

AUSTRALIAN CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION ALLIANCE



MEDIA RELEASE

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Time for action on Australia's growing weight problem

The nation's largest independent disease prevention groups have called for immediate and serious action to control Australia's growing weight problem following the release of new data showing 62% of Australians adults are now overweight or obese.

"A staggering seven and a half million Australians are now overweight or obese, putting them at increased risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers", said Professor Ian Olver, Chair of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance.

"That's an increase of more than a quarter of a million people in the last three years," he said.

The new data from the National Health Survey 2007-08 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics also shows that 94% of Australians do not meet recommended consumption levels for fruit and vegetables and over two thirds of Australians are sedentary or exercise at only low levels.

"We simply can't afford to delay taking some hard decisions on obesity control if we are going to avert a future legacy of escalating rates of chronic disease," Professor Olver said.

"We need to implement a comprehensive obesity control strategy, that addresses the many factors which contribute to rising obesity rates, as proposed by the Government's National Preventative Health Task Force," Professor Olver said.

"The strategy will need to include a range of measures to encourage increased physical activity and improve nutrition, and will need to take a hard line on issues such as restricting advertising of unhealthy food to children and adopting a front-of-pack food labelling system that guides people to healthier food products.

"Prevention is the key to curbing escalating rates of chronic disease as levels of obesity and overweight, poor nutrition and physical activity in the community rise," Professor Olver said. "The time for action is now."

Media contacts: Lesley Branagan 0439 827 781, lesley.branagan@cancer.org.au

Members of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance are: Cancer Council Australia, Diabetes Australia, Kidney Health Australia, the National Heart Foundation of Australia and the National Stroke Foundation.