

Client

Holroyd City Council

Project

Holroyd's Future - People Planning  
Tomorrow

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# 1 Introduction

Elton Consulting was commissioned by Holroyd City Council to design, facilitate and report on a comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement process focussed on urban planning and land use. The consultation project was titled *Holroyd's Future - People Planning Tomorrow* and was conducted from August through to October 2007.

The purpose of the consultation process was to provide guidance to a set of new and revised strategic planning instruments being prepared by Council. These include:

- Residential Development Strategy (RDS)
- Local Environmental Plan (LEP)
- Development Control Plan (DCP)

This report documents the variety of community views expressed during the consultation process, the existence of common ground and areas of disagreement in relation to core planning issues, and describes recommended strategic directions to guide Council's strategic planning.

## 1.1 State Government requirements

As a result of State Government planning reforms and metropolitan-level strategic planning Council is required to revise its planning framework.

In 2005 the NSW State Government released *The Metropolitan Strategy – city of cities – A plan for Sydney's future*. The objective of this city-wide planning document was to support continuing economic growth while balancing social and environmental impacts across the metropolitan area.

Based on long-term demographic trends *The Metropolitan Strategy* predicts that there will be an additional one million people in the Sydney metropolitan area by 2030. This growth in population will require new homes, new jobs, extra industrial land, and more commercial and retail floor space. All councils are required to plan for accommodating a proportion of this growth.

Beneath *The Metropolitan Strategy*, the State Government has also prepared sub-regional strategies. These sub-regional strategies take a more detailed look at specific regions of Sydney, translating the objectives of *The Metropolitan Strategy* to the local level and identifying the

proportion of growth each region must plan for. The Holroyd Local Government Area (LGA) falls into the West Central sub-region with Auburn, Bankstown, Fairfield and Parramatta LGA's. This sub-region has been identified as needing to provide 95,000 new homes and 35,000 new jobs by 2031.

In order to manage this expected growth responsibly, Council is updating its RDS. The RDS is a strategic document that will guide future residential development within the Holroyd LGA. The RDS is an important forward planning tool because it will establish specific outcomes for the location, density and character of different residential areas and future housing development.

As well as requiring each LGA in Sydney to plan to accommodate new growth, the State Government has also introduced state-wide planning reforms. Among other things these reforms require all NSW Councils to prepare new LEPs.

To comply with the State Government's planning reforms, all councils must re-write their LEPs to follow a standardised format. The planning reforms will ensure that land use zones have the same definition across all councils in NSW.

The State Government's planning reforms also require councils to rationalise their DCPs. Holroyd Council currently has thirty-six separate DCPs. Some of these have been in place for many years and are no longer suitable to an area that has changed significantly over the last decade. Therefore, to meet the State Government's requirements for DCPs, Council plans to consolidate its many DCPs into one single, consolidated plan.

## 1.2 The local context

While the impetus for Council to change its planning instruments came from State Government directives, Council has taken the opportunity to overhaul its planning framework to ensure its planning and development controls are aligned with community aspirations for the future and suitable to meet the needs of the changing population.

Holroyd has changed a lot in recent years. Approximately 90,000 people live in Holroyd now. This is an increase of about 10,000 people since 1996, and the area is expected to grow by a further 8,000 over the next decade.

Holroyd is a predominantly residential area with some substantial industrial areas and several commercial centres like the Merrylands Town Centre and smaller village centres like Toongabbie and Wentworthville. There is only a small amount of undeveloped land in the Holroyd LGA however, so as the population grows the density of existing residential areas will need to increase.

As well as growing in size, the population of Holroyd has also aged. There are more people aged 55 years and over than in the past, and a lower proportion of people aged under 25. Couples without children and one-parent households are more common, meaning it is unlikely that Holroyd will return to a situation where the proportion of younger people in the community out-number the proportion of older people.

The make-up of the population has also altered. In 1996 just over 30 percent of the Holroyd population were born overseas. In 2006, about 40 percent of people living in Holroyd were born overseas, coming from Southern Europe, the Middle East, and South East Asia.

Changes have also occurred in the type of housing within Holroyd. There are less detached houses and more semi-detached houses like terraces and townhouses, as well as flats and apartments, than in the past.

A community survey undertaken by Council in 2004 indicated that the community has a high level of interest and sensitivity around issues of zoning, controls, forms and locations for new residential development. In updating the planning framework, Council wanted to ensure that community concerns on these issues were explored and understood before a new planning framework was put in place.

Council wanted to ensure the planning framework for the future:

- Was guided by community aspirations
- Met the requirements of a changing population
- Aligned with State Government requirements
- Was less complicated than the existing system.

To do this Council initiated a number of studies to inform the new planning instruments, including *Holroyd's Future – People Planning Tomorrow*. The other studies being undertaken include a:

- Transitway study
- Employment lands study
- Retail study
- Transport study
- Review of open space and community facilities.

This document reports on the process and outcomes of the community consultation process entitled *Holroyd's Future – People Planning Tomorrow*.

*Holroyd's Future* was designed to provide community members and stakeholders with information about Council's planning initiatives and their broader context, to raise community awareness about key planning and development issues and to seek community input to inform Council's new planning instruments and help ensure Council's planning is aligned with community aspirations for the future. The consultation had a specific focus on development, the built environment and land use planning for the long term.

## 2 Community and stakeholder engagement process

*Holroyd's Future* was designed to explore complex urban planning issues with community members and key stakeholders. The purpose of the consultation was to involve the community in Council's planning decisions and to ensure it's new planning instruments reflect the community's vision for Holroyd's future.

The consultation process was not a quantitative research project like the 2004 community survey undertaken by Council. It was designed to build on and go beyond this past research by engaging community members and stakeholders in meaningful two-way dialogue to explore and understand their views about complex urban planning issues in Holroyd.

