

Health promotion strategies



February 2005

In this issue:

Editorial/Welcome	1
Health promotion at DHS	2
Major health initiative tells Victorians to 'Go for your life'	2
Special feature on 2004 Victorian Public Health Award Winner's	insert
Victoria reviews public health legislation	3
What's on—what's new?	4

Editorial/Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of *Health Promotion Strategies* for 2005.

This quarterly bulletin communicates statewide health promotion and prevention policies and strategies. It also reflects the role the Department of Human Services plays in supporting health promotion development in Victoria and the need to achieve this in a coordinated way across all its divisions and regional offices.

Through *Health Promotion Strategies* we present a diverse range of information on policy and strategy development, major new government programs, together with local practitioner experiences and expertise in quality program management. The bulletin provides snapshots of research and theory and gives practical support on quality approaches and partnerships for effective health promotion action.

This edition comes at a time when the government, and specifically the Department of Human Services, has signalled a strong focus on the determinants of health in its vision of improving the health of all Victorians and, particularly, those who are most disadvantaged. The role for effective health promotion action remains extremely valuable as one vehicle in achieving this vision.

Many staff within the Public Health Group have been involved in strategic planning for the next three years. Our strategic directions for 2005–08 are best explained using three categories: ongoing public health work, areas for growth and key processes.

Considerable energy over the next three years will be dedicated to the areas of growth, including broad determinants of health/health inequalities, environmental and social sustainability, chronic disease/injury prevention, child health and wellbeing, organisational wellbeing and coalition building to enhance public health. We hope to publish an overview shortly and will make this available in a future edition.

This edition highlights coalition building and includes a feature on the Partnership Development section. It also provides an update on two major initiatives—the recently launched 'Go for your life' whole of government strategy and the current review of the *Health Act 1958*. Complementing the bulletin is the department's Health Promotion website which contains greater detail about these and other initiatives from across the department. The website can be accessed at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion>

Also included in this edition is a special feature on the winners of the 2004 Public Health Awards for Excellence and Innovation. These awards reflect the government's commitment to excellence in public health practice including research, capacity building and programs.

We hope that you find this bulletin informative and welcome your feedback and suggestions for future editions.



Dr Robert Hall
Director Public Health
Chief Health Officer

Health promotion at DHS

With more than 10,000 employees, the Department of Human Services is a complex organisation and it can be hard to find your way through the maze.

Health Promotion Strategies aims to make it easier to understand the roles and responsibilities in health promotion by bringing you information from across the Department of Human Services. In each edition we will feature a different area of the department relevant to health promotion. This edition introduces the Partnership Development section.

Partnership Development

Partnership Development sits structurally within the Public Health Group, a branch of Rural, Regional Health and Aged Care Services (RRHACS) Division.

The role of the section is to work with others to 'develop and implement healthy public policy that supports a health promoting approach'. I sometimes feel like we are the health promotion officers of Public Health as we work mostly on what I call health promotion infrastructure, that is, health promotion policy and capacity building for health promotion.

Functionally, Partnership Development is made of up four areas:

- **Local Government** (Holly Piontek-Walker, Ron Frew and Catherine Viney)
- **Health Promotion Capacity Building** (Sue Heward, Martin Horrocks, Susan McDowell and Spiro Iliopoulos)
- **Regional Support and Development** (Necia Burford and Lucy Middleton)
- **Communications** (Nicole Richards).

The major roles of the Partnership Development section are to:

- advocate for healthy public policy
- support the public health role of local government as contained in sections 29A and 29B of the *Health Act 1958*
- enable the Public Health Group and regions to work as an integrated organisation

- facilitate the government's administrative requirements in enacting the Tobacco Act (VicHealth) and work with VicHealth to advance health promotion in Victoria
- advance workforce development strategies for health promotion practitioners and health planners
- develop new policy responses for addressing health inequalities
- play a coordination role in health promotion policy and action in RRHACS
- foster strategic communication within Public Health Group and externally.

This year the section is looking forward to evaluating the *Environments for Health* framework and the evidence-based resources program to ensure that it continues to meet the sector's needs in supporting health promotion practice.

New and exciting actions to tackle health inequalities in Victoria will include working towards the introduction of Health Impact Assessment in Victoria. Funding has also been secured to continue to deliver the Core Health Promotion Short Course and other capacity building initiatives in partnership with colleagues in regional public health teams. As the name implies, a very important aspect of the work of the Partnership Development section is to build relationships with other people and organisations working in health promotion, in particular through the RRHACS Health Promotion Group. I hope that in the near future, you'll see the results of those of us who work in central DHS, working together a little better!

Monica Kelly
Manager Partnership Development

Further Information

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Major health initiative tells Victorians to 'Go for your life'

'Go for your life' is the message of a major whole of government nutrition and activity program that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of all Victorians through a diverse range of projects and initiatives.

Launched on 10 November 2004 by the Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks, and Ministers Pike, Thwaites, Madden, Kosky and Jennings, the \$21.9 million program promotes an integrated approach to providing opportunities for Victorians to:

- increase their levels of physical activity
- improve their eating habits
- get involved in local community activities and volunteering.

The government has committed \$10 million to promote physical activity, \$10 million to prevent obesity and diabetes; and a further \$1.9 million to promote healthy and active living for senior Victorians.

The \$10 million committed to prevent obesity and diabetes builds on existing activities and includes projects targeting the community. Encouraging and supporting community projects and activities is seen as an effective way to identify and address the underlying lifestyle and environmental factors causing obesity and diabetes. To achieve sustainable change we must reach people in their communities and impact on their daily lives and habits.

