

Healthy kids, healthy futures

Victoria's five-year action plan to
support children and young people
to be healthy, active and well

October 2021

VICTORIA

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In this document, 'Aboriginal' refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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Foreword

In Victoria, we have a vision that all Victorians enjoy the highest attainable standards of health, wellbeing and participation at every age. This vision, captured in the *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023*, drives our efforts to improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and their families.



We are fortunate in Victoria to have an outstanding health system, excellent education system and a long, proud history of promoting good health and wellbeing across our communities.

With this plan, we are bringing our collective attention and assets together to focus on the foundations of good health – healthy eating, active living and mental wellbeing. Getting these foundations right from infancy through to early adulthood offers lifelong benefits. These include strong growth and cognitive development, the ability to concentrate and learn, and protection from poor mental and physical health throughout childhood and long into the future.

This is more important now than ever as we help children and young people to rebound from the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Now is our opportunity to reset for the long term so our population is strong, healthy and resilient in the face of current and future threats.

It is our duty to provide the best foundations for Victorian children and young people. Of central importance is ensuring good health and wellbeing is available to all, regardless of postcode, gender or cultural background.

With this plan, we are highlighting our existing efforts and identifying priority actions that focus on primary prevention for the next five years. We know that promoting physical and mental wellbeing is a long-term commitment. So we are also establishing the strategic directions and core approaches that will take us further into the future so all Victorian children and young people can grow, thrive and succeed.

The Hon. Martin Foley MP
Minister for Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Equality

Healthy kids, healthy futures



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Acknowledgement of Aboriginal Victoria

The Victorian Government proudly acknowledges Victorian Aboriginal people as the First Peoples and Traditional Owners and custodians of the land and waters on which we rely. We celebrate that Australia is rich in living Aboriginal culture, based on the values of reciprocity and respect for Elders and Country.

We acknowledge the ongoing leadership role of the Aboriginal community in ensuring that all Aboriginal children are raised in safe, healthy and culturally rich families and communities, and have every opportunity for a bright future.

We pay our respects to ancestors of this Country, Elders, knowledge holders and leaders - past, present and emerging.

Our vision for a healthier future

Our vision for Victorian children and young people is that they are supported to be strong, healthy and well from their earliest years. We want every Victorian to live long, healthy, happy and fulfilling lives. This aligns with our ambition to see all Victorians enjoying the highest attainable standards of health, wellbeing and participation at every age, as captured in the *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023*. It also aligns with our commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoying long and healthy lives as part of the *Victorian closing the gap implementation plan 2021–2023*.

Good health and wellbeing starts young. When we provide healthy foundations for our children and young people, we are giving them a head start on the rest of their lives.

We want nourishing, healthy food and drinks to fuel all Victorian children and young people. This will give them the energy they need to thrive, learn and grow. We also want Victorian children and young people to be physically active throughout the day to boost both their physical and mental wellbeing and help them focus and learn. And we want to ensure children and young people are confident and resilient. Supporting healthy eating, active

living and social and emotional wellbeing will also help protect children and young people from poor health in the future.

Vulnerable communities are more likely to experience poor health. So we need to make sure all children, young people and their families are living, working, learning and playing in places that promote their health and wellbeing. This is more important now than ever as we support our children and young people to recover from the turbulence of COVID-19.

Our goals with this plan are to ensure:

- child, youth and family settings provide and promote healthier food and drink
- communities focus on the health and wellbeing of children and young people
- children, young people and families are supported to be healthy and raise healthy children
- children and young people have more opportunities to be active throughout the day.

To achieve our vision for Victoria's children and young people, we need to focus on providing these foundations for a healthier future.



Laying the foundations for the long term

This action plan brings government departments and partners together to lay the foundations for better health and wellbeing for Victorian children and young people. The plan identifies the strategic directions that will guide our efforts over the longer term, together with current commitments and those that we are prioritising in the first instance. Actions focus on primary prevention because we know that implementing these initiatives early in life is crucial in promoting healthy physical, social and emotional development.

This is a collaborative, whole-of-government effort involving:

- Department of Health
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Transport
- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Department of Treasury and Finance.

VicHealth is a key partner in this effort, as is the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation. This reflects our ongoing commitment to support self-determination for Victoria's Aboriginal community. The plan also draws on the skills and experience of prevention sector stakeholders, local government and the community health workforce.

The evidence is clear that we need multiple strategies over the long term to improve the health of our population. These should include a mix of regulatory actions and supportive initiatives and programs. This action plan identifies the first steps towards better health and sets up a long-term approach to improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Why are these foundations important?

