

Media Release



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Moving from Slash and Burn to Invest and Save

With key economic policy announcements only days away the Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) highlights the need for a move away from the short-sighted 'slash and burn' approach that we are all primed to expect to a long term focus on improving Australia's healthcare.

"Broad cuts to health spending and a 'crisis levy' are not the long term solutions that Australia needs to alleviate the issues of an ageing population and unsustainable healthcare system," said Mr Carl Gibson, Chief Executive Officer of the CHC.

"Rather than moving from the current health practice of treating people after they become unwell to a system that will only treat people if they can afford to pay for that treatment, the focus needs to be on preventative health and assisting Australians to remain healthy."

"Complementary medicines play a significant role in allowing individuals to maintain a high level of physical and psychological wellness. Investing in complementary medicines research and expanding the use of complementary medicines could maintain quality patient outcomes while saving hundreds of millions of dollars a year in healthcare costs. Recent reports have indicated that selected complementary medicines are able to be highly cost effective, especially in the prevention and management of chronic conditions."

"A Frost & Sullivan report '*Smart Prevention – Health Care Cost Savings Resulting from the Targeted Use of Dietary Supplements*' found the use of key dietary supplements, including omega-3s, B6, B12 and folic acid, could reduce hospital costs by \$US billions per year."

"In Australia, an Access Economics report, '*Cost effectiveness of complementary medicines*' found that the use of St John's wort – which has been found to be similarly effective as taking a standard anti-depressant for mild to moderate depression – could provide costs savings to the Australian health budget. Across the 56% of Australians with mild to moderate depression that are taking medication, a saving of over \$50 million would be possible."¹

"Health policy in Australia does not yet recognise the contribution of complementary medicines or Indigenous medicines— but it should. This is supported by the recently published *WHO Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023* that encourages governments to harness the potential contribution that complementary medicines can make to health, wellness and people centred healthcare."

"Now is the time that government needs to be thinking beyond achieving a temporary surplus at all costs and placing the onus on solutions that address our long term ability to fund an equitable and sustainable healthcare system," said Mr Gibson.

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¹ Access Economics Pty Ltd, Report for The National Institute of Complementary Medicine, Cost effectiveness of complementary medicines, 2010, piii.

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