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### **Complementary Medicines' Growing Contribution to Australia's Health**

Following the recent publication of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) report, *Australia's health 2014*, the Complementary Healthcare Council of Australia (CHC) highlights the growing preference of individuals to take responsibility for their health and reiterates the importance of an increased commitment to wellness and prevention in health policy.

The *Australia's health 2014* report found that while the proportion of total recurrent health expenditure for medicines increased from 11.7 per cent in 2001-02 to 14.2 per cent in 2011-12, the majority of this increase in expenditure was related to unsubsidised medicines, such as over-the-counter and complementary medicines, which rose from 4.6 per cent to 6.6 per cent of total expenditure.

"This increase in spending on unsubsidised medicines is further evidence of an increasing consumer preference to take responsibility for their health. Greater than two out of every three Australians regularly use a complementary medicine product, and more than 40 per cent of users take complementary medicines for chronic medical conditions," said Mr Carl Gibson, Chief Executive Officer of the CHC.

"The AIHW report also found that while Australians are living longer, the rates of deaths from chronic diseases are increasing, which in most cases can be linked to lifestyle factors such as smoking, physical inactivity and poor nutrition."

"A fundamental aim of any health system must be to prevent disease and reduce ill health, so that people remain as healthy as possible for as long as possible. Complementary medicines are an often underestimated part of the health care system that contribute strongly to wellbeing and that assist in the prevention of disease."

"The growing contribution of complementary medicines needs to be seen by government as the impetus for fostering the appropriate proactive policies and for recognising complementary medicines as a vital part of a comprehensive Australian health care system," said Mr Gibson.

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