

2025 consultation

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9 July 2025

NSW Net Zero Commission

Via: [2025 consultation](#) | [Net Zero Commission](#)

Re: Consultation Paper

Dear NSW Net Zero Commission,

The Centre for Population Health (CPH), Western Sydney Local Health District (WSLHD) is committed to climate action and actively participates in a range of sustainability working groups. The CPH values the benefits of collaborative action to address climate change and partners with local Councils, Western Sydney Region of Councils (WSROC) and others. The geographic boundaries of WSLHD encompass the local government areas of Blacktown, Cumberland, Parramatta and The Hills.

The CPH recommends the following, for the Net Zero Commission's consideration.

Heat

The [Greater Sydney Heat Smart City Plan](#) describes the health consequences of heatwaves. Heat is a major challenge in WSLHD, with the number of days exceeding 35 degrees in western Sydney increasing at twice the rate of the Sydney CBD.¹

The WSLHD population is characterised by significant numbers of First Nations peoples, culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people (including refugee and humanitarian entrants) and people experiencing relative socioeconomic disadvantage. The geographic, demographic and socioeconomic profile of WSLHD makes the population more vulnerable to the health, social and economic impacts of heatwaves.²

The CPH recommends the Net Zero Commission:

- Refer to the **Greater Sydney Heat Smart City Plan** as a to guide for strategies to address extreme heat in NSW.
- Prioritise health equity in work plan and policy recommendations.
- Include those disproportionately impacted by climate change in community engagement strategies.

1. Centre for Population Health Strategic Framework 2025- 2026. WSLHD- accessed 04/07/2025.

2. [Greater Sydney Heat Smart City Plan 2025- 2030](#)- accessed 07/07/2025.

- Engage with First Nations peoples residing in WSLHD, acknowledging the unique status of Indigenous cultural knowledge and practices in relation to climate change.
- Collaborate with relevant agencies for community led solutions to improving energy efficiency. For example, the recent [Sweltering Cities community forum](#) in Parramatta identified tenant solutions to heat issues in rental properties.
- Support increased intersectoral collaboration and coordination to maximise community benefit of cool centres.
- Support increased access to free drinking water (water fountain/ bubbler/ water refill stations) on streets. The [Healthy Streets Design Check Australia](#) provides drinking water access metrics.

Transport

Active transport in the form of walking and cycling produces zero emissions. Walking, cycling and other forms of active travel can help people be more physically active in their daily lives and strengthens social connections.³ The population health benefits of physical activity are significant and well evidenced.⁴

The CPH recommends the Net Zero commission:

- Develop key strategies to support people to walk, cycle and use public transport.
- Collaborates with Transport for NSW and local government for the provision of regular and reliable public transport.
- Adopts the road user hierarchy outlined in Transport for NSW [Road User Space Allocation Policy](#).
- Advocates for provision of public transport stops within 400m of residences, as advised by the [Australian Urban Observatory](#).
- Utilises the [NSW Active Transport Health Model Reference Outcome Values](#) to demonstrate the health and economic benefits of active transport initiatives.

WSLHD has lower rates of walking, cycling and active transport use, compared to Greater Sydney¹, this can be partially attributed to hot weather limiting people being physically active.

The CPH recommends the Net Zero Commission advocate for:

- Tree planting to mitigate the heat island effect and create more liveable environments. Urban tree canopy encourages people to walk, cycle, use public transport, and also protects against over-exposure to sunlight, which can cause skin cancer.⁵ The [Draft Greener Places Design Guide](#) details tree canopy targets for urban environments.
- Sheltered bus stops. The Transport for NSW [Bus Stop Urban Design Guideline](#) provides advice on improving shade to enable people to safely use buses during hotter months.

Built environment

The CPH's work in the healthy built environment space aligns with the principles of the NSW Ministry of Health's [Healthy Built Environment Checklist](#), Transport for NSW's [Movement and Place](#) and [Healthy Streets](#) frameworks.

Housing

The population of WSLHD is one of the fastest growing in NSW. To accommodate the growing population, housing density is increasing through infill development, including the Transport Oriented Development program and new urban release areas in WSLHD, particularly in north-western Sydney.

