

Media Release

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Citizens' Jury offers 20 suggestions to tackle obesity

Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity, coordinated by VicHealth, has asked government and industry to consider 20 potential actions to promote healthier eating and tackle rising rates of obesity.

The Jury of 78 'everyday' women and men – a randomly-selected cross-section of the Victorian community - has offered a range of suggestions to increase the availability of healthy food options, reduce the appeal of junk food and improve understanding around healthy eating.

Their 'asks' include a government-mandated health star labelling program, a ban on junk food and beverage marketing to children under 16 years, a 20 per cent tax on sugar-sweetened drinks and fast-food exclusion zones around schools, sporting clubs, youth and community centres.

"Obesity is our single biggest health issue," says VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter. "Obesity shortens lives. It increases the risk of potentially life-threatening Type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer. Obesity rates are rising rapidly despite the efforts of government, public health agencies and others. More than 15 million Australians – one in four children and two in three adults - are overweight or obese. Without urgent action, one in three children and three in four adults will be overweight or obese by 2025.

"The 'everyday' men and women who made up Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity have spent six weeks listening to the evidence and questioning experts. They received submissions from 68 individuals and organisations including from industry and health. After two days of intensive discussions and deliberation this weekend, they have asked our panel of government, industry, health and sporting representatives to consider 20 options to promote healthier eating."

A panel of key decision-makers from government, industry and public health will meet in early November to consider each of the Jury's 'asks' and select actions to trial and implement. The panel includes representatives from the AMA Victoria, Australian Beverages Council, Australian Food & Grocery Council, CHOICE, City of Melbourne, and Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research at Deakin University, Coles, Foodbank Victoria, Obesity Policy Coalition, Tennis Australia, and the Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet.

"This is the largest Citizen's Jury undertaken in Australia," says Ms Rechter. "The women and men who have participated in this process have shown great commitment. They've been very generous

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with their time and are incredibly passionate about making it easier for their fellow Victorians to eat healthily. This is the first time a Citizens’ Jury has been convened on this scale to address a public health issue in Australia. It’s been fascinating process to be part of. The Jury’s asks will now be considered by key-decision makers.

“Obesity rates are rising rapidly. VicHealth convened the Citizen’s Jury in the spirit of trying something new to stem this rising tide. We owe it to the jurors to consider each of their ‘asks’ carefully, to respond constructively and potentially try something new.”

The panel’s response to the Citizens’ Jury on Obesity will be published in November 2015.

Victoria’s Citizens’ Jury on Obesity – Their ‘Asks’*
1. Provide ongoing funding for community level programs that encourage healthy eating
2. Mandate healthy eating and cooking as part of the school curriculum from pre-school to year 10
3. Develop an ongoing “Life Be In It” or “Slip Slop Slap” style campaign for healthy eating across all types of media.
4. People on low incomes will have a discount on healthy food when they go to the shops.
5. A government-funded program to teach practical skills such as budgeting, shopping and cooking to at-risk groups.
6. Amend State planning regulations to improve access to fresh produce by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. requiring the incorporation of edible, green spaces in new housing and community developments; b. protecting a proportion of fertile land for agricultural purposes as opposed to housing development, specifically in the ‘green belt’ surrounding the outer suburbs.
7. Make drinking fountains and taps freely available, accessible and visible at public events and places, parks and shopping centres.
8. Restrict visibility and accessibility of ‘Red traffic light’ drinks and foods at the point of sale (where you complete the sale).
9. Establish more healthy kitchens in schools, universities, hospitals and large workplaces.
10. Ban “junk food” and beverage marketing to children under the age of 16 years.
11. Provide only healthy food and drinks in Victorian schools.
12. Ask that the Victorian government prevent companies from locking farmers into unfair, restrictive contracts. Where a company does not require all the produce it has requested from a farmer the produce does not go to waste. Surplus must be made available for sale in the local/national area and other regions or to donate the surplus to charitable organisations, with farmer’s controlling what is grown on their farm.
13. Increase level of taxation by imposing an additional tax at point of purchase on sugar-sweetened beverages to raise prices and disincentivise consumption - Tax of at least 20% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. These additional taxes imposed on food and beverages must be earmarked (hypothecated) to fund new health promotion initiatives. b. Ban use of discounts applied for bundling and multiple purchases designed to increase consumption of junk food and soft drink (i.e. discounting for bulk purchase)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Regulate beverage sizes, imposing a maximum size that can be sold through restaurants and retail outlets (soft drinks and other calorie-dense beverages) d. Introduce legislation requiring all venues at all times serving food to offer at least one healthy meal option.
14. Government mandated health star labelling. No self-regulation of labelling in the food and beverage industry.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 15. Give local government the final say on deciding whether a fast food outlet is developed within their municipality. 16. Exclusion zones of unhealthy fast food chains/franchises outlets around schools, sporting clubs, youth and community centres where children <18 years spend time.
17. All projects that are implemented as a result of these asks to be monitored and evaluated to determine long-term outcomes.
18. Government funding for easy and regular access to health services which enable individuals to better their eating behaviour.
19. All donations to political parties, decision makers and regulatory organisations from food and beverage interest groups must be publically declared.
20. Limit the ability of food and beverage producers to market unhealthy products by advertising a healthy component of an unhealthy product.

-ENDS-

*** The Jury considered a total of 110 'asks' to help tackle obesity during the course of the two-day face-to-face meeting. They ended up agreeing on 20 final asks (80% agreement or higher)**

Notes to editors

Victoria's Citizen's Jury on Obesity received 64 submissions from individuals and organisations including Alfred Health, AMA Victoria, Australian Beverages Council, Australian Breastfeeding Association, CHOICE, Eating Disorders Victoria, Obesity Policy Coalition, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, as well as VicHealth. Read the submissions at:
www.citizensjury.vichealth.vic.gov.au.

Hear from some of the jurors participating in this weekend's event at:
www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/victorias-citizens-jury-on-obesity

The Citizens' Jury on Obesity is a VicHealth initiative supported by [newDemocracy Foundation](#), Australia's leading research organisation specialising in democratic innovation.

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