



OPAL says farewell to Mid Murray

Over the past five years, the OPAL program in Mid Murray has achieved some incredibly positive healthy outcomes through working in partnership with the community and key agencies. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the local community who have responded with energy and passion in supporting our programs, events, workshops, policies, infrastructure and projects aiming to make positive behavioural change.

We would also like to thank SA Health and the Mid Murray Council for contributing to the health of the community by investing in OPAL. We are proud to say this has been reiterated by winning more than 10 prestigious State and National awards.

The changes that can be seen in the Mid Murray community now, compared to five years ago, reflect the passion and dedication of all involved. It is this engagement across all sectors of the community which has been a vital ingredient to our success.

Although the State/Local Government partnership is due to end in June 2016, the Mid Murray Council is currently exploring opportunities to continue OPAL - keep your eyes and ears peeled for further information in the coming months.

From both Alex Day (*OPAL Support Officer*), myself Amy Loechel (*OPAL Manager*), and previous staff Courtney Blacker and Diem Luong, we would like to say a huge and heartfelt thankyou to all of you for supporting OPAL and your community to eat well and be active.

Evidence shows that healthy children can perform better at school and are more likely to grow up to be healthy and active adults.

**Amy Loechel
OPAL MANAGER**



Maximising Open Space

A plan to identify and activate our unique open space in Mid Murray is closer to reality, as an *Open Space, Recreation and Public Realm Strategy* is developed.

The Mid Murray Council has been granted \$50,000 from the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) to begin work on developing its first ever *Open Space, Recreation and Public Realm Plan*, including a *Mannum Riverfront Precinct Masterplan*.

The funding, to be matched by Council and its OPAL program, seeks to develop a long term action plan prioritising the development, maintenance and planning of all open space, outdoor recreation facilities and public realm within the district.

With obesity levels becoming a large community concern, the plan will encourage the diverse and dynamic use of public spaces in line with OPAL's goal to get people moving outdoors and increase physical activity opportunities.



The plan will also encourage positive mental health, social connections and reach economic goals, whilst showcasing and highlighting our history and local culture. In addition, the plan will make Mid Murray a more well known destination for tourists, improving standards and policies for future work.

The project will identify key open space, recreation and public realm areas, both existing and possibly new. This will build on the attraction of Mid Murray as a destination to live, play or stay. In the coming months, consultation sessions will be held in local towns to identify which open spaces and places are important to you and your community. For information visit: www.mid-murray.sa.gov.au or phone 8569 0100.

Gardening video through a health lens



Planting, harvesting, eating and celebrating are all on the agenda as Mid Murray students are given the opportunity to showcase their edible school gardens through creative film - a competition worth \$1200.

OPAL in partnership with Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin (SAMDB) are running a competition to recognise the achievements of our local schools and their gardening journey. The film must showcase gardening systems and demonstrate the skills and process on 'how to' successfully develop a sustainable food garden.

As part of OPAL's goal to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables, our team has been working with NRM Education for more than two years. This successful partnership has built community knowledge, encouraging people to grow their own produce at home (and of course, in their schools). Twice per year, the partnership delivers professional development workshops in local schools which are frequently attended by students, staff and community members - with a recent *Wiggly Worm* compost workshop held in Swan Reach.

Already through this program, OPAL has delivered more than \$10,000 worth of school grants, equipment and educational workshops, which has helped build and develop new fruit and vegetable gardens in ALL of our schools and kindergartens.



Award Winners in Public Health

The Mid Murray Council, through its OPAL program, has been rewarded for healthy initiatives at two recent award ceremonies.

State Winner Minister for Health Excellence in Public Health Award 2016

Mid Murray OPAL are honoured to win the Minister for Health Excellence in Public Health Award for leadership of the Mannum Netball and Football Club's healthy eating initiatives. Being recognised as State winners in the Regional category has not only showcased the healthy ethos of the partnership, but also rewarded the community with \$3000 to reinvest back in our region.

Through healthy alternatives including the introduction of grainy breads, leaner cuts of meat, free drinking water and minimising sugary foods/confectionery, the behaviour change has been instrumental. In addition, menu boards identifying the *healthy choice*, *occasional* and *sometimes foods* are continuing to educate and encourage the community to make a healthy choice.

Mid Murray OPAL Manager Amy Loechel said the partnership between OPAL, the Mannum Football and Mannum Netball Clubs has been instrumental to the health and well-being of the local community. "It can be difficult to change the entrenched culture of sporting clubs, so full credit must be given to both Clubs and their committees for successfully driving this project," she said.

"Sporting clubs are powerfully placed to promote healthy messages to families and it's enlightening to see such commitment to the health of current and future generations."



State and National Winner 2015 Heart Foundation Local Government Award

Mid Murray Council was recognised for best practice in creating healthier communities, beating 17 finalists to be named National and State Winners of the 2015 Heart Foundation Local Government Awards.

In November 2015, Mid Murray took out the 'Councils with populations 5,000-25,000' category for playing a pivotal role in introducing structural change, implementing policies and creating supportive environments which allow people to be physically active, reduce smoking and improve their daily eating habits.

Earlier in the year, Mid Murray Council was also awarded the State Heart Foundation Local Government Award, acknowledging our commitment to creating healthier communities.

Both the State and National awards combined totalled \$7000 in prize money which will be reinvested back into healthy initiatives for the Mid Murray community.

