

# Shopping for a Solution



An evaluation of Western Sydney shopping centre youth projects  
**Full Report**



Sheree Turner

© Youth Action Policy Association 2002

## **Youth Action Policy Association**

Suite 405, Level 4  
410 Elizabeth St., Surry Hills  
NSW 2010

Ph: 02 9281 2344  
Fax: 02 9211 2037  
Email: [info@yapa.org.au](mailto:info@yapa.org.au)

Additional copies of this report can be down loaded free from [www.yapa.org.au](http://www.yapa.org.au) or ordered from the above address at a cost of \$15 for members and \$30 for non-members.

A Summary Report can be downloaded free from [www.yapa.org.au](http://www.yapa.org.au) or contact YAPA to order.

### Cataloguing in Publication data

Turner, Sheree, 1958- .  
Shopping for a solution - full report : an evaluation of  
Western Sydney shopping centre youth projects.

Bibliography.  
ISBN 0 9580895 0 7.

1. Youth - Services for - New South Wales - Western Sydney.
  2. Shopping centers - New South Wales - Western Sydney - Planning.
  3. Shopping malls - New South Wales - Western Sydney - Planning.
- I. Youth Action & Policy Association (N. S.W.). II. Title.

362.7083099441

# Acknowledgments

Sheree wishes to gratefully acknowledge the assistance provided by the following individuals. In particular she would like to thank:

The members of the evaluation steering committee, Matt Roberts, Kristy Delaney and Dean Hart, for their feedback. A special thank you to Matt for his ideas and support.

The young people who took time out to participate in the evaluation.

All those people who attended consultations for the evaluation: Ross Beaton, Erich Weller and Melissa Haigh from Penrith; Lisa Hernando and David Smith from Blacktown; Rick Cooper, Karina Moore, John Zeitoune, Todd Bryant, Paula Chegwiddden, Maria Coelho and Dean Hart from Wetherill Park; Grant Howard and Tania DiCostanzo from Parramatta and Keith Glidden and Matthew Tickner from Castle Hill.

Margaret Leslie for assistance with consultations. Keith Gilbert for assistance with planning, ideas and consultations.

Thank you also to Melanie Pinnington, Angela Tsoukatos, Jeni Pollard, Perry Anderson, Lino Caccavo, Vanessa D'Souza, Robert Kenke and Juleen McTaggart for information and assistance.

Thanks to Nick Manning for proofreading the report.

Finally thank you to family and friends who put up with my absenteeism and stress and provided patience and support: Steve, Josh, Georgie, Ange, Esme, Julie and Sarah.



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Checklist: Key points for success of public space youth projects.....	7
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>13</b>
1.1 The Shopping Centre and Young People.....	13
1.2 The Background to this Evaluation .....	14
1.3 The Scope of this Evaluation .....	15
1.4 The Content of this Evaluation Report.....	15
1.5 A Brief Outline of the Context .....	16
<b>2 Project Profiles</b> .....	<b>19</b>
2.1 Introduction .....	19
2.2 The Social Belonging Project (Penrith Plaza and Fusion Australia).....	19
2.3 Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC) .....	27
2.4 The Equal Space Project .....	32
2.5 Parramatta CBD Project .....	40
2.6 Castle Hill.....	44
<b>3 Methodology</b> .....	<b>49</b>
3.1 Key Youth Work Contacts .....	49
3.2 Key Stakeholder Consultations.....	49
3.2.1. The Social Belonging Project.....	50
3.2.2 Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee.....	50
3.2.3 Equal Space Project.....	50
3.2.4 Parramatta CBD Project .....	50
3.2.5 Castle Hill.....	51
3.3 Consultations with young people .....	51
3.4 Literature Review and Data Collection .....	52
3.5 Conclusion .....	52
<b>4 The Broader Context</b> .....	<b>53</b>
4.1 Western Sydney .....	53
4.2 Young People.....	54
4.3 The Shopping Centre: A Privately-Owned Public Space .....	55
4.4 Law and Order.....	56
4.5 Policing of Privately-owned Public Spaces .....	57
4.6 Rights and Responsibilities .....	58
4.7 Conclusion .....	59

<b>5 Findings and Discussion:</b> .....	<b>60</b>
5.1 Introduction .....	61
5.2 Key Issues and Themes .....	63
5.3 Why address youth issues in shopping centres? A look at stakeholder perspectives, issues and opportunities .....	63
5.3.1 Centre Management.....	63
5.3.2 Youth Workers and Youth Services .....	64
5.3.3 Security Officers .....	66
5.3.4 Young People.....	66
5.3.5 Other Community Members.....	67
5.3.6 Stakeholders with Different Interests.....	67
5.4 Stakeholder Relations and Communication .....	69
5.4.1 Centre Management and the Youth Service and Worker .....	69
5.4.2 Young People and Security Officers.....	72
5.4.3 Youth Workers and Services, and Young People .....	74
5.5 Relationships Between all Stakeholders.....	75
5.6 The Capacities of the Partners.....	75
<b>6 Towards best practice in shopping centre youth projects .....</b>	<b>77</b>
6.1 Introduction .....	77
6.2 Relationships.....	77
6.3 Communication .....	78
6.4 Young People are Stakeholders.....	79
6.5 Goals .....	80
6.6 Capacity Building.....	80
6.6 A Model for Project Planning and Implementation .....	81
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>89</b>

# Executive Summary

## The Aim of the Evaluation

The overall aim of this evaluation is to profile a number of Western Sydney youth projects that aimed to improve the inclusion of young people in shopping centres, and to evaluate how well these projects operated.

## The Projects

The projects are (shopping centre owners in brackets):

- The Social Belonging Project at Penrith Plaza (Lend Lease);
- The Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC) at Westpoint Blacktown (Queensland Investment Corporation - QIC);
- The Equal Space Project at Stockland Wetherill Park (Stockland);
- The Parramatta CBD Project near Parramatta Westfield (Westfield); and
- The Castle Hill Project at Castle Towers (QIC).

These projects were associated with centres owned by the largest centre management/ownership groups in Western Sydney: Westfield having the largest presence in Western Sydney with four centres, followed by Lend Lease with three centres, Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC) with two centres and Stockland which has three smaller centres.

## Summary of the Projects

### 1. Social Belonging

The Social Belonging Project was a partnership between Penrith Plaza and Fusion Australia. It began in mid -1996 and finished in late 1999.

The main aims of the project were:

- To increase youth work in the CBD;
- To raise young people's issues with the community;
- To provide contact for young people to youth agencies and services; and
- To advocate on behalf of young peoples issues in public space.

The project involved:

- Streetwork, events and activities;
- Referral and support for young people;
- Stakeholder contact; and
- Security training.

The main achievements of the project were:

- more youth workers became involved in streetwork around the Plaza and the levels of streetwork to young people increased;
- young people who did not normally access youth services were able to, because youth workers made contact with these young people on the street;
- activities such as forum theatre helped to educate the community about young people's issues and to raise the positive profile of young people;
- activities and events benefited young people directly, through the enhancement of their skills and self esteem;
- a number of these activities and events took place at the Plaza; the practice of inclusion encouraged participation and allowed young people to feel a sense of belonging;

- the relationship between centre management and Fusion saw a degree of engagement and the growth of mutual understanding, with parties gaining some insight into each other's styles and perspectives;
- the partnership between Fusion and the Plaza had an impact at statewide and national levels including on YAPA and the Shopping Centre Council of Australia;
- the profile for the youth services involved was raised and centre management gained a different view of youth services;
- the youth services gained confidence in working with different stakeholders, which led to the possibility of exploring other valuable partnerships and attracting resources; and
- funding was acquired to set up a CBD youth facility in Penrith.

The following proposed project strategies were never addressed:

- to build a forum of young people, Plaza management and staff, local businesses and youth workers to enable the parties to work on long term matters and issues as they arose; and
- in cooperation with Plaza staff, young people and other youth services, develop training options for security personnel that would help them deal effectively and appropriately with young people.

The project difficulties were inherently related to:

- the lack of management structure for the project;
- a lack of ongoing communication;
- no formal agreements;
- changes to personnel; and
- changes to the nature of Fusion's youth service.

## **2. Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee**

The Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee Project was a young people's participation project. The key participants in the project were Westpoint Blacktown centre management, Blacktown City Council Community/Youth Planner and a group of young people. The Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC) was established in April 2000 and ceased operation in September 2001.

The main aims of the project were:

- to improve communication between young people and centre management;
- to promote the involvement of stakeholders;
- to create a more harmonious environment; and
- to make Westpoint more profitable.

The project involved:

- setting up the Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC);
- consultations; and
- education through the media and as arising from PSYC meetings.

The main achievements of the project were:

- relationships between stakeholders improved due to the work of the PSYC;
- the PSYC acted as a forum for communication over the duration of the project;
- Westpoint, its security firm and the young people on the PSYC gained a greater understanding of each other's needs and viewpoints;
- banning decreased - a reduction in punitive interventions on behalf of the security officers (security guards), as well as satisfaction reported by Committee members and retailers; and
- young people had some involvement in Westpoint's redevelopment, through informal consultations held at Westpoint and through a consultation with Blacktown Council's Youth Committee.

The project difficulties were:

- the PSYC did not involve more marginalised young people (it is often these young people who are most affected by the policies and practices of a shopping centre); and
- the young people who were involved stressed the dull nature of the meetings and their frustration at having ideas about things to do but feeling like they were unable to implement these ideas.

### **3. Equal Space**

Equal Space was a partnership project between Parks Community Network, Stockland Wetherill Park, Fairfield City Council, Wetherill Park Library, the Community Relations Commission for a Multicultural NSW (CRC) and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC). The project was launched in December 1998 and a worker employed in January 1999. The worker left the project in November 1999 and a project evaluation was undertaken in late 2000, with the project finishing in late 2001.

The overall aim of the project was:

- to work together to develop more constructive relationships between stakeholders and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB).

The project involved:

- pilot programs and activities for young people in and around Stockland Mall Shopping Centre, focusing on young people from NESB. The programs and activities included: a three on three basketball competition, two dance parties, self defence classes for young women, a video production, aerosol art, invisible theatre and life skills workshops;
- setting up and running a computer technology centre at the Wetherill Park Library;
- operating a tuition program at the Wetherill Park Library, again with a focus on young people from NESB;
- exploring the roles, policies and procedures of centre security; and
- setting up and operating a youth work office on site (this became part of the project but was not an original aim).

The main achievements of the project were:

- the activities and programs organised throughout the project;
- the work done by the sub-committee on the security policy and procedures;
- the setting up and operation of the technology centre; and
- the tuition program (which ran in conjunction with the technology centre).

Project difficulties included:

- conflicts which arose during project activities that were not dealt with effectively at the time;
- overall project management and communication;
- it was a complex project involving many stakeholders with different expectations, many of whom were not clear about the project objectives; and
- the complex role of the youth worker, particularly in regards to the management of the on-site office.

#### **4. Parramatta CBD Project**

The Parramatta CBD Project was one of the first attempts by a youth service interagency to work on young people's issues in relation to privately-owned public space. Initially, the project involved the Parramatta Youth Project working with the Parramatta Youth Services Network to provide outreach to young people in and around Westfield Parramatta. The result of this work was the funding of the STREETZ research.

The main aim of the project was:

- to better understand issues for young people in Parramatta CBD.

The project involved:

- outreach streetwork to young people in and around Westfield;
- the formation of the STREETZ working party (a sub-committee of Parramatta Youth Services Network), and
- the STREETZ research, which focused primarily on issues and concerns for young people in their use of public space in the Parramatta CBD.

The achievements of the project were:

- the initial outreach streetwork provided to young people (short lived);
- the connection between the initial work done with young people and the funding of the STREETZ research;
- the working partnerships developed between services across Parramatta;
- the formation of the STREETZ sub-committee; and
- the ongoing work of this committee in terms of implementing the priority recommendations from the STREETZ research.

Project difficulties included:

- a lack of capacity to include the necessary stakeholders at the time and the consequent lack of a relationship between Westfield management and Parramatta Youth Project;
- a lack of information about the issues of privately-owned public space and a lack of knowledge and information about projects to address the issues;
- lack of clear articulation of objectives - "just wanting to do something"; and
- the difficulties of engaging young people who were homeless in project work.

## 5. Castle Hill

The Castle Hill project was a partnership between Castle Towers and The Hills District Youth Service. Castle Towers provided the youth service with a youth facility and funding for a part time Outreach Youth Worker to work at Castle Towers Shopping Centre.

The main aims of the project were:

- to run joint projects and work on youth related issues;
- to consult with young people about their use of the shopping centre;
- to promote the centre as a safe place;
- to develop security policies; and
- to create employment opportunities for young people.

The project involved:

- the employment of a part-time Outreach Youth Worker working in the shopping centre with young people three afternoons per week; and
- referral of young people to the other services provided by Hills District Youth Service.

The achievements of the project were:

- young people were coming into contact with the Outreach Youth Worker at Castle Towers - and were able to be linked into the service;
- the securing of a youth facility - whether it was part of the project or not, it was one of the reasons for the development of the relationship;
- the project was the beginning of breaking down barriers between centre management and young people; and
- centre management at the time believed that there was greater awareness by security in their interactions with young people.

Project difficulties included:

- changes of personnel, initially at HDYS and then at Castle Towers; this was seen as the greatest difficulty as it impacted on the partnership;
- a lack of capacity and support from both the key stakeholder organisations;
- little planning, no clear written objectives and a lack of written documentation;
- new workers were not handed on the information needed to carry the project through;
- different ideas of new personnel in relationship to the project - no perceived need for the project; and
- the relationship between the new manager and the worker was not developed; however, the worker continued to provide service at Castle Towers.

# Checklist

## Key points for success of public space projects

An analysis of the five projects reveals seven key points that all projects need to address. These key points focus on the collaboration between youth services and shopping centres. By following these points projects will have a much better chance of achieving their objectives.

- Clear, understood project goal/s and an understanding of what this involves for each of the stakeholders.
- Involve all the stakeholders.
- Key stakeholders need to spend time on developing and maintaining working relationships.
- Agreements need to be made at an organisational level - these agreements should be formalised and in writing.
- Identify the capacity of the stakeholders and work at building and sharing capacity.
- Develop comprehensive communication structures and acceptable communication forms which are inclusive of young people.
- Review processes and outcomes and be aware that these two are integrally related. The way the project is managed will have as much effect on the outcomes of the project as what happens within the project itself.



# Recommendations

## General

### 1. Operation of shopping centre projects

*Development of relationships between project stakeholders needs to be given priority in the planning of and at the commencement of projects. Funding bodies need to allow for this. The early stages of a project should include developing and documenting clearly agreed objectives and communication processes, including mechanisms for dealing with tensions between stakeholders. These objectives and processes should be collated into a document that all partners sign and are issued copies of.*

#### **Background**

Establishing and maintaining good communication between the diversity of stakeholders in shopping centre youth projects is very important. Staff changes and lack of organisational rather than individual commitment to projects result in project difficulties. Documenting project agreements and ensuring that they are made with the parent bodies of projects rather than just with individuals is vital.

### 2. A Youth Shopping Centre Protocol

*That YAPA, the Shopping Centre Council of Australia, Planning NSW, Local Government and Shires Associations, NSW Police Service, management of shopping centres, centre retailers and their representatives, centre security firms, youth services and young people work together to develop a shopping centre protocol that focuses on the relationships between the key stakeholders involved in young people's use of shopping centres. These protocols should be developed by working closely with centres in Western Sydney.*

#### **Background**

The evaluation of the five projects raised many issues about the relationships between stakeholders. Development of a protocol similar to that operating at the Myer Centre in Brisbane (as mentioned in chapter 4) would provide a set of guidelines and processes for stakeholders to address youth shopping centre relations. A significant part of the protocol would focus on the interactions between young people and security officers. The protocol will clarify the role of security officers in relation to other stakeholders and encourage security officers to adopt a customer service focus when dealing with young people.

## Stakeholder recommendations

### 3. Centre managers

*That shopping centre managers closely monitor the approach of centre security to young people, including the maintenance of written records of banning and serious incidents and the provision of complaint mechanisms accessible to young people.*

*That shopping centre managers receive training in relation to working proactively with young people and addressing youth issues in shopping centres.*

*That the Property Council of Australia incorporate such training into their training programs for centre and marketing managers in co-operation with relevant stakeholder groups such as YAPA.*

#### **Background**

Change in centre management impacted significantly on at least two of the projects. Another project failed to build any relationship with management. If all management received training in best practice approaches to youth management in centres changes in management personnel would have far less impact on projects. There would also be the potential for youth centre relationships to improve across a far wider range of centres.

### 4. Local government

*That the Department of Local Government require local councils to ensure the involvement of young people in the design, development, and management of public and private community space as a necessary requirement in social planning processes and relevant development control plans.*

*That the Department of Local Government work proactively with YAPA and industry groups such as Shopping Centre Council of Australia and the Australian Security Industry Association to ensure that young people are involved in the design, development, and management of public and private community space.*

#### **Background**

Local government was involved in the initial stages of three of the five projects. In two of the projects there was some ongoing involvement. Local government could do more in the area of addressing the inclusion of young people in shopping centres and other community space. Also councils through planning mechanisms and development application processes can do much to improve the interface of young people with public space such as shopping centres by ensuring appropriate design and management practices are followed.

