

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

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Submission from the Auckland Regional Public Health Service on the Draft City Safe Plan.

1. Thank you for the opportunity for the Auckland Regional Public Health Service to provide a submission on the Draft City Safe Plan.
2. This submission represents the views of the Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS). ARPHS provides public health services for the three district health boards in the Auckland region (Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata District Health Boards), with the primary governance mechanism for the Service resting with Auckland District Health Board. This submission represents the views of ARPHS and does not necessarily represent the views of the three District Health Boards.
3. ARPHS understands that all submissions will be available under the Official Information Act 1982, except if grounds set out under the Act apply.
4. The primary contact point for this submission is:

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Introduction

5. ARPHS is a regional public health service provider and works towards improving, promoting and protecting the health of people in the Auckland Region. ARPHS has an active commitment to working with central and local government, other health service providers, iwi and local communities to develop effective strategies to promote and protect the health of the people of the Auckland Region.
6. ARPHS takes a whole of population approach but targets resources to those locations and people who will benefit the most. The Service operates in an outcomes based framework which reflects the reality that it cannot create public health by itself, but must work with a range of partners in a whole of community approach to achieve the public health ends sought. The Service has identified six vital few outcomes to be the focus of its efforts, namely:
 - Reduction in the incidence and impact of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.
 - Reduction in the incidence and impact of infectious disease.
 - Reduction in the incidence and impact of tobacco and alcohol related harm.
 - Reduction in the incidence and impact of cancer.
 - Reduction in the incidence and impact of environmental inequalities.
 - Reduction in the adverse effects of environmental hazards.
7. The Auckland region faces a number of public health challenges through changing demographics, increasingly diverse communities, outstanding infrastructure needs, the balancing of transport needs, and the reconciliation of urban design and urban intensification issues.
8. Policy to affect health gain is often marginalised to medical care. However, health is influenced by a broad range of policy decisions and is not solely the responsibility of the health sector. Planning and policy decisions by central government, local government and non-government agencies can have a large impact.
9. There is a shared responsibility between the health sector, local authorities, central government agencies, non governmental organisations and individual community members, to advance population health and community wellbeing. There is a need to foster stronger partnerships that work collaboratively to improve the health of the people of the Auckland region.

Determinants of Public Health

10. ARPHS believes that public health forms a central part of Council's social, economic, environmental and cultural outcomes framework, and that the effect on public health should form part of all Council decision making. ARPHS recommends Council use appropriate tools, such as health impact assessments¹, for assessing public health risks and impacts of Council decisions. One of the key reasons for undertaking a health impact assessment is to assist local authorities in fulfilling recent legislative requirements in relation to health and wellbeing. Using tools such as health impact assessments will help decision makers to ensure that they meet the wellbeing aims of the Local Government Act. The health impact assessment process will also help promote inter-sectoral collaboration which will help reduce inequalities in health.

¹ See "A Guide to Health Impact Assessment: A Policy Tool For New Zealand"
<http://www.nhc.govt.nz/phac/publications/guidetohia.pdf>

11. To assist Council in providing for the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of their communities ARPHS has published the second in a series of state of public health reports "Improving Health and Wellbeing: A Public Health Perspective for Local Authorities in the Auckland Region" (the SOPHAR report²). It is hoped that Council will find the state of public health report a valuable resource and that it will aid decision making as Council works towards achieving its community outcomes.

City Safe Plan

12. ARPHS is generally supportive of the goals, objectives and actions contained in the Draft City Safe Plan. The focus of the plan is on crime prevention rather than areas traditionally seen as public health issues, however safety from crime is a factor that can impinge on public health as fear of crime may make travel by private vehicle preferable to walking or other active exercise in the eyes of part of the population.

City Safe Plan Strand – Safe Places and Spaces: A Safe Environment.

13. ARPHS notes the comment under Perceptions of Safety "Conversely, having police and other non-threatening or familiar people around makes people feel safer".
14. In her address to the 2nd NZ Walking Conference in Nov 2006, Annette King³ referred to "research that shows that more people walking around in urban areas contributes to a decrease in crime, but for this to happen we need more pedestrian areas in the first place."
15. There is little explicit consideration of the issue of how to encourage an increase in pedestrian numbers in the Draft City Safe Plan.
16. ARPHS believes that the Draft City Safe Plan would be improved by ensuring that there is an explicit acknowledgement of the need to encourage an increase in pedestrian numbers and suggests that there should be an additional element in the Safe Places and Spaces: A Safe Environment strand of the plan under the heading 'Active Transport' or 'Walkability'. Within this additional element should be clear and explicit links to other Auckland City strategies such as the Auckland City Walking and Cycling Strategy and the Active Auckland Plan.
17. The Auckland City Walking and Cycling Strategy provides guidelines for improving walking and cycling safety. The Active Auckland Plan (still under development) contains a range of initiatives designed to increase the levels of physical activity by Aucklanders. There is need to link these three documents to ensure that there is increased availability to safe walking and cycling accessways in order to increase pedestrian traffic. Increased numbers of Aucklanders engaged in walking, cycling or using public transport will improve the public's perceptions of safety.
18. From a public health view point ARPHS supports the opportunity for safer walking and cycling, resulting in an increased level of activity which in turn will reduce the likelihood of obesity and diabetes, pedestrian and cycling injuries, and improve water and air quality, while enhancing mental wellbeing and social cohesion.

² Available at http://www.arphs.govt.nz/publications/Sophar06/Sophar_report06.asp

³ Available at <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=27610>

Conclusion

19. Improving public health was one of the prime reasons for the original establishment of local government. The key purpose of local government today continues to be promoting wellbeing. Public health issues are woven through all aspects of the Council's activities. The Draft City Safe plan reflects the reality of this world view, however it is disappointing that it doesn't contain increased emphasis on increasing pedestrian numbers as a factor in providing increased safety from crime. This increased physical activity as part of every day life will in turn lead to improved health and wellbeing for Aucklanders and help Council achieve the community's desired social, cultural, economic and environmental outcomes.

Yours sincerely

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