



# Media Release

## “A FRESH APPROACH TO ROAD SAFETY IS NEEDED”

4 October 2012

Victoria Walks calls for a new approach to road safety in its submission to *Victoria's Road Safety Strategy*.

“Victoria Walks commends the Victorian Government for undertaking a comprehensive review of the Victorian Road Safety Strategy. However, it is critical that we develop a fresh, more people and pedestrian centred road safety strategy” said Victoria Walks Executive Officer, Dr Ben Rossiter.

Our entrenched ‘car dominated culture’ is outmoded and needs to be discarded in favour of a road safety strategy that prioritises pedestrians in a planned, consistent and systematic way. Improving the safety of vulnerable road users will contribute to improved health, transport efficiency, environmental sustainability and community liveability.

“For too long, pedestrians have been neglected in road safety. Over the last ten years most of the gains have been made for car drivers and passengers” said Dr Rossiter. “While the gains for drivers and passengers are very encouraging, clearly we need to do more for walkers”.

“Previous strategies have not done enough to adequately improve road safety for children and older Victorians, and this is not good enough” said Dr Rossiter.

“It is essential that we do more for pedestrians, particularly children who may lack the knowledge, skills and experience to safely negotiate hazardous road environments, and older Victorians who may be at risk due to reduced agility, perceptual abilities and cognitive processing” said Dr Rossiter.

“We know from VicHealth research that 73 per cent of parents said road safety was a barrier to their children walking to school” said Dr Rossiter<sup>i</sup>.

“Pedestrians over 65 years of age are at greater risk of traffic injury or death as they may not be able to react as quickly and can have more difficulty judging the speed and distance of traffic.”

In its submission, Victoria Walks noted that:

- In 2011, 49 pedestrians were killed on Victoria roads and they comprise 17% of all road fatalities.<sup>ii</sup>
- Over the last decade, pedestrian fatalities in Victoria have shown a small decline (0.9%) compared to drivers (4%) and passengers (5%).<sup>iii</sup>
- Pedestrians involved in crashes are more likely to sustain serious injury (36%) compared to other road users (27%) and have longer stays in hospital.<sup>iv</sup>
- Victoria's fatality and serious injury rates for vulnerable road users are disproportionately higher compared to other developed countries.

“Previous road safety strategies have worked in isolation from other government priorities such as reducing traffic congestion, increasing physical activity, fostering environmental

sustainability, and creating strong, socially connected communities” said Dr Rossiter. “We need a more coordinated approach to these major challenges”.

“Over the last four decades there has been a massive decline in walking in Victoria. This has contributed to greater levels of obesity, congestion, social isolation which costs Victorians billions of dollars each year”, said Dr Rossiter. “Obesity alone is estimated to cost Victoria \$14.4 billion each year.

“We need a road safety strategy that helps to reverse this decline in walking” said Dr Rossiter.

“We need to follow the example of many European countries that have both significantly increased the level of walking while lowering injury and fatality rates” said Dr Rossiter.

“It is critical that we lower speeds in residential areas and within a 2 km radius of schools, shopping strips, parks, and major trip generators such as universities, TAFE colleges, hospitals, large shopping complexes, and high volume pedestrian areas” Dr Rossiter said. “The speed limit should be 40km/h in these areas and even 30 km/h in some.

“Victoria Walks believes that our road safety approach should aim to ensure that we can once again hear children’s footsteps on our streets in great numbers and elderly Victorians are safe, physically active and walking” said Dr Rossiter.

Victoria Walks *Road Safety Strategy* submission [www.victoriawalks.org.au/submissions](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au/submissions)

Victoria Walks is funded by VicHealth to get more people walking every day

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/Media-Centre/Media-Releases-by-Topic/Walking-and-cycling/Road-safety-concerns-stop-children-from-walking-to-school-survey-finds.aspx>

<sup>ii</sup> Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) (2012). *Road Deaths Australia - 2011 Statistical Summary*. Canberra, Department of Infrastructure and Transport

<sup>iii</sup> Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) (2012). *Road Deaths Australia - 2011 Statistical Summary*. Canberra, Department of Infrastructure and Transport

<sup>iv</sup> <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail?id=10737421997>