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Statutory Planning Systems Reform
Department of Planning and Community Development
GPO Box 2392
Melbourne Vic 3001
By e-mail: PEActreview@dpcd.vic.gov.au:

8 May 2009

Dear Madam/Sir.

We welcome the opportunity to make a submission on the review of the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Victoria Walks Incorporated is a new walking for transport health promotion body that is initially funded and supported by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth). Our vision is for vibrant, supportive and strong neighbourhoods and communities where people can and do choose to walk wherever possible. Our mission is to promote the health of all Victorians by increasing the number of people who walk as a means of transport.

Victorian cities, towns and suburbs have become largely automobile dependent and less walkable. This has contributed to the emergence of more sedentary lifestyles in which Victorians do not engage in the recommended levels of physical activity. Physical inactivity is a significant factor in the dramatic rise in the levels of obesity and preventable diseases such as Type II diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

This Review offers a unique opportunity to ensure that our planning system is better able to consider and prioritise the health implications of planning decisions.

Victoria Walks believes that walking-friendly neighbourhoods are important because they encourage people to walk. Walking is associated with positive health outcomes, improved fitness and better physical, social and mental health. Neighbourhoods in which people walk have a stronger sense of 'community' as they are more welcoming and inclusive. People who live in walkable neighbourhoods are more likely to know their neighbours, participate politically, trust others, and be socially engaged. When people walk, it also creates a stronger sense



of neighbourhood safety and security. Walking is good for local economies as businesses benefit enormously when people walk around their neighbourhoods.

We need to design relatively compact urban spaces with modest distances between local destinations to encourage walking for transport. Streets should be constructed to give priority for direct pedestrian routes. Streets need to be designed with high quality pedestrian infrastructure including wide tree-lined pavements with attractive landscaping, good street lighting, seating, shade, on street bicycle lanes, pedestrian priority crossings, links to good public transport and traffic calming measures.

Victoria Walks strongly believes that the objectives of Planning Act should prioritise the provision of economically, socially and environmentally sustainable walkable communities. Walkable urban spaces provide pleasant, efficient and safe working, living and recreational environment for all Victorians. The planning system should address the impact of climate change and must place the health and wellbeing of all Victorians as its core priority.

Victoria Walks contributed to submission that has been made by VicHealth and strongly endorses the VicHealth submission and its recommendations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Rossiter', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ben Rossiter
Executive Officer