
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Official Committee Hansard

# HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

**Reference: Sustainable cities**

TUESDAY, 27 JANUARY 2004

SYDNEY

BY AUTHORITY OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**INTERNET**

The Proof and Official Hansard transcripts of Senate committee hearings, some House of Representatives committee hearings and some joint committee hearings are available on the Internet. Some House of Representatives committees and some joint committees make available only Official Hansard transcripts.

The Internet address is: **http://www.aph.gov.au/hansard**

To search the parliamentary database, go to:
**http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au**

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE**

**Tuesday, 27 January 2004**

**Members:** Mr Billson *(Chair)*, Ms George *(Deputy Chair)*, Mr Barresi, Mr Cobb, Mr Hunt, Mr Jenkins, Mr Kerr, Mr Lindsay, Ms Livermore and Mr McArthur.

**Members in attendance:** Mr Barresi, Mr Billson, Ms George, Mr Jenkins, Mr Kerr, Ms Livermore and Mr McArthur

**Terms of reference for the inquiry:**

To inquire into and report on:

Issues and policies related to the development of sustainable cities to the year 2025, particularly:

- The environmental and social impacts of sprawling urban development;
- The major determinants of urban settlement patterns and desirable patterns of development for the growth of Australian cities;
- A 'blueprint' for ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement, with particular reference to eco-efficiency and equity in the provision of services and infrastructure;
- Measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion; and
- Mechanisms for the Commonwealth to bring about urban development reform and promote ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement.

**WITNESSES**

**Committee met at 11.36 a.m.**

**CAMPBELL, Mrs Fiona Maria, Member, Committee of Management, Bicycle Federation of Australia**

**KUIPER, Dr Gabrielle Sarah, President, Bicycle New South Wales**

**TONKIN, Mr Neil Kevin, Chief Executive, Bicycle New South Wales**

**CHAIR**—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage in our inquiry into sustainable cities to the year 2025. The inquiry arises from a request to this committee by the federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, Dr Kemp. Written submissions were called for, and 136 submissions have been received to date. The committee is now starting on a program of public hearings and informal discussions. This hearing is the first of the inquiry.

I welcome our first witnesses. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament. Consequently, they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House of Representatives itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. On that bright and cheery note, do you wish to make a statement in relation to your submission or some introductory remarks?

**Mr Tonkin**—Yes, we do. I will briefly discuss what our vision is for sustainable cities. After that, Gabrielle Kuiper will talk about how we believe that can come about. We are pleased to present to this inquiry. We are pleased also that you are conducting the inquiry into sustainable cities, as we believe that attention to urban policy is overdue. Urban policy and management have been somewhat neglected by the Commonwealth government over the past few years. Australia is one of the most urbanised nations on earth, with 85 per cent of the Australian population currently living in urban areas, so an inquiry into sustainable cities is fundamentally an inquiry into how to improve the quality of life of a large proportion of Australian people. We applaud the title of the inquiry, with its focus on economic, social and ecological sustainability.

We believe the inquiry is both necessary and well timed, given two things: the recognition of the need for all people to undertake physical activity; and, related to that, the recognition of the widespread and serious nature of the obesity epidemic amongst the Australian population, with over half of all Australian women and two-thirds of Australian men currently being overweight or obese. The rate of death and illness from urban air pollution is growing and is approximately two or three times that due to car accidents. There are studies in Europe to prove that; it is probably a bit less in Australia. There is new evidence of the social equity dimensions of transport. In some parts of Australian cities a greater percentage of household income is now spent on transport than on housing. Our presentation is focused on transport and on terms of reference 2, 4 and 5:

- ... desirable patterns of development for the growth of Australian cities;
- Measures to reduce the environmental, social and economic costs of continuing urban expansion; and
- Mechanisms for the Commonwealth to bring about urban development reform and promote ecologically sustainable patterns of settlement.

A sustainable city requires a sustainable transport system, particularly one where it is easy to travel around by walking and cycling. Over the last decade, intergovernmental organisations including the World Health Organisation, the World Bank and the OECD have become more and more vocal in their support for non-car ways of moving people and goods around cities. For example, in 1992 the World Health Organisation said the 21st century must see a reduction in people's dependence on cars. The unsustainable results of the last 50 years of car based transport and land use planning have been many and varied. There are about seven such results in Australia.

First, there is the inefficient use of land, where approximately one-third of Sydney's available public land is dedicated to car use through the provision of roads, parking and areas to support motor vehicles. Fly over Sydney and you will see all the grey concrete of roads, parking lots and service stations. Cities based around public transport can be far more compact, with corresponding reductions in the length of journeys to essential services, and therefore increased viability of walking and cycling as transport modes. Conversely, suburban sprawl results in a reduction in biodiversity, especially as much of Australia's flora and fauna has evolved for particular geographic locations. It also results in a reduction of the available land for agriculture, which is a considerable economic issue, given the lack of arable land for European style agriculture in Australia.

Second, the use of fossil fuels, a non-renewable resource, and the creation of greenhouse gas emissions are very important. Road transport consumes 90 per cent of Australia's transport energy requirements and produces 15 per cent of the nation's greenhouse gas emissions. Transport is the fastest growing source of greenhouse gas emissions. There is also a health issue: the creation of urban air pollution from vehicles, with the consequences of widespread related illnesses. It is well known within the health area that there are just as many people being killed by air pollution as by death and injury on the roads. We know that there are about 2,000 people killed on the roads in Australia, and there are about 25,000 to 30,000 injuries.

There is also a deterioration of public place and a reduced sense of place and community. Major roads often bisect communities, and people are isolated from each other. What was a cohesive community is now separate. There is social inequity. People in areas without public transport or with low frequency of service either have longer travel times or are required to drive. Next, there is isolation and loneliness. Sprawl and being unable to move about easily means that higher traffic equals fewer friends and, basically, poorer public life—and that suppresses social capital. A lot of the time, Bicycle NSW is on about social capital and getting the society—us, industry and the government—to work together to do things better to utilise our resources.

I will just talk about our overall vision—I have about nine points to make. Our overall vision is to have sustainable cities developed around integrated land use and transport planning. There is nothing new or unusual about that. We recognise what Vukan Vuchic, a German academic, states in *Transportation for Livable Cities*: that no single mode of passenger transportation can satisfy the diverse needs of a metropolitan area. Our favoured city type would be compact, have mixed use and have a variety of house styles and sizes to cope with occupants of all ages and household compositions. We support urban consolidation when it is done well by allowing increased people connectivity and minimising motor vehicle kilometres travelled—that is, VKTs.

Sustainable cities will have reduced noise, pollution and land take, increased urban amenity, better social justice and equity and a sense of place, and their citizens will have improved physical and mental health. The facts are that a lot of our kids these days do not have much social interaction other than being driven to all these various things. They do not have much social interaction in the streets. We believe that that social isolation will come back to bite us in the future.

Sustainable cities will have a higher proportion of trips undertaken by active transport. 'Active transport' is a relatively new term which describes walking, cycling and the use of public transport as forms of transport that involve human physical activity with substantial benefits to health, safety and wellbeing. Active transport is becoming increasingly important in Australia, where a large proportion of the population suffers from a wide range of illness and premature mortality on account of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle.

The widespread use of active transport would result in a vast reduction in transport pollution and congestion, and improved health outcomes. This is especially achievable in Sydney, for instance, where 55 per cent of all car journeys are of less than five kilometres and 33 per cent are of less than three kilometres. These are distances that can be comfortably covered by bicycle, and it is also practical to walk the shorter distances. Health authorities advise that 30 minutes a day of low-impact regular exercise provides a substantial gain in combating the problems of physical inactivity.

Australia should observe, and consider, the increasing international trend towards promoting active transport in cities. It is no coincidence that cities in some of the healthiest OECD economies have invested heavily in this form of transport. The Dutch are the only Western nation not to have increased in obesity since World War II. Studies have shown that this is primarily due to the large number of trips made by bicycle in the Netherlands. The so-called cycling culture of the Dutch is not due to their genetic disposition or the lack of mountains in the Netherlands; neither biology nor geography are responsible, especially when you consider the gales that come off the North Sea and all the rain and snow, compared to our climate.

Rather, national government policy is responsible. In response to both the oil crisis in the seventies and the falling cycling numbers over the last 30 years—they actually got down to between three and four per cent of all journeys as the proportion taken by bicycle—the government did something about it. They deliberately spent $20 billion on cycling infrastructure, resulting in the current rate of cycling in Holland of 28 per cent of all trips. If we build bike paths, cycle lanes and end-of-trip facilities—that is what the cyclists are asking for—and make it attractive and accessible for people to cycle, we believe that Australians will do so.

Sustainable cities must have interconnected forms of transport, allowing seamless transition between modes. Currently, the car is king in this area because it is easiest to get about by car. But we believe that cycling can increase the catchment reach of trains and buses by about 15 times, based on an average cycling speed of 20 kilometres an hour. The ability to cycle to public transport, with good end-of-trip facilities—that is, storage, showers and all those sorts of things—is a cost-effective way of making public transport more attractive and of increasing the current low utilisation rates. This can only happen when safe, convenient, on-road and off-road cycleways and secure bike locking and chaining facilities are widespread and are provided as a matter of course in all new developments and retrofitted in existing cities.

One of the settlement patterns is interesting. The trend of cul-de-sac style developments, we believe, is out of date. It does not allow permeability for public transport—that is, buses—and bikes to get through those areas. We would like that changed, and we believe the old-style grid pattern would probably work better. Otherwise, you have to do all those round trips to get where you want to go, which are favoured by car drivers but not by users of other forms of transport.

Australia should very closely examine the low percentage of trips by bicycle that are taking place in our cities. Sydney has one of the lowest overall percentages, at just under one per cent as an overall average. Cycling rates are higher in the inner-city areas, at over two per cent, with rates as low as 0.3 per cent in Western Sydney, where 10 per cent of Australia's population lives. At present, bicycles are largely used for recreational purposes and are not considered as viable transport by many people. Frankly, we do not blame them. A start has been made by the state government in New South Wales on improving cycling infrastructure but currently we still have a lack of safe, convenient bike facilities and networks.

On top of that, we have a poor attitude from car drivers that does not recognise the positive benefits to all society of more people cycling; we are seen as a nuisance on the road. That means we have a situation of a latent demand for cycling: a lot of people would do it if they did not get molested on the roads and if they had somewhere decent to ride. Without a change in these factors, we will not bring about sustainability in this area of transport.

Cycling tourism is very important. It is an important element of visitation of our cities. In Sydney, for example, cycling could be an ideal way for people to explore the views of Sydney Harbour at their leisure. Cycle tourism is becoming an increasing form of tourism in OECD countries and could be a useful adjunct to our reputation for ecotourism in Australia. Unfortunately, when travellers from OECD countries come to Australia and see the beauty of our cities by bike, they are often shocked at the lack of facilities and the poor driver attitudes that prevail on our city streets—unlike the experience they are used to in their own countries. We get many complaints at Bicycle NSW from European people saying that they are scared to ride on our roads. They do not see why they have to fight just to go about and spend a few tourist dollars.

There is a substantial latent demand for cycling. ABS census data on increased journey-to-work cycling rates in the inner city of Sydney, for example, show that the level of cycling for the journey to work from, say, Marrickville almost doubled from 1.22 per cent in 1996 to 2.18 per cent in 2001. With low relative costs—that is, compared with building new railways and bus networks et cetera—the character of the car-dependent peak hour traffic jams could be changed to achieve much more sustainability in our cities.

**Dr Kuiper**—I have the fun task of responding to the fifth term of reference about what the Commonwealth can do, following on from Neil's remarks about what our vision is for sustainable cities, particularly for a sustainable transport system as part of that. The answer, of course, is many things, given the Commonwealth responsibility for the environment and heritage and for the Australian people as a whole. We would like to suggest six major directions, and I will go briefly through each of them. In relation to the first one, as Neil said there is a great need for a shift towards sustainable transport and land use planning. There have been some moves toward that in New South Wales, with large numbers of new developments being within three kilometres of a train station or public transport such as a bus node, but what is needed at a

Commonwealth level is for a greater share of the transport budget to be spent on active transport—walking, cycling and public transport.

We include public transport as part of active transport because people have to walk or cycle to get to the bus or train station. I think that is often underrepresented in terms of what people see as appropriate physical activity. It has become a big thing in Europe, but here in Australia, although a lot of people are starting to recognise it, there is not a great societal recognition that one of the best things for public health is in fact active transport. Even if you take a 15-minute walk to the train station and back again—not counting the time you might take to get to your workplace—that is your half hour of physical activity that is recommended to protect health. It is recommended by all the international and Australian health authorities that at least half an hour of physical activity on most days of the week will reduce your chances of heart disease, diabetes, obesity, anxiety, stress and depression. It is the basic minimum, given that we are animals and need to be active.

There is a lot of public support for governments to shift the balance and spend more on active transport. A Warren Centre study showed that the public was much more in favour of the government spending money on public transport even at the expense of spending it on roads infrastructure, whereas policy makers tend to think that the public wants as much or more spent on roads. Studies in Europe, the States and now here have shown that is not the case—in fact, the public is a little more forward thinking than most policy makers on that matter.

We are also suggesting that the Commonwealth government should look towards models such as the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-First Century—TEA21 in the United States—and also the multimodal transport appraisal that is used in the United Kingdom. That is when you do not just say, 'Shall we build a road?' but you look at a particular corridor; you look at the kind of trips along that corridor and then you look at what kinds of transport might be the most appropriate and cost-effective. You look at whether it is a road or whether it is a combination of light rail and better cycling facilities and more footpaths—all those sorts of things. Obviously it can be a lot more cost-effective if you spend on active transport, with the cost of cycling facilities being relatively small for greater societal benefit. In fact Harry Owen, a qualified doctor who used to be the President of the Bicycle Federation of Australia, estimates that governments across Australia would save about $6.5 million a day if there were appropriate investment particularly in cycling facilities, largely because of the health benefits.

Another thing the Commonwealth could do would be to require councils to have a five-year plan as to how they would improve conditions for walking and cycling as a condition of receiving funding—for example, under the Roads to Recovery scheme. At the moment there are some really progressive councils out there. For example, Gosnells council in Western Australia has allocated all of their $2.2 million under the Roads to Recovery scheme to cycling facilities. South Sydney City Council, just down the road here, has allocated $710,000 of its Roads to Recovery on what we think is a best practice for New South Wales bike plan which includes bicycle parking facilities as well as particular routes. It has a focus on linking up trip generators—your TAFEs, your shopping centres, your hospitals—as part of its plan.

While those things are happening, a lot of councils are lagging behind. One council that I am familiar with is using a bike plan that dates back to 1986. While there is a lot of community pressure and a community bike group, the council is yet to respond to that. Obviously, if the

Commonwealth were to require councils to have a plan, that might have an impact—or we would hope that that would have a significant impact. In New South Wales, the Roads and Traffic Authority have put out two documents about how to prepare a bike plan and how to prepare a pedestrian access and mobility plan. We believe these are good models to start from and to be brought about and implemented nationwide. We are suggesting that councils should devote a significant allocation of their funding to walking and cycling and access to public transport and increase it over time.

As Neil mentioned, we believe there is a latent demand out there for cycling. You just have to go out to somewhere like Sydney Olympic Park on the weekends and see all the people who are out there, particularly families. They can go there because there are hardly any cars and they feel safe. People want to cycle—it is fun, it is enjoyable and it is a great family activity—but at the moment there is a perception that it is unsafe and there aren't the dedicated facilities to encourage people to get out there on their bikes.

That was the first point—the shift towards sustainable transport and land use planning. The second point is that there needs to be a review of institutional arrangements in terms of a review of federal, state and local government responsibilities and of financial and taxation measures such as subsidies for car use which distort the market. We are talking about a whole-of-government approach, because many aspects of government are involved in supporting car use—for example, with petrol subsidies or subsidies for the car manufacturing industry in Australia. The third point is that we would like to see fringe benefits tax concessions on company cars and parking reduced—or, preferably, abolished. At the moment over $750 million per annum is spent on subsidising car use.

In my work I have seen the impact of that time and time again. I know of one local council in Sydney that is located next to a major railway station, but the staff are required to drive their council cars to work so that they can be made available to other staff if they want to make trips during the day. That has a phenomenal impact, particularly because the level of concession increases as you drive more and so people tend to drive on family holidays from Sydney up to Queensland to increase their mileage in order to get the tax concession. That is not an ideal situation if we are aiming towards sustainable cities and towns where people use their cars less. Obviously it is a significant step, but we think it is necessary. It is following the international trend throughout North America and Europe, where countries have taken fringe benefits tax concessions off cars and put them on public transport, walking and cycling. The money that could be saved could be invested by the Commonwealth in public transport infrastructure.

The fourth point we would suggest would be the creation of a national mobility and access strategy, and also an office of active transport. It would be a matter of identifying and initiating cross-departmental programs that support active transport. We would suggest that an office of active transport would need a budget of at least $10 million per annum. I refer in particular to health reasons. Obviously there is a lot of focus in the media on the obesity epidemic in Australia, but it is also a matter of physical activity. People often do not realise that you can be quite slim but very unhealthy if you are not doing enough physical activity. So the health profession is now talking about SDS—sedentary disease syndrome. People are spending two hours a day sitting in their cars, they are sitting at work and then they are sitting in front of the television. People are not using their bodies and this is creating all sorts of illnesses and health problems.

The fifth point we would like to see is the creation of a new national cycling strategy. The current strategy has been unable to deliver because funding has not been allocated to it by the Commonwealth. We believe that with adequate funding and staff—approximately $5 million and five staff—it could at least carry out essential pilot projects, planning, education and promotion. We think it is important that that strategy should include a target—one that is about increasing the proportion of short trips made by bicycle, because that is where you can make the greatest gains. We are suggesting a target of at least 15 per cent of all trips under five kilometres by bicycle by 2008.

A new national cycling strategy should also include funding for the development of tourism cycling routes throughout regional Australia by 2010. As Neil said, there is a growing market for that. It can play a substantial role in regional economic development. Bicycle NSW runs a nine-day cycling holiday through rural and regional New South Wales called the Big Ride. That has a significant impact on the local economies of the towns it goes through. You only have to be part of the ride, as I was last year, to see how the whole town turns up, and people are talking about it a year afterwards: '1,500 cyclists came to town and they took over all the local pubs and they went out to all the local restaurants.' Also, local people are involved in putting on morning and afternoon teas for the riders and things like that.

**Mr Tonkin**—We believe that people spend half a million dollars in addition to what they pay for the entry fee. That is what participants spend in the local communities. We have evidence of quite a lot of return visitation as a result of that.

**CHAIR**—Are numbers up for this year?

**Mr Tonkin**—We do not know at this stage.

**Dr Kuiper**—At the end of March. You are all welcome to come along.

**CHAIR**—Please continue to wrap up.

**Dr Kuiper**—Also, there is a possibility of the Commonwealth supporting state based projects—for example, the coastline cycleway that has just been announced for New South Wales. It would also be invaluable for the new cycling strategy to include funding for cycling and social inclusion projects. I will read a brief quote from a study that was done by the London School of Economics in 2000. They concluded:

> The link between small-scale cycling projects and social inclusion can be strong. Such projects represent a useful tool for communities wanting to address a range of needs in their areas, such as crime diversion, training, youth activities, and flexible local transport. They can successfully draw together a wide range of different issues, for example training, job creation, road safety, recycling, health and personal development: in a youth cycle recycling project.

That example refers to where kids help to do up discarded bicycles and then get to keep the bicycle at the end of the project.

The sixth point is that there needs to be a coordinated, funded, nationwide program of comprehensive cycling education for children, young people and adults. I cannot emphasis enough how important this is now. We have a whole generation that are growing up not knowing

how to ride a bike. I think that is a great tragedy. It is much easier to learn to ride a bike as a child than as an adult. There are various state programs but there is no nationwide approach. We train all our kids to learn how to swim, but you cannot swim to school. So I think it is important that we teach our kids to ride. People at the moment are not riding to university and TAFE in the way that they used to. I have personal experience of that. There also need to be campaigns to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes in all local government areas, with what in Europe is called mobility management.

The final thing is that, in terms of talking about education, there also need to be funds for professional development of engineers and planners. Most of them have been trained to build car-dependent cities and roads, and they also need to be educated about building facilities for walking, cycling and public transport.

In conclusion, government organisations at all levels and across the transport, urban planning, health, tourism, education and environment sectors need to work together with industries, including the bicycle industry, retailers, health professionals, educational institutions and other major travel trip generators to reallocate road space to walking, cycling and public transport and to change our culture of car dependency. I am going to quote Vuchic as well, because he has very sensible things to say. In particular, he says—and for me this is an essential quote:

> ... urban transportation in many ways reflects the general problems of advanced societies, such as the dichotomy between individual and social interests, the external impacts of a system's operation—

that is, things like air pollution—

> the relationship between market conditions and public service.

He also says:

> Transport policies must not be based on market forces and financial considerations only.

I say to you that transportation is a social policy issue. It is not only about the quality of the cities or of the environment but also about issues as diverse as heritage, physical and mental health and urban amenities. In short, the type of transport systems we design for have a significant impact on people's lives and quality of life. We urge the committee to highlight the importance of sustainable and active transport in their findings and to recognise the need for the Commonwealth to play a more proactive role in funding public transport and creating supportive environments for walking and cycling.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for your comprehensive introductory remarks. You talked quite extensively about the infrastructure precondition in your submission and in your comments. Are you seeing different rates of improvement in inner cities—those middle cities that are established that are between the inner cities and the periurban areas? What are you seeing there?

**Mr Tonkin**—What we are seeing in New South Wales and in Sydney in particular is that quite a lot of money is being spent in Western Sydney—understandably, because there is a lot of the population out there. At least we can all get it right for the future by building cycleways. But, to be honest, it is easy to do that because it is greenfield space. You try to put cycleways in a CBD

like this, and it is a different scenario. We are at a stage where one good thing is happening—something is happening in Western Sydney—and I think we are starting to get some gains in a lot of the regional areas too, yet again because space is available. But, as Gabrielle did mention earlier, road space has to be reallocated, and that is a difficult issue for government.

**CHAIR**—That is where the contest is.

**Dr Kuiper**—There are two quick things. Firstly, the City of Sydney has actually just announced its bike plan, which is a fantastic step forward. So there will be cycle lanes in the CBD, some by the end of this financial year. Secondly, the census data does show exactly that—that you have increased cycling use in the inner city of Sydney but static or slightly decreasing use in the outer suburbs. Basically, in Western Sydney—and we are talking about Sydney a lot, but that is all I know about—you have greater and greater car dependency. There are families out there that have two, three or four cars and unfortunately a lot of those people are now spending a greater proportion of their household income on keeping those cars on the road. It would be much cheaper if they could walk, cycle and use public transport. But often the infrastructure for those is not available. Some suburbs do not even have footpaths.

**CHAIR**—My understanding was that in the middle and inner suburbs of Sydney there were some gains made using the rail corridors and that that was quite an innovative thing.

**Mr Tonkin**—In some instances we are getting that. We have a peculiar system in New South Wales where you cannot take the tracks up in disused rail corridors. It is a function of our legislation, unfortunately. But gains have certainly been made in other states where disused corridors are used. In Newcastle, for instance, there are a lot of old industrial rail corridors which are being used for bikes. That is certainly an area that we favour. We also believe that using a portion of the existing active corridor is possible. It is not such a safety issue. We believe that the State Railway Authority is very territorial about that.

**CHAIR**—So that is overplayed as a barrier to making gains—

**Mr Tonkin**—Yes. You will see lots of instances where there are cycleways right next to active rail lines. With appropriate fencing and all that it works all right.

**Mr KERR**—That was an issue that had to be overcome in Tasmania. There is an active cycleway all along the rail corridor. Admittedly, I have to concede that the volume of rail traffic in Tasmania is somewhat less than that in Sydney but nonetheless that was an issue which was ultimately resolved.

**Mr Tonkin**—Yes, it is an issue and it can be resolved, we believe. That is why we are asking for an integrated approach. We have a scenario with our railways. It is not your concern; you are federal, I guess. But our railways have grown up in an era of people thinking that railways are the only transport mode. They are not. We have to look at the entire transport scenario. We have had some gains in New South Wales. We have new developments going on: the *BikePlan 2010*, for example, which is a document the government has come out with. They piggyback a lot of the bike developments onto new public transport infrastructures being built. For instance, the transit lanes that are being built in Western Sydney have cycleways next to them. And there are lockers at the bus stops. All that stuff—

**CHAIR**—That should not be that hard.

**Mr Tonkin**—No, it is not hard. It is not rocket science. Where it is harder, I guess, is in these inner areas. But it is also a case of just watching what goes on. I know, for instance, that in London some pretty bad bits of bike facilities have been put in inner areas but people use them. As you start getting more people using them there is more awareness from drivers in motor cars and trucks and all the rest that we exist, we are there and we are human.

**CHAIR**—So the statement 'your fellow pavement users' has some value even if the design is not that flash?

**Mr Tonkin**—Yes. It is a matter of sharing the road and understanding that we have a part to play. We actually take another car off the road by riding our bikes around.

**CHAIR**—On ABC radio in Canberra this morning I was challenged when I suggested infrastructure mattered. They said that in the nation's capital they have infrastructure coming out of their ears and it is not used.

**Mr Tonkin**—That is right. There are a few arguments thrown against that.

**CHAIR**—Let us hear your take on why that—

**Mr Tonkin**—Our understanding of the Canberra scenario is that way back when it was being built all these cycleways were put along the creeks and in the back lanes and all these places where it was out of the way of the traffic. The great god of traffic had to be preserved. But the facts are if you want to get to work on time in Canberra you do not want to be rattling around the back lanes and down the creeks. You want to get straight down there. We fully support what Urban Services have done down there in putting those lanes on the roads. I know there has been a bit of indignation from the odd motorist but by and large there is now a recognition that bikes are a means of getting to work on time. Having the green lanes right at the crucial points—at the intersections—and the lanes with the logos otherwise is what we understand by an integrated on-road transport system.

**CHAIR**—So the 'build them and they will come' argument is not enough. You are saying it has to be done well.

**Dr Kuiper**—I would argue that it is not just a matter of infrastructure because at the moment the whole system is so skewed towards car use. When you have things like fringe benefits tax concessions on company cars and the vast investment in roads infrastructure in comparison to walking, cycling and public transport whether or not people will use them is not just a matter of building the bike lanes. It is a matter of all of those things that we have tried to talk about in here. It is a whole package of measures. It is reducing the focus on car use and on facilities for encouraging people to drive; it is educating the planners and the engineers and other people about riding bikes—social programs to do that. All of those things are needed. You cannot just do a single 'build it' approach. You cannot just build the cycleways because the system is so skewed towards encouraging people to drive at the moment.

**Ms GEORGE**—I accept what you are saying about the need for a much more integrated active transport strategy. One of the other issues that the committee will have to contend with is this idea that with urbanisation you have communities that are becoming very time poor. The argument I hear in places like where I live, the South Coast, is that people travel by car because travel even by train takes them twice as long as it would by car.

**Mr Tonkin**—We could have some decent timetables, for starters. Secondly, we need to have a situation where the transition from riding a bike to leaving it at the station or to doing something radical like putting your bike on the train is smooth and seamless. We do not have a lot of that.

**Ms GEORGE**—If we are going to try and tackle the culture of the car, time is an important issue.

**Dr Kuiper**—The time issue is an important one. But the studies show that people overestimate how long it will take to get public transport somewhere and underestimate how long it will take to drive, often because of the issue of finding parking. The NRMA does regular surveys of travel time in Sydney and in fact the fastest way to get around for most journeys is cycling, particularly if you combine cycling with public transport. The thing about having an effective public transport system is that it has to run well and be high frequency. The case is that a lot of our services are only every half-hour or every hour, so you have to look at those being every 15 minutes. Someone told me—and I do not know if it is true—yesterday that the train service to Newcastle ran faster in 1920 than it does today. I am not sure if that is the case but I would not be surprised, given how neglected those services have been. The other quick point to make is that, with 55 per cent of your trips in Sydney being less than five kilometres, those trips are done much faster cycling. You can do that distance in 15 minutes on a bike.

**Ms GEORGE**—I am talking about the kind of outer urban fringe, where it is a growing problem. The only other question I would like to ask is in relation to the current national strategy. You say that the department has not received any funding for the promotion of the strategy. What has happened with the strategy that was launched?

