

Media Release

3 May 2016

Budget lays platform for longer term improvements in cancer policy, says Cancer Council Australia

The 2016-17 federal budget should improve overall cancer outcomes in Australia while laying a platform for further investment over the longer term, according to Cancer Council Australia.

CEO Professor Sanchia Aranda has welcomed a range of measures in the budget, while identifying areas where an increased future commitment will be required.

“The increase in tobacco tax alone will translate to tens of thousands of cancer deaths avoided, with trend data showing that the recurrent increases will lead to around 320,000 smokers quitting and 40,000 teenagers deterred from taking smoking up,” Professor Aranda said.

Professor Aranda also welcomed the Government’s continued commitment to defending tobacco plain packaging legislation.

Key commitments also included:

- \$29.9 million over three years to integrate Australia’s cancer screening registries;
- \$63.8 million to subsidise medicines for breast and prostate cancer and melanoma;
- \$21.3 million to trial up to 200 Health Care Homes, with the aim of integrating prevention and care for people with chronic and complex conditions; and
- \$5.3 million for continued promotion of the Health Star Rating food labelling system.

“Additional investment and policy work are required in all the areas targeted by these initiatives, but the Government should nonetheless be commended for its commitments,” Professor Aranda said.

She said that for every measure funded, there was a longer-term opportunity to build.

“For example, the screening register has great potential to monitor screening participation, but we will need to do more to increase participation itself – particularly in bowel cancer screening, where the benefits are extraordinary but awareness is low.

“Funding for cancer medicines is also welcome, however governments in Australia and elsewhere will need to do more to assist people with rarer cancers who face exorbitant treatment costs.

“The funding for piloting Health Care Homes also puts some substance to a longstanding need to do more to enhance chronic disease control at the primary care level, and help inform an ongoing commitment.

“The initiatives funded in tonight’s budget show that the Government is listening. They should pave the way for greater investment and reform over the longer term.”

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