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### **Proposal to promote Active Living in the ACT**

In response to the Treasurer's invitation to participate in the development of the 2012-13 Budget, the Heart Foundation would like to submit the attached proposal to promote Active Living in the ACT. The proposal draws on the design principles of the Heart Foundation's *Healthy Spaces and Places*, and has at its core the aim of creating a sustainable local environment that encourages physical activity.

Physical inactivity produces a massive drain on the national economy. Research conducted in 2007 estimated that if more Australians were physically active for just 30 minutes a day, the Australian health care system could save \$1.5 billion annually.

At a local level, Access Economics has estimated that the preventative health benefits of greater participation in physical activity would amount to more than \$84 million, including almost \$38 million in savings on the delivery of services, welfare payments and health care in the ACT.

As our lifestyles get busier, enabling people to pursue physical activity in their everyday lives is becoming increasingly important. An environment that supports active living by offering attractive built and natural settings, encouraging active travel and providing opportunities for active recreation is critical to promoting physical activity and reducing sedentary behaviour.

The attached proposal seeks funding over three years to embed Active Living principles across the ACT. This will be achieved through expanding multidisciplinary collaboration between relevant professions; ensuring the inclusion of Active Living principles in processes, master plans and relevant strategies; supporting partnerships between key stakeholders; promoting Active Living principles to the ACT community; and strengthening local research collaboration.

Should you require further information on the attached proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me on telephone (02) 6282 5744.

Yours sincerely

Tony Stubbs  
Chief Executive Officer  
Heart Foundation - ACT



## Promoting the Active Living Agenda in the ACT

### 1. Introduction

The rates of overweight and obesity among Australian adults have doubled over the past two decades, with Australia now ranked as one of the fattest of the developed nations. Overweight and obesity affects about one in two Australian adults and up to one in four children.<sup>1</sup> Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the leading cause of death in the country, with almost 50,000 deaths in 2008. CVD is responsible for more deaths than any other disease group.<sup>2</sup>

Regular physical activity plays an important role in promoting healthy weight and reducing the risk of cardiovascular and other lifestyle-related diseases. Conversely, physical inactivity and sedentary behaviours produce a massive drain on the national economy. Research conducted in 2007 estimated that if more Australians were physically active for just 30 minutes a day, the Australian health care system could save \$1.5 billion annually.<sup>3</sup> At a local level, Access Economics estimated that in 2008-09 the preventative health benefits of greater participation in physical activity would amount to more than \$84 million, including almost \$38 million in savings on the delivery of services, welfare payments and health care in the ACT.<sup>4</sup>

Sedentary behaviours at home, in transit and at work are independently linked with overweight, obesity and poor health. Sedentary behaviours are influenced by increasing car dependency, urban areas with built environments not supporting active and healthy lifestyles, increasing reliance on advancing technology and modern conveniences, and occupations that increasingly impose prolonged sitting times. One study found that each additional hour spent in a car each day was associated with a six per cent increase in the likelihood of obesity. Conversely, each additional kilometre walked per day was associated with a five per cent reduction in the likelihood of obesity.<sup>5</sup>

As our lifestyles get busier, enabling people to pursue healthy behaviours in their everyday lives is important. There is strong national and international evidence that local environments can have a significant influence on sedentary behaviours and the amount of physical activity undertaken by individuals. The World Health Organization reports that one-third of physical

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *National Health Survey 2004-05: Summary of results*, ABS cat. no. 4364.0, Canberra

<sup>2</sup> AIHW 2011, *Cardiovascular disease: Australian facts 2011*, Cardiovascular disease series no. 35. cat. no. 53, Canberra

<sup>3</sup> Medibank Private 2007, *The cost of physical inactivity*

<sup>4</sup> Access Economics 2010, *Working for a healthier community: the economic contribution of sport and recreation in the ACT*

<sup>5</sup> Frank L., Andresen M. and Schmidt T. 2004, *Obesity relationships with community design, physical activity, and time spent in cars*, *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 27(2): 87-95

inactivity can be prevented by changing the local environment alone.<sup>6</sup> Environments that support active living and promote health and wellbeing are those that offer attractive built and natural settings, encourage active transport and provide opportunities for active recreation.

