

2050

YOUNG FUTURE LEADERS OF
THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

IN ASSOCIATION WITH



BACKGROUND TO 2050

What is 2050?

2050 is a national association of young professionals working in the built environment. We come from the fields of property development, urban design, architecture, planning, quantity surveying, engineering, building and allied professions.

"2050 exists to drive national initiatives towards a more sustainable Australia with passion, commitment and youthful energy."

Why 2050?

2050 was formed as an outcome of the first national Youthquake conference held on Newcastle as part of the 2004 Year of the Built Environment. The year 2050 is a notional sustainability timeline for the generation we serve. The name 2050 is a constant reminder for all members that we are working for a sustainable Australia for future generations; that the actions we carry out today will have an impact upon the future.

What does 2050 do?

We are lobbyists and advocates for change in the way Australia's built environment is developed. By leading our representative professions' youth committees, 2050 is able to comprehensively penetrate the built environment sector and seek generational change towards more sustainable development policy and practice.

How is 2050 Managed?

As a not-for-profit association, 2050 is managed through voluntary leadership in each state and territory. This is an indication of the passion and dedication Australians have for a more sustainable future.

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Who supports 2050?

The primary support for 2050 comes from the Property Council of Australia, The Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Planning Institute of Australia. Other professional associations and sustainability minded bodies also provide support, such as the Green Building Council and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

Who are members of 2050?

Membership of 2050 is automatic for any person who is a member of one of the associated young professional groups. Time commitments are entirely voluntary and there is no membership fee. 2050 is made up of passionate and committed young Australians.

What is 2050's agenda?

In 2006, 2050 will be seeking to raise our political profile through parliamentary submissions such as the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment and providing cross-disciplinary networks in the form of our third annual conference in Melbourne in November. Informal activities on a state by state basis are held throughout the year. Most importantly, 2050 members seek to support and implement sustainable change in built environment policy and practice in their workplace.

2050 will continue these activities into the future by holding our national conference on an annual basis at a different location across Australia. This will help ensure the continuation of a cross-disciplinary network for all young professionals working in the built environment. Our agenda is to inform 2050 members about matters effecting sustainability and the built environment, providing all 2050 members an opportunity to have their voices heard and continue to drive national sustainability initiatives.

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OVERALL STATEMENT

2050 congratulates the Government of NSW on endeavouring to address the issues facing children and young people and their relationship to the built environment through this enquiry. There is a definite need for leadership from government on this issue – we are faced with the alarming prospect that following generations will be the first to inherit a declining planet and a quality of life lower than that experienced by their parents. The fundamental precept behind the following response is that built environments that are good for children and young people will be good for the rest of the community.

The priority issue facing the built environment as it relates to children and young people is the question of its sustainability. Sustainability is implicitly about passing onto subsequent generations a quality of life that is as good as, or better than the departing generation's experience. Therefore gaining an understanding of the built environment issues facing the next generation, who are today's children and young people, is crucial for a better appreciation of what sustainability is, and what the creation of a more sustainable Australia might look like.

One third of Australia's population lives in New South Wales and 75% of Australians live in an urbanised environment [Australian Bureau of Statistics: 2004]. Therefore, the way our urban centres function will have a critical impact on overall sustainability. For example, a child or young person's quality of life and their current and future life opportunities are a function of the urban structure, transport systems, recreational opportunities and housing options that make up the built environment. If these factors are in step, children and young people will have access to life opportunities that unleash their full creative potential.

Built environment factors affecting children and young people are therefore best understood and measured in terms of their economic, social and environmental sustainability. The following submission responds to the terms of reference from the viewpoint of a "sustainable" built environment as it affects, and is affected by, children and young people now and in the future. In this report we are using the broadly accepted definition of sustainability developed in 1987, by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the Brundtland Commission), "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

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2050 believe each of the issues raised should be understood as a priority that needs to be addressed urgently, while recognising that many of the changes required will take at least one generation to implement. However, if the change process is not begun by Government and Community in the short term, quality of life will continue to decline for children and young people, and on into subsequent generations.