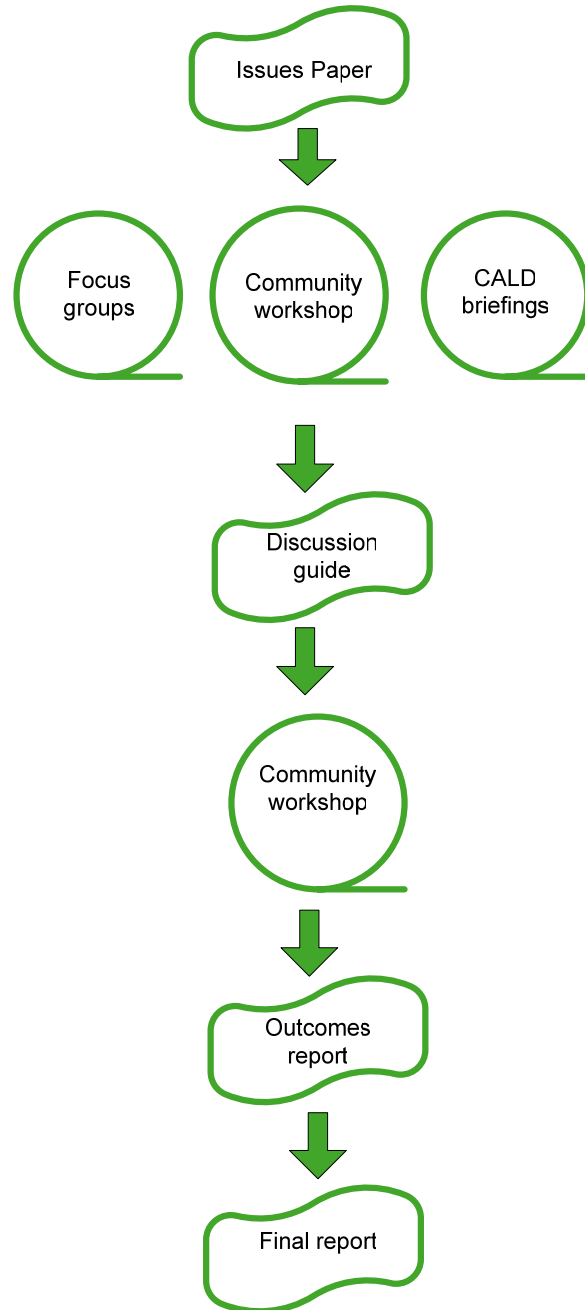
The process involved both large and small community consultation events targeted at the general public and specific stakeholders. These included:

- Two ward-based community workshops open to all community members
- Business, property development and youth sector-based focus groups
- Meetings with three culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) interest groups
- *Holroyd Speaks* - a workshop open to all community members but targeted at people who had already participated in earlier consultation events.

The first stages of the community and stakeholder consultation process identified a range of different perspectives and opinions, drawing out fundamental tensions associated with future land use zoning and development controls across the Holroyd area.

The second stage of the process involved participants in a more in-depth exploration of the issues at hand. Building on information gained during the initial consultation, the *Holroyd Speaks* event explored the implications and tradeoffs of different policy options and sought consensus amongst participants on preferred directions for future planning strategies.

Figure 1: Information flow-chart



## 2.1 Discussion papers and feedback reports

Three discussion papers and feedback reports were published to inform and report back on different stages of the consultation. These were the:

- Issues paper – A brochure-style document designed to provide background information about the nature and purpose of the project and to invite people to participate in the first stage of consultation or register an expression of interest in the project
- Discussion guide – A brochure style document reporting the key themes emerging from the first stage of consultation. This document also offered strategy options designed to prompt deliberation around the tradeoffs and consequences of different urban policy directions
- Outcomes report – A brief report style document detailing areas of common ground and areas of disagreement amongst participants during the *Holroyd Speaks* event.

## 2.2 Accessing diverse community perspectives

It is notoriously difficult to achieve strong community interest in long-term visioning and planning projects such as *Holroyd's Future*. Further, on projects such as this it is often only the voices of a few stakeholders with vested interests that are heard. A number of strategies were employed to overcome the risk of limited participation or the dominance of vested interests in the project.

## 2.3 Ward-based workshops

Council advertised the project widely in an effort to encourage residents and community members to participate in the two ward-based community workshops.

Strategies to inform and invite the public to attend the ward-based community workshops included:

- Two advertisements published in the corporate page of the *Parramatta Advertiser*
- Advertisements on Council's website
- An issues paper/invitation to the event distributed to every property and rate-payer in the Holroyd LGA
- Copies of the issues paper and personal invitations from the city's mayor sent to:

- Approximately 200 randomly selected residents
- Approximately 100 community groups and business leaders
- All state and federal MPs in the area.

Copies of the issues paper were also distributed by hand to approximately 750 business operators across the LGA.

These community workshops were open to all members of the Holroyd community and were designed to obtain widespread community involvement to explore and discuss issues related to Holroyd's urban future.

The workshops were made up of a series of small group conversations prompting participants to exchange views and hear a range of viewpoints and ideas. Prior to each workshop participants were invited to write comments on post-it notes responding to information posters displayed around the room.

The workshops were conducted over a three hour period, with participants asked to remain for the workshop duration. Following formal introductions by the Mayor and a presentation about the project purpose and context, participants were asked to engage in individual reflection and small group discussions on their hopes and fears for Holroyd's future.

Participants then engaged in a second set of small group discussions, with each group choosing two key themes to discuss. Summaries of small group discussions were reported at the end of the evening.

Details of the workshops are as follows:

- **North and East ward workshop**
  - Date: Thursday 16 August 2007
  - Attendees: Approximately 45 people
- **South and West ward workshop**
  - Date: Thursday 23 August 2007
  - Attendees: Approximately 25 people.

## 2.4 Stakeholder focus group meetings and CALD briefings

The focus groups and CALD briefings were conducted to ensure Council heard from a wide range of voices and interests in the community.

Invitations and copies of the issues paper were sent to:

- Approximately 40 business owners in the Holroyd LGA
- 25 property developers and associated firms who had submitted development applications to Council in recent years, and businesses involved in development including architects, draftsmen and planning consultants
- Council's youth advisory committee.

CALD briefings were organised by the Baulkham Hills–Holroyd–Parramatta Migrant Resource Centre.

The focus groups and CALD group briefings allowed specific demographic groups to provide input to the project and share perspectives that may not otherwise have been heard.

These events were facilitated as relatively informal discussions amongst invited attendees. After initial introductions a post-it note exercise was conducted to prioritise areas for discussion. Discussions were then facilitated to allow all participants time to give input and to focus discussions on exploring issues related to Holroyd's urban future.

The stakeholder focus group meetings and CALD briefings held as part of *Holroyd's Future* were:

- **Youth focus group**
  - Date: Tuesday 21 August 2007
  - Attendees: Approximately 20 people
- **Developer focus group**
  - Date: Wednesday 29 August 2007
  - Attendees: Approximately 10 people
- **Business focus group**
  - Date: Monday 3 September 2007
  - Attendees: Approximately 15 people
- **Indian/Afghan CALD group**
  - Date: Wednesday 12 September 2007
  - Attendees: Approximately 10 people

- **Afghan CALD group**

- Date: Thursday 13 September 2007
- Attendees: Approximately 10 people

- **Mixed African CALD group**

- Date: Sunday 16 September 2007
- Attendees: Approximately 10 people.

