



Action Agenda for Health Promotion

2019–2023



Contents

Introduction from the Board	3
Message from the Minister for Health	4
Message from the WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific.....	4
Message from the Acting CEO.....	5
A healthy Victoria.....	6
Action Agenda Framework 2019–2023	7
Our updated strategies for 2019–2023	10
Encourage regular physical activity	13
Prevent tobacco use	14
Improve mental wellbeing	15
Promote healthy eating.....	16
Prevent harm from alcohol	17
Promote health equity, research and the arts.....	18

Introduction from the Board

In 2013, VicHealth released our Action Agenda for Health Promotion, a 10-year plan with a vision that one million more Victorians would enjoy better health and wellbeing by 2023.

Since 2013, we have worked with our partners across a diverse range of sectors – including sport, the arts, local government, research and local communities – to address the major risk factors for poor health and their social determinants. We have also continued to fund research to identify the causes and patterns of poor health and to test innovative ways for health promotion to address these.

As we enter the final four years of our 10-year plan, we do so with a renewed commitment to working with our partners to achieve our vision. By following this approach, we give ourselves the greatest opportunity to make lasting change.

Fiona McCormack
Chair of the Board
VicHealth





Message from the Minister for Health

There's nothing quite as beneficial as a healthy and active lifestyle. A healthy dose of sport or exercise is great for our bodies, our minds and helps prevent debilitating chronic diseases.

That's why we're working every day with our dedicated partners to find more ways to encourage all Victorians to be healthy – no matter their age, ability, background or postcode.

Nobody should face barriers to health, which is why VicHealth's Action Agenda

is so important. At a time when Victoria's population is growing and ageing, preventing illness and promoting good health is more important than ever.

We want more people to be healthy, happy and active. VicHealth's vision is for a healthy Victoria, and it's a vision shared by our government.

The Hon. Jenny Mikakos MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services



Message from the WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific

In 2017, the World Health Organization Regional Committee for the Western Pacific Region endorsed the *Regional Action Plan on Health Promotion in the Sustainable Development Goals (2018–2030)*. The plan recognised the need, and opportunity, for health promotion to be at the forefront of finding solutions to shared challenges: climate change, hunger, obesity, rapid urbanisation and rising inequality.

As a WHO Collaborating Centre for Leadership in Health Promotion, VicHealth is a vital partner if countries across the region are to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

By working with WHO and our member states, VicHealth shares knowledge, builds capacity and strengthens leadership in health promotion, all of which are essential for health and wellbeing and sustainable development.

We look forward to continuing our partnership with VicHealth to promote and improve health and wellbeing across the region.

Dr Takeshi Kasai
Regional Director
World Health Organization
Western Pacific Region

Message from the Acting CEO

Consistent with our approach in 2016, VicHealth has updated our Action Agenda for Health Promotion as we begin the final four years of our 10-year plan.

Our 2019 update reaffirms our commitment to our five strategic imperatives: encouraging regular physical activity, preventing tobacco use, preventing harm from alcohol, improving mental wellbeing and promoting healthy eating. Over the next four years, we will integrate the three themes identified in our 2016 update – gender, youth and community – across our work, and continue our role as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Leadership in Health Promotion.

New to this update are our Action Agenda Framework and six health promotion Insights. The Action Agenda Framework shows how our work fits in the broader health context, while our Insights will help guide our work through to 2023.

VicHealth's ability to deliver our Action Agenda for Health Promotion relies on our diverse range of partners. We look forward to working with them in metropolitan Melbourne and across regional Victoria to support health and wellbeing for all Victorians.

Dr Lyn Roberts AO
Acting CEO
VicHealth



A healthy Victoria

All Victorians have the right to the resources and environments they need to live a healthy, happy life. Yet many in our community face multiple barriers to good health and wellbeing. This is particularly the case in a complex and rapidly changing world.

As Victoria's pioneering health promotion agency, VicHealth works with our partners in health, sport, the arts, workplaces, research and education to discover, implement and share solutions for long-term health. Promoting good health and preventing illness allows more Victorians to enjoy better health and wellbeing, which means they will have more time and energy for the things they enjoy.

