

Reducing the harm: alcohol, tobacco and UV exposure

\$3,692,640

funding to Quit to reduce the prevalence of smoking in Victoria

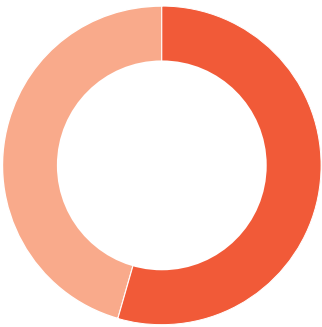
1400 clubs

are now accredited to the Good Sports Program, aimed at implementing systems changes to support responsible use of alcohol

\$463,996

funding to SunSmart

Research breakdown



- Tobacco \$250,525
- Alcohol \$209,000

\$459,525

invested in research into reducing harm from tobacco and alcohol



Reducing harm from alcohol: a case study

Raising awareness to help the real Australian spirit

Australian culture is known for its celebration of what has, in the past, been known as our larrikin spirit – a licence to be irreverent, cheeky and hard-drinking. The fact that social use of alcohol is so widely accepted within Victoria, as well as across the country, has diminished the results of alcohol-related harm in this state: including premature disability and death associated with road trauma, workplace accidents, drowning, sexual assault, domestic and street violence, and self-harm.

To help raise awareness of these effects and help prevent this damage, the Alcohol Policy Coalition (APC) – a coalition of health agencies that share a concern about the level of alcohol misuse and its health and social consequences in the community – was formed 18 months ago.

As one of four member organisations – the others are Cancer Council Victoria (CCV), the Australian Drug Foundation (ADF) and Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre – VicHealth's role was originally as facilitator. Now with VicHealth funding enabling the ADF to lead communications for the group and CCV to lead the legal policy function, the Coalition is set to continue to drive public, government and industry awareness.

With 17 years of experience at the ADF behind him, Geoff Munro brings a wealth of knowledge to his current role as the organisation's National Policy Manager and hopes that the boost to the APC's capacity to communicate will strengthen its voice and enable it to offer a more consistent approach to combat what he describes as "the powerful, cashed-up liquor interests".

"The Alcohol Policy Coalition shares information with politicians and policy makers on issues related to marketing, licensing, availability and the consequences of leaving alcohol issues to the marketplace," says Munro. "We point out how current legislation and regulations can be improved, we make submissions to Parliamentary enquiries, we put pressure on the alcohol industry to cease marketing its product in exploitative ways and we advocate our position through the media."

Recent campaigns have included the urging of stronger controls over alcohol marketing, including advertising and unsafe products. The recent debate on 'alcopops' – products the ADF has been campaigning against since 2005 – is another good example of an issue important to the APC. Taxation and pricing, the marketing of unsafe products, promotional activities, advertising and alcohol sponsorship of cultural and sporting events are also under APC scrutiny.

In a media release of May 2009, the APC cited strong evidence to prove that price has a major impact on consumption – after the alcopops tax was reintroduced in April 2008, consumption of alcopops showed a decline of seven million standard drinks a week.

Reducing the availability of alcohol by reducing the number of available outlets, as well as reducing trading hours and the irresponsible social supply of alcohol to young people by parents and other adults, will also have a positive impact, Munro believes. Of great concern, too, Munro says, is the insidious creep of alcohol-related marketing toward under-age consumers – such as the production of neo-alcohol products like child-friendly, alcohol-flavoured and branded chocolate biscuits, barbecue sauce, potato chips and confectionery.

"These products and campaigns are insidious because they incrementally alter our sense of what is appropriate," says Munro. "We are in danger of losing that sense entirely and yet we also know that the earlier a person starts to drink, the greater the risk that they will develop drinking and other behavioural problems."

With VicHealth funding supporting the APC, Munro believes that the "enormous contributions" of the Coalition's partners will now have a better chance to be heard.

"Having community support is an essential part of achieving policy change, so it is really important that we inform and educate the community on the issues and the changes we are seeking," says Munro. "The media is the major source of information for most people and using the media to communicate with the public makes sense. We are just beginning."

Reducing harm from alcohol

While the social use of alcohol is widely accepted, alcohol-related harm in Victoria results in premature disability and death associated with road trauma, workplace accidents, drowning, sexual assault, domestic and interpersonal violence, and self-harm. For many years, VicHealth has been engaged in debates around alcohol misuse and has supported programs that promote responsible drinking. With binge drinking among young people rising, we are strengthening our efforts to reduce alcohol-related harm.

Program investments

VicHealth works in collaboration with government and community partners to facilitate an innovative approach to alcohol-harm reduction; build evidence on the social impact of alcohol consumption; identify effective interventions; and develop programs to reduce alcohol-related harm.

