



OPAL Case Study

Creating healthy environments in Wallaroo

The District Council of the Copper Coast

Goal: Active Leisure

Theme: Active Play

Strategy: Partnerships

Summary

The District Council of the Copper Coast (DCCC) OPAL team provided advice to those responsible for the Wallaroo Town Centre redevelopment on ways to incorporate healthy options into the redevelopment, making healthy choices easier.

Our approach

The DCCC OPAL team were invited by the Council's Chief Executive Officer to work with other Council officers on the Wallaroo town centre redevelopment plans. Common goals focussed on increasing access to drinking water and physical activity opportunities for residents of the Copper Coast and those who visit Wallaroo.

DCCC OPAL led discussions to engage young people, parents and key stakeholders in planning the best strategies to ensure destinations such as parks and gardens and community centres offered opportunities for people to walk and cycle. The directions were informed by OPAL's information about what has worked elsewhere and evidence on the likely benefits of the proposed environmental changes. Consultation

with the Early Childhood Interagency Group resulted in a proposal for a nature park and the primary school and town traders supported a 'Park and Step' site at the library.

Our achievements

Environmental changes have made physical activity and water consumption more affordable and accessible. DCCC OPAL water fountains have been installed in the Wallaroo playground and 13 bike racks are being installed at Wallaroo, North Beach and other DCCC sites.

The North Beach playground is the site of a significant redevelopment including outdoor fitness equipment and there are plans for installation of similar equipment in other local settings. The plans for the nature park are underway and the 'Park and Step' site at Wallaroo library was launched on 1st July 2013.

The experience means the DCCC is now more ready to apply a 'healthy living' lens to its urban planning work.

Why

Amongst other things, OPAL aims to change environments to ensure healthy choices such as physical activity, healthy food and tap water are easily available especially, for children and families. The Wallaroo town centre

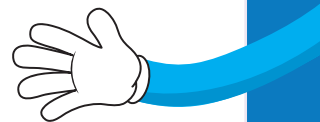
redevelopment offered an opportunity for DCCC OPAL to provide practical evidence based advice on strategies for supportive environments.

Who

The main focus was children aged 3-18 years and their parents and carers living in and visiting Wallaroo.

The outdoor fitness equipment is there for the whole community, so families, couples, grandparents and visitors can all enjoy using it.

Georgina Weissmann, former OPAL Manager



Opal



Rationale

Understanding the lifelong risks of excessive sedentary behaviour in childhood necessitates that parents and carers look for every chance for children to be active. Good access to opportunities for formal and informal activity provided by parks and open space enhances community health and wellbeing.¹ Improving access to outdoor recreation facilities may increase physical activity among children and adolescents.²

Evidence for the social, mental and physical health benefits experienced by physically active children is accumulating. Children and young

people who are physically active are more likely to be active adults, resulting in health benefits across the life course.^{3,4} Reductions in stress, anxiety and depression and enhanced social skills and self-esteem are also associated with physical activity in children.⁵

At the local level the DCCC Cycling and Walking Strategy adopted in March 2011 confirms the importance of physical activity, cycling and walking and associated facilities to the Council and community.⁶

Resources

In addition to the OPAL 'Active Play' materials, some specific resources were developed for this project including OPAL stickers for bike racks as well as infrastructure including the OPAL-badged water fountain and other equipment and exercise instruction signage.

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.

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¹ Maller C, Townsend M, Brown P et al. What is health and how is it determined? The Health Benefits of Contact with Nature in a Park Context. A review of Current Literature Deakin University and Parks Victoria p12

² 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

³ Trost S, Owen N, Bauman A et al. Correlates of adults' participation in physical activity: review and update. *Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise* 2002; 34(12): 1996-2001.

⁴ Kjonniksen L, Torsheim T, Wold B. Tracking of leisure-time physical activity during adolescence and young adulthood: a 10-year longitudinal study. *International Journal of Behavioural Nutrition and Physical Activity* 2008; 5 (Dec 29): 69.

⁵ Salmon J, Timperio A, Cleland V et al. Trends in children's physical activity and weight status in high and low socio-economic status areas of Melbourne, Victoria, 1985-2001. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 2005; 29(4): 337-342.

⁶ Available at www.coppercoast.sa.gov.au/webdata/resources/files/Cycling_and_Walking_Strategy_Adopted_March_2011.pdf

