



# NSROC REGIONAL SOCIAL REPORT

June 2005





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Gail Le Bransky, Director, GML Social Research conducted research undertaken in the preparation of this report.

## **DISCLAIMER**

The commentary provided in this report represents the views of the author and do not necessarily express the views of the Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils or the Councils within the NSROC region.

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## Glossary of Terms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CBD	Central Business District
CCB	Child Care Benefit
CSGP	Community Services Grants Program
DET	Department of Education and Training
DIPNR	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Environment
DRT	Demand Responsive Transport
HACC	Home and Community Care
LEP	Local Environment Plan
LGA	Local Government Area
NCOSS	NSW Council of Social Services
NSAA	National Strategy for an Ageing Australia
NSAHS	Northern Sydney Area Health Service
NSROC	Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils
OOSH	Out of School Care
QIAS	Quality Improvement Accreditation System
SAAP	Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
SEPP	State Environmental Planning Policy

# Key Findings

The process of drawing together the data about the current Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) social profile and overlaying it with the demographic trend data available is a complex one and is prone to a large degree of uncertainty about the accuracy of forecasting. From the available evidence and data, it is possible to draw the following conclusions about the potential impact of Metropolitan Strategy within the Local Government areas that comprise NSROC.

## Social Profile

1. The NSROC region can expect a total population gain over the 30 years from 2004 to 2034 of 122,500 persons. The growth trajectory will be steady at around 0.7 percent each year, but will not be uniform across the NSROC region.
2. The highest levels of growth are expected in the Willoughby, Hornsby and North Sydney LGAs while the lowest growth is expected in Hunters Hill and Ryde.
3. Population ageing will be one of the most significant influences on the demand and supply of social services. However, the LGAs in the NSROC region will not experience population ageing at the same rate and scale. Willoughby will experience the least impact of an ageing population and the elderly to child ratio will not be significantly altered in that LGA for at least 18 years.
4. The current housing stock is a key determinant of the social and age composition of each LGA in the NSROC region. It is likely that a change in the mix of housing options will increase the diversity of the community in terms of age, household type and socio-economic standing.
5. The NSROC region currently has high levels of labour force participation and a large proportion of workers in the region work in the same district as they live, or commute within the NSROC region.

## Community Values

6. NSROC communities have a history of opposition to high density dating back to the 1950s.
7. Connection to the physical environment is a defining characteristic of NSROC communities. This may take the form of bushlands, low densities, urban heritage or the village atmosphere within a town centre. Residents are drawn to NSROC suburbs by the green leafy environments, perceptions of safety, quality housing stock and proximity to jobs, transport and schools.

8. Local Councils within the NSROC region share similar values, concerns and challenges. These include a strong desire to maintain a sense of community and local identity, the physical environment and amenity of the region, while at the same time unlocking the region's potential for economic growth.
9. A number of common, current issues for NSROC Councils emerged in the review of documents that are likely to be exacerbated by the effects of the Metropolitan Strategy. These are:
  - increases in the proportion of older Australians in the community;
  - shortages of child care places;
  - inadequacy of provision for young people;
  - ageing and obsolete community facilities;
  - affordability of housing;
  - critical shortages of key workers, and
  - poor intra-regional public transport access.

## **Older People's Needs**

10. The review found that main impacts of an increased number of older people in the community are likely to be:
  - Local governance changes due to the expected reduction in Councils' revenue and rate base (from increased rate rebates, charges supplements and rate deferrals) and an ageing workforce within NSROC Councils.
  - The need to develop and maintain 'age-friendly' infrastructure and public domains. Particular considerations include maintaining footpaths, improved street lighting, lowering kerb heights, widening footpaths to accommodate additional numbers of mobility scooters, and addressing pedestrian safety.
  - The need to address housing choices for older people to achieve a better match between the housing occupied by older people and their housing need.
  - Potentially catastrophic shortages of HACC services in all NSROC LGAs.
  - A declining pool of voluntary labour and increasing numbers of older people living in private dwellings needing care, but without a primary carer.
  - Increased demand for modifications to transport services in terms of physical access, service frequency and coverage, and if these requirements are not met, increased pressure on community transport services to fill the gaps.

## **Childcare Needs**

11. There are significant current shortages in all forms of childcare, most notably long day care. At present only 18.8 per cent of the population of 0-5 year olds (34,324) in the NSROC region have access to formal child care in either long day or family day care options.
12. Throughout the NSROC region, growth in the number of long day care places over time has been achieved through private sector provision. However, private providers have not

met demand in the 0-2 years age cohort where demand is highest. This is due to the higher staff/child ratios that make provision less profitable.

13. In addition to shortages of child care places, the region is affected by a critical shortage of skilled child care workers.
14. The likely future scenario is that demand for new child care places will slow in all NSROC LGAs except for Willoughby, where the numbers of children and young people are expected to continue rising, but not at the same rate as other age groups.
15. Despite a reduction in the number of 0-5 year olds in the population, there will continue to be supply gaps. The extent of unmet demand is dependent on the degree to which current supply gaps are met by private providers and the completion of planned, new community-based centres in NSROC LGAs.

## **Youth Needs**

16. The decline in the proportion of young people in the population should not be construed as a reduction in demand for youth services and facilities. This is because the absolute number of younger people is set to increase from 2001 levels in most areas.
17. The main service demands from young people are for additional recreational activities, 'youth friendly' spaces and enhanced library facilities, and addressing current critical shortages in services for young people with special needs.
18. A change in the socio-economic profile of the region brought about by the Metropolitan Strategy may increase utilisation of public schools in the region. This will put additional pressure on a system that is already strained. However, the new population of children and young people will not be at a level that is likely to generate demands for new schools to be built.
19. Based on a commonly applied benchmark of one major youth centre for every 20,000 residents, the NSROC may require 30 youth centres by 2031. However, this approach presupposes a service model that may not be best suited to young peoples' needs and does not take into account a more flexible usage of existing and new facilities.
20. Gaps in health and welfare services for young people have reached a critical level in the NSROC region. The scarcity of services is largely attributable to Government policies which direct the bulk of funding to areas with high need. Given the overall prosperity of the region, young people who need assistance tend to miss out on necessary services.
21. While the inflow of new population is not expected to have a huge impact on the overall levels of demand for youth services, there is already stress of the system. If unchecked, existing youth problems are likely to worsen and have a flow on effect to the rest of community.

## **Community Facilities**

22. Cost shifting by other spheres of government and more than 20 years of rate pegging have exacerbated the problem of capital works funding.

23. Community facilities in many parts of the NSROC region are ageing and require costly upgrades or replacement to meet the requirements of modern service provision.
24. The need to upgrade and expand library buildings has been emerging for some time and has begun to be addressed by NSROC Councils. New libraries are planned in Chatswood, Ku-ring-gai (site TBC), West Ryde and Ryde. An extensions is planned for Lane Cove Library. A rising trend is to incorporate library facilities within multi-purpose community centres with the capacity to accommodate a range of existing and new uses.
25. Demographic change will significantly increase demand for library services.
26. At a rate of provision suggested by Library Council of NSW benchmarks (9 sq m per 1000 people), the estimated 2031 population of 660,652 persons for the NSROC region will require approximately 6,000 square metres of library space. Assuming that 50 per cent will be newly built, building and fitout costs (calculated at \$2,500 per square metre, excluding land value) would cost NSROC Councils \$7.5 million at current values. Significantly higher costs will be incurred if Councils are required to purchase additional land.
27. Councils will need to increase the availability of community centre space in order to meet the needs of the current and incoming population.
28. According to the commonly used standard of one community centre of at least 750 to 1000 square metres per 10,000 to 20,000 residents, there is a shortfall of between five and 38 centres depending on how the benchmark is applied. The cost of meeting this need is significant, ranging from \$9.375 million to \$95 million at the upper end of the estimate.
29. A number of strategies may be employed to increase the feasibility of such a building program. These include consolidating current assets, such as small-scale single-purpose facilities, in order to build large-scale multi-purpose centres; re-zoning of Council owned lands currently classified as “community lands” (open-space) for operational uses; and partnerships with commercial interests, such as retail and residential developers. While there is a strong financial incentive to do so, there would be strong opposition from residents who oppose any diminution of open-spaces in their LGA, and land sharing with the private sector.
30. Given current high levels of provision of open space, the expected increase in population density is unlikely to significantly impact on demands in this area.
31. Current demand for outdoor sporting facilities in most parts of the NSROC region exceeds supply during in peak playing periods such as Saturdays. The expected population increase will exacerbate current supply problems. There is limited opportunity for future development of new outdoor sporting facilities within the NSROC region. This is due to existing urban development, prohibitive costs of purchasing new sites, topography, adjacent bushland and natural areas.



32. To meet the needs of the current and incoming population, NSROC Councils will need to better plan and design parks and open spaces as social venues and meeting places. The main requirements are to:
- enhance existing facilities to improve the general amenity, including toilet facilities, seating, shade and playground equipment;
  - improve safety and utilisation of parks and sporting facilities with upgraded lighting;
  - provide more picnic and barbecue facilities to suit couples and families living in apartments, and increasing numbers of residents from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds backgrounds;
  - provide non-traditional sporting facilities such as skate board ramps, off-road cycle tracks and BMX tracks for children and young people;
  - improve access for people with disabilities to and within outdoor recreational areas, and
  - improve safety of cycle and pedestrian links between housing areas and parks.
33. Additional population strengthens the justification for the development of major new cultural facilities sought in a number of NSROC communities but is unlikely to affect the scale of provision requirement. There are currently three facilities, two in Chatswood and one in Ryde. Based on the commonly used benchmark of one cultural music/drama facility per 50,000 to 100,000, this would mean that the current goal of one major cultural facility in most of the NSROC LGAs is realistic for the incoming population. It should be noted that while several NSROC Councils including Hornsby and Lane Cove have begun to address the issue, there are no concrete plans in place in either locality.

## **Affordable Housing**

34. Affordability of housing is a growing concern for the NSROC region. The rising cost of housing in the region has meant that few low and middle income earners are able to live in the area. While job opportunities exist for unskilled and semi-skilled workers and in the lower paying professions such as child care, disability services and nursing, the available labour in the region falls well short of the demand.
35. While improvements to the transport system will increase opportunities to attract workers to employment in the region, it is unlikely to fully resolve labour shortages as there is little incentive to travel when the same jobs are readily available closer to home.
36. In December 2003, the Forum of Non-government Agencies set a benchmark for affordable housing. It suggests that 15 per cent of total housing units within new urban developments and renewal areas should be directed to social housing, low cost private rental and lower income home ownership. While such an objective would go some way to alleviating shortages of key workers, before establishing targets within its region, NSROC Councils first need to gain a better understanding of the unmet need. NSROC Councils would then be in a stronger position to lobby the agencies with historical responsibility for allocating social housing to develop funding approaches for meeting it.

37. In the absence of specific interventions, the property market will determine that the final social mix of the NSROC region. Given current high yields from property investment, it unlikely the Metropolitan Strategy will delivery a more diverse range of income and household types in the region.

## **Health Services**

38. The NSW Government has recently invested approximately \$490 million in upgrading health facilities in the NSROC region. The bulk of the funding was allocated to the redevelopment of the Royal North Shore Hospital. Expenditures in 2004-05 exceeded \$34 million.
39. Despite net gains in health facilities, continuing nursing staff shortages are likely to prevent services from working at optimum levels. Nursing staff shortages have caused bed closures across the Northern Sydney Health region and a reduction in operating room sessions.

## **Local Transport**

40. While the Metropolitan Strategy has focused on delivering more efficient public transport systems by improving connections between centres and major transport hubs, there has been very little focus on improving transport systems within localities.
41. The NSROC region is thought to be poorly serviced by intra-regional transport, especially outside of peak periods, but specific data is not readily available. Consideration should be given to improving understanding of the depth of the problem and its social and economic ramifications.
42. Young people, older people and people with disabilities are most affected by poor frequency and coverage of transport services.
43. Access to rail stations and buses is expected to become a critical issue as the community ages.

# **1. Introduction**

The Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (NSROC) is a voluntary organisation of Local Government in the lower north and northern suburbs of Sydney. The region takes in the seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Kuring-gai, Lane Cove, North Sydney, Ryde and Willoughby and spans more than 680 square kilometres (sq km). The population as at the 2001 Census was almost 530,000 people.

While each Local Government authority is independent, NSROC provides a mechanism to work cooperatively, optimise resources and increase value to the residents living within the region.

## **1.1 Purpose and Audience for the Report**

NSROC has commissioned GML Social Research to prepare a Social Report covering the NSROC region. This project is an outcome of NSROC's resolve to investigate the likely impacts of the NSW Government's Metropolitan Strategy on its region. The principal purpose of the report is to draw together substantial existing research into a cohesive report that will provide the basis for future NSROC submissions to the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR), and other State and Federal Government agencies.

The report will assist NSROC to develop a better understanding of the social issues and constraints that Councils face in the region and to plan for future social infrastructure. Major objectives are to:

- Identify issues of high concern to the communities of the NSROC region, in particular the community values of the region, and
- Consider the anticipated impacts on the provision of community services if current population growth trends continue as anticipated and as documented in the Metropolitan Strategy.

This report complements two additional reports commissioned by NSROC. One report highlights the contribution of the NSROC region to the NSW economy, and another examines the environmental constraints and issues in the region, and considers the capacity of infrastructure for sustainable growth.

The majority of the evidence and data used in this report is drawn from key planning documents obtained from each of the Councils in the NSROC region, the ABS 2001 Census and other statistical data.

## **1.2 About the Metropolitan Strategy**

The NSW Government has developed a Metropolitan Strategy to plan for future urban growth in the Greater Metropolitan Region of Sydney. DIPNR anticipate that Sydney's

population will grow by around 40,600 people each year over the next 30 years. The Metropolitan Strategy is an attempt to better manage population growth, focusing on the changing needs of communities brought about by demographic changes and the need to maintain valuable landscapes. It is intended to guide major decisions and plans by State and Local Government and inform private sector investment.

Metropolitan Strategy population growth projections in NSROC region reflect the constraints to urban consolidation in the area. The Strategy suggests that in the 30-year period from 2001-2031, the NSROC region will need to absorb between 30,000 and 45,000 additional dwellings. The figure represents only around 12-14 per cent of the total projected growth for Sydney, whereby the highest growth will be in western Sydney which expects to accommodate 34-38 per cent of housing development in Sydney. While new dwellings in land release sites will be a feature in the west, new dwellings in the NSROC region will predominately be located along existing transport corridors and established centres. Within the NSROC region, Hornsby, Chatswood, St Leonards, Macquarie Park and North Sydney are nominated as centres for jobs, services and economic activities<sup>1</sup>.

It is well known that infrastructure capacity is a limiting factor on urban consolidation<sup>2</sup>. Increased population in the NSROC is likely to place pressure on existing infrastructure such as roads, water and electricity. But what is the likely impact on social services infrastructure? The NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) has been critical of the Metropolitan Strategy for its failure to address the issue of human services planning and social equity issues in general<sup>3</sup>. This report is an attempt to address this deficiency within the NSROC region. While the NSROC region has scope for further urban consolidation, Local Councils in the region are concerned about the potential impact of absorbing an increased population on local amenity and human services infrastructure. Maintaining the quality of living and social assets currently enjoyed by residents in the NSROC region is a high order priority.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (2004) *Planning for a Better Future: Metropolitan Strategy Discussion Paper Greater Sydney Metropolitan Region*

<sup>2</sup> Glen Searle (2003) *The Limits to Urban Consolidation* Urban Frontiers Program Issues Paper No. 14 University of Western Sydney

<sup>3</sup> Council of Social Service of NSW (2004) *Submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Metropolitan Strategy* November 2004.

## 2. The Demographic Context

The following population analysis and projections are drawn from the ABS's 'medium variant' Series B Projections for NSW by age (ABS 2003), ABS 2001 Census of Population and Housing the Department of Community Services Metro Central Region *Northern Sydney Network Profile*, August 2004; and.

The ABS medium variant projections incorporate underlying assumptions for the Greater Sydney area of an annual net migration gain of 13,200, a fertility rate of 1.57, and life expectancy at birth increasing by approximately one year for every three years projected, but at a decelerating rate of improvement. These assumptions are held constant from 2011.

### 2.1 Population growth projections

**Table 1**

**Projected Population Growth NSROC Region 2004-2034**

	2004	2013	2022	2034*
<b>Hornsby</b>	157,407	169,905	181,502	194,042
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	13,637	14,125	14,502	15,462
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	109,190	113,637	117,634	126,262
<b>Lane Cove</b>	32,436	33,721	34,932	37,488
<b>North Sydney</b>	60,292	64,913	69,326	73,934
<b>Ryde</b>	100,317	104,026	107,278	111,886
<b>Willoughby</b>	64,473	72,916	81,673	90,133
<b>Total</b>	<b>537,752</b>	<b>573,243</b>	<b>606,847</b>	<b>649,207</b>

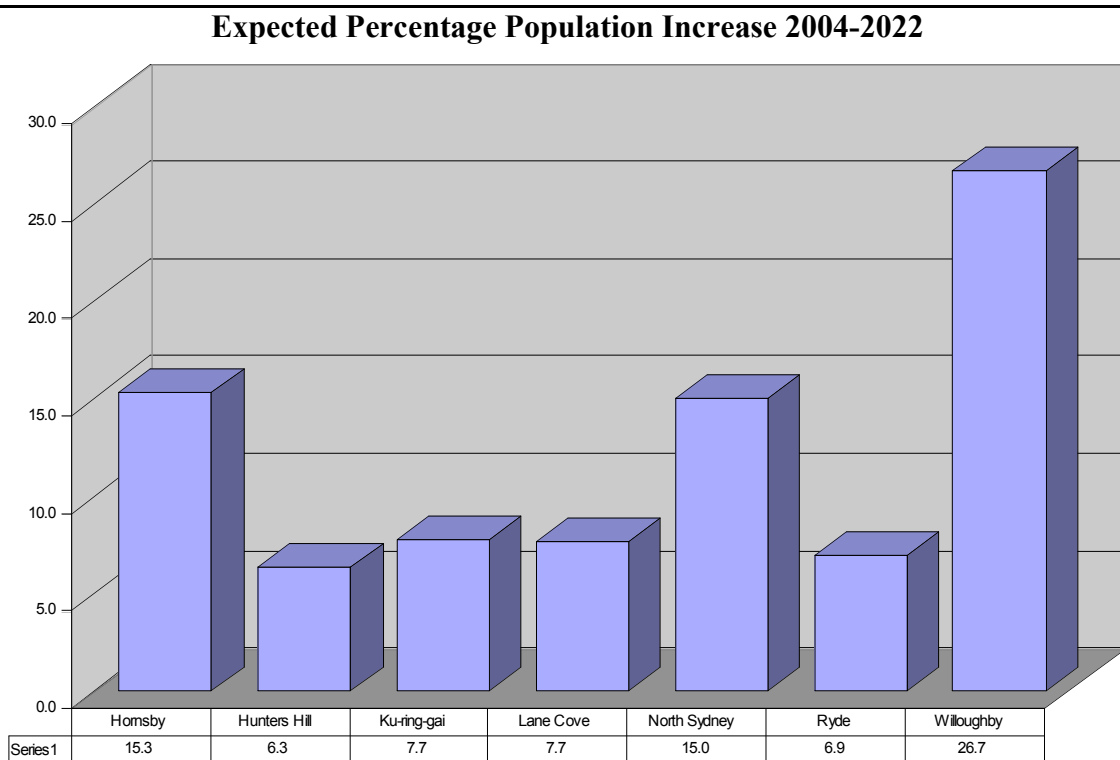
Note: \* ABS projections are only available to 2022. Therefore, an alternative methodology was required to derive 2034 projections. This has been achieved by proportioning the Metropolitan Strategy annual growth projection for established areas (28,420) as a percentage of Sydney's population across the NSROC LGAs. From these annual growth projections, a 12-year growth figure has been added to the 2022 base.

While this methodology was first used to forecast future population by NSROC in its working paper *Analysis of the Metropolitan Strategy's Housing Growth Predictions* January 2005, the 2034 projections can be regarded as indicative only. It must be noted that the calculations are based on current growth patterns and planning values that may not continue over the thirty years of the Metropolitan Strategy.

The population projections outlined in the table above forecast a total population increase for the NSROC region of 111,455 persons over 30 years from 2004-2034. This is within the top range of DIPNR’s proposed growth figures of 81,000 to 121,500 persons (based on 2.7 persons per additional household) and marginally above NSROC’s projection of 106,830 additional persons. Annual growth is calculated at approximately 3,700 persons each year.

