

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **FFV and VicHealth unite to help Victorian football clubs stand up to racism**

Football Federation Victoria (FFV) and VicHealth have joined forces to empower football clubs and their players, officials and spectators to respond when they witness racism.

**Don't Stand By. Stand Up!** aims to support the football community in responding and intervening safely when raced-based discrimination is seen or heard.

Importantly, the campaign will focus on racism in all its forms, from subtle exclusion, to overt verbal abuse on and off the field.

The official launch of the **Don't Stand By. Stand Up!** campaign will kick off at **2pm Sunday 25 May** at Knights Stadium, Sunshine, followed by the NPL match between Melbourne Knights and Port Melbourne Sharks. Ambassadors for the campaign will be available for interview.

**Don't Stand By. Stand Up!** is supported by A-League and W-League ambassadors, Melbourne Victory's Gulcan Koca and Andrew Nabbout, and Melbourne Heart's Jason Hoffman.

A VicHealth and Football Federation Victoria online survey of 620 FFV members from 180 Victorian football clubs found a staggering 96 per cent were willing to make a promise to take a stand against racism, however almost seven in 10 survey respondents were unsure of their club's policies and procedures for reporting a racist incident. A further 79 per cent indicated they would be interested in finding out more information about how to report a racist incident.

FFV's chief executive officer Mitchell Murphy, said that it was extremely positive that the research shows a willingness to promise to take a stand against racism as a bystander.

However, the research also highlighted the majority of the football community wanted further support from their club and education on how to report a racist incident.

"As a result of these findings, FFV's **Don't Stand by. Stand Up!** initiative will seek commitment from clubs to undertake measures to educate their officials, players and spectators about racism and how to stand up and respond effectively and safely," Mr Murphy said.

"In a nutshell, FFV will be asking clubs to pledge to become champions of the **Don't Stand by. Stand Up!** bystander program.

"FFV is honoured to be working alongside VicHealth with the assistance of the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and the Australian Human Rights Commission in raising awareness and empowering the football community to not stand by but to stand up safely to support a victim and have the confidence to do so."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the vast majority of Victorians dislike racism but many don't feel confident enough to directly challenge it.

"VicHealth research shows half of all people who see racist behaviour do something about it, but this means the other half do nothing, even though most want to," Ms Rechter said.

"It's important that everyone feels empowered to respond when racism occurs and this is what our partnership with Football Federation Victoria aims to achieve.

"We need to recognise that racism hurts more than feelings. It is directly linked to anxiety, depression and harmful coping behaviours, like smoking. **Don't Stand By. Stand Up!** sends a clear message that racism will not be tolerated in sport and that abuse and discrimination are never welcome in the football community."

The bystander program has been endorsed by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC).

**ENDS**

### **Further information about Don't Stand By, Stand Up!**

FFV's 343 clubs will be invited to 'take the pledge' as part of this campaign.

Clubs that pledge will be required to nominate at least two club officials to undertake FFV's updated Respect and Responsibility course, complete an online survey to test knowledge of bystander intervention, provide evidence it has communicated the initiative to its members, confirm it has read and understood FFV's policies and procedures on racial vilification and promote the initiative at its club facilities and on its website and social media.

In return for this commitment, the first 50 clubs that pledge will receive merchandise for 100 players, official recognition from FFV and an opportunity to win a visit from an ambassador. There will also be \$250 vouchers from Sportsmart to giveaway.

All the state's competitions played from Thursday 22 May to Sunday 25 May, will be known as the **Don't Stand By. Stand Up!** Rounds.

All of FFV's referees officiating these matches will also inform teams that regardless of who they are, they should feel it is their responsibility to stand up for a victim of racism, because if we ignore it, we are then condoning racism.

### **Media contacts:**

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