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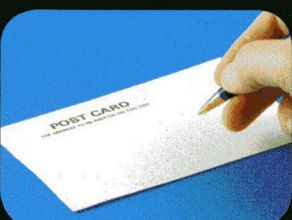
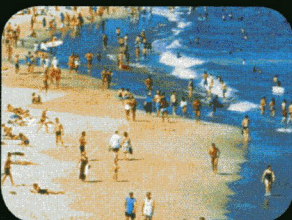
Backpackers in Global Sydney

Final Report

Fiona Allon, Australian Postdoctoral Industry Fellow
with Robyn Bushell and Kay Anderson
and assistance from Nathalie Apouchtine

Centre for Cultural Research
University of Western Sydney
2008

Project Partners:
Council of the City of Sydney
Manly Council
North Sydney Council
Randwick Council
Waverley Council
Woollahra Council



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Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, 2008

About the Research Team

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
List of figures and tables	ix
Executive summary <i>Robyn Bushell and Fiona Allon</i>	x
1. Introduction	1
1.1 'On a shoe string' that is getting longer and longer ...	2
1.2 The discerning backpacker — flashpackers, gap-packers and grey nomads	3
1.3 More than just tourists	6
1.4 Working holiday makers (WHMs)	7
1.5 International students/student backpackers	8
1.6 Definitional problems	9
1.7 Getting to know the locals?	10
1.8 Backpacker hostels	11
1.9 It's all about the experience!	12
1.10 Community relations	13
1.11 Community responses to backpacker tourism	14
1.11.1. 'Backpacker tourism as an asset'	14
1.11.2. 'Backpacker tourism as a liability'	16
1.12 A research gap	19
2. Project Aims	21
2.1 Summary of aims	21
3. Methodology	23
3.1 Focus groups	23
3.2 In-depth interviews	23
3.3 Online surveys	24
3.4 Forums	24
3.5 Meetings	25
4. Survey and Findings <i>Kay Anderson</i>	27
4.1 Outline of survey method: administration and distribution	27
4.2 Survey objectives in overview	27
4.3 Limitations of the survey method	28

4.4 RESIDENTS SURVEY	29
4.4.1. Demographic profile	29
4.4.2. Resident opinion about neighbourhood change and backpacking	29
4.4.3. Resident responses by Local Government Area (LGA)	31
4.5 BACKPACKERS SURVEY	34
4.5.1. Demographic profile	35
4.5.2. Backpacker opinion about their Sydney experience	36
5. Discussion of Interviews and Focus Groups <i>Fiona Allon</i>	39
5.1 DESTINATION SYDNEY	39
5.1.1. Sydney as a tourist destination	39
5.1.2. Sydney as a 'global city'	39
5.1.3. The branding of Sydney	40
5.1.4. Mixed messages	42
5.2 MORE THAN JUST TOURISTS	43
5.2.1. Beyond the backpack	45
5.3 FAIRNESS AND EXPLOITATION	46
5.3.1. Other vulnerabilities: health, safety and risk	48
5.3.2. Moving beyond stereotypes: backpacker, visitor, community, host ...	49
5.4 ACCOMMODATION	52
5.4.1. Wherever I lay my pack, that's my home ...?: budget accommodation for travellers	52
5.4.2. Authorised/legitimate backpacker hostel accommodation	54
5.4.3. Affordability and lack of supply	54
5.4.4. Room size requirements	56
5.4.5. Illegal/unauthorised backpacker accommodation	57
5.4.6. Real estate agents	59
5.4.7. Strata Title	60
5.4.8. Loss of compliance, rates and stamp duty revenue	61
5.4.9. Overcrowding	61
5.4.10. Boarding houses	62
5.4.11. Conversion of residential units into serviced apartments	63

5.4.12. Unauthorised accommodation in residential communities	64
5.4.13. Out of place <i>or</i> in the wrong place?: authorised versus unauthorised accommodation	65
5.4.14. Zoning	66
5.5 COMMUNITIES	67
5.5.1. Community benefits	67
5.5.2. Scope of complaints	68
5.5.3. Amenity impacts	69
5.5.4. Noise	70
5.5.5. Sleep deprivation and smoke	71
5.5.6. Dumped rubbish, garbage and dumped cars	72
5.5.7. More than NIMBYism?	72
5.6 GOVERNANCE AND REGULATION	73
5.6.1. Council constraints	74
5.7 BACKPACKERS — EASY TARGETS?	75
5.8 COEXISTENCE AND MANAGEMENT	76
5.8.1. Positive stories, positive images	76
5.8.2. Growing recognition of the need for a balance between <i>marketing</i> and <i>management</i>	77
6. Recommendations <i>Robyn Bushell</i>	78
Appendices	86
Appendix 1. Council profiles	86
A1.1 City of Sydney profile	86
A1.2 Manly profile	88
A1.3 North Sydney profile	90
A1.4 Randwick profile	92
A1.5 Waverley profile	94
A1.6 Woollahra profile	96
Appendix 2. Tourism NSW backpacker statistics	97
Appendix 3. Stakeholder input	99
A3.1 Online surveys	99
A3.1.1. Residents Survey: selected results	99

Table A-1: Selected responses to Residents Survey	99
A3.1.2. Backpackers Survey: selected results	104
Table A-2: Selected responses to Backpackers Survey	104
A3.1.3. Additional survey figures	107
Figure A-1: Residents Survey response rate, by LGA	107
Figure A-2: Resident opinion of 'benefits' associated with backpackers	107
Figure A-3: Resident opinion of 'problems' associated with backpackers	108
Figure A-4: Resident response to 'problems' with backpackers, by LGA	108
Figure A-5: Resident opinion of local council response to complaints about backpackers, by LGA	109
Figure A-6: Backpackers Survey response, by age	109
Figure A-7: Backpackers Survey response, by gender	109
Figure A-8: Backpacker self-classification	110
Figure A-9: Sydney LGA most visited by Backpackers Survey respondents	110
Figure A-10: Backpacker perceptions of local residents' views of backpackers	111
Figure A-11: Type of accommodation chosen by backpackers	111
Appendix 4. Case studies of successful strategies	112
A4.1 Successful strategies: City of Sydney Council	112
A4.2 Successful strategies: Manly Council	112
A4.3 Successful strategies: Waverley Council	114
Figure A-12: Waverley Council Christmas 1991-1993	117
Figure A-13: Waverley Council Safe Summer Initiative 2007/8	118
References	119

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Kym Wildman worked as a Research Assistant at the start of the project, providing literature searches, conducting interviews and focus groups. Dr Nathalie Apouchtine, in her role as Research Assistant for the majority of the project, made a major contribution, conducting literature searches, coordinating the online surveys, and organising focus groups and conducting interviews. Dr Apouchtine also co-authored the project's Interim Report. Hannah Wilde, a research student undertook a preliminary investigation of planning and management issues, Myat Mon Yi from the School of Information Technology at UWS, provided assistance to Fiona and Nathalie over many months with SurveyView, and Glen Fuller did some interviews with backpackers.

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List of Figures and Tables

Figures

Figure 1: Map showing location of Local Government Areas (LGAs) included in this study, in Sydney, Australia	26
Figure 2: Resident opinion of backpacker tourism in Sydney	31
Figure 3: Resident opinion of 'benefits' associated with backpackers, by LGA	32
Figure 4: Resident opinion of 'problems' associated with backpackers, by LGA	33
Figure 5: Backpacker perceptions of local residents' views of backpackers, by LGA most frequented	37

Tables

Table 1: Focus groups completed to end of March 2008, by area and stakeholder	23
Table 2: Interviews completed to end of March 2008, by area and stakeholder	24

Executive Summary

This report is based on the research undertaken for the Australian Research Council Linkage Scheme project *Backpacker Tourism in Global Sydney*. This project was a partnership between the Centre for Cultural Research at the University of Western Sydney and six Sydney councils: the City of Sydney, Manly, North Sydney, Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra (see Appendix 1 for Council Profiles, pp.87-97).

Backpacker tourism is a global phenomenon. It involves the movement of millions of travellers around the world, and refers to a diverse range of experiences and activities that can include work, volunteering, education, leisure and holidaying. Australia has a recognised highly developed tourism infrastructure and is a favourite destination for international backpackers. There has been strong and rapid expansion of the backpacker industry over the past decade. The backpacker market is widely regarded as especially beneficial because backpackers tend to spend more, travel further and stay longer than other tourists. But backpackers are also highly valued not just because they *consume* a range of experiences across a wide spectrum of places and settings, from cities to the outback, from the coast to the desert, but also because they *supply* a range of services. The youth traveller frequently fills labour shortages in urban and rural areas.

From data generated by Tourism Research Australia's, International Visitor Survey (to March 2008; see Tourism Research Australia 2008a, 2008b), it can be seen that of the 557,724 travellers designated as backpackers visiting Australia in 2007, some 440,446 or 79 percent visited NSW, contributing 16 percent of all international visitors to NSW. Of these visiting NSW, 419,817 or 95.3 percent, visited Sydney. The number of visitor arrivals in this category has increased 100 percent in the past decade from around 248,000 in 1996.

The average duration of stay in Australia in 2007 for backpacker visitors was 72 nights compared to 26 nights for other international visitors. International backpackers spent an average of \$5,555 per trip, compared to \$2,347 average expenditure for all other visitors. Backpackers contribute 19 percent of tourist expenditure in Australia.

Of those designated as backpackers, the breakdown of visitor nights in Sydney by country of origin were as follows: 22 percent from UK, 34 percent from the rest of Europe, 9 percent USA, 7 percent New Zealand, 6 percent Japan and 6 percent Korea. The accommodation preferences for backpackers recorded 35 percent in backpacker accommodation, and 30 percent in rented houses. A similar pattern of varied accommodation choice existed for other categories of budget traveller in the 2007 Survey. For the group categorised as independent traveller, 9 percent used backpacker

accommodation, 35 percent rented houses; for adventure travellers, 10 percent used backpacker accommodation, 33 percent rented houses; for experience seekers, 11 percent used backpacker accommodation, 31 percent rented houses; for surfing tourists, 23 percent used backpacker accommodation, 34 percent rented houses. Not surprisingly, for international students, only 1 percent used backpacker accommodation and 62 percent rented houses (Tourism Research Australia 2008a).

These figures alone indicate that 'activity' rather than accommodation type influences how travellers are categorised, and despite the official definition. From our research all the categories above could be deemed 'backpackers' from a local community perspective. And note the very high dependence/preference for rented accommodation, pointing to the significant definitional complexities surrounding the sector. The sheer diversity of the experiences and activities that 'backpacking' may involve, makes it exceptionally difficult to define a backpacker. Backpacker tourism has clearly morphed, with numerous related typologies variously described as budget, independent, adventure, youth, student, working holidaymaker, self drive, surfing, and even 'flashpacker'. The confusion and ambiguity around definitions also extends to related terms such as 'community', 'visitor', 'resident' and 'local'. In a globalised world characterised by increasing travel and movement, there is often little consensus about what such terms mean. Indeed, the Bureau of Tourism Research Australia's International Visitor Survey and National Visitor Survey 1999 – 2003 show comparable numbers of domestic backpackers as an important and growing segment (Ipalawatte 2004). This complexity presents considerable challenges for the collection and interpretation of data and statistics, and local governance and regulation.

This project's principal aim therefore was to significantly increase our understanding of the *social and cultural impacts* of the backpacker phenomenon, focusing in particular on areas that attract large numbers of backpackers and budget travellers in Sydney. More specifically the project aimed to:

1. investigate the changing tourism dynamics within six Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Sydney.
2. identify key characteristics in backpacker tourism and support local councils in the development of policy, planning, and in the regulatory work associated with backpacker tourism.
3. investigate the challenges to local governance arising from competing and often conflicting obligations to both 'local' residential communities and 'global' agendas (tourism).

The research incorporated a mixed-method approach, including both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods. Research data was collected from a range of sources, including

focus groups, interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Major stakeholder consultations were held in each LGA. The stakeholders included residents; resident precinct committees; backpackers; chambers of commerce and business representatives, including backpacker-related businesses; backpacker accommodation and hostel operators; council staff; councillors and mayors, NSW Government and tourism industry representatives.

Online surveys of residents provided a snapshot of the opinions of people living in select Sydney suburbs about the presence of backpackers in their local communities, and of backpacking in Sydney more generally. Backpackers were surveyed to learn more about their background and experiences of backpacking in Sydney, including their reception by local communities. The surveys yielded 389 responses from residents and 309 responses to the Backpackers Survey.

The survey data together with information from the focus groups and interviews revealed, not surprisingly, a mix of positive and negative responses. Almost half (47 percent) of our online survey resident respondents described backpacker tourism as an 'asset' for Sydney, while 35 percent described it as a 'liability' (though see later re 'other' responses). Regional variation in resident opinion across the LGAs was notable.

Backpackers have become recognised as an essential labour force, supplying skills and labour in a number of areas with chronic labour shortages in rural and regional Australia. However, backpackers are also now recognised as constituting an invaluable labour supply in a range of urban occupations and industries, especially service industries. The willingness of backpackers to work in a range of occupations, as well as to work long hours, is frequently mentioned as an asset by employers in these industries.

Recent changes to Working Holiday Maker visa regulations have been generally welcomed by employers as a measure intended to help ease skill shortages across all industries. Of particular relevance to this research project has been the relaxation of conditions under which working holiday visas may be granted. The WHMS exists mainly for the purpose of promoting international cultural exchange by allowing young people to travel and explore other countries and cultures. The tacit acknowledgement of the role of the WHMS as a *de facto* labour programme and the importance of backpacker labour is, however, underscored by the recent extension of the visa to up to 2 years.

The question relevant to this research is whether the liberalisation of the WHMS visa conditions has been matched by a consideration of the infrastructure and social needs of backpackers, who may be working with one employer for increasingly longer periods of time, sometimes for up to 6 months. Of particular relevance is the availability of appropriate and affordable accommodation to cater for

these travellers. There is also some evidence of unscrupulous exploitation of WHMS visa holders and backpackers by employers. This problem highlights a range of concerns about the working conditions of these travellers (for example, taxation, illegal work practices, low pay, lack of awareness about working rights and conditions). But it also brings into focus the much wider issue of the vulnerability of these travellers more generally. Backpackers and WHMS visitors can be exposed to unscrupulous real estate agents and landlords, and can end up staying in unsafe places of accommodation. They can also suffer from health and safety problems.

Much media coverage has tended to report incidents where backpackers and independent travellers are claimed to be the *source* of anti-social behaviour. However, they are also frequently the *victims* of abuse, including physical abuse and violence. A large number of backpackers engage in 'high risk' practices including unsafe sex, excessive alcohol consumption and illicit drug use. The risks they take often impact on their own health and wellbeing and have consequences for others. There is a need to look seriously at some of the potential consequences of these behaviours. The social and health needs of this cohort of travellers, including the responsibilities and duty of care owed to them, also need greater attention.

As the largest and most well known of Australian cities, Sydney is a popular destination for backpackers, and is promoted as a cosmopolitan 'global city' as well as the setting for a range of unique and culturally distinctive experiences, places and lifestyles. Despite the considerable economic benefits that backpackers bring to the city, however, many Sydney-siders regard backpackers as a 'problem', citing excessive noise and disruptive 'anti-social behaviour', public drunkenness, overcrowded and unauthorised accommodation, safety concerns, and perceptions of responsibility for abandoned cars and rubbish dumping. Local councils in particular face considerable challenges: they must investigate complaints about backpackers from residents; ensure that backpacker hostels and budget-accommodation premises comply with building codes and public health and safety standards; and also promote their areas as highly desirable tourist destinations with distinctive and recognisable cultural profiles.

In summary, the key issues identified through the research that informed the framing of recommendations are:

- the economic and socio-cultural importance of travel as part of everyday life is not always easily/clearly defined as 'tourism' or any particular sub-category of experience;
- the importance of medium-long stay visitors who undertake formal education in Australia or who meet labour-market shortages needs to be more openly acknowledged;

- the term 'backpacker' is in many ways an outdated construct, has some pejorative connotations, and is often misleading in terms of the nature and purpose of visit, length of stay, age of the visitor, and yield from expenditure. Nevertheless a sector of the tourism industry and the market identify with this label;
- the mobility of communities makes the delineation and categorisation of 'resident' *versus* 'visitor' very slippery and contested;
- councils and communities generally support the tourism industry provided visitors and businesses respect the rights and needs of residents;
- residents want to see that economic interests do not compromise other quality of life attributes for local people;
- residents want more efficient processes for grievances to be heard and appropriate actions taken;
- the research suggests that 'legal'/legitimate backpacker hostels cause few problems;
- backpacker industry operators argue that current penalties/fines for failure to comply with existing regulations or operating without council approval are too lenient;
- when residential premises are used as commercial backpacker accommodation there are not only issues of non-compliance. There can also be concerns regarding rates and stamp duty revenue for Local government;
- it is easy/convenient for problems and issues to be blamed on one particular group such as backpackers when in reality many people contribute to amenity impacts;
- councils feel they are often unable to readily access information, support or recognition from other levels of government regarding the burden of the impacts of high levels of transient populations and visitors;
- statistically reliable tourism data is (with very few exceptions) not available at the Local government level. In the main this is due to sample size, which is in turn connected to the fact that the collection of all tourism data has not been accepted and funded by the Federal Government as a responsibility of ABS. Consequently data collection has been undertaken collaboratively and is limited by the terms of, and resources available, under a volunteer agreement between all Australian tourism agencies;
- alcohol and drug related anti-social behaviour is not confined to visitors, rather it is a growing issue that many are attempting to address at all levels of government;
- young travellers are in the high risk category for a range of safety issues and support is essential;
- considerable variation is evident in opinions and levels of support and/or concern regarding different issues of the backpacker phenomenon across the various LGAs.

Councils need to consider the appropriateness of each recommendation in relation to local circumstances, priorities and existing policies. The research identified a number of successful local strategies, which can be shared with others (see Appendix 4, p.112-118).

The key recommendations, **outlined in more detail in Section 6 of the report (p.78)** concern:

1. The Backpacker label/definition

The Federal Tourism Minister's Council, for reference to the relevant sub-committee of the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT) and with appropriate consultation, should consider alternative terminology to 'backpacker'.

2. Accommodation

Strategies should be formulated to facilitate the development of an adequate supply of budget short-medium stay accommodation as a sustainable, low impact product with niche market appeal.

3. Community and visitor planning

A set of actions should be developed to address the different pressures and issues identified within each local area. This can be achieved through a local planning group that engages the various stakeholders: council staff and elected representatives, chambers of commerce; special interest groups; residents; police and others.

4. Greater co-ordination between tiers of government

A set of strategies should be implemented to ensure a consistent, informed and proactive approach which is resource-efficient across State and Local government to support this important area and at the same time reduce the undesirable impacts on local amenity and safety.

4 i. Working with Tourism NSW and the private sector

A collaborative effort is needed to better manage issues and impacts at the local level

4 i.a. Education and expectation management

Three separate information kits should be developed to educate residents, visitors, and businesses about their rights and responsibilities

4 i.b. Support for Local government

A review of resources available to councils managing tourist 'hot spots' should be conducted

4 i.c. Increasing the diversity of the market

While the marketing of tourism to Australia is regarded as highly professional, work is perhaps needed with Tourism NSW and Tourism Australia as well as Work

Australia and other agencies to attempt to attract a greater mix of long stay visitors, encouraging more diversity amongst the backpacker market.

4.ii. Working with other State bodies

4.ii.a. Planning issues

NSW Department of Planning, with input from Local government, should review the planning instruments related to definitions, permissible uses in zones, and codes most commonly involved in regulating backpacker accommodation. This should include the new Local Environmental Plans (LEP) Standard Instrument templates.

4.ii.b Enforcement issues

Local Government and Shires Association, Backpacker Operators Association, NSW Police, NSW Fire Brigade and the NSW Real Estate Institute should collaborate to ensure greater coordination between enforcement agencies.

4.ii.c Anti-social behaviour

NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, the NSW Police, the Australian Hotels Association and NSW Local Government & Shires Association should consolidate and monitor the numerous local strategies addressing anti-social behaviour linked to excessive alcohol consumption in public places.

1. Introduction

'Everyone is putting their hands over their eyes about this. It is a multi-million dollar industry that has been left to run wild' (Former Waverley Mayor, Peter Moscatto).

Since the start of the 21st century, backpacker tourism has grown considerably — as a lifestyle, a travel preference and an industry. In Australia, international backpacker visitation has continued to increase by approximately 3 percent per year since 2000, to reach 557,724 visitors in 2007. This growth is marginally higher than overall growth in international visitors (average annual growth of 2 percent, Tourism Research Australia 2008b). Largely as a result of the combination of low-cost airlines, the expansion of information and communication technologies via the internet, and the increased availability of budget accommodation such as hostels, independent international budget travel has become both easier to plan and organise, and also more popular, than ever before.

Backpacker tourism has been reported as amongst the fastest growing niche tourism markets worldwide (Richards and Wilson 2004). It is a dynamic and diversifying industry whose economic importance to Australian and global tourism is widely documented. In 2004, the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources 'Tourism White Paper' acknowledged backpacker tourism as an 'important niche market' and cited the significant expenditure of backpacker visitors compared to non-backpacker visitors (Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources 2004: 29). The economic significance of backpacker tourism in particular has received considerable attention and has been strongly emphasised. In 2003, for example, the Commonwealth Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources 'Tourism White Paper' stated that:

[B]ackpackers visit more regional areas than other international visitors and hence can provide a boost to local economies which might not benefit significantly from the growth in inbound tourism (Commonwealth of Australia 2003: 23).

The estimated economic significance of backpacker visitors for a range of areas, industries and services is such that backpacker tourism is now commonly referred to as a 'high yield segment' of the tourism industry. International backpackers, for example, account for 11 percent of international visitors to Australia. However, they spend around 20 percent of all tourist expenditure (Tourism Research Australia 2008a; see also Appendix 2 for Statistics on International Backpackers to NSW Year Ended December 2007, p.97). Similarly, their average duration of stay and average trip expenditure were also noted as more than double that of non-backpacker visitors. In 2007, the average duration of stay in Australia for backpacker visitors was 72 nights. This compares to the 26

nights for other holidaying international visitors. International backpackers spent an average of \$5,555 per trip, while for non-backpacker holiday visitors the average trip expenditure was \$2,347 (Tourism Research Australia 2008a).

