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# Illnesses that can be avoided a time bomb

**BRAD CROUCH**

HEALTH and welfare advocates have urged political parties to focus on disease prevention, warning that ploughing money into treatment is a “false economy”.

They say many South Australians are overweight and sedentary, creating a time bomb for conditions such as heart disease.

The coalition is calling for a full time Chief Public Health Officer – a role now combined with Chief Medical Officer – as well as city and rural health promotion centres.

The South Australian Council of Social Service, the Public Health Association Australia, the Australian Health Promotion Association, Anti-Poverty Network SA and the People’s Health Movement have united to call for more health spending for disease prevention campaigns.

The groups note that most adult South Australians are now overweight, many chronic diseases are largely preventable and say that Australia spends considerably less of prevention compared to nations such as Canada and New Zealand.

SACOSS chief executive Ross Womersley said health promotion budgets had been cut at the same time there had been an increasing emphasis on acute hospital services.

“In his most recent report, the SA Chief Medical Officer highlights the need to reorient services towards disease prevention,” Mr Womersley said.

PHAA SA president Kate Kameniar said poor nutrition, lack

of physical activity and smoking caused many chronic diseases. “All South Australians deserve a fair go and the opportunity to live well. We’re demanding urgent action be taken by a strong leadership with a visible commitment to improving public health,” she said.

“Changing the settings in which we work, live and play can make a difference; whether it’s through increasing physical activity by installing better bike paths, encouraging healthier food options or creating more smoke-free public zones.”

President of the Australian Health Promotion Association SA president Dr Stefania Velardo said health promotion can address the underlying causes of ill health rather than treating chronic disease when it appears.

“The evidence indicates that many interventions focused on prevention are indeed cost saving. Cuts to public health spending are shortsighted and create a false economy,” Dr Velardo said.

## Cuts to public health spending are shortsighted

**DR STEFANIA VELARDO**