

# VICHEALTH HIGHLIGHTS 2014–15



**Cover image:**

Almost one in 20 deaths in Victoria is attributable to high salt intake, six times the annual road toll. VicHealth leads the Salt Reduction Strategic Partnership to reduce salt intake in Victoria with an aspirational goal of a 1 gram reduction in average salt intake by 2018. The Partnership will work with governments, the food industry, health groups, non-government organisations and the public to increase awareness of the health risks of high salt intake, reduce harm from salt, and strengthen healthy policies (more on page 12).

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# INTRODUCTION

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**The inception of VicHealth in 1987 was the result of an unparalleled effort by public health advocates, members from all sides of the Victorian political landscape and the community. A unique model for a health promotion body was created, funded by a tax on tobacco.**

From its beginnings of reducing the impact of smoking in Victoria, VicHealth has addressed many other health challenges in the state. Today, it is at the forefront of health promotion, supporting Victorians to overcome barriers to better health and wellbeing.

The current issues affecting health and wellbeing are broad and complex. The rise in chronic disease is punctuated by the pervasiveness of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, stressful lifestyles and harmful behaviours like smoking and excessive drinking. Added to this are the persistent inequalities in health which hinder opportunities for disadvantaged Victorians to gain their full health potential and participate in their communities.

Many Victorians now know much more about what is healthy and what isn't, and yet too many still make unhealthy choices. Hence, the belief that 'health happens everywhere' has been the basis of VicHealth's work to not only understand the deep-seated motivations guiding choices, but also address the interrelated influences and dynamics of where people live, work, study and play.

VicHealth's 10-year strategic plan to 2023, the Action Agenda for Health Promotion, is our overarching guide to drive positive changes. With input from all levels in governments, health promotion, industry, community, leading thinkers and its Board and staff, the Action Agenda has clear goals and priorities for each of the five strategic imperatives – promoting healthy eating, encouraging regular physical activity, preventing tobacco use, preventing harm from alcohol and improving mental wellbeing.

VicHealth's vision in 2023 is one million more Victorians living with better health and wellbeing.

Bold targets require bold actions. The Action Agenda focuses on big issues that impact the health of the whole Victorian population. At the same time, it continues to address the needs of those with poorer health status by ensuring that a health equity lens is applied throughout all programs and research. VicHealth's work is encompassed by the three approaches of its organisational model: innovate, inform and integrate.

## INNOVATE

VicHealth has a strong commitment to innovation as a way of surfacing opportunities to accelerate the progress of health promotion efforts, as well as our own Action Agenda. This is achieved by trialling new approaches to solving complex public health issues, building bridges to embed global best practice into the Victorian Health Promotion and Prevention System, and testing new partnership and co-investment models to achieve collective impact in health promotion. We also engage Victorians in public debate and conversation and see this as an opportunity to influence health promotion behaviour through a social movement model. As a result of these efforts proven innovations can be embedded into mainstream policy and practice.

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**VicHealth's vision in 2023 is one million more Victorians living with better health and wellbeing.**

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## INFORM

VicHealth is embracing social marketing along with proven methods of communication to reach as many Victorians as possible and change attitudes to health. It is also facilitating strategic partnerships and engaging in public debate to address health priorities.

## INTEGRATE

Embedding proven initiatives into health promotion policy and best practice and working strategically with a range of partners continues to yield dividends. It allows VicHealth to continue its legacy as innovator and risk taker, backed by evidence from research and to deploy its innovations into mainstream work.

While bringing together these resources, VicHealth is also engaging with communities. VicHealth is collaborating with everyday citizens to clear new pathways to health.

The vision for one million more Victorians with better health and wellbeing requires VicHealth to listen, to be agile, proactive and accountable for its work. In implementing the Action Agenda, VicHealth will apply the learnings of nearly three decades to lead high-impact initiatives, encourage good policies and foster the right partnerships that support every Victorian to achieve their full health potential.

**The challenges to achieving improved health and wellbeing in Victoria have never been more pressing. VicHealth continues to work with partners from all sectors to use collective resources and influence to develop an effective response to these challenges.**

# CHAIR'S REPORT

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VicHealth has championed the health and wellbeing of all Victorians for nearly three decades. Over this time, Victorians have progressively taken control of their health through increased knowledge, support and engagement, and together we have improved the environments where people live, learn, work and play.



**Professor John Catford**  
Chair of the Board, VicHealth

In this, the second year of the VicHealth Action Agenda for Health Promotion, we are pleased with the progress in working together towards the goal of one million more Victorians living with better health and wellbeing. The Action Agenda – our 10-year strategic plan – builds on the depth of experience and astounding talent of our partners and people.

Victoria is a leader in health promotion both nationally and internationally, recognised for excellence in developing and implementing evidence-based interventions to reduce the social and economic impact of chronic non-communicable diseases.

This places VicHealth in a unique position to provide advice and support to all levels of government, across political parties and throughout a range of portfolios. Our partners span many sectors, including health, sports, research, education, the arts and community. We also have strong relationships with health promotion practitioners and the media.

In 2014, we bid farewell to one state government and welcomed another. The multi-partisan support for our organisation is a hallmark of our origins and evolution: a core reason why Victoria has been able to achieve so much. Importantly, our strong working relationship with the Minister for Health, The Hon. Jill Hennessy MP, enables us to progress our strategy whilst supporting government priorities.

As a strategic innovator, global influencer, ally and friend, VicHealth has extended the reach of its work, making significant advances in the Action Agenda's five strategic imperatives. These are promoting healthy eating, encouraging regular physical activity, preventing tobacco use, preventing harm from alcohol and improving mental wellbeing.

VicHealth was founded with an objective of ending smoking related illness. With a great sense of achievement in May this year, we celebrated 30 years of Quit, a world-leading program we have been proud to fund and support via our longest standing partnership with the Cancer Council of Victoria. Smoking is continuing to trend downwards and the rate of decline has accelerated over the past three years, assisted by strong smoking cessation support, tax increases on tobacco products and the introduction of plain packaging.

## **VicHealth has learned much and shares that knowledge widely. Victorians have benefited from broad-based investments and partnerships, collaboration with governments at all levels, and strategic alliances with other agencies in health, sports, research, arts, media, academics and the community.**

In April this year, legislation was introduced banning smoking within four metres of centres caring for children. We congratulate the Victorian Government on this proactive policy in the first year of its term. VicHealth will continue to work with our partners to achieve the objective of preventing tobacco use.

Our research shows that mental illness is the largest contributor to the disability burden in Victoria, costing our economy \$5.4 billion a year. VicHealth has commenced a multi-layered approach to meet its targets of improving mental wellbeing and resilience in young Victorians through education, community, online platforms, workplace partnerships and the arts.

The new Andrews Government appointed a Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, The Hon. Fiona Richardson MP, acknowledging this issue as the leading contributor to death, disability and illness for women aged 15 to 44. The establishment of the Royal Commission into Family Violence was another strong step towards reversing this trend. Based on our significant work in primary prevention initiatives over the last decade, VicHealth presented to the Royal Commission on several occasions in 2015 and has continued to fund groundbreaking research.

