



Key dates

Monday 11 July	Nominations open
Friday 19 August	Nominations close at 5 pm
September and October	Nominations assessed
November	Finalists announced
Thursday 1 December	VicHealth Awards ceremony

Enquiries

For further information about the 2016 VicHealth Awards visit www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards

Telephone (03) 9667 1315

Email awards@vichealth.vic.gov.au

How to enter

- Download the Awards Category booklet and determine the category you wish to nominate in.
 - Carefully read the awards criteria, eligibility and conditions of entry to ensure your nomination is eligible.
- Download the Awards Tip Sheet for ideas on shaping and refining your nomination.
- Complete the entry form below. **All fields must be completed for your nomination to be accepted.**
- Before uploading your nomination, you must name your files using the following convention:
 - Nomination form – **Category_Organisation_Nomination title**
 - Eg. Promoting health eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge
 - Supporting documents – **Category_Organisation_Nomination title_supporting document number**
 - Eg. Promoting health eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge_1
 - Eg. Promoting health eating_VicHeath_Seed Challenge_2
- **Submit your nomination online at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards**
- You may include up to up to four separate electronic supporting files as an appendix to your nomination. This could include:
 - photographs/images
 - supporting graphs and data
 - promotional material
 - Please note - An appendix should only contain supporting information. All material that directly addresses the selection criteria should be included in the body of the submission. Please note submissions will be sent to the judges electronically, so where possible, please ensure all appendices are submitted online.
 - **All supporting files are to be uploaded using the separate upload fields at www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/awards. Please do not insert any attachments or images into this Word document.**

1. Organisation and contact details

a. Main organisation for all awards correspondence

(in the event this entry receives an award, these details will be used)

Organisation	AFL Victoria
Address	AFL Victoria – IKON Park, Royal Pde
Town/Suburb	Carlton North
State	Victoria
Postcode	3054

b. Main contact for all awards correspondence

Name	Chyloe Kurdas
Position	Female Football Development Manager
Phone	0418572902
Email	Chyloe.kurdas@afl.com.au

c. Head of organisation

Name	Steven Reaper
Position	CEO
Email	Steven.reaper@afl.com.au

d. Please complete the following table if this nomination is a joint submission between multiple partner organisations. Add as many rows as required

Entrant organisation 2	Richmond Football Club
Entrant organisation 3	Deakin University
Entrant organisation 4	
Entrant organisation 5	
Entrant organisation 6	

2. Nomination details

a. Entry title

Please write the entry title as you wish it to appear on all promotional materials associated with the award

AFL Victoria's TAC Youth Girls Academy Mental Health & Wellbeing Program

b. Nomination web address

Please enter a web address that relates specifically to the nominated project (if applicable)

na

c. Budget

Please select the budget range of your nominated project

\$0 - \$50,000

\$50,001 – \$500,000

\$500,001+

d. Timeframe

Over what time period did this project take place?

NB: entries are assessed on their work between 1 July 2015 – 30 June 2016

September 2015 – May 2016

e. Award category

Please indicate the award category for your nomination

Improving Mental Wellbeing

f. Population groups targeted

<p>Eg. Koori/Aboriginal Victorians, CALD/new migrant groups, local communities, workforce, women, children etc</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Girls aged 13-18 - Metropolitan Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo, North Eastern Victoria - LGBTQI young people
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g. Health promotion setting

<p>In what setting did your project/initiative/campaign take place? Eg. Education, workplace, sporting club, arts, local government area etc</p>	<p>High performance sports program</p>
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3. Assessment criteria

Please note, the executive summary and all four criteria must be completed. Each carries equal weighting when being assessed. See the [Awards Category booklet](#) for specific points that should be addressed in your responses to criteria 1 to 4.

Executive summary

Outline the project, aims and objectives, settings, timing, population groups, health promotion activities and outcomes achieved

Maximum 400 words

A new and unique Mental Health and Wellbeing (MHW) Program was developed in collaboration with AFL Victoria, the Richmond Football Club and Deakin University for AFL Victoria's female under 18 high performance football program, the TAC Youth Girls Academy (YGA), and implemented by six provisional psychologists as part of their provisional psychologist placement requirements, within the Industrial and Organisational, General and Clinical psychology disciplines. The YGA is an on and off high performance program that reaches over 350 of Victoria's most promising female players and leaders aged 13-18 across eight regions of Melbourne and country Victoria.

This group of players experiences a range of challenges that have the potential to influence their mental health and wellbeing, and their on field performance. Issues raised by players in previous years related to experiencing same sex attraction and/or fluid gender representation, participating in a male dominated sport, aspirations associated with striving to be drafted into the AFL's upcoming National Women's League, balancing football commitments with those of other sports and school, confidence, body image, family relationships, as well as other challenges typically experienced by adolescent girls, many of which have significantly affected on field and training performance.

