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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



**Professor Emeritus John Catford**  
Chair

### Most change is incremental but sometimes we need a bold shift; a confident change in direction.

Victoria and Australia are home to health issues that are affecting not some, but most Australians at scale and with escalating intensity. Only evidence-based innovation will achieve the kinds of change we need to reverse negative trends and improve aggregate health and wellbeing. Healthier people mean stronger communities, productive workplaces and a growing economy. We need to act.

VicHealth is adopting new models of innovation to drive change: from addressing a risky drinking culture to getting people moving, we are determined to discover new ways to improve health and wellbeing for all Victorians.

Behind every VicHealth program, project or initiative are partnerships between academic, government, non-government, community and corporate sectors who share a similar vision for a healthier Victoria. They are connecting knowledge, networks and resources through collaboration with the input of innovators, digital disruptors, entrepreneurs and changemakers. Our programmes are all working at the vanguard of global health promotion.

This innovation culture has evolved and thrived since VicHealth's inception in 1987. One of our early pioneers was acclaimed scientist and leading thinker, Dr Nigel Gray AO. As Director of the Anti-Cancer Council of Victoria (now Cancer Council Victoria) from 1968 until 1995, Dr Gray was relentless in his commitment to reducing tobacco smoking. After 20 years of research into the harmful effects of smoking, he built alliances on both sides of politics and rallied media to support tobacco reform. At the time, many deemed it impossible to rid sports and the arts of tobacco sponsorship. Not today.

Dr Gray passed away late last year and his absence was immediately and profoundly felt. However, his legacy inspired the ongoing work of VicHealth and the major innovation programs we have underway this year are testament to the leadership and energy he brought to our work. On behalf of VicHealth and the Board I wish to pay tribute to his enduring legacy of pursuing big ideas and encouraging partners to bring them to life ■

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### VicHealth pays tribute to Dr Nigel Gray AO whose relentless campaigning against tobacco advertising led to the creation of VicHealth in 1987.

Pictured: Dr Gray (left) presented with a special award by The Honourable Alex Chernov AC QC, Governor of Victoria, for 'Outstanding individual contribution to health promotion practice' at the 2012 Victorian Health Promotion Awards.

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## Innovation is the engine of progress.

Sometimes opportunities to innovate are obvious but, often, we need to explore the setting, gather intelligence, and work hard to develop new methods and achieve positive change.

VicHealth has a broad mandate to find leading thinkers, develop new approaches and test them in practice, and build evidence. We're partnering with organisations that share our determination to tackle the great health challenges of our time. And we're also inviting entrepreneurial, socially motivated Victorians to join us.

In 2014 we launched a series of VicHealth Innovation Challenges which directs seed funding to initiatives that have great potential to achieve outcomes across our focus areas to: promote healthy eating, encourage regular physical activity, improve mental wellbeing and prevent harm from alcohol. It has been inspiring to see the submitted projects and meet the smart and creative people behind them. More broadly it reaffirms that Victoria is home to an innovative community with tremendous potential to achieve better health and wellbeing.

In our cover story from this edition, learn how start-up funding can help turn smart ideas into healthier communities.

With significant and complex challenges before us, standing still isn't an option. This 41st edition of the *VicHealth Letter* outlines the evidence-based innovation and creative health promotion activities VicHealth is pursuing right now, not only in Australia but in the Western Pacific Region.

In this publication, we reveal the details of our latest initiatives to address two major yet largely invisible challenges, sugar and salt. Victorians consume too much sugar, particularly through soft drinks; similarly we consume too much salt, which is particularly high in processed foods. Efforts to switch to drinking water with VicHealth's H30 Challenge will reap significant health benefits.

Through our Leading Thinkers initiative, we are excited about two important pieces of work.

The first is a series of trial interventions where we work with our partner organisations to build an evidence base to support the behavioural insights approach. The second will be a public deliberative forum on obesity later this year.

At VicHealth we are serious about innovation. It's in our DNA. Late last year we lost a lifelong innovator and a pioneer of health promotion: Dr Nigel Gray AO, who was instrumental in the establishment of VicHealth and a lifelong VicHealth Patron. He was a driving force behind globally recognised health promotion initiatives, most notably the reduction of tobacco smoking. This was no mean feat; it was a major battle in the face of adversity and opposition from tobacco companies. However, Dr Gray persevered and today, nearly 30 years later, preventing tobacco use remains a key focus of VicHealth.

Nigel has always been a great supporter of VicHealth's vision, and a wonderful mentor to me personally. He will be remembered well by all of us. As you read through the following articles, be inspired; and if you have an idea, be brave and take the Innovation Challenge ■

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**VicHealth has a broad mandate to find leading thinkers, develop new approaches and test them in practice, and build evidence.”**

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Jerril Rechter  
Chief Executive Officer



# THOUSANDS FLOCK TO DANCE EXTRAVAGANZA

VicHealth was excited to get behind White Night Melbourne for the second year with the hugely popular *I Could Have Danced All Night* 12-hour dance marathon on 21 February 2015.

The VicHealth-funded event got up to half a million people of all ages and abilities active through dance to promote people's physical and mental wellbeing. Hundreds and thousands of Victorians were guided by Ausdance Victoria and their professional dancers through a range of dance styles from 7pm to 7am. Community groups from across Melbourne also performed on stage including a group of senior citizens, people with disabilities, a group of newly-arrived migrants and refugees and a group of international students.

*I Could Have Danced All Night* is part VicHealth's Active Arts Strategy to get more Victorians moving and provide as many opportunities as possible to get people active.

Read VicHealth CEO Jerri Rechter's opinion piece about the power of dance on health: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/just-dance](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/just-dance) ■



Thousands got moving and active in Lonsdale Street, Melbourne during VicHealth's popular *I Could Have Danced All Night* White Night event.



