

- Have a regular 'outdoor play' theme for story time and library shelves.
- Check if your local library has 'Active Play kits' for hire or consider developing your own kit for parents to loan with basic equipment like a magnifying glass, bug catcher, kite, and Frisbee.
- Create an outdoor space that incorporates nature elements for play. See case study from Augusta Park Childhood Service Centre. www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/files/links/Fostering_Children_s_Engag.pdf.

Schools and out of school hours care (OSHC)

- Include excursions to local parks and playgrounds.
- Link with your local Natural Resource Management Board School Education program www.nrmeducation.net.au.
- Department for Education and Child Development (DECD) has developed a guide that provides practical information about creating natural play environments www.nrmeducation.net.au/uploads/Nature%20Play/PromotingNaturalOutdoorLearningEnvironmentsDECD.pdf.
- Create a natural playspace for students or add stimulating natural features to an existing playground.
- Consider opportunities for outdoor learning environments www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au/pages/resources.
- Access resources for borrowing from the DECD library www.earlyyears.sa.edu.au.
- Consider increasing your community's access to schools' grounds using the recent DECD guidelines on 'Schools as community hubs'. www.decd.sa.gov.au/aboutdept/files/links/Discussion_paper_WEB.pdf.
- Consider a classroom activity involving students auditing the local parks and playgrounds using the Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Audit tool for children and presenting data to local council.

Sporting and recreation clubs

- Consider incorporating outdoor activities or 'come n try' events for younger siblings during sports events.

Retailers

- Create a product display around healthy 'picnic food ideas for the park'.
- Encourage toy retailers to display active and outdoor play games and activities.

Make it long term

- Consider involving your clients or stakeholders in an audit of your playspaces, drawing what they would like, and incorporating natural elements into any playspace redevelopments.



For more information, visit:

- OPAL at www.opal.sa.gov.au
- www.natureplaysa.org.au

What is OPAL?

OPAL is about our community working together to create all kinds of ways to enjoy eating well and have fun being active. It is a program funded by the Australian and State Governments together with selected Local Councils.

The way OPAL comes to life in each community will depend on your input and enthusiasm. New information, programs and activities about healthy eating and physical activity will regularly be provided to help you make healthy choices in your life and for the people you and your organisation come into contact with. The OPAL team at your local council will be promoting all the great parks and playgrounds in your area as well as coordinating activities in local parks for your family and clients to enjoy.

OPAL has five previous campaigns, and we thank you for your ongoing support with them:

- 'Water. The Original Cool Drink' – encouraging a reduction in soft drink consumption.
- 'Give the screen a rest. Active play is best' – encouraging kids to switch off the screens and get out and play.
- 'Make it a fresh snack' – encouraging the replacement of junk food snacks with fruit and vegetables.
- 'Think Feet First' – encouraging kids to step, cycle, scoot to school.
- 'A healthy brekky is easy as Peel. Pour. Pop' – encouraging a healthy brekky.

To find out more and become involved, visit www.opal.sa.gov.au.

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Life looks brighter outside



*Local parks and playgrounds are great places to explore.
So enjoy the day with outdoor play!*

Stakeholder's action sheet

Every 12 months, OPAL introduces a new healthy lifestyle message to our community. The current message is 'Life looks brighter outside. Enjoy the day with outdoor play at your local park and playground'. The aim is to support families to enjoy time together through exploring local parks and playgrounds.

What you should know

- In Australia 87% of children spend more time playing indoors than outdoors (Planet Ark, 2011).
- Kids 8-12 years spend nearly half their free time plugged into technology but report they prefer outdoor play and want to spend more time playing with their parents (Australian State of Play Report, 2012).
- Whilst the increased amount of children's screen time is one reason for the decrease in outdoor activity, other factors play a role such as: an increasingly scheduled after school life, smaller back yards, increased risk aversion to activities such as climbing trees, and concerns about child safety and children independently going to parks (ABS, 2012).
- Getting active outdoors has real benefits to children in terms of their physical and mental health.

- Local councils have a wide range of parks, playgrounds, bike paths and walking trails.
- OPAL wants to support the community to be active in local parks and playgrounds and will make this a prime focus through the 'Life looks brighter outside' theme in 2014.
- To do this, OPAL wants to support parents to recognise the fun they can have with their children outside and for children to explore and live an adventure.

Activity habits of our kids

- Kids need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity each day (Australian Government National Physical Activity Guidelines).
- 63% of South Australian children do not meet the guidelines for sufficient physical activity. But kids are not alone, with 59% of South Australian adults also not meeting the guidelines for adults of at least 30 minutes per day of physical activity (SAMSS, 2012/13).
- South Australian children spend an average of 4.5 hours a day in front of a screen, exceeding the national average by half an hour (CSIRO, 2007). Yet our children spend less than two hours a day outside (Planet Ark, 2013).
- The average Australian child spends less time outdoors than a maximum security prisoner (Griffin Longley, CEO, Nature Play WA).