VicHealth's Action Agenda for Health Promotion

In 2013, VicHealth released a 10-year plan that outlined our vision for a Victoria where everyone can experience better health. [The VicHealth Action Agenda for Health Promotion 2013–2023](#) set an ambitious target: one million more Victorians with better health and wellbeing by 2023.

To achieve that target, VicHealth committed to five strategic imperatives that have the greatest potential to improve the health of the Victorian population. These are to:

- encourage regular physical activity
- prevent tobacco use
- improve mental wellbeing
- promote healthy eating
- prevent harm from alcohol.

Our 2019 update

In 2016, VicHealth [updated its Action Agenda](#), and we are doing so again in 2019. As in 2016, this update will make sure we remain on track to deliver our 10-year target and that we are focusing our efforts where we can have the greatest impact. A recent study of risk factor burden in Victoria by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare confirms the importance of VicHealth's ongoing commitment to our five strategic imperatives.

This 2019 updated Action Agenda will take us through to 2023. It:

- renews our commitment to our five strategic imperatives
- integrates our three themes – gender, youth and community – across our work
- demonstrates stronger application of our work in health equity, research and the arts
- articulates six Insights that will guide our work over the next four years
- aligns with key Victorian Government priorities for health and wellbeing.

VicHealth's 2019 update recognises that new and innovative ways of working are needed to deal with complex health issues. Our partnerships are vital for creating positive changes to population health and wellbeing, helping to broaden the reach and impact of our programs and incorporating lessons learned over the past three decades.

Action Agenda Framework 2019–2023

VicHealth's Action Agenda Framework summarises the approach to our work over the next four years. It illustrates how our work meets our legislative requirements, how our programs meet our 10-year target and how we contribute to key Victorian Government priorities in health and wellbeing, mental wellbeing, fairness and inclusivity, gender equality and building capacity.

Insights

VicHealth has developed six Insights to help guide our work over the next four years. They are informed by a wealth of knowledge from our health promotion programs, research, social marketing, participatory democracy and behavioural approaches to health and wellbeing.

1. Those who do little or no physical activity are more likely to get active and stay active when the activity is social and unstructured and can be fitted into everyday life.
2. Moving young men beyond simply understanding what's right to actively supporting gender equality is critical to reducing violence against women.
3. Fear of judgement is a key barrier holding women and girls back from participating in and maintaining physical activity.
4. The shared practices of social groups, rather than individuals, have the greatest scope to bring about cultural change, particularly in relation to alcohol and diet.
5. By working together, local communities can drive improvements to systems and their own physical and social environments.
6. Building social connections and having close, positive relationships is an effective way to address the rising levels of loneliness experienced by young people.

Action Agenda Framework 2019–2023

To meet our legislative objectives

Fund activity that promotes good health, safety or the prevention and early detection of disease

Promote good health through sponsorship of sports, the arts and culture

Encourage healthy lifestyles in the community

Fund research and development activities

we work

As a catalyst to achieve change

In environments to transform systems and influence behavioural change

Guided by health equity principles

Underpinned by evidence and a commitment to research

Collaboratively and in partnership with the community

An interactive version of the Action Agenda Framework is available on the VicHealth [Action Agenda](#) web page.

across our strategic imperatives ▼



Health Equity



Research



Arts

Informed by our Insights ►

Social, unstructured physical activity

Young men & gender equality

Fear of judgement

Social groups & cultural change

Local communities & capacity

Rising loneliness

to achieve our 10-year goal ►

Our goal

That by 2023, one million more Victorians will experience better health and wellbeing

and contribute to key government priorities

Health & Wellbeing

Mental Wellbeing

Fairness & Inclusivity

Gender Equality

Building Capacity






Our updated strategies for 2019–2023

VicHealth has updated its five imperative strategies to set our program of work through to 2023. Our five strategies now share two common objectives:

- to work with the public and stakeholders
- to influence the policy and practice of organisations and government.