**Mr Tonkin**—There is a body called the Australian Bicycle Council. We have one of the members of that in the room. Would you allow her to speak?

**CHAIR**—Very quickly, yes.

**Mr Tonkin**—Fiona Campbell is the bicycle lobby group representative on the Australian Bicycle Council.

**Mrs Campbell**—I am from the Bicycle Federation of Australia and I am on the federal government's Australian Bicycle Council. The Australian Bicycle Council meets three times and has three teleconferences a year to try and work on progressing the strategy. Every meeting is one of frustration, and all the really good people we have from each road authority around the country—from the Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services, from the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Heritage—are tearing their hair out about how we can do more to implement the strategy without any funding.

**CHAIR**—It is a 'show me the money' kind of conversation.

**Mrs Campbell**—We have developed a lot of things up into project briefs and then progressed them as far as they can go without money. Then we have that costed; we know that to finish that off it will take X number of dollars. We have a whole lot just sitting there ready to go.

**CHAIR**—So this is music to your ears?

**Mrs Campbell**—Absolutely.

**CHAIR**—You are not deeply appalled by anything you have heard so far?

**Mrs Campbell**—Not at all. I have not disagreed with anything.

**Mr BARRESI**—I am a passionate bike rider, so I can empathise with a lot of things you are saying but there is also quite a bit in your evidence which I find very hard to see being brought to practical application. First of all, I doubt whether any government is going to remove fringe benefits tax concessions on company cars. To put that up as a major proposition is going to be disillusionary for you. Perhaps some of the other things you are pursuing would be far better. I am particularly attracted to your bullet point:

- Revise national standards so that all public and private buildings, transport nodes and public services include bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure such as end-of-trip facilities.

That to me really is a great strategy to have and to aim for because that is the essence of one of the problems: you ride your bike to work or you ride your bike to a station and there is nothing there for you. I would love to be able to ride my bike to my work, but there are no shower facilities. Then again—and this gets back to your point about increased numbers of cyclists at the Olympic Park on weekends—I think people look at cycling as a leisure time pursuit. They do not look at it as a transport alternative, so I would have thought it was mainly an attitudinal thing rather than an infrastructure or dollar thing—which gets back to your answer to a previous question from Ms George.

**Dr Kuiper**—The answer, of course, is 'both'. But the interesting thing is that a growing number of Australians are seeing the bicycle as a form of transport, particularly in Melbourne at the moment and also in Canberra, where there have been great programs focused on making workplaces cycle friendly. You are seeing increasing numbers of people saying, 'Hey, I can save $5,000 a year by selling my second car'—that is just your running costs—'if I ride to work.' So a lot of families can go from being a two-car family to being a one-car family. They are saying, 'Okay, I also save on my gym membership,' or 'I don't have to worry about fitting in time to go for a ride on the weekend if I ride to work.'

**Mr Tonkin**—One point I would like to make is that the federal government has started to do something about the end-of-trip facilities. I think it was probably a deal brokered with the Democrats, but I think $2.4 million has been put towards a secure bicycle locker scheme subsidy to the states. We fully endorse that scheme. We support it and we would like it to increase. In New South Wales some money is spent on bike-parking lockers at stations through a car space parking levy in the CBD areas, and we actually have the contract to administer that scheme. From what we can see, it needs to increase, and the state government is making moves to do that, albeit slowly. I think the fact that there is federal money in the offing is a great thing. It is a great incentive for the states to pick up their skirts and start running with it—and we all know

about the flow-down of money. So I would fully support that scheme, whoever is implementing it. I think it goes through Environment Australia. That is good and it has to increase.

On the vexed matter of the fringe benefits tax, my understanding is that most of the state bureaucrats we deal with are with us and would like to see the thing gone as well. It is a major item; it is a difficult one, but it is just not helping us at all. I am all right because I work for Bicycle NSW, but some other people could not claim a bike as a tax deduction. They are back to the old problem of the employee versus the businessman and all that, and having a bike is seen as a fringe benefit, which is hilarious compared to what it could do for transport. So we will stick with it, I can tell you. I know you have that view—

**Mr BARRESI**—Hold on, that is a separate argument. If you want to argue for a bicycle fringe benefits tax concession, go for it—

**Mr Tonkin**—No—

**Mr BARRESI**—but to argue for the removal of a company car for a fringe benefits tax concession is, I think, a separate issue. You are right: bureaucrats are not politicians.

**Dr Kuiper**—We recognise that it would be an incredibly radical step to take fringe benefits tax concessions off company cars. You would have to reduce it over time; it would not be an overnight thing, and it would have to be done in such a way that the money saved was used for sustainable transport.

**Mr KERR**—I suppose I am interested in the chicken-and-egg issue of the vision, because it is easy to imagine people using bicycles as transport in the visionary world of, I suppose, the more dense and more liveable village type environment, but we live in dispersed urban environments. Canberra is a very good example, where people live huge distances from each other, well over your five kilometres. No matter what kind of public transport you have, to get from one edge of these cities to others is quite complex using public transport. In that framework, it is hard to imagine bicycles being as well utilised as they are, say, by the Dutch. So I am wondering what you are really aiming at here—what kind of target. I think the aims have to be a wee bit more modest.

**Dr Kuiper**—We are not expecting to go from 1.4 per cent of trips to 28 per cent of trips in a couple of years. In the 1970s the Netherlands were down to roughly three or four per cent of trips. It was a pretty courageous decision by their national government, but they recognised, particularly with the oil crisis, that they were highly dependent on fossil fuels, and they did not have much land. So what could they do? They invested $2 billion over the last 20 years; they were determined to make their cities cycle-friendly. It is going to take a long time, if ever, for Australia to reach that kind of best practice, but I think it is reasonable to aim to have 14 or 15 per cent of trips in 10 years time; that is my radical, utopian vision. But I think that, even if you doubled the level of cycling at the moment, you would see immediate improvements in the health of the population, traffic congestion and those kinds of issues. Obviously, at the same time you also need to increase urban densities to make cycling more viable. The New South Wales government has been doing that significantly in Sydney.

**Mrs Campbell**—Even in Canberra, where the land use is much less conducive to cycling, around six per cent of trips—journeys to work—are by bicycle, which is the highest of the major cities, compared to Sydney's one per cent. So by investing in infrastructure, even in a less suitable city like Canberra, you are able to realise a lot more of the latent demand, and that is the effort that needs to be put into Sydney and other major cities where a higher proportion of trips are short and would be easily transferable.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—You mentioned the example of Marrickville, I think it was, where there had been an increase from one per cent to two per cent or something like it. Who did the analysis to find that figure, and was any analysis done to work out why it had occurred?

**Dr Kuiper**—The next speaker will be able to answer that.

**Mr McARTHUR**—How does your group persuade individual Sydneysiders to get out of their motorcars and onto their bikes?

**Mr Tonkin**—By various means. We run events; we try to capture the public imagination. We run something called RTA Cycle Sydney—we obviously have the RTA as a sponsor—which is a cycling event from North Sydney to Parramatta. It is not in any way intimidating; one aspect of it is 50 kilometres and another is about 25 kilometres. That is the hook we use on the public. We do not have a huge budget—we are not sponsored by government to the extent that we can put ads on prime-time TV—but we try to put across the positive aspects of cycling. We might have dwelt on a couple of negative things today, but we are trying to push the fun, family atmosphere of it.

Unfortunately, at present we have a lot of people doing recreational riding rather than using it for getting to work, but we believe that that is the thin end of the wedge; they get hooked and they get interested in what it is like to cycle. We are also working very closely with the RTA, who are building cycleways around Sydney, particularly in the west. We fully support what they are doing, and we try to promote it. We have 10,000 members and we have a program where people can come on weekend rides that are run by volunteer members. I guess it is a bit of a 'suck it and see' approach.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Do you both ride to work?

**Mr Tonkin**—Yes.

**Dr Kuiper**—Yes, it is our main form of transport.

**Mr McARTHUR**—For how long have you been doing that?

**Dr Kuiper**—For my entire life.

**Mr Tonkin**—I am 50 years old and I have been doing it, with my various jobs, for the last 15 years, I guess.

**Dr Kuiper**—Bicycle New South Wales is an umbrella group for more than 40 local bicycle user groups. They are just local unfunded community groups, but they are the ones making a

substantial difference, in my view, because they are running rides every weekend. We publish a magazine, and a calendar of rides is listed in it. It usually lists over 100 rides every two months. You can go for rides every week, throughout the state.

**Mrs Campbell**—I think you would be surprised to find that many people do not need to be convinced to get out of their cars and onto bikes. So many people at the office where I work say, 'I would love to ride, but it's the traffic.'

**Mr KERR**—I want to raise the question of putting bikes on buses, trains and ferries. There are also lots of highways—freeways—that prohibit cycling. I am wondering whether one of the issues you wish to raise is about making certain that you can, as far as possible, take bikes onto other modes of public transport.

**Mr Tonkin**—Absolutely. We would like to make a very strong point about that. I suppose I am pointing at our wonderful State Rail Authority and the buses. But that is a very important point you raise. In Brisbane, for instance, we all know that Brisbane has a big city council so they can do what they like. They own the bus company. So now they have an arrangement where they take bikes on the front of the buses. So, if I happen to ride my bike to work and it just buckets down like it does down here occasionally and I do not feel like riding my bike home, I can stick it on the front of the bus.

**CHAIR**—It could be a roo bar.

**Mr Tonkin**—Yes. And it actually has worked. I do not know whether it would work in Sydney. I suspect it would. But that is a start. We are all about integrated transport and mixing and matching. The decision with the motorways is very interesting. In New South Wales we are allowed to ride on most motorway shoulders, although some of our old roads are so bad that they do not have a shoulder. So, relatively speaking, that is better. We would like something to be done about the interchanges on those major roads; otherwise, riding on the shoulder of the motorways is not too bad.

**CHAIR**—That is where cars pull in and out?

**Mr Tonkin**—That is correct—the exits and entrances. That is something that the state government has steadfastly refused to do anything about and it is the same in Victoria. That is one aspect. Also, on the business of taking a bike on the train, it seems like it is something totally unusual to our government, whereas I have been regularly to France, Germany and Holland, and there are plenty of bikes on the trains. In fact, in Switzerland, they like people to take their bikes on the trains because they know they will get more business. That is a really big issue in Australia. There seems to be this view that the public transport system is some sort of social welfare handout as opposed to something that facilitates making the whole place work better. So that is a very big point we would like to make. I do not know what the federal government can do about it, but an issue for cycle tourism and for everybody is this perception that bikes do not fit in.

**Mrs Campbell**—That is strategy 3.4 of the national strategy.

**Mr KERR**—Can you take your bike across the Sydney Harbour Bridge?

**Mr Tonkin**—Yes, because there is a dedicated cycleway to it.

**CHAIR**—I have one last question before we wrap up. Are bike helmets killing us? Some evidence we have received is that, for the 32 people killed riding a bike in Australia, there are tens of thousands who should be riding bikes but who are turned off. The analogy was that it is like asking pedestrians to wear fluorescent vests because a car might hit them. Are we putting the wrong solution to the problem and turning off thousands of people who should be riding a bike?

**Mrs Campbell**—In the last issue last year of *Injury Prevention*, the global journal, there was a great article called 'Safety in numbers'. It looked at cities and countries around the world and compared the levels of cycling in each city or country with the number of injuries. Basically, the more people you have cycling, the fewer injuries you have because drivers are more used to it.

**CHAIR**—We heard that, in the UK, 140 are killed per year but 20,000 die from lack of exercise.

**Mrs Campbell**—It is way out of proportion. The effect of the compulsory helmet legislation when it was brought in was to reduce cycling numbers by a third, making it more dangerous for everyone who was left and discouraging numbers from going out, which makes it more dangerous. So, overall, from a public health perspective it was a failure. Wearing a helmet on an individual basis is a good idea, but having it compulsory reduces safety overall.

**CHAIR**—Are there any last comments?

**Dr Kuiper**—We would be advocating all of the other things that we have talked about ahead of rescinding the legislation on helmets.

**Mr Tonkin**—I would just like to table these documents: the Bicycle New South Wales policy on what governments should do about cycling and some stats on the New South Wales government and the people who cycle. I would also like to say that we are a member of the Cycling Promotion Alliance and the Bicycle Federation of Australia and I have the cycling alliance's policy also.

**CHAIR**—Your members would be very happy, because you have had a very good run this morning. The committee will take the documents presented as exhibits. Can I ask a member to move that documents presented by Bicycle New South Wales be received as evidence as an exhibit and be authorised for publication?

**Mr BARRESI**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Mr Barresi. Thank you to Bicycle New South Wales for your time, your submissions and your answers to questions.

[12.34 p.m.]

**RISSEL, Dr Christopher, Director, Health Promotion Unit, Central Sydney Area Health Service**

**TONKIN, Mr Neil Kevin, Chief Executive, Bicycle New South Wales**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament. Consequently, they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. On that upbeat note, would you like to make a brief statement in relation to your submission or some introductory remarks as a brief statement?

**Dr Rissel**—I was not aware of who else was going to be presenting in this session. I am really pleased to see Bicycle NSW and Fiona here, because what I have to say is consistent with and extends exactly their position. I think there would be 100 per cent agreement on our position in most situations. I am speaking for the area health service because we have a particular interest in encouraging the population to become more physically active. Of all the ways that we could do better, cycling is a major platform. People already walk—there are already programs to get people to walk. We need to get people out of cars and moving more, in any way. That is entirely consistent with directions in sustainable, liveable cities and reducing car dependence. Cycling is just one of the ways that is a key platform for us.

I emphasise three different points. Firstly—I am sure you have heard it said—cycling is healthy. There can be no confusion that cycling is good for you, if you do it. Secondly, people want to cycle. I think that is a really clear position, and I will go into that if you would like me to expand on it. Thirdly, as we have heard, cycling infrastructure and the environment obviously need some attention in order to make cycling as viable as it can be.

**CHAIR**—I compliment you on your submission. I have been doing this for eight years, and I have not seen a more succinct, comprehensive, well-referenced, robust submission. It is a credit to you and your team—it is excellent. To open the batting, if I may, regarding the inner city catchment that you work within—and no doubt you would liaise with other area health services—are you seeing some variation in the challenges and the difficulty in implementation of your message and some ideas in an inner-city context from the middle suburbs and the periurban outer metro environment?

**Dr Rissel**—Absolutely. One of the questions from Ms Livermore about the increase in cycling in Marrickville was related to a research project we undertook in our area health service. We looked at the census figures for the journey to work between the 1996 and the 2001 census periods. We looked specifically at the journey to work mode by cycle. We analysed it by an inner city ring—where we took the 10 kilometres outside of Central Station—the outer ring of Sydney, and then the greater metro, which is Wollongong, Newcastle, the Blue Mountains and areas like that. There were massive increases in the inner city—up to around a 60 per cent increase in cycling to work in Sydney over that period. There was virtually no change or a slight decrease in

the outer areas of Sydney, and there was a slight decrease again in the outlying areas as well. So, in the inner city areas, we are seeing a great increase in cycling, and that is shared by colleagues in the South Eastern Sydney Area Health Service and in the inner areas of northern Sydney. Yes, I can say there are changes under way.

**CHAIR**—In the absence of helpful interventions, like the ones we were talking about with the previous presenters, what is bringing about those changes? What interventions, however small, are delivering those kinds of gains that you are speaking of?

**Dr Rissel**—One of the things you have already heard is that distance in the inner city areas is obviously a factor, so being closer to work and being physically able to get to destinations of interest, like movies and shopping centres, makes it viable. It is not too far; you can do it. The fact that there is a whole network of backstreets, as in the map that you have just been given, means that there are ways of doing it without having to ride on the busy streets, so that makes it attractive as well. The fact that you see other people doing it generates an energy in its own right. We in the Central Sydney Area Health Service have started to do cycling proficiency courses which are for adults who know how to ride a bike but lack a little bit of confidence and a little bit of skill—

**CHAIR**—Working the 18 gears and all that.

**Dr Rissel**—Working out how to not crunch your gears as you go up the hill.

**Mr BARRESI**—A modern bike has 21 gears.

**CHAIR**—Mr Barresi is our resident athlete. He is very well versed, and he will provide us with a demonstration when we are in Melbourne!

**Dr Rissel**—I think that is exactly the issue: people actually need some encouragement to do it and, once they do it, they love it. Through word of mouth, this program has been massively popular.

**CHAIR**—So, awareness is essentially the key ingredient in the gains to date?

**Dr Rissel**—And the desire to not have to drive. I do not know if you talked about it in the initial part, but the congestion when driving in the inner west is a major turn-off—you cannot park, it takes a long time and it is quicker to ride. Before you know it, the more cars there are and as the number of cars spread outwards, the same situation will happen in Western Sydney. So it is just more convenient to ride.

**CHAIR**—It is a logical plan B.

**Dr Rissel**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—You also mentioned the encouragement of active transport. You have heard a lot of the previous submission. Is there anything that you would like to add? Are there some insights that you would like to share with us about how to do that well?

**Dr Rissel**—We have trialled some intervention projects with staff at the area health service involving ways to encourage people to get out of their cars. We have developed transport access guides, which are maps of facilities which illustrate ways of getting to a destination without driving—for instance, this is the public transport link, this is the bus stop, this is the bus number and this is the number you ring to get the timetables. We are starting to develop these maps for the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Concord Hospital, Canterbury Hospital and the various community health centres as a way to help people know that there are options other than driving.

We have coupled this with communication strategies about the value of not driving and of walking, cycling or using public transport instead. We have also spent time doing some individual marketing, where we talk through people's individual issues about transport. They might say, 'I can't go there because I have to go to the shops on the way home,' and we talk about what solutions there might be to those individual problems. This is copying a program from Western Australia—the TravelSmart program—where they have had quite large changes in cycling behaviour as well as use of public transport. They invested a lot of money in supporting and encouraging this program, but they have got significant returns in terms of the change of behaviour, of getting people out of their cars.

**Ms GEORGE**—You mentioned the sustainable principles adopted in Vancouver. Is something happening in Vancouver that the committee should know about?

**Dr Rissel**—It was a meeting of interested transport people where they collectively discussed the benefits of different thinking around transport. They released the Vancouver statement. It is not so much that Vancouver is particularly a better place, but it was a venue for a significant meeting where they produced a charter.

**CHAIR**—Is there a case for an integrated approach providing fewer railway stops, complemented by bicycle and pedestrian pathways to facilitate movement between a fewer number of stops so as to accelerate the travel time? Ms George's circumstances are exactly the same as the community that I represent in Frankston, Victoria. It is an hour on the train to Melbourne because in some cases there is a railway station every third sentence of the book you are reading. It is a turn-off. Whereas, if there was a flyer service—

**Dr Rissel**—I am in one hundred per cent agreement. I endorsed the earlier position about the integrated transport system. That is the only effective way to get people out of cars in a way that works for them, so it is quicker and painless. That is obviously what you need to emphasise.

**CHAIR**—It would also deliver a time savings dividend.

**Dr Rissel**—The time argument was one of the major arguments that our intervention people found from the responses in the studies that we have done.

**CHAIR**—Are you seeing any planning that does implement that kind of thinking and any examples where proximity to a transport corridor of a non-vehicular kind—a rail or a bicycle and pedestrian corridor—is seen as a virtue for choice of housing and commercial location?

**Dr Rissel**—Very much so; when businesses move, I think there are opportunities for changes in behaviour to be introduced at that point. There are two answers to what you have just

commented on. Certainly in the development of medium-density housing on rail lines, that is seen as a plus for transport because you do not need a car. When the RTA moved their offices from central Sydney to Parramatta, which is a well-serviced network area, and at the time of the move introduced a travel behaviour change program, something like 25 per cent of people changed their mode of transport from driving to using public transport. So where there are good transport options, people like to take them up.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Did your thesis start from the better health of the urban population or from the transport mode of the bicycle? Where did you start your basic idea?

**Dr Rissel**—In central Sydney we have a physical activity strategic plan, which is trying to get people to be physically active. One needs to use a number of different strategies for that, and cycling is one of the strategies we use as part of the active transport program. We see active transport as being a key platform. The other evidence we have is that group fitness programs or individual sessions with a fitness instructor are not very cost effective and are not sustained. From a physical activity point of view, people who spend a lot of money going to the gym tend not to keep it up and it affects only a small proportion of people. To get more people active to a level that is good for their health we need population wide strategies.

Remember that in health terms you only need to walk fairly vigorously for about 20 to 30 minutes a day to maintain your health—you will not lose weight on that, but you will at least maintain some basic health. The 20 to 30 minutes could be 15 minutes to the station and 15 minutes home. That is sufficient to maintain adequate health as we measure it in the health system. So the active transport really works for us at a population health level to get people more physically active. Cycling is just one of the ways of doing that, but it is a very effective way.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Do you find that people who start cycling stay with it once they get into the general swing of things?

**Dr Rissel**—I have numerous case examples of where someone has bitten the bullet: they have done one of our courses or they have gone with a buddy to ride and have learnt a new way to go, and they are committed. I don't want to oversell it, because not everyone takes to it. You have to keep in mind that cycling as a strategy will not be the answer for everyone, but people who try it generally like it and tend to keep it up if it can be worked into their schedule.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—Dr Rissel, your submission talks a lot about integration as a key theme. Does your health service have a relationship with councils or infrastructure planners in your area? Is there a particular model that you recommend or would like to expand on?

**Dr Rissel**—You have identified a real weakness in the health system and its relations with other government agencies. We in the Health Promotion Unit make an active effort to liaise with key council staff, but there is no formalised arrangement between area health services and local governments. The area health services are in the middle of developing a public health strategic plan which will invite councils, but councils do not necessarily see much of a benefit in it for them. Health services have typically done their own thing and do not care what anyone else does, so it is a real problem because we could support some of the council programs much better. We have started to write submissions to councils when they do major developments—in fact, the Health Promotion Unit engages a consultant, Chloe Mason, who will speak to you later today.

She has advised us on some of the technical aspects where we submit to council about their pedestrian access plans and some of their cycle plans. So we try to give input to those things, but we are just one stakeholder among many.

**Mr BARRESI**—I notice that councils in Victoria often put out little glossies about where their different parks, gardens and dinner facilities are. We could encourage councils to put out a guide that shows how to get to your nearest railway station from where you live rather than where the bike paths in the city are—which can be anywhere. Perhaps there could be a guide that says: 'If you live in X suburb, your nearest railway station is such and such; this is the most appropriate way to get there by bike.'

**Dr Rissel**—You will be pleased to know that I am aware of two councils in the central Sydney area that have done that, Leichhardt and Marrickville. They have produced a map of the local government area which highlights all the key facilities, like pools, and also the transport links, as well as cyclepaths. They show the stations, the bus stops and the bus numbers, and they are distributed to the local councils. It is a variation of the transport access guide I mentioned earlier. It is a very good idea, but I only know of two councils that do that and I do not know that others are automatically doing that.

**Mr BARRESI**—I have a booklet at home that tells me every bike path in Melbourne. That is fine, but it does not tell me, where there is no bike path, what is the safest road to take from my suburb to the nearest railway station. There may not be a bike path there, but there may be a way that could be designated as a safer route. The comment I get regularly—and I notice this in your submission—is on the issue of danger. Whenever I plan to have a ride, the first comment I get from friends or relatives is: 'You're crazy. Why are you doing it? It's too dangerous.'

**Dr Rissel**—One of the research studies we have been involved in with drivers was about both their frequency of cycling and their perceptions of safety and danger. We asked them, 'How dangerous do you think it would be?' and we analysed that by whether or not they cycled. Echoing what you have just said, the people who cycled generally rated the level of danger as much lower than the people who had not cycled. So there is an exaggerated sense of danger, if you like. If you ride more, you think it is not as dangerous as people who do not ride. We also looked at how many people had been hurt riding a bike, and people thought it was hundreds or thousands. In New South Wales only 12 people were killed in 2000 by cycling, yet people were saying it was 150 or 200. Like I say, the danger is exaggerated.

**Mr JENKINS**—Have you investigated the way in which planning laws, and the way in which they are dominated by provision of parking spaces for cars and things like that, affect the mind-set? We went down to a building in Carlton where they negotiated locker space for bikes in lieu of paying for car spaces. I do not know whether there is any movement for that on a wider scale.

**Dr Rissel**—It is interesting that in Sydney there has been a move to look at a tax on parking in the city—a levy of some kind, I think. I am not 100 per cent across the details of it, but there has been an argument that those buildings or facilities that provide cycle parking or other options get a discount on the sort of levy that they have to pay. Parking is a major determinant of whether or not people take public transport. If it is convenient to take your car from outside your door to where you want to go, why would you go any other way if there is not congestion? But if you cannot park you think twice about where you go, and so parking is very much a planning issue.

In fact, if you remove parking then you encourage people out of their cars. So parking is a significant determinant of behaviour.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—I do not live in a city, so I am curious about the dynamic within a city like Sydney. Is there a tension between the people living and working in the very inner city and those living on the fringe who are coming in to the centre of the city? Are the people in the inner city saying, 'We live here and we'd like to ride or walk,' so that it is all these other forms of transport and people in their cars who are invading the city and making it less amenable to the people living there? Is there that kind of tension within a city, from someone who lives here?

**Dr Rissel**—I am not qualified, other than as someone who lives in it, to comment.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—Can that have an influence on where planning and decisions might go?

**Dr Rissel**—There are differences between the inner city area and the outer areas because, as we talked about, of the distances that people have to travel. They choose cars because they think that will be easier and better. That is a planning issue. The whole approach to medium-density housing means that people have to travel less to get to do the things they want to do. So it is really important that you have schools that are close to where people live. These are basic planning principles; I am not saying anything that is surprising to you.

People from the outer areas come in to the city, and how do they come in? If everyone came in with their cars there would physically not be enough space for those cars on the roads, and that would be a hassle for everyone. That does introduce tensions, sure, but it is a logical consequence of the fact that a car is so many square metres in size and there is just not enough tarmac on the roads to put them on. I do not know if I have answered you particularly.

**Mr McARTHUR**—In your submission you state:

... (55%) of car trips in Sydney are less than five kilometres and 33 per cent are less than three kilometres ...

That is interesting, relative to the planners who are building freeways, tunnels and so on. How does that work in reality? Is that a statistical anomaly, or is that true?

**Dr Rissel**—I am very convinced that it is a fact. You do have commuters who will travel at the same time who come in a distance, and that is why you have peak hour bottlenecks. But those people who are doing the longer trips comprise the other 45 per cent. Most of the educational trips—mothers taking the kids to school in cars, when usually the school is only a couple of kilometres away, picking them up in the afternoon, going down to the shops, picking up something else, visiting a friend—and social trips are close in the city. Even the people in the outer areas of Sydney do not actually travel a lot more by car than five kilometres to get to their major shopping complexes—the Westfields of Liverpool or Parramatta. So it is a very real statistic about the number of trips that people do. Lots of people drive around the corner to pick up something, rather than thinking of another way of doing it.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Do you suggest that they ride their bikes around the corner to pick up the groceries?

**Dr Rissel**—It is a very sensible way to get your physical exercise ratio for your day. If you walk down to the shops and back, you have done your 20 minutes, and that is not bad.

**CHAIR**—I will suggest to Mrs McArthur that you have proposed that, Stewart!

**Mr BARRESI**—I have ridden across the bridge, where there is a dedicated bike path. Is there a dedicated bike path in the tunnel under the harbour?

**Dr Rissel**—No; I do not think bikes are allowed in the tunnel.

**Mr BARRESI**—That is a recent infrastructure addition to the city. Why was it not put in there? More importantly, is there a bike path planned for the new tunnel that is being built from Anzac Bridge through to the eastern suburbs?

**Dr Rissel**—The bike path, I think, is planned for the top, but it is a quite inadequate one, as I understand, in that they have to share with the bus lane. So, yes, here is an opportunity, and Neil might want to add something about that.

