



Embedding Health in Planning

Shifting sands of legislative, policy and practice initiatives in NSW, Australia

Never Stand Still

Faculty of the Built Environment

Healthy Built Environments Program

Professor Susan Thompson

Economic & Social Research Council Seminar:

Reuniting Health and Planning

29 June 2015

Bristol, UK



THE HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENTS PROGRAM

Outline



1. Australia acknowledging need for new ways of working to tackle complex health problems - but shifting sands
2. Overview of Australian policy and practice initiatives across public, private and NGO sectors
3. Working towards the inclusion of a health objective in NSW state planning legislation
4. Challenges and opportunities in moving forward in healthy planning

Australian Policy & Practice

- Key initiatives in urban planning and health
- At all levels of government
- NGO and private sector
- Federal and state government policy sets framework - but shifts and changes
- Local councils plan, design and create places for communities



Tackling Complex Health Issues

- Growing agreement - our current ways of working and thinking are letting us down
- Our world is an increasingly complex web of social, cultural & environmental challenges and opportunities
- All of these have an impact on health



Tackling Complex Health Issues

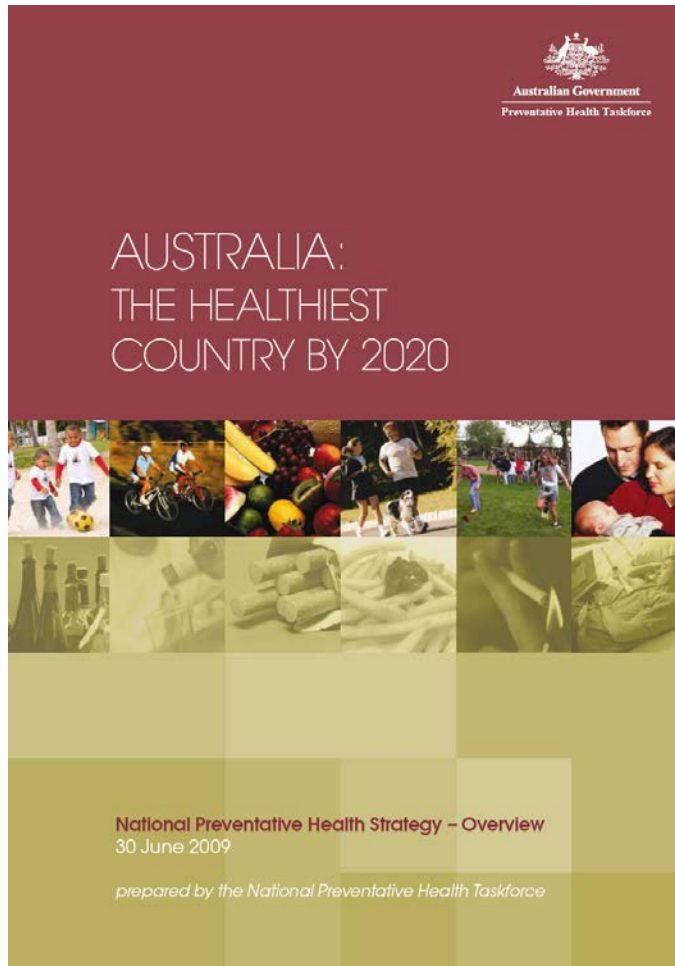
- Understandings evolving...
- Inter-related nature of complex, 'wicked' problems
- Work needed at all scales
- Develop inter-related solutions that draw on different knowledge and ways of working
- Embrace the physical and social sciences
- End silo-ways of operating!



Federal Government Initiative



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National Preventative Health Strategy