The NSW Transport Oriented Development program presents an important opportunity to reduce carbon emissions from vehicles through the creation of more walkable neighbourhoods, consistent with the "30-minute city" described in the [Greater Cities Region Plan, A Metropolis of Three Cities](#).

3. [Active Transport Strategy](#). Transport for NSW- accessed 07/07/2025.

4. <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/urbanhealth/Pages/active-transport.aspx>- accessed 07/07/25.

5. [Health Risks from Indoor Gas Appliances](#). Australian Journal of General Practice. 2022.

The CPH recommends the Net Zero Commission:

- Support NSW Government development of guidance on environmental issues for new urban release areas.
- Be guided by housing design consistent with WSROC's [Future Proofing Residential Development](#).
- Advocate for the supply of electricity, in preference to gas, in new urban release areas and raise awareness that cooking and heating with gas is a risk factor for several health problems, including childhood asthma.⁵
- Negotiate implementation of changes to the Building Sustainability Index (BASIX) to reduce urban heat as recommended in the [Sweltering Cities Hot Roofs report](#).
- Refer to the [Healthy Higher Density Living for Families with Children: An Advocacy, Planning and Design Guide](#) to inform design excellence and Local Environmental Plan and Development Control Plan amendments that support active travel and playable neighbourhoods.
- Prioritise provision of emission reducing infrastructure, such as solar panels, in public and social housing, in alignment with a health equity approach.
- Seeks guidance on heat resilience in urban developments from tools such as WSROC Cool [Suburbs](#) and the [UV Smart Cool Playground](#) project.

Green open space

Quality green open spaces are an essential component of liveability and can mitigate climate impacts. Green open spaces are important for physical and mental health and social connection and cohesion.⁶

The **CPH recommends** the Net Zero Commission:

- Refer to the NSW Government Architect [Draft Greener Places Design Guide](#), for the delivery of green open space across NSW.

Heat Intensive Industry

The CPH recently objected to a data centre proposal on the grounds of unreasonable risk to environmental health, citing production of heat and emissions and associated adverse effects on human health.

The **CPH recommends** the Net Zero Commission:

- Carefully considers data centres as an important environmental issue.

Agriculture and land

The current review of the Australian Dietary Guidelines provides an opportunity for the Net Zero Commission to **advocate** for reduced consumption of methane producing animals in favour of a more plant-based diet.⁷

Waste

Food

The CPH refers the Net Zero Commission to OzHarvest's [Australia Leading the Way?](#) paper and [Halving Food Waste](#) joint policy brief recommendations for reducing food waste across the food supply chain and simultaneously improving food insecurity.

6. Healthy Built Environment Checklist. NSW Health. 2020

7. [The Food System, Diet and the Environment Background Paper](#) Public Health Association of Australia- accessed 09/07/2025

8. <https://www.elacta.eu/news/breastfeeding-and-the-environment/>- accessed 09/07/2025

9. <https://recyclingnearyou.com.au/vapes>- accessed 10/07/2025

Furthermore, the CPH recognises breastfeeding as the most economical and environmentally friendly way to feed an infant, producing no garbage, minimal greenhouse gases and negligible water footprint.⁸ In the event of climate related natural disasters, breastfeeding can help safeguard infant health and survival.⁸

The **CPH recommends** the Net Zero Commission:

- Promotes the environmental value of breastfeeding.

Vapes

E-cigarettes (vapes) can only be disposed through specialised programs or services as they contain e-waste and hazardous waste.⁹ Whilst rechargeable vapes have a battery and nicotine cartridge that can be removed and disposed of safely, most people use disposable vapes which do not have this ability.⁹ Some Councils in NSW accept all types of vapes, however the CPH is not aware of any drop locations for disposable vapes in western Sydney.

The **CPH recommends** the Net Zero Commission:

- Work plan and policy recommendations address the issue of vape disposal.

If required, the Centre for Population Health is willing to provide additional evidence or information in relation to our recommendations.

For further information, please contact [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
A/ Director, Centre for Population Health
Western Sydney Local Health District