

## Media Release

Monday 1 April 2019

### **New funding to make gyms and sport centres less intimidating for women and get less active Victorians moving**

New research from health promotion foundation VicHealth has found Victorian women are shunning the gym, with over half believing fitness centres and gyms are too intimidating.

The research found gyms were particularly daunting for mums and inactive women, with over 70 per cent of mums and 65 per cent of inactive women stating they found them intimidating places to workout.

Other barriers included the cost of gym memberships and the time involved, with 71 per cent of inactive women shunning the gym due to it being too expensive, and 62 per cent of mums wishing they had more time to get active.

In response to this research, VicHealth is offering \$500,000 in funding through its [Innovation Challenge: Physical Activity](#), focusing on two areas: to make council owned facilities like pools, gyms and parks more inclusive and welcoming for women; and to make traditional sport more inclusive for less active, disadvantaged and culturally diverse Victorians.

VicHealth's Acting CEO Dr Lyn Roberts said gyms and sports clubs could be horribly daunting for less active Victorians and, in particular, women and girls.

"Less than one in three Victorian women get the amount of physical activity they need to be healthy. While gyms can be great places to get active, a staggering number of Victorian women find them too intimidating which is a problem," Dr Roberts said.

"Women, people from culturally diverse communities and those who are inactive are less likely to play organised sport and are missing out on the physical and social benefits this brings.

"We're encouraging councils and sports organisation who want to attract less active Victorians to really think about what might be turning people away and what changes they could make themselves to introduce these groups to their sport or recreation facility."

The VicHealth [Innovation Challenge: Physical Activity](#) program supports clever ideas that don't rely on regular classes or memberships so that more Victorians can get active in a flexible way.

Dr Roberts said sporting organisations and councils don't have to invent a completely new program, instead they can update and adapt existing activities and facilities or collaborate with a new partner to better suit the needs of their community.

"Small changes can make a big difference in terms of making your program or facility more welcoming to someone who hasn't tried it before," she explained.

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“For example, featuring people of different genders, backgrounds and sizes in your marketing and posters, ensuring people know what to expect when they turn up for the first time, changing the positioning of your mirrors and equipment, and offering beginner friendly sessions can all have a real impact.

“We’ve heard so many stories through our [This Girl Can Victoria](#) campaign of women who’ve worked up the courage to try a sport or go to the gym only to never go back because they don’t feel welcomed and included.

“We know this isn’t what sports organisations and councils want, which is why we’re encouraging them to apply for this funding – we want your clever ideas to help more people to give physical activity a go.”

**The VicHealth Innovation Challenge: Physical Activity grants open Monday 1 April 2019, with applications closing on 18 April 2019. Grants of up to \$150,000 each are available to Victorian councils and sporting bodies to test and refine innovative ideas over an 18-month project period.**

For more information visit: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/funding/innovation-challenge-physical-activity-grants>

### Notes to editors:

VicHealth surveyed over 2500 Victorians about their views on physical activity. The findings include:

- 55% of women find gyms intimidating compared with 41% of men.
- Inactive women (65%) and mums (71%) were the most likely to find gyms and sports clubs intimidating.
- The cost of gyms and organised sport is a barrier to nearly three in five Victorians (59%), more so women than men, and in particular inactive women (71%).
- In particular, nearly two thirds (64%) of parents said it is too expensive to join a gym or play organised sport, and 62% said they wish they had time to do more exercise.

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