



MEDIA RELEASE

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Young Victorians team up with VicHealth and local councils to drive healthy change

VicHealth is partnering with 16 councils in an ambitious new project putting young Victorians in the driver's seat to help create a healthier future.

From Mildura to Melton, young people in the 16 'fast-track' local government areas will have a seat at the decision-making table, as councils create connected and supportive communities through the design of their Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plans.

This partnership comes as a VicHealth survey shows 4 in every 10 young Victorians aged 18 to 24 had difficulties staying connected to others in 2020 (up from 3 in 10 before coronavirus restrictions began). 4 in 10 were concerned about their job prospects and 2 in 10 said they did not trust their neighboursⁱ.

VicHealth CEO Dr Sandro Demaio said the *VicHealth Local Government Partnership – young people leading healthier communities* aims to help children grow up active, connected and healthy.

"Local governments have said they want to work with us in a way that is tailored to young people in their communities. By offering meaningful opportunities where young people's voices can be heard, we can support young people to reconnect and inspire more creative local solutions," Dr Demaio said.

"Over the next 5 years, we'll work with councils across Victoria in a strategic and equitable way, through evidence-based modules and communities of practice, to secure a healthy future for all young people."

A recent study by VicHealth and the Burnet Institute found many young Victorians wanted greater consideration of their voices in decision making toⁱⁱ help them to stay connected, healthy and mentally wellⁱⁱⁱ.

18-year-old Letisha Osagiede, a member of Hume City Council's Youth Summit Working Group, says it's important for young voices to be heard, supported and included to create a stronger and more inclusive community for everyone.

"I think it is important for young people to have a voice because it can make change! Hume is a diverse community with lots of different people with different values. By including young voices, it makes the community that is for everyone – showing we are all supported and included. Everyone can bring their ideas and make a community that is for everyone."

The *VicHealth Local Government Partnership* initiative involves a range of evidence-based health promotion modules for local councils. The modules will be developed with input from a range of expert partners, including academics, community organisations and people with lived experiences to help create effective, equitable and sustainable change in local communities.



Partnering with councils in this way will see stronger and long-lasting outcomes for more Victorians, including those who face barriers to reaching their full health potential, because of circumstances such as their income, cultural background, gender, age or where they live.

The 16 'fast-track' councils involved in the *VicHealth Local Government Partnership – young people leading healthier communities* project are:

- Ballarat City Council
- Buloke Shire Council
- Central Goldfields Shire Council
- City of Greater Bendigo
- Colac Otway Shire Council
- East Gippsland Shire Council
- Glenelg Shire Council
- Greater Dandenong City Council
- Greater Shepparton City Council
- Hume City Council
- Latrobe City Council
- Melton City Council
- Mildura Rural City Council
- Northern Grampians Shire Council
- Southern Grampians Shire Council
- Wellington Shire Council.

All other Victorian councils will have access to VicHealth's new health promotion modules from September 2021. Councils wishing to participate and learn more, can visit:

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/local-government-partnership

Learn more about the project in this video: https://youtu.be/GZ6YTqIa_Yo

ⁱ VicHealth Coronavirus Victorian Wellbeing Impact Study (2020), Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne <https://doi.org/10.37309/2020.PO909>

ⁱⁱⁱ Burnet Institute and VicHealth (2020), Young people coping with coronavirus: interim report, Burnet Institute and Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, Melbourne. <https://doi.org/10.37309/2020.MW1001>