An update from the Minister for Health

One year into implementation, the Minister for Health, the Hon David Davis MP, provides a short video update on Healthy Together Victoria. Over 1000 schools and early childhood services have now registered to become health promoting environments for children, while businesses are also signing up to promote better health.

Click here to play.

Healthy Together Greater Dandenong launch

Minister for Health David Davis joins staff stretches at the launch of Healthy Together Greater Dandenong.

Minister for Health David Davis officially launched Healthy Together Greater Dandenong at A&L Windows - one of more than 300 local manufacturing businesses.

A&L Windows is one of the first Greater Dandenong manufacturing workplaces to sign up as a health promoting workplace under the Achievement Program, and is a great example of a workplace aiming for better health.

"Healthy Together Greater Dandenong is a new and exciting initiative that aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Greater Dandenong residents where they live, learn, work and play”.

“We are committed to working with the community in tackling preventable diseases, obesity and chronic illness and promoting healthier lifestyles,” Minister Davis said.
Greater Dandenong Mayor Angela Long welcomed the investment to create Healthy Together Greater Dandenong.

“We know that healthy workers are happier workers, so there’s a great incentive for decision makers and workers to make healthy choices to benefit themselves, their workplace and their families and the wider community as a flow on effect,” she said.

Through Healthy Together Greater Dandenong, a team of 13 new staff have been employed by Council and are dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Greater Dandenong. The team is targeting workplaces, schools and early learning settings, and the broader community.

The City of Greater Dandenong is one of 14 local government areas across Victoria that will be working with their community to create healthier environments. The other areas are Cardinia Shire, Bendigo, Geelong, Hume, Knox, Latrobe, Mildura, Whittlesea, Wodonga, Wyndham, Central Goldfields, Pyrenees and Ararat.

Caterers signing up for HEAS menu assessments

Sumo Salad Mildura are one of the first catering services to sign up for a HEAS menu assessment. Sumo Salad in Mildura is one of the first catering services in Victoria to sign up for a menu assessment with the Healthy Together Healthy Eating Advisory Service (HEAS).

With the support of Healthy Together Mildura and Nutrition Australia, the mother and daughter team will be assessing their catering menu and looking at what they can do to make it healthier. What they learn through this process will also help them to provide advice on healthier options to customers.

“Healthy food is our industry, so it only seemed natural to team up with Healthy Together Mildura to educate, inform and encourage people towards a healthier lifestyle. It is a wonderful opportunity for us to give back to our community and form new, positive relationships,” said Bec Burton.

The HEAS is working closely with Healthy Together teams across Victoria to support their work with workplaces, education settings and communities. Menu assessments are available free of charge to workplace canteens, catering and food service facilities within Healthy Together Communities, and as a fee-for-service to workplaces in other areas. Schools, early childhood services and hospital retailers across Victoria can all access menu assessments at no charge.

For more information or to enquire about a menu assessment contact the Healthy Eating Advisory Service on 1300 22 52 88 or at vheas@nutritionaustralia.org.

New faces leading the Achievement Program

The Centre of Excellence in Intervention and Prevention Science (CEIPS) has welcomed two new and highly experienced staff to lead the Achievement Program. Philip Vita is taking up the role of Program Manager and Emma Harris is joining as Team Leader.

Philip brings with him extensive high-level policy and practice experience from a range of settings including early childhood and schools, and has been a lead figure in the development of workplace health initiatives for the Australian and New South Wales Government. Most recently, Philip was the Director of the Sydney Diabetes Prevention Program at the Boden Institute of Obesity, Nutrition, Exercise and Eating Disorders, University of Sydney and Sydney Local Health District.

As the Health Promotion Team Leader at Peninsula Health, Emma has recently been implementing a settings based approach with schools and workplaces. With a background as a secondary school teacher, Emma has also worked for the National Health Service (UK) as part of the Healthy Schools Program, and as the Auckland Regional Coordinator for the Health Promoting Schools National Team in New Zealand.
The Achievement Program supports schools, early childhood services and workplaces to create healthier environments. For more information and to register go to http://www.health.vic.gov.au/prevention/achievementprogram.htm.

