

Report Card

June 2020



Victoria Walks is an independent walking health promotion charity. Our vision is that people walk whenever and wherever possible, within strong and vibrant communities, with resulting health benefits.



► Working to get more people walking more, every day.

Let's Walk Kangaroo Flat launch
(Photo: Healthy Heart of Victoria)

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Overview

This was a year of highs and lows. It was wonderful to celebrate our 10th anniversary and reflect on our achievements over the decade and think about what the future might hold. This provided an opportunity to show our appreciation to VicHealth, which funded our establishment in 2009 and has continued to be a primary partner working to get Victorians healthier and walking more.

The year was also very challenging as the Victorian community grappled with the

devastating bushfires and then the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic resulted in our annual Smart Urban Futures conference in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria being cancelled, along with a number of other conferences and forums at which we were scheduled to present. Like many workplaces, we needed to adjust to staff working from home.

While aspects of our work to encourage walking became harder during periods of lockdown as people needed to stay close to home, walking has actually been one of the pandemic's rare good news stories. With gyms closed and sporting competition

suspended, the hunt for information about walking skyrocketed. Demand for recreational walking space has never been louder, in neighbourhood streets and parks, and further out in the regions' national parks, state forests and waterways. Many Victorians are walking more, appreciating the health benefits of being active but also the mental health benefits of being in nature, or engaging in an activity that allows them to connect with loved ones, neighbours and local community in troubling times.

This report summarises Victoria Walks' activities and highlights from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.



Past and present Board members and staff at our 10 year celebration event.



Highlights 2019-2020

- ▶ Held 10-year anniversary celebration event with Peter Gordon AM, the founding Chair of Victoria Walks, as the guest speaker. It was a wonderful opportunity to bring together so many of the people who have played an important role in the development of Victoria Walks.
- ▶ Released the **Walking and transport in Melbourne suburbs** report that looks at how people travel around Melbourne and highlighting the significance of walking, especially in access to suburban shopping areas.
- ▶ Successfully piloted our **Women Who Walk** program in partnership with City of Melbourne at Princes Park, increasing local women's access to the park in the evenings and growing our community of active women walkers.
- ▶ Welcomed three new **Corporate Supporters**: SnapSendSolve; MRCagney; and Leadsun Australia.

- ▶ Our Walking Maps website proved its value as a smart, purpose-built tool to find great walks as Victorian emerged from the first Covid-19 lockdown. More than 105,000 individuals used the site in the month of June 2020, a 155 per cent increase on June 2019 when 41,000 people used the site.
- ▶ Engaged as consultants by the City of Banyule to assess the walkability of four local centres, the City of Maribyrnong to review their Walking Strategy and the Department of Transport to research pedestrian crash reporting and processes.
- ▶ Established the **Women Who Walk** Facebook group, providing a space for 1000 Victorian women (and counting!) to connect and inspire one another to walk more.
- ▶ Supported VicHealth's **Walk to School Program** and delivered workshops on active travel to school.
- ▶ Delivered the **Let's Walk** program in Long Gully and Kangaroo Flat in partnership with the City of Greater Bendigo.
- ▶ Provided a keynote presentation on The Economic Case for Investment in Walking at the 20th International Conference on Walking and Liveable Communities (**Walk21**) in Rotterdam, Netherlands.
- ▶ Our Executive Officer, Ben Rossiter, was awarded the **Sir James Barrett Memorial Medal** by the Town and Country Planning Association for a notable contribution to planning.
- ▶ Made a range of detailed submissions, including to: the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll; Parliament of Australia's Joint Select Committee on Road Safety; and National Transport Commission policy on Personal Mobility Devices (e-scooters).
- ▶ Agreed on a new three-year funding partnership with VicHealth to continue to strengthen policy and practice to encourage more walking for transport and recreation within Victoria, between July 2020 and June 2023.
- ▶ Our Executive Officer, Ben Rossiter, was re-elected as the Vice President of the **International Federation of Pedestrians** for the next two years.

Who we are

Victoria Walks is governed by a Board of Management comprising Kellie-Ann Jolly (Chair), Emma Hamilton (Treasurer), Daniel King, Josephine Monger, Dana Ronan, Justin Madden and John Hicks.

The small but enterprising team of staff is led by Ben Rossiter (Executive Officer) and over the year included Duane Burtt (Principal Policy Advisor), Jane Holroyd (Digital Communications Advisor), Kaylene McKay (Let's Walk Co-ordinator) and Jo Eady (Senior Advisor), with associated consultants and skilled volunteers.

Our work



Social media

Victoria Walks continued to build its community of passionate walkers. We welcomed 15,000 new Facebook followers, bringing the total number to over 94,000 people.

Our 'Dog Walks' Facebook group climbed to over 8,500 members sharing information about dog-friendly walks around Victoria.

