

10 February 2022

To the Chair of the Committee

**Re: Inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in NSW:
submission by Australian Health Promotion Association**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the inquiry into the planning and delivery of school infrastructure in New South Wales.

The Australian Health Promotion Association recognises that the built environment has an important impact on the health and well-being of individuals and the wider community, including our schools. In this context, our comments relate to section 1(h) of the Inquiry terms of reference “school design that promotes health...”

NSW Educational Facilities Standards and Guidelines currently suggest that schools with enrolments of 1000 students should provide at least 10m² playground space per student. In the absence of evidence regarding the relationship between free play space and the health and wellbeing of school children, the 10m² figure appears to be a pragmatic reflection of what is currently available in the majority of schools.

Recent NSW Health Promotion research into the relationship between free play space and physical activity among school children¹ indicates that the probability of students meeting physical activity recommendations increases sharply between 15m² and 25m² per student. Further, where loose play equipment is available (such as balls and skipping ropes), physical activity increases in a direct relationship with increasing free play space up to 25m².

Key Recommendations:

- 1. For new school builds and renovations (where retrofitting is possible) planning guidelines for NSW Primary Schools should refer to a minimum requirement of 20m² open play space per student, with a best practice goal of more than 25m² open play space per student.**
- 2. In existing schools and renovations where 20m² per student is not possible, alternative strategies to provide active play opportunities should be implemented.**

While sufficient play space is a major determinant of physical activity among children, we recognise that there are many contextual factors and alternative approaches for individual schools to consider. Hence the above two recommendations are intended to be broadly implemented and referred-to together.

Thank you again for opportunity to provide comment towards the Inquiry.

Yours sincerely



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¹ Grunseit AC, O'Hara J, Drayton B, Learnihan V, Clark E, Klarenaar P, Engelen L. Ecological study of playground space and physical activity among primary school children BMJ 2020 Vol 10 Issue 6. p.2