



Holroyd City
Built Around People

HOLROYD YOUTH PROFILE 2001

HOLROYD CITY COUNCIL

CONTENTS

	Page No.
Introduction	3
Family Background	8
Housing	12
Employment	16
Education	19
Juvenile Justice	22
Young People with Disabilities	31
Case Studies	38
Holroyd Youth Network Contact Details	46

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

In the *Holroyd Youth Profile 2001* a young person is described as a person aged between 12 – 24 years.

The main aim of this document is to provide the community with information on statistics, certain characteristics of young people and case studies to illustrate the experiences of young people who live in the Holroyd Local Government Area. Much of this information elaborates on the data previously published in the *Holroyd Social Plan (1999-2003)*; the figures provided are the most currently available at the time of printing.

The *Holroyd Youth Profile 2001* was compiled by Monica Bacusi, Social Work student from the University of Sydney, during her placement at Holroyd City Council from July to November 2000. The information contained in this report was researched by Monica and Council's Youth Services Officer, Claudia Tabernaberi.

Holroyd City Council would like to thank the following organisations for contributing information and support to the *Holroyd Youth Profile 2001*:

- Centrelink, Merrylands
- Department of Housing
- Department of Juvenile Justice
- Greater Western Sydney Economic Board
- Guildford Youth Project
- Holroyd City Council staff
- Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Services
- Holroyd Youth Services
- Merrylands Police Local Area Command
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics
- Wentworthville Youth Services
- Western Sydney Regional Information and Resource Service
- Westway Youth Support

Other information about young people living in Holroyd can be obtained from the *Holroyd Social Plan 1999-2003*, *Holroyd City Health Plan 2000* and the *Holroyd Youth Directory*.

Claudia Tabernaberi
Youth Services Officer
November 2000

“Young people have individual needs just like everyone else they require access to facilities. They also need support and assistance especially during the process of transition from childhood to adulthood. Young people are a very mobile and diverse group of individuals, which includes those in education, those entering the labour force for the first time, those living independently and dependently and those who are establishing new families. The time between childhood and adulthood is a time of great challenge, change and uncertainty. They are often vulnerable and many experience a great deal of anxiety about issues relating to health, housing, sexuality, education, employment, unemployment, income and self-esteem.”¹

¹ Holroyd Social Plan, 1999-2003.

Characteristics of the Holroyd Local Government Area

Holroyd is characterised by the size and diversity of its powerful manufacturing base. Almost two thirds of all economic activity and one third of jobs within Holroyd are generated by the manufacturing sector. Around 30% of the 40 square kilometres of Holroyd are zoned industrial with the suburbs of Girraween, Greystanes, Guildford, Smithfield, Toongabbie and Yennora dominated by the activity of local companies.

On the 5 July 1872, the boundaries of the Municipality were granted. These included the western railway line from Parramatta Park to Toongabbie Railway station; then across in a generally easterly direction to the southern railway line. North to Sydney Ground, across a Section of Harris Park, across to Church Street, Parramatta, across to Boundary Street to the west and then in a northerly direction back to Parramatta Park. In January 1991, the Municipality was declared a city.

During June 1999, a total population of 86,557 people were living within the Holroyd region, an increase of 3804 people since 1991, thus making Holroyd one of the most concentrated populations in Sydney. Local residents come from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and enjoy a relaxed social environment with good transport links to major employment areas. Health, retail and education services are also being upgraded to cater for the local population. These include 30 primary and secondary schools.

Overview of the Youth Population in Holroyd

Young people aged between 12-24 years represent 18,349 of the 86,557 people living in Holroyd. Thus young people make 21% of the total population of Holroyd.

Age	Female	Male	Total	% of LGA
12-14	2837	2688	5525	6.4%
15-19	2996	2770	5766	6.7%
20-24	3572	3486	7058	8.2%
Total	9405	8944	18349	21.3%

Source: 1996 Census Data

Services for Young People

Traditionally structured youth services such as Scouts, Venturers, Guides and Boys Brigades exist throughout the City and cater to a proportion of Holroyd's youth.

There are youth recreation clubs provided by the RSL at Merrylands and Wentworthville, and several churches employ youth workers who provide church based youth programs.

The Holroyd Local Government Area has three youth centres, funded and staffed to varying degrees, which provide programs and services for young people.

Holroyd City Council located in Merrylands has a full time Youth Services Officer that looks after the planning, development and coordination of local youth services and projects including direct management of Wentworthville Youth Services and the Guildford Youth Project. Council maintains and updates information that is relevant to young people and youth services.

Guildford Youth Project has a full time Youth Development Worker and a part time Youth Activities Assistant both funded by Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme (WSAAS). The youth project operates from two locations: the office is where young people can ask for help with resumes, job seeking, accommodation, etc. The centre is where young people are able to participate programs and be part of the activities held such as drop-in, basketball and the homework tutoring service.

Wentworthville Youth Services (The Cowshed) has a Centre Based Youth Worker and an Outreach Youth Worker (both full time) and places emphasis on street work and outreach programs to make contact with young people “at risk” (including homeless, unemployed and Non English Speaking Backgrounds). The funding is provided by the Department of Community Services, Holroyd City Council partially funds the centre based youth worker position.

Holroyd Youth Services (Merrylands Youth Centre) has a Drop-in / Centre Based Youth Worker, a Youth Housing Worker / Coordinator and a part-time administrator position. The centre provides drop in programs and structured activities, and assists young people with accommodation issues, until recently the Service employed a worker to develop youth employment projects (eg: lawn mowing).

Westway Youth Support (Hyland Road Youth Centre) located at Greystanes has a full time Youth Development Worker and a part time Youth Worker both funded by the Department of Community Services. The centre has a drop-in program, pool tables, band nights and a social program for young people with disabilities

The **Centrelink** office located in Merrylands and Parramatta assist young people in Holroyd with employment and referral. The Youth Service Unit is set up to help young people to look at education, training and employment options. The Parramatta office has two full time youth service officers and a full time and part time social worker in the Merrylands office.

High Street Youth Health Service is located in Harris Park. This service provides education, health and counselling services for young people 12-25 years as well as youth projects and regular centre based activities such as drop in. Outreach services are provided to the Holroyd, Parramatta and the Hills districts.

Holroyd-Parramatta Migrant Services operates a Circuit Breaker project, which provides support programs for young migrants to assist them into work and independent living.

Parramatta-Holroyd Family Support employs an Adolescent Parent Support Worker to do casework and co-ordinate groupwork for young parents in the Holroyd and Parramatta local government areas.

Holroyd Youth Workers Network (HYWN) is a forum of local youth workers who meet monthly to look at youth needs, services in the local government area and joint projects. One of the major projects for HYWN is the **Pit Stop**, which provides free information for young people aged 12-24 years provided by experienced and professional youth workers. The Pit Stop operates from premises located in Merrylands Stocklands Mall (across the road from Hoyts Cinema).

Karabi Community and Development Service located in Wentworthville has one full time youth development worker and one part time Youth Activities Worker. These workers provide information, referrals, lobbying, support, research, networking and youth resources and equipment.

Youth Action and Policy Association Western Sydney Project (YAPA) is located in Parramatta and is a regional organisation working with young people and youth services in Western Sydney on a range of youth issues including public space, social equity and equal access.

At present there is a high need for accommodation for young homeless people, particularly for those in crisis. **Western Housing for Youth** provides some semi support and medium term accommodation in Holroyd.

The Holroyd Accommodation Through Cooperative Housing (HATCH) is a long-term youth housing project that accommodates young people aged between 16-25 years of age on low incomes. HATCH consists of 10 properties and is located in Merrylands.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

Family Background

The diversity of cultures is evident in the Local Government Area of Holroyd. The following table illustrates the birthplace of the total population.

COUNTRY	MALE	FEMALE	PERSONS
Australia	25,156	26,095	51,251
UK	1,375	1,326	2,701
NZ	573	602	1,175
Lebanon	1,698	1,566	3,264
Malta	1,161	1,116	2,277
Italy	746	661	1,407
China	574	586	1,160
Philippines	409	671	1,080
Other	6,604	6,690	13,294
Not Stated	1,271	1,357	2,628
Overseas visitors	97	136	233
Total	39,664	40,806	80,470

Source: 1996 census data

The table below shows the number of young people in Holroyd aged between 10-24 years who are born overseas in the top fifteen countries.

