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To Office of Recreation Sport and Racing

The Heart Foundation welcomes the South Australian State Government's planned upgrade to the State Sports Park at Gepps Cross in Adelaide. We commend the Master Planning process and consultation with stakeholders that has taken place.

The Heart Foundation also commends the Office for Recreation Sport and Racing for their recently released Game On initiative which seeks to ensure physical activity and play can fit seamlessly into the daily lives of South Australians.

The Gepps Cross sports precinct has the potential to be health-promoting and support increased physical activity not only for the sports people but for their supporters, visitors and the community using the sports facilities and surrounding spaces.

The sports precinct encompasses world-class facilities for all levels of sport activity and sports people. We can assume that the people playing organised sports offered in the precinct, such as hockey and soccer, are meeting their recommended physical activity levels. The reality is that many people visiting the precinct will not be participating in organised sports and many will be inactive (sitting, watching, eating).

We know that physical inactivity contributes 10-20% of the disease burden. Physical inactivity is also a major risk factor for obesity.ⁱ

Disappointingly, only 56% of Australian adults engage in the recommended 150 minutes (or more) of physical activity each week.ⁱⁱ Only 30% of children aged 2-17 years meet the recommended physical activity guidelines.

For our ageing population the statistics are even worse – 75% of Australians over 65 years of age are not sufficiently active to achieve any health benefits.ⁱⁱⁱ

As part of our work we are committed to seeing more Australians more active, more often.

Why? Because physical inactivity is a major health problem in its own right. Insufficient physical activity has been repeatedly linked to an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, including coronary heart disease, hypertension and stroke.

We know that group physical activity can also provide motivational and emotional support and address social isolation. Our Heart Foundation Walking group participants state the reason they stay is because of the friendships they make. They come for the walking but stay for the talking.

Promoting healthy built environments that support active living is a strategic priority for the Heart Foundation and this is reflected in our flagship program [Healthy Active by Design](#), and through key resources such as the [Blueprint for an active Australia](#).

Our population is ageing^{iv} and this has implications on the age structure which shows a decline in the proportion of the population aged under 15 years and a relative increase in the proportion of the population over 65 years. The proportion of the population over the age of 65 is projected to increase rapidly over the next decade as the Baby Boomers age.

Physical activity is critical to maintaining people's quality of life as they age. Healthy active ageing requires appropriate environmental and social support. Physical activity, such as regular walking, is of critical importance for the health and wellbeing of older people.

The findings from the Heart Foundation's recent *Walkwise* project focussing on the needs of older adults show the following are key to healthy active ageing:

- Transport - universally accessible, well maintained footpaths that segregate pedestrians and cyclists and ensure slow movement networks within centres and surrounding the approach to destinations
- Outdoor spaces and buildings - universally accessible toilets, frequent park benches and shade within public open spaces. Public buildings to be connected by universally accessible paths and public transport.
- Social participation - combine physical activity and social engagement for best possible outcomes.

What is a health-promoting sports precinct?

A health-promoting sports precinct supports players, supporters, local community and visitors to be active and healthier through sport and active recreation by:

- Promoting active transport to the precinct
- Encouraging incidental exercise within the precinct
- Making the precinct inviting to the local community to use outdoor public spaces
- Providing ancillary facilities that help people to participate in active recreation, such as walking and cycling.

The State Sports Park goes some way to being health-promoting and the guiding principles are excellent.

While easy access by a number of different transport modes is considered, the site location, and abundant parking options will mean that most people will arrive by vehicle.

The Heart Foundation is confident that incidental physical activity and active recreation in the sports precinct can be achieved through this State Sports Park upgrade.

Recommendations

The Heart Foundation strongly supports the introduction of the walking/cycling path shown on the Master Plan as traversing through the middle of the State Sports Park, but would suggest improvements including the following:

- Introduce a number of further footpaths along the roads connecting destinations such as the sports facilities, the shopping precinct and the school;
- Construct footpaths of high quality and at least 1.5 metres wide to accommodate wheelchairs, prams and mobility aids;
- Widen - If the main walking and cycling path through the precinct is to be a shared path then it must be wide enough (at least 3 metres) for people to stroll slowly and safely while allowing bike riders to be travelling at faster speeds, particularly likely if they are commuters;
- Provide trees along walking and cycle routes for shade and aesthetics;
- Consider the use of native productive trees and the development of “orchards” within the precinct;
- Include ancillary facilities like public toilets and lighting along the walking and cycling path;
- Cater for formal and informal activities in the community sports areas, and provide shelters, seating, playgrounds and gardens;
- Consider personal safety in the central areas around the Adelaide Super Drome;
- Ensure signalised pedestrian crossing points over Main North Road and Grand Junction Road where the paths meet the precinct boundary;
- Introduce shared street spaces and 30km/h zones around the school and sports facilities.

Lastly, we would suggest applying a “healthy active ageing” lens over the Master Plan to ensure that it meets the needs of all ages, particularly vulnerable users, including older people with mobility issues.

Please visit The Heart Foundation’s *Healthy Active by Design* for further evidence. The site also houses many case studies which showcase best practice implementation of the healthy design elements, such as the [Optus Stadium in WA](#), which was built to make use of nearby public transport.

We would be pleased to participate in further consultation processes.

Yours sincerely



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ⁱ AIHW. Impact of physical inactivity as a risk factor for chronic conditions.

ⁱⁱ AIHW. Australia's Health 2018. Insufficient physical activity.

ⁱⁱⁱ AIHW. Australia's Health 2018. Insufficient physical activity

^{iv} Australian Bureau of Statistics (2016), *Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2014-15*, ABS Statistics, Canberra.