

# Victoria Walks



Supported by



## Supporting local action

Supporting communities to work together to increase walking and the walkability of neighbourhoods continues to be important and inspirational work. This year we welcomed two new Walkability Action Groups (WAGs).

- *Rossmoyne Street* (Thornbury) – local residents building a socially connected neighbourhood by organising social events, lobbying for change, and increased social interaction for a more walkable neighbourhood.
- *Child Friendly Neighbourhoods in Frankston* – local families nurturing a children’s ‘Play Culture’ with less screen time and more ‘green time’ so children can play on the nature strips and footpaths.

Victoria Walks also provided two WAGs with a grant to support their work, supported two WAGs to attend advocacy training, and held a forum for WAGs to share learnings. We also recruited 16 Walkability Champions to support our work.



## About Victoria Walks

Victoria Walks is an independent walking health promotion charity. Our role is to get more people walking every day. Our vision is for vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible.

### Victoria Walks:

- provides walking and walkability leadership through membership on advisory committees, presenting at conferences and forums, creating media content, writing submissions, providing resources, and influencing policy development
- supports local community action to increase walking and walkability
- promotes walking through educational resources and events, online activities, Walking Maps and social media.

The Victoria Walks Committee of Management comprises Kellie-Ann Jolly (Chair), Trevor Budge, Sue Fitzpatrick, Daniel King, Pete Thiessen, Blayne Morgan and Ben Rossiter (Executive Officer).

This document provides a summary of the activities and highlights of Victoria Walks from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013.

## Highlights

This has been an exciting year for Victoria Walks. The organisation moved from the VicHealth offices to the City of Melbourne’s not-for-profit community hub *City Village* in Bourke St, Melbourne. This enabled Victoria Walks to expand, taking on more staff and skilled volunteers. We have greatly enhanced our walking leadership status and ability to raise the profile of walking issues as evidenced by our expertise being sought relating to policy and program development and advisory groups. Our walking promotion activities raised the awareness of the health, environmental, social, and economic benefits of walking to key target groups.

### Highlights include:

- Released stage one of *Smart Steps for Primary Schools* – innovative AusVELS lesson plans with a walking theme that take English, History, Maths and Science learning into the neighbourhood.
- Released the *Smart Steps for Councils* how to guide – Developing a Walking Strategy.
- Released *Smart Steps for Families* – an exciting collection of activities, tools and tips to help more Victorian families walk every day and to make their neighbourhoods more child-friendly.
- Over 550 walks created on *Walking Maps*, including 75 high quality ‘staff picks’.
- Deployed *Walking Maps* ([www.walkingmaps.com.au](http://www.walkingmaps.com.au)) mobile site that enables people to search for walks anywhere in Australia based on their current location.
- Supported the Heart Foundation to deliver the Parks Victoria funded *Green Walks in the Park* program to get more people walking in local parks, state parks and bushland reserves. Over 20 ‘green’ walks created on *Walking Maps*.
- Received funding from the Department of Health to support staff in the 12 *Healthy Together Communities* to increase walking across school, workplace and community settings.
- Delivered ‘Cycling and Healthy Suburbs’ training course as part of the 2013 PLANET professional development program in partnership with Bicycle Network Victoria and the Heart Foundation.

## Building a community for walking

Victoria Walks continued to build a community for walking through our evolving digital eco-system that includes our website, Walking Maps, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Footprints (monthly e-news bulletin).

We strove to meet the public's need for positive, informative and inspiring content to get more Victorians to walk every day. Visits to the Victoria Walks website increased by 26%, Walking Maps by 86%, Facebook likes by 207% and YouTube views by 108%.

## Media activity

Victoria Walks was mentioned more than 50 times in newspaper articles, opinion pieces, letters to the editor and radio interviews. Media outlets continue to approach Victoria Walks for expert comment on walking-related issues.

## Workshops and committees

Victoria Walks participated in a number of workshops and committees, including:

- Minister for Planning Metropolitan Planning Roundtable
- Principal Pedestrian Network Demonstration Project, Department of Transport and the Councils of Frankston, Boroondara, Geelong and Yarra Ranges
- City of Melbourne Road Safety and Urban Navigator App Steering Committees
- 'Sharing roads and paths' (bike riders code of conduct), Amy Gillett Foundation
- City of Melbourne Pedestrian Strategy Workshop
- 'Children and Nature, State of Play Roundtable', Victorian Child and Nature Connection.

## Conferences, forums and events

Victoria Walks presented at many conferences, forums and exhibitions, including:

- 'Online walking maps, social media and walkable communities', 6th Making Cities Liveable Conference 2013, Melbourne
- 'Smart Steps: making a more walkable world', 21st National Australian Health Promotion Association Conference, Sydney
- 'Taking Smart Steps for traffic safety: school and family street audits', Victorian Traffic Safety Education Conference 2013
- 'Victoria Walks resources for councils', Municipal Association of Victoria, Walkability and Active Transport Information Strategy workshop, Melbourne.

## Memberships

- Victorian Pedestrian Advisory Council
- International Federation of Pedestrians (Australian representative)
- Safe Speed Interest Group (a collaboration of health and local government stakeholders promoting low speed limits in urban environments)
- Melbourne Transport Forum (Associate Member)
- Cycling Reference Group (Department of Transport)
- Australian Health Promotion Association

## Submissions

Victoria Walks actively worked to influence policy and practice at state and local level. Submissions included:

- A Plan for a Walkable Melbourne (Metropolitan Planning Strategy)
- Victorian Road Safety Strategy
- Walking, Riding and Access to Public Transport (Department of Infrastructure and Transport)
- Wellington Shire Walking and Cycling Strategic Plan
- Bayside Integrated Transport Strategy Discussion Paper
- Manningham Draft Principal Pedestrian Network Plan 2012–2021
- Darebin Cycling Strategy 2013
- City of Melbourne Bicycle Plan 2012–16
- City of Melbourne Road Safety Plan.



## The year ahead

The year ahead offers many exciting opportunities to build on the work of our first four years.

- Launching Smart Steps for Councils online resource toolkit, including a comprehensive Guide to Measuring Walking.
- Launching Smart Steps for Secondary Schools Geography curriculum resources with a walking and walkability theme for Years 7 and 9 and VCAL years 11 and 12.
- New Smart Steps for Primary Schools resources, including a Class Walkability Project where students audit their neighbourhood and work to make it better for walking.
- Supporting Healthy Together Communities to increase walking in school, workplace and community settings.
- Conducting research into barriers and enablers to seniors walking in partnership with the Council on the Ageing (Victoria).
- Working in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria to support councils to improve walkability in their municipalities.
- Holding a Local Government forum on walkability issues, including measuring walking and developing walking strategies.
- Seeking partnership funds to continue developing Walking Maps, particularly its mobile web functionality so users can more easily create routes while walking.