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## VICTORIAN SPORTS CLUBS GIVE UNHEALTHY HABITS THE BOOT

Hundreds of sports clubs across the state will make sweeping changes to become healthier places, with new \$3.3 million VicHealth funding announced today.

Clubs that participate in VicHealth's *Healthy Sporting Environments* program will strive to become healthier by addressing six preventable illness risk factors.

Over the next two years, these clubs will be provided support to reduce harmful alcohol use, offer more nutritious options at the canteen, work to reduce spectators' and players' exposure to harmful UV, reduce smoking in and around the club grounds, manage and reduce injuries and increase the number of women, culturally and linguistically diverse people and Indigenous people in local sport.

Following the implementation of the *Healthy Sporting Environments Demonstration Project* with 78 sports clubs around the Geelong region, the program will be rolled out to major regional centres across Victoria.

Preliminary results from an evaluation of the local sporting clubs in the Barwon South-West region who took part in the demonstration project show:

- One in six members were concerned about underage drinking at their club
- Two in five were concerned about smoking in and around the club and four in five said players, officials and administrators should never smoke around the club.
- An overwhelming majority (80%) said sports clubs should make low-fat and heart healthy food options available.
- One in six club members never use any form of sun protection at the club.
- Four in every five people believe it is important to encourage women's participation.

Through a partnership with VicHealth and nine regional sports assemblies, it is expected more than 250 local sporting clubs in Warrnambool, Ballarat, Bendigo, Horsham, Mildura, Gippsland, Geelong, Wangaratta and Shepparton will now join the program.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the idea is to use the unique position sporting clubs have in the community to develop them as leaders in health promotion.

"With so much momentum to promote zero-tolerance of racism and sexism in Victorian sport recently, this program will cement our state's place as a nationwide leader in promoting all aspects of good health through sport," Ms Rechter said.

"Sports clubs are more than just places that promote physical activity – they're also places where the community gathers and are ideal for promoting health and wellbeing beyond the match itself.

"This isn't about banning pies and beer from local sport. The Victorian community has told us that they want healthier options at sports clubs – *Healthy Sporting Environments* is a great opportunity for local clubs to heed that call."

For more information, visit [www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/healthysportingenvironments](http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/healthysportingenvironments)