Community Alcohol Action Network (CAAN)

Australian Drug Foundation
\$80,000

The Network aims to raise awareness of harmful alcohol consumption as an issue of public health and safety in Victoria and to mobilise the community to take action against inappropriate alcohol marketing and supply.

Good Sports Program 2008–2009

Australian Drug Foundation
\$200,000

This program assists clubs and/or sports and communities to develop and implement policies to promote the responsible use of alcohol and serving practices.

Building capacity in alcohol policy making

Australian Football League Players' Association
\$98,000

The aim of this project is to build capacity in the Australian Football League Players' Association (AFLPA) in the coordination and delivery of alcohol policy and programs across the AFL.

Creating healthy football environments

Australian Football League Players Association
\$80,000

The project aims to assist the AFLPA in assessing annual club compliance in alcohol policy and in monitoring its own performance in the alcohol policy arena.

Step Back Think

Youth Affairs Council of Victoria Inc.
\$70,000

The project aims to change the culture of night-time violence in and around licensed venues in Melbourne, Victoria. Step Back Think will develop a website to increase community awareness about alcohol-related violence and engage the community in rating venues based on safety, thereby encouraging venue accountability.

Research to address alcohol related harm

Advertising and the Alcohol Industry Social Aspect Organisation (SAO) Drinkwise

The University of Melbourne
\$45,000

This program is aimed at policy network analysis, analysis of Drinkwise-funded research publications and social media research.

Alcohol Legal Policy Project

The Cancer Council Victoria
\$40,000

The project aims to research, develop and advocate for legal and regulatory reform opportunities that support alcohol harm reduction.

Alcohol policy coalition development and community mobilisation

Australian Drug Foundation
\$164,000

The funding aims to increase the effectiveness of the Alcohol Policy Coalition and the Community Alcohol Action Network in responding to issues of community concern, mobilising communities into supportive action and influencing policy makers.

Discovery Grants

An evaluation of a community mobilisation intervention that aims to reduce alcohol-related harm associated with licensed premises

Australian Drug Foundation
\$31,500

This project is an evaluation of a community mobilisation intervention that aims to reduce alcohol-related harm associated with licensed premises in Geelong. The intervention will consist of a formalised accreditation program that will systematically implement demand, supply and harm-reduction strategies within licensed venues. Moreover, it will mobilise communities through the media, social marketing and targeted enforcement.

Guidelines for parents on dealing with underage drinking: A Delphi consensus study

ORYGEN Research Centre
\$37,500

This is a grant to develop guidelines for parents on how to prevent and deal with underage drinking. These guidelines can be widely promoted in the community. This will be done through conducting a content analysis of suggestions made in the literature for how parents can reduce the risk of underage drinking and how they should respond when it occurs. The study also aims to produce a set of guidelines for parents, which will contain messages that can be promoted at the population level.

Reducing harm from tobacco

Evidence shows that tobacco control has been one of the best – if not the best – buy in health for over a quarter of a century. VicHealth has continued to be a major contributor to the decline in smoking rates through its work with the Tobacco Control Unit of the Cancer Council Victoria. We also fund the VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control, which conducts innovative research and undertakes policy development.

Program investments

We continue to move towards our goals: getting fewer people to take up smoking; a cleaner and safer environment where fewer people are exposed to tobacco smoke; and greater accountability by the tobacco industry.

Supporting tobacco control and the reduction of smoking

Quit

Cancer Council Victoria

\$3,692,640

The Quit Program aims to reduce the prevalence of smoking in Victoria and to reduce the exposure of non-smokers and smokers to the harmful substances in tobacco smoke. Supporting this program is a broad range of policy and program initiatives, delivering a comprehensive program on tobacco control that includes cessation, prevention, exposure reduction and policy advancement.

VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control, Tobacco Control Unit (TCU)

Cancer Council Victoria

\$325,000

The VicHealth Centre for Tobacco Control, which has a national and international profile, contributes to the decline in smoking levels by carrying out research and development to identify and promote innovative ways of reducing exposure to tobacco, thus reducing the adverse health and social effects of tobacco use.

Reducing harm from UV exposure

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, and the cost to the health system is enormous. The major cause of skin cancer is exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun and other artificial sources, such as solariums. Skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers in Australia. That's why VicHealth invests in programs such as SunSmart.

Program investments

VicHealth supports program development, research evaluation and advocacy in the area of sun protection. This contributes to improving health by allowing Victorians to safely pursue recreational and sporting activities essential to health and wellbeing, and limits dangerous exposure to rays that are both damaging to health and costly to the community.

SunSmart Program

The Cancer Council Victoria

\$460,000

This is a major statewide skin cancer prevention program using media and community-based strategies to promote behaviour change and to influence structural barriers and social factors which affect skin cancer risk.