

Impact Report



JULY 2021 –
JUNE 2022



Supported by



Our Vision

Healthier, connected communities through more people walking more every day.

Our Purpose

To influence investment and inspire **more people to walk more every day.**

Our Role

- To facilitate and inspire more walking throughout the community.
- To capture, translate and promote evidence on the impact and value of walking.
- To be a trusted expert, positively influencing decision-makers.

About Victoria Walks

Victoria Walks is an evidence-based health promotion charity, leading the move for walkable communities in Australia since 2009.

We work primarily in Victoria, but increasingly nationally and internationally, to enable all types of walking – recreational, incidental and transport related.

Our work builds on our history and strengths, and we prioritise activities that will have the greatest influence on walking and walkability. We aim for scalable, systemic impact: anything we do on a small-scale or local neighbourhood level has potential for wider application.

We offer leadership and independent expertise and make timely and evidence-based contributions to influence policy and practice. In everything we do, we demonstrate the critical role walking plays in our health, wellbeing and economic productivity.

Who We Are

Victoria Walks is governed by a Board of Management comprising Kellie-Ann Jolly (Chair), Emma Hamilton (Treasurer), Daniel King (until February), John Hicks, Justin Madden AM (until February), Josephine Monger, Kathy Lazanas (from March) and Susan McNair (from March).

The small but enterprising team of staff is led by Ben Rossiter (Executive Officer) and includes Duane Burt (Principal Policy Advisor), Jane Holroyd (Digital Communications Advisor), Jo Eady (Senior Advisor), Sarah Allan (Project Officer), Steve Roddis (Senior Advisor) and associated consultants and skilled volunteers, including Sean Mathews and Kerry Haynes.

The year in review

We were very pleased, but not surprised, that the community's interest in walking remained high as we were able to move about more widely after stay-at-home orders at the start of the year.

Over the year we saw two long-standing board members, Daniel King and Justin Madden AM, retire from office and welcomed two new highly skilled board members, Susan McNair and Kathy Lazanas, with a passionate commitment to walking.

Our staff team grew by two, increasing our capacity to promote walking, particularly in Melbourne's west, and to work with stakeholders to develop our priorities for the 2022 Victorian State Election.

Particularly exciting was initiating our **#LoveWalking** project to share inspiring walking stories and celebrate good practice in creating walkable design by our council partners. The stories of creating a healthier, more sustainable and community-driven future align with the goals of our annual conference co-hosted with the Municipal Association of Victoria.

We continued to advocate for the need to invest in walking to respond to transport emission and climate change challenges, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



Thriving walking community

Inspiring communities to get active by promoting walking participation is central to our work. Our popular **Walking Maps** website continues to inspire people to explore Victoria and other parts of Australia.

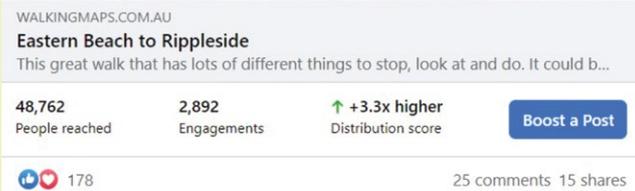
As part of our project with VicHealth, we built on our work supporting bushfire affected communities by mapping a collection of 22 walks in **East Gippsland Shire** (including 10 around Mallacoota), 11 in **Towong Shire**, and brought the total in **Alpine Shire** to 15. We showcase the walks and nature-based tourism in these destinations to support economic recovery and to promote physical activity options for residents as well as visitors.

It was wonderful to see community groups using Walking Maps to promote walking and access to nature, with **Parklands Albury Wodonga** publishing eight digital maps to share.

Our Facebook following grew by 8% over the year, bringing this community of followers to nearly 115,000. Our page posts about walking were seen 10 million times over the year.

Our small but committed 'WalkAgents' Facebook Group of 65 local walking advocates supported each other and shared stories of local action to make their communities more walkable. The group's members provide us with local knowledge and inspire us to work harder for a walkable Victoria. Our Dog Walks group now has nearly 13,000 members sharing great dog-friendly walks.

On Twitter and LinkedIn, we continued to put walking on the agenda around Australia and internationally, particularly among researchers, practitioners and people interested in sustainable transport.



