



'Postcards from Nanna', funded through VicHealth's Arts About Us program.

## 05 Improving mental wellbeing

### OUR 3-YEAR PRIORITY

Build stronger approaches to resilience, focusing on young people.

### WHY?

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

Some of our most powerful influences on mental wellbeing exist in the environments where we live, work, learn, play and build relationships with one another. These influences can affect the likelihood of people being free from mental illness and having a greater sense of wellbeing, and can particularly impact those whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable.



“The Don't Stand By. Stand Up! campaign has had a very positive effect in empowering the Victorian football community...we can all bring about a culture of football that is safe, welcoming, positive and respectful.”

**GULCAN KOCA**  
Melbourne Victory FC W-League player



“Ganbina and VicHealth have been working in partnership to address a combination of factors of Indigenous young people living in the Goulburn Valley with positive results.”

**ANTHONY CAVANAGH**  
CEO, Ganbina

### RESILIENCE + YOUNG PEOPLE

One in four young people will develop a mental illness, many are exposed to cyberbullying and young people from minority groups are often targets of racism. That's why VicHealth is building stronger approaches to resilience, focusing on young people.

This year we conducted numerous international literature reviews (which will be published later in 2015) and scoped new work in mental wellbeing and resilience of young people.

This has led to VicHealth prioritising three areas for future investment: young people and the digital world; young people, families and education; young people and work.

### Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre (CRC)

VicHealth continued its support for this Australian-based international research centre, which was established to explore the role of technology in young people's lives, and how it can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of people aged 12 to 25. The centre unites young people with researchers, practitioners, innovators and policy-makers from over 70 agencies across the non-profit, academic, government and corporate sectors.

[www.yawcrc.org.au](http://www.yawcrc.org.au)

### Ganbina Indigenous school-to-work project

Now in its final year, this VicHealth-funded project managed by the Ganbina Koorie Economic Employment Training Agency continued to exceed expectations. Young Indigenous Australians confront a range of barriers which can prevent them from participating successfully in education and employment systems. This project is reshaping the thinking behind Indigenous employment participation and creating a cultural shift. The partnership between the Indigenous community, industry leaders and eight regional schools in the Mooroopna/Shepparton district has had significant results in creating opportunities for young people to either remain in school or access work experience to assist them to gain meaningful employment in their community.

## We have overseen substantial program and partnership activity to make the vision of equal and respectful relationships between men and women a reality.

### IMPROVING HEALTH IN WORKPLACES

Workplaces directly influence the physical, mental, economic and social wellbeing of employees and, in turn, the health of their families. Workplaces play a critical role in the health of society, and are an important place for health action and improvement. That's why we focus our health promotion efforts on workplaces.

This year, to continue to build workplace mental wellbeing, VicHealth established a partnership with the **Victorian WorkCover Authority** and **SuperFriend**, a nationwide health promotion foundation that helps 'all profit to member' superannuation funds to promote and support improved mental health and wellbeing for their members, through the workplace.

Building on our shared focus and interest in workplace mental wellbeing, the collaboration will extend each organisation's existing work, and harness their collective expertise and networks to deliver a range of activities between 2014 and 2016.

The collaboration's unique expertise in mental wellbeing, health promotion, and occupational health and safety will enable us to take a holistic approach to contributing to the development and sharing of evidence-based approaches to promoting positive mental wellbeing in Victorian workplaces.

In addition, VicHealth continued its Communities of Practice in the five focus areas of our \$3-million **Creating Healthy Workplaces program**. The program specifically focuses on identifying best practice approaches for addressing stress, gender inequality, alcohol-related harm, race-based discrimination and prolonged sitting at work. Some of Australia's foremost researchers in workplace health are leading five large-scale pilot projects in Victorian workplaces, developing and testing solutions for promoting good health and preventing chronic disease.

Much of this work has informed our future investment focus on young people and workplaces.

[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/workplace](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/workplace)

### PROMOTING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

For over a decade VicHealth has played a pioneering role in building evidence and developing programs and policies to prevent violence against women in Victoria. We have overseen substantial program and partnership activity to make the vision of equal and respectful relationships between men and women a reality, and move towards a society that is not only aware of the extent of violence against women, but is actively working to stop it.

#### New partnerships

As part of our *Action Agenda*, we have built new partnerships to sustain this work.

Our new partnership with **Our Watch** (formerly the National Foundation to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children) is critical to our efforts to integrate the knowledge and learning we have nurtured over the past decade, escalating the work and this critical issue to a national level. The first priority for the 3-year partnership is the development of a national framework to provide a shared understanding of what it will take to prevent this violence. The national framework on the primary prevention of violence against women is a first in Australia. It builds on an approach developed by VicHealth, which has been a catalyst for action in Victoria.