## 2.5 *Holroyd Speaks* community workshop

*Holroyd Speaks* was open to all community members but targeted at people who had already participated in earlier consultation activities. Community members were invited to participate in the following ways:

- Discussion papers/invitations sent to all participants in ward-based community workshops
- Discussion papers/invitations sent to all participants in focus groups and to CALD briefing co-ordinators
- Two advertisements published in the *Parramatta Advertiser*
- Advertisements on Council's website.

*Holroyd Speaks* was the culminating event of the *Holroyd's Future* consultation process. All participants from ward-based community workshops, stakeholder focus groups and CALD briefings were invited to attend and issued with a discussion paper to help stimulate deliberation on potential Council strategies prior to the event. The event was also advertised on Council's website and in local media.

*Holroyd Speaks* was a three-hour facilitated workshop designed to identify the degree of consensus amongst disparate stakeholders on complex urban policy issues. Like the ward-based community workshops, *Holroyd Speaks* was designed around a set of small group discussions between participants. During the workshop, each participant discussed planning options relating to themes emerging from the ward-based workshops. These themes were:

- Holroyd's identity
- Urban landscape
- Transport and getting around
- Enabling and managing development.

A report-back session at the end of the evening allowed participants to hear an overview of the workshop outcomes.

The details of *Holroyd Speaks* were as follows:

- Date: Wednesday 10 October 2007
- Attendees: Approximately 60 people.

## 2.6 Submissions

The receipt of individual submissions to the project was not intended. However, three individual submissions were received during the projects duration. These submissions were read and analysed alongside the outcomes of the other consultations and contributed to the recommended strategic directions.

## 2.7 Data analysis and reporting

*Holroyd's Future* was a community engagement project. It entailed the collection and analysis of qualitative data. The purpose of engagement was not to obtain data revealing clear community preferences on one policy direction over another, but to engage in a deep exploration of complex urban planning issues, and to identify areas of common ground amongst participants.

Data was collected in the form of workshop and meeting notes. For focus group meetings and CALD briefings notes were taken by Elton Consulting staff. In the community workshops both Council and Elton Consulting staff acted as scribes for small group discussions. These discussions were reported back to all participants at the end of each event. All notes were transcribed and then analysed.

As the approach was qualitative as opposed to quantitative, the number of times each type of response or idea was raised was not recorded. Instead analysis involved grouping ideas into issue type and key themes to elucidate the range of opinions expressed around each issue.

Analysis revealed twelve key issues:

- Renewal and revitalisation
- A growing and changing population
- Zoning for different use and density
- Improving centres and shopping strips
- Increasing residential density
- Housing affordability
- Managing traffic and parking

- A healthy population and environment
- The development and approval process
- Community spaces and facilities
- Crime and safety
- Public transport, pedestrians and cycling.

From these twelve issues four major themes were identified. These were:

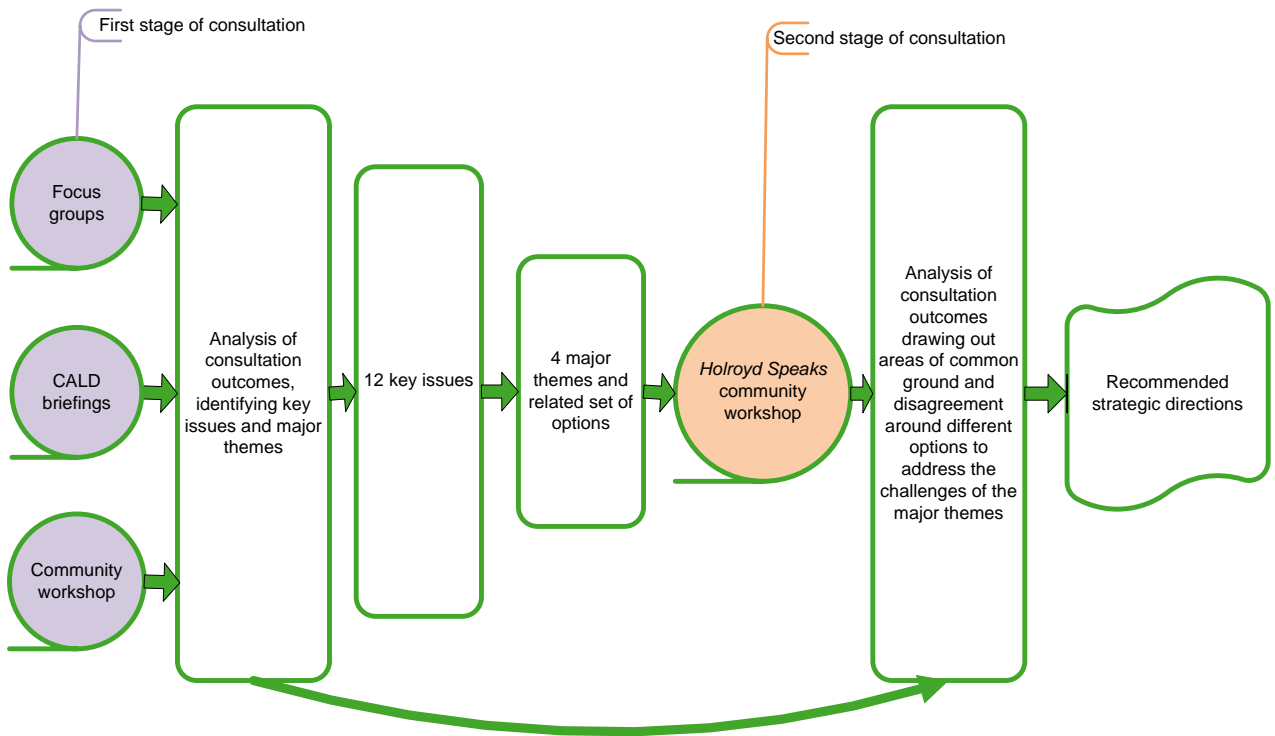
- Identity
- Urban landscape
- Transport and getting around
- Enabling and managing development.

The key issues and major themes together informed the options put to participants in the culminating consultation event; *Holroyd Speaks*.

