

# Media Release

## TOBACCO FREE SPORTS - HOW SPORT FINALLY GAVE UP THE TOBACCO HABIT IN VICTORIA

As part of World No Tobacco Day celebrations, VicHealth commemorates how sport finally gave up the tobacco habit in Victoria. Tobacco free sports` play it clean is the theme of this year's World No Tobacco Day celebrations.

"Tobacco and sport don't belong together on the playing field,' according to Dr Rob Moodie, CEO of VicHealth.

"And over the past decade or so, we've come a long way towards kicking the habit in Victorian sport. This has helped get rates down to below 20%." The 1987 Victorian Tobacco Act prohibited certain types of cigarette advertising and sales of tobacco products, reduced accessibility of tobacco to children and led to the establishment of VicHealth.

By early 1988, VicHealth together with QUIT were moving to buy out tobacco company sponsorship of sport and the arts.

"Where once there were advertisements for cigarettes, we could see health messages dealing with everything from healthy eating, mental health, skin cancer prevention, to physical activity and of course quitting smoking."

"What is interesting is that the response from members of the sporting bodies was extremely enthusiastic. Many were keen to publicly state their preference for healthy funding over tobacco company money."

Moving into the 1990s, the federal government banned all tobacco sponsorships . In 1998 the MCG went completely smokefree. VicHealth sponsored sporting organisations were encouraged to promote smokefree and healthy environments.

"Times are changing and we have successfully broken the nexus between tobacco sponsorship in both the sports and arts. We now have a better understanding of how health can be promoted through these important activities in our lives.

"VicHealth and QUIT have had a long partnership with sport to successfully buy-out tobacco sponsorship. As our goal is to promote the health of Victorians, our focus is on creating healthy and smokefree places where people can participate and enjoy their favourite sport or activity.

"The fact that one in every two lifetime smokers die of a tobacco-caused disease and nearly 19,000 Australians die each year from the harmful effects caused by smoking continually needs emphasis. We know this has a huge social and human cost."

This combined with the fact that physical activity ranks second to tobacco control in terms of the most important factors in disease prevention in Australia, have led us to look for new and more creative ways to promote health within the community."

Consider that 51% of females and 34% of Victorian males do not participate in enough physical activity to achieve a health benefit.

"It's time to arrest the decline in sports participation and physical activity and continue to support legislation to build healthy, smokefree spaces where people can enjoy and participate in their favourite activity." Our focus is on building healthy communities and encouraging Victorians to be more active and play it clean. With the support of 39 sport organisations in this state, we will make a bigger impact on thousands of people's health by providing new and novel ways to increase participation, and create smokefree environments.

**For more information, please contact:**

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