



Engaging a rural community in physical activity

Burnie Moves is a whole of community physical activity project funded by the Department of Health and Ageing, and auspiced by Speak Out Association of Tasmania. Burnie is a coastal Tasmanian town with a population of 20,000 people and a higher than average (National) prevalence of chronic heart disease and diabetes.

Goal: To provide participants with a taste of different types of exercise that leads on to sustainable physical activity participation, and to utilise existing assets in the community (e.g. parks and reserves). The target group varies for each program but overall the aim is to attract people with a low or average fitness level as well as include people with a disability. Burnie Moves programs and events are designed to build individual capacity. They demonstrate that exercise doesn't have to be difficult or expensive; it can be fun, social and free.

Burnie Moves involves the following:

- Free weekly exercise programs targeted at beginners and marketed as a 'lycra-free zone' and an alternative to a gym environment. Programs include: Sock Camp (boot camp for beginners), Gentle Moves (for older adults), Dare to Dance (for people with a disability) and a lunch time walking group.
- Taster programs provide people with a free opportunity to 'have a go' without pressure to commit. Links to existing community groups are promoted so that participants can continue that form of exercise if they choose. So far, participants have enjoyed: Core Strength, Warm Water Exercises, Tai Chi, Come and Try Croquet.
- Training opportunities for service providers and the general public have so far included: Tai Chi Leader Training, Vegies in Pots for schools/community groups and the public, Building the Bridge from Client to Citizen training with disability service providers and Asset Based Community Development seminar for the public.
- Regular community events to promote local resources and encourage a healthy and active lifestyle. Events have included the Wheelie Big Saturday in Somerset and the Big Burnie Bike Day.



Successes:

- Over 400 people have participated in Burnie Moves programs and events, with an average of 127 people participating in programs on a weekly basis.
- 69% of 'Burnie Movers' (program participants) identified themselves as having a low or average fitness level when registering to participate.
- 86% of Burnie Movers surveyed stated that participation in the project has increased their level of physical activity and a further 74% state that they intend to maintain that level of activity.
- Involvement of people with a disability in most programs.
- Working towards sustainability with Burnie Movers now paying a small fee to continue participation in some weekly programs (Gentle Moves/Sock Camp).
- Won a Commendation Award at the 2009 Medibank Private Active Tasmania Awards.

Challenges:

- Transport is proving to be a major participation barrier for people with a disability. The focus for the remainder of the project is engaging/motivating disability support staff so that they can see the benefits of participation for their clients and themselves.
- Accessing suitable, low cost venues for programs in a rural community.
- Limited opportunities for ongoing funding to sustain program initiatives.

For more information about the Burnie Moves project visit www.burniemoves.com.au.

