

MEDIA RELEASE

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TASMANIANS ENCOURAGED TO MAKE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE CHANGES

While New Year's resolutions to eat less and exercise more often fall by the wayside come February 1, participating in a healthy lifestyle program that involves good advice and peer support, can help patients lose weight sensibly

General Practice Tasmania spokesperson, Dr Judith Watson said Healthy Weight Week (24-31 January) was a great opportunity for people in the community to think about their commitment to healthy living and seek medical advice if they had concerns about the health impacts of weight gain.

"The national obesity figures show that 62 percent, or more than 13 million Australians are overweight or obese, with 68 percent of adult men and 55 percent of adult women overweight or obese*.

"These figures are alarming and just too high. Being overweight and obese puts people in a higher risk category for many chronic health conditions such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and stroke," Dr Watson said.

To turn this around in Tasmania, lifestyle modification programs (LMPs) are being run for people at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The six-month programs aim to prevent diabetes through nutrition and exercise education.

"These programs are being run for people who are ready to change their life and become healthier but perhaps need some help and guidance to get there.

There are now nationally-accredited program facilitators in each region of the State who can support participants to make changes to their lifestyle," Dr Watson said.

To be eligible for an LMP people need to complete an AUSDRISK assessment at their general practice and be referred by their General Practitioner to the program. About 275 adults develop diabetes every day and it is estimated that the total number of Australians living with diabetes and pre-diabetes is 3.2 million**.

Dr Watson's call for Tasmanian residents to have a healthier lifestyle coincides with Australia's Healthy Weight Week this week which encourages people to get active, eat and feel better.

For more information on regional programs phone your local Division of General Practice

General Practice North - Clinical Services (03) 6331 3777

General Practice North West (03) 6425 0800

General Practice South (03) 6208 7300

* source – Dieticians Association of Australia

** source – Diabetes Australia – Diabetes the facts brochure

The General Practice Tasmania network is a unique statewide infrastructure that supports contemporary general practice in Tasmania by linking GPs with each other, by supporting all members of the general practice team and, increasingly, by employing or supporting allied health professionals such as physiotherapists, dieticians and psychologists to be part of the primary care team. General Practice Tasmania is also a proud member of the Australian General Practice Network.

