



# Walk to School

## October 2014

Official Community Partner



an initiative of  
**VicHealth™**

### ***Walk to School* month kicks off today**

#### **Monday 6 October 2014**

Tens of thousands of primary school children across Victoria are taking to the streets as VicHealth's *Walk to School* campaign kicks off today.

It's not too late to register for *Walk to School 2014* – a fun, free campaign that invites primary school children and their parents to ditch the car and stretch their legs instead on the school run in October.

VicHealth CEO, Jerril Rechter, said getting kids into a routine of walking puts them on the path to good health for the rest of their lives.

"Around four in five Victorian children don't get the daily exercise they need for good health. Only one in four walk or cycle to school and one in four is overweight or obese. Habits have to change for the future health of our children.

"Being physically active can reduce body fat, improve fitness and reduce the risk of heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some cancers later in life. It also helps to develop motor and coping skills, healthy self-esteem and social skills in children.

"By participating in *Walk to School* we hope children and their parents will enjoy walking to and from school – a simple, free way to incorporate more physical activity into their day and a great way for busy parents to spend quality time with their children," Ms Rechter added.

Victorian Minister for Health David Davis said more than 30,000 students from more than 300 primary schools across the state took part in *Walk to School* last year.

"Between them, the students of Victoria walked a total of 411,100 kilometres - further than the distance from Earth to the moon. It was an amazing achievement and I hope we can beat it this year by seeing more schools across the state signing up for the challenge.

"Walking is an essential part of developing healthy habits and staying active for life," Minister Davis added.

Victoria Police is throwing its support behind the campaign this year. Sergeant Arty Lavos said walking to school was a safe way for children to get some exercise.

"The vast majority of drivers take extra care around schools, which means walking to school is very safe if children remember to use pedestrian crossings and look both ways before stepping onto the road."

More than 50 local councils are on board for the event and will run competitions, organise healthy breakfasts, pilot walking programs and support schools to develop other initiatives such as 'park and walk' options for families.

Schools that participate in *Walk to School* will be provided with certificates to celebrate their students' achievements and will be in the running for regional prizes including a full-day soccer clinic run by official community partner Melbourne City FC. All Victorian primary school students can get involved in VicHealth's fun walking-themed competitions throughout October, with prizes awarded each week.

The free *Walk to School* app for iPhone and Android devices makes it easier for students and families to record their walks to and from school every day. The app includes a fun interactive game that allows children to create their own imaginary *Walk to School* journey and collect bonus creatures and objects for their world with each walk they record.

Register at [www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au](http://www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au).

**Media contact: Helen Walsh, VicHealth, 0435 761 732/ 03 9667 1319**