

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australia must lead on UN plan to cut chronic disease deaths by one-third by 2030

Health groups urge government to step up its commitment to prevention

Health groups are urging the Australian Government to step up its commitment to chronic disease prevention, as world leaders prepare for a UN High-level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) this week.

More than 50 world leaders have committed to attend the UN Meeting on 27 September to highlight the global burden of chronic disease and report on national progress. It will be the third High-level Meeting on NCDs and the first time that leaders are considering chronic disease in the context of the international Sustainable Development Goal to reduce premature deaths from chronic disease by one-third by 2030.

Professor Sanchia Aranda, Chair of the [Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance](#), said almost nine out of 10 deaths in Australia are due to chronic diseases and almost half of Australians have at least one long-term chronic condition.

“It’s a pattern reflected around the world – and presents an opportunity for Australia to show global leadership and to do more domestically to reduce preventable disease burden,” Professor Aranda said.

“In the next few decades, chronic disease is expected to continue to grow, in low, middle and high-income countries. However, much of this could be prevented by addressing modifiable risk factors, including tobacco, alcohol, poor diet, physical inactivity and unhealthy weight, and creating environments conducive to health.”

Following months of negotiations, the final [political declaration on chronic disease](#) has been released before its official launch at the UN High-level Meeting. The declaration calls on governments to demonstrate political leadership and coordinate a multisector response to chronic disease, while recognising industry influence and potential conflicts of interest in private partnerships.

Health groups, however, are critical that the political declaration does not go far enough, especially with a recent *Lancet* analysis finding that more than half of countries are not on track to meet global NCD targets.

Terry Slevin, CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia said that concrete commitments and milestones for reducing chronic disease were missing.

“While the declaration has some strengths, it lacks accountability mechanisms to track and report against progress. The Australian Government needs to go above and beyond the declaration to meet our international commitments to cut risk factors by 2025 and reduce premature chronic disease deaths by one-third by 2030,” he said.

Health groups are also critical that the World Health Organization interventions and ‘Best Buys’ to reduce risk factors are absent from the political declaration, and urge the Australian Government to implement these recommended cost-effective and feasible solutions.

Michael Thorn, Chief Executive of the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education and spokesperson for the [Prevention 1st campaign](#) agreed.

“While Australia excels in tobacco control, we are falling behind on addressing other risk factors for chronic disease. We need national strategies and policies to reduce alcohol consumption, improve nutrition, reduce obesity and increase physical activity,” he said.

Together, health groups are calling for high-level political engagement at the upcoming UN meeting and continued commitment and leadership by the government to work towards our international targets.

We especially call on the Australian Government to recognise the many people affected by chronic conditions and invest in prevention to reduce the suffering, illness and death caused by chronic disease.

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Statement supported by:

Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance
Consumers Health Forum of Australia
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