



25 November 2005

Mrs Barbara Perry MP
Chairperson
Committee on Children and Young People
Parliament of New South Wales
Macquarie Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Mrs Perry

RE: Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment

I am writing on behalf of the Premier's Council for Active Living (PCAL), which was established in 2004 in order to build and strengthen the physical (or built) and social environments in which communities engage in active living. The Council commends the Committee on Children and Young People for its focus on the built environment through the current Inquiry, and is broadly supportive of the considerations raised in each of the Issues Papers.

In particular, we support the observations in Issues Paper 1 about the impact of the built environment on levels of physical activity, and the potential negative impacts on children and young peoples' health and wellbeing. In regards to discussion about the evidence for this, we refer the Inquiry to the submission from the Prevention Research Centres at the University of Sydney, which draws on their research on how the built environment affects children and young peoples' physical activity and nutrition, and weight status.

The Council is cognisant of the complex factors relating to both the built and social environments which contribute to this. These include, but are not limited to: the design of cities, towns and neighbourhoods so that they are amenable to walking and cycling; the decline of the "backyard" as a potential space for play and recreation for reasons relating to housing density, size of homes relative to blocks and housing affordability; parental concerns and perceptions about personal and road safety which impact the mode of transport for school travel trips and use of streets and parks for play and recreation; and legal liability issues which impact the provision and design of public play and recreation spaces, and create potential obstacles for program-oriented solutions.

In your consideration of responses to these and other factors, the Council urges the Inquiry to consider both the built and social environments because of their intrinsic relationship. The Council also encourages the Inquiry to consider how supportive structures for intersectoral action and collaboration can be further developed and made truly effective, as well as mechanisms for translating building and design guidelines into practice.

For your information I have recently been in contact with the Commissioner for Children and Young People about the Council and the synergies between our priorities, and look forward to the contribution of the Commission's Policy Director as we develop our strategic directions and work program for 2006 and beyond.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Libby Darlison', is positioned above the printed name and title.

Libby Darlison
Chair, Premier's Council for Active Living