

Children and Active Transport

Information Pack: November 2009



Promoting Active Transport for Children

The Children and Active Transport forum was presented by Kinect Australia and Kids - 'Go for your life', as part of their respective professional development series. Kinect Australia is supported in delivering professional development by the Victorian Government's 'Go for your life' Physical Activity Information Centre. Kids - 'Go for your life' is funded by the Victorian Government and managed by Diabetes Australia - Victoria and Cancer Council Victoria.

Ian Kett, Executive Director of Kinect Australia, opened the forum by highlighting the importance of children actively commuting to school and the whole community walking where possible. He provided an overview of Walktober, including the community challenge, a light-hearted competition between local council areas and the Workplace Challenge. He highlighted the key outcomes from the Walk 21 Conference in Melbourne in 2006. Many of the findings from the conference are still issues that need to be addressed to promote children to actively commute. These include; road danger reduction, urban design guidelines, community engagement, community promotion and support, measurement and evaluation, and information dissemination. He closed by stating that key discussion points from the today would be presented at the 'Walktober Walking Leadership Forum', later in the month.

Suzy Honisett, Manager, Kids- 'Go for your life' introduced the panel discussion by stressing the importance of children using active transport. Active transport could help to address the small percentage of children currently meeting the Australian physical activity guidelines.

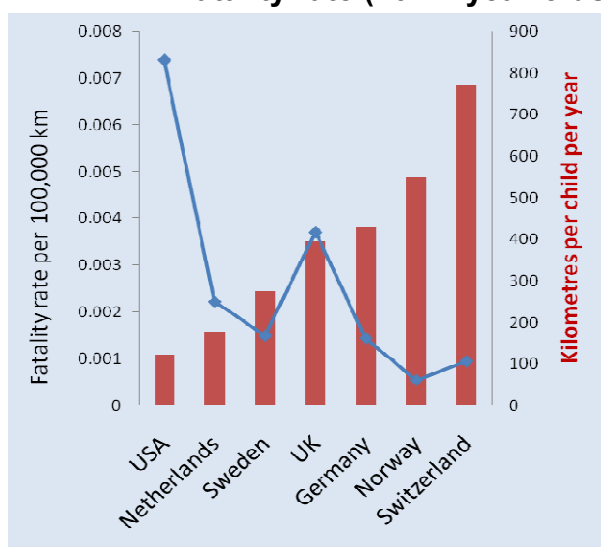
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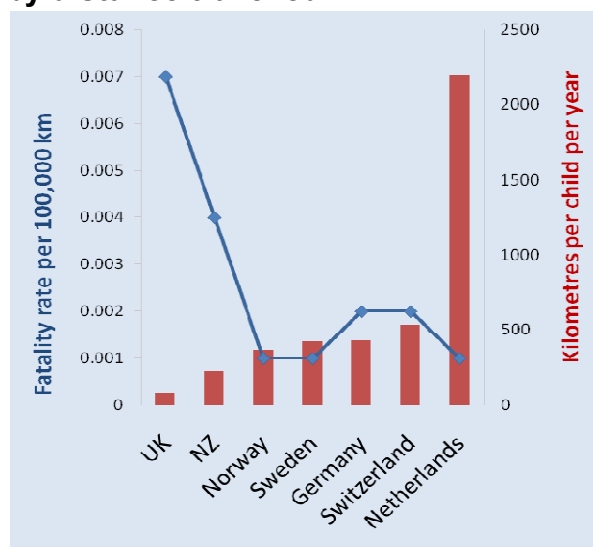
An Overview of Recent Research, Dr. Jan Garrard, Deakin University

Jan Garrard opened her presentation by stating that children who are physically more active are healthier and happier. Only 32% of children aged 9-16 years of age meet the recommended physical activity guidelines and girls are less likely to achieve the guidelines than boys. Active travel is a great way for children who do not participate in 'sport' to achieve the recommended guidelines. Countries with higher rates of walking and cycling generally have lower levels of car crash fatalities, as illustrated in the graphs below. Norway and Switzerland have the highest levels of walking for children and lowest levels of fatality

Fatality rate (10-14 year-olds) by distance travelled



Fatality rate by distance cycled



Fatality rate by distance walked

There is no national trend data for cycling or walking in Australia.

There is a huge discrepancy in the distance cycled in other countries compared to Melbourne. Countries with the highest rates of active travel, have the lowest percentage of the population overweight or obese.

