

Media Release from NZ School Speeds Embargoed until 12:00AM Monday 1st May
WILL OUR SCHOOL CHILDREN GET HOME HEALTHY AND SAFE?

Work Safe is promising adults to 'get you home healthy and safe', but little is being done for children who walk or cycle to school. Lucinda Rees from NZ School Speeds says the Government is irresponsible, as there are no consistent rules in place to get school children home 'healthy and safe' and is calling on them to put rules place to protect our most vulnerable road users.

Road workers have speed limits of 30km/h and these speed limits are posted in many city centres where adults work. Speed limits outside schools can be up to 100km/h, despite a recommended maximum speed limit of 30km/h at peak times. When children head to school on their bikes, there are no rules to protect them from cars passing dangerously close on the road. Currently there is only a 'suggested' passing distance; 1 metre is the recommended passing distance for vehicles driven up to 60km/h and 1.5 metres above 60km/h.

The 8th to 14th May is Road Safety Week and presents an opportunity for the Government to act and put consistent road safety laws in place. David Bennett the Associate Minister of Transport, responsible for road safety, will be aware of recommendations given by The World Health Organisation (WHO). So far, the minister seems to have ignored road safety of our most vulnerable road users. Last year Ms Rees sent correspondence to his department asking for their views on school road safety, but is still awaiting response. With New Zealand's road toll creeping up, Rees says, "Bennett and all of the Ministry of Transport have nothing to be proud of. They need to take advice from countries like Germany, where rights of vulnerable road users were historically and still are paramount and their road toll reflects this."

- School children are our future drivers and as walkers or cyclists will learn about road safety from the vulnerable road user point of view as they do in many European countries
- The WHO recommended speed limit outside schools at peak times is a maximum speed limit of 30km/h
- With consistent speed limits outside schools, drivers will know what to expect when approaching school zones, making them safer for all
- There is no mandatory passing distance of cyclists. The recommended cyclist passing distance for drivers is 1 metre up to 60km/h and 1.5 metres above that speed for cyclists
- Exercise is good for children and if they make their independent way to school it will benefit them in many ways
- Perceptual judgment and motor skills are often not fully developed until age 14
- Children are easily distracted and many teenagers feel invincible
- Drivers are required to slow to 30km/h at road works for adult workers and many city centres
- Schools buses loading or unloading passengers have a 20km/h speed limit and similar is needed outside schools
- Travelling to school on foot or cycle is considered a high risk activity by many parents in New Zealand, so few children are allowed to travel independently
- More children walking or cycling will reduce congestion outside schools

"According the WHO, 'Safe road systems consider the needs of all road users'." Rees continues, "After the Pike River tragedy rules were tightened around work safety. Do we really need to wait for another tragedy for action to be taken?"

The World Health Organisation recommends a speed limit of 30 km/h or less outside schools, yet the NZ Government does nothing to slow traffic to safe speeds

IF A SCHOOL BUS HAS STOPPED YOU MUST SLOW DOWN TO 20 km/h OR LESS UNTIL YOU ARE WELL PAST AND MATTER WHICH DIRECTION YOU ARE COMING FROM!

But when some school children walk onto the road outside their school the speed limit can be 100 km/h

NZ School Speeds will help make roads safe for all children with consistent school speed limits.

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