



# COMMITTEE OF PRESIDENTS OF MEDICAL COLLEGES

## National Health Summit on Obesity SUMMIT BACKGROUND PAPER

September 2016

## CONTENTS

CONTENTS.....	2
LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER! .....	3
WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE TELL US ABOUT OBESITY AND ITS MANAGEMENT? .....	4
WHAT MUST WE DO AND GETTING IT DONE - HOW TO PROGRESS TO ACTION AND IMPACT? .....	6
A TASTE OF SOME OF JUST SOME OF THE INFORMATION AND LITERATURE AVAILABLE ON OBESITY.....	7

*We are moved by sensational images of heroes who leap into action as calamity unfolds before them. But the long, pedestrian slog of prevention is thankless. That is because prevention is nameless and abstract, while a hero's actions are grounded in an easy-to-understand narrative.*

Nassim Nicholas Taleb<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in, Lawrence O Gostin (2008) *Public Health Law: Power, Duty, Restraint*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 19.

## LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER!

The Committee of Presidents of Medical Colleges (CPMC) is a unifying organisation of and support structure for the specialist Medical Colleges of Australia. In the area of obesity the CPMC is committed to working with the individual medical specialties to develop and promote a broad base of intercollegiate knowledge to provide for the Australian community the highest quality of health advice and care based on the best evidence available and sound clinical principles to improve, protect and promote the health of the Australian community.

While the individual member Colleges are responsible for the determination and maintenance of standards for their respective disciplines and for the training and education of medical specialists in that discipline; CPMC provides a vehicle for collective policy development and, as the peak specialist medical body in Australia, provide objective advice on health issues to Government and the wider community. Obesity is a burgeoning public health issue that requires an immediate and collective response from the health and social services sectors of our community.

**If we don't take action now the social, health and economic consequences for the community are likely to be catastrophic.**

Obesity is a complex social and health issue. So, designing a long term strategy across the life course must involve a wide range of stakeholders including medical, nursing and other health professionals, public health advocates, schools, advertising companies, the food industry, town and social planners, politicians and insurers.

**This is not a challenge that can be met silo by silo.**

Convening a Health Summit is aimed at bringing many of these parties together to examine the evidence and issues; tackle the controversies; recognise national and international success stories; identify potential policy and practice initiatives that can be achieved by the stakeholders; and make recommendations to the Australian Government.

Obesity it is fast becoming Australia's biggest health challenge. In 2014–15, an estimated 11.2 million adults (63.4%) were overweight or obese—6.3 million (35.5%) were overweight and 4.9 million (27.9%) were obese. One in 4 children aged 5–17 (27.4%, or 1 million) were overweight or obese.<sup>2</sup> Overweight and obese people are at higher risk of cancer, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and other life-threatening illnesses. There is evidence that including obese people into the development of normal ranges for pathology may corrupt results. It costs more to treat an obese patient, and some clinicians refuse to take the risk (anaesthetics) and there is potential for it to affect community rating insurance for all Australians.

**It is fair to state that the response to date has been fragmented and has had little apparent impact on arresting the rising rates of obesity in Australia.**

While there is some evidence Australian Government and the State and Territory health departments are starting to address the challenges of obesity, it is difficult to identify current and specific programs and initiatives relating to obesity. There is also no evidence of funding for

---

<sup>2</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) *National Health Survey: first results*, 2 and 25.

managing the obesity epidemic in the 2016-2017 Budget. While it appears there is a lack of leadership from Government or any of the stakeholder groups with an interest in this serious public health risk, this may be a symptom of the complexity of the challenge. However, that is no reason not to take a stand with all the key stakeholders and accept the challenge.

CPMC is well positioned to take the lead in furthering the consideration of how this problem can be addressed. It is respected and has the right sort of expertise to do so. Therefore, CPMC is convening and hosting a National Health Summit on Obesity at the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, in Melbourne on 9 November 2016, inviting key experts and stakeholders.

The aim of the Summit is to not dwell on how big the problem is but focus stakeholder thinking on what this group of stakeholders can do to solve the problem.

## WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE TELL US ABOUT OBESITY AND ITS MANAGEMENT?

Internationally, there are several examples of where government has intervened for the greater population health such as **in France** where government policy combines the principles of preservation of French standards with regard to use of local produce through to food safety, nutrition and prevention of obesity<sup>1</sup>. **In the United Kingdom** the government has developed a cross-governmental childhood obesity strategy that aims to reduce the number of overweight and obese children in the UK<sup>2</sup>. A 'sugar tax' has also been introduced in that jurisdiction, emulating a model of regulation that have been invoked to address the harms of smoking and tobacco. **In Australia** in 2009, the Preventative Health Taskforce identified obesity as one of the top seven preventable risk factors that influence the burden of disease in Australia<sup>3</sup>. This has led to a series of bipartisan Government initiatives targeting obesity including a dedicated website with resources based on the theme of a 'healthy and active Australia'<sup>4</sup>.

What evidence there is tells us that to reduce the burden of disease caused by obesity, initiatives must include those that:

- ❖ **PROTECT**
- ❖ **ENABLE**
- ❖ **INFORM**
- ❖ **SUPPORT<sup>3</sup>**

With a particular focus on a range of experimental preventative strategies, the initiatives must traverse the breadth of social, environmental, regulatory and medical interventions;

- **Life course considerations** (infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood and aging)
- **Regulatory mechanisms** (eg taxation on sugar, advertising restrictions, food labelling)

## LEADERSHIP NEEDED

*Professor Moodie and Ms Martin said it was time the medical community used its influence and reputation to sway politicians.*

*"If [doctors] come out and push a policy and take a stand, politicians will understand who's going to back them [when they take on the big industries]," Ms Martin said.*

*... "Leadership from the medical and nursing professions is really needed."*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>3</sup>

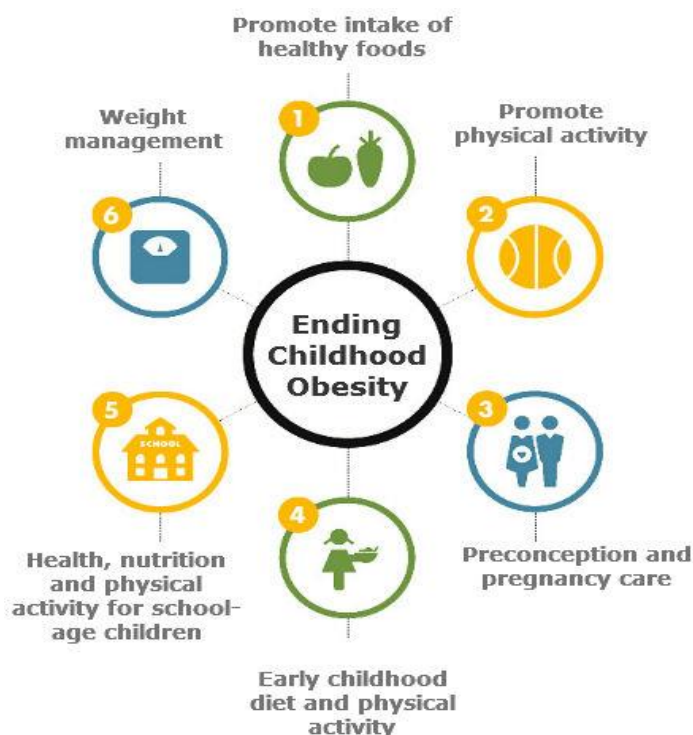
Obesity Stakeholder Group (UK) (2015) *Obesity Stakeholder Group: Joint Policy Position on Childhood Obesity*.

- **Lifestyle and behaviours** (eg diet, exercise and play)
- **Environmental considerations** (eg urban and regional planning initiatives)
- **Adjunctive therapies** (including surgery, medication, psychological support and dealing with stigma).

Models of strategy and action for the prevention and management of obesity are out there. The example of smoking and the collective and multi-pronged approach to reducing this public health calamity provides impressive guidance.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians has taken an early stand on the public harms of alcohol and begun the push for a “*comprehensive, evidence-based national strategy*”<sup>4</sup>.

The work of the Australian Health Prevention Taskforce gave us early advice on some of the strategies required to specifically address the burden of obesity.<sup>5</sup> Also, the recent work of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UK Stakeholder Group have given us important insights and guidance in the area of childhood obesity.



#### Recommendations from the WHO Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (2016) *Re-thinking drinking*.  
<sup>5</sup> Preventative Health Taskforce (2009) *Australia: the healthiest country by 2020* series of papers.  
<sup>6</sup> Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (2016) *Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity*, World Health Organisation.

