

VICTORIA'S
CITIZENS' JURY
ON OBESITY

INSIGHTS REPORT 2016

Victoria's Citizens'
Jury on Obesity



an initiative of
VicHealth™

supported by
newDEMOCRACY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Steering Group

AMA Victoria
Australian Beverages Council
Australian Food & Grocery Council
CHOICE
City of Melbourne
Coles
C-PAN Deakin University
Department of Premier and Cabinet in Victoria
Foodbank Victoria
Obesity Policy Coalition
Tennis Australia

Invited observers

Behavioural Insights Team
Professor Annette Braunack-Mayer
Dr Jackie Street

Delivery Partners

KINSHIP Digital
MosaicLab
newDemocracy Foundation
Wildwon

Presenters

Opening speakers to the jury

Mary-Anne Thomas, MP
Dr David Halpern
Jerril Rechter

Expert witnesses called by the jury

Adam Ferrier
Dr Daniel Little
Dr Anna Peeters
Dr Gyorgy Scrinis
Andrea Sloane

Most of all, we acknowledge the contribution from the 114 Victorians who comprised Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity.

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FOREWORD

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the historic declaration of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion. At its core were the three actions of advocacy, enablement and mediation. These actions remain as relevant to health promotion today as they were back in 1986.

In recent years, we have witnessed many changes with major demographic shifts, technological advances, and the rise of new, participatory models of democracy. These have occurred against the backdrop of dramatic increases in chronic diseases.

Obesity is now undoubtedly the most significant health challenge of our generation. It accounts for approximately 85 per cent of Australia's burden of disease, and many chronic diseases are preventable if we can reduce the risk factors including obesity. 63 per cent of Victorians are now overweight or obese as are approximately 25 per cent of our children which is astounding as well as very troubling.

Our response needs to be both creative and collaborative, drawing on those foundations of health promotion. Solving a problem such as obesity cannot be done by one agency alone; it cannot be achieved by governments alone. We must work across government, business and industry, and with the community to create the solutions that will benefit the whole of our population. We need the resolve to maintain our courage, our investment and our commitment to innovate for better health.

Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity, an initiative of VicHealth, represents one of the cutting edge approaches needed to partner with the public and build consensus on how to tackle obesity. Working with a diverse range of stakeholders and experts, this model gave everyday Victorians a journey of discovery to understand the factors influencing the way they eat and exercise. The result is 20 clear 'asks' which form a blueprint for coordinated action from government, industry and the community.

A recent Lancet study indicates that overeating has become a bigger problem than world hunger. Almost a fifth of the world's obese adults now live in six high-income countries including Australia. This is a stark reminder that there has never been a more pressing time for urgent action on obesity.



Professor John Catford
Chair VicHealth



INTRODUCTION



VicHealth has a strong commitment to innovation as a way of surfacing opportunities to accelerate the progress of health promotion efforts, as well as that of our own Action Agenda for Health Promotion. This includes trialling new approaches to solve complex public health issues, such as obesity.

Obesity is described by the World Health Organization as ‘one of today’s most blatantly visible – yet most neglected – public health problems’ (World Health Organization n.d.). Despite the continuing efforts of governments and advocates around the world, we continue to see rates of obesity worsening. In Australia, almost two-thirds of adults are overweight or obese (Department of Health 2014) with predictions indicating that 72 per cent of adults will be overweight or obese by 2025 (Leung 2014). Estimates suggest that, by 2025, one-third of Australian children will be overweight or obese (Leung 2014). The increasing social and economic costs of obesity highlight the need to explore new and comprehensive approaches.

In 2014, Dr David Halpern from the UK’s Behavioural Insights Team started a two-year residency with VicHealth as our inaugural Leading Thinker, with a focus on obesity. As a part of his residency, Dr Halpern challenged us to consider how we might apply behavioural insights to health promotion, and to re-envision the policy development process to enable citizens to engage with complex public health issues. By enabling citizens to understand influences which shape how they make decisions in practice, and by building community consensus on the required actions, we might be able to shift the dial on obesity by providing a more cohesive environment to support government, industry and community action.

