

# Municipal Public Health Planning Update July 2007

Health Promoting Systems  
Public Health Branch

## Auditor-General's Report: Promoting Better Health through Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

The Auditor-General's Report titled 'Promoting Better Health Through Healthy Eating and Physical Activity' was tabled in Parliament on 20 June 2007. The audit examined whether the Victorian Government's investment in health promotion had encouraged people to adopt healthier eating habits, to exercise more regularly and to achieve healthy weight levels.

The audit found that the Government had recognised the risks presented by the growing number of Victorians who are

overweight or obese. Government agencies were found to have acted to address these risks by better coordinating their activities, improving how they planned the activities, and gathering better evidence as a basis for the plans. However, to date, the combined efforts of government have not significantly slowed the increase in obesity underpinning the rise in preventable chronic diseases.

The report includes a number of recommendations to address some of the gaps and weaknesses in the current approach to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. One of these recommendations relates specifically to Municipal Public Health Plans:

"Recommendation 1.4 - That local councils regularly evaluate Municipal Public Health Plans and, in the design and scope of the evaluation, include information to understand how these plans have achieved their objectives."

The report also calls on Department of Human Services, VicHealth and Department of Victorian Communities to assist local councils and agencies responsible for health and wellbeing planning and program delivery through: providing more evidence about what works best; improved data gathering and monitoring; frameworks and guidance for planning and evaluation; and strengthened cross-government planning and coordination.

DHS is undertaking a number of initiatives to address these recommendations including:

1. The current review of the Victorian Population Health Survey and the pilot of the Victorian Health Monitor planned for 2007/08 aim to address existing gaps in the Victorian health surveillance system and improve access to data on health and lifestyle issues.
2. Action on the health promotion priorities will include the development of new evidence-based resources on two key risk factors underpinning obesity- physical activity and accessible and nutritious food, and will better support agencies to use evidence to guide their practice.



- Existing evaluation frameworks, which have been noted in the audit report, require a renewed focus to ensure that agencies are supported to use them in practice. The establishment of common indicators relating to the risk factors of physical activity and accessible and nutritious food will be a key area of work to support this.

The Auditor-General's report is available at [http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports\\_par/agp123cv.html](http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports_par/agp123cv.html)

## Health promotion priorities update

An initial draft of the overarching framework that will be used to guide implementation of the seven priorities has now been developed. This will be further refined over the coming weeks and will lead to the public release of a discussion paper in mid-August. This discussion paper will provide a mechanism for interested stakeholders to comment on the draft framework, contribute to its further development and consider the systems that will be required to support its use at a statewide level. Feedback will be captured either through written submissions or participation in a consultation workshop.

Four consultation workshops will be held across the state in late August-early September. The workshops, which will be half-day sessions, will be held in Horsham, Shepparton, Melbourne and Traralgon. For information about attending a consultation workshop please send an email to [health.promotion@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:health.promotion@dhs.vic.gov.au)

**Physical Activity** – Targeted consultations are being undertaken in early August to gather information to develop a determinants framework and evidence-based resource. PDF Management has been engaged to undertake this work and the resources will be ready in early 2008.

**Nutrition** – Deakin University has been engaged to develop a determinants framework and evidence-based resource. Targeted consultations around food access and healthy eating will be carried out. The resources will be ready by March 2008.

**Mental Health** – A Mental Health Plan for Victoria is being developed. The Public Health Branch of the department is leading development of the mental health promotion component of this plan. A workshop was held in May to scope current and planned activity in mental health promotion.

**Tobacco** – New tobacco reforms came into effect on 1 July 2007 banning smoking inside all enclosed licensed premises. The Victorian Tobacco Control Strategy is under development and will be completed by early December.

**Alcohol and Other Drugs** – The Victorian Alcohol Action Plan is being developed. An Amphetamine Type Stimulants Strategy is also under development, which will provide the framework for a comprehensive and coordinated statewide response to amphetamine use.

