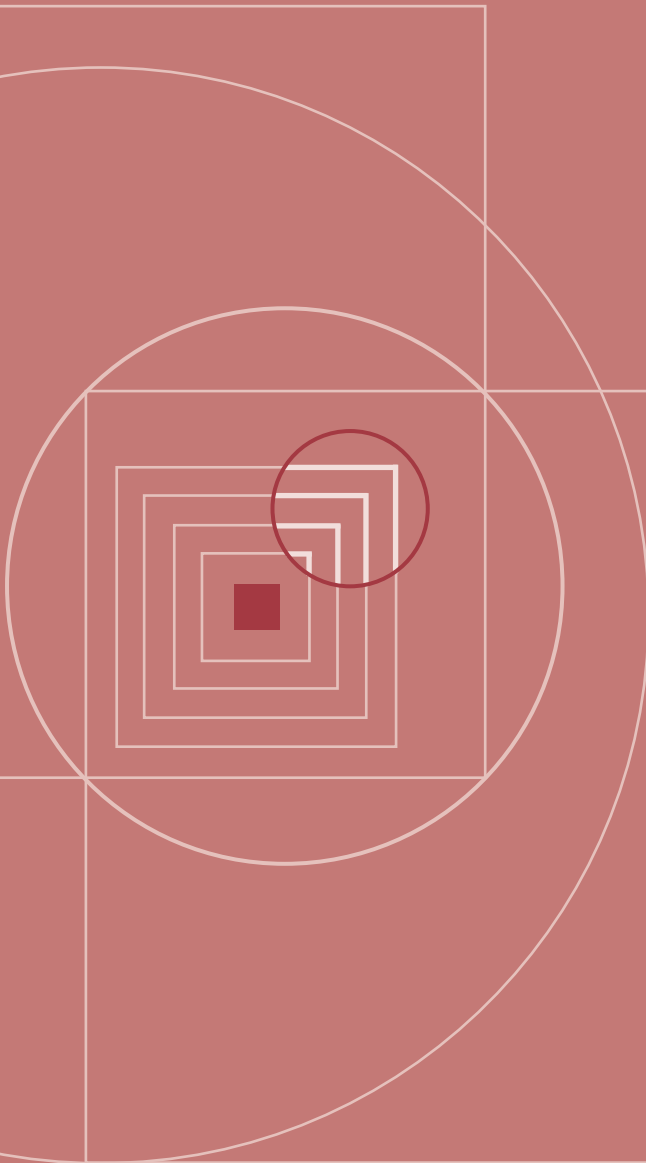


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A gender
analysis of
NSW Local
Government
Social Plans



Department for Women

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Acknowledgments

The Department for Women gratefully acknowledges the cooperation and support of the following organisations and individuals who assisted in this research:

- the local councils who supplied copies of their social plans for analysis
- the Department of Local Government for access to their library resources and unpublished findings from an initial analysis of the social plans as well as helpful discussion on the current review of the guidelines and feedback on the draft
- social planners at Randwick City Council and Penrith City Council for insights into the challenges presented by the social planning process
- Josephine Turner, undergraduate student from the University of Technology, School of Social Inquiry, on placement with the Department for Women who assisted in the development of the methodology, collected all the data and prepared an outline for this report
- the Social Planners Network who supported the work of the Department for Women towards increasing awareness of gender issues in local government planning.

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First published January 2002

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ISBN 0 7310 5268 4

ISBN 0 7310 5269 2 (PDF online version)

Designed by Bec Crockett.

Printed by Printing Headquarters, Sydney.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1998 the NSW Government introduced the *Local Government (General) Amendment (Community and Social Plans) Regulation, 1998* to promote more inclusive communities and more responsive local services and planning. The Regulation requires all councils to develop a social or community plan in accordance with the *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines* published by the Department of Local Government (1998). The Regulations also stipulate that the plans include an assessment of the needs of seven mandatory target groups: children, young people, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people with a disability and women.

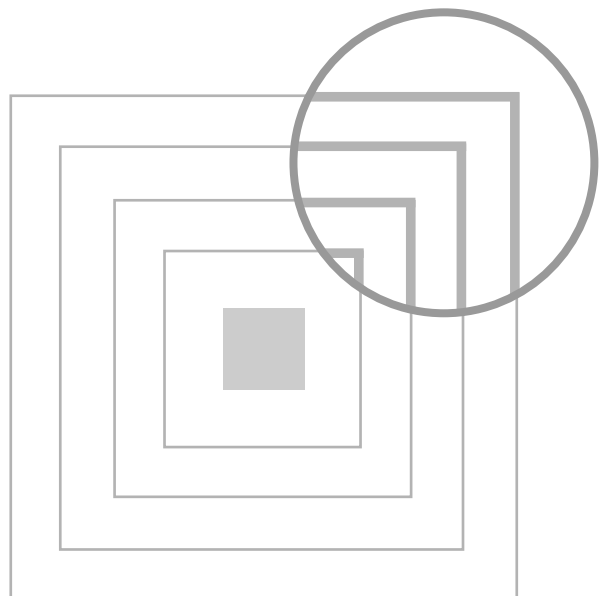
During the time that councils had to prepare their first plans, the Department for Women responded to their requests for information about the needs and concerns of women by publishing the *Issues of Importance for Women in New South Wales*. This briefing paper aimed to assist councils with identifying women's needs and issues and provided NSW benchmarks on the status of women.

Following the completion of the first round of the social planning process, the Department for Women sought to analyse to what extent women's issues were separately considered and effectively integrated into the plans.

Using the *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines* as a foundation, this research constructed a framework to apply gender analysis to a representative sample of 50 social plans. The main interests here are the relationship between the identification of women's needs in the social plans and the integration of gender issues into these plans.

The analysis sought to answer three main questions:

1. How did councils approach the needs and concerns of women in their social/community plans?
2. What issues and strategies were specifically identified for women in the plans?
3. To what extent have the needs and concerns of women been identified under the other target groups?



Summary of key findings

In terms of the approach taken by councils to gender issues in the social planning process the results showed:

- there was a strong relationship between the inclusion of a stated commitment to access and equity and issues identified for women
- reporting of sex disaggregated data in community profiles varied widely
- councils relied heavily on community consultation for needs assessment without necessarily analysing consultation methods or results from a gender perspective
- audits of council facilities and services were mostly only a list of existing services with no analysis of accessibility or client profiling.

The analysis of issues identified for women showed:

- violence, health, safety and work were the most often reported needs for women
- child care was not highly reported as a specific need for women
- there was considerable inconsistency of linking of needs and strategies.

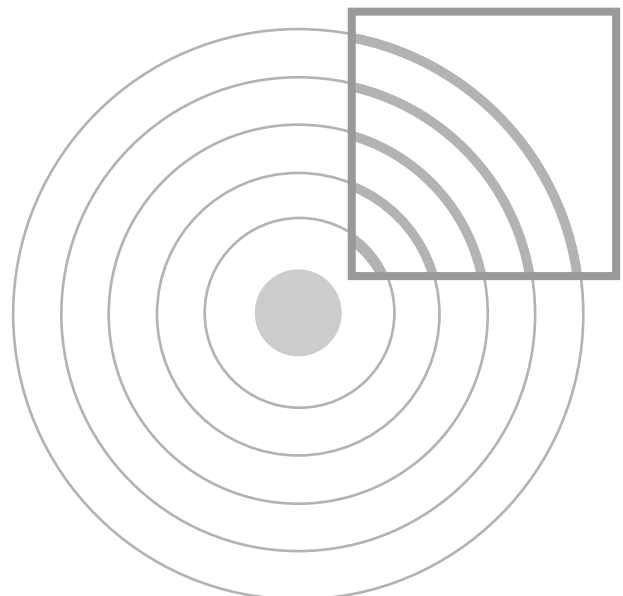
Initial analysis of cross-target group integration of gender issues showed infrequent and generally superficial references to specific gender issues in other mandatory and non-mandatory target groups.

Conclusion

The research suggests that more work is needed on:

- developing statistical profiles that clearly identify the status of women within communities
- improving community consultation so that it is conducted, analysed and reported in a gender inclusive manner
- improving the match between needs and strategies
- the integration of gender across other target groups.

There is much to be gained for women in NSW from the development and implementation by local governments of fully gender inclusive social plans. Equally, local governments will achieve more equitable outcomes from their plans by applying a gender analysis approach to their social planning processes.



Local government's response to recent social planning regulations offers a unique opportunity to critically evaluate and improve the way councils in NSW plan for their local communities in a gender inclusive way. The introduction of social planning in local government in NSW mirrors trends in countries such as Canada, the United Kingdom and Sweden where local and metropolitan governments have also been endeavouring to better cater for the needs of their diverse constituents (Khakee and Thomas 1995; Qadeer, 1994).

In NSW the need to cater for diversity in social planning has been addressed by stipulating that councils must consider the needs of seven mandatory target groups. By including women as a mandatory target group, the social plans are indicative of how well gender issues are understood by councils. Although councils may address women's needs through a range of activities, the main interest here is the relationship between the social plan and other council plans and the integration of gender throughout these plans.

This report forms part of a larger project to be undertaken by the Department for Women to apply gender analysis principles and methods to local government planning processes. This report presents an analysis of how local councils in NSW addressed women's needs and concerns in their social plans. The focus of the analysis is to determine to what extent women's issues were separately considered and effectively integrated.

The *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines* prepared by the Department of Local Government (1998) were used as a starting point for what was expected from the first plans. Both quantitative and qualitative data was then collected from a sample of 50 social plans from a total of 177* councils representing the distribution

of councils according to the Australian Local Government classification system. The methodology is described in chapter three.

The results are reported in three parts. Chapter four presents the results of the approach taken by councils to the social planning process as described in the plans. Chapter five is a summary description of the range of needs and strategies identified by councils concerning women. Chapter six provides an overview of the needs of women that overlap with other target groups identified in the plans.

The report includes examples of various processes and strategies used by councils that illustrate good gender analysis methods. It also includes a selection of resources available to councils that may assist them with their social planning. It is intended that this report will provide useful information for state government agencies, local councils, and other agencies and social planners to assist them in developing more effective gender inclusive policy and programs in future social planning initiatives.

* Comparative Information on New South Wales Local Government Councils 1998/99 was used to select the sample. There were only 173 councils at June 2000.

In 1998 the NSW Government introduced the *Local Government (General) Amendment (Community and Social Plans) Regulation 1998* to promote a more inclusive community by ensuring that council services are responsive to community need and diversity (Payne, 1999). The regulation requires all councils to develop a social or community plan in accordance with the *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines* (Department of Local Government, 1998) and include in both their management plan and annual report a statement regarding access and equity activities planned or undertaken by council. This report focuses on the social/community plan that is defined as a statistical profile and a summary of key issues facing a local community with a set of strategies that council and other agencies could implement to address those needs. (Department of Local Government, 1998, 1).

The introduction of social/community planning regulations has meant that the social planning process, which investigates and responds to the needs and aspirations of the people who live or work in a community, is no longer an 'optional extra' for councils. The introduction of social planning regulations reflects a recognition, as Menzies argued, that:

Local government is no longer a minor partner in government concerned only with roads, rubbish and rates. Local government is increasingly the key interface between people and government. As such, councils require improved ways of relating both to their governments and to their communities. (1993, 2)

Menzies (1993) suggests that over time the following five developments in the role of local government have been particularly important in bringing social planning to the fore:

- the increasing demand for local community services coupled with scarcity of funds means that planning of community services is important for allocating resources fairly and efficiently
- the requirement for councils to prepare Management Plans under the Local Government Act means that corporate planning has become essential, and this should incorporate Council's proposed social planning activities
- awareness that communities can be isolating and non-supportive for many residents has created support for community development and community cultural development as techniques for improving the quality of life
- councils' statutory responsibilities in environmental planning increasingly require Council to take account of the social effects of planning, and for physical planners to collaborate with social planners
- the realisation that separate planning by a multitude of government agencies often resulted in local communities being poorly served, has encouraged a move towards integrated local area planning involving many agencies and all sections of Council.

