

MEDIA RELEASE



AUSTRALIAN LOCAL
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Heart
Foundation



strokefoundation

Praise for Roxon's smart move on chronic disease prevention

The Heart Foundation, National Stroke Foundation and the Australian Local Government Association have today welcomed the announcement by the Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, to work with local government and health groups to deliver the \$72m Healthy Communities program to help combat the rise of chronic disease in areas with high rates of obesity and social disadvantage.

The organisations have welcomed the Australian Government's new program, saying that while it will initially involve some 12 local government areas in the pilot stage, it will expand over the coming years to include 92 sites across the country.

ALGA President Cr Geoff Lake said local government was well placed to play a leading role in the struggle to combat the rise in chronic disease.

"The Australian Government's investment in the Healthy Communities program is an excellent starting point. We're keen to expand on this initiative and see further investment in community infrastructure as well as initiatives such as further investment in the Healthy Spaces and Places program, which encourages all those involved in planning built environments to design more active, health-promoting communities," Cr Lake said.

Heart Foundation National CEO, Dr Lyn Roberts, said the program was an exciting initiative that would support community efforts to counter major risk factors for obesity, including physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

"We know that heart disease and its risk factors – such as obesity, smoking, physical inactivity and poor nutrition - hits the socially disadvantaged hardest. That's why we are deeply encouraged to see this investment in communities that need the most help.

"The need for tightly focussed programs such as the Healthy Communities program is underscored by the release today of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, Prevention of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic kidney disease.

"This report details the massive task we face to curb risk factors for our major chronic diseases, including our biggest killer, cardiovascular disease, which accounts for 34% of all deaths," Dr Roberts said.

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National Stroke Foundation CEO, Dr Erin Lalor said that the Healthy Communities program is one response from government to tackle the major risk factors for chronic disease.

“We look forward to the full response from the Australian Government to the recommendations of the National Preventative Health Taskforce early next year, starting with a major increase in tobacco tax, a move that will not only drive down smoking rates, but will also raise significant new revenue that can be used to underpin new investment in prevention measures.

“We’ve been impressed by the commitment to chronic disease to date and look forward to 2010 being a year of delivery,” Dr Lalor said.

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