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# It's Your Move!

East Geelong / Bellarine Youth Project

Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity

Implementation Report 10 – Walking and Cycling

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This report was produced for the **It's Your Move!** Project.

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## Objective

*To significantly increase active transport to and from school.*

## Introduction

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 walking and cycling objective of the action plan showed:

- 48% of students did not walk or bicycle to and from school on any school day
- 43% of students said it takes them less than 15 minutes to walk or bicycle to school
- 83% of students said that it would take them more than 30 minutes to walk to school

Three of the five intervention schools have a high proportion (~90%) of students using transport (e.g. school bus service) to get to and from school, therefore parts of the strategies to achieve this objective were not relevant to these schools.

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the strategies used towards achieving the walking and cycling 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. Parent information***

Information pertaining to walking and cycling was often included in school newsletters written by the School Project Officers (see Implementation Report 4 – Social Marketing).



## **2. School policies for drop-off zones**

This strategy was not addressed where schools already had designated policies for drop-off zones that were in place prior to the commencement of the project.

However, one such school with a policy (Saint Ignatius College) did attempt to make changes. The School Project Officer negotiated with the bus driver to drop students within walking distance to the school. Unfortunately a number of concerns arose: students complained about carrying their heavy school bag the additional distance (e.g. a student's bag usually includes: books, sports uniforms and music instruments etc), duty of care while walking (whose was it?) and the additional time it took to walk the extra distance. After a few weeks the school went back to the original route and plan.

## **3. Activities and Programs**

### 3.1 Walk 2 Where? Program

In 2005, the School Project Officer at Geelong High School approached the teacher of their 'Real Gorgeous' class (an optional body image class taken by female students) to ascertain the possibility for students to complete their semester project on one of the objectives of the *It's Your Move!* action plan. They brainstormed a number of ideas and eventually chose to develop a whole school walking program, in line with the walking and cycling objective.

Over the course of the term, the female students in collaboration with their teacher developed a list of activities and tasks to be completed over the term to implement the program. Items that required organising included:

- designing a logo
- designing a template for fact sheets, newsletters, posters etc
- designing and producing T-shirts: design, costing, printing, collecting money for the t-shirts
- producing fact sheets: information for students bulletin, staff presentation, school assembly, and home group distribution
- information relating to the benefits of walking eg. physical, emotional, mental, behavioural, social
- development of walking tracks: safety considerations, time, distance, supervision
- preparation of a recording sheet for Home Groups to monitor progress
- instructions for Home Group teachers to pick a national capital city (it's distance) to walk to
- prepare a launch: music and a presentation including a guest speaker
- meetings with the Principal and Assistant Principal to discuss the program aims, objectives and ultimate achievement



- presentation at staff meeting to generate support and motivation for the program
- preparing information for the school newsletter
- organising the presentation for assembly - expectation of the staff and seating arrangements
- arranging announcements to be used upon commencement of the program
- conducting the launch
- evaluation of the launch
- planning for 2006

During Term 4 2005, students from the 'Real Gorgeous' class presented the 'Walk 2 Where?' concept to teachers. The students gave insight into the program providing an outline of how each home group would be presented with a folder of walks that could be conducted in the surrounding areas of the school e.g. the Botanic Gardens and Eastern Beach. Staff asked the students a series of questions about safety, timing, duration and overall expectations. The students responded by saying: that the home group teacher would be responsible for their group, walks would be about 2-3km in length (take about 30-40 minutes to complete), conducted during Term 2, 2006 and that there was a commitment to doing the program for the term. At the end of the presentation staff was asked to demonstrate a show of hands for the program to go ahead, with a majority of the teachers supporting it.

In 2006, a new group of girls in the 'Real Gorgeous' class took over the organisation and implementation of the 'Walk 2 Where?' program. They continued to follow the plans that were developed by the previous class, including organising the launch at a school assembly. Before the launch, the students linked up with the Ambassadors to develop a video (using Movie Maker) to present at the launch to encourage the staff and students to get involved. This video engaged students with its creative content and music which featured the school students.

At the beginning of Term 2, a school assembly was organised by the students to launch the 'Walk 2 Where?' program. As the Home Group teachers entered the hall, they were issued with the folder of instructions and walks that their home group could choose from. The students then presented the 'Walk 2 Where?' video, with two Ambassadors and two of the 'Real Gorgeous' students promoting the program by encouraging everyone to get involved and have fun. At the end of assembly, the program was launched and immediately during Home Group time (55 minutes) all classes went for a walk. (approximately 1,000 students and staff).

