

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



MEDIA RELEASE

Sunday 24 February 2019

Health groups welcome cross-party commitment on health checks

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance welcomes support by the Australian Government and the federal Opposition for a Medicare item to prevent and manage vascular disease - heart, stroke, kidney disease and type 2 diabetes. Funding for an integrated health check has also been backed by the Australian Greens.

Alliance members, including the National Heart Foundation, Stroke Foundation, Diabetes Australia, Kidney Health Australia and Cancer Council Australia, have long championed integrated health checks to stem the tide of Australia's chronic disease burden.

Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance Sharon McGowan said investment in comprehensive health checks would encourage people to consider their health before a crisis.

"Chronic diseases affect half of the Australian population and are the leading cause of death in Australia," said Ms McGowan.

"Yet, many people are unaware of their risk and the first sign something is wrong is a trip to the hospital."

Around one-third of chronic disease could be prevented through modifiable risk factors, such as smoking, unhealthy weight, poor diet and high blood pressure. Although the new item has been focused around vascular disease, key risk factors, such as smoking, cause several chronic diseases and many people suffer co-morbidities through lifestyle.

Ms McGowan said today's announcement was an important step forward in Government recognition of the importance of prevention as well as cure.

"A Medicare item for integrated health checks provides an important opportunity for people to consider their risk in consultation with their GP and take steps to reduce their risk through lifestyle changes and/or medication," she said.

Chronic diseases - including heart disease and stroke - account for more than one-third of health spending, with costs expected to increase as the population ages.

"Investment in prevention is crucial to address the growing impact of chronic disease and reduce unnecessary hospitalisations," Ms McGowan said.

"The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance welcomes the cross-party support for comprehensive health checks to reduce disease risk and improve the health and wellbeing of Australians."

ENDS

For media enquiries please contact:

Emily Granland media@strokefoundation.org.au m)0408 000 409 p)(03)9670 1000

The Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (ACDPA) is an alliance of Cancer Council Australia; Diabetes Australia; National Heart Foundation of Australia; Kidney Health Australia; and Stroke Foundation. Members work together to collectively support prevention, integrated risk assessment and effective management of chronic disease risk.