

INQUIRY INTO PUBLIC DISTURBANCES AT MACQUARIE FIELDS

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Theme:

Summary



Macarthur Youth Commitment Inc. submission to the
Parliamentary Inquiry-
Public Disturbances at Macquarie Fields

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Summary

The parliamentary inquiry should consider the Macquarie Fields disturbance as symptomatic of concentrated socio economic disadvantage. The underlying issues that contributed to this incident are prevalent across all public housing estates in Campbelltown and exemplify issues impacting on youth across Macarthur. The problems are complex and multi faceted and as such require initiatives that are targeted, coordinated, collaborative and flexible in their delivery. The Parliamentary committee should develop responses that encompass the broader region, as focusing on one suburb/area will do little to alleviate poor socio-economic indicators and the emerging welfare mentality across the broader area. Further, appropriate resourcing and commitment for medium to long term delivery of services with any response is vital. Any suggested strategies should build on existing networks and complement services already in the region.

MYC has advocated throughout this submission for the extension of successful programs supporting young people in school to work transitions as a tool to address the underlying social issues. To this end supporting young people into a successful transition from school, to further education and training and employment will fundamentally attack the cycle of disadvantage and promote healthier communities.

1. Introduction

The social-cultural and economic issues impacting on residents of Macquarie Fields are complex and similar to those impacting other public housing suburbs in the Macarthur region and beyond, and like them, have no 'quick fix'. The development of these problems has been long term, including how public housing regions were planned and people settled there, and the inadequate provision or coordination of services.

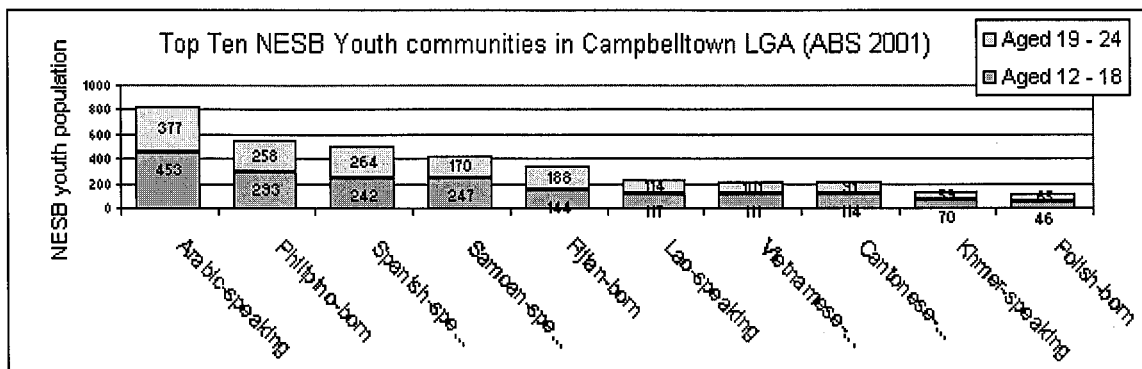
Whilst Macquarie Fields is a distinct area within the Macarthur region research and regional profiling does not provide enough depth to fully identify the population make-up, diversity and socio economic and cultural circumstance of said population. To this end Macarthur Youth Commitment's submission will provide information on the region generally with specific focus on youth and the broader social problems underlying the motivation of antisocial behaviours. Further this submission will draw upon the organisations extensive experience in working with youth in the region.

Whilst the Macquarie Fields unrest has been highlighted and is the subject of this Inquiry it is worth noting that a number of significantly serious incidents have happened in other public housing estates across the region that haven't received the same level and intensity of media coverage. Hence the same level of public concern and comment.

Long-term solutions are required, hence funding needs to be long term to enable development of trust from residents as many services are initially treated with a level of cynicism as they have a tendency to move in and out of high need areas as a result of short term funding cycles and/or trials and pilots.

