



NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity

THE NSW CENTRE FOR OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY

Strategic Directions 2004 - 2008

June 2005

....Contributing to reductions in overweight and obesity among the people of NSW – especially children and adolescents – through public health research.

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

About the NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity

The NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity (COO) is an initiative of the NSW Health Department, supported by the University of Sydney, through the School of Public Health and Discipline of Paediatrics and Child Health.

The NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity is a collaboration between public health groups to address the growing and serious problem of overweight and obesity, with particular emphasis on children and young people. This collaboration brings together expertise in public health nutrition, physical activity, overweight and obesity, and epidemiology, as well as expertise in translating research into action. COO was formed following the NSW Child Obesity Summit (2002), to significantly enhance the research capability in overweight and obesity within NSW.

COO is a collaboration of five groups:

- Australian Centre for Health Promotion (ACHP)
- Centre for Research into Adolescents' Health (CRASH)
- NSW Centre for Physical Activity and Health (CPAH)
- NSW Centre for Public Health Nutrition (CPHN)
- The Discipline of Paediatrics and Child Health

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NSW CPAH
 NSW Centre for Physical Activity and Health

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AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR
 HEALTH PROMOTION

the children's
 hospital at Westmead

COO's funding agreement with NSW Health specifies 9 performance areas:

1. Governance and administration
2. A research and development agenda
3. Population monitoring
4. Determinants research
5. Intervention research
6. Capacity building
7. Whole of government approach
8. Community engagement
9. Well-informed policy

This *Strategic Directions* document was developed with reference to the Funding Agreement with NSW Health and through a series of consultations with stakeholders, including a Strategic Planning Workshop in April 2005.

Overview

This document on COO's Strategic Directions has 5 sections:

- > The vision for the next 3 to 5 years
- > Strategic directions
- > Direction 1 – Pursuing a research agenda that is focussed and applied.
- > Direction 2 – Getting research into practice
- > Direction 3 – Developing a sustainable organisation

The links between the research agenda and initiatives for getting research into policy and practice are key features of this *Strategic Directions* document. The vision identifies WHAT health related and organisational outcomes COO will achieve over the next few years.

The Strategic Directions set the focus for COO's effort, and provide criteria to act as filters in choosing which projects or activities it will and won't undertake. The strategic directions encapsulate the nine performance areas of the funding agreement and demonstrate an integrated approach to driving the research agenda and developing capacity building initiatives.

The three strategic directions provide the framework for COO's work program. A range of current and proposed initiatives are identified with each direction. These initiatives will continue to be developed and refined over the next 3 years. Details of projects, including their timeframes, resources, performance indicators and milestones are covered within annual work plans. A set of project management systems is also in place to endorse project specifications, monitor progress and resources, and review reports.

The Vision

The NSW Centre for Overweight and Obesity.....Contributing to reductions in overweight and obesity among the people of NSW – especially children and adolescents – through public health research.

COO will have made a difference over the next three to five years by:

- increasing awareness and understanding of overweight and obesity
- increasing understanding of effective prevention and treatment interventions for overweight and obesity
- contributing to policy and system changes, within and beyond the health sector, to reduce overweight and obesity.

In making this contribution, COO will be a viable organisation with a high profile and will have:

- secured additional external funding
- established a presence in or links across a number of locations
- created an environment supportive of research and research training
- developed a reputation as a resource centre with specialised expertise in research and policy related to overweight and obesity.

COO's strategic directions for the next three to five years:

- 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.
- 2. Getting research into practice:** Actively translate research into policy and practice changes.
- 3. Developing a sustainable organisation:** Select and undertake work that contributes to COO's overall sustainability.

1. Pursuing a research agenda that is focussed and applied

Direction: 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.

Intervention research	
<p>Aim: COO contributes to the development of knowledge about effective interventions and intervention components that are appropriate and feasible within the NSW and Australian context, and that build on determinants and monitoring research.</p>	<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Identify, review and disseminate research information on interventions > Conduct, collate and disseminate formative research to inform intervention design > Collaborate in the development and evaluation of interventions for the prevention and management of overweight and obesity > Lead evaluation studies on interventions for the prevention and management of overweight and obesity > Support the application of best-practice to the design of interventions
<p>Current initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Work with selected Area Health Services and NSW Health on the evaluation of the NSW Health child obesity prevention community interventions > Review of evidence on effective physical activity interventions for adolescents. > Participation in PEACH study (Sydney site) – Parenting, activity and eating for child health weight management program 	
<p>Proposed initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Do intervention research that addresses selected determinants, in partnership with practice groups. 	