What makes getting outside so hard? Some facts

An Australian study of 2000 respondents comprising 8-12 year old children, parents and grandparents of 8-12 year old children in 2012 (Australian State of Play Report, 2012) revealed the following barriers to being active outdoors:

- **Time:**
 - since the 1970's there has been a 50% decrease in free play time
 - kids say homework is stopping them from playing
 - parents name work and home pressures.
- **Inspiration:**
 - 37% of kids 8-12 years have run out of ideas for play
 - some parents don't think kids want to play the games of their own childhood and are unsure of what to do instead, especially once kids outgrow the local playground.
- **Technology:**
 - 37% of kids report they don't have anyone to play with because everyone else is indoors playing on computers
 - children spend nearly half (47%) of their free time 'plugged' into technology, this is less on the weekends when getting outside is the main activity.
- **Safety and facilities:**
 - concerns about leaving children alone at the park
 - lack of safe access via local walking routes to the park
 - lack of facilities such as toilets, cafés and equipment for all ages to use.

But there is hope...

- 1 in 2 kids (8-12 years) don't play every day but most (65%) of this age group say outdoor play is their favourite activity – not technology.
- More than half of kids (55%) want to spend more time playing with their parents.
- 53% of parents and grandparents agree kids should spend more time playing outside.

Opportunities for visits to parks and playgrounds

Kids lead a scheduled and busy life. Encouraging kids to visit local parks and playgrounds more often will enable them to be more active. This also requires a reduction in

other more sedentary types of activities such as watching TV or surfing the net. Encouraging parents to take their kids to the park will also provide opportunities for more social activities. The most likely time for families to visit local parks and playgrounds is on the weekends and during the week after school.

Why focus on parks and playgrounds?

- Parents want their kids to be happy and being outdoors will create opportunities for learning, exploration and happy memories.
- Parents understand the benefits of outdoor play but just need to find the time and prioritise getting outside.
- Kids love exploration and independence and want to spend more time outdoors with friends or their parents and less on their computer.

Benefits of outdoor play

- Opportunity to connect with family and spend time with parents.
- Independence and freedom for children.
- Opportunity to get dirty and connect with nature.
- Physical health benefits – kids need 60 minutes of physical activity a day.
- Connection to the local community.
- Teaching of values and behaviour, improving social skills, imagination, creativity and problem solving skills through shared play.
- Mental health benefits.
- Encourages a positive attitude towards nature and caring for the natural environment.

Support from OPAL

Whether you are from a childcare centre or preschool, school or retailer, general practitioner or sporting club, health service or recreation centre, we all have a role to play in making our community one where families and young people can enjoy eating well and being active.

You can really make a difference by getting involved.

Tools available

- 'Life looks brighter outside' poster (3 versions).
- 'Life looks brighter outside' brochure for parents.
- 'Pocket guide to outside' with a map of local parks, playgrounds and trails, and ideas for fun activities outdoors.
- 'Amazing Race' intervention for promoting playgrounds.
- Your local OPAL Council Team members.

Getting involved

Here are some ideas on how you can get involved with the 'Life looks brighter outside' theme. Your local OPAL team is keen to work with your organisation and can assist you to implement these ideas.



OPAL will be supporting the community to enjoy their day with outdoor play through a range of initiatives that may include:

- working with partners to encourage facility improvements at parks and playgrounds
- offering education programs and workshops about outdoor play and nature play
- promoting the parks and playgrounds in the local community through posters, brochures, signs and adverts
- programming events and activities in parks and playgrounds to encourage visits
- giving children and parents opportunities to voice their views about what they want to see and what can be improved in their parks and playgrounds, and providing this information back to Council.

Things you could do:

Spread the message by:

- promoting 'Life looks brighter outside' by putting up posters around your organisation
- displaying the 'Life looks brighter outside' brochure and distributing this to children and families
- using your newsletters and other communication channels to promote the 'Life looks brighter outside' message
- being involved in events, workshops or education sessions that will be facilitated in relation to this theme

- helping to promote family activities which are based in local parks and playgrounds.

Ideas for all

- Encourage families to join the Nature Play SA 'Passport to an amazing childhood' program.
- Set up a 'Family Nature Club' taking children on outings into the great outdoors. See www.natureplaywa.org.au/familynatureclubs for more information.
- Encourage families to experience Geocaching (www.geocaching.com).
- Host or promote parent seminars on the benefits of outdoor play and ideas for nature play.
- Send staff to professional development opportunities around nature play and fundamental movement skills. For example the SA branch of the Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation (ACHPER) www.achper.com.au.
- Locate a current event in a park, such as a Playgroup or Library Story Time, Bounce and Rhyme time or school holiday programs.
- Use the Heart Foundation 'Healthy by design' checklist when planning new infrastructure developments www.heartfoundation.org.au/SiteCollectionDocuments/Healthy-by-Design-SA.pdf.
- Host a nature play movie session by screening the UK documentary 'Project Wild Thing' which explores the trials of one man in reconnecting his children with nature. Your OPAL Local Council Team can help.
- Access one of the many websites, Android and iPhone Apps for locating local parks and playgrounds. Examples include:
 - Playgrounds with 'Park n Play' App itunes.apple.com/us/app/park-play/id688242405
 - National Parks with DEWNR's park finder webpage www.environment.sa.gov.au/parks/find_a_park.
- Include ideas for nature play activities in local parks and playgrounds in your newsletter.

Early childhood

- Plan outdoor experiences for children, have reading sessions in the park, make use of magnifying glasses and bug catchers to explore leaves, bugs and more.
- Plan an outdoor 'healthy picnic' in the park, invite parents and carers and ask them to share an activity they enjoyed when they were growing up.
- Use the OPAL Think Feet First Active Travel Program for Under 5's in your centre. It promotes active travel and encourages exploration of the local environment.

