

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS BEFORE

COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

**INQUIRY INTO CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE
AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

At Sydney on Wednesday 31 March 2010

The Committee met at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT

Mr R. D. Coombs (Chair)

Legislative Council

The Hon. J. Ajaka
The Hon. K. F. Griffin
Reverend the Hon. F. J. Nile

Legislative Assembly

Ms M. T. Andrews
Mr R. A. Furolo

CHAIR: I formally declare the meeting open and welcome the witnesses who are attending this morning. Before proceedings commence, I remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones as they can interfere with the Hansard recording equipment. If your phone is on silent mode, please switch it off completely. I will make opening remarks about the reasons for the Committee's follow-up inquiry into its 2006 report on children, young people and the built environment.

One of the main functions of the Committee under section 28 (1) (d) of the Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998 is to examine trends and changes in services and issues affecting children, and report to Parliament any changes, which the Committee thinks desirable, to the functions and procedures of the Commission. Pursuant to this function, the Committee's 2006 report contains six detailed recommendations and proposed an enhanced leadership role for the Commission in respect of policy development and other projects relating to children, young people and the built environment.

Three and a half years since that report, the Committee's current inquiry aims to re-examine these recommendations, assess new research in the field and collect additional evidence to develop further recommendations in relation to the key issues of the original inquiries. In revisiting the Committee's original inquiry, this follow-up inquiry will focus principally on to what extent the recommendations of the Committee's original inquiry have been implemented since the tabling of the report, and why it is that some of the Committee's key recommendations have not been implemented to date.

The forward-looking component of the inquiry is to establish, based on the expertise of witnesses, which of the Committee's original recommendations remain relevant in 2010, how they can be effectively implemented, and what positive and practical recommendations the Committee can now make with respect to the impact of the built environment on children and young people in New South Wales into the future.

On behalf of Committee members, at the outset of these proceedings I acknowledge the outstanding public service of the Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People, Ms Jan McClelland, who of course is before us now. Ms McClelland stepped into this important role at very, very short notice, having originally been engaged solely to undertake a review of the Commission. Committee members would like to stress that any concerns which they may have with the Commission's implementation with the original report's recommendations are not in any way a reflection on the Acting Commissioner's exercise of her leadership role at this difficult time for the Commission.

Again I thank the witnesses for appearing today. I am pleased that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's terms of reference and a brochure entitled "Information for Witnesses Appearing before Parliamentary Committees".

JANETTE BELVA McCLELLAND, Acting Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People, Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, 2010, and

LOU-ANNE LIND, Policy Manager, Commission for Children and Young People, Level 2, 407 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Ms McClelland, is it correct that you have been given a copy of the brochure, "Information for Witnesses Appearing before Parliamentary Committees"?

Ms McCLELLAND: Yes.

CHAIR: Ms McClelland, as time is limited today, the Committee may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, the replies to which will form part of your evidence and will be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

Ms McCLELLAND: Most certainly.

CHAIR: Ms Lind, it may be that we need to provide some written questions to you. Are you happy to answer those questions and have those questions and answers provided for the record?

Ms LIND: Yes, of course.

CHAIR: We have already acknowledged that we have received some written answers. If I may, we will spend approximately half an hour asking a few questions. You can see who the Committee members are, so we will get straight into it. First and foremost, could you please advise in detail the steps the Commission has actually taken to implement each of the Committee's recommendations? In particular, what, if anything, was done to implement the report's key recommendation of the establishment of the interagency Steering Committee for Children, Young People and the Built Environment with the role of considering and promoting key projects and initiatives?

Ms McCLELLAND: Thank you, Chair and Committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to provide an update on where the Commission is with this work. I particularly thank you for your kind words of the acknowledgement of my contribution. They are very much appreciated, particularly in this context. Before answering your question specifically, I might just give a broad overview of where we are up to.

CHAIR: I was remiss in not asking if you wanted to do that.

Ms McCLELLAND: That is okay. I will just set the context and then I will be more than happy to answer the specifics of each of the recommendations. You would be aware that the Commission has a long history of interest in the development of child-friendly built environments. That was reflected in its submission to your inquiry in 2005. Since the release of the Committee's inquiry report in 2006, the built environment has been an ongoing priority for the Commission.

Following the release of the Committee's report in late 2006 the Commission's focus has been on a number of areas—undertaking literature reviews of child-friendly built environments, consulting with children and young people, engaging with local government and developing a set of child-friendly community indicators to assist local councils and other organisations in planning and developing their built environment. Although no additional funding has been provided, the Commission has redirected a total of \$259,000 of its own resources between 2007 and 2010 to fund this work.

A key outcome of the work has been the development and publication in June 2009 of *built4kids*, a resource for local governments and planners that reflects the thoughts and views of children and young people about what is important to them in the built environment. The publication has been disseminated widely to local councils, government departments and professional organisations. Unfortunately, the momentum in progressing this work since that time appears to have slowed down and has been affected by a combination of factors, including the departure of the longstanding, long-serving Commissioner and the departure of her replacement after only a short time and two major reviews of the Commission for Children and Young People, including a ministerial review of its functions and structure and a major review of the Working with Children check undertaken by the Auditor-General.

These reviews have now set a clear course for the Commission and its work, and it is now time to get on with the work of the Commission for Children and Young People and progress the recommendations of the Committee. To this end the following action is being taken. The Commission's Policy Manager, Lou-Anne Lind, who has accompanied me here today, and the Senior Research Officer in the Commission, have been instructed to make the built environment a priority in the Commission's policy and research plan and work program for the 2010-2011 year. The Commission will establish the interagency steering committee that was recommended by the Committee to oversee the built environment work, and invitations have already been extended to State Planning and local government agencies, who have agreed to come on to that steering committee. I am meeting with key industry bodies commencing next week.

I am meeting with the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and the Planning Institute of Australia on 8 April to invite them to participate in the work and meetings are being organised for me to meet with the Property Council of Australia and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects progressing those recommendations of the Committee's work as well.

More recently Lou-Anne has met with the Department of Planning and local government to progress the specific recommendations in relation to reviewing two publications that are the responsibility of the Department of Planning and to look at ways in which we can progress the recommendations concerning the incorporation of child-friendly policies and strategies in legislative regulatory reform programs. Following on from the release of *built4kids* to local councils and consistent with the Committee's recommendation that we find out what difference this is making to children's lives, we are now working with Professor Geoff Woolcock from Griffith University to develop a survey of all 152 councils to find out the extent to which they are firstly using the *built4kids* document, what impact it is having on children in young people and what more the Commission can do to assist them in their work in this area.

We are also working with Dr Kate Bishop from the University of New South Wales who is an expert in this area to assist the steering committee, which I mentioned earlier, in its work and to also look at how we might further progress the research into causal links between built environment and children's wellbeing, and I am happy to speak in more detail about that at a later stage. Through these processes and with the input of specialist advice, I think we have now got the matter back on track and I feel confident that we can be in a position to have addressed all the recommendations by June 2011, so that is setting the scene for you. It has been a significant piece of work. Your questions and your interest in this area have certainly prompted some action, I do not dispute that, but I think it has been very helpful in refocusing the Commission and its work in this area.

CHAIR: Thank you. I had two questions but I think you have just done a wonderful job in answering those. There is nothing like a bit of ESP, so I will hand straight over to Kayee, who indicated she has some questions too.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: I think you have answered part of what I was going to ask you also. You mentioned that \$259,000 was redirected. Can you briefly outline what that money went towards? The Committee specifically recommended that funding for the Commission be reviewed to ensure that it was adequately resourced. Why did the Commission not advise of difficulties with funding in relation to doing that work?

Ms McCLELLAND: If I can answer the first part first—the \$259,000 is broken down as follows: \$66,000 in 2007-08 for staffing costs and the development of the indicator framework that was incorporated in *built4kids*; \$95,000 in 2008-09 for staffing costs and the production and promotion of *built4kids* and \$98,000 in 2009-10 for staffing costs, research and follow-up of the Committee's recommendations. That is the full amount over that period. I am advised that the Commission did seek additional funding on two occasions but unfortunately without success. I am also advised that the former Commissioner did allude to this on two occasions when she appeared before the Committee; one, I understand, was in October 2007 and on that occasion I am told specific reference was made as to why the steering committee had not been established at that stage because of funding and I am advised that a further statement was made in May 2009, so that is the situation there.

In the current climate the likelihood of our getting additional funding for this project, I think, is slim, particularly as we also have a number of significant recommendations from the Auditor-General's report relating to compliance monitoring and education of employers, volunteers and self-employed persons. We have looked

at our financial situation and are committed to continuing to resource this project, which will require some funding for further research and staffing resources to progress the recommendations, but I feel confident that we can do that by redirecting some resources from within the Commission's current allocation of funds.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: When you seek the funding, you make a request through the Treasurer, do you? Is that the machinery?

