



19 October 2021

Shanti Ditter
Heart Foundation
155 Hutt Street
Adelaide SA 5000

Dear Shanti,

Re: Draft South Australian Walking Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft *South Australian Walking Strategy* (the 'Strategy').

I am responding as State President of the South Australian chapter of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA).

AILA is the peak national body for landscape architecture representing over 2,500 members across Australia, championing quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities, and greater environmental stewardship. AILA anticipates and develops leading positions on issues of concern to landscape architecture, and alongside government, we work to improve the design, planning and management of the natural and built environment.

The importance of the Strategy cannot be understated; the Strategy is in effect the leading document coordinating the collective effort of numerous agents encompassing the aspirations and endeavors for walking across South Australia.

The Strategy aims to guide the planning, building and creation of walkable environments for all South Australians with a Vision for '*more South Australians walking more often, all ages, all abilities*'.

The Strategy outlines the priorities and the linked and relevant policies, strategies and some plans, and very clearly outlines the benefits of walking to society, which AILA SA supports.

The vision is strongly supported, as are the three types of walking outlined.

The Priorities outline positive statements to encourage more walking, with pragmatic objectives that are proven and sound. Promotion of walking under Priority 3 is strongly supported.

However, to influence beyond the advocacy of walking across South Australia's requires a broadening and strengthening of the Strategy.

There is little mention of how the strategy will help to guide the *building* of these walkable environments.

AILA SA considers the Strategy requires further detail in the following critical areas.

1. The Strategy's duration

The Strategy is outlined as a '10-year blueprint' however there is no detail on how it will be achieved, annual targets, a base line of walking, or how changing demographics and climate change will impact behaviour change and city and regional growth patterns.

We would recommend more work on how success is measured to achieve the vision of more people walking more often, on an annual basis, which must include a methodology or recommendations for annual report cards.

Recommendation 1: AILA SA recommends an annual report card, which includes a baseline measure to assess the success of increasing walking across the three typologies. This must include funding or recommendations for key areas of focus.



2. Measuring Success

The quality of walking conditions and greening is touched on briefly within the Strategy. Greater consideration of the quality of walking conditions, against the three types of walking – Transport, Health and Recreation and Sport – must be included and expanded.

The provision of a footpath, track or space is no longer enough to encourage the behaviour change we are seeking – we must aim for quality in our public spaces – including connected tree canopy cover, easier access, pleasant walking conditions, equitable access, seating, and wayfinding to ensure people can walk at all times of the year. As climate change is impacting our cities and regions, consideration of these impacts and measures is essential.

A more detailed series of measures would assist in helping local governments in particular address inequalities in walking conditions and access. The City of Adelaide's *Adelaide Design Manual* is a good example of qualitative definitions of the different types of streets and public spaces, and the measures for success (refer www.adelaidedesignmanual.com.au) as well as the Transport for London Pedestrian Comfort Guidance which is an excellent guide for creating more walkable and accessible places ([Pedestrian Comfort Guidance for London \(tfl.gov.uk\)](https://www.tfl.gov.uk))

Recommendation 2: AILA SA recommends a more detailed approach to assessing and guiding the quality of walking conditions, including consideration of what constitutes good walking conditions, and preparation of guidelines to assist creating more walkable places.

3. Climate Change, Green Infrastructure and Quality Green Open Spaces

Aligned with the need for more qualitative measures is the integration of green infrastructure ([refer AILA Green Infrastructure Position Statement](#)) and quality green open spaces, as outlined in the Healthy Parks Healthy People initiative ([refer Creating Greener Places for Healthy and Sustainable Communities](#)). AILA SA strongly supports the provision of integrated green infrastructure as well as quality open spaces, and these must be completely integrated within the Walking Strategy – it is not clear in the draft how these would be integrated.

Looking ahead over the 10-year horizon, the impacts of climate change cannot be understated and there appears to be a limited response to this critical aspect. Consideration of an approach to climate positive design would be a welcome addition, as this could assist across all three typologies. For example, the construction of walking trails and their whole of life maintenance and climate resilience; shade for walking in city areas and walking for transport requires a new approach to the variations in climate we are now experiencing.

Recommendation 3: AILA SA recommends the Strategy incorporates stronger priorities on climate resilience in relation to walking and the integration of the relevant measures outlined in the Quality Green Open Spaces.

4. Mental wellbeing

Physical health has been addressed but only a singular mention of mental health is outlined in the Strategy. Increasingly, and this has been proven through the current COVID-19 pandemic, recognition of mental health has become much more apparent with equitable access to our green spaces and opportunities to be active in outdoor environments. The design of these spaces and its consideration to aid in mental health as well as physical health could be better addressed.

Recommendation 4: AILA SA recommends the Strategy strengthens the benefits to mental health and wellbeing of creating more walkable environments.

5. Ensuring universal accessibility

Priority 1 Planning for universally accessible walking facilities for all ages and abilities requires expansion and how it is applied at a project shaping and planning stage, to guide and advise the stakeholders who will



use the Strategy. The priorities are supported, and we see these being reinforced with more detail on how they can be achieved.

6. Other Opportunities

There are several opportunities the Strategy may consider incorporating, including:

- Benefits of wayfinding and signage – natural wayfinding enables orientation and access using natural and built features, and this is achieved in a number of ways – from direct paths in parks, positioning of trail heads at important natural features, and views to open spaces. Wayfinding signage is a secondary and more granular measure, to enable reassurance of location and directions.
- Consideration of Connection to Country and First Nations – awareness and inclusion of actions and guidance to complement broader First Nations recognition and tools could be a great opportunity to support recognition of the traditional lands of the Kurna people, and share and celebrate the stories and places.

AILA considers the Strategy is a working basis for walking in South Australia.

Additional focus on the Strategy's approach to the planning and design of the three typologies is required to ensure the successful achievement of the vision outlined.

If the intent of the Strategy is to be widely influential, then its aspiration should include a more contextual and nuanced approach and illustrate the connection of the strategy to the design and delivery of walking for people in South Australia.

The current draft of the Strategy would benefit from more focus on the profound effect of climate change, urbanisation and our choices in the design and management of our cities and places for walking.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss how the Strategy could be broadened and strengthened, or to clarify the overall intent of this important, and welcome, initiative.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Bennett
President, AILA SA