In a similar process to the ward-based community workshops, data obtained from small group discussions were recorded by Council and Elton Consulting staff. Recorded information was reported back to participants at the end of the evening. The collected data was analysed and grouped into ideas where agreement amongst small group participants was found, and areas where disagreement within or between groups was evident.

The areas of common ground and disagreement identified during *Holroyd Speaks* were reported back to participants in the outcomes report. After further analysis, the results formed the basis of the strategic directions documented later in this report. An overview of the data collection and analysis process is shown in Figure 2 overleaf.

Figure 2: Data collection and analysis process



## 3 Key issues

A number of key issues were raised repeatedly throughout the consultation process. For each of these issues a range of different viewpoints were expressed, consistent with the diversity of stakeholders and community members participating in the consultation process. These issues are summarised below, documenting the diverse views put forward during the consultations.

### 3.1.1 Renewal and revitalisation

Responses from participants revealed that people living and working in Holroyd wanted it to be a clean, attractive and desirable place to live and work. Many participants felt there were problems with rubbish, dumping of household furniture, graffiti and litter in public spaces. Buildings and parks appeared rundown, meaning some participants didn't want to shop in the area or use the parks and community facilities. Many participants felt the area needed 'a lick of fresh paint' with upgraded public domain elements like seating, paving and European style outdoor plazas in centres, as well as residents and businesses being encouraged or enforced to keep the area looking attractive and well maintained. Some participants suggested the establishment of tree corridors throughout Holroyd's streets; others said that marketing was needed to promote pride in the Holroyd area.

### 3.1.2 A growing and changing population

A number of participants have noticed a changing demographic in the area. People observed that there were less young families, more renters, more older people, and greater cultural and linguistic diversity than in the past. Some participants felt that these changes resulted in Holroyd losing its sense of community and identity. They felt the area was troubled by ethnic tension and differing cultural values. Others saw a need to accommodate the changing population, providing more housing, facilities and better accessibility for older people, and provision of community services and activities to different cultural groups. These participants believed that while the changing and growing population of Holroyd had brought challenges to the area, it had also brought the possibility for a different kind of identity and sense of community to be fostered in the area.

### 3.1.3 Zoning for different use and density

Participants expressed strong opinions about the best way to rezone land in the area. Some

participants believed that land-use zoning should be transitioned gradually across suburbs, so people could be assured that their property would always be positioned next to a building of similar scale and use. Others believed a greater mix of zones was needed to prevent blocks of high density housing turning into ghettos or slums. Some participants believed that areas near highways and industrial developments, for example the area between the M4 and the Great Western Highway, should be zoned for commercial use only, because the pollution and noise posed health risks for current and future residents. Others believed that main roads and t-ways should be zoned to allow high density residential developments because of the convenience and transport benefits afforded by these locations.

### 3.1.4 Improving centres and shopping strips

Many participants in Holroyd agreed that the commercial centres and shopping strips in Holroyd needed to be made more attractive in appearance to cater to the needs and wants of Holroyd residents. Some people agreed that Merrylands was a good centre, being close to public transport, with a range of banks, eateries and shopping. Others believed that the diversity and quality of businesses and shops needed to be improved because some people preferred to travel to Parramatta to shop because their local centres or strips did not provide enough diversity of shops or the quality of shopping they desired. Some participants were keen for more large shopping centres (like the Stocklands centre in Merrylands), while others believed local strips provide a sense of community not found in large private shopping centres. A number of participants believed strips and centres could be improved by allowing more outside dining. Parking congestion was identified by many participants as a problem that impacted their choice to shop in Holroyd. Some participants advocated for parking meters to address the issue, but others vehemently opposed that idea. A similar level of debate occurred around the prospect of 'shop-top' housing.

### 3.1.5 Increasing residential density

There was a fear expressed amongst many participants that areas of high density housing could turn into slums and ghettos and would increase transport and traffic congestion and crime and ethnic tensions as the population continued to grow and change. Others believed increased density, especially around business centres and transport hubs was a positive move. They expressed the belief that this would increase the vitality and 'buzz' within Holroyd, improving business turnover. Some participants thought that by locating people near centres crime would decrease through passive surveillance; however

this was not a consensus view. Most participants did however agree that locating people close to transport hubs, such as Wentworthville and Westmead train stations, would help to address issues of parking and traffic congestion.

### **3.1.6 Managing traffic and parking**

Many participants felt that parking in Holroyd was a problem, with overcrowded parking in residential streets as well as around centres and shopping strips. Some participants supported the introduction of more parking facilities near t-way stops and railway stations. Some participants were concerned about a 'hoon' culture of speeding through residential streets, and felt unsafe crossing roads near parks and schools. Industrial and commercial traffic in residential streets was also identified as a problem for some, due to pollution concerns and the physical impact this traffic has on roads. Installing speed humps and roundabouts in residential streets and around schools and parks was suggested to combat these problems. Many participants agreed that road and traffic infrastructure needs to be improved to support increased density. Some participants cited the Bridge Road overbridge and the Toongabbie Bridge as examples of where infrastructure had not been sized or upgraded to support new development in Holroyd.

### **3.1.7 A healthy population and environment**

The desire for environmentally sustainable development in Holroyd was a view expressed by a number of participants. These participants believed new development should incorporate measures such as water tanks and passive solar design. Other participants believed that clean industry should be promoted in the area, to allow increased industrial investment without increased rates of pollution. Pollution was also raised by participants concerned about the impact of increased residential zoning near highways. Others however believed there were benefits in placing residential developments near highways to allow people to access public transport and minimise pollution on a broader scale. A few participants advocated for a pedestrian and cycling focus within Holroyd, suggesting better maintained footpaths, bike racks near shops, and more cycle ways connecting centres and community spaces.

### **3.1.8 The development and approval process**

Many participants expressed frustration at what they felt was an overly slow and complicated development approvals process. Some participants believed the development assessment process at Holroyd Council was lengthier and more difficult than in other LGAs. Some participants felt a more

streamlined approach with greater flexibility and improved communication from Council was needed, as well as more consistency within Council on decisions being made. Some developers expressed frustration at 'a conservative attitude' to development by Council, which they felt promoted mediocrity in design rather than innovation and quality. Many participants also agreed however that there was a need to regulate development in some way to ensure both small and large scale development and redevelopment was attractive, sustainable and appropriate to the area.

