

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Professor Emeritus John Catford
Chair

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Cover

Cadel Evans gets behind VicHealth's H30 Challenge ahead of the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race in January 2016, sponsored by VicHealth for the second year running. The H30 Challenge encourages Victorians to swap sugary drinks for water for 30 days. Nearly 16% of Victorians drink sugary drinks daily, amounting to an average of 4.2 litres of sugar sweetened beverages consumed per week. Visit h30challenge.com.au.

Health is complex. In the same way that diseases are multi-causal, and causes are 'multi-diseasal', so too are causes 'multi-solution' and solutions 'multi-causal'.

There is no single magic wand, but rather a basketful of wands (solutions) is needed which together can address several causes and in so doing many diseases.

Take the issue of obesity, so high in the public consciousness.

We all know that obesity is a major health challenge in Australia, and the solutions are diverse and multi-layered. Individual choices, environmental supports, structural determinants and genetic factors surrounding obesity are dynamic and inter-related; so too are the relationships between the many organisations working to address them.

The success of the recent VicHealth Citizens' Jury on Obesity was its ability to enable every day Victorians, from as many communities, professions, lifestyle groups, and demographics as possible, to work together on the basket of solutions. They looked from varying positions on how to make healthier eating choices easier, and formed their ideas into actionable 'asks' from government and industry.

The Citizens' Jury is an example of VicHealth at its most effective in the role of facilitator and catalyst: providing the platform and guidance towards workable solutions, alongside key decision makers from government, academia, industry and the not-for-profit sectors.

The 2015 VicHealth Awards represent a different kind of venture with the same perspective of complexity in health promotion. This year we received outstanding submissions from advocacy groups, arts organisations, councils, health care providers, sporting bodies and universities. The diversity of achievements by both nominees and winners is evidence of the cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary nature of the work required to improve health at scale. The calibre of finalists truly reaffirms Victoria as a world-leader in health promotion and I offer my congratulations to each of them.

At this year's Awards, we also presented the prestigious Nigel Gray Award for Excellence in Health Promotion to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation for their Mental As campaign. This is an extraordinary, ground-breaking initiative that helped kick-start a national conversation about mental health. Through it the ABC raised over \$1 million funding for mental health research. This award honours the late Dr Nigel Gray AO whose vision, ingenuity and commitment - to prevent the incursions of big tobacco in Australians' lives - changed the landscape of health promotion forever.

In September the Victorian Government outlined its key health improvement priorities in the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2015–2019, with a particular focus on health inequality. Launching the Plan, Minister for Health, The Hon. Jill Hennessy, said that she hopes that the responses will break the cycle of poor health and social disadvantage so all Victorians can enjoy the highest standards of health.

VicHealth actively supports the Plan and will contribute our unique mix of insights, innovations and investments. In this complex environment, VicHealth will continue to initiate and facilitate interactions and partnerships with government, cross-sector organisations, communities and citizens to tackle entrenched and emerging issues to improve the health and wellbeing of all Victorians. ■