

**MEDIA RELEASE**

WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2021

**Ground-breaking new investment empowers Victoria's young people to create a healthier future***Survey reveals what young people need for good health*

Health promotion foundation VicHealth is today unveiling a first-of-its-kind initiative focused on creating a healthier future for Victoria's young people.

As coronavirus continues to affect the health and wellbeing of young people, *Future Healthy* will invest \$45million in new programs over 3 years to support people aged 0-25 to begin to build back better: reconnect socially and safely, get active, and access and enjoy good food.

This month, VicHealth will work with thousands of young people in developing this healthier vision together. The projects delivered through *Future Healthy* will then be created in direct response to the ideas and needs that young people share.

The announcement comes as a new VicHealth survey<sup>i</sup> reveals 2 in 3 (68%) of Victoria's young people aged 18-25 believe they have a role to play in helping plan and create healthier local communities.

The survey also highlighted what Victoria's young people and kids need for good physical and mental wellbeing, during and after the pandemic.

**Young people aged 18-25 key findings:**

- 9 in 10 (90%) young people believe that every young person deserves to enjoy good health as they grow up
- For 7 in 10 (71%) young people, staying socially connected with others has become one of the most important issues during the pandemic
- 3 in 4 (76%) young people said having access to healthy food near home is one of the most important things to them.
- Almost 7 in 10 (69%) young people said having nowhere near home to do the sports or activities they enjoy has an impact on their physical activity.

**Victoria's parents and carers of kids aged 6-17 years key findings:**

- 9 in 10 (90%) parents believe that social connection is important for their child's mental wellbeing
- Almost 9 in 10 (89%) parents feel that being able to feed their kids healthy food is one of the most important things for their family
- And almost 7 in 10 (68%) parents said having a limited number of physical activity spaces (eg playgrounds, parks and bike paths) near home has an impact on their kids' physical activity.

Minister Foley said *Future Healthy* will work with Victoria's young people and grassroots community organisations across the state towards a vision where no young person is denied a future that is healthy.

"*Future Healthy* is a strong signal of our support and commitment to the health of young people right across Victoria. It's about giving them the tools and agency to envision a future that supports their health and wellbeing," Min Foley said.



“We want young people and parents and carers, regardless of their postcode, bank balance, background or ability, to share their ideas for a healthier Victoria. We’ll then back those ideas, with the largest single health promotion investment of its kind, from VicHealth.”

VicHealth CEO Dr Sandro Demaio said the unprecedented health promotion investment comes after what has been an incredibly challenging 18 months, particularly for young people.

“The ongoing impacts of the bushfires, coronavirus pandemic and social upheaval have continued to weigh on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of Victoria’s young people” Dr Demaio said.

“They have told us that social connection, access to healthy food and having somewhere near home to be active are incredibly important to them – so is having their voices heard.

“The first phase of Future Healthy is about listening – we’re asking people aged 18-25 and parents and carers to join us in creating the solutions together that will promise a healthier future for all. We’ll be listening and learning as you share with us what we need to do to make happier, healthier living a reality for every young person.”

### **Future Healthy Community Champions**

As part of Future Healthy, VicHealth is working with 14 [Community Champions](#) – a diverse group of young people and parents from right across the state who are passionate about creating healthier communities. Through their work with Future Healthy, the champions will empower more young people and parents to have their say and help shape the solutions needed for people to lead healthier, happier lives.

Among the Community Champions is 22-year-old Mark Yin, a youth engagement professional living in Keilor East, who said young people have really had to work hard to maintain social connection throughout the pandemic.

“What it means to socially connect has definitely narrowed. Facilitating events online this past year, I could feel the Zoom fatigue, the uncertainty in people’s voices. I really feel for a lot of my peers,” Mr Yin said.

“But when those couple of hours are your only chance to see other people, these online spaces become more valuable and important than ever.”

Mark said there’s a sense of optimism and readiness for change among young people.

“Young people are more fired up than ever – rising to the challenges of COVID and continuing to agitate for change, for cleaner and healthier conditions in which we’ll grow up and live. We need this energy and these voices to secure a healthy future for young people.”

Learn more about Mark on the Future Healthy website:

[futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au/CommunityChampions/Mark](https://futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au/CommunityChampions/Mark)

All of the Community Champions’ stories can be found at:

[futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au/CommunityChampions](https://futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au/CommunityChampions)

**Get involved in Future Healthy:** If you’re a young person in Victoria aged 18-25, or a parent or carer in Victoria with kids aged 0-17, share your experiences, challenges and ideas about what a healthy future means to you and your community at [futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au](https://futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au)

### **More key stats:**

In 2020, the [VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact studies](#)<sup>ii</sup> found the health and wellbeing of Victoria's young people aged 18 to 24 years was impacted during the pandemic in the following ways:

- 2 in 5 (42%) found it difficult to connect with friends and family
- 2 in 5 (44%) relied on a restricted range of low-cost unhealthy food, as they were running out of money to buy food
- 1 in 5 (19%) were physically inactive (did 30 minutes or more of physical activity, which was enough to raise their breathing rate, once or less per week).

**NOTE TO EDITORS:**

- **Pre-recorded TV and radio news grabs are available from:**
  - VicHealth CEO Dr Sandro Demaio: [download here](#)
  - Community Champion Josh, a proud Aboriginal man from Ballarat: [download here](#)
- **Videos** of select Community Champions available below:
  - Zahra (university student from Cranbourne North, Melbourne): watch [here](#)
  - James (below-knee amputee living in Cobram): watch [here](#)
  - Ravi (international student from central Melbourne): watch [here](#)
  - Felicia (Mum from Wantirna, Melbourne): watch [here](#)
- **Images** of Community Champions: available upon request
- **Available for interview:**
  - Community Champions [futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au/CommunityChampions](https://futurehealthy.vichealth.vic.gov.au/CommunityChampions)
  - VicHealth spokespeople including CEO Dr Sandro Demaio.

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<sup>i</sup> Between July and August 2021, VicHealth surveyed 750 of Victoria's young people aged 18-25 and 750 of Victoria's parents and carers of kids aged 6-17 about their barriers and attitudes towards what makes healthy communities, social connection, physical activity and access to healthy food.

<sup>ii</sup> Around 2,000 people across Victoria were surveyed in late May-early June 2020, during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, while a further 2,000 were surveyed in September 2020 during the second wave. Learn more at [vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/vichealth-coronavirus-victorian-wellbeing-impact-study-follow-up-survey](https://vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/vichealth-coronavirus-victorian-wellbeing-impact-study-follow-up-survey)