Healthy Built Environments Program

Submission on the Metropolitan Strategy Review: Sydney Towards 2036

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Introduction

The Healthy Built Environments Program welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy review process. Co-Directors, Associate Professor Susan Thompson and Professor Tony Capon lead the Healthy Built Environments Program which is supported by a team of inter-disciplinary partners from across the health and built environment professions working in the public and private sectors. Recently established in the City Futures Research Centre, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of NSW, the Program receives funding from the NSW Department of Health. The Healthy Built Environments Program fosters cross-disciplinary research, delivers education and workforce development, and advocates for health as a primary consideration in built environment plan, policy and decision-making. The Program brings the combined efforts of researchers, educators, practitioners and policymakers from the built environment and health sectors to the prevention of contemporary health problems. Our vision is that built environments will be planned, designed, developed and managed in ways that promote and protect the health of all people.

The Healthy Built Environments Program website has more information about our work which brings health and the built environment together. Further, the website provides links to useful resources, many of which present evidence for the inclusion of specifically focused health policies, provisions and actions in the urban planning process.

See: http://www.fbe.unsw.edu.au/cf/HBEP/

This submission addresses both the M*etropolitan Strategy Review: Sydney Towards 2036* Discussion Paper and the *City of Cities Metropolitan Strategy.* For questions about the submission please contact Associate Professor Susan Thompson, Co-Director, Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP).
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The work of Mr. Andrew Wheeler, research assistant to the HBEP, in preparing this submission, is gratefully acknowledged.

