

**Results from Consultation
'Access & Equity Needs
Profile of NESB Young
Women: Fairfield and
Liverpool'**

Acknowledgments

The NESB Youth Policy worker liased with local and mainstream services on direction and content of consultation. Some of the agencies I consulted were the Cabramatta Youth Team, FLYHT, LYNCS, Lotus House Indochinese Young Women's Refuge, Medly House Refuge, Centrelink Outreach, YAPA, Parks Community Network, Open Family, Serbian Welfare Association, STARTTS, Liverpool Council, Cabramatta IEC, Fairfield Council, Liverpool Migrant Interagency, Fairfield Youth Accommodation Service and Liverpool Youth Refuge. From these consultations a theme and survey was developed which focused primarily on finding out general concerns and issues facing NESB Young Women and more specific concerns regarding accessing local and mainstream services. Overall, this profile would not have been possible without the generosity and openness from the young women in giving their time and information.

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Introduction to Needs Analysis

The purpose of the needs analysis is to monitor usage rates of Liverpool/Fairfield social services amongst NESB Young Women of the same geographical area. Where there are gaps in the provision of services to this target group a survey, and follow-up consultation will be used to identify key areas where current service provision is inadequate.

This follows that youth services are generally accessed predominantly by males, and that little documentation exists on access and equity issues experienced by NESB, refugee and newly arrived young women.

While the needs analysis does tend towards highlighting access issues, it is essential that all identified issues be given consideration, as opposed to locating all aspects of access barriers to either *client* or *service*. Simply, if all aspects of Access and Equity focus on the efficiency or manner of service delivery, the importance of Access and Equity continues to be lost. So that it does not become marginal to the process, the needs analysis will attempt to highlight a range of limitations that prevent young women from utilising services.

A survey questionnaire was administered to 50 NESB Young Women in the Liverpool Fairfield Local Government Areas.

The findings are a result of four consultations in which NESB Young Women were asked a series of questions regarding their experience with accessing social services particular to their perceived needs, conditions, barriers. The survey focus was thus on the following six key areas:

- Whether Young Women feel comfortable using existing services, and if not why ?
- Whether Young Women have enough information on what services exist in their local and adjoining areas.

- To what extent the gender element compounds the Access & Equity issues for NESB Young people.
- General barriers to service delivery in both LGAs and to what extent this excludes NESB Young Women from accessing services
- Whether existing services are being proactive in their marketing of services to this target group
- Which barriers are particular to services, clients and LGA

NOTES ON ACCESS AND EQUITY

Access and Equity evolved in recognition of a need to increase awareness and participation in service provision. In principle, needs should be identified through a process that is inclusive and consultative. It's delivery encompasses the process by which it is formed, and the manner in which it is carried out. Persons experiencing barriers, under a policy of Access and Equity, are entitled to receive a standard of assistance from those parties whose responsibility rests in acknowledging such barriers, and devising strategies by which to assist in them being overcome.

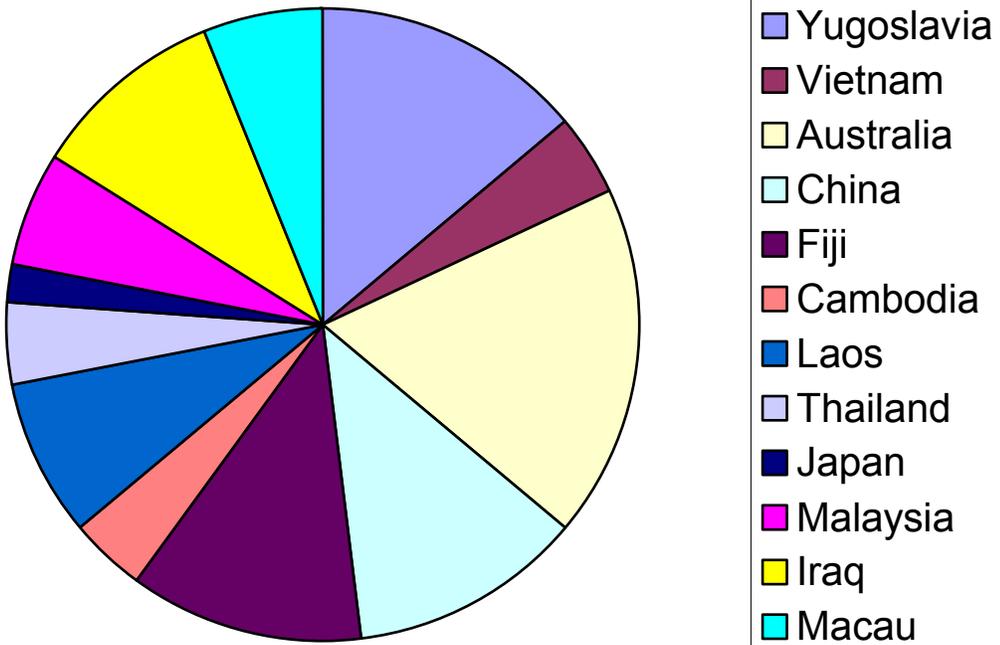
While gaps in the provision of services can be delineated to a few single causes, all aspects of access must be assessed in order to determine the dynamics of participation or a lack of participation where equity is negotiated as a result.

