

A Call to Action: Supporting More Australians to be More Physically Active

March 2025

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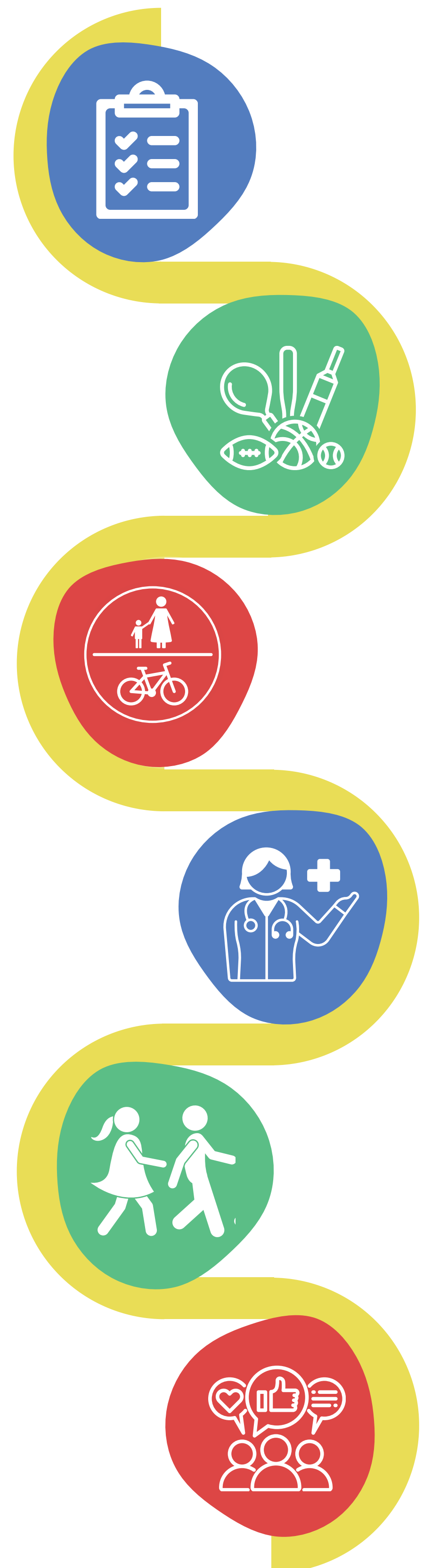
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Federal Election Recommendations to boost Physical Activity: Summary

This document is a Call to Action to support more Australians to move more and enjoy the many health, education, transport, economic, social and environmental benefits from increased physical activity. The **Australian Physical Activity Alliance**, led by the **Asia-Pacific Society for Physical Activity (ASPA)**, has identified six complementary priorities, summarised here and further detailed on subsequent pages.

1 **FUND DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ACTION PLAN**

2 **IMPLEMENT A NATIONAL ACTIVE SCHOOLS FUND**

3 **IMPLEMENT A NATIONWIDE ACTIVE TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM**

4 **FUND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PRE- AND POST-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS**

5 **COMMIT ONGOING FUNDING TO NATIONAL WALKING PROGRAMS**

6 **FUND IMPLEMENTATION AND PROMOTION OF NATIONAL PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES**





Fund development and implementation of a National Physical Activity Action Plan

Investment Required:
\$700,000 excl GST
over three years

Being regularly active is essential for our physical, cognitive, and psychological health and development. From walking, dancing and gardening to training and playing sport, moving more is good for us all.

However, in 2022, only 22% of adults aged 18–64 years met the Australian physical activity guidelines, with particularly low levels of muscle strengthening exercise. Prevalence is even lower among children and adolescents. These rates have barely changed in decades. Physical inactivity in Australia accounted for approximately \$2.4 billion in health spending in 2018-19.

Physical activity is a major focus in the National Preventive Health Strategy ([NPHS](#)) 2021-2030 and the National Obesity Strategy ([NOS](#)) 2022-2032. The Federal government has also recently launched the National Sport Strategy ([Sport Horizon](#)) 2024–2034 and is currently reviewing the Australian Sports Commission Act 1989 ([ASPA response](#)). Physical activity is also a priority of the World Health Organisation (WHO), with the development of the WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity (GAPPA) 2018-2030, designed to help meet World Health Assembly commitments to increase physical activity and reduce noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Yet population levels of physical activity level remain stubbornly low.

