

Completed research grants June 2010–2011

Final Reports

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Completed Research Grants

June 2010 to June 2011

VicHealth has a strong tradition of investing in public health research and evaluation to drive evidence-based interventions promoting the health and wellbeing of Victorians. Our research funding is directed at balancing innovation, capacity-building and public health priorities.

Each year, VicHealth invests approximately \$6 million in research. Funding is delivered through fellowships, research grants, centres, information infrastructure and strategic research.

VicHealth is committed to synthesising and translating research findings into practical health promotion practice, and disseminating these through our strategic communication channels.

This resource holds a collection of project summaries, each with a link to its final report or a published journal article from the study. The research projects were completed between June 2010 and June 2011.

Alcohol

Chief Investigator

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Project

The growth of alcohol outlets in Victoria 1991–2007: socioeconomic and demographic drivers

This research analysed the growth of alcohol outlets in Victoria from 1991–2007. In the last twenty years, Victoria has seen a dramatic increase in the number of places from which alcohol is available for purchase. There is growing evidence that this increase has resulted in increased rates of alcohol-related problems, particularly violence.

This study aimed to determine whether there are inequalities in how alcohol outlets are distributed across Victoria and to determine whether particular types of neighbourhoods have been disproportionately affected by the recent increases in availability. The results of this work are providing crucial information for the development of a more consistent and public-health focused liquor licensing system.

Institution

Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

July 2009 to July 2010

Outcomes

Michael's final report [Using Geocoded liquor licensing data in Victoria: The socioeconomic distribution of alcohol availability in Victoria](#) was released in October 2010.

Alcohol

Chief Investigator

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Project

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

This report reviews the evidence surrounding alcohol, alcohol-related harm, interpersonal violence and the effectiveness of interventions currently employed to deal with these harms. It is well-known that alcohol causes massive harm in terms of public health, related to illnesses such as liver disease and breast cancer; however this report focuses on the more acute forms of harm associated with alcohol in terms of intoxication, accidents and violence. Specifically, the report consists of a review of the literature on the effectiveness of different policy and community-based interventions, and an analysis of secondary data trends in Geelong Victoria over the past 10 years. It maps the effects of specific interventions on indicators such as emergency department attendances, police arrests and ambulance attendances.

Institution

School of Psychology, Deakin University

Type of funding

2008 Discovery Grants

Duration

May 2008 to December 2010

Outcomes

Peter's final report [Pubs and Clubs Project Final Report: Literature review and baseline trends \(2000–2010\)](#) was released in December 2010.

Healthy eating

Chief Investigator

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Project

The Impacts of a Localised Food Supply: What is the Evidence?

The supporters of localised food suppliers include consumers, suppliers and the health sector. They promote a wide range of advantages and benefits from locally-sourced fresh produce. However, with the exception of the obvious and evident health benefits, there has been little documented evidence that a localised food supply has substantive environmental, social and economic benefits. Focusing on a case study methodology, this project sought to document and evaluate to what extent localised food suppliers deliver environmental, social, and economic gains and benefits.

Institution

La Trobe University, Bendigo

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

February 2009 to August 2010

Outcomes

Trevor's final report [The Impacts of a Localised Food Supply: What is the Evidence?](#) was released in October 2010.

Healthy eating

Investigators

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Project

Victorian Food Supply Scenarios – Impacts on availability of healthy, nutritious and sustainable diets

This was an Australian-first research study which has built an evidence base for examining how cumulative changes in complex modern food systems can impact on the fruit, vegetables, meat, grains and milk that ends up on our tables. The primary aim was to develop and demonstrate a new methodology to link land and resource use with availability of a nutritionally adequate food supply for Victoria's population.

Institution

The Australian Centre for Science, Innovation and Society, University of Melbourne

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

August 2009 to August 2010

Outcomes

The final report [Victorian Food Supply Scenarios – Impacts on availability of a nutritious diet](#) was released in April 2011.

