

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

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ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## **Parents trust children to battle obesity**

Despite a prevalence of childhood obesity, Tasmanian parents still trust their children to make healthy food choices, a study at the University of Tasmania has found.

Dr Nick Towle and Associate Professor Sue Kilpatrick of the University Department of Rural Health are conducting a study into the attitudes of parents to healthy food choices at children's sporting venues.

So far more than 100 questionnaires have been returned by Tasmanian parents and the preliminary results are providing interesting data.

“Some of the responses were predictable, based on other research into school canteens, though there were some surprises,” Dr Towle said.

More than 95 per cent of parents said their children were aware of healthy food and drink choices. However the results suggest this awareness is not translating into practice. When children were left to make food choices on their own, 75 per cent consumed an unhealthy choice, compared to just 23 per cent when their parents made the choice.

“This raises important considerations for parent efficacy, such as their confidence and ability to positively encourage healthy eating behaviours,” Dr Towle said.

The questionnaires have also revealed that more than three quarters of parents always or often took food and drink from home and that the majority of food brought from home tended to be healthier than that brought at canteens.

Dr Towle said he hoped the study could help plan more effective strategies to increase the consumption of healthy food and drink at sporting venues.

“It is important because the prevalence of overweight and obesity in school-aged children has increased in the past two decades to almost 25 per cent, despite a high participation rate in out of school hours sport,” he said.

Research is ongoing. It is a joint project through the University Department of Rural Health and Eat Well Tasmania.

**For more information contact Dr Nick Towle on 6430 4565.**

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