



CITY OF DAREBIN

**TravelSmart Program**

**“Love Living Local” Umbrella Report**

**FINAL REPORT**

**June 2009**

**Document Approvals**


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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 Background

Love Living Local was funded for three years from 2006/07 to 2008/09. The focus of the project was to take a place-based approach to travel behaviour change initiatives, using a variety of tried and tested 'off the shelf' TravelSmart methodologies combined with specific solutions for the target areas.

Activity Centres within Darebin were the focus with Preston targeted in year 1. At the time the target locations for years 2 and 3 were proposed to be Northcote and then Reservoir, but this was left open to change as the project progressed. As it happened, it was Thornbury and Fairfield which were involved in year 2 and Reservoir remained in year 3.

The initial thinking behind Love Living Local was that Activity Centres, by their nature, are trip generators and contain components such as services, retail areas, offices, cultural destinations and education facilities which all create traffic. Targeting each component with tailored travel behaviour solutions in order to reduce the single occupant car traffic was the initial task of the project.

Love Living Local was born at a time when Darebin was developing the Darebin Transport Strategy (DTS). Synergies around the themes of Accessibility (to services, basic foods and retail, medical and government) and Local Living were central to the thinking for the DTS and LLL.

This report is an umbrella report that provides a summary to the three component reports that accompany it:

- Year 1 – Preston
- Year 2 – Fairfield and Thornbury
- Year 3 – Reservoir

## 1.2 Discussion Points – overall

The most beneficial aspect, in a delivery sense, of Love Living Local was the ability to try, learn, correct and improve. Each year the project team learnt more about what worked and what didn't and refined the subsequent year as a result. The fact that LLL was funded for three years, and didn't lock us in to a project plan for all three years from the beginning allowed for growth and change.

The introduction in year 2 and even more-so in year 3 of the ability to do physical infrastructure works served two purposes:

1. It left a longer legacy in those communities (signs and stencils in Fairfield/Thornbury and a bike lane and raised school crossing in Reservoir). These are things that will stay with those communities in the long term.
2. It allowed large chunks of the budget to be spent on single items, freeing up officer time for some of the other actions that are more time consuming.

The evaluation of Love Living Local was difficult. Making an impact into peoples travel habits in just one year (before the project moved on to the next location) was very difficult. In addition, traditional forms of empirical evaluation techniques are just not suitable for travel behaviour change projects. Even the difficulty with completing a simple schools evaluation (as discussed in Year 1 Report

regarding the survey forms, process, database, final reports etc) was problematic and created a burden that a project of this size didn't need.

Love Living Local was a particularly large project. In hindsight, Darebin could have spent three years on just one of the four communities that were targeted. This may have made evaluation easier, but may have also limited the learnings we had as we moved from location to location. Perhaps it was simply the scope that was too large – however the final result was still something to be proud of for both the Department of Transport and Darebin City Council.

### 1.3 Highlights and Innovations

Highlights of the project included:

- Local Area Access Guide development in conjunction with Metlink – a pooling of resources to produce a better outcome.
- Partnership with Northern Bullants Football Club, Metlink and Council.
- Shopping trolleys being distributed as prizes. Very relevant to this area.
- Production and delivery of seven Love Living Local Bulletins to local residents
- Directional signage for the two centres at key points within walking distance around the centres. These are a lasting legacy of the project – more so than any other element.
- Stall at Fairfield Open Mind Fiesta festival
- Reservoir Journeys photographic competition
- Street Parties
- Men's Shed restoring bikes
- Bike maintenance workshops
- Bike lane installed on Broadway

Innovations of the project included:

- Use of Real Estate Agents to deliver information/rewards to new tenants – historically a segment of the community not picked up in Council's new residents kits that only go to landlords.
- The theory of using door-knockers to hold a conversation on the doorstep and deliver incentives and information – however in practice this was not as easy as it sounds.
- Home delivery investigations including feasibility study
- 'Transport Café' information stalls
- Footpath stencil prompts
- Reflective bin sticker and letterbox stickers prompts
- Clear electrostatic, transferable signs/posters for shop windows
- Using local trader vouchers as incentives and rewards for sustainable travel
- PARK(ing) day activity
- A community development/art perspective on travel behaviour change in Reservoir
- Men's shed bike restoration

### 1.4 Summary of Recommendations

#### General Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the Project Sponsor agree that the project can be deemed closed.

Recommendation 2: That projects of this size only be attempted by Councils with significant experience in travel behaviour change programs. Even with Darebin's experience, LLL was at times overwhelming – perhaps the scope was too large.

