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Western Sydney heavyweights unite to combat diabetes surge

The new Western Sydney Diabetes Prevention Alliance has tabled a roadmap to fight diabetes in Sydney's west as the disease threatens to devastate community health and swamp the healthcare sector.

The alliance, formed today in a co-ordinated effort co-led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and Western Sydney Local Health District, heard by 2017 diabetes will be Australia's largest burden of disease.

In western Sydney, half of the population is either at high risk of diabetes or has diabetes with low or high comorbidity.

Experts speaking at today's meeting described diabetes prevalence as a "burning platform" that would reduce lifespan in western Sydney unless better lifestyle choices were made.

"The framework for action in the Taking the Heat out of our Diabetes Hotspot roadmap links weight loss with a reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes," Western Sydney Local Health District's Professor Glen Maberly said.

"You can turn the clock back on diabetes by losing four kilos.

"We need to use the Western Sydney Diabetes Prevention Alliance to manage a co-ordinated response before the diabetes situation gets further out of control in western Sydney," Prof Maberly said.

The Taking the Heat Out of Our Diabetes Hotspot roadmap supported today's crisis meeting, which brought together WSLHD, NSW Health, PHN, universities, Transport for NSW, NSW Department of Education, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, Diabetes NSW, Students as Lifestyle Activists, and the Premier's Council for Active Living.

The roadmap offers a whole-of-community approach that aims to use urban design, access to fresh food supply and prevention in priority groups to combat diabetes.

Today's meeting marked the establishment of the alliance which has the backing of the Department of Premiers and Cabinet in its work to reduce diabetes incidence.

Western Sydney PHN chief executive Walter Kmet said he was optimistic the alliance could drive down the burden of disease given the strong backing from government and non-government partners.

"Unless our diabetes hotspot is addressed, within a decade we will not be able to support the cost and societal burden on our healthcare system," Mr Kmet said.

Taking the Heat Out of Our Diabetes Hotspot is available at -

http://www.wslhd.health.nsw.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/1336/WSLHD_Taking_the_heat_out_diabetes_hotspot.pdf.aspx

Media enquiries: wslhd-media@health.nsw.gov.au or 0408 893 804

For more information, contact CEO Western Sydney PHN Walter Kmet: 0434 602 961.