

Youth

Youth housing, whilst not explicitly identified as an issue in the first Social Housing Hui that was held in September 2001, was an issue implicit in many of the concerns raised by participants. These concerns include:

- the impact of student debt on the housing careers of people, in particular young people. The number of people renting is increasing because of the difficulty people have getting into home ownership due to, among other things student debt. “Choices can be limited for example for young people with student loans”;
- the shortage of emergency accommodation for single men;
- the need for a range of housing options to cater for the needs of a diverse population;
- the importance of recognising that the “wellbeing of people, particularly children is paramount”;
- the fact that many tenants are not aware of their rights;
- the need for design that takes into account the needs of a range of tenant groups; and
- the need for research on the changing housing environment.

Make up of the Working Party

Various communities of concern were included in the working party, including women, Pacific and Māori representatives. In addition, a mix of urban and rural representatives and people representing different sectoral groups, such as health, education and justice were included. The majority of the group worked in community groups or private organisations and the remainder were public servants.

Vision

Participants were asked to construct a vision for youth housing ten years in the future. With respect to current government policies and programmes participants wanted to see:

- young people recognised as a priority group for housing support;
- initiatives and options developed by HNZC which address the identified needs of young people;
- an ongoing process of researching, evaluating and monitoring the housing needs of young people;
- a youth-friendly Tenancy Services and youth-friendly information on tenancy rights and responsibilities;
- youth input into all aspects of state housing projects and HNZC decisions;
- effective co-ordination of central government, local government, private sector, community organisations and faith based groups; and
- greater involvement of local government in social housing.

Participants also wanted to see:

- recognition that a young person’s place in society is dependent on a secure place called ‘home’;
- an inclusive, shared vision throughout New Zealand of youth housing;
- supported communities which recognised the cultural needs of youth in relation to housing;
- more research undertaken on issues concerning youth and housing; and
- a network of youth organisations.

In order to achieve these goals, participants felt that more systemic protection was required for children and young people affected by the eviction of their families from rental accommodation. Also, youth at risk need more adequate accommodation, including emergency accommodation.

With respect to education and advocacy services, the following needs were voiced by the participants:

- adequate mechanisms to ensure young people have the attitudes, skills and resources to manage their own housing requirements appropriately;
- core school curriculum courses on life skills, budgeting, housing, parenting, home management. This could be provided by peer education, outside providers and/or upskilling teachers;
- every community to have accessible and appropriate community centres with free advocacy services for young people; and
- adults need education on youth issues and ways of communicating with young people.

In relation to the physical environment, the beautifying and enhancing of urban amenities and recreational activities should be sustained centrally but local participation should be encouraged to build communities. Houses, in particular rental housing, will be well built and well situated and adequately maintained.

Youth housing projects which were investigated in the 1980s but never established, such as the Foyer project need to be revisited in light of the current youth population and resources and funding given to develop and implement a 'youth housing' concept. One stop shops for youth, providing government services and community group services should be developed and a variety of free to low cost housing should be available. In addition, utilities such as power, phone, water and laundry services need to be subsidised.

The Social Housing Strategy itself should be an effective and responsive strategy that meets the immediate and long-term needs of youth. It must also be a strategy and process which evolves in order to take into account changing geographic, demographic and social needs of youth. Youth also need to be continually consulted. Further to this, a holistic approach is essential when dealing with young people.

Key Principles

From the issues raised and the vision that participants felt that a social housing strategy should aspire to, the following principles were developed to form the basis of the youth housing strategy.

1. It is a fundamental right for young people and children to have access to safe, stable, healthy, affordable and quality housing.
2. The government recognises young people as a priority because of the inherent vulnerability that exists for them in the transition from childhood to adulthood.
3. The Government has an obligation to develop, facilitate and maintain social housing for young people.
4. It is recognised that quality housing provides a foundation for young people to:

- develop socially;
 - achieve and sustain good health;
 - have access to employment and income;
 - receive education; and
 - develop family/whanau relationships which provides a stable home environment.
5. The design, development, implementation and maintenance of social housing for Young people in New Zealand is consistent with the government’s domestic policies and international obligations and responsibilities under:
- The Treaty of Waitangi;
 - The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child;
 - The International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights;
 - Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa;
 - Declaration of Human Rights.
6. The government has a duty to ensure young people are advocated for, informed of, and educated on their rights in relation to housing.
7. Government recognises that in order for some young people to achieve sustainable housing solutions they may require support from whanau/family/caregivers or other appropriate support groups who in partnership with the young people themselves can support and encourage independence by:
- providing general support;
 - acting as an advocate when required; and
 - consulting and including the views of young people.
8. Government departments and services in relation to housing:
- are youth friendly and accessible; and
 - provide mechanisms and infrastructure to respond to young people and children in need.
9. Government recognises that the housing needs of young people are dynamic and that their ever-changing housing environment requires ongoing and regular:
- Monitoring;
 - Evaluation;
 - Research.
- 10 Government recognises that whilst independence is important for young people, many may still require support and encouragement, and to be advocated for by whanau, family caregivers, or other appropriate support groups in order to achieve sustainable housing solutions for them.

Contemporary Housing Situation For Young People

Government departments, including Statistics New Zealand and the Ministry of Youth Affairs, typically define youth using the age band from 12 to 24 years inclusive. Social definitions for youth such as, “those people who are making a transition from reliance on their

family or whanau into a state of full independence”¹ have, in part, informed age based definitions. The experiences of youth within this age group are dynamic because of the diverse ethnic make up of the group and the changing housing ‘careers’ of young people as the rising cost of education impacts on young peoples ability to gain independence. Debate continues as to how to define the population group ‘young people’.

In 1996, young people aged 12 to 25 made up 20.7 percent (747,200) of New Zealand’s population. The 2001 census found that this had dropped to 19.3 percent (720,087) of the population, the smallest the youth population has been as a proportion of the total population in over 50 years².

While the number of young people peaked in 1986 at 821,000, the proportion has fallen at each census since 1976. This has occurred primarily as a result of the baby boomers moving out of this age group and being replaced by the much smaller number of people who were born during the late 1970s and 1980s (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:11).

Population projections undertaken by Statistics New Zealand show that the proportion of young people should continue to decline until at least the middle of this century (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:12). However, within the youth population, the percentage of Māori, Pacific and Asian youth is expected to increase. Māori youth are expected to make up 21% of the total youth population by 2006 and 28% by the year 2040 (Te Puni Kokiri Factsheet – Rangatahi – Māori Youth, 1999).

Statistics New Zealand attributes this increasing diversity in the youth population to:

immigration in the case of Asians and Pacific Islands people, historically higher fertility rates in the case of Māori and Pacific Islands people and possibly, increasing numbers of children born from inter-ethnic unions. In the case of the Māori population another factor is the greater likelihood of people of Māori ancestry identifying with the Māori ethnic group than in the past (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:14-15).

Accommodation Patterns

In general, the accommodation patterns of youth reflect a “move by young people away from the parental home and reliance on the family, towards independence and establishing self identity, followed by setting up family situations of their own” (National Youth Council of New Zealand, 1980:90). Today, this stage of life, (that is the transition of adolescence which includes the physical changes of puberty; a change of status from child to adult; and a period of renegotiating relationships with family and the community), is steadily beginning earlier and finishing later (Martin, 2002:18). This may mean that young people are staying in the family home longer.

As one would expect there is a strong correlation between age and different types of living arrangements for youth. “Of young people living in private dwellings in 1996, almost all of those up to the age of 15 lived with their parents or people in a parent role. Between the ages of 16 and 19, when most young people leave school, the proportion living with parents fell sharply from 96.3 percent to 53.4. By the age of 25, just 18.2 percent lived with parents (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:22)”.

Due to a tendency for young women to leave the parental home earlier and the greater likelihood of them forming a family of their own while still living with parents, by having

¹ *15 to 25 – A Youth Statistical Profile*, Ministry of Youth Affairs, 1994 quoted in Martin:2001,14.

² Please note that figures were only available back to 1945.

children or living with a partner, young women are less likely than young men to be living in a family with their parents (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:24). In 1996, “by the age of 20, 36.5 percent of women live with their parents compared to 52.3 percent of men. By the age of 25, just 13.1 percent of women live with their parents, compared to 23.7 percent of men (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:24). This means that young women require independent, affordable and appropriate accommodation, outside the family home, at a younger age than men.