## OUR WALK TO SCHOOL CHAMPIONS

Walking to school has never been so popular with VicHealth's Walk to School campaign, breaking multiple records for the number of walks completed and schools taking part during October 2014.

A total of 78,628 primary school students from 499 schools took part across the state – more than double the number of students who took part in 2013 – racking up more than 1.2 million walks.

The Walk to School campaign inspires Victorian primary school students to walk, scoot, ride or roll to and from school every school day in October.

One winner and runner-up were selected in each of the four Victorian education regions based on the school's overall participation rate, and each school receives a special award.

To view the Walk to School winner and runner-up for each region in 2014 visit: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/kids-walk-to-moon-and-back](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/kids-walk-to-moon-and-back)



## ACTIVE CLUB GRANTS A HUGE SUCCESS

Hundreds of sports and active recreation clubs across Victoria will benefit from the first round of VicHealth's 2014–15 Active Club Grants program. Round one of the grants has awarded more than \$650,000 worth of grants to 270 successful clubs to tackle two major barriers that prevent people from taking part in sport and active recreation – cost and injury.

The grants, of up to \$3,000 each, aim to make clubs safer and more accessible by funding essential equipment and items to prevent or manage injuries.

To create greater opportunities for clubs to access Active Club Grants, VicHealth is running two rounds of funding this year. The second round has now closed and grant recipients will be notified in April 2015.

Watch out for future Active Club Grants by visiting: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/acg](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/acg)



## INCREASING ACCESS TO WATER

Earlier this year, as a part of VicHealth's Water Initiative (an integrated program with the goal of getting more Victorians to choose water instead of drinks with added sugar), VicHealth rolled out water fountains with a new design, which includes a bottle refill functionality, around the City of Melbourne. VicHealth will test whether including a bottle refill functionality on fountains, and the location of fountains, increases access and use. This research will then be used to provide best-practice guidelines.

With nearly two-thirds of Victorians currently overweight or obese, reducing intake of sugar through drinks is one way to promote a healthier diet and improved health.

Find out more about VicHealth's water initiative at: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/water-initiative](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/water-initiative)



## BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TEAM UPDATE

There are some exciting developments through VicHealth's Leading Thinkers initiative with two important pieces of work underway.

The first is a series of trial interventions where we work with our partner organisations to build an evidence base to support the behavioural insights approach. Several trials are underway in Victoria, including the effectiveness of price increases in vending machines and getting people in the workplace to use the stairs instead of the lifts and standing more in meetings. We believe that small incremental changes like these can make a difference to overall health.

Stay tuned for updates: [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/leading-thinkers](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/leading-thinkers)



# PROFESSOR JOHN CATFORD

Chair of the VicHealth Board



Professor John Catford has been at the frontline of health promotion for the past 30 years since setting up Heartbeat Wales, a pioneering community-based health program which focused on addressing an epidemic of heart attacks. He believes that now, more than ever, is a time for courage and innovation in health promotion.

***What are the global health promotion initiatives you have been involved with?*** I was part of the drafting team that led the development of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion in 1986, the Bangkok Charter in 2005 and the Nairobi Call to Action in 2009. We were helping to create a new concept of health promotion which was different to traditional health education and public health. These three major global policy initiatives engaged governments, non-governmental organisations, health organisations and health services to address importance of health promotion and provide the building blocks to take it forward. They have challenged health systems to respond more nimbly and more ably and have changed the nature and forms of public health enormously over the last 30 years.

***What aspects of VicHealth's current work are you particularly most excited about?*** I'm very enthusiastic about VicHealth's salt reduction program. We need to reduce salt in manufactured foods, but also raise awareness of the importance of reducing sodium in the diet. I'm also excited about VicHealth's Alcohol Culture Change program. This is a difficult area, particularly with how alcohol is embedded in the Australian psyche and lifestyle. If we can make some impact there, it will be world-leading.

***What are the challenges for VicHealth in the next three years?*** We need to turn challenges into opportunities. We need to look at how VicHealth can add value to quite a sophisticated prevention system. I think that's very much at the soul of VicHealth. It was set up as an innovator, a changemaker, reaching out to places where there wasn't any action. We need to continue to be smart, support strategic alliances and make sure we continue to work effectively with the State and Federal Governments. VicHealth also has a role to play nationally in terms of Australia-wide programs and partnerships.

***VicHealth was recently designated as a WHO\* Collaborating Centre for Leadership in Health Promotion. How will this role benefit our friends and colleagues in the region?*** In addition to sharing Victoria's health promotion successes and expertise with our neighbours in the Western Pacific, there's a real opportunity for knowledge and skills transfer because VicHealth has had a long history of championing emerging and challenging areas such as tobacco control, healthy eating and improving mental wellbeing.

***What do you see as the new frontier for health promotion?*** It is the understanding of how technology is changing people's lives and how it can be harnessed for better health. The broader electronic environments are going to be very important and mastering these will be very interesting and challenging. For example, are people going to socialise face-to-face, or will it be predominantly through the internet? What are the positive and negative aspects to that? Technology may not be a major risk factor, but I think there's a place for some very creative work here. And with creativity, comes risk. So we need to be courageous. We won't always get it right but if we don't take risks, we're not going to achieve our mission to be at the cutting edge of health promotion tackling those things that are hurting the health and wellbeing of Victorians. We need the resolve to maintain our courage, our investment and our commitment to innovate for better health ■

\* World Health Organization



# KICK- STARTING BRIGHT IDEAS

VicHealth Innovation Challenges

Victorians are among the most innovative people in the world. We have a culture of openness to new ideas and a willingness to adopt new methods, technologies and ways of living or working.

Launched in 2014, VicHealth's Innovation Challenges invite pitches for initiatives that encourage healthier behaviours in four areas: physical activity, reducing alcohol consumption, mental health and wellbeing via participation in the arts, and improving access to sustainable, nutritious foods.

