Almost 1 million more people with obesity in past 3 years

Two thirds (67%) of Australian adults are either overweight or living with obesity according to a new report: Weighing in: Australia’s growing obesity epidemic.

The alarming new study shows there are 900,000 more people living with obesity today (not including those who are overweight), compared with just 3 years ago and the numbers have doubled in the past decade from 2.7 million to 5.8 million.

If the current growth rate continues, within 10-years, 4 in 10 Australian adults will be living with obesity.

The concern has led to the formation of the Obesity Collective which includes more than 100 organisations from across civil society and business to launch a campaign to tackle obesity.

Annette Schmiede, Executive Leader of the Bupa Health Foundation and a founding member of Collective for Action on Obesity, said she fears the problem will get beyond our ability to stop the drastic increases if we don’t do more.

“We are fast heading down the road the United States has travelled and they have discovered exactly how much it costs in terms of health and taxpayer dollars.”

Professor Stephen Simpson, Executive Director, Obesity Australia and Academic Director, Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney’ said an extra 900,000 people living with obesity in just 3 years is cause for genuine alarm.

“The notion that 40% of Australians will live with obesity in 10 years is shocking. Obesity needs to be a national priority if we’re going to turn this around,” said Mr Simpson.

The report shows the cost of obesity in Australia is estimated to be $11.8 billion including $5.4 billion in direct health costs and $6.4 billion in indirect costs.

Professor Anna Peeters, Director of the Institute for Health Transformation at Deakin University, said we need to be very careful not to just blame individuals for this challenge as the stigma and shame around this topic is unfair and harmful.

“It is not just a lifestyle choice or due to a lack of willpower as many people assume, we know that there are strong social, biological and environmental drivers of obesity that are outside of people’s control,” she said.

“There are major equity considerations here with Indigenous, non-metro and people living in lower socio-economic status communities being impacted more.”

John Dixon, GP and obesity researcher at Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute, said the 900,000 increase tells part of the story, but things are even worse than the raw numbers suggest.
“With the largest increase being in obesity class 3, or clinically severe, we’re seeing the growth fastest in the most expensive class of obesity, but also the class where we see the highest risks of health complications,” he said.

“This problem puts enormous pressure on the health system. The risk of complications and mortality impacts in this class of obesity increases and the costs to people’s health and quality of life are immense.

“Overweight and obesity is a driver for 22 diseases including diabetes, musculoskeletal conditions, cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, asthma, dementia and various cancers.”

“It is estimated that 4,000 cancer cases each year are caused by overweight and obesity and 7% of the total health burden is due to overweight and obesity.”

This report was prepared and launched by the Collective for Action on Obesity. The Collective is a platform for committed individuals and organisations from across the community to take on the obesity challenge together, with empathy and a whole of society perspective.

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**About the Obesity Collective**

*Weighing in: Australia’s growing obesity epidemic* was prepared and launched by the Collective for Action on Obesity. The Collective is a platform for committed individuals and organisations from across the community to take on the obesity challenge together, with empathy and a whole of society perspective.

The Collective so far has brought together people from over 100 different organisations committed to seeking to address obesity in Australia, including:

- Large corporations such as NAB, PwC and Bupa;
- Professional colleges such as the RACGP;
- People with lived experience of obesity;
- Community and consumer groups such as YMCA and Choice;
- Indigenous organisations such as Indigenous Allied Health Australia,
- State health departments;
- Pharmaceutical and medtech companies;
- Leading academic institutions such as Sydney, Deakin and Monash Universities; and
- Clinical experts.

The number of organisations who have joined the collective is growing rapidly reflecting the breadth and depth of concern about this issue across all parts of the community.

More information is available [here](#).