
South
Australian
Public Health
Consortium

2026 ELECTION PLATFORM



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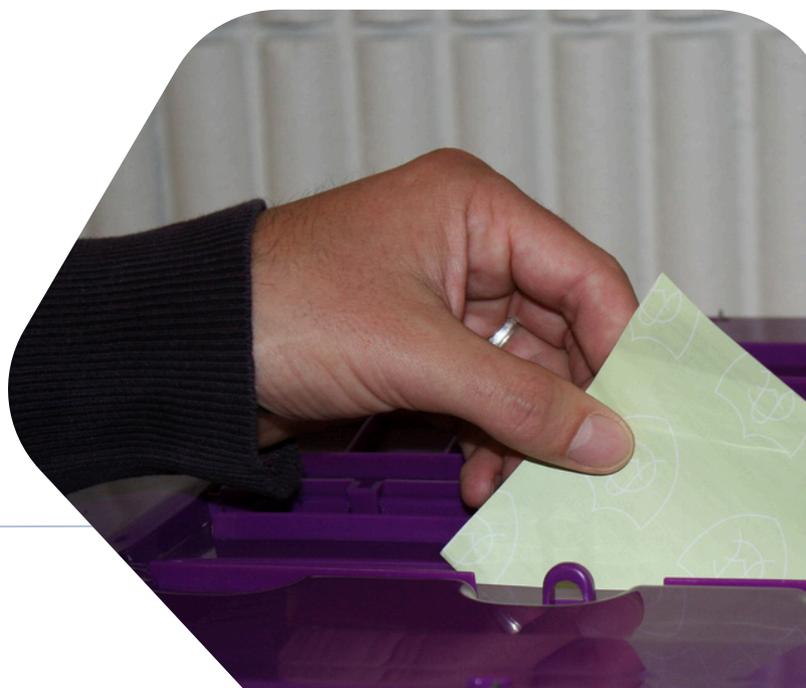
About Us

The SA Public Health Consortium comprises the state's leading public health organisations: the SA branches of the Public Health Association, the Australian Health Promotion Association, and South Australian Council of Social Service. All advocate for the community's health and wellbeing through disease prevention and health promotion. We agree on an equitable approach to public health, in which everyone has the opportunity to live well.

We are pleased to see prevention and public health prioritised in South Australia with the creation of Preventive Health SA and a Chief Public Health Officer - both of which were previous advocacy priorities of the Consortium. These are a foundation for SA to increase its investment in prevention to tackle the growing challenges of chronic disease, climate change and ensure a sustainable public health, health promotion and prevention workforce.

The *National Preventive Health Strategy (2021-2030)* has a target for governments of 5% of health expenditure for prevention and public health by 2030. But 2023-24 data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showed SA was spending just 2.4%. As a state, we need a clear plan to double this investment. This includes addressing issues like food insecurity, poverty and commercial interests, alongside risks like obesity, tobacco and alcohol to protect the health of our community.

The Consortium urges all candidates contesting the election to support the following actions, which if acted on, will improve the health and wellbeing of people across our state.



ACTIONS FOR A HEALTHIER STATE

1. Extend SA's unhealthy food advertising ban to all publicly owned assets, and include alcohol and gambling ads.
2. Develop a whole of government Health Promotion and Public Health Workforce Strategy.
3. Establish a Tobacco Free Generation. Ban the sale of tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1/1/09.
4. Study the feasibility of introducing an equitable school lunch program in South Australia.
5. Invest in research to assess the long-term health and well-being harms of the toxic algal bloom crisis.
6. Continue to invest in the People's Health Voice so everyone is heard.

Extend SA’s unhealthy food advertising ban to all publicly owned assets, and include alcohol and gambling ads.

Exposure to unhealthy food and drink marketing shapes long-term eating habits and contributes to unhealthy weight gain. In July 2025, South Australia became the first state to ban unhealthy food and drink advertising on government owned buses, trains, and trams. This action was part of broader initiatives to address overweight and obesity which, in 2024, affected more than one in three South Australian children, and two-thirds of adults.

