

Funding plea for Sunbury health project

Health authorities have called on the federal and state governments to stop bickering over the funding of a preventative health initiative that has made significant inroads in Sunbury.

Sunbury Community Health (SCH) chief executive Phillip Ripper and the Victorian Healthcare Association (VHA) urged the federal government to use tonight's budget to support efforts to get people to take control of their health and prevent expensive hospital care.

As reported by *Star Weekly*, Hume is one of 12 Victorian councils at risk of losing programs run by Healthy Together Victoria, which is funded by the state government.

Federal funding for the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health was cut in the 2014 budget.

The state government agreed to continue its share of the funding until June 30, but no money was allocated in last week's budget.

Mr Ripper said dozens of programs run under the Healthy Together banner, including pop-up gardens, free outdoor exercise sessions and healthy eating initiatives, were under threat.

He said Healthy Together allowed SCH to deliver innovative programs that achieved results.

"With ongoing support, I believe these programs can achieve long-term, generational change," he said.

Acting VHA chief executive Tom Symondson said strong partnerships between governments, community services and public health organisations needed help to continue.

"At a time when obesity rates are rising, more people are presenting with chronic illnesses and cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death, it's crucial that preventive health is our priority," Mr Symondson said.

State Health Minister Jill Hennessy said a deal between state and federal Liberal ministers was struck before last year's Victorian election and she expected new federal funding to be announced on Tuesday night.

Ms Hennessy said state-funded programs delivered before the National Partnership Agreement on Preventative Health would continue to receive funding.

Federal Health Minister Sussan Ley said the national agreement was ended to eliminate duplication of services.

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