COUNTRY	PERSONS
Lebanon	381
New Zealand	299
Fiji	273
Philippines	205
Vietnam	142
India	142
Korea, Republic of	116
England	114
Hong Kong	114
China (excl. Taiwan)	105
Sri Lanka	104
Turkey	76
Afghanistan	74
Iran	68
Chile	52

Source: 1996 Census Data

Language Spoken At Home

After analysing the birthplace and language spoken at home by people in Holroyd, it is interesting to note that the top five languages do not necessarily correlate to the top five countries of birth. This may be due to children being first or second generation Australians, who still speak the language of their parents' origin at home.

The table on the following page shows the broad spread of retention of community languages in Holroyd and statistics of languages spoken at home.

**LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME BY AGE, PERSONS AGED 12-24 YEARS
HOLROYD LGA**

Language spoken at home	Age 12	Age 13	Age 14	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17	Age 18	Age 19	19-24	Total aged 12-24 yrs
English	631	623	597	703	690	712	711	805	4,492	9,964
Other language than English										
Arabic	142	164	151	145	157	132	144	156	709	1,900
Greek	18	15	15	28	20	23	21	38	162	340
Italian	14	14	19	15	17	18	26	24	186	333
Croatian	15	23	19	19	25	20	24	23	152	320
Maltese	11	14	20	14	23	27	24	17	133	283
Cantonese	21	26	20	17	13	18	16	11	111	253
Spanish	11	16	19	18	9	18	14	18	108	231
Turkish	14	18	10	14	13	13	18	15	110	225
Hindi	12	13	14	9	13	18	16	25	76	196
Tagalog (Filipino)	10	6	13	10	19	13	9	17	46	143
Vietnamese	6	11	10	12	8	13	9	9	45	123
Korean	5	6	12	9	11	9	9	13	38	112
Persian	12	9	11	9	8	8	12	7	34	110
Mandarin	9	10	12	9	6	6	0	3	30	85
Tamil	3	6	4	3	6	9	5	3	30	69
Serbian	0	6	3	6	3	6	9	6	25	64
Samoan	3	6	3	0	6	6	6	3	22	55
Southern Asian languages	3	3	0	3	0	6	6	5	29	55
Polish	3	9	3	6	0	0	0	8	15	44
French	3	3	3	4	3	6	0	0	18	40
Indonesian	3	0	6	0	3	3	6	0	19	40
Other Chinese	0	3	3	3	6	0	6	3	10	34
Assyrian (including Aramaic)	3	6	0	0	3	3	3	0	10	28
Portuguese	0	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	9	27
Hungarian	0	0	0	6	3	6	3	0	7	25
Tongan	3	0	0	7	3	0	0	3	8	24
Russian	0	3	0	0	0	4	0	6	9	22
Punjabi	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	21
Bosnian	3	0	0	0	3	3	3	0	6	18
Slovene	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	9	18
South Slavic	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	3	12	18
Sinhalese	3	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	7	16
Macedonian	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	3	6	15
Kurdish	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	8	14
Slovak	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	7	13
Pashto	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	10	13
Fijian	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	10	13
Japanese	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	3	12
German	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	10
Albanian	3	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	0	9
Armenian	0	3	0	3	0	0	3	0	0	9
Urdu	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	9
Khmer	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	9
Ukrainian	0	0	0	3	3	3	0	0	0	9
Finnish	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	7
Maori	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	7	7
Romanian	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
Gujarati	0	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Lao	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3	6
Malay	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	6
Southwest Asian & North African	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	0	6
Oceanic Austrasian lang's	0	3	0	0	0	3	0	3	0	6
Other Oceanic Pilgrims and Creoles lang	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Thai	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6
Czech	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Bengali	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	3	3
Bisaya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Timorese	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Southern European languages	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Celtic languages	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
Australian Indigenous lang.	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3
Other languages (a)	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	0	13	22
Total	351	420	385	378	402	409	422	428	2316	5511
Not stated	23	33	32	32	31	39	29	24	145	390
TOTAL	1,005	1,076	1,016	1,113	1,123	1,160	1,162	1,257	6,953	15,865

Source: 1996 Census, ETHCON96, customised data.

(a) includes 'inadequately described' and 'not verbal so described' and 'invented languages'.

Marital Status

The following table indicates the ages and number of young people within the Holroyd Local Government Area who belonged to different marital status as per last census; details on de-facto relationships were not available.

	Married		Separated		Divorced		Widowed		Never Married		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	Persons
15-19	12	61	3	4	3	3	3	3	2935	2801	2956	2872	5828
20-24	270	273	19	54	13	28	3	6	3131	2714	3436	3525	69613

Source: 1996 Census data

Family Type and Birthplace of Parents by Age Group of Children. Children counted at home on Census night, Holroyd LGA.

	Age of Children		
	10-12 years	13-14 years	15-24 years
Couple family with children			
Both parents born in Australia	831	518	2,459
One parent born overseas:		97	401
Canada, Ireland, NZ, South Africa, UK(a) and USA	149		
In other country	263	181	663
Total	412	278	1,064
Both parents born overseas:			
Both born in Canada, Ireland, South Africa, UK9a) and USA	69	30	203
One in Canada, Ireland, NZ, South Africa, UK(a) and USA and one born In other country	33	23	80
Both born in other country	996	729	3,229
Total	1,098	782	3,575
Not stated/not present(b)	101	56	286
TOTAL	2,442	1,634	7,384
One parent family			
Lone parent born in Australia	335	207	811
Lone parent born overseas:			
Canada, Ireland, NZ, South Africa UK(a) and USA	49	34	116
In other country	174	138	636
Total	223	172	752
Not Stated	4	3	5
Total	562	382	1,568
TOTAL	3,004	2,016	8,952

Source: Table X32 Expanded Community Profile, 1996 Census of Population and Housing, ABS.

(a) Comprises England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and Ireland n.f.d.

(b) Comprises children where the birthplace of one or both parents was not stated or a parent was temporarily absent.

HOUSING

Housing

Young people in Holroyd live in a variety of situations including family households, private market as rental, proprietors, Department of Housing, shared accommodation; community based youth housing, Government residential units, with friends or on the streets.

There are many different reasons as to why young people leave their homes to live independently. This can include aspects such as family conflict or breakdown, physical and emotional abuse or the need to live near work or education.

Consultation with service providers and young people shows that there is a strong need for general youth accommodation, in particular crisis accommodation, as well as supported and independent accommodation.

The Holroyd area has no refuge accommodation and has 2 medium term houses: a total of 8 beds supported by Western Housing for Youth and also Holroyd Accommodation Through Cooperative Housing (HATCH). Without adequate accommodation it is difficult for a young person to sort out the rest of their life especially employment and education. The following are different accommodation arrangements for people of all ages living in the Holroyd LGA.

Classification of the property by ownership in Holroyd - all age groups.

Ownership of the property	Number	Percent
Fully owned	12,632	44.83%
Being purchased	5,405	19.18%
Being purchased under a rent/buy scheme	127	0.45%
Rented: State Housing Authority	2,218	7.87%
Rented: Other	6,102	21.65%
Rented: Not Stated	40	0.14%
Other	554	1.97%
Not stated	1,101	3.91%
Total	28,179	100%

Source: ABS Census 1996

Dwelling Structure in Holroyd - all age groups.

Dwelling Type	Number	Percent
Separate house	2,015	74.58%
Semi-detached, room, terrace house	1,524	5.41%
Flat, etc in a 2-storey block	1,476	5.24%
Flat, etc in a 3-storey block	3,357	11.91%
Other	807	2.86%
Total	28,179	100%

Source: ABS Census 1996

Observations made since last census (1996) seem to indicate that the most common type of dwelling for Holroyd is changing. The area is experiencing a decrease in the number of people living in separate houses and an increase in the number of people living in flats in a two or three storey block. It is expected that the next census will reflect this more accurately.