Since 1994 Australian government tourism policy has actively focused on the international backpacker market and has initiated strategies and campaigns to encourage the development and expansion of a flourishing backpacker industry in Australia. The 1995 Commonwealth Department of Tourism's backpacker strategy was the first of many marketing and promotion campaigns to support the industry (Commonwealth Department of Tourism 1995). At both Commonwealth and State levels, backpacker tourism has received enthusiastic encouragement and support. The strong and rapid expansion of the backpacker industry over the past decade can in part be seen as a result of these determined marketing strategies and initiatives. The increase in visitor arrivals from around 248,000 in 1996 to 557,724 in 2007 certainly confirms Australia's rise in popularity as a backpacker tourist destination (Tourism Research Australia 2008a).

1.1 'On a shoe string' that is getting longer and longer ...

The stereotype of the impecunious, budget-conscious backpacker, travelling 'on a shoe string', is at the same time debunked by this identification of the backpacker tourist segment as high-yielding and economically significant. Once considered part of the extreme low-end of the tourist economy — alternative, 'free-loaders' yielding few economic returns — backpackers have also now become highly sought after targets for a range of sectors: education, nursing, agriculture, a host of primary industries such as fishing and pearling, and horticultural industries such as fruit-picking and harvesting. It is for this reason that some commentators have noted that few modern social developments are more significant and yet less appreciated than the emergence of the backpacker travel industry (Jarvis and Peel 2005).

Our research confirms the increasingly redundant stereotype of the backpacker as a freeloading 'drifter tourist' (Cohen 1973). Indeed, an alternative image of the backpacker that emerges from our study, is one of a highly resourceful individual with considerable reserves of initiative and enthusiasm, actively seeking out new experiences, and often undertaking periods of serious, difficult, and sometimes very demanding and strenuous, periods of work.

Organising a working holiday, in particular, which involves finding suitable work and locating employers, requires considerable effort and initiative. Moreover, the emergence of the category of the 'backpacker volunteer' also works to debunk the stereotype of the backpacker as simply interested in a lifestyle of self-absorbed, hedonistic leisure — an 'ego'-tourist as opposed to an 'eco'-

tourist (Mowforth and Munt 1998: 149).

In the context of a national skills shortage and Federal government incentives to create visitor pathways to longer-term stays, Australia continues to figure prominently as a key 'adventure destination' for backpackers in international terms (Richards 2007: 22). The Federal government sees a direct connection between temporary visitation and more permanent settlement, and is encouraging more people to experience Australia initially on a temporary basis and then 'creating pathways to help migrants move easily from temporary to permanent migration' (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006b).

Backpackers and travellers on Working Holiday Maker visas are included in the cohorts of temporary visitors being targeted to consider more permanent settlement, and a large number of travellers view their initial visa, whether it is a tourist visa or a working holiday visa, as a 'stepping stone' to more permanent residency. As one accommodation operator in our study described:

We have got working holiday people who have come out, they've done their one year of work here, they've done their three months in the country, so they're here for two years ... But a lot of them are working towards permanent residency in this country (Accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

There is an increasingly blurred line between temporary visitor and permanent resident in these instances. The community ambivalence, and often the social tensions, around backpackers stems to a great extent from the fact that they exist in so many ways in this 'grey zone' between temporary visitor and permanent resident. In a sense, backpackers are a subset of visitors who increasingly defy easy or even, any, delimitation. By staying for extended, increasingly longer, periods of time, backpackers problematise the standard 'guest/host' relationship of conventional tourism. Of course in any globalising urban setting today, the so-called 'hosts' of place and community are themselves as likely to be short-term as permanent residents, transients too at some level in the sense of not being bound to one particular place. Thus, what is of interest here is the question of accommodating (in a number of ways and senses) this class of 'global nomad' (Richards and Wilson 2004) within the urban setting.

1.2 The discerning backpacker — flashpackers, gap-packers and grey nomads

These days wealthy older travellers are as keen on new frontiers as their kids. The upshot? Flashpacking, where the knapsack goes first class and a five-star hotel is followed by a night on the beach (Maxwell 2008: 42).

As mentioned above, the backpacker tourism market is diversifying and becoming fragmented. One of the most widely commented upon trends in the industry has been the emergence of more upmarket, less budget-conscious backpackers, a group of travellers that have been termed 'flashpackers'. This cohort of travellers is still regarded as 'experiential' travellers. However, they are not restrained by budget limitations and eschew other once-typical features of backpacking culture such as dormitory-style accommodation and cheap, 'shoe-string' living.

The new label of the 'flashpacker' also challenges the traditional 'strapped for cash' stereotype that has become synonymous with the backpacker. A neologism that is generally used to refer to the more 'affluent' backpacker, the flashpacker has come to describe the traveller who arrives with a sizeable credit card limit and budget, mobile phone, digital camera, iPod, laptop, seeks regular access to wireless internet, and a reasonable budget. It is also a term frequently used to describe the 'feminisation' of the independent traveller, in particular, groups of young women who may be staying in hostel-style accommodation but who will spend freely on leisure activities and travel experiences such as organised wine tours and adventure travel activities such as learning to surf and charter flights (Richards 2007: 5).

The term also refers to the growing demographic of older travellers (also sometimes called 'grey nomads') who travel *without* a budget, yet who shun traditional organised travel or package tours and venture to destinations once the reserve of more adventurous backpackers.

In fact, there has been a significant growth in older travellers, particularly in persons aged 40-49 years since 2000. This age group now represents 12 percent (62,000 visitors) of all backpacker visitors, up from 8 percent (38,000) in 2000 (Tourism Research Australia, 2008b; see also Lonely Planet 2007). Backpacker accommodation operators interviewed for this project also described this trend. In the words of one: 'A backpacker isn't a young person anymore. A backpacker is the older generation, as well. They also travel ... they've finally felt comfortable that they can go off and see things for the first time' (Backpacker accommodation operator, Randwick). Other operators confirmed this market change:

Yes. And older people who, instead of going on their one-week vacation, they'll come and do it on a budget for six weeks, and they might be in their forties or fifties. So it's a whole different market (Backpacker accommodation operator, Randwick).

Regardless of the usefulness or legitimacy of the label, the popularity of the term 'flashpacker', and the widespread commentary on the flashpacker phenomenon serves to indicate an important shift in

the travel trends of young backpackers. Contemporary young backpackers are generally considered to be more demanding and discerning than their predecessors, expecting a range of quality services and 'home comforts' from their accommodation facilities. As one accommodation operator put it:

My general viewpoint on backpackers is that they're more in tune with their environment. They want green, and all that sort of stuff. It's no longer the scummy backpacker as such. I think there's a lot more females that are doing it, and there's a lot more demand for quality in their [sic] establishments ... We had a whole floor dedicated to girls called 'The Sanctuary' ... and the only way to do that is to have a clean, safe, legitimate business. They want the internet, they want wireless ... (Operations manager, Manly).

A number of operators concurred with this view, outlining that there is now a cohort of younger travellers seeking more 'upmarket' accommodation that is significantly different to the traditional backpacker hostel experience:

They want more, like, the en suite sort of pseudo budget hotel feel, and they turn up with baggage, and not a backpack. They're still young. They fit the mould ... but they want a different product. They're actually specifically looking for it. They want budget, but budget with an en suite, and they want to have a TV in the room! They don't necessarily want to socialise with other people ... They don't want to go for the traditional sort of hostel experience (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

These quotations above demonstrate how diverse and niche-driven the backpacker market has become. They also illustrate some of the new trends emerging in the market which will continue to play out into the future. The image of backpacker tourism that is appearing here, especially when taking into consideration the flashpacking phenomenon, is of a highly diverse, often incongruous, mix of travel experiences and accommodation preferences. It is often a very contradictory mix of 'slumming it' *and* selectivity, the comforts of home *and* high-risk 'on holiday' practices, adventurous travel *and* luxury, leisure *and* work, being a traveller *and* living like a local.

As a result of this fragmentation in the market, many hostels are evolving and trying to cater for a more diverse range of travellers' needs and changing demands. Hostels have begun to offer more up-market accommodation and to provide services and comforts that were not normally associated with the 'no frills' austerity and parsimony of backpacker travel, though as will be discussed later there is an inadequate supply of diverse kinds of accommodation in the Sydney context.

1.3 More than just tourists

The steadily increasing number of backpackers to Australia indicates the strength and resilience of this market. Despite temporary, short-term fluctuations the picture emerging from these trends is of an expanding and diversifying backpacker industry and independent travel sector. According to Tourism Research Australia's 'Niche Market Report', 'the backpacker market exhibits considerable resilience in times of adversity' (Tourism Australia 2006: 2; see also Tourism Australia 2005). And adversity is an appropriate characterisation of the current condition facing Australian tourism with a decline in first-time visitors reported in 2008 for the first time in seven years (Munro 2008: 17; see also Lee 2008: 9 on Australia's 'flagging tourism industry').

In addition, backpackers themselves are also recognised as flexible, resilient travellers. They have been described as 'relatively indifferent to risk, a characteristic which has increased their value since the global downturn in international travel as a result of the 2003 outbreak of SARS in Asia and highly publicised terrorist acts in the United States, Bali, London and Egypt' (Peel and Steen 2007: 1057). These qualities — flexibility, resilience and youthful enthusiasm — are also cited by employers as some of the key attributes of backpackers in working environments.

The importance of backpackers as providing a flexible pool of labour at a time of skills and labour shortages is well recognised by many employers. Flexibility, resilience and a strong work ethic were repeatedly mentioned by employers in our focus groups and interviews as the benefits associated with working backpackers:

They do the jobs that a lot of Australians aren't inclined to do. They'll be working on Anzac Day picking up glasses in a pub, whereas you try and find a local guy who'll do that and he says "No, it's my day off". It gives the hospitality industry a great pool of labour that isn't available — sometimes you've even got people who aren't fussy about Christmas, and they'll work through that because back in their country it's no big deal, and they'll work through. So it's a very flexible pool of labour that doesn't mind working public holidays and will do fairly menial jobs in terms of cleaning vomit on a bathroom floor or picking up glasses or whatever (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

Backpackers and working holiday makers provide essential labour, skills and services for a range of sectors and service industries. In the current context of severe skills and labour shortages, the contributions that such travellers make to the overall economy are significant and substantial. It is therefore becoming clear that backpacker tourism should be seen as an adjunct to a range of other

sectors — labour force, education, rural and regional economies, service industries, health etc — which are dependent on a pool of labour increasingly derived from international travellers.

1.4 Working holiday makers (WHMs)

Australia's Working Holiday Maker Programme (WHMP, previously known as the Working Holiday Maker Scheme) was established in 1975. WHMS visas allow young people to travel and work in Australia for 12 months. Currently, Australia has reciprocal agreements with 21 countries. The primary objective of the scheme is to encourage travel by young internationals, permitting young people aged between 18 and 30 to combine a period of work and travel in Australia. The Commonwealth Government has estimated that the scheme contributes over \$1.3 billion to the Australian economy (Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2005).

The principal (original) purpose of the Working Holiday Maker Programme was to foster cultural exchange. The WHMP allows 'working holiday makers to have an extended holiday in Australia by supplementing their travel funds through incidental employment and to experience closer contact with a local community' (Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2006).

Working holiday makers (WHMs) are not supposed to impact detrimentally on the local labour market, hence the restrictions limiting work to the one employer (Joint Standing Committee on Migration 1997). However, backpackers and WHMS visas are increasingly used to meet specific labour needs in particular industries or sectors of the economy. In recent years, largely as a result of concerns over labour shortages, there has been a further expansion of the Working Holiday Maker Programme. The Federal Government has extended the Working Holiday Maker Programme to include more countries, and it has also liberalised the regulations governing Working Holiday Maker visas. Now WHMs can remain in the same job for twice as long — six months rather than three months — and can stay, potentially, for two years rather than the one year covered by previous visa restrictions. The type of work WHMs can do has also been expanded: in addition to fruit picking, they can now work in industries as diverse as harvesting, fishing, pearling, shearing, butchery and forestry.

In 2006-2007 a total of 136,422 Working Holiday Maker and Work and Holiday visas were issued. This is a significant increase, in fact almost a doubling, of the number of visas granted in the 2000-2001 period (76,570). Working Holiday Maker and Work and Holiday visas are increasingly popular as evidenced both by our own research findings and Department of Immigration and Citizenship

figures. In that year (2006-07), the UK was the main source country for working holiday makers (31,203 visas issued in 2007) followed by Korea (28,562).

As noted above, a range of industries, including the horticultural industry, have become increasingly reliant on these 'backpackers'. Since 1 November 2005, WHMs who have worked as seasonal workers in regional Australia for a minimum of three months have been able to apply onshore for another 12 month visa. They can also apply onshore for a Skilled Independent Regional visa to stay in Australia.

Backpackers have always visited destinations in Australia for extended periods of time. Recent changes to the Working Holiday Maker visa regulations have now increased the opportunities for longer visitation periods. The steadily mounting popularity of Working Holiday visas supports the trend that has been observed by a number of studies that backpackers are visiting for increasingly diverse durations of stay, including *both* shorter and longer stays. While much anecdotal evidence collected during the study suggests a trend towards longer stays, the average stay in Australia had actually decreased from 75 nights in 2000 to 72 nights in 2007. However, some are also travelling more often. The average number of trips taken by young people has increased in the last five years (Tourism Research Australia 2008b).

1.5 International students/student backpackers

International students and 'student backpackers' represent a growing niche market. These young visitors tend to combine a period of study in Australia with a period of travelling or backpacking. This category can also refer to international students who combine study and travel, and includes 'study abroad' and 'exchange students'. Around 7 percent of all international backpackers gave education as their main reason for visiting Australia. It is estimated that these 'student backpackers' each spend around \$13,047 during their stay (Tourism Research Australia 2008b).

In the year ending December 2007, for example, visitors who stated education as their main purpose of visit, spent a total of 46 million nights in Australia, representing 29 percent of all international visitor nights stayed. While in Australia, education visitors spent 58 percent of their nights in a rented house, apartment, flat or unit (Tourism Research Australia 2008b).

The significant growth of the backpacker market has coincided with increased marketing from Australian universities, which now promote study programs with elements of tourism typically found in the backpacker industry. Indeed, a number of residents interviewed for this project spoke about the noise and disruption caused by such 'student backpackers', particularly in the Randwick LGA

(near UNSW) and in the City of Sydney where backpackers have been identified as a concern for some residents of apartment buildings in Pyrmont and the CBD.

1.6 Definitional problems

A very clear, rapidly changing element of the backpacking phenomenon, like other visitor segments, then, is its increasing diversity and market segmentation and differentiation. As the Executive Office of the Youth Hostels Association (YHA) put it:

I can give you half a dozen different tribes of backpackers. I mean, it's a segmented market. [There is] the low end. They're the ones who don't travel around ... But there's lots of others who are travelling around and who are picking fruit in places where it would otherwise be falling off the vine, who are spending money in regional communities (Julian Ledger, CEO, Youth Hostels Association [YHA] NSW).

This project has identified a number of emerging niche markets, including:

1. Working backpackers
2. Student backpackers/International students
3. Volunteering backpackers
4. Flashpackers
5. Adventure travellers
6. Grey nomads
7. Gap-packers

Although this is in no way a definitive list of the niche markets within the backpacker industry, it provides an overview of the complexity of the market, and the difficulties in defining a 'backpacker'. Waverley Council, for example, now prefers to use the more neutral term 'visitor', a very broad term with its own limitations. Many travellers themselves also reject the 'backpacker' label, as shall be seen later in the report.

It appears there are substantial definitional problems in relation to how backpackers – and the types of accommodation they occupy – are classified. As will be discussed later, there are further definitional ambiguities in relation to the definitions of 'resident', 'host', 'community', 'tenancy', and 'transient', 'temporary' and 'permanent visitors'.

1.7 Getting to know the locals?

Both 'authentic' and 'local' experiences are highly valued by backpackers. Tourism NSW, for example, states that backpackers are 'eager to mix' with locals and are 'particularly interested in meeting and living with ordinary Australians'. They are also interested in activities that are 'authentically Australian' and removed from mainstream tourist experiences (Tourism NSW 2008). A preference for shared rental accommodation over conventional backpacker hostel-style accommodation, is a means, some backpackers believe, by which they are going to achieve a 'more authentic' experience.

Despite the importance placed on authenticity, it was noted in preliminary literature searches for this study that large numbers of young independent travellers also tend to congregate in 'suspended traveller enclaves', where backpackers carve out an almost self-enclosed space maintained by dense networks of friends and other travellers (see Wilson and Richards 2008). One of the issues it was considered interesting for our research to track, then, was the mix of impulses among backpackers in Sydney to simultaneously get to know the locals, while *also* joining a self-contained 'backpacker bubble' or community of travellers.

International youth and student travel are major markets. It has been recognised by several studies that 'international travel experiences are an essential part of young people's personal and educational development, feeds their curiosity of other cultures, and contributes to the "openness" that underpins international understanding' (Richards 2007: 3). Travel has long been seen as necessarily entailing experiences that are different to or opposed to those which constitute 'home' and everyday life. Yet for many of the backpackers interviewed for this project, the appeal of working holiday backpacking is precisely the opportunity it provides to have the 'authentic' experience of staying and working for long periods of time in residential communities, and to live, so to speak, not as a tourist, but as a local.

In this way, working holiday makers often live in a house, in a suburb, go to work, drink at the pub — a prosaic procession of activities not all that different from the life they left behind at home. In this version of 'ordinary life' (which tourism has conventionally been defined against) the usual oppositions between the touristic and the everyday, home and elsewhere and so on, are casually unsettled. The working holiday, therefore, may at some time provide territories of freedom and periods of leisure, but its defining feature is that it more often than not becomes a relocation of familiar work routines, regulations and social relations in new places and contexts. As Ateljevic and Doorne (2004: 76) contend, 'the relationship between work and leisure, particularly with respect to working holidays, is a rapidly changing element of the backpacking phenomenon'.

1.8 Backpacker hostels

Some stakeholders in the tourism industry seek to resolve the definitional problems surrounding 'backpacker' with reference to the accommodation type that is used. For example, the operational definition of a backpacker currently used by Tourism Australia refers to a person who spends at least one night in either backpacker or hostel accommodation. The limitations surrounding this working definition of a backpacker are clear, however, when one considers the percentage of nights backpackers do *not* spend in either backpacker or hostel accommodation. The 2007 International Visitor Survey found that while in Australia, backpackers spent only 37 percent of their nights in backpacker or hostel accommodation. For international backpackers a range of accommodation types was involved: only 23 percent spent all of their nights in hostel accommodation; 28 percent chose to stay in a rented house, apartment, unit or flat; and, 12 percent chose to stay in the homes of friends and relatives (Tourism Research Australia 2008b).

The term 'backpacker' is defined for statistical purposes as any visitor who has stayed in backpacker accommodation (i.e. a backpacker hostel). And while this is how government statistics define and use the term, a problem nevertheless exists in that many people - both inside and outside the industry - take the label to connote a particular type of traveller with assumed shared characteristics. As for the traveller concerned, most do not stay most of the time in this particular accommodation. Furthermore, while it is the case that other tourism visitors, for example, 'nature tourism' visitors, spend only some of their time in a 'natural environment', the public sentiments at stake in the 'extension' of the backpacker into spheres of accommodation beyond the hostel are contentious, as will be summarised at 1.11 (below, and discussed later in the report).

One of the major limitations of laws and regulations surrounding town planning and development control practice and policy for backpacker hostels, is that in the context of concern to this study, the license restricts provision of accommodation to a maximum of 28 days. Backpackers find ways of overcoming this limitation to enable longer term stays, as do operators such as one who stated in interview: 'You can check out for a day and then check in the next day. Some of them check out at ten, put their luggage out, and check back in five minutes later!' (laughs) (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

The *demand* for a longer-stay, therefore, is frequently overriding the technical requirements of compliance. It also appears that backpacker hostels are in effect offering longer term stays for backpackers simply because outside of the rental market there is little alternative accommodation available:

There are people who stay in hostels (I've heard, because I made some enquiries at Kings Cross to actually purchase some) who stay extremely long term. Six months, five months ...because they can't find the alternative. There's a lack of supply (Accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

The pressures being placed in Sydney on the rental market, boarding houses, and illegitimate premises have been intensified by backpacker demand. It should, however, be noted at this point, that over the past three to five years, the use of residential premises (apartments and houses) by visitors to Sydney has also been driven by the need for owners to acquire tenants. Residential vacancy rates at one point were quite high and the lack of traditional tenants did itself contribute to a shift to short-term lettings. So, investors in the rental market were being supported by short-term letting. Furthermore, it needs to be acknowledged that these visitors have been entitled under the Residential Tenancies Act to stay in residential premises if staying in excess of 60 days.

Such complexities provide context for this project's investigation into community impacts in residential Sydney. Irrespective of whether backpacker tourism represents a search for an authentic Australian experience, a desire to mix with the locals and become part of the community, or a cost-cutting measure and a way to save money on accommodation, the phenomenon presents a number of significant challenges to urban residential communities.

1.9 It's all about the experience!

The global tourism industry, like many industries over the last couple of decades, has become increasingly flexible, diversified and fragmented. The industry has also been profoundly transformed by the rise of what economists Pine and Gilmore (1999) have described as the 'experience economy'. This is a term used to indicate the shift from 'mass tourism' to a diversified market of individual and independent travellers seeking a broad range of eclectic, and so-called 'authentic', and 'original' *experiences*. One of the results of this shift is the extension of tourism's embrace into ever more private and 'local' zones of 'foreign' cultures and host societies.

This search for new experiences, and for so-called originality and authenticity, has profound 'affect' and consequence within the tourism industry. The tourist yearning for sensory engagements with particular places (such as the 'sand, sea and surf' for which Sydney is widely marketed for young travellers) shapes the experiences of backpackers and the ways in which they use and consume public spaces. The issue of tourism marketing and promotion is fundamental to the kinds of expectations tourists hold and the kinds of experiences they will demand or expect to have.

This study therefore investigates not only the ways backpackers are received by local communities, but also the ways tourist discourses and representations of places and experiences shape and inform the activities of backpackers. For example, as will be discussed later, a number of residents interviewed for the research believed that there should be a broader set of images and experiences marketed to international backpackers beyond the stereotypical British or Irish backpacker (who, as shall be reported in findings from the Backpackers Survey, represented the majority of the project's survey respondents). Although it was not the objective of this study to analyse such marketing material itself - its brand elements or images - there is reason to expect that the promotion of a greater mix of experiences and images to a diversity of nationalities might have the potential to shift some of the negative and entrenched stereotypical images and assumptions that have developed around the identity of the 'backpacker'. This was suggested by one interviewed operator:

So maybe it just takes a bit of time for the community's perception to catch up. A few years ago, everyone just wanted to come and get pissed, and the community said, "Well, that's all they are. Backpackers are just people who come and pee in my front garden," but now that the backpackers are changing, and they're travelling with laptops and staying in nicer accommodation, they want to get out and do and see things, maybe in a few years' time the community will catch up and see them as not a bad thing (Backpacker accommodation operator, Randwick).

