



Active Transport & Public Health

- NZ Trafinz Conference, Auckland, Sept 2014





Fat and Fatter

- 63% of Australian adults are obese or overweight.
- 1 in 4 Australian children are overweight/obese. This figure has doubled in the past 30 years.
- This is worse in rural/remote & disadvantaged areas.
- WHO attributes this to technologies that discourage physical activity (sedentary lifestyle) and promotion of energy dense foods (sugar & fat).



Queensland Obesity

- Queensland: one of the larger States in Australia - 4.5m population and by area.
- Qld's largeness redefined - hospital beds widened and strengthened, Flying Doctor planes and ambulances - stretchers widened, cranes used to get obese people out of homes into ambulances and into hospital.
- Qld Health Minister and DG, Qld Health see health/financial crisis. Aged living longer (better health care) + chronic conditions- early onset.



Active Transport - the last 30 yrs

- Active transport: public transport, walking and cycling
- In last 30 years, parents drive children to school.
- Metropolitan areas - more housing on outskirts of cities, poor access to public transport and jobs.
- More sugar, more advertising of energy drinks, high fat foods, more take away.
- RESULTS: Australians getting heavier

The BUS buses story

- The BUZ - 8 routes, high frequency buses, introduced in Brisbane in 2004.
- What did bus users want? Frequency> reliability> > price> Comfort> clean and tidy.
- High frequency = 15 minutes in peak/ 30 mins off peak.
- In first year 80% to 160% lift in patronage on BUZ routes, translating to 10% across whole network.
- 10% per annum for next 8 years.



Other Bus Improvements

- Busways - dedicated bus only corridors that carry about 23,000 pax per hour.
- On road bus lanes.
- Bus friendly traffic signals.
- Electronic swipe card (pre paid bus fares) called Go Card.
- Go Card across modes - train, bus, ferry.



Key Lessons

- Science - facts re obesity and overweight/ true cost of car ownership
- The Big Stick - controls on advertising
- The carrots - infrastructure/easy to travel and high frequency public transport services/
- Sticking with it - learning from smoking & alcohol campaigns and applying to overeating/lack of exercise



Key Lessons (cont.)

- Sticking together - getting public health and active transport experts and networks talking together - underpinned by cost/benefit analysis.
- Passing on the baton - encouraging next gen experts to take up the cause.
- The message stick - (1) creating a narrative that will be compelling and win support from key policy makers. (2) easy to understand healthy living messages for kids/adults.

