REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

FOLLOW-UP INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

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At Sydney on Wednesday 30 June 2010

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The Committee met at 10.00 a.m.

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PRESENT

Mr R. D. Coombs (Chair)

Legislative Council	**Legislative Assembly**
The Hon. J. G. Ajaka	Ms M. T. Andrews
The Hon. K. F. Griffin	
Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile	

GEOFFREY WOOLCOCK, Research Fellow, Urban Research Program, Griffith University,

PAUL TRANTER, Associate Professor, School of Physical, Environmental and Mathematical Sciences, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Forces Academy,

JENNIFER DENNIS, Policy Officer, Planning, Local Government and Shires Associations, Level 8, 28 Margaret Street Sydney, and

DEBRA LANGRIDGE, Project Coordinator, Child Friendly by Design Project, Healthy Cities Illawarra, 63 Auburn Street Wollongong, sworn and examined:

PETER McCUE, Manager, Premier's Council for Active Living, level 3, 80 William Street Sydney,

FIONA ROBBE, Director, Architects of Arcadia, 108 Arcadia Road Arcadia,

KATE BISHOP, Independent Researcher, Commission for Children and Young People, 6 Sunnyridge Road Arcadia,

KAREN PATERSON, Manager, Policy and Research, Division of Local Government,

TOM GELLIBRAND, Deputy Director General, Department of Planning, 115-123 Bridge Street Sydney,

JOSEPHINE WING, Manager, Centres and Urban Renewal, Department of Planning, 23-33 Bridge Street Sydney,

MEGAN MITCHELL, Commissioner for Children and Young People, level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street Sydney,

LOU-ANNE LIND, Manager, Policy, Commission for Children and Young People, level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street Sydney,

TRISH MALINS, Manager, Research, Commission for Children and Young People, level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street Sydney, and

SARAH REILLY, Social Planning Consultant, Planning Institute of Australia, 12 Womerah Avenue Darlinghurst, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: I declare the roundtable open. We are pleased to meet the newly appointed New South Wales Commissioner for Children and Young People, Megan Mitchell. Megan informs me that this morning she has been in the position for all of 10 days. It is a pleasure to have her here today. I welcome you all and thank you for your interest in the issues that will be discussed at today's roundtable. As time will be limited today, we may seek your assistance to provide written answers to any questions that we do not have time to canvass during the roundtable timetable.

I would like to make some opening remarks about the program for today. The purpose of today's roundtable is to gain expert input into the Committee's Follow-up Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment. We are keen to consider how the Committee might progress the relevant issues by providing concrete proposals for improvements and also to provide a basis on which the Committee may re-evaluate the relevance of its original recommendations.

To achieve this, we have arranged for today's roundtable to be conducted as two separate sessions. The first session will feature three presentations, which will provide some context for our discussion today. Firstly, we will hear from Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock, from the Urban Research Program at Griffith University, who will provide the international perspective, including the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative, and how this intersects with planning and local government processes. Secondly, we will hear from Mr Peter McCue, Manager of the Secretariat for the Premier's Council for Active Living, who will outline the New South Wales perspective and work of the Premier's Council for Active Living. Thirdly we will hear from Ms Fiona Robbe, from the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, who will provide the local perspective and the reality of creating child-friendly built environments in New South Wales. These presentations will be followed by a discussion facilitated by Dr Kate Bishop.

The second session will feature a discussion of the issues raised in the recommendations arising from the 2006 Inquiry into Children, Young People and the Built Environment. I thank the Commission for Children and Young People for assisting in the development of today's program. Again I thank you all for appearing before the Committee today, I am advised you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and a brochure entitled Information for Witnesses Appearing before Parliamentary Committees. Is that correct?

ALL WITNESSES: Yes.

CHAIR: I call on the first presenter, Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock, who will commence the proceedings today.

Professor WOOLCOCK: Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the opportunity to present in front of this distinguished group of people. At the outset, I pay respects to the impact that this inquiry has had in the field of child-friendly cities or building child-friendly communities, particularly being in the world's most urbanised nation here in Australia, how significant it has been to put a genuine committed policy focus on the impact of the built environment, which has not been true of many other constituencies around the world or, indeed, here in Australia. I say at the outset how much impact the inquiry has had. Many of the recommendations that came out of the original inquiry report have been taken up by various agencies, most noticeably the Commission that we have been working closely with at our centre, the Urban Research Program. That is how I wanted to start.

In reference to how this presentation was to be titled, as stated by Robert, I wanted to draw on some of the influence that has come from the UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative. I would like to turn the discussion quickly to what I think are important national issues driving the importance of the built and natural environments on children and young people's wellbeing captured in this popular title of child-friendly cities and communities. Some of that influence has no doubt come from the emphasis that is being driven by UNICEF in child-friendly cities but I think it is a reasonably minor one. I am happy to be taken up on that in our discussion if people have a different take on it, but my reading of it is that it has been a reasonably small influence in the notion of child-friendly cities being taken up. I think some much more clearer things have driven what we would call a resurgent agenda, not just a research agenda but a policy agenda very much as well.

I think there are four key things and the things that I most focus on in terms of this greater interest in child-friendly cities is how children and young people's lives are affected by different urban trends and forms. I think that has been a particular salient issue in certainly our capital cities in Australia over the last decade or so when we are increasingly seeing more compact or denser cities, denser urban environments and a concern about what kind of effect that might have on children and young people. I know that is particularly pertinent here in the Sydney metropolitan area.

There is also a key theme that is being increasingly recognised about how those lives are impacted by the built environment differentially across the age spectrum, that is, across children and young people. What was a reasonably universal and some might even say homogenous take on children as a broad spectrum is now much more nuanced around this impact and the difference particularly between early childhood, between children in primary school years and adolescence and the impact of all sorts of effects but including the built environment across that age spectrum.

Another key thing—and I would be interested to see how we can take this up in today's roundtable discussion as it is particularly pertinent to contemporary social lives—is about the increasing use of information technologies and how I think they may have affected analysis of young people's sense of place. I think some of that is changing. I think there is a recognition still that young people do, not universally but do have still a sense of place in the physical and built environment in their lives but we know that is being now very much mediated still by the onslaught of new information technologies. That is a key thing that ought to be taken up. To date that has been an area that has been left to one side as a specialist area around people's interest in new technologies but I think there is a fundamental relationship between how new technologies are being used and children and young people's relationship with built and natural environments.

Then the final of these four key things is defining this resurgent agenda and that is how the urban physical environment can better children's lives. I think there has been a more concentrated focus of late on particularly child-friendly physical environments, how they can be built, whether that be from a more traditional playground structure through to whole educational institutions where children spend a good deal of their lives,

such as schools. I just want to say from the outset that those four key things frame a lot of this resurgent agenda around child-friendly cities and communities. I acknowledge also from the outset, though, that the issue itself of building child-friendly cities is not a new one.

Anyone who is serious about researching this issue, of course, must acknowledge some very important efforts, particularly in post-war Britain that drove a lot of this issue. The doyen of this issue was a fellow Colin Ward, who wrote arguably the most significant text ever written in this area *The Child in the City* in 1977 in a very different phase of urban development for our large Western cities which were characterised by a lot of grinding poverty in manufacturing belts close to central business districts and not the type of patterns of urban development that we have now but, nonetheless, drew attention to what had been a very much overlooked area not just in planning, but in design, in built environments, in all forms of understanding our urban environments.

That book—but also a number of others that have drawn attention through that post-war period in Europe and then more broadly around the world—was the culmination of this initiative, run out of UNICEF, or originally the United Nations and then taken up by the specific agency for children at the United Nations, UNICEF, around child-friendly cities. The initiative of the late 1970s and early 1980s that took root and still exists today still has a reasonably significant influence around the world, particularly in the sort of principles that had struck, a universal set of principles for child-friendly cities, that a number of cities have gone down the path of accreditation. I think that is probably where it has had most impact: its capacity to be a means of attracting, particularly at a local government level, local governments to take up that form of accreditation and have it as a means by which they own this issue of child-friendly communities—not just as a set of principles, but they are actually enacting them.

We have a number of examples of local governments that have taken that route in Australia. But, to hark back to what I said at the outset, I do not think it has had as much influence as it might originally have intended to have, in terms of accreditation. There are a lot of local governments that are very interested in the whole issue of child-friendly cities and child-friendly communities that are not necessarily attracted to the issue by going through a form of accreditation, but are interested in it from its capacity to be regenerating or renewing their local government if it is within the local communities across the board.

I think the real keys in terms of the national agenda, beyond the four things I framed it with earlier, are its connection to the notion of working with children from disadvantaged backgrounds. I know that disadvantage is debated in many quarters and exactly what disadvantage comprises. But, taking the broad concept of socioeconomic disadvantage, real attention has been struck back onto understanding the needs of disadvantaged children. We have a number of Federal and State-based programs that have been important contributors to that. I think that is also a critical part of the resurgent agenda. There is no doubt that we must pay tribute to key individuals in this area, and the fact that Fiona Stanley was the Australian of the Year in 2003 and the amount of attention that she herself, but particularly her institute, has been able to draw on this issue nationally, culminating in her current ongoing tenure as the Chair of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth. Fiona Stanley continues to put this issue well and truly on the policy agenda, and included in that is a very large concern for the impact of the built environment.

However, if we are really going to tackle this issue seriously—and again it is an issue that I talk about often in my presentations—we must understand children's relationship with the built environment by looking at the whole spectrum of issues that are impacting on children's and young people's wellbeing. We cannot segment this issue just on the sort of impacts we can have around the built environment; we must look at all the sorts of factors that are affecting children and young people. Undoubtedly, to use a colloquial statement of the day, the elephant in the room, if you like, around children and their relationship with the physical and built environment is this issue of risk and security.

In any forum in which I speak—or in which other people who are well known, much better known than myself, speak on this issue—no matter what their take is on children's relationship with the built environment, the one common thread of any of the discussion that ensues is the issue of confronting perceived risk. That is the bone of contention, if you like. A very well-known planner that is based in the city of London, Tim Gill, who has been a regular visitor to this country but a spokesperson around the world on creating child-friendly cities, wrote a book called *No Fear: Growing up in a risk averse society*. In the book he draws very powerful and graphical attention to just how many barriers in the name of risk management have been put up in the way of children's capacity to engage with the built environment. But the quote that I am often fond of putting up in response to Tim's book—which was a very necessary contribution to this issue—comes from a newspaper's review, a columnist that would be seen as unashamedly right wing in his viewpoints. That columnist's response

to the book was that we can take all these wonderful, embracing principles, but while we have the Daniel Morcombes, the Madeline McCanns, and these sorts of incidents, "pass me the bubble wrap": we are always going to need to protect our kids and show respect for the kind of risks that people are perceiving out there.

At times it does seem that it is an issue where the twain shall never meet, or that we cannot broker; it does seem to polarise very quickly. We simply have to confront it, because the impacts of it are immediately deleterious. Paul Tranter, who is here today at the roundtable, has plenty of evidence of his own about children's transport, about how perceived risks associated with even children walking to school now mean that we have one of the lowest percentages in the world of children being allowed to travel alone, or indeed to travel alone to places other than their schools. These are the immediate outcomes from perceived risk in safety management, and we have to deal with it. We have to deal with it, as in confronting that it is real, that it is real in the eyes of parents and that we cannot simply immediately diminish it, but we still have to deal with it with children's well-being foremost in our minds.

I will quickly return to that. In the time I have left I wanted to pick up on the significance of this issue of dealing with socioeconomic disadvantage and how important it is that these arguments around what we can do with our built and natural environments is very much part of the agenda that is growing in this country, and the research and data that is growing about what we understand about children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their upbringings. Arguably the most significant data set we now have in this country that has come with significant Federal Government support over the last few years has come in the form of the Australian Early Development Index. It has got a reasonable amount of attention, so I will not labour on it here. The index has now been funded for up to 98 per cent of coverage of children in their first year of school, assessing children across a whole string of competencies, not just academic competencies, in their first year of school. It is a teacher-assessed index, but it is a very important marker of what is going on for children and young people. The fact that it has this commitment to being undertaken every year and with that massive coverage of the country means we are going to know a lot more about what is going on for our children.