We want all Victorian children to enjoy a healthy, happy childhood. Good physical and mental health also offers lifelong benefits for children and young people. These include protection from poor mental health and chronic disease later in life. There is also strong evidence that good health improves children's learning and development. Healthy children learn better because they are better able to concentrate and retain information in the classroom. Supporting children and young people to have healthy eating and active living habits, along with strong social connections, sets them up for a long and healthy future.

Healthy eating

Nutritious food is vital to child health and development and social and emotional wellbeing. From infancy and throughout childhood optimal nutrition is essential for healthy growth and physical and brain development. This starts with encouraging and supporting breastfeeding and then exposing children to a broad range of healthy foods as they grow.

Healthy eating supports better oral health, protects against infections and prevents chronic diseases in later life. There is also evidence that healthy eating can affect mood and mental health, with people who eat a healthy diet being less likely to experience depression. Finally, healthy eating equips children and young people to stay alert, concentrate and learn better, setting them up for a successful future.

Physical activity

Children and young people who are physically active have better physical health. They develop strong and healthy hearts and lungs, improve their strength and coordination and are less likely to develop chronic diseases such as heart disease and type 2 diabetes later in life. Staying active, whether through formal activity or unstructured play, also boosts mental health and resilience and supports children's ability to focus and learn.

Access to parks and greener neighbourhoods encourages physical activity and also boosts mental wellbeing. In addition, sport and active recreation can help children and young people to develop self-confidence and learn values such as teamwork, leadership and commitment.

Mental wellbeing

Mental wellbeing is a key pillar of healthy growth and development. The social and emotional wellbeing of children and young people is strongly influenced by positive connections with family and community and supported by universal settings like schools. There is also growing evidence that spending time in nature reduces stress and boosts wellbeing.

Supporting children and young people's wellbeing builds resilience. It provides them with the social and emotional skills and confidence they need to feel happy, build positive relationships, face life's challenges and succeed in their future endeavours.

The issues we need to tackle together

The way we live our lives, and the environments we live, work, learn and play in, are making it harder for children and young people to be healthy and well.

Children, young people and their families are surrounded by cheap, easily accessible and heavily promoted unhealthy food and drinks every day. These products offer little nutritional value and are instead full of low-cost ingredients like sugar, fat and salt. Whether they are in school, playing sport or out and about in their local community, chances are they are exposed to unhealthy products and unhealthy promotions.

Just six per cent of Australian children are eating enough fruit and vegetables and only 61 per cent are exclusively breastfed to at least four months of age. Conversely, most children and young people are eating multiple serves of unhealthy food every day – foods that should be eaten rarely, if ever. Children from two to three years of age are eating three serves of unhealthy food every day. This escalates to six to eight serves a day by the time they reach 14 to 18 years of age (Figure 1).

