

Embargoed until 11 am, Tuesday 1 June 2010

GEELONG REGION SPORTS CLUBS' GOAL - HEALTHIEST IN AUSTRALIA

Sports clubs in Geelong and surrounding areas are set to become the healthiest in Australia by tackling the issues of food, alcohol, violence, injury prevention and other aspects which make up a healthy sporting environment.

In an Australian first, the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) has teamed up with the Geelong area regional sports assembly *Leisure Networks* to pilot the \$2 million program.

It is the first time that sports clubs across a region of Australia are looking at everything they do and will be evaluated on their aim of becoming healthier places, including more than just physical activity.

The two and a half year program will involve more than 100 sporting clubs selected from about 1,000 clubs in the council areas of Greater Geelong, Surf Coast, Colac Otway, Queenscliffe and southern parts of Golden Plains.

"Clubs will be required to meet standards relating to the responsible use of alcohol, healthy eating, reduced tobacco use, protection from harmful effects of UV, creating a safe and inclusive environment for women and reducing race-based discrimination," VicHealth Chief Executive Officer, Todd Harper said.

"Some of these include either selling spirits at 20% higher than 2009 prices, or serving only drinks with an alcohol content of less than 3%, and replacing at least three 'red' foods with at least three 'green' options.*

The initiative follows a recent VicHealth survey which shows that more than four out of five Victorians would like to see an end to junk food and alcohol sponsorship in all local sports clubs provided there are funds to replace lost revenue.

"It's very important to realise that an overwhelming majority of Victorians support moving away from junk food and alcohol sponsorship of community sports.

"This new program isn't about banning alcohol and junk food from all community clubs. It's about supporting sports clubs to identify parts of their culture they can improve, so that they are healthy, safe, welcoming places without too much emphasis on booze and fast food. The lessons we learn through this program will have future implications for local sports clubs across Victoria and the rest of Australia," Mr Harper said.

Speaking at the launch, Lisa Neville, Minister for Mental Health and Community Services and member for Bellarine added: "In Geelong we are already seeing positive outcomes from the Good Sports program that helps sporting clubs manage alcohol responsibly and reduce alcohol related problems such as binge and underage drinking".

"This new program will help community sports clubs identify areas they can improve so they continue to be healthy, safe, welcoming places for the whole community.

"We know that the main reasons more than 4.7 million Australians participate in community sport are to be social, fit and healthy and it is fantastic that community sports clubs are taking the lead in this program," she said.

Media release

CEO of Leisure Networks, Rob McHenry said there is overwhelming interest from community clubs to be healthier places.

“There is already a lot of interest in this project from community clubs who recognise that a healthy club is a happy club and this translates into more participation and members.

“The bottom line is that if community clubs are all round healthy places, there will be more people being physically active, with a healthier population for the Geelong region.

“We have around 1000 clubs covering 86 different sports in our region and we are excited this program is set to be a model for Australia.

“Clubs will have the chance to register their interest in joining the program through invitations and information sessions in August and September.

“A major part of the program includes evaluation to work out the best ways of making sure community clubs can become as healthy as possible.

“The evaluation will guide future policy and investment in healthy club development by VicHealth and other government agencies,” Mr McHenry added.

ENDS

What: Launch of Healthy Sporting Environments Demonstration Project

When: Tuesday, 1 June 2010, 11.00am – 12.00pm

Where: Alex Popescu Room, Sports House at Skilled Stadium (370 Moorabool St, Geelong)

Who: Todd Harper, VicHealth CEO
Lisa Neville, Minister for Mental Health and Community Services
Rob McHenry, CEO Leisure Networks
Tommy Hafey MBE, former Geelong Cats Football Coach, four-time Premiership coach with Richmond and 10 times Grand Finals coach
Possible Geelong Cats Premiership Player and/or other sports stars (TBC)

There will be photo opportunities and doorstep interviews with all speakers on the Skilled Stadium oval 11:45am.

To download the *Community Attitudes Survey: Healthy Sporting Environments* please [click here](#).

You can also visit the VicHealth website by clicking www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

The *Community Attitudes Survey: Healthy Sporting Environments* research was approved by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee.

* Traffic lights are a classification system in which foods are categorised as green, amber and red according to their nutritional value. **Green** foods are ‘everyday foods’, such as fruit, vegetables, lean meats and grains. **Amber** foods provide some nutrients, but can be high in energy (such as a burger). The **red** category includes food and drinks that are high in fat, sugar and sodium (salt), as well as soft drinks.