

## Speaker's Notes

### Slide Two

- Original conception of sustainability was based on the 3 pillars of environment, economics, and social.
- Since earliest days, environmental dimension has dominated.
- Climate change has brought environmental consequences of our lifestyles into sharper focus.
- Less attention has been paid to the social.

### Slide Three

- Research and practical experience demonstrating that the physical and social fabric of a community are highly interdependent.
- Problem is we are much more competent at delivering the former than we are the latter.
- Progress on developing good quality, energy efficient homes and well designed housing estates - "challenge" now is "to build on this progress and ensure that new housing routinely creates strong communities" (Dixon and Social Life, 2012).

### Slide Four

- Lack of academic consensus on definition of social sustainability.
- It is a complex concept – brings together a number of inter-related factors (social cohesion, sense of community, quality of life, etc.).
- Manifests differently in different contexts – fluid and dynamic.
- Physical:
  - Quality housing
  - Access to local services
  - Transport
  - Employment
  - Open space
  - Environmental quality
  - Local amenity
  - Walkable design
  - Attractive public realm
- Non-physical:
  - Health
  - Quality of life
  - Wellbeing
  - Participation
  - Social inclusion
  - Social capital
  - Safety
  - Social interaction
  - Sense of community
- Dempsey et al (2011:291).

### Slide Five

- Findings of UK New Towns evaluation:
  - 1950s to 1970s – post war construction
  - 32 new towns were built
  - Housing for over three million people
- Good neighbourhood planning and design can facilitate some of the key social elements that are thought to contribute to social sustainability (like community cohesion, interaction and integration) but it does not determine it – physical design alone is not enough (it is necessary but not sufficient).
- Housing type and tenure play an important role in creating cohesive and sustainable communities. The ‘right mix’ of housing should consider “income, age, ethnicity and household types to ensure a range of households with different social characteristics.”
- Community development is identified “as an essential requirement in the creation of communities” (Stott, Stott and Wiles, 2009:38). Stott, Stott and Wiles (2009:5) add that “If the goal of sustainable and cohesive communities is to be achieved, community development must have a strategic and secure position in any new developments.”
- Developing appropriate community infrastructure was identified as a key ingredient in achieving vibrant, cohesive and sustainable communities. Stott, Stott and Wiles (2009:18) found that “Community infrastructure combines people, place and property. Place and property provide the physical opportunities/limitations to community activity, people (champions, activists, dedicated staff) provide the initiative, leadership and expertise.”

### Slide Six

- 1950s to 1970s – post war construction
- 32 new towns were built
- Housing for over three million people

### Slide Eight

- We have considered some of the UK based work (particularly that by the Young Foundation) and have adapted and developed it based on our own Australian based experience.
- Six key themesLayout and design or building blocks:
  - Gathering places and amenity
  - Supporting infrastructure
  - Social and cultural life
  - Voice, influence and participation
  - Flexibility, adaptability and incrementalism
- Each theme contains a number of features or initiatives that contribute to that building block. For example, in layout and design we talk about physical activity, diversity (housing choice), accessibility and safety – you will also see from the diagram that some of these features, like physical activity is a part of not only layout and design but also public places and amenity.
- A revised version of this diagram and the full paper that accompanies this presentation can be found on the Elton Consulting website.

## Slide Nine

- Planning and urban design directly influences the location and proximity of the uses and activities required for daily living (e.g. shops, employment, schools, etc.) this has a fundamental influence on how we live our lives.
- Urban design has a profound influence on our physical activity and the extent to which we are able to walk, cycle and use these more active forms of transport to move around on a daily basis.
- Walking for transport appears to be associated with increased residential density, street connectivity, a mix of land uses, proximity to land uses and the availability of pleasant streetscapes and quality open space.
- Diversity relates to a mix of land uses (to provide a range of local destinations) as well as housing choice to encourage a balanced and diverse community structure that includes affordable housing, housing for older people and housing for families.
- As highlighted in the review of the New Towns, physical design provides an important physical foundation however, it is not enough to create a socially sustainable community – it is necessary but not sufficient.

