

## **VicLANES scoops research prize**

**6 September 2006**

The Victorian Lifestyle and Neighbourhood Study (VicLANES) has won the 2006 Victorian public health research award for innovation.

The 10<sup>th</sup> public health awards were presented by Victorian Health Minister Bronwyn Pike on 5 September in Melbourne.

The research category for innovation recognises original new research that has the potential to make a substantial contribution to public health practice or policy.

Announcing the award Health Minister Bronwyn Pike said VicLANES was inspired by the growing awareness of researchers that obesity was more than just bad food and lifestyle, but the environment was also a key component.

“This study takes a multi-level approach and draws upon a number of different disciplinary perspectives including epidemiology, urban design and planning, statistics, psychology and sociology.

“It takes the research just one step further and identifies the relationship between social economic positions, fast food outlets in the community, the range of the fresh fruit and vegetables available in the area and obesity rates.”

Ms Pike said the results from VicLANES have been making an impact in the academic sector and in policy and practice.

“The researchers at VicLANES have been able to demonstrate that living in socio-economically disadvantaged areas is associated with lower levels of physical activity, high body mass index and less likely to purchase groceries that are consistent with dietary guidelines,” Ms Pike said.

“I would like to congratulate VicLANES on a award winning study. Their work will help inform policy and practice initiatives in our fight to against obesity and improving the health of all Victorians.

Minister Pike said she was convinced that public health initiatives were “absolutely fundamental” to the provision of a responsive health care system, but others were not so easily convinced.

“Your work demonstrates at an investment in prevention has huge payoffs, but some others are taking a bit longer to come to terms with this realisation.”

Associate Professor Anne Kavanagh, the lead investigator on VicLANES said the award was recognition of the unique methodology of the project and its capacity to generate results that will help to answer complex problems about health inequalities.

“We hope that findings from VicLANES will inform a range of policies to reduce health inequalities, and improve our understanding of why physical activity rates and the quality of the built environment varies so much between different areas of Melbourne,” she said.

Key Centre research projects have won two Department of Human Services public health research awards in three years, with “*Project I*, the longitudinal study on youth homelessness” also winning the innovation category in 2004.

For full details go to:

[www.health.vic.gov.au/publichealthawards/phap06.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/publichealthawards/phap06.htm)

Information about VicLANES is at

[www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/viclanes](http://www.kcwhs.unimelb.edu.au/viclanes)