



walkingsa.org.au

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118 Richmond Road, Marleston SA 5033

3 March 2020

Dear Mayor, Councillors and CEO

Walking SA is the peak body in South Australia for all types of walking. Our vision is to get *'more people walking more often'*. Walking SA supports all South Australians through our work to systemically improve access to walking for transport and recreation. Walking SA is also a member of Bushwalking Australia, the National body representing the interests of bushwalkers and other recreational walkers.

As the peak body for walking, we would like to encourage you to lodge a motion at the upcoming National General Assembly of Local Government 2020 relating to a strategic focus on boosting walkability nationally. Increasing the number of people who walk for utility trips, recreation and tourism would have significant and wide-ranging benefits for individuals and the wider community which could be realised at all levels of government.

The growth of our cities is leading to increasing congestion on roads and public transport networks. This congestion stifles economic growth and productivity as well as contributing to poor urban air quality, increasing carbon emissions and road trauma. Improved walking (and cycling) infrastructure will encourage more people to take up active travel, thereby providing a solution to urban congestion, enhancing the economic growth potential of cities and reducing the impact of urban transport on the environment and health system.

Many regional communities have been impacted by the recent national bushfire crisis, ongoing drought and flooding. Encouraging visitors to regional areas will support the recovery of these communities as they seek to rebuild the local economy and supporting infrastructure. The provision of connected paths/trails will support increasing visitation to regional areas by providing infrastructure that is attractive to visitors/tourists.

A coordinated response to address these critical issues of national importance will help to drive economic growth in both our cities and regions and enhance quality of life for all Australians.

With this in mind, we encourage you to lodge the motion below (or similar) by 27 March 2020. This motion provides both the rational, and the practical mechanism to take action.

We welcome any questions or feedback but otherwise encourage you to consider putting forward the motion below. If every LGA in Australia puts forward a similar motion, we provide a clear and consistent message to the federal government. Consistency and collaboration can yield significant results in building the health and economy of our communities.

Warm regards

Helen Donovan
Executive Director

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Motion

That the National General Assembly recognises that an increased uptake in walking and cycling nationally would result in financial benefits and improved health and wellbeing for Australians as well as enabling greater economic growth, productivity, social and environmental benefits.

The National General Assembly therefore calls on the Federal Government to, in consultation with State, Territory and Local Government authorities to allocate funding for a fifth round of the Building Better Regions funding (or alternate funding source) to a national infrastructure project to link up the gaps in existing walking & cycling paths/trails in both cities and the regions.

National Objective

Increasing the number of people who walk and ride bikes for utility trips, recreation and tourism would have significant and wide-ranging benefits for individuals and the wider community which could be realised at all levels of government.

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Summary of Key Arguments

In addition to benefitting the individual, there are also significant benefits to society of increased walking and cycling. Congestion on our road and public transport networks is reduced, health costs and required investment in public transport and road networks are lowered, productivity is boosted, carbon emissions are reduced and noise levels, air quality, the sense of community in our streets and the liveability of our cities can all be improved.

Congestion impacts the economy – in greater Sydney the cost of congestion is anticipated to increase from \$8.1 billion in 2016 to an estimated \$15.9 billion in 2031.

It is well documented that riding bikes is good for the economy – a recent study finding that cycling contributes GBP5.4 billion each year to the UK economy (Newson and Sloman, 2018).

Given the high number of short private motor vehicle trips within urban areas, there is significant potential to increase trips on foot and by bike and reduce reliance on private cars and public transport.

Infrastructure Australia recognises the national significance of increasing investment in walking and cycling. The Infrastructure Priority List (2020) includes two active transport projects on its Priority Initiatives list (for Sydney and Melbourne). Reducing urban congestion is stated as one of the key drivers for considering these projects as priorities for investment.

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Increasing capacity on the road and public transport networks is generally costly and often problematic within developed cities. Investment in walking/cycling infrastructure provides a considerable return on investment. The UK Department for Transport has found that the average Benefit Cost Ratio for walking/cycling projects is 13:1.

Walking and cycling present a significant tourism opportunity for regional Australia, with several regional areas already enjoying the economic benefits of increasing visitations by people looking to enjoy walking and cycling experiences. The provision of funding for path or trail infrastructure to regional areas will assist in attracting high-value walking and cycling tourists to these areas and support regional jobs and economies.

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