**Mr Tonkin**—In any tunnel, we are not allowed to ride, and that is not being provided with the cross-city tunnel. But the state government believes that some other facility has to be provided for us. In fact, one of the arguments for the cross-city tunnel was to free up the land space above so that there would be some sort of improvement in urban amenity. After some argument with the local council and the state government, we have managed to get bike lanes built on William Street, which is the street being replaced by the tunnel underneath. The problems Chris is talking about go to the fact that at either end it is not very well connected, and that is a function of how well our City of Sydney, in particular, works with the state government to integrate those things. The principle remains that we are not allowed in tunnels. We do not particularly want to be in tunnels. The only tunnel I can think of that we would really want to be in would be a separate bicycle tunnel under the Sydney international airport runway, which is an issue about which we have been battling SACL for some time. We want a cycleway around the whole of Botany Bay, for reasons of people taking more interest in the bay itself, for environmental reasons and also for reasons of having a good cycling and walking area. Sydney airport happens to be right in the middle of it. That is where we want our bike tunnel, separate from the motor traffic.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Neil.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—Dr Rissel, is there room for employers and employees to look at more flexible working hours and so on? It might be easier to cycle to work at, say, 6.30 a.m., rather than 7.30 a.m., so is there any move for people to be able to negotiate more flexible working hours in that sense, to accommodate their transport options?

**Dr Rissel**—That is a really sensible approach regardless of whether you cycle or use some other method. I think flexible working hours have been introduced in some of the public services, and I think that is an accepted option. I am not aware of any particular moves to do that in terms of staggering transport demand, but it makes sense that that would be a worthwhile policy.

**CHAIR**—The link between activity and cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity is fairly evident. I notice in your submission you talk about stress, hypertension and emotional resilience. You say people's personal feng shui in effect is enhanced through activity. Do you want to talk about that and about the fact that we are more able to accommodate a bicycling habit in our country than other countries that seem to leave us for dead.

**Dr Rissel**—When you compare our environment to the cold and freezing conditions of northern Europe and the fact that so many more women cycle in those countries it makes you wonder why we do not do it so much here. Part of the reason is the infrastructure, certainly. Physical activity has to be the second most important public health activity that we need to do more of. Smoking is the worst thing you can do for your health; being inactive is the second most significant thing that you can do. Any form of activity is good. If people are completely sedentary, just becoming a little more active is a major gain in their health. There is cardiovascular health, but mental health is as important. It does not matter whether you cycle, run or do something else; the fact is that if you do become more physically active then you will feel better completely. So from a health perspective this is a really significant direction that we can go in, and transport is a means of making that happen in a significant way.

**CHAIR**—I note that the equipment used in the Netherlands, for instance, is more of the *Flying Nun*, *Mary Poppins* variety ridden by both males and females.

**Dr Rissel**—With mudguards.

**CHAIR**—Yes, with mudguards. Ironically, they do not wear a lot of designer clothing; they just throw the jacket on. We seem to favour technology that is purpose specific and then you have to start all over again when you get to your destination and get into appropriate gear. Is that an issue we need to look at?

**Dr Rissel**—It is, and there are several dimensions to that. We hear this from the course participants who come to our courses to learn how to ride bikes more. They say that for women it is about the hair, the clothes being a bit sweaty or something like that. The environment does make it a bit harder if you are going any kind of distance because if you sweat then you do need to shower or change your clothes.

The other dimension to that is the culture of sports cycling and the speed issue. In the cities you drive at 60 kilometres an hour. There is a new move to go to 50 kilometres an hour, which is great, but bringing it down to 40 kilometres an hour would be even better. If you bring the speed down then there is not the same feeling of having to go fast to keep up with the cars. We need to change the attitude around cycling to make it a bit more of 'I am going from here to there and I am going to have a nice time while I go there'. That is a more desirable way and it means you sweat less and you do not have to worry so much about wearing your cycling gear—the wind-resistant, sweat-absorbing—

**CHAIR**—The sort of GT stripe up your backside when you are riding in rain hasn't quite broken into the fashion halls of Milan yet. That is a bit of an issue too.

**Dr Rissel**—Of course it is. When you get to the other end you want to be presentable; you do not want to look like you have just run a marathon. There is a whole new breed of bikes being

sold called hybrid bikes. They are a compromise between a mountain bike and a standard racing bike. You sit in a more upright position. You have got one?

**Mr BARRESI**—Yes.

**Dr Rissel**—I have got one.

**CHAIR**—He has taken the mudguards off though to emphasise his speed credentials.

**Dr Rissel**—You can have mudguards on them. We have bought two bicycles for our unit at work. We are starting a bicycle pool for staff. They can take the bikes to short meetings at the university, which is about two kilometres away, and to the couple of health centres which are a couple of kilometres away.

These bikes are like that. They are comfortable. They have a chain guard. They have a mudguard and simple click gears so you do not have any complicated things—it is not the old-fashioned lever type of style. They are easy to ride. They come with racks; they come with things so you can put your stuff on them. They are not the raciest bikes you will ever get, but they are really functional and anyone can ride them. This is something we are introducing as a bike pool.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, colleagues, and thank you, Dr Rissel. I appreciate you making the time available. We will suspend for about 25 minutes. There is a bike ride on for anyone who is interested in doing a lap around the bay!

**Proceedings suspended from 1.06 p.m. to 1.55 p.m.**

**BOYAGES, Associate Professor Steven, Chief Executive Officer, Western Sydney Area Health Service**

**CAPON, Dr Anthony, Medical Officer of Health, Western Sydney Area Health Service**

**CHAIR**—I welcome you and thank you for your excellent submission. I invite you to make some introductory remarks but, before you do, I am obliged to advise you that, although you are not required to give evidence under oath, these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament, and consequently they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. Giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. On that upbeat note, I will hand over to you for some introductory remarks.

**Dr Capon**—I will lead off, and Steven can come in a little later. I will spend five or 10 minutes introducing the background to our submission. Essentially we would like to make four points. The first is: when we think about health needs in new communities we tend to focus on health service needs. The second is: when we think about the environment—in particular, the urban environment—and health we tend to focus on pollution and the negative aspects of the environment on health. The third is more a question for the committee: when we are thinking about sustainability in Australian cities, how should we think about the population's health in those deliberations? The fourth is the need for new knowledge and the need to translate the knowledge that we currently have about health and cities into urban planning action and changes to the design and development of Australian cities.

I will recap on those four issues and elaborate a little on them. In relation to the first one—when we think about health needs in new communities we tend to think about health service needs—it is natural that when we think about new suburbs we think, importantly, about whether there will be enough general practitioners to deliver services for the community, whether we will need new beds in the local hospital or whether in fact we will need a new hospital if the community becomes large enough. In doing that—very important issues as they are—we sometimes overlook the opportunities to promote and protect health, to prevent people getting ill and needing to see primary health care providers or having to use hospital services. That is the focus of the submission from us today: how might we design and develop Australian cities to maximise people's health?

The second issue is that when we think about the environment, broadly, and health we tend to focus primarily on concerns about pollution—whether that is air pollution or water pollution—and health and, in doing that, we often overlook the positives in contact between landscape and human health and the positives in the way we can build our cities to ensure that we are as active as we can be. I say that because, in many ways, in the last 20 or so years, some would say we have designed physical activity out of our lives, whether that is in the buildings we use or the cities and suburbs that we live in.

The third issue is the question: when we are thinking about sustainability of Australian cities in the context of this inquiry, what are the options in terms of thinking about population health? We would contend that an eco-social view of health is central to considerations of sustainability. We are not confining this to discussions of a medical view of health, and the diseases people get

and the treatments they need, but are looking more broadly at the way we live in our environment and the social interactions we have and how that ultimately impacts on our health and contributes to the disease burden in the community. In many ways human health should be a central part of the triple bottom line so that the economic, social and environmental considerations become the means to ends which include positive human health experience, senses of safety and wellbeing and tolerance—the other ends we want from our life in cities.

The fourth point we wanted to make was that there is a developing knowledge base about best practice ways to design and develop Australian cities, and a challenge for us all is how we translate that into good urban design for human health. I think it is broadly agreed, though, that there is a need for some more strategic research in the Australian context, and that need not be an extravaganza of research but just ensure that we are best placed to design and develop Australia's future cities. Translating what we already know and that new knowledge into action, rather than just developing the knowledge as a set of knowledge itself, is critical. That will require effective partnerships between government, the private sector, academe and, of course, communities themselves, who really have critical perspectives on the sorts of cities that they want to live in. Those partnerships will also need to be supported by a capable work force in the urban planning sector, in the public health sector and elsewhere in Australia.

Those are our four primary points. Steven might add a few things to that, particularly from the health service perspective. We have a number of other things we want to bring to the attention of the committee as we have a more open discussion, but that was really an introduction.

**CHAIR**—Thank you.

**Prof. Boyages**—My role here is to lend support for Tony's views. The reason I have attended is that I see this as being crucial to the health of a community such as that served by the Western Sydney Area Health Service. My responsibility as CEO is to not only the hospitals that I coordinate but the whole health of that Western Sydney community, whose population is about 720,000. We have a staff of about 10,500 people and we spend somewhere in the order of $950 million per annum. That gives you an understanding, from an area health service that represents about 11 per cent of the state's population, of how much we in New South Wales are spending on health care. It is our thesis that we are often simply treating the symptoms of the problem rather than going back to what may be the fundamental root causes of those problems. I think at a Commonwealth level we spend about 9.3 per cent of gross domestic product on health. The key question is: how much more can we afford to spend without focusing strategic investment on both the prevention side and the management of acute illness? The right balance needs to be achieved.

The last five years have seen a huge set of issues around chronic illness management and chronic disease prevention. One of my other roles is as a diabetes specialist. You see the public health epidemic at the moment around diabetes and its consequences, such as ischaemic heart disease and stroke, but we need to recognise that that diabetes is caused by a disorder that is 20 years in the making. It is linked to obesity, particularly central obesity, and its causes are related to increased energy consumption and the converse of that, which is reduced energy expenditure. We know how to prevent these disorders, but that will not occur simply at an individual practitioner level; we need to have a coordinated whole-of-government approach to chronic disease prevention. Our thesis is that part of that must be linked to urban design, because without

having appropriate urban design we will not be able to facilitate all of those key public health messages of physical activity and doing that safely, good eating habits, a sense of safety and security and adequate interaction amongst key members of the community.

We are treating the symptoms and spending huge amounts of dollars on that. The question is: how do we strategically invest? I have provided you with a little diagram which highlights that in very simple economic terms: how do we reduce the rate of health spend? In other words, we are never going to achieve savings in today's dollar terms but how do we reduce the slope so we reduce the amount of expenditure into the future? We know, based on current evidence we have, that obesity alone will continue to consume a whole set of other dollars that we probably cannot afford at this rate of growth.

**CHAIR**—So your thesis is that we have been doing the primary health stuff for a long time—preventive health at a personal, physiological level—and that the next frontiers are the environmental opportunities to expand the preventive effort and how we can enhance wellbeing through urban design, settlement patterns, town planning, connectedness of various things that people value in their lives?

**Prof. Boyages**—It is about taking away the barriers. When you talk to patients they say, 'I know what to do, and I know how to do it, but I either do not have the time or do not have the physical locality that allows me to do it.' If you talk to a little old lady, she will say that during the winter months she will not walk after 6 p.m., because it is dark and she feels insecure.

**CHAIR**—You talk about 'lumpy' investment. Describe the lumpy investment that is referred in your paper. I am imagining that is not spare tyres around midriffs but something more sophisticated. Please enlighten us.

**Dr Capon**—Certainly. This is the question of lumpy investment in infrastructure. One good example of that would be in public transport infrastructure. It comes back to the point of the burgeoning health spend across levels of government, whether they be state or federal. Taking the red line as the health spend if we do nothing, if there were a possibility that we could make the red line into the black line, then into the future we would have potential savings here.

**CHAIR**—So that is your business case—

**Dr Capon**—Yes, to invest in major infrastructure in Australian cities.

**CHAIR**—So the lumpy aspect is that they might not be viewed as being quintessential health outlays, but you are saying that if we invest in other areas there will be savings, or reductions in the rate of growth, in the expenditure on health over time?

**Dr Capon**—Precisely. In fact, at the cabinet table, it might be that, down the track, health ministers and health bureaucrats need to be saying that, in the interests of the health of communities, a strategic investment might be to provide new public transport infrastructure, in advance of the redevelopment of a particular hospital—not necessarily in the same community, of course.

**CHAIR**—Do you sense an appetite for that longer range, more integrated, strategic thinking, or is that a task ahead of us all?

**Prof. Boyages**—I think it is a task for all of us, but there is increasing awareness at the Commonwealth health level, and the BC task force was formed. Those issues were discussed. There was a chronic disease strategy in place. I attended a meeting about six to eight weeks ago where we discussed the same known sets of prevention strategies, but we know that they alone will fail if we do not do something more coordinated and more integrated. For example, I am sure you have heard from Bicycle Australia that there are parallels with countries like the Netherlands, where they have dedicated bicycle tracks throughout the whole country. Given that the geography of that country is more suited to cycling—given that it is a smaller country and flatter—there are still some advantages to us to continue to build those types of known pathways into our physical design.

**CHAIR**—So the focus of your effort is less on the footprint of urban settlement and more on the tools, attributes, characteristics and opportunities within a space. I am sensing that you do not care how big the space is; it is what is on the menu within that space that matters, and you are arguing that we need to enhance that.

**Dr Capon**—Yes. If, when you are thinking about footprints, you are thinking about ecological footprints of cities, we do have a stake in that as well from the point of view of energy consumption—particularly greenhouse gas production—and the potential for changes to climate and longer term human health. But I think the pointy end for health systems at the moment is the contemporary epidemics of obesity, and all its associations, and mental health issues.

One of the things I want to bring to the attention of the committee today is this article. I do not know whether you saw it 10 days ago in the *Good Weekend* in Melbourne and Sydney—it was certainly in the Sydney paper. It is a piece by Jane Cadzow on the bubble wrap generation. It makes the point that in Australian cities we are wrapping up our kids in a veritable bubble wrap, protecting them in their homes. They are not as active and they are not as engaged with their community as they would have been in the past. This is likely to have potentially quite significant long-term physical and mental health consequences for the next generation. Urban planners are quoted in this article. These issues go beyond simply the obesity epidemic, but I think the obesity epidemic is a good example of what needs to be done.

**CHAIR**—Can you draw a link between that and time poverty, where there is not the time to recreate or to be engaged in leisure activities and the like?

**Dr Capon**—Certainly, because if we are investing a lot of our time in our large cities in traversing the city—whether that is for educational opportunities, jobs or business—then that is time that is no longer available to us to invest elsewhere. Given the increasing cost of housing in the large cities in Australia, this is an issue for increasing numbers of Australians in our cities. That link between the time we have to invest to have the economic resources to secure housing tenure and then what is left at the end of the day to spend with family in the community building those community relations is a really important social and health issue.

**CHAIR**—Could you describe how you see the consequences of that phenomenon you are talking about in health?

**Dr Capon**—What is the pointy end for us?

**CHAIR**—Mental health issues, stress—

**Dr Capon**—Family function.

**CHAIR**—the reduction in emotional resilience, family tension and so on.

**Dr Capon**—It is those sorts of things that underlie what presents to general practices around the country and to the emergency departments.

**Prof. Boyages**—And even in simple terms, males attend general practitioners on fewer occasions than females simply because they are working longer hours and they are not attending to their own physical health. It is now becoming a phenomenon with females as they become increasingly occupied and leading stressful work lives similar to males. So it is a huge issue for us.

Back to your point as to the footprint versus the nature of the development, that is real for us today. The north-west sector in Sydney is probably the largest growing urban sprawl that we have. It is here today. We will have a population of about 250,000 on the doorstep of the Western Sydney Area Health Service in the next five to 10 years.

**CHAIR**—I guess I was being a tad provocative in that in other capitals there is a policy of putting some fences around the sprawl. That seems attractive superficially, but, if you contain the sprawl and your economic opportunity is still 60 kilometres away or a three-hour round trip in a car away, containing the sprawl might be good for not stressing the natural environments and the natural systems—I accept that—but, in terms of these outcomes, if you still have a killer commute to earn some bucks, then it is probably less of an issue.

**Dr Capon**—I think that is a really good point. It makes the case for a focus on suburban economic development so that in the large cities such as Sydney—but there are several of them in Australia—we are bringing the jobs closer to where people live. This has been explicit government policy, but we are yet to translate it fully. I think we are increasingly understanding the importance of this for people's health outcomes. I think that is when we can start to say, 'There are good economic rational arguments for this to happen.'

**CHAIR**—Back to the village.

**Dr Capon**—Back to village, yes.

**Ms LIVERMORE**—It seems that the thesis of a lot of what we have heard today is based on the idea that there are these impediments—and we have identified impediments to more activity even though we know that it is necessary to improve our health outcomes—and that if these impediments are removed then people will get out there and do what we know we should be doing. But is that undermined a little by the health statistics that you see in the rural and regional population? You could argue that there are not those same impediments of design, layout and those sorts of things for rural communities and yet their health outcomes seem to be, statistically,

worse than in the city. How do you reconcile the thesis of removing the impediments with those statistics from rural and regional areas?

**Dr Capon**—Certainly this is not a magic bullet; we are not saying that this is going to solve all of our problems in terms of health. The point you make about health outcomes in rural areas is really important because in aggregate health outcomes are better in Australian cities than they are in rural areas. That is often compounded by socioeconomic issues and a range of other issues for people living in rural areas. So we are not saying that we should only focus on cities. It remains important that we get the best of health for people in cities, but your point that this is not going to solve it alone is a good one.

We need behaviour change on top of providing appropriate environments. In a sense we have to reprogram our lives for the village in cities. This raises issues of the way we shop in cities these days. We have moved away from basket shopping in the last 30 years where people shopped more often and got that physical activity walking to the shop. We now tend to do a weekly, fortnightly or even monthly shop and store it in the fridge at home. That is not necessarily a bad thing because there can be efficiencies in that, and the benefits of large regional shopping are also positive for cities, but I think, particularly for older people in communities, it is great to have a local grocer. I understand that the Senate Economics References Committee at the moment is looking at the Trade Practices Act in this context.

For example, there is a 94-year-old woman who lives across the road from me in a low-density suburb in Sydney. She pushes her walking frame around the block to the local independent grocer every day and that is where she buys her basic provisions. She greets people on the way. So she is interacting in her community, getting some physical activity and is able to secure healthy food. So there is a range of things to look at; it is not a simple magic bullet.

These are more complex issues than 100 years ago when we had problems in cities. With the rapid urbanisation 100 years ago the issues were air pollution and water quality. So there was, in a sense, a set of magic bullets for that. But now it is not that easy and we have to be more sophisticated in the way we think it through and the way we evaluate the changes that we make to Australian urban design because there is potentially a downside to some of the things we might do as well.

**Ms GEORGE**—I would like to return to the article on the ‘bubblewrap generation’. Is there reliable data that shows a growing incidence of mental health problems among children at a younger age? Is there any analysis going on of the impact of the lack of social interaction through more and more time being spent on computers? When I go to the homes of friends with young children I find that, whereas before the kids would be out playing cricket or whatever, they are all stuck inside on their machines and gadgets. What is happening in the area of the mental health of young people?

**Dr Capon**—We will be hearing from Professor Beverley Raphael later today at the human health roundtable, and I think she will have some things to say about that. There are concerns among health workers about the future mental health of the younger generation. Some of this is evidenced through eating disorders that are becoming increasingly prominent issues. Substance use by young people often reflects a lack of mental wellbeing.

I think these issues are important. We do not understand them well enough. Part of our submission to the inquiry is for the Australian government to think about how they might invest in the sort of research that is necessary—whether that is through established programs like the NHMRC or the ARC and some advocacy from groups such as yours to those groups, or whether it is through other potential sources of funding for what is really critical public policy research.

**Prof. Boyages**—As well, there are gaps in knowledge. We do know, for example, there is a strong relationship between obesity and television watching and we therefore extrapolate that to other sorts of monitor type interaction with computer games and whatever. That is some of our concern—the potential anxiety that younger children and then adolescents will have about the inability to interact with their environment. It comes back to your point as well: how do we measure some of these interventions? How do we compare rural to urban and are we seeing a lot of urbanised rural environments as well? When you actually go to a lot of these large town centres in the country, they are very similar to our cities. We have lost a lot of the good habits there. A lot of that data is contaminated by farm injury, which also worsens the health outcomes of some of the farming community.

When we do a breakdown of areas in Western Sydney we see huge differentials in health outcomes. For areas such as the Hills area—which is a high wealth area which has access to nice physical environments, safe environments and bicycle pathways—the health outcomes are much better than they are for the Mount Druitt or Auburn local government authorities. So even within the small physical environment there are huge differentials which we purport to be linked not only to the physical environment but also to other socioeconomic factors.

**Ms GEORGE**—In your submission you also point to the difficulty in accessing funding, particularly for these newly emerging areas, and the interaction between urbanisation and health outcomes. Can you expand on that a little? Obviously this is an important issue for the committee to understand.

**Dr Capon**—One of the difficulties for public health researchers, as I am, is that the research that tends to get best funded is research in the biomedical area where there are direct, fairly immediately commercialisable products that you could sell—whether that is new vaccines or new pharmaceuticals. In fact, I trained as a molecular biologist in the 1980s, so I know that that is very important. I guess what we are making a case for here is a balance in the research and potentially some strategic investment, particularly at this time, over the next decade, for the future of Australia around this issue of Australian cities and health. That does not have to be a huge amount of money. You have got already active research groups in urban studies as well as in public health. Maybe I will table for the committee today an editorial piece from the latest *Journal of Urban Policy* in Australia about the urban planning perspective on this issue. This is not a greenfield in terms of research. In Western Sydney we have been working on this for more than a decade. Elsewhere around the country people have been working on this issue. I think we are getting to the sharp end of these issues in Australian cities and we have to invest for the future.

**Ms GEORGE**—What level of interaction would there be between the Western Sydney Area Health Service and, for example, the University of Western Sydney Urban Frontiers Program? Do you have well-established linkages between the urban planners? Does that just happen as a matter of course or is it more formal?

**Dr Capon**—Some of this stuff begins with individuals with a passion. It is sustained by the importance of the issues. Bill Randolph from urban frontiers and I are partners in some of this work in Western Sydney. There is a range of universities here in Sydney and elsewhere around the country that are involved. CSIRO is very interested in this issue. There is the sustainable ecosystems group, the built environment people in Melbourne, the preventative health people in Adelaide, the air and atmospheric health people in terms of climate futures. They are interested and keen I think to strengthen the focus in CSIRO on these urban issues. In a sense we have already got a critical mass. That might just need a bit of oil to really make it hum in Australia. At the moment it is hard to access that research for these sorts of longer term future issues.

**Prof. Boyages**—Again I would just follow up on that point. In my role particularly, I recognise the importance of formalising these relationships. Tony is pulling together a range of key partners so that it is not dependent on passionate individuals alone and we can have these clear links across human service agencies to maintain that momentum. You might want to talk about the proposal that formulates a centre.

**Dr Capon**—Yes, sure.

**CHAIR**—My understanding is: the current state of knowledge is that everyone head-nods when they say there is something going on. There is some recognition of the interaction. The metrics are letting us down because we do not know quite how to measure and make the case with the current set of arrangements. There is a shared purpose in trying to nut this through because of what we do think is going on and in the opportunities to intervene, but we do not know precisely what those interventions should be. Is that where we are at?

**Dr Capon**—I think we have some good idea of what needs to happen. In fact, the urban planners—people such as Peter Newman in Western Australia and Geoff Kenworthy at Murdoch—have been working on these issues over the last decade or so. So some models are coming forward, but it is about translating them into what the city looks like. We can have the best laid plans and we can design it according to beautiful pictures of what the city will look like. But if we cannot deliver that lumpy infrastructure—the fundamentals such as good public transport—so that we can develop the suburban economies and bring the jobs closer to where people live and also connect them around the city, it is all just good ideas.

These issues are very much on the agenda in North America as well. In June a colleague of mine who is in our research partnership, with some of his colleagues there, is to publish a book called *Urban Sprawl and Public Health*; that will be coming out in six months time. We will be bidding for a cooperative research centre that we call ‘sustainable urban environments and health’ in the next round.

**Ms GEORGE**—When you say ‘we’, do you mean just you at Western Sydney Area Health Service?

**Dr Capon**—No; we are leading the—

**Ms GEORGE**—Who else is involved; who is in the partnership?

**Dr Capon**—There are colleagues of ours from the University of Sydney who will be participating in the roundtable this afternoon and colleagues from the University of Western Sydney, Murdoch, Griffith and CSIRO—those groups we mentioned before. Also I have recently had very good discussions with AusCID, the Australian Council for Infrastructure Development. They are quite interested in how they might partner with us. As you would be aware, they represent a number of the large industry groups such as Thiess, John Holland and others that are relevant to infrastructure spends.

**Prof. Boyages**—So a consortium of public, private, academic and industry groups will drive the agenda.

**CHAIR**—The group—I do not know how else to describe it—or the bunch of players that has come together in a collaborative manner to make this submission and to advance the CRC and insights: is it a fact that you have spent nearly $1 billion on stuff that really matters to those parties and helped you to get them together, or was there some other process that brought all of them together?

**Dr Capon**—I think it is a convergence of things. There is our experience in Western Sydney, which is clearly relevant, over the last decade or more. There is what is happening internationally. There is the focus in Australia this year, including your inquiry, and the Year of the Built Environment. I think a number of things are converging to mean that this is a good time to have a fresh look at some of these things. We would not want you to think that this is all new; it has very much been building over a longer period. But we perceive that there is an opportunity to bring the partners together from government, industry, academe and community.

**CHAIR**—So there would be one or two things that you would do. As you are used to big budgets and big issues, what would those one or two things be?

**Prof. Boyages**—We are very keen to create a focus around health and urban development. We see it as adding to an existing set of knowledge. It is a new science; it is emerging worldwide. We are not too far behind the rest of the world; in fact, we are probably leading the world in understanding how we translate the problems into some form of action. That is the key issue.

I would be contributing additional resources to have people like Tony and a team working through the science, identifying the metrics and building the models that will inform us about how we redesign and design our north-west sector and some of our other new developments in Western Sydney. Will it mean more community health people? Will it mean better urban street design? Will it mean more police? How will this inform community solutions groups? How will it inform service delivery across all of the human service agencies? In this way we will not be focusing simply and constantly on the acute end of the problem.

**CHAIR**—The regional organisations you have been collaborating with are various constituent bodies. I am thinking out loud here. Would a city engineer in one of the councils in Western Sydney see a comment from your organisation on a subdivisional layout or land use planning rezoning as something that has standing? Do they recognise and value the learnings that you have already accumulated and the input you have to offer?

**Prof. Boyages**—We have very good relations with local government authorities. That is how we have built our structure maps—according to the LGAs. WSROC, which is the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, were part of that grouping. As to whether it filters right down to the level of the town planner, I will refer you to Tony.

**Dr Capon**—At the individual officer level there has been a good history of collaboration. Recently we put in a submission to one of our local councils about the Rouse Hill town centre proposal, and we made some specific comments about the potential human health benefits of what is being proposed. I think there is an awareness of the importance of these issues. In the end, of course, it is going to come down to private and public sector investment to develop cities that are going to work for people's future health and social outcomes. I think we are getting the officer stuff into place and we are trying to provide some frameworks. In the end the cabinet table will be where some of the critical infrastructure investment decisions will be made.

**Ms GEORGE**—I would like to follow up on that. Just recently an announcement was made by the New South Wales government to release all that land for development at Bringelly, I think. Would your organisation be approached by government on this occasion or other occasions to seek your advice in terms of land release and future urban development? What level is there between what is happening at the cabinet table and what you know is happening on the ground?

**Dr Capon**—That is a good example because in November I was invited to be part of what was called the structure planning workshop for the north-west sector. My colleagues from south-western Sydney were involved with a similar one. So the health people are at the table. Steven Boyages and I had a good meeting with the New South Wales Premiers Department before Christmas about how we might feed some of this into the broader future for Bringelly, including the footprint issues, in terms of energy consumption, and the transport and housing point of view.

**Prof. Boyages**—It probably needs to be better formalised, rather than relying on keen and passionate individuals. I think that is the point that you are flagging. Bringelly is outside our area health service—that is for the South Western Area Health Service—but certainly with North West we have been meeting with the developers. We have our own directors of service planning and population health who interact at the Department of Health level and then with a human services group, which focuses on Western Sydney as well.

**CHAIR**—Is there an embracing of the importance of work and its proximity to where people live, recreate and pursue other interests? My reason for asking is that a lot of the structure plans seem to start from the assumption that it is a dormitory area and whether we need to do dormitory better. Sure, we will have some subregional commercial areas to service the dormitory existence of people, but in terms of meaningful employment prospects and trying to reduce the huge separation between one part—an important part—of a person's life, their existence and sense of fulfilment and the other part, being oodles of travel time being spent away, does that feature at all?

