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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

11 December 2009

**Australian Government Funding Supports Local Communities
to Take Action on Obesity**

Local government areas will receive a funding boost from the Rudd Government to foster healthier lifestyles in their communities, as the release of a sobering report shows risk factors of chronic disease continue to rise.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report, Prevention of cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic kidney disease: targeting risk factors, says the prevalence of some risk factors – such as obesity is increasing.

The Rudd Government knows that the cost of inaction on chronic disease is too high. We know that cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease and diabetes account for one-quarter of Australia's burden of disease and almost two-thirds of all deaths.

Through COAG the Government has committed \$872 million for health promotion and preventative health – the largest commitment ever of an Australian Government. Through this National Partnership with the states, the Rudd Government continues to support practical solutions to these growing problems.

\$72 million is available to support Local Government Areas (LGAs) in delivering effective community-based physical activity and dietary education programs, as well as developing a range of policy environments to support healthy lifestyle behaviours.

The Healthy Communities Initiative aims to help reduce the prevalence of overweight and obesity within participating communities by maximising the number of at-risk individuals engaged in physical activity and dietary education programs. The initiative will target individuals at a high risk of developing chronic disease and not predominantly in the paid workforce.

The Government has now invited 42 LGAs from across the country to apply for funding under the pilot phase of this initiative. 12 will be chosen, focusing on areas with higher than average rates of obesity and social disadvantage.

The 12 pilot grants in this innovative and practical program will be awarded in early 2010, with 92 sites across the four years of the program.

The establishment of a National Preventative Health Agency is another key component of the Government's prevention strategy. Incredibly, this weapon in the Government's fight against obesity, chronic disease and alcohol and tobacco addiction has been stalled in the Senate by the Opposition.

I encourage the Opposition to take heed of today's AIHW's report, and to re-consider their position on this vital legislation.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.