The new obesity and diabetes prevention initiatives include:

- **Kids—Go for your life**

This comprehensive, statewide initiative promotes healthy eating, physical activity and healthy weight in children. Kids—Go for your life will focus on children's settings, such as primary schools, kindergartens, child care and maternal and child health services. It will promote

Continued on page 3...

Major health initiative tells Victorians to 'Go for your life' continued from page 2...

supportive environments for healthy behaviours and enhance the knowledge and skills of families and staff working in children's settings to promote healthy eating and physical activity for children.

• **Community projects**

Funding is provided for community projects that address underlying environmental and lifestyle issues contributing to overweight and obesity. Supporting and working with the whole community, these projects will aim to make healthy choices, such as healthy eating and physical activity, the easiest choices. The community projects will be similar to 'Be Active Eat Well' a groundbreaking project that has sparked interest throughout Australia and all around the world.

• **Diabetes Prevention Program**

This program will apply internationally-recognised evidence that the early detection of people at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, combined with a program to support healthy eating, physical activity and achievable weight loss, can prevent progression to diabetes in a significant proportion of people. The program will be implemented in three pilot areas and will encourage close links between GPs and local health agencies. Victoria is the first State to fund extensive and systematic local programs for the prevention of diabetes. The program pilot sites will be rigorously evaluated to inform future diabetes detection and prevention efforts.

Further Information

Call Centre: 1300 739 899

Website: www.goforyourlife.com.au

Email: www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/hav/articles.nsf/forms/contactus?open

Victoria reviews public health legislation

As the principal piece of public health legislation in Victoria, the *Health Act 1958* deals with a wide range of issues including nuisances that are dangerous to public health or offensive, pest control, the control of infectious diseases and immunisation.

The Health Act has been amended many times since its enactment, resulting in a patchwork of largely unrelated ideas, rather than a coherent piece of legislation. The Health Act was last subject to a thorough review in 1988. Since then, there have been significant developments in the scientific, social and policy areas of public health regulation.

To ensure Victoria has a modern legislative framework to support current and future directions for public health, the Public Health Group, Department of Human Services, is currently reviewing the Health Act.

As part of the review process, a discussion paper entitled *Review of the Health Act 1958: A new legislative framework for public health in Victoria* was released for comment in August 2004. Some of the issues raised include the extent to which the new Act should address 'lifestyle' diseases, recognise the importance of promoting public health, recognise the need to address inequalities in the health and wellbeing of disadvantaged communities, and adopt a risk management approach. Consideration is also being given to including in the new Act a general statutory duty of care and a new offence of 'risk to health'.

To date, almost 150 submissions have been received from a wide variety of stakeholders including local government, health service providers, health professional bodies, public health bodies, pest control organisations, academics and government departments.

Currently, all submissions are being considered and it is anticipated that the department's policy position will be finalised in early 2005. A further round of consultation is planned for later in the year.

It is proposed that recommendations for a new public health Act arising from the review will be put to the Victorian Parliament in Autumn 2006.

For updates on progress of the review or to view copies of the submissions, see our website at www.health.vic.gov.au/healthactreview

Further information is available from:

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What's on—what's new?

Resources

Workforce Development

VicHealth has developed a comprehensive Mental Health Promotion Short Course in order to further develop the skills of people who work in a range of sectors, to undertake successful mental health and wellbeing activity.

The two-day course will be conducted at a range of venues throughout Victoria from February 2005.

Further Information

Register your interest or obtain further information

Email: iverins@vichealth.vic.gov.au

Conferences

Rural Health Conference

The Rural and Regional Health Services Branch, in partnership with the Victorian Healthcare Association are hosting a Rural Health Conference from 18–20 May 2005, at La Trobe University in Beechworth. It will be a key feature of the 2005 Rural Health Week.

Further Information

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United Nations International Conference on Engaging Communities

The 'United Nations International Conference on Engaging Communities' will be held in Brisbane at the Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre Queensland, August 14–17 2005. The

conference is an initiative of the United Nations and Queensland Government

Further Information

Online registration opens February 2005

<http://www.engagingcommunities2005.org/home.html>

Heart Foundation Conference

The National Heart Foundation of Australia inaugural Heart Foundation Conference Cardiovascular Disease in the 21st Century: Shaping the Future on 23–24 March 2006 Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour, NSW.

Further Information

Register your interest at

www.heartfoundation.com.au/2006conference

Global Ideas, Local Innovations: Municipal Public Health Planning State Conference

The Global Ideas, Local Innovations: Municipal Public Health Planning State Conference, November 2004, attracted over 180 delegates from an eclectic mixture of disciplines. The program highlighted leading edge work undertaken by Victorian local governments in planning for healthier environments and scoped current activities with the World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy Cities program. In the spirit of the Year of the Built Environment, a special focus of the program was on the role of urban design and the built form in contributing to active, healthy communities. Abstracts and presentations are available at http://www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/conf_nov04.htm

The **Local Government Planning for Health & Wellbeing** website has been revitalised. Check it out at <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/localgov/>

Australian Women's Health Conference

20–22 April 2005
Melbourne

Fifth Australian Women's Health Conference Reflecting on Gender/confronting the Evidence

View the Conference Program and register online through the Conference website www.womenshealth2005.com.au for details of presenters, invited speakers, topics.

About this Publication

Editorial Committee

Partnership Development Section,
Department of Human Services

Health Promotion Strategies is a quarterly bulletin published by the Public Health Group, Department of Human Services. This document can be accessed via the Internet at www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/resources_links/bulletin_index.htm

Contributions for future editions of this bulletin are most welcome. Articles for the May 2005 edition are due by 29 April.

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