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Media Release

PEDESTRIANS THE FOCUS OF ROAD SAFETY WEEK

6 May 2013

This week is the UN Global Road Safety Week, with pedestrian safety as the focus. Around the world, 1.24 million people die in road crashes each year. Of those, 270,000 are pedestrians.

Over the last five years, 219 pedestrians were killed on Victorian roads. Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer of Victoria Walks, describes Victoria's performance in pedestrian safety as "pretty average".

"Victoria is doing reasonably well in reducing deaths of car occupants, but not pedestrians. Between 2002 and 2011, fatalities for car drivers dropped 4% per annum, but pedestrian fatalities dropped less than 1% each year."

To mark Global Road Safety Week, the World Health Organisation has produced a comprehensive Pedestrian Road Safety Manual for road management professionals.

"The WHO Road Safety Manual makes it clear that pedestrian safety is more than simply providing footpaths and the odd pedestrian crossing," Dr Rossiter says "the key issues are vehicle speed, alcohol, a lack of safe walking conditions, poor pedestrian visibility and inadequate enforcement of traffic laws".

The WHO Manual states that we need to reduce urban speed limits.

"Speed management is important for addressing pedestrian safety around the world. Key measures for managing speed include setting speed limits to 30–40 km/h in residential and high pedestrian traffic areas, enforcing traffic rules on speed limits and implementing traffic-calming measures" (p.19).

The Manual also suggests narrowing roads and building refuge islands to help pedestrians cross.

"Road narrowing has a double benefit of reducing both vehicular traffic speeds and pedestrian crossing distances." (page 78)

Dr Rossiter believes we have to reassess our road safety priorities. "We have to look beyond vehicle road safety and start seriously looking at pedestrian safety, particularly if we want to see children walking to school, which is one of the best signs of a healthy community".

"VicHealth research in 2011 found that 73 per cent of parents said road safety was a barrier to their children walking to school" said Dr Rossiter, "and addressing the issues highlighted in the WHO Manual will go a long way to alleviating parental concerns.

“Victoria Walks calls on the Victorian Government and Councils to heed the WHO report and take up the challenge of making our streets safer and better for walking,” Dr Rossiter said.

[Victoria Walks](#) is funded by VicHealth to get more Victorians walking every day.

ENDS

Further comment

Dr Ben Rossiter, Executive Officer, 0425 805 578

More information

United Nations Global Road Safety Week links

- [UN Global Road Safety Week](#) to be held 6-12 May 2013
- Quick stats - [10 facts on global road safety](#).
- World Health Organisation [Pedestrian Road Safety Manual](#) for road management professionals.

Victorian pedestrian road safety

In 2011, 49 pedestrians were killed on Victorian roads, comprising 17% of road fatalities.¹ In addition, in 2008-09, 722 pedestrians were seriously injured, 36% of which were classified as high threat to life injuries.² The economic cost of road crashes in Victoria in 2006 was estimated to be \$2.7million for a fatal crash, \$265,430 for a hospitalised injury crash, \$14,430 for a non-hospitalised injury crash, and \$10,075 for a property damage only crash.³

For every pedestrian fatality in Victoria, there are about 15 serious pedestrian injuries.⁴ Based on Australian data for 2008-09, pedestrians are more likely to sustain a high threat to life injury than any other road user group (36% of serious injuries compared with 27% for all road users). Pedestrians also have the longest episodes of care, with a mean length of stay of 7.6 days in hospital (compared with 5.4 days, 5.1 days, 4.8 days and 2.9 days for motorcyclists, car passengers, car drivers and pedal cyclists respectively).

¹ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (BITRE) (2012). *Road Deaths Australia - 2011 Statistical Summary*. Canberra, Department of Infrastructure and Transport

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2012). *Serious injury due to land transport accidents, Australia 2008-09. Injury research and statistics series no. 67. Cat. no. INJCAT 143*. Canberra: AIHW. (<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publication-detail/?id=10737421997>).

³ Bureau of Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Economics (2009). *Cost of road crashes in Australia 2006*. Canberra, Bureau of Infrastructure Transport and Regional Economics

⁴ AIHW (2012).