

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



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Australia should lift its disease prevention game before stepping on world stage, say health groups

Gaps in life expectancy between the haves and have nots in Australia will widen unless strong policy action on inequities in chronic disease prevention is taken, according to the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA).

That's the message to federal parliamentarians at a special forum in Parliament House today, convened to focus on disease control inequities in the lead-up to the United Nations High Level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases to be held in New York in September.

Chair of the ACDPA, Professor Sanchia Aranda, said Australia was at risk of a blow-out in the gap in chronic disease burden between high and low socio-economic groups unless urgent action was taken.

"The purpose of the coming UN meeting is for countries to come together to engage in a global strategy to reduce the burden of non-communicable disease.

"We have some successes to share on the international stage, but also some major underperformance. For instance, while we are considered a world leader in tobacco control, smoking remains the leading preventable cause of disease burden. And we need to make stronger commitments to tackle other chronic disease risk factors including growing obesity, poor diet, physical inactivity and excess alcohol consumption," Professor Sanchia Aranda said.

"We also need to acknowledge that the poorest parts of our community are the ones disproportionately affected by preventable chronic disease, particularly in those communities where lifestyle risk factors are higher. The burden of chronic disease increases in step with financial disadvantage."

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, which focuses on obesity, nutrition and physical activity, is calling on all parliamentarians to support a range of measures to reduce the burden of preventable chronic disease.

"A significant proportion of Australia's chronic disease burden is the result of high body mass, poor diet and physical inactivity – as interacting and independent risk factors," Professor Aranda said.

"For Australia to lead on the global stage, we need to show a commitment to addressing the way food is formulated, promoted and labelled, and creating environments where the healthy choice in nutrition and physical activity is the easy and obvious choice."

"Chronic diseases are still the leading cause of death and ill health worldwide and currently 1 in 2 Australians are living with a chronic disease. As our Australian population ages the number of us living with chronic disease is expected to balloon. That's why urgent commitment to action is needed now, so we can continue to showcase to the world that Australia is a leader in disease prevention."

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The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA) is an alliance of Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia; National Heart Foundation of Australia; Kidney Health Australia; and Stroke

Foundation. Members work together in the primary prevention of chronic disease, with emphasis on changes to the food and physical environments.

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