On our **Victoria Walks Facebook page**, the community is engaged, inspired and values walking:



8% increase in followers to **114,747**



10,146,732 daily total reach
61% increase on the previous year



416,118 daily engaged users
26% increase on the previous year

Walking Maps visits and return visits show a higher engagement and change in behaviours through walking:



805,639 visits, with over **70%** via mobile devices

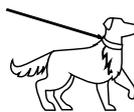


55 showcase walks, bringing the total to **810** staff-recommended walks



440 organisations and businesses referred users to the site

The Victoria Walks website continued to inspire people to walk in new places and connect walkers:



40,548 visits to find dog-friendly walks, staying an average of nearly 4 minutes



15% increase in visits to the women walking groups page

Influential data and evidence

As an evidence-based health promotion charity we work to capture, translate and promote data and evidence that influences the conversation and actions of decision-makers.

In November 2021, we released our report *Getting to the Bus Stop*, which examined walking access to bus stops in Victoria and the accessibility, safety and amenity of the immediate area. It included a survey of 436 Victorian bus users and audits of 70 bus stops. The audits found 60% of bus stops were located on urban roads with 60-80 km/h speed limits and 41% of stops were located on roads with four lanes of traffic, but only 5% had a pedestrian crossing at the stop.

There was considerable professional interest in this work and we were invited to present it to Infrastructure Victoria, the Department of Transport and Victorian Sustainable Transport Interest Group.

Most bus stops are located on high speed roads (60%)...



Our work was cited in a range of research and publications by others, including the World Health Organisation report *Walking and cycling: latest evidence to support policy-making and practice*.

NEIL MITCHELL

Victoria Walks calls for a TAC Style compensation scheme for pedestrian injuries on shared footpaths

View description Share

Published Oct 5, 2021, 2:31 PM

We commissioned Bartley Consulting to conduct the Victorian Walking Survey to gather sound evidence of the Victorian community's interest and support for increased State Government action and investment in walking. With assistance in promotion from stakeholders including RACV and a range of councils, a total of 2,372 Victorians aged 18+ completed the survey. This included a representative sample of 809 people. The survey, released in September 2022 along with our 2022 State election priorities, found a large majority of Victorians want greater government action and investment to make walking safer and more accessible.

Respondents to the Victorian Walking Survey agree/strongly agree that government should make it safer and easier to walk to:

- shops (75%)
- schools (72%)
- tram/bus stops (67%)
- train stations (64%).

The top five actions that would help people walk more in their local area are:

1. Improve footpaths (49%)
2. Provide separate walking paths from bike paths (46%)
3. Build footpaths where they are missing (44%), and particularly for Regional Victorians (57%)
4. More or better paths in parks or along waterways (44%)
5. More street trees (41%).

In March 2022, we asked local councils and other organisations to provide an overview of walking projects they had planned and costed but lacked funding for. A total of 39 councils and two water authorities put forward 522 "shovel ready" projects worth \$469 million that will be included in our investment platform for the November 2022 Victorian State Election.

Artist's impression of part of the proposed boardwalk for the Krauatunglung Walk in East Gippsland.



Meaningful influence

Media coverage

We attracted wide media coverage of walking issues, ranging from walking inspiration stories, walking for health, road safety issues, our bus-stop research and the impact of the Victorian Government's e-scooter trial on walkers. We led a call for the Victorian Government to extend Transport Accident Commission coverage to walkers hit by people riding bikes, skateboards, e-scooters and other mobility devices. A summary of some of the highlights can be found at www.victoriawalks.org.au/media2022/.

Conferences

We were delighted to hold the 8th Smart Urban Futures conference as a hybrid 2-day event with our partners at the Municipal Association of Victoria. The international keynote speakers – Ellie Cosgrave (Director, Publica UK), Associate Professor Helge Hillnhütter (Norwegian University of Science and Technology) and Matthew Baldwin (Deputy Director-General European Commission) – drew wide acclaim from delegates. We were also inspired by the many thought-provoking local presentations and case studies.

Victoria Walks' executive officer was invited to chair, and present to, the morning session of the *Sustainable Urban Planning and Precinct Development Summit* in Melbourne. He also sat on a Symposium panel of the Australasian Road Safety Conference.

Workshop

With the Support of VicHealth, we hosted *Changing Streets: successfully engaging communities*, a free online workshop for Victorian councils with speakers covering the City of Sydney's Summer Streets program, *City of Moreland's Open Streets trial* and *City of Yarra's Thanks for 30*. The event attracted nearly 100 people from 38 councils who heard presenters outline how they managed to engage local residents, traders and other stakeholders and reflected on their successes, learnings and biggest challenges.

