

timeout

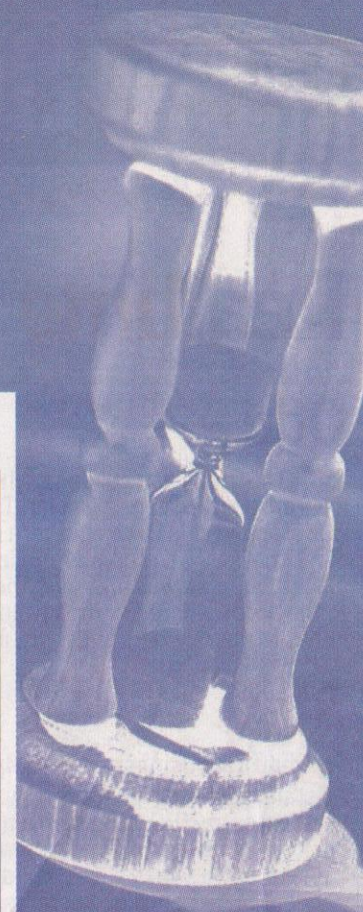
OPINION | PUZZLES | COMICS | WEATHER | TV

Time for us to cut the fat

Tasmania is at the forefront of a preventable epidemic, says Guy Barnett



today
HOT



TASMANIANS are fatter than the average Australian, according to the Productivity Commission's annual report on government services.

That's not a good record when we know Australia is one of the fattest nations on earth behind the US, UK and Mexico.

Sixty-one per cent of Australian adults and 25 per cent of our children are overweight or obese. Obesity leads to chronic disease and poor health outcomes such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers and lung disease.

More than 44,000 Tasmanians already have type 2 diabetes, which is sometimes referred to as a "lifestyle" disease. The fuse to this time bomb has been lit, with another 50,000 Tasmanians diagnosed as pre-diabetic, meaning they are at high risk of type 2 diabetes.

Diabetes remains the leading cause of heart attacks, strokes, blindness, limb amputation and kidney failure. Obese people are four times more likely to develop diabetes. Conversely, type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented altogether by up to 60 per cent by adopting a healthy, active lifestyle.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report on diabetes said 72 per cent of Australians did not get enough exercise, 90 per cent did not eat enough vegetables and 50 per cent did not eat enough fruit.

It also confirmed that one in 20 pregnancies are affected by diabetes and indigenous Australians are three times more likely to have diabetes. Diabetes is now Australia's fastest growing chronic disease.

Of the estimated 366 million people with diabetes in the world, 4.6 million die from the disease each year – one person every seven seconds, more than double the deaths from AIDS and malaria combined.

Global healthcare expenditure on diabetes in 2011 totalled about \$430 billion, equal to 11 per cent of total health spending. This is predicted to rise to more than \$550 billion by 2030 if nothing is done, according to the International Diabetes Federation.

But healthcare costs are one thing. The cost to the economy is another.

An Access Economics report



TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING: Obesity and diabetes are growing healthcare issues.

commissioned by Diabetes Australia estimated the cost of obesity in Australia at \$58 billion per year, with \$8 billion in direct health costs and the remainder in indirect, lost productivity and other costs. It costs the Tasmanian economy \$1 billion per year.

The "diabesity" epidemic has gone global. The developing world is now suffering type 2 diabetes and it is increasing at a massive rate. Four out of five people with diabetes in the world are in low- and middle-income countries. China has nearly 100 million

people with type 2 diabetes and India 51 million.

Rapid economic growth has brought millions out of poverty, but with it comes access to energy-dense food high in salt, sugar and fat,

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Communities are leading the way on climate change while governments remain idle, says Peter Boyer

HILARIOUS

Laughs, puzzles, predictions and a glimpse of the past in Diversions

ON HORIZON

Your comprehensive, daily, statewide weather analysis and forecast

ON TELLY

Your complete daily television guide

The First Interview, ABC1, 10.05pm
 August 1886, the world's first media interview occurred
 great photographer Nadar interviewed the famous
 sceptic Chevreul on his 100th birthday. The meeting
 ed by Nadar's son Paul as photographer and a
 er using shorthand. Now, with the technology of the
 y the interview comes to life as if a talking movie was
 e 19th century. — **TIM MARTAIN**