1.10 Community relations

I think they add a lot of vitality to an area. It's really a matter of addressing the issues which flow from that which aren't being very well addressed (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

While backpacker tourism is being actively promoted at the national level and is of considerable economic importance to regional Australia, its benefits to local communities remains a contentious issue. Both the Federal government and the tourism industry actively promote the backpacker sector as a key niche market for development because of its high yield. Yet neither a coordination of these initiatives at a local level nor recognition of the impact on Local government has been given sufficient attention. As one Waverley resident expressed it: 'NSW and Australian Tourism is saying one thing, and poor Bondi and Waverley are trying to say, "It's not like that, guys, because we can't handle it"' (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

Operators within the industry also recognise the impacts, as a young entrepreneur in the budget self-drive hire business stated: "Australians fear and loathe backpackers. The industry and

government fear they might stop coming because they contribute so much to the industry. Locals loathe them because they have become synonymous with ‘young drunks’” (Chris Ford, Global Sales and Marketing Manager, 2008).

Councils have limited resources and budgets. At the time of the project’s commencement, for example, only one participating council — City of Sydney — had a designated Shared Accommodation Officer, who was specifically responsible for backpacker accommodation concerns and complaints. (At present, this position remains unfilled.) Yet, as will become evident in later sections of the report, assessing and responding effectively to residents’ complaints is a lengthy and time-consuming process. Similarly, investigating and inspecting suspected illegitimate and unauthorised accommodation is time and labour intensive. Furthermore, residents and backpacker hostel operators may not always be aware of the legal and financial constraints bearing on councils. These complexities at the local level further underscore the rationale for sustained investigation.

1.11 Community responses to backpacker tourism

Community responses to backpacker tourism are highly passionate and also tend to be highly polarised. Indeed although many issues impacting people’s everyday lives, livelihoods, and communities arouse heightened responses, the public perception surrounding this particular category of visitor is such that the backpacker phenomenon is worthy of its own investigation. Thus, this study did not attempt to assess the *ranked* importance of backpacking vis-à-vis other local issues in the eyes of residents, and instead focused on the differentiated views that backpacking itself elicited. In this regard, we note that views about backpackers were varied and often strongly held, as can be seen in the excerpts from interview transcripts entered in the boxes below. These views were expressed by a diverse range of stakeholder groups, in online surveys, focus groups and interviews. The selection is included here (without sourcing to their respective speaking positions) to provide a *flavour* of the attention devoted to community opinion, and its regional variation, in other sections of the report. The summary quotations here are organized according to their correspondence with the description of backpacker tourism as either an ‘asset’ or a ‘liability’ for Sydney.

1.11.1. ‘Backpacker tourism as an asset’

‘I don’t think many backpackers leave here with a wallet full of dollars. I think they leave it in Australia, and then they go on their next adventure ...’

‘Culturally, it’s great to have the diversity. Manly is now, for the younger people, who can meet

people from all around the world, it's fantastic. We used to go to Europe and mix with all those people. Now they're all coming here ...'

'I think that they're generally a good bunch of people ...'

'If you go to most cafes, they're staffed by young travellers, aren't they? ...'

'The skill shortage, Australia has a huge skill shortage. Ageing population. Backpackers are the ideal population ...'

'At the moment it seems like backpackers are providing a short-term solution to possible longer-term skill shortages in some of the professional and service sectors, not just the restaurants and the bars and that but also, increasingly, in nursing and trades and things like that ...'

'I would argue that the occasional traveller, the backpacker, is part of the community. They operate in a different way within the community, but they are part of the community ...'

'I think culturally [backpacker tourism] adds to the colour of the place, all these people that our young people can meet. And get married to! ...'

'The reality is that we wouldn't have anyone serving in restaurants without them! ...'

'[Backpackers] keep Manly surviving through the winter season ... they keep the pubs going, the businesses going ...'

'They bring money into the area, they act as employees in the area. You walk up the street and you hear five different languages being spoken ... It makes the area feel interesting. So, it provides economic benefits and it provides an interesting atmosphere ...'

'They [backpackers] do the jobs that a lot of Australians aren't inclined to do. They'll be working on Anzac Day picking up glasses in a pub, whereas you try and find a local guy who'll do that and he says "No, it's my day off". So it's a very flexible pool of labour ...'

'There's your backpacker right there. They're the ones that go and pick fruit. There's your definition of a backpacker. Who picks fruit? Backpackers! Who washes dishes? Backpackers! ...'

'[Backpackers] are pretty highly skilled ... very well-educated, usually with a lot more languages than the average Australian has, which is great for the hospitality industry ...'

'Backpacking's all about ... you learn what to do, where to go, who to do it with ... It's lonely people

making friends, making networks (although they're not lonely) ...'

'Generally they're really nice people and they're good employees. I think they add a lot of vitality to an area ...'

'It [Backpacker tourism] is a market you want to have because it operates a whole lot of benefits, and the other benefit is that because of the length of stay, backpackers tend to actually spend more and put more into the economy than any other segment of the market ...'

1.11.2. *'Backpacker tourism as a liability'*

'I don't think there are any benefits! ... Well, none as far as I'm concerned. There's nothing ... and not for the community, because of the costs ...'

'The complaints [about backpackers relate to] the noise, the abuse of facilities, the abuse of residents, the additional costs of wear and tear and maintenance of the equipment and the facilities provided, the breaches of security, the fact that they're using fire exits, or letting all their mates in to use the facilities, so it's like 24 hours party time. These are the people on the lowest level of the food chain, that don't want to spend any money on accommodation. They want to be here as cheaply as possible, spend the rest of the money on food and drink and drugs and whatever else, and then invite hoards of people in to just have a good time, and it's all at the expense of the legitimate owners and long-term residents of the strata ...'

'From about October through to April – it becomes the party season, and the time when we have backpackers. And they're obvious because of a number of things. One, they just party on and off all day, night, whatever. They have no furniture, no belongings except a backpack with a few things in it. They all have an accent of some description, and they have no regard for the building at all. They come and go. They're here for a good time ...'

'Most of the increasing costs in the buildings that I manage can be attributed directly to an increase in overcrowding. Water usage, for example. Electricity. Wear and tear in general common areas. Lift maintenance. Moving in and out. Damage to common property. Rubbish left when these transient tenants leave. There are so many issues that require additional funding to run a building ... There's a noise factor. There's a visitor factor. These young backpackers tend to have many more parties in the buildings. That brings inherent problems. They bring their guests in. It's not one or two – it's usually six, or seven, or eight. Parties late at night ... additional security. I could

go on forever about the costs that are impacted as a result of this ...'

'These people obviously, they're between the age group of between, say, 18 – 20 up to 35. They're in holiday mode ... I'd say some of them don't respect the people that live there. Especially during the summer months, they're out on the balconies talking on their mobile phones to overseas, back to their friends overseas, or they're having parties which go to the early hours of the morning, and they're coming home in the early hours of the morning, talking loud because by that time they're all intoxicated. And these people, when they're in the intoxicated mode they usually have no respect for the property of the building. They're damaging the property, they're spraying – there was once an incident there where two guys got into a lift and they had beer, alcohol, and they sprayed the whole lift with alcohol. The whole lift was just dripping alcohol ... this is ongoing throughout the year ...'

'I think for the economy of Australia, yes. But from a building management point of view, [backpacker tourism] is certainly not benefiting ours in any way, shape or form. In many respects, apart from the obvious negatives, owners of buildings are being severely disadvantaged because it's the primary leaseholder that has the apartment that sublets to these people. That person is the one who's making the money. They're running it like a minibusiness. So, I mean, there's a real negative there ...'

'As a cultural phenomenon, these backpackers don't seem to bring an awful lot of positives to the community or the society, as I see it. I'm an employer, too, here in the city, and I would say that I regularly get applications from backpackers, transients, temporary students. Perhaps as many as six or seven or eight a day. Yes, that many. Most of which you can quickly reject ... I welcome any information that you may provide as far as their economic influence to the city or the country, but it doesn't seem to be as though they spend a lot of money in the areas where there's some benefit. But I guess why I'm here is because I'm burned off too about the way it affects me, as a property owner and a resident, and how it really disadvantages the building that I live in. It's as simple as that ...'

'The problem, as I see it, is not tourism per se, it's the industrialisation of tourism which is taking place ...'

'To me, "backpacker" just means purposelessness. I mean look at them. They just come out here and they're not actually doing anything. They buy a slab of VB, take it back to the hostel and get absolutely pissed. They're not doing anything. It's purposelessness, and I think it's caused by this two-year working holiday visa which is basically: you work for six months and then you get pissed

for eighteen months ...'

'They're trashing the place ...'

'Put them back on the plane! Back to England! ...'

'There are absolutely no benefits at all to the residents in Bondi. There are no serious benefits at all to the people who actually live in my area at Bondi. I can't think of one. It just brings strife and aggravation and it is not a benefit to Australia at all ...'

'What we experience is, for want of a better word, "Grog Tourism" ...'

'[A backpacker is an] inconsiderate hedonist ...'

'A selfish budget traveller out for a good time with no respect for residents ...'

'Partying youngsters, heavy drinkers and noisy residents ...'

'In Coogee - binge drinkers. Elsewhere - budget traveller ...'

'It's a pejorative term for independent travellers who behave badly (noisy etc) ...'

'Highly variable with many social irresponsibles ...'

'Of no real benefit to locals ...'

'Come for the cheap and easy booze ...'

'They come to drink - the ones in my building have not travelled ...'

'Scurges (sic) ...'

'Pain in the neck, noisy, inconsiderate to say the least ...'

'Low budget groupy travellers with little consideration for their host country ...'

1.12 A research gap

While government research on international backpacker travellers has concentrated on trends, visitor arrival data, distribution, length of stay, expenditure and thus the economic advantages of this market segment, it became evident from preliminary acquaintance with the Backpacker Taskforce established in New South Wales in 2001 that some, and possibly many, Sydney residents held negative perceptions of backpackers. Yet, at present, there is very little comprehensive research addressing the *forms* of social and cultural impact, and the transformation of cities, places and communities as a result of this market. This situation is changing slowly, and in recent years, research has begun to address this phenomenon in the Sydney residential context and elsewhere (eg. Allon 2004a; Allon 2004b; Allon, Anderson and Bushell 2008; Clarke 2004; Hannan and Ateljevic 2008; Peel and Steen 2007).

Much of the research conducted on the backpacker market in Australia by agencies such as Tourism Research Australia and Tourism NSW has been quantitative and has stressed the need for further, more in-depth and long-term studies (Buchanan and Rossetto 1997). Other studies have also noted the significant absence of research into the unique host/guest dynamics which occur when long-staying backpackers and independent travellers *live in* or *merge with* rather than merely *visit* residential communities. As tourism researchers Victoria Peel and Adam Steen have stated:

Not surprisingly, government policy which emphasises the economic advantage to Australia of the segment has likewise failed to address the diversity of backpacker impacts on the host communities with which they frequently reside for extended periods ... This research gap is significant given the notable behavioural characteristics of the segment which fosters close engagement with the host culture, in particular the clustering of backpackers in traveller centres at key urban and regional destinations, their tendency to become part of communities through either working and/or studying while travelling, and their extended length of stay (Peel and Steen 2007: 1057-1059).

The cultural dynamics and social significance of these travellers and this type of travel have largely been neglected. Furthermore, research on backpacking has tended to examine visits to peripheral and exotic destinations rather than to developed, urbanised cities such as Sydney.

This research project addressed this significant absence, with its principal aim being to increase our understanding of the backpacker phenomenon, especially within the wider context of globalisation and the changing role of cities and places within the tourist economy. It also had a particular

interest in the challenges to local governance as a result of global change played out at the local level in the culture of cities.

2. Project Aims

It is clearly recognised that the backpacker tourism market segment has wide-ranging economic benefits for a number of industries throughout Australia. One of the main agendas of this project, therefore, was that research contribute to an understanding of the changes these communities are experiencing, while ensuring that we are aware of the suitable infrastructure that is needed for this important tourist market. From our point of view as researchers, it seemed important that we understand the social and cultural transformations taking place in LGAs as a direct result of increasing numbers of tourists, and equip ourselves to respond appropriately in terms of policy at all levels of government. The study, in our view, will advance this collective task of understanding. The knowledge generated will be able to directly inform a range of tourism and planning policies.

The project's principal aim therefore was to significantly increase our understanding of the social and cultural impacts of the backpacker phenomenon. Focusing in particular on areas that attract large numbers of backpackers and budget travellers, its intention was to provide new and detailed knowledge about backpacker tourism in Sydney. The research sought to develop a comprehensive analysis of this relatively new form of urban 'residential tourism' and its effects on municipalities and residential communities. Specifically, the project aimed to develop a better understanding of the dynamics of contemporary backpacker tourism, in order to help Local government both clarify and meet the challenges associated with this particular tourist segment. The research also attempted to contribute to the development of appropriate social and strategic planning, enlarging and enriching the basis from which to develop more effective future planning and policy in these important areas of practical concern.

The project findings will also assist Local governments to develop a 'best practice' model of *managing* backpacker tourism in local communities. Additionally, the project aimed to consolidate better communication and information-sharing between the councils involved in the project; also between Local, State and Federal levels of government and between local councils, residents and tourism operators.

2.1 Summary of aims

In summary, the research had the following aims:

1. To investigate the changing tourism dynamics within six Local Government Areas in Sydney.
2. To identify key characteristics in backpacker tourism and support local councils in

the development of policy, planning, and in the regulatory work associated with backpacker tourism.

3. To investigate the challenges to local governance arising from competing and often conflicting obligations of both 'local' residential communities and 'global' agendas (especially, in this case, tourism).

3. Methodology

The research incorporated a mixed-method approach, including both qualitative and quantitative research techniques and methods. Research data was collected through a range of sources, including focus groups, interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Ethical compliance was secured (by the industry postdoctoral researcher on the team) through the UWS Ethics Committee, and before the field work commenced.

3.1 Focus groups

Focus groups with all major stakeholder groups were held in each LGA. The stakeholders included residents; resident precinct committees; backpackers; chamber of commerce and business representatives (including those from backpacker-related businesses); backpacker accommodation and hostel operators; council staff; councillors and mayors; NSW Government and tourism industry representatives. The backpacker focus groups usually contained between 5-10 participants.

Table 1: Focus groups completed to end of March 2008, by area and stakeholder					
	Focus Group Residents	Focus Group Backpackers	Focus Group Business	Focus Group Local Government	Focus Group Other
City of Sydney	3	3	1		1
Manly	1	1	1	1 (re: sexual health)	
North Sydney	1				
Randwick	1	2	1		
Waverley	2	4	1		
Woollahra					
Mixed			1 (backpacker operators)	2 (council staff & councillors)	3

3.2 In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with residents, backpackers, council staff and with key

backpacker service providers.

Participants for the backpacker interviews and focus groups were recruited using a number of techniques. A questionnaire survey was distributed to backpacker hostels in the LGAs of the study. This survey also invited backpackers to participate in individual, in-depth interviews and/or focus groups. Notices about the project were placed on the councils' websites and in council newsletters, local newspapers, backpacker industry publications, and in community newspapers such as *The Irish Echo*. Individual, in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 20 backpackers. Introduction to backpackers was also made through hostels, church groups, cafes and pubs, and at recreational areas such as parks and beaches. Regarding interviews with residents, these became especially helpful in Woollahra where it was not possible to coordinate a resident focus group. Other interviews were arranged to fill gaps in the representation of stakeholders across the issue.

Table 2: Interviews completed by to end of March 2008, area and stakeholder					
	Interview Residents	Interview Backpackers	Interview Business	Interview Local Government	Interview Other
City of Sydney	1	6			
Manly		3		2 (council staff)	
North Sydney					
Randwick	4	3			1 (hotel manager)
Waverley	1	6		4 (council staff)	1 (priest)
Woollahra	3				
Mixed		2			4 (Tourism NSW)

3.3 Online surveys

Online surveys were conducted for both residents and backpackers. Hard copies of this survey were distributed in each LGA, including to councils and backpacker hostels.

3.4 Forums

A yearly forum was held with partners and council staff, and variously included representatives from: Tourism Australia, Tourism NSW, Planning NSW, Work Australia, Local Government and Shires Association, and the NSW Fire Service.

3.5 Meetings

A number of meetings were held with council staff and with key stakeholder groups such as local police and precinct committees.



Figure 1: Map showing location of Local Government Areas (LGAs) included in this study in Sydney, Australia

4. Survey and Findings

4.1 Outline of survey method: administration and distribution

The survey research focused on two populations. One survey was administered to residents in the Sydney suburbs comprising the Local Government Areas (LGAs) targeted in the project (see Figure 1: Map, p.26). The second survey tapped the opinion of backpackers. Both were conducted and available online (www.uws.edu.au/ccr/backpacker) from December 2006 to March 2008, as well as available in hard copy for participants who preferred to send their responses to local council chambers, the Centre for Cultural Research, UWS, or in the case of backpackers using hostel accommodation, to their hostel's front desk (for collection). The surveys comprised a range of closed and multiple choice questions, as well as some attitudinal rating scales.

Regarding the Residents Survey (see Table A-1, p.99), of which 389 responses were received, the council partners on the project placed links to it on their websites for varying time periods. The councils also distributed notices about the survey or hard copies to the likes of precinct committees and other public information outlets such as libraries. The majority of Resident Surveys came to CCR online, with just a few coming directly by mail or via councils.

In the case of the Backpackers Survey (see Table A-2, p.104), very few of the 309 responses received were delivered online (despite assistance from Work Australia who promoted the research to WHMS travellers). It therefore became necessary to enlist the assistance of hostels with hard copies. But despite the apparent understanding of the importance of eliciting the viewpoints of backpackers, cooperation was very uneven. In all, seven hostels (from Kings Cross, Manly, Glebe and Bondi/Tamarama) returned completed surveys ranging from six to well over 100. Efforts to improve the response rate of travellers in Randwick were not successful. The information from the hardcopy surveys was transferred to the online version so that along with all the survey information from residents, the data could be tabulated by SurveyView – a commonly used electronic software and data collection system designed to collect and analyse data.

4.2 Survey objectives in overview

The survey data provided a snapshot of the opinions of residents living in select Sydney suburbs about the presence of backpackers in their local communities, and of backpacking in Sydney more generally. Backpackers were surveyed to learn more about their background and their experiences of backpacking in Sydney, including their reception by local communities. In what follows, the

findings for each survey are taken in turn. First, however, a note is included on the limitations of the survey method.

4.3 Limitations of the survey method

A familiar constraint of survey research is the widely observed limitation that the population of respondents tends to be comprised of those interested enough in the subject under investigation to take the time to participate (see, for example, Goyder 1987). In the case of this study, with regards to the residents, it is likely that mostly those who felt strongly about backpacker tourism were moved to complete the survey. However, as will become evident throughout this report, not only in the discussion of the survey but also of the focus groups with stakeholders in the next section, backpacker tourism arouses a mix of responses, both positive and negative. It follows that the survey instrument cannot, of itself, be discredited for the reason of biased uptake. There could, after all, be no predicting in advance whether resident opinion would be favourable or hostile (or shades in between, including indifference).

One quirk of the software package SurveyView also bears mentioning here. Online participants were restricted in the number of words they could use to express their views, whereas those using hard copies were not so constrained by the length of response. For the latter, the responses had to be manually summarised and entered.

With regards to the Backpackers Survey, the need to rely on hostels for respondents restricted the range of backpackers that were reached. This was unfortunate, since as noted earlier, many backpackers spend little or no time in hostels, preferring to use shared accommodation in apartments and suburban houses. The dependence of the survey on backpackers in hostels is also likely to have distorted the issue of length of stay in Sydney (as will be mentioned at the relevant question below). Equally, the dependence of the survey on English-language responses is likely to have discouraged non-English speaking travellers from responding. This is unfortunate given, as the report notes elsewhere, there is a case for diversifying the traveller source markets beyond the dominant UK and Irish origins of backpackers to Sydney, and the opinions of such diverse travellers regarding their Australian experience will be important to track.

Having laid out these limitations of the survey method, we note the value of the overall multi-method approach of the project taking in a range of data gathering techniques, not only the surveys but also focus groups and interviews.

4.4 THE RESIDENTS SURVEY

4.4.1. Demographic profile

There was significant variation in the return rate of surveys from the LGAs under investigation (see Figure A-1, p. 107. Also see Table A-1, p.99 for questionnaire). Of the 389 responses received from residents to our online survey, some 38 percent were from the LGA of Randwick. The second highest response rate came from people living in the areas of Waverley (18.5 percent of the total responses), with slightly less from the City of Sydney (17.8 percent), followed by nearly 12 percent from Manly, 8 percent from North Sydney and just over 1 percent from Woollahra. Approximately 4 percent came from beyond the municipal boundaries of the partner constituencies for this study.

Nearly 70 percent of the responses came from homeowners, approximately one third had lived in their areas for more than 15 years, the large majority (84 percent) did not own a business, and there was a slightly skewed gender profile to the respondents: 57 percent female and 43 percent male. (The most skewed gender distribution came from Randwick where 65 percent of respondents were female and 35 percent male.) Regarding age, the majority of respondents (54 percent) were over 41 years of age and as many as 88 percent were Australian citizens.

4.4.2. Resident opinion about neighbourhood change and backpacking

On a series of issues affecting suburbs, respondents were asked to assess the level of change they had observed during their time of residence. While 'environmental quality' and 'amenities & services' were said to have displayed significant decreases over time, notable increases were recorded regarding the likes of 'community diversity', 'cosmopolitan lifestyle', 'development' and, significantly here, 'unauthorised/illegal shared accommodation'. This latter change was deemed 'bad' by as many as 75 percent of all respondents, while other changes attracted much more mixed sentiments, notably 'cosmopolitan lifestyle', which was deemed 'good' for 53 percent and 'neutral' or 'bad' for 47 percent of the respondents.