Health inequalities

Investigators

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Project

Mitigating negative health outcomes of precarious housing

This report is one component of the VicHealth-funded project, originally entitled *Mitigating negative health outcomes of precarious housing*. This research explored poor health's influence on determining precarious housing and in turn, how precarious housing (including affordability, suitability and security of tenure) affects people's health. Housing and health are key areas of government expenditure and service delivery, but comparatively little is known of their relationship and interaction, especially in Australia. It is important to determine priorities and accountabilities for future policies and interventions.

Institution

Hanover Welfare Services, University of Melbourne, University of Adelaide, Melbourne Citymission and Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

August 2009 to August 2010

Outcomes

The final report [Precarious housing and health inequalities: What are the links?](#) was released in August 2011.

Health inequalities

Main contact

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Research collaborators

[Full list](#) of researchers involved in the collaboration.

Project

The Kids in Communities Study: measuring community level factors influencing children's development

The 'Kids in Communities Study' (KICS) was undertaken by a multidisciplinary international collaboration. Its overall aim was to investigate the community or neighbourhood level factors that affect child development and are amenable to change. In the early phase of the study, funding from VicHealth has enabled the collaboration to investigate how best to measure these factors.

The project has tested a combination of innovative quantitative and qualitative approaches to better measure communities' assets and challenges in the context of the social, economic, cultural, physical and service environments that might influence children's development, including the local governance and policy mechanisms. This included the use of geographic information systems, Google maps (and streetscape) and a community survey. It is anticipated that these measures will provide useful guidance for community effects researchers, as well as be of some benefit to communities looking to explore and understand their own key influences on child development.

Institution

Murdoch Children's Research Institution

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

August 2009 to August 2010

Outcomes

The final report [The Kids in Communities Study: measuring community level factors influencing children's development](#) was released in September 2010.

Physical activity

Chief Investigator

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Project

The social, economic and environmental barriers and facilitators to participation in community sport and physical activity

The aim of this project was to identify the barriers and facilitators to participation in community sport and physical activity for children with disability, living in Victoria. The outcomes will form a basis from which to further knowledge about the participation of children with disability in physical activity and community sports within the Victorian context. It has the potential to assist parents, teachers, sports and recreational staff, policy makers and researchers in developing successful programs and interventions to encourage and increase participation levels of children with disability in physical activity.

Institution

La Trobe University

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

July 2009 to October 2010

Outcomes

Nora published an article from the findings of the project in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, titled [Perceived barriers and facilitators to physical activity for children with disability: a systematic review](#).

Nora also produced a summary of findings from this research project and another related VicHealth funded project. The summaries are titled [Barriers & facilitators to physical activity & community sports for children with disability](#), and [What activities do children with disability living in Victoria participate in?](#) Both publications were released in November 2010.

Physical activity

Chief Investigator

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Project

Enhancing participation of sport and physical activity by first generation migrant communities at a high risk of cardiovascular disease

High levels of physical inactivity in adult Victorians contribute to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease. Both physical inactivity and cardiovascular disease are particularly prevalent in first generation immigrants, especially immigrants from Southern Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. Among the largest foreign-born communities from each of these three zones, which thereby represent the largest population attributable risk in Victoria, are those born in Italy, Lebanon and Sri Lanka, respectively. Small groups of migrants from these countries have reported many factors that cause high physical inactivity levels.

This study sets out to determine whether these factors are present across these migrant communities. Members of these communities are keen to improve their physical activity levels. Therefore, the knowledge gained from this study will increase the likely success of future programs by ensuring they meet the needs of the participants.

Institution

Victoria University

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

August 2009 to August 2010

Outcomes

Warren's final report [Immigrant Physical Activity Study](#) was released in February 2011.

Physical activity

Chief Investigator

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Project

The Australian component of the International comparison of children's independent mobility

This research is the Australian component of an international project on children's active travel and independent mobility. In 1990, a study led by Dr Mayer Hillman explored the degree to which children were able to travel and play outside unaccompanied by adults. In particular, it examined whether children engaged in active travel (e.g. walking or cycling) to and from school and whether they had adult accompanying them on these journeys. The study demonstrated a marked reduction between 1971 and 1990 in children's active transport and independent mobility in England, largely due to parents' fear of danger from traffic, and revealed significantly different cultural attitudes to children's independent mobility between England and Germany.

