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Dear Sport and Recreation team

RE: Sport and Active Recreation Strategy Consultation

The Heart Foundation welcomes the opportunity to make a formal submission on the development of a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy. The Heart Foundation is a leading advocate for the benefits of physical activity in our mission to reduce death and suffering from the leading killer of Australians - cardiovascular disease.

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 ischaemic heart disease, hypertension and stroke. Since 2001, the number of Australian's doing very little or no exercise has continued to increase. Two in three (66.9%) Australians aged 15 and over are sedentary or have low levels of exercise, and eight-in-ten children do not meet physical activity guidelines of 60 minutes a day.^{1 2 3} It is estimated that physical inactivity costs the health budget \$1.5bn a year⁴ and causes 14,000 deaths per annum.⁵

The Heart Foundation has long advocated for the need to increase Australia's level of physical activity, across all age groups and community settings. Our policy document, [Blueprint for an Active Australia](#), outlines an evidence-based case for change towards a more active Australia. We understand that present-day lifestyles make prolonged sitting difficult to avoid and finding the time to participate in structured exercise is ever-more challenging.⁶ A Sport and Active Recreation Strategy with a broad remit beyond elite athletic performance that supports all forms of physical activity, of which sports participation is one, can drive significant economic, environmental, social and health benefits.

Prevention through physical activity is a key pillar for addressing our chronic disease challenge. Around one-third (31%) of the burden of disease in 2011 could have been prevented through modifiable risk factors.⁷ In the case of cardiovascular disease, physical inactivity accounts for 21% of its disease burden in Australia. Research also shows that being inactive increases the chances of developing cancer, heart disease or having a stroke by 25-30% and can take three to five years off your life.⁸ The future better health of our state is closely tied to our levels of physical activity.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Health Survey: Physical Activity, 2011-12

² Heart Foundation, 'Sitting still making you ill, new health survey shows', Media release, 19 July, 2013

³ Active Healthy Kids Australia (2014). *Is sport enough? The 2014 active, healthy kids Australia report card.*

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2007) *The Burden of Disease and Injury in Australia 2003*

⁵ Medibank Private, Econtech and KPMG (2008) *Cost of Physical Inactivity, 2nd Report*

⁶ National Heart Foundation of Australia. *Blueprint for an active Australia*. 2nd edn. Melbourne: National Heart Foundation of Australia, 2014.

⁷ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2016. *Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011*. Australian Burden of Disease study series no. 4. BOD 5. Canberra: AIHW.

⁸ *Walking Works: Making the case to encourage greater uptake of walking as a physical activity to reduce the burden of long-term health conditions on the NHS*; Macmillan Cancer Support, UK (2013).

The Heart Foundation applauds the Queensland government for its political leadership in elevating the health priority of physical inactivity. We anticipate a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy which maps a multi-sector response, implemented at a community level to overcome the many barriers to Queenslanders moving more and sitting less.

Thank you for hosting us at the Sport and Active Recreation Healthy Queenslanders deep dive in September. It was a great opportunity to contribute and to hear from others about the direction we all think our Sport and Active Recreation Strategy should be heading to improve the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders. The Heart Foundation was very supportive of the insights communicated from stakeholders on the day.

Participation in physical activity

To make sport and active recreation part of everyone's daily routine there needs to be public health messaging that informs an education campaign on physical activity and its health benefits. A public education campaign should aim to change the social and cultural norm from sport being something that Queenslanders watch and admire from their armchair to something they embrace within their everyday and family lives.

Active recreation and sport are often seen as separate functions from everyday life, and replacing the everyday sedentary activities, such as TV/screen viewing, with incidental exercise would encourage physical activity in daily routine. Identifying smaller-scale evidence-base programs, which are suitable for investment to scale up state-wide can support people to make physical activity part of their daily routine.