The survey included a number of questions specifically on the backpacker phenomenon, that is, attitudes to backpackers and the issues which our preliminary research suggested were likely to surround them (eg. accommodation pressures). Respondents were asked to rate a number of potential 'benefits' and 'problems' commonly identified with backpackers (see Figures A-2, p.107; A-3, p.108). Opinion, overall, was decidedly split. So while backpackers were viewed favourably for 'adding character' (selected by 25 percent of respondents), 'renting local accommodation' (16 percent) and in particular 'contributing to the local economy' (50 percent), there was also a high proportion of respondents (40 percent) who saw 'no benefits' from backpacker tourism (see next section for a regional disaggregation of opinion by LGA).

There were high responses on a number of the issues designated in the survey questionnaire from which respondents could select (one or more). 'Noise' was reported overwhelmingly as the most onerous issue (by some 75 percent of respondents) with the other challenges associated with backpackers – 'anti-social behaviour', 'unauthorised accommodation', 'rubbish dumping', 'abandoned cars' and 'loss of low cost housing' - figuring very significantly too.

Residents did not always take action in response to their problems with backpackers. While a significant proportion did call the police, form a resident action group, contact their local Member of Parliament, or lodge a formal complaint with council, some 35 percent of respondents did not act on their concerns. In terms of outcomes of complaints, the responses in relation to council-directed complaints are difficult to interpret, with a high proportion selecting 'not applicable' though a significant minority (20 percent) reporting the problem was followed up on with 'no result'. For just 2 percent of respondents, the problem was 'solved immediately'.

With regard to suggestions for improving council response, respondents could select among a range of options. Nearly 50 percent of respondents hoped for 'better communication' between council and residents, over 45 percent supported the appointment of a 'designated backpacker/tourist officer', a significant proportion recognised the need for 'more council resources' and 25 percent wanted council to 'organise community forums'. Other questions attempted to elicit residents' ideas for improving backpacker concerns, together with proposals for backpacker hostel operators. Regarding the former, a significant proportion (nearly 40 percent) thought that council powers should be increased to manage the problems; regarding the latter, the proposal of having a manager on site 24 hours/day was supported by over 80 percent of respondents and of prohibiting noise after 10pm by nearly 70 percent.

Finally, here, respondents were invited to provide their judgement as to whether backpacker tourism in Sydney was an asset or a liability. Given the intriguing mix of resident responses to the 'benefits'/'problems' couplet noted earlier, it is possible that in hindsight the survey might have posed this question less in *either/or* terms and instead, or in addition, with a *both* option. This would have captured instances of *ambivalence* within individual responses. Regardless, the study can report the important finding that resident opinion on backpacker tourism in Sydney is indeed divided (see Figure 2, below). A majority of respondents – though not an overwhelmingly convincing one, at 47.2 percent – reported that backpacker tourism is an 'asset' to Sydney. Another 35 percent deemed it a 'liability', with 7 percent reporting 'no opinion' and 11 percent stating 'other'.

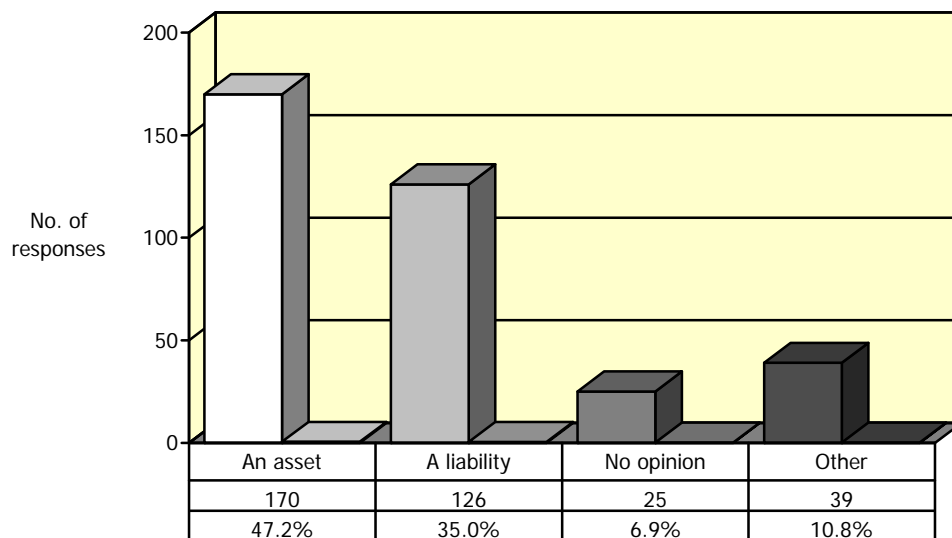


Figure 2: Resident opinion of backpacker tourism in Sydney

In view of the passionately negative responses of some residents expressed in focus groups (see Section 5.5), it bears underlining here that **in general terms, backpacker tourism is perceived favourably by a slight majority of Sydney-siders according to the survey research in this project.**

This result does itself repay closer scrutiny of the *scale* of analysis, however. Mindful of an aim of the project to undertake a *regional* study of backpacker tourism in Sydney, the following section describes the uneven distribution of opinion about backpacker tourism across the LGAs under consideration.

4.4.3. Resident responses by Local Government Area

The spatial variation in returns of the 389 Resident Surveys was noted earlier, from a high 139 responses in Randwick to a statistically invalid number of 4 from Woollahra (see Figure A-1, p.107). Given the very low return rate from Woollahra (just 1.1 percent of the total responses), it is not possible to include a discussion here of that area's relative profile of opinion.

Among the most significant finding to emerge from the Residents Survey was the high degree of variability of opinion across the LGAs under study. With regard to the perceived 'benefits' associated with backpackers, resident opinion was invited on a number of specified 'benefits' (and allowing respondents to choose more than one option, though also including 'none'). Manly and the City of Sydney had consistently positive responses (particularly in relation to the claim for a 'contribution to

the local economy'). The response from Waverley to the question of 'benefits' was also interesting in being so divided – with as many as 47 percent of its resident respondents claiming a 'contribution to local economy' (and 23 percent a boost to 'character') while 42 percent saw 'no benefit' at all (see Figures 3 and 4, below).

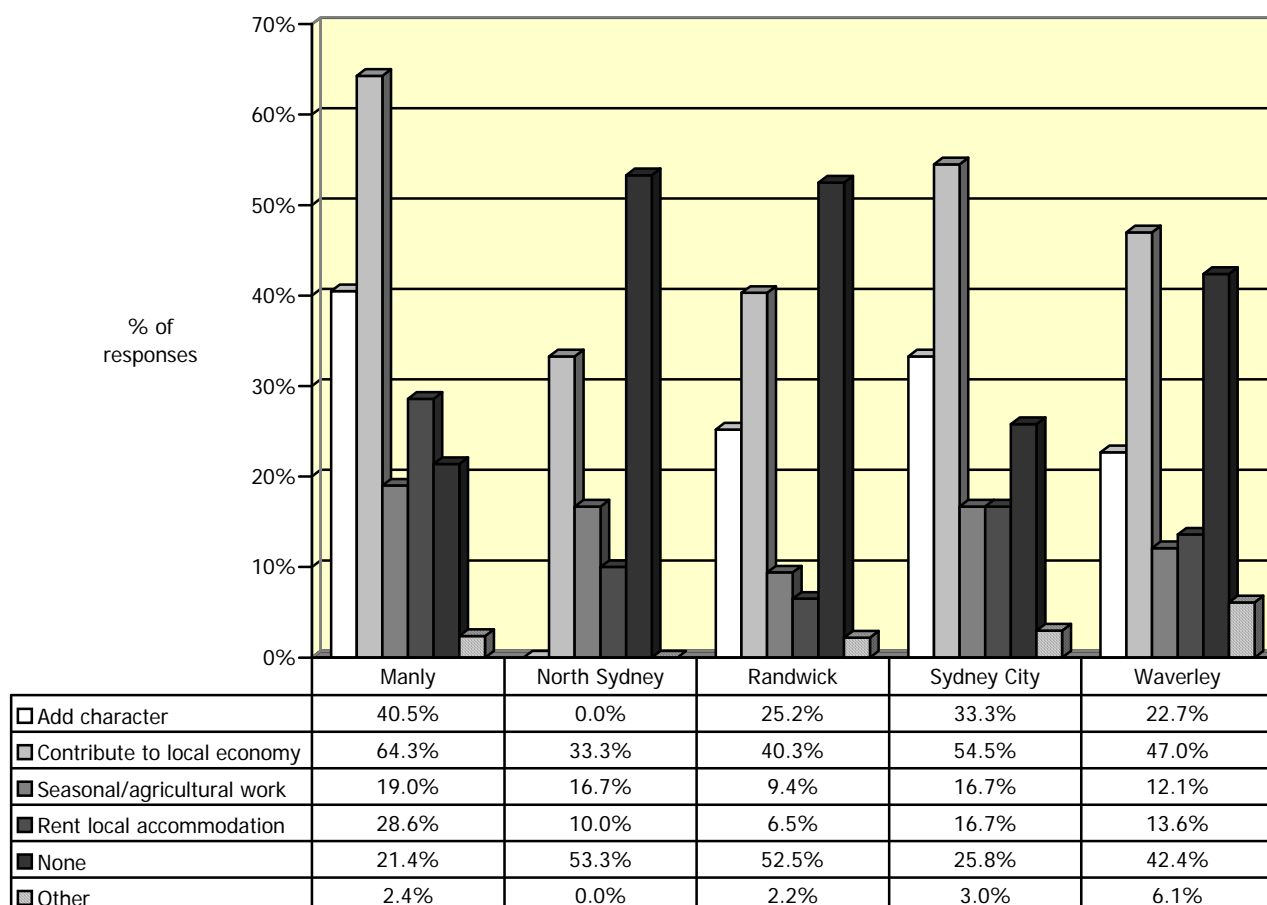


Figure 3: Resident opinion of 'benefits' associated with backpackers, by LGA

A (slight) majority of respondents from Randwick and North Sydney expressed the opinion there were 'no benefits' to backpacker tourism. For these LGAs, this constituted 52.5 percent and 53.3 percent (respectively) of responses. Of the remaining respondents from these LGAs (those who believed there were *some* benefits associated with backpacker tourism), those from North Sydney were the least likely (of all constituencies) to believe that backpackers 'add character' or 'contribute to the local economy'. Those from Randwick were the least likely of all respondents (across all constituencies) to believe that 'occupancy of local accommodation' or the role of backpackers in undertaking 'seasonal/agricultural work' could be said to be 'benefits'.

As noted in the previous section, respondents were invited to register their opinion about a number of specified 'problems' (including the option of none). Also as noted earlier, noise was considered to

be a problem for an overwhelming majority of respondents across all LGAs. The spatial variability to the responses is significant however (see Figure 4, below). The highest recorded response to 'noise' was from Waverley (where it was selected as a problem by as many as 83 percent of respondents), and there were even higher returns for Waverley on other factors. Some 88 percent of its residents also selected 'anti-social behaviour', and 89 percent, the 'rubbish dumping' option. Waverley residents also recorded the highest percentage (58 percent) of selections across all LGAs for the backpacker-related concern of 'abandoned cars'. Indeed, overall, Waverley respondents demonstrated the highest negative response across all categories. Randwick responses were also substantially negative across all categories, while for North Sydney the outcome is further differentiated, with negativity for most categories but less apparent concern for 'loss of low income housing'.

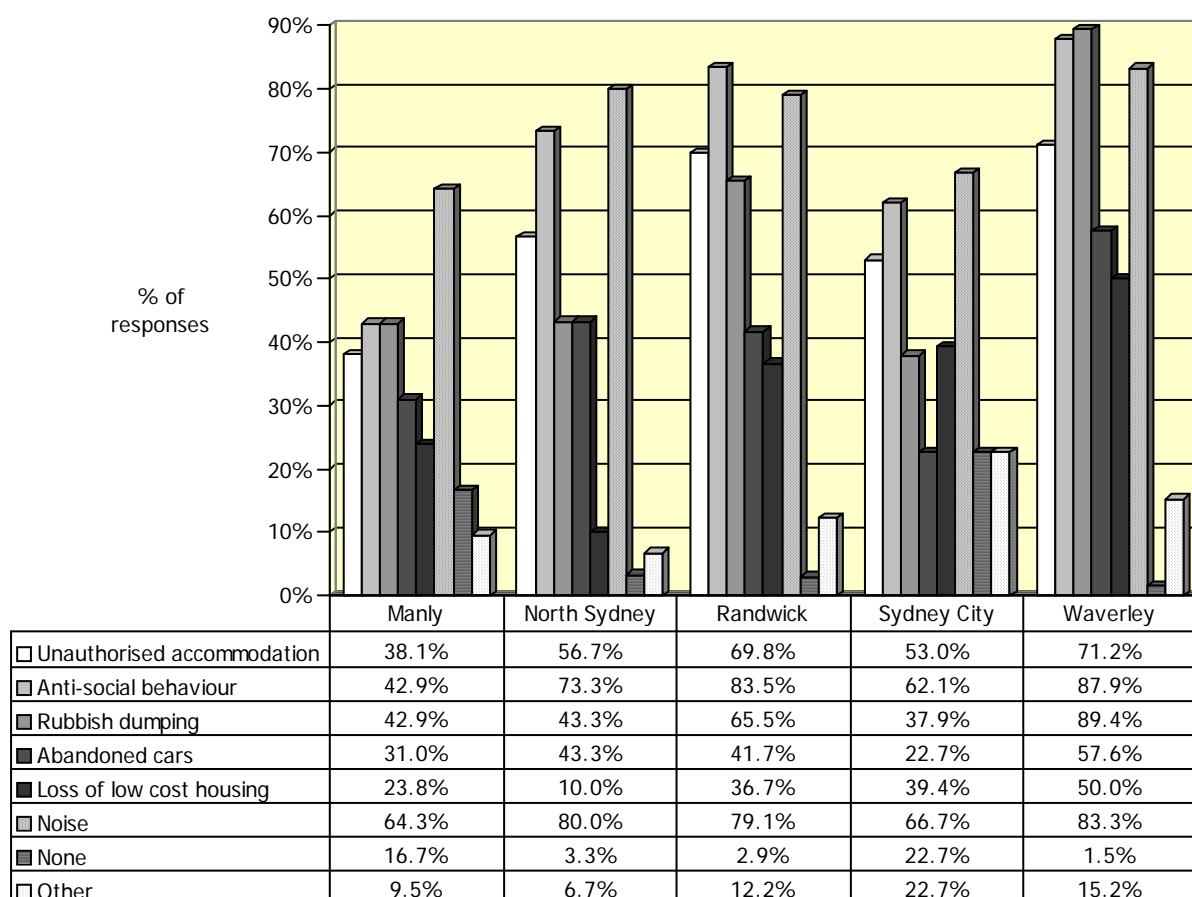


Figure 4: Resident opinion of 'problems' associated with backpackers, by LGA

The issue of 'anti-social behaviour' generated the interesting finding that for all LGAs – *except Manly* – a majority (more than 50 percent) of local respondents selected it as a problem associated with backpackers. Manly residents, along with those from Sydney City, were also less likely than the

other LGAs to select unauthorised accommodation, rubbish dumping, abandoned cars, noise and low income housing as problems associated with backpackers (see Figure 4, above). So while it is the case that the coastal areas of Waverley and Randwick were the most reluctant about backpacking of the areas studied, this cannot be attributed solely to the exposure their coastal location affords to the renowned backpacking lifestyle culture. After all, Manly, also coastal, returned the most positive responses. This points to differences between locations in community attitudes, connections, demographics and thresholds of tolerance. Perhaps those communities that are more tolerant are respected more in return? The Backpackers Survey responses (see below) indicated that in Manly, backpackers were more conscious of resident opinion than in Waverley or Randwick, despite the significantly higher level of resident antagonism in the latter two areas.

A regionally differentiated story is also told in the returns on preferred methods of response to the problems associated with backpackers (see Figure A-4, p.108). While Waverley respondents were the most likely to act on the problems across most categories (confronting backpackers personally, calling the police, contacting the local MP, and/or lodging a complaint with council), Manly residents were the least likely to form a resident action group, contact the local MP, or lodge a complaint with council. Manly residents were also among those least likely to call police. North Sydney residents were the most likely to form a resident action group, and, with Waverley, to lodge a complaint with council, and the least likely (by far) of the LGAs to opt for confronting backpackers personally.

For those who lodged a complaint with council, very few respondents from the LGAs stated the problem was 'solved immediately'. And across all LGAs – except Waverley – respondents were significantly more dissatisfied with council response than they were satisfied with it (see Figure A-5, p.109). There was strong dissatisfaction in particular from Randwick respondents. However, it should be re-stated here that the very large number of N/A responses to the question of 'satisfaction with council response', render the findings on this question tentative. Moreover, as will be noted later in the report, some residents recognised that council's 'hands were tied too'.

4.5 THE BACKPACKERS SURVEY

Over 300 responses from travellers were received to our online survey. As stated previously, our aim in soliciting traveller opinion was to acquire information about the nature, experience and impressions of backpacking in Sydney (see Table A-2, p.104 for questionnaire).

4.5.1. Demographic profile

The travellers who responded to our survey were predominantly 'youthful', with over 50 percent in the age range of 18-23 and a further 36 percent in the 24-29 age bracket. Only 2 percent were over 40 (see Figure A-6, p.109), somewhat at odds with the emerging trend of 'grey nomadism' noted earlier in the report. Male travellers made up 60 percent of the responses and the remaining 40 percent were female (see Figure A-7, p.109) – a proportion that again departs from the growing trend for female travellers to outnumber males in the youth travel market (see Richards 2007: 5; Wilson and Little 2008). As many as 47 percent of respondents were travelling alone, 40 percent were accompanied by friends, and 12 percent were travelling with a partner.

Respondents were asked about the duration of their stay in Australia and the nature of the travel visa that brought them to the country. As many as 61 percent had been (or planned to be) based in Australia for more than 6 months, of which the majority had been (or planned to be) based in the country for more than a year. An overwhelming majority were travelling on a working holiday visa (67 percent), as opposed to 17 percent on a holiday visa. Confirming the more anecdotal evidence from focus groups that backpackers spend extended periods of time in Sydney to raise funds for their travels throughout Australia, the survey revealed that 51 percent of respondents had spent longer than 2 months in the city (at the time of the survey). Turnover appears to be fast however, in that (of that population) only 15 percent had been in Sydney for longer than 6 months.

The respondents selected a wide range of categorisations to describe their own traveller type (see Figure A-8, p.110). Despite the predominance of working holiday visa holders among them (see above), only 30 percent (less than half) selected this classification. The next most popular self-designation was 'backpacker' for 29 percent of respondents, 18 percent preferred 'independent traveller' and the remaining respondents chose 'budget traveller', 'student traveller' or 'tourist'. Correlating these findings regarding the mode of self-definition with other characteristics (above), it transpires that those respondents visiting on a 6 or 12 month holiday visa most frequently referred to themselves as 'backpackers' rather than any other term. Older respondents (between 30-35 years) were the most likely of all age groups to refer to themselves as an 'independent traveller' and significantly less likely to consider themselves 'backpackers' (18 percent compared with 29 percent of all respondents).

The picture is complicated however, since as many as 30 percent of those over 36 years opted for the 'backpacker' label. The youngest respondents were the most likely across the age categories to refer to themselves as 'backpackers', though once again there is no convincing age factor at work given that as many as 33 percent of the youngest travellers preferred to call themselves 'working

holiday makers'. The *im*precision of the category of 'backpacker' is again underlined by the complexity of this survey's portrait of traveller self-definition.

4.5.2. Backpacker opinion about their Sydney experience

Waverley and the City of Sydney were the LGAs in which the majority of surveyed backpackers spent most of their time while visiting Sydney. As many as 48 percent reported Waverley and 42 percent reported Sydney City as the primary area of choice for their stay. Manly, Randwick, North Sydney and Woollahra were selected by significantly less travellers (see Figure A-9, p.110), suggesting that opinion (reviewed below) was based on a relatively narrow spatial field of experience and observation.

Overwhelmingly, and perhaps surprisingly given the stream of negative commentary in Sydney media outlets on the condition of the city's infrastructure (eg. Besser 2008; Creagh and Besser 2008), backpackers claimed that Sydney has a 'good' tourist infrastructure with regards to transportation, information, accommodation and services.

The positive opinion of backpackers is further reflected in their sense of their own regard by the wider Sydney community. The overwhelming majority (nearly 90 percent) of backpackers reported they had 'no experience' of conflict (in relation to residents, accommodation or councils) in Sydney. Only 17 percent felt backpackers were perceived negatively, with 43 percent believing the travellers to be positively evaluated and a further 38 percent claiming the community was 'indifferent' to them (see Figure A-10, p.111). This can be compared to the more passionate (negative *and* positive) resident opinions reviewed above, of which only 7 percent recorded 'no opinion' about backpackers. It is also interesting to compare the proportion of travellers – just 17 percent – who predicted negative views by the community, given that we noted in the previous section that as many as 35 percent of residents considered backpacker tourism to be a 'liability'.

It appears from this survey, then, that backpackers possess a degree of oblivion about their community impact and regard. This is least apparent, intriguingly, in the case of travellers who spent most of their time in Manly (see Question 15 in Table A-2, p.104 and Figure 5, below). Backpackers there predicted slightly more negative views from residents than the overall group of respondents – a somewhat surprising result given, as noted earlier, Manly residents were *more* likely than the other LGAs to view backpacker tourism as an 'asset'. Conversely, travellers who spent most of their time in Waverley significantly underestimated the level of negativity from residents (with only 11 percent of respondent backpackers anticipating negative resident opinion there). Regardless, the overwhelming majority (nearly 90 percent) of backpackers reported they had no experiences of 'problems or

conflicts' in the area in which they spent most of their time in Sydney (see Question 20 in Table A-2, p. 104).

