Helping Canberra turn type 2 diabetes round

The health of Australia’s Parliament was in the spotlight today when Diabetes Australia conducted health checks and type 2 diabetes risk assessments with the country’s 150 Federal MPs.

Michelle Trute from Diabetes Australia said it was an important opportunity to put the condition on the personal agenda of Australia’s political leaders.

“Type 2 diabetes is the world’s fastest growing chronic disease and can affect anyone, including our politicians,” Ms Trute said.

“While Prime Minister Tony Abbott certainly sets the bar high with his exercise regime, for many MPs, the combination of long working hours and frequent functions can contribute to weight gain, poor diets and physical inactivity.

“Gradual weight gain and deterioration of healthy eating and activity can creep up on people and ultimately push them into the high risk category for type 2 diabetes.

“Being overweight or obese significantly increases an individual’s likelihood of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease.”

Ms Trute said undertaking community risk assessments are an important part in addressing the burgeoning epidemic and reducing the significant costs associated with the disease.

“There are more than 1.7 million Australians living with type 2 diabetes which costs the Australian taxpayer an estimated $14.6 billion per annum in healthcare and carer costs and Commonwealth government subsidies,” Ms Trute said.

“The diabetes bill is forecast to increase to $30 billion by 2025 unless urgent action is taken.

“We need prevention, early detection and optimal care, better support and research to turn the type 2 diabetes epidemic around.

“Early intervention reduces the impact of costly complications. For instance, the average annual healthcare cost per person with diabetes is $4025, however diabetes complications can more than double that to $9465 per annum.

Member for Hasluck and Chair of the Parliamentary Diabetes Support Group (PDSG) Ken Wyatt applauded Diabetes Australia for conducting risk assessments at Parliament today.

“It is tremendous having Diabetes Australia here today at Parliament House to conduct risk assessments for my Parliamentary colleagues,” Mr Wyatt said.

“What is also really important is making MPs aware of the numbers of people in each electorate with type 2 diabetes which helps to highlight how critical this issue is.”

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Member for Moreton and Deputy Chair of the PDSG, Graham Perrett encouraged his fellow MPs to throw their support behind type 2 diabetes awareness.

“I recommended all my parliamentary colleagues attend the Diabetes Health Check today to help understand the importance of preventative health regarding diabetes and promote that information in their community,” Mr Perrett said.

“I am also encouraging parents and carers to build the skills to eat well, get active and live a healthy lifestyle.”

Ms Trute encouraged all Australians to understand their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by taking the free online test using the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool (AUSDRISK).

“Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include family history, not exercising regularly and having a waist measurement above 94cm for men and 80cm for women,” Ms Trute said.

“I encourage anyone who thinks they might be at risk to visit www.diabetesaustralia.com.au

“The test only takes around ten minutes and could be the difference between whether or not you develop type 2 diabetes.”

If you score 12 or more you are at high risk and may have pre-diabetes – you should consult your doctor and talk about a prevention program.

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Media Contact: Liam Ferney 0448 130 925

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