



## **Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre: 'Walk it Off' Program and 'Seniors Health Expo' Preliminary Report**

### Introduction:

During November 2009 the Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre staff proposed to run an activity and weight loss program for the Gin Gin Community.

The stimulation for the initiative came from the successful weight loss program conducted in Whyalla, South Australia. All staff members and volunteers in the Neighbourhood Centre were very supportive of the concept and agreed to support the initiative.

The concept of the Gin Gin 'Walk it Off' program was born.

Several meetings with stakeholders and staff during December/January resulted in February being the most suitable month to commence. The program was to run through until August 2010, culminating with a Health Expo.

### Methodology:

To ensure that the project was a success, with a number of positive outcomes being the result, careful planning and consultation had to be a major part of the project. The following stages were implemented:

1. consultation with various groups to ensure the date was acceptable;
2. consultation with service providers to guarantee speakers for monthly weigh-ins and stalls for the Health Expo;
3. development of an operational plan for the Gin Gin 'Walk it Off' program from February to August 2010;
4. reference to operational plan on a monthly basis throughout the length of the project; and
5. to complete the report on the project and distribute to stakeholders.

### Concept:

The developed program needed to provide a number of outcomes for the participants and the Gin Gin Community. This program was not developed to see which member of the community could lose the most weight but rather to develop an ethos of 'activity is healthy'. These outcomes included:

- provision of a fun project that could be enjoyed by all participants;
- development of an environment in which the Gin Gin Community would embrace activity and a healthy lifestyle as an ongoing past-time;
- provide opportunities for the Gin Gin Community to be educated in the components that contribute to a healthy lifestyle;
- provide incentives through friendships and fun to encourage the Community to embrace healthy lifestyle;
- to develop an electronic statistical collection process for evaluation purposes
- an evaluation and post program analysis
- develop a program that demonstrates to various service providers that Gin Gin is receptive to service provision; and
- to pilot a project that may be expanded from Gin Gin to the greater Bundaberg Region in the future.

### Operational:

#### The Walk it Off Program

Once the operational plan had been developed and endorsed by the staff and volunteers the preparation began. Because it was a six month project it became really important that the organisation didn't run out of energy after a couple of months. Margaret Curtis her support staff and centre volunteers ensured that all participants remained motivated for the whole journey and beyond.

They established group walking times on the various walking trails provided by Bundaberg Regional Council in the Gin Gin area. They provided the facilities to weigh-in at any time that the Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre was open as well as at the monthly weigh-in and information sessions. Each month there were shirts to be awarded to participants, recipe books, raffles and other give-aways that kept all of the participants interested. The Bundaberg Regional Council supported the concept through the presence of Councillors and Staff over the six months of the project.

The initial weigh-in involved one hundred and twenty participants. Over the six months the active group stabilised at over forty participants

Before each weigh-in, all participants received a newsletter containing everything from recipes to good news stories. As well, all participants received a phone call offering congratulations and motivation to help maintain their enthusiasm.

Many service providers became involved in the program over the six months and all commended the Gin Gin Community for its vision, enthusiasm and tenacity to achieve their individual goals.

Without the extreme dedication of Margaret Curtis and her team the Gin Gin Community would not have achieved some remarkable results through being involved in the Gin Gin Walk it Off program.

Collectively the Gin Gin Community walked 41,076 kilometres and lost 205.9 kilograms. This is truly remarkable result. Other results included participants losing 17% of their starting weight while others lost between 5 and 10 kilos. One lady dropped 4 dress sizes in the six months. Some of the participants walked in excess of 2,000,000 steps over the time that the program ran.

All participants received certificates with those who walked in excess of 1,000,000 steps joining the millionaires club.

All of the monthly activities are shown in the Walk it Off Newsletters (access via Councils webpage <http://bundaberg.qld.gov.au/residents/sport-recreation/healthy-community>). As a result of the enthusiasm of the participants to maintain their healthy lifestyle, it has been decided to develop a support group.

### The Health Expo:

The program culminated with the Health Expo that was held on Thursday, August 12, 2010. This was the final weigh-in opportunity and it was well supported on the day.

The theme of the Health Expo centred on Diabetes and the highlight was the Diabetes Forum which had a number of health professionals available to answer questions on Diabetes from the community.

Twenty five service providers were in attendance and they provided valuable information to the community. These providers were supported by Graham Jackson, from COTA, speaking on generic medicines and Marilyn King President and long term member of the Bundaberg Region Arthritis Support Group entertained the group with her personal insights into coping with arthritis.

