



Date: 24 October 2013
Contact: Amy Collie - 03 9635 5427/ 0431 474 328

FEDERAL GOVT MUST COMMIT TO ACTION PLAN ON OBESITY PREVENTION

Report Highlights Link between Social Disadvantage and Obesity

The Obesity Policy Coalition (OPC) is calling on the Federal Government to commit to a national action plan to prevent obesity following today's release of figures by the National Health Performance Authority (NHPA).

The report highlights the rapid growth of overweight and obesity in Australia, increasing from 44% of adults in 1989 to 63% in 2011-12, including 54% of adults in the wealthiest urban areas.

According to Jane Martin, Executive Manager of the OPC, the statistics highlight the obesity epidemic is impacting on all communities across Australia, and a national action plan is needed to slow and reverse the trend.

"This is a national health crisis and the Federal Government needs to recognise that and start taking significant steps to address it," said Ms Martin.

"By ensuring people have access to affordable fresh fruit and vegetables, introducing mandatory front-of-pack labelling and restricting junk food marketing to children, Government can empower individuals to make better choices and lead healthier lives.

"Australia is a signatory to the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases which calls for comprehensive action to address risk factors, including overweight and obesity," she said.

"Population-based prevention is recommended as the most cost-effective and sustainable approach, and the plan acknowledges the importance of promoting healthy environments."

According to the NHPA report, geographic remoteness and lower socioeconomic status (SES) are key determinants of overweight and obesity.

"While half the adults in wealthy suburbs are overweight or obese, there is no doubt that those in poorer suburbs are much worse off," said Ms Martin.

"Australian research shows socially disadvantaged communities are more likely to have easier access to fast food outlets, and these groups are higher consumers of fast food. These chains have huge marketing budgets, aggressively target children, are open 24 hours a day, and provide unhealthy food at low cost. Poorer neighbourhoods have also been found to have less access to fresh and healthy foods," she said.

"Although there are some fantastic government initiatives in place, such as *Healthy Together Victoria* and *Healthy Weight Action Plan (ACT)*, which empower

Media release



communities to support healthy lifestyles through improved diet and physical activity, the Federal Government needs to back these efforts by introducing policy and regulatory measures that will facilitate real change," she said.

About the Obesity Policy Coalition

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a group of leading public health agencies who are concerned about the escalating levels of overweight and obesity, particularly in children.

The Obesity Policy Coalition is a partnership between Diabetes Australia - Vic, Cancer Council Victoria and the World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University, with funding from VicHealth.



Media release