The most promising are rewarded with start-up funding. In preparation for the Innovation Challenges, VicHealth held a series of workshops to bring together a diverse range of organisations and changemakers to develop initial ideas. The aim of the workshops were to connect and nurture people, communities and organisations doing good work by building capability, skill sharing and practical learning opportunities.

The series of workshops were open to everyone, not only the finalists and winners, and not necessarily those with a specific expertise. It attracted participants from sporting groups, mental health sector, youth sector, entrepreneurs, changemakers, universities, government representatives, design, and communications professionals to build a shared understanding of key issues and trends.

VicHealth engaged the team at Doing Something Good, a social enterprise investing in Melbourne-based community initiatives, to facilitate some of the workshops and help with capacity building. Doing Something Good founder David Hood says the workshops were designed to be informative and inspiring.

"Participants heard from thought leaders, entrepreneurs and innovators from diverse fields. They explored key issues and their impact, gained insights into emerging trends and their drivers, and learned simple and effective techniques to develop socially innovative solutions together.

"Participants planning on submitting a project proposal learned how to apply the principles and practices of design thinking, lean start-up and rapid prototyping, learning what makes (and sells) a good idea, and how to develop a winning pitch," said Mr Hood. ►

## INNOVATION CHALLENGES

### ▼ Innovation Challenge:

**Physical Activity** is about getting more Victorians engaged in physical activity.

A pool of \$400,000 in start-up funding awarded to seven projects.

While many of us play traditional club sport to keep active, it's not the answer for everybody.

Some people are put off by the level of commitment required, high costs and limited opportunities for beginners and veterans.

More people are looking for flexible, social and less structured ways to get active. So, we wanted to identify and support these ideas.

Read about the winning entries on page 9.

### ▼ Innovation Challenge:

**Alcohol** is about improving Victoria's drinking culture.

A pool of up to \$395,000 in start-up funding awarded to successful projects.

Most Victorians drink. Alcohol is a part of most social occasions.

The problem is, the more you drink the more likely you are to suffer from an injury, aggression or accident and do or say things you may later regret.

Additionally, drinking too much, too regularly increases the risk of chronic disease; such as heart disease and some cancers.

We wanted to hear ideas that aim to decrease the amount Victorians drink, particularly those that drink heavily, or increase the acceptability of saying no to a drink or drinking a bit less.

See page 10.

### ▼ The Innovation Challenge: Arts

is about finding new ideas to achieve physical and mental wellbeing through involvement in arts activities.

A pool of up to \$100,000 in start-up funding awarded to successful projects.

Using new technologies we can provide more active and participatory opportunities for creators and audiences.

VicHealth wants to support dynamic, eclectic and interactive initiatives to promote people's mental and physical wellbeing.

Using technology to bring these two sets of health benefits together holds promise for both the arts and for health promotion.

Find out more about the shortlisted entries on page 11.

### ▼ The Seed Challenge is

about developing new ways of ensuring nutritious food is sustainable, available and affordable for all Victorians.

A pool of up to \$100,000 in start-up funding awarded to successful projects with 12 months' mentoring and coaching.

Working with The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI), the VicHealth Seed Challenge brought people from across the nutrition sector, fruit and vegetable industries, researchers, social innovators/entrepreneurs, the digital world and related sectors together to come up with solutions to achieve nutritious food that is sustainable, available, and affordable for all Victorians.

An update on the Seed Challenge is on page 11.

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**VicHealth wants to support dynamic, eclectic and interactive initiatives to promote people's mental and physical wellbeing.”**



## ► Innovation Challenge:

# PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Getting communities more active is in the best interests of all Victorians. Across Australia, people are leading less active lives, with less than a third of Australians getting enough physical activity. It is estimated that the increased risks of chronic disease and poor mental health associated with inactivity is costing the Australian economy \$13.8 billion each year.<sup>1</sup>

VicHealth's Innovation Challenge: Physical Activity was about kick-starting ideas that made getting active fun for everyone. The successful projects help provide more flexible, social and less-structured opportunities for Victorians of all ages to get active.

More than 100 video pitches were submitted in the Innovation Challenge: Physical Activity. The creativity and quality of submissions immediately affirmed how innovative Victorians are and just how hard choosing the winners would be. Among the seven winning entries was a charitable giving app that encourages daily physical activity and a social enterprise that links group fitness training with school fundraising: two very different approaches to the same health issue and both likely to succeed in different settings (see sidebar for a summary of winning entries).

CoDesign Studio Project Manager Helen Rowe, for one of the winning projects (Play Streets) in the Innovation Challenge: Physical Activity, said the funding will be used to trial Play Streets in Melbourne, a program that temporarily converts local streets into play spaces, for a day or even an afternoon, and reawakening a love of street play in a whole new generation.

Making play easy to do and close to home by creating opportunities for street play, is a great way to increase kids' activity levels. That's what Play Streets aims to do.

"At the end of the project we aim to create a Play Streets toolkit to help communities everywhere create more ways to play in their own neighbourhood," Ms Rowe said.

The Innovation Challenges: Physical Activity will be held twice a year, with the next one in July 2015. In the lead up to future Physical Activity Challenges VicHealth is excited to partner with Vicsport, Victoria's peak body representing the sport and active recreation sector, to deliver a series of 'forward thinking' sessions to support the community sport industry develop cutting-edge ideas on how to get more people active through sport. Sessions have already commenced, with the next two on in April and June.

**To find out more about future events and register for the free Forward Thinking Series visit:** <http://vicsport.com.au/industry/forward-thinking/>

## Snapshot of the winning entries

### **Go Explore It – Bendigo Orienteers Incorporated:**

Modification of the treasure hunt concept to encourage people to explore their local neighbourhood.

### **Play Streets – City of Melbourne & CoDesign Studio:**

Enables the community to temporarily close local streets and engage in physical activity.

### **Fit Football – Football Federation Victoria:**

Encouraging parents/guardians to participate during their kids' sport.

