

SHOPPING CENTRES



Considering Youth Issues In Shopping Centre Development Applications

Developed for the Youth Action & Policy Association (YAPA) and the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme of the Department of Community Services

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Acknowledgements

This resource constitutes part of the larger Hanging Out Together project as auspiced by the Youth Action Policy Association (YAPA) and funded by the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme from the Department of Community Services.

Five Western Sydney Councils were consulted throughout the development of this resource. These councils were selected due to the recent completion of major re-developments / expansions of shopping centres within their boundaries. We would like to acknowledge and thank the relevant personnel from the following local government areas for their time and valuable contributions:

- Bankstown City Council
- Baulkham Hills Shire Council
- Blacktown City Council
- Parramatta City Council
- Penrith City Council

The conclusions gleaned through this research have been accumulated in this resource to provide local government with suggestions and prospective solutions to adopt in their work with shopping centre re-developments. We anticipate the information provided throughout this document will prove both useful and insightful in future work endeavours.

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The Youth Action & Policy Association (YAPA) New South Wales (NSW) is the peak community group working in the interests of young people and youth services in NSW.

YAPA strives to achieve social justice for young people, including the appropriate provision of services for young people. The role of YAPA is to:

- Monitor and respond to government policies and proposals affecting young people
- Promote and advocate on issues affecting young people and youth services
- Bring young people and youth workers together to act on issues affecting them
- Work to raise a positive profile of young people in the media and in the community
- Provide training, forums and conferences to young people and youth workers
- Provide information and referrals
- Produce a range of resources, publications and newsletters.

Contents

Introduction..... 4

An alternative approach 5

Young people and shopping centres 6

Development applications..... 8

Some successful approaches..... 10

Promising initiatives 11

Course of action 12

Recommended approaches 13

Overcoming the obstacles 17

The way forward 18

Where to get help 19

References 21

Introduction

The following resource has been developed as a guide for local government to use during consultation with shopping centre management and development companies when shopping centre re-developments / expansions are proposed. Its primary aim is to provide guidance to local government to ensure that the needs of young people are appropriately catered for during centre re-developments, namely through the development application (DA) process. The resource constitutes part of the larger Hanging Out Together project as auspiced by the Youth Action Policy Association (YAPA) and funded by the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme from the Department of Community Services.

Initially, the project intended to identify successful approaches that councils had adopted to ensure that young people were considered and accommodated for in development proposals. Following preliminary consultation with councils where there had recently been substantial re-development of a shopping centre, it became apparent that few councils had managed to incorporate youth issues in development applications. The approaches that were successful will be detailed in the resource alongside a list of proposed recommendations that council is encouraged to advocate and adopt when developments are being discussed and proposals put forward.

Despite the limited use of the development application process to address youth issues, there have been and continue to be many successful approaches operating within shopping centres in Western Sydney (as well as nationally) that work towards improving relationships between young people and stakeholders. Previous initiatives such as the Social Belonging Project in Penrith Plaza, the development of a Public Space Youth Committee in Westpoint Blacktown and the Equal Space Project in Stockland Wetherill Park (just to name a few) were all positively evaluated and well received by participants (Turner 2002). There are also a multitude of other initiatives operating within shopping centres, such as youth protocols and youth spaces, that have neither been documented nor evaluated but which warrant acknowledgment as they too have significantly improved local partnerships.

An alternative approach

This resource seeks to encourage council staff to capitalise on the opportunity presented through new shopping centre developments / expansions to ensure that the needs of young people are carefully considered in development proposals. Currently, it is not compulsory to consider youth issues in development applications. As such the focus of this resource is to reinforce the opportunity that is presented through DAs, which includes the possibility of averting future problems and potentially addressing any existing issues.

It is important to note that there have been previous attempts to incorporate youth provisions during the planning stages of a new development. Leichhardt Council, in Sydney's inner west, put forward multiple recommendations concerning young people to the developers of Broadway Shopping Centre in the late 1990s (White et al. 1996). Whilst it is understood that only some of the proposed recommendations were acted upon, the success of advocating for youth considerations during the DA process put this form of negotiation on the map. This resource builds upon this approach, detailing the experiences and recommendations of some of the key councils throughout Western Sydney.

As detailed throughout the consultations, the process of considering youth issues is likely to be met with numerous challenges, some of which will be explored within this document. Fundamentally however, a whole-of-council approach has been identified as key for success to prevail. As such, this resource is targeted at a number of departments within local government. Community development workers, town planners, development application assessors, social planners, community safety staff as well as economic and marketing staff all need to work together to understand the issues that face young people within shopping centres and develop appropriate means to overcome them.