## 5. Security officer training

*That the NSW Government in partnership with YAPA and industry groups such as the Shopping Centre Council of Australia and the Australian Security Industry Association work to introduce VETAB (Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board) accredited training as the base level training required to hold the necessary license to work in the security industry in NSW. This accredited training would include working with and managing young people in public and private space.*

### **Background**

Three of the projects sought to work with security. Only one was able to build a relationship and even this was difficult. Also during the research for the evaluation a number of incidents of inappropriate and unhelpful behaviour of security officers in relation to young people were identified. Improving the training and professionalism of security officers has the potential to contribute significantly to improving youth - security relationships and help security see the benefits of working with youth services.

## 6. Youth sector

*That YAPA work with the NSW Community Services and Health Industry Training Advisory Body as part of the development of the next Community Services Training Package to expand the core competencies of youth work courses to include such skills as working successfully with a range of stakeholders, such as centre managers and security. This competency should involve youth workers being able to balance their advocacy role with the need to build partnerships with diverse stakeholders.*

### **Background**

The evaluation project identified a need for youth workers to balance their advocacy role with partnership building. Youth work increasingly involves the development of strategic partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders such as shopping centres. One project failed to develop a relationship with centre management due in part to youth worker skill issues. Targeted training would assist youth workers to effectively undertake this partnership building role.



# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The Shopping Centre and Young People

Over the last 25 years many regions across Australia have seen an increase in urbanisation and population growth and a decrease in unregulated public space. This has been accompanied by a growth in privately-owned public space. The modern shopping complex has replaced the town centre and main street strip shopping. In many areas of Western Sydney the shopping street has never existed. At the same time there has been a decline in local services and facilities, and affordable, accessible public recreational space is limited.

Young people view shopping centres as desirable and legitimate places to congregate. They tend to use these spaces for more than shopping. 'Hanging out' with friends - socialising - is a popular activity for most young people, which is an important part of growing up.

Developmentally, adolescence is a period of transition, the transition from childhood to adulthood. This transition involves puberty and changing body image, an increase in the importance of peer relationships, questions of sexuality and the formation of an individual identity. "One of the ways that young people respond to these changes is to seek space to be with friends or to be alone" (Roberts 1999:16)

Shopping centres have been successful at marketing themselves to the public in general. Young people are no exception and many view shopping centres as attractive places to be, for a variety of reasons. Firstly young people are able to be with friends and to express themselves away from the direct control of parents. Shopping centres also offer young people entertainment opportunities and access to important services. Young people see them as relatively safe and at the same time as being places where things happen. (Pearce 1997:38)

It has been well documented that young people's use of shopping centres has been seen as problematic for other users and for the owners and managers of these spaces. Shoppers report being intimidated, retailers raise concerns about losing business, the media reports negative incidents involving young people and owners and managers are left with a decision about how to respond.

The types of responses have varied and sometimes a combination of responses employed, however responses can be typified as those which:

- Discourage young people from using the space;
- Actively move unwanted people on;
- Increase surveillance;
- Design environments so as to enhance safety and lawful behaviour; or
- Acknowledge young people as legitimate users of the space.

(Pearce 1997: 46, endnote 60)

Just as managers, retailers and security officers have an interest in responding to young people, so too do youth workers and the youth sector. As advocates for young

people, youth workers are aware of the problems and issues for young people using these spaces, and therein lies the need for youth workers to respond.

This evaluation has been undertaken in order to be able to suggest to stakeholders more effective means for including young people in the community that is the shopping centre. Five specific projects which aimed to improve the inclusion of young people in shopping centres have been assessed, and the focus of the report is on how well these projects operated. The report also reflects on the types of conflicts that have arisen and suggests ways for the differences between the managers of privately-owned public space and some groups of young people to be lessened.

## **1.2 The Background to this Evaluation**

The Youth Action and Policy Association (YAPA) is the peak non-government organisation for young people and the youth sector in NSW. YAPA strives to achieve social justice for young people, including the provision of appropriate services for young people.

In 1998 YAPA received funding from the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme (WSAAS) - Department of Urban Affairs and Planning - for three years, for the Western Sydney Public Space Project. The project covers eleven local government areas of Western Sydney: Auburn, Bankstown, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith.

The overall aims of the Public Space Project are to:

- Facilitate a change in the way stakeholders deal with young people's use of public space in Western Sydney; and
- To increase young people's participation in the planning of public space areas in order to reduce the levels of conflict between young people, centre management and other users of that space.

The objectives of the public space project are to:

- Inform stakeholders about how to work with and plan for the needs of young people in planning and design processes; and
- To provide training to stakeholders in order to improve the inclusion of young people's needs in planning for areas of public space.

Note: In this context stakeholders include all those people involved in projects: managers, youth workers and services, security officers, retailers and community members, including young people.

An Advisory Board was established to provide strategic advice and support to the Public Space Project. The Advisory Board comprises stakeholder groups such as: shopping centres, youth workers, young people, police, planners, and representatives of relevant government departments. The Western Sydney Public Space Working Party was also established as an issues- and strategies-based forum for interested youth workers.

During 2001 the Public Space Working Party and the Advisory Board agreed that it would be useful to take a closer look at young people and the privately-owned public spaces of shopping centres. In order to do this an evaluation proposal was developed.

### **1.3 The Scope of this Evaluation**

The overall aim of this evaluation is to profile a number of Western Sydney youth projects which aimed to improve the inclusion of young people in shopping centres, and to evaluate how well these projects operated.

In August 2001 YAPA commissioned Sheree Turner to undertake the evaluation. Through consultation with stakeholders for each of the projects, and by incorporating the knowledge gained from other similar projects, the following aims were developed:

- To evaluate projects which aimed to improve the inclusion of young people in shopping centres;
- To consult stakeholders involved in and impacted on by projects;
- To identify issues key to the success or failure of projects;
- To visit older projects to identify lasting impacts of the projects;
- To provide easily accessible information about shopping centre youth projects for centre managers and youth workers
- To collect information useful in developing a protocol between shopping centre managements and YAPA.

The five projects that are the focus of this evaluation are (shopping centre owners in brackets):

- The Social Belonging Project at Penrith Plaza (Lend Lease);
- The Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC) at Westpoint Blacktown (Queensland Investment Corporation - QIC);
- The Equal Space Project at Stockland Wetherill Park (Stockland);
- The Parramatta CBD Project near Parramatta Westfield (Westfield); and
- The Castle Hill Project at Castle Towers (QIC).

These projects were associated with centres owned by the largest centre management/ownership groups in Western Sydney: Westfield having the largest presence in Western Sydney with four centres, followed by Lend Lease with three centres, Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC) with two centres and Stockland which has three smaller centres.

### **1.4 The Content of this Evaluation Report**

This evaluation report is structured in a way that allows both project stakeholders and other interest groups and individuals to read the sections that are of most relevance to them. The following is a brief outline of the report structure and content:

- **An executive summary:** The executive summary includes a summary of the project profiles, a checklist of the key points for success; and the key recommendations for stakeholders.
- **Section 1 - an introduction:** There is a brief discussion about young people and shopping centres in general. This is followed by an outline of the evaluation, including the background to the evaluation and the scope of the research. A brief context of the evaluation is presented.

- **Section 2 - The project profiles:** Each of the five projects is described including the project's structure and aims. The achievements and challenges of the projects are explored.
- **Section 3 - The methodology:** This section begins with an overview of the evaluation methodology. A description of the methods used in consultations with stakeholders follows. There is a reflection of the challenges of the research and effectiveness of the methodology.
- **Section 4 - The broader context:** Projects evaluated were in Western Sydney so this section includes information about the area. Young people and shopping centres are the focus of the report so both are discussed. How public space is policed and a discussion of rights and responsibilities conclude this section.
- **Section 5 - The findings and discussion:** This section explores, compares and contrasts the experiences of the five shopping centre youth projects. Discussion focuses on interactions between stakeholders especially their approaches and expectations. Difficulties and the opportunities arising in the course of setting up and implementing the projects are identified.
- **Section 6 - Towards best practice in shopping centre youth projects:** This section highlights the issues that need to be addressed for better practice and goes on to outline a stage by stage description of the processes which need to be employed for developing an effective shopping centre youth project.

## **1.5 A Brief Outline of the Context**

When discussing specific projects it is vital to be able to view the projects in a context. Each project is affected by its context, and some of the successes and difficulties relate to this broader context. For the purposes of this evaluation the broader context includes:

- Western Sydney:
  - Over the last ten years Western Sydney has experienced the highest level of population growth of any area in Australia;
  - Western Sydney is the multicultural capital of the world, with over 34% of its residents speaking a language other than English; and
  - In comparison to other parts of metropolitan NSW, overall, Western Sydney is more socio-economically disadvantaged.
- Young people:
  - Are all different; however they all share the fact that they are in a period of transition - the transition from childhood to adulthood;
  - For some young people this transition is smooth; however for others the transition is difficult;
  - Adults are able to influence young people - they can do this in positive or negative ways; and
  - The way adults treat young people has an affect on how successful this transition is for some young people.

- The shopping centre: a privately-owned public space:
  - The shopping centre is the new town square; Young people use shopping centres primarily to socialise with their friends; (Anthony 1985, Mathews et al 2000)
  - The main purpose of the shopping centre is to make money;
  - Shopping centres also have a social function and a social responsibility; and
  - There is conflict between groups about the use of the shopping centre space.
  
- Law and order:
  - A great deal of the adult responses to young people address the “obvious” issues and do not seek to understand and respond to underlying causes;
  - There have been significant increases in the legal controls imposed on young people in the last decade or so; and
  - Adult perceptions of young people are influenced by the “law and order” campaigns of politicians and by the media.
  
- The control of privately-owned public space:
  - The types of interactions that occur between young people and security officers are important for young people on a day-to-day basis; and
  - Inclusive practices encourage more positive relationships between young people and security officers and are beneficial for the community and the shopping centre.
  
- Rights and responsibilities:
  - Young people's rights need to be respected;
  - If a young person has done something wrong their rights need to be respected;
  - If young people's rights are respected they will be able to learn to respect the rights of others (ie. to take responsibility);
  - Young people need to participate in developing centre rules and procedures;
  - Young people need to be informed of policies and procedures; and
  - Young people need recourse when they are not treated fairly.



# 2 Project Profiles

## 2.1 Introduction

The profiles of the five projects explore how the projects came into existence and what their aims were. The nature and operation of the projects is discussed. Management and communication processes in each project are explored and the outcomes of the various projects investigated. Each profile concludes with reflection on the project from the stakeholders involved.

Each profile includes the following information:

- Primary information sources;
- The stakeholders;
- Project background;
- Project aims;
- Project description;
- Project management and communication
- Project resources;
- Project achievements
- Project difficulties
- Project outcomes; and
- Stakeholder reflections.

## 2.2 The Social Belonging Project (Penrith Plaza and Fusion Australia)

### **2.2.1 Primary Information Sources**

- Group consultation with stakeholders including: Ross Beaton (Sydney Youth Services Coordinator, Fusion Australia); Erich Weller (Community Programs Coordinator, Penrith City Council); Melissa Haigh (Marketing Manager, Penrith Plaza); a group of young people attending the Channel Café (the Fusion Penrith CBD youth facility), some of whom had been around at the time of the partnership;
- Discussions by phone with Jeni Pollard (Youth Development Officer, Penrith City Council) and Ross Beaton (Fusion); and
- Relevant documents about the project.

### **2.2.2 The Shopping Centre and the Youth Service**

Penrith Plaza is located in the heart of Penrith, just one hour to the west of the Sydney CBD. It comprises 200 stores, an eight screen cinema and a 3000 place car park. Lend Lease manage the centre, and seventeen others in Australia. "Lend Lease is committed to the provision of vibrant and welcoming shopping experiences that function as community, social and shopping focal points." (Lend Lease 2002)

"Fusion is an Australian inter-denominational Christian youth and community organisation. It has centres and associate works in each state and specialises in resourcing local communities to care for their own both through community effort and the provision of high quality professional services" (Beaton, R. 1999). The Fusion

program involved in the Social Belonging project was the Penrith Youth Outreach Project.

### **2.2.3 Project Background**

By 1996 Fusion and the Penrith Youth Interagency (PYI) had been lobbying for a Penrith CBD youth service for over eight years. In this year Fusion ceased operating the day-to-day service to young people at Werrington Youth Centre and put their energies into making a move to the Penrith CBD. At the same time they undertook some initial streetwork around Penrith Plaza. Through this contact it was decided to put more resources into detached streetwork around the Plaza and to more vigorously campaign for a CBD youth service.

As regular streetwork started Fusion initiated contact with the Plaza management to gain permission and seek support for streetwork. The first partnership meeting occurred in November 1996. This meeting included the presentation of plans for a CBD youth café and ongoing streetwork in and around the Plaza. In attendance at this meeting were representatives from Fusion, Penrith Plaza and PYI.

Following the opening of a multi-screen cinema at Penrith Plaza in 1997, there was a growing awareness among PYI members that increasing numbers of young people were using the CBD as a social zone. This resulted in increasing issues for young people related to the use of this space; issues such as public perceptions and the policing of young people. The Fusion Penrith Plaza partnership was able to address some of these issues.

### **2.2.4 Project Aims**

The Social Belonging project is best described as a partnership. During the consultation for this evaluation, the aims of the partnership were identified as:

- to establish youth work in the CBD;
- to highlight young people's issues around public/private space to the community;
- to increase contact for young people with youth services; and
- to advocate in a constructive way around young people's use of the CBD and particularly the Plaza.

Aims:

- to work with management and the community to identify issues of concern around young people's presence in the CBD and then develop strategies to address an agreed selection of those issues;
- to identify the critical needs of young people who frequent the CBD area and develop strategies to address them; and
- to develop community and a sense of responsibility among young people, youth workers, Plaza management and staff and local businesses around the issues of young people's presence in the CBD. (Beaton 1996)

### 2.2.5 Project Description

The partnership involved a number of key strategies. These were:

- to conduct streetwork, creative activities and entertainment to build relationships with young people and thus enable their involvement in research and consultative structures;
- to meet young people's recreation and information needs to:
  - build a sense among young people of being valued by the Plaza management and the wider community;
  - provide a focus for youth working groups;
  - build positive relationships with 'at risk' young people;
- to build a forum of young people, Plaza management and staff, local businesses, and youth workers to enable the parties to work on long term matters and issues as they arise; and
- in cooperation with Plaza staff, young people and other youth services, develop training options for security personnel which will help them deal effectively and appropriately with young people.

(Beaton 1996)

These strategies were part of a written proposal and informal agreement with the Plaza management.

Over the initial twelve month period from June 1996 to July 1997 streetwork was a major component of the project, with over 250 young people contacted.

The first activity to be organised was a piece of forum theatre devised and performed by young people in the central court of the Plaza. The focus of the performance was on contact between security officers and young people. This initial performance became the impetus for a group of young people, called "Random Acts of Kindness", performing at different times throughout the Plaza, with the main focus being public perceptions of young people.

It was soon after these activities that the formal partnership between the Plaza and Fusion commenced, with a commitment from the Plaza to fund the project for \$10,000 a year on a year to year basis. The proposal was for a twelve month pilot project, "Penrith Plaza and Fusion: A Social Belonging Project". However, the parties never signed a formal partnership agreement.

In the lead up to the federal election, in a close marginal seat and after a long campaign by Fusion and the PYI, the federal government announced funding for the development of the Backyard Youth Café in the Penrith CBD. This occurred six months after the commencement of the partnership, in November 1996.

At the beginning of 1997 Fusion received funding for the youth café. The first six months of 1997 involved Fusion in setting up the café and by June they were involved in managing and servicing this popular venue. This impacted on their ability to continue the same level of work with the Plaza. However, activities continued and in April 1997 during Youth Week live bands performed outside the Plaza. In June 1997 a group of young people were involved in painting an aerosol mural on the outside of the new cinema construction hoarding. Other activities over the ensuing two years included: an art show and competition held at the Plaza and the café, an information expo at the Plaza and a careers program involving collaboration between Cranebrook High, Fusion and the Plaza. Throughout this period information and

referral work for young people continued. There was also considerable media coverage of the different events and activities.

The so-called formal partnership was terminated in late 1999, not long after a change in management at the Plaza. By this stage both partners were engaged in other activities and communication was sporadic. At this point in time there was an unspoken agreement that the partnership would end.

### **2.2.6 Project Management and Communication**

There was no formal management structure and there were no formal agreements involved in the partnership. A draft project and partnerships document, "The Penrith Plaza and Fusion: Social Belonging Pilot Program", was written, but never signed.

Penrith Plaza clearly recognised the value of the relationship and the work undertaken with young people in and around the Plaza. This commitment was also reinforced through the provision of funds and the Plaza management's active participation. This participation mainly took the form of collaboration in organising events in and around the Plaza.

There were no regular meetings, but project partners did meet occasionally. Representatives attended those meetings from Fusion, Penrith Plaza and Penrith Youth Interagency. Young people were not involved in the management of the partnership, but were involved in developing activities and programs.

### **2.2.7 Project Resources**

In June 1996 young people undertook their first performance in the Plaza. This performance focused on the interactions between security officers and young people. Soon after this the Plaza management made an offer to support Fusion with some funds and invited Fusion to submit a proposal. The outcome was funding of \$10,000 each year for three years.