Household Composition in Holroyd

Family type	Number	Percent
Family households: One family-couple family with children	10,985	39.79%
Family households: One family-couple family without children	5,824	21.10%
Family households: One family-One parent family	3,278	11.87%
Family households: One family-Other family	406	1.47%
Family households: Two families	586	2.12%
Family households: Three families	13	0.05%
Non-family households: lone person household	5,593	20.20%
Non-family households: Group household	923	3.34%
Total	27,608	100%

Source: ABS Census 1996

Household Type in Holroyd

Household No.	Number	Percent
One Person	5593	20.26%
Two Persons	8174	29.61%
Three Persons	5027	18.21%
Four Persons	4869	17.64%
Five Persons	2485	9.00%
Six or more persons	1460	5.29%
Total	27608	100%

Source: ABS Census 1996

Dwelling Structure by Bedroom Category in Holroyd

Bedroom Type	Number	Percentage
None (includes bed sitters)	105	0.37%
1 bedroom	1208	4.29%
2 bedrooms	8005	28.41%
3 bedrooms	13322	47.28%
4 bedrooms	3874	13.75%
5 bedrooms	801	2.84%
Not Stated	864	3.07%
Total	28179	100%

Source: ABS Census 1996

Public Housing and Young People in Holroyd

There are a significant number of public housing households in the Holroyd LGA (2,555 properties). It can be assumed that many young people live in these public housing areas either with family or independently. The Department of Housing states that 649 of these people are in between the ages of 12-24 years.

The demand for public housing accommodation from all ages in the community is high. The Parramatta Department of Housing region (which includes the Holroyd LGA) indicated that during September 2000 there were 1,700 families registered on the waiting list for departmental accommodation.

Public housing is difficult for young people to gain access to because of the long waiting list and housing stock is generally not suitable for the housing of singles. Of the people registered on the waiting list, approximately 700 applicants are aged between 15-24 years.

Furthermore, it should be noted that public housing is not made available to young people under the age of 18.

Department of Housing Tenants in Age Group in Holroyd LGA

Age Group	Number	Percent
<25 years	30	1.17%
25-44 years	911	35.60%
45-64 years	814	31.86%
>65 years	723	28.03%
Not stated	77	3.01%
TOTAL	2555	100%

Source: Department of Housing Stripfile 10.6.00

Number of Department of Housing Dwellings in Holroyd LGA

Dwelling Type	Number	Percent
Cottage	584	22.86%
Unit	1575	61.64%
Townhouse	154	6.03%
Villa	242	9.47%
TOTAL	2555	100%

Source: Department of Housing Stripfile 10.6.00

The average market rent paid by people living in Holroyd as at September 2000 was \$160.89 / wk and the average rent paid by the Department of Housing Tenants was \$64.89.

Department of Housing Tenants Income Level in Holroyd LGA

Income Level	Number	Percent
<=\$160	13	0.58%
\$161-\$200	856	38.13%
\$201-\$300	451	20.09%
\$301-\$400	523	23.30%
>=\$400	402	17.91%
Not Stated	310	13.81%
Total	2555	100%

Source: Department of Housing Stripfile 10.6.00

Holroyd Accommodation Through Co-operative Housing (HATCH)

HATCH is managed by Holroyd Youth Services (HYS) and is a long-term youth housing project located in Merrylands. HATCH accommodates young people aged between 16-25 years of age on low incomes. Young people could be single, married or have children but to be eligible it is essential that they have independent living skills such as cooking, budgeting, cleaning, etc. The young people that are housed must be able to live independently with no support from youth workers.

HATCH consists of ten properties; tenants sign a residential Tenancy Agreement (Lease) and pay four weeks rent for bond and two weeks rent in advance. Rent is calculated at 25% of gross income. In addition, tenants have to connect their own electricity and furniture is not provided by HYS.

Tenants are responsible for the management of the project and must attend all meetings and training sessions as part of their tenancy agreement.

It is important for applicants to understand that HATCH is not just affordable accommodation, but rather a style of housing requiring commitment, time and energy. Tenants are required to put in a lot of volunteer time to learn to manage HATCH. Housing cooperatives are not suitable to everyone's needs so it is important to understand whether a young person's accommodation needs can be met by HATCH.

EMPLOYMENT

Employment

Employment is a basic requirement for most people in society. Studies have found that young people generally put a high priority on employment as a means of gaining access to economic independence. Unemployment for young people leads to a lifestyle of poverty or disadvantage. The majority of 15-19 year olds who are involved in the labour force are employed in low-paying occupations. (Harwath, 1989)

Labour force status in Holroyd LGA	15-17 years	18-19 years	20-24 years
Employed:			
Full time (a)	276	859	3,803
Part time	679	538	1,111
Not stated (b)	58	56	158
Total	1,013	1,453	5,072
Unemployed looking			
Full time work	84	190	444
Part time work	71	50	118
Total	155	240	562
Total labour force	1,168	1,693	5,634
Not in the labour force	2,156	665	1,158
Not stated ©	83	61	168
TOTAL	3407	2419	6960

Source: 1996 Census Data

- a) 35 hours or more in the main job held last week.
- b) Comprise persons who did not state their hours worked.
- c) Comprise persons who did not state their labour force status.

Unemployment

The youth population of Holroyd has a higher unemployment rate than those aged 25 years and over. However, their rate of participation in the workforce is higher and their unemployment rate lower when compared to the youth population in Western Sydney and Sydney in general. The following table illustrates the unemployment and participation rates by age groups for Holroyd, Western Sydney and Sydney.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

PARTICIPATION RATE

Age Group	Holroyd	Western Sydney	Sydney	Holroyd	Western Sydney	Sydney
15-19 yrs	13.8%	17.1%	15.2%	49.1%	45.6%	44.3%
20-24 yrs	10.0%	11.8%	10.3%	80.9%	77.4%	76.8%
25-34 yrs	8.4%	9.0%	7.3%	77.2%	75.2%	78.1%
35-44 yrs	7.4%	7.4%	6.1%	76.4%	76.4%	78.2%
45-54 yrs	6.1%	6.3%	5.4%	72.2%	74.1%	76.2%
55-64 yrs	8.0%	8.8%	7.3%	42.8%	43.6%	47.0%
65+ yrs	4.7%	6.3%	4.2%	3.4%	4.6%	6.3%
TOTAL	8.3%	9.0%	7.4%	59.6%	61.2%	60.9%

Source: 1996 Census Data

Occupations

Many young people are not involved in professional positions in the employment sector. This is due to their lack of training and experience, which are obviously the biggest disadvantages in attaining and securing a job. The majority of young people hold jobs within the elementary clerical and service workers sector and within the trade sector.

The high concentration of young people in these jobs can be accounted for by the fact that young people tend to lack the training and experience for other areas of work. Lack of experience and training can also be associated with young age and limited opportunities to gain skills in the workforce and through educational institutions.

Employed Persons Aged 15-24 years			
Occupations by age group in Holroyd LGA			
Occupation	15-17	18-19	20-24
Managers and Administrators	0	15	121
Professionals	7	47	628
Associate Professionals	17	60	422
Tradepersons and related works	160	324	970
Advanced clerical and service workers	14	45	307
Intermediate 'sales'	82	343	1271
Intermediate production and transport worker	66	122	375
Elementary clerical, sales, service workers	436	333	544
Labourers and related workers	179	136	318
Inadequately described	3	4	3
Not stated	47	25	85
TOTAL	1011	1454	5072

Source: 1996 Census Data

Income

Many young people in Holroyd may receive income security through their family, paid employment or government welfare benefits. Research indicates that many young people from poor families are rarely financially assisted by their parents. As an alternative they may be expected to financially contribute to their households. The level of income that is available to young people through employment differs according to the award levels available and it depends on whether the work is full time, part time or casual. Welfare benefits and other educational youth allowances may be the main and sole source of income for some young people. Welfare benefits are generally very low and not adequate to cover for independent living expenses.

Weekly individual income			
Persons aged 15-24 years in Holroyd LGA.			
Weekly individual income	15-17	18-19	20-24
Negative income	70	17	21
No income	1270	294	390
\$1 - \$39	321	62	67
\$40 - \$79	581	194	162
\$80 - \$119	189	320	275
\$200 - \$299	157	465	651
\$300 - \$399	38	334	1144
\$400 - \$499	8	132	1323
\$500 - \$599	6	35	961
\$600 - \$699	0	7	427
\$700 - \$799	0	3	165
\$800 - \$999	0	3	116
\$1000 - \$1499	0	3	38
\$1500 + more	0	0	5
No Stated	518	194	372
TOTAL	3408	2418	6959

Source: 1996 Census Data

EDUCATION

Education

The Report of the Committee of Review of NSW Schools defines education as the development of knowledge and understanding of what is held to be of worth:

“Education is a way of acquiring the knowledge and the skills that are needed in order to be able to live and work effectively as an individual within a society.”

