How can we work together to reverse Australia’s obesity crisis?
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The obesity crisis

Obesity is now a critical global issue, requiring a comprehensive intervention strategy rolled out at scale. More than 2.1 billion people—nearly 30 percent of the global population—are overweight or obese. Obesity, which should be preventable, is now responsible for about 5 percent of all deaths worldwide. If its prevalence continues on its current trajectory, almost half of the world’s adult population will be overweight or obese by 2030.

McKinsey Global Institute, Overcoming obesity: an initial economic analysis, 2014
The obesity crisis is a complex social challenge

Obesity is a complex social problem and solving it is not easy. There are many stakeholders with different opinions on both causes and solutions. Obesity is not an isolated problem - it is interconnected with many other issues. Most confronting is that obesity is now a norm in our society. Changing norms, values and culture calls on an effort which resembles that of a revolution. It can feel too hard to have any impact or too big a problem to make sense of, therefore we normalise it or look for silver bullets as the solution. Often we wait for someone, usually government, to act. Meanwhile the crisis and its impact continues to grow.

To tackle the obesity crisis we must take a different path. We require resources, creativity, courage, expertise and importantly engagement of stakeholders from across the whole system. While governments, businesses, health services and the community all have a role to play, no one player can solve this alone. By bringing our different interests and perspectives together we can begin to collaborate on our shared concerns, build a shared understanding of what’s needed and create genuine pathways towards measureable systemic impact.

The systems approach begins when first you see the world through the eyes of another.

C. West Churchman
The starting point for progress is a diverse coalition that is ready to challenge the status quo. This could include you. Health Futures Australia efforts bring together stakeholders from across the system to reverse obesity. Diversity may feel like the problem, but it is at the heart of problem solving. Working as guides, we skilfully engage people with different perspectives and interests to collaborate on shared concerns. This creates paths to crucial system transformations.

Reos Partners, 2014

Together we have created obesity, together we can reverse it. We need your help.
Health Futures Australia is working together with Reos Partners to create a unique, long-term platform dedicated to the primary prevention of chronic disease and building a healthy society.

We are a collaboration of organisations and individuals working together to facilitate community and market-based solutions to the primary prevention of chronic disease. As a team, we have been working directly in prevention and have been designing and facilitating system change initiatives for over 20 years.

We work with the public, private, philanthropic and community sectors. We bring a network of well connected people and experts and a set of rigorous, innovative and transformative methods to rethink and redesign the way we address the complex and stuck challenges of chronic disease.

Our priority area of focus right now is tackling obesity.

Using a pragmatic and creative approach we bring those impacted by, and with an interest in obesity and its solution together - corporations, governments, community organisations and communities of people to reverse obesity - one of the world’s most pressing issues. We enable people mired in confusion and overwhelmed by the extent of complexity to work together to construct new realities and act together to build a healthier Australia.

No individual sectors in society, whether they are governments, retailers, consumer-goods companies, restaurants, employers, media organizations, educators, health-care providers or individuals, can address obesity on their own.

McKinsey Global Institute, Overcoming obesity: an initial economic analysis, 2014
Our Approach

Through the guidance of Reos Partners, Health Futures Australia initiatives occur at three scales: events of a few days, processes of several months, and platforms that operate for years. A single event can spark new insights, relationships and capacities, while a long-term platform can enable new experiments, initiatives, and movements - and ultimately, system transformation.

We take a fresh and custom approach to every situation, we work with you to assess the situation, unpick and untangle the issues, and design prototypes and experiments to tackle the problems. We often employ at least one of four tested methods: dialogue interviews, learning journeys, transformative scenarios, and social labs. We also offer training and coaching to build the capacities and skills that enable enduring systems change work.

Underpinning our methods is our use of systems learning and re-design because we have found that conventional understanding and management alone cannot address complex problems. Systems learning and re-design takes into account the complex inter-relationships and different perspectives of everyone who has a stake in the problem and the solution.

We work with participants to experiment and create concepts that can then be scaled-up as community solutions and also taken to the marketplace.

Proven methods for systemic change

We should experiment with solutions and try them out rather than waiting for perfect proof of what works, especially in the many areas where interventions are low risk. We have enough knowledge to be taking more action than we currently are.

McKinsey Global Institute, Overcoming obesity: an initial economic analysis, 2014
Reos Partners
Theory of Change:

Starting Point:
A diverse coalition of leaders thinks that their situation is unacceptable or unsustainable and that it cannot be transformed unilaterally, directly, or immediately.

Methods:

1. Starting Point
   - A diverse coalition of leaders thinks that their situation is unacceptable or unsustainable and that it cannot be transformed unilaterally, directly, or immediately.

2. What is needed
   - Whole-system team
   - Experienced guides
   - Strong container
   - Requisite resources
   - Generative approach

3. What is produced
   - Events
   - Processes
   - Platforms
   - Relationships
   - Insights
   - Capacities
   - Commitments
   - Initiatives

4. What emerges
   - The situation has been transformed through new alliances, narratives, approaches, policies, and/or institutions.
With systemic change there is no quick fix.

The systems approach is a new and more complex way to reduce obesity, but ultimately it promises to be more sustainable and effective.

Professor Boyd Swinburn, 2013
We bring:

Experienced guides. Collaboration on problems characterised by overwhelming complexity, confusion, and conflict requires expert facilitation.

A generative approach. A creative, experimental method that engages team members’ whole selves - head, heart, and hands - enables breakthrough results.

Proof of concept design. Through experiments we design, test then adapt market based solutions and mechanisms to take to scale.

You bring:

Requisite resources. Social, human, and financial resources must be available at a scale that matches the scale of the challenge.

Commitment. A solid commitment to challenge status quo’s, to change directions, create new paths to deal with the challenge before us all.

Connection. Your connection to people, places, industry and systems as well as your influence and control to make the changes that are necessary.

Together we:

Are a whole-system team. The first prerequisite is a team of influential, insightful actors representative of the system’s many facets.

Create a strong holding container. In order to experiment with new ways of acting, relating, and being, the team needs a unique and carefully structured space to do their work - physically, psychologically, and politically.

Provide a safe space to innovate. A space is created to incubate different ideas and concepts, to be innovative and creative.

Create community and market-based prototypes and develop ways of taking these prototypes to scale in the real world.
Real progress on vital challenges, worldwide.

We’ve learned that there is no quick fix: systemic change takes time, energy, resources, and skill. With these in place, our most successful projects take on lives of their own, spawning resilient networks, alliances, and ecologies.
Investing in Health Futures Australia

Investing in Health Futures Australia is an investment in the immediate and long-term health and wellbeing of communities and the economy.

Mobilising change for our communities, our workers, our businesses, and our nation requires a re-think and a new practice to reverse current trends in the obesity crisis.

Health Futures Australia works with you to elevate inquiry over rhetoric, inject energy, dynamics and innovation in an unprecedented way to our efforts to prevent chronic disease in Australia and reverse obesity.

We are interested in partnering with businesses, government and the community in the pursuit of our goal of systemic change to reverse obesity.

No one can really say they understand a system unless they have been able to change it.

Prof. Peter Senge, MIT
We welcome a conversation with you.

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