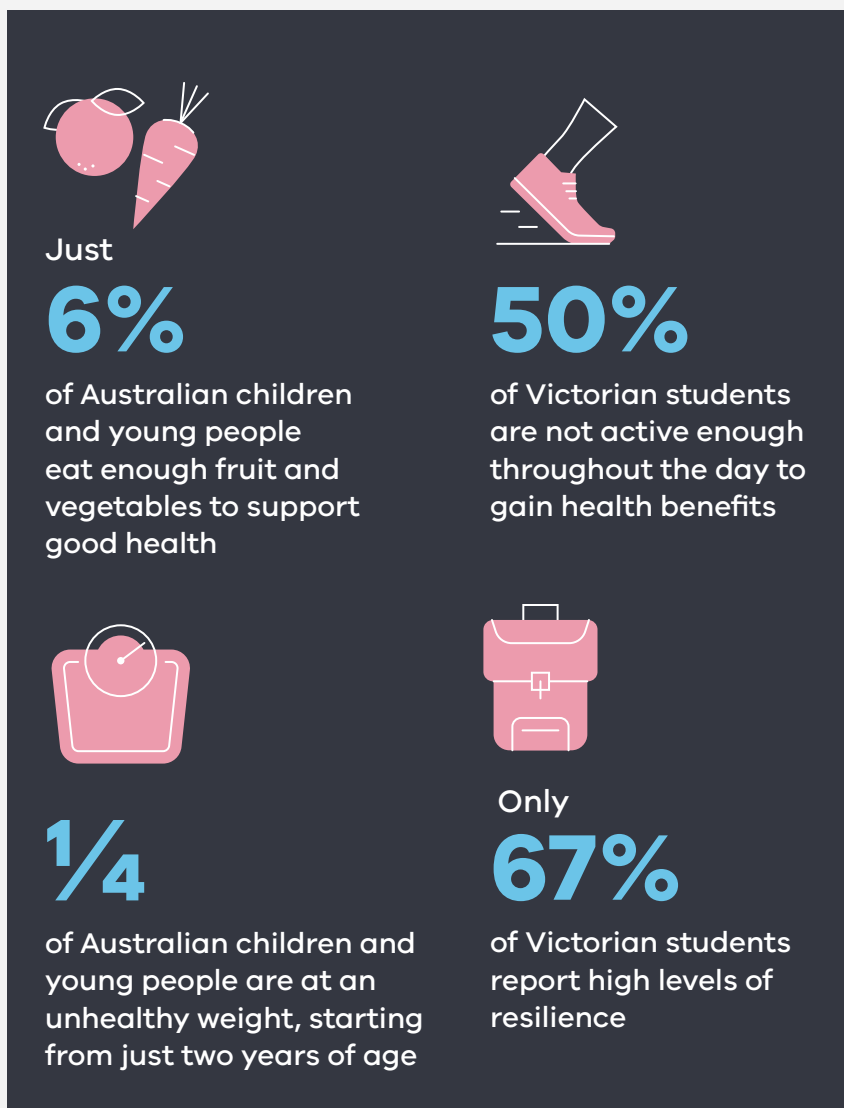


Figure 1: key health and wellbeing statistics for children and young people

At the same time, the lifestyles of children, young people and families have gradually reoriented to become less active and more sedentary. Whether at school, work or home, much of our time is spent seated. Our neighbourhoods, roads and buildings often discourage walking, cycling or taking the stairs. Less than 20 per cent of children walk to school, and leisure activities are often sedentary. Most children and young people spend more than the recommended limit of two hours a day on screen-based activities. Only 12 per cent of Australian children and two per cent of adolescents are meeting the guidelines for both physical activity and screen time. Half of Victorian school students are not active enough to gain health benefits (Figure 1).

Early life experiences are highly significant in building good foundations for physical and mental wellbeing later in life. Forty-five per cent of Victorians experience a mental health condition in their lifetime, with many of these manifesting before adulthood. Children and

young people can experience a range of stressors relating to social and emotional wellbeing, family relationships, study and employment opportunities. Supporting healthy emotional and social development and fostering resilience can help young people to face life's challenges and succeed in school, the workplace and the community.

The pandemic has had an impact on these foundations for good health. Young people are particularly affected by disruptions to schooling and employment and report feelings of isolation, loneliness and anxiety about the future. About 50 per cent of parents of school-aged children say their children are less active during lockdowns, while snacking on unhealthy food increased.

Many Victorians are also feeling financial impacts. Two in five Victorians resorted to cheap, unhealthy food due to financial pressures, with young people, the unemployed and those living in inner metro areas particularly impacted.

The result is that Victorian children and young people are not eating as well as they could be. And they are not as active as they need to be to support long-term health and wellbeing. This is leading to poor physical and mental health.

One in four children are at an unhealthy weight by the time they reach two years of age. Close to 50 per cent of young adults 18 to 24 years of age are overweight or obese. Unhealthy food and inactivity is also associated with emotional and behavioural problems in children and adolescents. Young people who have the unhealthiest diets are nearly 80 per cent more likely to have depression than those with the healthiest diets.

Ultimately, this is leading to poor health outcomes for our population including:

- increased risk of chronic disease (diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer)
- poor mental health
- reduced life expectancy.

A focus on fairness

These problems are magnified for some in our community. People from low socioeconomic backgrounds, people who live in rural and regional areas and urban fringe growth areas, and those living with severe mental illness or disability, all experience greater barriers to eating well and staying active.

Victorian Aboriginal people also continue to experience poorer health outcomes, with Aboriginal children 1.6 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to be obese. A focus on Aboriginal children and young people is particularly important given 55 per cent of the Victorian Aboriginal population is aged

25 years or younger (compared with 32 per cent of non-Aboriginal Victorians).

We need to focus on fairness and equity of outcomes so the health and wellbeing of Victorian children and young people is not determined by their cultural background, postcode or gender.



What we currently do

Victoria has some great existing infrastructure for supporting children and young people to be healthy and well. Our goal with this action plan is to continue to strengthen and focus our existing efforts. We will introduce new efforts with our partners across government and across sectors to support children and young people.

Examples of existing infrastructure

The Department of Education and Training's commitment

The Department of Education and Training's commitment to the Education State policy aims to reflect a focus on excellence and equity and equip all students with the personal and practical skills they need to succeed. This includes a focus on nurturing healthy, happy and resilient kids.