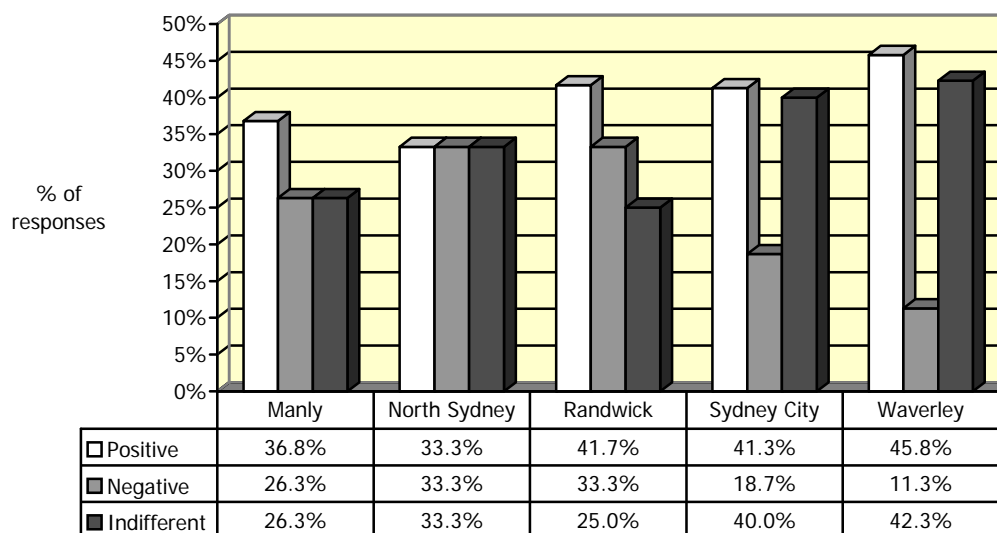


Figure 5: Backpacker perceptions of local residents' views of backpackers, by LGA most frequented

Backpackers were asked to specify their type of accommodation at the time of answering the survey. The large majority (79 percent) were staying in a 'backpacker hostel' (though note above under 'survey limitations', the possibly distorting profile that emerges in this discussion given the dominant return rate was from hostels – especially in Kings Cross, Glebe, Manly and Bondi). Just 10 percent were using 'shared accommodation' and only 3 percent 'serviced apartment' (see Figure A-11, p.111). The hostel stay is testimony to the rapid turnover of this particular element of the Sydney backpacker population, whereas we know from the concerns of residents in focus groups (see later) that backpackers are also opting for residential housing stock and the longer stay experience (of everyday suburban life). There was a relatively even spread of time periods selected for the duration of accommodation stay, with the most popular being a period of 2-6 months for 28 percent of respondents and a period of 1-2 weeks for 19 percent of respondents.

Regarding sources of information that backpackers tapped in their accommodation decision-making, 'word of mouth' was the most common selection, confirming the finding (mentioned earlier) of studies on 'tourist bubbles', that meeting fellow travellers is seen as an opportunity to acquire useful travel tips (eg. Wilson and Richards 2008). Word of mouth was followed closely by 'use of the internet'.

Backpackers in the survey research hailed overwhelmingly from the United Kingdom and Ireland (see Question 23 in Table A-2, p.104). As many as a third came from the UK and 15 percent from

Ireland, with other continental European destinations figuring to a degree, along with North America, Australia, and New Zealand. A tiny minority travelled from Japan and China. This is testimony to the conventionally 'western' orientation of backpacking cultures and youth nomadism – a characteristic that, it has been observed, has recently been disrupted by emergent backpacking flows from non-Western countries, especially East and Southeast Asia as well as Latin America (Cohen 2003: 107).

The dominantly youthful, male, UK and Irish character of the backpacker flows revealed in the survey section of the research, suggests there is scope for targeting a diversity of traveller markets to Sydney and Australia. There may also be a case for marketing a more differentiated tourist representation of the city beyond the standard sand, sea, surf lifestyle typically aligned with 'sentient Sydney'.

5. Discussion of Interviews and Focus Groups

5.1 DESTINATION SYDNEY

5.1.1. Sydney as a tourist destination

In 2006 over 2.6 million international visitors spent time in the Sydney metropolitan area, injecting substantial sums into Sydney's economy. The City of Sydney has 60 percent of all hotel rooms in the Sydney Tourism Region. In 2006 an estimated total of 5.6 million room nights was recorded. This represented an increase of 165,000, or 3 percent, since 2005 (see City of Sydney profile, p.86).

More than half of all international visitors to Australia visit Sydney. A significant number of these visitors are young travellers and backpackers. By far the majority (75.5 percent) of backpacker respondents who completed our online survey stated that Sydney was their first point of arrival. This confirms Sydney's well known position as a 'gateway' city among young travellers who prefer to visit it first before continuing on their planned itinerary. Other studies have also confirmed the popularity of Sydney for backpackers (see, for example, Giesbers 2002 which reported that almost 90 percent of respondents had visited Sydney and over 80 percent had visited Melbourne, while less than one third had been to Perth).

5.1.2. Sydney as a 'global city'

Sydney is increasingly referred to as a 'global' or 'world' city. 'Sydney 2030', the council of the City of Sydney's recent urban renewal strategy, repeats this claim. For the city's Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, 'Sydney 2030' will create 'a city that is dynamic, responsible, exciting, gritty and inclusive.' In fact, 'Green, Global and Connected' has become the catchphrase adopted by the City of Sydney to promote this image. The aim of the Sydney 2030 strategy is to create 'A city that is a cultural hot-spot, edgy and gritty' (City of Sydney '2030').

Tourism is an integral feature of the city's stated aim to be a serious contender for the status of 'global' city. Tourism NSW, the key arm of industry for tourism to the state, anticipates that visitation numbers will increase as Sydney consolidates its reputation as a global city and desirable tourist destination. For the state as a whole, there is an expectation that tourism will grow by a million visitor nights every year for the next ten years. In the context of Sydney's intensifying aspiration for global city status, the Research Manager at the City of Sydney Council stated in interview that backpackers need to be recognised not only as consumers of services, but as

'suppliers of labour for a whole stack of activities that are needed in the City for its global status' (Phillip Raskall, City of Sydney).

However, the social and cultural consequences resulting from the imperative to fashion Sydney into a 'global city' are not necessarily seen as unequivocally positive. When interviewees were asked what the term 'global Sydney' conveys and represents to them, the answers were highly varied, ranging from positive to negative. Although many thought that the term was an empty catchphrase used for branding and advertising purposes, other interviewees associated the term with the cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity resulting from immigration and tourism. As one Woollahra resident explained: 'I think it means basically - "global Sydney" means, I think it's people coming to Australia. I've got that in my head' (Woollahra resident, member of resident action group).

Attitudes towards increasing numbers of visitors coming to Australia were similarly mixed. Some interviewees felt that the travel and immigration associated with globalisation would result in a more vibrant, cosmopolitan and 'worldly' city. Not all Sydney residents, however, were so embracing of the image of Sydney as a 'global city'. This was summed up quite pointedly by one Randwick resident who had experienced less than positive encounters with tourist visitors, primarily backpackers, in her community, and who asked, 'Global Sydney! What about local Sydney?!' (Coogee resident, member of precinct committee).

5.1.3. The branding of Sydney

The marketing of places using specific images and representations is an integral part of tourism (Donald and Gammack 2007). Such 'place marketing' not only defines and constructs places in particular terms, ascribing to them a unique place identity, but also shapes the expectations that travellers bring to the places they visit. The sensory qualities of 'sun and surf' and a relaxed leisure-based lifestyle have long been used to promote Australia, as noted in the previous section of the report.

Such place marketing campaigns involve the 'active participation by the state' in the making and re-making of places as tourist objects and as sites of tourism consumption (Urry 1995: 192). The marketing and promotion of certain images about places therefore has enormous implications for the built environment. Cultural meanings coalesce around and become attached to places. These can then structure and reinforce the kinds of attitudes and expectations visitors bring to those sites. Places can also become invested with new meanings to encourage new place identities. These may be in direct conflict with the meanings shared by the local community.

Tourism agencies at both Commonwealth and State levels have used various marketing campaigns to 'brand' places across Australia. While generating international visitor interest in a host of places is the ultimate aim of such strategies, one of the less fortunate consequences is that place 'itself becomes a commodity to be bought and sold not only to corporate interests but also to individual consumers' (Meethan 1996: 323).

As the most important 'gateway city' for Australian tourism, Sydney has featured prominently in these campaigns. The promotion of tourism for Sydney has become one part of a much broader, concerted effort pursued by the NSW Government, the City of Sydney Council and commercial interests to consolidate Sydney's status as a financial, cultural and leisure city of global significance. Injecting billions annually into Sydney's economy (in the year ended June 2008 \$11.3 billion according to Tourism Research Australia, 2008c), tourism certainly plays an increasingly important role in the city's economic wellbeing and growth (see City of Sydney profile, p.86).

Tourism has also been identified as a key component for Sydney's future development in the region. Over half of all international tourists to Australia visit Sydney. Cultural attractions that have iconic status — the Harbour, the Harbour Bridge, the Opera House, Bondi Beach — continue to play a major role in the international promotion of Sydney. However, the tourism marketing of Sydney was a theme that consistently emerged in interviews and focus groups. A number of residents raised objections to the kinds of images chosen to represent Sydney, and expressed concerns about the association between certain representations and visitor behaviour. These residents, as noted earlier, believed that an emphasis on beach culture led directly to some of the irresponsible visitor behaviour that they had encountered:

I think you only have to look at the difference between the ads for Melbourne and the ads for Sydney, for tourism, and you can see what they're trying to achieve ... they make Melbourne look really attractive and lovely. Sophisticated. Whereas Bondi ... it's a totally different idea for tourists, and they are saying to them "Come here, party, be loud, take your clothes off ... get drunk, have as much sex as you like, get sunburnt" ... (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

This resident is referring to the branding of place, and the kinds of place identities that emerge as a result. Marketing 'landscapes of pleasure' in the way the resident describes can have real and serious consequences for local communities. The criticism that the resident makes, however, is a longstanding one. Government tourism and marketing campaigns have been extensively criticised in the past for showing a narrow range of images that have focused almost exclusively on the Harbour and beach culture (Murphy and Watson 1997; Sant and Waitt 2000).

In a number of recent domestic campaigns Tourism NSW has tried to move away from a focus on iconic landmarks and features towards the promotion of cultural precincts as alternative tourist destinations. Creating new images of places, and a diversity of tourism experiences, is necessary to avoid stereotypes the resident describes above, stereotypes that may influence visitor behaviour. An emphasis on the more diverse cultural landscapes, experiences and districts of Sydney would in turn enable the development of a more diverse range of tourist experiences with less negative impacts on amenity.

5.1.4. Mixed messages

The theme of 'mixed messages' in regards to tourism promotion and marketing arose during interviews with residents as well as with council staff. Residents expressed concern that the messages that councils were trying to promote around appropriate visitor behaviour were sometimes contradicted by, or in conflict with, State and Federal tourism campaigns. As one Waverley resident put it:

Waverley Council tried really hard last year, and the year before, about this backpackers Christmas Day thing and all that, saying "You're not going to be able to get drunk on Christmas Day on the beach and carry on like a lout." So it's interesting that NSW and Australian Tourism is saying one thing, and poor Bondi and Waverley are trying to say, "It's not like that, guys, because we can't handle it'." So we're getting mixed messages (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

This complaint about 'mixed messages' also arose in discussions with council staff. A number of council officers commented that a key problem that they've encountered is that the State government (Tourism NSW) and the Commonwealth government (Tourism Australia) appear to not work closely or collaboratively on promoting, educating and managing tourist destinations. A perceived lack of coordination and communication between tiers of government was an issue that arose in discussions on several occasions. However, the specific theme of 'mixed messages' in relation to promotion, marketing and education campaigns emerged as a highly significant concern. Council officers reported that Tourism Australia designed and disseminated campaigns about destinations without consulting the Local government, and without obtaining local knowledge and information.

From these discussions, the lack of effective communication and coordination between tiers of government was an issue that had a range of repercussions. Along with 'mixed messages', council

officers identified that the lack of communication resulted in an unnecessary and wasteful duplication of material, especially in relation to drug, alcohol and safe sex messages. The absence of regular communication and designated 'contact points' or representatives also meant that it was difficult to build and maintain relationships within organisations.

5.2 MORE THAN JUST TOURISTS

Further testimony to the contradictory 'figure' of the backpacker to Sydney is the split opinion regarding economic contribution. In focus groups and interviews a number of employers praised the enthusiasm and work ethic of working backpackers. One restaurant owner claimed:

We don't employ anybody who's not a backpacker ... Every one of them is a backpacker. One of them, the Chef, is in the process of getting permanent residency. He's an Israeli and he's marrying an Israeli girl ... Paolo has been with us for twelve months, initially on the three months [working holiday visa], and then on the six months ... We're sponsoring him, so hopefully something will happen there (Waverley café owner/member of Waverley Chamber of Commerce).

Employers also mentioned the 'international flavour' that backpackers bring to their businesses, especially in the service sector: 'People like that sort of thing when they come into a café. They love somebody who speaks a foreign language, who uses the French term for the coffee ... it's part of the international flavour that backpackers bring to a place' (Waverley small business owner/member of Waverley Chamber of Commerce).

Employing backpackers entails onerous paperwork. However, employers value WHMS travellers as workers because they are often highly skilled:

They're also pretty highly skilled. We're talking about countries — England, France, Germany — you're talking about very well-educated [people], usually with a lot more language than the average Australian has, which is great for the hospitality industry (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

But backpacker and working holiday makers are also valued because, quite simply, they make themselves available. They are willing to do a range of kinds of work, including very hard and menial tasks, like seasonal fruit picking in regional areas:

Can I just say one more point about the labour force? I'm also in the food industry, and

there's this opportunity for backpackers where if they do three months' work in fruit, they also get an extra year's visa, and it's a vital part of the labour force. There's a lot of jobs out there that other people, Australians, aren't willing to do ... so I mean, if it wasn't for backpackers, Mildura wouldn't have their oranges picked, and this sort of thing (Tourism operator, member of Randwick area Chamber of Commerce).

In the context of high property prices and housing affordability problems in Sydney, key service providers such as teachers, cleaners and nurses are often in short supply in a number of Local Government Areas. Backpackers and working holiday makers often fill this shortfall.

For many social and community planners working within Local government this means that backpackers must be recognised not only as the *suppliers* of labour and services but also as the *users* and *consumers* of local activities and amenities. As a Social and Community Planner at Waverley Council stated: 'tourists such as backpackers are part of the local community and they're part of the local fabric, and especially so if they're staying for six months or a year and, consequently, this requires a recognition of the services and amenities they require' (Social and Community Planner, Waverley Council).

Moreover, for Waverley Council, backpackers provide a 'local pool of potential employees' for essential local services such as child-care and health-care that are currently suffering from serious staff shortages, and therefore should not only be seen as *impacting* on local amenities and services, or as a *cost* to communities, but also as resources for their viability and continuation.

A large number of residents in the area also cite the contributions backpackers are making to local and national economies. As one Waverley resident explained, backpackers are '*a significant part of the economy*':

I'm aware how much they are involved in work in the community. This community has changed. The workers, in the main, are living out in the western suburbs ... but there are also a significant number of backpackers ... they're a significant part of the economy. They're a significant part of keeping the airlines working ... So I'm very conscious of the terrible burden they're putting on to some people ... but they are bringing in important skills. The nurses at St. Vincent's are mainly Irish nurses, so there are a lot of very worthwhile contributions from them, but there are some hellish conditions at the same time and how do we beat them? (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

One group of young male Irish travellers who were interviewed in a focus group displayed a very

savvy understanding of the way in which backpackers and working holiday makers are an essential component of the labour force now needed for many public and private businesses in Australia, functioning in effect as a *de facto* labour programme:

We're on a working holiday visa ... "Bringing our Skills to Australia!" ... labouring, doing construction work ... There's a lot of Irish contractors here. Phone them up, ask them. See what happens. It's just word of mouth, really ... Agencies are big, as well. Word of mouth is the best way, though (Male, Irish, Coogee, mid 20s, working holiday visa).

The temporary work sector, for example, is expanding in both Australia and Ireland especially in relation to specific industries and occupations such as nursing, teaching, IT programming and the construction industry (see Burgess et al 2004). In fact, many of the Irish backpackers who participated in our research project made a smooth transition from non-standard employment arrangements in Ireland to temporary, seasonal work in Australia, and reported that they found work in Sydney very easily. Casual work was often found through temporary employment agencies geared specifically for Irish working holiday makers and through word of mouth in the local community.

5.2.1. Beyond the backpack

A 2001 study estimated that each WHMS visitor spent over \$16,314 in Australia, generating over \$1.3 billion annually. This study also found that the scheme had a positive impact on stimulating employment (Harding and Webster 2001). However, other studies have highlighted the risks of exploitation of WHMs, the adverse labour impacts, and have argued that the overall economic benefits of the scheme are less than previously estimated (Kinnaird 1999). The exploitation of WHMs is a serious issue, and its prevalence has been confirmed by this research.

The current seasonal workforce in Australia consists mainly of backpackers, early retired 'grey nomads' and students (including overseas students). It is supported through government funded programmes including the Working Holiday Maker Programme and the National Harvest Trail.

Backpackers/working holiday makers comprise a large proportion of the seasonal pool of legal workers available to growers. Seasonal work is often described by backpackers as 'hot, hard and dirty'. It is obviously unattractive to most Australian citizens and residents, under existing conditions and pay rates. The work is often in remote locations, with poor accommodation. Workers are for the most part employed on piece rates, on a short-term casual basis.

The backpackers who were interviewed for our research described fruit picking, in particular, as physically demanding work requiring long hours exposed to the elements. As the Senate Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education conducting an Inquiry into harvest labour also noted, there is no escaping the fact that harvesting crops – picking fruit, pruning trees, working in a packing shed – is gruelling work. The harsh conditions and occupational risks associated with seasonal work undoubtedly contribute to the unreliable nature of seasonal work, and the unreliability of seasonal labour supply (Senate Standing Committee 2006).

Many industries and sectors are increasingly reliant on WHMS visas to make up labour shortfalls. The agricultural and horticultural industries are very dependent on the seasonal influx of backpackers. However, many employers regard backpackers as an important asset *and* a source of frustration. The energy of backpackers and their willingness to work long hours is seldom matched by a commitment to stay with one employer. The Senate Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education heard variations on a familiar theme in relation to backpackers: ‘they have a habit of flocking to the beach when the surf is up.’ The committee heard of backpackers lacking motivation to stay on the job for more than one or two days and physically wilting after a few hours in the sun (Senate Standing Committee 2006).

5.3 FAIRNESS AND EXPLOITATION

A number of backpackers reported to us, however, that they did not stick at seasonal work because they were convinced that they were not being properly remunerated. In fact, low, inappropriate and unfair payment was mentioned a number of times by interviewees, in relation to both seasonal work and work in service industries. As one Danish backpacker explained:

Well, I had to ask to get my real payment. It was just one dollar, but when you’re over twenty you should be getting more money than when you’re under twenty, and I was asking another employee and she was nineteen and she got the same amount, so I told my boss and he reluctantly said, “OK, I’ll give you one more dollar!” (Female, Danish, early 20s, one year working holiday visa).

When she was asked if she had heard of other experiences from people she had travelled with who have run into problems when they were working, she replied, ‘Yes. A lot, actually’, and went on to explain:

It’s usually about the payment. They’re underpaid, and they’re working more than the full-time ... because backpackers usually just want a job for a short period of time, just to get

some money, so they usually don't go into finding a real good job. They just take what they can, and that's why they always get a lot of problems as well (Female, Danish, early 20s, one year working holiday visa).

A number of backpackers complained that their payment was unfair and was below the casual minimum award rate. During the research it also became obvious that many working holiday makers didn't know about the minimum casual award or minimum rates, and weren't given much information about working conditions in Australia. A German backpacker on a working holiday visa described feeling exploited and underpaid:

Exploitation? Yes. I worked in a sandwich shop, for I think, eight dollars an hour, and it was really bad ... all the cash places where you can work, definitely, they make you work for a little bit of money, they don't give you the tips that you actually earn, take it away. That's why we didn't do it. And we did both work at that sandwich shop for three weeks, and then just couldn't deal with it anymore ... Everyone that I worked with ... all of them worked for really, really crap money. They never thought it was wrong conditions. Yeah, people from eight different nations, and none of them cared. When I told them all that I worked for this amount of money, when I was there as a backpacker, they were like, 'Oh my God, that's ridiculous, you must've been really lucky, that could never happen to me' (Female, German, one year working holiday visa and international student).

When this backpacker was asked if she had been given any information about working conditions, or information about her rights and entitlements, or about what to do if she encountered any problems, she replied that she hadn't received anything at all:

No, I did not expect to have any rights ... it was all laid out like you are very lucky when you get a permission to work. It's an honour, that's how they lay it out, I guess. So we didn't expect much, but still, we tried to get a good place to work. As well, we did feel kind of, I wouldn't say "too good", but too educated to work in a crappy sandwich shop ... So no, I think the only place where backpackers can really work is the sandwich shops, and the really crappy pizza shops. And for most of them it's cash. And they're being exploited by Telstra and stuff, doing the door to door running. Many did that, poor people ... It was really bad. That's again, dumb of them, but they don't really expect more (Female, German, one year working holiday visa and international student).

Illegal work has also emerged as a significant issue. Many of the jobs backpackers and working holiday makers do are 'cash in hand'. There has also been considerable media coverage in recent

years about raids by immigration officers tipped off about 'illegals' (visa overstayers or people working outside their visa conditions).

5.3.1. Other vulnerabilities: health, safety and risk

This research found that backpackers tend to engage in risk-taking behaviour, including a very high consumption of drugs and alcohol, as well as practicing unsafe sex. Our findings confirm a range of recent studies on this issue. One study, in particular, found that 40 percent of young travellers are having casual sex while in Australia and are using condoms less than they would in their home environment (Egan 2001, 2004). In fact, in response to this growing evidence that backpackers are an at risk group, a backpacker sexual health awareness campaign, *Safe in the Sack*, was developed by a number of local Sydney health authorities. This in turn has been followed by *Safe in the Shack*, a campaign promoting awareness about safe sexual practices in backpacker accommodation venues.

Encouraging backpackers to take responsibility for their own behaviour, and to be aware of the risks they are posing to themselves and others, underpins such campaigns. However, backpackers are also at considerable risk of being victims of exploitation, abuse, and poor health and safety standards in many of the situations they will experience on their travels.

A number of the backpackers interviewed for our research project, for example, complained about dirty, unhygienic and unsafe accommodation, and mentioned the difficulties of finding affordable and suitable premises in which to live. Others cited instances of exploitation, dangerous and unsafe working conditions, and physical and verbal abuse: '[In traffic control work] you're standing for about eleven hours. You get maybe a twenty-minute break a couple of times in the day. You get a lot of abuse ... an awful lot of abuse' (Female, Irish, mid-20s, one-year working holiday visa).

Backpacker accommodation operators also mentioned the high rate of violence directed at backpackers:

... I don't think backpackers themselves are a violent group. I think they're often the victims of violence, but I don't think they're a violent group (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

Evidence suggests, then, that Councils need to recognise backpackers as a significant 'at risk' group within the community and develop appropriate policies and educational strategies. This should include policies relating to safe housing and accommodation practices, safe sex practices, and also safe drug and alcohol use. A significant deficit of available and accessible information and education

strategies around these risk practices has, as mentioned, been identified by other studies (Egan 2001, 2004).

