



OPAL Case Study Active Travel

City of West Torrens

Goal: Active Travel

Theme: Active Travel

Strategy: Environments

Summary

OPAL has developed positive partnerships with a variety of different agencies in the process of supporting West Torrens residents to walk or cycle to local destinations.

Our approach

As a new OPAL site, the OPAL West Torrens team decided to implement the OPAL Active Travel theme across the community and build new partnerships through this approach. Assisting people to replace short, environmentally harmful, car journeys by walking or cycling became the initial priority for action.

To begin, a 'Think Feet First Community Challenge' was held but with low numbers participating this had limited success. Shopping centres were a likely destination for short trips and so brochures were developed for five key shopping centres showing easy, safe walking and riding routes. Complementing this, adult on-road bike riding skills training was held along with a community ride around each of the shopping centres. An active travel audit of the shopping facilities was conducted with the resulting report being submitted to Council

with advice on strategies to further improve cycling infrastructure – the City of West Torrens is already a strong supporter of cycling. School programs have also been supported and a partnership with a local senior college lead to the inclusion of road safety in the curriculum for recent arrivals, the setting up of a bike club, bike repair workshops and the proposed establishment of a bike hub

A bike extravaganza is now being planned for early in 2014. This will bring together a diverse range of cycling agencies (bike repair programs, electric bikes, cargo bikes, bikes for refugees, Bicycle Institute of SA, local bike shops, Council staff and many more), to showcase all cycling services, to consult on the establishment of an active travel road safety playground and to provide information on OPAL.

Our achievements

West Torrens OPAL held five community bike rides, three adult on-road skills sessions and one learn-to-ride session. Over 120 people participated across the events gaining higher self-efficacy about cycling as well as knowledge on where to ride and skills on how to ride. Cycling environments are being promoted as desirable, affordable and accessible with environmental barriers being addressed.

Hazel Mack (pictured) of Plympton fell off her bicycle twice several years ago and hadn't ridden for three years. After attending a bike session with her husband and daughter she has been a regular participant in cycling programs and has ridden to work every day in 2013. She says she feels fitter and healthier both physically and mentally and cannot believe how strongly she has been 'bitten by the cycling bug'. Hazel's advice to anyone thinking about learning to ride or getting back on the bike is "get over your fear and come along to one of the sessions".



Opal

The activities are building momentum for active travel as well as trust between West Torrens OPAL and its partners, forming a foundation for policy and environmental changes into the future.

While the purpose was to get more people active and healthier this is difficult to measure at the local level. It is likely environmental benefits associated with active travel have also been realised throughout the campaign.

Why

Active travel was the first theme to be implemented in the West Torrens OPAL region in 2012 and as such it was important that partnerships be developed with the broad community as well as schools and preschools that were a major focus.

Who

Residents in West Torrens are the target group for this initiative.

Rationale

In Australia, 40 per cent of all car journeys are less than 3km. These short journeys have the greatest impact on emissions as catalytic converters fitted in all vehicles (post 1986) and designed to reduce emissions, take a few minutes to warm up and become effective.¹

Increasing levels of active travel provides a range of benefits to children and their families through increasing levels of physical activity (and therefore the associated physical, mental and social health benefits) and helping children maintain healthy weight; providing more road safety experience; greater connectedness to the local neighbourhood and the

establishment of lifelong active travel habits.

There are also broader benefits to the local community including reducing environmental damage caused by greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles; encouraging less cars on the streets making it safer for everyone and reducing inequalities in children's health associated with physical activity and obesity as active travel is free and accessible to all.²

Resources

OPAL Live Local community maps were developed for each shopping precinct. Cycling experts conducted the training programs and the 'Think Feet First' resources were used in schools.

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 City of West Torrens. Get on ya bike. [on line]. Available from: www.westtorrens.sa.gov.au/Environment_waste/News_events/GreenE-news/Green_eNews_listing/Autumn_2013_-_Soft_plastic_recycling/Autumn_2013_-_OPAL_Bike_Sessions. (accessed 15 July 2013)

² SA Health. OPAL Active Transport Mobilisation resource. Available from: www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/healthy+living/healthy+places/where+we+live+and+play/opal/think+feet+first+step+cycle+scoot+to+school. (accessed 15 July 2013)