Regular physical activity is a key factor in promoting good health and preventing chronic disease, but less than a third of Australians are taking enough exercise to benefit their health. VicHealth has focused its support of sports organisations so that they are better able to promote good health, while also tackling barriers to sport participation, especially for women.

Healthy eating continues to be a high priority for VicHealth. This year we focused on lowering salt intake to reduce the incidence of high blood pressure. With great success we also worked on increasing access to water in public places and promoting the consumption of water in preference to energy dense sugary drinks.

Alcohol consumption is slowly decreasing in Australia, however alcohol is still second only to tobacco as the most preventable cause of death and hospitalisation. VicHealth continues to promote better attitudes, social norms and behaviours through social marketing, community engagement and partnerships.

As in previous years, VicHealth is immensely proud of and deeply indebted to our partners, patrons, advocates and supporters who work tirelessly with us. Together our whole is so much greater than the sum of our parts.

I wish to pay my respects and personal gratitude to one of Victoria's most important health promotion pioneers, Dr Nigel Gray AO, who passed away in December last year. Dr Gray's relentless campaigning against tobacco advertising led to the creation of VicHealth in 1987.

Within VicHealth, we are grateful for the ongoing support and enthusiasm of our Board members Deputy Chair Ms Nicole Livingstone OAM, Ms Susan Crow, Ms Margot Foster AM, Mr Nick Green OAM, Professor Michael Morgan and Mr Stephen Walter. I particularly wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions

of outgoing members Mr Peter Gordon, Professor Margaret Hamilton AO and Professor Ruth Rentschler OAM, and Members of Parliament Mr Neil Angus and Ms Danielle Greene who finished their tenures during this financial year.

The Board and staff thank Mr Mark Birrell, former Chair, who retired during the financial year. His inspirational leadership has ensured the success of VicHealth into the future.

Together with our outstanding CEO, Ms Jerril Rechter, and our skilled and experienced staff, we have positioned VicHealth to continue its unique role in promoting good health, preventing ill health and reducing the burden of disease for all Victorians.

To our friends, partners and communities – thank you for your tremendous support and willingness to work with us on new approaches in a complex and challenging environment.

I have great pleasure in presenting these highlights of our achievements in 2014–15, and I look forward to the next steps in progressing our quest of one million more Victorians with better health and wellbeing.



# CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

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Making a genuine impact on the health and wellbeing of Victorians continues to motivate us. While many challenges remain, we have made great strides and have ambitious plans for the years ahead.



**Jerril Rechter**  
Chief Executive Officer

This year VicHealth has focused on big health issues and used its enhanced agility to identify and address opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

All of our work aligns to our five strategic imperatives of promoting healthy eating, encouraging physical activity, preventing tobacco use, preventing harm from alcohol and improving mental wellbeing.

At the same time, we have kept our focus on fostering health equity to ensure that every Victorian has the opportunity to attain their full health potential.

We have worked on high-impact initiatives, programs and social marketing campaigns that reached Victorians in the day-to-day spaces where lifestyle factors influence health and wellbeing. This included innovating with digital technology, which increasingly influences our lives in a profound and encompassing way.

To find bold and creative solutions to health and wellbeing challenges, including addressing infrastructures and systems to help make healthy choices easier, we have formed new partnerships and enhanced old ones.

VicHealth led a collaboration with major health and industry groups to develop and implement an action plan to reduce salt intake in Victorian diets, with the ultimate goal of preventing death and disability from causes directly related to its high intake.

To help reduce the consumption of sugary drinks, a major contributor to overweight and obesity, we've promoted and built infrastructure to support the greater intake of water. Partners, including the City of Melbourne, have increased access to water in key environments at sports clubs, major sporting events and high traffic areas across the city.

In addition, we launched the 'H30 Challenge' social marketing campaign, encouraging Victorians to make a 30-day pledge to switch from sugary drinks to water for their health, with a third of participants taking action to increase their intake of water and reduce the amount of sugary drinks consumed.



Working with a range of government and non-government partners, we led an Alcohol Culture Change campaign. This included innovative approaches to reduce alcohol consumption and its attendant harms, and enable an improved drinking culture that decreases the acceptability of intoxication. This included the No Excuse Needed media campaign which led to a third of viewers drinking less alcohol as a result, and trials in licensed premises to encourage patrons to drink more water.

In just one year, we funded 13 initiatives as part of the new Innovation Challenges program, targeting seed funding to initiatives that encourage healthier behaviours in four areas: physical activity, reducing alcohol consumption, mental wellbeing through participation in the arts, and improving access to sustainable, nutritious food.

With great anticipation, we launched our VicHealth Leading Thinkers initiative. Dr David Halpern of the UK-based Behavioural Insights Team, our inaugural Leading Thinker, visited Victoria several times during the year to work with us and some of our partners.

This initiative brings together experts who draw upon behavioural economics and other fields to generate new thinking and approaches to deep-rooted health challenges. The first of these is the urgent and complex problem of obesity, which has become a leading cause of premature death and illness in Australia.

To provide Victorian's with the independent, reliable and evidence based information they need to be empowered to live healthier and happier lives, we've engaged them in conversations about health through media and social media. Our research, guides and tools have been reported on TV, radio, online and in printed press, and shared on Facebook and Twitter.

True to our legacy of generating evidence to support our actions, we continued to contribute significantly to health promotion knowledge and intelligence through our investments in research and evaluation. This year, VicHealth committed approximately \$1.25 million to fund new ARC Linkage and NHMRC Partnership research projects commencing in 2014-15. We also supported 13 of these grants to full application. Approximately half of applications with VicHealth as a partner in these grants are successful and every dollar of VicHealth investment in these grants results in a five-fold return in funding from the Commonwealth, for the benefit of Victorian research.

**VicHealth has a unique role, a role which is increasingly important as it builds on three decades of experience, knowledge and achievement. Our past year has been defined by innovation. Our next year will be defined by our ability to apply this year's learnings and implement actions to meet the great health challenges of our time.**

## LOOKING TO THE YEARS AHEAD

This year was defined by innovation, creativity and forward thinking.

We are continuing to explore and implement bold new ways to address Victoria's health priorities with cutting-edge interventions, digital technologies, pioneering research and cross-sectoral knowledge. We are embracing this boldness while staying solidly grounded in evidence-based health promotion and innovation.

To measure the impact of our work, we have set ourselves bold targets. Our Action Agenda Scorecard is the embodiment of our vision for achieving one million more Victorians with better health and wellbeing. In a first for VicHealth, we have set our sights on specific targets, which we know will also inspire our partners to imagine new possibilities for Victorians' health, and to help focus our collective efforts.

This coming year – and for the remaining eight years of the Action Agenda – all of our work will be shaped and defined by our organisational model, which has three equally important approaches: innovate, inform and integrate.

- We will harness the insights presented by digital technology to improve the reach and quality of our initiatives.
- We will dig deeper to understand behaviour, correlating insights from behavioural economics, psychology and social anthropology to design interventions that encourage, support and enable people to make healthier choices.

