



Draft Perth and Peel @3.5 million May 2015

**Submission to the Department of Planning prepared by the National Heart
Foundation of Australia (Western Australian Division)**

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Introduction

The National Heart Foundation of Australia (Western Australia Division) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments in relation to the draft Perth and Peel@3.5 million document which is currently out for consultation.

The Heart Foundation is committed to creating communities where Australians live healthy and active lifestyles as part of their everyday life. Reshaping the built environment in which Australians live, work, learn and recreate can significantly increase daily physical activity levels, reduce obesity, improve mental health and improve health.

The planning system is in a position to facilitate or discourage health and wellbeing outcomes and the policy initiatives within Perth and Peel@3.5 million along with the four sub regional frameworks all have direct impacts on the determinants for the health and wellbeing of current and future Perth and Peel residents. It is vital that as our population grows, our infrastructure keeps pace, and does so in a way that promotes better health.

Background

The Heart Foundation was established in 1959 and is a not-for-profit organisation committed to improving cardiovascular health for all Australians. Our vision is for people in Australia to have the best cardiovascular health in the world. Since its establishment, the Heart Foundation has funded world class cardiovascular research, supported health professionals in their practice, developed health promotion activities, informed and educated the public, and assisted people with cardiovascular disease.

Our work in healthy urban environments dates back to 1996 and is reflected in position papers, advocacy documents, resources, programs and policies. A key feature of this work has been fruitful collaboration with organisations and professionals in planning, transportation and local Government. The following is a summary of the Heart Foundation's major projects in this field to date.

- **Advocacy** at National, State and Local Government levels – reflected in the *Blueprint for an Active Australia* (2014 -2017) which calls for key government and community actions to increase population levels of physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviour in Australia, 2014 2017
- **Coalition building** at the State level with planning and development of *Healthy Active by Design* www.healthyactivebydesign.com – a guide for planners (released in 2014); and successful conduct of *Walk Week* and *Walk Over October* campaigns for over thirteen years. These initiatives have been developed in close collaboration with West Australian Government agencies.
- **Evidence based** strategies and recommendations – reflected in the Heart Foundation *Position Statement on Built Environment and Walking* (2009), the *Neighbourhood Walkability Checklist* (2011) and the following reviews of the impact of density on health *Does density Matter, the role of density in creating walkable neighbourhoods* (2014), *Low density development, Impacts on physical activity and associated health outcomes* (2014) and *Increasing density in Australia, maximising the health benefits and minimising harm* (2012)

- **Guidelines** – reflected in *Healthy Active by Design*, the PIA award winning resource for planners and related professionals for designing and creating sustainable communities that encourage active living; developed in collaboration with the Department of Planning, Transport, Sport and Recreation and Health, Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority and LandCorp
- **Programs** – reflected in *Heart Foundation Walking*, Australia's largest network of free community based walking groups, led by volunteer walk organisers with hundreds of community groups in Western Australia engaged
- **Public education** The Heart Foundation has led state-wide public education programs in the area of physical activity, nutrition and healthy weight. These include *LiveLighter*, *Healthier Workplace WA*, *Walk Over October* and the *Move More Sit Less* campaign.
- **Awards** – Heart Foundation Local Government Awards – established in 1992, have resulted in over 1000 initiatives being recognised by the Foundation for the ways they have contributed to improving heart health in Australian communities.

Key Issues

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in Western Australia and nationally. In 2010, CVD accounted for over 29% of all deaths in Western Australia. The national health survey of 2011-2012 indicated that 1 on 7 West Australians are affected by CVD and 15% of the population had a long term CVD condition.

The lifestyle related risk factors of CVD are also highly prevalent in the Western Australian population including: 21% with high blood pressure, 5.4% with high blood cholesterol and 66% overweight or obese. These risk factors are strongly influenced by activity levels and diet consumed.

Physical inactivity is a major contributor to the burden of chronic disease and has been identified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality (6% of deaths globally). The WHO in its *2010 report on global recommendations for physical activity for health*, urges member states to implement national guidelines on physical activity and encourages them to develop policies and interventions that

- Develop and implement national guidelines on physical activity for health
- Introduce transport policies that promote active and safe methods of travelling to and from schools and workplaces, such as walking or cycling, and
- Ensure that physical environments support safe active commuting, and create space for recreational activity.

