

New projects to help Victorians get active through art

Local communities will be supported to increase social connection and get physically active through arts activities as part of health promotion foundation VicHealth's \$250,000 [Active Arts Grants](#) initiative.

VicHealth today announced that Latrobe City Council, Melton City Council and Greater Shepparton City Council will all deliver new projects to increase physical activity, resilience and social connection in their communities.

The three projects include a music and performance program for young people and an arts program supporting Sudanese young people, Indian women and people with disability to develop leadership skills.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the new projects will deliver significant health and wellbeing benefits to local communities.

"We know that taking part in the arts can lead to better physical and mental wellbeing. These projects will provide new opportunities for people to get involved in the arts in a fun and accessible way," Ms Rechter said.

"VicHealth research shows getting involved in the arts helps to improve social connection, skills development, increase confidence and self-esteem, and create a sense of belonging – areas that can have a crucial impact on a person's mental health and wellbeing."

The Active Arts projects will be delivered in local government areas in Victoria identified as having some of the lowest levels of physical activity and social cohesion in the [2015 VicHealth Indicators Survey](#).

"Particular art forms like dance and singing are known to improve cardiac functioning and general fitness, flexibility and muscle strength," Ms Rechter said.

"The benefits of arts programs also extend far beyond physical health gains. Taking part in arts activities can have a big impact on how we deal with stress, anxiety or depression, and increased life satisfaction.

"Participating in arts programs is a fun way to get creative, meet new people and move your body so you can feel happier and healthier."

VicHealth's [Local Government Active Arts Grants](#) provide the three councils with more than \$85,000 each to deliver targeted and innovative arts programs to improve physical activity rates and social cohesion in their local areas. Successful projects are listed below:

Latrobe City Council – *Deadly Arts Latrobe*

Through consultation with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, LaTrobe City Council will work with a broad range of partners to deliver a targeted active arts program addressing current barriers to arts participation within the region. This could include cultural trails and stories, cultural flash mobs and the development of music, dance, and visual artwork with the potential of a theatrical production or exhibition.

Melton City Council – *Everyone Belongs: Active through the Arts*

This project will provide a range of participatory arts activities for young Sudanese people, Indian women and people with a disability. These programs will focus on building capacity of participants to become community leaders, which will provide opportunities for continued engagement. Activities run through the program could include Bollywood dance classes, student-led music workshops, and dance workshops adapted for all abilities.

Greater Shepparton City Council – *Greater Shepparton Active Arts Program*

Together with arts and education partners Greater Shepparton City Council will work with young people, including Indigenous, CALD, LGBTIQ and people with disability to develop a range of high profile and locally delivered activities across various streams including music, creative and performance arts, sport and physical activity based programs.

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