



Media Release

“SLOWING SPEEDS TO GET US BACK ON OUR FEET”

15 August 2012

Yesterday VicRoads released the long anticipated “Victorian Speed Limit Review”.

Outcomes of this review include a simplified system to “change speed zones at locations identified by the community”. Victoria Walks welcomes the intent to create consistent 40km/h pedestrian zone guidelines to:

- Allow for expanding school speed zones beyond the streets on which schools situated, to include nearby busy major roads.
- Move beyond limiting 40km/h to shopping strips in metropolitan Melbourne to include shopping strips around Victoria with high pedestrian activity.
- Give local councils the ability to determine where they need to reduce speeds to 40km/h on residential streets.

“These changes are long overdue and we congratulate VicRoads for seeking to make our road network safer” said Victoria Walks Executive Officer, Dr Ben Rossiter. “Pedestrians, particularly children and elderly people, are more vulnerable to injuries than other road users and this risk significantly increases at speeds beyond 40 km/h”.

Pedestrians over 65 years of age are at greater risk of traffic injury or death as they may not be able to react as quickly and can have more difficulty judging the speed and distance of traffic.

“VicHealth research found that 73 per cent of parents said road safety was a barrier to their children walking to school and lowering speed will go a long way to alleviating parental concerns, said Dr Rossiter.

“Over the last four decades there has been a massive decline in walking in Victoria. This has contributed to greater levels of obesity, congestion, social isolation which costs Victorians billions of dollars each year”, said Dr Rossiter.

“Victoria Walks is concerned whether the Review outcomes will lead to the types of changes that are needed on the ground. Until now, VicRoads has mostly insisted local council make expensive infrastructure changes, such as speed humps and road narrowing, before they will let speeds be lowered” said Dr Rossiter. Will VicRoads continue to insist on such expensive changes before speeds are lowered, and if so who will pay?

More than words are needed to get Victorians back on their feet, we need action and funding now to lift barriers to speed reductions.

“We urge communities to get vocal and start demanding speed changes to ensure that we can once again hear children’s footsteps on our streets in great numbers and elderly Victorians are safe, physically active and walking” said Dr Rossiter.

Victoria Walks is funded by VicHealth to get more people walking every day (www.victoriawalks.org.au).

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