

PURPOSE IN LIFE
SENSE OF BELONGING
BEING ACTIVE
PURPOSE IN LIFE

**Act-Belong-Commit
IN ACTION**



A compilation of case studies from the
Act-Belong-Commit Campaign 2011-2013

Act-Belong-Commit

Case Study Sites in AUSTRALIA

Act-Belong-Commit Case Studies Handbook

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FOREWORD

Act-Belong-Commit is a world-first program coordinated by Mentally Healthy WA that encourages everyone to take action to protect and strengthen their mental health and wellbeing. The campaign prescribes being active, building a sense of belonging and doing things that provide meaning and purpose in life as good for your mental health.

From 2005–2007 the Act-Belong-Commit campaign was piloted in six regional communities in Western Australia (WA). Project officers were assigned to each community and given the flexibility to develop and implement the campaign to suit local needs and conditions. When the pilot phase ended, the WA Country Health Service (WACHS) continued to fund the program within the original communities.

After a successful pilot the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign was launched state-wide in 2008 and has since continued to grow in terms of the reach of the campaign and the number of campaign partners. The core campaign activities are funded by Healthway (WA Health Promotion Foundation) and the Mental Health Commission.

The success of the campaign has been recognised nationally and internationally, with the spontaneous uptake of the campaign across Australia and overseas. In 2011, a team at Waseda University in Japan adapted the campaign to help children affected by the Tsunami.

Since being launched state-wide the campaign has continued to grow and now has 36 sites partnered to deliver the message in metropolitan, rural and remote WA, Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales.

The Act-Belong-Commit Case Studies Handbook is a collection of projects and events that have been undertaken by local Act-Belong-Commit project officers in WA and Victoria since 2011. These projects demonstrate how local initiatives, under the banner of Act-Belong-Commit, have enhanced mental and physical wellbeing, increased individual resilience and enhanced overall community cohesion. Each case study describes a project, how it was initiated and what outcomes were achieved. The case studies showcase how the Act-Belong-Commit message can be incorporated into community activities to enhance the mental health of a population.

The purpose of this handbook is to both, document the history of projects and events that have been conducted under the Act-Belong-Commit banner; and to be used as a guide for individuals and organisations who wish to undertake similar projects and events in the future. If you wish to find out more about any of the projects in this handbook please contact Mentally Healthy WA on (08) 9266 4648.

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Open Gardens Day

Shire of Morawa, Western Australia

What was the project about?

The Act-Belong-Commit Open Gardens Day was about promoting the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign, whilst creating a social and informative day out for our community members in Morawa.

The day consisted of a trip to five local gardens on the community bus. The bus stopped at each garden and spoke to the owners of the property about different plants, how the garden was built, and what worked well or not so well for them when gardening. Lunch and afternoon tea were provided as well as a pledge wall activity for the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign. The project intended to teach the participants about how they can stay mentally healthy, and promote the fact that gardening is a good example of an activity that improves mental health. Not only this, but the project was about creating a social day out for community members, giving the chance to catch up and chat amongst themselves or mingle with people that they might normally see.

How did the project begin?

A community member suggested the activity. Coordination of the event, scheduling activities and promotion the day was done by the Shire of Morawa. The event was successful and has become an annual event.

What did you do?

Five local gardens were visited as well as a discussion about the Act-Belong-Commit Campaign throughout the day. A pledge wall activity, magnets promoting mentally healthy benefits of gardening and crosswords about gardening were all activities done throughout the day.

What were the outcomes and what did you learn?

Twenty local community members learning about gardening & the benefits of being mentally healthy

- Promotion of the Act-Belong-Commit campaign
- Distribution of Act-Belong-Commit resources
- Community members having a stress free social day out and enjoying themselves.

What else?

This event is a good way to promote mentally healthy activities and create awareness of the Act-Belong-Commit campaign with the 'older' population of Morawa. It's a very inexpensive day out and a chance to meet new people and make friends.

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2. Open Access Youth Art Studio

Great Southern Population Health, Western Australia

What was the project about?

