

Media Release

29 April 2015

FOOTY FANS SCORE BIG ON THEIR HEALTH AND BANK BALANCE

In a move to improve healthy choices and reduce the strain on footy fans' hip pockets, Yarra Valley Water's Choose Tap and VicHealth have joined forces with Etihad Stadium to supply free drinking water at AFL matches and other sports and entertainment events at the venue.

The partnership will see water refill stations installed on all three levels of Etihad Stadium, enabling fans to make the healthy choice to access water free of charge at any time throughout an event.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said having free water refill stations throughout the stadium meant footy fans were scoring big wins on all fronts.

"Nearly two-thirds of Victorians are currently overweight or obese, and sugar sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, sports and energy drinks, and fruit drinks, which are the largest source of sugars in the Australian diet, are contributing to the problem. Providing water refill stations will entice footy fans to make the healthy choice and choose water. Under an Etihad Stadium policy, the fans can also bring their own healthy food from home – boosting their health and their bank balance!" Ms Rechter said.

Yarra Valley Water Managing Director and Choose Tap spokesperson Pat McCafferty said that the Victorian Water industry was proud to be working with VicHealth and Etihad Stadium, to showcase some of the best drinking water in the world. The installation of water refill stations at the stadium means that the community will get access to free water.

"Victorians love the footy, but we don't love paying high prices to stay hydrated on game day. The average price of one litre of bottled water is the same as 6000 glasses from your tap. By installing new Choose Tap and VicHealth water refill stations at Etihad Stadium we can help families have a more affordable experience at the footy. The Choose Tap program encourages people to make informed choices about what they drink for the benefit of their health, hip pocket and the environment," said Mr McCafferty.

Ms Rechter said VicHealth was pleased to be partnering with Etihad Stadium and Choose Tap to help make water accessible to everyone.

"Through VicHealth's [H30 Challenge](#), we're encouraging Victorians to swap sugary drinks for water for 30 days and reduce their intake of excess kilojoules through sugary drinks. This three-year partnership will also allow us to collect vital information about people's drinking water habits, and will help us to find out if availability of free water encourages people to choose water rather than sugary drinks, or if other factors play a role," Ms Rechter added.

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Etihad Stadium CEO Paul Sergeant said the introduction of refill stations was just one of a number of initiatives, the stadium in partnership with the AFL, had introduced in 2015 to 'engage with fans' and to make their experience as enjoyable as possible when attending AFL fixtures.

"Over a lengthy period we have taken note of a number of comments from fans and a trend was that they wanted the availability of free water. While AFL is played during the more temperate months, the requirement for hydration is very much a safety issue while sporting events such as cricket and soccer are played in the summer months," Mr Sergeant said.

"We are very grateful to be partnering both VicHealth and Yarra Valley Water (Choose Tap) and we're confident the arrangement will be a durable one. We are also very appreciative of our catering partner, Delaware North Companies Australia, which ultimately has made decisions, enabling us to proceed with the installation of the refill stations," he said.

The Choose Tap program has been rolled out by a number of water utilities in Victoria, championing the benefits of drinking tap water as part of a healthy lifestyle, and as a cheaper and more environmentally friendly alternative to bottled water.

"Choose Tap Water Refill Stations enable people to access free, high quality drinking water across Melbourne. Staying hydrated is vitally important, whether you are on the ground or in the stands. To find out where else you can access free drinking water download the free Choose Tap App, which lists almost 6000 taps across Victoria. Our bodies are 70 per cent water, and staying hydrated is essential for good health and performance in all areas of life, from the sporting arena to everyday activities," said Mr McCafferty.

To sign up to VicHealth's H30 Challenge go to www.h30challenge.com.au.

Find out more about Choose Tap at www.facebook.com.au/choosetap the free Choose Tap App is available for both iPhone and Android smartphone and can be downloaded online from the iTunes and Google Play stores.

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