Ms McCLELLAND: The funding process varies from year to year and I am advised that in the two financial years that the Commission was seeking funding the approach by Treasury in those years was to invite selected agencies to make bids for additional resources. If you did not get an invitation, you did not get a look in. In one of those years that request certainly did not come to us and it preceded the release of your Committee's report. In the following year the invitation was not forthcoming.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: In other words, it is difficult to get the extra funding the way the system is set up.

Ms McCLELLAND: It is very difficult and, as I said, I think the realistic position for the Commission is to assume that the additional funding will not be forthcoming. That is not to say that we cannot try again, but I do not think we can not proceed. I think we have managed to find some funding in the years to date. It is now a question of maintaining that funding, if not at an enhanced level, to progress this work.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: If we can just follow through on that, as I understand it, and we have discussed this before, technically your Commission has two separate roles. The first role, if I can call it, is to ensure certification for appropriate persons to be employed within areas that involve young children and the second area is to assist young children with various matters for their wellbeing. Do I understand what you are saying is that because of the new recommendations and continued additional requirements for the certification process that is eating up a lot of your funding?

Ms McCLELLAND: No. I should make it clear. The Commission has been provided with additional funding for the certification processes, particularly in the light of the Wood Inquiry and the recommendations of that inquiry that the categories of people who need to be checked has increased and particularly the changes in relation to checking of volunteers. The Commission has received additional funding for those additional checks, and the Commission has also received additional funding for a new technology information system to process those checks. My point is that, having received that additional funding, to receive additional funding for the other side of the work—

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: For part two it's creating a problem.

Ms McCLELLAND: I am not saying it is impossible but I think we have to be realistic in that context.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: So the fact that you have these two separate arms, my next question, I think you have answered it, is the fact that you received the additional funding for arm number one it is almost as if "you got your turn, you got your additional funding, you cannot receive it for part two, looking after the children". Are they being disadvantaged in a way because your Commission seems to be so focussed, if I can use that word, on the monitoring and certification side? Are the kids missing out?

Ms McCLELLAND: I do not believe they are and for these reasons. When I undertook the review of the functions and structure of the Commission it is very clear that the Commission needs to have a strong policy and research function. In fact, we recommended that those two functions be not only retained but more closely integrated so that the policy was supported by robust research and that there was a greater linkage between the work of those two areas. Michael Eyres, who was the co-reviewer, and I made strong recommendations about the retention of those functions. My view is, though, that there needs to be some refocusing of the priorities of those areas to focus on some key issues, rather than trying to spread the net so widely that you do not get the impact, and this provides an opportunity to start to do that.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: You mentioned earlier in your response that the Commission was going to commence its monitoring function and determine how the *built4kids* resource would be properly used, and then of course in your opening statement you indicated what is happening with that. Can you explain how you propose to undertake the monitoring? What are the steps that will be involved either by you or by Ms Lind?

Ms McCLELLAND: There are a couple of parts to this, and if I look at your Committee recommendations, and particularly given the Commission's focus to date on developing the *built4kids* resource, which had a number of indicators to be used by local government in informing their planning and provision of environments for children. The first thing we want to do is to follow up—that has been distributed to all local councils—the first thing we want to do is to find out how it is being used, in what way, and is there anything we can learn from that. What impact, if any, is it making on children? Do they have any data to inform us? Also, in what ways can the Commission further support local councils in progressing this work? That relates to one of your other recommendations relating to a series of seminars. There have been a few seminars that the Commission has conducted—not very many but nonetheless they have been conducted. We are having a look at that recommendation—and this comes back to your terms of reference that you outlined in your introductory remarks—we are having a look at the extent to which it is still feasible with our limited resources to conduct a wide number of seminars throughout the state. That is very resource intensive, so firstly what we want to do is to find out from local councils the areas that they want to focus on.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: How do you do that? Do you send them out a survey that you ask everyone to answer and then someone collates the information?

Ms McCLELLAND: Yes, that is the plan. In relation to the seminars, we are also exploring the opportunity of doing some online seminars, using modern technology, having some modules and having the opportunity for some interactive engagement. So that is also part of the work that Dr Bishop and Professor Woolcock will help us with as well.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: We talk about additional funding, and that is all lovely. Can you give us a figure? Realistically, if you have the magic ball or the magic wand and you wanted to implement this, get it up and running as soon as possible and really be able to put everything behind it, what sort of additional funding do you need? If you cannot answer that today, I am happy for you to take that on notice.

Ms McCLELLAND: I think I should take that on notice because particularly when I am exploring this area of research the funding varies quite widely. I am exploring a range of options that would set us in the right direction, so I would prefer to take that on notice if that is okay with you.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: On that basis, you might indicate—and I am only using this as an example—that \$500,000 extra would allow you to do this within this time frame, \$1 million would allow you to do the following extra within this time frame. If you could give us that sort of scenario it would be interesting for us as a Committee to know exactly how much money is needed to move it to certain stages.

Ms McCLELLAND: Okay. I am more than happy to do that.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: I am interested in the *built4kids* resource and its relationship with local government. Do you see it primarily informing their social plan or do you see it informing their actual planning instruments, or both?

Ms McCLELLAND: Both. The work leading to *built4kids* built on some work that the Commission had done in looking at children's wellbeing and in surveying, I think it was about 126 children about what is important to them. Both from the physical side of the built environment but also what it means to them in terms of their social interaction with their community, their friends, their lifestyle, their exercise regime or lack of, so all of those factors. Those indicators cover a wide range of views of children, and so we would hope that it influences both aspects.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Just to clarify, you see it having a role in informing councils when they are developing their planning controls that they should have a provision or section in there that deals with the issues raised in *built4kids*. So a development application gets submitted and it gets tested against a planning control that specifies that there be a specific program or service for children.

Ms McCLELLAND: It actually starts earlier than that. The *built4kids* publication encourages local councils to engage with children and young people in developing its planning regime and framework, and then using that participation to have provisions that would meet those objectives.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: I am really pleased that the Commission is making some positive moves on the *built4kids* environment. Are you aware of any practical outcomes of the Creating Child Friendly Cities

Conference and, if so, has the Commission maintained contact with participants to see how that conference may have influenced issues around children and young people in the built environment?

Ms McCLELLAND: The former Commissioner actually spoke at that conference, and it was very shortly after the release of your report I understand, and she spoke prominently about this. There was an outcomes and directions statement produced as a result of that conference, and the urban research program at Griffith University, headed by Professor Geoff Woolcock, has taken carriage of the research relating to that, particularly the development of indicators, and he was involved in our *built4kids* indicators—that is one aspect of the conference. We maintain contact with him on a regular basis, and I have mentioned his name and number of times today as being someone who will help us progress this further. We also maintain contact with the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth about a range of matters, but they were also a co-host of that conference, so we are in contact with them.

A couple of interesting findings that have come out of the work that Griffith University and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth have been doing, they have looked at the research challenges that emerge from this area and there are two points they are advising us on. They are saying there needs to be more applied research looking at the links between the built environment and its impact on children—enough of the theory, let us start looking at what is really happening. The second is that there needs to be a much better balance between the needs of the littlies, the young children, and adolescents—there needs to be a greater balance there.

The other thing that has come out of that is that the Planning Institute of Australia has produced a national position statement on the issue of child-friendly cities and has committed to four areas of action, two of which relate to publications, one includes developing a national guide on healthy spaces and places, and the other relates to a Victorian publication on the impact of built environments on people's health. They are important pieces of work that have come out of there as well.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Earlier you mentioned about the seminars. We had the impression that there had not been many, if any. You said there have been "some". Was it, one, two—

Ms McCLELLAND: There were three specific seminars, and I have the details here. The three seminars were held in August 2009. One was the National Investment for the Early Years, New South Wales group, held on 6 August 2009. Another one was for Lake Macquarie Council planning staff on 21 August 2009. Another was for members of the local council child-friendly cities network in August 2009. As well as that there have been some discussions with local councils but they are the three main seminars.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It is very important that the New South Wales legislation cater for the child-friendly planning principles. There seems to have been a bit of a delay or lack of action in relating those principles to the Department of Planning. I understand you are seeking advice but there seems to have been some sort of a delay in moving more promptly in that area—that could be again with all the changes?

Ms McCLELLAND: The analysis that we have done since receiving your questions would suggest there was some communication with the Department of Planning in 2007 and 2008 and not much happened as a result of that, and quite frankly there has not been a lot of follow-up action. We have now got that back on track. Lou-Anne Lind has been meeting with the manager of Centres and Urban Renewal at the Department of Planning. They have agreed to come on to the steering committee. They have agreed to have a look at their publications in the light of our *built4kids* and the Committee's recommendations. They have also agreed to work with us to look at how they can incorporate child-friendly planning principles into planning processes and policies. A further area where they have agreed to assist the Commission is in relation to looking at incorporating child-friendly principles in planning for new growth areas, which was another of your recommendations that focused specifically on the Growth Commission. That function is now located within the Department of Planning and the dialogue that is now occurring has that on the work plan as well.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: That may mean some legislation or amendments to give it some weight?

