

PLACE-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES TO DELIVERING HEALTH AND WELLBEING

PROJECT SUMMARY

The built environment can positively support the health and wellbeing of everyone. Where you live shapes how easy it is to buy healthy food, use active transport, enjoy green spaces and make social connections. The evidence is clear. But how do we create places that help deliver positive health and wellbeing outcomes for all?

In this project, we surveyed 350 built environment practitioners to get a better understanding of the barriers and opportunities when making healthy places. These include:

- Current capacity to support active lifestyles for communities
- Limited scope to facilitate access to affordable and nutritious food
- A lack of planning priority on healthy place-making practices
- Insufficient funding for programs and engagement

The problem

There is a longstanding recognition that strategic policy and health promotions fall short in the implementation of health supportive environments. As such, there is an ongoing question about how to bridge the gap between the rhetoric of healthy urban planning principles and the reality of what is being delivered and managed on the ground.

One dimension is the need for strategic recognition of health and wellbeing outcomes within state-level planning regulation and policy frameworks. This health objective was recognised by the NSW State Government through inclusion in its 2013 Planning Bill, though ultimately defeated and superseded by subsequent amendments. There was, however, success in recent ACT planning legislation amendments.

Additionally, our built environments are also profoundly influenced by local government-level policies, programs and actions. Critical here is how local council responsibilities are organised, internally and also in association with local health agencies.

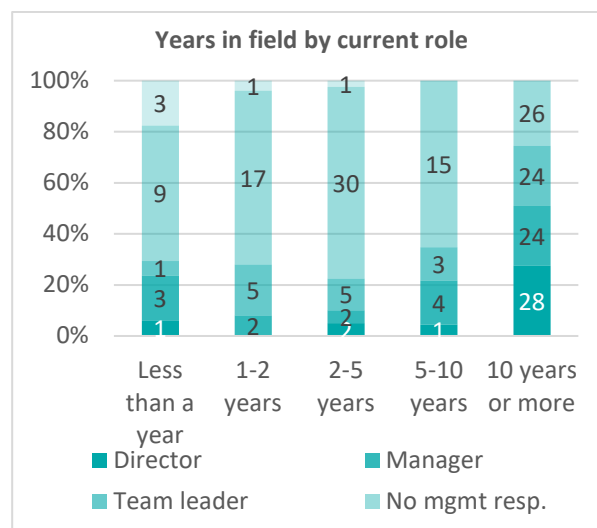
Our research

The project involved a mix of literature review and a practitioner survey, which mirrored a 2018 survey by the UK Design Council.

The survey focused on five key themes:

- Respondent background (e.g. profession, sector, and work experience)
- Current work practices in making healthy places (e.g. collaborations, community consultation)
- Opportunities to make healthy places (through improving access to positive influences on health, supporting better mental health, enabling active lifestyles, and reducing environmental health risks)
- Barriers to making healthy places (capacity, workplace, regulatory, implementation, and others)
- Resources available to help make healthy places (through assessing awareness, whether used, and would recommend to others).

A total of 350 respondents completed the NSW state-wide survey between December 2019 and January 2020, with 71 providing additional detailed qualitative and explanatory comments. Respondents represented practitioners in local and state governments as well as industry.



Translational impacts targeting health practices and policies

The survey produced a rich array of insights and perspectives, generously shared by survey participants.

A majority of participants recognise that they have the ability to support active lifestyles for communities, connect them with nature and encourage social interaction. The least ability to influence health and

wellbeing was considered to be facilitating access to affordable and nutritious food.

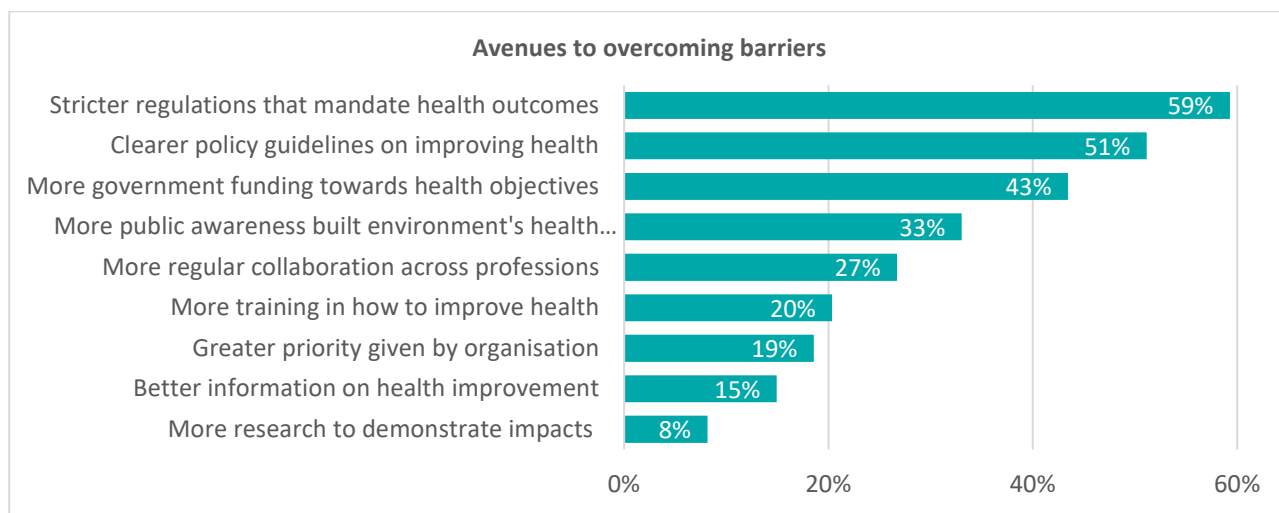
There were also frustrations regarding limited incentives and mechanisms within the planning system to prioritise healthy place-making, as well as dissatisfaction with funding levels and a lack of monitoring health outcomes.

Our research reveals key insights into how this can change, with recommendations such as:

- increased funding and budget allocation (the biggest barrier identified)

- enabling broader practitioner collaborations and community engagement
- improving understandings of the value of research data for practitioners
- strengthening government guidance
- improving systems, policies and processes, including the implementation of stronger statutory mechanisms.

Essentially this is about putting health at the top of the built environment and urban planning agenda, more important than ever with the global pandemic heightening the value of healthy place-making for all.



Details of our findings and recommendations are published in our research report, which can be found on our report page <https://bit.ly/3mljibP9>.

Future agenda

This project demonstrates the importance of considering health within planning policies and practices. It also highlights the barriers to its fuller implementation, and suggestions how these may be overcome. If you would like more information, or to participate, please contact:

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The Healthy Urban Environments (HUE) Collaboratory

The HUE Collaboratory exists to improve the health of Australians living in urban environments

We achieve this by facilitating partnerships between those who shape and have an impact on cities.

These partnerships undertake research and activities to build our understanding of how urban environments can deliver better, more equitable health outcomes.

We'll use this understanding to inform government policy and practice in the planning and development of urban areas.