

Health Impact Assessment

Oran Park / Turner Road

RECOMMENDATION REPORT

by SSWAHS Population Health

March 2008

Oran Park/Turner Road- Health Impact Assessment (HIA)

Introduction

In 2006, the NSW government released the *Metropolitan Strategy- City of Cities – a Plan for Sydney's future*. The plan aims to provide for a projected 400,000 new dwellings in Western Sydney by 2031. The first draft precinct plans are to be released through the Growth Centres Commission (GCC) which will deliver a total of 181,000 homes to help accommodate Sydney's growth. In 2006, the GCC announced that 39,500 lots were to be prepared for rezoning as the first stage of the release areas.

In May 2007, the NSW Government released detailed draft plans to develop 12,000 new homes in Sydney's south-west – with construction to start as early as 2008 in Oran Park and Turner Road. It is anticipated that these plans will create healthy communities for families, with a mix of housing, jobs, schools, parks, transport, community facilities and shops. These precincts will offer a choice of accommodation including houses, terraces and units, to cater for singles, families and seniors. The Oran Park & Turner Road precincts are expected to provide 7,700 new jobs for Western Sydney – helping to achieve a key State Plan priority of more jobs close to home. Oran Park and Turner Road precincts are located in the Camden Local Government Area (LGA).

Sydney South West Area Health Service (SSWAHS) has been involved in the Greater Western Sydney Urban Development HIA with Western Sydney Region of Councils (WSROC) and Sydney West Area Health Service (SWAHS), which assessed aspects of the *Sydney Metropolitan Strategy*.

The Oran Park & Turner Road Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is seen as a valuable extension and application of this previous project.

Management of the Oran Park & Turner Road Developmental HIA

The Oran Park & Turner Road developmental HIA was undertaken by a Steering Group, facilitated by SSWAHS Population Health and in conjunction with SSWAHS Health Service Planning Unit, the Centre for Health Equity Training Research and Evaluation (CHETRE) and APP Corporation (representing Camden Council and the Growth Centres Commission).

Steering Group

The Oran Park & Turner Road developmental HIA Steering Group was comprised of:

- Assistant Director Population Health, SSWAHS
- Service Development Officer Population Health(2) (Minutes), SSWAHS
- Senior Health Promotion Officer (2 (Chair), SSWAHS
- Representative from CHETRE
- Representative from Camden Council and GCC (appointed)
- Director Research Evidence Management Surveillance Centre (REMS)
- Director Health Services Planning, SSWAHS

The Steering Group brought together interested and committed groups of workers. Two members of the committee attended the Chetre HIA training whilst conducting the HIA, while other members had prior experience in conducting a HIA.

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Methods

The Impact Assessment Guidance Screening tool was used to determine whether a Health Impact Assessment could add value to development planning process.

The health determinants identified as potentially having positive and negative impacts were physical activity, air quality, built environments and land use, noise, water, crime, education, employment, family cohesion, housing, recreation, nutrition and social Exclusion.

The Oran Park & Turner Road development HIA Steering group recommended that an HIA be undertaken to identify:

- the potential positive and negative impacts of the Oran Park & Turner Road development and
- recommendations that can improve or minimise harm to the health and well being of residents in future development.

The main issues within the scope of the HIA were identified as:

- public transport;
- active transport;
- social connectivity;
- physical activity;
- injury and
- food access;

A rapid prospective HIA was chosen due to:

- short timeframe for opportunity to influence precinct planning
- evidence already collected as part of the HIA on the Metropolitan Strategy

The HIA process involved screening, scoping, identification and assessment of potential health impacts; decision-making and formulating recommendations, and devising a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Priority matrices were used to identify opportunities to enhance positive impacts and mitigate negative impacts for each issue considered. Relevant literature included documentation developed for the Oran Park and Turner Road Development and reports from other developments of similar scope and size in the area.

A key source of information was the evidence collected during the development of the Greater Western Sydney HIA on the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy and the subsequent recommendations of the HIA report.