Based on these growth estimates the NSROC region can expect a steady growth trajectory of around 0.6 per cent each year and approximately 13 per cent over 18 years from 2004 to 2022. However, the table below indicates that population growth is not expected to be uniform across the NSROC region. The highest levels of growth are expected in the Willoughby, Hornsby and North Sydney LGAs while the lowest growth is expected in Hunters Hill and Ryde.

**Table 2**



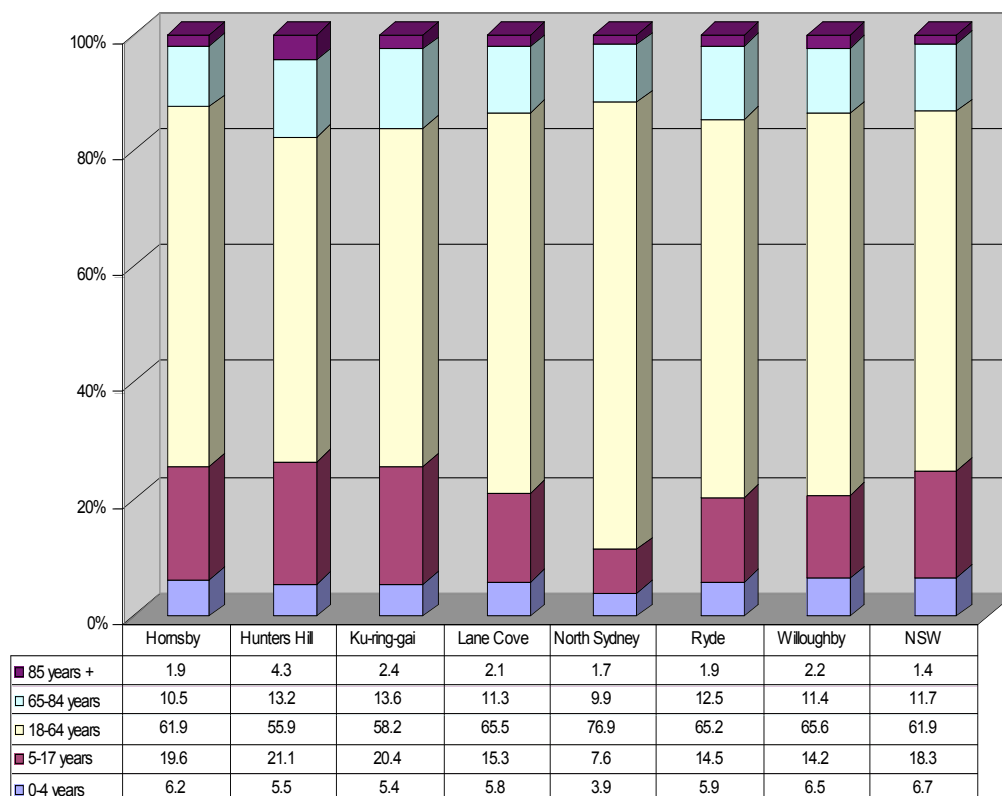
## 2.2 Changing Age Profile

Population projections also indicate that the ageing of the NSROC region will be an ongoing process for many years and will be one of the most significant influences on the demand and supply of social services. Population estimates indicate that by 2022, the proportion of people over 65 will have risen to 18.5 per cent for the NSROC region; and 15.8 per cent for the Sydney metropolitan area; and 23.6 per cent across the whole of NSW.

The table below shows that the current population of the NSROC region is somewhat older than for the Sydney region or NSW as a whole. North Sydney is a notable exception.

**Table 3**

**Age Distribution NSROC Region as at 2001 Census**



*Source: ABS National Regional Profile, Selected Characteristics 2001 Census*

The table below shows that LGAs in the NSROC region will not experience population ageing at the same rate and scale. The most rapidly ageing LGA is Hunters Hill, while Willoughby is likely to experience the least impact of population ageing. A disproportionately low number of children distort the age ratio in North Sydney LGA. A high proportion of younger working-aged people in the population is likely to offset the potential negative impacts of population ageing in North Sydney.

The elderly to child ratio indicates the number of older people in relation to children in the population. For example, a ratio of 0.6 means that there are six older people for every ten children. A ratio of 1.1 means that there are eleven older people for every ten children. The lower the ratio, the younger the age structure of the population. The year of cross over indicates the point in time when the number of older people will equal the number of children in the population.

It should also be noted that an ageing population profile is not of itself negative. In general, most older people are relatively healthy, active and significant contributors to the community and may only require health and extra support services in the last few years of life.

**Table 4****Overall Patterns of Ageing in NSROC Region 2004-2022**

	Percentage 0-14 years as at 2004	Percentage 0-14 years in 2022	Percentage 65+ years as at 2004	Elderly/Child ratio 2004	Percentage 65+ years in 2022	Elderly/Child ratio 2022	Annual Percentage rate of increase	Year of crossover to > 1.0
<b>Hornsby</b>	19.5	16.6	12.6	0.6	17.9	1.1	.30	2018
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	18.2	14.9	16.4	0.9	22.2	1.5	.32	2007
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	19.0	15.7	15.9	0.8	21.4	1.4	.31	2010
<b>Lane Cove</b>	16.9	14.8	12.9	0.8	16.9	1.1	.22	2016
<b>North Sydney</b>	9.6	8.2	11.7	1.2	16.9	2.1	.29	Already occurred
<b>Ryde</b>	16.5	14.1	14.4	0.9	18.6	1.3	.24	2011
<b>Willoughby</b>	17.2	15.2	12.7	0.7	15.5	1.0	.15	2022
<b>Sydney</b>	n/a	n/a	12.0	0.6	15.8	1.1	.28	2015
<b>Balance NSW</b>	n/a	n/a	17.1	0.8	23.6	1.5	.33	2009

*Source: Data extracted from Jackson & Baum (2004) Ageing and Place NSW Local Government and Shires Associations.*

### 2.3 Housing Stock in the NSROC Region

One of the key factors in determining community composition is the types of housing available and its affordability relative to other areas.

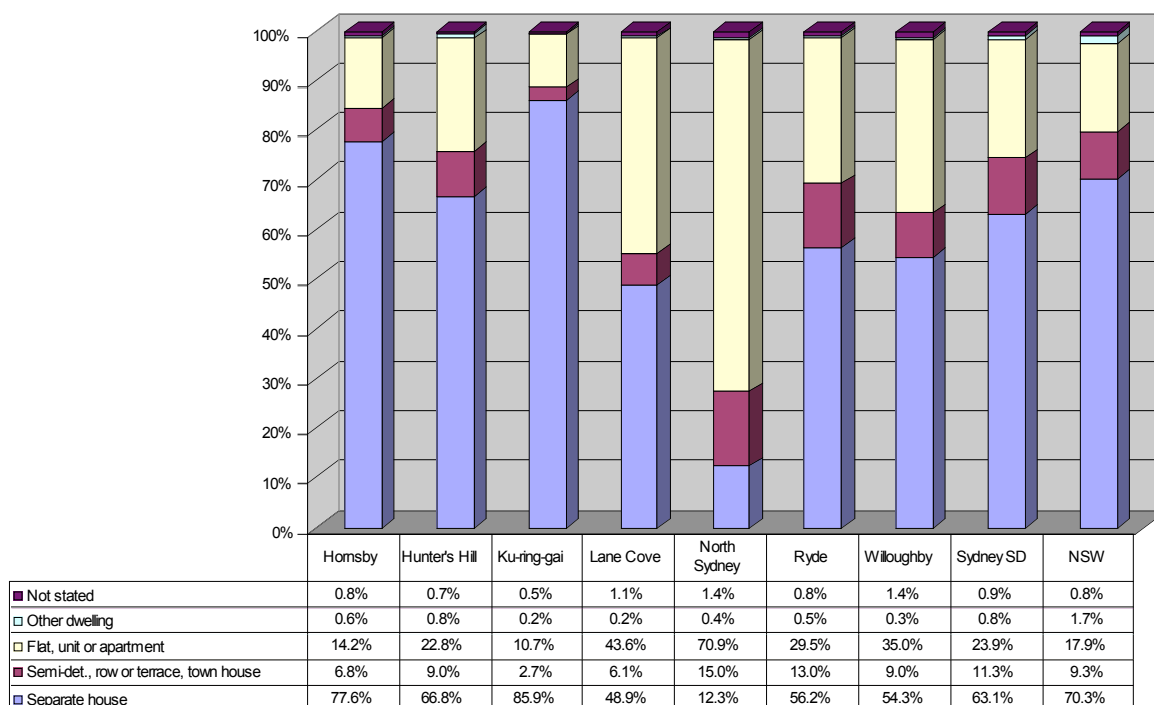
The breakdown below shows that the freestanding housing commonly associated with Sydney's north shore is the principal housing type in four of the seven NSROC LGAs. The trend is particularly strong in the Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby LGAs where freestanding housing accounts for 85.9 and 77.6 per cent of all housing in the LGAs.

However, there also has been considerable investment in high and medium density housing in many parts of the NSROC region. This is most apparent in the North Sydney LGA, where it is the dominant form, and in the Lane Cove LGA, accounting for 85.9 and 49.7 per cent of the available housing.



**Table 5**

**Housing by Type as at 2001 Census**



Source: ABS 2001 Census Table B18

## 2.4 Socio-Economic Profile of NSROC Region

The NSROC region is prosperous at the aggregate level. However, some variation in the socio-economic standing of suburbs is apparent within the NSROC LGAs.

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) Index of Advantage and Disadvantage is derived from attributes such as income, educational attainment, unemployment, occupations and variables that may reflect disadvantage rather than measure specific aspects of disadvantage (for example, separated/divorces). High SEIFA scores occur when the area has few families of low income and few people with little training or in unskilled occupations. Low scores on the Index occur when the area has many low-income families and many people with little training or working in unskilled occupations.

Based on the SEIFA index, the most advantaged NSROC suburb is Kirribilli (1248.48). Other higher scoring suburbs include North Sydney and Neutral Bay in the North Sydney LGA and Killara, Gordon and Pymble within the Ku-ring-gai LGA. The highest level of relative disadvantage is found in Ryde (1064.32). Melrose Park, North Ryde and West Ryde in the Ryde LGA and Hornsby and Mount Ku-ring-gai in the Hornsby LGA also had lower scores. However, it is important to bear in mind that no suburb falls below the 10<sup>th</sup> decile in the SEIFA index scores or below the Sydney statistical district score of 1050.72<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Community Services (2004) *Northern Sydney Network Profile* August 2004 Metro Central Region.

The social indicator data tables in the sections below show that, overall the NSROC LGAs currently experience a high level of community well-being and human capital.

## 2.4.1 Household Type

The table below indicates that household types tend to reflect the age structure and housing stock currently available in each of the NSROC LGAs.

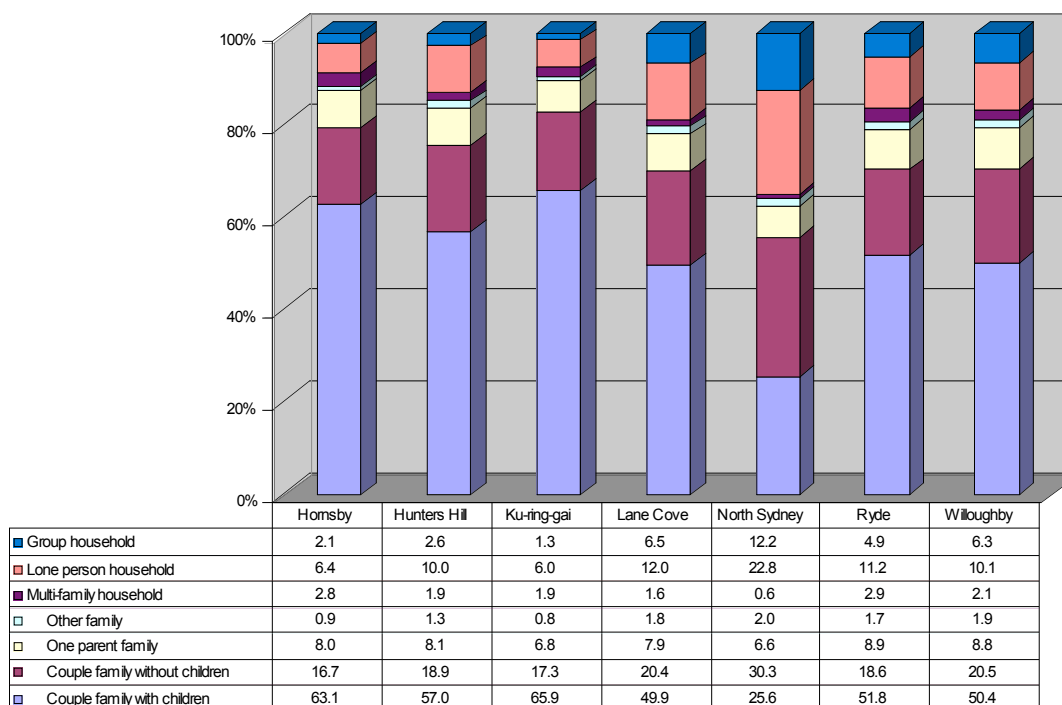
Couples with children are the predominant household type in all areas except North Sydney. There is a direct correlation between the proportion of families with children and availability of freestanding dwellings. For example, in the Ku-ring-gai LGA where 85.9 per cent of the housing stock is freestanding, 65.9 per cent of the population are families with children. It is possible to speculate that older people either living alone or as couples occupy a substantial proportion of the remaining freestanding stock and that there may be some generational change of occupancy within the next five to ten years.

Conversely, in North Sydney, where the housing stock is predominately medium or high density, there is an exceptionally high proportion of lone person households and of couples without children.

Single parent households are low in all LGAs in comparison to the State average of 15.5 per cent. This would likely be due to higher housing costs in the NSROC region in comparison with other areas. Group households are more common in LGAs with higher levels of high and medium density housing, or are on the main transport routes to tertiary institutions. The incidence of multiple family households in the NSROC region is negligible.

**Table 6**

**Household Types in NSROC Region as at 2001**



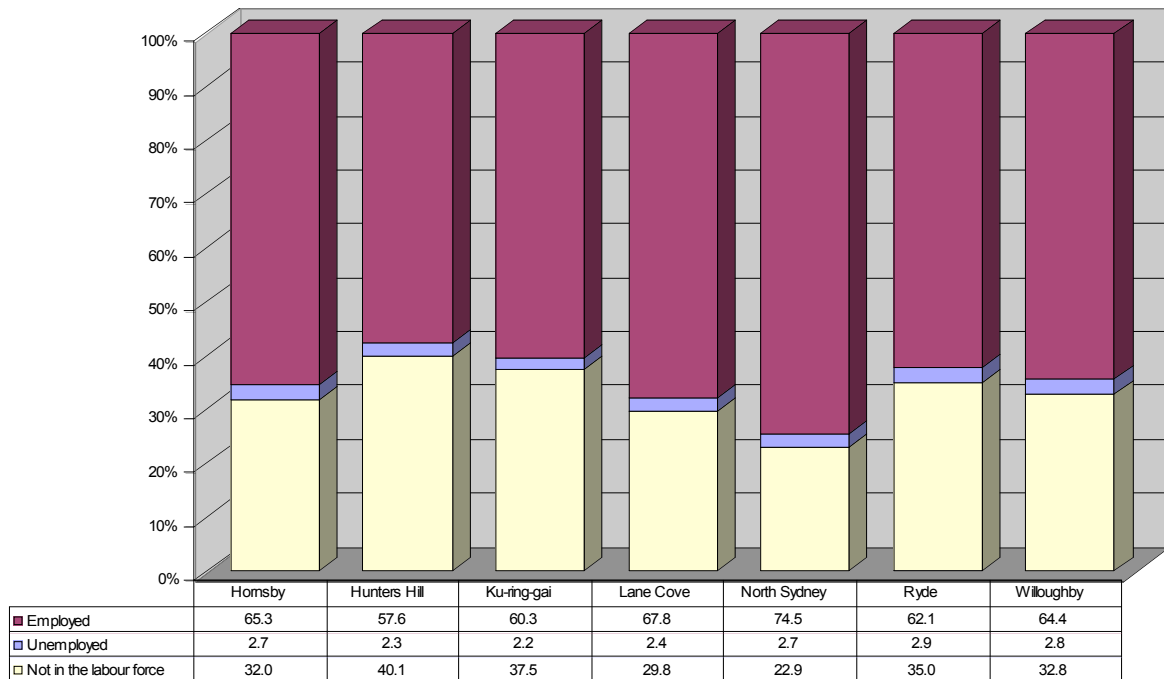
Source: ABS Census 2001, Table B17

## 2.4.2 Employment

The NSROC region enjoys a high level of labour force participation that is above the rate for the Sydney metropolitan region (61.4 per cent) in all LGAs except Hunter Hill (59.9 per cent).

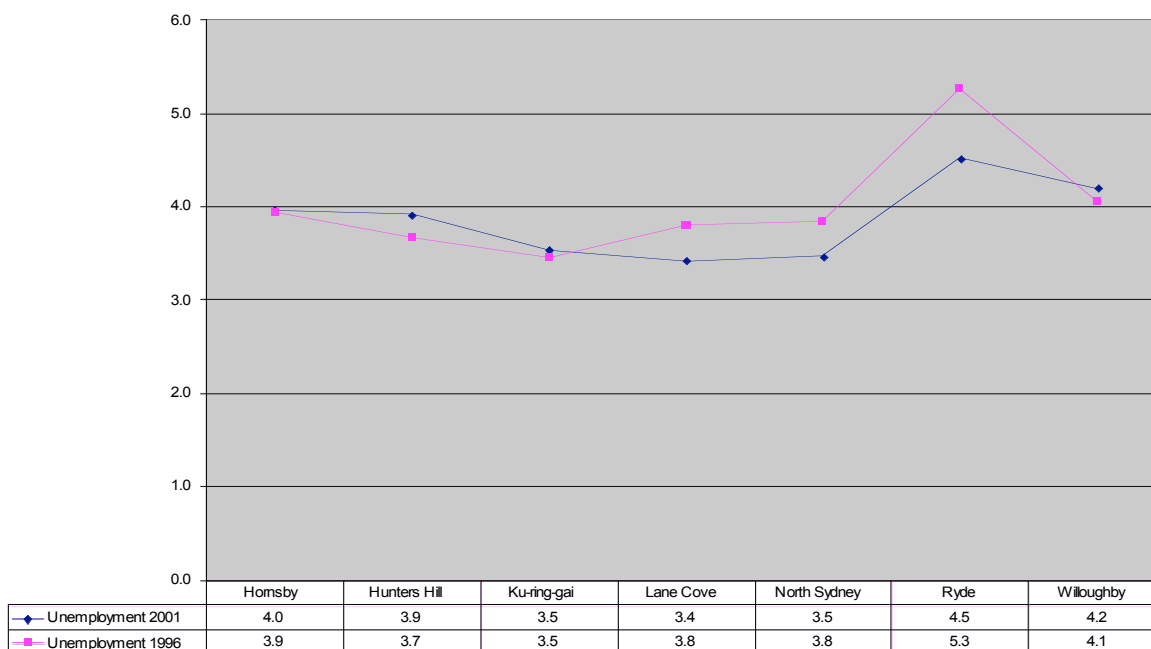
**Table 7**

**Employment in NSROC Region as at 2001**



*Source: ABS 2001 Census Table T01 Selected Characteristics*

Unemployment has fallen since 1996 in the NSROC region in all LGAs except Hunters Hill where it is marginally higher. Overall, the rate of unemployment is significantly lower than the Sydney average of 6.1 per cent. As at the 2001 Census, the highest percentage unemployment was in the Ryde LGA (4.5 per cent) and the lowest was in the Lane Cove LGA (3.4 per cent).

**Table 8****Change in Unemployment Rates 1996-2001**

Source: ABS 2001 Census Table T01 Selected Characteristics

One of the contributing factors to both high levels of labour force participation and low unemployment is the availability of jobs within key centres in the NSROC region. The table below shows that there has been strong jobs growth in the majority of NSROC employment hubs.

**Table 9****Jobs Growth in Main Centres 1996-2001**

	1996 Jobs	2001 Jobs	% Annual Growth	Absolute Growth
North Sydney	36280	39819	1.9%	3538
St Leonards	23446	25339	1.6%	1893
Chatswood	19361	20938	1.6%	1577
Macquarie Park	19932	24266	4.6%	4874
Hornsby	4125	4054	-0.3%	-71

Source: Sydney's Economic Geography: Trends and Drivers

Research by DIPNR<sup>5</sup> has shown that a high proportion of workers within NSROC regions work in the same district as they live. Within the Inner North Western region, comprising the Ryde, Hunters Hill, Lane Cove and Willoughby LGAs, 39 per cent of workers work within the region; 20 per cent work in the CBD; and 9 per cent in North Sydney.

