

Improving the lives of all Victorians

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation



Good health is at the centre of our society

Good health is important to our quality of life. Health promotion is a powerful, cost effective and efficient way to maintain a healthier community.

Today, we have a broader understanding of health than ever before. Having friends, how much you earn, your social position, your level of literacy or your capacity to be involved in sport or creative activities is as important to determining your health and wellbeing as the medical care you receive when ill.

We also know that in the industrialised world, the greatest burden of disease is related to illness that can be prevented through lifestyle changes.

The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, under the name VicHealth, works with organisations, communities and individuals to make health a central component of our daily lives. Its activity is geared towards promoting health and preventing ill-health.

VicHealth does this by working with various groups within the community to build opportunities for people to be informed, learn new skills, have greater access to activities, and share healthier environments.

We work closely with government departments, particularly the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC), as well as non-government and community based organisations to support health promoting initiatives.

We play both a formal and an informal role in connecting organisations and individuals to ensure those working in areas that impact on health and wellbeing are sufficiently supported to achieve healthy results.

With access to resources and networks through VicHealth, there is much communities can do to achieve and sustain good health.



Components of good health promotion

Establish a system for intelligence gathering

Develop clear policy, legislation and regulation

Communicate the information

Provide the services and educate the workforce

Share responsibility across sectors

Mobilise communities

VicHealth's Focus



Promotion | Prevention | Early Intervention | Treatment | Rehabilitation





Healthy partnerships are the all-important link to the people of Victoria

VicHealth:

- *funds over 800 projects a year;*
- *distributes over \$23 million annually for research and programs – 85% of our total budget;*
- *works with a wide range of organisations of all sizes and at all levels.*

Working alongside others in partnership is fundamental to our approach. Without these partnerships, the concept of improving the health of Victorians would simply not be possible. Collaborating with government departments is crucial. For instance, DHS, VicHealth, and the Planning Institute of Australia (Victoria) are working together to understand the relationship between urban infrastructure and the extent to which people choose to walk, cycle or drive. Developing activity which builds health into the environment means collaborating across relevant government departments and with local government.

Local government has had direct roles in programs such as the Walking School Bus as well as art and environment projects that create meeting places within local communities to promote mental health and wellbeing.

To involve more people in sport VicHealth collaborates with State Sporting Associations, Regional Sports Assemblies and DVC (Sport and Recreation Division) to attract more participants and encourage healthy club environments.

One of the cornerstones of our approach to tackling mental health and wellbeing is that many people have a role to play. For instance,

the Whitelion project involves sportspeople, business people, local leaders and musicians mentoring young offenders and supporting an employment program involving businesses such as KFC and PriceWaterhouseCoopers. The aim is to provide young people with employment and skills necessary for a successful return to the community.

With all such projects VicHealth commissions the research, consults widely, develops overarching strategies and provides the funding, but it is the schools, the councils, the clubs, and the theatres that deliver the specific projects and make them successful.

VicHealth is also involved in, among other programs, the Victorian Smoking and Health Program (Quit), the Victorian Drug Strategy and the Premier's Drug Prevention Council.

The success of our long-standing relationship with the Cancer Council of Victoria in partnership with DHS and the National Heart Foundation (NHF), through Quit and SunSmart is well known.





Finding innovative answers to solve the complex health challenges of modern life

Working towards:

Improved mental health and wellbeing

Increased physical activity

Reduced smoking and other substance misuse

Health for all

Modern life presents many obstacles to good health – we only have to consider the impact of cars, computers and television on levels of physical activity to understand that.

These realities make managing population health complex. It is a delicate balancing act that must consider many factors such as the needs of different age groups, cultural differences, different skills, varying financial capacities. However, to be effective, the solutions must be comprehensive, involve the community and be easy to implement.

They must also ensure the gap between those with the highest and lowest health status narrows even as population health improves. This often means prioritising specific sections of the community, who might otherwise be excluded from mainstream health promoting activity.

To gain results and community involvement, innovative, creative and sometimes unusual answers are sought to build successful health programs. The Foundation helps build these health programs after examining the evidence. A wide range of organisations and communities become directly involved in creating, developing and managing individual projects that seek to improve health and wellbeing.

To get children walking to school and creating a physically active routine VicHealth, along with a whole lot of other organisations, developed a Walking School Bus Program.

The Walking School Bus is not a vehicle in fact but a fun, healthy and safe way for primary school children to travel to and from school. Children walk in a group with an adult ‘driver’ at the front and ‘conductor’ at the rear. It is currently being implemented by schools in partnership with local government.

Evidence has shown a link between involvement in creative activities and good mental health and wellbeing. This involvement also impacts upon the prevalence of substance abuse and other risk-taking behaviours amongst young people. To improve the connections and self-esteem of socially isolated young people the SmartArts Music Program developed ways for young people to understand the art of music making – through music theory, instrument playing, songwriting, arranging, performance, recording or presentation.

Innovation not only stretches the value of every dollar, it allows VicHealth to support practical health promoting programs developed by communities to meet their real needs.



See how the wider community benefits from VicHealth support

VicHealth has links to virtually every section of Victorian life.

Older people, young people, those who want to play sport, those who love the arts, those from every cultural and socioeconomic background and those from rural and regional communities have the opportunity to participate in VicHealth funded programs designed to improve health.

