

**Secretary,
Legislative Council,
Environmental & Planning Committee.**

**Submission to the Environment and Planning References Committee
regarding an Inquiry into Environmental Design and Public Health.**

Having just noted information concerning the above Inquiry and having regard to the very brief time remaining in which to make a submission, the following comment is contributed relating to what is considered one very important aspect of environment and planning as it affects public health and in particular the health of children.

As a resident in a major growth corridor district to the south east of Melbourne, during the past two or three years I have observed the decreasing size of subdivided house blocks, in some instance to about 300 sq.m. which results in a built dwelling taking up almost all of the site and leaving hardly any outdoor space, no area for garden, children's play or domestic recreational activity. Children growing up in these locations are inevitably deprived of beneficial fresh air, unstructured play, adequate sunlight or contact with the natural environment. Of course there are some local small parks or sports ovals located in the vicinity of many housing estates but it is not always possible for families to be visiting those locations often enough to counteract the detrimental effects of their dense residential location. The optimum health of adults must also be affected in these circumstances.

The rationale for building density is to contain residential sprawl and enhance environmental conservation, but there is substantial opinion that those involved in housing development subdivide to increase the yield of small dwelling sites for financial gain and not for environmental reasons.

Some balance needs to be established in planning regulations in order to address potential health concerns particularly for lower income families who are customers for the cheaper priced housing developments.

The recently announced emphasis on increasing highrise apartment accommodation is cause for concern with regard to health of growing children whose only contact with fresh air or sunlight might be during their journey between a highrise apartment and day care or school.

The optimum health of adults is obviously a matter of individual choice. However, the increased city and urban planning which favours greater availability of highrise accommodation is seriously questioned from an environmental aspect due to the necessity for much higher use of energy resources for lighting, heating, cooling, use of clothes dryers and elevators .

The widespread and increasing installation of flood lighting on sports grounds throughout city and suburban areas must inevitably result in high energy consumption which is environmentally unsound, but that becomes a dilemma when considering the health and fitness needs of those who participate in night time sport and training sessions. Choices obviously need to be made by those who could opt for participation in day time sessions, but of course the expectations of promoters and spectators are a factor to be considered here.

The increasing absence of eaves on buildings and also verandahs which could provide for healthy outdoor living and conservation of energy resources is raised as a matter for consideration. The only current explanation available for the non-inclusion of eaves and verandahs on residential buildings is that it contributes extra to the cost of construction. However, if there are identifiable positive benefits from the point of view of health and reduced energy use, incentives for their inclusion in buildings could be offered.

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