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MEDIA RELEASE

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LiveLighter urges people to stop drinking themselves fat

- A 375mL can of soft drink contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar.
- It is estimated that consuming one can a day could lead to a weight gain of 6.5kg in one year.¹

The LiveLighter Campaign is today urging West Australians to reduce their consumption of sugary drinks as a key strategy to reduce the growing rates of overweight and obesity.

Australia is ranked in the top 10 countries for consumption of sugary drinks² and many in the community are missing the link between consuming these empty kilojoules leading to more overweight or obese people.

A 375ml can of soft drink contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar, and it is estimated that consuming just one of these a day can lead to a weight gain of 6.5kg in one year.

Global health expert Professor Rob Moodie of Melbourne University said: "Our diets and exercise patterns have changed significantly. We are eating and drinking ourselves fat at the same time as not exercising to compensate."

"Sugary drinks are empty kilojoules in that they don't provide us with nutrition – just extra kilojoules!"

"Sugary drinks are easily available, marketed extensively and cheaper than bottled water but consuming just one can a day could very well cost you over \$1000 a year. All you get for your \$1000 a year is a 'grabbable gut' around your waist and 'toxic fat' around your vital organs."

"The ultra processed food and drink industries use similar strategies to the tobacco and alcohol industries to undermine effective public health policies," Professor Moodie said.

"Responsibility falls on both the individual and the government. If we rely on the government for policy and regulation we take away the responsibility that the individual and parents must bear," he said.

"On the other hand, if responsibility is solely on the individual you completely miss the point about all factors that influence our behaviour – advertising, pricing, peer attitudes, cultural norms, education etc."

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LiveLighter Campaign Director Maria Szybiak said: “The aim of these new advertisements is to show people drinking sugary drinks is contributing to our expanding waistlines leading to higher rates of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and several cancers.”

“Public health education campaigns like LiveLighter are an essential step to increase awareness that we need to change our policies – about junk food advertising to children, promotion of junk food through sport sponsorship, food labelling that is easily understood and reformulating our foods to make them a lot less sugary, salty and fatty,” Professor Moodie said.

Department of Health WA Chief Health Officer, Dr Tarun Weeramanthri said: “We are already seeing very positive impacts from the first evaluation of the campaign – particularly around the strong awareness of the campaign, the fact people are listening, understanding the messages, seeing them as personally relevant and beginning to think about the issues and make changes. I expect this new focus will stimulate some robust debate which is an essential part of a public health strategy.”

This new focus of the LiveLighter Campaign will feature new radio, television, cinema, online, print advertisements, and for the first time animated advertisements in lifts and lobbies in Perth’s CBD.

To find out more or to view the advertisement, visit www.livelighter.com.au

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For media enquiries please contact Kema Rajandran on (08) 9382 5913 / 0422 022 518 or kema.rajandran@heartfoundation.org.au

¹ Apovian CM. Sugar-sweetened soft drinks, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 2004; 292(8): 978-979.

²1995 National Nutritional Survey; analysis by the NSW Cluster for Public Health Nutrition (based on market share)

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Media Backgrounder

- The LiveLighter campaign is funded by the WA Health Department and run by the Heart Foundation (WA Division) in conjunction with the Cancer Council of WA.
- LiveLighter is an “umbrella campaign” incorporating, and building on, the messages of the successful Find Thirty®, Draw the Line® and Go for 2&5® campaigns. Those programs are no longer active.
- Of the OECD countries, Australia is ranked 5th for highest percentage of obese adults. (OECD, Obesity Update 2012)
- Western Australia has the highest proportion of overweight and obese people of all the States and Territories. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Overweight and Obesity in Adults in Australia: A Snapshot, 2007–08)
- A study conducted by Access Economics showed that obesity costs the nation \$58.2 billion each year. (Access Economics, Growing Cost of Obesity 2008).
- 66.3% of Western Australian adults are overweight or obese. (WA Department of Health, Health and Wellbeing of Adults in Western Australia 2011, Overview and Trends)

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