Ms McCLELLAND: I am not an expert in planning so I would not want to commit the Government or the Planning Department to anything that is outside what is capable. The feedback I have received is that you are probably going to get more traction through incorporation in policy regulatory frameworks than necessarily legislation, but that is really beyond my area of expertise.

CHAIR: It is probable that we will send you some further questions in writing and your response to those would certainly be appreciated.

Ms McCLELLAND: Thank you and good luck in your work.

(The witnesses withdrew)

GALINA MARY LAURIE, Acting Manager, Estates Strategy Unit, Housing New South Wales, Liverpool Road, Ashfield,

STEPHEN JOHN McINTYRE, Executive Director, Assets Division, Housing New South Wales, Liverpool Road, Ashfield, and

NADA NASSER, Director, Business Strategy, Housing New South Wales, Liverpool Road, Ashfield, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: In what capacity are you each appearing before the Committee today?

Mr McINTYRE: Executive Director, Assets Division, Housing New South Wales.

Ms LAURIE: Acting Manager, Estates Strategy Unit, Housing New South Wales.

Ms NASSER: Director, Business Strategy, Housing New South Wales.

CHAIR: It is probable that Committee members will not get through the list of questions in the short time available to them. Are you prepared to answer any written questions that the Committee sends to you?

Mr McINTYRE: Absolutely. That is not a problem at all.

CHAIR: Do you want to make an opening statement?

Mr McINTYRE: I do. I am not sure whether it is too long. We have attempted to address some of the issues at least thematically which I thought might be more helpful, and if the Committee wants to dig into the detail or any individual questions we can do that today or whenever. Thank you for the opportunity for us to appear. This is clearly a critical issue and the opportunity to progress and talk about how Housing NSW is addressing the challenges facing young people and children living in social housing in New South Wales is important to us. Nada Nasser has considerable experience in developing youth strategies and, indeed, the Housing NSW Youth Action Plan, and that is a particular perspective she can bring to today's discussion. Equally, Galina Laurie is involved in community regeneration activities.

Young people, as you may well appreciate, are a key client group for Housing NSW. One fifth of public housing residents are aged 12 and 24 years. As at June 2009, 1.9 per cent of all leaseholders in public housing and 6.3 per cent of all leaseholders in community housing were aged between 16 and 24 years. Also, young people are significantly affected by homelessness. As at the 2006 Census, 28 per cent of homeless people in New South Wales were aged 12 to 24 years of age. In 2007-08 young people were the largest single group of Supported Accommodation Assistance Program [SAAP] users. 22.7 per cent of service users were aged 15 to 19 years and 13.7 per cent were aged 20 to 24 years.

Housing NSW is committed to providing children and young people with suitable and safe housing and building communities which support young people to develop their potential. I note that Housing NSW Design Requirements actually reflect a number of the principles contained in the *built4kids* guidelines which the Committee was just discussing. Further, it is our intention in Housing to have a closer look at those guidelines to see if we can more fully reflect some of those principles the next time we undertake a full review of our own design requirements. Housing NSW is also committed to engaging with and listening to young people about their experiences and needs, and to responding to these through a range of housing services and community engagement strategies.

In 2008 Housing NSW completed a draft Housing NSW Youth Action Plan as part of a suite of client segment strategies. While the plan is still in draft form, Housing NSW implemented a number of key priorities from 2006 to 2009 that were supported through consultation with key stakeholders. These initiatives include: the Links to Leadership Program, the Youth Scholarships Program, the Housing NSW Young People Awards and a range of other youth engagement initiatives through the Building Stronger Communities Program. Housing NSW partnered with other agencies in a number of the initiatives to ensure that young people can access support when needed. I have a number of examples but one is Partnering with Community Services on the Young People Leaving Care trial which helps young people exiting care to secure and sustain independent living. We can also provide other examples.

Recently, the plan was revised to reflect new Government priorities under the Homelessness Action Plan, the State Plan and the Keep Them Safe reform. A final Youth Action Plan covering the period 2010-14 is subject to final departmental and Ministerial approval. The Plan has five themes aimed at ensuring: choices in housing products and services, support available when needed, pathways to address homelessness, voices of young people in future planning and connections to people and places. Housing NSW is also committed to strengthening child wellbeing and is working with a range of New South Wales Government agencies on the implementation of Keep Them Safe. Furthermore, Housing NSW collaborates on a range of across agency initiatives designed to protect and enhance the wellbeing of children.

Housing NSW is committed to building stronger communities and opportunities for young people living in social housing through a range of community engagement and capacity building initiatives. Since making its submission to the 2006 inquiry, where Housing NSW flagged the development of a new community regeneration strategy aimed at improving outcomes for people living in priority areas to help break the cycle of disadvantage, Housing NSW has implemented such an initiative. The Building Stronger Communities Program is being rolled out across seven priority locations, comprising 22 estate areas. It includes: Killarney Vale, Bateau Bay, Tumbi Umbi on the Central Coast, Mt Druitt, Macquarie Fields, Claymore, Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga. The initiative seeks to improve the physical environment, contribute to more positive social environments, provide better access to services and opportunities, and enable more social housing residents to access employment and training.

Young people have been engaged in the community regeneration planning process as well as decisions regarding built environment projects. For example, in Macquarie Fields in south-west Sydney, young people were involved in identifying the priorities for the location through a community visioning process. There have been many physical improvements funded as part of Building Stronger Communities, which have been of particular benefit to children, young people and their families. For example, in Bateau Bay, concerns with community safety have been addressed by \$250,000 worth of improvements to street lighting. Other major works include a new children's playground and in Dubbo, Lunar Park has had a \$200,000 upgrade.

Housing NSW is also undertaking major redevelopments in several disadvantaged estates. The purpose of these redevelopments is to create mixed communities and more positive social environments, which deliver outcomes for the young people living in those areas. One example is the Minto renewal project which involves the staged redevelopment of approximately 1,000 properties in the Minto public housing area in Sydney's south west, under a partnership between Housing NSW, Campbelltown City Council and Landcom. The project aims to renew Minto so that it looks like neighbouring suburbs with a mix of public and private housing. It is really indiscernible picking out the public housing from the private housing. Importantly, the project will provide \$10 million worth of community facilities, including six new parks and a \$1.5 million community centre and childcare facilities. The Minto renewal project has a strong focus on community engagement and capacity building, and several activities have involved children and young people. In conclusion, I reiterate how pleased Housing NSW is to have the opportunity to update the Committee and we look forward to the outcomes of the inquiry.

CHAIR: What impact has the Housing for Health Program on Aboriginal communities?

Mr McINTYRE: The Housing for Health Program is actually implemented through the Department of Health rather than Housing NSW and we feel that representatives from Health would be better placed to respond to this particular question.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Going back to your opening statement, you indicated—and it was good to hear—that funding is being used to better improve the built environment with parks and so on. How do you balance the need for additional housing for the many people on the waiting list with using funding to improve what is already there? Is there a greater need to improve what is there for those who already live in the accommodation, such as young children, as opposed to using the money to acquire additional housing for those on the waiting lists?

Mr McINTYRE: It is a balancing act. It is at the core of our strategy, to be honest. We have an overriding responsibility to make sure that our dwellings are appropriately maintained and that they are safe and habitable for all the people who live in them, whether they are children, seniors or any of our client base. Obviously, managing our resources and making those decisions are critical. In that context, we tend to focus on making sure that our property portfolio is realigned to best meet our client requirements. That involves change

in geographic location and bedroom mix. We have been working on that program now for some years. The boost that we have received in recent times through the Nation Building Program has obviously provided us with a tremendous opportunity to add considerable numbers of stock to the social housing portfolio, noting that the majority of housing will go over to community housing providers, with a small number being retained by the Aboriginal Housing Office and Housing New South Wales.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am happy for you to take my following questions on notice, if you need to. Are you able to indicate how many young persons would be currently on a waiting list for housing, if there is such a waiting list?

Mr McINTYRE: We would have to take that on notice.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: I am happy for you to do that. The figure that has been going around for some time is approximately 30,000-plus on the waiting list. How many would be children compared to adults? Could you take that on notice?

Mr McINTYRE: Yes.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Is there any indication of what amount of funding would be needed to seriously reduce that waiting list? If you had a magic wand and you could take all the funding you needed, what funding are you looking at to be able to progress and move forward, especially having regard to what you said earlier about all the additional housing that is being built via the Federal Government grants?