The Built Environment and Health

There is a rapidly growing body of evidence which demonstrates that the built environment is one of a range of important factors that influences people's physical activity, consumption of healthy food, and social interaction. These behaviours underpin good physical and mental health. Sprawling suburbs with low residential densities, segregated land uses, disconnected street patterns, limited provision of public transport and few local employment opportunities encourage car dependent, physically inactive and socially isolated lifestyles. These urban forms also contribute to climate change with excessive greenhouse gas emissions. Conversely, dense urban forms, mixed uses, active and public transport modes, open space and locally sourced fresh food, together with safe and well designed neighbourhoods, are the foundations of a physically and mentally healthy community. These are also the building blocks for managing future growth in an environmentally sustainable way.
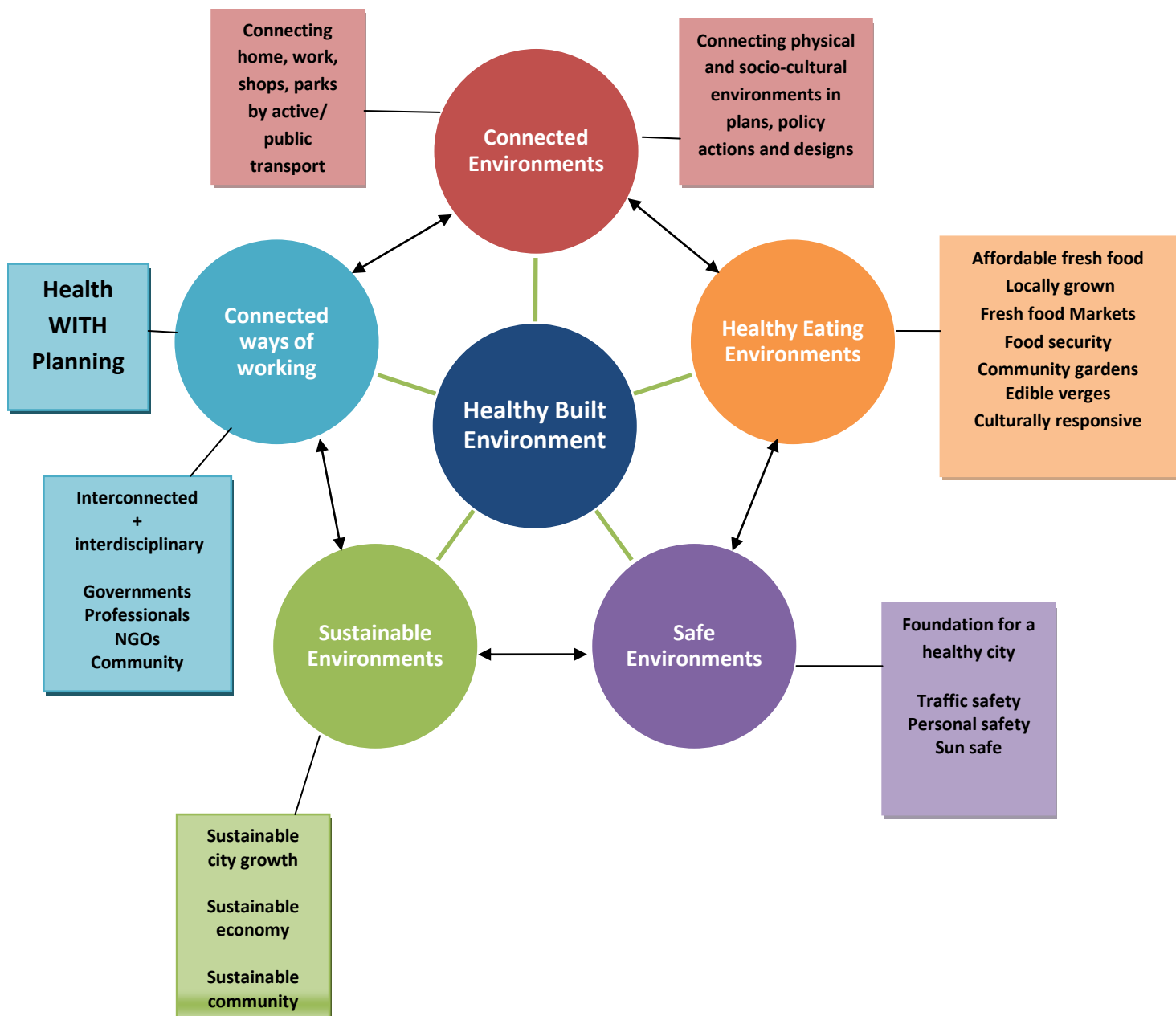
Given the challenges of climate change and population growth, it is essential for planners to think about the health of people and the planet in an integrated way. Together with colleagues in the health professions, urban planners can be proactive and effective in helping to address the wellbeing of local communities, as well as the health of the planet. This needs to occur at all levels of the urban planning process - from policy development to detailed implementation strategies and actions.

The CHESS principles for healthy environments are a useful comprehensive schema for such inter-sectoral thinking and collaborative action (Thompson and McCue, 2008). CHESS encompasses different 'environments' which underpin the achievement of healthy people, places and planet:
➢   Connected Environments
➢   Healthy Eating Environments
➢   Safe Environments
➢   Sustainable Environments.

CHESS is particularly useful in building a strategic policy foundation for supporting human health and environmental sustainability in a high growth scenario. Up until recently the planning profession has tended to focus attention on environmental sustainability without necessarily making the link to human health. CHESS provides a mechanism to make this critical link. The diagram   overleaf   encapsulates   the   essence   of   the   CHESS   principles.

CHESS Principles

Connecting home, work, shops, parks by active/ public transport

Connecting physical and socio-cultural environments in plans, policy actions and designs

Connected Environments

Health WITH Planning

Connected ways of working

Healthy Built Environment

Healthy Eating Environments

Affordable fresh food
Locally grown
Fresh food Markets
Food security
Community gardens
Edible verges
Culturally responsive

Interconnected + interdisciplinary

Governments
Professionals
NGOs
Community

Sustainable Environments

Safe Environments

Foundation for a healthy city

Traffic safety
Personal safety
Sun safe

Sustainable city growth

Sustainable economy

Sustainable community

Evidence for Built Environment and Health

There is growing agreement that there are numerous health benefits in planning and creating a built environment that supports physically active lifestyles, access to fresh, nutritious food, together with opportunities to be socially connected in public community spaces. These environments are also recognised as environmentally sustainable. In the long term, the economic and social burden of chronic disease will be reduced. Evidence to support this is mounting both internationally and within Australia. The HBEP is currently undertaking a literature review that will pull much of the salient material together. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this submission, the HBEP considers that the following Australian and NSW sources will be particularly helpful for the Metropolitan Strategy Review Team in arguing for the incorporation of health related provisions in the revised Metropolitan Strategy.

