

## National Physical Activity for Health Action Plan

In March 2003 the National Public Health Partnership (NPHP) agreed to support the development of a National Physical Activity for Health Action Plan by the Strategic Intergovernmental forum on Physical Activity and Health (SIGPAH).

The World Health Organization has confirmed its commitment to physical activity including the recently released draft *Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health*. A growing number of countries have developed physical activity plans (Scotland, New Zealand, Canada, Brazil etc). Physical inactivity is a major health issue for Australia with almost half of all Australians insufficiently active for a health benefit. It is timely now for Australia to develop a national Action Plan to facilitate co-ordinated and strategic national action by the health sector and articulate a clear commitment to supporting all Australians to be physically active.

The Action Plan will build on the work undertaken by SIGPAH and the former Active Australia Alliance as well as complementing and adding value to the considerable action at the jurisdiction level to promote physical activity. There is a clear recognition that a successful approach must involve multi sector strategies including health, education, sport and recreation, transport, urban planning and all three levels of government as well as the private and non government sectors. However, the focus of the Plan will be on the role of the health sector, including the role it can play in building partnerships with other sectors.

Stage 1 of the Plan's preparation has involved updating the literature and evidence base on the health impact of physical (in)activity and the evidence for interventions, based on *Getting Australia Active* (Bauman et al 2002). This was prepared by consultants (Dr Fiona Bull, Prof Adrian Bauman, Prof Bill Bellew and Prof Wendy Brown) and also included a review of relevant national and international strategies to inform the Plan's key directions. This is currently being finalised.

The review confirms that physical inactivity is a major risk factor for a range of diseases and conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, some cancers, obesity and falls amongst the elderly. The Plan will identify links with other national strategies on relevant health issues, including the recently released *Healthy Weight 2008*, as well as the needs of different population groups. In particular, the intention is to seek the active involvement of key Indigenous organisations and individuals and to build on already identified physical activity related strategies for this community.

There are clear health benefits for populations who are active and the maximal risk reduction comes from moving those who are inactive to become at least moderately active. The Plan will build on the evidence presented in the review regarding successful interventions in different settings and across the lifespan.

A draft Plan is currently being prepared for consultations at the state and territory and national level in March and April 2004. A national workshop is planned for May to finalise the document for the NPHP by the end of June 2004, prior to forwarding to the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, with the support of its Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.

Michele Herriot, SIGPAH Co-chair, is undertaking the development of the National Physical Activity for Health Action Plan and can be contacted on 08 8226 6355 and [Michele.Herriot@dhs.sa.gov.au](mailto:Michele.Herriot@dhs.sa.gov.au). Alternatively you may wish to contact the National Public Health Partnership Secretariat on (03) 9603 8338. Input from all interested groups is welcome.