

Integrated Health Promotion in Action

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Integrated health promotion is making a difference

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A PCP practical example:

Movin' Around Project 2007-2008

North Central Metro PCP

'Go for your life' Walk Together Grants funded the Movin' Around Project to build on the work commenced by the North Central Metro Primary Care Partnership's (NCMPCP) Seniors 'Go for your life' project (2005 -2007). This project targeted members of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Community (CALD), and Aboriginal community, in the north central metropolitan catchment and aimed to encourage walking to improve physical activity for these community members.

The goal of this second phase of the project in 2007-2008, was to create opportunities for the Aboriginal community to explore parks and recreational spaces in Melbourne that linked to Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Project Partners:

1. Maya Living Free Healing Centre in Thornbury
2. Project linked with NCMPCP Seniors 'Go for your life' project. Target CALD Communities to develop and provide training for walking group leaders.
3. Other NCMPCP organisations – Cities of Darebin, Yarra, Whittlesea, North Yarra, North Richmond, Darebin and Plenty Valley Community Health Service, Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
4. Merri Creek Management Committee
5. Department of Sustainability and Environment (Parks Victoria)
6. Department of Sport and Recreation Victoria (Indigenous Policy)
7. Merri Creek Management Committee

Maya Living Free Healing Centre promoted the project to other Aboriginal organisations and personal contact and visits to the following organisations were undertaken: Home Ground Services Outreach Fitzroy, Emu Strutters and Kookaburra Club Darebin, Northland Secondary College, Austin Health, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care, Wandara Elder Group Dianella Community Health, Aboriginal Community Elders Service, Burt William and Margaret Tucker Hostels.

What is the integrated health promotion response?

Project objectives:

- to set up and support walking groups for the Aboriginal community; and
- to foster Aboriginal reconciliation and cross cultural links through monthly walks in local parks

Strategies:

- create opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Islander community to explore parks and recreational spaces
- set up and support walking groups for the Aboriginal community
- hold cross cultural walks in Darebin, Yarra and Whittlesea
- improve relationships between Aboriginal community and health and community services
- engage a range of health and community services to implement the project; and
- create opportunities for health and community agencies to further their knowledge of strategies to improve physical activity and walking in Aboriginal communities

Community Health, Local Government and the Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre in the North Central Metro catchment had worked together on the 2005-07 project that supported the formation of walking groups for seniors. Collaboration with this group allowed the current project to build on that work and forge links with other walking groups in the area as well as promoting the cross cultural walks.

The resource, 'Ready Set Stride: a training manual for walking group leaders' developed by the Seniors project was used to train Aboriginal walking group leaders from the Maya Living Free Healing Centre.

Contacts from the Merri Creek Management Committee, City of Darebin, City of Yarra and Parks Victoria were able to contribute information to prepare a brochure for walk information and provide a cultural and historical background to the walks. The brochure featured Aboriginal art from the Maya Living Free Healing Centre's art program.

Having an Aboriginal organisation as the lead agency enabled access to the community and various Aboriginal organisations and groups that were able to support the project. Additional funding was made available by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Sport and Recreation branch of the Department of Victorian Communities, (now the Department of Planning and Community Development) for promotion material and collateral such as T-shirts, caps and rain jackets for the participants in the Maya Walking Groups.

What are the impacts?

- A weekly walking group with 8 to 10 regular walkers has been set up to run from the Maya Living Free Healing Centre. In addition, a Women's Walking group has been developed as part of the special women's programs offered by the Centre.
- Four walking group leaders from the Maya Living Free Healing Centre have been trained. Training covered:
 - benefits of walking
 - planning and preparing for walking groups
 - walking routes in Yarra, Whittlesea, Darebin
 - walk route checklist and safety tips, forms
 - manual and CD available
 - first aid courses
 - paid employment was provided to the four walking group leaders
- six combined cross cultural walks were held with attendance ranging from 8 (scheduling during school holidays accounted for low numbers), up to 80 at a walk coordinated with the City of Darebin as part of the Darebin Seniors Week Festival
- a booklet was produced describing various walks of cultural significance in Melbourne's Northern Suburbs.

Lessons learned from the project:

- Feedback from Aboriginal Liaison workers indicated that many Aboriginal people walk for transport and are not interested in walking for health. It was noted, however, that there was interest by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Aboriginal culture and history in the area.
- Regular walks for Aboriginal people need a dedicated Aboriginal walking group leader.
- The most effective method of attracting Aboriginal people to join in the walks was by word of mouth from other Aboriginal Leaders who championed the project. Some Aboriginal participants felt they didn't need extra exercise; however when the walk was promoted as an opportunity to connect to the land and themselves, participants were motivated to join. Many ended up using the walks as time to stop at certain points and reflect on their life, gain spiritual lessons, and become 'grounded'.
- Whilst the aim of the walks was to improve physical activity, the main attraction for many participants was the added benefit of social connection and subsequent improvements in mental wellbeing. The social contacts developed during regular walks were a strong motivator for Aboriginal people to continue participation.
- The creation of caps, t-shirts and rain jackets for walking participants provided a greater sense of group 'belonging'.
- A BBQ at the end of the walk is appreciated by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants and was an opportunity for socialisation, an important motivator for participation. The BBQ provided an opportunity to identify issues around healthy eating and physical activity with the group deciding a "lighter" sandwich/salad lunch was more appropriate to follow the walks.
- Promotion of Aboriginal culture and history in the area encourages participation on walks among both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Aboriginal leaders add to the experience with welcome to country, smoking ceremony and talks about the area.
- Training and resources (information about local parks and recreation areas) for leaders helps build their confidence to take on the leader role.
- Leaders need payment. Aboriginal organisations are unlikely to financially support walking group leaders without specific funding and it is difficult to draw on volunteers from the community.

- Partnerships between participating organisations offer opportunities for further work to achieve common aims.

What's next?

Options for further funding for the Maya Centre to continue to support walking groups will be explored. Interest expressed by local government and state government departments in Aboriginal led walking experiences, as part of their reconciliation and cultural awareness programs, is a possible source of funding.

Further training for walking group leaders will be offered to Aboriginal people as well as others from the catchment to support the on-going commitment to walking by NCMPCP agencies.

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- Troy Blow from the Maya Living Free Healing Centre
- 'Go for your life Walking Grants' (Dept. Sport and Rec)
- Department of Sustainability and Environment
- City of Darebin, Whittlesea and Yarra
- Merri Creek Management Committee
- Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
- Walking Groups and leaders (Darebin)
- NCMPCP member agencies

Further information

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Further information including a copy of the Ready, Set, Stride - Trainer's Guide for Walking Groups can be located on the website: www.ncmpcp.org.au