

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE
COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
INQUIRY INTO
CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

At Sydney on Tuesday 16 May 2006

The Committee met at 10.40 a.m.

PRESENT

The Hon. J. C. Burnswoods (Acting Chair)

Legislative Council

The Hon. K. F. Griffin
Ms S. P. Hale
The Hon. M. J. Pavey
The Hon. P. G. Sharpe

Legislative Assembly

Mr S. R. Cansdell
Mr M. J. Daley
Mrs J. Hopwood

ACTING CHAIR: I declare the meeting open. In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, Mrs B.M. Perry, I will take the Chair. Other members of the Committee are also unwell today.

PHILIP RAYMOND CRANE, Senior Lecturer, School of Humanities and Human Services, Queensland University of Technology [QUT], Carseldine Campus, Beams Road, Carseldine, Queensland, affirmed and examined:

ACTING CHAIR: The Committee has received your submission. Do you wish your submission to be included as part of your public evidence?

Dr CRANE: Yes, I am very happy to do that. In giving evidence today I would like to add other material.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes, that is excellent. Thank you.

Dr CRANE: Before the Committee addresses the prepared questions, do you wish to make an opening statement?

Dr CRANE: Yes. Firstly, I thank the Committee for the invitation. This is an incredibly important inquiry; it is the first of its type in Australia. It could well lay the foundation for not only further effort in New South Wales but also have more National significance down the track. That is my hope and I wish the Committee the very best with this inquiry. There are some areas that I did not cover in depth in my submission, which was necessarily very brief and covered quite a lot of territory. I would be interested in tabling further information that I have come across since that time. I will refer to some of that briefly.

ACTING CHAIR: You can table that now if you wish, or keep it with you so you can refer to it in answering some questions.

Dr CRANE: Yes. First, an article in the journal, Social and Cultural Geography, Volume 7, No. 1, February 2006, by Brendan Gleeson, titled "Desocialising Space: The Decline of the Public Realm in Western Sydney".

ACTING CHAIR: The Committee heard from Professor Gleeson last week.

Dr CRANE: Good. His work provides an important larger backdrop to the rather more applied focus of my submission. I acknowledge that my submission really did not go into depth into that broader appreciation of what is happening in urban space with the same theoretical robustness as Brendan's work does. That is all I wish to say, I am happy to take questions.

ACTING CHAIR: Would you give a brief overview of the work you are doing?

Dr CRANE: Currently I co-ordinate a public space research team located in the School of Humanities and Human Services at QUT. That is the latest in our efforts to research and work in this area. I have undertaken research and consultancy in the area of public space, most specifically public space and young people, since the mid-1990s. In that time I have done a lot of work for local governments, in particular about how they might address public space issues and tensions that crop up for them. In addition, I continue to co-ordinate a web site called Yspace, which is a clearinghouse for resources and information on young people in public space, that is explicitly underpinned by values of building more inclusive communities.

The current work in the public space research team focuses around attempting to look at how we might develop tools for gauging the link between the built environment and social amenity, not just for young people but in relation to all people; and how we might use things such as geographic information technology [GIS] to help people involved in decision making have a better sense of what is happening to our public spaces over time and be able to put numbers to things that are broadly happening such as the disappearance of many forms of public space or its reduced availability and the link that has to reduced amenity and reduced sustainability in communities. Currently we are looking at how we might develop tools that marry social indicators as experienced by people with physical and geographic indicators and typologies of space.

CHAIR: Can you tell us a bit about general changes in the urban landscape in recent decades?

Dr CRANE: In relation to urban space, many of the tensions that I have had to respond to in one form or another over the years related to the increasing multiplicity of demand on particular spaces by different user groups. In other words, spaces are being far more intensely utilised, often by groups when there are different prevailing interests.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Like dogs and children!

Dr CRANE: Yes, like dogs and children and like commerce and non-consuming hanging out in relation to young people; about how it is the public, in public space, and what that means. We have seen a massive shift to privatisation and commodification of space; even space that is owned by governments if not privatised is often commodified. For example, the Queensland Government set up literally a corporation to manage South Bank, the old Expo site, in Brisbane. It becomes a corporatised form of space, which employs private security, essentially still within government hands in the broadest sense. The Roma Street Parklands in Brisbane have been redeveloped. We have seen a commodification in the sense that space that was fairly loosely orientated to public use increasingly has very specific purposes attached to it.

In larger cities there have been significant ties to the goals of general economic development in the city—whether about building a liveability image, as it has been in Brisbane, and attracting international business to set up headquarters in that city, or in a city like Sydney, where tourism and inner-city living combine to create substantial demands on public spaces and how they are orientated in not only the central business district [CBD] but increasingly in other centres around the city. Those pressures mean that latent tensions and issues that may have warranted some attention in the past become even further exacerbated quite quickly. Any underlying issues around people having a different perception of what they want to do and how they want to do it, whether the general public or people in business or people in public life these differences become far more exacerbated the more that you concentrate those spatially.

It very easily results in what I would call facility stress; for example, behaviour which may not warrant attention in previous years is warranting attention because it is in a far more compact space with multiple uses, multiple demands. For example, we see public nuisance offences applied in a far more rigorous way in law enforcement than in the past when what was out of sight may have been out of mind.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: I am very interested in how you work with local government. Can you enlarge upon that? Obviously that is the transplant into local communities in relation to your theories and your work and putting it into practice might be a completely different thing. What is the scope of your work? How difficult is it to convince local governments of your work?

Dr CRANE: Broadly speaking it is of two sorts. One is where there has been broader policy advice required by local government, so they want broad advice about principles that ought to be used in urban planning, design and management. For example, in 1998 the work I did for Brisbane City Council with a colleague, Phil Haywood, was tabled. It was called "Out and About". Brisbane City Council wanted guidelines for its major centres—and in Brisbane the major centres are those regional hubs where there are shopping centres and transport interchanges, alongside the CBD, which is considered a major centre as well.

We were asked to develop guidelines for how these should be designed, planned and managed in respect to young people. That was essentially a fairly significant research exercise, one that was highly participatory, in terms of getting various stakeholder involvements in that from the Property Council to young people directly themselves and other age cohorts.

The other end of the spectrum is that local government has an almost continuous need to respond to issues that are raised from constituents about public space tensions—what I call hot-spot management. For example, things 'blow up' in a park, all sorts of complaints coming from residents around the park and what is happening in that park et cetera. Council is expected to do something. The question then becomes: What? What does it do? What does it

do about a noise-related problem, needles left around, crime-related problems or simply conflicts about how a space ought to be used? In a lot of instances I have done work around that.

For example, the Myer Centre Youth Protocol started from a complaint taken by a young man to the media that he had been unfairly treated when he was told to leave the centre for having a particular hairdo—he had a Mohawk hairdo. This young fellow had come down from a country town and was in the centre. That resulted in quite a lot of media attention and, as a result, council drew on the broader work that we had done about "Here are some guidelines for how you might respond to various sorts of tensions and challenges in terms of public space and young people. Could you please do some further work to help sort this out" because local government is often seen as having some type of role in the negotiation of local-level conflict, particularly around the use of space.

Those two types of broader and then very localised intervention to some extent are two sides to the one coin. My view now is that politically there is often some level of energy to get in and sort out specific hot spots, and that if we can do that well, and do that in a way that builds the opportunity for further and broader types of actions, we can use what has politically got some interest, that is, sort out this particular issue in this particular context. If we do some broader work simultaneously we can bring that in and we can build on the more localised work and build into a broader political acceptance for more substantial strategies that go across different types of jurisdictions.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: When you say that one young man was evicted because of his hairstyle, was it his perception it was his hairstyle or was it his actions, that is, abuse or his behaviour in the centre? Was that ever established or was it specifically his hairstyle?

Dr CRANE: I do not want to be too assertive about this, given I was not directly involved in those circumstances, but it was reported to us, and subsequently, I think, the willingness of the management of the centre to engage in a problem-solving approach, all this supported the idea that this really had been more about his hairdo. There had been some issues with "punks" in that centre previously where there had been behaviourally related things occurring.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: It was pure association—

Dr CRANE: Yes, it appears as though security within the centre moved to a point of deciding that young people who were of that appearance were part of a group not welcome in the centre. I have to say that centre management ended up being incredibly supportive of looking at this whole area.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I want to follow up on the Myer Centre because I know it was one of the first places to put in place these protocols. Is it still operating? How has it changed over time?

Dr CRANE: The protocol is still operating. It was one of the sites that the committee visited when it made its trip to Brisbane. The staff are required to be aware of the protocol and it is still seen as an active part of the centre's policy. I think it is fair to say that we did an evaluation of sorts. We did a follow-up on the protocol that looked at its operation in the first 18 months. From that it was very clear that the initial level of angst that had developed between some young people and management, and the level of difficulty in the centre in terms of the number of people that were being banned, had dropped away dramatically to the point where no young person was banned in the period following the introduction of the protocol.

When I say that, as part of the protocol, management were given the capacity to ask anybody to leave the centre for up to the remainder of that day without it being considered a ban, in a sense. So that does not mean that no young people were asked to leave the centre, but what it does mean is that there were no longer than the rest of the day bans in the period that followed up.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: The centre would have had the right to ban kids that were, for instance, extremely badly behaved or extremely abusive?

Dr CRANE: That is actually not true in the Queensland context. The law around shopping centres and trespass in New South Wales, as I understand it, is a little different than that in Queensland. Garner Clancy is most probably better qualified to give you the details of the legal situation in New South Wales. One of the interesting things—and the Myer Centre is a very good example—is that we cannot assume that it was simply the shopping centre's right to decide who came in and who did not. For example, at the bottom floor of the Myer Centre is a public bus interchange. You actually have to cross the Myer Centre property, at least for a few metres, to access the bus exchange.

Given that we have anti-discrimination legislation in Queensland and in most other States if you withhold services or goods to a person on a discriminatory basis that would not be lawful. Given the location and the whole shift to privatising and corporatising and given the massive shift we have seen of public and government delivered services now being delivered from places like shopping centres, I think the question is what actually are people's rights? What are the rights of citizens to access particular sorts of services that are considered essential to our living and our life and our conduct of our everyday business is an extremely important point.

From a governance point of view I would have to say I do not believe government has really fully appreciated the role it has in protecting the basic rights of citizens to access basic goods and services in a world where it has

overseen the privatisation of many goods and services to being delivered from private property. What is the Government's role in this new privatising world in terms of guaranteeing access? Does someone have the right to catch a bus separate from the right to go shopping?

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: Are you doing a lot of reactive work for councils on that plan, even though you want to do further work? Is it your impression that councils may not seek expert advice about what they have jurisdiction over until a hot spot arises?

Dr CRANE: My sense is that historically there has been the most energy when there has been some issue to react to, and that that has unfortunately meant that whilst there has been some quite good proactive work done, much of the energy fuelling "We need to do something about young people, public space and the built environment" comes from a recognition that there are issues and tensions which need resolving. I think that is a reality. My concern is that it is reactive practise if it limits itself to just dealing with local level hot issues. My view is that that can be one avenue into gaining the engagement of the policy process in what really is a far broader range of issues.

ACTING CHAIR: Is it easier for Brisbane City Council that covers the whole metropolitan area to be more forward thinking rather than reactive compared with the multiplicity of separate councils in the city of Sydney, for instance?

Dr CRANE: Yes. My experience is that larger local governments have understood the need to be thinking in policy terms as well as just localised practise terms more easily.

ACTING CHAIR: Have you had dealings with councils in regional and rural parts of Queensland or is most of your experience with Brisbane?

Dr CRANE: No, I have done a lot of work with councils in the Northern Territory, namely Palmerston and Darwin which are often regional in size.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What are the good ideas that you have encouraged them to follow-up on?

Dr CRANE: Palmerston City Council was interesting in that it used the opportunity for recognising there were hot issues in public space to look at, to undertake an examination of the whole of the inner central business district [CBD]. The work we did with Palmerston involved looking at not only particular spaces but the way they interfaced with each other in a whole of CBD sort of way and that was very useful. For example, there were issues about buses at the bus depot, the shopping centre, how the future planning ought to be undertaken and about indigenous people utilising the inner city area in a way that upset some other people. We were able to look at the issues specifically but in the context of the whole inner CBD area. As it turned out

there were lots of inter relationships between those issues, for example, the school and the bus depot were located on opposite sides of the shopping centre which meant that facility stress was happening. When the students left school they were all marching via the shopping centre on the way through to the buses which, if you live in the Territory for any period of time, you know it is hot and there was limited shade at the bus depot.

So, things like built environment issues, like how do you design a bus depot in a hot tropical climate and where is that positioned in relation to the shopping centre and the school? How do you do the roadworks there? A lot of issues with the buses were to do with rocks being thrown at the buses. They can be seen as behavioural issues and could be responded to behaviourally. The difficulty was in that case that they used river rocks as the fill to separate the lanes of road across which the students walked from the school to the bus depot. It is no wonder they had a supply of missiles. There being some level of frustration and tension on hot days one could ask is that a behavioural issue or is that a built environment issue?

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: A bad planning issue?

Dr CRANE: A bad planning issue, bad design.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: They did the same thing in Grafton. They put those rocks in the streetscape and wondered why windows were being smashed.

Dr CRANE: That is right. We can pick it up as a behavioural issue but really it is a built environment issue.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: It could be a bit of both?

Dr CRANE: It can be bit of both. Most probably there is no way of making so inert our environment that there are still not things people can do with objects, but in that case, what was happening was that the left hand was not at all aware of the impact on the right hand of the way something had been constructed. I guess we are aware of that interface through things like crime prevention through environmental design, CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environment Design) type principles, where we are quite comfortable with the idea that there is a link between built environment and behaviour, and what we have often tended not to do nearly as much as we ought to is to appreciate that what we might see as a behavioural issue on the surface from young people is often underpinned by a range of factors some of which we could do something about and assist the situation. But we are often very quick to leap on a behavioural explanation in relation to what young people are seen or perceived to have done, and then to most quickly suggest that it is a management, or a police, or a security response that is needed rather than looking at the full range of factors that might be contributing to the situation and looking at what is the most effective and efficient way to respond to these sorts of issues.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Going back to something I talked about before, I know there are discriminatory practices in discouraging young people from public spaces—shopping centres, malls, et cetera—and going back to what you said before about people's rights being the priority to give them access to public, and even some private, properties, you really have to draw a line when people's rights in general are being taken away by the abuse by the minority of these young people who should be banned, and are in New South Wales, from shopping centres because of their offensive and almost criminal behaviour in these centres. That sort of thing has to be in place to be able to ban those completely destructive people with no respect, who bring into disrepute all the good young people who are there just sitting, enjoying the public space?

Dr CRANE: Yes. My thoughts are not that a regulatory approach of applying sanctions to people does not belong in the tools we have in public governance. It is rather that we have tended to be too quick to use them when we have had other possibilities and other understandings we could have developed. We often do not really appreciate what is happening in a particular space, whether it is a local space or a whole citywide space. We have tended not to understand, or pause to understand well, what the dynamics are in relation to young people in those sorts of spaces. Where there are needs to deal with significant behavioural issues, my view is that it is more useful have a very clear and time-limited intervention, whether it be policing or other forms of authority, to deal with intensity and behavioural issues that exist, but we should not rely on that as the long-term, ongoing strategy we are most dependent on for having good public order and amenity from public spaces.

Regulation is not irrelevant to that. We really need to and can, I believe—and it is demonstrated in practice—develop more positive cultures and environments and do things in a different way that build communications. For example, the Shopping Centres Council of Australia is highly supportive of getting management, security and young people to communicate around issues and tensions, full well understanding if they get into a case of the we are bigger than you, we can do this, it can feed an unhelpful dynamic and it can escalate issues rather than address them.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In relation to your comments about your fears about privatisation and corporatisation of public space, and you referred to South Bank and the Roma Street areas, we received evidence is from Griffith University that Roma Street has been a stunning success. Could you give examples of where government has privatised and/or corporatised public space and it has had serious ramifications for people, young people, where they have been excluded?

Dr CRANE: If I can just touch on Roma Street for a minute. It depends how you look at something whether it is a stunning success. One of the interesting things about Roma Street was that largely as a result of the work the Brisbane City Council has been doing there was a substantial effort to consult with young people and develop a range of input from young people

about how Roma Street could be developed in a way that would make it somewhat youth friendly. There were some 30-odd suggestions that came out of focus groups, consultancies and working parties with young people. My understanding is not one of those ended up making it into the final way Roma Street was done. That does not mean Roma Street is not a fantastic place for some people, but it means a vast amount of energy went into consultation processes and very little outcome in relation to that was there for young people, although that was at one level an intention. That is part of the limitation of participatory and consultation strategies, that they are tantamount to how we used to criticise public funding as being input oriented. It is about what we do in the process not about the outcomes.

The general point I would like to make is that we ought to be shifting our attention much more to 'What are the outcomes that would tell us that we have youth-friendly urban areas, towns, cities, places?' What would we see? What would young people tell us were their views as a result of that, that we ought not to over-rely on participatory frameworks when urban development happens so fast, with such rapidity, that it is impossible for participatory processes to effectively feed into them and alter their outcomes. That is where the role of government is very clearly to identify key indicators and key principles and key benchmarks based on evidence and based on research that indicate what you would see in a child and youth friendly city or town or place and to demand some of those things in the planning process.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Can you remember those 30 things that youth wanted for Roma Street that did not occur?

Dr CRANE: Some of it was about seating that would be convivial to conversation that was designed by young women in design workshops. Some of it was for there to be a place to skate through the parkland. It would mean it was possible for the young people who were skating to do so without causing difficulty or crowding to other people who were walking.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Is there a skate park in the area?

Dr CRANE: No. There was a range of things young people suggested and which were not incorporated.

ACTING CHAIR: Can you give us some examples of good practice in relation to designing and looking after public space? What would you point to as good examples to follow?

Dr CRANE: Yes. There are a whole range of examples from the international literature, particularly UNESCO's work and *UN Habitat* has produced an interesting analysis of the characteristics of the sorts of projects and programs from around the world, that seemed to have had a child and youth-friendly impetus to them. There are public spaces that allow, for example, and facilitate young people being able to meet informally in groups. I think they are extremely important. Queen Street Mall has worked very well

over the years. It has largely worked well because to walk through it you meander. It has a sort of a curved method of moving through it which, in design terms, creates eddies like a river would create eddies at its corners, and allows a lot of informal clustering. It also allows people at different times of the day, or even if there is more than one group simultaneously using the place, to take up territory that is not overlapping and creating conflict with another group wanting to have some territory. So in a built environment design sense, being able to create public spaces that allow multiple groups simultaneously to use the space at different times of day and night without causing each other grief and without having a negative impact on each other is a terribly important design feature. It gives the capacity for us to promote public spaces as places of diversity and places, as Karen Malone talks about, 'communities of difference', as opposed to the rather homogenising demand that some public spaces require of a population.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Local governments, in Sydney particular, are under constant pressure to build and to provide facilities for young people.

Dr CRANE: Yes.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: One of the types of facilities that is invariably proposed and built from time to time it skate parks, skate ramps and BMX ramps. I note that skate ramps did not make it to the Roma Street development. When councils propose these sorts of facilities, in my experience, there is a lot of unreasonably reactionary opposition to them, particularly from the older section of the community. When the facilities are built—and sadly they are often not built because councils bow to public pressure—it is shown that the facility is a real asset. How can government, local government in particular, go about educating the community that facilities such as these for young people are not going to be the demons that some older people think they are?

Dr CRANE: I think the first thing is not to put them out of the back on a disused block that has no commercial value other than that we can put a youth facility on it. We did that a lot in the 1980s and 1990s. My experience is that overwhelmingly when young people and the community are in a relationship with each other where they have the opportunity to communicate, a lot of myths and stereotypes wash away.

Skate parks ought to be not just seen as skate parks; they ought to be seen as multiactivity—maybe youth oriented but in spatial proximity to other types of community functions. You would have barbecues, an area where a whole range of people from the community went. Skateboarding has a spectator element to it. There is an element of performance in it. The notion of putting young people out in the back blocks away from the community eye is not what young people want, it is not what is safest and it does not build that relationship between young people and other people in the community. I have seen letters to the editor in which people have said, "I was amazed when I sat and watched the skating, how pro-social and supportive those young

people were. When one fell over others went to their aid." They are qualities which many people in the community do not think young people display. It is this "otherness" that we have so easily fallen into.

As Rob White talks about it, we have approached young people with a frame of futurity. In other words, they are of value to us only because of who they will be down the track in the future—as workers, as economic contributors, as parents—as opposed to having a place in our community now as people who can contribute now. I do not think we further that incredibly useful frame of seeing them as part of the community by over-othering them in terms of considering that they have to have all their own facilities: we must only have youth-specific facilities. Many young people will say that they like and enjoy being part of the community and would prefer to be respected as part of it. This has implications for how we build and where we position new facilities. If we are going to have youth specific facilities, let us bring them into the community and not leave them out the back.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The perceived guardians of public space are generally the police. Yet they are the ones who are often—whether it is because they are so close in age to the people they are supervising as it were—very antagonistic to young people. They see them, when they congregate, as potential troublemakers. How do you set about overcoming the problem?

Dr CRANE: I agree that it is a problem. Dr Tamara Walsh from Queensland has just looked at the massive increase of charging with public nuisance offences in Queensland since the legislation was changed in 2004 to increase penalties and to make it easier for people to be charged with public nuisance offences. The policing issue has a number of elements. The more we rely on policing as the strategy the more we are asking the police to be the principal agents for managing and dealing with public space issues. So in a sense we get what we asked for. There is a long-known difficulty in relations between some police and some young people. There is a very important role for police training. Training in some jurisdictions is not particularly adequate in relation to working with young people, particularly for younger police, who sometimes do not relate to young people and marginalised young people. There is a need to engage the police as part of a broader strategy in terms of sitting alongside and communicating with a range of other people. My experience is that, if engaged, the police are quite happy to acknowledge that there are limitations to what they can do and should do. But in the absence of other types of strategies and interventions we historically have got overpolicing and overregulation and a mistaking of what is the most useful form of intervention to take.

(The witness withdrew)

MICHAEL ANTHONY MANIKAS, Chairman, 2050, www.2050.org.au, sworn and examined:

ACTING CHAIR: In what capacity do you appear before the Committee?

Mr MANIKAS: I am a quantity surveyor and represent a group known as 2050, which represents young future leaders of the built environment.

ACTING CHAIR: We have a submission from you. Are you happy for the submission to be made public?

Mr MANIKAS: Yes, I am.

ACTING CHAIR: Would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr MANIKAS: Yes. I might give a bit of background on the group and the submission we have presented to the Committee. First, I thank the Committee for attending the conference we held in November last year in Brisbane to engage the ideas of our group and the future leaders of the built environment and also for accepting our submission to the inquiry into children and young people and the built environment. Our group, 2050, is a national association of young professionals working in the built environment. We come from fields such as property development, urban design, architecture, planning, quantity surveying, engineering, building and the associated professions. We were formed out of an event that was held in the Year of the Built Environment, 2004, in Newcastle which was known as Youthquake. It was a brainstorming session organised by the Property Council of Australia, the Planning Institute of Australia and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects to get an idea on where our country is headed towards the year 2050. The outcome of that was that we elected a national committee, of which I was elected chairman, to represent the thoughts of young people in the professions and how we might make a change for a more sustainable future. The 2050 association is non-profit. Basically, it is a group of young people from around the country who devote their time voluntarily to promote and put forward the thoughts of young people towards a sustainable future. We thank the Government of New South Wales for endeavouring to address the issues facing children and young people and their relationship with the built environment through this inquiry.

