

Victoria's **Diabetes epidemic 10 years on**

Media release: embargoed until 1am Monday 7 November 2011

Urgent Action Needed With Over 250,000 Victorians Diagnosed with Diabetes

Local communities across Victoria are being asked to take urgent action as new data reveals rates of diabetes have soared in the past 10 years.

Figures released by Diabetes Australia – Vic today show that 252,000 Victorians are now known to be living with diabetes, and this figure is increasing by 73 new cases each day.

DA–Vic's Chief Executive Professor Greg Johnson said, "We are in the midst of a diabetes epidemic and it is imperative that local communities understand the impact and take action. Communities and local government can play an important role in prevention."

The number of Local Government Areas (LGAs) considered diabetes hotspots has increased dramatically from only 1 in 2001 to 64 in 2011. An area is designated a hotspot when more than 4 per cent of its population has diabetes.

Across the state diabetes rates have more than doubled in 10 years. In the past year alone we have seen another 26,500 Victorians registered with diabetes. The areas with the highest prevalence of diabetes in metro Melbourne are Brimbank, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Moreland and Hume. The full data of Local Government Area and postcode is now available on the new Diabetes Epidemic website at www.diabetesepidemic.org.au

AMA Victorian President Dr Harry Hemley called on doctors to be aware of the diabetes epidemic. "Doctors must be aware of the growing rates of diabetes in Victoria particularly if they are practicing in a diabetes hotspot. Diabetes is one of the most significant challenges that doctors confront in the 21st century.

“Doctors in general practice need greater resources to better coordinate the complex, multidisciplinary care for people with diabetes in their practices.”

Diabetes is serious and can lead to potentially lethal complications including heart attack, stroke and kidney failure. It can also lead to blindness, lower limb amputation and erectile dysfunction and is associated with depression. Diabetes is predicted to become the number one burden of disease in Australia in the next few years.

If we want to prevent diabetes over the next 10 years we have to do two things:

1. Re-design our local communities and lifestyles so they are healthy communities
2. Identify the large number of Victorians at high risk and deliver proven prevention services.

“Local communities and local government can do many things to help prevent type 2 diabetes,” Professor Johnson said. “Local planning can limit the availability of unhealthy foods and promote better access to healthy foods. Local planning can ensure people have good access to physical activity opportunities such as walking and cycling, recreation facilities and public transport,” Professor Johnson said. “Preventive health is not just a responsibility of national and state governments – local communities can be designed to be healthy communities.”

All Victorians are being urged to take the risk test for type 2 diabetes at www.diabetesrisk.org.au and call 13RISK to assess their eligibility for the *Life!* diabetes prevention course.

Diabetes Australia – Vic is the peak consumer body and leading charity representing all people affected by diabetes and those at risk.

For media enquiries contact:

Lyn Curtis 9667 1714 or 0411 019 924 or lcurtis@diabetesvic.org.au

Penny Smits 9667 1744 or 0478 029 929 or psmits@diabetesvic.org.au