

TASKFORCESUBMISSION: submission

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POSITION: Managing Director

ORGANISATION: Healthy Inspirations Weight Loss Centres

SUBMISSION1: Opportunities in lifestyle-based obesity prevention and treatment.

The discussion paper on obesity, tobacco and alcohol, misses an important distinction. Although these are all modifiable health risks, tobacco and harmful drinking are behaviours but obesity is a symptom of a mix of behaviours, environment and other factors.

There is unresolved commercial conflict between government and the alcohol industry, tobacco industry and food companies. Although government should address the impact these industries have on community lifestyle choices, it should not ignore the weight loss industry and fitness industry whose agendas are all about treatment and prevention.

Current government thinking is that all health care is delivered by 'approved healthcare provider' which ignores entire industries devoted to prevention.

There is no evidence yet that the 'healthy eating and exercise guidelines' like those in the Measure Up campaign will be effective in treating or preventing obesity. At best they increase community awareness and provide dietary guidelines that overweight people will ignore or fail to understand.

Unfortunately the Measure Up does not provide access to both public and private treatment options. As the discussion paper recognises "But individuals cannot achieve change on their own. They will need support..."

The technical report 'Obesity in Australia' recommends "Introduce incentive schemes to encourage healthy behaviours including contributions to gym memberships" but fails to recommend contributions to commercial weight management programs.

Overweight is a bigger risk than inactivity. High body mass is a greater contributor to the burden associated with diabetes (55%) compared with (60%) when high body mass and physical inactivity are combined.

Being overweight is soon to become a bigger modifiable health risk factor than smoking.

Through the PBS, the government currently funds 90-day pharmacological treatments for smoking motivated quitters but it does not provide any financial support to people motivated to lose excess weight through lifestyle change programs. The PBS is all about drugs. Their needs to be a LCBS (Lifestyle Change Benefit Scheme).

There are commercial weight management programs like Healthy Inspirations that follow the NHMRC guidelines for the treatment of overweight and obesity. Healthy Inspirations specialises in the treatment and prevention of overweight in women.

Women, not doctors, are the primary health influencers in the home and the community.

As the causes of overweight and obesity are multi-factoral (eating and activity choices, plus environment) the Healthy Inspirations program is also multi-factoral and combines education and advice about nutrition, supervised physical activity for the management and prevention of overweight and obesity in women. This education flows on to the family unit.

This program purposely does not employ approved providers (doctors, dietitians, exercise specialist etc) at the delivery level, as doing would make cost un-affordable to most of the community, decrease community accessibility and would be overkill. The program employs trained "lifestyle consultants" who deliver and support a pre-set program designed by an expert team of dietitians, exercise scientists and behaviour change experts.

The program communicates with each member's doctor.

Healthy Inspirations maintains data on over 10,000 Australian and New Zealand women, many of whom have participated in excess of one year.

We recommend that the government investigate rewards and rebates to people who attend self-funded lifestyle-based obesity treatment programs like Healthy Inspirations.

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PRIVACY: yes

SUBMIT: Submit