Fusion's contributions focused on the provision of services to young people through:

- the presence of a streetworker
- support from the Fusion Coordinator
- the provision of specialist facilitators
- representation on the YAPA Western Sydney Public Space Advisory Board
- other in-kind contributions, such as program materials.

The Plaza also made in-kind contributions to the project partnership, these included:

- use of the centre stage for performances and displays;
- advertising the project and specific activities such as the art competition and youth week in community papers and in the centre
- time and resources in relation to meetings and with security
- facilitation of the art competition with the retailers.

The partnership itself was seen as a resource. During consultations for this evaluation it was suggested that together the Plaza and Fusion were more able to create political goodwill and influence other stakeholders, for the benefit of the project.

### **2.2.8 Project Achievements**

Consultation with stakeholders during this evaluation revealed agreement about the positive aspects of the partnership project. It should be noted that the evaluator was unable to speak with a number of the personnel involved at the time, as they had moved on.

When the decision to change the focus of service provision from Werrington Youth Centre was made, PYI members and Fusion staff became involved in the provision of streetwork. Consequently, more youth workers became involved in streetwork and the levels of streetwork to young people increased. This also had the impact of large numbers of young people being able to access workers and agencies (it was suggested during consultations for this evaluation that these were the young people who wouldn't normally have been tapped into services). Due to an increase in the presence of youth workers, there was also an improvement in safety for young people.

Activities such as forum theatre and street theatre, the art exhibition and the media coverage of these events helped to educate the community about young people's issues and to raise the positive profile of young people. Through these experiences young people were given greater direct experience with adults in their community.

The activities and events that took place benefited the young people directly through the enhancement of their skills and self esteem. The fact that a number of these activities and events took place at the Plaza also benefited young people. This practice of inclusion encourages participation and allows young people to feel a sense of belonging.

The relationship between centre management and Fusion saw a degree of engagement and the growth of mutual understanding. There was commitment from the Plaza and Fusion to work on the issues and both parties gained some insight into each other's styles and perspectives. From Fusion's point of view, as advocates for young people this helped them to share relevant information with young people about the shopping centre.

A first meeting was held between the youth worker team and the security team. This meeting was viewed as useful by both parties; however it did not lead to the desired outcome, which was the development of training options for security personnel to help them to deal effectively and appropriately with young people.

The decision not to locate a youth centre in the shopping centre was seen as an achievement. The partners involved had weighed up the pros and cons of locating a youth centre in the Plaza and it was felt that there was more to be gained for young people by focusing on the partnership strategies and the setting up of the cafe close to the Plaza, without the possible problems of internal location. The main problems raised in this context were the likely or possible problems with neighbouring tenants and the possibility of tension with management about the operation of the service.

The partnership between Fusion and the Plaza had an impact at a statewide and a national level. It was one of the first Western Sydney public space projects that provided information to other agencies and contributed to a focus on shopping centres and young people, by shopping centres, government, youth services and the community. It influenced some important organisations, such as YAPA and the

Shopping Centre Council of Australia (SCCA) on the issues of privately-owned public space and encouraged them to become more involved. It was after this time that YAPA applied for and received funding for its Western Sydney Public Space Project. In 1998 Fusion's Sydney Youth Services Coordinator addressed the SCCA. During this time the Coordinator was also a member of the Attorney General's Juvenile Crime Prevention Committee. This Committee was set up as part of the Crime Prevention Division and was able to advise and influence policy and legislation at a state level.

The relationship also led to further changes in perceptions of youth services. The profile for the youth services involved was raised and stakeholders gained a different view of youth services. The youth services themselves gained confidence to take on challenges with very different stakeholders, which in turn led to the further possibility of exploring other valuable partnerships and of attracting resources.

### **2.2.9 Project Difficulties**

The major difficulties of the partnership relate to the lack of management structure and a consequent lack of ongoing communication. At the same time changes to personnel limited the potential of the partnership, as too did changes to the nature of Fusion's youth service.

When Fusion became involved in the setting up of the new youth café their relationship with the Plaza changed as more time was spent on setting up the café and less time on the partnership. In some ways part of what they set out to achieve through the partnership had happened: the establishment of a youth facility in the CBD. At the same time, the nature and scope of Fusion's service changed dramatically and Fusion no longer had a dedicated position attached to the relationship with the Plaza. The level of streetwork was also affected by staff changes.

The original partnership proposal "Penrith Plaza and Fusion: Social Belonging Pilot Program", included a number of strategies which were never addressed. These strategies were:

- to build a forum of young people, Plaza management and staff, local businesses, and youth workers to enable the parties to work on long term matters and issues as they arise; and
- in cooperation with Plaza staff, young people and other youth services, develop training options for security personnel that will help them deal effectively and appropriately with young people.

It is likely that these particular tasks would have been undertaken later in the partnership, however because of a lack of resourcing, this project maintenance and project development did not occur. Also impacting on this was the fact that there was no documented agreement between the partners, no commonly agreed goals or work-plans. There was however the goodwill and good intentions of both partners, but these could not sustain the partnership and it became frustrating for both sides. It is the evaluator's opinion that had the original partnership proposal and agreement been signed, the partnership may have been able to endure and incorporate the changes which occurred over the duration of the project. A well prepared written agreement would have given both parties a clear vision and understanding of the goals of the project. Without a clear shared vision either party can do good work but fail to meet the expectations of the other party. A formal agreement by both parties in the form of a contract signed by both partners also creates a legal obligation. This

type of agreement can provide encouragement to work through issues and to see the relationship as having value in the long term. In the case of the Social Belonging project the overall aims of the partnership were fulfilled, if only for a short time.

In retrospect the main aspects of the project that Fusion felt were disappointing relate to the overall aims of the partnership. These were:

- lack of follow through regarding ongoing communication and training for security staff with young people and best practices of managing behaviour; and
- a failure in terms of the ongoing development of the project around the emerging needs and issues for young people and stakeholders.

The evaluator was unable to contact the previous centre manager and therefore cannot provide a retrospective comment from Plaza management.

### **2.2.10 Project Outcomes**

The overall outcomes of the project included:

- 2 the enhancement of streetwork skills for the youth workers involved;
- 3 an increase in the positive profile of young people; theatre-based activities held in the Plaza presented community members with different perspectives;
- 4 the social implications of retail development have been highlighted to Penrith Council and other stakeholders and some responsibilities implied;
- 5 the youth sector has gained more confidence in its ability to work in partnership with the business community;
- 6 in the long term the issue of privately-owned public space has become a more explored and understood issue statewide and this project partnership contributed to that process; and
- 7 Fusion was funded for a CBD youth facility, which continues to operate today.

The outcomes for young people included:

- young people had the opportunity to express their issues and have them recognised and to some degree responded to through public events, media coverage and interactions with the streetwork team;
- young people benefited through the staging of PYI Youth Week events at and around the Plaza (an accessible, safe and popular location);
- young people were able to raise their own positive profile through programs, community contact and media coverage;
- young people were resourced in terms of access to services, information and opportunities through streetwork connections and their ability to physically access the CBD café youth service; and
- young people benefited from increased attention to and understanding about security practices around the Plaza.

▪

### **What young people said**

The evaluator spoke to a group of seven young people at the Channel Café. Two of the young people were involved in the project at the time; they recalled feeling good about the forum theatre activity which replayed an incident between young people and security. However they commented that things went straight back to normal afterwards - normal meaning, feeling harassed by security and being moved on. The evaluator asked each of the young people how they thought relationships were now between young people and security - three of them said they had no problems (these were a younger group) - the other four all believed things had gotten worse, that some security officers were fine but others were not. They cited having the sprinklers turned on them on a number of occasions as something they thought indicated that things weren't good. They also mentioned heavy banning for things they believed weren't serious.

In view of this the evaluator spoke to the current marketing manager. Statistics on banning were not available from the time of the partnership, as the security company had changed. There had been, according to her, a significant increase in banning over the most recent six months, with as many as 20 young people being banned in a month, for up to two years.

The outcomes for Fusion were:

- Fusion's capacity to respond to young people's needs was increased through:
  - the financial and in-kind contributions but equally by the ability to influence the management about what is for young people a major social environment (the Plaza);
  - the increased public profile, networks and 'legitimacy' such a partnership afforded;
  - broad contact with young people through streetwork around the Plaza; and
  - the funding of the Café (partly as a result of the project).

The outcomes for the Plaza were:

- The Plaza acquired an insight into young people's perspectives and experiences regarding youth related issues; and
- The Plaza received some recognition for this project within Lend Lease and also externally.

### **2.2.11 Stakeholder Reflections**

When reflecting on the project the stakeholders had very practical suggestions about what they would do differently if they were entering into a similar project again. The main ideas mentioned during the consultations for this evaluation were:

- Set up a formal agreement;
- Make sure that there are appropriate levels of resourcing for the partnership itself; and
- Ensure adequate project resources.

## **Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC)**

### **2.3.1 Primary Information Sources**

The following have informed this profile:

- group consultation with stakeholders including Westpoint Blacktown Centre Manager and Blacktown City Council Community/Youth Planner;
- consultation with the two young people remaining on the PSYC;
- discussions by phone with the Community/Youth Planner; and
- relevant documents about the project.

### **2.3.2 The Shopping Centre and the Youth Service**

The Queensland Investment Corporation (QIC) manages Westpoint Blacktown. QIC is one of the largest investment funds managers in Australia. They manage over \$27 billion of funds. As part of investing these funds QIC own nine shopping centres. Westpoint Blacktown has 173 stores, a four screen cinema and a 2900 place car park.

The other key stakeholder involved in the PSYC was Blacktown City Council Community/Youth Planner, who is the youth planner and community development worker for the Blacktown LGA.

### **2.3.3 Project Background**

In response to YAPA's report "Consultation with Young People and Security Officers" (Turner, Campbell 1999), the YAPA Western Sydney Public Space Officer and the Blacktown Council Community/Youth Planner negotiated the establishment of the Blacktown Advisory Committee in late 1999. This committee comprised a broad range of stakeholders and was set up primarily to deal with the issues arising for young people in their use of public space. Westpoint Blacktown was committed to the initiative from the outset.

In April 2000 - recognising that the Blacktown Advisory Committee's scope was limited and it could not address all the issues identified - members of the Blacktown Advisory Committee, Westpoint, YAPA and Blacktown Council set up the Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC).

Council's Community/Youth Planner and the YAPA Public Space Project Officer facilitated a full day consultation with local young people, to identify key issues around public space and establish terms of reference for the PSYC. The consultation - which received favourable media attention (eg. Blacktown City Sun, Blacktown Advocate, and the Standard) - cemented young people's ongoing involvement in the work of the PSYC. By September 2000 the Blacktown Advisory Committee folded and its work was effectively taken on by the PSYC.

### **2.3.4 Project Aims**

The aims of Blacktown PSYC were:

- To provide an ongoing forum for communication between Westpoint and young people;
- To involve youth workers and other relevant agencies in this communication;
- To help reduce conflict and create a more harmonious environment (for retailers, shoppers, young people, security and centre management); and
- To boost the economy of Westpoint.

Additional objectives - as stated in the PSYC's Terms of Reference:

- To identify how young people like to use space in Westpoint;
- To make clear the practices/roles of security officers;
- To identify and make clear the processes of complaints and appeals open to young people and other sectors of the community; and
- To inform the community on 'youth culture' through the use of media and other appropriate mechanisms.

### **2.3.5 Project Description**

As a result of the initial consultations held with young people the PSYC commenced operation in April 2000. The PSYC comprised approximately ten young people who were recruited by the Council Community/Youth Planner and the Blacktown Youth Services Association (BYSA). The PSYC meet monthly to discuss issues pertaining to centre management. Many of these young people had attended the initial consultation meeting.

The young people spoken to during the evaluation commented that this first meeting was really interesting, because they did lots of activities and it was stimulating and interactive. They felt that after this meeting there was not enough to do; there was too much talking and not enough action.

#### *2.3.5.1 Programs and Activities*

The work of Blacktown PSYC remained focussed on developing and maintaining relations between stakeholders to create a harmonious environment at Westpoint overall. As such, events were not a feature of the PSYC's work. Activities included:

- Regular, ongoing consultation with young people, in particular to inform development and planning at Westpoint. Westpoint's Manager attended each of the monthly meetings, along with the Council Community/Youth Planner and the YAPA Public Space Project Officer. The young people consulted during the evaluation commented that over the time of the PSYC many positive relationships were developed between the people involved. They also mentioned that they thought that the young people who really needed to be involved were not;
- Articles in local media raising the profile of youth culture and young people's rights to public space;
- Logo competition - a competition for young people to design a logo for the PSYC; and
- Development of the relationship between security and young people.

### **2.3.6 Project Management and Communication**

Representation on the original Blacktown Advisory Committee included: Westpoint Blacktown, YAPA, local police, Department of Education, local high schools, two local students, Premier's Department, Attorney-General's Department, BYSA and the Council Community/Youth Planner. This committee was initiated by YAPA and meetings were organised and facilitated by the YAPA Public Space Project Officer. The committee was viewed by many as too unwieldy and complex with many differing agendas. As a result and because a number of members thought that a committee of young people would be more suited to the project's needs the PSYC was formed.

It was the role of the YAPA Public Space Project Officer to assist with the establishment of the PSYC. Initially it was this person who facilitated PSYC meetings every four to six weeks. The Westpoint Manager and the Blacktown Council Community/Youth Planner felt that the vacancy of several months in the YAPA Public Space Project Officer position affected the momentum of the PSYC. Originally about ten young people played an active role, although over time this dwindled to a core of two.

However, the young people consulted stressed the point that many of the members had dropped out because the PSYC was not given enough to do. They also said that to maintain the involvement of young people required work on projects that sustain interest and meetings that were more like the initial consultation, which was interesting, stimulating and interactive - "we need things to do".

At the time of this evaluation the PSYC was no longer operating. There were two young people who still had an active interest in the potential of the PSYC and who expressed interest in ongoing involvement. With the creation of the new position of Community Relations Manager at Westpoint, and the ongoing work of the Council Community/Youth Planner and the Westpoint Marketing Manager, strategies are being investigated to make PSYC relevant and viable again for young people.

### **2.3.7 Project Resources**

The key resources in Blacktown have been the contribution of time and skills by workers and volunteers. Additional financial resourcing has included prize money for the logo competition, and advertising costs.

The young people consulted said that there were not enough resources for the PSYC. They felt that they had a lot of ideas that they were unable to implement because there were no resources for them to be able to undertake actual activities, events or project ideas.

### **2.3.8 Project Achievements**

The relationships between the project stakeholders themselves were seen as an achievement. The PSYC, generally, reached its aim to provide a forum for communication over the duration of the project. In particular Westpoint, its security firm and local young people have a greater understanding of each other's needs and viewpoints. The centre manager believes that personal relationships with the young people who use the centre are important. He reported that knowing each of the security officers was also important for centre relations and that low key interactions between security officers and young people should be encouraged. The Centre Manager reported that banning had decreased. Indicators of this include a reduction in punitive interventions by the security officers, as well as satisfaction reported by PSYC members and retailers.

Further, young people have had an active involvement in Westpoint's redevelopment, and all stakeholders continue to take responsibility for ongoing communication and consultation. At the time of this evaluation the Westpoint Manager and the Council Community/Youth Planner had been informally consulting with young people in the

shopping centre and a formal consultation had been held with young people on Blacktown Council's Youth Committee, in relation to the re-development.

A number of respondents cite the Blacktown experience as a "model" for corporate - community relationships.

### **2.3.9 Project Difficulties**

The key criticism arising from the stakeholder consultations during this evaluation was that, despite involvement from the young people on the PSYC, there was a range of young people not affected or involved in the processes. Young people also stressed the nature of the meetings and their frustration at having ideas about things to do and feeling like they weren't able to do these. The fact that the PSYC has not continued to operate could also be seen as a failing of the project.

### **2.3.10 Project Outcomes**

The evaluation found that the stakeholders are in agreement about the achievements of the PSYC:

- Relationships between stakeholders have been improved due to the work of the PSYC. It provided an important opportunity for management to hear from young people. The issues raised during meetings helped Westpoint, its security firm and local young people have a greater understanding of each other's needs and viewpoints. According to centre management, indicators of this include a reduction in punitive interventions by the security officers, as well as satisfaction reported by PSYC members and retailers.
- Further, some young people have had an active involvement in Westpoint's redevelopment, and all stakeholders continue to take responsibility for ongoing communication and consultation. This communication to date has taken the form of three informal consultations with young people in Westpoint and a formal consultation with the Blacktown Council's Youth Committee.

### **2.3.11 Stakeholder Reflections**

The non-youth stakeholders believe that in part the project was successful due to the simplicity of its aim. To attempt to improve communications cuts through to the core of the issues arising from young people's use of public space:

- misrepresentation in the media
- conflict between security officers and young people
- opportunities for disagreement between youth services and centre managers.

On reflection the young people spoken to felt that the PSYC had the potential to be much more successful than it was. They believed that there were not enough resources to actually do anything and they made it clear that if young people were going to be involved and maintain their involvement then they need to be doing things that they believe are useful and interesting.

