Reviewer’s report

Title: Is there a role for workplaces in reducing employees' driving to work? Findings from a cross-sectional survey from inner-west Sydney, Australia

Version: 1 Date: 2 November 2009

Reviewer: Evie Leslie

Reviewer’s report:

This cross-sectional study examines the perceptions of workplace support for active travel from a convenience sample of adults whose children participated in a walk to school program. It provides some interesting descriptive data relating to those in the sample that travel to work by car. The paper raises issues about the nature of supportive workplace policies and broader environments that could contribute to the promotion of active travel although no data on workplace policies was collected. The information collected is limited but does provide some directions for future research on this topic.

The paper is well constructed and the presentation clear and logical. I do think however that there is some important information on measures used that was not included. This issue and a few minor suggestions are listed below for the author’s attention;

Major Compulsory Revisions

1. The study is focused on the ‘role of workplaces’ in increasing active travel. The eight statements used to help explain this included ‘there is convenient public transport close to home’ and ‘the area I live has a reputation for being safe’, neither of which are related to the workplace. Can the authors give a little more information on how these items were derived? The questions have apparently been pilot-tested (p.6) but there is no information on reliability or construct validity of the items.

2. Previous studies have demonstrated that distance is an important determinant of active travel. A distance measure is reported in the results and used as a categorical variable in both tables 1 & 2 but there is no information in the methods as to how this was obtained. Was it self-reported by parents or was it derived from objective measures of children participating in the walk to school program? Some information on this should to be included.

Discretionary Revisions

1. Demographic variables included are quite limited. Was there any information on other potentially relevant factors such as number of cars in the household, number of children, number of children attending primary school, etc. The author’s mention that adults used in the sample were all parents of primary school children; is there any information regarding age of these (considering that younger children may be more likely to be driven to school than older children,
which may impact parents driving to work).

2. The discussion does not mention flexible working arrangements – while not significant in this study they are important for those wishing to make use of discounted "early bird" tickets for public transport use, as has been recently successful in shifting travel patterns (in Victoria). Given this factor is of no cost to the employer it could be readily targeted for change in workplace policies.

3. The strongest finding related to driving to work was associated with having convenient parking at the workplace. A comment on implications of this for broader policy (for example, local government and land use planning) is warranted in the discussion.

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

'I declare that I have no competing interests'