

Media Release

9 August 2016

New grants to help Victorian councils change alcohol culture

VicHealth is calling on local councils to help tackle risky drinking by applying for a grant under its new \$1.3 million Alcohol Culture Change Grants Initiative for Local Councils.

The Initiative will allocate funding to councils to work with researchers, community partners and others to develop ideas and deliver projects that target groups of risky drinkers in their local area.

The council grants come as VicHealth released new survey results showing young Victorians often feel pressured by their friends to drink, and that the majority of Victorians don't want to live in a society where it's seen as acceptable to set out get drunk.

VicHealth defines 'alcohol culture' as the way people drink including the formal rules, social norms, attitudes and beliefs around what is and what is not socially acceptable for a group of people before, during and after drinking.

Victorian Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley welcomed the new initiative, saying all Victorians must help to change cultures of risky drinking.

"We recognise our alcohol culture has become detrimental for too many Victorians. VicHealth's Alcohol Strategy and Culture Change Grants are yet another important step in tackling the harms associated with alcohol and changing destructive patterns of behaviour."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said reducing the social acceptability of risky drinking is key to changing the drinking culture in Australia.

"VicHealth is working to reduce the impact alcohol has on the health and wellbeing of Victorians. Our 10-year goal is to see 200,000 more Victorians drinking less alcohol by 2023.

"Peer pressure among young people is rife. In a survey we conducted last month, 40% of more than 1,800 18- to-24-year-olds feel obliged to drink alcohol when people around them are drinking. This is an example of social acceptability that needs to change.

"The survey also found that more than two thirds of the 2,000 adult Victorian drinkers agreed it's not OK to drink to get drunk. Victorians are telling us that they don't want a society that says that's acceptable behaviour.

VicHealth today released its new Alcohol Strategy, which outlines its plan to prevent harm from alcohol over the next three years. For more information, go to: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/alcoholstrategy

Media Contact

John Fulcher, Communications Manager 0412 978 263 jfulcher@vichealth.vic.gov.au

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Note to editors:

The new grant initiative provides a pool of \$1.3 million to local councils to change risky drinking cultures across two stages of funding.

The first stage will shortlist up to eight councils and provide a scoping grant of \$25,000 – over four months – to develop partnerships, plan, scope and refine their ideas into a project proposal for project delivery at stage two.

Up to four councils that demonstrate the greatest potential during the scoping stage may be offered subsequent funding of between \$250,000 and \$300,000 – over 24 months – to deliver their ideas and make a big impact.

For more information, go to: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/alcoholculturegrants

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