The MHW Program focused on the interaction between the mental and physical aspect of athlete performance. The overall goal of the MHW Program was to:

- enhance the mental health and wellbeing and improving on and off field performance of players by providing them with strategies to combat and become more resilient to stress;
- improve emotional wellbeing; and,
- provide players with individual support by their provisional psychologists during the season for their ongoing personal wellbeing and development.

The MHW Program enabled all players to develop their skills through weekly training sessions and fortnightly workshops relating to the following topics: mindfulness, values and goals, resilience, growth mindset, and emotional balance. The workshops, developed to be informative and engaging for young athletes, consisted of a mixture of activities and small/whole group discussions either before or after training sessions for a 30-minute duration and aimed to support players' on and off field development. The provisional psychologists also provided 1:1 support to players as 'Walk and Talk' counseling sessions during training sessions and games.

The provisional psychologists conducted an evaluation of the MHW Program that included pre, mid and post program surveys of players and parents. The evaluation's complete outcomes have been detailed in the attached report, "2016 TAC Youth Girls Academy's Mental Health and Wellbeing".

Criteria 1

Be a catalyst for change that has potential to result in positive and sustainable improvement in the health of Victorians
Maximum 800 words

The MHW Program aimed to reorient a high performance sporting culture to focus on the holistic development of young female athletes. Historically high performance football programs have focussed on talent development, athlete performance, and critical skills and knowledge that support performance around nutrition, drug and alcohol education, and sport psychology. The MHW Program aimed to go beyond these areas to enhance emotional intelligence and resilience of our young women. Integrating training and education for players and staff, and indirectly parents, that enhanced the emotional intelligence and resilience skill set of players was viewed as a catalyst for improved on field training and playing performances of players, and the retention of emotionally vulnerable young women in the TAC YGA.

Given the mental and social health and wellbeing concerns regularly raised by our young athletes, the MHW Program sought to teach these athletes about the influence of mental health and wellbeing on preparation and performance, and empower them to implement positive mental health management strategies across their sporting and general lives. Coaches and other leaders were taught how to integrate such principles as growth mindset into their coaching and leadership practice. Consequently, the overall culture of the Academies that received the MHW Program focused on engaging growth mindsets, process over outcome, coaching effort over talent, and positioning challenges as opportunities.

The YGA presented an opportunity for us to provide our young women in the community with education and support that they may not ordinarily feel comfortable seeking out or have access to in their local communities. Given the increase of mental health issues that often appear throughout adolescence and early adulthood, and with a higher proportion of same sex attracted young women in our YGA, we acknowledged the vulnerability of our players and the influence on their on and off field aspirations.

Having our players in our care once a week provides us with a terrific opportunity to invest beyond football. With increasing and new football opportunities such as being drafted to play in the AFL's National Women's League, and the impact on football-school-life-family balance that football has, we felt a genuine responsibility for helping our athletes negotiate a football environment and experience that has never before brought such enormity of pressure. The MHW program was implemented to offset such pressure, and in turn, enhance the ability of our athletes to thrive.

The introduction of the AFL's new National Women's League has seen many of the YGA coaches and staff being recruited to lead their new programs. With the YGA becoming a development program for high performance coaches and leaders of female athletes, the YGA MHW Program's reach and sustainability is extended further.

With so many of Victoria's most promising athletes being critical leaders in the

	<p>local community football clubs and within their school based peer group, the investment in their emotional wellbeing and skill set was deemed to be an advantageous to their local club team mates. With enhanced wellbeing and leadership, the girls expressed higher levels of empowerment to feel willing and able to influence their club environments.</p>
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Criteria 2

<p>Demonstrate a firm commitment to health promotion by using evidence-informed actions and initiatives Maximum 800 words</p>	<p>From concept’s inception, and its piloting nature, the MHW Program was always to be guided by ongoing evaluation as part of the provisional psychologists’ placement. Pre, mid and post program surveys were conducted with players and parents, with feedback integrated into the MHW Program’s structure and delivery so as to ensure its appropriateness and optimal impact. The evaluation enabled us to identify key case studies that Program leaders were able to share to further educate players, parents, coaches, staff, and AFL Victoria staff. Furthermore the evaluation has allowed us to better understand how the MHW Program needs to evolve for the following year to ensure that we continue to grow the emotional intelligence and resilience of returning players, and to efficiently build such literacy in first time YGA participants and staff.</p> <p>Further evidence of the outcomes of the evaluation and research associated with the MHW Program can be reviewed in the attached report, “2016 TAC Youth Girls Academy’s Mental Health and Wellbeing”.</p>
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Criteria 3