Participating in sport

For example, the Pony Club Association of Victoria began its Riders without Horses program under the Partnerships for Health Scheme. This program provides an opportunity for children aged 5–15 years from low income families and rural remote areas who do not own a horse to participate in Pony Club activities. It's a classic VicHealth program – supporting organisations to involve people (who wouldn't otherwise be involved) in activities that improve their physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Mall Walk

Over 100 older people have become regulars on the Casey Mall Walk – and some of the participants are walking up to 4km a day, just in and around a place they are familiar and comfortable with: the Cranbourne Park Shopping Mall.

The great benefits of this activity have not only turned out to be the obvious ones of better physical health and greater flexibility, but also the strong social networks and friendships that are forming as a result.

Creating access

Access to and participation in the arts is an important way to promote mental health and wellbeing. The Geelong Performing Arts Centre (GPAC), a smokefree environment, is funded under VicHealth's Major Arts Partnerships Scheme. The Centre uses this investment to provide greater access to quality arts events by people who experience high levels of social or economic disadvantage and encourage social connection. For example a community partnership developed between GPAC and local councils saw community buses transport senior citizens from isolated areas to Musical Mornings, as well as a Red Theatre for Young People, a schools program that engages over 20,000 students per year.



How to access funding

Funding rounds become active at various times throughout the year. Guidelines are available when funding is open at the VicHealth website www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/funding or by ringing VicHealth on (03) 9667 1333.

Check the VicHealth website to see the types of programs and initiatives we fund to promote health, and make sure you register so that you receive fortnightly updates of new information appearing on the site.



Using research to find the facts and track health promotion results

Before any strategy can be developed to address a health question – for example, raising levels of physical activity amongst children – all the issues need to be researched.

Sometimes evidence is available from our network of sources but in many cases VicHealth commissions specific research for the Victorian situation.

For instance, VicHealth has worked with DHS and a range of researchers, policy-makers and practitioners to assess the health impact of intimate partner violence for Victorian women, a common problem with serious health, social and economic consequences. The study will help determine the ways in which organisations can support primary prevention of violence against women.

Over the past 15 years, VicHealth has invested more than \$60 million in 400 individual public health research projects. We support practitioners, policy-makers and researchers to work together to increase the connection between research and policy.

Our investment in research through scholarships and fellowships is a broad-based investment, providing researchers with skills beyond research such as media training, advocacy and public speaking, as well as building networks amongst researchers to share ideas for the future.

Just as important as policy development research is the requirement to measure effectiveness. That means we evaluate our programs, learn from them and build upon these lessons.

VicHealth currently supports, at varying levels, five Centres of Excellence in Research and Practice: VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control; Centre for Adolescent Health; Centre for Mother and Child Health Research; Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society; and the Koori Health Research and Community Development Unit. VicHealth is to establish a Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Social Wellbeing. We invest in these centres to support them to become nationally and internationally competitive in seeking funding, and therefore sustainable over the long term.



Victorians have been subject to changes in anti-smoking advertising and tobacco portrayal in the media for many years. Research will find out how successful the changes have been and if they have resulted in lower tobacco consumption.

Chief Investigator – Dr Melanie Wakefield, The Cancer Council Victoria

Another topical research project looks at the connection between reduced passive video entertainment (TV, games, computers) and physical activity. The question is: does less TV lead to a more active lifestyle?

Senior Research Fellow – Dr Jo Salmon, Deakin University





In 1987, VicHealth joined the battle to combat the influence of tobacco dollars

- *Smoking rates down to 17%*
- *Tobacco advertising banned*
- *Healthy dining, healthy entertainment, healthy sports*
- *Further policy changes advocated*
- *Smoking prevention costs per life year gained less than 1/500th of the costs of treating lung cancer*

VicHealth was established by the Victorian Parliament as part of the Tobacco Act of 1987.

This Act set the standard for international best practice by banning outdoor tobacco advertising and using cigarette taxes to fund anti-smoking campaigns and buy-out the tobacco sponsorship of sport and the arts.

The nexus between tobacco and these two important areas of society was broken while ensuring that the financial base of art and sport was maintained.

VicHealth became a statutory body with an independent chair and board of governance with vast experience in health, sport, the arts, research and communication.

Since 1987, the impact on smoking has been dramatic. Sponsorship has gone from sports and arts events; tobacco advertising cannot be found in media or sporting fields; most workplaces and public spaces are smokefree; the legal age to purchase tobacco has increased to 18 years; and the number of adult smokers has almost halved.

In partnership with Quit, DHS and NHF, VicHealth has contributed to an outstanding result with long-term health benefits for all Victorians. It is a great example of good health promotion in practice.



Part of a worldwide movement

In 1986, the World Health Organisation developed the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion; the following year VicHealth became the first Health Promotion Foundation in the world.

Today, strategic alliances are maintained with national and global health interests to strengthen our actions and advocacy.

Members of the International Network of Health Promotion Foundations are:

- VicHealth (Victoria)
- Healthway (Western Australia)
- Healthpact (ACT)
- Austrian Health Promotion Foundation
- Health Promotion Switzerland
- Health 21 Foundation Hungary
- Korean Health Promotion Foundation
- Thai Health Promotion Foundation
- Polish Health Promotion Foundation



Victorian Health Promotion Foundation
PO Box 154
Carlton South 3053 Australia
Phone: +61 3 9667 1333
Fax: +61 3 9667 1375
Email: vichealth@vichealth.vic.gov.au

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au