- We will continue to drive the creation and transfer of knowledge; use data and evidence to make the best possible decisions; and carry out rigorous evaluation of all VicHealth investments to increase the impact of our health promotion programs.
- We will continue to embrace social marketing as a critical way of using our understanding of the public's needs and wants, to drive change in awareness, attitudes and, ultimately, behaviour.
- We will continue to align with government priorities and complement the work of other agencies, to embrace the synergy we know achieves the best results for Victorians.
- We will continue to operate with transparency and accountability, and with a focus on the sustainability of our actions.
- We will be unceasing in our work to remove the barriers to better health and wellbeing, and reduce chronic illness among Victorians.
- We are committed to reducing health inequities and will work so that every Victorian can have a fair opportunity to attain their full health potential.
- Importantly, we will remain focused by implementing the Action Agenda to strengthen our competencies and influence, share our expertise, lead high-impact projects and support good health policy while continuing to fund research and initiatives that improve the health and wellbeing of all Victorians.

I wish to thank our current Chair, John Catford and former Chair, Mark Birrell, and the VicHealth Board and Committees for their support, encouragement and guidance through our second year of the Action Agenda.

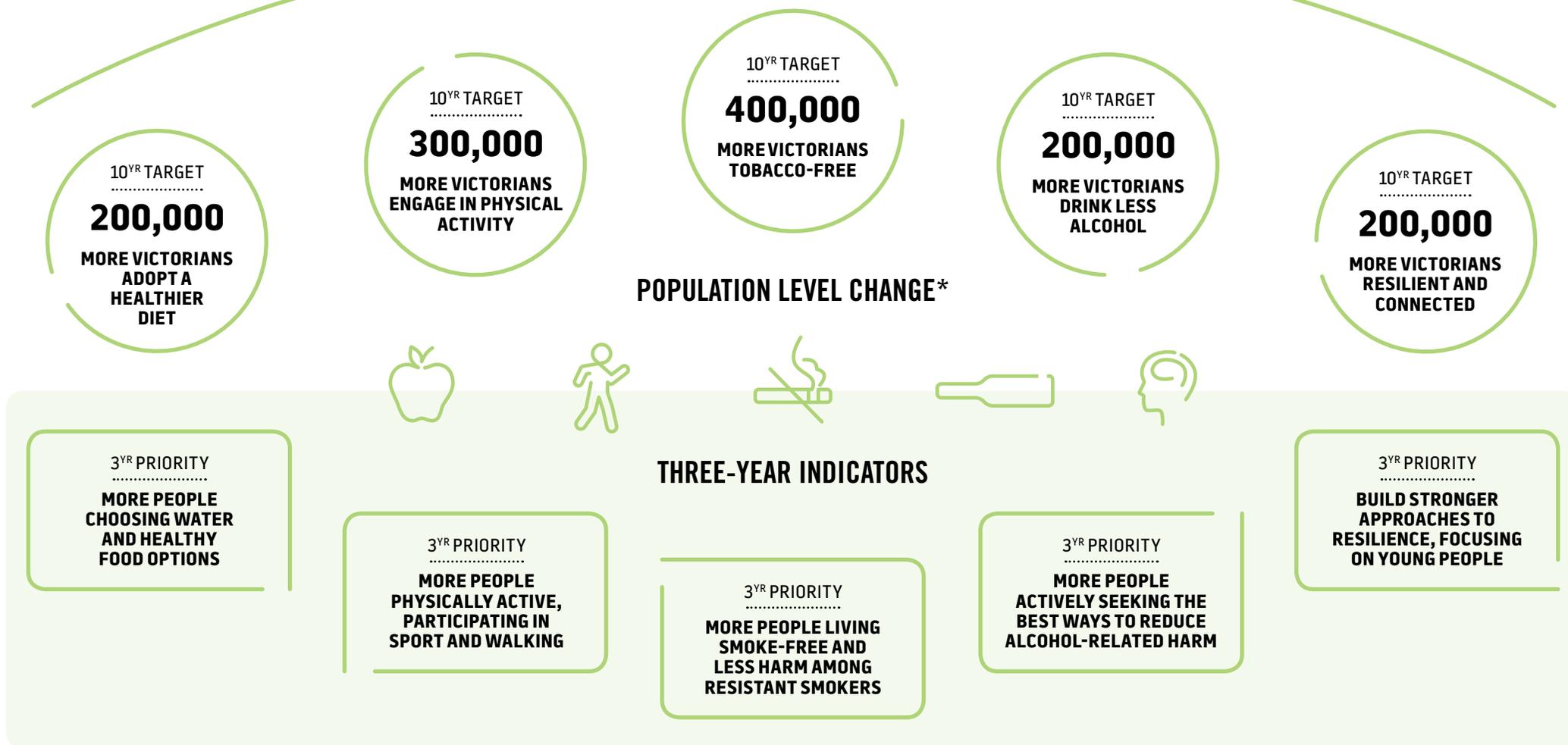
We are grateful for the support of the Minister for Health, The Hon. Jill Hennessy MP and thank the previous Minister for Health, The Hon. David Davis MP. And, we would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of the Victorian Government, members of the Victorian Parliament, a number of government agencies and key partners, researchers and our patrons, who have given us the tools and confidence to be ambitious.

Each and every staff member at VicHealth is driven to achieve our goals and aspirations. They can be immensely proud of the achievements of the last year and the work they are doing now that will yield results for many years to come. Thank you.



# ONE MILLION MORE VICTORIANS WITH BETTER HEALTH AND WELLBEING

## Strategic imperatives



\* A technical paper describes the calculations underpinning these targets. As some individuals may achieve goals across more than one imperative, the total number in each 10-year target exceeds 1 million to account for this.

