

Making Physical Activity a Priority



PICTURED: The Alpine Active Living Mapping project got Jo Long physically active. Here she tackles Bright's Goat Track.

Central Hume Primary Care Partnership (Central Hume PCP) improves the health and wellbeing of people in its communities.

We do this by helping organisations work together on complex health and social challenges in our region. This way, we make the most of available resources, avoid duplication of effort and achieve outcomes our community needs and deserves.

With benefits for her physical and mental health and feeling more capable generally in life, it's no surprise that Jo Long is a convert to the advantages of physical activity.

It hasn't always been that way.

Two years ago, Jo took part in a physical activity survey as part of the Alpine Active Living Mapping Project aimed at assessing if people in the Alpine Shire were achieving Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines and to identify barriers and opportunities for physical activity that existed locally.

"The survey was a bit of a wake-up call. Answering the questions made me realise I was doing absolutely nothing! It was definitely the starting point that led me to thinking 'this is a bit ridiculous'."

"I initially started with walking and mountain bike riding. But then I had an accident and injured my wrist, so I moved on to classes at the gym, including pilates and yoga.

"Through the gym staff's knowledge of my injuries and ability, they gave me confidence. They really started by getting me to focus on the things I could do and not what I couldn't do. Their personal support gave me the frame of mind to get back out to enjoy the hills; walking and running. Plus, before the Coronavirus restrictions, I was going to eight or nine exercise classes in a week."

"For me the variety of exercise options is important and the individual support you get in a gym or in a class, gives you the connection and the feeling that you are valued."

Maureen Ryland, Health Promotion Officer at Alpine Health said this support of others also came through as a strong motivator for Alpine Health staff to take part in exercise.

As part of the Active Alpine Group delivering the Alpine Active Living Mapping Project recommendations, Alpine Health is implementing the Healthy Workplaces Achievement Program including workplace initiatives for staff.

"One example is the lunchtime Bright walking group. Staff have told us they are more likely to do it because other staff are participating", Maureen said.

Partners Alpine Health, Gateway Health, Alpine Shire Council and Sport North East are working locally to deliver a range of other recommendations identified through the project. At the time of writing, most of these have been put on hold due to Coronavirus restrictions.

The mapping project responded to data showing residents of the Alpine Shire were not meeting Australia's Physical Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines. The Alpine Shire had less than 50% of its population undertaking sufficient physical activity with 30% of the population being overweight and 18% obese.

Felicity Kennedy, Health Promotion Coordinator with Gateway Health, the lead agency for the project, said the benefits of physical activity are well known, as are the negative health effects of being sedentary.

"People who do not undertake enough physical activity have a greater risk of cardiovascular disease, colon and breast cancers, type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis, just to mention a few," Felicity said.

"This project aimed to understand why local Alpine communities are not meeting the Australian Physical

Activity and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines that adults should accumulate 2 ½ to 5 hours of moderate intensity physical activity, 1 ¼ to 2 ½ hours of vigorous intensity physical activity, or an equivalent combination of both, each week.”

The project identified lack of time and weather as they key barriers to people’s involvement in physical activity. Nearly 27% of participants said there were no barriers, they just didn’t do much physical activity. Walking, cycling, free events and family events were found to be the top solutions.

This project started with research and community consultation in January 2018 and made a range of recommendations in July 2018, following this the Active Alpine Group was established, they developed an action plan which began being delivered in 2019. Actions included community consultation, promoting free, family friendly activities as part of the Premier’s Active April campaign and scoping community interest and funding opportunities for Outdoor Exercise Equipment. (Many activities planned for early 2020, including the Premier’s Active April, were cancelled due to Coronavirus restrictions.)

▶ Funding

The project was funded by Central Hume PCP through the Alpine Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

▶ PCP Role

The Central Hume PCP team:

- Supported the Alpine Health and Wellbeing Partnership to collaborate on a health priority area – increase active living.
- Supported and strengthened the coordination and collaboration of existing services.
- Supported the implementation of the Alpine Municipal Public Health and Wellbeing Plan:
 - Priority 1:** Improve healthy eating and physical activity.
 - Priority 4:** Social connected and supported communities.
- Supported a transferable model for application across other LGAs in the Central Hume PCP catchment.
- Supported the implementation of the Prevention Strategic Action Plan.
- Supported a place-based approach to service delivery and planning.
- Supported the strengthening of partnerships with service providers in the area.

▶ To learn more about Central Hume PCP please visit our website:
www.centralhumepcp.org

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