



## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is Victoria Walks Inc?

Victoria Walks is a walking health promotion body funded and supported by VicHealth.

Victoria Walks is governed by an [independent board](#). The Executive Officer is Dr Ben Rossiter.

We work with communities, government, councils and local organisations to encourage walking for leisure, fitness, health, community connections and everyday purposes (e.g. to local destinations).

### What is the purpose of Victoria Walks?

Victoria Walks wants to get Victorians back on their feet. Our mission is “more people walking every day”.

We want to get more people walking as a part of their everyday life so they walk to the shops, school, work, public transport and around their neighbourhood etc.

We want to build vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible.

### Why was Victoria Walks established?

Victorians are less physically active and are walking less than they used to. We lead much more sedentary lives and spend more time sitting in cars and in front of computer screens and televisions.

Since the early 1970s there has been a dramatic decline in walking to work and school and a reduction in walking generally.

- In 1976, 9% of trips to work in Victoria were walked.<sup>1</sup> By 2001 less than 4% of people walked to work, by 2006 the percentage of people walking to work had slightly increased to 4.5%.<sup>2</sup>
- More than 60 per cent of primary school students are driven to school even though 44 per cent of these trips are less than 2 km.<sup>3</sup>
- The latest figures indicate that: Only 37% of Australian adults undertake sufficient exercise to obtain benefits to their health; and 61% of adults are overweight or obese as are 25% of children aged 5–17.<sup>4</sup> Type 2 diabetes (a preventable chronic disease) is expected to become Australia’s leading cause of disease burden by 2023.
- The total cost of obesity to the Australian economy is estimated to be \$37.7 billion, which includes direct health costs of \$1.5 billion, indirect costs (productivity related losses etc) of \$6.4 billion and burden of disease costs of \$30 billion.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Travel to Work, School and Shops* Australian Bureau of Statistics, Victoria 1994.

<sup>2</sup> *Pedestrian Access Strategy*, Department of Transport, Melbourne 2010.

<sup>3</sup> *Pedestrian Access Strategy*, Department of Transport, Melbourne 2010.

<sup>4</sup> *Australia’s health 2010*. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Canberra.

<sup>5</sup> *Obesity in Australia: financial impacts and cost benefits of intervention*, Medibank Australia 2010.

- 40 percent of trips within metropolitan Melbourne are less than two kilometres long but most people drive rather than walk.<sup>6</sup>

All this means more pollution and more chronic diseases related to physical inactivity, such as obesity and type 2 diabetes.

We know that many people would like to walk more, but are deterred for various reasons. The presence or lack of footpaths, street crossings, shade, lighting, safety, traffic patterns and friendly people and social neighbourhoods can make a big difference to the levels of walking.

### **What are the benefits of walking?**

Walking has incredible health benefits. Walking is good for our physical, social and mental health.

People who walk feel better and are more likely to know their neighbours and feel a part of their community. It is easy to stop for a chat when you are walking.

Walking also benefits local businesses. Research shows that people who walk to their local shops go there more often, stay longer and spend more money than those who drive.

### **How does Victoria Walks help get people walking?**

Victoria Walks is leading the move to create walkable neighbourhoods by working with communities, government, councils and local organisations to encourage walking for everyday purposes (e.g. to work, shops, school and around the neighbourhood).

Victoria Walks offers support, tips and ideas to get people walking. It has practical online tools to help communities turn their neighbourhoods into walk-friendly places.

### **What is a Walkability Action Group?**

A Walkability Action Group, or WAG, is simply a group of people that promote more walkable, liveable communities by making their suburb, town or neighbourhood a friendlier and better place to live. WAGs work with local council, schools, trader's and the community.

Here are some examples of what WAGs do:

- [iPat](#) (Kyneton) promotes walkability through fun, inspired activities to cultivate community connectedness;
- [Locomote](#) (Portarlington) has been constructively involved in assisting their council and local authorities to improve walkability in the Bellarine Peninsula, as well as promoting walking to the wider community;
- [East Ivanhoe WAG](#) successfully campaigned for a safer crossing at the Burke Road North roundabout.

### **What information and tools are found on the Victoria Walks website?**

Victoria Walks' groundbreaking website provides on-line information and tools to help communities turn their neighbourhoods into walk-friendly places. These resources assist people to work with their community, local council and government to bring about effective change.

### **Who is Victoria Walks spokesperson?**

Dr Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer, 0425 805 578 or 9667 1339.

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<sup>6</sup> Patton T. Presentation of *Walk21 conference*. 24 October, 2006 Victorian Department of Transport.