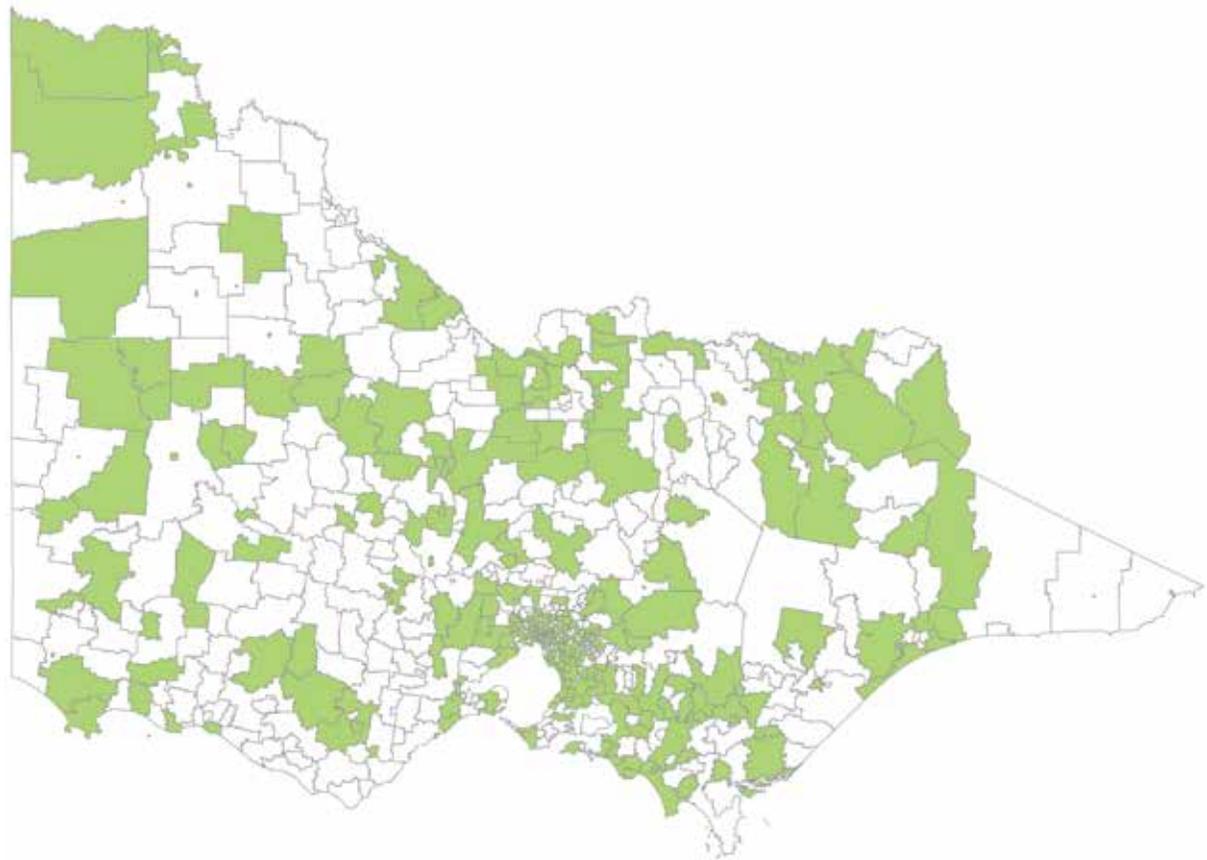
# FAST FACTS

VicHealth works in partnership with communities, organisations and individuals to promote good health and prevent ill health.

## WE FUNDED

Sport and active recreation organisations	628
Local governments	63
Community organisations and NGOs	13
Tertiary education and research institutes	33
Arts organisations	11
Health service organisations	9
Partnered investments with government and statutory bodies	2

## OUR REACH



## SUMMARY OF GRANT PAYMENTS

### STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES



**\$3.5m**

**PROMOTING  
HEALTHY EATING**



**\$11m**

**ENCOURAGING REGULAR  
PHYSICAL ACTIVITY**



**\$5.4m**

**PREVENTING  
TOBACCO USE**



**\$1.7m**

**PREVENTING HARM  
FROM ALCOHOL**



**\$3.1m**

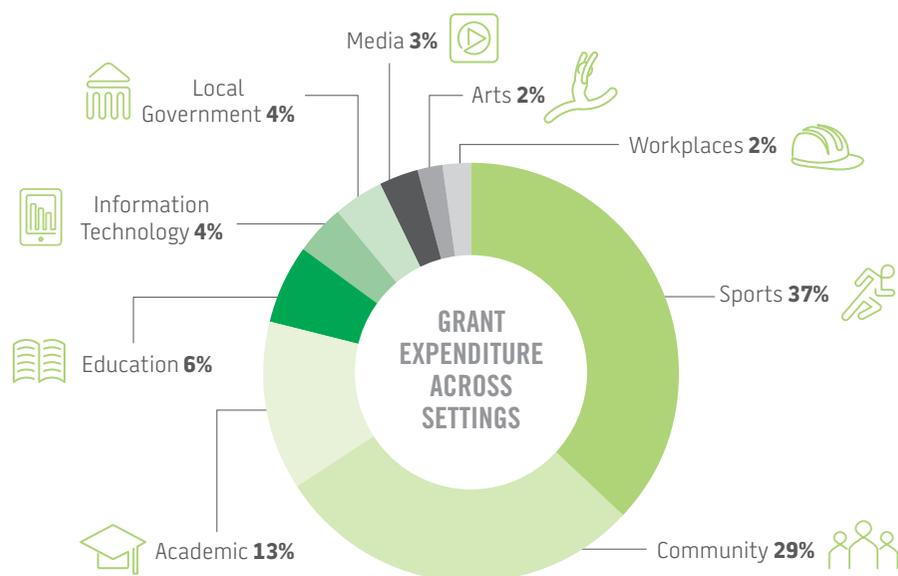
**IMPROVING  
MENTAL WELLBEING**

### OUR OBJECTIVES

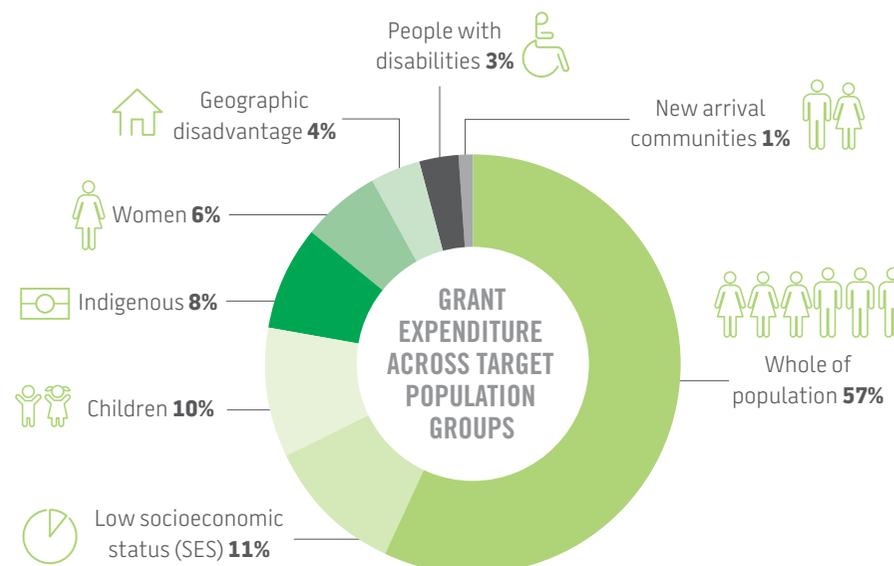
- To fund activity related to the promotion of good health, safety or the prevention and early detection of disease.
- To increase awareness of programs for promoting good health in the community through the sponsorship of sports, the arts and popular culture.
- To encourage healthy lifestyles in the community and support activities involving participation in healthy pursuits.
- To fund research and development activities in support of these activities.

(as mandated by the *Tobacco Act 1987*)

### SETTINGS



### TARGET POPULATION



# PROMOTING HEALTHY EATING



## 3-YEAR PRIORITY MORE PEOPLE CHOOSING HEALTHY FOOD OPTIONS AND WATER

All too often, the healthy choice is not the easiest choice for people to make.

Most people understand the importance of having a healthy diet for themselves and their families, as well as what foods and drinks make up a healthy diet. But there is a gap between what they aspire to eat and what they actually do eat.

The reality is that eating a healthy, balanced diet is not just down to individual choice and willpower. The environment in which we live influences our diet, from the availability of fresh fruit and vegetables to time pressures and cultural norms.

VicHealth has targeted three key areas to make it easier for people to choose the healthier options.

