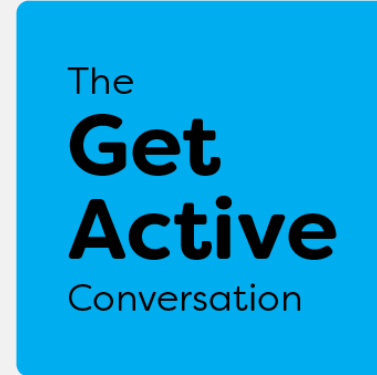


Designing active recreation infrastructure for inactive Victorians

Insights from SEC Newgate Research



The target audience



Inactive women (roughly defined as those who do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per day).



Aged between **35 – 44** and **55 – 64**.



Who would like to **increase** their physical activity levels.

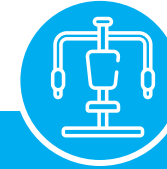
We spoke to a mix of Victorian metropolitan and regional residents, low to middle income households, different life stages and education levels, and included people living with a disability and people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds.



Our two studies



Recreational Walking Research



Outdoor Fitness Equipment Research

Aims

To explore the likelihood of using walking paths integrated into multi-purpose sport and recreation infrastructure

To explore the needs, expectations, barriers and motivators to using outdoor fitness equipment, including preferences around design and location

Method

2-day online community platform

+

Pre-task to keep a walking log

Three x 1.5 hour **online group discussions**

+

20-minute pre task to visit their local outdoor fitness equipment station(s) to record their thoughts and observations

Timing

15th-16th February 2023

30-31st May 2023

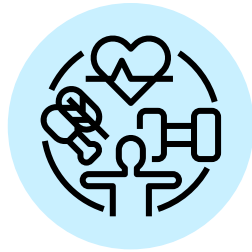
Recruited using the Stages of Change model

Q. When it comes to your physical activity, which of the following sentences best describes you?

Stages of Change



A bit of background on this audience...



What role does physical activity play in their lives?

Many used to do more but have **fallen out of an exercise routine**

Lack of **time and motivation** are key barriers... others are **weather, cost & safety**

See key benefits of exercise as energy/**endorphins**, **social activity**, **physical health incl. weight loss/maintenance**, and **mindfulness**



What types of physical activity do they like?

Prefer less strenuous physical activity, particularly the older group

Some like strength-based activities but most avoided running



Where do they like to exercise and why?

The majority **prefer exercising outside**, but **weather and darkness are issues**

Those who liked the gym enjoy the increased structure, options, and motivation it provides

Outdoor fitness equipment





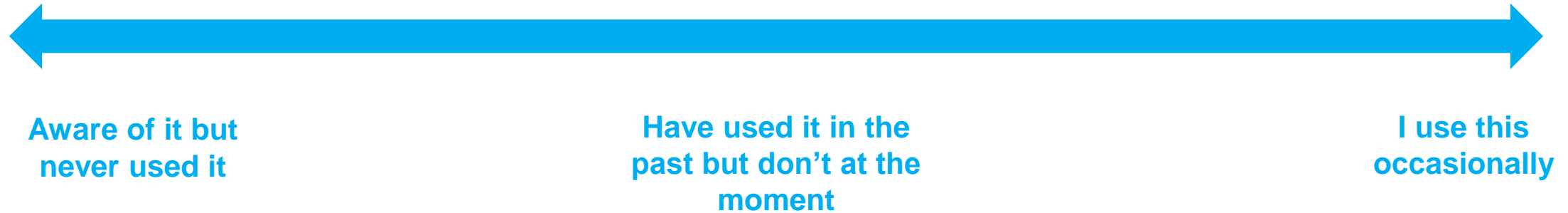
Overall finding

There appears to be **an opportunity to get this audience to use this sort of equipment.**

However, the prevailing sense is one of **cautious openness** rather than strong enthusiasm.

Beyond good design, they need other support and communication to give them the confidence to get started.

Awareness & usage of outdoor fitness equipment in our sample



We recruited a **mix of levels of current awareness and usage** of this equipment, excluding those who had insurmountable barriers.

All were aware of outdoor fitness equipment, but less than half had used such equipment before. No participants used it frequently.