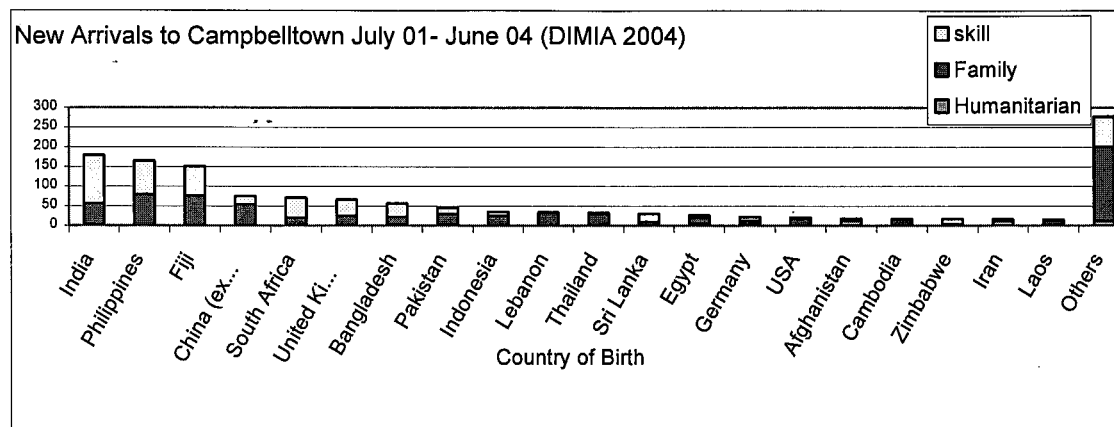
2. Young people in the Region

In 2001 the Macarthur region had 235,209 residents (up from 197,000 in 1991 and 215,800 in 1996) a 19.3% increase over a ten-year period (1991-2001). Significantly young peoples population grew by 13.9% (15-19yo) and 12.9% (20-24yo) over the same period. 12 to 24 year olds represented more than 19% of the population or 46,840 out of 235,209.



As can be seen from the aforementioned table the largest 3 groups of NESB amongst the young people of Campbelltown are Arabic, Philipino and Spanish. It is worthwhile noting that people from the various pacific island nations when counted collectively make up the second largest NESB group amongst Macarthur's young people.

Interestingly new arrivals into Campbelltown since 2001 have been made up of Indians, Philipino and Fijian with significant numbers from the sub-continent, China, South Africa and the United Kingdom. (See table below.)



3. Public Housing

It is worthwhile noting that Campbelltown has 5 Department of Housing (public) estates, Macquarie Fields, Minto, Airds, Claymore and Rosemeadow that have significant populations of disadvantaged people with high rates of unemployment, single parent families, health and substance abuse problems. Higher levels of crime, particularly property crime, are also symptomatic of these areas.

Within these estates unemployment is intergenerational with 2nd, 3rd and in some cases 4th generation of unemployed family members. This has entrenched unemployment as not the exception but the rule creating a welfare mentality that is entrenched within the psyche. This then has created behaviours that are barriers to the development of employability skills across many people living within these circumstances hence impacting on their ability to improve their socio-economic situation.

Whilst not all people in public housing have these attitudes the requirements to access public housing exempt all but the most disadvantaged in society consequently compounding the problems for young people living in these areas.

4. Macarthur's Young People and Education and Employment

Macarthur's young people (15-19yo) face an unemployment rate of approximately 16% across the region with about 11% of 20-24 year olds in the same predicament. This is further broken down by LGA with Campbelltown having about 17.9%, Camden 12% and Wollondilly 7.5% of 15-19 year olds unemployed. Further Macarthur's young people are more likely to attend TAFE than university and are more likely to not attend an educational institution as compared to the rest of NSW and Australia. Significantly the highest level of schooling completed among Macarthur youth, and the Macarthur population overall, was on average significantly below the figures for NSW and Australia.

School Retention and Attainment

We can only get a very approximate estimate of local school retention rates, due to confidentiality problems and bureaucratic obstacles, but it appears from comparing Macarthur HSC awards to SC awards two years previously that around 67% of Macarthur year 10 students have continued to complete year 12 in both 2001 and 2002. This is on the face of it in line with the NSW and national figures of 64% and 68% respectively (2001). However, these latter figures are in this context artificially low as they refer to all young people of year 12 age, not just (as in the Macarthur data) to those who completed year 10.

37.2% of 15-24 year olds and 29.0% of those aged 25 or more in Macarthur had completed year 12 or equivalent, compared to figures of 43.7% and 36.9% for NSW; 45.0% and 36.2% for Australia

Similarly, only 7.7% of all persons 15 and over in Macarthur had completed a degree or higher tertiary qualification, compared to 13.5% for NSW and 12.9% for Australia.

Therefore Macarthur's young people have significantly lower school education attainment and are less likely to obtain a university qualification and their employment prospects are lower as compared to the broader NSW and Australian population. If a young person has left school and obtain employment than they are slightly more likely to be employed in the retail trade industry, and considerably more likely to be employed in manufacturing, than is the case in NSW or Australia as a whole.