Having said that, however, one factor cited as crucial to this project's achievements was the fact that Westpoint had a good reputation amongst young people *prior* to the setting up the project - through the day-long consultations at the beginning, young people "recommended" the involvement of Westpoint, if you like, above a number of other local shopping centres. Further, the youth workers involved were not afraid of working with corporate players, and suggested that the sector needs to get "real" - to

identify there are issues that can be held in common across the sectors, and more, that centre managers have to be held accountable in their control over public spaces.

Further comments, when asked to reflect on the project, included the suggestion that the YAPA Western Sydney Public Space Advisory Board meetings should include a section on feedback by individual projects as a way of information sharing. It was also suggested that the YAPA Public Space Advisory Board relate more closely to individual projects and that meetings are held at project sites.

## **2.4 The Equal Space Project**

### **2.4.1 Primary Information Sources**

The following have informed this profile:

- group consultation with stakeholders including: Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team (FLYHT) Manager; Fairfield City Council Community Projects Officer, Youth; Parks Community Network Coordinator; McDonalds Wetherill Park Manager; Stockland Wetherill Park Manager and Community Relations Manager; Stockland Wetherill Park security.
- discussions (face-to-face and by phone) with the Stockland Community Relations Manager and the Coordinator at Parks Community Network; and
- documents about the project including the Equal Space project report.

### **2.4.2 The Shopping Centre and the Youth Service**

Wetherill Park is in the south western suburbs of Sydney, near Fairfield. The Stockland Trust Group, a diverse property group that has interests in shopping centres, commercial, industrial, office property, residential development, parks and hotels, manages Stockland Wetherill Park. It owns and manages thirteen shopping centres in three states. Stockland Wetherill Park comprises over 95 speciality stores and five major stores, a twelve cinema complex, a professional and medical centre, a community centre, a library and auto service. It has a 1650 place car park.

The major stakeholder involved with Stockland Wetherill Park in the Equal Space Project was the Parks Community Network. Parks Community Network is located on site at Stockland, and it services the residents of seven new release areas in the Fairfield LGA, to help identify and act on local needs and issues.

### **2.4.3 Project Background**

The Stockland Trust Group in partnership with Hoyts Cinemas submitted a Development Application to Fairfield City Council in 1998 "to develop a twelve screen cinema complex within the shopping centre at Wetherill Park." (Robinson & Chegwidden 2001)

During the Development Application process youth services raised concerns about the proposed development and initiated discussions regarding the needs of the extra young people who would be attracted to the shopping centre by the cinema. Discussion centred on meeting the needs of young people as well as concern for possible conflict between young people, other centre users and security officers. This led to a requirement that the cinema development include office space to be utilised for the benefit of young people. Stockland Wetherill Park was interested in working with Parks Community Network in order to see this facility utilised and had heard about other projects that had taken place in other shopping centres.

Parks Community Network and Fairfield Council then submitted an application for funding to the Community Relations Commission for a multicultural NSW (CRC) and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC). At the time CRC was seeking to fund an innovative project to explore public space issues, with a focus on the experiences of young people from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB). Parks Community Network was successful and received a grant of \$80,000 from CRC and \$20,000 from the HREOC, for the Equal Space Project.

Equal Space was a partnership project between Parks Community Network, Stockland Wetherill Park, Fairfield City Council, Wetherill Park Library and the

funding bodies CRC and HREOC. The project was launched in December 1998 and a youth worker employed in January 1999. The youth worker left the project in November 1999 and a project evaluation was undertaken in late 2000, with the project finishing in late 2001.

#### **2.4.4 Project Aims**

The aims of Equal Space were:

- to take a positive approach to the complex issue of public space through building relationships with key stakeholders. The project expected to create constructive relationships between shopping centre management, shopping centre security, general users of shopping centres and young people from diverse cultural backgrounds;
- to work within the centre at a time when it was undergoing significant expansion. The experience of this project was to be of great value to other areas given that similar shopping centres are expanding periodically;
- to provide valuable lessons for other areas in the state and nationally. Other youth and public space initiatives, while providing valuable insight into this issue, are not necessarily applicable to such diverse communities located within urban fringe areas (eg. Western Sydney).

(Equal Space Funding Application to CRC)

#### **2.4.5 Project Description**

The project relied on a number of key strategies:

- To pilot programs and activities for young people in and around the Stockland Mall Shopping Centre, focusing on young people from NESB;
- To set up and run a computer technology centre at the Wetherill Park Library;
- To operate a tuition program at the Wetherill Park Library, again with a focus on young people from NESB;
- To explore the roles, policies and procedures of centre security.

An additional part of the project, which was not included in the funding application, was to set up and operate a youth work office on site.

Parks Community Network believed that by implementing these strategies the project stakeholders could work towards the development of a model of best practice.

In addition to CRC funding, Parks Community Network was successful in securing funding from the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning - Area Assistance Scheme (AAS) for an activities worker to work in conjunction with the Equal Space Project. Thus the Positive Use of Public Space (PUPS) Project commenced in August 1999 and is due for completion in June 2002. PUPS was not evaluated for the purposes of this evaluation.

#### *2.4.5.1 Programs and Activities*

Equal Space trialed and/or delivered the following programs and activities:

- Three on three basketball competition, which involved young people in the planning and running of the event and which was held on site, in the Stockland car park;
- Two under 18s dance parties, organised and run primarily by young people and each was attended by 300 young people (almost all were from NESB). Stockland's contracted security company, Access Security, was retained on the night;
- Self-defence classes for young women; this series of classes was run on a second occasion with many more young women in attendance;
- Arts based activities, including invisible theatre and aerosol art;
- Video production - in conjunction with the PUPS project; this included running workshops, conducting interviews and producing a video about the centre; and
- Life skills workshops for 'at risk' young people, with support from local high schools.

#### *2.4.5.2 The Roles, Policies and Procedures of the Centre Security*

The Equal Space Project wanted to encourage positive relationships between young people and security officers. It sought to do this by reviewing and revising the *Roles, Policies and Procedures of Centre Security*.

Exploring the roles, policies and procedures of the security company (Access Security) was an important aspect of the Equal Space Project. It was envisaged that this would be undertaken as a joint project and alongside of the other activities of the project. In view of this a sub-committee was established to review the security policies and procedures. The sub-committee comprised representatives of Parks Community Network, Fairfield City Council, Access Security and Stockland management. A review was undertaken and a revised policy resulted, which continues to be used by Stockland Wetherill Park and Access Security.

#### *2.4.5.3 The Technology Centre and Tuition Program*

The technology centre and the tuition program took place in the Wetherill Park Library (on site) and were run in close cooperation with the Branch Librarian and Fairfield City Council. Both the project and the library provided funds for the purchase and hiring of the equipment needed. The library undertook the administration tasks of the technology centre and operated the tuition program. Both projects focused on helping NESB young people access the library and use computers. The technology centre still operates today.

### **2.4.6 Project Management and Communication**

The Equal Space Project was auspiced by Parks Community Network who managed the legal and financial aspects of the project, the day-to-day management, and supervision of staff.

Two committees were set up: one, a steering committee to guide the project (comprising key stakeholders who met on a monthly basis), and the other a reference group to support and advise the project (with broader membership including young people), who met a few times throughout the duration of the project. The committees shared some members.

### **2.4.7 Project Resources**

The funding for the project was \$100,000. As mentioned this was provided by CRC and HREOC. Other resources included the office space provided by Stockland to Parks Community Network at a minimal rent.

The PUPS Project also operated in conjunction with Equal Space for a period of five months. It is funded through AAS for a period of two years and will cease operating in June 2002

### **2.4.8 Project Achievements**

The evaluation found that the stakeholders are in agreement about the achievements of the Equal Space Project.

#### *2.4.8.1 The short-term activities and programs organised throughout the project:*

- the basketball and arts based activities were seen as very successful;
- the video program was viewed as a great concept, however for reasons which will be discussed in the next section, the outcome was not viewed as an achievement;
- the self defence classes for young women;
- the life skills workshops worked well overall (although there were also some problems with them);
- the feedback from the young people involved was, on the whole, very positive;
- the fact that young people assisted in the planning, running and evaluation of many of the activities and programs indicates high levels of participation and therefore the success of these activities in young people's opinions, was a real achievement; and
- overall the activities and programs attracted an estimated 90% of participants from NESB.

#### *2.4.8.2 The work done by the sub-committee on the security policy and procedures:*

- young people had input into the policy changes;
- changes to the security policy included the inclusion of a disputes process so that young people could discuss problems or if necessary complain about treatment; this was seen by all as a more democratic process;
- a statement saying that groups of three or more would be moved on was replaced with "groups would be assessed by the security officer and being moved on would be in relationship to behaviour";
- there was some clarification regarding banning notices; and
- some clarification on the use of guard dogs.

#### *2.4.8.3 The setting up and operation of the technology centre and the tuition program:*

- the free computer access in the centre was and is heavily utilised by young people from non-English speaking backgrounds (the target group for the project);
- as a result of the technology centre more young people are using the library;
- the Branch Librarian developed and continues to develop positive relationships with young people;
- the tuition program was run shortly after the technology centre opened and attracted large numbers of young people, most of whom were from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Overall it was envisaged that through piloting particular activities and programs a model would be developed of youth programs in shopping centres. This did not eventuate.

A comprehensive evaluation of the Equal Space Project was undertaken at the completion of the project by Robinson and Chegwiddden (2001). The evaluator has had the benefit of the information contained in their report.

#### **2.4.9 Project Difficulties**

The consultation for this evaluation highlighted differences in opinion about the project difficulties. At the same time none of the stakeholders described the difficulties faced as insurmountable. What stakeholders did agree upon was that they failed to resolve specific problems that occurred during the project.

##### *2.4.9.1 Activities*

Some of the activities or programs that were said to be problematic include:

- the dance parties - conflicts arose at the second dance party; also stakeholders disagree about whether it was of benefit for the project to hold events outside of the centre;
- the life skills workshops - a minor incident occurred at the venue for the workshops, involving a young person jumping into an enclosure. The response by the venue manager was seen by the youth worker as an over-reaction. Parks Community Network postponed the workshops until the damage had been paid for;
- the video production - there was disagreement about the portrayal of Stockland and the security officers and the video could not be shown in the centre.

##### *2.4.9.2 The Office*

The presence of the youth office in the grounds of Stockland Mall created many difficulties for the project and for some of the stakeholders. The office became - over time - a place for young people to 'hang out'. The different stakeholders never agreed whether or not a drop-in style office was an appropriate evolution of the project. The office was not part of the initial Equal Space Project funding application and so was never planned for in an appropriate manner. There were many questions about the role and implications of an on-site office which were not discussed as part of the preparation for the project. For example: How was the office to be utilised? How would young people see the office? What issues might arise with an office on site, for example with retailers and other users of the centre? The location of the office? These questions were also not discussed as part of the ongoing operation of the project, until there were concerns and conflict.

As is often the case the use of the space had more to do with the needs of a group of young people and the youth worker's desire to meet these needs. The space ended up creating dilemmas for the security officers, the young people, the youth worker, centre management and for the overall management of the project. The problems created for the project stemmed from the fact that the office became a drop-in space for some young people. The office was located near some automatic teller machines (ATMs) and large groups of young people were often present in this area. Centre management and security received complaints from other shoppers that young people were congregating near the ATMs. Some shoppers also felt intimidated by the groups of young people congregating. It is important to note here that the use made of the office by young people, at times, did meet their needs.

Another issue that is worth mentioning here is the complex role of the youth worker for the project, especially in relation to the location of the office. The difficulties inherent in the role of a youth worker whose job it is to coordinate a project and then at the same time take on the role of the 'youth advocate', are many. This is particularly the case when the project requires the youth worker to undertake capacity building and educative roles with project partners who have little understanding of the notion of youth advocacy. Depending on the level of experience of the youth worker, they may also fail to understand the complexity of taking on the dual role of project worker, community development worker and youth advocate, in an already challenging arena.

#### *2.4.9.3 Project Management and Communication*

The most important and visible difficulty encountered was in managing the project. This is highlighted in comments from all stakeholders about the difficulties in communication, making decisions and a lack of agreement about what the project was actually set up to achieve and how to go about this. The consultations for this evaluation found that this was not only the most difficult aspect of the project, but also the reason for the overall aim of the project not being achieved. Specifically:

- a lack of clear understanding about the roles of the steering committee as opposed to the reference committee; no agreement about how these committees would communicate with each other;
- a lack of representation from young people on the steering committee for the project, or ways to consult effectively with young people that would be heard by all stakeholders;
- the objectives of the project were not clear; the project had broad aims and a list of tasks and expected outcomes; a number of stakeholders suggested that they never felt clear about the project objectives;
- there was not enough time spent on stakeholder cooperation and information sharing;
- when problems occurred there were times when they were not addressed, for example the reference group stopped meeting and this was not followed up, due partly to staff changes;
- the steering committee members did not understand where each other was coming from and it took time for members to realise that they were all working with different agendas, understandings and styles; and
- the security company was not involved from the outset.

Two other points need to be raised. Firstly, the question of whether the project attempted to do too much, especially considering the lack of lead up time given to project development. This is regularly the case for community development projects and the results are often unclear project objectives and tenuous relationships between stakeholders. These relationships then go on to face difficulties in dealing with complex agendas, let alone disagreement and conflict. Another aspect linked to the lack of project development time, is the requirements of funding submissions that place the focus for projects on outcomes at the expense of process. Community development work requires an integrated approach that values both process and outcomes. (Ife 1995)

Another issue in the management of the project is whether the organisations involved had the capacity to manage such a complex project. At the time, things such as the employment of the youth worker, the experience of the youth worker, support for the project and the stability of the management committee were areas where capacity

building may have assisted the project to overcome some of the difficulties experienced.

During the consultation with stakeholders for this evaluation, a number of incidents were raised as being significant in terms of the relationship between the parties. The conflict between Stockland and Parks Community Network was seen by some people as a result of less identifiable incidents that were left unattended. It is obvious in retrospect that whether small or large any disagreements needed to be dealt with, in order to minimise possible conflict. There were no agreements between stakeholders about what procedures would be followed should a dispute arise.

Some stakeholders saw the overlap between the PUPS Project and the Equal Space Project as an issue. It was the intent that PUPS would commence once Equal Space was finished; however Parks Community Network received funding and the PUPS project commenced well before the completion of Equal Space. There were comments during consultations for this evaluation that indicated this happened with little or no communication with some of the stakeholders.

#### **2.4.10 Project Outcomes**

The main outcomes of the Equal Space Project were:

- the development of an ongoing relationship between the Stockland management and Parks Community Network;
- the Equal Space Project Report and recommendations (see appendices for recommendations) and an agreement to work towards implementing the recommendations;
- the goodwill created between stakeholders of the project and the potential for further collaboration;
- the lessons learnt through the project, which inform this evaluation and future projects;
- the four key strategies of the Equal Space Project were successfully implemented (see 2.4.5 *Project Description* above);
- the commitment made by Wetherill Park Library to the continuation of the technology centre for young people in Wetherill Park and surrounds;
- the raised positive profile of young people including young people from NESB created through the shopping centre-based activities of the project; and
- the continuation of the PUPS Project.

#### **2.4.11 Stakeholder Reflections**

On reflection the stakeholders' comments echoed closely the problems of the project and all agreed that what was most important was the need for everyone to understand the project objectives. It was also suggested that there should be clear agreements about how to resolve disputes should they arise and that clear communication was the key to project success. Other comments included hiring a project worker with all the skills, characteristics and abilities necessary for such a complex project and that now they had developed relationships they could do better next time.

The young people consulted about the project who remembered it spoke positively about the activities and events. However, at the same time they had a less than positive reflection about their relationships with some security officers. Once again young people distinguished between what they describe as good and bad security officers.

## **2.5 Parramatta CBD Project**

### **2.5.1. Primary Information Sources**

The following have informed this profile:

- a group consultation with stakeholders from Parramatta Youth Project (PYP) and Karabi Community & Development Services;
- phone calls to Parramatta City Council, PYP and Westfield management;
- an individual meeting with the PYP Coordinator; and
- documents about the project.

### **2.5.2 The Shopping Centre and the Youth Service**

Westfield owns and manages 30 centres in Australia. "The Westfield Group is one of the world's leading shopping centre organisations - a vertically integrated group of companies involved in funding, creating and managing regional and sub-regional shopping centres. Now in its 41st year as a public company, Westfield Holdings acts as developer, architect, builder, property manager and funds manager." (Westfield 2002). Westfield Parramatta is located in Parramatta CBD and comprises over 360 speciality stores and fifteen major stores. It has an eight-screen cinema complex and parking for over 4000 cars.

The key stakeholder for the Parramatta CBD Project was Parramatta Youth Project (PYP), a service of Anglicare, which provides outreach youth work to street-frequenting young people who live in and visit the Parramatta LGA. Parramatta Youth Services Network (PYSN) was also a key player in the project. PYSN is an alliance of youth and community agencies working with young people who frequent and live in the Parramatta LGA.

### **2.5.3 Project Background**

In the early 1990s, many community workers were voicing their concern about the speedy growth of Parramatta and the effects of this on young people. Youth workers were feeling the urgent need for new strategies in their work with the local population of young people. However, they felt the area was under-resourced to respond effectively. As well, some experienced feeling overwhelmed by the suddenness of the growth and changes.

