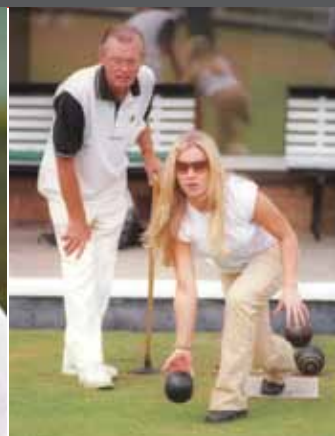


Healthy sporting environments give clubs the edge

Program summary

Creating environments that improve health



Creating healthy sporting environments

VicHealth's *Healthy Sporting Environments* program supports grassroots sports clubs to become healthier, welcoming and more inclusive—leading to greater participation in sport and improved health and wellbeing within communities.

Community sports clubs can—and do—play a pivotal role in both broader health promotion and reinforcing community values, particularly in rural and regional communities, where clubs provide meeting places, support networks and community involvement.

That's why VicHealth is investing over \$3 million to expand *Healthy Sporting Environments* into community sports clubs across rural and regional Victoria.

Creating a healthy sporting environment is a win-win for sports clubs who can benefit from funding and sponsorship opportunities and attracting more players, spectators and volunteers.

Under the two-year *Healthy Sporting Environments* program (2012–14), VicHealth is funding nine Regional Sports Assemblies to deliver training, education and health programs to community sports clubs.

Clubs will be assisted through the program to attain minimum standards in six key health areas.

Responsible use of alcohol

Healthy eating

Reducing tobacco use

UV protection

Injury prevention and management

Fostering an inclusive, safe and supportive environment for women and girls, Aboriginal Victorians and people from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Through the *Healthy Sporting Environments* program, hundreds of sports clubs across rural and regional Victoria are committing to making community sport healthier. Creating a healthy sporting environment is also a win-win for sports clubs, who can benefit in a range of ways including funding and sponsorship opportunities and attracting more players, members and volunteers.

What does a healthy sporting environment look like?

There is no doubt sport improves the health of individuals and communities. More than 4.7 million Australians play community sport at least once a week, with many more involved as spectators, supporters and sponsors.

Sports clubs engage the community at many levels providing opportunities for children and adults to exercise, develop new skills, and to compete and socialise with others in their community.

But while sport and good health should go hand in hand, there are strong cultural links between alcohol, junk food and community sport. The competitive culture of sporting organisations sometimes gives rise to unhealthy environments that can deter broader community engagement and perpetuate unhealthy attitudes and behaviours.

Healthy and thriving sporting environments extend beyond the playing field. They are welcoming, family-friendly and inclusive of all in the community. They promote and reinforce healthy and respectful attitudes and foster a culture that supports health and wellbeing.

With adequate support, all sports clubs have an opportunity to become healthier by implementing policies, programs and practices that ensure the following:

- Alcohol is served responsibly.
- A variety of healthy food choices is available.
- Smoke-free venues become the norm.
- Measures are taken to reduce harmful exposure to UV.
- Injury prevention and management is part of the club's safety plan.
- People from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds are provided with safe, supportive and meaningful opportunities to participate.
- Costs are not prohibitive.
- Women can participate in safe environments free from the fear of violence.
- Aboriginal and culturally diverse community members participate in environments that value diversity and are free from discrimination.

Healthy sports clubs promote respectful attitudes and foster a culture that supports health and wellbeing.

The benefits of a healthy sporting environment

Increasing participation in physical activity, promoting healthy eating and reducing harm from alcohol, UV exposure, smoking and sports injuries all lead to improved health outcomes for the whole community.

But creating a healthier culture can also add value to sports clubs, with the potential benefits ranging from getting more players on the field to increased sponsorship opportunities. In addition:

- Clubs with a welcoming, family-friendly image are better placed to recruit and retain members, and attract more spectators at games and people at social events.
- Opening sports clubs up to a wider section of the community helps build important social networks as well as the club's capacity to attract more volunteers for administration, coaching and other club support roles.
- By implementing strategies to reduce injuries players spend less time out of the game.
- *Healthy Sporting Environments* gives committee members, coaches and volunteers access to tools, training and resources to improve skills that can also benefit them outside the club.
- By participating in the *Healthy Sporting Environments* program, clubs can also benefit from partnerships with VicHealth and Regional Sports Assemblies.