NSW Health **Healthy Urban Design Checklist**
http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2010/hud_checklist.html

NSW **Premier's Council for Active Living**
http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/

WA **Centre for the Built Environment and Health**
http://www.sph.uwa.edu.au/research/cbeh

SA **Planning for Health**
http://www.health.sa.gov.au/PEHS/branches/health-promotion/0904-planning-for-health-report.pdf

National Heart Foundation's **Active by Design** resources
http://www.heartfoundation.org.au/Professional_Information/Lifestyle_risk/Physical_Activity/Active_by_Design/Pages/default.aspx

National PIA, ALGA and NHF, **Healthy Spaces and Places**
http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/site/

National Preventative Health Taskforce (see **National Health Preventative Strategy**)
http://www.preventativehealth.org.au/internet/preventativehealth/publishing.nsf/Content/home-1

Other useful publications can be found on the **Healthy Built Environments Program** website:

http://www.fbe.unsw.edu.au/cf/hbep/publications/

Comments on the Discussion Paper

The Healthy Built Environments Program makes the following observations in relation to the ***Metropolitan Strategy Review: Sydney Towards 2036*** Discussion Paper

- We welcome the review of the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy and the shift towards a more integrated approach, particularly the integration of the revised Strategy with the Metropolitan Transport Plan.

- A network of connected centres, supported by appropriate transport and social infrastructure, has the potential to deliver significant positive outcomes in terms of individual and community health.

- It is encouraging to see that certain 'key challenges' are linked to health outcomes. For example, the Paper states that 'reduced car reliance, well designed and plentiful public spaces and streets that are friendly to pedestrians and cyclists contribute to **healthier lifestyles**' (p. 6). We believe this should be further developed in the final Strategy, with the inclusion of health as a major vision/goal/aim. This has been done in strategies for other Australian states – for example, in the *South East Queensland Regional Plan* and *The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide*. An appropriate framework needs to be put in place, encouraging and enabling the profession to address health issues associated with the built environment. Importantly, the revised Sydney Metropolitan Strategy should acknowledge the health implications of its policies and link these to actions designed to produce positive health outcomes.

- A number of the 'Proposed Directions' include healthy planning principles, albeit indirectly. In particular, we applaud key directions which address: climate change, integrating land use with transport, providing more equitable access to employment and essential services (especially in western Sydney) by boosting job growth, land supply for employment and the diversity of employment across the region, concentrating existing growth in existing urban areas, providing a mix of housing types and densities, and protecting land on the city's fringe for the purposes of primary production, open space and conservation needs.

- Despite this, the Discussion Paper fails to acknowledge the health implications associated with the majority of these issues. Human health is only directly addressed in two of the Paper's directions:

  > **Direction 4** – a link is made between employment provision in centres other than the CBD and the reduction of health inequality.
  >
  > **Direction 9** – focuses on urban renewal. Here, the health implications of urban consolidation, mixed used development and good urban design are made explicit.

- We welcome **Direction 8** which acknowledges the importance of protecting viable agricultural lands for food production in close proximity to Sydney residents. The specific link to benefiting both human and environmental health needs to be made here. We would also like to see other healthy eating policies in the Strategy to guide local actions in promoting and supporting food policies and edible public landscapes (e.g. community gardens; edible nature strips; farmers' markets).

- There is the potential for health to feature as a key component and justification for addressing many of the Strategy's overarching aims. We recommend explicit mention of health, and call for continued consultation with NSW Health and other key stakeholders.