5.3.2. Moving beyond stereotypes: backpacker, visitor, local community, host ...

As noted in the introductory section of this report, how to define a backpacker remains problematic and contentious for a number of stakeholders. Indeed a question common to all focus groups and interviews has been 'How does one define a backpacker today?' The continuing fragmentation and diversification of the industry presents further difficulties.

This issue of vague and ambiguous definition is particularly pertinent to the backpacker industry. Backpackers are travellers, but they are also frequently seasonal workers, working holiday makers, students and temporary residents. In some instances, they may reside in communities on a temporary long-term basis. Indeed, the number of overseas visitors entering Australia on such a basis (staying up to one year) has exceeded the number of people arriving for permanent settlement. The flexible itinerary, extended stay, and combination of diverse activities (holiday, work, study) have all become characteristics of what defines a backpacker today.

The conventional definition of a tourist also offers little clarification. A tourist is defined as a person who is not 'at home' in their usual place of residence. Tourists are considered to be travelling not only for holidays, pleasure or leisure, but also for business, professional, sport, health, education or religious purposes. Overseas students, for example, may stay for up to a year and are still considered tourists. Similarly, seasonal workers and working holiday makers may stay for up to two years and are also counted as tourists. Tourism, therefore, covers a wide and dispersed range of visitor activities. For this reason, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) states that what is usually referred to as 'tourism' would, in fact, be more accurately referred to as 'visitor activity' (ABS 2003).

For many backpackers, the identities and definitions associated with 'travelling', 'holiday', 'working' and 'residing', 'home' and 'abroad' are extremely fluid and unstable and, as such, reflect the flexibility of their lives and itineraries. Many backpackers, for example, do not see their experiences as fitting within the current definitions of travel and travellers within the tourism literature, while others reject the term 'backpacker' as derogatory and outdated.

One young English backpacker, for example, chose to describe herself as an 'independent traveller' rather than a backpacker, explaining that her one-year working holiday visa and use of rental accommodation meant that she was living and working in the same place for an extended period of

time and therefore had a temporary long-term residential experience that could not be accounted for within the usual definition of a backpacker:

Because I've only been living in a hostel while I've been here [in Manly], for about four weeks, but before we were living in a unit for five months and we were working full-time jobs, so I didn't really feel like a backpacker. I just felt like someone who was working abroad, do you know what I mean?' (Female, English, mid-20s, one year working holiday visa).

Similarly, a young Scottish backpacker, also distinguished 'backpacking' from the working holiday:

Well, it was like, before we had the flat in Manly in summer, and I wouldn't have classified myself as a backpacker then because we were all staying in a flat and working ... It's like being back home, working every day, going back to your flat. Not backpacking (Female, Scottish, mid-20s, one year working holiday visa).

Both indicated that when they were staying in hostel accommodation they were most likely to identify as 'backpackers'. Yet at other times, for example when they were living in rental accommodation and following an everyday, familiar routine of staying in one place and going to work (just 'like being back home'), they were more inclined to identify as 'travellers' or simply 'working abroad'. In this sense, the very identity of the 'backpacker' is fluid and unstable. 'Backpacker' is just one of many identities that may be taken up or identified with during the period of visitation. It is one of multiple identities that are available, and which are constantly changing, from being highly mobile and travelling around and seeing places, to residing or 'dwelling' in a place for long periods 'like back home'.

So, a backpacker may be a student *and* working *and* travelling *and* holidaying *and* living a day-to-day existence in a house, flat or apartment that appears to differ very little from the lives and identities of other more permanent residents. Indeed, some share accommodation with Australian residents who themselves may be temporarily residing in Sydney (away from home) as students.

For a social and community planner at Waverley Council, the phenomenon of the 'resident backpacker/traveller' necessarily demands a reconceptualisation of 'local community' and a rethinking of the distinction between the local and the non-local, or the resident and the visitor: 'People [are] coming from all over the place to work, to live ... I think that because of that, yes, perhaps that distinction is slowly falling away. What is a tourist these days? It's impossible to say!' (Social and Community Planner, Waverley Council).

Indeed with the extension of the working holiday visa, backpackers are sometimes living in LGAs for relatively long periods, frequently staying even longer than so-called 'local' residents: 'Given the transience of city residents, many backpackers are actually here longer than some city residents are' (Research Manager, City of Sydney). In the Bondi/Waverley area, the overall transience and mobility of the community in general has also been noted: 'I spend a fair amount of time trying to talk to neighbours, and they're changing as often as we're changing. It's Bondi' (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

With such mobility and transience, who is 'a tourist' and who is 'a local', 'guest', 'host', 'visitor', 'resident' and 'local community' (and so on), become increasingly hard to ascertain. When asked to account for the backpacker who not only travels but also *stays*, one operator of a backpacker's hostel summed it up this way: 'But then you've got to classify your definition of a backpacker, and that's like asking how long is a piece of string, you know?' (Backpacker accommodation operator, Randwick).

Many travellers reject the label 'backpacker' and prefer to describe themselves as 'independent travellers' or 'budget travellers'. Many interviewees explained that their one-year working holiday visa and use of rental accommodation meant that they were living and working in the same place for an extended period of time. There is increasing evidence therefore, as noted in the survey section of this report, that backpackers themselves desire to escape traditional travel labels and create their own classifications of travel style.

The tourism industry also remains sceptical about the appropriateness of the term. As an Australian Tourism Export Council spokeswoman suggested: 'There's a very solid discussion to say why they shouldn't be called backpackers, because the youth and adventure market is far broader than people who carry a pack' (cited in Allen 2006).

Additionally, in some sections of the community, the term is regarded as demeaning and insulting. A number of residents commented that traditional backpacker images and definitions are 'old fashioned' and 'inadequate', while backpackers themselves were sometimes conscious of the negative and stereotypical associations that the term now represents: 'Backpacker. It's like derogatory' (Female, English, 22 years, one year working holiday visa).

Yet, while many of the travellers interviewed were aware of the negative connotations of the word, some were strident in defence of the term:

“Bloody backpackers!” Well, I’d rather be a backpacker than anything else. [A backpacker is] someone who’s gone out there and put in the effort to actually learn about other people’s cultures, to get out of their country and see other things. Someone who’s got the guts to get out there and ask (Male, English, one year working holiday visa).

The extended length of stay, in particular, was cited not only as a crucial distinction between a ‘tourist’ and a ‘backpacker’ but also the difference between a backpacker and other kind of travellers:

As opposed to a tourist ... if you’re staying in one place for a while, you feel less like you’re actually travelling around. Most of us are here on working holiday visas. Work for a bit, save money ... (Female, English, one year working holiday visa).

5.4. ACCOMMODATION

5.4.1. Wherever I lay my pack, that’s my home ...?: budget accommodation for travellers

Backpackers are not only visiting for increasingly diverse *purpose* of stay, but also increasingly diverse *durations* of stay, including longer stays. The backpacker market is changing and backpackers are seeking flexibility in their accommodation options and flexibility in their terms of stay.

When they are on WHMS visas or undertaking periods of study, many backpackers become, in effect, temporary residents, living and working in the one place for extended stays. This results in a new form of ‘residential tourism’ that significantly blurs the traditional lines of demarcation between ‘transient’ and ‘local’ resident. It also complicates the usual distinctions between ‘short’ and ‘long’ term, and ‘temporary’ and ‘permanent’ residency.

A large number of stakeholders have identified a discrepancy between planning controls and instruments and market dynamics. In particular the research highlighted limitations in Strata Law, the Residential Tenancy Act and the NSW Public Health and Safety Act and the implications of each on affordable short and medium term housing. (Each is mentioned in the following sections.) There is increasing evidence to suggest a lack of supply of legitimate and flexible budget accommodation suitable for backpackers, working holiday makers and student travellers. Some industry operators reported a significant increase in demand for accommodation, especially over high season periods such as summer. The increase in demand is seasonal, of course, and there is a lack of consensus among operators over supply/demand dynamics.

There does seem to be a general consensus, however, about the changing accommodation preferences of backpackers and their increasing demand for *flexible* accommodation. Backpacker accommodation operators reported a substantial shift away from 'dormitory-style' accommodation towards smaller rooms and better amenities:

The main changes that I've seen have been, I guess, how backpackers want to live, and the way they want to travel. It used to just be about getting your backpack on and staying in a dorm with sixteen people, eating two-minute noodles, sending an email home and going to the pub to get pissed. Now, it's more about staying in smaller dorms, nicer rooms, they want clean showers ... they come over with their laptops, they'll eat at a restaurant or a café ... so it's changed considerably, even in just the last two or three years ... so there's a real change in the market for people who no longer want to stay in scummy accommodation. That really has happened in the last couple of years. I think the last two or three years I've noticed it (Backpacker accommodation operator, Randwick).

However, significant numbers of backpackers are still choosing to stay in backpacker-style hostel accommodation, as was confirmed by the survey findings. Expense was cited by backpackers as one of the major reasons motivating a preference for hostel over rental accommodation. Yet hostel accommodation was also primarily chosen, not only because it was inexpensive but also because of the sociality it offered and the chance to meet other backpackers:

It's cheaper; however, the social side of it is absolutely brilliant. How much fun do we have! ... We were going to move out and get an apartment and we were saying, "It's going to be costing about the same, or a little bit more, and we'd lose the social side of everything." It's so much more fun. Like, you meet loads of people coming in and out all the time, and you meet people from so many different places as well. If you were in an apartment, you wouldn't get that (Female, Irish, early 20s, one year working holiday visa).

5.4.2. Authorised/legitimate backpacker hostel accommodation

The evidence from our research suggests that authorised/legitimate backpacker hostels cause few problems. Both residents and operators tended to agree that the majority of social tensions and amenity impacts were caused by 'illegal' accommodation premises operating in residential areas:

I think one thing we've established is that most of the problems come from illegal operators. They're the ones who are going to be screaming and yelling in a residential area, so I think really we shouldn't be generalising and targeting all backpackers. We should be seeing where

the problems are, and stamping down on that, and it should be a lot better (Backpacker accommodation operator, Randwick).

However, it is paramount that authorised backpacker hostels maintain strict compliance with noise controls and regulations to ensure that impacts on residential amenity are minimised. A number of residents who currently have concerns about backpacker tourism in residential areas support a requirement that all sites of backpacker accommodation should have a 24-hour on-site manager. Councils also need to ensure that operators have a full management plan/council application, and must enforce fire safety guidelines. All operators must comply with strict DA and fire safety guidelines. A number of stakeholder groups, including council staff, recommended that premises should be listed on a backpacker accommodation register or licensing system.

5.4.3. Affordability and lack of supply

Housing affordability in general has become a major socio-economic issue in Sydney. As a result of the property boom, real estate in many Sydney LGAs has become prohibitively expensive. Rising rents and a general lack of affordable accommodation have emerged as a significant problem for both local residents and travellers. The lack of supply of affordable accommodation for residents and budget accommodation for tourists emerged in the research as a major theme across all LGAs. As one Backpacker accommodation operator put it:

In Coogee, backpacker-wise we've probably only got, at a rough count I think it's about 120, 140 beds. There's a lot more than 140 backpackers in Coogee (Backpacker accommodation operator, member of Randwick area Chamber of Commerce).

A North Sydney resident and operator of a Bed and Breakfast establishment in Crows Nest reported receiving 'a lot of enquiries' from people looking for medium to long-term accommodation. One North Sydney resident was highly critical of the anti-backpacker stance adopted by council, believing that council should be supporting a greater range of affordable and budget-style accommodation which backpackers could use:

I've lived in this municipality for twenty-five years, and the council tends to be pushing out the backpacker type of accommodation. [In North Sydney] we're so close to everything ... bus and ferries. [Backpackers] are saving money because they want to travel. That's what they want to do ... Yes, the council has a big responsibility here (North Sydney resident, member of precinct committee).

This resident was dismayed by the loss of low-cost accommodation in the North Sydney LGA more generally (a concern not necessarily widely shared in North Sydney, see survey) and the loss of community diversity as a consequence. He specifically cited the lack of support for low-income elderly residents and the number of premises that had been converted into luxury accommodation:

... they were old people on very little income. Living on the pension. But I could name eight [premises] that have gone. I live in the Neutral Bay area — it's almost waterfront. You get a glimpse of the ocean from a big percentage of the streets, and of course there's the objection to low-income residents, "An old folks' home! A backpackers? Not on your nelly!" (North Sydney resident, member of precinct committee).

While housing affordability is an issue that demands urgent attention, the supply and demand dynamics related to the facilities and services needed to cater for travellers such as backpackers, especially suitable budget-style accommodation for various time periods (short, medium and long-term), need to be closely investigated.

In the City of Sydney LGA, for example, the occupancy rate for tourist accommodation in the 15+ room category is frequently over 80 percent. In Glebe, where there are currently 5 backpacker hostels, the occupancy rate reached 89.1 percent (Phillip Raskall, Research Manager, City of Sydney). An occupancy rate of 75 percent is the level used to identify a shift towards high demand. On the basis of such investigations, demand appears to be well exceeding supply, indicating an urgent need for more diverse types of accommodation (low-cost budget, boutique hotels etc) in more diverse locations.

5.4.4. Room size requirements

At present, low-cost shared accommodation can generally be divided into two categories, long term (more than 28 days) and short-term (less than 28 days). The Public Health (General) Regulation 2002 stipulates the minimum room requirements for sleeping rooms. Clause 22 of the Regulation requires a sleeping room or cubicle to have a minimum floor area of 5.5 square metres or more for each person accommodated in the room and staying 28 consecutive days or more. It requires 2 square metres or more for each person accommodated in the room and staying under 28 consecutive days. The backpacker industry estimates that most operators provide at least 3.25 square metres per person (Aegis Consulting 2005). A standard international guide for boarding house accommodation is 15 square metres per person. The City of Sydney has adopted 10.5 square metres per person with an additional 5.5 square metres for each additional person in the room for backpacker accommodation.

There is an obvious need for medium term budget accommodation, which must be formulated in response to the increase in interest by residents and visitors for alternative sources of tourist accommodation. A number of budget accommodation operators have called for a review of sleeping room occupancy requirements to achieve greater flexibility in the kinds of affordable accommodation they can provide.

The accommodation provider in the City of Sydney, *Sleeping With The Enemy*, for example, offers 'short to medium stay accommodation'. There is a 1 month minimum stay requirement for guests and a maximum 3 month stay, although, as with other providers, this limit can be simply overcome by moving out and then checking back in. *Sleeping With The Enemy* reports that it is 'meeting the demand that is between backpacker hostels and somebody going out and getting their own apartment'. The group also maintain that they are eliminating the 'whole revolving door' transience typically associated with backpacker hostels. Greg Riches, CEO, *Sleeping With The Enemy*, described the difficulties associated with offering budget medium stay accommodation yet being forced to comply with room size requirements and legislation appropriate for boarding houses and 'made before backpackers turned up' (Greg Riches, CEO, *Sleeping With The Enemy*).

The Furnished Property Group is another accommodation provider that maintains it is filling an apparent gap in the market. *The Furnished Property Group* was established in 2002 and advertises as 'the market leader in share accommodation, medium term rentals and furnished apartments for travellers in Sydney' and targets the 'working and studying traveller'. Short-let and serviced apartments tend to be expensive and targeted at higher spending visitors, whereas our research suggests the growing demand is for budget medium-term accommodation.

While this sort of accommodation fills what appears to be a substantial gap in the market, compliance is a significant issue for providers such as *Sleeping With The Enemy* and *The Furnished Property Group*, and it is not clear what the regulatory status of these properties should be. The City of Sydney DCP explicitly states that 'premises approved for residential development (such as serviced apartments and/or residential units and the like) are not to be used for backpacker accommodation, or for any other use without development consent' (City of Sydney 2006).

5.4.5. Illegal/unauthorised backpacker accommodation

Illegal/unauthorised backpacker accommodation has become a highly publicised and contentious issue with serious and adverse community and environmental amenity impacts. At present, the definition of illegal/unauthorised backpacker accommodation is vague and unclear. It is accepted by

industry, however, that illegitimate use generally refers to residential dwellings (houses, apartments, units, flats) used for backpacker accommodation on a commercial basis. These premises are often located in residential areas rather than commercial precincts or zones.

It is clear that both *adequate* backpacker accommodation and *illegitimate* backpacker accommodation are significant issues, and are of major community, governmental and industry concern. The backpacker industry estimates that there are at least 150 residential premises (1350 beds) illegitimately operating as commercial backpacker accommodation in Sydney (Aegis 2005). Other estimates, however, are higher. According to the Tourism and Transport Forum there are as many as 2000 illegally-operating serviced apartments in the Sydney CBD (Klan 2006). Operators also estimate that in contrast to the 600-700 legal beds in the Bondi/Waverley area, there are around 1500- 2000 illegal beds (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

Illegal/unauthorised accommodation is often associated with rental overcrowding. This is an issue that has become a particular problem in high-rise apartment blocks in Sydney's CBD. The 'subletting' of leases in these blocks is common, and the companies and individuals that organise both 'rolling leases' and subletting have been dubbed 'career subletters'. This type of subletting can result in large profits for these individuals, sometimes by as much as double what the primary leaseholder pays to rent the apartments. As one newspaper account describes: 'In one crowded high-rise apartment, the three bedrooms housed 10 students while another three lived on mattresses in the lounge room. The subletter — who has moved on — would have been charging between \$90 to \$100 per head per week, netting almost \$1,300 despite paying no more than \$700 for the apartment' (Edwards 2007:32).

Another newspaper story outlined the lucrative profits to be made from such subletting: 'There was one person leasing 20 to 30 apartments around the city, subletting them to groups of renters and estimated to be earning more than \$100,000 a year — without owning a skerrick of property himself. Another was squeezing nine adults into a two-bedroom apartment, shoe-horning two into the tiny study area alone' (Wellings 2007:4).

A number of residents we interviewed for the research described very similar situations in the apartment blocks where they live. Sublet apartments are frequently rented to international students and people of non-English speaking backgrounds who can be very vulnerable to exploitation. For example, interviewed residents described finding large groups of 'international students' crammed into two and three bedroom apartments, and paying around \$100 each for a bunk-bed, a mattress on a floor, and even a space on a balcony. One resident of the luxury high rise *Millenium Towers* described the following:

Since living there I have become aware of quite extensive overcrowding in the building. Eight to twelve people per two-bedroom apartment, in many cases, and with just mattresses on the floor and curtains strung between them ... One of the apartments on our floor, which had twelve young people in it, young Asian people who told me they were students at UTS. They were moving out because of the excessive water penetration from their two bathrooms that had flooded right into the living room and it was a complete mess. They allowed me to take some photographs of it, which I did, and I asked them who the agent was and they said there was no agent. A man in the building came and collected money from them. They were paying about a hundred and twenty dollars – I think the ones sleeping on the balcony were only paying a hundred, but the others were paying a hundred and twenty dollars each, which came to, if you do the sums, a lot of money. Another case where the owner was receiving five hundred dollars a week rent for his two-bedroom apartment and then discovered that there were eight people in it all paying a hundred and thirty dollars a week each, and the money was not going to the owner. And so we realised that it's a very lucrative little business being run on our floor and, actually, probably in the building as a whole, and we've not been able to take any action about it (Sydney Central Business district resident).

A member of the City of Sydney Residents' Network (RESNET), Patricia Brown, has also identified this kind of subletting and overcrowding:

We've known people subletting a two-bedroom apartment to 10 people and seen photos of 12 bunks in the same-sized apartment. It's becoming a real problem and it's very difficult to get on top of. We've been told about some outrageous circumstances ... students setting up tables in hallways of apartment blocks to give themselves room to study, and some of the damage to apartments is appalling, while the noise is terrible (quoted in Wellings 2007: 4).

Subletting and overcrowding, however, are problems that occur across Sydney and are not just limited to high-rise towers in the CBD. In the eastern suburbs, it has become a problem associated not just with backpackers but also with international students, particularly those studying at the University of NSW. Some of the residents interviewed for the research described significant amenity impacts associated with international students and 'student backpackers'. As one apartment owner stated:

We have a lot of overseas students who come here to go to the University of NSW and six are typically put into a three-bedroom apartment. A lot of them are here to party; they're quasi-backpackers — and the rubbish they generate ... (Coogee resident quoted in Wellings 2007:4).

A Bondi resident described a similar instance of subletting arrangements that led to overcrowding:

I can tell you about the people in the block next door to me. The owner, I know for a fact, doesn't care how many people stay there and how long they stay there. In fact, I think he has one particular Australian guy he rents to, and that guy sublets, and I know this because when I moved in here they used to – you know, you'd wake up and know it was twenty past four. You wouldn't have to look at your clock, because you knew the Bondi Hotel closes at four, and by the time they staggered home and got inside it was twenty past four, and the noise started. I saw that they were moving out. I went and knocked on the door and I said to this guy, "Why are you moving out?" very innocently. He thought I was a backpacker, probably, with the South African accent ... He said, "Oh, I couldn't get enough backpackers to sublet to." So I said, "Oh, why is that?" "Oh, you know, it's winter, nobody's here, so I have to let the place go." So I took the number off the window which said, "Unit for Lease", and it was a home number and a mobile number, and I took them down and I phoned the home number and I said, "Is that your flat?" to the woman who answered, and she said, "Yes." I said, "I'm looking to rent." She said, "Oh, great!" I said, "How many people can fit in there, because we're about five or six people." She said, "Well, it's a two bedroom place with a sunroom, but you can fit in – and in the sunroom we've got a bunk bed, so you should be fine. I reckon you can fit in" (Bondi resident).

