



COMMUNITY HEALTH FIRST URGES VICTORIAN GOVERNMENT TO REVERSE CUTS TO HEALTH PROMOTION FUNDING

Community Health First was today made aware that Integrated Health Promotion funding to metropolitan, rural, and regional community health services is set to be cut by an average of 10% in the upcoming State budget.

Health promotion plays a critical role in ensuring better health outcomes for communities across metropolitan, regional, and rural Victoria. Community health services play a critical role in the delivery of state-wide health promotion activity, and in doing so, saves the Victorian Government tens of millions of dollars each year by preventing avoidable hospital presentations and other healthcare costs.

Health promotion services engage with communities to build health literacy and empower community members to take control of their health, ultimately reducing the risks of poor health outcomes and avoiding the associated costs of poor health.

Investment in health promotion is critical to address the escalating healthcare costs in Victoria. According to a report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Potentially preventable hospitalisations in Australia by age groups and small geographic areas*, 38% of illness, diseases, and early deaths can be prevented. This same report also found that 1 in 10 hospital admission days are preventable. This is particularly relevant given that the Productivity Commission Report on Government Services found that there was an annual increase of 13,000 avoidable admissions during the 2020-21 financial year in Victoria.

There are many real-life examples of the positive and life changing impacts of health promotion activity delivered by community health services throughout Victoria. A great example of this work is Gippsland Lakes Complete Health's Health Promotion Team Leader Jaquie Nethercote, who was recently announced as a winner of the inaugural *Vic Kids Eat Well Awards*. These awards recognise outstanding efforts by organisations to provide healthier food and drink options for kids across the state and highlights the positive difference that health promotion programs like *Vic Kids Eat Well* make at a community level.

Another prime example is the *Let's Bring Change Together* project, led by DPV Health. This project helps to reduce family violence in South Asian communities across Victoria. According to Whitney Exposto, Former DPV Health Senior Health promotion Officer, the project was developed to support the community to manage family violence and isolation. "We trust that the video will pave the way to work with other diverse communities within Hume & Whittlesea to help create a safe, equal, and respectful community for all," said Ms Exposto.

Community Health First urges the Victorian Government to reverse the proposed cuts to be made to Integrated Health Promotion funding.

The more we invest in prevention, the more disease we prevent, the healthier our communities become and the less we rely on costly ambulance, emergency, and hospital services and workforces.

Quotes attributed to Community Health First spokesperson:

"A short-sighted decision to reduce health promotion spending now will ultimately result in increased costs elsewhere in the health system in years to come".

"Health promotion services include programs that educate school children about healthy eating, work with sports clubs to include people with a disability, promote gender equity in parenting, and work with communities to address family violence and social isolation."

"During COVID-19 health promotion services connected and supported our most vulnerable communities to keep them safe, protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities is an essential part of what community health services do".

FOR MEDIA COMMENT OR CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS, CONTACT STEVE MICHELSON - 0427 906 100.

Community Health First is an initiative being led by all 24 registered, independent community health services in Victoria. Community Health First seeks to start a dialogue with Government to promote the central role of community health services in the wider health system and deliver better health outcomes for communities across Victoria.