Q. Which of the following best describes your awareness and use of outdoor fitness equipment - that is, gym-style equipment (such as different height bars, sit up bench, leg press, balance beam, exercise bike, etc.) which is provided for anyone to use free-of-charge in local parks or other public areas? Base: All participants (n=19)

Barriers to use

Barriers to consideration

Only need to be overcome once or on the first few visits

Perceived barriers to continuous use

Need to be addressed on an ongoing basis

Barriers to use

Barriers to consideration

Intimidation & embarrassment



I don't know how to use it

I don't feel that I'm fit/strong/tall enough to use it

... so I worry I will look stupid or other people will judge me

Not on their radar as an option



Just not in my head as an exercise option

Don't understand what's on offer (haven't looked closely)

Don't understand how they could beneficially incorporate it

Social norms



I know this equipment is intended for everyone, but it's not really used by people like me

It's more for younger "gym bros"... or retirees.

Barriers to use

Barriers to consideration

Intimidation & embarrassment



Not on their radar as an option



Social norms



Perceived barriers to continuous use

Weather - rain or too much sun



Hygiene - a particular concern since COVID



Safety - injuring yourself, or potential assault



State of the equipment - dirty, in disrepair



Motivators for use

What gets them started?

Understanding what it can do for them & how they can incorporate it

New, modern equipment with a view

Other users who are welcoming, encouraging and willing to share knowledge

What keeps them going?

It's available - I can use what I want, when I want

I'm enjoying myself (*feel relaxed, confident*)

Secondary benefits

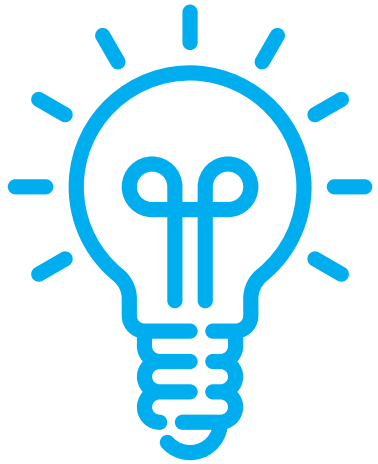
It's free

Exercise in the fresh air

Social possibilities (use it with friends) *for some*



Note: these are based on insights from the pre-group task as well as conversations in the group discussions



Amongst our sample, the **barriers were more about their understanding and confidence than the equipment itself.**

There were **consistent views on what would make the ideal type of outdoor fitness station...**

- dynamic equipment
- a single location that feels adequately private yet safe
- a gym-like but accessible aesthetic
- a rubberised surface.

The **provision of usage information** is also key to breaking down barriers to use.

Some examples of design elements we discussed...

Static (No Moving Parts)



Dynamic (With Moving Parts)



Seated vs standing



Simple
vs
Gym-Like
vs
Playful style



Design preferences

Movement types			
Dynamic	✓	Seated	No strong pref
Static	?	Standing	

Style	
Simple	?
Gym like	✓
Playful	x

Location	
Single location	✓
Spread along a path	x
With a view	✓
By a busy road	x
Near a children's playground	x
Semi-private but with clear lines of sight	✓

Flooring material	
Rubberised	✓
Tan bark	?
Grass	?
Concrete	x
Gravel	x

Specific design considerations

Definitely **dynamic** because it's easier to figure out what to do on it. Self-explanatory or hopefully with instructions. Whereas static ones I always look at it and think 'what are you supposed to do?'

Equipment being wet - **if it had been raining you don't want to sit down**, but if they had the stepping thing there you could do that without too much worry. You wouldn't have to worry about walking home with a wet bum...

Like the idea of it being private, but from a **safety perspective**, people need to see what's in there. Half and half would be nice, somewhere in the middle. Not too exposed but not too private.

Guidance instructions

Highly appreciated!

QR codes were seen as a good way to show people how to use the equipment, because they can have video

An **instructor** on-site is highly appealing for a first use, especially as part of a small group



Other signs can also be added to encourage use e.g.

- Welcoming signs
- Stickers to show what is easy, intermediate, or challenging
- Decals to refresh look and re-attract attention



Beginner exercise program

Warm up

- Walk along the river to Jennings St and back (where the footpath ends), or for approx. 10 minutes.