Admittedly, the complex web of circumstance, isolation, cultural differentiation, gender, sexuality, religion, and economic hardship each pose significant challenges to developing a universal standard where providing human services is concerned. Nonetheless, it is often the case that unravelling these challenges gives greater evidence to the depths in which inequality, poverty and social-political marginalisation occurs.

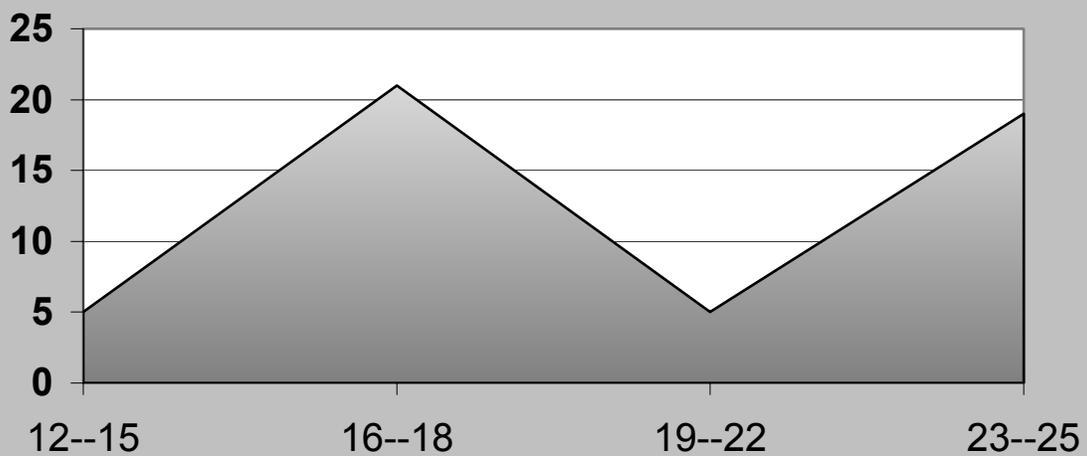
This is the case for NESB Young Women whose settlement difficulties are generally more pronounced, despite statistical evidence that shows the contrary. Due to the fact that young men tend to youth specific services more than young women, there exists a lopsided perception that excludes NESB Young Women based on accumulated participation as opposed to actual need.

STATISTICAL INFORMATION ABOUT SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

