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Ms Erin Pasley
 Research Director
 Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee
 Parliament House
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Dear Ms Pasley

Heart Foundation submission to Planning Bills 2015 – Consultation draft version two

The Heart Foundation welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Planning Bills 2015 consultation draft version two. The Heart Foundation has a strong interest in planning legislation and regulations, because of the impact of this legislation on the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders.

We urge the Infrastructure Planning and Natural Resources Committee (IPNRC) to ensure that the health and wellbeing impacts are incorporated more comprehensively into the planning process at the highest levels. This includes the Planning Act itself, as well as the supporting regulation and guidance material. Our particular focus is in the overarching areas of: creating active, healthy and inclusive communities; active transportation (walking, cycling and public transport); and the food supply.

The Heart Foundation calls for an amendment in the Planning Bills 2015 to reflect the link between planning and health and to provide the necessary legislative framework to ensure that health can be successfully and systematically incorporated into the Queensland Planning System.

We have consistently submitted feedback through the various steps of the State Planning reform; from feedback given to the previous government, to participating in the Planning Summit in July 2015 and giving our feedback formally through our Better Planning [submission](#) in October 2015.

We facilitated an international expert, Mark Fenton in November 2015 to speak at a stakeholder [forum](#) about Designing Healthier Communities, of which government stakeholders in health, transport, planning and local government attended.

As a member of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council, the Heart Foundation also met with senior staff from the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning to discuss the draft State Infrastructure Plan last November and subsequently submitted our feedback in December 2015. We have invested in these processes because we know from the evidence that incorporating the health and wellbeing impacts more comprehensively into the planning process at the highest levels will have positive impacts on the health of Queenslanders.

We support the stated aims of Better Planning for Queensland¹ that:

- the “Queensland Government is committed to delivering a better planning system that enables responsible development and delivers prosperity, sustainability and **liveability** for now and into the future”; and
- such Planning reform can contribute to “**improving the quality of places and spaces**”, “making sure new and existing **communities are supported with infrastructure**” and “tackling long term challenges like climate change and the **ageing population**”.

A healthy economic future for Queensland will be shaped by the health and wellbeing of the population². That is why we need a coordinated, systems approach across whole-of-government and industry to prevent and manage chronic diseases and a focus on sustaining health and wellbeing for all. This includes both physical infrastructure and social infrastructure that enhances productivity, the economy and the community.

The Heart Foundation's key recommendations submitted to Better Planning for Queensland are:

- Include health and wellbeing as a key consideration across all elements.
- Include planning and approval mechanisms that support the creation and maintenance of active, healthy communities.
- Have a strong focus on urban development that is higher density and mixed use in walkable and connected communities.
- Make active transportation an easy and safe choice through better infrastructure planning.
- Increase access to affordable and efficient public transport.
- Prioritise food security in vulnerable populations, food supply to remote Indigenous communities and land use planning which protects good quality agricultural land.

The Heart Foundation recommends a whole-of-government approach so planning and approval mechanisms support maintaining and enhancing active, healthy communities and not diminishing them in any way in the pursuit of efficiencies to streamline processes.

When the Deputy Premier announced the release of the Planning Bills 2015, we were pleased. However when we read further into the Bills we were disappointed to read the only inclusion regarding health is in reference to "health care facilities".

Chronic diseases (heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes) cause 89% of all deaths and cost Queensland \$7.7 billion annually². Unless we do a better job of supporting people to live active, healthy lives now, our health care system will struggle to counter the burden of chronic diseases.

The Queensland Government health budget currently accounts for 27% of the total state budget, with less than 2% of this spent on prevention. By 2020, less than five short years away, it has been projected the health budget will consume the entire state budget, not to mention the impacts to the economy from lost productivity.

The NSW Planning Review made significant progress by listing health as one of the eight principal objectives of their Planning Bill in 2013. The exact wording as an Object of the NSW Planning Act 2013 is "to promote health, amenity and quality in the design and planning of the built environment"³.

The Tasmanian Parliament recently included "health and wellbeing" in their amended objective in 2015 to the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993 to be furthered by planning schemes, amendments and projects of regional significance. The amendment received widespread support from the three parties and upper house independents. The amended legislation, not yet available as a consolidated Act, will read, "to promote the health and wellbeing of all Tasmanians and visitors to Tasmania by ensuring a pleasant, efficient and safe environment for working, living and recreation".

The Heart Foundation recommends that Queensland includes a similar amendment to NSW and Tasmania by embedding the promotion of health and wellbeing of the population into the Planning legislation. The legislation must then be translated into actual statutory standards to ensure that it is implemented and has a real benefit to the health and wellbeing of the population.

