

**# VOTE
FOR
PUBLIC
HEALTH
NSW**

2023 NSW ELECTION ADVOCACY PLATFORM



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AUSTRALIA
NSW Branch

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President's Message

The health and wellbeing of every individual in NSW is crucial to the growth and prosperity of the state. Building and maintaining healthy communities and environments are fundamental to achieving growth, equity, and stability.

COVID-19 revealed undeniable faults in our health system and differences in health outcomes. If left untreated, these issues will significantly impact the health of people in NSW, contributing to preventable illnesses and deaths. The future Government of NSW must recognise this and prioritise people's health. Investing in illness prevention saves lives and money, and delivers the best return on investment. For every \$1 invested, the NSW Government can save \$14 through disease prevention. This reduces the reliance on costly ambulance, emergency and hospital services.

Our election platform identifies five key public health issues and evidence-based solutions that affect NSW. If addressed, each can prevent ill health in the NSW population.

Vaping uptake among 15-24-year-olds has more than doubled in the past two years. The next NSW State Government needs to act to protect children and young people from nicotine addiction by making it an offence to supply or sell non-nicotine e-cigarette products.

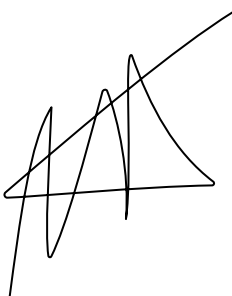
Children's eating habits are highly influenced by food marketing, with strong evidence showing restrictions on food advertising are one of the most cost-effective interventions to prevent obesity in children. The State Government can help stop the rising rates of obesity by banning unhealthy food and beverage advertising on NSW Government-owned or controlled assets, starting with public transport.

Gambling significantly harms the physical, social, and mental health of communities, families and individuals. Implementing a universal pre-commitment cashless card system, with regulations and legislations that prohibit advertising and other incentives, can help control gambling and money laundering activity. To support this policy, we're calling on all political parties to refuse pre-election agreements with the gaming industry.

Climate change is a global health emergency. We can reduce climate-related public health harms in NSW by banning new coal and gas mines, and stop expanding existing ones. To further protect the health and safety of workplaces, neighbourhoods and communities, we urge the next NSW Government to hold a NSW-focused Health and Climate Summit to determine what local actions are needed.

The pandemic highlighted the immense strain the NSW health system is under. It also showed how certain communities are particularly vulnerable to poorer outcomes from communicable and chronic diseases, and find it difficult to connect with the health system. We call on the next NSW Government to expand and diversify the public health workforce to enhance prevention efforts and ensure the health needs of marginalised populations are met. To support this, we ask that a strategy be developed to embed prevention across all NSW health sectors. NSW can do better.

With better public health policies and investment in public health, our government can create a healthier NSW, allowing its people to live their best, healthiest lives regardless of neighbourhood, cultural background or income. This election, vote for public health NSW.



Associate Professor Kate McBride
President, NSW Branch of the
Public Health Association of Australia



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Protect young people from the harms of vaping



- **Protect children and young people from nicotine addiction and risk of smoking uptake by making it an offence to supply or sell non-nicotine e-cigarette products.**

Our young people need the best start in life, yet more than [1 in 3 young people in NSW](#) have used e-cigarettes. Daily and regular use of e-cigarettes among 6-24-year-olds has more than doubled between 2019/20 and 2020/21 from 4.5% to 11%. The availability of e-cigarette products that are not labelled as containing nicotine, or inaccurately claiming to be nicotine-free, is hampering NSW enforcement efforts. If action is not taken to curb e-cigarette use among young people, we risk addicting a new generation of smokers.

Why is this needed?

- In September 2022, the first report from the [NSW Generation Vape research project](#) found one third of NSW teenagers surveyed had vaped. Of them, four out of five described getting hold of vapes illegally as “easy”, through a mix of multiple interrelated channels, including retail.
- [Non-smokers who vape are three](#) times as likely to take up regular (tobacco) smoking as non-smokers who don’t vape.
- [E-cigarettes are harmful for non-smokers](#), especially young people with their use increasing the risk of a range of adverse health outcomes and injury such as burns, seizures, lung disease and poisoning.
- Many e-cigarettes contain nicotine, even those not labelled as containing it. Additionally, young [people who vape can be inhaling over 100 toxins](#) and chemicals that are also found in weed killer, nail polish, bug spray and cleaning products.
- The vaping epidemic is a live issue in [schools](#), attracts major [community concern](#) and [media attention](#), while attempts by the [tobacco industry to influence public policy](#) are relentless.

