

Healthy Built Environments

Housing and Health

Susan Thompson and Anthony Capon

The University of New South Wales

2010 has been a productive and exciting time for healthy built environments.

Urban Health was the theme of World Health Day and here in NSW our Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP) was established. Progress has been made across the Program's strategic areas of research, education and leadership in advocating for healthy built environments. In this final column for the year, we provide an overview of other key milestones and have a look at what's ahead for 2011.

The NSW Premier's Council for Active Living (PCAL) goes from strength to strength in supporting practitioners and policy makers. An updated 'Why Active Living Statement' has been released and a comprehensive 'Development and Active Living Resource' published. This is a first for NSW planners who can use the guidelines to ensure that planning policies and developments promote physical activity. The document is replete with practical examples and supportive evidence, as well as a systematic method for assessing proposals.

The 'Workplace Travel Plan Resource' and 'NSW Bike Plan' were also overseen by PCAL and can be downloaded from their web site (www.pcal.nsw.gov.au). Both showcase the cross sectoral focus and cooperation demanded for the successful implementation of healthy built environments.

In February, the NSW Health Department published the 'Healthy Urban Development Checklist' (www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2010/pdf/hud_checklist.pdf). While its prime audience is health professionals, this informative and detailed checklist is very useful for planners.



The NSW Bike Plan will see cycling rates increase

Conferences focusing on aspects of healthy built environments provided a wealth of research findings, practical applications and policy initiatives. In April, the 'Healthy Parks Healthy People' congress linked research and practice on the relationship between natural environments and human health. A web resource 'Healthy Parks Healthy People Central' has been established and is a great source of up-to-date information (www.hphpcentral.com).

In June the Australian Academy of Science's Fenner Conference 'Healthy Climate, Planet and People' explored the co-benefits for health flowing from action on climate change (<http://nceph.anu.edu.au/Fenner2010/index.php>). The take home message was that 'low-carbon ways of living are healthy ways of living.' This is an important recognition of planning's contribution to environmental sustainability and an acknowledgement that this work significantly benefits human health. The 'NSW Public Health Bulletin' devoted a full issue to this topic (www.publish.csiro.au/nid/226/issue/5430.htm).

In July, the 3rd 'Healthy Cities - Making Cities Liveable' conference had a strong practice focus for planners and built environment professionals (www.healthycities.com.au).

This year also saw the release of the 'State of Australian Cities 2010' report from the Major Cities Unit of Infrastructure Australia (www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/mcu). Human health is acknowledged as an important measure of the future liveability of Australian cities.

The 'Healthy Places and Spaces' web site (www.healthyplaces.org.au) continues to provide planners with robust and up-to-date evidence. Other collaborative guidelines released this year include 'An Australian Vision for Active Transport'. This advocates active transport (walking, cycling and public transport) and is the result of a partnership between the Australian Local Government Association, Bus Industry Confederation, Cycling Promotion Fund, National Heart Foundation of Australia and International



A walking strategy will encourage walking for transport and leisure

Association of Public Transport (http://www.alga.asn.au/policy/transport/ActiveTransport_Draft_5.pdf).

Our work in NSW continues to benefit from international web-based resources including the US 'Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Designing and Building Healthy Places' (www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces) and the UK 'Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment' (www.cabe.org.uk).

2011 promises further progress and action. At the state level we will have our own walking strategy, as well as more evidence for planners and designers to use in developing policies and best healthy built environment practice. We also look forward to a sharper focus on these issues in the revisions to the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy. And locally, 2011 will herald healthy built environment initiatives that build on existing achievements of local government across NSW.

Thanks to members of the HBEP Advisory Board for their valuable support during the year. Associate Professor Susan Thompson and Professor Anthony Capon direct the Healthy Built Environments Program in the City Futures Research Centre at the University of New South Wales (<http://www.fbe.unsw.edu.au/cf/HBEP/>). The Program receives funding from the NSW Department of Health.

architectus™

An international practice with over 25 years experience creating award winning solutions in urban design, planning and architecture.

Urban Design
Master Planning
Strategic Planning
Statutory Planning
Expert Testimony

Key Contacts

Stewart Verity
Director - Urban Designer/Planner
B Sc (Env Stud) GDip Urban & Regional Planning
M Bllt Env (Urban Design) MPIA

John Riordan
Associate Director - Urban Planner
B Sc MURP (Syd) MPIA CPP

Murray Donaldson
Associate - Urban Planner
BTP (Hons) MEnvM MPIA CPP

Elisabeth Peet
Associate - Architect/Urban Designer
B Arch (Hons) M Urb Des

Anne Sutherland
Associate - Architect/Urban Designer
M Urb Des B Arch (Hons) B Sc (Arch)

Murray James
Urban Designer
MA Urb Des BA DipLArch

Offices

Sydney
Level 3 341 George Street
Sydney NSW 2000
T + 61 2 8252 8400

Melbourne
Level 7 250 Victoria Parade
East Melbourne VIC 3002
T + 61 3 9429 5733

**Auckland
Brisbane
Shanghai**

www.architectus.com.au
www.architectus.co.nz