

# Diabetes data prompts action

By Matt Crossman

Efforts to revive a Sunbury support group are under way after new data revealed more than 11,500 Hume residents have diabetes, well above the national average.

Diabetes Victoria findings show that 6.1 per cent of residents in the municipality have the serious and complex condition, compared to 5.3 per cent across Australia.

Rates in the Macedon Ranges are much lower, at 4.2 per cent.

Balla's Bob Laidler, who helped run the Sunbury Diabetes Support Group until it went into recess earlier this year, said National Diabetes Week (July 10-16) was a great opportunity for people to familiarise themselves with risk factors for type 2 diabetes. These include weight, inactivity, family history, race, age and high blood pressure.

"Unfortunately, many people can be a bit blasé," Mr Laidler said. "They don't realise the potentially serious consequences."

Mr Laidler says he has managed his disease with medication, a balanced diet and frequent exercise for more than a decade.

When he joined the Sunbury group soon after he was diagnosed, about 30 members turned up at its regular meetings.

But with numbers dwindling, the group stopped meeting earlier this year. Now, with the help of organisations including the Goonawarra Medical Centre, former members are trying to get it up and running again.

"It's a shame because those meetings gave you insight into how other people manage their

diabetes," Mr Laidler said. "It made you aware that you're not on your own."

He said people not properly educated about their condition faced real dangers, including heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, vision loss and even amputation.

"I was at the doctors and casually mentioned I'd had some pins and needles in my feet," Mr Laidler said. "Straight away he said, 'That's not good. You could be losing feeling in your legs'."

**“ It's an example of how a small thing can easily become ... big ”** - Bob Laidler

"He'll keep a close eye on it, but it's an example of how a small thing can easily become something big. Because I'm aware of what's going on - the risks - I mention those changes straight away."

Sunbury Community Health has a diabetes educator who can also help people manage their condition. A spokeswoman for the centre said things people could do to prevent diabetes included eating nutritious meals and smaller portions. Increasing physical activity and taking steps to reduce stress were also recommended.

A new digital awareness campaign launched by Diabetes Australia is designed to show people who already have diabetes how they can live full and active lives.

More details: call 9744 9565 or visit [www.diabeteswontstopme.org.au](http://www.diabeteswontstopme.org.au)