## WORKING TO REDUCE OUR SALT INTAKE

Victorians eat too much salt. High salt intake has been attributed to six times as many deaths each year as there are on our roads. Salt reduction is one of the most cost-effective strategies for improving health.

Together with Deakin University, the Department of Health and Human Services, The George Institute for Global Health, the Heart Foundation, Kidney Health Australia and National Stroke Foundation, VicHealth instigated the Salt Reduction Strategic Partnership to advance action on salt reduction. The Partnership is working to achieve a greater commitment and consensus to reduce salt intake in Victoria, with increased monitoring of progress and a strong policy framework. *The State of Salt: The Case for Salt Reduction in Victoria* was published in May 2015.

The aspirational goal is for a 1 gram reduction in average salt intake by 2018. Progress has been made through existing initiatives, but further collective action with government, industry and the public is needed as part of a comprehensive program of work. If Australia can achieve the WHO target of a 30 per cent reduction in average salt intake across the population by 2025, we can save around 3,500 lives a year, as well as millions of dollars to the health care system.

## MAKING HEALTHY FOOD MORE ACCESSIBLE

To help improve the food supply, access and culture, VicHealth launched the Seed Challenge. It sought innovative solutions to achieve nutritious food that is sustainable, available and affordable for all Victorians.

The two winners of the Seed Challenge were given funding to roll out their initiatives, with additional funding provided in November 2014:

1. **Open Food Network** ([openfoodnetwork.org](http://openfoodnetwork.org)) is an online marketplace for small producers, allowing farmers and suppliers to connect directly with consumers. This results in easier access to affordable food.
2. **3000acres** ([3000acres.org](http://3000acres.org)) is helping people make use of vacant land around Melbourne to grow their own food. Seven plots of underutilised land have been converted into productive community gardens, improving access and also taking food education to the streets.

These successful outcomes suggest both projects will continue to grow beyond the Seed Project which concludes in October 2015.

## PROMOTING WATER AS THE HEALTHY DRINK CHOICE

As a nation, we are one of the biggest consumers of soft drinks,<sup>1</sup> and sugar-sweetened beverages are the largest source of added sugars in the Australian diet.<sup>2</sup>

To achieve positive shifts in knowledge and attitudes around choosing water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages, VicHealth has launched an integrated program encompassing social marketing, infrastructure development, settings-based research and strategic partnerships.

In partnership with the City of Melbourne, we installed 60 drinking fountains with special taps for refilling water bottles. Early research suggests water bottle refill stations are an effective way to encourage people to drink more water. We will continue to evaluate the drinking fountains and use the results of our research to inform the development of evidence-based approaches and best practice guidelines.



## The H30 Challenge

In September 2014 VicHealth launched a major social marketing campaign, the H30 Challenge ([h30challenge.com.au](http://h30challenge.com.au)). It encourages Victorians to swap sugary drinks for water for 30 days.

The aim of the challenge is to help establish healthier habits, with water becoming the main choice of beverage in the long term. Evaluation of the campaign has shown it to be very successful, and the campaign will run again in 2015–16.



**30**

DAYS

To swap sugary drinks for water



**5500**

PARTICIPANTS

Took part in the H30 challenge



**76**

PER CENT

Would continue drinking water

# ENCOURAGING REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



## 3-YEAR PRIORITY

### MORE PEOPLE PHYSICALLY ACTIVE, PARTICIPATING IN SPORT AND WALKING

Less than a third of Australians get enough physical activity to benefit their health.<sup>3</sup>

To create opportunities for people to build physical activity into their daily lives, VicHealth promotes participation in sport and active recreation, active travel and the arts. It achieves this through diverse partnerships with the sports sector, government, active travel and recreation agencies, arts organisations, workplaces and more.

In July 2014, VicHealth launched the Physical Activity, Sport and Walking Investment Plan (2014–18), a whole-of-population approach to getting more Victorians active through sport and walking, with a specific focus on targeting those who are inactive or somewhat active.

The plan underpins all our new approaches in this area. It builds on our previous work, which focused on developing organisational capacity, providing a transition towards more direct engagement of Victorians in physical activity.

## BOOSTING PARTICIPATION IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES

### Changing the Game

Research conducted this year showed that women are finding it harder to exercise, with issues including the costs involved, access to childcare, and a lack of social and flexible opportunities. In response, our Increasing Female Participation in Sport initiative supports Victorian sporting bodies to create new programs to engage women and girls who wouldn't normally participate, as well as raise the profile of female sport.

### BeActive

Together with Sport and Recreation Victoria, we have been working with local councils to strengthen physical activity outcomes. In 2014–15, the final year of BeActive, our emphasis was on further strengthening council policy, planning and frameworks and the activation of initiatives with a strong focus on walking, cycling, active transport, use of open space and engaging local volunteers.

### TeamUp

Launched in 2013, TeamUp is a free app to help people join a range of nearby sports and physical activities. With the added support of our TeamUp partners in 2015, the TeamUp community continues to grow.

## GETTING MORE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN SPORTING ACTIVITIES

### Healthy Sporting Environments Program

To support the development of sustainable policies in sporting organisations, the Healthy Sporting Environments program (2012–14) involved nine Regional Sports Assemblies and 250 local clubs. Our new Regional Sport Program builds on the work with the Regional Sports Assemblies, helping them to increase participation in physical activity through sport, as well as making water the beverage of choice in regional sporting clubs, leagues and facilities.

### State Sporting Association Participation Program (SSAPP)

VicHealth's SSAPP invested almost \$13.7 million between 2011 and 2015 to increase participation and help make 31 State Sporting Associations more inclusive. There was a particular focus on people with disabilities, Indigenous Australians, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women and girls.

In the final year of this pioneering organisational and cultural change program, the funded organisations created a foundation for sustainable change to ensure that they could continue to develop greater inclusiveness.

## MAKING IT EASIER TO PARTICIPATE

### Active Club Grants

This year, a total of 566 clubs across Victoria shared in over \$1.3 million in grants for essential equipment to help get more people active through sport.

### Innovation challenge: Physical activity

We called for new ideas to create flexible, social and less structured ways to get more Victorians physically active. The sporting community enthusiastically met our challenge to take sport and physical activity in a new direction. More than 100 video pitches were submitted and a pool of \$400,000 in start-up funding was awarded to seven ideas:

- Back 2 School Fitness – combining fitness with fundraising;
- Pulseraiser – fundraising through running;
- Learn Right Skate School – a formal induction into skateboarding and skate parks;
- CardioNET – encouraging people to re-engage in physical activity through netball;
- Go Explore It – a game-based orienteering activity;
- Play Streets – encouraging free, unstructured, safe street play; and
- Fit Football – an anyone, anywhere, anytime approach to fitness through football.



# Walk to School 2014

**Getting kids into a routine of walking puts them on the path to good health for the rest of their lives.**

VicHealth's Walk to School is a high profile annual community event that encourages primary school students across Victoria to walk to and from school as often as possible during October.

Now in its tenth year, the Walk to School campaign encourages regular physical activity in primary students by supporting them and their families to establish routines incorporating walking, and by supporting primary schools, local councils and communities to integrate walking behaviours into their local settings.

