



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATIONS RELEASE BLUEPRINT TO BETTER TACKLE CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE**

The Heart Foundation and National Stroke Foundation today released *Time for Action*, a blueprint for a national action plan to better tackle cardiovascular disease (CVD), Australia's biggest killer.

CVD causes 34% of all deaths, is responsible for 18% of the total burden of disease and injury, and is the nation's most expensive disease group to treat (\$5.94bn in 2004-05, or 11% of total allocated expenditure).

Heart Foundation CEO, Dr Lyn Roberts, said that while CVD was a national health priority area, "it's a priority in name only, with no comprehensive, funded plan to help tackle the gaps in Australia's approach to prevention, treatment and on-going management of this major disease group".

"*Time for Action* forms the basis of the Heart Foundation and National Stroke Foundation submissions to a range of important reviews currently underway as part of the broad national health reform agenda.

"While many exciting advances have been made in cardiovascular health over the past five decades, bringing down CVD death rates from a peak of almost 70% of all deaths in the 1960s, there remain significant gaps in the current approach," Dr Roberts said.

National Stroke Foundation CEO, Dr Erin Lalor, said that the Federal Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, had recognised the problem and had launched a review of the federal approach to CVD.

Dr Lalor said: "We applaud the Minister's commitment to review the current approach to CVD, especially as it will look at what is currently being done – or more importantly, not being done - to address the priorities identified in the 2005 national service improvement framework for heart, stroke and vascular disease."

"Death rates continue to decline, but the number of people with CVD is set to increase as the population ages, grows and some risk factors - such as overweight and obesity - become more prevalent. This makes the review both important and timely," Dr Lalor said.

Time for Action sets out 34 policy recommendations, including:

- improved prevention with an increase in tobacco tax (there has been no real increase for almost a decade); an improved food supply; better support for walking, cycling and public transport; and action to counter obesogenic environments;
- a comprehensive approach to improving CVD outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who develop CVD and die from it at much higher rates than non-Indigenous Australians;
- better early detection and intervention through a CVD health check;

- better management of patients with CVD in primary care;
- expansion of multidisciplinary care teams for heart failure patients;
- support for clinical guideline development;
- support for education campaigns to help people recognise the warning signs of heart attack and stroke and to understand the importance of getting help fast;
- creation of a national cardiac procedures register; and
- action to ensure the availability of stroke units in hospitals.

Time for Action can be accessed on the Heart Foundation and National Stroke Foundation websites:

[www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)

[www.strokefoundation.com.au](http://www.strokefoundation.com.au)

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