## WHAT WE KNOW ALREADY

*Professor Moodie said Australia's success in restricting advertising of tobacco products had resulted in significant drops in smoking rates, and lessons needed to be learned from that campaign.*

*"We know what to do in this area [because we did it with tobacco]," he said.*

*"We know that we cannot rely on the industry to self-regulate. It's their job to make money, and we understand that, but they can't just make money by destroying Australians' health.*

*"Our job as health professionals is to continuously point this out not only to the government but also to the medical profession."*<sup>1</sup>

## WHAT MUST WE DO AND GETTING IT DONE - HOW TO PROGRESS TO ACTION AND IMPACT?

### WHAT MUST WE DO INDIVIDUALLY AND JOINTLY?

**The summit must address what initiatives the participant stakeholders can undertake individually and jointly within their sphere of action and influence to make a difference in the short, medium and long term.**

This involves identifying positive solutions across the social determinants of health:

- **Health professional education and training** (eg curriculum development, undergraduate education and continuing professional development)
- **Health policy, planning and translation** – local (medical colleges and health associations), COAG (political/policy recommendations to governments for action)
- **Community engagement** – partnering with patients and the community to ensure shared commitment
- **Effective therapies** - developing clinical advice to provide care to people (eg models of care, clinical pathways)

### WHAT CROSS SYSTEM INITIATIVES MUST BE UNDERTAKEN?

What cross system initiatives should be proposed, funded and undertaken with the support of the Council of Australian Governments in the short, medium and long term that will make a difference?

How do we progress the initiatives identified to maximum effect? Ideas for identifying the way forward from the Summit in the short, medium and longer term.

*The challenge now for all of us is TO DO!*

*To do COLLECTIVELY...*

*And to MAINTAIN the COMMITMENT and  
INVESTMENT in the strategies!*

## A TASTE OF SOME OF JUST SOME OF THE INFORMATION AND LITERATURE AVAILABLE ON OBESITY

**Series of papers and other materials in *The Lancet*:** Available at:

- Editorial (2016) “UK Government won’t step up to the plate on childhood obesity”, 388:10047 *The Lancet*, 841. Available at:  
[http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)31476-3.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(16)31476-3.pdf).

<http://www.thelancet.com/series/obesity-2015>.

- Sabine Kleinert and Richard Horton (2015) “Rethinking and reframing obesity”, 385:9985 *The Lancet* 2326-2328. Available at: [http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(15\)60163-5.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(15)60163-5.pdf).
- Christina A Roberto, Boyd Swinburn, Corinna Hawkes, *et al*, (2015) “Patchy progress on obesity prevention: emerging examples, entrenched barriers, and new thinking”, 385:9985 *The Lancet*, 2400-2409. Available at:  
[http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61744-X.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(14)61744-X.pdf).
- Corinna Hawkes, Trenton G Smith, Jo Jewell, *et al* (2015) “Smart food policies for obesity prevention”, 385:9985 *The Lancet*, 2410-2421. Available at:  
[http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61745-1.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(14)61745-1.pdf).
- Terry T-K Huang, John H Cawley, Marice Ashe, *et al* (2015) “Mobilisation of public support for policy actions to prevent obesity”, 385:9985 *The Lancet*, 2422-2431. Available at:  
[http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61743-8.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(14)61743-8.pdf).
- Tim Lobstein, Rachel Jackson-Leach, Marjory L Moodie, *et al* (2015) “Child and adolescent obesity: part of a bigger picture” 385:9986 *The Lancet*, 2510-2520. Available at:  
[http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61746-3.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(14)61746-3.pdf).
- William H Dietz, Louise A Baur, Kevin Hall, *et al* (2015) “Management of obesity: improvement of health-care training and systems for prevention and care” 385:9986 *The Lancet*, 2521-2533. Available at: [http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61748-7.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(14)61748-7.pdf).
- Boyd Swinburn, Vivica Kraak, Harry Rutter, *et al* (2015) “Strengthening of accountability systems to create healthy food environments and reduce global obesity” 385:9986 *The Lancet*, 2543-2545. Available at: [http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61747-5.pdf](http://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(14)61747-5.pdf).
- Sania Nishtar, Peter Gluckman, Timothy Armstrong (2016) “Ending childhood obesity: a time for action” 387:10021 *The Lancet*, 825-827. Available at:  
[http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)00140-9/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)00140-9/fulltext).