Mr McINTYRE: What I would say is this, we provide housing assistance through a range of mechanisms. For some people public housing or community housing is the best outcome. For others it might be assistance to get into the private rental market through various other subsidies. We use a combination of housing and non-housing approaches to try to provide support to people with housing assistance needs. We will give you a fuller answer and take that on notice. It is not a straightforward matter of just using the number on the waiting list.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: That is why I pre-empted my questions by saying you could take them on notice. The statistics on the number of homeless children are frightening, especially when we hear about homeless children the age of 12. Are you able to indicate the reason for it? It is not just an issue of a lack of housing. There may be other fundamental issues that create a figure of that nature.

Ms LAURIE: We probably could give a fuller answer taking it on notice. My sense is that for children and young people the key cause of homelessness is family breakdown.

CHAIR: When Housing New South Wales property is transferred to community housing, what mechanism is used? Is it purchased by the community housing groups or does a lease apply? Basically, what is the mechanism to restate that relationship or ownership?

Mr McINTYRE: Traditionally the approach has been short-term leasing to the community housing providers and we have retained ownership of the properties. In addition, community housing providers have leased additional properties to meet their needs. Of more recent times the Government has made a decision to transfer the title of a number of properties to community housing providers with the intention of giving them an asset base that they can leverage to help grow their stock.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: One of the challenges for children and young people in disadvantaged communities, that is, those who are in private accommodation but qualify for public housing or social housing, is that overcrowding affects their ability to study, socialise and so on. They are approved for public housing but they cannot get in because there is not sufficient stock for families. You can take this question on notice. What percentage of new dwellings constructed by Housing New South Wales accommodate families with children, that is, dwellings of three bedrooms or more?

Mr McINTYRE: We will give you a fuller answer on that. What I can say is that our demographics are quite clear. The traditional family unit has been declining for some time as a key focus area. Seniors, whether couples or singles, are our fastest growing group that need our support through social housing. There is a range of others, such as single people, et cetera. It is complex. What it means though in terms of our portfolio is that we have unmet demand for one- and two-bedroom accommodation—that is our primary focus—and we

tend to have, in a relative sense, an oversupply of three-bedroom accommodation. As you get to very large families, particularly Indigenous families, we could probably do with a little bit more of four- and five-bedroom properties as well.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Speaking from my own experience in my electorate, families with three, four, five or more children struggle enormously on the waiting list to get approval for an offer of accommodation. I am curious as to what percentage of your accommodation is available or has been constructed for them?

Mr McINTYRE: There would be a very considerable amount at the moment that would suit them. As we would all acknowledge, there are severe affordability problems at the moment in a number of the markets, which is unfortunate. We wish we could service more people. We have criteria for eligibility and we have a process to allocate in a particular priority order.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: In your opening statement you spoke about Building Stronger Communities. I understand that a review was scheduled for January 2010 in relation to Building Stronger Communities. Are you able to advise the Committee of the findings of that review?

Ms LAURIE: Housing New South Wales is currently considering a draft report from that review, which was undertaken in January and February of this year. The review focused mainly on how the initiative has been implemented rather than on the outcomes achieved because it is still too early to tell the outcomes. The review we conducted is intended to guide managed exit and sustainability strategies to ensure that we can smoothly transition from the funded initiative when the funding ceases at the end of this calendar year. In addition to that review, we will also shortly let a tender for the final evaluation, which is due to report in June of next year. That will focus on the outcomes achieved against the key result areas of the initiative. It will measure progress against baseline data, which was collected at the commencement of the initiative.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You may not have this information at the moment. It may be information that you will have down the track. In terms of Building Stronger Communities and community regeneration plans, have you any evidence in relation to those plans improving the built environment for children and young people?

Ms LAURIE: Again, in terms of outcomes I do not know that we can tell you yet. In each of the priority locations under Building Stronger Communities [BSC], regeneration partnership plans have been developed in conjunction with local residents and other stakeholders who are there. The plans articulate the priorities that the community thinks need to be addressed, as well as ones that will deliver on the broader outcome areas that we are trying to achieve under BSC.

Each plan has a component, which focuses on initiatives that will improve the physical environment. For instance, the needs of children and young people might be taken into account, as Stephen said earlier, through their involvement in identifying the priorities: they say what they think is good or not so good about their community and how that might change. Then there are priority projects such as upgrading parks and playgrounds, which directly improve, I guess, recreational options for children, young people and their families. Also in each location community hubs have been either established or augmented. These can provide places where young people might meet or where service providers might come and deliver services to young people from within that community rather than having to go outside the community.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Are children and young people considered to be stakeholders in some of these discussions? Perhaps the issue may be about the need for parks and so on and for a community centre to provide some programs, but are children and young people considered to be specific stakeholders in any project that goes through?

Ms LAURIE: I think they very much are and I think there are specific activities arranged. It goes according to priority location. Each plan reflects the very local nature of what is going on in a particular place, but with strategies there are particular ways of engaging with young people to make sure their views are captured. They are absolutely considered to be stakeholders.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Are you in contact with the Commission for Children and Young People when engaging children and young people?

Ms NASSER: We work quite actively with the Commission for Children and Young People. It is a member of the Housing and Human Services senior officers group. The Commission participates regularly in the process around decision-making in housing policy and programs. We also partner with it on a number of strategies where we are partners with other agencies. For example, currently there is a partnership with Ageing Disability and Home Care with young carers where the Commission for Children and Young People, Housing NSW, and a number of other agencies are partnering. The Commission also provided advice on the Youth Action Plan on ways to consult young people as well as having input into the plan itself.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: In its submission to the 2006 built environment Inquiry the Department of Housing mentioned the young people's housing access strategy 2006-2010 and the antisocial behaviour strategy project, one in which I am particularly interested. What is the current status of those projects?

Ms NASSER: As Stephen said in his opening, we developed a draft Youth Action Plan, which we were implementing as it was in draft form. We have been doing so for the last three or four years. We implemented a number of initiatives resulting out of priorities that were identified as priorities in the consultation process. My colleague Stephen mentioned a number of those in his statement. There were a couple of others that I can add. For example, the Links to Leadership program was a leadership initiative where we brought young people from around the state in social housing to look at building their leadership capacity. We also gave them the opportunity to contribute to the Youth Action Plan. It was also promoting a positive approach and their positive contribution as young people in social housing. There is also the Youth Scholarship Program. You may have recently seen *Australian Story*, *ABC Television* which highlighted one of the young people who received a youth scholarship, Lachlan McCarthy, who talked about the value of that program to him continuing his education.

We also partnered with a number of other agencies on the Young People Leaving Care project to help young people who are exiting community services care to secure and sustain their tenancies in social housing. We worked also with other agencies, for example, Juvenile Justice, about young people leaving juvenile detention facilities or those at risk of homelessness or at risk of entering those facilities. We worked with them on providing housing where other agencies provided the support to help them sustain those tenancies.

Recently we revised the plan to take into account recent reforms around homelessness, Keep Them Safe and other reforms. The plan currently is being considered by Government.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Stephen, you mentioned the regeneration in Macquarie Fields and Dubbo. That regeneration in fact involves the demolition of many buildings because of their poor quality—the area is almost like a slum. Some families, especially single mothers with children, are distressed as to where they go during that process. How do you cater for them?

Mr McINTYRE: On any of our projects we really have a close look at the options to achieve the outcomes. We are about trying to achieve outcomes that are best for the community and for our tenants who require our housing. Generally we go through quite an extensive options appraisal process. As we are forming our view about what we want to do, whether it is in those locations or anywhere else, obviously consultation with the community and with tenants is part of that process. There is no question that some people find this a confronting or traumatic experience. If it has been a place in which you have been living for a period of time, that is natural and we do not deny that. But we need to balance, I guess, the requirements of individual people who might have a particular affiliation with an area with the need to try to improve community social outcomes. It is a balancing act. We try to weigh that up in coming up with a decision. Certainly, where it is possible to rehouse people back in an area after regeneration activity, we can take those requests into consideration. Other people are happy to relocate perhaps to a nearby area where they are still close to other family, friends or facilities with which they have become acquainted. There is a balancing involved in that, but we are certainly sensitive to those issues.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Are those families rehoused temporarily?

Mr McINTYRE: Yes. If we have a major renewal or regeneration program, depending on the nature of the program, and we need to demolish houses as part of that program, certainly we would rehouse them. There is no question about that. We have a very clear policy around that. We would attempt to work with those individuals and families to try to best meet their needs.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: How successful has Housing New South Wales been in collaborating with the Premier's office et cetera to get some action on the Keep Them Safe five-year action plan?

