



# Walking: Why ward Councillors love it

## Call to action for candidates in the Queensland local government elections March 2016

### Why walking?

Making our towns and cities more attractive for walking benefits everyone. Walking is a part of every journey we take – even if you drive or take public transport part way.

If you are (or want to be) a local government Councillor, Queensland Walks has summarised easy, relatively inexpensive, election platforms for walking you can adopt that will appeal to your constituents and help your community.

Walking is by far the most popular recreational activity in Australia<sup>1</sup>. But as a way of getting around, especially for shorter trips, it is second to none. Yet many easily walkable trips are made by car. In Brisbane for example, 39% of trips under 1km (a 10 minute walk) are currently by car<sup>2</sup>.

At the end of this call to action is a summary of some of the many benefits of walking, including improved local economy, reduced congestion, increased safety, improved community health and more alert kids. There's no down side to increasing walking.

If you want to get these great benefits for your community then start designing your streets to attract more people on foot, not in cars.

### Do your block

Take a walk around your local area and use the Queensland Walks collaborative map to record what you like and don't like about the pedestrian facilities in your community. It covers every town in Queensland.



In the lead up to the elections, this map will become an excellent source of ideas about how to improve your community for people on foot.

Go to [www.collaborativemap.comorg/Queensland-Walks](http://www.collaborativemap.comorg/Queensland-Walks) to access the map (or you can scan the QR code). If you're out and about walking, use your mobile or tablet's location services to drop a pin where you are standing. You can also add photographs to your comments. Make as many comments as you like as you walk around your neighborhood. You can also take a look at what others are saying about walking in their areas. Ask a friend to help if you don't have easy access to any of these devices.

<sup>1</sup> 19% of people aged 15 years and over walk for exercise (25% of women and 14% of men) – ABS 2014, Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@nsf/mf/4177.0>

<sup>2</sup> Queensland Transport 2011. Household Travel Survey 2011



## First things first - Get the basics right

All Councils, even for the smallest towns, can do these things for walking quickly and easily:

Wipe off some speed – make all CBDs/main streets/local shopping streets a 40kph speed limit. 30kph is better. Warwick even has a 25kph shared zone in its main street, complete with rose beds. Get creative. Make pedestrians feel welcome in your main street, and they will reward you by staying longer and spending more money in local businesses.

We also know that speed limits and the speed travelled are not the major factors in travel time in urban environments, as some may argue. Of more significance to road congestion are signal timings, the number and type of intersections, or trouble parking. Therefore, improving intersection safety and function and coordinating signal timing are better ways to improve flow than increasing traffic speed (America Walks).



### CASE STUDY: Walking is better for business

Reducing speed is not only important for improving health and safety, but we have evidence to show that making streets more walking and cycling friendly is good for business too. Dr Rodney Tolley prepared a report for the Heart Foundation entitled *Good for Busine\$\$* which shows the direct economic benefits from developing communities that are more walking and cycling friendly. Designing streets for activity adds economic value to an area, through increased retail values, higher rents, attraction of new tenants and businesses and increased sale prices of nearby homes. Larger volumes of pedestrian and bicycle riding activity generate more business and stimulate the local economy. Local areas are revitalised and become vibrant places people want to visit.

Tolley, R. (2011). *Good for Busine\$\$*. The benefits of making streets more walking and cycling friendly. Adelaide: Report commissioned by National Heart Foundation of Australia (South Australian division).

Commit to improving streets for walking, one street at a time. Use our neighborhood walkability checklist ([www.queenslandwalks.org.au](http://www.queenslandwalks.org.au)) to audit the walking routes to the top 10 destinations in your town or city. You'll be surprised how many improvements can be made quickly and cheaply.

- Widen the footpaths
- Install kerb ramps, make build-outs to shorten crossing distances, and even raise the crossings to make it easier for people in wheelchairs or with prams to get about
- Build more linking paths and formalize short cuts
- Plant street trees for shade, comfort and beauty
- Introduce more crossings to encourage walking to key destinations and reduce road danger.



## CASE STUDY – The power of a footpath

Ever tried to walk along a street without a footpath? Difficult hey? Dangerous even. You might be surprised to know that residents of neighborhoods with footpaths are more likely to walk, and consequently tend to have lower rates of cardiovascular disease, obesity, and other health issues related to sedentary lifestyles<sup>3</sup>. Also, children who walk to school have been shown to have better concentration<sup>4</sup>.

Making sure your town has ample, wide footpaths is one of the simplest steps you can take for a healthier and happier community.



Fund it. Quadruple your Council's commitment to funding for footpaths, both construction and maintenance. Footpaths cost chicken feed in comparison with building new roads. But take a strategic approach.

Plan for the future. Amend your Council planning scheme to make sure all new developments and housing estates include footpaths or slow speed shared road spaces.

Aim to create at least one “perfect street”: These are streets and public spaces that people of all ages, abilities will be able to walk along and across, on foot, in wheelchairs or prams, on scooters or skates. If you can't convert a street, open up some shopping streets once a month to walkers and wheelers only.

