



# What do we know about the laws that shape our built environments

for walking and cycling in Australia?



Creating built environments that support both active and sustainable lifestyles is a growing global priority.

Laws are an important tool for regulating the built environment. Little is known about whether the laws in Australia promote or hinder physical activity.

We used scientific legal mapping to assess the laws that influence the built environment for walking and cycling in Australia.

## What did we examine?



## What did we find?

**Most**

jurisdictions do not embed objectives in primary legislation that would promote physical activity.

**Only 2**

addressed the large majority of evidence-based standards that promote active living.

Few fully met evidence-based recommendations.

**Few**

legislated obligations for monitoring implementation of planning law.

However, most legislated responsibility for enforcement.

## 1. High-level support for physical activity



**4 out of 8** jurisdictions had health as an objective in their Planning Act



**2 out of 8** jurisdictions had objectives to increase active and public transport in their Transport Acts



**One** jurisdiction had a Climate Act with obligations to consider the climate impact of planning

## 2. Standards for active environments

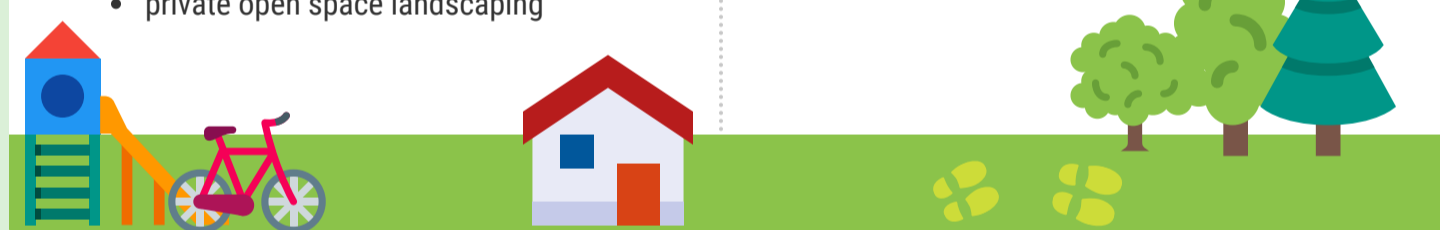
Four jurisdictions addressed more than half of the 12 standards examined.

### Most widely addressed:

- residential density target
- distance of homes from an activity centre
- distance of homes from public open space
- distance of homes from public transport
- provision of bicycle infrastructure
- private open space landscaping

### Least commonly addressed:

- street block size
- footpath provision
- tree canopy cover



## 3. Alignment to evidence

Only three jurisdictions had one or more planning law standards that fully met recommendations.

No jurisdictions had standards that fully met recommendations for:



Minimum residential density target



Public open space accessibility



Primary school accessibility



Public transport accessibility

## 4. Enforcement and monitoring



Most have a single source of default, comprehensive provisions for design and planning that apply jurisdiction-wide.



Five jurisdictions addressed design review in their planning law, but only two specified circumstances in the law where design review was required.



Few jurisdictions addressed performance monitoring in their planning law, but most specified responsibility for enforcement.

## What are the opportunities for improvement?

1 Amend primary legislation to enable a more integrated approach to creating environments for active living



2 Incorporate evidence-based standards into planning law



3 Realign existing legal standards to meet recommendations



4 Strengthen obligations to monitor the performance of planning law



## What does this mean?

Increasing physical activity is a systems issue, requiring actions across multiple sectors. Our findings reveal opportunities where laws could be strengthened to promote more active environments in Australia.

Further detail is available in the publications and resources associated with this visual summary, at <https://preventioncentre.org.au/research-projects/employing-physical-activity-to-prevent-chronic-disease/#project-resources>