

3 May 2017

Ms Stephanie Prvcic
Senior Project Officer
Active Transport Victoria
Level 22, 1 Spring Street
Melbourne 3000

Dear Ms Prvcic,

Re: Victorian Cycling Strategy 2017–27

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2017–27*.

As you know, VicHealth has participated in previous stakeholder consultations to help inform the draft Strategy. We commend Active Transport Victoria for developing the Victorian Cycling Strategy and believe it provides a clear vision for cycling in Victoria. This includes the social and economic benefits of cycling and the role and benefits of cycling as a form of active transport.

With these comments in mind, VicHealth's response is limited to two aspects of the draft Strategy: the health benefits of cycling; and steps to deliver the strategy.

The health benefits of cycling

The *Victorian Cycling Strategy 2017–27* notes that 'cycling contributes to better health' (p. 5). VicHealth supports this view and recommends the Strategy, and in particular *4.2.3 Safety, health and wellbeing*, has a stronger focus on the health benefits of cycling.

Currently, *4.2.3 Safety, health and wellbeing* starts with a focus on safety and road trauma, before concluding with the health benefits of physical activity and cycling. VicHealth recommends this section be split into two and its order reversed: (1) Health and wellbeing, and (2) Safety. Reversing the order will frame cycling and health in a positive way. We also recommend that the health and wellbeing section be expanded to reflect the broad range of health benefits that cycling provides.

There are a range of resources that Active Transport Victoria can use to highlight the benefits of cycling (and physical activity), and the barriers that must be overcome to boost participation. Some key resources include:

- VicHealth's [Physical activity and sedentary behaviour: Evidence summary](#), which provides an overview of the benefits of physical activity and negative impacts of sedentary behaviour, and the barriers to and enablers of active lifestyles.

- VicHealth’s review of physical activity through [different life stages](#), which identified common themes and unique attributes that influence physical activity throughout people’s lives.
- The National Heart Foundation’s [Blueprint for an active Australia](#), which sets out government and community actions that are needed to increase population levels of physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour in Australia.
- The Victorian Government’s [Better Health Channel](#), which highlights some of the health benefits of cycling.

VicHealth would be happy to work with you to highlight the evidence of the health benefits of cycling.

Delivering the Strategy

VicHealth recommends that the final Victorian Cycling Strategy should clearly articulate Active Transport Victoria’s role in coordinating and implementing the Strategy. The latter includes the detailed actions within the Strategy and their timeframes.

VicHealth has a range of research, data and programs that could help implement the Strategy and measure its success. Examples include:

- [VicHealth Indicators](#), which is a Victorian community wellbeing survey that provides results by local government area. The survey has a range of questions to measure [physical activity, including cycling](#).
- VicHealth’s research to understand [parents’ fears](#) in allowing their children to play and travel independently (including cycling).
- [Walk to School](#), which is a VicHealth initiative encouraging primary school children to use active travel (including walking, cycling, and scooting) to get to school and adopt physical activity habits for life.

VicHealth would be happy to share further examples of our research and programs to help inform the Strategy’s implementation. Our work focuses on engaging those Victorians who are less active to become more active, which can include cycling. The strong equity focus in our approaches means our research and programs consider how we can improve health outcomes and participation rates of people experiencing disadvantage.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity provide feedback on the draft Victorian Cycling Strategy. Please feel free to contact Rayoni Nelson, VicHealth’s Manager of Physical Activity, Sport & Healthy Eating at rnelson@vichealth.vic.gov.au if you have any questions about our response.

Yours sincerely,



Jerril Rechter
Chief Executive Officer