<sup>5</sup> SGS Economics and Planning (2004) *Sydney's Economic Geography: Trends and Drivers* Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, June 2004 p.100.

In the North Sydney LGA, 30 per cent of workers live in the area. Journey to work data also shows that 33 per cent of North Sydney residents commute to the city and 13 per cent to the Inner North Western LGAs.

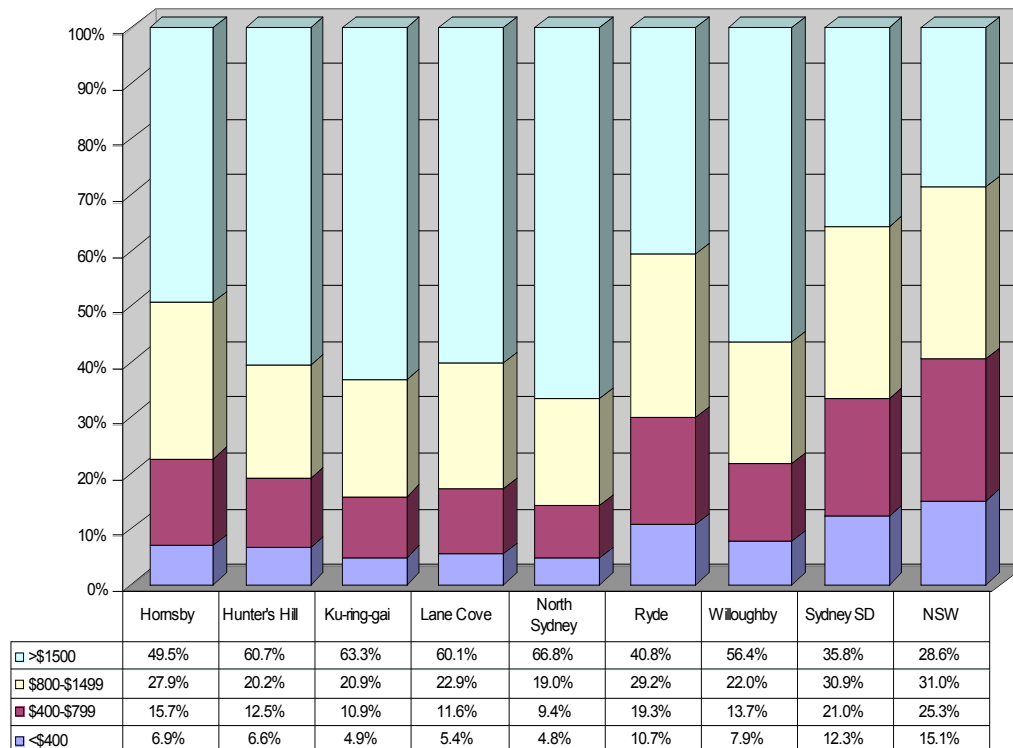
In the Hornsby and Ku-ring-gai LGAs 35 per cent of workers live in the area, while 17 per cent commute to the city and 16 per cent to Inner North Western LGAs.

### 2.4.3 Household Incomes

Analysis of the 2001 Census shows a concentration of high-income households within the NSROC region in comparison to the Greater Sydney region and the State as a whole. This is in part attributable to the availability of high quality housing stock which high income earners are attracted to and able to afford. The growth of well paid ‘knowledge industry’ jobs within the region also may play a part.

**Table 10**

**Household Incomes in NSROC Region as at 2001**



Source: ABS Census 2001, Table B25

### 2.4.4 Occupational Structure

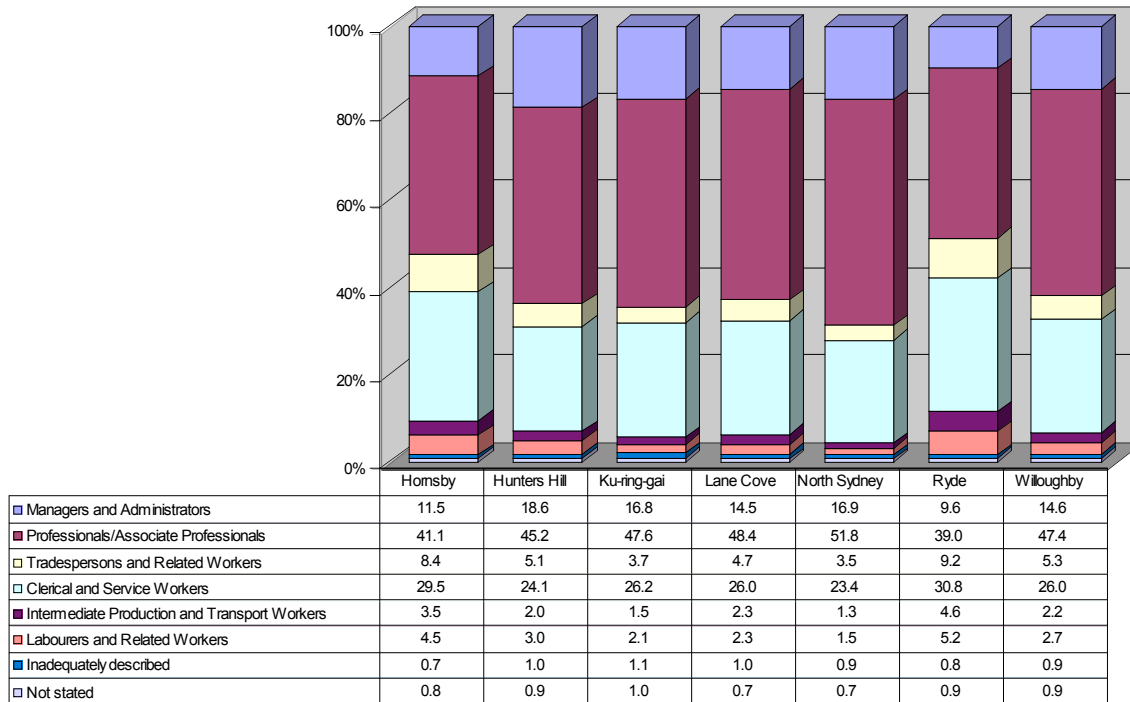
In terms of occupational structure, the NSROC region has very high shares of managers, administrators, professionals and associate professionals among its work force.

The table below indicates that there is some variation across the region. The highest proportions of managers and administrators are found in the Hunters Hill LGA (18.6 per

cent), followed by North Sydney (16.9 per cent) and Ku-ring-gai (16.8 per cent). Professionals and associate professionals comprise 51.8 per cent of the labour force in North Sydney and 48.4 per cent in Lane Cove. Clerical workers and trades people are more commonly found in the Ryde and Hornsby LGAs where they comprise 40 and 37.9 per cent of workers.

**Table 11**

**Occupations in the NSROC Labour Force**



Source: ABS 2001 Census Table B27

**2.4.5 Reliance on Income Support**

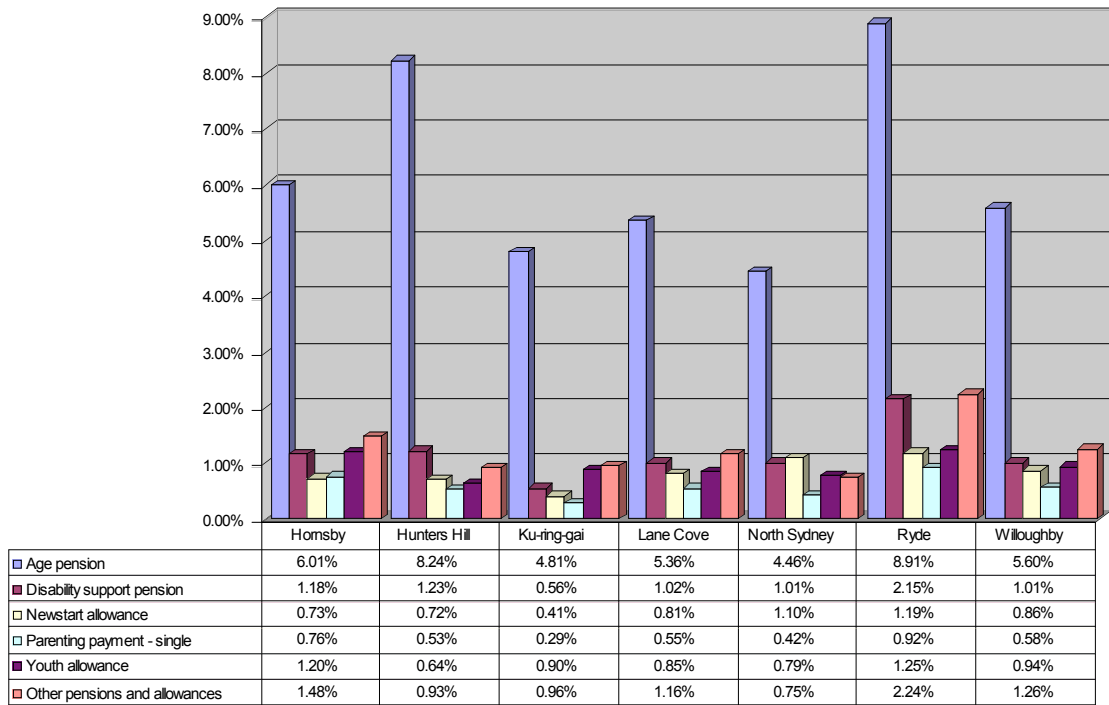
The table below indicates that the most common form of income support currently used by NSROC residents is the Age Pension.

The highest percentages of persons receiving the Age Pension live in the Hunters Hill, Ryde and Hornsby LGAs. However, having a high proportion of persons of pensionable age (i.e. 65 years and over) did not necessarily mean a high percentage of recipients of the Age Pension. For example, in Ku-ring-gai where persons aged 65 years and older comprise 15.9 per cent of the population, only 4.8 per cent received the Age Pension. This is a useful indicator of the likely proportion of self-funded retirees in the LGA.

The proportion of residents receiving the Disability Support Pension is higher in Ryde than for any other NSROC LGA. Residents in the Ryde and Hornsby LGAs are more likely than those in other NSROC LGAs to receive other forms of income support.

**Table 12**

**Income Support as Percentage of Population as at 2001**



*Source: ABS National Regional Profile, Selected Characteristics 2001 Census*

**2.4.6 Housing Tenure**

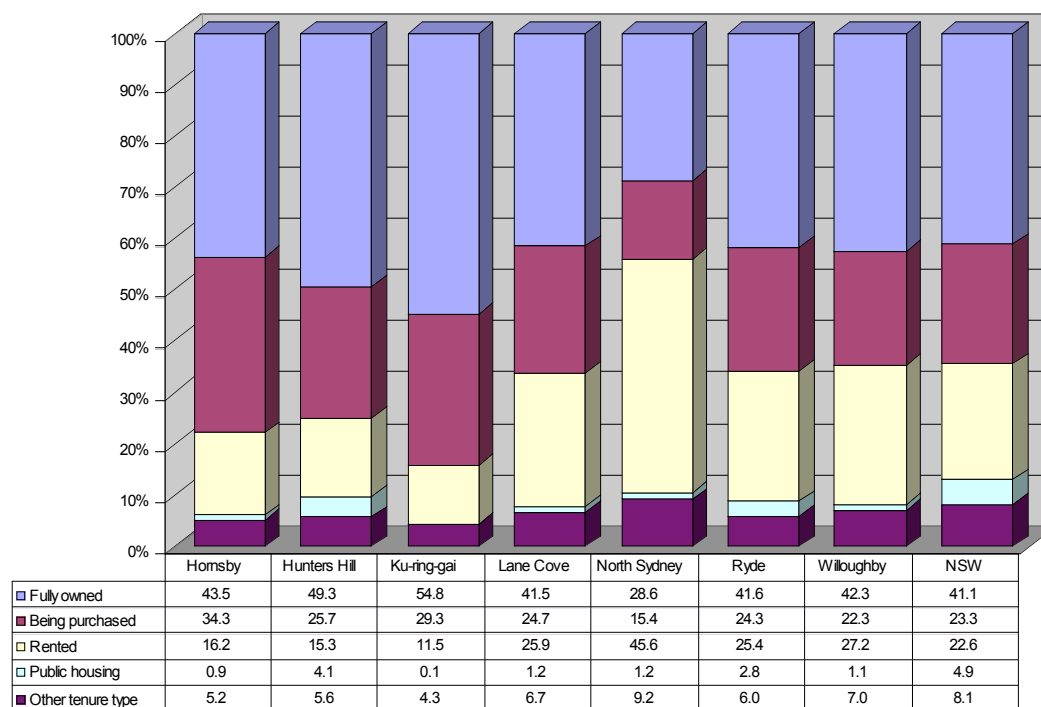
The level of home ownership is high in all LGAs except North Sydney, where the private rental market provides housing for approximately 46 per cent of residents. The highest level of home ownership is found in Ku-ring-gai where just over half (54.8 per cent) of all residents live in properties that are fully owned.

The largest proportion of mortgaged residences is in the Hornsby LGA where 34.3 per cent of residents live in properties that they are paying off. This is followed by Ku-ring-gai with approximately 40 per cent of residents live in properties in this category.

The proportion of residents living in public housing is below the State average of 4.9 per cent in all LGAs. The largest percentage of residents in public housing is found in Hunters Hill with 4.1 per cent residing in public housing. The lowest absolute number of residents living in public housing is found in the Ku-ring-gai LGA where just 91 persons live in 37 public housing residences.

**Table 13**

**Housing Tenure in the NSROC Region as at 2001**



Source: ABS 2001 Census: Table 19

**2.4.7 Residential Stability**

The number of people who were living in a different place five years earlier is a measure of residential stability. While high levels of mobility over a five-year period can indicate insecure housing tenure and relative community disadvantage, a number of factors can explain high mobility rates in the NSROC region.

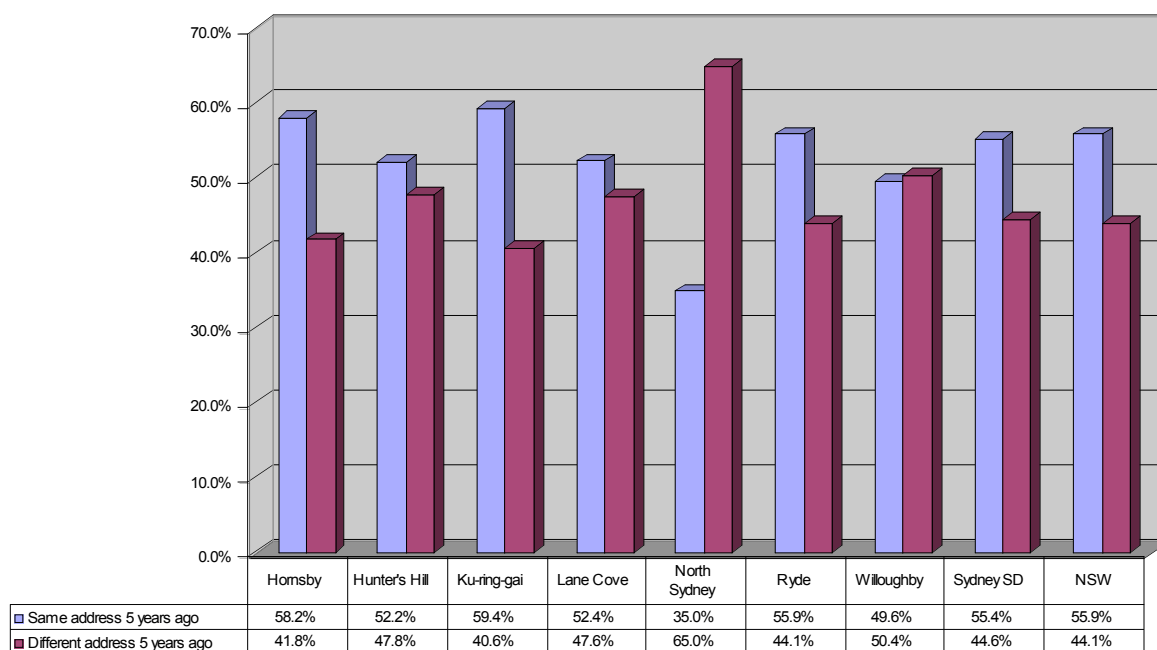
Firstly, many of the LGAs with higher mobility rates contain relatively high proportions of medium density accommodation including flats, units or apartments, and rental housing and nursing homes and/or hostels. Mobility is most apparent in the parts of the region with the greatest volume of rented accommodation. This will create a natural turnover effect as tenants move into other rented accommodation or into home ownership. For example, 65 per cent of residents in the North Sydney LGA (which has both high density and a high proportion of renters) compared with 40.6 per cent of population in the Ku-ring-gai LGA (characterised by lower densities and higher levels of home ownership) lived at a different address five years ago.

Secondly, there is some evidence to suggest that generational change is occurring in some areas as older people and so-called “empty-nesters” are selling large family homes to younger families. This may explain high levels of mobility over five years in the Lane Cove and Hunters Hill LGAs.



**Table 14**

**Residential Stability in NSROC Region as Percentage of Population**



**2.4.8 Ethnicity**

The majority of the people in the NSROC region are born in Australia. The NSROC region appears to be becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse, with significant increases in numbers of overseas born in some LGAs. Both Lane Cove and Willoughby Councils have noted a rise in people from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds within their communities which is yet to be reflected in ABS Census data. In Willoughby and in Ku-ring-gai, this is confirmed by a noticeable increase in the demand for services such as English classes and CALD information services.

The table below shows a 15.5 per cent overall rise, with the largest percentage rise was in the Hornsby LGA while the lowest was in the Hunters Hill LGA.

**Table 15**

**Growth in Overseas-born Residents 1991-2001**

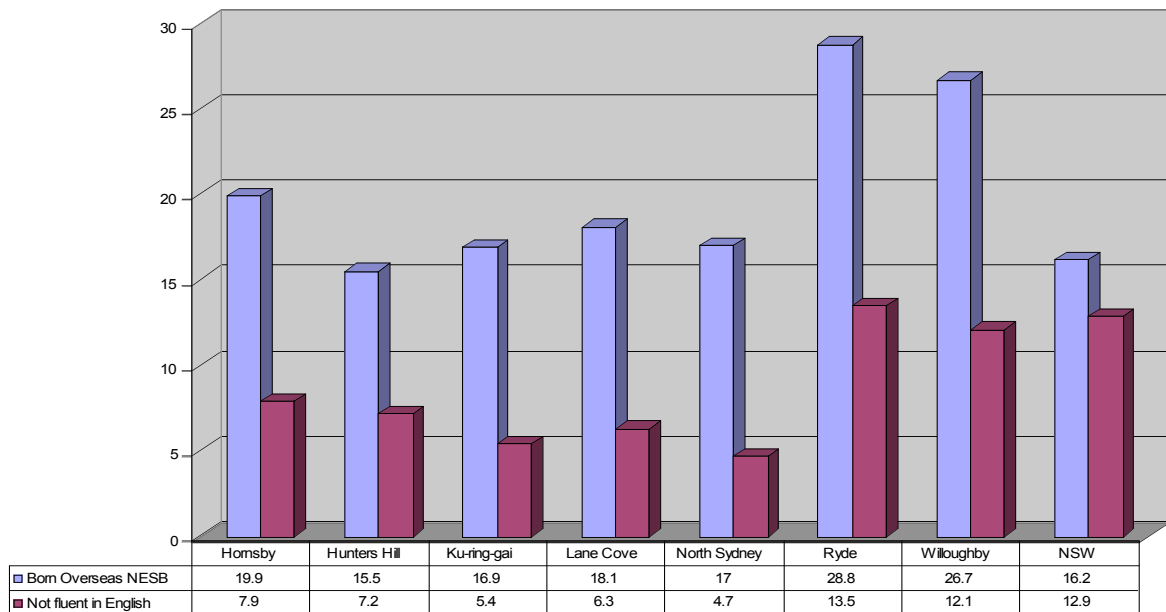
	1991	1996	2001	% Growth
<b>Hornsby</b>	31,357	37,221	43,269	27.5
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	8,782	8,559	8,909	1.4
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	27,804	29,827	31,476	11.7
<b>Lane Cove</b>	8,369	9,006	8,879	5.7
<b>North Sydney</b>	17,181	17,276	18,657	7.9
<b>Ryde</b>	29,252	31,623	33,579	12.9
<b>Willoughby</b>	17,866	19,180	21,625	17.4
<b>NSROC Region</b>	142602	154688	168395	15.3

As at the 2001, across with NSROC region, 20.4 per cent of residents were born in non-English speaking countries. However, this figure masks considerable variation between the LGAs. The highest proportions of persons born in non-English speaking countries live in the Ryde (28.8 per cent) and Willoughby (26.7 per cent) LGAs. The lowest proportions of persons born in non-English speaking countries live in the Hunters Hill (15.5 per cent) and Ku-ring-gai (16.9 per cent).