Over decades in Australia, the government has invested billions of dollars in sport, yet there has been minimal change in national physical activity levels in any age or sub-group. It is critical to maintain the investment in sport nationally and the Brisbane Olympics 2032 provide an exciting opportunity for the Australian government to invest in an Active Australia. But more is needed. Investment and implementation of a National Physical Activity Action Plan will help the government realise national preventive health and obesity reduction targets. It will help Australia meet its international commitments to WHO Global Action Plans on NCDs and Physical Activity.

Aim 4 of the National Preventive Health Strategy is to increase investment in preventive health to 5% of total health expenditure by 2030. [In 2022-2023, non-COVID-19 related preventive health expenditure was 2.3%, well below target.](#) Investing to develop and implement a National Physical Activity Action Plan would prioritise and coordinate investments to increase physical activity and decrease sedentary behaviour. This is an important opportunity to make critical investment in key preventive health priorities.

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Implement a National Active Schools Fund

Investment Required: Being active in school supports learning and promotes child health and wellbeing.
\$30 million excl GST over three years

However, up to 80% of the school day is spent sitting. And many families find the cost and time requirements of extracurricular activities prohibitive. Schools provide an invaluable and cost-effective opportunity to reach most Australian children and adolescents five days per week. A whole-of-school approach to physical activity is recommended and involves: high quality physical education classes; classroom activity breaks and active lessons; opportunities to be active during recess and lunch; providing suitable physical indoor and outdoor environments; resources to support structured and unstructured physical activity throughout the day (e.g. play and recreation before, during and after school); and the promotion of active transportation to and from school. These actions can be enabled through supportive school policies and also engaging staff, students, parents and the wider community ([ISPAH 8 Investments](#)).

A sample of evidence-based school physical activity programs that have been tested at scale in Australia and, with funding, can be immediately offered to all schools nationally include:

- [Physical Activity 4 Everyone](#) (PA4E1) is a whole-of-school physical activity intervention designed for secondary schools in disadvantaged areas. This program has been implemented and thoroughly evaluated across four local health districts in NSW.
- [TransformUs](#) is a whole-of-school program reaching 650+ Primary, Secondary and Special schools primarily in Victoria and Queensland, and is currently reaching through the TransformUs Higher Ed, 2,000+ pre-service teachers in five Australian Universities.
- [iPLAY](#) is a whole-of-school intervention that has been implemented in more than 200 primary schools in NSW, improving the health and wellbeing of more than 50,000 students.
- The [Active Schools](#) program is a current Victorian Government initiative which builds on existing programs and funding to boost support and resources for schools to get students moving.
- [Kiddo](#) is for primary schools and early learning services targeting children's fundamental movement skills.
- [RideScore](#) Active Schools Program is a current Queensland active transport to school initiative.

A National Active Schools Fund initiative could be an Olympic Legacy for the government.

This fund is important for closing the physical activity and health inequity gap between schools in advantaged compared to disadvantaged areas, between minority groups, and for supporting children of all abilities.



Implement a Nationwide Active Transport Infrastructure Program

Investment Required: \$400 million per year over three years (\$15 per person, per year) Making streets safer, especially around schools, and boosting active transport will enhance health, wellbeing and the economy by reducing inactivity, traffic congestion, and CO2 pollution.

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Australia spends \$714 per person annually on roads, but just 90 cents supports walking and cycling. Investing \$15 per Australian per year would create a better built environment to walk, wheel and ride and deliver significant economic, social and environmental benefits.

The funding commitment and further details about the numerous benefits of the infrastructure funding program are highlighted within the [Better Streets 2025 Federal Election Campaign](#).

Research demonstrates the investment will increase the percentage of people cycling fivefold, resulting in \$40 billion in economic benefits by 2050. The program would deliver comprehensive networks of walking and cycling paths in 15 regional cities, comprehensive active transport networks within the four largest Australian capital cities and enabling initiatives such as e-bike subsidies that align with ASPA's 3 Transport Priorities (see ASPA's [3 Transport Priorities](#)).



