



MASTER BUILDERS
A U S T R A L I A

3 April 2024

House Standing Committee on Health, Aged Care and Sport
Inquiry into Diabetes
Email: health.reps@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee

Please find enclosed Master Builders Australia's response to Questions on Notice from the Committee.

1. Could you please tell us about the building and construction industry's role in supporting healthy communities and lifestyles?

Master Builders released its inaugural Building and Construction Sustainability Goals in 2024 that outlines its commitment to supporting a sustainable building and construction industry. These goals articulate the ambition to achieve a more robust and sustainable industry through an environmental, social and governance lens.

Under its environmental goal, Master Builders supports the delivery of a more resilient built environment through building laws, standards, and performance outcomes that are an appropriate level to meet the health and wellbeing needs of our future population and contribute to better building outcomes.

The three areas of focus in the environmental goal include actions that support a net zero built environment, resilient built environment and circular economy. This complements social and governance goals relating to industry culture, conduct and business performance.

The Sustainability Goals are available [here](#).

The building and construction industry has a major role to play in creating better housing affordability and ensuring there is adequate housing supply. Whether through mortgage repayments or rents, housing costs eat up a very substantial share for most household incomes. That's why housing affordability conditions have such a major impact on the well-being of so many Australia families and households.

In the current economic landscape we have seen a shortage of housing supply and rising interest rates which eats away at household budgets, in some instances, causing families to make sacrifices to discretionary and essential services. This has major implications for living standards and quality of life.

2. Could you please describe the ideal healthy built environment?

A healthy built environment includes neighbourhoods, towns and cities that are planned, designed and developed into communities that support people being healthy in their everyday lives.

A number of tools are available to the building industry and consumers to enhance health and wellbeing outcomes in the built environment.

For example, the International WELL Building Institute administers the WELL building standard which is a performance based system for measuring, certifying and monitoring features of the built environment that impact human health. It provides a guide to deliver spaces that enhance human health and well being. It considers ten concepts including air, water, nourishment, light, movement, thermal comfort, sound, materials, mind and community.

In addition, the World Green Building Council's Health and Wellbeing framework identifies six principles for a healthy and equitable built environment in regard to climate action, health, comfort, harmony with nature, healthy behaviour and social value.

3. What are the barriers to creating healthy built environments in Australia?

Planning requirements have a significant impact on creating healthy built environments in Australia and need to be more effective across the federation. This includes for example planning that enables solar access and natural light in developments or for developments in flood prone and disaster risk areas.

The quality of products as we transition to a net zero economy will need to be managed effectively to ensure they are fit for purpose. Better processes for product assurance, including evidence of suitability requirements in the National Construction Code and traceability systems are safeguards that need to be developed further for building and construction sector products and systems.

Developing and implementing reforms in the built environment that change building methods and practices take time, cost and can come with construction risks that need to be better factored in the reform and change management process.

Master Builders Sustainability Goals acknowledge that substantial reforms require appropriate transition, risk mitigation, education, and capacity-building processes to be effectively implemented.

4. Could you provide examples of best practice building/construction in towns across Australia who are improving their environments to encourage communities to be healthy and active?

The Cape at Cape Paterson in Victoria launched in 2019 brings together the expertise of local builders and sustainability experts, to create a modern community that supports people being healthy in their everyday lives and that better connects the community with the environment. It provides a network of walking and cycling trails that allows people to easily travel through and connect with their community. Community facilities and shared vegetable gardens provide opportunities for social connection. More information is available [here](#).



Aurora master planned community in Epping/Wollert Victoria is another example. It was also designed with walking and cycling trails that allow movement through the community without using the road network. More information is available [here](#).

5. In your view, what are some examples of good healthy built environments in other countries that Australia could learn from?

Master Builders is looking more closely at best practice approaches to construction around the world. Master Builders Victoria has recently produced a report in collaboration with other stakeholders that investigated best practice in the building and construction industry. The report considers best practice building innovation in Brussels, London, Birmingham, Toronto, Washington and NY. The report is available [here](#).

Please contact us if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

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