

Help us fight cuts, says council

By Lexi Cottee and Matt Crossman

Hume council has turned to social media to bolster support for its campaign to reinstate funding for preventative health programs.

The council is spruiking the hashtag #anappleaday and #fundprevention in a bid to attract state government attention to its fight to have funding for obesity and disease prevention measures reinstated beyond June 30.

The council wants community members to take photos of themselves eating apples and post them on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram with the #anappleaday and #fundprevention

hashtags to show their support for the campaign.

Hume is one of 12 councils in Victoria at risk of losing programs run by Healthy Together Victoria.

Federal funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health was cut in the 2014 budget.

This agreement had provided funding for Healthy Together Victoria.

The state government agreed to continue its share of the funding until June 30, but has said nothing about what happens beyond that date.

Sunbury Community Health executive

manager Bernadette Hetherington said the future of dozens of programs held under the Healthy Together banner were in jeopardy.

"There needs to be a co-ordinating force, where people committed to change can get together and access support and resources," she said.

"Without further prevention funding, there will be limited capacity and resources to support the many prevention efforts that have sprung up around Sunbury."

Hume mayor Adem Atmaca said Healthy Together programs delivered vital health promotion services to communities facing high

risk of preventable chronic diseases including obesity, diabetes and heart disease. "Funding for prevention is critical to helping us build healthier, more resilient communities," he said.

Instead of answering questions about whether the funding would be reinstated, Health Minister Jill Hennessy stressed the severity of the federal government's \$90 million cuts to health care in Victoria.

According to Medicare Local statistics, about one in 11 people in Hume has heart disease, more than 1000 go to hospital each year with a heart attack, 58 per cent are overweight or obese, and 8317 live with diabetes.