

Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy  
2010-2014

Consultation  
2010

Response Form

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Authorised by the State Government of Victoria, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne.

## Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy 2010-2014. The 2010 Consultation paper aims to facilitate ongoing discussion about women's health building on previous consultations for the 2002-06 and 2006-10 strategies.

Your feedback on the Consultation paper will assist with the development of the third Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy 2010-2014.

Please use this response form to provide us with feedback that will assist in developing the Strategy. You can answer as many or as few questions as you like and use additional space as required.

- **Part A** provides you with information about how to provide your submission
- **Part B** asks you to supply information about yourself/or the organisation on whose behalf you are responding
- **Part C** presents a set of questions about which we are seeking your comment.

## Part A: How to send in a submission to the Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy 2010-2014 consultation

This template is provided to assist you to respond to the Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy 2010-2014 Consultation paper.

**Submissions close 5 pm Friday 25 June 2010.**

Submissions can be emailed to: [diversity@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:diversity@health.vic.gov.au)

or sent by post to:

Jennifer Phan  
20/50 Lonsdale Street  
Policy Coordination and Projects Branch  
Department of Health  
MELBOURNE VICTORIA 3000

## Part B: Information to help us understand your response

- If you are providing an individual response fill in section **A** below
- If you are responding on behalf of an organisation or group, fill in section **B** below.

So that we can better understand the information we collect, we would like to know a little about you, your interest in women's health and where you live. This latter information will help us identify geographic variations in the feedback.

None of the information we are collecting will be used to identify you and everything you tell us will be treated confidentially.

### A. Individual responses

Cross the 'Yes' or 'No' box to indicate if you agree to the information you provide being cited in the Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy 2010-2014:

Yes  No

What is your postcode?

If you would like to be acknowledged as a contributor to the Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy 2010-2014, please provide details below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address  
(optional): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate which of the following best describes you (place an X in relevant box)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Member of the public
<input type="checkbox"/>	Health professional
<input type="checkbox"/>	Researcher/academic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community services worker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Women's health advocate
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify) _____

**B. For organisational or group responses**

Are you providing a response on behalf of an organisation or group? Yes  No

If yes, please provide details below.

Contact name: Fiona Kuilboer

Organisation name: vicsport

Address: Level 3, Sports House

375 Albert Rd, South Melbourne

Postcode:

Email: fionak@vicsport.asn.au

Cross the 'Yes' or 'No' box to indicate if you agree to the information you provide being cited in the Victorian women's health and wellbeing strategy 2010-2014: Yes  No

## Part C: Key areas for comment

### Question 1

Are the suggested **four priority areas** (chronic illness and injury; violence against women; mental health; and sexual and reproductive health), the right ones for the Strategy to focus our efforts on for the next four years?

#### Your comments:

**vicsport** represents the needs and concerns of over 170 member groups including State Sporting Associations (SSA), Regional Sport Assemblies (RSA), Local Government Authorities (LGA) and organisations representing specific sub-groups of the sector. Three of the priority areas outlined in the Strategy (chronic illness and injury; violence against women; and mental health) are all areas through which sport can have a substantially positive effect for those involved.

The continued focus on both the mental health and sexual and reproductive health areas will maintain the work of the previous strategy, thus benefiting females who require assistance from these priority areas into the future.

The inclusion of a priority area targeting violence against women complements the release of the VicHealth National Survey on Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women (2009). It shows that the government are utilising the latest research findings and beginning to address important issues raised by this research.

Similarly, making chronic illness and injury a priority area is being increasingly important as our population ages. Steps taken now to assist Victorian women in addressing health issues which may lead to a long term illness or injury will assist the health system in future.

## Question 2

The paper describes how women experience a range of serious illnesses such as cancer and diabetes. What should we do **differently for women** to reduce the numbers of chronic illnesses and injuries they experience?

### Your comments:

In recent years, studies have consistently shown the link between participation in sport or recreation activities and the health benefits which can be gained by the individual in relation to the prevention or management of chronic illness or injury (Hutchinson, Loy, Kleiber & Dattilo 2003, Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993). Not only has it been shown that participation in sport and recreation prior to the occurrence of an illness or injury can minimise the damage it may have on the body, but after the occurrence of such injury or illness, participation can assist in recovery both physically and mentally.

**vicsport** feels there is a large opportunity for the health sector to work in partnership with the sport and recreation sector to provide these opportunities for females at risk and recovering from chronic illness and/or injury. The development of programs targeted at females to allow them to exercise in a friendly, comfortable and safe environment would greatly assist the prevention of such illness and injury. Similarly, by providing support to sport and recreation venues for the provision of cost effective child care facilities would also assist to increase the number of females who take part in sport and recreation activities. In the 2007 ABS report on Participation in Sports and Physical Recreation, 14% of females said they didn't participate in a recreational activity due to family commitments. The development of facilities and/or programs which are family friendly could also assist in improving the participation rate of females in sport and recreation.

Action in both this priority area and that of mental health is where sport can have some of the biggest impacts on the general population. **vicsport** would welcome the opportunity to discuss and further consult with the Department of Health on this and other highlighted issues outlined in this paper.

### Question 3

What **practical things** could the Department of Health focus on to improve women's health outcomes? Where can we make the most difference within these areas?

#### Your comments:

Closer consultation with the sport and recreation industry relating to the growth of partnerships with the health sector is strongly recommended in order to develop targeted and practical initiatives. Participation in sport and recreational activities either as an active participant or volunteer has been proven to provide both physical and mental health benefits (Penedo & Dahn 2005) to the individual. Utilising this area of research to develop initiatives which are female focused will provide significant gains into the future in regards to the health of the female population of Victoria and also act to lessen the burden on our health system.