Despite the uncompromising overtone of the following submission, there is considerable scope for optimism when it comes to children and young people and the future of the built environment. The social change and growing recognition of children and young peoples' needs and viewpoints from an early age will ensure that their voice continues to be recognised as legitimate. The NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Children, Young people and the Built Environment is testament to this concern for the needs and viewpoints of children and young people.

The creative avenues through which children and young people increasingly communicate societal disaffection, such as music, fashion and preferred ways of "hanging out" reflects a growing enviro-community conscience. Threads of thought can be picked up in song lyrics, clothing labels and attitudes to relationships about the declining planet, social break down, need for mutual respect and to rise above personal circumstance. This all points to significant generational maturity and a willingness to accept responsibility in a post-modern era (An era which has been a "hard pill to swallow" for their parents). The voice of children and young people may in fact become invaluable in the planning and development of built environments that lead New South Wales and Australia towards greater levels of economic, social and environmental sustainability. 2050 looks forward to being involved in the days ahead.

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RESPONSE TO TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. *Trends, changes and issues for children and young people in the development, implementation and coordination of policy, design and planning for the built environment.*

A) PRIMARILY ECONOMIC TRENDS, CHANGES AND ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE INFLUENCED BY THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Transport
 - Rising price of fuel and/ or parental time constraints is limiting use of “parent’s taxi” or carpooling.
 - Increasing cost of public transport may place regular long distance travel out of reach of some children’s and their parent’s incomes
 - Alienating transport environments that barrier and segregate communities, for example main roads that create major physical barriers. This makes cycling and other forms of non-motorised transport difficult, especially when it comes to crossing these barriers
 - Lack of facilities on public transport for children to take bikes and parents to take prams & strollers
 - Lack of cycle paths in cities such as Sydney that allow children to safely commute by bicycles between suburbs or around the city centre
 - Children living in non-urban areas often becoming dislocated from children living in rural areas and vice versa
- Employment
 - Employment for young people tends to be in low skill, low paid, uncreative occupations
 - Due to poor planning and provision of public transport, remote areas and outer suburban areas often have limited potential for people to travel for work to more lucrative inner city work areas.
 - Mono-culture areas reduce potential for entrepreneurial activity
 - Poorly planned suburbs and housing developments often provide little stimulation for children and young people’s creative energy

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- Creative occupations in mono-culture areas are characteristically unpaid or very low paid
- Poor planning places parent's employment far from home and therefore requires travelling long distances to work or working longer hours. This necessitates placing children in long day care centres or after-hours childcare and may leave children and young people unsupervised

B) PRIMARILY SOCIAL TRENDS, CHANGES AND ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE INFLUENCED BY THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Increased isolation
 - Suburban boredom
 - Suburban isolation
 - Lack of "real" recreational opportunities (natural, physical, socially engaging etc)
 - Increase in "unreal" recreational opportunities (internet chatting, video games, remotely engaging)
 - Privatisation of public space, such as shopping malls, leave no places to "hang out"
- Marketing and popular culture
 - Children have proportionally high disposable incomes and are soft targets for marketing tactics that can determine social behaviour, and therefore the dominant functions of a built environment – i.e. shopping malls, cinemas, theme stores etc. Also, children are increasingly looked upon by parents for advice and assistance when making major household purchases, including motor vehicles and furnishings. Children and young people can therefore positively or negatively influence the built environment and household spending habits well beyond their actual buying power
 - Increased commercialisation of space and activities has meant that there is often a cost involved for children's activities, therefore potentially widening the gap between the haves and have nots. It is important to keep public space truly public, in providing equitable access to facilities, in terms of cost, locality and access