Young people and shopping centres

The importance of shopping centres to young people

The shopping centre continues to play an important role in the lives of many young people. In the present day, shopping centres assume the role that was once the domain of the main street or town square. Urban development throughout the past few decades has led to the growth of planned, decentralised communities which in turn has increased reliance on shopping centres within townships (White 2001). Shopping centres are particularly important for young people, as they provide them with an environment in which they can congregate and socialise, free from widespread surveillance and parental supervision. Moreover, they supply means of employment, are a key source of entertainment, are within close proximity to transport hubs and are generally accessible to all. In recent years, conflict between young people and centre management, business owners and the general public has periodically arisen, prompting attention from centre management and youth workers / agencies.

Responses to young people in shopping centres

Initial responses to young people gathering in shopping centres have often been predominantly coercive approaches in the form of tighter security, increased policing powers (such as move on powers), loitering / trespass provisions and the introduction of banning notices (White et al. 2001, Copeland 2004). These measures have collectively led to the increased exclusion of youth from shopping centres, which has attracted criticism from youth and community workers, researchers, social planners and young people alike (White et al. 1996, National Crime Prevention 1999, Crane et al. 2000, Spooner 2001, White et al. 2001, Turner 2002, Neuburger 2004). As with any anti-social activity, the proportion of disorderly youth within shopping centres is minor. As such, restrictions targeting young people on a whole have been deemed inappropriate and guidelines for appropriate practice have been increasingly advocated to assist those who come into contact with youth on a daily basis (White et al. 1996, Turner 2002).

As realisation of the consequences of excluding young people from shopping centres have come to the fore, centre management, security personnel and retailers have begun adopting different approaches to deal with young people. Responses have turned to a focus on problem solving rather than coercion. Shopping centre youth protocols have become a popular tool, strengthening relations and providing key stakeholders with direction regarding their behaviour and responsibilities within centres. The training of security guards to be more in tune with the needs of young people and the provision of flexible spaces within shopping centres, where people can freely congregate, have also been recommended as workable solutions (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning and Urban Design Advisory Service 1999, Clancey et al. 2004). The inclusion of young people in the consultation and planning process of their local public spaces is also a suggested response. Involving young people will help create an important

sense of partnership, communication and respect that is essential for prosperous work. Children and young people will bring to the table a fresh look at their circumstance, consequently providing a unique and valuable source of information that will ensure suitable initiatives are developed (White 2001, Neuburger 2004, NSW Commission for Children and Young People 2005).



Development applications

It appears that youth issues are rarely considered during the re-development or expansion of shopping centres throughout NSW. Current planning and building laws in NSW are governed by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. Development applications, alongside other building and construction applications, are assessed under Section 79C of the Act. Of particular pertinence to addressing the needs of young people would be the assessment of the social impact of a proposed development. Applicants are required to indicate what impact the development is likely to have on the community and ideally, youth plans would feature within this section (www.legislation.nsw.gov.au). Despite all DAs being assessed on their social implications, it is not obligatory for developers to provide comment on implications / considerations of young people. Therefore, it is critical to highlight the important and influential role that local government can have in influencing the final provisions of DAs. Some of these opportunities will be briefly examined below.

Utilising development applications

It is a requirement for all development applications to be on public exhibition for a minimum of 30 days. During this time, neighbours, community and government have the opportunity to provide comment on applications through written submissions to the relevant consent authority (typically the local council, however an accredited private professional or the Minister for Planning is also eligible to give authority depending on the calibre of the development) (Lawyers 2007). The possibility of making a submission and attempting to negotiate youth-specific services is arguably one of local government's key opportunities to advocate the inclusion of youth plans in development proposals. Another potential option, and one that perhaps provides local government with increased authority, could involve council initiating the preparation of a Development Control Plan (DCP) specifically for shopping centres or one that targets youth / community issues. Alternatively, if a relevant DCP already exists, youth considerations could be incorporated into the various sections accordingly. It should also be noted that DCPs supplement a council's Local Environment Plan (LEP) which is the key legal document for controlling development within councils. As such all LEPs should be reviewed periodically to include any new or amended DCPs.