Industry forums

We presented at many industry forums, including twice to the Metropolitan Transport Forum and the Victorian Sustainable Transport Interest Group; Infrastructure Victoria; and the Pedestrian Functional Family, Department of Transport.

Webinars included the World Athletics Forum "The Power of Walking – From daily strolls to Olympic Race Walks: Reasons to love it all"; VicHealth's Values-Based Messaging Walking and Bike Riding Webinar; VicHealth's Fast-track Forum: Councils facilitating walking and bike riding – local examples.



Victoria Walks' Official Supporters event with guest speaker José Besselink
A virtual event: Tuesday May 24th 2022 4.30pm - 6pm (AEST)

Supporter events

We held two online events for our Official and Corporate Supporters:

- In September 2021, the Hon. Ben Carroll, Minister for Public Transport, Roads and Road Safety gave an engaging presentation followed by a lengthy Q&A. The Minister's passion and commitment to walking shone through and we were impressed at how much he valued the importance of walking not only for health, but for community development and of course for transport.
- In May 2022, José Besselink, Urban Planner at City of Rotterdam, presented on Rotterdam's impressive work putting walking front and centre of planning policy and investment. José outlined the steps in Rotterdam's story from having a concept, engaging at policy-level, to transforming policy into practice.

Partnerships

We joined 44 organisations including VicHealth, VCOSS, Heart Foundation and the Institute for Physical Activity and Nutrition (Deakin University) on the Cancer Council led Food Fight campaign to protect Children from Unhealthy Food and Drink Advertising near Schools and on Public Transport .

Along with VicHealth, Moreland City Council and Bicycle Network, we co-authored the "Building Active Communities" module for the VicHealth Local Government Partnership.

Policy input

Our input to government policy included the following formal submissions: Transport, Built and Natural Environment Climate Change Adaptation Action Plans 2022-2026; Victoria's Transport Accessibility Strategy, Department of Transport; City of Melbourne DRAFT Design & Construction Standards; and City of Darebin Transport Strategy Refresh.

Our involvement in roundtables and workshops included: Suburban Rail Loop Roundtable with the Hon. Jacinta Allan; VicHealth's Early Childhood Supplement Roundtable; VicHealth's Early Childhood Expert Partner Online Roundtable; Infrastructure Victoria's project on adapting Victoria's infrastructure to climate change; and a joint DHHS/VicHealth Workshop on Child and Adolescent Health.

We provided strategic advice to numerous councils to support their work to make their municipalities more walkable and reviewed a research report counting pedestrians for Fussverkehr Schweiz (Swiss Pedestrian Association).

Meaningful influence

Our Smart Urban Futures conference with the Municipal Association of Victoria



132
delegates



96%
of delegates were satisfied or very satisfied



96%
said the speakers were relevant or very relevant to their work



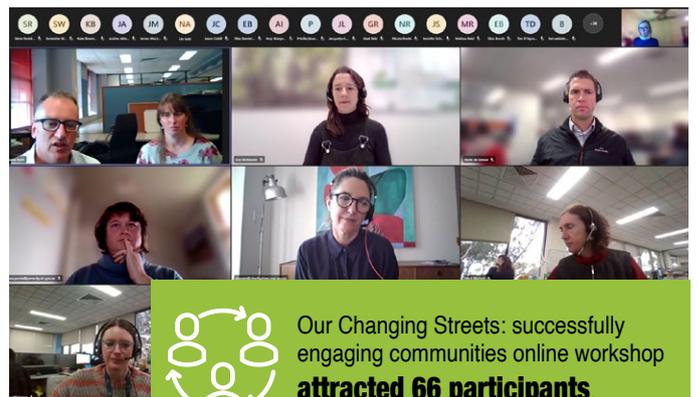
10 NEWS FIRST

E-SCOOTER TRIAL

SAFETY CONCERNS ON THE RISE AS POPULARITY GROWS

Our comments relating to the Government's e-scooter trials generated numerous television stories, including a national story on A Current Affair, radio stories, including interviews with Neil Mitchell (3AW) and Sammy J (ABC Melbourne), and many print stories, including prominent articles in The Age.

Influencing decision-makers and practitioners



Our Changing Streets: successfully engaging communities online workshop **attracted 66 participants.**



Our research, particularly relating to falls in the street, was **cited in 15 journal articles and the South Australian Walking Strategy.**



The **World Health Organisation cited our research** in its 2022 "Walking and cycling: latest evidence to support policy-making and practice" report.



