

15 December 2021

Dear School Infrastructure NSW

Re: NSLHD Health Promotion feedback on Educational Facilities Standards & Guidelines, Master Planning Guidelines for Schools and School Site Selection and Development guideline

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Educational Facilities Standards & Guidelines (EFSG) and related planning guidelines.

Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) Health Promotion is committed to ensuring that the built environment has a net-positive impact on the health and well-being of individuals and the wider community, including our schools. In this context, we commend NSW Department of Education on reviewing guidelines relating to school master planning, site selection and development and recognising the need to accommodate for future expansion by providing sufficient open space and opportunities for active play.

The EFSG currently suggests that schools with enrolments of 1000 students should provide at least 10m² playground space per student. In the absence of evidence regarding the relationship between free play space and the health and wellbeing of school children, the 10m² figure appears to be a pragmatic reflection of what is currently available in the majority of schools.

Our recent research into the relationship between free play space and physical activity among school children¹ indicates that the probability of students meeting physical activity recommendations increases sharply between 15m² and 25m² per student. Further, where loose play equipment is available (such as balls and skipping ropes), physical activity increases in a direct relationship with increasing free play space up to 25m².

Key Recommendations:

- 1. For new school builds and renovations (where retrofitting is possible) planning guidelines for NSW Primary Schools should refer to a minimum requirement of 20m² open play space per student, with a best practice goal of 25m² open play space per student.**
- 2. In existing schools and renovations where 20m² per student is not possible, alternative strategies to provide active play opportunities should be implemented.**

While sufficient play space is a major determinant of physical activity among school children, we recognise that there are many contextual factors and alternative approaches for schools to consider.² We would therefore welcome future opportunities to collaborate with School Infrastructure NSW to support quality school design that benefits the health, wellbeing and safety of our children.

Thank you again for opportunity to provide comment on the EFSG and supporting guidelines. Should you have any queries about this submission or further collaboration opportunities please contact Eve Clark at Eve.Clark@health.nsw.gov.au or 9388 5293.

Yours sincerely



Paul Klarenaar | Director | NSLHD Health Promotion

¹ Grunseit AC, O'Hara J, Drayton B, Learnihan V, Clark E, Klarenaar P, Engelen L. Ecological study of playground space and physical activity among primary school children BMJ 2020 Vol 10 Issue 6. p.2

² NSLHD Health Promotion, School Play Space... alternative strategies, 2021