



16 January 2007

**Committee Secretary  
Senate Employment, Workplace Relations and Education Committee  
Department of the Senate  
P O Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra  
ACT 2600**

**Inquiry into the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation  
Amendment Bill 2006**

**Fitness Australia Submission - Workplace Fitness At Risk**

Fitness Australia views with some concern proposed changes contained in the provisions of the Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2006.

Whilst there is concern about the cost pressure on the current scheme, the cost of an increasingly inactive workforce is infinitely more.

Numerous reports in recent years have indicated that lack of physical activity has been a major contributor to such conditions as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, arthritis, falls and many others.

Increasingly Australians are being encouraged to incorporate more physical activity into their daily lives – 30 minutes of activity per day is the oft quoted benchmark – as a way to prevent and/or manage a variety of conditions and diseases. Whilst this may be difficult for many, incorporation of incidental exercise is manageable for everyone.

The Victorian Government Better Health Channel describes incidental exercise as, among other suggestions, “get off the bus (or train) at an earlier stop and walk the rest of the way,” or “take the stairs instead of the lift”.....

The Pedestrian Council of Australia’s charter includes “for individuals, walking offers a valuable low-impact form of individual exercise as a healthy counter to the sedentary lifestyle. It is highly accessible, available for all age groups and is a proven method of promoting better health”.

Bicycle sales in Australia during 2006 outstripped cars for the first time reaching an average 1133000 per year since 2001. The market share for adult bikes was about two thirds in 2005.

**Contact**

P | PO Box 6453 SSCP, Alexandria NSW 2015  
T | (02) 8338 3000  
F | (02) 8338 3033  
E | [info@fitness.org.au](mailto:info@fitness.org.au)  
W | [www.fitnessaustralia.com.au](http://www.fitnessaustralia.com.au)



Cycling is the 4<sup>th</sup> most popular physical activity for people 15 years and older, more popular than golf or fishing according to the Exercise, Recreation and Sport Survey (ERASS2005).

The Cycling Promotion Fund in their report on 4 January 2007 state “there is an emerging trend towards people using bikes as their official company-supplied vehicle in place of the traditional company car. Some of Australia’s biggest corporations now have bicycle fleets and when you add in government organisations, we now know of at least 50 organisations which operate fleets of bikes.”

The National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults advises:

**“Ways to increase activity**

Increases in daily activity can come from small changes made throughout your day – they all add up. It is important to remember that some activity is better than none, and more is better than a little. To make a habit out of increasing activity in your day, you can;

Walk or cycle instead of using the car

Park further away from your destination and walk the rest of the way

Walk or cycle to and from your tram/train station or bus stop and get on and off at a stop that is further away

Take the stairs instead of the lift.

Walk rather than rest on escalators or travelators.

*Work in the garden*

*Play with children in an active way.*

*Walk or play with pets.*

Challenge family, friends and work colleagues to be active with you”

The policy change to **“remove claims for non work-related journeys and recess breaks where the employer has no control over the activities of the employee”** is likely to impact on the physical activity of those in the workforce who attempt to incorporate incidental activity into their daily lives. Such employees are less likely to consider walking or cycling to work, less likely to go for a walk or run or play ball with colleagues at lunchtime and many other activities currently employed. Whilst this may cut costs to Workcover in the event of injury in the short term, it will undoubtedly increase costs long term for the Health Service (and employers) in dealing with the many ‘lifestyle’ diseases which are prevalent in Australia today.

Fitness Australia cannot support any move that will restrict the opportunity for people to incorporate physical activity into their daily routine including the journey to and from work and lunchtime and other breaks activity.

Prepared by

Karen Seager  
National Training and Registration Manager

**Contact**

P | PO Box 6453 SSCP, Alexandria NSW 2015  
T | (02) 8338 3000  
F | (02) 8338 3033  
E | [info@fitness.org.au](mailto:info@fitness.org.au)  
W | [www.fitnessaustralia.com.au](http://www.fitnessaustralia.com.au)