



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mrs Elizabeth Kikkert MLA (Chair), Mr Michael Pettersson MLA (Deputy Chair),
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Auditor-General's Performance
Audit Reports July 2022 - December 2022

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Feedback submission

ACT Auditor-General's Report: ACT Childhood Healthy Eating and Active Living Programs Report No. 7 / 2022

The Obesity Collective is the peak body for obesity in Australia. It is a national umbrella coalition with a vision to reduce the health and wellbeing impacts of obesity in Australia.

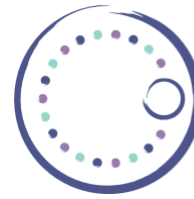
We thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the above-mentioned report. We commend the ACT government for progressing the Healthy Canberra ACT Preventive Health Plan 2020-2025 with tangible actions. In a high level review of the Auditor-General's report summary, we feel the following recommendations are particularly pertinent and so have provided further considerations on the science and many drivers of obesity.

Recommendation 1 regarding professional learning and guidelines. We further recommend that any professional learning and guidelines developed or implemented include the science of obesity.

The stigma associated with obesity arises from the general misunderstanding of the drivers of obesity and the perception that it is **only** about personal decisions about food and physical activity. While acknowledging that everyone has a personal responsibility for their own health and wellbeing, we must also acknowledge that many of the most powerful drivers of obesity lie outside of a person's control. Obesity has powerful underlying biological causes, which are exacerbated in our obesogenic environment, particularly with social disadvantage, and can accumulate across generations.

Because the development of obesity is so complex, there is no one solution that will reduce the risks and health impacts of obesity for everyone. Owing to the heterogeneity of obesity, the health implications of a higher weight will not affect every child's health in the same way. Therefore, a nuanced, person-centred approach that considers the complex drivers of obesity should be core to any delivery of service to address atypical growth and development.

Healthcare teams need to be supported with education, guidelines, and toolkits to provide supportive and effective healthcare to people whose weight is potentially impacting their health.



Recommendation 6 regarding food relief and financial support for food insecurity. We further recommend multi-agency and cross-sectorial actions to reduce the underlying factors of food insecurity.

Obesity affects all sections of society, but equity is a major issue with rates being higher in communities with relative socio-economic disadvantage, lower levels of education attainment, regional and remote areas, as well as Indigenous Australians. Social determinants such as education, income and housing can have considerable impacts on people's opportunities to be healthy and well in general, including obesity risk.

The complex factors that may contribute to financial instability are likely to have implications that extend beyond the financial insecurity that prevent a family from accessing healthy foods and physical activity opportunities, therefore, it is crucial that these factors which include that include trauma, stress, mental illness, housing, and family structure are addressed through multiple government departments with cross governmental accountability and collaboration.

