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Ministry for the Environment Manatū Mō Te Taiao
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By email: nps-udconsultation@mfe.govt.nz

Tēnā koe

Planning for successful cities: A discussion document on a proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD)

The New Zealand Nurses Organisation Tōpūtanga Tapuhi Kaitiaki o Aotearoa (NZNO) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Ministry for the Environment on Planning for successful cities: A discussion document on a proposed National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD).

NZNO is the largest health professional workforce voice, with 51,000 members. NZNO embraces te Tiriti o Waitangi and contributes to the improvements of the health status and outcomes of all people of Aotearoa New Zealand through influencing health, employment and social policy development. NZNO aims to represent the main issues and concerns of its members and has consulted Public Health, Regional Councils, Primary Health Care Nurses and Te Rūnanga in preparation of this submission.

NZNO would like to comment specifically on Section 5 of the document. This section outlines that the NPS-UD would give direction on what is meant by quality urban environments, both in existing and future urban environments. “Quality” can mean different things to different people. As health professionals, we are of the view that a “quality” urban environment is one that meets the health needs of people and communities. Urban infrastructure can make a significant difference not only to economic performance, but also health and wellbeing and the reduction of inequalities. We strongly believe in the potential of urban design to improve the health of New Zealanders and reduce health service costs, now and in the future.
Health is closely linked to the built environment in which we live. For example, there is evidence demonstrating the links between chronic diseases and lifestyles characterised by car-dominated transport, reduced opportunities for exercise, increased fast food availability and lack of social connection\textsuperscript{1}. Aotearoa New Zealand has the third highest adult obesity rate in the OECD, and our rates are rising – a situation that poses a major risk for increasing rates of heart disease, some cancers and Type 2 Diabetes\textsuperscript{2}. Mental health problems are also very common, with nearly half the population meeting the criteria for a mental illness diagnosis at some stage during their lives, and one in five experiencing depression in any given year\textsuperscript{3}. Quality urban environments support human health as part of everyday living, for example through ensuring physical activity opportunities (safe, active transport), healthy food access and opportunities for social and community interactions. Although individuals can take responsibility for their own health, it is not within their personal influence to create healthy urban infrastructure, such as walkways, accessible green spaces or safe roads\textsuperscript{4}.

NZNO therefore strongly urges the NPS-UD to acknowledge that a quality environment is a built environment that is designed in ways that will improve health outcomes. The NPS-UD should also provide explicit direction on how this can be achieved. We draw your attention to useful policy tools to support healthy urban development. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has developed an excellent toolkit \textit{Healthy cities: Good health is good politics for local governments}\textsuperscript{5}. This toolkit contains resources from other organizations and includes practical experiences of Member States, including Aotearoa New Zealand. Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is another useful tool and provides guidance through a formal process to assess how a particular infrastructure project may affect health determinants\textsuperscript{6}. The HIA carried out to examine the Christchurch Urban Development strategy is a great local example that focused on five determinants of health agreed by participants – air and water quality, social connectedness, housing and transport\textsuperscript{7}.

We trust the above is useful and would be happy to discuss if necessary.

Nāku noa, nā
About NZNO

NZNO is the leading professional nursing association and union for nurses in Aotearoa New Zealand. NZNO represents over 52,000 nurses, midwives, students, kaimahi hauora and health workers on professional and employment related matters. NZNO is affiliated to the International Council of Nurses and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions.

NZNO promotes and advocates for professional excellence in nursing by providing leadership, research and education to inspire and progress the profession of nursing. NZNO represents members on employment and industrial matters and negotiates collective employment agreements. NZNO embraces te Tiriti o Waitangi and contributes to the improvement of the health status and outcomes of all peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand through influencing health, employment and social policy development enabling quality nursing care provision. NZNO’s vision is Freed to care, Proud to nurse.

REFERENCES