Recommendation 3: That DoT Project Officers assigned to TravelSmart projects, where at all possible, stay consistent over the life of the project. LLL had four Project Officers over the three year period, each with their own focus and interpretation. This at times created frustrations.

Recommendation 4: The inclusion of physical infrastructure in conjunction with pure behaviour change is a critical point.

### Recommendations from Year 1:

- The monies spent on evaluation in Year 1 was in some respects abortive. There was a high level of scepticism that the pedestrian/cyclists counts conducted in the Preston Central Activity District would not, in any way, reflect the outcomes of the Household doorknocking venture. This was for a number of very good reasons:
  - Preston is a regional attractor and the influences on the number of visitations is far greater than those in the local area or under the control of the project.
  - Conducting evaluation one year after the doorknock was far too long, and as described above, it would probably not show anything anyway.
- Traffic counts outside schools were seen to be excessive. Some of the streets outside the schools in question are thoroughfares and school traffic is only a very small percentage of the traffic going past. As such the traffic counts weren't repeated as a post-survey.
- Input of school surveys into the database provided by the Department was so laborious that Darebin decided to outsource this. This was at an additional expense to the project. There were considerable issues with the database provided by the Department's contractors and the format of reports/graphs. These were well documented through the Collegiate Network at the time and there was considerable dissent with the process and particularly the timeliness of receiving results and making these available to the schools.
- By the time schools were ready to be post-evaluated (2009) the survey process had changed, contractors had changed and this is of concern to the results.
- Projects should aim to be implemented over the warmer months, not the cooler months. If that means holding off or timing things differently, then that needs to happen.
- More staff time to be factored in to manage, implement and then maintain the various aspects of the project.
- Large grants mean a large amount of work and this needs to be factored in as above.
- Evaluation is expensive and can't always measure what we want. Consideration should be given to simple, possibly anecdotal, results. This could mean reverting to hands up surveys in classrooms and the value of comments in Focus Groups meaning just as much as pedestrian counts.

**Recommendations from Year 2:**

- Consider evaluation activities – and budget allocated to these – carefully in the early planning stages.
- Be flexible in delivery of activities and willing to alter plans as opportunities arise and disappear
- Use lessons from previous years and current activities to inform future activities
- Allow a great deal of extra time for planning, implementing and completion. One year to run a project of this size probably is too short a time
- Consult all stakeholders early, often and thoroughly. Pay particular attention to all possible internal stakeholders, and allow sufficient time for consultation and negotiation.
- Be realistic with objectives and outcomes, and measures to evaluate the outcomes.
- Be realistic with time required to deliver a project of this size

**Recommendations from Year 3:**

- Outsourcing when possible adds to the value, success and timely delivery of the project
- Some smaller elements may not always be worth pursuing
- Utilise other groups and agencies, and allow for more time
- Innovate liberally.
- Allow a lot of time to work with schools.
- Define the scope of outsourced activities clearly, and identify early contractors who may stray from this.
- Draw heavily (without burdening) other project workers in the area.

## 2 CLOSURE ACTIVITIES

### 2.1 Project Staff

Project staff have been easily mobilised onto other Darebin projects. The project knowledge has been carefully captured in this final report and on Darebin's electronic filing system.

### 2.2 Issues Management

There are no outstanding issues regarding Love Living Local.

### 2.3 Risk Management

The only risk that will flow to future years from Love Living Local is the stencils in Fairfield and Thornbury. This was identified early and removal of the stencils was paid for in advance to ensure that it was taken care of within the Love Living Local budget, removing the risk that Council did not allocate a budget in future years to complete this work.

### 2.4 Financial Management

There are no excess funds from the grant funding. Although funds were rolled between year 1 and year 2, as well as year 2 and year 3, all grant funds were spent in year 3, including an overspend (absorbed by Council) as a result of the raised school crossing.

### 2.5 Asset Management

Any assets produced as part of Love Living Local will be maintained by Council into the future. These include directional signs in Thornbury/Fairfield, Broadway bike lanes and the raised school crossing on Carrington Road.

### 2.6 Records Management

Darebin Council: Electronic filing system (Objective) and archiving of hard files after completion of project.

### 2.7 Post Project Responsibilities

New residents kits – Reservoir. An evaluation of the New Residents kits will be undertaken by Darebin when a decent quantity of feedback postcards have been received. Darebin will endeavour to provide a report prior to December 2009 regardless of number of postcards received if response rate is low.

The signal boxes art project will happen prior to Christmas 2009, a brief report on this will be provided to the Department of Transport following its completion.