



## MEDIA RELEASE

National Diabetes Week 2015 (12–18 July)

UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 9.30 AM SUNDAY 12 JULY

### 3 out of 4 Australians underestimate the diabetes epidemic

New research\* released by Diabetes Australia today shows that three out of four people substantially underestimate the prevalence of diabetes and over 60% of people don't link diabetes to its major complications including heart attacks, stroke, anxiety and depression.

"This study of over 1000 Australians\*\* highlights most people still underestimate the vast number of people developing diabetes, and the serious health complications of diabetes if it's not diagnosed and managed," says Diabetes Australia CEO Greg Johnson. "People also tend to underestimate their personal risk. Two out of three people older than 55 years or younger than 24 years stated that they are not at risk."

Diabetes Australia's new awareness campaign '*280 a day*' focusses on the number of Australians who develop diabetes every day. The new TV ad shows images of 280 Australians and highlights the 24/7 nature of living with diabetes and its serious complications. "Everyone needs to know more about diabetes," says Mr Johnson. "Most Australians are at risk and 'you don't have to be old, you don't have to be overweight' to develop diabetes."

The findings of the survey show that almost two in three respondents correctly identified blindness (64%), kidney damage (64%) and amputation (62%) as possible complications of diabetes. Only 40% were able to identify heart disease and 34% identify stroke which are also major complications of diabetes. The fact that diabetes is associated with depression, anxiety and dementia was correctly identified by only a minority of respondents (36%, 25% and 7% respectively).

"This campaign is about all diabetes and is targeting the general public, not people who already have diabetes," says Mr Johnson. "All types of diabetes are serious and complex and can increase a person's risk of developing life-threatening complications, yet the general public do not see the whole picture."

"Diabetes can be a silent killer if not managed well," says Craig Bennett, CEO of Diabetes Victoria. "Many death certificates quote 'heart attack' or 'stroke', camouflaging the fact that diabetes is an underlying cause of death in many cases. There is a great need to share this fact with the general public and to raise awareness."

Diabetes is the fastest growing chronic disease in Australia. Around 1.7 million Australians have diabetes. This includes all types of diagnosed diabetes (1.2 million known and registered), as well as 'silent', undiagnosed type 2 diabetes (up to 500,000 estimated). More than 100,000 Australians have developed diabetes in the past year alone.

## #280aday – What do you need to know?

[www.diabetesaustralia.com.au](http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au)

“There are three main types of diabetes: type 1, type 2 and gestational diabetes,” Mr Bennett says. “Each type of diabetes has different underlying causes and may be managed with different strategies, but once you develop diabetes you will have to manage the condition every day for the rest of your life.”

For every person diagnosed with diabetes there is usually a family member or carer who also 'lives with diabetes' every day in a support role. Mr Bennett adds: “In our survey, almost 60 per cent of respondents indicated they have had personal experience with diabetes, either having the condition themselves (10%), or through having a friend or family member with the condition (49%). Despite this personal experience, these findings show a concerning lack of awareness.”

Diabetes Australia's 280 a day awareness campaign is funded by a donation from the eftpos Giveback program. eftpos Managing Director Bruce Mansfield says: “We feel passionate about making Australians aware of the health ramifications faced by our society with the growing number of diabetes cases being diagnosed every day. Awareness is one of the keys to helping people manage the disease and enjoy better lives.” eftpos joined forces as a key charity partner with Diabetes Australia in January 2014.

*Diabetes Australia is the national body for people affected by all types of diabetes and those at risk. Diabetes Australia is committed to reducing the impact of diabetes. We work in partnership with diabetes health professionals, researchers and the community to minimise the impact of diabetes.*

*\*The new research published by Diabetes Australia was conducted by the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes, a collaboration between Diabetes Victoria and Deakin University.*

*\*\* The sample of the online survey was 1011 adults (over 18 years) from all states and territories in Australia. 10% reported having diabetes and 49% reported having a family member or friend with diabetes.*

### For more information:

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# SPEAKERS

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## Adjunct Prof Greg Johnson – CEO Diabetes Australia



Greg Johnson joined Diabetes Victoria as Chief Executive in January 2003. He was Acting Chief Executive of Diabetes Australia from July 2009 to February 2011 and was appointed permanently in November 2012.