### **3.1.9 Community spaces and facilities**

There was agreement amongst many participants that open space and community facilities were run down, under serviced and under used. A number of participants believed more maintenance and upgrading of current spaces and facilities such as the Merrylands Pool was needed, rather than the provision of new spaces and facilities. However, others felt new facilities including an indoor aquatic centre and skate parks for young people were needed. Many participants noted that community amenities and open spaces needed to cater to all people in the community including young children, teenagers and young people, older people and people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Most participants agreed that as density increases, community and open space must also increase, but there were differing views on how and where community space is best located. Examples of good community space and facilities in Holroyd include Central Gardens with its lakes, barbecues, seating, lighting, and shade, as well as Merrylands Library.

### **3.1.10 Crime and safety**

A number of participants felt that crime was a problem in the area. Some participants felt a greater police and security presence on streets and in centres was needed. Others believed improved lighting, including in alley ways, was important. There was vigorous debate about the likely impact of 'shop-top' housing on crime. Some believed this could bring an increase in crime through overcrowding and proximity to businesses vulnerable to theft. Others thought that passive surveillance from shop-top housing would act to decrease crime around centres and shopping strips.

### **3.1.11 Public transport, pedestrians and cycling**

A number of participants felt a more integrated public transport system was needed, and suggested coordinated bus and train timetables and parking provision near train stations and t-way stops. Others felt more information on private bus times and routes was needed. Many

participants agreed that all residential development should be located within walking distance of shops, parks, and public transport. A number of participants advocated for increased residential density to be located at transport hubs to encourage public transport use. Some participants also believed that Holroyd should have a pedestrian and bicycle focus, with wide, well maintained walkways throughout, and more cycle ways like the Toongabbie to Pemulwuy cycleway going to centres and community spaces.

### **3.1.12 Housing affordability**

A number of participants were concerned about housing affordability. Some participants supported increased residential development in Holroyd, especially around transport hubs, as a means of ensuring affordable housing remained available. It was noted by a number of participants that units and apartment blocks were a more affordable option than other types of dwellings. On the other hand some participants were concerned that units and apartment blocks would turn into slums and ghettos in the future. Others believed that an increased proportion of rented dwellings was responsible for Holroyd's run down appearance, because renters failed to properly maintain the places they lived in and dumped furniture on streets when they moved house.

## 4 Urban planning themes

Four major themes emerged out of the key issues. These themes exposed some of the fundamental areas which will shape future development and land use regulations for Holroyd. Themes flag where critical decisions and compromises must be made to determine the most suitable ways to plan and manage urban change and growth across Holroyd.

### 4.1 Future identity of Holroyd

#### 4.1.1 Theme overview

The theme of 'future identity of Holroyd' explored the topic of the type of character and identity people felt characterised Holroyd, how this was changing and what kind of character participants envisioned for the area in the future.

Participants said they had noticed a changing demography in Holroyd with more older people, less young families and a changing cultural and linguistic mix. Participants also identified problems with graffiti, litter and poorly maintained buildings and spaces. They expressed the view that without a strong process of renewal and revitalisation the area would decline as people chose to shop, work and live elsewhere, and ethnic division, unemployment and crime increased. Many participants expressed dismay at what they saw to be a loss of strong identity and unique character to the area.

Some participants expressed a strong desire to retain the quiet, suburban, character of the area, but others believed this could fail to meet the needs of the changing population, limit housing affordability and lead to a further decline for the area. Others felt that a cosmopolitan identity should be cultivated with larger centres and more dense living arrangements providing affordable housing for many, but some participants feared this development outcome would be overcrowded, unattractive, lacking in community spirit and subject to increased crime.

The theme necessitated that strategies be identified to balance the needs and wants of different people within the community to form a strong identity and sense of pride in the area. It was clear from the views expressed by participants that whatever planning decisions were made that

contributed to the future character and identity for Holroyd, issues of ethnic division, unemployment and crime needed to be considered.

#### 4.1.2 Options

Participants were asked to find common ground on the question of the type of character and identity that should be fostered in Holroyd, taking into account what this would mean for the type of growth and development in Holroyd's centres and suburbs. In answering this question, participants were asked to consider the following options specifically:

- Increased density of business and residential development throughout Holroyd
- A suburban area with self sufficient neighbourhoods and small, decentralised shopping centres and strips
- A combination of increased density in centres and along main transport corridors but with retention of suburban neighbourhoods
- Increasing densities, throughout Holroyd via terraces, villas and townhouses, while minimising the numbers of new unit and apartment blocks
- Increase opportunities for business and commercial development along major arterial roads.

#### 4.1.3 Areas of common ground

- There was strong agreement amongst participants that the character of Holroyd should be defined by leafy suburban neighbourhoods and strong communities. It was felt that more vibrant, higher density, mixed-use neighbourhoods could be accommodated in appropriate locations (eg centres), to the extent that this allows for cohesive communities and a suburban character to be maintained throughout other parts of the LGA.
- Participants felt that elements outside of planning had a strong influence on the area's identity. These included:
  - Public domain upgrades and maintenance such as litter and graffiti management and public seating provisions
  - Using native or drought tolerant plants in landscaping
  - Provision of quality community services and facilities for diverse groups including older people, children and young people and culturally diverse groups.

- Core planning initiatives that participants felt promoted their desired identity for Holroyd included:
  - Open space increasing in accordance with any increase in residential density
  - Design of walkable neighbourhoods to promote community interaction and cohesion
  - Retention of small corner shops/shopping strips in low and medium density residential areas
  - Concentration of increased residential density in or around centres and near well serviced transport hubs.
- Participants agreed that the quality of development is a critical aspect of identity, and that ensuring high development standards is very important to generating and maintaining community pride.

#### 4.1.4 Areas of disagreement

- There was disagreement amongst participants on the extent and nature of the residential/commercial mix. Many participants felt that there should be distinct areas of residential and business/commercial areas, with business/commercial areas primarily focussed on major arterial roads where possible. Others however supported mix-used zoning such as 'shop-top' housing.
- There was no consensus from participants around the issue of 'shop-top' housing. Some participants strongly believed that 'shop-top' housing would promote crime and result in overcrowding and community fragmentation. Others believed 'shop-top' housing would increase centre vibrancy, improving business turn over and local prosperity. Some, but not all, participants believed compromise was possible, if some or all of the following conditions were established:
  - It may be appropriate in some areas and not others. However no consensus was reached regarding whether 'shop-top' housing was more appropriate in small shopping strips or larger centres.
  - It may be appropriate with strict height limitations to four or five storeys or below.
  - It may be appropriate to locate office space but not housing above retail and food stores.
- The issue of high-rise development also caused debate. Some people felt development of any high-rise buildings compromised the creation of an identity focussed on 'leafy suburban neighbourhoods with strong communities'. Others felt some high-rise development would

be acceptable if strict provisions were established to ensure:

- High-rise development is limited to larger centres with good public transport
- High quality design
- Ongoing maintenance of buildings
- Adequate nearby open space.

