

For immediate release

## GREENS SUGAR TAX WILL SAVE LIVES AND PREVENT CHRONIC DISEASE

**22 June 2016:** The Greens have been applauded by an alliance of health professionals for their bold new plan to fight childhood obesity and prevent chronic disease by introducing a tax on Australia's sweetest and most harmful sugary drinks.

The proposal would see a 20 per cent increase on the retail price of sugar sweetened drinks (with more than five grams of sugar per 100ml), costing an extra 45 cents on a two litre bottle of cola.

The announcement has been welcomed by Prevention 1st, an alliance led by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) and Alzheimer's Australia, which has been calling on all political parties to commit to efforts to reduce chronic disease ahead of the July election.

"Many Australians underestimate the health problems related to excess sugary drink consumption, including tooth decay and overweight or obesity, as well as a range of long-term health conditions such as type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, kidney and heart disease, stroke and some cancers," says CEO of PHAA and President of World Federation of Public Health Associations Michael Moore.

A sugar tax in Australia is estimated to save more than 1,600 lives and raise \$400 million per year for obesity prevention initiatives.

The Greens have also indicated that every dollar raised from the proposed sugar tax will be reinvested into preventive health and public education measures.

"The Green's *Taxing sugary drinks* plan reflects a welcome commitment to preventive health, adopting one of the actions outlined in [Prevention 1st's 2016 Election Platform](#) released earlier this month," said Mr Moore.

"It's really important that we don't just focus on treatment and the acute end of care. When it comes to the health of our nation, prevention is better than a cure. We know that taking action today to address the known risk factors of chronic disease and encourage healthier choices will dramatically improve the lives of Australians."

Chronic disease accounts for 83 per cent of premature deaths in Australia, 66 per cent of the total burden of disease, and costs our healthcare system more than \$27 billion a year.

At least 31 per cent of the burden of disease can be prevented by targeting modifiable risk factors including tobacco use, poor nutrition, alcohol use and physical inactivity.

“We cannot ignore the size of the problem. It is a national shame that our children are likely to have shorter lives because of the rising rates of obesity. We need to be making changes now that will ensure our children live long, healthy lives,” said Mr Moore.

The announcement comes after the Labor Party released its \$300 million election campaign plan for *Healthy communities and chronic disease prevention* on the weekend – which focuses on smoking, physical activity, diet and nutrition, awareness raising and protecting kids from unhealthy advertising.

The Prevention 1st alliance was pleased to see preventive health policies are beginning to receive deserved attention this election, and call on all parties to show their commitment.

“We can no longer adopt an ‘ambulance at the bottom of the hill’ approach to health in this country. Before heading to the voting booths, Australians deserve to know how the major parties plan on tackling our nation’s greatest health challenge: chronic disease. We need bipartisan support for evidence-based measures, like a sugar tax, which will ensure that Australia makes a stand on obesity and chronic disease,” said Mr Moore.

**Michael Moore (PHAA) is available for interviews.**

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Prevention 1st is a campaign by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and the Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA), Consumers Health Forum of Australia and Alzheimer’s Australia, calling on all Australian governments and political parties to commit to a strong preventive health agenda to tackle Australia’s greatest health challenge. Prevention 1st will pursue every opportunity to express the need for action on public policy that the evidence shows will stop and prevent the rising burden of chronic disease.