

Healthy Together Victoria	
<b>Challenge</b>	In Victoria, 62.6% of adults - 2.4 million people - are overweight or obese, as are close to 25% of children. Overweight and obesity are linked to chronic preventable diseases including diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers. The prevalence of type 2 diabetes has more than doubled over recent decades. Obesity costs Victoria an estimated \$485 million in health care costs and \$899 million in lost production every year.
<b>Mission</b>	To create a healthier Victoria by tackling the rising rates of obesity and preventing obesity-related chronic disease.
<b>Approach</b>	Obesity is a complex issue caused by multiple factors, many of which are beyond an individual's control. To meet the challenge of obesity <b>Healthy Together Victoria</b> (HTV) is taking a complex systems approach to prevention. It is operating across Victoria for all Victorians, and includes a concentrated community-level trial in 12 <b>Healthy Together Communities</b> (HTCs).
<b>Targeting</b>	HTV is a prevention platform. It is delivering multiple strategies, policies and initiatives at both the state and local levels to target all Victorians where they live, learn, work and play - including over 2,233 schools, 2,624 early childhood services and 447,476 medium to large workplaces. HTCs are reaching 1.3 million Victorians - 25% of the Victorian population - through 520 schools, 938 early childhood services and 4,409 medium to large workplaces. For a summary of key initiatives, refer to Figure One.
<b>Commenced</b>	HTV commenced in 2011, followed by HTCs in 2012.
<b>Evaluation</b>	The HTV evaluation will assess the collective impact that a complex systems approach has on population health risk factors. It includes a randomised comparison trial of intervention communities to provide measurable evidence of impact and effectiveness.
<b>Early indicators of success</b>	An estimated 500,000 Victorians have been reached so far, including over 300,000 children, across 1,211 early childhood services, 512 primary schools, 93 secondary schools and almost 200,000 workers through 581 businesses.

## What is Healthy Together Victoria?

Preventing chronic disease is a complex challenge that requires a 'comprehensive package' of interventions and a sustained effort over the longer-term. HTV is Victoria's flagship preventive health effort and a core part of Victoria's world class health system. It aims to drive the changes necessary to support good health and wellbeing.

HTV is taking a unique 'complex systems approach' to reducing population level chronic disease risk. This approach aims for large-scale reach across the Victorian population, initiating action on the systems that influence the health and wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

HTV aims to place good health at the centre of our everyday lives by creating many health promoting environments in the places where Victorians spend their time – including in childcare centres, schools, workplaces, shops, food outlets and

sporting clubs. It is applying an approach to prevention that creates healthier environments where people live, learn, work and play for the long-term.

HTV is rolling out multiple initiatives across the state, as well as resourcing local governments in partnership with community health services in 12 HTC's. The core HTV investment is in building a health promotion workforce, both in the 12 HTC's and more broadly across the sector. This locally-owned approach is proving to be an innovative way to harness community capability to improve health.

The evaluation will assess the impact that a complex systems approach has on health risk factors across the population. It includes a randomised comparison trial of HTC's to provide measurable evidence of impact and effectiveness. This is the only trial of its size and type in the world and will contribute greatly to the international knowledge base and to the design of future preventive health initiatives.

## Why is understanding complexity and taking a systems approach so important and new?

Understanding the complex task of tackling chronic diseases and their risk factors, such as obesity, requires us to explore the range of factors that are beyond an individual's control. Understanding these connections and influences sheds light on what types of interventions can be tried.

Taking a systems approach means a departure from the traditional health promotion projects approach, which at best reaches a few people, for a short time. It means considering how the systems that influence health work and where best to intervene for optimal health and wellbeing outcomes. Drawing from different types of theories of complexity, socio-ecology and systems, HTV explores and adopts sustainable and cost effective strategies to prevent obesity related chronic disease across the whole population.

For example, Victorians spend a third of their day at work, making workplaces an important setting to capture the adult population of Victoria. Traditionally a project might target some workplaces and some employees for a limited period of time, not reaching large numbers of either people or workplaces. The HTV approach provides an action framework for all organisations and businesses to build a health promoting workplace by adopting health promoting design and practices across the working environment from healthy catering to engaging the workforce and the community in wellbeing. These changes are in place for the long-term.

This approach enables a better understanding of the complex systems that contribute to chronic disease and their risk factors, and the characteristics of prevention systems that might hold the solutions. It moves away from disconnected, small-scale, and short-term approaches, to a model that addresses the systemic drivers of chronic disease in a concerted and coordinated manner.