Strength and mobility circuit

1. Sit to stand (Repeat x 10)



- Sit on bench, feet flat, toes forward. Hands on bench for support.
 - Look forward and stand slowly (nose over knees).
 - Push bottom backwards as you slowly sit down.
- TIP**
To progress: don't use arms (cross arms over chest).

2. Wall press (Repeat x 10)



- Place both hands on the bar.
 - Step back a foot distance.
 - Bend elbows in a push-up position, keeping body straight.
 - Push back to starting position.
- TIP**
To progress: move two feet away from bar.

Other features they want

Most important

Toilets

Shade/cover

Nice view

Somewhat important

Sanitation station

Hydration

Peace and quiet

Lighting

Less important

Car parking / PT

Seating near equipment

Bike racks

Dogs allowed

Most see benefits of lighting, but would still not feel safe to use at night

Key takeaways

We can improve consideration and usage of outdoor fitness equipment for this target audience in three ways:



1. Design

Dynamic equipment (not just static), a welcoming and accessible feel, privacy without isolation, rain and sun protection, and a sense of cleanliness/hygiene.



2. Education

Getting people to give it a supported first try via introductory classes with an on-site instructor and additional signage of 'how tos'.



3. Broader communications

To help people understand what this equipment can do for them, and to encourage a supportive community of users.

A fitness station that has good instructions that are accessible at any time and actually work. Being close by water (lake, river, ocean) is really nice but it would be equally as nice in a bush/parkland setting. Near to toilets is important but equally would be OK if there was a tap/handwashing faucet nearby. A mixture of cardio and strength training equipment is great. Signage is a must and a soft rubbery matting underneath. Organised bootcamp would be awesome, but often run on times I'm not available. Love the QR codes.

Variety of equipment, padding on the floor, clean toilets close by, a safe space, pretty much describing the place near me (near Point Ormond). I think it's perfect. And instructions because I found that really helpful. And well maintained. Cross trainer doesn't grind, obviously been well maintained even though it's on the beach. Really clean toilets.