We believe there is a definite need for leadership from government on this issue as we are faced with the alarming prospect that the following generations will be the first to inherit a declining planet and a quality of life lower than experienced by their parents. The fundamental idea behind our submission is that built environments that are good for children and young people will be good for the rest of the community. The priority issue facing the built environment as it relates to children and young people is sustainability. If I can use the Bruntland definition of sustainability, sustainable

development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainability is about passing on to subsequent generations a quality of life that is as good as or better than the departing generation has experienced.

The New South Wales parliamentary inquiry into children and young people and the built environment is a testament to the concerns about the needs and viewpoints of children and young people. The creative avenues through which children and young people increasingly communicate societal disaffection point to significant generational maturity and a willingness to accept responsibility in a post-modern era. Our group looks forward to being involved in the days ahead with the working with the Committee to form a more sustainable future and encouraging young people to become more involved in their society and shaping the way Australia should be in the future. If the Committee would like, I can give a quick run through of our submission as well.

ACTING CHAIR: We can take for granted that Committee members have looked at it. What has 2050 been doing since the conference in Newcastle? What are you doing now and how have the different professions you listed contributed?

Mr MANIKAS: The submission to the New South Wales Parliament is our first major submission. We are in the process of finalising a submission to the Federal Government, which prepared the sustainability report. It is currently holding an inquiry into the sustainability charter. We hope to be called to give evidence on that report as well. We are also in the process of organising our next major event, which is to be held in Melbourne in November. We have secured the services of Tony Arnel, the Victorian Building Commissioner, to speak at the conference. I am also in the process of organising next year's event, which will be in Canberra. We hope to be able to get more Federal Government involvement in that event. Besides that, we are doing more state-by-state functions to gather some numbers and get some involvement and feedback from our members. In preparing a submission we got feedback from the group. Likewise, in the one for the Federal Government we have quite a bit of feedback from our members being compiled into the submission.

ACTING CHAIR: We have a question about tertiary courses and the provision of information—I suppose guidance relevant to children and young people in the built environment. Would you like to tell us a bit about the education and training side of things?

Mr MANIKAS: In relation to tertiary courses?

ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Mr MANIKAS: We did not go into that much detail in our submission in relation to tertiary courses. We have focused more on primary and

secondary schools. We believe that compulsory parts of the syllabus should encourage the involvement of young people in sustainable practices. We did not focus much on tertiary education because we were hoping to get people involved at a younger age instead of waiting until they are in their late teens.

ACTING CHAIR: The other side is the education of your own members, given the extent to which tertiary training encourages the young professionals you are talking about to think in the sustainability terms you are talking about?

Mr MANIKAS: From the feedback we got, especially from our last event, there seems to be a definite lack in sustainable education at university. One of the main issues that came out of the conference is the lack of knowledge that people have in relation to sustainable issues and one of our aims is to try and encourage people to get involved through the community or through institutes. Tertiary is quite hard because we have found that a lot of courses have been reduced or cut out. I am a quantity surveyor and most of our courses at university have now disappeared and the future of our profession is quite scary because there is no specific quantity surveying course offered any longer at university. They have all been combined into construction courses.

There is consolidation of a lot of courses and it is really based on commercial thoughts and where people want to be. When it comes to construction, everyone wants to be a project manager. They do not want to do any work. They just want to sit in an office and push paper. Nobody wants to be a quantity surveyor, measuring how many bricks there are in a building. That is based on this whole idea of marketing and commercialism that has taken over.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: There are is still a need for that side of surveying though, is there not?

Mr MANIKAS: Absolutely.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Which means that people have to be brought in from overseas.

Mr MANIKAS: Yes. That is why in my office I am probably one of two or three Australians. The rest have got British, Scottish or Irish accents.

ACTING CHAIR: Two or three out of how many?

Mr MANIKAS: About 20 or 30 of us. There is a definite lack of our profession in the country.

ACTING CHAIR: Are you saying that in general, in all those interrelated professions, that universities have been narrowing and, in a sense, commercialising the sort of training and education that people are getting?

Mr MANIKAS: Yes, they have had to because with courses like mine, the numbers of people who want to do that course have dropped dramatically so there has been a combination of multifacets of the course to a bachelor of construction instead of a bachelor in project management, bachelor of quantity surveying and bachelor of design. They have all been crammed into one course now.

ACTING CHAIR: Is the same sort of process happening with the engineering courses?

Mr MANIKAS: I am not too sure about that, but a lot of the professions are suffering from a drop in numbers.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: You state in your submission that children living in non-urban areas often become dislocated from children living in rural areas and vice-versa. Would you like to enlarge upon that or offer some solutions as to how that could be remedied?

Mr MANIKAS: One of the things we found that affects young people in society these days is a detachment from other people of their own age in different situations and one of the biggest issues is probably the urban sprawl of Sydney and how Sydney is the second largest city in the world on area and the difficulty in transportation and people being able to mix with other people of possibly different social and economic backgrounds. Therefore, it detaches different classes from other people and pushes the divide even further.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: On page 7 of your submission there is a point that I think is the crux of the matter. When you talk about the priorities of economic rationalism during the process of construction and even when good attempts have been made to get the views of young people and children, often they are cut out. Two issues arise for me. One is: What are the sorts of things young people ask for and do not get through that process?

Mr MANIKAS: Sorry?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I assume that young people are asking for play areas. In other evidence people have said that buildings are not properly soundproofed so that they can have children in high-density buildings. First, are you aware that children and young people want certain things, yet they are not getting them? Second, as a professional, with your group, what are your suggestions, if any, of how the needs of children and young people can be built in ways that are seen as being economical and are not just cut out at the end?

Mr MANIKAS: One of the big issues that can be linked into that is also on page 7 of our submission, that is, the item about increased fear of litigation. To get young people involved, they need to create areas to play and to be involved in the community. We are moving towards the age where most

kids are sitting at home playing on the PlayStation or surfing the Net, instead of getting out and playing.

They probably cannot get out and play because councils are too scared to put up play equipment and schools are fenced off to stop children from entering schools after hours because they are too scared that someone will break their leg and then sue them. There is really a declining choice for children so they are forced in doors and they have no other option but to sit at home. There is then the fear of obesity and non-communication with other people.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: As a quantity surveyor, obviously you are counting up how many bricks are needed to construct a building. You are building a development that presumably will have families in them, so there is a need for reasonable soundproofing. At what point in the process do you think intervention can be made to ensure that soundproofing happens? Is it local government through various planning instruments and requirements or is it the company acknowledging that these will be better places in the long term for people to live in? I am looking for professional guidance and where the intervention should happen.

Mr MANIKAS: We suggest changes could be made to Building Code of Australia [BCA] in relation to these items. Definitely soundproofing is an issue. I live in an apartment building that was done pre-some current BCA changes so the sound rating between apartments is atrocious. Our bedroom backs onto a living room. If the people are talking next door we can hear them. Obviously, these days with young people and their appreciation for music, especially music with a lot of bass music—bass is the worst type to try and stop transmission through structures and walls and as soon as somebody turns on a stereo in our building, a couple of floors can actually hear it, and probably pick which song is playing.

Probably that is something that the Building Code of Australia has to address in relation to trying to be more aware that we are living in a more urbanised environment and that more steps have to be made to make sure that buildings are made to incorporate these idea of everyone living on top of each other and ensuring that there are community facilities and community spaces where people can mix and enjoy each other's company without upsetting their neighbours.

That probably covers the legislation but there is also the issue of the industry being educated as to the needs of the environment. With sustainability, I think we are getting more and more towards where the whole construction and development industry are aware of the issues that face Australia in relation to water and energy savings. You will find most facets of the industry now are thinking: what is it going to cost to go green? What will we save? Is there any benefit? But they are probably not looking at these issues of children and young people and how they need to be incorporated into the whole design process.

Most of the projects that I work on now are generally four or five star green-rated buildings, if they are office design—and possible six star—which is great to see happening but there is still that thought: is it worth it? At least they are thinking about it now. Everybody has been driving this sustainability bandwagon and it is obviously working because people are picking up on it, but we do need to educate people on the urbanisation of our environment and how things need to be done to ensure that it all works.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Are there any similar groups around the world, such as the United States, United Kingdom or Canada, that you have modelled yourself on?

Mr MANIKAS: No. I think there are some similar groups but they have been more groups that have been borne out of the United Nations or some other major foundations around the world, but ours has really been borne out of the back of our own thoughts and has not been really driven by anyone. We have had the Property Council, the Planning Institute and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects guiding us if we need them, but they have been really trying to stay out of it and help us if we need help.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Are they listening to your advice?

Mr MANIKAS: I think they are because they have been really pushing for us to comment on submissions such as this and they are pushing for us to continue with what we do and they have been happy with our progress so far.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Have they picked up on any particular recommendations?

Mr MANIKAS: Not yet, no.

ACTING CHAIR: You are not quite two years old yet?

Mr MANIKAS: Yes, we are still pretty young and it is very hard, with all of us desperately trying to advance our careers and then trying to do this in our spare time, it is a bit difficult. Time is obviously a bit difficult for us to progress these things. I think our first year was really all out of excitement from the first event, but we did not really have a clear direction on where we were going and after we held our last event last year, we have got a bit more focused as to where we need to be driving the agenda.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: Do you look overseas for ideas? Is that influencing the 2050 Group in relation to what is happening globally?

Mr MANIKAS: Yes, we do. Even just recently the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade held the Australia-Japan initiative and was looking, and still are looking, at engaging some of our members with some Japanese

young people on a roundtable discussion to try to get some connection going with Japan.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Because they have a much bigger density issue and a lot less obesity issues.

Mr MANIKAS: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Would your organisation address education and changing attitudes? What weight would you give to government legislation and regulation? You mentioned earlier the BCA?

Mr MANIKAS: Yes. Probably one of the things we have always stressed is education of children because obviously we believe that if you educate the children, they will go home and educate the parents. So many times you hear of kids coming home and telling their parents, "That tap is leaking. You shouldn't let it leak because you're going to lose a thousand litres of water a year." Parents obviously are too busy to worry about little things like that, but if you educate young people, they will go home and educate their parents, so it does start at school.

ACTING CHAIR: Some people might say it is going to take us a long time to rescue the planet before those children start to influence, for instance, the construction industry.

Mr MANIKAS: Yes, absolutely, but if you look at generation Y, which is just finishing the university and starting in the workplace, in 10 years time they will be taking up 40 per cent of the work force, so it is not too late to educate people at that level, which will be almost half the work force in 10 years time, and they will be the ones making the decisions.

ACTING CHAIR: You mention in your submission the number of documents—national, State and local—that provide all kinds of guidelines but at the moment do not include anything particularly relevant to the needs of children and young people. How do we make those three tiers of government start to include that information, whether it is in guidelines or in more regulatory documents?

Mr MANIKAS: I suppose the first thing is raising the awareness of government. When they are more aware of the issues they may then make an effort to include the ideas of children and young people in the guidelines that they set. It is a difficult question to answer.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: I would like to congratulate you, Michael. It is enlightening to see someone who is not just running on hypotheticals. You look at the facts and get out there. Your group of young professionals will virtually be the leaders in the future of our built environment and you are looking at ways now to ensure that there is open, friendly space for our young people in the years to come. I was impressed when you said that 2050 exists

to drive national initiatives towards a more sustainable Australia with passion, commitment and youthful energy. I encourage you to keep going because I think it needs to come from young professionals, especially if you are listening to young people who are probably looking to you to be the leaders.

Mr MANIKAS: Thank you.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: Returning to your comments on litigation, I have two questions. Are you fearful about the increasing problems with providing youth-friendly equipment—playgrounds, for example—because councils are not putting it in or ripping it out? Last year I visited Chicago. In Millennium Park there are huge columns bearing people's faces, with water spilling out and a huge recessed area where people of all ages congregate. Children play in their swimmers and people take off their shoes and so on. I was gobsmacked. Would we do that in Australia?

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: We have got it at Darling Harbour.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: It is not quite like this. I could imagine all sorts of accidents occurring—for example, a little child could drown unnoticed in the pools. We do not have that sort of thing in Australia. Is it just a phase? Might we move towards creating spaces where young people would love to go?

Mr MANIKAS: The Government has taken steps to try to limit liability claims. It will probably help if we get some rationalisation of what people can claim. I can understand why they lock up schools and why councils are too scared to put in slippery dips, for example. I am married, and when we tried to organise our engagement party we were looking at holding it in a marquee in a park somewhere. But most councils would not let us put up a marquee in a park because they were scared of litigation.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: It is a bit of a sad comment. Think about what the children and young people of yesteryear could experience and compare that with the restrictions we have now. It is no wonder they are sitting in their lounge rooms. Parents fear for their safety and do not let them outside. The park in Chicago was amazing. It would be fantastic to have something similar in the middle of Sydney. I am sure it would be tremendous for young people to join people of all ages in a huge park with eating areas and so on. It would help to break down barriers.

Mr MANIKAS: The Olympics Games brought together many different people from different cultures. They took advantage of open spaces such as those at Homebush, where I think they did a really good job of having open spaces with different-themed activities. People mixed together, sitting and watching television and eating.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: But nobody goes there any more. It is like a wasteland now.

Mr MANIKAS: It is.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: There is a hotel sitting in the middle of it. Unless there is a special event—at the aquatic centre, for example—you would not seek to go there. There are just vast areas of concrete and the Olympic stadium.

Mr MANIKAS: The only events they seem to hold out there now are sales—sheet sets for \$1 and so on.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: Yes. That is quite sad and such a waste after all that excitement and ingenuity in terms of the fountains and seating areas, which were well frequented.

Mr MANIKAS: I recently took up bicycle riding with some friends so I am just starting to learn about places and open spaces where you can ride bikes. They are fantastic. I quite often go for a ride in Centennial Park but the Centennial Park foundation is trying to build speed humps to slow everyone down. Trying to ride a bike over speed humps is a bit difficult.

ACTING CHAIR: Have we covered the things that you wanted to talk to us about? Feel free to add something. We did not ask you our last question about the extent to which you would support more formal plans and statements in dealing with development applications and so on and making sure that there is some sort of youth-specific impact statement or State Government plan. Would you go down that path or do you think it is too prescriptive and not what your organisation is on about?

Mr MANIKAS: I do not think so. Putting another report as a condition on a DA is probably not the way to do it. I think it needs to happen before then. I think it needs to be incorporated more in the design stage than the approval stage, which is getting back to educating not only young people but senior people who are designing the places where we live and work.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Could there be some sort of code of practice or just a recommendation?

Mr MANIKAS: I suppose, yes. I am not sure exactly how it would have to be administered at present but it is probably something that needs to be looked at and thought about in more detail—whether it is changes to the building code or whatever. I am not too sure. You would probably have to think about quite a few issues to change people's perceptions, ideas and designs. It is probably a good time to do it now because the construction industry is a bit quiet at the moment and there is not a lot happening. If we could get some changes before we hit the next wave of the building boom that would be fantastic.

ACTING CHAIR: Thank you for coming today. We wish you well with the conferences in Melbourne and in Canberra the following year. We look forward to hearing more about 2050.

Mr MANIKAS: Thank you very much.

(The witness withdrew)

(Luncheon adjournment)

LESLEY KING, Executive Officer, New South Wales Centre for Overweight and Obesity, University of Sydney,

ADRIAN ERNEST BAUMAN, Professor of Public Health, University of Sydney, and

TIMOTHY PAUL GILL, Director, New South Wales Centre for Public Health Nutrition, University of Sydney all affirmed and examined:

ACTING CHAIR: We have received your admission. Are you happy to have your submission made public and included with your evidence?

Ms KING: Yes, we are.

ACTING CHAIR: We have prepared some general questions, but Committee members will have all sorts of other questions. Would any or all of you like to make an opening statement before we get into those?

Ms KING: We were planning to make a brief opening statement. I will start and all three of us will contribute. Firstly, I thought I would explain to you where we are actually come from. In fact, we represent three different prevention research centres that are co-located at the University of Sydney, all of which receive some funding from the New South Wales Department of Health—that is the New South Wales Centre for Overweight and Obesity, the New South Wales Centre for Physical Activity and, Health and the Centre for Public Health and Nutrition. Clearly, our goals and our work considerably overlap in that regard. The submission we made was based on the work of all three centres. Our research work has a particular orientation to research that is relevant to policy in the New South Wales context, and that is the basis of our funding from the New South Wales Department of Health.

Given our interest in physical activity and nutrition, we are aware that physical activity and nutrition have many health benefits and many protective effects. In particular at the moment, of course, there have been substantial increases in the rates of overweight and obesity in children and young people, with one in four children or young people in New South Wales currently overweight or obese. Clearly, the overweight and obesity problem derives from physical activity and nutritional behaviours, but we are well aware that these three issues are all strongly influenced by the physical environment as well as by the social environment, and it is that influence of the physical environment on those behaviours that was the focus of our submission and the focus of much of our work. Professor Bauman and Dr Gill will give some more detail about those particular areas.

Professor BAUMAN: My major comment is that the process of making change, which is preventing obesity or preventing childhood obesity, is not a single strategy commodity. Any single intervention based on a curriculum, or telling people to do something, or "Exercise is good for you", or telling kids,

"Don't eat at McDonalds" is destined to have, at best, short-term impact. If we think strategically about how change is made and sustained, it is made through informing groups, populations of children, their parents and teachers, it is made through changing the social climate and social environment so that it is actually changing social norms about the amount of time kids spend watching television, or kids food preferences or choices. The third thing is that it is reinforced by supported physical environments where kids can play, walk or cycle to school, have access to healthy choices in foods in school cafeterias or even in the corner shop on the way to school. There is a synergy there between those three elements that are all required for sustained change.

The final thing is that it does not happen from one sector alone. In my time at chairing the Premiers' task force on physical activity in this State nothing ever happened from one single sector that was sustained, but by coalitions and partnerships—a whole-of-government approach and the private sector and non-government organisations, if you can—in an integrated way working together with shared objectives and shared goals. If we are serious about an issue or serious about making change, it is that intersection that allows both doing things within limited resources because you are pooling resources and sharing goals so that it is everybody's responsibility, not Health's responsibility to do things like environment or change, which they cannot do, or the Metro 20 strategy, trying to do health-related things when it is not part of its mandate. A whole-of-government strategy would integrate some of that.

Dr GILL: Just following on from what Dr Bauman said, I would just like to indicate that the association between the built environment and what children eat is something that we really do not have a huge amount of understanding about at this point in time, primarily because the association has only just been recognised. Our examination of the issue has been rather fractured and rather limited. What we do know is that there are some really important nutritional issues that face children at this point in time, which contribute to a range of ill health, particularly obesity. The key ones we would like to identify are soft drink consumption particularly versus water consumption, consumption of snack foods and fast foods, fruit and vegetables and breastfeeding. The way that the built environment operates and affects these nutritional behaviours in children basically come down to access, opportunity and exposure. Obviously, you have to have access to the appropriate or inappropriate foods to determine the capacity to purchase them.

For very young children, obviously what parents do is a key issue. As children get older, they make some of these decisions themselves. We know that if you have limited opportunity to purchase from large shopping venues, such as supermarkets where there is a wider array of foods, then, obviously, the restricted number of products available in convenience foods limits what you can eat. Your access in terms of where those facilities are sited and the transport to them also influences the capacity to purchase appropriate or inappropriate foods. There also is a whole range of issues associated with

opportunity. If, as a teenager, you are going to want to go somewhere, one of the most obvious places to congregate is a fast food outlet because it is safe and because there is a degree of attraction for you there—it is situated away from parents. It is one of the few facilities in the built environment that actually encourages teenagers to hang around.

Opportunity presents itself in terms of what facilities are available within the built environment to allow you to breastfeed, if you are a mother breastfeeding, in a convenient, safe and clean environment. If you are walking home from school, what are the facilities in the built environment that you are most faced with? Are they convenience stores selling soft drinks? Are they vending machines? What sort of environment is it that makes it more convenient or less convenient for you to purchase these types of foods? Even down to the point of enjoyable public places to eat, particularly in inclement weather. If, as a family, you want to go out and if your only opportunity is to sit inside a fast food outlet then, clearly, you are going to choose that if there is no clean, comfortable and appropriate facility within that environment.

Lastly, exposure is a really big issue for children because it is what drives the development of a lot of their behaviours. If you have never been exposed to fruit and vegetables, if you have never seen fruit and vegetables growing, if you have never seen a fruit and vegetable store then you are less likely to purchase and consume fruit and vegetables. This is a situation in many of the developing suburbs around Sydney, where there are a number of fast food outlets, there are a number of alcohol outlets, there might be convenience stores if there are no fast food outlets and also with the demise of green space where there used to be market gardens then children never see these things being grown. Instead what they see is not only fast food outlets but also a lot of marketing for fast food outlets, particularly signs along the trails to and from schools. Obviously, there is a range of issues that we perceive would be quite useful in dealing with this issue within the built environment.

ACTING CHAIR: You were sounding rather depressing about it all until your last sentence, which suggested that we could address some of these in a positive sort of way. Media reports about obesity, diabetes and so on in the last couple of days are bringing up even more the sorts of problems we are facing.

Dr GILL: I might just add that a lot of these submissions might sound a bit negative because all we are doing is pointing out what we know is, at this point in time, wrong with the built environment. But this primarily is because we have not had the opportunity to do anything about it because it really has only just come to our notice. We have not been looking for these issues before and now they are in front of us and we have the opportunity to do something.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Can I ask about your international experience? We are a country of 20 million people the size of America. If we look at Japan we do not see evidence of their obesity rates, yet they have

much higher density in terms of living and much less open space, but they also have a very rich and thorough tradition of food. They are very proud of their culture and their cuisine. Is that linked, or is there a stronger discipline there?

Professor BAUMAN: Trends in obesity are an almost global phenomenon, except for sub Saharan Africa. They are just starting at a much lower base, but their rate of trend—the slope of increase—is extremely similar in Brazil, Japan, China, India, South Africa and a raft of developing and transitional countries. Firstly, their increase is just about as great as ours, they are just starting with a lower baseline prevalence. There are two countries that you could observe since 1980 with no increase in obesity until quite recently compared to European countries—the Netherlands and Denmark—but even they have now started to show an increase in obesity. They have poor diets. They eat lots of meat and lots of high-fat foods, but they have biking infrastructure and walking infrastructure that is pervasive from 7 to 70. The energy balance deficit is not that big. In other words, if we could get everyone doing a little bit more or eating a little bit less we could prevent the obesity epidemic at the population level, and how much that is a little bit debatable, but it is not a lot.

We are not looking at a packet of Tim Tams, we are looking at a Tim Tam per day per person less or cycling to the local shop or walking to the bus. The obesity epidemic is quite universal. We appear to be ranking second, behind the United States of America, and we are closing the gap. We can take some national pride in our quest for Olympic gold and other gold medals, but this should bring shame to us. Japan is increasing.

ACTING CHAIR: What do we do? Where do we start?

