

National Preventative Health Taskforce

National Walk to Work Day - Friday 3 October 2008

Maintaining good health and just as importantly, preventing ill health, are major factors in the well-being and future prosperity of our community. Better personal health expands opportunity and choice for Australians.

That is why I strongly urge all Australians to become Walking Class Heroes on Friday October 3 and take part in **NATIONAL WALK TO WORK DAY (WTWD)**, which is an event when all Australians are encouraged to walk all or part of the way to work.



The objectives of the day are:

- To promote regular walking as a healthy activity (better physical, mental & social health)
- To reduce the reliance on the private motor vehicle (reduce car-dependency)
- To promote and improve the use of public transport (less traffic)
- To improve air quality by reducing unnecessary vehicle emissions (reduce global warming)

In short - Better Health, Cleaner Air, Less Congestion.

A strong economy can only ever be built on a healthy, active society. If we are to maximise our human capital, we need a greater emphasis on preventing ill health.

Today chronic diseases cost the community almost \$34 billion annually, and nearly 70% of allocated health expenditure. Left unchecked, this figure is expected to increase to 80 per cent of allocated health expenditure by 2020.

One of the key drivers of chronic ill health is obesity. Obesity levels have been rapidly increasing during the past 20 years, and Australia now ranks as one of the developed world's fattest nations. Approximately 7.5 million Australian adults are either overweight or obese, with nearly one in five in the high risk obese group.

Access Economics estimated that the total financial cost of obesity in Australia in 2005 was approximately \$3.8 billion, nearly half of which were productivity costs.

While changes to policies that develop our human capital are one way of achieving better health, every individual, community, employer and government body can make a contribution and the Pedestrian Council of Australia is leading the way with its national **Walk to Work Day** campaign.

Of course, walking everyday - either all the way or part of the way to and from work is even more beneficial - even if this only means getting off the bus a couple of stops earlier than usual.

Taking part in national **Walk to Work Day** is an easy way for anyone to take a personal step towards better health including improved physical, mental and social well-being, resulting in fewer sick days and absenteeism, along with increased productivity and creativity.

I encourage all corporations, businesses, government agencies, employers and employees to put their Feet First and register as ambassadors and participants in National Walk to Work Day at

www.walk.com.au

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Rob Moodie". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Dr Rob Moodie
Chair, National Preventative Health TaskForce
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