



Director, Industry and Infrastructure Policy
Department of Planning and Environment
PO Box 39
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6 April 2017

Director, Industry and Infrastructure Policy,

Re: Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) Health Promotion-Response to the Draft Education and Child Care SEPP – schools.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Education and Child Care SEPP. As a partner with the Department of Education on health initiatives and working with schools in the Northern Sydney region on obesity prevention we are keen to ensure this state-wide and national issue is addressed in the School Design Quality Principles and Education and Childcare SEPP.

Childhood obesity is a key population health issue and a priority of the NSW government (NSW Premier's Priority 2015). The school environment is thought to have a major influence on children's physical activity levels, obesity and overall health (Button, Trites et al. 2013). The NSW school population is expected to grow by an average of 14.4% in the decade between 2016 and 2026 (Goss 2016). Over the last decade there has been growing concern that to accommodate increasing numbers of children, schools are replacing playground space with buildings, thus incrementally reducing opportunities for physical activity (Asset Management Directorate, 2016). Of particular concern is that this trend may be associated with reduced participation in physical activity.

These issues are also recognised internationally by the World Health Organization Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (WHO 2016). In recommendation 2.2, WHO advises that we ensure that adequate facilities are available on school premises and in public spaces for physical activity during recreational time for all children.

We are currently generating research evidence to inform primary school planning and design by quantifying the relationship between free play space and physical activity.

We agree with the Regulating Expansion of Schools Planning Circular that 'projects should be designed to anticipate any expected future expansion of the school, including catering for the future needs that may affect student and staff numbers. '

Northern Sydney Local Health District-Health Promotion strongly supports:

- Sufficient free play space to support best student health outcomes
- Provisions for active connections to/from school
- Provisions for sharing school space with the community (3.7 GSC social panel page 28)

NSLHD Health Promotion recommends the following responses to the Draft Education and Child Care SEPP and supporting documents:

Draft State Environmental Planning Policy (Educational Establishments and Child Care Facilities) 2017

Part 4, p27 30 (2) subclause (1) applies only to development that:

Addition:

(c) does not encroach on or decrease the utility of the playground space and space for physical activity required for the current and predicted student population growth.

(d) that consideration has been given to student population growth and that a multiple storey building is preferable as they are more space-saving than a spread of single storey buildings that may have a future impact on school playground space.

Schools – design quality principles

Schedule 4 (p61)

Principle 4 – Health and Safety

Addition:

School development accommodates playground space and space for physical activity so that the current (and predicted) school student population has sufficient size and quality spaces to engage in physical activity that supports best health outcomes.

Principle 5 -Amenity

Addition:

Where possible and especially for a newly planned school, build next to a public green space without the need to cross a road, with maximum ease of access and sharing of this amenity.

Draft Better Schools Design Guide:

We support part 1 of the Design Quality principles, the principal of schools actively seeking opportunities for their facilities to be shared with the community and to cater for activities outside of school hours.

We are also aligned to the design guide in part 2 of the Design Guidance about maximising opportunities for safe walking, cycling and public transport access to and from the school is included.

In part 6 of the Design Guidance, whole of life flexible and adaptive, we would like it to be made explicit by adding that 'space for school play grounds and physical activity needs to be appraised before any development. No development should reduce their amenity for the current and predicted student population and should maximise engagement in physical activity for students'.

NSLHD Health Promotion would like to be able to further assist with the Draft Education and Child Care SEPP consultation especially in relation to the School Design Quality Principles and how they relate to creating a healthy built environment in schools.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further discussion.

Yours sincerely



Eve Clark

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