A traditional approach to policy development focuses on five key stages: agenda setting, policy formulation, policy adoption, policy implementation and policy evaluation (The Texas Politics Project n.d.). Citizens are primarily engaged in this process through opportunities such as opinion polls and once every three to four years at the ballot box.

Governments have begun to explore innovative democratic models such as citizens' juries to develop better, and more enduring, public policy and deliver public value. Across Australia and around the globe, civic participation is being reimagined to address issues as diverse as environmental sustainability (Geraldton, WA), waste management (Noosa, Queensland), energy reform (Parliament of NSW), constitutional reform (Ireland), political donations (Estonia), chemical exposures and public health (USA), rebuilding of lower Manhattan after the World Trade Center attacks (USA), and mental health strategy (Canada). A growing body of evidence suggests that greater democratic participation is proving to be effective in finding impactful, long-term policy solutions (MacDonald 1998; Irvin and Stansbury 2004; Street et al. 2014).

Recognising existing efforts around obesity in Victoria by state and not-for-profit organisations, VicHealth identified an opportunity to test out the value of democratic innovation in public health. It was a chance to engage Victorians in debate and conversation as a means of informing mainstream policy and practice. In 2015, we instigated a deliberative process to catalyse public discussion and debate on the issue of overweight and obesity: Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity.

This report describes our deliberative process and presents some of the key insights and learnings from our journey.



Jerril Rechter
CEO VicHealth

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

A citizens' jury is an innovative means of involving everyday people in the process of government decision-making. Actions to address complex public health issues such as obesity can elicit polarised responses from government, industry and the community at large. Understanding the interaction between human behaviour and the environments in which we live, work and play is critical when translating research into effective and enduring public health policy.

Victoria's Citizens' Jury on Obesity, an initiative of VicHealth, provided 100 everyday Victorians with an independently designed and facilitated process to allow them to make their own decisions on obesity, and how they would like government, industry and community to respond. The intent was to mobilise communities and individuals to take action, encourage industry to initiate change, and create an enabling environment for stronger government action.

The newDemocracy Foundation, a leading Australian research institute in democratic innovation, developed a process to give a random sample of everyday citizens a 'journey of discovery' about their food choices. This citizens' jury focused specifically on food and the way we eat, recognising the large role it plays in society and psychology, and the range of influences few of us are aware of when it comes to food choices, such as social setting, colour and context.

The jury was asked to respond to the following remit:

We have a problem with obesity. How can we make it easier to eat better?

Submissions of evidence responding to the question were invited by newDemocracy Foundation. Jurors were provided with 64 submissions encompassing a broad range of views from public health advocates, food retailers and industry groups, community organisations and individual community members. After six weeks reviewing and discussing this evidence online, using a specially designed collaboration platform, the jury was asked to identify any gaps and to select experts they would like to hear further evidence from in person.

On 17 and 18 October 2015, 78 people randomly selected from the broader Victorian population came together as citizen jurors to consider the additional evidence, consolidate their views and develop their asks. An 'ask' is the jury's perspective, after considering the evidence, on what needs to be done to address the issue.