**Injury** – The injury working group is an expansion of the existing Statewide Injury Prevention Advisory Committee. This group had already developed a solid foundation of work, which will now be updated and built upon.

**Sexual and Reproductive Health** – A focus group is being planned to more thoroughly define this priority issue. This will feed into the preparation of a request for quotation for a consultant to develop a determinants framework and evidence-based resource.

For more information about the framework or the specific priority issues, please contact Kellie Horton on (03) 9096 5506 or [kellie.horton@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:kellie.horton@dhs.vic.gov.au)

## Community Indicators Victoria Website



On 16 July, the Community Indicators Victoria (CIV) website went live. The site uses local community wellbeing indicators to improve citizen engagement, community planning and policy-making. It allows individuals, community groups, local government and policy makers to obtain a unique snapshot of trends and issues that are important to local communities. CIV is a collaborative project hosted by the McCaughey Centre, School of Population Health, University of Melbourne. Visit the website to become a member

<http://www.communityindicators.net.au/>

## Guides to Community Participation

One of the recommendations of the evaluation of the Environments for Health Framework was to compile a community participation guide containing lists of resources and examples for local governments with multiple access points. As an excellent starting point, local councils can access a wide range of research, tools and guides via the Department for Victorian Communities (DVC) 'Building Stronger Communities' website at <http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/> The [E-Library](#) on this site contains a wealth of information and links which can be searched by keywords or by browsing through categories such as Community Participation, Community Engagement and Community Wellbeing.

Useful links found on the DVC website include:

*Talking Communities: sharing information and ideas for community building*, J. Sharples, D. Bruck, B. Cheredenchinko, T. Kruger & B. Tilden, May 2004. This report provides a review of a range of qualitative methods and toolboxes used to gather information from the community in a way that builds the community. <http://www.obs-pascal.com/CBRS/TalkingCommunities2005final.pdf>

*Working Together: Involving Community and Stakeholders in Decision-Making*, WA Office of Citizens and Civics. This is a guide for planning, implementing and evaluating community involvement in decision-making. The appendices contain some excellent resources.

<http://www.citizenscape.wa.gov.au/documents/FullColourhighresolution.pdf>

*Citizen Science Toolbox*, (also known as *URP Toolbox*) developed by the Coastal Cooperative Research Centre in partnership with Griffith University and the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water. This is a free resource of principles and strategies to enhance meaningful stakeholder involvement in decision-making. It contains over 60 community involvement tools, case studies and a handy reference list.

<https://www3.secure.griffith.edu.au/03/toolbox/>



*communitybuilders.nsw*, the NSW Government's electronic clearing house for information about community building. The Community Participation page contains many useful links to guides, tools, case studies and research. <http://www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builder/participation/>

*Getting to know your community – A guide to gathering qualitative information*

<http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/cms/items/2005/09/00618-upload-00001.pdf> and

*Getting to know your community – A guide to using local data*

[http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/graphic/local\\_data/](http://www.communitybuilding.vic.gov.au/graphic/local_data/), published by the Department for Victorian Communities.

If you know of other community participation resources, or you can tell us about how your council has successfully involved the local community in planning for health and wellbeing, please contact Kate Gill on (03) 9096 0402 or [kate.gill@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:kate.gill@dhs.vic.gov.au) We'd love to hear from you and share your expertise with others.

## Research into effective interventions in the economic environment

The evaluation of the *Environments for Health Framework* highlighted the gap in our knowledge about effective interventions in the economic environment that strengthen health and wellbeing. DHS is funding two research projects that will explore how local government policy for the development and distribution of economic capital can create opportunities for health and wellbeing.

A team from the University of Melbourne will undertake a project in the City of Stonnington to identify the economic harms and benefits associated with licensed premises and explore how these economic benefits can be translated into better health outcomes. The project will model a potential scheme to allow the alcohol industry to purchase (through in-kind, direct funding or other community-based means) 'health credits' based on estimates of the unit cost/benefit of a standard alcoholic drink. The premise for this model is to offset a proportion of the harm caused by hazardous drinking. This type of regulatory model is being used in other industries such as energy production, whereby energy producers purchase carbon credits to reduce the harmful effects of energy production.