## 4.2 Urban landscape

### 4.2.1 Theme overview

The theme of 'urban landscape' explored the issue of what Holroyd's suburbs, centres and neighbourhoods look and feel like now, and what the community would like them to look and feel like in the future.

Participants were clear that they wanted a clean, attractive and desirable place to live and work, but different participants held different ideas about how to best achieve this.

There was strong agreement amongst participants that town centres and transport hubs were the areas that could best support increased residential development. There was debate however about whether this should include 'shop-top' housing or not, with different opinions about the impact of 'shop-top' housing on crime.

Some participants were concerned about housing affordability, and believed residential density should increase in Holroyd to provide a mix of housing choice, but others were keen to retain the lower density suburban character the area has now. Some participants believed that higher density housing, such as townhouses, villas or apartments, should be intermixed with lower density areas to create diversity in the streetscapes. Other participants believed that certain areas could support higher density living, while others were better suited to lower density development, and that there should be a gradual transition between these areas.

There was much agreement amongst participants that as density increases, open space and community facilities and services should also increase. Some participants believed there should be many small neighbourhood parks to help build a sense of community. Others believed there would be more benefit in providing fewer, larger blocks of open space and centralised multi-purpose community buildings. Still others thought community space could be provided in centres, in an outdoor 'European' plaza style.

Decisions taken about future land use and zoning determine the way that different types of housing, businesses and community facilities and spaces

are placed in relation to each other. This theme asked participants to explore the implications of alternative approaches to managing residential, commercial, open space, and mixed use zones.

#### 4.2.2 Options

Participants were asked what zoning and land use options they felt would best realise community aspirations for Holroyd. In answering this question, participants were asked to consider the following options specifically:

- Defined areas of high, medium and low density housing, providing gradual transitions from apartments through to single homes
- A salt and pepper mix of housing density with a diversity of apartments, townhouses and individual houses in any one neighbourhood
- Locating high density residential development in business centres ('shop-top' housing)
- Locating high density residential housing adjacent to, but not within, business centres, forming a boundary between centres and medium and lower density residential living.

#### 4.2.3 Areas of common ground

- Participants felt that increased residential density should be focussed around centres and well serviced transport hubs, with the provision that all development be appropriate to the local context. That is, it may be appropriate to locate high density residential living near centres that are well serviced by public transport. Correspondingly, centres with less public transport accessibility or transport hubs with fewer shops and facilities, may be better suited to medium or low residential density.
- Participants believed transitioned zoning provided the most suitable urban planning model for Holroyd. They described this model as involving medium to high residential density around larger centres and transport hubs, gradually transitioning to medium and low residential density in suburban residential areas.
- There was strong support for height restrictions of four to five storeys in future development, especially in high density residential areas and for 'shop-top' housing'.
- Participants agreed that townhouses and villas were more suited to the character of Holroyd than other forms of higher density residential development. Participants believed most of the increase in density of residential development in Holroyd should take the form of townhouses,

terraces and villas rather than flats, apartments or duplexes.

- Open space was viewed by participants as being vital to Holroyd's character and to community harmony. Participants strongly agreed that community open space must increase proportionally to increased residential density.
- In some discussions, participants agreed that future development needs to cater to the communities of the future. They felt planning provisions must cater to the ageing population through single storey dwellings or vertical retirement villages (ie apartment blocks that provide accommodation, services and facilities for older people all in the one building).

#### 4.2.4 Areas of disagreement

- Although there was clear agreement that increased residential density should be located close to centres there was contention around exactly how housing should be located in relation to centres. Some people felt it was appropriate to locate housing within centres through shop-top housing. Others felt centres and housing should be separated, with housing located immediately adjacent to, but not within, centres.

### 4.3 Transport and getting around

#### 4.3.1 Theme overview

The theme 'transport and getting around' focussed on the challenge of balancing health, safety, the environment and convenience in the way community members get to and from Holroyd, and move around their neighbourhoods.

Some participants in Holroyd believed public transport services currently work well, with many participants agreeing that the trains and the t-way provide good access to and from the city and neighbouring areas like Parramatta and Fairfield. However, other participants felt more options for getting around, especially moving between different areas within Holroyd, were needed.

On the issue of parking and traffic, the majority of participants thought there was a lot of room for improvement. A lot of participants felt that parking in centres and residential areas was insufficient, local roads were degraded from industrial and commercial traffic, a dangerous speeding culture existed and traffic management near schools and parks was lacking.

Participants recognised that as residential density increases in Holroyd, so too will the number of

people driving, parking and using transport. The risk of increased traffic congestion and reduced accessibility was discussed. Council has recognised the need to plan for improved community mobility to provide safe and efficient travel choices between home and work, including walking, cycling, driving or catching a train or bus. This theme asked participants to explore the implications of different ways of managing traffic, transport, urban roads, development and parking controls to balance convenience, accessibility and environmental impacts.

#### 4.3.2 Options

Participants were asked to consider what parking and transport measures could be implemented to help realise their vision for Holroyd in the future. In answering this question, participants were asked to consider the following options specifically:

- On and off street parking controls like parking meters or ensuring new developments provide adequate off-street parking for all residents
- Parking provisions in centres and near bus and rail services (e.g. limiting the amount of car parking provided in new development, to encourage people back onto public transport)
- Integrating pedestrian, cycling, and public transport options, for example by providing walking and cycle ways to connect centres
- Promote measures to make public transport more user friendly (e.g. improving frequencies, integrating bus and rail ticketing systems, improving timetable information, focussing development around public transport hubs).

