

Investing in walking

A step forward for Victoria's environment, economy and health

Victoria Walks is an evidence-based health promotion charity inspiring more people to walk more every day. In the approach to the 2022 Victorian State Election, we ask parties to commit to the following three key investment areas to demonstrably improve state-wide walking outcomes:

1. Champion a culture of walking, including through development of strategies committed to increasing walking across Victoria.
2. Support walkable communities across Victoria, by creating an investment stream to fund safer streets and vibrant places.
3. Forge new paths to growth, health and recovery in Victoria's regions through the funding of 200 walking tourism projects.



Investment of \$942m over four years will increase the opportunities for all Victorians to walk more often and deliver substantial economic and environmental benefits.

Why?

Victorians love walking and want support to walk more often. It is time for Victoria to step up and harness the potential of walking to improve neighbourhoods and towns and give all people the communities they need to thrive.

A commitment by the next government to increase the proportion of trips made by walking is essential, not only to meet climate change targets but also to ensure all Victorians – regardless of age, physical ability, gender, postcode and socio-economic status – have healthy, appealing options to travel to daily activities in their community and to connect with others.

Walking is Victoria's second most common form of transport after the car and the most popular recreation, but a lack of strategy and investment in recent decades has meant its benefits are not shared equally and many neighbourhoods and streets are not conducive to active living.

The number of registered vehicles on our roads continues to rise and each week there are over five million car trips in Victoria under one kilometre.¹

This is unsustainable and misses an opportunity to address a leading cause of preventable illness in Victoria, where almost 70 per cent of adults and one quarter of children are overweight or obese.² It is also not what Victorians want.

Research shows Victorians value walking and want more safe, appealing places to walk where they live.



The recent Victorian Walking Survey³ found 89% of Victorians want a combination of government actions to help them walk more in their local area. A national Heart Foundation survey found almost 70% support for increased transport spending on walking, cycling and access to public transport, with support stronger in Melbourne than most other cities.⁴

There is a solution ready and waiting. In March this year, Victorian councils and statutory authorities provided Victoria Walks with 522 projects across the state, which would immediately improve local walking environments and walking safety.⁵

With societal benefits of \$2.68 for every 1 kilometre walked,⁶ Victoria's political leaders have much to gain from proactively embracing the popularity of walking to strengthen communities across the state.

How:

1. Champion a culture of walking in Victoria

The incoming government must set a framework that gives more Victorians transport and lifestyle choice by taking these high level actions:

- Create a Walking for Transport Strategy with clear targets, actions and investment to achieve more walking trips, and to coordinate planning to ensure all communities are walkable.
- Establish an expert walking and bike riding panel to advise on meeting climate change transport targets, including increasing public transport patronage by improving walkability to and from stops.
- Develop a pedestrian-specific road safety action plan. Everyone should feel safe to walk but since January 2012, 23% of all road fatalities in metropolitan Melbourne have been walkers, and approximately one third of all walkers killed are aged over 70.⁷
- Expand 'school zones' into neighbourhood-wide active travel precincts to enable greater walking to school.
- Provide TAC or equivalent compensation for walkers injured in crashes with people using bikes, e-scooters, mobility scooters or other similar devices.
- Develop a Regional Victoria Walking Tourism Strategy so more rural and regional communities capitalise on the growing popularity of nature-based tourism.
- Fund Victoria Walks \$450,000 per annum to: facilitate community engagement; provide walking input into government and council policy processes, including greater walkability in metropolitan growth areas; and promote a more diverse range of quality walking experiences in all parts of the state.

2. Support communities across Victoria to create safer streets and vibrant places

A large majority of Victorians say having facilities such as parks, shops, schools and public transport accessible by walking is important.⁸ However, without infrastructure and support for walking, Victorians across all age groups find themselves reliant on cars to get around. This is apparent even for short trips such as the school run, where cars add to local congestion and reduce opportunities for walking.

The next government can reverse the trend of driving for short trips. By working collaboratively with local government and other agencies, we can improve the convenience, safety, accessibility and amenity of our suburbs and open spaces to support health and wellbeing.

Victoria Walks has identified a need for:

- **\$150m per annum** over four years to deliver safer streets projects and improved access to recreational walking in our communities.

This funding will deliver:

- New and improved pedestrian crossings on local streets and arterial roads.
- Safer speeds and traffic calming to support more walking.
- New and upgraded footpaths and completing missing links in principal walking networks.
- Walking access to public transport including Disability Discrimination Act compliance.
- Better lighting in streets and parks.
- Tree planting to provide shade and improve walking environments.
- Open streets initiatives to support walking to school and create valued public spaces.
- New and upgraded recreational walking paths and green corridors so everyone can be active where they live.

3. Forge new paths to growth, health and recovery in regional Victoria

Victoria's regions need extra support to capitalise on their natural assets.

Only 36% of Victoria's tourism expenditure occurs in regional areas, compared to the national average of 43%. Infrastructure Victoria has calculated this gap cost Victoria's regions \$3.8 billion in visitor spend in 2018 alone.

Growth in nature-based tourism experiences is a global phenomenon and in Victoria one third of regional tourists already identify as 'walkers.'

Governments have invested in marquee walks such as the Grampians Peaks Trail, but there are many more opportunities to bring people to our regions. Victoria Walks has collated 100 locally-identified walking trail projects, large and small, of an estimated 200 to be delivered right across the state over four years.

In addition to a Regional Walking Tourism Strategy, we call on the next government to:

- **Invest \$85m per annum** over four years to deliver 200 walking tourism projects across Victoria.

New and upgraded trails would not only benefit local economies and employment but encourage physical activity in rural and regional communities where rates of cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes are higher than metropolitan areas.

For more information on identified example walking projects including case studies, see www.victoriawalks.org.au/victorian-election-2022

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¹ Victorian Integrated Survey of Travel & Activity (VISTA).

² Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Plan 2019-2023.

³ Victoria Walks 2021 Walking Survey www.victoriawalks.org.au/survey/

⁴ Heart Foundation, What Australia Wants, 2020/2021.

⁵ www.victoriawalks.org.au/victorian-election-2022

⁶ The economic case for investment in walking, Arup and Victoria Walks, 2018.

⁷ www.tac.vic.gov.au/road-safety/statistics/online-crash-database

⁸ Heart Foundation, What Australia Wants, 2020/2021.