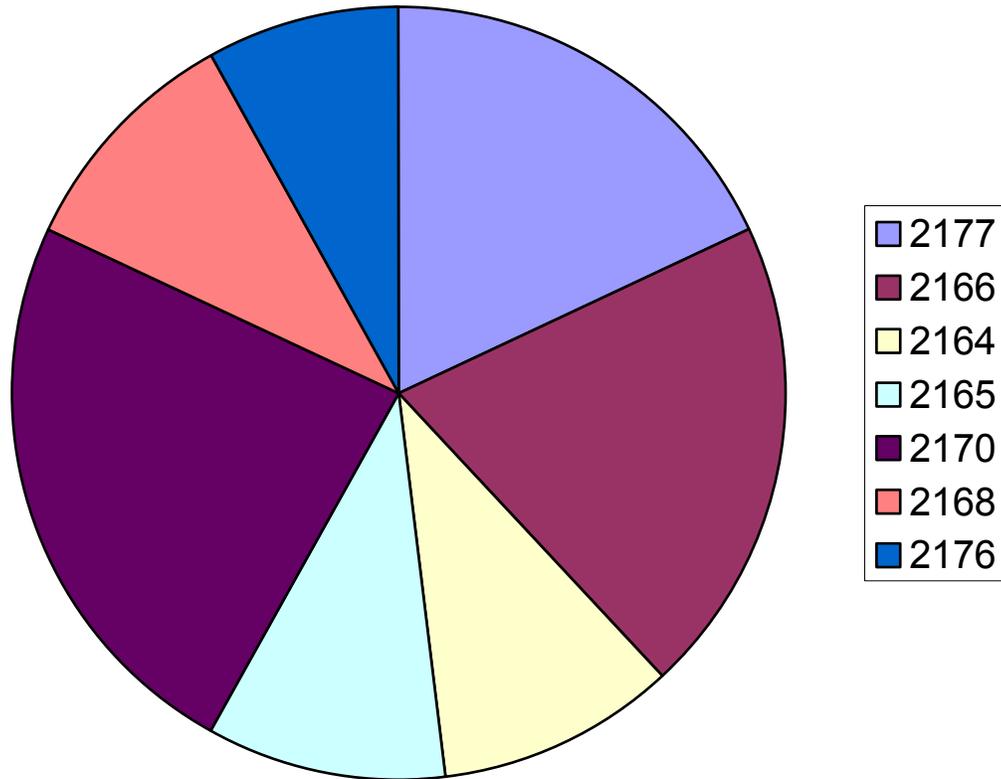
NESB Young Women by Country of Birth



Participation by Age Category 12-25



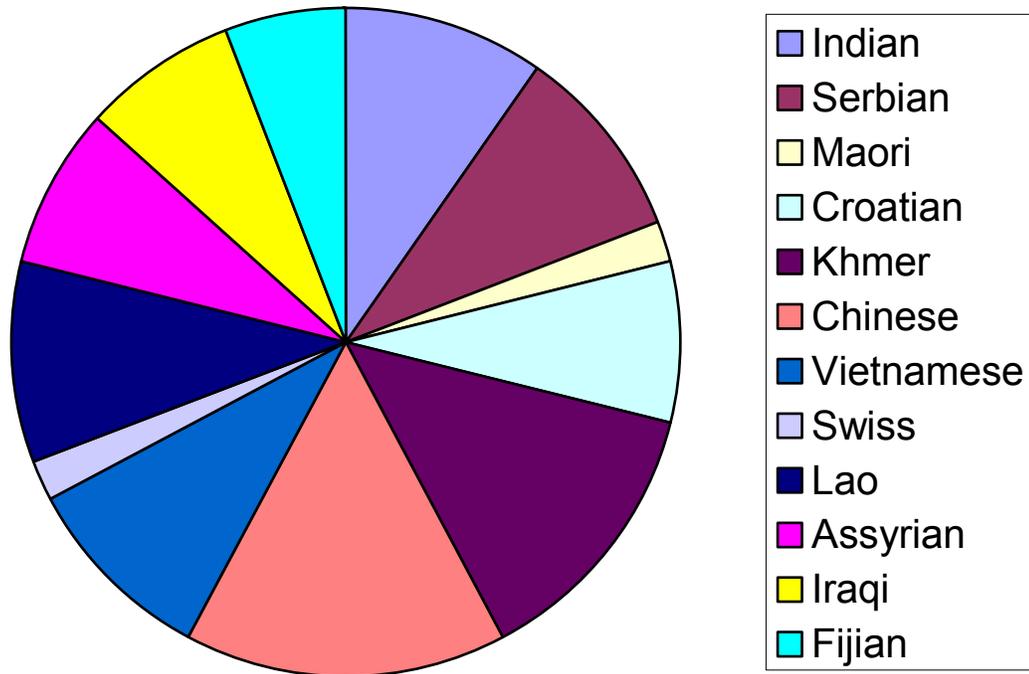
Participation in Survey by Postcode



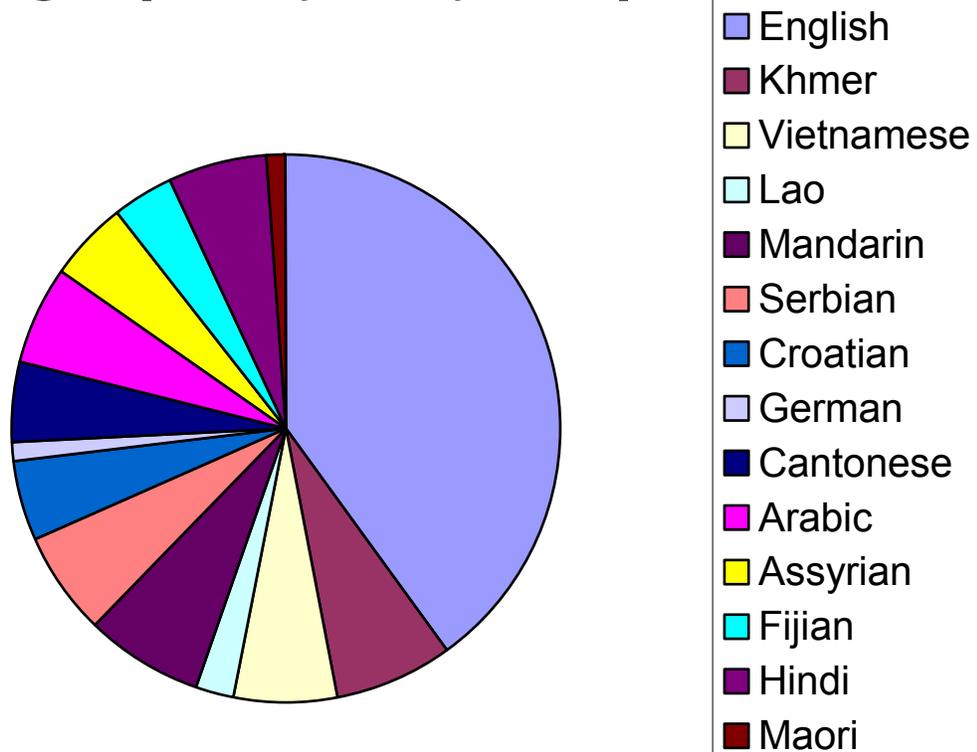
Note: Postcodes 2164, 2165, 2166 and 2176 are in Fairfield Local Government Area
Postcodes 2168, 2170 and 2177 are in Liverpool Local Government Area.

The breakdown of participants by LGA are almost perfectly dispersed between the two Local Government Areas. The areas represented in the chart are considered either newly established or relatively isolated in comparison to the rest of the LGA. For example, the Horsley area is isolated compared to Cabramatta, As is Horningsea Park compared to the centre of Liverpool.

'Cultural Background' as Identified by Survey Participants



Languages Spoken by Survey Participants



Service Needs – Issues Identified by NESB Young Women

Table of Major Concerns outlined by NESB Young Women

Racism	33%	
Unemployment	86%	*
Poverty	62%	*
Family Breakdown	43%	
Housing	33%	
Drug and Alcohol	23%	
Health	43%	
Crime	14%	
Transport	43%	
Cultural Identity / Loss of Culture	52%	*
Relationships	38%	
Education	52%	*
Discrimination	38%	
Lack of Knowledge about Services	52%	*

* Represents Issues where more than half the young women expressed concern.

The majority of the young women surveyed identified unemployment (86%) as a key issue for them, followed by poverty at 62%. Most of these young women were 16 and over which meant that they were old enough to join the labour force. The correlation between age and concerns regarding poverty and employment is evident. Consequently the experience of poverty is one aspect of unemployment. In addition, most young women (90%) were recipients of a Centrelink payment. Which indicates that while some were studying and others looking for work, these young women were very concerned about their employment opportunities. Services may need to concentrate more on income support, job search training, workplace and industry placements, and education/vocational training.