In 1993, the Coordinator of PYP wrote to all PYSN members, inviting them to a meeting to discuss pro-active strategies for working with young people on the streets. The letter described Parramatta emerging as "the second CBD of Sydney", and links were drawn between street life there and Kings Cross. A focal point for PYSN was the area around Westfield Parramatta shopping mall, where large numbers of young people congregated.

PYSN had made contact with Westfield centre management in an attempt to discuss the needs of young people, although it is not now clear the form this communication took. What *is* remembered is that the response of the representatives of Westfield Parramatta was akin to "We are aware of young people's needs...we employ security guards." No further attempt to engage the centre management took place, nor did the centre management initiate any contact with PYSN.

Instead, youth workers from PYP, Parramatta Community Centre (PCC) and Granville Multicultural Community Centre (GMCC) came together and agreed to establish a streetwork outreach project.

#### **2.5.4 Project Aims**

Essentially the purpose of the outreach project was “to look at the needs of young people in the CBD” - with a particular emphasis on homeless young people - although it is uncertain whether this was articulated clearly and agreed to by the group at the time. The overriding sense is that workers felt the need to “do something” and it is likely that different participants saw the core aim of the outreach differently, eg. being as much about “direct service delivery” (providing interventions in health or housing, etc) as about “action research” (developing a greater awareness of issues facing the target group).

#### **2.5.5 Project Description**

Upon agreeing to establish the outreach project, the youth workers from PYP, Parramatta City Council and GMCC wrote to other youth services, and together with Nicholii Cottage, Dundas Area Youth Service, Karabi Community & Development Services, High Street Youth Health Service, Parramatta Youth Organisation (later Teen Challenge) and the Police Community Youth Club, they committed time to an outreach roster. This involved a team of workers walking the area from Parramatta Railway Station to Westfield and talking with young people, hearing their concerns and providing interventions such as referrals. The outreach took place at least twice weekly, but only for a period of about two months, and without the knowledge of either Westfield or the security officers it employed.

PYSN began to devise and articulate forward directions for work with young people in Parramatta’s public spaces. A key issue or concern expressed by PYSN members at the time was the absence of a sound body of knowledge upon which they could confidently rely to inform strategies and practices.

PYSN set up a working party in 1994 and applied for funding to the Attorney General’s Department Juvenile Crime Prevention Advisory Committee to conduct research into young people’s issues and experiences of public space, as well as to look at the needs of other stakeholders. This application was successful and the STREETZ research report was completed in 1998. (Whittington 1998).

#### **2.5.6 Project Management and Communication**

As mentioned earlier, involvement in the 1993 stage of the Parramatta CBD Project was restricted to youth workers. A preliminary attempt to engage with the management at Westfield failed and no further correspondence was entered into. Further, outreach workers recall that, at best, the relationship between them and security officers encountered on outreach could be characterised as a grudging acknowledgment.

PYSN met monthly (and it is still a strong network a decade later). This provided a forum for the outreach workers to debrief together, and generate discussions about local young people and public space. Core involvement was from GMCC, PYP and Parramatta City Council’s Youth Development Officer. Members who have seen PYSN evolve since that time describe youth workers in Parramatta as always having worked collaboratively, and having strong involvement and support of key players in government services - including NSW Health, Police and Council.

However, a number of organisations quickly withdrew their staff from the project. This was out of concern that those workers did not have the capacity to undertake the work and nor did the organisations have the capacity to cope with possible

occupational health and safety repercussions. There was a lack of commitment by the partner organisations to the project.

### **2.5.7 Project Resources**

Resourcing for the 1993 Parramatta CBD Project was strictly limited to the staff time contributed by each organisation on board - for planning, meetings and fulfilling outreach roster obligations. The STREETZ research project received \$50,000 from the Attorney General's Department.

### **2.5.8 Project Achievements**

- outreach and its research focus (aiming to “look at the issues”), while not necessarily well-formulated at the time, did in fact focus PYSN's attention on the need to develop sound knowledge of young people and public space to inform work on the ground, and to assist advocacy;
- closer links and collaboration across services, in particular between PYSN members;
- through their contact with outreach youth workers, young people in the CBD were able to access youth services;
- many issues arising on outreach assisted the STREETZ research question formulation;
- in 1995 the then Juvenile Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney General's Department funded PYSN's STREETZ research project, through the auspice of High Street Youth Health Service;
- the release of the STREETZ report in 1998 provided a cornerstone for youth services locally - PYSN undertook a thorough dissection of the report to prioritise issues and develop workplans. For example one of the participants commented that the report gave him the cache and capacity to advocate for young people's rights at the level of the United Nations. Further, the document has been quoted widely in a number of circulars and letters from PYSN members - eg. to Parramatta Council and state MPs;
- the working party still exists today, with members taking part in two committees set up as a result of the STREETZ research; the focus of the work is on the securing of a CBD youth facility and ongoing work with the NSW Police Service.

### **2.5.9 Project Difficulties**

- the project was short-lived and somewhat reactive in its genesis;
- lack of clear articulation of objectives;
- difficulties in engaging young people who were homeless;
- lack of support from some youth service management committees and more importantly a lack of organisational capacity;
- a lack of prioritisation of the issues relating to young people and public space;
- a lack of knowledge, skills and perseverance by PYSN in terms of their efforts to engage Westfield management;
- Westfield management at the time seemed to have decided on an approach to young people which was coercive and therefore did not warrant the involvement of youth workers; and
- not a strong enough focus on youth development work in the area.

### **2.5.10 Project Outcomes**

- the direct link between the initial streetwork and the STREETZ research and resultant report.
- the work undertaken as a result of the STREETZ report by members of the PYSN, particularly in relation to the following:
  - the focus on a CBD youth facility for young people in Parramatta and a CBD feasibility study; the setting up of the working party to work towards securing a CBD youth facility; and
  - working with police and young people to improve relationships; the result of which is the Parramatta Police and Community Training Project (PACT).

### **2.5.11 Stakeholder Reflections**

The strength of PYSN and the lack of competition between members bode well for developing more expansive partnerships. However, there is a lack of skill and capacity within youth sector organisations in terms of being equals at the table of the “big boys” in the corporate world. There may be a role for centralised training (provided by YAPA) to increase youth workers’ understanding of the *language* of big business - the motives, practices, and approaches to relationships they employ, phenomena like competitive tendering and their responsibilities under the law.

The Parramatta CBD Project’s evolution illustrates that there are stages in the development and implementation of public space youth projects. Each stage requires a variety of skills for successful transition to the next stage.

A *thorough* knowledge of the issues in a particular location is fundamental to the success of public space youth projects. This knowledge needs to be developed over time. It needs to acknowledge the changing needs in the target group. Involving young people in projects is difficult (especially when they are street-frequenting) and maintaining their active participation over the life of a project is even more challenging. Indeed, where projects are implemented over a number of years, “the young people involved at the start are not young any more!” (File note, group interview).

### **2.5.12 Youth Services and Westfield Parramatta 1998-2002**

After the release of the STREETZ report in 1998, PYSN prioritised the recommendations; the result was the formation of the CBD Youth Facility Working Party and representation on the Parramatta Police and Community Training (PACT) steering committee.

Parramatta Council held the launch of a graffiti solutions program at Westfield in January 2002; the Westfield Parramatta Marketing Manager supported this. Young people’s ‘graff’ art work was displayed and information about graffiti distributed. In 2002 Westfield is supporting Youth Week, by donating prizes for young people in the form of vouchers.

Westfield Parramatta supported research by the University of Western Sydney (UWS) Institute for Cultural Research Generate Project conducted in Westfield, looking at its role as a site for the expression by young people of their cultural identity.

## **2.6 Castle Hill**

### **2.6.1 Primary Information Sources**

The following have informed this profile:

- an interview with the Coordinator of Hills District Youth Service (HDYS) and interview with the previous Manager of Castle Towers.
- It should be noted that the Coordinator at HDYS was not the coordinator involved at the time of the project. Further, HDYS could produce no written records relating to the project.

### **2.6.2 The Shopping Centre and the Youth Service**

Queensland Investment Corporation bought Castle Towers Shopping Centre in 1990. It comprises 265 speciality stores and seven major stores, sixteen screen cinema and car parking for over 4,370 cars. It is Australia's most profitable complex.

The Hills District Youth Service (HDYS) is a community youth service providing programs, activities and services to young people across the Hills district.

### **2.6.3 Project Background**

Proposed developments for Castle Towers were met with some vocal opposition from local community groups in mid to late 1999. In particular, Christian lobbyists spoke out against the plan for inclusion of a "theme pub" at the shopping centre.

Castle Towers management expressed interest in consulting young people and working with them to market the centre. The Coordinator of HDYS invited the Manager of Castle Towers to meet to discuss working together on issues affecting young people. At that time, HDYS was also looking for a venue to operate from.

In the ensuing discussions, Castle Towers agreed to provide a venue for HDYS, at a "peppercorn" rent. Castle Towers also provided funding for a part-time youth worker (three days per week) managed by HDYS. This position commenced in November 1999.

The evaluator does not know whether HDYS documented the project at the time; there was however no documentation available at the time of the consultations for this evaluation. The Manager of Castle Towers at the time of the project said that guidelines for the position and accountability mechanisms had been documented and that this documentation would have been archived by QIC. The lack of available documentation on these key agreements between HDYS and Castle Towers makes it difficult to draw conclusions about the efficacy of this relationship and the processes that led to the youth project.

### **2.6.4 Project Aims**

In hindsight, HDYS believes the project aims were:

- to run joint projects and activities at Castle Towers; and
- to make contact with young people to enable the provision of further services from HDYS to young people.

Castle Towers management cites the following aims:

- to work with HDYS on youth related issues;
- to employ a youth worker for the purposes of consulting with young people; to find out what young people wanted in terms of safety and also retail outlets;
- to promote the centre as a safe place to young people as well as other customers;
- to work with the security company and young people on policies and practices; to identify the characteristics of the perfect security officer to work with young people. (Centre management at the time were very clear that they didn't want heavy handed security approaches);
- to look at risk related issues - in relation to public liability etc; and
- to create employment opportunities for young people through positive relationships between young people and retailers. The Castle Towers Manager saw the youth work position as assisting and supporting young people to develop relationships with retailers.

It is difficult to identify whether there was a shared understanding of the aims of the project - and of the Outreach Youth Worker position. At the start of the project the Manager of Castle Towers and the Coordinator of HDYS may have had a clear idea of the project. However due to changes in staff and lack of available documentation this could not be identified.

#### **2.6.5 Project Description**

The beginnings of the project saw the provision of a venue to house HDYS. The venue was situated just next to the shopping centre and provided by Castle Towers at a peppercorn rent. Castle Towers also funded a part-time Outreach Youth Worker position to work from the shopping centre three afternoons each week. This position, to be managed by HDYS, commenced in November 1999 and ended in December 2000. There was little evidence at the time of the evaluation as to whether Hills actually did manage the position.

#### **2.6.6 Project Management and Communication**

The stakeholders for the project were the HDYS Management Committee, Coordinator and part-time Youth Outreach Worker, and the Castle Towers management group. The project was managed on an informal basis with the Youth Worker providing a written report to the Castle Towers Manager on a monthly basis; this was seen as a way of maintaining accountability in relation to the funding provided for the position. At the commencement of the project monthly meetings took place between the Coordinator of HDYS, the Youth Worker and the Manager of Castle Towers. During this evaluation the previous Castle Towers Manager stated that both the local police and the local high schools were invited and sent representatives to the first few of these meetings.

#### **2.6.7 Project Resources**

Castle Towers funded a large percentage of the Outreach Youth Worker position. It also provided HDYS with space for the operation of its youth service at a peppercorn rent. Other project resources included in-kind contributions of publicity by the local press. HDYS and the Outreach Youth Worker were able to use Castle Towers as a location for activities and events.

### **2.6.8 Project Achievements**

The project achievements identified during consultations for this evaluation are as follows:

- young people came into contact with the Outreach Youth Worker at Castle Towers - and were then able to be tapped into other services;
- the securing of a venue - whether it was part of the project or not - was one of the reasons for the development of the relationship;
- the project was the beginning of breaking down barriers between Castle Towers management and young people;

### **2.6.9 Project Difficulties**

The project difficulties identified during consultations for this evaluation were:

- change of personnel, initially at HDYS and then at Castle Towers; this was seen as the greatest difficulty as it impacted on the partnership:
  - new personnel lacked the information to carry the project through;
  - new personnel had different ideas about the project - no perceived need for the project;
  - there was no relationship between the new manager and the youth worker, however the youth worker continued to provide service at Towers.

The project encountered a number of difficulties, which centred on changes to staff and a lack of project management. The HDYS Coordinator left about seven months into the project and not long after this the Manager of Castle Towers changed. The current Coordinator of HDYS said there were no files that he could find and the current management committee members at HDYS were not involved at the time of the project.

Both parties suggested that there was little planning and no clear written objectives. There was however a good relationship and an agreement at the time of the project between the Manager and the Coordinator. With the loss of both these key stakeholders the project faded. The relationship and agreement between the stakeholders appears to have been more of a relationship between the individuals rather than the organisations. A good relationship between individuals is unlikely to sustain a project like this without the capacity and the support of the stakeholder organisations.

### **2.6.10 Stakeholder Reflections**

On reflection the Manager of Castle Towers made a number of relevant suggestions for partnership projects in shopping centres:

- start off with a concrete list of objectives;
- develop a business plan or implementation plan;
- identify more accurately the current issues for all users and all stakeholders;
- hold a community forum to get other people's ideas;
- set up a small committee;
- identify skills and resources required;
- specify the role of the shopping centre, and the roles of all parties;
- reporting systems need to be in place - accountability, responsibility, measurability;
- it is also important to be able to measure success - success for both parties might be different;
- develop some generic policies for partnerships in shopping centres; and
- develop core fundamentals and some common practices re safety, complaints.

The relationship between Castle Towers management and HDYS was viewed by the current coordinator of HDYS as still being open and with future possibilities.



# 3 Methodology

Prior to the commencement of this evaluation, and in order to achieve its aims, YAPA had developed the broad methodological approach to the evaluation. The detailed methodology was finalised in collaboration with the evaluator. Six projects were to be evaluated including projects with a mix of different approaches. The broad approach was to conduct consultations with different groups of stakeholders through either focus groups or interviews. It was acknowledged that depending on the project and the audience some questions would be common to all groups and projects and other questions would need to be different.

The majority of the information used in the evaluation was collected directly by the evaluator during interviews and focus groups. All these consultations took place between September and December 2001. Where available, other information about the projects, such as reports and funding documents, were used.

This section of the report explains the overall methodology of the evaluation. It includes information on:

- each of the consultations with the key stakeholders;
- the consultations with young people; and
- the literature and data collection.

## **3.1 Key Youth Work Contacts**

At the commencement of the evaluation the evaluator phoned or interviewed face-to-face the youth worker involved in each project. This enabled background information about the project to be collected. Contact details for other stakeholders involved in the project were obtained from the youth worker.

## **3.2 Key Stakeholder Consultations**

For each project a consultation was held with key stakeholders including: shopping centre managers (past and present);

- youth workers;
- local council representatives;
- young people;
- security officers; and
- retailers.

The consultations were organised by making initial contact with individual stakeholders to discuss and explain the evaluation. An invitation was sent to each of the stakeholders, with a brief explanation of what the consultations would involve. The venues for the consultations varied, however most were held at the youth service involved in the project, or the management office of the shopping centre. For four of the projects, the evaluator visited the shopping centre to observe the setting for the project.

Key stakeholder consultations were held with as broad a representation of stakeholders as possible. This was primarily to enable the convergences and divergences of opinions regarding the project to be highlighted and to encourage a level of capacity and relationship building. Due to the passage of time since some of the projects, a number of stakeholders were difficult to contact; when this occurred alternatives were sought out and if appropriate followed up.

Consultations ran for between one and two hours. Focus questions were used to elicit discussion and all responses were recorded on paper. The themes for the consultations were:

- background and context to the project;
- a description of the project;
- the objectives of the project;
- project management and communication;
- the resources used;
- what worked and what didn't; and
- reflection.

(See *Appendix* for full questionnaire)

### **3.2.1. The Social Belonging Project**

The consultation was held at Penrith City Council. Representatives from the three key stakeholder groups were present including: Penrith Council, Fusion Australia and Penrith Plaza. The representatives of Fusion and Penrith Council had been involved at the time of the project. It would have been beneficial to speak with the previous Plaza Manager, so the evaluator contacted her in Britain, however, repeated attempts at sending and receiving the questionnaire were unsuccessful.

### **3.2.2 Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee**

The consultation was held at the Westpoint Blacktown management office and attended by Blacktown Council Community/Youth Planner and the Manager of Westpoint Blacktown. The Public Space Youth Committee was not in operation at the time, however the stakeholders present at this consultation were working together to re-establish the committee and had continued to have an ongoing relationship over the time the committee was not meeting.

### **3.2.3 Equal Space Project**

The consultation was held in a meeting room at Parks Community Network and attended by representatives of most of the groups involved in the project, including: Parks Community Network, Stockland, Fairfield City Council, Fairfield Liverpool Youth Health Team, McDonalds and Access Security. An evaluation of the Equal Space Project had already been undertaken and this report (Robinson and Chegwiddden 2001) was available to the evaluator. This consultation was the longest, running for two and a half hours. In many ways it was also the most beneficial in terms of process, particularly in regards to assisting with communication between stakeholders and as a way of wrapping up the project.

