

# 2006 Public Health Awards for Excellence and Innovation:

## Public Health Research Award for Innovation

### **Victorian Lifestyle and Neighbourhood Environments Study (VicLANES)**

*University of Melbourne, Deakin University, Monash University and Queensland University of Technology*

Physical activity, diet and alcohol use are major determinants of morbidity and mortality and it is well documented that socio-economically disadvantaged adults are less likely to be physically active or purchase healthy foods. It remains a real challenge to understand why these socio-economic differences exist. The Victorian Lifestyle and Neighbourhood Environments Study (VicLANES) was inspired by a growing awareness by the researchers and VicHealth that these differences in health behaviours were complex and could be due to individual differences such as attitudes and knowledge as well as structural characteristics of neighbourhoods such as price and availability of healthy and less healthy foods, the features of the built environment and access to recreational facilities.

Between September and December 2003, researchers collected individual and environmental data from 4,913 randomly selected household members, in 50 census collector districts (CCDs) across 19 local government areas in inner Melbourne.

Using established audit tools, information was gathered on the presence of food stores, price and availability of healthy and less healthy foods, walkability (safety, functionality, aesthetics and presence of destinations such as shops) and the presence of alcohol outlets and the price and availability of common alcoholic beverages.

Data analysis continues, however, to date, the research has demonstrated that living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas is associated with:

- lower levels of physical activity (walking, jogging, swimming and cycling)
- higher body mass index
- lower frequency of purchase of fruits and vegetables
- less likelihood of purchasing groceries purchased that are consistent with dietary guidelines (ie low fat, high fibre, low sugar).

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