All those who were active in the Walk it Off program had the chance to win two night's accommodation, in a two bedroom apartment, at Bargara. Coincidentally the lucky winner was a person who lost a large amount of weight during the program.

The day was a great success with a healthy lunch ending the proceedings.

### Evaluation Process:

The Healthy Lifestyle Group (HLG) partnered with the Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre to provide an evaluation process for the "Walk it Off" Program. The Healthy Lifestyle Group is comprised of a broad range of government and non government Sector, including CQ University, Queensland Health, Department of Communities and Bundaberg Regional Council representation and has the primary aim of working in partnership to create healthy communities through smoke free environments, nutritious and active living.

The HLG conducted two evaluation sessions with participants of the Walk it Off Program, with 17 conducted as a Pre evaluation screening process at the March weigh-in and 9 conducted at the culmination of the program in August 2010 at the Health Forum.

The aim of the Pre Evaluation tool was to reveal some baseline statistics about the participants of the program, including demographics, reasons why people chose to participate as well as perceived barriers.

The aim of the Post Evaluation was to identify any benefits participants obtained from their participation in the program and group together primary benefits.

Having an impartial and professional evaluation process was valued by the Healthy Lifestyle Group and Bundaberg Regional Council for the valid evidence base it can contribute for future health promotion programs in our region.

An overview of Key data obtained from this process is outlined in the Key findings section below.

## Key Findings of the Evaluation Process:

The Pre Evaluation process provided the following baseline demographic profile on program participants:

- Primary age range was between 45 - 65 - represents 70% of respondents,
- Primary participant gender were female – represents 85% of respondents,
- Cultural demographics:

Only 6% of respondents were of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin, 41% of respondents were born overseas, however only 11% of these identified as Non English Speaking Background.

- Participants joined for a wide range of reasons with the top priorities identified by the respondents as to address health and weight issues (33% of responses) and to become more healthy and active (30% of responses) with social reasons i.e. to meet new people (17%) and for health education (20%) i.e. learn how to improve my health identified as secondary reasons for joining the program.
- Primary health conditions of the respondents were: high blood pressure and anxiety/depression – represented by 50% of all health condition responses.

*#Refer Appendix 1 for Pre Evaluation Proforma.*

From analysis of both the Pre and Post Evaluation process key identified barriers to following a healthy lifestyle, were associated with issues of personal skills and resources and to a lesser extent barriers were associated with community resources and health issues. The Primary barriers participants identified in the Pre Evaluation Process were related to a perceived lack of personal skills and resources - 80% of responses (i.e. cost, lack motivation, time or knowledge and poor stress management), with secondary barriers identified as related to a lack of social support – 10% of responses (i.e. lack friends and awareness of community resources) and related to health issues – 10% of responses (i.e. health issues and lack of regular physical exercise).

The post Evaluation Process conducted with fewer program participants at the conclusion of the program revealed a similar demographic baseline profile and identification of barriers to leading a healthy lifestyle.

The Post Evaluation also revealed some positive outcomes for the benefit that participants obtained from the program. Out of the responses provided to this question (Question 10 of Post Evaluation form – Appendix 2) the three main benefits that participants derived from the program in almost equal proportion were:

- Increased awareness of how to live a healthy lifestyle and of community resources available to support this,
- Increased motivation to be active, and
- Increased physical activity and healthy eating.

Also identified to a lesser extent was an increase in the participants' confidence to take part in their community.

Significantly the Post Evaluation process also revealed that for all respondents who answered whether they would continue with the physical activities they had adopted during the program at the completion of the challenge, 100% indicated that they would.

Further, for all respondents who answered whether they were interested in participating in another program similar to "Walk it Off" in the future 100% said that they would.

Such participant feedback on the "Walk it Off" Program provides a valid justification for the benefit and value to our community, of the continuation and broadening of a health promotion program such as the "Walk it Off" program in the future.

A detailed Evaluation Report of the Gin Gin "Walk it off" Community Challenge can be obtained by contacting the Healthy Lifestyle Group Facilitation Unit on [sportandrec@bundaberg.qld.gov.au](mailto:sportandrec@bundaberg.qld.gov.au) or access the Healthy Community Page of Bundaberg Regional Council's website (<http://bundaberg.qld.gov.au/residents/sport-recreation/healthy-community>).

## Outcomes:

All of the outcomes established when the operational plan was endorsed were achieved or exceeded by the Gin Gin Community.

The Program evaluations conducted by both the Gin Gin Neighbourhood Centre and the independent process completed by the Healthy Lifestyle Group indicate that the Gin Gin Community really appreciated the energy of the facilitators, the information received and the results achieved over the six months. The evaluation proformas are attached in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

## Recommendations:

1. That a similar program be promoted in Gin Gin during the next twelve months;
2. That the potential to expand the project across the region be researched;
3. That funding be sought to expand the operation locally and across the region as a paid coordinator would be necessary.

