

Wednesday 18 July 2018

Food trucks, music and festivals: Sports rethink how to get teens to play ball

Food trucks, music and festivals might not be typically associated with sport and physical activity. Yet these teen-friendly activities will form part of a major new VicHealth program shaking up traditional sport to get teenagers active and healthy.

The new \$6 million [Growing Participation in Sport program](#) comes after a [VicHealth report](#) found teenagers were almost five times more likely to be on their smartphone than being active.

Additionally the report found 92 per cent of teenagers aren't meeting the Australian Physical Activity Guidelines of an hour of physical activity every day. In contrast the average teenager spends more than three hours a day on screens like smartphones and ipads.

VicHealth will partner with 19 sports, including AFL, touch football, and skateboarding, to try to turn this around by making sport more fun and attractive to teenagers.

New activities to tempt teens away from their screens include a seven-week festival combining food trucks and touch football and a rollerskating program targeting teenage girls.

Victorian Minister for Health Jill Hennessy said the health benefits for teenagers from being regularly active couldn't be underestimated.

"Regular physical activity and playing sport can provide many benefits for our physical and mental health. This program is about making sport attractive and interesting for teenagers so they can be happy, healthy and thrive."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the statewide program was all about making sport accessible, fun and non-competitive to get less active teens into sport.

"Playing sport is a really fun and social way for our kids to keep active, but we know that sport participation halves when they hit their teenage years," Ms Rechter said.

"Many teenagers have told us that they stopped playing sport because it stopped being fun and started getting too competitive.

"We're working with sports organisations to deliver programs for teens that focus more on having fun and building skills and less on winning and being the best. Additionally they combine sport with things we know teens love like food trucks, hanging out with friends and listening to music."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said sports organisations had to try new things if they wanted to get less active teens to play sport.

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“Many teenagers have told us they’re not interested in sport that’s too competitive or that takes them away from doing the things they love like hanging out with their friends,” she said.

“Some young people thrive on competition and playing to win. Yet a lot of teenagers just want sport to be fun, social and a bit of a stress relief.

“Regular physical activity is so great for teens’ physical and mental health and we need them to do more of it. If that means changing the way sport is played then we need to shake things up to benefit our kids’ health.”

The Growing Participation in Sport program aims to get close to 60,000 less active teenagers playing sport over the next three years. Activities will focus on engaging teenagers who face health inequities, those who don’t engage in regular physical activity and those that aren’t interested in participating in existing traditional sport offerings. More information is available at <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/funding/growing-participation-in-sport-program>

Notes to editors:

THE FACTS ON TEENAGERS AND SPORT

- Nine out of ten teenagers are doing less than 60 minutes of exercise each day
- Teenagers are almost five times more likely to be using a screen device than being active – teenagers 15 to 17 years spend around 40 minutes a day being active and around 180 minutes doing screen-based activities, like watching tv or using their smartphones
- Sport participation halves at around age 15
- Almost half of children under 15 play no sport at all (outside of school hours) during a typical week.

Why teens stop playing sport:

- Too much focus on winning and being skilful
- Needing too much time, financial resources or family support to play
- Having to prove themselves and try out for limited places on a sports team
- Pressure to perform on the sports field
- Competing priorities including academic performance, part-time work, social activities and screen-time.

Why teens want to play sport:

- Having fun
- Getting active and improving fitness
- Learning new skills
- Being social and making new friends
- Trying new things
- Stress relief

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Sports funded as part of Growing Participation in Sport (2018 to 2021) include:

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| AFL Victoria | AFL Unity Cup is a structured non-contact football program that brings people together from all cultures and religious faiths. |
| Australian Sailing | Get In2 Sailing and windsurfing program aims to increase physical activity levels of less active teens through the exciting, alternative sports of sailing and windsurfing. |
| Blind Sports Victoria | Social blind tennis and soccer programs for teens. The program will be available to sighted participants (bring-a-friend) who will wear blindfolds to level the playing field. |
| Bowls Victoria | Roll Up is a 6 week introductory bowls competition aimed at secondary school students. |
| Cycling Victoria | Let's Ride: Community is a 10 week club based program that provides professional cycling education for teens with a focus on teaching cycling skills, knowledge of road rules, as well as general road and traffic awareness. |
| Football Federation Victoria (FFV) | Football for Fun is a social, modified version of traditional football (soccer), with participants attending a local venue with friends and playing a friendly game of football. |
| Golf Victoria | Delivered in local parks, ovals or leisure facilities, Freestyle Golf is a modified introductory Golf program. |
| Gymnastics Victoria | GymPT is an all abilities program that uses gymnastics equipment, to get teens fit and having fun in new and creative ways |
| Hockey Victoria | J-Ball is a non-competitive, safe and fun game-based format of hockey that uses music and social media to keep teens interested. It can be played by anyone regardless of their skills or fitness levels. |
| Lacrosse Victoria | Social Stix is a modified non-competitive lacrosse program incorporating fun activities, in a safe and friendly environment. |
| Life Saving Victoria | The Key to Aquatics Project for culturally communities is a community swimming and water safety education program. |
| Netball Victoria | Rock Up Netball Youth is a non-traditional format of netball which is fun, flexible, social, non-competitive and run outside of school hours. |
| Touch Football Australia | In Touch with Youth is a localised seven-week youth festival offering music, entertainment, food trucks, and modified/non-competitive touch football games. |
| Skate Victoria | She Rolls is a skate based holistic fitness program that brings teenage girls together to exercise their bodies, hearts and minds. The program provides some opportunities for participants to learn about skating as well as nutrition and mental health. |
| Skateboarding Victoria | All Aboard Skateboarding Sessions is a gender inclusive skateboarding workshop for new skateboarders. The program is fun, safe and social. |
| Surfing Victoria | Coasting - Stand Up Paddleboarding is a modified girls only program that introduces Stand Up Paddleboarding to teen girls in a fun and social environment |
| Squash Victoria | Double Dot offers fun, sociable and quick squash and racquetball activities. With programs held on squash courts, participants will have fun and improve their skills in a relaxed environment, without the pressure to perform. |
| Tennis Victoria | Tennis 4 Teens has been designed with teens for teens. It focuses on fun, fitness and skill development all in a stress-free and non-competitive environment. |
| Triathlon Victoria | TRI2gether is an introduction to triathlons focussing on finish lines, not finish times. The program supports young people, of all backgrounds and abilities, to look at their performance with an achievement mindset, not through the lens of competition. |

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