



## It's time to change the way we speak about obesity

**Health Consumers' Council welcomes a new media and communications guide changing the narrative around obesity.**

*Shift. A guide for media and communications professionals* is a new communications tool that aims to work with media to influence better public perceptions of overweight and obesity.

"The majority of Western Australians have a higher body weight, but there is lots of misunderstanding about what influences this and what the impact is. One way to help reframe this conversation is through a collective shift in the way overweight and obesity is represented and talked about in the media," Health Consumers' Council Deputy Director Clare Mullen said.

The use of respectful, positive language and imagery in communications, media, marketing and health information can reduce stigma and encourage better engagement with health professionals, leading to improved health outcomes.

When Health Consumers' Council asked people about their experiences of weight, almost 800 responses were received with many calling for more empathy and understanding.

"The responses told us that the issues relating to overweight and obesity are complex, including factors such as income, safety, education, stigma, support networks, disability, mental health, access and equity," Ms Mullen said.

"*Shift* will be an important tool to help increase the community's understanding of this topic as work in this space continues."

One person who shared their experience said: "I'm not obese just because I don't know what I should or shouldn't eat. There are lots of issues in my life that I need support with."

"Shame is a huge issue, it is the root of so much pain and inequity within health," a second person commented.

Another person told us: "I feel unlovable because people are constantly fat-shaming others, particularly on social media. I fear people do not like me because I look fat..."

*Shift* was produced by East Metropolitan Health Services, funded by the WA Health Networks Unit in the Department of Health as part of the implementation of the WA Healthy Weight Action Plan 2019–2024. It is available on the [Action Plan website](#).

Health Consumers' Council encourages Western Australians with lived experience of overweight or obesity to join us in ongoing conversations around the Action Plan. Visit the [Health Consumers' Council website](#) to find out how.

**ENDS**

# MEDIA RELEASE



HEALTH CONSUMERS'  
COUNCIL

**Media contact: Clare Mullen**

Deputy Director, Health Consumers' Council

T: 9221 3422 E: [clare.mullen@hconc.org.au](mailto:clare.mullen@hconc.org.au)

**About Health Consumers' Council**

Health Consumers' Council (WA) Inc. is an independent, not for profit organisation established in 1994 with the purpose of giving a voice to health consumers in Western Australia and improving health outcomes by encouraging and supporting consumer engagement and involvement in health services.

Health Consumers' Council welcomes media contact in relation to lived experience of overweight and obesity.

**About the Healthy Weight Action Plan 2019-2024**

The WA Healthy Weight Action Plan 2019-2024 is a joint initiative of WA Health, WA Primary Health Alliance, and Health Consumers' Council. It creates a roadmap for sustainable changes to support people and families who are at-risk of overweight and those with overweight and obesity.