Policy context

- From 1 October 2021 it became [illegal to sell nicotine e-cigarettes](#) in Australia without a prescription, however it is [still legal to sell non-nicotine e-cigarettes in NSW](#).
- In the first quarter of 2022/23, [NSW Health reportedly](#) seized a record 53,000 illegal e-cigarette products worth over an estimated \$1.6 million. Between February 2021 to September 2022, NSW Health seizures totalled 166,000 with an estimated street value of \$4.6 million.
- The next NSW Government can apply greater pressure on the Australian Government to immediately strengthen its enforcement action to intercept illegally imported vaping products.

Promote healthy weight among children



- **Reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy food and beverage advertising by banning it on NSW Government owned or controlled assets, starting with public transport.**

All children in NSW must have the best chance to grow into healthy adults. However, [food marketing influences children’s eating habits](#), with advertising of unhealthy foods reaching a significant number of young people each day. The next NSW Government could lead by example and refrain from contributing to the unhealthy food environment.

Why is this needed?

- Children’s exposure to food marketing influences their food decisions, brand awareness, preferences, eating habits, weight and health outcomes.
- [Restrictions on food marketing](#) are one of the most cost-effective interventions for obesity prevention in children.
- In NSW, [57.8%](#) of adults and [23% of children \(aged 5-16 years\)](#) are overweight or have obesity, placing unsustainable pressures on tertiary healthcare systems and heightening [risk of chronic disease](#), including cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers.
- In 2021, the [Australian Medical Association](#) estimated that ‘if no action is taken to stem the obesity crisis, by 2025 taxpayers will have footed a further \$29.5 billion for direct healthcare costs of obesity (over four years in 2024-25)’.
- Government revenue from food advertising on publicly owned assets [is not likely to be impacted](#).

Policy context

- NSW PHAA, along with 13 health organisations and individuals, support Cancer Council NSW in the [2022 joint statement](#) calling on the [next](#) NSW Government to show leadership by restricting unhealthy food and beverage advertisement on state-controlled assets, starting with public transport.
- Reducing children’s exposure to unhealthy food marketing is recommended by both the [World Cancer Research Fund](#) and the [World Health Organization](#) as a cost-effective wide-reaching obesity prevention strategy.
- [London, Amsterdam, and the Australian Capital Territory](#) have implemented legislative bans on the advertising of unhealthy foods and beverages on publicly owned assets. The policy is likely to have the biggest impact on groups who experience economic and social challenges.
- The [NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy 2022-32](#), [National Obesity Strategy 2022-32](#) and [National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030](#) have common goals to halt the rise and reverse the trend in the prevalence of obesity by 2030. All strategies have objectives to reduce exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing.

Minimise harms of gambling



- **Help people control their gambling by implementing a universal pre-commitment cashless card system with upper limits per day, month and year. Reforms must include a one button self-exclusion; prohibitions on inducements, advertising and marketing; and penalties for regulation and legislation breaches.**
- **Give better public gaming policy a chance by refusing pre-election agreements with the gaming industry.**

NSW is the gambling capital of Australia, according to the [NSW Crime Commission](#). Electronic gaming machine turnover at hotels and clubs was about [\\$95 billion in 2020-21](#). That is equivalent to more than a quarter of all household consumption expenditure in NSW during that financial year. Governments should protect the health of communities by [improving regulation](#) and introducing [harm minimisation and product safety interventions](#).

Why is this needed?

- [Gambling causes harm](#) to the physical, social and mental health of communities, families and individuals. Moderate to severe gambling can result relationship breakdown, financial difficulty, and mental health problems such as anxiety, depression and self-harm.
- [Gambling particularly affects vulnerable groups](#) in the community such as people who experience economic and social challenges. In early 2022, the top three NSW local government areas for [poker machine losses](#) were Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield and Cumberland. Home to many low-income families, these councils also had the highest gambling losses per person.
- There are [30 per cent more poker](#) machines in NSW than in Queensland and Victoria combined. A [2017 study](#) calculated there were 2150 people per poker machine across countries that have gaming machines. In NSW alone, there were [82 people per poker machine](#) at the time.
- Profits from gambling are out of control in NSW. In just the first half of 2022, profits from gaming machines at clubs and pubs in NSW hit a record [\\$3.8 billion](#).
- The [NSW 2022-23 budget](#) revised up expected revenue from pokies in clubs and hotels by \$423 million over the next four years due to the strong recovery in gaming activity in 2022 and “expectations for household disposable income”.

