

23 April, 2018

## **AFLW player Mel Hickey shows her skills with Hampden Specialist School kids for Walk to School**

AFLW star Mel Hickey travelled to Hampden Specialist School to run a unique footy fun experience for the student's winning results in the 2017 Walk to School program.

Hampden Specialist School had the highest participation rate in the South-Western Victorian region with over 95 percent of students walking, riding or scooting to school during the program. Students learnt footy skills and were given AFL merchandise as a reward for their outstanding results.

Corangamite Shire Council Mayor Cr Jo Beard congratulated the Hampden Specialist School students and staff for their effort.

"Keeping active is such an important ingredient in getting the most out of life and it's a credit to these students and to the school for achieving the highest Walk to School participation rate in the south-west.

"Getting to meet and learn from a top-level star like Mel Hickey is a great reward and she's fantastic example of what can be achieved by looking after yourself and making good choices about keeping active."

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said it is great to recognise all of the students, teachers and parents at Hampden Specialist School who did an exceptional job walking, riding and scooting to and from school for Walk to School.

"It's increasingly important to get schools and families involved in programs like Walk to School and these kids learnt how important it is to be active and healthy," she said.

"The proportion of Victorian children walking to school has declined dramatically in recent decades, from around 50 per cent in the 1970s to less than 20 per cent today s we need to continue to encourage kids to build this healthy habit."

Last year VicHealth partnered with the AFL Players' Association to encourage even more kids to get walking, riding and scooting to and from school and establishing healthy habits for life.

Hampden Specialist School is one of 4 Victorian school winners which were chosen based on their school's overall participation rate.

For more information on Walk to School visit [www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au/](http://www.walktoschool.vic.gov.au/)

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**Note to Editors**

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*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 8 October to 2 November.*

*In 2017, almost 150,000 Victorian primary school kids from more than 750 schools took part in Walk to School, travelling more than 1.6 million kilometres throughout October. VicHealth is hoping to make 2018 bigger and better.*

*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.