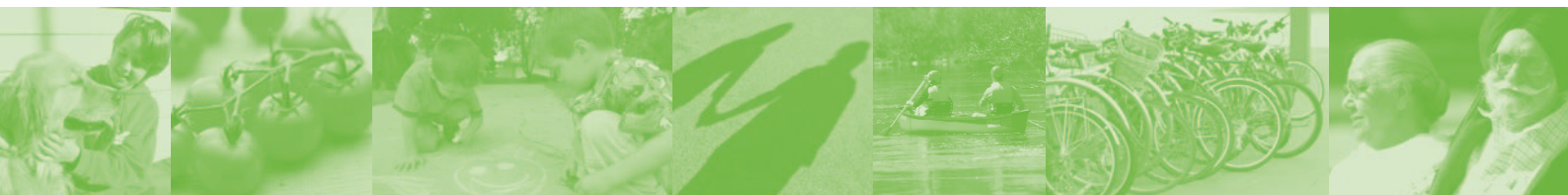


# Health promotion strategies



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## Editorial—health promotion for people with a disability



Welcome to the third Health promotion strategies bulletin for 2006. This bulletin highlights the importance and relevance of health promotion for Victorians with a disability.

An estimated 20 per cent of Victorians experience some form of a disability that results in activity restriction. This includes people with an intellectual disability, physical disability, sensory impairment, neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis or motor neurone disease or disabilities resulting from an accident such as an acquired brain injury. The *State Disability Plan 2002–2012* provides a framework to achieve the vision of including people with a disability in all aspects of life in the Victorian community, including opportunities for a healthy lifestyle.

People with a disability experience significant health inequalities and are at higher risk of health problems, particularly conditions that relate to lifestyle, including poor nutrition, low levels of physical activity and limited social networks. Therefore, people with a disability also have a higher prevalence of heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity and mental health problems when compared with the Victorian population.

Providing information and ensuring a supportive environment is key to improving the quality of life for people with a disability and reducing health inequalities. Health promotion strategies need to recognise that people with a disability are not a homogenous group and so multifaceted and innovative approaches are needed.

In Victoria, there is increasing attention to tailoring population-based strategies that promote healthy lifestyles for people with a disability. Initiatives such as Go for your life, Edible Gardens and Healthy Homes, coordinated by the Department of Human Services, are promising examples. The success of these and future initiatives requires coordinated and concentrated effort to increase the capacity of community-based platforms to promote the active participation of people with a disability in everyday activities relevant to promoting healthier lifestyles.

Continuing to break down barriers between health and other community-based services provides further opportunities for key health promotion programs to be relevant and accessible for people with a disability. This is a challenge for all of us. This newsletter provides some excellent examples of work that ensures the inclusion of people with a disability in health promotion efforts. We encourage you to consider their relevance and potential opportunities in your work.

Dr Robert Hall  
Director Public Health  
Chief Health Officer

Arthur Rogers  
Executive Director  
Disability Services

## Spotlight on Disability Services, Wellbeing and Practice Improvement Unit

Improving health outcomes and promoting healthy lifestyles for people with a disability are key priorities of Disability Services Division in achieving the vision of the *State Disability Plan 2002–2012*. This requires approaches at several levels, including forming partnerships with primary, secondary and tertiary health sector organisations.

Current key areas of work include:

- establishing quality monitoring systems that will promote the identification and management of people who are at risk or experiencing declining health

- developing strategies to promote a healthy lifestyle for people with a disability to reduce the incidence of preventable disease, such as Go for your life—Edible Gardens, which is described below
- building the capacity of the health sector to provide appropriate services to people with a disability
- developing partnerships across sectors to promote the health and wellbeing needs of people with a disability and identify pathways forward.

### Go for your life—edible gardens

The Go for your life—edible gardens strategy aims to improve the health and wellbeing of people with a disability through better nutrition, more physical activity and opportunities for social interaction within the community. It is about encouraging people to become involved in designing, building, planting and maintaining a vegetable and fruit garden and then enjoying the produce in their meals.

