



Friday 11 September 2020
SAVE THE DATE
National Walk Safely to School Day

MEDIA RELEASE

PUT YOUR FEET FIRST AND STEP INTO SPRING ON NATIONAL WALK SAFELY TO SCHOOL DAY

EMBARGOED – WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2020: Primary school aged children across Australia are encouraged to start incorporating regular walking back into their daily routine with the Pedestrian Council of Australia announcing National Walk Safely to School Day has been rescheduled to Friday 11 September 2020 following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions.

Professor Patrick McGorry AO is urging families with primary school aged children to start putting their best foot forward following a significant rise in anxiety, depression and overall poor mental health among young Australians due to the COVID-19 lockdown.

“The recent pandemic dramatically interrupted the routines of families with young children as schools closed for extended periods of time and organised sport post-poned until further notice. The mental and physical health impacts of COVID-19 are intertwined and we need to act quickly to flatten the rising curve of young Australian’s now struggling with mental health,” he said.

National Walk Safely to School Day is a community initiative that aims to raise awareness of the health, road safety, transport and environmental benefits that regular walking (especially to and from school) can provide for the long term well-being of our children. Apart from the physical benefits, regular walking also has a favourable impact on their mental health and academic performance.

“Research by Orygen shows that regular exercise, like walking to and from school, has a positive impact on anxiety and depression which is why we are encouraging primary school aged children to step into spring this September for National Walk Safely to School Day,” he said.

There has never been a better time to build walking into our kid's daily routine, by walking to and from, school, not just on Friday 11 September, but every day.



Harold Scruby, Chairman and CEO of the Pedestrian Council of Australia said: "The extremely disturbing childhood obesity epidemic continues to affect 1 in 4* children at critical levels across Australia."

“Unless teachers, parents, carers and the community generally get behind this event and its objectives, this number will never decrease. The best exercise for all of us is regular walking. Children require at least 60 minutes per day of physical activity. We should encourage them to reinstate these healthy habits off the back of COVID-19 and include walking at the beginning, during and end of each day,” he said.

The national initiative also promotes improved diets (by asking schools and P&Cs to Host a Healthy Breakfast), positive environmental action, better use of public transport with reduced car-dependency and the vitally important road safety message: "Until they are 10, children must always hold the hand of an adult when crossing the road".

It also encourages parents and carers to walk more, reducing dangerous traffic congestion around schools, while minimising the risk of Australian children developing heart disease and diabetes.

*ABS: National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18

For more information, including images and interviews contact:
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Top 5 tips for parents to get their kids walking to school:

1. Walk some or if you can, walk all the way to school
2. Get off the bus, train, or tram a few stops earlier and walk the rest of the way
3. Leave the car at least 1km away from school and walk the rest of the way
4. Set your alarm 30 minutes earlier to fit in a walk to school
5. If you can't walk in the morning, walk home after school

ENDS.

Contact: Harold Scruby (0418) 110-011

FAST FACTS

WHAT:	National Walk Safely to School Day
WHEN:	Friday 11 September 2020
WHERE:	In all primary schools across Australia
WHY:	This national initiative aims to encourage children to lead a healthier, more active lifestyle by simply including a walk at the beginning, at lunchtime and at the end of each day. The event also promotes reduced car-dependency, greater use of public transport, cleaner air, improved diets and road safety to primary school children throughout Australia.
HOW:	Encourage children to build regular walking in their daily routine by walking to, during, and from school
IMAGES:	Please click here for images.
MORE INFO:	www.walk.com.au/wstsd

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Facebook:	@nationalwalksafelytoschoolday
Twitter & Instagram:	@NatWalkToSchool
Hashtag:	#WSTSD

ABOUT PROFESSOR PATRICK MCGORRY AO

Professor Patrick McGorry is an Irish-born, Australian psychiatrist known world-wide for his work in early intervention and youth mental health, and for mental health innovation, advocacy and reform. He is Executive Director of Orygen and Professor of Youth Mental Health at the University of Melbourne. He led the development of headspace, the national youth primary mental health program, which is now in over 100 communities nationally. He has played a key advocacy and advisory role to government and health systems. In 2010 Professor McGorry was named Australian of the Year and in 2016 he became the first psychiatrist to be elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science.