**Table 16** below shows that proficiency in English among people born in non-English speaking countries is higher than the NSW average. Chinese, Korean, Italian and Japanese are the most commonly spoken languages in the NSROC region.

**Table 16**

**Proportion of NSROC Residents Born Overseas from Non-English Speaking Countries**



*Source: ABS 2001 Census*

### 3. History of Settlement of NSROC Region

Two factors are crucial to understanding the history of urban expansion in the NSROC region: the role of transport systems in opening up new areas for development; and the desire of the middle classes to retreat from the high density, row houses of the inner city.

The first significant expansion of settlement in the Ryde LGA came in 1886, with the completion of the main Northern Railway from Hornsby to Strathfield. Urban villages developed around each railway station and beside the tracks. The opening of the North Shore rail line in the 1890s was the genesis of suburban development in the northern sections of NSROC region. The line initially ran from Hornsby to St Leonards with stations at Wahroonga, Pymble, Gordon, Lindfield, Roseville and Chatswood. It was extended to Milson's Point in 1893 and additional stations were progressively added between 1895 and 1900. A service directly connecting the North Shore to the city could not be established until 1932, after the Harbour Bridge was completed. A network of tramways established in the inter-war years serviced the Lane Cove, Hunters Hill and Ryde LGAs<sup>6</sup>.

The strong resistance to urban consolidation in parts of the NSROC region is unsurprising given the foundation of many of its suburbs within the “garden suburb” movement. The middle classes eschewed the higher densities and lifestyle of the inner city. Outbreaks of bubonic plague in the Rocks area of Sydney between 1900 and 1902 were a catalyst for a wide spread retreat of the middle classes from the inner city terrace houses to the healthier environments of the garden suburbs. This trend, which was not to be reversed until the gentrification of the inner city from in the 1980s, was well established on the North Shore by the 1920s. To prevent the emergence of terrace or row houses in the suburbs, the Local Government Act was amended in 1919 to prohibit the construction of dwellings joined by a party wall<sup>7</sup>.

After the Second World War urban development within the NSROC regions gathered pace with unprecedented demands for housing and employment. Soaring land values encouraged many large land holders to sub-divide their properties and prompted speculative development of suburban bungalows. Overall, development of the region has been characterised by predominantly detached residential neighbourhoods.

Higher density housing in the NSROC region initially was concentrated in the North Sydney LGA. From the 1920s, development in North Sydney was dominated the construction of flats and unit blocks. Between 1923 and 1931, 501 new blocks of flats were built, with a

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<sup>6</sup> Les Thorne (1979) *A History of the North Shore Sydney from 1788 to Today* (Revised edition); see also Michael Poulsen and Peter Spearritt (1976) *A Social and Political Atlas of Sydney*.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Cardew (1980) “Flats in Sydney: The 30 per cent solution” in Jill Roe (Ed.) *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History* Sydney: Hale and Iremonger pp69-88.

further 559 blocks erected in the following decade<sup>8</sup>. Surrounding suburbs such as Lane Cove and Chatswood became targets for developers from the 1950s as North Sydney became built out<sup>9</sup>.

Commercial development growth in North Sydney started in 1955 with the commencement of the MLC Centre in Miller Street. The commercial property building boom that followed was founded on speculation about North Sydney becoming a 'twin city' to the City of Sydney<sup>10</sup>.

Throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s, resident action groups on the lower North Shore concentrated efforts on preserving the residential and natural heritage of the area from threats from industrial and high-rise residential development. Notable battles include the "battlers for Kelly's Bush" in Hunters Hill who successfully resisted the residential development plans of the firm AV Jennings for an area of foreshore bushland and the failed attempt to prevent the construction of Harry Seidler's residential tower at Blues Point, in the North Sydney LGA<sup>11</sup>. Census data from 1976 shows that the campaigners were having an impact. Of 128,126 dwellings within the NSROC region in 1976, only 6.9 per cent of the total housing stock comprised dwelling of three storeys or more. 66.4 per cent of all high-rise accommodation was located within the North Sydney LGA.

Both local residents and Councils in the NSROC region have reacted strongly to the NSW Government's attempts to impose blanket policies aimed at increasing urban consolidation. These include policies to maximise infill potential through state dual occupancy policies and to allow three storey flats in most residential areas. The strength of the backlash in many parts of Sydney forced the NSW Government to abandon these policies and to limit blanket urban consolidation to lower density town house and villa development<sup>12</sup>. Even this level of development is strongly contested in many parts of the NSROC region and significantly restricts the scope for urban consolidation in residential areas.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Cardew (1980) "Flats in Sydney: The 30 per cent solution" in Jill Roe (Ed.) *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History* Sydney:Hale and Iremonger p.74.

<sup>9</sup> Michael Poulsen and Peter Spearritt (1976) *A Social and Political Atlas of Sydney* p.56.

<sup>10</sup> Margaret Park (2002) *Designs on a Landscape: A History of Planning in North Sydney* North Sydney Council p.73.

<sup>11</sup> See for example, *Ibid* p259; and Zula Nittim (1980) "The Coalition of Resident Action Groups" in Jill Roe (Ed.) *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History* Sydney:Hale and Iremonger pp.231-247.

<sup>12</sup> Glen Searle (2003) *The Limits to Urban Consolidation* Urban Frontiers Program Issues Paper No. 14 University of Western Sydney

Residential intensification that has occurred in the region has taken place in existing commercial zones, especially around rail stations. For example, St Leonards was rezoned in 2001 from a low-scale industrial and commercial centre to mixed use zone. This brown field rezoning has allowed wholesale redevelopment of the area into a medium to high-rise commercial and residential centre, with significant increases in the working and residential populations. Significant urban redevelopments also have occurred adjacent to rail stations in Chatswood and West Ryde.

In the northern and north-western parts of the NSROC region, development is constrained by the natural topography and extant bushland preservation areas. Historically, urban development proceeded along the ridgelines, with the steeper areas adjacent to the Hawkesbury River and its tributaries remaining undeveloped except for small residential settlements and commercial hubs supporting water-based commercial activities. While some former rural areas have been developed for residential purposes, large areas within the Hornsby LGA have remained primarily rural. The high cost of delivering urban infrastructure and the importance of maintaining productive agricultural lands are the key impediments to urban growth in these areas.

The NSROC region is currently experiencing unprecedented growth. State strategic land-use policies such as the Metropolitan Strategy appear set to challenge historical growth patterns and values of the region.

## **4. Current Community Values and Priorities**

The NSROC region is characterised by high land values, quality housing and an urban environment that is pleasant, leafy, with mature parkland and private gardens. Local Councils within the NSROC region share similar values, concerns and challenges. These include a strong desire to maintain a sense of community, the physical environment and amenity of the region, while at the same time unlocking the region's potential for economic growth.

They have significant concerns about the capacity of their Councils to provide necessary social infrastructure and supports in an environment of rate pegging, State Government cost shifting and unfunded mandates. Without greater funding and a guaranteed share of tax revenue, it will be increasingly difficult for NSROC Councils to maintain infrastructure and provide services to meet community demands.

This section of the report is an attempt to sum up the key values and priorities of each of the NSROC LGAs. The material is drawn from Council visioning statements, Management Plans, Section 94 Contribution Plans and Local Environment Plans (LEP).

### **4.1 Hornsby**

Hornsby Shire is generally regarded as a "bushland" Shire with urban areas concentrated in the south. Extensive areas of the Shire are zoned Open Space, Environment Protection or Rural and planning policies restrict development in these zones. Substantial parts of the western and north-western parts of the Shire are rural interspersed with some urban village settlements.

The aim of Hornsby Shire Council is to create a 'Living Environment' through informed community action on sustainability, a strong sense of community and housing choice, preservation of natural heritage, and development of vibrant and more self-sufficient local economy.

The majority of the residential areas are low-density suburbs, and there is a strong desire to retain this character. Some medium and high-density precincts are concentrated in Hornsby town centre and other district centres. A Residential Strategy has been produced to guide future development in Hornsby. The key directions set down in the Strategy include:

- a concentrated rather than dispersed model of urban consolidation that is likely to produce fewer environmental effects, while maximising efficiencies in utility usage;
- setting an optimum level of housing and population growth matched to the capacity of infrastructure such as transport, water and sewers; and,
- commitment to environmental sustainability and heritage conservation principles.

The Strategy identifies a target of 270 new infill residential dwellings to be provided annually up to 2021. Hornsby Shire Council will be reviewing its Residential Strategy during 2005/2006 with a view to investigating new areas to accommodate multi-unit housing.

Council is seeking to increase housing choice, with a view to increasing the ratio of multi-unit housing developments as a per cent of the total stock at the 2001 level of 21 per cent to approximately 29 per cent. Higher density housing strategically located around major transport routes will maximise accessibility, support the State Government's "Compact City" approach and maintain the urban/rural boundary within the Shire.

A high order priority for the Shire is the protection of natural bushland and the provision of bushland reserves. At present, approximately 69 per cent of Shire lands are deemed bushland, with approximately 5,880 hectares managed by Council or in partnership with National Parks and Wildlife. There is strong community pressure to resist further urban expansion and the Council is actively working to reduce the areas of bushland on private land lost to development. A further policy area is supporting the continued viability of the rural lands.

While Hornsby is predominantly a residential location, Council aims to increase the percentage of residents employed within the Shire. Hornsby town centre and the Thornleigh Industrial Area are the pre-eminent employment locations in the LGA, although planning strategies are being progressed to enhance the role of other centres in Council's retail and employment hierarchy.

The Hornsby Shire is strongly oriented to families. Families are attracted to the region because of access to high quality, value for money housing. The proximity to two major rail lines and good public and private schools also draws residents to the area. In regard to public facilities, there is strong demand for provision and maintenance of high quality open spaces and children's playgrounds; upgraded and new leisure facilities including indoor sports facilities, modern pool facilities, a performing arts venue and more walking and cycling opportunities, ovals, youth centres and community centres.

## **4.2 Hunters Hill**

The Hunters Hill area is currently experiencing unprecedented development. Construction has commenced on an integrated housing development on the Riverglade campus of the former Gladesville Hospital site. When completed, the area will house an estimated 800 persons. Retirements villages at the former Woolwich Public School (in Woolwich Road) and the former Mary McKillop Convent (in Gladesville Road) have recently been completed.

Hunters Hill is characterised by a strong sense of community pride and identity. Heritage issues have commanded significant attention in Hunters Hill since the early 1970s. Large areas of Hunters Hill are subject to Heritage Conservation Areas that constrain future development of the area, particularly on the Hunters Hill peninsula.

The population is ageing at a faster pace than other LGAs in the NSROC region and there is a focus on enabling residents with special needs to access and participate in programs to maintain their health, dignity and well-being. Given significant constraints to its revenue and rate base, Council has difficulty in meeting the needs of children, youth and families. Child care services are particularly under-provided. Other priorities are upgrading of playgrounds and provision of a multi-purpose youth recreational facility.

### **4.3 Ku-ring-gai**

Residents of Ku-ring-gai wish to maintain the unique character of the area and exhibit a strong sense of community pride. People choose to live in Ku-ring-gai because of the larger than average suburban blocks, open space, lack of congestion and close proximity to Chatswood and Sydney CBD. The area is green, clean and safe and the community expects Council to preserve and enhance these qualities.

The Ku-ring-gai community highly values the surrounding natural environment, and the connecting urban bushland within its neighbourhoods. There are strong concerns in the community that development will impinge on this feature of the LGA.

Families are a dominant feature of the social composition of the Ku-ring-gai LGA. Access to a range of excellent public and private schools is another strong driver for settlement in the area.

Priorities within the community are to address social and physical isolation and increasing accommodation options for older residents, lack of open spaces that are easily accessible and child friendly, and the lack of cultural and entertainment options.

### **4.4 Lane Cove**

As in many of the NSROC LGAs, connection to the physical environment is a defining characteristic of the Lane Cove community. Residents highly value the “village character” of the Lane Cove Shopping Centre and the green and leafy environment. Bushland and parks make up more than 14 per cent of the municipality. Preserving these features is a high priority for the community and while the area is not development averse, in recent years, controversial developments such as the new Woolworths supermarket have polarised the community.

Through its LEP, Council has sought to maintain the environmental character of residential zones and to allow for additional medium-density housing in limited quantities within certain residential zones. Preservation of the existing environmental character of the locality and preventing business and industrial uses from intruding into surrounding residential precincts are key planning values.

The existence of Lane Cove Plaza as a central, accessible meeting place, outdoor dining and performance space that is accessible to the community enhances Lane Cove’s strong sense of community identity.

Residents are attracted to Lane Cove because it offers a suburban lifestyle, a range of housing choice, access to schools, convenience of employment and public transport, and close proximity to the city. Completion of the Gore Hill Freeway has made Lane Cove highly accessible to North Sydney and the Sydney CBD.



## **4.5 North Sydney**

North Sydney differs from other NSROC LGAs in that it is highly urbanised and densely populated. Residents of North Sydney value proximity to the Sydney Harbour foreshore, the village atmosphere and neighbourhood shops and the pedestrian-friendly feel of the streets. They would like to ensure that the urban landscape consists of an appropriate mix of high, medium and low-density development. North Sydney is characterised by a diversity of buildings from all periods of European settlement in Sydney. Ensuring that the layers of built and natural history are kept on view and that significant buildings are retained are key planning values in the LGA.

North Sydney resident's connection with the natural environment is maintained through local parks and reserves that are predominantly located in the foreshore area and small pockets of urban bushland. A key challenge for the Council is in meeting the increasing community demands for access to sporting facilities and for the creation of new parks and reserves.

Residents in the North Sydney LGA have a strong history of community participation in Council decision-making and local events and activities. Local features such as Stanton Library, the Civic Centre, the system of local precinct and streetscape committees, and local arts and cultural events enhance the sense of community and 'liveability' of North Sydney. Protection of iconic landmarks such as Luna Park, North Sydney Oval and the Cammeray Suspension Bridge and maintaining the integrity of streetscapes have been rallying points for community action on heritage issues.

The North Sydney CBD is one of Australia's largest commercial centres. Around 75,000 people commute to the area to work or study. Traditionally, businesses have been attracted to North Sydney as it has provided a cost effective alternative to the Sydney CBD. Council's goal is to protect and strengthen the retail and commercial centre of North Sydney to ensure that it remains competitive and attractive to the business sector. Future residential growth in the North Sydney CBD has the potential to erode the commercial status of the Centre.

## **4.6 Ryde**

Ryde is arguably the most diverse of the NSROC LGAs, culturally, economically and geographically. The 16 suburbs within its boundaries incorporate residential areas, urban villages characterised by mixed uses, industrial zones, key institutions and services including universities, TAFE campuses, hospitals and cemeteries, and the Macquarie Park employment area.

A key initiative in the Ryde LGA has been the adoption of the Urban Villages Strategy which aims to revitalise urban centres by encouraging new development which provides more uses that are residential and better retail and commercial opportunities in these centres. Urban Village strategies have been developed for West Ryde, Eastwood and the Meadowbank Employment Area. Plans are also underway for Top Ryde, Gladesville and the Macquarie Park Corridor.

Residents are attracted to the City of Ryde for its convenient location, green and leafy environment, peaceful atmosphere and the range and relative affordability of housing options. They also value the good shopping areas, parks, foreshores and public transport.

Priorities for the community include protecting and maintaining existing bushland, controlling the heights and densities of new developments, upgrading shopping and economic centres, maintaining existing infrastructure, increasing the useability of open space and improving public transport routes and services.

## **4.7 Willoughby**

The City of Willoughby contains a diverse mix of land uses including residential, commercial, retail and industrial uses. This diversity is an important feature of the City's attraction as a desirable place to visit, work and live.

While the City of Willoughby has become synonymous with the Chatswood CBD in the minds of non-residents, the city comprises 11 lower density high quality residential suburbs. These suburbs have much in common with other NSROC LGAs in that they promote low-density family living, provide an exceptional leafy environment and offer good access to facilities such as transport, schools and recreation. Within the Chatswood CBD itself, high-density residential use is balanced with retail and commercial uses.

Convenience and ease of access to transport and employment are the key reasons people settle in the area. Six community surveys from the last three years indicate that the Willoughby community would like to see improvements to traffic management, parks, playgrounds and streetscapes in the area, and a reduction in the scale of residential and commercial development.

## 5. Major Issues Affecting NSROC Communities

While each Council within the NSROC region will have different emphases and imperatives, a number of common issues emerged in the review of documents. These include:

- increases in the proportion of older Australians in the community;
- shortages of child care places;
- inadequacy of provision for young people;
- ageing and obsolete community facilities;
- affordability of housing;
- critical shortages of key workers, and
- poor intra-regional public transport access.

Each of these issues is examined in detail in the sections below.

### 5.1 Impact of Population Ageing

#### 5.1.1 Overview

Unprecedented population ageing is a growing challenge for Local Government authorities around Australia<sup>13</sup>. The ageing of the population is likely to impact on a number of areas of Local Government direct and indirect service delivery in the NSROC region. The main areas likely to be affected include the provision of home and community care, public transport, residential age care, housing strategies, recreation and leisure and library services.

In terms of community services and facilities, there is not a strong demand for expensive infrastructure and facilities specifically targeted at seniors. Rather, the demand and unmet need is much more focused on programs and activities that promote independence, physical activity and intellectual fulfilment and social interaction. While NSROC Councils do not necessarily have to provide these services, clearly they have a role in coordinating or fostering provision by other sectors.

#### 5.1.2 The Policy Context

Over the past decade, governments at both the National and State levels have promoted the importance of healthy ageing to enable a greater number of older people to remain healthy and independent for as long as possible. As well as increasing opportunities for older people to participate fully in economic and social activities, the policy documents have underlined the need to develop services that help older people, especially those who are very frail or disabled, to be as independent as possible. In parallel with the policy interest in preventing

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<sup>13</sup> Australian Local Government Association (2005) *Ageing Awareness and Action Survey Report*, April 2005 <http://www.alga.asn.au/policy/social/ageing/>

and delaying dependency, there has been a corresponding drive towards meeting the growing demand for accessible, appropriate and high quality health and aged care services<sup>14</sup>.

The National Strategy for an Ageing Australia (NSAA) is a framework to support the Australian Government's response to the issue of an ageing Australia, initiated in the International Year of Older Persons. The NSAA aims to describe the Australian Government's leadership directions on the issue of Australia's ageing population. The principles underlying the NSAA are that an ageing population is of relevance to government, business and the community; age should not be a barrier to accessing essential services; people should be able to make a lifelong contribution to society; public programs should support individuals and communities; decisions should be based on evidence and the delivery of government services and supports to older people is possible as long as the country has a well managed economy and growth. Broad issues associated with an ageing Australia; retirement incomes; a changing workforce; attitudes, lifestyle and community support; healthy ageing and excellent care are all addressed in the NSAA.

The NSW Healthy Ageing Framework (1998 – 2003) was the result of collaboration between the Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care and NSW Health and describes the NSW policy on an ageing society. The goal of the Framework is “a society in which all older people lead satisfying and productive lives with maximum independence and well-being”<sup>15</sup>.

The Framework set out a number of principles including: recognition of the independence of older people as full and contributing members of society; the right of older people to fair and equitable treatment free from unlawful discrimination; and recognition of diversity in the development of programs, policies and services.

The Framework identifies six key areas of action for the NSW Government, these being:

- Attitudes to ageing and older people
- Participation in community life
- Making your own decisions
- Supportive neighbourhoods and communities
- Health, accommodation, care and support
- Making the best use of resources

In terms of service provision for aged care services, the Commonwealth Government provides the majority of funding. In 2004-05, Commonwealth expenditure is expected to rise to \$6.5 billion from \$5.6 billion in the previous financial year. The bulk of this funding is directed to residential aged care. The states and territories make a substantial contribution to the funding of Home and Community Care providing \$434.1 million of the total \$1.1 billion in 2002-03. They also provide some funding for public sector residential care beds and for Aged Care Assessment Teams<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care (2002) *National Strategy for an Ageing Australia An Older Australia, Challenges and Opportunities for All* Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra; NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (1998) *NSW Healthy Ageing Framework 1998 – 2003*.