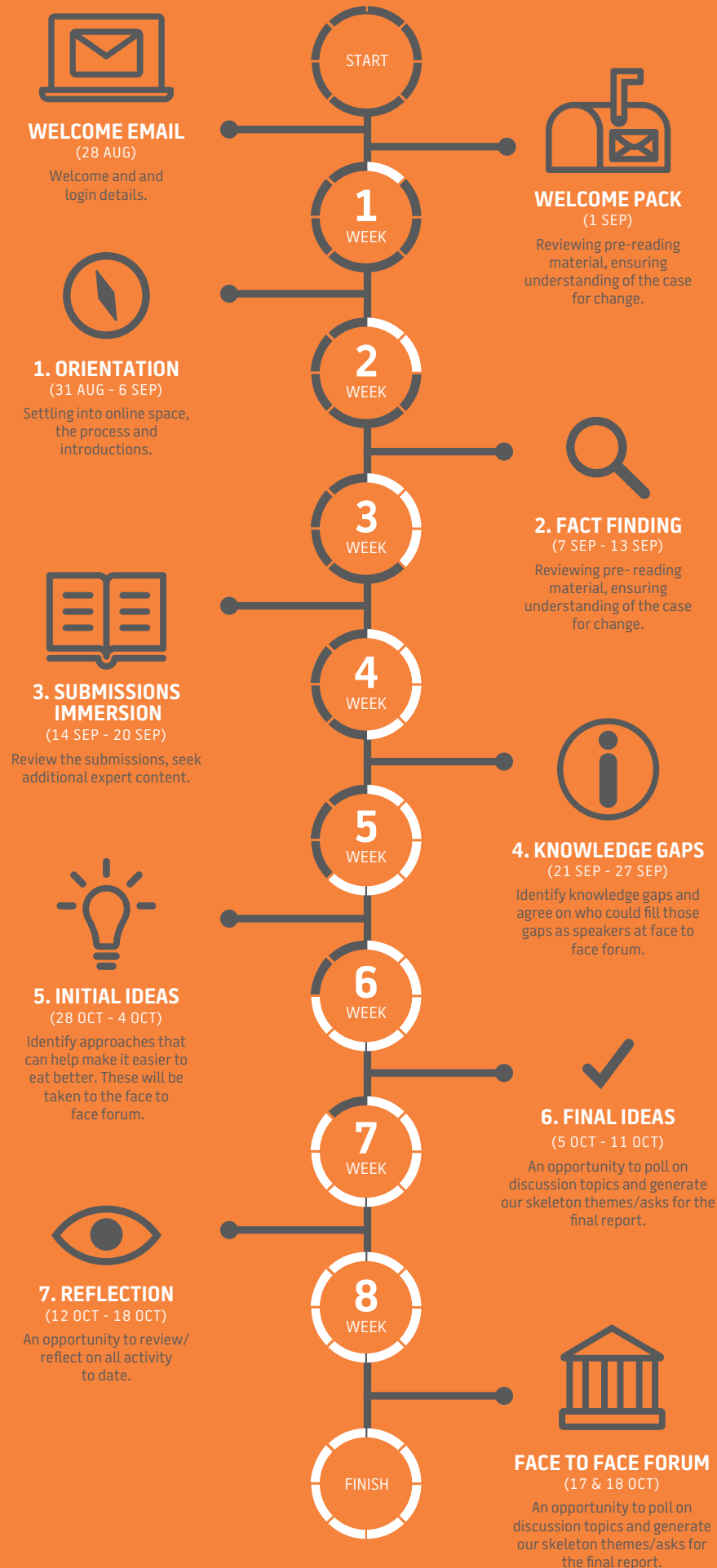
The jury presented 20 asks to a Steering Group comprising key government, industry, public health and community decision makers and convened by VicHealth. The group included representatives from AMA Victoria, Australian Beverages Council, Australian Food and Grocery Council, CHOICE, City of Melbourne, Centre for Physical Activity and Nutrition Research at Deakin University, Coles, Foodbank Victoria, Obesity Policy Coalition, Tennis Australia, VicHealth and the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Steering Group publicly responded to the jury's asks on 4 December 2015.

The progress of the jury's asks (see Appendix 1) will be monitored by VicHealth. We and some members of the Steering Group will continue to work with policy makers, public health and consumer advocates, and industry to promote the asks of the jury.

