



An initiative funded and supported by VicHealth

ESTABLISHING VICTORIA WALKS

Report card: June 2010

About Victoria Walks

Victoria Walks Inc. is a charitable non-profit organisation promoting the prevention or control of diseases relating to physical inactivity by increasing the number of people who walk. The organisation's vision is for vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible.

Victoria Walks seeks to:

- provide leadership through submissions, resource provision, influencing policy development, research, public comment, forums & social marketing;
- support local action to increase walking and make walk-friendly environments via the Victoria Walks website/toolkit; and
- promote walking by increasing the awareness of the health, environmental, social and economic benefits of walking and undertake walking advertising, promotions and events.

Victoria Walks is funded and supported by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). It was developed and established by VicHealth in response to

a need identified by many stakeholders for a walking promotion body that could represent the needs of walkers and increase the level of walking in the Victorian community.

Initially, Victoria Walks concentrated specifically on walking-for-transport, but the organisation has now broadened its focus to include all forms of walking related activity.

Victoria Walks is governed by a Committee of Management chaired by Peter Gordon. The founding Members include Trevor Budge, Kellie-Ann Jolly, Tim Lane, Edwina Pearse, Pete Thiessen, Daniel King and Ben Rossiter (Executive Officer).

This document provides a summary of the activities and highlights of the first year of Victoria Walks.

Highlights

of the first year of Victoria Walks

Victoria Walks was incorporated in March 2009, commenced operations in May 2009 and was formally launched on 13 November 2009.

Launched by Tim Pallas, Minister for Roads and Ports and Nicole Livingston OAM.

The Australian Taxation Office endorsed Victoria Walks as a Health Promotion Charity in July 2009 for charity tax concessions and as a deductible gift recipient.

Victoria Walks spoke at conferences, forums, made submissions, participated in national workshops, joined government advisory committees, and provided advice on establishing similar walking organisations in other states.

Launch campaign *Have you got what it takes?* featured on many websites and newsletters including, YMCA, VicHealth, Walk Smart, Go For Your Life, CERES, Greypath, Department of Transport intranet, Infoxchange and Women's Golf Victoria.

"Have you got what it takes?" video campaign videos screened up to 4 times a day at Federation Square from January to March 2010.

A 30 second community service announcement featuring Nicole Livingston screened on networks TEN and Southern Cross, and at a Western Bulldogs AFL match at Docklands.



Supporting local action

A key focus of Victoria Walks has been supporting communities to take action to increase the level of walking and make their streets and neighbourhoods more walk-friendly. Much of our initial work centred on promoting our website and tools for taking action. We have more than 1000 registered website users, most of whom have also signed up to receive our monthly e-news.

We have actively encouraged and supported the establishment of Walking Action Groups (WAGs) around Victoria, and twelve WAGs have microsites on the Victoria Walks website.

Their issues included:

- Safer crossings for pedestrians;
- Supporting slower speed limits (40km/hr) at a local shopping strip;
- Closure of a local street to car traffic to promote more walking to local shops;
- Promoting greater appreciation and awareness of local features and landmarks;
- Finding ways to improve access to local community facilities; and
- Making local streets more walkable through art, improved traffic design and improved amenity.

WAGs activities have also included advocacy with their local council to highlight local concerns, conducting walking audits, organising community meetings and community walks, participating in community consultations, collecting petitions and even presenting at an international conference! Significantly, WAG members contributed to Department of Transport's forthcoming *Pedestrian Access Strategy*.

Their achievements include the successful East Ivanhoe WAG's campaign for a \$245,000 pedestrian crossing at the Burke Road North roundabout, and the steady progress of the Bayswater West Community Hub Action Group's *Streets 4 Living* project. This project has helped to see residents' ideas turned into reality, including putting in more seating, drinking fountains, plants and public art to turn local spaces into attractive areas for children and residents to walk, sit, rest and play.



Stakeholder relationships

VicHealth The critical importance of VicHealth to the establishment and ongoing development and sustainability of Victoria Walks cannot be understated and has extended well beyond the formal core funding agreement. As a new, independent and growing organisation their support and guidance has been invaluable.

Victorian Government Victoria Walks developed productive working relationships with many government departments and agencies. Victoria Walks received a grant of \$50,000 to promote neighbourhood walking. This enabled the production of the video 'Walking in your Neighbourhood'. Victoria Walks and/or Walking Action Groups were mentioned in Parliament four times in this first year.

Local government Connecting with councils has been a significant part of our work and Victoria Walks has been recognised by many local governments as an authority on walking issues. Content for the 'Local council activities' pages on our website was provided by 19 councils. Victoria Walks has been mentioned in various council strategy documents and became an Associate Member of the Melbourne Transport Forum.

Other stakeholders Victoria Walks has built working relationships with many stakeholders across a diverse array of sectors and communities. Of particular importance will be the development of the 'walking advocacy group' with the Victorian Local Government Association, VicHealth, Kinect Australia and the Heart Foundation (Vic).

Media activity Victoria Walks began to develop a presence in the media with more than 45 mentions in newspaper articles, three opinion articles, letters to the editor (online and print) and radio interviews.

Conferences, forums and exhibitions

Victoria Walks presented at many conferences, forums and exhibitions including:

- International Healthy Parks Healthy People Congress (Melbourne).
- Transport and Infrastructure Advisory Group, Municipal Association of Victoria.
- Go For Your Life 'Active Communities' Forum (Warrnambool).
- Go For Your Life 'Children and Active Transport' Forum (Melbourne).
- Transport Connections, a Sustainable Future Coordinators Forum, Department of Planning and Community Development.
- Let's Get Moving – Translating Physical Activity Research into Practice Symposium, VicHealth.
- Sustainable Transport workshop at Banyule Council.
- Sustainable Transport workshop at Darebin Council.
- Sustainable Living Festival, Federation Square (Feb 19 & 20).
- Health Food & Lifestyle Show, Melbourne Exhibition Centre (Apr 9 – 11).
- Darebin Community & Kite Festival (March 14).

Submissions

Victoria Walks actively worked to influence policy and practice at state and local level. In our first year, we made the following submissions:

- 'Review of the Planning and Environment Act 1987' Department of Planning and Community Development.
- 'Planning and Environment Amendment (General) Bill 2009', Department of Planning and Community Development', (with Planning Institute Australia and Heart Foundation).
- 'Tram Route 86 Corridor Improvement project', City of Darebin.
- 'Northcote Streetscape Masterplan', City of Darebin.
- 'Moreland Pedestrian Strategy', City of Moreland.

THE YEAR AHEAD

The year ahead offers many exciting challenges to build on the work undertaken in our first year. The decision to broaden the scope of Victoria Walks beyond walking-for-transport to include walking for leisure, recreation and community connections will strengthen our ability to form partnerships with government, corporate and philanthropic sectors.

Our work will include:

- **Developing innovative children's walking initiatives;**
- **Expanding our website to allow for broad-based, mass appeal walking promotion and events;**
- **Conducting social marketing campaigns to address issues of time and enjoyment of walking, overcome the divide between leisure and transport walking, and encourage walking to become integral to everyday life; and**
- **Developing a workplace walking initiative.**

*The soon to be launched **Pedestrian Access Strategy** will hopefully provide further opportunities for Victoria Walks to work in partnership to increase the levels of walking in the Victorian community.*