Physical inactivity in Western Australia remains very high with over 55% of adults not active enough to gain health benefits.

There is widespread evidence both locally and internationally that the design of our neighbourhoods and cities has a major impact on physical activity. Infrastructure Australia in its State of Australian Cities Report highlights that the “design of urban environments can contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities by supporting active living, physical activity through walking, cycling, and using public transport and opportunities for social interaction”.

Key trends over the last 50 years, including the continuing dominance of the car as the primary mode of transport, coupled with urban sprawl, low density developments, and car dominated urban design have reduced opportunities 'for people to factor physical activity into their day' This is apparent in the Perth metropolitan area where current levels of car dependence and urban sprawl are unsustainable in supporting a growing population.

However, there is potential to reverse this trend if there are reasonable alternatives to using the car. Research conducted for the TravelSmart Program found that cycling is an option if the trip is less than six kilometres. This must be supported by provision of a safe and accessible environment where people feel comfortable and consider they have a choice to cycle or walk to their destination.

Studies that have objectively (using pedometers) compared physical activity levels in those who use public transport versus those who drive to work have found that public transport users complete a significantly higher number of steps per day. One Perth study found that public transport users take an average 1,200 more steps per day (Villanueva et al., 2008). This is due to the linked walking trip that they take to and from bus stops and train stations.

Poor nutrition has a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of individuals, society and the environment. Poor diet makes a significant contribution to Australia's most prevalent chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and some cancers. Risk factors such as obesity, high cholesterol and hypertension are increased by high intakes of total kilojoules, saturated fat, added sugar and salt and low intakes of fruit and vegetables.

In Western Australia, only 7% of adults consume recommended intakes of fruit and vegetables for optimal health. Intake of ultra-processed, nutrient poor foods 'discretionary' foods, those that are high in saturated fat, salt, sugar and total kilojoules make up 36% of adults total dietary energy intake and 38% of children's.

What we eat and drink is influenced by the entire food system with multiple interplaying factors including availability, accessibility, price, promotion and individual circumstances however the **accessibility and availability of healthy food choices (or unhealthy food choices) where people live, work and play can have a direct impact on our dietary behaviours.**

Problems in today's food system that directly affect the diets of West Australian's are:

- Increasing trend to eat meals prepared outside the home which are of poorer nutritional quality.
- Social exclusion and food insecurity – lack of regular access to safe, nutritionally adequate, culturally acceptable food from non-emergency sources, is a key issue confounded by the link between food insecurity and obesity.
- Disparities in income, transport, physical access to retail outlets and varying levels of retail outlet exposure may make it difficult for some people to easily access food and stay healthy due to:
 - Low density urban expansion
 - High density of fast food outlets in some areas leading to greater consumption in lower socioeconomic status areas.

General Comments

The Heart Foundation has reviewed the Draft Perth and Peel @3.5 million strategy and sub regional frameworks and is supportive of the approach for managing urban growth and increased urban consolidation. The strong focus on medium to high density residential development around transport nodes with complementary land uses is fully supported and aligns with the Heart Foundation's Healthy Active by Design guidance (www.healthyactivebydesign.com).

The main focus of this submission is on the potential of the policy and sub regional frameworks to provide quality outcomes for increasing the health and wellbeing of West Australians.

Key Considerations

1. Health

There needs to be greater acknowledgement of the relationship between the urban environment and health and wellbeing outcomes. Under the New Public Health Bill, there is a proposal to introduce public health assessments which are a form of Health Impact Assessment (HIA). This is supported by the Heart Foundation as planning decisions are instrumental in determining the physical and social characteristics of neighbourhoods which impact on walking and cycling, access to public transport, recreation choices and exercise patterns in addition to healthy and fresh food.

Research shows that the way we design and build our communities can have a positive or negative impact on our health. Healthy and active lifestyles can be encouraged by the way we design our streets, parks, recreational facilities and where we locate our homes, schools and retail areas.

