

# The H3O Challenge

## Evaluation of the first wave of a social marketing campaign to reduce sugar-sweetened beverage consumption in Victoria

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Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are the largest source of sugars in the Australian diet. A high intake of SSBs is linked to poor health outcomes such as weight gain and associated illnesses along with increased risk of tooth decay.

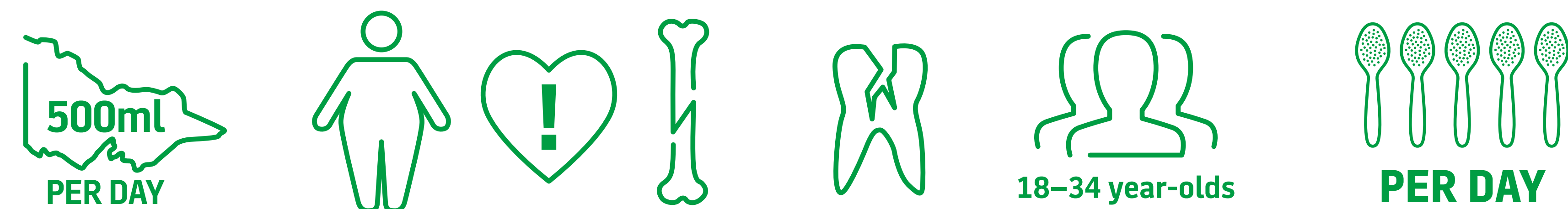
Nearly two-thirds of Victorians are currently overweight or obese, so reducing their intake of excess kilojoules through drinks is a key way to improving both diet and health.

The H3O Challenge campaign is part of an integrated water initiative with the goal of 'More Victorians choosing water instead of drinks with added sugar'. This initiative aligns with the VicHealth Action Agenda for Health Promotion strategic imperative to promote healthy eating, and its three-year priority to see more people choosing water and healthy food options.

The aim of the H3O Challenge is to help establish healthier habits, through a 30-day challenge, with water becoming the main choice of beverage in the long term. SSBs include sugar-sweetened soft drinks, energy drinks, fruit drinks, sports drinks, ready-to-drink iced tea, flavoured water and cordial.

### Why do we need to switch sugary drinks with water?

Key facts used to inform the project:



Australia is in the top 10 countries for per capita soft drink consumption<sup>1</sup>. In 2009-10 Victorians consumed an average of 500ml per day.

High intake of SSBs is associated with:

- an increase in body weight and obesity in both adults and children<sup>2,3</sup>
- chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and metabolic syndrome<sup>4</sup>
- bone fractures, low bone density and osteoporosis.<sup>5</sup>

Sugars are a major contributor of dental caries and every sip of an SSB produces acid that eats away at the surface of teeth.

It is known that 18 to 34 year-olds have some of the highest rates of SSB consumption, and in particular low socioeconomic groups with a skew towards males.<sup>6</sup>

In March 2014, the World Health Organization (WHO) released draft guidelines on sugar intake for adults and children<sup>7</sup> that stated added sugar, like that found in SSBs, should only account for 5% of an adult's daily calorie intake. This means less than 25g, or 5 teaspoons of added sugar, per day.

### Campaign objectives

The VicHealth Water Initiative aimed to achieve positive shifts in knowledge and attitudes around choosing water instead of SSBs. As an integrated initiative, it also delivered key programs in the areas of infrastructure development, settings-based research and strategic partnerships.

The H3O Challenge was the social marketing element of the initiative, with all components contributing to achieving the broader initiative goal. The key campaign objectives in its first year were to achieve:



More than 1500 sign-ups to the H3O Challenge

More than 10,000 unique visits to the H3O Challenge microsite

A campaign recognition of 20% or greater with the target audience

Strong key message recall amongst those exposed to the campaign.

### Campaign delivery

The H3O Challenge was delivered via an integrated social marketing program that promoted the call to action for individuals to sign up to the 30-day challenge on the campaign website. The campaign was launched following extensive formative research to inform the approach.

The target audience for the campaign was identified as some of the highest consumers of SSBs, specifically:

- Primary audience – Victorians aged 25-34 with a skew towards men and lower socioeconomic status groups
- Secondary audience – Victorians aged 18-24 with a skew towards lower socioeconomic status group.

The campaign was delivered through the following channels:



**Paid advertising** across bus shelters and panels, metro and regional radio stations, digital advertising including mobile phone and social media, and print advertising across culturally and linguistically diverse publications.

**Public relations** program where media outlets were engaged to promote the H3O Challenge via case studies, ambassador appearances and key campaign insights.

