



## MEDIA RELEASE

...good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.

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### **Fighting Obesity Needs Many Solutions**

Australia's peak rural health body has welcomed the release of the Federal Parliamentary Select Committee Inquiry into the national obesity epidemic, but calls for a multi-pronged approach to tackling the problem given its complexity and the higher incidence in rural and remote areas.

The National Rural Health Alliance said the Parliamentary committee recognised solutions needed to be broad based and that no one strategy could tackle the issue.

The committee report highlighted that solutions must be a mix of top down and bottom up approaches - from government interventions such as a National Obesity Strategy and National Obesity Taskforce, mandatory food labelling, the introduction of a 20% sugar tax on sweetened beverages and legislation of discretionary food and drink advertising to children, through to community-led activities at the grass roots.

The Alliance supported the need for a multi-pronged approach across the country, noting that obesity and being overweight are significant health issues for people in rural and remote Australia.

"People in regional and rural areas are 30% more likely to be obese than those in major cities - and this increases to 50% more likely for males in remote areas," Alliance Chief Executive, Mark Diamond, said.

"The Alliance supports the multipronged approach outlined in the report and is pleased to see that the Senate committee has adopted recommendations made by the Alliance, particularly recognition of food security issues.

"People living in the bush may have fewer healthy food choices and what is available can be expensive. We welcome the recommendation to provide incentives and initiatives to increase access, affordability and consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

"The evidence is clear, no one strategy can tackle this complex problem alone. Solutions designed for city folks do not translate to changes in country towns, so the Alliance is keen to ensure that solutions will address the specific needs of those living in country Australia.

"The recommendation for the National Obesity Taskforce to develop a National Physical activity action plan is also welcomed particularly given that rates of physical activity are also considerably lower outside of major cities."

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*The National Rural Health Alliance is Australia's peak non-government organisation for rural and remote health.*