# APPENDIX 1:



## **“GIN GIN WALK IT OFF” PROGRAM** **PRE PROGRAM PARTICIPANT EVALUATION** TO BE COMPLETED WITH YOUR FACILITATOR:



Healthy Lifestyle Group in partnership with Bundaberg Regional Council is monitoring the Walk it Off Program. All information collected will be strictly confidential. No names or information that identifies an individual will be released.

This evaluation form has been adapted from the Queensland Health resourced Lighten Up to a Healthy Lifestyle Program with permission of the Lighten Up Program.

### 1. How did you hear about the “Walk it Off” program?

(Please tick only ONE box that best applies to you)

Friend / family	<input type="checkbox"/>	Doctor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chemist	<input type="checkbox"/>	Allied Health Worker	<input type="checkbox"/>
Neighbourhood billboard	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mail/Householder flyer	<input type="checkbox"/>
Newspaper/ radio/ newsletter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neighbourhood Centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other, please specify _____			

### 2. Why did you join the “Walk it Off” program?

To become more active	<input type="checkbox"/>	To become more healthy	<input type="checkbox"/>
To address diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/>	To meet new people in my area	<input type="checkbox"/>
To address weight problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	To address health issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
To learn more about improving my health	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other, please specify _____			

### 3. What do you think prevents you from following a healthy lifestyle?

Don't eat healthy foods	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of regular physical activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of time	<input type="checkbox"/>	Safety concerns re exercising in my community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not motivated to exercise	<input type="checkbox"/>	Too costly to prepare healthy food	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of friends to exercise with	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of knowledge of community resources	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor stress management	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of confidence to get out in my Community	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't Know	<input type="checkbox"/>	Not a priority/other responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>
Too costly to participate in healthy activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of knowledge about healthy lifestyle options	<input type="checkbox"/>

### 4. Are you: Male or Female

### 5. What is your age group?

75+	<input type="checkbox"/>	34-39	<input type="checkbox"/>
65-75	<input type="checkbox"/>	30-34	<input type="checkbox"/>
55 -65	<input type="checkbox"/>	19 -29	<input type="checkbox"/>
50-55	<input type="checkbox"/>	U 18	<input type="checkbox"/>
45-49	<input type="checkbox"/>	U 10	<input type="checkbox"/>
40-44	<input type="checkbox"/>		

### 6. Do you identify as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander?

Yes, Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, Torres Strait Islander	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, both	<input type="checkbox"/>	None of the above	<input type="checkbox"/>

**7. Which country were you born in?**

Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>	Outside Australia	<input type="checkbox"/>
If born outside Australia, do you identify as NESB?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	

**8. Do you reside in:**

Gin Gin	<input type="checkbox"/>	Childers	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outside these communities			<input type="checkbox"/>
If you answered in Gin Gin, how long have you resided here? _____			

**9. How would you rate your current health?**

Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Very Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>
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**10. Do you have any of the following health conditions?**

(please tick ALL boxes that apply to you)

Diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/>	High blood pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Kidney disease	<input type="checkbox"/>	Heart disease	<input type="checkbox"/>
Angina (chest pain)	<input type="checkbox"/>	High cholesterol	<input type="checkbox"/>
Asthma	<input type="checkbox"/>	Depression / anxiety	<input type="checkbox"/>
Food allergy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know/unsure	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____			

**11. Do you take any medication for any of the health conditions identified above?**

Yes  No

**12. Are you on a waiting list for elective surgery?**

Yes  No

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.**

## APPENDIX 2:



### **GIN GIN "WALK IT OFF" PROGRAM POST PROGRAM PARTICIPANT EVALUATION TO BE COMPLETED WITH YOUR FACILITATOR:**



Healthy Lifestyle Group in partnership with Bundaberg Regional Council is monitoring the Walk it Off Program. All information collected will be strictly confidential. No names or information that identifies an individual will be released.

*\* The purpose of the Post Program evaluation is to measure the effectiveness of the program in meeting individual/ community needs.*

This evaluation form has been adapted from the Queensland Health resourced Lighten Up to a Healthy Lifestyle Program with permission of the Lighten up Program.