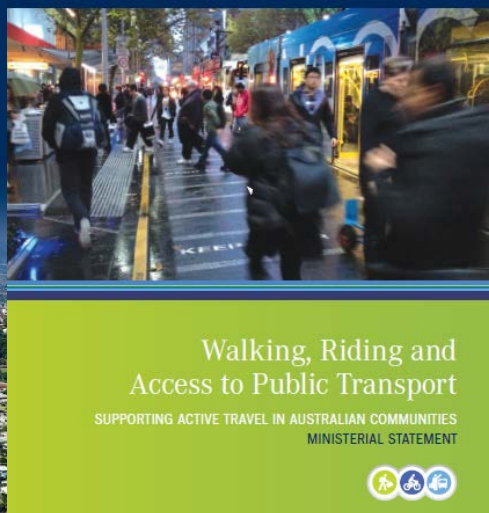
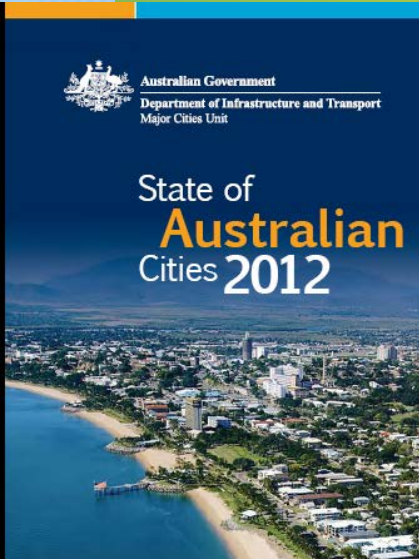
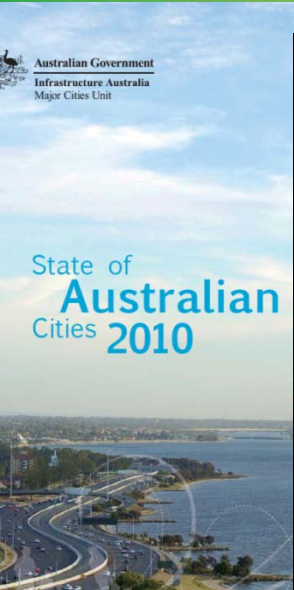
Final report 2009

Significant recommendations for supportive environments for health

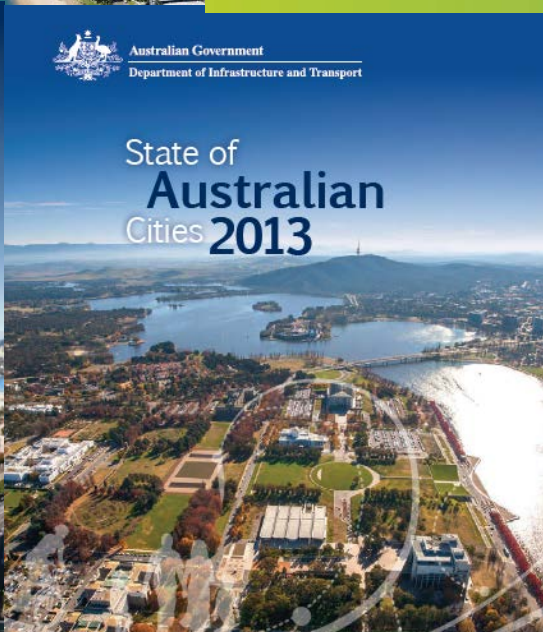
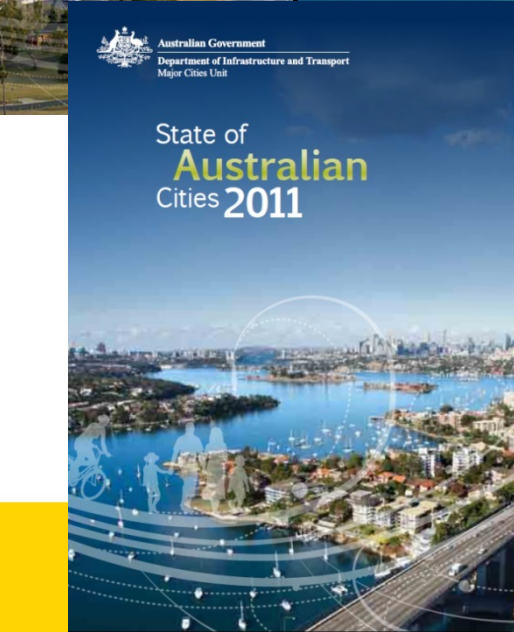
Federal Policy 2010-13



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Health - an important component of the liveability of Australian cities



Our Cities, Our Future

A national urban policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future



National Collaborations



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HEALTHY SPACES & PLACES
A national guide to designing places for healthy living