The cost of transport and/or lack of public transport was identified generally by almost half of the young women surveyed. This had an impact on their experience of accessing educational institutions, traveling to and from places of employment and generally restricting their social mobility. In terms of access, transport was identified as a major impediment for young women (almost 90%).

Another issue was the experience of family breakdown and loss of cultural identity (52%). It is not surprising that over half the young women feel a loss of cultural identity when they are newly arrived or are the children of refugees. The issue of family breakdown is a contributing factor to this sense of cultural disconnection. What this indicates is that settlement is an ongoing process that has ramifications for the children of migrants and refugees. Service providers in the mainstream and ethno-specific areas may need to be aware of culturally appropriate assistance that reinforces positive cultural identity. Family breakdown as identified by the young women include double-gender standards, unrealistic or high expectations of parents for young women in areas of education, employment or marriage prospects. In addition, conflict arising from the young women's desire to make decisions independently about peer groups, interpersonal relationships and goals. A small number of young women surveyed experienced physical abuse within the family. In these cases family breakdown was a result of multiple factors such as economic pressure on the family, separation or divorce, gambling addiction, substance abuse, or parents that have been unable to cope with traumatic experiences such as war, persecution, death and forced migration.

Education was identified as an equally important concern as loss of cultural identity. Young women stated that accessing education or training was made difficult by the compounding factors of cost of transport and income support while they are studying. This is exacerbated for homeless young women who maybe motivated to complete their education but lack the material or financial support to continue their education, this increases their risk of leaving school. There are also issues with obtaining educational support, the young women surveyed stated that they have difficulties grasping what is taught in the curriculum due to language proficiency, not having adequate foundation knowledge, unable to cope with the workload. Other issues include conflict with teachers, unawareness of student rights and lack of support from family. All these have an impact on the young women's motivation to remain in education. Consequently, putting them at risk of truancy, attrition and suspension. Unlike young men who generally express their inability to cope in overt behaviour, these young women often felt too intimidated to approach teachers and or don't know how to seek assistance resulting in leaving school prematurely.

Indirectly, issues relating to transport and access to income support has provided anecdotal evidence that NESB young women are developing short-term dependant relationships with male 'friends' who are employed and have access to a car. These young women stated that their male 'friends' often provided transportation to and from school, work, places of recreation/entertainment and appointments. From these anecdotes it is a concern that young women are developing this dependency on young males in order to compensate for a lack of equity in other areas. Another point of concern is that these types of relationships often do not enhance young women's sense of self-esteem, and often manifest into a myriad of unhealthy interpersonal relations, of which a young women's self-worth is negotiated.

Access – What services are NESB Young Women Accessing?

Services Accessed by Survey Participants – Liverpool – Fairfield Local Government Areas	
Centrelink	90%
Job Network	57%
Youth Centre	52%
Recreation Facilities/Activities	28%
Migrant Resource Centre	24%
Accommodation Service	24%
Neighborhood Centre	19%
Community Health	19%
Legal Aid	19%
Ethnic Community Worker	14%
Counseling (including Torture & Trauma)	14%
After-School Help	14%
Financial Aid	10%
Interpreting Service	10%
Childcare	10%
Other Employment	10%
Drug & Alcohol	5%

Generally, people find out about services through a number of channels. These are well recognized and should come as little surprise. From the consultations and the above information, it is obvious that a significant number of NESB Young Women utilize multiple services. The response to how the Young Women were referred (or found out about services in their area) thus varied as there is no standard or generic mechanism for referral.

- 64% of NESB Young Women stated that they were informed or encouraged by friends to access local services. It is evident that this target group responds much better to word-of-mouth information and that while written mediums may convey information more accurately, they are not always effective in reaching NESB young women.
- 30% were referred or given information by a government service (primarily Centrelink & DOCS). This figure is significant as 90% of the Young Women surveyed were in receipt of a Centrelink benefit. It is also significant as a high proportion were using Job Network Services. Accommodation also appeared frequently in the statistics.
- 28% were self-referred.
- 18% were familiar with Ethnic Community Workers and had received information from their services either directly or indirectly. The same percentage also received information via pamphlets or other forms of written information.
- 14% received information from Youth Workers. This conflicts with the above table which states that over fifty percent utilize Youth Centres. It may be assumed that despite the rate of attendance to youth centres, NESB Young Women tend to

receive information about relevant services from other means. The connection between these two figures was not made clear in the consultations, though it may indicate a greater need for streetwork and outreach services in the Fairfield and Liverpool Areas.

