

## MEDIA RELEASE

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# Cancer Council: Labor commitment to tackling obesity, alcohol could help prevent thousands of cancer cases

Federal Labor's election commitment to addressing Australia's growing obesity problem and risky alcohol consumption could help prevent thousands of cancer cases according to Cancer Council Australia.

Professor Sanchia Aranda, CEO, Cancer Council Australia has welcomed the latest federal Labor commitments announced today, saying an effective National Obesity Strategy and a national \$39 million *Live Lighter* campaign had the potential to turn the tide on "the fastest growing cause of preventable cancer in Australia".

"As Australian waistlines increase at an alarming rate, so too are the number of preventable cancer cases linked to obesity, poor diet and physical inactivity.

"Recent Cancer Council funded research estimated that 200,000 cancer cases in Australia over the next 25 years could be avoided if all Australians maintained a healthy weight and met physical activity guidelines for cancer prevention. It's the fastest growing preventable cancer risk factor in our population.

"Yet many Australians aren't aware that more than a dozen cancer types can be caused by high body mass, poor diet and physical inactivity, including cancers that cause significant burden such as bowel, breast, pancreatic and oesophageal cancers. We urgently need a well-resourced national obesity strategy, ongoing public education campaigns, and a serious discussion about fixing and mandating Australia's Health Star Rating food labelling system.

"The Opposition should also be commended for committing to review children's exposure to junk food advertising. Messages or programs promoting a healthy diet have no chance of competing with the billion-dollar budgets and tsunamis of advertising from the major food companies. Voluntary codes do not work to protect our most vulnerable."

Professor Aranda said *Live Lighter* campaigns originally developed by the WA Government and since run in both WA and Victoria had proven to be effective in driving down sugary drink and junk food consumption, but would be even more effective if run across the country and supported by new regulations.

Professor Aranda said the commitments to a new alcohol strategy, increased warnings about the harms of alcohol and protecting children from alcohol advertising, also had significant long-term potential to prevent cancer.

"Evidence shows few people appreciate the association between cancer and alcohol, yet excessive alcohol consumption in Australia causes nearly as many cancer deaths as overexposure to UV," Professor Aranda said.

Professor Aranda said Australia had a strong record of bipartisan support in cancer prevention, particularly in tobacco control, and hoped that all political parties would step up their commitments across the cancer prevention spectrum, including obesity and alcohol.

## ENDS

For media enquiries please contact Hollie Harwood via the Cancer Council Australia media line (02) 8063 4109 (diverts to mobile outside of business hours) or email [media@cancer.org.au](mailto:media@cancer.org.au)