



Western Sydney
Local Health District

Centre for Population Health

'Gungurra' Building 68, Cumberland Hospital
5 Fleet Street, North Parramatta
LBM 7118 Parramatta BC NSW 2124
Tel 9840 3603 Fax 9840 3608

11th, August 2022

Johnathan Kerr
Contact Planner for M7 Motorway
(Mod 6 Widening)
Planning and Assessment
Department of Planning and Environment
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124

Dear Mr Kerr,

**RE: M7 Motorway (Mod 6 Widening), Application Number SSI-663-Mod-6
Opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing**

The Centre for Population Health (CPH), Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD), thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the proposed widening of the M7 Motorway.

Chronic health conditions such as, diabetes, overweight and obesity, cancer, heart disease and mental illness are the leading cause of ill health and hospitalisation within our community. The prevalence of these risk factors is in turn determined by several *social and environmental* determinants of health such as education, housing, transport, employment, social networks and access to healthy food.

While the links between these health determinants and planning are complex, there is a substantial body of evidence linking the built environment to health and wellbeing outcomes of the community, particularly in the following three domains of: getting people active, connecting and strengthening communities, and providing access to healthy food options.¹

Based on evidence relating to how the built environment impacts population health outcomes and the information provided:

- CPH recognises the opportunity the widening of the M7 offers for additional active transport links that provide a connection across the M7. While there are 37 entry/exits onto the M7 cycleway within the Blacktown LGA, only seven provide a connection across the M7. Additional connections would enable movement across the M7 linking neighbourhoods severed by the motorway.

Connections across the M7 would increase opportunities for people to be active, use active transport for local trips and increase community connectivity. This would provide additional health and wellbeing benefits and help address further the negative health and wellbeing impacts of operation identified in Chapter 7.12; decreasing cardiovascular health, increasing isolation and reducing the sense of community and community cohesion. The current proposal seeks to address these negative health impacts only through reduced congestion.

Western Sydney Local Health District
ABN 48 702 394 764

Darcy Road, Westmead
PO Box 533 Wentworthville, NSW 2145
Tel 9845 5555 Fax 9845 5000

CPH is aware that Blacktown City Council have identified four points along the M7 that would provide improved active transport access and connect communities to each other and to the regional open space network:

- two near Richmond Road connecting the Western Sydney Regional Parklands to the Eastern Creek Corridor and the Northwest Release Areas
- two at Rooty Hill connecting communities either side of the M7 and enhancing the connectivity of the Great West Walk.

CPH is also aware that additional links to Western Sydney Parklands are needed, including:

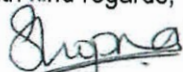
- a new link across the M7 from the northern end of Precinct 1 - Nurragingy to the Eastern Creek Corridor, heading up to the Northwest Release Area precincts
- a connection from the M7 shared path to the Wallgrove precinct, part of which is currently sandwiched between the Great Western Highway and the M4.

CPH supports the provision of all these active transport connections.

- CPH commends the consideration of climate change impacts in Chapter 7.14. CPH has a particular interest in mitigation of extreme heat in Western Sydney, with heatwaves being the biggest killer of all natural disasters in Australia.² In Western Sydney, work in the area of urban heatwave management and prevention is underpinned and guided by the Turn Down the Heat, Strategy & Action Plan (2018), developed and led by Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC), supported by WSLHD and local Councils. The associated resources Urban Heat Planning Toolkit and Cool Suburbs Tool provide landuse planning considerations, strategies and measures to reduce urban heat for development in Western Sydney.
- CPH support the consideration of opportunities for additional shade for road users who may be exposed to high temperatures for prolonged periods (e.g. breakdown bays), Table 7-109, CC2 Mitigation Measures. CPH recommends that additional shade (natural and/or built shade) also be extended to users of the shared path.
- CPH recommend further consideration of the proposal to replace the trees that are to be removed with shrubs. Table 7.10.6, notes that the replacement of trees may not be possible due to maintenance requirements but that there may be opportunities for future tree planting. From a health perspective, replacing trees with trees is preferable to shrubs. Trees provide shade reducing the health impacts of ultraviolet light³ and heat. Shrubs also offer fewer sight lines, than trees with open trunks. Lack of sight lines can reduce people's perception of safety.⁴ It is recommended that the replacement of trees with trees rather than shrubs be considered on a case-by-case basis, with replacement with trees being the preferred outcome. Consultation with WSROC and Blacktown City Council and their work on Climate Resilient Street Trees is recommended.

Please contact Health Promotion's *Partnerships and Healthy Places* team, for further information or clarification on points raised in this letter. Contact: Elizabeth.leece@health.nsw.gov.au

With kind regards,



Dr Shopna Bag
Director Population Health
Western Sydney Local Health District

References:

1. Kent J, Thompson SM and Jalaludin B. *Healthy Built Environments: A review of the literature*. Sydney: Healthy Built Environments Program, City Futures Research Centre, UNSW; 2011. Report number; ISBN: 978-0-7334-3046-6.
2. Coates L, Van Leeuwen J, Browning S, Gissing A, Bratchell J, Avci A. 2022, *Heatwave fatalities in Australia 2001 – 2018: An analysis of coronial records*. International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction 67,102671.
3. Parsons, P., Neale, R., Wolski, P. & Green, A. 1998, *The shady side of solar protection*, Medical Journal of Australia, 168: 327–330.
4. NSW Ministry of Health, *Healthy Built Environment Checklist: A guide for considering health in development, plans and proposals*. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health; 2020. ISBN: 978-1-76081-302-4