“The most powerful indicator of achievement is the socio-economic backgrounds of the student. Students from poor backgrounds fall in greater numbers than their peers in much more difficult areas in the current schooling system. An accumulation of issues often leads students from poor backgrounds to leave school early or be alienated from learning at school, which can result in truancy, behaviour problems and silence”.

The above statement was made at a summit organised jointly by the Australian Council of Social Services and the Australian Teachers Union.

Census data indicates that participation in secondary educational institution is high for young people in Holroyd. During 1996, 5,493 young people were attending secondary schools in Holroyd out of the total population of 7626 of 12-18 year olds. This is approximately 30% of the total youth population. There are three types of educational institutions that students of Holroyd attend: government, catholic and non-government schools.

Type of Institution	Male	Female	Persons
Government	1620	1686	3306
Catholic	1007	994	2001
Non-government	91	95	186
TOTAL	2718	2775	5493

Source: 1996 Census Data

School Retention Rates

One measure at youth participation in education and their pursuit of tertiary education is the school retention rates. A retention rate is: *“a measure of the number of students in a given grade as a preparation of the number who were enrolled in a lower grade for that cohort of students”.* (Report of the Committee of Review of NSW Schools).

Age	Male	Female	Persons
14 yrs + under	4128	4833	8961
15 years	6430	7207	13637
16 years	6159	5851	12010
17 years	4164	4339	8503
18 years	4616	4325	8941
19 years + over	1641	1450	3019
Still at school	1555	1824	3179
Never enrolled	363	540	903
Not stated	2129	2584	4713
TOTAL	31185	32953	63866

Source: 1996 Census Data

During 1996 35.2% of the total population of Holroyd had left school by the age of 15 years.

Age left school	15-17 years	18-19 years	20-24 years
14 yrs + under	62	48	170
15 years	216	139	627
16 years	303	407	1425
17 years	67	770	1850
18 years	0	678	2152
19 years + over	0	44	386
Still at school	2467	222	36
Never enrolled	3	3	17
Not stated	289	109	297
TOTAL	3407	2420	6960

Source: 1996 Census Data

Highest Level of Qualifications

Census data indicated that the majority of young people aged between 15-24 years living in the Holroyd LGA have the qualifications equivalent to a skilled vocational level, followed by young people holding or attaining a bachelor degree.

Persons aged 15-24 years with a Qualification in Holroyd LGA

Qualification highest level	Male	Female	Persons
Higher degree	15	16	31
Postgraduate diploma	6	31	37
Bachelor degree	303	448	757
Undergraduate diploma	57	162	219
Associate diploma	184	316	500
Skilled vocational qualification	902	219	1121
Basic vocational qualification	114	324	438
Level of attainment	10	59	69
Level of attainment not stated	717	834	1551
TOTAL	2308	2409	4723

Source: 1996 Census Data

Juvenile Justice

Juvenile Justice

There are legal rights and responsibilities that are linked to many aspects of life for young people; some rights are determined by age, property, tenancy, family law and financial benefits. Young people need to understand their legal rights and responsibilities to be able to recognise the legal elements of a particular problem that they may have and to know what legal resources are available to assist them.

Juveniles aged between 10-17 years of age who allegedly offend against the criminal law may be brought before the children's courts for conviction and sentencing. Minor offences may be dealt with by a system of police cautions.

Profile of Services in Holroyd and surrounding areas

1. **Police:** There is one Local Area Police Command in Holroyd incorporating Merrylands and Wentworthville police stations. It covers the Holroyd local government area, as well as an additional 12sq kilometres of the Parramatta local government area. There are 95,000 people residing within the area of the Holroyd Local Area Police Command.

During community consultations, primarily during the Holroyd Safety Audit Project surveys in 1998/99, people expressed concerns over the perceived lack of police throughout Holroyd. Generally people indicated the need for additional police, more beat police and police based at Guildford. In addressing this concern Holroyd Local Area Police Command have moved toward community policing, allowing flexible pro-active and community based strategies for crime prevention and detection.

Holroyd Police have introduced a range of service standards to ensure public satisfaction with their services. These include measures such as a 10-minute response time in any life threatening situations.

2. **Emergency Services:** There is a fire station in Merrylands (operated part-time) and one in Wentworthville as well as an ambulance base in Mays Hill and the local State Emergency Service.
3. **Legal Aid Commission:** Legal Aid Commission of NSW offers legal assistance in most areas of the law to people who are on low income or disadvantaged in other ways. Free legal advice is offered to the community as well as providing legal education to community organisations and groups. People from Holroyd access the Legal Aid Commission office based in Parramatta.
4. **Community Legal Centres:** Macquarie Legal Centre is based in Parramatta and caters to people from sixteen local government areas across Western Sydney. It provides legal advice and referral as well as a range of other legal services. Macquarie Legal Centre also provides a full-time Children's Legal Service and a Youth Education Program.
5. **Community Justice Centres:** The Community Justice Centre based at Bankstown caters to the Holroyd community and it offers a free mediation service. This service is seen as an alternative to the courts.

6. **Courts:** Holroyd residents access Parramatta Local Court (District and Local Courts) and the Commonwealth Court Complex in Parramatta (Family and Federal Courts and Appeals Tribunal).
7. **Neighbourhood Watch:** Neighbourhood Watch plays an important role in crime prevention. Neighbourhood Watch exists throughout most of Holroyd and is strongly supported by Police. One of the greatest concerns with Neighbourhood Watch is the lack of members.

Source: Holroyd Social Plan, 1999 – 2003.

Young Offenders Act 1997

The Young Offenders Act 1997 is a radical new way of dealing with offending by young people. The Young Offenders Act changes the way police and the justice system deal with young offenders. The act aims to direct young people away from the formal justice system such as Courts. The act achieves this through Youth Justice Conferences and police cautions. The Act establishes a hierarchy of intervention:

1. Warning
2. Caution
3. Youth Justice Conference
4. Court

The Act involves victims and their families in the conference process and it also makes the juvenile justice system much more responsive to individual needs. Furthermore, the act reduces time and costs in the court system and the human costs of too many young people in detention; in addition the act empowers communities to deal with their young people.

Warnings and Cautions

Warnings apply for trivial offences such as swearing in public places and shoplifting where there has been no violence or other related issues. Police officers may give warnings on the spot. They record warnings but do not include the young offenders name. Cautions apply to more serious offences such as damage to property and stealing. To receive a caution, the young offender must admit the offence and agree to be cautioned.

With a caution, the young offender meets a police officer or community member at the police station and considers what they have done. An adult responsible for the young person must be present during the caution. Cautions can take up to an hour and may involve a written apology to the victim. As well as the police, the Children's Court can also decide whether a caution is appropriate.

Youth Justice Conferences

A Youth Justice Conference is based on the idea that a young person has caused hurt, loss or damage to other members of the community. At a Youth Justice Conference, the young offender and members of the community meet together to help the young person take steps towards repairing the harm they have caused and taking responsibility for their actions.

Youth justice conferences bring the offender(s), their family and supporters together, face to face with the victim(s) and their support people. Together they must agree on a suitable outcome that can include an apology, responsible reparation to victims and steps to link the young person back into the community.

When Can A Conference Be Held?

- The offence is covered by the Young Offenders Act (NSW) 1997.
- The young person has admitted to the offence and agreed to participate in a conference.
- A warning or caution is not appropriate because of the seriousness of the offence, degree of violence, harm caused to the victim or offender history.
- As an option available to courts.

Why Hold a Conference?

- To provide a forum where the young person must acknowledge and accept responsibility for the results of their actions.
- To return decision making power to families and identifies support mechanisms for the young person to prevent future offending.
- To give recognition and empathy to victims and to involve them in decision relating to offences against them.
- To develop an outcome plan that supports all of these objectives and aims.

Who decides to hold a Conference?

- Police, especially Youth Liaison Officers.
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.
- The Court.

Who Can Attend the Conference?

- The young offender(s).
- The victim(s) or their representatives.
- The conference conveyor.
- An adult responsible for the young offender or someone of the young person's choice.
- Member of the offender's family and/or support network including extended family.
- Family support network of victim.
- The investigating officer or police Youth Liaison Officer.
- Legal adviser for the young offender.
- A cultural adviser or developmental specialist if appropriate.