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Results

Findings from the HIA showed that the Oran Park & Turner Road plans had generally adopted best practice for urban design in relation to promoting the use of public transport and active transport, promoting physical activity and health-enhancing aspects of urban form.

A total of 24 recommendations have been developed to highlight initiatives that support health and to suggest steps to maximise a range of other health benefits. These recommendations are accompanied by related implementation considerations such as timing and resources.

Discussion

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a valuable tool to assess a range of health impacts of new suburban development in a systematic way and in particular to focus on population health issues. Involvement of stakeholders and community partners is invaluable to improve the quality of response as well as strengthening implementation and monitoring of the recommendations. SSWAHS has in this process identified the value of working with local government in addressing population health.

For the future use of HIA, a rapid time-frame may necessitate innovative methods of involving community partners, which was one of the limitations of this project. Overall, HIA is a useful approach for assessing future developments of this type in SSWAHS.

Future Directions

- The findings of the HIA will be presented to government agencies, non- government agencies and local land developers to encourage the consideration and implementation of the recommendations.
- An evaluation on the HIA will be conducted on two levels:
 1. process evaluation of the governance and project management of the HIA.
 2. impact evaluation based on the uptake of the recommendations.

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1. Recommendations

The HIA recommendations are based on the available evidence, and have been prioritised by the steering group.

ISSUE 1: PUBLIC TRANSPORT

What is in the plans for Oran Park and Turner Road?

- 90% peak time coverage of bus transport for both precincts and all dwellings within 400m of a bus stop
- Proposal to foster a non car-dependent culture
- For the short term – connecting to existing services e.g. Narellan
- In the long term – transport connection to Leppington rail link

What does the evidence say?

- Patterns of transport use have a number of impacts on health and wellbeing e.g. air quality, traffic accidents
- Use of public transport contributes to increased physical activity
- Early establishment of public transport services is important to achieve a public transport culture.
- Most of the region is poorly serviced by public transport

Recommendations

- 1.1 The planned approach to availability of public transport will enhance the health and wellbeing of residents of Oran Park and Turner Road by fostering a non car-dependent culture
- 1.2 Resources and subsidies should be made available to the local bus provider for early establishment of bus transport
- 1.3 Bus routes need to facilitate direct access to services and transport connections to Liverpool as well as Campbelltown. Current plans to connect to other services will add to travel time and cost and potentially discourage the use of public transport. We recommend:
 - A direct connection to Liverpool
 - Fast Tracking of Badgally Road to Campbelltown Station

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ISSUE 2: ACTIVE TRANSPORT – WALKING AND CYCLING

What is in the plans for Oran Park and Turner Road?

- High quality connected pedestrian networks will be provided
- Hierarchy of cycle routes will be developed to ensure residents can cycle to shops, school and work

What does the evidence say?

- Active transport levels are lower in Greater Western Sydney than the rest of Sydney
- Prerequisites for use of active transport:
 - Safe places for people to walk and cycle
 - Stimulating and attractive routes
 - Safe, accessible footpaths
 - Smooth surfaces, traffic calming, lighting, adequate storage for cycles at major destinations
- Walk to School & TravelSmart Programs can increase the number of children who walk to school
- Active transport also helps to promote social connectivity

Recommendations

- 2.1 Pedestrian and cycle routes should go ahead as planned to provide a positive health impact for residents
- 2.2 *Healthy by design* and *Safer by design* guidelines should be taken into account when developing the pedestrian and cycle routes
- 2.3 SSWAHS, Dept of Education in consultation with Camden Council should collaborate to establish TravelSmart and/or Walk to School programs for all new schools when they are established.
- 2.4 Active transport should be included in advertising and promotion of the new areas

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ISSUE 3: SOCIAL CONNECTIVITY

What is in the plans for Oran Park and Turner Road?