**Dr Capon**—Certainly, as I see it, the importance of this issue is on the agenda of urban planners around the country. One of the challenges, as I perceive it, is that much of the land that is being used for this incremental greenfield urban development is in reasonably small private

holdings and so it is more difficult to be strategic about the way you release that land and provide for business parks and the sort of aggregate that you need for—

**CHAIR**—Residential being its highest and best use, and if you want to do something—

**Dr Capon**—One more point about that is that there is some exploration about land pooling to achieve that. You would provide potentially government mechanisms to bring a range of land developers together so that we would have these few square kilometres, rather than just a few acres, and we would set aside some land for business, for health services, for education in a more strategic way. That is starting to happen.

**Prof. Boyages**—It is a very good question. We have another consortium between us, Parramatta City Council and the University of Western Sydney and we are in the process of encouraging government to formalise the knowledge region that we have around the Westmead campus, for example. We have the greatest density of health services in the country—in health services research and health research as such—so we have plans there for constructing a large biotech park that will actually facilitate the translation of that knowledge into commercial and occupational activity. I chaired the state cabinet standing committee on biotechnology two years ago, and one of the misconceptions that people have—or one of the things that people did not realise—is that most of the biotech industry is already located in Western Sydney. Most of the information technology industry in New South Wales is already located within the confines of Western Sydney. So there are already small to medium enterprises out there doing this type of work. What is needed is what Tony was alluding to: large open areas that can be rezoned and refashioned into larger business parks or technology platforms. The argument that I put to competitors on the eastern side is that it is not east versus west or west versus east; this is east and west. It is absolutely essential, given the population density that exists in Western Sydney.

**Mr KERR**—One of the underlying themes about which we have heard this morning is the desirability of a more village-like environment, which inherently means increasing density rather than sprawl. But there seems to be a conflict between what I might say is private choice and public policy. I keep hearing of instances where residents' groups and what have you bring pressure on government—local government and state government—to oppose medium- or higher density uses of land. This seems to be very common. It often frightens local government mayors and councillors and has affected, I think, the way in which state governments have shaped their policy. So I suppose I am asking this question: if we are going to develop some serious national government responses, how do we deal with this gap between what people appear to want and what we are telling them they should want?

**Prof. Boyages**—I could not answer that. I think that is a great research question. That is part of the issue that we have. I do not think we have really understood what people really want when they are talking about a village atmosphere. I think I know what they want, and probably you know what you think they want, but I think this is where the urban design question needs to come into it, because we are increasing density but we are not actually adding value to the physical space. I visited a city in northern Italy—Siena—where they had the town centre and the houses around the town centre. They were all built at high density, but there was a space where the community could get together. I think that is really the challenge for our urban designers and architects to determine—but I will hand across to Tony.

**Dr Capon**—I will add one thing to that. I think the concern about densification is a critical issue in the big cities. Unless we have a good debate about it, I do not think we will get to the nub of the issue. One thing that I think about this issue is that much of what we see in community concerns in media in the area where I live is about urban consolidation. Part of the problem is that we are trying to refashion existing environments, whereas in Australia at the moment we have an almost unique opportunity in the greenfields to deliver a mix of housing choices, with a more village-like atmosphere and more affordable housing that suits needs across the life course. We need to get on with that, but, clearly, we still need to negotiate with established communities. I can understand why people do not necessarily want a big block of flats next to their nice federation house. That is perfectly understandable. But if that constrains us from addressing what is going to happen in the greenfields then we will end up with more of the same. So we have to be working on both fronts at the same time.

**Mr KERR**—I have a couple of other questions. One is about what seems to be a very US phenomenon but one that is increasing here—that is, the gated community. In Western Sydney there are a number of examples of gated communities which, in a sense, privatise access to large amounts of space and, presumably, cut down on opportunities for local kids to play, muck around and use resources that would otherwise be publicly available and which contribute to various other resentments externally—even if life is happy and benign inside—because there are gates, police and so on. Do you have any reflections on what we should do or say about gated communities? To me, it is a very unhealthy phenomenon, one to which I have been opposed. I believe it should not be permitted in Australia. As a health group, do you have any views in relation to these issues?

**Dr Capon**—It is an area that we do not fully understand yet but I think inherently most people in the health system would have concerns about isolating one section of the community from another. It is likely to lead to problems of segregation and envy in communities. We need to understand what drives people to see it as a positive to live in what has been called a ‘privatopia’. Maybe that is about perception of lack of safety and security in the wider community. But is that real, or is that just perception? We have to work with communities to understand this better. I certainly agree with you. It is quite likely that we will end up with another suite of issues around these gated communities, and we have to be very cautious about them.

**Ms GEORGE**—After the gates will come the security guards to patrol the gates.

**CHAIR**—Thank you, Professor Boyages. Good luck with your challenges; they are considerable and will take great talent. Dr Capon, no doubt we will catch up again soon. Thank you to both of you. Is it the wish of the committee that the documents provided be taken as an exhibit? There being no objection, the documents are received as evidence as an exhibit and are accepted for publication. Keep punching; you are doing some good work there. It is important.

[2.43 p.m.]

**ADAMS, Ms Jane, Chairman, Australian Farmers' Markets Association**

**BRISBIN, Mr John Brian, President, Australian Community Foods**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and consequently they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House of Representatives itself. It is customary to remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. And on that note, encouraging you to be open, would you like to make a brief statement or some introductory comments?

**Mr Brisbin**—Thank you, and thank you to members of the committee. I appreciate the chance to come here. It has been a very informative morning. I have listened with great interest to the various presentations so far and there seem to be some common threads emerging out of them. It is tempting almost to raft off some of those statements from the health folk and from the transport planning people and connect some of the dots. I appear as an enthusiastic individual loosely representing a group mentioned in the submission that have also been involved. But we are not a well-organised lobby force by any means. I do have a few things that I would like to open with. They are maybe at a different level from what we have talked about so far today. I am not sure whether the committee wants to go there or not but I will just open with them anyway. After that, I think Jane has some much more pragmatic, on-the-ground experiences and observations. So we represent two ends of the spectrum in terms of being able to address the sustainability issue.

First of all it looked like a fantastic opportunity, a great study, and a great committee, to come together. Sustainability is certainly a term that is on many people's lips, and for good reason. We face a lot of problems today without a doubt. I do not think there is anybody that questions that things could be done a lot better. Some of the obvious questions that come up regarding sustainable cities concern a future cities blueprint, and you can put those two things together. Firstly, what is a city? The Commonwealth is not a city, so we are actually talking about the Commonwealth investigating something that is going to be some sort of framework of recommendations for a bunch of very powerful, very entrenched localities. Take the top nine cities in Australia and you have got maybe 85 per cent of the population. So essentially this committee is about informing, at least in today's terms, nine specific localities with specific characters. This allows us to look at things quite specifically. We talk about general trends, but there are also some very specific opportunities. Sydney is different from Melbourne and different from Brisbane. So maybe the deep theory about what sustainability is in species terms is quite difficult to grapple with, but perhaps in Australia there are some great opportunities to engage with sustainability concepts specifically in these localities.

I guess the next question is: who is going to become a city? Some of the regional areas are growing quite rapidly and so maybe there is a threshold at which these recommendations and this blueprint start to apply. After that point I think it gets kind of difficult to design a blueprint that is going to be applicable to everything from a settlement of 1,200 people all the way up to

2.5 million. That is going to be a long stretch. I present that as something that I did not actually see in the discussion paper so it is not really much of a framing of what is a city and how the blueprint would apply to a city.

**CHAIR**—We were opting for the free-range hen version rather than the battery hen, so range as freely as you feel.

**Mr Brisbin**—Okay. So that is the thing about the Commonwealth establishing some process or some vision that will help inform specific localities, recognising that these localities often have very strong individual, often divergent, agendas. I recognise that that is a position you are in. One of the issues that has not really come up this morning is that in thinking about the city we draw the blueprint around it—and 'privatopias' was a great term that came up there. In a sense we have got that situation as well. When we talk about city administrative boundaries it is often seen that way but I am sure that some of the people who are going to be coming in later talking about sustainability in general will recognise that there is the whole concept of ecological footprint.

When turning this over in discussion with some people—I will talk about food in a second, by the way—there is always the rural/urban divide problem, particularly in policy development, that seems to be haunting us. It seemed like the concept of a footprint gives scope to say, 'Just make the system boundary a little bit bigger and you recognise that the city depends on the land which supports it.' Bingo! There are your rural issues. Most of the people in the rural areas are engaged in some kind of support of the city and most of the people in the city are in some way engaged with resources and activities that are based on the land. So these things actually go hand-in-hand. You do not see that in any place more clearly than in the area of food. Has somebody got an explanation of how the concept of a sustainable city, which has inputs and outputs—you have water covered and waste covered—works? What happened to food? It is a bit baffling and mysterious to me. People have to eat. Food comes from some place.

Going a little bit to one side: we talk about ecological health and I cited some statistics from Michael Cebon from OzProspect, a think tank down there. Sydney is kind of unusual in that 30 per cent of its food—fresh fruit and vegetables, in particular, which is quite remarkable—is grown in the Sydney basin. Most of the ecological damage in Australia is done by agriculture; it is the primary contributor to ecological degradation. Getting a handle on what agriculture is on about and how the policies that we see as being rural or relating to business issues are tied into what the city's ambitions are is a key factor. We will leave that to one side.

In summary, a sustainable city is most clearly seen as a sustainable partnership between the dense cluster of people actually in the city area and the dispersed network of people caring for the land that the city depends on. Those I think are the best grounds on which to start healing the rural-urban divide. I will go to three recommendations and then I will turn it over to Jane. The first is that going all the way from zero there is no mention of food in the blueprint—

**CHAIR**—I'll wear that!

**Mr Brisbin**—I will not press that issue any further!

**CHAIR**—That is why they pay me the big bucks! I will wear that one.

**Mr Brisbin**—I would like to suggest that we go from zero, no mention at all, to making it one of the key policy concepts in a sustainable city blueprint. It provides one of the most productive and comprehensible integrated indicators of sustainable health that we have available. Health has been the constant theme this morning, and the health people have come in with some very strong arguments. They even touched on urban planning today, which is fantastic. If you look at food, you get a chance to touch on almost everything. Physical activity is definitely there. People's contact with the environment is there. Also, there is the nutritional value of food in the difference between community gardens and city farms. There are opportunities for people to socially interact inside a city, and there is amenity space with nature and that sort of thing in the city itself.

The development of that urban-rural policy is important because we need broadscale agriculture to help feed the city itself. If the broadscale agriculture is done properly, you do not degrade the environment. So food policy brings everything together in a sustainable city. You can touch on all kinds of health: economic health, social health and nutritional health. All the health factors are in there. That is our central recommendation: to somehow get food into the blueprint.

The second is that again I want to hammer home the point that the sustainable city has to step outside the urban administrative boundaries. We have to see a sustainable city as a collaboration between the city administration and rural processors; we have to see that the two are inextricably linked. If we can get a collaborative partnership working there and see how each one works back and forth, we will have a framework to develop some solutions that are sustainable in the bigger system.

The third is looking at what the Commonwealth role might be, aside from conducting this excellent process and perhaps developing some kind of blueprint out of it. The blueprint itself is an example of establishing mechanisms that will promote and facilitate the policy development and implementation process. We are missing a lot of metrics; a lot of things do not get measured at all. It is definitely a Commonwealth role to sponsor that. There is a Commonwealth role in establishing frameworks—sharing frameworks, information knowledge frameworks—that are hard to develop individually. A policy pattern book could be established, for instance. That sort of thing might be a valid Commonwealth pursuit, as could be the sponsorship of the collection of the underlying data and developing a data sharing framework.

We have a lot of great people doing fantastic research individually, and there is not a lot of coordination between them. My background is in IT, and I have done a lot of work with natural resources information. It is astonishing to find that you have one government department collecting topographical data, another group collecting hazardous waste locations and technically, even from the point of proprietary software, they cannot correlate the data without an immense amount of effort. This is a proper role for Commonwealth intervention, I would have thought. Those are my three top level, left field positions. I would like to go to Jane.

**Ms Adams**—I am going to get down and dirty. I am actually going to talk about farmers' markets. I am going to talk about food that is brought into the city from its source. I am not sure if the members of the committee are aware, but I represent the Australian Farmers' Markets Association. That body was established a little over 12 months ago. There are in Australia now—Australia-wide and represented in all states—70 farmers' markets.

**CHAIR**—What actually is a farmers' market?

**Ms Adams**—A farmers' market is a food-only market where the produce is sold directly by the producer, maker, baker and value-adder of that produce. In other words, there is no middleman component in a farmers' market. So it is primarily a food market, although—

**Ms GEORGE**—You do not have them in Victoria, Chair?

**CHAIR**—Yes, we have them—

**Ms Adams**—Yes, you do.

**CHAIR**—I have one in my electorate that calls itself a farmers' market—

**Ms Adams**—There are varying levels of authenticity, which is an issue for the association.

**CHAIR**—So there are bona fide and spoof farmers' markets—

**Ms Adams**—There are look-alike farmers' markets as well. But we are talking today about the authentic farmers' market. The model that the association recommends, which is available on the association's web site, is a market which is a food-only market but which also allows plants, herbs, compost and things that foster the growing of more food, essentially. But they are food-only markets where the vendor sells direct to the consumer and the vendor is the producer, maker or baker of the goods. That is essentially the definition of a farmers' market.

**Ms GEORGE**—Are they accredited by your organisation?

**Ms Adams**—We do not yet have an accreditation system. It is something that I would dearly like to have. I am one of these enthusiastic individuals that the previous doctors were referring to, who became involved in what is essentially a grass-roots movement. In 1999 the first farmers' market was established in Australia. They operate in cities and rural communities that would not even qualify for city status. So they can be in a metropolitan region, a suburban region or a country town. They do actually spread across the full gamut in Australia.

Listening to this afternoon's session, it struck me that I sat there thinking, 'I have a solution to that—a farmers' market.' Farmers' markets bring fresh food direct from the farm to individuals in communities. When you are talking about obesity problems, go out and buy fresh food at a farmers' market and you already have the first foot, if you like, through the door in helping to deal with that problem. It would be even better if they have ridden bikes to the farmers' market, but you cannot always guarantee that.

The whole notion of a farmers' market, when talking about triple bottom line, taps into all of those things. Obviously, a farmers' market is sustaining the farmer's income, but it is also bringing fresh, nutritious food direct to consumers. It is putting it, often, into an urban environment. I do not know if any of you are aware of this, but, in Bondi Junction, the Waverley Council recently started a farmers' market. They had their first one before Christmas. They have actually redesigned their mall as part of their overall redevelopment of the Bondi Junction shopping area. They have installed a purpose-built canopied area with power points and water so

that they can host markets. The first farmers' market happened there about a month or so ago. I went to one on Thursday night. All of these things take time for people to discover, but essentially you have farmers there with piles of fresh vegetables that they have brought in and unloaded straight from the truck, and they are selling them—

**CHAIR**—At night time?

**Ms Adams**—It is an afternoon market. It starts at one o'clock and goes to about seven o'clock at night. It is a purpose-built site. So when you are talking about urban planning and the city framework, if you start to think ahead, as the Waverley Council has done, you can actually purpose-build the place to put that farmers' market. I did my research in farmers' markets in America in 1998. There are purpose-built farmers' markets where they have actually built whole structures—big warehouse-like structures which offer all-weather facilities, for instance—for communities to run central food markets.

John has pointed out that this blueprint did not actually encompass food. It does not encompass the notion, either, of markets in a community, but obviously that is a very vital part of city life. One of the things that I found when working with communities right across Australia is that, if you put a farmers' market into a community, it changes the dynamics of that community. I have now been involved in farmers' markets since 1999. There is enough anecdotal evidence to show how a market can actually change the dynamics, let alone the nutrition and health basis, of the people who live in that community when you are bringing fresh food directly to people. I can talk at some length about the benefits of farmers' markets. Some of them have actually been acknowledged. The *Bulletin* ran a cover story on 18 May 2002 which was called 'The Real Food Revolution' and I would ask the chairman if I can table that.

**CHAIR**—Sure.

**Ms Adams**—I have included a copy of that here, along with the charter of the Australian Farmers' Markets Association. That was a significant turning point in the work that I am doing in this area, when acknowledged in a publication like this. The growth has been pretty dramatic in many ways: 70 farmers' markets started in that period of time and constantly more are starting across Australia. Some local government organisations are thinking ahead about this and facilitating the placement of markets in their communities and providing public space or facilities within public space, but I would not say that that is common. Obviously I would like to see far more of that.

**CHAIR**—Are those spaces ordinarily in the current commercial hubs?

**Ms Adams**—Sometimes and sometimes not. Sometimes they are on the outskirts and sometimes they are incumbent within a community, like a racecourse that provides ready-made cover, power and water—the things that you need to run a market. The stimulus for the markets—and perhaps I am pre-empting the question being asked: why did this happen?—came partly because rural incomes have obviously been impacted upon, and I am sure the committee is aware of what has been happening to farm incomes. The price to the farmers has headed downwards and the cost that the consumer pays has headed in the opposite direction. So farmers could see a benefit in obviously selling direct in farmers' markets. Consumers have driven it very largely. They want fresh food. There is a huge demand from the consumer. They want to

know the provenance of what they are eating. They are very concerned to know whether their food has been genetically modified or whether it has been sprayed or whether hormones have been injected into their chickens.

There is also a very strong need within our society in the 21st century to belong, and we crave a reconnection with community. Farmers' markets provide a place that facilitates that. We are reconnecting with one another as people. We are reconnecting to the people who are the source, the producers, of the food that we eat. It is also very educational. I was listening to a previous witness who talked about the whole need for attention to obesity, which is a major problem in our society. I can see that addressed very readily through farmers' markets. I can also see the issue of food security addressed through farmers' markets, where the underprivileged have access to better quality food through various adjunct activities that can happen through farmers' markets.

**CHAIR**—Supplementary programs.

**Ms Adams**—Yes, supplementary programs. Community gardens, for instance—John is more familiar with this than me—can tap into farmers' markets. The food from community gardens can be sold to the community through the marketplace. It provides, if you like, a very low-cost simple vehicle to often regenerate urban or rural communities. An example is Wauchope in the Hastings Valley in central New South Wales, which was deeply impacted by the deregulation of the dairy industry. Many of the producers there needed to find alternatives or were looking for alternatives. They started a farmers' market. It is actually run by the council, which is not common, I have to say, but it is the case there. They have examples of, if you like, positive benefit that have derived from it. A producer of tomatoes has invested half a million dollars in a hydroponic operation purely on the back of his experience in the farmers' market. At the moment, they are estimating job creation but jobs have been created in that community. They have farmers who have diversified and gone from dairy into avocados or from dairy into potatoes. In other words, give them an outlet within an urban or regional environment, and you start to see the economic impacts in communities. The township of Wauchope has changed quite dramatically in the time that I have been involved with that farmers' market. It was a dying town. It is not a dying town any more; it is a thriving town. I am not saying that that is all directly attributed to that, obviously, but it is a part of the impact of having a new sense of life and belonging in the community.

As to other places where you can look at the impact of farmers' markets on a city, Albury has a farmers' market which operates twice a month. They have estimated that it contributes $1.5 million to the local economy. I cannot tell you how they have arrived at that figure, but that is the figure that they are citing for their market, which runs twice a month in Albury-Wodonga. Carnarvon is another example of where, by having a farmers' market, you have brought fresh food to a very remote community. John made the point about what happens when you ask: what is a city? The conversation this afternoon has tended to focus very much on a metropolitan environment, but obviously there are cities that are not downtown Sydney and farmers' markets sit quite happily within whatever that city environment is, whether it is a metropolitan area or a big country town.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. I have a particular interest in what you are saying and the work of your organisation in that, in the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria, where I am, we have Collins Street

lawyers starting up wine growing operations and the like. There is a lot of pressure on residential subdivisions, and broadacre land-holders, primary producers, are finding it hard to compete with it. They are not big enough to take on a Coles Myer for a contract. They do not have that Boeing volume of produce as a play for the big guys—they are not big enough for that end of the market. We are canvassing this as a way of giving them an outlet for, hopefully, a higher yield method of production to make their broadacre land use viable and therefore underpin the landscape values that everyone loves about the area in a way in which people can make a living. Is it the kind of experience where the scale of a farmers' market enables individual farmers to have another pathway for their produce and keep them in business because they have someone or some outlet to sell to?

**Ms Adams**—Absolutely. It suits a small farmer better than a broadacre farmer, obviously. Farmers use farmers' markets for different reasons. Some of them might be trialling a new crop. They might be selling excess crop that has been rejected by the supermarket that they normally deal with. They will come to farmers' markets for different reasons. It is more suited, in essence, to a smaller farm operation or a mixed farm operation than it would be to a very broadacre operation.

**CHAIR**—I am arguing that it is provincial, too. It is a bit French in that, if you want to come to our region, eat our berries, not some that have been trucked down from—

**Ms Adams**—It taps in to what was discussed earlier, which is the village. Obviously the village has to have a market. When I first started out on this—my background is actually in journalism, and I have written a lot about food—I could not understand why we did not have a lively culture of markets in Australia because we are individuals who are quite motivated by and interested in food. Melbourne was the only exception, because there are municipal public markets in Melbourne. Adelaide has a central market but other cities in Australia do not have food markets like those in France, Italy or Asia.

**CHAIR**—The lack of space to do this is as much an issue—

**Ms Adams**—Which is why I very much appreciate the opportunity to be here, to put this in front of the committee and to say that, if there can be some forward thinking, you can plan spaces to facilitate it. You do not need a very expensive infrastructure to facilitate a market. A very simple structure is all you need. We are not talking about a multimillion dollar building. The space in the community could be planned or facilities added to existing space, as has happened in the Waverley Council example. That is not new space that has been provided—the mall has always been there—they have just rethought how they are going to use that space.

**Mr KERR**—There are other models that do not require any infrastructure. In many European cities, the local farmers know that particular streets are closed each day of the week and they bring their produce to those street markets. That has no infrastructure at all; it just requires minor cooperation from the council to facilitate minor road closures.

**Ms Adams**—You say it is minor, but I find dealing with local government very challenging on very minor issues.

**Mr KERR**—That may be. That is in the open, of course, but in many southern Mediterranean cities that is very common.

**Ms Adams**—Absolutely.

**Mr KERR**—I was interested in the other side of this submission, which was the encouragement of farming within cities. That seemed to be the focus of what John originally submitted to us. Again, there is a very large European tradition of community gardens. You do not really advocate a style for how this would be done; you say, 'It is a good thing.' What do you intend by way of putting this idea into operation?

**Mr Brisbin**—That is a good question. There is a bit of a paradox, of course, in trying to say, 'Let's grow food inside the city.' Cities are about the city, and once you get a densely settled, built environment it is not really the same as having a wide-open healthy environment to grow food in. It is quite challenging. There are some remarkable things being done in cities around the world with little microindustries, especially in impoverished countries—they are very resourceful about using every little crook and cranny to grow food in. I think inside the city the main benefit is actually on the social side; it is in the community-building side. You do bring some amenity into the city, you do bring green things into the city and you do encourage people to come into contact with an environment; but, more importantly, they are coming into contact with each other.

**Mr KERR**—Kids see that beans do not grow in cans—things like that, so that is all right.

**Mr Brisbin**—That is right.

**Ms Adams**—Milk comes out of a can.

**Mr Brisbin**—There was a really interesting exercise in West Dapto, down the coast—

**Ms GEORGE**—That is where I am.

**Mr Brisbin**—I talked to one of the guys doing strategic planning down there and they did a really interesting exercise with children, asking them to draw their ideal neighbourhood. Almost without fail, the thing that came up was they liked having their modern lifestyle, their typical house, but out the window they wanted to see a cow.

**Ms GEORGE**—They can see that in West Dapto, but I do not know for how much longer!

**Mr Brisbin**—Not for much longer? It sounds like some great planning is going on down there. As for what is going on in Europe, it is hard to overlook the fact that the States and particularly Australia are very young countries, and things have been settled quite quickly. It was not that long ago that there was no agricultural industry: everybody grew their own food. There was no such thing as an agricultural industry. Everybody had a market garden. It is still like that in Japan—lots and lots of people have, out the side, a little paddock of rice, and there are your vegetables, and that is just the normal course of events.

So, as those European cities, which were founded much longer ago, grew up, that gardening habit and the allocation of space was always there. I think in Australia the tide had already started to turn a bit by the time the cities got under way, and then it was a whole new idea of modernity. I think the northern suburbs had a great idea; there was a big vision up there about garden suburbs. There was a visionary architect around the turn of the century who laid out a lot of ideas about keeping garden spaces throughout northern Sydney, and that is why they are still such leafy suburbs in many regards.

**Ms GEORGE**—But how do you introduce the notion of city farming when space is the essence of the problem?

**Mr Brisbin**—That is right. Actually, there are a couple of ways around it—there are lots of opportunities. We just came back from Northey Street City Farm up in Brisbane. I am not sure if you have ever been to the space, but it is absolutely remarkable. It was just a fairly good sized but totally underutilised estuarine space on Breakfast Creek which is within sight of the skyscrapers. It is right there just north of the hospital. They turned it over to a community group that put together a little proposal, and that space is now bursting. In 10 years—they are celebrating their 10th anniversary this year—their social footprint, the people that they come into contact with on a regular basis, is well in excess of 500 people. And on a Sunday, when there is a farmers' market there, as well as all the gardens, demonstrations of permaculture techniques and all sorts of things, it is packed out. Thousands of people come through there every week for these farmers' markets.

And then they have extended it to other ideas. They are doing their own greenfields research in a way. They have connected with some crazy people doing Australian hardwoods and they have as a demonstration an eight by 20 metre space—which is not very big, like ordinary little urban nooks and crannies that might be sitting all over the place—planted out with hardwoods, and the hardwoods are staggered in such a way that they get the first commercial yields in 12 years. It is integrated planning, very innovative, and it is a demonstration of what can be done inside the city.

So there is a huge amount of competition in the city, but there is a lot of room for innovation as well. The rooftop gardens are a great example of the potential. All these rooftops are sitting around up there. You can imagine these towers full of people who have come in who are stressed out because they are in the city, they are working at these jobs and they are separated from each other—we have all the same sorts of social problems in these towers as we do elsewhere. Instead of paying for some great corporate escape weekend to do team-building exercises, they could get a community garden going on the roof and grow the veggies for the snacks for the meeting. There are opportunities everywhere.

**Ms Adams**—School gardens are another place where you can plant fruits and vegetables; you can grow food within the school garden environment.

**Ms GEORGE**—I recall reading about one of the large public housing developments in the western suburbs of Sydney where a South Sea Islander community took the initiative of converting land into a small market garden. Is that still going? Do you see many examples of that occurring?

**Ms Adams**—Increasingly.

**Mr Brisbin**—Yes. That is why it so important to be here at this sort of hearing and suggest that these sorts of issues are great candidates to be in the middle of a sustainability policy, because many of these efforts are just like little bits and pieces. The Eat Well Australia plan tried to do a little survey of what was going on across the country. They came up with two local councils doing anything: the South Sydney Council and the Penrith Council. There are a lot of bits and pieces of development, but a formal policy on the table about here is how our community deals with food issues is pretty spare.

For instance, the South Sydney Council effort was done about four years ago—a little document saying, 'This is what we are going to believe in,' with a bit of money put towards it. It resulted in community gardens all over the South Sydney area. It was just a little spark. But even that has been marginalised now because, probably due to a lack of support or something like that, you cannot even find the policy on the web site anymore. But there are still these community gardens going on as a result of that process. They are actually helping out the community.

**Ms Adams**—The very nature of these sorts of activities is grassroots: they are often run by people who are enthusiastic volunteers, do not particularly get recorded anywhere as existing; they are just out there. This is one of the areas where John, through the Australian Community Foods, has tried valiantly to act as an umbrella for some of these groups. I felt this acutely in the farmers' market area. For a long time I felt like a lone voice, until there was a level of momentum that pulled things together and it started to happen.