The Local Government and Shires Associations Policy Statements (2000/2001) strongly endorse the important role that social planning plays in contributing to the physical, psychological and social health, welfare and well being of residents.

Implications for councils

The Department of Local Government acknowledges that social/community planning is a rapidly evolving discipline. Some councils have developed their own approach to community planning prior to the new regulations being introduced, while for others their social plan is their first attempt to gather and present information about their communities in this way.

Adapting to new social planning regulations poses challenges for many councils. However the intention, as stated in the *Social Community Planning and Reporting Manual*, (Department of Local Government, 1998) is that the social/community plan will inform councils' strategic

planning processes across a range of functions and will help make sure that council services are responsive and accessible to all residents.

Social planning, often referred to as 'planning for people', is underpinned by the principles of social justice and that means that all councils should take particular care to involve and protect the interests of people in vulnerable positions. To ensure these principles are met, the Department of Local Government's guidelines require that seven mandatory target groups are included in social/community plans:

1. older people
2. young people
3. children
4. people with disabilities
5. people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
6. women
7. Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander people

In addition, the Department of Local Government has encouraged councils to include other groups (such as gays/lesbians, transgender people, families, new residents or unemployed people) where such groupings provide a better representation of their communities.

Since women are represented in *all* mandatory target groups, the Department for Women is not only interested in the issues considered for women as a separate group, but how gender differences are addressed within and across the other target groups as well.

Opportunities for women

The social/community planning regulations have opened up opportunities for the Department for Women to assist councils in their efforts to achieve justice and equity for women within their communities under the principles of social justice.

Essential elements of these principles as they relate to women that should be reflected in the social/ community plans are:

- elimination of discriminatory practices against women
- consideration of the equity implications of proposed actions and policies

- development of an understanding of the needs and concerns of women
- promotion of fair, open and participatory decision making; and positive participation by women, especially from marginalised groups
- promotion of equal opportunity for women.

In response to requests from social planners and councils developing their first social plans the Department for Women prepared a background paper *Issues of Importance to Women in NSW* in 1998. The briefing paper aimed to assist councils in identifying women's needs and issues and provided NSW benchmarks on the status of women. The paper was circulated to all councils and was made available on the Department for Women's website at www.women.nsw.gov.au.

Issues outlined in the background paper are broad and relate to women in NSW generally. The paper included issues relating to:

- violence
- work
- safety
- promotion of women in society
- education and training
- health and quality of life
- support to children and families
- access to justice

Councils were also offered information on the types of enquiries made by women from their local government area to the Women's Information and Referral Service, a toll-free telephone service operated by the Department for Women. This support was generally well received.

Issues for women identified through the social planning process at a local government area level offer a potential wealth of information for both state and local government that could lead to more effectively targeted policy and service delivery. As this is a new social policy area, much progress can be made by developing and maintaining the dialogue between the two tiers of government.

Literature review

The Department for Women, as part of its core business, develops and pilots gender inclusive approaches for government policy, programs and services. To support this work the Department has collected a vast array of research and resources on gender analysis from around the world. The Department has prepared an annotated bibliography of these resources on its website at www.women.nsw.gov.au. The main resources used for applying gender analysis in this project were:

- *The gender lens: a guide to gender inclusive policy and program development* (1997) produced by the Ministry of Women's Equality, British Columbia, Canada.
- *The full picture: Guidelines for gender analysis* (1996) produced by the Ministry of Women's Affairs, New Zealand. Both of these resources are designed as step by step guides for applying gender analysis to policy reviews and development.
- Mackay, F and Bilton, K., (2000) *Learning from experience: Lessons in mainstreaming equal opportunities*. Produced for the Governance of Scotland Forum, this work is a comprehensive review of how mainstreaming equal opportunities can be instigated and sustained in the work of government. Its analysis draws upon case studies of innovative practice at various government levels in the United Kingdom, Europe, Canada, New Zealand and Australia.
- *Mainstreaming gender equality in local government: A framework* (1997). This framework was developed from case study research in four countries (Britain, Ireland, Italy and Sweden). This work was produced by the Equal Opportunities Commission, Great Britain, as part of the European Commission's Fourth Action Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1996–2000). It aimed to facilitate the process of mainstreaming gender equality in local government.

Useful background material on social planning processes and local government was sourced from publications of the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW, namely reports by Menzies

(1993), *Groundrules: Social planning handbook for local government* and Baum, N. et al (2000) *Resourcing communities: The 1999 community planning and services audit*.

Reviews of social plans, annual reports and social planning guidelines

The Department of Local Government has been conducting an ongoing review of the social plans submitted by councils and is currently reviewing the *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines*.

Initial findings from the reviews demonstrate a clear disparity between the reporting of issues for women considered under the mandatory target groups within social plans, and the reporting of action taken by councils for women in their annual reports. The percentage of councils reporting on women as a mandatory target group in their social plans was 95.3 per cent, but only 29 per cent of councils reported on women's issues in their annual reports. Moreover, of the seven mandatory target groups, women were the least reported group in council annual reports, as shown in Table 1 (see Appendices).

It is intended that these reviews will improve the guidelines to ensure that they remain practical and allow councils to carry out their social/community planning and reporting informed by current good practice. It is hoped that the Department for Women gender analysis of the social plans will contribute to these reviews and ultimately assist councils to apply gender inclusive approaches to their social planning processes in future.

Government reform of plan making in NSW

The introduction of social planning regulations has coincided with the NSW Government's acting on its commitment to review and reform plan making across the State. Following an extensive consultative process, the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning released the White Paper, *PlanFIRST: a review of plan making in NSW* in February 2001.

The *PlanFIRST* White Paper sets out a new planning framework which aims to simplify the

current complex web of plans and processes and provide greater certainty for business and the community about land use matters. Within the proposed new framework local councils may be required to develop a single 'local plan', which may also encompass the councils' management plans and social plans.

The move towards more integrated planning has been adopted already by a number of councils. Penrith Council, for example, which was one of the councils sampled in this research, has a fully integrated management plan. The management plan encompasses six master programs representing key focus areas for Penrith. It is divided into three parts:

- a summary document outlining the vision for the Council

- the operational plan detailing tasks that the Council will implement and meeting the obligations under the Local Government Act, 1993, including the social/community planning regulations
- a revenue policy which lists the council's fees and charges.

The integration of local government planning, as proposed by the *PlanFIRST* White Paper, is likely then to be supported by this trend. The implementation of the proposed new framework, however, will highlight the importance for plans to be fully inclusive and equitable.

The sample

The findings discussed in this report are based on qualitative and quantitative research drawn from a sample of fifty social/community plans. The sample was comprised of 28 per cent of all the plans that were required to have been submitted to the Department of Local Government by June 1999.

In order to gain a representative sample, the Australian Local Government Classification System was applied. This system categorises councils into eleven groups, distinguishing between urban and rural councils and then by population size. (Department of Local Government, Comparative Information, 1998/99, 174).

The aim was to achieve a sample profile that was consistent with the spread of councils across all categories and to use random sampling within each of these categories. While the sample size goal of fifty was achieved, there was a slight variation between the selected category and the desired sample profile. After requesting plans from councils, some were not received; others were incomplete or not available.

Table 2 (see Appendices) outlines the list of councils in each category whose plans were analysed in the sample. For example, 24 per cent of all councils (30 councils) are Group 10 councils (defined as rural, agricultural, large-sized). This would mean in a sample of 50 nine councils would be from the Group 10 category. The actual number of plans analysed in this category was eight councils. Where percentages were small, plans were included to ensure that all categories were represented. Thus Sydney, the only Group 1 council (Urban, Capital City), was included. The table shows that the sampled councils were consistent with the distribution of councils by category using the Australian Local Government Classification System and is, therefore, considered representative.

Method of analysis

The analysis sought to answer three main questions:

1. How did councils approach the needs and concerns of women in their social/community plans?
2. What issues were specifically identified for women in the plans?
3. What strategies were identified to address the needs and concerns of women?

To answer these questions the plans were analysed by applying gender analysis techniques to the elements of the social plans as required by the Department of Local Government *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines* and the *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Manual*.

The requirements set out in the guidelines lend themselves directly to gender inclusive planning, and the steps for developing a plan set out in the manual also follow a gender analysis approach. The analysis was framed, therefore, to determine the degree to, and range of ways in, which councils, by following the guidelines and the manual, produced gender inclusive plans. The analysis then involved applying a set of supplementary gender analysis questions against each of the key components of the plans.

Table 3, included here as well as in the Appendices, outlines the gender analysis framework applied to the social/community planning process and requirements. A gender outcome was specified for each step in the development of a social/community plan as described in the manual. For each gender outcome one or more indicator queries were prescribed. In this way the analysis could be applied systematically to each social plan in the same way a survey questionnaire might be completed.

Gender analysis of the suggested steps for developing a social/community plan (Table 3, Appendices)

Steps for developing social/community plans <i>Social/Community Planning and Reporting Manual</i>	Applying gender analysis
1. Decide on a methodology	1. The methodology is based on the principles of social justice, and promotes gender equity. 1.1. Does the Council have a statement of principles that sets out its commitment to equality?
2. Develop a statistical profile	2. All demographic data in the community profiles is reported and analysed by gender. 2.1. Have sex disaggregated data been used for each population group including young people, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from cultural and linguistic diversity and people with disabilities? 2.2. Has data on socio-economic and other relevant factors been collected, reported and analysed by sex, such as household composition, employment and income?
3. Conduct a human needs assessment that includes:	3. Gender issues have been identified and integrated throughout the human needs assessment in the plans. 3.1.1. What common themes and issues for women emerge from the review of social plans? 3.1.2. What issues have been identified for women as a mandatory target group? 3.1.3. Have gender issues been identified within each of the other mandatory target groups? 3.1.4. How have the plans addressed gender issues that cross target group boundaries?
• Auditing existing available information about community needs and target groups	3.2. Existing information is audited with a view to identifying differences between women and men within target groups. 3.2.1. To what extent does existing information present a gendered perspective on community issues and concerns?
• Reviewing council services and other key services to determine appropriateness	3.3. Review of council and other key services includes an assessment of client access by women and men. 3.3.1. What consideration of gender issues has been included in the audits of existing services?
• Consulting target groups and stake holders	3.4. Consultation process involves specific activities to facilitate women's participation and results are reported by gender. 3.4.1. Has the degree of participation of women and men been identified? 3.4.2. Were women's organisations consulted? 3.4.3. Were there any women-only focus groups conducted during consultation?
• Prioritising needs	3.5. Women's needs given equitable priority and attention. 3.5.1. What priority has been given to women's needs and concerns?
4. Formulate strategies and set goals and targets	4. Strategies have been developed to address gender issues. 4.1. What gender specific strategies have been developed for what issues?
5. Consult on the draft plan	5. Action is taken to ensure women's equal participation in the consultation of the draft plan 5.1. What activities have been undertaken to ensure women's equal participation in the consultation of the draft plan?

The most difficult part of the research was developing the matrix to take into account the range and specificity of each social/community plan. There was no one prescribed format or method for preparing a plan and results have shown that different councils have developed and used a wide range of innovative planning models (*Manual, 1998, 5*). Some councils have adopted a regional approach and worked with other neighbouring councils, whilst others focused on their local government area.