### Want to go a step further?

Install precinct-wide 40kph speed limits around 'urban villages' like Rosalie, Kangaroo Point, Kelvin Grove, Mitchelton, and also in tourism precincts like Bargara, Townsville Strand, Cairns Esplanade and town centres in all regional cities.

Commit to creating a whole series of new walking boulevards to shops, schools, community centres and public transport nodes by progressively installing wider footpaths, street trees and better road crossings.

Grow a thriving night time economy with better urban lighting to also make these streets welcoming outside of daylight hours for business, recreation and social activities.

Give lots more crossing time for pedestrians around shops, schools and public transport - 50% of walk time in CBD areas is waiting time. Give those people more time to shop! Prioritise pedestrian crossing time in CBDs. Decrease the cycle times on signals to reduce waiting time and give more safe crossing opportunities. This also reduces pedestrian crowding at crossings freeing up footpath space for other activities such as retail or planting.

Start installing pedestrian count down timers around shops, schools and public transport stations and stops. Already got them? Install more!

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.newsweek.com/how-public-policy-can-prevent-heart-disease-75073>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.citylab.com/commute/2013/02/kids-who-walk-or-bike-school-concentrate-better-study-shows/4585/>

# Truly great walking towns and cities commit to these things:

Separate: Start building separated cycle and pedestrian pathways on high use commuter routes. Re-allocate on-street parking for separated cycleways on main roads.

Employ health promotion/ sport and recreation/ physical activity promotion specialist staff in Councils.



Do your block. Join the “Better Block” movement and bring back life to ailing commercial streets. Use ‘quicker, cheaper, lighter’ ways to encourage people to walk and ride and shop locally. Trees in large pots, and ‘pop up’ shops and dog parks.

Be the first Council in Queensland to implement play streets or “Home Zones” with 10k residential streets. Use trees, planter boxes, herb patches and hopscotch to slow down the cars.

Recycle your streets. Why not creatively re-purpose all those acres of unused bitumen that many Councils spend so much money to maintain? Start a pop-up after school play area, install hardy table tennis tables for public use, bring in sand and start bocce courts outside aged care facilities, hold a city wide “garage sale and meet your neighbour day” every Australia Day, sponsor street parties.

This call to action is an initiative of Queensland Walks and is supported by PedBikeTrans and Bicycle Queensland .

## Photos and references

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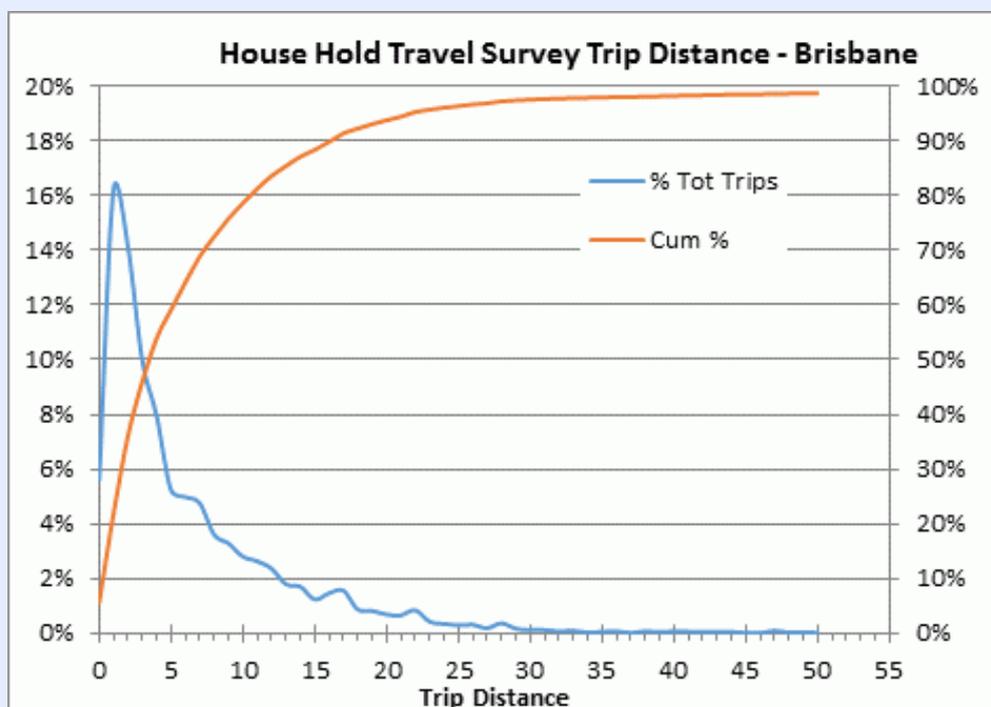


## The hard data

Want to go to the source for why walking is so good for communities. We’ve done all the hard work for you and summarized it here, along with the references. Use without restraint (but with acknowledgement)!