Particularly interesting in that study is looking at its actual effect on real communities. A large study that accompanies that index is a study looking at what are called the "off-diagonal communities"—that is, communities that are having children scoring well on these competencies but living in a disadvantaged area and/or, vice versa, children that are not scoring well and living in relatively advantaged areas. That study is going to tell us a lot about what is going on, and particularly environmental and community-level factors that might be impacting on children.

As I mentioned earlier, we have to come to terms with understanding high-density environments and children in outer suburbia, where the vast majority of young families and children are living. I do not think people across the board have really come to grips with what that is about. Some great work has been done of late out of South Australia using 10 different Australian outer suburban sites to look at this balance between work and life and family. But we know that there is still a lot more to do there, in connecting children back more with their natural environments.

I am conscious of the time, and of the fact that I am not going to be able to cover as much ground as I would normally do in a presentation of this nature. But I hope I have raised some of the key issues that I think need to be confronted. I finish with one particular hobbyhorse of mine at the moment, along with a lot of other people. One of the big areas that we are yet to do—we have just scratched the surface in terms of impacting children and their relationship with the built environment—is getting inside school curricular. Whether that be from straightforward material about dealing with environmental change that all children and young people are confronting, or whether it be a more nuanced understanding of how a child's relationship happens with their local environment, I think we must do much more within the school environment. Too often this issue is being taken back out to children's' non-school world—and that is important too—but they spend a considerable amount of time, without stating the obvious, in a school environment. All of us need to show much more fortitude in getting involved in this area. I finish there and thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

CHAIR: Thank you, Geoff, for your very detailed contribution. Mr Peter McCue is the next speaker. Peter is the Manager of the Premier's Council for Active Living.

Mr McCUE: Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I commence by extending my respects to Elders past and present, and I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting. This brief presentation was prepared by the New South Wales Premier's Council for Active Living [PCAL], by invitation from the Commission for Children and Young People. The purpose of the presentation is very much

to provide an overview of PCAL's interagency work in trying to influence the built environment to promote active living and expand on the lessons learnt from that work.

PCAL aims to encourage more people in New South Wales to be more active more often. The Council works with government, business and community sectors to essentially promote greater involvement in active living across all population groups in New South Wales; build and strengthen the physical as well as social environments that facilitate and support active living, particularly incidental active living—movement throughout the day—as well as more formal activity—fitness and sports programs; and to ensure that government policies and strategies provide every opportunity for the citizens of New South Wales to embrace active living throughout all stages of their life.

PCAL comprises senior representatives from 12 New South Wales government agencies and members from the community sector. The Council provides an important forum for inter-agency and inter-sectoral collaboration, through the promotion and implementation of active living principles. PCAL's interagency membership provides a well-established forum to enhance links between infrastructure agencies, such as the Department of Planning and Transport New South Wales, as well as service-oriented agencies, such as the Commission. The Council's activities are very much informed by international best practice that recommend a high-level interagency collaboration as a key component of promoting health-enhancing activity as a comprehensive government response. Most other Australian States and Territories have a similar type of council of some description.

There is a rapidly growing body of evidence that shows that being active in everyday life not only has positive health impacts but also offers environmental, social and economic gains. However, the 2005-06 *New South Wales Child Health Survey* reported that only 25 per cent of children and young people between 5 and 15 years engaged in the recommended 60 minutes of movement each day. Not only that, 84 per cent of those children between 5 to 15 years engaged in more than the recommended two hours of passive screen time. Essentially, we have got the majority of children not being active and they are spending most of their time in front of screens as well.

PCAL's summarised in its *Why Active Living* statement the key evidence demonstrating the benefits of active living and the individual and social costs of a sedentary lifestyle. Essentially, inadequate physical activity is a serious health problem that results in poor health outcomes, that we are all well aware of, including obesity, heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, colon and breast cancer, depression and further issues. The cost is significant. Chronic conditions impose enormous direct and indirect health costs. Heart disease, stroke and type 2 diabetes costs well over $4 billion nationally in direct costs alone, and obesity costs $2 billion nationally. Of those direct costs, $1.5 billion have been linked quite recently to physical inactivity. Physical inactivity is a major contributing factor to obesity. Approximately 25 per cent of school students are either overweight or obese, and that figure has doubled in the last 20 years—I am sure you are well aware of that.

In Sydney, significantly, 55 per cent of car journeys are less than five kilometres, and 33 per cent are less than three kilometres. Since 1981 the proportion of children driven to school has doubled to more than 50 per cent, while the share of children walking and cycling has almost halved to about 20 per cent. These car trips to school have a significant bearing on the demand for second cars at home. The solution to these challenges is obviously to build more supportive not only social environments but physical environments that can build opportunities for physical activity back into everyday life.

Infrastructure Australia in its *State of Australian Cities 2010* report highlighted that the design of urban environments can contribute to the health and wellbeing of communities by supporting active living, physical activity through walking, cycling and using public transport, and opportunities to social interaction. These clear characteristics of urban environments have demonstrated strong evidence to links to physical activity, including mixed land use and higher density, footpath and cycleways and facilities for physical activity, street connectivity and design, transport infrastructure systems linking residential, commercial and business areas, neighbourhood safety, and aesthetics including access to public open spaces.

Recent Australian research has also demonstrated a negative relationship between urban sprawl and physical activity. For example, people living in outer Sydney suburbs tend to be 30 to 50 per cent more at risk of being overweight and 40 to 60 per cent less likely to be adequately active compared to their inner-city counterparts. There is widespread agreement that there are benefits in modifying the built environment to encourage healthy, active and more liveable communities. COAG's National Criteria for Capital City Strategic Planning Systems includes addressing health, liveability and community wellbeing. Here in New South Wales

the University of New South Wales City Futures Research Centre has been awarded $1.5 million recently in funding from NSW Health to establish a New South Wales Healthy Built Environments Program. As far as we know that is the first such collaboration between a health department and planning academics, not only in Australia but internationally as well.

There is also a growing body of evidence demonstrating the positive economic advantages of investment in active transport. For example, at the request of the New South Wales Premier, PCAL oversaw the development of the recently released New South Wales Bike Plan. Background studies were commissioned to inform the development of the bike plan including a cost-benefit analysis of building that infrastructure in selected cycle programs. Results clearly demonstrated significant positive returns for the proposed shared pathways that were highlighted as part of the plan.

Research summarised by the National Heart Foundation has identified a number of characteristics of the built environment that influence physical activity for children and young people, in particular children's walking is associated with close proximity to parks, good pedestrian infrastructure, traffic safety and parental influence. Following on from that a Transport NSW schools program was undertaken during 2006-07, which aimed to encourage active travel to and from school by students and their parents. Parent journey to work was found to be a key factor in influencing parents' decisions on how they and their children travelled to and from school. Importantly, the report concluded that the goals and strategies of active transport to school programs should extend to include the active travel of how parents get to work—we all know that incidentally from our own experiences.

PCAL's work in particular is to focus on the built environment. Our work specifically focusing on children and young people has been the development of guidelines for the external delivery of physical activities within schools and out-of-school hour centres. But since its inception in 2005, PCAL has prioritised work towards the development of more supportive built environments for active living for all the residents in New South Wales. More recently active transport has become a key priority as well. To facilitate greater coordination across agencies to promote active transport, the Council has hosted an ongoing high-level active transport roundtable since 2008, with executive representation from health, environment, transport and planning agencies.

The roundtable has led to the implementation of a number of active transport initiatives including: a new New South Wales State Plan active transport target; the development of interagency tools, such as a New South Wales-specific workplace travel plan; best practice active travel case studies; and a range of New South Wales government policy changes that have predominately focused on the workplace, such as mandatory provision of end-of-trip facilities within New South Wales government workplace refurbishments. That is quite important because if people are going to walk or cycle to work, then they need somewhere to get changed. As previously highlighted at the request of the New South Wales Premier, PCAL also oversaw the development and resourcing of an updated New South Wales bike plan. An interagency governance model jointly led by the New South Wales Roads and Traffic Authority and the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water was used to ensure that the bike plan generated not only the development of key strategic cycling infrastructure but also the behaviour change programs to utilise that infrastructure.

Another priority area in which PCAL has facilitated interagency collaboration has been the promotion of supportive urban environments for active living. Evidence-based active living indicators were prepared by PCAL and incorporated within the Division of Local Government's long-term integrated strategic reform manual. The intention of the indicators is to provide local councils with a selection of evidence-based measures that will help demonstrate progress towards the development of more supportive environments for active living. Essentially, if a local council wants to work towards more supportive environments for active living, the evidence-based indicators will demonstrate that they are working towards those more supportive environments. There also have been Director General requirements to consider active living principles within relevant State-significant projects, such as the Bonnyrigg housing redevelopment.

PCAL also has developed a number of resources to facilitate the implementation of healthy planning principles at the local government level, such as, designing places for active living as a web-based product that provides key design considerations for walking and cycling—public transport, streets, open spaces, shopping centres and workplaces—as well as links to key references and other resources for more detailed guidelines on specifications. Essentially, it is meant to be a library of the existing resources, and there are quite extensive resources across those environments. There are also New South Wales Better Practice case studies, demonstrating the translation of key design considerations into practice. More recently, Development and

Active Living provide relevant matters of New South Wales development type for consideration in the preparation of local environment plans and development control plans and the assessment of major projects.

From that work we have learnt key lessons about trying to influence the built environment to provide more supportive environments for active living. Some of those lessons include: that the mere presence of infrastructure, such as a park or an open space, does not mean it will be utilised; the most effective strategies to promote increased active living incorporate not only the infrastructure change but also behaviour change programs to utilise that infrastructure; policies from a diverse range of agencies to cater for sometimes competing user groups influence decisions about the built environment; and advocacy is most certainly required to ensure consideration of children and young people are incorporated within the suite of competing priorities. There is a plethora of guidelines addressing how to influence the built environment for various purposes. Rather than trying to provide new guidelines, influencing the work that is currently underway provides an efficient use of limited resources.

For example, PCAL contributes to New South Wales Police crime prevention through environmental design training. What we are trying to do there is to demonstrate the need to balance risk aversion, as Geoff mentioned, with stimulating environments that promote social engagement. Face-to-face capacity building workshops have been well received by planners. What they have done is provide the opportunity to link with professionals from other agencies, so it has enhanced the opportunity for interagency collaboration. The rationale for design changes to planning policy and practice are much more readily understood if the key messages are translated to the language of that agency. For example, rather than trying to promote health-promoting physical activities, what that physical activity becomes once we provide a submission to the *Metro Strategy Review* would be walking and cycling for short trips in urban centres to support transport-related walking and cycling and public transport use. Obviously what we try to do is translate our key messages to the language that is used by the agencies that we are targeting.

In conclusion, PCAL's established interagency model makes it well placed to incorporate feedback from the children and young people commission in regard to how PCAL's built environment work can accommodate the views of children and young people. One practical example relates to PCAL's current work with the Division of Local Government to prepare a resource demonstrating how local councils can incorporate active living considerations within their response to the Division of Local Government's long-term integrated strategic planning reform. The children and young people commission's membership of PCAL enhances the opportunity to ensure the views of children and young people would be incorporated into that resource.

CHAIR: Thank you, Peter, for your comprehensive report. We will now hear from Ms Fiona Robbe from the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects.