The Victorian Curriculum is also building the capacity of children and young people to make informed decisions about their health and wellbeing, particularly through health and physical education subjects.

In addition, early years learning and development is guided by the *Victorian early years learning and development framework*, which recognises children's health and wellbeing from birth as a prerequisite for and an outcome of learning, while the *National Quality Framework* embeds health and wellbeing in early learning and school-aged care, with specific regulatory requirements for outdoor space, play equipment, food and drinks.

The Department of Health's key prevention initiatives

- The Healthy Schools, Healthy Early Childhood Services and Healthy Workplaces Achievement Program is helping Victorian organisations create healthier environments for working, learning and playing.
- The Healthy Eating Advisory Service is supporting healthy food and drink supply in early childhood services, schools, hospitals and health services, sport and recreation facilities, universities and workplaces.
- The 'Life! Helping you prevent diabetes, heart disease and stroke program' is a free healthy lifestyle program helping more than 5,000 Victorians achieve their healthy lifestyle goals every year and reduce their risk of chronic disease.

Victoria’s pioneering health promotion agency – VicHealth

VicHealth aims to create a Victoria where everyone can enjoy better health and wellbeing through world-class interventions, research and public campaigns. VicHealth’s investment focuses on promoting healthy eating, encouraging regular physical activity, preventing tobacco use and harm from alcohol and improving mental wellbeing.

Sport and Recreation Victoria, as part of the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions

The department supports the sport and recreation sector and helps Victorians to get active. Sport and Recreation Victoria works to ensure sport is integral to Victorians’ lives by increasing access and opportunities, improving facilities and supporting the sector.

A commitment to establish a new Mental Health Promotion Office

The Victorian Government is establishing a new office that will deliver a mental health and wellbeing strategy for Victoria that prioritises public health principles, human rights and reducing inequalities.

Healthy parks, Healthy people

Access to forest, parks and greener neighbourhoods encourages physical activity and boosts mental health and wellbeing. Parks Victoria’s *Healthy parks, healthy people framework* describes the fundamental connection between the health of our environment and the health and wellbeing benefits of spending time in nature and how we maximise the benefits of parks for community health and wellbeing.

Parks Victoria’s *Healthy parks, healthy people* is put into practice through partnerships and programs with a wide range of community organisations, with a focus on increasing participation of under-represented groups. It also recognises the traditional knowledge Aboriginal communities have applied for many generations – that if you care for your Country, your Country cares for you.



A new commitment for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community in Victoria

The Department of Health is committed to working with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) to establish a new approach to supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria. This effort will focus on community-determined resources and approaches, drawing on connection to Country, knowledge and beliefs, language, self-determination, family and kinship and cultural expression to impact positively on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities.

Through the Healthy Communities initiative, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations will be supported to strengthen their roles as prevention hubs and implement programs that are self-determined, local and culturally driven. The aim is to create healthier communities that will lead to reduced chronic disease, improved mental health and happier families, with a focus on improving the first three years of life.

Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety plan (2017–2027) recognises the important links between strong cultural identity, capacity for self-determination and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These principles are at the heart of the commitment with VACCHO and align with the Victorian Government's Closing the Gap implementation plan and the Self determination reform framework.

Our approach

We are focusing our efforts on children, young people and their families so our next generation will grow into strong and healthy adults. By doing this, we recognise our fundamental duty to protect and nurture our children and give them the best possible start to life.

A focus on key stages of life

We are taking a life course approach to health and wellbeing that recognises there are critical times in a person's life when we are most receptive to change. These include key points across the crucial 0 to 25 age range such as:

- the first 1,000 days of life
- starting early childhood education and care
- entering primary and secondary school
- transitioning from youth to adulthood.

Preventing adverse childhood experiences is particularly important. Early experiences affect health and wellbeing, mental health, social functioning and brain development.

We must support our children and young people to be healthy, active and emotionally well as they move through these key points. This will greatly improve the chances of them being healthy and happy in the short term and living long, healthy and happy lives.

Of course, children depend on their parents and carers, so focusing on children also requires a focus on the adults in their lives. This includes supporting adults to be as healthy as possible before they begin a family, throughout pregnancy, and as they raise and care for the children in their lives.

A focus on the places where we spend time

To help children and young people be as healthy as possible, we are delivering population-wide approaches. This involves a strong focus on improving our day-to-day environments so healthy food, physical activity and positive social connection is a natural part of our everyday lives.

