

Werri Beach Outdoor Gym Program

Evaluation Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

A 9 week fitness program was facilitated by Kiama Municipal Council in partnership with the Health Promotion Service from the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. The project included 9 one hour sessions facilitated by a trained exercise professional to demonstrate safe and beneficial ways to use the Werri Beach Outdoor exercise equipment.

Method

A pre and post program evaluation was concluded to determine effectiveness of the outdoor gym equipment Werri Beach Outdoor Gym program (please see appendix 1). Of the nine participants' that completed the pre 'Werri Beach Outdoor Fitness Program' survey, eight participants completed a post-evaluation.

Results

Overall, survey findings were very positive with all participants reporting they would be interested in participating in the program if it were run again. The majority of participants were satisfied with cleanliness and maintenance of the outdoor gym equipment and the structure of the program and program sessions. There was more variety in what participants reported doing at the gym and the park in the post survey compared to the pre survey. There were slight differences in number of days of physical activity that was enough to raise breathing rate in the last week, with positive changes in how often participants used the park. Nearly all participants reported they would consider a small payment if the program were run again, with only one answering "maybe."

Conclusion

The 'Werri Beach Outdoor Gym Equipment' program was well received with positive improvements in how participants used the park and how often they visited the park, as well as having positive effects on their self-reported health.

Recommendations

- Continue to conduct outdoor gym program to assist local residents to successfully use equipment facilities and increase utilisation of park amenity
- Run the program during cooler times of the day or in cooler seasons
- Improve park amenity by providing shade in vicinity of equipment e.g. tree planting and enforce dog owners to clean up after their pets
- Include outdoor gym equipment programs which are targeted for people who are fitter and more experienced users of equipment

WERRI BEACH OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT PROGRAM

Introduction

A 9 week fitness program was facilitated by Kiama Municipal Council in partnership with the Health Promotion Service from the Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District. The project included 9 one hour sessions facilitated by a trained exercise professional to demonstrate safe and beneficial ways to use the Werri Beach Outdoor exercise equipment.

Kiama Municipal Council installed outdoor exercise equipment in 2015 at various locations along Pacific Ave in Werri Beach Gerringong. Community Consultation was undertaken in 2014 to determine the location of equipment that would be most accessible for the community. 105 responses were received and 76% of those responses preferred the equipment to be distributed along Pacific Ave between Gerringong Surf Club and Lloyd Rees Reserve. Since the equipment has been installed there has not been any come and try sessions implemented for residents in the Gerringong area until this project.

The current national recommendations for physical activity in adults, is 30 mins of moderate intensity physical activity on most days. Achieving this amount of physical activity can have not only physical health benefits, but also mental and social health benefits¹. Incorporating physical activity into our daily lives and routines is described as active living and there are certain elements in our environments that can support active living such as accessible footpaths and accessible recreation equipment². The 9 week project provided an opportunity for residents in the Kiama LGA to learn not only how to use the outdoor exercise equipment but, also teach them ways to incorporate active living into their lives. The program built social connections between residents and increased people's confidence to participate in physical activity on their own.

The Werri Beach Outdoor Gym Equipment program evaluation was conducted by Kiama Municipal Council in conjunction with Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District as a quality assurance project to determine areas of improvement and areas that went well within the program.

Method

A pre and post program evaluation was conducted to determine effectiveness of the outdoor gym equipment 'Werri Beach Outdoor Gym Equipment' program (please see appendix 1). Of the 9 participant's that completed the pre 'Werri Beach Outdoor Fitness Program' survey, eight participants completed a post-evaluation.

The pre survey included questions on: social demographics; if, when and how often participants used the outdoor gym equipment; participant logistics for getting to the park; how many days participant had done a total of 30 minutes or more of physical activity that was enough to elevate breathing done in the last week; how would participant rate their health during the past four weeks; general questions on outdoor gym equipment condition; and questions on local community organisation participation.

