Homeless in Parramatta

A research partnership between Parramatta City Council and the University of Western Sydney

April 2010
‘Homeless in Parramatta’

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1 Introduction and Overview

Parramatta is widely recognised as Sydney’s second CBD, is the sixth largest CBD in Australia and the economic capital of Western Sydney, Australia’s fastest growing region. Parramatta is a major regional transport hub accessible by road, rail, bus and ferry and available statistics indicate that Parramatta Station is the fourth busiest station on the CityRail network. The city is one of three regional centres along with Liverpool and Penrith nominated for major growth in the NSW Government’s Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney released in December 2005. In accordance with the Metro Strategy, Parramatta City Council developed a long term strategic plan for the City called Parramatta Twenty25, incorporating over 400 local, state and national policies and plans.

Thus while Parramatta forms part of greater metropolitan Sydney, it increasingly displays the features of an inner city area in its own right. Statistical evidence from the 2006 ABS census, and analysis of calls made to the Homeless Persons Information Centre (HPIC), shows that Parramatta already has a significant and growing homeless population. The city’s increased importance and projected growth as a metropolitan business and transport hub suggests that this population can be expected to increase in coming years. The Parramatta Twenty25 plan thus seeks to address this issue and to improve the well being of homeless people and reduce the impact of homelessness in the Parramatta LGA. The Council’s Social Outcomes Team has expressed the view that “left unmanaged, issues related to homelessness can also impact on the broader community” (Parramatta City Council 2009a). In its submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness and Low-Cost Rental Accommodation in April 2009, the Council outlined its concerns as follows:

1. Homelessness in the Parramatta Local Government Area (LGA) is a significant and growing issue, and this trend will increase as Parramatta’s CBD continues to develop and the economy weakens.
2. In this context, there is a critical need to be proactive in managing homelessness, for the benefit of individuals at risk of homelessness, those who are homeless and the Parramatta community more broadly including residents, visitors and businesses. (Parramatta City Council 2009b)

Several reports have already been commissioned which analyse Census and HPIC data (Environmetrics 2007) and collate the approaches of other cities, both in Australia and overseas (Stubbs 2009). Parramatta City Council has commissioned an analysis of housing stress in Parramatta (Informed Decisions 2009) and is currently working with the UWS Urban Research Centre and other housing-related organisations on the delivery of its Affordable Housing Implementation Plan which was endorsed along with the Affordable Housing Policy in May 2009.

Although the Council has access to statistical data from secondary sources on the extent of homelessness in the area “it lacks current information from homeless people in the Parramatta LGA themselves, local businesses and local homeless community service providers”. Further, “Council needs to understand ... what leads people to homelessness (the risk factors), why they choose to be in this LGA, what they perceive would assist them to break out of homelessness and what their key challenges are with being homeless day to day” (Parramatta City Council 2009a).
Data on homelessness is notoriously complex and often unreliable. Fine grained research concerning the scope and range of the problem in Parramatta has not previously been conducted; this research in part seeks to redress this lack of research.

1.1 Aims

The aims of the current study were

1. To inform the development of a strategic approach to homelessness in Parramatta by Parramatta City Council and other agencies.
2. To explore the actual and potential impact of homelessness on local business and economic development, and,
3. To contribute to innovative approaches to understanding and measuring homelessness in urban localities.

The study was the first to collect and analyse primary data concerning the incidence and experience of homeless people in Parramatta. This involved a census (street count) of homeless people in the LGA, both rough sleepers and those in temporary and crisis accommodation; in-depth interviews with homeless people; plus survey and qualitative research involving local businesses. This study links detailed understanding of the extent and experience of homelessness in Parramatta with an exploration of the impact of the issue on the local business environment by gathering data on the perception and understanding of the issue among the local business community.

1.2 Significance

Homelessness is a major social issue in Australia. Yet attempts to define and measure it continue to be the subject of intense debate (Chamberlain and Johnson 2001). Marsh and Kennett observed that, “the meaning of the term ‘homeless’ is fundamentally unstable” (Marsh and Kennett 1999, p 2.). Nonetheless, over the last decade a degree of consensus has emerged in Australia about how homelessness should be defined (House of Representatives 1995; Chamberlain 1999). An approach, known as the ‘cultural definition of homelessness’ (Chamberlain 1999) was used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to enumerate the homeless population.

This definition comprises three elements:

- **Primary homelessness, such as sleeping rough or living in an improvised dwelling.**
- **Secondary homelessness including staying with friends or relatives and with no other usual address, people in specialist homelessness services.**
- **Tertiary homelessness including people living in boarding houses or caravan parks with no secure lease and no private facilities, both short and long-term**. (Homeless Taskforce 2008, p. 3)
Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2009) use this definition to show that over time homeless people’s housing and support options progressively diminish. As a result, people are increasingly forced to rely on substandard forms of accommodation such as boarding houses and eventually sleeping rough becomes a relatively common experience. They show that the longer people remain homeless, the more difficult it becomes to assist them to ‘get out’ and ‘stay out’ of homelessness.

The nature of inner cities (including Parramatta CBD and the surrounding area) has changed over the last two decades. In the past, boarding houses were very common in the inner city; however as a result of gentrification and rising land values, this is no longer the case (Jope 2000). Boarding houses have largely relocated to middle or outer suburbs west and southwest of Sydney and out of CBDs such as Parramatta. The process of gentrification in inner cities has also inflated housing prices and sharply increased the cost of private rental accommodation, while government support for public housing has declined and contributed to severe shortages in housing options in major Australian cities (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2009). Public housing is no longer an option for many low income households, because of increased targeting to households with the very highest needs. Low income households in the private rental market pay more for housing, are forced to accept sub-standard accommodation or in many cases are forced onto the streets. These problems are typically understood as ‘housing stress’.

This study focused homelessness as a local issue for the City of Parramatta, and obtained detailed data taking into account local social and economic conditions, services and geography. However, the research has implications for developing the link between the social and economic implications of homelessness on a much wider scale. The project arose in the context of the Federal government White Paper on Homelessness, ‘The Road Home’, released on December 21, 2008, and also the release of the NSW Government’s Homelessness Action Plan 2009-2014, and the findings provide the City of Parramatta with the evidence base required to participate fully in emerging policy development.

In the Parramatta LGA, the lower end of the private rental market is under acute pressure (Environmetrics 2007). There are limited housing options for low income families and people have to devote more energy to finding scarce accommodation. This means that housing workers sometimes have to assist people into accommodation that is either too expensive, far removed from their local networks or below standard, since there are few realistic alternatives. Analysis of HPIC data in 2004 and 2007 shows a dramatic increase in calls from Parramatta LGA and a clear shift towards eviction from private rental as the most common reason given for becoming homeless.

This research provides detailed and contextualised data on homelessness in Parramatta. Including the voice of homeless people in Parramatta was a critical component of the brief provided by Parramatta City Council, and extended interviews explored the pathways into homelessness and potential pathways out of homelessness in the LGA. The study also provides an account of the impact of homelessness on the local economy particularly as perceived by local businesses and also potential roles for business in an integrated strategy for addressing the issue in the City of Parramatta. In so doing, the research provides the basis for addressing one of the shortcomings
identified for most homelessness strategies, namely the underrepresentation of businesses amongst the active stakeholders in such strategies (Cunningham et al. 2006).

It is well known that most homeless people move around from one form of temporary accommodation to another (Chamberlain 2009). This research found that people move into, around in and out of the Parramatta LGA. Cultural definitions of homelessness, such as those provided above, do not describe the qualitative experience of being homeless. Robinson comments on the importance of recognising “iterative homelessness”, or “where there are trajectories of unstable and often unsafe accommodation constituted by repeated movement through many different forms of accommodation” (Robinson, 2003, p. 15, emphasis in text). In her analysis Robinson stresses the consequence of homelessness characterised by “constant movement and continued vulnerability” (Robinson, 2003, p. 15). In response to these issues, this study used multiple methods, qualitative and quantitative and mapping techniques, and will involve extensive collaboration with local agencies in the field.

1.3 Elements of the Study

This research collected primary data relating to homelessness in the Parramatta LGA. Four sets of primary data were generated and reported:

1. Focus groups of local businesses concerning perceptions and understanding of homelessness, and its possible impact on local business and the economic environment.
2. A survey of local businesses concerning perceptions and understanding of homelessness, and its possible impact on local business and the economic environment.
3. In-depth interviews conducted with 35 homeless people, mainly rough sleepers.
4. A ‘street count’ or census of rough sleepers (primary homeless) in the Parramatta LGA on a given night (or nights), plus a survey of the number of homeless people who slept in hostels, refuges or other formal temporary accommodation, but excluding squats and informal crisis accommodation (secondary homeless) in the Parramatta LGA for the night in question.
2 Focus Groups with Business

2.1 Summary

Research shows that in most strategies addressing homelessness businesses as stakeholders are under-represented, if they are part of the strategy at all (Cunningham et al 2006, p.3). This research addresses the lack of information on business perceptions and understanding in order to enable businesses to become active stakeholders in any strategy being developed for Parramatta LGA and to draw on the wealth of expertise and experience business could offer to support the development of solutions. The inclusion of local business in the research contributes to a better informed and more innovative homelessness strategy in the context of its economic impact.

To enable business to contribute to this research, two focus groups were held. Both local business organisations, Parramatta Chamber of Commerce and Western Sydney Business Connections were asked to invite their members to attend one of the two focus groups, and Parramatta City Council informed businesses on their database about the opportunity. There is therefore an element of self-selection that needs to be considered when interpreting the outcomes. Attendees included owners and managers of small businesses and major banks and staff from cultural and educational institutions as well as from business organisations and service providers to homeless people.

Members of both business focus groups identified the need to distinguish homeless people from other people ‘sitting around’ and ‘causing trouble’, in particular people with alcohol and other addictions, drug dealers and others ‘looking for trouble’. Attitudes towards and experiences with people who were homeless could be grouped into three types:

1. Not an issue
2. Problematic
3. An expected and acceptable part of a growing CBD.

Overall, there was a strong feeling expressed in both focus groups that ‘homeless persons make part of being a city’ and as such they are ‘not a water cooler conversation’. One participant summed this up as ‘every city has areas you don’t go at night’ – and participant agreed that this is not necessarily due to homeless persons. However, in a number of businesses ‘people in need’ more generally are coming up as an issue in staff conversations on an almost daily basis. One participant remarked that ‘how Parramatta supports its homeless people is a sign of how mature Parramatta as a city has become’, a statement that found support in the group and expressed a general willingness by businesses to be involved in and contribute to developing strategies that address the issues that lead to homelessness in the first place.

In both focus groups all members repeatedly discussed knowing particular individuals as if they were local identities. Particular individuals were known to all by name and/or appearance, including specific knowledge of aspects of their individual situation.

Both focus groups quickly agreed that homelessness is never exclusively an issue relating to housing and meals only. Any best-case scenario has to address the variety of pathways into homelessness, but needs to include as a minimum a massive increase
in a variety of low-cost housing, the provision of extended and more accessible mental health services and of services for those leaving prisons. Particular emphasis was given to services for younger people in danger of embarking on a pathway into regular periods of homelessness.

Participants in both groups rejected the view that an increase in services offered would increase the number of homeless persons in Parramatta. It was stressed that the expected increase is much more related to Parramatta proudly becoming a bigger city.

Council’s role in coordinating with State and Federal government and their services was seen as crucial in improving opportunities and accessibility for homeless persons in Parramatta. Participants had high hopes that Parramatta City Council would show leadership in this regard.

An important role in the process of educating the population on issues related to homelessness can be played by businesses providing opportunities for their staff to get involved with charities and other organisations providing services for homeless people. Participants agreed that this does not only raise the visibility of a business in the community, but also helps the team building amongst staff and trains a wide variety of staff skills.

Parramatta may be unique in that both local business representative organisations, the Parramatta Chamber of Commerce and the Western Sydney Business Connections are active supporters of particular local agencies working with homeless people. This has contributed to raising the awareness and knowledge of the complexities of homelessness amongst the local business community and may have contributed to a greater willingness to being active stakeholders in the development of wider solutions.

2.2 Approach

The structure and topics covered in the two focus groups held in December 2009 appear in Appendix 4 below.

2.3 Findings

Businesses in Parramatta CBD were aware of Parramatta as a business and commercial centre having to overcome residues of a ‘stigma of the West’. This was seen to be diminishing with the relocation of a number of government departments to Parramatta. Parramatta was described as clean, easily accessible by public transport, and as quite cosmopolitan. Both focus groups quickly agreed that homeless persons per se are not an issue of concern for local businesses. Yet drug and alcohol addiction and begging were seen as serious issues particularly for strip shops. The findings on the particular issues of homelessness in Parramatta can be grouped into three distinct areas:

1. Direct experiences of business and the impacts of homelessness in the area;
2. How businesses are currently dealing with or responding to homelessness in Parramatta; and
3. What businesses think should be done about homelessness in Parramatta into the future.

2.3.1 Direct experiences of and impact on businesses
Firstly members of both business focus groups identified the need to distinguish homeless people from other people ‘sitting around’ and ‘causing trouble’, in particular people with alcohol and other addictions, drug dealers and others ‘looking for trouble’. Attitudes towards and experiences with people who were homeless could be grouped into three types:

1. Not an issue
2. Problematic
3. An expected and acceptable part of a growing CBD

Not an issue

Businesses in Parramatta did not report homeless children and young people as generally visible, but organisations which target or work with 16 to 18 year old people spoke of encountering homeless families.

It was reported that bank staff in general do not want to work after 5pm in winter, but it was also clarified that they would not necessarily feel safer if there were no homeless persons around.

A business open to the public mainly at night situated between a popular rough sleeping area and a common route to the food bank did not think that homeless people have an impact on their patronage, because the homeless people are around the area during the day, while the patrons come there at night. However, at times, staff have observed disturbing behaviours (such as indecent exposures) by presumed rough sleepers, while other, regular and known homeless persons are perceived as actively trying to protect this business from such incidents (for example by admonishing or shepherding away).

One participant remarked that often businesses and homeless people are operating in the same space, but without making eye contact. In this context guilt was mentioned as an important factor, as some people do not know whether to acknowledge homeless people and thus feel uncomfortable.

Problematic

A number of issues were raised as problematic by participants, and the ensuing discussions showed a need for more detailed investigation and discussion, in particular regarding some of the assumptions behind the issues raised.

Begging now poses a serious issue for restaurants in Parramatta. Focus group participants made it clear that those begging in Church Street are not necessarily homeless. Begging particularly in Church Street has increased as the number of restaurants with tables outside has increased and this is of some concern.

Some businesses noted that staff at times are exposed to unpleasant behaviours of homeless people who rough sleep in an adjacent area. One particular negative experience was mentioned by a participant, when a young female relative had a bottle of port smashed over her car by someone she assumed was homeless. This relative is now scared to walk alone in Parramatta and has since sought employment elsewhere.

In this context it was mentioned that former colleagues of one participant were unhappy with their move to Parramatta. However, a more detailed discussion revealed that their concerns were not so much related to homelessness as to other
issues, in particular violence on Civic Place, drug dealing in the car park, violence around Hungry Jack’s, Darcy Street as problem area, and school children as prime target for drug dealers.

**An expected and acceptable part of a growing CBD**

*Overall, there was a strong feeling expressed in both focus groups that ‘homeless persons make part of being a city’ and as such they are ‘not a water cooler conversation’. One participant summed this up as ‘every city has areas you don’t go at night’ – and participant agreed that this is not necessarily due to homeless persons. However, in a number of businesses ‘people in need’ more generally are coming up as an issue in staff conversations on an almost daily basis. One participant remarked that ‘how Parramatta supports its homeless people is a sign of how mature Parramatta as a city has become’, a statement that found support in the group and expressed a general willingness by businesses to be involved in and contribute to developing strategies that address the issues that lead to homelessness in the first place.*

*It was observed that in the City of Sydney rough sleepers go away with daylight, while they stay visible in Parramatta. There was no clear understanding as to the reason for this difference.*

**2.3.2 How businesses are currently dealing with or responding to homelessness in Parramatta**

*One local bank has developed the practice that an older woman staff member usually serves homeless people due to her superior people skills.

Some businesses regularly bring food over to homeless persons in Prince Alfred Park and their staff never feels threatened. A significant number of businesses in Parramatta contribute staff time to organisations that provide for homeless people, a practice that is expected to contribute to a reduction in fear that results from homeless people being ‘different’.

It was observed that accountants, lawyers and bankers were not represented in one of the focus groups and that as groups of professionals they may not want to have anything to do with homeless people. In the ensuing discussion it became clear however, that many of those professionals and their businesses are happy to write a cheque in support of the work other businesses are doing with homeless persons. A distinction was made between businesses who give money, businesses that provide material aid and businesses whose staff are directly involved. It was stressed that it is important to find the right ‘home’ for each of these businesses.*

*In both focus groups all members repeatedly discussed knowing particular individuals as if they were local identities. Particular individuals were known to all by name and/or appearance and their individual situation.*

*One such individual was described as having slept on the riverbank since 1996, as giving himself a fearsome looking appearance and as signalling to everyone that he wanted to be left alone. Earlier this year this man had the opportunity to access mental health treatment at Cumberland Hospital and now has rational conversations with people in the street, has a home and is obviously highly intelligent. When asked about tensions between an acceptance of homeless people as somehow part of the community and concerns over safety, participants quickly agreed that*
manifestations of mental ill health were the scariest issue for businesses. Safety concerns were to some extent addressed by the police. Police on bicycles were appreciated as this had significantly reduced violence visible on the streets at night. Going out for dinner in Parramatta on Saturday night is now seen as safe.

In both focus groups there was strong support for the view that an ‘Olympics Model’ of shipping homeless persons out of sight was unacceptable and that business would want to see more services provided and better funded.

2.3.3 What businesses think should be done about homelessness in Parramatta into the future

Both focus groups quickly agreed that homelessness is never exclusively an issue relating to housing and meals only. Any best-case scenario has to address the variety of pathways into homelessness, but needs to include as a minimum a massive increase in a variety of low-cost housing, the provision of extended and more accessible mental health services and of services for those leaving prisons. Particular emphasis was given to services for younger people in danger of embarking on a pathway into regular periods of homelessness.

Participants in both groups rejected the view that an increase in services offered would increase the number of homeless persons in Parramatta. It was stressed that the expected increase is much more related to Parramatta proudly becoming a bigger city.

Business representatives unanimously considered it necessary to focus attention on mental health services and on services for those in and leaving prisons. That this will require a very significant increase in public expenditure was acknowledged.

In one focus group a discussion arose around the problem that non-governmental organisations or NGOs have increasingly been asked to take over responsibility for services that would better be provided by government, including low-cost housing and emergency accommodation, mental health services and related support, rehabilitation and social support in jails and prisons.

Business were interested in partnering with government to achieve these aims and one businessman’s suggestion of adding another local levy to provide additional public funding for this purpose was well received.

Council’s role in coordinating with State and Federal government and their services was seen as crucial in improving opportunities and accessibility for homeless persons in Parramatta. Participants had high hopes that Parramatta City Council would show leadership in this regard.

In this context both focus groups hoped that Parramatta City Council would support a coordinated approach to increasing the services offered to homeless people and to making these services more accessible, rather than Council offering a particular additional service. A number of past experiences with Council’s attitude of ‘let’s work together and work it out’ were mentioned as highly appreciated by the business community. It was stressed that in many forums collaboration between all sectors was generally good and that a lot was already happening in Parramatta.

In one focus group a discussion developed about the role of education about homelessness and related issues, both in schools and for the community in general, and about the need to base this education on respect for people as human beings. It
was felt that Parramatta City Council could play an important role in this ongoing education process.

An important role in the process of educating the population on issues related to homelessness can be played by businesses providing opportunities for their staff to get involved with charities and other organisations providing services for homeless people. Participants agreed that this does not only raise the visibility of a business in the community, but also helps the team building amongst staff and trains a wide variety of staff skills.

