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It’s Your Move!

East Geelong / Bellarine Youth Project

Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Implementation Report 12 – Healthy Body Weight, Shape and Size
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This report was produced for the It's Your Move! Project.

Acknowledgments

The ongoing efforts and support of the following persons are acknowledged:

**It’s Your Move! Schools**
Lauren Reading, Sue Blackett (Bellarine Secondary College)
Kerryn Fearnsides (Christian College at Bellarine)
Christine Green, Kate Meadows, Sonia Kinsey (Geelong High School)
Lee Denny, Kirsty Licheni (Newcomb Secondary College)
Lyndal Taylor (Saint Ignatius College)

The Principals, teachers and staff at each school.
The *It’s Your Move! Student Ambassadors*.

**Deakin University Support and Evaluation Team**
**WHO Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention and Related Research and Training**

Annie Simmons
Narelle Robertson
Mary Malakellis
Dr Peter Kremer
Dr Andrea Sanigorski
Professor Boyd Swinburn

Dr Marj Moodie (Public Health Research, Evaluation and Policy Cluster)

Other researchers and students from the WHO Collaborating Centre for Obesity Prevention and Related Research and Training; and the Public Health Research, Evaluation and Policy Cluster at Deakin University.

A special thanks to Narelle Robertson, Annie Simmons and Professor Boyd Swinburn for their writing and editorial contributions.

This project has been funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services as part of the Victorian ‘Go for your life’ Healthy Eating and Physical Activity initiative, in conjunction with VicHealth and the National Health and Medical Research Council.
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Objective

To create an acceptance of different healthy body size/shape and decrease episodes of inappropriate dieting.

Introduction

When students attended the ANGELO workshop in 2004, they were involved in developing the objectives and strategies for the 'It's Your Move!' action plan. Naturally, nutrition and physical activity objectives emerged, but there were a number of students who believed that there needed to be an objective which looked at body image. The action plan allowed for an exploratory/innovative objective. Hence healthy body weight, shape and size became the final objective of the action plan, objective ten.

In 2005, over 3,000 adolescents across the Barwon-South Western region of Victoria completed a knowledge, attitude and behavioural survey. It contained questions about nutrition, physical activity and body image. Schools also completed a School Environmental Audit that assessed indicators of curriculum, policies, canteens, indoor and outdoor facilities, and staff perceptions of healthy eating and physical activity within their school. The baseline data (2005) relating to the body image objective of the action plan showed:

- 25% of students perceived themselves as overweight or obese,
- 58% of females and 60% of males described themselves as being at about the right weight,
- 53% were either happy or very happy with their body weight and size,
- 32% of students (44% of these were females) were trying to lose body weight, and
- 51% of students (72% of these were males) were trying to gain muscle size.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the strategies used towards achieving the body image objective of the action plan within the five intervention schools. Intervention activities are outlined in the project’s action plan (see Implementation Report 2 – Action Plan) and were typically developed collaboratively between the Project Coordinator, School Project Officers, Ambassadors, staff and Principals. Baseline data helped to inform the interventions.
Summary of Intervention Strategies

1. Social Marketing

This strategy is covered in Implementation Report 4 - Social Marketing.

2. Fad Diets Won’t Work! Campaign

In 2005, the Victorian Government Department of Human Services in partnership with the Australian Medical Association launched a body image campaign titled Fad Diets Won't Work. The campaign promoted a health centred approach to weight management, warning of the dangers of fad diets. Its central theme was the promotion of long-term, lifestyle approaches to adopting positive healthy eating and physical activity behaviours, and a positive body image. As a component of campaign, the Department of Human Services allocated funding for a number of ‘Creating Community Conversations’ projects across the state, targeting adolescents.

The objectives of the Creating Community Conversations projects were to:

- promote awareness of healthy living, positive body image and reinforce the message that fad diets don’t work,
- provide targeted education messages through provision of expert speakers delivering specific information at an event,
- promote ongoing community conversations and incorporate supportive education activities consistent with the school curriculum, and delivery of healthy lifestyle programs (such as, Its Your Move!), and
- promote access to local services that support young people to maintain healthy lifestyles, positive body image and address issues associated with fad dieting.

The state projects were coordinated by the Victorian Centre of Excellence in Eating Disorders (CEED) with five communities funded to conduct ‘conversations’ typically consisting of public forums, service provider workshops, and community meetings for teenagers, young adults, family members and key stakeholders.

It’s Your Move! in partnership with the Barwon Primary Care Partnership (BPCP) applied for and was successful in obtaining funding to conduct the project for the Barwon-South Western region.