### **Back 2 School Fitness – Healthy Communities Australia:**

Social enterprise that links group fitness training for parents and friends with school fundraising.

### **Pulseraiser – Malvern Harriers Running Club & London**

**Agency:** A charity-giving fitness app incentivising daily physical activity through charity fundraising.

**CardioNET – Netball Victoria:** Re-engaging people who are no longer involved in netball.

### **Learn Right Skate School – Victorian Skateboarding**

**Association:** Provides skate education in schools and then a safe transition into community skate parks.

**For more details about the winners and to watch their pitches visit:** [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/funding/innovation-challenge-physical-activity](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/funding/innovation-challenge-physical-activity)





#### ► Innovation Challenge:

## ALCOHOL

Research shows that almost half of Victorians (46%) drink in a way that increases their risk of injury, with this rising to two-thirds (67%) for young people aged 16 to 29. Over half (53%) of Victorians aged 16 to 29 believe getting drunk every now and then is not a problem.<sup>2</sup> But a majority (87%) of Australians think alcohol is a serious issue facing our community, and improving Victoria's drinking culture is a high priority for VicHealth.<sup>3</sup>

The Innovation Challenge: Alcohol offered an investment pool of \$395,000, which will be shared among successful projects that have the most potential to decrease the amount Victorians drink, particularly those that drink heavily, or to increase the acceptability of saying no to a drink, or drinking a bit less.

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**87% of Australians think alcohol is a serious issue facing our community, and improving Victoria's drinking culture is a high priority for VicHealth.”**

#### Snapshot of the winning entries

**#SoberSelfie – Australian Drug Foundation:** Targeted towards 18- to 30-year-olds, the #SoberSelfie campaign encourages people to drink less by sharing a selfie of them looking sharp on their social media platforms. Young people can nominate their friends to take the challenge so that everyone can have a healthier and more enjoyable tomorrow.

**Enough is Enough: Emergency Department Clinicians' Action on Reducing Alcohol Harm – Australasian College of Emergency Medicine, Hello Sunday Morning and Monash University:** This project will develop an app to allow emergency department clinicians to identify hazardous drinkers and offer them a Brief Intervention (BI) and referral if required. Clinicians will screen for harmful drinking on their smartphones, using the World Health Organization's Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Tool (AUDIT), and where appropriate, follow with a referral to HelloSundayMorning.org to reduce their alcohol consumption. The aim is to develop a feasible, sustainable BI for emergency department patients, coupled with an ongoing opportunity to reduce harmful drinking. The innovation will be piloted in three Victorian emergency departments. Each year over 350,000 Victorians present to emergency departments due to alcohol-related harm.

**Be a brother – cohealth, Youth Support & Advocacy Service, Victoria University and South Sudanese filmmaker Ez Eldin Deng:** The program is aimed at African men aged 16 to 25 in Melbourne's western region. cohealth will work with young African Australians in the community who have controlled their drinking or whose lives were adversely affected by alcohol to produce peer-led social media campaigns that will define being a brother as somebody who takes care of their friends and does not push them to drink more.

**Peer Modelling: Drinking Culture Change Intervention – Swinburne University & Victoria Police:** This project targets young adults aged 20 to 24 whose alcohol consumption brings them into contact with Victoria Police. An online program will be developed, featuring video interviews with young people talking about how they have successfully reduced their own harmful alcohol consumption. The program will provide an alternative to legal penalties for offences related to alcohol.



## ► Innovation Challenge:

# ARTS

The Innovation Challenge: Arts attracted dozens of submissions seeking to achieve physical and mental wellbeing through involvement in arts activities.

From the 40 entries, eight proposals have been shortlisted (see sidebar for a summary on each) with winners to be announced in April 2015.



## Snapshot of the shortlisted entries

**Dance Shop – Big West Festival:** A user-generated online bank of dance content and stories within one virtual dance hub with participants celebrating in a mass dance event on Altona beach.

**Circus Fun For All – Circus Oz:** An app that teaches fun circus skills, challenging Victorians to learn, move their body, collaborate, and be part of a flashmob.

**Digital Tanderrum – Ilbjerri Theatre:** Connecting young Indigenous Victorians with their community and learning about traditional culture through nation-specific microsites ahead of TANDERRUM 2015 – a traditional ceremony of the Kulin nations.

**Dance Break – No Lights No Lycra:** An app that makes you stop and dance once a day with hundreds of people listening to the same song.

**Outer Bounds – Polyglot Theatre:** Using smartphones and geocaching technology, this app will activate differently accessible ‘adventures’ in their local parks prompting families to explore the natural terrain.

**The Cloud: a Real World Game – Pop Up Playground:** An alternate reality street game combining different styles of digitally supported real world play.

**Teach to the beat! – The Song Room:** Encouraging students to become physically active and enhance their dance skills while mentoring teachers in delivering creative dance programs.

**Dance the Phone Away – The Village Festival for New Performance:** Learn funky partner-dance moves from your phone at home guided by the phone’s movement sensor and join a mass dance event at three different festivals.

News on winners will be published here:  
[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/innovation-challenge-arts](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/innovation-challenge-arts)

## VicHealth’s Seed Challenge

Recently VicHealth announced extended support to the two Healthy Eating Seed Challenge winners, 3000 Acres and Open Food Network, until June 2015. The investment will accelerate their progression to viable business models whilst delivering new solutions to improving the supply, access and culture of fruit and vegetables in Victoria.

Over the past 12 months, 3000 Acres have established pilot gardens on vacant or underutilised land, and a website and online toolkit to support people who want to grow foods to connect with others who hold the keys to vacant land. The clear impact of 3000 Acres is increasing awareness of the importance and value of food growing within the city and the creation and strengthening of communities around those gardens. The initiative has generated strong interest from traditional and social media, landowners, enthusiastic growers and volunteers.

