



# Media Release

## “FREE RANGE CHILDREN’S WALK: VICTORIAN FIRST”

29 April 2012

New York City columnist Lenore Skenazy gained worldwide attention when she let her 9 year old ride the subway alone. Lenore is launching Victoria’s first Free Range Children’s walk in Bendigo on Monday 30 April.

The ‘Free-Ranging Bendigo’ walk has been created on Victoria Walks’ new and unique *Walking Maps* ([www.walkingmaps.com.au](http://www.walkingmaps.com.au)). *Walking Maps* is designed to excite and inspire Australians to explore their world on foot. The ‘Free-Ranging Bendigo’ walk is specifically aimed at children and their families.

Lenore Skenazy believes that today’s children are overparented and overprotected from perceived risks to the detriment of their health and development.

“Children, like chickens, deserve a life outside the cage. The overprotected life is stunting and stifling, not to mention boring for all concerned”, says Lenore.

“*Walking Maps* is a wonderful initiative that will get families walking together and getting to know the public spaces that interest and are relevant to their children’s everyday lives” said Lenore. “Being familiar with local streets, play spaces, attractions and public transport options will give parents more confidence to let their children become more independent.

“Victoria Walks is absolutely thrilled to have Lenore launch the ‘Free-Ranging Bendigo’ walk” said Dr Ben Rossiter, Victoria Walks Executive Officer. “Lenore is a leading international voice on the importance of children’s independent mobility”.

“There has been a significant decline in children’s physical activity and independent mobility over recent decades” said Dr Rossiter. “Worryingly, 25 per cent of Australian children are now overweight or obese which is likely to be related to the reduced time children spend being physically active and outdoors”.

“*Walking Maps* provides a fun way of integrating walking into everyday life”. Dr Rossiter urges people to “look at the ‘Staff Picks’ on *Walking Maps* to find great walks”. “Your neighbourhood is at your feet, step out and explore”.

“We congratulate the City of Bendigo for developing this Free-Ranging Bendigo walk and their work in developing a child friendly city” said Dr Rossiter.

This activity is Lenore’s first public engagement whilst a guest of the City of Greater Bendigo. Other activities will include her keynote address at the Child Friendly Cities Conference (May 1 and 2). Victoria Walks is a health promotion charity funded by VicHealth to get more people walking every day ([www.victoriawalks.org.au](http://www.victoriawalks.org.au)).

### PHOTO OPPORTUNITY

**WHEN:** 9.30 am Monday 30 April 2012

**WHERE:** Lotus Flower Chinese Precinct, 9 Bridge Street, Bendigo

**WHO:** Lenore Skenazy accompanied by several local children as they enjoy ‘free ranging’ Bendigo

Further Information: Dr Ben Rossiter, Victoria Walks Executive Officer, 0425 805 578