Victorian Citizens' Jury Timeline

Overview of the entire deliberation process



The Asks

1. Provide ongoing funding for community level programs that encourage healthy eating.
2. Mandate healthy eating and cooking as part of the school curriculum from pre-school to year 10.
3. Develop an ongoing “Life Be In It” or “Slip Slop Slap” style campaign for healthy eating across all types of media.
4. People on low incomes will have a discount on healthy food when they go to the shops.
5. A government-funded program to teach practical skills such as budgeting, shopping and cooking to at-risk groups.
6. Amend State planning regulations to improve access to fresh produce by:
 - requiring the incorporation of edible, green spaces in new housing and community developments
 - protecting a proportion of fertile land for agricultural purposes as opposed to housing development, specifically in the ‘green belt’ surrounding the outer suburbs.
7. Make drinking fountains and taps freely available, accessible and visible at public events and places, parks and shopping centres.
8. Restrict visibility and accessibility of ‘Red traffic light’ drinks and foods at the point of sale (where you complete the sale).
9. Establish more healthy kitchens in schools, universities hospitals and large workplaces.
10. Ban “junk food” and beverage marketing to children under the age of 16 years.
11. Provide only healthy food and drinks in Victorian schools.
12. Ask that the Victorian government prevent companies from locking farmers into unfair, restrictive contracts. Where a company does not require all the produce it has requested from a farmer the produce does not go to waste. Surplus must be made available for sale in the local/national area and other regions or to donate the surplus to charitable organisations, with farmer’s controlling what is grown on their farm.
13. (1) Increase level of taxation by imposing an additional tax at point of purchase on sugar-sweetened beverages to raise prices and disincentivise consumption – Tax of at least 20%.
(2) These additional taxes imposed on food and beverages must be earmarked (hypothecated) to fund new health promotion initiatives.
(3) Ban use of discounts applied for bundling and multiple purchases designed to increase consumption of junk food and soft drink (i.e. discounting for bulk purchase).
(4) Regulate beverage sizes, imposing a maximum size that can be sold through restaurants and retail outlets (soft drinks and other calorie-dense beverages).
(5) Introduce legislation requiring all venues at all times serving food to offer at least one healthy meal option.
14. Government mandated health star labelling. No self-regulation of labelling in the food and beverage industry.
15. Give local government the final say in deciding whether a fast food outlet is developed within their municipality.
16. Exclusion zones of unhealthy fast food chains/franchises outlets around schools, sporting clubs, youth and community centres where children <18 years spend time.
17. All projects that are implemented as a result of these asks to be monitored and evaluated to determine long term outcomes.
18. Government funding for easy and regular access to health services which enable individuals to better their eating behaviour.
19. All donations to political parties, decision makers and regulatory organisations from food and beverage interest groups must be publically declared.
20. Limit the ability of food and beverage producers to market unhealthy products by advertising a healthy component of an unhealthy product.

Refer to Appendix 1 for the jury’s full report.

KEY PROCESS DESIGN ELEMENTS

With the overarching objective of a citizens' jury process being to build trust through public accountability and transparency, our process design featured a range of distinctive aspects that distinguish this process from other citizens' juries. This section of the report outlines our multidisciplinary approach, key factors influencing jury recruitment, and the development of a clear remit and authorising environment for the jury. It also explores strategies to facilitate large-scale deliberation, maintain neutrality of information and amplify the jury's efforts across Victoria.

The following design features are highlighted:

1. Key delivery partners
2. Jury recruitment and selection
3. Establishment of remit and authority: the Steering Group
3. Facilitation, deliberation and consensus
5. Stakeholders, submissions and information management
6. Media partner

1. KEY DELIVERY PARTNERS

VicHealth appointed a multidisciplinary consortium of suppliers to combine leading expertise in democratic research, large-scale deliberative facilitation, user experience design and social technologies. This blend of methodologies was deliberately applied to extend the project’s impact beyond policy outcomes, in order to empower and strengthen the growing social movement for change. Such an approach has not been previously tried in other citizens’ juries.

PARTNER

ROLE

NEWDEMOCRACY FOUNDATION

Australia’s leading democratic innovation research institute.

As a nonpartisan organisation with no stakeholders or conflict of interest in the issue, the institute was engaged to design the process, manage the recruitment and selection of jurors, and oversee submissions to the jury. This was deliberate to ensure that integrity of the process was maintained throughout project delivery.

MOSAICLAB

A collaboration of facilitators that specialise in deliberative processes.

The team was responsible for designing and facilitating discussions and activities for both the online component and the face-to-face event. They supported the jury to stay focused on the remit – helping them to work through the submissions, determine who they wanted to hear from at the face-to-face event and, ultimately, turn their initial ideas into concrete asks.