The analysis of issues and strategies was primarily focused on those reported for women as a mandatory target group. However, where issues and/or strategies that were specifically related to women were reported within each of the other target groups, these issues were noted.

Classification of needs and issues identified in the 'Human Needs Analysis' for women (Table 4, Appendices)

Issue area
• Amenities
• Child care
• Community harmony
• Education and training
• Families/sole parents
• Health
• Housing
• Information
• Justice and legal issues
• Participation
• Recreation
• Safety
• Support services
• Transport
• Violence
• Work

Issues and strategies were classified into 'issue areas' and 'strategy types'. Table 4 lists the issue areas used to classify the issues reported in the social/community plans. Table 5 lists the types of strategies identified in the plans. These classifications were developed in the first instance from a scan of the plans. Reference was also made to the Department of Local Government summary of issues from the social plans outlined in their *Circular to councils No 01/34 Reviews of Social Plans, Annual Reports and Social Planning Guidelines*. Canterbury City Council includes in their social plan a useful list of council roles in addressing social needs, and the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW report *Resourcing Communities* also proved helpful in identifying types of strategies that councils undertake to address social needs.

Classification of strategies identified in the 'Strategies, Targets and Goals' for women (Table 5, Appendices)

Strategy type
• Building and maintenance of facilities
• Consultative mechanisms
• Development planning
• Further research
• Information provision
• Lobby State and Federal government
• Service provision/designated staffing
• Supporting community organisations
• Working in partnerships with other agencies
• Issues not regarded as council's responsibility

Once the framework for analysis was prepared, the matrix was used to construct a simple database using Microsoft Access to enter the information from each plan. This enabled the results to be quickly retrieved and allowed a considerable amount of qualitative information to be retained.

THE SOCIAL PLANNING PROCESS

Chapter Four

The findings will be discussed following the suggested format given by the Department of Local Government in their *Social/Community Planning and Reporting Guidelines and Manual* (May, 1998), applying the gender analysis checklist. As the Department of Local Government points out, developing and implementing a high quality social/community plan is an evolving process and maximising their efficiency and effectiveness will take time. The analysis presented here is limited by relying on the content and detail included in the plans. In some cases, particularly in relation to examining the preparation of the social plans, the published plans alone are insufficient to make an analysis of the degree to which gender issues were considered.

Methodologies used for developing the social community/plans

The Department of Local Government strongly recommended to councils that before proceeding they decided whether the plan should be developed in-house or sourced externally. They were advised to consider the resources to be allocated for the task and the time frame required.

If it were to be council staff developing the plan, it was strongly suggested that a decision needed to be made as to whether one person would take ownership or a multi-disciplinary team would drive the process. Furthermore, it was also desirable that council staff across the full range of departments/sections should be involved in the process by identifying issues and making recommendations relevant to them. In this sense,

Social planning is not just the task of 'social planners'. The active involvement of Council's senior staff and Councillors is essential.

While some techniques only apply to particular situations, the approach and philosophy extend beyond community services and are relevant to other council activities. Social planning is about how a Council relates to its community. (Menzies, 1993, vii).

Generally, the methodologies presented in the social/community plans were not discussed in detail. The decision making process in relation to who would be responsible for developing the plan and what factors influenced the decision whether to develop the plan in-house or externally were rarely reported. However, the results showed that 15 councils out of the total sample of 50 used an external consultant.

The use of an external consultant should not necessarily determine one way or another how gender issues are considered in social planning. However, this information was collected for this research to assess whether there were any qualitative differences between plans prepared by external social planners/consultants and those developed in house. Ultimately the onus remains on councils to prescribe to consultants what the councils' priorities are, and to specify in contracts and require compliance with access and equity principles.

The distribution of councils using consultants for the preparation of their social plans, listed in Table 6, shows that the use of consultants was highest in the Group 9 (medium-sized, rural, agricultural) local government areas, where more than half (five out of nine councils) used a consultant. This compares to the Group 4 (small-medium, urban or regional town) local government areas, where only two of the 11 councils in that category used a consultant. The lowest use of consultants was by the Group 10 (large rural, agricultural) councils, where only one of the eight councils sampled used a consultant.

Access and equity statements

As noted, the Department of Local Government suggested that councils make sure they are familiar with the principles of social justice in their approach. This would help councils, in conjunction with their community, to:

- promote fairness in the distribution of resources, particularly those in need

- recognise and promote people's rights and improve the accountability of decision makers
- ensure that people have fairer access to the economic resources and services essential to meeting their basic needs and improving their quality of life, and
- give people opportunities for genuine participation and consultation about decisions affecting their lives.

Defining a set of values and objectives in relation to access and equity is fundamental to implementing these principles in practice. An access and equity statement that unambiguously refers to gender equity is a clear indication of the commitment of an organisation to equitable outcomes for women in the development and design of policies and services. As noted in the European case study research the need for public commitment to the principles and goals of gender equity to be consistent and regularly restated is the first step to successful implementation (Mackay and Bilton 2000, 9).

The results show that most social/community plans promote principles of social justice and those councils that took this approach generally addressed women's needs and concerns. Out of the 50 plans that were analysed, the results showed that:

- 39 councils included an access and equity statement either in their introduction and/or in the women's section
- of the 39 plans with an access and equity statement, 32 councils analysed their data by gender
- only 2 councils of the 11 councils without an access and equity statement analysed their data by gender.

Two examples of promoting social justice principles are the City of Sydney and Inverell Shire's plans. Not only did both provide an original access and equity statement advancing the issues of social justice in the introductory section, they also focused on specific issues of access and equity in relation to women.

City of Sydney Council highlighted its commitment to social justice for women by quoting the *United*

Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995 Beijing Platform of Action as follows:

The advancement of women and the achievement of equality between women and men are a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue. They are the only way to build a sustainable, just and developed society. Empowerment of women and equality between women and men are prerequisites for achieving, political, social economic, cultural and environmental security among all people.
(City of Sydney's Social Plan, 1999, 101)

Similarly, Inverell Shire Council promoted social justice for women by beginning the women's section of their plan with the following statement:

To advance the welfare of all women by removing barriers to the equitable, safe and unimpeded use and enjoyment of community services and facilities, recognising, respecting and promoting the role of women within our society (1999, 17).

Statistical profile of the community

This key component of the social/community plans required councils to undertake an analysis of the demographic statistical information available about their Local Government Area, including information about women and the other six mandatory target groups. Applying gender analysis this task would involve councils collecting, analysing and reporting data disaggregated by sex. This allows any significant differences between men and women for important social indicators to be easily recognised and then considered when identifying community needs and priorities. As noted by Makay and Bilton (2000, 41):

Gender disaggregated statistics and other gender sensitive data underpins mainstreaming. They have crucial roles in awareness raising, informing policy making, monitoring and evaluating the impact of policies and programmes, and assessing trends over time. The production of good, transparent gender data was a priority area agreed by governments as part of the Beijing Platform of Action which emerged from the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

At a state level, for example, there are significant differences between women and men in relation to employment, income and life expectancy. Table 7 lists some of these statistics at a state level included in the *Issues of Importance for Women* document.

Statistical information presented in the social plans sampled ranged from minimal information about women to comprehensive profiles. The Department for Women acknowledges that much information is not readily available at a local government area level and many councils may not have the human or financial resources to compile comprehensive community profiles. However, results show that most social plans used the standard Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Regional Profiles to gain statistical information about their communities, which include summaries of basic data disaggregated by sex.

Australian Bureau of Statistics publishes *Community Profiles* of statistical local areas from Census data for free on the website at www.abs.gov.au. These *Community Profiles* include summaries of demographic characteristics of males and females including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people born overseas, proportion of the population who speak a language other than English at home, employment and unemployment, and medians for age, income and household size. However, not all person-based data is available disaggregated by sex.

The results showed that 34 of the 50 social/community plans sampled presented at least some statistical information disaggregated by sex. The most frequent statistical information provided by councils that was disaggregated by sex was simply the percentage of females in the population of the local government area, as shown in Table 8. Twenty-two councils included this information. Other information in order of frequency was income characteristics, percentage of females by age group, family structure, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, employment and cultural diversity within the population.

Some of the 16 plans that did not present sex-disaggregated data had previously compiled

separate community profile documents which were not examined in this research but may have included specific data on women within their communities.

Relatively few councils (nine) reported cultural diversity characteristics by sex. This information is particularly important in metropolitan areas, where as many as 90 per cent of the population born overseas in non-English speaking countries reside, but it is also important in rural areas to identify small groups of isolated women from non-English speaking backgrounds. Nambucca, for example, noted that the proportion of people who speak a language other than English at home was 1.6 per cent of the total population. However, because the social plan also provided a table of languages spoken at home by sex it was clear that a significant subset were women who speak Tagalog (Filipino). Furthermore, the ratio of Filipino women to men in Nambucca is 4:1. Had Nambucca Council only considered the data at a general level the needs of a significant group of women could easily be overlooked.

In metropolitan areas where overall the proportions of men and women migrants may be more similar, disparities within ethnic communities can easily be overlooked. Hornsby, for example, reported that significant numbers of people migrated from Hong Kong, Malaysia, Korea, China, India, Italy, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. On closer examination gender differences also emerge in these populations. Amongst the people from Hong Kong, Malaysia, China and the Philippines there were at least 150 (15 per cent) more women than men from each country. This is significantly different from the proportions of women and men from the other countries in the area.

Where overall proportions of women and men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are relatively similar overall, significant differences can also occur across age groups. In Shellharbour, for example, where 11.9 per cent of people were reported born overseas in non-English speaking countries, the main communities were Macedonian, German, Italian, Dutch and Croatian. People in these communities are generally older, long-term residents. Except for the Macedonian population, these communities are characterised by significantly higher proportions of women than men in the over 70 years age group.

The needs of older migrant men and women may not be equitably addressed if the differences in the proportions of the populations are not recognised.

Information about language and cultural groups by local government area in NSW is readily available in the Community Relations Commission publication *The People of New South Wales* available on the website at www.crc.nsw.gov.au. This website includes data from the 1996 Census for each local government area grouped by country of origin and language spoken at home by gender. Age profiles for language groups are also available.

A good example of a social plan that provided a comprehensive community profile was Marrickville Council. Information about each target group was presented separately with reference to age, cultural diversity, Aboriginality, household composition, dwellings, income, employment and social advantage.

Other statistics disaggregated by sex that were reported by councils included education levels, housing and crime. Some social/community plans elaborated on these profiles by including:

- a comparison between women in the local community and the surrounding areas or state
- a comparison between women and men in the local community, and
- a comparison between the community now, how it was and how it might be.

Two statistical characteristics that are of particular importance to councils, but not always reported by gender, are household composition and dwelling type. Housing policies and development planning of local government can directly influence housing affordability and limit housing options for these families. Significant differences emerge, for example when the relative incomes of single parent families and older people living alone are considered with the cost of housing within areas. An example of data drawn from the Randwick City Council Social Plan illustrates this point in relation to the high cost of rental properties and the proportion of older women living alone.

In 1996 43% of dwellings in Randwick were rented compared to 30% in the Sydney region,

an increase of 12.5% since 1991. The cost of renting in Randwick is equal to or above the aged pension, single parent pension, disability benefit and other benefits. The waiting time for public housing is 6–8 years. There has been a rapid loss of boarding houses in the area.

At the time of the 1996 Census, 25,183 people or 21.5% of the population of Randwick were aged 55 years and over, compared with 19.9% for Sydney. Almost 6,000 people aged over 55 live alone, 21% are renting, with 10% of rentals through public housing. People who do not own their own homes are more likely to be in poverty as their living costs are much higher. Older people who live alone are also more likely to live in poverty as they do not have the opportunity to pool income and resources. 17% of women and 8% of men aged over 55 in Randwick live alone. At age 75 and over this increases to 30% of women and 9% of men live alone.