The role of the built and natural environments in influencing health and wellbeing is widely acknowledged. A recent comprehensive review by NSW Health, *Healthy Built Environment program* examined three domains for influencing how environments can affect health;

- Getting people active
- Connecting and strengthening communities; and
- Providing healthy food options

There is potential for the role of the built and natural environments in influencing health and wellbeing to be acknowledged further. The Heart Foundation recommends the WAPC consider referencing and including some of the strategies in the PIA award winning *Healthy Active by Design* (www.healthyactivebydesign.com) resource within the plan. This ground breaking design guidance promotes healthy environments and active communities. This is principally by creating the conditions, environments and opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating through the design of communities, streets, schools, public open space, recreation facilities and the use of active travel modes. This web based tool provides practical guidance on nine key design features, checklists, local case-studies, examples of projects from around the world, and links to evidence.

2. Transport

There is no reference within the documents to the new Transport Plan titled “The Transport Plan for Perth for 3.5 million People and Beyond (PTP 3.5). This is currently in development and it is assumed there will be close alignment. A key aim of the proposed structural changes to the transport network is to promote public and active transport modes to support public health and environmental strategies. This is strongly supported by the Heart Foundation as transport systems help shape the design of communities and can have a profound effect on public health. It is proposed for greater recognition of health as a sustainable driver of the urban form to provide accessible infrastructure which maximises the opportunity for physical activity through provision of modes of active transportation such as cycling and walking opportunities. In addition, trail and pathway systems located within urban green spaces will save energy and protect air quality by encouraging more environmentally sustainable nonmotorised transportation modes.

The suite of documents doesn't currently address the transport network planning detail or how this additional infrastructure will be funded.

3. Food Access and Availability

The Heart Foundation urges consideration into the availability and accessibility of healthy food as a key issue in what Perth and Peel should look like in the future to meet the essential infrastructure needs of its growing population.

Planning for healthy food is interplay between numerous planning decisions. Therefore, the plan and frameworks **require an over-arching planning mechanism and objective to increase access to fresh, nutritious and affordable foods, and to reduce access to unhealthy food.** Considerations regarding a healthy and accessible food supply should be apparent in the plan and each of the sub regional frameworks.

Planning decisions have a significant impact on our food system; decisions are made about how land is used, where activity centres are located, how shops and services are distributed and where housing is sited. These decisions influence how easy it is to shop for fresh food, how accessible perishable vegetables are to the metropolitan areas and how much horticultural businesses contribute to local economies.

The Heart Foundation notes and supports the strategy to protect rural food producing land close to the city

Specific Comments

P4

The aims of Liveable, Prosperous, Connected, Sustainable and Collaborative are strongly supported as these will contribute to increased outcomes for the health and wellbeing of the communities of Perth and Peel. In particular, addressing the key challenge of the movement network through a shift to sustainable travel modes prioritising public transport, cycling and walking will contribute towards a more Liveable, Connected and Sustainable Perth and Peel.

P15 Section: Perth 2050 – The Need for Change

The reference to declining community health and increasing obesity rates as walking and cycling become less practical is commended as this is a key issue faced by people living in areas with limited public transport. Where transportation infrastructure is designed to accommodate or even encourage nonmotorized transportation, such as through complete streets policies, it can have a positive effect on public health.

The Heart Foundation recommends that obesity be framed as an issue not only of walking and riding becoming less practical but of diets excessive in discretionary food choices. Food choice is in part shaped by the availability and accessibility of food.

P21 4.1 A Connected City

The Heart Foundation supports the connected city model as the preferred future growth pattern. Accessible connected activity centres will contribute towards making public transport and walking and cycling desirable and it is proposed that movement networks should be adapted and prioritised to support this. Evidence shows that dietary behaviour is improved with increasing proximity to healthy food retail from residential address and therefore urge the consideration of movement networks to support the equitable accessibility to such infrastructure for populations whom rely on active travel and public transport.

P24 Community and Social Infrastructure

The inclusion of health and wellbeing as a component of social infrastructure and acknowledgement of the importance for communities to have access to a wide range of social infrastructure is strongly supported. It is important that this is integrated and well connected providing for a range of community services in accordance with design specifications.

P28 Demographic Diversity

There are significant challenges to be faced in dealing with a growing population and in recognition of the challenge faced by an ageing population, there does need to be more of an equitable balance in housing type and road infrastructure to cater for a mix of transport modes.