<sup>15</sup> NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (1998) *NSW Healthy Ageing Framework 1998 – 2003* p.8.

In NSW, HACC funds are administered by the Department of Ageing, Disability and Homecare, the Department of Transport and the Department of Health.

### 5.1.3 Projected Demographic Change

The population of the NSROC region already is somewhat older than that of the Sydney Metropolitan Area as a whole. At the time of the 2001 Census, 14.1 per cent of NSROC's population was over 65 years of age compared with 11.9 per cent of the Sydney metropolitan area was aged 65 or over.

The table below shows that the population in the NSROC region is likely to age at an unprecedented rate. However, two factors may mitigate this effect. Firstly, the current tendency of middle and upper income 'baby boomers' to migrate to coastal regions is set to continue. Secondly, urban consolidation within the NSROC region is likely to bring with it a higher share of overseas migrants than live in the region at present. Immigrant population tends to be younger and this factor will have a positive effect on birth rates<sup>17</sup>.

**Table 17**

#### Aged Population Growth Projections 2004-2022

	65 years and over			85 years and over		
	2004	2022	%>	2004	2022	%>
<b>Hornsby</b>	19,821	32,528	64.1	3,095	5,787	87
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	2,242	3,214	43.4	544	729	34
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	17,363	25,217	45.2	2,650	4,345	64
<b>Lane Cove</b>	4,179	5,908	41.4	667	857	28.5
<b>North Sydney</b>	7,034	11,732	66.8	1,065	1,422	33.5
<b>Ryde</b>	14,405	19,952	38.5	1,956	2,916	49.1
<b>Willoughby</b>	8,204	12,630	53.9	1,310	1,602	22.3

Source: Data extracted from Jackson & Baum (2004) *Ageing and Place NSW Local Government and Shires Associations*.

### 5.1.4 Current Issues on Ageing in NSROC Region

When thinking about ageing issues it is important to consider issues from the perspectives of both the 'well aged' (usually in the earlier stages of ageing from 65 years onwards, although may be considerably older) and the frail-aged (predominately from 75 years onwards, although may be younger).

<sup>16</sup> Senate of Australia (2005) *Future Ageing: Inquiry into Long Term Strategies for Ageing over the Next 40 Years* Parliamentary Paper: tba/05; Tabled: 7 March 2005. <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/Reports.htm>

<sup>17</sup> See, SGS Economics and Planning (2004) *Sydney's Economic Geography: Trends and Drivers* Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources, June 2004 p.51.

Council's role in delivering services to the well-aged typically comprises the provision of community facilities such as halls and communities centres where groups meet for social and learning activities, as well as leisure and recreational facilities such as parks, pools and sporting facilities, and library services. Provision for frail-aged people is somewhat more complex as Council may not be a direct service provider but has a strong role in service planning and advocating for additional places to meet community needs.

The main source of local support services for frail older people is the Home and Community Care program (HACC). The objective of the HACC program is to provide services to enhance the quality of life of frail aged and younger disabled people and their carers, enabling them to live as independently as possible in the community.

Data is not available at LGA level to show the actual level of frail-aged service provision within the NSROC region. Available breakdowns of the Northern Sydney region (incorporating the NSROC LGAs and the LGAs of Manly, Mosman, Pittwater and Warringah) support assertions in NSROC Councils' Social Plans that HACC services are significantly under-provided in the region. The HACC Minimum Data Set recorded 18,068 clients for the period 2003-2004. This figure is inclusive of both frail older people and younger people with disabilities. The data indicates that only 250 people per 1000 of the HACC target population received services, which is lower than the NSW average of 307 people per 1000. Average client hours are also lower for HACC clients in Northern Sydney (36.9 hours) in comparison to the NSW average of 37.8 hours. The average age of HACC service recipients in the Northern Sydney region (76 years) is also older than for the state as a whole (73.1 years) however this is attributable to the significantly lower proportion (16 per cent) of younger people with disabilities receiving services<sup>18</sup>.

It should be noted that the NSROC Councils recently lobbied to retain the Northern Sydney HACC Officer and ongoing funding of this position is uncertain. Failure to retain the position will potentially lead to a further diminution of service.

Figures obtained from the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care MIDAS team indicate that there are 9525 licensed residential age care places currently operational in the Northern Sydney region. An additional 242 provisional places are allocated to the region but have not yet come on-line. One hundred and sixty-one licensed beds are currently closed. The estimated occupancy rate is 94.7 per cent, which is marginally lower than the Sydney average of around 96 per cent. While care is needed in directly correlating vacancies with demand, it would indicate that pressure on residential care places is less than for community care services. While it appears that the supply of residential care places in the NSROC region meets demand, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest that demand is not met in all locations and at all times. Further investigation to determine whether aged care accommodation shortages exist in any parts of the region is warranted before demand is accelerated by population ageing.

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<sup>18</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care *HACC Minimum Data Set: Annual Bulletin July 2003 – June 2004*  
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/hacc-mds.htm>

A review of documents including Social Plans, Facilities Plans and Section 94 Contribution Plans from NSROC Councils has revealed remarkable similarity in the issues that are affecting older residents today. The table below is a summary of these issues.

Issue	Summary of Concerns	LGAs affected*
Information and Communication	<p>Older people lack of information about the services that are available to assist them. This is particularly for community care services and is more pronounced for CALD communities. The problem is exacerbated by the complexity of the service system and the lack of a single entry point for referral and service delivery.</p>	<p>Hornsby Hunter Hill Ku-ring-gai Willoughby</p>
Under-provision of Home and Community Care Services	<p>Councils report growing demand for affordable services that support older people to stay in their own homes. Such services include personal care, handyperson and home modification, lawn mowing and gardening, grocery delivery, assistance to attend appointments, in home security and community transport to support specific need. There are lengthy delays and waiting lists in most areas, particularly for higher cost services such as home modification.</p> <p>HACC services are usually only available to pensioners and do not meet the support needs of self-funded retirees.</p> <p>Facilities for HACC service providers in some areas are inadequate, and do not support more integrated approach to service delivery.</p>	<p>All LGAs</p>
Housing Options	<p>At present, the NSROC region offers limited housing choices for older people. Older residents who are ‘downsizing’ have difficulty finding appropriate alternative housing to suit their stage of life. The large houses and gardens that characterise the NSROC region are difficult for older people maintain. Many older residents would prefer to remain in a familiar area and to maintain connection with family and friends. However, the lack of suitable, low rise, low maintenance alternatives means that they either stay until they can no longer manage at all (often moving to residential care after having a fall), or they decide to move to another area for lifestyle or health reasons.</p> <p>In recent times, there has been growth in SEPP 5 developments for older people’s housing. Their overall impact on the market is yet to be determined.</p>	<p>Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Lane Cove</p>



<b>Issue</b>	<b>Summary of Concerns</b>	<b>LGAs affected*</b>
Public Transport	<p>Public transport services do not always run at times to suit older people. While many train stations in the region have now introduced lifts to the platform areas, there are few wheelchair accessible buses operating in the region. Buses with access for people with a disability also assist older people whose mobility problems make it difficult for them to manage bus steps.</p> <p>There are insufficient bus shelters in some areas.</p> <p>A major concern is that older residents' apprehension about safety may cause unnecessary reliance on community transport and place pressure on the capacity of these services.</p>	Hunters Hill Ryde Willoughby Ku-ring-gai
Pedestrian access and condition of footpaths	<p>Cracked, uneven or non-existence of footpaths in many part of the NSROC region poses a hazard for older people and people with disabilities. This is an issue that Councils are continuing to address.</p> <p>Improving pedestrian access to meet the needs of older people and people with disabilities may require access auditing in key locations such as shopping precincts and significant planning to improve standards in suburban areas.</p>	Hunters Hill Ku-ring-gai Ryde Lane Cove Willoughby
Under-utilisation of senior citizens centres	<p>Senior Citizens Centres are not utilised to full capacity especially where Seniors Citizens Clubs are the sole users of the facility. Councils in the NSROC region are tending to employ a more contemporary approach of having a range of hirers using the Centres. Generally, this requires a dedicated officer to coordinate access for hirers.</p> <p>While this approach resolves issues of low and inefficient use, it side steps the issue of the current relevance of single purpose centres targeting seniors.</p>	Ryde Hornsby Lane Cove Ku-ring-gai
Choice in leisure and recreational opportunities	<p>Older people are now less inclined to identify with the traditional Seniors Citizens Club, but rather seek stimulation and social contact through groups and activities aligned to their interests and needs. These may include:</p>	All areas

Issue	Summary of Concerns	LGAs affected*
Choice in leisure and recreational opportunities cont...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ intellectually challenging activities such as U3A, computer-user groups, book groups, bridge, genealogy and local history</li> <li>▪ political and local activism, including advocacy groups for seniors</li> <li>▪ arts and cultural activities such as painting classes, musical and dramatic societies</li> <li>▪ sporting/exercise groups such as bowls clubs, aqua aerobics, gentle exercise, golf and tennis, and</li> <li>▪ volunteering.</li> </ul> <p>Councils have a role in ensuring that older residents have reasonable access to affordable social, recreational and cultural activities. There is also increasing community demand to provide technical aids in library and cultural facilities such as magnifiers and hearing loops.</p>	
Shortages of volunteers	<p>Services that rely heavily on volunteers have difficulty attracting enough people. As the profile of volunteers in the region is ageing, there is stress on services to find replacements.</p> <p>The increased proportions of working women in NSROC LGAs has reduced the overall pool of voluntary labour from which services might draw from.</p>	All LGAs
Rubbish removal	Large-scale wheelie bins used in the NSROC Councils for waste collection and recycling are difficult for frail older people to manoeuvre.	Hornsby Hunters Hill Ku-ring-gai

\* *This list refers to Councils that have specifically mentioned issues in planning documents and it cannot be assumed that the problem is absent in other LGAs.*

### 5.1.5 Demands of Future Population

The predicted growth in the numbers of older people in the community is expected to have impacts on both local governance and local service delivery.

In terms of NSROC Councils' revenue raising functions, the major impact is likely to be a reduction to rate revenue due to increases in pensioner rate rebates, pensioner rate and charges supplements or rate deferrals. Reductions to user charges revenue and reductions to Local Government financial assistance from Commonwealth and State (due to reduced tax

revenues) are also possible<sup>19</sup>. The impact of changes to the revenue and rate base is intensified by ongoing rate pegging, cost shifting and increased legislative requirements, and increased expectations of the community for service delivery.

As employers, NSROC Councils will be affected by a maturing workforce. Retaining mature, skilled staff may be a future problem and NSROC Councils will need to consider creating opportunities for ageing staff to work part-time. Prevention of age discrimination and promotion of the benefits of age diversity in the work place will take a higher priority in Human Resource Management strategies<sup>20</sup>.

The social implications of the transition to an older population are expected to be considerable. The section below is an attempt to identify the key impacts for NSROC communities and where appropriate, the statutory planning and regulatory functions of Councils.

The development of **age-friendly infrastructure** will be essential to enable older people to remain active and independent. NSROC Councils will face increasing pressures relating to the suitability of infrastructure, much of which was built without particular consideration for ageing populations. Some of the key considerations for the public domain include:

- Maintenance of footpaths and walkways, upgrading street lighting, and additional pedestrian crossings to encourage walking by older people;
- The need to plan, design and build public domain environments with older people in mind. Particular considerations include lowering kerb heights, widening footpaths to accommodate additional numbers of mobility scooters, and adopting Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles to overcome older people's fear of becoming victims of crime;
- Increasing technology in public libraries and community facilities to assist older people with visual and hearing impairment, and
- Upgrading swimming pools, tennis courts, gyms and other sporting facilities enjoyed by active older residents.

**Appropriate housing** will be a vital factor in maintaining the independence, quality of life and health of older people in the NSROC region. Within the NSROC region, there is a mismatch between the housing occupied by older people and their housing need that will grow in dimension as the population ages. In many cases, the large scale of houses and gardens, high property rates and maintenance costs make it difficult for older people to remain in their homes. Access difficulties, such as inability to manage steps, may also necessitate looking for accommodation that is more suitable. However, the high transaction

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<sup>19</sup> Noel Baum and Natalie Jackson (2004) *Planning the Local Government Response to Ageing and Place* NSW Local Government and Shires Associations.

<sup>20</sup> Noel Baum and Natalie Jackson (2004) *Planning the Local Government Response to Ageing and Place* NSW Local Government and Shires Associations.

costs (such as stamp duty and property transfers) involved in selling and repurchasing in NSW often act as a disincentive to older people moving out of homes that no longer suit them<sup>21</sup>. Evidence from the region's Social Plans also suggests that there is a lack of choice when it comes to housing options for older people within the region and that pressure to provide affordable, accessible and suitable housing will increase as the region ages.

Housing planning policies aimed at ensuring appropriate housing choices for older people are required to enable older residents to continue living in the area. The NSW Government has attempted to address this issue by legislating to encourage the planning of new housing with the needs of the ageing population in mind. In 2004, it implemented the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) – Seniors Living 2004 legislation. It replaced the unpopular SEPP 5 - Housing for Older People and People with Disabilities. The new SEPP introduces a requirement for all medium density development to comply with AS 4299 Adaptable Housing standards and AS 1428 accessibility standards and strengthens design and site provisions. It clearly segments the range of housing types to be provided under the policy for people aged 55 years and over or people with a disability. These housing types include residential care facilities, hostels, self-contained dwellings, infill self-care housing and serviced self-care housing.

However, some NSROC Councils do not welcome the application of a blanket State planning policy. For example, Ku-ring-gai Council and Hornsby Shire Council have requested exemptions from the policy. Hornsby Shire Council argues the new policy does not resolve community concerns about the location and development of infill senior living developments, the development of senior living facilities in inappropriate non-urban areas, and the monitoring and enforcement of occupancy restrictions<sup>22</sup>.

One of the compounding issues in increasing the future supply of 'age-friendly' housing is the development industry's focus on speculative investment markets. Developers build with the expectation of obtaining the best possible return rather than meeting demand from a particular age group, such as older people<sup>23</sup>. A number of organisations including the NSW Local Government and Shires Associations, NSW Council of Social Services and the Australian Network for Universal Housing Design have argued that the most effective way of providing appropriate housing choices for older people and people with disabilities is to require *all* developments to meet minimum adaptable housing standards<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Senate of Australia (2005) *Future Ageing: Inquiry into Long Term Strategies for Ageing over the Next 40 Years* Parliamentary Paper: tba/05; Tabled: 7 March 2005 p.50 <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/Reports.htm>

<sup>22</sup> Hornsby Shire Council (2005) *Strategic Plan for Older People (55 years and Older) 2005-2010* p.88.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Spearritt (2002) *Unhappy Valley: housing options for the over 60s* [http://www.brisinst.org.au/resources/spearritt\\_peter\\_agedcare.html](http://www.brisinst.org.au/resources/spearritt_peter_agedcare.html)

<sup>24</sup> Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (ND) *Response To: Review of SEPP 5 Housing for Older People and People with a Disability- Options For Change*

As the population of the NSROC region ages, **community care services** will continue to play a critical role in delivering a preventive approach and delaying the entry into high cost residential care services. The main vehicle for delivering these services is through the HACC program. Examples of the types of services provided through HACC include: nursing care; allied health care; meals and other food services; domestic assistance; personal care; home modification and maintenance; transport; respite care; counselling, support, information and advocacy; and assessment.

It is expected that the NSROC region will experience an increase in the demand for HACC services. HACC Minimum Data Set reporting from 2003-2004 shows that NSW is significantly under-provided in comparison with other States in most service categories. For example, in domestic services, NSW clients within the Greater Sydney region received only 2005 hours per 1000 people in the HACC target population compared with 4875 hours in Melbourne, 3166 in Brisbane and 4242 hours in Perth<sup>25</sup>. Measuring the potential extra demand is difficult as there is no agreed planning benchmark. The table below uses a benchmark from New Zealand for domestic help to estimate current and future service deficiencies<sup>26</sup>.

**Table 18**

**Domestic Help Demands from Future Population as at 2022**

	<b>Estimated Current Provision in Hours per Annum <sup>(a)</sup></b>	<b>Estimated Current Need in Hours per Annum <sup>(b)</sup></b>	<b>Estimated Need at 2022 in Hours per Annum <sup>(c)</sup></b>
<b>Hornsby</b>	29,979	55,807	101,487
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	3,705	6,867	10,028
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	26,947	49,998	78,677
<b>Lane Cove</b>	6,737	12,739	18,433
<b>North Sydney</b>	10,610	19,893	36,604
<b>Ryde</b>	22,737	42,357	62,250
<b>Willoughby</b>	13,305	24,854	39,406

- (a) This estimate is based on current annual provision of 1,684.2 hours per 1000 people aged 65 years and over. The calculation takes into account the 16 per cent of HACC recipients in the Northern Sydney region who are under 65 years of age.

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*Discussion Paper; NCOSS (2004) Submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Metropolitan Strategy November 2004.*

<sup>25</sup> Department of Health and Aged Care *HACC Minimum Data Set: Annual Bulletin July 2003 – June 2004*  
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/hacc-mds.htm>

<sup>26</sup> New Zealand Guidelines for Community Services to the Elderly (1974-1990) in Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (1998) *Planning Benchmarks and Standards* (unpublished report).

- (b) The New Zealand guidelines suggest a standard of 60 hours per week per 1000 people aged 65 years and over. The figures supplied are based on a ratio of 3120 hours per annum per 1000 people aged 65 years and over. ABS Census data from 2001 has been used as the current population base.
- (c) The estimated need is based on the New Zealand standard as a ratio of the ABS projected 'Median Variant Population Estimates' for 2022, previously cited.

This illustration shows that current provision falls short of the potential demand for services and that this shortfall is likely to increase catastrophically as the population ages. Demands for centre-based HACC services are also likely to rise in direct relationship to the proportions of people aged 85 years and over. It should be noted that pressures might not only be demand related, as there may be an emerging trend in the shortage of healthcare professionals in throughout the NSROC region.

While demand for **residential care** places in the NSROC region does not appear to be critical at present, it is likely that demand will rise significantly as the population ages and the proportions of the population over 85 years grows. At present, the supply of 9,525 beds across the Northern Sydney region equates to 95 residential age care places for every 1000 persons over the age of 65 years. It appears to exceed the current provision ratio of 88 operational places for every 1000 people aged 70 years and over. This comprises 48 low care and 40 high care residential care places. A number of additional licensed places are not yet operational, but likely to come online in the near future.

Comments in the North Sydney Social Plan that nursing home beds have been reduced the area causing a shortage suggest that the supply may not be dispersed equitably within the NSROC region. The extent to which older people from outside the NSROC region occupy residential care beds within the region is not known. The relative lack of pressure on residential care in comparison to critical shortages of HACC services reflects a growing preference among older people to continue living in the community for as long as possible<sup>27</sup>

A critical factor likely to affect the NSROC region is increased pressure on **carers**. As pressure on community care provision grows, it is likely that the shortfall will be met to some extent by informal care provided by family members and friends. Submissions to the *Senate Inquiry into Long Term Strategies for Ageing over the Next 40 Years*<sup>28</sup> remarked on differing attitudes and policy responses to caring for older people in comparison to caring for children. Elder care is largely regarded as a private matter to be managed by families, while child care is now accepted as a communally provided service.

However, modelling by NATSEM projecting a fall in the ratio of older persons needing care (i.e., persons aged 65 and over, with a severe or profound disability *and* living in private

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<sup>27</sup> Senate of Australia (2005) *Future Ageing: Inquiry into Long Term Strategies for Ageing over the Next 40 Years* Parliamentary Paper: tba/05; Tabled: 7 March 2005. <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/haa/Reports.htm>

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*

dwelling) to persons likely to provide care indicates that this approach will, of necessity, shift. NATSEM has projected a fall in the ratio between 2001 and 2031 from 57 primary carers for every 100 persons needing care to 35 carers for every 100 persons. It argues that by 2031, the percentage of older persons in private dwellings needing care but without a primary carer will increase from 43 per cent to 65 per cent<sup>29</sup>. While it is not possible from the available data to quantify what this means for the NSROC LGAs, a decline in the pool of volunteer carers in the community has already been identified in social planning documents from the region.

Access to private and public **transport** enables older people to access services, family and friends and community activities. In NSW, 78 per cent (457,459) of people in their 60s are licensed, dropping to around 65 per cent (286,308) of people in their 70s. By 80 years of age and over, only 27 per cent (75,155) hold driving licences<sup>30</sup>. Continuing to drive later in life is a key factor in maintaining health and independence. However, for many older people, reliance on public transport circumscribes where they can go, and their fear and insecurity on the street restricts their travel to daylight hours.