Fund physical activity pre- and post-service training programs for health professionals

Investment Required: Physical activity promotion by health professionals can increase the physical activity levels of patients and is cost effective.
\$30 million excl GST over three years

But evidence shows that many health professionals don't speak about the benefits of physical activity to their patients because of either a lack of knowledge, skills or confidence.

Health professionals agree that promoting physical activity is part of their role, and they have a broad reach within the population, with over 21 million Australians consulting at least one health professional every year. However, only 16% of Australian health professionals can describe the physical activity guidelines accurately.

Providing pre- and post-service training of health professionals to increase their physical activity promotion knowledge and skills can increase the population's physical activity levels ([WHO GAPP](#)). With an increasing number of Australians at risk of, or living with, long-term conditions and strong evidence for physical activity as a prevention and treatment tool it is important that healthcare professionals have the knowledge, skills and confidence to promote physical activity to their patients.

A \$30 million fund will empower implementation of effective training and physical activity promotion models under development or that already exist such as:

- In collaboration with the Heart Foundation, ASPA's evidence-based [physical activity advice continuum](#) provides a clear and practical framework for physical activity promotion in healthcare settings that addresses the major barriers reported in the literature. Building on the awareness raising digital resources currently being developed for health professionals to pledge their commitment to promoting physical activity in their practice, this platform will be further expanded to include training for health professionals in supporting their patients' physical activity.
- [Measure It!](#), an evidence-based very brief physical activity intervention delivered by health professionals from a variety of disciplines, in a variety of settings. In July 2024 Queensland Health adopted Measure It! in all Mental Health Alcohol & Other Drug (MHAOD) services across the state, developing the '[Move and Measure It!](#)' physical activity cascade of care for insufficiently active MHAOD consumers. Evaluation of this initiative is underway.



Commit ongoing funding to national walking programs

Investment Required:
\$30 million excl GST
over three years

Walking is the most prevalent physically active recreation pastime reported by adults and older adults. Numerous large-scale studies demonstrate the health benefits associated with walking.

Walking is accessible, low impact, and inexpensive. Walking programs offer support for people to connect socially as well as increasing their activity levels in a safe environment.

- The [10,000 Steps](#) program is an evidence-based web-, app-, and tracker-based program that supports individuals, workplaces and communities to increase their physical activity through walking. Since 2003, this free digital health program has engaged over 680,000 people and 25,000 organisations (mostly workplaces) who collectively logged over 430 billion steps. The program has secure funding only until June 2025 in QLD and SA. **Federal funding is needed to expand the program and support availability nationally.**
- The [Heart Foundation Walking](#) program is currently funded by the Australian Government under the National Walking Initiative. Since 1995, Heart Foundation Walking has encouraged people in Australia to walk more for a healthy mind, body and heart. This free and accessible national walking program helps individuals and community-led groups to meet physical activity guidelines recommendations, with a focus on those most at risk of cardiovascular disease. Sustained funding beyond June 2025 will provide important ongoing support for the 350,000+ people in Australia who have accessed the program as well as allow for program expansion.



Fund implementation and promotion of National Physical Activity Guidelines

Investment Required: The new 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults and Older Adults will be launched in 2025, for the first time incorporating physical activity, sedentary behaviour and sleep.
\$9 million excl GST
over three years

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It is vital that the new 24- Hour Movement Guidelines are supported by a funded implementation plan including a communications strategy aimed at both professionals who would use the guidelines and communities who would receive and act on their messages.

Evidence suggests that public knowledge and awareness of guidelines is one of the key drivers of enhanced compliance levels. Well supported and targeted public education contributes to changes in awareness and knowledge, and with sufficient dose it can impact behavioural intention and behaviour. Such public education should be complemented by a stakeholder engagement strategy aimed at health and other professionals who would use the guidelines to achieve physical activity objectives with their patients and communities.

About ASPA

The **Asia-Pacific Society for Physical Activity (ASPA)** provides a forum for researchers, practitioners and policy makers to advocate, network, build capacity, and share expertise and experiences and hear about the latest research and practice in physical activity in the Asia-Pacific region.

The **Australian Physical Activity Alliance** is an informal alliance of ASPA members and allies committed to improving Australians' enjoyment of the benefits of physical activity.



AUSTRALIAN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ALLIANCE MEMBERS