He has over 25 years experience in healthcare leadership in CEO and Board roles and has lived and worked in NSW, Victoria, SA and Tasmania. He is an Adjunct Professor with Deakin University and holds a degree in pharmacy, post-graduate qualifications in hospital pharmacy and health service management, and a masters degree in business administration.

He has participated in a wide range of health industry and government advisory committees and has a particular interest in prevention and has led the establishment of a number of leading diabetes prevention initiatives. Greg is also a passionate advocate for people affected by diabetes and raising awareness of the seriousness and impact of diabetes on the health and productivity of Australia.

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## Adjunct Prof Craig Bennett – CEO Diabetes Victoria



Craig took up his appointment as the CEO of Diabetes Victoria in March 2013. Prior to this, he had been the CEO of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre in Melbourne from May 2004 and the Chief Executive of the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Perth from October 1998 until April 2004.

Craig has long been interested in the economics of health; in hospitals; and in how different parts of the health system connect – particularly from a patient's point of view. This is particularly relevant to his work with diabetes, as a study published in the Medical Journal of Australia indicated that about one in four inpatients in Melbourne's public hospitals had diabetes. Clearly, this is a wakeup call about an issue that needs urgent and coordinated action by all those involved in our public healthcare system. Craig is very focused on developing strategies to assist in meeting this challenge.



## Professor Richard Larkins AO – endocrinologist/diabetes expert



Richard Larkins has had a long career in medical practice in diabetes and endocrinology, in medical research, in teaching and in university administration.

Positions held have included the James Stewart Chair of Medicine at the University of Melbourne, the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health Sciences at the University of Melbourne, Vice-Chancellor of Monash University, Chair of the National Health and Medical Research Council, President of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, President of the Endocrine Society of Australia, Chair of Universities Australia and two stints on the Prime Minister's Science Engineering and Innovation Council.

He has been awarded the Eric Susman Prize for Medical Research, the Sir William Upjohn Medal, the Brownless Medal, honorary doctorates of Law from both Melbourne and Monash Universities amongst several other awards and is an Officer in the Order of Australia.



# CASE STUDIES

National Diabetes Week 2015 (12–18 July)

## Jack Fitzpatrick – AFL player, living with type 1 diabetes



Jack Fitzpatrick is living proof that you can achieve anything you want when living with diabetes. The 24-year old forward/ruckman for the Melbourne Football Club was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes in June 2012, two weeks shy of his 21st birthday.

The two metre tall man dubbed ‘The Fitz’ made his AFL debut in 2011. He believes that living with type 1 diabetes is an “interesting challenge” but that the right attitude and, in his case, playing footy help to lead a normal life.

"It gives you something to look forward to and you don't wallow in self-pity," says the Demons player. He checks his blood glucose levels during every game at quarter time and half time, making sure he doesn't develop hypoglycaemia ('hypo', caused by low blood glucose levels). If left untreated, hypoglycaemia can lead to serious medical problems including loss of consciousness, convulsions or seizures requiring emergency treatment.

He often involves his trainers in his diabetes management and jokes that they help keeping him alive. Since changing to a low carb/high fat diet and after a period of adaption, he was able to reduce his insulin intake. He now only injects long-acting insulin at night, instead of having needles at every meal. This has given him greater flexibility in his diabetes management whilst being able to train fully at high intensity, without losing strength.

Jack is well aware of being a role-model for young people living with diabetes. "I really enjoy being able to tell them about my story and that with careful management, they will be able to live a completely normal life," says Jack.

## Vasanthan Ragunathan – health coach, living with type 2 diabetes



Vasanthan Ragunathan was very upset when she learned that she has type 2 diabetes. "My sister was hospitalised with an extremely high blood glucose reading of 27," remembers the health coach from Rosanna, "and within four years she had both her legs amputated above the knee."

Blood glucose levels for people without diabetes generally range between 3.5–8.0mmol/L. However, when living with diabetes, maintaining those levels within the target range is not always easy. For over a decade, Vasanthan has managed to stay in the target range through lifestyle changes alone which have helped her to feel fit and healthy. She says: "Don't take any shortcuts when it comes to your health."



Vasantha follows a strict and healthy diet and exercises regularly; she particularly enjoys walking, lifting weights and yoga. The mother of two adult sons is determined to have a good quality of life and believes that sufficient sleep and good habits are important factors in achieving this goal.