The role of local government

Before delving into further discussion of the various approaches that can be adopted to accommodate young people in shopping centres, it is important to reinforce councils fundamental role throughout the process. At present, the scope of local government involvement in the planning, design and management of sites is a concern (National Crime Prevention 1999). Given the lack of statutory requirements regarding the provision of amenities and services for youth, local government is a key stakeholder in ensuring that young people are justly accommodated within centre re-developments. Political and financial pressures are however often experienced and must be acknowledged. Budgetary targets and associated financial pressures often see councils seek development and

investment within their local government area which has typically involved the selling off of public property to accommodate private investment (White 1997; National Crime Prevention 1999). This resource will seek to emphasise the importance of local government's role in ensuring that the space provided within private developments accommodates the needs of the entire community sufficiently.



Some successful approaches

Of the councils consulted, few reported successfully considering the needs of young people within the shopping centre DA process. Corporate memory of previous initiatives was scarce (generally due to staff turnover), resulting in only a few notable undertakings being identified. The key approach included relevant personnel from the community development section of council putting forward a recommendation in relation to the relevant DA, to group together stores within the shopping centre that had a youth orientated focus. The recommendation was taken on board and the arrangement of youth stores was considered during the planning phase, resulting in a seemingly successful outcome.

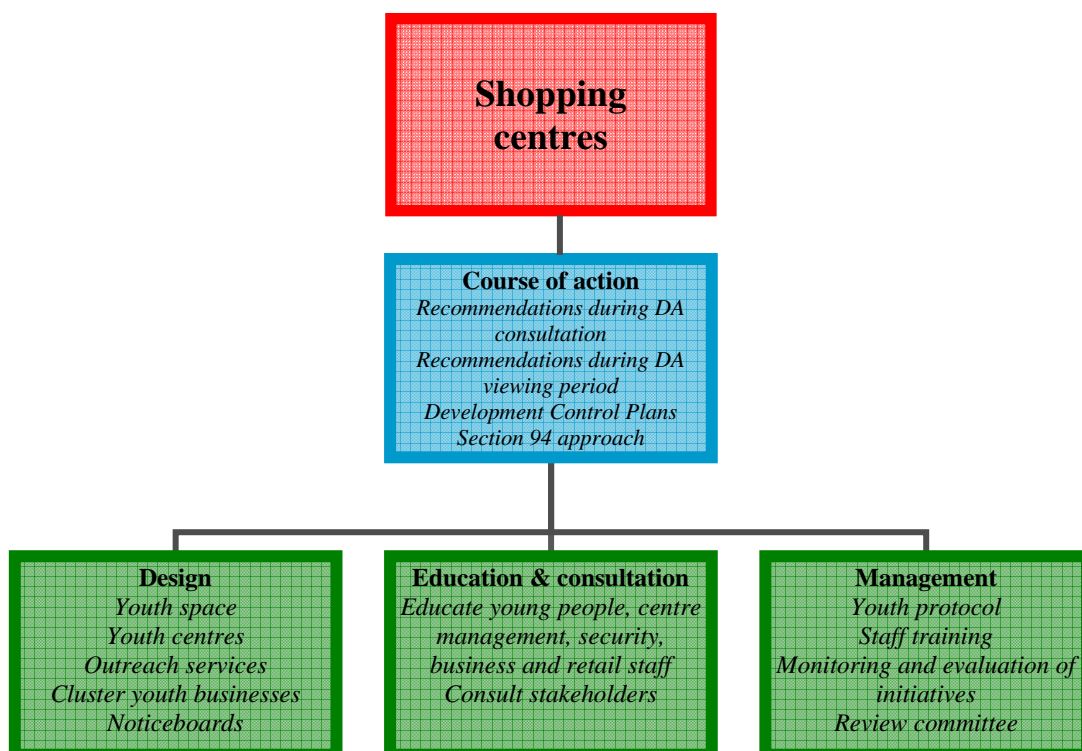
The other key approach included the preparation of a youth protocol as a requirement for a proposed shopping centre to gain expansion approval. Whilst the protocol got off to a good start, staff turnover within council saw the project stall for an extensive period of time, hindering its completion and subsequent implementation.

It became apparent throughout the consultation process that councils were faced with multiple challenges, both internally and externally, in their work with young people and shopping centres. While only a few previous examples were highlighted by staff consulted during this project, a number of ideas were promoted as being potentially beneficial during this process. These ideas have been captured below.