I have one plea to the committee: one of the things that has inhibited the growth of the farmers' markets, and which has been very difficult for the people operating them, is the lack of a coordinated approach when it comes to food health safety regulation. The most recent publication of FSANZ, which is responsible for putting forward guidelines in this area, does not have a designated section for food markets, for instance. So the people who operate them have to fossick about to try to find what prevailing legislation is relevant to their operation. If you take it from the other end, you find that the local government health inspector is the final arbiter of what rules and what does not, and there is a lot of interpretation and reinterpretation all the way down the line, from the original guidelines to their application in a market environment. I hope that this committee will consider the sorts of issues whereby you can offer to the grassroots level some overall direction straight from a national, federal government perspective, rather than have it filter all the way through levels of government.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Could you give a perspective on the farmers' markets from the point of view of social improvement at the local level, the health of the local people or the benefit to the farmers participating in the market?

**Ms Adams**—If you look at it from the consumers' point of view, you see that the consumer is able to access very fresh food. Sometimes it is food that has been picked two hours before the person has actually bought it versus the same item that might be four, five or six days old when they purchase it in a supermarket. So the major benefit to the consumer is to have very fresh, nutritious food. It is also educational because children see where food comes from. People talk

to farmers about how they have grown the food and where they have produced it, so an educational component comes into it from a consumer point of view.

From a farmer's point of view the benefits are very varied. It is partly financial, because their profit margins are maximised. But there is also an important thing that happens for farmers. You could say that, generally, the smaller farmers feel that they are not compensated properly for what they do. If you are standing in front of somebody who, the week before, bought a bag of wonderful, ripe, juicy tomatoes and has come back to tell you that they were the best tomatoes they have eaten in the last 10 years, you, the grower of those tomatoes, obviously then feel better about what you are doing. Mental health came up in the previous submission as well. I have talked to farmers who have felt better about themselves since they have been selling their produce in a farmers' market, because they are getting that positive reinforcement of what they do that they have previously been deprived of. But there are many other benefits to farmers.

**Mr McARTHUR**—What do the mainstream farmer organisations like the Australian Wheat Board and the milk marketing programs think of your concept?

**Ms Adams**—They have not even noticed it is there.

**Mr Brisbin**—There is a huge divide, and this is probably one of the hard questions that you have to dice around a bit. There is a huge divide. When the New South Wales Farmers Association gets up and talks about 'the farmers', there is an enormous difference between agribusiness and family farms. There is a huge difference. Agribusiness, which is responsible for most of the environmental degradation in the country, is busy growing food which is mostly for export. Eighty per cent of Australia's food production is for export. It does not have anything to do with feeding Australians or taking care of Australian land, so when we say, 'What do the industry boards talk about?' they are actually caught between representing the small, local, human end of the scale and representing the corporate end of the scale. There is a big tension in there. It is hard to get a message out of that. This goes across the board with all kinds of issues. That is really part of the problem that the committee might want to consider, and by putting it back in the government's hand to, say, set a top level direction and actually confront the out-of-hand, commercial directives we will probably get ourselves on a better health footing.

**Ms GEORGE**—Do you also cover the food share organisations? Are they part of your umbrella group?

**Mr Brisbin**—We would love them to be but, as we said, this is a passionate individual collection. Australian Community Foods is an introduction service to help build local food networks. It tries to introduce producers, consumers and value-adders, like retailers and so on, in a local area to get to know each other and build their own local food communities. In that process there are two big sides: there are the representative organisations like the farmers and growers themselves, and there are the local seed networks—people who collect open pollinated heritage value seeds. We have them on board. The Australian Farmers' Markets Association has come in with a huge range of resources and energies to support this network. The Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network, which has a loose and long rambling history, is on board with this thing. So we are trying to build a local food network coalition—a top level representative organisation that allows each one of these guys to come underneath. What we do

not have right now is a big footprint among people, because that takes getting out to everybody, and that is huge.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for your contribution, Mr Brisbin, and thank you Ms Adams for the surprise enhancement to the submission. That was excellent. Thank you for making your time available. We appreciate it. Is it the wish of the committee to accept as an exhibit the documents presented by Australian Community Foods and the Australian Farmers' Markets Association and to authorise that for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

[3.25 p.m.]

**HIGGS, Ms Juanita Ruth, Regional Projects Manager, Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament and, consequently, they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House of Representatives itself. It is customary to remind witnesses that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as contempt of parliament. Would you like to make an introductory statement or some comments in support of your submission?

**Ms Higgs**—I was prepared to do a summary. I have included for your benefit the first few pages about what SSROC does and what ROCs in general do. I am not sure how familiar you are with ROCs as organisations but Southern Sydney ROC, which I represent, comprises 11 local governments in southern Sydney. We range from the mansions in Vaucluse right down to the cruddy unit blocks in Canterbury, so we have a very diverse area. The reason that I provided that information as a little bit of an introduction is that Commonwealth and state agencies seem increasingly to be using ROCs to implement their programs. I have included a couple of those as case studies in your notes. Because our submission was rather long and because we have very little time—and I would like to leave most of the time for questions—I have confined my summary to the 'Suggestions for Commonwealth action' that I included in the submission.

I would like to run through those suggestions now. If you flick through the first few pages, you will come to 'Suggestions for Commonwealth action'. I will start with urban green zones. The committee was interested in finding out about how cities could increase the amount of bushland and what we thought the value of urban bushland was and whether it was needed, so I have included a section here on what we as local government in Sydney see as important. I guess that is evidenced by the fact that we, in conjunction with our fellow ROCs—WSROC, which you will be speaking with later, and all the other ROCs in Sydney—have been running what is called the Green Web Sydney program, which aims to implement a network of green corridors throughout the city. This is funded from NHT money and it is an example of what I said before: Commonwealth aims being implemented by ROCs at the local level. We have quite extensive networks within local government and, in turn, within their communities. In terms of community health, we see urban green zones as important for the reasons that you are interested in today. They certainly maintain recreational opportunities. We see that there are opportunities to include areas in green zones for, say, cycling and walking, as well as for national heritage protection and use as wildlife corridors.

It is a wonderful thing to interact with wildlife in a city. We were talking in the last submission about how kids in Dapto like to see a cow out their window. It is quite a valuable experience for people in the city also to interact with their local wildlife, be it blue tongue lizards, possums or whatever. It also contributes to the aesthetic value of the city—more than that, it builds community. Local government in our area has quite a lot of what are called 'bush care groups', which are made up of interested members of the community who get together and go down to the local creek or what have you and do bush regeneration. They get to know each other and to

feel that they are part of something greater. It is a very valuable thing in a city. Our suggestion in this instance is that there be a milestone program implemented by the Commonwealth, based on our successful Green Web program.

**CHAIR**—Like the Cities for Climate Protection program.

**Ms Higgs**—Exactly. The Cities for Climate Protection program has been a very good example of something that works at the local level. I will touch on that a little later as well. In terms of the kind of program that that introduced, it really did work. After a bit of lobbying, all our councils joined CCP; we now employ a regional CCP officer to help them do regional CCP initiatives. The councils have chipped in for that. This is an example where we have had very little Commonwealth help, but it was the Commonwealth program that gave us the seed of the idea that let us go forward in this area. If we did a milestone program based on Green Web the uptake by councils around Australia would be similar to CCP.

Many councils across Australia are now involved in the Cities for Climate Protection program. In our area, the reason it has worked so well is that when all the general managers get together at their meetings they say, 'What milestone are you up to?' Every now and again they have award ceremonies where they get another star in their trophy to say that they have reached the next milestone. It is quite good kudos for the council, and the people in the community who have been involved also feel good about it. It is a good example. I mentioned Green Web already. I have an introduction to Green Web, which I will not go into now.

The next area of interest in our submission is renewable energy. Our suggestion for Commonwealth action in this case is for more mandatory measures to generate a greater proportion of electricity from renewable sources. We think this is essential for a sustainable city. The government's two per cent renewable energy target needs to be increased annually. The government has the capacity to intervene to provide incentives and reduce dependence on electricity from coal fired power stations, and it would be a shame if it did not take the opportunity. At the moment, by applying normal economic models, we are penalising good behaviour in people who purchase green energy, because they are paying premium prices. That is not what we are trying to encourage, but it is what we are doing with economics. That situation, frankly, needs to be reversed. As an idea, the New South Wales government ran a 'green power' logo scheme whereby companies that purchased over a particular percentage of green power could use a logo in their marketing to say that they were a green company. That is something that could be pursued nationally, for example.

In terms of residential energy generation, only about four per cent of Australian households use solar energy at the moment, primarily for heating water. The main barrier is the cost of purchasing the equipment and the installation. There is such a thing as a photovoltaic rebate program; however, there was so little funding for this program that the demand far outstripped the ability of that program to provide rebates to all the people who wanted one. Clearly something can be done in that area.

I have grouped energy efficiency with energy and water efficiency, because coming from a local government background I see that a lot of these things can be implemented through the development assessment process. Local government is where the buildings get built and where the rubber hits the road so we think that introducing national schemes for greener buildings may

well have a place. We would be very keen to see those things happen. For example, the Commonwealth could assist by funding model sustainable buildings so that developers can see them on the ground; that is, so that they can visit them. There could be building and appliance performance ratings, for example. You could do things like reduce stamp duty on buildings that are energy and water efficient. There could also be incentives for landlords to upgrade to make their buildings more energy and water efficient. There could also be a rating scheme for houses, particularly at the time of sale. We know that a four-star house, out of a possible five stars, is going to be cheaper for us to operate in the long run. In terms of water efficiency, we also think that there is a great need for a national pipe inspection scheme. Quite a large percentage of houses have leaky lines that connect the house to the sewer, and that is an important source of pollution in local creeks.

**CHAIR**—And a national link there would be—

**Ms Higgs**—We have tried at the state level already. I said I would touch on the CCP. I have included a case study for a regional CCP. We have a clean air program coordinator employed at SSROC, partly funded by the councils and partly subsidised by other work that this person does. They are looking at doing retrofit programs. We have done a regional recycling contract to encourage recycling. We have done various street lighting initiatives—for example, all of our councils and all of the inner metropolitan ROC councils have been involved in our street lighting program, which seeks to replace the current street lights which are way out of date and were out of date and pulled off line at the beginning of the eighties in Victoria. Those sorts of things are what our CCP person has been doing.

I do not want to dwell too much on waste management because we have only recently got into waste management ourselves, because we had state bodies that dealt with this up until about three years ago. We need incentives at the Commonwealth level for more markets to be developed for more reprocessed waste. We do not need education aimed at waste avoidance; we think that is a waste of time. I know that waste avoidance is the top of the traditional hierarchy and that you should do avoidance before you do anything else but people on the ground buying the products, the mums and dads, look at the range of products in the supermarkets and say, 'What do we need and what is the cheapest?' They balance it that way. Everyday they are being fired at by ads from all over the place saying, 'Buy this; buy that.' Our little local government saying, 'You have to look at your packaging and reduce your waste,' is not going to work. We also need mandatory packaging reduction and we also believe in the expansion of the very successful South Australian container deposit legislation.

The second last area I want to talk about is what I call 'eco-social housing'. We believe the Commonwealth could strengthen the guidelines, through the Building Code of Australia, for sustainable buildings. The New South Wales government recently introduced the BASIX program, which was actually an initiative of local government. BASIX will be coming into operation from July this year. It will mean that approval to build a house will not be granted unless certain energy and water efficiency measures are implemented. Something like that across the nation may be the way to go.

There are other things such as innovative mortgage products being offered overseas, and, indeed, through the Bendigo Bank in this country. For example, a sensible lender may see that, if a house has more energy and water efficient features, down the track its owners will be more

able to pay back the loan because they will have more money in their pocket. That kind of mortgage product is being offered in the States and lately, as I said, by the Bendigo Bank. Maybe it could be made a requirement for the first home owners grant—instead of moving into very inefficient Western Sydney housing, for example.

I have already mentioned the national star-rating scheme for buildings, so I will now move on to transport. SSROC have been involved in lobbying for various transport options in our area. We have done a few minor projects, but it is not something that local government has traditionally been involved in. We believe that private vehicle use is inefficient and is the least sustainable mode of travel. Funding by the Commonwealth government between 1975 and 1998, as we said in our submission, was $43 billion for roads, $1.2 billion for rail and $1.3 billion for urban public transport. We believe that the solution for making this a little more equitable, and less in favour of roads, is to provide funding for transport, rather than for roads, so that you can look at a project and assess it on its merits: how many people does this project actually transport and what are the other benefits, be they environmental or social? This is just a thought that I offer up for your consideration.

The federal government could also do such things as eliminate duties and taxes that favour city four-wheel drives. We acknowledge that there needs to be something for people in the country. However, maybe that could be on an application basis. People in our areas—for example, in Woollahra—do not need Range Rovers to take their kids to school.

**CHAIR**—It's those big kerbs you have!

**Ms Higgs**—It is like a metropolitan version of an arms race on our roads. The duty on eco-cars, such as the Prius, could be reduced or you could increase the duty on other cars. There could be tax breaks for employers who offer public transport passes—just a thought. To put this into context, I should point out that we also made a submission to the AusLink inquiry. Roads of national importance will be useless if they are clogged with commuters. We think the Commonwealth government really does have a role to play in providing urban transport systems and not just the systems for freight. These two things need to go hand-in-hand; they are all integrated. Providing more roads, particularly for freight, will not make the roads more usable; it will just attract more cars. That is what roads generally do, wherever they are built. That concludes my presentation.

**CHAIR**—Thank you. A number of the points raised in your submission point to areas where some councils are already doing some constructive things, particularly in the use of the development assessment process. Is there a lack of confidence or competence in utilising those current tools to achieve some of the things that local government is saying it should be doing?

**Ms Higgs**—Local governments in our state have been subjected to rate pegging for a very long time. Local governments in general have nowhere near enough funding. In fact, the departments that assess developments generally run at a loss, which basically means that developers, who are the main customers of those departments, are being subsidised by the rest of the community. The fees for development applications are regulated by the state government, and there is very little we can do about that, therefore. We cannot actually increase the fees. All we can do is try to make our development assessment more efficient, yet the community are saying, 'We want you to be more stringent.' That takes time and expertise, so currently local

government have to employ a range of different experts. For example, they might need someone who is an expert in contaminated land or they might need an ecologist, and these people do not come as cheap as the usual old building inspector.

**CHAIR**—With regard to conditions attaching to development approvals, are you saying that pressure for turnover of applications and the resources available to deal with them are limiting the ability of the councils to think creatively about development conditions that would achieve some of the strategic goals that they might be putting money into anyway elsewhere within the corporation? Is that just not on the radar screen, or has the Land and Environment Court cleaned up a few of these?

**Ms Higgs**—There are two aspects to that question that I would like to answer. The first is that SSROC puts out standard environmental conditions. We get together experts from all those areas. Maybe one council does not have an expert in noise, for example, but at the ROC level we can bring that person together in the same room as another council's expert in contamination. We put out a list of standard conditions for development and we circulate that to the planners. That covers one aspect. Things like water efficiency, energy efficiency and a whole suite of environmental issues that you would want local government to deal with are included in those conditions.

**CHAIR**—Are they used?

**Ms Higgs**—Yes, they are definitely used. I know this because one of the conditions that people put down was that they must comply with the SSROC soil and water management guidelines, and so we end up with developers ringing our office—which is not appropriate. That is how I know this. The other side of that question is that conditions are the last resort. You really need to get in there at the start of the development application process with these things, not condition it at the end—because then, if they do not do it, it requires local government resources to follow it up. That is when you get the problems with the court. What are you going to do: ask them to knock down a building because they did not put in a recycling area? That is not going to happen.

**CHAIR**—There are whole sets of resources available for architects, designers and the like about technology that is available and things like that. They are out there. I think the one that Environment Australia put out was fully subscribed within a very short period of it being released. Would it be helpful if those things were followed through with an accreditation of those professionals that are competent and knowledgeable regarding those things so that consumers knew who had some clue about these things? Maybe even the councils could say, if they got an application from an accredited architect, subdivider or consultancy firm, that it should be rocketed up the hit parade in terms of processing priority.

**Ms Higgs**—You are getting into an area there that I really cannot comment on. There were moves by our state government towards, I think, making architects the only ones who could submit plans in DAs. Then the people who were designers did not want that to happen. But, really, there are bad architects and there are good architects, just as there are bad building designers and good building designers. This is a personal opinion, rather than an opinion from my organisation: I think it would be a good idea to do that—but I do not think that is really our place.

**Mr JENKINS**—You talked about looking at funding for transport, rather than funding for roads, and then making some assessment on a cost-benefit basis. The submission cites some figures. Were they from a study? The submission indicates a nearly twofold to threefold greater input of public funds per kilometre travelled for cars as against public transport.

**Ms Higgs**—Where are you looking?

**Mr JENKINS**—It is in the submission at dot point 2.5.

**Ms Higgs**—Is this under 'suggestions for Commonwealth action'?

**Mr JENKINS**—Yes.

**Ms Higgs**—Banfield et al. The reference is in the back of the submission.

**Mr JENKINS**—So the point you were raising was really on the basis of that work?

**Ms Higgs**—That is right. I think that was done by the Institute for Sustainable Futures.

**Mr JENKINS**—To the extent that urban design can influence a lot of these issues, has your organisation had a look at those sorts of things?

**Ms Higgs**—We run an awards program to encourage good local government examples. We do not actually get involved in terms of the community, because we think it is local government's role to do that. They are the representatives of the community. But we, as a ROC, can give awards for good practice by councils. So we have SSROC awards every couple of years, and that includes awards for heritage protection plans and environmental management. Is that what you are getting at?

**Mr JENKINS**—In a way, but it went more to discussion of the actual physical form of residential development. You talk about energy efficient housing, but also one of the issues that is important is having a variety of housing stock, stock that might be more useful throughout a life cycle and so on. Especially in newer suburbs, the characteristic is that there is a very similar type of housing stock, which is not necessarily appropriate, especially in the latter part of a life cycle.

**Ms Higgs**—That is very true. We have very little opportunity, though, in our particular area, because we do not have any greenfield areas left. We have developed it all, pretty much, already. We have redevelopment opportunities, such as Green Square in south Sydney. Those things are usually covered in master plans, such as there was in Green Square.

**Mr KERR**—I have a couple of questions. With energy efficiency in households, one of the ways in which you can retrofit is with insulation. I think there is a Commonwealth program called Cool Communities which is designed to encourage people to retrofit. Do you have any experience of that? Would you recommend that as one of the elements? I do not think it is mentioned here.

**Ms Higgs**—Yes, we have got a grant application in to Cool Communities at the moment to do a retrofit program. Actually, it is also to do a program among non-English-speaking communities in our area. Traditionally, people with English as a second language are the people we can least get to in terms of education on these sorts of things. So, yes, I have heard of Cool Communities but I believe in this round of funding they are giving out only two grants—

**Mr KERR**—New grants?

**Ms Higgs**—Yes, two grants overall.

**Mr KERR**—For the whole of Australia?

**Ms Higgs**—In New South Wales, I think.

**Mr KERR**—I do not know about that. But you think it is a worthwhile program?

**Ms Higgs**—Actually, I think that local government is better placed than most community organisations to coordinate these sorts of things. If there were a requirement such as with NHT funds, for example, that local government partner with the community, then I think it could work better. Community organisations generally do not have the same networks, I suppose, and the same ability to access all of those other areas. I think there are some flaws in Cool Communities in the way it is set up.

**CHAIR**—The funding model requiring a community organisation to be—

**Ms Higgs**—The lead agency.

**CHAIR**—the key is novel.

**Mr KERR**—You may wish to expand on that, because it is one of things that we can take some advice on. I must say that my own experience is that the local one in my estate is very successful. I do not know, maybe it could be improved. The other thing I want to raise is that it seems to me that we talk about all these design frameworks that local government operates in. Many of them are actually quite conservative and they probably contribute to a logjam in some ways themselves. For example, you cannot get planning approval for many new residential or high-density buildings without providing parking places. Yet we hear this constant complaint that we are car orientated and that we need to move away from this. It is impossible with the way local government planning now operates to design high-density new buildings for a residential population that would use public transport and give up the car as one of the prices for entering into that kind of community. It seems to me that one of the downsides of local government is that it does tend to be template orientated and not particularly able to be responsive to innovative ideas. I wonder what you say about that.

**Ms Higgs**—In our area anyway—and that is all I can really speak for—we have been quite innovative. Some of our councils have, for example, made rainwater tanks in new developments mandatory. They are actually going to have to go back on that policy now that the new state government policy has come in. Sure, that policy has raised the bar from the lowest common denominator, but it actually means that those councils which require energy efficiency levels are

going to have to come back and we cannot require rainwater tanks be mandatory anymore. Things like that have been happening in local government in our area for some years now. Many of our local councils have reduced the number of car parking spaces if the development has good access to public transport. We are lucky in our area in that we have quite a good train line that runs through most of the area. The higher density and medium-density areas have been grouped around centres over the last few years and that has been encouraged.

Unfortunately we have not been, we feel, supported very well by the state government in terms of our public transport system. We think that we have done our bit in encouraging higher density around these public transport nodes. Car spaces are a good example. It used to be that there were several car spaces for a dwelling and that has been dropped back considerably now. In places that have access to public transport, that is a policy, and it is something that some of the community are in backlash against. I would argue that we have been fairly innovative in a number of areas—not that reducing car spaces is particularly innovative, I know, but we have been going in that direction.

I was also going to say something about the previous speaker's comments in respect of this. The point was made that there seems to be a divide between what people want, in terms of having a backyard et cetera, and what governments want, in terms of pushing people into higher density living. I would say that perhaps the vocal communities are the people who have an older mind frame with regard to these sorts of issues. Young people like me do not generally speak out about these sorts of things. However, we like medium-density and high-density living. I live in a unit, and I like it; I will not be moving into a house. Most people of my age and my friends feel the same: we do not want to have to look after a backyard, but we will contribute on community days to bush care and stuff like that. It is changing.

**Mr KERR**—I am not sure. Sometimes it seems to be changing in the wrong direction. There is a real resistance now. There was a very great government and local government focus on increasing density. It was a good thing, and everyone agreed it was a good thing. But because of a whole series of confrontations with local communities I think the enthusiasm for that at various levels is less. I agree with you that if you can encourage greater density it is a wonderful thing, and I cannot see any reason not to. Logically, all the infrastructure works better. There are a whole range of good, sensible community reasons for it. But what I was trying to ask was: how do you deal with the fact that it does also seem to generate, whether from the majority or the minority, the private choice issue where local communities say: 'Not in my backyard.' Many people who would probably agree that a broad increase in density is no bad thing just do not want it where they are. They associate it with decreasing property values and a whole range of other things, so it does present this public-private dilemma again.

**CHAIR**—We will need to move on. Ms Higgs, do you have any comments in response to those issues?

**Ms Higgs**—The same people would probably have the 'Only in my backyard' attitude as well, saying: 'I want to look at trees, but I want to build my house here.' There is a certain degree to which we should listen to their concerns, but sometimes we have to look at the facts and do what is best for the whole community.

**CHAIR**—Thank you for your contribution. Is it the wish of the committee that the presentation handout be taken as an exhibit? There being no objection, the document presented by Southern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils is received as evidence as an exhibit and is authorised for publication. Ms Higgs, thank you for your time and your submission, and congratulations on your work.

[4.04 p.m.]

**BUNKER, Dr Ray, Senior Adjunct Research Fellow, Urban Frontiers Program, University of Western Sydney**

**HOLLOWAY, Mr Darren John, Senior Research Officer, Urban Frontiers Program, University of Western Sydney**

**HURNI, Ms Anne, Research Fellow, Urban Frontiers Program, University of Western Sydney**

**RANDOLPH, Professor Bill, Director, Urban Frontiers Program, University of Western Sydney**

**CHAIR**—Welcome. Thank you for your submission and for making the time to be with us today. Do you have any comments to make on the capacity in which you appear?

**Prof. Randolph**—I am the professor of urban and regional development at the University of Western Sydney.

**CHAIR**—Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that these hearings are formal proceedings of the parliament. Consequently, they warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House of Representatives. It is customary to remind you that giving false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. Would you like to make a brief opening statement or other introductory remarks?

**Prof. Randolph**—We submitted a rather lengthy document to you, and we have boiled that down into a three-page summary of the four or five key things that we think we want to talk about. We can table that.

**CHAIR**—An abridged version.

**Prof. Randolph**—Yes, basically. As I say, we have pulled out four or five issues that we think are particularly relevant to this discussion. I am aware that our discussion ranged quite widely. How will we proceed? Do you want us to make a statement first?

**CHAIR**—Yes. Make some opening comments and then we will ask some questions of you.

**Prof. Randolph**—Do you need to know a little bit more about us or are you fairly briefed up about what we are?

**CHAIR**—That is pretty well canvassed in your material.

**Prof. Randolph**—Good. Firstly, thanks for giving us the opportunity to come along this afternoon and address you directly. What we tried to do in our submission was draw on some of

the research we have been doing over the last three or four years which we felt was of relevance to the committee's deliberations. Essentially, that looks at some of the aspects of the social and environmental impacts of urban development, particularly with a view to our work on Western Sydney over the last few years. We took the brief to be wider than simple environmental sustainability and really read into that a triple bottom line view but at the same time did not move too far away from environmental issues.

We have summarised in the document in front of you five areas we thought would be most relevant to your deliberations. The first one we have called 'Striving for a balanced urban form', the second one 'Reducing car dependency', the third one 'Reduced energy and water use', the fourth one 'Supporting social and cultural equity and diversity', which is about the environmental impact of social diversity in our cities, and, the last one, 'Aligning decision making and governance with principles of sustainability', which we think is very important in our cities. Most of this discussion is driven by work we have been doing, which essentially has been trying to assess the impacts of urban consolidation policy. As you are probably well aware, that is the dominant policy framework within which our major cities are currently being managed.

I will say at the outset that we are not against urban consolidation as a concept. What concerns us is that a number of the assumptions on which urban consolidation policy is based, which are very much aligned to the issue of sustainability of cities, are not well tested. Our aim in our work is to essentially say: 'We want urban consolidation. We do not want sprawling cities. We do not think it is a good thing. But can we make urban consolidation work better?' The last thing we want, which is more or less what we have at the moment, is a policy framework where the assumptions are poorly understood and which is deeply unpopular. I think we can do better, and that is what is driving us forward.

I will not take a lot of time but I will skim through these five things. Then we can have discussion. The first issue is about balancing urban form. Clearly, there are two ways in which we are approaching this at the moment. There is the issue of the balance between fringe development and, for want of a better word, sprawl and the opposite to that, which is urban consolidation. All our cities, with the exception of Adelaide—and Ray can talk about Adelaide; he was there for many years—are expanding rapidly. Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth particularly are undergoing major growth. We have a growth management problem. We are trying to balance the demand for land against the growth that is happening.

Urban consolidation has been seen as a panacea for our growth management problems. It has been linked to decreasing automobile dependence, increasing public transport use, reducing energy consumption, improving housing choice and efficiency, and making infrastructure provision that much cheaper. Our concern is that a lot of those assumptions are simply untested. If you look at research that others have done over the past 10 or 15 years, the research that has come to the fore has been pretty equivocal about how those assumptions have been assessed. We are trying to develop that research further into the areas that we are particularly interested in, which are the environmental impacts and some of the longer term social impacts. We are there to test these assumptions.

We would argue that medium and high density development in its current form does not necessarily reflect patterns of demand out there in the marketplace as far as households are

concerned. For example, current patterns of investment in high density housing in Sydney is driven by an investor market; it is not driven by the end user. I think that is a critical link which is not picked up by planners. Basically, high-rise developments are built for investors. That is not necessarily a bad thing, but if you do not understand that then you cannot plan for the households that are necessarily going to be living in those things. I think there is a critical role for the Commonwealth government here in the way in which the Commonwealth government holds the levers to the macroeconomic and fiscal drivers for a lot of the investment we see in our urban built form at the moment. There is a clear role for the Commonwealth government to understand the outcomes of those particular macroeconomic policies, and they are all around us in cities today.

Secondly, looking at reducing car dependency, it is claimed that urban consolidation policy will do that. We do not think that is necessarily the case. Some of the evidence in the research we have done, and in ongoing research—and I stress that we have several large ongoing research projects which cover these areas—found that, firstly, when we looked at suburban urban consolidation outcomes, there was no necessary link between reduced levels of car ownership and car use amongst people who lived in suburban high-rise developments at all. Secondly, research has shown that relatively few work journeys from Western Sydney into Sydney are along the radial railway networks into the CBC. Western Sydney, as with other suburban areas of our major cities, is pretty much and increasingly becoming a self-contained system. Most of the rail journeys, including non-work journeys, which of course dominate trips, are simply not along the radial routes at all. So the notion that piling up people on radial railway lines will result in a reduction in car usage and an increase in public transport strikes us as not being very sensible.