On Twitter @victoriawalks we continued to put walking on the agenda with thousands of conversations among more than 3,800 followers, many in professional roles relating to walking.

The number of people visiting www.victoriawalks.org.au nearly doubled (95 per cent) in 2019-20 as they looked for inspiration and for advice relating to walking and COVID-19.

As ever our Walking Maps inspired many people to get out walking with nearly 881,000 visits to the site – up 45 per cent on the previous year. Individual maps made great content on Facebook, so they were widely shared, especially after smoke from the summer bushfires cleared and Covid-19 restrictions lifted in early June.

Media activity

Victoria Walks generated 481 media mentions (including syndications), including 176 television, 163 radio and 17 print stories with a combined estimated audience reach or circulation of 7.8 million people. The equivalent advertising spend that would be needed to reach the same audience is estimated to be \$1,777,945 (which compares to \$1,476,709 in 2018/19 and \$2,941,000 in 2017/18).

The most popular issues or stories covered included:

- Challenging a call for senior walkers to wear hi-vis vests when walking at night, and highlighting that the majority of older pedestrian road crashes occur during daylight hours and were due to driver error or poor road design.
- A regular segment on ABC Melbourne Afternoons talking walking with Michelle Hunt.
- Articles in *The Age* by Jane Holroyd listing best summer walks and great Melbourne urban hikes
- Our report into the role of walking in Melbourne, particularly access to suburban shopping areas; and issue relating to walking and COVID-19.

The Age, 2 December 2019



WALK21 ROTTERDAM

WALK THE TALK

Conferences, forums and events

Victoria Walks presented at many conferences and major forums during the year, including:

- Keynote address at the launch of W2040 community plan (City of Warrnambool), September 2019
- Walking in Warrnambool workshop, September 2019
- XX International Conference on Walking and Liveable Communities – Walk21 (Keynote), Rotterdam, Netherlands October 2019.
- Royal Australian College of Surgeons Trauma Symposium – Pedestrians – Staying Safe, November 2019.
- 'Streets worth sharing, walking in Melbourne's suburbs' Seminar, Australian Institute of Traffic Planning and Management, February 2020.
- 'What COVID-19 is teaching us about sustainable mobility: lessons for the future' Webinar, Global Alliance of NGOs for Road Safety April 2020.
- 'Keeping the Walking and Cycling Activity Boom Post COVID-19' webinar, Cycling and Walking ANZ May 2020.

Workshops and committees

Victoria Walks participated in a number of workshops and committees this year, including:

- Ministerial Roundtable on Childhood Obesity Prevention, VicHealth.
- Cycling and Walking Australia and New Zealand (CWANZ).
- Physical Activity Taskforce, VicHealth.
- VicRoads Pedestrian infrastructure design and road rules – slip lanes and roundabouts; and T intersections.
- Walking and Cycling Post COVID-19 Working Group, VicHealth.
- Complete Streets Victoria workshop Department of Transport.
- Movement & Place – Walking Indicators Workshop, Department of Transport.
- City of Melbourne and Transport Accident Commission investment planning workshop.
- Department of Transport older road users reference group.
- Pro-walk networks: lessons learned and next steps towards a collective Action Plan, International Federation of Pedestrians (Rotterdam).
- VicHealth's Walk to School Investment Review Panel.



► The year ahead

2020-2021 will be a difficult year for the Victorian community as we contend with the continuing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but Victoria Walks will rise to the challenge and promote walking as a key component of the state's recovery.

We plan to:

- Release Understanding pedestrian crashes in Victoria report into official crash, hospital and police data to provide a better understanding of pedestrian crashes in Victoria, conducted by Monash University Accident Research Centre and funded through a TAC Community Road Safety Grant.
- Undertake improvements to the Walking Maps website to make it easier for users to create maps, and to provide a better search experience for people who are increasingly accessing the site from mobile devices to find walks.
- Undertake research for the Bus Association Victoria to better understand pedestrian safety at and near bus stops.
- Build and capitalise on the increased opportunities for walking that have been among the unexpected side-effects of the coronavirus pandemic.
- Contribute to the development of Department of Transport's Pedestrian Strategic Plan and advocate across Government that it be upgraded into a Walking Strategy for Victoria.
- In partnership with Municipal Association of Victoria, deliver the seventh Smart Urban Futures Conference that was postponed in 2019, due to COVID-19.
- Identify and promote safe, accessible and connected places and spaces that support and encourage regular walking – with a focus on bushfire affected communities.
- Complete our research for the Department of Transport on pedestrian crash reporting, data and processes, and begin working on implementation with relevant agencies.
- Present to Parliament of Victoria's Inquiry into the Increase in Victoria's Road Toll – Public hearings.
- Partner with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions to develop a Fishermans Bend 'Making Montague' online digital walking map.

► Acknowledgements

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Victoria Walks Official Supporters



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Let's Walk Kangaroo Flat launch
(Photo: Healthy Heart of Victoria)