

Question on Notice
No. 1824
Asked on 12 November 2009

MRWENDT asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (MR LUCAS)-

QUESTION:

Will the Minister provide an update on the State Government's vision for assisting in preventing the onset of diseases such as diabetes in children?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Ipswich West for his question.

I am advised that across Australia in 2004/05, about 41% of children reported a long-term health condition, such as asthma, diabetes, cancer or a mental health or behavioural problem. I am further advised asthma was the largest cause of the burden of disease in Queensland children aged 1-14 years in 2006, causing 24.6% of the total burden in this age group, with a prevalence rate of 12.4% for children aged 0-14 years in 2004/05. The underlying causes of asthma are still not well understood and there is no known cure.

In terms of diabetes, there are several types of diabetes that affect Australians, including Type 1, Type 2, and Gestational Diabetes. Each has different causes and clinical histories. I am informed Type 1 diabetes accounts for the majority (98%) of diabetes in children and is largely the result of a combination of genetic, biological and environmental factors. Although it can occur at any age, the onset of Type 1 diabetes is usually associated with children and young people. There is currently no prevention or cure for Type 1 diabetes, although research is occurring in this area.

Unlike Type 1 diabetes, Type 2 is highly preventable. It results from a combination of genetic factors and lifestyle behaviours. I am advised that more than half Type 2 diabetes is due to overweight and obesity and physical inactivity. While Type 2 diabetes is not common in children, there are concerns that the rate of Type 2 diabetes in children will increase as childhood obesity rates increase.

The Queensland Government's vision for assisting Queenslanders to prevent the onset and the impacts of the largely lifestyle-related diseases is articulated in *Toward Q2: Tomorrow's Queensland*. *Toward Q2* recognises that poor diet, inactive lifestyles and rising obesity are predicted to fuel a 55% increase in the Type 2 diabetes disease burden in Queensland over the next 10 years. By 2020, the Government aims to cut by one third obesity, smoking, heavy drinking and unsafe sun exposure to help make Queenslanders Australia's Healthiest People.

Asthma and Type 2 diabetes have also been identified as two of the chronic diseases in-scope for action through the *Queensland Strategy for Chronic Disease 2005-2015*. The Strategy has a strong focus on the common underlying lifestyle and behavioural risk factors of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, alcohol misuse and smoking.

Under the Strategy a range of activity has been undertaken, including funding of:

- positions to support nutrition and physical activity programs, such as *Lighten Up* and *Living Strong*;
- Social marketing campaigns to raise community awareness about the importance of healthy choices, such as *Go for 2 Fruit and 5 Veg*; and
- Surveys (*Healthy Kids Queensland* survey and *Adult Nutrition and Physical Activity* survey) to monitor key indicators such as nutrition, physical activity and weight.

Funding from the Indigenous Health package has also helped with initiatives funded over the last five years to improve Indigenous health, including:

- supporting healthy and safe children, young people and families; and
- supporting physical activity and nutrition promotion.

The Government has further invested in promoting health and wellbeing through:

- the Healthy Queensland Awards that aim to motivate communities, workplaces and schools to create healthier places for Queenslanders to live, work, learn and play;
- TravelSmart that encourages people to reduce car use and consider environmentally-friendly travel options such as public transport, cycling, walking and carpooling;
- the Eat Well Be Active campaign featuring social marketing to promote physical activity, healthy eating and community partnerships;
- breastfeeding promotion through social marketing, the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, and resourcing the child health workforce;
- the Smart Moves - Physical Activity Programs in Queensland State Schools that aims to increase student participation in physical activity; and
- Smart Choices – Healthy Food and Drink Supply Strategy for Queensland Schools that aims to offer healthy food and drink choices in Queensland schools.

The second report of the Chief Health Officer, released in 2008, recognised that preventing chronic diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes, is everyone's business and the Queensland Government is continuing to work with other government and non-government agencies to reduce the impact of preventable chronic diseases, such as Type 2 diabetes.