Ms ROBBE: I particularly value addressing all of you today as a designer. As you know, I am addressing this inquiry as the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects representative. I am a specialist design professional who works across the full range of outdoor environments for children and young people. The work that my office does encompasses children's environments right across Australia. However, I am particularly keen to address child- and youth-friendly environments in New South Wales. Since the original report on children and young people in the built environment in October 2006 I have asked myself, What has palpably changed in the design community in New South Wales since then? My observations are just casual but they are that we are seeing greater awareness of the many health and wellbeing issues of childhood and adolescence, with many providers being cognisant that they contribute to these issues. They are asking themselves, What can be done? There are also numerous conferences and seminars that are meaningfully addressing child-friendly cities and better built environments for children and young people, as well as children's health and wellbeing considerations being added to the debate. This has helped raise awareness of these issues in New South Wales design communities.

We also are seeing advocacy and advisory bodies, such as Kidsafe, being better informed on many of these issues. This has had some positive flow-on effects. We are seeing small numbers of design professionals paying attention to participatory design processes with children and young people. However, this is very slow in gaining momentum. We are seeing documents like *built4kids* and the *TAKING PARTicipation* kit as being helpful but not really filtering through to enough of these professionals. We also are seeing a very small number of councils championing child-friendly principles through a partnering process with the children and young people commission, for example, Wollongong Council. This, again, helps start the process of change. However, it is looking a bit slow. These changes are small. I must admit that we are seeing more rapid changes in Victoria,

Western Australia and Queensland on some of these fronts. From my perspective, New South Wales appears to be lagging behind.

In my experience from a design office, I see three overall issues blocking the original 2006 report recommendations from being implemented. I will summarise what they are and then I will unpack them in more detail. Firstly, there is an overall ignorance of the report but, much more importantly, its broader context, everything that the report stands for. Secondly, we are seeing a lack of funding to enact quality outcomes for children and young people across all levels of provision in the built environment. Thirdly, we are seeing a lack of analysis and critique of gains made on behalf of children and young people in the built environment. Just unpacking those three in a little bit more detail, dealing with the first issue: ignorance of the context of the 2006 report.

Our clients are generally unknowing about the *United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child* or the Child Friendly Cities Initiative, and many do not know of the existence of the children's commission of New South Wales. They reacted with surprise at all of these being mentioned. The same goes for participation processes with children in the design process. This is uniform, be the client a school, a child-care centre, local government and even State government; we are seeing that ignorance across all levels of provision in the built environment. Admittedly, as designers we are dealing with people at the coalface. That is not to say that the higher echelons may not know about these issues, but the message is not getting through to the coalface and that is where we are most often delivering to children and young people.

The second issue is the lack of funding. Many clients are enthusiastic in their own right to do something better for children and young people in the built environment but struggle to gain sufficient funding to enact construction programs. The changes to section 94 funding for local government has meant that many parks, playgrounds and other community-minded facilities for children and young people are not being built. Schools and child-care centres have always relied on parents and grants to fund improvements to the built environment, and we notice how time and time again this frustrates quality outcomes for children. There is never enough money to effect good construction outcomes.

My third point is lack of analysis and evaluation. We notice a lack of rigour and systematic appraisal of recent projects for children and young people in the built environment. When a new project for children is built it should be carefully analysed to discover if it meets the needs of children and young people. Without rigour, without discussion or debate and criticism many items are created with good intentions but they do not meet children's needs. The question has to be asked: How would we know?

These three concerns are experienced in a sea of ever-increasing parental anxieties and concerns over their children's safety in the built environment in particular. These anxieties usually are experienced as an impediment to better outcomes for children and these are the sorts of issues both of you have raised as well. So what recommendations can be made? Again, I am offering this as a designer professional: we need to follow the original 2006 report's recommendations, which are very well laid out, particularly in chapter four, but we need a greater emphasis on education—education of providers of the built environment at all levels; the coalface being vital in this program. We also need to educate schools, child-care centres, local government, State government and advisory groups.

In addition, we need to educate design professionals, both at university and in the workforce. We need to make child-friendly principles and requirements more than a good idea; we need to make them mandatory so that they have to be followed with achievable outcomes and guidelines. We need to put real funding into children and young people's environments and this can be done in a number of ways: in education, in printed manuals and in construction budgets. We require evaluation tools to evaluate, test and measure the gains we are making for kids in the built environment. This needs children's input, of course, and the tools must be able to be applied by everyone.

All of these recommendations are more important than they were 3½ years ago, as research tells us that our children are more unhealthy and more unhappy as time goes by, not less. So we, as design professionals, look to the New South Wales Government to show strong, enhanced leadership on representing the interests of children and young people in the built environment. We are lagging behind the other States in Australia and, indeed, many other countries around the world. We have the resources, we have done the research, we have the knowledge and we have the Commission. It now behoves us as caring professionals to deliver measurable improvements to children and young people in New South Wales. This is a worthwhile investment as these people represent our future. Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you very much. That was a well thought-out contribution. I am about to be relieved of my position, but the good news is that the very capable Dr Kate Bishop will lead discussion in this next section, based on the three contributions that you already have before you. We are due to conclude at 11.30, so we have 35 minutes of discussion time. I will now pass over to Kate.

Dr BISHOP: We are going to try and accomplish two tasks in the next session. I would like to give you all an opportunity to ask some questions of the speakers who have just given us three wonderful presentations, which have touched, between all three, the complexity of the issue that is children and the built environment. If you would all like to ask questions from your own particular perspectives and see if those questions identify the issues and draw to everybody's attention major issues for concern. That is the first task.

The second task is to begin to focus on a working definition that is useful to the Inquiry for the next round of recommendations and work generated by this parliamentary inquiry of the built environment—a working definition of the built environment; a more targeted, perhaps more focused approach for the next round. Does anybody from the floor have questions for any of our speakers or comments they would like to make in relation to the talks they have heard this morning?

Ms REILLY: I have two different issues. The first one is about neighbourhood development and community connectedness in communities. I think in urban sprawl there has been a bit of a loss of that where people do not see each other on the streets and are not building those relationships. Children might not be walking to school for a number of reasons; one is because they need to be driven to school for parents to get to work at 7.30 in the morning, or something like that, but also because there is not that whole sharing of children, like kid-sharing where people walk other children to school. I think as the urban sprawl has happened there has been less of that connection and people are not doing those sorts of community activities. Does anyone have anything to say on that?

Professor WOOLCOCK: I think there is general evidence about that across the urban landscape. I think there are dangers to demonising urban sprawl and accumulating a world of sins. I am not sure that it is necessarily a problem in only isolated areas that are characterised by urban sprawl, but it is a disturbing pattern. As Peter was saying, there is disassociation now with parents' work transport patterns and school transport patterns, but also overriding all that is this general sense of risk.

Ms REILLY: I was trying to make the point that you can make a great built environment but then you have to get people to at least work together.

Mr McCUE: Yes. The infrastructure alone is not the only solution.

Ms REILLY: The other thing is about whether young people are actually welcome in the built environment and whether there are spaces for young people—not necessarily little children but the older children—to hang out, to congregate and to be seen. The work that I do in the community, when you are working with the community, the residents, you see that they often do not like to see young people in the built environment and they get very upset about young people skating in public, young people hanging out in public, and that is a really big issue as well that needs to be dealt with in our community. Firstly, we are not building spaces for young people and, secondly, if we do, no-one wants them to see them there. That is another issue we need to think about.

Mr McCUE: And that there are opportunities to try and build environments that accommodate the different age groups as well, rather than just put a park down there that caters for a limited age range.

Ms REILLY: That is right, and I think Melbourne has got some great examples, particularly around St Kilda where there are some fantastic examples of intergenerational activities happening and people being really happy about that.

Mr McCUE: That obviously promotes much greater community engagement across a greater range of ages.

Ms MITCHELL: Picking up on Sarah's point, there is an educative role for the media. Many of the impressions of young people are fuelled by the media. Risk is also taken up by the media and that helps to create

anxiety, which then becomes a barrier. The educative role is very broad, and it is not only the domain of the kinds of people who are in this room.

Ms REILLY: I deal with it every day.

Mr McCUE: We also need to accept that we have had 50 years of designing around the automobile. It will take some time to address that environmental design.

Ms REILLY: If you look at a high-density urban environment—and I have a couple of good examples—there are much lower levels of obesity in children. That is because they walk to school, parks and pools. They do that because everything is close. I was not meaning to be awful about urban sprawl, but there are some obvious things happening in those environments that are forcing children to sit inside their house and watch television while both parents go to work with no after-school care and things like that

Mr GELLIBRAND: I would like to make an observation probably more as a parent than as a professional with the Department of Planning. There is a role for the department of school education in terms of this neighbourhood connectedness. Many parents are concerned about their kids going to school by themselves, principally because they are afraid that they will be run over by a car. That is different in places like Canberra, where you can penetrate an entire suburb without crossing a road. In Sydney you have to cross roads and that is a concern for most parents. The department of school education and the Roads and Traffic Authority obviously have programs for children to cross roads safely immediately outside school, that includes the crosswalk lollypop volunteers. That works quite well.

However, every now and then they run programs involving a "walking bus". One or two parents will take their turn guiding a conga line of kids through the suburbs. Those programs are really good for getting kids to school safely, but they also give parents a greater sense of confidence that their kids are being looked after. It starts to familiarise parents and children in the built environment with the fact that they can get to school safely. It also increases kids' independence over time. There are structural things we can do to our environment to improve opportunities for young people—built spaces, grade separated roads and so on—but there are also softer initiatives that can be deployed through education programs.

Mr McCUE: I again stress that a coordinated approach is the best way to go. The built environment makes it safer to walk to school and then the behaviour change programs encourage the use of the safer route.

Dr TRANTER: I would like to pull a few themes together. Geoff mentioned risk, Peter mentioned the second car and Sarah mentioned the problem of parents not letting their children walk to school. One of the problems is that as parents we tend to adopt very individualistic responses to protecting our children. We drive our children to school to protect them from the parents who drive their children to school. We need to break out of those social traps. We can do that by getting a collective response at the community level. You can get the schools together, organise walking school buses and safe routes to school that will help parents to realise that it is a bit dumb to drive their kids to school because they are contributing to the problem. We can do that at a community level.

However, we also need to think about what the department of school education and the Department of Planning can do. You mentioned Canberra and the fact that suburbs there are designed so that kids can walk to school without crossing major roads. That is true. However, many local primary schools in Canberra are being closed and children must now travel a long way to get to school. One of the very important things in the built environment is that we do everything we can to keep local schools active and vibrant. I am not saying that we should never close a local school—if there is only one child that is probably a good reason to close it—but if we do close them we should retain the option to re-open them if the demography changes in that area.

Peter mentioned the second car. Many people need a second car because they drive their kids to school. However, if they thought about the huge amount of time devoted to keeping that second car supported they would realise that they would be better off working part time, not having the second car and walking their children to school. That would meet the active transport component. We assume that the car saves time. However, cars and speed generally steal our time and money. We need to rethink the way in which our transport systems do or do not save time. I have written on this if anyone is interested. The complex point is that the slower modes of transport—walking, cycling and public transport—save time and money, both at the individual and national or city level.

We should follow the example of many European cities with regard to ensuring that children are safer walking. The Austrian city of Graz has a 30 kilometre an hour speed limit across the entire city, except for major roads, which have a 50 kilometre an hour limit. Less than 50 per cent of the population supported that move when it was introduced and now more than 80 per cent support it. Of course, that makes it safer for everyone. It is very hard to kill someone if you run over them at 30 kilometres an hour. There is a big jump in risk after the speed increases to more than 30 kilometres and hour. If you run over someone at 55 kilometres an hour you have a 95 per cent chance of killing them. At 30 kilometres an hour it is only a 5 per cent chance. If I could make one suggestion to change the built environment it would be to reduce speed limits in residential streets and outside schools and shopping centres to 30 kilometres an hour or less.

Ms DENNIS: I would like to add some comments from a local government perspective. Fiona, your summary was excellent. From a local government point of view, ignorance, lack of funding—especially the capping of section 94 levies—and lack of analysis is a very good summary of what is going on at the local government level. I would like to widen the conversation to how we involve children in the decision-making process that affects the built form. Some councils are doing it very well and getting awards for doing so. However, that is atypical. I have a couple of case studies that I will table involving councils that have actively engaged children at the primary school level in creative arts that has directly resulted in better outcomes.