**Sports partnerships** with key sporting organisations who championed the H3O Challenge with their audiences. The partners included the Melbourne Stars Cricket team, the Melbourne City Football Club (soccer), the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, Surfing Victoria and AFL Victoria.

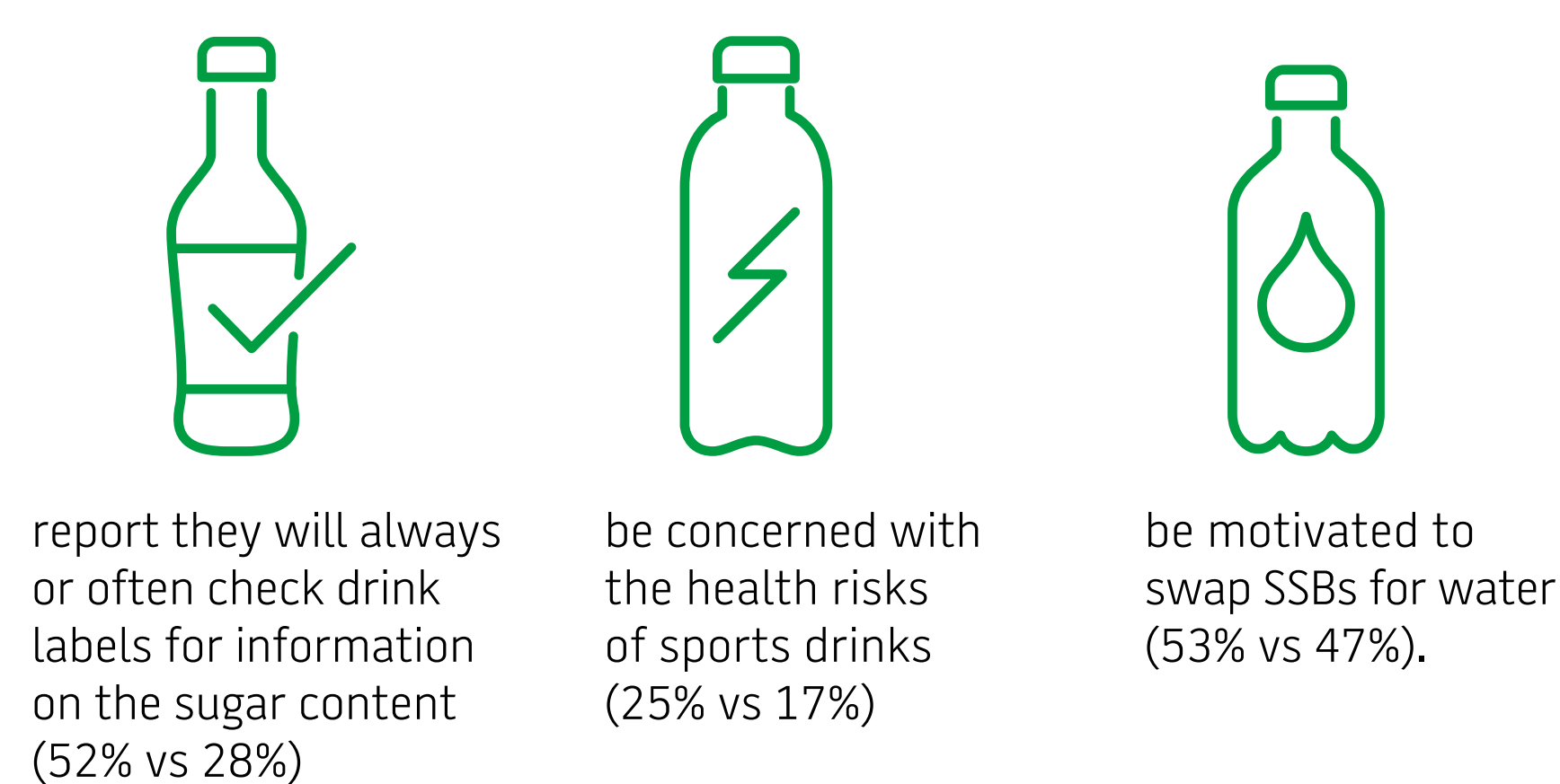
**Other channels** include communicating via electronic newsletters, social media, the VicHealth and H3O Challenge websites and key stakeholders' communication channels.

