

OBESITY**Thursday 23 November 2006**

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: I seek leave to make a brief explanation before asking the Minister for Environment and Conservation, representing the Minister for Health, a question about state government funding towards the obesity crisis.

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: Figures show that more than half of the South Australian population is overweight or obese, and there are a number in this place in that category, including myself.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. A.L. EVANS: I thought I would get a bite! The annual South Australian Health Omnibus Survey has found that the number of people who are grossly overweight has doubled since 1993 from 11.6 per cent to 20 per cent. Of those who are overweight, 33 per cent are at risk of type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart disease and stroke—so help me God! According to a recent report in *The Advertiser* of 2 September 2006, the current cost of Australia's weight epidemic is estimated at \$8 billion per year. Costs are expected to rise in Australia as the number of people who are overweight or obese will rise.

The International Obesity Task Force predicts that, by 2025, one in every three adults will be obese if current trends continue. The costs involved are directly related to treating obesity and the overweight, not to mention the indirect costs such as lost work productivity, absenteeism and unemployment. For many people struggling with weight gain, seeking professional assistance may be a necessary step to overcoming obesity. However, private consultations with dietitians cost anywhere between \$90 for an initial consultation to \$25 for subsequent consultations. My questions to the minister are:

1. What measures are being taken by the state government to combat adult obesity?
2. Will the minister consider subsidising dietitians for worthy candidates, in addition to producing informative material, such as pamphlets?

OBESITY CRISIS FUNDING

In reply to **Hon. A.L. EVANS** (23 November 2006).

The Hon. CARMEL ZOLLO: The Minister for Health has advised:

1. A number of initiatives have been set in place by the State Government as the foundation to a coordinated approach to the situation of obesity in SA. Strategies include:

- the Eat Well Be Active Healthy Weight Strategy for South Australia 2006-2010 which compliments South Australia's physical activity strategy and the *Eat Well SA* nutrition action plan;
- funding the State's health regions over the next four years to establish positions for healthy weight coordinators;
- supporting a number of programs in health services across the State that encourage overweight adults to eat well and be active, including walking groups, supermarket tours and cooking groups; and
- raising community awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle through promoting the *be active* and *Go for 2 fruit and 5 veg* health messages. In addition, through the Office of Recreation and Sport, the Government is actively encouraging physical activity through workplace physical activity programs.

Given that being overweight starts at a young age, a number of strategies have been implemented to address the primary prevention of overweight and obesity including:

- promoting breastfeeding;
- training health and education sector workers about healthy eating and physical activity; and
- making sure schools, preschools and childcare centres provide and promote healthy food, healthy eating and physical activity through programs such as *Start*

Right Eat Right in childcare centres; the *healthy food in schools and preschools* initiative; the *Community Foodies* program to reach disadvantaged groups; and the Premier's *Be Active Challenge* in schools.

2. Around 80 full-time equivalent dieticians and nutritionists are currently employed in our State hospitals and community health services.