We have also updated our health equity, research and arts strategies to reflect our commitment to applying this work across all that we do over the next four years.

Imperative strategies

	Physical activity strategy	Tobacco strategy	Mental wellbeing strategy	Healthy eating strategy	Alcohol strategy
FOCUS AREA	 <p>To increase physical activity levels of less active people, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fear of judgement experienced by women • social sport, active recreation and play • walking and active travel. 	 <p>To further reduce tobacco use, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • preventing uptake among young people • supporting people to quit, particularly those from disadvantaged groups • reducing the appeal of tobacco products. 	 <p>To increase mental wellbeing, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • positive social connections among young people • gender equality. 	 <p>To further increase access to healthy foods and drinks in Victoria, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sports settings • fruit and vegetable consumption • food cultures. 	 <p>To prevent harm from alcohol products, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changing risky drinking cultures • enabling environments to support low-risk drinking.
Objective 1	To engage the public and stakeholders				
Objective 2	To influence the policy and practice of organisations and government				



Cross-imperative strategies

Physical activity strategy	Tobacco strategy	Mental wellbeing strategy	Healthy eating strategy	Alcohol strategy
<p>Health Equity</p>  <p>Apply the Fair Foundations by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • putting equity at the heart of our work • supporting action by the health promotion sector • influencing the determinants of health inequity through partnerships. 	<p>Research</p>  <p>Generate new evidence for direct application to health promotion and practice by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • applying research for impact and scale • supporting the development of research partnerships • increasing the flow of knowledge from research to practice. 	<p>Arts</p>  <p>Promote health and wellbeing benefits of the arts by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increasing participation and diversity in the arts • embedding the arts and creative industries across our work • harnessing arts and cultural settings as powerful enablers to influence awareness, attitudes and behaviour. 	<p>FOCUS AREA</p>	
Application				

Case study: This Girl Can – Victoria

This Girl Can – Victoria celebrates everyday women giving it a go and getting active, no matter how well they do it. The campaign is based on Sport England’s highly successful This Girl Can, which has inspired more than 3.9 million women in England to get active.

While women know the health benefits that come from physical activity, there are major barriers that stop them from being more active. VicHealth research in 2016 revealed that fear of judgement stopped many women from exercising. In fact, 52 per cent of Victorian women worried about being judged while exercising, while 41 per cent said this fear was so bad it stopped them from getting active.

Armed with this insight, VicHealth launched This Girl Can – Victoria in 2018 to motivate and empower women to be active, and to influence policies and the places where women go to be active so they feel welcome, included and supported.

This Girl Can – Victoria is more than a physical activity campaign. It’s about empowering women to feel comfortable in their bodies and in public spaces. And it’s about women getting active whenever, wherever and however they choose – without worrying about being judged.

This Girl Can – Victoria features the voices and stories of everyday women being active in their own way. There are no models or actors in the campaign. In its first year, This Girl Can – Victoria inspired more than 285,000 Victorian women to be more active. That represents one in seven women across the state.

This Girl Can – Victoria has generated a highly committed supporter community. More than 900 organisations around the state are connecting with the message, using campaign materials and working towards providing activities and facilities that make it easier for women to be active.

More than three-quarters of women who have seen the campaign believe it helps women feel confident in getting active, with 17 per cent starting a new sport or physical activity or returning to exercise after taking a break.



Encourage regular physical activity

Regular physical activity has major benefits for health and wellbeing. It reduces people's risk of health conditions like heart disease, type 2 diabetes and cancer. It also helps reduce social isolation, strengthens social connection and improves mental wellbeing.

Our 10-year goal

In 2013, VicHealth set a 10-year goal that 300,000 more Victorians would be physically active by 2023.

Since then, we have worked with local governments, schools, community organisations and all levels of sport to promote physical activity, so that more Victorians can be active, irrespective of social or economic background. Our approaches include the application of behavioural insights and nudges that continue to be used by various VicHealth partners since they were first trialled five years ago.

