



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES

MEDIA RELEASE

Report tabled: Childhood overweight and obesity

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 December 2016

An Upper House committee has today published its report into childhood overweight and obesity. The report is available at www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/socialissues.

The Chair of the Standing Committee on Social Issues, the Hon Scott Farlow MLC, said “Twenty-two percent of children aged between 5-16 years old in New South Wales are overweight or obese. This can seriously impact on their health and wellbeing with increased health risks of type 2 diabetes, fatty liver disease, orthopedic disorders and psychosocial problems. The number of children overweight or obese has remained stable since 2007 and the New South Wales Premier has committed to tackling this issue by making it one of his twelve key priorities and setting a target to reduce childhood overweight and obesity by five per cent by 2025.”

Mr Farlow said “Childhood overweight and obesity is a complex issue, influenced by a variety of factors that will take more than just a single strategy to combat. This report advocates for a multifaceted approach, underpinned by cross-agency collaboration at all levels of government and across the non-government sector.”

“We have made a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening the existing work of the NSW Government and also its collaboration with the non-government sector to support children and families to be healthy and active. In relation to schools we have made recommendations around the Fresh Tastes @ School Healthy Canteen Strategy, encouraging the NSW Premier’s Sporting Challenge, and ensuring training for primary school teachers in physical education” Mr Farlow stated.

“Also, we have recommended funding for a school kitchen garden pilot program and that consideration be given to incorporating nutrition and cooking within the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education school curriculum” Mr Farlow said.

“With only 28.2 per cent of children aged 5-15 years achieving adequate levels of physical activity, we have made recommendations to encourage the participation of children in sports” Mr Farlow said.

Mr Farlow concluded “We identified that more focus is needed in the area of secondary school students, preconception and early childhood, along with a continued focus on family orientated programs. We hope that the recommendations in this report and the work of the NSW Government can assist parents with the responsibility of raising healthy children. We look forward to the government’s response to our recommendations.”

For more information about the inquiry please visit the committee’s website: www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/socialissues, or call the committee secretariat on (02) 9230 2412.

-ENDS-

For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Scott Farlow MLC, on 9230 3786 or 0414 698 118.

Recommendations

- Recommendation 1** 25
That the NSW Government consider incorporating an audit and compliance process in the revised 2017 Fresh Tastes @ School Healthy Canteen Strategy.
- Recommendation 2** 33
That the NSW Government re-evaluate, further promote and encourage participation in the NSW Premier's Sporting Challenge to a broader range of schools and students.
- Recommendation 3** 34
That the NSW Government collaborate with secondary schools and non-government organisations to implement programs and initiatives that focus on reducing sedentary behavior and promoting healthy eating habits to help reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity amongst secondary school students.
- Recommendation 4** 34
That the NSW Government make available training for primary school teachers in physical education and implement programs to share resources between schools.
- Recommendation 5** 34
That the NSW Government consider pursuing the incorporation of nutrition and cooking within the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education school curriculum.
- Recommendation 6** 35
That the NSW Government fund a pilot program, similar to the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program, to target areas with a high prevalence of childhood overweight and obesity.
- Recommendation 7** 37
That the NSW Government investigate the options to reduce the cost of organised sport for children, such as through a voucher system.
- Recommendation 8** 40
That pre-conception, pregnancy and early life stages are better incorporated in programs that aim to address childhood overweight and obesity.
- Recommendation 9** 43
That the NSW Government continue to implement and promote family orientated programs, such as Making Healthy Normal and Go4Fun, to assist in reducing childhood overweight and obesity.
- Recommendation 10** 47
That the Department of Planning and Environment improve opportunities for cross-agency collaboration and contribution to urban planning process, particularly giving consideration to health objectives.
- Recommendation 11** 50
That the NSW Government continue its work in the area of active travel to school to reduce childhood overweight and obesity.

Recommendation 12**53**

That the NSW Government consider options to enable shared sports facilities, or increased opportunities for sharing of existing sports facilities, between state and local governments, schools and sporting organisations.

Recommendation 13**56**

That the NSW Government oppose any suggestions for bans on donations from restaurant chains and food or beverage producers to sporting clubs or organisations.

Recommendation 14**59**

That the NSW Government, through the Council of Australian Governments forum, seek to improve the food labelling systems in Australia.

Recommendation 15**62**

That the NSW Government further investigate the healthy ‘food desert’ concept and give consideration to mapping food deserts across New South Wales to better inform how to address the issue.

Recommendation 16**68**

That the NSW Government, particularly the NSW Ministry of Health as the lead agency, continue to seek to collaborate with non-government organisations and private sector partners in approaches to support the Premier’s priority to reduce childhood overweight and obesity.