The Creating Community Conversations Project could be integrated into the It’s Your Move! action plan, meeting partial requirements of objective ten, the body image objective.
consultation and an event with the adolescents across the Barwon Region, in particular within the five participating schools involved in It’s Your Move!

In planning for the Creating Community Conversations project the Project Coordinator consulted with a number of local agencies (both local government and non-government organisations) such as School Nurses, the regional Heath Promotion Coordinator, Leisure Networks, Geelong Division of General Practice, and the It’s Your Move! Reference and Project Management Committees.

**Barwon Fad Diets Won’t Work**

The consultation resulted in the development of the Barwon Fad Diets Won’t Work project. This had two components: curriculum activities where key issues could be identified and discussed and a Fad Diets Won’t Work two-hour event with presentations from a number of body image experts held for all the five It’s Your Move! schools.

**Curriculum**

Initial concerns from the Reference Committee led to the curriculum component. Members of the Committee were concerned that a one-off event, with the work and effort required to organise it, would not have much impact. Based on this feedback, the Project Coordinator and the Department of Human Services Project Manager developed a set of lesson plans and other information for teachers and the School Project Officers. Seven lessons plans containing activities and resources were develop; four for implementation prior to the event and three for after the event. The pre event curriculum topics were as follows:

- **Activity One:** Getting the conversation started
- **Activity Two:** Why do teenagers diet?
- **Activity Three:** What are healthy alternatives?
- **Activity Four:** How can communities help with healthy approaches?

Discussion in the curriculum activities obtained views from students about the factors that encourage fad dieting, that support alternative healthy approaches including healthy eating, active living and self-esteem. The factors included socio-cultural and environmental factors, as well as individual factors.

Feedback from teachers after implanting the curriculum activities are highlighted below. These include the responses and themes that emerged from the discussion with students.
Activity One: Getting the conversation started
- Students were aware of the ‘Go for your life’ campaign and linked it more often with a television advertisement but identified It’s Your Move! as part of the initiative also.
- Students had not seen any material from the state-wide fad diets campaign as it was not available at the time of administering the curriculum
- Students felt that messages that they identified with came more from their peer group than mass media
- Students enjoyed doing the multiple choice survey obtained on the teenagers section of the ‘Go for your life’ website, titled Debunking the myths.

Activity Two: Why do teenagers diet?
- Students were aware of dieting primarily through magazines that promoted quick weight loss
- Major influences on students was a feeling of acceptance (will be liked by more people)
- A number of students mentioned that they knew of people/friends that had tried a fad diet, this occurred more so among girls and their mothers.

Activity Three: What are healthy alternatives?
- Most students thought that they ate healthy foods, but upon further discussion, noted that they were not really considered healthy due to branding of products such as 99% fat free
- Young people did have some confusion in relation to the products that stated ‘fat free’ etc and what constituted a balanced diet for their age, gender and levels of physical activity
- Classroom based initiatives such as wrap days and soup days were popular with students (see Implementation Report 9 - Food @ School)
- Environment factors influenced students on the Bellarine Peninsula due to poor public transport and availability of recreation/sports facilities. Students also noted that engaging in physical activity had some financial cost involved (which affected their ability to do some activities). It was pointed out in this lesson that walking was ‘free’. But footpaths and safety issues were raised both for themselves and for younger students and that their parents would not let them go out during certain times
- A number of students noted the types of food sold at the canteen were not very healthy and how they would like healthier options. Students recognised that It’s Your Move! was doing more in the school to offer healthy alternatives
- Students noted that they still wanted to have some choice in relation to foods sold at school. School canteen menus were under review, and consultation with students stated that they still wanted some unhealthy
choices, but that the social marketing message ‘moderation and only on the odd occasion’ be promoted in the canteen

- students could not recall the physical activity guidelines. Upon further discussion, many thought they met the recommendations, including their time spent in physical education at school
- one of the intervention schools took a ‘whole-school approach by conducting year level Health and Wellbeing Days. A range of activities were on offer e.g. yoga, guest speakers
- girls who were not involved in competitive sports were less likely to want to get involved unless there was some social element attached

Activity Four: How can communities help with healthy approaches?