In 2014, 52 local councils across Victoria received grants, resources and support from VicHealth to deliver local Walk to School activities in their area. Walk to School month in October 2014 saw a record 78,628 students and 499 schools joining in.

Our evaluation findings indicated that on average, students that participated in Walk to School 2014 walked significantly more following the campaign, compared to students who did not participate.



**499**  
PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Took part  
(up from 303  
in 2013)



**78,628**  
STUDENTS

Participated  
(up from 32,518  
in 2013)



**896,898**  
KILOMETRES

Estimated distance  
walked by participating  
students



VicHealth is working to integrate a focus on equity through all programs, campaigns, policy work, research and evaluation.

In 2013, VicHealth published *Fair Foundations: The VicHealth framework for health equity*, a planning tool that guides action on the social determinants of health inequity. Fair Foundations was updated and republished this year, and is accompanied by a new supporting resource called About Fair Foundations and Promoting Health Equity.

Fair Foundations was also used to guide eight evidence reviews about what can be done to reduce inequities in relation to mental wellbeing, alcohol consumption and harm, tobacco smoking, physical activity and healthy eating, as well as in different settings, in early childhood, and through social innovation.

VicHealth's commitment to reduce health inequities experienced by Aboriginal Victorians remained a focus this year.

Sport provides a critical setting for the integration of health promotion activity for Aboriginal Victorians, demonstrated by Surfing Victoria's Indigenous Surfing Program.

Our support of the program focused on long-term sustainability, strengthening the capacity of local mentors, further developing regional surf events and broadening the appeal of participation in Surf Development Squads.

VicHealth is committed to the promotion of health equity, where everyone has the opportunity to gain their full health potential and no one is disadvantaged from achieving this potential, if possible.

**THE PROBLEM:  
SOME GROUPS  
ARE MORE LIKELY  
TO EXPERIENCE  
BETTER HEALTH  
THAN OTHERS**



Smoking rates can be 2 to 5 times higher for particular population groups compared to all Australians<sup>4</sup>



Depending on where you live in Victoria, there can be up to 7 years difference in life expectancy<sup>5</sup>



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can expect to live 10 to 17 years less than other Australians<sup>6</sup>

INTEGRATED THEME

## INFLUENCING POLICY

VicHealth contributes to government policy in a range of ways, including through research partnerships that enhance or build the evidence base, strategic advice and the provision of support across all of our strategic imperatives.

Examples of the work of the Policy Development Office over the last year include the:

- development of submissions to the Hazelwood Mine Fire Inquiry
- Victorian Government Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Senate Finance and Public Administration Committee inquiry into domestic violence in Australia
- Federal Senate Select Committee on Health
- Victorian Government consultation on the requirements for wholesale liquor supply reporting
- Australian National Diabetes Strategy
- participation on Ministerial and government advisory panels.

In recognition of three decades of generating and sharing evidence-based knowledge with local and international partners, VicHealth was designated as a World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Leadership in Health Promotion in September 2014.

Although this designation connects VicHealth to organisations throughout the world, it focuses on the Western Pacific Region, home to approximately 1.8 billion people where non-communicable diseases (NCDs), particularly cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes, are the leading cause of death and disability.

As a WHO Collaborating Centre, VicHealth provides advice and knowledge to organisations around the world and recently hosted delegations from three countries. In 2015, VicHealth hosted TongaHealth, giving VicHealth an opportunity to share knowledge as well as build understanding of health issues in the Western Pacific Region.

A delegation from the Korean Health Promotion Foundation was hosted by Quit Victoria and VicHealth in 2015 to discuss experiences in tobacco control with a specific focus on plain packaging, education and cessation programs.

The Singapore Health Promotion Board also visited in 2015 to discuss experiences in health promotion for children and young people, with a focus on school settings, mental wellbeing and physical activity.

Working with government at local, state and national level, as well as non-government and community organisations, VicHealth is recognised as a leader in health promotion internationally.

### CHALLENGES AS A WHO COLLABORATING CENTRE IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION

#### RISK FACTORS FOR NCDs IN THE WESTERN PACIFIC REGION REMAIN UNACCEPTABLY HIGH

1 in 5

ADULTS OVER 18 HAVE ELEVATED BLOOD PRESSURE

50%

OF MEN OVER 15 SMOKE TOBACCO DAILY

85%

OF ADOLESCENTS DO NOT ENGAGE IN SUFFICIENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

# PREVENTING TOBACCO USE



## 3-YEAR PRIORITY

### MORE PEOPLE LIVING SMOKE-FREE AND LESS HARM AMONG RESISTANT SMOKERS

Victoria has been a leader in tobacco control for many years and much of this achievement has been borne out of the longstanding partnership between VicHealth and the Victorian Government to support the activities of the Quit program in tobacco control.

Since the *Tobacco Act* was introduced to Victoria in 1987, regular smoking rates have dropped from over 32 per cent to just over 13 per cent. Despite this, smoking still causes 4,000 preventable deaths in Victoria every year and costs the economy \$5 billion.

## INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION FORUM

In July 2014, VicHealth hosted an international Tobacco Harm Reduction Forum in Melbourne. The two-day forum brought together national and international tobacco control experts.

These experts shared their knowledge and experience about tobacco control, tobacco harm reduction and alternative nicotine delivery systems (ANDS), and also discussed new trends in these areas.

One of the conclusions of the Forum was that there is a considerable level of consensus among the Australian tobacco control community about the potential of tobacco harm reduction within the Australian context, as well as a number of areas that require further development.

The discussions and findings from the Forum will be used in determining VicHealth's work in the area of tobacco harm reduction in the years ahead.

## CULTIVATING SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENTS

VicHealth and Quit Victoria support smokefree legislation and policies in public spaces in order to:

- reduce exposure of non-smokers to secondhand tobacco smoke
- prevent children being exposed to smoking behaviours
- support smokers who are trying to quit.

This year, the Victorian Government introduced a smoking ban that applies to the grounds of, and within four metres of an entrance to, schools, childcare centres, kindergartens and preschools, hospitals and community health services, and many government buildings.

VicHealth and Quit Victoria supported this legislation, which helps protect everyone in the community from second-hand smoke as they go about their everyday lives, as well as reducing the likelihood that children will see smoking as acceptable behaviour.

## IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ANTI-SMOKING CAMPAIGNS

With the support of a National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) partnership grant and VicHealth funding, Dr Sarah Durkin of the Centre for Behavioural Research in Cancer is conducting research to find the optimum levels and types of emotions evoked by anti-smoking ads about the health effects of smoking in the broad population.

This research also aims to explore the impact of using emotion in anti-smoking ads to best activate quitting motivation and preparation in low socioeconomic smokers.

Due for completion in December 2015, this research will also provide guidance as to whether message strategies that work with the broader population are equally effective among disadvantaged groups.



## 30 years of **Quit**

It's amazing to think that smoking was so common when Quit Victoria was established 30 years ago that people would light up on aeroplanes, inside restaurants, at their desks at work and even in hospitals.