- There is a need to raise awareness of planning's role in addressing public health and the Strategy provides an effective mechanism for this to occur. This will only occur if attention is given to the points of concern raised above.

Comments on the Metropolitan Strategy

In this section we comment on the existing Metropolitan Strategy, *City of Cities*, making suggestions for how it can better incorporate health provisions.

- Whilst health does feature in the Strategy, it needs to be explicit. To facilitate this, a specific health vision/aim/section should be included. Public Health Law and Policy (2009) highlight how this provides a health context and serves to clarify the purpose and significance of specific actions.

   > 'There are a number of ways to integrate public health into general plans – for instance, by creating a separate public health element (or chapter), developing a health "guiding principle" for the entire general plan, and including health rationale to support specific policies. All of these strategies help create a health frame for the specific goals, objectives, and strategies the plan promotes' (Public Health Law and Policy 2009, p. 38).

- The two most recently released metro strategies for Australian capital cities – the *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2009-2031* (2009) and *The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide* (2010) – both incorporate health as key component. In the case of the Queensland Strategy, health was included as part of the overall vision, as one of the strategic directions and as an individual element of the Strategy ('6.3 Healthy and strong communities'). The Adelaide Strategy included health as a one of its key principles and backed this up with a stand-alone element (entitled 'Health and wellbeing', pages 100-101), complete with a rationale and set of specific policies and targets.

- Whilst *City of Cities* does contain numerous actions that have the potential to improve health outcomes, these need to be embedded within a prominent and clearly articulated health context. In doing so, the Strategy will require more actions to support an increased emphasis on health. Some suggestions are provided below, and reference is made to key resources that will further enable health to be integrated into the Strategy.

- Overall, the current Strategy uses the term 'health' 112 times, 40 of which are directly related to healthy planning principles and the improvement of human health. Out of these 40 occurrences, 14 are found within specific actions in the Strategy (see appendix for analysis).

- These actions cover a range of areas and initiatives. In particular, we commend the recognition of health in actions associated with:

- the provision of walking and cycling infrastructure,

- improving air quality,

- retaining production of agricultural produce,

- encouraging links to local food production, and

- implementation and governance issues dealing with sustainability and economic evaluation.

- The actions in the Strategy also indicate a commitment to inter-sectoral activity on health issues. Notably, actions facilitate collaboration between Planning and Health Departments on the development of urban design principles for mixed-use developments, the redevelopment of housing estates and stock managed by the Department of Housing and in the promotion of regional recreational trails. We believe this broad commitment can be further strengthened through the establishment of a health in all policy officer (as is the case with the Adelaide Metro Strategy) or a healthy planning committee to provide advice on, evaluate and foster the implementation of specific health related initiatives in the Strategy.

- There are a number of other actions in the Strategy that have implications for human health, and these should be explicitly acknowledged. Predominantly, the Strategy only makes reference to the heath implications of its actions in a broad sense (i.e. in introductory and background sections).

- There is scope for many of the Strategy's actions to be amended to give greater recognition to health.[1] As well as this, additional actions could be included around the following:

- The provision of parks and open space for both active and passive recreation, especially around renewal centres

- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

- Shading for sun protection

- Promotion of green buildings and rooftop gardens

- Community gardens, edible verges and urban agriculture

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[1] In undertaking this analysis we found Public Health Law and Policy (2009) to be particularly helpful.

- Farmers' markets
- Specific targets regarding the protection of agricultural land for food production
- Land use regulations that promote health food options and discourage fast food restaurants that serve high-calorie, low-nutrient foods
- Specific goals/targets for public and active transport usage
- End-of-trip facilities for those travelling to work by active modes of transport (showers, lockers, secure bicycle parking, etc.)
- Traffic calming measures in and around local neighbourhood centres
- Measures that aim to increase average occupancy of vehicles (e.g. preferential parking space and fees for carpool vehicles)
- Provision of adequate and safe sidewalks in all new developments areas
- Promotion of 'green' streets and active streetscapes
- Promotion of partnerships to encourage joint-use agreements of private open space for recreation
- Strengthening health considerations in sustainability and economic evaluation criteria and the development of lower order plans (e.g. plans subject to mandatory Health Impact Assessment)
- The negative impacts of alcohol, drug and tobacco use
- Universal design to facilitate access for people with a disability and the elderly
- Specific targets for affordable housing
- The needs of vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, people with a disability and refugees
- Lifecycle housing and ageing in place
- Promoting stronger partnerships with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders.