Launched at the 2005 Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show, the Edible Gardens strategy is being implemented statewide through a series of workshops conducted by the Horticultural Therapy Association of Victoria.

Resources developed to support the strategy include:

- a DVD showcasing two shared supported homes that have successfully created edible gardens
- fact sheets that provide information on topics including building raised garden beds, composting, gardening safety, making a scarecrow, water saving tips and using vegetables and fruit in daily meals



- an online edible gardens calendar developed in conjunction with the Better Health Channel
  - regular newsletters.
- These resources are available through the Disability Services website ([www.dhs.vic.gov.au/ediblegardens](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/ediblegardens)) and the Go for your life website ([www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au](http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au))

#### Further information

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## Talbot St edible gardens project



Kevin and Steven building the garden.

After attending an Edible Gardens training session in Colac, the residents of the Talbot Street CRU have established their own vegetable garden.

With the assistance of a contractor, and following the recommendations of the Edible Gardens training, the residents constructed a raised garden bed using red gum timber for boxing and about five metres of fertile garden soil.

The project will provide a variety of indoor and outdoor activities associated with preparing and cultivating food for the table while promoting a healthy lifestyle at the same time. This participation will be year-round with seasonal vegetables planted. So far the residents have planted—and begun enjoying—broccoli, silverbeet, cauliflower and garlic.

#### Further information

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House Supervisor  
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## Veg Out Van brings ‘fresh’ opportunities

A project between Melton Shire Council and Merrimu Services Inc., an adult day service, is addressing food security while supporting people with disabilities to run a small business.

As part of VicHealth’s Food for All program, the project has received three-year funding to reduce the barriers to buying and using fresh fruit and vegetables.

The Veg Out Van provides fresh fruit and vegetables to isolated residents, supporting them to enjoy the benefits of healthy eating and healthy food. Merrimu clients have been engaged to help out the business, learning new vocational skills and mixing with local community members in a meaningful way.

Bacchus Marsh orchardist, Jeff Jones, purchases produce at market prices and provides it to Merrimu Services where the goods are repacked. The Veg Out Van operated by Merrimu clients and supported by a Merrimu instructor sells the produce in the two Melton Shire townships of Diggers Rest and Rockbank. The weekly run includes sales at schools, community centres, sporting pavilions and caravan parks.

The Veg Out Van also provides healthy eating information and cooking tips prepared in partnership with dietitians at Djerriwarrh Health Service.

The Veg Out Van project connects people from the community—not only to each other but also to access to affordable fresh food choices.

The Australian Institute of Primary Care, La Trobe University will be formally evaluating the project.

### Further information

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## Healthy Lifestyles in Colac

Community consultation in Colac has highlighted the need for consistent health promotion policies and procedures for the eight agencies that provide services and support to people with a disability.

As a result, the Colac Disability Network, in partnership with Colac Area Health (CAH), Leisure Networks and RuralAccess, has developed the Healthy Lifestyles Project, which establishes local sector-wide protocols that incorporate health promotion principles into strategic planning and work practice.

‘Some agencies just need access to healthy recipes while others need help planning outdoor activities for wheelchair bound clients,’ said Christine Brooks, Rural Access Worker.

Working with the CAH dietitian, the Colac Disability Network helped arm agencies with a store of healthy recipes and cookbooks. To promote exercise, a program of outdoor activities is being developed with the local Leisure Networks. Another concern was the need to raise awareness of good nutrition for independent clients who live in the community and are vulnerable to risks associated with limited budgets, physical inactivity and the lure of cheap junk food. Small group tours of the supermarket, led by the CAH dietitian, have been supporting clients to make informed decisions about healthy food choices.

On a broader scale, a Green Tick program is being developed with local restaurants. Similar to the Heart Foundation’s red tick, a green tick on restaurant menus will guide customers to select healthy foods.

