



MEDIA RELEASE

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PARK & WALK FACILITIES TO PUT CHILDREN ON THE PATH TO GOOD HEALTH

A new VicHealth survey released today reveals that 75% of Victorian parents with children under 12 would consider using a park and walk facility to walk with their children to school.

As part of this year's [Walk to School](#) campaign, VicHealth and Victoria Walks are piloting a Park & Walk Grants program to create infrastructure to increase the number of children walking to and from school.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said the \$150,000 investment was in response to an evaluation of last year's Walk to School campaign which found that primary school students who live more than 2km from their school are the least likely to walk.

"On average, students who live within 1km of their school walk to or from school five times a week, while those living between 1-2km walk to or from school between 3-4 times each week. Children who live more than 2km from school walk to or from school no more than once a week, if at all.

"Around four in five Victorian children don't get the daily exercise they need for good health. Walk to School is part of VicHealth's long-term plan to get more Victorians living healthier and happier lives. Encouraging children to walk, ride or scoot to and from school puts them on the path to good health for the rest of their lives," Ms Rechter added.

The VicHealth survey showed that 75% of parents would likely use the park and walk facility to walk with their children, while just under two in five (37%) said they would be likely to let their children walk to school alone if they could drop them off at a park and walk facility.

Victoria Walks Executive Officer Ben Rossiter said the Park & Walk Grants would fund physical infrastructure and improvements to make walking to school safer and easier for children who live more than 2km from their school.

"We hope the program leads to an increase in the number of students who are walking to or from their school on a regular basis and will be counting children before and after to see whether Park & Walk facilities can get kids who have previously relied on cars or buses to regularly walk to school," Dr Rossiter added.

The three successful projects are:

Bass Coast Shire Council: The council is planning to construct a 600-metre safe, off-road shared path connecting an existing V/Line carpark located just off the Bass Highway to the Bass Valley Primary School. The school is located in an isolated rural area in between a number of small townships and there is no opportunity for children to walk or ride to school. As a result, only one of the 185 students at the school currently walks to school; all other students arrive by car or bus.

Cardinia Shire Council: With more than 90% of students at Bayles Regional Primary School living more than 2km from the school gate, Cardinia Shire is planning to build a concrete path that will link the school with parking in the town centre. The new pathway is expected to be ready to launch in time for VicHealth's Walk to School month in October.

Macedon Ranges Shire Council: A shared pathway will link Holy Cross Catholic Primary, the Gisborne Montessori School and the new netball complex with the train station and New Gisborne township. The local train station and sports reserve car parks will mark the Park & Walk drop zone. The majority of students live more than 2km from the school and the main mode of travel is currently via car or school bus.

For more information about VicHealth's Walk to School, visit www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au.

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