Healthy by design

Creating places that support good health is an integral part of preventing chronic disease and work is underway from New York to Wodonga to make healthy places a reality.

A recent seminar series saw Dr Karen Lee, Adjunct Professor at the Schools of Public Health, University of Alberta (WHO Collaborating Centre), and University of Toronto, share her experiences of leading and supporting initiatives to improve the built environment for better health in New York City.

Representatives from local and state government, and the planning and public health sectors gathered to hear Dr Lee talk about creating healthier buildings, streets and urban spaces through New York City’s Active Design Guidelines, and supporting access to fresh food through the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) initiative.

As part of this series, the Department of Health sponsored a webinar on 4 February and a Public Health Forum on 5 February. At the Public Health Forum, representatives from Healthy Together Cardinia Shire and Healthy Together Wodonga joined Dr Lee to share their local efforts to improve the built environment and deliver better health for their communities.

For Wodonga, the focus was on food security and the impact of embedding healthy design principles into the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) – the highest level policy document within local government. Tracey Farrant, Partnership and Engagement Officer at Healthy Together Wodonga, shared their process for influencing the MSS, as well as the struggles and achievements they have faced in supporting implementation.

On behalf of Healthy Together Cardinia Shire, Georgia Davies-Jackson, Team Leader Preventive Health Partnership, shared their ongoing efforts to incorporate healthy design principles into Cardinia Shire Council’s MSS. The 18 month long process has seen a broad range of staff from across Council involved in developing guidelines to support healthier, more active spaces.
Since the Public Health Forum, Healthy Together Cardinia Shire has achieved a major milestone, with their Healthy by Design guide being endorsed by the council for integration into their MSS. Congratulations to the team at Healthy Together Cardinia Shire and all those involved.

These experiences show that whether it is in New York City or Wodonga it is possible to create healthier places where we live, learn, work and play.

All three presentations from the Public Health Forum, plus a link to Dr Lee’s webinar, can be found at http://www.health.vic.gov.au/prevention/pcm.htm.

Dr Lee’s visit was by sponsored by the Victorian Department of Health, VicHealth, the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians, the McCaughey Centre and the Heart Foundation.

Supporting good health in Aboriginal communities

January 2013 saw the beginning of a new partnership to support food security in Aboriginal communities. In a joint statement the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Secondbite expressed their support of this new initiative, saying “We are very excited to be working together to improve food security within the Victorian Aboriginal community. The need is evident and we are compelled to act. Food plays such a vital role in supporting the physical, spiritual and emotional wellbeing of the community members that we exist to serve.”

This new partnership is just one way that VACCHO, the peak body for Aboriginal health, is supporting the health of Victorian Aboriginal communities.

As part of the Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise (VHEE), VACCHO’s Nutrition Team is implementing the Victorian Aboriginal Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy.

Key components of this strategy include:

• Workforce development - As a Registered Training Organisation VACCHO delivers accredited training for Aboriginal Health Workers. VACCHO also offers cultural safety training for mainstream organisations.
• Healthy food policies - VACCHO is supporting Aboriginal organisations such as Aboriginal health and children’s services to adopt healthy food policies similar to their own.
• Community-based healthy living programs – VACCHO delivers the Aboriginal Life! program and also works with MEND Australia to deliver healthy living programs to Victorian Aboriginal communities.
• Koori-specific health information resources – VACCHO has developed 12 Tip sheets, a Healthy Tucker Card and a new suite of child nutrition resources to support good health.
• Food security - VACCHO and Second Bite are currently working together to scope the nature and extent of Aboriginal Community Food Programs in Victoria.

More information and resources can be found at http://www.vaccho.org.au/ or contact VACCHO’s Nutrition Team on 03 9411 9411.

Many thanks to VACCHO for contributing this article.

VACCHO’s Nutrition Team - Catherine MacDonald, Sharon Thorpe and Jennifer Browne - implementing the Victorian Aboriginal Nutrition and Physical Activity Strategy.

Greater Dandenong’s supporting healthy smiles

March 2013 sees the launch of a new early years oral health and hygiene initiative in Greater Dandenong.

Healthy eating and oral health has been identified as a key issue for Greater Dandenong’s children. To address this issue, the City of Greater Dandenong is working closely with Southern Health to deliver a new initiative to help young children and their families improve their oral health. Twenty-five kindergartens, childcare centres or family day-care centres that have selected Healthy Eating and Oral Health as one of their first priorities in the Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program will be eligible to participate.
Participating organisations will be supported to improve children’s oral health via:

- a one hour family information session on oral health and hygiene, including supporting materials
- an on-site oral screening program for children aged 3-4 years old
- resources and learning materials to support the delivery of an oral health learning curriculum
- personal development training and education sessions for staff and educators.

The launch of this new initiative coincides with the first training session for staff and educators on 19 March.

For more information contact the Healthy Children Team on healthandwellbeing@cgd.vic.gov.au.

Healthy Food Charter now available

The Healthy Food Charter is now available to guide healthy eating messages across Victoria.

State Public Health Nutritionist, Veronica Graham, says that the Charter is a guide for individuals and groups spearheading healthy change, particularly those working in partnership with the Victorian Government.

“The Charter doesn’t replace specific nutrition policies or guidelines that already exist in schools, hospitals and workplaces. Instead, it provides overarching guidance to make sure we are all promoting the same messages about healthy eating to the community”, said Veronica.