The issue here from a local government perspective is what is effective and where you want to spend your money as councils to have an impact. One approach is a waste of time and I suggest we do not bother going there. I have read material about it, but I personally think it is a waste of time. The other area delivers outcomes. The area in which people are trying to engage children is in plan making. I refer to the environmental planning assessment process or the LEP/DCPs [Local Environmental Plan/Development Control Plan]. You need two degrees as an adult to understand that system. I suggest that you do that later. When we clean up that space kids may understand it. Most adults do not understand it.

The area in which we can get dividends and achieve better outcomes and make safer, liveable environments is in the delivery of better local infrastructure. Councils need money, training, education and also inspiration to do that. What children deliver to this space is imagination, art and creativity. If we harness the creativity and dreaming of children into how we design our skate parks and local spaces we will get engagement, safer spaces, less vandalism, less graffiti and fewer maintenance issues. We should turn the debate around and look at how to bring children into that space in a creative and artistic way not just a functional way. That may be a way ahead.

Children love to be engaged. The two examples I have are Penrith Council and Bankstown, where the children were creatively involved in telling councils what they wanted through an artistic process. Out of that came very functional outcomes. That is my contribution. I think let children be children. Let their imaginations drive it and let us use that to inform us how to make creative places where they will use them. Then I think we are in a more positive space in the debate.

Dr BISHOP: I am going to use that as a segue into the second task for this session. As you hear, this topic is enormously complex and the complexity is introduced in several different ways. Of course, first, the built environment itself is a complex thing, indoor or outdoor spaces, landscaped constructed, absolutely everything in the way of connection physically between. Then, as you can hear from this conversation, we never discuss it in isolation. We normally discuss it in relation to a series of outcomes like wellbeing, development, education playing, and in relation to a population group—children and young people in this instance. That immediately means that in isolating the built environment, that is a false isolation. It never works on its own to affect those outcomes. It always works in combination, with the social and the cultural contexts, the economic and the political environment together and it is always part of the interaction between all those contexts that affect the outcomes we are interested in.

The next point of complexity is that behind any environment that the children are experiencing are layers and layers of decisions made by layers and layers of decision-makers. The built environment is the result of an enormously complex process that intersects with an enormous number of professional communities. Those communities have limited knowledge of each other's practice, let alone the impact of their decisions on children and in combination on children. The next point of complexity is introduced because this is happening within a policy and a regulatory environment. That introduces another group of stakeholders, three layers of government potentially, community groups, peak bodies, all of whom have a say in the final product.

Then, of course, we are dealing with children, who are not an homogenous group, and variations based on age, gender, ability, cultural background, socioeconomic circumstances all affect their needs from us as designers of their environments. Even variations at an individual level have a profound impact on the relationship a child has with its environment. A child's perception of the environment sits behind their sense of place, their sense of belonging or their sense of placelessness. These may sound like nebulous concepts but they are enormously powerful in the child-environment relationship and in the capacity for environments to be effective and successful in children's lives. Of course, children themselves are often not given the opportunity and certainly not consistently given the opportunity to affect these environments.

So, in the last round of this inquiry there was tremendous community engagement and the Committee was exposed to the breadth and depth of the complexity that is this issue. That resulted in a robust range of recommendations that the Commission was in large part charged with following through on. It is from its learned experience in trying to enact these recommendations in combination with a number of stakeholders that we reach this point, which is that they suggest we take a more targeted, a more strategic and more focused approach this time round and define the built environment, be quite specific in the slice of this complexity that we are going to target in this round of strategies and work so that we can achieve greater traction in the issue and hopefully greater outcomes for children and young people.

So, I am going to pick on people to start the ball rolling, Geoff. I would like you to think about which is the most sensible definition of the built environment from your perspective, which are the most important points of focus from your perspective and that you would like us to see addressed in this round of recommendations and work effort?

Professor WOOLCOCK: As you have already alluded to, it is a complex area and one should not shirk from the fact that the definition of built environments can be equally complex. One issue I want to emphasise, that I think we are often in danger of losing in talking about the built environment, is its connection with the natural environment. This is a particularly significant relationship we do not want to lose at all. It has been a problem even with some of the research that has characterised the area of children and cities to be so focused on the built environment that we lose that essential contact with nature. Paul Tranter and I were just speaking this morning about a book that Paul is about to have out later this year with Claire Freeman, a well-known writer based in New Zealand. Claire's chapter in that book on nature and children's connection with nature notes that some of our celebrity naturalists, like David Attenborough and co, all grew up in the city of London and their contact with nature was a very urban one, but taking snails into the kitchen and so forth, connecting with nature in the urban environment, is an absolutely crucial thing.

One of the outcomes of this recognition of children's disconnection with nature in relation to children living in urban environments has been to have some knee-jerk reactions—in some cases, not all—that we need to get children back out into nature, take them to the bush, or the American equivalent of a fellow whose books are best known and who has been a visitor in this country a couple of months ago, Richard Louv, nature deficit disorder as he has coined the term in *Last Child in the Woods*, in the American context of getting kids back out into the woods. That might well be an important need but the reality of day-to-day life for urban children and young people is that their connection with nature is going to be a very urbanised one. That would be a strong principle I would like to hold on to in any definition we use of the work from here in terms of the built environment, that we do not lose that essential connection with natural environments.

My own director, Brendan Gleeson, has been well publicised in terms of his championing of the suburbs. One of the great virtues of Australian suburban living over time has been its essential connection with day-to-day nature. We want to retain that. There are some great things about that we do not want to lose in the push for density.

Dr BISHOP: So within our discussion you are centring us on the need to focus on urban environments. Are you talking public spaces, principally?

Professor WOOLCOCK: Principally.

Dr BISHOP: As we define where we might be going with this discussion I want to see what we might be jettisoning at the same time. It is unlikely the strategy we come up with can effect change usefully across all types of children and environments, for example - indoor settings - the need to support children's wellbeing in a childcare centre is completely different to supporting children's wellbeing in a hospital setting. I am going to pare back what we have been offered by speakers as we go along in terms of where we are centring our

understanding of focus for this next round of work. Geoff has peak urban environments, large-scale public community spaces.

Professor WOOLCOCK: Urban public spaces, but certainly not to lose our important informal suburban green spaces, and I include in that backyards. The most prominent work anyone has done in our centre in the last five years, and it has been well publicised around the country, is a publication by an English town planning professor, *The Disappearing Australian Backyard*. It is a whole series of overhead shots of literally the disappearing Australian backyard. That has been a great source of active play for Australian children that we do not want to see lost as well.

Dr BISHOP: Now I am looking for a focus within that. Is there a particular point where the rubber hits the road for you in relation to public urban spaces that you think our efforts in this round should be centred on? As in regulatory environment, design practice, awareness training, all that sort of stuff is on the table at this point?

Professor WOOLCOCK: Let us just centre it then on formal and informal play and recreation public space, but I think by doing that, it is a fully broad coverage of the types of spaces I am talking about.

Dr BISHOP: And you want to effect regulation. Is there any particular work focus that you want to see done?

Professor WOOLCOCK: Yes, particularly effect a commitment to actually looking at measurable outcomes that are happening in those spaces.

Dr BISHOP: Measurable outcomes?

Professor WOOLCOCK: Yes, what is going on in them.

Dr BISHOP: Okay. Can we have a contribution from Paul in that regard?

Dr TRANTER: Yes, and thanks, Geoff, you have got me thinking there again about nature as well. One of the ways of looking at this is not to think about how we can define the built environment but to think about what our objectives are in terms of what we are trying to achieve for children and young people and also for all adults. I think play is the central component. Play is important for all of us. If adults forget to play, then forget life; it is the essence of life. What we should be aiming at is three broad things: one, to facilitate the freedom to playfully explore the environment—and active travel will come into that. Also, associated with that, play is a sense of connection and a sense of connection with people, other children, adults and nature, and also a sense that some risks are good.

The risk of falling over and grazing your knee is something that we should not be too precious about; in fact, we should encourage. The risk of a child falling off a cliff is a bit more serious. We need to think carefully about the difference between the risks that we want our children to be exposed to and the dangers that we want to make sure they avoid. There are those three points: play, connection and risk. They are the themes we should be thinking of in terms of what is important in the built environment for children.

Dr BISHOP: You seem, by implication, to be referring to the community environment and public urban space, both natural and constructed?

Dr TRANTER: Yes, I think at any scale, from inside your home to the backyards, the streets, the public squares and public transport. I think those principles will apply on any scale, if we get the principles right. We just apply them, whatever scale, to public and private spaces. I would not like to see a distinction between just a concentration on public spaces and private spaces. One of the major problems is that we do live in a privatised world and when we focus as parents on providing the best possible chance of giving our children a successful adulthood in a consumerist world—and I do not think that consumerist world will be around for much longer, I think we should be focusing on play, which is the best way to encourage children to grow into resilient human beings.

Dr BISHOP: Resourceful human beings?

Dr TRANTER: Yes, rather than causing them to be a nation of wimps, which we are developing at the moment.

Dr BISHOP: How about a planning perspective on this? What would be a useful focus?

Mr GELLIBRAND: I think it builds on what Paul is saying. We really have to connect the home because that is where it starts; it is the place where people live. We need to connect the home with the other places, which could be school, an open space, a beach, the shops or something in the neighbourhood. We need to connect people and their homes to those places in such a way that it can occur safely, so that you do not get squashed by a car or fall off a cliff, but that actually supports the development of young people and children, so that when they are moving to a different place to live, they do so as independent human beings that are resilient human beings.

We have to connect their homes with these other places in such a way that we are actually fostering their longer-term development so they can participate so they are not, to use your words, wimps. That can be effected in a planning sense because a lot of those connections have a physical dimension.

Dr BISHOP: Your responsibility?

Mr GELLIBRAND: But they have a physical dimension, so you can address those things through some of the planning instruments, but they are not static phenomena; they are dynamic. A planning system can affect the shape of a suburb, the location of a road, the location of uses, open space, shops and things like that. But that, in itself, will not actually give you the connections that you are always after. It will not actually provide for people to then become increasingly independent as they grow, because the places need to be embellished; they need to change. Expectations change over time. Planning will take you partway on the journey but it will not deliver you all of the outcomes that you are after.

Dr BISHOP: The local government perspectives—you also travel part way on the journey. What is a useful focus for you?

Ms DENNIS: I would actually look at it from the point of view of the child, so it depends on the age of the child. I think there are three spaces - the play space, the meeting space and how-to-get-there space. The play space is the local park if you are little or the bigger park if you are bigger. In terms of the council's hierarchy, the local park, then the regional park and then the right level of sporting facilities for the right-age child is the key issue there. Getting feedback from kids on that is critical information so that you are matching the needs of the kids with the right sorts of facilities. That is the play space.

The other space that is really important for children is the meeting space, which is your local centres, your neighbourhood centres, the hang-out space and making the hang-out space for the youth being youth friendly is very important. We have examples at Coffs Harbour and a number of councils where they have tried to make it an inclusive space that is safe, that is not an alcoholic place, a place where kids can hang out. In the community plan that councils do, in the social planning that councils do, these things can absolutely be spelt out in how kids and youth live in those three spaces. The spaces are play space, meeting space and then how do you get there if the buses, the bike routes are in place for the kids to get there on their own so that parents do not have to continually drop them there.

I actually think it is quite simple in some ways. I think we actually look at it from the eyes of children and we look at how they see their space. That is totally derived by their age. When they are little, it is little. When they get bigger, it is bigger and then when they are big, it is the city. I actually think we should think of it the way they think of it and then we will be able to include their thinking in how we deliver better outcomes because we are not doing that well at all; we are not handling our youth at all well. I totally agree with Fiona; we know the theory but we are not delivering it.

Dr BISHOP: So that leads to another question. What would enable you to deliver it more effectively? What is missing in the landscape that could be supplemented in terms of the challenges you have?