An overview



www.healthyplaces.org.au

PIA, NHF, ALGA partnership

National guidelines
connecting planning
and health

www.healthyplaces.org.au

Australian Heart Foundation



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Federal NGO

Focus on heart health

Increasing interest in BE and role in supporting health

Exemplary research and leadership

HF's *Healthy by Design* 2004 ++



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Healthy by Design: a planners' guide to environments for active living

Heart Foundation

Healthy by Design SA

A guide to planning, designing and developing healthy urban environments in South Australia

Healthy by Design[®]

A guide to planning and designing environments for active living in Tasmania

Newer, state-based guides

Healthy Active by Design



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<http://www.healthyactivebydesign.com.au/>



Public Open Space
Shared Facilities
Buildings
Town Centre / Main Street
Schools
Movement Networks
Mixed Use
Housing Diversity
Sense of Place

HF's Active Living Resources



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The screenshot shows the Heart Foundation website's 'Active living resources' page. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, News & Media, Publications, Shop, Donate, and Contact us, along with a search bar. Below this is a red navigation menu with categories like 'You & your heart', 'Healthy eating', 'Active living', 'Support us', 'Driving change', 'Research', 'Information for professionals', and 'About us'. The 'Active living' category is selected. The main content area features a header image of people cycling and walking, followed by the title 'Active living resources'. The text explains that evidence-based resources support relevant built environment, government, and health professionals. It includes a section for 'Join the Australian Physical Activity network' and 'Our policy recommendations', which highlights the 'Blueprint for an active Australia: Second edition'. A sidebar on the left lists various sub-topics under 'Active living', with 'Active living resources' highlighted. On the right, there are promotional banners for a free mobile app and a recipe finder.

www.heartfoundation.org.au/active-living/Pages/active-living-resources.aspx

NSW State Plan



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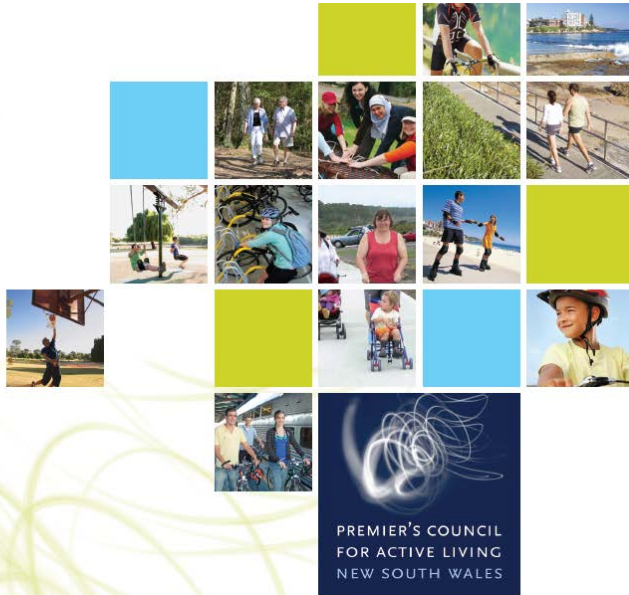
- State wide plan for ‘whole of government’ approaches
- Economic growth, health, transport, education, community services, legal systems, infrastructure provision and governance protocols
- Transport - focus on public transport
- Walking and cycling targets to increase levels of physical activity
- Health - focus on illness prevention and reduction of chronic disease
- Keep community healthy and active
- Reduce obesity rates
- Infrastructure - WestConnex



