

Hello - I'm Jennifer McIntyre, a Senior Transport Planner and Urban Designer at Darebin Council.

I work, live on and am presenting today on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country and would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we're presenting and work on, and pay my respects to their elders past present and emerging, and extend that to any elders who places today.may be joining us from other places today.

 **Background**

Darebin has a range of Active Travel Programs and Strategies related to participation in active transport.

**Focus on schools:**

- Safe to School Audits 2012-2018
- Bike Fleet Giveaway
- Active Routes to School
- Octopus School




Darebin has a range of Active Travel Programs and Strategies related to participation in active transport:

- Darebin Loves Bikes Newsletter
- Bike Skills Workshops & Training
- Free portable bike parking hire for events
- Streets for People
- Love Your Commute
- Free bike hoop installation
- Safe Travel and Walking strategies

In addition, we have a range of programs that focus on schools and students.

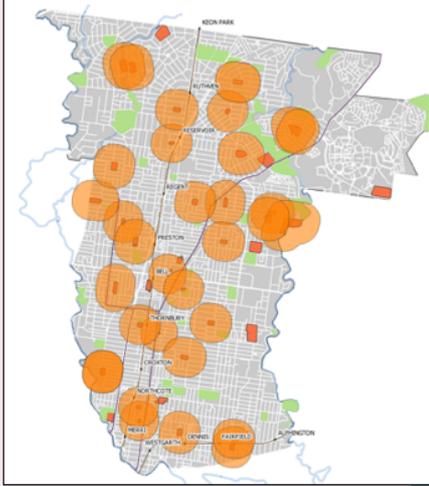
Darebin has 33 local primary schools. We have been working directly with schools and the local community to manage road safety issues for over ten years, including investment in school infrastructure through Walking, Cycling, Speed reduction, and Traffic Management capital programs, and externally supported programs such as Bike Ed, Walk to School and Fit 2 Drive. Our internal programs included safe to School audits, which I'll cover on the next slide, an annual bike fleet giveaway to assist with delivery of Bike Ed, active routes to school, and more recently our octopus School program. Today's presentation will be focused on schools and how we have

addressed behavior change through our Octopus School program.

 **Octopus Schools Development**

**Issues and Barriers**

- Access to data
- Longevity of programs
- Teacher time required
- Turnover of staff, students and parents
- Prioritising locations for interventions



Darebin Primary Schools with a 400 metre radius

Trying to fine tune a way to monitor and assess the impact of changes to the walking and riding environment around schools.

Through our Safe To School program Since 2012 we have audited 32 schools in our safe to School program, and highest priority recommendations have been implemented at 18 schools at cost of \$1.2M to 2017. This is extremely slow going and also difficult to understand the impact of the treatments on walking and riding numbers to the schools.

We did have access to some hands up counts (schools have to be registered and supply the data to Bicycle Network), so that was limited.

Walk to School month is only representative of October.

Programs such as Walking School Bus would lose traction as interested staff or parents who organized it left the school community.

We also found it difficult to maintain ongoing relationships with school staff due to the demands on their time, so mostly we were only hearing from schools when issues came up with congestion at drop off and pick up times, and we were being asked to make it easier for parents to drive!

So in 2017 we decided to develop and trial a new program, focusing on one school at

a time, but working intensively to embed behavior change through programs as well as infrastructure.

**What is it?**

**City of DAREBIN**

A dedicated grant of \$100,000 for the school to spend on programs, bike fleet, bike shed, student art project etc.

Includes \$2,000 for CRT cover for the nominated Safe Travel Champion staff.

An additional capital amount for construction of infrastructure such as wombat crossings (approx. \$200,000).

Image: An active routes footpath decal

The Octopus School program is an extension of the Safe Travel to School program and audits, designed to increase the number of students actively travelling to school, along with decreasing congestion and improving road safety in primary school precincts through the use of both programs and infrastructure designed with the school.

Council developed an approach to work intensively with one school every year to complete four modules, which represent varying amounts on engagement from different stakeholders, culminating in the construction of road safety treatments funded by Darebin Council. The four modules assist the school with setting up a sustainable program of achievements to embed active travel behaviours across the community and Hannah will go into more detail about these.



## How did we engage them?

### Expression of interest responding to Key Selection Criteria

- Nomination of Safe Travel Champion (staff) and stakeholder experience (\$2000 to assist)
- Examples of previous active travel programs/activities
- Commitment to actively promote program
- Current data collection or plans to collect data
- Long term maintenance of program
- Current barriers/issues

### Selection Panel

### Report to Council

### Sign MoU with successful school



To be considered for the program, school's had to provide an expression of interest / application which included details of work already being done, and the barriers to participation in active travel in their school community. Reservoir West Primary School was the first school selected for the program. In each year of the program, the successful school receives funding of \$100,000 towards implementing programs and activities, plus additional capital funding for construction of priority road infrastructure.