#### 4.3.3 Areas of common ground

- There was strong consensus around the need for improved public transport measures such as timetable and ticketing integration, improved reliability, increased public transport frequency, and affordable prices, both now and in the future. However, most participants conceded that as these were primarily issues of State Government concern, Council could have only a limited role in any public transport improvements.
- Strong consensus was formed around the desire for improved parking facilities and measures. These included:
  - Increased parking facilities near railway stations and t-way stops, including the provision of non-time limited parking around these facilities

- Increased off-street parking provision at centres, including basement and rooftop parking stations.
- Participants believed Council should support and encourage alternatives to driving through education and promotion initiatives. Examples suggested included:
  - Promotion of the health benefits of walking and cycling
  - Educating the community about cycle ways and safe cycle routes
  - Providing integrated timetable information
  - Educating the community about strategies to reduce car use such as having groceries delivered by supermarkets.
- Participants agreed that cycling safety should be further improved in the following ways:
  - Lighting at night
  - Safety from cars
  - New cycle routes designed using ‘crime prevention through environmental design principles’
  - Cycle routes being separated from both roads and footpaths.
- In some discussions participants agreed that cycling could be supported by the following facilities:
  - Installation of lockers / showers at train stations and centres
  - Installation of secure bike storage facilities in key locations.

#### 4.3.4 Areas of disagreement

- Consensus was not achieved on the issue of parking meters. Some participants believed parking meters to be a useful tool in managing parking congestion in and around centres. Many participants however believed parking meters risked being too expensive, limiting the time people could park in an area or being ineffective without adequate enforcement. Compromises reached by participants included:

- Parking meters only coming into effect after a set timeframe
- Measures such as resident parking permits to allow residents to park for free.

Even given such measures, parking meters remained a contentious issue amongst participants.

- There was no consensus amongst participants on whether car use should be discouraged by

limiting parking in new residential development. Some people believed that this option could be appropriate in developments located very close to transport hubs. Others believed this strategy was unrealistic and would increase parking congestion and overcrowding of streets by forcing residents to use on street parking. As such, some participants called for increases to off-street parking provisions for all new residential development.

## 4.4 Enabling and managing development

### 4.4.1 Theme overview

The theme of 'enabling and managing development' explored the issue of how Council can best manage the development assessment process.

Many participants expressed frustration at the lengthy and complicated approvals process of Holroyd Council. A number of participants believed that gaining approval to develop or redevelop land in Holroyd was more difficult than in other council areas. Large and small scale developers, as well as home renovators, complained that greater flexibility in granting approvals and clearer communication within Council, and between Council and developers was needed. On the other hand, both developers and others in the community agreed that regulations needed to be in place to ensure development and redevelopment was attractive, high quality, sustainable and appropriately located.

Council understands that it needs to manage the potential adverse impacts of development on the environment, heritage and the amenity of the surrounding area and community, as well as enable people to renovate their properties and allow investment in the form of new housing and businesses to meet the needs of the growing population. This theme asked participants to explore the implications of different regulatory approaches Council could adopt to balance the need for ease and flexibility in approvals with quality and appropriate development.

### 4.4.2 Options

Participants were asked how Council should approach the regulation of development in Holroyd. In answering this question, participants were asked to consider the following options specifically:

- A prescriptive approach – a very clear framework setting out things like maximum building height, set-back from the street and open space. This approach would improve

consistency in approvals and ensure certainty in the community, but is inflexible and increases red tape.

- A performance based approach – a flexible approach that sets standards describing desired end results and acceptable limits of impacts. This approach would reduce red tape and allow more flexibility to enable innovation in response to site-specific constraints, but would be less consistent, involving more subjective decision-making by individual planners.
- A mix of a prescriptive approach in some areas (e.g. centres, heritage or master planned development areas like Nelsons Ridge) and a performance-based approach in others – this would allow consistency in specific areas to ensure things like protection of heritage features, consistent appearance or ensuring provision of adequate open space, but allows most areas to be governed under the more flexible but less consistent performance based approach
- Improve opportunities to “fast track” development approvals by increasing delegation to staff and increasing the amount of exempt and complying development identified in Council's LEP.

### 4.4.3 Areas of common ground

- There was strong consensus that a balance between prescriptive and performance based planning controls was needed. However, participants did not believe that there should be a difference in approach between areas. Rather, they felt this balance needed to be achieved across all development by allowing flexibility and innovation, but with broad minimum standards enforced.
- Participants agreed that smaller development applications should have less stringent regulations and be approved at lower levels within Council, while larger development applications should have more stringent regulation and be approved by more senior Council staff.
- Participants felt that clear, accessible advice and good communication was critical to a workable development application process. Suggestions to ensure this included:

- Rules and guidelines available in plain English
- Simple, easily understood information on zoning.

- Participants felt there was a need for those submitting development applications to have greater access to Council officers prior to submitting applications. This would enable applicants to discuss their proposals to fully understand Council's requirements, seek advice and feedback on applications, and reduce the need for multiple submissions. Participants suggested that Council allocate a specific planning officer for this duty, or operate a development application hotline.
- Consensus was achieved on the proposal that the time required to obtain a development approval could be reduced by increasing staff delegation within Council and increasing the amount of exempt and complying development.

#### **4.4.4 Areas of disagreement**

- Despite concerns that decreasing prescriptive controls and 'fast tracking' the development application process may risk poor quality development, consensus was achieved on the points raised above with no noticeable areas of clear disagreement.
- The single area of disagreement was around the issue of affordability of development. Some participants felt rigorous and lengthy application processes were detrimental to Holroyd and prevented development in the area. Others felt that keeping the expense of development high was desirable, as more affordable development was more likely to be of lower quality and would attract less desirable tenants, which would detract from Holroyd's character.

## 5 Recommended strategic directions

Through a process of broad and in-depth community consultation a set of six strategic directions for urban planning and development in Holroyd were developed.

It was recommended that Council take a strategic direction towards:

- Transitioned residential development
- Catering to a changing population
- A 'clean, green' public domain
- Pedestrian and bicycle friendly neighbourhoods
- Transport integration
- A streamlined approval process.

These strategic directions are consistent with the community hopes that in the future Holroyd will be characterised by leafy, people-orientated neighbourhoods. The recommended strategic directions are guided by the common ground found amongst participants around different strategies to manage the urban landscape and new development.

A review of Council's existing planning controls was not conducted as a part of the process of determining the strategic directions. To implement these strategic directions it is recommended that Council undertake a review of current planning instruments to identify areas where existing strategies can be built upon, and areas where a shift in focus or a new approach may need to be considered.

### 5.1 Strategic directions

#### 5.1.1 Transitioned residential development

New planning instruments could make provisions to concentrate areas of high and medium residential density around larger centres with good public transport provision.

The new LEP could permit medium and high density residential development in areas adjacent

to, but still within short walking distance of, large centres with transport hubs, and smaller centres and transport hubs. The remaining areas could be zoned for low residential density and other land uses. In line with community aspirations to retain the residential character of Holroyd, residential development could be limited to four or five stories in height under the revised planning framework. Controls could be implemented to ensure that new development is sensitive to its context through provisions to regulate height, setbacks and footprints.