WILDWON

An end-to-end experience design and event production company that specialises in knowledge, innovation, sustainability, social change and advocacy events designed to create meaningful and lasting impact.

The company’s experience in user experience design and social impact brought intentionality and focus to external communications, the online portal and event production. They focused on maximising the jury’s experience across the initiative, as well as supporting project management.

KINSHIP DIGITAL

A specialist consultancy that applies the principles of kinship to the digital age, helping large organisations adopt and use social and digital tools to strengthen relationships with consumers.

The consultancy worked with VicHealth ICT, Wildwon and MosaicLab to build the online portal using Zimbra, an online collaboration platform.

In addition to managing the supplier consortium, VicHealth provided the jury with their remit and an overview of obesity and food in Victoria to assist them to embark on their deliberations from a common starting point. We handled stakeholder relations, and chaired the Steering Group.

2. JURY RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

The newDemocracy Foundation employed a random selection process to secure a descriptively representative sample of the Victorian community. The sample was stratified by a range of variables including age, gender and geography. In other words, people from ‘all walks of life’ were selected.

Invitations were distributed electronically to approximately 20,000 addresses, drawn from samples of:

- the VoteCompass database (at least 570,000 of 1.2 million participants opted in to participate in events related to public policy)
- two student databases (to maximise reach to the 18–24-year age group).

It was recognised in the process design that solely using electronic databases would limit the ability to draw a truly representative sample of the population. However, given the extensive use of online engagement in the process design, newDemocracy Foundation considered drawing on electronic databases to be an appropriate proxy for internet accessibility and digital literacy.

An initial pool of 117 jurors commenced the online process, allowing for individuals to withdraw without jeopardising the validity of the process. (Jurors self-withdrew for a number of reasons including changes in personal circumstances, lack of interest and lack of time.) From this initial pool, 78 jurors participated in the face-to-face event. A citizens’ jury of this scale and magnitude had not previously been attempted in Australia.

A \$250 honorarium was provided to avoid excluding participants who may have found participation a hardship. Accommodation was offered to participants travelling from regional locations to attend the in-person deliberation.

The key measure of success for jury recruitment and selection was partly subjective: ‘do parliamentarians, the local community and the media see a group that looks like everyday Victorians they see in their daily lives?’

3. ESTABLISHING REMIT AND AUTHORITY: THE STEERING GROUP¹

Previous citizens’ juries in Australia have been commissioned by government departments and agencies, with a clear remit or focus, for action on the issue being deliberated. Two key factors influenced our approach to establishing an authorising environment. First, as VicHealth, our role within Victoria is to conduct research into health promotion and chronic disease prevention, and advise the Victorian Government on policy-relevant findings. Second, the Obesity System Atlas (Vandenbroeck et al. 2007) highlights that effectively tackling obesity requires action from a broad range of multisector stakeholders. As such, a Steering Group was established to involve key decision makers and influencers representing government, health care, industry bodies, retailers, consumer advocates, local government, academia, non-government organisations, public health advocates and sporting bodies. The deliberate use of a representative Steering Group had not been employed in previous citizens’ juries.

Previous juries designed by newDemocracy Foundation have demonstrated that providing a clear remit and demonstrating an authorising environment is vital to maximising the effectiveness of this model. Similarly, expressing the issue in neutral terms and plain English is essential for people to understand the problem to be deliberated.

It is well documented that obesity is a complex issue: there are many potential causes and many stakeholders involved in effective solutions. Tackling the full range of factors that influence obesity (including physical activity, genetics and income inequality) was deemed too large for a citizens’ jury process. Drawing on the experience of other deliberative processes, our method focused on a singular question around eating behaviour. We recognised the large role food plays in society, and the range of sociological and psychological influences on food choices. This focus provided the jury with tighter parameters on possible areas for action.

1. Refer to Appendix 2 for the names of the Steering Group’s members.

4. FACILITATION, DELIBERATION AND CONSENSUS

MosaicLab and newDemocracy Foundation worked together to build a facilitation process that would enable the large number of jurors to work through a significant amount of information online and then meet face-to-face to come up with tangible solutions that were practical and clear in intent.