As mentioned above both organisations representing local businesses are active supporters of particular local agencies. This has contributed to a degree of awareness and knowledge of the complexities of the issue on the part of the business community and the potential to be active stakeholders in the development of city strategies to address homelessness.
3 Business Survey

3.1 Summary

The survey covered mainly businesses of different sizes in the centre and outskirts of Parramatta CBD, two geographical areas that are not precisely defined, and hence findings related to locality have to be interpreted very cautiously. A similar caveat is appropriate for the distinction between business types. Business size measured by number of employees is a clearer cut indicator, which in the sample was evenly spread.

While the results of the statistical cross-tabulation thus have to be interpreted with caution, it is not surprising to find a statistically significant relationship indicating that those businesses that have been longest in Parramatta had more relationships with homeless people, were more likely to talk with their staff about homelessness and showed more concern for the issue than others.

These businesses were also more likely to disagree with the statement that homeless people come from elsewhere. They also disagreed more strongly with the statement that homeless people were well looked after by government and welfare groups and agreed with the need for more support programs in Parramatta for the homeless.

While attitudinal questions are graphically represented and discussed in more details below, some of the more noteworthy ones include:

- Roughly three quarters find that homelessness is an obvious issue in Parramatta
- About one quarter thinks that homeless people in Parramatta affect their own business
- Views as to whether homeless people negatively impact on shopping, dining and visiting Parramatta are divided
- An overwhelming majority thinks that homeless people themselves are at risk of becoming victims of violence
- There is a strong view that more needs to be done to address the issue of homelessness

Overall, the survey results support the findings from the Focus Groups. Particularly noteworthy is the relatively high level of awareness amongst Parramatta businesses that homelessness is a complex issue, which does not have easy solutions but needs to be addressed locally in an integrated way. The relatively low number of stereotyped answers augurs well for business participation in the development of a homelessness strategy by Parramatta City Council as an active stakeholder group.

The following sections provide some more detailed information in a generally accessible format illustrated with tables and bar diagrams as well as some quotes from the sections of the questionnaire with open ended questions. The detailed statistical analyses are provided in annexes.
3.2 Demographic Information

The participating businesses were roughly evenly divided regarding business size measured by number of employees: “Micro (less than 5 employees)”; “Small (5-19)”; “Medium (20-199)”; “Large (200+)”. About half of the businesses were located in the “Centre of Parramatta CBD”, about a quarter of them were located at the “Outskirts of Parramatta CBD”, and the last quarter was divided 2:1 between “Multiple sites” and “Other”, which included two from Camellia, one from Seven Hills, one from Hebersham and one from North Sydney. Business types were distributed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/ Entertainment</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate/ Property Development</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Service Industry</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and Industry</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not For Profit</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About a quarter of those who filled in the questionnaire described themselves as “Owner”, a good 40% as “Managers”, almost 30% as “Staff Member” and 1.5% as “Other”. Three quarters of the businesses have been in Parramatta for “10 years or more”, 12% each for “5-9 years” and for “1-4 years”, and only 1.5% for “Less than 1 year”. The distribution of how long the person who filled out the questionnaire had owned or worked for the business was slightly more balanced, namely 27% for “10 year or more”, 27% for “5-9 years”, 39% for “1-4 years” and only 7% for “Less than 1 year”.

3.3 Respondents’ Observations about Homelessness in Parramatta

Only 3% said they “Never” see homeless people in Parramatta, while a quarter said “Once in a while”, and the remaining 72% said “Frequently”. 45% thought homeless people were “Very visible” in the street or area in which their business is located, almost 40% thought “Sometimes apparent” and a bit more than 15% thought homeless people were “Not apparent” in their street or area.

A good third said they have noticed a change in the number of homeless people in Parramatta over the last 12 months, yet almost two thirds had not noticed a change in numbers, while almost 5% had not been here that long. Once the time horizon of the question is increased to five years, those who have noticed a change increased to almost half and only a bit more than a third had not noticed a change, while 15% ticked “I have not been here that long”.

The subsequent Question 11 then asked: “If you answered ‘yes’ to questions 9 or 10, what changes have you observed”. There were a total of 37 respondents who
provided statements addressing Question 11, and a number of them gave composite answers, two samples of which are provided:

They are increasing. They "disappeared" during the Olympics and are now flocking back. There are a group of 4 or 5 that sleep (when warm) in the park by St Johns but in winter they sleep in our arcade (Queensland Arcade). As we are opening at 6 am we usually get to see the "mess" they have caused during the night - rubbish, excrement etc

There is an increase of Homeless with in Parramatta and there are far more families that are at food vans etc

The issues raised are summarised as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Responses to Question 11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase number of homeless people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased visibility of homeless people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased nuisance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease number of homeless people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless people are accessing services more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease visibility for a time but increase generally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More men than women, less near river, or more older vs. more youths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased community concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the two questions “Have you or your staff had any experience of homelessness or homeless people affecting your business” and “Are you aware of other businesses in Parramatta having direct contact with homeless people” were answered by one third with “Yes” and by two thirds with “No”, the distribution is almost balanced once the question is about whether they or their staff had “any personal experience with homelessness or homeless people”. In 60% of the businesses staff have been talking about homelessness in the past 6 months. The related qualitative questions asked respondents to please give an example if they answered yes to the previous question. They can be summarised as follows:

Question 13, which referred to Question 12 (Have you or your staff had any experience of homelessness or homeless people affecting your business) was answered by a total of 25 respondents. The following two quotes illustrate the width of answers provided:

Not getting out of our doorway, scaring off clients, THE SMELL!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
Relieving themselves at our entrance

They don't wear a 'homeless' sign around their neck, but every now and then someone comes in asking for money or hangs around the shops on the footpath asking for money for food so one may assume they are also homeless. One or two obviously in difficult circumstances comes into my shop to buy something. They are well behaved and courteous and always pay. There are also people who live at Cumberland, who can give the wrong impression. All, treated patiently, are o.k.
The following table summarises the issues raised:

**Summary of Responses to Question 13**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social behaviour deterring customers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed toileting in public by homeless people</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begging or soliciting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used business as a refuge</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transacted business without a fuss</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 15 was answered by 37 respondents and referred to Question 14 (Have you or your staff had any personal experience of homelessness or homeless people). Some of the issues mentioned here include:

I see the same homeless people in Parramatta on a daily basis – they obviously do not have access to showers or somewhere to wash their clothes – the gentleman that is often near the police station has aged so much in the last year – it must be very difficult for these people – particularly in winter and the hot days in Summer. I think as a community we are only as good as how we treat these people.

Having to clean up after them.

We have had some customers renting garages who we believe are homeless

Issues raised are summarised in this table:

**Summary of Responses to Question 15**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships through business or service</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had sympathy for the plight of the homeless</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of begging or soliciting or anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated experiences with homeless people</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 17 referred to Question 16 (Are you aware of other businesses in Parramatta having direct contact with homeless people) and 26 people provided answers, which in their majority fit into two main groups illustrated by these two quotes:

Many local businesses give disadvantaged locals assistance.

They come up to counters at food courts to ask for free food and the stench is unbearable

Question 19 relates to Question 18 (Staff in my business / company have talked about homelessness in the past 6 months) and was answered by 41 respondents. The following quotes are illustrative for these answers, while the table below provides a summary of the groups of most common answers:

We have discussed ways to actively participate in helping people in need.

We can't walk past the church on Hunter Street at night due to the homeless people threatening and abusing us.
Summary of Responses to Question 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical contacts or observations of the homeless</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General discussions about homelessness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed specific topics regarding homeless people</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions to homelessness has been discussed</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.4 Respondents’ Attitudes towards Homelessness in Parramatta

The following diagrams illustrate the answers to 11 attitude questions. Some comments are provided, where appropriate in relation to the focus groups discussed earlier.

**Question 20:**
*Homelessness is not an obvious issue in Parramatta*

Nobody strongly agreed with this statement and only a little less than ten percent of businesses agree that homelessness is not an obvious issue. While roughly a fifth neither agreed nor disagreed, almost three quarters disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, i.e. they think that homelessness is an obvious issue.

**Question 21:**
*Homelessness people deter people from shopping in Parramatta*

The views on whether homeless people deter other people from shopping in Parramatta is fairly evenly distributed, with the largest group of 28% being those who neither agree nor disagree, while about 10% have a strong opinion either way.

**Question 22:**
*Homeless people deter people from dining or using services in Parramatta*

Number of respondents
The responses to this question are fairly evenly divided between those who agree and those who disagree: while 39% agree or strongly agree with the statement, 37% disagree or strongly disagree with it, while a quarter of the respondents are undecided.

**Question 23:**
**Homeless people deter visitors to Parramatta**

- 5: strongly agree
- 4: agree
- 3: neither agree nor disagree
- 2: disagree
- 1: strongly disagree

When looking at visitors more generally, the pattern in the answer to the previous question is reinforced with an even more balanced distribution with a third agreeing, a third being neutral and a third disagreeing.

**Question 24:**
**Homeless people are a natural part of Parramatta being a growing CBD**

- 5: strongly agree
- 4: agree
- 3: neither agree nor disagree
- 2: disagree
- 1: strongly disagree

While a quarter of respondents are neutral on this question, 31% agree and 43% disagree. However, amongst those who disagree, the share of those who strongly disagree is much bigger.
In light of the feedback from the focus groups, it needs to be recognised that the word natural in this question can be interpreted as implying ‘and therefore nothing has to be done about it’. This would explain the apparent discrepancy between the survey results and the views expressed in the focus groups, namely that while homelessness does come with being a growing CBD, more needs to be done to support these people.

This interpretation of the large number of respondents who strongly disagree can be supported by the answers to question 30, where 85% agree or strongly agree that more support programs are needed in Parramatta to help local homeless people.

**Question 25:** Homeless people are well looked after by government and welfare groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5: strongly agree</th>
<th>4: agree</th>
<th>3: neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>2: disagree</th>
<th>1: strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

Number of respondents

The low support for this statement is consistent with the above interpretation of Question 24 and with the answers to Question 30 regarding the need for more support programs. It also corresponds to the fact that both Parramatta business chambers are supporting specific local homeless agencies as their main charitable contribution and have a long tradition of active support of their work.

**Question 26:** Most homeless people in Parramatta come here from other areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5: strongly agree</th>
<th>4: agree</th>
<th>3: neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>2: disagree</th>
<th>1: strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Number of respondents

Almost three quarter of respondents to this question were neutral, while the 16% who disagree and the 10% who agree share the remaining quarter roughly 3:2. This could explain the strong rejection of a so-called ‘Olympic solution’ by the members of the focus groups.

**Question 27:** The number of homeless people in Parramatta does not affect my business

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5: strongly agree</th>
<th>4: agree</th>
<th>3: neither agree nor disagree</th>
<th>2: disagree</th>
<th>1: strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of respondents
While in Question 1 almost three quarters found that homelessness is an obvious issue in Parramatta, here only a quarter states that the number of homeless people in Parramatta affects their business (by disagreeing that they do not affect it). This could indicate that Parramatta businesses are aware of and concerned about issues that do not necessarily affect their business directly.

**Question 28:**
**Homeless people in Parramatta create an impression that the city is unsafe**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While a quarter of respondents disagrees or strongly disagrees with this statement, a bit more than a quarter neither agrees nor disagrees with it, which leaves almost half of the respondents to agree or strongly agree.

It is interesting to see the answers to this question together with the answers to the next question.

**Question 29:**
**Homeless people in Parramatta are at risk of becoming victims of violence**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a combined total of 4%, this question has the lowest share of respondents disagreeing and strongly disagreeing. As only 12% are neutral, the overwhelming majority of 84% thinks that homeless people themselves are at risk of becoming victims of violence.

It would be interesting to know more about how businesses see the connection between the two issues.

**Question 30:**
**More support programs are needed in Parramatta to help local homeless people**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: strongly disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: neither agree nor disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5: strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only six percent of respondents strongly disagree that more support programs are needed in Parramatta to help local homeless people. With nobody disagreeing and nine percent being neutral, 85% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this need. This clearly corresponds not only with the strong views expressed in both focus groups, but also with the active support from Parramatta businesses for agencies that support homeless people in Parramatta.

3.5 Views of Homeless People

When asked who makes up the homeless in Parramatta, 42% think they are mainly men, 6% think they are mainly individuals and 1.5% think they are mainly Anglo-Australians. Interestingly, nobody ticked any of the boxes for mainly “Women”, “Young People under the age of 18 years”, “Couples”, “Families”, “Indigenous Australians”, “People from other cultural backgrounds”, but half the respondents thought the homeless in Parramatta were “A combination of the above”.

The respondents think that people in Parramatta become homeless because of “Mental Illness” (13%), “Drugs” (8%), “Family Breakdown” (5%), “Lack of Affordable Housing” (2%) and “Other” (6%), but nobody thought it was because of “Poverty” or “Unemployment”, while two thirds thought people would become homeless because of “A combination of the above”.

Two thirds thought the number of homeless people will increase, one third thought the number would not change, and only 1.5% thought the number would decrease over the next 12 months, while over the next five years 80% expect an increase, 16% no change and 3% a decrease.

Question 35 asked for reasons why respondents expected the number of homeless people to increase. 55 respondents answered the question, some with multiple reasons. Some illustrations and an overview over the reasons provided are given below:

Cost of living is rising, has risen. Mental health related illnesses increasing.

With economic downturn and lack of availability of affordable housing

Summary of Responses to Question 35

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of or poor support services</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global financial crisis, economic downturn, and increased unemployment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased population</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living and house affordability</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family breakdown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive use of drugs and alcohol</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.6 Views about the Future

Question 36 then asked respondents what worries them most about homelessness in Parramatta. Interestingly, every respondent provided an answer to this qualitative
question, some with multiple issues. Some illustrative answers are provided below, together with a table of the key groups of answers.

That it is increasing and there seems to be younger people now. Also that a lot of the more obvious homeless people have some form intellectual or mental issues.

That some of the homeless may become victims of others’ intolerance.

That someone I know could wind up in that position through very little fault of their own.

That the root causes are not being addressed in a mutually beneficial way.

That they become the 'norm' and that no-one adequately addresses the problem - like overnight accommodation and shelters; no one gets ahead without a basic roof over their head;

Young people (local and international students) are unable to make an investment in their futures if they don't have housing that supports them remaining in education – i.e. affordable, quiet, clean, free from violence and intimidation, close to transports and community facilities. They may be unable to complete their qualifications, and end up in a poverty cycle.

Summary of Responses to Question 36

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness in general</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social equity, sympathy, desire to improve society</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services availability</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and welfare concerns</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of the damage done by the homeless</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 37 asked what respondents think should be done about homelessness in Parramatta. Almost all respondents made some suggestions, some of which are provided here, together with a summary table.

A real attempt to house, help and assess mental stability in addition to providing temporary shelter, food and activities. Long term - re-integration into society as productive and valued citizens.

All people, whatever the 'crime', should have access to basic food and shelter. We give this to prisoners, after all, why not people with mental illness or alcoholism? I'd like to see these people off the streets and into rehabilitation programs, or at least with somewhere to hang out during the day and sleep at night.

Council, State and Federal Govt work together with charities and welfare organisations to find ways to offer them places to live, preferably permanent homes.

They need a place to go - to cook meals, wash clothes and have showers - where they can access a locker to place there belonging - somewhere where a nurse is on hand and other government agencies are accessible by phone - Social worker is available, etc.
Summary of Responses to Question 37

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased support (government, PCC and/or NGOs)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, new initiatives, greater awareness</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Move them on”</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too hard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last two questions referred to what businesses were prepared to do themselves. Question 38 asked ‘Are there ways in which you or your business could help to find solutions to homelessness in Parramatta’, a question that 45% answered with Yes. The last question then asked respondents to indicate how they could help. A wide variety of suggestions was made by 38 of the respondents as illustrated by the samples provided. The most common answers were grouped as summarised in the table that follows the quotes.

Businesses such as ours should be invited to participate in forums involving Government and NGOs to develop solutions rather than create more problems through simply talking about the issues.

Pro Bono work - send our employees out to help on work time. Financial

There should have been a ‘don’t know how, but we’d like to help’ button for this question. We run education programs. We’d be happy to help.

We are a patron of the [named local agency] and support [local food service]. We engage our staff to contribute to the [agency’s] efforts through both food and clothing donations and serving lunch at [the food service]

Summary of Responses to Question 39

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form a partnership</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered support</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donate food or money</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a better business precinct</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.7 Cross-tabulation Analysis – Key Findings

Detailed cross-tabulation analyses were performed and detailed reports can be found among the Appendices. However, it is important to notice that in particular the qualitative answers were analysed only in terms of whether a respondent provided an answer, not regarding the answer’s content.

A further difficulty for a detailed analysis through cross-tabulation lies in the fact that the choices for business location, namely Centre of Parramatta CBD; Outskirts of Parramatta CBD; Multiple Sites; and Other (please provide suburb name) were not precise locations and open to some differences in interpretation. Similarly, the possible selections for business type, which included Retail; Restaurant / Entertainment; Real Estate / Property Development; Other Service Industry;
As stated above, those businesses that have been longest in Parramatta had more relationships with homeless people, were more likely to talk with their staff about homelessness and showed more concern for the issue than others. These businesses were also more likely to see homeless people as belonging in some way to the local community – being ‘from’ Parramatta. They were also more likely to support the view that more public or community resources should be directed to support programs for homeless people in Parramatta.
4 Experiences of homelessness – in-depth interviews

4.1 Introduction and information on the participants.

As active agents it is clear that homeless people attempt to “establish a ‘homeplace’ in the midst of deprivation, humiliation, and degradation” (Wright 1997, p. 5), but what homeless people most often lack is a voice. As Foulks and Panatzis (1999) show, the homeless lack not only the ability to articulate their needs but the opportunity to be heard, understood and listened to by authorities such as police, welfare agencies and government. The issue of ‘voice’ is a critical constituent of the research, and the value of data drawn from the direct experience of homeless people is crucial in the development of an effective strategy. This part of the Report gives the homeless a ‘voice’ and speaks of pathways into, experiences of and the barriers out of homelessness.

This Report draws on interviews with 35 homeless people, 26 males and 9 females. The interviews were conducted in November and December 2009, in different locations in Parramatta LGA, including the Department of Housing, the Stepping Stone (Pendle Hill), the Parramatta Mission, the Cardinal Freeman Lodge (Granville) and some ‘feeding stations’ around Prince Alfred Park.

The interviews were semi-structured and open ended, with the specific aim of gaining an understanding of individual and personal experiences of homelessness; ‘Pathways into homelessness’, ‘Why Parramatta?’ and ‘Pathways out of homelessness’. The interviews were recorded and transcribed and this report will endeavour to allow some of the voices and opinions of the interviewees to be heard. The excerpts from the interviews have been chosen to highlight some, but not all of the issues addressed in this report. Most of them draw on individual, personal experiences, recapitulating the experiences of many of the participants.

It should be pointed out that there was a great diversity in the backgrounds and experiences of homelessness among the interviewees. These differences can be explained by personal histories, age, gender, health and current living situations. At the same time there were a number of uniform factors detected in the stories of many of the interviewees, as outlined below.

The part of the Report will be divided into three sections; the first section outlines and accounts for some of the most common ‘pathways into homelessness’, the second section details the reasons given by the interviewees for residing in Parramatta LGA, the third section provides a reflection on possible ‘pathways out of homelessness’, as provided by the comments of the interviewees in this study.

4.2 Pathways into homelessness.

There were a number of different reasons given as catalysts explaining the interviewees’ current living situations, ranging from drug/alcohol abuse, to parenting obligations, to the current global economic crisis. However, it must be stressed that for each person the causes are multidimensional. While some cited a particular reason for their current living situation, there were inevitable additional personal (e.g. lack of...
family support, need to support family), social (e.g. drug abuse, lack of education and social/survival skills) and economic (e.g. gender, age, education, work history, criminal record, family obligations/support) contributing factors. However, there were apparent dominant themes when it came to ‘pathways into homelessness and this section will be split into sub-sections according to the following themes:

1) Financial hardship (very general) and difficulties obtaining/maintaining employment.
2) Gender and parental obligations.
3) Ill health (mental and/or physical) and drug abuse/addiction.
4) Difficulties obtaining/maintaining housing. (Housing NSW).