Sugar Free Junior Sport

Did you know a 600ml sports drink contains around 9 teaspoons of sugar? It takes an average 10 year old one hour to run this off, which practically reverses the health benefits of playing a game.

You may recall only a couple of decades ago that sweet drinks were often saved for celebrations like birthdays and Christmas. Today, sugary drinks and lollies are gradually becoming the norm, and are being consumed by our local kids in alarming amounts.

Due to this growing trend, a *Sugar Free Junior Sport Policy* has been developed in partnership with OPAL, Murraylands Kindergym, Mannum Soccer, Basketball, Little Athletics and the Netball and Football Clubs. The policy encourages water and fresh fruit to be consumed one hour before, during and after sport, limiting access to confectionery and sugar-based drinks.

If you or your club would like to know more about *Sugar Free Junior Sport*, please contact the OPAL Manager, Amy Loechel, on 8569 0100.



Sprout Cooking at Cadell



It was all about skill, technique and taste for a crowd of 3000 people at Cadell on the Easter Long Weekend.

OPAL in partnership with the Cadell Community Tourist Association brought Dietitian, Themis Chryssidis and

Professional Chef, Callem Hann (Sprout Cooking School) to the Harvest Festival.

Mid Murray OPAL Manager Amy Loechel said using simple ingredients such as pumpkin, lentils and asparagus cooked on a barbecue was a good way to demonstrate simplicity, and an easy way to include vegetables into your diet.

"*Sumac Kangaroo with Pumpkin and Asparagus* and *Spiced Lamb salad* was enjoyed by all during the tastings, prepared in true Aussie style on the barbecue."

OPAL continues to proudly support community events.

Murraylands APEX Fun Run and Walk a success in 2016

More than 150 people turned out to either run, walk, or volunteer their time as part of the 2016 Murraylands APEX Mannum Fun Run and Walk in December. The event, now heading towards its sixth year, has been a remarkable success, with local community and participants from across the State in attendance on the day. Categories included the 10 and five kilometre runs, five and three kilometre walks and U10 kids dash, with the addition of a new category in 2016 - *the gopher*. Major sponsor Murraylands APEX catered for the event, cooking up their famous healthy brekky pancakes. Thanks to the Mid Murray Council, IGA, MIFSA, Aroona Scouts, Mannum Rowing Club, Mannum Medical Centre, Mannum Community College, Mannum Tennis Club, Mannum Little Athletics and OPAL for their kind contributions to allow the event to continue, and importantly to keep it free for all participants. The event steering committee full of amazing volunteers, should also be acknowledged for the huge amount of time and energy put into the event. Thankyou!

Mid Murray Opal – The Story in Numbers

Why is OPAL a council priority?

OPAL supports children, families and the community to make positive life choices to improve their own wellbeing and build a vibrant community where all people belong and have means to contribute.

Program description:

OPAL works with local families, organisations, community and Council to deliver projects that support the health and wellbeing. OPAL works with the community to build locally-focussed programs and interventions.

3000+

participants over
4 years involved in

500+ projects

Infrastructure, Community
Development, Events,
Tourism, Culture etc.



30+



infrastructure projects

- › 8 play spaces
- › 2 bike tracks
- › 3 walking trails
- › 13 community gardens
- › 5 drinking fountains
- › 40 activity and cooking kits
- › 2 outdoor exercise equipment

50+

key partners

across education, business, NGOs,
health, community groups, including...

- › All Mid-Murray schools, pre-schools, early childhood settings
- › STARCLUB
- › Community Foodies
- › NRM Education
- › MIFSA
- › Scouts
- › DPTI, DEWNR, ORS



40+

community events including:

- › 5 Mannum Fun Runs
- › 2 NAIDOC week activities
- › 10 Christmas pageants
- › 30 school holiday programs
- › 10 community fairs
- › 14 educational shows



Opal



visit opal.sa.gov.au

\$1,250,000 invested in Mid Murray



- > \$1m SA Health (budget and staff)
- > \$110,000 grants
- > \$110,000 resources
- > \$40,000 volunteer hrs

\$20k

positive media coverage

- > 110 Newspaper articles
- > 111 Newsletter articles
- > 52 Radio interviews
- > 516 Facebook likes

Engagement boost

- > Community presence
- > Regular mail outs
- > Awareness of programs
- > New OPAL website



The Change...

“The average kindy kid can access positive wellbeing opportunities and resources in almost all settings of their community now. This is an incredible change from four years ago, before OPAL.”

– **Mary Langsford**,
Mannum Kindergarten
Director.



Big Wins...

- > More than 10 National and State Awards
- > \$120,000 for Cycling, Walking and Rec plans
- > ALL schools and kindergartens with vegetable gardens
- > FIRST SA Council 100% Healthy Eating Policy
- > Upskilled 100+ volunteers and early childhood staff



“Opal has been an excellent resource for us and should be a high priority for our community’s future.”

– **Joy Marks**, Mannum Community College Pastoral Support Worker and Teen Challenge Coordinator

“The job is not done yet. We’re just starting to build momentum around children’s health because of OPAL. Right now we need the people to stay here and keep driving it.”

– **Di Hancock**, Truro Primary School Principal

“You should be very proud of what you do – very inspiring.”

– **Marc Maddaford**, Starclub Murraylands Officer