Ms NASSER: Housing New South Wales has been an active partner in the Keep Them Safe reform. We are one of the key agencies that has established, through the Department of Human Services, a child wellbeing unit. That unit is working on early identification of risk so that we can respond and refer children and families to support services as well as to the helpline where the risk is significant. We have worked also in partnership with other agencies on a range of responses to improve our response to child wellbeing. For example, young people leaving care is one of the priorities that came out of the Wood Commission that is a priority project for Housing. We work on a range of initiatives around responding to children who are caught up in a domestic violence situation. We work on a range of initiatives that support that reform and we are key partners with Premier and Cabinet as well as a number of other agencies.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: You have mentioned already that you seek advice and work in with the Commission for Children and Young People. The answers the Committee has heard today certainly indicate that once again the Department of Housing does a lot more than just house people—I certainly speak from experience in my electorate. Could the Department benefit from increased input from the Commission for Children and Young People in order to develop the current range of programs for children and young people in housing?

Ms NASSER: We have quite an active relationship with the Commission. We would certainly welcome more input as appropriate in relation to the various policies where it can contribute.

Mr McINTYRE: It is not directly on the point, but that question triggered a thought with regard to an earlier question about large families and the difficulty of housing them. It is worth restating and picking up on the theme that we have a range of programs and services. I fleetingly mentioned private rental assistance, but things like our Rent Start program support a large number of families each year to get into private rental accommodation. Being on the waiting list for public housing is one option for families in need. However, we encourage all of those families and individuals to talk to us about whether other products or services might be able support them in the short term or be an alternative to public housing.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your valuable contribution. We could probably go on for much longer. At some stage I would like to discuss the current housing stimulus projects, the unfortunate public reaction that has been generated and what we might do to better educate the public. I am sure they would be much more sympathetic if they were privy to some of the facts and figures that you have explained today. Thank you for your contribution. We will provide written questions and we would very much appreciate your replies.

Mr McINTYRE: We welcome the work of the inquiry, so thank you very much for the opportunity to appear.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(Short adjournment)

THOMAS LLOYD GELLIBRAND, Deputy Director General, Plan Making and Urban Renewal, Department of Planning, 23-33 Bridge Street, Sydney, affirmed and examined:

CHAIR: Because our time is limited today the Committee may wish to send you some additional questions in writing, the replies to which will form part of your evidence and will be made public. Would you be happy to provide written responses to any further questions?

Mr GELLIBRAND: Yes, I would.

CHAIR: We have already received some written answers from you. We can start questions by asking if you have any prepared notes or an introductory contribution that you would like to make?

Mr GELLIBRAND: I have a couple of introductory comments I would like to make, but of course I am available for questions. The Department of Planning is responsible for setting a broad strategic direction for planning across New South Wales as well as metropolitan Sydney. In doing so, we involve the community extensively in the development of those plans and related policies. We are responsible for setting the policies and strategic directions. We also assess some major development applications in New South Wales. We manage the State's heritage as well.

In some cases we prepare very specific and detailed local planning controls for certain areas. Whilst we have developed specific controls with some sectors of the community—seniors and people with a disability is one example of that—we do not generally focus on the specific elements of the community in our work. However, we are working with the Commission in relation to children, and that is an emerging relationship. It is obviously one that will provide us with significant benefit because the Commission provides us with a conduit, which we really do not have at the moment, to a particular sector in the community. We are looking forward to that relationship as it develops.

Our expectation will be that the Commission can communicate to us about specific requirements of children in a particular area, or specific requirements of children generally. Where we are involved in doing more detailed planning work, we can articulate that into our plans. Even though the Department plays a very important role in planning across New South Wales, there is a very, very important role for local government in planning specifically for sectors of our community. They do that across New South Wales. They utilise things such as local environmental plans, development control plans, contribution plans and social plans. I think they do quite a good job. That is my introduction. I will be happy to answer questions.

CHAIR: What interaction has the Department of Planning had with the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People concerning built environment planning? Are you aware of the Commission's child-friendly community indicators? If so, how does the Department incorporate them into strategic planning decisions?

Mr GELLIBRAND: In terms of the interaction with staff from the Commission, there was some interaction, I understand, following this Committee's hearings back in 2006. The people who would have been involved in those discussions are not with the Department anymore. Since that time the most recent discussions have occurred over the past weeks or past months with Lou-Anne Lind and others in the Commission. We have been talking about some of the documents, some of their goals and objectives, and what the Department can do to take those on board in terms of its work.

The Commission has indicated to us that they are setting up a steering committee. We have indicated that we would be more than happy to participate and can see significant benefit in participating in that committee. We are also aware of the *built4kids* document. We have reviewed it. We have identified that there are key indicators in the document that can help to inform planning, which is good. We have also indicated that we will look at using that document almost as a filter for the policies that we already have. We look at our policies and we almost pour them through that document and ask ourselves whether there are specific things that we need to do to change some of our policies. Not all the policies are relevant. Aircraft noise is perhaps slightly less relevant, and things like that. But where it is relevant, we will look at reflecting the *built4kids* indicators.

In our discussions with the Commission we have also talked about the documents we have published in the past that specifically relate to young people. We have indicated that we are more than happy to have those

documents reviewed in consultation with the Commission and, where necessary, if they do require amendment, we would be more than happy to commence that process.

CHAIR: It would appear that it is probable that the communication has to be strengthened in that area. We recently completed an inquiry into children aged 9 to 14 years. It was quite a lengthy inquiry and set recommendations. My recollection is that there are some planning matters there as well, so we might encourage the Commission to liaise with you to see what synergies there are there, and certainly any recommendations that might come as a result.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Earlier you referred to updating some of your publications regarding children. The Committee was unable to locate any document on the Department's website that relates specifically to children. Are there such documents?

Mr GELLIBRAND: There are documents that exist. They might not exist on the website, so it is a matter of putting them on. Some of the documents were produced several years ago and they have not been uploaded. We are able to do that, though.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There are five or six, or 10, documents?

Mr GELLIBRAND: There are two, and I brought them with me today. The most specific document is entitled "Urban Design Guidelines with Young People in Mind", and that was published in 1999. That is obviously some years ago, but it is still a very contemporary document. For its time the document was far reaching; it is a very good one, and I think it is still very current. That is something we want to discuss with the Commission. We can certainly make that document available, as well as look at putting it on our website.

The other document is entitled "Child Friendly Environments". The document was also produced by the then Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and its publication date was 1981. Again, it is a very useful source document, especially for local government when they are doing their more detailed planning.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There has been a proposal for the mandatory completion of child impact statements in regard to all major development proposals in New South Wales. Does the Department have a policy on that proposal yet?

Mr GELLIBRAND: We do not have a specific policy on it. With major proposals that the Department of Planning is responsible for assessing, the Director General issues specific requirements. Those requirements are developed through consultation across Government, within government agencies: most generally, the Roads and Traffic Authority, the Department of Agriculture, Investment & Industry, and organisations such as that, but there is also consultation with the Department of Housing, the Department of Community Services, et cetera. The Director General's requirements seek to impose on proponents specific things that must be taken into account in developing their proposals. That is occurring, and that is quite an effective way of addressing a lot of the issues because we are getting the information from the experts.

Issues concerning young people are not always relevant with some of these major development applications. Many of the applications we are involved in assessing involve coalmines in remote locations, the construction of power lines, easements or windfarms. There may be very limited community in those areas and many of the impacts tend to be focused on environmental impacts—for example, water quality, air quality, and transport movement. Imposing a blanket requirement for child impact statements is not necessarily relevant to a large number of the applications that the Department would see. It would have relevance in some cases. If it were uniformly applied, it could involve another step for industry to respond to that is not always necessary and could impose costs on those developers unnecessarily.

There are good examples of where the impact on young people is taken into consideration. The Government recently made a decision to refuse a major sandmining project on the Central Coast because of the significant potential impact on a school. It was thought inappropriate that that development should happen in that location, very much because of its potential impacts on young people.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: On their health?

Mr GELLIBRAND: On their health, and on their ability to learn because of potential interruptions with the school environment.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: There have been some problems with children falling from windows in high-rise buildings. Has that been part of your consideration with regard to the impact of buildings on children?

Mr GELLIBRAND: The controls around buildings are incorporated into many different documents. There is the Building Code of Australia, and there are specific building codes within each of the councils. The Department's role is not as close as that of local government. I would have to take on notice the question about anything specific we have done over the last six months—which is probably the period you are thinking about in terms of children falling from windows. I am more than happy to do that.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: I can relate to the Somersby sandmining proposal: it is in my electorate of Gosford. How is the Department influencing new developments, particularly those in Sydney's new growth areas, to achieve positive built environment outcomes for children and young people?

Mr GELLIBRAND: The Department of Planning, as I mentioned in my introduction, does play a role in doing the detailed planning for some areas—not everywhere in New South Wales, but in some areas it does have that hands-on role. The area you mentioned is one of those areas. The northwest and southwest growth centres of Sydney are where the bulk of greenfields development will happen in Sydney over the next 25-odd years. In those areas the Department of Planning is now responsible for generating detailed precinct plans. It was done by the growth centres, which was part of the planning administration, but now the growth centres are purely within the overall Department of Planning.