4.2.1 Financial hardship and difficulties obtaining/maintaining employment.

An overwhelming majority (28 out of 35) specified some form of past and/or present financial hardship as one of the main causal factors underpinning their current situation. Most cited financial hardship as an instrumental factor when discussing problems with housing (both in terms of access to rental housing and costs of running a household (public/community housing and private market). Subsequently, financial hardship was one of the main obstacles cited as impeding a path out of homelessness.

None of the interviewees had permanent employment at the time of the interview, a few had intermittent employment and the majority received some form of governmental financial support. Hence, lack of paid employment (opportunities) and in many cases training and education, was a factor raised by many when explaining their situation; others expressed frustration with the extent of financial support provided by the State and some cited the high rental and living costs in Sydney.

The following is an extract from an interview with a man in his late 40s, who claims to ‘technically live in Albury’, but frequently travels to Parramatta, where he stays for a number of days or weeks, sleeping in Parramatta Park. This interviewee recognises that his ‘personal circumstances...are to some degree [his] own fault’, partly relating to a ‘...lack of employment opportunities to poor education’, as well as ill health (both physical and mental). The following extract summarises some of the most common elements raised when discussing financial situations and current living circumstances:

Where I am down at Albury I can afford it...I’ll pay $70 a week and I can still afford to pay, like buy some food and clothes and so on.

Rent in Sydney is just so high and particularly in Parramatta...even the medium rents are $250 to $300 a week...even if I was to share with someone else I couldn’t simply afford that. And the waiting list in the Department of Housing in Sydney is that long we’re talking in some cases it’s four to five years... who in their right mind can afford to pay say even $200 a week on the Newstart or the pension. Like I’m on a disability support pension; I can’t afford $200 a week...Even if I was to get someone else in I’d still find it a struggle paying $100 a week plus buy food and pay for electricity and clothes and that... (WS119113).

There are two additional factors which need to be considered when discussing ‘Financial hardship’; gender (roles) and prejudice (personal and societal).
While a number of the men admitted finding themselves homelessness due to some fault of their own, they also cited negative attitudes and prejudice as barriers to employment and training opportunity. The most common forms of such prejudicial attitudes are demonstrated towards people who have (had) alcohol/drug problems and those with criminal records. Furthermore, these experiences were almost entirely found among the male respondents. The reason(s) for such a male-centric focus cannot be fully established here, but some likely explanations may be linked with dominant societal ideas concerning males and masculinity. In addition, the prejudice experienced by the male respondents may be linked to assumptions about the ‘bread winner role’ of males (as opposed to the ‘mothering role’ of women as discussed below). The following quotes outline some of the common problems identified among many of the male participants.

You get a lot of negative attitude...I’m an alcoholic and you know once somebody finds out that you’re an alcoholic and also I’m an ex prisoner. The moment you mention those two words is “that’s it”. And especially if you’re an ex prisoner that’s real big discrimination. Employers just look at you and go “no way” (WS119116).

You have to fill out what medication you are on and why you are on it and once they find out why I am on it, it is like “no”, we can’t employ you; our insurance isn’t going to cover it. So it is kind of like a no win situation (WS119121).

I lost my driver’s licence which made working very hard...I’ve not had a licence for almost for five years now and that’s gradually making it harder to find employment and someone to take you on. It makes it very hard. It’s quite hard to find a job without a licence...transport. Nearly every employer specifies that (WS119124).

However, there is another form of prejudice experienced by some of the older males that are causal factors in their slide into homelessness and provide continued stumbling blocks on the path out of homelessness. According to the following accounts, this prejudice can be found among both private employers and staff in public service agencies, revealing discrimination based on age and disability. The following three extracts draw on interviews from interviewees residing (at the time of interview) in temporary hostel accommodation. They express the experiences of men who have already achieved a certain level of stability in their lives, after becoming homeless, but who are limited by factors such as age and/or minor disabilities.

I went to another interview for a forklift driver and I told them all my experience and all that, now there was an awful lot of young fellows going for the same job too...Most people don’t understand that until they get to a certain age, they think I am over qualified, they think I am over age because I am over 50 and they go “this fellow has only got about five years life left in him”. So it is pretty competitive out there (WS119120).

There is a lot of things I can do but people will not employ you with a limp...So that was just bit of a kick in the arse, do you know what I mean... ?(WS119117).

Yeah it’s mainly because I’m getting older now and yes just a bit more of a struggle because people don’t want to employ an older man, they’d rather have the young ones (WS119126).
Similar concerns can be found among men sleeping rough:

Well at the moment I’m doing a warehouse course. If something comes of it. I’m not holding my hopes up too high because for one bloke doing the course said straight away most of us are over a certain age that nobody wants to hire. They want to hire between 20 and 30... Well it’s a bit stupid being in something if you know you’ve only got one in a hundred chance to get even a look in let alone getting a job (DG110022).

For some, past training and profession are no longer applicable:

I’m an RN by trade... I’ve got bipolar disorder and they won’t re-register me (DG110021).

Ill health, personal history, age and opportunities are evidently factors contributing to financial hardship, however, gender and parental responsibilities need also be understood.

4.2.2 Gender and parental obligations.

Parental responsibilities were cited by some as one of the key contributing element to their current living situation. It is not the function of this Report to engage in discussion on gender roles, but there is one glaring difference between the accounts described by female and male interviewees on this topic. While some of the younger men (fathers) claimed that their desire to establish a connection with their child(ren) and to take on parental responsibilities, was driving their attempts to move out of homelessness, many of the young women (mothers) cited their parental roles as both the cause of the current situation as well the reason for limited opportunities to improve their lives.

Of the nine women participating in this study, five were mothers with dependent children. While these five women gave different reasons for their current living situations, e.g. family breakdown, domestic violence, financial hardship, drug abuse of spouse, they were in accord in their concerns for the welfare of their children, as well as the fact that their roles and obligations as mothers were creating barriers in their struggle to improve their living situations. The women stated that their parental obligations create significant limits when it comes to both work and educational opportunities as pathways out of homelessness.

All five women resided in temporary accommodation such as the refuge or an apartment provided by a local agency, but two were coming to the end of their residency, facing the uncertainty of having secure shelter for themselves and their children. Similarly, the other mothers raised the issue that while the services and assistance provided by the agency was invaluable to them, this assistance and shelter was not permanent. Permanence and security were the highest priorities raised by these women1. Parental responsibility is an important common element among these women, both as a contributing factor towards their current living situation and in terms of impacting on their options for improving their lives.

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1 Permanent and secure housing was the highest priority for the majority of the participants, followed closely by employment opportunities.
The following quotes represent some common experiences cited by homeless single mothers, regarding lack of family support, dependence on welfare, lack of opportunities to access further education and training and social exclusion due to responsibilities in caring for young children.

Because like we’re in these situations because we are mothers and we’re nurturing and we want to look after our kids, if there’s any problems of course the man can work; well we can’t like we have to be there with our children. So women need more support...

I think that we couldn’t cope if they took away what we’ve got now we’d be worse off. Like if we didn’t get our Centrelink benefit how would we support our children? If you don’t have any family to look after your kids whatever, you are really in a hard position. So in recognising that I do feel guilty to say we need more, but we do.

Like you can’t afford the child care to put the kids in the child care because you’re paying so much rent. You just feel hopeless and sad that you’re on your own you don’t have anyone to turn to...

You find many women that you know like especially in your age group [20-30years] who have this same problem? There are so many....With the older children at least they go to school... With smaller children you have to pay for that at least there’s public education for once they reach a certain age (all from the same interview WS119111).

All these claims need careful consideration when addressing the problems faced by single mothers and fathers fighting homelessness.

Well that’s the thing I have two children with me now... So pretty much over the last six months I had to deal with...you know while I’m trying to find housing and trying to keep the kids fed sort of thing. Trying to find the income...there’s just so much to do (WS119109).

There was a much greater diversity in the male interviewees’ responses when it came to considering the effects of gender on the experiences of homelessness. To illustrate this, nine of the twenty-six males resided at the time of interview at one particular hostel. This meant that one factor was uniform among them – they needed to be pre-approved for access to the accommodation and services provided by this agency (no drugs and evident willingness to wish to improve their living situations) – however their reasons for their current situations differed greatly.

These reasons ranged from problems with drug, alcohol and mental health problems, to struggles to maintain permanent employment, for various reasons, to problems resulting from residency status and difficulties adapting to Australian society, i.e. migrant status, language skills and lack of family support. A combination of these factors cumulatively resulted in financial hardship and lack of capacity to secure work and/or housing.

4.2.3 Ill health (mental and/or physical) and drug abuse/addiction.

A number of interviewees cited ill health (mental and/or physical) and/or drug abuse as factors contributing to their current living situation. It should be pointed out that these factors were not always directly associated with the participants themselves. For example, an abusive spouse or troubles experienced by a family member might be identified as contributing to the respondent’s own struggles. However, drug and
alcohol abuse/addiction were cited as contributing factors in more than half the stories and were more commonly mentioned among the men than the women.

A number of the respondents were seeking help for addiction(s), this applied especially to those currently residing in particular hostels as mentioned above, some utilised counselling provided by services for the homeless in Parramatta and some had access to specialised medical services. However, it must be pointed out that those availing themselves of services for both health and addiction matters, were predominantly those already receiving significant assistance to stabilise their living situations, i.e. secure housing, food and personal support. These respondents stated clear intentions for improving their situations further.

It must be noted that the account provided in this report represents a very simplified view on the factors of ill health and drug abuse/addiction experienced by the participants in this study. Firstly, this category, ill health including mental/physical health, and drug abuse/addiction is used to conveniently draw together very diverse physical, psychological, social, economic and even cultural aspects of everyday lived experiences of the participant. Consequently, where any of these aspects were raised as reasons for homelessness, both causes and possible solutions to these problems varied greatly. Some are ingrained in the life of the individual, e.g. drug abuse, addiction, mental health problems, some can be addressed through public and social services, e.g. addiction, mental/physical health problems and some are derived from wider societal predicaments, e.g. lack of employment for people with disability either physical or mental disabilities.

Hence, secondly, it is almost impossible to determine a direct cause/effect correlation between these matters and homelessness\(^2\). In some cases ill health and/or drug abuse played little or no causal role in the living situation of the person concerned, particularly as it applies to some of the younger women and recent migrants, a fact which must be considered carefully in order to avoid stereotypical explanations for homelessness. The following quote outlines very well the respondents’ feelings about being stereotyped, as well as touching on some of the issues raised below on socio-economic factors.

> In one ad I think I saw one woman and she looked like a hobo. She looked like, you know, the typical stereotype of the homeless lady with the shopping trolley, that’s not what homeless is today... Just in my family off the top of my head three women, four women including me [have been] homeless. There’s my mum, two aunts and me you know and that’s because of our family situation, our cultures, our family background, things like that (WS119109).

Thirdly, due to the sensitive nature of this specific topic area (i.e. illegality and stigma associated with drugs (abuse) and mental health problems), not all interviewees raised these issues directly. However, it might be suggested - based on comments made by some service providers and indirect indication and comments made by some participants on these issues - that many had struggles/ed with either drugs and/or mental health problems.

\(^2\) I.e. this might be possible on an individual basis, but impossible when considering the diversity of homeless people in Parramatta.
Finally, specifically on the topic of drug abuse, the strict rules banning the use of alcohol and illicit drugs (no service for those who are intoxicated) on the premises of service providers might also have meant that some of those interviewed were reluctant to discuss this issue, in fear of losing access to food and other resources.

4.2.4 Difficulties obtaining/maintaining housing.

The conventional social and political debates on homelessness revolve around 'lack of housing'. It has already been stated that the paths into homelessness for the participants in this study are numerous and varied; there are interwoven personal, social, political and economic factors which all need to be addressed in order to achieve a holistic picture of homelessness. However, there is a need to stress a few factors on 'housing' here, drawing on points already raised, which link directly into the discussions below.

Nearly all the accounts in this study feature experiences with Housing NSW, and overwhelmingly these accounts were negative. The causes behind the difficulties of obtaining/maintaining housing can be put into three broad categories: Socioeconomic status; Political - the welfare state; Personal.

4.2.5 Socio-economic status

As stated above, a number of people cited financial hardship and lack of employment opportunities as the major reasons for their current living situation. For some the situation was relatively recent - e.g. separation from a spouse resulted in loss of housing and or/financial support, or loss of regular employment had resulted in the loss of housing - and by their account this situation was most likely temporary. Some cited the rises in rental costs across Sydney (even the global economic crisis and landlords raising the rents beyond the person’s means) combined with other personal factors (limited family support or lack of opportunities) as the reasons for their homelessness. The common factors among this group tended to be low socio-economic status, lack of alternative resources and, for some, limited skills to manage everyday life (esp. economic aspects).

The following quote, from a mother currently living with her daughters at an agency refuge, describes the impact of socio economic factors on the lives of homeless single parent families:

Yeah, so you're just basically meeting the needs of everyday life... Pay rent, groceries and that’s all...we really [just] have enough money for groceries and rent...yeah we definitely don’t even have $20 to put aside each week... We’re not complaining too much - at least we have a roof over our head now [the refuge]. So that’s going to be better than nothing (WS119106).

The following quote, from an interview with a man in his early twenties, demonstrates how a combination of factors including intermittent employment, problems with keeping employment and lack of family support and social dislocation have contributed to his homelessness:

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3 Still, some participants recognised the tremendous demands facing the Department
I was working and living in Newcastle as a door to door sales person and I needed somewhere to live up there so I was living with two people that I barely knew basically. And I lived there with them for several months. One of them asked me to move out and I moved to another one and that guy asked me to move out. So I moved...my problem is saving money, that’s simply how I got here [hostel]... I don’t have work. I don’t really have too much problem finding...it’s more finding something you like... it’s getting that job that works for me. And my longest job is five months or seven months something like that (WS119123).

4.2.6 Welfare Services

A small number of those interviewed had owned their own house or participated in the private rental market, but most received some form of financial government support 4. However, many had lived in public and /or community housing at one stage or another in their lives - the reasons for their loss of this housing differed - and most reported having current applications (being ‘on the waiting list’) with Housing NSW, as well as with other services. The respondents commonly described their dependence on welfare, but also referred to a lack of opportunities, especially employment, struggles with managing on meagre income and personal misfortune as can be observed in the quotes below:

[My daughter] just got a voucher then from St Vincent’s De Paul so it’s hard but we get rental assistance but we were here [the refuge] for I think we’ve been here six and a half weeks we were here before until we even started getting the rent assistance (WS119107).

Yeah when I was married. When I was married with my daughter. We had a house and everything and she [wife] passed away... When she passed away I kept up with the bills and everything and then you know putting her [daughter] through school. I lost my job and everything just went down, downhill. The banks don’t care they want their foreclosure and their money so I lost the house (WS119114).

Well in 1996 my father died and my sister and I had to sell his house and I had nowhere to go so I just turned into Parramatta and then I found myself living on the street and more or less been there ever since (WS119116).

Yeah just no money, can’t afford to do anything yeah. I’m on dole payments. Because I was working casual I wasn’t getting enough like on the dole like I was getting too much to get a payment but not enough to survive (WS119126)

4.2.7 Personal or lifestyle choices

Finally, homelessness (or lack of housing) was a personal choice for a very small number of the respondents. Those in this position could be said to fit into one of two categories. Firstly, for some of the 'rough sleepers', their living situation might be considered a personal 'choice' (in many instances there were also evidence of ill mental health) Secondly, those who through lack of income or low income and lack of access to affordable housing, 'chose' the life of the homeless. The following excerpt is taken from an interview with a couple in their sixties, who have lived (singly and as a couple) on the streets for a number of years. Both have suffered substance abuse and the woman has a mental illness. The two appear to be quite resourceful, but

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4 For many this applied to other members of their families, e.g. parents and siblings.
evidently the available assistance through the channels of the State are not sufficient in meeting their housing needs without impacting too severely on their living standard:

We got...they call it rent start or emergency housing and they put us up in hotels one was the Grand Stand in Warwick Farm and another one was the one after that was "Pethridge House"... So anyway we can’t continue the situation so they put us in a place in Fairfield a guest house and it was $590 a fortnight right.... We’re only getting $800 a fortnight between the pair of us and ... so that’s a big chunk out of our money. Then we got to pay cigarettes we got to pay if we want to go out or pay for food... They put us up at this place in Sydney similar story but it ends up costing us $660 a fortnight. So you can see our money is going down and we’re in the same situation if the cigarettes butts up, doing everything we’re doing living on the streets but we’re having no fun and we got a roof over our heads...it’s no different than living on the streets when they put you in some of those positions (WS119112).

To conclude, it is clearly evident that the respondents experienced difficulties in securing permanent housing for a variety of different reasons ranging from personal problems, to market forces, and the limited capacity of Housing NSW to meet their needs. While a small minority of the interviewees did not express a great desire for permanent housing (shelter), the vast majority sought permanent housing as a matter of priority.

4.3 Why Parramatta?

Like I went to the Housing Department the other week just to see what the story was...They’ll say to me "ok we’ve got a place for you at Mt Druitt". Sorry I’m not going anywhere near Mt Druitt you know (DG110016)

I did go over to Penrith once, looked around the place and thought "no", go back to where I know. That’s why I keep coming back to Parramatta because I know the area I know a lot of people here and I know staff here are pretty good. Food vans are pretty good, I can get a shower here five days a week even, do my washing. And so I just keep coming to Parramatta whenever I need help (WS119113).

There are a number of reasons why those interviewed found themselves living in Parramatta LGA. For the purpose of this report, these reasons have been split into three themes:

1) Born or raised in/around Parramatta
2) Referred to Parramatta
3) The 'Pros and Cons' of living homeless in Parramatta

4.3.1 Born or raised in/around Parramatta

Well you got food, I know people here. I’ve lived in Parramatta in Northmead most of my life so I know the area. All the other areas are too dangerous I don’t want to [live anywhere else in Sydney], I mean even with my circumstances why should I have to up and move somewhere else that I don’t know (DG110022).

A number of the participants (predominantly male) were born and raised in and around Parramatta. Hence, their explanations for living in Parramatta drew on matters to do with familiarity, security, access to social networks, and even some sense of 'ownership'. Some had lived for periods of time outside of the Parramatta area, but
most had not ventured far. Therefore, it is important to consider that the positive aspects of living in Parramatta raised by many of the participants includes everyday emotional support\(^5\) and sense of security as the result of assumed 'affinity to place'.

This 'affinity to place' was certainly not exclusive to those born in the Parramatta area; many participants who had moved to Parramatta from other parts of Sydney/Australia expressed similar feelings. Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of this 'affinity', for the purpose of this report, relate to the nature of the social networks amongst the homeless (for security, emotional support and information flow) and the importance of knowledge about the various services and resources for everyday survival for homeless people.

A number of respondents, predominantly those sleeping rough and those interviewed at the Parramatta Mission, described some form of camaraderie among homeless people in the area: a form of a social support network\(^6\). This support network might not be fully recognised by society in general and public agencies in particular, but it appears to provide a function, which would be usually fulfilled by family, which supplements the public and charity services and provides money, food and clothes. There is not space here to delineate the functions of this support network, but there was certainly evidence of personal empowerment and survival skills being derived from it\(^7\).

The following quotes describe this network.:

> Like us homeless...at Parramatta we have our own underground communication system... I would feel safer with our underground network than with other networks, providers. Because the other homeless people...that can point us to say "ok there’s feeds on tonight, you need some clothes come with me, we’ll get some clothes"...that’s the word of mouth (WS119114).

> Lenny got bashed last night his push bike got stolen and word of mouth gets around, like news. And we try to look after him if we see like some of the homeless guys that I know they’ve got two or three push bikes and they can either give him one or give him some clothes... We look after our own, no one else will (WS119114).

> If it hadn’t been for a man [another homeless man] I’d most probably died on the street because he showed me where the food vans were. He showed me a good place to camp where you couldn’t be found and I just more or less just stayed here [Parramatta]. I got nowhere else to go I’ve got no family so... (WS119116).

