



Media Release

WALKABILITY IS KEY TO THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING STRATEGY

25 March 2013

Victoria Walks has released its [Plan for a Walkable Melbourne](#) which calls for walkability to be at the heart of the new Metropolitan Planning Strategy due for release in June.

Walking is the most popular form of physical activity, with more than a million Victorians actively walking for exercise.

“Despite the importance of walking, it is taken for granted as a transport mode” says Dr Ben Rossiter, Victoria Walks Executive Officer.

“Currently, no government department owns walking, there is not a walking strategy, or dedicated walkability funding programs or coordinated walking network planning” he said.

Dr Rossiter went on to say that, “walking is the main way people access public transport, so as public transport grows, walking will become more important. We need to increase our investment in walking”.

The major emphasis of the Victoria Walks submission is that increasing walking as part of everyday life is our best chance of combatting the obesity epidemic estimated to cost Victoria at least \$14 billion each year. The social, physical and economic health of Victoria and Melbourne and its residents is dependent on a walkable Melbourne.

Key aspects of Victoria Walks’ *Plan for a Walkable Melbourne* include:

- A ‘20 minute city’ with 95% of Melbourne residents living in urban villages within 1km of day to day services, including healthy food options, a primary school, cafés, medical services and high quality open space.
- All areas of Melbourne connected by convenient, high frequency, direct public transport.
- Re-focusing transport expenditure away from new freeways, towards other transport needs.
- Auditing of walking access around all major public projects to identify and fund priority pedestrian works, as a condition of funding.
- Developing targets for walking, such as increasing walking from 3.4% of journey to work in 2011 to 7% by 2021; and 35% of primary school students and 25% of secondary school students walking to school by 2021.

“Building freeways to solve traffic congestion is like smoking to cure lung cancer, it simply makes it worse”. We need a fresh approach as Melbourne rapidly grows. The only effective way to address congestion and plan for a much larger city is to reduce our need for cars, and that’s about a walkable Melbourne and better public transport.

“A marker of a healthy community is children walking to school, and frankly, we are not doing very well” said Dr Rossiter. Children who walk to school are more physically active and concentrate much better than those who are driven. To give our children the best chance of learning successfully, we need to create environments that encourage walking to school.

With over 17 per cent of Melbourne’s morning peak being the school run, we need to make walking to school a priority. If we do not make significantly increasing the number of children walking to school an explicit target of the Metropolitan Planning Strategy it is destined to fail

Dr Rossiter concluded by saying that “Victoria Walks calls for significantly increasing the number of children walking to school to be an explicit target of the Metropolitan Planning Strategy”.

Victoria Walks *Plan for a Walkable Melbourne* www.victoriawalks.org.au/submissions

[Victoria Walks](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au) is funded by VicHealth to get more Victorians walking every day.

Further Information: Dr Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer, 0425 805 578