→ 6% of survey participants accessed or knew of services simply due to their close proximity to the Young Women's place of residence.

Need for Services in Own Language

The question ‘*Which services would you like to be available in your own language(s)?*’ was asked and attracted the following responses.

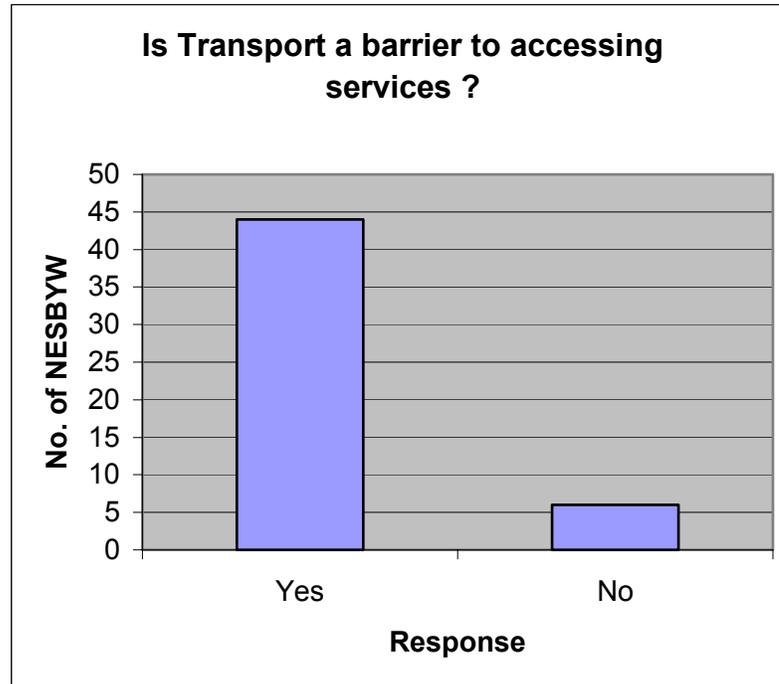
- “Recreation activities for young women that are free or don’t cost much to go to”
- “More information on ethnic women’s health”
- “Legal – Law services more about my rights, some stuff about budgeting and managing finances, just basic things”
- “A Laos teacher that will teach Lao children how to read, write and speak Laos....more about customs etc....we don’t know much about our customs and sometimes its hard to communicate with our parents”
- “Weekend or after-school language classes”
- “Since I can’t get an easy-to-read application for department of housing, I would like one in Serbian, actually I would like to know if it makes sense in any language!”
- “Everything, I’m still learning English. Things about train timetables, going to the bank, the doctor, actually I’ve only been here for just over 2 years, its still hard to get to places and to do normal things....this area is too far from [the] city”
- “More legal services , more information about rights and responsibilities in public, more information about what cops can do and what they cant”

Most young women could identify services that offered language support in their language. The most frequently recognized services that offered multilingual support

were Centrelink, Public Health services such as doctors and hospitals. Young women also identified women's health services, local neighbourhood centres that had workers that spoke their language, certain charities, Multicultural Job Network Providers such as AMES and T&A skills, Housing, DoCS and ethnic workers. Less than 10% were unable to identify at least one service that provided bilingual or multilingual support.

Given that most of the young women surveyed identified a competent level of English, the percentage of young women currently utilizing interpreting services was unexpectedly high at approximately 52%. I expect that this figure is indicative of parental usage as well, as children of migrants often assist in translating and interpreting once they have achieved a certain level of linguistic competence. The real figure, judging from the statistics is probably around 30%.

