Preventable illnesses and disease place significant pressure on our hospitals and health systems and jeopardize the wellbeing and livelihood of all Australians.

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, dementia, stroke, kidney disease, cancer and type 2 diabetes are all too common in Australia, accounting for 83 per cent of premature deaths (deaths among people younger than 75 years) and 60 per cent of the total burden of disease.

It is no surprise that the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has identified chronic disease as “Australia’s biggest health challenge.”

Despite this, our investment in preventive health has fallen. Australia lags behind in prevention and public health funding for all areas of health expenditure when compared to other countries, contributing only two per cent compared to New Zealand’s 6.4 per cent and Canada’s 5.9 per cent.

Our future to adequately address this looming crisis is evident in the continued rise of obesity. Because of our inaction in this area, for the first time, we face the very real prospect that our children will have a shorter life expectancy than us.

If we care about health, then we must put prevention first. Future generations depend on us to take the actions needed to make this happen.

If we did not take action to prevent the major risk factors that make up chronic disease, 7 in 10 people will have a chronic condition causing them to live longer in pain and disability.

We urge you to take this action.

1. Increase the expenditure on preventive health and ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to address the burden of disease.
2. Commit to achieving the World Health Organisation’s 2025 non-communicable disease reduction targets and publically reporting the progress in reaching these targets.
3. Reform tax systems to minimise economic externalities, encourage healthier choices, and maximise the health and economic benefits to the community.
4. Implement a health warning labelling regime on alcohol and food products to provide information to the community at the point of consumption.
5. Stop unhealthy promotion and marketing of products that are associated with increased risk of chronic disease.
6. Create physical and social environments that support individuals with a shared conviction: We believe that every Australian has the right to live and grow in communities that provide them with the best opportunity to live a long and healthy life, and not die prematurely.
7. Fund public education campaigns on alcohol, tobacco, physical inactivity and poor nutrition.

Today we write to you as representatives of a number of organizations with a shared conviction: We believe that every Australian has the right to live and grow in communities that provide them with the best opportunity to live a long and healthy life, and not die prematurely.

If we care about health, then we must put prevention first. Future generations depend on us to take the actions needed to make this happen.

The actions that we undertake in this election campaign can dramatically improve the lives of Australians and reduce the devastating burden of chronic disease.

We urge you to take this action.