

Arts and health

VicHealth's Active Arts Strategy (2014–2017)



CEO's Message

VicHealth has a long and proud history of working across sectors to promote health and advance our illness prevention efforts.

The case is no different in arts and health, with VicHealth having supported the convergence of these two streams since 1987.

The health benefits of participating in the arts are well documented—from supporting individual mental wellbeing by providing an opportunity for people to gain new skills, confidence and self-esteem, to building social connection and reducing isolation by participating in an activity with others while engaging in a creative process.

We also know the added benefits gained from promoting movement and physical exertion in active arts, such as dance and circus. The health benefits of physical activity are well known and include improved cardiovascular and bone health, and a reduced risk of obesity and its attendant risks of diabetes and some cancers.

I am proud to introduce VicHealth's new Active Arts Strategy 2014–2017. This strategy aligns our approaches with the National Arts and Health Framework. It builds on our considerable experience in working across the arts and health sectors and has a singular aspiration:

to promote people's physical and mental wellbeing by bringing people together to be involved in active and participatory arts activities.

Our new strategy is based on an extensive review of activity in various sectors and our role. It identified a number of established and emerging trends and context factors that have informed our new approach:

- the recent endorsement of a National Arts and Health Framework by all state and territory arts and cultural ministers
- widespread participation in arts and cultural activities and a trend towards co-creation
- increasing utilisation of digital communication technologies, with an associated growth in temporary and mobile communities with which to engage through these media

Many Australians believe the arts have a big impact on our development and wellbeing.

Australia Council for the Arts 2014
'Arts in Daily Life: Australian participation in the arts'

- the continuing need for improvement in research and data to advance understanding of the relationship between the arts and health.

These shifts offer us and our partners a myriad of opportunities to achieve positive health outcomes through innovative and forward-thinking actions.

We look forward to working with our partners, old and new, to promote greater integration of arts and health.

Jerril Rechter
CEO, VicHealth

VicHealth's Active Arts Strategy

AIM

VicHealth investment in active and participatory arts will encourage physical activity and improve mental wellbeing for the benefit of all Victorians.

HOW?

- Encourage physical activity through engagement with the arts.
- Build individual and community resilience through participatory arts practices.
- Build the evidence for arts-based health promotion.
- Stimulate public debate and lead policy development for arts-based health promotion.

VICHEALTH ACTION AGENDA STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

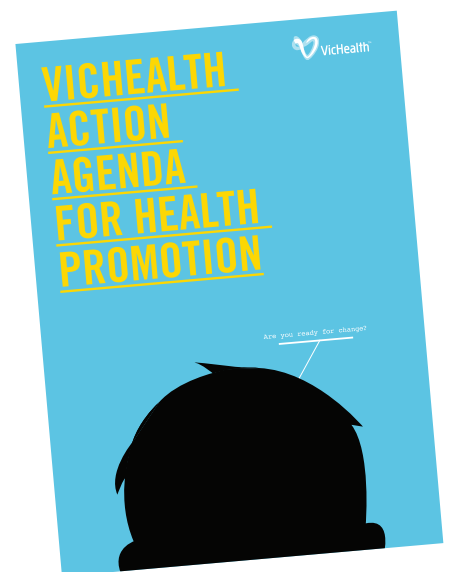
PROMOTE HEALTHY EATING

ENCOURAGE REGULAR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

PREVENT TOBACCO USE

PREVENT HARM FROM ALCOHOL

IMPROVE MENTAL WELLBEING



Less than a third of Australians are getting enough physical activity to benefit their health. Regular physical activity is a key factor in promoting good health and preventing chronic disease.¹

The arts create opportunities for people to expand their social networks and develop new friendships, which can provide social support and impact positively on health.²

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012), *Australian Health Survey: first results, 2011-12*, cat. No. 4364.0.55.001, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

² McDonald L (2008), 'Under the bridges: a community narrative on the impact of DADA's Freight Gallery', in A Lewis (ed.), *Proving the practice: evidencing the effects of community arts programs on mental health*, DADA, Western Australia.

2014–2017

KEY ELEMENTS



ARTS AMBASSADORS

We will work with leaders from the arts and other sectors to engage communities and begin conversations about how the arts can address challenging social issues and improve wellbeing.

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

THE VICHEALTH INNOVATION CHALLENGE – ARTS

Opening in November 2014, VicHealth will invite arts practitioners, designers and others from the creative industries to submit pitches for approaches using digital media or technologies to increase physical activity and social connection. Successful pitches will receive a grant to develop prototypes.

VicHealth and its partners will support the best prototypes to move into proof-of-concept testing.



COMMUNITY ACTIVATIONS

Over the next three years, VicHealth will engage with communities across Victoria and encourage their involvement in active and creative projects.

These projects will feed into annual mass participation events.



MASS PARTICIPATION

Annually, VicHealth will contribute to a major arts event which reflects the themes of active participation and engages Victorians from the Community Activations program.

This work will be underpinned by VicHealth's broader principles of health equity, inclusiveness and innovation in health promotion.