Philip Vita and Emma Harris join CEIPS to lead the Achievement Program.

Transport, sustainability and health webinar

The Department of Health and the University of Melbourne’s McCaughey VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing are hosting a series of seminars with Dr Larry Frank from the University of British Columbia.

Dr Frank is the Bombardier Chairholder in Sustainable Transport at the University of British Columbia and Senior Non-resident Fellow of the Brookings Institute. He is also cross-appointed with the School of Population and Public Health and specialises in the interaction between land use, travel behaviour, air quality and health.

On 13 May, Dr Frank will be giving a free webinar which will be of particular interest to those involved in physical activity and urban design, specifically local government planners and public health practitioners.

Evidence-based tools to evaluate health impacts of community design

Date: 13 May 2013
Time: 1.00pm-2.00pm.
Registration: Registration is essential, go to https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1334594160623346432

Eating smarter in Knox

Healthy Together Knox and Knox Health Services are working closely with local food premises to provide healthier food in Knox through the new Eat Smart initiative.

Eat Smart aims to reward local food outlets that adhere to food safety standards and provide healthy food choices to customers.

In addition to ensuring food safety, registered food businesses such as restaurants and cafes will be encouraged to make small changes to their menus to reduce salt, fat and sugar and increase fruits, vegetables, legumes and cereals. They are also encouraged to rethink portion sizes to support better health.

The Knox Health Services team will be introducing food businesses to the new initiative as part of their routine food safety inspections, and businesses will be encouraged to get on board to support healthier options for Knox residents.

Sit-stand workstations on trial in Latrobe

Latrobe City Council is investigating different ways to create a healthier workplace, and with the support of their Healthy Organisation Workplace Committee, they are trialling adjustable sit-stand workstations.

Spending long periods of time seated has been linked to chronic disease, so the idea in Latrobe is to encourage workers to sit less and move more during their working day. The workstations on trial allow people to make the choice whether to sit or stand while working at their desk.

The first participants are excited by the opportunity to be able to take a break from sitting for long periods of time. So far, user feedback has been extremely positive.
"I love it! It is fantastic to be able to stand up and work. After working 20 years in an office it makes such a big difference to how I feel. There are a few things (about the workstation) that I have to work around but it is worth it," says Nikki Lappin from Child and Family Services.

The trial will run for six months and will allow all divisions to test the workstations and determine if sit-stand workstations are a suitable and cost effective option to reduce sitting time at work.

This is just one of many ways Latrobe City Council is seeking to encourage their staff to be more active at work.

Students getting involved in healthy eating

Students from St John’s Regional College in Dandenong share their ideas for healthy eating

Students from across Victoria are helping to develop a new healthy eating and food literacy initiative for secondary schools.

Students from Geelong High School, Werribee Secondary College, Belvoir Special School in Wodonga, St John’s Regional College in Dandenong and Mildura Senior College have been exploring what healthy eating means for them in their schools and their communities. With the support of their teachers, the students have also identified ways that healthier food choices can be supported in their local area.

The students said they wanted to see more varieties of healthy food available in their schools, and at cheaper prices. They also suggested that fundraising activities could be healthier, recommending that fundraising stalls could sell things such as smoothies, vegetable kebabs, wraps and sandwiches as healthy alternatives.

The students also pointed to social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter as being key to engaging young people, and suggested that mimicking reality cooking show competitions – such as “My School Kitchen Rules” - would be a great way to create interest amongst their peers.

These and other insightful ideas from students are helping Home Economics Victoria to develop a healthy eating and food literacy initiative that will engage young people and support healthy eating for the long-term.

Thanks to Home Economics Victoria for this article.

Creating healthier smiles in Greater Bendigo

Healthy Together Bendigo and Bendigo Health are working with Loddon Mallee Preschool Association to build healthier smiles across Greater Bendigo.