Seed Challenge investment in the Open Food Network has enabled trialling new software that makes it easy to find, buy and sell local and source-identified food online. Open Food Network’s concept is generating a broad support base including international interest and a very successful crowdfunding campaign raising more than \$35,000 ■





# VICHEALTH JOINS THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



NCDs are the leading causes of death and disability in the Western Pacific Region.

about 1 in every 20 deaths in the Western Pacific Region is caused by alcohol consumption.

In September 2014 VicHealth was designated as a new World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Leadership in Health Promotion. Through this recognition, VicHealth will focus on strengthening health promotion in Australia and the Western Pacific Region. VicHealth will lead the activities of the new centre, building on our existing expertise and our role as a leader in health promotion.

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**It is an honour and a privilege for VicHealth to continue to generate and share knowledge with our partners.”**

The activities of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Leadership in Health Promotion will include building the capacity of existing and new health promotion organisations through technical support and mentoring, as well as hosting international delegations, forging new partnerships in health and sharing information and resources across the region.

Our designation recognises that for nearly three decades VicHealth has generated and shared evidence-based knowledge with local and international partners. It also acknowledges Victoria's leadership in health promotion and disease prevention, and our long history of working in collaboration with government, researchers, non-government organisations and affected community groups. The Collaborating Centre provides an opportunity to share learnings from our successes and the work of our partners across the 37 countries in the region.

The Western Pacific Region, one of the six WHO regions, is home to 1.8 billion people, more than a quarter of the global population. Non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases are responsible for four in five deaths in the region. Health promotion approaches have the potential to prevent much of this ill health, and VicHealth aims to share its, and our valued partners, knowledge in areas such as healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco, alcohol and mental wellbeing to inform and assist action across the region.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter says the organisation feels a sense of great responsibility and promise in receiving designation as a WHO Collaborating Centre.

“Since our establishment in 1987, VicHealth has aimed to produce the highest quality research and solutions for the complex challenge of promoting health. It is an honour and a privilege for VicHealth to continue to generate and share knowledge with our partners, including our commitment to the International Network of Health Promotion Foundations.

“The recent designation cements our status as a global leader in health promotion,” said Ms Rechter.

As a WHO Collaborating Centre, VicHealth recently hosted Seini Mafi Filiai, CEO of the Tonga Health Promotion Foundation (TongaHealth). TongaHealth was established in 2009 and the visit gave VicHealth an opportunity to share our knowledge with a relatively new health promotion foundation, as well as build VicHealth's understanding of the health issues and health promotion successes in the region.

“The main health issue in Tonga is non-communicable diseases. It's the major cause of mortality, causing almost 80% of all deaths in Tonga,” said Mrs Filiai. “Tonga also has a very high rate of obesity and a lot of people are overweight.”

TongaHealth's focus over the next 10 years includes collaboration, building partnerships and advocacy for legislative change. “We plan to develop partnerships with overseas organisations like VicHealth that have the skills and a long history of success in doing health promotion. So we are grateful we can develop a working partnership with VicHealth and other international organisations like the World Health Organization, which has been supporting a lot of health promotion initiatives in Tonga.” ■

**Michael Moore**

CEO, Public Health Association of Australia  
Vice-President/President-Elect, World Federation of Public Health Associations



“

**The designation of VicHealth as WHO Collaborating Centre provides some outstanding opportunities for their achievements to be shared world-wide. These have been important for Victoria and have provided a model for other countries. Health promotion and public health action cannot simply be extrapolated from one community to another and VicHealth is well-placed to share their learnings.”**

**Seini Mafi Filiai**  
TongaHealth CEO



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**We plan to develop partnerships with overseas organisations like VicHealth that have the skills and a long history of success in doing health promotion.”**



**Dr Jacqui Webster**

Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Population Salt Reduction, The George Institute for Global Health, Australia

**Dr Shin Young-soo**

Regional Director for the Western Pacific World Health Organization (WHO)



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**VicHealth will be a valuable addition to the WHO Collaborating Centres as an exemplar of innovative health promotion strategies. I’m looking forward to our continued partnership in Australia and future opportunities to link our work internationally.”**

“  
**VicHealth has accumulated a wealth of experience and expertise that can be shared with other countries that may be embarking on their own journey to set up health promotion foundations.”**

The Western Pacific Region, one of the six regions of the World Health Organization, is home to approximately 1.8 billion people, more than one-fourth of the world’s population.<sup>1</sup>

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) (principally cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases) are the leading causes of death and disability in the Region, responsible for 80% of all deaths in the region.<sup>2</sup>

Globally, NCD deaths are projected to increase by 15% between 2010 and 2020 (to 44 million deaths), with the highest numbers predicted in the Western Pacific (12.3 million deaths) and South-East Asia (10.4 million deaths) Regions.<sup>2</sup>

There are an estimated 430 million smokers residing in the Western Pacific Region, or about one-third of the world’s smokers.<sup>3</sup> In the Region, it is estimated that two people die every minute from tobacco-related disease, and half of all men, women and children are regularly exposed to secondhand smoke at home and in public places.<sup>4</sup>

Of the World Health Organization’s six regions, the Western Pacific Region has:

- the greatest number of smokers
- the highest rates of male smoking prevalence
- the fastest increase in tobacco uptake by women and young people.<sup>4</sup>

In the Western Pacific Region, NCD risk factors remain unacceptably high:

- one in five adults over 18 years of age has elevated blood pressure<sup>5</sup>
- nearly half of all men over 15 years of age smoke tobacco daily<sup>5</sup>
- 85% of adolescents do not engage in sufficient physical activity.<sup>5</sup>
- About one in every 20 deaths in the Western Pacific Region is caused by alcohol consumption. The Western Pacific, along with the Europe and the Americas, has the highest rates of adolescent heavy drinking.<sup>6</sup>

# SWITCH TO WATER FOR HEALTH

In March 2014 the World Health Organization released its draft guidelines on sugar intake for adults and children with a warning: drinking just one can of soft drink a day could be bad for you.

