

# 5590+

## The new health insight helping Australians lead healthier, longer, better lives



HEALTHIER, LONGER,  
BETTER LIVES

The causes of global disease have changed significantly over the past few decades.

Until recently, it was accepted that four modifiable behaviours – physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking and excess alcohol – led to four major non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – cancer, diabetes, respiratory and heart diseases.

Each year these NCDs are responsible for 90 per cent of deaths in Australia.

At AIA Australia, we referred to this health insight as 4490 – that is, four modifiable behavioural risk factors leading to four NCDs that caused 90 per cent of Australian deaths.

4490 provided the foundation for AIA Australia's purpose-driven focus on life, health and wellbeing. Using these insights, AIA Australia developed an ecosystem of products, services and partnerships designed to shift the healthcare focus away from treatment towards health promotion and prevention of NCDs, by addressing the modifiable behaviours that have the greatest impact.

“Health awareness is about disease prevention and appropriate treatment to support, maintain and advance individual and community health, and creating a safe space as a society for us all to thrive.

This requires societal commitment, sustained efforts, and collaboration between communities, governments, public and private sectors to maximise our quality of life and health for all.”

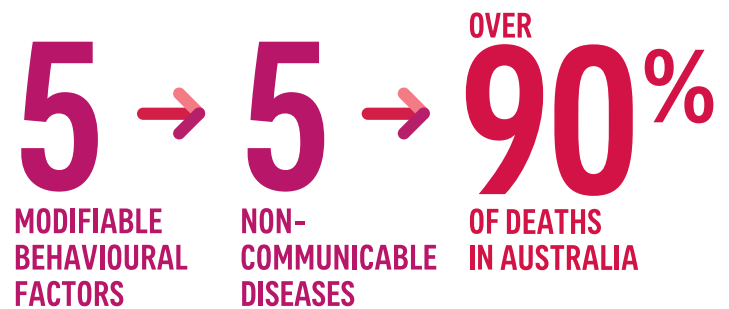
Dr Jaime Lee MD, performance and health expert, founder of Health Quotient, and AIA Vitality Ambassador

## The evolution of NCD insights

In keeping with the latest evidence and data on global disease, AIA Australia has updated 4490 to 5590+. This revision includes a fifth NCD: mental health conditions and disorders, and a fifth modifiable behavioural risk factor: our interaction with the environment.

Combined with the 4490 inputs, these now lead to more than 90 per cent of deaths in Australia.

5590+



**5 modifiable factors** – physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking, excess alcohol and our interaction with the environment, **lead to 5 non-communicable diseases** – cancer, diabetes, respiratory disease, heart disease and mental health conditions and disorders, **which are responsible for more than 90 per cent of deaths in Australia.**

# The impact of the environment

The environment is increasingly recognised as a significant cause of disease, with research showing links between NCDs and environmental factors such as air pollution, climate change, agriculture and food and urbanisation.

## Impact

There is mounting evidence that demonstrates the link between health and the environment. Our behaviours have an impact on the environment, which in turn impacts our health and wellbeing. We cannot thrive in an unhealthy environment, while the environment cannot thrive when our behaviours are unhealthy.

Concerningly, the impact of environmental factors on NCDs is escalating.

- **Air pollution** is second only to tobacco smoking in causing global NCDs. Globally, almost one-third of cardiovascular disease burden is attributable to household and ambient air pollution, second-hand tobacco smoke and exposure to toxins such as lead.
- **Climate** plays an important role in human health and wellbeing. Climate change itself can directly and indirectly increase the incidence of NCDs. For example, climate change may increase the risk of cardiovascular disease directly via air pollution and extreme temperatures, and indirectly via changes to food availability.
- **Dietary choices** also link environmental and human health. Strong evidence indicates that food production is among the largest drivers of global environmental change by contributing to climate change, biodiversity loss, freshwater use and land-system change. Rising incomes and urbanisation are driving a global dietary transition in which traditional diets are replaced by diets higher in refined sugars, refined fats, oils and meats. These dietary shifts are causing increases in diet-related diseases and environmental degradation.

There are direct and indirect links between our interaction with the environment and our mental health. These can be positive – for example, the beneficial impact of access to green space on mental health. In contrast, the effects of climate change can cause significant mental distress.

## Action

To address the interplay between the environment and NCDs, both issues must be considered when designing policies and solutions. Alignment of NCD and environmental policies and

**“It’s almost impossible to separate human health and the health of the broader environment. The two are inextricably linked by a whole range of environmental factors that have a direct impact on personal, physical and mental health. It’s important to make these links so that proactive steps can be taken to do something about it, whether that is contributing to climate change, or just living more healthily in response.”**

Tim Jarvis AM, British-Australian environmental explorer and AIA Vitality Ambassador

programs can offer win-win opportunities for people and the planet by fully integrating strategies that benefit both, such as pollution control, healthy urban design and sustainable transport.