- A supervising officer if the young person is under probation or a court order.
- The conferencing administrator or approved researchers with appropriate permission.

Source: A Guide to Youth Justice Conferencing, Department of Juvenile Justice, 1999.

How A Conference Is Run?

Step 1 The convenor asks those present to introduce themselves and state why they are there.

Step 2 The young offender tells the story of what occurred. The convenor using questions to the young person make sure the full picture of the event is revealed to the group.

Step 3 The convenor asks the victim to tell the young person how they have been affected by the incident.

Step 4 The convenor invites other participants to tell about their thoughts on the events and the impact of the offence.

Step 5 At this point the convenor asks the victim what they would like the young person to do to repair some of the harm they have caused. The young person and their family and support people are then given time alone to decide on an appropriate proposal for an outcome plan.

Step 6 The victim and supporters respond to the proposed plan of action for the young person and together everyone in the conference talks about what should happen and how it can happen. The final agreement is written in to the outcome plan. Both the young person and the victim must agree to the outcome plan.

Step 7 The group nominates conference participants to monitor the young person and provide support to make sure that they are given the best chance to meet their agreement.

Step 8 The conference participants nominate an adult present at the conference to help the young person complete the outcome plan. If the plan is not completed, the conference administrator may reconvene the conference.

Source: A Guide To Youth Justice Conferencing, Department of Juvenile Justice, 1999.

Courts and Conferences - How do they differ?

COURT SYSTEM

YOUTH CONFERENCING

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the court system the offender is forced to be present in an environment that can be intimidating. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A conference is based on cooperation and agreement; the offender and the victim must agree on the outcome plan if they are both present.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the court, a lawyer speaks for the offender. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a conference young offenders must speak for themselves. They must meet the victim and think about how their actions have caused someone else to be hurt or to suffer loss.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In court, victims are not involved in making decision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In a conference, the victims are able to respond to what happened, how they felt about it and suggest a possible outcome plan.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Courts can be distant and interested in the crime and not the person. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A conference is an emotional and confronting interpersonal experience that allows emotions to be dealt within a safe environment.

Source: Department of Juvenile Justice, 1999

Youth Liaison Officers

The Youth Liaison Officers (YLOs) have a number of functions while the actual functions of the position will vary at a local level in response to specific local issues. There are a number of functions common to all YLOs. These include:

1. Servicing the Young Offenders Act 1997.
2. Developing initiatives and strategies to reduce and prevent juvenile crime.
3. Networking.
4. Assisting Local Area Command personnel with youth related matters.

There is one Youth Liaison Officer for the Holroyd area based at Merrylands Police Local Area Command.

Servicing the Young Offenders Act 1997

YLOs are required to attend to the implementation of the Act in their Local Area Command (LAC). Servicing the Act requires various tasks ranging from training other police, monitoring LAC divisionary statistics, making determinations as a Specialist Youth Officer (SYO) and attending youth justice conferences.

The Act clearly identifies the criteria that should be considered when determining how a young person should be dealt with, the criteria includes:

1. Seriousness of the offence.
2. Degree of harm to the victim.
3. Violence.
4. The number and nature of previous interventions.
5. Any other matter, appropriate by the investigating official.

Reducing and Preventing Youth Crime

YLOs maintain a current understanding of juvenile crime issues in their local area. Through the use of locally gathered intelligence and through contact with local service providers, local juvenile crime hotspots should be identified. An understanding of local juvenile crime hotspots enables the development of coordinated, collaborative and proactive responses.

Networking

A vital function of YLOs is to establish and maintain networks with local youth, community and other relevant agencies within the local area command. The YLO at Merrylands attends local Youth Network meetings as well as other Council meetings related to youth issues and youth services in Holroyd. There are many benefits, which derive from having good networks within the local community, these benefits include:

- **Understanding of Emerging Youth Issues**

The sharing of information of youth interagencies and other forums provide an insight into emerging local youth issues and problems. Discussions at these forums will often identify areas where young people have caused problems or been the victims of crime. The various agencies represented at these forums will be able to provide relevant and current information about local issues which might effect decisions about truancy prevention strategies, delivery of crime prevention workshops, deployment of police personnel and the establishment of good interagency partnerships aimed at reducing the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

- **Development of Partnerships**

By establishing contact and relations with external agencies like the Department of Education and Training and the Department of Community Services, youth service providers and local councils will help to reduce and prevent juvenile crime. Specific programs might be established to provide activities for young people such as the ones found consuming alcohol in a local park on a Friday night.

- **Educate Services in Policing Issues**

Maintenance of relationships with external agencies will help to educate them about issues faced by the service. Many organisations have a limited understanding of the functions and roles of specialist police and some of the issues confronted by general duty police. YLOs can help to educate and inform local youth and community agencies about the challenges confronted by the organisation.

- **Exchange of Information**

Ongoing contact with external agencies will facilitate the sharing of information about young people, adolescent development and related issues. These exchanges help to increase the knowledge base of YLOs and broaden insight into the different perspectives on particular issues.

Youth Resources to Local Area Command Personnel

YLOs will acquire considerable knowledge and expertise on youth related issues during the course of their duties. YLOs will have a superior understanding of the Young Offenders Act 1997. As a result of this knowledge it is likely that YLOs will be called upon in educating, assisting and informing police about youth issues. YLOs also maintain relevant information, research and literature on a wide range of youth issues.

Youth Liaison Officers have different pressures and demands depending upon the Local Government Area and the local issues. The above information are the core functions of the YLO and attention must be given to the implementation of the Young Offenders Act 1997, the prevention and reduction of juvenile crime, the establishment and maintenance of networks and the assistance provided to other police personnel.

Offences Committed by Young People in Holroyd

The following tables show the offences committed by young males and females during the year 1998 and 1999 in the Holroyd LGA. The figures indicate that the total offences committed by young people have decreased slightly over the following 12 -month period.

<i>Offences Committed by Young Females in The Holroyd LGA in 1998, 1999</i>							
	<i>Homicide Offences</i>	<i>Aggravated Assault</i>	<i>Other Acts Intended to injure</i>	<i>Aggravated Sexual Assault</i>	<i>Other Sexual Assault Offences</i>	<i>Aggravated Drink Driving Offences</i>	<i>Other Danger Acts</i>
1998	0	0	6	0	0	0	0
1999	0	0	3	0	0	0	0
	<i>Abduction and related offences</i>	<i>Robbery extortion and related offences</i>	<i>Burglar break and enter</i>	<i>Motor vehicle theft related offences</i>	<i>Other theft related offences</i>	<i>Deception offence</i>	<i>Illicit drug offences</i>
1998	0	2	0	2	4	0	0
1999	0	1	1	0	5	0	2
	<i>Weapons explosives offences</i>	<i>Property damage environment and pollution</i>	<i>Public Order</i>	<i>Road & traffic motor vehicle offences</i>	<i>Justice Court Offences</i>	<i>Misc. Offences</i>	TOTAL
1998	0	1	0	0	1	6	22
1999	0	0	1	2	1	4	20

Source: NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, 1998, 1999

<i>Offences Committed by Young Males in the Holroyd LGA in 1998, 1999</i>							
	<i>Homicide Offences</i>	<i>Aggravated Assault</i>	<i>Other Acts Intended to injure</i>	<i>Aggravated Sexual Assault</i>	<i>Other Sexual Assault Offences</i>	<i>Aggravated Drink Driving Offences</i>	<i>Other Danger Acts</i>
1998	0	1	18	1	0	0	4
1999	0	1	16	0	0	0	1
	<i>Abduction and related offences</i>	<i>Robbery extortion and related offences</i>	<i>Burglar break and enter</i>	<i>Motor vehicle theft related offences</i>	<i>Other theft related offences</i>	<i>Deception offence</i>	<i>Illicit drug offences</i>
1998	0	3	14	8	25	1	14
1999	0	4	12	12	17	0	18
	<i>Weapons explosives offences</i>	<i>Property damage environment and pollution</i>	<i>Public Order</i>	<i>Road & traffic motor vehicle offences</i>	<i>Justice Court Offences</i>	<i>Misc. Offences</i>	TOTAL
1998	0	9	8	2	8	12	128
1999	2	5	3	1	8	12	112

Source: NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, 1998, 1999

Figures from the tables on the previous page show that the majority of offences committed by young males and females in the Holroyd area are of minor significance, most relating to theft and drug offences.

