

Hon Sussan Ley MP  
Minister for Health  
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Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
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14 June 2015

Dear Minister,

**Re: Healthy Together Victoria**

We are writing to support a delegation of Victorian Local Government representatives meeting with you this week regarding the future of *Healthy Together Victoria*, in light of this year's state and federal budgets.

No country in the world has yet been successful in reducing overweight and obesity and Australia is no exception. This is also the case locally. Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2013 Australian Health Survey shows the extent of the problem: 61% of Victorian adults are overweight or obese.

A comprehensive approach is needed to address this problem that includes initiatives like *Healthy Together Victoria*. The program is unique because it works in local government. That sector has a direct relationship with its community, with programs that target vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and others with a broad population approach.

In February this year, the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet*, recognised the important role played by the workforce in *Healthy Together Victoria* communities, noting:

*"... the professionals in place to promote local health do not deliver programmes or projects, but they support local settings and community leaders to map their systems (such as food provided in schools or the fruits and vegetables supplied in a town) and identify and take the necessary measures within the systems to promote healthy food and physical activity environments and behaviours."*

We recognise there are significant pressures on the health budget. However, we believe that a pilot project must be given the opportunity to run its course. Without funding certainty, we are the gains and lessons learnt from *Healthy Together Victoria* will be lost. This will add to the significant cost burden on government as a result of increasing levels of chronic disease.

We would support the message of the Local Government delegation meeting with you this week and urge you to assist in ensuring *Healthy Together Victoria*, and models like it, receive the sustainable funding they need to improve the health of all Australians.

We are happy to be contacted for clarification.

Yours sincerely,



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