On 7 December 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to nine criteria and a national objective to ensure Australian cities are globally competitive, productive, sustainable, liveable, socially inclusive and are well placed to meet future challenges and growth.

Among the COAG criteria are requirements that city strategic planning systems:

- are integrated across functions (including land-use and transport planning, economic and infrastructure development, environmental assessment and urban development) and government agencies;
- address nationally significant policy issues including climate change, social inclusion, health, liveability and community wellbeing; and
- allow for appropriate consultation and engagement with external stakeholders, experts and the wider community.

COAG agreed that by 1 January 2012, States and Territories will have in place plans that meet the criteria and noted that the Australian Government will link future infrastructure funding decisions to meeting the criteria.<sup>7</sup>

The Heart Foundation's *Healthy Spaces and Places: A national guide to designing places for healthy living* supports the COAG criteria and aligns closely with the ACT Government's vision for Canberra. *Healthy Spaces and Places* provides guidance for planning, designing and creating sustainable communities that encourage healthy living; supports a multi-disciplinary approach to planning; and facilitates community engagement.<sup>8</sup>

The ACT Government is responding to the challenge of creating a sustainable and liveable city through the development of a revitalised planning strategy that will guide Canberra's development over the next 30 years. The draft *ACT Planning Strategy* responds to social and environmental challenges, including population growth and climate change. The Strategy includes the establishment of compact housing close to town centres and along transport corridors to reduce the community's reliance on cars. The strategy links closely to the *Transport for Canberra* policy, which focuses on increasing patronage on public transport and supporting walking and cycling to and from work.

## **2. The evidence for environments that support Active Living**

Canberra as a planned city and the nation's capital, is an important model for planning throughout Australia and beyond. It is important, therefore, that planning decisions support the health and wellbeing of the community and respond effectively to future challenges.

Active Living principles centre on increased attention to planning and design of the built environment, including collaborative efforts around open spaces and resources to activate the

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<sup>6</sup> Pruss-Ustun A. and Corvalan C. 2006, *Preventing disease through healthy environments: Towards an estimate of the environmental burden of disease*, World Health Organization

<sup>7</sup> COAG 2009, *Council of Australian Governments Meeting Communique: 7 December 2009*, Canberra

<sup>8</sup> Heart Foundation, Planning Institute of Australia and Australian Local Government Association 2009, *Healthy Spaces & Places: A national guide to designing places for healthy living*, Kingston ([www.healthypaces.org.au](http://www.healthypaces.org.au))

public realm. Environments that support physical activity, including active travel, are becoming increasingly important as rates of obesity and chronic disease escalate, and social and environmental concerns grow.

- Proportion of people in the ACT who are overweight or obese increased from 48.7 per cent (2004- 05) to 57.8 per cent in 2007-08 (ACT Government [www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au](http://www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au))
- Greenhouse gas emissions increased by 1.7 per cent since 2000 which is higher than the national average (0.7%) in the ACT (ACT Government [www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au](http://www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au))
- Our ecological footprint increased from 7.4 to 8.5 global hectares in the ACT (ACT Government [www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au](http://www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au))
- Contact with people outside of a household declined by 16.4 per cent between 2002 and 2006 in the ACT (ACT Government [www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au](http://www.measuringourprogress.act.gov.au))
- Health care costs in the ACT are increasing 11% per annum, which is currently higher than any other jurisdiction in Australia (ABS, 2010).

