



MEDIA RELEASE

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OLYMPIC CHAMPION INVITES STUDENTS TO WALK TO SCHOOL

Kids, teachers, parents, neighbours, friends and family are encouraged to sign up for this year's **Victoria Walks to School Day** on **October 19**.

Media personality and Olympic medallist Nicole Livingstone OAM today issued a challenge to Victorian families to ditch the car and hit the streets.

Ms Livingstone, a VicHealth board member and ambassador for the 2011 *Victoria Walks to School Day*, said she hoped thousands more Victorians would join her and her children as they walk to school on October 19.

"As a mother of three young children, I walk my children to school whenever I can. When they walk they are happier, more alert and ready for the school day," Ms Livingstone said.

Now in its sixth year, *Walk to School Day* – funded by VicHealth and this year run by Victoria Walks during the month of *Walktober* – aims to raise awareness of the need for children to make active transport part of their daily routine to improve fitness, friendships, the environment and their confidence.

Research shows one in four children aged five to 17-years-old are now overweight or obese. VicHealth and Victoria Walks strongly encourage children to be physically active and walk from a young age to put them on track for better health in later life.

Last year, a record 70,000 primary school children from 363 schools across Victoria participated. Participating schools effectively doubled the number of children walking to school on the day, compared to the day before.

Schools that sign up are entered into a competition to win sports carnivals and sporting vouchers, along with the coveted Golden Shoe award.

Victoria Walks Executive Officer Dr Ben Rossiter said the walk to school is as important as lessons learnt in the classroom. "Research shows that active children are healthier, happier, more self confident and socially connected than less active children," Dr Rossiter said.

"We need to challenge our ingrained habits to ensure walking to school becomes a regular, everyday activity to improve kids' health, help the environment, broaden social networks and build self confidence."

Primary schools and families around Victoria can now sign up to take part in *Victoria Walks to School Day* by ordering a free information pack from Victoria Walks:
www.victoriawalks.org.au/walktoschool

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