Where possible the new LEP could include provisions to concentrate areas zoned for commercial and industrial use along major arterial roads, creating a buffer between residential areas and major roads.

#### 5.1.2 A 'clean, green' public domain

One strategy towards a 'clean, green' public domain that Council could incorporate into its planning framework is to use the DCP to ensure landscaping is a feature embedded across the public domain and in new development. Council could also take the opportunity presented in updating its planning framework to ensure sufficient open space exists, or can be provided, in areas identified to accommodate increased residential density.

Other strategies that could help Council work towards a strategic direction of a 'clean, green' public domain not directly linked to the revised planning framework include measures to address litter such as education initiatives around litter and recycling, and improving the enforcement of fines for littering. Council could also initiate strategies including free or low-cost hard rubbish collection to address the problem of roadside dumping, and the planting of native, drought-tolerant plants in areas maintained by Council.

#### 5.1.3 Catering to a changing population

It is important that Council plans for the people that will be living in Holroyd in the future - i.e. a larger community that will be older and more culturally diverse than now.

The new planning framework could cater to an ageing population by requiring a proportion of medium and high density residential development to be suitable to older people. For example, the RDS could include provisions for medium density development made up of single storey dwellings without level changes, adaptable housing or housing adjacent to or combined with services for older people.

The new DCP could also accommodate older people in the public domain by making footpaths

and malls pedestrian friendly and where possible, accessible for wheelchairs. Council could also provide seating in centres, near t-way stops, and where possible along walkways and footpaths.

Other strategies Council could undertake towards catering to a changing population include providing services and activities for different groups including older people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

#### **5.1.4 Pedestrian and bicycle friendly neighbourhoods**

Council initiatives towards pedestrian and bicycle friendly neighbourhoods could be achieved by the provision of controls requiring bike storage facilities, such as sheltered bike racks, in and around centres, shopping strips and high density residential developments to be integrated into the DCP. Council could also provide these facilities near railway stations and t-way stops.

In implementing a strategic direction towards pedestrian and bicycle friendly neighbourhoods, Council could also identify safe walking and cycling routes between transport hubs, centres, recreational spaces and other areas. These routes could be further supported by other Council initiatives such as night-time lighting and other 'crime prevention through environmental design' principles to address opportunistic crime risk and enhance safety. The routes could also be promoted to the community in terms of health benefits and the reduction of parking congestion and pollution.

#### **5.1.5 Transport integration**

Council initiatives to support a strategic direction towards transport integration could include planning for commuter parking facilities to be incorporated into, or built in close proximity to key railway stations and t-way stops.

Council could also consider taking other steps to advocate for the provision of integrated public transport timetables for public and private buses and trains. Another initiative Council could take is to lobby State Government and its agencies to provide improved frequency in public transport and integrated ticketing systems across public transport modes.

#### **5.1.6 A streamlined approval process**

To implement this strategic direction broad minimum standards for development could be enforced across the board through the planning framework, but with innovation and flexibility in design enabled through the RDS, LEP and DCP.

Further, small scale development, such as building or renovating individual houses, could have a straightforward approval process with minimum standards being enforced in the DCP to ensure quality designs, but with applications able to be approved by general planning staff. Larger development could have more stringent standards to meet, and could be approved by more senior staff. The amount of exempt and complying development could be increased across the board.

Finally, to improve the application process and reduce applications needing to be processed several times over, Council could ensure the LEP, DCP and RDS, and any other development guidelines are made available in simple documents that are able to be read and understood by the general public. Council could also take proactive steps to ensure there are open lines of communication between Council and developers, by making Council planners available to provide advice and feedback on individual development applications prior to and during the submission process.

#### **5.1.7 An integrated planning approach towards leafy, people oriented neighbourhoods**

The six strategic directions were designed to be a set of mutually supportive strategies that together support the vision identified by *Holroyd's Future* of a Holroyd that is characterised by leafy, people-orientated neighbourhoods.

The strategic directions will:

- Allow the character of low density suburban areas to be retained by changing the pattern of development from dispersed approach where medium density development occurs randomly throughout the LGA, to a centres-based approach
- Ensure that open space, infrastructure and services are in place to enable the future population to engage and participate meaningfully in Holroyd's public life
- Address issues of traffic and parking congestion and increase daily interactions between people in the community
- Make the public domain more accessible, functional and attractive
- Ensure developers clearly understand Council's expectations and promote innovative, outcomes-focussed development in the area.

## 5.2 Issues in need of further consideration by Council

A number of issues remain unresolved with no clear consensus emerging through the *Holroyd's Future* consultation process.

These unresolved issues were:

- The appropriateness of shop-top housing as a means of increasing density in centres
- The appropriateness of parking meters in and around centres and strips as a means of discouraging car use
- The appropriateness of restricting off-street parking in new residential development as a means of discouraging car use.

If these measures are included in Council's planning reforms, careful consideration should be given to community concerns around these strategies.

The following measures were suggested by participants as planning strategies that could help to address their concerns.

- Shop-top housing - Council could consider using the DCP to ensure height restrictions of four or five storeys for shop-top housing development. Council could also consider incorporating into its planning framework 'crime prevention through environmental design' provisions around new shop-top housing development.
- Parking meters – Council could consider installation of parking meters and enforcement only during set times, such as peak shopping hours. Council could also consider issuing resident parking permits to residents of metered streets.
- Restricting off-street parking in new residential development – Council could consider implementing this measure only in medium and high density development areas that are a short walk from well-serviced public transport hubs.

## 6 Conclusion

The outcomes of *Holroyd's Future* have provided Council with some insight into community hopes and fears for the future.

Although the consultation process was not intended to be a quantitative research exercise, significant effort was made to enable a diversity of voices to share their views about Holroyd's urban future. The process was designed to be inclusive and deliberative to provide considered feedback to Council on key planning issues.

The process involved open public workshops, targeted sector-based focus sessions and briefings with CALD groups.

The outcome of the consultation process was the identification of a vision for the character of Holroyd and the identification of six strategic planning directions for Holroyd Council to help shape Council's new planning framework.

Council has a significant amount of strategic work to complete over the next six months to prepare a draft RDS, LEP and DCP for public exhibition. The outcomes of *Holroyd's Future* will guide Council's planning work and enable further consultation to be undertaken to ensure the new planning framework provides for Holroyd to be a sustainable and liveable city.