



# Pupils map school route hazards as part of study

by ROSEMARY McLENNAN

CARS PARKED on the footpath or speeding, driveway visibility and barking dogs are among the hazards Maoribank School pupils have identified in a school travel plan study.

Last week the whole school took part in an exercise to identify impediments to safe and healthy ways to travel to and from school.

Other hazards included broken glass on the footpaths and even bigger children throwing things at children on their way from Totara Park.

It's a Wellington Regional Council project and co-ordinator Simon Vincent says it is not about reinventing the wheel but "reintroducing the feet".

"A travel plan enables the whole school community to create safe and healthy ways for students to journey to and from school. "Essentially a travel plan is a set of practical actions which aims to improve road safety and reduce car trips to and from school.

"The plan is developed and implemented by the whole school community in partnership with the local council, Greater Wellington and other experts in areas of health and safety."

The regional council is working with schools, communities and local councils to introduce school travel plans to the region.

Maoribank School and St Joseph's School are the first in Upper Hutt to take up the programme.

Students use monopoly houses and coloured stickers to identify their homes and travel modes. They then use "issue cards" to pinpoint areas of concern on their journey. All the information gathered is used by the school's working party to develop strategies to promote and deliver a range of active travel options.

Mr Vincent says the Upper Hutt City Council supports the process and will be involved in assisting the working party on potential strategies.

"The benefits of developing a school travel plan are wide ranging - the school sees reduced traffic congestion at the gate, improves student safety and the students arrive at school ready to learn, the parents build better relationships with the school, increase parent and child contact and reduce the stress of time spent in traffic jams, the students improve their health and fitness, gain road and personal safety skills, increase their knowledge of the lo-



cal environment and develop confidence and independence. "The community benefits from reduction in air and noise pollution, reduced congestion problems and improves walking, cycling and bus routes," says Mr Vincent.

Maoribank School principal Kay Wilson says most pupils walk or are driven to school. Some roads are unsafe for pedestrians for various reasons and there is pressure on parking outside the school.

She says speed humps in the school's street Hillside Drive "have made a big difference" and there is potential for more pedestrian crossings and walking buses.

The health benefits of biking to school are obvious "but how can we make it safer in a healthy way".

Most of the school's pupils live in Maoribank or Timberlea but some come from Te Marua, Totara Park and the central city.

**Maoribank Monopoly:** Pupils Te Hana Whare and Cassian Jewell, both seven, with the large map showing where the school's children live and the hazards they face to get to school. Te Hana and Cassian are either driven or catch a bus to school. Occasionally Te Hana will bike to school with mum.