Healthy Lifestyles is a sub-committee of the Barwon-South Western Region’s Disability Health Promotion Working Group. It is leading the way in guiding and supporting Colac’s disability sector with a coordinated approach to nutritional practice and physical activity for the benefit of clients.

### Further information

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RuralAccess Worker  
Colac Otway Shire Council  
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## The Central Sports Hub

The Ballarat-based Central Sports Hub (CSH) is an after school physical activity program for children, teenagers and adults with disabilities. Developed, coordinated and supported by Access for All Abilities/Pinarc Support Services, the CSH teaches fundamental motor skills to people with a disability. This gives them the skills and game sense needed to participate in community sport and recreation.

The program is delivered over 30 weeks and sessions are structured around skill development, such as catching, running, throwing, kicking and participating in games and activities.

As well as the obvious health benefits, the CSH improves people's connection to the community, links them to other sports and activities in the community, and encourages sportsmanship.

Since the program began in January 2005, anecdotal evidence has shown that participants have greater confidence and self-esteem and have developed their motor skills. Parents have expressed positive improvements in their children's sporting and social skills and a number of participants and their families have become involved in other sports.

The CSH has established partnerships with many agencies including other disability services, local universities and high schools, Ballarat Specialist School and the Department of Human Services.

### Further information

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## Youth Week—a time to get active



The Ashburton, Ashwood and Chadstone Neighbourhood Renewal project used national Youth Week to promote its new Youth Gym program.

Established with funding from Office of Youth and Neighbourhood Renewal, the Youth Gym encourages young people with a disability to get active.

Within days of promoting the gym, lists of young people's names were gathering at the YMCA and Ashwood School. As a result, five groups of eight young people, each group with two instructors, have been established.

The focus now is on making the program sustainable. The YMCA is exploring ways to reduce costs so that the young people attending the gym can stay on as ongoing gym members. The Gym Recreations Liaison Worker and the Neighbourhood Renewal Project Worker are developing a low literacy program card for the young people to use each time they visit.

Monash and Boroondara councils have supported the program—Monash Council has documented it in their Health and Wellbeing Action Plan and Boroondara has provided administrative support.

### Further information

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## Walking grants fund two new groups

Receiving Go for your life Community Walking funding has enabled the Brimbank Melton Primary Care Partnership (PCP) to establish a walking group for people in wheelchairs from Scope in St. Albans, and a group for clients with a mental illness from Outlooks Psychiatric and Disability Support in Melton.

The Scope group, named the 'Wanderers', meets once a week for an outing and a walk, at places such as the Zoo, local parks and shopping centres. Up to ten people join in the weekly walking group at Outlooks Psychiatric Disability Support, enjoying the chance to participate in physical and social activity.

Brimbank Melton PCP used the Go for your life funding to provide both groups with incentives, such as t-shirts, water bottles and pedometers, as well as assist with costs such as support workers.

### Further information

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## Healthy Homes

The Eastern Metropolitan Region (EMR) of the Department of Human Services has identified the building of skills in health promotion for disability direct support workers as a priority in addressing the health and wellbeing of residents in community residential units (CRUs).

Initial research undertaken through the EMR/Deakin Partnership<sup>1</sup> has identified major health and wellbeing issues for residents as well as barriers to promoting health.

The project made three key recommendations to improve the health and wellbeing of people with a disability residing in shared supported accommodation in EMR. These are:

- development of health promotion strategies to address weight management
- provision of training for staff on how to support health promotion
- a long term project to assess and monitor residents' health and wellbeing, as a result of participating in weight management programs.

## Darebin walking with partners

As part of the Walking Darebin Project, residents of the Toolangi Road CRU and local community members meet for a weekly walk to get fit and get out and about in the community.

The Walking Darebin Project is a VicHealth Metro Active Demonstration Project that promotes walking, especially for people who experience barriers to participation, such as people with a disability.