Australian Bureau of Statistics (2015) *National Health Survey: first results, 2014–15*, Cat no 4364.0.55.001, Canberra: ABS. Available at:  
[http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/CDA852A349B4CEE6CA257F150009FC53/\\$File/national%20health%20survey%20first%20results,%202014-15.pdf](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/CDA852A349B4CEE6CA257F150009FC53/$File/national%20health%20survey%20first%20results,%202014-15.pdf).

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2016) *Australia’s Health 2016*, Australia’s health series no. 15, Cat no AUS 199. Canberra: AIHW. Available at:  
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=60129555788>.



- Bauman A, Baur L, Caterson I, Gill T, Wise M, Brown W, Raymond I, Lyle D, King L, Vita P (2006). *Healthy weight for adults and older Australians: A national action agenda to address overweight and obesity in adults and older Australians 2006-2010*, Commonwealth of Australia. Available at: [http://www.healthactive.gov.au/internet/healthactive/publishing.nsf/Content/healthy\\_weight06\\_10.pdf/\\$File/healthy\\_weight06\\_10.pdf](http://www.healthactive.gov.au/internet/healthactive/publishing.nsf/Content/healthy_weight06_10.pdf/$File/healthy_weight06_10.pdf).
- Baur LA, Twigg SM, Magnusson R (eds) (2012) *A modern epidemic: Expert perspectives on obesity and diabetes*, Sydney University Press.
- Bishay RH, Kormas N "How to investigate weight gain in an Adult. 'I've put on so much weight doc" (2015) *Endocrinology Today* 2015; 4(5); 40-42. Available at: <http://endocrinologytoday.com.au/2015/october/regular-series/how-investigate-weight-gain-adult-%E2%80%98I%E2%80%99ve-put-so-much-weight-doc%E2%80%99>.
- Bishay RH, Omari A, Zang J, Lih A, Kormas N (2013) "Divide and Conquer: The Multidisciplinary Approach to Achieving Significant Long-Term Weight Loss and Improved Glycemic Control in Obese Patients With Type 2 Diabetes" *Clinical Diabetes* 2013 Jan; 31(1): 14-20. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.2337/diaclin.31.1.14>
- Colchero MA, Popkin BM, Rivera JA, NG SW (2016) "Beverage purchases from stores in Mexico under the excise tax on sugar sweetened beverages: observational study" *BMJ* 2016;352:h6704. Available at: <http://www.bmj.com/content/352/bmj.h6704>.
- Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (2016) *Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity*, World Health Organisation. Available at: <http://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/final-report/en/>.
- Department of Health (2016) *A Healthy and Active Australia* website, Australian Government. Available at: [www.healthactive.gov.au](http://www.healthactive.gov.au).
- NSW, Queensland and SA Health website: *Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service*. Available at: <http://www.healthwaysaustralia.com.au/getthehealthy>.
- Gostin Lawrence O (2008) *Public Health Law: Power, Duty, Restraint, 2nd Edition*, University of California Press: Berkley and the Milbank Fund: New York.
- Gow M, Baur L, Ho M, Chisholm K, Noakes M, Cowell C, Garnett S, (2016) "Can early weight loss, eating behaviors and socioeconomic factors predict successful weight loss at 12- and 24-months in adolescents with obesity and insulin resistance participating in a randomised controlled trial? 13(43) *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*: 1-11. Available at: <http://ijbnpa.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12966-016-0367-9>.
- HM Government (2016) *Childhood Obesity: A Plan for Action*, UK Government 10800. Available at: [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/546588/Childhood\\_obesity\\_2016\\_2\\_acc.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/546588/Childhood_obesity_2016_2_acc.pdf).
- Huang KC, Kormas N, Steinbeck K, Loughnan G, Caterson I (2004) 12 (5) *Obesity Research* 5 May 2004: 840-845. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1038/oby.2004.101/pdf>.



Kausman Rick website: *If not dieting*. Available at:

[http://www.ifnotdieting.com.au/cpa/htm/htm\\_home.asp](http://www.ifnotdieting.com.au/cpa/htm/htm_home.asp).