Over the course of the school term, a number of classes continued to use their Home Group time for the program. Some classes however revert back to using the time for students to catch up with their work.



### 3.2 Run 2 Where? Program

The 'Walk 2 Where?' program inspired the development of a running group for students. Inspired by Walk 2 Where?, a teacher at the same school saw the opportunity to develop Run 2 Where? to enlist those students who would be interested in running the various routes. Like Walk 2 Where?, the running program was conducted during Home Group time, but moved to lunchtime when the 'Walk 2 Where?' program lost momentum.

The teacher made a few modifications to the program to encourage a range of students to be involved. These included the development of a handicap based on ability. Those on a higher handicap started first which ensured students all crossed finished at a similar time. Each student was given their time, which was recorded on an Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. At the end of the week, the teacher tabulated their improvements based on their times and ranked them. Those with the most improvement were placed on the 'Run 2 Where?' noticeboard.

From 2006 to 2008, the Run 2 Where? program continued twice a week, with up to 30 students and a small number of staff (usually about 4) regularly participating in the program. Students that completed 50, 100, 150 and 200 runs were awarded a certificate or a badge to recognise their efforts.

Overall, the teacher who has organised the 'Run 2 Where?' program has stated that his involvement in this program has added to his overall enjoyment of teaching and that he looks forward to getting out and running with the students.

### 3.3 Ride 2 School Program

The Ride 2 School program was an initiative developed by Bicycle Victoria in conjunction with 'Go for your life' to increase the number of students riding to and from school ([www.bv.com.au](http://www.bv.com.au)).

In 2006, Newcomb Secondary obtained an information pack, along with an application to pilot the program in secondary schools. The School Project Officer applied and was accepted to be one of the schools that would be part of the evaluation of this program. The evaluation involved students being given a 'passport', which required the School Project Officer to verify with a stamp when students rode to school. In practice, stamping the 'passport' was somewhat problematic as some of the students did not arrive on time to have their page stamped. These students often sought out the School Project Officer in her morning classes. Staff completed a survey at least once a month about their riding patterns.

In 2006, there were two Ride 2 School Days. Based on the level of participation, the school was recognised as having one of the highest levels of cyclists (70 students and 10 staff) in the program and was awarded a mountain bike in recognition of their efforts. In 2007 and 2008, a further four



Ride 2 School Days were conducted, with the Ambassadors providing a healthy breakfast for the cyclists after their ride.

As a result of the school's involvement in this program, they were made aware of funding, available to schools, to improve bicycle facilities. The School Project Officer along with members of staff submitted a grant for \$4,500 for a new bicycle shed through Bicycle Victoria and 'Go for your life'. Successfully obtaining this grant, the school built a covered area with improved security for staff and students to store their bikes. Once this facility was built, staff and students reported an increased level of confidence in storing their bikes during school hours. Unfortunately, there has been no long term increase in the number of students riding to school.

### 3.4 Lunchtime walking groups

#### *Case Study # 1*

In 2005, Saint Ignatius College was one of the first schools to complete baseline data collection. Eager to commence their interventions, the School Project Officer offered staff and students the opportunity to participate in walks around surrounding areas of the school at lunchtime.

Initially, the School Project Officer, along with two other staff supervised 15-20 students on a walk once a week which took approximately 50 minutes to complete. This level of involvement and participation continued until the end of the term, a duration of 12 weeks.

Based on this activity, the School Project Officer reported that there were a number of issues in relation to walking groups. First, the walking groups relied on teachers giving up their time to supervise students outside of the school grounds during lunchtime. Second, it took all lunchtime to complete the route since there were limited places that they could walk. The group was limited to a set track and often experienced issues with traffic and wildlife (particularly snakes). The walking group continued in sporadic bursts, but depended on the School Project Officer to organise and promote. Due to the intensity required to organise the program and the aforementioned issues it proved to be unsustainable.

#### *Case Study # 2*

In Term 2 of 2007, the School Project Officer and Welfare Officers at Newcomb Secondary College conducted walking groups for a small group of students that were regularly seeking counselling during lunchtimes. Over the course of the term, up to 20 students and two staff walked for 30-40 minutes around the block of the school.

In Term 3, the walking groups faded as poor weather, interruptions to the school program and additional responsibilities were being asked of the



teachers. It was suggested by the School Project Officer that walking groups and programs be integrated into the Physical Education program – using the pedometers provided by Leisure Networks and PACE Advertising with the 10,000 Steps Adolescent Program (see next section). The Health and Physical Education (HAPE) Coordinator agreed and has since made them available to other HAPE teachers.