Ethnic Diversity

There is also variation between ethnic groups with young Asian and Pacific young people being more likely to be living with parents after the age of 15 than Europeans or Māori. Māori are least likely to be living with parents, with 69.7 percent of 16-19 year olds and 214 percent of 20 – 25 year olds doing so. According to Statistics New Zealand, the in part reflects the fact that at these ages Māori are more likely to have children of their own. (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:25).

Differing social and religious conventions of different ethnic groups also influence they numbers living in married or de facto relationships. For example, “young Asian people are the only group who are more likely to be married than in a de facto union, while those in the Pacific Islands ethnic group have a higher ratio of married to de facto people than Europeans or Māori” (Statistics New Zealand, 1998:30).

Therefore, Pacific and Asian youth may require appropriate housing solutions that enable them to stay with their families. Māori youth are more likely to require affordable accommodation that also caters for young children.

Impact Of Student Loan Scheme

Also, the rising cost of education and the growing student debt has changed the housing careers of young people. Traditionally, New Zealand has had high rates of home ownership. Young people leaving universities and other tertiary institutions with Student Loan debt are finding it increasingly difficult to obtain the ‘New Zealand dream’ of owning their own home.

In 1992, the then National government introduced the Student Loan Scheme designed to allow full-time students to borrow money for course fees, course related costs and living costs. The objective of the scheme is to overcome financial barriers for people wishing to undertake tertiary study (Ministry of Education, 2001:2). According to the Student Loan Scheme Annual Report for 2001, the average amount borrowed in an academic year has increased from \$3628 in 1992 to \$6222 in 2001 (Ministry of Education, 2001:3).

Because of growing public concern of the growing student debt, the Education and Science Select Committee conducted an inquiry into ‘Student Fees, Loans, Allowances and the Overall Resourcing of Tertiary Education’. The committee noted the lack of quality research in the area of tertiary education resourcing and subsequently made the following recommendation to Government:

That the Government undertake a significant, extensive and high-quality research programme into education resourcing, to be conducted as a matter of priority by all relevant government agencies (Education and Science Select Committee, 2001:4).

Submitters to the inquiry highlighted the concerning “cumulative effect of student loan debt, both at the individual and nation level and the unintended social effects that may arise as a

result of the loans scheme” including an inability to save for retirement; obtain finance for purchasing a home and delaying marriage and/or having children until their loan is reduced. The report states that in relation to the growth of student debt there are several key concerns including:

- the impact of growing individual debt on life choices – particularly in relation to child-bearing and marriage, or decisions to pursue self-employment or the establishment of new businesses;
- the ability to accrue additional debt, particularly home mortgages;
- the capacity of student loan borrowers to make individual and/or collective provision for future events – for example, to make provision for health insurance, superannuation or their own children’s tertiary education;
- the impact of growing levels of individual debt on fees for professional services – dentists, doctors, lawyers, accountants and so on; and
- the potential changes to the labour market in the wake of graduates choosing to work overseas and leave their debt unpaid – the ‘brain-drain’(Education and Science Select Committee, 2001:24-25).

According to the Student Loan Scheme Annual Report, the total student loan debt as at 30 June 2001 was \$4.1 billion (Ministry of Education,2001:3).

In line with this, Lloyd Martin in his book ‘The Invisible Table’ concludes that youth could be defined as youth for longer, in contemporary times, because of their need to be financially dependent on their families for longer. He asserts that the independence of young people is being affected by the rising cost of tertiary education in New Zealand. “Many young people now delay leaving home (or return home) while they study”(Martin,2002:14).

Whiting in his paper on young people and home ownership talks about the contradiction that currently exists between tertiary educational policy and the provision of social welfare benefits in New Zealand. The Student Loan Scheme considers young people 18 and over eligible for a loan to cover course costs, course related costs and living expenses however, the student allowance and the unemployment benefits provided by Work and Income New Zealand assumes that he/she is still financially dependent on his/her caregivers or parents until the age of 25.

Mobility Of Youth

The 2001 census also found that people aged 25 to 29 are particularly mobile, with 7 out of 10 having changed their usual address since 1996. The Auckland, Otago, Wellington and Canterbury regions had the largest net gains through internal migration between 1996 and the 2001 Census for the 15 to 24 year age group. This can be attributed somewhat to the fact that these are all towns and cities which house universities. The Northland, Hawke’s Bay, Southland, Taranaki and Bay of Plenty regions had the largest net internal migration losses for the 15 to 24 year age group (Statistics New Zealand, 2002).

