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Standing Committee on Health and Ageing
Inquiry into Obesity in Australia

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Terms of reference

The Committee will inquire into and report on the increasing prevalence of obesity in the Australian population, focusing on future implications for Australia's health system.

The Committee will recommend what governments, industry, individuals and the broader community can do to prevent and manage the obesity epidemic in children, youth and adults.

Submission

Public health workers and epidemiologists agree that obesity is a major health concern in Australia today. Obesity is caused by excess energy intake, low levels of exercise, a built environment which promotes reliance on private cars and readily available and cheap energy dense food.

I am writing this submission to offer my expertise at predicting future obesity rates, calculating future health system impacts, and ability to translate weight gain or losses in the population into saved lives and reduced disease.

At UQ, I work with Theo Vos, who was directly invited to participate in this submission process, in the Centre for Burden of Disease and Cost-effectiveness. This centre works to provide health policy makers with best available evidence to guide the allocation of resources.

As a result of our research, we have built a sophisticated mathematical model of weight in Australia. This model can predict how changes in weight, whether it be up or down, can impact directly on the diseases which result from obesity. If the future of disease related obesity can be predicted the implications for Australia's health system are easier to predict.

Therefore, our submission is not about *why* obesity occurs, but rather relates to determining how changes in weight change the pattern of disease in Australia. If this expertise proves useful to the committee, particularly when reporting on the future impact of obesity, cost-effectiveness evaluation of programs to prevent or decrease obesity and the future prevalence of obesity, please contact me using the information above.