The Act-Belong-Commit Open Access Youth Arts Studio delivers art projects for disadvantaged young people in the Albany region. It has been in operation since 2006 and its main goal is to improve the lives of young people experiencing a variety of personal issues ranging from homelessness to mental illness. The studio uses visual, musical and digital art forms to engage and alleviate crisis with its clients. The projects are based on an early intervention model and focus on positive lifestyle choices for at risk young people aged 15 to 25 years. It provides a safe and healthy environment for young people to explore the arts, and reduces mental health risk of young people through positive arts programs facilitated by suitable mentors.

The program is coordinated by the Albany Youth Support Association, a not-for-profit association that provides a range of support and advocacy services with a focus on early intervention to alleviate and prevent crises in the lives of young people who are at risk of harm.

Healthway has sponsored the program from 2010 until present (inclusive) with the Act-Belong-Commit message being given Naming Rights. Great Southern Population Health's health promotion team has provided support at a local level since the commencement of the sponsorship.

How did the project begin?

Great Southern Population Health has been involved with the Act-Belong-Commit campaign since the campaign pilot in 2005. The City of Albany was first introduced as a pilot centre during the Act-Belong-Commit pilot phase, which ran from 2005-2007. Albany has continued to be involved in the Mentally Healthy WA Act-Belong-Commit Campaign onwards. The focus for the Great Southern in 2012 remained with sponsorships, and media with the addition of partnerships and schools which has strengthened the message promotion and concept understanding in the Great Southern community.

What did you do?

Past and present project officers provide support and act as a local contact for the Studio Coordinator. This role has been adapted from initially developing sponsorship plans, in conjunction with the Studio Coordinator, as well as providing local evaluation at events and campaign support, to local evaluation, reporting and support in 2013.

Apart from attending Open Access events and providing annual reports to Healthway, the Studio Coordinator is also met with to discuss how the program is meeting its sponsorship objectives, and any support required to best promote the Act-Belong-Commit concept. In these meetings, any barriers experienced are discussed with regards to sponsorship, such as event date changes and how they plan to incorporate Act-Belong-Commit messages into upcoming events or projects. These meetings have also been valuable for developing relationships with Studio staff, and assists in the overall evaluation of the sponsorship.

What were the outcomes and what did you learn?

The Act-Belong-Commit Open Access Youth Arts Studio is a fantastic role model for the Act-Belong-Commit concept, and they continue to strive to achieve the best outcomes from the sponsorship. They are also a very visible and effective advocate for mental wellbeing and mentally healthy environments in the lower Great Southern region, and continue to experience a growth in participation numbers amongst local youth.

However, like any program, barriers and challenges are encountered, including staff changes, event delays, and so on. One of the more difficult aspects of this is addressing these challenges when they arise, such as events being cancelled or postponed, or sponsorship objectives not being met. Maintaining honest and open communication channels between Healthway, Mentally Healthy WA and the sponsored agency is essential – this applies to all four of the ongoing sponsorships.

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Westall Book Swap Story Time Project

Southern Melbourne Primary Care, Victoria

What was the project about?

A collaborative project between staff from the City of Kingston Community Engagement, Family Support Services and Maternal & Child Health teams along with Central Bayside Community Health Services, Southern Melbourne Primary Care Partnership and Family Life, the Westall Book Swap and Story Time Project targets culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families with children under school age in the Melbourne suburbs of Clarinda and Clayton South and aims to strengthen community connectedness and wellbeing. Many local families attend the sessions regularly to share stories, sing songs and swap books while building strong relationships with each other and health services. Volunteers have participated in training to facilitate in the running of the sessions and to lead the project in becoming more 'community owned' in the future.

The Westall Book Swap and Story Time Project has embodied the principles of the Act-Belong-Commit campaign in that it enables participants to be mentally and socially active, fosters a sense of belonging in those who may have previously been isolated and provides the opportunity to commit to new challenges such as volunteering within the group.

How did the project begin?