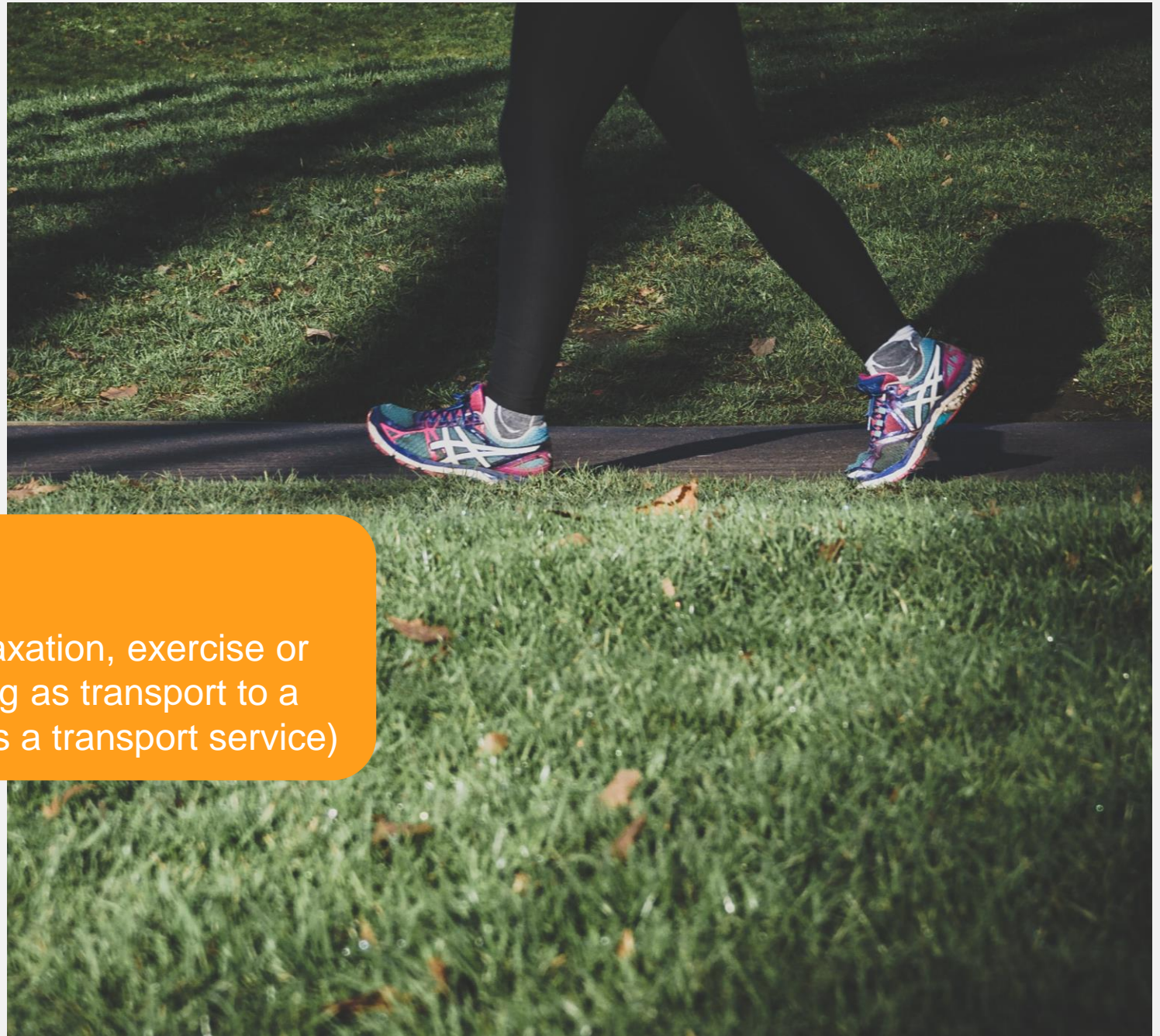
I'd like to see a bit more of the walking machines and bikes than some of the other things that don't get used. Would entice me if it was all modular and dynamic equipment in my park. Having the actual instructions on them [...] especially more things for ladies.

A place that looks inviting and has the ability of having an instructor attend to teach you about the equipment. The equipment needs to be maintained and weather friendly. Somewhere that has some privacy but at the same time you can see into the area.

Recreational walking

Defined as...

Walking for the purpose of pleasure, relaxation, exercise or as a social activity, and excluding walking as transport to a destination (such as to work or to access a transport service)





Overall finding

There was **considerable appetite amongst our sample to increase their current recreational walking levels.**

Nearly **half of our sample reported having few or no walking paths available** within walking distance.

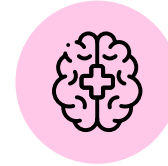
But their **key barriers to walking are less to do with the availability of paths** than other issues of opportunity and motivation, and these need to be overcome as the first step.

Motivators for recreational walking



Physical fitness and overall health

Maintaining or improving health, fitness and mobility in a non-strenuous way, including for weight loss



Mental health benefits

Relaxation, calmness, a clear head, getting ready for the day or decompressing after work, a sense of accomplishment



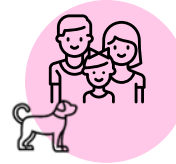
Being outdoors

The opportunity to enjoy fresh air, sunshine, nature, scenery and receive Vitamin D



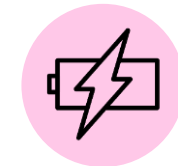
Taking a break

Getting out of the house to reset and take a break from work/chores; the ability to stretch your legs (especially now people are working from home more)



For the benefit of others

Dogs and young children get their parents/owners out of the house on a regular basis for exercise and enjoyment



Increased energy

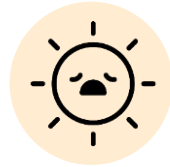
Provides a feeling of energy

Barriers to recreational walking



Lack of time

Don't have the time to dedicate to recreational walking due to work, childcare and home duties



Lack of motivation

Day-to-day life leaves me tired and I would rather catch up on rest than use more energy to be active



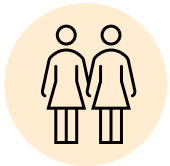
Weather conditions

Extreme heat, rain, wind are key barriers to walking more in the Victorian climate



Poor health

Injury, disability or health conditions made walking painful for some



No one to go with

Some want company but don't know anyone local at a similar level to them



Availability of footpaths

A barrier for a small number of our sample



Lack of enjoyment

Walking isn't for everyone – some simply don't enjoy it and some felt judged due to their fitness/weight



Safety and security

Not feeling safe when walking alone or at night due to risk of being attacked

What can COM-B tell us about the barriers in this population?

