

press release

Novo Nordisk and Murdoch Children's Research Institute announce collaboration to advance youth-centred obesity care across Pacific Island nations

Canberra, Australia – 16 March 2026: [Novo Nordisk](#) and [Murdoch Children's Research Institute \(MCRI\)](#) today announced they have entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to fund a three-year research program aimed at developing scalable, youth-centred models of care to counter the impact of adolescent obesity across Pacific Island countries. The initiative is set to become a key research effort in the region.

The collaboration was announced at Parliament House and witnessed by Their Majesties King Frederik X and Queen Mary of Denmark during their State Visit to Australia. Mike Doustdar, President and CEO of Novo Nordisk, also participated, reflecting the strong bilateral relationship and shared commitment to health innovation between Denmark and Australia.

Tackling the growing burden of adolescent obesity in Pacific nations

Pacific Island nations have some of the highest obesity rates globally, accounting for nine of the ten countries with the highest obesity prevalence worldwide.¹

Of particular concern, rates of obesity-related chronic diseases have risen sharply in recent decades, causing a large burden of preventable disability, premature death, and reduced workforce participation across the Pacific region.^{1,2}

Adolescence is now recognised as a critical life stage to address obesity and non-communicable diseases. Prevention and early intervention during adolescence can reduce health risks for disease in later life and break intergenerational cycles of poor health. Accessible models of care can also improve outcomes for adolescents directly, including prevention and care for early onset of diabetes and other metabolic diseases.

¹ World Health Organization (2024) Study finds Pacific accounts for 9 of the 10 most obese countries in the world, 4 March. Available at: <https://www.who.int/westernpacific/about/how-we-work/pacific-support/news/detail/04-03-2024-study-finds-pacific-accounts-for-9-of-the-10-most-obese-countries-in-the-world> (Accessed 20 February 2026)

² Hou X, Anderson I, Burton-Mckenzie EJ. The value of lost output and cost of illness of noncommunicable diseases in the Pacific. *Health Policy Open*. 2022 Jul 16;3:100073. doi: 10.1016/j.hpopen.2022.100073. PMID: 37383583; PMCID: PMC10297817.

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However, realising this huge potential requires coordinated action across families, communities and health systems.

A new collaboration to strengthen adolescent health across the Pacific Island nations

Under the MoU, Novo Nordisk and MCRI will collaborate on a three-year program anticipated to launch in 2026. The initiative will begin in Fiji and draw on regional insights from across other Pacific Island Nations.

The program is framed around two key phases of work:

- **Phase 1:** The project will establish a formal local leadership group (including youth), synthesise available data, and undertake a series of consultations to broadly explore the acceptability and potential feasibility of therapeutic approaches to clinical obesity.
- **Phase 2:** Dependent on findings from phase 1, the team will co-design a youth-centred model of care and implement it to assess the acceptability and feasibility of GLP-1 therapies in real-world settings.

Professor Pete Azzopardi, Group Leader of Global Adolescent Health at MCRI, said: “MCRI has a long and proud history of working hand-in-hand with our friends and colleagues across the Asia Pacific region. This new collaboration continues that tradition. We’re looking forward to contributing to substantial health impact and reducing the burden of obesity and related diseases in our region.”

Mike Doustdar, President and CEO of Novo Nordisk, said: “By putting young people at the centre, this collaboration advances our aim to expand equitable access to high quality obesity care. Working with local partners to co-design sustainable solutions will help improve long-term health outcomes for adolescents and their communities across the Pacific.”

Shaping healthier futures for Pacific adolescents

Insights generated through the program will inform evidence-based recommendations and scalable, youth-centred solutions to support adolescents living with obesity today, while reducing risk and improving health outcomes for future generations across the Pacific.

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Grounded in local data, youth leadership and regional collaboration, the initiative is designed to support sustainable and equitable improvements in adolescent health over the long term.

About Novo Nordisk

Novo Nordisk is a leading global healthcare company founded in 1923 and headquartered in Denmark. Our purpose is to drive change to defeat serious chronic diseases built upon our heritage in diabetes. We do so by pioneering scientific breakthroughs, expanding access to our medicines and working to prevent and ultimately cure disease. Novo Nordisk employs about 68,800 people in 80 countries and markets its products in around 170 countries.

Novo Nordisk has been operating in Australia since 1976. We deliver medicines to more than 1.6 million patients in Australia for the treatment of diabetes, obesity, rare diseases and other serious chronic diseases. For more information, visit www.novonordisk.com.au

About Murdoch Children's Research Institute

Murdoch Children's Research Institute (MCRI) is one of the world's top three child health research institutes, dedicated to improving the health of children and adolescents in Australia and around the world. In 2026 MCRI celebrates its 40th anniversary, marking four decades of transforming child health through research, discovery and innovation. Its breakthroughs have improved diagnosis, informed global vaccine strategies, advanced precision medicine, and continue to redefine what's possible for sick children.

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