

Letter to editor, Monday 22 February 2016

From VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter

From Saturday evening until dawn on Sunday the Melbourne CBD welcomed huge crowds and our iconic Royal Exhibition Building was flooded in vibrant green as thousands of festival-goers rolled up to 'Circus Circus' programmed as a new activity space as part of White Night Melbourne, and proudly supported by VicHealth.

At VicHealth, we relish the opportunity to get involved with Melbourne's one-of-a-kind arts and creative industries scene. We know that active arts events like White Night are a powerful and fun way to improve people's physical health and mental wellbeing.

It was a buzz to be part of this celebration of Victoria's colourful history of circus performance with Circus Oz, the Women's Circus and Cirque Africa all taking part.

Every day, we're inundated with expert opinions and media coverage telling us to be more active – and many of us already know we don't get enough exercise. But the truth is, it can be really hard to find the time and the motivation to get moving for the recommended two-and-a-half to five hours each week.

Active arts programs like Circus Circus remind us that being active doesn't always have to be about counting every step, or waking up at dawn to squeeze in a session at the gym.

VicHealth is applying a similar concept to five local communities across Victoria by partnering with councils to deliver the first-ever Community Activation Program. This pilot investment has been transforming underutilised spaces into pop-up parks, providing inviting places for people to gather and have a go at all sorts of physical activities from Zumba classes to hip hop, giant chess and tug-of-war.

Find something you love doing – dancing, theatre performance, or indeed circus skills – and make a healthy habit out of an activity you enjoy, while gaining skills, confidence and self-esteem. Combine physical activity with arts and you have a recipe for success!

So, hats off to everyone who got up off the couch and flocked into the city to hula-some-hoops and try-out-trapeze. We had a blast!

Jerril Rechter, VicHealth CEO