The evidence for community and street-scale design and land-use policies and practices in increasing active and healthy lifestyles is compelling. For physical activity, international studies have shown good urban design and land use to be important for health at three levels:

1. The **community level**, such as proximity of residents to commercial opportunities and schools, connectivity of streets, population density and green spaces. Supportive community environments have been shown to increase physical activity levels by 161 per cent;
2. The **street level**, such as improved lighting, ease and safety of street crossings, pathway continuity, presence of traffic calming structures and aesthetic enhancements. Supportive street level environments have been shown to increase physical activity levels by 35 per cent; and
3. **Access to places for physical activity**, such as trails, physical activity facilities and parks. Providing access to places for physical activity, including through reducing barriers in terms of safety and affordability, has been shown to increase physical activity levels by 48 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

Walking and cycling can be encouraged by creating compact, connected local environments with a mixture of densities and land uses. This results in shorter travel distances from home to destinations of everyday use, such as local stores and schools. Neighbourhood studies linking built environment characteristics to physical activity have found, for example, that residents are more physically active in communities with pedestrian and bicycle-friendly infrastructure to destinations of interest, and that children travel more by active modes of transport in communities that have footpaths and traffic lights leading to schools.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, greater participation in active recreation can be encouraged by creating aesthetically-pleasing local environments and communities with convenient spaces and

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<sup>9</sup> Heath G. W., Brownson R. C., Kruger J. et al. 2006, *The effectiveness of urban design and land use and transport policies to increase physical activity: A systematic review*, Journal of Physical Activity and Health, 3(Supp 1); S55-S76

<sup>10</sup> Owen N., Humpel N., Leslie E., Bauman A. and Sallis J. F. 2004, *Understanding environmental influences on walking: review and research agenda*, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 27(1): 67-76

facilities for physical activity. Again, studies have shown that residents have higher levels of physical activity in communities with access to large attractive public open spaces, and convenient facilities for physical activity such as cycling and walking trails and parks.<sup>11 12 13</sup>

### 3. Heart Foundation Active Living in the ACT

The Heart Foundation has been a long standing partner of the ACT Government in a number of disciplines and in particular planning, transport and health. In recent years this has included partnering with the ACT Health Directorate on the Active Living Project – an initiative aimed at supporting built and natural environments and transport systems that provide opportunities for physical activity.

Ten key design principles, derived from *Healthy Spaces and Places*, underpin the Active Living agenda in the ACT. These are:

1. **Active transport:** travel modes that involve physical activity, such as walking and cycling, and include the use of public transport that is accessed via walking or cycling.
2. **Aesthetics:** the attractiveness of a place or area affects the overall experience and use of a place (e.g. walking, cycling, viewing and talking). An attractive neighbourhood invites people to use and enjoy its public spaces and to feel safe.
3. **Connectivity:** the directness of links and the number of connections in a path, street or road network, and for *Healthy Spaces and Places*, the ease with which people can walk and cycle around a neighbourhood and between places.
4. **Environments for all people:** places that are safe and easily accessible for everyone, regardless of age, ability, culture or income, with a suitable range of facilities and services that are available to all.
5. **Mixed density:** residential development that contains a mix of housing types, such as single dwellings and multi-units and development of varying size and height. This promotes a more diverse community and caters to various stages of life.
6. **Mixed land use:** complementary uses, such as houses, shops, schools, offices, libraries, open space and cafes, are co-located to promote active transport to and between different activities. People are more likely to walk, cycle or take public transport when they can conveniently undertake multiple activities at one destination.
7. **Parks and open space:** land reserved for passive recreation, sport and recreation, preservation of natural environments, green space and/or urban stormwater management.
8. **Safety and surveillance:** perceptions of safety influence the nature and extent that people use spaces and places. Design that aims to reduce crime can enhance the physical, mental and social wellbeing of a community.
9. **Social inclusion:** refers to a society where all people and communities are given the opportunity to participate fully in political, cultural, civic and economic life.
10. **Supporting infrastructure:** facilities that encourage regular and safe physical activity, such as walking (footpaths, lighting, water fountains and signs), cycling (bike paths, bike

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<sup>11</sup> Owen N. et al 2004

<sup>12</sup> Gebel K., Bauman A., Owen N., Foster S. and Giles-Corti B. 2009, *Heart Foundation Position Statement: The Built Environment and Walking*, Heart Foundation

<sup>13</sup> Ball K., Bauman A., Leslie E. and Owen N. 2001, *Perceived environmental aesthetics and convenience and company are associated with walking for exercise among Australian adults*, *Preventive Medicine*, 33(5): 434-40

lockers, signs and showers), public transport (safe shelter, lighting and signs), social interaction (seating, shade, shelter and toilets) and recreation (seating, play equipment and facilities).

