



HEALTHYSPACES&PLACES



HEALTH AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

Australia is facing an ageing population, growing burdens of disease and increasing pressures on health budgets.

The role that regular physical activity has in managing and reducing the risk factors of many preventable diseases is now recognised.

There is a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that the design and management of the built environment where we live, work, play, shop or learn is associated with physical activity.

CURRENT HEALTH CONCERNS

Some health facts

Physically inactive Australian adults are costing the health care system \$1.5 billion a year.¹

It is estimated that almost 9 million Australians – 54% of our adult population – do not do enough physical activity on a daily basis.²

Not doing enough physical activity doubles the risk of heart disease. Physical inactivity also increases the risk of type 2 diabetes, obesity, breast and bowel cancer, depression and anxiety.³

National Physical Activity Guidelines

These Guidelines recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity on most days, preferably achieve health and fitness benefits.⁴

Getting people out of cars

10% of all car trips are less than one kilometre (the equivalent to a ten minute walk); 30% are less than three kilometres.⁵ There are substantial direct benefits in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions when people choose to walk or cycle rather than drive.

LINKAGES BETWEEN HEALTH, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT

Research is showing that regular physical activity improves people's physical and mental health and wellbeing. People engaging in regular physical activity locally can also engender a sense of belonging in a community.

Neighbourhoods and cities that are designed to encourage active lifestyles can affect improvements in people's health, such as by providing more opportunities for more walking, cycling and using public transport.

For more information
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HOW PLANNING FOR HEALTH CAN IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY OUTCOMES

Communities where consideration for people's health is part of the planning process, create a more sustainable community by contributing to outcomes such as reducing car emissions, having more active and healthier people, and creating safer and more socially connected communities.

The built environment can promote increased physical activity through design elements such as:

- Suburbs and neighbourhoods that people can walk easily around and to key facilities such as schools, shops and public transport
- Provision of walking and cycling facilities (eg foot paths and cycleways)
- Facilities for physical activity (eg swimming pools, playgrounds)
- Activity centres with a variety of land uses
- Transport infrastructure and systems, linking residential, commercial, community and business areas.

KEY REFERENCES

¹ Stevenson J., Bauman A., Armstrong T., Smith B. and Bellew B. (2000), *The costs of illness attributable to physical inactivity in Australia*, Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care.

² McCormack G., Milligan R., Giles-Corti B. and Clarkson J. (2003), *Physical Activity levels of Western Australian Adults 2002: Results from the adult physical activity survey and*

pedometer study, Perth, Western Australia: Western Australia Government

³ Begg S., Vos T., Barker B., Steveson C., Stanley L. and Lopez A (2007), *The burden of disease and injury in Australia 2003*, AIHW publication PHE 82, Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

⁴ Department of Health and Ageing (Reprinted 2005), *An active way to better health, National Physical Activity Guidelines for Adults* www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/ Publishing.nsf/Content/phd-physical-activity-adults-pdf-cnt.htm

⁵ Bureau of Transport and Regional Economics (2002), *Greenhouse policy options for transport*, BTRE Report No 105

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