5.4.6. Real estate agents

Real estate agent practices deserve closer attention in relation to the problem of illegal/unauthorised backpacker accommodation. Anecdotal evidence in our study from some residents and one building manager pointed to the scope that exists for insufficiently regulated practices. These would include the operation of 'rolling leases'; agents organising subletting arrangements on behalf of owners and landlords; tenants effectively becoming the primary leaseholder 'subletting' a premise; and agents failing to respond sufficiently or adequately to tenants that break the terms and conditions of the lease. Given the potential implications for zoning, bylaw and Strata Title requirements, plus the issues of unauthorised accommodation, overcrowding and the potential adverse impact on the amenity of neighbours and the wider community, any such practices are arguably in need of systematic review. Anecdotal reports in this report are no substitute for comprehensive study of the problems that are said to arise in relation to the above practices, and when real estate agents provide leases to tenants who cannot offer appropriate identification or documentation such as references, or when owners live abroad without full understanding of the circumstances that place renters in their properties. As suggestive only of the possible need for more accountability in this

area, a building manager of an apartment block in Sydney's CBD can be quoted at length (below). This participant also acknowledged the challenges for the real estate industry itself given its own fluidity and the slippery mobilities of backpackers noted earlier in the report:

The biggest problem we have is with real estate agents, and I called an agent in yesterday to Hyde Park Towers and had a discussion with him, and said, "Look, why is this happening?" and he is one of the better ones, and he said, "Well, we have – again, like the tenants, we have transient staff. They come, they go, you try and train them, they have somebody come in, the market is as it is at the moment ... they just grab whoever they think is the best tenant ... You'd think they'd be able to sit down and get twenty or thirty applicants for an apartment, and select them, but he said, "Well, you've got a lot of young real estate agents who are a bit lazy, and they just take who they think" ... Most of the agents are leasing apartments, for all intents and purposes, correctly. There's a standard lease that's drawn up, and that lease usually does stipulate the number of occupants in an apartment. They know that council regulations are usually no more than two adults in one bedroom. Three bedrooms, six people maximum. They know that. But once they issue that lease to a primary leaseholder, they don't care what happens. And one of the biggest problems that we've got is that real estate agents are supposed to come and do regular inspections of apartments. They simply don't do it, and that's where it falls down. Or if they do it, they come in and they close a blind eye to it (Building manager, Sydney Central Business District).

There would seem to be scope for more educational and consultation efforts with real estate agents in relation to the problems of unauthorised backpacker accommodation. And as mentioned above, there is a need for more rigorous study that could usefully involve key stakeholders such as real estate institutes.

5.4.7. Strata Title

Current strata title legislation is inadequate for dealing with the complaints of residents impacted by illegal/unauthorised backpacker accommodation and overcrowding. Several residents described receiving no help or assistance from the Strata Titles Office. When impacted residents are in the minority within the body corporate, there appears to be no avenue for recourse. In some cases, the members of the body corporate, such as the Executive Committee, can work in concert with real estate agents and building managers to let apartments on a commercial basis, leaving the impacted residents unable to mount any successful opposition to the use of the building on such terms.

One building manager who has experienced directly the amenity impacts of overcrowding and subletting described the inefficiencies of current Strata Title legislation:

I think that we as building managers, or owners of the corporation, should have more power to be able to, like “take control” – but I don’t mean that – to act upon and know that there is a law that enables us to do so. We should be able to go in without having to go to the Strata Board. There should not have to be this long ... it’s such a prolonged process. You’ve got to go to the Strata Board, you’ve got to prove that there’s a breach of bylaws. You’ve got to go through a whole series of things before you can get anywhere. The ideal situation would be to have something like a ranger situation where if you see somebody doing something in the park, you call the rangers and a ranger comes immediately and investigates it. If there’s a problem, there’s a fine issued. But the process we’ve got to go through now is so long, so involved and so time-consuming that you hesitate doing it (Building manager, Sydney Central Business District).

5.4.8. Loss of compliance, rates and stamp duty revenue

When residential premises are used as commercial backpacker accommodation there can be significant concerns, not only about compliance, but also rates and stamp duty revenue for Local government. Some authors have also raised issues about the fate of GST revenue (see Aegis Consulting Australia, 2005).

5.4.9. Overcrowding

Overcrowding is one of the most significant amenity impacts associated with unauthorised backpacker accommodation. In focus groups and interviews, residents could describe examples of overcrowding in houses and apartments, usually involving large numbers of backpackers and ‘student backpackers’ crammed into two and three bedroom dwellings. As one resident described: ‘In a two-bedroom apartment you’ve got four in the rooms and then you’ve got a couple in the lounge — I’ve even heard of people sleeping on balconies, you know?’ (Pyrmont resident, member of RESNET).

Overcrowding is especially prevalent in apartment buildings in the Ultimo and Pyrmont areas, and has been associated with particular blocks such as the luxury apartment buildings built by Meriton. In interviews and focus groups with residents, specific buildings — The Palladium, World Tower — were identified as particular problem areas. Interviews with backpackers also confirmed that these

blocks were known in the backpacker community and that apartments in these buildings were regularly used by backpackers for accommodation.

At an 'overcrowding forum' organised by the residents action group RESNET it was described as 'the single biggest issue concerning CBD residents'. An Ultimo resident and apartment building manager described the issues these residents face and the kinds of complaints they have raised:

The complaints were the noise, the abuse of facilities, abuse of residents, the additional cost of wear and tear and maintenance of the equipment, and facilities provided, the breaches of security, the fact that they're using fire exits, or letting in all their mates in to use the facilities, so it's like 24 hour party time (City of Sydney resident, building manager).

The building manager of another apartment block also described the significant amenity impacts as a result of overcrowding:

I can give you an example of another apartment. Yesterday we did an inspection of an apartment. We had a complaint about noise in an apartment. We also had an electrical problem in the apartment, so I was able to go in and have a look at the apartment. It's a two-bedroom apartment with nine people in that two bedroom apartment. On one balcony – you know the large wheelie bins that you can get? We had to get three of those bins to remove the empty beer bottles from the balcony. The balcony was littered with beer bottles. Now, there were three young Irish guys in there, two Swedish girls... it was like an international dormitory. The apartment was an absolute mess. Light fittings had been damaged. The smoke detectors had been disconnected. The mess on the balcony – now, this is where I had to call the agent in. This happens so regularly (Building manager, City of Sydney CBD).

5.4.10. Boarding houses

Boarding houses are an important source of low cost housing in Sydney, yet their numbers have decreased steadily over the last few decades. Many are converted to other uses, including budget-style backpacker accommodation, or demolished to make way for other uses.

Our research suggests that boarding houses are being used by backpackers for short, medium and longer-term accommodation, and supports the findings of the *Inner Sydney Boarding House Report* (Davidson et al 1998). This study found that more than one third of the boarding house residents in North Sydney were overseas visitors. Most of these visitors were young, English-speaking

backpackers visiting Australia as short-term tourists or as part of an extended working holiday.

Chamberlain (1999) considers a boarding house to have the following characteristics:

1. The majority of residents reported that they were living there permanently; and
2. The majority of residents were unemployed or outside of the labour force.

Yet a number of backpacker accommodation operators maintain that councils are not enforcing the minimum stay requirement of boarding houses: 'I think there should be more council compliance, as there is now, with brothels, to make sure that bona fide premises are either backpackers or boarding houses. I think that's really important (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

It would seem the definition of a boarding house and that of conventional hostels and hotels used by travellers need clarification. Local government and others are concerned about 'covert' or unauthorised conversions of boarding houses. A range of issues surrounding boarding houses, including approved changes of use and incentives for the development of affordable housing, need to be examined.

5.4.11. Conversion of residential units into serviced apartments

The proliferation of serviced apartments in residential zones is a growing concern, particularly in the Sydney CBD. Many serviced apartments are used to provide backpacker and student accommodation. Short-term holiday accommodation across NSW, including holiday lettings and rentals, has also come under investigation, and current legislation has been reviewed. In 2003 the NSW Land and Environment Court upheld a decision made by Sutherland Shire Council that short-term holiday accommodation less than 90 days was not permissible in a residential zone. Furthermore, the Court of Appeal decision in North Sydney vs. Sydney Serviced Apartments, in 2006, passed a ruling determining that any short-term occupation of a residential dwelling as defined under the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme was not consistent with a residential use of such a dwelling, and therefore illegal. Other councils have also attempted to enforce these regulations. Nevertheless, the short-term letting and tourist use of residential apartments appears to remain a widespread practice, one that has recently received considerable media attention (Buckell 2006).

5.4.12. Unauthorised accommodation in residential communities

In a focus group conducted with Waverley residents, respondents described the number of what they considered to be 'illegal' backpacker accommodation premises and the negative impacts on the area, including the intimidation of non-backpacker residents such as the elderly, children and families:

I'm not sure of the numbers, but there's whole blocks together. 45 [in my local area], around about there ... There's one elderly person left in a block who's being completely intimidated ... (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

We've got illegal backpackers in our place, which is run by a group of people who have completely no ethics whatsoever. They've totally ruined the environment of our block. And the rest of it — it's a five-flat building. Four of them are lived in by owners ... and there are young children there ... it's a really nice community. We have a lovely time, but we've got this constant thing going on in the block. And the reason I'm here is because we've been fighting it for six years now. Waverley Council said that they would help us. We've been in and out, back and forth ... They asked us to keep a dossier. We've got a dossier this thick of photographs, quotes, comments, ads off telegraph poles. The police came 23 times last year. We've just had constant, constant problems ... We've had AVOs, we've had threatening letters on our noticeboard, we've had all sorts of things ... Only last Sunday somebody wired up the front doors of our block so we couldn't get out ... with fairy lights and wire, from the outside (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

It is important to point out here that although these residents could cite numerous amenity impacts relating to the 'backpackers' living in residential areas — impacts ranging from fire safety issues to anti-social behaviour and vandalism — they were at pains to emphasise that they were not opposed to backpacker tourism *per se*, and could recognise the economic benefits and contributions of backpackers:

I guess why we're ultimately here is not because we want to stop backpackers coming to the area, because obviously it's good for the economy, but we want to stop illegal backpacker hostels in residential areas ... in the wrong areas ... in the wrong buildings (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

5.4.13. Out of place *or* in the wrong place?: authorised versus unauthorised accommodation

The statement that backpackers are in the 'wrong' areas and in the 'wrong' buildings stems from a perception that backpackers are 'out of place' in residential communities and that the lifestyles of residents and backpackers are incompatible. This perception is often reinforced by the fact that backpackers are in many different senses 'out of place': as travellers and as transient visitors their 'place' is often unclear and uncertain.

Despite the serious complaints a significant number of residents expressed about the impact of backpacker tourism on communities, some residents identified a distinction between 'legal' and 'illegal' backpacker accommodation, and recognised that problems most commonly arise when backpackers are residing in overcrowded, unregulated and often unsafe premises:

... the difference is, the legal backpackers do the right thing, I think. I don't think there's a lot of complaints from them. They're disadvantaged by the illegal backpackers, and it's unfortunate, and having the illegal backpackers gives backpackers a bad name (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

The *perception* that backpackers are a cohort of young, irresponsible drifter-travellers who are 'out of place' in stable, settled communities unfortunately stigmatises all backpackers. However, although a number of residents held a negative image of backpackers in general, others could make a crucial distinction between the backpackers themselves and the problems inevitably caused by unauthorised accommodation. The residents who were able to make this distinction between individual travellers and the conditions of the accommodation in which they lived, were also more likely to have insight into the negative consequences of blanket opposition to 'all backpackers'.

These residents understood that indiscriminate opposition to all backpacker tourism actually exacerbated the kinds of tensions around which residents were most concerned. In other words, these residents recognised that widespread community opposition to backpacker tourism in general was in fact causing many of the problems the residents faced. For example, it was noted that the widespread community opposition and protest to development applications for backpacker hostels had led to insufficient authorised accommodation and therefore had indirectly created an increase in the number of illegitimate shared accommodation premises:

There's a development application a couple of doors up, and they're trying to stop it because they think it's for a legal backpacker hostel, but I think it's a shame that there's so much dissent against the legal backpacker hostels, because we've got one at the corner of

our block and we have no trouble with it whatsoever, and Bondi desperately needs these establishments ... it's definitely what Bondi needs, and I think that residents need to be a little more open-minded about it and understand that when an establishment's run properly it's not going to cause you any trouble. It's the illegal ones that sprout up, as a result of there being no legal space, that cause the problem (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

The *displacement* that this resident identifies — the displacement of backpackers into residential areas as a result of a shortfall of legitimate, appropriate accommodation — is a major issue that needs to be addressed if adequate solutions to current community tensions are to be found. Widespread community opposition to backpacker tourism, along with protest against development applications for backpacker hostels, places councils in a difficult position. Community pressure on councils to not support backpacker tourism creates a context in which the decision-making process can easily become contentious and politicised. Local government is elected to represent and serve local constituents, and the opinions and grievances of residents and communities need to be taken seriously and addressed. However, decisions that are made in the short-term to assuage immediate community complaints can have deleterious long-term consequences that may in fact create further impacts on amenity in the future.

The divergent views of all stakeholders need to be considered in such decision making. Good data and 'objective' measures such as bed occupancy rates could help to ascertain the supply and demand dynamics associated with backpacker accommodation. It could also help to build a more accurate overview of the adequacy or inadequacy of the supply of affordable and appropriate accommodation for backpacker-type travellers. Such information would assist Local government to plan for tourism growth and avoid problems associated with unauthorised and illegal use of accommodation stocks.

5.4.14. Zoning

Where, then, do backpackers belong? What is the right 'place' for backpackers and backpacker-style accommodation? Zoning is a key issue here. Zoning mechanisms were developed to keep incompatible land uses (for example, industry and residential uses) separate and protected. At present, council LEPs differ on what uses are permissible in which zones. However, backpacker hostel accommodation, like all tourist accommodation, is considered a commercial use and is generally only allowed in commercial zones.

In one North Sydney focus group, residents proposed a number of innovative solutions and

suggestions for including low-cost and budget accommodation in mixed use zones:

I would actually think that [the Mayor] would actually be quite forthcoming in looking at the prospect of doing that in a mixed use zone ... if it's in a commercial area, and you could actually put commercial on the bottom, and the podium level could be boarding house or backpacker accommodation etc. and the residents above ... (North Sydney resident, member of precinct committee).

This suggestion received a great deal of support from other residents:

I actually think that the council should consider putting in their DCP or LEP that if something's going into a mixed use zone, that we should then provide this couple of levels of cheaper accommodation — short-term accommodation — in those couple of podium levels before the residential ... and those buildings are always being built at train stations and at points of transport around here. So I think that would actually be a really good idea (North Sydney resident, member of precinct committee).

5.5 COMMUNITIES

Backpacker communities have been described variously as 'enclaves' and as autonomous, self-enclosed 'bubbles'. The crucial point to make here is that backpacker communities and the networks that support them are only autonomous to an extent; they are actually overlaid on, coexisting, or even *merging* with residential communities.

This sort of *coexistence* implies a spectrum of encounters for residents, ranging from: meeting backpackers working in local shops and service industries; to living next door to noise, parties and the general 'stuff' of day-to-day living; encounters over rubbish and waste disposal, plumbing problems, and the heightened energy consumption generated by, to take one interviewee's living arrangements, a three-bedroom house inhabited by fifteen young travellers. It is the palpably visceral and confronting nature of many of these encounters that residents described in interviews and focus groups (see in more detail below under complaints).

5.5.1. Community benefits

The encounters between 'residents' and 'backpackers' are not necessarily, or at least not always, negative. Some residents were at pains to stress the positive attributes - cosmopolitan diversity, youthfulness, and economic benefits, for example - associated with backpackers. In this sense,

backpackers can be both desired and despised; on the one hand, thought to promise welcome new character to place, while for others, perceived to threaten existing place character. As noted earlier, in Manly, for example, a significant number of residents claimed that backpackers 'add character', with even more acknowledging their contribution 'to the local economy'. Employers also mentioned the 'international flavour' that backpackers bring to their businesses, especially in the service sector and as was noted earlier with regards to French speaking café workers in Waverley.

The economic benefits to local communities were also repeatedly emphasised by operator stakeholder groups, one of whom bears quoting at length:

[We] would be very supportive of the whole backpacker industry. Backpackers are a huge source of export earnings. So, whether you're an activity provider or you're an accommodation provider, you're an exporter. It's a really important thing to Australia. We've got a huge current account deficit. What else? They bring in income to the local economy. Backpackers are the ideal population. They don't bring in pensions. They don't bring in health care costs from when they're older. We have a rotating, mobile, young population, which means we get them in the prime of their lives. They're working, they're spending money in the local economy ... (Participant, backpacker-related businesses focus group, Randwick).

Such stakeholder interests also maintained that these benefits were not sufficiently recognised by Local government:

My perception is that tourism brings a lot of benefit. Now, that's a perception coming from the point of view of a commercial interest, supporting tourism, supporting business, and Chambers of Commerce ... The positive elements of tourism, the really good things we're hearing around this table, that message is not getting through sufficiently, and we see it as an important part of our responsibility ... to try to cultivate an understanding among the councils ... We don't want unfettered tourism, but we can't help thinking – we're coming from a pretty obvious position of self-interest – but we can't help thinking that tourism is not appreciated *per se* as a worthwhile commercial activity (Participant, backpacker-related businesses focus group, Randwick).

5.5.2. Scope of complaints

Despite the considerable economic benefits that backpackers bring to the city, and their (varied) efforts to assimilate into everyday communities, many Sydney-siders regard backpacker

communities and cultures as a 'problem', citing incompatible social, cultural and lifestyle differences. In fact, backpacker tourism is generating considerable community tensions in certain suburbs across Sydney.

In the case of our study and its Residents Survey, the tensions were found to be most pronounced in the coastal areas of Waverley and Randwick. We noted earlier that significant impacts on community amenity include the following: noise pollution, rubbish dumping, car dumping, loss of security in residential buildings, public health and fire safety concerns, public drunkenness, anti-social behaviour, violence and harassment, damage to property and general loss of neighbourhood amenity, loss of local shops and services and the general 'touristification' of communities.

As one resident explained:

I've been reading up a lot about the economics of the backpacker tourism industry in Australia and how it's the fastest-growing and all this sort of thing, but I would be really interested in drilling down on those statistics to see how much, in fact, the beer-swilling backpacker that we get in Coogee contributes to the economy ... So I think our council is decidedly deluded (Coogee resident, member of precinct committee).

Many of the interviewed residents could describe a range of uncomfortable and distressing encounters with backpackers in local neighbourhoods. These ranged from drunken backpackers urinating and vomiting in front yards and doorways, passing out in gardens and apartment blocks, to experiences of intimidation and harassment. One resident summed up these encounters in this way: '[The problems] are just constantly in your face. They're always there. It's an overload, a sensory overload' (Coogee resident, member of precinct committee).

5.5.3. Amenity impacts

'They urinate. Throw up. All the time, we have our hose cut because they use it as a bong! We've lost so many hoses it's not funny' (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

The various costs and benefits associated with tourism are extremely difficult to measure. Tourists consume products and services that are not easily distinguishable from those supplied to and used by residents. This frequently means that the benefits of tourism to the community are difficult to specify. Conversely, it also means that the costs are equally hard to ascertain. These difficulties are multiplied when it concerns backpacker tourism. Backpackers tend to stay longer than other tourists,

often living in places for extended periods of time. The impact of their extended stay and tourism activities is therefore hard to measure accurately.

Understandably, different stakeholders have very different perceptions of the respective costs and benefits associated with backpacker tourism. Resident precinct committees almost uniformly and categorically highlight the costs to the community as a result of backpackers. When the Coogee Residents Focus Group was asked about the benefits associated with backpackers, most residents laughed and replied 'I don't think there's any!' or 'Well, none as far as I'm concerned. There's nothing ... and not for the community, because of the cost'.

One Woollahra resident found the amenity impacts from the backpacker premises in his neighbourhood so intolerable he set up a Resident Action Group. The group's quarterly newsletter described the social implications in these terms:

[The backpackers' accommodation] is resulting in a flagrant disregard for the amenity of neighbours through noise, unsightly washing hung up on the fence, rubbish not properly put out for collection. It's causing a real nuisance for neighbouring owners/occupiers (Woollahra resident).

Within the LGAs of this study, it will be clear by now that a number of residents expressed a strong lack of support for backpacker tourism (though as noted earlier, the Residents Survey indicated a more measured opinion overall). For the more ardently opposed residents, it was perceived to be a 'high impact' and 'low benefit' form of tourism. Councillors and council staff are in turn torn between the expressed concerns of their ratepayers, political imperatives, and their constitutional and financial (in)ability to fully field and mitigate those impacts.

5.5.4. Noise

As noted in the Residents Survey section, excessive noise is the most onerous and frequently cited complaint of residents. As one Waverley resident explained:

... I'm very conscious of the change in the area over the last few years, particularly noise level. That's the thing I'm most concerned about. We also have a group of — we classify them as backpackers — who rent one of our flats, and thankfully they're well-behaved and generally cause no problem, but two doors up we do have a shared house and it's predominantly Irish, I would say by their accents, and again the noise level at times is really unacceptable, and the problem is that if the police are called — and invariably they have

parties on a Saturday night there — the police are over-extended. Generally they don't come, and if you do ask them to tone it down, regrettably, one can be abused. So that's the down side, but I agree there's been a positive component, because my niece's husband is a recent arrival and he's working in one of the hospitals, so it's, you know, you've got two sides to it there. But, you know, I would really love to know: is there any solution to this issue? (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

It is unclear to many residents who should be responsible for handling noise complaints and what course of action should be taken when noise issues are a concern.

... it's probably unfair on the police, because they have to come around to noise issues when they really shouldn't have to, and on the weekend they're not going to do that. They've got more important issues, and so residents have to suffer (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

5.5.5. Sleep deprivation and smoke

Sleep deprivation and the impacts associated with both indoor and outdoor cigarette smoking were common complaints among affected residents. Several residents spoke about the serious health consequences they have suffered due to constantly interrupted sleep and lack of sleep due to excessive noise. One Bondi resident described these impacts:

Sleep deprivation. And sleep deprivation from two things: one from noise and one from cigarette smoke. So, noise is a very obvious one. You either can't go to sleep because people have started their parties earlier, but generally it's quiet and then, when the pubs close, people come home and it just becomes absolutely impossible...and it's noise not just from musical instruments. It's noise from people talking. So, you've got all these people talking, and they're screaming and they're shouting, and they're calling to each other, "Wait for me!" Or, "There's the cab!" Or just having fun or falling over because they're drunk, and broken beer bottles, and constantly buzzing on their buzzer... You just hear this "Buzzzz" the whole night. And then musical instruments ... an electric guitar. Even the other night, it was an ordinary guitar, and then they all sing along! (laughs) They all shout along. So, you've got all different types of noise, and you've got these bursts of noise ... They're up all night and they're smoking, and they smoke a lot of dope, as well, and I get into bed and I try to go to sleep, and this smoke wafts into my bedroom. They sit at their windows and the smoke just keeps coming in. So, sleep deprivation, for me, is a huge problem – from noise

and from smoke. Dope and cigarette smoke. So, on a personal level, they're the biggest issues (Bondi resident).

5.5.6. Dumped rubbish, garbage and dumped cars

Residents also cited impacts associated with rubbish dumped in the street, dumped cars, mattresses, and household appliances:

Our bins are constantly overflowing. We had to buy extra bins to accommodate their beer bottles alone, and we're just one of many places where this is happening. So it impacts on the council, it impacts on the ratepayers (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

This is the only country that I know of where you can buy a vehicle and dispose of it so easily (Waverley resident).