The communities of Clarinda, Clayton South and Westall in Melbourne's south-east are home to a significant number of CALD families who may be experiencing social isolation. Approximately 57 percent of Clayton South residents and 48 percent of Clarinda residents were born overseas. Cultural differences, past experiences such as trauma and financial pressures such as unemployment also mean that families may not understand the importance of or are unable to ensure the provision of an environment that nurtures access to literature from a young age.

The project was seen as a way to enhance mental activity through the sharing of stories and books (Act), address social isolation for both the adults and children (Belong), while providing better opportunities for the adults to access health services and affordable books in both English and other languages and the possibility to volunteer within the group (Commit).

What did you do?

Launched in mid-2012, the Westall Book Swap and Story Time Project is held monthly at the Westall Maternal and Child Health Centre. The venue is familiar to young families and accessible by public transport which has overcome barriers which were excluding them from accessing local libraries. Books were donated to the program by Kingston Council Library Service and community donations of books were also accepted into the program.

Sessions include time for swapping or borrowing of books, storytelling and singing.

What were the outcomes and what did you learn?

Two years after it was launched, over 200 people have taken part in the life of the book swap to date. Participants have found great value in attending the group by expressing comments to staff such as "I feel much better after I have been here" and "I don't feel so alone anymore". Choosing a venue that was familiar and accessible to families has been essential to the program's success. It is hoped that more participants will complete training to become volunteer leaders to further enhance the community ownership of the program.

Written by Michelle Spragg
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Men's Survival Handbook

Men's Resource Centre, Western Australia

What was the project about?

The Men's Survival Handbook was compiled to offer the community a one-stop-shop for preventative health information. A designated Act-Belong-Commit page in the Handbook delivers the campaign message in a clear and concise format. The Survival Handbook addresses 24 different subjects covering physical and mental health and social wellbeing in an easy to read and informative manner. It has been distributed state-wide to all golf and bowling clubs, each participant of the Well Man Wellness Check delivered by Men's Resource Centre (MRC) staff and has also been sent to men's groups in NSW and Tasmania. Specific topics covered in the Survival Handbook include men's health checks, blood pressure, waist measurement, preventing type 2 diabetes, mind your nuts, prostate health, healthy bladder and bowel habits, sexual health, new dads, men's D.I.Y pec check, home stretches, work stretches, healthy eating for men, quick easy recipes, Act-Belong-Commit, work/life balance, stress buster, importance of sleep, social wellbeing, binge drinking, gambling, men's anger management, where to get help and help for depression and anxiety.



How did the project begin?

The Men's Survival Handbook was born from enquires from participants of the Well Man Wellness Check. Rather than being given individual information on health subjects, the MRC Executive Committee decided it would better to collate the information into a single handbook encompassing information about preventative physical and mental health and social wellbeing.



What did you do?

Collecting and collating relevant information and writing articles on various subjects. The 1st Edition of the Men's Survival Handbook (20 pages) was delivered to the printers late 2012.

What were the outcomes and what did you learn?

The Men's Survival Handbook 2nd Edition has been received favourably by all recipients and plays a positive role in awareness and informing the community about preventative health methods. The MRC Executive Committee believes that the Handbook is changing men's and community attitudes towards preventative health. Keeping the information in the Handbook up-to-date and relevant is a priority.

What else?

The Men's Survival Handbook 2nd Edition is unique in that it is more than one dimensional and covers subjects addressing physical and mental health and social wellbeing.

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5. Act-Belong-Commit Photo Voice City of Rockingham, Western Australia

What was the project about?

PhotoVoice is an amateur photography project where participants are asked to take photos based on the theme of Act-Belong-Commit and what they like to do to keep mentally healthy. With each entry, a short description explaining the idea behind the photo is provided, giving the photo a 'voice'. Entries could be submitted in non-modified and modified photo/image formats with a maximum of three entries per person.