## What does HTV look like?

HTV funds a workforce of approximately 170 people across the state, largely in local government, community health services and non-government organisations. This workforce is undertaking a range of actions at the state and local level, such as:

- delivering high-level policy and leadership for health promotion, including a new health promotion policy for children and young people and quality local municipal health and wellbeing plans
- providing a quality improvement framework for healthy early childhood services, schools and workplaces, and supporting healthy policies, strategies and activities within these settings
- providing advice and support to create healthy canteens, menus and vending machines in children's settings, workplaces and hospitals, along with supporting healthy procurement and catering in all organisations, and working with the food industry to support healthy product formulations, access to healthy choices in supermarkets and healthier options in restaurants and retail food outlets
- working in collaboration with food growers, producers, sellers and more to map the local food system and increase access to fresh, healthy food, including providing healthy food to the most disadvantaged

- influencing community planning and transport to increase walkability of neighbourhoods, support active transport and encourage physical activity throughout the day
- working with local planners and developers to design and build communities and activity centres that support healthy lifestyles through the provision of walking and cycling paths, and parks and open spaces
- building leadership of prevention at all levels, from senior leadership positions through to local community members, through networks, exchanges and a range of supporting strategies
- working with sporting clubs and leisure centres to increase healthy food access in canteens
- activating strategies within local communities to address community needs, such as supporting healthy behaviours among young mothers and improving oral health among pre-schoolers and their families
- delivering health promotion messages across the state and across communities to build understanding, awareness and action for a healthier Victoria
- undertaking research and evaluation to further local, national and international knowledge about how best to address obesity related chronic disease.

## The critical ‘building blocks’ of a prevention system effort

To enable sustained action across the Victorian prevention system, investment is focused on the prevention system building blocks. HTV is:

- resourcing and supporting a **dedicated, reflective and skilled workforce** at a state and local level to engage, activate and influence at multiple levels of the system to combat obesity and chronic disease
- building **relationships** with prevention partners across the system, and across sectors and industries, to strengthen positive health outcomes on multiple fronts
- capturing and feeding back **knowledge and data** on progress, impact and effectiveness and calling for new types of research, policy and practice collaborations
- allocating **resources** based on best possible investment to effect change and population need, seeding long term change by resourcing local governments to lead action towards public health
- building **leadership** for sustained prevention across the system to drive effective and long lasting change.

## The important principles of system-wide change for good health

HTV is underpinned by a number of key principles that support system-wide change for good health:

### Line-of-sight

A line of sight provides a transparent view on how investment in policy is translated into measured health impacts, ensuring best value from every dollar spent on prevention.

### Prevention at scale

Prevention is viewed as a system and delivered at scale across that system to impact the health and wellbeing of large numbers of the population in the places where they spend their time such as schools, workplaces and community venues.

### Collaboration for collective impact

Long-term commitment is required by multiple partners, from different sectors, and at multiple levels, to ensure that actions are shared, mutually reinforcing, knowledge is co-created and interventions are co-produced.

### A culture of transformation and experimentation

Leading transformative change is a way of working. It recognises that when it comes to prevention we are often “stuck”. We are required to operate and think differently, engaging system stakeholders in the change process and undertaking small-scale experiments that provide insight into the most effective system interventions.

### **The practice of adaptation**

Strengthening the prevention system requires constant reflection, learning and adaption to ensure strategies are timely, relevant and sustainable.

### **Embedded equity**

Health equity is at the heart of the system, and its interventions, to ensure the highest level of health for all. This enables Victorians to make healthy choices because they become more physically, financially and socially desirable compared to less healthy options.

### **Leadership for change**

Building a critical mass of leaders at all levels of the prevention system (including senior managers, elected officials and health champions in our schools, businesses, workplaces, sporting clubs and communities) is required to drive population change.

## **A unifying and recognised identity for Victoria's prevention effort**

The contemporary nature of HTV, it's creativity to think outside of the traditional box of projects, it's rigour in design and monitoring, and it's applicability across the state and across multiple systems – such as education, media, food and planning - is allowing it to gain traction with a broad range of stakeholders. As a brand for preventive health, HTV is generating the interest and action that will cement good health at the centre of our everyday lives.

\*Please note, this document will continue to evolve as we learn and apply a whole of systems approach