Dr GILL: The questions that have been phrased seem to be asking about what are other people doing that we can take a lesson from. The short answer is that this issue has only just come onto the agenda and Australia has been a world-wide leader in recognising the issue and the need to do something about it. It would be wrong to sit back and ask what we could take from everyone else; instead we should be saying what we could do to try to lead the world in understanding and driving solutions to this issue.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Professor Bauman, in your work as head of the Premier's committee looking at this, two things come to mind. Recently I visited a local high school which has fenced off the whole high school from the community. A local country paper this week carried the story of a young girl who can no longer train on the track at the high school because it has been closed off. Instead of fencing off the building, for fear of vandalism, the school has taken away the use of the whole school out of hours. Secondly, how exposed are young people in a high school to a curriculum that deals with home economics, or home science? When I went to school I did home science, or home economics as it was then, but not many others understand

the five food groups, the calorie and kilojoule table. Is that more generally available now?

Professor BAUMAN: The answer that has been attenuated in favour of core discipline subjects with focus on maths, science, English and literacy, taking emphasis over what is called PDHPE and home economics and those kinds of subjects, where the health curriculum is taught. It is part of a cultural trend amongst parents as well to favour the university admission index, Higher School Certificate subjects, from an early age to put their kids into after-school lessons instead of sporting activities and to downplay the importance of the curriculum so that it is squeezed slightly across the system. Partly that is cultural parental pressure. The only solution to that is just like we created non-smoking as a socially desirable attribute, we have to create the social norms through mass media campaigns, mass communications and modelling and behaviour at all levels that physical activity is normative, that healthy eating is normative, rather than our current move towards elitism and non-health related curricula.

That is the curriculum question. The facilities question just follows: School is used for after-school lessons not for after-school activities and programs. There is a large investment by the Federal Government, about \$160 million in the active after-school program. But how is that being implemented in New South Wales? That is worthy of inquiry. Are we really getting our share and is it really working? That could be looked at. That money was promised, but is it being used in the way that it was intended. A small amount of effort was used for the Red Chair campaign that you may have seen bouncing across your television screens in the past couple of months. It gave a very good message but it was not linked to programs, it just came on as a media campaign.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How do other States do it?

Professor BAUMAN: The same.

Ms KING: It focused on a Federal Government initiative; it all came through in the same way across Australia.

Professor BAUMAN: The States were not really engaged in it enough to be integrated with it. It was a stand-alone message, and that is important, but we need to integrate with messaging in order to make social change.

Dr GILL: At the recent Child Obesity Summit in Queensland, the Premier, Mr Beattie, indicated that he would ensure that the facilities that are currently locked up in schools would be opened up to the community. He said that he would be happy to bear that liability, which is borne by the State anyway, as an opportunity to encourage greater community use of existing sporting facilities. He mentioned also some private-public partnerships for developing land where the school is integrated, and the school facilities are integrated, into the community so that they share sporting facilities.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Where do you see the major share of the problem? Is it a lack of education in respect of a healthy diet, kilojoules, energy in-energy out, and the need for exercise?

Dr GILL: Adrian has already indicated that there is a range of issues, rather than one, and that education, per se, whilst it is very important and useful by itself, rarely achieves changes in behaviour. Whilst it is very important to focus on making sure that people understand what is required to be done there needs to be a greater focus on making it easier, more appropriate and more normal for people to undertake those sorts of behaviours. At the moment a lot of the environment works against that.

Professor BAUMAN: All of the adults who smoke know it is bad for them. Most kids who start smoking, at the median age of 13, know that smoking is not healthy. The facilitators are their social environments and their physical environments in addition to what they know. The issue about McDonald's or Burger King or KFC—or fast food in general—is well understood and accepted, but that is not the only cue to getting people to choose other food. Persuading the industry to develop healthy options and persuading other options to occur in communities including persuading local shops to sell options other than sweetened soft drinks and chips is what is needed.

ACTING CHAIR: Obviously the anti-smoking campaign obviously has gone on over a long time and has involved legislation, regulation and banning, and some of those issues have been controversial. Education, legislation and regulation and funding are the issues.

Professor BAUMAN: And mass media.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes. I am not sure whether the change of attitude comes first. Obviously this is a circular problem; someone has to cut in and start a process, but I guess it all works together.

Professor BAUMAN: The best evidence is that it is not linear. You cannot put together a package and say if we do this, and then this, and then this, in this sequence, that is how it will work. From public health experiences such as HIV prevention, or tobacco control, an integrated mix of mass communications, curriculum education information strategies and environmental regulation of banning smoking at cricket and football matches, at officers, at workplaces and eventually restaurants and pubs and clubs, gradually moves towards decreasing the prevalence of smoking continuously. We are leading the world in having one of the lowest rates of adult smoking.

Ms KING: For example, if you apply that to children's overweight and obesity, New South Wales has taken the lead on the school canteen strategy when there is a mandatory approach in government schools. That sends symbolically a very strong message to the immediate environment that

children are in for some part of the day. One can imagine that that kind of strategy, in a theoretical way, could be quite simply applied to food outlets at sporting venues. They are in public places and on the whole they are managed by parent groups or local government groups.

The situation where the energy-in from what you eat after a game could be much greater than the energy used within a game. It does not take a lot to think about what is going on in those venues on weekends with young children and the strategy at present in school canteens can be applied to that situation. Obviously there are other potential extrapolations of that kind of strategy. That is not exactly related to the built environment, but on the other hand some of that does connect, it is about the environment and the cues it gives. While some of those things might be at the local government level, and we recognise that some of the environmental changes can be made only at the local government level, there are a number of State-level planning instruments and levers that can be applied to influence local government processes.

In terms of the built environment, we are particularly conscious about the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy and the sub-regional planning processes that are part of that as well as regional planning strategies in the Hunter and other areas. At the moment the capacity for health considerations to come into those processes are probably non-existent. As I understand it health might be implicit in some aspects of that strategy, but there is nothing explicit.

ACTING CHAIR: Is that because this is all quite new thinking? So, literally, no-one thought to put in a health component?

Ms KING: Possibly. I am aware that the planning strategies for London make health goals explicit. It is not that it has never been done, it is not as if there are arguments about how to do that.

ACTING CHAIR: It is not too late.

Ms KING: No. There is a variety of possible mechanisms as I understand it. As part of the sub-regional planning process and some of the tools to be used by local government in preparing their environmental plans there are to be numbers of indicators that they report against about how they are meeting housing and employment indicators. It may be possible to introduce additional targets that relate to open space, that will be one example. Location and density of fast-food outlets may be another example. There may be a variety of other indicators that would be reasonable to start thinking about in that context. All those things are yet to be explored.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Recent research indicates that children are exercising as much as they ever were but are now eating more high-energy, high-kilojoule foods—presumably because of greater access and exposure to those foods. Would you comment on that? Do you know of any country or city

that has undertaken a campaign against the mass advertising of convenience and fast foods?

Professor BAUMAN: I will deal with the first question. The issue is not only measured leisure time and physical activity because it is about total energy expenditure: how much you consume and how much you expend. You could expend as much, or even a little bit more as you ever did in leisure time activity but much less, for example, because of increased Internet time, homework time, sitting time, x-box time, television time. So your total daily energy expenditure could well fall—we have not got good measures of that in kids. But we certainly suspect that that is a more likely contributor to the obesity epidemic than the formal leisure time. Your second question is a little bit more challenging: are there any campaigns directly organised—I assume you mean by government?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: By government or local authorities?

Professor BAUMAN: —or by local authorities or even by non-government organisations that have tackled the food industry directly? Was that the question?

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Yes.

Dr GILL: That is a really tricky question. First of all, I add my support to what Adrian said. A lot of time is wasted on trying to separate the influence of diet and physical activity when they are both part of the equation. What we should be looking for are solutions and what is going to deliver the solution rather than who is the biggest contributor to the cause of the problem? In terms of controlling advertising and exposure to fast foods, that is a really difficult issue. The issue of television advertising has been addressed in a few places, most particularly in Quebec Province of Canada, in Sweden to a lesser extent, in Norway, Denmark and even Greece. Quebec is probably the most useful example to look at because in the other places most of the television advertising was State controlled and what they have done is just limit advertising as private companies or commercial channels have come on line.

Quebec actually reversed the situation and it did it within an environment of Canada where commercial television advertising to children remains in the other provinces. It did it, not on the basis of health, but on the basis of the civil rights of children in that it banned all advertising, rather than just advertising of fast foods because it believed it was inappropriate to target children with messages where they did not have the development at this point to rationalise the intent. So, in fact, it said that advertisers were exploiting the vulnerabilities of children, which is a fair argument.

ACTING CHAIR: Has anyone been able to measure the impact?

Dr GILL: Well, that is the problem, it is very difficult. It was never set up as an experimental design to see what would happen before or after, so all

we are really doing is taking little pointers here and there. Quebec does have one of lowest rates of childhood obesity of any of the provinces in Canada but I would not take that as proof that restrictions on advertising works.

ACTING CHAIR: It might be the French heritage—

Dr GILL: It could be a range of issues. In fact, Quebec does have a range of other health strategies and it is much more effective in its other public health interventions as well so there is a range of issues. There is an indication that it has resulted in a reduction in usage of certain sugar-sweetened breakfast cereals compared to other breakfast cereals. That study was done because sugar-sweetened breakfast cereals are actually one of the highest advertised products directed at children, marketed on the basis of cartoon characters rather than anything else.

Have any countries looked at limiting the density or sighting or availability of fast foods? As far as I am aware, not directly, although Brazil is looking at certain planning regulations being imposed at a central level, in terms of the availability of certain foods. In parts of France, at a local level, rather than restricting fast food outlets they have ordinances that protect the diversity of food outlets, requiring outlets for fruit and vegetables, bread, meat and those sorts of primary products. Closer to home in Penrith the local government area is one of the first local communities to adopt an approach of trying to maintain, or develop a diversity of food outlets for its citizens. Penrith certainly did not try to restrict fast food outlets but it did encourage the establishment of fruit and vegetable outlets and convenience stores which sell a diversity of foods, given the fact that when it did its survey it found that in most places it is far easier to buy cigarettes, tobacco and petrol than bread, milk and fruit and vegetables and those sorts of things.

It is not an easy solution. There is a whole lot of issues about how much you can restrict trade, how much you can enforce certain behaviours but I think there are opportunities. There are opportunities in terms of siting a particular outlet, and what can sit next to each other, what can sit across the streets, what can go along highways, all those types of things which give an opportunity to reduce the density of fast food outlets in particular areas because we know they tend to congregate more in low income areas and in traffic corridors which, of course, low income housing goes along traffic corridors.

Professor BAUMAN: One small example that might reflect this from a different perspective. We did a lot of work with Kellogg's Canada nationally. We had been working with the CIHR—Canadian Institute for Health Research—which is like its national Health and Medical Research Council, to develop a Canada-wide intervention. We put pedometers in cereal boxes. Pedometer is a small gadget like this that measures steps—it is a step counter to get people active. Kellogg's Canada threw away its pedometers and put more valid and reliable ones in their cereal packets. It funded a \$15

million advertising campaign to promote it with the CIHR brand "Move more or add 2,000 steps to your day" targeting the whole population.

Kellogg's put 1.4 million pedometers across the country and had a population national physical activity surveys of all ages monthly that showed an increase in awareness of pedometers and an increase in walking, seasonally adjusted, resulting from that public/private partnership initiative which put more funds into a project than we could ever afford in the public sector. But it had public sector messages and quality controls so that the process was actually regulated and not purely commercial and purple toys in cereal boxes. It was a reasonably successful public health intervention, as evidenced by some serious evaluation. That is a way to work with a particular element of the food industry around a campaign, which was sanctioned by the highest health authority. That is just an example that it is not all impossible in the public/private partnership arena.

Mr MICHAEL DALEY: Could that be replicated with Kellogg's in Australia?

Professor BAUMAN: If Kellogg's Australia had the same commitment and timing, and if the NHMRC or equivalent body would work with Kellogg's to make sure that the messages are right and that the corporate social responsibility bit is important and not overtaken by for-profit motives which most inserts into packaging might be construed as being.

ACTING CHAIR: As far as you know, Kellogg's Australia has not been approached to see if it is interested?

Professor BAUMAN: No, it did have a brief pedometer blitz as part of a Kellogg's global strategy but they were not reliable or valid instruments, nor was it marketed to any substantial degree. They go into healthier cereals, which were the bran types.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: In relation to building codes and planning instruments, what are you talking about aside from the green space? Are you talking about making sure there are walking and bicycle tracks and other examples?

Professor BAUMAN: One of the problems with walk and bike to school programs, even if the infrastructure was created, is overcoming the following things: the culture of traffic, for example, Sydney traffic is not supportive of cyclists or walkers whereas some European cities are immensely supportive—

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Some other Australian cities are too?

Professor BAUMAN: Some other Australian cities certainly, such as Canberra are immensely more cyclable to school for kids than Sydney. To a certain extent Melbourne and Perth, followed by Brisbane and Adelaide, and followed well last by Sydney.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Is there any data to back that up?

Professor BAUMAN: Yes, we have got cycling data from all of those cities.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: No, obesity data for young children.

Professor BAUMAN: Not that I am aware of inter-State differences.

Dr GILL: Any samples that have been done have been far too small to make any real meaningful inter-State comparisons. If you look at the situation amongst adults then basically the problem is much the same across all States. It is more driven by other things, such as remoteness and indigenous population size and social status and similar factors rather than the State where you live.

Professor BAUMAN: Two issues about walking and cycling to school are, we tried the walking bus which is a well developed model in many countries overseas where kids walk in groups, usually supervised by an adult at each end and they form a bus that walks to school. There were three issues that are particularly problematic in New South Wales: one was public liability issues for that walking bus. Two, the amount of screening that those two adults had to undertake to be deemed to be safe and proper individuals to do that that it was intrusive that adults, even parents, were disinclined to be part of. The third for walking to school are parental perceived safety issues, even where those safety issues are way out of proportion to the real safety issue. We have a community that is hypersensitive to these issues and perceived parental safety is an issue.

ACTING CHAIR: When you say safety do you mean physical safety from being hit by a car or in terms of fears of sexual predators?

Professor BAUMAN: Both, stranger danger and physical safety. Parents have morbid preoccupations with both of those that are real problems but because they are reported in great detail in the media their true prevalence and incidence are vastly over-estimated by parents compared to their real state, so parental anxiety is therefore high. These are big challenges to walking and cycling to school in our city, plus the traffic one, the first bit which is driver disconnect from pedestrians and cyclists. I believe that to be more real in Sydney because our drivers are less used to having anything else getting in their way.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: Last week I was at a school where the children were given pedometers for the launch 10,000 steps, which from my understanding was not sponsored by a food company. Many parents of children at public schools will not pay \$50 annual school fees but think nothing of spending much more at a fast food outlet. How can you get around that? Many parents have an overwhelming fear in their mind about children

walking to school. The number of children in the past couple of days who have been hit by a car will make parents even more likely to drive their children to school rather than allow them to walk to school and cross dangerous crossings that do not have proper signage?

Dr GILL: And be hit by parents driving to school.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: That is right.

Professor BAUMAN: The cultural norm I can only express by personal anecdote. I used to live in a small village to the south of Sydney, in the northern part of the Illawarra. It was contained by the escarpment and had no feeder roads into it. It had only its own internal roads. No house in that village was more than 500 metres from the local primary school. Parents would drive their kids to school rather than walk their kids to school or let their kids walk. That reflected the cultural trend which is independent of either the safety or the road issue. That is what I mean about changing the social norms about the environment as well as changing the environment.

ACTING CHAIR: To some extent we are trying to do a do as I say not as I do, are we not? Adults are really most of the problem and we are looking at ways to tell kids to behave differently from the way adults, and parents in particular, behave.

Professor BAUMAN: If adults are overweight and obese—and high prevalence rates of more than half of adults are—the modelling that goes on with food consumption patterns and behaviours amongst adults is not conducive to kids.

ACTING CHAIR: In the end it is the parents who drive the kids to school. They might get pushed into it by kids wanting to know why they are not being driven when everybody else is.

Ms KING: There is a way of looking at it that would suggest that looking at a family as a constellation of eating, physical activity habits as a whole—both what the children do and what the parents do—has some influence as well and is probably a relatively constructive way of approaching it. There is quite a lot of evidence about the link between parents as role models and the parents' direct influence on what their children do, and, from some qualitative research we have done, we know that parents feel very undermined in many aspects of their parenting. Of course, all parents want to do the best by their children. It is just the sense of their capacity and their ability to do it. They often feel it is quite difficult. They feel they are in adverse circumstances in many cases. So, there is a strong argument for working constructively with the family as a unit as a way of dealing with real complexities in those relationships.

Dr GILL: If you are looking at planning issues and the built environment, clearly it is very difficult to separate children from parents.

There are some specific issues that relate to children and they are not just restricted to schools. We talked before about teenagers congregating in certain areas. In some parts of the world there are planning requirements on developers to have the areas set aside for recreation that is appropriate for teenagers. Shopping centres are great congregation areas but most shopping centres want to get rid of teenagers. In certain parts of Canada they are required to have bowling alleys or skating rinks and facilities like that. Although a different culture exists in Canada, there could be planning requirements that insist some sort of facility that is attractive and usable and safe for teenagers might be an option rather than them congregating at fast food outlets or down in parks drinking, or something like that.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Who pays for the maintenance of such facilities? Is it part of the ongoing obligation?

Dr GILL: I am not aware of that, but they are commercial ventures. They return some income. You pay a small fee. They are also part of the facilities of the shopping centres in the same way as the toilets are.

Professor BAUMAN: They are an adjunct to the cost of renting that shopping centre and they are a mandatory planning part of that process.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: The toilet analogy is useful. They are regarded as essential requirements, so it is how you visualise the problem that is the solution.

Dr GILL: A big issue that has not been addressed for children is access to clean, potable water in areas in which they congregate and attend. There is no requirement on sporting venues or even government buildings to provide water and what we have are vending machines that dispense cold soft drinks at an affordable price. It is difficult to find water to give to your children.

ACTING CHAIR: Bubblers and things that used to be dotted around, most of them are gone.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Is it a maintenance issue?

ACTING CHAIR: I think it is a health issue as well. Whether or not they are more perceived problems than real ones, you people can probably tell us.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: I was quite heartened with my two young adult children taking along food, something they could snack on during a working day, and wanting to do that and seeing it as an advantage, and then they were not ravenously hungry at lunchtime and they ate a sensible meal. I was thinking that is good, but in relation to the built environment and listening to radio stations, for example, to the gardening shows, rushing out to get your lettuce leaves and bringing them in from the garden, then the children obviously get to see vegetables and fruit growing and you have a ready source,

but if you have no space—like in 450 square metre blocks and high-rise living—people do not have the opportunity. As much as parents might want to they just cannot provide these opportunities. So, I suppose the built environment is not working for good health in that way.

Professor BAUMAN: The challenge is it is difficult to retrofit already existing medium density housing and we are going to build things on the space of land, we are going to build bike lanes and walking paths in the higgledy-piggledy, narrow, convict-designed roads in a moderate Sydney. The opportunity for us is with the green fields developments at the urban fringe where urban sprawl can be redefined, as well as places on the Central Coast, Western Sydney and south-western Sydney, where new housing developments are being built. There are case studies from the United States, Europe and Canada that demonstrate this. If you create connected environments, you plan the types of shops that are going to be there, you allow destinations so that the cull-de-sacs link to each other through connectors so your kids can walk to school. You create the paths. You create that the environment that allows physical activity and nutritional patterns that are planned more in advance, and there may even be a health benefit that is saleable to the developers of these ideas. For example, retirement villages in the United States sell health by having physical activity facilities for older adults so, it is not impossible to plan communities a little more oriented towards activity, towards having transportation systems that can get people to things and towards patterns of food consumption.

Dr GILL: I do not want to contradict Adrian there, but with community gardens it is possible to retrofit them in existing housing developments. This has happened in a number of places, even within Australia. While there is no direct connection between community gardens and improved nutrition, it is one of those issues that increases exposure to real foods so that children see them growing, they are part of it. Certainly Stephanie Alexander—you have probably heard of her long-running Collingwood community garden project, and obviously she had the money to invest in that. It only requires one plot of land from a demolished house or an unused part of a park or something like that.

ACTING CHAIR: There is a longstanding successful community garden at the Riverwood Housing Estate in Sydney. It has had all sorts of spin-offs with different ethnic groups being involved together and growing different types of vegetables. It has been a model for some time.

Dr GILL: Yes.

(The witnesses withdrew)

SARAH REILLY, Social Planning Consultant, Planning Institute of Australia, 126 Womerah Avenue, Darlinghurst, affirmed and examined:

ACTING CHAIR: We have a submission, and you are happy for that to be made public and to be considered as part of your evidence?

Ms REILLY: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you want to make an opening statement?

Ms REILLY: Yes, I will. I am a social planning consultant. I am not a town planner. I do not work with the building regulations. I consult quite a lot with local communities, particularly local government areas, and I have done a lot of work across the whole of Sydney. I do quite a bit of work in relation to young people and youth facilities planning, and I also do a lot of work in relation to child care, child care facilities and children's needs. That is how I will be of most benefit to you today.

I have been doing some interesting work in Fairfield and Liverpool. There is a lot of obesity in that area in relation to children. I might be able to give you a different perspective on why I think that is happening, if you would like, and also in relation to the needs of young people and the need to involve young people in planning. There is not much point building something like a skating facility—which is all young people seem to get built for them—and then putting it in the back of a park that is dark when most young people are more afraid of being attacked than most adults are of being attacked by young people. I have consulted with a lot of young people and that has come up every time.

ACTING CHAIR: I do not know whether you want to start by going through some of those areas. They are very different areas. There is your social planning expertise, your practical role at Fairfield, and then whether there is anything you want to say on behalf of the Planning Institute more formally.

Ms REILLY: They just asked me to come along and I said I will because it is an important area.

ACTING CHAIR: Let us break it up a bit as suits you.

Ms REILLY: Would you like me to talk about the need to involve young people in the planning?

ACTING CHAIR: Yes.

Ms REILLY: I think that very seldom are young people considered at the master planning stage of a new area, for example, in new release areas, for example, in Green Square in the city of Sydney. It is really important to consult with them at that early stage to ensure you are building an area they

will be able to congregate in. The people before were speaking about kids doing street skating and things like that. Areas are never built to endure street skating, and councils get really angry because materials or walls are getting broken and they cannot repair things. If they had considered the issues at the beginning they would have been able to plan for street skating and other recreational activities.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Could you explain to me street skating?

Ms REILLY: Street skating is extremely popular with young people at the moment. It is an international trend. You will see them in the city all the time and they like to go on stair rails and chairs. It is about skating on the urban form, basically. It is extremely good exercise. The social interaction between young people is amazing. They have great respect for each other. There are young women, Indian kids, Asian kids, it is a great mix of kids. There are six to seven to eight-year-olds. There are 40-year-old fathers. They are all doing it, and they are not really very welcome, basically. Nobody wants them around. People are scared of them in the streets, afraid they are going to get knocked over. The police have to tell them to go away. It is causing a lot of problems.