- Demand-based approach for the provision of services, based on Camden Council recreation demand assessment study
- Opportunities for co-location and adjacent facilities
- Arrangement of neighbourhoods with links to schools, commercial centres and other facilities
- Long-term planning for a range of district facilities such as sporting, childcare, family support, young peoples services
- The importance of establishing identity and a sense of place through cultural development and public art strategies

What does the evidence say?

- Current facilities in Camden and Narellan are operating at near capacity and are unable to accommodate residents of new growth centres. Past experience and planning mistakes have had new housing developments built without any facilities
- Communities with a high level of trust and connections between social groups are more desirable to live in and have better mental health outcomes
- Existence of quality community facilities such as cafes, shops, clubs,, plazas, also parks and footpaths provide opportunities for people to meet and connect with one another
- There is already an identified shortage of existing sporting facilities within Camden LGA - children's services, local child care services and pre-schools, family support services and services for young people are inadequate for current need
- Cultural development is a central issue in an individual's and community's establishment of a home and a sense of belonging to a place

Recommendations

- 3.1 Ensure that social infrastructure is provided early in the development process, at the time that residents move in. As past developments have shown special attention needs to be paid to the provision of services such as cultural and sporting facilities especially for families, children and young people. The social infrastructure for Oran Park and Turner Road needs to be established early in the development process
- 3.2 Negotiations should occur between Camden Council and the education sectors to encourage co-location of education and community facilities (eg meeting rooms)
- 3.3 Resources should be secured to ensure the early support of a Community Development worker to develop a strategy promoting social connectivity including networks, services and cultural development
- 3.4 Camden Council and the developers need to establish a clearly articulated plan for prioritising and staging of social infrastructure, with short and long-term proposals. This should be based on the best available information about the demographics of the population of the new precincts
- 3.5 That the Growth Centre Commission and the councils in the region undertake a study to address the needs of the South West Growth Centre for regional level community, cultural and recreational facilities

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ISSUE 4: PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

What is in the plans for Oran Park and Turner Road?

- Public open space for Oran Park(60 hectares) / Turner Road (30 hectares), including active and passive uses
- Oran Park will have 6 children's playgrounds for 0-4 year olds; 6 play spaces for 5-12 year olds; 2 managed lawn areas/green space for informal recreation use and 2 sports parks
- Turner Road will have 3 children's playgrounds for 0-4 year olds; 3 play spaces for 5-12 year olds ; 2 managed lawn area/green space for informal recreation use and 1 sports park
- Dwellings will be no more than 500m walking distance from recreational areas
- Co-location with other community uses will be pursued where possible
- At a district level a leisure centre, adventure based recreation centre and 3 district sports grounds will be provided and these will be accessible by public transport
- Walking and bicycle tracks

What does the evidence say?

- The health benefits of increased physical activity are well established (promotes healthy weight: decrease in obesity, protective for heart disease, stroke, mental health, diabetes)
- Elements conducive to parks being used include maintenance, trees, water, birdlife and walking paths
- Potential for sports and playground injuries through increase in physical activity especially in young people. This includes skateboarding, rollerblading and bicycle falls
- Personal safety is an issue in public spaces, especially for children
- Needs of older residents need to be considered. Physical activity is important to healthy ageing and falls prevention

Recommendations

- 4.1 Cycleways and pathways as well as community and recreational facilities should be implemented according to the plans
- 4.2 Camden Council should actively support early establishment of community sporting activities, and construction of play areas for recreational and organised sports for residents, especially young people
- 4.3 Playgrounds should comply with Australian standards and be regularly inspected and maintained
- 4.4 Surfaces should be well maintained. Footpaths and cycleways should be wide enough for shared pedestrian/recreational use and disabled access
- 4.5 Recreational areas should be well lit, have neighbour surveillance and be clear of hidden areas
- 4.6 SSWAHS should liaise with local providers for recreational activities to promote physical activity in older people (eg Active Over 50s program)

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ISSUE 5: INJURY

What is in the plans for Oran Park and Turner Road?

