

The role of government in obesity prevention – Lessons from Victoria

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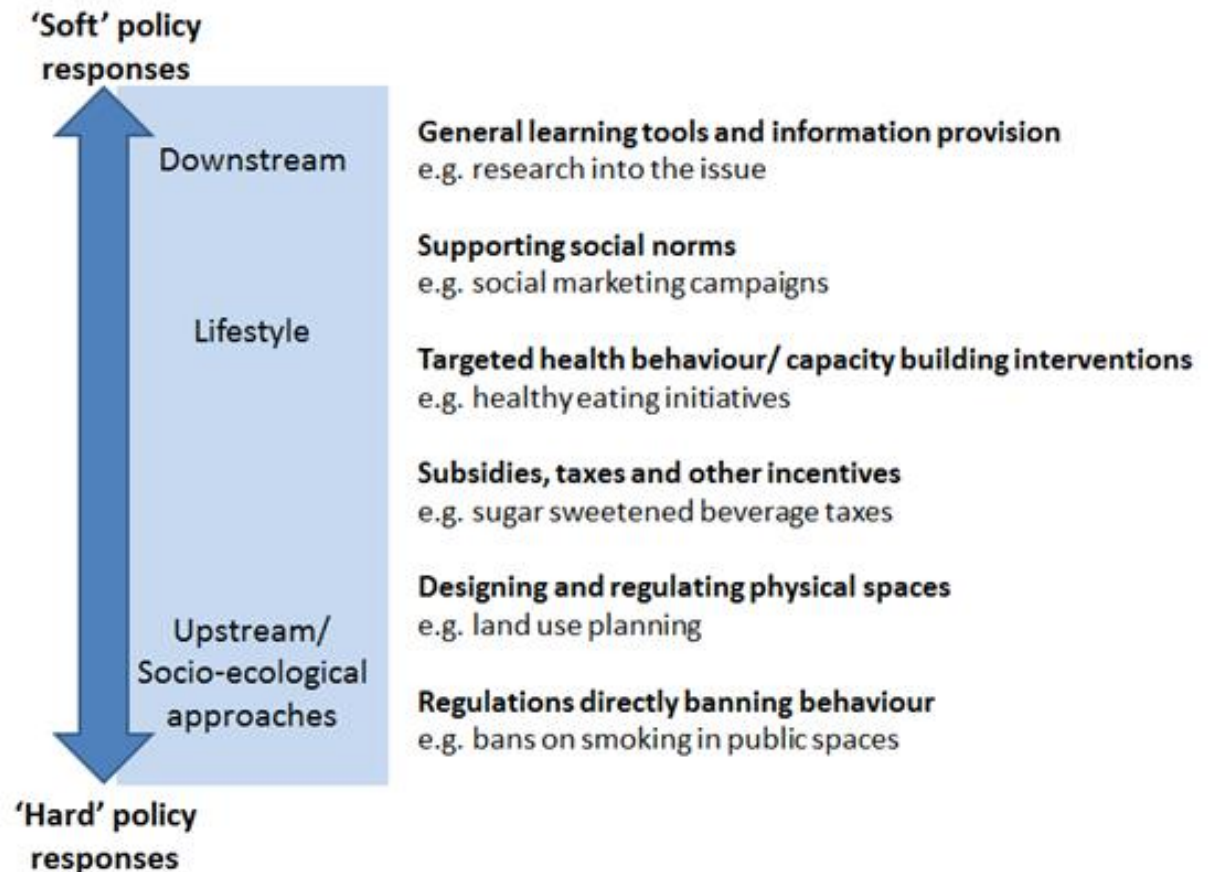
Summary

- Context for government action
- Our current policy environment
- The role of government in place-based approaches to primary prevention of obesity
- An overview of the Victorian experience
- Critical success factors
- Conclusions

Context for government action

In the Australian context, governments tend to only step in when there is market failure – which is arguably the case with obesity.