We have continued to lead the way in the primary prevention of violence against women thanks in part to our partnership with the **Office for Women's Affairs**. This partnership has seen the continued capacity building of the field through the design of tools and resources to support the primary prevention of violence against women and the delivery of forums and conferences to strengthen and expand knowledge and networks. This project has supported the training of survivors of sexual assault to become media advocates, the development of bystander approaches to prevent violence against women, and the design of the new Respect and Equality Workplace Project.

Workplaces play a critical role in the health of society and are an important place for health action and improvement.



VicHealth supports a range of local government and community projects that build capacity for safe and respectful communities for women.



### Surveying community attitudes to violence against women

Understanding community attitudes can help us learn from and understand what people think about violence against women, so that we are better placed to know how to prevent it.

The 2013 National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey was developed by VicHealth in partnership with The University of Melbourne, the Social Research Centre and experts across Australia, and supported by the Australian Government Department of Social Services as part of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022*.

This is the third survey of its kind, with the first undertaken in 1995 and the second in 2009.

The rigour of the Survey makes it an invaluable road map to guide efforts to tackle violence against women and monitor future progress.

#### FUTURE FOCUS

Survey results were released in September 2014 and are gaining significant public and media support. The results show us the extent of the work that lies ahead, where to best focus efforts, and the types of approaches and messages that are likely to be effective.

[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/ncas)

### Generating Equality and Respect Program

This year we continued piloting an Australia-first project in partnership with Monash City Council and MonashLink Community Health Services. Generating Equality and Respect is delivering tried and tested primary prevention programs in Melbourne's south-east over 3½ years. This approach effectively 'saturates' this community with interventions and activities that address the root causes of violence against women. Part of this investment includes the development of a model for intervention that could be used in other Victorian communities.

One of the interventions, Partners in Prevention, delivers an innovative local network to support professionals in the youth sector build their capacity to promote gender equality and respect and in turn prevent violence against women. Network members include local teachers, police, school nurses, youth services and community organisations. Activities supported include the Monash Youth Film Festival with a special category for Gender Equality and Respectful Relationships.

### Communities of Practice

As part of VicHealth's commitment to transferring knowledge and building partnerships we developed training courses for practitioners and leaders working in the field of primary prevention of violence against women, and convened a series of forums for practitioners and project workers. The focus of the forums was on exploring common themes in prevention work across a variety of settings, sharing VicHealth research and providing skill exchange to support and improve everyday practice.



“Our Watch is fortunate to collaborate with VicHealth in the primary prevention of violence against women and their children. The important role of primary prevention has been reinforced with VicHealth's latest (2013) National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey.”

**NATASHA STOTT DESPOJA**  
Chair, Our Watch



## VicHealth has always invested in the arts to inspire and connect people. Now we better understand its importance in being physically active and reducing anxiety and stress, too.

### SOCIAL CONNECTION + THE ARTS

The health benefits of the arts in connecting people, engaging communities and contributing to the culture and vitality of our environments are well known. VicHealth has always invested in the arts to inspire and connect people. Now we better understand its importance in being physically active and reducing anxiety and stress, too.

VicHealth's *Action Agenda* supports a range of arts projects, both large and small, that contribute to the physical activity and mental wellbeing of Victorians by getting more people up and moving.

This year's hugely popular **White Night Melbourne's *I Could Have Danced All Night*** performances and the *For You* dance floor at the National Gallery of Victoria's **Melbourne Now** exhibition were supported by VicHealth and are examples of the evolution of arts intersecting with health.

Through our **MOTION** funding (see p. 29) we are supporting tens of thousands of people to get physical through local arts initiatives, such as free community dance workshops and other participatory arts experiences.

#### Indigenous Arts Program

Indigenous people in Victoria have a long history of using arts methods to bring their communities together and build a strong collective sense of cultural identity. These activities are an intrinsic part of their lives and their health and wellbeing. The Indigenous Arts Program supported the Black Arm Band, Koorie Heritage Trust and ILBIJERRI Theatre Company to increase opportunities for Indigenous Victorians to engage with contemporary arts and media making. Among this year's highlights were the Victorian Indigenous Performing Arts (VIPA) Awards presented by ILBIJERRI, Songlines and the Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival. The VIPA Awards celebrate the outstanding achievements in the Indigenous performing arts across Victoria.

<http://artsforhealth.com.au/article/victorian-indigenous-artists-honoured-at-awards>

### REDUCING RACE-BASED DISCRIMINATION + SUPPORTING CULTURAL DIVERSITY

As a society, we've become more aware of racism and how to combat it. We're better bystanders and more likely to act when someone is being vilified. But racial discrimination still frequently occurs on the playground and the footy field, at school, at the shops and on the streets – and from VicHealth's perspective it is a serious health concern. There is compelling evidence that exposure to racism, particularly if it is repeated, is strongly linked with serious mental illnesses.

