



Media release

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Turn the school run into a walk

This Walk to School Safely Day (Friday September 11), the Heart Foundation and Walking SA are urging children and parents to change their habits and get more active as they travel to and from school.

Heart Foundation CEO SA Imelda Lynch is encouraging families to put their health first by seeking out more active ways to do the school run and leave the car at home.

The [National Physical Activity Guidelines](#) recommend that children get at least an hour of physical activity a day, but only one in five Australian children are currently meeting the guidelines.

“This is a concern because physical activity is good for children’s physical health, it reduces the likelihood of childhood obesity, and it is also important when it comes to their mental health, academic performance and concentration in school,” Ms Lynch said.

“Walking, cycling or even scooting to and from school are some of the easiest ways to increase children’s activity levels,” Ms Lynch said.

National data show that over the past 40 years, children walking and cycling to school has declined from 75 percent to 25 percent.

In South Australia on average 52 percent of school children live within two km of their school, but only 20 percent actively travel to or from school.¹

“This figure is worrying but could be improved if the school run was used as a way to incorporate include more activity into the daily routine,” Ms Lynch said.

Parents and caregivers will also benefit if they join their kids walking to school.

“Physical activity can help reduce the risk of heart disease in adults, which is the single leading cause of death in Australia, claiming 48 lives every day,” Ms Lynch said.

Walking SA Executive Director, Helen Donovan, said children who walk to school are happier, healthier, less stressed, and more attentive during the school day. Walking to school also offers the

1. GIS Residential data from 26,910 primary school students (2015-2018) and Way2Go school survey data from 11,944 year 3-7 students (2015-2018)

opportunity for strengthening social bonds with family and peers through the incidental chats that naturally occur. These healthy behaviours, when established in childhood, are more likely to be sustained into adulthood.

“Parents want the best for their kids. One of the ways to develop healthy, happy, confident kids is to build a walk into every day,” Dr Donovan said.

“Governments can help by shaping the urban environment for safe, enjoyable walking on connected networks. This requires more investment in pedestrian and cycle paths, safe crossings, and lower speeds on local roads,” she said.

The Heart Foundation is calling for the government to develop and fund a State-wide Walking Strategy. The strategy will aim to get more people walking more frequently including a focus on ensuring safe routes for children to walk to school.

Media enquiries

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About the Heart Foundation

The Heart Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to fighting the single biggest killer of Australians – heart disease. For 60 years, it has led the battle to save lives and improve the heart health of all Australians. Its sights are set on a world where people don't suffer or die prematurely because of heart disease.

Find out your risk of heart attack or stroke by using our [Heart Age Calculator](#). For heart health information and support, call the Heart Foundation Helpline on 13 11 12. To find out about the Heart Foundation's research program or to make a donation, visit www.heartfoundation.org.au

About Walking SA

Walking SA is the not-for-profit peak body that leads, promotes and supports all forms of walking in South Australia, including walking for recreation, transport, health, wellbeing, organised events, adventure, environmental appreciation and fun experiences.

- Our vision is to see more people walking more often.

Our members include walking clubs, informal groups, individuals and organisations whose aims and objectives align with those of Walking SA.

We provide leadership by:

- Promoting opportunities to improve the health and lifestyle of South Australians through walking.
- Offering expertise, guidance and advocacy for the development and maintenance of safe and supportive walking environments throughout South Australia.

To find out about Walking SA, including our database describing over 700 trails in South Australia, visit www.walkingsa.org.au