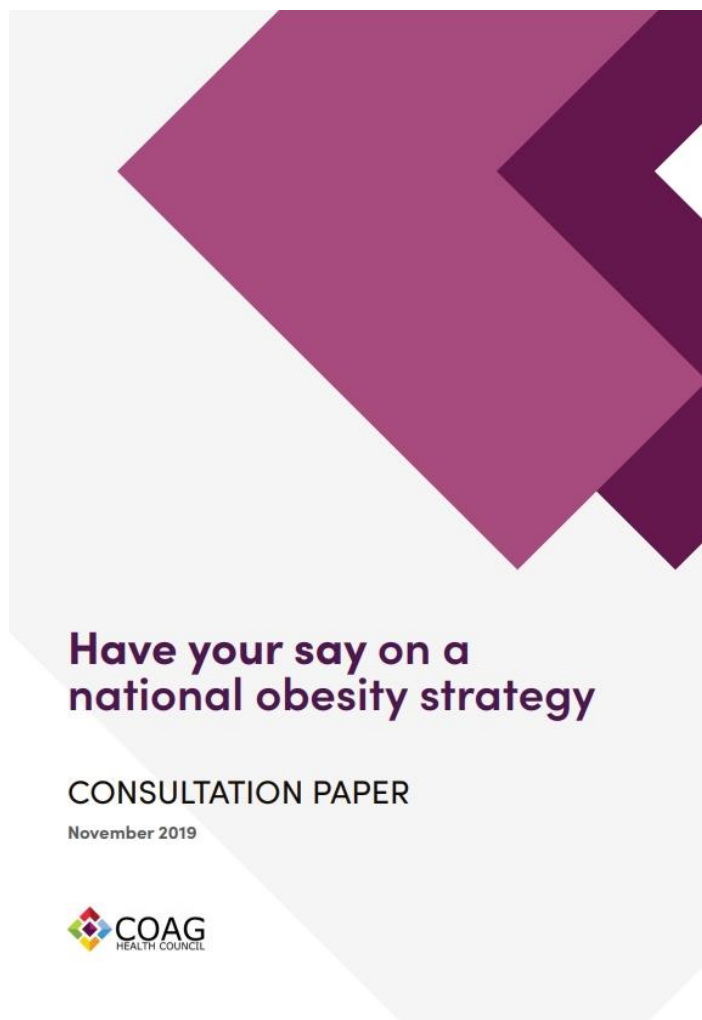
Policy in the form that we think about it will tend to be the preferred option only when other methods (i.e. information provision, social marketing) have not been successful.



Framework for action

1	Authority	What are the decision-making rules? Does government have the necessary authority to take action.
2	Evidence	Is there clear evidence of a problem? And evidence that actions will be effective and feasible?
3	Support	Are stakeholders supportive?
4	Alignment	Does the action align with broader government objectives?

Our current policy environment – National



- National Obesity Strategy – in development
- National Preventive Health Strategy – in development
- Ongoing work through COAG to reduce the impact of unhealthy food and drinks on children

Our current policy environment – Victoria



- Child obesity prevention plan – in development
- Ministerial roundtable held in October
- Whole of Victorian government governance group

Our current policy environment – Victorian public health and wellbeing plan

State-wide policy is translated into local level planning



Place-based approaches

As part of the solution, not a magic bullet, these approaches commonly share:

- **Leadership** - Clear governance and accountability
- **Partnership** - Bringing together diverse players
- **Community** - legitimacy, authenticity, empathy
- **Resourcing** - a 'backbone' agency, budget and workforce
- **Information** - data, evidence and evaluation to drive action

Local government has all these attributes...

But can't do it alone.

Victoria's experience led by researchers, government and communities

**Be Active
Eat Well
2003-2006**



**Healthy
Together
Victoria
2011-2015**



**WHO STOPS
2015-2020**



**Healthy
Heart for
Loddon
Campaspe
2018**



**Central
Highlands &
East Region
Prevention
Labs 2018**



**RESPOND
2019**



Healthy Together Victoria operated across 14 local government areas – both regional and metro

Funded through National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health

Delivered multiple strategies, led through local government and community health partnership