### **3.2.4 Parramatta CBD Project**

An initial interview was held with the Coordinator of the Parramatta Youth Project (PYP). This was followed by a consultation with Karabi Community & Development Services and PYP, held at PYP. The management at Westfield Parramatta was

contacted twice during the pre-consultation phase of the evaluation. Unfortunately the evaluator was unable to speak with anyone from Westfield.

### **3.2.5 Castle Hill**

An interview was held at the Hills District Youth Service with the current Coordinator. The Coordinator did not have very much information about the project and could not find any files relating to the project. The information collected was very sketchy. The previous Manager of Castle Towers was able to provide relevant and useful information regarding the project. He suggested that there was some written information, but that it would be archived.

## **3.3 Consultations with young people**

For three of the five projects (Social Belonging, Blacktown PSYC and Equal Space) consultation took place with young people who had been involved in some way in the project. In each case the consultation method was different.

The **Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee** consultation with young people was held with two members of the committee. The young people were contacted through the council Community/Youth Planner, who arranged for them to meet the evaluator at Westpoint Blacktown, in the management office. This consultation took the form of an interview, with the young people responding to specific questions and discussing their involvement in and opinions of the project. (See Appendix 2 for questionnaire)

The **Social Belonging Project** took place more than four years ago. The evaluator was aware that this would make contacting young people involved at the time difficult. The alternative was to make connection with a group of young people who frequented the Plaza to get their opinions about what was happening now. It would then be possible to use this anecdotal information to suggest whether the project had any lasting impacts. The Fusion Youth Services Coordinator spoke with the Coordinator of the Channel Youth Café (Fusion's CBD youth facility) who agreed to allow the evaluator to attend a drop-in session.

Consulting with some groups of young people requires a more informal approach. Given the nature of drop-in services, the youth worker was unable to guarantee who would be there or whether they would be willing to talk. The evaluator was able to speak with seven young people, two of whom had been around at the time of the project.

The **Equal Space Project** involved large numbers of young people. The evaluator attempted to make contact with young people who had been around at the time, through a number of channels. In the end staff at Parks Community Network, the project auspice, suggested talking with some of the young people who attended drop-in. The evaluator sent the questions to the youth worker who supervised the drop-in service, who had the trust of the young people. Two of the young people at the drop-in had been around at the time of the project and spoke briefly to the youth worker. This was written up and sent to the evaluator.

### **3.4 Literature Review and Data Collection**

A brief literature review was conducted and relevant findings have been included in the body of the report. Please see the bibliography.

Project data collected and analysed included:

- project information
- funding applications
- project reports
- demographic information
- media articles.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The evaluation has not been without its own difficulties. Consulting with stakeholders who are no longer part of a particular project poses problems in terms of collecting relevant information. At times the evaluator was able to track down previous shopping centre managers, or youth workers, or young people (who were of course no longer young people). At other times the evaluator was unable to speak to previous centre managers or youth workers or young people. When this occurred the evaluation of that particular project was more problematic.

# 4 The Broader Context

This evaluation has been undertaken in order to suggest better practice strategies for stakeholders, regarding the inclusion of young people in the community, that is the shopping centre. To do this it is necessary to understand young people, the community and the shopping centre in a socio-political context and to acknowledge the ways in which social disadvantage and social exclusion undermine participation and a sense of belonging.

The projects featured in this evaluation have all taken place in a particular context. This section of the report describes the environments impacting on shopping centres and the stakeholders involved in these spaces. The contextual landscape under consideration includes:

- Western Sydney;
- Young people;
- The shopping centre: a privately-owned public space;
- Law and order;
- Policing of privately-owned public spaces; and
- Rights and responsibilities.

## **4.1 Western Sydney**

The eleven local government areas (LGAs) of Western Sydney are: Auburn, Bankstown, Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Holroyd, Liverpool, Parramatta and Penrith. Over the last decade the Western Sydney area has experienced the highest rate of population growth of any area in Australia, with Blacktown, Liverpool and Baulkham Hills recording some of the highest rates of growth in NSW. (Greater Western Sydney Economic Development Board 2002)

Young people aged 12-24 make up just over 20% of the total population, with Baulkham Hills, Blacktown, Liverpool, Fairfield and Penrith having higher than average percentages of young people. Western Sydney is also the multicultural capital of the world, with over 34% of its residents speaking a language other than English. In the Fairfield LGA 67% of the population speak a language other than English. (YAPA 2001)

In relation to socio-economic status the region of Western Sydney is more disadvantaged overall in comparison to other regions in metropolitan NSW; with Blacktown and Auburn scores in particular reflecting;

- Relatively small proportions of households with high income or with a breadwinner in the trained workforce;
- More disadvantaged than the average LGA in metropolitan NSW; and
- A high proportion of people who are employed as tradespersons, labourers or related workers and have relatively low educational achievements. (YAPA 2001)

## **4.2 Young People**

Young people are not a homogenous group, they come from different ethnic backgrounds, different social and economic backgrounds and they have varying spiritual, sexual and cultural orientations. There are, however, aspects of being young that all young people share. Being a young person involves being in a period of transition - a transition from childhood to adulthood, from school to work, from diminished responsibility to responsibility. Some argue that,

*"The success of this transition relies on achievements and value in the adult world".* (King & Turner 1999)

An important part of the context of this evaluation is the broader context within which this transition takes place. What was once a reasonably straightforward period of transition, occurring within a particular set of boundaries for most young people, is now ever more complex and difficult.

*"The transition from dependence to independence is a dynamic and increasingly uncertain process that magnifies the tensions and difficulties experienced by young people as they move from youth to adulthood."* (Carsen, Fitzgerald & Roache 2000)

Globalisation has had a significant impact on the world we live in. It has affected the social structures and institutions of our society and has clearly had an impact on the way that governments, business, services and therefore communities view young people. (Carson, Fitzgerald & Roache 2000) What is occurring in this context for young people is:

- a reduction in services and facilities;
- a change in the concept of the labour market (with young people having less access to employment); and
- a redefinition of the rights and responsibilities of young people.

Like all people, young people are affected by these changes; with marginalised young people being more adversely affected. At the same time young people are typically caught up in the day-to-day interactions which make up their lives. For young people "the personal" and the related interactions, are of primary importance.

*"The immediacy of young people's personal situations is often so complex, the ability for them to address the broader causes of their problems is overwhelming. It is often the combination of young people's personal and social context that produces feelings of despair, alienation and hopelessness."* (King & Turner 1999)

Some young people, on the other hand, make a smooth transition from adolescence to adulthood. In order to do this young people need to experience choice. In order to move from dependence to independence, from diminished responsibility to responsibility, real choice and participation are essential. From a purely practical perspective this is closely connected to the way adults treat young people. Do adults believe that young people have something to give, do they explain things and encourage young people to make choices, do adults walk the talk (are they positive role models), are they able to support young people and are they fair? These

questions need to be asked and acted upon by those involved in shopping centre youth projects.

### **4.3 The Shopping Centre: A Privately-Owned Public Space**

There are many factors which impact on the way that public space is perceived and valued. Different groups develop their notions of public space through divergent value systems, different experiences, and their location within the social structure.

*"Shopping centres are usually owned by large private corporations and leased out to the operator/manager of the shopping centre. The lessor then allows the public to enter the premises during operating hours and use the facilities and space. It does this by granting to each member of the public an implied licence to be on the premises. Shopping centres have therefore been described as having a dual status as privately-owned public space." (Grant 2001)*

The shopping centre is the new town square, the realm for community life in 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia. What used to be public space is now more likely to be privately owned. There has also been an increase in the regulation of public spaces, but young people still need safe and interesting places to meet each other. At the same time there has been a decline in local services and facilities in some areas, and affordable accessible public recreational space is limited.

Young people view shopping centres as desirable and legitimate places to congregate. They tend to use these spaces for more than shopping. 'Hanging out' with friends - socialising - is a popular activity for most young people. Shopping centres also provide many of the essential services that are required by community members, including young people, for example banks, libraries, job agencies, Medicare etc. While young people do have a vested interest in spaces like shopping centres, it is about the way they live - and not about their work or their profit share. Young people are not a homogenous group and they are not bound by infrastructure and regulations of any corporate or non-government sector entity.

The main function of the shopping centre is to make money, but at the same time some owners and managers would agree that associated with this role is the responsibility to provide safe, enjoyable and useful spaces for interactions between all community members. Shopping centres, in addition to serving commercial interests, have a social function (Pearce 1997). For example "shopping centres have been evolving constantly and today they play an important role in the social, economic and cultural life of the community. We have to be cognisant of this responsibility and deal with the issues surrounding shopping centres in a manner that is acceptable to all sectors of the community." So said Frank Lowy, the Chief Executive of Westfield, in a speech at the Shopping Centre Leadership Summit in June 2001. The challenge is to act on these responsibilities.

If young people are viewed as valuable members of communities then the responsibility of owners should also include a responsibility to young people. From a social justice perspective it should focus on the inclusion of all young people, but take into consideration the needs of young people who are more marginalised and therefore less likely to be included. If a young person comes to the shopping centre but cannot afford to consume, do they have a right to be there? If some older

members of the community see a group of young people as undesirable or scary - do these young people have a right to be there?

Shopping centres are a legitimate place for young people to congregate and spend time. Most young people would not question this belief. However there are strong feelings in many communities that young people are a threat when they 'hang out' in shopping centres. The feelings of fear felt by many have had the affect of shaping responses to young people on many levels. The levels of fear felt are out of all proportion to the reality. A number of well know commentators on the topic of social capital have commented on the levels of fear felt by individual community members, particularly in relation to the increased fear of crime, as being more indicative of the general levels of social mistrust in a community (Cox 1995). These commentators agree with many involved in the issues of public/private space that practices of inclusion and engagement of the community will lead to benefits for all involved.

The "policing" of shopping centres is discussed in section 4.5, after looking more generally at law and order issues.

#### **4.4 Law and Order**

At a social and political level over the last decade a great deal of adult response to young people has been in the form of exclusion. These responses are often reactions to specific incidents, which may work in the short term. However, these types of responses do not encourage considered, planned and strategic ideas, projects, policies, or long term solutions to the underlying issues.

In relation to the policing of young people, the legal control of young people has been promoted as a key goal of the parliament, the media and law enforcement services throughout the course of the 1990s and the early 2000s. During this period a dominant idea of "law and order common sense" has developed (Hogg & Brown 1998). This idea promotes the control of young people and sees difference and deviance as an appropriate job for police and private security services. Over this time also, the police have been given expanded powers through several Acts of the NSW State Parliament. The alternative view might be one that looks at the young person's right to, or need for, a good education, health care, employment, support services and a sense of belonging in the community.

Adult perceptions of young people come from many sources. One of the ways that people form opinions about other people is through their personal experiences. If an elderly person has ongoing contact with a young person, they may be in a better position to understand more about not only that young person, but also other young people. There are many elderly people and adults in our community who do not have a close relationship with a young person. This of course works the other way round - there are many young people who don't have close relationships with elderly people or other adults. It could also be argued that adults and young people generally have less contact with each other than they used to, particularly in public spaces. There is less public space available in which to meet and interact as community members, particularly open, unregulated public spaces. The "shopping centre" is a different type of space, primarily a place to consume, and those with money to spend are welcome.

This lack of contact and personal experience, combined with law and order politicking and the media's representation of young people, forms the foundation for many of the responses to young people, both at a personal and political level. In turn, more and more, the messages that many young people receive from individuals and institutions are negative; the image is that they are not to be trusted, they are irresponsible, violent and lazy. The way young people are treated has an impact on the way they feel and behave - these negative messages can become self-fulfilling prophecies.

#### **4.5 Policing of Privately-owned Public Spaces**

The legal status of a young person in a shopping centre is roughly equivalent to 'guest' whereas their legal status in true public space is that of 'citizen'. Individuals are welcome in privately-owned public space so long as the owner of that space (represented by the shopping centre management) does not revoke the implied 'invitation' that it has extended to the public to be present. Essentially, a withdrawal of the 'invitation' converts an individual's status to that of trespasser - a condition which cannot exist in public space. Therefore, behaviour in this hybrid space is regulated largely through the use of private security forces, utilising centre rules, warnings, banning and the exercise of social power rather than the traditional tools of caution and arrest. This gives centre management, and through delegation, the security services they use, a broader discretion to monitor and control behaviour than the police have in publicly-owned space.

Within this context many issues have been raised about the policing of young people in shopping centres. Security officers (security guards) have a great deal of contact with young people. The form that this contact takes, along with the policies of the centre, will determine what types of relationship security officers and young people have. At their best security officers will focus on customer service and the safety of all users, but in many cases they simply enforce the centre rules.

In 1999, as part of the Western Sydney Public Space Project, YAPA undertook consultations with young people and security officers (YAPA 1999). The aim of the consultations was to identify the needs of both groups, with a view to using this information as the foundation of a security officer training module. The key finding of the consultations related to the manner in which security officers approached and interacted with young people. Each individual interaction is vital and all the actions that take place in any given interaction are key to future interactions. It is the evaluator's opinion that in any interaction between a security officer and a young person the security officer is the responsible adult and should take the lead in modelling a positive respectful approach.

Young people often do not understand the role of the security officer, and/or the rules of the centre. This lack of information in certain circumstances could exacerbate conflict within the centre and with security officers. Young people need clear messages about what's expected and they need to be given an opportunity to have input into rules, policies and practices. If young people are excluded from the shopping centre they are not only curtailed in their socialising, but their access to basic services is affected, and for some young people their ability to do the family shopping or even access their place of employment can be affected.

If the centre has a policy of exclusion rather than inclusion this is likely to increase negative interactions between security officers and young people. As security officers

feel the pressure to respond to young people's behaviour (whether it be exuberant, anti-social or criminal), on behalf of managers and other users, they will be more likely to transgress the basic rights of young people, leading to a cycle of conflict and confrontation. The outcome of this for young people is further exclusion through interactions and the potential increase in banning notices.

*"There are no regulations, guidelines, or procedures or any method of accountability governing the issuing of banning notices. The operators and security guards have an open-ended discretion, with some banning notices given to young people not referring to any reasons for the ban and those that do, stating such vague notions as "anti-social behaviour" or "obstructing traffic flow". A notice recently issued to a young person listed "suspicious behaviour" as the reason for the ban. The length of bans also varies greatly without any apparent linkage between the penalty and the alleged conduct, with bans ranging from between six months and two years and even going as far as lifetime bans at some centres. (Grant 2001)*

Further, stories of confrontational approaches on the part of security officers - and the impact this has on young people's lives - contributes significantly to the perspective of youth workers, and to their relations with shopping centres and security firms.

#### **4.6 Rights and Responsibilities**

The idea that young people are only afforded their rights if and when they are 'responsible' is having an increasingly negative effect on young people. Young people more than adults learn through their experiences of success and failure; they learn through their mistakes. If adults expect young people to be responsible, then they need to remember that this happens through a learning process and over time; and that as adults there is a responsibility to encourage this learning.

A system of laws needs to be based on inalienable human rights, rights which are universal and held by all because we are all human:

*"The selective or discriminatory application of basic rights does indeed undermine social responsibility, and social cohesion". (Anderson, Campbell & Turner 1999)*

*"Rights cannot be diminished by a person's individual misconduct, or failure to respect the rights of others." (Anderson, Campbell & Turner 1999)*

If there are groups or individuals in our society that are able to select if and when a person or group should be afforded their basic rights, the effect is likely to be an undermining of social responsibility. Alternatively if the rights of the person or group are respected this creates a powerful opportunity for socialisation.

Young people's rights are non-negotiable, and young people, by virtue of the fact they are young, should have decreased responsibilities and be afforded more protections. It could be said that young people generally have a responsibility not to harm others; the same could be said of adults. Young people usually have less life experience than adults and they are still learning what it is to be responsible. Just as

children have decreased responsibility and more protection in society, young people should not be expected to have the same degree of responsibility as adults. At the same time young people are learning about responsibility, and the way our society responds to and interacts with young people will influence their ability to become responsible adults.

What of the rights and responsibilities of the shopping centre? There is some disagreement about the status of the shopping centre. A number of academics and practitioners (Grant 2001, Booth 2001) have described the 'shopping centre' as having a dual status: that of privately-owned public space. It is therefore difficult to agree on what rights the shopping centre does have. However, many centre managers agree that they have a responsibility to the community because of their status.

One document based on an exploration of youth and centre rights and responsibilities is the Myer Centre Youth Protocol (Crane, Adkins & Marsden 2000). Myer Centre management, Brisbane City Council and the Youth Affairs Network of Queensland endorsed this protocol. The protocol sets out guidelines between the key players, on conduct, tenets of understanding of the rights and responsibilities of each party and processes for the implementation of the protocol.

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

The context for 21<sup>st</sup> century shopping centre projects is complex and contentious. Shopping centre youth projects will be affected by this context, and in turn projects themselves can impact on the context. The inclusion and participation of young people in communities is vital for their overall sense of belonging and their well being. The stakeholders involved in projects need to be well informed about their communities and society if projects are to have positive, significant and lasting impacts for the community.