We commend the South Australian government for this action. We encourage it to extend such advertising restrictions to all publicly owned assets, such as bus stops and billboards. This will reduce exposure to harmful advertising, and will benefit the community, particularly children who are more vulnerable to the effects of marketing.

Strong evidence also shows that exposure to alcohol and gambling advertising is harmful, increasing the likelihood of earlier and heavier alcohol use, and increased participation in risky gambling behaviours, particularly among young people. We call for existing advertising restrictions to be expanded to include alcohol and gambling to more comprehensively address harms that contribute to poor health outcomes for South Australians.



Develop a Whole of Government Health Promotion and Public Health Workforce Strategy

Building and maintaining a strong health promotion and public health workforce is vital to improving health and wellbeing. The pandemic showed that public health expertise was critical, as was the importance of coordinated, multisectoral responses.

The [National Preventive Health Strategy 2021 - 2030](#) listed 'Enhanced public health workforce planning' as a priority. The health promotion and public health workforce is broad and complex. It requires tailored support and development. The South Australian draft State Public Health Plan outlines public health workforce shortages, particularly in local government and environmental health. [Preventive Health SA Strategic directions](#) also highlight the importance of partnering across sectors, requiring a capable and competent workforce.

To improve health equity and preventive health, we call on the South Australian Government to develop a Health Promotion and Public Health Workforce Strategy.

With a new State Public Health Plan and a new Preventive Health SA plan in development, a dedicated workforce strategy is urgently needed. The evidence and directions for this work are clear. In 2022, Wellbeing SA commissioned the Australian Health Promotion Association to develop **'An evidence-informed review to support the development of the South Australian Health Promotion Workforce'**. The review's first recommendation was to establish an advisory committee to develop a workforce strategy. This needs to become a reality.



Action 3.

Establish a Tobacco Free Generation in SA. Ban the sale of tobacco products for anyone born on or after 1/1/09.

Tobacco smoking is the world's leading cause of preventable death. It kills more than 1,900 South Australians per year. South Australia has a proud record of leading strong tobacco control measures to reduce preventable death, disease, and health system burden due to smoking. This World Health Organization report outlines tobacco control measures aimed at drastically reducing tobacco use prevalence and associated harms. Actions like reducing the number of tobacco retailers, removing nicotine from products, and enacting Tobacco-Free Generation Policies.

As a first step, **we call on the South Australian government to introduce Tobacco-Free Generation legislation** which prohibits the sale and supply of tobacco products and e-cigarettes to people born on or after 1 January 2009.

This novel measure is equitable, and evidence-informed and stops the tobacco industry from hooking new generations of customers onto its deadly products. By regulating sales and holding retailers accountable, rather than penalising young people, the policy places responsibility for compliance on those who profit from selling harmful, addictive products.

This measure has high levels of public support, including among young people, and is consistent with national tobacco control reforms. It also helps prevent adolescents from developing nicotine addiction through vaping and then transitioning to smoking. Preventing young people from starting to smoke is a highly effective strategy for lowering smoking prevalence, and the numerous, avoidable harms which follow.



Action 4.

Study the feasibility of introducing an equitable school lunch program in South Australia

Australian primary-aged children consume over one third of their daily energy intake during school hours. Unlike countries such as Finland and Japan where schools provide nutritious meals to all children, Australia largely relies on a 'bring your own' model. This means poor nutrition for more than 80% of lunches eaten. Amid rising rates of food insecurity and economic hardship, some children go to school hungry.

Internationally, universal free school lunch programs offer substantial health and economic benefits like improved diet quality, reduced diet-related diseases, and higher academic performance. The [2023 SA Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Security](#) also positioned universal school meals as a mechanism to ease financial pressure. SA Council of Social Service's consultations with over 230 people experiencing food insecurity demonstrated strong local support for new school initiatives that expand beyond charitable responses, to give children a fair and equal start.