¹ Premier's Council for Active Living NSW 2011, Active Living Factsheets, Environmental Audit Tools, http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/resources/active_living_fact_sheets

² Premier's Council for Active Living NSW 2011, Active Living Factsheets, The Environment and Active Living, http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/file/0006/27636/2007_environment_active_living.pdf

The post survey evaluation included questions on: social demographics; how many days of a total of 30 minutes or more of physical activity that was enough to elevate breathing had the participant done in the last week; how often participant used the outdoor gym equipment and what they generally did at the park; program marketing questions; number of program sessions attended; reasons for program participation; general questions on equipment and confidence in safe use of equipment; questions on program session; and suggestions for the program.

Results

Demographics

Of those who complete the post-program evaluation 7 identified as female (87.5%) and one as male (12.5%). One female did not complete the post survey.

Level of Physical Activity

Pre and post

There was a range of responses for the number of day's participants completed a total of 30 minutes or more of physical activity that was enough to elevate their breathing rate.

Pre and post evaluation findings are summarised in the following table:

TABLE 1. WEEKLY PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Weekly 30 minutes or more of physical activity	Pre N=9	Post N=8
0 days		
1 day	0	1
2 days	0	0
3 days	1	1
4 days	2	2
5 days	2	3
6 days	0	0
7 days	3	1
Nil days	1	0

Reasons for participation

There were three themes when asked for reasons for attending the 'Werri Beach Outdoor Gym Equipment' program. These included: achieve/increase strength, to get fit and to learn how to use the equipment safely. The remaining reasons included cost (program inexpensive to partake in), increase functional fitness, needing to get healthier, motivation, wanting to access equipment closer to Gerroa than Kiama and "any opportunity for fitness is a bonus."

Park usage

Pre and post

Participants were asked to provide responses on what they would like to say about the park in general. Answers were varied; however there was a theme in regards to other park users not cleaning up after their dogs (specifically their faeces). Others requested shade in area of equipment.

The remaining responses were positive and included: good breeze, feeling safe, “nice park” and “looking good”, “great spot – handy to beach”, good outdoor gym equipment and a good play area.

Responses for how often participant’s used the ‘Werri Beach Outdoor Park’ were also varied with two participants reporting that they used the park 2-4 times per week; two participants visited 1 time per week; two participants 2-3 times per month; and 2 participants a few times a year.

While responses for this were largely unchanged over the period of the program (9 weeks), there were more (2) participants reporting using the gym equipment ‘2-3 times per month’ in the post evaluation. When asked what they usually did at the park a common theme was to attend with their children or grandchildren. Another theme was to use the equipment, with one participant stating they used the gym to do “the exercise we practised.” Other responses included walking, jogging and mixed exercise. One participant did not provide a response. This was significantly different from the pre-survey response asking what participants did while at the park. Responses were ‘walk’ (3), “not much” and “relax, walk, jog” with 5 participants not providing any response.

When prompted to comment on the outdoor equipment in general, the two major themes included: that the park was “good”, and it was useful knowing how to use the equipment safely.

Marketing of Program

Generally, half of the respondents (4) had heard about the ‘Werri Beach Outdoor Gym Equipment’ program through the Kiama Council website. The remaining respondents had seen the program advertised through the Kiama Bugle (2), the Gerringong Facebook page (1) and the Health and Sustainability Newsletter (1).

Participation rates

There was little deviation in responses when asked how many weeks participants had completed of the program:

- Three respondents (37.5%) reported completing 8 of the 9 weeks
- Two respondents (25%) reported completing 7 of the 9 weeks, and
- Three respondents (37.5%) reported completing 6 of the 9 weeks

Outcomes of Program

When participants were asked about how confidence they were in using the outdoor gym equipment following the program, the responses were as follows:

TABLE 2. OUTDOOR EQUIPMENT USE

	Very confident	Quite confident	Somewhat confident	Not confident
Your safe use of the outdoor gym equipment	6 (75%)	2 (25%)		
Using outdoor gym equipment as part of your exercise routine	6 (75%)	2 (25%)		
Showing family and friends how to use the outdoor gym equipment	3 (37.5%)	4 (50%)	1 (12.5%)	

Generally, participants were confident or very confident in all areas.

