

MEDIA RELEASE**Wednesday 3 March 2021****Boost to grassroots organisations as Victorians look to reconnect to community after pandemic**

VicHealth is seeking to support hundreds of grassroots organisations across the state to help their communities reconnect and improve their health following the impact of coronavirus and 2020 bushfires.

From today, grassroots organisations and clubs can apply for a share in \$3 million in [Reimagining Health grants](#) to fund their projects for improving access to healthy affordable food, building strong social connections and increasing physical activity in their local area.

The grants come as new VicHealth data reveals the majority of Victorians who dropped out of community activities, like fitness classes, community gardens and parenting groups, are now keen to reconnect with their communities to improve their health and wellbeing.

Of the 2,000 Victorians surveyed during the second wave of the pandemic:

- Fewer than one in ten continued to participate in formal fitness groups
- Large declines were also commonly reported for participation in environmental groups (69%), informal exercise groups (64%), and parenting groups (63%)
- More than half (56%) intended to be involved in a community group or club once restrictions allowed
- Sports clubs were the most popular activity people wanted to join, with a fifth (20%) of Victorians keen to play sport as restrictions ease
- Exercise groups were also popular avenues of connection, with more than 14% of people wanting to get involved with exercise groups
- Community social groups or charities (14%), religious groups (13%), and hobby groups (11%) were also commonly identified as ways people wanted to reconnect with their community.

Victorian Minister for Health Martin Foley said the Reimagining Health grants play an important role in providing community organisations with the resources they need to support Victorians.

“Whether it’s exercise, gardening or parenting groups, these support networks allow Victorians stay active and socially connected to their community. I encourage local organisations to apply for the grants, so these programs can be delivered where they are needed most.”

VicHealth CEO Dr Sandro Demaio said the *Reimagining Health* grants were a fantastic opportunity for local groups to support others to get their health and wellbeing back on track in 2021 and beyond.

“We’re seeing a groundswell of Victorians who want to get involved with their community after a really tough year. This funding is about supporting the many fantastic grassroots organisations to meet that demand so Victorians can enjoy the physical and mental health benefits of being active and socially connected.

“Protecting our health and wellbeing is more important than ever, so we’re thrilled to be able to work in partnership with local Victorian organisations to support communities to build back better from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic and the 2020 bushfires.”



This new funding builds on VicHealth's December grant round which saw 460 organisations across the state share in \$3.9million in funding.

Among the recipients was All the Queen's Men, a Melbourne-based independent arts organisation.

Bec Reid from All The Queens Men explained that their \$35K Reimagining Grant will help create the Rainbow Family Dance Club.

"We now have an opportunity to expand our LGBTIQ+ Elders Dance Club model into a new inclusive social dance space for children and young queer families," said Reid.

"Rainbow Family Dance Club will engage young people with diverse lived experiences as co-collaborators. It will foster creative participation, social connection and build community as well as being fun and active while we dance up a storm."

Dr Demaio encouraged community organisations to put their projects forward.

"If you have an innovative project that will support the physical health and wellbeing of Victorians, this is your opportunity to partner with VicHealth to bring it to life!"

For further information or to apply, visit www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/funding/reimagining-health-grants. Grants of \$3,000, \$10,000 or \$50,000 are available. Applications close Tuesday 23 March 2021.