Ageing populations in the NSROC region is likely to increase current demands for modifications to transport services in terms of physical access, service frequency and coverage. It is also likely that existing conflict over fare inequities will escalate. The State Transit Authority is the main provider of bus services in all parts of the NSROC region except Hornsby Shire where private operators prevail. On State operated public transport, pensioners can purchase an ‘all-day go anywhere’ ticket for \$2.50. The ticket is not available to private bus passengers who are entitled to half price fares.

Rail services are available in five of the seven NSROC LGAs. While the State Rail Authority has made significant progress in recent years, not all stations in the region are accessible to older people and people with disabilities. For example, a recent *Integrated Land Use and Transport Study* commissioned by Hornsby Shire Council found that only five of the 14 railway stations in the Hornsby Shire are fully accessible (Asquith, Cowan, Hornsby, Pennant Hills and Epping) with lift or ramp access onto platforms. The Ku-ring-gai LGA has only one accessible station.

Poor access to public transport services can increase the demand for community-based transport. One solution put forward in the Hornsby transport study is the development of “demand responsive transport” (DRT). DRT allows flexible routing of small vehicles in order to cover a wide geographical area. It is demand driven in that potential passengers book their journey through a dedicated call centre. Using specialist technology, this information is then passed on so that the vehicle can pick the customer up at their chosen location, allowing them greater flexibility in travel choice. DRT also may be used to

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<sup>29</sup> NATSEM, *Who’s going to care? Informal care and an ageing population* cited in *Ibid* p.24.

<sup>30</sup> NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (2004) *Driver and Vehicle Statistics in Annual Report 2004* <http://www.rta.nsw.gov.au/publicationsstatisticsforms>

transport people in isolated pockets of an LGA to accessible rail stations or major bus interchanges<sup>31</sup>. The DRT concept is also being explored by Willoughby Council.

As its population ages, Councils in the NSROC regions are likely to face additional demand for a range of **recreation, leisure and learning** opportunities from older residents. The quandary for NSROC Councils will be how allocate sufficient funds for upgrading of services to meet current and future needs of older people while, at the same time, ensuring that the region remains attractive for people of all age cohorts<sup>32</sup>. Examples include enlarging collections and increasing the availability of technical aids for people with visual impairment in public libraries; modifications to sporting facilities such as adding ramps or introducing hydro-therapy facilities at local pools; and ensuring that community buildings meet standards for access for people with a disability and provide facilities such as hearing loops.

Clubs and groups for older people in the NSROC region that do not receive government funding largely rely on the Council community services grants for financial support. While the membership base and fee revenues of such organisations may grow in the future, the pressure for Councils to maintain and enhance financial support also is expected to increase.

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<sup>31</sup> PBA International Pty Ltd *Hornsby Integrated Land Use and Transport Strategy* Final Report [DRAFT] Hornsby Shire Council November 2004

<sup>32</sup> Australian Local Government Association (2005) *Ageing Awareness and Action Survey Report*, April 2005 <http://www.alga.asn.au/policy/social/ageing/>



## 5.2 Child care

### 5.2.1 Overview

Child care needs in the NSROC region are met through a range of long day care centres, occasional care centres, family day care service, preschools, and out of school hours care (OOHS) (including before and after school care and vacation care) centres.

A common thread running through social planning and other documents provided by NSROC Councils is the shortages of child care places, affordability of services and uncertainty as to whether demand will continue to rise; stabilise at current high levels; or shift to an over-supply situation as the population ages. The only certainty is that despite recent growth in child care provision, the current supply does not correspond to the demand for child care services.

Uncertainty is also exacerbated by the lack of an agreed formula for calculating current and future demand. The purpose of this section of the report is to examine the main factors influencing child care provision and to provide a clearer picture of trends in child care demand across the seven LGAs.

### 5.2.2 The Policy Context

The provision of child care services has undergone a marked policy shift in the past decade coinciding with significant increases in demand for child care services. In January 1994, the Commonwealth Government withdrew capital funding to acquire and build new centres and subsidies to trained staff in community based child care centres. As compensatory measures the Commonwealth introduced the Child Care Benefit (CCB) payment to families and the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS) for long day care services.

The CCB provides a payment to help families who use approved and registered child care, including long day care, family day care, out of school hours care (OOSH), vacation care and occasional care. It is paid directly to child care services to reduce the fees charged, or retrospectively as a lump sum to parents. It is subject to an income test but not to an assets test.

In its most recent Budget, the Commonwealth Government announced plans to introduce a 30 per cent Child Care Tax Rebate of rebate on out of pocket child care expenses up to \$4000 per year per child. Effectively, the Commonwealth has shifted child care expenditures (\$1.04 Billion in the 2005/06 Budget) from funding of community infrastructure to subsidising individual family expenditures on child care. Child care lobby groups have criticised the policy's focus on providing benefits to existing child care users rather than addressing significant supply issues. There are also concerns that demand may be increased as families who use services one or two days a week consider taking on additional days<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Community Child care Co-operative (2005) "Something's wrong with the Government's child care plans" in *Broadside* April 2005  
<http://www.cccensw.org.au/resource/0504apr/story01.html>

The aim of QIAS is to monitor and assess levels of quality service provision beyond those principals outlined in the State regulations, which set standards for minimum requirements that must be met in order for child care centres to remain operating. It is designed to complement State licensing regulations and Local Government guidelines which specify minimum standard of operation for services. The accreditation process requires centres to engage in a process of self-evaluation against 35 principles of quality care<sup>34</sup>.

The NSW Government is the key provider of preschool services. However, base levels of funding to services in NSW were frozen in 1989/90 having a major impact on viability for community based services and affordability for families. The Commonwealth Government ceased funding preschools in 1985 and now provides no funding for preschool education, other than Indigenous services. Indexation for services has failed to keep pace with the increased cost of service delivery, including salaries, rental costs, superannuation, insurance (particularly public liability), IT, training and equipment costs<sup>35</sup>. A two-tiered system has evolved whereby the Department of Education and Training (DET) fully funds centres for staffing and building costs and a larger community based system (over 800 preschools) receives a lower level of funding support through the Department of Community Services. The NSW Government has committed to building 100 new preschools within existing school lands bringing the total number of DET preschools to 279 statewide by the end of 2005<sup>36</sup>. These new preschools will primarily target disadvantaged communities and will not enhance supply to the NSROC region.

The NSW Government has responsibility for regulation and licensing child care services including occasional care services and family day care. From January 2006, the *Children's Services Regulation 2004* will replace the *Centre Based and Mobile Children's Services Regulation (No 2) 1996*, introducing more stringent regulations for child care providers. Licensing covers aspects of a service's operation such as:

- the number of children in care;
- the size of rooms and playgrounds;
- the required number of staff and their qualifications, and
- health and safety requirements.

The implication for Local Government of the policy and funding changes has been:

- cost-shifting of the capital funding responsibility for child care facilities from Commonwealth and State Governments to Local Government;
- reliance on private sector provision to meet growing demand for long day care, and

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<sup>34</sup> Child care Service Handbook 2004-2005 [http://www.facs.gov.au/child\\_care/handbook2004-05/part1/chapter1/1.htm](http://www.facs.gov.au/child_care/handbook2004-05/part1/chapter1/1.htm)

<sup>35</sup> Advice from DOCS Northern Sydney Network Children's Services Advisor; see also NSW Children's Services Forum (2003) *Who Sank the Boat?: The impact of under funding on community based preschools in NSW* NCOSS [http://www.ncoss.org.au/bookshelf/election2003/ChildrensServices\\_ElectionKit.pdf](http://www.ncoss.org.au/bookshelf/election2003/ChildrensServices_ElectionKit.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Australian Education Union (2004) Submission to the Independent Inquiry into the Provision of Universal Access to High Quality Preschool Education. [www.aeufederal.org.au/Ec/preschinqsub.pdf](http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Ec/preschinqsub.pdf)

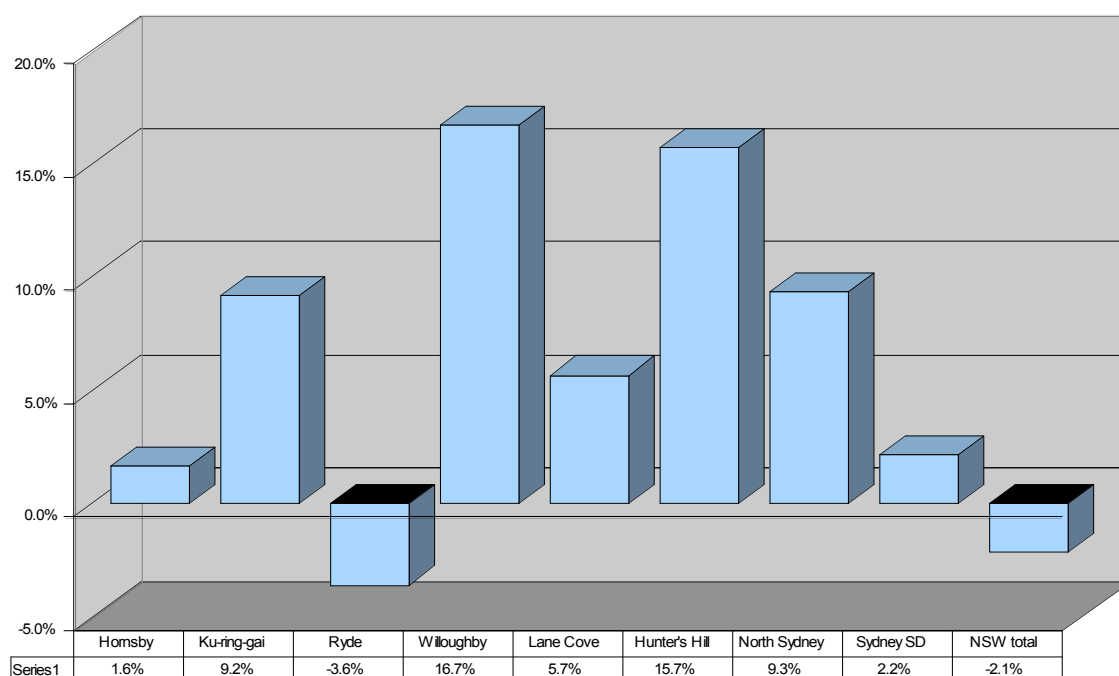
- a market-driven approach to child care provision that does not always place services in the areas of greatest need.

### 5.2.3 Demographic Trends

Demographic data about the local population its size, composition and trends provides an important foundation for local child care needs assessment. While the overall proportion of 0-4 year olds in the NSROC region is under the Sydney region (6.7 per cent of population), there has been significant increases in the number of this age cohort in some of the LGAs in the region. The diagram below shows the most significant percentage increase between 1996 and 2001 occurred in the Willoughby and Hunters Hill LGAs. The population of 0-4 year olds fell in the Ryde LGA and the rate of growth was below the Sydney average in the Hornsby LGA.

**Table 19**

**Percentage change in 0-4 population 1996-2001**



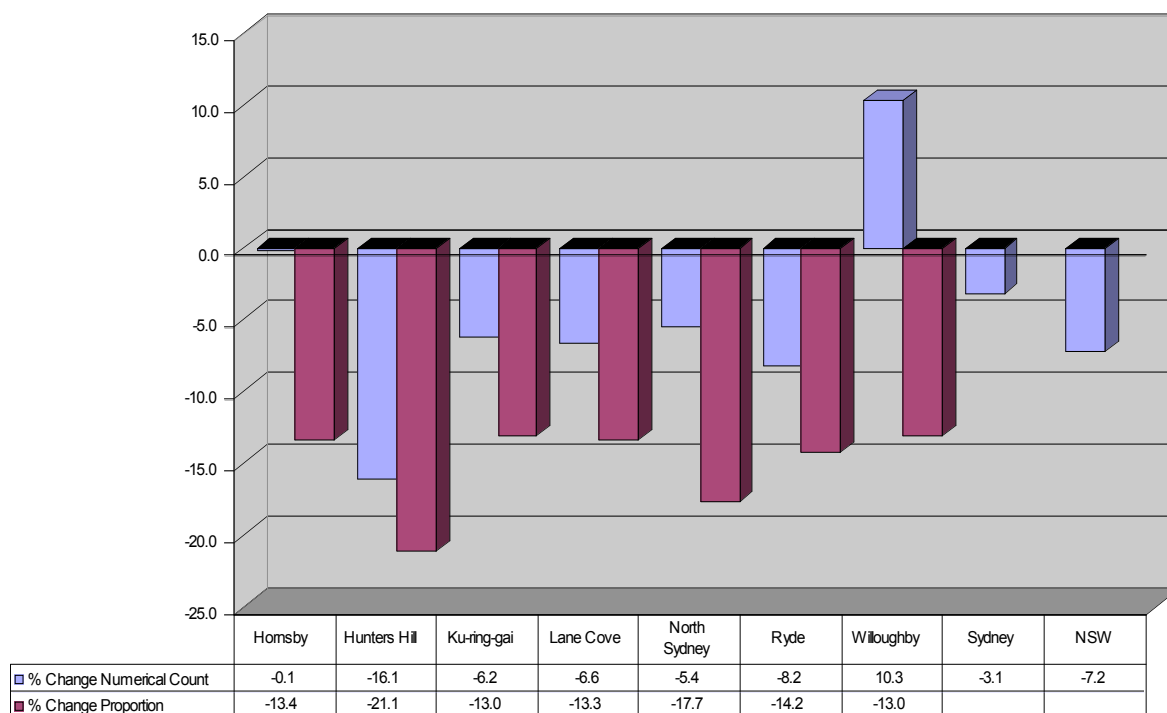
*Source: Data extracted from tables in Department of Community Services Metro Central Region, Northern Sydney Network Profile Aug 2004, Based on ABS 2001 Census Data*

ABS Medium Variant population projections of population change between 2004 and 2022 suggest that the population of infants and young children is likely to decrease both in numerical and structural terms. The table below shows marked reductions in the overall number of 0-4 year olds in all NSROC LGAs except Willoughby and Hornsby. While the population of children in Willoughby is projected to continue to rise, the rate of increase is slower than other sectors of its population. Hunters Hill's larger proportional decrease is a result of the high number of residential aged care facilities in the LGA. The projected decrease in most parts of the region is expected to be greater than the projections the greater Sydney area and for NSW.

These findings suggest that, to some extent, current child care shortages may be alleviated by future demographic trends.

**Table 20**

**Projected Change in 0-4 years Population 2004-2022**



Source: ABS NSWy SLA Projected 5yr Age-Sex.xls (Medium Variant B Series) 2002-2022

### 5.2.4 Types of Care

There are five main types of child care services in the NSROC region: long day care; pre-schools; family day care; occasional care and out of school hours care. Each service type is explained below.

**Long Day Care** offers centre based care for 0-6 year olds. The two main age cohorts for long day care services are 0-2 year olds and 3-5 year olds. Long Day Care Centres must open for a minimum of eight hours per day five days per week. Most centres open for 10 hours per day. Current staffing ratios under DOCS regulations require one staff member for every five children under two years. One staff member for every eight children aged two to three years. One staff member is required for every ten children aged three to six years. Each centre must have staff trained in early childhood, and the numbers of trained staff will vary depending on the size of the service.

**Preschool** services cater for children three to six years old to enhance children's early learning and development in the years immediately preceding school entry. They are generally open from 9am until 3pm and close during school holidays. Preschools require the same staffing ratios as Long Day Care Centres and require a proportion of staff to be trained in early childhood.

**Family Day Care** is a flexible care arrangement for children aged 0-12 years. It can offer regular long day care for pre-schoolers or before or after-school care for primary school aged children in a home environment. A ratio of one carers for up to seven children (including the carers own children) applies. Carers are required to have a first aid certificate.

**Home Based Care** operates under identical conditions and ratios as Family Day Care. However home based carers work alone and are not part of the larger network which characterises Family Day Care. Carers may work in their own homes or in the child’s home where a child’s special needs warrant this.

**Occasional Care** services cater mainly for the needs of families who require short-term care for their pre-school aged children. The hours of operation vary from service to service. Occasional Care services require the same staffing ratios as Long Day Care Centres and must have at least one staff trained in early childhood for under-tuos.

**Out of School Hours Care (OOSH)** services cater for primary school aged children of working parents who need to be looked after before and after school and during school vacations. Staff ratios are not regulated by DoCS and there are no specifications for the qualifications of staff. The focus is on recreational activities although some homework assistance may be incorporated in programs.

### 5.2.5 Current Infrastructure Capacity

The table below provides a breakdown of the number of places across the different categories of care. As far as possible, the data has been sourced from NSROC Councils. Where gaps exist, data provided by the Department of Family and Community Services relating to ‘licensed places’ as been used.

	Long Day Care Places	Family Day Care Places <sup>(a)</sup>	Pre-School Places	Occasional Care	OOHS Services
<b>Hornsby</b>	1541	271	n/a	45	1598
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	59	7	104	20	135
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	697	212	1010	64	1200
<b>Lane Cove</b>	397	50	268	30	265
<b>North Sydney</b>	664	86	n/a	n/a	140
<b>Ryde</b>	1087	399	451	53	680
<b>Willoughby</b>	869	155	358	28	995
<b>NSROC Region</b>	5314	1180	2191	240	5013

(a) includes Home Based Care

n/a = data not supplied

The data shows that only 18.8 per cent of the population of 0-5 year olds (34,324) in the NSROC region has access to formal child care in either long day or family day care options.

## 5.2.6 Assessment of Need

While the evidence from NSROC Council planning documents suggests shortfalls in all categories of child care and a significant imbalance in demand and supply for long day care places for 0-2 year olds, at present, there is no objective basis for determining child care needs. The key regulator for child care in NSW, the Department of Community Services, has indicated that it is “not in the business of predicting demand”<sup>37</sup>, while the Commonwealth policy position is founded on the expectation that private providers will enter the market to meet any gaps in supply.

Where quantitative needs assessment is conducted, NSROC Councils have tended to use two key methods in assessing the potential demand for child care places. These are population benchmarking and utilisation rates.

### Population Benchmarking

This method proposes a ratio of the number of children in the child care age cohort to the number of places needed and can be quite arbitrary in nature. For example, in its *Children’s Needs Paper: Social Plan 2005* the City of Ryde has calculated a shortfall of 818 full-time formal child care places (based on a ratio of one place for every three children who are in the 0-4 age range). Taking into account the workforce population of the Ryde LGA, the estimated shortfall is 1066 places. These calculations are used to mount an argument that approximately 23 new child care centres (45 children per centre) are required to support the working population in the Ryde LGA.

While the development of an indicative standard for child care provision would be useful, it is difficult to determine an accurate threshold for provision without significant and costly changes to qualitative and quantitative data collection at the local level. The information needed includes:

- the number of children (0-5 years) whose parents who work or study full-time (1 place for each child);
- the number children (0-5 years) whose parents who work or study part-time (.5 place for each child);
- the number of these families that rely on informal care as a matter of choice (decrease in demand);
- the number of families who use long day care and family day care for non work-related purposes (increase in demand);
- the number of workers from outside the area who wish to use child care services in the LGA (increase in demand);
- the existing geographical distribution of child care facilities, and
- the emerging demographic profile of the area.

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<sup>37</sup>

Advice from DOCS Northern Sydney Network Children’s Services Advisor

### **Utilisation Rates**

The population/supply figures can certainly be used for comparative purposes, but the fact that one area has a lower comparative supply than another is not of itself an indicator of demand.

Utilisation rates are arguably a more effective measure of demand for child care places. Established long day care services within the NSROC region have reached maximum utilisation as measured by very small number of vacancies for long day care places, and extremely limited capacity in centres to add more places. All centres maintain long waiting lists, although waiting lists in themselves are not an accurate measure of demand as many families place their children's names on multiple waiting lists in the hope of obtaining a service. New residents who need child care are particularly disadvantaged by the current waiting list backlog. Over time, this could become a disincentive to new families to settle in the region.

There is also evidence to suggest that occasional care places are being used by parents on a regular basis as substitute for long day care places. This is putting significant pressure on these services and is disadvantaging people with a genuine need for occasional care.

It was noted that demand for pre-school is also strong though perhaps not as difficult as long day care.

### **Analysis of Comparative Variables**

There is a relationship between numbers of working women within a given geographical area and demand for child care. The data tables below indicate that the percentages of children aged 0-4 years in full time, formal child care places in the NSROC region falls short of workforce participation rates by women. The positive correlation between women's labour force participation and child care utilisation is supported by the data, which shows that the LGAs with highest percentages of children in formal child care equate with those with highest percentages of women in the workforce (North Sydney and Lane Cove). Likewise, the LGAs with the lowest levels of formal child care match those with the lowest workforce participation by women (Hunters Hill and Ku-ring-gai).

