

Submission to
The Joint Select Committee Preventative Health Care



Transition Break O'Day
February 2013

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About Transition Break O'Day:

Our mission

Transition in Break O'Day . . . Moving Forward!

Transition Towns/Transition is not an organisation, a business, or an agenda directed, 'top-down' or micro-managed process. Transition is a local, community-inspired, creative and ever evolving, place-specific/relevant and 'bottom-up' movement for change . . . Transition Towns/Transition is '*community focused*'. Transition works to build cohesive, strong and resilient local communities which embrace and foster local diversity, interconnectedness and skills and which take care of their local natural environment and natural world.

"A push towards clean air, sunshine, beauty, rediscovering each other; community and celebration. This is a key shift in our perception. The difference between change that feels like being torn away from something and change that feels like moving towards something is huge. This is the approach Transition takes. It suggests that the collective intentional transition could lead us to a far better place than where we are today. Who's to say that the world we see today is the best we could ever do?"
Rob Hopkins, co-founder of Transition (Ref: 'The Transition Companion – Making Your Community More Resilient in Uncertain Times' Pub: Green Books, 2011, p39)

A **Transition Roadshow** (a joint initiative between Transition Tasmania and 'Be the Change' Aust.) was offered in both St. Helens and St. Mary's in December 2012. This helped to raise awareness of global issues which may currently, or potentially, impact on local community life...or on the lives/lifestyles of some individuals, or sectors of local communities. Various additional 'Awareness Raising' workshops/events may be offered in the future, depending on local community interest at the time. Subsequent to the Roadshow here in Break O'Day, small groups of community members have come together to brainstorm

ideas for **local community-based initiatives**. (Refer Transition Break O'Day **blog/facebook sites/links** for further information.)

The Transition Break O'Day Steering Group was formed on 17th January 2013

(Refer Transition Break O'Day blog/facebook sites/links for further information.)

In addition, **follow up 'Transition in Action'** workshops are planned to be offered locally (e.g. organic gardening, Permaculture/Biodynamics, compost making, home renovations/building, seed saving/sharing, composting, propagation, recycling, community skill sharing, food growing, harvesting and preserving, bread making, cooking, etc).

Transition in Action workshops/events will seek to meet local community interest/need at the time.

Transition Skills Training Workshops are also planned to help facilitate **'Moving Forward'** here in Break O'Day. These will include training in facilitating group meetings, if needed. (These workshops have already been offered through Healthy House.) We can also invite other 'transitioners' from Tasmania and elsewhere to come along to share experiences and feedback.

So, we're all in the process of discovery. We're in the process of writing our *own unique* local Transition story... No one is an *'expert'*; no one is *'in charge'*. We can be guided by others' experience, and are also free to be innovative and creative. Transition is an organic and evolving process. We can therefore feel free to experiment, to make mistakes, to learn...and to grow and move forward. Transition is about coming together, making new contacts and new friends ... it's about celebrating where we live and about creating the communities *we'd like to live in* ...and, above all, it's about having fun!!

(Susan Probert)

For further information refer:

- www.transitionnetwork.org;
- www.transitiontasmania.org.au – worth viewing video clip 'In Transition 1.0';
- www.transitionaustralia.org.au)

(<http://transbod.wordpress.com/>)

On 27/2/13 a small group of 'Transitioners' met to consider a submission to the Joint Select Committee, Preventative Health Care. We have attempted to link our points to the Tasmania Together Revised Plan 2011, Goals and Benchmarks. Following is a brief outline of our discussions.

Goal 1, Standard 1.1

Cost of essentials, Financial Security

Transition Break O'Day has strong links with existing community gardens and there are intentions to expand such resources. A centrally located Swap, Barter Buy event is currently run fortnightly. A 100 Mile Dinner is run every month. This has the potential to indicate to low income earners that there are local food options that may indeed be cheaper, and certainly more sustainable, than imported food stuff. Such events have the potential to address some of the income issues for low income families.

Goal 4, Standard 4.2

Promote and support Healthy lifestyle choices.

Many of the initiatives of Transition Break O'Day concern food security. Some are listed under Goal 1, Standard 1.1. Nutrition was a dominant topic of discussion leading to this submission. We acknowledge that there are a number of resources that address the nutritional and social aspects for food through Eating With Friends, Food Patch and Food Cents programs. We are also aware that many people are unable to cook or lack the knowledge to source adequate food. There are major concerns about the number of children who are not even familiar with commonly available fruit.

Increased support for programs such as Food Patch, Food Cents, Eating With Friends, School based Breakfast Clubs would promote healthy eating by building skills. Healthy eating is one of the contributing factors in the prevention of lifestyle diseases. Further initiatives such as a food co-operatives and the existing Swap Barter Buy event also partially address lifestyle issues.

Discussion ensued about the potential for more community gardens, the writing of basic recipes for the local newspapers, food co-ops and the linking of existing social media sites to others with a view to building community. The possibility of a legislative response to the incidence of high sugar content in processed food was discussed. We will investigate the potential for the 100 Mile Dinner Group to forge links with other community based groups such as Building Blocks (for young children and their parent/carers) to promote better eating and introduce different flavours and styles of cooking.