In those areas we establish teams that look at the precinct plan. They generate the land-use plans, which show where different activities occur—such as roads, schools, health, open space, residential areas, et cetera. They do that in consultation with the relevant local council. They develop development control plans and contribution plans to ensure that those communities are provided with a high level of amenity. There is a high level of involvement with government agencies. The Growth Centres Commission is responsible for coordinating with the government agencies for the provision of the required public assets. That means working with the government agency. Say it is the Department of School Education. They have thresholds for the provision of schools, and we give them our data on what we think the growth profile is going to look like. There is a conversation about that, and then when they are preparing their total asset management plans, which are an important part of the process for bidding for Treasury funds, we ask them to put our requirements for schools into those plans. That then goes to Treasury, and the funding follows.

We have a very detailed involvement in the capital planning for the relevant state agencies and a very detailed involvement with local government. We sponsor people within the local council to help us with the local planning. We do not impose a plan on the council; we give them money to employ their own person, whom we deal with, and they help us with the exhibition of material.

There are some great examples in terms of the growth centres, which I could elaborate on if you want me to. Oran Park has recently been publicly opened; there are over 30 kilometres of cycleways planned there that are incorporated into open space areas; cultural facilities; and adjoining schools with houses. There are planned connections between Oran Park and Campbelltown. People say that is a terribly long distance, but it is a great distance to ride. A lot of close work was undertaken with the Department of Health in looking at obesity within the population and coming up with new residential areas that provide for a lot of active opportunities for people. We are also looking at making sure that we have enough land zoned for employment and industrial-type activities so that we can get people working closer to home.

That is a good example of the Department of Planning joining State Plan initiatives all the way through to local planning on the ground. There is an important initiative within the State Plan that is focused on getting jobs closer to home and targets have been given to the Department of Planning so that wherever possible we are trying to locate jobs close to these new residential areas.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child requires parties to the convention to ensure that a child is capable of forming his or her own views and has the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, and that the views of the child are given due weight. The Department may be helped along the way with the steering committee that is being set up with the Commission for Children and Young People, but does the Department see children and young people being a group of stakeholders perhaps separate from some other groups? You just spoke about new developments and

children and young people being involved in consideration of what sort of recreational areas there are, how they will fit together with work and home, and the types of facilities. This is particularly current for this Committee because of the Inquiry we just completed about children in the middle years. Can the Department look at children and young people being a separate group of stakeholders when it is considering some of the quite massive developments in new growth areas and so on?

Mr GELLIBRAND: The short answer is yes. I would like to address the detail in two ways, the first of which is the spatial way. The Metropolitan Strategy provides the overall direction for growth in Sydney. It has a longstanding policy position that 70 per cent of the growth will happen in established areas and 30 per cent in greenfield areas. Planning for the greenfield areas is quite interesting because we are talking about converting very large dairy farms into new suburbs, so when you go to consult there is actually no-one there. We still work with councils and we put things on exhibition but the people you are consulting are often the ones who are selling and moving out. They are not the people who are moving in, so there often is not an extant community to mine information from. We tend to get representations from the established stakeholders—they are the departments, they could be housing groups, transport for action groups and people like that. Often the specific community groups, one of which would be young people, do not exist. That is not to say that we do not try to consult, but it is quite different because rural lands are being converted into residential lands. We still have an extensive consultation regime that we follow.

In the established areas, where the bulk of development is going to occur, there is a much greater opportunity and perhaps a greater need for consultation with young people. That is where I think the Commission really comes into its own. As an organisation we could specifically consult with young people. I am not sure how effective it would be and if we were to do that I would question the fact that we might need also to consult ethnic groups and perhaps other age groups. I am not sure how effective we would be at doing that. With the established areas we are taking existing suburbs, and in some cases industrial land and vacant government land, and converting it into renewed urban areas, generally with a higher density. As these densities go up the imperative for young people to have places to recreate actively and passively in a safe fashion becomes more important because there are a lot more people around. In those cases we will have a community we can talk to, so we can consult.

If we consult broadly we will not always elicit responses from young people because it is a formal process and is perhaps not the domain of young people. We still consult schools and do things like that but it is up to the school to fire up the children to participate. I see a really important role for the Department and the Commission to work together so that when we are looking at urban renewal opportunities in an area we can ally our work with theirs and ask them to do some of that engagement for us and give us the general requirements of young people in an urban environment. Perhaps we can charge them or resource them—I would not commit to that this morning—but work with them so they can give us specific responses about what particular people in that community would like to see. We are talking about very detailed plans about how the urban environment is going to change; where new buildings will go and how they touch the ground; what is happening to the schools and whether they will be bigger or smaller and easier to get to; how people get to public transport areas, be they railway stations or strategic bus corridors, and how they do it safely and throughout the day; and how we can have active facilities for youth without creating a whole lot of problems for people who do not want to hear skateboard wheels and who do not want to see bicycles lying on the ground. There is a very important role for the Commission and the Department to make sure we are doing the right thing in the established areas of Sydney.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: With the development of planning documents with children in mind is there any thought being given to, or benefit in, the development of a state environment planning policy that would guide applicants or consent authorities in the planning and approvals process?

Mr GELLIBRAND: Initially we would see greater benefit in reviewing our existing policies against the *built4kids* document and any other document like that that the Commission has produced or is producing to see if and how they need to be changed to reflect the needs of young people. I think we would do that before we launched into a specific policy.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: I am thinking from a council's point of view. It is hard for the Commission to communicate effectively with all 152 councils and give them advice and suggestions about how they can incorporate the needs of children in their planning documents, whereas it might be easier if a council in its assessment process can simply reference an existing statewide set and say the applicant has to demonstrate compliance with these objectives.

Mr GELLIBRAND: It is possible to do that. The influencing of development is important but you need to ask yourself initially what sort of development you are seeking to impact on: is it commercial, retail, industrial, agricultural or mining? It is mainly the residential areas that we are talking about—

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: And possibly commercial.

Mr GELLIBRAND: —and how they relate to commercial areas and how people come in and out of those centres. There are provisions within the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act that require councils to look at community impacts. It is not about specifically pulling out requirements for particular groups, such as ethnic, aged or mobility, but those matters are requirements for councils to consider. Most councils will have development control plans covering all of their areas. I think initially we would work with the Commission to see what we could put out to councils. We maintain very close contact with councils. We have broadcast alerts and we have just finished a round of New South Wales when we would have personally met with about 70 per cent of the councils in the State—mayors, general managers and planning directors. We do that regularly, in fact at least twice a year. What you are talking about would be a very important agenda item. We could either be given the information by the Commission and do it on their behalf or we could take someone from the Commission and put them on that agenda. We have just finished one round so we will be out on the road again in six months time.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Going back to a matter that was raised earlier, let us look at this from the point of the lowest denominator. There are the Department of Planning, local government councils, the Commission for Children and Young People and the *built4kids* policy. How do you see the three of you working together? Do you see yourselves working with the councils and later on working with the Commission? I am intrigued about whether the three of you are getting together sufficiently to ensure that at least an agreement or synergies come from the three of you and an understanding of how to proceed.

Mr GELLIBRAND: As I said before, we can translate *built4kids* for local government. In terms of influencing each of the development control plans that local government would have, it is a much more substantial exercise—I do not know exactly what the number is but I think we could assume between 500 and 1,000 of those plans exist across New South Wales. Most councils have a number of them, and there are 150-odd councils. So influencing each of those development control plans would be a considerable task. The Department's direct role, and we are doing the detailed planning for particular areas in the growth centres or in urban renewal areas inside Sydney, would be to work directly with the councils and make sure that those requirements of the Commission are translated and we can do that.

I think your question relates more to all of the other areas of New South Wales where the Department is not as directly involved with what is going to happen in those locations. It is not clear to me yet how we will do that but I would have thought the committee that will participate with the Commission for Young People will give us the direction in that regard. We need to work out what is the best way of influencing local government so that the user requirements of young people are taken on board in terms of planning and development and then once we have worked out that we can work out the best means of actually distributing that information or that requirement across New South Wales. I am just not too sure what it is yet. We have not turned our minds to exactly how we are going to influence local government across New South Wales.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: Again, just taking it on a basic level, if you look at something like a new area being built and then you look at the issues involving kids and the environment being built for kids and then you have the issues of, say, vandalism or graffiti, is the Department, with local government and with the Commission, looking at more appropriate ways of building those areas—whether it is the type of paints to be used, the types of materials to be used—from a safety, anti-vandalism point of view so that there is at least a grassroots minimum requirement for that?