Three of our research reports are listed as resources on the "Why walking matters" webpage of **Department of Transport and Main Roads (Queensland)** and our Guide to Developing a walking strategy was promoted by **Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency.**



4,405 visits to our research, submissions and position statements web pages and **897 downloads.**





If people find it difficult to cross in the time allowed or feel overly rushed, they may find walking stressful or even dangerous.

Dr Ben Rossiter

Sustaining our impact

Working to achieve greater financial diversification ensures we can build a sustainable organisation, invest in technology, and increase our capacity and capability to get more people walking. Key to this is how we can extend our digital reach, including partnerships centring on **Walking Maps**.

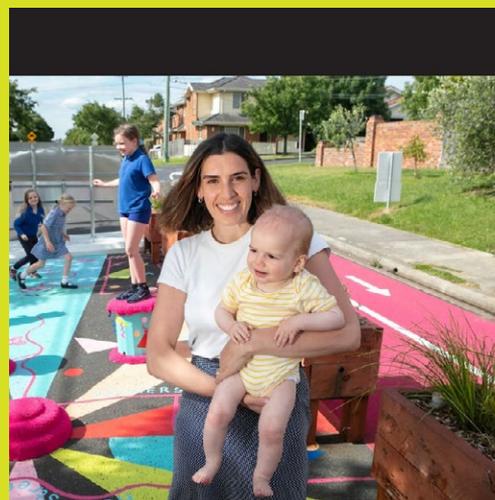
We were pleased to receive a grant to develop an easy-to-use, all ability walk checklist for assessing or creating routes, particularly for the Walking Maps website to address the access barriers for people with a disability to experience walking in Victoria's outdoor parks. *Walking and rolling together: accessible walking trails for people with disability* is supported by Access for All Abilities, an initiative of the Victorian Government.

We increased our organisational capacity by bringing in dedicated expertise to undertake background research in drafting our priorities for the 2022 Victorian State Election.

Our partnership with Melbourne Water, through its Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways incentives program, enabled us to work with local groups and Riverkeepers to map and promote 17 western waterways walks created health and wellbeing opportunities for people in the western suburbs.

Along with our partner – Safe System Solutions – the City of Banyule again engaged us to undertake audits of safe access for walkers, mobility scooter users and cyclists around: Ivanhoe Activity Centre (Waterdale Road area); Heidelberg Activity Centre (Cape Street/Yarra Street area); Greensborough Activity Centre; and St Marys Primary School, Greensborough. It is very pleasing to see Banyule undertake capital works to address issues identified by audits over the last three years – we would like to see more councils with a similar level of commitment.

We were thrilled to welcome two new Official Supporters: City of Greater Dandenong and the City of Boroondara. They join 17 other councils and the Bus Association Victoria, as well as our four Corporate Supporters.



Victoria walks

"I can't imagine the park not being here."

Casey Wengritzky, Resident

#LoveWalking
Darebin Council's James Street pop-up park, Preston

The year ahead

- Release our priorities for the 2022 Victorian State Election – *Investing in walking: A step forward for Victoria’s environment, economy and health*. This will call on major parties to invest \$942m in walking over four years to increase the opportunities for all Victorians to walk more often.
- Commence our partnership with Scope to develop a user-friendly checklist to map and promote walks for people with a disability supported by Access for All Abilities, a Victorian Government initiative.
- Hold a forum showcasing council walking initiatives with a focus on community engagement.
- Actively participate in the Department of Transport’s Walkable Communities Consultation Group, a forum for discussion and consultation on creating more walkable communities in Victoria.
- Under our #LoveWalking banner, showcase Victorians who are taking positive steps to create a healthier, more sustainable and community-driven future
- Promote best practice examples of local government and community partnership with a value-based messaging lens.
- Complete our Mapping Western Waterways Walks project supported by **Melbourne Water’s** Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways program and look for opportunities to replicate the project in other areas.
- Analyse and report on trends in walking and transport based on Victorian Integrated Survey of Travel and Activity data collected up to 2021, with comparison to the June 2016 data in our report ‘Walking and transport in Melbourne suburbs’ (2019).
- In partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria, deliver the 9th Smart Urban Futures conference.

Acknowledgements

Victoria Walks acknowledges and thanks the following:

- VicHealth for its significant core and project funding since 2009.
- City of Melbourne for provision of reduced-rent office space in City Village.



Victoria Walks Official Supporters



Victoria Walks Corporate Supporters



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