PCAL - NSW



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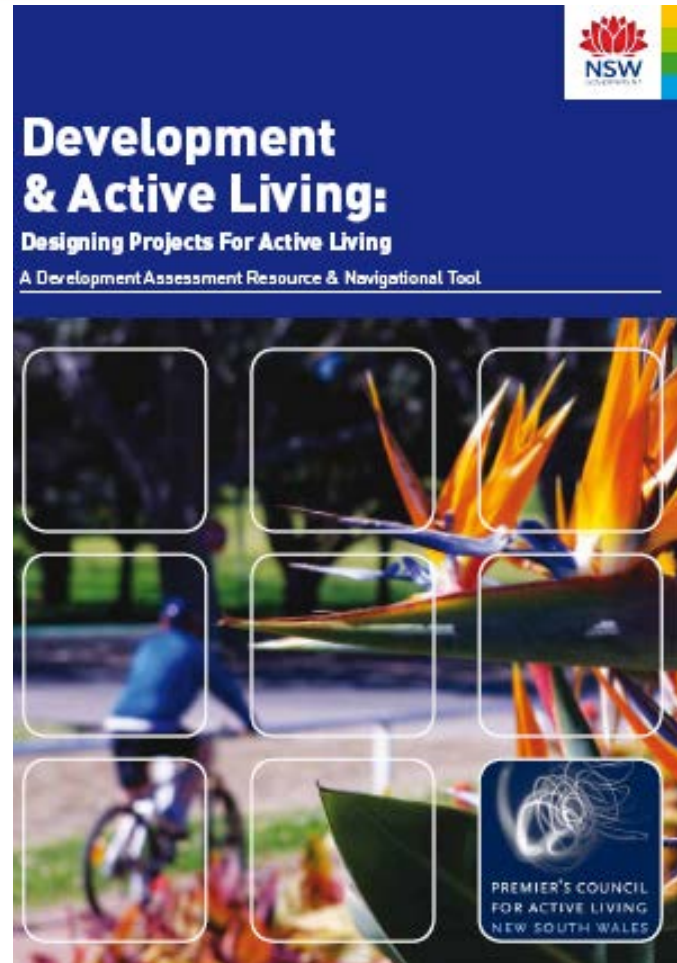
Why active living?

A HEALTH, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL
AND SOCIAL SOLUTION

Forum for
inter-agency
strategic
partnerships

Government,
NGO and
business
members

Development
of physical
and socially
supportive
environments
for health



<http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/>



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

NSW Health



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- Demonstration of significant leadership
- Focus on health promotion - encouraging active and healthy lifestyles and preventing chronic diseases
- Health protection - reducing exposure to environmental health risks
- Health facilities - minor and major capital works for health service delivery



NSW Health and HBEs



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NSW Ministry of Health

State level agencies,
stakeholders, decision
makers and planners

Built
environments
for health

Health staff working
regionally and locally
through Local Health
Districts

Local government and
regional planning decision
makers and professionals

NSW State Health Policy



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Environments to support healthy eating and active living

Strategic Direction 1

Initiatives to create healthy food and healthy built environments are key components of a comprehensive approach to support healthy eating and active living.

The food environment refers to what foods are available (via the local food supply and in food service and retail outlets), how much they cost, and how they are marketed. It affects the types and amount of foods consumed. Access to affordable, healthy food and limited access to energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods are prerequisites for healthy eating.

Food marketing targeted to children generally promotes energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods and takes advantage of children's vulnerability to persuasive messages. There is widespread recognition of the negative impact this has on child obesity levels. Within this context, policy and environmental approaches that increase the availability of affordable healthy food choices are important^{53,54}.

The built environment comprises physical design, patterns of land use, and the transport system; each influencing access to opportunities to be physically active for adults and children. Strategies in the built environment that are important for physical activity include those that:

- Facilitate and encourage walking, reduced traffic speed and volume;
- Promote access to recreation facilities;
- Incorporate mixed land use;
- Provide open and green space;
- Incorporate proximity to key destinations; and
- Increase density and diversity of housing.

Perceptions of safety are also important. Active transport is of special interest as it is physical activity that can be built into everyday living. A built environment that provides easy, accessible connections between buildings, walkways, cycle paths and public transport nodes; and transport infrastructures that link residential, commercial, and business areas, is important to support active transport and physical activity^{55,56}.

Strategic Direction 1 has a whole-of-population focus, however some actions have a specific emphasis on the following populations:

- Sydney metropolitan region;
- Aboriginal communities;
- People with a mental illness; and
- People with a disability.



NSW Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy:

Preventing overweight and obesity in New South Wales 2013-2018



Guidelines for Health Practitioners



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Healthy Urban Development Checklist

A guide for health services when commenting on development policies, plans and proposals



NSW HEALTH

Guide designed for health professionals

Assessing plans, policies and proposals in relation to health supportive infrastructure

Interactive web version available

Additional chapter on environmental sustainability and health

Healthy Built Environments Program



THE HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENTS PROGRAM



The **Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP)** is a consortium linking planning and health

Leadership in urban planning and public health

Initial core funding from NSW Ministry of Health of \$AU1.5m over 5 years

Situated in the City Futures Research Centre, Faculty of the Built Environment at UNSW