It means making sure our schools and early years services, neighbourhoods, sporting facilities/clubs and public spaces are all playing a role in supporting our health and wellbeing. Schools

are particularly important – students consume over a third of their energy needs during the school day.

Improving the health of our surroundings is also important because it ensures we are supporting everyone to be healthy, and not leaving anyone behind. To make sure everyone has the opportunity for a healthier future, our efforts offer targeted support for our most vulnerable and disadvantaged families and communities.

Victoria has a long history of using legislation and regulation to protect children's health. Seatbelts, bicycle helmets and smoking restrictions are just some of our previous successes in protecting children from harm. There is a public expectation that we will safeguard health and wellbeing too. As such, part of our approach will involve exploring the full range of options available to protect and support Victorian children.



Guiding principles

Eight principles will guide our efforts to support the health and wellbeing of Victorian children and families:

- 1.** A focus on primary prevention to build the foundations for good health.
- 2.** Initiatives delivered at a scale to affect entire populations.
- 3.** Enhanced support for priority populations, including a commitment to Aboriginal self-determination, to reduce inequities in health outcomes.
- 4.** Recognition of the strong interplay between our physical and mental health and wellbeing.
- 5.** Collective attention to shared priorities and alignment of effort and resources.
- 6.** A commitment to activating government levers to benefit the health of Victorians.
- 7.** A positive, strengths-based approach to support inclusion, diversity and wellbeing, and to avoid stigma and harm.
- 8.** Initiatives informed by evidence, local knowledge and experience, reflection and adaptation.

Overview

OBJECTIVES

Child, youth and family settings provide and promote healthier food and drink	Communities focus on the health and wellbeing of children and young people	We support all children, young people and families to be healthy and raise healthy children	Children, young people and families have more opportunities to be active throughout the day
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ACTIONS

PRIORITY 1 Increasing healthy food and drink	PRIORITY 2 Boosting community action	PRIORITY 3 Supporting children and families	PRIORITY 4 Increasing active living opportunities
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WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children, young people and their families will have access to healthier options where they learn, work and play Legislative options will be employed to help keep children and young people healthy and well 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local communities will take action to increase healthy eating, active living and mental wellbeing for children and young people We will include children and young people in decisions about their health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents will be better equipped to raise healthy, happy children Schools will better support wellbeing for students Emergency food relief will include a focus on healthy produce Young people in care services will be supported to be healthy and active 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We will support children and young people to be active throughout the school day Women and girls will have increased access to sport and recreation Neighbourhoods and parks will encourage active living
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PRIORITY ACTIONS

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating healthier food environments in schools, early years services, sport and recreation facilities and clubs, community settings and government agencies Exploring legislative options to create healthier environments for children and young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting local action on child health and wellbeing in partnership with local government Delivering a youth engagement strategy to support children and young people to play an active role in their health and wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing parenting support programs, including helping first-time parents with healthy eating and active play via the INFANT program Supporting schools to promote social and emotional wellbeing for their students and school community Enabling vulnerable families and young people to access healthy food and participate in physical activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing the Active Schools initiative Reducing the barriers to taking part in sport and recreation for women and girls Encouraging healthy and active design through 20-minute neighbourhoods
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Priority 1: Increasing healthy food and drink



Creating healthy food environments is a critical element in helping Victorian children and young people to be as healthy as they can be. The food environment refers to the range of food and drinks that are available and affordable. It includes how they are distributed, promoted and sold. By creating healthy food environments, we can increase access to affordable healthy food and drink and reduce access to unhealthy products that are full of cheap ingredients like sugar, fat and salt. We can also ensure promotions focus on healthier products, particularly in the places our children and young people spend their time.

Existing commitments

- The Victorian Government is committed to providing free, healthy school breakfasts at 1,000 primary, secondary, P-12 and specialist schools via the expanded School Breakfast Club Program. This includes targeted meal preparation and nutrition classes for parents and children at 100 schools and lunch and holiday supplies for eligible students. [Lead: Department of Education and Training]



Priority actions

- Creating healthier food environments in schools, early years services, sport and recreation facilities, clubs and across government agencies including:
 - supporting implementation of an updated *School canteens and other school food services policy* with a staged removal of sugary drinks [Lead: Department of Education and Training]
 - developing a new healthy eating initiative – Vic Kids Eat Well – with the Achievement Program and Healthy Eating Advisory Service [Lead: Department of Health]
 - leveraging investment in government-owned and funded sport and recreation facilities to implement the Healthy Choices guidelines [Lead: Department of Health]
 - greater support for early childhood services to meet Victorian Government menu planning guidelines and support the achievement of healthy eating under the National Quality Standards [Lead: Department of Health/ Department of Education and Training]
 - delivering a healthy and more sustainable food procurement policy across government departments. [Lead: Department of Health]
- Exploring legislative options to create healthier environments for children and young people, including options to extend Victoria’s menu labelling scheme. [Lead: Department of Health]
- Supporting self-determination approaches that embed and promote healthy eating among Aboriginal children, young people and families in Victoria. [Lead: Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, supported by Department of Health]