The fact that youth are particularly mobile has a huge impact on the housing market. Many rural towns experience a large drop in the youth population at the start of each academic year and university towns and cities which are seen to be able to provide employment experience increases. Affordable and appropriate housing for youth migrating to cities is in short supply often forcing young people to live in sub-standard or inappropriate accommodation. This urban migration can also have a negative effect on rural towns which experience a virtual ‘brain drain’.

Housing New Zealand Corporation's Provision For Youth

Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) does not currently provide any youth-specific programmes. However it does provide houses to community groups through Community Housing, some of which provide services to youth (such as the Women's Refuge and Youth Trusts).

From 1 December 2000 HNZC has provided IRR for state tenants on low incomes. For IRR purposes, low income is described as:

- For single tenants without children, where low-income is equal to or less than the equivalent of the after tax single living alone rate of NZ Superannuation.
- For all others (couples, sole parents), low-income is equal to or less than the equivalent of the after tax couple rate of the NZ Superannuation.

Tenants on or below the low income threshold only pay 25% of their net income in rent. Tenants with incomes exceeding the low-income threshold pay progressively more than 25%, up to the maximum set by the market rent for the property.

As at the 31st July 2001, 89% of the approximately 60,000 households living in HNZC tenancies qualified for IRR. Of those tenancies which qualify for an Income Related Rent, those in the 15-19 year old age group make up only 0.47% (278 out of 59,303) of the total number of HNZC rental properties. Tenancies headed by 20-25 year olds, make up 4.9% (2,945 out of 59,303) of the total number of HNZC rental properties.

Of the 3,223 HNZC tenancies let to youth (aged between 15 and 25), 2,426 or 75% of the tenants, have one or more dependants. Of the total population of head HNZC tenants who qualify for income related rents 6.1% are aged 15-25. There are also significant numbers of people aged 15-25 living in the remaining 93.9% of households.

To coincide with the implementation of IRR, Cabinet introduced a Social Allocation System (SAS) to allocate new tenancies based on need. The system determines eligibility based on residency, income, assets, and housing need. Housing need is assessed in terms of affordability, adequacy, suitability, accessibility and sustainability.³ SAS ensures that HNZC houses are allocated to those households who are most in need.

³ Housing need Criteria descriptors:

Affordability – measures housing expenditure relative to benefit entitlement.

Adequacy – measures the condition of currently occupied house and whether it meets minimum health and safety standards.

Suitability – measures the level of crowding in currently occupied dwelling.

Accessibility – assesses discriminatory practices encountered by applicant in the private rental market.

Sustainability – relates to the longer term security of the current accommodation.

Percentages of Tenants Aged 15-25 Years who qualify for
Income Related Rents, by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percentage of tenants aged 15-25 by ethnicity who qualify for income related rents	Overall tenant population by ethnicity who qualify for income related rents
European	29%	34%
Māori	44%	28%
Pacific	19%	22%
Other	8%	16%

It is interesting to note that, as a percentage of the 15-25 year old population who receive income related rents Māori head tenants aged 15-25 make up a significantly higher proportion of the youth population than the proportion of Māori head tenants in the total head tenant population: 44% as opposed to 28%. This may be related to the youthful nature of the Māori population. Young Māori aged between 12 and 24 inclusive make up a larger proportion (27 percent in 1996) of the total Māori population than do Pakeha young people (18 percent in 1996) of the Pakeha population. This proportion is expected to increase over the coming years.

Discussion Of The Key Issues That Arose From The Working Party

Research

Recommendation - Undertake, gender balanced focus groups with youth including rural, urban, Māori and Pacific youth, solo parents, students, 17 year olds and youth at risk in order to ascertain the needs of these groups in relation to housing. (This research is important given the lack of information around youth and housing in New Zealand).

Recommendation - Develop research priorities in relation to youth and housing based on the above focus groups and current information available.

Participants wholeheartedly agreed that more research was required on youth housing issues. They felt that there was an extreme lack of New Zealand information on youth housing. Also research which uses census data can be problematic in that it is not able to be distinguished as to whether youth are living in a family or other situation.

Education and Advocacy

Recommendation - Investigate the development of a tenancy advocacy service for youth and life skills education programmes.