Promising initiatives

The following section outlines the methods and approaches that councils are encouraged to adopt and advocate for during the developmental stages of shopping centre expansions. To begin, the all important methods through which youth considerations can be incorporated into DAs are outlined. The consecutive sections focus on the various initiatives that could be put forward through a DA. The first of these explores concepts of design, which focus on physical features of the centre and how they can be improved and enhanced to better accommodate young people. The second is concerned with educating and consulting stakeholders on appropriate behaviour within shopping centres and dispelling prominent myths surrounding young people and their use of centres. To conclude, key policies and procedures pertaining to the management of youth related problems are detailed.

A combination of initiatives is going to be most effective in ensuring young people are appropriately catered for and as such, it is recommended that council consider an array of approaches to be adopted. It is important to remember that cross-sector consultation is never straightforward, however it is necessary in order to achieve successful outcomes. Furthermore, it became evident during the consultations that councils are likely to encounter some prominent challenges throughout the process, which will also be highlighted below.



Course of action

The following approaches list methods for having youth issues considered throughout the DA process. As previously detailed, it is important to capitalise on the opportunity presented through a new development to push for youth provisions to be incorporated into a shopping centres expansions.

Approach	Challenges / Considerations
Put forward recommendations / comments during the development application consultation and viewing period.	It is often noted that it is difficult to have youth issues considered separately in these deliberations. Therefore, recommendations should indicate the benefits of each initiative across a wide range of target groups, not only the positive impact upon young people.
If there is no Development Control Plan (DCP) that is relevant to the development, council should perhaps initiate the preparation of one specific to shopping centres (if there are multiple centres within the area). In any case where a DCP exists or is under development, a youth segment should be integrated into the relevant section/s. It is also important to remember that DCPs constitute part of councils Local Environmental Plan and as such LEPs need to be regularly reviewed and updated to accommodate any new / amended DCPs.	A DCP provides local government with extensive authority regarding future developments. It is compulsory for any DCP to be considered during the assessment of a DA, so it is in councils best interest to have a DCP (or part of a DCP) that reflects the needs of young people within public spaces. This measure bears great potential in ensuring that youth plans are considered in proposed developments.
Under section 94 of the <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 NSW</i> , the consent authority can request contribution towards provision or improvement of services if a development will require an increase in amenities and services to the community.	This approach will prove most useful if council is the consent authority for a particular development. Contributions to support establishing youth services, the building of a youth centre or funding an outreach worker might be considered as part of the section 94 procedures.

Recommended approaches

The suggestions that will be highlighted below provide options for improving relationships between young people, shopping centre management, retailers, councils and other relevant stakeholders. By giving consideration and potentially recommending some of these suggestions during the DA process, it is anticipated that youth issues will be duly considered.

Design

The following table details various approaches associated with the layout and provision of space within shopping centres that could be incorporated to better accommodate and provide for young people.

Approach	Challenges / Considerations
Provide a youth space within the shopping centre. This space should allow for the congregation of people without causing obstruction. The space can be either indoors or outdoors and does not have to be limited to a single area.	Providing young people with a specific space to congregate can deflect problems with groups gathering in places that impede pedestrian traffic. Careful consideration of where such a place would be located will be important.
Provide a youth centre within the shopping centre. This would include the placement of a youth worker.	There have been some successful examples of youth centres being located within a shopping centre (Erina Fair is a good example). However, the incorporation of a youth centre needs to be approached with caution. It will be important to consider the impact that the provision of youth activities within a commercial setting is likely to have on young people's aspirations, development and community engagement (White 1996).
Provide a youth outreach service. This could consist of instituting referral procedures to local agencies or enabling an outreach worker to operate in the shopping centre.	The deployment of an outreach youth worker in and around a shopping centre can provide additional support to security and assist young people with referrals to relevant local agencies. An outreach worker can work closely with security to prevent problems and to reduce security and policing responses.
Cluster youth orientated businesses to create a 'youth precinct'.	It is important to make sure that whilst grouped together, youth focused businesses are integrated into the centre without obvious separation. Young people enjoy

	being within dynamic environments so it will also be important to position these stores within appropriate localities.
Provide notice boards to display local youth initiatives / information.	The promotion of local youth events will demonstrate a commitment to youth issues. Centre management and local youth agencies can work together to advertise and promote relevant events.
Display information about youth events and initiatives in shop fronts.	Again, promotion of local youth events suggests a commitment to local young people. Effective engagement with business owners is essential for this to occur. A common understanding and regard has to be established to ensure that businesses support council in its initiatives. The development of a youth protocol (see under management below) will increase understanding and improve relations between these agencies.

