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Kid's health check- A step in the right direction

Yesterday's roundtable on childhood obesity hosted by Opposition spokeswoman for Health Nicola Roxon has been commended by the Australian General Practice Network (AGPN).

Childhood obesity is a growing epidemic that needs to be tackled now to improve the health of Australia's youngest citizens.

One in four Australian children are overweight or obese. Obesity not only causes serious health problems but can also result in social problems such as overweight children being bullied.

AGPN CEO Kate Carnell who attended the discussion said one of the proposed measures was to tie in the four year old immunisations with healthy weight checks.

"GPs and practice nurses are able to effectively communicate with parents in a professional manner. They have the knowledge and the skills to help parents make smarter lifestyle choices.

"This is an excellent way to effectively reach and teach parents," Ms Carnell said.

Parents and guardians do need to understand the very damaging health effects obesity can have on their children.

"There are multiple contributing factors to childhood obesity and it is disturbing to solely blame parents for their children's weight. Many parents are not trained in childhood nutrition and can need and do appreciate professional guidance," Ms Carnell said.

The AGPN budget submission strongly argued for a new Medicare item number which would allow the GP or practice nurse to provide an intervention of up to 15 minutes around healthy eating habits and exercise, opening the door for guidance on healthy weight management discussion.

It is well known that overweight children often become overweight adults. Inevitably as obesity levels rise, so will the pressure on our already strained health system.

"It's a social and financial problem that is not going to go away without strong support and leadership," Ms Carnell said.

For further information please call AGPN CEO Kate Carnell on 0415 662 266