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Corporate Plan Output: Road Safety	

The purpose of this report is to inform the Committee of the 'Walk a Child to School Day' event that was held in Christchurch on March 3rd this year organised by City Streets Unit staff. It was the first WCSD held anywhere in New Zealand. WCSD is being used in Christchurch as part of an overall approach to improve school children's road safety, and to encourage alternative forms of transport on the school journey.

DISCUSSION

WCSD was last year used successfully in parts of North America to raise the profile of walking as a means of travelling to school. Information received from these sources suggested it would be a worthwhile concept to try out in Christchurch.

The declared purpose of Christchurch's WCSD was to promote walking as a safe and healthy way for children to travel to and from school. The main aims centred on easing traffic congestion and improving road safety around schools, improving the health of children, and fostering the learning of road safety among families.

Support for the WCSD concept was sought and obtained from the Police Education Service and the School Health Service. Primary schools in Christchurch were invited to 'register' last year to take part in the event. Forty-two schools accepted the invitation.

Participating schools were encouraged to promote 3 March 1999 as a day for walking children to school. Organising drop off points for walkers, as well as for those having to come by car, were a key suggestion made. These also provided meeting points for the eight rugby and cricketing personalities that were invited to take part and walk with children. Certificates and stickers of participation were supplied to schools for distributing to children who walked to school. Partial sponsorship was arranged with Mayell Foods for the provision of cookies for walkers.

Most of the publicity was carried out through the schools themselves, with assistance from Council staff. Some radio and newspaper advertising was carried out to promote WCSD. A live radio cross over was staged at two schools who had prominent Canterbury Crusaders rugby players present.

RESULTS

The high turn out of walkers on WCSD surprised Council officers and schools alike. Schools reported quiet streets nearby, along with plenty of children and their parents walking to school. Some schools had in excess of 90% of their children walking to school. WCSD received good coverage in the local media, and was also reported on New Zealand's key real time news site, the NewsRoom.

Thirty-two schools returned travel to school surveys that were held the week before WCSD and on the day itself. These show that the numbers of children walking to school increased from 35% beforehand to 74% on WCSD. Correspondingly, the numbers travelling by car fell from 54% to 20%. Based on these figures, and assuming

there are 1.5 children travelling per car on the school journey, it is estimated that 3,000 car trips to school were saved on WCSD.

Evaluations of WCSD received from schools show a high level of satisfaction and support for the event. All but one school indicated that they would like to take part in WCSD again. Many have shown an interest in being involved in further measures to increase the numbers of children walking to school.

As part of WCSD, schools were also asked to enter a competition for the best idea to encourage walking to school, with several schools entering. Their ideas will partly form the basis for plans to trial several initiatives at schools to promote walking. It is hoped that these follow up strategies will be able to capitalise on the enthusiasm generated by WCSD for walking to school.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.