



Friday 15 May 2009

Active Kids are Healthy Kids!

ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT & CONGESTION FACTS

CLIMATE CHANGE:

The transport sector is a major contributor to climate change and car use significantly contributes to an individual's carbon footprint. Transport emissions – already responsible for 16% of greenhouse emissions in Australia – are increasing more rapidly than those from any other sector.³

Cars produce nearly a fifth of household greenhouse gas emissions. Not owning a car saves you money (a typical car costs \$7500 a year to run).⁹

Half of car journeys are less than 3km but car engines are least efficient while still warming up. Replacing short trips like driving to school with walking, can help to reduce the negative environmental impacts of driving.⁹

CAR POLLUTION AND ITS EFFECTS ON HEALTH:

Motor vehicles are a dominant source of air toxics.²

Traffic noise is probably one of the most serious and pervasive types of noise pollution.⁴

On a daily basis, almost 40% of all Australians are exposed to undesirable levels of traffic noise and a further 10% is exposed to excessive levels.⁴

Associations between particles, ozone, nitrogen dioxide and asthma hospital admissions have been confirmed in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.⁶

Exhaust fumes are known to affect health causing and/or developing the instances of:

- Respiratory tract irritation and infection, allergies
- Bronchitis, eye irritation
- Exacerbation of respiratory and cardiopulmonary diseases
- Asthma requiring hospital admission
- Lung Cancer.⁶

As well as greenhouse pollution, vehicle exhaust causes air pollution, such as smog, which kills about 4,000 Australians every year - more than the number of people killed in road crashes each year.⁸

Unfortunately there are many occasions when parents drive their children to school over extremely short distances when it is practical to walk. In one particular Australian state, Victoria, there is evidence that about 80% of primary school aged children live within 3km of the school - an easily walked or cycled distance. Yet the majority is driven to and from school. This car-dependent school travel results in congestion, pollution, and an increased risk of road trauma.⁷

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF WALKING:

Many car trips are short (less than 2km) which is a walkable distance for most. If people walked instead of using a cold-start vehicle, pollution levels would be reduced substantially.¹

With every litre of petrol saved, greenhouse pollution is reduced by 2.9 kilograms.⁸

Walking just half a kilometre to school each day instead of driving saves about 500kg of greenhouse pollution each year.⁸

TRAFFIC CONGESTION AROUND SCHOOLS

An alarming number of people are killed on pedestrian crossings in New South Wales. Younger children are at particular risk because they are smaller and less visible and because they will sometimes run rather than walk across a pedestrian crossing or may hesitate or turn back if they see a car approaching.¹⁰

The NSW Government states: "Traffic congestion in the vicinity of schools peaks for a period of approximately an hour before classes commence and for a similar period at the end of the school day. The cause of the congestion is a sudden influx of parents dropping off or collecting their children, school buses unloading or loading students and students arriving at or leaving the school grounds. This concentration of traffic for short periods at the beginning and end of the school day has a number of negative consequences for students and poses a serious risk to their safety. It is likely that the problems will get worse with increasing car ownership and growing traffic on the roads. There is a need to take additional measures to reduce the risks to students."¹⁰

RESOURCES

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