



THE GEORGE INSTITUTE

for Global Health

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Calls For A Halt To Salt

MEDIA RELEASE

The George Institute for Global Health has called for a plan to reduce energy, salt and saturated fat in all fast food at a Fast Food Forum, held today by the New South Wales Government.

The Forum brings together industry, government and public health specialists to devise a plan to tackle problems caused by poor diets. It follows a recent announcement from the Keneally government of plans to introduce labelling on energy, salt and saturated fat levels on menus in fast food restaurants.

“By making every serving a little less unhealthy you get a lot more benefit than by persuading a few motivated people to buy a healthy option’ explained Dr Neal, Senior Director at The George Institute and Professor of Medicine at the University of Sydney. “And if you make small changes each time no one will notice’ he added.

A major report recently showed that national programs to remove small amounts of salt from all foods have as much potential to prevent disease as tobacco control initiatives. Likewise, that moderate reductions in saturated fat consumption could prevent hundreds of heart attacks in Australia each year.

“The Federal Government’s Food and Health Dialogue is a step in the right direction, although progress to date has been glacial. The Dialogue has set targets for just two product categories so far. At this rate it is going to take twenty years just to get agreement on salt”, added Professor Neal.

Australia is now lagging well behind countries like the US and the UK which have already introduced salt targets for 80 different food categories. In the UK the national salt reduction program is already credited with preventing thousands of deaths each year. These benefits have been achieved by government and industry negotiating targets for the whole sector.

Professor Neal concluded “The UK has showed that voluntary agreements to improve the quality of foods can work. However, there needs to be a clear and present threat of regulation, and objective third party monitoring of progress, to keep industry motivated. This is a great opportunity to get large improvements in health at very low cost and simply has to be taken more seriously’.

###ENDS###

Robert Gunning – Communications Manager, The George Institute for Global Health
Tel: +612 8238 2424/ Mobile: +61410 411 983
Fax: +612 9657 0301/ email: rgunning@georgeinstitute.org.au
www.georgeinstitute.org.au

About The George Institute

The George Institute for Global Health is an internationally-recognised health research organisation, undertaking high impact research across a broad health landscape. Affiliated with the University of Sydney, the Institute is a leader in the clinical trials, health policy and capacity-building areas. The Institute has a global network of top medical experts in a range of research fields as well as expertise in research design, project management and data and statistical analysis. With a respected voice among global policy makers, The Institute has attracted significant funding support from governments, philanthropic organisations and corporations. George Institute research is regularly published in the top tier of academic journals internationally.