

MEDIA RELEASE

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Public health leaders welcome Diabetes Inquiry push for Australia to tax sugary drinks

Public health leaders behind [Rethink Sugary Drink](https://rethinksugarydrink.org.au), including Cancer Council, Diabetes Australia, the ADA, and AMA have welcomed the Federal Parliamentary Inquiry into Diabetes' recommendation for the Australian Government to introduce a levy on sugary drinks.

The [recommendation](#), presented in Federal Parliament on Wednesday evening, saw the Standing Committee support the introduction a levy on sugary drinks based on the amount of sugar in products and modelled on international best practice.

Clare Hughes, Chair of Cancer Council's Nutrition, Alcohol and Physical Activity Committee, encourages the government to adopt the recommendation as a good investment into public health.

"We know this policy will encourage manufacturers to reduce the amount of sugar in sugary drink products. When the UK announced their tiered tax, manufacturers responded by taking around 45 million kilos of sugar out of soft drinks alone each year."

"Given these drinks are the leading source of sugar in Australians' diets, a health levy will fast track reformulation, reduce sugar consumption and help manage and prevent obesity, which is a leading risk factor for 13 types of cancer, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease."

"By creating a supportive environment for healthier drink choices, governments make it easier for Australians to enjoy longer and healthier lives. It's time for Australia to put the community's health above corporate profits and catch up to over 100 countries that already have a levy in place."

[In 2022-23](#), the average Australian consumed 67 grams of free sugar per day, more than 1.3 times the recommended amount. [Meanwhile](#), Australians aged above 15 have an average of 11.2 teeth that are decayed, missing or filled.

Dr Angie Nilsson, Federal Board Director at Australian Dental Association, said the policy will also benefit the community's oral health.

"Sugary drinks don't only fuel poor diets and chronic disease – they also significantly contribute to tooth decay, erosion, sensitivity, and other oral health complications. It's no wonder when just one 600mL bottle can contain 16 teaspoons of sugar."

"[Studies](#) have predicted that a 20% health levy on Australian sugary drink manufacturers can prevent half a million cases of tooth decay over 10 years, with the largest benefits expected to be experienced by Australians from low socio-economic groups."

President of the Australian Medical Association (AMA), Professor Steve Robson, said the funds raised could be invested into obesity prevention.

"A sugar tax would have a huge impact on Australia's health system and the AMA's [modelling](#) suggests a sugar tax could result in government revenue of \$4 billion across four years, which could be used to fund further preventative health activities," AMA President Professor Steve Robson said.

"We are 100 per cent behind this sugar tax on sugar-sweetened beverages because we know it could help reduce the prevalence of type 2 diabetes in Australia, as well as reducing other chronic diseases."

In February, leading organisations behind Rethink Sugary Drink launched [a position statement](#) at Parliament House in Canberra urging the Federal Government introduce a 20 per cent health levy on sugary drink manufacturers.

In addition to a reformulation levy on sugary drinks, the Inquiry into diabetes also recommended other measures to improve diets, including limits on unhealthy food marketing to children.

"Eating habits start young, when kids are highly susceptible to marketing ploys," Professor Robson said.

"Limiting junk food advertisements and marketing is about nurturing health in our children, providing them with the opportunity to make healthy choices well into adulthood.

"Prevention is better than cure and this inquiry has realised we need to be ahead of what is a national health crisis."

To learn more or read the statement visit www.rethinksugarydrink.org.au/healthlevy. You can read all the Diabetes Inquiry recommendations [here](#).

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About Rethink Sugary Drink: Rethink Sugary Drink is a partnership between 22 Australian public health organisations including the following organisations that support a health levy on sugary drink manufacturers: Australian Dental Association, Australian Dental and Oral Health Therapists' Association, Australian Medical Association, Cancer Council Australia, Dental Health Services Victoria, Dental Hygienists Association of Australia, Diabetes Australia, Food for Health Alliance, Stroke Foundation and The Heart Foundation. Visit www.rethinksugarydrink.org.au for more information.