



Calling on the next SA Government to commit to **Safe Streets to Schools**

Walking SA is calling on the next South Australian Government to invest in Safe Streets to Schools.

All children should feel safe to walk to school and we want to work with the Government to see more children walk to school.

More than 70% of primary school children are driven to and from school every day, and parents driving to the school gate for drop-off and pick-ups add to the congestion on the road, while at the same time reducing the safety outside of the school for pedestrians and bike riders.

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The walk to and from school is an opportunity for children to be physically active, connect with their community and develop their independence and road safety skills.¹

Walking SA advises the government to commit to this proposal to create a Safe Streets to Schools initiative which would include an audit of all primary school walking catchments (2km radius) and investment in addressing issues identified by the audit and improving walkability.

Pedestrian infrastructure improvements can overcome a major barrier to active school travel by improving safety and amenity.

This proposal adds value to the existing (Department of Infrastructure and Transport) Way2Go program.

Investment in Safe Streets to Schools

Walking SA calls on the government to commit to this relatively low-cost investment for the safety of our children.

The initiative would include:

- ✔ Government commitment to active school travel
- ✔ Government partnering with Walking SA to implement the initiative
- ✔ Improvements to pedestrian infrastructure at all SA primary school catchment areas
- ✔ Reducing pedestrian crashes
- ✔ Increasing the numbers of children walking and cycling to school
- ✔ Make our streets greener, shaded and climate resilient

Why Safe Streets to Schools?

All children should be able to enjoy getting where they need to go safely – with good footpaths and bike paths, plenty of crossings, passive surveillance, and calm streets – this is particularly important around schools.

The evidence tells us that active travel to and from school is effective in increasing physical activity levels. However, rates of active travel to school have declined substantially in Australia since the 1970s, with walking and cycling trips replaced mainly by car trips.²

Our proposal focusses on the pedestrian infrastructure in school catchments which will help to alleviate parental concerns about road and personal safety. In addition, improving the walkability for children's journey to school will improve the streets for everyone.

The concept of "Streets for People" is all about designing safer streets that balance the movement of people and goods, with more people-friendly places.⁶ Safer streets and the environment around them will



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Why are less children walking (and cycling) to school? Many reasons, ranging from poor infrastructure and urban form to social and economic conditions.⁴

Parents' concern about road and personal safety is one of the major barriers to children commuting actively to school.⁵

The concern is valid. A RAA research report found that the highest frequency for pedestrian crashes is on weekdays and between 8-9am and 3-4pm, that is, when children are going to and from school.

encourage more people to walk and cycle as part of their everyday journeys as well as for recreation and is one of the keys to increasing the population's physical activity levels.

*Designing Streets for Kids*⁷ states that streets are the conduits that knit communities together and should be redesigned to respond to the needs and contexts of local communities. Each school catchment will include a diverse set of streets, so it is important to develop designs that ensure walking, cycling, and transit facilities are prioritised over direct paths for private vehicles.

A government commitment to enabling children to walk or cycle to school would not only have significant

health benefits to the community but is also good for the environment and the economy (e.g., children spend money on food on the way home).

It also fosters behaviour change at an early age through safer and greener streets, especially in a warming climate.

We know this is what the community wants.

The Heart Foundation asked everyday South Australians and found that 62% were supportive of **directing more funding into walking and cycling infrastructure**, and 60% were supportive of local government reducing speed limits in neighbourhood streets.⁸

Safe Streets to School helps to meet the SA government agenda:

- ✔ Department of Infrastructure and Transport – South Australia’s Road Safety Strategy to 2031
- ✔ Department of Infrastructure and Transport – Way2Go Program
- ✔ Wellbeing SA and partners – South Australian Walking Strategy 2022-2032
- ✔ Office for Recreation, Sport, and Racing – Game On
- ✔ Climate Change Action Plan 2021-2025
- ✔ Department of Environment and Water – Healthy Parks Healthy People, Creating Quality Green Open Spaces policy
- ✔ Green Adelaide – Creating a cooler, greener wilder and climate-resilient Adelaide



Footnotes

1. Living Streets. Swap the school run for a school walk. Living Streets, UK.
2. Booth V, 2013. Trends in physical activity among South Australian school children from 1985-2013.
3. Living Streets. Swap the school run for a school walk. Living Streets, UK.
4. Garrard J, 2009. Active transport: children and young people. An overview of recent evidence.
5. RAA. Hit Pedestrian Casualty Crashes report. 2018
6. SA Government and Heart Foundation. 2012. Streets for People; compendium for South Australian practice. https://irp.cdn-website.com/541aa469/files/uploaded/StreetforPeopleCompendium_full.pdf
7. Island Press. Designing Streets for Kids: Global Designing Cities Initiative. <https://globaldesigningcities.org/wp-content/uploads/guides/designing-streets-for-kids.pdf>
8. Heart Foundation. 2020. What Australia Wants <https://www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au/resources/publications>

About Walking SA

Our vision is to get *'more people walking more often'*.

Why walking? Having more people walk for recreation, sport, transport, and health along with creating more walkable environments, can achieve numerous co-benefits for the community including physical health, mental health, social, economic, and environmental impacts.

Everyone knows how to walk, it's one of the easiest ways in the world to be physically active and you can do it virtually anywhere with just a comfortable pair of shoes. Walking connects us with others, and with our community. It keeps us healthy and improves our mental wellbeing. If we are to reduce the burden of chronic disease, resulting from factors such as an ageing population and an increased in overweight and obesity, it is essential that we create a culture in South Australia that encourages more people to walk more often.

Walking SA promotes and encourages all types of walking.

Walking SA has been the peak body in South Australia for all types of walking since 2000. Walking SA supports all South Australians through our work to

systemically improve access to walking for transport, recreation, and health. In addition, we directly support walking clubs and organisation members. Walking SA represents over 650,000 South Australians who choose to walk for recreation, in addition to those who walk for health and transport.

We increase the number and diversity of South Australians walking for recreation, transport, and health through the following strategies:

- › Grow walking participation through programs, walking clubs and walking SA supporters.
- › Support the planning of walkable communities and environments.
- › Provide community information and lead annual walking events.

Our website contains extensive details of over 750 walking trails in South Australia: www.walkingsa.org.au and we have significant engagement with the community via social media with over 19,000 followers on Facebook and a similar email newsletter distribution database.

Walking SA is a volunteer driven organisation funded through a combination of state government grants and supporter and organisational funding. Our highly experienced Board and Executive Director have extensive depth and breadth of knowledge of project development, implementation, and management.

Walking SA acknowledges and respect the traditional owners of the land on which we walk, and we pay homage to their ancestors who maintained and cared for the land.

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