



# Town-health focus of talk

CAN the design of your neighbourhood make you sick? Dr Lisa Wood, who will speak at the Critical Horizons Regional Futures Conference in Bunbury, says there is growing evidence the built environment affects physical and mental health.

“The design of neighbourhoods is associated with levels of walking, cycling and use of public transport, together with sense of community, positive mental health, depression and asthma,” she said.

“Transport planning, housing and public open space design are also associated with health and wellbeing at the individual and community level.

“In relation to mental health, social isolation, loneliness and lack of sense of community are factors that impact on mental health.”

Dr Wood, of UWA’s Centre for the Built Environment and Health,

will speak on the topic at the upcoming 2010 Critical Horizons Regional Futures Conference.

Hosted by the South West Development Commission, the conference will see 15 leading Australian experts in Bunbury on June 2 and 3 to talk about global trends and their implications for the South West.

“In terms of ensuring the built environment has a positive effect on health, there are things we want to plan and design ‘in’, and plan and design ‘out,’” Dr Wood said.

#### PLAN AND DESIGN ‘IN’

- Connected street networks to encourage walking
- Public transport, parks and shops/cafes within walkable distance of homes and workplaces
- Mixed density and housing that caters to a variety of life stages
- Presence of greenery and nature
- Things for people to do within the community

• ‘Eyes on the street’ to promote community safety

• Bring back local shops and eating places as this is good for sense of community and for walking.

#### PLAN AND DESIGN ‘OUT’

- Streets that go nowhere
- Urban sprawl
- Poorly designed high density that doesn’t provide adequate social and recreational spaces around it
- Car dominance
- Vandalism that results from alienating young people or not providing places and things for them to do
- Less dominance of massive centralised retail centres.

The conference will also feature former Victorian premier Jeff Kennett, Peter Ellyard and John Sanderson.

This week is the last opportunity to register for the conference. See [www.criticalhorizons.com.au](http://www.criticalhorizons.com.au) or phone Alan Cross on 9792 2000