Ms DENNIS: I think we have said it all. It is embracing children in that decision-making space, making it less regulative and much more community-based. I would put aside the development control plans—that is just not going to work for kids—and go back to the community planning and engagement process and use

your public schools; go back to basics, go back to planning, basic planning: "How do you want to live in this area? Where are the hang-out spaces?"

It is not rocket science, any of it. As we all know, the problem is making it safe, useable and something the kids will want to engage in. That is the challenge because we know that parking, the conflict with traffic that these are all things that stop kids from being able to play in the neighbourhood. We sort of know the issues—I do not think any council does not know the issues—we just do not know how to deliver better outcomes at a local level. Back to Fiona's one, it is money, education and working collaboratively across the different expertise to get it more workable.

I would take it from a kid's perspective and, from the Commission's point of view, from a neighbourhood centre. From the Commission's point of view I would not be worried about public transport in the city. I would be looking at it from the local centre out, if you know what I mean. I would make that your terms of reference because I think that is how kids see it. Start inwards and work out. Then you might engage with kids and you might be able to solve it more systematically. Do you understand what I mean?

Dr BISHOP: Indeed. We touched on a range of different considerations and approaches to this, from big picture to little picture, from public to private space, connections in between, addressing risk, addressing the need for play and supporting the development of resilience and resourcefulness amongst our children, and increasing community engagement in the whole design process for the outcomes for kids, especially involving children and young people themselves in the processes of planning and design in order to achieve more effective and successful environments for them. Does anyone want to say anything about the qualities of the environments we should be addressing in this round of work, or any recommendation they have in mind as to how that should be handled?

Mr McCUE: That there is evidence that supports the criteria of the built environment that promotes physical activity, as I summarised. I think it varies, dependent upon age groups. So, I think we need to have a focus, if we are trying to encourage everyone to be active, that we dress an age-specific approach, in that it will not be the same across the entire age bracket.

Dr BISHOP: You remind me that another point you raised in your talk is the need for a multidisciplinary approach to the solutions we come up with, and perhaps strategies for how that can be better managed and how duplicate effort can be avoided, and streamlining of policies and recommendations, and all the rest of it. You seemed to touch on these matters as a need for going forward as well.

Mr McCUE: Most certainly, from our experience of trying to promote interagency collaboration, interagency collaboration is most effective when it is established upfront and that those relationships are established right from conception, and that it is not something that is being thrown in at the end. After the environment is designed and built, then we need to add something to that already built environment. My key message, from our experience of interagency collaboration, would be that those relationships and the process for ongoing maintenance of those relationships, are really established from commencement.

Dr BISHOP: Fiona and Deb, do you want to add anything to where we are going with this, from your perspective?

Ms ROBBE: Yes. I was just thinking about what Peter was saying about that. Everyone contributing to the process is so important to the success of the outcome. That also builds on what Jennifer was saying: that we must build kids' participatory processes right through from the entire inception to completion of any of the principles we are talking about. Too often we are seeing kids involved perhaps at the beginning of a project and we are not seeing them in full engagement all the way through. Something that greatly worries me as a designer is that we may get a lot of ideas at the beginning, that the kids may never actually see those ideas and how those ideas travel through the design and construction processes, planning processes and regulatory processes, and that they are not meaningfully engaged in a lot of the outcomes that follow. I definitely think we need more of that in everything we are talking about.

But also, we are seeing simple things like walking, school buses, smaller programs for footpaths, community gathering centres, and all those sorts of provisions for children and young people quite often failing because we are not getting enough engagement and involvement all the way through from the local community. It goes beyond involving children; it is all levels of the community being involved. We cannot just say, "There's your skate park. Now everyone should be really happy". We find that there are all sorts of social issues and

other issues that are resulting, because the box was ticked but nobody was engaged. We cannot just say, "There it is; have it." It does not work that way. It might work in a completely different way if we asked everyone involved. And we need to see further policy being put in place to get those processes fully happening at the beginning. That is how I see it, anyway.

Dr BISHOP: Gaps in the regulatory environment that we could address, and the need for greater community engagement that could be supported in a number of ways.

Ms ROBBE: Yes.

Dr BISHOP: I am conscious that the time has finished for this discussion. Thank you all.

CHAIR: I think the last couple of comments were extremely appropriate. I get the impression that we know what the issues are, but conveying them is a real problem for us. As someone said earlier, we need to lift the role and profile of the Commission. It really does come down to an educative thing, I think.

I will briefly relate a personal experience of mine. There was some antisocial behaviour in a particular area. We thought we did all the right things: we surveyed the kids, we set up a management committee concerning the issue, and we got the kids involved. They all identified the need for a skate park. We got the funding for it. Then, at about five minutes to midnight, when it dawned on everyone that the skate park was going to be built at a certain location, we had 100 angry mothers and fathers protesting against it. Worse still, I knew some of them. Under normal circumstances, they would be considered good contributors to the community, but for some reason or other, even despite our best efforts, we were unable to convey that this was a positive thing. As I say, I think in our overall attempts to lift the profile of the Commission, an educative focus should be adopted in trying to overcome some of the many obstacles that people have already described.

(Short adjournment)

CHAIR: Simply put we are now going to have a general roundtable discussion. It will basically be a mixture of questions and comment. I invite the Hon. John Ajaka to be the first person to ask a question of each or any one of the participants present today.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: My question is directed to all and sundry. I have two main concerns. I am also speaking as a parent—I have six daughters.

Ms LANGRIDGE: Wow!

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I know. That is why I got into politics—to get away from them. I have noticed two things in particular over the years. Firstly, in relation to walking or cycling to school, I have noticed that we seem to have kindergarten to year 6 in one complete area and high schools in another area. No longer are older brothers and sisters walking with younger brothers and sisters to school, as occurred in my time. I have found that even some of the high schools seem to be broken down and put into two separate venues, with years 7 to 8 in one venue and years 9 to 12 in another venue. In our case, for example, we cannot have little ones walking to school in one direction and the older ones walking in another direction. The older ones do not have time to walk the younger ones in the opposite direction. What occurs is that we drive the younger ones to school and the older ones hop in the car and move along. Has any thought been given to those school scenarios that have kindergarten to year 12 and everyone walks together to school?

My second area of concern is that I drive around and see so many of these lovely, open space parks, thousands and thousands of square metres of open space, and nobody is there. It appears to me that open space parks do not work. There is nothing in them to attract people. If you do get 30 or 40 young people suddenly hovering around in those parks, the next thing you know the police are being called and there is half a riot because these kids were kicking a ball when they should not have been or yelling a little too loud. Nobody really goes to these open spaces. Are we wasting those open spaces by not turning them into something a little bit more constructive with indoor and outdoor facilities?

Mr McCUE: I will have a go at both. To start off with, the Department of Education and Training would obviously be the agency to respond to what is going on in trying to link primary schools and high schools. As part of the bike plan we deliberately tried to incorporate behaviour strategies in there to re-teach people how to ride bikes. Unfortunately, we are not getting those experiences of older siblings teaching younger

siblings and riding on the streets, because the streets unfortunately are not perceived as a safe environment to play so they are not considered a play space any more.

Certainly as part of promoting the active travel to school, the evidence from the New South Wales TravelSmart program was quite clear that the parent journey to work was a strong predictor of how children would get to school and that separation would only accentuate that if you then had to get to two places. That would seem to make sense that going to one place would reduce the amount, but I am unaware of any work that has examined the difference between that. Certainly there are different strategies adopted for trying to promote walking and cycling to school for primary schools versus high schools. From the law's perspective there is an expectation that from 12 years of age children are considered to be able to safely ride on the road and are not entitled to ride on the footpath anymore. That is a legislative constraint in terms of that safety, particularly if we are crossing age brackets.

In terms of the open space, there is actually an interesting trend that we have got a gradual shift up in New South Wales for an increase in health participatory physical activity—so people participating in physical activity. What people tend to be doing though, is driving somewhere nice on weekends to go for a walk and a cycle. So we are naturally choosing quality destinations. The evidence is quite strong that open space in itself does not get people active; they need to be quality destinations. We have seen at the local council level a shift, partly due to maintenance costs, in closing down small parks and building big, quality destinations. But the same thing is happening though. People are now driving their families to those big, quality destinations .So we have got people active but unfortunately they are driving to that destination, and it is closing down a component of that neighbourhood. That is something that is a matter of concern. Certainly the evidence is quite strong that it is not just the parks; they need to be quality parks.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Professor Woolcock mentioned about the priority for risk and security. I mentioned this to him during the morning tea break and asked how we improve the situation for children. I have noticed, when talking about parks and playgrounds, a lot of councils—because of claims for accidents and so on—are closing down playgrounds and removing all the equipment. Some say the equipment is risky and could result in an accident, and I think that is a very sad development. Would someone like to comment on that?

Professor WOOLCOCK: I might respond with what we spoke about briefly in the break. I raise the issue because I think it has got multiple, manifold consequences. It is not just about physical risk and safety but that is still a core driver surrounding the issue. There are definitely some very heated discussions going on around the world about what are safe child-friendly spaces. A colleague that is working with us, and well-known in Australia on play spaces—a bit of a doyenne in this field—Prue Walsh, calls a lot of that equipment "plastic fantastic", she also uses great terms such as "safety Nazis", but areas that overly impose that risk premium on play spaces, and there is no doubt that will continue to be a contentious issue.

I was also wanting to highlight what I think is a broader discussion about what are generally safe and social environments. The example I just mentioned in the break would be worth probably raising here. Certainly a very popular part of my local world in Brisbane is South Bank. People might have misgivings about certain parts of South Bank and certain functions that it plays but overall it has a very positive viewpoint, and a big part of that is its adequate provision of safety and security. It puts an enormous amount of resources into that, not in the stereotypical way of stacking it with big body security forces and lots of closed-circuit camera television but putting resources into lots of people-friendly security provisions so that people feel they can be there across a pretty large time cycle. You would have to say just on the amount of visitors right across the age spectrum who participate in South Bank's activities that it has been a very effective means. I still think it is one of the few examples we are able to draw on that has provided some of that safety. Typically we still hear, as we have heard here today, a number of examples where that friction arises and is not really resolved. We are going to need to find more examples. South Bank is one example on a very large scale. We are going to need to find more examples at a local scale.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: What did they do at South Bank to make it a better environment?

Professor WOOLCOCK: Like a lot of these things, it was social reform triggered by early incidents of assaults. In a sense, they were forced to grapple with this in a very public space post-Expo in Brisbane. They were forced to deal with what was a public outcry—South Bank is going to be Brisbane's playground and we do not want it to be known as a place where people can be easily assaulted and mugged. They were forced to deal with it. Often that is how change occurs. As a result of that, they have learnt. Apparently it is a very well

regarded, world-class, security training program. It is not just traditional security methods—not quite the depth of this discussion in terms of children and young people—but they understand a lot more the social context of the people the security officers are dealing with and the security issues.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: My question is similar to comments I made during the break. This Committee has recently finished an inquiry about 9-to-14-year-olds, the middle years, and the differentiation between very young children, the middle years and older teens. This question is open to anyone to make a comment. How would you envisage trying to meld the ideas for open spaces for young children, the middle years who have different issues, and older teens? How would you envisage trying to get input from these three diverse groups? The inquiry showed that the 9-to-14-year-olds—the missing middle, as they are called, who are moving from primary to high school and face a range of other issues—once they leave primary school their needs for after-school activity are not catered for.

CHAIR: That is an important point to put on the record. The recently concluded report on the missing middle 9-to-14-year-olds was a far-reaching report. It dealt with issues we are facing here, although specifically focused on the middle age group. To our knowledge, it is the only report in the world undertaken by a Committee such as this. For those who have not read it, I recommended it as necessary reading. It could and, in my view, should be included in the discussions we are having here today. Did we lose your question?