(Randwick City Council Social Plan 1999–2003, page 14)

By looking for and exposing these significant gender differences in the statistical profiles councils are better equipped for conducting the needs assessment stage of the planning process.

Human needs assessment

Human needs assessment is at the core of social planning and involves collecting information about key issues and needs faced by the people living within the local government area or region. It examines people's well being and informs social planners as to what strategies and goals should be put in place to address those unmet needs.

To ensure this was done effectively, the Department of Local Government suggested that a broad definition of need be used so that it included any issues commonly experienced by members of the community or target group, that impacted on a person's quality of life.

Analysing this section of the social/community plans proved the most complex as there are various ways to conduct a needs assessment. As a minimum requirement the Department of Local Government proposed councils carry out the following four main tasks.

- a) auditing existing information available about the community needs and target groups
- b) reviewing current council services and other key services within the community to determine their appropriateness and accessibility
- c) consulting members of target groups and other key stakeholders
- d) prioritising needs.

Each of these tasks has the potential to either highlight or obscure gender differences in the needs assessment depending on whether gender differences are considered at the outset and whether gender analysis is applied appropriately when the tasks are undertaken.

The results showed that 32 councils reported in their social plans that they undertook all four tasks as part of their needs assessment. The most frequently reported task undertaken for the needs assessment was community consultation (45 councils) and the least frequently undertaken task reported was seeking information from government and agency reports (34 councils).

Task A

Auditing existing information available about the community needs and target groups.

Material collated to audit existing information came from many and diverse sources. Almost three-quarters of (34) councils sourced existing information from local, state and commonwealth government documents outlining the services that government agencies provide to local communities. Further information was collated from:

- council research and published documents
- community documents
- local knowledge
- information from the media.

Relying on these sources of information would not necessarily provide councils with comprehensive information about the needs of women in their area. As noted, a number of councils sought assistance from the Department for Women in identifying issues for women. The Department for Women's document *Issues of Importance to Women in NSW* (1998), produced in response to these requests, was referred to in 14 social/ community plans. Eight of these councils were urban.

This information provides a general picture of issues for women. Councils also need to consider the issues for specific populations to develop a better assessment of women's needs.

Task B

Reviewing current council services and other key services within the community to determine their appropriateness and accessibility.

In relation to reviewing current council services and other key services to determine their appropriateness and accessibility, councils were advised to conduct a review or audit of the way in which their practices might affect people's access to their services. Applying the principles of access and equity to this task would involve collecting information about clients by sex, age, race and ethnicity and comparing this data to the community profile. This information could then be investigated in relation to factors such as opening hours, location, physical access, staffing, costs to clients and use of bilingual workers or interpreters to fully assess suitability and accessibility of services.

Almost all (44) councils conducted an audit of council facilities and services but only a few social/community plans reported initiatives undertaken to audit current services with respect to women. Most often the service audit was a list of existing services grouped by service type, such as in the case of the Orange Community Plan. Further levels of analysis are demonstrated by examining client target groups and issues addressed by these services and then determine who actually uses them.

Two examples of how this could be approached are from Marrickville Council and Inverell Shire Council. Marrickville Council described in broad terms the nature of commonwealth, state and council services provided for women within their local area including programs dealing with health and domestic violence prevention. These included child care, information and cultural services, recreational activities, community development, public works, concessions and employment. The same approach was taken for each target group.

Inverell Shire Council Social Plan also identified services separately for each target group but

summarised these into a service matrix for each group. In this example the name of the service organisation was listed against the type of the service provided. Services were categorised as health, cultural development, housing, employment, education and training, transport, public information and libraries, family, individual and community support, economic development and recreation and sport. This approach could potentially be used to quickly identify gaps and discrepancies between groups in the service provision within the area but would not give a clear indication of accessibility or client service levels.

Sometimes when existing services and facilities appear to meet local needs, such as health, education, sport and recreation, an assessment of access to existing services and purpose built facilities still shows up gaps in provision. In Uralla Shire Council Community Plan, for example, it is noted that the Community Health Centre, which offers a range of services to the general population as well as a specific Aboriginal medical service, is not accessible to a large proportion of the community, especially women. The Plan states:

Most clients walk to the Centre but this is difficult for mothers with young children and almost impossible for elderly clients given that there is a long steep hill to climb (Uralla Shire Council Community Plan 2000, 35).

Similarly, accessibility issues can affect service provision even for population group specific services and purpose built facilities. In Auburn Council's social plan, for example, it was noted that:

a high level of dissatisfaction (25%) was expressed with women's rest centres, particularly by people (presumably women) from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. (Auburn Council Social Plan, Executive Summary, 1998, 18).

By taking a closer look at who does and who doesn't use the services and facilities in the local area, more effective strategies can be developed. In both of these cases the social/community plans related the information from the services and facilities audit to formulate a strategy to improve access for these identified groups of women.

Task C

Consulting members of target groups and other key stakeholders

In relation to consulting members of target groups and other key stakeholders a broad spectrum of consultation methods were used. Almost all councils (45) conducted some form of community consultation and used one or more of the following methods:

- questionnaires/surveying
- workshop and telephone interviews
- focus groups
- consulting council staff
- consulting established community groups
- consulting local, state and federal government agencies.

Some methods of consultation work better than others for raising particular issues or for different groups of people. Specific examples of how different methods were used were noted.

In relation to community surveys/questionnaires, only four councils reported what percentage of participants were women. Two examples are Ashfield and Fairfield councils. Ashfield Council stated that 1223 residents participated in their consultation campaign and 35 per cent were women aged between 26–64 years old. In addition, out of the 114 key stakeholders that took part, 14 per cent were women aged between 25–65 yrs (1999, 50). Similarly, Fairfield Council noted that 3000 women participated in an extensive survey conducted between 1996–1998 called 'Have your say' (1999, 4).

In relation to consulting community groups, Bega Valley Shire Council presents a good example of where to start for councils with limited experience in consulting women. Acknowledging that they had very little information available on women's services, the council contacted representatives from seven women's services and a meeting was held on the proposed social/community plan (Social Plan: 2000–2005, 1999, 22). Groups included:

- Bega Country Women's Association
- Women's refuge centre
- Pambula Community Health Centre
- Bega Women's Refuge

- Family Support Service
- Bega Sexual Assault Service
- Bega Community Health

On the other hand, in some cases there was little if any consultation conducted, in particular with women. While it may seem logical to consider that women naturally have access to all services mentioned in other target group data, analysis of results of consultations with target group populations reported by sex shows clear gender differences in terms of demand for, and access to, various services emerged.

A clear example of this is found in the Wagga Wagga Social Plan with respect to services for young people. Wagga Wagga Social Plan conducted a survey of approximately 1000 young people in the area aged 12–18 years to identify their needs and desires and how these can be addressed. The survey findings are reported in the social plan firstly in a non-gendered table showing responses to the question of ‘what services do you access?’ These responses showed the main services accessed by young people were the cinema (92.2 per cent), followed by the Bolton Park Sports Centre (63 per cent), the library (57.4 per cent), private based sports facilities (36.9 per cent) and the Riverina playhouse (26.5 per cent). Clearly, with such a high response rate, the cinema is accessed equally by young men and young women, however, gender differences could easily be obscured in the access to the other services.

These gender differences were exposed in the responses to a subsequent question that asked for suggestions of other services, activities or facilities that the young people would like to see in Wagga Wagga. These responses were reported by gender and showed that the priority for young men was for facilities for bikes, skateboards and roller blades (27.5 per cent) whereas these facilities were only suggested by 7.3 per cent of young women. The priority for young women was for more discos and entertainment (24.4 per cent), which was not even mentioned in the male responses. Similarly, young women included suggestions for more and better transport (6.1 per cent), an issue not raised by the young men, while young men raised the suggestion of ‘a place to hang out’ (6.0 per cent) which was not suggested by young women.

Task D

Prioritising needs

Prioritising needs and making recommendations is a difficult task and councils were encouraged by the Department of Local Government to rank their concerns according to perceived importance rather than just develop a long wish list.

An example of an attempt to prioritise issues against target groups can be found in Broken Hill City Council’s social plan. In their plan the Council notes:

Because Council will always be unable to meet all needs at all times, a system of prioritising needs is required. For the purpose of this plan, only unmet needs that are in some way the responsibility of Council have been considered. (Broken Hill City Council, Social Plan, 1999–2001, 8)

Referring to the suggested criteria for determining needs and priorities tabled in the *Social/Community Planning Manual*, (Department of Local Government 1998, 19), the Broken Hill Council then developed a needs and services framework. The framework identified the key communities of interest and the services systems of relevance to the social planning process. These are portrayed in a matrix so that the needs of the various target groups are shown as columns, while the set of services which might be planned or produced fall into rows. Priority areas for action could then be identified for each target group.

Such a framework could be effective both as a quick reference for council planners and the public for planned priority actions as well as a record of action towards meeting the range of needs identified for each target group in the social planning process. In the Broken Hill example, all priority action was directed to what was termed the ‘Broken Hill Community’, but the concept allows for future application.

Ideally issues arising from the social planning process are also prioritised within councils’ management plans, within the context of competing priorities of financial constraints and political realities. One example of how this can be done is found in the Draft Management Plan 2001–2002 of Penrith City Council. The Management Plan incorporates six master

programs, which represent key focus areas for Penrith. Key issues are identified within each master program and critical actions have been developed to address these issues over a four-year time frame. Specific tasks, including tasks addressing target group needs are listed, to be completed over one to two years, and these have financial information attached to them.

Consulting on the draft plan

The last step outlined by the Department of Local Government guidelines involved the opportunity for the community and other interested parties to comment on the draft social/community plan before it was adopted by council. For most councils, as noted by Bathurst Shire Council, this would mean putting the draft plan on public exhibition for further comment before it was finalised. This part of the social planning process, however, was not part of the research. It could be included in future analysis conducted by the Department for Women involving a closer examination of consultative processes used by councils.

Conclusion

The results show that most councils and external consultants have made genuine progress in addressing women's needs through the new social planning regulation. The inclusion of women as a mandatory target group has very evidently encouraged councils to consider the needs of women within their local area, albeit to varying degrees of detail. More work needs to be done to demonstrate the benefits of a gender inclusive approach to those councils that do not have stated access and equity commitments.

For many councils there is room for improved data collection and reporting of statistical information from a gendered perspective. More work is also required to examine ways to assist councils to conduct effective consultation with women and in the analysis of issues raised from community consultation. This will ultimately lead to improved needs analysis.

WOMEN'S NEEDS IDENTIFIED AND STRATEGIES PROPOSED

Analysis of the issues and needs identified by councils in their social planning process involved the following steps:

- gathering information on the broad issues raised
- determining whether these broad issues were considered from a gender perspective, that is, whether any particular needs of women in relation to the broad issue had been identified
- examining whether councils had developed strategies to address these identified needs, and if so, the nature of these strategies.

Applying a gender analysis model, as described in *The Gender Lens*, to the issues identification stage would also involve two further steps. Firstly, trying to determine the underlying factors involved in the issue and then clarifying how these factors affect women and men differently ensuring that diversity of women and men is considered (Ministry of Women's Equality in British Columbia, 1997, 38). Crucial to this process is the recognition that on most issues and within most community groups there are likely to be gender differences. It is recommended in *The Gender Lens* that:

How you see and define the issue can affect your analysis and response throughout the policy/program development cycle. Take the opportunity to identify gender implications of the issue right from the start.

