

FRIDAY, 4 AUGUST 2023

## BOOSTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN CASEY

Federation University Australia and the City of Casey are working together to empower local women to become more physically active.

Through a series of workshops, researchers got a snapshot of the barriers to physical activity faced by local women and invited them to co-design sport and recreation solutions.

Participants identified the top four barriers to physical activity as cost, not having enough time, being unsure of what was available to them, and domestic and care responsibilities.

More than 75 women attended the workshops and researchers looked at survey data from 46 of the participants. They ranged in age from 18 to 71, many with children under 5 years old (28%) and more than half from households that speak a language other than English.

On average women reported 107 minutes of leisure-time physical activity per week, below the recommendation of 150 minutes.

The research project brought together research expertise from Federation University's Collaborative Evaluation Research Group (CERG) and Physical Activity and Sport Insights (PASI).

Lead researcher Dr Meghan Casey said after unpacking the barriers women were experiencing, researchers asked them how they would design a program for themselves and the other women who were like them.

Among the women-designed physical activities were learn to swim classes, group-based exercises like yoga and Zumba, walking groups and social sports with a focus on affordability and child-friendly or childcare options.

The City of Casey is now looking at ways to implement the participants' recommendations and once programs are rolled out, researchers will later this year assess their effectiveness in getting more local women physically active.

### **Quotes attributable to Federation University Senior Lecturer of Sport Management, Dr Meghan Casey**

*"It's well known that women generally have lower physical activity participation rates than men, but the City of Casey is also a growth area and has a culturally diverse population, and we know their participation rates are lower".*

*"By having the women involved in the process of designing how the programs will look, how they should run, how much they should cost and these aspects, this will show us if that makes a difference in changing their behaviour."*

**Quotes attributable to City of Casey Acting Director Community Life, Angie Peresso:**

*“Council is proud to have partnered with Federation University on this research project to gain a better understanding of the physical activity needs of women and girls of Casey and the barriers they face when trying to exercise and connect to their local communities through recreation.*

*“Based upon the findings, Council will develop and implement recreation programming opportunities that will address current barriers to enable more women and girls of Casey to be active more often and to improve their physical health and mental wellbeing.”*

**About Federation University Australia**

*With a history spanning over 150 years, Federation University Australia is Victoria’s premier regional dual-sector university with campuses located in Ballarat, Berwick, Brisbane, Gippsland and Wimmera. From 2018-2022 Federation ranked first in Australia for first-generation student enrolments. In a first for Australia, the globally recognised co-operative education model will be embedded across all Federation programs from 2025.*