- barriers to healthy lifestyles emerged as cost, time, travel, enjoyment, parents, siblings, uniforms, registration, not having a friend/s to participate with, lack of facilities/facilitators near where they lived, not being able to stay behind after school to do things due to bus times
- students noted that some form of encouragement would be beneficial to try new activities. Having more social activities and gender specific activities also emerged
- there needed to be a greater awareness of making use of what was already available
- One student noted: I remember when I was in year seven that there used to be staff versus student games. Now, I am in year 11 and they don’t do it anymore’. Why? ‘I don’t know’. When asked how could you change this? The student replied I am not sure, but it would be fun to get going again.

The Barwon Fad Diets Won’t Work Event
This event was held on the 21st July 2005 at Deakin University Waterfront Campus in the Costa Hall. Students and staff from the intervention schools were invited. Nearly 600 students attended and each received a show bag containing information on resources and some ‘Go for your life’ products.

The event consisted of a number of presentations from experts on adolescent health and body image. These included:
- Dr. Rick Kausman, body image expert
- Lisa Neville, Local Member for Bellarine who at the time was also a member of the Victorian Government Body Image Standing Committee
- Professor Boyd Swinburn, obesity prevention expert
- Dr Anne Chirnsides from the Geelong Division of General Practice, and
- Two Ambassadors representing It’s Your Move!

As part or Dr Kausman’s presentation, each student received a chocolate mars bars to undertake an activity. Students were asked to eat the mars bar as slowly as possible. His message was that we should all learn to eat slowly
and have a more positive attitude to food rather than rate foods as good or bad. Some responses from students after conducting this activity were:

- The slower you eat the fuller you feel
- I might not eat as much when I am not hungry
- Enjoy my food slowly

Appendix A shows the responses from students completing the evaluation form at the conclusion of the event.

**Post- event curriculum**

Teachers were provided with lesson plans to implement in the curriculum in follow up to the Fad Diets Won't Work event. These continued from the previous curriculum activities and included the following topics:

Activity Five: Take the lifestyle alternative  
Activity Six: Getting the messages through  
Activity Seven: Develop healthy eating habits

Some teachers provided comments after administering the curriculum:

- *Fad dieting is not something that our school places great emphasis on in our curriculum*
- *The curriculum lessons were a great guide to ways in which I would not have thought about engaging students. I was surprised how much the boys got into it*

As part of the initial brief for the project, a Professional Development session was developed for teachers and school nurses of the five schools. Unfortunately, due to a number of factors (clashes with teacher commitments, availability of guest speakers), this was not delivered prior to the first set of curriculum activities. It was finally delivered about two months after the Fad Diets Won't Work Event.

The Professional Development session was conducted at one of the five schools and commenced with high level academic research about studies in the area of body image. The presentation also featured a number of generic resources that teachers could obtain through the Centre for Adolescent Health. Eight people attended (Project Coordinator, 5 School Project Officers, 1 Health and Physical Education teacher and 1 School Nurse).

After the session the Project Coordinator followed up with attendees to see what they thought of the presentation. They reported that as good as this information was, it had very few practical elements that they could integrate into their curriculum; they did not feel like they walked a way with anything new and that it was really disappointing given the amount of time they had 'given up' to attend.
Some of the reasons for poor attendance (given by those who did not attend) included:

- Teachers are just too busy at the moment, maybe if the PD was at the beginning of the term it would be better
- The PD would have been more useful at the beginning of the campaign

3. Other Curriculum Activities

Two schools, Geelong High School and Bellarine Secondary College worked together to review their own body image units within the curriculum, known as Body Beautiful or Risky Business respectively. The revisions to the units have included lessons about the nutrition related objectives of It’s Your Move!, and a focus on the body image topics covered in the secondary school’s curriculum.

4. Radio program

In 2007, the School Project Officer from Bellarine Secondary College was approached by the School Wellbeing Coordinator to garner if the Ambassadors was interested in being involved in a local community radio program about body image. The School Project Officer got in contact with the Pulse FM radio station and found that the Ambassadors could be involved in the radio’s Body Beautiful Program. This program involved about 15 schools within the City of Greater Geelong.

The eight Ambassadors were invited to attend five two-hour training sessions at the radio station to develop their topic, gather the research, construct their script, record and then edit their production. Over the course of the sessions, their English teachers allowed them to use their class time to work on their scripts. Topics covered by the Ambassadors included why girls do not take their jumpers off during physical education classes or on hot days?; what are some of the myths and facts about fad dieting and body mass index?, how the body mass index depends on gender, height, weight, and level of physical activity.

As a result of their involvement, the School Project Officer noted that the students learned a range of skills such as writing, communication, pronunciation, project management, and team work.