5. Macarthur's Households

Macarthur households are more likely to be made up of families (83.1%, as against 72.8% for NSW and 72.1% for Australia), and much more likely to be made up of lone parent households (14.9%, as against 3.8% for NSW and 3.9% for Australia). By contrast, group households, although around a quarter of NSW and Australian households, are almost completely absent in Macarthur. In Macarthur, two-parent and one-parent families predominate, and couple-only families are well down, by comparison to NSW and Australia. The median household size in Macarthur in 2001 was 3.1, as against 2.6 for NSW and Australia.

Young people have a 25% chance of being on some form of Centrelink support with the Macarthur region having one of the highest incidents of breaches of any region in Australia (National Welfare Rights Network, 24/3/2003). The Outer South Western Sydney region had slightly higher home ownership rates (68.5% of residents were home owners or buyers) than the NSW average in 2001 (64.4%). This probably reflects lower median housing prices in the region.

Around 38.1% of Outer South Western Sydney renters were in public housing (August 2001), which is considerably higher than the NSW average (17.7%). There was a particularly high concentration in the Campbelltown LGA (46.3%).

6. Macarthur's Typical Young Person

Hence a young person from Macarthur as compared to Australia is more likely to:

1. Come from a larger family or single parent family with a significant probability of being culturally or linguistically diverse
2. Have lower household taxable income
3. More than twice as likely to come from public housing than the other young people in NSW
4. Less likely to complete high school
5. Have parent/s that have lower formal education or training qualifications
6. Less likely to obtain employment
7. If they do obtain employment have fewer options on types of employment and have almost a 50% chance of working outside the area
8. Less likely to attend university or obtain formal education or vocational qualifications
9. Less access to efficient public transport
10. About 25% chance of receiving some form of Centrelink support with the likelihood of a breach being higher than almost any area in Australia

7. Current Initiatives

Whilst MYC is not presuming to forecast the Inquiry's final response and recommendations it would be safe to assume that specific recommendations targeting supporting at risk young people to more successful educational and employment outcomes will be evident in the final report. To this end significant bodies of research here and abroad consistently show that to break the welfare cycle is to alleviate the socio-economic disadvantage by the provision of initiatives that aims to promote positive participation in the community through obtaining employment and educational outcomes commiserate with the broader community.

Across Macarthur, including in Macquarie Fields there is a number of programs that have been operating that specifically target breaking the welfare cycle through mentoring, medium and intensive levels of one on one support. The following are examples of region wide programs that have been identified as providing significant outcomes for the region's young people:

Transition Brokers Program

MYC initiated the transition broker project in Macarthur and supported the establishment of its project management through a partnership with Centrelink. The program has five transition brokers in fourteen schools across the Macarthur region. The brokers have been working in the schools since the beginning of term four 2003 and have supported more than 800 students classified "at risk". The support consists of encouraging students to stay on at school, assistance to move into further training or employment, and referral to other appropriate services as needed with required follow up at specified time points. Macarthur Youth Commitment Inc provides the Transition Brokers program.

MYC Transition Broker Client Outcomes as at June 30th 2005

	School	School & P/T Employ.	Apprentice /Trainee	TAFE	F/T Employ.	P/t Employ.	Not Employ.	Total
Males	167 32.4%	66 12.8%	94 18.3%	86 16.7%	62 12.1%	24 4.6%	16 3.1%	515 100%
Females	99 34.7%	31 10.9%	16 5.6%	58 20.4%	27 9.5%	32 11.2%	22 7.7%	285 100%
Total	266 33.3%	97 12.1%	110 13.75%	144 18%	89 11.1%	56 7%	38 4.75%	800 100%

NB. The TB program supports significant numbers of young people from Macquarie Fields area.

Links to Learning

Links to Learning helps young people who have left school early or who are at risk of leaving school early, and gives them a range of opportunities to remain in or re-enter mainstream

education and training. This program is provided by 3 services in Macarthur but only for a limited number of the regions schools. The following organisations provide the Links to Learning program in Macarthur: Mission Australia's SW Sydney Youth Services, Uniting Care Burnside and Macarthur Diversity Services.

Job Placement, Employment and Training

The Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) program is aimed at assisting students and unemployed young people aged 15-21 years (with priority to be given to those aged 15 to 19), who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Mission Australia SW Sydney Youth Services provide JPET services in Macarthur.

Jobs Pathway Programme

The Jobs Pathway Programme (JPP) helps at risk young people make the transition through school and from school to further education, training or employment. This program is being reshaped into Youth Pathways from 2006, targeting the most highly at risk young people. Mission Australia SW Sydney Youth Services provide JPP services in Macarthur.

