



Submission to the NSW consultation on changes to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*

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Context

The Australian Sporting Goods Association Incorporated (ASGA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Government's consultation on changes to the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

ASGA was formed in 1981 as the national industry association representing a broad spectrum of sporting and active lifestyle goods industry participants, including brands, manufacturers, distributors and retailers.

Members of ASGA include the world's leading sports brands and major Australian retailers. We represent over 1000 sporting and active lifestyle goods retail stores around Australia.

Sports retailers range from the very large (1,000+m²) like Rebel Sport and Sportsmart, through to franchisees like The Athletes Foot, family-owned businesses in the High Streets of regional towns and tiny golf club pro-shops. Ownership and business models include franchises, listed corporations, family-owned companies and vertically-integrated international brands.

ASGA is a leading industry voice on issues impacting the health, trade, regulation and taxation of the sporting and active lifestyle goods industries. ASGA aims to foster market growth, provide services and advocate for increased participation in sport and physical activity.

ASGA members have a strong interest in promoting active and healthy lifestyles for Australians. As such, we partner with like-minded organisations to encourage active participation and work with governments at all levels to ensure people have access to healthy movement options.

Recommendations

ASGA strongly supports the submission prepared by the Healthy Planning Expert Working Group (HPEWG), an independent NSW expert group comprising healthy planning experts from the academic, planning, health, local and state government sectors. As such we make the following recommendations:

1. Ensure 'Health and wellbeing' is explicitly identified as an object in the Bill, thereby embedding it as a strategic planning outcome and setting the context for future decision making. (The HPEWG have suggested the phrasing "*To promote the health and wellbeing of the all communities in NSW*" and we support their suggestion).
2. Embed health considerations in strategic planning. To achieve this, local strategic planning statements should be used as an opportunity to reconcile population forecasts and infrastructure delivery priorities, build greater social connection and equitable access to healthy food, and address locally occurring clusters of health disadvantage.
3. Engage the community to create connected and inclusive communities, where a sense of empowerment aids mental and physical wellbeing. Community participation plans offer an opportunity to achieve this, however to maintain integrity, this process must be appropriately resourced and incorporate regular timely review.
4. Evidence based indicators should be developed to focus delivery, evaluate healthy planning considerations, and encourage accountability in decision making. Such indicators could potentially be implemented through Development Control Plans.
5. Increase healthy built environment expertise in decision making by adding it to the list of preferred expertise for membership of planning bodies. This will support improved decision making and assist to optimise opportunities for consideration of health in large developments and planning proposals.

The Importance of Active Cities

Australia, like much of the rest of the developed world, is facing a physical inactivity crisis. Obesity has risen to record highs, with over 65 per cent of adults classified as being overweight or obese. One in five Australian adults has cardiovascular disease. Over 25 per cent of 5-17 year olds are overweight or obese.¹

Physical inactivity contributes 6.6 per cent of the overall health burden in Australia and 10 per cent of all deaths.²

¹ <http://www.sportforall.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Maximising-the-potential-of-Australian-Sport-CAS-15.9.14.pdf>

² Ibid.

Research from around the world has shown cities that encourage physical activity have better health and economic outcomes for their residents.³ For example, consistent stair use can be linked to a 12 to 20 percent reduction in all-cause mortality, including reductions in cardiovascular disease.⁴ Other studies have found that redeveloping business areas to promote mixed use and walkability increased employment by 300 percent.⁵

ASGA is concerned the Objects in the draft amendments of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* do not contain an explicit reference to 'health and wellbeing', despite the fact there is ample evidence from around the world that the planning system has a significant role to play in supporting healthy outcomes for residents.

As noted in the Designed to Move resource [Designed to Move: Active Cities](#):

“From a city planning standpoint, the evidence presents a strong case to design cities to be more active. In some instances, that can simply be a matter of making the most of existing space – opening up school grounds for public use, for example. Other solutions will involve more substantial changes to urban design and public policy...

Put simply, the research shows active cities are healthier, wealthier, safer, greener and more cohesive. Not surprisingly, the people who live in them are happier.”⁶

While significant detail can be found on the Designed to Move website and the various reports it contains, the infographic below summarises the research:



[Designed to Move: Active Cities. Figure 2, Page 9.](#)

³ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 8.](#)

⁴ Meyer, P., Kayser, B., & Mach, F. (2009.) *Stair Use for Cardiovascular Disease Prevention*. European Journal of Cardiovascular Prevention & Rehabilitation, 16(2 suppl), S17-S18.

⁵ Lawlor, E. (2013.) *The Pedestrian Pound: The Business Case for Better Streets & Places*. United Kingdom: Living Streets & Just Economics Report.

⁶ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 8.](#)

ASGA supports the four Calls to Action as described in the *Designed to Move: Active Cities* report. These Calls to Action implore governments to put movement first when designing, building and using city infrastructure by:

1. *Prioritising physical activity as a solution* – Build physical activity into master plans, administrative actions and incentives.⁷
2. *Make existing resources active resources* – Look at existing resources for low-cost, high-gain interventions, like abandoned space and after-hours access to facilities.⁸
3. *Design for people to be active* – Cities should be built for people, not just cars. Rethink how you measure where, why and how people move.⁹
4. *Build a legacy of movement* – Create changes that will live beyond the current administration, such as infrastructure and policies.¹⁰

We support the work of the NSW Department of Planning & Environment to create a more integrated, dynamic and engaging vision for the future of planning in NSW and we are willing to assist the Department in delivering these objectives.

Conclusion

The Australian sporting and active lifestyle goods sector has a vested interest in promoting a healthy and active community. As shown above, physically active Australians not only improve their own health through sport and exercise, they also improve their communities and contribute to the economy through increased spending and lower health costs.

Our members understand that it is easier for individuals to achieve their health and physical activity goals if the infrastructure surrounding them facilitates movement and exercise, whether deliberate or incidental.

The planning system, as recognised in other jurisdictions including Tasmania, South Australia and, from 1 July 2017, Queensland, has an important role to play in ensuring our cities are livable and have a healthy design built into them from the start.

We strongly encourage the Government to adopt new amendments that include explicit references to 'health and wellbeing' in the Objects of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*.

Our members thank the Department and the Minister for the opportunity to be involved in this consultation and I would be pleased to discuss this submission further, at your convenience.

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⁷ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 19.](#)

⁸ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 28.](#)

⁹ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 31.](#)

¹⁰ [Designed to Move: Active Cities. Page 34.](#)