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: How do you mix those three distinct groups of children and young people? Our inquiry showed the middle group had a greater distinction because of the issues they face. If we go down the path of getting children and young people participating at the beginning of the process, how do we get those three diverse groups involved?

Ms ROBBE: If I could speak to that, there is another study that has just recently been completed in Denmark titled, *Nowhere to Go*. That might be worth cross-referencing to your study. It looks very much at that age group and there may be commonalities between the two. Again, it relates to what we were talking about before where this group said that their public space might be called the "meeting space". I thought that was coining a really good phrase. All these processes for finding out what we can do with these age groups has to start off with dialogue with those age groups. What the 9-to-14-year-olds might like to do in a city context may be very different to what they might do in a semi-rural context. So consultation and participation is going to drive the process ultimately. It must drive it because it is the only way we are going to get true engagement from those kids and true ownership in the outcomes for them.

That process of consultation can be augmented hugely by the research that is going on in this age group. What is happening in Denmark is that they are proposing different sorts of spaces for those children. They do not necessarily need to be separate from other spaces but there has to be a point of separation. They do not necessarily want to be seen as being younger. The outcomes are that these kids would still like to engage in playful behaviour but they do not want to be seen in playful behaviour where there might be toddlers, for instance. Swinging is huge on their agenda, particularly for girls. The study highlighted an interest in difference between the genders and what they want to do in this age group. That again is very interesting for us all to consider. Ball games were a focus for boys and for girls it was more socialising and an emphasis on particular activities like swinging and nooks for hanging out and gathering.

There is a body of evidence that is steadily growing. I believe with the right participatory approaches, again it would not be that hard to deliver. Quite a number of organisations and manufacturers are particularly targeting this age group in the equipment that they are providing. It is more robust equipment, more sophisticated. It is immensely sophisticated in its appearance. It is not meant to be tackled by a younger child. In fact, a younger child would not have the upper body strength half the time to even hop on this gear. So we are going beyond the skate park, if you like, and looking at both genders. It is all there. Everyone is kind of grappling with the same issues across the world.

Mrs LANGRIDGE: If I could give some practical examples of your point, in the Child Friendly by Design Project in the Illawarra we have done a lot of consultation in one area, the Shellharbour local government area in Albion Park, with kids from a number of different ages. We have gone into primary schools in lower and upper primary and then into high schools and talked with them about the community precinct that their schools surround. The community precinct, there is one in every local government area, is probably the nightmare place where nobody wants to be and no-one feels safe. That is the area that through Child Friendly by Design redesign principles we are trying to adapt and change. The work that we have done with kids has been amazing in that a number of different age groups have said, yes, they want spaces specifically for them, whether

or not it is a skate park or a middle or early childhood design combination of natural and fixed play spaces, but there has been an overriding trend that kids want to be with kids of other ages to some degree.

With the skate park, a current and ongoing theme of a lot of the high school kids was that they wanted to also have a younger age group there. They wanted part of the skate park to be suitable for kids of younger ages so there could be a mentoring program. But also then a more difficult concept within the skate park for the older kids to have their time and play and space. But in the engagement itself we were able to do very similar things regardless of the ages. The community precinct is a large area, so that there is the capacity to have a number of different play spaces or sections that then can cater for different ages or different types of play. It means that for families it is a place where they will want to come and be, and that is the feedback that they have been giving us, because they can bring their entire family with their two teenage kids and their middle-age child and their toddler to come to the one place and be able to enjoy the morning or the day or whatever it may be. There are other community facilities there like a library, a pool and a community centre. It is a destination point, as Peter was talking about, and obviously the most direct mode of transport will be by car.

In terms of the engagement process, we have found that by involving kids in that process they have already got a commitment to what that place will be like and that then leads to the issue of connectivity within communities, which Sarah was raising before. We are finding that if kids and young people are involved in the actual design and being respected in giving input into the process, that then leads to an ownership and a willingness to want to be there, which, therefore, connects them with the community but also can lead to issues of graffiti and those kinds of things being greatly reduced, because they have been part of the process of what has ended up being there. Just the process of consultation creates a sense of community about a place. I think we have been able to demonstrate in a number of different ways a number of processes and tools that can be used to be able to work down the road that Fiona has been talking about in terms of engaging children and young people in being able to have a say about what is there in their environment.

Ms DENNIS: Councils operate a lot of youth councils that targets that age group in particular. So from upper primary and lower secondary many councils have what is called youth council. Those kids that age come representing their school and they discuss all these issues and provide really good feedback to councils. I think they are the easiest group, for councils anyway, to engage with, because they usually have strong views about how they experience their own local environment. My research from our perspective is similar: the boys are the roamers and explorers. That age group knows the ins and outs of every park, every street; they use their bikes, they use their skates or their rollerblades and they go places. They have got good feedback; they know where there are holes in the pavement and so on and they tell councils those things. The girls tend to hang out in the shopping centres; they know the shopping centres really well. That is a bit sexist but the research is a bit that way. So that delivers really good feedback to councils, and that is happening quite regularly at a council level.

Dr BISHOP: For the Committee's benefit, you need to have in perspective what you are hearing here. Community engagement is the key. Design is always a collection of a compromise of a range of interests. But these people are speaking as though community engagement, especially with children and young people, is standard practice. It most definitely is not. It is a very rare project that welcomes children and young people's input throughout the life of the project. We often find clients quite reluctant to go down this path. If they go down it they might do it once with us, and that is it.

The problem is the report that you have got in hand is coming from young people who are not working in environments that have been the result of a participatory design process where they were included in the planning and execution of the environment around them. And it is still not standard practice; it is not consistent practice that children and young people are involved in the design and planning process. We would love that to change.

Ms MITCHELL: I would absolutely support that kind of initiative, and the Commission could be very active in that, building on the good examples and good outcomes that some areas and councils have experienced and, in particular to build advice around participation of kids in different age groups. The middle years are a particular focus group which could link back to the built environment. The other thing is those kids grow up. We have had a bit of that conversation already. How do we adapt and change the environments as kids grow and change their demographics? I think the Commission would be well placed, in particular, to provide continued advice and education on participatory practice with children and young people, at whatever stage of the planning process that is sensible, as consultation with children yields great benefits.

I did want to alert the Committee that in terms of the *built4kids* initiative, my advice is that there have been around 45,000 hits on the website. That shows that there is significant interest. Whether people are using it to engage kids or not is not something we know and we also do not know how they are using it and where it might be strengthened. That is a piece of work we would like to do.

CHAIR: Without the counsel of my colleagues, I am trying to think it through, and it is probable that out of a gathering like this there will be a couple of recommendations at least, but I am very keen for us not to lose this moment and not to lose some of the good ideas that come from you and the various reports to which we are referring and I am wondering whether we could give our thoughts to the establishment of a steering committee. Taking into account Megan's contribution just then, it is probable that Megan would be in a good position to chair such a committee, if you saw it as appropriate. But the committee would be formed most definitely with experts such as you so that we can ensure that all those very, very good recommendations from the reports already done are put into some practical context. There will be other things that reports do not pick up. Maybe if we could have your thoughts about that and your comments as we go along.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: I might be right out of line with this but I was concerned that we are becoming more and more urbanised. No matter what city you go to in Australia you see high-rise apartments going up, which do not seem to be very child-friendly, and certainly there is no provision for open spaces within the grounds of those buildings. The first units were probably built in Sydney in the 1960s. I think it is a planning issue but it has concerned me for quite some time that no-one seems to be addressing this fact. I could be wrong but I will open it up.

CHAIR: Would anyone like to respond to that?

Mr GELLIBRAND: The observation is absolutely correct, there is no doubt about that whatsoever. Sydney, like most major cities, is experiencing growth and will continue to experience growth. Every second day in the *Sydney Morning Herald* there is some percentage comparison of how fast we are growing relative to everyone else. Putting that to one side, our estimates are that we will need another 700,000-odd dwellings over the next 25 years, and the policy position of the Government is that 70 per cent of that growth will happen in established areas and the rest will be in greenfield.

The development that happens in the established areas, as far as we are concerned, should be focused on areas that are well served by public transport and are well served by access to existing and future centres, and those centres are places where people can work and recreate. Your observation also about the manifestation of multiunit dwellings is correct, and they will only provide accommodation for certain family types. Most units have a mix of one, two and, in some cases, three-bedroom dwellings. So if you are a couple with nine girls, I suspect you would not be living in an apartment block, you would be living in a greenfield area. The greenfield areas will provide great accommodation for people who want a more suburban experience and larger open spaces and people who have larger families. There will always be a choice in Sydney.

Families are increasingly living in multiunit dwellings and their access to open space over time will not necessarily change, but their "pro rata entitlement" will. Today we have 100 people using that space, but as time goes on that number will increase so there will be greater demand for it. We cannot keep providing more open space in these areas because it would be self-defeating—you would not be able to build buildings—so the environment must respond. It is responding, in that the new facilities for young people and families tend to be more dynamic. For example, the Ian Thorpe pool has a gymnasium, crèche, cafe and so on. They tend to be multipurpose. The Cook and Phillip Park Aquatic and Fitness Centre is probably the nearest facility to Parliament. It has a basketball court that can be adapted for netball, volleyball, yoga and so on. It also has activities for kids during the school holidays and so on.

In more densely populated areas you have a higher ratio of use for the open space, but increasingly there will be better access to higher-level facilities. The experience for people living in these higher density areas will be different. They will be less grubby; that is, people will have less exposure to the muddy environs of less formal open areas. Centennial Park will always exist and kids will be able to get muddy there, but there will be fewer opportunities in the more dense environments. The challenge is to ensure that as the density increases we are still capable of renewing, refurbishing and developing facilities that can accommodate the needs of that changing demographic. There will still be families, but they will be smaller families.

Ms REILLY: I am one of those people who has three children and who lives in a high-density environment—I live in Darlinghurst. There is not a fat kid in the area. Everybody walks everywhere and the

parks are always full and active. They are really great parks. They have cafes, dog walking spaces, gym equipment and so on.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: They are not just open space.

Ms REILLY: No. We also have the harbour, which helps. People are out on the street a lot more and they know each other. That sounds unusual and people might not believe it, but people really do know each other. The other thing that happens in these environments is that places like schools are used much more. That has been a great policy shift in Victoria. I believe that is planned in New South Wales and that schools will become community facilities. Ovals, schools, playgrounds and pools will be opened to communities on weekends through agreements with local government and schools. As we become more urbanised that will have to happen more. Our schools will become great community facilities, which is what they are. Our school is full all weekend with people on the playground and on the grass.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I apologise that I must leave. It was wonderful to meet everyone and I am looking forward to further input.

Professor WOOLCOCK: This is not really the pressure point. Sarah's example is great and it would be great to see more dense communities taking that path. However, social and economic pressures mean that that will not happen in many areas. Some significant work is being done. In this place four years ago we held a child-friendly cities research conference. That was held on the back of the original report from the Inquiry. A colleague of mine, Bill Randolph at City Futures Research Centre, prepared a paper as part of that conference. There were reports on inner city issues for children and young people and on the middle and outer suburbs. Bill Randolph did the one on the middle suburbs. A couple of other pieces of work have resulted from that. That draws close attention to the issues for children and young people that we should be mindful of in denser environments.

A more recent report has been done out of Melbourne called *Vertical Living Kids* by colleagues at the University of Melbourne, in particular Caroline Whitzman from the Faculty of Architecture. That is of particular interest broadly speaking because it shows the gentrification of the CBD and surrounds in Melbourne. It paints a rosy but not naive picture of what life is like for children out free range to a certain time of night in the Melbourne CBD. They are pretty well resourced with their own casual spending money to get around Melbourne. Again, I do not think that it is the nub and they were not claiming that. It was focused deliberately on the inner city lives of children. Many were from double-income families or single-parent families and they were pretty mobile in a way that I do not think is true for children from less advantaged households.

CHAIR: Does anyone wish to make any further comment?