Accessing Services – Location and Transport



Transport as a problem was more pronounced in those areas considered geographically isolated for both LGA's. However as the graph demonstrates, almost all survey participants consider transportation to be a hindrance to accessing the services they need. It is above all a constraint to other forms of mobility, given that such a large portion of the participants are in receipt of a benefit, it is safe to assume that transportation impacts on their ability to either fulfill activity agreements (Centrelink Mutual Obligation Preparing for Work Agreements) as well as looking for and attending paid employment.

Comments on why transportation was a problem were both varied and direct.

Transportation overall is considered to be :

- Unreliable
- Too expensive
- Inconvenient
- Unavailable
- Infrequent

- Limited in its times of operation (ie, Night time, Public Holidays, Weekends)

This is consistent with other research done with young people in both areas, and does not indicate anything new in this respect.

Travel concessions also appeared an area of concern, both for its general unavailability, confusion over where to get cards, and the difficulty in private companies to recognize state concessions. This was conflated by the fact that many service providers do not understand where to obtain cards for different client groups. Even though the Department of Transport (State Level) is responsible overall for the provision of concession cards, the allocation and distribution of cards is dependant on the agreement the Department has with other government bodies. For example, full-time students are too be issued concessions through Department of Education & Training (State Level), while full-time jobseekers are to be issued cards through Centrelink, despite the fact that both are in receipt of funds generated by Department of Family and Community Services (Federal Level). This is further confused when training hours are shortened or extended (eg. Links to Learning), where courses offered under the same government department are configured differently (eg. Community Programs). This then results in a change in the young person's eligibility and in the jurisdiction of concession card allocation. One young women caught in this cross-fire reported paying over \$20 per day in transportation costs as a part of fulfilling her study/employment obligation. Furthermore, breaches imposed by Centrelink also result in young people losing their rights to travel concessions. Another young women stating that she felt she had been 'double-breached'.

Consequently, close to 75% of the young women survey indicated that 'walking' was their most likely means of transportation. While many did catch buses, trains, or had friends who could drive them, the majority stated that this was comparatively infrequent. From the group surveyed only a small percentage had regular access to a car of their own. As mentioned above, some of the young women stated they were dependant on their 'guy-friends for lifts' and that they relied heavily on others for transportation.

Not unrelated, close to 70% would not travel out of their local government area for services. In the section of the survey 'What would make it easier for you to attend a youth

service' approximately 40% stated better access to transportation and more equitable pricing for their age-groups and circumstances.

Access Barriers – Limitations from a Client Perspective

During the consultation young women were asked to identify some of the things they considered to be barriers in accessing ethnic specific services, mainstream services and youth services. The following does not reflect the service delivery of any service or centre in particular, but are a reflection of the group's perception of difficulties they have faced with the services they encounter.

- ❖ “Boys are too rude”
- ❖ “The people smoking outside doesn't look inviting”
- ❖ “Some workers look down on us, ignore us and treat us like sh*t”
- ❖ “Unfriendly workers, unsafe places, and workers that cant communicate with parents in a community language sometimes makes it hard to justify going to activities”
- ❖ “The age criteria for certain programs is a real problem for me to access youth activities because I'm over 18”
- ❖ “The type of people who access the centre, eg. Groups of boys in a gang”
- ❖ “More female workers or people in the group that were female would make me more comfortable”
- ❖ “The times of some programs clash with school so I miss out”
- ❖ “Unpleasant Atmosphere”

- ❖ “Services don’t seem to know what other services are doing. I went to a Youth Service to find out stuff about Housing, but noone could give me any help”
- ❖ “The hours aren’t really flexible, most people go home after five o’clock and there is nothing on the street after dark”
- ❖ “My appointments were cancelled because of a lack of staff”