Capability, **opportunity** and **motivation** are all required for a behaviour to take place.

Capability	Opportunity	Motivation
Poor health	Lack of time Weather conditions No one to go with Safety and security concerns Availability of footpaths	Prioritise other tasks or relaxation Lack of enjoyment Feelings of embarrassment



Capability is much less of a barrier than we have seen in other types of exercise



The issues appear to lie more specifically with Opportunity and secondarily Motivation



The Intention-Action Gap

Intention



I want to walk more

Barriers between intention and action

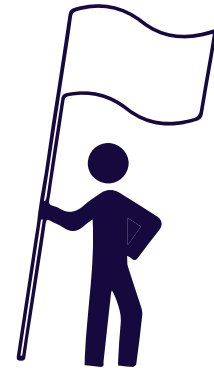
In their control:

I don't have time
I'm too tired now / would rather do something else
Worry what others will think

Outside of their control:

I don't want to go alone
I'm worried about my safety/security
Weather too hot/cold/wet

Action



**I am walking more
(sustained behaviour)**



Stimulus material

SIMPLE PATHS AROUND SPORT FACILITIES

Open space around sports facilities (for example around ovals) is used for other activities like walking.



1



2



3



4



5

MULTIPURPOSE FACILITIES

Purpose built paths around sport facilities for walking, cycling etc.

Has additional features, for example:

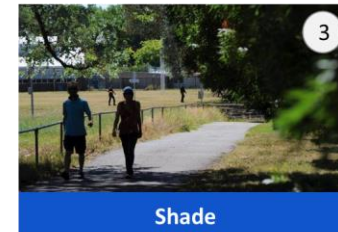


1



2

Fitness equipment along / near the path



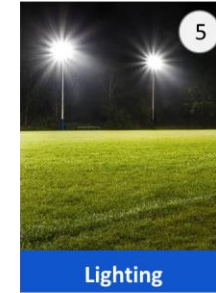
3

Shade



4

Seating along the path



5

Lighting



6

Drinking fountains

Overall response to integrated walking paths

How were the integrated walking paths received?

Viewed positively, but **enthusiasm was muted**.

Majority said they were unlikely to use integrated walking paths if a sports game was on.

Did it solve any of the problems?

Some key barriers remain (such as hot weather and safety concerns).

But walking groups can address safety concerns and appear likely to **increase motivation**.

Did it exacerbate barriers?

For participants who described themselves as being 'larger' or especially 'unfit', the feeling of **being judged** while walking meant they were unlikely to use paths if there was a sports game on.