International comparisons (some examples)

Country	Distance walked per child per year (km)	Distance cycled per child per year (km)	Proportion of total distance travelled using active modes (%)
USA	123	-	0.8
UK	396	79	6.8
NZ	-	232	-
Switzerland	773	535	14.4
Netherlands	180	2200	33.5
Melbourne	182	26	4.6

Research shows that parents often drive their children to school for convenience and then to other destinations (linked trips). Risk and perceived risk, 'stranger danger' and the media are major factors in the decisions about allowing children to walk or cycle to school.

ROAD TYPE	EUROPE (mainly)	AUSTRALASIA (mainly)
School areas	30 km/h	40 km/h
Residential areas	30 km/h	50-60 km/h
Built-up areas	60 km/h	70-80 km/h
Urban roads	60-70 km/h	80 km/h or higher
Rural roads	80-90 km/h	100 km/h
'Motor' roads	100 km/h	100 km/h
Motorways	120 km/h	110 km/h

Australia has the highest speed limits compared to Europe and the lowest number of people actively commuting. If the speed limits were decreased what changes might we see?

In conclusion, Jan mentioned that children enjoy walking and cycling in their neighbourhood and the majority of children prefer to walk or cycle to school. Many parents enjoy actively commuting to school with their children but due to the environment and social policy they are limited.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

An overview of the Policy Context: Michael Hopkins, Executive Director, Policy and Communication Division, Department of Transport

Michael opened his presentation by stating the importance of active travel for children and parents as a sustainable mode of transport and the role State Government plays in supporting active transport. Active transport focuses on improving health and fitness and is not necessarily only about transport for functional purposes. Active transport helps decrease congestion on the roads, decrease noise pollution, and decrease carbon emissions. Communities with high levels of active transport have a sense of community connectedness and a sense of feeling safe when walking or cycling within the neighbourhood.

Why do parents drive their children to school?

Distance (too far) – 28% in primary schools and 34% in secondary schools
Dangerous Roads – 29% in primary and 6% in secondary schools
Personal Safety – 26% in primary and 3% in secondary schools
Convenience (on the way to other destinations) – 22% in primary and 16% in secondary
Running short of time – 10% in primary and 21% in secondary

Personal safety and trips are more convenient using a car. Children who were surveyed for travel planning purposes exposed they want to ride or walk to school.

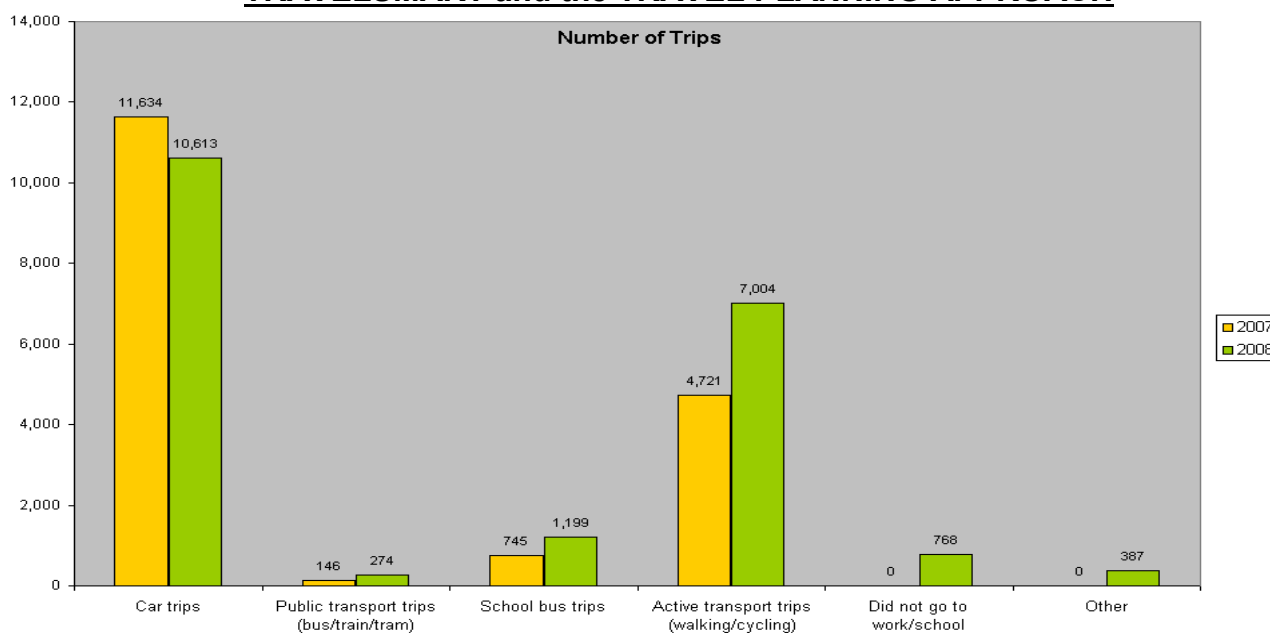
Three key areas of interest for the State Government in addressing issues around children and active transport include:

