



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**EMBARGOED 12AM FRIDAY 22 AUGUST 2008**

### **AUSTRALIA'S WAKE-UP CALL - OBESITY COSTS NOW AT \$58 BILLION TYPE 2 DIABETES CRISIS**

A new Access Economics Report commissioned by Diabetes Australia has found that 3.71 million Australians are obese with a current estimated cost to the nation of \$58 billion.

*The report titled "Growing economic costs of obesity in 2008"* reveals that there has been a 137% increase since 2005 in the number of Australians who have type 2 diabetes as a result of being obese.

The total cost of obesity includes \$8.3 billion in financial costs and \$49.9 billion in the value of lost wellbeing, which accounts for years of healthy life lost through disability and /or premature death.

Commenting on the report, National President of Diabetes Australia Dr Gary Deed said, "These new figures are tragic and frightening and represent a wake-up call for the nation. They show that previous estimates of the epidemic's size and cost were very much understated.

The obesity epidemic in Australia is having a direct and catastrophic influence on increasing the incidence of type 2 diabetes. We know that obesity and type 2 diabetes can be prevented and we need to make fundamental changes in the way we live to arrest the escalating crisis. The report underlines the need to shift our focus on health and wellbeing and make prevention our priority."

Dr Deed said, "The fight against obesity requires a new approach that considers the economic and social conditions under which we live and how this is impacting on our health. Long-term policy planning is needed on issues such as urban design, food labelling, workplace initiatives, lifestyle education, and making healthy choices easier for Australians and their families. Governments must act outside of concern for their current electoral cycle to address the explosion of obesity and diabetes."

The Access Economics Report updates figures collated in 2006 and shows that:

- 17.5% of the Australian population is obese representing 16.5% of all males and 18.5% of all females

- 242,000 Australians have type 2 diabetes as a result of being obese; a 137% increase from the 102,000 estimated in 2005, due in part to new AIHW estimates of the burden of diabetes attributable to obesity, as well as to increases in the prevalence of obesity over the past three years.
- 644,843 Australians have cardiovascular disease as a result of being obese, up from 379,000 Australians in 2005 – a 70% increase;
- 422,274 Australians have osteoarthritis as a result of being obese, up from 225,000 Australians in 2005 – an 88% increase;
- 30,127 Australians have colorectal, breast, uterine or kidney cancer as a result of being obese, up from 20,430 IN 2005 – a 47% increase.

Economic costs of obesity were largest in NSW at \$19 billion followed by Victoria at \$14.4 billion and Queensland at \$11.6 billion.

*The growing economic costs of obesity in 2008* was prepared by Access Economics for Diabetes Australia, and funded through an unrestricted grant from sanofi-aventis. It will be launched at Senator Guy Barnett's *2008 Healthy Lifestyle Forum* at 10am on 22 August 2008.

End

#### **MEDIA INTERVIEWS**

Dr Gary Deed, Diabetes Australia National President, 0411 171 790

Dr Ian White, Diabetes Australia National Policy Manager 0418 389 671

Matt O'Brien, Chief Executive Officer, Diabetes Australia, 0419 264 856, 02 6232 3800

In Sydney: Prof Stephen Colagiuri, Director, Institute of Obesity Nutrition & Exercise 0419 432 985

#### **FURTHER INFORMATION**

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*The growing economic costs of obesity in 2008* report can be downloaded from [diabetesaustralia.com.au](http://diabetesaustralia.com.au), but is **EMBARGOED until 12 am, 22 August 2008**

#### Definition of obesity:

Obesity is the accumulation of excessive fat in the body, defined as Body Mass Index (BMI) over 30 for adults.

Obesity is linked to genetic, perinatal, socioeconomic and other factors, but is primarily due to energy imbalance.