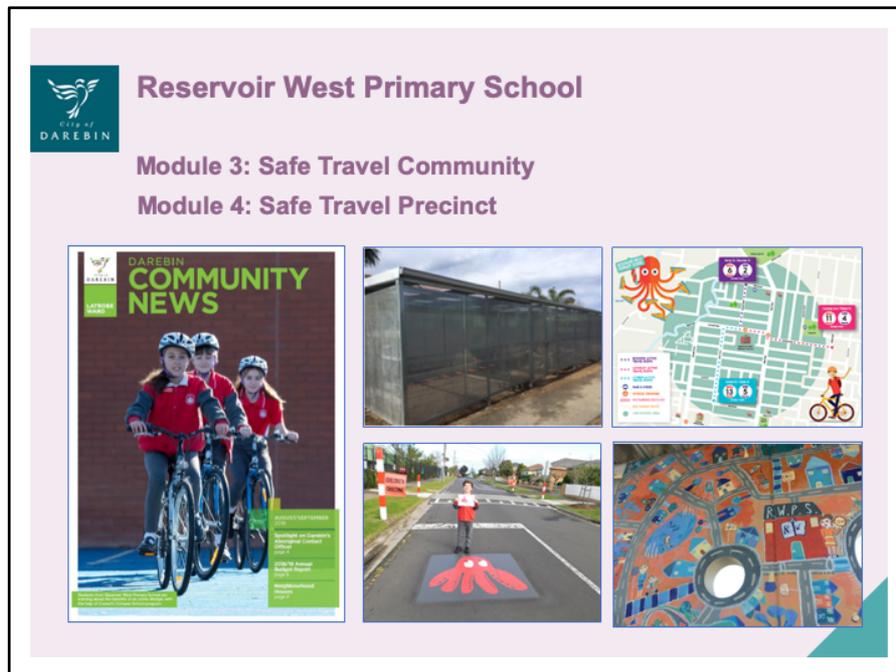
There are now three schools that have received the grant and are actively engaged in the program. Additionally, schools that expressed interest but were not successful in securing the funding are completing the program at a lower level of engagement from Modules 1 – 3 to get them started on the Octopus School journey. There are currently three schools at this stage of engagement.



I'm now going to talk in more detail about exactly what we did with our pilot Octopus School.

**Module 1** covers safe travel basics, and actions here are based around setting up a strong foundation to get the school started in their active travel journey. – this included signing an MoU with Council, appointing a Safe Travel Champion who was a staff member, collecting baseline data on active travel to school and setting goals and targets for higher participation rates, and engaging all staff and school community about the program and a commitment to active travel.

**Module 2**, safe travel programs, helped the school identify actions based around programs from external providers that would support the school in gaining confidence around active travel. These kinds of programs included registering with Bicycle Networks hands up program, participating in VicHealth's Walk to School Program and Bicycle Networks Ride to School Day, and the school student leadership team undertook a planning a session for developing ideas around school behaviour change. Council also reviewed the safe travel audit with the school, and identified infrastructure gaps and opportunities to improve safety around the school.



**Module 3** focused on actions formed by school-based initiatives, to ensure the whole school community is engaged in the safe and active travel journey. The school by now had submitted four consecutive months of active travel counts and established an Active Transport Class Award, which was a trophy that got given to the class with the highest counts each week and was presented at assembly, and had also run bike ed, which Darebin provided funding for 2 teachers to be trained in, and provided the school with a bike fleet to make bike ed accessible for all students.

**Module 4** was the culmination of the schools hard work and the final piece that brought the entire project together. Council built a bike shed, engaged a parent to paint an active travel mural at the school, mapped safe travel routes and lay down footpath decals along these routes and installed road decals designed by students on the streets around the school. Council also constructed major infrastructure to create a safe school precinct which included 2 x wombat crossings and 2 x contraflows.

 **Outcomes & Evaluation**

- **Fewer vehicles** are travelling through the area
- Vehicles are travelling slower – from **45km/hr to 35km/hr** on average
  - More than **3 times** as many people riding bikes in the area

Wombat crossing      Bike contraflow

The evaluation was planned for 2020 following construction of the infrastructure treatments.

Due to Covid-19, the full evaluation has been postponed, as students have not been attending school in person.

We did manage to do some traffic counts before the pandemic, and they show some encouraging results! Traffic counts conducted in April 2018 and again in October 2019 show that less vehicles are now, on average, travelling through the area and travelling more slowly than before the program begun. For example, vehicles traveling past the new raised thresholds are now travelling up to 10km slower than before – from around 45km/hr to 35km/hr! We also found that there are more than 3 times as many people riding bikes along Carrington Road since the Octopus School program started at the school – perhaps due to some new bike contraflows. These numbers indicate that the many elements to the Octopus Program are resulting in great success for safe and active travelling students in the area.

The Octopus School won the Institute of Transport Engineers Australia and New Zealand Sustainable Transport Award, and was featured in the Herald Sun newspaper.



## Learnings

- Teachers need time to do things, and checklists are a great way to help them. Also newsletter copy and text, images etc.
- Parents can be a great resource – get them involved from the start
- Running workshops with students is a great way to get them excited (and having some
- prizes helps). Using student designs and artwork creates ownership.
- Tap into existing great stuff the schools are doing – example if they are already doing hands up counts
- Continuous feedback loop is important! Find out where the sticking points are.





**Thank you!**

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