(Ministry of Women's Equality in British Columbia, 2001,15).

Issues raised

There were 400 issues noted from the 50 council social plans sampled. Of these 283 issues were specifically related to women. Table 9 shows how often each of the issues areas were identified in the social plans analysed and how many times councils considered the issues in terms of women's needs. It should be noted that the councils often reported several needs within each issue area.

Not surprisingly in a social/community planning context, health is the most frequently reported

issue area. Child care was the second most frequently reported issue area. This may be related to an historical legacy of local government involvement in child care services (see Baum et.al. (2000) for a history of local government community planning and services). Violence and safety also featured highly. That is consistent with the findings of the Department of Local Government *Review of Social Plans* (2001, 2), which found safety, including crime prevention and domestic violence, the fifth most frequently reported issue area considered separately by councils.

Women's needs identified

The most frequently reported needs identified for women were in the areas of domestic violence, health, safety and work, but this is only part of the picture. The issue areas that councils most often identified from a gender perspective were community harmony, violence, support services, information, participation, amenities and justice and legal issues. These results also suggest that relatively few councils regard other issues such as safety, work, housing and transport and recreation as having gender implications. This is clearly evident in the difference between the proportion of councils reporting child care as an issue (40 out of the 50 councils) compared to the number that considered this issue as a concern for women (only 19). Similarly, the number of times councils reported the issue areas of transport and recreation from a gender perspective was also less than half the number of times these issues were identified generally.

An example of one of the councils that took a gender perspective on the identification of women's needs was Fairfield City Council. A description of how gender relates to the issues not immediately regarded as 'women's concerns' is found in the Fairfield City Council Community Plan which states:

Gender, defined as the socially determined roles and responsibilities of women and men, influences the way women and men experience social, economic and political opportunities.

An example of this is how men and women respond to the fear of crime. Simplistically, men respond by taking precautions and using strategies such as increasing the security of their homes, women are more likely to respond by adopting strategies which alter their behaviour such as going out less, returning home earlier, or only going out at night with an escort. Another example is provision of English classes for people from non-English speaking backgrounds. English classes need to cater for women and men in the workforce, but also need to cater for women who are at home caring for their children. These examples shows that when addressing issues such as safety, housing, transport, employment and unemployment, education and training, gender plays a part. By analysing issues from a gender bias, we acknowledge that there are differences between men and women that need to be addressed in different ways, to ensure equity for both men and women.

(Fairfield City Council, Community Plan, 2001.)

A superficial examination of the spread of these issues across the council groupings, as shown in Table 10, shows that Group 2 (Urban Metropolitan Developed Small to Medium) councils were least likely to identify issues for women. This spread of the issues is also indicative of an emphasis on some issues over others in different regions. Violence, for example, was the most frequently reported issue for Group 4 (Urban Regional Town, small-medium) councils and Group 5 (Urban Regional Town/City, large to very large) councils, but health was the most frequently reported issue for Group 3, 8 and 10 councils. These issues were secondary for Group 9 councils, however, who reported education and training issues and

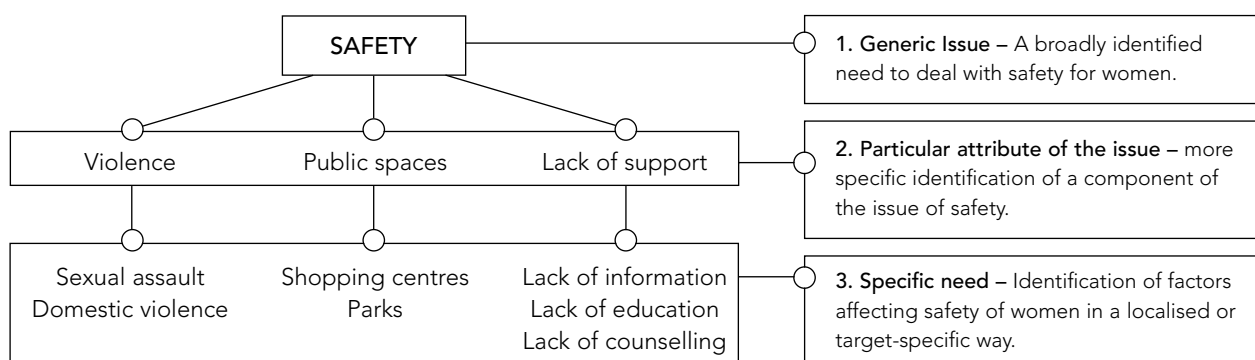
families and sole parent issues most frequently.

Only two council plans in the sample did not specifically address women's issues. In one case this was based on the rationale that women's issues would be incorporated by other target groups. In the other case it was acknowledged that the council had no knowledge of the specific needs of women in the area and therefore the community plan outlined that the initial strategy for this target group would be to conduct a post box survey for all women in the area to seek feedback on their needs, followed by a public meeting to determine priorities and strategies.

Nature of women's needs identified

When women's needs were identified there was a spectrum of specificity in the way they were described. To simplify the analysis there appeared to be three levels of 'needs analysis'. At the most general level councils made a broad statement of a need related to the issue area, such as 'health is a high priority for women' (Holbrook Shire Council, Social Plan 2000). At the next level, a particular element or attribute of the issue was identified, using the health example this could be a need for preventive programs and services (Harden Shire Council, Community and Social Plan, 1999). At the most specific level councils detailed needs to a single group, service or location, for example 'no maternity facilities are currently available in Jerilderie resulting in most women having to travel elsewhere' (Jerilderie Shire Council, Social and Community Plan, 2000, 23).

The following diagram illustrates the three different levels of needs analysis using safety as an example.



This illustrates that some social/community plans mentioned 'safety' as a general need whilst others went into more depth mentioning gender specific and inclusive safety needs. This was similar for other issues. The advantage for councils of drilling down to the specific level in their needs analysis is that it provides a clearer direction for the types of strategies that could be developed to address the need.

Of the 48 councils that identified gender specific needs across the issue areas, a summary description of the nature of the needs identified is provided below with a few examples. The issue areas follow the order of the frequency that they were reported in the plans from the most frequently reported issue to the least.

Violence

Violence was the issue most often cited for women in the social plans. Thirty-four references were made in the plans to the need to address violence and 21 of these identified domestic violence as the primary concern. Almost all of these references are at the general issue level. One exception is Shoalhaven Council which identified a need to provide adequate information, counselling and support to victims of sexual assault including incest survivors.

- A typical example is from Jerilderie Council social plan which states that 'domestic violence levels are unacceptably high and there is a need for the community to focus on it'.

Health

Twenty-two councils reported health issues as a concern for women, with many of these councils reporting it as the primary concern. Bathurst Council included an extensive list of twelve identified needs. About a third of the needs statements were at the most general level, the more particular needs covered a range of health issues including access to services for breast screening, prenatal and maternity care, drug and alcohol rehabilitation and mental health support.

- Uralla Council identified a need to encourage more women to be examined by the Mammography Unit.

Safety

Eighteen councils reported 21 needs related to the issue area of safety. Eight of these needs were reported at the most general level. Some councils separated safety issues, as noted above, into reducing incidences of violence, from the fear of crime in public places. Three councils reported the need at the most specific level as the need to improve street lighting.

- Liverpool City Council identified a need to improve women's access to open space and built environment through greater safety.

Work

Eighteen councils reported 21 needs related to the issue area of work. The majority of these needs were reported as the need for increased employment opportunities. Four councils additionally noted the need for increased flexibility in work practices for women to be better able to balance work and family responsibilities. Two councils specifically noted the need to increase the proportion of women working in council.

- Shoalhaven City Council identified the need to provide more employment opportunities for women, especially with young children or who are long term unemployed.

Support services

Almost all (12 of the 14) councils reporting needs relating to support services for women identified needs at the second level or most specific level. For example, while Uralla identified a broad need for support services and organisations for women, the particular need for a Nursing Mother's Association group was also identified. At the specific level, the needs were mostly described in relation to particular groups of women. For example, Randwick Council identified the need for support services for women who are carers. In five cases the need was described in terms of increasing access to existing services addressing particular issues.

- Holbrook Council reported a need to promote access to relevant support services and mechanisms for men and women experiencing the effects of the rural downturn.

Child care

Women's needs relating to child care were identified by nineteen councils. At the broadest level the need identified was a lack of child care services, particularly in the smaller rural centres such as Jerilderie and Urana. Six councils reported the need in terms of affordability, all of these except Lismore were large councils. At the most specific level, several councils identified child care needs in terms of the particular type of child care, such as before and after school care, vacation care or casual child care places.

- Wollongong Council identified the need to increase the affordability, accessibility and flexibility of hours of child care services for all age groups.

Education and training

Education and training needs were almost entirely reported at the broadest level. Two exceptions were Fairfield and Wagga Wagga councils, both identifying the need for English language classes for migrant and refugee women. Broken Hill Council identified a need for training in parenting skills and similarly in Young, a need for education on reproductive and sexual health needs especially for young women, noting the high numbers of young mothers in the area. Apart from these exceptions, the main trend was lack of educational opportunities reported by the medium sized, rural agricultural (Group 9) Councils, with Bourke Council reporting several concerns related to early school leaving, and an inadequate range of courses offered in school and TAFE.

- Holbrook and Lockhart Councils both reported that education is a high priority issue.

Participation

The needs identified by the eighteen councils grouped under the issue area of participation fell into two, almost equal, groups. Nine of the councils referred to the need for greater involvement in decision making either through consultation or by taking up public office. The other seven councils referred to the need to reduce social isolation of women in their communities. The remaining two councils referred to participation only at the most general level.

- Shoalhaven City Council, identified the need to help reduce the isolation which may be felt by older women.

Families/sole parents

Issues for women relating to families was most commonly reported as a need for support services for single parents, without identifying what form such support should take. Bourke Council had a significant number of family-related issues identified as needs for women. About one third of all issues reported in this area were from the Bourke Shire Council social plan. These focused around the problems of Aboriginal children as a result of what was described as 'lack of home support'.

- Cowra Council reported that there needs to be more services available for single parents.

Housing

Twelve of the sixteen councils reporting housing issues for women cited the need for the provision of emergency and refuge-type accommodation. Most of these councils were outside the Sydney metropolitan area. The need for more affordable housing options was a concern in large urban areas, noted by Randwick, Marrickville and Wollongong councils.

- Cowra Council reported a desperate need for a house for abused women and children or a refuge.

Information

Information needs identified in the social plans were related, almost entirely, at the broadest level to the provision of information about existing services for women. The one exception from the 14 councils reporting in this issue area was Hume Shire Council which reported a very specific need for women to be aware of farm safety practices.

- Dungog Council identified the need to ensure information about women's support services is available.

Justice and legal issues

Needs identified in the justice and legal issues area are the least well defined by councils, and are most commonly described simply as a need for women to have access to justice. The notable

exception, from the 11 councils reporting needs in this area is Walgett Council social plan, which has a good example of a very clearly specified need. The plan reports a need for a separate room at court in Lightning Ridge where women in domestic violence situations can wait without having to confront the perpetrator, relatives or the general community.

Community harmony

Needs identified relating to community harmony were extremely diverse, reflecting very localised interpretations of the things that may contribute to building social capital within areas. Examples included a need for community centres, establishing women's social support networks, fostering reconciliation and hosting or promoting social, cultural events and festivals. Rockdale Council described a need to provide community development, while Shellharbour noted a need to promote women and their issues through a women's festival.

Transport

The need for improved public transport was spread across all eleven councils identifying this issue area as a concern for women.

- Fairfield Council provides a concise summary of the concerns related to the issue of transport as a need for public transport to be safe, reliable, affordable, easy to access and have user friendly routes.

