

SUSTAINING ACTION TO PREVENT CANCER

GUEST EDITORIAL

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This issue of the *NSW Public Health Bulletin* is the third in a five-part series that examines cancer in NSW. This issue highlights the opportunity for prevention through tobacco control and sun protection. Tobacco control and sun protection are areas where public health interventions in Australia have been especially active and effective. In each case, there is evidence of widespread change in behaviour to reduce risk, and consequent improvements in health indicators in the longer term.

However, there is no room for complacency. There is significant scope to make further gains in tobacco control and sun protection given the size of the problems, the availability of effective interventions, and the feasibility and efficiency of interventions. Further action is specifically required to redress inequities, as the gains to date have been unequally distributed: more disadvantaged groups remain at higher risk.

Right now in NSW we have up-to-date policy and planning frameworks to drive active, coordinated prevention initiatives. The articles by O'Neill on tobacco control, and Ferguson and Vita on sun protection, describe the current directions. The opportunity for coordinated action by NSW is also reflected by the infrastructure, which includes partnership arrangements between the NSW Department of Health and the NSW Cancer Council on specific projects and the operation of statewide sun protection and tobacco control networks.

As illustrated in the case studies by Penman and Soulos, prevention initiatives can be diverse and wide-ranging. The importance of working at many levels within organisations and across sectors, in order to have a significant effect on health outcomes has been well documented by health promotion experts.

Tobacco control and sun protection remain high priorities for action in cancer control and public health, at both national and state levels. The challenge remains to apply what we know, and take sustained action on a scale that is sufficient to make a difference. ■

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