Participants of the youth housing working party noted the lack of specific youth housing support services such as:

- tenancy advocacy services; and
- information and education services focusing on:
 - budgeting advice;
 - basic life skills;
 - tenancy obligations;

- legal rights (including the right to access the Tenancy Services mediation service where disputes arise);
- the intricacies of home ownership.

In addition, participants thought that there is a general lack of awareness, by tenants and landlords of statutory requirements under the Residential Tenancies Act. It was stressed that access to information and resources such as these would aid the prevention of unsustainable housing situations that young people can find themselves in.

Rental Housing

Recommendation - Investigate tools to ensure that youth are better protected in relation to rental housing.

Because of the large numbers of young people living in rental accommodation, the need to protect young people in rental housing, was reiterated by the participants. Participants felt that young people were often exploited by landlords because they lacked knowledge of their tenancy rights. Exploitations included, eviction of families and young people without due process and renting out substandard accommodation such as garages for comparatively high rents.

I have had a few cases where sole parents are renting out someone's garage, living in it with their children and paying a ridiculous amount of approximately \$120.00 per week, because this persons garage is cleaner than the paru house they were renting or, it was the only accommodation they could afford. (WINZ staff - quote provided by a working party member).

Participants also noted that currently youth, outside of student hostels and Child, Youth and Family homes, find it hard to find supervised, supported accommodation which still allows them a level of independence.

Lack of Access to Affordable Housing

Recommendation - Investigate options which allow youth to access affordable and appropriate accommodation.

Ensuring that young people can afford housing was a central concern for working party participants. Participants raised the following issues:

- young people lack access to affordable housing, including Housing New Zealand Corporation houses;
- affordable housing is often situated in poor locations in relation to schools and other amenities.

We also have too many people moving into housing they cannot afford to be in and there are empty HNZC houses, the problem seems to be that they do not want to move into these houses, as they are either in the gang related areas of town or they are in poor condition. (WINZ staff in Gisborne – quote provided by working group participant);

- young people who are eligible for the Independent Youth Benefit (IYB) or the Student Allowance receive less subsidy for accommodation costs than adult beneficiaries despite the fact that their accommodation costs are not necessarily lower;
- young people aged 17 often find it difficult to get the IYB; and
- the high cost of living and other spending priorities such as heating make it difficult to afford adequate housing.

In addition, the inability to afford quality housing can have an impact on the health of young people. Young people may live in overcrowded situations in order to keep the rent down aiding the spread of contagious diseases. Living in overcrowded situations can also have a negative impact on the mental health of young people due to the fact that they do not have much private space in the house.

At Risk Youth

Recommendation - Investigate the provision of youth specific accommodation programmes to provide emergency accommodation for young men.

There is a lack of decent accommodation for young people at risk. Currently, young people at risk over the age of 16, are often placed in police cells to detoxify or calm down. Participants felt that the police station is not an ideal place for this to happen. There is also a shortage of emergency accommodation to house short term or long term at risk youth including youth with mental illnesses, those living in overcrowded conditions which cause physical health problems and young people coming out of penal institutions.

Also, young people who experience family violence, including sexual violence, as dependants or victims of abusive partners, have difficult finding emergency accommodation.

Youth Specific Accommodation Programmes

Recommendation - Investigate the provision of youth specific accommodation programmes.

During the 1970s and 80s youth housing was available, usually provided by community groups. However these closed down during the late 80s due to increases in rents for community houses provided by the state. This had a huge impact on the community's ability to care for young people and in particular solo parents. Currently, outside of university hostels, young people find it hard to find supported accommodation which provides a level of supervision and independence for youth. . Participants asserted the need to try some experimental youth housing projects that would enable this, including partnership with other youth organisations. It was noted that a decade ago, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Housing New Zealand investigated a 'foyer' project based on the European models, which would provide accommodation for young people migrating to cities to find employment.

Government Policy

Recommendation – Investigate how HNZC can involve youth in all of its housing policy.

Some felt that current housing policy does not adequately assist those in private rental accommodation.

Government should provide the same access to subsidised private rental for low income families as it does for Housing New Zealand Corporation tenants. This would then assist low income families who choose to live in areas away from 'gangs etc' and overcome the shortage of homes near appropriate amenities. (CYFS staff member – provided by a participant)

Others thought that more research needed to be undertaken on looking at what housing arrangements work for young people. “I know lots stay home with the family – is there some merit in government assistance to build a flat or extra room on to existing homes?”(work party participant).