- Measures planned to reduce car usage include extensive cycle and pedestrian paths; the speed limit in residential streets to be set at 50kph and all dwellings to be no further than 400m to public transport
- There will be separation of bike tracks from roadways and safe crossings in line with the NSW Bicycle Guidelines
- There will be traffic calming devices such as roundabouts and speed humps
- Public parks will be bordered by streets on all sides with houses orientated towards them for surveillance
- Housing lots will front open space and major streets will provide casual surveillance
- Pedestrian and cycling tracks will be well lit

What does the evidence say?

- Urban form and transport strategies to reduce traffic injuries and deaths include:
 - measures to reduce Vehicle Kilometres Travelled (VKT) rates as fewer cars on the road generally lead to less accidents e.g. promoting use of public transport
 - reducing speed limits reduces the number and severity of accidents
 - traffic calming devices are effective in reducing accidents, e.g. speed humps, roundabouts
 - separating pedestrians and cyclists from traffic by the use of appropriate paths and tracks reduces accidents
 - safe pedestrian crossings
 - child plays areas away from roads and traffic
- Design of residential and public areas can promote improved surveillance
- Good street lighting leads to reduction in crime rates and feelings of insecurity
- Increased physical activity may lead to increase in injury , e.g. sports and falls especially in the elderly

Recommendations

- 5.1 Measures intended to reduce car usage and prevent injury should go ahead as planned to provide a positive health impact for residents
- 5.2 Sports field, public parks and playgrounds should meet the Australian Standards for design equipment, installation and maintenance
- 5.3 Footpaths should be regularly inspected and maintained, and effectively lit

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ISSUE 6: FOOD ACCESS

What is in the plans for Oran Park and Turner Road?

- There are some market gardens along the eastern boundary of the precinct

What does the evidence say?

- There are health benefits from good access to fresh local fruit and vegetables
- Proximity of access to fresh fruit and vegetables is mainly an issue for disadvantaged communities

Recommendations

- 6.1 The community development worker should seek opportunities to establish and promote food growing areas within the precinct e.g. school and community gardens, garden beds outside community facilities
- 6.2 The retail centres should provide fresh food outlets
- 6.3 SSWAHS and Camden Council should collaborate to develop a Health Food Policy for Camden LGA, to ensure good access to fresh food outlets

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3. Related Design Principles

Although, outside of the scope of the Oran Park / Turner Road Precincts HIA, the following issues have emerged during the HIA process as being of relevance and significant concern to the developments at Oran Park and Turner Road as part of the larger SW Sub Regional Strategy:

Timelines

Introduction of infrastructure will need to be in a timely fashion to facilitate the development patterns of behaviour i.e. use of public transport, physical activity, community building. Social infrastructure also needs to be established early as surrounding suburbs are already at capacity. Current changes in Section 94 levies may have significant effect on this in terms of the provision of facilities.

This raises concerns that the provision of essential community facilities may be delayed or reduced until there is a significant increase in population in the two precincts.

Housing Affordability

Current plans for Oran Park and Turner Road do not promote the provision of affordable housing. If the plans proceed then the Oran Park and Turner Road Precincts will have a similar housing landscape to a number of other recently developed housing estates in the Camden LGA (e.g. Harrington Park) where the average price for housing is \$400,000.

This is not consistent with the consensus across the five metropolitan strategies (Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth, SE Queensland and Sydney) that there is a need to introduce policies to ensure a supply of affordable housing and urban renewal programs to address the spatial effect of disadvantage emphasise the need for mixed forms of housing to promote affordability.

Agriculture

Opportunities should also be sought to protect some agricultural land and to promote diversity of land use (including land use for agriculture, housing, and recreation). The production of locally grown fruit and vegetables should be a priority for the Sydney Metropolitan strategy and Sydney South West regional strategy, to prevent all currently productive and fertile agricultural lands in the area being replaced with housing development.

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