

# Media Release

## OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS SPORT PROGRAM PROMOTES HEALTH AND SPORT FOR CHILDREN

VicHealth and the Australian Sports Commission have today kicked a goal for children's sport and health by launching the Out Of School Hours Sport program.

The program will target primary school-aged children to provide them with opportunities to participate in quality sporting experiences out of school hours. This time slot is always a challenge for parents and guardians. The program, which is being funded \$400,000 in the first year, will provide a fun and active supervised after school care option for their children.

According to VicHealth Board member Elaine Canty, over the past decade there appears to have been a trend to children becoming less active in that 3pm-6pm period after school. "For a range of reasons, they are spending more time in front of televisions and computers," she said. "The Out of School Hours Sports program provides a genuine alternative that is active, healthy, fun and supervised."

ASC CEO Mark Peters, believes the program will also benefit local community sporting clubs and organisations by presenting them with a valuable opportunity to access new young members.

"By participating in the Out of School Hours Sports program, clubs can establish links with these juniors who—with positive experience of the program—may become the next generation of senior club members," Mr Peters said.

Ms Canty said it was alarming that participation is on the decline and obesity is on the increase. "One in five Australian children is overweight and one in ten is considered obese," she said. These children are more likely to face serious health problems including heart disease, diabetes and cancer later in life. This sort of program can contribute to reducing rates of child obesity in Australia by increasing participation in sport."

Ms Canty said the focus was on building healthy communities and encouraging all Victorians to be more active. By sport and health working together, it is hoped that the program will be a positive experience for young people and their parents.

The innovative pilot program will initially be funded and run in Victoria in partnership between the Australian Sports Commission and VicHealth.

The Out of School Hours Sports program is an important part of the Commonwealth Government's sports policy, Backing Australia's Sporting Ability-A More Active Australia. The policy aims to create awareness of the benefits of sport and to boost the number of people participating in sport at a grass-roots level throughout Australia. The program is also a key part of VicHealth's Promoting Health through Sport Program, a three-year sport investment to encourage more Victorians to participate in sport and physical activity in response to increasing obesity and diseases related to inactivity.

### For more information, please contact:

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