Education and consultation

The approaches detailed below focus on the education and instruction of young people, centre management, security, business owners and retail staff in developing an understanding of each others roles and responsibilities within the centre.

Approach	Challenges / Considerations
<p>Educate young people about appropriate and expected behaviour within shopping centres. Approaches could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of pamphlets • School visits by security guards or centre management personnel 	<p>Such initiatives need to be recurrent. They must be carried out periodically to ensure that there is a consistency in information dispersal and that new community members are made aware of rules and expectations promptly.</p>
<p>Educate centre management, developers, security, business owners and retail staff about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The significance of shopping centres to young people • The characteristic behaviour young 	<p>Staff turnover within shopping centres is frequent. It is essential for education campaigns to be held regularly for such measures to maintain their effectiveness.</p>

<p>people engage in versus criminal behaviour</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate and expected ways to interact with and towards young people 	
<p>Consult with relevant agencies and other stakeholders, especially young people, in appropriate planning and management decisions. Stakeholder groups can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government • Police (in particular Youth Liaison Officers) • Security • Centre management • Shopping centre developers • Business owners • Retail staff • Youth workers • Local industry/retail groups i.e. Chamber of Commerce • Young people 	<p>Consultation is essential for informed decision making. Local government is in a position to play an important role in co-ordinating and facilitating sessions where tensions between stakeholders can be communicated and solutions worked towards.</p>

Management (policies and procedures)

The development of a youth protocol together with the training of staff (namely security) in best practices were suggestions repeatedly advanced by council staff consulted during this project. If there can only be one approach that councils endeavour to incorporate into a DA, the development of a youth shopping centre protocol is recommended. Its advantages are twofold; the process allows stakeholders to work cooperatively and build positive relations, whilst the final product aids stakeholders to ensure that good relationships and understandings are maintained in the long term.

Approach	Challenges / Considerations
<p>Develop a shopping centre / youth protocol. A protocol will provide guidelines on appropriate / inappropriate behaviour and processes to deal with conflict within centres. The development of a protocol will involve extensive consultation and partnership with local stakeholders.</p>	<p>A youth protocol can strengthen multi-agency relations. It can assist in building rapport and provides clear guidelines and objectives on behavioural expectations and subsequent processes. Whilst the implementation of a protocol is important, it is also necessary to</p>

	<p>recognise the significance of the consultation process leading up to protocol development. Providing stakeholders with the opportunity to share and discuss problems / solutions in a localised forum is a fundamental aspect of the process. Improving relationships, understanding and commitment can all be achieved through the development of a protocol.</p> <p>The costs associated with developing a protocol (alongside other initiatives) can however be expensive. Protocols have previously been developed under the provisions of a crime prevention plan for which council may have received funding from state government. Councils can also consider seeking funding from management through the DA.</p>
Provide or organise training for security, centre management, business owners and retail staff on appropriate ways to engage / work with young people.	Training needs to be recurrent in order for all new staff to receive adequate guidance. Regular updates should also be conducted to re-familiarise staff of good practice.
Ensure that initiatives (such as protocols) are well documented (to maintain corporate memory) and regularly evaluated in order to monitor their progress.	Staff turnover both within shopping centres as well as councils has been frequently associated with a loss in the successful handover of work. Established practices are at risk of being run into the ground if successful safeguards are not put in place.
Establish review committees that are made up of relevant stakeholders. The committee should meet regularly to review what is happening within the centre and update policies / procedures as required.	It is critical that the review committees, like all other initiatives are not left inoperative for extended periods of time. Council should be responsible for establishing and co-ordinating meetings.