### Results

The H3O Challenge campaign achieved the following results:

#### Population survey data

- Campaign recognition among the target audience showed promising exposure of 24%. Key message take out was very high at 50%.
- The campaign messaging was well received, with 53% of those who consume more than five SSBs per week indicating they are motivated to switch to water after seeing the campaign.
- People who recognised the campaign were more likely than non-recognisers to:



report they will always or often check drink labels for information on the sugar content (52% vs 28%)

be concerned with the health risks of sports drinks (25% vs 17%)

be motivated to swap SSBs for water (53% vs 47%).

#### Sign-up data

- Sign-ups well exceeded targets with 5525 individuals signing up to join the H3O Challenge and 69,336 unique visits to the website.
- Individuals who signed up were high consumers of SSBs with an average weekly consumption of 11.5 units (375mls) for men, and 9.5 units for women.
- 67% of the total sign-ups were aged 18-35. Note: these figures are based upon data available from 3735 signups.

#### 30-day survey data

- Participants recorded reducing their SSB consumption during the Challenge and 76% indicated they would be likely to continue in the immediate future.
- 87% of respondents indicated they completed the 30-day challenge. Note: with all participant survey data there may be a response bias with those completing the survey potentially being more likely to have engaged with the campaign.

### Evaluation

To understand the impact the H3O Challenge had on participants and consumption habits, VicHealth undertook an extensive evaluation program. Key components of this program were:



- **Population-wide surveys\*** – A pre-campaign and post-campaign survey was established with the target audience. The pre-wave survey (n=507) asked respondents to indicate their attitudes and knowledge around SSBs. The post-wave survey (n=1040) then measured effectiveness of the campaign amongst those exposed (n=273) and in contrast with those not exposed (n=767).
- **30-day Questionnaire** – All recipients who registered for the Challenge were issued a link to a five-minute questionnaire to assess the impact of the challenge on their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour when they completed the Challenge at the 30-day mark.
- **Full database questionnaire** – To further understand sustained behaviour change, a questionnaire was sent to the full participant database in April 2015, to gauge the longer-term impact of participating in the Challenge.
- **H3O Challenge registration data** – The sign-up data from the H3O Challenge microsite provided insights into participants' demographics, consumption habits and motivations for signing up to the Challenge.
- **Leading Thinkers trial** – A behavioural insights trial was incorporated into the campaign delivery which sought to understand which of three different online sign-up mechanisms would achieve the strongest response.

\*While a cohort model was trialled for this survey, due to the relatively low campaign exposure the number of individuals who repeated the survey did not allow for statistically significant analysis.

### Opportunities for improvement

Key learnings are listed below, and have been incorporated into the program planning for the second year of the campaign.

- H3O Challenge participants indicated a preference for a higher level of ongoing engagement with the Challenge, such as more detailed and in-depth content.
- A more sophisticated digital platform is required to maximise communication opportunities with participants, including personalising messages to participants and providing group sign-up function for workplaces/groups to participate.
- Streamline evaluation methodology to allow for more continuous monitoring during the Challenge. Evaluation should also seek ongoing information from participants to enable in-depth understanding of the effect of the campaign.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Euromonitor International. Euromonitor International: Country Sector Briefing - Carbonates - Australia. Chicago: Euromonitor International Inc, 2006  
<sup>2</sup> Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation. Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Disease. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2003  
<sup>3</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Nutrition Evidence Library: Evidence-based systematic reviews to inform Federal nutrition policy and programs, November 2013.  
<sup>4</sup> D'ingra R, Sullivan L, Jacques PF, Wang TJ, Fox CS, Meigs JB et al. Soft drink consumption and risk of developing cardiometabolic risk factors and the metabolic syndrome in middle-aged adults in the community. *Circulation*. 2007 Jul 31; 116 (5): 480-8. PubMed PMID: 17646581 Epub 2007/07/25. eng.  
<sup>5</sup> Tucker KL, Morita K, Qiao N, Hannan MT, Cupples LA, Kiel DP. Colas, but not other carbonated beverages, are associated with low bone mineral density in older women: The Framingham Osteoporosis Study. *The American journal of clinical nutrition*. 2006 Oct;84(4):936-42. PubMed PMID: 17023723. Epub 2006/10/07. eng  
<sup>6</sup> VicHealth Indicators Survey, 2012 <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/vichealth-indicators-report>  
<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization Nutrition Guidance Expert Advisory Group (NUGAG) Draft Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children. Geneva, WHO, 2014.

### More information

Contact the Campaigns Team at VicHealth  
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 H3O Challenge website: [h3ochallenge.com.au](http://h3ochallenge.com.au)  
 VicHealth website: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/h3ochallenge](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/h3ochallenge)  
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