These healthy design principles can be applied to a range of development types, including infill development, neighbourhood parks, neighbourhood planning and design, regional recreational facilities, retirement accommodation, schools, shopping precincts, urban squares, rural and regional communities, and workplaces.

The internationally recognised<sup>14</sup> and award winning<sup>15</sup> Active Living Project combines expertise from various areas (including planning, public health, transport, community development and urban design) to overcome barriers and identify opportunities to support a more active Canberra community. A key element of the Project has been the establishment of extensive collaborative networks across the community, voluntary, NGO, private and public sectors. Through these networks the Heart Foundation, in its role as project coordinator, provides input and support to influence and raise awareness of good land use planning to create healthy environments, and to progress an agenda around active travel.

The Active Living Project has received significant media coverage both nationally and internationally as an example of good practice. Key among its achievements to date include:

- Educating community groups and interested individuals on health and the built environment (e.g. community council, youth engagement workshops). This has included the delivery by the Heart Foundation of 56 presentations across the ACT.
- Developing partnerships with, and linkages between, key interdisciplinary stakeholders.
- Providing strategic policy advice on Active Living principles to stakeholders including:
  - the LDA Canberra Brickworks and Environs Planning Strategy,
  - NCA Bowen Dr Crossing,
  - Roads ACT Bicycle Advisory Group,
  - Molonglo Valley Stage 2 Development,
  - Molonglo River Park Concept Plan,
  - Tuggeranong/Erindale Master Plan,
  - Kambah town centre,
  - NCA Constitution Avenue Draft Public Realm Handbook,
  - LDA Campbell Section 5 Project Reference Group, and
  - Roads ACT Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Working Group.
- Organising and supporting interdisciplinary professional development through the delivery of four Active Living events.
- Advocating for policy change, including through the provision of 23 submissions to the ACT Government.

This proposal seeks funding to build on the above outcomes and further embed Active Living principles across the ACT. Some of the potential on-the-ground projects to which the Heart Foundation will seek to contribute are outlined below.

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<sup>14</sup> The project has been promoted in the conference newsletter as an important and very effective tool to drive positive change as part of the Ecocity World Summit 2011 in Montreal.

<sup>15</sup> The Active Living project received the PIA Improving Planning Process and Practice Award 2011.

- Urban design expert advice as part of the Town Centre Master Plans (e.g. Kambah, Belconnen, Tuggeranong, Erindale);
- Contribution and support to the Suburban Challenge, which underpins the Heart Foundation's commitment to support meaningful youth engagement in planning and design;
- Expert advice as part of committee membership to urban renewal projects undertaken by LDA, ESDD, LAPS and NCA;
- Partner in research and mapping of urban design-related access matters to achieve smart growth along transport corridors with a strategic and integrated land use focus (e.g. Northbourne Transport corridor, Adelaide Avenue, Belconnen Express way);
- Promote and support the finalisation and implementation of the Eastlake development as a showcase for Active Living and healthy planning;
- Provide expert advice on integrated bus interchange design and other supportive infrastructure solutions such as Dickson Bus interchange;
- Provide further advice on Urban design upgrades and intensification around Civic;
- Direct input in committees responsible for overseeing work related to active travel such as Roads ACT Bicycle Advisory Group, Walking and Cycling Implementation Committee; and
- Ensure community ownership and raise awareness around projects by supporting the healthy, green and sustainable neighbourhood concept in an existing neighbourhood. This can be a showcase project that demonstrates a whole of government and whole of community approach/commitment to work together to resolve the greatest challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century through a very own local solution.

#### **4. Project Goal**

The Active Living project will work to:

1. create a built and natural environment that supports a more active Canberra; and
2. create a community that understands and values Active Living through leadership, advocacy and partnership building.