**CHAIR**—So the rail infrastructure in Western Sydney is the wagon wheel version, with the hub being the CBD and not intraregional.

**Prof. Randolph**—That is right. As I said, the dominant ethos amongst urban consolidationists is to put people in high-rise developments around railway nodes because, obviously, they will get onto trains and they will not use cars. We question that. Lastly, we have looked at the new suburbs and the level of car ownership in the newest suburbs of Sydney, and they are highly car dependent. You may well find that piling up some households near railway nodes will convince them to take trains, but we are continuing to build entirely car dependent suburbs out on the fringe. So whatever benefits you might get from urban consolidation around railways nodes, you are losing them with the three-car dependent households out there on the fringe. We need to understand that these two things are interrelated. Again, we think the Commonwealth government does have a role to play in these issues. It is not just a matter of state concern. The Commonwealth government is involved in transport infrastructure investment. The orbital road, for example, is part-funded. We think the Commonwealth government has a role to play in transport policy more broadly than that, building on its current road transport investment.

The third area is the issue of reducing energy and water use. We have several large projects which are currently in train on this issue. There simply does not appear to be much research that looks at the issue of how different densities of development affect energy use and water use across the city, including the issue of embodied energy. Embodied energy is the energy used to construct buildings and infrastructure. I think, from the work we have done already, it is quite clear that energy and water use is not a simple relationship between building type and usage. The households that occupy those different buildings are vitally important in mediating the outcome.

For example, the issue is not household consumption but per capita consumption. You may pile lots of single-person houses up in tower blocks, but they are going to consume a similar amount of water to get bathed or showered to a family of five in a house, if you see what I mean. So it is per capita consumption which is important, and very little research has been done on that. We are hoping to fix that in the next year or so. There really is not evidence to say that high-density outcomes are more efficient in terms of energy and water use than lower density building forms. In many respects, we hoped that it was true but we were questioning that.

The fourth area we have been looking at is the more social impacts of urban development over the last 10 to 15 years and the environmental and sustainability outcomes of an increasingly segregated urban system. We have been doing work, as others have, which has shown that our cities are becoming more segregated as society itself becomes more polarised. That is having a spatial outcome within our cities, and areas of disadvantage are growing in our cities. Our recent research has shown that in both Melbourne and Sydney. Our question is: does that have an impact on the sustainability of our cities? We would argue that it has at least two impacts. One is that low-income households work, and they work across the city. If we have cities that are increasingly segregating our lower income workers into distinct areas—which appears to be happening—then that work-home dichotomy for those people is becoming more pronounced, and that has an impact on their journey to work patterns. They have to drive further because a lot of them work unsocial hours and shiftwork—again our research is showing that—for very little money, and they drive old cars which are polluting. We have an issue about the work-home dichotomy, whether that is being stretched and the environmental impacts on that.

The second issue is the issue of health and wellbeing in an increasingly socially polarised city. I know you have been taking evidence from health authorities who are becoming very interested in the issue of urban planning, housing and health and wellbeing. We think there is a real issue emerging there. If you are piling people into more disadvantaged localities in some of our middle city areas—and that is where it is all emerging—then there is an issue as to whether that affects their health and wellbeing and the knock-on effects.

**Mr KERR**—I did not understand ‘middle city’. What do you mean by that?

**Ms GEORGE**—He comes from Tasmania.

**CHAIR**—Not the CBD, not the periurban area; the bit in the middle.

**Prof. Randolph**—In the olden days, we had the notion that inner cities were where disadvantage was concentrated. Australian inner cities are now gentrified. The poor have been pushed out to a middle band which, in Sydney, equates to places like Bankstown, Auburn and Fairfield, and there are similar zones in Melbourne and Brisbane as well. We have been looking at those areas.

**Ms GEORGE**—So what would be the equivalent in Melbourne, for example?

**Mr Holloway**—Dandenong.

**Prof. Randolph**—Dandenong, Springvale and those sorts of areas.

**Ms GEORGE**—And then you have got the outer urban fringe, like Glen Alpine and West Dapto.

**CHAIR**—Professor, I will just use this punctuation of your presentation to welcome the Clerk of the House of Representatives, Ian Harris, who has joined us today. He has brought with him a special guest, Seppo Tiitinen, who is the Secretary General of the Parliament of Finland. Welcome, sir. Welcome, Mr Harris. I understand there is a fact-finding tour going on between the parliaments and we will get a report card later. We will go back to our representatives from the University of Western Sydney. That will help with my report card! Back to you, Professor.

**Prof. Randolph**—Getting back to the question, all our research shows that it is those middle suburban areas, the areas that were developed between the 1930s and forties and the 1970s, where our urban problems are beginning to pile up in social terms. And there is a strong relationship between that and urban consolidation, because a large proportion of those disadvantaged populations in Sydney are living in medium-rise developments—the three- or two-storey walk-up flats.

**Ms GEORGE**—It might tend also to be the area where newly arrived immigrants and refugees congregate as well?

**Prof. Randolph**—Yes.

**Ms Hurni**—Yes.

**CHAIR**—What is your sense of the dormitory characteristic of those areas? I am curious about the proximity of work opportunities to where people domicile and where their leisure, recreation, education and social networks are. Is there a correlation there, in that those middle suburbs, difficult to retrofit, have the bulk of the economic activity on either side of them?

**Prof. Randolph**—Predominantly, if you look at where people who live in those areas work, it is reasonably local, but it is also regional. Work done by others recently—a major transport study done by WSROC, which you may have had some information on—showed very clearly that Western Sydney is a very regionalised labour market and that there really is a divide between, more or less, Strathfield and Auburn, where people do not go from Western Sydney into the inner west or the eastern side of Sydney. So it is a localised but also regionalised labour market for those people. We have done a bit of mapping of some of the commutes. There are industrial areas out there, but a lot of low-income households are very much in very similar jobs. But perhaps that is something else we do not need to talk about here—I am a bit wary that I might start rabbiting on about something you are not the slightest bit interested in!

**Ms GEORGE**—What are the main lessons that we draw from this increasing polarisation, in terms of the sustainability blueprint that we are entrusted to work upon?

**Prof. Randolph**—I think, as I said, there is an issue about the work-job dichotomy. We do have a couple of projects looking at where low-income households live and then trying to work out where they work, looking at some census data to see if that has changed over the last decade. If the thesis is right, a more polarised urban structure will lead to lower income households doing the sort of basic, low-paid jobs that have to be done right across the city in retailing, office

cleaning and that sort of thing. They may well be being concentrated in certain areas of the city, which may be leading to longer work trips and a more dysfunctional city. The counterargument would be that you should provide more affordable housing across the city, to allow low-income households to be located more where their jobs are. We do know, from anecdotal information from the eastern suburbs, that you cannot get a care worker to work in private hospitals in the eastern suburbs because there are no care workers who live over that way. So there are those sorts of issues, I think.

Then, secondly, there is this issue about health and wellbeing and whether we really want communities of disadvantaged building up in a way which we kind of got over 20 or 30 years ago, but we think they are building up again. There are some issues about health and wellbeing which I think the health people have probably picked up on already. So those are two issues, I think, which are relevant to this inquiry.

Lastly, there are the issues about governance and decision making. I think the first thing to say about the governance of our cities is that we simply do not have a strategic framework within which our cities are governed. Sydney is a prime example of that. We honestly would argue that some of the problems Sydney faces are because governance of the city is so dispersed and multitiered. We think the Commonwealth government does have a role to play in that—it is not simply a state or regional problem—because, as I said earlier, you do have your hands on some of the macro levers that have spatial impacts here. So there is an issue about how we develop new processes of integrated strategic metropolitan planning.

Secondly, there is the issue of whether or not our urban policies really do have a triple bottom line evaluation attached to them, and whether the policies that affect our cities are being evaluated in this way. We suspect, despite good intentions, that this actually is not happening. We would want that to be developed as part of the policy process.

The third thing, going back to the Commonwealth, is about better understanding of the spatial impact of economic policy, immigration policy and natural resource management policy so that we can better understand how the Commonwealth government does affect the outcomes within our cities. Immigration policy is a clear example of that, particularly in Sydney. We need to know what the spatial outcomes of Commonwealth government policy are, recognise them and work with them to get better city outcomes.

We came up with three key recommendations—we thought we had better leave you with something to go on with—which essentially recognise the complexity of urban areas. The first recommendation is to do with travel and transport issues. Urban transport policy is still seen as a function of land use—you put a building somewhere and you link it with a road. What never seem to be taken into account are issues of lifestyle, behaviour, changes in the way in which households use that housing and the interaction between their housing and what they do in terms of travel. Jobs only account for less than 20 per cent of all journeys—going to the shops, taking the kids to school, going out for the evening and all those things are much more important in volume terms. We do not have a good handle on that.

We recommend that the Commonwealth should not assume that urban transport issues are the states' sole responsibility, given your role in the national economy, and we recommend that you initiate a national program of sustainable urban transport in conjunction with other tiers of

government to address these issues directly. One of the key issues there is that if you want to reduce car usage do not do it by indirect policies like urban consolidation; do it by addressing the issue of car usage. Building a block of flats does not guarantee that people will give up using their car—if you want to reduce car usage then address that issue; do not use rather difficult and amorphous levers like urban consolidation.

The second recommendation concerns the issue of urban form and density. We would argue very strongly that current urban consolidation policies are based on assumptions which have simply not been tested rigorously in the Australian context. We would also argue that the Commonwealth government again must recognise its role in areas like the investment decisions that lie behind urban consolidation outcomes. We recommend that the Commonwealth government undertake an independent national evaluation of the impact of their own policies on funding of urban form and density and, perhaps just as importantly, on the assumptions of urban consolidation, with a view to getting more sustainable urban outcomes from them. Again, it is not just a matter of state and local government.

The third recommendation is a more general one about the issue of policy making and decision taking. We would argue that we need an integrated three-tier approach: we need you and state and local government to work together. We cannot do it without those three levels. We do recommend that an office for urban regions be established within DOTARS to help develop this integrated policy at the federal level. There is no one place within the Commonwealth government where these issues can be brought together. We rest our case at that point.

**ACTING CHAIR (Ms George)**—Thank you. Does anybody else from the centre wish to add anything, or shall we just go straight into questions and discussion?

**Ms Hurni**—I would like to add to what Bill said. It relates mostly to car dependency and making a case for Western Sydney, because it is the third-largest urban area in Australia.

**Prof. Randolph**—It is the third-largest regional economy.

**Ms Hurni**—That is right—and population. Transport and urban consolidation have a different manifestation in Western Sydney than in the rest of Sydney, and it is probably different from regions of other Australian cities. The critical thing is that there is very limited public transport in Western Sydney, and that has always been a concern for people living here. That has been raised in our research about the concerns of the people of Western Sydney as the primary concern. Talking about urban consolidation as a mechanism and putting more houses around railway stations, in the Sydney CityRail network there are 301 stations and only 58 in Western Sydney. So about 19 per cent of the railway stations of the CityRail network are in Western Sydney, which has a population which is 40 per cent of the Sydney region's population. The other thing about understanding the population of Western Sydney and its importance nationally goes back to a transport issue and why we think there could be a greater contribution from the Commonwealth to public transport. For example, the Adelaide to Darwin rail network is seen as a national link. But the population in Western Sydney of under-15-year-olds is greater than in South Australia and Tasmania combined. So if you are talking about the future of Australia, we are growing it in Western Sydney. Unless we address the deficit in the public transport network now, it is not going to get any better. I am coming from a social policy point of view, so I wanted to put the people into the argument about car use and houses.

The other thing I want to say about urban consolidation—having listened to the Southern Sydney ROC representative talking about lifestyle and choice—is that sometimes choice is not always there for people in housing, and that is particularly evident in Western Sydney. We do not have the same proportion of medium and high density in Western Sydney as we do in the rest of Sydney but we have a greater proportion of families with children, particularly sole parent families with children, who are living in flats and apartments. Over 50 per cent of the people who are living in flats and apartments in Western Sydney are families with children. That has come out in the 2001 census data that has been produced on social profiles. You have to keep in mind that it is not a lifestyle choice that we are making; sometimes it is a necessity. The design of regions needs to take into account the housing needs as much as housing choice or market demands.

**ACTING CHAIR**—On that issue of housing needs, are you doing any work at the centre into the issue of housing affordability? Could you comment on the kind of research that is occurring and some of the conclusions that are coming out?

**Prof. Randolph**—We have done a fair amount of work over the last four or five years. We have done some scoping work looking at affordable housing policies. In empirical terms we have been mapping and enumerating the number of people in housing stress across Sydney, which we have published work on. We are currently doing a piece of work funded by Landcom, which is the state development agency, looking at key workers and the need for moderate-income housing. Landcom have a moderate-income housing program to assist in developing more affordable housing for working households. We have done a lot of work on public housing, which is at one end of the affordability continuum. We have an interest in looking at social housing policy as well.

We have done a fair amount of work on looking at community housing as a potential provider of affordable housing. In terms of urban consolidation policy, one of the pieces of work we did a couple of years ago looking at the local impacts of urban consolidation in three Sydney local government areas tried to test the assumption that high-density and medium-density housing was more affordable than other housing. At a front of the brain level, of course, it is; you can always buy a flat in a particular area that is going to be cheaper than if you buy a house. But whether those flats are affordable for many of the households who need to live in them is another issue.

Some recent work we completed for the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils showed that a lot of the middle suburbs—I am going back to our middle suburbs again, where there is a lot of medium-density housing—were also associated with higher levels of unaffordability or low affordability, because, obviously, the householders who live in those flats really are on very low incomes and unstable incomes. So there was an affordability issue associated even in what was notionally a low-rent part of the market. As I said, a lot of this was associated with the middle-suburban, medium-density market.

**Mr JENKINS**—I was interested in your point about the social planners and the notion of what is required for the residential mix but that the market operates in a different way. To a certain extent, in my local area, that has always been the great challenge. The introduction of a different mix of housing and residential areas was tried in the new suburbs, but the developers would say, 'No, sorry, the market is taking us off in another direction.' You have indicated that you think the Commonwealth could have a role, whether it be through macroeconomic settings

or other devices. Do you have more ideas on what sorts of levers we should be pulling to assist? It is something that Duncan has been raising throughout the day. It gets to the point where we think we know what the right solution is, but, whether it be the market or the people, there is some resistance. We have to try to come to that happy medium where we get the type of change that we would require if we were to step back and say 'We want a sustainable city and this is what is required.'

**Prof. Randolph**—Are we talking about the new urban fringes or about the—

**Mr JENKINS**—I think we are looking at the whole shebang, because that is the challenge. I represent an area on the urban fringe. Even there, funnily enough, because we are along the transport corridors, they will be the ones where we will be looking at urban renewal. What are we going to do? At the moment, it has a similar density—there is low-density housing everywhere. But there will be urban renewal, because it was along those corridors that the railway lines were first developed. It is the oldest housing stock and it is ripe now to be renewed. We will get people saying that it has to be medium to high density. In some of the newer areas right on the urban fringe they are talking in the terms that you are mentioning. We place areas with higher densities around the areas that we think are going to be the transport nodes.

**Prof. Randolph**—Firstly, to reiterate, we are not against urban consolidation. We just want to understand it better and to do it better. We have just finished a big piece of work for Penrith which sounds like a similar kind of area to the one you are talking about. Exactly the same thing is happening out there. There is an urban renewal pressure along the old central corridor, the railway lines and the old great west road. It is being pushed very strongly into a medium- and high-density solution, where you knock over the old fibros and put up high density. Out on the fringes I think people are talking about more mixed development. We actually have an argument for precisely that.

We have done some work looking at the structure of brand new suburbs. They are very monolithic. Ninety-eight per cent of dwellings in the nine latest suburbs in Sydney are single-house dwellings. We have to move away from that. Our argument is essentially that we need to disperse high-, medium- and low-density housing throughout the urban area to allow that choice and that mix across our urban suburbs, precisely because the way in which we build our suburbs is increasingly leading to polarisation. Families live out on the fringe. In fact, that is not the case of low-income families, but, increasingly, you are getting a differentiation between where children live and where single people live.

We have heard from the Southern Sydney ROC person, who—without being prejudicial to her—clearly lives in a very nice block of flats in south Sydney or the CBD. But we know that those blocks of flats are overwhelmingly for singles and childless couples. As soon as those people decide to have children—if they do so—where will they go? They will have to move beyond the inner city, because prices are extremely expensive—they have been gentrified—and they will have to head for the suburbs. The way we are building our cities at the moment gives you two options as far as new dwellings are concerned: either you live in a new block of flats, increasingly in the inner city, or you live on a new estate in the suburbs. We are building in polarisation, which we need not do. We would be concerned to argue that, yes, you do need that mix right across. So you do not redevelop all your older housing into medium and high-rise; you have a mix of dwellings.

If you go around the inner city of Sydney—Petersham or those sorts of areas—you find that there is a whole range of housing. There are small blocks of flats, semi-detached houses and big detached houses, and that gives a mix of housing choice. We should be doing the same thing in our new outer suburbs and retooling some of our middle suburbs, which were the fibro belt, in a similar way. We would support that. What worries us is that the market does not do that. When push comes to shove, the market will do what it did yesterday because it thinks it can sell those. It is not good at leading change and diversity, because building houses is a very risk averse process. So, if you are a developer, you do what you know you can get away with. I think government has a real role to play in working with the development industry in saying, 'We can do it differently, and we'll assist and facilitate in that,' and the planning system is one way of doing it.

As to what the Commonwealth government can do, it holds some of the reins in terms of investment in new property. About 20 per cent of dwellings in the new urban fringe are rented; they are sold to investors. Investors get the benefits of negative gearing—we know that; not all of them but some of them do. Rent assistance is another form of subsidy which flows into the investment market. We would argue that the Commonwealth has real power there. Is it $2 billion a year that goes into Commonwealth rent assistance? What outcomes do you get from it? Do you know? It strikes me that you have a lot of power there if you wanted to direct that $2 billion into a more targeted investment, both in terms of affordable housing and more appropriately sustainable housing forms. So you do have a role to play there, and we would argue that you have a more general role in framing policy for these sorts of things across urban Australia and working with state and local government can do that.

**Mr KERR**—If I can be cheeky, one of the things I would like to have is concrete suggestions as to where we would redirect $2 billion if we were so minded? Much of your recommendations are that we ought to do more research, which essentially does not take us particularly far in terms of direct—

**Prof. Randolph**—practical policy solutions.

**Mr KERR**—Yes.

**Prof. Randolph**—It might help to understand it better. If you were talking to people about affordable housing, you would find a very strong lobby now to get them to target and channel that $2 billion plus negative gearing, which is extremely ineffective in channelling resources into affordable housing. We have had the recommendations on that. At the same time you could—

**Mr KERR**—Target it at what?

**Prof. Randolph**—The more affordable part of the market. That could be easily done, I would have thought, at the Commonwealth level, with a bit of tinkering of current legislation. You might also want to consider how that money might be funded towards more sustainable housing outcomes as well.

**Ms Hurni**—And transport infrastructure—the other parts that build into a sustainable city.

**Prof. Randolph**—If you invest in the Western Sydney Orbital, for example, why not invest resources into developing a sustainable transport outcome for some of the more distant suburban areas, in which there is a huge public transport deficit? There are ways in which you could start to look at the leverage you have got at your disposal to modify them to better benefit both an affordable housing outcome, which is another argument, and a sustainable city outcome. That goes back to the point we are making that you really do need to understand better the spatial impacts of some of the policies you are implementing. The first home owner grant, for example, could have been linked to a policy on sustainable urban development.

**ACTING CHAIR**—You and your colleagues might take up that challenge and give some thought to some of the more practical ends of the levers that we might be able to pull and recommend.

**Ms Hurni**—The Commonwealth is releasing its own excess defence land for resale.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Is that the Bringelly land release?

**Ms Hurni**—It is more the ADI side of it—St Mary's for example, which is quite an inaccessible plot of land. A disused railway line goes through there. A lot of the debate has been about how much of the bushland is retained, but that whole area could be easily linked through the north-west if some infrastructure funding were put into developing that rail line into a workable rail line. I would point out that the last bit of Commonwealth funding on rail infrastructure in Western Sydney was the wire link at Parramatta, which basically linked the Parramatta line to the Bankstown line, as opposed to having to change lines. That added a little bit of cross-regional transport in Western Sydney. That cost $40 million. The Environmental Protection Authority records showed that that little bit of rail line—about two kilometres—actually increased usage between Parramatta and Bankstown by 10 per cent. So you have to think about these regions needing to be linked up a bit better. It is a small investment really, considering that there was the sale of the airport for $5 billion in Sydney. I think a bit of reinvestment into infrastructure would go a long way. There are lots of other more practical things down at the local level that the local councils, as you have probably heard, have suggested. But at that more strategic level those things make a difference.

**Dr Bunker**—I will be very brief and perhaps draw attention to the last page of what we have tabled. We argue that in these three crucial areas many of our policies are based on out-of-date assumptions about simplistic associations of travel and land use, for example, and we now are in a much more complex interactive society. Similarly, policies of urban consolidation are based on assumptions about future dwelling demand and locating points of good accessibility. Those sorts of simplistic notions may have been all right 10 or 20 years ago, but they really are not sufficient for the current challenges we have. Similarly with our third heading on policy making and decision taking, my personal opinion is that, for example, the processes and instruments of state planning agencies are really 10 or 20 years out of date and that we need to look at more fluid, dynamic and prioritised areas of policy making and decision taking. In many ways we are stuck in the instruments and institutions of the past, and I think a lot of our research is in trying to shape the future.

**Mr JENKINS**—Have you done any work on the effect of public housing purchasing policies?

**Prof. Randolph**—We are just completing a piece of research on the breaking up and renewal of public housing estates across Australia, yes.

**Mr JENKINS**—And also on the effect of spot purchasing by various states?

**Prof. Randolph**—Not spot purchasing. We are a member of what is known as the Australian Housing Urban Research Institute; it is funded both federally and by the state through DFACS. We have just finished a project looking at the social impacts of breaking up public housing estates for sale. A project of ours looking at the impact of spot purchase was turned down just last week, and we are working with AHURI to see whether we can get it going again.

**ACTING CHAIR**—A roundtable discussion is due to start in about 10 minutes time. Is it the wish of the committee to accept the submission tendered today by the Urban Frontiers Program of the University of Western Sydney as a supplementary submission and to authorise it for publication? There being no objection, it is so ordered. We will now suspend this section of our hearing. If interested, you are very welcome to stay and listen to our roundtable discussion. We have invited a number of groups to participate in it, and members of the public are welcome to attend as well. Thank you very much for your efforts and for attending here today.

**Proceedings suspended from 4.51 p.m. to 5.20 p.m.**

**BERRYMAN, Mr Colin, Senior Project Officer, Human Services, Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils**

**CAPON, Dr Anthony, Medical Officer of Health, Western Sydney Area Health Service**

**HARRIS, Ms Elizabeth, Director, Centre for Health Equity Training, Research and Evaluation**

**KENDIG, Professor Hal, Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney**

**LAUT, Ms Pieta-Rae, Executive Director, Public Health Association of Australia**

**LEEDER, Dr Stephen Ross, Visiting Senior Research Scientist, Centre for Global Health and Economic Development, Columbia University, New York**

**MASON, Dr Chloe (Private capacity)**

**McMICHAEL, Professor Anthony John, Director, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Australian National University**

**MOODIE, Professor Rob, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Health Promotion Foundation**

**RAPHAEL, Professor Beverley, Director, Centre for Mental Health**

**TOWNSEND, Dr Mardie, Senior Lecturer and Leader of the Nature in Community, Health and Environment Research Team, School of Health and Social Development, Deakin University**

**ACTING CHAIR**—I declare open this roundtable discussion on community health and wellbeing. The roundtable is a formal part of the committee's program of gathering evidence in relation to the inquiry into sustainable cities to the year 2025. Although the committee does not require participants to give evidence under oath, I advise you that this roundtable warrants the same respect as proceedings of the House of Representatives itself. The making of false or misleading statements is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of parliament. These proceedings are covered by parliamentary privilege. The committee will authorise the publication of the record being made by Hansard.

Having said that, I also note that these proceedings will not be conducted with the same degree of formality that occurs at public hearings. We hope to get a more free-flowing discussion and exchange of information across the table from all sides. We also hope that you will feel free to contribute to the discussion at any point. The focus of the roundtable is to emerge with some strategies and potential actions that address the nexus between urban planning and community health and wellbeing. To set the scene, I invite Professor Tony McMichael to provide some introductory remarks. Following this, I will open discussions to the rest of the participants on

both sides of the table. Thank you very much for agreeing to be our discussion starter for this afternoon's proceedings, Tony.

**Prof. McMichael**—Thank you for the opportunity. If I seem to lack a little sparkle in my presentation it is because this morning I arrived back from Europe after flying overnight. I was at the Davos conference of the World Economic Forum as a speaker last week. It has some interesting relevance, in that I am sure members of the committee would know that in the past the World Economic Forum has been seen as a body likely to have primary interest in economic growth, economic rationalist approaches to the development agenda and the promotion of private business in general within the world. There is a lot of that, but it was very interesting to me that the flavour has clearly broadened out in the last few years and there was a lot of discussion about the importance of social and cultural influences on community wellbeing. There were a number of sessions to do with those sorts of influences on community health. I just had a sense that the ideas of sustainability are becoming part of that discourse, and I mention that because I think that in our comments this afternoon we are going to come back to this issue of how we think about the future of Australia's cities within a sustainability framework. I sent a letter to the committee via Anna Dacre, and I think it is in your papers.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We have it.

**Prof. McMichael**—It is just a two-page letter, but I tried to make a few points there that I thought were relevant from the point of view of someone working in population health. I am a medical graduate and an epidemiologist. I have had a longstanding interest in the influences of both the social and the natural environment on health, and I am very aware from quite a bit of my work over the years that as the urban environment becomes the dominant human habitat we really have to come to grips with understanding how it is that aspects of the urban environment impinge on the physical and mental health of communities. Now we must do that within a sustainability framework.

I emphasise that because there have been—and I said this in the letter—over the last century several waves of interest in cities and how we should be developing them. Within Western society I suppose the first real surge of interest was the garden cities movement in the latter half of the 19th century, primarily in Britain, asking questions about suburban layout and the design of cities in the interests of the human inhabitants—their wellbeing and their health. Then in North America early in the 20th century there was another wave of interest in healthy cities, and that had a lot to do with the ideas that were then current about maternal and child health, good food supplies and the control of infectious diseases. Later in the 20th century, through the World Health Organisation, another healthy cities program took on a more international dimension.

None of those early waves invoked the idea of sustainability. They were all dealing with the immediacies of planning urban environments, living in them and optimising those environments in the interests of the wellbeing and the health of human communities. Now, in addition to that, we have to ask ourselves: what do we mean by sustainability? How are we going to work to create physical and social environments in modern cities in Australia that will serve the needs of sustainability with respect to the creation of enduring social conditions that will be supportive of cohesive societies and good health, and that will have characteristics in terms of energy efficiency and environmental impacts that will conserve the natural resource base and minimise, if you like, the ecological footprint of the city on the wider environment? It is worth stressing

that I think this committee's work is part of this fourth wave of interest in the development of urban environments. It is distinctive in that it is trying to do so in relation to this bigger and complex question of the day that stretches now into the indefinite future, and that is achieving sustainable cities.

I have mentioned in the letter that we have moved through several sets of major risks or penalties to health of persons living in urban environments. In the 19th century the major issues were to do with epidemic infectious diseases which were a major scourge—small pox, cholera, measles, influenza and so on. There were also problems of rank environmental pollution—dreadful air quality in early urban industrial cities—and of nutritional inadequacies. Those three penalties that urban populations faced were all recognised and dealt with subsequently and we would say that in modern Western societies we have those three problems more or less under control. But we have another set of problems that have arisen that we must be aware of.

The ones that I have mentioned in the letter and that I will just mention here are to do with, firstly, the rise of obesity in urban populations all around the world. This has clearly a lot to do with the way we now lead our urban lives in terms of the types of social diets to which we have access and patterns of eating behaviour. Just as important is the continuing decline in levels of physical activity so that we have now got a systematic energy imbalance in the way we lead our lives in urban environments. That underlies the rise of this massive and growing public health problem in Australia and all around the world. I am sure you are aware that in the international obesity league we now rank second after the United States. That is pretty shocking for a country that has in the past prided itself on being outdoor loving, healthy, fit and tanned. We are actually the second fattest big nation on earth and that has a lot to do with the way we have designed and live in our cities.