Key Learnings & Recommendations

Fad Diets project
Administering the Fad Diets Won’t Work project was only a small component of health education, which needed to be built into the bigger picture of nutrition and physical activity. To do so required a high level of engagement with the Health and Physical Education teachers within the school. The Project Coordinator and the School Project Officers met with the relevant staff to aggregate their ideas and put them into usable materials and resources.

One of the activities offered to teachers as part of the Fad Diets campaign was the teacher Professional Development session. It was felt that that it would be beneficial for all secondary school teachers to participate in body image/sensitivity training so that they were aware of appropriate and inappropriate ways of discussing fad diets/healthy eating patterns and body image issues. This session was offered to all staff within the five intervention schools, only eight participants turned up. The reasons for the poor attendance were given as existing time constraints (after school), cost (personal rather than financial), lacking value (to their teaching), travel, at the time it was not considered a school priority and other additional meeting pressures that affected their time. It was suggested that the sessions be conducted before the unit of work is to be administered, conducted during professional learning team time, and in targeted groups. It was also highlighted that the beginning of Terms one and three were the best times for sessions to be run.

A number of Health and Physical Education teachers stated that there were a range of health related topics all competing for the limited health curriculum time allocated within the overall syllabus. To incorporate body image, curriculum resources need to be prepared so that they were usable, drew on the current evidence (e.g. trends, prevalence) and be provided to schools with additional professional development sessions and access to an expert.

The Barwon ‘Fad Diets Won’t Work’ campaign was promoted well including media coverage in the local newspaper (the Geelong Advertiser), extensive promotion through local networks within the region about the event, and schools encouraging staff and students to attend the event.

Body measurements
Some key learnings that emerged from the data collection(baseline) phase of the evaluation relating to body image have been about the process and protocols associated with the delivery of personal information to students i.e. the body composition data. From the beginning of the It’s Your Move! project, a high level of input was required from Senior Administrators and teachers to ensure that there was adequate support (e.g. teacher professional development), resources (development of curriculum resources) and adequate structures (in the event of negative situations, teachers and welfare staff were on hand).

Further to this, adolescents were highly interested in their own body composition (e.g. percentage water, fat, muscle) and how energy intake and expenditure can influence their state of balance. They were also genuinely
interested in food labelling and the physical activity levels associated with the activities done on a regular basis. Students were able to link concepts and terminology to their body composition, in order to understand how their diet and physical activity levels can affect their overall weight status.

As a result of this, a further submission will be presented to the Australian Research Council in order to extend the research on body image.

**Other**

A few other ideas emerged from the Project Management team throughout the project that could be potential strategies to address body image, but were not implemented as part of *It’s Your Move!*

School Uniform: The uniform within the three government schools had not changed in decades. Girls still wear kilts and both genders still wear woollen jumpers. Updating the school uniform to be contemporary and practical was an idea put forward; however, due to time constraints this was not explored, but could be an avenue for future projects to investigate.

Parent Information Evening: A parent information evening was considered as a possible avenue for raising program awareness amongst parents (i.e. community parenting programs) that educate about the behavioural practices parents exhibit to their children and how these influence their child’s lifestyle (e.g. dieting, binging, poor diet and weight concerns, over eating). However- 9 Food @ School) this strategy was reconsidered. Further examination into accessing parents is required.

**Conclusion**

Following the trend of the other behavioural objectives, conducting ‘one off events’ such as the ‘Fad Diets Won’t Work’ campaign did little to influence long term behaviour change. From the Project Coordinator’s point of view, the total number of hours put in by the project management team, external agencies and staff from Deakin University were not justified by the returns. Focusing the efforts on more sustainable interventions such as curriculum resources and ongoing professional development sessions would be more beneficial to teachers in the long term.

Further work is required to test innovative approaches to informing young people of their current health status, such as body composition in order for them to understand their practices around diet and exercise. Having a space within the curriculum to learn about themselves in a safe and ethical way is required to ensure that they are provided with information in a sensitive and supportive forum.
References

Appendix A: Evaluation responses from the Barwon Fad Diets Won't Work Event

Feedback – FAD DIETS WON'T WORK

Geelong event

How would you rate the content of today’s event?

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<th>Poor</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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<td>18</td>
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<td>27</td>
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How would you rate the way the content was presented?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Ok</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
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How will you apply what you have learnt today?

