1 in 4 Australian children with obesity or overweight

A quarter of the nation’s children over 2 years of age, more than 1.2 million, are now living with overweight including almost 396,000 who are living with obesity.

This means the number of children living with obesity has increased by 60% since 2011-12 from 249,000 to 396,400 or 24,500 additional children each year.

Of great concern is the rising incidence of obesity among 16-17 year olds in later adolescence where there has been an increase from 7.9% of the population in 2014-15 to 10.3% today.

The findings come from a new report by the Obesity Collective: Weighing in: Australia’s growing obesity epidemic.

Releasing the report, Georgia Rigas, General Practitioner with a focus on obesity, said the prevalence of obesity amongst children means that people will live with obesity for a greater portion of their life as children with obesity are more likely to experience it as adults as well.

"Research shows that health risks increase with the number of years someone is living with obesity so the fact that a tenth of all 16-17 years are already living with obesity is a real worry.

Adolescence is a critical life-stage in the development of obesity as it is period during which young lives can change quickly in both negative and positive directions.

"Children and adolescents experiencing obesity are five times more likely to also experience obesity as adults and obesity in childhood is linked to poor mental and social health outcomes.

"It also leaves young people more at risk of complications and chronic conditions like Type 2 diabetes, asthma and sleep apnoea."

Georgia Rigas said obesity among adolescents needed to be a focus for government and policy makers as their specific needs are often lost in conversations about adults or children.

"Adolescence is one of the most rapid phases of human development, with massive physical, neurodevelopmental, psychological and social changes.

"The pace of brain development in adolescence and into young adulthood is second only to that of early childhood."

Media contact: Tim O’Halloran
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](#).