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# MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release



## No time like the present to tackle preventable illness

The Government's national preventative health taskforce's ambitious plans to make Australia the healthiest country worldwide by 2020 is applauded by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

The RACGP was particularly pleased to see attention drawn to the importance of educating young Australians on health related issues, and strategies aimed at lower socio-economic groups and indigenous Australians.

Also welcome is the establishment of a central and coordinated agency to oversee the taskforce's preventative health strategy. The RACGP believes that the agency needs to work closely with the Primary Health Care Agency to ensure that preventative messages are consistent across the health, education and community sectors.

The RACGP firmly believes that tackling alcohol misuse, obesity and smoking are crucial to the wellbeing of all Australians.

"We need to encourage each and every person in Australia, regardless of their age, to understand and participate in the challenge to eat well, stop smoking and stay healthy," says RACGP President Dr Chris Mitchell.

"Australia's general practitioners are at the forefront of providing preventive health advice and are ready to support a concerted preventive health campaign. The RACGP has significant experience in advising and supporting Australian practice in the prevention area.

"Prevention is key to Australia's future health and general practice has a pivotal role to play in ensuring better health outcomes for Australians," says Dr Mitchell.

The RACGP says GPs can reduce risk factors such as smoking, alcohol misuse, poor nutrition and lack of physical exercise.

"These behavioural risk factors are linked to multiple conditions and account for a large percentage of avoidable illness and disease," says Dr Mitchell.

He adds that general practice has a proven track record in preventative health and that the RACGP and its members are in a prime position to work with government and local communities to champion and deliver preventative health strategies at the coalface of Australian health care.

Dr Mitchell says that GPs' success in reducing high blood pressure within the community is just one example of the profession's ability to tackle preventable health problems.

The college points out that a preventative strategy is the responsibility of all interested parties in the community including not only doctors but businesses, educators and Government right through to families and individuals.

The RACGP believes that the money raised by the extra taxes on cigarettes and alcohol should be re-invested in healthcare education directly.

A detailed response to the report will be available on the RACGP website at [www.racgp.org.au/healthreform](http://www.racgp.org.au/healthreform) soon.

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**About the RACGP**

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is responsible for maintaining standards for quality clinical practice, education and training, and research in Australian general practice. The RACGP represents the majority of Australia's urban and rural general practitioners. Visit [www.racgp.org.au](http://www.racgp.org.au).