Priority 2: **Boosting community action**



Place-based approaches recognise that the places where people spend their time play an important role in their health and wellbeing. Some areas – such as regional and rural areas – face greater challenges to staying healthy and active. Place-based approaches allow us to focus on local people, local needs and local priorities, and engage the community as active participants in developing and delivering solutions. They allow us to draw on community knowledge, skills and wisdom to deliver better outcomes.

Existing commitments

- The Victorian Government continues to support communities through investing in Regional Partnerships and has provided funding to support the Loddon Campaspe Healthy Heart of Victoria initiative. [Lead: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions]



Priority actions

- Supporting local, community-based action on child health and wellbeing including:
 - creating partnerships with local government to support the physical and mental health of young people through the Local Government Partnership [Lead: VicHealth]
 - establishing Healthy Kids Advisors (funded by the Commonwealth) in targeted communities to provide hands-on support and healthy eating expertise for child- and youth-focused settings. [Lead: Department of Health]
- Delivering a youth engagement framework to support children and young people to play an active role in their health and wellbeing. [Lead: VicHealth]

Priority 3: Supporting children and families



There is a lot we can do to improve the health of our everyday environments and communities. But we also want to help parents and carers develop the knowledge and skills they need to support healthy, happy and resilient children. This includes universal and tailored services and supports to help children and young people gain and maintain healthy lifestyles.

Existing commitments

- The Victorian Government is committed to ensuring Victorian school students have brighter smiles and families avoid hefty dental bills. The Smile Squad is rolling out free dental care at all Victorian public primary and secondary schools via the Smile Squad. [Lead: Department of Health]
- As part of Get Active Victoria, a Victorian Government-first voucher program is helping eligible families get their kids involved in organised sport and recreation activities. The initiative reimburses the cost of membership and registration fees, uniforms and equipment. [Lead: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions]
- The rollout of universal funded three-year-old kindergarten will continue supporting children to access the benefits of two years of teacher-led, play-based learning before school, building social and emotional wellbeing. [Lead: Department of Education and Training]
- The delivery of maternity and maternal and child health services, including the Koori Maternity Service, will continue to support children and their families from pregnancy, with health screening and parenting support to ensure that all Victorian children thrive in their early years. [Lead: Department of Health]



- The Victorian Government is giving young people living in care services the support they need to create healthy eating and physical activity habits. HEALing Matters training for carers is supporting young people in residential care homes, foster and kinship care to ensure vulnerable children and young people in Victoria have the opportunity to thrive. [Lead: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing]
- The Sports Academy program supports young people in custody to take part in sports alongside coaching, general health and wellbeing advice, and leadership and resilience programs. When transitioning into the community young people are linked to local sports clubs to help them continue to remain active and engage pro-socially. [Lead: Department of Justice and Community Safety]

Priority actions

- Helping first-time parents access the best possible advice and tips on healthy eating and active play for a healthy, happy baby through community and maternal and child health services via the INFANT program. [Lead: Department of Health]
- Delivering evidence-informed online parenting programs and group-based parenting sessions to better support parents, caregivers and supporters to build a positive relationship with their infant or child. [Lead: Department of Health]
- Supporting schools to promote social and emotional wellbeing through mental health programs and activities that meet the needs of their students and school community. [Lead: Department of Education and Training]
- Providing sector leadership and advice to government on strengthening and enhancing food relief activity in Victoria through a Food Relief Taskforce. These activities provide for families and support the health and wellbeing of Victorians. [Lead: Department of Families, Fairness and Housing]

Priority 4: Increasing active living opportunities



Staying active throughout the day is important for everyday health. While sport is a great way to get active, active living is also about moving more. This can be through walking, cycling or scooting to school, taking the stairs instead of the escalators or breaking up lessons with activity sessions. Being active in nature is also important for mental health and wellbeing, and strong connections to Country is particularly important in supporting the physical and mental health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people. The way we use green spaces and public land has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this will remain an important part of recovery. We want to ensure Victorians have many opportunities to stay active every day.