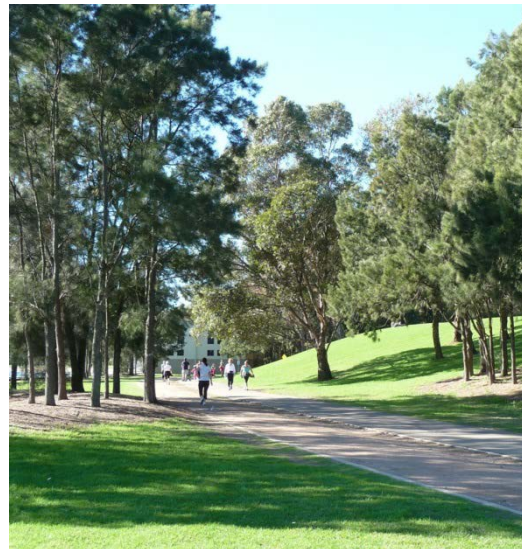
HBEP partnership includes academics, health NGOs, NSW health professionals, local councils, planning consultants

The HBEP Vision



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Built environments will be planned, designed, developed and managed to promote and protect health for all people



Three Strategic Areas of Work



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Research

Leadership and
Advocacy

Education and Capacity Building

HBE Research Evidence



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Healthy Built Environments: A review of the literature

Systematic, comprehensive and rigorous scholarly research

Links research evidence with policy to underpin actions to create healthy built environments

Accessible for professionals via different presentation modes - book and fact sheets; free from website; regular updates



Focus of the Review

- Proposes three main 'domains' of built environment influence on health
- Aspects of the built environment over which planners generally have most control
- Address major risk factors for chronic disease

- Physical inactivity
- Social isolation
- Obesity



ARC Linkage Research



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Planning and building healthy communities

Research partners from health and the built environment

Four sites being examined

Detailed healthy neighbourhood audits and food assessments

Compilation of health data

Qualitative in-depth interviews and focus groups



Core Research Question

How do these neighbourhoods support people being healthy as part of every day living?



AHURI Investigative Panel



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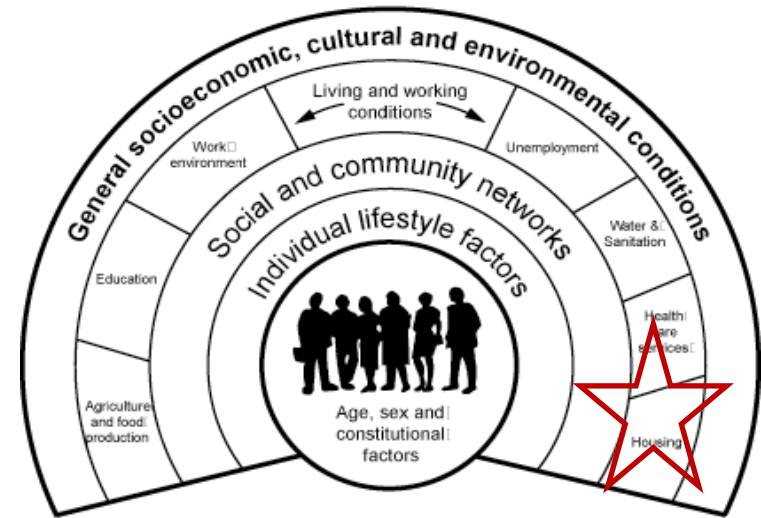
Researching the complex housing-health relationship

What's healthy housing?

Focus on Australasian research

New areas of housing-health research - HBEs

The policy research interface: engaging built environment & health professionals in collaborative partnerships



Education & Capacity Building

Courses at UNSW

UG Healthy Planning

PG Healthy Built Environments

Pro-bono places for NSW Health professionals

Mix of theory, research, policy and practice based learning



Education & Capacity Building



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Seminars, workshops,
special lectures,
forums