Having high blood glucose levels over a period of time can cause damage to the small and large blood vessels and the nerves. This can lead to many health complications which Vasantha is well aware of. She is a textbook example when it comes to following up with her medical team. She has her eyes checked yearly, sees her dentist and GP every six months and a podiatrist every eight weeks. She also checks her blood glucose levels at least three times a week.

Only three months ago, she followed her GP's recommendation and started taking diabetes medication. "I didn't like the idea," says Vasantha. "I needed some time to accept that my body doesn't produce enough insulin anymore." Since starting medication, Vasantha has felt a positive effect on her health.

### **Bev Friend – management and business consultant, *Life!* champion**



Bev Friend has never officially been accounted in the '280 a day' figure – and she is very proud of it. The management and business consultant from Torquay was on the path of developing type 2 diabetes but successfully has turned this scenario around.

At least two million Australians have pre-diabetes and are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Not everybody can do what Bev has achieved but there is strong evidence from randomised controlled trials which show that type 2 diabetes can be prevented in up to 58 per cent of people at high risk, through structured lifestyle intervention.

A keen golfer and runner, Bev had always been very health conscious, even whilst working and raising 3 children. Last year, she unfortunately went through some emotionally difficult periods.

These tough times sent her into a downward spiral and Bev started to drink more regularly to help relax and ease her stress. Bev's blood sugar levels also increased and she and her GP were concerned that she was on the path to type 2 diabetes. "One of my closest friends has type 2 diabetes as well as my ex-husband. I'd seen the impact of it and I knew where I was heading."

After a work function, Bev was driving home and heard a *Life!* program radio advertisement. She immediately pulled over, wrote the number down and called 13 RISK as soon as she got home. Bev signed up for the Telephone Health Coaching service with health coach Jenny.

"It was just fantastic. Jenny knew the sort of person I was – I work in a similar field in coaching professionals – and she could really click into my head space. Jenny was just terrific and reminded me of all the simple things to do." Bev made some simple changes. Instead of going home to a couple of glasses of wine, cheese and biscuits every night, she switched to a low fat, low sugar hot chocolate for two nights a week.



“I did that for a month. The next month I didn’t have the hot chocolate and after three months I went off alcohol all together. My liver sent me love letters! Now I’m in a very healthy state. I only drink alcohol in moderation with friends and as soon as I get home I’ll go for a swim, sauna and a spa.”

Bev’s aim was to get back to a healthy weight range, a healthy BMI and lose 10cm from her waist. She achieved that and more losing 11 kilograms and 13cm from her waist. Today Bev is feeling fabulous. “I feel my whole way of life has improved – I’m back on track.”

## Ian Westman – former bank manager, living with type 2 diabetes



Ian Westman was watching a game of footy with one of his mates when the two blokes started talking about their health. “My friend was curious if my diabetes had already gone away,” laughs Ian who of course knows that he will live with type 2 diabetes for the rest of his life. There is no cure for diabetes.

The former bank manager from Oakleigh was 38-years young when he learned of his diagnosis. Although being a young and very active person, Ian was aware of his high risk of developing type 2 diabetes as it runs in his family. “It was a bit of time-bomb,” says Ian. His mum was keen to have him tested after he lost a lot of weight and was generally exhausted. “I wasn’t looking after myself as good as I could have at that time.”

Since his diagnosis in 1994, Ian has changed his diet and is very mindful of what he is eating. “I have cut the soft drinks altogether,” says Ian who loves walking his two dogs and aims to walk 10,000 steps every day. The main treatment for type 2 diabetes is healthy eating and regular physical activity. Next to making appropriate lifestyle changes, taking oral medications or administering insulin are important options in the management of type 2 diabetes.

“I feel that many people do not understand diabetes,” says Ian. “Especially the differences between type 1 and type 2 are not generally known or, in my case, that some people with type 2 are required to administer insulin too.” Ian is one of over 236,000 Australians (23%) who need insulin to manage their type 2 diabetes. He currently has two injections every day.



# QUICK FACTS

National Diabetes Week 2015 (12–18 July)

## Prevalence

The best estimate is that 1.7 million Australians have diabetes which includes all types of diabetes, type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, gestational diabetes as well as silent, undiagnosed type 2 diabetes.

Over 100,000 Australians have developed diabetes in the past year.

**Type 1 diabetes** is an auto-immune condition in which the immune system is activated to destroy the cells in the pancreas which produce insulin.

**Type 2 diabetes** is a chronic condition that occurs when the pancreas does not produce enough insulin and or the insulin does not work properly.