Jurors were arranged into small groups, both online and in person, which were regularly mixed into new groups to avoid factions. The facilitators used a blend of synchronous (webinars) and asynchronous (example) learning approaches to assist people with the large amount of information in the submissions. This blended approach was essential to provide a balance between structured and self-paced activities during the six weeks of online deliberation.

Wildwon's design approach focused on user experience and informed jury management, communications and the build of an appropriate online environment. The facilitators worked closely with Wildwon to enable a smooth transition for the jurors from online interaction to face-to-face conversation.

A supermajority² of 80 per cent was used for voting on the asks, with a complementary minority report for jurors to provide background on discussions that didn't achieve the minimum support required for a supermajority. Jurors were able to discuss their ideas with members of the Steering Group at the beginning of the second day, to help them strengthen or clarify their asks, before final voting and report writing.

"Understanding the solutions consumers want to tackle obesity will help guide future advocacy and campaigning work. It also allows us to highlight why we are working on current issues. It's a great process to show what consumers want."

–Steering Group member

5. STAKEHOLDERS, SUBMISSIONS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

The methodology was carefully designed to give jurors access to a balanced and transparent set of information. VicHealth, as the commissioning agency, provided the jury with baseline information on the issue, as well as our own perspective on possible solutions. Steering Group members were each invited to make their own case to the jury, as was anyone within the wider community. In total, 64 submissions were received from a wide variety of individuals and organisations, encompassing the broad spectrum of views on obesity that exists in the community at large. A readers' poll was conducted through the Herald Sun (see page 15) to provide the jury with a broader range of community views on the issue. Similarly, a poll was conducted within youth organisations to ensure that the perspectives of young people were heard.

The jurors had an opportunity to clarify information with public health and nutrition experts from VicHealth during an online webinar, and a recording was made accessible to the Steering Group. All submissions were made publicly available so that the process was transparent to the public and interested stakeholders.

Jurors were prompted by the facilitators to identify who they wanted to hear more from and whether there were any potential gaps in information they had available to them, as well as who they trusted to inform them. A comprehensive list was collated by the jury and then voted on. The newDemocracy Foundation invited those in the jurors' top five to present their views to the jury at the face-to-face event and to answer questions from the jury.

The Steering Group had 'courtside seats' throughout the online process and face-to-face discussions, to ensure that transparency was upheld at all times. This also enabled the Steering Group to see the level of discussion and debate being undertaken as the jury reviewed the evidence and formulated their opinions. If they wanted to discuss something purely among themselves, the jury could request 'in-camera' sessions, from which all Steering Group members and observers were excluded.

2. A supermajority is a number which is much more than half of a total, especially in a vote.



6. MEDIA PARTNER

An essential aspect of the process design was building broader awareness of this initiative among the wider Victorian population. So that the process was seen as legitimate, we had to leverage the 'human element' so that the wider community had an opportunity to see and identify with the people involved. It was clear that the jurors were not merely interested activists but represented the bell curve of views within the community at large.

A partnership was established with The Herald and Weekly Times, publishers of the Herald Sun and Sunday Herald Sun, to promote the initiative through a series of news articles, profiles of jurors, opinion editorials and a poll that elicited the views of its readership. The Herald Sun is read by 1.3 million Victorians every week day and the Sunday Herald Sun by 1.4 million people every Sunday, with a combined weekly circulation of more than 3.4 million, the highest circulation for a newspaper in Australia.

Media activities generated significant interest and discussion on overweight and obesity across Victoria. The VicHealth-Herald Sun Readers Poll held in October 2015 yielded 2580 responses – the highest response the newspaper has had to a public survey. The jury generated 126 media mentions (58 plus 68 syndications), including print, online and radio.

“Having the opportunity to hear real grass-roots thoughts of everyday Victorians through the Citizen's Jury, rather than the often diluted and top-down information presented in research papers, not only allowed us to provide a valuable new approach to the issue, but also has much greater resonance and cut-through with the very people who need to hear the message the most.”

–Grant McArthur, Health Editor, The Herald Sun