E-resources on HBEP
website

University,
metropolitan, rural and
remote locations

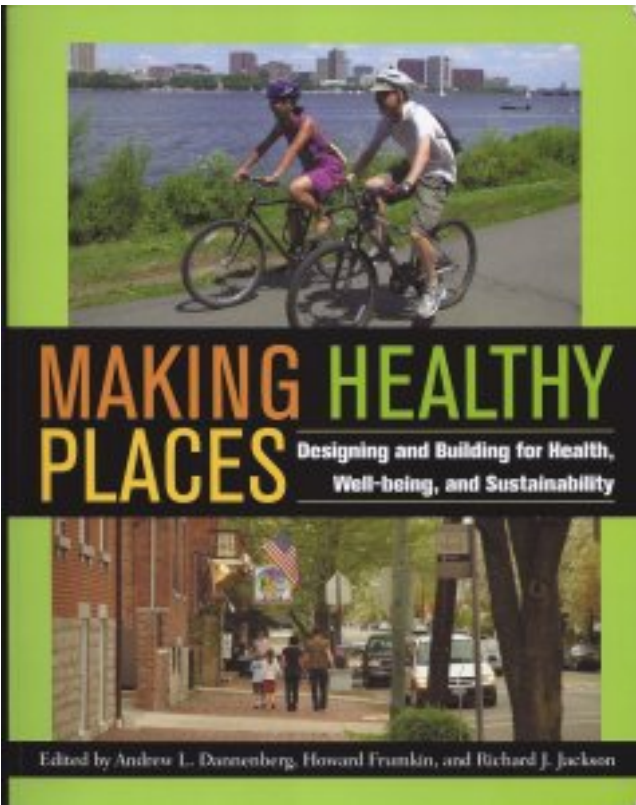
Focus on building
partnerships in
participation, training
and speakers



Education – Communicating HP

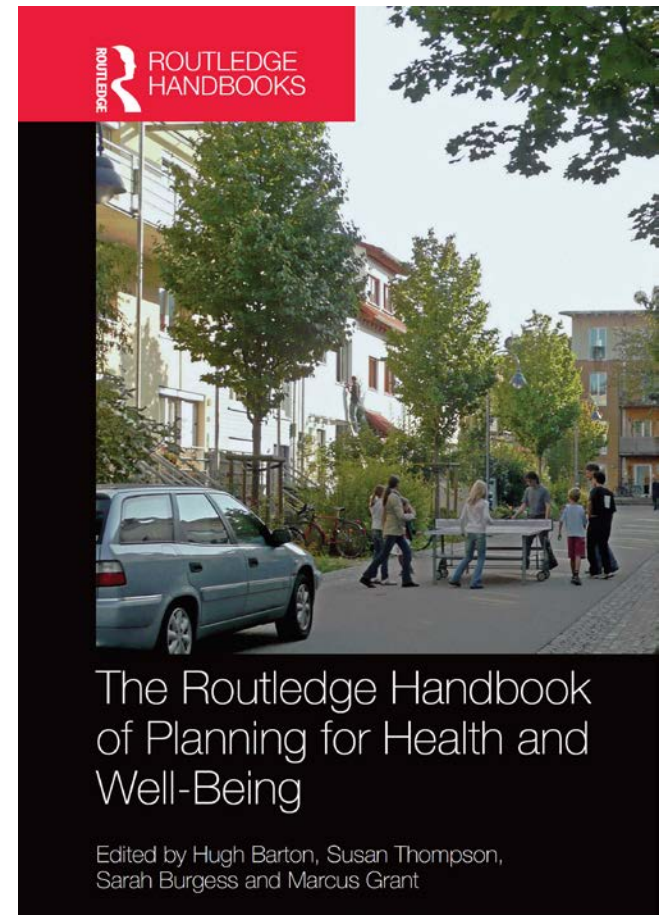
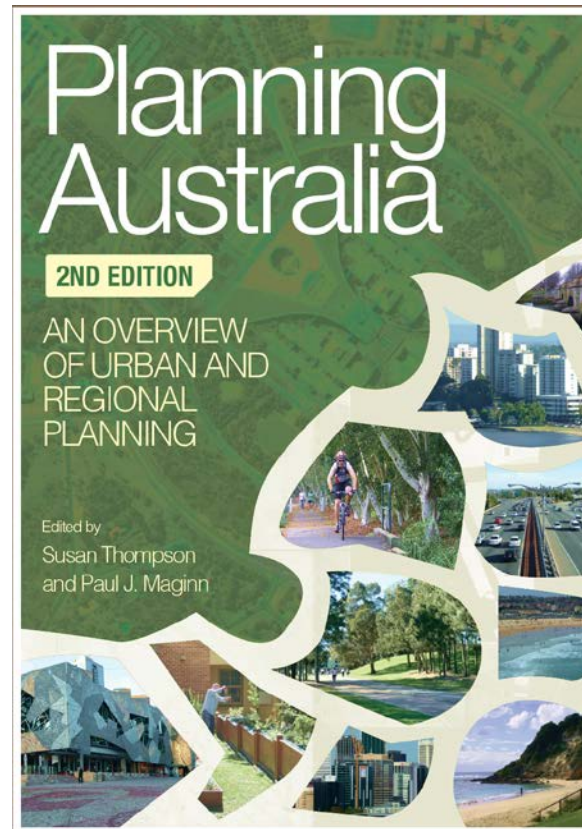