What councils then do is built a skate park somewhere at the back of a park and nobody uses it, because they have not consulted with young people. The City of Sydney is building one in Waterloo at the moment next to the South Sydney youth services facility. Young people have been involved from the very beginning in the design of that. That is doing really well. It will be a very popular skate park. But lots of other kids are saying that they are not going to go there because it is in Waterloo. If other councils had considered at the beginning that young people would be street skating in the urban domain they could have planned areas that might have had some purpose-built skate rails or purpose-built chairs in materials that are not going to get destroyed by skating. Melbourne City Council has some good examples of that.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: With Hornsby shire council it has taken a long time. The kids are now 30 or 40 that started off the consultation when they were about seven or eight. Young people were not involved in the preliminary planning. At the beginning of last year there was finally a skateboard park. It is in the perfect position and it is used day and night. It has lights and kids are there all the time.

Ms REILLY: Absolutely. All the young people I have spoken to in the youth facilities plan that I am doing for the City of Sydney have said, "We do not want to go somewhere where we cannot be seen. We get really frightened, particularly at Cook and Phillip Park. We are not going to go down onto the grass. There are too many deros down there and we are really frightened. We want to be somewhere where we can be seen by people and where we can see people." It is a really important aspect. Young people do not get considered in that regard. Everyone is frightened of young people. That is the perception out there.

ACTING CHAIR: I know another example of a council that has just decided to put a skate park—of all things—on the waterfront, because it happens to be a former industrial area and no-one lives near it. The councillors at Ryde decided that no-one is going to hate them and they have spent a lot of money putting a skate park totally isolated from anyone.

Ms REILLY: And no-one will use it.

ACTING CHAIR: Council is responding to adult opposition to the notion of providing something noisy that would bring young people to the area.

Ms REILLY: I come up against that a lot in my work.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: In Berowra it is across the road from residential housing. Normally, if people are going to complain they will complain through my office. I have not had one complaint in relation to the young people there. It is right next to an oval. It is really in a perfect position. It is not far from the railway station, so kids can get there by train.

Ms REILLY: That is another big issue. Young people do not drive cars so they need facilities near public transport.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Is that the problem with Waterloo?

Ms REILLY: No, lots of kids are just too scared to go to Waterloo because of the image. But there are heaps of young kids around there who will use it. The 25 to 30-year-old skaters will go there.

ACTING CHAIR: We have just heard from witnesses talking about the percentage of obese and overweight children and so on. What percentage of children and young people are skateboarders?

Ms REILLY: I could not give you an exact number. Very few studies have been done on it. One of the main reasons is that there are very few facilities for people to skate. The numbers are probably a lot higher than they seem. The study that the City of Sydney is about to release—it is doing a skate strategy—has a lot of research and it will give you the numbers. I can probably get it to the Committee when it is finished. It will not be very long. Increasing numbers of young children are doing it. It is becoming the highest percentage of young children and their parents.

ACTING CHAIR: So we are not talking about something that represents only a small percentage?

Ms REILLY: No, it would probably be 10 or 15 per cent, which is pretty big.

ACTING CHAIR: And presumably it would be bigger if there were more facilities?

Ms REILLY: Absolutely. Another problem young people raise is that they do not feel welcome in public space, particularly in shopping centre areas. I do not know how you deal with that. I suppose if there is a new shopping centre being built then you get in at the early stages and work with young people and bring them in at the planning stage. I am trying to think of the shopping centre in Melbourne. At Erina Fair on the Central Coast they have been doing that. Another one in Melbourne has done the same thing. Involving young people is a really important part of it. They are really enthusiastic and very insightful. There is no point building for young people if they are not involved, because it will not work.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: They are going to spend a lot of money there too.

Ms REILLY: Yes.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: Westfield in Hornsby is reasonably new. There is a mall that forms a sort of a cross. There is supposed to be an amphitheatre and all sorts of little alcoves and so on but I do not think young people were involved in the consultation stage. It becomes a problem for policing. The wrong things are going on in the alcoves. The amphitheatre is not even used because it is just an impractical design. There was consultation recently. Council is thinking about restructuring. It will cost more money. They should have brought the young people in at the beginning to see what their needs were.

Ms REILLY: Exactly, at the master planning stage. It is most important.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Many councils have built skate parks and, by most accounts, they are quite successful. What is your experience of public liability fears in local councils? If councils can overcome fears around skate parks why can we not overcome the issues around children's playgrounds? I am interested in that interaction. What is your experience of councils and dealing with changing insurance liability?

Ms REILLY: I can only talk about my experience when I used to work in councils, when the changes started happening. Those issues have impacted a lot on kids being overweight. With Bondi, Waverley Council was frightened about surfing. They thought if anybody went into the water they were going to get sued. So everything starts to get banned. I do not have a lot of knowledge about playgrounds.

ACTING CHAIR: It is a very good question.

Ms REILLY: Yes, it has impacted greatly.

ACTING CHAIR: The seesaws have gone. Many things have gone. Yet skateboarding is likely to produce just as bad a set of injuries.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is right. You were talking about street skating down in front of the church. There are huge signs saying that kids are not supposed to be doing that but 20 to 40 people are there every afternoon. Where does the liability lie if somebody is hurt? While I am pleased to see people using the space, I am interested in that interaction. Are we just turning a blind eye to it or are there councils who are taking the decision? I point to another example. Marrickville Council has one of the few parks in town that has a flying fox. In putting in a flying fox it seems to have overcome quite a lot of different issues in terms of play equipment. It has gone down the road of more adventurous equipment than you see in other places. Why can it be done by one council? Is it the case that they are just not sharing the information?

Ms REILLY: I think it is more a matter of councils being completely starved of funds and not being able to deal with paying. Councils now have a lot of responsibilities to deliver to a community and I just think that they are really frightened that if they get sued they are going to go broke.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: We will be hearing representatives from the Local Government and Shires Association this afternoon. We can ask them.

Ms REILLY: I have just done a project with Marrickville Council, a childcare needs study. I think there is a lot of fear in councils about going broke.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You said that you had done work at Liverpool. We seem to be getting two potentially contradictory streams of advice. We were out at the Liverpool PCYC. The council seems to have been at great pains to take into account the wishes of the children in planning for the club. Yet the attitude of the PCYC, which is now managing it, is that you cannot plan along the lines of simply giving children everything they wish for. The result is that we have a club that no-one seems to be using, and it seems to be a great source of friction. This morning Bill Crane said that there should not be an over-reliance on participatory processes because development is going on at such a great rate that if you are fixated on participation the thing will be built before you get a chance to intervene in the outcome. What is more called for is an outcomes orientation. I do not know whether you do this in conjunction with children or adults but you look at the outcomes and then you work back to see how those outcomes can be achieved while at the same time still satisfying the children's needs.

Ms REILLY: Liverpool and Fairfield are really interesting communities. I am pretty sure that Fairfield is the most obese community in Australia for children. I could go on for hours about the children in the communities out there. I think you need to consider the needs of children and young people. I

am not saying that at the master planning stage you need to seek consultation processes but you need to consider their needs then. I heard people speaking before about connectivity and community—ensuring that housing estates are connected to the schools or that you do not build a road that is too narrow for a bus to drive down. In Penrith there are new communities where a public bus cannot drive. The other issues are really major issues. People are spending so much money on their mortgages that both parents are having to work. In Fairfield 6,000 families have both parents working or the single parent working. There are 300 vacation care places—for 24,000 children. What do the 6,000 or 8,000 children whose parents are working do during the holidays? I do not think they are running around the park. Many of them are sitting home on their own watching television, sitting at their friends house watching TV, getting \$20 to go up the road to McDonald's to buy their lunch. I am sure they are not up being active. The council has run school holiday programs at its leisure centre that cost six dollars. When the council asked why they were not working I said, "Who has got six bucks to go to the pool?" If they do go to the pool once they probably cannot go again for another two weeks. What are these kids doing when the parents are working? The parents are driving 1½ hours in the morning and 1½ hours in the afternoon. They are probably leaving at seven and getting home at six or seven at night. That is one of the biggest issues in those communities at the moment. Kids are exhausted, parents are exhausted—

Ms SYLVIA HALE: You cannot force them. The social context in which they find themselves—

Ms REILLY: You cannot. If I was a seven-year-old and dropped off at Grandma's at 7.00 a.m. and going to school at 8.30 and getting home at six o'clock and doing my homework I do not think I would be running around playing basketball. I probably went off at a tangent there, I am sorry.

ACTING CHAIR: The built environment is of little relevance unless the planning relates the built environment to the other issues.

Ms REILLY: That is right. If you can have a park that is close to someone's home or a basketball court that is free or something that young people children can do and feel safe that is close to their homes you can build communities that way and they might be more likely to walk out and do something. But there is a lot of fear in those communities as well.

ACTING CHAIR: In many communities building things around the local primary school—as community centres and those kinds of programs—probably would help with many of the problems. If kids and families feel relatively welcome and secure at school, as most of them do, you can also add a lot of physical activity, healthy eating and all kinds of other things.

Ms REILLY: Yes. Many of the parents out there said that they feel very comfortable with their children doing things at schools. They felt safe about the school environment. So if you build things around schools it is good.

ACTING CHAIR: What training do planners, whether social planners or other varieties of planners, receive in understanding the needs of children and young people and how to engage them? In your submission you make the specific point about the range of age cohorts covered by a phrase such as "children and young people". Can you tell us something about the issues and the solutions of how to engage and take account of the needs of such a diverse group?

Ms REILLY: It is very difficult. It is extremely difficult to engage children, especially in the zero to five years group. I suppose you can only do that through parents. Are you talking about consulting?

ACTING CHAIR: Both. Relating the two, the sort of education that planners receive in how to do it and the huge range you mentioned in your submission.

Ms REILLY: I did my studies a long time ago; 15 or 16 years ago I got my degree and then I did a communications degree not long after that, so I am probably not the best person to ask about the training that people get. I am a member of the Planning Institute of Australia and we do a lot of ongoing training, which is fantastic.

ACTING CHAIR: That is the sort of thing I am talking about.

Ms REILLY: Every month they have guest speakers to discuss how to engage communities. They get international speakers over and there are lots of workshops and conferences. It is ongoing professional development. I have to say, it is fantastic.

ACTING CHAIR: Are the needs of children and young people gradually becoming a bigger part?

Ms REILLY: I think it is becoming more important with increasing obesity in our community.

ACTING CHAIR: Has the Planning Institute recognised that by the way it structures its ongoing training?

Ms REILLY: Social planners have only just become a member of the Planning Institute of Australia. That has only been in the last few years. Prior to that social planners were not considered planners. I do not think there are really that many of us out there. I just have particular interest in children, young people and society. I really enjoy doing this kind of work, but I think it will increase over the next little while.

ACTING CHAIR: Therefore, are you very unusual and is that, in itself, a bit of a problem because of that understanding, taking into account that the needs of children and young people must be more widely spread?

Ms REILLY: There are quite a few organisations that represent them. We have organisations like the Youth Action and Policy Association and the Office of Children and Young People.

ACTING CHAIR: They have been involved with talking to shopping centres developers and so on?

Ms REILLY: They do, but because they are not an economic force—except for purchasing fast foods—they still have to get their money from somewhere, their parents still give them the money, if you are a developer you are really only interested in putting as many houses on the land as you can and making as much money as you can. It needs to come from local government and State government legislation about what they need to be doing for children and young people.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Drawing on your experience with Sydney City Council—

Ms REILLY: I have had a lot of that.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I find Martin Place extraordinarily interesting. You have kids skating, a very mixed audience, cars, commercial buildings, yet do accidents occur there?

Ms REILLY: They are very unwelcome there.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: I know they are very unwelcome yet they persist.

Ms REILLY: They do but street skating is huge; it is massive, they have to do it somewhere and the city of Sydney needs to find an alternative.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Does the city of Sydney try to discourage those kids from skating there?

Ms REILLY: They do, they police it; they get hundreds of complaints every day.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: What are the sources of those complaints?

Ms REILLY: Mostly old ladies shopping; they fear being knocked over.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: They come up behind you and they are really noisy—and I am not an old lady.

ACTING CHAIR: Dr Crane made the comment about the clever design of Queen Street Mall in Brisbane, and the way curves, slopes and corners were built into it so that different activities could take place without one group terrorising another.

Ms REILLY: Brisbane City Council has great youth involvement in its decision making. It is really good.

ACTING CHAIR: Even after all the times that Martin Place has been rebuilt, in one sense it is still dangerous. You start at the top of the hill, and you go down faster all the way.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: It is the danger they want.

Ms REILLY: There was a skating film done there recently. It is internationally known that when you come to Sydney you go to Martin Place, so I do not know what we can do about it really.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you think that we need to focus on legislation and regulation, whether local government or State government?

Ms REILLY: Yes. I think that at the initial master planning stage the needs of children and young people should be considered. You cannot even take your kids to a toilet anymore. I have a four-year-old and when you go out, where do you go to the toilet? There are no toilets. That is the need for a child, surely. They cannot hold their bladders. It is very practical and sensible.

ACTING CHAIR: Are toilets not mandatory in shopping centres?

Ms REILLY: They are in shopping centres but you have to go into a pub, restaurant or into a mall. Lots of parks do not have them anymore.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Councils have policies of closing them down.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: Ray Hadley about two weeks ago reported on a web site that was available for paedophiles to access and there were even Hornsby addresses, which brought it to my attention and I rang the police straight away, where some people had drilled holes in the toilet so that they could observe children or anyone going into the toilets. It was dotted like a tour guide, which is why councils are worried.

Ms REILLY: I understand, but I think they are more worried because they have to clean them all the time, particularly in areas like this.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: You referred to the non-affordability of vacation care, even \$6 a day. A lot of councils have activities for up to 12-year-olds.

Ms REILLY: Most of them have that.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: But for the 12 to 15 or 16-year-olds they do not seem to have much at all. Up in Hornsby they really do not have anything.

Ms REILLY: No, and that is a real problem because parents are working and 12 years old are not really ready to be left alone.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: But if you cannot afford it, what do you do. You are in a double bind even if they were activities if the parents cannot afford the \$6 a day—

Ms REILLY: It is not \$6 a day. It is actually \$35 a day for formal vacation care, which comes under CCB, which is the Australian Government rebate; a vacational care centre is like a child care centre. If you are on the highest rebate, it will cost you maybe \$8 or \$10 a day, but if you are earning \$400 a week and you are a single mother with two children, you cannot really afford that money, so your kid sits at home, "Don't tell anyone you are home" and watches television and eats biscuits.

All those things impact on obesity. I do not just think it is advertising on television. I think it is the fact that our society now is work driven. People are tired. People are travelling so far to school. If you go out to Wollondilly, for example, children travel 1 to 1½ hours to school in the morning and 1 to 1½ hours home again. I did a project and I never saw a kid on a street, ever. There were lots of issues with overweight children. They live in big houses with not much of a yard. They live in this semi-rural area—it was really interesting—but they are not walking anywhere.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: But there are high levels of obesity in low socioeconomic areas in regional New South Wales, so they do not have to commute to work for an hour and a half; they are five minutes away.

Ms REILLY: No, well that is true, but I am just saying that there are other influences besides television

Ms SYLVIA HALE: It was interesting yesterday that the headmaster at Bonnyrigg thought it was a mark of achievement that some of his kids were going from Bonnyrigg into North Sydney Boys or Girls High; they had got into a selective school, but at what cost to the kids in terms of the travelling time and loss of connection with the kids they would otherwise play with?

Ms REILLY: Yes. There is no doubt that Coca-Cola, McDonald's and all those other things are dreadful but someone is giving them money to buy it as well.

ACTING CHAIR: As the health people from the three centres said from their different perspectives, the problems need to be addressed at a variety of points. That was their main message; a simple linear strategy will not work.

Ms REILLY: No. My main point, from a social planning perspective, is to involve children and young people, considered their needs and understand affordability.

ACTING CHAIR: They are two very different things, are they not? Involving them is different from their needs?

Ms REILLY: You will understand the needs if you involve them. I am 36; I do not understand the needs of a 15-year-old these days.

ACTING CHAIR: Yes, but they are different?

Ms REILLY: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: That was what we heard yesterday. I think what they want is an important part of the process, but there are other issues about their needs and the needs of the kids who do not respond to a survey.

Ms REILLY: Well, they will not respond to a survey and you might have to pay them forty bucks or give them a Westfield voucher to come along. The most successful consultations I have done is when we have given them a Westfield voucher and you get heaps of them.

ACTING CHAIR: Which they will then go and spend on fast food.

Ms REILLY: Or a pair of joggers or a skateboard. I do not know, but that is their prerogative. Adults get paid.

ACTING CHAIR: We will contact you if there are further issues.

Ms REILLY: And I will forward on the skate strategy, which has lots of good statistics in it.

(The witness withdrew)

ROSS KEITH WOODWARD, Deputy Director General, Department of Local Government, 5 O'Keefe Avenue, Nowra, sworn and examined:

ACTING CHAIR: The Committee has received a submission from the department. Do we have your permission to make the submission public and for it become part of your evidence?

Mr WOODWARD: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement before we go into questions?

Mr WOODWARD: The submission covers the statement, other than to confirm the department's role, which is about setting the policy and legislative framework for councils. We do not deliver the services but we provide the framework for councils to deliver that service. I have some publications that are referred to in the submission and will table those if that is of assistance to the Committee. Those publications are entitled "Social Community Planning Reporting Manual", The "Social Community Planning Reporting Guidelines" and the "Youth Council Checklist".

Documents tabled.

ACTING CHAIR: Could you make some comment on the vexed issue of liability that keeps coming up and the impact of liability concerns and the way in which councils equip playgrounds and deal or do not deal with skating, and so on? Can you give us a summary of the current position because it has changed legally over time, has it not?

Mr WOODWARD: It has. It has been a serious issue for councils and it still is. Councils are required to conduct risk assessments of all of their assets and, of course, that includes things like children's playgrounds. In the past some councils have done that well; others have not. They are now across the board improving the way they look at risk assessments. One of the issues around that is that it focuses on the negatives because risk has to look at: What are the possibilities of something going wrong? Councils are very attune to that because the cost of payouts is really quite crippling to local government so quite often the answer is to remove the items rather than deal with the risk in a different way.

So councils are now starting to think through some of the better risk assessment tools that are now available to look at what sorts of other things they can do, other than just removing the items, such as developing plans around minimising risks. Even signage can be a way of dealing with issues. Some of them are starting to think about—as well as looking at the negatives and around the risks themselves—what are the community benefits of providing things like playgrounds? Because in the past, if you look at a playground and the risks, you were likely to only come up with negatives,

whereas the community benefit of having a playground for the whole of society is not measured. So that is probably the next challenge for local government or for all of us, I guess, to look at how we can quantify all of those benefits so that when a council is making a decision as to what to do with, say a playground, that the benefits are put into the equation together with the risk, so that you get a balanced outcome.

ACTING CHAIR: Can that be taken into account in terms of legal liability or payouts?

Mr WOODWARD: I am told that it can be. It has not so far been tested but it is probably the next way of councils looking at risks. I am not a lawyer so I do not know how that could be tested, but eventually that will be tested because if councils are only required to look at the risks, then the risk measurements tend to be reducing all facilities.

ACTING CHAIR: And if you can say we have done a responsible and detailed study and we have concluded X, Y and Z, therefore, we have fulfilled our responsibilities.

Mr WOODWARD: Yes, because we have looked at the full range of risks and we have done what we can to minimise those risks but we have also looked at the benefits. It links to things like councils becoming better at asset management too. Part of a proper asset management plan is engagement with the community around the condition or the expectation of the community over those assets. So things that involve children would fall into that category as well, in that to what extent does the community expect there to be safe playground equipment in parks? If the community wants those things, what is the level of risk that the community is prepared to tolerate? There is an engagement with the community that has not so far really been done around asset or risk management in New South Wales and it is an issue that we are starting to look at with other States that have done some work in this area, particularly around asset management.

ACTING CHAIR: Are other States further advanced in this respect than we are?

Mr WOODWARD: In asset management, yes.

ACTING CHAIR: And in looking at risk?

Mr WOODWARD: Not so much with risk. I think that is fairly standard across Australia. There are some fairly sophisticated tools now for assessing risk. So councils are looking at those models. But, as I say, that tends to focus on the negatives. We are starting to look at ways of expanding that. A lot of it is around community engagement and what the community expects. For instance, if a council has consulted with the community in terms of its risk assessment and has community acceptance about the potential risks and that has been made public, I would say that that would probably have some weight

in court if something went wrong in that area. It is yet to be tested but it is the next phase around risk. Otherwise the outcome is to close things down, and none of us really want that.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Has any work been done in this area overseas? Do we have experience from the United States, for instance, of communities adopting this approach?

Mr WOODWARD: I am not sure, to be honest. I am told that in Australia and the United States because we have a fairly litigious society for a while local government was seen as fairly lucrative. Councils were sued for anything that went wrong and there were not a lot of checks and balances. But that has been corrected with the legislation, so now it is about what other models are there. I cannot really answer your question. I am not sure.

Ms SYLVIA HALE: Are you saying that the department is being fairly proactive in pursuing these lines of investigation with councils?

Mr WOODWARD: We have a program called Promoting Better Practice reviews. We go to a council—and our intention is to get eventually to all councils—and we do a review of their range of governance. So it is around procedures but one of the things we look at is how they manage risk. We have found that around liability issues the councils are doing quite well but we are looking at how they might improve that. Part of our role is to pick up the trends that are happening and then to look at ways to help the sector move forward. It is emerging—this is a fairly new program—that risk assessment and legal liability is an area that needs further attention. We will be working with the sector to see how we can advance that. It is not only around legal liability—although that is where councils have focused—but we are looking at risk management more broadly for the whole organisation. So it does link with that. Part of that exercise is to see what is being done elsewhere rather than reinventing it.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: You say that equipment is assessed for risk. What about trees? You would not cut down trees in a park but children will climb them. You would not remove a tree because there is a risk—a child can fall out of a tree—yet you would remove a piece of equipment because there is a risk. Where does it start and stop? Why are trees not considered to be just as risky as anything else?

Mr WOODWARD: Councils do consider trees to be quite a major risk. This is a very vexed question for councils. If a branch falls from a tree that someone asked council to remove and council did not approve its removal under its tree preservation order, the council can be liable. That has happened on a few occasions. Councils are very aware of the danger posed by trees.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: I am not saying that you should remove trees. Supervision is an issue here. If children are playing in a playground that has

trees and equipment you must assume that there will be an element of parental responsibility too.

Mr WOODWARD: Absolutely. I think there has been an assumption that all the risk ends up with the council. That is where councils are on the receiving end and are becoming more risk averse because they are the ones that, at the end of the day, must front up to court and defend why they did or did not do certain things. That is an issue for them.

ACTING CHAIR: We can obviously follow up this issue with people with the necessary legal knowledge. But it has come up several times. Did you want to take up that issue, Penny, because you raised it before?

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I notice that your submission and that of the LGSA do not mention liability. Yet we have been told on many occasions that councils are risk averse around this issue and that it impacts on what they are building in their communities. Has the department tracked the number of claims since the change in legislation? Is fear about the large claims, which got a lot of media attention, flowing through the culture and blocking the best intentions in what we have in legislation? If that is the case, first, is there any evidence anywhere to show that claims are increasing or decreasing, particularly in relation to children and young people and playgrounds and open space? Secondly, we have heard that councils are building skate parks. If they can overcome the risks associated with skate parks why can that not flow through to playgrounds? What role do you think the department can play in sharing good practice? You spoke a little about better practice but it seems to me that there is fear and time is lagging in terms of council attitudes as opposed to what is actually happening on the ground. Can you comment on that?