> That’s right I have no social support and in fact, the people on the street are my social support. They’re one’s who have lent me some money or something when I needed it and when I needed train fare or something they’re the only ones that come through (DG110019).

However, regardless of birthplace or inclusion into the local network of the homeless in Parramatta, there are no simple, absolute answers to question of: 'Why Parramatta'?

\(^5\) Support for physical well being will be discussed below

\(^6\) It should also be made clear that not all homeless people were included in this network, and sometimes these networks functioned as protection against some other homeless people (esp. those considered violent or dangerous).

\(^7\) Another factor to consider is the notion of a 'community' which was evident among those discusses this network.
Never the less, there needs to be a full recognition of the importance of social support at the level of the homeless people themselves, coupled with the various local services and support which will be discussed below.

4.3.2 Referred to Parramatta.

It is not the purpose of this report to reflect on the nature and function of the agencies which deal with homelessness in Australia. The points and quotes in this section draw exclusively on the experiences of two groups among the participants and do not provide complete insight into the full nature of public assistance to homeless people. The purpose of this section is to reflect briefly on the fact that while many people chose to live homeless in Parramatta (as discussed above) many do not have such a 'choice'.

The explanations in the quotes below were given by interviewees residing in or receiving assistance from several temporary accommodation/hostel services and echo that of most of their fellow residents.

Through the Department of Housing, they told me because I was getting pretty desperate... I was very upset...they just said "oh you have to ring the homeless line we can’t help you". And then I rang the homeless line and they just said you have to go to a refuge. And I was more upset because I’ve never been to place like that before and I didn’t know what to expect (WS119111).

Well, I approached the Department of Housing as soon as I found myself homeless, they referred me to a backpacker’s hostel, they paid for a week there. They told me that the condition was that I had to ring the homeless person’s hotline everyday and so I did that and the first vacancy that came up was in Parramatta in [named] hostel (WS119119). I rang the homeless persons hotline and they asked me what area I was in and they referred me to [named] hostel in Parramatta and then I was there for a week and then they moved me down here [another hostel]... I have been here a month now, so not long (WS119121)

Someone mentioned [named] hostel to me and I rang them and that’s sort of how I come to be here [another hostel]. I could have easily been in Sydney or somewhere else out there... Yeah, basically when I was at Foster House (in Sydney) bloke there says try [named hostel] if you want something urgently. And so that’s how, otherwise I wouldn’t have sort of thought of them [CFL] I suppose (WS119124)

So I had no choice but to come here [named refuge], because you got to ring the homeless line and they say well whatever refuge comes up first you have to take (WS119110).

It should be stated here that the quotes above draw on the accounts of people who have found temporary accommodation, and have met the particular criteria for assistance, which might include demographic (age, gender, family type) or personal/motivational criteria (e.g. willingness to commit to programs). The above accounts suggest that many people who find themselves suddenly without secure housing, and have neither strong financial resources, nor family or friends who can help, are likely to either ring the Sydney Homeless Persons’ Information Centre (HPIC) or approach Housing NSW. Some find temporary assistance (financial and referral to temporary hotel/motel/guesthouse accommodation) from the Housing
NSW⁸, they listed for housing with Housing NSW and/or referred to the HPIC helpline. For those providing the quotes above, the HPIC has led them to their current temporary housing – and in many cases this has been a two stage process, through one hostel or refuge to another which offers a longer stay or program.

It must be pointed out that this (albeit selective) sample indicates that while all these people are grateful for being given shelter, they had limited say in where they were located. For many the location of their current residence does represent at least a short term solution, but a number of the mothers in particular expressed concerns about the apparent randomness of temporary housing allocation and the subsequent need to frequently uproot their children.

She’ll [daughter] be going to school next year but I don’t know if I could put her in because I don’t know where I’m going to be living. So that’s another thing… Yeah she’s supposed to be starting kindergarten next year. But if I don’t have a roof over our heads well she can’t go to kindergarten (WS119110).

4.3.3 The Pros and Cons of living homeless in Parramatta

When interviewees were asked about their lives as a homeless person in Parramatta a number of both positive and negative factors were brought to light. Overall, the comments about ‘place’ were more positive than negative, especially when accounts draw on comparison with other parts of Sydney/NSW, rather than particular personal experiences. This section draws predominantly on the responses of those collected in the Parramatta Mission, the Department of Housing and 'rough sleepers'. As stated in the previous section, those people who had been referred to longer term temporary accommodation programs, were already provided with housing and food (also clothing and other services for many), so some of the everyday challenges of homeless people who sleep rough or have very erratic housing, might not be applicable.

However, there were some common elements raised by participants across the board, equally important to those who slept rough and those in refuges and temporary housing. Parramatta is relatively well connected for public transport (most mentioned the railway). This fact allows for significant mobility, which permits people to travel (cheaply) in order to keep in contact with family and friends (across Sydney and interstate), it allows mothers to continue to send their children to (their existing/previous) school outside Parramatta and it provides for a 'sense of freedom' which was very important to many. Another interesting factor which should be noted is that this ease of travel and good connection allows many homeless people who do not sleep in Parramatta to 'visit' for the day in order to utilise some of the services provided there, especially food outlets.

INTERVIEWER: How long have you been there approximately?... About I’d say about five months, six months...Prior to that I had my own little squat camp in Blacktown. But I got out of there because I was robbed, bashed. I got taken to Westmead hospital. I said I’m not coming back there again it’s too dangerous. And there’s no free food or feed. But there’s no facilities for the homeless in Blacktown...they’ve stopped all that now and some of the homeless people from Blacktown come here for the feed and the clothes... and some people have moved on from Blacktown and come here permanently (WS119114).

⁸ As pointed out before, nearly all the participants of this study claim to be are on a waiting list at Housing NSW.
There was a uniform consensus on the fact that when it comes to services like food, clothing and physical hygiene, Parramatta's providers were one of the best, if not the best.

There were a number of different charities and service providers mentioned, and the following quotes refer to some of them:

... you get breakfast, lunch and dinner or tea here every night or most nights. Plus a sort of a supper late at night from St Vincent de Paul so there’s no reason what so ever to go hungry in Parramatta. I could get a shower here five days a week, I can do my washing here (WS119113).

Well services here are basically you can never go hungry in Parramatta that’s a certain thing...when I first moved out I went off without going on the dole deliberately for approximately two and a half months. And one stage I had one dollar to my name for five weeks but at no stage did I go hungry. In actual fact I can put on weight if I wanted to and that’s mainly because not the Government provided services, its voluntary provided services which is Stepping Stones, Burnett Street Church, Cocos, Salvation Army, Vinnie vans things like that (DG110015).

Once a person has gained some local knowledge and tapped into the local homelessness network, Parramatta appears to be a good place for those in need of a meal, cloths and human contact.

Oh it’s good, it’s the best [Parramatta]... well the Mission’s good here. ... There are other places where you can go for a feed for something to eat or a cup of tea like the Stepping Stone in the park. And there’s one at the library tonight, there’s two tonight. They’re run by the Greek Orthodox Church. They’re in the library it’s every Tuesday night about 8 o’clock, 8.30. So you go to the first feed and get some clothes, something to eat, sit have a cup of tea have a chat. Find out if you could get some referrals with Department of Housing or something. Because they’ve got connections as well...and then after that go to the second feed at the library and do the same thing again (WS119114).

There were certainly some less positive comments made when discussing the available services in Parramatta, but these was mostly to do with personal characteristics and reservations concerning particular staff in some agencies.

Perhaps the major area of concern raised by a few on the topic of personal care was the lack of washing and toilet facilities at certain times during the evenings and night times.

The only [negative] thing in the Parramatta area that I find is the toilet arrangements at Town Hall, they are locked up at 4.30 or something like that, there are shops still going, people are still walking through everywhere, and no one can go to the toilet areas and a couple of people have been fined for urinating in the public... if you have got the council worker still walking around at 8 o'clock at night empty the bins, don't they know how to turn a key, can't they lock the toilets up. So how fair dinkum are they for helping the homeless (WS119117).

...we’ve approached them [the Council] about leaving the toilets open because they shut the toilets at 5 o’clock and us people that live on the street after 5 o’clock we got nowhere to go. And most publicans won’t let us in the hotels it’s just to go and use the toilet... Well see we’ve only got here [Parramatta Mission] to wash our clothes unless we go to a Laundromat and as for showers well there’s anywhere to 80 people every
day and you’re all lining up to have a shower...There’s no places for us to go to do that. It just makes life difficult (WS119116).

Well funny story is one bloke he keeps getting caught for urinating. $600 fine... because there’s not many places to, there’s no toilets (MD00001).

Furthermore, while many referred to some instances of negative attitude from the public, police and/or service providers, there was also frequent recognition of the fact that there are a number of homeless people in Parramatta; hence it is understandable that there would be negative feelings and action.

Well there are well I think the main problem with the Council was because there was so many homeless people congregating in the one area, mainly up in the Church Street Mall outside the St John’s Church it sort of presented a bit of a bad image for the City. I mean I can understand you know the Council’s attitude of wanting to have a good image for the area. I mean everybody wants to have a good image. But I don’t think the Council understood the reason why people or the homeless were congregating there was because they had nowhere else to go. We had nowhere else to go. So you sit up at the mall chat away and we usually end up taking a coffee away from here [Parramatta Mission] like a cup of coffee from here and the cups would get dropped on the ground (WS119113).

The general consensus among the participants on the appeal of Parramatta for homeless people continues when discussing some further services:

I appreciate what the Council does in Parramatta for the homeless you know. The meals, the transport, there’s a free bus you know that takes you from the station to the meals and yeah...and the Library I go to the Parramatta Library to read you know just to have a relax and read history and things like that (MD00002).

...there is Parramatta Mission, like the soup kitchen there, that is every day, like people can go and have a shower there, do their washing there, charge their phone there, get their mail sent there if they don't have an address and a lot of places elsewhere in NSW just don't have it (WS119121).

When the focus is brought to the topic of the police and police approaches to the homeless, the responses are controversial and stories differ greatly. The following accounts are typical of the accounts given by those who had had encounters with the police:

They [police] pick on us [homeless] all the time. It was so hot was it last week or the week before it was so hot. I just walked through WestPoint [shopping centre] I had my bag with me just my bag and my clothes and my little bit of food there, clothes and blanket in my bag... I had Police tap me on the shoulder...and he says "sir are you a customer". I said "no I’m just walking through and getting out of the hot". He said "can I have a look in your bag please sir". The way I looked, the way I was dressed they thought I could have been a thief or a drug dealer or something... (WS119114).

Without their dedication to the job the Ambulance Officers or the Police we might not be here today...Because he was out to kill me that guy [describing an attack]... we might call them "pigs"... but at the end of the day they’re there to do a job and if they’re not dedicated it’s going to cost you...we’re lucky people... the Police do have my credit of recommendation they really do (WS119112).

9 This participant is referring to claims that Parramatta Council had actively taken steps to move homeless people out of Parramatta a few months earlier. This communication was not recorded, hence not quoted.
No, no coppers are pretty good. I do get harassed by them because being with the wrong people and that but they’re normally pretty good towards me say (DG110018).

It is quite apparent that as long as a person did not look like an 'out-of-place' homeless person (see quote WS119114) and that they were not mingling with the 'wrong people', that their encounters with the police were minimal, and usually in order to seek assistance. There were two comments made about serious police harassment, but both were based on the supposed experiences of a friend of a friend, hence cannot be substantiated.

Similarly, when asked about general attitude of the public and local business people towards them/homeless people, there were diverse answers

Some of them [business] turn their nose up at you and look at you if you’re a piece of filth don’t they... They look sideways... You can feel almost if they’re burning through your soul... But see I think too like without being all negative there is a lot of businesses that donate money to this place [Parramatta Mission] to other places right. The unsung hero and when we talk about the negatives they’d be dragged into that and be labelled and they shouldn’t be they should be smiled at, thank you for the little bit of help you’ve given (WS119112).

You get a lot of negative attitude especially if you go to a department store and you want to lay-by something you want to take your time paying it, once they find your homeless...that’s real big discrimination. Employers just look at you and go no way (WS119116).

I don't get hassled by the local businesses or nothing, they treat you just like everybody else and so it is good (WS119121).

I do use the facilities of the library a lot and things like that. But not in the local business area "no". They generally, it’s like a shadow world we [homeless] live in...they [business people] don’t see you because they don’t want to (DG110015).

INTERVIEWER: Do you have any contact with local business? DG110022: No why should I you know what I mean... No I keep away from them [cafes, restaurants] they cost money (DG110022).

Again, the quotes above indicate that the experiences of homeless people differ greatly, depending on personal appearance, personal attitudes of the people(s) they engage with, stereotypical images and beliefs and engagement with society in general.

Still, apart from a few specific stories from those who sleep rough, most considered Parramatta safer than other parts of Sydney, especially the City of Sydney. There were a number of factors contributing to the feeling of safety, perhaps starting with the certainty of regular meals and the availability of services to meet minimal daily needs, supported by the knowledge of the 'underground' support network, to that fact that, assuming civil and respectful conduct, neither police nor the public causes participants (too much) hassle.

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10 It must be kept in mind that the participant cohort was quite diverse.
4.4 Pathways out of homelessness.

This section reflects on the comments and opinions of those who are actively seeking improvement in their current living situations, i.e. while the vast majority of the participant wished for change and improvement, it must be noted that not all the participant made such claims. The key factors to keep in mind here are that many participants were actively engaged in seeking paths to improvement (out of homelessness), some were seeking improvement in their lives as currently lived (i.e. facilities and services) and some (very few) did not state any particular drives towards change and/or improvement.

Perhaps, one of the key analytical factors while debating 'pathways out of homelessness' are these: Does the target group/individuals wish for change(s), are they capable of utilising services and assistance which are already available and do the services and assistance provided meet their real needs (and wishes)?

This section is brief - many of these issues have already been raised and addressed to some extent - based on some key areas identified by the interviewees in this study as pathways towards improvement in their lives. Furthermore, the points raised here and throughout the report, are not meant as solutions to the problems of the homeless, the main aim is to put forth the areas identified by interviewees, identifying the problems, hence possible solutions.

It stands to reason, that those seeking paths out of homelessness, placed permanent, secure and affordable housing was at the top of their list:

...start my life over again with me and my daughter... secure housing would be the first step in the right direction and then getting work (WS119114).

...the first assistance is the food and the second is shelter... I think the most important thing is shelter (WS119125).

INTERVIEWER: So would you say then that the first step in improving your living situation would be to get into housing? WS119118: Yes INTERVIEWER: Anything else you would put on a list in that sense of improving your everyday life? WS119118: No just housing (WS119118).

There is not much reason to extend further on the problems associated with securing permanent housing for the participants in this study, many have been raised and the solutions are evident in the problems. As stated earlier in this report, most of those interviewed locate the main problem as the inability of Housing NSW to provide them with a secure and affordable option, but many were also ‘realistic’ in their opinions:

I know it’s hard but probably the housing side of things working with the Department of Housing and the availability housing I know they’ve only got so much but it’s like I suppose it’s like hospitals and everything else. It just needs money spent on it by the Government. They can only do so much, yeah (WS119124).

Evidently, the wait for public housing can be long:

So I kept trying here with the Housing Department because I’ve been with the Housing Department since 1989 I was first signed up. And so they know me pretty
well for a long time... I’ve been living on the streets for the past 9 years (NB110004).

Furthermore, for many it is simply a matter of being given an opportunity, to be assisted over the first hurdles:

But where there’s a short term and your neighbour’s always drugs, alcohol, gambling and no brains. If you could get a short term accommodation and I don’t mean by one week or two weeks, six weeks, six months and then you got six months to get your act together. And if you haven’t got your act together in six months bad luck son. You know because we are responsible for where we are and why we are there (DG110015).

Employment opportunities and permanent work follow closely on the 'pathway' list. However, as has been mentioned a few times already, there are obstacles for many.

I’ve been unemployed for three years, it’s a long time and I look at my resume “oh what have you done in three years?”, "nothing unemployed living on the street" (WS119114).

The following is a quote from an interviewee who has irregular and temporary employment, and might be classified as ‘falling between the cracks’ when it comes to covering the cost of living, through a choice between a small pay check or the dole.

...my situation is different to everyone else. I get sort of categorised like because I’m working they [Centrelink] say I’m earning too much, but I’m not. I can’t even afford to feed myself so..... Yeah so I think that’s one way they could improve it a little bit the situation because my situation is different to like because I like to go out and work but I’m not getting much work. I mean two days three days, it’s not enough to pay big rent and yeah and you just end up in here [homeless]. So [the choice to] not eat or pay the rent (WS119126).

Furthermore, it must be recognised that the needs and expectations of those interviewed differ greatly, and the services and assistant provided might not be considered useful by many. The following quote draws on the experiences of a man in his fifties, who finds limited support in computer course, but seeks ‘honest work’:

Instead of going to these silly courses all the time like Centrelink sent me to I’d rather they help me get [work], ring up people for me. [Say] "we got this bloke here [who wants work]", someone just give you that little bit of a go then they could say “oh yeah he’s good”. I don’t know how to use a computer or anything like that. You know the scanners they get in the warehouses if they had a course where they could teach you how to use them things like... Not something that like an office girl needs or something and it doesn’t suit me (WS119126).

It is evident that secure and permanent employment is not an easy, or even realistic, target for many. For some there is little likelihood of permanent employment (the reasons range from mental and physical disability, to parent roles (temporary), to age as an obstacle, but many still seek improvement in life skills and more active engagement with other people and society in general:

Well maybe more courses or living skills because of a day time you just walk around. There’s no incentive really to do anything...I’ve done just about every course there is to fill time... Even if I could get to go to Westmead Hospital and do a bit of work there. Even if it’s just walking around talking to patients or something... Because
then you don’t know if that could lead to a job or you know you’re always hopeful...because you’re only communicating with the homeless themselves. Like there’s a lot of brainy people out there on the street and you know mainly they’re the only people we got to talk to (WS119116).

What transpires is that the experiences of many homeless people has installed in them a sense of social exclusion – ranging for isolation from contact with society in general and other adults in particular due to childcare responsibilities, to feelings of idleness and uselessness, due to lack of opportunities and means to engage in mental/physical pursuits, to exclusion due to mental problems which are expressed in anti-social feelings/behaviours. All of these factors inevitably impact on the path towards a better life.

Well it’s you’ve got too much time on your hands, you know like I’m up at 5.30 of a morning I come down here [agency] for breakfast, the rest of the day I’m sitting around in the mall waiting for something to happen or lunch time and then you just waiting around then, you go and hide for the night (WS119116).

For some this exclusion extends to family and close friends (excluding the support network of the homeless themselves), which might further impact on the will to set out on a 'path out of homelessness'.

Yeah and it’s because homelessness is probably one of the worst things you can have in ways in a sense or if you don’t have access to a mobile phone or access to another phone or access to computer you lose contact with your family very quickly and that makes it like the situation that you left a lot worse because things are stewing and people are sort of thinking they don’t love me they don’t want to know me. But quite often the families don’t know how to get in contact with you. They don’t know where you are (WS119113).

A number of those interviewed had already given some thought to how some of the factors causing social exclusion might be addressed towards improving the lives of homeless people, both encouraging social, physical and mental engagement and feelings of a community spirit:

Maybe one of those times if you want to project or something other than use the library maybe one of the people who help the homeless organisations could make a day or two with a work shop or something like that...like an arts centre, maybe that sort of one yeah...An arts in at one week you do art, project or do some art or something like that. That’s one that I was thinking of yeah. INTERVIEWER: Something to bring people together and be creative in a sense yeah. WS119115: Yeah very much so yeah (WS119115).