Mr GELLIBRAND: I would like to follow up my comments because I was describing density in a particular way. We should appreciate that increasing density does not always equate to the manifestation of high-rise buildings. You can increase densities very effectively with three, four and five- storey apartments. If you look at places around Victoria Park to the south of the CBD you can see some quite good results of that. With that higher density development you still get a good integration of public and private open space throughout. Interestingly, Victoria Park is not far from Sydney Park, which is at the bottom of St Peters-Newtown. Sarah might have been referring to that area. It is a fantastically utilised piece of open space with higher density accommodation. It has education facilities for kids on bikes in a mock traffic environment, remediated lands that now provide for a range of environmental outcomes in terms of water and it has really well designed, very active and highly used facilities for young kids. You can take kids there from zero all way through to their teens. However, it is supported by the density around it. Without that density it would be much less popular.

Mr McCUE: The evidence is strong that higher density increases participation in physical activity. It stresses the need for quality parks in that limited space that cater for a number of different age groups. When we do get that quality space it is certainly used. There are many examples of those parks being built and suddenly people filling them. That clearly demonstrates a latent demand. People wanted to be active and building that park brought out that participation. The Department of Education and Training introduced a policy last year for the use of its facilities after school as well.

CHAIR: Is the science such that it is possible to develop a set of child-friendly indicators? Is it possible for developers, local councils or those sorts of people to tick off on a set of indicators and get it right?

Or is the issue so complex that some investigation needs to be done first on the environment in which the new structures will be built?

Professor WOOLCOCK: That is a slight dorothy dixer because that is the precise exercise we undertook with the Commission three years ago with the intention not necessarily for a set of hardcore quantitative indicators but certainly that local government would be the primary audience and also linking with the terrific work the Commission had undertaken to that point in asking the kids about the built environment and the things they valued. So, there was a segment in their *built4kids* resource and there is a document on its own on the Commission's website, but there is a segment of that full report that is now captured in *built4kids*, which is a set of indicative indicators—without trying to sound too wordy on that—but more towards the notion of guidelines rather than hard and fast qualitative numerical indicators for the kind of environments that ought to define a child-friendly community.

I think the science is such that a lot of those can be supported, and the feedback from local government is that that is a far more practical resource than some sort of secondary objective indicators of children's wellbeing. That is not to say that they are not vital too, and I also want to throw into discussion, but I think there is some real significance in having broad—whether nationwide or statewide—indicators of children's wellbeing, and I know the Commission, like other commissions around the country, is pulling together children's wellbeing annual reports and I think there is plenty of scope to incorporate the kinds of issues we have discussed today into those reports that are not typically in those reports.

That is, they are normally focused on traditional health and wellbeing indicators, individual markers, but I think if we can get a broader focus into those reports, as has happened quite effectively in other places around the world—and London is most noticeable with its state of children annual report, where CABE [Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment], the group in England, has had a big influence on the architecturally built environment, has had a major input into that report about five years ago about children actively involved in planning built environments, and they had a big turnaround about perceptions about how involved children and young people are in the built environment. It was a massive turnaround, really significant, going from about 10 per cent of the kids feeling they had any say in what happens in the built environment to 60 per cent to 70 per cent a few years later. So those broad indicators are critical but just as effective and arguably more practical are the ones we have been trying to work with, directed towards mainly local government implementation.

Dr BISHOP: There is a bit of confusion about what an indicator is. It means totally different things to different sections of the community—an indicator for a research community is a very specific research tool, it is a validated part of a measure. We are a long way from having a robust set of those that can comprehensively include all aspects of children's wellbeing in relation to the built environment. What you are talking about we can certainly marshal to some extent, which is really a series of quite precise operating principles, but they lack the robust research validation process, some of them do, that sits behind them. So, we can do some of what you like.

Mr GELLIBRAND: I think it relates to your question about indicators. If we think about big pieces of public transport infrastructure—railway stations and bus interchanges—it is common practice for those things to be referred to NSW Police and they assess them against particular safety design criteria and they come back with a statement saying this is good or this needs to be changed. That is terrific, because you know, moving forward, it has been considered and is addressed.

You might want to consider a similar approach for the issue of young people. If you are doing a particular thing, have you done it in such a way with those people in mind? It brings in the question of the idea of indicators or it brings in the *built4kids* manual or it brings into consideration maybe a *built4kids* manual that is augmented by the Department of Planning's guidelines. There must be some research that indicates a whole lot of documents go to the matter of accommodating young people or designing for young people or building for young people. If you stack them all together—you would have a big mess obviously—and you try to synthesise them in a document, which I think *built4kids* is seeking to do, you could then have the basis upon which to measure certain things.

The things I am talking about are the doing things. I am talking about new developments. Where things exist you have to take a different approach but if someone is proposing a large thing, a substantial residential subdivision or, say, the Carlton and United Brewery site at the end of Broadway. It is a substantial development, that involves a number of buildings, public and private open space, access to roads, and access to facilities.

Potentially you could measure those designs or have the proponent measure their designs up against some agreed outcomes you would like to see, and that could go into the mix to make sure the issue had been addressed. In saying that, we have to be careful we are not putting another hurdle in the way of development, that we are not increasing the complexity of development assessment and development approval—the Government is all about simplifying that—but it is a reasonable thing to consider in new developments, subdivisions and developments that you might want to consider some sort of measurement.

Dr BISHOP: It is a bit of a worry when a raft of indicators like that is used as a checklist. It can be interpreted minimally for indicators—

CHAIR: Or become a bit homogenous.

Dr BISHOP: Well, sites will vary enormously. It is unlikely that a universal set of indicators can possibly take into account the variation across all those design projects, and it would be dreadful to see them used as a weapon against the outcomes that we want for kids. It is difficult to assist with the interpretation of them and how they affect practice can be quite damaging.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just following up that discussion and the earlier one about high-rise buildings, if they are child-friendly accommodation should there be a limit on high-rise levels? We do talk about having 20-story blocks at Ku-ring-gai, and I think they have cut them back to 10 levels already. Should they be limited to three levels? What is a child-friendly block of units, what height should they be?

Ms REILLY: Developers will not make any money, which is what they are all about, mostly. That will make it hard.

Mr GELLIBRAND: I do not think this is what the Reverend is referring to, but the Building Code of Australia certainly has controls over windows and kids falling out of windows, so that is absolutely an issue that is addressed already through regulation, to make sure that kids do not fall out of buildings, which is important. I am not aware of the research that says that a building of three, five, seven or 10 stories is more or less kid friendly than one that is smaller. I am not aware of that.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Perhaps we should do that then, again from the children's point of view?

Mr GELLIBRAND: I think it is reasonable to say for a lot of the higher density developments the frequency of families with more than one or two children is less, purely as a consequence of the built form. But I do not know that that translates necessarily that they are not friendly environments or conducive to children.

Ms DENNIS: Perhaps the issue with housing targets and trying to comply with the Department of Planning's standards for housing targets in certain areas, but I think the wider debate is social mix and getting the right household size that is relevant for the area. Where the debate is, is the high-rise development providing the right combination of household sizes relevant to the Local Government and Shires Associations? How many two-bedroom, three-bedroom, four-bedroom units are there and is that an appropriate mix given what else is in the suburb already? So, it is a complex argument about social mix but I think it is relevant what the proportion of that new housing might be in a suburb that already exists.

So, when you are looking at planning in the suburbs you need to ensure there are enough areas for low-density housing that accommodate large households with children. I think as long as you do your planning well, an area can accommodate high-rise development but it is a mix. Of course, some councils are concerned that that mix is not right but I do not think there should be universal height limitations. I do not think that is an answer, but I think there is a good argument, are we getting the right mix and are we providing appropriate housing for the different types of households within a suburb, of which some will have children and some do not.

Dr TRANTER: I go back to your question about the child-friendly city indicators and follow up on one of Kate's points. I think it is very important that it does not turn into a tick-a-box exercise. The critical thing is whether people engage in the child-friendly city concept with the right spirit. If they are doing it with the right spirit, then the checklist is less important. Also, there is a child impact assessment tool that was designed for the Commissioner for Children in New Zealand that might be worth looking at as a way of getting a range of organisations to think about what they do and how that might impact on children.

I think the question about the spirit is possibly addressed by getting people to understand the value of a child-friendly city approach. We know it is valuable for the children so if we can get more child-friendly cities, they will be happier and they will be healthier. Their development, not just their physical development but their social, emotional and intellectual development will be better, so you can argue on that sense. Their sense of place will be enhanced, so it is good for the children; that is one thing. It is also good for a whole range of other groups. It is good for the parents because if parents can live in an environment where children are freer to walk and cycle everywhere, parents get their lives back. They do not have to drive their kids everywhere.

Today in Australia parents spend about twice the amount of time transporting and supervising children than as they did a generation ago. So there is a lot of time and money cost involved with parents. We have heard this before but the community benefits because the presence of children, especially out and about on the streets, is a very important way of generating local neighbourhood-based community. Children are very effective at breaking down that learned reserve between adults, and you will know that if you have ever gone for a walk with a child. If you have not got a child, a cute dog works almost as well. The last thing, of course, is that it is great for the environment, both now and in the future. If we have less traffic on the road there is less congestion, less road crashes and less pollution, and importantly there is less fuel used and that is going to be a critical issue as oil vulnerability starts to bite—just watch this space; it will happen. There are a lot of ways in which we can sell child-friendly cities. It is not just about children; it is about everyone, now and in the future.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: In the opening remarks some of the speakers commented that some other States were doing better than New South Wales in providing child-friendly cities or suburbs. I am wondering if anyone can comment on how that was done? Was it done through legislation or regulation?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: And is it true?

Ms ROBBE: I think the comment originally came from me. It was not so much on the child-friendly cities debate. It was more in policy development on inclusion. Because with the other States we are seeing a greater emphasis on social inclusion at the community level, that very often translates directly to outcomes for children. That is where we are seeing a shift between the other States and New South Wales. It is not so much on the Child Friendly Cities Initiative. Sometimes it is driven by an angle of trying to have people with disabilities more included in facilities, but it works for everyone.

That is what is so marvellous about those policies. It is at a local government level. We, as designers, would start a design project, say in Perth, and we would get a whole stack of policy documents on how to include the community in our park design, to the point where even at the level of getting comments or getting the community to come in and start the participatory processes, information needs to go out in five languages. I have never seen that in Sydney, where we are trying to engage the community through the different languages that happen around a park. That is really where we are seeing the change, not so much in, yes, they have more child-friendly cities, although they might have.

Professor WOOLCOCK: Just to validate the point that Fiona made, if I had had longer I would have said it in mine as well—and it is important to trace this—it is based in terms of its affiliation with the United Nations. The UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative came very much from the impetus of another academic, Karen Malone, originally based in Melbourne, now at Wollongong, who has been a long time chief proponent advocating for that and was behind a lot of the linking with local governments in Victoria. That was a key element to that and why a number, Bendigo and Brimbank, got some very publicised efforts underway and are still doing it under that kind of framework. There is also an important historical and cultural aspect in Victorian local government, that they have always had a much stronger community set of services branch roots to them than is true of local government elsewhere in the country. That was also fertile ground for a lot of this work to make an impact in Victoria. I just throw that in also.

Ms REILLY: Melbourne is a really good example of where they do this. In particular, in the city in their urban design they actually use stairways, chairs and things like that as recreational spaces for kids as well. So kids on skateboards can skateboard down stair alleys in certain areas because street skating is actually more popular now than a skate park. Intergenerational spaces like along the St Kilda boardwalk are where older people can walk, little children can scooter and people can ride their cycles all at the same time in those sorts of spaces. You see that a lot in the actual urban design, which is the public space we were talking about before, in Melbourne than you do in Sydney. I think Sydney is really not very progressive in that regard.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: What are the difficulties with engaging local government or people within the Sydney metropolitan area as opposed to rural and regional New South Wales? Mention was just made of getting information in a number of languages. Where I live 130 languages are spoken, with perhaps 10 major languages. How do you engage a community, whether it is parents or children, when English is not the first language, in addition to the differences between rural and regional New South Wales and metropolitan Sydney? Ticking the boxes was referred to earlier. How do you know that you are going to get, not necessarily the quantity but the quality, as a general point of discussion?