Mr GELLIBRAND: I would say no, definitely not at the moment, and I would say probably not moving forward as well. It might not be the answer that you want to hear, but it is mainly because of just the level of detail. At the State Government level we are absolutely committed to making sure that where we are providing for new communities and new people that they do have access to health, education, housing, and that they have got access to appropriately safe and useful recreational grounds. But then you start getting into the levels of detail. If we are talking about an open space area, for instance, we will make sure that those areas are identified in the land zone, we will make sure that there are arrangements for buying that land or paying for that

land in one way or another and we will also help councils and allow them to actually charge developers to provide basic services—be they a skateboard park or some open space basic levels of embellishment.

Then councils will get into the next level of detail, which is coming up with the specific designs, and most of the councils do that in consultation with the local community if they exist—they usually do in established areas—and then they set about scheduling that capital investment and then they do it, and quite often they lead off with a minimal investment and then a few years later they might go back and renew part of it and embellish it, and they look at all those very specific details about surfaces that you cannot paint on, surfaces that can withstand quite a lot of stress and damage, and they change quite frequently. So many of the councils will be going through their twentieth or thirtieth or their fortieth iteration of open space design and development and how it integrates and how it incorporates into the built environment.

The Department has long gone at that stage. So we make sure that the bones are there and that they are in place and we make provisions for councils to raise funds to do works. But after those things have been developed they always need to be renewed, as sure as night follows day, and there are changes in regulation which will require sometimes things to be renewed—say, hard surfaces are to be replaced with soft surfaces, et cetera. We are not as involved unless there is a specific government program and then sometimes we get involved in doing assessments of grants and the provision of funds and checking how the funds are expended. But we do not tend to get involved in those capital works; our grant programs relate more to planning activities rather than development activities.

The Hon. JOHN AJAKA: It just concerns me that when you have got 152 councils they are all going out separately looking at that grassroots level where maybe an indicator from either the Commission or from your Department indicates that as at this stage this would be the appropriate level to look at so they do not all go off on a different tangent.

Mr GELLIBRAND: I have worked in local government. I worked at Blacktown for six and a half years at that council—obviously a very large and very capable council. You certainly had people there that were focused on open space and community services and in doing so they had young people in mind. There was absolutely nothing clearer than that—the needs of the child from basically six weeks, which was the earliest they took kids into care, all the way through to the older adolescent in terms of moving from skateboard parks into actually built-form community centres that they could start occupying in terms of graduation into employment, and those people out there—and certainly in other councils—would be very expert and could probably teach a lot of us, certainly the Department, a thing or two.

CHAIR: Unfortunately we are out of time. Thank you very much. I think it is probable that we will send you some written questions and we would really appreciate it if you could respond to them.

Mr GELLIBRAND: My pleasure. Thank you.

(The witness withdrew)

TRACY GABRIELLE VENAGLIA, Coordinator, Community Development and Social Planning, Wollongong City Council, 42 Burelli Street, Wollongong, and

JENNIFER MARY THOMPSON, Divisional Manager, Community, Cultural and Library Services, Wollongong City Council, 42 Burelli Street, Wollongong, sworn and examined:

CHAIR: Thank you very much for appearing today. I am advised that you have been issued with a copy of the Committee's Terms of Reference and also a brochure entitled "Information for Witnesses appearing before Parliamentary Committees", is that correct?

Ms VENAGLIA: We received the questions and there was some information. The brochure could be making its way through our system—and the Terms of Reference.

CHAIR: As time is limited today the Committee may wish to send you additional questions in writing, the replies to which will form part of your evidence and be made public. Would you be happy to provide a written reply to any further questions?

Ms THOMPSON: Yes.

Ms VENAGLIA: Yes.

CHAIR: Have you got any supplementary comments or issues that you would like to explain to us?

Ms THOMPSON: We have had a bit of discussion around how we present the evidence. I guess one of the major discussions we have had around the whole issue around child-friendly cities is that we see the work that we do and the work that the State Government does and the work that a whole lot of other parts of this puzzle do needs to be interlinked and that that work sits within the broader culture of our community and attitudes around children, so it is a somewhat contested area. It is very complex. I think for us the issues around being clear about what is the role of local government, what is the role of the State, what is the role of the broader community, what is the role of private enterprise in terms of thinking about the built environment and urban planning and planning by the commercial sector as well, so it is a very complex and very layered arena that we are practicing in.

CHAIR: The Committee understands that Wollongong City Council worked with the New South Wales Commission for Children and Young People to develop child-friendly indicators for inclusion in its *built4kids* publication. Can you tell me how this relationship was initiated with the Commission?

Ms VENAGLIA: I think we had established a relationship prior to that just in terms of conversations around child-friendly cities. It is something Wollongong had become interested in and there was an invitation for a number of councils I think to trial some of the indicators and consider some of them in the work they were doing. So we were invited to be part of that, where we had some opportunities to trial the indicators and provided some feedback on those. So that was our primary involvement around the indicators in terms of the publication that resulted from those.

CHAIR: Before you did that work did you know of the Commission, its existence and the work that it engages in?

Ms VENAGLIA: Yes. I had worked in children services for a number of years so the Commission was quite—we were quite aware of some of the work they were doing.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Just following that up, what was the actual child-friendly project that you had? Did you actually have one project?

Ms VENAGLIA: We did. We looked at a Child-friendly Communities Project with the Commission, so that sat a little aside from *built4kids* although there was some connection, and that is where we actually undertook an audit of Wollongong City Council in terms of our processes, our planning, our policies and systems and looked at barriers and opportunities to create a child-friendly Wollongong, and we provided to the Commission reports around that. So it was looking at how we can, I guess, implement that in our council and hopefully from that there are some learnings for some other councils.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Was that the only one or are there other projects you are planning to work with the Commission to develop?

Ms VENAGLIA: Are we planning to?

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Yes.

Ms VENAGLIA: There is no formal arrangement to work with the Commission although from those projects we have established a relationship with the Commission, as we have with other local government authorities. Part of something that came from some of this work was a local government network that we established. It is a fairly informal network in terms of its terms of reference but it is where we bring together local governments that are interested in progressing the child-friendly initiative and share stories and best practice models, share some of the obstacles that we encounter in our work and ways that we can move forward around that. So that is an example of another arena that the Commission has had some involvement in, but as I say it is certainly a fairly informal arrangement but we think it is effective in terms of sharing some of those stories that councils are doing. Sometimes you need to tease out some of the issues that sit behind the documents in terms of how it really did work in practice or how you can move forward.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: Has the Commission been a help to you?

Ms VENAGLIA: Yes. They have certainly attended, participated at times, presented at other times. Councils have presented and hopefully from the Commission's point of view, I imagine, although they are better able to say how it has been for them, but it gives them some more grassroots information about what is happening down there. But again it is early days. I guess from our point of view with child-friendly it is, as Ms Thompson said, incredibly complex. I am sure from the other witnesses, it is a very complex area. It has to be balanced with so many priorities. We are optimistic about where it can head but we are also very realistic about the time it takes to make significant change. We all have very conflicting priorities but I think certainly we are optimistic in our own local government area about what the possibilities could be.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It sounds like your own experience in child services has been a very positive factor.

Ms VENAGLIA: In children services yes, but certainly when looking at service delivery it is quite different. I guess the sort of work we have been looking at is more around children as citizens and how children are in the city, as opposed to recipients of a service that we are providing, so that when we look at child-friendly we are not looking necessarily at child-specific areas but we are looking at children as they interact with their environment, and that is for us why the built environment inquiry that was held in 2006 was such a significant directional change for us in starting to consider what is this built form and as a Local Government Authority how do we impact on children and young people's lives because we know that as a community we were becoming risk averse. Children were less visible in our community, less able to independently move about our city and that, as we know, has long-term consequences for their development. So we started to look more broadly. So whilst I had a background in terms of child development and childhood education, I saw myself much more in terms of planning then and looking at children in a very different role than I would have in an educative role.

Ms MARIE ANDREWS: Continuing on from that, do you feel there would be merit in other councils adopting much the same attitude that Wollongong Council did in going into partnership with the Commission? Do you think arising out of this there could be some sort of a format that could be used with some flexibility across the State? Also, your project was one that was in an already established environment, was it not? It was not a green site at all.

Ms VENAGLIA: It was more around looking at full processes as opposed to a specific project—we certainly do some projects in spaces that are child-friendly and that was part of it, but a lot was looking more broadly at our policies because we do not have the luxury of just developing new space. Most of what we do is retrofitting what already exists so we are trying to work within an existing built form, to improve for children and young people, and of course the whole community. In terms of many of the issues that we were addressing for children and young people we will also then address for older people and people with disabilities because it is about moving safely and freely around the community. In terms of benefits, I think there are certainly some benefits of having resources and having some guidance and having stories shared. I do not know how you would

template creating a child-friendly city at a local government level because there are so many factors that play out around planning and around project delivery.

