

Foreword

FROM THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING



As a nation we must recognise that doing more to stay healthy and well will be key to coping with the human and financial costs of chronic and preventable illness.

The Rudd Government was elected on a platform that recognised that things need to be done differently in health care in the future. Prevention of illness and chronic disease is central to a sustainable health system and a fuller life for all members of the Australian community.

Too often in the past, individuals, communities and governments have focussed on the immediate issues of treating people after they become sick. Whilst this will always remain vital, and there is much to do in this area, we cannot afford to limit our focus to treatment and ignore prevention.

I established the Preventative Health Taskforce in April and tasked it with developing a comprehensive and lasting Preventative Health Strategy by mid 2009. In the first instance the Taskforce was asked to focus on how to reduce harm flowing from obesity, tobacco and alcohol.

In order to develop this discussion paper, the Taskforce has reviewed Australian and international research to come up with its preliminary views on what interventions could be available to prevent illnesses.

In this discussion paper the Taskforce identifies a wide range of options, some of them contentious, that it considers would have a positive impact in preventing illness. Importantly, the Taskforce has thrown down a challenge to the community to respond to its work – and provide input. With which findings and suggestions do you agree? Which do you disagree with and why? Do you have alternative or better ideas, and if so what are they?

All parts of the community have a role to play, be they individuals and families, communities and industry, and of course federal, state and territory governments. No one sector alone can deal with the prevention agenda – we must act in concert and take responsibility for actions within each of our domains. So your views will be vital to the next stage of development of a truly national prevention strategy. I encourage you to provide input at this important time.

I thank all Taskforce members for their work, and particularly the Chair, Professor Rob Moodie, for their effort and foresight in preparing this discussion paper – *Australia the Healthiest Nation by 2020*.

The ball is now in your court.

I encourage everyone to read the discussion paper and submit their views to the Taskforce to help develop an exciting and constructive new prevention agenda for the decades to come.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicola Roxon'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

NICOLA ROXON, MP

Minister for Health and Ageing