There are problems to do with large cities in which sense of community has broken down. The scale is large and growing in outer suburbia. This is associated with problems of mental health, and life satisfaction scores tend to be low and in some cases declining. We still have the residual problem of injury on the roads from traffic in cities.

The final contemporary problem I want to mention that has health consequences is the ecological footprint. As we know, cities are the engines of economic activity and development, but they are also, of course, the great consumers of material and energy, and the generators of waste and greenhouse gases. Urban populations are contributing mightily now to the disruption of some of the larger environmental systems in the world, including the climate system. Both now and, particularly, in the future, that has great potentially adverse consequences for human health.

That really summarises the things that I have said in the letter. I think we are embarked upon an interesting discussion now in a fourth contemporary wave of interest about cities and health. We have dealt with a number of the major problems for human health over the past 1½ centuries, but we have a new set of problems that are pressing on us now. We have to find a way of dealing with all these things within the sustainability agenda. We have to seek ways of ensuring that our cities impart a sense of community and engagement for people; that they preserve the diversity of physical environment, social activity and culture; and that they are built and operated in ways that will preserve the amenity, the natural resource base and the wider life support functions of the world around us. I will leave it there, by way of opening comments. I hope that that

stimulates some of my colleagues to elaborate on some of these things and, perhaps, invites some questions.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you. In your communication to the committee, you said that we needed to think creatively about the measures of sustainability into the future and whether we could develop new ways of looking at the issue of sustainability. The genuine progress indicator was one of the methods that you referred to. Would you like to throw some ideas into the ring about that issue specifically?

**Prof. McMichael**—Yes, although they will not be very well-formed ideas, because this is a challenging area—

**ACTING CHAIR**—A work in progress.

**Prof. McMichael**—Yes, and it is one that we will all have to come to grips with. I certainly had in mind that we tend reflexively to revert to rather conventional indicators that are based on standard economic indices with respect to the throughputs of materials and energy and the wealth that is created and so on. While this is an important dimension, it only picks up one of the three items in what has been referred to as triple bottom-line accounting. It does not deal with the social impacts, it does not deal with the environmental impacts and it certainly does not deal with what I have argued here is finally the most important consideration: actual human experience. The reason we want to get our economics, our social structures and our environmental management right is that those things are means to human ends, which can be measured, then, in terms of things that are important to humans: autonomy, security, happiness, wellbeing and health.

Maybe, then, in thinking about the sorts of indicators that are appropriate, as well as having composite triple bottom-line approaches, which have now become a conventional and, I think, sensible idea, we should also be wanting to push beyond that and ask whether we can incorporate measures of actual human experience, so that we know whether the things we are doing are having the effects that we would wish them to have on the community itself. I am sorry if that is a bit generic, but I do not have the 'McMichael all things included index' to offer you at the moment.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We will take it as a work in progress.

**Dr Mason**—I work in a field called mobility management and environmentally sustainable transport. I am across some of the wider issues because I have also worked for a long time in public health. I want to add to Tony's introduction to that answer about the measures. State of the environment reporting has grappled with a lot of those questions, not necessarily altogether successfully. It seems to me that one of the key, first questions is: what organisational boundary are we talking about? Triple bottom-line accounting, as people might well know, was basically developed for corporations who were keen to demonstrate that they were making some progress on the huge interest of shareholders in being more socially and environmentally responsible, as well as financially responsible, particularly through ethical investment areas for superannuation.

What I think is really important—and difficult—about the environmental, economic and social aspects of any other group, whether it be government or a geographic area, is what scale we are

talking about. I should add that I am a geographer, so I think about these issues a lot. It seems to me we suffer hugely in urban policy analysis from inappropriate scales of aggregation. I see this as a huge problem. So, within a reasonable geographic area covered by a very tiny local government area, as in New South Wales or in other regions in Australia, you would expect to find huge diversity in economic conditions, mental health conditions and senses of racial intolerance conditions. What is good for one small group of people is not necessarily good for another.

Concern is often about what measures we should use. My questions would be: what do we want to use them for, and who will use them? I am not just being provocative; I am saying that that is actually quite a helpful question to ask first. I would add that some of the green capital work that is going on is actually going on quite successfully. In Australia, the Total Environment Centre is making some huge gains on that front. Within the social area, there are a whole lot of issues to do with workers and their families—and the community is included in that, in terms of community wellbeing and social solidarity for inclusion. I think it is an extremely complex area.

I am sceptical, too. I am old enough now to have been through the fashions in the seventies. There was a huge body of work in the seventies about social indicators to do with housing and urban settlements. I am actually very bothered about the idea of throwing any more millions of dollars into trying to find the holy grail at the end of the rainbow, because I am not sure that it exists. It is really important to be quite cautious about that question.

**ACTING CHAIR**—I can see nodding heads.

**Prof. Kendig**—Having done a PhD in urban studies in the 1970s, I am well acquainted with, and agree with, your suggestion. My main area of interest is older people. It is useful to think about particular population groups when we start to think about what are tangible measures, because there are different measures for different groups and so forth. You can go from children to older people. Let me take the case of older people. This is not intangible, it is not abstractions; it is very simple and real things in people's daily lives. You can measure them in surveys, and we do these sorts of surveys. Do people have a sense of belonging? Are they able to be independent? Are they able to walk to the shops or not? If they cannot, maybe that is because the shops are too far away, instead of it meaning there is some detriment in their person. Do they know their neighbours? Do they have a sense of social belonging? Are they physically active so they can get around and about? You can ask people whether they are satisfied with their urban environment. All these are real, tangible things. One of the confounding factors is that people tend to adjust to whatever they have—understandably. But one can have ideals and one can improve a lot. I am sure that if we were able to move ahead with this kind of research we would be able to demonstrate it more. But there really is not a whole lot of it going on now.

**ACTING CHAIR**—This morning when Dr Capon was making his presentation we referred to the impact of urbanisation on outcomes for children these days. We did not have anyone with expertise in the mental health area to comment, so we would be interested in comments on that.

**Prof. Raphael**—I think one of the critical issues is that this impacts on mental health and mental health impacts on it. We were talking earlier, before this roundtable started, about public housing. In public housing we have a large number of people often with quite profound and severe mental illnesses who are being sustained in the community, which is a very positive part

of deinstitutionalisation of care that has quite significant strains on both the public housing sector and the surrounding communities. It would be dishonest of me to pretend that that is all running perfectly and has no impact. It has a massive impact if you are a neighbour and someone is unwell and not well sustained in the community.

On the other hand, we also know, most specifically from work such as Steve Zubrick's excellent studies in Western Australia, the impact of a whole range of indicators on the wellbeing of children and then their performance in school and their projected development. When we come to older people, we know from recent statistics that a lot more older people are living alone, quite often in high-rise or other apartment buildings where the sense of neighbourhood does not exist or is transient because of the movement through of people. So the sorts of things that sustained people in previous communities both in cities and in rural areas do not exist anymore.

I would like to pass this set of tables around. Forgive the cartoons at the end, but they cheer one up a little bit. The first graph shows you the extent of mental ill health in the Australian community, based on epidemiological data and projections. Clear data on a population basis of screening shows that distress to the level of 'caseness' is actually rising in the Australian community. This data has also been replicated in New South Wales using the same measure, so it is not an isolated thing. We are seeking to get this looked at much more thoroughly and investigated in terms of what the social factors are that contribute to this. We are able to see, looking at this sort of measure in New South Wales, different patterns in different communities, and that will be one of our indicators. One might say there is currently an epidemic of mental ill health. This is worldwide. We do not understand the reasons for the rise. It was projected in the global burden of disease study report in 1996, and there is much to suggest that it is actually happening. This links, in some instances, to the lack of support that people have in their communities.

There are a couple of factors I would like to put in that equation to start with. First of all, there is quite a lot to suggest that social support and social connectedness are buffers against life's adversities. Equally, there is significant evidence that the experience of life's adversities, such as traumatic life events, is increasing with both violence and other occurrences in the community so that the buffers which might normally help people in their neighbourhoods and social connections are less likely to be there and available to mitigate mental ill health impacts. We know, for example, that this measure went up in New York around September 11 and, in relation to how close people were to the event, there was a dramatic increase. The threat and fears associated with adverse life events, and violence in particular, can alter the way people live in their cities and communities very significantly. Many of the older people who are living alone are afraid to go out and afraid to move around because of their fears of what might happen to them. They then lose health indices in that process.

We have a big political group in the older people and older women particularly—who survive longer to their eighties and nineties—living alone in buildings, frightened of going out, frequently with the beginning or major onset of dementia and depression, which are common in those age groups. They are in themselves a burden on the community and there is uncertainty about care. How do they live in a city and what does that do to city wellbeing? Is the vertical high-rise the best way? Certainly nursing homes are a combative option.

I would like to emphasise how much there is a growing body of evidence that the negative trajectories, from perinatal through to infancy, childhood and adolescence lead into this epidemic of mental ill health and yet the focus on both the social indicators in cities and the complex range of determinants of ill health in children has been very poor. I chair the National Mental Health Promotion and Prevention Working Party. But getting that bedded down, getting effective programs in place to mitigate some of those things is quite complex because, as Rob could comment on far more than I could, the issues that we deal with in trying to get communities committed to promoting mental health are complex and often require substantial lobbying because people do not see that as the cost.

I see a risk in the future of cities, in that we are providing for either those who are single and upwardly mobile or double income, no kids, or the aged, but with the neglect in urban planning and the urban environment there will be in future generations—if they are not well looked after in terms of their mental health and wellbeing—a trajectory increase in this epidemic of mental health, which also feeds back into cycles of violence if they are exposed to it. This will create not happy and well and glowing cities but cities which are the embodiment of some of the negative trajectories, where there are ghettos of the mentally ill and the people who are socially disadvantaged. So I think we have opportunities when we talk about planning to look at what the places and the spaces are and what looking after the future is in terms of mental health and wellbeing.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do you want to take up from there, Professor Moodie?

**Prof. Moodie**—Yes, thank you. I fundamentally believe that you can plan good health into an environment, just as you can plan bad health into an environment. There are some very simple examples. If you have shops down one end of your street and a park down the other end of the street then you and your kids are much more likely to use the street. You will be able to get to the shops—rather than being three or four kilometres away, where you have to hop in a car to get there—you will get activity from getting to your park or whatever amenity you can use, and you will get to know the people in the street as well, so you have the opportunity to be active.

If you live on a freeway, you are four times more likely to be obese than if you do not live on a freeway. We know that, the less traffic you have on your street, the more you perceive that street to be friendly and the more neighbours and friends you actually have in the street. There is a very good San Francisco study showing a heavy traffic street compared to a light traffic street. People in the heavy use street, which has eight times the amount of traffic in the light use street, do not have the friends that people in the light use street have, and they perceive it as being much less safe. What you can do ideally is, in a sense, plan environments that do become not only active and healthy but also safe and productive.

So we are not necessarily talking about pitting economic productivity against activity and safety; we are talking about putting those all together so that the suburbs we develop do have this capacity to be cohesive as well as productive. There are some good examples of conventional suburban development where you fundamentally lock things off—so you have a major mall, a sporting area, a low-density residential area—compared to a much more mixed pattern, which you will find in the inner city, where employment, leisure and residential areas are mixed, tend to be used much more effectively, are more cohesive, are safer and tend to be

friendlier. They are generalisations. But, again, it is the notion that we can plan it into our environment; it is not just a matter of chance.

**Dr Townsend**—I would like to pick up on what Rob said. I was involved in a study in the UK for the UK Housing Corporation on engaging women in planning housing and neighbourhoods for the future. They have since funded two follow-up studies based on that, because they were interested in the results. The women in that study were very diverse, from a range of socioeconomic statuses, ethnic backgrounds, tenures, ages, locations, education levels—the whole works—so there was a real mixed bag. What those women were talking about wanting in neighbourhoods was exactly what Rob is talking about: mixed use neighbourhoods. When we looked at the literature, the literature said, 'We're going down the path of technology and we're all going to e-live; we're going to e-shop, we're going to e-study and we're going to e-socialise,' and all those sorts of things—

**Prof. Moodie**—And be e-depressed!

**Dr Townsend**—and be e-depressed. The women, without exception, said, 'We don't want to know—not interested. What we want are neighbourhoods where there are some jobs, where there are some houses, where there are parks, where there are schools. And we want systems which actually help people to interact across the age ranges, across the ethnic divides, so that we build community.' It was a very strong message from them, and I think that is the sort of community that will be more sustainable in the future.

Follow-up work that we have done in Australia, picking up on the nature and health stuff, shows that that happens when we engage people in actual activities to build ecological sustainability through friends of parks groups. So, if you have a local urban park and you engage people in activities to improve that environment, that builds the relationships in the community across the age ranges, people feel safer and they then use the parks.

**Prof. Moodie**—Again, it does not have to be rocket science. The walking school bus is an initiative that we have been really pushing for. Fundamentally, for those who do not know about it, it is getting kids to walk again, because our patterns of getting kids to school have changed dramatically in the last 30 years. Thirty years ago, 80 per cent of kids walked; now it is about 20 or 30 per cent who walk. So there has been a tremendous drop in kids actually walking to school. The major reasons for that are safety concerns, stranger danger, convenience and concerns about traffic accidents. You get kids to walk on a designated route to school and they have a mum or dad up the front as a driver and a mum or dad up the back as a conductor. They go along a designated route, go to school, then they obviously come back the other way and are dropped off.

This is designed, in a sense, to reteach kids how to get to school and to encourage their parents to let them walk to school, to let them get to know their neighbourhood, to let them get to know each other and to let them have the increased exercise. When they arrive at school they are more attentive. The boys actually do more exercise when they get home. There is less congestion around the schools. There are less emissions from the cars. There is a greater sense of cohesion for the kids. That is just a really simple example—and it can work in the bush, too, Stewart, because we have some models where people are actually driving their kids to a designated point two kilometres out from school and then walking. So there are a whole lot of different models—

very simple things that can turn around the way that we actually perceive our environments. What is really important in this whole movement is, in a sense, that we repopulate our streets, because fundamentally what has happened is that we stay indoors much more. Therefore the notion of activity, the notion of belonging and the notion of safety are in danger.

**Dr Capon**—Related to that point, ultimately weaning the children off the walking bus means that in the end they are independent within their community—

**Mr JENKINS**—Absolutely.

**Dr Capon**—and become more self-reliant, potentially. I think we spoke earlier today about Jane Cadzow's piece recently in the *Good Weekend*—

**Prof. Moodie**—The bubble.

**Dr Capon**—about the way we wrap kids up in bubbles these days. A lot of that relates to our perceptions of a lack of safety and security, and a lot of that is not real, so we have to wean ourselves back off that way of living.

**Dr Mason**—I have been working intersectorally in health, because one of the arguments is to create conditions of health and safety outside the health sector. I think it is important to appreciate some of the backroom work that goes on behind Safe Routes to School. The program was actually developed about 25 to 30 years ago in Denmark and was then picked up by a very interesting organisation in the UK called Sustrans. One of the difficulties about transplanting a program from one nation, state or place to another is to actually recognise that there are similar, suitable fruitful conditions. One of the indications that we have actually become a seriously car-dependent society is that, over the last 50 years, there has been a significant depletion of moneys and skill spent on walkways and cycleways compared to 50 years ago. In inner parts of Sydney and other parts of New South Wales, the walking bus program has actually had to be put on deferment. There is a two-year works program going on in certain councils in New South Wales to fix the road so that there is actually a safe route. This has happened in England too, where Sustrans were doing both the physical fixing and then the organisational and social development around getting the program going.

One of our problems in major road authorities in Australia at the moment is that they have a very strong, separate approach to physical change and psychological change about road safety and education. This is where the European work called mobility management came in in terms of mobility change. It brought together changing the physical conditions at the same time as the users, including the organisations—often referred to technically as 'trip generators'. So we now have to have that technical term. The concept of mobility management has actually been taken up in the USA and Canada as well. It deals with the bifurcation of the physical and the social, which is a serious impediment not only in major road authorities like the RTA, VicRoads or whatever but also in councils. Local councils are often a reflection of the major directions. It is also reflected in the professional training of civil engineers and planners. So there is a total separation. That has actually compounded the problem.

So in terms of a sustainable cities vision, one of the things that never really took place—despite the huge visioning—was giving concrete thought to what we would have to change in

terms of professional development, organisations involved in human habitats et cetera. This is actually a very exciting time. Both the Planning Institute of Australia and the AITPM, the Australian Institute of Transport Planning and Management, are looking at professional development. So this is a very good time for getting a bit of movement at the station. There are a lot of things that the Commonwealth government can do. They can continue doing a lot of great things they are doing and they should stop doing some naughty things they are doing.

**ACTING CHAIR**—As a committee, we have the responsibility to look at the terms of reference and make recommendations. Based on your experiences—if we could just go around the table—what are a couple of really practical things that you think the Commonwealth might be able to do to make sustainable cities a much more realistic proposal for the future? What kinds of levers do you think are there to be pulled? What kinds of interventions might the Commonwealth make? Where are the shortcomings? What practical things do you think we could focus on as part of the committee's work?

**Dr Leeder**—I spent the last 12 months living in Manhattan, which is, I guess, one of the best planned contemporary cities that you could find. It provides all the best benefits that lead to the formation of cities. Cities occur largely as a result of the advantage they confer on economic development. They are an extraordinarily efficient way of making economies function. Manhattan has the great advantage, in terms of built facilities, of wide streets and wide sidewalks, a flat landform—which was created when the city was built—a very effective subway and bus transport system and taxis that encourage people to make use of those facilities and not use private transport. A lot of people walk.

Talking with the Commissioner of Health and Mental Hygiene in New York, who is putting together a strategic plan for all of the boroughs, it was interesting to learn that, even when one takes account of all the socioeconomic advantages that Manhattan has, obesity is less and quite a few other problems are less than you find elsewhere. It is a very impressive city, and if one wanted to make a recommendation to urban planners from the Commonwealth it would be to have a look at how New York has done its business.

Where the Commonwealth fits in all of this seems to me to be a question that we could reframe. We could ask: given that the imperatives of city developments are largely economic, are there particular points where market failure will occur in the development of new cities that one might expect a government in a democracy to take a leadership role on—and respond to the pressures of various civil society organisations—to enable those cities to be developed in a way which would make them sustainable? Another of the features of Manhattan, of course, is the tremendous foresight that led to the formation of Central Park and Riverside Park. That is a very simple thing, but if the market forces had been left entirely to their own devices then Central Park would be covered with skyscrapers.

I think it is a matter of government identifying where it suspects that market failure will occur and then making some specific provisions to enable planning to take place so that it leads to higher levels of future sustainability. I do not actually think that we should expect government to do everything to preserve all available ecosystems that are there or to be totally concerned about every aspect of life. I think that the massive majority of cities that have gone ahead and developed have done so with very high levels of success. We need to be very careful that we do

not cast the city as some kind of failed social institution when in actual fact city development is fantastic development from many points of view.

Government does not have to assume responsibility for the whole thing. A lot of these very positive developments will occur spontaneously. That is why people choose to live in cities. You get concentrations of excellence in the arts, intellectual processes and ready accessibility of all sorts of good things. So I think we need to be careful that we do not end up a bit like Eeyore in regard to urban development, just endlessly reciting a list of 500 things that could possibly go wrong if you lived in New York. It could easily be matched by a list of 5,000 things which are absolutely fantastic which come from living in a really good city.

The Earth Institute, with which I am currently involved, at Columbia University has a very strong commitment to assisting Third World countries in relation to urban development. The problems we face in Australia are trivial pursuit, frankly, compared with what a lot of those huge conglomerates have overseas. If you go to Ho Chi Min City or wherever in Vietnam, you discover that there is absolutely no public transport at all. So we are confronting there some of the big issues about urbanisation and sustainable development. In many respects, what we have done in Sydney and other places like that are pretty exemplary compared with what has happened when government has taken no interest at all.

That is not to say that we have got it absolutely right, but I do think that we need to start from the premise that most urban development is a very successful social enterprise—extraordinarily successful. A lot of identifying those relatively few areas where government intervention and leadership—and I think those are two different things: one is a subset of the other, and I will leave you to guess which it is—should chip in to make sure that there is sustainability has to do with control over physical development, assuring public transport, assuring public space, assuring good quality public health surveillance and protection networks and things of that sort. I think there is a lot that we can learn from successful cities around the world.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Could you just comment on the policing and safety in the streets of Manhattan and the change of attitude there?

**Dr Leeder**—Safety has become very much better. People say, 'Ooh, New York! That's all Rudolph Giuliani's zero tolerance stuff.' It is not, actually, because safety in all North American cities has improved spectacularly over the last 10 to 15 years.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Does being able to walk on the streets freely make a difference to the attitude of the citizens?

**Dr Leeder**—Absolutely. They do so with safety.

**Mr McARTHUR**—Could you give us a couple more comments on that?

**Dr Leeder**—I would simply say that compared with even 10 or 15 years ago, where you would be spooked walking through the streets or using the subway after 10 p.m. at night, it is now a very safe experience. The statistics bear that out: street crime has decreased. There are side consequences of that that deserve action and the movement of the homeless from the city centre to other places is a big problem; I am not denying any of those things. But the place has

been cleaned up and crime has diminished, and with that has come a very much enhanced amenity for the ordinary citizens living there; it is a fantastic place.

**Dr Capon**—I will just say a few words, because I spoke to the committee at length earlier in the day. When thinking about what the Australian government might do as distinct from what state and local governments might do, there are some areas to be addressed in terms of our fostering partnerships between the private sector, government and academe for developing the knowledge base that we need and, importantly, translating that into the way we design and develop Australian cities for the future. I think, as has been raised also, there should be work force development so that we have a cadre of people who can deliver this for future generations in Australia. Given that the Australian government is not responsible for, in a sense, the planning architecture of the cities, there may well still be some strategic things that the Commonwealth could be thinking about.

**Prof. McMichael**—I would like to say a few things. While I was listening to Steve's comments about New York, I was thinking also about recent experiences I had when in Europe. Prior to going to Switzerland I was at a meeting in the suburbs of Paris and subsequently I stayed in a little town in France, just outside Geneva. In each case—without thinking at all about this committee—I remember being impressed by the sense of community that was there and thinking, 'Why don't I get this in the suburbs back home in Australia; what's the difference?' If you walk out in the suburbs of Paris in the evenings, people are out doing their shopping; there are little shops on the corner and people are talking to one another.

**ACTING CHAIR**—And at the market on Saturdays.

**Prof. McMichael**—Yes. In the shops, when people come in, they just routinely say 'monsieur, dame'; they take notice of everybody. I thought, 'These are terrific little cultural habits,' and they are so different from the sense of nonengagement and noncohesiveness that you get in much of suburban Australia. We need to be aware that there are these different models out there.

The sorts of things that I am talking about bear, I think, on the things that Rob particularly wanted to emphasise. That is, we have to find ways of building and extending cities in Australia in the future that promote the opportunities for social contact and cohesion. I think that is so fundamental not just to mental health, as Beverley was discussing, but also to lots of other things that relate to patterns of physical activity—the sorts of diets that we are reaping because of where you can buy food, who else you are emulating and that sort of thing. In that area there is a lot that I think the inquiry needs to pay attention to, because our cities are going to get bigger—this is happening all over the world—and we are going to have to find ways of somehow re-creating communities such that we can restore the sorts of benefits of wellbeing and health that we have been talking about.

I also think definite policies should be developed in the area of things that bear on the transport system. I know that there has been a recent inquiry into this question of renewable energy in Australia. The government for the moment, very disappointingly, is not committed to increasing the proportion of energy that must come from these sources in Australia. We should be building that up to five, 10, 15 per cent; instead we seem to be happy to leave it at two per cent. In the modern age I think that is just quite disappointing. It is dreadful, because we know that a lot of these technologies are now on the horizon ready to be developed. Many of them

could be incorporated in urban transport—in fleets of buses, cars that governments buy and so on. We could be starting to make these changes in ways that would not only have immediate benefits on local environments but also be a useful contribution to reducing our greenhouse gas emissions.

I dare say Chloe could give more sophisticated comments relating to transport than I can, but I agree with Stephen that government cannot do everything. One of the things it can do is anticipate the need for things like light rail in new suburbs that are being developed and set aside the necessary land. It is so expensive, if not impossible, to retrofit these things. A lot of cities around the world are now finding that it is almost unaffordable to stick in an underground system—for example, Bangkok just cannot do it. A bit of forethought in that regard is very important.

Finally, it is important to remember that we are talking about both the city environment per se—where people live—and the impact of urban populations on the wider environment, the ecological footprint. We should not underestimate what that means. A city like Sydney has an ecological footprint about 150 times greater than the area of Sydney itself. In other words, in order to supply the materials and energy that people living in Sydney need and to absorb the waste, the Sydney population depends on an area of the earth's surface about 150 times greater than the full area of Sydney. These ecological footprints are tending to grow at the moment because our ways of living are becoming more material and energy intensive. We have to find a way of reversing those trends so that we can live comfortably but without needing to consume so much. That is a critical part of what we mean when we talk about cities and sustainability. We are talking not just about the social and physical environment within which people live but about the impacts on the wider environment.

**Prof. Moodie**—Tony, that is the first apologist for the Parisians I have ever heard—it is great to hear they are very friendly!

**Prof. McMichael**—But you have to say bonjour.

**Prof. Moodie**—Mais oui! I completely agree with the point that Stephen made about Manhattan. If you take the parallel with Melbourne, the inner parts do have a lot of these advantages; but, if you take the outer areas, which are the new areas, their levels of amenity are such that you have to have a car to get around. You also have less money by virtue of the land prices, so there is already a bias against you being physically active and probably a bias against you knowing your neighbours because of those structural differences. So I agree that our urban developments are wonderful, but they are not evenly spread. Look at the work coming out of, say, Glasgow, with Sally Macintyre and the inverse care law—those with more, get more; those with less, get less. That amenity is not necessarily evenly spread, whether it be physical, social or cultural amenity. The Commonwealth does have a role in balancing some of that—if we really do want to develop the Pakenhams, the Officers and the Brimbanks of this world, we need to provide amenities and job opportunities for those areas.

Going back to Tony's point on the overall role of the Commonwealth in leading policy development, it is about policies that, in the long run, encourage pedestrians to have as much space on our thoroughfares as cars have so that we are increasing capacity to walk, to cycle or to use public transport and we diminish the over-reliance we have on the car. There may be a big

fight there. It may be the sort of fight that we have had with the tobacco companies over smoking—although it is not the same—but we have an over-reliance on the car and to balance that out some fairly hard decisions will need to be made. They may be extremely uncomfortable decisions to make, but I think they are going to be there in the next 20 years and someone is going to have to make them.

**ACTING CHAIR**—It seems from what we are hearing this morning that in terms of the future the issue of equity and sustainability is going to be very important. The work that people out in Colin's area are doing at the University of Western Sydney shows an increase in sociospatial polarisation. You are getting arcs of people who are really lacking in the kind of amenities that many would take for granted. So I think that is going to be a key parameter of our thinking as well.

**Prof. Kendig**—Much of this comes down to a political question. If one looks at Australian politics for the last couple of decades one sees a Commonwealth vacation of the whole area of urban and social and to a degree—

**ACTING CHAIR**—Public housing.

**Prof. Kendig**—these other issues. Someone has to start to rebuild the case politically and perhaps ethically in the knowledge area. And I would start by saying firstly that while planning and property are the responsibility of state and local government they have proven to be failures in important respects. Basically, state governments are very much focused now on two areas: enabling developers to maximise their returns and minimising or transferring the cost of urban infrastructure. There is very much a focus on specific financial issues rather than the broader social return of that initial development.

Another part of that is of course the focus on the short term rather than the long term. These issues are so obvious. It is obvious that you should leave the space there for light rail. It is obvious that you should leave space for medium density housing near the shops in a suburb where people are going to be 30 years older 30 years from now. There are a whole range of obvious things.

