

Safe & Active Routes to School

Date: _____

Dear Parents / Carers,

The City of Darwin encourages active transport through walking and cycling across the community. Supporting active transport in children from a young age through the journey to school establishes this as a normal part of their routines for the rest of their lives. As many schools are focal points of the local community, increasing walking and cycling to school will increase walking and cycling for the benefit of the whole community.

Increasing car use in Australia over the last forty years has coincided with a significant decline in incidental physical activity, such as walking and cycling to school, work, local shops and friends. Lack of physical activity is now having an impact on population-wide health with increasing heart disease, diabetes and obesity related illness.

The City of Darwin has worked with local schools and other partners to develop an Active Routes to School program and an associated “Toolkit” to support schools to increase active transport (walking, cycling, scooting, skaters etc.) to and from school. All schools in Darwin can utilise the resources in the Toolkit to implement their own school Travel Plans.

The Toolkit has been developed with feedback and experiences from the schools, parents and the students themselves. A series of class, student and parent based surveys and workshops were undertaken to understand current travel patterns, what influences them and how Council can work with schools and parents to change the perceptions of walking and cycling relative to the car, and address key issues such as:

- traffic congestion and lack of parking that means car travel is often slower than walking or cycling for short journeys, as well as more stressful;
- providing direct routes, separated footpaths and bicycle facilities and safe and convenient crossings to improve the walking and cycling trip;
- regularly walking or cycling to and from school enabling parents and children to achieve recommended physical activity levels;
- proportionately more children are injured when driven to school compared to those walking and cycling;
- there is generally less ‘stranger danger’ risk than there was 30 years ago; and
- Media stories and adverts that continue to promote use of the car as quicker, cheaper and safer.

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The Toolkit is split into five different sections; Governance, Catchment, Activities, Travel Plan and Environment, each with a variety of subsections. The sections of the Toolkit link together to guide schools through the process of developing a Travel Plan to increase active travel to school.

The sections of the Toolkit provide the following information for schools:

- Catchment toolkit helps the school to understand current travel patterns
- Governance toolkit provides advice on how to set up and manage a Travel Plan
- Activities toolkit provides information and examples of active travel programs and events
- Travel Plan toolkit provides guidance on compiling the existing travel information and proposed activities in to a Travel Plan document
- Environment toolkit provides information on improvements to the local environment that may be needed to support planned activities and walking and cycling access to the school.

The Travel Plan will include an Annual Action Plan to guide our activities and events each year and continue planning into the future.

The overall goal of the toolkit and resulting travel plan is to increase the levels of walking and cycling to school and improve road safety around our school.

Further information will be provided to you as we work through the Toolkit and look at different Activities to run in the school.

For further information about how our school is planning on using the Toolkit please contact SCHOOL CONTACT on PHONE NUMBER or by email at SCHOOLCONTACT@EMAIL

Regards SCHOOL CONTACT