Recreation

The needs identified for women in relation to recreation were mostly at the generic level as a need for more recreational activities. Young Council was the exception going to the next level, identifying the need to provide sporting and recreational facilities focusing on more community based activities and providing more meeting places.

- Inverell Council, more typically, identified a need to increase the level of sporting activities offered to women during and outside day light hours.

Amenities

Five of the eight councils reporting a need related to amenities specified a need for suitable areas for breastfeeding and baby changing facilities. Taking a slightly different tack, Auburn Council identified a need to enhance the facilities at the women's rest centre, to offer not only clean, safe public

toilets, but a safe space for women to gather in the centre of town.

- Bega Valley Shire Council identified a need for family friendly facilities within shopping centres, including breastfeeding and child changing areas.

Strategies proposed

While identifying needs in broad terms can assist councils in gaining a sense of priorities for different groups of people within their communities, the more clearly an issue is defined the more likely an appropriate strategy can be developed to address it. Once the councils identified their key issues and needs, they were encouraged to address the needs by developing a strategy that could be implemented by council or other groups or agencies. The strategies formulated depended upon the issues and unmet needs identified and the circumstances that faced the particular council and community.

Similar to the human needs analysis, strategies and outcomes ranged from extremely broad to the very specific. As expected, there appeared to be a trend that if the need was only broadly defined then so too was the strategy and, conversely, if the need was very specific then the strategy was also. The more specific a strategy can be described in practical terms, the more likely it can be implemented.

The results show that 68 per cent of identified women's needs and issues raised in the social plans were addressed by a corresponding strategy. Table 11 shows how many of the councils that raised gender specific needs formulated a corresponding strategy. Domestic violence was the issue that was raised most often with 83 per cent of needs having a corresponding strategy. Even though health needs were identified nearly as often as domestic violence only 70 per cent of health needs were addressed with a corresponding strategy. Justice and legal issues were least likely to have a corresponding strategy included in the social plans, with only 39 per cent of these issues addressed with a strategy.

Table 12 shows that the most frequently cited type of strategy in the plans that councils developed to address the needs raised for women was related to some form of further planning, such as developing

a strategic plan on the issue. Some form of direct service provision or designated staffing was the second most often applied strategy. Lobbying state and federal governments, establishing consultative mechanisms and building and maintenance of facilities were the least often applied strategy types.

Developing plans, such as strategic plans and action plans was most frequently applied to the issue of violence but was also applied to all other issue areas except the provision of amenities and information. Information provision, as a strategy type, naturally enough, was most frequently applied to address the need for information. Service provision and designated staffing as a strategy type was also applied across issue areas but with a concentration on child care issues. Supporting other agencies was a strategy applied mainly to health, participation and violence issues. A full cross tabulation of the strategy types against the issue areas is provided in Table 13.

The following examples are indicative of the different types of strategies most commonly applied and described against each issue area. The examples are supplemented, where available, by information about NSW State Government initiatives that may assist councils when developing strategies to meet the needs of women in the future planning processes.

Violence

○ Development planning

Wollongong Council included a strategy to establish an anti-violence project that is long term, fully funded and staffed with special attention paid to domestic violence.

○ Supporting community organisations

Uralla Council's strategy was to recognise that domestic violence is a community issue and support the NSW State Government's regional violence prevention specialists in addressing problems and implementing prevention strategies.

○ Lobby state and federal government

Addressing the issue of domestic violence, in regards to women's refuges/safe houses, Orange Council's strategy is to lobby and apply for funding for appropriate supported accommodation.

The NSW Government Strategy to Reduce Violence Against Women is a state-wide response to violence against women. The strategy is managed and financed by the Attorney General's Department, NSW Health, the NSW Police Service and the Department of Community Services, in partnership with the Department for Women.

Some key elements of the strategy are a focus on prevention, a network of 17 Regional Violence Prevention Specialists and a coordinating program that involves legislative amendments, policy initiatives, program and support service delivery, information and referral services, funding programs, prevention programs and community education. More information about the strategy can be found online at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/cpd.nsf/pages/vaw2.

Health

○ Supporting community organisations

Yallaroi Council social plan included a strategy to support health services and groups that presently provide women's health services.

NSW Health has developed the *NSW Strategic Framework to Advance the Health of Women*. The first document of its kind in Australia, it provides guiding principles for women's health policy and practice that all health workers can use. The framework focuses on incorporating a gendered approach to health, working in collaboration with others to address the social determinants of health, advancing research on women's health experience and applying a health outcomes approach. The framework is available online at www.health.nsw.gov.au/pubs/#guidelines.

Safety

○ Development planning

Wollongong City Council's strategy to address women's safety is firstly, to develop and implement a three-year strategic plan to reduce 'trouble spot' streets and places where a high level of violence occurs. Secondly, to develop and implement a best practice policy regarding street planning that decreases the incidences of street/public violence in Wollongong.

The Department for Women is addressing safety issues for women through its Safe Places Project, which has evolved from the Womensafe Forum held in November, 2000. Details of the Forum and the project are available on the Department for Women website at www.women.nsw.gov/safety/womensafe.html.

The *Crime Prevention Resource Manual* for local councils developed by the Attorney-General's Department in conjunction with the Department of Local Government and the Local Government and Shires Association includes a range of strategies aimed at preventing crime in public places. It is available on the Department of Local Government website at www.dlg.nsw.gov.au/dlg/dlghome/documents/information/98-87.pdf.

Other useful websites addressing safety issues are:

The NSW Police Safer by Design site, which describes the principles of crime prevention through environmental design. www.police.nsw.gov.au/sbd/index.cfm

The website of the Crime Prevention Division of the Attorney-General's Department includes the *Safe Women Project, Plan it Safe* kit that provides a comprehensive overview of a range of options and strategies to promote safer public places for women in local areas. The full contents of the kit can be downloaded from the site at www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/swp/swp.nsf/pages/swp_toc.

Work

○ Further research

One example of further research in relation to women and work is found in Liverpool Council's social plan, which states that the council will investigate and support regionally based women's training and employment initiatives, particularly for women with low English language proficiency. Another example of further research is found in Canterbury Council's social plan to investigate ways to promote gender awareness amongst the council workforce and women's access to career paths and management training in council.

More detail on women's workforce participation is provided in the *Work and family* paper at the Department for Women's website at www.women.nsw.gov.au.

Child care

○ Service provision/designated staffing

Hawkesbury City Council's strategy is to support (and fund) the provision of child care services and facilities to enable women to access education, employment, social and recreational services. Similarly, Lismore Council outlined its intention to maintain council's sponsored child care centres.

The NSW Government's Early Childhood Services policy, launched in October, 2000, views children's services as part of an integrated network of support for children, families and communities. This policy outlines how the needs of infants and young children will be met through coordinated action, including early intervention programs such as Families First. More information can be found on the Office of Children and Young People website at www.youth.nsw.gov.au and the Office of Childcare on the Department of Community Services website at www.community.nsw.gov.au.

Education and training

○ Where issues were not regarded as council responsibility

Bourke Council suggests that a high school liaison officer should mediate between the education department and parents.

Participation

○ Supporting community organisations

Hornsby Council planned to support the work of the Northern Sydney Settlement Services Officer to increase opportunities for participation of women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

The Department for Women is undertaking a Women in Leadership project that aims to increase the number of women nominated for and appointed to boards and committees. Information and resources produced by this project are available on the Department for Women website at www.women.nsw.gov.au.

Participation by women in rural areas is strongly supported by the NSW Agriculture's Rural Women's Network. One key source of support is the *Country Web Newsletter* produced by the Rural Women's Network and available on their website at www.agric.nsw.gov.au/rwn.

Families

○ Development planning

Wollongong Council stated that it would ensure that the needs of women, particularly sole parents, are integrated into the Council's divisional Business Plans.

Housing

○ Development planning

Randwick Council social plan included a strategy to finalise the Randwick Housing Affordability and Accessibility study as well as to provide financial and organisational support to services providing housing for women.

Information

○ Information provision

Shellharbour Council planned to establish a women's services list within its community directory, while Shoalhaven Council stated that it would publish a *What's where for women on the South Coast of NSW* booklet on a biennial basis.

The Women's Information and Referral Service operated by the Department for Women provides a toll-free confidential telephone service for women in NSW. The number is 1800 817 227 and the service operates from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday.

The NSW Women's Gateway is an online one-stop-shop for information on most frequently asked questions by women on topics, including health, family law, violence, legal aid, legal tenancy and housing issues, education, child care, employment, training and more. The Women's Gateway is at www.womens.gateway.nsw.gov.au.

Justice and legal issues

○ Consultative mechanisms

Bourke Council planned to establish a community consultative committee to investigate and initiate activities to address levels of violence and access to support services.

Community harmony

○ Working in partnerships with other agencies

Shellharbour Council planned to work in conjunction with the community towards holding a Shellharbour women's festival. Fairfield Council

planned to continue support and maintain facilities for community meeting places. Uralla Council's strategy aimed to support and encourage the fund raising efforts of local social groups, especially those with a community focus.

Information about innovative local community activities can be found at the NSW government Community Builders website at www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au.

This site is an interactive electronic clearing house for everyone involved in community level social, economic and environmental renewal, including community leaders, community and government workers, volunteers, program managers, academics, policy makers, youth and seniors.

Transport

○ Consultative mechanisms

Fairfield Council planned both to participate in local transport forums and to consult with women in regard to the location, cleanliness, safety and accessibility of transport in the area.

Recreation

○ Working in partnership with other agencies

Both Harden and Young Councils planned to work in partnership with the Department of Sport and Recreation to identify specific areas of need and develop suitable recreational and leisure programs.

The Department of Sport and Recreation (2000) has produced a booklet entitled *Safe Sports Facilities: Making physical activity safer and more accessible*, which outlines a number of key issues for improving service provision at sports facilities including access, lighting, safety, signage and child care. The booklet is available online on their website at www.dsr.nsw.gov.au.

A comprehensive set of guidelines for improving access to physical activity have also been produced specifically for local councils, published cooperatively by the Department of Local Government, the Department of Sport and Recreation, NSW Health and the Heart Foundation.

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Creating Active Communities: Physical activity guidelines for local councils (2001) highlights examples of initiatives by councils to promote physical activity catering for the needs of specific populations, including women. The guidelines are available online on the Department of Local Government website at www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.

Amenities

O Building and maintenance of facilities

In relation to amenities, Wagga Wagga City Council's strategy is to ensure that there are appropriate and adequate family toilet and baby change/feeding facilities in the established shopping centres throughout the city. Nambucca Council and Bourke Council aimed to identify a suitable building, preferably in the main street, for the development of a safe public toilet and breastfeeding/baby change room.

A comprehensive summary of NSW Government initiatives for women can be found in the 2001 Update of the *NSW Government Action Plan for Women, 2000–2002* available on the Department for Women website at www.women.nsw.gov.au.

From these examples it may seem that there could be a direct correlation between how the councils approach the need and how they decide to formulate their strategies and plan of action. However, this is not always the case. There is always more than one way of addressing a particular need and any of these strategy types could be applied to any of the issue areas. More often, however, issues require more than one type of strategy. This was reflected in many of the plans where there was much overlap in the types of strategies developed to address women's needs. For example, Shoalhaven Council lists four strategies to address health issues for women. These include establishing consultative mechanisms with health educators, further research to inform health education and promotion activities, provision of information about breast screening programs to be conducted and supporting community organisations such as the Women's Health Centre to secure permanent and affordable premises.

Alternatively, Marrickville Council decided to use a broad approach based on a role for the Council

then followed up with numerous gender specific strategies related to the different issues.