## **4. Curriculum**

### The 10,000 steps curriculum package

The overall aim of this project was to develop a 10, 000 Steps curriculum package to be used by schools (Years 7-10) that linked with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) framework and that could be applied to other secondary school settings across the region.

As an extension to the 10,000 Steps Barwon<sup>1</sup> project, Leisure Networks and the Barwon Primary Care Forum undertook the development of a 10,000 Steps Curriculum Development Project titled 'Take the Next Step'. This was piloted in the five schools. The Project Coordinator for It's Your Move! took the lead on developing the 10,000 steps curriculum package. This project was funded by the 'Go for your life' Community Walking Grants Program, which aims to encourage participation in one of the most accessible forms of physical activity, i.e. walking.

The 'Go for your life' Walking Grant and the 'Take the Next Step' project had the following aims:

1. develop and produce a 10,000 Steps Curriculum package that fits the Victorian Essential Learning Standards Framework for use in secondary schools (Years 7-10),
2. develop a secondary schools curriculum package to a level for wider dissemination,
3. develop and deliver a pilot a training module to support teachers from selected schools in the Barwon-South Western region to pilot the 10,000 Steps curriculum package,
4. develop a training module to a level for wider dissemination,
5. create units of work or curriculum resources that can be applied across a range of subject areas (e.g. Maths, Health, Science and Physical Education), and
6. appropriately evaluate the impact of the project.

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<sup>1</sup> 10,000 Steps Barwon is a regionally coordinated health promotion project operating in partnership with the Barwon Primary Care Partnership that has brought together a diverse range of partners from local government, health, community-based organisations, university researchers, private business groups and the sport and recreation sector.



The curriculum package contains guidelines for the promotion of physical activity within adolescent settings, including secondary schools. The guidelines provide an integrated curriculum of lessons that promote use of the pedometers; support the implementation of lesson plans; assist in setting up walking groups; and advocate pedometer use in non-school based activities.

The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority provided support and expertise collaborating on the development of the curriculum based resource. They provided feedback on numerous drafts of the resource to ensure that the end product was in line with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS). This meant the resource could be applied to other secondary school settings across Victoria.

Each of the pilot schools involved in the 'It's Your Move!' project were provided with the necessary resources and tools to implement the curriculum components of the walking project. This included a hard copy of the resource book/lesson plans; two class sets of pedometers; and reproducible materials (including parental permission forms, pedometer tracking sheets, travel logs, lesson plans/sheets).

The resources provide numerous reproducible materials designed to assist in the delivery of different aspects of the activities for each curriculum subject strand. Each activity was structured around a learning based activity which is appropriate to certain subject area/s. Many of the activities required students to utilise their skills and knowledge to design, implement and evaluate their work. Students were also able to conduct individual learning pathways in some of the activities and also utilise group interaction and socialisation in others. This diversity allowed students to identify their own behaviours, understand the pedometer as a measure of change and understand the health outcomes that transpose through physical activity.

By ensuring the schools have ready access to these reproducible materials, and keeping the Take the Next Step project on the *It's Your Move!* agenda, it is feasible to suggest that the project and its benefits will continue in future years within these schools. By integrating walking activities into the school curriculum, it is also anticipated that the project will be sustained in the school based activities.

Further information from the evaluation report written for the Department of Human Services as part of the 10,000 Steps Walking Grants can be obtained through Leisure Networks or the Department of Human Services: Public Health Unit- Walking Programs.



## Key Learnings and Recommendations

Activities such as the Walk 2 Where?, Run 2 Where?, Ride 2 School and the walking groups were found not to be sustainable due to the amount of time required in their organisation. One of the key recommendations about these types of events is to use them sparingly to increase the awareness or motivate students and staff.

Integrating *It's Your Move!* activities into the curriculum was beneficial for a number of reasons. These included having a captive audience for a year /semester to continually provide messages over a period of time; it gave teachers the opportunity to integrate work and provide assessment pieces where a particular health topic was researched and discussed, often dispel myths along the way. This was evident with the 10,000 Steps resource, where a compilation of resources aligned with the Victorian Essential Learning Standards.

It is recommended that all secondary schools provide a health subject whereby a number of topics are covered for a semester or a year; resources such as lesson activities are provided for teachers to follow.

## Conclusion

It is clear from this report that organically grown classroom based activities are more influential in engaging students with particular knowledge and skills. The sustainability of one- off activities and those that have short life cycles are largely dependent on those who organise them.

