

**ANPHA PREVENTIVE HEALTH RESEARCH GRANTS PROGRAM  
2011/2012 FUNDING ROUND**

**Funded research projects**

Steve Allsop, Curtin University, with the University of New South Wales and Monash University \$393,813

*Young Australians alcohol reporting system*

In order to effectively respond to risky drinking among young people, we need enhanced information about the nature, patterns and contexts of use. By engaging with young people and ensuring their input, this can assist us to direct policy, prevention and treatment efforts. This project will develop an approach that will be trialed in Western Australia, Victoria and New South Wales, in three metropolitan and one country area, with a view to national application thereafter. It will combine information from existing data sources with annual data gathering, targeting at-risk young people (16-19 years old) to provide:

- an early warning system on risky patterns of alcohol consumption, contexts of use and related harms that will also allow tracking of changes in use and harm over time; and,
- timely information on patterns of use and related problems to inform policy, prevention and treatment initiatives.

The establishment of structured target groups of young at-risk drinkers across three jurisdictions will also enable the future development and implementation of other key initiatives and satellite investigations such as assessment of the relationship of risky alcohol use to mental health disorders.

Cathy Banwell, Australian National University \$157,450

*What roles do time, money and social position play in driving participation in a workplace health promotion program*

The study will investigate the temporal and financial barriers to participation in a workplace health promotion program in the ACT and how these barriers affect the participation of different social groups within the workplace. Its purpose is to help employers and employees overcome any barriers these costs impose so that workforce participation in health promotion programs is improved.

Annette Braunack-Mayer, University of Adelaide \$288,381

*Steward or nanny state: Consulting the public about the use of regulations and laws to address childhood obesity*

25% of Australian children are now considered obese, compared to 21% in 1995. How should governments respond to this challenge, particularly concerning the introduction of regulations and laws that may reduce or prevent obesity in children? For example, should governments ban junk food advertising during children's television, or enforce better labelling on children's foods? The public debate around these issues is often polarised with some individuals and groups proposing that the government should avoid being a 'nanny state' and cease its intrusions into private life, and others suggesting that it should act as 'steward' and help to provide a healthy environment. The voice of ordinary citizens is rarely heard in this debate. We will systematically review the literature, analyse citizen discussion forums which discuss regulations and laws to prevent childhood obesity, survey the public on childhood obesity, and conduct a citizens' deliberative forum to answer the question: what regulations and laws, if any, are socially acceptable, ethically rigorous, legally sound, and cost-effective for the state to use in preventing childhood obesity in Australia?

Tanya Chikritzhs, Curtin University \$224,792

*The public health impacts of liquor outlets in Queensland communities: outlet numbers, alcohol sales and alcohol related morbidity*

At least 40 potentially fatal conditions are caused in whole or in part by alcohol. These include various cancers, liver disease, falls, road injuries and assaults. Alcohol-related harms can be grouped according to the type of drinking patterns they are associated with. Short-term (acute) harms are most often associated with episodic excessive drinking while long-term (chronic) harms tend to be associated with ongoing high level average exposure to alcohol. It is unclear how the level of alcohol availability within a community may affect the risk of different types of alcohol-related conditions among local residents. This study will assess the association between numbers of licensed outlets, alcohol sales and alcohol-related hospitalisations in local communities. This study will also be an international first, enabling investigation of the impact of numbers of licensed outlets on short and long-term alcohol-related harms within communities while taking into account the levels of alcohol sales made by liquor outlets.

Rachel Clark, Centre of Excellence in Intervention and Prevention Science (CEIPS) \$88,725

*Identifying Systemic Drivers of the use of Evidence to Prevent Obesity: A Service Mapping Approach*

This project aims to identify some of the factors that enable or discourage the use of evidence by local policy makers and practitioners. It starts with a description of what is being done currently in the belief that understanding why things look the way that they do now will offer insights into how to do better in the future. The current array of activities provides a way in to understanding some of the formal and informal system drivers, such as an organisation's attitude to risk, that constrain and shape policy and practice, and help or hinder the uptake of evidence. It also provides the logical starting point for thinking about what to do differently, suggesting where resources might be reallocated to increase effectiveness without increasing cost.

Helen Dixon, Cancer Council Victoria with Cancer Institute NSW \$348,093  
*Lifestyle media message-testing: Finding the keys to successful public health campaigns promoting healthy weight*

This study will identify existing mass media campaigns promoting healthy weight, physical activity and healthy eating from Australia and internationally. Potentially persuasive advertisements in each of these three domains will be shortlisted based on their concordance with content and executional characteristics known to exert beneficial influence in mass media advertising on other health topics (e.g. smoking cessation). Shortlisted advertisements for each domain will then be tested with target audiences using a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. Persuasive features of advertisements promoting healthy weight, physical activity and healthy eating will be identified. This information will be used to inform recommendations for developing and airing successful mass media campaigns on these health topics. The recommendations may identify existing campaigns with potential utility for airing to Australian audiences, or consist of a brief for developing successful advertising on these topics if development of new advertisements is deemed the most appropriate strategy.