So the question is, then: is there a role for the Commonwealth? I think there is, partly because of the gaps in state and local government and partly because there is—some of us think it—a higher purpose here about Commonwealth and national leadership. A fundamental aspect of this that the Commonwealth has always been involved in is the equity issue and in particular—going back to the Constitution—looking after disadvantaged groups, be they older people or whoever. The Commonwealth should take the lead in terms of knowledge and innovation and can do so. It should take the lead in terms of progressive policies: for example, looking at cross-portfolio impacts. Look at the ageing area, where we are very preoccupied by the cost of aged care and nursing homes. We have the idea but little attention is paid to how to make sure we have supportive neighbourhoods that mean the people do not need, necessarily, home care or do not need to move to a nursing home. This can be looked at.

The Commonwealth can fund and support new ways of thinking through doing audits of how age friendly areas are to support innovation in ways that demonstrate to a very conservative private development industry that there are some things that are going to be efficient and they

are going to be marketable if they take the risk. Australia has had a history in these areas. But it is probably going to come down to a matter of where the political case for this is. The specific ideas follow on.

**Mr Berryman**—I was gratified to hear the last two contributions. I was particularly concerned, looking at the terms of reference of the sustainable cities inquiry, that it looked like a grab bag of a whole lot of issues—issues that would be relevant to different cities in different ways and to different levels all across the country. What occurs to us is that this begs the question of whether the Commonwealth can take a policy approach that addresses city regions and identifies each of those factors as they relate to each of the city regions. That is the urban planning responsibility you referred to.

In terms of justification for that, the Commonwealth has always had a responsibility around the alleviation of poverty. We just had a poverty inquiry. Of course, there is contention about the relevance and the definition and the meaning of the term 'poverty' nowadays but I have not seen anything that contradicts the association between poor health and poverty. That has been demonstrated over a long period of time. It would seem that if poverty is something that is related to geographic, social and service infrastructure and the Commonwealth wants to reduce poverty then it can seek to influence those factors as a part of that strategy. The rationale would seem to be there in building the case.

In our case in Western Sydney, people would be very familiar with the degree of social stratification in our community and the divisions along cultural, income, communication and distance lines in our region. Taking a regional approach to analyse how to improve the health in south-west Sydney compared to the Blue Mountains, compared to Hawkesbury, would seem to be necessary—not just saying, 'We'll improve transport, we'll improve accessibility,' in a generic way but looking at each area according to its needs.

An overarching principle around that would seem to be the encouragement of a social mix in communities. You have probably discussed that ad nauseam today. I have not been here for the earlier sessions. There are issues around lack of access and around isolation from opportunity, and there is even the small issue of food. I lived in the inner city until I moved to the mountains a couple of years ago, and I could walk to any number of places and buy healthy food. If I live at Dharruk or at Bidwill, I can walk all day and the best thing I will find is a white sandwich with a bit of canned beetroot and old salad. That is the best food you can actually get in the area. That sort of stratification is not much acknowledged when you just talk about how we must increase these opportunities. It has to be delivered to the sites, and structural changes must be made around the availability of services and the social stratification of those places. It needs to be part of that change.

**Prof. Raphael**—I will just talk quickly because I had a good chance before. I think that we need to look at the issue of inequity. I think that still exists. Going to Manhattan or any of the great cities of the world, if you have got resources when you go there they are great places to visit. If you have not got resources, they can be very intimidating and despairing places because you see where one half of the city lives and that is what you are sharing with them. Cities are much more inequitable, in lots of ways, than they used to be—we imagine anyway. There are some factors to suggest that. I think we should be looking at inequity and at how equity can be better built, bearing in mind the cultural traditions that make people want white bread

sandwiches and not brown bread and not healthy foods—those sorts of things take a while to change.

I think Mardie's comments about asking women, particularly, in the part of the consultative process that informs the Commonwealth could be very important. The Commonwealth sets a lot of collaborative federal-state policy directions, as it has for mental health, and that has been progressively more successful as it has gone on. It has done a lot of work in the area of early childhood and families, but none of that has really had clear deliverables in a way that might be relevant to cities, like saying that there needs to be, in any urban development, positive encouragement and places for mothers with babies and young children—so that there are spaces in apartment buildings. There are not spaces like that. If you are poor, you might be living in a studio or a public housing place that does not have a good neighbourhood and does not have access to places where you can come together and get the social connectedness and support. I support everything others have said, and there are great things about cities. The points I would make are about inequity of access to resources, the competition for resources—which we have not talked about, and has been suggested in other research to correlate with some of the increasing depression that is in the community—and the access to the resources for children and families who do not have a political voice. Children do not. Everybody else does, but children do not vote, so they do not get heard. That will project for the future and people who are able to take the initiative with cities can make them great and exciting places.

**Ms Laut**—By and large I am thinking along exactly the same lines you have already heard, but I would like to add two things. The first is: talk to the communities. Nobody knows more about what is needed in the community than the people who live there. Fear for safety and things like that might come down to something like: could you light the streets in a way that you can actually see where you are going and who is around and what the bushes look like and those sorts of things? Some of it is very simple, but if you do not ask the community it always comes up to a higher generic statement like 'safety' instead of the specific statement of: 'We need lights on the streets that are not the main streets,' or on the streets that lead to the shops or whatever it is.

The second thing is: it would be very useful if the Commonwealth would use its capacity in providing money to deal with inequities across the board from regional development through to handling welfare payments and if it would stop and look at whole communities instead of just individuals. Handing out the money to the individual in the unemployment ghetto is not going to resolve the problem for the people in the unemployment ghetto. Perhaps the small business part of the Commonwealth could look at how it can educate these people to look at providing services and businesses of their own, or how to go about it or identify what is needed in those areas. For instance, maybe the community needs a laundromat and somebody is willing to take it on as a community business development incubator or something like that. We need to get to that point of thinking beyond just making a payment to an individual, who has not got anything, and saying, 'Whew, that's done.' We have got to say, 'What does this whole community need in order to work to becoming a healthier community economically, socially and in terms of health?'

**Dr Mason**—I would just like to gather up a few quick points and then come to my main thesis, if I may. I will take not more than five minutes. Mr McArthur raised the question about walking on the streets and the contribution that seeing other people on the street makes to people's sense of safety and willingness to walk. There was an article published last year on that,

which I have got with me so I can provide that to the inquiry if that would assist you. I thought it was really good that Tony Capon re-emphasised the importance of the work force development of people who work in cities, because it is still not clear that environmental sustainability, including the whole concept, is well enough understood by the decision makers and practitioners on a day-to-day basis.

Rob Moodie made a point about Sally Macintyre's work from Glasgow. The work she wrote about that I found so stunning was the evidence showing that the opportunity structures for health in the urban fabric are actually what differentiate health outcomes for people in the same major urban areas. It is a matter of whether there has been an investment made in the urban fabric in terms of transport, swimming pools, libraries and so on. It is those types of public realm places that are essential and it is very important to look at it structurally rather than merely looking at it on an individual basis. I think her work is very important in that respect.

Another point that Rob mentioned was the allocation of space for road reservation and how much space gets allocated to motor vehicles, walking and cycling. Of course that is a very significant issue, one that is written about very clearly by a professor called Hazell, from Napier University. I have got his references here. He talks about the importance of the reallocation of road space. In some parts of Sydney—just to show you how absurd this issue can get—there is actually a discussion going on about allowing parking of motor vehicles on the footpath because there is no longer space for parking on the road. The question about where people who are, or who want to be, on the footpath go has actually not really been addressed, so it is a really interesting question.

However, there are some interesting innovations going the other way. Late last year the City of Sydney Council approved its inaugural bicycle plan. This is highly significant because the argument has been for decades that there cannot be bicycles in the streets because Sydney's roads are too narrow, and therefore it is going to be different from all the other major cities in the world that are adopting bicycle plans—it will not have one. Now it has. This is a really important step. They are actually going to take road space from motor vehicles on Oxford Street in Darlinghurst and re-allocate it to bicycles exclusively. This is a very courageous political decision. I am raising it because things are starting to change. But they work at both ends of the spectrum: people who want to take the footpaths for motor vehicle parking, and the other. This is also indicative that we cannot just have goody-goody nice things about sustainability; we also have to review our longstanding practices that are profoundly unsustainable and deal with those too.

The other quick point I want to refer to is the role of the state government. It is not usually my role to come to the defence, necessarily, of governments but for factual accuracy it is important to recognise that for some years the New South Wales government has recognised the significance of compact cities and it has fostered high-level development near railway stations and that has resulted within five years—and this is data from the council on the cost of government in New South Wales—in a higher proportion of people in Sydney living within the ped shed, within walking distance, of their house to a railway station. In terms of access that is a major achievement.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Do we know that that leads to a reduction in the usage of cars?

**Dr Mason**—No, because, as I am saying, you have to do two things; you cannot do the nice goody-goody things only. You have to provide the capacity to walk to a railway station and catch a train. Once you have that you can then start pulling the rug out about the issues of free car parking and of restraining car use. In Sydney it has been estimated that 50 per cent of car use during peak hour is a direct result of Commonwealth concessional use for cars. This is a classic opportunity for the Commonwealth to not wipe it off—because it would be political mayhem—but to gradually claw back the extent of the fringe benefits tax concessions. I am not arguing to abolish it immediately, because there would be a revolution and a civil war. I understand that, but it is absolutely essential to provide the signal that the time has come that this is no longer a sustainable concession because people get higher concessions the more kilometres they travel and the more fuel they use. The issues for urban and rural Australia might be very different, I understand that, but basically it is no longer acceptable in my view to try to claim that we are trying to go anywhere near sustainability when we have concessions that increase by motor vehicle kilometre usage. It has got so bad that in local councils in New South Wales there is somebody with responsibility to make sure the officers have travelled enough, and have even recommended that they lend their car to someone to travel to Perth. We can document all this.

Coming back to the equity issue, we did a big piece of interesting work in Western Sydney, which Colin Berryman was involved in, about increasing access of job seekers looking for work in the Sydney metropolitan area. This is a document that explains that, and deals with the issues of transport and enabling people to become transport literate. In my view it is important for job networks in Australia to become as public transport, cycling and walking literate as they were in the olden days about equal opportunity. Basically it is as important as that. It is about how people get access. This is also to do with the sheds, again.

The thing that has not been touched on so far is the issue of the shape and access of cities. The urban form is largely driven by the urban infrastructure, and that leads to spatial inequality. For the past many years it has been the federal funding of road infrastructure that has driven the shape of the cities. That is important to appreciate. The question we might ask is: what have other nations done about that? The answer is quite clear and highly desirable, in my view, for us to follow, and that is to take a regional approach to urban settlement and transport and to look at multimodal transport together and to recognise that we need to retrofit because we have spent the last 50 years overinvesting in motor vehicle transport at the price of walking, cycling and public transport. In the USA they have the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century and that enables planners to seek federal funds so that the funding is allocated more appropriately to get the right mix of transport to reduce the reliance on motor vehicles. In that sense the Roads to Recovery fund needs to be strengthened. It is already doing a wonderful job in enabling councils to spend money on bicycle planning and bicycle infrastructure. It could be tied to a requirement that councils show what they are doing for pedestrian access and mobility improvement plus cycling improvement. There are other things I could mention. There are other great programs like the community solutions program which is funded by the Commonwealth. I encourage the Commonwealth to continue funding that and to strengthen that.

**ACTING CHAIR**—The name has changed. I think it is called community partnership or regional partnership.

**Dr Mason**—Okay. That program has done stunning work. One of the reasons is that it has successfully integrated partnerships between business, NGOs, state and local government. It is

fantastic. In New South Wales 152 programs were surveyed and the two common issues amongst all of those programs were domestic violence and transport. One more program is Cities for Climate Protection. If you could strengthen that, that would be great.

**ACTING CHAIR**—We will now hear from Liz from the Centre for Health Equity, Training, Research and Evaluation at the University of New South Wales.

**Ms Harris**—I am from CHETRE, which is part of the University of New South Wales. I fashion myself as an intervention researcher; we are interested in doing interventions to reduce health inequality. Before I say what I think are the practical things, I would like to reiterate that this is a very complex issue and often what we are talking about is very opinion driven and very romantically driven. We have to recognise that whatever we come up with is going to have to be multilevel and multifaceted but that each part of it needs to be simple and practical. One of the things I have learnt from my work in Western Sydney is that we often conflate three ideas when we are talking in this area, one of which is space. We are talking about a physical space, but that is different from the place. The place is how people relate to each other within that geographical space. Within all of that there are people who bring their life stories with them, which have often not happened in that space or place—they come from somewhere else.

It seems to me that one of the dangers when we start looking at sustainability is that we think that by changing the physical structure we are going to change all those other things automatically. My research suggests that you can change the space but it is much harder to change the place and much harder to change the people. We need to keep in mind when we are talking that it is very useful to unpack whether we are talking about an intervention that is focused on the place, the space or the people, because they are different things.

Having said that: what are the practical things that would be useful, thinking of you as the Commonwealth, sitting a long way from where I work? To me the concept of health impact assessment or human impact assessment needs to be explored seriously. For both policies and large-scale developments that are funded through the Commonwealth we should seriously be thinking about a process of health impact assessment. To give an example of one, the Commonwealth-state housing agreement is in desperate need of a health impact assessment. I see the health impacts of the degradation of that policy over the years. I am sure that other people would say there are taxation policies and whatever. Those things are really important.

The second thing I would mention from a bureaucratic level at the Commonwealth is that the idea of equity audits is very important. It comes back to the inverse care law that someone was talking about. We know from everything that if you leave the market to its own force, the people who need the service most will be the people who will least get it. We can demonstrate that again and again in health. There are ways of doing equity audits. A lot of the policies we have been talking about here are population based, which we want to see run across the whole population. My plea is: let's audit them to see that they are actually coming to the ground in places where people need them most. For example, are the school walking groups more likely to happen in the middle-class areas where mum's at home or are they likely to happen in the areas where you really could use those things? So I think equity audits are something that you can build into policy.

I would like the committee, through having another inquiry or a subtext, to seriously question or explore the whole issue of user pays in transport. In Sydney at the moment I see that as having one of the most detrimental long-term impacts. If we proceed with a user pays approach to public transport, or any transport system, we are forgetting that the people who are actually going to pay are not born yet—and yet we are developing systems in, say, the development of the land. You may have heard this today, but in the land developments in Western Sydney there is a whole issue that, if we are going to put trains into that area, the people who buy the land need to buy the use of the train. That means an extra $30,000 on their block of land; nobody is going to let that happen. I think there is a very big issue about sustainability embedded in these notions of user pays or triple bottom line—whatever you want to call it.

The last thing I would like to raise, which is more of a philosophical issue, is that our work shows that a huge issue in our disadvantaged communities is trust. Speaking to you as politicians, I think it is very important that one major job that we all—and particularly you as politicians—have is to build trust within the community. It seems to me one way of doing that is by showing that opportunities are distributed to everyone. In the communities where I work unemployment, access to public transport and all those sorts of things are not fairly shared. Even though—to take Steve's point—I love living in Sydney and I have a good life in Sydney, there are many people who do not. As politicians I think you have a responsibility to govern for us all.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thanks.

**Dr Townsend**—I do not want to repeat a lot of what everyone has said because it is ringing bells for me. I am not going to go over that ground. I have a few resources here that I have lugged up from Melbourne for the committee: a research report on belonging to a friends of park group, civic environmentalism and how that contributes to social capital and health; a description of a project that we are doing now that was funded by the research council on people living in inner city high-rise housing and the impacts that good and poor access to nature have on their health and wellbeing; an article by Howard Frumkin on urban sprawl and public health; a couple of copies of the Healthy Parks Healthy People report on the human health benefits of contact with nature; and the second report of the women and housing 2020 project in England. They are contributions.

I want to pick up on three things. One was the issue of what I would term ownership. In a sense we will never resolve these issues unless we as academics, as politicians, as people in positions of authority, but also the community, own sustainability as an issue. Things like safety in communities will not change until people take ownership of their community and say, 'This is our community; we're not going to live in an unsafe environment.' That links me to a word that has become unpopular in political circles over recent years—empowerment. It is not an 'in' word nowadays. Unless we empower people to take control and say, 'We do want an environment that is protected; we do want energy efficiency; we do want safety; we do want community'—like Tony was describing—we are not going to get a sustainable city.

A second word that is also out of vogue, and has been for some time, is regulation. My PhD study was on the greening of manufacturing industry in Australia, and the funny thing about it was that when I talked to the companies that were greening and asked them what had helped them green one thing that had was regulation. One of the things that they wanted more than anything was strict regulation, although not so strict that it choked them. Let us set regulations

that encourage this. We can do this in planning. If we say, 'It doesn't matter what you do, we'll accept it,' they are going to make as much money as they can with little input and little care for the effects of that. If we set down reasonable parameters that say, 'This is the bottom line and you can't do that; you can't shove people in boxes and give them no ground; you can't have places where there is not walking access to shops and parks and things like that,' then developers, just like manufacturers, will respond to that regulation, will make the best of it and will find ways to make it beneficial to them.

The third word, and my final comment, is education. You have talked here about work force development. Unless all people receive some education on the notion of sustainability—both ecological sustainability and social sustainability—then it is never going to happen. We have sectors of the population that seem to be in control of planning, like architects, engineers, planners, health service providers and so forth. Everyone should have an understanding of what ecological and social sustainability is and what it could do. I am not talking about a degree here. Let us give them something that puts it in the context of education broadly, and let us require that this is part of the curriculum. People need to have at least one lecture on what it means. Then we can build up the knowledge and the capacity of our professionals in society to provide for sustainability.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Thank you. Are there any members of the committee with any queries, contributions or comments they want to make?

**Mr JENKINS**—Many of the things that have been said have been very interesting. It is interesting that, when you come together and hear a diverse range of views, a lot of the stuff that is actually happening comes under the umbrella of this inquiry. Perhaps we did not really think of that in the way that it has been interpreted by people today. That was something that has helped me. There still are challenges in the way that Australia's Federation works, in etching out the Commonwealth's role. I do not want to put a dampener on things, but every inquiry I have ever been on seems to get back to that. But that is the challenge for us, not for you guys. You guys can prepare us with information to go forward. Thanks very much.

**ACTING CHAIR**—Bruce, you have listened to most of the discussion.

**CHAIR**—I have enjoyed listening, just sitting quietly and hearing the input. I sincerely thank you all for coming. I am mindful of the fact that we did want more of a fireside chat kind of moment. If everyone is in agreement, I would not mind a couple of sentences from any of you who may have had some reflections on others' comments or input, just to round out your thoughts. This is a learning journey for us. We have heard during the day that there are certain elements that make for sustainable communities and satisfying lives. If we separate those elements as far as we possibly can, we end up with what we have got now—with killer commutes as we reach out for those bits that make life meaningful and worth while. The issue about the footprint was well raised. We canvassed that earlier in the day, along with whatever happened to the village and humanising our cities. Those are some of the themes that have come through. Are there any closing remarks from any of you, or some take-home value that you want to drive into our brains as we move forward? This is the first day of public hearings.

**Dr Leeder**—I would just like to underline the policy instrument that Liz Harris referred to, called health impact assessment. I do not know whether the committee has encountered this

before. It is a rigorous process of examining policies as they would come to the Commonwealth or as they are formulated by the Commonwealth. It is anticipatory. It says, 'What are the health consequences of this likely to be—positive or negative?' It simply says that there is a rich literature about the use of health impact assessments internationally. It may be that, Liz, you could provide the committee with some background reading on that. It was a very important element in what she had to say. Certainly from an international perspective this is an extraordinarily useful way of saying to people, 'Think about the consequences of what you're doing. If you're planning a new city or whatever, think through how your plan will affect people's lives.' It is a systematic form of policy analysis.

**CHAIR**—My understanding is that it is not about just physiological issues and epidemiology.

**Dr Leeder**—No, it is the whole totality of it.

**Dr Mason**—For a point of clarification, having worked as a regulator in government with federal and state government legislation, I think it is absolutely critical to distinguish between assessment of a project vis-à-vis a policy or a strategy. We have had extremely flawed legislation in New South Wales on environmental impact assessment for projects. The freeway is already out the gate, and no-one has thought about or been allowed to raise the questions about a combination of other modes of transport. That is why I mention the significance of the British and the American initiatives in their legislation to have multimodal regional assessment of transport and urban development.

**CHAIR**—TEA21.

**Dr Mason**—TEA21—it is very important.

**CHAIR**—I invite you all to please not hold back if you have more value to contribute. This is work in progress and if you have had some 'ahas' from today about which you need to inform us, don't hold back.

**Dr Capon**—I would like to make one comment that I think is relevant to the broader work of the committee beyond this particular inquiry. It is the environment and heritage committee. Some work is being done in North America that I draw your attention to. It is being done by the Institute of Medicine. It is about rebuilding the unity between health and the environment. In essence, it is saying that, from the 1970s, we have had a very active environmental movement, and we still have people beavering away in the public health system looking at environmental pollution and those sorts of issues. This is very much about saying that for the 21st century we have to bring that back together, look at the positives in contact with nature that Mardie mentioned and look at socially built and natural aspects of the environment.

**CHAIR**—This is Tony's very own message. He has raised this three times with us now. I think it was more for your benefit, fellow roundtable members. Professor McMichael, do you have any closing remarks?

**Prof. McMichael**—Time is running out so I feel a little hesitant to ask, but I was going to put a question to you, if that is not an impertinent thing to do.

**CHAIR**—We will see when you ask the question.

**Prof. McMichael**—I wondered whether at the outset or forming in your minds now you have a working definition of sustainability. Do you have a sense of what the boundaries of this concept are?

**CHAIR**—We have canvassed that but have not signed off on anything, but it is worth referring to the fact that at our last committee inquiry on employment in the environment sector—and picking up on some comments around regulation driving—we canvassed it there as well. We are not sold on any one in particular. We have used a universally accepted terminology up until now, with all its deficiencies, but it is a bit like grabbing hold of a chunk of jelly. It is very much in the eye of the beholder. That is why we are having these roundtables. It is not just about natural systems impacts, as all of you have said and as many of the submissions have said; there are other elements about human wellbeing and fulfilment and how to maintain those over time. We are not closed off but neither are we venturing recklessly on definitions at the moment.

**Prof. McMichael**—I think you probably heard me make the point a bit earlier—and I know it can sound a bit healthist coming from health scientists—that we need to construe sustainability in terms of the actual human experience that we want to optimise. That is really what it is all about.

**CHAIR**—Like the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Program—humans are animals too and they need to be looked after in the natural system setting as well.

**Prof. Kendig**—Perhaps this is obvious but basically what we do in the built environment now is heavily dominated by, basically, the specialised interests of various people—builders, regulators, whatever. What we always have to take into account and seldom do is the difference the investment or decision will make overall on the lives of the people who are going to live there. We need to look at that overall assessment of the final impact—we are all saying the same thing—and be able to take that into account when a particular decision is being made.

**CHAIR**—I would encourage us to go further. Let us look at the third owner—not the person that constructed or built it, not the one they thought was their client but the one who gets it next—to see whether some of those decisions are wise through that prism. Whatever led to the initial intervention might suit those players but theirs is not the only game in town and on a time scale they might be there for a fraction of time compared with how long we are left with what they did.

**Prof. Raphael**—We all have a nostalgic longing for communities like the ones Tony talked about but their rate of social movement and social change means that people change where their place is enormously. Even if they keep in touch on the Internet, if it is equitable in terms of access to such systems, there is still a need for future planning to take into account the flexibility that you are talking about.

**CHAIR**—It seems that we have this specialisation thing: we are going to have this patch playing this function in this part of our lives for these people at this moment in time when the idea of a village is terribly untidy when viewed through some of the policy sieves that we look through, yet everybody seems to be searching for that untidiness.

**Prof. Raphael**—We have not mentioned the media and their powerful role in stimulating debate.

**CHAIR**—I will be doing so later as I have to make sure my colleagues are happy that we drag along a journalist as we tour Western Sydney tomorrow. Given that some of our remarks are freely shared, I need to make sure that my colleagues are happy that it is understood that there is a media representative listening in. We will have that conversation in a minute.

**Prof. Moodie**—I have several points to make. One is that the whole notion of government in this case, it seems to me, is about modifying and enhancing market forces as to what would happen. I think that is an incredibly important role. Three major areas seem to come up. One is the mixed use of our urban and suburban space, and that notion comes across time and time again. One is a mixed provision of transport—and Chloe really brought that up. The other one is a more balanced provision of amenity and opportunity, which is the equity issue, but it does mean deprioritising some things and increasing the priority of other things.

**Dr Townsend**—Yes, that is right.

**Prof. Moodie**—They are fundamentally difficult decisions. That is where we need governmental national leadership.

**Ms Harris**—They are also based on articulation of values. One of the things that is quite often missing from the debate is a real discussion about what are the values that we look for in a city. In our discussion we have talked about some of them: diversity and mobility, being able to move and being able to access opportunities. But if we have a clear sense—and Mardie has a report of what women said about housing, which says it's all about what they want—and if we can articulate the values and then measure those against the difficult decisions, sometimes that can make it easier.

**Dr Townsend**—The interesting thing about that project was that 70 women were involved, yet we had unanimous agreement. How in the hell do you get unanimous agreement from 70 people in a room? You do not normally, but what it came down to was this: they got back to what were the core values that matter in life. They could then say, 'Okay, I wouldn't have put that at the top of my list but, yes, it is a pretty important thing,' so they could come to agreements. I think it is about that, so Liz is right.

**Mr Berryman**—People have already said a bit of what I was going to say. The concept of the village and things being there and available to all is an attractive idea, but to my mind the issue more relevant to the context of our region might be connectiveness. It may be connected because it is there and it may be connected because you can get to where it is, even if that connectiveness involves transport and not physical activity.

**CHAIR**—Yes, it is in reasonable reach.

**Mr Berryman**—Yes. I am saying that it needs to be reasonable. But even if we are still solving that with a form of transport activity or something like that, that may be just one element of the picture. Another element is making sure people are connected. Therefore they are more aware; they are educated about what the activities are and they come into contact with

opportunity. Their health improves because of their socioeconomic status, not just because we have provided all of the things in the spot that they need but because we have connected them to the wider community. So there is that idea.

**CHAIR**—That may be a topic for another day. I understand that Perth is the only jurisdiction that has recognised that transport is of humans as well as goods. Freight is left to engineers to sort out. Isn't there some commonality in the infrastructure? Anyway, that is a discussion for another day. We have been focusing on humans as the transport task whereas there are a whole lot of other things that complicate things. Beverley, I think you have some quick comments.

**Prof. Raphael**—People should remember that wellbeing and mental health—making a city work well, making it productive—are key issues. If a city does not work well, there can be massive costs for the Commonwealth.

**CHAIR**—Another thing—someone was asking about jurisdictional interests—is that, if we get this wrong and it goes pear shaped, then the Commonwealth gets involved. It is like when a fire—

**Prof. Raphael**—The Commonwealth pays the disability pensions for those who cannot work, for those who do not have equity.

**CHAIR**—Tony has been doing your profession a remarkable service. He is almost family now.

**Ms Laut**—It is great having all these people here. We all think in systems terms and how policy works. But I think it is very important that you go and talk to someone in a place like Marrickville, who walks 15 minutes to the station, catches a train, walks for half an hour to where they work, stands on their feet for eight hours a day and then does the reverse of that and, on a Thursday night, does it late and in the dark. For that they get $300 a week. They pay $200 for an apartment above a greengrocer's shop and they are trying to live or bring up a family on that. I think it is important to actually hear what those people think they need. We have great ideas, we have lines that we want to take and we are all concerned about equity. But, until you actually hear it and walk in those people's shoes and say, 'This is so bloody different from how I live my life'—

**CHAIR**—Your suburban toil!

**Ms GEORGE**—We will be doing some of that tomorrow.

**CHAIR**—I am going to float an idea that the deputy chair, Ms George, has raised. We are very early in the committee process. We may consider reconvening at some stage to share with you some of our thoughts and insights and even some crayon drawing ideas and you can smack the bejesus out of those. If that is of interest to you, we might want to go down that pathway. Thank you all for coming today.

**Mr McARTHUR**—As a member of the committee, I would like to thank the panel very much for your expertise. It is a star-studded group and we appreciate your presence. I move that the documents presented by Professor McMichael, Professor Kendig, Dr Leeder, Professor Moodie,

Professor Raphael, Dr Townsend, Ms Laut and Ms Harris be received as evidence and be authorised for publication.

Resolved (on motion by **Ms George**):

That this committee authorises publication of the proof transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

**Committee adjourned at 7.03 p.m.**