Knoesen NP, Mancuso SG, Thomas S, Komesaroff P, Lewis S, Castle DJ (2012) "Relationship between severity of obesity and mental health: An Australian community survey" 4(1) *Asia-Pacific Psychiatry*, March 2012: 67-75. Available at:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1758-5872.2011.00164.x/abstract;jsessionid=077FD4D11E60190035904029FA239DCC.f01t03>.

Lewis S, Thomas SL, Blood RW, Castle DJ, Hyde J, Komesaroff P (2011) "How do obese individuals perceive and respond to the different types of obesity stigma that they encounter in their daily lives? A qualitative study" 73(9) *Social Science & Medicine*, November 2011: 1349-1356.

Available at: <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953611005284>.

Lih A, Pereira L, Bishay RH, Zang J, Omari A, Atlantis E, Kormas N (2015) "A Novel Multidisciplinary Intervention for Long-Term Weight Loss and Glycaemic Control in Obese Patients with Diabetes" *Journal of Diabetic Research*, Volume 2015 (2015), Article ID 729567, 7 pages.

Available at: <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jdr/2015/729567/>.

Manger Bouge, Programme National Nutrition Santé (2012) *French National Nutrition and Health Program 2011-2015*. Ministère Des Affaires Sociales et de la Santé. Available at: [http://social-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/PNNS\\_UK\\_INDD\\_V2.pdf](http://social-sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/PNNS_UK_INDD_V2.pdf).

Moodie A Rob, Tolhurst Penny, Martin Jane E (2016) "Australia's health: being accountable for prevention" 204(6) *MJA*, 223-225. Available at:

[https://www.mja.com.au/system/files/issues/204\\_06/10.5694mja15.00968.pdf](https://www.mja.com.au/system/files/issues/204_06/10.5694mja15.00968.pdf).

Swannell, Kate (2016) "Prevention policy 'flapping in the wind'" 12 *MJA Insight*, 4 April 2016.

Available at: <https://www.mja.com.au/insight/2016/12/prevention-policy-flapping-wind>.

MJA Podcast available at: <https://www.mja.com.au/multimedia/podcasts#2016-04-01T20:35:30-0700>.

MJA Video available at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVNIldLF\\_FU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XVNIldLF_FU).

National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) *Clinical practice guidelines for the management of overweight and obesity in adults, adolescents and children in Australia*, Melbourne: National Health and Medical Research Council. Available at:

[https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/n57\\_obesity\\_guidelines\\_140630.pdf](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/n57_obesity_guidelines_140630.pdf).

National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) *Summary Guide for the Management of Overweight and Obesity in Primary Care*, Melbourne: National Health and Medical Research Council. Available at:

[https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/n57b\\_obesity\\_guidelines\\_summary\\_guide\\_131219.pdf](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/n57b_obesity_guidelines_summary_guide_131219.pdf).

National Health and Medical Research Council (2013) *Clinical practice guidelines for the management of overweight and obesity in adults, adolescents and children in Australia -*

- Systematic Review*, Melbourne: National Health and Medical Research Council. Available at: [https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/n57a\\_obesity\\_systematic\\_review\\_130601.pdf](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/files/nhmrc/publications/attachments/n57a_obesity_systematic_review_130601.pdf).
- Obesity Stakeholder Group (2015) *Obesity Stakeholder Group: Joint Policy Position on Childhood Obesity*. Available at: <https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/news/new-alliance-obesity-outlines-priorities-action>.
- Preventative Health Taskforce (2009) *Australia: the healthiest country by 2020* series of papers. Available at: <http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/nphs-roadmap>.
- Sahadi J and Smith A (2016) "Philadelphia passes a soda tax" *CNN Money International*, 16 June. Available at: <http://money.cnn.com/2016/06/16/pf/taxes/philadelphia-passes-a-soda-tax/index.html>.
- Rudd Centre for Food Policy and Obesity website: *Weight Bias and Stigma: resources for health professionals*. Available at: <http://www.uconnruddcenter.org/weight-bias-stigma>.
- The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (2016) *Re-thinking drinking*. Available at: <https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/racp-factsheet-rethinking-drinking.pdf>.
- Thomas SL, Lewis S, Hyde J, Castle D, Komesaroff P (2010) "The solution needs to be complex. 'Obese adults' attitudes about the effectiveness of individual and population based interventions for obesity" *BMC Public Health* 2010 10:420. Available at: <http://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-10-420>.