- the provision of infrastructure that supports the increased movement of people in Victoria.
- the environment and the urban form is also an important factor in influencing how people choose to move around, especially for local trips.
- the culture and behavioural change is perhaps the most important as getting people to think about how they move around and what choices they make about their trips is the hardest, but also the most rewarding in terms of positive changes for social, environmental and economic considerations.

The Victorian Cycling Strategy aims to decrease road congestion, increase the number of people cycling, and reduce the carbon emissions. More people cycling and walking means less crime as more people watching houses and streets.

Since 2006, 90 projects across Victoria have been funded for TravelSmart programs. The aim of the program is to promote smarter and healthier travel choices.

TRAVELSMART and the TRAVEL PLANNING APPROACH



The graph above illustrates the increase in schools actively commuting to school before and after implementing a travel plan.

Michael concluded by stating there will be a Walking Strategy developed in the next 6 months. A discussion paper will be released in March, 2010.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Panel Discussion:

Facilitated by Kellie- Ann Jolly, Director Cardiovascular Health Programs, National Heart (Victoria)

How can we enable children in Australia to walk or cycle in the streets on their own?

Children's Independent Mobility

Dr Carolyn Whitzman, Senior Lecturer in Urban Planning, University of Melbourne

Carolyn opened her presentation by stating we need to shift our way of thinking, despite the fact that scary things continue to happen to people. Bad things will happen in some time of our lives, but was still needed to allow children to actively commute to school.

A huge generation shift has resulted in a decrease in the number of people actively commuting to school. The most common reasons include 'stranger danger', increasing car ownership, and decreasing neighbourhood activities. "Always hold the hand of a child under 11" states the Pedestrian Council of Australia, while the norm in Japan is that children as young as 4-5 travel to school on their own. Children need to feel that they are given the independence to travel to school.

Cities can't be built thinking that children will not visit the areas or grow up in the areas. Planners think children belong in 'cages'; schools, playgrounds etc. Children like 'social spaces', places where they can hang out with other kids; kids belong everywhere.

Carolyn concluded by stating the need for a graduated licensing system, allowing parents to trust their children and provide gradually small tasks such as, walking in the streets on their own to their local store. As the child becomes more responsible they can progress to a further distance.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Safety and Risk- A Case Study: the development of an objective method for star-rating road crossings on school walking routes

Dr Bruce Corben, Senior Research Fellow, Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC)

Bruce Corben opened his presentation by stating the need for a program focusing on active travel as children are becoming physically inactive and obese. Some major concerns with children actively commuting to school include common crash circumstances in residential streets, proximity of schools to home, poor understanding of traffic, limited safe crossing places and poor road - crossing judgment.

A community based approach was taken by partnering with three multidisciplinary organisations, Caulfield Community Health Service, Caulfield Hospital and Alfred Health. The concept a star rating tool for school walking routes that increases rates of low-risk walking to and from school, is low cost and scientifically based. The star rating is based on five main risk factors: speed limit, traffic volume, road width, number of conflicting vehicle directions, and crossing type.

Bruce concluded by stating the next steps are to pilot the tool within schools, disseminate the outcomes and build confidence in local communities to use the star rating tool.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Culture and Commerce

David Engwicht, Less Traffic

David Engwicht opened his presentation by challenging conventional ways of thinking and offered some alternative ways of thinking. Some suggestions included increasing active transport by changing our attitudes to thinking we are children once again, remember the fun things we (parents/adults) participated in, such as walking and cycling to school and playing outside. Society needs to change their attitudes to trips and create unsafe routes to school. If traffic lights are removed parents drive more safely and become more aware of their surrounding environment. The way parents view childhood, impacts the way they take children to school. Parents need to focus on the experience of walking to school, see the journey as fun and exciting not just walking to school.

