



Jai Rowell MP

Minister for Mental Health
Assistant Minister for Health

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 1 August, 2014

COUNTRY COMMUNITIES ENCOURAGED TO SHED THE KILOS AS PART OF NSW HEALTHY TOWN CHALLENGE

NSW rural and regional communities are being encouraged to take up the fight against obesity and enter the Healthy Town Challenge, as part of an initiative launched by the Assistant Minister for Health, Jai Rowell.

The Minister said five towns would be selected to face off in the Healthy Towns Challenge, a joint initiative between NSW Health and Heart Foundation NSW.

“Towns outside the greater Sydney metropolitan area with populations between 1000 and 15,000 can enter to win a first prize of \$5000,” Mr Rowell said.

The prize money can be put towards initiatives that further support the local community to be healthy, such as sports equipment, training or cooking classes.

Entries close on 12 September, and the weight loss challenge will run from 1 October 2014 to 1 June 2015. The duration of the weight loss challenge is 24 weeks and the winning town will be announced in June 2015.

“The town that collectively has the greatest progress towards healthy weight, after taking into account population size, will be announced the winner at an awards ceremony in Sydney,” Mr Rowell said.

“The NSW Government, through the NSW Office of Preventive Health and NSW Ministry of Health, together with Heart Foundation (NSW), is committed to working across communities to help them become healthier.

“It is well known that a team effort can have greater impact than individuals working alone. The Healthy Town Challenge aims to bring together all those with an interest in improving health across rural and regional NSW; local communities and businesses, local government, Medicare Locals and Local Health Districts.”

Heart Foundation NSW Chief Executive Kerry Doyle said her organisation was proud to partner with NSW Government in delivering the program, saying she expected rural and regional communities would enthusiastically rise to the challenge.

“We look forward to communities across the state working together innovatively to address the challenge of creating environments that encourage healthier eating and active living, and which supports individuals to prevent chronic disease and improve how they feel,” Ms Doyle said.

“This is a fantastic way people in country towns across NSW can join with friends in getting fit, perhaps learning a new fitness activity and having fun in their efforts to lose weight and stay healthy.”

Collective town progress towards healthy weight will be calculated based on the number of people registering for NSW Health’s Get Healthy Service.

The Get Healthy Service is a free six month telephone-based coaching service where healthy lifestyle information and ongoing, personalised support are delivered to help people make lasting lifestyle changes, including better food choices, increased vegetable and fruit consumption and higher exercise levels.

“We are looking forward to seeing which five NSW towns will compete to be the most healthy town in NSW,” Mr Rowell said.

To enter: Forms are available from: <http://www.preventivehealth.net.au/healthy-towns.html>

Email your town’s application to santosh.khanal@sswahs.nsw.gov.au or fax to: 02 8738 6371 by **12 September 2014**.

Individual registration with Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service **closes 31 October 2014** and all town participants must sign on in order to be counted towards the town total weight loss.