

ACTIVSMART WHEATBELT PROGRAM

Statement by Minister for Sport and Recreation

MS M.J. DAVIES (Central Wheatbelt — Minister for Sport and Recreation) [9.14 am]: I rise today to introduce the ActiveSmart wheatbelt program to members of the house, which I launched in Northam on 5 February this year. ActiveSmart involves a partnership between 12 local governments in the wheatbelt region and the Department of Sport and Recreation. It is a proven behaviour-change program encouraging households to be more active. The aim is to positively influence the daily physical activity behaviours of residents in the region.

Twelve shires have been identified for the program: Beverley, Dowerin, Goomalling, Koorda, Merredin, Moora, Northam, Toodyay, York, Wyalkatchem and Narrogin. Why the wheatbelt? Statistics tell us that this region has the highest rate of overweight and obese people in the state. It is ranked sixteenth out of the 92 regions in Australia for obesity and physical inactivity and has a high rate of chronic disease. More than half of wheatbelt residents are not doing enough physical activity.

The ActiveSmart program gives participants a personalised toolkit to help them increase their physical activity levels and offers ongoing support and motivation. It encourages them to join local sporting groups, breaks down barriers to engaging in physical activity and educates the community about the benefits of participating in more physical activity. It also aims to make better use of our regional sporting and recreation facilities. Sports clubs and recreation facilities are the heart of regional towns. One of the key philosophies behind ActiveSmart is to help more people connect with them and reap the personal rewards of being more active and involved in their community. As we know, this will have ongoing health and social benefits for individuals and the community in general.

This program is due to commence in April. It will include personalised phone coaching and be offered to approximately 13 200 households in the wheatbelt and will work intensely with up to 5 000 participants. The state government is investing \$900 000 in this upcoming program based on the success we have achieved in other areas of the state. The government has already made a combined investment of \$935 000 in previous versions of the program in Rockingham and Geraldton, and this has proved to be effective in addressing inactivity levels and creating long-term behavioural change. Through the connections participants make, we have seen that they will continue to be involved with their community and maintain their physical activity levels.

ActiveSmart wheatbelt is an important opportunity to create some real and lasting change in regional communities and I look forward to seeing the results it has on people's health and wellbeing.