**1. Looking at the list below please number the top 3 categories that best reflect why you joined the "Walk it off" program and rate how well you think your participation in the program met these needs.**

**1a. Reason for participation in the Program**

To become more active	<input type="checkbox"/>	To become more healthy	<input type="checkbox"/>
To address diabetes	<input type="checkbox"/>	To meet new people in my area	<input type="checkbox"/>
To address weight problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	To address health issues	<input type="checkbox"/>
To learn more about improving my health	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other, please specify _____			

**1b. Rate how well you think your participation in the program met your number one need (please tick one box).**

Extremely well     Very Well     Well     Not sure     Didn't meet the need

**1c. Rate how well you think your participation in the program met your number two need (please tick one box).**

Extremely well     Very Well     Well     Not sure     Didn't meet the need

**2a. What prevents you from following a healthy and active lifestyle? Please look at the list below and number your top 3 barriers that you think limit you from living a healthy and active lifestyle?**

*Don't eat healthy foods	___	*Lack of regular physical activity	___
*Lack of time	___	*Safety concerns re exercising in my community	___
*Not Motivated to exercise	___	*Too costly to prepare healthy food	___
*Lack of friends to exercise with	___	*Lack of knowledge of community resources	___
*Poor stress management	___	*Lack of confidence to get out in my Community	___
*Don't Know	___	*Not a priority/other responsibilities	___
*Too costly to participate in healthy activities	___	*Lack of knowledge about healthy lifestyle options	___

**2b. Please rate the degree your participation in the "Walk it off" program has dealt with your top 2 barriers, using the rating scale below.**

**2b (i) Dealt with major barrier: (please tick one box)**

Completely	sometimes	occasionally	no change	not dealt with
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**2b (ii) Dealt with second major barrier: (please tick one box)**

Completely <input type="checkbox"/>	sometimes <input type="checkbox"/>	occasionally <input type="checkbox"/>	no change <input type="checkbox"/>	not dealt with <input type="checkbox"/>
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**3. Are you:** Male  or Female

**4. What is your age group?**

75+ <input type="checkbox"/>	40-44 <input type="checkbox"/>
65-74 <input type="checkbox"/>	30-39 <input type="checkbox"/>
55 -64 <input type="checkbox"/>	19-29 <input type="checkbox"/>
50-54 <input type="checkbox"/>	18 and Under <input type="checkbox"/>
45-49 <input type="checkbox"/>	

**5. Are you of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin?**

Yes, Aboriginal <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, Torres Strait Islander <input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, both <input type="checkbox"/>	None of the above <input type="checkbox"/>

**6. Which country were you born in?**

Australia <input type="checkbox"/>	Outside Australia <input type="checkbox"/>
If born outside Australia, are you from a non English speaking background?	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	

**7. Do you reside in:**

Gin Gin area <input type="checkbox"/>	Childers area <input type="checkbox"/>
Outside these communities <input type="checkbox"/>	
If you answered in Gin Gin, how long have you lived here? _____	

**8a. How would you rate your current health? (Please tick one box)**

Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Very Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Poor <input type="checkbox"/>
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**8b. Do you think your participation in the 'walk it off' program has seen a change to your health? (Please tick one box)**

Yes, a big improvement <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, a small improvement <input type="checkbox"/>	No change <input type="checkbox"/>	Not sure <input type="checkbox"/>
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**9. Do you have any of the following health conditions?**

(Please tick ALL boxes that apply to you)

Diabetes <input type="checkbox"/>	High blood pressure <input type="checkbox"/>
Kidney disease <input type="checkbox"/>	Heart disease <input type="checkbox"/>
Angina (chest pain) <input type="checkbox"/>	High cholesterol <input type="checkbox"/>
Asthma <input type="checkbox"/>	Depression / anxiety <input type="checkbox"/>
Food allergy <input type="checkbox"/>	Don't know/unsure <input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) _____	

**9b. Has your participation in the "walk it off" program resulted in any change to your above health conditions?**

Yes  No

**Comments** -----  
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**10. What do you think was your greatest 2 benefits from participation in the “Walk it off” program?  
(Please number the boxes with a “1 and 2” from the list below)**

- Increased awareness of local community activities that support living an active and healthy lifestyle
- Increased general awareness of how to be more active and healthy
- Making and renewing social connections in my local community
- Increased motivation and commitment to being active and healthy
- Increased confidence to participate in my community
- Increasing my level of physical activity and healthy eating
- Other -----

**11. Are you intending to continue with the physical activities that you have been doing during the walk it off program?**

Yes       No       Don't Know

**12. Would you like to participate in another program similar to “walk it off” in the future?**

Yes       No       Don't Know

**13. Do you have any comments or suggestions for the improvement of this program or similar programs in the future?**

Comments -----  
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**Thank you for taking the time to complete this form.**