



News Release

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## **FREE ACCESS TO BIKES AND FACILITIES FOR ALL NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN IS THE AIM AFTER HAWKE'S BAY PILOT INITIATIVE DEEMED A SUCCESS**

Prime Minister John Key today launched a new programme that aims to give every primary school child in New Zealand regular access to a bike and bike track within the school grounds.

A trial of Bike On NZ's 'Bikes in the School' programme has been running since 1 February in St Mary's School, Hastings, and now founder Paul McArdle hopes to secure funding to be able to offer it to any New Zealand primary school that wants it.

Tukituki MP Craig Foss launched the programme with Mr Key and said; "Bikes in the School is a fantastic and positive initiative to help get young people more active on a regular basis. **I thank the generosity of those who have invested in this program.**"

"By providing free bikes and helmets to schools, and also building safe bike tracks on which children can ride safely, Bikes in the School helps our kids to get active which in turn will lead to a whole range of positive outcomes such as improved health and increased confidence," said Mr Foss.

The main aim of Bikes in the School is to ensure all primary school children have an opportunity to experience the 'joy of biking' and all the wonderful benefits that flow on from cycling in a safe environment says Mr McArdle.

"Ministry of Transport figures show that children aged 5-12 now cycle for only one-third of the time and distance they did 1990," said Mr McArdle. "Yet at the same time the World Health Organisation says New Zealand has the third-highest obesity rate in the OECD. We believe that Bikes in the School can help contribute to the reversal of these statistics."

Since Bikes in the School provided St Mary's school with their 62 new bikes, 225 helmets, a dedicated staff resource, a 550m cycle track, two pump tracks, a skills track and a bike shed, the school has seen a huge increase in children's interest in biking, says principal Liz Crowley.

"Some of our children had never ridden a bike before. We've incorporated the biking into our physical education programme and the kids just can't wait to get out there. The teachers are also enjoying biking with the children"

"We're seeing an increase in confidence, improved social interaction, more physical activity, and also more attention to safety and an increase in their awareness of what's around them when they're biking."

As well as the support of the Prime Minister, Bikes in the School has gained the backing of New Zealand's main official cycling organisations, who believe Bikes in the School will help address health

issues and parental fears about children's safety while learning to ride.

BikeNZ sees the programme as a natural fit with its RideStrong Programme, which is dedicated to promoting a safe and enjoyable environment for all cyclists.

"One of RideStrong's core goals is to provide the opportunity for every Kiwi school kid to ride a bike safely and with confidence, and as such we have launched a pilot programme of cycle skill training for school children," says Kieran Turner, CEO of BikeNZ.

"Bikes in the School helps to achieve this goal. Not only are children having fun and getting exercise, but through the Bike On NZ - RideStrong partnership they will also learn important safety skills that will make New Zealand's roads safer places for them to be."

CAN (Cycling Advocates Network) and the government-funded Bikewise (NZTA and Ministry of Health) have also lent their support.

Double BMX World Champion Sarah Walker attended the launch – providing inspiration to children and showing just how far they can go on their bikes.

Mr McArdle said he hoped Kiwis would get behind Bikes in the School so that every child would have the opportunity their parents and grandparents had – to experience a fun and enjoyable activity.

"The best things we can provide for our children are fun and healthy habits they will take with them for the rest of their lives. Bikes in the School achieves both of these goals and we hope that before long we can offer that opportunity for every primary school child in the country."

For further details visit: <http://www.bikesinschools.wordpress.com>

Ends

For further information, including images or to arrange interviews please contact Sarah Alexander-Willcox from PR ink on 021 400 458 or email [sarah@pr-ink.co.nz](mailto:sarah@pr-ink.co.nz)

**Notes to Editor:**

Bike On NZ is a not-for-profit organisation whose aim is to enable everyone in New Zealand to experience the "joy of biking".

Bike On's Bikes in School programme has provided St Mary's school in Hastings with:

1 new bike storage shed

62 new bikes

225 helmets

550 meter track – around the outside of the playfield

two pump tracks – one easy and one medium level skills

A bike skills track

1 dedicated staffing resource to oversee the program