

9 October, 2017

AFL players help kick off Walk to School for 2017

Thousands of Victorian kids will be inspired by their AFL and AFLW heroes to walk, ride or scoot to school this October as VicHealth's Walk to School program kicks off today across the state.

VicHealth has partnered with the AFL Players' Association for [Walk to School 2017](#) to encourage even more kids to get walking, riding and scooting to help them build healthy habits for life. Participating schools have the opportunity to win a footy clinic led by an AFL or AFLW player.

AFL star and Demons defender Neville Jetta and AFLW Collingwood midfielder Bree White helped launch the program in Melbourne and encouraged primary school kids and their families to get active throughout October.

"As a father and sportsman I know how important healthy habits are for me and my children. A great way for kids to stay active is to walk to school – it's a small thing that starts their day on the right path," Mr Jetta said.

Minister for Health Jill Hennessy has also thrown her support behind the campaign encouraging Victorian families and schools to get involved.

"It's vital for our kids to get the daily physical activity they need to be happy and healthy. I encourage Victorian families and schools to take part in VicHealth's Walk to School month – it's a free, easy and fun way to get primary school kids active this October," Minister Hennessy said.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said she was thrilled to partner with AFL Players to promote Walk to School in 2017.

"Helping our kids to get active is critical for their health and wellbeing – we know that currently two-thirds of kids aren't getting the physical activity they need to be healthy.

"Walking, riding or scooting to and from school every day is an easy way to make physical activity part of kids' daily life.

"We're thrilled to have the support of talented AFL and AFLW players in Walk to School this year. When kids see their heroes on board, they're even more likely to get involved," Ms Rechter said.

As part of this year's Walk to School, Victorian primary school kids are encouraged to [decorate their shoes, bikes or scooters](#) to make walking to school even more fun.

Ms Rechter said this year's Walk to School combined creativity with physical activity to get kids excited about walking, riding and scooting to school.

"This year we're encouraging kids to put their creativity on show and make the journey to and from school even more exciting by decorating their shoes, bikes and scooters," she said.

"Getting active is even more fun when we do it together and we can't wait to see what fantastic shoe designs our clever Victorian students come up with."

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VicHealth is encouraging parents and carers to walk to school with their kids where possible and enjoy the chance to talk and teach road safety skills while getting active themselves. Parents and carers can also get involved in Walk to School by helping their kids decorate their shoes, bike or scooter. For design templates, inspiration and non-permanent decorating ideas visit walktoschool.vic.gov.au.

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Note to Editors

Since 2006, every October, VicHealth's Walk to School program encourages primary school kids to walk, ride or scoot to and from school. This year, the program will run from 9 October to 3 November.

In 2016, almost 150,000 Victorian primary school kids from more than 750 schools took part in Walk to School, resulting in more than 2.2 million walks, rides and scoots throughout October.

This year, students are encouraged to decorate their shoes, bike or scooters to make Walk to School more fun. Teachers, parents and carers can download design templates and lesson suggestions in the lead-up to Walk to School via the website.

In 2017, VicHealth will be working with Bendigo Bank and the AFL Players' Association to bring Walk to School to life.

Participating schools will be provided with certificates to celebrate students' achievements, as well as being in the running for fantastic prizes.

Fast facts about Walk to School:

- The number of Victorian kids walking to school has declined dramatically in recent decades. In the 1970s, almost 50% of Victorian children walked to school, compared with only 20% in 2011.
- New VicHealth research shows that more than 60% of Victorian parents want their child to walk to school more regularly.
- Parents in rural and regional Victoria are less likely to have the option to walk their child to school than those in metro areas.
- Childhood obesity levels are on the rise. Only one in five children aged 5-17 years get the recommended amount of physical activity every day.
- By 2025, one in three children will be overweight or obese.
- Kids who are regularly physically active are more likely to continue to be active as they grow up.

For more information on VicHealth's Walk to School or for interview opportunities please contact Mango Communications:

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