

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport Inquiry into Diabetes in Australia



In May 2023, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport opened an Inquiry into the prevention, diagnosis, and management of all forms of diabetes, and obesity in Australia. The aim of the Inquiry was to investigate the causes of diabetes, including risk factors, the broader impacts of diabetes on Australia's health system, and the interrelated health issues that exist between diabetes and obesity in Australia.

Cancer Council Australia welcomed the opportunity to highlight the key health issues pertaining to diabetes and obesity and to provide recommendations to the Committee to contribute to the reduction in the incidence and burden of diabetes and obesity in Australia.

Obesity and diabetes are two prevalent chronic conditions in Australia, which both have a significant relationship with cancer. Research shows that in the 35 years between 1987 and 2017, the rate of obesity-related cancers in Australia almost quadrupled, with more than 1 million cases of cancer with an association with obesity diagnosed. Individuals with type 2 diabetes also experience an increased risk of developing several cancers, including pancreatic, liver, endometrial, colorectal, and breast cancer.

The environment in which we live can have a positive or negative influence on a person's health, and Australia's food environment has become one which allows for the promotion, and provision of, widely available access to nutrient poor, energy-dense, highly processed food. Strategies that take population wide approaches to address the environmental drivers of obesity have the maximum potential to achieve positive health improvements.

Our submission into this Inquiry provided three key recommendations for the Committee to address nutrition, overweight and obesity, and physical activity in Australia:

- Comprehensive government regulation to protect children from unhealthy food marketing
- A 20% health levy on manufacturers of sugary drinks
- Mandating an enhanced and strengthened Health Star Rating system across the packaged food supply.

Underpinning these recommendations, our submission urged the Committee to recommend that the Australian Government implements and adequately funds the actions under the National Obesity Strategy (2022-2032) and the National Preventive Health Strategy (2021-2030). Both these strategies aim to reduce rates of overweight and obesity, improve dietary intake, and increase physical activity.

Further information on this Inquiry can be found on the [submission page](#).