# 5 Findings and Discussion:

## The Experience of Five Shopping Centre Youth Projects in Western Sydney

### 5.1 Introduction

This section of the report presents the findings of the evaluation and offers some comparison and contrast between the projects. The discussion highlights the needs and expectations of the stakeholders and the relationships between the stakeholders. The achievements and difficulties arising in the course of setting up and implementing the projects are also discussed. For each project the youth workers, shopping centre management, security officers, retailers, young people and community members were involved (to differing degrees) and/or recognised as stakeholders in the projects. Each of the projects was different: they were set up for different reasons, used different underlying principles, approaches and strategies, faced different problems, set up different opportunities and achieved different results (see table below).

The aspects most in common in the projects were:

- all were initiated by youth services, with varying degrees of commitment and involvement from shopping centres;
- all attempted to consult with young people and incorporate their perspective's;
- all experienced challenges relating to young people's participation; and
- four of the five projects included outreach youth work.

At this point all the projects diverge.

Whether the projects can be considered "successes" or "failures" pertains to the specific detail of each project and its context (see *Project Profiles*, Section 2). However, we can ascertain from the experiences of the projects:

*That the success or failure of such projects hinges on the nature of relationships between stakeholders, the capacity of the stakeholder groups and the articulation of clear objectives.*

## The projects at a glance

Project & partners	Model	Aims	Main activities	Management	Funding
<p><b>Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC)</b></p> <p>Westpoint Blacktown, Council Community/ Youth Planner</p>	Partnership & young people's participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication between young people and centre management</li> <li>• Involve stakeholders</li> <li>• Create a more harmonious environment</li> <li>• Improve Westpoint's sales to young people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Setting up of the PSYC</li> <li>• Consultations</li> <li>• Education through media and as arising from PSYC meetings</li> </ul>	PSYC: made up of young people and stakeholders	In kind - eg. commitment of staff time
<p><b>Castle Hill Project</b></p> <p>Castle Towers, Hills District Youth Service</p>	Partnership/ Outreach & off-site venue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To run joint projects and work on youth related issues</li> <li>▪ To consult with young people</li> <li>▪ To promote the centre as a safe place</li> <li>▪ Develop security policies</li> <li>▪ Create employment opportunities for young people</li> </ul>	Outreach Youth Worker in shopping centre	Agreement and informal meetings	Castle Towers funded part-time youth worker & still provides venue for youth service
<p><b>Parramatta CBD Project</b></p> <p>Parramatta Youth Services Network</p>	Outreach Action research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To better understand issues for young people in CBD</li> <li>• Promoting young people's issues to the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outreach streetwork</li> </ul>	Parramatta Youth Services Network	In-kind (staffing); leading to Attorney General's funding for STREETZ report
<p><b>Social Belonging</b></p> <p>Penrith Plaza, Fusion</p>	Partnership building Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CBD youth work</li> <li>• Promote young people's issues to the community</li> <li>• Service contact for young people</li> <li>• Advocacy for young people's issues in public space</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Streetwork</li> <li>• Events and activities</li> <li>• Referral and support</li> <li>• Stakeholder contact</li> <li>• Security training</li> </ul>	Strong commitments; informal	\$10,000 per year for three years from Plaza
<p><b>Equal Space</b></p> <p>Stockland Wetherill Park, Parks Community Network</p>	Partnership Project & On-site office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To work together - develop more constructive relationships between stakeholders and young people from NESB</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programs and activities</li> <li>• Technology centre</li> <li>• Tuition</li> <li>• Security policies and procedures</li> </ul>	Parks Community Network two committees	\$100,000 CRC and HREOC, low rent office & in kind from both partners

## **5.2 Key Issues and Themes**

The main stakeholders in the realm of the shopping centre (at least for the purposes of this report) are: youth workers, young people, centre managers, retailers, security officers and other community members. Each group has its own particular investment in the space. How this is expressed and understood (or not) and how the relationships between the groups have been played out in these projects reveal a complex dynamic. It is vitally important to understand and unpack the set of interactions that occur between these stakeholders as the very starting point for successful shopping centre youth projects.

The issues and themes highlighted through the consultations with stakeholders were:

- *the need to develop working relationships, ie. to work in partnership and to work at partnerships;*
- *the need to establish and articulate transparent goals or objectives; and*
- *the importance of building the capacity of the stakeholder groups.*

The issues are very closely linked and in order to deal effectively with them, they need to be seen as integrally related to each other.

## **5.3 Why address youth issues in shopping centres? A look at stakeholder perspectives, issues and opportunities**

This section outlines the varying perspectives of the stakeholders and discusses some of the issues and opportunities that arose during the projects.

### **5.3.1 Centre Management**

Shopping centre management, in the main, perceives its role as providing a safe, secure and uninterrupted shopping experience, in order to maximise profit and the centre's reputation as a shopping destination. Shopping centre management is also required to implement changes in approaches on the part of the owners of the shopping centre.

A coercive or strict security approach has been used by most shopping centres at different times. The needs and expectations of centre managers who adopt this approach are heavily focused on the centre's reputation and the maximisation of profit. Their perceptions of young people rely heavily on general community attitudes and media stereotyping, as well as on the young person as a potential consumer.

The view of young people as a problem to be controlled in shopping centres, needs to be balanced by an understanding of the social role of shopping centres in society. Centres need to attract young people for their survival. How they manage these young people once attracted is important. The experiences of young people and those around them in shopping centres are important. A community partnership approach with youth services can help address these issues.

In recent years the role and expectations of the shopping centre manager to assist with the development of community well-being and sense of belonging has expanded. This is due to the position the shopping centre as "owner" of public or quasi-public space. An important part of this approach is an acknowledgment that

what takes place in the broader community should impact on the operation of the centre (White, Kosky & Kosky 2001). This community approach by managers is premised on the idea that improved centre-community relations will facilitate provision of a positive shopping and social environment. It acknowledges that traditional coercive or strict security approaches are inappropriate and ineffective at achieving long-term change.

Westpoint Blacktown, Penrith Plaza, Stockland Wetherill Park and Castle Towers are examples of shopping centres that have supported a community-centred approach in an attempt to benefit all stakeholders. It is important to note, however, that it was youth services that initiated the community partnerships in three of these four partnership projects. In one project the shopping centre indicated interest in an idea arising from YAPA, so at a local level they initiated the project. One project failed to establish a relationship with the shopping centre. It is one thing for a centre to support a community approach, but quite a different matter for the centre to form a community partnership and provide resources for that partnership.

A community approach is not something that happens for a short period and then it's over. It is a philosophy that needs to shape the operation of an organisation over the long-term. In the four projects which involved the shopping centre management, two projects operated for one year (Castle Hill and Equal Space), one for three years (Social Belonging), and one is still operating at a reduced level (Blacktown PSYC). At Stockland Wetherill Park a new project, involving contact with management, started after the Equal Space Project.

In some of the centres there is still some contact between youth services and management but not at anything like the level that could be called a partnership. The reason for partnerships only being short-term was in some cases due to changes in centre management, with new personnel not placing as much importance on the community approach. Other partnerships ended due to external funding ending, or other factors.

Shopping centre managers are required to run a tight ship - to produce efficient, effective outcomes for the owners, the retailers and the shoppers. The corporate approach needs to be juggled alongside of what is required from a community approach. The manager of a centre may request very specific project outlines and objectives and will want to be sure about what some of the outcomes are going to be and how these outcomes will benefit them.

### **5.3.2 Youth Workers and Youth Services**

The needs and expectations of youth workers in relation to shopping centres are directly linked to their work with young people (as well as to the limits of their role set out by their managing service and its funding agreement). The reason youth workers are involved in shopping centres is because young people are. The expectations held by youth workers are often directly informed by those of the young people they work with. Further, youth workers routinely experience their interactions with young people in relation to a problem or set of problems that the young people are experiencing.

If young people feel like they are being stereotyped and targeted in the shopping centre, eg. because of their exuberance or their cultural background, then youth workers will work with these young people to try to address the problems this raises. If this means working with the shopping centre to improve the situation for the young

person, and the youth worker is able to do this in their role, then the worker will attempt this work. The needs and expectations of the youth worker are directly linked to the expectations of the service they work for. The needs and expectations of the youth worker and the service also relate to the capacity of both to be able to undertake the work required.

Having touched on what motivates youth workers to work with shopping centres it is useful to explore how this happened in the five projects. In its inception, the Social Belonging Project involved the work of the Penrith Youth Interagency and the needs and expectations of many workers and services in relation to meeting young people's needs in the Penrith CBD. This was similar to the Parramatta CBD Project, which also began as a result of the youth interagency's (PYSN's) concerns for young people in the Parramatta CBD. These projects initially attempted to bring youth workers from a number of agencies together to provide outreach to young people in and around the respective shopping centres.

The experiences of the youth workers and agencies involved in the five projects were very different. A common issue was the level of skills of youth workers in working with centre management. Parramatta Youth Services Network's approach to Westfield management took the form of a simple phone call and when this led to a rebuff, no further action was taken to establish contact. This was also due to the fact that the youth workers already had significant workloads so devoting time to building a relationship was difficult.

Of the five projects, Fusion's Social Belonging Project had the most success at building relationships with centre management. There were several meetings with the management of Penrith Plaza. Fusion had already done some streetwork in the area and had relevant knowledge and experience. During discussions with centre management Fusion prepared a well-written project proposal. The need for youth agencies to document and formalise relationships was frequently raised during the consultations for this evaluation. The lack of documentation was a real issue in the Castle Hill Project.

Youth workers involved in some of the projects, most notably Equal Space, found it difficult to balance the role of advocate for young people with the need to build relationships with centre management. This will always be a tension as youth workers and centre management have very different types of relationships with young people.

There are difficulties for any youth worker who has the dual role of project coordinator and youth advocate. If the project also involves a number of partners who have no knowledge or understanding of youth advocacy, then these difficulties can become major stumbling blocks. Depending on the level of experience and the capacity of the youth worker, this notion of undertaking project work and youth advocacy in an already complex arena, may also be difficult for the worker. The capacity of the youth service will also impact on the capacity of the youth worker.

The Equal Space Project highlighted the issues that can arise when a youth organisation operates a youth space in a shopping centre. Stockland Wetherill Park provided office space for the Equal Space youth worker as part of a cinema development. Even though it was not a base for youth activities, the office attracted young people. This had more to do with the needs of a group of young people and the worker's desire to meet those needs. This use of the space ended up creating

dilemmas for the security officers, the young people, the youth worker, centre management and for the overall management of the project. This is not to say that at times it didn't meet the needs of the young people frequenting the office. In the Social Belonging Project, Fusion and Penrith Plaza management considered the pros and cons of establishing a youth specific space in the centre. Fusion believed that it was better to focus on the existing partnership and look for youth space elsewhere in Penrith. Getting centre management to accept this view was seen as significant. During the course of the project, Fusion obtained funding to set up a café near the Plaza.

### 5.3.3 Security Officers

Security officers (security guards) play an important role in the shopping centre. Their needs and expectations - as with youth workers and centre managers - relate closely to their role, which is to facilitate the public's safe use of facilities.

The needs and expectations of security officers were for the most part not considered by the projects. The Social Belonging Project attempted as one of its aims to work closely with security officers, but in the long run this was unsuccessful. The 'Equal Space Project failed to include security officers from the beginning, however it was successful in reviewing the security policies of the centre. The Blacktown PSYC Project reported success at improving youth-security relations. The Parramatta CBD Project was never able to develop a working relationship with either centre management or security officers.

### 5.3.4 Young People

The needs and expectations of young people in the context of the shopping centre vary. As mentioned in the introduction, young people are not a homogenous group. A tension and a challenge, for both this evaluation process and for the five projects, has been: *How can you establish a "youth perspective" on this? How do you formalise youth participation, especially given diversity and given the fact their vested interests are neither formalised nor related to capital?*

---

A few points need noting here:

1. Centre management, security officers and youth workers all have the backing of formal infrastructures; young people do not.
2. Each of them perceives young people in relation to the relevant infrastructure and what it is designed to protect or achieve. (To play devil's advocate - they are all **paid** to see young people in a particular light).
3. The nature of their work (youth workers and security officers in particular) can encourage an unbalanced view of young people as going hand-in-hand with "problems".
4. Young people's investment in corporately-owned public space is somewhat ironic; of the four stakeholder groups described here, young people's needs and expectations are the most personally held.

---

The focus groups with young people for three of the projects suggest that young people's expectations around shopping centres are based upon their need to socialise - they need entertainment, friends, fun, food, safety, and spaces in which to express themselves physically, intellectually, romantically, socially, culturally, and spiritually. Young people also said they often have to *demand* their rights to be

treated fairly and to be given information - two things that facilitate the making of positive choices. The focus groups confirmed that young people's needs are complex and many. The single, presenting issue in terms of their use of public space is the impact of the day-to-day interactions in those spaces on their lives and on their experience of rights and responsibilities.

In relationship to each of the projects young people's involvement in the project management was minimal. Equal Space had youth representation on the project steering committee (for a short time). This project also sought young people's opinions about activities and involved young people in some of the planning and evaluation of activities. The Blacktown PSYC was a committee of young people and although this committee provided a means for management to work with young people around centre issues and relationships, ultimately the young people were frustrated rather than empowered. The Social Belonging Project worked closely with young people through organised activities, specifically theatre. The young people involved developed skills and had enhanced direct experience with adults in their community. It also had the effect of raising the positive profile of young people in Penrith. One of the issues raised in the Parramatta consultation was the difficulty of involving young people in project work (especially more marginalised young people) on an ongoing basis. It is the evaluator's opinion that if there are a variety of mechanisms and support available for participation, then a young person will be more able to make the choice of whether to participate or not.

### **5.3.5 Other Community Members**

The needs and expectations of other community members, in relationship to the shopping centre, are diverse, including access to services, food, shelter, safety, shops and a space to socialise. Some community members are concerned about the behaviour of young people; others are concerned just by the presence of young people; and others still by the appearance of some young people. Older people can be particularly fearful, often because of their frailty. They may have expectations that security officers will curb the exuberant behaviours of young people and move certain young people on.

Over the last decade the impact of privatisation, political law and order campaigns and the media's portrayal of young people has increasingly led people to believe that many young people are out of control, criminal and should be feared. (Whittington 1997) These constructs have had an enormous impact on people's perceptions. In the realm of the shopping centre this has meant that many community members are not able to view young people as members of their community. This, in turn, affects the way other users of the shopping centre choose to interact, or not, with young people. It would appear that many people place the responsibility for young people primarily in the hands of others. In the shopping centre, the responsibility is seen as belonging to security officers, police and centre managers.

### **5.3.6 Stakeholders with Different Interests**

Each of the stakeholders in the five projects had different sets of needs and interests. The opportunity for stakeholders to articulate and to understand each other's needs and expectations was rarely taken (or given). This was most apparent in projects that reported experiencing greater difficulties.

*There can be no effective communication processes established - eg. "to agree to disagree" - to assist the likelihood of a project's success unless all partners and stakeholders work very hard to understand each other's needs and expectations and agree on project objectives from the start.*

It may be the case that project partners do not want the same outcomes, however the overall objectives need to be clear to both. At least project partners need 'to agree to disagree'.

The needs and expectations of stakeholders are closely linked to the approaches utilised by each of the projects. World wide there has been a number of different approaches to young people's use of public/private space and to the conflicts that arise in these spaces. The key approaches or interventions are outlined below.

### **Approaches to tensions relating to young people in public places**

<b>Coercive approaches</b>	
Emphasis	Crime control
Key concepts	Deterrence, opportunity reduction and exclusion of trouble makers
Main players	Police, security officers, transit police
Young people	Seen as a problem or a threat
Key methods	Heavy policing, youth curfews or banning
Key problems	Offence displacement, denial of youth rights, stigmatisation of young people

<b>Developmental approaches</b>	
Emphasis	Dealing with social problems
Key concepts	Youth participation, opportunity enhancement and inclusion of all young people
Main players	Schools, local councils, parents, young people
Young people	Seen as part of the community and as part of the solution
Key methods	Developing positive options in school, work and leisure
Key problems	Lack of resources, multi-agency coordination, getting young people to take action

<b>Accommodating approaches</b>	
Emphasis	Dealing with immediate conflicts
Key concepts	Negotiation, stakeholder interaction, multi-agency cooperation
Main players	Shopkeepers, managers, local councils, police, security officers, young people
Young people	Seen as legitimate stakeholders and users of public space
Key methods	Open lines of communication, use of youth advocates, provision of youth services
Key problems	Issue of 'community' spaces and private interests, commercialisation of leisure

(National Crime Prevention 1999: 9)

An analysis of the five projects in this evaluation reveals that more often than not there are different approaches by different stakeholders (because of different values, needs and expectations), which are not expressed or understood. Shopping centre management, and thus the security they contract, tended to operate from a coercive approach (although one centre operated from more of a developmental approach).

Youth services tended to operate from a developmental perspective and in some projects sought to build partnerships in line with the accommodating approach. These projects were not successful in this as the necessary depth of partnership with centre management and security was absent. When there are stakeholders with such different perspectives, confusion and difficulties often arise. It is the evaluator's opinion that each of the projects experienced some confusion and difficulty because stakeholders' differing values and expectations were not communicated.