**Gestational diabetes** develops during pregnancy and usually does not continue after the birth of the child.

Mothers after gestational diabetes are more likely to develop type 2 diabetes.

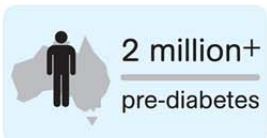
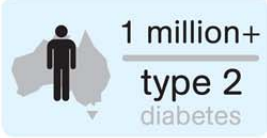
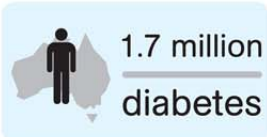
Children after gestational diabetes have an increased health risk.

## Pre-diabetes

At least 2 million Australians have pre-diabetes and are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes in coming years.

## Preventing type 2 diabetes

Take the risk test. A score of 12 or more means a person is at high risk. Evidence shows that type 2 diabetes can be prevented in up to 58% of high risk cases.



[checkmyrisk.org.au](http://checkmyrisk.org.au)

## Seriousness

Diabetes is a complex metabolic condition. The seriousness of diabetes is often under-estimated.

## Complications

Early diagnosis, treatment and effective ongoing management reduce the risk of diabetes and related complications including:

**heart attacks and strokes:** up to four times more likely in people with diabetes

**blindness:** diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in working age adults

**kidney damage:** three times more common in people with diabetes

**amputations:** 15 times more common in people with diabetes.

## Cost

The cost of diabetes in Australia is estimated at \$14.6 billion in 2013.

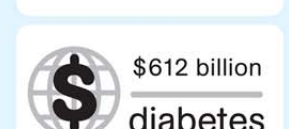
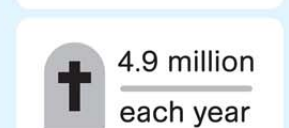


## International facts

Almost 400 million people have diabetes; by 2035 this will rise to 600 million.

4.9 million deaths caused by diabetes in the past year.

Global health expenditure to treat and manage diabetes was upward of US \$612 billion in 2014.







## Backgrounder:

# National Diabetes Week 2015

### Diabetes in Australia

Diabetes is the fastest-growing chronic disease in Australia. Over 1.7 million Australians are living with diabetes and a further 280 Australians develop diabetes every day. In the past 12 months, 100,000 Australians have developed diabetes. The prevalence of all types of diabetes is increasing: the prevalence of type 1 diabetes is increasing, the prevalence of type 2 diabetes is increasing, and the prevalence of gestational diabetes is increasing.

Diabetes is the major global threat to human health and productivity in the 21st century. The disease costs Australia more than \$14.6 billion per annum, and as much as \$9046 per annum in individual health care. By 2017, diabetes is expected to overtake heart disease as the number one burden of disease in Australia and by 2031, it is estimated that 3.3 million Australians will have type 2 diabetes.

Over 2 million Australians are already at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes and have developed atypical blood glucose levels, yet many do not know it. Factors that increase risk of type 2 diabetes include family history, cultural background, smoking and physical inactivity.

The personal impact of diabetes is significant. The condition has no known cure and there are serious complications common to all types of diabetes including heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, limb amputation, depression, anxiety and blindness. For every person diagnosed with diabetes there is usually a family member or carer who also 'lives with diabetes' every day in a support role.

### National Diabetes Week 2015

National Diabetes Week is celebrated in the second week of July each year. It is a week to raise awareness of diabetes and its prevalence in Australia.

In 2015, Diabetes Australia will launch a new campaign to coincide with National Diabetes Week (12 – 18 July), which will bring attention to the increasing prevalence and serious consequences of diabetes. The campaign will focus on the theme '280 a day', which draws attention to how many Australians develop diabetes every day.

Qualitative research conducted earlier this year demonstrates that there is a need to enhance awareness of diabetes amongst the general public, and in particular to develop strategies to address the existing low perceptions of personal susceptibility to diabetes. Participants did not think of themselves as being susceptible to the serious consequences and complications of diabetes. Nor did they think that they might have to inject themselves with insulin.

The '280 a day' campaign will address these misconceptions surrounding diabetes and will emphasise the prevalence of diabetes. Diabetes Australia is calling on all Australians to support the campaign and help to raise awareness of diabetes during National Diabetes Week 2015.

**[www.diabetesaustralia.com.au](http://www.diabetesaustralia.com.au)**