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Foreword

Preventative health initiatives are becoming increasingly important considering Australia's ageing population and increasing rates of chronic disease.

A key part of the Australian Government's strategy for preventative health is the National Partnership on Preventive Health (NPAPH) which is providing up to \$872.1 million in funding over six years, the biggest investment in health promotion that the Australian Government has ever made.

The aim of the NPAPH is to reduce the risk of lifestyle related chronic disease through investment in a range of preventive health activities including through initiatives in three settings that the population spend a large proportion of their time, the Healthy Communities, the Healthy Children and the Healthy Workers initiative.

The Healthy Workers initiative is an important component of the NPAPH which is funding workplace health programs that focus on decreasing rates of overweight and obesity, increasing levels of physical activity, intake of fruit and vegetables and smoking cessation and reducing harmful levels of alcohol.

The Australian Government recognises the important role industry can play in promoting and supporting healthy lifestyles. Partnership between the Australian Government, peak employer/industry bodies and unions is crucial to improving the health of the working population.

This Statement demonstrates an important commitment of these parties to promote good health in and through workplaces.



Nicola Roxon

Minister for Health and Ageing
July 2011





Purpose

The purpose of this Statement is to provide national level commitment to improving the health of the population in and through the workplace.

It is a joint commitment between the Australian Government and peak employer representatives and unions.

Vision

To promote good health in and through the workplaces in an effort to reduce the prevalence of chronic disease across the population.

Setting the Scene

Australia is one of a number of developed countries experiencing significant changes in the age profile and health status of its population.

The substantial changes in the rates of overweight and obesity across the whole Australian population are also likely to see a rise in the incidence of chronic disease such as heart disease, diabetes and stroke, and increased pressure on the health system.

The *Australian Bureau of Statistics* National Health Survey 2007-08 classified 61.3% of persons over 18 years as overweight or obese. The proportion of obese persons aged 18 years and over increased from 18.7% to 24.8% from the previous survey in 2004-05.

Preventable conditions now account for around one third of the total burden of disease in Australia. Of the modifiable risk factors causing the greatest disease burden, tobacco smoking, alcohol misuse, poor diet, physical inactivity and unhealthy weight are the major contributors.

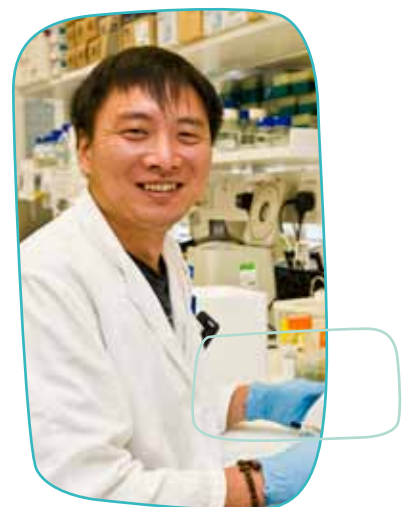
It is also recognised that numerous factors influence lifestyle choices and behaviours including the work environment, socio-economic factors, where a person lives and age.

Workplaces provide the potential to reach over 11 million people in Australia. It is a setting where most adults spend around half of their waking hours and which can provide the opportunity to reach a substantial proportion of the population.

Supporting good health in and through workplaces can have benefits for the individual, the employer/business and overall productivity.

Australian governments at all levels have recognised the need for a preventive approach to emerging health issues as well as the opportunities that workplaces and other settings can offer in reaching the wider community.

The Healthy Workers initiative is providing up to \$294.6 million over six years to support workplace health programs that focus on decreasing rates of overweight and obesity, increasing levels of physical activity and intake of fruit and vegetables, smoking cessation and reducing harmful levels of alcohol consumption.



Of this amount, up to \$289.4 million is being made available to state and territory governments from 1 July 2011 to design, deliver and monitor programs, with oversight and support from the Australian Government. Activities will also include capacity building, as well as the development of tools and resources for employers of all sizes to support the implementation of healthy workplace programs.

The initiative acknowledges the diversity of workers, workplaces and businesses (large, small to medium, self-employed and home businesses) in Australia and Occupational Health and Safety legislation which is an important statutory requirement for all Australian workplaces.

Core Principles*

- Participation by employers/businesses/the self employed in the initiative is voluntary.
- Participation or non-participation by individuals in workplace programs is voluntary.
- Participation or non-participation will not result in discrimination.
- Confidentiality of health information will apply.¹
- Participants will have access to their own health information and it will not form part of an 'employee record'.
- Data for feedback to employers/businesses will only be used when it is not possible to identify individuals.
- Occupational Health & Safety legislation requires workplaces to be safe and healthy which may have some overlap with this non-mandatory initiative.
- The programs and activities will complement and not detract from Occupational Health & Safety legislation requirements and obligations.
- Workplace parties will have the ability to choose programs that are suitable to their workplaces.
- A supportive environment based on engagement, consultation and the subsequent agreement of workplace parties will be the basis on which programs in a workplace are initiated.

* All healthy lifestyle activities taking place in or through the workplace, regardless of whether these are provided by an employer, worker or third party, are also to be conducted in keeping with the National Privacy Principles and any relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory arrangements.

¹ All parties are assured that this Statement does not add to, modify or diminish any existing or future arrangements for the privacy, collection, management, storage and access to a person's health information under the National Privacy Principles, the Commonwealth *Privacy Act 1988* or any other regulatory requirement including relevant State and Territory arrangements.

Evaluation

Evaluation of this initiative will contribute to the growing body of evidence for healthy living programs in workplaces.

Evaluation will occur at the program, state and territory and national level.



Working Together

The Australian Government, peak employer/industry bodies and unions have jointly developed this statement and support the objectives of this initiative.

Parties are committed to monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the statement and its contribution to the initiative and will also assess its potential to be sustained beyond the life of the initiative.

Handwritten signature of Nicola Roxon in black ink.

Nicola Roxon
Minister

*Department of Health
and Ageing*

Handwritten signature of Peter Anderson in black ink.

Peter Anderson

Chief Executive
*Australian Chamber of
Commerce and Industry*

Handwritten signature of Ged Kearney in black ink.

Ged Kearney

President
*Australian Council
of Trade Unions*

Handwritten signature of Heather Ridout in black ink.

Heather Ridout
Chief Executive Officer

Australian Industry Group

Handwritten signature of Jennifer Westacott in black ink.

Jennifer Westacott
Chief Executive

Business Council of Australia

Handwritten signature of Peter Strong in black ink.

Peter Strong
Executive Director

*Council of Small Businesses
of Australia*

www.healthyworkers.gov.au

All information in this publication is correct as at July 2011