Eat healthier and not try any stupid diets.
No more fad diets because they don’t work, it made very good points.
Fad diets are bad.
Exercise and eating right is the key to staying healthy.
Don’t need to.
By not going on fad diets.
Not eat badly.
Enjoy my food slowly.
By being more aware and careful with my diet and exercise more often.
It didn’t really change my opinion on my diet because I was already happy with it.
I won’t diet anymore but eat healthier.
I will tell my friends other people about it.
With friends when they have problems about their self image.
Use Dr Ricks tips personally and professionally.
I learnt communication.
I already knew about fad diets so didn’t really make much difference.
How fast or slow I eat.
I probably won’t do anything differently.
I won’t use fad diets or wear the sleepers.
If I need to lose weight, lose it by healthy eating.
I’ll remember in the future not to trust these diets, not to buy rings, slippers etc. I’ll eat slower.
 Probably apply most of it to my life but I already do most things correctly.
I might not eat as much when I am not hungry.
I don’t think dieting to that extreme will affect me much but it was good to know what stupid diets there were.
What did you enjoy the most or find most useful?

Eating the mars bar, and when that guy was talking about eating it slowly and enjoying it.
The mars bars thing was very effective and interesting to participate in. I always think about the taste when I’m eating now.
Mars bars.
I enjoyed the architecture of the building and the mars bars.
The show bag.
Learning all about the hoaxes and fad diets that are out there.
How a girl went from a size 12 to a size 10 back to a size 14 from fad diets. It scared me.
The info about real life situations.
I really enjoyed the pink elephants part.
The doctor because it showed me real life things that happen and it was a person who knew what they were talking about.
Dr. Rick’s presentation.
The drink bottle and the mars bars.
I didn’t find it very useful but enjoyed the thing about the burger.
I like looking at the gadgets that are supposed to help you lose weight even though they don’t work.
The slower you eat the fuller you feel.
I enjoyed the whole event and it was very useful.
I enjoyed having/learning about our health and dieting.
The stage, that was a nice stage.
The green bands.
The mars bar and the guy who taught us the 5 things.
Getting two periods off school.

What did you enjoy least or find least useful?

None.
The lose weight shoes and rings, very interesting but not useful.
Shoes and rings, I found it funny that some people would think they work.
Everything was useful.
I didn’t like all the talking.
The cookie monster film.
Eating slowly, I don’t have the time to do it.
All the talking that they repeated.
They could have done more slideshows. Lisa Neville.
They talked too much, I lost interest towards the end.
Too long.
Basically repeated over and over.
All the different diets they told us about.
Politicians speech, reading some one else’s speech, not their background, boring for students.
A bit of lecture at the end.
Having to sit and listen for so long.
Way things were explained was in a boring manner.
A lot of the talking about what diets not to go on. I don’t think anyone our age would only eat one food for just a week, i.e. cabbage. That you might put on more fat by going on a fad diet. The fad diets. The smell of the drink bottles. All the pamphlets were annoying. All the boring statistics. I don’t think there was any useless content. It was all pretty good. About the other people in different countries. They said a lot of the things more than once and it wasn’t very exciting. The long, long, long, long speeches. Too much talking, I didn’t know what a fad diet is. The presentation. The information in the bag.

What would you like more of?

Bigger mars bars and more stuff in the bag. Find out more about careers in the health field. Mars bars!! Healthy eating plans that can help people lose weight healthily. More activities to do, not just sitting and listening. More support for teens with their body image and self esteem. More stories on how teenagers tried fad diets. More people need to know the facts about fad diets. Props, water bottles, mars bars, sweat bands and speakers like Dr. Rick. Pictures and facts. Interaction with other schools. Different ways to present it. Activities with the other schools, more interaction to see what happens at their school. Activities with the other schools! More examples of stupid fad diets. More audience interaction. Options of healthy food. More general information. Food. Slide shows and movies instead of talking. I would like to know how many hours you are supposed to exercise. Chocolate! The people underweight, there are just as many people under weight than overweight, how do they diet? More interesting and different people, keeping us entertained would help us remember different things easier. More healthy food and not mars bars. Hands on activities.
Do you have any further comments?

It should be a whole day thing with games and activities throughout the day to keep students interested.
It was well presented and the speaker spoke very well.
I liked it because we got a free drink bottle.
Overall the day was very enjoyable.
Make sure that the speakers to students speak at their level.
More activities involving the other people instead of just sitting.
We should have been able to communicate with others in group activities.
The brochures were no good for me, useless.
The info was good just very boring presenters.
The show bag was great!
I really think that everything demonstrated at today’s event could be very useful in children’s futures.
It was a very interesting experience.
The mars bars were a weird touch (diet talk) but good.
Thank you for getting me out of maths, ha, ha, ha. It was good!
Thanks for the drink bottle, pity it got confiscated.