## H3O challenge highlights

Over 6000 people have registered to participate in VicHealth's H3O Challenge since its launch in September 2014.

High profile celebrity ambassadors have lent their support to the H3O Challenge including former competitive swimmer Giaan Rooney OAM, cycling legends Cadel Evans and Phil Anderson, and Dale Vine (The Block).

The campaign is the Official Hydration Partner of sporting clubs the Melbourne Stars and the Melbourne City Football Club, and also the inaugural Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race. Water bottles were distributed to spectators by each partner, with advertising encouraging people to sign-up to the H3O Challenge.



VicHealth's H3O Challenge was the Official Hydration Partner of the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race, with Phil Anderson taking up the reins as H3O Event Ambassador. Pictured from left to right: Cadel Evans and Phil Anderson.

The draft guideline proposes that less than 5% of total energy intake per day comes from sugars. This is equivalent to around 25 grams (or 6 teaspoons) of sugar per day for an adult of normal Body Mass Index (BMI).<sup>1</sup>

There are up to 10 teaspoons of sugar in a standard can of soft drink, and up to 16 in a 600ml bottle.<sup>2</sup> Dissolved and invisible but not benign, the excess sugar intake from sugary drinks is contributing to many preventable diseases for Australians. A high intake of sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with poor health outcomes, such as increased risk of weight gain and tooth decay.

Nearly two-thirds of Victorians are classified as overweight or obese and that proportion is predicted to rise. Researchers estimate that by 2025, over 75% of adults and one-third of Australian children will be overweight or obese and at severe risk of type 2 diabetes and/or cardiovascular disease.<sup>3</sup> To avoid this confronting projection, VicHealth is promoting the benefits of drinking water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, iced teas, fruit drinks, cordials and flavoured waters.

The H30 Challenge encourages Victorians to make a 30-day pledge to switch from sugary drinks to water. This initiative aligns with our strategic imperative to promote healthy eating, and three-year priority of more people choosing water and healthy food options.

Over the past six months VicHealth has been targeting sugary drink consumers through advertising, media and stakeholder networks. VicHealth has also formed partnerships with sporting associations, such as the Cadel Evans Great Ocean Road Race and Melbourne Stars, to build support for the H30 Challenge and its message.

While the campaign encourages all Victorians to drink more water and less sugary drinks, the H30 Challenge has a particular focus on 18- to 34-year-olds, who are some of the highest consumers of sugary drinks.

Melbourne is blessed with pristine water collected from the mountains circling our city. It's a marketer's dream! So why are we buying sugary drinks, often laden with the unnecessary sugar additive, when we can be quenching our thirst with nature's finest?

A pattern of behaviour sees us line up and spend our hard-earned wages too often on sugary drinks that have the potential to seriously impact our health. Water is widely available and practically free but we often overlook its presence and its qualities.

The H30 Challenge campaign is informed by rigorous research including in-depth interviews, focus groups and quantitative testing of the most promising creative ideas with target audiences. Audiences responded strongly to the idea of a challenge encouraging people to make the switch.

VicHealth CEO, Jerri Rechter, said the aim is to make the shift easy for Victorians by working with partners who interface with consumers to raise awareness of the benefits of water and health risks of sugary drinks.

"Australian dietary guidelines recommend we drink plenty of water and limit foods and drinks containing added sugars. The H30 Challenge is part of an integrated water initiative aligned with the goal of getting more Victorians to choose water instead of drinks with added sugar," says Ms Rechter.

VicHealth is collaborating with the City of Melbourne to undertake innovative research to increase water access in the CBD. A new design of water fountain that includes a tap to refill your water bottle is being trialled. Evidence indicates that people are concerned about hygiene when drinking from fountains, so this project will test whether the refill tap is a more accessible and acceptable way to provide water in public spaces.

The City of Melbourne was selected for the one-off trial due to the high volume of Victorians entering the CBD each day, ensuring adequate data is collected. Sites were informed by research into pedestrian traffic, sports and recreation spaces, and availability of water and/or drinks with added sugar. The new fountains are conveniently located in shopping precincts, between meeting venues and in parklands. No queues, no cost.

The trial is expected to provide valuable learnings.

Ms Jan Black, Policy Adviser at the Municipal Association of Victoria said, "Designing and trialling different kinds of water fountains can assist councils to meet changing community needs. Taps and water fountains in public spaces help people make easier choices to drink water which is free, and is the healthiest beverage of all."

A range of activities are underway as part of the water initiative to inform the development of best-practice guidelines for provision of drinking water in key public settings for health promotion purposes.

This includes research to assess the current supply and access patterns of drinking water in sports and recreation facilities and spaces, public transport nodes and the construction industry.

Other research focuses on supply of water within high-risk licensed premises. Results will determine whether changes in supply, accessibility and promotion of drinking water impacts patron behaviour and, if so, what that impact might be in relation to alcohol harm reduction. The objective is to develop best-practice guidelines in partnership with the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulations ■

#### To read more about the initiative or take part in the H30

**Challenge visit:** [www.h30challenge.com.au](http://www.h30challenge.com.au) or [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/h30-challenge](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/h30-challenge)

H30 Challenge ambassador Giaan Rooney said she needed a healthy challenge for the year so she is swapping sugary drinks for water and encouraging others to do the same.





It might be hard to swallow for the habitual salt grinders among us but the extra salt in our diet is killing us.