A second team from the University of Melbourne are co-leading a project with the Victorian Local Governance Association that will explore the role of local government in supporting local economic participation for health, with a specific focus on community enterprise. The project will generate new knowledge about the relationship between economic participation and health, by examining the relationships between economic participation, social connectedness and civic engagement. It will also develop a set of practical resources that will assist local governments to adopt good practice in supporting and facilitating community enterprise.

Progress and findings from both research projects will be made available through this bulletin and the Local Government Planning for Health and Wellbeing website <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/>

## Planning for Health and Wellbeing Award - Call for Entries

Entries are now open for the 2007 Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) Victoria Awards for Planning Excellence. Category 14, the Planning for Health and Wellbeing Award, recognises excellence in planning policy and initiatives that create liveable, connected communities, promote active transport, improve access to a variety of food for healthy eating and support people to live more sustainable lifestyles. Submissions close on 17 August. For an entry form and further details visit <http://www.planning.org.au/vic/> or call Eula or Stuart at PIA on (03) 9347 1900.

## Other upcoming events

### Local Government Responses to Alcohol Related Harm, 19 September 2007

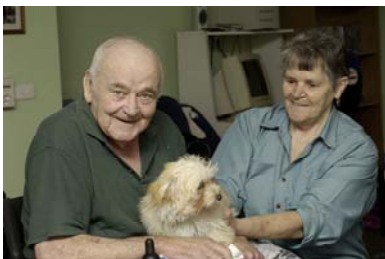
The Australia Drug Foundations' DrugInfo is holding a free interactive seminar and forum on 19 September 2007. The half-day seminar will showcase good practice examples of responses to alcohol related harm by local governments and provide an opportunity to share ideas. It will be held from 10am – 12pm (registration & refreshments from 9.30 am) at the Angliss Conference Centre in Melbourne. Places are strictly limited, so please book early. For information and bookings call 1300 85 85 84 or send your name, organisation and contact phone number to [druginfo@adf.org.au](mailto:druginfo@adf.org.au)

### Road Safety Conference, 17-19 October 2007

The 2007 Australasian Road Safety Research, Policing and Education Conference will be held in Melbourne 17-19 October. With the theme **'The Way Ahead'**, the conference will focus on the application of road safety research at practical and local levels into the future. It will include workshops on traffic safety education, effectiveness and social acceptance of speed enforcement, alcohol, and drug impaired driving. Local government and health services are encouraged to attend. Early bird registration closes 31 August 2007. For details visit <http://www.roadsafetyconference2007.com.au> or call 1300 799 961.



### People, Pets and Planning Symposium, 30 November 2007



Are pets an effective prescription for improving health and wellbeing? Increasing evidence from overseas and Australia suggests that pets can play a positive role in improving mental health, reducing social isolation and loneliness, and encouraging people to be more physically active. Deakin University is holding a symposium on 30 November 2007 to explore the relationships between pets, public open space, town planning, and policy and how pets can practically contribute to social capital and public health. These insights will have direct application in policy for health promotion, community development, local government, urban planning

and animal management. For details visit <http://www.deakin.edu.au/events/ppp> or call Marika Thomson on (03) 5227 8121.

## Contacts

The Health Promoting Systems Team is part of the Public Health Branch of the Department of Human Services. Our role is to support stakeholders, both internally and externally, to deliver effective health promotion. We produce this electronic newsletter to provide subscribers with the latest updates in Victorian local government public health planning and associated links nationally and internationally.

To subscribe to the newsletter visit [http://www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/links/reg\\_form.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/links/reg_form.htm)

*For more information about this newsletter contact Kate Gill on (03) 9096 0402 or [Kate.Gill@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Kate.Gill@dhs.vic.gov.au)*