



HEALTHY BUILT ENVIRONMENTS

progressing

the agenda in a year of change, challenge and opportunity

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Political change has been ever present throughout 2015. We have seen significant shifts across all levels of government, creating both challenges and opportunities for healthy planning in NSW. A new Prime Minister, state election and looming local council amalgamations have provided the backdrop to an inevitable realignment of strategic directions.

In our final column for the year we reflect on these political movements and what they mean for healthy planning practice and policy. We also offer a great Christmas/New Year read to inspire your healthy planning passions well into 2016!

Changes at the national level

At the national level our new Prime Minister has called for the development of 'vibrant, liveable cities', and appointed the country's first ever Minister for Cities and the Built Environment. Minister Briggs has indicated a desire to 'ensure that public transport works better in Australia', and has been tasked with the preparation of a new Federal plan for cities, working with states, local government and urban communities. We have the opportunity for a more coordinated whole-of-government approach to address the interconnections between the planning of our cities, productivity, increasing congestion and declining liveability.

Changes at the state level

The Baird Government was re-elected in March 2015 and has instigated a number of changes with implications for healthy planning in NSW. A new overarching State Plan, Making it Happen, articulates 12 'Premier's Priorities', including 'building infrastructure' and 'tackling childhood obesity'.¹ Light rail and expanded public transport infrastructure projects provide a significant opportunity to increase participation in active travel such as walking and cycling.

Changes at the local level

Potential council amalgamations have been a major focus in 2015, although the State Government is yet to formally propose any mergers.

The Integrated Planning and Reporting (IP&R) framework guides the long-term strategic planning of local councils.² The overarching strategic document is the Community Strategic Plan (CSP), which is updated to coincide with local council elections. The next elections are scheduled for September 2016. PCAL has prepared an electronic resource that demonstrates how healthy eating and active living considerations can be incorporated across all stages of the IP&R process.³ An expanded case study of how the Illawarra Food Plan was incorporated into the IP&R responses of three Illawarra councils is also available.⁴

NSW residents will soon have the opportunity to participate in community consultations to inform local council updates of their CSPs and subsequent IP&R responses. We encourage everyone who wants to embed healthy planning in local government priorities to participate in forthcoming IP&R consultation processes.

Other news

An excellent summary of Australian healthy planning initiatives across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors can be found in an international compendium on planning for health and wellbeing published earlier this year. Entitled *The Routledge Handbook of Planning for Health and Well-Being: Shaping a Sustainable and Healthy Future*, the book brings health into the centre of planning, strengthening the hands of those who argue and plan for healthy environments.⁵ A chapter illustrating how environmental sustainability initiatives have significant co-benefits for health is particularly pertinent to planners. Kevin McCloud, of *Grand Designs* fame, has endorsed the book and wants to see every politician, planner and developer with a copy.

So all in all, 2015 has been a year of change and opportunity for healthy planning, with a great anthology of resources to cap it off! We encourage you to continue to play your part in helping to bring about the improved health and liveability of our cities, towns and local communities. We look forward to sharing the journey with you into 2016 ■

Endnotes

- ¹ See: www.nsw.gov.au/making-it-happen
- ² NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet 2013, *Integrated planning and reporting manual for local government in NSW*, NSW Government, Sydney.
- ³ See: www.nswpcalipr.com.au/
- ⁴ See: www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/case_studies/IP_and_R_and_the_Illawarra_Regional_Food_Strategy
- ⁵ See: www.routledge.com/products/9781138023307



Light rail, now linking the city and the inner west, will soon be a feature of Sydney's public transport system. Construction will be full steam ahead in 2016.