We have also funded research that revealed Victorians' changing needs for, and expectations of, physical activity. People want to take part in social and unstructured sport and physical activity that is flexible and fun and fits into their busy lives. This is particularly true for people who are less physically active.

Our landmark This Girl Can – Victoria campaign celebrates real women giving it a go and getting active. The campaign supports women to be active, recognising that the fear of judgement often stops them joining in and being physically active.

2019–2023

Four-year goal: To increase the physical activity levels of people who are less active, with a focus on:

Fear of judgement experienced by women

- Through This Girl Can – Victoria, continue to smash the stereotypes about when and where women can be physically active, and build a community of supportive and empowered women across Victoria.
- Work with our partners to improve the policies and places where women go to be active, so they are welcomed, included and supported.

Social sport, active recreation and play

- Champion more options for sport and physical activity that are fun, social and local.
- Address the drop-off in sport and physical activity among people aged 12–17 years, and support opportunities for women and girls and population groups who face greater barriers to participation.

Walking and active travel

- Create a culture and an environment that normalise active travel, particularly among children and families who walk, ride or scoot to and from school.
- Continue to build the evidence base for active travel and test new approaches for communities who face greater disadvantage.

Find out more about VicHealth's [Physical Activity Strategy](#).



Prevent tobacco use

While the proportion of Victorians who smoke is declining, the tobacco industry is continually evolving its products to make them more appealing – and in some instances more affordable – thereby threatening to stall the progress made over the past 30 years.

Preventing uptake, promoting and supporting cessation and reducing exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke are the key pillars to reducing harm from tobacco.

Our 10-year goal

Preventing tobacco use has been foundational work for VicHealth, and in 2013 we committed to a 10-year goal that 400,000 more Victorians would be tobacco-free by 2023.

Over the past six years, we have supported Quit Victoria to deliver programs and campaigns across the Victorian population to reduce smoking, with a focus on:

- public education campaigns using mass and digital media
- cessation support delivered by the Quitline and online
- policy and regulatory change
- cessation promotion in health, community and social settings.

We have also funded research to explore the effectiveness of cessation support for disadvantaged groups and, in partnership with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, supported health professionals to offer evidence-based support to people who smoke.

2019–2023

Four-year goal: To further reduce tobacco use, with a focus on:

Preventing uptake among young people

- Continue to monitor tobacco and related products to ensure they are not designed to appeal to young people.
- Support, through Quit Victoria, the delivery of public education campaigns about the negative health impacts of smoking, to increase quitting behaviour and to discourage uptake of smoking among young people.

Supporting people to quit, particularly those from disadvantaged groups

- Continue to provide substantial funding for the Quit Victoria program, and explore opportunities for greater collaboration between different organisations and communities to contribute to smoking cessation.
- Participate in coordinated effort and action to integrate evidence-based smoking cessation support in health service settings.

Reducing the appeal of tobacco products

- Continue to advocate for national reform on tobacco products, including pricing and further regulation of product packaging and contents.
- Work with government and other stakeholders, including Quit Victoria, to identify and close loopholes in tobacco advertising legislation.

Find out more about VicHealth's [Tobacco Strategy](#).



Improve mental wellbeing

All Victorians deserve to live healthy, happy lives and experience positive mental health and wellbeing. Despite considerable evidence that many mental health conditions are preventable, too many people in our community experience mental health conditions that affect their wellbeing and their ability to participate fully in everyday life.

Our 10-year goal

VicHealth's commitment to mental wellbeing led to our 10-year goal of 200,000 more Victorians being resilient and connected by 2023.

Over the past six years, we have led research to assess levels of resilience and wellbeing in Victorians aged 12–25 years, and tested what works to improve resilience and social connection. In partnership with the CSIRO, we identified the megatrends likely to affect young people's mental wellbeing over the next 20 years. Our Staying on Track deliberative forum gave young Victorians a voice in how they could be supported during their transition from education to employment.