Mr WOODWARD: Each council is autonomous in its local decision making. So we do not become involved. We do not monitor things such as the issues that you raised. But what we can do, and what we are starting to do through our reviews of councils, is get the trends. We look at things like how many cases councils have—not necessarily specifically the ones that you raised but broadly. One of the issues we look at is a council's legal costs, for instance. That includes development matters that go to the Land and Environment Court as well as other issues. So we have not particularly honed in on that other than to say that across the board there is an issue around risk management. As well as other areas of trends where we can add value, risk management in its broadest sense—it is not only about legal liability—is now coming to the fore. We are looking at that more broadly. So, yes, we do have a role and we are starting to take up that role but until now we have not.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: This question probably falls into the question that Penny asked. Perhaps you may not have all the relevant information in relation to the Department of Local Government. We have heard that councils removed a lot of play equipment because it did not meet Australian standards. There is also the issue of soft-fall under the new play

equipment. My question relates to how much information the Department of Local Government has about the changes that councils have made probably since the 1990s—because this processes started in the early to mid 1990s. How much information does the department have? You may need to take that question on notice. My other question is about the removal of play equipment that did not relate to Australian standards and the introduction of new play equipment. I assume that most councils have provided new play equipment. Have they had to give information to the department about that? What about soft-fall under that play equipment? I know that there are some risks associated with skate parks. Some councils—I can cite only Canterbury council as an example—have also introduced a different type of equipment in parks for older children. Does the Department of Local Government have any information about that? You may need to take that question on notice also. Is that type of equipment seen as appropriate for use in open spaces?

Mr WOODWARD: The answer to all three questions is that we do not collect that information and councils are not required to provide it to us. Perhaps I can answer in a broader sense. It links back to the social and community planning process. We have a proposal with councils and the whole sector—other government agencies—at the moment around planning. We call it integrated planning and reporting. The system we have at the moment is that councils are required by legislation to prepare a series of plans and to report on a number of things. But it is not well integrated and we only check some things and not others. So our intention is to streamline that and make it a more meaningful and integrated process—to help councils integrate their social plan, for instance, with their management plan and their budget. They can have the best social plan that you have ever seen but no money is put aside for any of it and we do not know that. We see the social plan but not how it links to the budget or to the annual management plan.

So our proposal to the sector is: Let us work on this together to make a more meaningful planning process and pick out the things that they should be reporting on—and that may well be one but I am not saying it is necessarily. Falling out of that would be that they report to us on some key indicators but not necessarily the whole range of indicators that they currently provide to us. We would not know whether some of them are linked to anything else. Our project is a fairly major piece of work that we expect may lead to some legislation. For instance, one of the gaps coming through our review of better practice is that councils do not really plan strategically very well and they are not required to. Our thinking is that we need to get councils to focus on the strategic planning level as much as the operational, and to link the two. Part of that process is the social and community planning and what gets reported. At the moment there is no reporting against the community plan other than it comes to the department and we look at it. However, we look at it in isolation. So our intention is to report that together to have more meaningful planning and reporting flowing from that.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I have another question in relation to youth councils, which a number of councils have. Sometimes youth councils

feed into issues regarding the relationship between young people and councils. In a number of cases youth councils make recommendations to the council as a whole about youth issues and the things that young people might like to see happen in a council area. Is there any requirement at present for councils to report that, first, they have the functioning youth council; and, secondly, any recommendations that come out of that youth council that feed into the council as a whole?

Mr WOODWARD: No.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: There is no formal structure?

Mr WOODWARD: No. We do not mandate how councils engage with their community, including young people. But in the guidelines we have provided we have made some suggestions about how they might do it. We have suggested things like youth councils as a good way to go and there is a range of other things. We do not mandate how they do it but we say that they should have some form of consultation process. So they do it differently.

ACTING CHAIR: So when you have children and young people as a mandatory target group in the preparation of council social plans you go as far as to say that councils must engage and plan in relation to children and young people but no-one is monitoring the process or collecting information about how the various councils across New South Wales are carrying it out.

Mr WOODWARD: We do, in that councils are required to provide to us the social plan and, in doing that, they detail how they have gone about the process of developing the social plan. But I have to say that it varies across the State how they go about it and how serious they are about it. Some councils do it extremely well and are absolutely committed to it but others do it because they have to. They tick the box to say it is done and send it in to us.

ACTING CHAIR: So when we say that children and young people are a mandatory target group as long as you tick the box you are covered.

Mr WOODWARD: Yes, that is one of the reasons why we are looking at having a more meaningful planning process. Because then our add-on value will be to say, "You've identified these series of things for young people, where's your budget for it? How does that link with your strategic plan? What happens in the next generation?" It is about how we make it a more meaningful process rather than councils ticking the box to say that they have done their social plan and that is all we monitor. We have identified that there is a gap and we are filling it.

ACTING CHAIR: They were a couple of the questions we had. We have come at social plans in a slightly roundabout way. Did you want to say anything else about the preparation of social plans and how they inform development of the built environment?

Mr WOODWARD: If they are done well, and I have to say there are a lot a very good examples, they are an extremely good tool for councils to go through methodically to understand what their community needs are, and to implement the outcomes of that planning process.

ACTING CHAIR: Can you give us some good examples of the sorts of things they do, even if you do not want to name the councils?

Mr WOODWARD: Not off the top of my head. It is about community engagement. If you engage with the community and you do it seriously, our experience is that the plan at the end of it will always be a good plan because what we do not like is the pro forma where they get a consultant, tick the boxes and say that they have done it. You can tell exactly how well the process has been done by how they have engaged with the community. Some of the councils in the metropolitan area of Sydney do it particularly well. They also have more resources to put to it, but, equally, you can tell the ones that are really committed to the process. Legislating to require them was a first step, really, around saying that this is a critical step for local government. Our view is that local government is all about community: that is the nub of it. Therefore the social plan really is the key to a successful council.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: In relation to councils that just tick the box, what can the department do about that? Are there any ways in which you can make the councils improve their game? At the end of the day if they are putting together something that is just a tick in the box they are going to utilise ratepayers' money in some way that may not be fruitful and may be a waste of money. They might have to revisit it at a later time, again using ratepayers' money. Is there any accountability, or are you moving along on a continuum at the moment trying to improve it?

Mr WOODWARD: It is more the continuum. We have not had a sanction, other than to say that we will review the plan. If we think it is bad we certainly give them feedback and tell them where it needs to be fixed. But our reviewing process, the program of better practice reviews, looks at that whole process of how councils go about all of their functions, and then we set out a series of recommendations and require councils to come back to us with an action plan of how they are going to address those issues. That is another way of doing with it if it has been poorly done. But they are five-year plans, and most of them have only just completed their first go at it. For some of them it is a new process, so it is a continuum.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: If you get a you-beaut plan that looks wonderful and possibly there is an amount of money in the budget for it, would you audit to ensure they do what they say?

Mr WOODWARD: Not at the moment, but that is part of the integrated planned reporting process. We would like to link the reporting that councils are required to do with what they say they will do. At the moment the whole system is a bit disjointed around planning and reporting because they report

on a number of things, but they do not often link to their actions. They report on a lot of financial data, but whether they have achieved what they have said they would do in their management plan or the social plan is not reported on. That is what we are looking at doing. How can we make this a more meaningful process to make sure? By putting a discipline of reporting to us on what they have said they will do rather than a whole lot of other, sometimes minutiae of reporting, to focus on those key issues we think will get a better outcome for the community, which is what they are about.

ACTING CHAIR: We noted that the department has produced a number of publications giving guidelines and so on about how councils might consult with young people. Can you tell us how you feel those publications have gone? Have they helped? Have they produced better outcomes in terms of consulting and then meeting the needs of young people?

Mr WOODWARD: Yes, they have been a very positive step. When we introduced them—it was before my time—I am told that some councils were already doing this very well and they said to us, "We are already doing this." But others said to us, "This is very helpful", because they wanted to do it better, "We just did not know how to go about it." One of the things we are encouraging councils to do, another reform of local government, I guess, is to operate not as individual islands but to share their resources as well as their information across the board. A good example is that the Minister is currently very strong on sibling city relationships or sibling local government and relations within the New South Wales. That is about saying to metropolitan councils, some of whom are doing it very well with things like social planning, "Go out into the bush and help those guys out there who are struggling and who do not know quite how to go about it." Some of them already do it because a lot of them do it fairly quietly. They get on with it and they do it. We are encouraging councils to share information. The guidelines really were a mark in the sand to say that this is the minimum level and this is some advice about how to do it. They have been well received, and councils rely a lot on our guidelines to help them get there. But some of them are already doing it very well, but others see it as of great assistance. Yes, they have been very successful in that regard—as a first step, really.

ACTING CHAIR: But the department does not monitor them as such, there are no particular sanctions if councils are not performing or following the guidelines?

Mr WOODWARD: The department's role is to provide the guidelines so that they can provide the services themselves. This really said to them, "You have to do a plan and these are some suggestions about how to go about it." If they ignored that it would be a different question for us to have a look at, but they have not. In the overwhelming majority of cases they have taken the guidelines and applied them with some very good outcomes.

ACTING CHAIR: One of our early witnesses commented that we need much more of a focus on outcomes, probably generally, but certainly in

relation to children and young people. Does the department look at outcomes as distinct from looking at the guidelines and the documents, and how to plan better? Do you have a look at what results from the work you are doing?

Mr WOODWARD: In terms of the actual planning?

ACTING CHAIR: The outcomes of all this activity?

Mr WOODWARD: In the plans?

ACTING CHAIR: And even further down, the actual implementation of the plans?

Mr WOODWARD: At the moment we do not, and that is one of the reasons why we wanted to change that system, so that we focus on outcomes rather than inputs. At the moment we look at the quality of the plan and we like them to report on it. Sure, it might be a nice plan, but did you do it? That is the key.

ACTING CHAIR: Does that run into a problem with local government where they say, "We have jurisdiction. We are local government. We are our own tier. It is not your job to tell us how to do things and to measure what we do"?

Mr WOODWARD: In a way it does, but they are acknowledging that the way the planning system currently works is a bit disjointed. They are quite willing to work with us around improving it. So far we have had no opposition to the idea or the concept. The detail might be different, but certainly the concept of saying, "Let's focus on council at the strategic level and then the number of plans that have to be done and how they link to the management." Then the reporting should be simplified and, based on outcomes, no-one has said to me or to the department that they object to that. They actually like that concept because some of them are already doing that. That is what they like to focus on, too, because it should streamline their reporting back to their communities. We require them to report back in their annual reports on outcomes, so it closes that loop and helps them to focus on outcomes rather than inputs.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In relation to one of the things you are talking about with management plans and social plans, and probably-state-of-the-environment plans coming back into that process, how does this link in with what the department provides, which is the reporting process that says that councils have kept up to what they should be doing in relation to turning around DAs to a range of other things? Are you looking down the track at providing the same sort of reporting process for how councils report on their management plans, their social plans, these days of the environment plans and so on, and coming back to a process where they can report not just back to their community but where there is a report card from the department as well, as there are with other things at the moment?

Mr WOODWARD: That is sort of where we are headed, yes. That is what we are likely to focus on so that you will have an alignment of the various plans. You might have your social plan, the state-of-the-environment report, your financial plan, your asset management plan all interlinked. They have different time frames around them. They have different reporting requirements. Different people in the council do these plans and often they do not talk to each other. We are also talking about integration within the council itself, so that comes together at the management plan with a report card at the end of that around how all that links together.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The principle is good. I suppose the question would be do councils agree that that process might be the report that the Department of Local Government provides as opposed to making a report that goes out to the local community? Would you envisage that the same report that the community is being given by the local council is the same as the department? How are you going to do indicators for those sorts of things? Is it going to be an agreed process between councils and local government and the department?

Mr WOODWARD: Yes, that is the aim. We have not got there yet. As I said, we have just put the concept out there. That would be a nice outcome that you actually have alignment. They have to report to us on some other things that the community would not be interested in and need not necessarily see. There will be other reporting requirements, but in terms of the broad report card if we have a standardised way that links to planning process that went to the community and then came to us, we think that would be a huge step forward because it would reduce the amount of reporting and work that councils have to do, and give some consistency and transparency to the community. As I said, there would still be other reporting requirements to us on their finances and a whole range of other things that would not necessarily be in the public arena. What you are talking about is sort of our goal.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: That would also have to be a process that was agreed between councils and the department in relation to a cycle. For instance, if you were talking about management plans that have a three-year cycle then there would have to be some cyclic process that whatever councils do and whatever the department is looking at they all come out at the end to reach the same goal and give the same outcomes?

Mr WOODWARD: Yes, exactly right.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: And that is still being discussed?

Mr WOODWARD: Yes.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Is that being discussed with the Local Government and Shires Associations as well?

Mr WOODWARD: Yes, they are a key part of this. They and the Local Government Managers Association and the LGSA are on a working group with us. They have put together the discussion paper that is currently out for comment, or which has just closed, and they are on the reference group to assess that and to drive that process. It will not work if they are not all in the same cart together with us.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: The question from this Committee would be whether there is a box that talks about children and young people specifically?

Mr WOODWARD: There will be in the future because that is part of the current social planning. Whatever that currently is, we will look at whether we need to add things to the various boxes. We certainly will not take away.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I suppose it should not be a box but boxes.

Mr WOODWARD: Boxes, yes.

ACTING CHAIR: We should get back to children and young people, and the built environment. People who think that not enough attention is being paid to it have suggested things like a youth impact statement, a special SEPP dealing with the needs of children and young people, in other words various things that could be done legislatively or by regulation to beef up the attention paid at a moment to children and young people. What would your reaction be to that?

Mr WOODWARD: My view is that anything that can beef up the attention would be a good thing. As you are aware, there currently is a broad skills shortage, focussed particularly in local government. We set up a skills shortage task force to look at how we could drive the process of putting some more skills in local government. The first thing we were struck with coming out of that was local governments becoming an employer of choice for young people. That took us down a different path altogether because one of the features of local government is that if you look at their collective representatives they tend to be older men, and that staff in councils tend to be an ageing work force. The attraction of young people to work in local government is missing. We are dealing with that as a separate series of strategies to encourage and advertise local government, and to generate interest in it for young people. If you have young people as elected representatives by having family friendly ways of meeting and a whole range of things, this opens up a whole Pandora's box around the culture of local government and how local government works. Then you start to get a different flavour in the policies of local government and the attention that is given to things like children and young people. We are all in it together.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: In 2003 I was asked questions concerning a huge high-rise development in Waitara, in my electorate. It came to my attention that there was no demographer in Hornsby Shire Council. In fact, there is no demographer in the Department of Education and Training, in relation to the needs of planning for schools. At Waitara a school is close to that huge development, which is still ongoing, involving many units, and demountables are to be erected on the playing fields.

No-one had thought about the impact of extra children from that high-rise development on the local school. Does the department take those things on board? Maybe there needs to be a demographer to look at the needs of young people and young adults generally. If there is no demographer who does look at those needs?

Mr WOODWARD: Not every council would have enough work for a demographer on a full-time basis. The State Government has a lot of information in any case, and the Department of Planning provides that information—not to the level of detail that your question suggests about the development at Waitara. That resource is already available. That is another issue, that councils should share and work together, because there may be a regional organisation of councils that together works out the demographics and the future of the broader area.

We encourage councils to work together, sharing that sort of resource exactly. There are a number of other things that they could share, but that is a classic one. We could not justify having a demographer in every council, but you might justify having one across 10 councils, to work for those councils and to get a more regional strategy around where the population is going. That could then be linked to the Metropolitan Strategy as well.

Mrs JUDY HOPWOOD: That would be logical. Everyone would have noticed in the media over the past months issues related to child care. Hornsby, again, was mentioned in relation to a lot of child care centres in one area. After I saw that huge development next to the school, I thought there was an obvious need for a demographer, because one thing has led to something else. Now the amenity in the streets where all the child care centres operate is impacted upon, because no-one thought about the school space being taken up and also there would be more parents with more young children needing child care.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have any written material for the Committee that would give more detail about the developments you have spoken about?

Mr WOODWARD: Not specifically. The discussion paper is on our web site. Everything we have is on the web site.

ACTING CHAIR: If the Committee wishes to ask you anything arising from your evidence the secretariat will contact you.

(The witness withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

BEVERLEY GIEGERL, Treasurer, Local Government and Shires Associations, and

JULIE ANNE HEGARTY, Treasurer, Local Government and Shires Associations, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: In what capacity do you appear today?

Ms GIEGERL: Since 1995 I have been the Chair of the Community Planning and Services Committee of the Local Government Association. I am a councillor of Hurstville City Council, where I chair the service delivery of the Standing Committee and Traffic Committee and the Aboriginal Advisory Committee. My professional background, before I retired from it, was schoolteacher and school principal. I also have a particular interest in libraries.

Ms HEGARTY: I appear as an executive member of the Local Government and Shires Association. I am a councillor on Pittwater Council. I sit on the community panel with Councillor Giegerl at the Local Government Association. I have been at Pittwater Council for 12 years and I have a special interest in young people. I have two young daughters so I am aware of a lot of issues that really young people are going through, the parents, and the school issues. I sit on a lot of traffic committees, because that is something I am very interested in through our school workshops. I am an activities officer at Bunnings, in charge of marketing and promotion and making sure that everyone has fun when they go shopping.

ACTING CHAIR: The association has forwarded a submission to the Committee. Are you happy for that to be made public and included as part of your evidence?

Ms GIEGERL: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: You have seen the prepared questions. Do you wish to make an opening statement before questions commence?

Ms GIEGERL: Yes, I would like to make some additional comments. I became aware of my need to be here today only yesterday morning. However, I have been kept abreast of the work of the Committee through the association. Yesterday afternoon was the first time I had seen the submission. There are some matters that I could fill out and add to. Do you wish me to do that now?

ACTING CHAIR: You may feel that during questions that would be appropriate.

Ms GIEGERL: In summary, starting at the beginning, the submissions states that we "share the desire to ensure the wellbeing" and I am certain we

would all endorse that. The submission cites the association's rural and youth affairs project as one project that gives evidence of shared concerns. I add to that the recent cultural awards that included the cream of the social planning and cultural development projects that councils across the State have developed. Many of those certainly involve consultation with children's groups within the area. I think you could add extensively to the evidence of the concern and the success stories involving the integration of children and young people's planning for public space.

ACTING CHAIR: Would you tell us some of those specifics when we ask questions?

Ms HEGARTY: Yes.

Ms GIEGERL: I have a brief opening statement that I want to put to the committee today. I believe that young people should have the same rights to access the built environment as other consumer groups and groups within our communities. I believe unfortunately young people, particularly in groups, are often considered a problem when they use and occupy the built environment—by the built environment I include parks, gardens, shopping centres, libraries and things like that. As a group they are often misconceived to be a problem. I think it is probably reasonable to ask: is it a problem that we commonly need to address within our community? How do we do that? I think we can do it by addressing young people. We can also do it by addressing the built environment but we need also to keep in consideration that we can address it by informing the remainder of the community that groups of young people are not always a problem and to try to be positive and take it on a different angle as to just young people and the environment. We should remind the remainder of the community that sometimes young people just need to congregate in groups, and that is just what young people do. I wanted to put that on the table.

Ms HEGARTY: I strongly endorse that. It can be attitudes and perceptions that drive young people away from the use of public spaces and the ultimate use of the built environment hinges on more than just the design of the building. In that situation, attitudes and perceptions are critically important.

ACTING CHAIR: How do councils go about involving children at the planning stage and finding out what they want and what are their needs? How successfully do councils do that?

Ms GIEGERL: We are here today representing 152 councils, and councils are ultimately autonomous and governed by their resources for that sort of thing and beyond that certainly driven by the values and concerns of the council itself. Having qualified it in that way, I would say that in many of the larger councils, and Hurstville and Canterbury are examples, that is something that is understood and an attempt is made.

ACTING CHAIR: How?

Ms GIEGERL: One through our social plans.

ACTING CHAIR: What does Hurstville do to engage with young people to find out what they want?

Ms GIEGERL: They have targeted focussed groups. We have particularly experienced officers in that area. One of our officers heads Youth Zone, for instance. Hurstville has a large building where Youth Zone is housed and it services and maintains very close contact with a lot of the youth in the area who otherwise would not perhaps engage. There are some wellknown youth facilities in the arts and crafts field, such as Shop Front Theatre that has been an icon for many years. Forgive me for this plug, but the library certainly caters for them. You will find that in every council area that has a library service, if nothing else in the council area taps into consultation and catering for the needs of kids, public libraries do.

ACTING CHAIR: Does Hurstville consult and engage with young people reasonably well?

Ms GIEGERL: We certainly do it as well as we possibly can.

ACTING CHAIR: What do you say?

Ms HEGARTY: Actually a motion was put before council to establish a Youth Council. We actually went out to our young people in the community—not the older people—that would be part of this and it was suggested by them that it would not be well supported; that young people tend to like to throw their weight behind something 100 per cent for a couple of weeks and then not at all. Because a Youth Council is an ongoing commitment that takes a great deal of time, they felt they were not able to commit to it and perhaps would not be interested in committing to it. It was also established by the group of people that we originally asked what was the problem with Youth Councils that it tends to be the same type of people who get involved, that is, the kids that are already on student representative councils, the kids that are already student leaders, that are class captains, school captains tend to be the ones that participate in the Youth Council.

So we decided to hold a Youth Forum, which has now become an annual event. I guess the children from the other end of the school social area were included in that. The kids that had an interest in event management were the ones who actually put the whole thing together. They are the ones who organised all the events over the lunchtime period, the bands and things like that. They also targeted the people to specifically invite to the Youth Forum and from that we engaged those people that were not usually engaged. They were the ones that had some great ideas but just were not usually the ones who participated. They were not the ones that usually like to put their hands up for things.

ACTING CHAIR: How many were at the forum?

Ms HEGARTY: We had 120 young people from four high schools, which we have in our local government area. It was a fantastic day. It was a sort of 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. type day and the kids got there on their own. It was supported by our council and ran very well. I think the positive with that is the kids who organised it were the ones who invited people. So, it was an intimate day in which they got to meet kids from other high schools and worked together.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Which group decided that the youth would not be involved in the youth council? Were they ones who normally turned up all the time at these things?

Ms HEGARTY: Yes. There was a meeting that we organised with the principals and the school captain of these four high schools. They were the ones who were more against the youth council. Following the youth forum the same thing came out, unanimously supported by the young people who attended the forum, that they would not like to be part of a youth council, that it was too much of a commitment over too long a period. What you were talking about before with our social plan, it was a matter of our officers going into the schools, usually in year 11 because they are not quite so committed to their studies at that stage, and spoke to each year 11 at each school and asked what is important to you, what would you like to see out of your area, or what would you like to see provided, and other minority groups.

ACTING CHAIR: How far down the age range that did you go?

Ms HEGARTY: It was from year 9, so it was years 9, 10, 11 and 12, the four years, whatever age that makes them—15? That was a really successful event.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: When was that?