Existing commitments

- School Sport Victoria's *Strategic directions 2020 to 2030* is providing a clear direction to engage more Victorian students in physical activity through school sport, which is often where children play sport for the first time and is the beginning of many lifelong physical, mental and social benefits. [Lead: Department of Education and Training]
- The ministers for Education, for Health and for Community Sport have confirmed their commitment to physical activity for children and young people with the release of the joint ministerial statement on physical activity – *Active schools, active kids, active communities*. [Lead: Department of Education and Training]



- The Victorian Government and YMCA are ensuring Victoria's camps continue to provide an opportunity for Victorians to tap into the benefits of active participation in the great outdoors. This includes the Kids' Adventure Outdoors camps and activities days. [Lead: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions]
- Victoria's Great Outdoors initiative is making it easier for Victorians to enjoy our forests and parks with improved walking trails, four-wheel drive tracks and campground and visitor facilities across the state, which will enhance accessibility for children and their families. [Lead: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning].

Priority actions

- Implementing the Active Schools initiative to ensure all Victorian students have the skills, confidence and motivation to be active for life. This includes a toolkit for school leaders and teachers, expert physical education leaders and extracurricular coordinators, and funding for schools that need it most to get kids moving. [Lead: Department of Education and Training]
- Increasing efforts to reduce the barriers to taking part in sport and active recreation for women and girls. [Lead: Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions]
- Building on the work undertaken through the 20-minute neighbourhood pilot project, which incorporated

healthy and active design objectives, and embedding this work into planning policy to create healthier communities. [Lead: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning]

- Creating and connecting 6,500 hectares of open space through the Suburban Parks Program for Melbourne's urban kids to play and exercise in, and to connect with nature. This includes the Local Parks Program to create green spaces for local communities, which will have a positive impact on accessibility for children. [Lead: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning].

A focus on communities

At the core of our effort is a targeted approach to reducing disparities in health outcomes between communities.

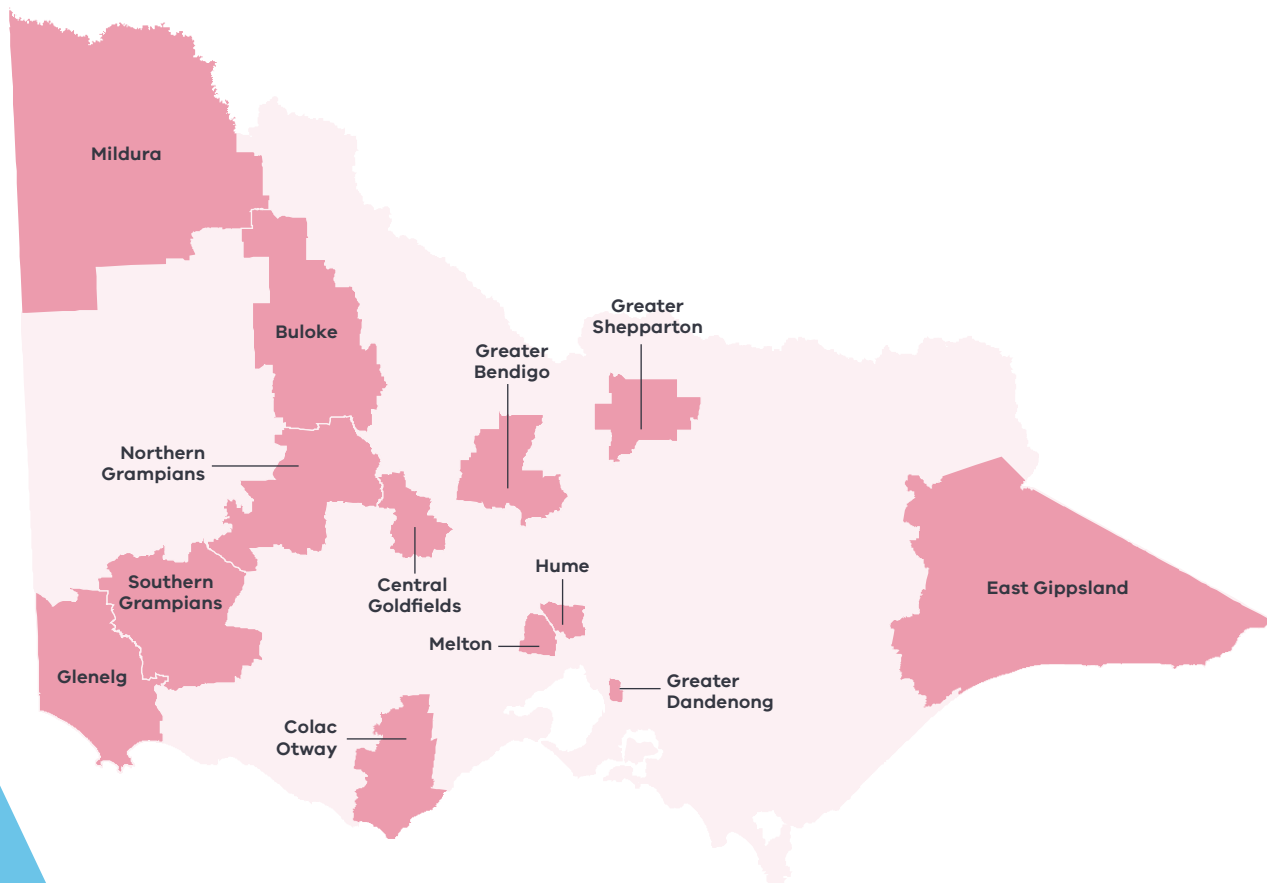
Across Victoria, we will be working with 13 local government areas to support the health and wellbeing of children and young people. These communities will be provided with enhanced support from a range of partners to create a concentrated effort to improve healthy eating, active living and mental wellbeing.

