

Victoria Walks

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Victoria Walks?

Victoria Walks is an exciting new walking-for-transport health promotion body funded and supported by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth).

Victoria Walks Inc. is governed by an independent board. Dr Ben Rossiter is the Executive Officer.

We work with communities, government, councils and local organisations to encourage walking for everyday purposes to local destinations.

What is the purpose of Victoria Walks?

Victoria Walks wants to get Victorians back on their feet.

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 the television.

The latest figures indicate that in Victoria, only 64.2 percent of adult men and 61.2 percent of adult women are sufficiently active to enjoy the health benefits of physical activity.¹

Research also shows that physical inactivity is responsible for over 13,000 deaths each year in Australia² and costs the health system \$400 million in direct health care costs.³

40 percent of trips within metropolitan Melbourne are less than two kilometres long but most people drive rather than walk.⁴

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,

¹ Australian Institute of Health & Welfare 2008 *Australia's Health: The Eleventh Biennial Health Report of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare*. Cat. No. AUS 99, Canberra.

² Cadilhac DA et al. 2009: *The health and economic benefits of reducing disease risk factors*, VicHealth.

³ Stephenson J, B.A., Armstrong. T et al, 2000 *The costs of illness attributable to physical inactivity*. Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care Canberra

⁴ Patton T. Presentation of *Walk21 conference*. 24 October, 2006 Department of Infrastructure.

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 offers support and practical online tools to help communities turn their neighbourhoods into walk-friendly places. www.victoriawalks.org.au

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).

Communities that have already taken up the challenge to actively improve their neighbourhoods include East Ivanhoe, Footscray, Portarlington, Point Lonsdale, Elwood and Toorak.

What is a Walking Action Group?

A "Walking Action Group" are people who walk together to make their neighbourhoods better and safe for walking. They work with local council, schools, and local trader's to create walk-friendly neighbourhoods.

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

Victoria Walks' is responsible for the creation of groundbreaking website that provides on-line information and tools to help communities turn their neighbourhoods into walk-friendly places. www.victoriawalks.org.au

The site provides helpful tools and resources to assist people to work with their community, local council and government to bring about effective change. Tools are provided to make the process as easy as possible and include:

- Templates for writing letters to the editor and government bodies; and
- Step-by-step instructions on how to set up a walking group.

There is also information on what each local council is doing to support walking, informative short films and case studies of community action from around the world.

The unique website allows "Walking Action Groups" to set-up their own on-line profile and connect with other groups around the state.

What is the “*have you got what it takes*” campaign?

Victoria Walks' first campaign “*Have you got what it takes?*” utilises viral marketing to deliver and promote a tongue-in-cheek series of videos aimed at inspiring all Victorians to make their communities better for walking.

www.gotwhatittakes.org.au

There are 5 episodes which run for 90 seconds each. The series investigates people who are interested in particular neighbourhood walking issues. But, in every case their response to the issue results in some hilarious situations that won't quite fix the problem.

The campaign will run from 13 November 2009 to 31 January 2010.

How can media representatives support Victoria Walks?

Promote the Victoria Walks website www.victoriawalks.org.au

Promote the “*Have you got what it takes?*” campaign and viral marketing videos.

www.gotwhatittakes.org.au (web banners can be provided).

Highlight walking for transport issues in relevant news stories.

Contact Victoria Walks on matters relating to walking-for-transport.

Who is Victoria Walks spokesperson?

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