Finally, some of the younger women (mothers) expressed similar concerns when discussing their potential 'paths out of homelessness'. The following quote summarises the concerns of most of the mothers among those interviewed, as well as the feelings of social exclusion and 'otherness' expressed by many others; the complicated links between secure house, secure employment and full participation in society:

For them [the government] to [provide] assistance for single mothers with child care like we need more and also because if we can’t [get care for the children] then we can’t better our lives so then we can get a job, then we can get housing. Because we can’t afford step one and also I’d like them to run a course for self-esteem for women. Because when you’re stuck at home with the kids all the time you got no money your self-esteem plummets and you feel like there’s no hope you feel like you’re in a tunnel and you can’t crawl out of that tunnel...(WS119111).
4.5 Summary

The following summary overview is particular to the participants in this study; to the demographics and geographical location of Parramatta. Perhaps the starting point should be the reality and visibility of homeless people in Parramatta11. As stated above, many of those interviewed recognised the fact that homeless people are very ‘visible’ in Parramatta, there are congregations of groups of homeless people in particular locations in central areas of the city. There are a number of reasons behind this congregation: companionship and support; various centrally located service/charity outlets; various centrally located public services; availability of public transport; open, public spaces.

For those reasons, Parramatta has become a hub for homeless people or people who are struggling to meet the various needs of everyday life. The railway connections to Parramatta station do not only allow for freedom of travel for those living homeless in Parramatta, but also allow easy access and cheap transport to Parramatta for homeless people living outside the city. Hence, as stated above, a number of homeless people come into Parramatta in the morning and leave at night. The main reason for this travel is the availability of services (e.g. food, clothing, and social support) in Parramatta. And the main reason for why these people congregate in public places in central Parramatta, is that most of these agencies have set opening hours (esp. for meal services) and time in-between is spent out on the streets (this of course applies also to those living homeless in Parramatta). This ‘time on the street’ and the fact that homeless people congregate serves a number of purposes, apart from the need of human company, it is also evident that the homeless in Parramatta network both information (about services and other practical matters) and exchange various consumable items. Most of these factor would seem perfectly obvious as human conducts, but there is one additional factor which should be brought to light; the increase in numbers of homeless people in Parramatta (in Sydney).

A number mentioned an apparent increase in the numbers of homeless people in Parramatta and this increase would have to be in the group of the ‘visibly’ homeless (see footnote 12). Furthermore, some also made reference to the increase in the number of families living homeless. This study cannot determine the extent of an increase in the numbers of homeless people in Parramatta, but this (claim) is inevitably a factor which needs consideration when reflecting on both the ‘visibility’ and presence of homeless people on the streets (public places) in Parramatta and the essential needs of these people. These ‘needs’ are inevitable varied, many have been raised in this report, but, when it comes to the ‘presences’ of homeless people on the streets of Parramatta, there is one factor which needs addressing; the needs for mental and physical activities and places to conduct these activities.

There are not many places where the homeless can spend their time during the day, outside the opening hours of the service agency (for most that is the Parramatta Mission). Some mentioned spending time in the local library and local churches, some were quite mobile, travelling around Sydney (Interstate) to catch up with family and friends, but most had very limited choices, mostly due to lack of any disposable funds

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11 It might be worth keeping in mind that the homeless in the study who had already found refuge or temporary accommodation do not experience the stereotypical images of the ‘homeless person’. They are much less likely seek any of the food services (outside of their accommodation) and do not spend extended times on the streets/in public places.
and/or options. For many local pubs were not an option (due to the cost or not being welcome in those places), quite a few participants gave accounts of being escorted out of shopping centres, many also avoided commercial outlet due to apparent, judgmental attitudes by both staff and the public in general. Hence, drawing on the accounts of the participants in this study, the homeless in Parramatta do not have much choice when it comes to where and how to spend their time of a day (and night for some). This is caused by both fiscal reasons and places for affordable leisure/work/training activities. Again, the experiences of inactivity differ greatly among those interviewed and must be considered in the context of individual situations (e.g. education, age, gender, mental/physical capabilities). However, the majority expressed a wish to be able to engage with other people through some form of mental and/or physical activity, in specific locations, for some the purpose was the passing of time, for others the purpose was to gain further training and education (marketability).

At least half of those interviewed would not be classified as ‘visibly’ homeless and their realities and needs vary greatly. As mention above, young mothers were among the most isolated and powerless people we spoke to. They were also the least visible. While those participating in this study were all in temporary housing, all of them had grave concerns about their futures and that of their children; two of these mothers were due to lose their temporary housing within few weeks and had not yet found any alternative. This group is inevitably the one with the greatest and the most complex needs; many of their problems are also structurally and culturally engrained in Australian society.

When it came to men who fall into the category of “less visible”, those in temporary housing, their major concern was finding and keeping steady employment. As outlined in this report, their problems had various causes (ranging from problems with substance abuse, to mental and physical impairment, to lack in family support and survival skills). Some of these men had experienced harsh living conditions (sleeping rough), but the unifying factor was that all were seeking improvement in their lives. Some of them shared the experiences of those living on the streets, when it came to stigma and low self-esteem, but most avoided (did not seek) any involvement with the homeless congregating in public places (for many it was a matter of staying out of trouble and meeting the conditions set by the accommodation provider). Similar to the experiences of the women (mothers), the solutions to the life problems of these men differed and inherent ‘ageism’ and market demands determine the option for many.

Finally, there was a small number of interviewees who have “adapted” to the life of the homeless, and although most of them would clearly prefer secure and affordable (public/community) housing, are not likely to be making active efforts to change their lives; most would fall into the category of the ‘visibly homeless’. For most, the concern was to be able to afford shelter, food and clothing, and just a little more (especially cigarettes and alcohol). Most did not have great needs, but when faced with the choice of spending hundreds of dollars a week/fortnight on housing and have little left to ‘live on’, they chose homelessness. These interviewees had become quite “savvy” in their life as homeless, they had learned to utilise the available services provided in Parramatta.12 For this group, apart from wishing further financial support, most comments concentrated on improvements in the facilities that were already

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12 As stated before, those with comparative basis cited Parramatta as one of the best, if not the best, places for a homeless person to live
available or the instalment of further facilities. Most of these interviewees were well aware of the stigma associated with their lifestyle and that there were limits to what the Council and other services can provide and that there were explanation for the public attitude expressed towards homeless people. Perhaps the most significant comments these interviewees provided on living homeless in Parramatta, when it come to the visibility and social problems associated with homeless people, draw on the lack of some basic facilities (e.g. toilet and washing facilities) and locations or facilities to spend time, to socialise and undertake practical or beneficial activities.

The end result is that a study of the homeless experience in Parramatta brings to light a great diversity of people and lived experiences, there are some broad categories which may apply to most people (e.g. ‘visibly homeless’), but these categories are not absolute, the lives of people are fluid and strategic approaches towards homelessness must reflect this fluidity and the multi-dimension of homeless people in Parramatta.
5 The Street Count

5.1 Summary

In mid February 2010 a ‘street count’ was undertaken for the purpose of developing knowledge about the extent of homelessness in Parramatta. In particular, the count was designed to provide data on the number of people ‘sleeping rough’ or staying in emergency accommodation in the Parramatta LGA. There are a number of ways that the homeless have been counted in the past including through the use of a statistical method of ‘capture-recapture’ in analysing homelessness data (D’Onise, Wang and McDermott 2007), estimating by using census and SAAP service data (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2006) and through the Delphi technique, that is by questioning service providers (Environmetrics 2007) However, it was considered that, for the purposes of this research, counting the homeless individually was the most appropriate method since this method enables mapping and does not rely on estimating to develop a knowledge of the extent of homelessness in the Parramatta LGA.

The 2006 Australian Census reported that 170 people were homeless on census night in Parramatta (Environmetrics 2007). However, a year after the census was undertaken, Environmetrics estimated that there were between 200 and 300 homeless people in the Parramatta LGA (2007 p. 5). The lower figure provided by the ABS might be explained by a number of methodological factors. First, in order to be counted by the Australian Census, homeless people must actually complete a Census form. Second, the Census is conducted in mid-winter when homeless people are harder to locate. Third, data collection tends to focus on known gathering places. Chamberlain claims that “undercounting is most likely in the census category ‘improvised homes, tents and sleepers out’, and over counting is more likely in boarding houses because of misclassification” (Chamberlain 2006, p. 5).

Homeless Persons Information Centre (HPIC) data suggests that since the Census and Environmetrics data were produced, the homeless population in Parramatta has increased particularly as the Parramatta CBD has grown significantly since the 2006 Census was undertaken. All of these factors increased the necessity and value of the street count.

Given the problems inherent in the methodological approaches in other studies, the UWS researchers were particularly mindful of the need to gather local knowledge on which to base their research. In order to develop a methodology that might provide valid data on the numbers of homeless people in Parramatta, the UWS researchers consulted Parramatta based homeless service providers, the local Police Commands, Housing NSW, Parramatta City Council staff, and the homeless themselves including those who sleep rough in the Parramatta LGA. All of these sources, and particularly the locally based homeless people, have extensive knowledge and experience of the location of many homeless people sleeping rough; this knowledge proved invaluable to the planning of the street count. The methods adopted to undertake the street count were also based on those developed and used effectively by the City of Sydney whose staff were extensively consulted concerning technical aspects of the Parramatta count. However, the methodology adopted for this street count was not without its flaws;
some areas of secondary homelessness could not be counted, or indeed estimated, this includes people who are ‘couch surfing’, that is using friendship networks to gain shelter. Additionally we did not count people in ‘squats’, that is, people living in empty houses and factories since it was considered by the police that to enter a squat would be too dangerous.

5.2 Methodology

The count in the Parramatta LGA coincided with the count being undertaken by the City of Sydney in its LGA. While the counts undertaken in both LGAs occurred on the night of 15th February, the time of the Parramatta based count was earlier than the count taking place in Sydney City. The Parramatta count began at 11:30 pm on 15 February and finished at 1:30 am 16 February. The 11:30 pm start time was selected as the result of consultations with Parramatta Police, agencies servicing the homeless and homeless people. It is was thought that most rough sleepers would be asleep or settling in for the night at this time; however in future some consideration might be given to holding the count later since it might well be the case that some homeless people might still be mobile at 11.30pm.

5.3 Findings

The study accessed occupancy and other service data from all homelessness service providers in the Parramatta LGA. This data provides a ‘point in time’ snapshot of primary and secondary homelessness in the Parramatta LGA. Additionally numbers of rough sleepers were developed on a geographic basis; however due to ethical considerations the location of the rough sleepers and the location and the individual numbers provided by the services is not provided in this report.

Two sets of primary data were generated by the street count:

i. A census of people experiencing primary homelessness (sleeping outdoors) in Parramatta CBD and surrounding areas on a given night. On the night this totalled 81 people.

ii. A survey of accommodation numbers in homeless services in the Parramatta LGA, including an analysis of SAAP data for the night in question. On the night this totalled 285 people who were housed as follows:

- Admitted to Mental Health facility (no fixed address) 18
- Temporary Accommodation voucher (Housing NSW) 21
- Hostels, Refuges, Emergency Accommodation 246

5.4 Homeless Services

All of the homeless services providers in the Parramatta Local Government Area were contacted in designing and organising the count. Homeless people in the Parramatta LGA are serviced by a number of agencies including both government and charitable church agencies. Government agencies include Housing NSW and the Department of Community Services (DOCS). The major agencies in Parramatta include the Parramatta Mission which provides services to a range of people including homeless
men, homeless women and to young people; Mission Australia and St Vincent de Paul Society providing services to homeless men; services to women are provided by the St Vincent de Paul Society. There are a number of smaller services including a service to families provided by Uniting Care and local churches such as the Stepping Stones service.

Many of these agencies provide amenities such as the use of showers and internet access, as well as providing meals on site. These agencies also provide food services via feeding vans where nearly all meal times as well as supper at 11.00pm at night are covered.

Some agencies such as The Salvation Army do not provide shelter but do administer government sponsored and funded services such as Emergency Relief where money is provided to people to pay for emergency issues such as Electricity Bills. Many of these services also provide food parcels and open up their premises during the week for the use of homeless people.

An analysis of the service providers, and their service areas such as women’s services and youth services was not part of this research. The information that was sought of service providers was directly related to the location of rough sleepers and likely numbers. Services were asked to recruit homeless people for interview. Personal aspects of homeless people accessing services such as gender, age range, length of homelessness and previous homeless history were not canvassed in this research. Additionally, service characteristics such as catchment areas, ‘turn away’ statistics and occupancy levels were not part of this research; such information should be the subject of a future research project.

5.5 Planning the Count

To conduct the street count the Social Justice Social Change Research obtained the services of two researchers – Dr Dennis Garland and Dr Roslyn Richardson –who worked under the coordination of a senior researcher, Associate Professor Michael Darcy, to organise the street count in the Parramatta LGA.

This phase of the research required considerable cooperation and engagement with local agencies through the Parramatta LGA Homeless Interagency Group. This Group includes the homeless service providers in the Parramatta LGA including private not for profit organisations, church agencies and government representation with local, State and Commonwealth agencies.

The City of Sydney Council (CSC) has conducted a street census on a biannual basis for the past three years. Through contacting CSC staff, the UWS researchers were able to draw on the considerable knowledge and learning developed through these counts. CSC staff who have been involved in organising the Sydney City street counts freely gave of their time, experience and knowledge, including providing copies of their Street Count Volunteers Manual. Additionally, it was decided that since the CSC was conducting their street count on the night of 15 February that a recommendation be made to the Parramatta City Council to coordinate the Parramatta LGA count with that of CSC. This recommendation was adopted by Parramatta City Council.
5.6 Development of the Street Count Procedures and Street Count Manual

The CSC street count manual formed the basis for the Parramatta Street Count Procedures and the Parramatta Volunteer Count Manual. The basic difference between these two manuals lies in the fact that the procedures manual provides an extensive coverage of all contingencies, including UWS’ Occupational Health and Safety requirements. The Volunteer Manual is in effect a summarised version of the Street Count Procedures Manual and is aimed at informing volunteers of their responsibilities and the procedures to be carried out on the night of the street count. The Procedures Manual also formed the basis of the training to be provided to all volunteers.

5.7 Mapping Rough Sleepers

Contact was made with the police through the Parramatta Local Area Command. Police from this Command proved to be supportive of the street count and were highly knowledgeable about the locations of rough sleepers in the Parramatta LGA. From this contact the team was able to gain information not only from the Parramatta Local Area Command but also from Eastwood and Granville Commands. Police from all three commands provided local intelligence about the probable location of ‘rough sleepers’, while the Parramatta Local Area Command assisted in the development of the training manual and street count map. Police from all three commands readily offered their advice and assistance to the research team and their attendance at training nights was much appreciated by staff and volunteers.

Assistance and intelligence on the probable location of rough sleepers was also gained from the major agencies operating in the Parramatta area; specifically Parramatta Mission, Mission Australia, St Vincent de Paul and Stepping Stones. The UWS team found all homeless service agencies that were consulted for this research to be extraordinarily helpful and also very interested in and committed to the count. Through these agencies, the UWS research team was able to meet homeless people and speak to them about the count and to obtain intelligence regarding the location of rough sleepers throughout the Parramatta LGA. This intelligence was used to develop the Street Count map; this knowledge proved to be accurate and can be relied on for future counts. The area included in the count is shown on the map.

However, there were a number of areas not counted on the Street Count night where rough sleepers were said to be sleeping. These areas were as follows:

a. **Squats.** Parramatta Police, homeless people consulted for this project and agencies who assist the homeless indicated that the risks associated with entering squats are substantial. Indeed, the City of Sydney does not count homeless people living in squats for this reason. All parties consulted by the UWS research team suggested that there was a strong likelihood that volunteers who count in squats would be assaulted.

b. **Lake Parramatta Reserve.** Parramatta Police advised that because the main access road to the reserve is locked at night then their response to any incident involving volunteers in the reserve would be slow. There was also a risk that volunteers might become lost in this park as the
area is large and unlit at night. The risks posed to volunteers were deemed to be substantial and it was thought that there may be little value in counting this area as rough sleepers advised that any homeless who sleep in the reserve are likely to be well hidden in bush land. It was unlikely that rough sleepers would have been easily counted by volunteers in this area.

c. Parramatta Park. The Parramatta Park Trust advised that their security personnel undertake regular patrols of the park and count the homeless people in this area at night\textsuperscript{13}. The Parramatta Park Trust agreed to provide their count figures to the UWS team. It was considered unsafe for volunteers to count in Parramatta Park since many areas of the Park are unlit and access to the Park at night is limited. Estimates provided by the Park Trust and a homeless advisor to the study varied considerably, possibly because the Park Trust staff counted at different times, or perhaps made observations from a vehicle.

To resolve this the study team requested our homeless advisors to provide two count of rough sleepers in Parramatta Park. The first was conducted early on Sunday morning 14\textsuperscript{th} February and the second on the morning of the main count. These counts were far less discrepant, although there was a small variation, and so the lower of the two was accepted and incorporated in the count total.

d. People who sleep in cars. Homeless people who sleep in their cars and who were interviewed by UWS staff advised that it would be very dangerous for volunteers to count these people. One homeless man reported that he sleeps with weapons in his car with which to defend himself from people who approach his car. This obviously presents a considerable risk to any volunteers attempting to count rough sleepers who sleep in cars. Local intelligence suggests that there are significant groups of people sleeping in cars in at least two specific locations.

e. Car parks. It is unsafe for volunteers to enter enclosed areas like buildings and car parks. ‘Secure Parking’ which operates the majority of car parks in the Parramatta area was contacted to assist with the count. A representative from Secure Parking advised that their staff would count the number of homeless people sleeping in their car parks on the count night. The research team liaised with the manager of the secure Parking car parks and the figures were provided and incorporated into the total.

f. Outside the CBD. A number of rough sleepers advised the UWS research team that they sleep in other areas of the city outside the CBD, particularly near the Parramatta River. During daylight hours the UWS team walked the specific areas identified and determined that these

\textsuperscript{13} It might be of value to find just what the Trust does with the numbers and if trends are discernable in their figures. It could well be the case that their figures are less than useful.
areas would not be counted on the night because they are very isolated, unlit, or covered in bush land and therefore potentially dangerous.

The final locations were therefore determined taking into account the advice received by Police, the staff of service agencies and the homeless themselves. Thirty three count areas were mapped across the Parramatta LGA. Most of these areas were located in or close the Parramatta CBD while there were small number count areas in Granville and Harris Park.

The development of walking times was an iterative process. Initially, individual areas were determined by effectively carving up a map of the Parramatta LGA into what were thought to be ‘walkable’ areas. A map was then given to a UWS student who walked through a number of areas and reported on the time taken to complete these areas. Given that general fitness levels vary, Dr Ros Richardson and Dr Dennis Garland then walked a number of local areas to assess the time that would be needed to complete the count; from this, the team was able to develop a better idea of distance and walking times. From this experience the size of each area was reduced to ensure that there would be no areas which would take over two hours to walk. The experience on the night showed that the average length of time spent walking was one hour, despite being warned that they may walk for two hours, one team complained of having to walk for one hour and ten minutes and another team did not complete their area.

5.8 Transport

Based on the size of the walking areas and the distance of the areas from the count headquarters a transport plan was devised. This plan was created after Dr Dennis Garland and Dr Roslyn Richardson had walked some of the proposed count areas as described above. As a result of this ‘trial run’ it was determined that volunteers would be transported by vehicle to all areas which were over 800 meters from the count headquarters. In particular, transport was required for volunteers counting in the Granville area and North Parramatta. Council provided a bus for the count night and there were a number of council vehicles available both from Council Rangers and Council staff together with some vehicles from UWS Security which transported teams to their count areas.

The transport schedule worked well on the night. Many teams finished the count early and there were enough cars available to pick up teams when required. However, planning the transport schedule was a very labour intensive exercise and relied upon the recruitment of precise numbers of volunteers (exactly three per team) to work effectively. In the future it may not be possible to precisely control team numbers, and, given that City of Sydney experiences a 20% last minute drop out rate, it is not advisable to turn away prospective volunteers in order to keep the transport schedule on target. If more transport were available then the planning of logistics for the night would be improved.
5.9 Recruiting Volunteers

A volunteer recruitment flyer was developed and distributed within Council, UWS and sent to agencies which provide services to rough sleepers. This flyer described the count and provided information about registration. Agencies were asked to place the flyer on their walls and to send it and other information sheets about the count through their email networks. A press release was also issued by both Parramatta City Council and UWS and information about the count appeared in an article in the local newspaper.