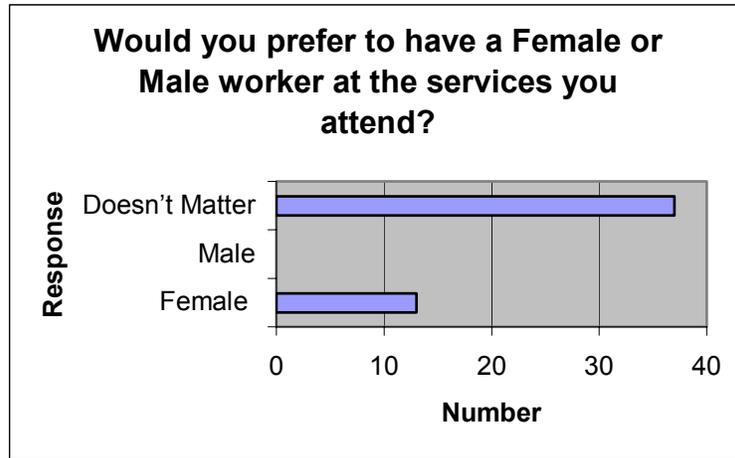
Suggestions on Improving Access and Equity from Client Perspective

The following suggestions and comments were made in response to the above barriers noted. Again I have taken direct quotes so as to give a clear and honest reflection of their interests.

- ❖ “Friendly Staff who are easy to communicate with”
- ❖ “More information leaflets given out in the community”
- ❖ “Offer a wider variety of services including health and education, more stuff on prevention”
- ❖ “Give more information, they make it easier when they come to me”
- ❖ “I’m more comfortable with friendly people”
- ❖ “If my friends told me about a service and are involved then I would be more likely to go too”
- ❖ “Use more posters, newspapers, school newsletter, magazine, T.V”
- ❖ “More activities that include just females”
- ❖ “Better transport to and from the activity”
- ❖ “Come out onto the streets and the places we hang out, meet us half-way”

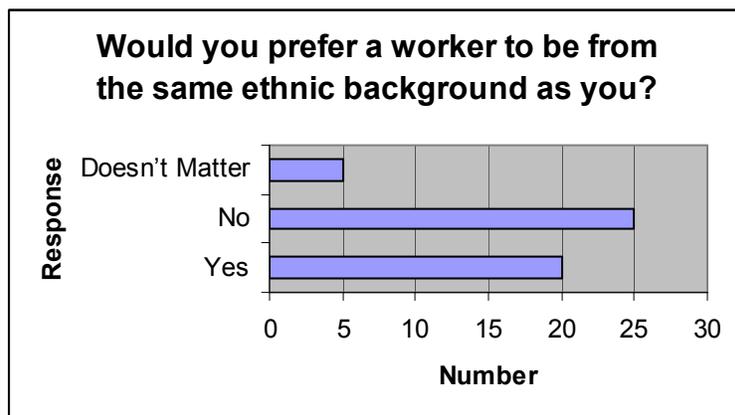
- ❖ “I actually feel 18-25 are too old to be considered youth, our needs are definitely different to those of 12-17 year olds”
- ❖ “Open door policy”
- ❖ “Have services that meet the needs for all to access them, it shouldn’t matter if they are disabled or have drug problems, should help everyone”
- ❖ “Outreach really works, I think its easier for them to come to me. I cant always get to them”
- ❖ “Having friends around”
- ❖ “Make services for girls only”
- ❖ “When I’m welcome and when the person knows alot about the service, I’m sure they can help me”
- ❖ “When the workers are very understanding”
- ❖ “When the group gets along well”
- ❖ “Advertise the programs in places that we visit, like shopping centres”
- ❖ “The environment and atmosphere is important, it has to be friendly, I have to feel safe”
- ❖ “Check all the rooms and services regularly to make sure young women are ok, just because we are quiet – doesn’t mean we are ok”
- ❖ “Come to talk to students at school about services and programs”

NESB young women were also asked about how they felt about accessing services that were serviced by either female or male staff, the graph below is a record of their responses.



While the young women were predominately unphased by the gender of the worker, the above suggestions indicate that certain activities need to be exclusively coordinated and conducted by female staff. These suggestions were general and did not extend to issues surrounding affirmative action, though this was implicit in young women feeling more comfortable with female staff in particular situations, ie women's health, sexual health, refuges and so forth.

A similar question was raised as to the preferred ethnicity of workers. The results were more contentious as the graph below indicates.



Overall, NESB young women indicated that the ethnicity of the worker was not as important as being understood, and that the cultural and personal sensitivity of the worker was more vital than the actual ethnicity. This is consistent with responses and comments made regarding cultural identity, language proficiency, barriers and major issues.