When asked to comment on the overall program itself, answers were as follows:

TABLE 3. GYM EQUIPMENT AND PROGRAM STRUCTURE

	Excellent	Very Good	Fair	Unsatisfactory
The location chosen for the outdoor gym program was	6 (75%)	2 (25%)		
The cleanliness and maintenance of equipment was	1 (12.5%)	6 (75%)	1 (12.5%)	
The demonstrations and instructions provided by the fitness leader at the sessions were	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)		
The program format including warm up, exercises and stretches was	7 (87.5%)	1 (12.5%)		
The healthy morning tea was	8 (100%)			
The weekly incentive prizes were	4 (50%)	4 (50%)		
The sessions 'passport' card was	4 (50%)	4 (50%)		

Overall, participants generally responded 'excellent' or 'very good' when asked about gym location, cleanliness and maintenance, demonstrations and instructions provided by the fitness leader, program structure, morning tea, weekly prizes and session 'passport.'

In regards to gym cleanliness and maintenance, the response provided more positive insight compared to the pre-program evaluation in which only three participants provided diverse responses ('never,' 'most of the time' and 'always').

When asked on the appropriateness of the program, answers were as follows

TABLE 4. PROGRAM SESSIONS

The length of each session was	Too long	Just right (7)	Too brief
The 9 week block of sessions was	Too long	Just right (5)	Too brief (1)
The overall content and information provided was	Difficult to understand	Just right (6)	Too simple

Not all of the sections were answered by every participant for this section. The main comments received were for the day and time the program was run with suggestions of an earlier time in the day in order to complete the program in cooler weather/temperatures. One participant suggested running the program in a cooler season to avoid the program being run when the days were too hot. (NB. the weather was not the usual early summer weather, it was unseasonably hot).

There was a question asking what participants thought of the day and time the program was run, with 7 respondents reporting that the session time should be earlier in the day to avoid exercising in warmer temperatures.

Program improvements

When asked what they learned from the program, most participants reported they learned proper use of the outdoor equipment. A more minor theme was exercise variation. Other responses included fitness strategies, gym routines, to keep intensity up while exercising, to hold stretches for longer time, motivation and exercises transferrable to the home.

When queried as to what would help participants to use the outdoor gym equipment more, most respondents did not have any recommendations. Suggestions provided to help participants use outdoor gym equipment more included: if there was an outdoor gym closer to where they lived, self-motivation, continuing to exercise as a group and shade near equipment. For additional suggestions or comments for how to improve the 'Werri Beach Outdoor Gym' program, most respondents reported that they did not think there needed to be any improvements and that the program was "well organised and very informative." Two suggestions, however, were to offer more programs so more people could enjoy the equipment and perhaps run the program in winter to avoid exercising in hot weather.

All of the participants said they would attend the program if it were run again, with one agreeing that they would do it again "but at next level without so much need for orientation." Participants were asked if they would consider a small payment of \$3-\$5 if they attended the program again with 6 (75%) saying yes, one (12.5%) saying maybe and one saying they would but only if the current program instructor continued to run the program.

Discussion

Overall, survey findings were very positive with all participants reporting they would be interested in participating in the program if it were run again. Furthermore, nearly all participants reported they would consider a small payment if the program were run again, with only one answering "maybe." The majority of participants were satisfied with cleanliness and maintenance of the outdoor gym equipment with only one participant (12.5%) reporting that they thought it was "fair."

The majority of participants were 'confident' or 'very confident' in terms of their safe use of the outdoor gym equipment, using it as part of their exercise routine and showing friends or family how to use the gym equipment correctly. Positive feedback was received for gym location, cleanliness and maintenance, demonstrations and instructions provided by the fitness leader, and program format. The healthy morning tea was also valued.

Encouragingly, there were positive changes in how often participants used the park.

There was more variety in what participants reported doing at the gym and the park in the post survey compared to the pre survey. Levels of self-reported weekly moderate intensity physical activity remained much the same at the completion of the program. Interestingly a reduction was

noted in participants reporting doing 7 days of physical activity. This could possibly be explained by a better understanding of moderate intensity physical activity after completing the program.

Recommendations

- Continue to conduct outdoor gym program to assist local residents to successfully use equipment facilities and increase utilisation of park amenity
- Run the program during cooler times of the day or in cooler seasons
- Improve park amenity by providing shade in vicinity of equipment e.g. tree planting and enforce dog owners to clean up after their pets
- Include outdoor gym equipment programs which are targeted for people who are fitter and more experienced users of equipment