Broad approach

Act as a catalyst for the implementation of a range of activities and programs that addressed the needs of women.

Gendered strategy

- Develop affordable recreation and leisure activities for young girls and others whose needs are not currently met.
- Address the safety concerns of women through the development of strategies under Council's Community Safety Plan.
- Extend and improve child care services in areas of need to ensure that women who work have access to quality and affordable child care.
- Improve advisory committee structures to improve the opportunities for women of all ages to participate in Council's decision making process.

(Marrickville Council Social Plan, 1999, 60)

Referring to the Department of Local Government's guidelines, social planners were not required to follow through with a corresponding strategy to a need or issue that had been identified. Quite often women's needs were mentioned in one form or another, but corresponding strategies were lacking in many of them.

The following few explanations for this are based on observation from the social plans:

Firstly, a community organisation could already have initiatives under way to address that unmet need, so the Council does not need to include a corresponding strategy in their social/community plans.

Secondly, other government departments already offer services to address that unmet need and Council is relying on those strategies. For example, in relation to women's need for emergency housing, the NSW Government currently funds women's refuges, providing approximately 4,000 services per year (Bega Valley Shire Council, 2000, 20).

Thirdly, as mentioned above, councils did not consider the unmet need as a priority. It was not necessary, therefore, to formulate a strategy.

In relation to the last suggestion, the Department of Local Government did suggest that councils needed to use their own discretion in establishing what needs they were going to address and prioritise them in order. While the service mapping exercise should have assisted councils to do this, reasons some needs were met with a strategy, and others not, ultimately remains within the council's decision making processes.

Conclusion

Menzies argues that social planning is above all based on strategies, and having strategies means that the planning is focused not only on what is the best thing to do in an ideal world, but on what is the best that can be achieved in the real world (1993, 11). Therefore, without proper strategies addressing unmet needs the social/community plan is ineffective. It is not sufficient enough to be able to write an accurate analysis of needs if the plan produces only more reports or plans. There has to be change and strategies should identify clearly what is to be done and how.

Councils such as Penrith and Hawkesbury are moving in the direction of fully integrated social planning in which social planning strategies can be identified in their management plans and costed. This has great potential for council plans to be effective and gender inclusive if the recommended steps for gender analysis are conducted thoroughly during the planning process. However, as these planning processes evolve, the inclusion of gender equity as a key element at the decision making stage in weighing and recommending options for action will become increasingly important so as not to have the needs of women being treated only as an 'add on'.

WOMEN'S NEEDS ACROSS OTHER TARGET GROUPS

As a consequence of specifying women as a separate, mandatory target group, cross-target group needs and issues were rarely identified. Grappling with the multi-dimensional nature of diversity presents a major dilemma for planners and policy makers across all tiers of government. However, 26 councils out of 50 mentioned women in other sections in an attempt to integrate or cross-reference gender issues. Table 14 (see Appendices) shows the number of times councils mentioned women's needs in other mandatory target group sections and how often a strategy was included.

The results show that women's needs and issues were raised in other mandatory group sections 39 times but there were only 13 strategies to address them. Women's needs and issues featured most often (14 of the 39 references) in the young people target group, followed equally by children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups (7 references each). Women's issues were least often mentioned in the target group for people with a disability (only one council, Bega Valley Shire Council). There were also fewer mentions of women's issues under the older people target group (4 references) than for people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (6 references).

Types of issues and concerns that were identified were similar to the issue areas outlined in the women's section. For example, 9 out of the 26 councils that raised women in other target groups identified safety as an issue. In most cases the gender issue was a sub-reference of a broader need for the particular target group rather being reported as a distinct or separate issue. For example, in the section on youth, safety issues raised noted that this was a particular concern of young women, and under the target group of children, women's needs and issues focused around mothers and families. Reporting of the qualitative differences between men and women in each target group as they experience or are affected by local issues was rare.

The following list sets out a few examples show how women's needs were incorporated in other mandatory group sections.

Older people

Issues raised in the older person's section specifically relating to women included:

- assistance and support for elderly women living alone
- income for older women who are widowed or never married and living on a single income, and
- participation within the community.

Aboriginal people

Issues raised in this section specifically relating to women included:

- domestic violence
- teenage pregnancies
- family breakdowns
- early child care and nutrition
- access to artistic and cultural development
- homelessness and appropriate housing
- police relations
- alcohol and substance abuse.

Further general issues relating to women included:

- access to justice
- health and quality of life
- education and training
- information provision.

An example from Liverpool City Council identified that Aboriginal women, children and young people need to have access to supported accommodation and counselling services. Their strategy to address this need was to investigate with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific women's refuge. The aim would be to allow families (that is, women and children)

to take refuge and to consult and advocate for increases in counselling support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and young people (Liverpool City Council Social Plan 1999, 18).

Youth

Issues raised in the youth section specifically relating to women included:

- unplanned pregnancies/ family planning
- sexual health needs, mainly education
- sexual assault
- juvenile crime
- homelessness
- lack of employment opportunities for young women
- social and support services for young lesbian women.

Botany Bay Council presents the one example of these issues as they provided the following information:

In relation to sexual health Botany Bay provided a community profile by providing results of an in-house survey they conducted where 53% of the sample was female. They stated that a high proportion of respondents claimed to be aware of sexually transmitted diseases, aware of family planning centres and a need for condoms. Furthermore, results showed that over half of the young people surveyed claimed to have experienced discrimination due to gender, race, age, occupations and looks (Botany Bay City Council 1999, 24).

In a different sense, Botany Bay Council mentioned young women (especially those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds) are expected to play an active role in caring for the elderly, sick, disabled family members and raising of younger siblings. They suggest that these young women may face greater disadvantages from restrictive definitions of women's roles and this is particularly the case in regards to education and employment (1999, 25). Strategies to address these issues were not gender specific but Botany Bay Council addressed the broad topic of access and equity through local council, state support and commonwealth support by mentioning the two

following opportunities (1999, 25):

- federal government policy to promote economic independence for women whilst respecting the choices they make about their lives
- federal funding to non-government organisations that represent women in business, ethnic women, older women and supporting single women.

Children

Rarely did women get a mention in social plans within this target group despite some councils identifying the proportion of sole parent families within their local government area. Mainly the needs and issues that are identified in this section concern child care facilities and government policies that impact on parents/young families but without special reference to women.

Issues raised in the children's section specifically relating to women included:

- access and affordability to all forms of child care
- social networks and support groups for women and children
- domestic violence and child protection
- post natal depression
- mothering facilities in towns and in shopping centres
- health centres.

The different needs of girls and boys were not specifically mentioned.

Cultural diversity

Issues raised in the children's section specifically relating to women included:

- isolation experienced by women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- lack of opportunities for women with limited English
- the need for ethno-specific counselling services, particularly in areas of domestic violence, sexual assault, drug and alcoholism and relationships
- culturally appropriate health services.

One non-metropolitan example is Bathurst Council who identified a lack of local female medical specialists available to women, in particular for Muslim women. Their strategy to address this issue is to lobby the Government to increase the number of specialists in the area to address the needs of women from different cultures (Bathurst City Council Social Plan 1999, 83).

People with disabilities

Only one council mentioned women within this target group and that was Bega Valley Shire Council. They provided statistics on women that included what percentage of females by age group were recipients of disability pensions in their local area and statistics showing women by their disability service type (Bega Valley Shire Council, 1999, 45).

Non-mandatory target groups

Fifteen councils mentioned women's needs in other groups that were not mandatory. Five of these councils included a general community or 'all' target group. Others organised issues and strategies around issue areas such as housing, transport and recreation. Women's issues and needs have been identified under issue areas these were amalgamated in the results relating specifically to women.

Table 15 (see Appendices) shows the number of councils (15) that identified women's issues in relation to other non-mandatory groups. These groups included men, gays and lesbians, unemployed and low-income earners. As with the mandatory target groups, there were more needs and issues raised than strategies to address them.

Penrith City Council provides an example of thinking differently in relation to target groups. They have identified 16 different groupings in addition to the mandatory groups that are assumed to include women. They discussed issues that affect women in sections such as young families, students, socio-economically disadvantaged groups and communities at risk (Penrith City Council Draft Management Plan 2000, 150). Another example from the City of Sydney Council social plan was a section called 'planned future sections' and this included men, transgender and gay and lesbian people.

Men

There were ten councils that chose to identify men as a separate target group and five of these made reference to women, including Holbrook, Hume and Lockhart councils. Of particular note was the fact that all of these councils were rural or regional councils and the issues were focused primarily on health and mental health needs specifically relating to men and the impact of structural adjustment in agriculture.

Young Council identified a need for crisis accommodation for men and a need to reduce domestic violence. Their strategy to address this issue is similar to the way they addressed the same issue for women and that is to support the Domestic Violence Action Group and other community based initiatives. Moreover, Young Council identified the need to inform young people about reproductive health in order to reduce teenage pregnancies. Their strategy to address this issue was to lobby the Health Department and liaise with appropriate educative and other projects (Young Shire Council 1999, 61).

Bathurst City Council primarily mentioned women in direct comparison with men through a statistical profile, however some specific issues were raised. For example, when discussing men's health, Bathurst City Council argued that:

Men are not a driving force in establishing services and facilities that specifically address their health needs. Women are often the providers of men's health services. The most appropriate people to determine men's needs are men. If women continue to be the driving force behind men's health issues, an inaccurate assessment of men's needs may result (1999, 64).

Furthermore, the Lone Fathers Association that has support groups in Bathurst and Orange identifies that issues pertinent to non-custodial parents need to be addressed. They claim that:

Women's needs have already been strongly advocated. Men need to increase their role in advocating their needs (1999, 65).

No strategy was proposed however, instead a recommendation was noted for Council to investigate child support and family law and lobby the State and Federal Governments for

improvements identified arising from the social/community plan (Bathurst City Council Social Plan 1999, 65).

Gay and lesbian

Hawkesbury City Council and Lismore City Council both included sections identifying needs and concerns of gays and lesbians within their community. Lismore City Council also addressed these issues with strategies aimed at increasing participation and consultation with these communities.

Conclusion

The significant number and range of needs and issues for women that intersect with other target groups reflects the diversity that exists within communities. These results suggest that, rather than seeing the identification of broad community needs and those of particular target groups as two separate tasks, councils could take the approach of identifying broad community needs first, then examining these for differences in the ways they

might impact women differently based on age, race, ethnicity, abilities and socio-economic status or other distinguishing characteristics.

The inclusion of a target group for men appears to be a trend in rural and regional plans, although this is qualified by the fact that four councils were within the same region and their social plans used the same structure. It is important to note that the inclusion of women as a mandatory target group does not, in itself, preclude attention to men's needs and the inclusion of men's issues in social plans shows careful consideration of local community concerns. The main issue is that there is a clear understanding that the life experiences and needs of men and women are different in some ways and that women are often systematically disadvantaged through a 'one-size fits all' approach.

Ultimately, an increased awareness of the gender differences within various target groups, however they may be defined, will produce a clearer picture of community needs and more equitable outcomes from better targeted strategies.

Focusing on the main components of the social/community plans it appears that most councils and external consultants have made genuine progress with the new social planning regulation. Under the guidance of the Department of Local Government it appears that most plans have included key concerns of women, albeit to varying degrees. This would suggest a broad understanding of and commitment to the needs and concerns of women at the local government level.

Social planners have focused on developing plans that are locally sensitive. Despite this, common themes, such as health, safety, education and work still emerged when women's needs were identified, but the strategies to address these were not always at a sufficiently specific level to be implemented at a local level. This disparity between identified needs and proposed strategies signals a direction for future research to find useful strategies that can be applied at a local level to address common concerns for women.

