



Diabolical diabetes data

DIABETES

BY BEN CHENOWETH

IT'S the epidemic sweeping across the world.

And Macarthur residents are not immune.

Nearly a quarter of patients that presented to Campbelltown Hospital had diabetes, the hospital's leading diabetes specialist and head of the Endocrinology Unit, Dr David Simmons, said.

Of even greater concern were statistics relating to the disease - that can be potentially fatal and lead to feet and leg amputations - were getting worse.

"Even though there are strategies in place to improve things the number of people with diabetes is increasing rapidly (through Australia)," he said.

"Nearly a quarter of patients in hospitals - certainly in this hospital - have diabetes, though they may not be here because of diabetes directly.

"One of the biggest epidemics is (gestational) diabetes in pregnancy.

"This is not just affecting mums it's affecting babies

who have an increased risk of diabetes and obesity later on.

"In this facility about five years ago there were 150 to 200 women who had gestational diabetes.

"Last year there were 500.

"This is huge - it's swamping us."

To help combat the disease, the South Western Sydney Local Health District will invest \$2.25 million over the next three years to research

the incidence of diabetes in the local area.

The research will look at several areas including: prevention, intervention; and support.

Tests will be carried out

with the aim to implement programs and interventions on a larger scale within the community.

Obesity has been one of the most significant causes of type 2 diabetes.

Dr Simmons said while healthy diets and regular exercise were obvious ways to prevent obesity and diabetes, lifestyle and genetics meant there was no overarching solution to preventing diabetes.

"Having a cultural blame around why people become obese ignores a lot of the reasons about why that actually

occurs," he said.

"One of the things we've learnt is everyone is different.

"So the 'you should do this' approach is not going to work.

"You have to have a proper assessment and look at the best way for that person to deal with the issues in their life."

Dr Simmons said residents in Macarthur would be called on soon to participate in research and case studies.

He urged anyone interested to take part to contact the health district at domtru@sswahs.nsw.gov.au.

"Macarthur now has the opportunity to participate in research that has real meaning," he said.

"We want people to say 'yes we want to participate.'"



IT'S AN EPIDEMIC: Dr David Simmons, head of Campbelltown Hospital's Endocrinology Unit, has issued a dire diabetes warning. **Picture:** South Western Sydney Local Health District/Jane Dyson