Participants also commented on current HNZN policies and the impact of these on young people. The biggest impact included a shortage of housing available to young people which can be attributed in part to the introduction of Income Related Rents and an allocation system which favours families. Young people, of course may be part of these families, however single young people in need could possibly be disadvantaged in the allocation of HNZN housing. Advocacy services for young people who wish to get a house through HNZN are also currently scarce.

Community and Youth

Recommendation - Develop programmes which promote connections between youth and their communities and support already established programmes.

Youth have a lot to add to their communities. Participants felt that positive youth development enabling young people to contribute to their communities, required cross-communication between government and community; projects which are community driven; and the promotion of connectedness between young people and their community / neighbourhood. The Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa highlights the importance of social connectedness for youth. Accommodation plays a pivotal part in this, for example, youth can experience social isolation due to inadequate transportation or unsafe housing environments. Currently, participants asserted, community groups and government groups work autonomously and there is not only a lack of cohesion between community groups / non-government organisations and government but also a lack of cohesion between community groups and community groups.

Physical Environment

Recommendation – Develop mechanisms to ensure that youth are involved in the planning and design decisions in relation to their local communities.

An appropriate physical environment in which youth live was deemed important by the working party. Neglected neighbourhoods are often plagued by high crime rates. Participants felt that young people should have input into town planning, state housing design and state housing policy that has an impact on the physical environment. Issues of importance included:

- the need to maintain buildings, fixtures, infrastructure;
- the need to provide good public transport; and
- the current lack of parks and recreational amenities (council by-laws often restrict youth activities such as skateboarding).

Students

Recommendation - Review the housing needs of students.

Influxes of tertiary students at the beginning of each study year may limit affordable housing for students and young people in general. Rural regions experience drops in the 15-25 year age group as many young people leave their rural homes to follow tertiary opportunities. This leads to a 'brain drain' from the provinces. Participants questioned whether this was a good thing and felt that more research needed to be undertaken on the needs of rural youth and programmes provided to encourage them to stay in their hometowns.

Because of the large numbers of secondary and tertiary level students coming to New Zealand to study, further research into their needs and conditions of living needs to be undertaken given the fact that they may be experience cultural barriers alienating them from mainstream services, including information services outlining their rights in relation to tenancies.

Housing quality also needs to be assured through stronger local government regulation of private rental housing. For example, it is some what accepted that in Dunedin, students will live in 'grotty' houses.

Youth Mobility / Transience

Recommendation - Undertake research in order to ascertain the effect of high youth mobility and the extent of transience and homelessness amongst New Zealand youth.

Despite the lack of research in this area and the difficulties surrounding the measurement of transience and homelessness, working party participants felt that youth transience had increased in recent years. Homeless young people in contemporary times tend to be less visible than the street kids of the 1970s and 80s. Participants suggested that one of the reasons for this is that homeless youth prefer to live off friends, moving from one floor to another when they have overstayed their welcome at one home, rather than living on the streets. It is also now not as acceptable, in most youth communities, to look unkempt with many wearing or aspiring to wear labelled and expensive clothing similar to that of their American peers on television shows and movies.

Youth and the wider population

Recommendation - Undertake research looking at tenancy and home ownership decisions of youth today and projected trends.

There was also a general discussion in the working party on issues for youth in relation to the wider population. These included:

- the need to tackle New Zealand's economic framework. For example the Reserve Bank keeps inflation down to 3% which is good for older people who have lots of savings but means that social spending on young people is cut back;
- The need for resources from the government as currently a larger percentage is spent on rest homes and little on youth development; and
- The need to support our ageing population. Participants felt that this role will fall on youth.

Move from Dependence to Independence

Recommendation - Research the accommodation patterns and the housing career trends of youth.

The strategy needed to define 'independence' and 'delayed adolescence' and whether or not these were desired. In this vein, participants contended that there is a need to plot the course of young people's movements from dependence on family to independence, to adulthood and interdependence. This process needs to be managed effectively and young people need to be supported through this as if young people do not make a positive transition from dependence to independence, this can lead to a necessary high dependence on family, whanau, care-givers or other support groups.