Smiles 4 Miles aims to improve the oral health of the youngest children in the community. Funded by Dental Health Services Victoria, Smiles 4 Miles is being delivered to preschools locally to help young children drink well, eat well, and clean well.

Thanks to Healthy Together Bendigo, the program has reached capacity this year by building on relationships developed with early childhood services through the Achievement Program.

Healthy Together Bendigo, Bendigo Health and Loddon Mallee Preschool Association now make up the partnership group that will work with staff, children and their families over the coming months to improve oral health and healthy eating across Greater Bendigo.

Whittlesea’s plan for healthy catering

The City of Whittlesea’s four work sites are about to get a healthier take on catering. The new Healthy Catering Policy has been drafted by staff from across the organisation, and work is already underway to inform and educate local catering suppliers about the changes.

The new Healthy Catering Policy sees the introduction of a number of key changes to catering within council. All council catered events (excluding community festivals and events) will begin using the traffic light approach to
healthier food choices: 50% of food choices to be ‘green’ (healthier option), 30% of food choices to be ‘amber’ (to be eaten in moderation) and 20% of food choices to be ‘red’ (should only be eaten occasionally). In addition, existing vending machines will be replaced with healthier options and catering will not be provided for internal meetings under two hours in length.

To support the new policy, a Healthy Catering Panel of Suppliers is being established. Local caterers met with council recently to hear about the new policy and learn about the support available, and how they could apply to be part of the Panel of Suppliers. Inclusion on the Panel not only means that the caterers will be used exclusively by council for a three year period, but local caterers that are providing a healthy menu will also be promoted to workplaces as part of the Achievement Program.

In brief…

- Mayor Cr Rex Griffin, Mr Craig Ondarchie MP and Ted Chwasta from The Good Guys Thomastown have welcomed Jamie’s Ministry of Food mobile kitchen to Whittlesea.
- ‘Connect with Cooking’ is aiming to establish a community cooking movement across Bendigo. One forum has already been held, with a second larger event to be held in June to connect food stakeholders in the local area.

Cycling into the future

In December 2012, the Victorian Government released Cycling into the Future 2013-23: Victoria’s Cycling Strategy. The strategy is being supported by a series of action plans, the first of which - Victoria Cycling Action Plan 2013 & 2014 - has also been released.

To support the implementation of this policy, we are keen to hear of cycling policies, strategies and projects underway where you live, learn, work and play.

Tell us via Twitter #viccycling

For more information on the cycling strategy and action plan see http://www.transport.vic.gov.au/projects/cycling/cycling-strategy

Creating the link between growing vegies and eating vegies

Farmers in Wyndham are growing 70% of Victoria’s leafy green vegetables, yet only 5% of local people are eating the recommended number of serves of vegetables each day…so Healthy Together Wyndham is working to build a stronger connection between “we grow vegetables” and “we eat vegetables” in the local area.

Building relationships with local farmers has been central to this work, and the first step was to invite local farmers, and their produce, to play a central role in the launch of Healthy Together Wyndham last year. Since then, local residents and producers have been working on ideas to help Wyndham rediscover fresh local food.

For instance, a sub-committee of the Werribee South Rate Payers’ Association is currently investigating ways to help children learn more about farms and growing food in Werribee South to support increased awareness and vegetable consumption among children and their families.

The team at Wyndham have also been uncovering the barriers to selling local produce locally with the help of local growers. This has led to discussions across local government – including with local laws, town planning, economic development and environmental health – to find ways to support the sale of fresh local produce at fresh food markets, food vans and roadside stalls.

Through a broad range of initiatives Healthy Together Wyndham is reconnecting local people with the high quality local produce the area is known for.

Victoria’s prevention effort aims to improve people’s health where they live, learn, work and play.

It incorporates policies and strategies to support good health across Victoria, as well as locally-led Healthy Together Communities in Hume, Wyndham, Knox, Whittlesea, Greater Dandenong, Cardinia Shire, Mildura, Bendigo, Wodonga, Latrobe, Geelong and Grampians Goldfields.

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