It is difficult to identify the needs and expectations of the stakeholders in each of the projects. This is most likely the case because it was not something that the project partners understood to be of importance. What can be raised is the fact that:

*when difficulty or conflict arose in a project it was then that stakeholders started to voice their needs and expectations. At this point it is probably too late in terms of the level of project achievement and project outcomes.*

## **5.4 Stakeholder Relations and Communication**

The difficulties and conflicts, achievements and outcomes that transpired for each of the projects relates closely to the depth and effectiveness of relationships developed between partners. Without mechanisms for ongoing communication throughout the life of the project the formation and maintenance of working relationships was more uncertain.

This section of the report looks at the communication and the relationships involved in the projects, and discusses these in view of project difficulties and achievements.

### **5.4.1 Centre Management and the Youth Service and Worker**

In each of the projects, the relationship between the youth service and the centre management emerged as key to the success and/or difficulty that projects experienced. Each of the projects - at the instigation of the youth service - attempted to develop this relationship. Some of the projects managed to formalise the relationship (Equal Space and Blacktown PSYC); others were able to make agreements and get commitments (Social Belonging and Castle Hill); while one was unable to forge a relationship (Parramatta CBD Project). In the case of Parramatta, the informants reported that, looking back, the lack of communication with the centre manager proved a most significant stumbling block.

#### **Social Belonging**

Penrith Plaza and Fusion developed a relationship in which there was commitment from both parties, especially at the commencement of the project. Both parties were able to gain an insight into the other's perspectives, languages and styles. This also assisted Fusion in its communication with young people about the Plaza. The partnership also had an impact at statewide and national levels, which helped to legitimise the role of youth services in working with shopping centres. The level that the partnership was taken to sets Social Belonging apart from the other projects. This was primarily to do with the capacity of the youth worker and youth service and that worker's links and networks with stakeholders at a broader level. This in itself is

another set of relationships, which can impact on the issues for young people and other stakeholders in privately-owned public space.

The demise of the partnership and relationships was due to a number of factors:

- a change in personnel;
- the lack of a management structure and ongoing communication;
- a change in the nature of Fusion's Youth Service; and
- the securing of funding by Fusion for a Penrith CBD youth facility (which was one of the reasons for the commencement of the partnership in the first place).

### Blacktown PSYC

The Blacktown Public Space Youth Committee (PSYC) Project improved relationships between stakeholders. All those consulted believed that the PSYC, generally, reached its aim to provide a forum for ongoing communication between all stakeholders.

The Blacktown PSYC Project, of all the projects, has achieved a long-term benefit: there is a working relationship between the Westpoint Manager and the Council Community/Youth Planner. Since the winding up of the PSYC, the Manager and the Community/Youth Planner have been undertaking ongoing informal consultation with some young people who were not members of the PSYC.

The PSYC was not operating at the time of the evaluation, but stakeholders were keen to get it back off the ground with a more practical focus. When the evaluator spoke to the young people who had been on the PSYC, the two main problems they highlighted were a lack of practical tasks to undertake, and the need for more marginalised groups of young people to be included in some way. The Blacktown PSYC Project partnership lacked a clear understanding of the needs of the young people involved and at the time was unable to come up with creative ways to involve more marginalised groups of young people.

The Council Community/Youth Planner and the Westpoint Manager cite the Blacktown experience as a "model" for corporate/community relationships. The evaluator believes that this "model" would need to be looked at more closely in order to decide whether this is the case.

### Equal Space

The Equal Space Project was the only project to be funded for a full-time youth worker, the only project to operate an on-site office, and the only project with a fixed timeframe. It was a complex project, involving many stakeholders and therefore many relationships. The project attempted a great deal in a short space of time, in a difficult environment.

The relationship between Parks Community Network and Stockland management changed during the course of the project. The Stockland Manager was in contact with Parks Community Network as a member of the project steering committee and in this way the relationship was quite formal. However, Equal Space was complicated by the youth worker being on-site. A great deal of communication took place between the youth worker and the security officers, the security officers and young people, and the youth worker and young people.

It is the evaluator's opinion that a project such as this requires a long lead up period in order to develop understanding and relationships. The project experienced

difficulties because issues arose between stakeholders, which were not dealt with. There were no formal communication methods for dealing with disputes. This resulted in relationships between some stakeholders being strained and unproductive. The problems for the project stemmed essentially from a lack of understanding between the stakeholders, and a lack of clear project objectives. This, together with the location of the youth office on-site and the complex role of the youth worker, made the project, for all involved, an experience they would not like to repeat. It needs to be said here that Equal Space achieved a great deal. However, for many of the stakeholders these achievements were difficult to see.

At the completion of the Equal Space consultation, all those involved were much more willing to move forward and were open to working together in the future.

#### Parramatta CBD Project

As mentioned previously, relationships take time to develop and often the more time spent on the development of a working relationship the more productive the relationship. The Parramatta CBD Project did not lead to the development of a relationship between the shopping centre management and the youth services and youth workers. Parramatta Youth Services Network (PYSN) made contact with Westfield management in an attempt to discuss the needs of young people congregating near the shopping centre. The PYSN were put off by the Westfield response to their request to discuss “young people's needs”. They did not persevere in their attempts to involve Westfield management. It is the evaluator's opinion that PYSN's initial approach may have been too challenging for Westfield management; the request to discuss young people's needs was met with a very direct and defensive response which was basically “we have our own way of dealing with young people”. Without ever having met each other, the idea (to Westfield management) of talking (probably over the phone) about young people's needs could have seemed both presumptuous and inappropriate.

Another aspect of the Parramatta CBD Project to consider, in terms of the abilities of the stakeholders to form relationships, is when it took place. In 1993 there had been very little talk between youth services and shopping centres about the issues involved in young people's use of privately-owned public space. There were few examples of how to go about this and little information about what the issues actually were.

#### Castle Hill

The Castle Hill project was set up primarily between two people: the Hills District Youth Service Coordinator and the Castle Towers Manager at the time. Communication took place on a reasonably informal and personal basis and there was little in the way of formalised communication. For example, there was no formal written project brief or clear set of objectives. This relationship broke down when the Coordinator left and soon after the Manager moved on. What this points to in the relationship between shopping centre management and the youth service is that no matter what the project looks like and how positive the relationships are at the time - circumstances change.

Most of the projects experienced change in personnel. This affected Castle Hill, Equal Space and Social Belonging and as a result each project experienced difficulties. In relationship to Castle Hill it meant the end of the project, as funding for the youth worker ceased soon after this relationship ended. Social Belonging, on the other hand, experienced a change in personnel at two points in the project. Firstly

this change occurred at the same time as a number of other occurrences that impacted on the project; and the second personnel change resulted in the end of the partnership. The Equal Space Project also experienced changes to key stakeholders during the project. These changes created difficulties for the other stakeholders in what was already a very complex project.

#### General issues

As a result of the evaluation of individual projects, a number of general issues can be raised for discussion.

If projects are based simply on the relationship between two or three people then the departure of one of them is likely to impact heavily on a project. If on the other hand the individuals involved have the support and involvement of their organisations, then staff changes are likely to create less difficulty. It is desirable that there are agreements in relation to the project roles and responsibilities at an organisational level. This does more to ensure that the loss of a particular person does not create unnecessary problems for a project. These agreements need to be written, understood and signed by both parties.

There is a close link between the relationships that developed and the capacities of the organisations and people involved. A number of the projects faced difficulties because at different points the capacity of one of the main stakeholders was not sufficiently developed. As previously mentioned, youth projects in shopping centres raise complex issues. The abilities of the organisations and the workers to tackle both the project and the issues need to be examined before and during the project.

Another aspect of the relationship between the youth service and the shopping centre management that was highlighted during the evaluation was the need to set clear objectives that are understood by the partners. When setting project objectives, both parties need to be honest and open in communicating their wants and needs. The objectives of the project should be clear enough so that both groups have an understanding of what the project is setting out to achieve.

The language and style differences that occur between the community sector and the private sector are pronounced. Time spent attempting to understand these differences will benefit projects. For example, a shopping centre manager understanding the concept of youth advocacy could be a useful thing for shopping centre youth projects. The youth worker who has some understanding of the language and the role of the shopping centre manager will be much better placed to develop an effective relationship.

#### **5.4.2 Young People and Security Officers**

Young people use shopping centres differently to most adults. The primary reason young people frequent shopping centres is to socialise. Therefore, the most important relationship that takes place for young people in the shopping centre is their relationship with friends and peers.

It is because of this need to socialise with friends that the relationship between the security officer and the young person is also a key relationship for the young person. It is this relationship that is arguably the one that has the greatest impact on young people using privately-owned public space. The security officer is, for most young people, the face of the centre and its management and shapes their view of the

centre as an entity. If the young person has a difficult relationship with a security officer the outcome might be that the young person could no longer socialise with her or his friends.

The four projects that worked with centre management had as an aim improving the relationship between young people and security. Each project attempted to deal with the relationships in a different way and had different levels of success and some serious difficulties.

The Social Belonging Project partners believed that the relationship between security and young people improved over the duration of the project. This was due to the raised positive profile of young people and the relationships between centre management, security and youth workers. During the consultation for this evaluation, a number of the young people said that recently things had gotten worse. They thought more young people were being banned for things that were not serious. The issue of increased banning was followed up in discussion with the current Plaza Marketing Manager. According to her there had been a significant increase in banning over the last six months, with as many as twenty young people in some months being banned for periods of up to two years.

The question cannot really be answered: Did the improvement in relationships between security officers and young people during the project have any lasting impact? The evaluator believes that it is worthwhile noting that the young people were able to make a distinction between security officers that treated them fairly and others that did not.

The impetus for the Blacktown PSYC Project was YAPA's report on the interactions between young people and security (Turner & Campbell 1999). The Blacktown PSYC Project claimed the relationships between young people and security officers had changed for the better. Westpoint Blacktown, its security firm and local young people have a greater understanding of each other's needs and viewpoints. Indicators of this include a reduction in punitive interventions by the security officers, as well as satisfaction reported by PSYC members and retailers.

The Equal Space Project at Wetherill Park had as one of its desired outcomes the review of the shopping centre's security policies in consultation with young people. Young people were able to comment on the policy and their comments were considered in the drafting of a new policy. However, at the same time a number of incidents occurred between security officers and young people which the project partners never really resolved. The evaluator spoke to a number of young people who had been involved in the project. They felt that the project had changed nothing and said that they were moved on by some security officers for no reason. It was their opinion that in these cases they were treated unfairly. It is difficult to say with certainty whether there has been any lasting impact in relation to an increase in either positive or negative interactions between security officers and young people. It was not possible to do a comparison of statistics on banning.

The Castle Hill project was seen to benefit the relationship between young people and security officers. At the commencement of the project Castle Towers management was clear that they did not want a centre that employed heavy-handed security approaches. The manager at the time wanted to understand what young people saw as the perfect security officer.

In light of the evaluation, what can be said is that the relationships taking place in shopping centres between young people and security officers are often fraught with tension and conflict. Other literature and research back this up - young people are being banned at higher rates than ever, as well as for longer periods of time. Another aspect of the relationship between security officers and young people that is worth noting is the ability of young people to distinguish between what they see as a 'good' security officer and a 'bad' security officer - this distinction relates to the young person's idea of fairness or of being treated fairly or unfairly.

There are benefits for managers, security officers and ultimately the community (including young people) of a more inclusive approach. These benefits include:

- closer links between community members and the shopping centre;
- less conflict and less potential conflict;
- more resources and support for minimising any conflict;
- a community that wants to take part in creating positive relationships within the centre;
- an enhanced reputation as a safe and friendly shopping destination;
- an increase in customers; and
- in the long term money saved on security and repairs. (White, Kosky & Kosky 2001)

#### **5.4.3 Youth Workers and Services, and Young People**

The relationship between youth workers and young people is central to the achievements and difficulties of the projects. Youth services and workers have varying levels and types of relationships with young people. The credibility and depth of the relationships between the workers and the young people impacts on what projects are able to achieve. This in turn relates to the service's capacity and resources and whether, and what, other services are available in the particular area.

The work of Fusion at Penrith Plaza is a good example of a project that put considerable time and energy into building relationships with young people. Fusion staff meet with young people in and around the Plaza on an ongoing basis. They established good relationships with young people and the word spread. The number of young people accessing the service grew during the course of the project, and the team at Fusion was successful in assisting young people with their individual needs. They were able to involve a range of disadvantaged young people in the workshops and activities of the project.

The Blacktown PSYC Project was the only project to set up a youth committee. This committee was used as a way of informing other stakeholders about the needs and expectations of young people in public space. It was also the only project where young people participated at this level. However, it was still not youth-driven and the groups of young people represented on the committee were not the groups of young people who would be considered the most marginalised at Westpoint Blacktown. Even for the young people involved in the committee the project was not a very successful form of youth participation. All but two of the members quickly left because they did not see the committee achieving anything. This shows that youth participation is not simply about involving young people but is about involving young people in ways they see as useful and that can achieve positive outcomes for young people. The management and youth workers in this project intend to re-establish the committee in a format that address the previous problems.

Another aspect of the youth worker-young person relationship, which was pointed out during the Parramatta consultation, is the difficulty of involving young people over long periods of time and in project work, especially young people who are transient or homeless. Often these groups of young people have pressing day-to day needs and these are an important focus of the youth worker-young person relationship. At the same time youth workers need to remember that many of the problems facing these young people can be dealt with in a more systemic way. This raises a related issue raised by the Parramatta CBD Project - the need for more youth development work and resources for this work.

## **5.5 Relationships Between all Stakeholders**

It is clear from the experience of the five projects that feature in this report that “success” hinges upon the quality of partnerships and relationships between each of the stakeholder groups. This is the case whether the project articulated improved relations as a primary objective (as in the case of Blacktown PSYC) or whether the focus was on events and services (as in Social Belonging).

Whilst it is important to involve all stakeholders, it is also true that:

- too many cooks spoil the broth - eg. Blacktown PSYC, and Parramatta CBD to a degree, have found large decision-making committees unwieldy; and
- developing and maintaining relationships takes time and commitment and this needs to be factored into project development, resourcing, timeframes and desired outcomes.

Given this, it is important to recognise - and recognise openly:

- who the project partners are, their carriage of responsibilities and any agreements between them (as distinct from)
- who the partnership needs to develop and maintain relationships and communications with (eg. local young people, security, and retailers), how it is anticipated that this will occur.

## **5.6 The Capacities of the Partners**

The capacities of the partners in any project partnership will have an impact on both the level of success of a project and the difficulties experienced by a project. All of the projects have had moments when the capacity of an individual, a group or an organisation has not been at the level required for that particular aspect of the project to succeed. Moreover, productive partnerships and positive relationships are enabled by various “capacities” of the partners. Indicators of capacity are found within the structures and processes of the partner groups, eg. funding levels, corporate knowledge, relevant skills possessed etc. These “internal” capacities determine how well an organisation or group can administer and deliver services and programs as well as how it responds to and impacts on external factors.

The types of projects that have been evaluated here are by no means traditional youth work projects. Youth workers are more often found working directly with young people - running groups, organising activities and events, providing support and referral and so on. Projects such as those evaluated are far more demanding and far more complex in terms of the requirements on both the youth worker and the youth service. It cannot be expected that the youth worker at the local neighbourhood

centre undertake projects that require the knowledge and skills that these types of projects demand, unless of course the youth worker has years of experience. Youth workers in the Parramatta CBD Project are only too aware of their inability to “talk the talk” of the corporate world. The capacity of many youth organisations is likely to fall short in respect of these types of projects, particularly:

- if there are no other supports in place; and
- when the management committees of these services are also inexperienced, or too far removed from the staff to represent their concerns adequately.

In the Social Belonging Project, the Fusion youth worker did have the capacity to work closely with the Plaza management. The particular worker had years of experience in community development projects and had worked with organisations at a state and federal level, including the corporate sector. Fusion is a national organisation requiring a highly organised infrastructure, and it also had the capacity to support the worker in this type of situation.

The capacity of shopping centre managers to work with the community sector is also something that created difficulties for projects. Shopping centre managers are not community workers or youth workers. However, the projects in question have all required centre managers to work closely with youth services and youth workers, and often to understand young people's issues and perspectives. There is an educative role here for youth workers; just as there is the need for youth workers to understand corporate sector models and roles of managers. Herein lies the interrelatedness of capacity and the development of working relationships.

The Blacktown PSYC Project was an example where the partners had the capacity to undertake the project. A broad range of partners was involved, with support from YAPA. The aim of the project was clear, simple and focused. The impetus for the project was more positive than negative. The project spent a great deal of time on relationships and communication between all stakeholders. When one of the key partners in the project left, the momentum of the project was disrupted, but the capacity was still there because the relationships had been developed between other key partners and also because the focus of the project was on communication.

The Parramatta CBD Project is an example where there was a lack of capacity at the time. Without the involvement of the Westfield management, the chances of the project being successful were limited. At the same time many of the youth workers involved in the streetwork had limited experience in this type of work and their respective management committees were not approving of their workers undertaking streetwork. In addition, at the time there was little information about the issue of young people and public space, Parramatta being one of the first regional areas where youth workers attempted this work. All this aside, what has resulted is a group of youth workers and services that are very well informed and have continued to work with young people around the issues of public space over a long period of time.