



## **New Scooter Safety Program offers Kids Safe and Sustainable Travel to School**

Promoting **active travel** and teaching young children the skills to **keep safe on their scooters** is the aim of a new safety program being rolled out at primary schools in Sydney this month.

Everyday thousands of Sydney school children zip around busy city pathways on their scooters, using them as a means of getting to school, as well as riding them in their leisure time. For young children, the scooter is often their introduction to the world of transport, with many learning to ride a scooter before they learn to ride a bike.

*"Scooter riding is increasingly popular, particularly with younger children," says Richard Thomas, Instructor of the new **Scooter Safety Program**. "It's easy and fun, but often simple safety skills are overlooked."*

*"This program is about teaching children the basics. Things like how to stop safely before an intersection, changing legs when turning and being aware of dangers such as cars reversing out of driveways. It's fun and the children really enjoy doing it together, but at the same time they are learning some fundamental safety lessons."*

According to the Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit, in April 2009 49% of children aged 5-14 years, or 1.3 million Australian children, had been skateboarding, inline skating or riding scooters in the previous two school weeks. Whilst participate rates have gone up, so too have injuries. The number of scooter related injuries have tripled since 2006.<sup>1</sup>

Briony Schofield, whose six year old son Austin is a keen scooter rider, welcomes the new initiative. "Austin loves using his scooter to get to school but sometimes it's hard to keep up with him. I always worry about cars reversing out of driveways or that he won't stop in time before an intersection. This program will help to teach him important skills and understand traffic dynamics."

The program, which is sponsored by micro Australia, has been run in Switzerland since 2007 where over 30,000 children have been educated on scooter safety.

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<sup>1</sup> Victorian Injury Surveillance Unit, April 2009.

It was successfully piloted at Crown Street and Bourke Street Public Schools, Surry Hills in November 2011 and March 2012. Both schools have a much higher than average percentage of students commuting to school via active transport.<sup>2</sup>

Crown St Public principal John Croker said *"Bike and scooter safety is very important for young children. Any program associated with improving the safety of children with bikes or scooters is very beneficial to the school. We decided to target young children because we feel they're less aware of road safety issues and more vulnerable on the streets of Sydney"*.

The plan is to roll out the program nationally – starting with the City of Sydney region in 2012, where the program is being offered to Stage 1 students in primary schools.

Jeremy Brown, Director of micro scooters said, *"Safety is a major issue for parents and teachers and we feel that the program is a great start to encouraging kids - the drivers of tomorrow - to be aware on the streets and paths, to be responsible and to learn some safety skills in a really fun way. Ultimately, we want to provide kids with the skills and confidence to ride their scooters safely to school"*.

For more details visit [www.scootersafety.org.au](http://www.scootersafety.org.au)

**To book the Scooter Safety Program for your school, please contact:**

**Tiffany Cole, Program Manager. [tiffany@scootersafety.org.au](mailto:tiffany@scootersafety.org.au)**

**Phone: 0408 289 757**

**To speak with Jeremy Brown, Director, micro scooters. Please contact:**

**[jeremy@scootersafety.org.au](mailto:jeremy@scootersafety.org.au)**

#### **Key points of the program:**

- Teaches children when they are developmentally ready to learn these skills (Stage 1, primary school)
- Focuses on injury prevention and teaches children about safety equipment – reasons to wear safety equipment and correct fit
- Supports healthy and sustainable school travel, which has a direct impact on the environment
- Promotes an activity that contributes to health and fitness in young children
- Is a fun filled way to learn important road safety skills

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<sup>2</sup> On March 23, 2012 Ride2School Day, Bourke Street Public School, Surry Hills recorded 84% 'active travel' and Crown Street Public School, Surry Hills recorded 70% 'active travel' to school, with 27% of students riding scooters to school. (the national average for active transport according to Bicycle Network/Ride2School Day is 20% of school children).