

Launch of SW Healthy Kids Project

Monday 3rd September 2012, Port Fairy Yacht Club

I wish to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Acknowledgements: Cr Jill Parker representing, Mayor of Moyne, Ms Michelle Bickley representing, Principal W'b College, Mr Mark Brennan, CE South West Primary Care Partnership, Facilitator Steve Allender...Ms Lisa McLeod WCC, project workers from both Councils, and workshop participants including schools, and health services across our two municipalities.

Warrnambool is a progressive creative city underpinned by the productivity of its surrounding region. This Healthy Kids Project is another great example of how Warrnambool and Moyne work together to bring about an improvement in our citizens health and wellbeing.

At this point in Warrnambool's history we have low unemployment, about 300 new jobs being created each year, and population growth that reflects the attraction to our wonderful lifestyle for 20 to 39 year olds and the aged, our 2 biggest population growth cohorts. Despite the current growth in Warrnambool's economy, we still have and have always had areas of low income and disadvantage within our city.

As city, we can only ever be as strong as the least among us and we can't claim success as a community without being honest about the fact that not all members of our community are able to share in the economic and lifestyle benefits of our current boom. It is the responsibility of Local Government in partnership with our community to address these challenges in an ordered and evidence based way.

We know that income is the single most significant indicator of health – and we know that obesity is one of our biggest community health challenges, that is why this Healthy Kids Project is a very important project from the Warrnambool city Council's perspective.

Obesity is now reaching pandemic proportions across much of the world with prevalence dramatically increasing since the 1990s. Obesity causes morbidity, disability, diabetes, heart disease, premature death and many more health problems. In Australia 42% of men are overweight and 25% are obese. In women 24% are obese and 31% are overweight. In Warrnambool and Moyne more than half the population is overweight or obese (53.3% and 51% respectively).

In Australia a quarter of our children are overweight or obese with is prevalence doubling in the last 30 years. At the current rate it is predicted by 2020 that 65% of young Australians will be overweight or obese. (DEECD 2010)

There is plenty of evidence that providing active transport opportunities, better parks and gardens, creating policy which supports behavior change in various settings, improving the walkability of streets and neighbourhoods through planning, as well as pedestrian safety measures and advocating for funding to support our local organisations, like schools are influential to healthy lifestyles. This is where Local Government has a significant role to play, it is our obligation to serve our whole community not just those who can easily engage in the civic, cultural and economic life of our city.

I congratulate the Primary Care Partnership, Moyne Shire and the other organisations represented here today for recognizing the issue of obesity in our community and taking an interest in identifying the most value for benefit actions we can do as a broader community.

I wish you a very productive two days.

Thank you

Jacinta Ermacora