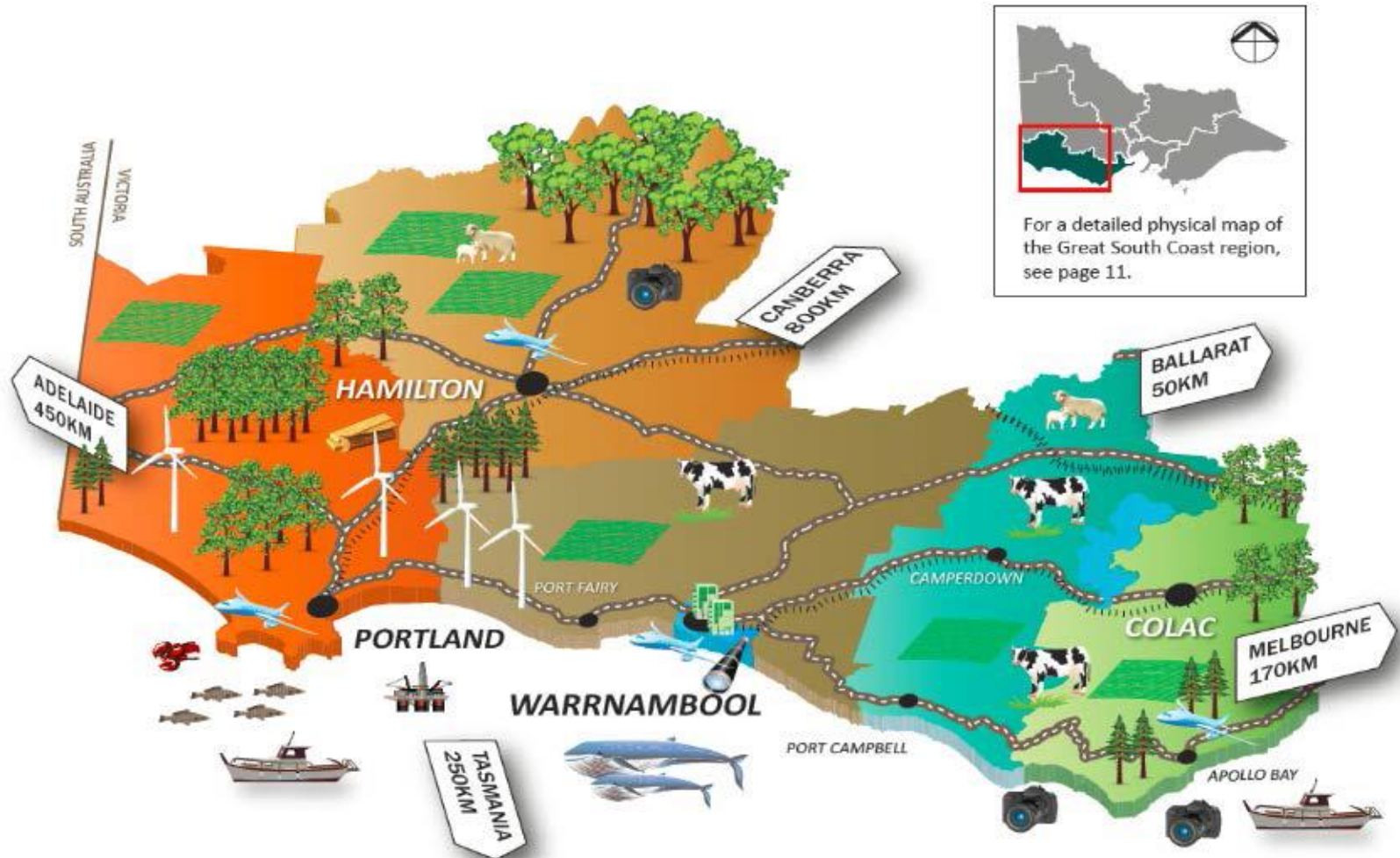
At the 2 year mark:

- High levels of early childhood and primary school engagement
- 7,000+ people in healthy cooking classes
- Population exposure to LiveLighter campaign

But funding ceased



WHO STOPS - a community-based randomised controlled trial in Victoria's Great South Coast led by Deakin University researchers



New place-based activities reflect the legacy of Healthy Together Victoria

Regional Partnerships identify priorities for their region and to develop collaborative solutions to local problems – obesity prevention initiatives are now emerging. And now the East Region Prevention Lab is joining these leaders.



Critical success factors

- Investment - in resources, time, people and process
- Reasonable expectations - place-based approaches are not a magic bullet and do take time, but can leave a legacy
- Supportive strategies - an epidemic requires action at the population level
- A rigorous approach to evidence use and building
- A clear approach to scale and sustainability

Conclusions

- We must act and community is ready
- Local government has a role to play in place-based approaches
- We do need to build on existing evidence and sustain our effort
- We don't need to do this...