ABS Census data indicates that the level participation by women in the workforce has remained fairly constant since 1996. The 2001 Census shows an average of 75.5 per cent of women in full or part time work across of the NSROC region.

Data is not available to determine if the gap is being met by informal care. State funded and community preschool places are not accounted for.

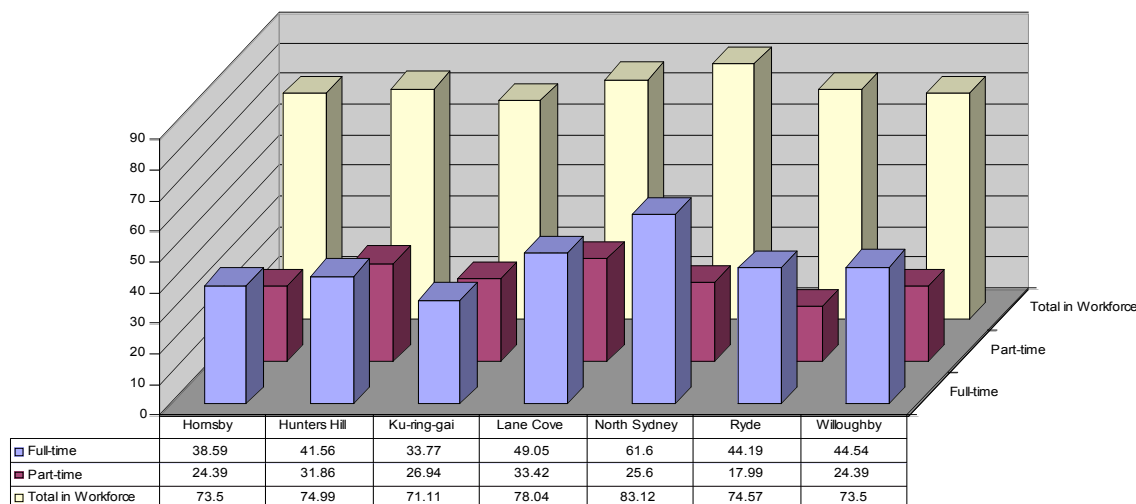
**Table 21**

**Proportion of Children 0-5 years in Formal Child Care**

	<b>Population 0-5 years</b>	<b>Number of formal LDC &amp; FDC Places</b>	<b>% children in full-time formal child care</b>
<b>Hornsby</b>	10,927	1812	16.6%
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	850	66	7.8%
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	6,724	909	13.5%
<b>Lane Cove</b>	2,131	447	21.0%
<b>North Sydney</b>	2,465	750	30.4%
<b>Ryde</b>	6,718	1486	22.1%
<b>Willoughby</b>	4,509	1024	22.7%
<b>NSROC Region</b>	34,324	6,494	19.2%

**Table 22**

**Labour Force Participation by Women 20-44 years**



Source: ABS Census 2001 (Table 13B & C)

**5.2.6 Mixed Economy in Child Care Provision**

The under-resourcing of child-care provision by Commonwealth and State Governments underpins the barriers that parents and caregivers in the NSROC region face in accessing child care services. Current policies support a free market approach to development of new child care services, particularly in relation to long day care service places, which are not capped by the Commonwealth.



Throughout the NSROC region, growth in the number of long day care places over time has been achieved through private sector provision. For example, of 186 additional licensed long day care places established in Ku-ring-gai, 173 were in new private child care centres and 18 were achieved by expanding existing private centres. Private providers currently supply 84.6 per cent of all long day care in the City of Ryde.

Private sector provision is undoubtedly sensitive to market conditions such as increasing demand for additional places. However, private providers have been reluctant to meet the demand for places for 0-2 years where current staff/child ratios of 1:5 make private sector provision less profitable. For example, in the Ryde LGA only six of 16 privately operated day care centres cater for infants under the age of two years. Private providers also have proven reluctant to meet demand for preschool places in the region. This situation is likely to have a further negative impact from January 2006 when the new regulations become mandatory for existing providers. The main factors are the reductions in group sizes, and the new requirement to maintain ratios and group sizes applicable to each age group at all times, even when children are in mixed age care arrangements.

The availability of child care places for family day care, OOSH and occasional care is controlled by the Commonwealth Government. Child care places are allocated to services in accordance with the requirements of the Family Assistance Administration Act and the Child Care Benefit (Allocation of Child Care Places) Determination 2000. This legislation requires that operators of child care services are approved and that child care places (with the exception of long day care service places) are allocated only in accordance with written determinations. These determinations specify the areas where places may be allocated and the number of places of each kind that can be allocated in each area. Available child care places are allocated to areas that are identified through the child care national planning system as needing additional places.

### **5.2.7 Issues Affecting Supply**

#### **Land Capacity**

A constraint on child care provision in the NSROC region is the limited available land on which to build centres. Existing residents are also resistant to new centres being built in suburban streets. Effectively this has two impacts that are likely to increase as the population of the region grows. The first is the pressure to locate centres within lands that are zoned for open space and recreational purposes, putting further pressure on these uses. The second is the pressure on Councils to relax development standards in order to encourage providers to establish centres to meet demand. Pressure in this regard is not solely from potential providers but also from the Commonwealth Government. There has been strong emphasis on the requirement for Local Government to remove barriers to operators setting up centres in areas of need<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> See for example, Senator Kay Patterson Minister for Family and Community Services 'Howard Government committed to child care', Media Release February 2005.

In the NSROC region, the majority of Councils have resisted pressure to relax the standards contained in Child Care Development Control Plans. The main difficulty is ensuring that DoCS regulatory standards in relation to indoor and outdoor spatial ratios are met, and that there are no adverse impacts to residents, such as noise, traffic and parking. Adherence to these standards effectively creates a barrier to entry into the market for private providers, especially in CBD precincts or built-up areas where land costs are high and availability is limited.

One example where standards have been relaxed to some extent is allowing adjacent open space, such as a park to substitute for outdoor space which cannot be provided on site. Rooftop open space is also considered in some locations. These alternative arrangements must receive approval from the NSW Department of Community Services. Another is changing development controls to permit work-based child care centres in specifically zoned industrial areas, providing there are appropriate environmental safeguards.

### **Shortages of Qualified Staff**

High staff turnover and shortages of skilled child care workers is also a matter for particular concern in the NSROC region. The major impacts on services include:

- lack of continuity for children, families and staff
- increased costs for the service for repeated advertising, and
- undue strain on remaining staff and management committees.

The main contributing factors are thought to be the lack of wage parity for trained child care workers with teachers with the same qualifications in school settings, and the reluctance of lower salaried workers to travel into the region to find work that can be obtained closer to their homes.

It is likely that these shortages will be ongoing as the community services sector is unable to meet the significant additional salary costs needed to achieve wage parity.

### **5.2.8 Demand from Future Population**

As the available population projections relate to are aggregated to 0-14 years, it is not possible to yield an estimate of the future demand for child care in the NSROC region.

From what we know about current supply and demographic trends, the likely scenario is:

- While the population will increase by approximately 120,000 persons over the next twenty years, predicted population ageing effects mean that the numbers of children in the community are likely to fall very slightly in absolute terms and their proportion in the population composition (currently 5.6% average) will fall dramatically.
- As a result, the growth in demand for new child care places will slow in all NSROC LGAs except Willoughby, where the numbers of children and young people are expected to continue rising, but not at the same rate as other age groups.
- The rate of population ageing varies markedly within the NSROC region and some LGAs will feel its effects later than others. As a result, it is expected that the current supply gaps will continue for at least the next ten years. The extent of unmet demand

is dependent on the degree to which current supply gaps are met by private providers and the completion of planned, new community-based centres in some NSROC LGAs.

- One factor that could alter the projected future age composition of the NSROC communities is “juvenescence”<sup>39</sup>. Juvenescence refers to an influx of young couples of childbearing age that is large enough to counteract the prevailing trend of population ageing. It is possible that this could occur within the NSROC region through generational change as older people move out of larger dwellings to make way for young families and through emerging trends of raising children in apartments and other forms of medium density housing. Given the scale of population ageing, it is unlikely that these factors would overtake the trend completely.

A regional child care study to systematically examine issues of supply and demand would be beneficial in determining current and future child care needs, and potential methods of addressing shortfalls that will reduce the overall cost burden on NSROC Councils.

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<sup>39</sup> Noel Baum and Natalie Jackson (2004) *Planning the Local Government Response to Ageing and Place* NSW Local Government and Shires Associations.

## **5.3 Youth Provision**

### **5.3.1 Overview**

As the proportion of young people in the population decreases, Councils in the NSROC region must ensure they continue to pay attention to the views and needs of young people in the community. This will be essential to ensure that the suburbs within the NSROC LGAs remain attractive to families and that current facilities and services do not enter a cycle of decline.

The decline in the proportion of young people in the population should not be construed as a reduction in the demand for youth services and facilities. This is because the absolute number of young people is set to increase from 2001 levels in most areas. There are currently unmet demands for key services.

Many of the current service deficits identified in this report are the responsibility of other spheres of government. However, the Local Government Charter does not preclude direct service provision and NSROC Councils have a strong role to play in planning and advocating for services to meet community needs.

In this section of the report, the standard definition of young people as people aged between 12 and 24 years is used.

### **5.3.2 The Policy Context**

Strategic directions and outcomes for young people have been set out in the *NSW Youth Policy 2002-2006: Working Together Working for Young People*. It is a universal framework targeting all young people in this state. The policy aims to ensure that young people already doing well continue to do so and that those who require additional support receive the help they need. The policy framework includes a number of key principles. These include:

- youth participation in the development of policies, programs and services and in decision-making that impacts upon their lives;
- connection to family, school, community and other young people is an essential component in supporting and protecting young people;
- fair access to opportunities and services;
- early intervention and prevention to address problems before they become acute, and
- inter-sectoral collaboration to improve the delivery of services to young people.

The outcomes sought from implementation of the policy include:

- increased participation by young people in all areas of community life;
- better educational and training outcomes for young people;
- broader opportunities for appropriate developmental, sporting and recreational activities;
- improved health, safety and well-being of young people;
- a reduction in risk-taking behaviour and crime among young people, and

- communities and services that are more responsive to, and supportive of, young people and their families<sup>40</sup>.

The main mechanism for delivering support services to young people in NSW is the Community Services Grants Program (CSGP), administered by the Department of Community Services. Services include community information, sexual assault counselling, building social capital, support to families in crisis and social support to young people. In 2003/04, approximately 28 per cent of the CSGP budget of \$69.72 million was allocated to 325 community youth and adolescent support programs throughout the State. This included 50 specialist adolescent and counselling and case management services. In the period between 2001 and 2004 CSGP funding to youth services has grown by 18.7 per cent compared to overall program growth of just 1.6 per cent<sup>41</sup>. It should be noted that very limited funding is available to Councils in the NSROC region due to the current policy of applying funds in areas of highest need. Local Councils in the NSROC region make a significant contribution from general revenue to all costs for positions supported by the CSGP Local Government Salary Subsidy Scheme. This includes youth and community development positions.

Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) services (jointly funded by Commonwealth and State Governments) provide accommodation and support homeless young people and those at risk of homelessness. As at 2001/02, the SAAP program supported 16 services in the Northern Sydney Region (incorporating all NSROC LGAs and Manly, Mosman, Pittwater and Warringah LGAs). The total funding allocation was \$36.78 million of which approximately 38 per cent is directed to youth<sup>42</sup>.

### 5.3.3 Demographic Trends

Young people between the ages of 12 and 24 years make up 18.1 per cent of the population of the NSROC region. Population projections suggest that while the proportion of young people to the rest of the population will drop to about 12.3 per cent, between 2001 and 2022 there will be a net gain in youth populations in all NSROC LGAs except North Sydney and Ryde. In these LGAs, the youth population is expected to decline slightly. The table below shows the current spread of the youth population as a proportion of the total population in the NSROC LGAs at the 2001 Census.

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<sup>40</sup> Office for Children and Young People (2002) *NSW Youth Policy 2002-2006: Working Together, Working for Young People* NSW Cabinet Office.

<sup>41</sup> Department of Community Services (2005) *Community Services Grants Program in Annual Report 2003/2004*.

<sup>42</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2002) *Homeless People in SAAP: SAAP NDC Annual report 2001-02 NSW SAAP National Data Collection Agency (NDCA) Report Series 7*.

**Table 23**

<b>Proportion of 12-24 Year Olds as at 2001</b>			
	<b>Population 12-24 years as at 2001</b>	<b>Total Population as at 2001</b>	<b>% of Youth to Population</b>
<b>Hornsby</b>	27,560	144692	19.0
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	2,509	12570	20.0
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	19,618	100152	19.6
<b>Lane Cove</b>	5,186	30340	17.1
<b>North Sydney</b>	7,549	54970	13.7
<b>Ryde</b>	15,927	94244	16.9
<b>Willoughby</b>	9,319	48010	19.4
<b>NSROC Region</b>	87,668	484,978	18.0

Source: ABS 2001 Census Table 2A

Based on available data for 15-24 year olds, the table below shows that despite considerable change in the age profile of the NSROC region, young people will comprise a significant proportion of the population by 2022. The highest level of growth in the youth population is expected in the Willoughby LGA. The lowest levels of growth are expected in the Hunters Hill and Ryde LGAs.

**Table 24**

<b>Proportion and Growth of 15-19 Year Olds 2005-2022</b>				
	<b>Estimated Population 15-19 years in 2005</b>	<b>2022 Projected Population 15-19 years</b>	<b>% of Population in 2022</b>	<b>% Growth of 15-19 years</b>
<b>Hornsby</b>	20,761	11897	6.6	14.2
<b>Hunters Hill</b>	1,877	1423	9.8	5.8
<b>Ku-ring-gai</b>	14,645	8349	7.1	7.2
<b>Lane Cove</b>	4,143	1938	5.5	7.2
<b>North Sydney</b>	6,628	2105	3.0	14.0
<b>Ryde</b>	12,917	5261	4.9	6.5
<b>Willoughby</b>	7,486	4022	4.9	24.8
<b>NSROC Region</b>	68,457	34995	6.0	12.0

Sources: ABS 2001 Census Table 2A and ABS Medium Variant Population Projections Series B 2002-2022.

### 5.3.4 Current Provision

Local Government services to young people in the NSROC tend to be delivered through centralised Youth Centres and outreach programs. A review of documents including Social Plans, Facilities Plans and Section 94 Contribution Plans from NSROC Councils found a range of common issues that affect young people in the NSROC region. The table below is a summary of these issues.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Summary of Concerns</b>	<b>LGAs affected*</b>
Lack of information in the community about what services are available for young people and their families	Social planning consultations identified the need for better information provision about facilities, services and recreational opportunities. Young people from disadvantaged families and from CALD backgrounds have the most difficulty accessing information.	All LGAs
Acceptance of young people as legitimate users of public space	<p>There are negative perceptions surrounding young people in groups congregating around shopping malls, centres and public transport interchanges.</p> <p>Design of public spaces must recognise that the street, parks and open spaces are important social venues for older children and young people.</p>	Hornsby Willoughby Ryde Ku-ring-gai
Youth spaces	<p>There is a dearth of youth specific facilities across the NSROC region. Two LGAs have no dedicated youth spaces and there is poor coverage in others. Youth centres tend to close early and there are few opportunities for suitable nighttime activities for under 18s.</p> <p>Facilities oriented to young people are limited to the public libraries, sporting facilities and scout and guide halls. There are also a number of commercial venues such as cinemas and indoor amusement centres. However, entertainment of this kind is expensive and is no substitute for community provision.</p> <p>There may be a tension between the informal and less structured facilities and venues that appeal to young people and the structured activities that adults in the community may prefer. Young people are also looking for informal spaces, such as ‘youth cafes’ where they can meet friends and relax.</p>	All LGAs
Development of library facilities to meet youth needs	Young people would like to see improved library services, with ‘youth-friendly’ relaxation and homework areas, better student resources and greater access to music, multi-media and internet resources.	Hornsby Ryde Ku-ring-gai

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Summary of Concerns</b>	<b>LGAs affected*</b>
<p>Access to public transport</p>	<p>Young people perceive public transport to be expensive and hard to obtain outside of peak periods. School transport passes are seen as too restrictive.</p> <p>It is particularly difficult for young people travelling home at night from outside the area. Safety, especially on trains is also an issue at night.</p> <p>Transport routes for young people living away from the main arterial roads or railway stations are restricted.</p>	<p>Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Ryde Willoughby</p>
<p>Additional recreational activities</p>	<p>Young people consulted in the majority of areas are looking for more things to do that do not require them to take part in structured programs. Needs identified include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Multi-purpose courts for basketball and netball</li> <li>▪ Non-traditional sporting facilities such as skateboarding areas and BMX tracks</li> <li>▪ Extra youth entertainment events</li> <li>▪ Cycle paths to assist young people to move safely within their local areas</li> <li>▪ Multi-purpose, flexible indoor facilities that can accommodate a range of sports, performance and entertainment activities.</li> </ul>	<p>All LGAs</p>
<p>Addressing critical shortages in services for young people with special needs</p>	<p>Service providers point to the lack of services for young people in the NSROC region. Specific service deficiencies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ youth specific mental health services</li> <li>▪ no crisis accommodation for young people in the NSROC region</li> <li>▪ no youth specific drug and alcohol services at Royal North Shore Hospital</li> <li>▪ no services targeting dual diagnosis (both mental health and substance abuse problems)</li> <li>▪ torture trauma counselling services for some migrants (Ryde LGA)</li> <li>▪ few programs for young people who are at risk of leaving school early, and</li> <li>▪ respite care and post-school options programs are lacking for young people with disabilities.</li> </ul>	<p>All LGAs</p>



Issue	Summary of Concerns	LGAs affected*
Night-time socialising	There are few entertainment options for under 18s at night. Most youth centres close early. Sporting venues need additional lighting for young people's sports and other outdoor activities. Public transport options are difficult for young people at night.	Lane Cove Willoughby Ku-ring-gai

\* *This list refers to Councils that have specifically mentioned issues in planning documents and it cannot be assumed that the problem is absent in other LGAs.*

### 5.3.5 Demand from New Population

The inflow of new residents to the NSROC region is likely to impact on youth provision in three key areas: education, physical facilities and youth services.

#### Education

There is currently a wide choice of primary and secondary schools in the NSROC region. As at 2001, the total student population was 76,099, comprising 39,960 primary students and 36,139 secondary students. There were 13,302 TAFE students resident in the NSROC region.

While there are a number of excellent public schools in the region, there is a strong preference for private education in either the Catholic or independent schools sectors. As at 2001, 34.3 per cent of primary school students and 54.9 per cent of secondary school students living in NSROC LGAs attended private schools. The highest level of private school attendance is in the Hunters Hill LGA where a staggering 90.7 per cent of secondary students attend private schools. The lowest level of private school attendance is in the Hornsby LGA where only 36 per cent of secondary students attend private schools.

Higher density housing is likely to change the socio-economic profile of the region to some extent. A higher per cent of lower-income families is likely to increase the proportions of residents attending public schools. This will put additional pressure on a system that is already strained. However, the new population of children and young people will not be at a level that is likely to generate demands for new schools to be built.

#### Physical Facilities

A commonly used standard is one major youth centre for every 20,000 residents<sup>43</sup>. Applying this standard to a projected future population of up to 660,652 people by 2031, the region could require approximately 30 youth centres.

However, this approach presupposes a service model that may not be best suited to young peoples' needs and does not take into account a flexible use of existing and new facilities. For example, the potential facilities requirements could be met by a combination of new purpose built youth facilities, youth facilities within multi-purpose community centres, and

<sup>43</sup> Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (1998) *Planning Benchmarks and Standards* (unpublished report) p.17.

sharing of existing under-utilised community facilities such as schools (out of school hours and during vacations).

The future youth population is also likely to put pressure on a range of other general purpose community facilities discussed in Section 5.4 of this report.

### **Youth Services**

Gaps in health and welfare services for young people have reached a critical level in the NSROC region. The scarcity of services is largely attributable to Government policies which direct the bulk of funding to areas with high need. Given the overall prosperity of the region, young people who need assistance tend to miss out on necessary services.

One of the issues for young people, which may worsen with urban consolidation, is mental health. A causal relationship has been suggested between higher density living, particularly high-rise living, and mental health problems. The assertion is that high-rise living causes a disconnection from street life and the casual interactions with neighbours and passers-by. The resulting isolation causes the individual breakdowns. These effects may be mitigated by lively streets and parks, and opportunities for social interaction and community participation<sup>44</sup>.

