



HEALTHY SPACES & PLACES

A national guide to designing places for healthy living

COMMUNITY LETTER TEMPLATE

Dear (Councillor, local Member of Parliament, Mayor, Council Staff),

I/We are writing to express our concern about a serious issue within our community that we consider needs your action.

Australia is one of the most overweight of the developed nations, with overweight and obesity affecting about one in two Australian adults and up to one in four children (Department of Health and Ageing, 2009). Current research shows a strong link between people's health (mental and physical) and regular physical activity. An active lifestyle can reduce the risk of some of these preventable diseases, including coronary heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, obesity and some cancers.

According to health experts, it takes as little as 30 minutes of exercise most days of the week to make a difference for adults and 60 minutes for children for positive outcomes. Our sedentary, car dependent lifestyles are seen as a significant contributing factor reinforced through poor built environment design which most often gives priority to cars rather than encouraging people to walk, cycle and use public transport.

[insert town/suburb/community name] is an example of a place where if good design and people-friendly spaces and places that promoted active lifestyles were implemented, people within the community would be greatly encouraged to walk, cycle and participate in active recreation.

Healthy Spaces and Places is a national guide for planning, designing and creating sustainable, people-friendly places. It provides tools and information on how we can plan and design healthy sustainable communities, it details 10 key principles that need to be applied to the built environment and six processes on how to implement these.

Of the 10 design principles listed on *Healthy Spaces and Places*, we feel the following are what is currently missing from our community [delete those not applicable]:

- **Active transport** – travel modes that involve physical activity such as walking and cycling and include the use of public transport.
- **Aesthetics** – the attractiveness of a place or area affects the overall experience, an attractive neighbourhood invites people to use and enjoy its public spaces and places and to feel safe.
- **Connectivity** – the directness of links and the number of connections in a path, street or road network and the ease with which people can walk and cycle around a neighbourhood and between places.
- **Environments for all people** – places that are safe and easily accessible for everyone regardless of age, ability, culture or income.
- **Mixed density** – residential development that contains a mix of housing types enables people to grow older in their local neighbourhoods.
- **Mixed land use** – complementary uses such as houses, shops, schools, offices, libraries, open space and cafes etc are co-located to promote active transport.
- **Parks and open space** – land reserved for passive recreation, for sport and recreation, preservation of natural environments, green space and/or urban stormwater management.

- **Safety and surveillance** – design that aims to reduce crime can enhance the physical, mental and social wellbeing of a community.
- **Social inclusion** – all people and communities are given the opportunity to participate fully in political, cultural, civic and economic life.
- **Supporting infrastructure** – facilities that encourage regular and safe physical activity such as walking (footpaths, lighting, water fountains and signs), cycling (bike paths, bike lockers, signs and showers), public transport (safe shelter, lighting and signs), social interaction (seating, shade, shelter and toilets), and recreation (seating, play equipment and facilities).

Our community needs your help in ensuring that the principles and processes outlined in *Healthy Spaces and Places* are applied to (insert town/suburb/community name). Please go to www.healthyplaces.org.au to find the national guide and further details or email healthyplaces@planning.org.au

We look forward to hearing from you and working together to ensure our community becomes a healthier, more sustainable place to live for all.

Kind regards,



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