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2011

2012



2015



BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Communication to Practitioners



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PIA *New Planner*
Healthy Built
Environments
column since
2010

Other practice
journals in health
and built
environment



Anthony Capon is professor of public health at the University of Canberra and Susan Thompson is associate professor of urban planning at the University of New South Wales. They are contributing authors to *Making Healthy Places*, published last year by Island Press.

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Like all other animals, our habitat – the human habitat – helps determine our habits and our health.

For thousands of generations, our ancestors were hunter-gatherers. They lived among nature and got plenty of exercise in day to day life, while hunting other animals and gathering plant foods. It was only about 10,000 years ago that some humans began to take up farming as a way of life and live in villages.

These days, of course, most of us live in an urban habitat. In fact, more than 50% of Australia lives

in cities and large towns. And this urban habitat is now shaping our habits and our health.

From an evolutionary perspective, the human body is well suited to the hunter-gatherer way of life because it provides a natural diet and plenty of exercise. Nowadays, many of us lead a very different way of life.

The modern lifestyle can be very sedentary and the modern diet can be far from natural. The way we live – in cities, towns and, indeed, the countryside – is contributing to many of our current health problems, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.



Photo courtesy of the author. Photo: K. A. (K. A. is a local tropical fresh produce

Leadership & Advocacy



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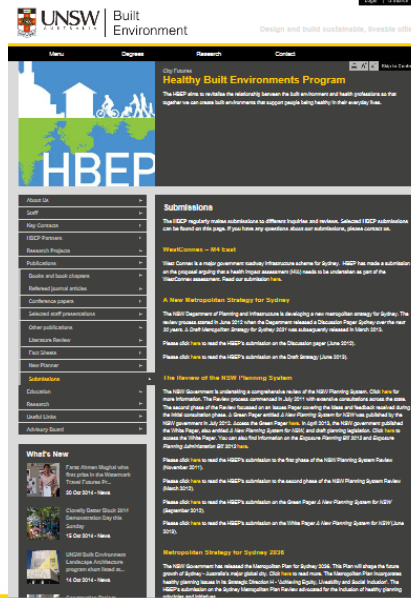
Network of key HBE stakeholders (former Advisory Board)

Media engagement

Regular newsletter; blog

Submission writing

Communicating the evidence in various ways



Leadership & Advocacy



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Health - a significant inclusion in NSW Planning Bill 2013

Engagement with key HBE stakeholders

Single message - strategically & consistently communicated

Only example in Australia

Already having an impact - local and metro levels

Future?



Health into Planning Law!



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1.3 Objects of Act

(1) The objects of this Act are as follows:

.....

(h) to promote health and safety in the design, construction and performance of buildings,

(i) to promote health, amenity and quality in the design and planning of the built environment,

.....

NSW Planning Bill 2013

Some Challenges in this Work...



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- Traditional Westminster system of government can make progress on cross cutting issues / wicked problems difficult
- State Department of Health often not seen as key stakeholder - priorities in acute sick care
- Convincing some planners that this is relevant work - co-benefits framework is a way forward
- Different research traditions challenge shared ways-of-working across health and the built environment
- Language (technical jargon) barriers
- Professional respect for the 'other' - has to be nurtured
- Shifting political philosophies, commitment & funding

Conclusion

Building Australian research to inform policy and practice

Interdisciplinary ways of working and engaging are evolving

Building strategic alliances - impacting on policy across built environment and health

Interdisciplinary education - professional development and university based courses

Health objective in NSW Planning Bill significant

Shifting political commitment - threat to future progress?