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- Declining health
 - Increased obesity – especially as related to lack of non-motorised transport options
 - Increased sedentary activities – especially as related to recreation options. Limited pleasant and useful outdoor areas for children and young people to play in
 - Increased emissions from vehicles and industry and potential negative impact on children's health
- Lack of built environment education
 - Lost opportunities to create a culture of appreciation for quality sustainable built environments
 - Lost opportunity to change Australians' understandings of what makes a quality sustainable built environment
- Legitimising children and young peoples' views
 - Culture does not encourage celebration of childhood and what it means to be a child or young person and therefore children's participation in decision making is low
 - The problems of teenagers is often emphasised in the media rather than their positive attributes and potential for positive contribution
 - The priorities of the economic rationalist approach during the process of constructing a built environment results in other inputs (such as children and young peoples' suggestions) that have been sought in planning stages being cut in order to meet budget. This disenfranchises young people and reinforces their perception that their involvement is merely token
- Increasing fear and litigation
 - Growing culture of fear has meant many parents feel uncomfortable letting children have certain levels of freedom, for example walking to school or catching public transport
 - Increased fear has meant people often feel intimidated by young people. Teenagers in particular are often perceived to be a potential threat when congregating in groups or 'hanging out'

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- Multiple uses for recreation and open spaces such as school ovals are becoming rare with the increased fear of litigation. In NSW the roll out of high perimeter fencing public school to stop after-hours access sends a negative unwelcoming image and limits access to potential open green space for children in urban areas outside school times (not to mention the recreation synergies that school yards offer)
- Fear of children getting hurt can sometimes overly sanitise and/or sterilise children's play, removing the potential for serendipitous or imaginative play.
- Poor maintenance of Public Education
 - Public Schools that are poorly maintained project a negative image about the values our government and community place on children in society. Children attending private education often have the opportunity to experience prize winning built environments, whereas many public school buildings are poorly maintained or present a monotonous standard of architecture.

C) PRIMARILY ENVIRONMENTAL TRENDS, CHANGES AND ISSUES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE THAT ARE INFLUENCED BY THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- Inappropriate housing
 - Housing typologies reinforce increasingly irrelevant and marginalising nuclear family model
 - Lack of choice for other housing typologies – multi-family, multi-parent
 - Housing performs poorly in environmental terms (energy use, water use) and therefore is no incentive for changing behaviour
- Alienating and dangerous environments
 - Environments dominated by cars and their infrastructure are not conducive for child-play, nor a secure and grounded sense of place and belonging
 - Scale, material, sound, colour, shape and smell etc rarely take into account child preferences
- Limited exposure to “green” culture

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- Reduced opportunity to explore quality natural environments
 - Reduced respect for the spiritual significance of landscape across all cultures
 - Increasing urbanisation of space
 - As the population continues to rise and more children grow up in urbanised environments it is important to ensure green areas in the form of parklands are provided to allow children experience of a non-urban space
 - Ensure that existing natural environments are maintained so they can be experienced by future generations of children.
 - Ensuring our cities and urban centres are designed to incorporate children of varying ages
 - Increased Global Warming
 - Targets to reduce green house emission to ensure the quality of the environment that children grow up in is not compromised, for example, impact on water & air quality
 - Necessary changes are made to ensure meeting our current needs is not at the cost of our future children's needs. Therefore making the necessary shift to ensure changes are made now to minimise the negative effects of global warming
2. *The mechanisms available for monitoring and reporting on planning processes and decisions concerning the built environment, as they relate to and impact upon children and young people.*
- Planning process and decisions
 - The two key factors that need to be monitored in the planning process are children and young people's mobility and recreation opportunities. The measures of best practice in these areas are numerous and are easily monitored and benchmarked, such as:-
 - Mobility
 - Trip kilometres required per day for school (especially if analysed for comparative incidence with obesity)

