



# OPAL Case Study

## Safe and Active Travel at the Robertson St Reserve Traffic Education Park

City of Onkaparinga

**Goal:** Parks and Places

**Theme:** Active Play

**Strategy:** Supportive Environments

### Summary

In partnership with a variety of agencies, a traffic education park has been developed at a Reynella community reserve to encourage children and their families to be active, to have fun in the local park and to learn how to be safe whilst cycling, walking or scooting.

### Our approach

The Onkaparinga OPAL team began working with the Reynella Neighbourhood Centre on a 'Screen Time Challenge' in late 2010. With the leadership and enthusiasm of the Playgroup Coordinator, the Centre's playgroup members were keen to meet the Challenge but expressed concern about the safety of children being active outside the home. Discussions within Council revealed that the nearby Robertson Street reserve was ready for redevelopment providing an opportunity to create a supportive environment to promote active play and active travel.

Discussions with the relevant Council staff followed and over 1500 people attended a community consultation event about the reserve redevelopment

during the Onkaparinga OPAL festival in September 2011. The concept of a traffic education park was widely supported and a range of community agencies contributed to the design. Two disused tennis courts were converted into an urban and a rural road circuit. The urban circuit is designed for younger children (2-5 years old) and the rural circuit is designed for older children (5-10 years old). The circuits consist of miniature road signage and line markings including driveways, a school crossing and a roundabout. Children can learn to ride their bikes and road safety skills.

Onkaparinga OPAL made a financial contribution to the creation of the traffic education park as part of Stage 1 of the reserve redevelopment which opened in September 2012. An interpretive signage book on road safety and an OPAL water fountain are being installed as part of stage 2. A local artist is also working with the local community to reinvigorate the adjacent shelter with 'Think Feet First' themed art.

### Our achievements

There has been strong community engagement to develop the traffic education park. The process has successfully achieved community outcomes and local residents report more positive attitudes to using local parks.

**I became involved through the screen time challenge which is about switching off the TV and getting kids active. I wanted a local place for kids to safely ride their bikes and somewhere to teach children about road safety. The traffic education park does both, as it offers an easy way for parents to teach their children how to ride and for parents to explain road safety. There has a very positive reaction to the traffic education park from the community and local people are excited about the upgrade.**



Amy Battams, a local Playgroup Coordinator and founding member of the Reynella Community Working Group

Children's bike riding and road safety skills are being enhanced as parents have a fun, safe and supportive environment for their children to be active. The reserve environment is now a more desirable place for families, providing a free community-based physical activity option. It is also a well-suited excursion site for local schools and preschools. The Council staff have additional expertise in applying a health lens to development projects.

Amy Battams, Playgroup Coordinator was awarded a Children's Week Award in 2012 for her involvement in the community and this project after being nominated by the Onkaparinga OPAL Team.

New suppliers have been sourced and the café has worked to make the healthier options clear for consumers, providing promotional material and prompts throughout the facility.

## Why

During the community consultation for the 'Give The Screen A Rest' OPAL theme, parents expressed concerns about the safety of their children when

learning to ride bikes and scooters outdoors. Parents felt it would be easier to encourage and support active play if there were more inviting facilities in the neighbourhood; the traffic education park addressed the need.

## Who

Children 2-12 years of age and their families in the Onkaparinga region are the target group.

## Rationale

Studies have shown that:

- high levels of screen time and inactivity are linked to children being overweight or obese
- excessive exposure to TV has been linked to poor cognitive performance and antisocial behaviour
- activity patterns established during childhood continue into adult years.

The recommended Australian guidelines for total recreational screen time (which is all screen time not related to study and homework) are one hour or less per day for children 2-5 years and two hours or less per day

for children 6-18 years. The majority of South Australian children watch more than these guidelines recommend.<sup>1</sup> The built environment can either facilitate or discourage physical activity. High quality parks that are easily accessible and desirable for a range of ages make active play an easy choice.<sup>2</sup>

## Resources

To complement the traffic education park, an interpretive signage book on road safety has been developed. With further community consultation, the 'Think Feet First' artwork is being developed for the adjacent shelter.

## About OPAL?

The OPAL (Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle) initiative supports children, families and their communities to eat well and be active. It is South Australia's largest ever investment in obesity prevention. OPAL uses a range of interconnected strategies to build knowledge and skills and change policies and environments in partnerships with others to support healthy behaviour. This case study is one of many linked projects that together are helping children, through their families and communities, to be healthy now and stay healthy for life.

### Contact:

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<sup>1</sup> SA Health. OPAL Campaign action sheet child care pre and primary schools. Give the screen a rest active play is best. [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/b6653c8045d0bf37a26cae9f9859b7b1/OPALscreenchildcare-sss-20110217.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=b6653c8045d0bf37a26cae9f9859b7b1](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/b6653c8045d0bf37a26cae9f9859b7b1/OPALscreenchildcare-sss-20110217.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=b6653c8045d0bf37a26cae9f9859b7b1) (accessed 23 July 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Keener D, Goodman K, Lowry A et al. Recommended community strategies and measurements to prevent obesity in the United States: Implementation and measurement guide. Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009