Goal 5, Standards 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3

Foster inclusive and supportive communities

Promote viable rural communities

Recognise and value the contribution of volunteers and unpaid workers to their community

There is documented evidence to support the assertion that we are all healthier if we have a connection with the natural environment. Therefore a connection with the natural environment improves our quality of life. One of the advantages of living in Break O'Day is the ready access most of us have to the natural environment. This access is enhanced by the development of community gardens, nature trails and such activities.

Membership of Transition Break O'Day improves the opportunity to socialise and gives the opportunity to forge more connections with various groups. Transition Break O'Day has membership spanning seventeen years of age to ninety plus years. There is something to suit all.

Goal 11, Standard 11.1 Value and protect our biodiversity

Home grown produce and Community Gardens reduce the pressure for hybrid and genetically modified food crops. One of the aims of Transition Break O'Day is to facilitate the purchase of materials and building of poly tunnels to extend the growing season of crops and enable the growing of frost sensitive produce.

Goal 12, Sustainable management of our natural resources. Standards 12.2, 12.3, 12.4

Air quality is in part improved by the use of renewable energy sources. Public transport in rural Tasmania is very poor or non-existent. Car-pooling is often used to attend meetings and makes a small contribution to air quality .

One of the bulk buying aims of Transition Break O'Day is the purchase of water tanks. Water tank use for garden watering, toilet flushing and clothes washing reduces the demand for, and reliance on, mains water.

Pesticide usage is reduced in the home garden and community gardens. Most home gardeners are reluctant to use pesticides and are also cautious about fertiliser use.

In recent times there has been considerable assistance available through the Commonwealth Government to defray the cost of Solar Panels. There are still many people who wish to purchase solar panels for their homes but are unable to do so due to the capital outlay required. Recognition and resources for community groups would be valuable to support the bulk purchase of solar panels. Any technical or financial support for alternative renewable energy projects such as small hydroelectric systems or wind turbines would be of great value; suiting many different situations.

Car-pooling and the provision of bicycle lanes, foot paths, public transport, all contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gasses and potentially support positive lifestyle choices.

Other issues:

Although there are many grants available to support not for profit and community groups the possibility of deficit funding for major projects was raised. This would ensure the continuity of projects which may otherwise fail due to a lack of ongoing funding.

The tyranny of distance is a factor affecting healthy lifestyles in Break O'Day. There is limited public transport and road access is poor. In recent years the St Marys Pass, and occasionally the Elephant Pass, have been closed due to safety issues. This necessitates a long and hazardous detour when travelling between St Helens and St Marys or further afield. Added to the locally perceived differences between the "Valley" and the "Coast" These issues complicate service provision in Break O'Day. This is, in microcosm, an example of the dispersed nature of the Tasmanian population.

We applaud the State Government initiative to ban plastic shopping bags. A local group will be promoting a further reduction in the use of non-renewable plastics.

A small group of local allied health workers offer "Get The Most Out of Life", a chronic disease self-management course developed by The Stanford University. It is notoriously difficult to enthruse people to participate in the group and recent reductions in the support staff numbers have made promotion of this program even more difficult. This means that people dealing with chronic conditions have even more limited access to services which may be of benefit.

The Get Active Program (GAP) delivered through Women's Sport and Recreation is often run locally, through the Health Community House based at St Helens. This program is an enjoyable and educative program which promotes healthy lifestyles.

Recommendations:

- 1) It is often difficult to recruit experienced workers to rural areas. Tasmania also is disadvantaged by a lack of financial reward for health workers. Further, increased funding to community based organisations would enhance the potential to address the social determinants of health.
- 2) As noted in the body of this submission, a recent reduction in the administrative support for Get the Most Out of Life has compromised the delivery of this self-management program. Interventions such as Get The Most Out of Life can reduce the incidence of hospital admissions for chronic conditions. Recognition of the value of such programs and adequate support would be beneficial.
- 3) It is vital to prioritise funding to address the Social Determinants of Health and preventative measures for health and wellbeing. Moneys which have been directed to AFL football would be better directed to preventative health.
- 4) Increased interest in the Social Determinants of Health could be satisfied by membership of the Social Determinants of Health Advocacy Network.
- 5) As in point three, the redirection of Government funding from sporting events, of limited value to many people, to support schools, health facilities and community groups would be advantageous.

In Summary:

There are many programs and resources currently available which partially address the Social Determinates of Health. Limited financial and practical support often limits the provision of such programs. Many of the mental health problems in our environment today have their root in childhood adversity, poverty, chronic ill health, lack of gainful employment and poor social networks. There are many approaches that will move toward a more inclusive, fair society by addressing the Social Determinants of Health. Increased awareness and change across the entire society is required.

We thank the Joint Select Committee for the opportunity to lodge this submission and trust that the outcomes will enhance Preventative Health Care, through the Social Determinants of Health, in Tasmania.

This submission was prepared by members of the Transition Break O' Day group:

Wendy Fowler
Hannah Rubenach
Joy Walters
Shan Williams

The views herein expressed are those of the authors.

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Further information can be obtained from:

Shan Williams
Social Worker
St Marys Community Health Centre

0363722111
0439765244