We have embedded our work on the prevention of violence against women through partnerships with other organisations. This includes the national community attitudes surveys with ANROWS (Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety), the development of the first national prevention framework with Our Watch and ANROWS, and support for a PwC report on the potential cost savings from prevention programs.

We have also explored the use of behavioural insights approaches to gender equality. Our De-biasing Language in Job Advertisements trial was included in the Victorian Government's Recruit Smarter pilot. In 2019 our Behavioural Insights and Gender Equality deliberative forum brought together 70 practitioners and academics to explore ways to make it easier to move from intention to action for a more gender-equal Victoria.

2019–2023

Four-year goal: To further increase mental wellbeing, with a focus on:

Positive social connections among young people

- Generate new knowledge about the prevalence and nature of loneliness among young Victorians to empower local government and community organisations to foster positive social connections for young people.
- Trial, replicate and embed effective approaches to promote youth mental wellbeing.
- Contribute to government action to prevent mental health conditions and promote mental wellbeing in response to the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System.

Gender equality

- Contribute to government action to promote gender equality, focusing on the systemic reforms outlined in Safe and Strong and Free from Violence.
- Develop a public health framework and guiding resources to support policy and practice in healthier masculinities.
- Work with partners to develop tools and strategies to help bystanders who witness sexism or sexual harassment take effective action.

Find out more about VicHealth's Mental Wellbeing Strategy.



Promote healthy eating

All Victorians should have the opportunity to eat a healthy, balanced diet. Yet, too often, the ability to do so is undermined by environmental factors. Advertising and marketing of unhealthy foods, the relatively high cost of healthy foods such as fruit and vegetables, and time pressures that make convenience foods appealing are all forces that shape our diet.

Our 10-year goal

Responding to the challenge of preventing diet-related conditions, including obesity, VicHealth set a 10-year goal that 200,000 more Victorians would adopt a healthier diet by 2023.

Since 2013, we have promoted water as the drink of choice instead of sugar-sweetened beverages, and in 2015 we convened [Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity](#), which asked everyday Victorians for their solutions to obesity. The jury developed 20 'asks' which formed a blueprint for coordinated action from government, industry and the community.

We have also explored ways for sporting bodies and facilities to promote healthier food and drink options. This includes reviewing the evidence and sharing case studies from sporting organisations that do not accept junk food sponsorship, to better understand the challenges, both real and perceived, and the benefits of this approach.

We continue to work with our partners to identify and support policy and legislative changes needed to improve the food supply chain and the way the food industry markets and sells its products. This includes ongoing work with the Salt Reduction Partnership to highlight changes at the national level to reduce the amount of salt hidden in processed foods.

2019–2023

Four-year goal: To further improve access to healthy foods and drinks in Victoria, with a focus on:

Sports settings

- Collaborate with local governments and sporting venues to increase the availability and accessibility of healthier food and drink at their retail outlets.
- Work with the public and key stakeholders to harness community support for the removal of junk food marketing and sponsorship from children's sports.

Fruit and vegetable consumption

- Develop a consensus statement with the Victorian Fruit and Vegetable Consortium about policy and practice changes needed to boost fruit and vegetable consumption.
- Explore and scale interventions across the food system to increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

Food cultures

- Review the evidence on food cultures and effective ways to shift expectations, beliefs and social norms towards healthier eating.
- Work with partners and communities to co-develop healthy eating messages that reflect a contemporary understanding of food and resonate strongly with decision-makers and people most at risk of diet-related poor health.

Find out more about VicHealth's [Healthy Eating Strategy](#).



Prevent harm from alcohol

Most people agree that, overall, Victorians drink too much alcohol. This causes a range of preventable diseases, including cancer, stroke and liver cirrhosis, along with injury and violence experienced by communities across the state. Every year in Victoria, alcohol products cause more than 1,200 deaths and nearly 40,000 hospitalisations.

Our 10-year goal

Responding to the harm caused by alcohol, VicHealth set a 10-year goal that 200,000 more Victorians would drink less alcohol by 2023.