# THE CASE FOR SALT REDUCTION

**75%**

—  
Around 75% of salt in the Australian diet comes from processed foods.<sup>1</sup>

**30%**

—  
Reducing salt by 30% as per the global target committed to the WHO would save around 3400 Australian lives a year.<sup>2</sup>

**15,000**

—  
Victorians eat a combined total of over 15,000 tonnes of salt every year.<sup>3</sup>

**-3g** (per day)

—  
Reducing salt by 3g/day in Victoria would prevent about 800 deaths per year from stroke and heart disease.<sup>2,4</sup>

**25%**

—  
A quarter of all Victorians have high blood pressure.<sup>5</sup>

**2x** (daily intake)

—  
On average, Victorians eat almost twice the amount of salt that is recommended.<sup>6</sup>



Every night around the dining table or in restaurants and fast food outlets, too many Victorians are risking their lives eating too much salt, and many don't even know it. New research estimates that each year 1.65 million global deaths are a direct result of eating too much salt.<sup>7</sup>

Salt is made up of sodium and chloride. Too much sodium increases risk of high blood pressure, which is the leading cause of heart attacks and stroke. One in four Victorians have high blood pressure.<sup>5</sup>

Around 75% of salt in the Australian diet comes from processed foods. People are unaware of the recommended daily amount and how much salt they're eating. Daily intake of salt should be no more than one teaspoon (about 5g).<sup>8</sup> Currently Victorians are eating almost twice this amount, at about 8 grams a day.<sup>6</sup>

Tackling salt reduction is a highly cost-effective strategy for improving population health, and for this reason reducing salt in the Victorian diet is a key initiative of VicHealth's healthy eating strategic imperative for the next three years.

Together with The George Institute for Global Health, the Heart Foundation and other partners, VicHealth is responding to the alarming scale of salt-related health hazards.

VicHealth's aim is to achieve consensus and commitment on salt reduction action from government, industry and the general public leading to a 1 gram reduction in average salt intake by 2018.

Professor Bruce Neal from The George Institute at the University of Sydney says the harmful effects of salt on blood pressure and the very close link between blood pressure and cardiovascular disease are well established.

"Governments worldwide have agreed to intervene and reduce the terrible toll on human life. Processed foods account for 75% of the salt Australians eat and this salt is being added to the food supply for purely commercial purposes," said Professor Neal.

The Heart Foundation's spokesperson Kellie-Ann Jolly agrees and says reducing our intake of salt from processed foods by just 15% over 10 years would avert 5800 heart attacks and 4900 strokes a year.

"Consumers need to be aware of the hidden salt in processed foods we eat every day, like bread, breakfast cereals, processed meats, cheese, sauces and spreads," said Ms Jolly.

A recent review of the range and impact of current national, international and community salt reduction interventions, funded by VicHealth, provides the rationale and identifies the opportunities for action. *The Case for State Action on Salt in Australia*, prepared for VicHealth by The George Institute for Global Health made recommendations for state-level action that incorporates strategic partnerships, policy development, public debate, and research. The review also found that existing state and federal government initiatives to reduce salt in Australia are unlikely to achieve the WHO target of a 30% reduction in the population's salt intake by 2025.

Reducing salt intake in Australia by 30% to achieve the global targets committed to would save around 3400 Australian lives a year.<sup>2</sup> Modelling conducted by The George Institute predicts that if a 3g/day reduction in average salt intake in Victoria was achieved, about 800 deaths from stroke and heart disease would be prevented each year with potential savings of millions of dollars in annual health care costs.<sup>2,4</sup> There is a need for greater state-level action on salt reduction, and increased support for effective evidence-based national salt reduction initiatives.

On our side is the fact that Victoria is a recognised leader in innovation and health. We know there is the capacity to reach the necessary targets.

To further address Victoria's dangerously high salt intake, VicHealth has established a Salt Reduction Partnership Group, which includes The George Institute for Global Health, the Heart Foundation, Deakin University, and the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. The group has developed a three-year action plan for salt reduction in Victoria. Consultations with additional stakeholders is the next step to expand the Partnership and the reach and impact of the action plan. (See box for the Strategic Partnership Group members).

Existing programs are already available and the intention is to build on and strengthen these. The Food and Health Dialogue established by the Australian Government as a voluntary reformulation scheme aims to reduce the content of sodium and other adverse nutrients in commonly consumed foods. Another, The George Institute's Food Policy Division, was designated as a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre for Population Salt Reduction in 2013 with a remit to support member states achieve the global target. In addition, the Heart Foundation, the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and Deakin University all have useful policies, campaigns and research to influence our population's salt intake.

Dr Bruce Bolam, Executive Manager of Programs at VicHealth, says there are a range of salt reduction initiatives currently being undertaken in Australia and Victoria, including activities led by Salt Reduction Taskforce partners.

"We have a group of partners all committed to salt reduction in Victoria and making important contributions. That's a strong foundation from which to build coordinated action," said Dr Bolam.

The action plan to reduce Victoria's salt consumption will be coordinated over the next three years. Our first year will be focused on consultation and research, and development of a Victorian State of Salt Report. Implementation of a range of salt reduction activities will occur in the second and third year of the plan, thereby building a comprehensive program to achieve an improved food supply and increased public awareness of the need to eat less salt. The program will include social marketing strategies, direct support for industry action, and trials of innovative approaches to reduce salt and ultimately cut the level of related chronic disease among Victorians ■

#### VICHEALTH SALT REDUCTION STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP GROUP

**Dr Bruce Bolam** Executive Manager – Programs, VicHealth

**Veronica Graham** State Public Health Nutritionist, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

**Dr Carley Grimes** Research Fellow, Deakin University

**Kellie-Ann Jolly** Director, Cardiovascular Health Programs, Heart Foundation – Victoria

**Professor Bruce Neal** Senior Director, Food Policy Division and Chair of the Australian Division of World Action on Salt and Health, The George Institute for Global Health

**Professor Caryl Nowson** Chair in Nutrition and Ageing, Deakin University

**Jen Reimers** Principal Program Officer – Healthy Eating, VicHealth

**Colin Sindall** Director, Prevention & Population Health, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services

**Dr Jacqui Webster** Centre Director, World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Population Salt Reduction, The George Institute for Global Health



# VICHEALTH RESEARCH UPDATE



## RECENT NEWS

### Melbourne Vital Signs 2014 released

VicHealth is pleased to support Melbourne's first edition of Vital Signs, a community report on key indicators assessing the quality of life, health and wellbeing of the residents of metropolitan Melbourne. The Lord Mayors' Charitable Foundation commissioned Community Indicators Victoria (part of the McCaughey VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing) to provide the research. [www.lmcf.org.au/vitalsigns](http://www.lmcf.org.au/vitalsigns)

The new **NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence on Social Determinants of Health Equity** is to commence in 2015. The Centre will be jointly led by Professor Fran Baum (Flinders University) and Professor Sharon Friel (Australian National University).