#### Football Federation Victoria Bystander Project

Through our partnership with Football Federation Victoria we empowered the football (soccer) community to respond and intervene safely when racism is seen or heard. The **Don't Stand By, Stand Up!** campaign is active in nearly 50 clubs and supported by A-League and W-League ambassadors, Melbourne Victory's Gulcan Koca and Andrew Nabbout, and Melbourne City's (formerly Melbourne Heart) Jason Hoffman. This initiative seeks commitment from clubs to undertake measures to educate their officials, players and spectators about racism. It aims to boot out subtle to overt forms of racism on and off the sports field.

#### Localities Embracing and Accepting Diversity (LEAD) program

VicHealth's LEAD program, which concluded in 2013, demonstrated how local governments can have a positive impact on reducing race-based discrimination and support cultural diversity within their local communities. LEAD was delivered in partnership with the Cities of Greater Shepparton and Whittlesea, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and The University of Melbourne and co-funded by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Lowitja Institute and *beyondblue*.

The councils trialled a series of interventions within the councils themselves, local workplaces, retail operators and schools to strengthen policies and cultures to minimise unfair treatment and ensure that cultural diversity is valued.

Evaluation findings will be made available on VicHealth's website, including the Australian Human Rights Commission's Workplace Cultural Diversity Tool, which can also be accessed at: <http://culturaldiversity.humanrights.gov.au>

Learning about the benefits of a multicultural society at an early age can prevent racist attitudes from developing.



VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter joins in a dance at Darren Sylvester's *For You* dance floor at the NGV.



#### Arts About Us program

VicHealth recognises that the arts are a powerful conduit for social change, and have widely documented health and wellbeing benefits. VicHealth is funding seven Arts About Us projects for 3 years to develop arts and media-based programs that celebrate cultural diversity and help people understand the impacts of race-based discrimination. This thought-provoking suite of activities is engaging Victorian communities in conversation and will be running until June 2015. Projects include:

- **Postcards from Nanna**, a musical, theatrical 'story-concert' for kids and their grown-ups about discovering people who are 'not like us' and learning to love the ways that we're all different. The multiple award-winning show is being staged at over 50 regional and metropolitan libraries across Victoria, as well as art centres and festivals.
- **Meet+Eat**, a beautifully crafted and intimate online documentary series produced by CuriousWorks, which celebrated the extraordinary and culturally rich lives of the residents of Hume, an interface local government area in Melbourne's north-west.

The reach of a number of the projects participating in Arts About Us has been further extended by our partnership with producers Artistic Merit. One example is **Stand Up! Sisters and Brothers** in Geelong which brought members of **MASSIVE**, Australia's first hip hop choir, with local school students and community members to perform as part of Geelong After Dark and M-M2014 (Mountain to Mouth) Extreme Arts Walk.

Arts About Us complements VicHealth's larger program of anti-discrimination research and pilot projects. [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/artsaboutus](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/artsaboutus)

#### McCaughey VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing

We continued to support a program of research at The University of Melbourne's McCaughey Centre that is dedicated to supporting program development and increasing our understanding of workplace stress and race-based discrimination and cultural diversity. This program has attracted extensive further funding from the Australian Research Council and NHMRC grants programs.

#### Talking Culture: Learning about the benefits of a multicultural society at an early age

This year, a VicHealth and University of Melbourne study 'Talking Culture', by Doctor Naomi Priest, looked at how eight to 12-year-old primary school children in Melbourne learn about racial, ethnic and cultural diversity and racism. Learning at an early age the benefits of a multicultural society and how to embrace the differences that make us special is crucial for preventing racist attitudes from developing. The findings will be used to develop intervention strategies to support teachers and parents to promote positive attitudes to cultural diversity and anti-racism among children.

A fact sheet summarising key findings from various studies examining racism and health and wellbeing in children and young people, in particular the research led by Dr Priest, is available at: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/racism-and-young-people](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/racism-and-young-people)

### COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

VicHealth was represented on numerous committees, advisory bodies and working groups that guide policy and practice related to mental wellbeing in Victoria and nationally, including:

- Asialink Asia Australia Mental Health Advisory Committee
- *beyondblue* Impact of Discrimination Advisory Group
- Castanet
- Ethnic Communities Council Victoria Health Policy Sub-Committee
- Preventing Violence against Women's Strategic Coordination Group
- Victorian WorkCover Authority Leading Thinkers Network
- Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre