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Mr Hockey: Prevention is better (and more sustainable) than cure

The Australian Health Promotion Association (AHPA) is calling on the Federal Government to provide a greater commitment to public health with concerns that the government has been disappointingly silent on prevention in last night's Federal Budget, particularly in the wake of the 2014 cuts for health promotion.

AHPA welcomes announcements for a range of important health initiatives including vaccination, cervical screening, support for the Royal Flying Doctor Service and support for tobacco plain packaging litigation. AHPA's National President, Gemma Crawford says however that this doesn't go far enough, with no additional funding slated for health promotion programs, meaning full emergency departments and long hospital waiting lists could be a reality for years to come.

"We think the Treasurer might need to look up 'health' in a dictionary – he seems to have it confused with 'illness'" Ms Crawford said. "The best way to keep hospital waiting lists down – is to stop people getting sick in the first place".

"To keep Australians healthy we need to focus on targeting the causes of chronic disease like obesity, alcohol misuse and physical inactivity – not treating chronic disease when it appears." said Ms Crawford.

AHPA believes that if the Treasurer is serious about families and small business being able to contribute meaningfully to society – they need to be healthy too. Cuts to child dental programs, child health assessments, training scholarships and Health Department staffing-on top of last year's slash and burn just fails to feel 'fair'.

The Federal Budget has further compounded a lack of health promotion funding in the Victorian State Budget last week. Victorian Health Minister Jill Hennessy was seeking a federal cash injection to support the Healthy Together Victoria initiative but none was forthcoming.

AHPA's Victorian State President, David Towl suggests that there has been significant interest from around the world in the Healthy Together Pilot – but a lack of commitment from the State and Federal Governments might mean an end to this work before the pilot results are finalised. "While federal and state jurisdictions might shift responsibility between each other –this does little for the health of Victorians including many in the most disadvantaged communities in the state' said Mr Towl.

"Prevention is better than the cure – it costs less and it is more sustainable in the long term" said Mr Towl.

AHPA calls on all politicians to reject a narrow sighted view of health and encourage sustainable funding for prevention and health promotion to keep Australia profitable and healthy into the future.

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