

Herald Sun

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WORST GATE^①

When it opened 30 years ago, the West Gate Bridge was a fast-track link over the Yarra River. But now, for 160,000 motorists a day, it is a bridge too slow. Travel time across the span has doubled in the past 15 years. And as the search for an alternative crossing gathers speed, Roads Minister Tim Pallas admits:

"There is an unsustainable reliance on it."^{②③}

Report & pictures Pages 4 & 5



The Herald and Weekly Times Photographic Collection

FAT CRISIS^①

Hundreds of obese kids swamp hospitals^②



At least 35 Victorian children are being treated for obesity-related diabetes, a potentially lethal^③ disorder that usually strikes adults.

And a 13-year-old weighing 160 kg is among more than 300 overweight children swamping Melbourne hospital specialist clinics.

Children as young as 11 are being treated for obesity-related type 2 diabetes, which can lead to heart and kidney disease, stroke, eye and foot problems and nerve damage.

In the worst cases, children are also showing signs of cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and hip problems.^⑤

Mary, of Mulgrave, said her greatest fear was that her daughter – who at 15 is already 153 kg – could die if she does not win her battle with obesity. But she says the teen can't see she's overweight.^⑥

"We try and help her, and she gets angry at us. She yells at us," Mary said.

The *Herald Sun* and Royal Children's Hospital have joined forces to fight the obesity crisis.^⑦

By **KAMAHL COGDON AND RACHEL HEWITT**

Starting today, and on each Monday over the next month, the *Herald Sun* is publishing the Kids' Food Plan.^⑧

The plan has been designed by the RCH based on healthy, simple yet tasty dishes and snacks.

Another Melbourne mum, who didn't want to be named, told the *Herald Sun* she allowed her daughter to have lapband surgery when, at 14, she was about 115 kg.

"We tried everything. She was in dietitians' and everything in kinder," the woman said.

She said her daughter's weight damaged her self-esteem.

Her daughter has lost about 40 kg since the surgery.

"It was the best thing we could have done for her," the woman said. "You could just see the delight in her face, being able to wear nice clothes."

But Mary said she did not think lapband surgery was the solution for

her child.

She said her daughter had begun a sensible eating plan and was being supported by friends.

"Two of her friends have actually started eating healthily with her to help her along," Mary said.^⑨

The Royal Children's Hospital is treating about 35 children with full-blown type 2 diabetes at its weight management clinic, and dozens more with early signs of it.

More than 150 new patients, some up to 150 kg, have been treated at the clinic in the past year.^⑩

Obesity expert Dr Matt Sabin said: "We are quite often seeing children who are very obese – for example, 45 kg at the age of three to 160 kg at the age of 15."

More than a million Australian children are now overweight or obese, and experts predict an explosion in childhood type 2 diabetes over the next few decades.^{⑪⑫}

Healthy eating special, Pages 6–7