



University of the  
West of England

## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

Including Health in planning system policy-making: people, ideas, systems, and politics

- **Format:**

Presentation (in-person)

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

University of Sydney

- **Abstract (300 words):**

### **Purpose**

Despite the extensive evidence base establishing the built environment as a determinant of health, there is limited knowledge about how and why planning systems incorporate health issues in policy-making. This presentation provides insights from a program of research investigating the inclusion of health at multiple levels of the land use planning system in New South Wales (NSW), Australia.

### **Methods**

*Methodology:* Case study design mixing realist research and policy analysis using a new institutionalist framework focused on ideas, actors, structures and procedures.

*Data collection:* publicly available documentation and purposively sampled stakeholder interviews and focus groups (n=50) relating to case studies of planning system activities: legislative reform, strategic planning, and environmental assessments of mega-infrastructure (transport and mining) projects.

*Data analysis* combines empirical data with social science theories to develop propositions about conditions and mechanisms surrounding the consideration and inclusion of health in planning policy and systems.

## **Results**

We will present findings from each case study. Within each we demonstrate how influencing planning to take on health requires work within and outside of government. The healthy planning agenda runs counter to the reality of established siloes within government (including the health sector). Planning is currently driven by a neo-Liberal agenda. This requires connecting health ideas, critically as both supporting and challenging, to a market oriented system. This requires: strategic coalition building; learning the core procedures planners use to achieve goals; respecting planning as politically driven and power-laden; and recognizing windows of opportunity for influence frequently open and close.

## **Conclusion**

Health remains a novel issue for the planning sector. The NSW experience provides valuable insights for influencing the planning agenda at different levels of the system. Effective workforce strategies require, 10 years plus, investment to develop capacity, relationships and 'skin in the game'. More research is required to understand long term implementation issues.

## **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Patrick Harris is a senior research fellow and Australian National Health and Medical Research Centre early career fellow at the Menzies Centre for Health Policy, Sydney University, Australia. He holds a PhD in health and public policy and a Masters in Public Health. His research interests include health and health equity as cross cutting public policy issues, specifically within urban and regional planning and infrastructure, and the use of impact assessment to improve public health. He has over 80 publications across his career including 38 journal articles. He has been chief investigator in research funding of over Aus\$4 million, and has regularly consulted for and collaborates with government and non-government agencies including the World Health Organisation.

Dr Jennifer Kent is a University of Sydney Research Fellow in the Urban and Regional Planning program at the University of Sydney. Jennifer's research interests are at the intersections between urban planning, transport and human health and she publishes

regularly in high ranking scholarly journals. Her work has been used to inform policy development in NSW and Australia, including Sydney's most recent metropolitan strategy – A Plan for Growing Sydney. Prior to commencing a career in academia she worked as a town planner in NSW in both local government and as a consultant.

Peter Sainsbury was until his recent retirement Director of Population Health in South Western Sydney Local Health District. He holds adjunct professorial appointments at the Universities of Notre Dame, Sydney and New South Wales. Peter is Vice President of the Climate and Health Alliance, a past president of the Public Health Association of Australia, and a past member of the National Health and Medical Research Council and the Australian Health Ethics Committee. Peter's qualifications (MBBS, MHP, PhD, FAFPHM) and background cover medicine, public health, health services management and sociology. His professional interests include inequalities in health, healthy urban development, and climate change and environmental sustainability. Peter is very active in several environmental and climate change organisations. He is alarmed but not surprised that the world is doing so little to avert catastrophic climate change.