In its research report, Planning Complete Streets for an Aging America, AARP notes that "the ability to live closer to daily destinations is an important factor in maintaining mobility among older people who cannot drive or whose driving is limited. People 65 and over living in areas where houses are built closer to shops and services are less likely to stay home on a given day, and are more likely to use public transportation and walk to get around

P42 Activity Centres

The concept behind increased activity centre provision is strongly supported as these will contribute towards a more intense urban environment with less dependency on car travel. Affordable housing close to a range of services that includes education, retail, recreation facilities and public transport is essential for this aspiration to be achieved.

Activity centres must be serviced by accessible and connected cycle and walking networks and public transport nodes that include the following ancillary facilities:

- Walking (well maintained footpaths, lighting, water fountains and signs)
- Cycling (well maintained paths, signage, and end of trip facilities to include lockers, parking and shower facilities)
- Public transport (safe shelter, lighting and signage)

Caution is advised in the allocation of corner shops and delis to meet the vital infrastructure required to support the availability and accessibility of healthy food. The range, amount, affordability and quality of healthy food in total and in proportion to unhealthy options in these types of retail is not conducive to healthy eating and provision for additional types of healthy food retail is recommended.

The guidance within Healthy Active by Design www.healthyactivebydesign.com could be utilised further as best practice urban design.

P 45 Social Infrastructure

The inclusion of health as a component of social infrastructure and acknowledgement of the importance for communities to have access to adequate social infrastructure and services is strongly supported.

There is a comprehensive range of hard and soft infrastructure that can help facilitate healthy active living. This section could be expanded as follows

Education

Schools are a significant contributor to the place making and sense of place of a neighbourhood and become a focal point for a new community. Recreational areas and open spaces are an important component of school sites both in the delivery of education and providing larger open spaces capable of accommodating a range of community sport and recreation needs and use after school hours. School sites are therefore an important element in designing and establishing healthy and active communities. The co-location of open space with educational facilities should be encouraged as this can provide long lasting benefits for the community and increase utilisation of facilities.

Ideally schools should be provided within walkable proximity (around 800m) to homes ensuring that the routes to school are connected and facilitate children's active transport to school through the provision of footpaths and cycling infrastructure and public transport.

P46 Health

In addition to just referencing formal health facilities, this section could be expanded to include the role of planning on promoting health and wellness, as outlined in this submission, notably environments that support:

- walking, cycling, public transport and recreational physical activity;
- healthy food access and supply;
- improved mental health and sense of place; and reduced obesity

Sport and Recreation

It is recommended that other hard infrastructure such as safe walking/cycling paths and quality public open space provision including nature parks and recreational play spaces are referred to here. It needs to be recognised that the proportion of high quality public open space may need to exceed the current standard of 10% as contained in Liveable Neighbourhoods. This becomes particularly important in areas of higher density. Access to high quality public open space will result in communities travelling less and serve to encourage more environmentally sustainable non-motorized transportation modes such as cycling and walking and increased recreational physical activity. As referenced in the document, the population is ageing and as walking is recognised as having the high levels of participation in comparison to more structured activities, this needs to be catered for.

In addition all community infrastructure should be accessible, integrated and well connected providing for a range of community services in accordance with design specifications.

Transport

As previously stated, It is assumed that this section on Transport will be aligned with the new Transport Plan titled "The Transport Plan for Perth for 3.5 million People and Beyond. The reality is that there needs to be considerable investment into public transport infrastructure, walking and cycling infrastructure for Western Australia to meet the demands of the projected population growth.

P61 Implementation

The whole of government approach to the implementation strategies is supported as integration across a range of policies is critical to achieve a more consolidated urban form. The role of Local Government along with state government and industry are identified as having responsibility for a large number of these actions. In recognition of this, it is important that there is additional support through integrated policy, advocacy, guidance and resource allocation for local governments in order to implement the required actions.

Conclusion

In this submission, the Heart Foundation has provided a number of comments for consideration by the Department of Planning in relation to addressing the opportunities for health and wellbeing outcomes within Perth and [Peel@3.5](#) million.

The Heart Foundation's principle resource for articulating and promoting health through planning and healthy design is the Healthy Active by Design Program, at www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au

If further clarification is required in relation to the areas outlined in this submission, please contact Trevor Shilton Director Cardiovascular Health Programs on 9382 5912 or email Trevor.shilton@heartfoundation.org.au