

Western Bulldogs team up with Liverpool FC for Men's Health

The Western Bulldogs today launched *Sons of the West*, a \$1.2 million men's health initiative developed in alliance with the Liverpool FC Foundation – the community arm of English Premier League powerhouse, Liverpool FC (LFC).

Delivered with major partner, Macedon Ranges and North Western Melbourne Medicare Local, *Sons of the West* is a free program that aims to promote healthier lifestyles and improved health for men aged 18 years and over living and working in Melbourne's West.

Western Bulldogs President Peter Gordon said that there are all sorts of challenges, especially for men after they've reached 40, to stay fit and healthy.

"We get affected by career change, family issues and the pressures of modern living. But one constant in all our lives is footy. *Sons of the West* is about using football to create some good health outcomes which are also fun and create mateship," Gordon said.

Based in part on Liverpool FC's highly successful men's health program, *Sons of the West* will specifically tackle the health challenges faced by men in the West through free health checks, education sessions and men's health events.

Mark Haig, Head of Foundations Operations Liverpool FC Foundation said that following LFC's tour of Melbourne in 2013 they identified the Bulldogs enthusiasm to have a similar positive impact on the lives of the men who live locally.

"Our collaborative alliance is a great example of a tangible legacy of that tour programme. Two clubs. Two communities. One aim. Better men's health," Haig said.

Sons of the West is expected to engage up to 2,000 men in a free 12 week program that is no-nonsense and easy to access. No bootcamps; No marathons; No extremes. More fun than pain.

There will be great incentives to participate in the program including free Bulldogs memberships, Dogs gear and jumper giveaways.

Sons of the West Ambassadors and former Bulldogs stars Doug Hawkins, Tony Liberatore, Scott West, Steve Kretiuk and Brad Johnson and master chef Shane Delia will also engage with participants regularly throughout the program.

In addition to major partner Macedon Ranges and North Western Melbourne Medicare Local, the Bulldogs have also partnered with VicHealth, Victoria University, Western Health and Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Melton, Hobsons Bay and Wyndham councils to deliver this exciting initiative.

Macedon Ranges and North Western Melbourne Medicare Local CEO, Dr Vanda Fortunato said the local health organisation was very excited to partner with the Western Bulldogs to deliver such an important health initiative for the men of Melbourne's West.

"Our key priority is to work with the community in Melbourne's North West and beyond to achieve healthier and more active communities. There is no better way to reach men than through the vehicle of sport and to this effect we are thrilled to team up with the Bulldogs," Dr Fortunato said.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said VicHealth was proud to be a founding partner of *Sons of the West*.

"Men can be a bit complacent about their health, so this partnership will help them to see the value of adopting a healthier lifestyle.

"This is a really exciting opportunity for VicHealth to pour all of our expertise into one area of Victoria and to make a real difference in the lives of men living in the western suburbs of Melbourne," Ms Rechter said.

This AFL first initiative kicks off at the Western Bulldogs Men's Health Expo on 18th May at Victoria University Whitten Oval from 11am to 3pm where men of the West can sign up to the program and undertake a free health check.

Men of the West can also sign up to the initiative online and take a quick health check at www.sonsofthewest.org.au with the 12 week program to kick off on 1st June.

Sessions include a free comedy night with international star Wil Anderson, a healthy food session with Jamie's Ministry of Food, sessions with QUIT, Beyond Blue, Victoria Police, Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation, EJ Whitten Foundation and the Heart Foundation.

Background:

Men living in the West of Melbourne face some of the toughest health challenges in the Victoria including:

- Males living in Maribyrnong have the lowest life expectancy in urban Victoria (76.5 years)
- 39.9 per cent of Victorian males are overweight or obese - in Hobsons Bay this jumps to 50 per cent.
- Less than one-in-five Victorian men smoke - in Brimbank this jumps to one-in-three.
- In Victoria, 41 per cent of people report being involved in organised sport – in Wyndham only 30 per cent are involved in sport
- Nine per cent of men living in Melton are classified as sedentary – almost double the Victorian average

Health Issues to be addressed:

- Increasing physical activity and healthy eating (reduce consumption of sweet beverages).
- Reducing smoking rates and alcohol consumption.
- Increasing social connection and cohesion and emotional health.
- Improving mental health and wellbeing.
- Investigating opportunities to decrease depression, stress and violence.