Ms HEGARTY: March. I cannot remember the exact date, but it was in March. The positive thing that came out of that was that it gave us an opportunity to target some of the minority groups in our area. We do not have many ethnic minority groups. We do have them, but they are not as prevalent as some other areas in Sydney. But the minority groups like the people who struggle financially or the groups that struggle emotionally or socially were also the groups we were able to target and include them in the day. Apart from the fact they were able to give input, they found it a really fun day, which is what you are trying to achieve.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: As the peak body in relation to local government in New South Wales and with what happens to young people, say, the reporting processes that go through social planning, and so on—this question has a couple of parts to it. One is do councils come to the Local

Government and Shires Associations in relation to how they connect and have policies that connect with young people, using young people, say, through youth councils which a number of councils do have? Also, is there a policy that the Local Government and Shires Associations have in relation to how to get councils to connect to young people and what young people see as issues with the built environment and also how young people get involved in planning processes, particularly where youth councils do not exist? I support youth councils, but one of the issues with youth councils in the councils where they exist is that they may only be asked to participate in something like an appropriate area for a skate park or something like that. How do the Local Government and Shires Associations look at policies that may be utilised through local government about youth councils, about young people getting involved in processes across the board of local government in a particular local government area? Also how do you engage people—particularly if I am thinking of areas like my own area of Canterbury—who come from very diverse backgrounds and particularly from non-English-speaking backgrounds?

Ms GIEGERL: That is an important issue, the engagement of the diverse needs of the community. As far as the Local Government and Shires Associations, each association establishes its policies through the annual conference, and various councils submit motions that are modified, accepted or rejected, and progressively policies are amended and added to. We do have core policies covering all the areas of the local government brief, but they were significantly revised just a couple of years ago to come up with an overall statement to set the tone. We can only encourage. We can only promote, we can only showcase and we can only invite. Frequently we do survey councils and invite them to keep us informed. We welcome when individual councils who are doing a particular thing feed the information into the LGA, because that does inform us and helps us to promote.

Then there are the various showcase events, and so forth. Then there is an awareness of the need for catering for the diversity. It is not just the diversity within a complex LGA like Campsie or Fairfield, and to a lesser extent perhaps Hurstville, but is also the diversity of needs of between, say, Hurstville and Gosford young people. So, you can never really take away from the responsibility and respect for each individual LGA, but we certainly strongly promote that they do it. There are some programs—one that has been done at Hurstville that confirms a lot of what Julie had to say. It was a joint project originally funded through the Attorney General's crime prevention program. Hurstville has been involved in a lot of those. Graffiti comes to mind. I was heavily involved with the graffiti project which then led into CPTED, crime prevention through environmental design, and councils that have been able to be involved with those choose to implement them or not.

Now councils, including Hurstville and several others, have developed master plans with the help of Chris Johnson, who I believe will be here later. It is getting in at the key level like that where we can reinforce, if your council, your officers, are well aware of the need to consult early to understand the importance of the social planned community development and

make sure that those things are up front with any master plan that is developed. Julie mentioned they were not so very keen on the school councils. We have had a school council in the past but it seems to be that we now are moving more towards not just targeting the various divisions—ethnic and socioeconomic groups—but also the particular projects.

We have had one very successful project that was funded through the Attorney General's crime prevention program. It was called Paved Paradise. It involved securing a grant that looked at public space and art. It invited from the high schools and from the youth groups their participation in working with officers to look at the design of public spaces in our master plan that has been developed in conjunction with Chris Johnson. We felt it was important to get them in at that early stage because again you have this crime rate. A lot of research has shown that crime rates tend to diminish where the kids had an improved sense of belonging and pride, and work has been done on the problem of that perception and attitude.

So, in a nutshell, the project involved four artists and four agencies identified to take part in the project. That was the Youth Zone, that I mentioned earlier, the Shopfront Theatre for Young People, Kingsgrove High School and Penshurst Girls campus and Georges River College. Those four agencies each selected, nominated, and supported their own particular group of young people to work with an artist and work over time with suggestions for public art projects and create models that could be shown around and discussed. Their work was followed by a forum where you had the community, the planners and everyone there. It was extremely successful. They have taken it a step further—and this I find really interesting—to form a register of designs done by this sort of organisation, and artistic copyright has been considered in that. So, those kids really do feel they have an important role, that they have been consulted at a significant part of the master planning. I believe that has been one of the best projects we have done to involve them.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Julie, just going on from the forum in March, I am also from a coastal area and some people say there is a beach, there is so much for kids to do. We can go back to what happened in Sutherland shire before Christmas. Were there any particular issues that came through in the forum such as infrastructure or the built environment that these kids wanted? We all talk about skate parks, basketball courts near the beach or beside the beach or more inclusive areas. Was there any sort of wish list that the kids came up with?

Ms HEGARTY: It was quite significant, really. Whenever we have consulted with young people, and that is why I stood for council, it has been an over going interest they had that, yes, they have fabulous things to do during the day. There are heaps of skate parks, there are heaps of beaches, there are lots of soccer teams, netball, basketball, whatever you want to do you can do during the day. Their problem was there was nothing to do at night. They are saying they have lots of infrastructure, they are lucky that they have great surf clubs and a couple of really significant halls that they can use,

an indoor sports centre which is fantastic, but so many of them do not want young people there. Unfortunately, I suppose in previous situations, young people have done the wrong thing, and most of our community halls are managed by community groups made up of members of the community and users of those halls, and they do not want young people congregating and ruining them.

They were saying we want things to do at night. We want dances, we want somewhere to hang, we want lights in the skate parks and on the basketball courts. We do not want old people complaining because we are making noises. We want to be able to have somewhere to go. So, that is something that we as a council have taken on quite strongly. We had one young guy who established a dance party at one of our halls. We put in some very stringent conditions he had to adhere to. He had to have a number of security guards, both men and women. He had to have a number of police officers there. As well, he had to have members of the Manly drug and alcohol group there, St John ambulance and things like that. It was really well supported. Unfortunately, he got to his HSC year and had to focus on other things. He was running those. He was not making any money and I think it took a lot of work.

ACTING CHAIR: Who paid for all the security?

Ms HEGARTY: He did. Obviously he sold tickets. He charged admission to the shows. Because he was a young person he was inviting the bands young people wanted to hear. I think they were accepting of the fact that there was a significant amount of built environment for them to use, being facilities outside tennis courts, basketball courts and shopping centres, but they were not able to use them. So, while they were there they were moved on. If they were just hanging in the park at night the police would move them on.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Do they just move them on because they are moving them on or is drinking taking place?

Ms HEGARTY: Yes. Alcohol is a significant problem in our area. It is probably the same in every other area. We tend to be a reasonably financial area in Pittwater so it is easier for parents to say, "Here is \$20. Go to the movies and catch a cab home." Of course, they are not going to. They go: great, \$20. They find someone to buy them alcohol and they sit in the park. That is what they do. Yes, alcohol is a problem and that is one reason they are moving them on. The young people I have spoken to, and I sometimes go to the skate park and hang there and try to start conversations so I can understand how they feel about stuff—and I can just get away with being young, I think, but not for much longer—and they are continually saying that they have a code of conduct amongst themselves and they get really annoyed if someone comes to their skate park in the evenings, starts drinking and leaves their bottles there. They get really angry with that. They may well drink

before they go there and they may well drink after, but they will not trash their own area.

I guess it is the same: they all have their own little areas. They say, "No, there's a code of conduct here, Jules. No-one does anything wrong." I think they acknowledge that there is a built environment for them and that we have a significant number of places and opportunities for them but they are either not welcome at these places or they are not able to use them because it is dark.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I have asked this question of a few people. It is not raised in your submission but it is an ongoing thing. It refers to skate parks and the like and playgrounds generally. Councils see a risk in relation to the types of equipment going into parks and playgrounds. Could you comment generally on that and specifically talk about the risk assessment process that councils are going through? The question I asked previously was: If we can manage to get through the risk process to develop a skate park why are we failing to have interesting playgrounds for smaller children, particularly children aged eight to twelve?

ACTING CHAIR: This is in the context of public liability issues.

Ms GIEGERL: That again depends on councils. Most councils are very well aware of the standards that must be reached for playground equipment. I can remember—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Do you believe that it is the standards that are impacting on the interesting playground equipment or is it—

Ms HEGARTY: I think litigation is impacting on it. Everybody, not just councils, anyone who provides a space that someone might be likely to go to, be it private or public property, has to be aware that something might happen. You are never going to stop it. There have been some things in the papers lately about litigation and things that have occurred. A five-year-old in the middle of summer on a 35-degree day was put on an old metal slippery dip, which had been in the sun with no shade cloth, by her mother. The child was screaming. The slippery dip would have had to be at 50 degrees. The child went down the slippery and got third degree burns on her hands. We had to take the slippery dip out. So I see what you are saying. It does impact—

ACTING CHAIR: Why did you have to take it out?

Ms HEGARTY: Because our risk assessment was that we have to assume that there might be someone out there that may not put two and two together. I am trying to say it nicely.

ACTING CHAIR: I can see why you might be sued by the parents of the child—technically by the child—but why does that then lead to taking the

slippery dip out? Surely the chance of a child being put on a slippery dip on a 35-degree day, which comes along perhaps 10 times a year, et cetera—

Ms HEGARTY: It is a risk that has been identified to officers.

ACTING CHAIR: Penny's question is whether it is going too far. Is the caution—

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Are we holding on to risks that were perhaps previously there and perhaps have been ameliorated by the changes in legislation? Are we failing to catch up with that in terms of providing better equipment that the kids want to use?

Ms GIEGERL: We have not had hard things such as steel slippery dips for a while. There was a hoo-ha when we removed a historic train engine from Oatley Park. It had to be done.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: Why?

Ms GIEGERL: Because of a genuine risk that we were all concerned about. But part of the process has been consideration of what to replace it with. That has all been part of the budgeting process and the communication to the community. When there was a major change eight or ten years ago, the first big change, one of our local community run preschools was devastated because it meant that all the equipment that the parents had spent years raising funds to install was suddenly not anywhere near the required standards. Council made a one-off grant to replace that equipment with stuff that was acceptable. It is not just a case of deciding that it has to come out because we might be sued and never mind about depriving the kids. There has to be the global budget but with young children—I go back to my schooling days—if a piece of equipment is dangerous then let us replace it. But replacing is important.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is the perception of danger, I suppose. You are talking about a slide that was there for probably 50 years. I am interested in the balance and what we can do to encourage councils not to think that the first option is to rip out the slippery dip.

Ms HEGARTY: I guess councils have become overly cautious. Some of the significant cases against councils have caused us to be that way. We also need to be aware that not everyone needs to or should have play equipment; there are other ways for children to enjoy just being kids. Our council has just built the most popular kids playground ever. It was just a dry creek bed with some carved lizards and things and recycling water. The kids just love it. There have not always been parks with sunshade and everything else. Changes in society and litigation have caused us to become very cautious. We may have to take some things out because there are people that do not think. That may be to the loss of 98 per cent of the population. Is that fair? Councils are responsible not for their own money but for the ratepayers' money. We are not

really in the position of being able to say that we think it is okay. We have to be cautious. We just have to start thinking outside the square. Metal slippery dips may not be safe but perhaps we can put one under a tree. Perhaps we need to plant more trees. Do we need shade structures? Why can we not plant big Moreton Bay figs? Why can we not have things that kids can climb in? Why can we not think of some other way for children to express their need to play? Do they need plastic or metal structures to do that?

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Is there also an issue in relation to how the council or the association compartmentalises children into young children, the group from eight to 12, and the older group that may be interested in skate parks and congregating in shopping centres? Is there a gap in everyone's thinking about what is appropriate in open space or in the built environment for the different ages of children? We are very concerned about having safe play equipment but that relates to the younger group of children. People are concerned about how young people congregate and participate in the community or with their own age group. Is there not also a gap in the middle with young people and children who do not constitute the zero to eight group but are not in their teenage years either? There does not appear to be a lot of thought for them.

Ms GIEGERL: This is a conversation we have had several times—maybe not you and I but certainly with the Committee and indeed with various projects. We have been involved in roundtable discussions with the Attorney General's Department over time. There seems to be a classification that there are children to eight then the forgotten group before they become teenagers, that group in the middle. Without referring back to our reports and records at policy level, I have forgotten the exact words we came up with to distinguish and cover that need. You could put the most whiz-bang, magnificent equipment in or the most environmental or the creative stuff in but there are basics such as lighting that are critical. There is pedestrian accessibility so that kids of whatever age and their parents can get to these things safely. This is where it begins to merge in with what is sometimes felt is the hard infrastructure things such as traffic planning, roads—

ACTING CHAIR: I was going to ask that before we finish we get on to deal with some of those things.

Ms GIEGERL: Yes, access and appropriate bus services and so forth. It is a really big, complex jigsaw. You could have perfection in several areas and if you miss one of those critical links that is particularly relevant to the specific local area you are looking at you are going to be wondering why it did not work.

Ms HEGARTY: It may be perceived that that age group is forgotten but I think that they do things differently. When mothers have little kids they go to the park with their friends and it is more about the mothers and the little kids do their thing. Teenagers have to have their independence. It is just part of their age group. It is part of how they mature. But the age group you are

referring to just play differently. They are very involved in after-school activities, structured sports, structured group activities and bike riding. My whole life is arranged around this age group. They would no more go to a park than fly to the moon. That is not what they want to do. They want to hang in their friends' bedrooms and listen to music. They want to get on their bike and ride to the shopping centre or to the park and whiz around the bike track. The older age group has the independence to do things. Although there is a very strong perception that age group is missing in some of our planning I also think that they do things differently in that age group. Although it does not appear that they are being catered for I think they are catered for in a different way.

Mr STEVE CANSELL: Many of them use a skate park for their BMX bikes and their skateboards.

Ms HEGARTY: Yes, they are the ones at the skate park from 3.30 until five o'clock. When they all go home the older age group coming from five to eight.

Ms GIEGERL: What about all of the kids? This is perhaps what needs to be gathered before we can effectively monitor. I would say that a great, and likely to be growing, proportion of children in the primary school age are involved in after-school care, which councils are not heavily involved in.

ACTING CHAIR: An earlier witnesses gave us the figures for Fairfield. The number of places for after-school care was infinitesimal in comparison with the number of children in the age group.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: That was vacation care.

ACTING CHAIR: No, it was after-school care as well.

Ms GIEGERL: After-school care?

ACTING CHAIR: What she was saying was that the number of places was incredibly small compared with the number of children in the age group we are talking about.

Ms GIEGERL: Yes, and the waiting list would be enormous.

ACTING CHAIR: She was not just speaking about Fairfield; it just happened to be what she was doing—

Ms GIEGERL: I do not know what the latest impact of Federal Government funding in that area or emphasis in that area is but I see that as representing a very significant proportion of children in that age because that is when many mothers decide to go back to work. Then they run into the need for after-school care. At this stage it is generally not run by local government. Hopefully, an increasing number of schools may participate but that is an area

in terms of the commission monitoring perhaps that is part of what could be looked at.

ACTING CHAIR: In your submission you suggest it might be premature to consider mechanisms for monitoring and reporting about the impact on children and young people at this stage and that the Commission for Children and Young People should actually work up a project and—

Ms GIEGERL: I would like to see the jigsaw laid out a bit and at least identified so that we are not just focusing superficially or on limited aspects. Then there is a lot of work we could do together with roundtables and looking at ways to monitor it.

ACTING CHAIR: The submission refers to the Commission on Children and Young People. I just want to get it clear. This Committee is a parliamentary committee on the Commissioner for Children and Young People because we have an oversight role as well as an inquiry role. Can you clarify for us whether the suggestion in your submission is actually about the commission, the outfit that Gillian Calvert heads?

Ms GIEGERL: Pardon me. I said I got this yesterday.

Ms HEGARTY: Obviously, this inquiry has been put together because it has already been identified that there is an issue with young people and the built environment or we would not be sitting here. There are a lot more issues about the built environment, for example cycle networks. If we can get cycle networks, then there is not so much use on people's cars, which frees up the roads. If kids can safely ride their bikes to school, then their mums do not need to drive them. It is actually a very far-reaching investigation into young people and the built environment.

ACTING CHAIR: And, of course, we are also getting evidence about children's health, obesity and so on?

Ms HEGARTY: Absolutely, and all those things go towards making young people fit and healthy, and that is obviously what we are going to go through. If you are going to start monitoring how successful it is, you need to put something in place so that you can monitor it. We can go out and say: How much consideration are developers putting into young people when they design shopping centres? How much consideration do council planners give young people when they put in bicycle paths? Are they actually going near the schools? There is no point creating a bike path if it does not go near the school. What is the point? Are we not supposed to be encouraging them onto bikes, running or walking to school?

That is not part of the LGA submission but, in my personal opinion, we are too early to start monitoring it. There is certainly a lot of work that the inquiry or the commission could put into seeing how much consideration is currently given. My guess is that it is not enough. Perhaps workshops could be

enacted upon to make players in the development industry aware of council's social plans. I can guarantee that some of the big players like Meriton's would not know that councils had social plans that required consideration be given to certain aspects of developments. In my opinion workshops could be instigated where major planners from all councils and planners in State government and larger developers, the ones who are going to be constructing big shopping centres, the places where young people are going to go and council planners who instigate playgrounds, do they take into consideration social plans? I think that they need to be made aware and once they are aware, then you can monitor whether they are actually taking that into consideration.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Does it need to be more than awareness? Should there be guidelines?

Ms HEGARTY: Yes, quite probably.

Ms GIEGERL: And for it to be resourced.

Ms HEGARTY: Our council has won a lot of awards for our DA processing and our computer processing. Everything is on line now.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: That started at Coffs Harbour.

Ms HEGARTY: Yes. It would be interesting to see if there was actually something on our processing of DAs that actually said, "Have you considered council's social plan?"

ACTING CHAIR: Would you like to check that for us?

Ms HEGARTY: I would love to, because I do not know the answer to it. It would be interesting to see that. I know that we ask, "Have you take into consideration the colour of your building and this planning?" and "Have you thought about this" et cetera.

ACTING CHAIR: We would be very grateful if you could do that.

Ms HEGARTY: I would be happy to do that.

Ms GIEGERL: Depending on the council, that sort of comment comes from your manager of community development and social planning as her response to a DA submission and as part of the report, just as measuring a DA up against the Symtec process. I think a lot of councils do that as part of their reporting procedures.

ACTING CHAIR: The Committee may wish to ask you further questions or if you would like to give us further information about the youth forum, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Ms HEGARTY: Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

(The witnesses withdrew)

CHRISTOPHER RICHARD JOHNSON, Acting Executive Director for Cities and Centres, Department of Planning, Lands Department Building, 22 to 33 Bridge Street, Sydney, affirmed and examined:

ACTING CHAIR: The Committee has received a submission from the department. Do you have any objection to the submission being made public and included as part of your evidence?

Mr JOHNSON: I have no objection.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement or comment on any matters before we go to questions?

Mr JOHNSON: I would not mind giving a brief overview of the submission that we put in and refer a little to the department's role generally in relation to planning and also specifically to young people and children. The submission we put in looked at three different areas. First, liveable neighbourhoods, is a really important part of the planning process and focusing on the character of the places that we are evolving from, that is, the planning system. Clearly, our population is growing. Another 1.1 million people will come into Sydney over the next 25 years. These people need to go somewhere and our planning system is to work out what is the best manner for that to occur.

Therefore, the issue of planning and for liveable neighbourhoods and meeting places is a really critical part of that. The metropolitan strategy, which I will briefly refer to, titled City of Cities, is fundamentally predicated on the need to look after the suburban areas of Sydney, so 80 per cent of Sydney has no change at all, but to focus development around transit nodes and very much picking up on the changing demographics, which is a big rise in the number of one and two person housing units relative to bigger scale housing units.

But out of that comes a focus on neighbourhood centres, village centres, town centres, and regional city centres and a very important focus is to make sure that the character of these is one that has a large variety of places. In the past cities were often only about workplaces, just commercial towers for people to work in. Nowadays we are trying to make our cities and the whole hierarchy going back down to neighbourhood centres, much more mixed use, so that they are places that have people living in them, working in them, shopping, recreation and are places also that are a focus for all levels of the community, all phases of the community. So children, younger people, teenagers, mums and dads, families and older people are all within these centres, as well as, of course, the broader suburban area.

Therefore, quite a lot of strategies come out of looking at how the population will move and change and the character of some of these places is a major part of the metropolitan strategy and how to balance those issues.

Relative to that, of course, are issues to do with work, employment issues, issues to do with lifestyle living, with environmental issues, landscape, water and implementation strategies and how to make that work.

The second one that we looked at in some detail was to do with safety and I think the previous team also mentioned a little bit about this. Safety issues of the built environment needs to be incorporated, particularly for children and young people, but of course it is an issue across the whole community and older people as well, and the detailed issues we listed in our submission related to safety. The third issue was to do with healthy lifestyles, such as major issues that are very current about obesity, walking, car use and those sorts of things and the metropolitan strategy and, indeed, the regional strategies for the Lower Hunter and generally now moving across the State have built into them key strategies about encouraging more walking, less reliance on cars and relationships about healthy lifestyles that flow from that.

They were the key issues that our submission picked up on. Your documents also referred to the documents we have produced. We produced the "Child Friendly Environments" booklet at the end of 1999, which basically came out in 2000 for children up to the age of 12, which sets out a whole lot of guidelines and recommendations about the built environment. Also at the end of 1999 "Urban Design Guidelines with Young People in Mind" picked up the group to the age of 18, which was a limited production but still exists on the Local Government and Shire Associations web site as a resource document where we can go back into local government, councils, developers and all those involved in the production of the built environment to ensure that things happen.

They are the key issues that we are involved in. I think it is also worth mentioning that in the last few years the Department of Planning has been focusing very much on a reform process of the planning system, so there has been a fairly major rethink of how planning works, looking at our local environment plans, the development control plans and the hierarchy of plans, and developing the strategies for the city for the North Coast, the Hunter, the South Coast and the Illawarra.

The next step, having now restructured and reformed that system and having got these bigger picture systems in place, is to now focus back down more on the details of centres, very much in conjunction with local government. A final statement just in production is that the planning system in New South Wales is very much a partnership between the State and local government. The State sets big picture issues about planning and is increasingly trying to make those, as part of the planning reform, fairly simple, clear, direct and reasonably uniform across local government to allow local governments to then tailor much more their own character for their own particular areas and precincts.

So where we are at in the planning system in the last few years is to finish the reform process and now focus very much on moving into the next

phase of looking at neighbourhood centres, of planning the numbers each suburb will take on board and how that can actually occur. Obviously, part of that will be the impact of the built environment in relation to children and young people.

ACTING CHAIR: In our first couple of questions we asked you for an overview of the department's role in the planning processes. There are many competing priorities and levels in the planning process you have just outlined. Can you be more specific on how the needs of children and young people can be included in those processes? You mentioned the documents that came out in 1999. Can you give us an update and account of how children and young people are being factored into the processes that you have outlined?

Mr JOHNSON: I think that is a good question. The planning process is, as you say, one of balancing competing requirements, desires and needs partly between economics and the environment, between different age groups, families and non-families, work and play and residential. I think the attitude within the department is very much to try to get a balanced solution and not to overly favour one part of the community or one part of the State. I guess "diversity" would be the word that sums up what a planning system needs to be about—that is, to encourage opportunities for all groups to succeed and have their own form of the built environment that they can all be within. Clearly, that is going to be different in the western part of the State, on the North Coast and in the middle of the city. In terms of the built environment, the city is going to be much denser because of its nature as a global city.