The Department of Health, in partnership with Cancer

Council Victoria and Nutrition Australia, will be delivering the new Vic Kids Eat Well initiative to increase healthy eating in child and family-focused settings. This includes a new workforce of Healthy Kids Advisors delivered by the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation and supported by the Victorian and Commonwealth governments to provide hands-on support to local organisations. VicHealth will also be providing support via their Local Government Partnerships initiative, extending the focus to active living and mental wellbeing.

Within these communities, existing health promotion efforts delivered by the health promotion workforce within community health will contribute to a collective focus. We will also partner with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to explore opportunities to boost the health of Aboriginal children and families through self-determined actions in community and sporting environments.

Figure 2: Local government areas supporting the health and wellbeing of children and young people





Critical enablers

Governance

Supporting health and wellbeing for all Victorian children and young people requires sustained leadership, a shared commitment to act and cross-sector partnership.

To maximise coordination, leadership and accountability across government departments, the Public Health and Wellbeing Inter-Departmental Committee is overseeing the development and rollout of this action plan. This committee includes members from the:

- Department of Health
- Department of Education and Training
- Department of Transport

- Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
- Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions
- Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Department of Treasury and Finance.

This group is also overseeing the *Victorian public health and wellbeing plan 2019–2023*, bringing government together to improve the health and wellbeing of Victorians.

Government leadership will be matched by strategic leadership, including Aboriginal led decision-making and convening roundtables to bring sector and community representatives together to advance health and wellbeing. We will hold regular forums on healthy eating and active living to connect, learn from others, assess progress and celebrate achievements.

Alongside these networks, we will continue to strengthen existing partnerships for health and wellbeing. We will develop new and innovative partnerships across sectors to generate a whole-of-community effort.

Evaluation and monitoring

The *Victorian public health and wellbeing outcomes framework* provides an approach to monitoring and reporting progress in our collective efforts to achieve better health and wellbeing. The outcomes framework focuses on the longer term outcomes we want to see, outcomes that can take years to eventuate. While the outcomes framework covers five important domains, the following longer term outcome areas and measures are most relevant to promoting healthy eating, active living and mental wellbeing.

Our role over the coming period is to link these longer term outcome measures with shorter term progress measures, including Aboriginal community defined measures of success/ outcomes. This will help us assess our progress and adapt where necessary to maximise our impact. This will involve developing an impact and evaluation framework matched to this effort. It will also include exploring existing and new measures and datasets that will support our efforts. These include the Victorian Child and

Adolescent Monitoring System and the Victorian Population Health Survey.

The Victorian Government is also supporting the Murdoch Children's Research Institute to track the wellbeing of 100,000 Victorians throughout their lives through the GenV health study. This will provide valuable health and wellbeing data and increase prevention and early intervention opportunities.

Victorian public health and wellbeing outcomes framework – Domain 1

Outcome	Indicator	Measures
1.2 Victorians have good mental health	Increase mental wellbeing	Proportion of adolescents with a high level of resilience
	Reduce overweight and obesity	Proportion of adolescents and children who are overweight or obese
1.3 Victorians act to protect and promote health	Increase healthy eating and active living	Proportion of adolescents and children who consume sufficient fruit and vegetables
		Mean serves of fruit and vegetables for adults, adolescents and children
		Proportion of adolescents and children who consume sugar-sweetened beverages daily
		Proportion of infants exclusively breastfed to three months of age
		Proportion of adolescents and children who are sufficiently physically active

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