

# VicHealth Walk to School 2016

## Campaign evaluation summary\*

VicHealth's Walk to School campaign is an annual, high profile event held in October that encourages primary school students across Victoria to engage in school active travel (walking, riding and scooting) as often as possible.

The primary audience of the campaign is Victorian primary school students, however the campaign also aims to engage carers of primary school children as well as primary schools and local councils.

### Campaign aims

Aim	Result	Specific findings
A: A 2% increase from 2015 in primary school student participation	Exceeded	144,928 primary school students participated in the campaign in 2016 – a 33% increase from 2015
B: A 2% increase from 2015 in overall walks by participating students	Exceeded	Participating students performed a total of 2,238,326 walks in 2016 – a 26% increase from 2015

### Campaign objectives

**Objective 1:** To increase awareness of the Walk to School campaign and the benefits of school active travel

**Achieved**

 **51%**

of carers had heard of Walk to School prior to the campaign

 **64%**

Increased to in the month after the campaign

Awareness also increased by 31% (to 90%) among those who reported their child(ren) participated in the campaign and by 9% (to 33%) among those who reported their child(ren) did not participate in the campaign.

The proportion of carers who agreed with the following benefits of walking/biking to school remained high after the campaign:

**helps develop child's independence**  
(84% to 87%)



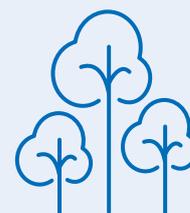
**helps child participate in 60 mins/day of physical activity**  
(87% to 89%)



**is good for their child's health**  
(94% to 95%)



**is good for the environment**  
(94% to 95%)



\*Based on the evaluation report prepared by Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (IPAN), Deakin University.

**Objective 2:** To change attitudes of carers of primary school children towards school active travel

**Achieved**

Overall, there were slight increases in the proportion of carers who agreed that:

they place a high importance on active travel  
**(57% to 61%)**



allowing their child to walk or bike to/from school is something they do automatically without really thinking about it  
**(36% to 40%)**



There were decreases in the proportion who agreed that people would disapprove of their child to walking or biking to/from school without adult supervision (47% to 45%); and that it is irresponsible to let their child do so (57% to 53%).



Parents of participating children had approximately 50% higher odds of placing a high importance on active travel during and after the campaign, compared to parents whose children did not participate.

There were no other differences in the attitudes described above according to child participation in the campaign.

**Objective 3:** To increase council and primary school engagement in the campaign

**Achieved**



**62 councils**  
**(up from 61 in 2015)**



**758 primary schools**  
**(up 22% from 620)**  
participated in the 2016 campaign.

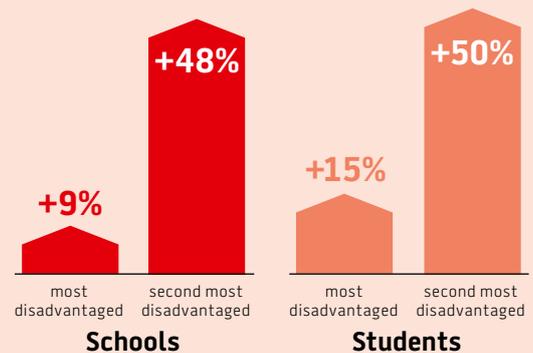
**Objective 4:** To increase participation by schools and students from disadvantaged areas by 5% compared with 2015

**Exceeded**

Scores from the 2011 Socioeconomic Index for Areas (SEIFA) were applied to the postcode of participating schools to determine area-level disadvantage.

The number of schools participating in the campaign in 2016 that were located in the most disadvantaged quintile was 152 and from the second most disadvantaged quintile was 163, representing increases in participation of 9% and 48%, respectively, compared to 2015.

Similarly, the number of students participating in the campaign from schools in the most disadvantaged quintile increased by 15% and the second most disadvantaged quintile by 50%.



**Objective 5:** To maintain school active travel in students with low school active travel behaviour

**Partly achieved**

Participating children who lived more than 5km from school and did not engage in active travel to/from school before the campaign increased their school active travel by 0.6 trips/week during the campaign. This increase was largely maintained after the campaign (0.5 trips/week). In comparison, in 2015, this target group made 0.7 trips/week via active travel after the campaign.

\*Based on a survey of carers of primary school children from across Victoria



## Recommendations

The following recommendations to further maximise the impact of the campaign are based on full analysis of the campaign using data from carer, council and school surveys.



**1** Minimise the burden on participating schools by streamlining the data collection process.



**2** Develop and disseminate additional campaign resources to schools and councils, including:

- 'Case studies' of councils and schools with high rates of school active travel
- Materials or strategies to better support carers (e.g. practical information about how to plan for school active travel)
- Materials specifically targeting CALD groups
- Summaries of lessons learnt from previous campaigns.



**3** Work with councils and schools to conduct environmental audits of their surrounds and ensure school policy and the local environment supports active travel, such as:

- Encourage use of 'drop and walk' points within short distance of schools
- Ensure provision of adequate bike storage
- Encourage (and support) councils to upgrade and improve the walking and cycling infrastructure along popular school travel routes.



**4** Conduct focus groups with children, carers and council representatives to better understand strategies to increase active travel.



**5** Provide councils with a list of key evidence-based influences on school active travel and encourage them to link their strategies with these.



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