Since 2013, VicHealth has worked with our partners in state and local government, universities, and community and sporting groups to highlight the harms of alcohol, the benefits of drinking less and the evidence for why and how to do so.

Our [No Excuse Needed](#) campaign challenged social norms around younger people's drinking, including the pressure some young people feel to drink. Our world-first [Alcohol Cultures Framework](#) guides public health action on risky drinking cultures, shifting the focus from individual behaviour to the shared group activities and practices of what we call a 'social world'.

We have also supported the development of the alcohol prevention sector's legal policy capacity, and assisted local councils in municipal health planning and liquor licensing matters. Through our [Top Spin](#) initiative, we have asked young Victorians to call out the tactics used by the alcohol industry to influence them to drink.

2019–2023

Four-year goal: To prevent harm from alcohol products, with a focus on:

Changing risky drinking cultures

- Embed VicHealth's Alcohol Cultures Framework by offering grants to help local communities and organisations develop interventions that change risky drinking cultures.
- Continue to shift the focus from the behaviour of individuals to the shared activities and practices of a group or social world.

Enabling environments to support low-risk drinking

- Support local communities across Victoria to reduce alcohol-related harm.
- Continue to provide legal policy capacity to the alcohol prevention sector, and seek ways to increase public support for the regulation of alcohol marketing and sales.
- Develop a research agenda for alcohol in consultation with key stakeholders, and share findings with policymakers and professional networks.

Find out more about VicHealth's [Alcohol Strategy](#).

Promote health equity, research and the arts

Health equity, research and the arts are core areas of work for VicHealth. Over the next four years, we will identify opportunities where these areas can help deliver our five strategic imperatives.



Health equity

Some people face greater barriers than others to enjoying a healthy life. That's why VicHealth has a focus on health equity throughout our work. It's about levelling the field between people who can more easily access the drivers of good health and those who face barriers to those drivers. We want to achieve the highest level of health for everyone.

VicHealth's health equity framework, [Fair Foundations](#), recognises the underlying determinants that support or hinder good health, and identifies those determinants of health inequity that must be addressed so that all Victorians can experience good health and wellbeing.

Over the next four years, VicHealth will focus on applying Fair Foundations by:

- putting equity at the heart of our work
- supporting action by the health promotion sector
- influencing the determinants of health inequity through partnerships.

Find out more about VicHealth's [Health Equity Strategy](#).



Research with impact

Health promotion research is essential for understanding the factors that drive preventable disease and for designing interventions to prevent illness and promote health. Since 2013, VicHealth has contributed more than \$31 million to a wide range of research projects, including investigator-driven and commissioned research. This includes recently commissioning the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to examine the current and projected risk factor burden in Victoria, based on the Australian Burden of Disease Study 2015.

A 2018 review has led to a greater focus on impact, prioritising research projects that generate new evidence for direct application to health promotion policy and practice.

Over the next four years, VicHealth will build on this approach, with a focus on:

- applied research for impact and scale
- supporting the development of research partnerships
- increasing the flow of knowledge from research to practice.

Find out more about VicHealth's [Research Strategy](#).



Health and wellbeing through arts participation

Participating in the arts has multiple benefits for health and wellbeing. It reduces social isolation, strengthens community connection and builds self-esteem as people pursue creative activity alone or in groups.

Since 2013, VicHealth has led a research agenda to build the evidence for arts-based health promotion to demonstrate what works, how to measure it, and the importance of communicating the benefits of arts for health and wellbeing. Our [Arts Strategy 2017–19](#) explored the role that arts can play in addressing complex social issues such as social isolation, youth mental wellbeing, gender equality and local identity.

Over the next four years, VicHealth will promote the health and wellbeing benefits of the arts by:

- increasing participation and diversity
- embedding the arts and creative industries across our work
- harnessing arts and cultural settings as powerful enablers to influence awareness, attitudes and behaviour.

Find out more about VicHealth's [Arts Strategy](#).



A list of the resources and links referred to in this booklet can be found on the VicHealth Action Agenda web page www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/actionagenda



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