The competition was open to the whole community with three age categories (12 years and under, 13-17 years and 18 and over). Student workshops in local high schools were facilitated by a professional photographer and these students competed in a student workshop category. One hundred finalists were selected and displayed in an exhibition for three weeks at a local community centre. An awards night was also held as part of the exhibition and competition.

How did the project begin?

This project was funded by the City of Rockingham and Healthway and was used to promote the Act-Belong-Commit message and more generally, being mentally healthy in Rockingham. The project started in 2009 and has been running every year since. A booklet of the winners is produced bi-annually and presented to all winners and sponsors.

What did you do?

Funding is applied for each year or every three years from Healthway. All local high schools are approached each year to take part in the project.

What were the outcomes and what did you learn?

Over the years the competition has grown from just over 300 entries in the first year to almost 500 entries in the sixth year. The competition is well known in the community as is the Act-Belong-Commit message.

What else?

This competition produces many fantastic photos and entries each year. Most years we receive entries from whole families (mum, dad, brothers and sisters) so it is a great family activity that everyone can get involved in.

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6. Building Local Partnerships Great Southern Population Health, Western Australia

What was the project about?

Western Australia Country Health Service (WACHS) Great Southern Population Health has focused on building partnerships with local agencies to increase effective promotion of the Act-Belong-Commit campaign in the Great Southern. As Act-Belong-Commit is a community-based campaign, the aim is to build capacity of other organisations to deliver health messages, and empower them to tailor the messages to their local community; in turn, communities should experience increased cohesion and engagement in their activities, sports and groups. How did the project begin?

How did the project begin?

Population Health in Albany was an Act-Belong-Commit site during the pilot phase of the campaign between 2005-2007 and has continued as a site in subsequent phases.

The Research and Evaluation team conducted a regional needs analysis, identifying key issues and priority areas for all activities planned and implemented by the Health Promotion Team. Partnership development has been a major strategy for implementing the Act-Belong-Commit campaign in order to address one of these key issues, and ultimately reduce social isolation in priority areas.

What did you do?

Relationships with key agencies were built in priority towns identified through the needs analysis, focusing on the organisations which had the largest reach and capacity to implement the campaign. Due to the majority of Shires employing Community Development Officers or similar, and the provision of services to the community, these were the organisations approached. Community Resource Centres also proved to be a valuable platform from which Act-Belong-Commit could be promoted.

Rather than promoting an Act-Belong-Commit partnership immediately to an organisation, it was distinguished between a formal and informal partnership, offering an informal partnership as a 'soft' approach to introduce the campaign and its messages, with a view to developing a long-term, formal partnership further down the track.

Priorities and activities were researched to find which agency was already engaged in identifying ways in which the campaign could fit and support their objectives, without adding considerably to their



workload. Many organisations were already providing many opportunities for community engagement, without necessarily realising that they were providing people with a chance to involve themselves in mentally healthy activities, so this was an opportunity to 'value add' to existing projects. Additionally, the support available from locally-based Project Officers was emphasised throughout as a resource when employing Act-Belong-Commit concepts; the development of a partnership and signing of a partnership agreement is a means to an end, and is not an end in itself.

What were the outcomes and what did you learn?

All but one of the priority towns across the Central Great Southern has some level of engagement with the Act-Belong-Commit campaign. When we met with organisations to discuss the possibilities of the campaign, there was genuine enthusiasm for the messages and a sense of need for their implementation in regional areas. Some parts of the Great Southern have very transient populations, which can make it difficult to develop whole-of-community cohesion, and there was a feeling that Act-Belong-Commit could be used to encourage newer residents to make themselves part of their local community.

Local governments were met with during their strategic planning process, which is a requirement of the development of plans for community engagement and enhancement. Adopting and applying Act-Belong-Commit messages assisted to meet this requirement, as a strategy where a more mentally healthy community can be built through increasing participation in programs.

What else?

In terms of engaging people and making information locally appropriate, the community itself is the expert. Act-Belong-Commit has served as an effective relationship builder, as Great Southern Population Health now have contacts in the majority of towns already serviced with whom further plans and projects can be developed into the future.



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