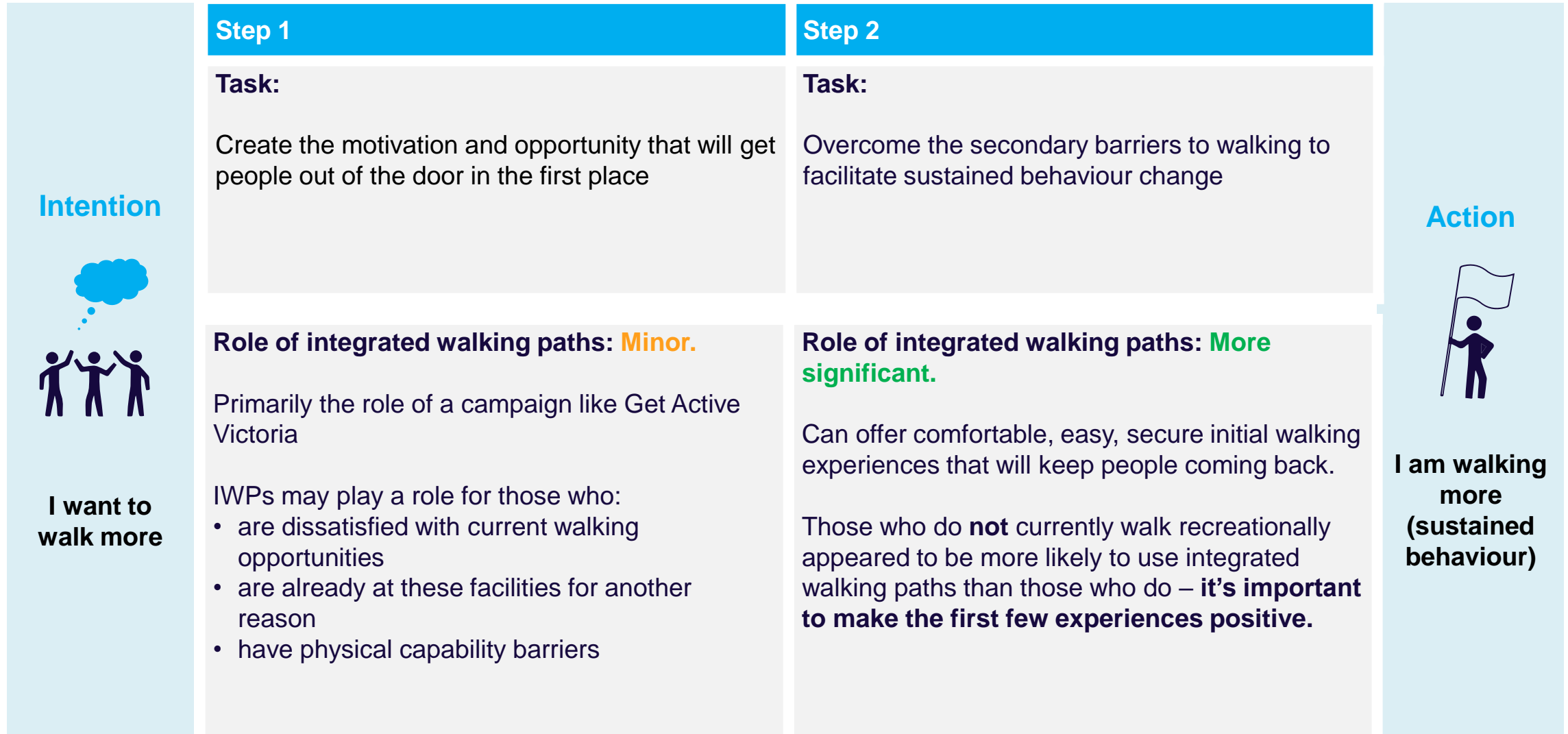


The two walking concepts: pros and cons

Concept	Pros	Cons
<p>SIMPLE PATHS AROUND SPORTS FACILITIES</p> <p>(open space around ovals used for walking)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Proximity to sports fields/ovals✓ Sealed surfaces such as concrete or synthetic✓ Natural surroundings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Gravel paths✗ Lack of shade✗ Path size/width
<p>MULTIPURPOSE FACILITIES</p> <p>(purpose-built paths with additional features)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Seating✓ Shade✓ Water fountain✓ Outdoor fitness equipment	<p>Raised as concerns by one or two:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">✗ Too dark✗ Light pollution✗ Vandalism of equipment✗ Shared walk/cycle pathways

Lighting...?

Narrowing the Intention Action Gap



Do integrated walking paths address their barriers to walking?

Barriers between intention and action

In their control:

I don't have time
I'm too tired now / would rather do something else
Worry what others will think

Outside of their control:

I don't want to go alone
I'm worried about my safety/security
Weather too hot/cold/wet

Integrated walking paths can address some barriers by creating a sense of comfort, ease and security

- ✓ Comfortable track
- ✓ Places to rest
- ✓ Water
- ✓ Shade
- ✓ Toilets
- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ People around

Keep in mind:

Nature of shade is important

Don't tell people there is no risk - but remove the cues that make them feel unsafe

Signage can reinforce beneficial features

Thank you.

