

Media Release

EMBARGO: 00.01am 23 March 2016

RESEARCH SHOW WORKPLACES KEY TO PROMOTING HEALTH AND PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASE

New VicHealth research published today (23 March) highlights the important role workplaces have in promoting good health and wellbeing and preventing chronic disease.

The *Creating Healthy Workplaces* Program funded four large-scale pilot projects in Victorian workplaces over four years and focused on the best ways to tackle alcohol-related harm, prolonged sitting, stress and violence against women.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said with many Victorians spending up to one-third of their day at work, protecting and promoting health in the workplace is important for overall health and wellbeing and crucial to a fully functioning economy.

“A healthy working environment improves productivity, staff morale and enhances an organisation’s ability to attract and retain staff. It can also decrease staff turnover, absenteeism, accidents and injuries and worker compensation claims,” Ms Rechter said.

“Employers have the potential to reach a significant amount of the population who may not otherwise respond to health messages, may not use the primary health care system or may not have time to make lasting change to their behaviour outside of work.”

“VicHealth’s *Creating Healthy Workplaces* Program, in conjunction with a range of important partners, has built a body of knowledge about how to address alcohol related harm, reduce prolonged sitting, prevent violence against women and minimise stress in the workplace. I’d encourage all employers and policymakers to read each of the four reports and consider how similar programs could be applied to other workplaces.”

“Today we have also launched a new online resource* in conjunction with SuperFriend and WorkSafe Victoria to help all Victorian workers and employers promote good wellbeing in workplaces.”

The findings from each of the projects, outlined below, will be presented at VicHealth’s *Workplaces into the Future* forum today (23 March) which showcases and provides opportunity for discussion on best practice in workplace wellbeing.

Media Contacts

Media Release

EMBARGO: 00.01am 23 March 2016

Stand Up Victoria

Overview: Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute, The University of Queensland and Deakin University designed, implemented and evaluated strategies to reduce prolonged sitting in office-based staff in the Australian Government Department of Human Services. The world first Stand-Up Victoria program delivered sit-to-stand workstations in selected offices and health coaching sessions, telephone and email support conducted during work hours in a bid to reduce the time office workers were sitting each day by encouraging them to stand up, sit less and move more. Prolonged sitting is a risk factor for chronic illness, including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and early death, even among people who meet or exceed physical activity guidelines.

Findings: Sitting time was reduced substantially at work, with an average reduction of 1.7 hours per 8-hour work day after three months and one hour after 12 months.

Sitting time was also reduced across the workers' overall day by an average of 1.2 hours demonstrating an overall beneficial change in behaviour and that reductions to sitting at work were not compensated in non-work time.

Report: [http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating Healthy Workplaces Reducing prolonged sitting Final Report.pdf?la=en](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating%20Healthy%20Workplaces%20Reducing%20prolonged%20sitting%20Final%20Report.pdf?la=en)

Workplace Reduction of Alcohol-Related Harm Project

Overview: LeeJenn Health Consultants, the National Centre for Education and Training on Addiction and South East Business Networks worked with organisations that are part of Victorian manufacturing industry to develop new and innovative approaches to reducing alcohol-related harm in the workplace. These included information sessions, training programs, resource guides for referral to drug and alcohol support providers and development of an employee health, safety and wellbeing package.

Findings: The project reduced risky drinking and the number of employees coming to work with a hangover. It also improved alcohol-related attitudes, employee awareness of the workplace alcohol policy and use of alcohol-related health and wellbeing services.

Report: [http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating Healthy Workplaces Reducing alcohol-related harm Final Report.pdf?la=en](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating%20Healthy%20Workplaces%20Reducing%20alcohol-related%20harm%20Final%20Report.pdf?la=en)

Media Contacts

Media Release

EMBARGO: 00.01am 23 March 2016

Y Gender Respect

Overview: This project led by the YMCA and evaluated by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society at Latrobe University tested ways that workplaces can overcome gender inequality, which is a key driver of violence against women. More than 6000 YMCA employees and 1500 volunteers took part in the program which consisted of staff training, education and information, awareness events and reviews and audits of practices and policies.

Findings: Results from staff surveys before and after the project indicated a better understanding of the link between respectful relationships and violence against women. Overall a change in the workplace culture was reported and more women were in leadership roles after the project.

Report: [http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating Healthy Workplaces Preventing violence against women Final Report.pdf?la=en](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating%20Healthy%20Workplaces_Preventing%20violence%20against%20women_Final%20Report.pdf?la=en)

Reducing Workplace Stress

Overview: Deakin University developed and tested a range of tailored, needs-based approaches to preventing stress at Victoria Police and Eastern Access Community Health (EACH) Social and Community Health. At Victoria Police trial sites, a supportive leadership program was developed for senior staff supervising junior officers, an online workload management system was developed to better track correspondence and workloads and Mental Health First Aid training was delivered. At EACH, a supportive leadership development program for all managers was developed in addition to the creation of a 'wellbeing day' and staff resiliency workshops.

Findings: The Victoria Police trials showed improvements in the management and leadership competencies of the sergeants taking part in the program. Psychological working conditions and health and wellbeing outcomes experienced initial improvements at Victoria Police that were not maintained. The Victoria Police trial sites experienced a significant amount of change during and after the project, which could have impacted the results. The EACH trials saw a reduction in management competencies and psychosocial working conditions and health and wellbeing outcomes experienced an initial deterioration. However, five months after the program concluded there was a positive trend in both working conditions and health outcomes, demonstrating a recovery back to initial baseline levels. EACH also experienced major organisational change which appeared to undermine some of the effectiveness of the strategies.

Media Contacts

Media Release

EMBARGO: 00.01am 23 March 2016

Report:

[http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating Healthy Workplaces Reducing workplaces stress Final Report.pdf?la=en](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/~media/ResourceCentre/PublicationsandResources/Economic%20participation/2015%20workplace/Creating%20Healthy%20Workplaces%20Reducing%20workplaces%20stress%20Final%20Report.pdf?la=en)

*Note to editor: The Victorian Workplace Mental Wellbeing Collaboration website provides resources and case studies to encourage workplaces to implement positive mental wellbeing strategies that enhance existing policies and processes and programs and create positive and supportive work cultures and environments.

For more information visit www.leadingwellvic.com.au

Media Contacts

VicHealth- Cimara Doutré, Senior Media Advisor **T** 03 9667 1319 /0435 761 732 **E** cdoutre@vichealth.vic.gov.au