The Sport and Active Recreation Strategy must recognise that all human activity is based upon a spectrum of capability and matching physical activity. Sport offerings to all levels along this spectrum (flexible entry points) can help maximise people's willingness to engage. This could combine elements that:

- Reduce the emphasis on ability and competition;
- Focus on fun and social/personal interaction;
- Plan entry level options that account for capability and financial accessibility; and
- Focus on the health and wider lifestyle benefits of participation

Supportive environments for active living

Most sport and active recreation opportunities rely on people coming to them, which can be a barrier in itself. The specific participation needs of local communities must be considered, though a process of consultation, because people tend to congregate and play with people like themselves. It is important to establish programs that consider the barriers to participation in terms of the individual (physical determinants), social (norms/culture) and built environment ([Heart Foundation's Healthy Active by Design](#)).

The urban environment plays a major role in encouraging and enabling physical activity. Therefore, the Heart Foundation advocates for planning that supports the creation and maintenance of strong, active, healthy, complete communities, with a solid focus on urban development that is higher density and mixed use in walkable and connected communities. Active travel (walking, cycling and public transport) then becomes an easy, safe, affordable and efficient choice across the lifespan, through better, integrated transport infrastructure planning.

The creation of supportive environments is central to the success of a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy if it is to boost participation and increase physical activity rates. Public, open spaces provide the opportunity to be active, in whatever form a person enjoys, and help reduce issues around equitable access. Encouragement should be given to spaces that

are shaded, multipurpose and have intergenerational amenity. Even maximising the use of existing public infrastructure/space such as schools, streetscapes, and ovals is important. The physical environment is the site in which physical activity takes place, a fact that must remain front-of-mind when considering the allocation of resources through the Strategy.

A great example of this is Stockland's 'Aura', in Caloundra South. Neighbourhood parks are built within 400 metres of every home and interconnected by a network of bikeways and pedestrian paths. Over 200 kilometres of this network, will sweep close to every dwelling, meaning a lot of encouragement to get out and about. For recreation, they have an 11-hectare People's Place, similar in style to Brisbane's South Bank, with community meeting rooms for the general public to utilise. Together with a 10-hectare Major Recreational Park, provisioning for an Indoor Sports Complex, a 15-hectare Major Sports Field Complex, with the opportunity for a Sports Stadium and Community gardens, Aura provides a supportive environment for active family living. The new Baringa State Primary School within Aura is also a great example of shared community spaces and active school travel with a majority of children coming to school by active means, as they all live within a 2km lower speed limit catchment of the school.

Equitable access to physical activity

A Sport and Active Recreation Strategy should prioritise areas of socio-economic disadvantage and remoteness because they often have higher rates of physical inactivity, obesity and chronic disease and poorer lifestyle choices. The Heart Foundation's [Heart Maps](#) provide a state (and national) picture of hospital admission rates for heart-related conditions down to a regional level. [Australia's Health Tracker by Area](#) is another valuable tool, developed by the Australian Health Policy Collaboration, to target areas of high obesity and chronic disease and low rates of physical activity. In prioritising these areas, infrastructure development and program implementation must be tailored to the needs of the community, which can take the form of subsidies, vouchers or other financial supports for local clubs to attract and facilitate community involvement and reach under-represented groups. Obviously the [Get in the Game initiative](#) has been successful and consideration needs to be given to the initiative's further development.

Support programs and funding that enhance sport and active recreation involvement for children at a grassroots level is crucial. The AFL's reconciliation program is a successful example of how sport can reach into Indigenous communities, have them participate in sport and provide education on healthy living. More broadly it is an example of how sport can use its influence in relation to health and social issues.

Non-traditional sports offer alternate avenues for participation for those would do not yet have or will not have the required skill sets or interest in playing mainstream sports. They also make sports participation more equitable for a wider cross-section of the community, through engaging and involving cultural, social and geographical minority groups.

As the provider of the largest free community walking program, with over 45,000 walkers across the country including 7,500 Queenslanders, the Heart Foundation as long advocated for walking as a valid form of physical activity across the life-span worthy of more consideration in planning processes. We would therefore recommend that the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy is developed in close consultation with the Queensland Walking Strategy, soon to be developed by Transport and Main Roads.

