

Media Release

1 July 2016

VicHealth investing in the health and wellbeing of Victorian women

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter has today unveiled further details of the organisation's focus on building gender equality in sport, which includes increased funding to encourage greater female physical activity participation.

The announcement coincides with a visit from Sport England CEO Jennie Price, who has overseen the renowned ['This Girl Can'](#) campaign in the United Kingdom, which tackles traditional barriers that prevent women and girls from being active.

As part of the refreshed focus, VicHealth's next round of [Active Club Grants](#), which have provided funding to community sport and recreation clubs for almost 30 years, will specifically focus on supporting clubs that will drive female participation.

The grants, opening in August, will be awarded to clubs looking to establish new female teams, deliver new social sport programs or competitions and create new membership options for women.

In addition, VicHealth is also extending funding for four of the sport projects previously funded under the [Changing the Game](#) program, which aims to increase the number of women and girls who are physically active, while raising the profile of women's sport in the media and championing the important role women play in sports' leadership and management.

The four programs will receive an additional funding for a further 12 months to expand their delivery and encourage even more women to become active.

The four programs include:

- **Netball Victoria's 'Rock Up Netball'**- A program that provides women 15 years and over with a low cost 'pay as you play', easy and informal chance to play netball in a fun setting
- **Surfing Victoria's 'Coasting program'**- An initiative that provides an introduction to stand-up paddle boarding
- **Gymnastics' Victoria's 'Move My Way'**- An entry level activity to teach and involve women in simple movements that build strength, flexibility and mobility
- **Cycling Victoria's 'Social Spin'**- A program that provides women-only, fun and social pop-up spin style sessions

The four programs join **AFL Active** and **Get into Cardio Tennis** to total six initiatives being funded under VicHealth's \$2.7m Changing the Game program.

Ms Rechter said 60 per cent of VicHealth's sporting investments supported women to try and encourage greater female participation in physical activity.

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“Given that more than two-thirds of adult Australian females are classified as being sedentary or having low levels of exercise, it’s important to ensure programs that facilitate, encourage and support female participation in sport and recreation exist and are adequately funded,” Ms Rechter said.

“The costs associated with inactivity are incredibly high, including the impact to the economy, cost to employer and the impact on our physical and mental wellbeing.

“Whether it’s through our Changing the Game program, our Find Your Motivation campaign or our sponsorship of women’s elite sports like the Women’s Big Bash League, VicHealth is proud of our investments to get more women and girls moving, while also raising the profile of women’s sport.

Ms Rechter also announced **Vicsport** would be delivering a two-year project to provide resources for sporting organisations and grassroots clubs to create inclusive environments for women and girls, Aboriginal Victorians, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and people with a disability.

The project ensures the learnings from two of VicHealth’s prior major sport programs between 2010 and 2015 – the State Sporting Association Participation Program and the Healthy Sporting Environments program – are built upon and made available to all sporting organisations in Victoria.

The two major programs delivered a range of improvements within 250 clubs and 31 State Sporting Associations, including the development of more accessible and inclusive sport environments and improved club environments in areas including responsible use of alcohol, healthy eating, and safety and support.

Ms Rechter said VicHealth’s focus on women in sport formed part of VicHealth’s overarching commitment to achieving gender equality across the community and building a culture of respect and non-violence.

“Importantly, Victoria’s recent Royal Commission into family violence highlighted the role of sport in building gender equality,” Ms Rechter said.

“Gender equality means men and women having equal opportunities and our research shows that women want to be more active, but that they’re not finding the right opportunities.

“We’re excited to have Jennie in Melbourne to share her expertise on how Sport England has addressed traditional barriers to female physical activity. We look forward to continuing to support more women to be physically active and reap the health benefits of doing so.”

-ENDS-

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