Main discussion points from the panel presentations

Education to schools and parents

- Encourage an active approach to walking and cycling
- Facilitate parent sessions to know each other, to build trust
- Remove the perceived risks
- Increase skills of independence (Teachers conduct a 10 minute walk with children)
- Need to trust children
- Promote local trips that are sustainable (schools and parents)
- Bike Ed needs to start earlier than grade 4
- Raise awareness of parents who are new to school
- Connect primary schools and early childhood centres
- Graduated licensing of children- start small, just walk to local shops then develop beyond that

Community building

- Facilitate awareness of the neighbourhood and environment, people can build trust
- Take responsibility off the parents by being aware of the neighbourhood and community, therefore allowing children to actively commute as parents know the area is safe.

Social marketing

- Consider the children's perspective- what do they want?
- Address parents' perception, marketing campaign licensing children to walk to the shops
- Raise awareness of benefits

Kids taking ownership of the decision, parents are the decision makers

- Parents focus on the risks instead balance the risks and the benefits
- Kids can become crossing guards
- Expose to safety excursions/ road safety/ practical experience
- Active Travel Policy, designed by children

Change the culture of a car driven society to active travel society

- Lower the speed of traffic, eg Japan and Germany lower speed limits
- Walkers and cyclists higher priority, eg traffic lights quicker change
- Develop mutual respect for both modes of transport
- Highlight the adventure of walking to school
- Culture change- shift our thinking, eg Walk Bendigo, create space for both modes of transport

Workshops

Workshop A. Planning for Active Transport: What can be done at the local level? Facilitated by Fiona Tinney, VicHealth & Stacey Bloomfield, Victoria Local Governance Association

Councilor Rose Iser of Moonee Valley City Council opened by stating the central problem at the local level is the 'behaviour change challenge.'

- 33% of car journeys taken in Australian cities are less than 3 kms
- 81% of all trips made by children aged between 5 and 9 are as a car passenger in Melbourne
- Almost 40% of car trips made to school by parents with primary school children are simple home-to-home chains

The rising issues are derived from parental behaviour and not children's choices. A 1/5 of the traffic morning congestion is from parents driving their children to school. The Council needs to create supportive environments for children actively commuting to school, ie decrease speed zone in surrounding streets. Education is needed to make the community aware of the health and environment benefits of actively commuting to school. More women are working and therefore they drive to school, drop the children off and continue on to work.

Elyse Rider, City of Brimbank Council and Project Officer for VicHealth Streets Ahead project, explained how the project builds on independent mobility by using the social model of health and address the health inequalities within neighbourhoods. The majority of the communities participating in the program are from non-english speaking backgrounds, low socio economic communities and a high level of disadvantage is prominent. The project aims to create community connectedness through linking community organisations with the neighbourhood. A neighbourhood action group has been created to ensure the program is sustainable. Consultations occurred with the community to see what the community thought an active community would look like. Elyse mentioned the importance of building relationships with schools and sporting clubs.

Dr. Ben Rossiter, Victoria Walks, introduced Victoria Walks as a framework which supports local communities to increase the number of people, including children, who walk as a means of transport. The Victoria Walks website acts as a tool kit for action where walking groups can register users. The website also allows campaigners to join forces in achieving walkable communities. Case studies are provided on walking groups in different local government areas. Dr. Rossiter made valid points during his presentation, highlighting a local walking group's road safety concern was raised in Parliament as a result of strong community action. Some challenges in children actively commuting to school include parental fears, general level of walking, traffic and overall reliance on schools.

Rob McGlashan, Northern Mallee Primary Care Partnership (PCP), explained the Kids on Bikes Program. In 2007, Mildura Primary School had a high rate of absenteeism. A random count of bikes was done and only 5 people rode their bike to school out of 369 students. The program focused on kids building bikes from old bikes donated by the community. The kids made the bikes their own and developed ownership of the bikes. Not only did the project act as a means of encouraging school attendance and increasing the number of children riding to school but the community was also involved. The children's confidence and self esteem increased from the program and new skills were developed. The school has a high population of Koori families that are from CALD backgrounds and 35% are single parent families. The Children work

with volunteers to build their own bike and paint the bikes any colour they would like. Currently 250 students now have a bike. School attendance has increased and the number of kids riding bikes to school has increased. Some challenges include finding enough volunteers to run the program and safe riding routes to school.