For young males, most of the offences committed consist of general theft related offences including motor vehicle, burglar break and enter as well as extortion, acts intended to injure and also some level of property damage.

In general the number of offences committed by young females in the Holroyd area tends to be low when compared to the number of males engaged in criminal activity. Although numbers are low, young females tend to be involved in offences such as acts intended to injure and theft related incidents.

Overall, only a very small percentage of the youth population come in to contact with the official justice system, many of the young people who do are not heavily involved in or commit serious and violent offences. Young people are more likely to be charged with offences against property and in particular larceny and shoplifting.²

Unfortunately figures and statistics on offences involving young people as victims of crime were not available at the time this publication was printed.

² Juvenile Justice: Debating the Issues, Gale, F. (1993)

Young People with Disabilities

Young People with Disabilities

A **disability** refers to any restriction or lack resulting from any impairment of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.

An **impairment** is any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.

A **handicap** is a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal depending on age, sex, social and cultural factors for that individual.

Thus, *impairment* may be an organic condition, *disability* is the functional consequence and *handicap* is the social consequences. For instance, the spinal condition of people with paraplegia is their impairment, their inability is their disability, and their problems in achieving access to buildings and in finding employment are the handicaps.

During 1993, the Australian Bureau of Statistics conducted a survey of Disability, Ageing and carers. It was found that within Australia 19% of the population had a disability and the incidence of disability increased significantly with age. 14.2% of the population were found to have a handicap.

The ABS estimates the number of Holroyd residents with a disability is 14,442 and the number of residents with a handicap is 11,393.

<i>Number of Holroyd Residents with Handicaps by Age</i>							
Ages	Profound 2.4%	Severe 1.7%	Moderate 2.6%	Mild 5.3%	Not Determined 2.2%	Total 14.2%	Total Population 100%
0 to 4	137	98	149	304	126	814	5,734
5 to 14	253	179	275	560	233	1,500	10,565
15 to 24	307	217	332	678	282	1,816	12,786
25 to 34	313	222	340	692	286	1,853	13,051
35 to 44	271	192	294	599	249	1,605	11,304
45 to 54	22	178	273	555	231	1,488	10,476
55 to 64	170	120	184	376	156	1,006	7,088
65 to 74	133	94	144	294	123	788	5,550
75+	88	63	96	195	80	522	3,683
TOTAL	1,924	1,363	2,087	4,253	1,766	11,393	80,237

Source: 1996 Census Data

The above table indicates that the number of young people aged between 15 to 24 years with a disability who live in the Holroyd Local Government Area is 1,816 or 10% of the total youth population in Holroyd.

<i>Number of people receiving a pension due to a disability in Holroyd</i>		
Disability Support Pension	Sickness Allowance	Child Disability Allowance
3,316	150	418
These figures do not reflect the number of people with disabilities who are employed, or do not meet the Centrelink eligibility criteria.		

Source: Centrelink Data March 1998

The increase in the population of younger persons with disabilities has created a demand for child assessment and therapy services, peer support and family respite services, skills programs and supported accommodation. The absence of daytime alternatives for post school age adolescents and younger adults with disabilities has meant that their carers, many of whom are ageing, are under increasing personal strain to provide support in the home.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)

Disability Discrimination happens when a person with a disability is treated less fairly than someone without a disability. The Federal Disability Discrimination Act provides protection for everyone in Australia against discrimination based on disability. It can be used to stop you from being treated less fairly than people without a disability.

The DDA makes it against the law to discriminate against a person because of their disability and in these areas of life:

- Employment
- Education
- Access to premises used by the public
- Provision of goods, services and facilities
- Accommodation
- Buying land
- Clubs and Associations
- Sports
- Administration of Commonwealth Government laws and programs

Preferred Terminology for Young People With A Disability

- Avoid terms such as: *the disabled, the handicapped, the mentally retarded, the deaf, the blind* and so on. These suggest that the features of the person are central to them rather than being simply an aspect of their individuality. It allows us to forget them as individuals and lump them into a group by just using “them”. Use instead: *young people with a disability, students who are deaf, people who are blind*.
- Avoid terms such as *handicapped, abnormal, defective*. These terms are better suited to products than people. They make people seem like objects and robbing them of dignity.
- Avoid terms such as *invalid, afflicted with, stricken with, victim of, sufferers from*. These terms make people into patients in need of cures. They indicate helplessness, dependency, defeat.
- Avoid derogatory terms such as *deaf and dumb, deaf mute, dummy, blind as a bat, cripple*. Such terms are inaccurate and demeaning. It is easier to say someone is *deaf, blind, partially sighted, unable to walk or has a physical disability*.
- Avoid describing someone as an *epileptic, an arthritic, spastic, a downs, a Mongoloid*. These make it sound if the person was the condition itself. You say: *someone has epilepsy, has cerebral palsy, has Down syndrome or has an intellectual disability*.

- Avoid euphemisms such as '*differently abled*' or '*physically challenged*', if a person has a physical, sensory or intellectual disability and it is absolutely necessary to draw attention to it, just state it.
- Don't refer to people with a disability as being brave or inspirational. Some are, some aren't - just like everyone else.

Barriers

It is recognised that the barriers to access of mainstream services by young people with disabilities may be of different types.

- Physical barriers in terms of:
 - a) Accessibility to the building, eg: lack of ramps or rails for entering the service.
 - b) Accessibility within the service, eg: information is not available in other formats and workers are not aware of other services such as TTY (telephone typewriter), recording service.
 - c) Obtaining appropriate transport to the service or program.
- Attitudinal barriers such as:
 - a) Workers attitudes.
 - b) Other participants attitudes.
 - c) Young people with disabilities attitudes.
- Structural or institutional barriers such as:
 - a) Policy lacking nomination of disadvantaged groups.
 - b) Employment practices.
 - c) Program/service strategies/plans.
 - d) Program/service delivery/implementation.

In addition these are barriers to access created by social attitudes, such as misunderstanding of the nature of disabilities, over-protectiveness of caregivers, lack of transport for young people's social activities and lack of recognition of social and recreational needs of young people with a disability.

Also some young people with a disability are double or multiple disadvantaged due to their culture, their disability and other factors.

Learning Disabilities and Difficulties

In Australia, there are two widely used terms, '*learning difficulties*' and '*learning disabilities*'. These terms are often used interchangeably or exclusively of each other. Lerner (1997) identified the common elements contained in some of the most prominent definitions of learning disability. The following table is an adaptation of these common elements.

<i>Common Elements in Definitions of Learning Disabilities</i>	
Central Nervous System Dysfunction	This assumes that all learning happens in the brain and as the result of brain function. Therefore, any problem with learning is viewed as the result of same type of dysfunction in the central nervous system.
Uneven Growth Pattern (in thinking and reasoning abilities)	Our overall intellectual ability consists of component mentalities. For individuals with a learning disability, these component abilities do not all develop at the same rate. The results are varying strengths and weaknesses in different thinking and reasoning abilities.
Difficulty in academic and learning tasks.	Individuals with a learning disability have difficulty with one or more specific academic skills even though they have been exposed to the same validated teaching of those skills as other individuals who do learn them.
Discrepancy between potential and achievement	Individuals with a learning disability are identified as having a gap between their achievement in academic skills and their thinking reasoning abilities.
Exclusion of Other Causes	Learning disability is not the primary result of other conditions such as environmental, influences, poor health, intellectual disability, emotional disturbance or sensory impairments.

Many young people especially students in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions are identified as having a learning disability. Lerner (1997) names the common characteristics of learning disabilities as:

- Disorders of attention.
- Poor motor abilities.
- Perceptual and information-processing problems.
- Failure to develop and mobilise cognitive strategies for learning.
- Oral language difficulties.
- Reading difficulties.
- Written language difficulties.
- Mathematics difficulties.
- Inappropriate social behaviour.

Many resources contain the following points as the diagnostic criteria for identifying a student with a learning disability:

- A discrepancy between apparent ability for learning and their levels of achievement in learning (achievement will be lower than expected given individual ability).

- Difficulty in learning the academic skills of reading, writing and mathematics even though other students with the same level of ability have learnt and mastered these some skills.
- Learning problems, which are not due to physical disability, environmental disadvantage, lack of motivation, intellectual disability, cultural factors or emotional trauma and disturbance.

