

Childhood obesity prevention program gets tick of approval from top doctor

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Former AMA Queensland President Dr Shaun Rudd with PEACH program director and head of QUT's Exercise and Nutrition Sciences School, Professor Lynne Daniels

The champion of childhood obesity prevention and former AMA Qld president Dr Shaun Rudd has given the thumbs up to a free state government-funded program from QUT to address rising levels of obesity in children.

The [PEACH](#) (Parenting, Eating and Activity for Child Health) [program](#) will roll out again in more than 20 locations around Queensland after the school holidays finish in mid-July.

Dr Rudd said the increasing problem of overweight and obese [children](#) in Queensland indicated a genuine need for a program such as PEACH.

"I'm thrilled that Queensland families now have access to a free program that offers parents the skills and confidence to lead a healthier lifestyle for the long term," said Dr Rudd

"The great thing about PEACH is that it recognises that the problem is complex and influenced by many factors such as the environment we live in and the hectic lifestyles we lead."

Dr Rudd added the first step to making positive change was for parents and carers to recognise their child was overweight and make weighing and measuring children part of a standard health check with their GP.

"It's about taking control and learning skills that will then be passed onto children," he said.

Program director and head of QUT's Exercise and Nutrition Sciences School, Professor Lynne Daniels, said the program was being offered for the first time at Kenmore South, Springfield Lakes and Hervey Bay. It will also be run in six other Brisbane locations (Redlands, Dutton Park, North Lakes, Aspley, Mackenzie and Caboolture), Bundaberg, the Sunshine Coast, Logan, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Mackay, Cairns, Townsville, Yeppoon, Coomera, Burleigh Heads, Roma, Charleville and St George.

"Families with a child between 5-11 years whose weight is above a healthy range for their age and gender are eligible for the program. In Roma, St George and Charleville it is available to all families and it really is a program with the potential to transform lives," Professor Daniels said.

"PEACH was launched in September 2013 and more than 500 Queensland families have taken part so far. The response we have had so far has been very encouraging and reinforces the need for the program.

""We hear parents say they are so relieved to be able to access this professional help because often they don't know where to begin.

"Parents should not feel guilty if they think their child is overweight, but they do need to make change in their family's lifestyle which is where the PEACH Program can help.

"By taking a parent-led approach, the program ensures that children are not stigmatised but that healthy change is made at a family level and therefore the benefits are there for all."

The program runs for six months and consists of 10 group sessions that run for 90 minutes each. The first nine sessions are held weekly within the school term. Ongoing individualised family support is offered through the second half of the program ending with one final group session.

Topics covered include nutrition skills, relationships with food and eating, changing family lifestyle behaviours and making healthy eating affordable. While the parent sessions are taking place, children enjoy active play with a trained child physical activity facilitator.

- The PEACH program is evidence-based, internationally recognised and meets current guidelines and recommendations.
- Research shows that the program works. It has been evaluated as effective in a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC)-funded trial the results of which were published in 2011 in *Pediatrics*, the official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- In Australia, overweight and obesity rates in children has doubled over the past 30 years and in 2011-2012 in Queensland, one in four children is above their healthy weight.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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