Overcoming the obstacles

As detailed above, a multitude of recommendations have been put forward outlining the types of initiatives that local government can advocate for during the lead up to a shopping centre re-development. A number of procedural challenges within councils were however uncovered throughout this project and will be reiterated below. Overcoming some of these challenges will lead to more effective practice and outcomes for all concerned.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Frequent staff turnover within shopping centres (including centre management, security, retail and recreational staff) as well as local government can contribute to previous initiatives and practices often being lost. It is essential to maintain detailed records of past / current programmes to enable future staff to carry on the work of the past.
- It is critical to monitor and evaluate any initiatives that have been put in place to ensure that they are operating smoothly or alternatively identify any problems that may have arisen.
- Consultation with key stakeholders is essential to express and discuss concerns, resolve tensions and develop solutions. The development of a youth shopping centre protocol, for example, must incorporate representatives from all relevant agencies in an area. Through this process it is anticipated that working relationships between council, centre management, security personnel, business owners, retail staff, youth workers and young people are strengthened and a common objective attained.
- Project management will have a significant impact on not only the outcomes of the project but on the overall success of the associated process. Local government is in a good position to co-ordinate and manage various initiatives.
- Financial restraints are a common constraint identified by councils. Through advocating for the inclusion of youth plans within DAs or DCPs, developers and management can contribute to funding initiatives which in the long term should save management money on security and repairs (Turner 2002).
- A whole of council approach is necessary for any of the strategies mentioned throughout this resource to succeed. The development of a common understanding and collaborative work ethic are essential for prosperous work.

The way forward

Ensuring the needs of young people are taken into consideration in the development / re-development of shopping centres is essential to developing and maintaining good relationships between stakeholders. The shopping centre is, and will continue to be, a vital source of entertainment, employment, relaxation and socialisation for young people. The recommendations detailed in this resource have been put forward by council staff that deal with youth issues on a daily basis. They are practical initiatives that can improve the manner in which young people are dealt with and received within shopping centres. They also encourage participation from all sectors (including young people themselves) through consultation and education.

As has been stated, current planning laws do not require youth issues to be incorporated into development applications and it is for this reason that the role of local government is critical in seeing that local young people are catered for appropriately. It is anticipated that you will be able to take numerous ideas and approaches from this resource that can be implemented by / within your council. For further information and assistance, please refer to the information on key agencies and services that is provided below.



Where to get help

NSW Youth Action Policy Association

YAPA is the peak community group working in the interests of young people and youth services in NSW. YAPA has had extensive involvement in public space issues and have wide networks within the youth sector. YAPA can provide advice about strategies to adopt, suggest people to contact for support or assistance or can provide ideas that might have been successful in other locations.

Telephone: (02) 9319 1100

Freecall: 1800 627 323

Website: www.yapa.org.au

Email: info@yapa.org.au

NSW Commission for Children and Young people

The Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) develops policy, advises government, undertakes research and educates people about the needs of children and young people. CCYP has developed a number of useful resources, including *Taking PARTicipation Seriously*, a guide to involving young people in making decisions that affect their lives.

Telephone: (02) 9286 7276

Website: www.kids.nsw.gov.au

Children's Legal Service, NSW Legal Aid Commission

The Children's Legal Service operates across NSW. The Service employs solicitors who work in Children's Courts and represent young people in other courts. The Service also operates a legal advice helpline, which enables young people to receive legal advice from appropriately trained solicitors most hours of the day / week / year.

Helpline Phone Number: 1800 101810

Shopping Centre Council of Australia

The Shopping Centre Council of Australia is the peak advocacy body for shopping centre companies across the country. The Council promotes understanding of issues affecting the operation of shopping centres, advocates on behalf of shopping centre managers and companies and lobbies government. The Council has been significantly involved in reviewing issues associated with young people's access to shopping centres and can provide advice and resources relevant to this issue.

Telephone: (02) 9336 6902

Website: www.propertyoz.com/scca

Y-Space Website

The Queensland University of Technology created and maintains the Y-Space website, which is a clearinghouse of publications, articles and information about public space projects. The website is an excellent resource and the information contained on the website can promote thinking about different, innovative ways to tackle public space problems.

Website: www.yspace.net/

Youth.NSW

Youth.NSW is the NSW Government's website for young people and workers in the youth field. The site aims to provide people aged 12 to 25 with links to New South Wales Government, community services and information. It also contains a range of information for young people about getting involved in their community through programs and events. The site is a forum for youth participation and for government to hear young people's ideas on a range of issues.

Website: www.youth.nsw.gov.au/

Foundation for Young Australians

The Foundation for Young Australians is an independent national grant-making organisation, funding and working in partnership with youth-led initiatives which aim to positively contribute to young people and their communities. The Foundation's website is a great source of information about young people across Australia.

Telephone: (03) 9670 5436

Website: www.youngaustralians.org/

NSW Department of Planning

The NSW Department of Planning provides information on legislation and planning instruments that guide the way the environment is managed and resources used within NSW. The website details information on the planning system and its associated services, which amongst other things includes information on development assessments and Local Environmental Plans.

Telephone: (02) 9228 6111

Website: www.planning.nsw.gov.au

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