Causes of Learning Difficulties

Learning difficulties may be the result of one or more factors including:

- hearing impairment
- vision impairment
- muscular skeletal impairment
- brain injury
- chronic illness (eg physical, psychiatric)
- the influence of legal and illegal drugs
- environmental factors eg:
 - malnutrition
 - poor educational instruction
 - deprivation
 - lack of resources
 - recent arrival in Australia (in the previous 2 years) from a non English speaking background
- trauma (physical or emotional)
- learning disability

A student learning difficulty is not necessarily caused by a learning disability. All of the above factors, a combination or only one of the above factors, may be influencing the level of difficulty experienced by the student in learning. If a student experiences difficulties in learning, then medical and educational assessments should be pursued.

This ensures that the student's learning is not being adversely affected by vision difficulties, hearing difficulties, muscular or organic difficulties, difficulties in general health or deficits in educational intervention.

Myths and Stereotypes of Learning Disabilities

<i>Myths & Stereotypes</i>	<i>Facts</i>
1. Students identified with a learning disability have a below average IQ score.	Students with a learning disability can fall within the full range of intellectual ability including the average to superior intelligence.
2. Students with a learning disability do not have the level of ability to succeed at university.	Students with a learning disability, like any other students, have succeeded and continue to succeed at University. The implementation of reasonable academic adjustments ensures that students with a learning disability may compete equally in a learning environment and demonstrate their actual level of ability.
3. Students with a learning disability are just 'lazy'.	Students with a learning disability generally have to spend more time to adequately complete course requirements. These timeframes can often lead to difficulties in studying, completing assignments, and maintaining course requirements, eg: tutorial reading. These difficulties should not be misinterpreted as 'lazy' attributes of the student.
4. Students with learning disabilities are 'slow learners'.	Students with a learning disability can learn as rapidly as their counterparts. Their difficulties with their academic skills (reading, writing, and spelling) slow their intake and output of information using these mediums only.
5. Students diagnosed with a learning disability at school age should have outgrown it by adulthood.	If the diagnosis of learning disability in childhood is accurate, the disability will endure into adulthood. Specific learning strategies and adjustments can be developed to address problems but the learning disability in itself remains. Learning disability is a lifelong condition.
6. Students from a non-English speaking background do not have learning difficulties, just difficulties with their second language.	Learning disability occurs across all cultures, nations and language groups. Difficulties in learning over and above the influence of culture and language difference would indicate that a student may have a learning disability. A learning disability is normally present in first and subsequent languages.
7. Students with learning disability should spend more time learning the basics of reading, writing and spelling.	Learning disabilities describe a profile of chronic and pervasive characteristics. Therefore, intensive educational intervention alone produces minimal improvement. However, time spent identifying and implementing alternate learning strategies and academic adjustments would produce accurate performance levels, reflecting the individual's ability and skills.
8. Students with a learning disability are a product of poor teaching practices in school.	Learning disability is not the primary result of poor teaching instruction, nor environmental influences, poor health, emotional disturbances, intellectual or sensory impairments. Learning disabilities are highly resistant to general learning strategies and intensive education instruction.
9. Accommodating the needs of students with a learning disability in a learning environment is too difficult, time consuming and draining of resources.	Accommodations implemented for students with learning disabilities are often considered good examples of flexible learning strategies. Accommodations can improve teaching and learning strategies, not just for students with a learning disabilities, but also the overall student population and other minority groups such as people from a non-English speaking background.

Case studies

Case Studies

The following case studies were developed through interviews conducted with young people in the Holroyd area during 1998 and 1999. The names of the participants have been changed to maintain their privacy and for confidentiality purposes.

The aim of introducing case studies into the *Holroyd Youth Profile 2000* was to demonstrate the diversity of experiences in young people's lives, however these cases are limited and by no means are representative of all young people in Holroyd, these are examples only.

The case studies feature young people dealing with the issues and situations that affect them and are important elements of their day-to-day life as residents of the Holroyd community. Topics covered include:

- ◆ Lack of recreational activities.
- ◆ Being a single mum and transport issues.
- ◆ Being young, unemployed and a student at TAFE.
- ◆ Youth unemployment and employment services.
- ◆ Being a young migrant from New Zealand.
- ◆ Disability vs ability.
- ◆ Young women and sports.

Daniel

Daniel is fourteen years old, lives in Greystanes and attends year 10 at Girraween Selective High School.

On weekends, he enjoys to spend time with friends because *“school is so hard and competitive and everyone takes himself or herself too seriously”*. So weekends are a time to relax away from the competition. During this time he enjoys *“jamming on the guitar in the garage with friends, when neighbours don’t complain”*, playing soccer, karate, computers and bike riding. He enjoys the occasional work out in his garage gym.

Daniel has lived in Holroyd all his life thus he has seen several changes that occurred. The major one that has affected him is the building of the freeway. This is because it has made it harder *“just to walk to places”* or even find a place to ride his bike. Prior to the freeway being constructed, Daniel was able to easily walk to his primary school. However his sister does not have this opportunity as he had and thus requires to be picked up from school.

Daniel feels that there is *“not much to do in Holroyd. There are only so many times that you can go to a friend’s place, or have a jam session and play on the computer. All the action is in Parramatta, that is the Time Zones, cinemas and cool shopping centres”*. However Parramatta is not easy to get to *“it is difficult when you are not allowed to travel alone”*.

Parramatta has all the entertainment, however *“there are often a lot gang fights”*. This is what also stops Daniel making regular train rides in to Parramatta. *“I do not feel safe in Parramatta as I do in Greystanes”*.

Daniel feels that there are not enough services available to the young people of Holroyd, not that he is aware of. *“Even if I was it doesn’t mean that I’d be allowed to attend, it depends on what supervision they’ve got”*.

Daniel enjoys the Internet and is lucky to have access to this facility at home. However the hours are limited and if he has used his limit he often goes to the library. *“It is great that the library has an Internet service, this way you can study at the library using the books and the computers, but Internet is expensive, especially when you do not have a job”*.

The ultimate dream would be for Holroyd to have a big shopping or recreational complex that has facilities such as those in Parramatta. These include, *“cinemas, Time Zones and an Entertainment Centre or hall where local bands could perform, jam or entertain. The hall could be used to host under 18’s dance parties as well. In this complex you could have a few shops like surf, sports, music and food. This centre would not have open all day, just on weekday afternoons, weekends and holidays. It would not even have to open up late so kids could be home at a decent hour”*.

Daniel thinks that along with the recreational centre it would be necessary to consider transport issues. There should be a regular bus service that would assist young people. *“The bus service needs to come on a more regular basis than the current public one. With the current bus if you miss the first bus from school, then there is no other to follow”*. For the sake of parents being comfortable: *“there should be supervisors or youth workers there and give the parents the opportunity to meet them, if all this happened Holroyd would be great”*.

Natalie

Natalie is nineteen years old and lives in Pendle Hill. She is a single mum and in her spare time she enjoys drawing and writing poetry. Natalie often attends the Wentworthville Youth Services with her son.

Natalie enjoys living in Holroyd; this is because where she lives is a walk away from the train station, buses and the Youth Centre. However she faces several difficulties with public transport. The major one is that there is no ramp at Pendle Hill station and when she is alone it is difficult to get from one side of the train station to the other, this means making double trips in order to be able to carry everything without falling.

She faces similar experiences on buses. *“Trying to get on the bus with all the equipment, then securing a seat before the bus takes off and everything goes flying everywhere”.*

Coming from a Non English Speaking Background, issues of racism are obvious to Natalie. *“Racism is everywhere not just in Holroyd, however people under 18 years are most racist than those over 18 years. This may be because people grow up”.*

Another issue that concerns Natalie is the amount of drugs in Holroyd. *“There are drug dealers around and the availability and access to drugs is easy, all you have to do is make a phone call”.* Where she lives she often picks up needles so that her son will not get hurt. This concerns her a lot as it places a great risk on her child's health.

Being a single mum, she is lucky to have the support of her mother and her friends. Natalie is also able to attend Youth Centres and receive support from the youth workers when things begin to get difficult. This can include contacting the Salvation Army for food vouchers to just having someone to talk to.

Natalie believes that youth centres are beneficial for everyone, *“however they need to advertise and notify young people of what is happening and when and if cancellations do occur”.*

The one thing that Natalie wishes for is for the community buses to be facilitated with seat belts so children can be protected.