Policy context

- The [response](#) of industry, state and territory regulators to concerns about the harmful effects of gambling is to blame individuals.
- In 2022, the [Tasmanian Liquor and Gaming Commission](#) recommended, and adopted, a player card gaming scheme for electronic gaming machines in casinos, hotels and clubs to minimise gambling harm. Under the scheme players are identified, provided cashless gaming and can set spending and time limits.
- The [Alliance for Gambling Reform](#) recommends gaming machine regulations should be reformed to include a pre-commitment system, utilising a cashless gaming card which is compulsory for all gaming, has appropriate upper limits for gaming losses per day, month and year, and is effective in ceasing gaming activity once loss limits are reached.

Act boldly on climate change



- **Reduce climate-related harms on public health by banning new coal and gas mines, including expansions.**
- **Hold a NSW focused Health and Climate Summit to determine actions that protect health and safety across workplaces, neighbourhoods and communities.**

The people of NSW want to live in a secure, safe and liveable environment that supports a healthy lifestyle. Climate change is a [global health emergency](#). Climate induced floods and bushfires are posing a serious risk to NSW communities, economy, and environment. Unless strident actions are taken now, these problems will deepen existing inequalities and further marginalise people who are most vulnerable.

Why is this needed?

- Extreme heat events are already the [leading cause](#) of natural-disaster related deaths in Australia, and are associated with [increased premature births](#) in NSW. Vector and water-borne diseases are moving southward, and our food security is threatened by changing ecological conditions.
- The NSW Government has [approved 85%](#) of fossil fuel projects since the 2016 Paris Climate Conference. This includes [27 new and/or expanded coal and gas projects](#). Together, these are expected to release at least [three billion tonnes](#) of greenhouse gas emissions. This is [six times](#) Australia's total emissions for one year.
- The people of NSW are already experiencing the disastrous effects of climate change. Our workplaces and neighbourhoods need to adapt. A Health and Climate Summit involving unions, research organisations and community representative groups will improve the evidence-base we need to adapt and protect the public's health. It should centre and empower [Indigenous knowledges](#) in Government planning processes and climate adaptation. It will garner community support for government action.

Policy context

- Australia has committed to the [Paris Agreement's](#) global warming targets of 1.5° C (at worst 2°C by 2030). The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change forecasts that primary energy from coal needs to have reduced by [at least 59% to](#) meet this target.
- In August 2022, [Commonwealth Health](#) Minister, Mark Butler confirmed the Government's election commitment to create a National Climate Health Strategy.
- By the end of 2023, the NSW Government's [Climate Change Adaptation Strategy](#) promises to establish specific metrics to measure progress towards climate resilience and adaptation.

Make prevention a health system priority



- **Expand and diversify the public health workforce to enhance population health prevention efforts and ensure the health needs of marginalised communities are met.**
- **Develop a strategy to comprehensively embed prevention across primary, secondary and tertiary care to enhance patient level care.**

All people in NSW deserve a long and healthy life. [Thirty-eight percent of illness, disease and early deaths can be prevented](#), along with 1 in 10 hospital admission days. This [unfairly](#) impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, people who experience economic and social challenges, women, and children. NSW has a world class health system, but it is under pressure. [Upskilling and empowering staff to work to their full potential](#) is also important to help keep everyone healthy and well.

Why is this needed?

- The NSW health system is under immense strain with [almost half](#) of all Australians living with a chronic disease.
- [COVID-19 highlighted how low socioeconomic and marginalised communities are particularly vulnerable to chronic and communicable diseases](#), and have difficulties navigating the health system.
- The more disease we prevent, the less we rely on costly ambulance, emergency and hospital services, and the more health dollars saved with public health initiatives cost-saving to health services and the wider economy, returning \$14 for every \$1 invested.
- While the health workforce has [recently been boosted through the NSW Government's 2022-2023 budget](#) but this funding is focused on nurses, midwives, doctors, paramedics, scientific staff, pharmacists and allied health professionals.
- A [diversified public health](#) workforce is vital to [manage future epidemics and pandemics](#), and to prevent and reduce the burden of chronic disease in NSW. Introducing state funded community health workers would also better support communities to navigate our complex health system, and enhance community-based care contributing to [prevention of death and illness](#). It would also mean fewer hospitalisations, and save health care dollars.

Policy context

- A key objective in [NSW Health's Future Health Strategy](#) is to invest in keeping people healthy to prevent ill health and tackle health inequality in our communities. Another objective is to strengthen diversity across the workforce and in decision-making.
- The [NSW Health Workforce Plan 2022-2032](#) recognises that we need to equip the NSW Health workforce with the skills and capabilities to be an agile, responsive workforce which includes a focus on preventative care.
- In line with the national goal expressed in the [National Preventive Health Strategy](#), NSW governments should work towards achieving the outcome that 5% of state health expenditure goes to preventive health investments by 2030.
- The [2020-2025 National Health Reform Agreement](#) identifies prevention as one of its four strategic priorities.