Submission in response to:

The Draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney 2031

by the NSW Premier’s Council for Active Living (PCAL)

June 2013
Overview
This brief submission has been prepared by the NSW Premier’s Council for Active Living (PCAL) in response to the draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney 2031.

To assist preparation of this submission, PCAL in collaboration with UNSW’s Healthy Built Environment’s Program (HBEP) convened a forum on April 30, 2013 of relevant healthy built environment stakeholders to identify key issues that need to be addressed within the review of the NSW Planning System and the draft Metropolitan Strategy (Metro). A selection of government, non-government and industry representatives attended the forum. The content of this submission draws upon previous PCAL Submissions to the Planning Review and a compilation of suggestions and recommendations that emerged from the forum.

The submission provides responses to key relevant components of the draft Metropolitan Strategy related to health and wellbeing. For each response a brief rationale is provided why improvements are needed directly followed by recommended alternatives.

What is your view on the Vision for Sydney in 2031?
The NSW Planning Review White Paper and draft legislation were released after the draft Metro and the Metro presents the first of the regional delivery plans to translate the objects of the draft Act into policy and action. The Metro is therefore expected to be an exemplar for other regional delivery strategies. For this reason PCAL recommends that the Metro contain actions to implement all relevant Objects of the draft Planning Act.

Objective 7 of the draft Planning Act is to promote: ‘Health, safety and amenity in the planning, design, construction and performance of individual buildings and the built environment’. This objective acknowledges the overwhelming evidence of the critical role the built environment has in supporting community health and wellbeing. Population health matters currently receive minimal attention in the draft Metro. PCAL therefore recommends it would be beneficial that the promotion of health is included as an objective of the Metro and that a stand alone section on health matters be included in the document.

The Liveable City section of the Metro is the Chapter with most relevance to population health and would benefit from a stand alone section on population health. The inclusion of health and active living considerations as a major priority would be consistent with other State Strategies such as the South East Queensland Regional Plan and the Adelaide Plan. The Metro Discussion paper also included a proposed principle: ‘building new places and improving existing places to promote healthy, active lifestyles and to create safe, inclusive and comfortable neighbourhoods’ (pg7) which provides an appropriate principle to construct a stand alone health section.

PCAL also recommends the inclusion of Health indicators within Appendix C of the Metro to monitor consequent implementation of the population health related matters.

For example, the proportion of people not engaged in sufficient physical activity to confer a health benefit, rates of overweight and obesity and access to quality open space were all listed as indicators to measure liveability within Infrastructure Australia’s State of Australian Cities Report (2010).

PCAL has also prepared a list of evidence based key performance indicators for inclusion within the Division of local Government’s (DLG) Integrated Planning and Report (IP&R) Manual (pg 56-57). The indicators are divided into ten different categories including; Land use environment, facilities, transport environment, aesthetic, travel patterns, social environments, land use expenditure, transport expenditure, policies and promotion.
What is your view on the focus to encourage balanced growth, including the identification of nine city shapers to deliver strategic outcomes for Sydney?

If suggesting improvements, please explain your recommended alternative:

PCAL supports proposed increases in urban renewal to minimise the potential loss of productive agricultural land from Greenfield development. Such loss of prime agricultural land will have an adverse impact on supply of locally grown fruit and vegetables and will inevitably increase the transportation and consumer costs of fresh fruit and vegetables.

PCAL recommends that the Balanced Growth Action 1.5 be strengthened from ‘identify and map’ to ‘map and protect productive agricultural and resource lands.’

What is your view on the strategic policies and actions to achieve a liveable city, productivity and prosperity, a healthy and resilient environment, and accessibility and connectivity?

If suggesting improvements, please explain your recommended alternative:

PCAL has prepared a number of case studies demonstrating a mix of housing types within masterplanned estates (www.pcal.nsw.gov.au/case_studies) to meet changing population needs. As we move towards an ageing population strategies will be required to encourage people to ‘age in place’ and maintain their existing housing and social networks. The incorporation of universal design within affordable housing stock will help increase the number of adaptable homes within the Sydney Metropolitan area.

PCAL recommends that the Metro include a requirement for Universal Housing Design to be mandatory within Government funded affordable housing developments beyond a certain size (Action 6.4)

Accessibility and Connectivity

PCAL supports the concept of using Urban Activation Precincts to demonstrate how to plan for greater use of public transport, walking and cycling and better integration of transport and land use. Indicators are required however to determine the success of such implementation. An opportunity exists to link development of the Urban Activation Precincts with Transport for NSW (TfNSW) work to prepare walking and cycling strategies.

PCAL recommends that explicit linkages be made between the Urban Activation Precinct development process and NSW 2021 walking and cycling targets. Furthermore PCAL recommends that a measure of walkability be included within the indicators to demonstrate successful implementation of the Urban Activation Centres (Action 26.2)

Productivity and Prosperity

PCAL supports the provision of well located office space to enable more jobs closer to home. Strategies to reduce single occupancy car use for trips such as journeys to and from work need to be considered. Especially since the cost of Sydney’s reliance on cars was estimated to be over $18 billion in 2005 (Centre for International Economics, 2005) made up of congestion, accidents, air pollution and government subsidies.

PCAL recommends the preparation of Workplace Travel Plans (WTPs) and Transport Management Associations to accompany larger scale businesses within business parks (Action 14.2).

The most successful Australian example of the implementation of a WTP was undertaken at Macquarie Park as part of the Optus relocation and has been described in a detailed case study on the PCAL website (www.pcl.gov.au/case_studies/optus). PCAL has also developed a NSW specific Workplace Travel Plan resource which can be utilised by industry to assist development and implementation of WTPs.