Determinants of overweight and obesity

Aim:

COO contributes to knowledge about determinants of overweight and obesity, particularly the role of social and environmental factors and patterns of variation between socio-economic groups.

Activities:

- > Identify, review and disseminate research information on determinants of overweight and obesity
- > Describe patterns of variation in overweight and obesity and determinants
- > Investigate determinants through available data sets
- > Investigate the role of environmental factors in influencing physical activity and nutrition
- > Investigate community perceptions and barriers to individual and organisational action.

Current projects/commitments:

- > Qualitative study on community perceptions of the problem of children's overweight and obesity.
- > NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey 2004 (SPANS) survey and studies on food habits, physical activity, fundamental motor skills, sedentary behaviours, school environment.
- > Sub-studies on the Nepean Longitudinal Study
- > Projects on environmental influences on overweight and obesity

Proposed initiatives

- > Use spatial mapping to present data on weight status, food consumption and physical activity patterns.

Population monitoring

Aim:

COO produces information on weight status and related determinants for population groups within NSW that is used to inform interventions, and contribute to the establishment of monitoring systems.

Activities:

- > Conduct a limited range of surveys that allow monitoring of trends
- > Identify, review and disseminate measurement systems and tools
- > Identify a systematic framework for ongoing monitoring systems

Current initiatives:

- > NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey 2004 (SPANS) reports

Proposed initiatives

- > Develop an integrated approach to monitoring that spans environmental and behavioural determinants and examines relationships with health service utilisation and outcomes.
- > Focus monitoring studies on specific determinants, (including media messages and exposure) that have changed over the last 20 years, in order to support interventions.
- > Identify and disseminate appropriate indicators and measurement instruments.

2. Getting research into practice

(incorporating capacity building, well informed policy, community engagement, whole of government approach)

Direction: Actively translate research into policy and practice changes.

Getting research into policy and practice	
<p>Aim: COO contributes to building a stronger capacity to address overweight and obesity across professional and community groups, through communicating research in ways that inform policy and practice.</p>	<p>Activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Investigate and conduct research on the capacity required and available to address overweight and obesity. > Assimilate and apply best practice methods in the dissemination of research and its application into policy and practice > Provide a range of information 'products' for professional groups, media and other stakeholders.
<p>Current initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Investigate implementation issues for the NHMRC Clinical guidelines on management of overweight and obesity for children > Conduct professional short courses/workshops on obesity topics, as required > Provide placements and training opportunities for postgraduate students, Public Health Officers and health promotion professionals. > Provide research information in accessible formats for a variety of audiences > Facilitate and contribute to evaluation of the <i>NSW Government Action Plan</i> > Seek advice from a range of stakeholders on their informational needs, and their specific interests in relation to COO research projects, through consultations, reference groups and project briefings. > Commitment to a media monitoring database 	
<p>Proposed initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Media analysis studies > Build stronger infrastructure for media communication and policy input. > Set up an information resource on measures and tools on the COO website > Provide consultancy on research and evaluation to Area Health Services > Support evaluation of NSW school canteen strategy by Centre for Public Health Nutrition. 	

3. Developing a sustainable organisation (Incorporating governance and administration and organisational development)

Direction: Position and develop the organisation and its work program in a way that contributes to COO's overall sustainability.

Governance, administration and organisational development

Aim:

COO develops as a viable organisation, with a high professional profile and a secure funding base.

Activities:

- > Adopt transparent governance arrangements
- > Actively seek stakeholder engagement through advisory mechanisms and specific activities and projects
- > Implement systems that ensure the organisation is effective, efficient and accountable
- > Select and undertake research and capacity building projects that enhance the professional profile of COO with key stakeholders
- > Build the infrastructure, profile and funding base of COO
- > Links with other research groups

Current initiatives:

- > Co-location with CPAH, CPHN, CRASH, and development of the Sydney University Prevention Research Centres (PRC) group
- > Membership and links with Australian Child & Adolescent Obesity Research Network (ACORN), Australian Society for the Study of Obesity (ASSO) and membership of the Sax Institute
- > Advisory structures
- > Seeking funding for additional projects and consultancies e.g. *Tender for Australian Department of Health & Ageing (ADHA) on framework for interventions to address overweight and obesity in adults*