Natalie would also like to meet the local Minister of her area, this is because of her dealings and experiences with Centrelink. She would like to share her experiences with the Minister in hope that things will change.

John

John is nineteen years old, lives in Merrylands and is currently unemployed; he attends TAFE where he is completing a Ticket Writing Course.

One of John's interests is to draw but he finds there are no facilities for him to do his art whilst being unemployed makes financing his interest difficult.

Boredom is a big issue for John: *"There is nothing to do in Merrylands, it's boring. I don't like anything about living in this area"*.

An average day for John consists of him getting up early and going to Merrylands Centrelink and looking for jobs until about 12.30pm. After this he goes home and watches television, listens to music, practices his art when he has the equipment to do so, or just *"run a muck because there is nothing else to do"*.

He finds that those two days a week when he attends TAFE take away the boredom.

Drugs and drug users are of concern to John, he feels that there are too many of them in his area. This could be because there is nothing much for young people to do so they may turn to drugs to have something to do or even begin to sell drugs in order to make money.

John feels that the Police can be particularly hard on young people. *"Hassling us for no reason at all just because we are young"*. He also feels that at times they can be *"lazy"* because they do not come as fast as they should when they are called.

"No one asks, no one talks to you, they just do not try". John made this comment about the fact that *"no one asks me what it is like to be young, unemployed and living in Merrylands, what needs and/or issues I have and what I would like to see happen. It is straight to the top to the people who have all the power but not the know how"*.

The lack of services, facilities and a variety of things for young people to do are very obvious when talking to John. He would like to see changes in Merrylands including an increase in recreational facilities - a place for him to go to enjoy himself to do his art, meet new people and just try new things.

Luke

Luke is sixteen and is currently unemployed, he has completed a bricklaying course and has had limited employment opportunities in this area. Luke had some trouble in school: *"I was kicked out of boarding school"*, therefore never completed his formal education.

Getting to places is a big issue for Luke and he stated that this impacted on some job opportunities because he did not have the way of getting to job interviews. He found that some employers would discriminate against him because he was young and he relied on public transport or his pushbike.

In regards to employment he also finds getting assistance to be troublesome, *"Centrelink people make up their own minds about you and some won't even bother with you"*.

Luke believes that the youth workers at Holroyd Youth Services are much more helpful than those in Centrelink. This is because when arranging for an interview, the youth workers would explain to the young person the situation and by knowing this the meeting between the young person and the employer would take on a different perspective. Luke feels that *"the people in Centrelink don't care about you because they already have their own jobs"*.

Luke believes that there should be more support services for young unemployed living in Holroyd like those offered by the youth workers, who are willing to help.

He also found that because he relies a lot on his pushbike to get to places, he is constantly hassled by shop owners (and people in general) about leaving his bike on the footpath. *"There is no where else to put your bike and without it I can't get anywhere. I never leave it where it is in the way but I still get hassled. What else am I meant to do?"*.

Luke feels that just because you are young, people like to hassle you. He finds this particularly true of the Police. Often he gets asked, *"who are you? What are you doing? You've been doing graffiti All these questions for no reason at all"*.

Luke finds that boredom is a big issue for him. He said that there was nothing for him to do and no where for him to go. *"You do the same things, you see the same people, you go in to the same shops everyday and there is never nothing new to do"*. Luke would like some facilities such as *"Laser Zone, Time Zone, Pinball Parlours, Snooker Rooms, Skateboard ramps or any other entertainment that gives us something to do"*.

Tony and John

Tony and John are both nineteen years old and they both live in Guildford. They were born in New Zealand and have been living in Australia for a short time.

Tony enjoys football and hopes to be selected for the first grade football one day. He is currently on the local football side and says *"Guildford has great opportunities for football players"*. John enjoys sports as well and both young men make use of Wentworthville Youth Services when they have the chance.

Tony and John are both currently unemployed and feel the reason for this is because employers take one look and think they are too young. *"They want people with experience, yet no one is willing to give the opportunity to try. Even if they give us a trial for a week, then the boss can decide if he/she thinks you have what it takes"*.

Tony and John are not on unemployment benefits. The reason for this is that they are tired of being pushed from one place to the next. *"The minute you get a job and tell Centrelink they wipe out all your records and forget about you. You could come back two weeks later and be out of the job again and they will make you fill out A-Z files the same ones you filled out last time. Then you have to wait two weeks to hand the files in, then another two to get an appointment, then another few weeks before you get any benefits... By this time you may get another job and lose it again. It takes too long. This waiting may cause young people to forget about looking for a job, but rather to stay on benefits"*.

Tony believes that they should get the people that they have put through TAFE to take calls, arrange interviews and help out in the process. This way you are employing people so the unemployment rate goes down and you are servicing people much faster. *"But the Government just does not want to pay"*.

Both young men feel that being on unemployment benefits is shameful and that there is a stigma that is associated with being unemployed and 'on the dole'. For financial support they are currently relying on the assistance of their father. However they do not want this to continue forever, they would like a job if someone would just give them a chance.

Tony believes that young people are expected to pay the same rate as older people for rent, food and services and yet the young people *"get paid biscuits"*. *"Young people do the same type of work & sometimes longer & harder but we don't get paid the same as older people, this doesn't encourage us to work, it makes us want to forget about it"*.

Young people may think that taking drugs could be a way to forget about things for a while and may even begin selling drugs because it pays a lot more than a job would. Furthermore, they think that drugs are everywhere so it is expected to see drugs in the local area.

Both young men at times have been faced with racism. People often think because *"we are black we are criminals"*. Also, Tony and John have had several people approach them for drugs because *"we are black and wear baggy pants"*.

Both young men also think that the way parents bring up children is quite different to the way they do it in New Zealand. *"If I was out on the streets coming home at whatever time I wanted and doing drugs then I would have a boot up my backside"*.

If they could change anything it would not be to do with Holroyd, because they believe that there are services, they just need to tell people when things are happening.

Timothy's Story

Timothy is 20 years old and has lived in Guildford all of his life. The most amazing side to Timothy's story is that he has a mild intellectual disability and unbelievable talents and abilities.

Timothy has established his own business called "Computer Artworks" – He produces chat books for people with disabilities who cannot communicate with others through speech or sign language.

The books are equivalent to an A5 folder, usually made of 6 pages, where Timothy writes stories and information about a person by using pictures and photographs that he scans into his computer.

The idea to develop chat books started when Timothy helped his sister Jenny to communicate more with their parents, teachers and friends. In Jenny's communication chat book, he has set out a program detailing activities of that week, what was needed for each of the activities and who else was involved.

For example, the book had pictures of everything Jenny needed for swimming on Mondays such as the exact coins, a swimming costume, a towel, lunch, drink etc. There were also pictures of the staff who were working with Jenny and the other kids in her group so she could recognise them, as well as a feelings page with numerous facial expressions so that she can tell others how the day was going for her.

The pictures in the communication chat books have velcro backing so they can be moved to different page to create changes according to new programs.

Timothy's mum said that Jenny is now talking so much more and that the books have made a significant difference to Jenny's life and the lives of the people that communicate with her.

Timothy's business is going so well that he has received orders for books from NSW, Queensland and Victoria. He does 95% of the work involved in his business – his mum has been invited to give talks to promote his work and he is getting heaps of referrals from speech pathologists needing books to be developed for their clients.

Holroyd Youth Workers Network Contact Details

If you require information about programs, projects and services that are available to young people in the Holroyd Local Government Area please contact staff at the following services:

<i>Holroyd City Council</i>	9840 9912
<i>Wentworthville Youth Services</i>	9636 4969
<i>Guildford Youth Project</i>	9681 3316
<i>Holroyd Youth Services</i>	9637 1535
<i>Granville Multicultural Community Centre</i>	9637 7600
<i>Holroyd Parramatta Migrant Services</i>	9631 1777
<i>Job Placement Education & Training</i>	9637 6582
<i>Westway Youth Support</i>	9688 4352
<i>High Street Youth Health Service</i>	9687 2544
<i>Pendle Hill to Parramatta Youth Support</i>	9636 7400
<i>Parramatta Holroyd Family Support</i>	9896 4329
<i>Australian Chinese Community Association</i>	9637 9913
<i>Australian Lebanese Welfare Group</i>	9682 4762
<i>Youth Action & Policy Association</i>	9687 1466
<i>Youth Off the Streets</i>	9721 5700
<i>HMF Youth Groups</i>	9896 2514