Twenty years after the publication of the above study, researchers repeated their surveys of parents and of their children in England and Germany. In addition, they invited international collaborators to repeat the surveys in their own countries. This report presents data gathered from surveys in Victoria, Australia in 2010. The aim of this report is to compare levels of active transport and independent mobility among primary and secondary schoolchildren in urban and rural Victoria, and to describe parents' and children's views in relation to these behaviours.

Institution

Deakin University

Type of funding

Individual Projects/Commissioned research

Duration

July 2010 to February 2011

Outcomes

The final report [Children's Active transport and independent mobility in urban and rural areas of Victoria](#) was released in February 2011. Alison has also had an article published, [Young and free? A study of independent mobility among urban and rural dwelling Australian children](#), in the Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport (published online April 2012)

Social connection

Chief Investigator

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Project

Community Connections: How can technology promote community social inclusion?

This study was conducted in Cardinia (Victoria) and mapped four families' everyday interactions with new technologies to connect to their communities. It also identified the potential for particular media to support connectedness, the impact of limited access for children outside of school, and gaps in parental mediation strategies for children's safe and positive technology use. It aimed to identify how, in a connected world, technology can impact and influence a person's experience of social inclusion or exclusion.

These findings can be used to inform future strategies that promote the use of communications technology in a way that is safe, but also active, ethical and critical, and supports community cohesion.

Institution

The McCaughey Centre, University of Melbourne

Type of funding

2009 Research Grants

Duration

August 2009 to August 2010

Outcomes

Lisa's final report [Screen Stories and Community Connections](#) was released in September 2010.

Social connection

Investigators

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Project

Connected Lives: Deploying virtual worlds, the internet and free media software to connect young people isolated by disability, geography and socioeconomic disadvantage

The 'Connected Lives' project explored how digital technologies might be deployed to improve the connectedness and wellbeing of young people disadvantaged in multiple ways including disability, geographic isolation, cultural and social disadvantage. Working with individual young people and parents, as well as within specialist schools and community centres in Gippsland and Melbourne (Victoria), the project team deployed a suite of technologies including virtual worlds, digital video, media creation software and games. Activities were based on the interest of each young person.

The project found that the interface of technology and young people is complex, with many factors determining the type and level of interaction. However, an interest in technology (either for its own sake or as an enabler of activities) pervaded all settings, and some software (such as the *Crayon Physics* game) demonstrated near-universal appeal. Young people and their families were also observed initiating positive forms of social interaction through the mediation of software, such as playing the same game together (a concept known as 'object-oriented sociality').

Institution: Victoria University

Type of funding: 2009 Research Grants

Duration: August 2009 to August 2010

Outcomes

The Connected Lives research has informed further work, including articles (in press) and [The Lab](#) project.

Social connection

Chief Investigator

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Project

Connecting Communities to Government

This constitutes the final report of the Social Connectivity Study, a research project funded by the Australian Research Council in conjunction with VicHealth and Knox, Manningham, Maribyrnong and Port Phillip City Councils. The challenge of making public institutions more open, accessible and responsive to the needs of citizens is among the most difficult tasks facing public policymakers today. Understanding the nature of citizens' involvement in civic affairs and associational life, and mapping the embedded resources they can draw on when required represent an important step in meeting this challenge. The research has also examined how patterns of engagement, associationalism and resource availability vary across a range of socioeconomic, demographic and geographic characteristics, for people living in eight very diverse suburbs in Melbourne (Victoria).

Institution

University of Melbourne

Type of funding

2005 ARC Linkage Partnership Grants

Duration

2006 to 2009

Outcomes

Jenny published an article from the findings of the project in the European Sociological Review, titled [Civic Engagement and Associationalism](#).



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