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- Number and type of travel methods available for daily needs (Are cycling and walking realistic options?)
- Average total width of limited access carriageway per square kilometre (As a measure of the ability for cross-community travel)
- Recreation
 - Incidence of childhood obesity within comparable communities and the built environment factors that might contribute towards it
 - Square metres of playing fields per residential dwelling
 - Frequency of footpaths on both sides of the street (This has been shown in anecdotal evidence to have an impact on the desire to walk)
- Simple “tick the box” planning assessment monitoring mechanisms should be avoided as they do not allow for qualitative assessment of development proposals
- Reporting and feedback
 - New South Wales Youth Advisory Council
 - As mentioned in the briefing papers, this Council could be an effective sounding board for major changes to planning processes to ensure they do in fact enhance children and young people’s relationship to the built environment. The prestige of the twelve-member council could be enhanced through raising its profile and hardening membership criteria. Democratic processes are an option if it is to be truly representative of children and young people throughout the state. (The Mayor of London currently supports the lowering of the voting age in the UK to 16.)
 - High School Student Leadership
 - The briefing papers suggest a figure of some 12,000 high school students throughout the state who are involved in student leadership. This could be a very effective two way information conduit for comment on planning processes and decisions concerning the built environment, as they relate to and impact upon children and young people. Marketing and regularly promoting the work of the Committee in raising awareness of the issues could

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lead to informal and rapid “feedback surveys” from student leadership on decisions that effect them.

3. *Strategies to ensure that built environment issues affecting children and young people are readily identified and receive coordinated attention across portfolios and different levels of government.*
- There are many national, state and local government design policy and guideline documents that do not currently include information on desirable processes and outcomes for children and young people. CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) for example, has increased its profile and become widely accepted as important for best practice built environments through incorporation into various government led multi-level design processes and guidance. In much the same way, including child and young people friendly design guidance, could be an affective strategy for ensuring the issues receive co-ordinated attention.
 - Building Code of Australia
 - This national document is in need of overhaul to more comprehensively deal with the performance based aspects of building and the built environment, rather than quantitative aspects only. This need is gathering momentum due primarily to its weak approach to sustainability. Its overhaul would create the opportunity to include sections on built environment issues and best practice guidelines for child and young people friendly cities. For example. the access clauses in relationship to disability (ramps, rails, corridors etc) could be expanded to include guidance, minimum standards or performance measures to improve access for children and young people
 - Awards
 - Encourage professions working in the areas of the built environment, such as engineering, architecture and planning, to reward exemplary examples of work in the built environment that is beneficial for children and young people. A precedent example, would be the international award for architecture and design for young children run by Children in Scotland, in association with The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, The Organisation for Economic Co-

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operation and Development, Children in Europe and with sponsorship from Lend Lease and support from the Scottish Executive.

4. *The role of the Commission for Children and Young People in giving input to the Government and non-Government sectors on inclusive and integrated planning and policy-making for children and young people in the built environment.*
- Consistently and strategically promoting the interests of children and young people to the development industry. This clearly involves a cultural shift not unlike that occurring for the purposes of sustainability. Fortunately, giving input to Government and non-Government sectors on inclusive and integrated planning and policy-making for children and young people in the built environment should be able to “ride the back” of the (international) sustainability agenda. There are clear synergies between children’s issues and sustainability, as discussed in the overall statement above.
5. *Any other matter considered relevant to the inquiry by the Committee.*
- Built Environment Education
 - Built Environment Education should be made a highly desirable, if not compulsory component of primary and high school curriculums. New South Wales and Australia can never hope to increase the level of appreciation for quality built environments, or the desire to participate in their creation, if the general public are not educated at primary and secondary school about what a quality built environment actually looks like
 - The current exhibition at Queensland State Art Gallery, “Made for this World: Contemporary Art and the Places We Build”, is a good example of interactive education for children to start thinking about the built environment
 - Events such as National Architecture Week have the potential to further engage children to think about a sustainable built environment and for practitioners to engage children’s’ viewpoints

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