The incidence of chronic heart disease, obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure in the Mackay region is higher than many other areas in Queensland. With a growing part of the community employed in the mining industry, many Mackay residents have long working hours and irregular working patterns. This not only makes incorporating physical activity into their daily routine challenging, but may also increase their risk of chronic disease.

Mackay Regional Council is focused on developing community infrastructure and promoting active lifestyles to encourage community involvement in sport and recreational activities, including walking and cycling. Following its success in winning the 2010 National Heart Foundation Local Government Award for the $30 million mixed use Bluewater Trail, the council has developed the Active in the City program. The program is a collaboration between the council’s Economic Development and Recreation Services departments and aims to address both the economic and recreational needs of the community. The program costs approximately $20,000 per annum for physical activity providers and marketing. Active in the City seeks to increase the custom of local businesses in the central business district (CBD) and improve the physical health and active lifestyles of residents and visitors by providing free and fun physical activities in the city centre.

Mackay is one of the fastest growing areas in Queensland with a population of 166,811 (Census 2011). Mackay’s growth is fuelled by the mining boom in the Bowen Basin and growth in agri-business, tourism, and the marine and retail sectors. Mackay is also the largest sugar producing region in Australia.

**Good practice**

Active in the City demonstrates:
- the benefits of interdepartmental partnerships within councils to deliver programs
- that linking a range of council objectives and goals improves access to resources for programs
- the importance of developing programs which seek to accommodate the working habits of the local community.

**What we did**

- Identified physical activity programs as a way to encourage people back into the Mackay CBD and improve trading for businesses in the city centre.
- Used an existing council levy on local CBD-based traders to fund projects and programs that bring increased economic activity to these traders.
- Actively sought out local providers and trainers, including physical fitness operators, to run activities consistent with supporting local business.
- Over the past three years, provided free exercise activities such as aerobics, walking, Zumba and Street SUP (paddle boarding on wheels) in the Mackay CBD.
Active in the City: Mackay Regional Council

- Relaunched the program when new activities were added, with attendance from Councillors, sponsors and local media.
- Acknowledged the work of physical activity providers with a morning tea with the Mayor and Councillors.
- Developed a similar program for Sarina called Focus on Sarina.

What we have achieved so far

- A diverse range of physical activities are available to the public within the CBD.
- CBD businesses have reported an increase in trade since the program began.
- Created a viable industry for local private operators of physical fitness programs.
- Greater awareness of physical activities centred within the Mackay CBD.
- Increased the number of local residents and visitors who are actively involved in physical activity within the Mackay CBD.
- A stronger sense of community involvement and support for local businesses.

What we have learnt so far

- Internal council and external partnerships add real value to the delivery of active and healthy lifestyles programs.
- Linking programs that are driven by different goals increases opportunities for providing better outcomes (for example, improved physical health and economic development).
- The middle of the day (lunch times) is not a successful time to provide outdoor activities due to Mackay’s climate.

What we are planning to do next

- Develop different approaches to address the challenges of delivering the program in other smaller town centres (e.g. finding local providers to deliver activities).
- Continue to diversify activities to ensure people of all fitness levels and abilities have the opportunity to participate in Active in the City and Focus on Sarina.
- Continue to increase the number of activities being provided and create a better mix of the types of activities and the times they are offered.
- Continue to seek feedback from participants and the broader community to evaluate existing programs and make improvements where necessary.

What you can do

- Look at existing council programs and objectives that could be linked to support the delivery of active and healthy outcomes.
- Consider ways to work with local businesses to increase resourcing options.
- Adapt successful programs for other communities within the region.
- Use local demographic knowledge to develop appropriate activities for specific communities.


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