

Country life no cure for city ills

By Matt Crossman

Sunbury residents have all the hallmarks of chronic lifestyle diseases cited on a new national report card.

Sugar consumption is excessive, especially among teenage boys, while diabetes, high blood pressure and obesity are increasing nationally, according to the latest Australian Health Tracker released by Victoria University.

These problems, as well as inactivity, are also concerning Sunbury health experts, who say businesses and councils have a role to play

in finding ways to get people moving more. With about 2000 new clients every year, many with multiple chronic conditions, Sunbury Community Health executive manager Bernie Hetherington said people need not be alone in changing risky lifestyles.

"Making healthier choices is a good start, however, know that this alone isn't enough," she said. "Ask your workplace or community group to start looking at the small changes they can make to help everyone maintain a healthy lifestyle."

"Ensuring a healthy overall environment

will have a bigger impact, and makes it easier for you and others to make the healthy choice the easy choice."

Ms Hetherington said many Sunbury businesses want to encourage healthy workplaces, with activities such as the Bendigo Bank's Step to it, Sunbury and Western Water's longstanding commitment to "walk the block".

"Standing desks and walking meetings are becoming more prominent in our workplaces," she said. "Our local schools have also committed to various healthy activities and continue to seek out support for initiatives that

support not only their students but their staff and community as well."

Ms Hetherington said sporting, school and community groups also need to find healthy fundraising options.

"The recent Great Gnome Hunt is one example of connecting school communities with an alternative to chocolate fundraising," she said.

Australian Health Policy Collaboration's director, Victoria University's Rosemary Calder, said people should not accept that Australia was now among the world's fattest nations.