

COMMUNIQUE

NATIONAL PREVENTIVE HEALTH STRATEGY EDUCATION WORKSHOP: 30 JANUARY 2020

The Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, has committed to the development of a National Preventive Health Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy will provide a long-term vision for improving the health of all Australians and stimulating a systemic shift to achieve a better balance between treatment and prevention. It will be a national strategy that includes primary and secondary prevention, and it will not have a disease-specific approach. The Strategy will be underpinned by the strongest research available.

An Expert Steering Committee has been appointed to provide advice on the development of the Strategy, with meetings held on 26 September and 28 November 2019. Broad consultation is essential to the development of the Strategy and the views of public health groups, key stakeholders and consumers will be represented in the Strategy.

A series of consultations are being held from October 2019 to February 2020. A consultation workshop on the topic of education was held in Sydney on 30 January 2020. Participants included representatives from research organisations, consumer groups, government departments, not-for-profit organisations, Primary Health Networks, and other experts in prevention.

CONSULTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Consultation participants considered the vision and scope for the Strategy, as well as topics related to education. "Education" was considered to include: information that is publicly available about health issues; communication through public health messaging and campaigns; as well as the importance of health literacy.

Some of the themes emerging from the discussion were:

- Multiple approaches to public education are required to achieve effective behavioural change.
- Providing health information and education through an equity lens is important when targeting priority groups.
- The emergence of digital communication is important in raising awareness and needs to be part of a broader education approach.
- The Australian public needs a source of credible and consistent health information that is trusted and easy to understand.
- The importance of ensuring any new interventions, programs and campaigns are designed to meet the health literacy needs of the audience.
- The health workforce is an important source of health information and can provide leadership in prevention.
- The need for consumer involvement in the development and design of public health messaging and campaigns, incorporating principles of "co-design" and community-led initiatives.
- Programs and education interventions need to be based on strong evidence and have demonstrated efficacy in increasing knowledge and changing behaviour.
- The importance of evaluating education approaches.
- The consideration and incorporation of existing government strategies/action plans into the Strategy.
- The importance of building ways of systematically working together with other parts of government and sectors outside the health system that play a pivotal role in contributing to health outcomes.
- The need for ongoing and sustained investment in long-term public health education.

NEXT STEPS

The following next steps in the development of the Strategy will be undertaken:

- The Living Well for Longer national consumer survey has been extended to 14 February 2020 in recognition of the widespread impact of the bushfires over the Christmas period.
- The Expert Steering Committee will meet in March 2020 to consider the outcomes of the consultations.
- Further public consultation will take place in the first half of 2020.