

PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA  
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## **New report - more work needed on tobacco and obesity**

“The evidence is in. Clearly much more needs to be done to focus national efforts on tobacco and obesity”, according to Associate Professor, Heather Yeatman, the President of the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA). In welcoming the two detailed reports of the Australian National Health Performance Authority (ANHPA) on tobacco and obesity the PHAA has called on governments from around Australia to reassess their approach to these major causes of poor health outcomes.

“Prevention is so much better than cure”, added Mr Moore, the PHAA CEO, “the difficulty is that while so much of the funding and research focusses on the treatment of conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes and cancer, so little funding goes into prevention”.

According the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare less than 2% of all money spent on health goes into prevention.

“The reason the PHAA wants to see a doubling of funding into prevention is that we are sick of seeing the metaphorical ambulance being sent to the bottom of the cliff while there is no funding to build a fence at the top”, said Mr Moore. “Some parts of industry like to pick on the parts of the statistics that suits them – however, the message is clear that we still have a major problem with overweight and obesity levels across Australia and in some communities the rates of tobacco use are simply much too high”.

The advantage of the *inFocus Health Communities* reports of ANHPA is that they identify where tobacco use and obesity need our greatest efforts. “There are few surprises”, said Professor Yeatman, “we expected to see greater rates of overweight and obesity in poorer areas. These are the areas that are targeted by fast food outlets; people have lower food literacy and less access to and availability of healthy food options. Healthy foods are also more expensive in rural areas”.

“Governments simply cannot ignore these findings. The time has come to consider more stringent measures than industry codes and self-regulation. Let’s start with:

- banning the promotion of junk food to kids,
- adopting the Health Star Labelling system that identifies the nutrition rating of food, and
- breaking the nexus between unhealthy junk food and sport.

Much has already been done by governments to reduce tobacco. However, it is clear that even greater efforts are needed to focus on particular communities where use is widespread.

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**For reports and detailed results:** [www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au](http://www.myhealthycommunities.gov.au)