Practical initiatives could involve:

- Improved access to child care facilities in sport and recreation venues
  - Assistance to build/develop them
  - Subsidies and/or financial incentives to encourage organisations to provide them
  - Softening of regulation relating to childcare facilities in sport and recreation venues
- Work with sports to develop programs specifically targeting the particular groups of women as outlined in this paper:
  - Age appropriate programs or activities for the elderly
  - Culturally sensitive initiatives for those from an Indigenous or Culturally Diverse backgrounds (especially those who may have experienced traumatic events, such as refugees)
  - Mum's only programs
- Assist sporting clubs to become more inclusive and family friendly as well as encouraging them to conduct more activities suitable for females
- When developing program, competitions or initiatives take into consideration:
  - Availability of childcare
  - Timing of activity – both day and time – could mid week be better?
  - Flexibility surrounding uniforms for financial, cultural and body image reasons
  - The use of role models in the promotion of initiatives and programs.

The suggestions outlined above not only provide an avenue for individuals to increase their physical health and wellbeing, but may provide group situations where participants are able to network and meet other females with similar issues, therefore positively contributing to the mental health of participants.

#### Question 4

In what ways can **health service providers** ensure that they better understand and meet the health needs of women?

##### **Your comments:**

To ensure the needs of women are met relating to the area of mental health, it is vital to include individuals from the sport and recreation sector in consultations regarding the development of new projects/programs. Individuals from this sector provide a wide range of skills, knowledge and networks through which to explore new ways to develop policy or implement and roll out programs within the area of sport and recreation.

In addition to this, women who have experienced hardship in this area and subsequently recovered should be included in policy and program development and discussion. Their opinions and experiences are invaluable and should be seriously considered when forming initiatives and policies such as this.

## Question 5

Are the **suggested population groups** of women under each priority area the right ones?

### Your comments:

**vicsport** represents the needs and concerns of over 170 member groups from within the sport and active recreation sector, as well as some local government bodies. As outlined in the table below, ABS Data shows over half a million females across Victoria participate in organised sport and physical activity each year (ABS, 2008). With such large numbers participating in organised sport, this poses an excellent opportunity for State Government to reach a large number and cross section of the suggested population groups.

#### FEMALE PARTICIPATION RATE

Age group (years)	Total Persons Involved (000's)
15-24	112.5
25-34	93.2
35-44	123.2
45-54	82.8
55-64	58.9
65 and over	49.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>519.7</i>

It is a strong belief of **vicsport** that sport and recreation activities can have a major impact on the future health and wellbeing of the Victorian population. We also feel this is an area that has not been utilised to its full potential to date.

**vicsport** welcome the opportunity to consult and further discuss with the Department of Health the ways in which sport and active recreation can assist in Women's health and wellbeing issues.

## Question 6

What approaches are most effective for responding to the health issues faced by **particular groups of women** under the priority areas, such as Aboriginal women, refugee women and young or older women?

### **Your comments:**

Approaches that have proven to be most effective are those which are aligned with or developed in such a way that they take into consideration the cultural needs and sensitivities of the target group.

Aboriginal women may have culturally sensitive needs or there may be a preferred method of interaction in order to develop strong relationships for the promotion of programs (i.e. who best to contact first within the community, how to best spread the message through community).

Refugee women may have been through traumatic events in their previous country of residence. As those who are in a position to shape and develop public policy and programs, we need to be aware of this and take extra care to ensure interaction with this population group is done in a sensitive manner. It may involve face-to-face contact with community leaders to explain initiatives and answer any questions or allay their concerns about the topic. Most importantly it needs to be shown that the initiatives take place in safe environments where the females can gather without fear.

When seeking to involve females of Muslim background into sport and physically active pursuits, it is important to take into consideration the requirements of their religion in regards to clothing. Encouraging sport and physical activity groups to be flexible with their uniform policies will assist with the inclusion of this growing population group. Support should also be provided for organisations to develop and most importantly implement inclusive policies and practices in this area.

Young women and older women will require different strategies to engage them in the same/similar programs. This should be taken into account when ascertaining how to promote initiatives relating to the identified priority areas.

### Examples of noteworthy or good practice

Would you like to bring to our attention noteworthy initiatives or practice examples? (If appropriate, please attach or send in any relevant materials or include relevant weblinks.)

#### **Your comments:**

An example of an initiative that has a positive effect on individual's health and wellbeing both physically and mentally is the Mother's Tennis Group which runs out of the Steel's Creek Tennis Club. This program came to the attention of **vicsport** during a call for information on female initiatives in the area of sport and recreation.

The Steel's Creek Mother's Tennis Group has been organised at the Steel's Creek tennis club, much to the delight of locals. Mothers bring their children to the courts and have an hour coaching session or social game while the children play in a safe and supervised environment. The program currently operates with two groups of four players and those on the sideline watch out for the children and socialise while the other group play before rotating. There is provision for a social game to take place at the same time as the coaching to allow for more people to join the group.

This program was set up to encourage women as well as their children from the Steels Creek area to come together after the bushfires. This was at a stage when people were starting to want to 'do' things together and also have some exercise. It has grown into a program that has produced much laughter and positive distraction from the monotonous activities of rebuilding after the fire, benefiting the participants both physically and mentally.

**Any other comments:**

**vicsport** welcome the opportunity to consult and further discuss with the Department of Health the ways in which sport and active recreation can assist in Women's health and wellbeing issues.

Thank you for your contribution.