

# Active and Healthy Ageing Adviser (AHAA)

## What does an Active & Healthy Ageing Adviser (AHAA) do?

The Active & Healthy Ageing Advisers are funded by the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) to promote, build and/or maintain the health and wellbeing of people as they age (50 years and over, 40 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people) particularly those experiencing disadvantage and social isolation. This is achieved through system change, population health and place-based approaches. This includes working with services, community organisations and state and local government to:

- Foster partnerships, collaboration and networking in relation to active and healthy ageing;
- Disseminate evidence, research, data, best practice and information relevant to active and healthy ageing;
- Support stakeholders to include active and healthy ageing strategies in planning (eg. Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing planning, positive ageing planning, age/dementia friendly communities work);
- Engage with and build capacity of workforce, service providers and networks to promote, build and support active and healthy ageing across various settings relevant to older people;
- Identify and promote effective active and healthy ageing programs and strategies operating across the local area and any gaps and opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of older people;
- Enhance the recognition of the importance of active and healthy ageing.

There are ten AHAA's spread across the Department's four operational divisions, employed on a part time basis. Eight of the AHAA's sit within the Department's Population Health and Planning teams and two in the East division sit in Regional Sports Assemblies (Sports North-East in Wangaratta and Valley Sport in Shepparton). Coordination of the AHAA's is managed centrally by a Senior Program Adviser in the Department's Community Based Health Policy and Programs branch.

## Why focus on healthy ageing?

The proportion of the Victorian population aged 65 years and over is projected to increase from 15% in 2016 to 18.7% per cent in 2031. The greatest proportional change for any age group is projected to be in the oldest age group: the number of Victorians aged 85 years and over is expected to increase from around 2 per cent of the population currently to 4.6 per cent in 2051 (Victoria in Future 2016).

While we are living longer, this doesn't necessarily mean we are living better.

- The 2014 Victorian Population Health Survey data shows at a state levels that of those aged 55 years and over:
  - ½ population meet recommended fruit intake guidelines
  - Only 8% meet recommended vegetable intake guidelines
  - 45% meet physical activity recommendations.
- It is estimated that 10% of older Victorians are socially isolated (<https://www.seniorsonline.vic.gov.au/services-information/commissioner-for-senior-victorians##report>)

- An estimated 25 – 40 % of Australian adults aged 65 years and older are assessed as at risk of malnutrition or as being malnourished (<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/publications/policiesandguidelines/healthy-ageing-literature-review>)

Population ageing requires a comprehensive population approach to ageing in order to achieve the best possible health and wellbeing as people age, to enable those added years of life to be lived as well as possible.

## AHAA work priorities for 2017-18

The State-wide priorities for the AHAA's reflect the [Victorian Public Health & Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021](#):

- **Healthy eating and active living**
- **Resilient and liveable communities**
- Preventing violence and injury - falls prevention
- Preventing violence and injury - elder abuse
- Social connection
- Improving mental health
- Reducing harmful alcohol and drug use
- Tobacco free living
- Improving sexual health

All AHAA's will implement strategies to address the first two core priority areas (healthy eating and active living, resilient and liveable communities). All AHAA's will choose additional priority areas listed above to focus on according to local need.

## Other key frameworks and initiatives

- The [WHO Global Strategy on Ageing and Health](#) defines healthy ageing as a process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables wellbeing in older age. Functional ability is affected by intrinsic individual capabilities (both physical and mental); and the environments (physical, social and policy) around the individual, and the interaction between the two. Healthy ageing is about being the best you can be at any functional capacity.
- The [Victorian Active Ageing Partnership](#) is a three year DHHS funded program, intended to increase opportunities for participation in physical activity for older Victorians, especially in areas of socio-economic disadvantaged and among isolated, lonely older people not currently involved in physical activity. The program commenced in October 2015 and is being led by MOVE muscle, bone and joint health (formerly known as Arthritis Victoria), in conjunction with Monash University and Fitness Australia.
- [Place-based prevention approaches](#) recognise that people and places are inter-related and that the places where people spend their time play an important role in shaping their health and wellbeing. Local context is critical. A place-based approach focuses on local needs and local priorities, engages the community as an active partner in developing solutions, and maximises value by leveraging multiple networks, investments and activities to deliver the best outcomes for communities. The department has commenced a discussion with funded prevention and health promotion organisations and councils on how Victoria can best deliver place-based primary prevention to improve health outcomes in local communities.
- [Liveable communities](#), including [age-friendly](#) and [dementia-friendly](#) environments.
- [Age-friendly Victoria](#) encourages active ageing and optimises opportunities for good health, social and community participation for Victorian seniors. The initiative aims to promote the inclusion of older people and support services, business and community leaders to better plan for the needs of seniors and enhance the quality of life for people as they age.
- Ageing is Everyone's Business report and the work of the [Commissioner for Senior Victorians](#) on tackling social isolation and loneliness.

- The [Healthy Ageing Online Network \(HANet\)](#) is an online, interactive network for health professionals and service providers to work together, share information and resources, and discuss best practice strategies to support Victorians as they get older.
- [Well for Life](#) information booklet provides information and advice for older people to follow a healthy ageing approach to life.

## Partners

An important part of promoting and planning for active and healthy ageing is linking with current and established networks, alliances and partnerships as well as developing new opportunities and partners. AHAAs have connected with many stakeholders including:

Regional Sport Assemblies	University of the Third Age (U3A)
Primary Care Partnerships	Men's sheds
Hospitals & health services	Parks Victoria
Community health - health promotion teams	Victorian Active Ageing Partnership
Commonwealth Home Support Program – Diversity	Sport & recreation organisations
Advisors, Wellness and Reablement Consultants	Universities & research organisations
Local governments	RecLink
Municipal Association of Victoria	Peak bodies – eg. Heart Foundation, Jean Hailes
Neighbourhood houses	Victorian Healthy Eating Enterprise
Aboriginal community controlled organisations	Primary Health Networks

## Contacts

A list of AHAAs can be found at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/ageing-and-aged-care/wellbeing-and-participation/healthy-ageing/healthy-ageing-program>