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Inquiry into Diabetes: Report

Joint statement of support from public health and consumer groups

Leading public health and consumer groups welcome the [Report](#) of the Inquiry into Diabetes undertaken by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport and tabled in the Australian Parliament today.

While progress has been made on some other chronic diseases in Australia, type 2 diabetes, with its links to factors including food and drinks, remains a critical problem.

It is imperative that we have a comprehensive plan to tackle diabetes, and the Report delivers that - a robust package of measures that will be most effective delivered as a whole.

We commend the Committee for undertaking this work into diabetes, which is a significant cause of poor health and disability in the community and disproportionately impacts First Nations people and people living in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas.¹

The number of people in Australia living with diagnosed type 2 diabetes has increased by 220% in the last two decades in Australia, with an unhealthy food environment putting people at higher risk.^{1,2}

Diabetes was the second leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2018.³ The diabetes death rate was 2.3 times higher for people living in the lowest socioeconomic areas than for people living in the highest socioeconomic areas, after adjusting for age.¹ People living in remote and very remote areas were 2.5 times as likely to be hospitalised for diabetes as people living in major cities, after adjusting for age.¹

The diabetes disease burden weighs significantly and increasingly on Australia's health system, costing \$3.4 billion in 2020-21 for hospital care and services.⁴ Medications alone cost taxpayers almost a billion dollars (\$952.7 million) in the same period.⁴

We are particularly pleased to see that the report echoes our calls for a levy on sugar-sweetened beverages. Since sugary drinks represent around 20% of free sugars consumed in the average Australian diet, targeting their reduction is a rapid way to achieve considerable public health benefit.⁵ There are now sugary drink taxes in more than 100 countries, including the UK, France, South Africa and Mexico, and there is good evidence showing a drop in consumption as a result.⁶

We also support the recommendation to appoint a dedicated resource within the Department of Health and Aged Care to support access to healthy food to all Australian communities to focus on addressing food insecurity, a known risk factor for type 2 diabetes, and improving access to healthy, nutritious food for Australians no matter where they live or what their circumstances.⁷

We look forward to the release of the Government's full response to the Review in the coming weeks, and to seeing an implementation plan that supports strong health and wellbeing for all Australians throughout their lives.

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