



Walkability Action Group Case Study

*More walking and talking in Melbourne's outer east:
Bayswater West Community Hub Action Group*

By Knox Community Health Service

What is the setting?

The Bayswater West Community Hub is a large public space adjacent to a busy intersection in Melbourne's outer east. It hosts a primary school, early childhood services, a church, scouts club, bowls club and sporting reserve.

Who is involved?

The Bayswater West Community Hub Action Group is a Walkability Action Group (WAG) including residents and representatives from local organisations: a primary school, Anglican church, children's services, aged care facility and various sporting clubs.

How did the group come together?

The group followed the success of the [Mothers Living Well Project](#), coordinated by Knox Community Health Service in partnership with Knox City Council. The project aim was to improve the mental wellbeing of mothers in the area by establishing a community supportive of walking and cycling for transport and social inclusion.



As part of the project, a number of local mothers participated in a walkability audit of Bayswater West, with a facilitated walk of two routes followed by group discussion. The audit was promoted through the local primary school and by a letterbox drop in the neighbourhood. Participating mothers were asked about their perception and experience of active transport and social connection. Using this information, the mothers developed an action plan, and identified engaged citizens, along with representatives from the local primary school, sporting groups and agencies. From this the Bayswater West Community Hub Action Group was established.

How does the group advocate for walkability?

The group is working to make the Bayswater West Community Hub a place that encourages the community to meet, connect and use sustainable modes of transport such as walking, public transport, cycling and car sharing. Partnerships, namely with local government, have been established to achieve this. The group has a strong and direct connection with a local councillor and the council's community engagement officer, who assist in collaboration with Knox City Council.

The group has used local print media to promote activities and have recently created a [Facebook page](#). An online [WAG page](#), provided to the group by Victoria Walks, has been considered unsuccessful, as has a print newsletter, due to the demand for content maintenance.

What has the group achieved and where to from here?

Working with Knox City Council, the group has achieved the installation of new street infrastructure to identify the community hub and to slow traffic. This includes a new 'pause point' for the community, with seating, a community notice board, plantings, a fountain and sculpture; and improved road markings. Approval has been gained for master-planning for the area, installation of a pathway, and a pedestrian crossing.

The group meets four times per year and has set up a monthly community café, where members of the community can discuss issues informally. Knox Community Health Service has been the facilitator, but in 2013 the group will need to become self-sustaining. The group has had significant success to date, and valuable partnerships have been established, but it will be a challenge to maintain momentum. A connection needs to be maintained with the primary school, which represents a key neighbourhood place and is integral to the group's link with the community. There is potential support in the government's Prevention Community Model, which places value on school–community partnership.

What resources does the group use?

The group has successfully accessed the financial and human resources of Knox City Council, both of which have enabled change at the Bayswater West Community Hub. They have sought advocacy advice from Victoria Walks, who has helped to establish a [webpage](#).

What has contributed to the group's success?

The support and facilitation of Knox Community Health Service has built the group's capacity and skills to create a walkable neighbourhood space.

Involving the Bayswater West community has enabled the group to better understand the community's vision. Methods to engage the community included:

- a partnership agreement with key organisations
- quarterly meetings for key organisations, facilitated by the primary school principal
- a children's 'play day' on a closed road
- Community Café
- Cinema Under the Stars
- arts projects and launches

Getting the right people to the table, particularly Knox Council's community engagement officer, who understands council language, has been invaluable. The Council led a community planning process with the group, encouraging them to work constructively in building a vision for the public space. The plan was the basis for a number of successful submissions to council for funding. Concurrently, the council improved its ability to work with the community.



What are the challenges?

The most significant challenge at the moment is facilitation because support of the group by a funded professional will soon cease.

What has kept the group motivated?

The group is motivated by its mission to:

- increase physical activity and improve health
- build a successful community
- achieve a child-friendly neighbourhood
- improve environmental sustainability



How has the group managed conflict?

The group has not experienced direct conflict, just diversity of opinion, which is seen as a normal result of change. The group ensures well-facilitated meetings, where everyone has a voice.

What advice can the group offer about establishing a Walkability Action Group?

- A walking audit is an important tool to understanding the local area and building community involvement.
- Bring together all relevant organisations and interested residents: this builds a more sustainable group with less conflict.
- Understand local government processes, including the budget allocation process and relevant expertise and decision-makers.

Why should our neighbourhoods be more walkable?

All people should feel safe and comfortable to walk, interact and enjoy their public spaces. A neighbourhood that encourages more public life and social interaction increases passive surveillance, or 'eyes on the street', building a community that is more liveable and walkable.

For more information about Walkability Action Groups:

- visit www.victoriawalks.org.au/WAGs
- contact Victoria Walks on 03 9662 3975 or info@victoriawalks.org.au

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