



NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity

THE NSW CENTRE FOR OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

REPORT 2004 - 2007

The NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity is funded by the NSW Health Department and supported by The University of Sydney

Report on Achievements 2004 - 2007

The aim of COO is to contribute to reductions in the incidence and prevalence of overweight and obesity among the people of NSW, with an initial focus on children and adolescents. As described in its *Strategic Directions* statement, COO seeks to make this contribution through 3 strategic directions:

- Direction 1 - Pursuing a research agenda that is focussed and applied. Focus the research agenda on action-oriented intervention research that has relevance to policy and practice, and build direct links between intervention research, determinants research and monitoring studies.
- Direction 2 – Getting research into practice. Actively translate research into policy and practice changes.
- Direction 3 – Developing a sustainable organisation. Select and undertake work that contributes to COO’s overall sustainability.

These 3 strategic directions reflect the 9 performance areas described in the COO Funding Agreement. COO has negotiated annual work programs with NSW Health, and these have reflected the 3 strategic directions and identified a range of specific studies and tasks to be undertaken.

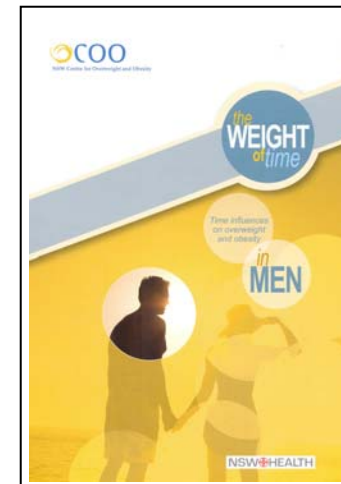
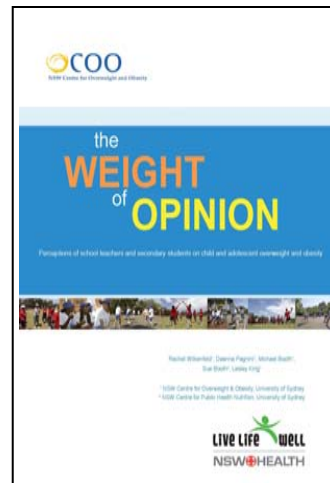
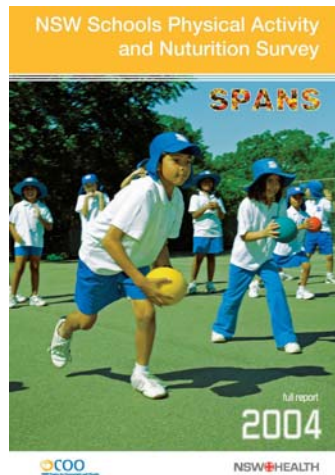
This document reports on COO’s achievements in relation to its three Strategic Directions and specific studies and tasks identified in agreed work programs.

Direction 1 - Pursuing a research agenda that is focussed and applied.

COO has made significant progress on developing a policy-relevant research program which comprises a diverse set of research studies, and a range of policy and academic products. The highlights include:

- The *Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey (SPANS) 2004*, which formed the initial major study undertaken by COO. Reports have been widely disseminated across the health system and government sectors, presentations given to professional and community audiences across NSW, and a number of academic papers published or submitted for publication.
- Completion and launch of two short reports on the *Weight of Time: time influences on overweight and obesity*, describing the effects of ageing, time of survey and generation on population weight status for men and women. This work advances the epidemiological analyses of trends in adult population weight status, and has been critical in identifying the importance of young adults as a potential target group for interventions. Academic papers have also been prepared and published.
- The *Weight of Opinion* is a major qualitative research study which has produced highly meaningful information about how different professional and community groups perceive issues in relation to childhood obesity. This is particularly valuable for guiding the formulation of communication messages, and informing the design of new programs. This research has specifically contributed to the identification of early childhood services as an important intervention setting. Reports and academic publications have been published.
- Research on *Food marketing to children*. This has included two studies in 2006 and 2007 on children's exposure to food advertising on television. A third study has investigated outdoor food advertisements around schools. This work has been published in academic journals, and used for advocacy for more effective regulation of food advertising to children on TV.
- Completion of the policy evaluation project: 'Midpoint evaluation of the implementation of the *Prevention of Obesity in Children and Young People: NSW Government Action Plan 2003-2007*' (GAP). The evaluation of the NSW GAP was a specific deliverable required by NSW Health. The mid-point evaluation provided a thoughtful and balanced analysis of the Plan and its implementation, in a way which fosters ongoing implementation and development of initiatives. The report was submitted to government. This work has relevance to government policy elsewhere in Australia and internationally.
- The "*Obesity in the news*" study has initiated a stream of media analysis work and related publications. This work is being used by COO to develop a more sophisticated public understanding of media interest, political viewpoints and advocacy opportunities in relation to child obesity prevention. A *Media Resource for Journalists* has been produced.
- Collaboration with the Hunter New England Area Health Service on the NSW Health-funded *Child Obesity Prevention Program*. COO has invested considerable time and intellectual work into this collaboration, in order to plan and produce a transparent, robust and informative evaluation of this large and complex intervention.