There was also some discussion about when young people move away from dependence on their family/whanau and become independent. There was some disagreement about the point at which this happens in contemporary times and some felt that young people were moving away at an earlier age whilst others thought they were moving away at a later stage. More research needs to be undertaken on this.

Delivery of Services

Recommendation - Investigate how HNZC can involve youth in decision-making processes.

Many felt that any youth housing programmes should be able to be distanced from the political process, in order that they can proceed regardless of which political party is in power. In order to do this, participants asserted that young people should have a formal voice in decision making processes. In addition participants maintained that often when programmes work well, government decides that the programme does not need further funding.

A lack of ownership by any government department was also cited as a problem which inhibited adequate service delivery to youth. For example there seems to be no collaboration between Work and Income New Zealand and Housing New Zealand Corporation at a national level.

HNZC needs to put more effort into supporting low income families and linking them with services who will develop life and home management skills. I understand HNZC has a position for this purpose however I believe it is insufficient to meet the need. I know personally, as a landlord, that many tenants require intensive support and monitoring – budgeting and home management. There are many tenants who are not used to meeting financial commitments in the appropriate priority. For example they will pay for their Sky Television and not their rent (CYFS staff – provided by a working party participant)

Treaty of Waitangi and Legislative Obligations

Recommendation - Ensure that Treaty of Waitangi and legislative obligations are considered throughout the development of the Strategy.

A number of international and national legislative obligations were highlighted by participants to consider in the development of the Strategy. These included the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC), the Treaty of Waitangi, the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights and the Declaration of Human Rights. Participants felt that the Youth Housing Strategy should have the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi and the relevant articles of UNCROC at its heart. Relevant UNCROC articles include:

- Article 3 - The welfare and best interests of the child;
- Article 4 - The level of government funding;
- Article 6 - The survival and development of the child;
- Article 12 - The right to participation;
- Article 19 – The right to protection from abuse and neglect;
- Article 26 - The right to social security; and
- Article 27 - The right to an adequate standard of living.

The Needs of a Diverse Youth Population

Recommendation - Undertake, gender balanced focus groups with youth including rural, urban, Māori and Pacific youth, solo parents, students, 17 year olds and youth at risk in order to ascertain the needs of these groups in relation to housing. (This research is important given the lack of information around youth and housing in New Zealand).

Recommendation - Develop research priorities in relation to youth and housing based on the above focus groups and current information available.

17 Year Olds

Participants asserted that 17 year olds can fall through the gap as Child Youth and Family usually only cares for youth up to the age of 16 and they are not eligible for any government benefits or subsidies apart from the Independent Youth Benefit (IYB). In addition, as previously mentioned, the IYB is difficult to get. Also, IYB recipients receive less accommodation supplement, than those on the Unemployment Benefit, despite the fact that their costs are not necessarily lower. Working party participants asked ‘Does HNZA have a role in letting houses to under 18 year olds?’ and felt that the arbitrary and diverse age limits for rights and access to services (e.g. A person must be 18 before they can sign a contract yet can live independently at age 16), should be reviewed.

Pacific Youth

Participants noted that the Pacific youth population is increasing, in contrast to the Palagi youth population. This needs to be taken into account in the construction of a housing strategy in particular the Youth Housing and Pacific Housing work streams.

The living patterns of Pacific youth was also raised. Often Pacific youth are dependant on their families longer than Palagi youth, staying in the family home until they get married. This is particularly true for females as it is more acceptable for males to move than females.

In addition, it was noted that sometimes the family structure and obligations of Pacific families does not align with tenancy obligations. People can become in breach of tenancies when extended family comes to stay. They then are being served 10 day notices because they are living in overcrowded situations.

Rangatahi - Māori Youth

The Māori youth population is also growing and makes up a large percentage of the overall Māori population. In 1996 youth aged 15-24 years made up one fifth (19%) of the Māori population. Non-Māori youth made up 14% of the non-Māori population. The percentage of young people that are Māori is continuing to increase. “By the year 2006 it is projected that 21% of all youth aged 15-24 years (approximately 120,000) will identify as Māori, and by the year 2040 the proportion is projected to rise to 28% (145,000)” (Te Puni Kokiri, Fact Sheet – Rangatahi – Māori Youth:1999)

In addition the family make-up of Māori whanau are diverse and government policy and programmes need to take this into account. Māori youth have higher unemployment rates than non-Māori youth.