<p>Exemplify innovation and leadership in taking action to improve and promote health and reduce chronic disease and/or addressing emerging health issues Maximum 800 words</p>	<p>The catalyst for the MHW Program’s development and implementation was the positive results of engaging psychologists for one on one counselling and support in our Under 18 Youth Girls State teams and the increasing presentation of social and emotional wellbeing concerns by players. Many of these concerns were unrelated to football, such as emerging sexuality issues, relationships with family and friends, suicide ideation, and coping with the school pressures. Others were very much the product of being a high performing athlete, such as coping with performance and selection expectations of themselves, their families and local football clubs; managing school-football balance; and the emerging influence of the new opportunity to be drafted to play in the AFL’s National Women’s League.</p> <p>The benefits of the engagement of a provisional psychologist at a State team level over the past four years were deemed to be so great that AFL Victoria sought to adapt the concept one level down at the regionally based YGA to be able to influence larger numbers of athletes, their families, coaches and leaders.</p> <p>In understanding the above wellbeing challenges of our athletes, our YGA high performance program presented AFL Victoria with a terrific opportunity to reposition football as the foundation from which the rest of their lives leverage. The MHW Program sought to provide athletes with philosophies, such as growth</p>
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mindset, and values to guide their decision making, responses to adversity, life goal setting, and efforts to bring greater balance and perspective in their day to day living. In essence, through the MHW Program, we aimed to reposition football and their learning from it, as a way of life, or be a solution rather than a burden. Consequently, YGA players frequently reported to the provisional psychologists that they had applied techniques or mindsets to various challenges they faced, such as school exams or conflict resolution with friends or family. In addition, players who experienced non-selection in the 2016 State teams demonstrated less distress, easier acceptance, a more balanced perspective, and a greater understanding and awareness of their developmental level as a footballer.

The MHW Program strived to instigate greater innovation from coaching staff and leaders. YGA staff observed and sometimes participated in the MHW Program sessions in order to obtain their buy-in to the MHW Program and build their psychological literacy. Through the leadership of the Female Football Development Manager and the provisional psychologists, the coaches and staff were mentored to integrate their MHW Program learnings into their own player management processes, coaching delivery and philosophy, and match day success indicators. This was extended by some coaches, who also invited parents into pregame meetings to share the developmentally focused success indicators for games and how the MHW Program principles would be applied in how they coached their teams.

Through the MHW Program, coaches and players implemented a philosophy that saw the optimal performance outcomes as having their origins in having optimal mental health and wellbeing. Coaches, staff and players focused on building emotional intelligence and resilience of players to assist in allowing players to develop their football capacity less encumbered by the mental and psychological challenges they experience as adolescent girls who participate in a high performance program within a male dominated sport and culture. Consequently, on field training and performance issues were primarily assessed, analysed and addressed through a mental health and wellbeing lens.

Training sessions were viewed as an opportunity to train all aspects of the players, with fortnightly sessions extended to include a 30 minute MHW Program workshop. Follow up information, session recaps and MHW Program 'homework tasks' were provided through closed social media discussion groups, whilst provisional psychologists used this space to share other online resources that supported key topics. This also allowed the MHW Program to engage parents and provide them with more insight into the concepts their daughters were learning. Some parents used these references to initiate conversation with their daughters to better understand how they can support their daughter's adoption of the MHW Program learnings and principles.

Finally, the cross sector collaboration between a State Sporting Organisation, an elite AFL club, and a tertiary institution brought in both academic rigour to the MHW Program and a broader set of skills throughout the MHW Program's development, implementation and evaluation.

Criteria 4

Demonstrate value for money relative to the health outcomes achieved
Maximum 800 words

The actual financial investment into the MHW Program was minimal, with travel reimbursements and apparel for the provisional psychologists. The organisational resources committed to the MHW Program, included the time committed by AFL Victoria's Female Football Development Manager and Richmond Football Club's General Manager – People, Culture & Performance, to meet regularly throughout the planning, implementation and evaluation phases of the MHW Program. In addition, both organisational leaders visited the Academies to observe the MHW Program in action, and provided consultation and supervision throughout via phone and one on one meetings.

The MHW Program provided primary, secondary and tertiary prevention strategies with all minimising immediate and future costs to players and the community. The overall MHW Program, which uses sport as location for primary prevention by empowering players and coaches to prevent mental health and wellbeing issues, aimed to minimise future costs on players and the community. Providing players with secondary and tertiary prevention strategies through weekly one on one counselling minimised immediate counselling costs for players and their families. Previously, some parents have reported that the perceived cost of accessing regular support for their daughter to be prohibitive and thus, have not followed through with or avoided seeking out support for their daughter. Given this perception, the MHW Program ensured that players had access to these secondary and tertiary levels of support for the MHW Program's duration as part of their overall YGA registration fee.

Whilst an actual cost-benefit analysis of the MHW Program has not been completed, the investment of AFL Victoria, Richmond Football Club, and Deakin University to deliver set organisational key performance indicators for their respective organisations relating to wellbeing, improved on field performance, coach and staff professional development, organisational cultural development and change, player retention, investing in women and girls in football, and psychology student placements, as well as the actual immediate financial and wellbeing benefits for players and their families, has been returned innumerably.

As such the recommendations from review of the 2016 TAC YGA program and the collaboration of AFL Victoria, the Richmond FC and Deakin University, will support and encourage the future delivery of the MHW Program.