At an individual level, every one of us can improve our impact on the environment, which in turn improves the impact of the environment on our health. For example, conserving natural resources, being mindful of our consumption and dietary choices, reducing household waste, and choosing to use public or active transport (such as walking and cycling) when possible.

## Focus on mental health

Mental wellbeing is essential for communities to thrive, yet an estimated one in five Australians are impacted by mental health conditions, with almost four million Australians suffering from a chronic or episodic mental health condition each year. Depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide: this is clearly a universal concern, and it appears to be growing.

Suicide is the leading cause of death in young people and also accounts for the largest number of productive years of life lost due to premature death (115,000 each year in Australia), far exceeding that due to heart disease or cancer.

## Impact

Mental health is impacted by a combination of diverse factors, including biological, psychological, social and environmental.

Mental health affects, and is affected by, other NCDs. Mental health conditions and disorders share several common causes and outcomes with other NCDs, and can frequently occur in the same person. For example, depression increases the risk of developing cardiovascular disease at an early

age, while cardiovascular disease increases the chance of developing depression.

Having a mental health condition, alone or in combination with another NCD, markedly increases the risk factor for suicide.

## Action

Traditionally, efforts to combat mental illness have primarily focused on treatment and cure late in the course of illness, rather than prevention or early intervention.

Significant evidence supports a focus on preventive interventions that promote mental wellbeing and reduce the risk of mental health conditions throughout life.

Government policies can support mental wellbeing by concentrating on mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention. This would require a shift of resources towards targeting the risk factors for mental health conditions and disorders at both the individual and population level. In addition, health systems will need to be aligned by providing mental health screening and support services.

In the last few decades, considerable research has highlighted various social and personal factors that contribute to positive emotional and mental health. Actively engaging in education or employment are at the top of the list.

At an individual level, we can all benefit from mental wellbeing check-ins, which can improve our awareness of our mental health state and encourage us to support it with healthy habits. As with other NCDs, we can modify our behaviour and incorporate small, simple changes to support our mental fitness and reduce our risk of developing mental health conditions – for example, through physical activity, diet, meditation and mindfulness and social connectedness.

**“It’s really time for action to be proactive about mental health. It’s not a separate domain from physical health and from the society in which we live - but integral. Focusing on the common factors that really matter leads to good outcomes on all of the key bottom lines – economic productivity, social participation and your own mental health and wellbeing.”**

Professor Ian Hickie, Co-Director, Health and Policy at The University of Sydney’s Brain and Mind Centre

# Latest statistics

## Global

In 2019, NCDs were responsible for 42 million deaths globally, which equated to 74 per cent of the year’s total deaths and seven of the top ten causes of death.

NCDs contribute not only to global deaths, but also to years lived with disability. NCDs were responsible for 1.62 billion total years of healthy life lost to both death and disability in 2020.

By 2025, the NCD burden is expected to increase by 17 per cent.

## In Australia

In 2019, NCDs were responsible for 91 per cent of the year’s total deaths in Australia.

The biggest risks contributing to death, disability and ill-health in 2019 were tobacco, high body mass index and high blood pressure.

# AIA Australia’s role

The case for investing in health promotion and prevention of NCDs is now stronger than ever. NCDs are the main cause of death and disability worldwide, and yet the main risk factors associated with them are largely preventable.

AIA Australia is focused on the critically important work of improving the nation’s health outcomes and helping Australians live healthier, longer better lives.

This is underpinned by 5590+. That is, preventing the five major NCDs – cancer, diabetes, respiratory disease, heart disease and mental health conditions – by improving the five modifiable factors that underpin these – physical inactivity, poor nutrition, smoking, excess alcohol and our interaction with the environment.

As a life, health and wellbeing insurer, AIA Australia has invested heavily in developing programs that support Australians to maintain and improve their health throughout their lives. To help people be healthier for longer and improve their overall wellbeing, AIA Australia has built an ecosystem of products, services and partners through five stages:



1. Predict



2. Prevent



3. Diagnose



4. Treat



5. Recover

## AIA Vitality

AIA Vitality is a world-leading, science-backed health and wellbeing program that is central to AIA Australia's focus on helping people live healthier, longer, better lives.

The program applies behavioural economic principles to educate, empower and incentivise members to understand their health and make lifestyle changes with the aim of decreasing their risk of NCDs.

By focusing on four core wellbeing pillars: physical activity (Move Well), nutrition (Eat Well), mental wellbeing (Think Well) and preventive measures (Plan Well), AIA Vitality addresses and integrates the key modifiable behaviours that are part of 5590+.

**“Our dream is to champion Australia to be one of the healthiest and best-protected nations in the world.”**

Damien Mu, AIA Australia and New Zealand CEO  
and Managing Director