Ms DENNIS: I know this is not typical but Bankstown Council won an award for engaging with different social and racial backgrounds when it was developing the Greenacre Town Centre Improvement Plan. It went to the primary schools and used an integrated arts program to engage the children, of which the children represented many different backgrounds. They had to do two projects. They had to talk about where they came from, where they belonged and how they saw their belongings. They had to bring the story of where they came from and design something for the town centre.

Out of that arts program—they had a set of artists—they developed a whole public arts display in the Greenacre Town Centre. The artwork that the children did was integrated into the town centre, which created community belonging. They established as set of really beautiful public art features. Out of that urban design process the kids of that school felt engaged. That became their sense of place and their sense of community. That was a very innovative way for that council to engage with cross-cultural groups and give them a say in how they built their centre. That particular council won an award for that. But that is a good example of how it can be done. I think that story needs to be shared with other councils.

Ms REILLY: I did a consultation program in the Canterbury local government area, and it is quite difficult to consult with different cultural backgrounds. The best way to do it is to go to where the people are, to go through the existing community service organisations that represent different cultural groups, to help you find representatives in the community. I think once they have someone they identify with, it helps a lot more. Public meetings do not work; we all know that. Going through those existing networks in the community is what I find works.

Dr BISHOP: On-the-ground consultation, we find, is a lot like research: you have to develop the methods and techniques that are applicable, with the community that is going to be involved, and they need to flex with the circumstance you are working with, the age group you are working with, the availability of people, et cetera, et cetera. It is usually managed best beginning at the level with the local council, not from on high—not making assumptions about what you will find when you work with the council, but working with the council specifically and working through their networks, all the work they have already done, setting up relationships, and work accordingly, and capitalise on that. I cannot see the day when we can handle community engagement from on high—a series of universal recommendations that are applicable to all projects. That would miss the point of community consultation anyway, because every community is different and the way they want to participate can vary as well.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In terms of consultation at the grassroots level, if you talk about local government, there are 152 councils in New South Wales, with a mix of rural and regional, ranging from very large metropolitan councils to very small shires. If the boxes can be well understood and you are going to get worth out of them being ticked, how do you manage that across such a diverse range of local government areas? If you use Bankstown or Canterbury as an example, or some of the large metropolitan councils, they are probably more involved in a range of consultation and have some form of network already set up that has some youth involvement, or they have children's services, or whatever it might be. In a number of the shire councils, for instance, they do not necessarily have all those community services and they have, obviously, a smaller staff and a smaller number of residents in the area. How do you think you could manage having something that will fit both, and getting the right answers from a large council or a large area and a smaller area where the funding is very different? Using local government as an example, quite a lot of their responsibilities are different as well.

Ms DENNIS: I was just going through all the awards for these things to prepare for today. The other case study I did not bring was one of the smallest councils in rural New South Wales that won an award for youth engagement. It is not always the capacity of the council. I think there is this will, or the right people in the right place who want to do it. I think the problem goes back to education: wanting to do it and having the tools to do it, but not actually the size of the council itself. It does not take that much to engage with the community; it just takes an expectation and the desire to do it. It is not just a capacity issue. I think learning, innovating and sharing ideas across a sector is the way to do it—not just being constrained by the capacity. I am happy to give

the other example, which was a remote council that won the award for work in Aboriginal communities. It was all to do with one council officer's work, which achieved a huge outcome. I think there are individual stories. The issue is: How do you change the whole sector by individual stories? Education, I suppose.

Mrs LANGRIDGE: Building on that, I think there is also the importance of then sharing those processes amongst the 152 councils. I think if people can see a demonstration of how something is being done, and that it can be done, and that nothing fell off in the process, that can then be applied to where they are currently, regardless of the size. I think that is the key to the process. Working with kids and young people can be an incredibly rewarding experience. With the work we have been doing, the principal architect with Australand, or the social planner at council, or the playgroup mum, all contributed so much that everybody around the table came away with a great sense of, "That was a brilliant process to be a part of. We need to make it part of our everyday work practice." I think it is the sharing of examples and passing them on, so that people do not feel like they have to reinvent the wheel; there is already a protocol and the process there. I think that is really important.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: I have a general question regarding this problem that children do not play outside and do not walk to school. Should we be promoting the Safe Houses program and Neighbourhood Watch programs so that parents feel their community is safer and there is more community engagement?

Mr McCUE: There is no question, from a physical activity perspective, that a community's sense of safety increases as parents allow their children to be outdoors. So any program that increases safety would be a good thing, from a physical activity perspective.

Professor WOOLCOCK: I absolutely support that there should be any move to increase engagement, but I simply throw a note of caution about the kind of threshold that might be still there in the kind of era we are going through. We might be going through changing times, as Paul has said, but it does not look like there is any slowing of what is called "turbo" childhood, where everything is locked in to a 24/7 cycle about a child's life. There are a lot of children living across all socioeconomic statuses across society that have their childhood programmed so much that it is not even an option that they are thinking about playing outside or doing something, because it is all locked in to the week, the month, the year. I, as a parent as much as a researcher, do not see any sign of that slowing. If anything, I see it probably increasing. Speaking broadly, while we live in the kind of economy and capitalist system that we do, to me that is an inevitable outcome until some really significant things change.

CHAIR: I think we are probably out of time and have reached the point where we can start to sum up. Could I ask if anyone has a point that they specifically came to the table to make today but have not been given the opportunity to do so?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Or any recommendations.

CHAIR: We can start with that. I mentioned one recommendation: the establishment of a steering committee. It is not like you are nailing your colours to the mast, or anything like that. I understand that there would have to be a level of detail. In fact, the Committee has not even had a discussion about it, so there might be some problems with it. But as a general thing, it is not difficult to understand the concept of it: It would be a vehicle to better ensure that some of the recommendations that have come from our very good reports get to the stage of implementation, and to ensure that we remain contemporary. Does anyone have any disagreement with that? If not, we will flesh that through a little more, in full consultation with the Commissioner. We might get some paperwork out to you, then we will draw up a draft terms of reference, and talk about participants and all that sort of thing that needs to occur, and further progress the suggestions at that level.

Ms MITCHELL: May I make a comment about that? I understand the previous Acting Commissioner agreed to do is, and to advance this at the appropriate point, which is absolutely terrific. In terms of the internal discussions we have had—and today I think we have seen this—there are many, many stakeholders in this space. I think one of the issues is to work out exactly who would be on this group and who else might be a group of critical friends that you might refer to from time to time. I think it needs to be small enough to be workable and, at the same time, there needs to be the capacity to refer to all those many players in this space when you need to. That would be my comment.

CHAIR: Are there any further recommendations?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Do people have any suggestions for the order of priorities to guide the work of the Commission?

CHAIR: That is a good suggestion. The Committee would encourage those of you with an order of priorities to lodge that with the Commission. Now has anyone got any views on what should be the order of priorities in developing a work plan for a steering committee, considering the recommendations set out in the Committee's 2006 report? In fact, rather than putting that very difficult question to participants today, people should come back to us on that question. Participants might prefer some time to think about priority issues but it does relate to the Reverend the Hon. Fred Nile's suggestion.

Ms MITCHELL: In terms of developing that terms of reference and talking to the various stakeholders about the priorities that would form part of that exercise, and then go out more fulsomely for comment?

CHAIR: Yes, it is an all bottoms up approach to me.

Ms MITCHELL: Yes, if people are happy with that.

Dr BISHOP: To my mind I just see a problem in relation to how this is set up. You cannot have the Commission at the mercy continually of an overarching steering committee. It would be better I think probably to locate the authority over the steering committee in the Commission. The Commission has to operate within its own expertise, capacity, resources and people constraints. The committee will have much too large agendas so the steering committee needs to be a focused collection and probably used quite strategically through this process to comment on very specific projects rather than a nebulous collection of people that leans hard on the Commission to do things it simply cannot follow through on.

CHAIR: Absolutely. It would be a supportive mechanism—

Dr BISHOP: To the Commission, rather than the other way around.

CHAIR: Exactly. They are the sorts of things that need to be very clearly spelt out in our correspondence to people in trying to develop the best structure.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Can I go back one step in relation to the steering committee? Recommendation No. 1 lists a range of groups to be represented. I would imagine that one of the first things, which we cannot obviously decide on here today, would be to see if those people around this table have very relevant ideas on whether that recommendation still stands as the most appropriate groups to be on a steering committee. Has that changed since the original recommendation? I do not think it is something we could make a decision about today.

Dr BISHOP: I have a view on it. I think the approach that has been discussed already by the Commissioner; a targeted nucleus of continuous input is terrific with satellite groups that can be pulled together around specific issues. It is not that all of those people in that original group need to be at the table on all issues all the time, yet they will have very salient viewpoints that need to be included in relation to specific projects as things progress. So it is probably not that all those people need to be at the table in the first committee—it could be reduced substantially—but they are not excluded.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: No.

Dr BISHOP: You could bring them to the table quite quickly with the idea of satellite groups that can be called upon.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Given the original recommendation it would be too difficult, and obviously there is an opportunity to look at whether or not that recommendation is appropriate for the groups or whether there needs to be a committee and a subcommittee or whatever it might be.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Perhaps the word "steering" needs to be given further thought. It sounds as if it is steering the Commissioner. Perhaps a "consultative" committee or an "advisory" committee might be better.

CHAIR: Those comments have been taken into account in the best possible spirit and we will work towards that particular structure. Does anyone wish to say anything further?

Mrs LANGRIDGE: Just in terms of recommendations, I think as a practitioner we are coming to a point where the turning of theory into practice is something we need to take on board. Not that we do not need, we certainly do need, ongoing research and evidence-base, but for councils especially and for designers and people who are meant to be doing this work, in terms of involving children and young people, there seems to be a general awareness to some degree of what a child-friendly community or place looks like, but the how-to of doing that needs to have a greater focus. Unless we do that, the momentum that was raised through the *built4kids* resource will continue to be lost. There is a small network of New South Wales councils that focus specifically on child-friendly cities and other non-government organisations—Healthy Cities is one of those—that have been purely set up because of self interest but agencies and networks like that will not continue unless there is an ongoing mode of turning the theory and the principles into the how-to. I suppose in terms of a recommendation I think that is something that needs more focus from here on in for future reference.

CHAIR: That is a reasonable comment. Does anyone want to comment on that?

Mr McCUE: In terms of reinforcing that from the Premier's Council for Active Living experience in trying to integrate active living principles into the way New South Wales government agencies do their business, we initially had to state the case for *Why Active Living*. So we prepared a *Why Active Living* statement some years ago that collated that evidence. Now we have moved on to a point, through professional development and developing resources, to more a: What is active living? That *Why Active Living* has really turned into: This is how you do it! I reinforce that that is a good place to go.

CHAIR: Does anyone have anything further to say?

Dr BISHOP: Yes. I would support the need to emphasise the how-to aspect of this next round of recommendations. The issues in your first report have not fundamentally changed this time round but we do not need another report to some extent that leaves us in the same place. In this next round of recommendations and objectives it would be terrific to target something or focus something as set goals for some real achievement that moves us beyond what we all understand is an issue that needs attention.

CHAIR: There being no further comments, I thank you all for your participation today. It has been a very positive experience and it puts us in good stead to be able to interlink some of those very difficult and complex things we have discussed. Do all participants give the Committee permission to make public what has been said at today's roundtable? Is there anything confidential in what has been discussed? As all participants are nodding assent, the answer is that you do give permission and there is no confidential information. As time is limited today, the Committee may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, the replies to which will form part of your evidence and be made public. Are participants happy to provide a written reply to any further questions? As all participants are nodding assent, there is no problem with that.

CHAIR: I now declare this roundtable closed.

(The Committee adjourned at 1.20 p.m.)

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