



promoting the value of play

Media Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Why won't we let our kids walk to school?

As we are emerging from our homes post COVID-19 and children are getting back to school, now is the perfect time to get our children walking there. But parents still seem hesitant to let them. This era of risk aversion by parents is creating problems for our children's development.

Instead of being as safe as possible, children need to be as safe as necessary.

This is what development psychologist, [Dr Mariana Brussoni](#) proposes. When we say to our children "Be careful!" we are actually telling them that they are heading into danger out there, making children feel there is a constant threat. Children in fact need to feel that they are trusted and being given responsibility then builds their independence and resilience. Walking or riding to school is a perfect way to strengthen confidence, improves their physical and mental health and reconnects kids to their local surroundings and community.

Australian children's [physical literacy](#) has deteriorated leading to the [number of overweight children having doubled in recent years](#). A shocking 25% of children are overweight or obese. The health outcomes are staggering and something has to change to get our kids outside, back onto the streets and being active. Walking or cycling to school is a great start!

The Queensland Government has recently introduced the [Queensland Walking Strategy](#) so that everyone can "experience the lifelong health benefits of increased physical activity". As part of the strategy the Lions Club of Buderim coordinates a [walk to school program](#) with four local schools and they say, "The kids are definitely more active now, more aware of road safety and they look forward to walking to school with their friends."

The VicHealth initiative [Walk to School](#) has long supported the benefits of getting children walking. Not only supporting the health and wellbeing of children through increased physical activity, but enhancing

community connection, reducing traffic around school zones and it's better for the environment with less cars on the road. That's a win all round.

During COVID-19 it has been impressive to see the volume of people exercising outdoors, but it also highlighted the limitations and inadequacies of some public spaces to cope with the increase. Hats off to the NSW Government which is putting money where their mouth is, having just announced a [\\$15million fund](#) for local councils to widen footpaths and create new bicycle lanes to create safer streets for walkers and cyclists. Let's put this challenge out to all states and territories to do the same.

So Play Australia calls on all parents - give it a go! Now is the time to start something new. Let's learn from this time of upheaval and bring something new to the table that can have such a positive impact on our children's health and wellbeing. Walking or riding to school is a simple and direct way to provide better physical and mental health outcomes.

Our children deserve it.

For more information about the importance of outdoor play, visit Play Australia at www.playaustralia.org.au

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PHOTO SHOOT with school aged children walking to school can be scheduled.