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## **Budget Fails to Deliver Urgent Funding for Environmental Health Workforce**

*Australia's Public Health & Economic Future at Risk Without Investment.*

**BRISBANE, QLD, March 27 2025**

Environmental Health Australia (EHA) has expressed deep disappointment towards the Federal Budget for failing to provide the \$234.3 million needed to rebuild Australia's Environmental Health Officer (EHO) workforce, leaving communities exposed to preventable diseases, foodborne outbreaks, and emerging health threats.

### **A Welcome Focus on Health Care**

While the Government has committed \$8.5 billion to healthcare services, preventive health remains severely underfunded. The \$132 million allocated to public health initiatives falls short, neglecting workforce shortages that threaten frontline health protections.

### **The Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC)**

EHA welcomes the establishment of the Australian Centre for Disease Control (CDC) from 2026 but warns that without EHOs, Australia lacks the workforce to effectively prevent health emergencies. Investment in environmental health must complement the CDC's work.

### **\$13.2M for Safe Medicine Disposal**

EHA supports the \$13.2 million investment in the National Return and Disposal of Unwanted Medicines Program, which will reduce medicine misuse and environmental contamination.

### **Redirection of Foreign Aid to the Indo-Pacific**

The Government's \$119 million shift in foreign aid to the Indo-Pacific is welcome, but EHA calls for dedicated funding for environmental health programs to strengthen regional health security.

## **Illicit Tobacco Enforcement: A Critical Safety Concern for EHOs**

EHA supports efforts to combat illicit tobacco but warns against forcing EHOs into law enforcement roles, exposing them to dangerous criminal activity. Specialized agencies—not EHOs—should handle these enforcement responsibilities.

## **A Missed Opportunity for Preventive Health**

“This budget is a missed opportunity,” said EHA National President, Melissa Burn. “Without investment in EHOs, we risk more outbreaks, higher healthcare costs, and worsening workforce shortages.”

EHA’s proposed investment would have:

- Reopened university programs to train EHOs
- Funded 1,000 new EHOs over four years
- Reduced foodborne illnesses by 15%, saving \$360M annually

## **Celebrating Preventive Health Leadership**

EHA applauds WA’s appointment of Australia’s first Minister for Preventive Health, calling on the Federal Government to follow suit and commit 5% of health expenditure to prevention.

## **The Cost of Inaction**

Australia’s failure to invest in EHOs ignores a \$15.4 billion annual economic burden and a 14.3:1 return on investment in preventive health.

“As the election nears, we urge MPs and candidates to prioritize preventive health funding before it’s too late,” Ms. Burn said.

*The submission document can be seen here: <https://www.eh.org.au/documents/item/1658>*

*“We protect people from hazards in their environment!”*

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