[Click here to access the full presentations](#)

Workshop B. Active Communication- Getting Your Message Heard. Facilitated by Marissa Dewan, Bicycle Victoria & Serrin Cooper, VicHealth

Dr Leanne Downing, Health Writer (a health promotion communication consultancy organization), discussed the power of commercial media and the importance of framing values when reaching your target audience, the importance of knowing the audience and suiting the language accordingly. She encouraged the use of a creative idea when initiating a project/program to strengthen the effect to ensure it will 'store' in the memory for a long time. Most organisations are restricted by budgets when planning, implementing and delivering a program. This problem can be minimised by the use of social networking such as creating a blogspot which is a good idea for evaluation, where people can express and share their thoughts.

Ross Egleton, Ride2School, presented on behalf of Barb Birkett from Clifton Hill P.S – Bicycle Victoria. Ross stated the benefits of the program and the success at Clifton Hill P.S. The benefits of community based social marketing for behaviour change strategies for active travel is shown through Ride2School as over 1000 Victorian schools are involved in the program. Ride2School uses a community based model in implementing the program into schools. There are challenges associated with the program which have been identified including weather, distance and personal safety etc.

Megan Edwards, Kids- 'Go for your life', presented on the key components of the Kids- 'Go for your life' Award Program which focuses on encouraging healthy eating and physical activity to children aged 0-12 through early childhood services and primary schools.

Kids-'Go for your life' also focuses on health professionals and has a new media campaign addressed at parents and carers. The communication strategy includes eNews, Kids News, term updates, quarterly updates, mail outs, brochures, campaign kits, information sheets, press ads, media releases and a website. She stressed it is important to use correct branding when communicating and consistent use of the key messages. One of the main barriers of getting the Kids- 'Go for your life' message across is the healthy eating and physical activity message not being translated at home beyond the school grounds. Megan encouraged liaising with the local paper to feature possible media releases about programs/projects in order for the message to reach the wider community.

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Workshop C. Settings-based Programs: Working with Primary Schools and Early Childhood Services to engage them in Active Transport. Facilitated by Emma Clarkson, VicRoads & Tarli O'Connell, Kids- 'Go for your life'

Workshop C was set up for attendees to have the opportunity to visit 7 different organisations focusing on active transport for children. The attendees could ask questions, receive resources and note the many options of promoting children to actively commute to school.

Amanda Stirrat, City of Greater Geelong, presented on 'Engaging with schools and early childhood services.' The key components for contacting primary schools and early childhood services include:

- arrange to meet at a time that suits them,
- never go before the school or service day starts,
- try to meet on a pupil free day (ie planning day).

If the health professional is meeting with the correct representative from the school or early childhood service, in a face to face meeting never use the word "program", instead use "framework" something that will help them. The health professional needs to find out what the school is already involved in. Never expect the service to contact you, you have to make the effort provide programs and resources for the school. Make sure you are aware who to meet with; principal, teacher, school council and/or parents.

Ben Dew, a teacher from Leopold Primary School, Geelong, presented on how he successfully implemented a travel plan into the school. The school is located in a difficult area (highways, traffic congestion), a school walking bus was implemented in the school and the school chose to build on that with TravelSmart. The school developed a TravelSmart Committee including the Principal, teachers and parents. The committee conducted travel plans and identified actions needed to decrease vehicles and increase active transport. An award was given for children who walked the most to school (golden shoe award).

The seven different organisations provided for participants to find out more information on available programs included (click through for more information):

- [Kids- 'Go for your life'](#)
- [TravelSmart](#)
- [Ride2School](#)
- [Starting out Safely](#)
- [Bike Ed](#)
- [VicHealth Resources](#)
- [Kids on the move](#)

[Click here to access the full presentation](#)

Workshop D. Triggering Cultural Change. Facilitated by Theresa Whalen, Kinect Australia

David Engwich opened by stating the need for cultural and social change, people need to be aware of what creates or triggers change. People often assume, cultural change is large and needs to be a big adjustment. The reality is people are more towards emotions and perceptions, often based on rituals ie driving to school. We need to address this reality in planning for active transport to school, to engage the parents and children to do so.

David's model for social change is based on recognising multiple people with the same values and build submerged voices by celebrations and parties "lift up" the negative submissive don't bring down "the dominant" ie, the adventures of walking to school. Don't dismiss the power of small changes, one person creating change. Initiatives should focus on asset building (asset based planning), at least 50% of time should be spent on small gains.

One suggestion was to have children journal the benefits of walking to school.