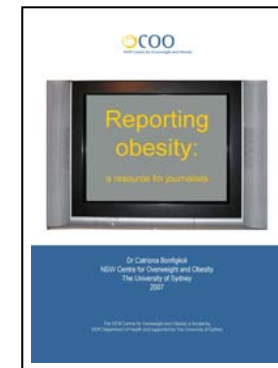
- Intervention development, implementation and evaluation of *Munch and Move*, a statewide project to promote physical activity and nutrition in childcare settings
- Exploring environmental influences, including publication of the report: *Creating health environments: review of environmental interventions which influence physical activity and obesity*
- Investigating the costs of children's physical activity as an influence on children and family behaviours.
- COO has contributed to the development of reports on the evidence on interventions addressing childhood obesity. A set of evidence updates '*Building solutions for preventing childhood obesity*' will be published at the end of 2007.
- COO has developed proposals and undertaken planning work on a number of intervention research projects, including:
 - an e-communication intervention to reduce soft drink consumption in young adults
 - interventions and resources to promote action in schools
 - approaches and issues in providing assessment, advice and management through General Practice
 - approaches to professional development for health workers



Direction 2 – Getting research into practice

COO has applied best practice knowledge transfer processes and adopted an active approach to communicating research results and liaising with policy and practice stakeholders to ensure effective knowledge transfer. For example:

- consultation with organisational and policy stakeholders in the planning of research (for example in the *Weight of Opinion* study)
- engaging with community members in qualitative research (e.g. exploring the view of young adults on patterns of soft drink consumption)
- convening briefings and forums with organisational and policy stakeholders to present results and discuss policy and practice implications (e.g. the Research-Policy Forum on *Models of care for the management of childhood overweight and obesity*; and *Weight of Opinion* Forums)
- preparation of reports in formats and styles suitable for different stakeholder groups (e.g. *SPANS Short Report*; *Media Resource for Journalists*)
- policy advice and advocacy on the need for improved regulation of food marketing to children on TV
- evaluation and policy advice for school programs to support obesity prevention goals
- conduct of an Obesity prevention Short Course (2005) and professional development forums for health professionals (e.g. June 2007)
- regular forums with visiting speakers, including Dr Mike Rayner on nutrient profiling, Melissa Sweet on Working with Media
- contribution to Area Health Service planning processes, and collaboration with health professionals, particularly health promotion services and practitioners
- up-to-date website with reports and publications; dissemination of the PRC newsletter



Direction 3 – Developing a sustainable organisation

- Developing a strategic and policy-relevant research agenda, designed to address priority gaps in research
- Developing collaboration across the prevention research centres based at Sydney University, through collaborative projects and shared administration; and building the capacity for prevention research at Sydney University
- Developing as part of the public health division of the Boden Institute for Obesity, Nutrition and Exercise (BIONE)
- Developing as a centre for excellence in relation to policy research and advice, particularly in NSW, through advice to NSW Department of Health, and collaboration with the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice and NSW Department of Education and Training, as well as consultancy to the Australian Department of Health and Ageing.
- Presentations and profile at national and international forums and conferences, such as the International Congress of Obesity, Sydney 2006, ASSO in 2007, the North American Association for Study of Obesity (NAASO) in 2005, the national Fenner Conference '*Environment, urbanism and health*' in 2006.
- Building capacity for the prevention of overweight and obesity through providing training initiatives, including placements for students and public health professionals
- Demonstrating sound governance, through accountability, advisory and administrative systems
- Liaison with other research groups, including the Sax Institute and ACAORN