- Walking reduces the risk of all-cause mortality by up to 20% and cardiovascular disease by up to 30%<sup>1</sup> (meaning that regular walkers are likely to live longer than non-walkers). Walking reduces the risk of high blood pressure<sup>2,3,4</sup>, stroke, and high cholesterol<sup>5</sup>. Walking expends energy and therefore can help energy balance and body composition<sup>3,6</sup> (potentially reducing obesity).
- Children can also gain health benefits from walking. Regular walking of around 20 minutes per day can increase their physical performance.<sup>11</sup>
- Strong relationships have also been found between quality of the local walking environment and health. Studies in the US<sup>13</sup>, Europe<sup>14,15,16,17</sup> and Australia<sup>10,18</sup> have all found such links. Residents of walking friendly neighbourhoods, in terms of density, mix of use and connectivity, are less likely to report depressive symptoms<sup>13</sup> or poor mental health<sup>18</sup> and those in neighbourhoods with high social environmental quality<sup>14,18</sup> or greenery<sup>10</sup> are more likely to report good health.
- A study commissioned by the Queensland Government in 2011<sup>20</sup> found that, for a typical off-road path in an inner urban area, economic benefits per kilometre walked or cycled are: decongestion (20.7 cents per kilometre walked or cycled), health (up to 168.0 cents per kilometre), vehicle operating costs (35.0 cents per kilometre), infrastructure savings (6.8 cents per kilometre) and environment (5.9 cents per kilometre). The aggregate result is that:
  - • 1000 pedestrians per day will generate discounted benefits of around \$7 million per kilometre over a 30-year appraisal period (\$2.12 per kilometre walked, per person)
  - 1000 bicycle riders per day will generate discounted benefits of around \$15 million per kilometre over a 30-year appraisal period (\$1.43 per kilometre cycled, per person). This means that, for each person who cycles 20 minutes to work and back, our economy benefits by \$14.30; and for each person who walks 20 minutes to work and back benefits our economy by \$8.48.
- The net health benefit (adjusted for injury) for each kilometre walked is 144 cents – about 70 per cent of the total economic benefits of a walking project. The net health benefit (adjusted for injury) for each kilometre cycled is 75 cents – about half of the total economic benefits of a typical bikeway project.<sup>21</sup>
- Around 20 per cent of the Australian population commutes less than five kilometres to work or study. Distance is one of the most important factors in determining whether people consider walking or riding for their daily commute. In an urban environment, riding a bicycle is often faster than driving for trips up to five kilometres, while walking is faster for trips up to 400 metres.<sup>28 29</sup>
- Most people are prepared to spend about 10 minutes walking or riding to a high-frequency, direct public transport service such as a train or express bus. This equates to 800 metres walking or two to three kilometres riding. For less frequent or indirect local services, people are generally prepared to walk for up to five minutes, about 400 metres.<sup>33 34</sup>
- Most pedestrians will not survive being hit by a motor vehicle travelling over 50 kilometres per hour. At 30 kilometres per hour the likelihood of fatality is 5 per cent; at 40 kilometres per hour it is 20 per cent; at 60 kilometres per hour it is 80 per cent; and at 70 kilometres per hour it is more than 90 per cent likely to result in a fatality.<sup>46</sup>
- All states have adopted a default urban speed limit of 50 kilometres per hour. This change was linked to a 20 per cent reduction in casualty crashes and an even greater reduction in serious injuries.<sup>52 53</sup>

- Most states have adopted 40 kilometre per hour speed limits around schools. The National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020 reported that ‘safety outcomes in higher-risk pedestrian and school areas were improved... [resulting] in a 23 per cent reduction in casualty crashes and a 24 per cent reduction in all pedestrian and bicyclist crashes outside schools’.<sup>56</sup>
- Education, information and promotional activities have been shown to change travel behaviour where the appropriate facilities and infrastructure are in place to support walking, riding and public transport use. The best results are achieved when planning and infrastructure investments are supported by education and promotional activities together.<sup>64 65</sup>
- According to the 2011 Census, almost 220,000 people ‘walk only’ to work in the capital cities every day, around 3.8 per cent of total mode share.<sup>80</sup>
- Walking and cycling represent one of most effective methods of building PA into daily life.<sup>81</sup> whilst at the same time reducing CO2 emissions, air pollution and congestion caused by motorised forms of transport<sup>82</sup>.
- Congestion is estimated to cost Brisbane tax payers as much as \$3 billion by 2020.<sup>83</sup>
- If more Australians were physically active for just 30 minutes a day the Australian healthcare system could save \$1.5 billion a year, whilst creating a healthier community.<sup>84</sup>
- In Queensland 28% of children are overweight or obese and 65% of adults. This state had the highest rate of adult obesity in Australia. In Queensland for adults, 60% achieved recommended physical activity and for children, 41%.<sup>85</sup>
- 22% of all household trips in Brisbane are 1km or under<sup>86</sup> – a distance that can be easily walked.



Source (reference <sup>86</sup>)

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