



# Media release

29 January 2021

## Children have the right to walk and ride safely to school

Leading advocacy agencies Walking SA, Bike Adelaide and Heart Foundation, are urging all levels of government to radically rethink school precincts to prioritise children's physical and mental health and safety by providing safe, enjoyable walking and cycling routes to school. The agencies call for:

- A consistent decrease in speed to a *maximum* speed limit of 40km/h in local streets and school precincts, with lower speed limits in all dedicated school zones and streets where pedestrians and cars are forced to share space (including streets with narrow footpaths, carparks, and laneways)
- An immediate increase in funding to local governments to install a network of planned separated bikeways, safe road crossings, and other supporting infrastructure to create safe travel routes to schools
- To move school drop-off zones away from the front gate to decrease the high traffic volumes immediately in front of schools and thereby decrease the risk of collision with a child

“Let's start with a simple, systemic change that will dramatically increase children's safety – drop the default urban speed limit to a maximum of 40km/h” said Dr Helen Donovan, Executive Director of Walking SA. “The relationship between speed and road traffic accidents is well established. Speed is one of the major factors contributing to accidents on South Australia's roads. Evidence shows a decrease in the default maximum speed from 50km/h to 40km/h would reduce the risk of death on collision from over 80% to 26%<sup>1</sup>. If you could save the life of one child by adding a few seconds on to your daily commute, would you choose to do it?”

“Over the past 40 years, children walking and cycling to school has declined from 75 percent to 25 percent,” Dr Donovan said. “As physical activity levels decrease, not only do children experience a myriad of problems associated with loss of physical health, but we have also seen levels of anxiety and depression in young people skyrocket. Are we going to accept this as a community?”

In South Australia on average 52 percent of school children live within two kilometres of their school, but only 20 percent actively travel to or from school<sup>2</sup>. Bike Adelaide Chair, Katie Gilfillan, is encouraging local governments and the state government to re-orient transport and infrastructure spending toward a network of safe, enjoyable walking and cycling routes. “Walking and cycling to school isn't just a matter of individual motivation. We need to steadily improve the built environment to ensure it is safe and enjoyable to walk and ride. Children and families must have a viable, safe choice.”



Heart Foundation CEO SA/NT Imelda Lynch welcomes the recent South Australian government announcement that a state walking strategy will be developed in 2021. The strategy will aim to get more people walking more often including safe routes for children to walk to school which improves levels of physical activity and wellbeing.

### **Media enquiries**

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### **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](http://www.walkingsa.org.au)

### **About Bike Adelaide (Formerly the Bicycle Institute of South Australia)**

Bike Adelaide advocates for the development of bike friendly communities that encourage people to use the bicycle as a healthy, efficient, and environmentally friendly transport choice. Our advocacy efforts focus on supporting everyday cycling, particularly the creation of a low-stress cycling network safe for anyone aged 8 - 80 years to enjoy.

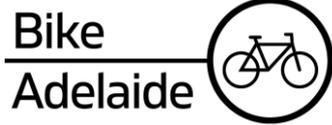
Specifically, Bike Adelaide advocates for investment in new and improved cycling infrastructure and supporting policies and practices to improve cycling safety, connectivity, and comfort across the Greater Adelaide area.

Our vision: Sustainable transport is at the heart of Adelaide's success as a people friendly and environmentally responsible city. Adelaide thrives on the fun and freedom that comes from cycling.

As a non-for-profit organisation powered by volunteers Bike Adelaide represents its members and all people including children who currently, or would like to bike, as a part of their everyday lives. For more on Bike Adelaide and our activities visit [bikeadelaide.org.au](http://bikeadelaide.org.au).

### **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.

For heart health information and support, call the Heart Foundation Helpline on 13 11 12. To find out about more about the Heart Foundation's work supporting active living visit [heartfoundation.org.au/Heart-health-education/Physical-activity-Built-Environment](http://heartfoundation.org.au/Heart-health-education/Physical-activity-Built-Environment)

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[1] *Curtin-Monash Accident Research Centre's fact sheet Improving Pedestrian Safety (2010)*

[2] 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)