Mentoring Programs

MYC fostered the introduction of youth mentoring initiatives in the region via a youth mentoring network group that has met regularly since 2001. MYC has helped liaise with *TAFE NSW - SWSI Outreach* in the provision of training for mentors, and worked to support the development of a range of mentoring programs that complement each other. We have encouraged joint marketing of programs, recruitment of mentors, provided resources to mentors and coordinators, and helped make strategic connections that has provided mentors via strategic partnerships with UWS, Lend Lease and Centrelink with *Plan-it Youth* mentoring program. This program is a DET school based program that is very worthwhile.

Maximising Potential in Macarthur (MPM) aims to improve the capacity of the Macarthur region to create sustainable social change and leadership aptitude for young people. MPM offers Macarthur youth (16-25 yrs) with the opportunity to explore 10 Life Principles (MAXIMIZERS) aimed at maximizing their potential, particularly with respect to personal leadership and related life directions. MPM draws on leaders within the community, business, industry, schools, TAFE and university to work as 'one-on-one' coaches with Macarthur's young people. To date, 46 community representatives have been trained to coach 66 young people in leadership and to work with the MPM participants to facilitate civic leadership projects within the Macarthur Community.

The *Breakthrough Youth Employment* mentoring program targets young people post school, assisting them with a business mentor to get the vocational training or employment outcomes they seek. MYC is trying to assist Breakthrough to expand from its Liverpool base into Campbelltown, and has been seeking FACS funding to do so.

8. Service Coordination

Many of the programs across the region were established without any real coordination subsequently the best value for the service dollar was not achieved. Over recent years organisations and government agencies have been working towards coordinating programs across the region that has resulted in a number of coordination mechanisms being developed and implemented. This has included:

- Macarthur Youth Commitment Inc.
- Macarthur Youth Service Network – MYC Coordinator chairs in 2004-2006
- Macarthur Youth Commitment Consultative Network
- Macarthur Apprenticeship Recruitment Strategy (MARS) steering committee

- Macarthur Community Forum; Community services managers network
- Macarthur Youth Mentoring Network
- Live 'N' Learn foundation re campus and youth employment mentoring
- Partners In Employment (PIE) is a strategic network to enhance collaboration across Macarthur in relation to the delivery of employment, education and training opportunities. The focus is on the more highly disadvantaged areas particularly around Macarthur's five public housing estates, being Airs, Claymore, Minto, Macquarie Fields and Rosemeadow.
- Macarthur and Campbelltown VET in Schools Committee (MACVETISC) with membership from DET, industry, MWLP, Special Education, Schools and TAFE.
- GROW Macarthur committee

To further support the coordination process regional research was and is required to ensure programs are developed and implemented that compliment and reduce competition between services, both government and non-government. Macarthur Youth Commitment Research undertaken to date includes:

- 2001 and 2003 Macarthur Environmental Scans
- Development of the Macarthur Youth Services Audit
- Employer Research 2004

Proposed research for 2005-6 includes:

- Industry and Skills Audit
- Youth Aspirations Survey
- Transition Broker Program Evaluation

- NAPCAN (National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect)/MYC- Developing a children and young persons friendly community resource

Resources developed to date include:

- Environmental Scans
- Macarthur Youth Services Directory
- Macarthur Training and Employment Passport (currently being used as a template and adopted across a number of regions in NSW and Australia)

Macarthur Youth Commitment (Inc.) also hosted the first Macarthur Youth Summit (MYS) in July of this year. The Summit's primary aims included:

- Identifying from young people and service providers issues that are impacting on young people in the region
- Possible suggested strategies
- Production of an MYS Outcomes document that will directly influence the coordination of planning processes and to assist all providers (govt. and non-govt.) in the focusing and targeting of their services

NB. The Macarthur Youth Summit Outcomes report and other identified resources are available from Macarthur Youth Commitment upon request.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) also conducted the Better Connections Better Outcomes workshop in the region in August that specifically targets the promotion of collaborative and coordinated planning and delivery processes in the region.

9. Recommendations

Macarthur Youth Commitment recommends:

1. The NSW Government work with existing Macarthur networks inclusive of local and federal governments to further develop and implement appropriate coordination mechanisms and structures for service delivery in the region
2. The NSW Government commission research to fully profile the Macquarie Fields area and other housing commission estates across Campbelltown
3. The NSW Government liaise with existing regional networks and review current regional research prior to the establishment of any new initiatives to reduce the possibility of duplication of services
4. The NSW Government collaborate with and resource if required existing programs and services to ensure that successful programs are achieving appropriate outcomes and are servicing the appropriate clients
5. The NSW Government ensure that any new initiatives and amendments to existing programs are funded appropriately to optimise service delivery and outcomes over sustained periods of time