

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (from 26.03.10)

QUESTION 1

What has the Commission learnt from its 'informal monitoring' of the use of *built4kids* through its relationships with stakeholders and membership of inter-agency groups, such as the Premier's Council for Active Living and the Local Government Child-Friendly Communities Network?

Through its membership on inter-agency groups, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) has learnt that *built4kids* and its child-friendly indicators is the first resource of its kind in NSW and has been well received by both government and non-government stakeholders.

Agencies have advised the Commission that they need advice and support with the day-to-day practicalities of working with children and young people and supporting their participation in decision-making.

The Commission is engaging the services of Professor Geoff Woolcock from the Urban Research Program at Griffith University, who developed the child-friendly indicators in partnership with the Commission, to survey the 152 local councils who have received a copy of *built4kids*. The Commission wants to find out how *built4kids* is being used, what impact it is having on the work of local councils and how the Commission can further support local councils in working with children and young people.

The Commission will also place this on the agenda of the inter-agency Steering Committee that will include government agencies, representatives from relevant industry sectors and local government.

The A/Commissioner has met with the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Planning Institute of Australia. Among the issues discussed were further promotion of *built4kids* and how industry bodies can assist the Commission to monitor its use and impact. Similar meetings will be held with other organisations such as the Property Council of Australia and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

QUESTION 2

The Commission's response to questions on notice notes that the Commission is seeking advice from the NSW Department of Planning and the Urban Research Program at Griffith University on the incorporation of child-friendly planning principles in planning instruments and legislation in NSW or other jurisdictions. Why has the Commission not investigated this earlier, with a view to promoting their use in NSW?

As stated in the hearing on 31 March 2010, the Commission has a long history in promoting the development of child-friendly built environments in NSW. Since the Committee's Inquiry in 2005 and Report in 2006, the built environment has been an ongoing priority for the Commission.

Following the release of the Committee's report, the Commission focused its attention and resources on consulting with children, working in partnership local councils and developing *built4kids*. This was a complex piece of work involving research, extensive consultation with children and young people and local councils, development and piloting of indicators and publication and promotion of the resource.

During the course of this work, representations were made to the Department of Planning seeking the inclusion of child-friendly planning principles as a consideration in reviews of relevant planning acts and instruments as they occur in NSW. In August 2009, the Commission provided the Department of Planning with a copy of *built4kids*.

The momentum in progressing this work slowed down in the latter part of 2009 and early 2010 due to a combination of factors including the departure of the long standing Commissioner and her replacement after only a short term and two major reviews of the Commission, a Ministerial review of the functions and structure of the Commission and a review of the Working with Children Check undertaken by the Auditor General.

These reviews have set a clear course for the Commission including the implementation of the recommendations from the 2006 Report of the Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment.

The Commission's Policy Manager has met with officers from the NSW Department of Planning who have agreed to consider how it can incorporate child-friendly planning principles into planning policy and processes.

Initial advice from these officers is that it may be more appropriate to incorporate child-friendly planning principles into guidelines and other policy documents rather than the *Planning Act* or environmental planning instruments.

QUESTION 3

The response goes into some detail as to what would be required to develop a set of indicators to demonstrate the impact of the built environment on children and young people, and notes that the Commission will include in its policy and research program for 2010-11 a scoping exercise to determine what would be required to do so. Has the Commission undertaken any preliminary costing of the development of these indicators?

The Commission will undertake a scoping exercise with input from Professor Geoff Woolcock from the Urban Research Program at Griffith University and Dr Kate Bishop, an independent researcher in the area of children youth and environments. As part of the scope, costings and timeframes will be developed. The Commission's preliminary estimate is that developing the scope will require engaging a consultant for a period of four months at an estimated cost of \$45,000.

QUESTION 4

The response also notes that the aim of the scoping exercise will be to 'make a recommendation about the feasibility of developing a set of indicators around the impact of the built environment and the development of a pilot project'. How long do you envisage it will take to develop (i) the set of indicators and (ii) the pilot project.

The timeframe for this work will be considered as part of the scoping exercise discussed in the answer to Question 3.