## OTHER NEWS

**Congratulations** to Professor Billie Giles Corti (Director, McCaughey VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing) who in 2014 was included in Thomson Reuters' list of Highly Cited Researchers, ranking her among the top 1% of researchers globally by citations in the social sciences field.

**Watch out** for an upcoming Special Issue of Health Promotion International Journal focused on application of *Fair Foundations: The VicHealth framework for health equity* to practice. Due for release in 2015, the issue will be freely available through open access.

## TOP READS

*Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice*

Michau et al.

The Lancet

[www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(14\)61797-9/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(14)61797-9/fulltext)

*An evaluation of the effects of the Australian Food and Health Dialogue Targets on the Sodium Content of Bread, Breakfast Cereals and Processed Meats*

Trevena et al.

Nutrients 2014, 6, 3802-3817

[www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/6/9/3802](http://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/6/9/3802)

*Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems: A Policy Statement from the American Association for Cancer Research and the American Society of Clinical Oncology*

Brandon et al.

Clinical Cancer Research; 21(3)

[www.medpagetoday.com/upload/2015/1/8/Clin%20Cancer%20Res-2015-Brandon-1078-0432.CCR-14-2544.pdf](http://www.medpagetoday.com/upload/2015/1/8/Clin%20Cancer%20Res-2015-Brandon-1078-0432.CCR-14-2544.pdf)

## UPCOMING CONFERENCES

**National Conference: Understanding and promoting the mental health and wellbeing of young people**

Thursday 7 May to Friday 8 May 2015  
Melbourne

[www.criticalagendas.com.au/National/understanding-promoting-the-mental-health-wellbeing-of-young-people-may-7-15](http://www.criticalagendas.com.au/National/understanding-promoting-the-mental-health-wellbeing-of-young-people-may-7-15)

### Progress 2015

From Thursday 7 May to Saturday 9 May 2015

Melbourne

[www.australianprogress.org.au](http://www.australianprogress.org.au)

### Population Health Congress

Saturday 6 September to Wednesday 9 September 2015

Hobart

[#pophlth2015](http://www.populationhealthcongress.org.au)



## INNOVATION RESEARCH GRANTS

VicHealth Innovation Research Grants provide an opportunity for research teams to trial an innovative idea, research a new concept or methodology, or to develop better supporting evidence relevant to the theory, policy and practice of health promotion. The scheme funds researchers to undertake a two-year research project addressing specific research priorities related to the VicHealth Action Agenda for Health Promotion.

A refreshed Innovation Research Grant round opened in November 2014, trialling a new two-stage application process. The grants proved to be highly competitive, with 125 expressions of interest received in stage one.

Thirteen applications progressed to an assessment stage by two external reviewers, informing the final decision of an assessment panel comprising VicHealth and external expertise. The panel selected three successful projects to be funded for two years commencing April 2015.

Innovation Research Grants will be offered annually. The next round is due to open in August/September 2015.

## CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW INNOVATION RESEARCH PROJECTS

Vaporising smoking-related harms in people with severe and persistent mental illness: A study of the acceptability of vaporised nicotine products for smoking cessation or long term substitutes, **Professor Jayashri Kulkarni – Monash University**



Despite a large decline in smoking among the general adult Australian population, smoking prevalence among Australian adults with a severe and persistent mental illness (SPMI) remains high. The failure to see any decline in smoking prevalence among Australians with SPMI is consistent with quitting being more difficult for most in this population under current public health and cessation strategies.

A strong case has been made that smokers with mental health conditions are a tobacco-disparity group and more attention and resources should be directed to this priority population.

This proposed project is significant as it will provide important new data and approaches to reducing smoking related harms in people with SPMI. The results will also have immediate relevance for public health policy if it is found that access to alternative nicotine delivery systems (ANDS) such as personal nicotine vaporisers, could benefit this priority population to reduce their smoking related harms.

Creating supermarket food environments that encourage healthy eating, **Dr Adrian Cameron – Deakin University**



This project will provide rigorous evidence of the effectiveness and financial impact of interventions to improve the healthiness of food purchases in Australian supermarkets. The project adopts a strongly solutions-focused approach in bringing together private sector and public health groups to examine the potential impact of population nutrition interventions in the real-world supermarket setting. It builds on a strong existing collaboration between supermarkets, local government partners, and senior researchers from the internationally recognised World Health Organization (WHO) Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention at Deakin University. The economic analysis that is central to the project will ensure that the results are highly relevant to groups beyond the public health community and therefore readily transferable to other settings.

A mobile phone delivered intervention for reducing alcohol consumption **Dr Megan Lim – Burnet Institute**



Risky drinking by young people is a significant public health issue in Australia with two-thirds (67%) of young Victorians aged 16 to 29 drinking at levels that put them at risk of injury from a single drinking occasion.

Research has shown that mobile phones are proven effective in delivering health promotion interventions. The ability of mobile SMS-delivered health promotion to engage with young people and the impact of these interventions on a range of health behaviours has also been successfully demonstrated.

This project will take a strong underpinning in brief interventions, ecological momentary assessment, social marketing theory, health promotion and behaviour change theory, and participatory development into the mobile realm, the realm in which young people operate for most of their daily lives.

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**Contemporary dance group on page 11:** Yellow Wheel

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