Regional sports assemblies support healthy sporting environments in Victorian clubs

Through VicHealth's *Healthy Sporting Environments* program, over \$3 million will be distributed between nine Regional Sports Assemblies throughout rural and regional Victoria.

Regional Sports Assemblies are charged with the critical role of supporting the sport and recreation sector within region and rural Victoria.

Project officers will work with each club to help them work through the *Healthy Sporting Environments* program's six key activity areas in a staged approach over two years, based on club engagement and support.

The nine Regional Sports Assemblies being funded for the 2012–14 *Healthy Sporting Environments* program are:

- CHSA Sport Central (Central Highlands)
- GippSport (Gippsland)
- Leisure Networks (Barwon Region)
- Mallee Sports Assembly (North West Victoria)
- South West Sport (South West Victoria)
- Sports Focus Inc (Loddon Campaspe)
- The Centre Carn (North East Victoria)
- Valley Sport (Goulburn Valley)
- Wimmera Regional Sports Assembly (Wimmera and Grampians Region).

Champions of cultural and environmental change: Otway district football netball club

The *Healthy Sporting Environments* program follows on from VicHealth's pioneering \$2 million *Healthy Sporting Environments* Demonstration Project, a two-year pilot program working with 78 community sports clubs in the wider Geelong and Barwon south-west region through Leisure Networks.

The pilot was the first in Australia to take a holistic look at community sports clubs to promote good health. At its foundation was the November 2009 *VicHealth Community Attitudes Survey: Healthy Communities Sporting Environments* which showed strong support for health promotion in grassroots sports clubs, particularly around responsible alcohol consumption and healthy eating.

The Otway Districts Football Netball Club signed on to the Demonstration Project and used it as an opportunity to review their practices and encourage a change of culture. A year on, the club gained a reputation in their local area as an extremely family-friendly club that values safety, inclusion and diversity. The club has also been successful in applying for grants and has seen significant increases in cash and in kind support.

Club president, Peter Hickey, attributes their success to the changes the club has made through the Demonstration Project.

"The changes have boosted the club's reputation as a strong, healthy, family-friendly and diverse club that strives to become more inclusive, develop stronger links with their community and grow as a club", said Peter.

The changes have boosted the Otway District Netball Football club's reputation as a strong, healthy, family-friendly and diverse club that strives to become more inclusive, develop stronger links with their community and grow as a club.

Healthy Sporting Environments modules

The *Healthy Sporting Environments* program focuses on ensuring sports clubs are viable, sustainable and healthy places. This will be achieved through a process of club engagement, based on the provision of adequate resources and working modules for clubs to assess their current situation and implement gradual change in six key areas:

Responsible use of alcohol

Guided by the *Good Sports* program, clubs can reduce alcohol-related problems by implementing responsible alcohol management practices that ensure alcohol is not consumed at harmful levels.

UV protection

Clubs achieve a balanced approach to UV exposure to reduce the health risks associated with overexposure, maintain adequate vitamin D levels and protect participants from UV-related harm. Measures include education, the provision of sunscreen, shade, sun protective uniforms, and other recommendations under the *SunSmart* Sports policy.

Inclusion, safety and support

Practical tools and resources help clubs become more inclusive and welcoming of everyone in their community, with a focus on increasing the involvement of women, girls, Aboriginal Victorians and people from culturally diverse communities. Resources include online tools *Play by the Rules* and *Everyone Wins*.

Reducing tobacco use

Assistance for clubs to implement a plan to reduce smoking and work towards creating a smoke-free venue, including prohibiting smoking in outdoor areas using Quit's *Going Smokefree Outdoors* guide for sports clubs.

Healthy eating

Introduces healthy eating policies and provides more healthy food and drink choices for players, officials and spectators in community sports clubs based on VicHealth's *Healthy Club Canteens* resource. These guidelines do not ban any foods, but seek to increase the proportion of healthy food within sports clubs.

Injury prevention and management

Clubs work through a strategy to embed good prevention methods to reduce the number of sporting injuries, as well as implement procedures for managing injuries supported by resources from *Smartplay*.

VicHealth's partners in creating healthy sporting environments



VicHealth would like to thank and acknowledge the following organisations for their support and contributions to the *Healthy Sporting Environments* program: Australian Drug Foundation (*GoodSports*); Cancer Council Victoria (*SunSmart*); Australian Sports Commission and Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (*Play by the Rules*); Cancer Council Victoria (*QUIT*); Prevention and Population Health, Department of Health (*Healthy Choices Guidelines*) and Sports Medicine Australia (*Smartplay*).