

## **Keep VicHealth Independent and Strong**

Dear Premier

The most important thing is the health and wellbeing of our families and communities. That's why it matters to all of us that there is a strong focus on keeping Victorians healthy and well.

For 40 years, VicHealth has been a world-leading health promotion agency at the forefront of campaigns and programs that have improved the health of people across the state, and saved countless Victorian lives.

VicHealth's independence is critical to its impact – existing beyond four-year political terms, it has the ability to build enduring community partnerships, inform long-term strategy, and deliver programs that help more Victorians lead longer, healthier lives.

**For these reasons, we call on you to keep VicHealth as a strong, independent and fully funded health promotion agency.**

As the world's first health promotion foundation, VicHealth has been instrumental in major reforms and initiatives, including the world-leading Quit and SunSmart programs, the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program, the This Girl Can Program to support Victorian women and girls to be active, and the first Victorian breast screening and cervical screening programs. Beginning with its bold move to replace tobacco billboard advertising with 200 VicHealth billboard advertisements in 1989, VicHealth has paved the way for innovative new approaches to health, benefiting the lives of many Victorians.

Today, VicHealth continues to work with community organisations, local governments, universities and charities to build healthier communities and address disadvantage. Its track record of driving change and creating impact is why other countries look to Victoria for guidance in establishing their own health promotion agencies.

The health challenges facing Victoria are growing and far reaching. They include increasing rates of chronic disease and mental health conditions, misinformation and disinformation, and overwhelmed hospital systems.

Now more than ever, prevention matters.

We need independent, trusted health bodies to provide advice, support community-based work, and lead policy development and research.

We are calling on you to maintain VicHealth as a stand-alone, fully funded health promotion agency, and withdraw any plans to absorb it into the Department of Health.

Yours sincerely

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Dr Lisa Murphy, Chief Executive Officer, Stroke Foundation  
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Dr Erin Lalor, Chief Executive Officer, Alcohol and Drug Foundation  
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Melissa Russell, President, Australian Epidemiology  
Terry Slevin, Chief Executive Officer, Public Health Association of Australia  
Professor Catherine Bennett, Distinguished Professor and Chair in Epidemiology, Deakin University  
Tim Read, Victorian state MP, The Greens  
Andrea McLeod, Chief Executive Officer, Better Health Network  
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