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs report ‘Māori women: Mapping Inequalities and Pointing Ways Forward’ has highlighted that Māori women and girls experience disparate difficulties with housing. In particular, Māori are less likely to live in owned dwellings than non-Māori partly because of the younger age structure of the Māori population but also because Māori women are more likely to live in households with household income below \$20,000 (Ministry of Women’s Affairs, 2001:99).

Young Men and Women

As already noted, a lack of youth emergency housing was a serious problem, particularly for young males in family violence situations and for older male children who fall out of the Child, Youth and Family Service remit. Young women face problems of pay inequity.

Young men and women have different experiences with accommodation needs. The lower female labour force participation rate and pay differentials within paid work may mean that young women have less money to spend on adequate sustainable accommodation. This is particularly pertinent for Māori girls/women and Pacific girls/women. Societal, cultural and familial norms may also impact on young men and women’s experiences with securing adequate accommodation.

Many young women, and men, before the age of 25 are also supporting dependent children, which may exacerbate some difficulties in finding adequate sustainable accommodation. For example financial constraints, housing design, access to pre-schools and schools, access to transportation, proximity to physical and emotional support.

Any housing initiatives within the Social Housing Strategy need to recognise and accommodate the diversity in men’s and women’s lives.

Development Process of Youth Housing Strategy

Recommendation - Ensure that youth are involved in the development of the action plan by forming a reference group in which minority and under-represented communities are represented.

In relation to the development of the Youth Housing Strategy, participants felt housing needed to be looked at in relation to other sectors such as health; education; welfare and justice. Participants felt that “housing is central to the physical and psychological well-being of children and young people” and is “often a causative factor in other spheres of concern, for example:

- Crime – poor housing areas with few run-down amenities create an environment conducive to crime;
- Health – overcrowding and poor infrastructure is a catalyst for the spread of disease – South Auckland outbreaks an example;
- Child Welfare/Care & Protection; and
- Access to Education”(provided by a participant).

Participants also felt that we could involve more young people in housing policies generally in addition to the Youth Housing Strategy. Suggestions made as to how HNZC could do this included:

- reference groups;
- focus groups around the country;
- website surveys;
- community forums ;
- writing to youth organisations, youth councils etc;
- advertising on youth media including Tearaway, television, radio and other government agencies (for e.g. WINZ); and
- research to ascertain best practice models and provide good data and statistics on young people.

It was also felt that the Youth Housing Strategy may have to be undertaken in stages in order to allow for the involvement of more young people in the design of the strategy and that it should be ensured that the process is robust and thorough – which may mean extending timeframes and budget.

Current Positive Outcomes For Youth

Working party participants noted the following positive outcomes in relation to government policy and service provision:

- the Ministry of Housing provides a mediation service which is accessible in urban areas and small towns and also affordable (\$20 disputes tribunal or mediation free);
- the Ministry of Youth Affairs has recently developed a Youth Development Strategy;
- local government is increasing its development of youth strategies and policies;
- WINZ are more flexible in dealing with specific groups;
- HNZC provides case management for tenants with special needs;
- HNZC Community Renewal Programmes;
- HNZC design guides will improve the design of new states houses and when renovating older ones;
- HNZC has some good partnerships and fosters relationships with iwi, community groups such as Habitat for Humanity and the private sector;
- HNZC Community Housing group provides housing for community groups;
- recent Residential Tenancy Act amendments have determined more rights for boarders and that the cost of agency fees will be transferred to landlord and away from tenant; and
- government restructuring has brought together fragmented housing services and departments.

Positive programmes, provided by community groups which youth can access, include advocacy services and budget services, maintained by the Tenants Protection Association in Christchurch; Youth law in Auckland which provides legal advice on tenancies; and mental

health services and services for ex-prisoners, including housing provided by church and community groups.

In communities themselves, participants felt that:

- volunteer energy and goodwill abounded. (However this can be exploited by government);
- low income communities often have a good community spirit;
- living in New Zealand was a positive as people have access to land in order to grow their own food;
- young people have better access to information through technology and media, for example Tearaway; and
- youth are more savvy about their rights than previous generations.

In addition, participants felt that families in home ownership experience, more stability and lessens transience for young people who may have to change school, friends and social environments when moving from house to house.