What appears to be less well understood are the gender differences that may arise in relation to the various community issues that councils often have direct influence over, such as recreation and safety through planning. Similarly, incorporating gender differences that may exist within and across the other target groups, mandatory and non-mandatory, is an emerging challenge for council planners.

Clearly, the inclusion of women as a mandatory target group in the regulations has drawn to the attention of councils across the State the needs of women within their communities, putting women in the picture. By following the Department of Local Government guidelines, most social/community plans produced a statistical profile for women, to varying degrees, and a set of needs for women. However, more work is needed to gain greater consistency in the analysis and reporting of the specified human needs assessment tasks—in other words, sharpening the focus of the 'gender lens'. This would involve better collection and reporting of sex-disaggregated data in the community profiles, an assessment of accessibility of local services and more care taken in community consultation to ensure that it is both conducted, analysed and reported in a gender inclusive manner. Adopting a gender analysis approach would enable councils to address the needs of women within their communities in a more focused and holistic way.

APPENDICES

Table 1: Department of Local Government *Review of Social Plans, Annual Reports and Social Planning Guidelines* – Reporting on mandatory target groups

Target group	Percentage of councils addressing each target group in their social plans	Percentage of councils reporting on each target group in their annual report
Children	97.3%	96%
Young people	99.3%	77%
Older people	99.3%	78%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	92.7%	90%
People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	96.0%	94%
People with disabilities	97.3%	81%
Women	95.3%	29%

Source: Department of Local Government website www.dlg.nsw.gov.au.

Table 2: Sample profile based on NSW Local Councils Categories using the Australian Local Government Classification System

Group	Number in group (1998/99)	% of all councils	List of councils whose social plans were analysed	Number of actual plans analysed	Desired sample of 50
Group 1 (Urban Capital City)	1 (Sydney)	0.5%	Sydney	1	*
Group 2 (Urban Metropolitan Developed small-medium)	19	10.0%	Ashfield Auburn Botany Bay Ashfield	4	5
Group 3 (Urban Metropolitan Developed large-very large)	14	8.0%	Fairfield Marrickville Randwick Rockdale Canterbury	5	4
Group 4 (Urban Regional Town small-medium)	34	19.0%	Bathurst Bega Valley Broken Hill Ballina Casino Hastings Lismore Orange Shellharbour Singleton Wagga Wagga	11	10
Group 5 (Urban Regional Town/City large-very large)	4	2.0%	Shoalhaven Wollongong	2	1
Group 6 (Urban Fringe medium)	3	1.5%	Hawkesbury	1	1
Group 7 (Urban Fringe large-very large)	8	5.0%	Hornsby Liverpool Penrith	3	3
Group 8 (Rural Agricultural small)	5	3.0%	Jerilderie Urana	2	2
Group 9 (Rural Agricultural medium)	42	24.0%	Bourke Carathool Coolah Coonamble Harden Holbrook Lockhart Yallaro Oberon	9	12
Group 10 (Rural Agricultural large)	30	17.0%	Bland Shire Cobar Dungog Murray Uralla Hume Tenterfield Walgett	8	9
Group 11 (Rural Agricultural very large)	17	10.0%	Inverell Nambucca Young Cowra	4	5
TOTAL	177	100.0%		50	50

Table 3: Gender analysis of the suggested steps for developing a social/community plan

Steps for developing social/community plans <i>Social/Community Planning and Reporting Manual</i>	Applying gender analysis
1. Decide on a methodology	6. The methodology is based on the principles of social justice, and promotes gender equity. 6.1. Does the council have a statement of principles which sets out its commitment to equality?
2. Develop a statistical profile	7. All demographic data in the community profiles is reported and analysed by gender. 7.1. Have sex disaggregated data been used for each population group including young people, older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from cultural and linguistic diversity and people with disabilities? 7.2. Has data on socio-economic and other relevant factors been collected, reported and analysed by sex, such as household composition, employment and income?
3. Conduct a human needs assessment which includes:	8. Gender issues have been identified and integrated throughout the human needs assessment in the plans. 8.1.1. What common themes and issues for women emerge from the review of social plans? 8.1.2. What issues have been identified for women as a mandatory target group? 8.1.3. Have gender issues been identified within each of the other mandatory target groups? 8.1.4. How have the plans addressed gender issues that cross target group boundaries?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auditing existing available information about community needs and target groups 	8.2. Existing information is audited with a view to identifying differences between women and men within target groups. 8.2.1. To what extent does existing information present a gendered perspective on community issues and concerns?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing council services and other key services to determine appropriateness 	8.3. Review of council and other key services includes an assessment of client access by women and men. 8.3.1. What consideration of gender issues has been included in the audits of existing services?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting target groups and stake holders 	8.4. Consultation process involves specific activities to facilitate women’s participation and results are reported by gender. 8.4.1. Has the degree of participation of women and men been identified? 8.4.2. Were women’s organisations consulted? 8.4.3. Were there any women-only focus groups conducted during consultation?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritising needs 	8.5. Women’s needs given equitable priority and attention. 8.5.1. What priority has been given to women’s needs and concerns?
4. Formulate strategies and set goals and targets	9. Strategies have been developed to address gender issues. 9.1. What gender specific strategies have been developed for what issues?
5. Consult on the draft plan	10. Action is taken to ensure women’s equal participation in the consultation of the draft plan 10.1. What activities have been undertaken to ensure women’s equal participation in the consultation of the draft plan?

Table 4: Classification of needs and issues identified in the Human Needs Analysis for women

Issue area
• Amenities
• Child care
• Community harmony
• Education and training
• Families/sole parents
• Health
• Housing
• Information
• Justice and legal issues
• Participation
• Recreation
• Safety
• Support services
• Transport
• Violence
• Work

Table 5: Classification of strategies identified in the Strategies, Targets and Goals for women

Strategy type
• Building and maintenance of facilities
• Consultative mechanisms
• Development planning
• Further research
• Information provision
• Lobby State and Federal government
• Service provision/designated staffing
• Supporting community organisations
• Working in partnerships with other agencies
• Issues not regarded as council's responsibility

Table 6: Distribution of councils using consultants for the preparation of their social plans across council groups

Council group	Ratio of councils using a consultant to number of councils in sample from each group
Group 1 (Urban Capital City) Sydney	1:1
Group 2 (Urban Metropolitan Developed small-medium)	2:4
Group 3 (Urban Metropolitan Developed large-very large)	1:5
Group 4 (Urban Regional Town small-medium)	2:11
Group 5 (Urban Regional Town/City large-very large)	1:2
Group 6 (Urban Fringe medium)	1:1
Group 9 (Rural Agricultural medium)	5:9
Group 10 (Rural Agricultural large)	1:8
Group 11 (Rural Agricultural very large)	1:4
TOTAL	15:50

Table 7: Population in NSW: Selected characteristics

Characteristics	Women	Men
Population at 30 June 1997	50.3%	49.7%
Population over 70 years of age	60%	40%
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population	50.7%	49.3%
Proportion of population born overseas in non-English speaking countries	22.1% of women in NSW	22.5% of men in NSW
Life expectancy at June 1997	81.3 years	75.6 years
Life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at June 1997	66 years	57 years
Proportion of one parent families by sex (One-parent families represent 25% of all families.)	88%	12%
Labour force participation at May 1998	52%	71%
Unemployment rate at May 1998	7.1%	7.6%
Proportion of employed people working part-time or as casual workers by sex (Part-time employees comprise 20% of all employees and casual employees comprise 16% of all employed persons.)	42% of female employees	11% of male employees
People with post school qualifications	39% of women	46% of men
Average weekly earning (ordinary adult full-time)	\$708.80	\$855.40
Proportion of people with pensioner concession card	27% of women	16% of men
Perpetrators of all incidents of violence	15%	85%
Proportion of time spent on domestic work	13%	7%
Proportion of time spent on recreation and leisure	18%	20%

Source: Department for Women (1998). A range of statistics is provided online at www.women.nsw.gov.au.

Table 8: Statistical information provided by councils disaggregated by sex

Selected characteristics	Number of councils that included this information
Percentage of females in local government area population	22
Income characteristics	19
Percentage of females by age group	18
Family structure/household characteristics	18
Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander population	15
Employment characteristics	14
Cultural diversity within population	9

Table 9: Frequency of issues and needs identified in social/community plans

Issue area: category of needs identified by councils	No. of times needs were identified by councils in each issue area	No. of times councils identified the needs from a gender perspective
Health	42	32
Child care	40	19
Violence	35	34
Safety	30	21
Work	29	21
Families/sole parents	27	18
Housing	27	16
Transport	27	11
Education and training	26	18
Support services	21	20
Information	19	14
Participation	19	18
Recreation	19	9
Justice and legal issues	18	13
Community harmony	11	11
Amenities	10	8
Total	400	283

Table 10: Distribution of issues identified across local council groupings

Issue area	Group	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Total issues
Amenities			1	2	2		1			1		1	8
Child care				4	4	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	19
Community harmony				3	3		1			2		2	11
Education and training		1		2	3	2		1	1	7		1	18
Families/ sole parents					3	2	1		1	7	3	1	18
Health		1		6	5	1	2		3	6	5	3	32
Housing				2	6	1	1	1		3	1	1	16
Information			1	1	5	2	1		1	1	2		14
Justice and legal issues		2		1			1	1	1	3	4		13
Participation				4	2	1	2	2	1	5	1		18
Recreation		1		2		1		2		1		2	9
Safety		1		4	5	1	1	2	1	3	2	1	21
Support services		1	1	3	3	3	2	2		1	4		20
Transport				4	1	1	2		1	1	1		11
Violence		1	1	4	8	4	1	1	2	5	4	3	34
Work		1		3	2	3	2	3	1	5		1	21
Totals		9	4	45	52	23	19	17	15	53	28	18	283
No. of councils in each group		1	4	5	11	2	1	3	2	9	8	4	50

Table 11: Strategies developed to address identified needs of women

Issue area: category of needs identified by councils	No. of times councils identified the need as a gender issue	No. of times a council formulated a corresponding strategy	Ratio expressed as a percentage
Violence	34	28	82%
Health	33	21	64%
Safety	21	16	76%
Work	21	12	57%
Support services	20	13	62%
Child care	19	14	74%
Education and training	18	10	56%
Participation	18	13	72%
Families/sole parents	18	9	50%
Housing	16	13	81%
Information	14	11	79%
Justice and legal issues	13	5	39%
Community harmony	11	6	56%
Transport	11	10	91%
Recreation	9	8	88%
Amenities	8	5	63%
Total	284	194	68%

Table 12: Frequency of strategy types developed by councils to address identified needs of women

Strategy type	No. of times strategy type was applied	Application of strategy types expressed as a percentage
Development planning	40	18%
Service provision/designated staffing	33	15%
Working in partnerships with other agencies	31	14%
Further research	30	14%
Supporting community organisations	27	13%
Information provision	19	9%
Not regarded as council responsibility	11	5%
Lobby State and Federal Government	11	5%
Consultative mechanisms	9	4%
Building and maintenance of facilities	6	3%
Total	217	100%

Table 14: Women’s needs identified under other mandatory target groups

Other mandatory target groups	No. of times councils mentioned women’s needs and issues	No. of times a strategy was included
Young people	14	2
Children	7	3
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people	7	4
People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds	6	4
Older people	4	0
People with disabilities	1	0
Total	39	13

Table 15: Non-mandatory target groups identified in the social plans sampled

Other groups that were not mandatory	Number of councils that mentioned women’s needs and issues	Strategy included
All	5	2
Men	5	5
Gay and lesbian	3	1
Unemployed	1	0
Low income earners	1	0
Total	12	4

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