The focus of David's presentation was to challenge our ways of thinking about the "norm" and to focus on asset building and small changes.

Key findings revealed throughout the day, Paul Tranter, The University of New South Wales

Paul Tranter summarised the day by highlighting the key points discussed throughout the day including the importance of celebrating modes of active travel, experiencing the joy and wonder of active travel. A cultural change needs to occur, a world created where children feel safe to walk and ride in the neighbourhood. Environments need to be created that are children friendly where children can have unstructured play and resources to walk. Our society is orientated with thinking about the risk instead of pursuing the action. The big question needs to be asked why are children not actively commuting to school? Is it due to the time restraints of parents, the global challenge, or the population overload! etc

RELATED RESOURCES *(click the heading where possible for more information)*

STAR RATING SCHOOL WALKING ROUTES, REPORT, BRUCE CORBEN, DAVID LOGAN AND JENNIE OXLEY, 2008

A report on the findings and method for using the star rating tool.

ACTIVE TRAVEL AND PLAY, SUSTRANS, OCTOBER 2009

This is a new guide for local authorities and other organisations managing outdoor play space, on ensuring children and young people can get to play areas actively and independently. Also included on the website is an information sheet on active travel and play including the latest research and guidance on the benefits of independent active play.

THE SPIRIT LEVEL BOOK, WHY MORE EQUAL SOCIETIES ALMOST ALWAYS DO BETTER, RICHARD WILKINSON AND KATE PICKETT

This book is based on thirty years' of research which demonstrates that more unequal societies are bad for almost everyone within them - the well-off as well as the poor. The remarkable data the book lays out and the measures it uses are like a spirit level which we can hold up to compare the conditions of different societies.

DEVELOPMENT OF SCALES TO ASSESS CHILDREN'S PERCEPTIONS OF FRIEND AND PARENTAL INFLUENCES ON PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BEHAVIORAL NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, OCTOBER 2009

This research was on producing a new questionnaire with three scales that assess how parents, friends and group normative values may be associated with children's physical activity have been shown to be reliable and internally consistent. The findings revealed examination of the extent to which these new scales improve our understanding of children's physical activity in datasets with a range of participant and family characteristics is needed.

TEST-RETEST RELIABILITY OF A NEW SELF REPORTED COMPREHENSIVE QUESTIONNAIRE MEASURING FREQUENCIES OF DIFFERENT MODES OF ADOLESCENTS COMMUTING TO SCHOOL AND THEIR PARENTS COMMUTING TO WORK - THE ATN QUESTIONNAIRE, INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BEHAVIORAL NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OCTOBER 2009

The purpose of the research was to report the test-retest reliability of a newly developed comprehensive questionnaire on active commuting to school and work among 6th grade school children and their parents in Norway. The findings showed this newly developed questionnaire appears to be a reliable tool for measuring active commuting to school and work.

INSTITUTIONAL ENABLERS TO CHILDREN'S INDEPENDENT MOBILITY (GAMUT) "FROM BATTERY-REARED TO FREE RANGE CHILDREN" DR. CAROLYN WHITZMAN, SENIOR LECTURER IN URBAN PLANNING AND LUCY PIKE, RESEARCH ASSISTANT, 2006-2007

The report summarizes international research on trends and disparities related to children's independent mobility (CIM). In English-speaking developed countries, rates of children aged 8-12 walking independently to and from schools, friends, local parks, and shopping, has decreased by as much as a factor of nine in the past 30-40 years. The report also examines the Victorian policy framework to see the extent to which CIM is addressed. With the exception of some local governments' Child-Friendly Cities policies, there is no explicit consideration of CIM.

WALKING THE WALK: CAN CHILD FRIENDLY CITIES PROMOTE CHILDREN'S INDEPENDENT MOBILITY? DR CAROLYN WHITZMAN, MEGAN WORTHINGTON, AND DANA MIZRACHI, 2009

This final report summarises the findings of a project undertaken for the Australasian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport (GAMUT), and follows on the report, above. The overall aim of the research program was to identify interventions that facilitate children's independent mobility within urban environments, and to determine whether there are principles across interventions that can be replicated in different settings.

HEALTHY BY DESIGN RESOURCE, HEART FOUNDATION

Local council can use this resource to increase environmental support and opportunities for people to be physically active in their daily lives by highlighting the benefits of integrating health into planning. Councils incorporate the message through unique initiatives and programs that, in a variety of ways, enable people to be active in their local community.