PIA POSITION

Planners have the ability to help create child friendly cities and communities that can contribute positively to the development of a child’s, happiness and wellbeing. With the increasing focus on Australia’s ageing population, it is important that policy makers and planners do not neglect the interests of children when managing the structure and form of Australian cities. The physical, social and economic dimensions of urban environments impacts on a child’s life by shaping their ability to form social relationships and by influencing their physical, mental and emotional health. The planning profession is committed to representing and meeting the diverse needs of the community. Children are vulnerable to environmental stress and their physical, emotional and mental needs should be a planning priority.

PIA supports the characteristics of a Child Friendly City identified by UNICEF

- Children should have good access to basic services
- Policies, resource allocation & governance to be in the best interests of children
- Safe environments & conditions that nurture the development of children
- A sustainable future – equitable social and economic conditions & protection from the effects of environmental hazards
- Children have the right to participate in decision making that affects their lives
- Special attention should be given to disadvantaged children
- Non-discrimination (gender, ethnicity, economic and social)¹

PIA ADVOCATES THE FOLLOWING ACTION:

- Governments should give due recognition to the needs of children in policy, planning and service delivery and should encourage broader community awareness of the needs and concerns of children and youth.
- Within planning, and policy development generally, community consultation should include engagement with children and youth.
- Greater awareness in policy making of the relationship between a child’s needs and the built environment, and prioritising of needs such as addressing obesity, creating a sense of belonging and place, fostering social connectedness, enhancing freedom to explore, and encouraging engagement with the environment.
• More public and policy forums such as the “Child Friendly Communities Conference – 2006” that can raise the profile of the importance of child friendly communities.

• Preparation of guidelines that ensure multi-purpose public spaces that includes opportunities for public and private spaces for children to play and socialize.

PIA also supports the Outcomes and Directions Statement issued jointly by Griffith University’s Urban Research Program and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (March 2007). In particular PIA supports the recommended actions regarding the role of the planning and design professionals:

- Champions need to be identified in the planning and design professions, and their assistance engaged in the difficult work of identifying objectives and criteria for Creating Child-Friendly Cities at a practical level.

- Relevant professional associations (eg. In the disciplines of planning, architecture, transport) should be approached and support offered to help them to host forums on these topics; and encouraged to develop good-practice publications.

**POLICY PRINCIPLES**

Creating child friendly environments generates broad economic, social and cultural benefits. It is an action and a policy end that serves the general community and is a long term investment in the life of that community².

As Australia’s urban population continues to grow, cities need to be designed with children’s needs in mind to ensure that all urban environments provide positive advantages for their development. Cities provide a diverse range of services, experiences and opportunities and enhance the possibilities for a child’s mobility and independence. If not managed well however, these same urban attributes could become disadvantages that undermine a child’s well being³.

Planners are key players in shaping and managing the built environment both at a metropolitan and a local scale. Planners are in a unique position to directly impact the creation of child friendly cities and communities. In order to increase the planning focus on the needs of children and youth the following challenges must be overcome:
POLICY PRINCIPLES (cont)

• How can children be involved in decision making processes, given limited resources and dominance of other issues (such as ageing population). PIA supports initiatives such as consulting with the student representatives from local schools as a potential way to involve children in the decision making process.

• A growing tendency to design children out of built environments through gated or exclusionary design;

• A lack of research and dissemination of information to the built environment professions about children’s issues

• The narrow sectoralism (‘silo mentality’) that operates in many organisations – where do children’s issues fit in a Local Government structure

PIA ACTION

PIA will continue to:

• Provide leadership on child friendly policies through research, advocacy and grants.

• PIA in partnership with the Property Council of Australia, Royal Australian Institute of Architects and Planning Officials Group, will lobby for a national action agenda to advocate to the Federal government the importance of its role in influencing and funding the States to improve their planning of cities.

• “Planning for Health and Well Being” is a major initiative being undertaken by PIA Victoria and funded by the Victorian Health Promotion foundation to encourage planners, and local councils to include health as a planning priority. The project will focus on key issues in health and the planning decisions that affect our health, including those that affect our children and youth.

• Develop a national guide: “Healthy Spaces and Places” with the Heart Foundation ALGA and Australian Government Department of Ageing.
THIS POSITION STATEMENT DERIVES FROM:
PIA Liveable Communities Policy
PIA Planning for Healthy Communities Position Statement

RELATED REFERENCES
Creating Child Friendly Cities (CCFC) Conference: Outcomes and Directions Statement.

¹UNICEF. 2001 “Partnerships to Create Child Friendly Cities” UNICEF.