Healthy Built Environments (HBEs) are essential for improving the health of the community and keeping people out of hospital. Evidence shows that HBEs:

- Increase physical activity; connect and strengthen communities and provide equitable access to healthy food.
- Impact positively on 3 chronic disease risk factors:
  - Physical inactivity
  - Social isolation
  - Overweight and obesity

BARRIERS TO WALKING IN WESTERN SYDNEY

- Poor public transport infrastructure, long journey to work times and high rates of car dependency.
- Significantly higher temperatures and less tree coverage.
- Time, weather, perception of safety, lack of available facilities.
- Lack of awareness of places to walk and people to walk with.

WALKING BENEFITS

- **PHYSICAL HEALTH**
  - Reduces the risk of heart disease, blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, arthritis and helps manage weight.
  - Improves fitness, muscle tone and balance.

- **MENTAL HEALTH & SOCIAL**
  - Improves sleep and feelings of strength, energy and happiness.
  - Reduces depression and anxiety.
  - Facilitates social interaction and sense of community.

- **ENVIRONMENTAL**
  - Reduces the environmental impact of car use and the costs of traffic congestion, injuries, noise and pollution.

WALKING RATES IN WSLHD

WSLHD has amongst the lowest rates of walking in metropolitan Sydney. In the LHD, Blacktown and The Hills Local Government Areas (LGAs) have the lowest rates. The LHD also has:

- High rates of hospitalisations due to diabetes.
- High prevalence of overweight and obesity.

BLACKTOWN LGA IN FOCUS

On a given day:

- 18.8% of people drive for trips less than 1.5 km
- 7.3% of people participated in sufficient health enhancing walking
- 5.6% of people walked for recreation or exercise
Health impacts of higher density living study.


Other LHD Initiatives

Scalability testing of primary and secondary school active travel initiatives.

Evidence-informed submissions for improving built environments that support walking.

**OUR TARGET**

There is potential for change in Western Sydney, given that the average prevalence of ‘Regular Walking’ in the other Sydney metropolitan LHDs is twice or three times as high.¹

- Improved infrastructure for walking
- Increased rates of walking for recreation or exercise
- Decreased rates of driving for trips less than 1.5 km
- Increased rates of people participating in sufficient health enhancing walking

**How can you help?**

This work is currently undertaken by a small team.

Support Population Health and be involved in driving change in local government policy and practice in relation to Healthy Built Environments.

Advocate for Healthy Built Environments throughout WSLHD. Hospital redevelopment sites could be leaders in demonstrating Healthy Built Environment best practice.

**WHO TO CONTACT FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Helen Ryan, Co-ordinator Partnerships Program, Education & Local Government, Centre for Population Health

02 9840 3708

Helen.Ryan@health.nsw.gov.au

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