The house supervisors of community residential units in the City of Darebin were contacted by the project coordinator based at the City of Darebin. The Toolangi Road CRU House Supervisor was keen to be involved. A flyer was developed to inform the local community about the new walking group led by the direct support workers and to invite people of all abilities to join in. Residents and council staff promoted the walking group via a letterbox

Following the study, a workforce development strategy has been developed to address training needs. This consists of several components, including an orientation workshop on health promotion to be delivered to all CRU staff, a follow-up two-day short course for identified 'champions', and the establishment of a health promotion practitioner position to support change in practice and organisational capacity building.

An Australian Research Council proposal has been developed and submitted in collaboration with Deakin University to address the third point above.

A Reference Group comprising of a range of DHS, funded sector and Deakin representatives supports the work.

### Further information

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<sup>1</sup> Clark R, Webber L- for the DHS-EMR/Deakin University Partnership (in publication). Health and wellbeing of people with an intellectual disability: perspectives of staff and residents.

drop, flyers at local community events and information in the local paper. Walking Darebin provided maps, a pedometer for the house and water bottles for each of the walkers to reward participation.

Some unexpected outcomes were positive newspaper coverage and greater awareness and involvement in other council activities, such as the Darebin Festival and the Summer events in the park program. The group now walks most Saturday mornings and is one of 15 walking groups in the City of Darebin.

### Further information

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Walking Project Coordinator  
City of Darebin  
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## Walking with a difference

*Laughter floated through the air on a winter afternoon as a group of happy people enjoy the trail through the local park on their way to the local leisure centre. The observer sees there is something quite different about the group for this is a Walking School Bus™ but a bus with a difference.*

One Walking School Bus in Warragul is a bus with a difference. The SCOPE Walking School Bus has extended VicHealth's successful program by forming a 'bus' for adults with a disability.

Following the idea of a SCOPE staff member, a partnership was formed with Baw Baw Shire, SCOPE and program participants to encourage them to be out in the community moving to and from activities rather than taking a taxi or bus.

The Walking Bus is not a vehicle, it is a fun, healthy and safe way to travel. Participants 'walk' or 'ride their wheelchairs' with a volunteer 'driver' at the front and a volunteer 'conductor' at the rear of the bus and assisted by a volunteer or carer. The drivers and conductors are registered under Baw Baw Shire Council's Volunteer Program, are subject to police checks and undergo training in road safety and duty of care.

The Walking Bus™ has many benefits, including:

- increases physical fitness and wellbeing
- provides an opportunity to chat with friends
- gets people familiar with their local community
- provides a chance to enjoy sun and fresh air
- builds confidence and independence.

### Further information

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## Improving accessibility for pedestrians in the Bass Coast

The Cowes Easy Access Map is helping people get around Cowes safely on foot or wheel.

This joint initiative between Bass Coast Community Health Service Inc., Bass Coast Transport Connections and the Bass Coast Shire called on community members with accessibility issues to provide valuable information for the map. For example, the Planned Activity Group in Cowes and Mums with prams participated in mapping sessions.

The colourful Cowes Easy Access Map displays the shopping district and surrounding streets. It provides pedestrian safety information, a large key and a map of streets with footpaths, indicating dangerous crossings and gradients for wheelchairs. Other useful information is highlighted, such as parking and toilets, ATMs and resting points.

The maps have been distributed at local community centres and information centres across the Bass Coast Shire.

Groups involved in the project also took part in an evaluation which found that 82 per cent of respondents found the map easy to read, and around two thirds agreed that the information was of value and made it easier for them to access Cowes.

Further maps are being developed for the other major towns in Bass Coast, Inverloch and Wonthaggi.

### Further information

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Contact: Louise Sadler  
Bass Coast Community Health Service  
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## Working together to reduce family violence

Cardinia-Casey Community Health Service's six-month action research project aims to improve services for local women with disabilities experiencing family violence.