**“Quit has been – and continues to be – a strong voice in the campaign against smoking. More than halving the number of smokers in Victoria in the past 30 years is a testament to the sustained effort by Quit Victoria and the leadership of VicHealth and Cancer Council Victoria.”** *(Minister for Health, The Hon. Jill Hennessy MP)*

Through VicHealth’s long-standing partnership with Quit Victoria, we have continued to realise significant improvements in the prevention of tobacco-related harms with smoking prevalence among Victorian adults now under 14 per cent. Both VicHealth and Quit are committed to addressing tobacco prevention with an equity lens and tackling smoking in high risk populations.



1985  
**32% smokers**

2015  
**13.3% smokers**

**= 800,000** = **500,000**  
FEWER SMOKERS FEWER PREMATURE DEATHS

# PREVENTING HARM FROM ALCOHOL



## 3-YEAR PRIORITY

### MORE PEOPLE ACTIVELY SEEKING THE BEST WAYS TO REDUCE ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

Alcohol is one of the top 10 avoidable causes of disease and death in Victoria.<sup>7</sup> Its negative impacts on individual Victorians, their families and the broader community is estimated to cost \$4.3 billion every year.<sup>8</sup>

Alcohol-related harm is a significant preventable health issue. Each day in Australia, alcohol causes 15 deaths and 430 hospital admissions, placing a significant burden on the healthcare system.<sup>9</sup> Alcohol also causes a range of social problems that affect the drinker and those around them.

## ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

When attempting to tackle an issue such as alcohol-related harm, it is essential to have an accurate picture of the situation so that efforts can be effectively targeted.

VicHealth and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) funded the *Alcohol's Burden of Disease in Australia* report, released in July 2014.<sup>9</sup> Key findings include:

- 5554 deaths and 157,132 hospitalisations were caused by alcohol in 2010
- the number of deaths increased by 62 per cent in the last 10 years.

A Turning Point and VicHealth study – *Inequities in Alcohol-Related Chronic Disease in Victoria* – revealed men and the middle-aged are among those most likely to suffer from wholly alcohol-caused chronic diseases.

Victorians in regional areas and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged groups were found to be at greater risk of hospitalisation and death from alcohol-related chronic disease. These groups do not necessarily consume more alcohol than others, and in some instances are drinking less. It is important to focus beyond consumption to other equity factors that may increase a person's vulnerability to alcohol-related harm.

## WATER IN LICENCED PREMISES TRIAL

While licenced premises in Victoria are required by law to provide free drinking water to their patrons, no research had been done on what things might increase its access and consumption.

VicHealth set out to change this. In collaboration with the Behavioural Insights Team as part of our Leading Thinkers Initiative, we conducted trials within four licenced premises.

Three different interventions were trialled. A combination of observational data, bar sales data, and patron and bar staff interviews was used to see what impact each intervention had on water consumption. The next steps for this research will be to refine the interventions and carry out a second, longer trial.

Our research will help licensed premises to improve the supply, accessibility and promotion of drinking water.

## INNOVATION CHALLENGE: ALCOHOL

VicHealth offered a share of \$395,000 to initiatives that could change Victoria's drinking culture by either reducing the amount Victorians drink or increasing the acceptability of saying no to a drink.

Work is now underway on the four winning projects:

Enough is Enough – an app to allow emergency department clinicians to identify hazardous drinkers and offer them a Brief Intervention (BI) and referral if required.

Peer Modelling: Drinking Culture Change – an online program providing an alternative to legal penalties for offences related to alcohol.

Be a Brother – peer-led social media campaigns aimed at African men, which will define being a brother as somebody who takes care of their friends and doesn't push them to drink more.

#SoberSelfie – a campaign encouraging people to drink less by sharing a selfie of them looking sharp on their social media platforms.



## Alcohol culture change

In partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services, VicHealth developed a two-phase campaign to drive the attitudinal change needed to achieve a more moderate drinking culture in Victoria.

The first phase, Name That Point, was an online community conversation with young Victorians. This informed the No Excuse Needed campaign, which continued to champion a more moderate drinking culture via a positively framed social marketing campaign.

The high profile campaign, which ran from September to December 2014, used humour to show that people shouldn't feel the need to make up an excuse to say no to a drink. By highlighting the fact that moderate drinking is the norm and that most young Victorians don't intend to get drunk, we aimed to reduce the broader acceptance of binge drinking and drunkenness in Victoria.

**1/3**  
Reduced  
drinking

ONE-THIRD OF CAMPAIGN  
RECOGNISERS DRANK  
LESS THAN BEFORE

**55%**  
Would think twice  
about getting drunk

OVER 55% OF PEOPLE WHO HAD  
SEEN THE CAMPAIGN WERE  
LIKELY TO THINK TWICE ABOUT  
GETTING DRUNK

INTEGRATED THEME

# KNOWLEDGE FOR HEALTH

VicHealth works closely with the research community to drive the creation, exchange and transfer of knowledge to increase the impact of its health promotion programs.

Research is essential to build the knowledge that leads to new and innovative solutions for health promotion, and VicHealth invests in a diverse range of investigator-led, strategic and evaluative research.

In 2014–15, VicHealth committed approximately \$1.25 million to fund new ARC Linkage and NHMRC Partnership research projects and supported 13 of these grants to full application. As an industry partner supporting applications for Australian Research Council Linkage grants and the National Health and Medical Research Council Partnership grants, VicHealth is supporting major Victorian preventive and health promotion initiatives.

In addition to supporting research through these partnerships, VicHealth-commissioned research and VicHealth Innovation Research Grants, VicHealth continues to seek creative ways to showcase health promotion research and evidence both in Australia and internationally.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter chairs the State Government's Justice Health Ministerial Advisory Committee. This has resulted in the development of a Health Promotion in Correctional Care framework and an increased focus on preventative health in the prison setting, that will help maximise the State's return on its health investment through public health benefits.

### VicHealth Indicators 2015

In 2015, VicHealth embarked on the next VicHealth Indicators Survey. Conducted every three years, VicHealth Indicators collects information about health and wellbeing from a representative sample of the adult Victorian population. This information will be used to monitor progress toward our three-year priorities and 10-year goals. The survey also provides critical information to inform local government decisions about public health.

One of the key strengths of VicHealth lies in its ability to communicate research findings directly to policy-makers and health promotion practitioners, and this is backed up by a rigorous evaluation of the design and delivery of all VicHealth investments.

## VICHEALTH RESEARCH GRANT FUNDING MILESTONES 2014–15

13

ARC LINKAGE AND NHMRC PARTNERSHIP GRANTS SUPPORTED TO FULL APPLICATION

\$1 invested = \$5 return

IN COMMONWEALTH FUNDING FOR PARTNERSHIP GRANTS

\$1.25 million

FOR NEW ARC AND NHMRC PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS



### Healthy Sporting Environments

VicHealth's Healthy Sporting Environments program supported over 250 community sporting clubs in rural and regional Victoria to become healthier and more welcoming environments between 2012 and 2015.

Through this initiative, the nine Victorian Regional Sports Assemblies worked with regional, rural and remote sporting clubs to reduce the impact of risk factors within community sports clubs and develop healthier, more welcoming and inclusive clubs.

The program supported clubs to make changes to their club facilities and policies in the areas of: responsible use of alcohol; healthy eating; reducing tobacco use; inclusion, safety and support; injury prevention and management; and UV protection.

