

VICHEALTH PUBLIC HEALTH FELLOWSHIPS ANNOUNCED

Public health research fellowships totaling more than \$2.5 million have been awarded today by The Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) to foster the work of five Victorians.

The Minister for Health Bronwyn Pike and VicHealth CEO Dr Rob Moodie said the two five-year VicHealth Senior Research Fellowships and three five-year Public Health Research Fellowships will encourage and foster young public health research talent.

"These sought-after five year Fellowships allow for longer-term research to be undertaken and they are designed to attract and support high quality public health research talent in Victoria," Ms Pike said.

"Victoria has a real competitive advantage in science and technology and the Bracks Government is committed to maintaining our competitiveness by supporting our home-grown scientific talent," Ms Pike said.

"The high quality evidence that will flow from this research will help Victorians make the safest choices for the care of themselves and their families," Ms Pike said.

Dr Moodie said the Fellowships cover salary and on-costs, plus some project funding and include support for communications and leadership training to allow research to be translated into policy and practice.

"Applications for funding are peer reviewed and then assessed by an expert panel including senior academics and public health specialists, prior to being recommended to the VicHealth Board and the Minister for funding.

"VicHealth received 19 applications for Public Health Fellowships and nine applications for Senior Fellowships in the 2003 grants round.

"In addition to these Fellowship grants, \$239,348 has been awarded to support four Public Health Research PhD Scholarships," Dr Moodie said.

Senior Research Fellows:

Associate Professor Anthony Smith, of La Trobe University has been awarded \$125,000 per annum to study the impact of social factors, including social networks on sexual and reproductive health. The research will increase understanding of many poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes such as teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.

Dr Daniel Reidpath, of Deakin University will receive \$100,000 per annum to measure the impact on health and wellbeing of the social, cultural and environmental context in which people live and work. Dr Reidpath's research aims to expand the focus of current wellbeing research, and to help us understand the effects of social factors such as discrimination on population health. In addition, the research will examine the impact of an individual's ill health on other household members, both social and material.

Public Health Research Fellows:

Dr Elizabeth Waters, of the Murdoch Children's Research Institute will receive \$100,000 per year to study the health, development and wellbeing of young children in Victoria. Dr Waters will review factors associated with effective public health interventions in childhood. This work will support evidence-based public health and health promotion strategies, in partnership with communities, to address child health inequalities.

Dr Anna Peeters, of Monash University has also been awarded \$100,000 annually to study the long-term implications of obesity prevalence and duration, for health in Australia. Dr Peeters aims to develop a more sophisticated approach to examining and predicting the impact of obesity on individuals and the community in the longer term. The research will also examine the role of obesity in creating health inequalities across the community.

Dr Colin Bell of Deakin University will receive \$80,000 per year to examine the environmental causes of obesity and measure of the impact of approaches to prevention. The outcomes of Dr Bell's research program will be used to suggest modifications to the environment to make it easier for individuals to be active and to eat well. Dr Bell said past experience had shown that behaviour-based approaches to prevention were unsuccessful without wider environmental change.

For more information, please contact:

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