The obstacle that I might face may be very different to another community, a rural community, an inner-city community, but I think the greatest change can be affected at a higher planning and policy level, at a statutory level. They are the things that I think have very good impact on what we then do at a grassroots level because, when you look at priorities, compliance around statutory and policy level is always a priority. So if we can make change there, then that will have a great impact. An example might be that obviously the planning instruments we apply, things like the standards, the codes and standards we comply with, we know there are some wonderful things historically we have been able to provide for children in communities that have happened quite naturally in our spaces. The current codes and practices do not allow that to happen.

Regardless of how much academic literature sits out there about how great it is to swing from a tree, it would be very difficult for a local government authority to install it. They would not install any piece of equipment that was not compliant. So if there were reviews around standards and are we actually doing well at that level, that would impact down.

Ms THOMPSON: Reinforcing what Tracy is saying, I think there is a lot of merit in councils working out ways of working together, and I think having that leadership from the Commission for Children and Young People—but I guess it is also then about working out where local government sits and where, as Tracy was saying, the state responsibility sits, and the parameters for that work to happen in as well. I do think if you could get some consistency happening because for us, for example, in Wollongong—and most councils in Sydney are in the same boat—we have our LGA and we overlap or sit right next to Shellharbour and to all intents and purposes that is one city, so we work really cooperatively with Shellharbour as it happens and some of these agendas we have had as shared agendas, but foreseeably if you are looking at how your citizens interact with citizens in the neighbouring LGA the more you can have some level of consistency across the state the better I think that would be.

Ms VENAGLIA: I guess it is that bottom-up top-down approach if we are really going to bring about some good outcomes for children in terms of their city. We can do many things in one-off projects, where it might be about creating one space that we think, you know, is starting to look at a best practice model for considering children, and also then there is that policy level and quite strategic planning level. Together I think we will get good outcomes because some of the higher level stuff takes longer to realise, whereas it is good to also have some positive outcomes on projects with a time limit, they deliver a little quicker. Certainly for children to see that and for us to gain support locally around the initiative we have to also see things happening. So there needs to be a combination but when we look at even our strategic direction we are looking at a very long term. It is really not going to come about next year; it is going to be a long-term change.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: You spoke about an informal network that has been going for some time. How many councils are involved in that? Is it a mix of rural, regional and metropolitan councils?

Ms VENAGLIA: We have two ways. We have an e-group setup where people can register on that and share stories, ideas, issues or might put out a question for response around something. There is certainly—I actually do not know the number registered currently but I think there are around 38 and some of those would be from the same council. Then at our network meetings we can have up to 20 councils represented. Again if it is held in the city here we get a greater representation than if we hold one in Newcastle or Wollongong, and that is just the nature of it. What we have tried to do is move the location—we certainly have had rural people come in and out but there is a real cost impact for people to come to networks. So some of it is about coming along and then going back to your council but having some contacts to follow up with by phone or whatnot. We certainly do that interstate as well; while we do not get together we have made contacts interstate with a number of councils.

I do not know if any literature has been provided but there are a number of councils in Victoria that are moving forward around child-friendly cities. Some of that is because of the Communities for Children funding that has sort of initiated some of that direction, otherwise it has to be integrated into your already existing resources. There are not many councils, I think, that would be bringing on additional staff resources; they would be integrating into what currently happens. So New South Wales is a little different because there are a lot of councils that do not have Communities for Children money attached to them, so they are doing it within their existing social planning and strategic planning sort of areas. So it is different.

They come in and out. There is no requirement to attend on a regular basis. Some of it is about where it is located and some of it is about what is happening at that network: is it of interest? Some of our challenge is to sustain interest in that group, and that with any group or network can be difficult.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Have you had any projects across councils in your informal group? Have there been a couple of councils that have picked up a research project or anything like that?

Ms VENAGLIA: No, but that is an area that the network identified early on would be good and be positive. One of the areas we did some initial research in and we are contemplating its place, in terms of research, is that we know a lot of other States have things like the Walking to School Buses, which is really coordinated and well taken up. New South Wales does not seem to. Is there some capacity here for us to look at why we are different to other States? But again it is a case of having the resources to do some of the research. Certainly that is something I think the network would be interested in if we had the capacity to do that, and we would work with groups like the Commission or the Department of Local Government or the Ministry of Transport, whoever really is around the work that fits in with whatever their portfolio is.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: Is there any involvement in your network with the Local Government and Shires Association?

Ms VENAGLIA: Not formally. It is very new, the network. We have not wanted to layer—we have not put any formalities around it. It is really about a group of professionals who get together because this is an area they want to progress. Perhaps in time it could evolve into something else. There are interest groups through the LGSA—I think that is one of the groups. There are certainly some frameworks that we could fit it into over time but I mean some of this is about the individuals who are driving things.

The Hon. KAYEE GRIFFIN: But at this point they are not involved in your network?

Ms VENAGLIA: Not formally, no.

Reverend the Hon. FRED NILE: It is a grassroots thing.

Ms VENAGLIA: It is very grassroots. It is really about—I mean we initiated it through a process where you can send out an invite to every council in New South Wales and it lands in somebody's in tray through a system and that is how we did it, and we got a response from there. Now some councils have taken it up and others have not. That is really the degree, but it certainly has the capacity to grow and develop and become more coordinated and more strategic in the way it works—early days.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Congratulations to you and Wollongong council on your engagement in this issue. I was wondering, through your own experiences and through your discussions with the network forum, what you think is the greatest challenge for local government to better engage and implement planning for children?

Ms VENAGLIA: That is a very big question: the greatest challenge?

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: It is simply resourcing? Financial? Coordination?

Ms VENAGLIA: No, I think it is more than that.

Ms THOMPSON: It is partly resourcing. From my point of view local government has a huge number of competing priorities—and I guess I will put it on the table that I have been with council for two years. I have only been in local government for two years and prior to that I was with TAFE—so quite a different working experience. The thing that has struck me—when I joined council it was just after the Parry report had been released, so in terms of what infrastructure, sustainability of infrastructure, where you put the capital dollars in infrastructure and how you, as Tracy said, also do some retrofitting, so for us it is about how do you get in among these competing priorities of where the resources should go, how do you ensure that there is a place at the table for ensuring that a child-friendly environment is part of it.

Mr ROBERT FUROLO: Perhaps training for councils as well would be important?

Ms VENAGLIA: Yes, and I think it is so multifaceted because council is one of the players; we are a key player but we are not the only player. In terms of major developments now council is not the consenting authority on those—that is a factor. I mean there are so many issues. I do not have the answers in terms of how we change it. I think while we are a risk-averse community, while the community is not well educated in the fact that really our community is not this incredibly dangerous and scary place for children, there is work to be done around that.

The media is incredibly powerful in the stranger danger message. We all know that is not the greatest risk to our children. Parents are struggling with is it a good thing if I let my child walk to the bus stop? Am I negligent? So there is that layer and that whole culture around children and do we see them as capable and competent people who can make decisions? I think we have moved to not seeing that. The pendulum is swinging back. In terms of within council, there was no problem with me going to any level of council and people not getting what child-friendly meant, and what they wanted for children. That was never an issue.

It was the easiest thing for people to say "I get that" because everyone has been a child, has a child or knows a child so we all have such good life experience to draw back on what it was like and what elements we see are missing now for our children. So that is a really easy thing I found to advocate for. It is when you get down to the real layers of what can you include in your development control plans? What are the priorities? How do you balance up some of the other issues with these? I think you just have to navigate through them. As we have said if things are happening at this policy level that we can infiltrate it is easier for us to then be the advocate who can also say "Actually, you know, we kind of have to comply with that. This is a direction." So I do not know if there can be more.

Transport is a massive issue when you look at children and how they move around their city. In Wollongong public transport is not the preferred option of transport, neither is walking! There is a lot of work for us to do around that.

CHAIR: Unfortunately it is not a perfect science.

Ms VENAGLIA: It is not a perfect science and I guess it is about how we plan strategically? What do we want our cities to look like in 25 years? How do we get there? What can we actually change now? What do we have to put off? Timing is the thing. If you look at a template, timing is critical. No point trying to push something if the timing is wrong. It might be a great idea but if you have just had your development control plan done, it is unlikely that it is going to be put on as a priority project next week. You look at the cycle. And that is what we have found most effective for us to look at the cycle of when things are happening, and find a time. They are the sorts of things we share at our local government networks about timing. How do you get it in your management planning or your organisational planning? How do you build a relationship with your planners? I think it is a combination of policy even at a local government level and a combination of relationships, which is the way we work with everything. But certainly there is no fear around it and there is no massive obstacle to it. It is the how to?

CHAIR: We could carry on the discussion for quite a time but we have run out of time unfortunately. It is probable that you will get some further questions from the Committee and it would appreciate your answers.

Ms VENAGLIA: We should be optimistic about it but realistic. It is not just going to happen. In 10 years we could still sit at the table but we will have moved forward.

(The witnesses withdrew)

(The Committee adjourned at 12.23 p.m.)