



Fat tax not the whole answer

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DENMARK has introduced a food 'fat tax' but Southern Grampians residents can rest assured their high fat and high sugar foods will not be charged at a higher price.

While Danes will now be charged extra for food with more than 2.3 per cent saturated fat, Australia has chosen not to adopt this world-first tax.

Western District Health Service chief executive, Jim Fletcher said the fat tax would not fix the increasing issue of obesity, where more than 50 per cent of Australians now classified as overweight.

"In my view a strategy to tackle obesity and diabetes that only increases the cost of high fats and high sugar foods through taxation without doing anything else would only affect struggling families more," Mr Fletcher said.

"A tax on high fat and high sugar foods would only be successful if it is part of a comprehensive strategy that at the same time reduces the cost, affordability and access to healthy food options, promotes and encourages people to eat less in terms of portion size but more often, and

increase physical activity.

"It also would require government to regulate to reduce the promotion of high fat and high sugar foods.

"In my view if the comprehensive strategy was adopted it would make a difference to the spiralling rates of obesity and diabetes but how much of difference depends upon the choices adults make; however it certainly would have a very positive influence on our younger generation."

However, health advocates are pushing for the tax.

Obesity Policy Coalition senior adviser, Jane Martin said unhealthy foods should be taxed and the funds raised used to subsidise healthy food for people on a low income.

"We know price plays a role in our decisions, and taxes are used in alcohol and tobacco sales to change people's behaviours," she said.

In only 15 years from 1990 to 2005 the number of overweight and obese Australian adults increased by a staggering 2.8 million.

If the current trends continue unabated over the next 20 years it is estimated that nearly three-quarters of the Australian population will be overweight or obese by 2025.