Becky Freeman, University of Sydney \$259,159  
*Online food and beverage marketing to children and adolescents*

There is a growing body of evidence indicating that unhealthy food marketing impacts on childhood obesity, by influencing the food and drinks that children prefer, request and consume. Regulatory interventions to reduce children's exposure to this unhealthy food marketing have also been identified as a cost-effective obesity-prevention strategy. Children are exposed to unhealthy food marketing through many media channels, and increasingly this includes new media such as the Internet and viral marketing. These media channels are particularly salient forms of marketing to children, as 79% of Australian children access the Internet. This project will investigate how the rapid emergence and mass adoption of new media tools, including social networking websites, may be promoting unhealthy foods, influencing dietary choices and contributing to excessive weight gain. This research will explore how effective marketing regulations could be optimally designed to respond to the rapidly changing media landscape.

Andrew Mitchell, University of Melbourne with Cancer Council Victoria \$389,640  
*A collaborative model for combating non-communicable diseases (NCDs): coherence between regulation on risk factors and international law*

Reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases (such as cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases) by addressing the key risk factors of tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy diet is a critical challenge for Australian health policy. Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are now a global priority, with a High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly having been held in September 2011 and a review of progress scheduled in 2014. As Australia and other countries develop regulatory measures to combat the key risk factors, they are likely to face legal challenges under international trade and investment law from affected industries such as the tobacco industry, which have the potential to undermine public health initiatives. Through in-depth examination of relevant case law, statutes, regulations, treaties, international 'soft' law, and secondary literature, this project aims to clarify the role of international trade and investment law in this phenomenon to support the development of more effective and robust regulatory strategies for combating NCD risk factors.

Kerry O'Brien, Monash University \$80,000 (joint funding with NHMRC)  
*Alcohol advertising and sponsorship in Australian sport: Associations with implicit and explicit alcohol attitudes and drinking behaviour*

There is considerable debate in Australia, New Zealand and the UK as to whether a ban on alcohol advertising and sponsorship in sport is warranted. The present project will provide much needed evidence to this debate by examining whether alcohol advertising and sponsorship in Australian sport is related to unconscious (implicit) as well as conscious alcohol-related cognitions/thoughts and alcohol consumption. The research uses more rigorous and novel methods than used before, and will provide important evidence on the impact of alcohol advertising and sponsorship in sport and thus inform alcohol policy.

Claire Palermo, Monash University with Menzies School of Health Research \$77,500  
*A community of practice model in supporting remote retail store public health nutrition workforce development*

Stores in remote communities have a unique role in delivering preventative health promotion strategies by influencing the primary food supply with positive impacts on indigenous health. Past initiatives have been limited and generally not sustained and therefore health status remains well below the average for Australia. Promoting and making use of evidence based strategies of effective nutrition promotion in retail outlets, will improve Indigenous health outcomes through improvements in the food supply from remote Indigenous community stores. Supporting public health nutritionists working in the remote food retail sector, to be able to create sustainable and effective change in the foods in remote stores is key to success. This study will provide a model for workforce development, building much needed evidence and opportunities to sustain improved nutrition and health in remote communities and in addition increase the attraction and retention of public health nutritionists in remote Australia.

Anna Peeters Baker IDI and Monash University \$247,340

*The impact of obesity prevention policy on social inequalities in obesity*

The prevalence of overweight and obesity has increased greatly in Australia over the past few decades. Government and non-government organisations are calling for wide-ranging policy to prevent obesity, and work is ongoing to evaluate the potential effectiveness of such strategies. Obesity is known to be socially patterned in Australia, with those living with greater disadvantage more likely to be overweight and obese. However, little is known about the potential impact of obesity prevention strategies on this social gradient in obesity. Some strategies may be more likely to work in those with higher socio-economic position, widening the difference between social strata, while others may be more likely to narrow this difference. In this project we aim to evaluate the likely impact of potential obesity prevention policies on this social distribution of overweight and obesity, and to identify strategies more likely to decrease the difference in obesity prevalence between social strata.

Robin Room, University of Melbourne \$532,468

*Drinking patterns, regulation and market influences in Australia: the international alcohol control survey*

This project involves a large-scale survey of drinking in Australia, with a particular focus on collecting data from heavy drinkers. The project will collect data on drinking, alcohol purchasing, policy attitudes and a range of other relevant issues and respondents will be re-interviewed to assess changes in these behaviours over time. The study will provide data not previously available in Australia that can be used to better inform alcohol policy by: 1) assessing the impact of any policy changes on drinking, purchasing and harm, 2) estimating the impact of alcohol price on sub-groups of Australian drinkers and 3) measuring stability and change in heavy drinking behaviour over time.

Luke Wolfenden, Hunter New England Local Health District and University of Newcastle \$662,778

*Creating childcare environments supportive of child obesity prevention effectiveness of an intensive population based dissemination intervention*

Supporting childcare services to implement policies and practices which encourage children to eat healthily and be physically active has the capacity to make an important contribution in reducing the health burden of excessive weight gain in childhood. This study aims to assess the effectiveness of an intensive, population-based intervention in increasing the physical activity and healthy eating policies and practices of childcare services.

The study will recruit 200 NSW preschools and long day care services to participate in the study. The childcare services will be randomised to receive the intensive intervention, or a usual health promotion service support comparison group. The intensive intervention will consist of multiple strategies including staff training, incentives, executive support, performance feedback, resources and ongoing support information will be collected about healthy eating and physical activity service policies and practices before and after the intervention to assess the effectiveness of the initiative.

The intervention will be the first of its kind internationally and will provide valuable information for health promotion policy makers and practitioners on ways to support services create environments more supportive of child obesity prevention.