



30 March 2017

Ms Alison Frame
Dep Secretary Planning, Policy, Strategy and Governance
Planning Legislation Updates 2017
NSW Department of Planning & Environment
GPO Box 39
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Ms Frame,

RE: THE INCLUSION OF HEALTH AND WELLBEING IN THE REVIEW OF THE NSW PLANNING SYSTEM

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the review of the NSW planning system, and specifically the public consultation draft *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Bill 2017* (the Bill).

The purpose of our correspondence is to strongly endorse the inclusion of explicit reference to 'health and wellbeing' in the Objects of the Act in recognition that:

- There is growing awareness of the key role that the planning system can play in supporting the health and wellbeing of the community;
- Precedents for this measure exist in other jurisdictions such as Tasmania, South Australia and from July 2017 Queensland; and that
- Reference to the importance of health and wellbeing already exist in many strategic planning documents in NSW including the State's Regional Plans and the Greater Sydney Commission's current draft District Plans.

We make this submission on behalf of The George Institute for Global Health, whose mission is to improve the health of millions of people in Australia and worldwide in areas including chronic disease and injury by providing evidence and engaging with decision makers to enact real change.

The Institute's public health law program recognises that law is a powerful, effective and cost-effective instrument of public health that can be used to create conditions for people to live healthier lives. Our work in both food and alcohol policy is grounded in an understanding of the importance of healthy environments in supporting individuals to make healthier choices. Access and availability of alcohol and unhealthy fast foods are just one reason we believe consideration of public health imperatives in planning law reform initiatives is vital.



The George Institute for Global Health 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, and 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). To support this, the World Health Organisation definition of health should be adopted to ensure a consistent and shared understanding of the desired outcomes.
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.

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 any way we can. For further information regarding this submission, please contact Jan Muhunthan or Alexandra Jones of our public health law program on +61 2 8052 4588.

Sincerely,

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