Physical activity in schools

The mandatory delivery of high-quality physical education lessons from Kindergarten to Year 12 (totalling between 120-180 minutes per week), that focus on life-long engagement in physical activity, mastery of fundamental movement skills and physical literacy, is essential to increase participation in the schooling years.⁹ An emphasis on the health benefits of physical activity rather than sporting proficiency is an important consideration to maximise the establishment of life-long habits for those children who are not 'sporty'. Our [Canberra Communique](#) outlines actions and policies that would strengthen the connection and pathways between school physical education and community-based sport and active recreation to help support physical activity outside of school and into adult life.

Active School Travel, whether as a program or an encouraged student activity, enhances readiness to learn, is a great way to foster healthier, more active students, better community awareness and safer streets. This potentially life long participation in active travel will not only contribute to fun and fitness but also connectiveness to the local environment in which the individual may participate in other physical activities.

Physical activity public awareness campaign

The key benefits of sport and active recreation such as physical and mental health, personal wellbeing and community cohesion need to be promoted by governments and the community. A long-term evidence-based social marketing campaign that replicates the successful model used to reduce smoking rates in Australia over the last decade. A public education and social marketing campaign needs to be delivered and driven by evidence, both regarding the evidence-based dose required to change community understanding and norms and the most motivating messaging and delivery channels. We must shift apathetic social norms regarding sedentary behaviour and the health implications of physical inactivity if we are to boost levels of physical activity through greater participation. A comprehensive, long-term campaign would also help raise awareness of the benefits of sports participation to the Australian public.

The urgent need to help prevent and better manage chronic disease through lifestyle behaviours, necessitates that the Sport and Active Recreation Strategy does not tokenise active recreation. A broad physical activity focus would help overcome the barrier that sport and its traditional emphasis on competition has for some segments of population to which this has negative connotations.

Public Health England deliberately targeted individuals who were physically active less than 30 minutes a week in its successful [Everybody active, every day](#) national campaign. This cohort were typically more reliant on the health system and would have the greatest health gains from even small amounts of physical activity. Sporting organisations could be encouraged/incentivised to connect with disability and the aged care service providers to support participation in modified sports – in and out of service facilities. A Sport and Active Recreation Strategy could coordinate many entry level options to normalise participation for everyone and move away from the already active and elite end of the spectrum. A successful Strategy would be as inclusive as possible depicting Australians of all ages, sizes, shapes, genders, ethnicities and fitness levels doing all sorts of physical activity and sports as part of its messaging.

⁹ National Physical Activity Consensus Forum. *Canberra Communique*. Melbourne: National Heart Foundation of Australia, 2015.

Leadership for increased physical activity

The Heart Foundation has long advocated for a Premier's leadership group/advisory council on Active Living/Physical Activity. We believe this would enable a high-level, cross-sector group of organisations to play an influential role in policy development to get more Queenslanders active. Such a leadership group should include, as a minimum, sport, health, transport, infrastructure/planning, housing and education experts, including academic and non-government representation. This group could also feed into any future National Physical Activity Strategy, that we are also advocating for federally.

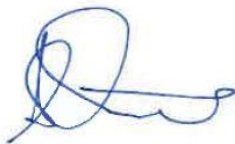
The media plays a key role in bringing sport to the public and as such is a primary tool in leveraging the reach and influence of sport to get people more active. The promotion of sports participation by a sports champion/role model through mainstream sports media, would have deep penetration into the community and reach those who are sedentary despite avidly following sports.

The Heart Foundation recommends the Queensland Government develops a Sport and Active Recreation Strategy that emphasises and supports community participation in physical activity as a part of everyday life, not something that has to be squeezed into already hectic lives. Supporting the development of a built environment that encourages physical activity is also needed to entice those who are currently inactive to be more involved in sport, active recreation and incidental physical activity.

To guide the development of the actual Sport and Active Recreation Strategy, a collaborative group that includes sport, health, transport, planning/infrastructure, housing and education experts, including academic and non-government representation would be vital.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our submission. Implementing changes such as those outlined in this submission, requires a coordinated and holistic approach that the Heart Foundation would be pleased to contribute our expertise to.

Yours sincerely



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