

## Media Release

Embargoed 05.01am  
6 August 2015

### VICTORIA'S FIRST CITIZENS' JURY ON OBESITY TO IDENTIFY WAYS TO MAKE HEALTHY EATING EASIER

VicHealth is today announcing a Citizens' Jury that will bring 100 people together to tackle the issue of obesity on behalf of all Victorians.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said [Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity](#) was designed to engage everyday Victorians in a discussion and debate around solutions to end obesity. It will take place on 17 and 18 October in Melbourne.

"Overweight and obesity is a major, complex health issue. Nearly two thirds of Australian adults and a quarter of children aged two to 17 are either overweight or obese.

"The Citizen's jury is part of VicHealth's long term plan to get more Victorians living healthier and happier lives. With a third of children and almost three quarters of adults predicted to be overweight or obese by 2025, now is the time for comprehensive and sustained action on obesity," Ms Rechter added.

The Citizens' Jury will be made up of approximately 100 randomly selected people that are a representative sample of the Victorian community. They will be presented with the best current evidence on obesity and hear from international and Australian experts who work in industry, behavioural insights and public health.

Ms Rechter said: "This is the first time that an event of this scale has taken place on this issue in Australia. We trust juries to make decisions about the law so it makes sense to trust everyday Victorians to make decisions about issues that affect their health. Members of the Citizens' Jury will tackle the complex issue of obesity on behalf of all Victorians by focusing on ways to make it easier to eat better. They will focus specifically on food, the way we eat and the range of influences few of us are aware of when it comes to the food choices we make.

"Jury members will be taken on a 'journey of discovery' around food choices, they will read lots of different views and hear from a range of experts of their choosing with the aim of finding potential solutions for overweight and obesity. We hope this will mobilise public debate, generate a social movement for change, and create an enabling environment for government and industry to take action."

VicHealth has engaged research institute newDemocracy Foundation to support the Citizens' Jury on Obesity. Their Executive Director Iain Walker said they were inviting submissions from the public including food manufacturers and producers, retailers, public health advocates, non-government organisations, community groups, individuals and all levels of government.

"This is a chance for anyone to make their case to a group of everyday people who are being given the time to look at this in real detail. For anyone who has ever hoped people would go beyond the headlines or an opinion poll and examine the data on an issue, then this is the process which makes that happen. Having

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the chance to read, discuss, share and learn from experts of their own choosing, we hope the wider community trusts the common view emerging from a group of people just like themselves.

“The jurors will meet online and face-to-face over a six-week period culminating in a two day event in October to consider the evidence. At the end of the process, the Citizens’ Jury will develop a number of potential solutions to the problem, which VicHealth will take to key decision makers in government and industry,” Mr Walker added.

Parliamentary Secretary for Health Mary-Anne Thomas said this new initiative shows that Victoria is committed to innovatively and insightfully identifying new ways to tackle obesity.

“Obesity particularly affects Victorians living in areas of most disadvantage, people in rural areas and people aged over 45 years, and it can have serious health consequences.”

“VicHealth’s Citizens’ Jury is a unique and powerful way to deepen our understanding of the causes of obesity, and to find new ways to address the issue.”

The Citizens’ Jury is supported by steering group of senior representatives, chaired by VicHealth, from the Australian Medical Association Victoria, Australian Beverages Council, Australian Food & Grocery Council, CHOICE, City of Melbourne, Coles, Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research at Deakin University, Foodbank Victoria, Obesity Policy Coalition, Tennis Australia, and the Victorian Government Department of Premier and Cabinet.

**For further information on the Citizen’s Jury, or to make a submission, see**

[www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/citizens-jury](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/citizens-jury)

The newDemocracy Foundation is a not-for-profit research institute exploring innovations in democracy. The Foundation is non-partisan and non-issue based, with a Research Committee headed by former Premiers Nick Greiner and Geoff Gallop. More information can be found at [www.newdemocracy.com.au](http://www.newdemocracy.com.au).

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