Slept Here, Erica Heller, 24.95

Heller family changed in
 when Joseph Heller's book
 as published. It was a
 bestseller but, despite
 mpts, Heller never wrote
 ok that came close. Heller
 d, perhaps cursed, with a
 ten hurtful, sense of
 was a difficult man who
 e of lifelong friendships,
 ed to be generous about
 ments of others. He died before this captivating story
 and contradiction was published. — **STEPHEN**

Tweets

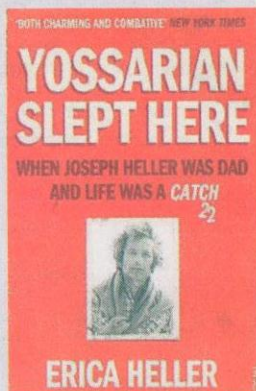
Paul Verhoeven
 @paulverhoeven,
 NARNIA.
 Radio presenter.
 Writer. Host of
 Save Point.



Drew Bowie
 @Drew_Bowie,
 Sydney
 Stand up
 comic, MC,
 opinionated
 tweeter.

el's *The Last*
 n of Christ is great
 eating eggs/flying

Have you ever bought or rented
 a video that wasn't quite right?
 It might have been *Twilight*.



ever since the rise of the family car
 and its costly appurtenances (roads
 and parking lots, expanding suburbs
 and drive-in shopping).

Urban life today is shaped by
 personal needs, by the likes of
 personal transport, personal
 workspaces and personal
 entertainment.

We come together (though
 decreasingly so) in our workplaces
 and at scheduled events like
 meetings or sporting fixtures, but in
 the main we live solitary lives with
 most social contact limited to family,
 work colleagues or close friends.

This is why the world-wide
 Transition Movement is so valuable.
 In seeking to change the way we

Groups of people in communities
 as diverse as South and West
 Hobart, Launceston, Burnie, Sandy
 Bay, Kingston, Woodbridge,
 Molesworth and New Norfolk are
 working to change how we see
 ourselves and interact with each
 other.

Some of them are just beginning,
 putting out feelers at the start of
 what will be a long process. Others
 such as the South Hobart and
 Waterworks communities are well
 under way with an array of schemes
 including bulk solar hot water
 purchases and community food
 gardens.

Slowly, steadily, they are building
 their collective experience, creating



wellsprings of expertise and wisdom
 that will inform others starting their
 own long journeys of transition.

Along the way there are real,
 practical benefits. Rachel Roddam, a
 Transition enthusiast based in
 Molesworth, reports that a
 Transition network's alert about a
 tip shop selling apple trees for \$2
 each led to hundreds of trees being
 bought and dispersed around a
 number of communities.

As Roddam says, all such little

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televisions and technology,
 sedentary lives at work and at home,
 improved but "non-active"
 transport and more urban living.
 Western lifestyles, like the internet,
 have gone viral.

This worsening tragedy is
 preventable.

What more to do

Targets are used for cutting
 carbon emissions: they should also
 be used to safeguard our children's
 health.

Children's health and fitness
 should be benchmarked, just like we
 do for literacy and numeracy. These
 results will be vital to designing
 healthy, active initiatives.

Healthy eating habits are critical
 for our children. Only healthy food
 should be sold through our school
 canteens and childcare centres.

Sugary, fizzy drinks should be
 banned.

Education programs on
 nutritional health and improved
 advertising standards directed at
 better eating habits are necessary.

It is estimated that increasing fruit
 and vegetable consumption by just
 one serve per day will save the
 Australian health system \$157
 million per year in relation to heart
 disease alone.

Diabetes Tasmania's evidence-
 based The Coach program has
 delivered better health outcomes for
 its 400 plus participants.

Other initiatives include
 establishing a voucher system to
 encourage participation in sport
 across the community, more
 healthy school breakfasts and
 lunches, vegetable gardens and
 cooking classes.

The State Government is now
 cutting hard into our health services
 when the Productivity Commission

report reveals Tasmania's health
 spending of \$5276 per person is 4 per
 cent below the national average. We
 smoke more and die younger than
 other Australians.

If vending machines don't offer
 healthy options, they should be
 removed. Water should be made
 available and encouraged at school
 and in the workplace. Takeaways
 and restaurants should include
 nutritional information on their
 menus.

The majority of the
 recommendations from the
 Australian Government's National
 Preventative Health Taskforce
 Report have not been implemented.
 They need to be. It is time for serious
 action.

● **Guy Barnett** is a former senator, a
 Diabetes Australia and Diabetes
 Tasmania Ambassador, and represented
 Australia at the World Diabetes Congress
 in Dubai in December.