Volunteers participated from both UWS and Parramatta City Council. A large number of volunteers were recruited from Sydney West Area Health Service through the partnership of Parramatta City Council with SWASHS and from Centrelink. This recruitment led to some 160 names being added to the volunteer database. However, there were a large number of cancellations and additional recruitment was completed through the Hillsong Church who provided a further nine volunteers on the count night. On the night 108 Volunteers registered their attendance.

It should be noted that the maintenance of the volunteer names database was a very labour intensive exercise. While it may be possible to streamline this process through an online registration process many factors will still affect the amount of time that is needed to maintain volunteer records. In particular, much time was spent answering volunteer questions, sending volunteers additional information (especially in regards to the safety procedures), organising transport home from the count for volunteers who usually relied on public transport, and sending reminder emails. Furthermore, at various stages it became necessary to send out mass emails to try and bolster volunteer recruitment. The time taken to perform the administrative tasks associated with volunteer recruitment and records maintenance should therefore not be underestimated.

An additional flyer was developed to inform rough sleepers that the count was taking place. This was distributed by the homelessness advisors and homeless service providers.

5.10 Involvement of Homeless Advisors

The City of Sydney Council advised that they have consulted ‘homeless advisors’ in order to conduct their street counts since 2007. These are people who are currently homeless or who have been homeless. These advisors assist in the development of the count procedures and advise on the locations of rough sleepers. They also take part in the count itself.

During the initial planning phase of the Parramatta Street Count it proved difficult to obtain this type of involvement from the homeless population. This was overcome by the involvement of a homeless advisor from the City of Sydney street count team who was able to recruit a local homeless person, whose services and knowledge proved invaluable prior to and on the count night. Our local advisor has lived rough in the Parramatta area for some time and is familiar with the homeless people living there and also the places where they live and sleep. Two other homeless volunteers were recruited and their advice was of value as well. The assistance of the homeless advisor
was critical in ensuring the support of the homeless on the night given that this was the first time that the count was to take place and there was a high degree of caution from homeless themselves.

The use of rough sleepers in count teams appears to be particularly important and led to the location of rough sleepers that might not have been visible to untrained observers. Indeed, one team leader noted on the feedback form:

“Strong suggestion about having homeless people helping us with the count - extremely useful resource. We had … on our team and he was invaluable and had a lot of insight”.

A volunteer also reinforced the need for homeless advisors, stating on the Feedback Form that “More homeless involvement” was desirable. The involvement of homeless advisors was significant in the success of the count. These advisors assisted in identifying areas that may not have been considered, or indeed known by services previously consulted. Additionally, teams with homeless advisors found significantly more. Finally, their involvement is critical in involving the homeless voice in the process of the count thus ensuring greater cooperation in future counts through the building of significant relationships with the local homeless population in the Parramatta LGA.

However, experience would suggest that caution may need to be taken before rough sleepers are placed in counting teams. Count coordination staff do not have the capacity to investigate the personal history of the homeless advisors. On the count night an advisor was placed in a team comprised of mental health professionals and unfortunately this advisor had previously assaulted a person in the team. Action was quickly taken to change the teams; however this caused considerable concern for the volunteer, the homeless advisor and count coordination staff. Given that a considerable number of the recruited volunteers lived and worked in the local area, similar types of issues may arise again in the future. Such problems may be addressed to some extent through advice and discussion during training.

While the participation of homeless advisors proved invaluable, further advice may be required from the City of Sydney staff who have experience in determining who from their pool of advisors are able to participate on the count night. It is also important to better examine and understand the OH&S implications associated with the use of homeless advisors.

The homeless advisors were compensated for their time by the provision of Woolworth’s vouchers.

5.11 Training

Volunteers received a bound hard copy of the volunteer manual. The volunteer manual contained all instructions and information required by volunteers to complete the count. An electronic version of the volunteer manual was emailed to most volunteers prior to the count. Amongst other things, the manual included the count
night safety procedures, an explanation of the count methodology and count forms.
Volunteers stated that they appreciated being able to read the manual prior to training.
Two training sessions were held in early February 2010. Volunteers attended a
training session at the Jubilee room in Parramatta Town Hall on either 10th or 11th
February from 5 to 7:30pm. All training sessions included an explanation of the
purpose of the street count, roles of team leaders and volunteers, the methodology for
the count, and the safety protocol and emergency procedures. Training presenters
included UWS, Parramatta City Council staff, Parramatta Police, and local service
providers: Parramatta Mission and Mission Australia. Homeless advisors also
presented on both training nights.

The training sessions appeared to run smoothly, however, feedback from volunteers
suggested that these sessions were a little long and the room was too hot.

Volunteers, where possible, were emailed a registration form to complete prior to the
training days. The registration form contained general identifying questions as well
as questions required for Occupational Health and Safety. Volunteers were asked to
provide their date of birth; unlike the count undertaken by the City of Sydney no
volunteers under the age of 18 were allowed to participate in the Parramatta based
count.

In addition, the registration form included a question about employer support. This
question was used to establish if external employers would be supporting their
employees (financially) and if these participants would be covered by their own
insurance. The form also asked if volunteers have a preferred counting partner.
While this was not essential to the count, it did assist with the logistics on the night of
the count because it helped to avoid last minute requests from volunteers to change
teams. When the final team lists were developed some people were not placed with
their preferred partner. In most cases this was acceptable, in others this meant a
rearrangement of the teams on the count night, however since there were adequate
numbers of volunteers on the night this rearrangement was not problematic. It is
recommended that registration forms and insurance forms be emailed to participants
ahead of training days as this assists with the administrative and logistical aspects of
the count.

5.12 Equipment

The equipment list was largely dictated by Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S)
requirements determined by the UWS OH&S officer. Most of the required equipment
was provided by UWS and Parramatta City Council, while volunteers were asked to
bring their own torches and mobile phones. In particular, all of the volunteers were
required to wear safety vests at all times which were provided. Volunteers were also
required to carry a water bottle; these were provided to volunteers as a result of local
business sponsorship. Since the night was particularly hot, water bottles proved to be
a necessity. Each team leader carried a mini first aid kit; since no one was hurt on the
night these first aid supplies were not needed. It is important ensure that similar small
kits would be available for any future count.

Each Volunteer team was provided with a clipboard with their count map placed on
top; for safety reasons all volunteers were supplied with a copy of this map but only
one map was used to record data for the count. The final area maps were developed by Parramatta Council’s GIS unit and were of high quality and accuracy. The items required by each team, other than water, torches and mobile phones were provided to them in a bag which was clearly marked with their count area number. While volunteers were able to easily collect all of the required equipment, this process could become more ‘systematic’ in the future.

5.13 The Counting Process

The count Headquarters was located in the Jubilee room, Parramatta Town Hall. Headquarters was used on the count night as a meeting place for the volunteers and a command centre for all operations. On the count night volunteers registered their attendance at Headquarters and the Volunteer Coordinator and her team monitored the safety and progress of all teams from this base. The location – Parramatta Town Hall – was chosen because it is centrally located within the Parramatta CBD and is within walking distance of many count areas.

While the Jubilee room proved to be adequate on the count night, a much larger space should be used for future counts. Having a full complement of volunteers and staff meant that over 120 people were in the room at one time; this made the room both noisy and hot. It was felt that a larger space would have better enabled teams to spread out and volunteers to hear the instructions been given to them by their team leaders.

For safety reasons, the aim was to have counting teams consist of at least three volunteers. However, the available transport also affected the size of teams; most teams could not be larger than three or else more transport would need to have been sourced. This aim was achieved; all teams consisted of three volunteers except two teams which were comprised of four. Team leaders were responsible for the count team they were walking with and one other team. Based on the experience of City of Sydney, it was considered likely that approximately 20% of people who registered would fail turn up to the count. This was not quite the case. Prior to the count night, a number of volunteers informed the organising team that they would be unavailable, as a result a small number of volunteers were recruited on the count night from the Hillsong Church. All of these additional volunteers received training prior to their allocation to teams and this additional emergency recruitment allowed for a last minute reorganisation of the teams.

Based on this experience it is recommended that more transport options be available so that team numbers do not need to be so tightly controlled. It is noted that the City of Sydney count includes teams which consist of four or five volunteers. It would seem wise to be able to ‘over recruit’ to better address drop outs on the night. In addition, while recruitment should be ceased prior to training days, a reserve list should be maintained (as occurred for this count) this enables staff to call up these volunteers if required. Though less than ideal, it was ultimately very easy to train volunteers on the night of the count and therefore, this approach could be used again if necessary.

Volunteers were informed of their count area number (i.e. their count team) on the night of the count. However, the teams were allocated prior to the night and minimal
changes were made to teams on the night itself. This proved to be a successful strategy and given that the team allocation process can be quite a labour intensive exercise, it is recommended that this approach be adopted for future counts.

A registration list was used to monitor volunteer attendance and movements on the night for safety reasons. The list, compiled in a spreadsheet format, included the volunteers’ names in alphabetical order. Volunteers were required to register on arrival at HQ by signing this list. The list noted if volunteers had completed their insurance and registrations forms and also displayed their mobile phone number. If the appropriate registration and insurance forms had not been completed, the volunteer was required to complete the forms prior to proceeding to their allotted team area. Volunteers were also asked to check if their mobile phone number was correct so that they could be easily contacted in an emergency. Volunteers were also required to sign the list when they return to HQ after the count. This system worked reasonably well although it was felt that bigger font should have been used on the registration list so that volunteers could more easily find their names.

The counting house staff and in particular the Volunteer Coordinator and her team were required to maintain a range of documentation on the count night including the registration lists, running sheets, registration forms and insurance forms. This team were given folders in which to collect all documents. Members of this team felt that the running sheets, while useful in their current form, could be simplified to make it easier to record the required information.

As noted above, some count areas were not within walking distance of Headquarters. In particular, transport was required for volunteers counting in the Granville and North Parramatta area. The bus and council vehicles available to transport teams to their count areas proved adequate and efficient although more transport would allow for the use of larger teams.

5.13.1 Reporting

Volunteers and paid staff were required to report on critical incidents and injuries; all injuries were to be reported to the First Aid Coordinator while critical incidents necessitated that an accident reporting form be completed. Volunteers were required to report on all children seen sleeping rough; this information was to be recorded on count maps and forms and when teams returned to the count headquarters the Count Coordinator was to be informed. Volunteers also had the option of reporting on criminal activities that they observed and were provided with forms in order to do this; however, reporting on these activities was not a mandatory requirement. On the count night none of these incidents occurred. It is recommended that volunteer training continue to include comprehensive safety instructions; this training has proven to be important and effective.

The count forms used proved to be effective, however, it was felt that these forms could be simplified to make them easier to complete and understand. Similarly, volunteers commented that minor changes could be made to the maps. In particular, it was suggested that maps could include a border in which teams could make additional
notes. The volunteers’ comments in relation to these counting tools are described in greater detail below.

Volunteer teams submitted their count forms and maps on returning to the count headquarters by placing them in marked trays placed on the registration desk. While this presented a convenient way to collect these forms from the volunteers there is a need to guard this information more securely especially considering that it includes the locations of rough sleepers. On the count night UWS staff observed a volunteer who took a number of the forms from the trays and began to read them. This was an unanticipated incident and UWS staff acted quickly to secure the information. However, with such a large number of people at headquarters on the night and so many people returning from the count at the same time, it would be relatively easy for these forms to be lost or interfered with in some way. It is essential that additional measures be put in place to secure the census information. It is recommended that a single person be placed in charge of all returned forms in future. A secure, ‘election’ style box may also be used to collect the forms.

5.14 Volunteer Feedback

At the close of the street count, volunteers were requested to complete a Feedback Form. Even though, the night concluded at around 1:30am a significant majority of the feedback forms were completed. In total, 80 forms were returned from a total of 108 volunteers. A higher response rate may be achieved if an individual is nominated to hand feedback forms to volunteers as the return to headquarters.

Some 77 volunteers noted that they enjoyed the street count process with 2 abstentions. One person indicated that they did not enjoy the street count with the comment, “It has a good reason”. This could well refer to the difficulty with one of the homeless advisors; another comment in this regard was “Screen the participants”. Given these two comments, it is clear that overwhelmingly the volunteers enjoyed the night and all 80 volunteers indicated that they would like to take part in the next count.

5.14.1 Time Taken

The average time taken to complete the count was 1.3 hours. The longest time taken was 2 hours for areas 1, 2, 7, 8, 11, 22 and 25. It should be noted that areas 22 and 25 were consolidated by the team leader, based on local knowledge, so it would be correct to assume that individually, areas 22 and 25 would only take 1 hour each. The shortest time taken was 1 hour for areas 7, 8, 20, 21, 28, 29, 32 and 33. All of the other areas varied between 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. From this analysis we can conclude that the count areas were generally acceptable. However, based upon this count, the first of its kind in Parramatta, it is recommended that the count areas be reviewed to ensure that teams experience more uniform count times. One volunteer from area 24 noted that a “Slightly larger area would be OK” whereas the count in area 24 took 1.5 hours.

5.14.2 Advertising

On the Feedback Form volunteers were asked to reveal how they had learned that the street count was taking place. From the comments received it is clear that the broad
spectrum of media used to recruit volunteers was effective. Volunteers stated that they learned about the street count through the Homeless Inter-Agency meetings (5), the press (6), in-house advertising for Council and UWS (22), Department of Health Bulletins (6) and word of mouth (41).

5.14.3 The Reason to Volunteer

The reasons that the volunteers gave for volunteering, though expressed differently, centred on several common themes. Perhaps the most common theme related to the volunteers’ wish to contribute to society; this was expressed in comments such as: “Important contribution to the community”, “Felt like I was doing good”, “It is good to provide support to projects like this and to contribute to collecting useful data - hopefully leads to increased programs etc” and “Great to be part of contributing to the welfare of the homeless with likeminded people”. Another theme related to the enjoyment of the experience itself as expressed in comments such as “Meet other like minded socially aware people”, “Being able to help was great”, “Good Company, interesting conversation, Learnt about the local landscape. Felt good making a small but meaningful contribution” and “It was fun - though I'm sleepy”.

5.14.4 Maps

The most positive comments volunteers made related to the maps. Some 64 respondents felt that the maps were very well done, 15 thought the maps were reasonable and only 1 thought that the “Map was annoying”. Overall, the maps attracted positive comments such as “Very legible and well printed and highlighted”, “Very clear and easy to follow” and “Loved the large print - didn’t need to fuss with glasses”. The Council’s Mapping Section is to be commended on the excellent map production.

5.14.5 The Count Form

The volunteers were asked to comment about the ease of using the count forms. A number of volunteers declined to comment on the use of the forms because no rough sleepers were recorded in their count area, thus, they did not use the forms. Thirty volunteers were of the opinion that the forms were reasonable but had flaws; the volunteer comments included “Long and too many categories - not very good”, “Could have used clear instructions on how to tally - but we did OK”, “Count Form iffy” and “Talley column would help”. Forty seven volunteers stated that they were happy with the form noting that the form was “Straight forward” and “Easy to use”. It is recommended that the count forms be simplified and a tally section be included as suggested by the volunteers.

5.14.6 Count Equipment

Of the 80 volunteers who completed the Feedback Form, only two reported difficulties with the count equipment stating that they needed torches and indicating that these could have been supplied by the count organisers. One volunteer was unhappy to have not have received any of the welfare information cards that were supplied to the volunteers in order to be given to rough sleepers if required; this volunteer stated “No info cards of council services to give to anyone who needed one”. 
Other volunteer comments related to the need for snacks to be provided; one said s/he “Had everything - unless Cadbury would like to sponsor a chocolate frog in every bag” while another volunteer simply wrote the word “Mints”.

5.14.7 Training

Most of the critical comments received from volunteers related to the training. Though 45 volunteers found the training ‘Very Helpful’, many volunteers criticised the repetitive nature of the training, for example saying, “It was repetitive - a little boring after a long day at work”, “It seemed long quite long and repetitive - but I guess that it is necessary”, “It was very repetitive and most of the info we could have read at home NO NEED FOR TRAINING”, “Aircon, Microphone, Less info repeated” and “Too much time spent on the obvious safety info & not enough on how to use the actual tools on the night (i.e. street count sheet/ map)”. While the information delivered by the various presenters was repetitious at times, a deliberate effort was made to use the training nights to reinforce the information provided in the volunteer manual. This was particularly the case with the safety procedures included in the manual. Therefore, while effort could be made to reduce the incidences of overlap between the speeches, repetition, as an element in the training, actually serves an important purpose. However, it is clear that this purpose could be better explained to the volunteers.

Given that the training nights were hot (the outside temperature on both nights was over 35 degrees) the need for some form of air-conditioning was mentioned quite often by the volunteers on their Feedback Forms. The volunteers said, “Everything was covered in the handbook, air-conditioning not working”, “More air conditioning” “Air conditioning?” and to emphasise the point three people noted “Too long. Too hot” on their Feedback Forms.

The volunteers also commonly stated that a PA system was needed for training, one stating for example “A PA system would have allowed people to hear easier and save presenters having to talk so loud”. While count organisers can do little to influence the temperature on training days another venue may need to be considered if the training and count is to take place in the height of summer as occurred this year. However, there were distinct advantages associated with holding the training and count headquarters in the same location, namely this ensured that volunteers would more easily find the count headquarters on the count night. Those who presented during the training days would agree with the recommendation that a PA could be used.

5.14.8 Methodology

All of the volunteers indicated that they had no difficulty with the count methodology. Only two comments were received in response to the question “Was the Methodology Clear?”; these comments were: “Especially once it was done” and “The night was easy”.

5.14.9 Overall Comments

On the Feedback forms the volunteers were invited to provide some general comments. Only 25 volunteers took this opportunity. Most of the feedback received in the general comments section of the feedback forms [why is this in caps? Should it
was positive, including “It was well organised”, “Very good organisation”, “Enjoyed participating in the inaugural Parramatta Count”, “I think you all did a great job for a first attempt” and “Thanks - it was well organised, supper was a nice touch”. A number of volunteers commented on team leadership and transport such as, “I think it helped having a car with us, it made me feel safer”, “Felt we were rushed out of the door to leave - needed more time with team Leader before hand - may have had some cards - Felt team leader a little flustered”, “Need Leader with the team.” and “Give team leaders instructions to clarify who to count and how to fill in forms Would like to know the details of the count”. The comments provided on the Feedback forms were therefore constructive and can be used to shape the approach taken to organising any future counts.

5.15 Summary of Recommendations

Major Recommendations

It is recommended that

(1) As many ‘homeless advisors as possible are recruited to assist in the design of any future count.
(2) As many ‘homeless advisors’ as possible take part in the street count on the night.
(3) That any future count be held on the same night as the CSS street count.

Other Recommendations

(1) The street count to be commenced at a later time than 11.30pm.
(2) More transport options be available so that team numbers do not need to be so tightly controlled.
(3) Team allocation be completed prior to the night of the count.
(4) Volunteer training continues to include comprehensive safety instructions; this training has proven to be important and effective.
(5) A single person is placed in charge of all returned forms in future. A secure, ‘election’ style box may also be used to collect the forms.
(6) The existing count areas be reviewed to ensure that teams experience more uniform count times.
6 Conclusion

The past decade has seen a considerable interest by government and its bureaucracy, academics and journalists in the growth of urban homelessness. Driven by the writings of a few key authors, much of this work has been framed by the desire to connect homelessness to wider debates around gentrification, urban restructuring and the politics of public space. However, public perception of homelessness and the bulk of policy intervention are focussed on central cities. The decision of Parramatta City Council to commission this research and to develop its own strategy on homelessness reflects recent recognition of the changing nature of the Sydney metropolis and especially of Western Sydney.

This report traces significant differences in the extent and form that homelessness takes. The range of homelessness and the data in this Report in many ways confirms much of the research conducted on a wider national scale. Yet the data in this Report has relevance to the development of policy on a local scale designed to address the issue of homelessness in the Parramatta LGA.