The Southern Region, which includes the City of Casey and Shire of Cardinia, has the highest proportion of people with a disability (14.3 per cent) in Victoria (DHS 2001). Further, the City of Casey has the largest proportion of people with a disability aged 15–64 years of any local government area in the Southern Region. From a family violence perspective, 34.7 per cent of Victoria Police family violence call outs were from the Outer South (in which Cardinia and Casey fall) compared to 26.3 per cent from the Middle South and 15.1 per cent from the Inner South (DHS 2004).

Research undertaken in planning the project found that women and girls with disabilities experience higher rates of violence and lower rates of service access than their non-disabled peers (Strachan 1997). The Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre (DVIRC 2004) argued for an integrated response to family violence in Victoria, where agencies become aware of the whole problem and so implement informed improvements to the services they provide.

To date, the project has focused on research to identify good practice approaches to working with women with a disability in family violence, and consulting service providers about partnerships/relationships, consumer participation strategies and anecdotal access statistics.

So far, 15 local services have committed to the project. These include Police, housing services, sexual assault services, neighbourhood houses, community health services, family support services, disability advocacy and support services and carers networks.

In the next few months, case studies from women with disabilities will be collected to better understand issues around access to services.

### Further information

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trish.plompen@southernhealth.org.au

Association for Children with a Disability 2006, *Disability Counts 2006: A Statistical Profile of Children and Young People with a Disability Living in Victoria*, Southern Metro, Association for Children with a Disability, Melbourne.

Department of Human Services 2001, *Disability Estimates for Local Government Areas (LGAs) and Regions in Victoria*, DHS, Melbourne.

Department of Human Services 2004, *Family and Domestic Violence Crisis Protection Framework*, Southern Metropolitan Region, Regional Implementation Plan, DHS, Melbourne.

Domestic Violence and Incest Resource Centre 2004, *Developing an Integrated Response to Family Violence in Victoria—Issues and Directions*, DVIRC, Melbourne.

Jennings C 2003, *Triple Disadvantage: Out of Sight, Out of Mind*, DVIRC, Melbourne.

Strachan F 1997, *'More than Just a Ramp'—A Guide for Women's Refuges to Develop Disability Discrimination Act Action Plans*, Sage Consulting, Canberra.



## Overcoming barriers to cervical screening

Alarming, around 35 per cent of women are still not adequately screened for cervical cancer in Victoria.

PapScreen Victoria recognises there are significant barriers that may prevent women from screening regularly, especially for women with a disability. A 2002 research project found that women with a disability were less likely than other women to have regular Pap tests. The barriers to cervical screening for women with a disability fell into three broad groups: social barriers, life circumstances and subjectivity.

**Social barriers** include issues such as transport difficulties, lack of access to buildings, health professionals who are not sensitive to women's needs or who

assumed that women with disabilities were unlikely to have active sex lives and therefore thought screening was unnecessary.

**Life circumstances** for women with disabilities often mean they lead very different lifestyles. Some live in supported accommodation, some work, some are in relationships and some are parents. Many are on low incomes and move often. This means their doctors may change frequently and registry services simply lose track.

**Subjectivity**, or how women see themselves, is an important issue for women with disabilities. Some women were made to feel different or 'strange' because of their disability, and this made it

difficult for them to have Pap tests. Some women felt their privacy was compromised and a Pap test made them feel uncomfortable, as though they did not have control over their bodies.

The research report, *Screened Out!* documented 15 recommendations to help overcome these barriers, many of which have been implemented by PapScreen. The report and other resources for women with disabilities can be obtained from the PapScreen Victoria website [www.papscreen.org.au](http://www.papscreen.org.au).

### Further information

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## Peers support amputees

Limbs 4 Life Inc. is helping Victorian amputees lead independent and productive lives. Since 1994, this program has been working to alleviate the distress associated with amputation through peer support programs, information and community awareness activities.

Around 40,000<sup>1</sup> amputees live in Victoria. The leading cause of limb loss is diabetes, followed by vascular disease, cancer, trauma accidents and infection.

