

Time for action on heart disease and stroke

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The National Heart Foundation and Stroke Foundation have today commended the Minister for Health, Greg Hunt, for his announcement of a new national action plan set to tackle two of Australia's biggest killers – heart disease and stroke.

The Federal Government will partner with the Heart Foundation and Stroke Foundation in developing the National Heart and Stroke Action Plan. The first plan of its kind, it will focus on the prevention, control and research of cardiovascular disease.

National Heart Foundation Group CEO Adjunct Professor John Kelly AM, commended Minister Hunt and the Federal Government for a long-term commitment to reducing the impact of cardiovascular disease - Australia's most costly chronic disease.

“The National Heart and Stroke Action Plan is an opportunity to avoid premature deaths and save lives through a coordinated response to cardiovascular disease, which includes two of Australia's biggest killers – heart disease and stroke,” Professor Kelly said.

“Cardiovascular disease affects 4.2 million Australians, costs \$8.8 billion each year in health care expenses and is a leading cause of death and disability. Despite these alarming facts, cardiovascular disease is mostly preventable.”

“The Action Plan will plug gaps in Australia's approach to the prevention and control of cardiovascular disease to reduce risk, improve detection and outcomes for patients, and reduce the immense impact cardiovascular disease has on the health system and the community.”

The number of people with cardiovascular disease is set to continue to increase as our population grows and ages. Lifestyle factors are also having an impact as overweight and obesity increase and some risk factors, such as poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure continue at alarmingly high rates.

Stroke Foundation Chief Executive Officer Sharon McGowan commended the Federal Government for moving to stem the tide of this chronic disease challenge.

“We look forward to working with the medical community and key stakeholders to look into what gaps might be present in prevention, treatment, recovery and research,” Ms McGowan said.

“The development of a National Heart and Stroke Action Plan will set the agenda for the next decade’s action on heart disease and stroke. It will help guide resource allocation to life-saving interventions and improve the quality of life for those living with cardiovascular disease.

“It will also help ease pressure on health systems by reducing avoidable hospital admissions.”

The Federal Government has provided \$170,000 towards the development of the Heart and Stroke Action Plan.

Key facts on cardiovascular disease (CVD):

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) comprises a number of individual diseases, including heart disease and stroke. Heart disease is Australia’s single biggest killer, stroke is Australia’s third biggest killer.
- CVD kills one Australian every 12 minutes.
- Affects one in six Australians, or 4.2 million people.
- Accounts for almost 30 percent of all deaths in Australia.
- Mostly preventable.
- Costliest disease to treat: costing \$8.8 billion each year in direct health care expenses, including \$5 billion each year on hospital admissions and \$1.65 billion on pharmaceuticals.
- At least 60 percent higher in remote areas for hospitalisations and deaths.
- More prevalent among low socioeconomic groups and in regional areas.

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