

## Media Release

15 March 2016

### VICHEALTH JOINS REGIONAL COMMUNITY FORUMS TO LOOK AT NEW WAYS TO ADDRESS LOCAL HEALTH ISSUES

VicHealth is teaming up with the Victorian Regional Community Leadership Program Secretariat (VRCLP) to hold conversations with local community leaders across regional Victoria this week (15 to 18 March) about how the whole community can work better together to tackle important local health promotion issues.

The forums, entitled *Your Conversation: Our action agenda for health and wellbeing* invite local community leaders from diverse backgrounds to share personal experiences and contribute their ideas to a discussion around creating positive change that can have a large impact on the health of the community.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said: “There are many benefits to a regional lifestyle. However, these Victorians face unique health and wellbeing challenges. While some issues are part of a large national problem, the way they’re tackled at a local level is different in every community.

“We’re holding a series of forums across regional Victoria, including Ballarat, Shepparton, Bendigo, Gippsland and Geelong. The feedback and ideas we receive will help VicHealth develop broader strategies around promoting healthy eating, encouraging regular physical activity, preventing smoking, preventing harm from alcohol and improving mental wellbeing.

“Our focus is helping all Victorians understand how they can take more control over their health so they can live longer, happier, healthier lives. As opposed to treating people once they’re ill, our work is aimed at preventing people from getting sick in the first place.

“The local community’s advice will contribute towards the upcoming refresh of our [Action Agenda for Health Promotion](#), which is our roadmap for VicHealth’s work to 2023.

“Participants at the forum won’t come from traditional health backgrounds, but will be drawn from all walks of life – small business, primary production, community, government, arts and heritage, education, sport and recreation. They will also be diverse in age and gender and from different cultural backgrounds. What everyone has in common is their commitment to making their local communities vibrant and sustainable into the future,” said Ms Rechter.

VRCLP CEO Katrina Baddeley said their mission is to develop leaders capable of tackling regional Victoria’s biggest challenges.

“We’re committed to making regional communities across Victoria vibrant and sustainable into the future. In partnership with VicHealth, we’re working on these forums with current and future community leaders with a varied range of life experiences. They are truly representative of our rural and regional population,” Ms Baddeley said.

At the forum, VicHealth will also share information about what it does, and how local communities can work together to improve overall health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

#### Media Contacts

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Cimara Doutré, VicHealth Senior Media Advisor M 0435 761 732 E [cdoutre@vichealth.vic.gov.au](mailto:cdoutre@vichealth.vic.gov.au)