



Media Release

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RECORD NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND SCHOOLS GET WALKING

Primary school students who took part in VicHealth's [Walk to School](#) campaign during October have walked more than 1.2 million kilometres, the equivalent of walking almost 32 times around the world.

This year saw a record number of students and schools participate with 108,997 children taking part from 620 schools across Victoria. It is a significant increase on last year's campaign which saw 78,628 students and 499 schools involved.

VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter said it was exciting to see so many children and their schools embrace the Walk to School campaign in its tenth year.

"We are thrilled to see an almost 40 per cent increase in the number of primary school students participating in Walk to School compared to last year. This is one of many programs VicHealth is supporting as we work towards our target of 300,000 more Victorians being physically active by 2023."

"Only one in five Australian children get the recommended one hour of daily physical activity and only one in four walk or ride to school, which is concerning given the high rate of childhood obesity.

This year, VicHealth focused particularly on encouraging families who currently walk to school rarely to participate in Walk to School. The campaign also aimed to increase participation by schools and students in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. This included encouraging families to walk even part of the way to school, where distance, time or safe walking routes might be a factor.

"Regular physical activity is crucial for good health and walking or riding to school can be a fun and free way to build exercise into our busy days – for children and their parents. It's also a good way to reduce the risk of serious health problems including obesity, type 2 diabetes and heart disease. Our evaluation shows that students who participate in Walk to School walk more during and after the campaign."

In the 1960s, one in 20 children was overweight or obese. Today, that has risen to one in four, and is expected to increase to one in three by 2025. The Walk to School campaign helps children and their families to establish healthy lifestyle habits and healthy weight early on in life.

Through VicHealth grants, 61 of Victoria's 79 councils supported this year's Walk to School campaign with competitions, healthy breakfasts and walking programs.

"Participating councils play an important part in the Walk to School campaign by coordinating programs that promote the benefits of walking to school and also provide opportunities for students in their municipality to get involved."

One winner and runner-up was selected in each of the four Victorian education regions based on the school's overall participation rate. Each winning school will receive 250 tickets to the Melbourne Stars first home match. Runners up will receive a Spartan school cricket set. In 2015 VicHealth also offered a prize for first-time participating schools in each region, with the winning schools rewarded with free tickets to the Melbourne Stars practice match on 15 December.

Walk to School



The Walk to School winner and runner-up for each region in 2015 are:

North Western

Equal Winners – Woorinen District PS and Raywood PS

First time participant winner- Kerang Christian College

South Western

Winner- Elliminyt PS

Runner-up – Napoleons PS

First time participant winner- Toolern Vale and District PS

North Eastern

Winner – Winton PS

Runner-up – Millwarra PS

First time participant winner- Strathmerton PS

South Eastern

Winner – Bundalaguah PS

Runner-up – St Laurence O’Toole School (Leongatha)

First time participant winner- Nambrok Denison PS

Regional summaries

North-Western Victoria Region

- Number of primary schools that participated in Walk to School 2015: 145
- Number of students that participated in Walk to School 2015: 24,221
- Total number of walks recorded by participating students: 382,354
- Estimated total distance walked: 274,968 kilometres

North-Eastern Victoria Region

- Number of primary schools that participated in Walk to School 2015: 140
- Number of students that participated in Walk to School 2015: 22,263
- Total number of walks recorded by participating students: 387,051
- Estimated total distance walked: 278,233

South-Western Victoria Region

- Number of primary schools that participated in Walk to School 2015: 189
- Number of students that participated in Walk to School 2015: 34,442
- Total number of walks recorded by participating students: 555,452
- Estimated total distance walked: 398,998

South-Eastern Victoria Region

- Number of primary schools that participated in Walk to School 2015: 146
- Number of students that participated in Walk to School 2015: 28,071
- Total number of walks recorded by participating students: 455,802
- Estimated total distance walked: 327,546

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