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**Roma residents invited to battle the bulge**

Maranoa residents are being invited to battle the bulge and join a highly successful program aimed at reducing the size of their waistlines.

South West Hospital and Health Service Roma-based Community Nutritionist Rohan Ballon said this year’s Battle of the Bulge would get under way on 16 February.

Mr Ballon said the start date would fall within this year’s Australia’s Healthy Weight Week.

He said the Battle of the Bulge would be run in conjunction with the Maranoa Regional Council as part of the Be Healthy and Safe Maranoa partnership.

“We want to build on the momentum achieved during our last highly successful Battle of the Bulge in 2015 where Roma residents were invited to take up a challenge to shrink their waistlines and get fit,” Mr Ballon said.

“In 2015, we had 52 teams and individuals totalling 284 people participating in the Battle of the Bulge, with 241 participants completing the program.

“The results were phenomenal.

“Participants who completed the program had an average waist size loss of 5.2 cm, or about 5 per cent of their starting waist size.

“A local husband and wife duo took out the top individual prizes for the last round, recording losses of 11.5 cm and 13 cm respectively.

“Team ‘Belly Flat’ made up of three generations of family members, managed to lose an average of 7.8 per cent each, or 30 cm combined, in taking out the team award.

“The feedback on the program was very positive, which is why we are launching our new-look, 2017 Battle of the Bulge.”

Mr Rohan said this year, the waist-loss challenge had been trimmed to eight weeks rather than 12 weeks, workshops had been restructured, additional new healthy weight and lifestyle topics included and new guest speakers enlisted.

“The program will still focus on challenging participants to shrink their waistlines, rather than losing weight,” he said.
“This is because having excess fat around your middle is directly related to an increased risk of developing chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes and some forms of cancer.”

Mr Ballon said the 2016 Chief Health Officer Report had found that obesity was a major problem in the South West with around one in three locals now classified as obese.

“I would love for the community to get behind this event to address the issue of increasing rates of overweight and obesity in our region,” he said.

Maranoa Regional Council Mayor Tyson Golder said the Battle of the Bulge was a great initiative aimed at inspiring community members to get their healthy eating practices on track for 2017 and beyond.

“Participants will receive professional health advice throughout the program, and I commend everyone who is looking to get involved on their commitment to leading a healthier lifestyle,” Mr Golder said.

Mr Ballon said individuals as well as teams of from 4–6 individuals were welcome to join the Battle of the Bulge.

The first program workshop will be held from 5.30 pm on Thursday, 16 February at the Ernst Brock Room, Roma Cultural Centre.

- For more information on the Maranoa Battle of the Bulge, contact Rohan Ballon on 4624 2929 or email: rohan.ballon@health.qld.gov.au

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