We know that prevention is effective in improving health, but it must be prioritised, sustained and appropriately funded. The now defunct Australian National Preventive Health Agency set out a comprehensive strategy for Australia to become the healthiest country by 2020^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}. If we implement what we already know about prevention across sectors (including planning), we will succeed in improving the health and wellbeing of all Queenslanders at every stage of the health continuum.

Health must be an integral consideration in planning in order to counter the mega trends of increasing levels of unhealthy food choices, physical inactivity and obesity in our population and the resultant increased disability, hospitalisations, costs to our community through direct health care costs and loss of productivity and premature death. Queensland has the highest rate of adult obesity in Australia which has increased at double the national rate over the past five years². The number of overweight or obese adults has increased by about 55,000 each year on average in Queensland since 1993^{Error! Bookmark not defined.}, in part due to poor land use and transport planning of the past. Actively considering health and wellbeing in the planning process is one part of the solution to addressing this issue.

The built environments in which we live, work, shop, play, learn and pray need to be conducive to healthy living by being walkable, closer together and intermingled, not spread apart. Car dependent and sedentary behaviours are significant contributing factors to the prevalence of preventable chronic diseases. The Heart Foundation would like to see a stronger focus on urban development that is higher density and mixed use in walkable and connected communities⁴.

Well-planned neighbourhoods can provide access to a healthy food supply and increase the number of people who use active transportation to local destinations such as shops, educational institutions, parks, services, facilities and public transport⁵. [Mark Fenton](#) recommended that the design and layout of those destinations have to actually reward rather than punish people for arriving without a car⁶.

Features such as buildings up next to the footpath, with parking on-street or behind the building rather than a giant car park between the street and the building, make it more inviting and safer to walk, bike, or step off the bus. According to Fenton, street trees, benches, water foundations, pedestrian lighting and bicycle racks, once considered “amenities,” are now recognised as functional and important street furnishings for users of all ages and abilities.

The US Surgeon General has recently made a Call to Action on Walking and Walkable Communities⁷. This evidenced-based summary reaffirms that: *People have to walk more and for that to happen we must build a much more walkable world.*

The strong link between planning, infrastructure and health and wellbeing should be articulated more comprehensively in the planning process at the highest levels. This link was present in the recent draft State Infrastructure Plan and loosely in the State Planning Policy but is not highlighted at all in the Planning Bills 2015.

In addition, and as discussed at the Public Briefing for the Planning Bills in November 2015, the Queensland Government must have a stronger role in helping Local Governments to implement the Planning Bills 2015. This role could be extended to helping to embed these principles in creating the types of places we want to make a healthier Queensland.

In summary, the Heart Foundation recommends a planning system that benefits and supports the health, wellbeing and economic prosperity of Queenslanders – at the same time as streamlining processes and providing a vision that is beyond the current market and election cycle. The principles for creating active, healthy communities will deliver sustained economic, health and social benefits for governments, business and communities.

The Heart Foundation urges the Committee to ensure planning mechanisms and processes which support active living and improve the health of Queenslanders are well integrated into the final Planning Bills.

Yours sincerely



Rachelle Foreman
Health Director

References

- ¹ Better Planning for Queensland <http://www.dilgp.qld.gov.au/planning-reform> Accessed 11 January 2016.
- ² Queensland Health (2014). *The Health of Queenslanders 2014*. Fifth report the Chief Health Officer Queensland. Queensland Government. Brisbane.
- ³ NSW Planning Bill 2013. Accessed 11 January 2016.
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- ⁴ National Heart Foundation (2014) *Does Density matter? The role of density in creating walkable neighbourhoods. Discussion Paper* http://heartfoundation.org.au/images/uploads/main/Active_living/Does_density_matter.pdf Accessed 11 January 2016.
- ⁵ Queensland Government and Heart Foundation (2010). *Active, healthy communities: A resource package for Local Government to create supportive environments for physical activity and health eating.* www.activehealthycommunities.com.au Accessed 11 January 2016.
- ⁶ Fenton, M. (2015). *Building a World for Free Range Kids*. National Physical Activity Plan Alliance Commentaries on Physical Activity and Health, 1(3).
- ⁷ Dept. of Health and Human Services, *Step it Up, The Surgeon General's Call to Action on Walking and Walkability.* <http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls/walking-and-walkable-communities/call-to-action-walking-and-walkable-communities.pdf> Accessed 11 January 2016.