The numbers of primary and secondary homeless people provided, namely 81 sleeping rough and 285 in crisis beds is at best a snapshot of the homeless population in the Parramatta LGA on one night in February 2010. There are a number of factors that must be taken into account when interpreting the final data. The count was taken on a warm night, experience shows that cold, rainy nights tends to drive homeless people indoors, and a winter count may well show a lower figure. A number of areas were excluded from the count for reasons of safety, the exact numbers of homeless people sleeping rough in these areas is unknown but our intelligence suggests that it could be significant. Additionally, our data excludes homeless people who may well use the Parramatta LGA by day and take transport out of the area by night; counting these people. Accordingly, given these limitations the final figure of 366 provides a benchmark for future counts and for the development of appropriate policies to ameliorate the problems of homelessness.

Homelessness is a process including stages of becoming homeless, being homeless and at some point recovering from homelessness. A deal of literature relating to homelessness in Australia identifies and uses metaphors such as the ‘homeless career’ (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 1998) and ‘homeless pathways’ (Chamberlain and MacKenzie 2009). And these metaphors are evident in this research. However, we have shown that the homeless population in the Parramatta LGA consists of diverse groups including single men and women and families with children. We have revealed that for some people, homelessness is a short-lived experience, while for others homelessness lasts more than one year, and some people experience repeated episodes of homelessness.

Reducing the size of the homeless population in the Parramatta LGA will require a significant policy development and investment in early intervention. This will require the development and application of appropriate intervention models for different subgroups in the population. There will also be a need for services to support people who are homeless and follow-up support to ensure that formerly homeless people can maintain their accommodation.
Achieving the right mix of interventions is the challenge. Chamberlain and MacKenzie (2009) estimate that about 50 per cent of the homeless population could be assisted directly by the early intervention measures. However, experience has demonstrated that it takes time to put new services in place and for those services to have their full impact. It will also take time to increase the supply of affordable housing, and it must be recognised that other low-income people will be competing for the new housing stock.
7 Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: PowerPoint Slides of Discussion Starter

Homelessness today – some snapshots

Ingrid Schraner, Natalie Bolzan, Rosalie Atie

Social Justice Social Change Research Centre and School of Economics and Finance

ABC TV, “The Last Chance Motel”, 4Corners, 21 September 2009.

(for the transcript of this video please see Appendix 2 below)
Homelessness – difficult to define

Cultural Definition of homelessness (ABS): First identify shared community standards, then identify those that fall below these standards. Australia:
70% home ownership (including mortgages)
88% of private dwellings are houses
75% of flats with 2 or more bedrooms
→ Australian community standards:
   Small rental flat with bedroom, living room, kitchen, bathroom, and an element of secure tenure

Demographics

• **Aged 12-18**: largest group of homeless persons (21,940 youth in Australia, 4,987 in NSW)

• **Under 12**: increase by 22% over 2001-2006 (12,133 children in Australia, 2,915 in NSW)

• **Families with children**: ¼ of all homeless persons (26,790 people or 7,483 families)
Homeless Persons in Sydney

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<tr>
<td>Inner City Ring</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outer City Ring</td>
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<td>Growth Corridors</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15,956</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Parramatta’s Future

Predicted population by 2026: up to 190,000
• Between 700 and 1000 new dwellings per year
• Increase from an estimated 200 to 300 homeless persons now to 1,007 to 2,527 homeless persons

Homeless Persons Information Centre

“In 2007, 19% [of] Parramatta callers did not have their need for accommodation that night met”
Questionnaire

• Change in the number of homeless persons
  – over last year: 1/3 yes, 2/3 no
  – over last 5 yrs: almost ½ yes, more than 1/3 no
• Slightly more than ½ had personal experience with homeless people
• 1/3 aware of other businesses’ direct contact
• Staff in 60% of businesses talked about it
• 2/3 expect homelessness to increase (1 yr)
• 80% expect it to increase over the next 5 yrs
7.2 Appendix 2: Transcript of Excerpt from Four Corners Program

“SARAH FERGUSON: Tonight we follow several families in Sydney's outer western suburbs as they struggle for the first time with the privations of homelessness. And the rules of the overburdened welfare system.

It's the story of ordinary people when their luck runs out and they enter the nether world of homelessness, where dignity and sympathy are rare commodities.

SARAH FERGUSON: So what happens to the jobless and evicted families, unable to get a toe-hold in the pitiless rental market, and struggling to hold on to their few belongings?”

“SARAH FERGUSON: David and Toni's troubles started when the rental home they were living in was sold.

DAVID SABJAN: Actually that day we had to go down to the department of housing and say we've moved out of our home, we're actually homeless at the moment. We sort of didn't know the process at the time.

But they um told us that um yeah well the only place is at Katoomba. So we basically had our bare essentials, clothes and things, packed in the car and drove up to Katoomba.

SARAH FERGUSON: They spent two weeks, fifty kilometres away, in a motel in Katoomba before being moved to Windsor.

David is surrounded by the paper work from more than 20 houses they've inspected since then.

DAVID SABJAN: There's a lack of rental properties I think and the people obviously on a on a better income and things like that will get priority, which I understand.

Landlords want to have someone reliable who's going to have an income to be able to pay the rent.

SARAH FERGUSON: Their situation is made worse by being unemployed, they're both at TAFE studying for new jobs.

TONI NORRIS: It looks like we won't find out til Monday or Tuesday. We're going to have to go to the department of housing and extend for another week.

DAVID SABJAN: Another week in this place.”

“SARAH FERGUSON: Toni and David Sabjan also want to stay in their old neighbourhood, to be near Brandon's school. After years of waiting, Brandon's just started a special programme to help with his learning problems.

REAL ESTATE AGENT 2: There's so many people at the moment, it's horrible.

SARAH FERGUSON: They found a suitable house but since they viewed it, the agent has shown it to 34 other people.

REAL ESTATE AGENT 2: I should be able to get it processed today, so just depending if the landlord wants a few days to think about it, yeah. So I'd say Monday at the latest.
DAVID SABJAN (to Agent): Ok thank you, put in a good word, we're nice people!

I always had this picture in my head a homeless person is they're got torn dirty clothes, they're not shaven, they're, they're sort of sitting in the corner you know waiting for a handout and that was my and to think that - I'm not in that category - but I don't have a home for my family.

It's really yeah it's very um embarrassing, I wish I could explain the way you feel but it's like it's very um like a degrading feeling like you, you feel you're useless basically yeah.
7.3 Appendix 3: Structure of Focus Groups

Chair: Dr Ingrid Schraner
Facilitator: A/Prof Dr Natalie Bolzan
Note taker: Dr Rosalie Atie

5:35 – 5:40 Welcome and overview over the evening

5:40 – 5:50 Introduction:
PowerPoint presentation on Homelessness in Parramatta

5:50 – 6:20 Part 1:
What businesses are experiencing now:
1) Direct experiences of and impact on businesses
2) Parramatta as a place for businesses: issues of concern and impact on businesses for those present themselves and for others

6:20 – 6:50 Part 2:
The Future: Parramatta 2025:
1) Best-case scenario regarding homeless people
2) How will it look if nothing happens now

6:50 – 7:00 Summary of key points & conclusion
7.4 Appendix 4: Parramatta Homelessness Survey – Questions

Q 1: Would you describe your business as
Micro (less than 5 employees); Small (5-19); Medium (20-199); Large (200+)

Q 2: Where is your business situated
Centre of Parramatta CBD; Outskirts of Parramatta CBD; Multiple Sites; other (please provide suburb name)

Q 3: Please describe your business type
Retail; Restaurant/Entertainment; Real Estate/Property Development; Other Service Industry; Manufacturing and Industry; Not For Profit; other (please specify)

Q 4: What is your position in the business
Owner; Manager; Staff Member; other (please specify)

Q 5: Approximately how long has this business been in Parramatta
Less than 1 year; 1-4 years; 5-9 years; 10 years or more

Q 6: Approximately how long have you owned or worked for the business
Less than 1 year; 1-4 years; 5-9 years; 10 years or more

Q 7: How often do you see homeless people in Parramatta
Never; Once in a while; Frequently

Q 8: How visible do you think homeless people are in the street or area in which your business is located
Not apparent; Sometimes apparent; Very visible

Q 9: Have you noticed any change in the number of homeless people in Parramatta over the past 12 months
Yes; No; I have not been here that long

Q 10: Have you noticed any change in the number of homeless people in Parramatta over the past 5 years
No; I have not been here that long

Q 11: If you answered ‘yes’ to questions 9 or 10, what changes have you observed
Open Text Questions

Q 12: Have you or your staff had any experience of homelessness or homeless people affecting your business
Yes; No

Q 13: If you answered ‘yes’ to question 12, would you please give an example
Open Text Questions

Q 14: Have you or your staff had any personal experience of homelessness or homeless people
Yes; No

Q 15: If you answered ‘yes’ to question 14, would you please give an example
Open Text Questions

Q 16: Are you aware of other businesses in Parramatta having direct contact with homeless people
Yes; No

Q 17: If you answered ‘yes’ to question 16, would you please give an example
Open Text Questions

Q 18: Staff in my business/company have talked about homelessness in the past 6 months
Yes; No

Q 19: If you answered ‘yes’ to question 18, would you please provide an example
Open Text Questions

Q 20: Homelessness is not an obvious issue in Parramatta
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 21: Homeless people deter people from shopping in Parramatta
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 22: Homeless people deter people from dining or using services in Parramatta
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 23: Homeless people deter visitors to Parramatta
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 24: Homeless people are a natural part of Parramatta being a growing CBD
Q 25: Homeless people are well looked after by government and welfare groups
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 26: Most homeless people in Parramatta come here from other areas
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 27: The number of homeless people in Parramatta does not affect my business
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 28: Homeless people in Parramatta create an impression that the city is unsafe
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 29: Homeless people in Parramatta are at risk of becoming victims of violence
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 30: More support programs are needed in Parramatta to help local homeless people
strongly disagree; disagree; neither agree nor disagree; agree; strongly agree

Q 31: Homeless people in Parramatta mainly consist of
Men; Women; Young People under the age of 18 years; Individuals; Couples; Families; Anglo Australians; Indigenous Australians; People from other cultural backgrounds; A combination of the above

Q 32: I think people in Parramatta become homeless because of
Poverty; Mental Illness; Drugs; Family Breakdown; Unemployment; Lack of Affordable Housing; A combination of the above; other (please specify)

Q 33: Do you think the number of homeless people in Parramatta will change over the next 12 months
Decrease; No Change; Increase

Q 34: Do you think the number of homeless people will change over the next 5 years
Decrease; No Change; Increase

Q 35: If you answered 'increase' to questions 33 or 34, would you please give a reason why you expect this
Open Text Questions

Q 36: What worries you most about homelessness in Parramatta
Open Text Questions

Q 37: What do you think should be done about homelessness in Parramatta
Open Text Questions

Q 38: Are there ways in which you or your business could help to find solutions to homelessness in Parramatta
Yes; No

Q 39: If you answered 'yes' to question 37, would you please indicate how
Open Text Questions
7.5 Appendix 5: Statistical Analysis of Business Survey Dataset

The dataset received on Monday, December 7, 2009 was a MS Excel file of 72 responses on 39 questions. A preliminary sort to remove the Local Government respondents was conducted and the remaining 67 responses were converted to a SYLK file for entry into SPSS for analysis. To enable the statistical analysis, text responses to Questions 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 35, 36, 37 and 39 were omitted. Similarly, the text responses to Other (please specify) were coded numerically and, in the case of Question 3, interpretatively coded by applying apparent similarities with the existing categories plus the addition of a Government category (Q03A), and as originally presented with the Other being numerically included (Q03B).

The following tables and figures display the initial descriptive analyses for each Question.

Question 1: Would you describe your business as *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business size</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Micro (Less than 5 employees)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small (5-19)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (20-199)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (200+)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following pie chart displays the distribution of business size categories: Less than 5 employees, 5-19, 20-199, 200+. The chart shows the proportions of businesses falling into each category.
Question 2: Where is your business situated*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBD centre</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>53.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD outskirts</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple sites</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing business location data]
Question 3: Please describe your business type*
Q03A (Coded with the addition of Government)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business description- Coded</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/ Entertainment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate/ Property</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Service Industry</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and Industry</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not for Profit</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bar chart and pie chart showing the frequency and percent of each business type.
Question 3: Please describe your business type*
Q03B (Original data with coded Other)

### Business description with Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/ Entertainment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Estate/ Property development</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Service Industry</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and Industry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not for Profit</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Business description with Other](image)
Question 4: What is your position in the business*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position in business</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Member</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The percentages might not sum to 100.0 due to rounding.

![Position in business pie chart](chart.png)
Question 5: Approximately how long has this business been in Parramatta?

### Business' time in Parra

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Interval</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing time intervals for businesses in Parramatta.](image)
Question 6: Approximately how long have you owned or worked for the business?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time with the business</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-4 years</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 years or more</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing time with the business]
Question 7: How often do you see homeless people in Parramatta*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>71.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once in a while</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Saw homeless people

![Pie chart showing frequency of seeing homeless people in Parramatta.](chart.png)
Question 8: How visible do you think homeless people are in the street or area in which your business is located*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How visible are homeless</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not apparent</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes apparent</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very visible</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>44.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to the question about how visible homeless people are in the street or area in which the business is located.](chart.png)
Question 9: Have you noticed any change in the number of homeless people in Parramatta over the past 12 months*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in numbers in last 12 months</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>61.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not been here that long</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to the question about the change in numbers of homeless people in Parramatta over the past 12 months. The chart shows that 34.3% said 'Yes', 61.2% said 'No', 4.5% said 'I have not been here that long', and 100% accounted for in the total.](chart.png)
Question 10: Have you noticed any change in the number of homeless people in Parramatta over the past 5 years*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change in numbers in last 5 years</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not been here that long</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*81
Question 14: Have you or your staff had any personal experience of homelessness or homeless people*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal experience with homelessness</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>47.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 16: Are you aware of other businesses in Parramatta having direct contact with homeless people*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aware of other business' direct contact with homeless people</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Aware of other business' direct contact with homeless people
Question 18: Staff in my business/ company have talked about homelessness in the past 6 months*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff have talked about homelessness in past 6 months
Question 31: Homeless people in Parramatta mainly consist of*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeless consist of..</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of the above</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individuals</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo-Australians</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Homeless consist of..

- **Men**: 28 (41.8%)
- **A combination of the above**: 34 (50.7%)
- **Individuals**: 4 (6.0%)
- **Anglo-Australians**: 1 (1.5%)
- **Total**: 67 (100.0%)
Question 32: I think people in Parramatta become homeless because of*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for homelessness</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental illness</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family breakdown</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of affordable housing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A combination of the above</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reasons for homelessness**

- Mental illness
- Drugs
- Family breakdown
- Lack of affordable housing
- Other
- A combination of the above

![Pie chart showing the distribution of reasons for homelessness](image-url)
Question 33: Do you think the number of homeless people will change over the next 12 months*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Will homelessness change in next 12 months</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>64.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 34: Do you think the number of homeless people will change over the next 5 years?

**Will number of homeless change in next 5 years**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>67</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses to the question about the change in the number of homeless people over the next 5 years. The majority of respondents (80.6%) believe the number will increase, while 16.4% believe it will not change and 3.0% believe it will decrease.]
Appendix 6: Analysis of Qualitative Responses

The Parramatta Homelessness Survey conducted amongst businesses in and around the Parramatta CBD produced a dataset that was initially received on Monday, December 7, 2009 in a MS Excel file of 72 responses on 39 questions. A preliminary sort to remove 5 Local Government employees was followed by a statistical analysis of the quantitative data from 30 questions and its results have been reported in two earlier documents. The remaining nine questions, namely, Questions 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 35, 36, 37 and 38, generated optional textual responses that sought explanations or reasons for responses to their associated closed response items. These typed responses were printed separately in order that a content analysis of each question could be conducted. Classification codes and descriptors for each the different classes of responses were developed and then the codes were included in the original MS Excel file. A preliminary breakdown of each question’s range of responses follows.

Question 11: Changes in homelessness observed in Parramatta over the last 5 years. Twenty-seven (27) respondents reported that there has been an increase in the number of homeless people, 12 reported there was an increased visibility of homeless people, and 6 reported that homeless people had become an increased nuisance during that time. Only one (1) person said the number of homeless people had decreased. Three (3) respondents have observed that the homeless people are accessing services more, while 4 others reported a decrease in visibility for a time but that the number had most likely been increasing. Three (3) offered their descriptions of the homeless people’s demographics, namely, that there were more men than women, there were less living near the river or bridge, and the apparently contradictory views that there were more older homeless men and that there were more youths. One (1) respondent observed that there has been an increased community concern regarding homelessness over the last 5 years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased number of homeless people</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased visibility of homeless people</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased nuisance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased number of homeless people</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeless people are accessing services more</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased visibility for a time but increase generally</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More men than women, less near river, or more older vs. more youths</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased community concern</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 13: Examples of experiences with homelessness affecting your business.

14 Namely, Statistical Analysis of Parramatta Homelessness Survey Dataset, and Results of cross-tabulations between demographic and experience variables that indicate substantial differences between categories.
Twelve (12) reported they had observed anti-social behaviour by homeless people that deterred customers/clients from entering their business, while 7 had experienced homeless people urinating or defecating in public near to their businesses. Homeless people begging for or soliciting food, money or cigarettes were experiences of 5 respondents, and another 5 reported that some homeless people had used their premises, business entrances or a bus as a refuge both day and night. Five (5) people reported that in their contacts with homeless people they transacted their business without any fuss.

Table 2: Summary of responses to Question 13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anti-social behaviour deterring customers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observed toileting in public by homeless people</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Begging or soliciting</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Used business as a refuge</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transacted business without a fuss</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 15: Examples of personal experiences with homelessness.
Several (13) respondents had relationships with homeless people through their business or the service they provide and 8 reported having isolated experiences over a number of years. Three (3) indicated they had sympathy for the plight of the homeless, while 9 indicated they had been accosted by homeless people asking for money, etc or that they were the victims of some anti-social behaviour.

Table 3: Summary of responses to Question 15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationships through business or service</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had sympathy for the plight of the homeless</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims of begging or soliciting or anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolated experiences with homeless people</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 17: Awareness of other business’ experiences with homelessness.
Eleven (11) said they were aware of the support agencies for homeless people and 8 others said they were aware of homeless people begging at food courts and some other businesses.

Table 4: Summary of responses to Question 17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aware of support agencies for the homeless</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aware of begging at food courts/other businesses</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 19: Our staff members have discussed homelessness on the last 6 months. Physical contacts with or observations of the homeless have been discussed by 16 respondents’ staff. While 5 have had general discussions, not specifically related to
Parramatta, about homelessness, 7 indicated they had discussed some specific topics related to homelessness. A further 9 had discussed solutions with their staff.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical contacts or observations of the homeless</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General discussions about homelessness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussed specific topics regarding homeless people</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions to homelessness has been discussed</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of or poor support services</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global financial crisis, economic downturn, and increased unemployment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased population</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living and house affordability</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family breakdown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive use of drugs and alcohol</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 35: Reasons for thinking the numbers of homeless people will increase over the next 5 years.
Lack of support services and poor government services were given as reasons by 15 respondents. Fifteen (15) said the Global Financial Crisis and the consequent economic downturn with increased unemployment were to blame. Another reason offered by 18 respondents was that it was a function of an increased population, while the cost of living and house affordability were the reasons given by 8 survey respondents. Five (5) included family breakdown, 4 suggested mental health problems, and 3 thought an increase would be due to the excessive use of drugs and alcohol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of or poor support services</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global financial crisis, economic downturn, and increased unemployment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased population</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of living and house affordability</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family breakdown</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excessive use of drugs and alcohol</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 36: What worries you most about homelessness in Parramatta?
Fifteen (15) were mostly concerned by homelessness in general, both in Parramatta and elsewhere. Social inequity issues, sympathy, and a desire to help improve the situation were mentioned by 16 people, while the availability of support services, including services for the mentally ill and those with a drug and/or alcohol dependency were worries expressed by 25 respondents. Safety and welfare issues, namely the safety and welfare of the homeless and the safety of the community, were concerns shared by 20 of the survey sample. The most important worry for 12 people was the costs of the damage that homelessness caused, namely, the cost of repairs, the cost of the damage that it does to people’s perception of Parramatta and western Sydney, and future costs of this problem.
Table 7: Summary of responses to Question 36.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness in general</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social equity, sympathy, desire to improve society</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support services availability</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and welfare concerns</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of the damage done by the homeless</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 37: What do you think should be done about homelessness in Parramatta? A huge majority (44) of the responses to this question said that support services, government, Parramatta City Council (PCC) and Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), need to be increased. Twenty-four (24) recommended that there should be further research or new initiatives and greater awareness of the problem. Of the other responses, 9 said “move them on” or place them in a refuge, 9 did not know, and one (1) said it was too hard.

