



# MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 20 March 2025

## Sugar tax needed to help tackle Australia's obesity crisis

Australia must introduce a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages to curb the nation's escalating obesity crisis.

The Australian Medical Association has published the ["Sickly Sweet" chapter of its pre-budget submission](#), which warns obesity has overtaken tobacco as the major cause of preventable death in Australia.

The AMA is calling for a tax on selected sugar-sweetened beverages at a rate of 50c per 100g of sugar, which would raise the price of an average 375mL can of soft drink by 20c. This would encourage consumers to choose healthier options, while creating a strong incentive for beverage manufacturers to reformulate their products to contain less sugar.

AMA President Dr Danielle McMullen said it was high time for Australia to catch up with more than 100 jurisdictions around the world that have implemented a successful sugar tax.

"Australia's obesity crisis will cost the health system \$38 billion over the next four years if nothing is done," Dr McMullen said.

"But here's the good news for the major political parties ahead of an election: there is a tried, tested and easily implemented policy that can significantly curb the prevalence of obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke.

"Our proposal for a tax on sugary drinks would drive down annual sugar consumption by 2kg per person, while raising \$3.6 billion in government revenue over the forward estimates — funds that could be invested in crucial preventive health measures."

Dr McMullen says the AMA's proposal for a sugar tax is a common-sense policy that has been proven to be effective in dozens of other countries.

"Australia is so far behind the eight ball, it's not funny. The United Kingdom, France, Mexico, Chile, Catalonia in Spain, several states in the US — these are just a few of the jurisdictions where sugar consumption dropped after a sugar tax was implemented," Dr McMullen said.

"We have been pushing for a tax on sugary drinks for many years, but governments keep kicking the can down the road, all while Australia's issues with obesity and chronic disease become worse and worse.

"We have a much healthier, and much cheaper, alternative we must encourage people to drink instead — water."

Dr McMullen said reduced sugar consumption and improved diet leads to a reduction in the prevalence of obesity, and therefore substantial healthcare savings in the long run.

"From both a health and an economic perspective, it is far better to prevent obesity in the first place than manage it once it is entrenched.

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“Ahead of this federal budget and the upcoming election, we are urging the major parties to look at the bigger picture and implement a tax on sugary drinks — for the health of Australia.”

[Read the AMA's pre-budget submissions](#)

[Find out more about the AMA's SicklySweet campaign](#)

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