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For immediate release

Health professionals and vegetable growers team up to increase fruit and vegetable intake

Australia's leading health professionals and horticulture industry groups have teamed up to launch the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium, which brings together key organisations to collectively advocate for comprehensive action to address Australia's complacency about eating fruits and vegetables.

While the Coronavirus pandemic impacts our daily lives, Australians continue to have a bountiful supply of fresh fruit and vegetables, which are a vital component to a well-balanced diet, a strong immune system and a healthy lifestyle to combat the current pandemic and to prepare for the coming flu season.

The [Fruit & Vegetable Consortium](#) was formed in response to the alarmingly low rates of fruit and vegetable consumption in Australia. Just half of Australian adults – and two thirds of children – have an adequate daily intake of fruit.

When it comes to vegetables, Australians fall alarmingly short of the recommended daily intake, with just seven per cent of Australian adults and five per cent of children meeting the recommended guideline for daily vegetable intake.

The Fruit & Vegetable Consortium is collaborating to investigate options to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, including one project to develop a behaviour change program that will work to increase vegetable consumption among Australians to improve their health and well-being.

The inaugural Chair of the Consortium is Nutrition Australia CEO Lucinda Hancock, with other founding members including AUSVEG, the Cancer Council of Victoria, Heart Foundation, the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition, Melbourne Market, Nutrition Australia, Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation, the Good Foundation, the Produce Marketing Association of Australia – New Zealand and VicHealth.

The Consortium already has over 50 organisations that have pledged their support since launching to industry four weeks ago.

Ms Hancock said that lifting fruit and vegetable consumption is not only a critical step to improving the nutrition and health of the general public, but also a sure safe way to reduce government expenditure.

"Diets rich in fruits and vegetables have been shown to protect against high blood pressure, obesity, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes and some cancers," said Ms Hancock.

"The job of increasing fruit and vegetable consumption is too much for a single person or organisation. This Consortium was born out of a common imperative to increase fruit and vegetable consumption with the aim of improving health outcomes for Australians and their families."

James Whiteside, CEO of AUSVEG, the peak industry body for vegetable growers, said that it was important that growers work with health professionals, researchers and other organisations that possess the same goals to develop and promote programs that will meaningfully change behaviours to increase consumption of vegetables and fruits.

“Growers are deeply committed to increasing vegetable consumption among Australians of all ages and are keen to work alongside the food and health industries to improve the health and wellbeing of Australian men, women and children,” said Mr Whiteside.

“The health benefits of increasing vegetable consumption are well-documented, but the rates of consumption are still unacceptably low. We need to work together to pool our research, knowledge and passion to remedy this.”

“If every Australian ate an additional half a cup of vegetables per day, government health expenditure would reduce by an estimated \$100 million per year (\$60.7 million to the Commonwealth Government and \$39.2 million to states and territories).”

[The Consortium has outlined its vision](#) and for its first major project is developing a business case and prospectus for potential funders, including government, retailers and other interested sectors to outline the investment needed for a sustained, comprehensive behavioural change campaign for increasing vegetable consumption.

“We are hopeful that we can work with industry groups, sectors, farmers, philanthropists and others with a goal to fostering a healthier population to develop a business case for a substantial behaviour change campaign that will make a difference for generations of Australians ,” said Ms Hancock.

“The importance of eating plenty of fruit and vegetables has never been more critical, so I urge everyone who has an interest in supporting the health of their families, friends and their communities to support the cause of the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium and see how you can help make a difference.”

For more information on the Fruit & Vegetable Consortium and to find out how you can help make a difference, visit thefvc.org.au.

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