Table 8: Summary of responses to Question 37.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased support (government, PCC and/or NGOs)</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research, new initiatives, greater awareness</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Move them on”</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too hard</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 38: Ways that you or your business could help to find solutions. Most frequent (18) suggestion offered was that a partnership (a forum) of businesses with government, Parramatta City Council and NGOs be formed to develop a whole problem approach and to advocate for more State government support. Four (4) volunteered their individual support, 10 offered to donate food or money, while others (3) said if the precinct for their businesses had more facilities that were more successful in providing for the community, homelessness would be less an issue.

Table 9: Summary of responses to Question 38.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Frequency of response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form a partnership</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteered support</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donate food or money</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a better business precinct</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using SPSS, a cross-tabulation of the higher frequency response categories with the quantitative output will next be undertaken to see how these views are distributed throughout the sample.
7.7 Appendix 7: Cross-tab of Qualitative Responses with Demographic Variables

Summary
This report is divided into three sections. The first looks at interactions between the demographic variables and the open-ended questions with examples and comments from the survey sample (N=67). The second section looks at the attitudinal questions and their associations with the examples and comments from the same open-ended questions. A final section investigates the interactions between the demographic variables and the attitudinal questions, Questions 20-30, of the survey.

Section 1. Smaller Business Sizes more than larger businesses made more comments on any “Noticeable Changes in Homelessness over last 5 years” and in particular said that homelessness had increased in numbers. Awareness of support agencies for the homeless and the discussion of solutions amongst staff were both greatest in the smallest and the largest businesses. Ways that you or your business could help and the suggestion to establish a forum and develop partnerships were greater in number from the largest to the smallest business sizes.

The CBD and Multiple Sites locations indicated they had more contacts with the homeless through their businesses than the others. The CBD respondents gave the reasons for thinking the homeless will increase over the next 5 years as the lack of support services and, along with CBD Outskirts, an increased population. Multiple Sites and Other Business Locations blamed the economic downturn and increased unemployment. The CBD expressed the most concern for the costs of having homeless people in Parramatta and the least concern about homelessness in general. Business Descriptions of Retail and Government offered more comments on “Noticeable Changes in Homelessness” than all others. Retail also gave more examples of how homelessness affects their business, public toileting by the homeless, and along with Restaurants/Entertainment, examples of anti-social behaviour. Not for Profit and Other Service Industries report they have discussed homelessness in general and, along with Retail, solutions for homelessness more than the other Business Descriptions. Most concern for the cost/damage of homelessness was shown by Retail, Restaurants/Entertainment, Real Estate/Development, and Other Service Industries. Not for Profit, Government, and Manufacturing and Industry more frequently suggested forming a partnership as a solution to homelessness. Businesses longest in Parramatta had more relationships with the homeless through their business, they were more likely to talk with their staff about homelessness, and they showed more concern for homelessness in general than the others. Respondents who were with their business longer were more likely to comment that the homeless had become more of a nuisance in the last 5 years.

Section 2. Disagreement with the statement, “Homelessness is not an obvious issue in Parramatta” was associated with reporting homelessness was an increased nuisance, providing more reasons why it will increase, more comments on what should be done, and more support for taking the homeless off the street.

The statement that “Homeless people deter people from shopping in Parramatta” (Q21) was agreed to by those who reported it was an increased nuisance, had observed public toileting by the homeless, had experienced more contacts with the homeless,
and advocated “Take them off the street”. Disagreement with Q21 was matched by suggestions for a proactive approach with new initiatives. Stating that “Homeless people deter people from dining or using services in Parramatta” matched agreement with an increased visibility of the homeless and a lack of support services as the reason for the increase. Its disagreement was matched with the reason for the increase being an increased population and the suggested option of a proactive approach to the problem.

Support for “Deterring visitors to Parramatta” related positively with homelessness is an increased nuisance, citing examples of anti-social behaviour and public toileting, and the advocacy for “Take them off the street”.

Saying that “Most homeless people in Parramatta come here from other areas” was associated with a general concern about homelessness and having discussed solutions with staff.

Witnessing public toileting by the homeless was not in accord with the view that “The number of homeless people in Parramatta does not affect my business”. “Homeless people (creating) an impression that the city is unsafe” was supported by those with contact experience of homeless people through their business and with having discussed solutions. Disagreement was matched with suggesting a proactive approach to homelessness and with the recommendation to “Take them off the street” and “Put them in a refuge”.

Agreeing that homeless people are at risk of becoming victims of violence was associated with numbers of contacts with the homeless, having discussed homelessness, and giving the cause for homelessness as the economic downturn and increased unemployment. Strong agreement with the need for more support programs in Parramatta for the homeless was linked with the suggested solution of more government support, with concern for the damage done by the homeless, with the recommendation to “Take them off the street” and “Put them in a refuge”, and with thinking that the increase in the next 5 years will be due to the economic downturn and increased unemployment.

Section 3. Business Location in the CBD was associated with more support for “Homeless people in Parramatta create an impression that the city is unsafe”. Business Descriptions of Retail, Other Service industries, and Not for Profit strongly disagreed with the statement that “Homelessness is not an obvious issue in Parramatta”. The latter two also strongly agreed that there needed to be more support programs in Parramatta to help homeless people.

 Longer time in Parramatta for a business, that is, greater than 5 years, resulted in stronger disagreement with “Most homeless people in Parramatta come here from other areas”.

Respondents whose time with a business in Parramatta was less than a year strongly agreed with the deterrence statements for shoppers and for diners and service users. Those with more than 5 years with a business strongly disagreed with “Homeless people are well looked after by government and welfare groups” but agreed with the need for more support programs in Parramatta for the homeless.
To further interpret the responses made to the open-ended questions of the Parramatta Homelessness Business Survey, a series of cross-tabulation tables and statistics were generated using SPSS 17.0 software. The major demographic variables chosen for this series of analyses were Business Size (Q01), Business Location (Q02), Business Description (Q03a & Q03b), Business’ Time in Parramatta (Q05) and Time with the Business (Q06). The open-ended question responses that were coded in an earlier analysis\(^\text{15}\) were entered into the SPSS datafile as “1” to indicate whether a comment that matched that code had been made or as “2” to indicate that “No comment” was made by that respondent. The Crosstabs procedure with a Pearson Chi-squared ($\chi^2$) statistic was employed to identify interactions that existed between the sample’s qualitative responses and its demographic variables. Each cross-tabulation included a variable that signified that a comment of any type had been made as well as those variables that corresponded to codes that had frequencies of 6 or more. This report contains those interactions that denoted any identifiable trends\(^\text{16}\) that were found.

1. **Demographic Variables Analyses**

Business size had an impact on whether respondents made any comment at all to Question 11, “Changes in homelessness observed in Parramatta over the last 5 years”. The trend apparent in the cross-tabulation is that the smaller size businesses were more likely to comment than the larger size firms $\chi^2 (3, N = 67) = 9.08$, $p=0.028$.

Table 1: Cross-tabulations of Business Size (Q01) with Question 11 (Comments on Changes in homelessness observed in Parramatta over the last 5 years).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business size</th>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 employees</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small 5-19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium 20-199</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large &gt;199</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the comment that distinguished the Business Size respondents was that there had been an increased number of homeless people in Parramatta in the last 5 years. Businesses with less than 5 employees were more likely to indicate that the number had increased $\chi^2 (3, N = 67) = 11.319$, $p =0.010$.

\(^\text{15}\) *Analysis of Qualitative Responses from the Parramatta Homelessness Survey Dataset*

\(^\text{16}\) Please note that Cross-tabulation tables are only presented for Q01, Q02 and Q02 to demonstrate the typical distributions of the identifiable trends in this report. Other tables can be made available if required.
Table 2: Cross-tabulations of Business Size (Q01) with Question 11a (Increased number of homeless people in Parramatta over the last 5 years).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business size</th>
<th>Increased number</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 employees</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small 5-19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium 20-199</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large &gt;199</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The next trend in the analysis of Question 11 was that Businesses described as Retail or Government were more likely to make a comment than the other Business Descriptions. There was however no specific comment of Increased Number, Increased Visibility or Increased Nuisance, that separated the Business Descriptions. Time with the business (Q06) was positively correlated with the number of comments of homelessness being an increased nuisance (p<0.014).

Business Descriptions though were featured in an interaction with Question 13 that requested examples of “any experience of homelessness affecting your business?” Retail businesses were again more frequent contributors than any other. Government enterprises on the other hand were unable to give any examples at all. Retail and Restaurants were equally frequent comment makers on “Anti-social behaviour by homeless people deterring customers/ clients” (Question 13a). Retail were the most frequent respondents to report witnessing public toileting by homeless people (Q13b).

Question 15 also asked for examples. In particular, it asked for “any personal experience of homelessness or homeless people?” and Business Location was related to reports of “having a relationship through their business or service” (Q15a). Table 3 shows that both the CBD centre and Multiple sites provided more examples of these contacts than the other locations $\chi^2 (3, N = 67) = 8.038, p =0.045$.

Table 3: Business Location (Q02) and Examples of a Relationship through Business or Service (Q15a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business location</th>
<th>Have a relationship through business</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD centre</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD outskirts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple sites</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A Business’ time in Parramatta (Q05) affected the number who reported a contact or relationship with the homeless. The longer the time the more contacts reported (p<0.009).
Business Size (Q01) and responses to Question 17 (Examples of other businesses contact with the homeless) interacted on Q17b which was coded “Aware of support agencies for the homeless” (p<0.37). Of the 9 responses, 4 came from businesses with less than 5 employees and 4 came from large businesses with over 200 employees.

Question 19 was the last of the requests to give examples of the respondents’ experiences. There was an interaction between Business Size (Q01) and whether “Solutions to homelessness has been discussed” (Q19c) which indicated that once again it was the smallest and the largest businesses that had had that occur (p<0.037). Business Description interacted with two of the Question 19 codings, namely “Discussions about homelessness” (Q19a) and “Solutions to homelessness…” (Q19c). Both “Not for profit” and “Other service industry” featured in both the cross-tabulations with Q19a and Q19c (p<0.001 and p<0.008, respectively), while “Retail” was found in the interaction with Q19a. The longer a Business’ time in Parramatta (Q05), the more comments that were made (Q19). Times of ten years or more contributed 26 out of 35 comments on this question (p<0.019) and they have discussed homelessness more than the newer businesses (p<0.031).

The later open-ended questions of the survey canvassed opinions and suggestions and in general were responded to more frequently by the people in this sample. Question 35 asked for reasons why homelessness would increase over the next 5 years and a trend towards the CBD centre Business Location saying an increase would be due to a lack of government services was observed (11 out of 15). Proportionally more of the Multiple sites and Other Business Location respondents (8 out of 14) gave the “Global financial crisis, economic downturn, and increased unemployment” reasons for an increase in homelessness. Conversely, CBD centre and CBD outskirts Business Location respondents blamed an increased population (18 out of 19).

In response to Question 36 “What worries you most about homelessness in Parramatta”, proportionally more of the Business locations out of the CBD indicated their concerns were for homelessness generally (p<0.04). Businesses in the CBD were more concerned about the physical damage and the damage to Parramatta’s reputation (13 out of 13). Similarly, the Business Descriptions of Retail, Restaurant/ Entertainment, Real Estate/ Property Development and Other Service Industry expressed concern for the damage (12/13). The longer a business’ time in Parramatta the more concern shown for the homeless in general (p<0.046).

The number of suggestions offered in Question 39’s request for “how you or your business could help find solutions to homelessness in Parramatta” correlated highly with Business Size, that is, Large (>199) made the most suggestions (13/32) and the number of suggestions then followed in the order of Business Size (p<0.005). A similar trend (11:3:3:1) between Business Size and the suggestion to establish a forum and develop partnerships was also observed (p<0.000). Proportionally more of the Businesses outside of the CBD (8/14) and the Business Descriptions “Not for profit”, “Government” and “Manufacturing and Industry” (13/18) suggested “Form a partnership” (p<0.015 and p<0.000, respectively).

2. The Analyses of the Attitudinal Questions
Questions 20 to 30 sought responses ranging from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” and they were compared with responses to Question 11. The first table is
shown as an example of the distribution that results when smaller response rates occur. Later questions with higher frequencies and important findings will be shown with statistical results only.

Table 4: Cross-tabulations of Question 20 (Homelessness is not an issue) with Question 11c (Homelessness is an increased nuisance).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homelessness is not an issue</th>
<th>Increased nuisance</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No comment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree or disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 shows that respondents who commented that homelessness is causing an increased nuisance to businesses in Parramatta also “Strongly disagreed” with the statement “Homelessness is not an issue” $\chi^2 (3, N = 67) = 13.132, p =0.004$.

Other Question 11 cross-tabulations that indicated trends included the following. People who think “Homeless people deter shoppers” also commented “Homelessness is an increased nuisance” $\chi^2 (4, N = 67) = 15.401, p =0.004$. Similarly, respondents who agreed that “Homeless people deter diners…” thought there was an increased visibility of the homeless $\chi^2 (4, N = 67) = 10.647, p =0.031$. A comparable result indicated that supporters of the statement “Homeless people deter visitors” also made comment on the increased nuisance that homeless people were creating $\chi^2 (4, N = 67) = 13.984, p =0.007$. The commensurate finding was that respondents who answered negatively to “Number of homeless people doesn’t affect my business” also made comment on the increased nuisance that homeless people were creating $\chi^2 (4, N = 67) = 10.444, p =0.034$.

Amongst the Question 13 cross-tabulations with the opinion questions (Q20-Q30) there were examples of sample integrity. Not surprisingly those who said “Homeless people deter shoppers” also commented on witnessing “Public toileting”. Similarly, those who agreed with “Homeless people deter visitors” comment that the homeless' anti-social behaviour was a deterrent (p<0.036). “Public toileting” was another comment of those who “Strongly disagreed” with the “Number of homeless people doesn't affect my business” (p<0.043). Similar comments by respondents on “Public toileting” were supported by the view that “Homeless people create the impression that the city is unsafe” (p<0.008).

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17 Please note that detailed statistical information has been reduced to the criterion for inclusion as a point of interest, viz. p<0.05.
From the responses to Question 15, an interesting interaction was found between those who had a relationship with the homeless through their business (Q15a) and their negative responses to “Homeless people create impression that city is unsafe.” Apparently, contacts of this type have affected their attitudes to the safety issues that surround homeless people (p<0.006). In some way, this finding is confirmed by the interaction between those who had “Other contacts/ experiences with homelessness” and their agreement with the statement “Homeless people are at a risk of violence” (p<0.037). Either these respondents have had separate experiences or they have distinguished general safety of the community from the safety and welfare of the homeless.

Question 17 responses showed that those who did not support the statement “Homeless people create impression that city is unsafe” were “Aware of support agencies for the homeless” (Q17b) (p<0.003). Another interaction that showed a trend was that between “Homeless people are at risk of violence” and “Aware of begging at food courts/ other businesses (Q17a). Those who were aware of begging supported the view that the homeless risked violence.

Question 19b where respondents described their contacts with homeless people was associated with support for “Homeless people deter shoppers” (p<0.011). The discussion of solutions experience was matched with agreement that homeless people come from other areas (p<0.005). Similarly, the statement “Homeless people create impression that city is unsafe” was supported by those who had physical contacts or observations of the homeless (p<0.011) and those that had discussed solutions (p<0.014). “Homeless people are at risk of violence” was supported by those respondents who had had discussions about homelessness (p<0.01).

Understandably, respondents who disagreed with the statement “Homelessness is not an issue” were more likely (p<0.005) to give their reasons why “the numbers of homeless people will increase over the next 5 years” (Q35). Those who agreed with “Homeless people deter people from dining or using services in Parramatta” (Q22) indicated that homelessness was due to a “Lack of support services and government services” (p<0.022), while those who disagreed with the Question 22 statement cited an “Increased population” (p<0.017). Respondents who thought “Homeless people are at a risk of violence” and that there should be “More support programs…in Parramatta to help local homeless people” blamed the “Global financial crisis, economic downturn, and increased unemployment” for an increase in the homeless (p<0.034 and p<0.043, respectively).

General concerns about homelessness in Parramatta (Q36) were matched with disagreement with the Question 26 statement, “Most homeless people in Parramatta come here from other areas (p<0.035). Nine out of 13 respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with a need for “More support programs…in Parramatta to help local homeless people” also expressed concern on the cost of the damage done by the homeless.

Question 37’s “What do you think should be done about homelessness in Parramatta?” received 64 comments and naturally those who commented also “Strongly disagreed” or “Disagreed” with “Homelessness is not an obvious issue in Parramatta” (p<0.004). Associations between the recommendation for “Research, new
initiatives, and greater awareness” and disagreement with “Homeless people deter people from shopping in Parramatta” by 14 respondents, with “Homeless people deter people dining or using services in Parramatta” by 15 and with “Homeless people in Parramatta create an impression that the city is unsafe” by 9 suggest there are those who support a positive, proactive response to homelessness being taken (p<0.041, p<0.009 and p<0.043, respectively). On the other hand, there were ten who commented “Move them on”, “they should be placed in a refuge…”, “Take them off the streets”, etc. but disagreed with the statement “Homelessness is not an obvious issue in Parramatta” (p<0.021). Seven of those said homeless people deterred shoppers (p<0.048), that they “deter visitors to Parramatta” (p<0.006) and that they “create an impression that the city is unsafe” (p<0.022). A synchronicity between “More support programs are needed in Parramatta…” (Q30) and a recommendation in Question 37 for increased support from government, Parramatta City Council and/or NGOs was also observed (p<0.006). Further associations between Question 30, “More support programs…”, and “Move them on”, “they should be placed in a refuge…”, “Take them off the streets”, etc. (p<0.034) and the “Don’t know” response (p<0.006) also occurred.

3. Demographic with Attitudinal Variables.
Business Location (Q02) interacted with the responses to the statement, “Homeless people create impression that city is unsafe”. Respondents in the CBD supported this view more strongly than any other location (p<0.000). Business Descriptions “Retail”, “Other Service Industries”, and “Not for profit” disagreed more strongly than other Descriptions to the statement that “Homelessness is not an obvious issue in Parramatta” (p<0.032). “Other Service Industries”, and “Not for profit” Business Descriptions were also more strongly in favour of the statement, “More support programs are needed in Parramatta…” (Q30) than the others (p<0.025). An effect of respondents saying their Business’ time in Parramatta was over 5 years and especially those whose Businesses were in Parramatta for over 10 years was that they disagreed strongly with the statement, “Most homeless people in Parramatta come here from other areas” (p<0.000). Similarly, the “Time with the business” variable found the category, “Less than a year”, agreeing with “Homeless people deter shoppers” (p<0.021) and “Homeless people deter people from dining or using services in Parramatta” (p<0.005). The other categories were ambivalent on these statements. “Time with the business” also differentiated the less time from the more time respondents on whether “Homeless people are well looked after by government and welfare groups”. The “10 years or more” and the “5-9 years” categories disagreed more strongly than both other groups (p<0.001). A similar pattern was found with the amount of agreement with “More support programs are needed in Parramatta…”. The longer with the business respondents agreed more strongly than those who were “Less than a year” or “1-4 years” (p<0.042).
8 Bibliography


Parramatta City Council (2009b) Submission to NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Homelessness and Low-Cost Rental Accommodation. Sydney: NSW Government


