

MEDIA RELEASE

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300 new sites statewide: VicHealth funding will support thousands more Victorian women get active and socially connect

Thousands more Victorian women, including many from bushfire-affected communities, will have the chance to get active and meet new people in 2021, thanks to \$830,000 in new VicHealth funding to expand highly popular social sport programs.

The sports programs, including body-positive hiking groups and lawn bowls for mums and bubs, have already proven a hit with Victorian women and will expand to more than 300 new locations across the state, including regional and culturally diverse areas.

The activities funded as part of VicHealth's Active Women and Girls Program include:

- **Bowling with Babies by Bowls Victoria:** planning to expand to 90 new locations, including a focus on bushfire-affected areas
- **GO Soccer Mums by Football Victoria:** planning to expand to 196 new sites, including a focus on reaching women from culturally diverse or newly arrived backgrounds in regional areas
- **Switch by Touch Football Victoria:** planning to expand to 30 new sites, including a focus on reaching women affected by bushfires and from culturally diverse or newly arrived backgrounds
- **Escaping Your Comfort Zone (bushwalking):** expanding to Gippsland, with the aim of running more than 170 hikes across the region.

Victorian Minister for Women Gabrielle Williams said:

"We know women are twice as likely to put off exercising because they worry what other people think - this is a mindset we're continuing to change."

"Having more women involved in sport benefits us all, it's healthy, it's social and it changes the way women and girls view themselves."

VicHealth Executive Manager Programs Group Kirstan Corben said after the difficulties of 2020, it's important to support more women to get active and socially connect through inclusive and innovative activities.

"We're excited to support these highly popular sports initiatives to expand to more than 300 new locations and provide thousands of women with an opportunity to get active and be social," Ms Corben said.

"After a challenging 2020, in which many Victorian women found it difficult to socially connect and be active, these activities will be a fun way for women to reconnect with their communities and try something new."

VicHealth's Active Women and Girls Participation Program (AWAG) began in 2017 to give women and girls the chance to be active in more social and relaxed environments, without the pressure of competitive sport.

Since 2017, almost 10,000 women and teenage girls have participated in AWAG programs across close to 300 locations. A La Trobe University evaluation shows the programs were highly successful at getting more than two-thirds of attendees to come back and participate again.

About the newly expanded programs:

- **[Bowling with Babies](#)** empowers less-active mums to take time to focus on their wellbeing in a fun, relaxing and comfortable environment – with their baby. It's a fitness and social activity that



brings new and expecting mums together to enjoy a social bowl, coffee and a chat with other local mums

- [GO Soccer Mums](#) is an introductory football program designed specifically for women, where participants can have fun, meet new people, and learn basic football skills in a fun, social, judgment-free environment. It's not just for mums - but for all women, from all walks of life.
- [Switch](#) is a multi-week touch football program for all women. Participants will develop fitness and skills to boost their confidence in playing touch football. The program is open to all fitness and skill levels, making it a great alternative to a conventional boot camp. Switch focuses on the fun and social benefits of touch football.
- [Escaping Your Comfort Zone](#) is an inclusive hiking and adventure group for women and non-binary people of all different body shapes, sizes and abilities. All hikes are easy, short and slow paced. The outdoors doesn't care about your size, your speed or your fitness – it's just about having fun in nature with new friends.

For more information or to get involved, head to www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/activewomen