

# Active School Travel - A snapshot

The proportion of Queensland school students driven to and from school has been significantly increasing since the 1970s.<sup>1</sup> More cars around schools increase traffic congestion and road infrastructure costs. There is also a negative impact on broader issues such as health and well-being, the environment and social connection. Active School Travel (AST) programs provide an opportunity to reverse this travel behaviour trend. To support all levels of government, schools and the community to promote AST, the Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has surveyed and analysed eight current Australian AST programs. This report shares the learnings from these programs to promote best practice.

## What is AST?

AST programs encourage students, parents and carers to choose more active modes of transport for all, or part of the journey, to and from school. Australian programs promote, encourage and enable a range of travel options such as:



Walking



Riding



Scootering



Skateboarding



Public Transport



Carpooling



## Our travel habits have changed

Queensland was a state where most students actively travelled to and from school by walking, riding or catching public transport. However now, most students are driven in cars from home to the school gate.

**1976: 29% students aged 5-18 driven by car**



**2020: 66% students aged 5-18 driven by car<sup>2</sup>**



## Why have our travel habits changed?

Parents and carers have reported the following reasons for increased car use:

- parents' work commitments and time constraints
- before and after school activities
- longer distance for students to travel<sup>3</sup>
- lack of secure bike and scooter parking at school
- parents concerned about road safety and injury<sup>4</sup>
- fear of crime along the route<sup>5</sup>
- limited road safety and riding skills
- variable weather
- heavy school bags
- neighbourhoods designed for cars.<sup>6</sup>

## Why we need more active travel

### Improved



physical & mental health



equity



academic performance



social connections & vibrant streets

### Reduced



environmental impact



road infrastructure cost



traffic congestion

## Measuring success

Studies of AST programs in Australia, Northern Ireland and the USA have shown that promotion, education, and infrastructure improvements have increased levels of active travel by between five and 20 percent.<sup>9</sup> This is consistent with results of the TMR Healthy Active School Travel (HAST) program which delivered an 11.2 percent increase in active travel.<sup>10</sup>



## Key program components

AST program components vary and can be tailored to meet individual school needs.

### RESOURCES:

- curriculum links
- guidance & templates.

### PLANNING:

- walking network planning
- school travel plans.

### INCENTIVES:

intrinsic or extrinsic rewards for individuals

### MAPPING:

- active travel maps
- wayfinding.

### INFRASTRUCTURE:

- audits
- funding
- end of trip facilities.

### FOCUS DAYS AND EVENTS

- weekly days
- national focus days
- walking/riding groups.

### EDUCATION AND SKILLS TRAINING

- assembly presentations
- bike, scooter & bus skills
- road safety training.

## Key learnings

Surveys of, and interviews with, current Australian AST program owners revealed the following key learnings about AST programs:

### Online resources alone are not enough

Online resource hubs with information and resources to assist schools and local governments must be supported with facilitation and funding at the local level.

### Ongoing funding over time delivers best results

All programs reported that one off or stop/start funding results in a loss of momentum, skills and AST knowledge.

### Local ownership of programs encourages sustainability

Programs reported that the transfer of skills and ownership from government to individual schools is essential to sustain AST over time.

### Behaviour change supported by safe, connected infrastructure will deliver best results

While behaviour change programs can increase levels of active travel, behaviour change is most effective when supported by safe, connected walking and riding infrastructure.

### Behaviour change is embedded over time

Programs that work closely with individual schools for one to three years have greater impact than short term initiatives of a day, a week or a month.

## Conclusion

The Queensland Government strongly supports the work of governments, schools and the community to promote and enable AST and supports this through grants, resources and the Road Safety Advisor network. We will also work with local governments to investigate and promote future AST initiatives.

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## Stay connected

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