## Slide Ten

- Particularly in new communities a focal point for community activity is essential to the creation of a sense of community, identity and belonging.
- Lisa Wood, Lawrence Frank, Billie Giles-Corti et al (2010) 'Sense of community and its relationship with walking and neighbourhood design' – published in Social Science and Medicine in 2010 – Providing retail in communities can promote social capital and have mental health benefits – they found that a positive relationship between sense of community and commercial floor area but only when the commercial was designed to be walkable and had less area dedicated to surface parking.
- Public space provides the stage upon which the act of creating community takes place.
- Public places that foster meetings, both planned and incidental, provide a physical space for the creation of the ties and relationships that form a community.
- It is not all about urban design and expensive capital projects. PPS (Fred Kent, 2013) says that "90% of success in public spaces is about management" and the "key to successful management is understanding and being responsive to the people a place currently serves."
- Range of evidence from the public health field showing the restorative and mental health benefits of the exposure to green space (recent research from WA from Billie Giles-Corti, 2013). Many of you probably familiar with the term 'nature deficit disorder' and a range of research showing the importance of the exposure to nature for children (Last Child in the Woods).

### Slide Eleven

- Social gathering places, informal meeting spots – as important to social cohesion, connection and sense of community as formal facilities

### Slide Twelve

- Community facilities – including libraries, schools, community centres, etc. – responding to an appetite for safe places to interact, engage, learn and celebrate – and interact in both formal and informal ways.
- New conceptions of facilities like libraries – seen as a new form of ‘village green’, ‘community hub’ – places where a wide range of people can meet, exchange ideas, spend time, interact.
- ‘places you can spend time, without having to spend money.’
- Community assets – local shops, etc. – also spoken of the importance of these local destinations for promoting physical activity, but also important as local meeting places (‘third places’). The review of New Towns found that sense of community was maintained through networks of family and friends and through the “mundane and routine interactions that take place at the local shops, hairdressers and post office.”
- Human services – Services, programs and activities – facilities are just buildings without funding for services and programs to operate from them. Too rarely do we get the human service agencies involved in the planning of our new communities to understand what services may be required and how they could be best delivered.

### Slide Thirteen

- Providing a range of opportunities for people to participate in community life.
- Research by Dempsey et al (2011) – participation in collective groups and networks is an essential vehicle for the development of the bonds and networks we know as ‘social capital’.
- Timothy Beatley in *Native to Nowhere* (2004) – “Community events can help to bring people and neighbourhoods closer together, help develop lasting community relationships, and build commitments to place. We need more community events that rally people together, that call upon them to demonstrate (physically) their bonds to one another and to the community as a whole.”
- The New Towns review highlighted “the critical role played by community development staff in creating cohesive communities that are vibrant, engaged and empowered.”

### Slide Fourteen

- The Young Foundation talks of the importance of the mix of informal and formal opportunities and activities.

- Importance of facilitated activities – catalyst for engagement, interaction and participation in community life.
- Needs to be a balance between too much facilitation and an enabling approach that promotes community engagement and ownership – leads to next section on voice, influence and participation.

#### Slide Fifteen

- Grattan Institute – Social Cities (2012) Providing opportunities for people to take part in decisions that affect them and their neighbourhoods – creates a sense of stewardship and promotes connection with other residents.
- Equally important is fostering local leadership – the recent (2012:363) Victorian Inquiry into Liveability Options in Outer Suburban Melbourne reported that “residents associations are a particularly effective means of involving residents in community activity, building community spirit, encouraging social inclusion and for residents to develop a sense of ownership of new communities.”

#### Slide Sixteen

- It is recognised that new suburbs need to be well planned to ensure that social sustainability is considered in all stages of planning.
- However, shouldn't be so fixed and rigid that planning inhibits flexibility and impedes the capacity of a community to evolve and change.
- Grattan Institute 2012 work on 'Tomorrow's Suburbs' found that although new suburbs may serve initial residents well, they also need to be able to “adapt over time to the shifting needs and preferences of changing populations.”
- Greater diversity of dwellings - making it easier for residents to move within the same area and to downsize when their needs change.
- Greater land use mix and more flexible zoning.
- Flexible social infrastructure – temporary pavillions; flexible, multipurpose spaces.
- Meanwhile or temporary use of otherwise underutilised space – schools in houses, use of shopfronts for artistic and cultural activities – Renew Newcastle.
- Ellenbrook in WA developed a 'schools in houses' project where 6 residential houses were used as classrooms – with the associated street closed off to traffic to provide a play area – the schools in houses was able to commence with 49 students rather than the 300 required to trigger a Government Primary School. The Schools in Houses project continued for two years until the primary schools was built – the houses were then sold as residences.

#### Slide Seventeen

- Part of this flexibility is about 'pop ups' – which are something of a placemaking phenomenon.