PHYSICAL ACTIVITY LEVELS OF WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ADULTS 2009

Call to Action

December 2010
1. RATIONALE

The findings from the 2009 Adult Physical Activity Survey are encouraging. The downward trend in levels of physical activity appears to have been averted, reaching a plateau since 2006. It is also encouraging that those who are already active appear to be undertaking more physical activity and for longer.

However, increasing levels of overweight and obesity as well as the fact that there is still 40% of the Western Australian adult population not being sufficiently active for good health, remain a significant concern.

It is essential that there is a strong and clear commitment to physical activity policy and strategy across government. There also needs to be the will to work in partnership with local government and the community sector to ensure this policy is translated into sustainable programs and initiatives at the community level.

The actions identified below are aligned to key findings from the Adult Survey. They have been developed by the Taskforce and are designed to focus attention and guide discussions amongst Taskforce members and other relevant stakeholders. It is intended that these actions will continue to inform strategic planning within the Taskforce and assist Taskforce members and stakeholders in their business planning processes relevant to physical activity.

Some of the actions are already in progress, others reinforce the ongoing commitment required to achieve outcomes for physical activity in this state.

The role of the Taskforce will be to facilitate a coordinated response to the findings and in particular work with its members to address physical activity through policies within their respective portfolios.

It is important to note that these actions are not exhaustive, rather a summary of some immediate priorities that have been identified by the Taskforce in relation to the Adult Survey findings. Other priorities may become apparent following further analysis of the data, the Taskforce Strategic Directions Project and stakeholder planning and priority setting processes.
2. PRIORITY ACTIONS

2.1 Promotion and Awareness

2.1.1 Ensure social marketing and media campaigns provide balanced healthy lifestyle messages and promote the broad benefits that physical activity provides to the health and wellbeing of Western Australians.

2.1.2 Continue to promote the national physical activity guidelines.

2.1.3 In partnership with health services and professional associations, reinforce the vital role of primary healthcare in promoting physical activity.

2.2 Built Environment

2.2.1 Contribute to the current statutory planning reform agenda to influence policy and strategy to ensure the design of the built environment is accessible and conducive to physical activity (e.g. high density living, public open space, connected and accessible communities).

2.2.2 Continue to support the development of Healthy Active by Design - WA specific design guidance and associated strategic planning tools to assist planners, urban designers and developers in the development of communities that support physical activity.

2.3 Walking, Cycling, Active Transport

2.3.1 Ensure continued investment in infrastructure to support walking, cycling and access to public transport.

2.3.2 Continue to support and encourage active transport behaviour change campaigns and walking and cycling promotions.
2.3.3 Advocate for the development of an Active Transport Policy statement for WA and ensure Active Transport is reflected in the development of future integrated transport strategies and policies.

2.3.4 Review and update the Walk WA Strategy to reflect current evidence and trends in relation to walking in Western Australia.

2.3.5 Encourage and promote the benefits of greater coordination and communication between cycling stakeholders across the domains of competition, recreation and transport, in particular the benefits of a stronger, united voice for cycling.

2.4 Settings

2.4.1 Expand promotion and support for workplace physical activity initiatives (Current - DSR Healthy Active Workplaces; Future – COAG funded Healthy Workers Initiative)

2.4.2 Work to address perceptions of safety within local neighbourhoods through education, community based initiatives and applying design out crime principles to community planning.

2.5 Specific Populations

2.5.1 Increase focus on policy and strategy to increase levels of physical activity amongst older adults.

2.5.2 Identify key strategies to support physical activity opportunities for adults living in low socio economic circumstances.
3. KEY STRATEGIES

The Taskforce will continue to work with its members and other stakeholders to ensure the following strategies support the above actions and reflect an ongoing commitment to delivering outcomes for physical activity in Western Australia through a coordinated approach.

3.1 Build the case for physical activity through strong and consistent communication and advocacy.

3.2 Identify and influence key policies across portfolios relevant to physical activity (eg: health, transport, planning).

3.3 Promote the importance of integrated planning at state, regional and local level.

3.4 Encourage the implementation of relevant strategies and programs that are evidenced based and reflect sustainability principles.

3.5 Identify and promote case studies and best practice examples across settings and populations.

3.6 Foster partnerships and collaboration opportunities

3.7 Consider specific needs and priorities of regional WA to ensure relevant application of policy and strategy in regional WA.

3.8 Identify workforce development needs for professions and sectors that impact on physical activity and deliver relevant professional development opportunities.

3.9 Support the development of relevant campaigns that can be linked to community based strategy.

3.10 Continue to undertake appropriate monitoring and evaluation of physical activity in Western Australia to inform strategic direction, policy and strategy.