

Local government and place-based approaches for primary prevention of obesity – Lessons from Victoria

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Summary

- Context and key facts
- The role of local government in place-based approaches to primary prevention of obesity
- An overview of the Victorian experience
- Critical success factors
- Conclusions

Context and key facts

- With business as usual, there is an additional overweight or obese Victorian child every 53 minutes
- We can't treat our way out of this epidemic – primary prevention is needed to reduce the incidence of new cases
- This is a public health problem – not a question of individual willpower
- We need to change the environments where we live, learn, work and play so its easier for people to eat more everyday foods and less sometimes foods...(and move more and sit less)
- Evidence and public opinion shows we need **critical MaSS** – action on **M**ultiple dimensions, **A**t **S**cale and **S**ustained

Beyond the spin, people are ready for change

VicHealth Citizen's Jury was a deep dive with a representative sample of Victorians, who said they wanted:

- Ongoing funding for community initiatives
- Healthy eating mandated in schools
- Public health campaigns
- Support for disadvantaged communities
- Restricted fast food and drink advertising to children
- A tax on sugary drinks
- Limitations on fast food outlets, including exclusion zones where children spend their time

Place-based approaches

As part of the solution, not a magic bullet, these approaches commonly share:

- **Leadership** - Clear governance and accountability
- **Partnership** - Bringing together diverse players
- **Community** - legitimacy, authenticity, empathy
- **Resourcing** - a 'backbone' agency, budget and workforce
- **Information** - data, evidence and evaluation to drive action

Local government has all these attributes...

But can't do it alone.

Victoria's experience led by researchers, government and communities

Be Active
Eat Well
2003-2006



Healthy
Together
Victoria
2011-2015



Biggest
Loser
Ararat
2013



WHO STOPS
2015-2020



Healthy
Heart for
Loddon
Campaspe
2018



Central
Highlands
Prevention
Lab 2018



RESPOND
2019



Healthy Together Victoria operated across 14 local government areas – both regional and metro

Funded through National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health

Delivered multiple strategies, led through local government and community health partnership

At the 2 year mark:

- High levels of early childhood and primary school engagement
- 7,000+ people in healthy cooking classes
- Population exposure to LiveLighter campaign

But funding ceased



In Ararat, Healthy Together Victoria activity was supplemented by The Biggest Loser

- Got the community excited about taking action together
- Boosted local efforts, shining a light on digital platforms for behaviour change



NEWS

Reality bites hard for Ararat fast food outlets as locals prefer salad over hot chips

AARON LANGMAID • SUNDAY HERALD SUN • DECEMBER 28, 2013 10:00PM

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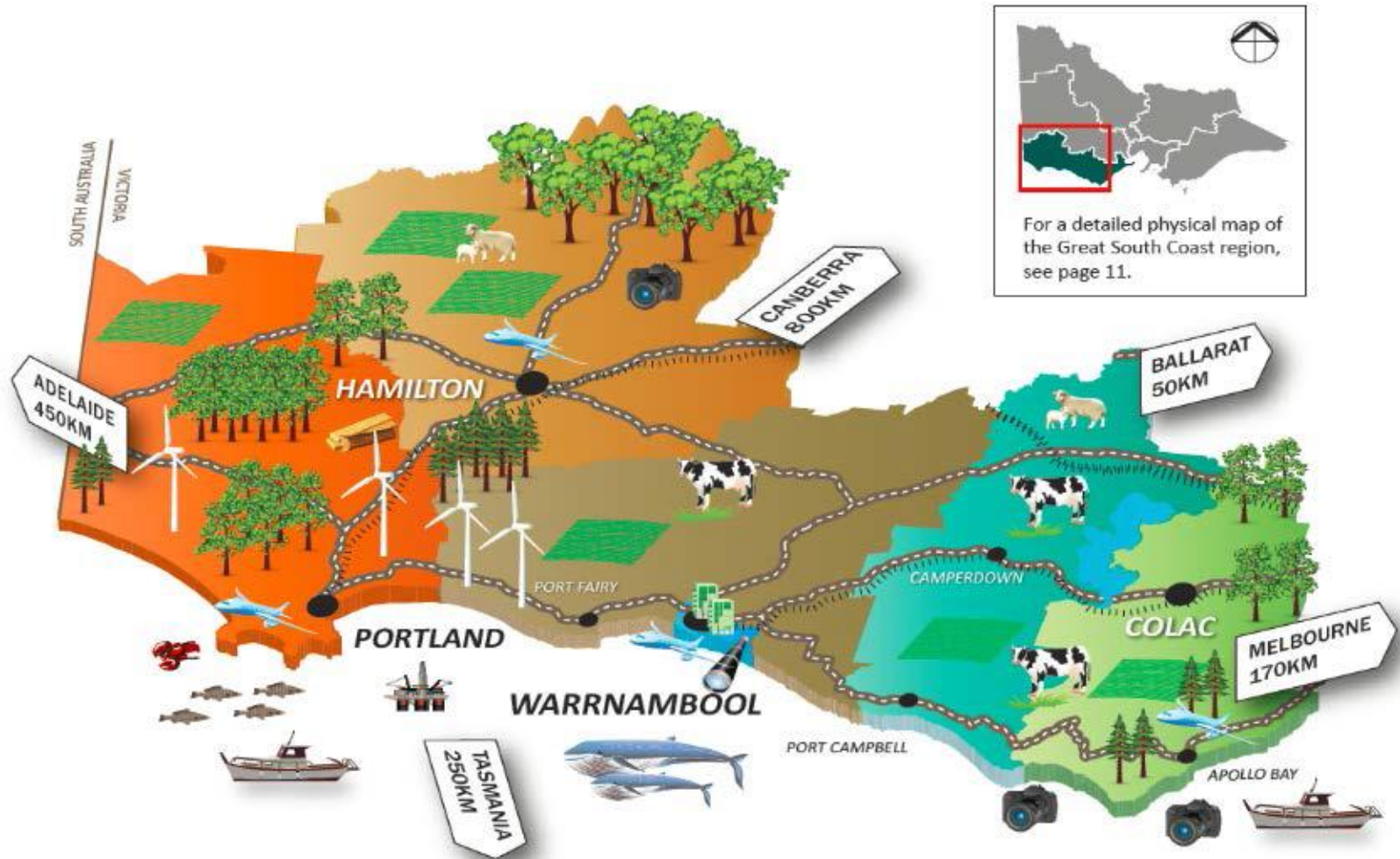
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Sal Benson serves up healthier dishes at her fast food outlet since The Biggest Loser came to town.
Picture: Rob Leeson Source: News Limited

WHO STOPS - a community-based randomised controlled trial in Victoria's Great South Coast led by Deakin University researchers



New place-based activities reflect the legacy of Healthy Together Victoria

Regional Partnerships identify priorities for their region and to develop collaborative solutions to local problems – obesity prevention initiatives are now emerging



Critical success factors

- Investment - in resources, time, people and process
- Reasonable expectations - place-based approaches are not a magic bullet and do take time, but can leave a legacy
- Supportive strategies - an epidemic requires action at the population level
- A rigorous approach to evidence use and building
- A clear approach to scale and sustainability

Conclusions

- We must act and community is ready
- Local government has a role to play in place-based approaches
- We do need to build on existing evidence and sustain our effort
- We don't need to do this...

