



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Obesity

Hon. PD BEATTIE (Brisbane Central—ALP) (Premier) (9.41 am): Australians are becoming unhealthier. The Australian Bureau of Statistics released its National Health Survey yesterday. It shows that more Australian adults were overweight or obese and more drank alcohol at risky or high-risk levels in 2004-05 than in 2001. The Queensland government has recognised the need to try to improve people's health. It has introduced many strategies that try to influence people to eat healthy food, drink alcohol responsibly, stop smoking and take regular exercise.

We are now rolling out a \$155 million Strategy for Chronic Disease to try to reduce the burden on the state's health system by preventing chronic disease and managing the severity of some cases. Examples of preventable chronic disease include heart disease, kidney disease, diabetes and some cancers. This strategy is a blueprint for how the Queensland government is going to deal with growing pressures on the health care system, both now and into the future. If we continue to become unhealthier, as yesterday's survey suggests, chronic disease will account for 80 per cent of the burden of disease by 2020. If we do not change the eating, smoking, exercise, excess drinking, lack of activity and other dangerous lifestyle habits of young people, the present generation of children is at risk of being the first to die before their parents. Queensland has the highest rates of preventable deaths of any state in Australia, and more than a third of Queenslanders die every year from largely preventable chronic diseases.

We are rolling out an action plan to combat obesity in Queensland children. The Eat Well, Be Active—Healthy Kids for Life plan has over 100 initiatives that we will implement over the next few years. We have also ordered a widespread survey of schools this year to get an accurate picture of the current eating habits and physical activity and weight levels of Queensland children.

We joined other states to force the Commonwealth's hand in undertaking a major review of food and drink advertising at last year's health ministers' meeting in Adelaide. Queensland also has the nation's toughest antismoking legislation.

We have introduced strict healthy food guidelines at our school tuckshops through Education Queensland, rolled out several Get Active programs targeting children through Sport and Recreation Queensland and launched an extensive Healthy Kids for Life plan through Queensland Health.

Yesterday's survey reveals that we have a major problem in tackling the problems of eating the wrong food and not taking sufficient exercise. Sixty-two per cent of men and 45 per cent of women were classified as overweight or obese, but only 32 per cent of men and 37 per cent of women believed they were overweight. Unless people realise they have a problem, they are not going to change their habits. It is obvious that we need to do more in tackling this problem, and we will continue to do so.

The recent Queensland Road Safety Summit was successful in examining new approaches to tackling road accidents. We will, therefore, accordingly hold a summit to take a similar approach to finding new solutions in tackling the problems of bad diets and insufficient exercise to add to the excellent work that is already being done. We will also do this as part of the education campaign to convince people to live healthier lifestyles.