This project also built the evidence base for health promotion interventions in a sports club setting. The pioneering Healthy Sporting Environments program provides a better understanding of how health promotion can be weaved through grassroots sporting clubs.

VicHealth will continue to use the learnings from Healthy Sporting Environments to build community awareness and demand for healthy sporting clubs by disseminating information and key findings of the program and ongoing engagement with key partners.

### Sons of the West program

Run by the Western Bulldogs AFL Club, the Sons of the West (SOTW) program is a men's health program that targets all men who live, work or recreate in the local government areas of Melton, Wyndham, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Brimbank, with the aim of contributing to the health of communities in the west of Melbourne.

In the second year of this partnership, VicHealth has worked with the Western Bulldogs to help it adopt best health promotion practice to underpin all of its SOTW operations. We also support the club to measure the benefits of the program so that it can be sustained and potentially translated to other football clubs and leagues.

VicHealth's Healthy communities integrated theme supports our role in creating supportive places where people live, learn, work and play to improve health outcomes for all Victorians.

### HEALTHY SPORTING ENVIRONMENTS PROGRAM



INVESTED BY VICHEALTH OVER THREE YEARS



VICTORIAN REGIONAL SPORTS ASSEMBLIES INVOLVED



REGIONAL AND RURAL COMMUNITY SPORTING CLUBS SUPPORTED

# IMPROVING MENTAL WELLBEING



## 3-YEAR PRIORITY

### BUILD STRONGER APPROACHES TO RESILIENCE, FOCUSING ON YOUNG PEOPLE.

We need to build the right foundations for mental wellbeing – long before illness begins – in our homes, communities and workplaces.

One of the keys to mental wellbeing is building resilience, which is the ability to maintain wellbeing despite adversity. It's been shown that resilience helps people with a mental illness to cope better and for those without a mental illness to flourish.

We develop resilience through various individual and environmental factors. Where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with one another are important influences, and can affect the likelihood of people being free from mental illness and having a greater sense of wellbeing. In particular, they can impact those whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable.

## BUILDING RESILIENCE TEACHER TRAINING

Research shows that high levels of mental wellbeing are associated with improved learning, creativity, productivity and social relationships.

Building resilience early in life has been shown to have a strong protective effect against mental illness. Schools are therefore an obvious place to implement resilience building activities.

In collaboration with the Department of Education and the University of Melbourne, VicHealth has launched the Building Resilience Teacher Training Project, which involves face-to-face and online professional development packages for teachers to support their delivery of the Resilience and Wellbeing Framework curriculum.

The curriculum was developed by Associate Professor Helen Cahill from the Youth Research Centre in the Melbourne Graduate School of Education at the University of Melbourne. Dr Cahill is a recognised expert in the field of resilience building in schools and in teacher training.

## IMPROVING MENTAL WELLBEING IN THE WORKPLACE

The Victorian Workplace Mental Wellbeing Collaboration is a partnership between VicHealth, WorkSafe Victoria (WSV) and SuperFriend. It aims to promote workplace mental wellbeing in Victoria by harnessing the collective expertise and networks of each organisation.

With combined experience in mental wellbeing, health promotion, and occupational health and safety, the Collaboration will enable the mapping, testing and sharing of world-class products to Victorian workplaces.

Activities during 2014–15 included:

- hosting a series of Business Leaders' Breakfasts, with expert speakers
- mapping of resources in workplace mental health promotion
- developing a website with resources to help employers promote mental wellbeing in the workplace.

## SOCIAL CONNECTION AND THE ARTS

The VicHealth *Active Arts Strategy (2014–17)* aims to use active and participatory arts to encourage physical activity physical activity and social connection and improve mental wellbeing. It includes:

### The Innovation Challenge – Arts

Grants to support innovative ideas that increase physical activity and mental wellbeing. Projects included No Lights, No Lycra and Pop Up Playground.

### Community activations

Partnerships between key arts organisations and local communities to develop sustainable arts and physical activity projects.

### Mass participation

Staging of 'I Could Have Danced All Night' at White Night Melbourne. Some 100,000 people took part in the 12-hour dance marathon.

### Arts About Us 2010–15

Helping arts organisations promote discussion about cultural diversity and the harms of race-based discrimination, and give a voice to those who have experienced discrimination.



# Preventing violence against women

For more than a decade VicHealth has driven a groundbreaking program of research and action that has informed the establishment of a vibrant sector working toward the prevention of violence against women in Victoria.

## National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey



VicHealth partnered with the Australian Government to undertake the survey, released in 2014. Over the last year we have worked to promote and deepen understanding of the results through the delivery of a series of workshops throughout Victoria. We have also undertaken more focused analysis of particular groups, including young respondents aged 16–24. This work provides a snapshot of community attitudes, which is used to help hone and direct efforts in preventing violence against women.

## Generating Equality And Respect (GEAR)



Drawing from a longstanding commitment to research, policy and partnership, VicHealth piloted an Australia-first program, Generating Equality And Respect (GEAR).

In partnership with Monash City Council and MonashLink Community Health Services, VicHealth's GEAR program will deliver tried and tested primary prevention programs in Melbourne's south-east over a three-year period. This site-based, saturation approach aims to reach people where they live, work, study and play with interventions and activities that address the root causes of violence against women.

## 2015—THE YEAR SO FAR

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**It is an exciting time for VicHealth. We continue to lay the building blocks of significant change: change that will encourage one million more Victorians to lead healthier lives.**

This year, we began work to encourage and support 25,000 more women and girls to become more physically active through sport. The Changing the Game: Increasing Female Participation in Sport program launched in July, inspired six sports to provide fun and flexible ways to make it easier for less active women and girls to participate. This initiative will also help raise the profile of women in sports – not just for players but also for females in leadership and management roles in the sports sector.

We are changing the way health apps are viewed. We released a review of over 200 health and wellbeing smartphone apps, rating them, not just for their functionality, but also their effectiveness in helping to change behaviour. This provides Victorians with confidence when choosing health and wellbeing apps. Using literature reviews, we also compiled a guide for app developers to inspire the application of sound principles to create apps that help a user achieve sustained behaviour change.

Our Leading Thinkers program continued to work on innovative ways for VicHealth to engage and persuade people to improve their health and wellbeing.

A key achievement in 2015 is the Citizens' Jury on Obesity. More than 100 everyday Victorians came together online and face-to-face to listen to evidence and presentations from experts in health through to food industry representatives, then assess and form their 'asks', in answering the question 'How can we make it easier to eat better?'. VicHealth is coordinating a panel of decision makers in public health, government and industry, which will consider each of the jury's suggestions and select actions to trial and implement.

We commissioned foresight research on young people which examined megatrends long-term changes that affect us over a long period of time. One finding of this research indicates that young people will require sophisticated social and emotional resilience skills to thrive in a future of unprecedented change and competition. In response, VicHealth has developed a Mental Wellbeing Strategy to be launched later this year that encompasses individual change; school, workplace and community support; and increased involvement of sports and arts organisations to assist young Victorians to deal with their future environment.

Many other initiatives complement these major milestones where we seek to effect sustainable changes for better health and wellbeing. There is much more to come as we strive to carve a healthier future for all Victorians.



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