Conclusion

The Healthy Built Environments Program endorses the integrated approach of the review of the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy. In particular we support its link with the Metropolitan Transport Plan. We assert that health needs to be an explicit aim, with direct flow-on to different strategies in the revised Metropolitan Strategy. It is critical that human health is aligned with environmental sustainability and the co-benefits of adaptive strategies acknowledged. This needs to occur at all levels of the revised Metropolitan Strategy – from its vision statements through to specific actions and targets, setting the framework for regional and local planning instruments to deliver supportive environments for human and environmental health. This will greatly strengthen the ability of the Sydney Metropolitan Plan to ensure that Sydney remains one of the world's great metropolises.

References

Public Health Law and Policy (2009) *Healthy Planning Policies: A Compendium from California General Plans* http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/healthy-planning-policies

State of Australian Cities (SOAC) Report:2010
http://www.infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/mcu.aspx
See especially Chapter 6 Chapter 6: Liveability of Australian cities – specific section on health

Thompson, SM. and McCue, P. (2008), *The CHESS Principles for Health Environments: An holistic and strategic game plan for inter-sectoral policy and action*, NSW Premier's Council on Active Living, http://www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/file/0003/27651/chess.pdf

The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide
http://www.dplg.sa.gov.au/plan4adelaide/html/plan.cfm (See especially Chapter D – Policies and Targets (pages 100-101)

South East Queensland Regional Plan
http://www.dip.qld.gov.au/seqregionalplan

Appendix

Textual analysis of health related provisions in *City of Cities* using the CHESS Principles

Key words at a glance:

	City of Cities
Health - TOTAL	112
Health (Category 1)	(40)
Health (Category 2)	(55)
Health (Category 3)	(17)
Wellbeing	3
Connect	91
Food	10
Safe	44
Sustainable	127
Walk	74
Cycle	58
OVERALL TOTAL	**519**

Tables – Actions in *City of Cities* (Health Category 1 – Healthy planning principles and human health)

INTRODUCTION

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
		No occurrences

A. ECONOMY AND EMPLOYMENT

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
		No occurrences

B. CENTRES AND CORRIDORS

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
115	**B7.2.3** Prepare urban design guidelines for mixed–use development along enterprise	The Department of Planning will work with councils, the Department of Health and the Department of Environment and Conservation, to prepare a set of urban design principles for accommodating mixed use development along enterprise corridors.

| | | corridors. | |

C. HOUSING

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
148	**C4.2.1** The Department of Housing will redevelop and regenerate housing estates and stock.	Through these initiatives with other agencies such as the Department of Health and the Department of Education and Training, it will aim to revitalise and build more sustainable communities and provide better social and additional affordable housing.

D. TRANSPORT

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
181	**D3.1.1** Improve local and regional walking and cycling infrastructure through the implementation of the Planning Guidelines for Walking and Cycling.	Almost one in five of all trips are made by walking or cycling. There is potential to increase this, as many short trips currently made by car could also be made by walking or cycling, improving local accessibility, neighbourhood amenity and community health. Walking and cycling provide both local access and access to public transport for longer trips to centres across the metropolitan region. Better facilities will encourage more walking and cycling for everyday travel. Walkers and cyclists need high quality, safe and direct routes.
183	**D3.3.1** Implement TravelSmart voluntary travel behaviour change programs targeted at households, schools and centres and other locations which generate travel.	TravelSmart voluntary travel behaviour change programs provide information and education to encourage travel choices that are consistent with and support sustainable travel. People change their travel behaviour for many different reasons. Some people change because it saves them time, or it saves them money, while for other people the change gives them freedom or independence, improves their health or better connects them to their community.