There is also then, as you have indicated, the relationship to different parts of the community—to younger people and to older people. It is interesting that the demographic information that has been the founding basis of the City of Cities document, the Metropolitan Strategy, is indicating a big swing, in a broad sense, over the past 40 or 50 years almost to other groups as well as families. It is interesting also that Bernard Salt, the demographer, indicates that by 2031 only 25 per cent, or one-quarter, of households will be families—mum, dad and the kids—and three-quarters will comprise one or two persons. This is an important part of the planning agenda. We must look across the whole spectrum at how those demographics can influence the form of the city. It is obviously vital for the suburban house, which is the key component for families, to be the preferred and desirable living approach. Therefore, the Metropolitan Strategy keeps at least 80 per cent of Sydney as suburban areas. But the new development is very much around town centres and railway stations and is designed to accommodate these new demographics of one- or two-person housing units but, as well as that, a certain number of children and families in that context.

So there are a variety of ways that an accent on families is considered within the broader planning system. One is the issue of transport. There is quite a lot of talk about accessibility in transport—to give people of various ages easy access to the metropolitan area, and indeed to the whole of the State. Another issue is green space, parklands and outdoor areas and ensuring

that there is a good balance of that within all our built and suburban areas. That is listed in our documents as an important part of taking a balanced approach. There are also many social issues, which are not directly planning issues, about how families and children fit into the broader structure. But I think it is fair to say that the planning framework is about diversity. It is about encouraging mixed use and varieties of people living in centres and spaces. That then can lead down to a tiering of design guidelines that are generally picked up at local government level and maybe up to the Australian building standards, which set out requirements for balustrade heights, ramps and a whole lot of things that relate to people of different ages within the community.

I think the planning system is really about encouraging all parts of the community to fit into the environment. The documents that we produced before have a special focus on young people and child-friendly environments. I think there is probably a need to update these. Now that we have gone through the process of the planning reform systems, restructuring the whole planning system and doing the major strategies for the next 25 years across most of the State, as I mentioned, the next step is to look more at qualitative issues within the planning system.

ACTING CHAIR: Quite a few of the witnesses that we have heard from have stressed that the issue of children and young people and the built environment is a relatively new one. It has come to the forefront of planners' and other people's minds quite recently. You talked about the capacity in various documents to allow for the planning process to include all age groups and all sorts of other diversity. Would you agree that there has been a bit of a blind spot until recently in thinking about children and young people when we are doing our planning and looking at what a good built environment will look like?

Mr JOHNSON: There could be. I have only been involved in the planning system for the last year. I recall that there was an International Year of the Child some years ago when I got quite involved in a whole lot of programs through the Institute of Architects at that stage, working with schoolkids and children all over the place. That certainly in my mind opened a Pandora's box about the importance of the built environment relative to children. The work here was done in 1999 but work obviously started some years before that. I must admit that I am not really aware of what was happening in broader planning terms before then but I think you are probably right: It was very much on the backburner and was not really accentuated as much as it could have been. I think in the last seven years or so—which is the time span that these documents cover—there has been a reasonable focus.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am very familiar with those documents and I think they are very useful. I am interested in whether you have any knowledge about how much they have been picked up. We can release good reports and the guidelines are there, but I am interested in whether there is

any ability to monitor the take-up in terms of what councils have actually done through the guidelines to change their practice.

Mr JOHNSON: I will have to take that question on notice because I do not have any direct information about it. My understanding is that "Child Friendly Environments" has become quite a popular document. It has been quite widely distributed through local government and has been generally well received by people. It is, of course, an update of an even earlier document that goes back to 1981. So there has been material around for some time. I guess it is an issue of having information out there but encouraging people to access it. "Urban Design Guidelines" is basically only a web-based document at the moment. I will take on notice the degree to which those documents are being taken up in local government because their aim primarily is for local government to pick up the detailed issues.

ACTING CHAIR: We would appreciate it if you could take that question on notice.

Mr JOHNSON: I will.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am interested in building around transport nodes. You talked about them being for households of one or two people but there is obviously a plan to have a mixture of buildings in such developments. Can you talk specifically about what people are thinking in terms of how children and young people will be accommodated? A variety of witnesses have talked about the value of suburbia in terms of space, backyards and parks for kids but we have not been able to pinpoint a lot of good examples of higher-density developments that are accommodating children. I remain to be convinced that good things are not happening. How do you see children and young people fitting into high-density environments around public transport and so on?

Mr JOHNSON: I think there will have to be a whole variety of approaches. I think we are actually at the front end—the beginning—of tackling these issues. In many parts of the world people obviously do live with families in reasonably dense environments. My daughter has two little kids on the sixth floor of a block of apartments in McMahons Point in Sydney. She goes down to the park with them and so on. It is a question of what design issues occur. One of the things that I think will happen around our centres is that there will be a ring of accommodation on the edge of the centres that will be generally three storeys or so. I think many people think consolidation is only going way up to 15 or 20 storeys. I think within three or maybe four storeys you can get quite dense accommodation but still have all the amenities that the Australian lifestyle is about—that is, indoor-outdoor relationships, not looking as though it is an anonymous block of buildings and having individual accommodation and houses.

I designed some apartments in Victoria Park, which we call garden apartments, that have very big outdoor spaces about the size of this part of

the room flowing off four-storey chequerboard patterns, lots of gardens and landscaping within the buildings to try to bring some new models into play to look at this. I think there is a whole range of terrace houses, villas and low-rise apartments that can be very adaptable for families and for family living but they have to be designed carefully as they have to be worked on in that sort of way. I think some of the more medium-rise buildings—four, five, six or seven storeys—can also have very big outdoor spaces so people can move indoors and outdoors. I was in Melbourne recently where a couple with two young kids are living on the twenty-second floor. They seemed to have quite a big outdoor space—which is unusual, I think. It is about providing alternatives, options and a variety of approaches.

What may well occur is that people may start off with younger kids in a more medium-density environment, pick up the increased value of that and then move off into a more suburban location. No-one is trying to say that the suburban ideal is not the best one for families with kids—indoor-outdoor, back gardens, front gardens and those sorts of things—but I think there is an opportunity to provide some forms of developments within town centres and closer to railway stations. There is another positive that comes out of this. One of the potential downsides of suburban dwellings is that they obviously spread a lot and therefore cars are essential if people want to get a bottle of milk, cheese or bread. If one is in a slightly more dense but walking environment you can encourage walking a lot more. In America there is a movement called transit-oriented development, TOD, which aims to try to get developments within walking distance—a 400- or 500-metre diameter—of a transport node so that everyone within that dimension can walk. I think that can be quite a positive aspect relative to overreliance on cars in other areas. But I guess in Australian society as opposed to some others—Europe has a more monoculture perhaps in these terms—we are about variety and providing differences and options. I think that is what the planning system needs to encourage.

ACTING CHAIR: Sydney is also perhaps more addicted to cars than most places, except the United States.

Mr JOHNSON: I think the United States might beat us a bit.

ACTING CHAIR: In terms of the acceptability of different lifestyles, higher-density living and so on, it is not just a matter of making it possible to walk but changing an essentially car-oriented culture and the design of our cities.

Mr JOHNSON: I do not think it is our role to tell people to live differently. I think it is important that people live the way they want to live and feel they can live. But there are consequences back into environmental quality, obesity and all sorts of other things.

ACTING CHAIR: Some witnesses from the health field have come close to saying in terms of obesity that perhaps we have to if not start telling

people how to live then go a long way towards changing our surroundings so that people are encouraged to change.

Mr JOHNSON: I think that is right but I think change probably needs to be iterative and it needs to be by example. I think we can get up some best-practice examples through the planning system. Victoria Park between here and the airport is a good example. It generally comprises buildings of four, five or six storeys with big parks and outdoor spaces and good environmental issues that are close to public transport. We need similar role models across the whole State where at least people can see slightly different ways that accommodation can work and mixed use can work.

ACTING CHAIR: I am looking at the fifth question on our sheet. Some people commented on the planning reforms you are talking about and suggested that, although they are good in modernising and signifying the actual planning processes in place in the State, they might end up unintentionally further relegating the needs of children and young people. Would you agree with that or disagree with that?

Mr JOHNSON: I would not agree with it. I do not think there is anything in the reform process that is for or against any particular part of the community. It really is an administrative-type issue. It seems crazy as I go around the State to find when I pick up a local environment plan or development control plan that they can be fundamentally different not in their local content but in the way they are structured, the format and all sorts of things, and unnecessarily so. The reform process has been more to help get a template that can allow people to pull together a simpler way of getting the planning system together. And to most people I think the planning system is a little bit difficult to comprehend, and I think it needs to be in fairly plain language, a simple system that the broader community can understand. One of the projects I am doing at the moment is driving some new city plans for six regional cities from Wollongong up to Newcastle. We are using the planning template to signify the process, but of course, each one of those cities wants its own special character, as they should, and that is exactly what we are doing.

But each of them is seeing the positives coming out of having a similar approach across all of those cities to just how we define height and shape and sun plane angles to protect sunshine into parks and those sorts of things, which are fairly universal. There may be taller buildings in Parramatta than in Wollongong, Gosford or whatever it is, but that is a detail within the system. The reform process really has been about simplifying, almost for consumers, for the public and for the development industry as well, a system that makes it easier for everyone to get involved. The price of that should be to enable more potential for planners with the various tiers, in both the State and local government system, to get a bit more involved on the detailed issues that then do relate to children and young people, do relate to older people, do relate to the character of town centres, village centres and neighbourhood centres. I think that really is where the attention needs to be spent, not on bureaucratic

processes caught up in the planning system, but on the outcomes, the actual physical end products that are produced. I would see the planning reforms helping release skills and energies to go back into more qualitative things that are important to relate back to the group we are talking about.

ACTING CHAIR: Would you see the planning reforms as allowing or encouraging enough attention to the layout of streets, the provision of pedestrian and cycle areas, the location of shops and other centres and so on? So far you probably have talked more about individual living spaces.

Mr JOHNSON: Yes, very much so. Again, with these cities that tier down to centres, down to neighbourhood centres and villages the development control plans generally are about how wide the footpath is, what sort of material the footpath is. Is it wide enough for mum, dad, prams, et cetera to pass, which is an issue for children. What sort of awnings are over there in terms of sunshine—a moment ago I heard about slippery dips that got too hot—to protect both from sun and water. The importance of active uses, and these are mentioned in our report, around town centres so that there is not a centre just of blank walls and therefore people feel uncomfortable, not only for younger people but also for others. I think quite a lot can come out of the planning system that really is about vital, lively, interesting, people-friendly centres where you can shop or where you can work at a variety of scales across the metropolitan area. And in some ways I think it is the maturity that has come into our planning system from almost just having a very small number of big retail shopping centres and then lots of suburban housing to really try to encourage a little bit of concentration for community reasons of gathering in different spaces.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: Based on your evidence and as a specialist in this area, you would not like to see guidelines have absolute requirements for developers to provide these for young people within planning legislation or local government planning decisions? You think the absolutes would not work?

Mr JOHNSON: In certain places I think they can work. In planning systems there is a mixture of absolutes and sensible guidelines. For instance, if you want to get sunshine onto a park you cannot have a building above a certain height, and that is absolute. If you are flexible, you then do not achieve the objective of what you are setting out. The footpath, there is a similar sort of issue. There are a number of things like that that are quite important. However, I do not think the planning system should say that all the buildings will be in a Tudor style, for instance, or overly start controlling ascetic. They should allow the ingenuity and ideas from local communities and the designers and people involved in the property industry to come through to see the sorts of interesting places they are. Again, in a slight comparison to Europe, I think our society is much more diverse and about differences rather than just everything being the same. I think our built environment needs to represent that. Somehow the planning system has to encourage diversity within it.

Mr STEVE CANSDELL: Would it not be for the council to have long-range plans in place because they could not insist on it with one developer if it did not fit in with the rest of the area plan, the LEP for the area, which possibly could incorporate some sort of child-friendly environment?

Mr JOHNSON: All of these things are a balance. Obviously, we are not saying, "Do whatever you want anywhere." Neither are we saying that everyone must do things exactly the way I think they should be. The planning system is a balance from the top down, and that is from a broad Stage legislation, it needs to be fairly general about height-related issues and things. As it gets down to the more local issues of development control plans, et cetera, public domain plans, it becomes much more local about those sorts of characters. But in saying we need a better diversity as part of our culture, I do not think that means that every building has to be a different colour or a different shape or a different everything. There is an interesting balancing role in here, but I think that communities, with their own planning system and local government, need to be the ones that generate and develop how that balance works.

ACTING CHAIR: Earlier in evidence we heard about preventing garages from being the streetscape. I suppose people have an ascetic view about it, but it also sends the messages about cars and the way in which people in individual dwellings relate to the rest of the world. Is that the sort of thing that people should be more prescriptive about?

Mr JOHNSON: Definitely. I agree that it definitely is one and, in fact, it has been. State environmental planning policy 65, which is about the design of residential flats, prevented rows and rows of garages from fronting the street on a block of apartments.

ACTING CHAIR: What about I detached or semi-detached houses?

Mr JOHNSON: It is a little bit hard to eliminate garages totally on every detached house because that is very much part of things, but it is an area that needs to be looked at more carefully. I think there is an alienating environment to younger people and to most people, quite frankly, from just blank walls or garages as the bit you interface with. A built environment that is about shops, action, cafes and whatever it might happen to be, entrances into buildings, feels much more comfortable to everybody. The planning system needs to encourage that rather than the reverse.

ACTING CHAIR: Are young people involved at all in any of the planning or the actual drawing up, the preparation of the metropolitan strategy, the consultation process?

Mr JOHNSON: We have a number of younger people in the department who have been involved. There were a number of exercises where younger people were involved in some of these sorts of issues. I was not with the

department at that time, but there was one exercise I was involved in during the Year of the Built Environment at Sydney Town Hall, where we got younger people involved to give their ideas about Sydney and Sydney's metropolitan area to an audience of about 1,000 people.

ACTING CHAIR: What sort of age group are you talking about?

Mr JOHNSON: They were getting more up into the 18-year-olds, I must admit. There were early university students rather than levels below that. But I would need to take that on notice because I am not aware of the degree to which people below 18 were involved in this exercise. There certainly were a lot of community groups and to discussions.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You have talked about the planning process. There seems to be a universality of good planning practice that, in effect, includes most people. Your evidence is that you think most of that would pick up children and young people. Is there anything in particular that you think could be missed or should be given attention to, to make sure that children and young people are included within that? It seems to be that good environments for children and young people are good environments for everyone, but I wonder whether you think there is something that we could pay particular attention to, to make sure that those needs are picked up? Maybe it is in the guidelines and we should look at those more closely.

Mr JOHNSON: There are a number of issues in here that are of value. I guess the trick is to talk about scale. Clearly, people so high have a different attitude about scale, about lines that block their view, and getting up steps and ramps to people as they get taller. It is a very interesting issue to think through in our approach to planning and buildings. It relates a bit more back to architecture. In my previous role I did the Children's Court at Parramatta, and things like heights and thinking of where people can see become quite critical in those sorts of terms. I think a built environment that is conducive to younger people has a bit of issue about scale. However, the group you are looking at, if it is from nought up to 18, is a very diverse group of people. I sense that it falls into three or four different categories. There are the kids who have to be looked after totally by their parents—prams and all those sorts of issues and that brings up ramps, crossing of streets and curbs, and things—the walking group that is still not adult enough to be totally on their own, and then the more adolescent group who almost want to challenge society a bit.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: You drop them around the other block so that they do not have to walk with you.

Mr JOHNSON: That is right. To create through a planning system the built environment that responds to all of those is not easy and it is challenging, but that is what we will have to try to achieve, I think.

(The witness withdrew)

PAUL RICHARD GILBERTSON, Executive Director, Strategic Projects, Department of Housing, Liverpool Street, Ashfield, sworn and examined,

MAURA CLARE BOLAND, Executive Director, Office of Community Housing, Liverpool Street, Ashfield, affirmed and examined:

ACTING CHAIR: The department has forwarded a submission to the Committee. Are you happy for the submission to be made public and included with your sworn evidence?

Ms BOLAND: Yes.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you wish to make an opening statement?

Ms BOLAND: We would like to make a couple of opening comments rather than an opening statement. We thank the Committee for the opportunity to attend the hearing today. Our answers will respond to the questions you have forwarded to us. In response to those questions, we would like to make it clear that while the inquiry considers children to be people aged up to 18, the department considers children and young people to include people up to be a job and including 24. Some programs specifically target young people aged 16 to 25. Some responses that we will discuss include that age category.

It is important to understand also at the outset the role the department plays with regard to children and young people. The department's core role is to deliver housing services that meet the needs of its many and varied tenants. Where we deliver new properties we address issues such as the estate regeneration. We generally have the expertise that we need to do those tasks in-house. Increasingly we are finding that in order to meet our tenants needs we have to work in partnership with other government and non-government agencies. By forming partnerships we find that we can build on the expertise of others. That expertise could be in particular population groups, in mental health support provision, in improving tenants skills in parenting or in budget provision, in accessing employment or any other broad services that our tenants need. That is an important factor to consider when considering our response to children and young people, and very much forms the approach that we take.

ACTING CHAIR: Most of the Committee members visited the Bonnyrigg project yesterday and heard a bit about the project. We had a tour and were able to ask questions and hear from the people. Do you wish to give a summary of that project or add to what you said yesterday?

Mr GILBERTSON: I would like to emphasise a couple of issues that did not come up in our discussions yesterday. The Committee's questions hedged towards regeneration, meaning redevelopment. A lot of what we are doing with the community in general and with young people in particular,

while directed at asking them about their aspirations for redevelopment, is aimed equally, and I mean equally, in getting them involved in what is happening in their community. A lot of things we do, while superficially might look as though we are out to get information, are really to get involvement of the kids. Some great examples of that were the master planning exercise, which is where the University of New South Wales Built Environment students took the local high school students as clients to develop master plans. They came up with master plans and went back and presented them to the students.

That was only superficially about developing master plans, it was about getting the kids and the University students to think about real-life situations. Following our engagement with kids and young people, what they want is no different from what their parents want. Sure, except for the obvious things like skateboard parks they want safe environments, they want friendly environments. By and large, they want the same sort of facilities and amenities as other people.

At Bonnyrigg our approach to the estate renewal has an entire third of its planning to help the community help itself as well as addressing the deficiencies in that built environment, as well as helping all the service agencies, both government and non-government, do what they are meant to be doing and doing it in a targeted sense. To that extent our approach would be to engage young people in all of those facets, not just one.

ACTING CHAIR: Yesterday the Committee went to Minto, to the Burnside Centre in one of your properties.

Mr GILBERTSON: I am aware of that.

ACTING CHAIR: We heard quite a bit of criticism of the Minto process.

Mr GILBERTSON: That is well known to us.

ACTING CHAIR: What the people at Minto said was very different from the original announcement and the involvement of the community in general, and other young people in particular. The picture at Minto was very different from the picture at Bonnyrigg.

Mr GILBERTSON: Yes, and that is not a matter of opinion, it is a matter of fact. There is no doubt that if there are any benefits from doing things in a suboptimal way, you learn from them. The Bonnyrigg experience has learnt from some of the lack of planning that was evident at Minto. We would like to think that making a mistake once is human nature but making it twice is not excusable. We are treating that as a learning experience. I would like to think, though, that the work at Minto and the view of Burnside Family Support Services at Minto was of positive improvement. Although the

comments might be that in the past things could have been better, the plans for the future are organised and are well thought through.

ACTING CHAIR: Certainly something along those lines was said about the process at the moment.

Mr GILBERTSON: It has been developed as a result of significant consultation. There is a recognition that it could have been done better but equally there is certainly an assertion by the Department of Housing that we have learnt from those things and we have our game together. We are addressing it in a far more constructive way.

ACTING CHAIR: It was interesting for the Committee members to have a good look around and to talk to people at Bonnyrigg and then go to Minto. Perhaps we should have done it in the reverse order. Yesterday the Committee heard evidence to the effect that what children and young people want is pretty much what adults in the community want, with the exception of specific play areas and so on. I guess, one question from that is to what extent are the consultation processes? To what extent are the children reflecting on the opinions of their parents? Would you like to address the way in which young people have been consulted? The Committee heard elsewhere that sometimes what has been said about the needs of young people and the reality are sometimes slightly different.

Mr GILBERTSON: One of the biggest challenges of consulting with any community is knowing who you have reached. How do you know who you have not reached? You do not know what you do not know. One of the advantages at Bonnyrigg is that we made a commitment to consult from day one; which we did. We actually started on the day that the project was announced in a very serious way. We kept going until we figured that there was no more consultation to be done, or the community asked us to stop talking to them: please go away.

We have been doing that non-stop for 17 months at Bonnyrigg. We have changed how we consult along the way. We had to face the different languages used and we found that in consulting with groups, no matter whether young people or adults, we had to change our approach to interpretation. We no longer use interpreters, we use multi-lingual educators. It was not until quite late in the program, despite some of our targeted sessions with young people, that we realised that most of their parents were coming along to sessions. The parents were reading our flyers and the communications at Bonnyrigg are quite vast—they do not come only from the Department of Housing but also from Fairfield City Council, from advocate groups, all about the project.

We found that there was a disconnect, particularly between the tenants, who invariably are parents, and the children. We had made an assumption that if the parents knew, the household knew. Wrong assumption! Because we have an open-ended program of consultation, that allowed us to

uncover that fact and address it by having specific things targeted at youth. So the informal things that we talked about yesterday—the coke and pizza nights, the drop-in after school sessions, meetings around the basketball courts, the community safety forums which specifically engaged them—were about going into the local schools and targeting kids rather than their parents.

We still do not know whom we have not reached. We keep track of how many numbers, we know there are 3,500 people living on the estate and we have had 4,000 people come along. We know that the same people come to every event. It will be a large number that we have not covered. We do put all our communications in the local libraries and schools. We try to target kids. We keep plugging away, we have no intention of stopping consulting. It is not as though this is a consultation program that is funded for six months. Our plans for Bonnyrigg to redevelop the estate in a physical sense but also get the community working as a broad group of interrelated communities, which, in effect, it is. It is an ongoing process.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: After seeing what was happening at Bonnyrigg yesterday I have given this a lot of thought. I was interested in the continuing to consult approach and the success of the week with the camera, which was highly praised by the local principle. It sounded like a fantastic idea. View envisaged that you would do that again? Obviously the project to redevelop the estate will be ongoing over several years. The children who first participated in that when they were in year 5 or year 6 probably will be finishing school by the time it is done. Do you consider engaging younger people as it is happening as part of the process?

Mr GILBERTSON: That is a good question. How do we continue to do things to keep people interested as well as catching new people.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: It is a specific issue about children and young people. A year in the life of a child is a very long time. What might happen in five years may not seem like a long time to us. But from age 8 to age 18 is quite a change.

Mr GILBERTSON: We have not specifically thought about a reasonable period of time to recycle those successful things. We have not specifically thought about when would be the right time to pick up another cycle of kids, with kids with the camera. Too often the effect comes out of it. Having said that, while we have not considered that specific one, we have an ongoing program. We do these programs in consultation with the local community and the local schools and the council. We have an ongoing program of events.

And whatever might be the appropriate events are actually worked up with the community. So if the schools actually came back to us and said "Why don't we do that school thing again. I think it's about the right time. We have got a new batch of students to do that" we are happy to provide the drive and the energy and the money but we look quite a lot to the community to tell us

what works and what does not work. The coke and pizza nights are really successful, catching kids on their way home from school.