Limbs 4 Life believes that no amputee should go through the trauma of losing a limb alone. A range of services provide information and support to amputees, their families and primary caregivers. Peer support programs match amputees in hospitals and rehabilitation centres to experienced amputees who are trained

peer support volunteers. All volunteers are screened, police checked and undergo a two-day training program with contributions from Volunteering Victoria.

Limbs 4 Life volunteers help new amputees adapt to their disability, assist in finding community resources, offer encouragement, are eager to listen and have hard-earned wisdom. Through peer mentoring, volunteers have reported satisfaction in being able to contribute to their community; an increase in independence, self-confidence and self-esteem; and greater awareness of their own disability and health needs.

Peer support can assist in recovery and rehabilitation and can significantly empower an individual to return to productive and independent living.

Prof. Lenore Manderson<sup>2</sup>, who is conducting a study into the impact of social supports on lower-limb amputees, has identified peer support as crucial in enhancing the overall transition to independence.

### Further information

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[www.limbs4life.com](http://www.limbs4life.com)

1 Figures from National Health and Welfare Services

2 Prof. Lenore Manderson ADAPT *Social Aspects of Amputation in Urban and Rural Victoria*





## What's on—what's new?

### New Participation Advisory Committee

*Doing it with us not for us* is a participation policy that sets out how stakeholders in the health care system can work together. It reflects existing policies in the mental health, primary and community health areas and the current work of disability services on active participation.

To oversee policy implementation, the Department of Human Services has established the Participation Advisory Committee, which will develop an implementation plan and set up communication systems with the wider community to advise on progress and to hear participation stories. To access the policy, visit [www.health.vic.gov.au/consumer/](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/consumer/) or for a hard copy contact Cath Harmer.

#### Further information

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Consumer Participation and Information  
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### Access and inclusion

The Melbourne Mobility Centre is dedicated to improving access to the heart of Melbourne. People with disabilities, older people and anyone needing a little extra help will welcome the Centre's services which make getting around the City easy and enjoyable.

Services provided include equipment hire, such as motorised or manual wheelchairs, scooters, walking frames, crutches and canes for the vision impaired, to name a few.

The Centre is on the first floor of the Federation Square Car Park in Federation Square. To book equipment online or via email, visit [www.melbournemobilitycentre.com.au](http://www.melbournemobilitycentre.com.au) or contact the Centre on (03) 9650 6499 or free call 1800 735 266.

Similarly, the City of Yarra's Access and Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2004–2009 aims to enhance access for people with disabilities and their carers into all aspects of community life in the City of Yarra. The strategy can be viewed at <http://www.yarracity.vic.gov.au/Services/Older%20Persons/Intro.asp>

For more information about services provided in your municipality, visit your local Council's website which can be accessed via the following web link: [www.vicnet.net.au/government/localgovt/](http://www.vicnet.net.au/government/localgovt/)

### Richmond hosts community netball comp

Yarra's AAA, Netball Victoria and RecLink obtained a grant through Sport and Recreation Victoria to run a modified netball program for people with a disability. The first nine months involved skills-based sessions run from the Richmond Rec Centre with two coaches who were students at a local university. This progressed into a competition that is run as a regular program by Richmond Netball Association. The program gives participants opportunities to get involved in recreation, socialise with a range of people in the community, be involved in a club, enjoy proper competition and improve their skills.

#### Further information

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Access All Abilities Officer  
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### Strong Bones strategy

People with a disability are at high risk of osteoporosis due to a number of significant and often compounding factors. Resources are available to assist in promoting healthy lifestyles to reduce the incidence of osteoporosis.

#### Further information

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#### About this Publication

##### Editorial Committee

Health Promotion Section, Public Health Branch; Wellbeing and Practice Improvement Unit, Disability Services Division, Department of Human Services.

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The **November 2006** edition will focus on child health promotion and feature the 2006 Victorian Public Health Award winners. Contributions on child health promotion are now invited. The deadline for articles is 27 October 2006.

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