



WHO Collaborating  
Centre for  
Obesity Prevention



VicHealth

Heart  
Foundation



strokefoundation

## Media release

# Health survey highlights need for investment in prevention, say health and community groups

Victoria's leading health and community groups have called on all parties to commit to doubling Victoria's investment in prevention in the lead up to this year's election, following this weekend's release of the 'Victorian Population Health Survey 2008'.

"Victoria's Population Health Survey shows that our focus must be on preventing chronic illness and keeping people healthy and out of hospital," said Kathy Bell, Chief Executive Officer of the Heart Foundation (Victoria).

The Survey found that, since 2002, the proportion of Victorian adults who are current smokers has fallen from 23.9 per cent to 19.1 per cent, highlighting the positive returns to health by investing in tobacco control and Quit programs.

However, the Survey also found that since 2002:

- the proportion of Victorians eating the recommended daily intake of fruit has fallen from 54.5 per cent to 47.4 per cent
- the proportion of Victorians eating the recommended daily intake of vegetables has fallen from 12.3 per cent to 7.9 per cent

The Victorian Population Health Survey found that nearly half (48.6 per cent) of Victorian adults are overweight or obese, adding a considerable burden to the health system," said Boyd Swinburn, Director of the WHO Collaborating Center for Obesity Prevention.

The Survey also revealed the link between poor health and social disadvantage. Victorian adults were more likely to report better health as annual household income increased. Many risk factors for poor health, such as smoking, decreased as annual household income increased.

"By tackling the cause of the problem we improve the health of the whole community, particularly Victoria's most disadvantaged groups," said Cath Smith, Chief Executive Officer of the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS).

"The recent *Accessing the Cost-Effectiveness in Prevention* study found that many prevention programs such as SunSmart, Quit and mass media campaigns to promote physical activity not only save lives, but are also highly cost-effective," said Professor David Hill, Chief Executive Officer of Cancer Council Victoria.<sup>1</sup>

"We know that prevention delivers great value for health budgets. VicHealth research shows even small improvements in domestic violence, smoking and drinking, and increasing physical activity and fruit and vegetable intake would save the economy billions of dollars," said VicHealth CEO, Todd Harper.

"Many of the risks for chronic disease can be prevented by investing in public health and prevention programs," said Greg Johnson, Chief Executive Officer of Diabetes Australia (Victoria).

"Prevention saves lives and keeps people healthy and out of hospital. This should be the focus of future health care in Victoria," said Erin Lalor, Chief Executive Officer of the National Stroke Foundation.

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<sup>1</sup> More information about *Accessing the Cost-Effectiveness in Prevention (ACE-Prevention)*, can be found at <http://www.sph.uq.edu.au/bodce-ace-prevention>