It will be important for the State to assign priorities to the enhancement of youth service provision in the NSROC region. While the inflow of new population is not expected to have a huge impact on the overall levels of demand for these services, there is already stress on the system. If unchecked, existing youth problems are likely to worsen and have a flow on effect to the rest of the community.

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<sup>44</sup> Glen Searle (2003) *The Limits to Urban Consolidation* Urban Frontiers Program Issues Paper No. 14 University of Western Sydney p.9.

## **5.4 Community Facilities**

A consistent theme in NSROC Councils' Management Plans is the concern that cost shifting by other spheres of government and more than 20 years of rate pegging have exacerbated the problem of capital works funding. Whereas in the past, community facilities such as community centres and child care centres were funded through Commonwealth and State Government initiatives (usually in the form of Specific Purpose Program funding), there has been a gradual devolution of funding responsibility to Local Government. Commonwealth and State funding is increasingly targeted to areas of greatest disadvantage. For example, Area Assistance Scheme grants through the Department of Community Services, which provides one-off capital grants for community infrastructure development, only covers Western Sydney and a number of regional areas.

Given the age of suburbs in the NSROC, it is not surprising that any of the community facilities in the region are ageing and require costly upgrades or replacement to meet the requirements of modern service provision. In many parts of the region, community facilities are at least 30 years old. Many are housed in inappropriate converted residential buildings and have dated internal configurations that make service delivery difficult. Funds will be needed to add to the current stock of facilities and to renovate and repair existing facilities. It should also be noted that pressure on Councils' resources to augment services in established areas is likely to affect the availability of resources to rural and other isolated sections of the NSROC region.

The range of services and facilities demanded by residents include: libraries, community halls and neighbourhood centres, multi-purpose community service centres, youth centres, sport and recreation facilities, playgrounds, early childhood health centres and child-care facilities.

The section below covers the potential impact of the Metropolitan Strategy on requirements for libraries, community centres and recreation and cultural facility requirements in the NSROC region.

### **5.4.1 Libraries**

There is a strong network of public libraries within the NSROC region. The distribution of libraries is such that most residents in the NSROC region have easy access to public library services. This is reflected in their usage, as libraries are among the most extensively used community facilities. For example, libraries within the City of Ryde attracted just over 800,000 visitors in the period between July 2003 and June 2004.

However the need to upgrade and expand library buildings has been emerging for some time and has begun to be addressed by NSROC Councils. New libraries are planned in Chatswood, Ku-ring-gai (site TBC), West Ryde and Ryde. An extension is planned for Lane Cove Library. A rising trend is to incorporate library facilities within multi-purpose community centres with the capacity to accommodate a range of existing and new uses. Flexible meeting spaces for community groups are a key element of multi-purpose community centre design.

It is expected that demographic change will have a significant impact on demand for library services. In particular population ageing is increasing demand for reading material, and other audio-visual materials that older people may be not be able to afford to purchase on a regular basis. Higher density housing also is likely to increase demands for study carrels, reading areas and workrooms in libraries as smaller housing provides less room for quiet study at home.

The Library Council of Australia has established benchmarks sizes for public library buildings<sup>45</sup>. Using a population-based formula, it is possible to calculate the required floorspace for public libraries needed to service the projected future population. With this benchmark the required gross floor area is calculated utilising the projected local resident and non-resident workforce served and a standardised “building area factor” which is a gross square floor space per 1000 residents.

At the rate of provision suggested by the benchmark (9 sq m per 1000 people), the estimated 2031 population of 660,652 persons for the NSROC region will require approximately 6,000 square metres of additional library space. Assuming that 50 per cent will be newly built, building and fitout costs (calculated at \$2,500 per square metre) will cost NSROC Councils \$7.5 million at current values for construction only.

#### **5.4.2 Community Centres**

One of the major issues identified in planning documents was the need to increase the availability of community centre space for community services and activities, as well as commercial and private hiring. There is demand for enhancement of existing facilities rather than wholly new facilities, although in some parts of the NSROC region new facilities also are needed.

The distribution of community facilities and services would appear to need some review. Reviews of community centres and meeting places conducted in Willoughby and Ryde LGAs have indicated a concentration of facilities in key centres and under provision of appropriate community facilities relative to population in other parts of the city. There is also considerable room for improvement in the model of provision of community/neighbourhood centres in older areas. Lack of space within centres and halls is a key issue for a number of community groups. The current lack of space in some centres limits the activities that can be conducted at that centre, with many user groups accommodated in a space which is unsuitable or inadequate to their current and future needs. There is a concern over the lack of accessibility for people with a disability. Policy changes relating to user-charges have also created additional financial pressures for some services and community groups.

Current planning mechanisms tend to calculate additional community centre space requirements for new residents based on the existing floor space. This methodology assumes that the current stock is matched to current demand. However, it is apparent from the community facility studies and community surveys that have been conducted in the region

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<sup>45</sup> Library Council of NSW (2000) *People Places: A Guide for Public Library Buildings in NSW* [www.slsw.gov.au](http://www.slsw.gov.au)

that current facilities have no spare capacity and in some areas, there is unmet demand for spaces. A large proportion of the available facilities are utilised on a full-time basis by one organisation (eg. a pre-school or community services provider) and much of the current infrastructure is ageing or obsolete. Expensive upgrading is required to ensure that these facilities meet the needs of the community.

According to the commonly used standard of one community centre of at least 750 to 1000 square metres per 10,000 to 20,000 residents<sup>46</sup>, it is expected that the estimated 2031 population of 660,652 persons for the NSROC region will require between 33 and 66 large community centres across the region. The present supply is estimated at 28 major community centres across the region. Effectively this means that NSROC have a shortfall of between five and 38 centres depending on how the benchmark is applied. The table below shows that either way, the cost impact impacts on NSROC Councils will be significant.

**Table 25**

**Cost of Required New Community Centres**

<b>Proposed Area</b>	<b>Shortfall of 38 Centres</b>	<b>Shortfall of 5 Centres</b>
750 sq metres	\$71.25 million	\$9.375 million
1000 sq metres	\$95 million	\$12.5 million

Requirements are costed at \$2,500 per square metre, excluding land value<sup>47</sup>.

Given high land values and cost of construction, it is unlikely that NSROC Councils will be able to meet the increasing need from their revenues. Should NSROC Councils wish to embark on building programs, a number of new approaches will need to be considered. These include consolidating current assets, such as small scale single purpose facilities, in order to build large-scale multi-purpose centres; re-zoning of Council owned lands currently classified as “community lands” (open-space) for operational uses; and partnerships with commercial interests, such as retail and residential developers. While some residents may oppose any diminution of open-spaces in their LGA, and land sharing with the private sector, there is a strong financial incentive to do so. Strategies to promote the community benefits may be required in LGAs that have been resistant to these types of proposal in the past.

### **5.4.3 Recreation and Cultural Facilities**

The NSROC region already offers a wide range of recreation and leisure facilities. This includes indoor and outdoor sports complexes, golf courses, tennis courts, playgrounds, public parks and recreation areas. There a number of sporting and leisure facilities of regional standing. These include: North Sydney Oval; Ryde Aquatic Centre; Willoughby

<sup>46</sup> Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (1998) *Planning Benchmarks and Standards* (unpublished report) p.4.

<sup>47</sup> This figure has been used by Ku-ring-gai Council in its current *Section 94 Contributions Plan* (see p.48)

Leisure Centre; North Sydney Pool and Luna Park. There are also extensive natural areas within the Lane Cove, Ku-ring-gai Chase, Garrigal and Marramarra National Parks

Outdoor sporting facilities within the NSROC region tend to be multi-purpose and cater for more than one sport. They contribute to the network of open space, provide relief from the urban environment and cater for passive recreational opportunities.

Current demand for outdoor sporting facilities in most parts of the NSROC region exceeds supply during in peak playing periods such as Saturdays. Women's sports are particularly disadvantaged by the historical patterns of use of existing facilities predominately by male sporting clubs. Some of the schools in the area have no or limited sporting fields and rely on public facilities.

The incoming population is expected to exacerbate current supply problems by increasing the overall numbers in the population wishing to access sporting facilities. The reliance on public sporting facilities by schools is also expected to increase as school populations grow. There is limited opportunity for future development of new outdoor sporting facilities within the NSROC region. This is due to existing urban development, prohibitive costs of purchasing new sites, topography, adjacent bushland and natural areas. Ongoing requirements for sports ground rectification, upgrading and maintenance, as well as water restrictions, put other pressures on the ability of sports fields to carry additional utilisation.

There is potential for NSROC Councils to develop a region-wide response to shortages of sports fields, recognising that sporting clubs do not differentiate between LGA boundaries. Such an approach would allow for the redevelopment of existing facilities or development of new facilities to take into account regional issues such as existing facilities within the region and the need for such facilities within the region.

One model that is worth considering is a central body for the allocation of grounds and courts to member sporting associations, and local schools. This solution has been used by the three Northern Beaches Local Government Areas; Manly, Warringah and Pittwater since 1964<sup>48</sup>. These Councils have delegated authority in the management of their fields to the Manly Warringah Pittwater Sporting Union Incorporated.

With regards to indoor sporting facilities, local surveys suggest that the main demands are for better quality in existing facilities and for new or upgraded pool facilities (in combination with other facilities such as gyms and sports halls).

There is a high level of provision of open space for passive uses. Notwithstanding this, to meet the needs of the current and incoming population, NSROC Councils will need to better plan and design parks and open spaces as social venues and meeting places. The main requirements are to:

- enhance existing facilities to improve the general amenity, including toilet facilities, seating, shade and playground equipment

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<sup>48</sup> Warringah Council (2004) *Sports in Warringah Strategy* June 2004

- improve safety and utilisation of parks and sporting facilities with upgraded lighting
- provide more picnic and barbecue facilities to suit couples and families living in apartments, and increasing numbers of residents from CALD backgrounds
- provide non-traditional sporting facilities such as skate board ramps, off-road cycle tracks and BMX tracks for children and young people
- improve access for people with a disability to and within outdoor recreational areas, and
- improve safety of cycle and pedestrian links between housing areas and parks.

There are currently three major cultural facilities across the NSROC region, the Willoughby Town Hall complex and the Zenith Theatre in Chatswood and the Ryde Civic Centre. A number of NSROC communities are strongly advocating for an increase in the range of facilities directed to the performing arts. The development of a major cultural centre is high priority for residents in the Lane Cove, Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby LGAs. A major new regional cultural facility will be built within the Chatswood Town Centre redevelopment. The Ryde Civic Hall can be used for performances but the Centre is now 40 years old, and has major deficiencies in design, acoustics and lighting that limit its utility.

Additional population strengthens the justification for this type of facility but is unlikely to affect the scale of provision requirement. The commonly used benchmark of one cultural music/drama facility per 50,000 to 100,000<sup>49</sup> would mean that the goal of one major cultural facility in most of the NSROC LGAs is realistic for the incoming population. It should be noted that while several NSROC Councils including Hornsby and Lane Cove have begun to address the issue, there are no concrete plans in place in either locality.

## 5.6 Affordable Housing

Affordability of housing is a growing concern for the NSROC region. The rising cost of housing in the region has meant that few low and middle-income earners are able to live in the area. While job opportunities exist for unskilled and semi-skilled workers and in the lower paying professions such as child care, disability services and nursing, the available labour in the region falls well short of the demand.

Many workers in key service sector occupations commute over long distances to work in the region, resulting in high levels of staff turnover. While improvements to the transport system will increase opportunities to attract workers to employment in the region, it is unlikely to fully resolve labour shortages as there is little incentive to travel when the same jobs are readily available closer to home.

The Local Government and Shires Associations and the NSW Council of Social Services (NCOSS) have called for the inclusion of housing affordability as a specific direction in the

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<sup>49</sup> Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW (1998) *Planning Benchmarks and Standards* (unpublished report) p.10.

Metropolitan Strategy. The issue of housing and its affordability is not addressed in the Strategy and these organisations have suggested that only a more directive approach will ensure that current geographic social divisions in Sydney are not exacerbated<sup>50</sup>. NCOSS has also called for amending Section 94 of the *Environment Planning and Assessment Act* to specifically include affordable housing in the definition of public amenities and public services. Researcher Bill Randolph however points to the potential for urban consolidation to create social polarisation *within* communities as well as *between* communities. He argues that while high density housing within older town centres may lead to more balanced outcomes, there is also a possibility that these housing options will become “future hostels for disadvantaged renters”<sup>51</sup>.

Given the low proportion of public housing stock in the region and the declining availability of low cost private rental accommodation, it would seem fitting for NSROC Councils to advocate for the inclusion of affordable housing within the new dwellings. In December 2003, the Forum of Non-government Agencies set a benchmark for affordable housing. It suggests that 15 per cent of total housing units within new urban developments and renewal areas should be directed to social housing, low cost private rental and lower income home ownership. While such an objective would go some way to alleviating shortages of key workers, before establishing targets within its region, NSROC Councils first need to gain a better understanding of the unmet need. They would then be in a stronger position to lobby the agencies with historical responsibility for allocating social housing to develop funding approaches for meeting it.

In the absence of specific interventions, the property market will determine that the final social mix of the NSROC region. Given current comparatively high land values in the NSROC region, it is likely that the Metropolitan Strategy will provide higher density living in a predominately low density region, but will not deliver a more diverse range of income and household types in the region.

## 5.7 Health Services

Northern Sydney Area Health Service (NSAHS) is responsible for the funding, organisation and delivery of public health services to residents in the NSROC region. These range from hospitals and community health centres to dental and mental health facilities.

The NSROC region is reasonably well provided. The major public hospitals are:

- Royal North Shore Hospital (726 beds)
- Hornsby Ku-ring-gai Hospital & Community Health Services (302 beds)
- Macquarie Hospital (183 beds)

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<sup>50</sup> NSW Local Government and Shires Associations (2004) *Submission Metropolitan Strategy Discussion Paper* December 2004; Council of Social Service of NSW (2004) *Submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Metropolitan Strategy* November 2004.

<sup>51</sup> Bill Randolph (2004) *Renewing the Middle City: Planning for Stressed Suburbs* Issues Paper No. 15 University of Western Sydney: Urban Frontiers Program p.5.



- Ryde Hospital (229 beds)
- Manly Hospital (238 beds) and
- Royal Rehabilitation Centre (242 beds)

Additional public rehabilitation and palliative care facilities are provided through the Hope Healthcare in partnership with the NSAHS. Greenwich Hospital provides 25 rehabilitation beds, 25 psycho-geriatric beds and 19 palliative care beds. Palliative care is also offered at Neringah Hospital. Other services include the Kolling Institute of Medical Research based at Royal North Shore Hospital, the Northern Sydney Home Nursing Service and the Sydney Dialysis Centre.<sup>52</sup>

The NSW has invested significantly in upgrading health facilities in the NSROC region<sup>53</sup>. Capital projects include:

- \$22.6 million for stage 2 redevelopment of the Royal North Shore Hospital. The total project cost of \$470 million includes reconstruction of central campus for clinical services, operating theatres, inpatient units, community health and support services.
- \$8.6 million for redevelopment of Hornsby Hospital. The total project cost of \$16.4 million includes redevelopment of emergency department, obstetrics and paediatrics.
- \$2.85 million for a new 15-bed intensive care psychiatric unit at Macquarie Hospital.

Despite net gains in health facilities, continuing nursing staff shortages are likely to prevent services from working at optimum levels. Nursing staff shortages have caused bed closures across Northern Sydney Health region and a reduction in operating room sessions. Bed closures and access blockages across the health service is mainly the result of nursing recruitment difficulties which are compounded by a significant number of patients requiring long-term placement<sup>54</sup>.

## 5.7 Local Transport

While the Metropolitan Strategy has focused on delivering more efficient public transport systems by improving connections between centres and major transport hubs, there has been very little focus on improving transport systems within localities. For example, to attend an appointment at Royal North Shore Hospital, an older resident living in say Castlecrag would need to first travel to Chatswood, then take another connection down the Pacific Highway. NCOSS has strongly advocated for new specialist transport services to assist frail and

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<sup>52</sup> NSW Health (2004) “Area Profile and Services” in *Annual Report 2004*  
[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2004/pdf/ar2004\\_211-221.pdf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/2004/pdf/ar2004_211-221.pdf)

<sup>53</sup> NSW Health (2005) *2004-05 Capital Funding for Health Facilities*  
[http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pbh/ahsmaps/nsydney\\_ccoast.html#cf](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/pbh/ahsmaps/nsydney_ccoast.html#cf)

<sup>54</sup> NSW Health (2001) *Better Health Bulletin* November 2001 [www.nsh.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nsh.nsw.gov.au)

disabled people who live in the community, and for flexible local transit solutions to improve access to local shops, services and recreation facilities. NCOSS argues that the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy is overly focused on commuter transport needs and inter-regional transportation systems. They argue that a focus on local and community transport should be a key component of the Strategy's response to transport issues<sup>55</sup>.

The proposed transport study for the NSROC region should ensure that both intra-regional and inter-regional issues are examined to assess systematically whether residents are able to reach the destinations they want efficiently.

Issues of improved mobility access to rail stations and buses also will become critically important as the community ages.

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<sup>55</sup> Council of Social Service of NSW (2004) *Submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Metropolitan Strategy* November 2004.

## 6. Conclusion

It is evident from the analysis in this report that, without appropriate interventions, the implementation of the Metropolitan Strategy will have a significant impact on the provision of social services and the quality of life in the NSROC region.

To date the Metropolitan Strategy planners have emphasised infrastructure investment in roads, transport and utilities. However, in order to absorb successfully the planned population growth the NSROC region will require additional investment in social services and community facilities. The research findings suggest that the greatest challenges will be:

- meeting the demand for community aged care services which is now at a critical level;
- the provision of vitally needed youth services in a policy environment that targets funding and resources to more socially disadvantaged communities;
- meeting current and future childcare needs that the private sector is unable or unwilling to supply. This is most critical in long day care places for 0-2 year olds, occasional care and pre-school services;
- maintaining and enhancing ageing community infrastructure such as community centres, sporting and recreational facilities, and libraries, and
- meeting the demands of the incoming for additional facilities such as multi-purpose community centres, new libraries, sporting facilities and cultural centres.

It is clear that greater investment by all spheres of government will be required to meet these needs. The capacity of Local Councils to contribute is significantly constrained given the prevailing policy of rate pegging. To date there has been a reliance on Section 94 contribution funds to enhance community facilities. While this mechanism has delivered much needed new facilities in the region, collection of funds is very slow and is unlikely to keep pace with growth in demand from the incoming population. NSROC Councils support an alteration of the rate-capping regime to enable levying of rates for properties in the region for targeted projects that will directly benefit residents<sup>56</sup>.

Urban densification that is perceived to threaten the unique character of the region and erode quality of life is likely to meet continuing resistance from NSROC communities. Community surveys conducted by NSROC Councils in recent years point to concerns from residents about increasing urban density, high rise construction and threats to environmental assets such as trees and bushland. In some areas, public concerns reflect a 'siege mentality' among residents who feel that the environmental, cultural and historical qualities related to local landscapes are under intolerable pressure from developers.

While perceptions of over-development may be relative, it will be important for the success and acceptance of urban consolidation in the NSROC region that planning standards emphasise quality design, high building standards, a focus upon visual impact and access to

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<sup>56</sup> NSROC (2004) *NSROC Metropolitan Strategy Submission* (November 2004)

open space, relationships with public transport and jobs and genuine social integration. Residents need assurances that existing social networks will be nurtured and there will be no loss of social capital.

To date the Metropolitan Strategy has been silent on the issue of social sustainability. While there is broad agreement that housing affordability should be included as a specific direction<sup>57</sup>, there has been no explicit treatment of the broader social impacts of population growth and urban densification. NSROC Councils may work with other spheres of government to plan for and address social issues in a number of ways. These include:

- planning at a regional level to ensure appropriate levels of social service provision in key areas of need, such as childcare, aged services and youth services;
- identifying the resource issues associated with the supply of community and recreational facilities to meet current and future demand, and working with the appropriate government agencies to secure necessary funding;
- working with State Government agencies to monitor demand and facilitate the provision of affordable housing, and
- investigating labour needs to support social services in the region and working with other spheres of government to attenuate current shortages.

Resolution of these issues in partnership with the State Government will increase the degree of confidence within the NSROC region that the Metropolitan Strategy can be implemented with no reduction in quality of life or compromise to community values and social assets.

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<sup>57</sup> NSW Council of Social Services (2004) *Submission to the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Metropolitan Strategy* November 2004; NSROC (2004) *NSROC Metropolitan Strategy Submission* (November 2004)

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