Transforming the South Australian school food system would require careful planning, programming, and rigorous evaluation. Following recent recommendations made by the [Social Development Committee](#) to address child hunger at school, **we call on the South Australian Government to examine the feasibility of introducing an equitable school lunch program for primary schools.**

While representation from across the community is needed to help guide this, it is essential that a renewed school food system comprises:

- High-quality, fit-for-purpose food and nutrition standards
- Universal provision at school level to reduce stigma and ensure no child misses out
- An equity focus which prioritises communities experiencing disadvantage
- Leaders with lived experience to advise on local needs



Invest in research to assess the long-term health and well-being harms of the algal bloom crisis.

The current harmful algal bloom in South Australia is unprecedented in scale, duration, and impact. It has caused destruction that's been described as analogous to an “underwater bushfire”. The scale of marine death has been estimated as likely to be equivalent to the wildlife deaths from the Black Summer bushfires of 2019-20, and it's likely to regularly recur. The algal bloom has been documented as having current direct and indirect health consequences both acute and chronic. These include mental health concerns for people exposed to dead marine life, and an inability to use the marine environment for play or work. Furthermore, there's the lost income for business which rely on the oceans, such as fishing, tourism, and exercise.

We know eco-anxiety from climate change is an emerging health problem, and preliminary research suggests it's the same for the algal bloom. This issue is closely aligned with the Healthy Environments for Healthy People priority area in the draft State Public Health Plan. We need a One Health approach that recognises that human health and the environment is intrinsically linked.

We call on the South Australian Government to invest in research to better understand the long-term health and wellbeing impacts of the harmful algal bloom crisis. This will strengthen South Australia’s capacity to anticipate, monitor, and respond to future ecosystem threats through coordinated, evidence-driven action.



Action 6.

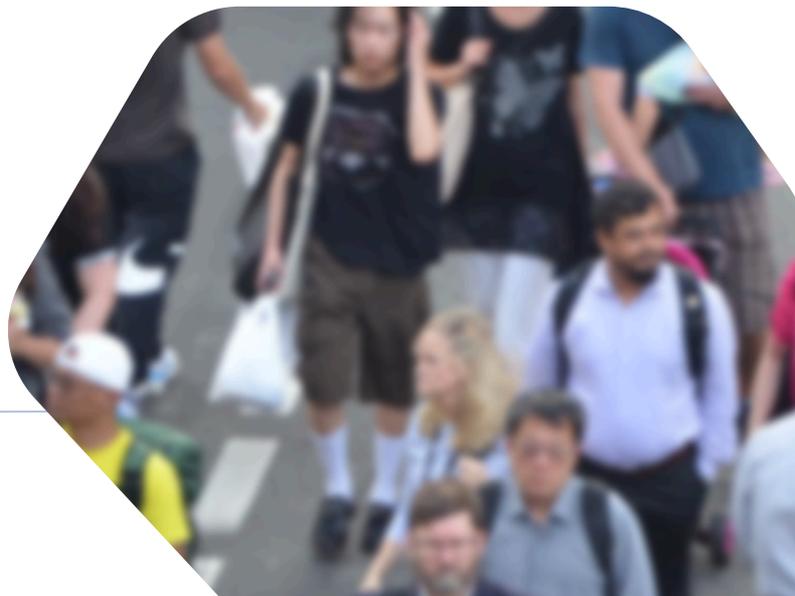
Continue to invest in the People's Health Voice so everyone is heard

Community participation is essential to creating public health policies and services that are effective, accessible, and responsive to real-world needs. When marginalised voices are included, policies and services become more inclusive and equitable. In South Australia, consumer and community engagement in health has typically occurred within service-specific advisory committees that focus on service improvement rather than system-wide reform. This results in system-led priorities rather than on a community's concerns. Marginalised voices are excluded.

The People's Health Voice was established in 2023 to address these gaps. It's independent and community designed, and has elevated the thoughts of nearly 500 diverse people from across the state, from cities to rural areas. Their concerns about things like a lack of transport access and workforce shortages to mental-health distress have been translated into advocacy efforts, policies, and programs. It's essential that this independent and inclusive entity can continue its work and reach more people.

We call for ongoing and increased investment in the People's Health Voice so South Australia's least-heard communities continue to shape health policies and services that genuinely respond to their needs.

Update: SA Health Minister Chris Picton on 6 February announced continued support for the People's Health Voice.



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