



## Media Release

4th October 2016

### **SAM MITCHELL ENCOURAGES MORE VICTORIAN CHILDREN TO WALK TO SCHOOL**

Hawthorn Football Club legend Sam Mitchell is urging more children to walk to school this October to curb the declining number of primary school students using active transport to travel to school.

The proportion of children using active travel to school has declined dramatically over the last 30 to 40 years with children today around half as likely to actively travel to or from school compared to their parents, according to a report by Active Healthy Kids Australia.

That's despite a new VicHealth community attitudes survey revealing 62% of parents with 6-18 year-old children want their kids to walk, ride or scoot to and from school more frequently.

AFL champion and VicHealth ambassador Sam Mitchell, is calling on all Victorian primary school children to take part in VicHealth's *Walk to School* month in an attempt to combat the declining numbers of children walking to school and kick-start healthy and active lifestyles.

Being a father himself who walked to school when he was young, Sam is encouraging primary students to join him in lacing up their boots and walking, scooting or riding to and from school this October.

"It's important to get the kids out of the house, away from screens and involved in physical activity. Walking to school is a great way parents can help instil healthy habits for life in their children and family bonding time is an added incentive," he said.

VicHealth's Acting Physical Activity, Sport and Healthy Eating Manager, Rayoni Nelson said VicHealth's *Walk to School* month is an important initiative to encourage more Victorian children to lead more active and healthier lives.

"*Walking to school* is particularly important at a time when childhood obesity is high and four in five Victorian school aged students are not getting the daily physical activity they need to benefit their health. This month, we're encouraging parents to pass on the healthy habits they learnt in their childhood to their own children by supporting them to walk to school," Ms Nelson said.

VicHealth's *Walk to School* runs for the month of October. Primary schools and individuals can still register by visiting [www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au](http://www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au)

Notes:



1. Source: Active Healthy Kids Australia (2015). *The Road Less Travelled: The 2015 Active Healthy Kids Australia Progress Report Card on Active Transport for Children and Young People*. Adelaide, South Australia: Active Healthy Kids Australia
2. VicHealth's Community Attitudes Survey (2016) is an online survey of 3113 Australians conducted by Ipsos for VicHealth.

- ENDS -

**For further photo opportunities, interviews or information, please contact:**

**Stephanie Jones**

Thrive PR

E: [stephanie.jones@thrivepr.com.au](mailto:stephanie.jones@thrivepr.com.au)

M: 0481 566 386

**Anissha Vijayan**

Thrive PR

E: [anishsha.vijayan@thrivepr.com.au](mailto:anishsha.vijayan@thrivepr.com.au)

M: 0401 016 860

**About VicHealth**

VicHealth is a world-first health promotion organisation focusing on promoting good health and preventing chronic disease. VicHealth's pioneering work includes creating and funding world-class interventions; conducting vital research to advance Victoria's population health; producing and supporting public campaigns to promote a healthier Victoria; and providing transformational expertise and insights to government.

Over the past decade, VicHealth has been working with schools, families and communities to reverse the decline in children walking to school.

