



# Safe

**By Sophie Torrens**

With initiatives such as Walk Safely to School Day (May 6), there is becoming an increased public awareness regarding the benefits of regular exercise for children.

Taking into account the common concoction of children who are practically glued to their TV screens and eating habits becoming increasingly unhealthy, is it any wonder the issue of childhood obesity has reached epidemic proportions? Corrective efforts must be bolstered.

"With over 25% of Australian children overweight or obese it is important to encourage all young children to be active by creating regular walking habits from an early age," commented Greater Bendigo Mayor Cr. Rod Fyffe.

From this statistic it can be clearly seen that children are a priority group for intervention and that sedentary lifestyles throughout childhood should be strongly discouraged. Hayley Lewis, former Olympic swimming champion is strongly endorsing the fact that children should undertake this form of regular exercise.

Children not only need to be motivated by parents to walk

to school frequently for health reasons but, should also be taught at a young age how to do it safely. We need to keep our children safe on and around roads. This will hopefully help in lowering the number of pedestrian accidents, which are one of the leading causes of child injury in Australia.

It has been suggested, that children who walk to school are more likely to think better in class and develop healthier lifestyles as adults.

The benefits of encouraging this healthy lifestyle do not end here. Our environment will also reap the rewards. "By not driving the kids to school we would help reduce air pollution from cars and reduce the level of traffic congestion around schools," said Cr Fyffe.

It can get extremely busy for families on a school mornings but, the benefits of walking to school can make a significant difference in many areas of life both now and in the future. So next time you go to grab the car keys and drive the kids to school, why not contemplate ways to make a little extra time in the future and walk your children there?