

MEDIA RELEASE

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Sugar tax, stronger focus on prevention and tackling health inequities key to reducing diabetes in Australia

The AMA has told a parliamentary inquiry the \$3.1 billion cost to Australia's health system from diabetes could be mitigated through the introduction of a sugar tax, a much stronger focus on prevention and addressing inequities in the health system.

More than 1.3 million Australians live with diabetes (one in 20) and two in three adults, and one in four children are living with overweight or obesity, which can lead to type 2 diabetes, heart disease, cancer and other chronic diseases.

The AMA's submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport's Inquiry into Diabetes in Australia says health data shows that preventable disease resulting from people being overweight and/or obese accounts for 18 per cent of health spending (\$4.3 billion).

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said preventive measures are key to tackling overweight and obesity and reducing the impact of diabetes on Australia's health system and economy, as prevention not only saves lives, but also takes pressure off the health system in the long term.

"The AMA would like to see all levels of government do more with preventive health policies that lead to positive health outcomes, save the economy money, and also ease the impact of poor health on our over-stretched health system.

"The impact of obesity on our health system is one of the reasons why the AMA is campaigning for a tax on sugary drinks. We've seen the success a sugar tax has had overseas helping to reduce consumption of soft drinks, which deliver around 12-teaspoons of sugar per can.

"We also support restricting advertising of unhealthy food and harmful products targeted at children to improve health outcomes and wellbeing for our children," Professor Robson said.

The AMA's submission emphasises that health is shaped by the social, economic, cultural, and environmental conditions a person lives under, and to achieve health equity, governments must focus not only on treating disease and modifying risk factors, but also on the underlying social determinants of health.

"We need a determined effort by the Australian government to address the inequalities in our society which give rise to unequal health outcomes for all Australians.

"This includes systemic inequities that affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, resulting in disproportionately high levels of diabetes, with almost eight per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with the condition. This very often leads to chronic kidney disease.

"Health outcomes relating to diabetes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, could be improved with better investment in prevention and early detection programs".

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[Read the AMA's submission.](#)

See the AMA's [Health is the Best Investment Report](#) which makes a case for preventive health measures being better funded.

Read more about the AMA's sugar tax campaign, [#Sickly-Sweet](#)

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