ACTING CHAIR: You have not thought of giving them fresh fruit and vegetables?

Ms BOLAND: We would not get nearly as many people.

Mr GILBERTSON: One comes first. You hope to draw that in the future. First you have to engage them. Some of the very successful things—Tom McBride, the local school principal at St Johns Park Primary School spoke about how the kids and his teachers had really taken the work with the camera. Equally the local high school really took to the planning sessions with the high school students and the New South Wales University architecture students. Whether these should be annual things or whether we should give them a rest is something that we have no thought about. What we do know is that we have to keep coming up with bright ideas to engage the community.

I guess the other thing that we do recognise is that doing anything for a couple of months, or not saying anything for a couple of months, is not an option. We spoke a little bit yesterday about the rumours and how we like to float the rumours to the top so that we can address them rather than them being quite corrosive rumours. We just address all those as they come up. The worse thing we could ever do is to create a vacuum. It is not a matter of distracting people; it is a matter of saying "We are here to do three things: fix the services, fix the built environment; help the community help itself. But for the next three months when we are talking to potential private sector partners we cannot say too much about those confidential government processes, we can really focus on some community renewal programs. We can focus on some of these other activities. You will see at the minute, for the next two months, we have a very heavy program in the community of community-based activities all aimed at increasing engagement of the community and improving community capacity to steer its own path through all this.

ACTING CHAIR: Your submissions talks about the importance of residential stability to children. The young people at Minto spoke about the impact on them and others of being moved out of Minto as the process of clearing particular parts of the estate go on for the redevelopment. The committee did not talk so much about that yesterday. As your consultation process is in itself community building because of all the different things you are doing to bring people together—

Mr GILBERTSON: Yes it is—

ACTING CHAIR: what will happen when families have to be moved and see their and the neighbouring houses demolished? How will you cope at that stage of the project?

Mr GILBERTSON: I can talk about that. When we set up this project we only set ourselves a few objectives. Some of those objectives I have spoken about but one of them was to minimise the impact on the tenants, notwithstanding that we had to address some of the safety issues in the public domain. We had in headlines "Minimise impact". What that means is that we have to go to extraordinary effort in our rehousing strategies and plans. We touched on that superficially yesterday. Our plan to minimise impact over all the families—I will come to the specifics of kids in a minute—is to minimise the number of people who actually have to move off the estate.

Our approach for that at Bonnyrigg was to ask the entire community. We surveyed almost 670 of the 830 tenants on the site, that is all we could get to, but that is a very large sample. We asked them who would rather live somewhere else? Approximately 200 families said they would if the department would move them. We said, "Yes, we will move you" because that will create 200 vacancies on the site. In that way we can move the other people within the estate area and while we cannot minimise the trauma of actually leaving the house, we can certainly minimise the trauma of also having to leave the school, friends, the local church and all those other social networks.

We have done that for two reasons: one is because that is the right thing to do on a personal level. But this is also a community renewal project and you do not renew a community by sending every single tenant to the far ends of the earth. To actually keep the community in tact is a core deliverable of the objectives so keeping as many people in the community, while you are still doing your real estate renewal, becomes a prime objective. So minimising the number of people who actually have to move is half the job.

The other half is to have a formal documented, well thought through rehousing plan. The rehousing plan that we are developing at the minute, the model document for that has been developed for the Minto project. It has been signed off by the community reference group. It has been developed in consultation with Burnside and other non-government stakeholders in those projects. It is simply a written down way of how we will talk to each family to ascertain their needs, when we will talk to them and what will be their rights. It is a matter of making explicit "What are your normal rights? What will be your extra rights because we are asking you to move for our convenience?" That is a fairly highly evolved plan and is designed to minimise the impact, notwithstanding that somebody might still have to leave their house.

We have found that the two driving concerns is to make sure you interview everyone in the house because kids will not always tell their parents what is happening in their life. So that means also talking to the people that might be dealing with the children, such as the local school. That raises a plethora of privacy issues so that needs to be handled very sensitively. We are aware of the privacy issues but we are still aware of the need to find out what the needs of people are, and special needs. When we are dealing with some of the cultural groups at Bonnyrigg, families will not always tell you their needs

because they do not want to say that they are needy in particular areas so you have to find other ways, perhaps using their peers or leaders in the community to find out how to actually phrase the question to get the information that you are looking for. That is a highly specialised task.

At both Bonnyrigg and Minto we have set up specialist teams, specially recruited personnel that replace the normal Department of Housing front-of-office teams. That is a shared project team between both the Minto project and the Bonnyrigg project so that we have got the same approach in both areas so that we can learn in real time what is and what is not working. We will learn from not only what has gone right but from what has not gone right. I think having plans, talking to people well in advance of when they need to move, giving them as much certainty as you can, understanding that you always will not be able to identify people's needs just from talking to them, privacy issues notwithstanding you might need to be very clever in how you find out what people's needs are—all those things put together is our approach. We think we will minimise that impact.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: More generally, how many young people are in public and community housing in New South Wales?

Ms BOLAND: In the financial year ending June 2005 there were approximately 257,000 people living in public housing, of those about 29 per cent, or just over 60,000 people were young people, children aged under 18, and another 13,000, or 6 per cent, were aged between 18 and 24—so a significant percentage. In the same year, there were approximately 28,000 people living in mainstream community housing, of those 39 per cent, or 9,400, were children aged under 18, and a further 7 per cent or 1,700 were people aged between 18 and 24, so a slightly higher percentage in community housing than in public housing.

In addition, there were nearly 3,000 households headed by someone aged 24 or less, some of those are likely to be under the age of 18, predominantly in community housing. And of the new tenants who were allocated public housing in 2004-05, more than 1,000 were allocated to households where the tenant was aged 24 and less. Young people have also been one of the focuses of the recent reshape in public housing reforms. It has been recognised that we need to become much better at focusing on young people, and addressing their housing needs, particularly where they are the sole person in the household.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: How did you come to that conclusion?

Ms BOLAND: We are working with our partners, we are seeing the kind of impacts of young people who are becoming homeless, young people who are unable to access secure and stable housing, and the old way of approaching public housing did not deal with that particularly well. Community housing has had a better way to approach that, it has been much

more flexible in its ability to be able to house young people, particularly to house people in the 16-18-year-old age bracket.

One of the things that is particularly important to deal with when you are looking at young people is that they are at a particular point in their life when their life circumstances may be especially chaotic. They may have family problems, they are likely to have employment problems and they might have a mental illness. But it is a period where they experience a much more chaotic life; a much less stable life and those housing needs change typically through their 20s and stabilise significantly once people enter their 30s. So what we need is a model that allows people to enter into public housing, and access housing that is appropriate for that need at the time they have that need, and that is there for the duration of the need as well.

I guess it is reasonable to say there would have been some reluctance to give people who are 16 years lifetime tenure in public housing. Too often we know that children who are 16 years do not need lifetime tenure, what they need is something that is secure and stable, helps them to normalise their life, helps them to deal with the issues that they are facing at the time, and then move on at the time they need it. So particularly the reshaping reforms try to work with that. Historically community housing has also tried to work with that and there are a number of programs existing in various community housing organisations where people have been able to enter in at 16 years and move on as their needs are stabilised and as they feel that they have been able to move into private rental to home ownership to form partnerships.

The Hon. MELINDA PAVEY: What are some of the fundamental community infrastructure that you now provide in terms of the built environment for that younger clientele through your reforms?

Ms BOLAND: To do that it is probably reasonable to talk about the kinds of things that the Department of Housing provides. The first and most important service of the Department of Housing, and the one that everybody typically thinks of when they think of the Department of Housing, is housing. We place people in housing that is owned or leased by the Department of Housing. When we are thinking about the form of housing, what we need is something that is appropriate to the needs of a particular individual that is in there. We certainly focus on people who have higher needs, people with mental illnesses, older people, particularly young homeless people and people who have a range of support needs.

Just to pick up on a couple of your questions, we noted that the demographics of the population was changing and increasingly we are seeing a need for housing for smaller households, this is particularly where young people come into it. Our housing stock is predominantly three-bedroom housing. It is not really appropriate for young people to come into a three-bedroom household when they are a sole household occupant. It does not meet their needs. So one of the things we need to do is to try to make sure

that the housing that we have actually matches the needs of the people who are coming into that. Increasingly, that is single person household, or couple household. So we are moving towards more one- and two-bedroom stock and away from three-bedroom separate cottages.

We also provide services by community housing, that is outsourced housing provision, and again it is housing that is managed by independent non-government organisations who manage properties that are owned generally by the Department of Housing or that are leased from the private market. The issues that I just discussed around the household configuration also apply to community housing. Although it is reasonable to say that community housing stock actually more closely mirrors the needs of the community because it is a newer stock and a newer form of housing provision than the older Housing Commission and the Department of Housing, and it typically tends to be smaller households. It is also able to reshape itself because of the large proportion of leased stock. So we are always conscious of trying to think about how things are done.

Within that there are also sometimes specific projects that are targeted at high-need groups. In those cases the built form tends to vary a little. One of the things that springs to mind is one of our Port Jackson projects in Francis Street East Sydney, which is targeted at young people aged 16 to 25 who have experienced homelessness and who need to find some way of stabilising. We do that in partnership with the Salvation Army, with St George Community Housing managing it. The Salvation Army looks to find children who are already in existing programs who may have been in homeless refuges and who have experienced homelessness and who are starting to stabilise a little bit and move them into that.

What we have there is a complex of about 20 bedsits. It is a three-storey complex. It is quite high density. Within that we have young people occupying bedsits independently so they have their private space. They also have some common space, which is a really important thing, we find, when trying to have programs that influence young people in a way that improves their lives. There is an on-site caretaker, who is also a registered nurse who has experience working with young people. There are lead tenants as well on each floor, people who have been through those homelessness programs who are probably at a point where they could move onto private accommodation if they wanted to but are still able to be there to provide a role model and a kind of positive influence for the people who are moving into the complex. That is one example of the project where we have worked with the built form to get some positive program around that.

Just to continue with that and it is probably partly answers your question and probably partly answers a related one about some of the things the department does, those are programs where the department owns properties and manages people within those properties. We also provide other services that do not necessarily involve an asset. We call them non-asset solutions but they are really services that help people get into the private

rental market or help them access housing in some other way. Some of the examples are things like private rent assistance, so that when people are entering into the private rental market we will provide a bond that allows people to get in there without that financial disincentive.

We provide home purchase assistance services—not necessarily something for young people but something that is really useful for their families—to be able again to access impartial advice and to enter into that market, receiving good, well-rounded advice as to whether they can actually do so, as well as providing mortgage assistance services for individuals and households who experienced problems paying their mortgage. We provide a service that gives them enough money to repay arrears when they are in arrears or to keep up their repayments when they are experiencing temporary hardships. That means that families can stay in their properties for longer while they find a way of dealing with temporary employment problems.

Probably more focused on young people themselves are things like tenancy guarantees. We have a program of tenancy guarantees where we offer an additional bond on top of the standard bond. We do that to try to overcome discrimination, particularly for people who do not have a rental record or who may have a negative rental record and who are experiencing discrimination in trying to access private rentals. That can include young single mums—who have a very big problem in trying to access private rentals—women escaping domestic violence, often with children, as well as indigenous people and other people who do not necessarily have a record or have problems accessing it. That has proved to be an enormously successful program. It has been piloted in five locations in the State and we are rolling out to other locations at the moment. It has been successful in allowing people to enter the private rental market and stay there safely, which is really important, because it gives us a way of assisting people without necessarily the enormous cost associated with the provision of public housing or community housing.

A related program is My Place Leases. My Place Leases operate in the inner-city. It is about getting people who may be homeless or at risk of experiencing homelessness into the private rental market. We have had a couple of young people go through that program who are articulating into the Francis Street program as well. We try to get the programs all working together so that we have pathways for people who enter and leave at the other end.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: I am interested in all those things you are talking about. I read in your submission the development of the young people's housing access strategy, which I am quite interested in, but I am particularly interested in how you speak directly to young people and, if you are speaking directly to young people in the development of that strategy, how are you doing that? That is the first question.

Ms BOLAND: It is probably reasonable to say that we are learning an enormous amount about how to speak to young people from Bonnyrigg and Minto. That is because that was the first time we have tried addressing lots of

different population groups in an holistic way. We are learning a lot from that. The young people's access strategy is at a point where we still need to work through the consultation strategy and what we need to do, building on the experience from Bonnyrigg, is try individual approaches. One of the things the department commonly does is approach peak bodies and has peak bodies involved in the development of its strategies. Young people do not necessarily have the same voice via the peak bodies that many others do, and we would like to be able to get to young people directly. We have not worked through the way we will be doing that, though.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: What are you hoping to see come out of the housing access strategy?

Ms BOLAND: What we would like to see come out of the housing access strategy is a framework on how to approach young people. We have a lot of really good initiatives for young people scattered around different locations in the State. What we do not necessarily have is something that is integrated and considers the needs of young people in the family, the needs of young people as they move independently through public and community housing. We need to be able to put all those things back together. There are some fantastic initiatives like the live'n'learn campus, where we have affordable managed accommodation in self-contained units for 29 young people. It is a fantastic thing. It brings people in and connects them to education. It gives them a pathway to training.

There are other initiatives, like in Cranebrook we have a great partnership between the department, the Cranebrook Metropolitan Technology Centre, the Department of Education and Training, Cranebrook High School, the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury and Penrith School of Industry as well as public and community housing. So we have a lot of people working there with Cranebrook year 11 and 12 business and IT students, who are having workplace experience. It is generally about trying to keep them in education and training but also moving them on to be able to articulate properly with employment at the other end.

There is a program we have in greater Western Sydney, which is a partnership involving the department's inspectorate and employment services, where we are trying to get landscaping traineeships. There, we recruit people through job networks. They had an opportunity to develop those skills on department properties, working with the resources we have to give those people the opportunity. They design gardens. They help residents to pick appropriate plants for the gardens. So, they work with residents to be able to grow their gardens, and it becomes a bit of a community building exercise. There are 20 people in that traineeship.

More recently, the Minister announced an educational scholarships program for children in years 11 and 12 to try to encourage them to stay on at high school or at TAFE and to continue their education. We are also doing some awards for young people, trying to recognise young people under the age

of 24 who are leaders in their community, who might be leaders through school or through social work, through employment or through other forms as well. We have a whole range of really good initiatives. What we need is something that tries to put it all together and gives us an overall sense of how we approach young people and how we deal with all of their very complex needs.

Mr GILBERTSON: It is much easier to focus on the needs of young people on estates. Estates are not ideal places and they are concentrations of disadvantage. The housing access strategy is not about estates; it is portfolio wide. It is not a safety net, it is planned for the areas where we are not focusing. Every estate we go to fix we will develop a community regeneration plan for that, and that will tackle the children and the young people. It will tackle all the training and learning issues. Eventually there will always be a training and learning co-ordinator to help the kids get the training they need. There will always be programs to get the kids off the streets. So, the young people housing access strategy is another focus for those areas where you do not always get the concentrations.

ACTING CHAIR: Can you tell us something about the protocol for homeless persons in public places, with particular reference, obviously, to young people?

Ms BOLAND: The protocol for homeless persons in public places was initially developed in the lead-up to the 2000 Olympics. It was particularly in response to the needs of homeless people at that time to try to make sure homeless people were treated sensitively and that they were not inappropriately pressured to leave the streets, while also helping them access housing and support services at a time when we all know there was intense pressure on access to temporary accommodation. At the time we did that the protocol only applied to Olympic live sites as well as the surrounding central business district. The protocol was signed by 10 government departments, including the departments of Community Services and National Parks, the Sydney Olympic Park Authority, Police, Health and State Transit—the kinds of the government departments that might have become engaged in that. It was delivered with a training package, including implementation guidelines, communications strategies and reporting requirements and was rolled out at that time. Subsequent to that, in 2002, Cabinet gave approval for extension to the whole of New South Wales. So, the protocol now applies across the State.

What does the protocol do? The protocol is based on the principle that all people have a right to be in public places while also respecting the rights of the local community to live in a safe and peaceful environment; that all people have a right to participate in public activities and events; that people will not be harassed or moved on from public places unless there is a threat to their general security, their personal safety or if they are causing a disturbance that constitutes a breach of the peace, and also recognises that people who work in areas where their responsibilities are likely to bring them

into contact with homeless people, for example, the signatories of the protocol, will receive enough information to help them to assist homeless people if required or, alternatively, help homeless people make contact with appropriate services if required. It is very much about respecting the rights of the individual as well as trying to make sure we have joint approaches to the way we can access services.

There was a question around the effectiveness of the implementation of the protocol. The protocol was reviewed prior to Cabinet giving an extension to the whole of New South Wales and it was seen as being very successful. The department reported to the Cabinet standing committee on social justice in June 2003 about the operation of the protocol and we sought feedback from relevant agencies at that time. All agencies that are members of the protocol reported favourably. There were no complaints about the way it was impacting and there was minimal impact on staff implementing it. We continue to monitor that protocol and we will also be evaluating the whole approach to the inner-city homelessness plan to the end of 2006.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: That is when it finishes, is it?

Ms BOLAND: The approach to homelessness will continue. In 2003 we released a limited-period, inner-city homelessness plan, and because it is approaching the end of its time it is appropriate that we evaluate that.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you know what percentage of homeless people are young people, approximately—whatever definition you use, up to 24? I suppose it fluctuates?

Ms BOLAND: We would have to answer that question for you after. I do not have the information with me. I will take it on notice.

ACTING CHAIR: As I said, it may fluctuate and it may be difficult for you to give an exact figure, but we would be interested in an estimate anyway.

Ms BOLAND: I will take it on notice.

ACTING CHAIR: Our final question is can you sum up for us the strategies the department has specifically used in relation to children and young people through the annual and generational programs in recent years? We have a snapshot of Bonnyrigg and a bit of a picture of Minto, but what are the others?

Ms BOLAND: I think in part that has been answered by some of the responses that I had given to earlier questions. Our predominant approach, as I opened with, is to try to work in partnership with a range of government agencies and nongovernment agencies to bring in the expertise that they have; that is, to tackle issues confronting children and young people as well as issues confronting families and the various other people who live on our public housing estates. As I pointed out in my response to the youth access

strategy, what we do not have is a framework of responses. What we have is a series of very good initiatives. Those initiatives vary depending on the locations. They include things such as the establishment of homework and breakfast clubs, working with the local education centres to try to ensure that children attend, and continue to attend, school. One of those programs has been running since the late 1990s. It was found to be enormously successful. Children who came to get breakfast at the beginning of the day stayed at school during the day. The education results improved enormously. By having that interagency, intergovernmental approach around our estates we had enormous improvements there.

ACTING CHAIR: Do you have a formal evaluation program for these strategies or initiatives in particular places?

Ms BOLAND: As a general principle, the department evaluates most of its activities. That one was part of a regional co-ordination program. The pilot proved to be very successful and it would have been evaluated formally.

ACTING CHAIR: Will you extend it elsewhere?

Ms BOLAND: Yes. We also have a framework for evaluation generally of community regeneration activities that is being developed at the moment in conjunction with the University of New South Wales. We are trying to standardise the way in which we do it. Previously we had approached monitoring and evaluation on estates not in an ad hoc way but in a way that was very much tailored around the individual estate. That meant that sometimes we measured things and sometimes we did not. In the project that we are working on with the University of New South Wales known as Mosaic we are trying to get a consistent, standardised suite of things that we assess and a series of tools that allow us to assess those in a predictable and consistent way. Bonnyrigg is included in that work as well as our priority communities that we are working on and we are planning to roll out with the community regeneration strategy that we are working on at the moment.

Mr GILBERTSON: The subject of evaluation is very dear to our heart. All these programs are very expensive and you need to determine whether you are getting value for the taxpayers' dollars. The linking of cause and effect is quite fraught. Is it something that we did or is it something that the local schools did? Or is it something that the Commonwealth Government did through a tax relief scheme or an employment scheme? You might do a whole lot of work, and it is hard using all the statistics that you would normally measure to see a difference. But that might simply tell you it would have been worse if you had not intervened. Similarly, you might have done quite an ordinary job but the results are spectacular and it might have been nothing you did at all; it might have been the local school principal or the local DOCS people. It might be a new approach that the police have taken to something, or it might be all of those things.

Getting that linkage when you are evaluating what you are doing between what you did and the results is difficult because you have to look at the total environment that is impacting on the outcomes—for everybody in the community, not just the young people. It is an area where you could spend immeasurable time and effort. We are doing specific work not only with the University of New South Wales but also with the University of Western Sydney to evaluate what we are doing at Bonnyrigg. It is very difficult. You can spend a lot of money and look at a whole lot of statistics—whether they are from the Department of Community Services, the police or the Department of Health. You can look at mental health statistics. You can look at all this, but you are not quite sure what it all means. A lot of it is too general. It might be suburb wide but the issues might not be suburb wide; they might involve a few streets or a few blocks. Some of that data is quite coarse. So you need to be far cleverer in your evaluation.

ACTING CHAIR: That gets even more complicated if you try to narrow it down to children and young people where you go into a subset of a subset.

Mr GILBERTSON: Yes. We will look for qualitative data but sometimes maybe the best data is to ask the community whether they think you have made a difference, and your local indicators. You get some surprising results there.

Ms BOLAND: It is probably important to emphasise that we do consistently evaluate our projects and that we increasingly work in an interagency way in trying to do that, in line with the frame of methodology that the human services CEOs have adopted to try to identify what those higher-order outcomes are that we are looking to achieve, and try to work in ways that will be contributing to those.

Mr GILBERTSON: Just to finish answering the question on the community regeneration work, there is a two-layered approach. The department has a community regeneration strategy. It talks about the sort of things you should look at. You should always look at training and education. But each community has specific issues too. So each community you go into will have issues specific to that community and the cultures in that community and the history and numbers as well is the overlay of all things that you look at as a matter of course, targeting kids. What might be appropriate to do in one community might be completely inappropriate because of cultural backgrounds or language issues in another community, with the children. So in this two-level approach you have to be very community specific as well as considering what is on your general hit list of things to consider or in any case which you expect to get.

ACTING CHAIR: Some of the specifics were pointed up by the principal of St John's Park primary school. There are lots of specific, quite different things about the mix of kids at his school that probably would not exist in any other estate. Many of them would, but some of the specifics that he was talking about, the different groups and their—

Mr GILBERTSON: The approach we have taken there is: What do we know about what the kids want? Who knows more? The schools know a whole lot. So you just invite the schools into the project. That is just a core strategy, to find out who knows what is going on and invite them in and make them part of the solution.

The Hon. PENNY SHARPE: As you were talking I remembered the Miller Live and Learn Program. I have visited to see it and think it is fantastic. It is basically 20 bedsits and it is providing that longer-term support for kids while they are in training and education. Do you have any evaluation of that that talks specifically about the importance of the build environment there? I know, for example, that they have community space and they have the computer rooms but I know also that for many of those kids who had been homeless security was a real issue, particularly for young women. So they built a fence around it to provide them with safety from the broader estate within Miller. For the first-time kids have their own key and their own place. Could you take that on notice or see whether there is anything specifically about young homeless people and the build environment in terms of their surroundings that contributes? That program may provide something on that.

Ms BOLAND: Sure, we will look into that.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 5.18 p.m.)