E. ENVIRONMENT AND RESOURCES

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
213	**E2.3** Improve Sydney's Air Quality	Urban air quality in Sydney has generally improved since the 1980s. There have been substantial reductions in the levels of carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and lead so that levels of these pollutants are currently within safe limits all the time. However, Sydney currently faces two significant challenges–ozone (or photochemical smog) and particles–both of which are linked with motor vehicles and have significant health impacts.
213	**E2.3** Improve Sydney's Air Quality	Both smog and particle pollution have significant health impacts. Studies have shown that they can cause increases in mortality, hospital admissions, respiratory symptoms such as asthma and decreases in lung and immune system function. A study commissioned by the NSW Department of Environment and Conservation conservatively estimated the total health costs of annual emissions of common ambient pollutants from all sources in the region to be between $1 billion and $8.4 billion per annum.

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
222	**E4** Protect Valuable Rural Activities and Resource Lands	There are consumer benefits in retaining production of agricultural produce, especially highly perishable foods, in close proximity to major markets. This proximity also provides the opportunity to access farm–gate sales of fresh produce. Much of the interest in agriculture by cities internationally is in relation to improving the ==health== and well being of the community. This is achieved by strengthening links to local food production, improving access to, and consumption of safe, nutritious, affordable food.

F. PARKS AND PUBLIC PLACES

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
240	**F1.3.1** Continue to develop the framework for an integrated network of regional recreation trails as part of the overall open space system in partnership with local government, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Roads and Traffic Authority.	Regional recreation trails meet the growing community demand for informal ==healthy== activities, for recreation and active transport across Sydney. Trails are a corridor or pathway, mainly off–road, used for recreational walking or cycling and pass through or connect landscapes, facilities or sites of regional or metropolitan significance.
241	**F1.3.1** Continue to develop the framework for an integrated network of regional recreation trails as part of the overall open space system in partnership with local government, National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Roads and Traffic Authority.	The NSW Government released Planning Guidelines for Walking and Cycling (2004) to support councils, communities and the development industry to improve planning for walking and cycling and create ==healthier== and more sustainable cities and centres.
241	**F1.3.2** Work in partnership with other Government agencies — such as Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, NSW Health and the National Parks and Wildlife Service — to develop a comprehensive communications package for regional recreation trails.	F1.3.2 Work in partnership with other Government agencies — such as Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, NSW ==Health== and the National Parks and Wildlife Service — to develop a comprehensive communications package for regional recreation trails.
241	**F1.3.2** Work in partnership	Department of Planning will work in partnership with other Government agencies — such as Department of Tourism, Sport and

| | with other Government agencies — such as Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation, NSW Health and the National Parks and Wildlife Service — to develop a comprehensive communications package for regional recreation trails. | Recreation, NSW ==Health== and Department of Environment and Conservation — to develop a comprehensive communications package, to ensure Sydneysiders are aware of the trails network. The package will provide signage and maps showing links to facilities such as railway stations, shops, picnic areas and playgrounds. |

G. IMPLEMENTATION AND GOVERNANCE

PAGE	ACTION	OCCURRENCE
262	**Table G2** Sustainability Criteria for New Land Release	5 Avoidance of Risk Land use conflicts, and risk to human ==health== and life, avoided.
270	**G3.5.1** Continue to ensure economic evaluation guidelines take into account social and environmental aspects of projects and apply to integrated assessment of multiple projects.	In addition to evaluation methods for individual projects, the framework provided by the Guidelines allows for the integrated evaluation of: • land use and place outcomes; • network impacts; • implications for other agencies and service providers; • community ==health== and disadvantage; and • environmental externalities and energy use.

Analysis from: Wheeler, A and Thompson, S (2009) *The role of planning in supporting health and wellbeing: An assessment of supportive health provisions in key city plan*, paper presented to the Healthy Cities Conference, Gold Coast Queensland http://www.healthycities.com.au/Downloads.asp