QUESTION 5

When do you anticipate the findings of the Children's Hospital Westmead (CHW) Working Party on Falls will be made available?

The Commission anticipates that the findings will be made available by July 2010.

QUESTION 6

Could you please respond in more detail to the Committee's questions about recent developments in relation to the built environment that you consider would be important for consideration in the Committee's review of the Built Environment Report?

The Commission has identified a number of developments for the Committee's consideration:

- Amendments to the *Swimming Pools Act 1992* commenced in December 2009 and provide the legislative framework for high standard four-sided, child resistant barriers to be consistently applied to all newly constructed private pools in NSW. The legislation also provides additional mechanisms to encourage compliance. The Child Death Review Team, to which the Commission currently provides research and executive support, will continue to monitor this area.
- The Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils has established an interactive on-line consultation titled *WesternSydney2030* to allow the people who live in Western Sydney to put forward a vision for how Western Sydney should be in 2030. Councils involved with this initiative include Auburn Council, Bankstown City Council, Baulkham Hills Shire Council, Blacktown City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, Fairfield City Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Holroyd City Council, Liverpool City Council, Parramatta City Council and Penrith City Council. The consultation covers a range of issues including housing, employment, transport and the environment. Further information is available at: www.westernsydney2030.com.au.
- The Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health is finalising a Youth Health Policy for NSW Health, which acknowledges the influence of the physical environment on young people's health. This is due for release in July 2010.
- Dr Kate Bishop has advised that UNICEF is expanding and developing its child-friendly cities initiative in response to the positive international response and take up of this initiative. Australia is now part of Child-Friendly Cities Asia Pacific, formally established in 2007 and led by Dr Karen Malone, Professor of Social Sciences, Faculty of Education, University of Wollongong.
- In the United Kingdom, Play England, a body dedicated to the development and research of play provision for all children, published the first national play strategy in 2008.
- In 2008, the Royal Australasian College of Physicians launched *Standards for the Care of Children and Adolescents in Health Services* in which it is stated that:
Children and adolescents are cared for in a safe and appropriate physical environment designed, furnished and decorated to meet their needs and developmental age (p.4)
These standards also recommend the Commission's TAKING PARTICipation Seriously Kit as a resource available to support organisations in engaging children and young people in decision-making.
- In 2009, the American Academy of Paediatrics issued a policy statement on the role of the built environment in children's health.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE (from the Hearing)

QUESTION 1

During the hearing Ms McClelland noted that the Commission is working with Dr Kate Bishop of the University of NSW to look at how the Commission can further progress the research into causal links between the built environment and children's well-being. Can you provide some further details about this work?

Dr Bishop and others have indicated that there is very little research which directly explores the impact of any kind of environment on children's well-being. She has advised that there is very limited empirical evidence that supports a causal link between children's experience of environments and child well-being. Since the hearing Dr Bishop has advised the Commission that establishing causal links between children's experience of the built environment and their well-being is very ambitious. Correlational, comparative and exploratory studies are more likely to identify specific environmental attributes relevant to children's well-being in community environments.

Correlational studies have been undertaken by Deakin University for the Victorian Department of Human Services, the National Heart Foundation of Australia, the Centre for Built Environments and Health, University of Western Australia, the Urban Research Program Griffith University that attempt to comment on the strong correlation between children's experience of environments and child well-being.

There is also a strong tradition of research in the area of children, youth and environments which has identified many attributes of children's environments which are salient to their well-being. The Commission's future work will seek to capitalise on this existing research and strengthen the links between children's environmental experience and their well-being.

QUESTION 2

Can you provide a realistic figure for the amount of additional funding that would be required to progress all of the Committee's previous recommendations as well as the research work the Commission has planned relating to the built environment?

The Commission estimates that a total of \$540,000 is required to progress the Committee's recommendations including:

- i. Salaries: \$170,000.
- ii. External advice: \$30,000.
- iii. Research and evaluation: \$175,000.
- iv. Publications: \$75,000.
- v. Education: \$60,000.
- vi. Travel: \$30,000.

Please note, the above are estimates only.