The five principles at the heart of the Charter are:

- **Easy** - accessible ingredients, equipment and recipes
- **Fresh** - fruits and vegetables in every meal and snack
- **Balanced** - eat a variety of foods from core food groups
- **Healthy** – limit unhealthy foods, practice portion control and drink water
- **Connected** - share food, use local, seasonal foods, reduce waste, promote access and connect with diverse cultures and communities.

The Healthy Food Charter provides the foundations for the Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise (VHEE) and organisations are encouraged to use the Charter to communicate clear and consistent healthy eating messages in all policy, programs and community events.


“Eating fruits and vegetables at every meal is just one of the principles in the new Healthy Food Charter” says State Public Health Nutritionist, Veronica Graham.

Bendigo welcomes Jamie’s Ministry of Food Mobile Kitchen

Healthy Together Bendigo welcomed Jamie’s Ministry of Food Mobile Kitchen to Bendigo in January. Over 450 residents attended the Community Day in Bendigo’s CBD, joining in on Zumba classes, active games for kids, apple slinkies and cooking and gardening demonstrations. Kids could also plant a seed and take it home to watch it grow.

The Hon Wendy Lovell, Minister for Housing and Children and Early Childhood Development, was in attendance and spoke about how important it is to lay the foundations for good health early in life.

Over 500 Bendigo residents are attending classes at the mobile kitchen during its 10 week visit, and almost half of these participants have been referred by local community organisations to promote easy, inexpensive and healthy cooking across Bendigo.

This is the first stop for Jamie’s Ministry of Food Mobile Kitchen in Victoria. It will visit another 11 Healthy Together Communities over the next few years.

The mobile kitchen will be in Bendigo until March 24.
Wodonga’s great ideas for workplaces

Wodonga’s Healthy Workplaces Great Ideas competition is a new initiative from Healthy Together Wodonga and Wodonga’s Chamber of Commerce.

The competition aims to recognise the great work that is already underway in Wodonga to create healthier organisations, and also to inspire other workplaces to think of the ideas they could implement to create a healthier place for their workers and their community. Businesses that are already successfully implementing great ideas for health will be recognised and promoted through the council and the Chamber of Commerce. Organisations that have great ideas but are not yet implementing will be offered advice and support to put their ideas into practice.

Along the way, organisations can win healthy and active prizes such as a corporate team membership to the YMCA Sports and Leisure Centre, a corporate sponsorship package for community events such as the Fed Hill Challenge or the Nail Can Hill Run, a team day at Murray River Canoe Hire, a weekly fruit and veg box with support to introduce this as an ongoing program, or a workplace water cooler.

The competition will help both Healthy Together Wodonga and the Chamber of Commerce to support healthy workplaces in their city.

Walking meetings are one of Wodonga Council’s great ideas for a healthier workplace. Councillor Mike Fraser meets and walks with the Healthy Together Wodonga team above.

Healthy workplaces registrations now open

The Victorian Prevention and Health Promotion Achievement Program for workplaces is now open for registrations.

The Achievement Program is supporting best practice workplace health promotion to create healthier environments for workers and their families. It focuses on five priority areas - healthy eating, physical activity, alcohol, smoking, and mental health and wellbeing.

Participating in the Achievement Program will improve the health and wellbeing of employees, and can offer benefits to employers through increased employee engagement, improved productivity, reduced sick leave, and increased employee retention.

Participating workplaces will receive guidance, tools and templates, and will be networked in with other organisations, programs and health professionals for additional support. They will also receive government recognition for their efforts.

To register, email admin@achievementprogram.org.au.

New dietary guidelines for Australians

The NHMRC has launched an update of the Australian Dietary Guidelines ten years after they were first released in 2003. These guidelines provide the latest scientific advice for healthier Australian diets.

The key highlights which distinguish the new Dietary Guidelines from the earlier version include:

- the renaming of ‘extra’ foods as ‘discretionary’ foods to highlight that these foods are not needed for health
- strengthened evidence and recommendations around limiting sugar-sweetened drinks
- an increase in the serves of dairy, fruit, vegetables and meat for children and adolescents
- greater emphasis on eating a range of different coloured fruits and vegetables
- greater focus on the benefits of wholemeal grains and cereals
- advice on replacing saturated fats with poly and monounsaturated fats, rather than limiting saturated fat
- strong evidence on the benefits of reducing salt/sodium
- provision of daily food requirements for infants, toddlers and preschoolers.
Alongside the release of the Dietary Guidelines for adults, adolescents and children, the NHMRC has also released Infant Feeding Guidelines. These guidelines aim to assist health workers to provide advice about infant feeding, including breast feeding, supporting mothers and parents, introducing solids, preparing infant formula and other common health related concerns.


**In brief…**

- Healthy Together Mildura is working with local sports clubs to encourage healthy eating options in club canteens. Clubs can receive additional funds for healthy food options or equipment if they work with the team to consider healthier choices.
- Up to 850 youngsters in Cardinia Shire will benefit from a partnership between Healthy Together Cardinia Shire and the Dental Health Service Victoria (DHSV). Children aged 3-4 are the target for this initiative.
- Healthy Together Geelong are supporting a new Business Excellence Award for health promoting workplaces. These prestigious awards are coordinated by Geelong’s Chamber of Commerce and are an integral part of Geelong’s business landscape.

**What are your favourite healthy apps and tools?**


The new incarnation includes a range of apps, tools and resources to help people choose healthy food and get more physically active. Among these are NHMRC’s Food Balance Game for children, VicWalks Walking Maps and a BMI calculator.

Does your organisation have any apps, tools or resources that you would like to share? What are your favourites?

Tell us via Twitter #healthytoolsandapps

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