#### **5. Project Objectives**

Objective 1	To build interdisciplinary collaboration between relevant professions to support the Active Living agenda.
Objective 2	To ensure the inclusion of Active Living Principles in processes, master plans and relevant strategies of the ACT Government and non government organisations.
Objective 3	To develop, support and promote partnerships with, and between, the range of key Active Living stakeholders across the ACT.
Objective 4	To promote Active Living principles to the ACT community and to support effective social marketing for Active Living.
Objective 5	To strengthen and support local research collaboration on Active Living and evaluate the project impacts.

### *Objective 1*

- To create a series of professional development opportunities related to Active Living principles for key professional groups, with a focus on interdisciplinary education on key issues.
- To continue to support individuals and organisations across the community with interest in the Active Living agenda to share ideas and develop networks (e.g. Active Living Drinks and LinkedIn).

### *Objective 2*

- To advocate for resourcing priority for Active Living principles around active travel.
- To advocate and to provide support to the ACT Government around the implementation of integrated urban design solutions around Active Living key design principles (e.g. complete streets/ streetscape design manual, localised sustainable design solutions) in master plans, processes, plans and strategies.
- To provide independent submissions to all relevant inquiries and processes to communicate Active Living principles and provide specific advice on actions to achieve these principles.
- To monitor and respond to Active Living-related activity in relevant government plans, strategies and processes as well as government resource allocation in relation to Active Living.
- To provide strategic advice on planning for Active Living to government and key stakeholders.

### *Objective 3*

- To review the current Terms of Reference for the Strategic Expert Group and to coordinate/ facilitate regular meetings.
- To continue to identify and engage key stakeholders to support and enable project activities.

### *Objective 4*

- Undertake education activities with community groups.
- Investigate/ identify opportunities for Active Living showcase developments in Canberra to promote Active Living principles with government and industry.
- Investigate opportunities for a green, active and healthy neighbourhood project as part of an urban renewal project in the ACT.
- To work with the government and non government sectors to develop innovative behaviour change initiatives such as car free neighbourhoods that can ideally demonstrate how shared spaces can work in Canberra (Bunda Street or Hibberson Street) and continued support of TravelSmart.
- Investigate and promote opportunities in ACT planning processes for the use of the Active Living Impact Checklist.
- Development of ongoing media and PR opportunities for Active Living.
- Support current government and non-government programs/ promotions for active and public transport options as well as physical activity with an Active Living focus.

### Objective 5

- Collaborate and support evaluation research with key academics.
- Strengthen and support new research projects around Active Living principles.

## 6. Budget

Funding of \$484,700 (GST exclusive) over three years from 2012-13 is required to support the ongoing implementation of the Active Living Project in the ACT. A breakdown of costs is provided below.

Activity	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Salary plus on-costs	\$129,000	\$135,450	\$142,250
Interdisciplinary events/workshops (x2)		\$15,000	\$15,000
Conference attendance	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500
Travel and accommodation	\$8,200	\$8,200	\$8,200
Consultancies	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Catering/meeting expenses	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Advertising and promotional materials	\$300	\$300	\$300
Printing and publishing	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Project evaluation	\$1,000		\$4,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$143,000</b>	<b>\$165,450</b>	<b>\$176,250</b>

## 7. Key Personnel

Mr Greg Mews, Active Living Coordinator, Heart Foundation, will oversee delivery of the internationally recognised and award winning project. Greg is an Urban Planner/Designer from Berlin, Germany. Over the last decade he has been involved in planning and infrastructure design projects around the world visiting and observing more than 355 cities.

Greg has received several research scholarships from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) as well as work-related awards. He published a book in Germany about sustainable development for cities in Central Asia and has contributed numerous articles to local magazines and newspapers. Greg is currently a member of the International Council on Environment and Physical Activity and a regular participant and speaker at national and international planning and design conferences. Greg has held roles as a guest lecturer at universities in Australia and Europe. He also holds an adjunct position at the Centre for Health and Research Action at University of Canberra.

With a strong interest in built environments and health, Greg is currently working in Canberra to make the city better for active living. This includes through evidence based advocacy, the provision of strategic policy advice to state and federal governments, active travel planning, research and education.