And just feeling like you're living in a dump, and all the cigarette butts – they don't care to pick up their papers, they just throw the beer bottles down, they use our paper recycling bin and our letter box as a dump for everything ... You'll go out on a Sunday morning, and the wall outside our block has beer bottles, cartons of milk, whatever, chocolate milk, strewn around, and when there's a turnover of backpackers, you get all the furniture and all the crap just dumped on the sidewalk. You just feel you're living in a slum. It's not a nice feeling (Bondi resident).

5.5.7. More than NIMBYism?

While some residents are explicitly concerned about the 'touristification' of local areas, many view tourism, and backpacker tourism in particular, as one aspect of a much broader set of demographic changes adversely affecting communities and leading to a loss of community diversity. In Waverley, in particular, residents cited the loss of services such as the butcher's shop, the local hardware stores, and a general decrease in the diversity of the social fabric. Many residents are worried by the loss of a 'family feel', a decline in the number of elderly residents, and a homogenising cultural character geared to young, affluent tourists.

In these terms, backpackers are just one element of a much broader process leading to the loss of community and social diversity and an increasing reliance on international labour and skills. As one Waverley resident explained:

... if this trend continues, and we lose more and more of our regenerative capacity, you're going to be more and more dependent on backpackers ... We've lost our regenerative capacity and we're so much dependent on people from outside, and backpacking is, I'd say, part of the problem. So, there needs to be a critical, social look at what's happening in the eastern suburbs to supposed 'communities' ... There's a whole change in the social strata that isn't beneficial, and if the trend continues, it's only going to get worse (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

What I notice is the services that have gone out of the place. I look at the hardware shops that we used to have ... everything's been replaced with apartment blocks ... Instead of the local shops, we now have the big attraction, which is Westfield (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

5.6 GOVERNANCE AND REGULATION

The burden of investigating unauthorised backpacker accommodation and enforcing compliance falls on Local government. Significant resources are required to physically identify, monitor and collect evidence on such premises, and it is apparent that councils lack sufficient resources and capacity to effectively investigate and identify alleged illegitimate/unauthorised premises. Councils are also perceived by residents to have a lack of resources to adequately manage the situation:

The council don't seem to have any real control over the situation. They're under-resourced. They've got one person working — there are apparently 90 illegal backpacker hostels in the area. So, yeah, we had a fire in our building, in the backpacker hostel, and they didn't know they were on fire ... When the fire brigade came, the backpackers said "Oh, it was only a small fire", and as the firemen pointed out, there's no such thing (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

A significant number of residents acknowledge the complexity of the issue, and the considerable difficulties councils face:

... Council's in a difficult position. It's very hard to enforce any kind of law against them. This is the real problem. If the council could find a way to do it, I think they would but their hands are tied too ... (Waverley resident, member of precinct committee).

The costs to Local government as a result of backpacker tourism were also argued to be generally downplayed or even unacknowledged:

People always tend to present [tourism] – or Treasury Departments tend to present it – as being a net benefit to a country, and that probably is correct in some sort of balance sheet sense. But this fails to take into account the detriment that individual communities suffer as a result of tourism. Putting on my old Local government hat for a minute: tourism to Waverley was a net cost, and I'm sure tourism to Randwick is a net cost, this is because there is no direct quantifiable benefit that comes back to the local community (Paul Pearce, State Member for Coogee).

5.6.1. Council constraints

Evidence from this research suggests that Local government is seen as not always responding adequately to the problems associated with *unauthorised* backpacker accommodation. Both the backpacker industry and resident precinct committees feel that Local government is not responding urgently enough to the issue of illegitimate backpacker accommodation. Councils are also perceived as not managing or regulating backpacker tourism sufficiently. They are sometimes seen as not implementing effective measures to prevent the illegitimate use of boarding houses or other accommodation by backpackers. Moreover, some residents feel that their complaints are not taken seriously or handled properly or adequately:

Part of the reason that [one resident] got so revved up was because council never did anything and if council had been far more proactive about, you know, just being a bit more helpful about what the level of evidence that was needed and being a bit more proactive, without necessarily getting themselves into risk territory, they would have been acting for the benefit of the residents much more (Woollahra resident).

In many focus groups and interviews with residents there was a shared concern that residents' issues were not taken seriously or given more attention by councils. These residents reported suffering from a kind of 'protest fatigue', because they felt their complaints were not adequately addressed:

I appreciate it's tough for council, I do, but I do think they gave us a particularly hard time on this and I do think that if we [the Residents Action Group] hadn't been on the case nothing would've happened. I don't think there's any evidence that council, would, off their own bat, have done anything about it (Woollahra resident, member of action group).

Individual residents, if they've got a problem, it really shouldn't require such a concerted effort to get action on what is such an obvious problem (Woollahra resident, member of action group).

Significant resources are required to physically identify, monitor and collect evidence on alleged illegitimate/unauthorised premises. Local councils appear to lack sufficient resources and capacity to effectively investigate and identify such premises. Moreover, it appears there is currently a large disincentive for councils to investigate and prosecute illegitimate premises due to the lack of resources and capacity to obtain sufficient/adequate evidence to prosecute. However, a number of residents argued that councils insist on relying on a (too) conservative interpretation of evidence:

Council seem unwilling or unable to act with enough vigour and effectiveness to bring about any change to this situation (Woollahra resident).

Recognition of resident concerns with more effective communication and timely response about issues would be beneficial in the handling of complaints. It would act as an important means of assuaging the problems reported.

5.7 BACKPACKERS — EASY TARGETS?

The interviewed backpackers were also aware that backpackers are an easy, recognisable target, providing in effect a scapegoat for a range of problems in the urban environment, from noise to vandalism and anti-social behaviour. As Sarah from England put it 'backpackers are easy enough to blame for doing it'.

Despite hearing about some of the tensions between travellers and residents, Sarah's enthusiasm remained as strong as ever: 'I mean, I've never had any kind of hostility from anybody out here. Everybody's been absolutely brilliant. We still want to come! There's still thousands of people who want to come here every year and see it, so there's still something here that's great! (Female, English, early 20s, one year working holiday visa).

In fact, a number of backpackers we spoke to actually shared the concerns of many residents about the detrimental effects of mass tourism:

One of the biggest changes to Bondi's whole look is probably the Swiss Grand Resort, and there's not too many backpackers there. It's mainly tourists. That's a massive resort. It

takes up a whole block on its own. I doubt that backpackers are staying there. Sure, with backpackers you've got noise ... but the biggest, hugest thing which has changed all of Bondi is actually the Swiss Grand Resort, which is tourists, in general (Male, English, early 20s, one year working holiday visa).

5.8 COEXISTENCE AND MANAGEMENT

The successful coexistence of stakeholder groups and the successful management of backpacker tourism emerged as key themes of the research. In focus groups and interviews, residents, operators, and council staff acknowledged the need to find solutions so that the amenity of all affected groups could be improved. As one backpacker operator put it:

I mean, we're not going to sit here and say, "Look, it's not to do with us ..." I mean, we've got to basically co-exist. We understand that residents are obviously — it's their place, it's their community but we're trying to just, you know, operate a backpacker's amongst that to try to give these people a great experience ... I would hope the residents see them in that positive light, you know? But we have to co-exist, yes. I mean, you know, if you get rid of backpackers they're all just going to go into illegal accommodation set-up (Backpacker accommodation operator, City of Sydney).

A number of operators acknowledged that community tensions had emerged and expressed a willingness to cooperate and assist in the development of better management strategies:

We certainly respect the people who have raised the complaints, and they're entitled to a quiet existence as well as anybody else, and it's up to us to try and assist with the management of those issues (Backpacker accommodation operator, member of a Randwick area chamber of commerce).

5.8.1. Positive stories, positive images

The need for positive stories associated with backpacker tourism, and positive images of backpackers, was repeatedly mentioned by a range of groups in the research:

But we have to manage it, to reduce this negative perception ... because I think that's the message that is most frequently conveyed. There's a lack of positive stories going out. In tourism, we are conscious of that. In our small way, we do it whenever we can, but I think

there's got to be more of it. We hear city operators here who are proud of what they do, and have every reason to be proud (Backpacker accommodation operator, Randwick).

Some residents, too, thought that dominant negative perceptions could be addressed by a greater range of images, including positive images, of backpackers:

Most people, when they hear about backpackers, they hear about the really, really negative things that have happened. I've got friends in Manly, and it's just mess on the street, mess in the back garden, there's music all the time ... throwing furniture out of a five-storey building (North Sydney resident, member of precinct committee).

5.8.2. Growing recognition of the need for a balance between *marketing* and *management*

An appropriate balance between the marketing and promotion of areas as tourist destinations and the management of existing tourism emerged as a key theme in this research. Waverley Council, for example, has recently shifted its priorities to decrease its focus on marketing and promotion and to concentrate on sector development and management (Bobbi McIlwraith, Place Manager, Waverley Council). Councils are increasingly trying to strike an effective balance between these two sides, and greater cooperation and communication between tiers of government may work to assist this process.

An improved correlation between the *marketing* of destinations and the *management* of tourism is crucial to future planning for the backpacker market. Greater correlation between these two aspects will also enhance the possibilities of achieving an improved balance between satisfactory community experiences of living with backpackers, and industry and government promotion of the economic advantages of backpacker tourism as a valuable market segment.

6. Recommendations

In summary, the key issues that have been identified through the research and that have informed the framing of the recommendations (see below) are:

- the economic and socio-cultural importance of travel as part of everyday life, which is not always easily/clearly defined as 'tourism' or any particular sub-category of experience. The blurring of activities and categories complicates the collection of useful data and the management of issues via regulatory frameworks;
- the importance of medium-long stay visitors who undertake formal education in Australia or who contribute to labour-market shortages needs to be acknowledged. Increasingly recognised as providing significant labour in the service sector, including the hospitality industry, these young people mostly want to feel they 'belong' and be regarded as part of the community, but are often labelled as backpackers;
- the term 'backpacker' has quite pejorative connotations and is often misleading in terms of the nature and purpose of visit, length of stay, age of the visitor, yield from expenditure and relates in many ways to an outdated construct. Nevertheless, a sector of the tourism industry and the market identify with this label;
- the mobility of communities makes the delineation and categorisation of 'resident', 'visitor', 'tourist', and 'transient, temporary and permanent visitors' very slippery and contested;
- councils and communities generally support the tourism industry provided visitors and businesses respect the rights and needs of residents;
- residents want to see that economic interests do not compromise other quality of life attributes for local people;
- residents want transparent and efficient processes for grievances to be heard and appropriate actions taken, and for solutions that can be achieved not lost in bureaucratic process;
- the research suggests that 'legal'/legitimate backpacker hostels cause few problems. However, councils need to ensure operators have a full management plan/council application, and must enforce fire safety guidelines. Many residents support a requirement that all sites of backpacker accommodation should have a 24-hour on-site manager;
- backpacker industry operators argue that current penalties/fines for failure to comply or operating without council approval are too lenient. Some operators suggest fining owners of buildings rather than unauthorised operators;
- when residential premises are used as commercial backpacker accommodation there are not only issues of con-compliance. There can also be concerns regarding rates and stamp duty revenue for Local government;

- it is easy/convenient for problems and issues to be blamed on one particular group such as backpackers when in reality many people contribute to problems such as noise, litter, dumping of unwanted household goods and graffiti. Education is required to shift attitudes and behaviours;
- councils feel they are often unable to readily access information, support or recognition from other levels of government in relation to the burden of impacts of high levels of transient populations. Greater co-ordination and efficiency in the use of resources is therefore necessary;
- statistically reliable tourism data is (with very few exceptions) not available at the Local government level. In the main this is due to sample size, which is in turn connected to the fact that the collection of all tourism data has not been accepted and funded by the Federal Government as a responsibility of ABS. Consequently data collection has been undertaken collaboratively and is limited by the terms of, and resources available, under a volunteer agreement between all Australian tourism agencies;
- alcohol and drug-related anti-social behaviour is not confined to visitors. It is a growing issue that many are attempting to address at all levels of government, and any local strategies need to be integrated and supported with broader research and policy/legislative reform;
- young travellers are in the high risk category for a range of safety issues relating to alcohol consumption, sexual activity, and predatory behaviour. Advice and support is essential;
- considerable variation is evident in opinions and levels of support and/or concern regarding different issues across the various LGAs. This suggests that while many issues are common to most areas, strategies need to be considered within the local context.

Following this last point, it is evident that councils need to consider the appropriateness of each of the following recommendations and determine their own priorities in relation to local circumstances and existing policies. It is also noted that all councils have a number of successful strategies in place. These can be shared with others. Some examples have been included in the Appendices.

1. BACKPACKER LABEL/DEFINITION

The Federal Tourism Minister's Council, for reference to the relevant sub-committee of the Australian Standing Committee on Tourism (ASCOT) and with appropriate consultation, should consider alternative terminology to 'backpacker'

The research identifies a need for peak Tourism bodies in NSW, together with industry, to consider alternative terminology to 'backpacker' in light of increasing evidence that the term backpacker has developed quite negative associations, and that it is often misleading and unhelpful in terms of capturing statistics about visitor numbers, the nature and purpose of visit, length of stay, age of the visitor, and yield. An expanding market, it now includes: flashpackers, student backpackers,

working holiday makers, budget, independent travellers, studying and working abroad travellers, young professionals and 'grey nomads'. A significant number of 'backpackers' themselves desire to escape this traditional travel label. Such changes would also need to be accommodated by NSW Department of Planning in the LEP templates and definitions which use the term 'backpacker accommodation', as would local council codes.

2. ACCOMMODATION

Strategies should be formulated to facilitate the development of an adequate supply of budget short-medium stay accommodation as a sustainable, low impact product with niche market appeal

With backpacker tourism continuing to be a major growth segment, strategies are required to facilitate the development of an adequate supply of budget, short–medium stay accommodation as a sustainable, low impact product with niche market appeal. These strategies should be formulated in response to the increase in interest by visitors for alternative sources of accommodation. The need for medium-term budget accommodation is particularly acute. Given that more and more young travellers are arriving on Working Holiday Maker and other similar visas there is a need for the provision of medium-stay accommodation and a diversity of accommodation types.

NSW Department of Planning in conjunction with Local government should review planning strategies regarding the supply of budget tourist accommodation in LGAs, assessing the adequacy of supply, and facilitating the development of a diversity of budget accommodation types. Illegitimate backpacker accommodation is an increasingly significant issue, of major concern to the community, the backpacker industry and government - and should be considered in such a review.

3. COMMUNITY AND VISITOR PLANNING

A set of actions should be developed to address the different pressures and issues identified within each local area. This can be achieved through a local planning group that engages the various stakeholders: council staff and elected representatives; chambers of commerce; special interest groups; residents; police and others

There is a need for a set of actions that address the different pressures and issues identified within the local area of each Partner. It would be strategic to frame these to proactively engage the various stakeholders: council staff and elected representatives; chambers of commerce; special interest groups; residents; police and others. Such representation could be constituted as a local Planning Group charged with the need to consider how issues related to backpacker and other forms of tourism might be better managed. The priority issues identified from the research include: noise, anti-social behaviour, unauthorised use of rental accommodation, rubbish and dumping,

vandalism/damage to property, safety, loss of security in residential buildings, public health and fire safety concerns, public drunkenness, and general loss of neighbourhood amenity including the loss of local shops and services and the 'touristification' of communities.

Collectively the Community and Visitor Planning Group would be able to work toward improving the quality of life and satisfaction of residents, visitors and the business sector; encourage socially responsible behaviour; provide a 'voice' for all stakeholders; inform and remind all stakeholders of their rights and responsibilities; provide a vehicle for more open dialogue and a 'working together' ethic. See case studies in Appendix 4 on City of Sydney, Manly and Waverley Councils who have successfully implemented strategies related to a number of the recommendations.

To achieve this it is recommended that each local area Community and Visitor Planning Group work to some extent independently. Local representation would not be achieved if such a group was formed across several LGAs, with frequency of meetings, composition and duration of the life of the Group varying between councils.

However, it is also recommended that each of the councils have representation and input to a Working Group, including Tourism NSW with the Backpacker Operators Association and the NSW Real Estate Institute discussed in 4.i. below.

4. GREATER CO-ORDINATION BETWEEN TIERS OF GOVERNMENT

A set of strategies should be implemented to ensure a consistent, informed and proactive approach which is resource efficient across state and local government to support this important area and at the same time reduce the undesirable impacts on local amenity and safety

There are many opportunities to collaborate with the tourism industry authorities on education, promotion, and distribution of information. However the current arrangements are not always conducive. Tourism NSW (TNSW) has worked with local government, chambers of commerce and business partnerships in tourism precincts to maintain the link between these precincts and TNSW. Such a relationship might be extended, noting any structure would have benefits for all parties and not only issues related to the backpacker sector.

4 i. Working with the Tourism Sector

A collaborative effort is needed to better manage issues and impacts at the local level. educate locals, visitors, and businesses about their rights and responsibilities

4 i.a. Education and expectation management

Three separate information kits should be developed to educate residents, visitors, and businesses about their rights and responsibilities

A Working Group should be established to enhance collaboration between industry representatives such as TNSW, the Backpacker Operators Association, Tourism Industry Council, Working Australia and representation from each LGA interested (beyond just the Partners in this research) to develop three Information Kits – Visitor Information Pack; Resident Information Pack; and a Tourism Businesses Information Pack.

Such an education campaign would provide a more balanced public understanding of backpacker/budget travellers but also make clear the responsibilities of visitors and businesses. Much will be generic, but local variations will be needed (see City of Sydney 'Residents Guide'). These materials could be made available through council and TNSW web sites; airport arrival counters and local visitor information centres; industry bodies.

Visitor Information Pack

This could be given on arrival providing a welcome, but also outlining the rights, responsibilities and opportunities for short, medium and long stay visitors. This could build on the various tourist information brochures and the *Safe in the Sack* campaign, in which several of the councils are already actively involved. Such an information pack could also contain information about where to seek assistance and advice about broader precautions with personal safety, health, valuables, beach-wise tips, safe drug and alcohol consumption, health services and access to Medicare, tenancy rights, rights at work etc.

Residents Information Pack

This could outline the positive aspects of tourism, providing information about the social and economic value of travellers, including the motivation of many medium to long stay visitors to not only relax and have fun but explore, work, study, volunteer, get to know local cultures and experience everyday life. It could advise what constitutes 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' neighbourly behaviour. It could also update on what is being done to reduce undesirable impacts, and provide information on where to find advice/assistance on different issues relating to tourism. Finally, it could outline complaint procedures for different concerns such as anti-social behaviour, regulatory compliance or safety.

Tourism Businesses Information Pack: "Respecting Our Place"

This could provide a Code of Conduct for socially and environmentally responsible business practices in the local context. It could also advise operators of the responsibilities to both resident communities and to visitors – their customers.

4 i.b. *Support for Local government*

A review of resources available to councils managing tourist 'hot spots' should be conducted

Local councils lack sufficient resources and capacity to effectively investigate and identify alleged illegitimate/unauthorised premises. Significant resources are required to physically identify, monitor and collect evidence on such premises, creating a disincentive for councils to investigate and prosecute illegitimate premises. Councils also find access to tourism data and information difficult to obtain. It is therefore recommended that the different tiers of government (Local, State, and Federal) recognise the infrastructure and amenity burdens placed on tourist 'hot spots' and develop appropriate strategies to assist Local government in the successful management of recognised tourist destinations.

4 i.c. *Increasing the diversity of the market*

Marketing approaches should be varied to attract wider source markets of budget travellers

While the marketing of tourism to Australia is regarded to be highly professional, work is perhaps needed with TNSW and Tourism Australia as well as Work Australia and other agencies to attempt to attract a greater mix of long stay visitors, encouraging more diversity amongst the backpacker market. Sydney's cultural fabric needs to be marketed in a more differentiated and cosmopolitan fashion, beyond the conventional coastal-centred discourse attracting mainly the hard-partying and drinking demographic.

4.ii. Working with other State bodies

4.ii.a. Planning issues

NSW Department of Planning, with input from local government, should review the planning instruments related to definitions, permissible uses in zones, and codes most commonly involved in regulating backpacker accommodation. This should include the new Local Environmental Plans (LEP) Standard Instrument templates

In addition to concerns addressed in recommendation 2 relating to accommodation, the research identified a mismatch in definitions and planning instruments, especially concerning the consequences of Strata Law; Residential Tenancy Act and NSW Public Health and Safety Act. In

particular, discrepancies were identified between planning controls and instruments, and market dynamics. The backpacker market is changing, and budget travellers are seeking a diversity of accommodation options and terms of stay. In order to work towards greater conflict/dispute resolution in this area, it is recommended that NSW Department of Planning with input from Local government, review the planning instruments including the new Local Environmental Plans (LEP) Standard Instrument templates. The definitions and permissible uses in zones, and the codes most commonly involved in regulating backpacker accommodation require review to achieve greater efficacy, consistency and relevance with current trends in backpacker tourism (such as room size requirements). The NSW LEP Template does not recognise the significant differences between LGAs (for example, Manly's tourist zone). State-wide definitions are therefore difficult to establish. Also, consideration should be given to the inclusion of a requirement for all places of shared accommodation to be subject to some form of licensing system that allows checks on conditions at the time of license renewal.

The research also identified the need for a review of the stock of affordable housing and Boarding Houses with greater enforcement of compliance. Boarding Houses are an important source of low cost housing, yet their numbers have decreased steadily over the last few decades. Many are converted to other uses, including budget-style backpacker accommodation, or demolished to make way for other uses. Individual councils would be in the best position to undertake such a review. However the dedication of funds and resources for such a review may not be feasible for all councils. It is noted that individual councils already have measures in place to minimise such losses. NSW Department of Planning with input from Local government should review measures required under SEPP 10 – Retention of Low Cost Accommodation, to prevent 'covert' or unauthorised conversions of boarding houses and the broader issue of affordable housing. Applications for changes of use of boarding houses need to be more rigorously assessed. Federal and State government also need to review the incentive packages for affordable housing developers and operators of boarding house stock. It is also recommended that councils conduct ongoing monitoring of tourist use of boarding houses. A review of measures needed to reach minimum levels of regulatory compliance (for example, financial assistance) is also recommended.

4.ii.b Enforcement issues

Local Government and Shires Association, Tourism NSW, Backpacker Operators Association, NSW Police, NSW Fire Brigade and the NSW Real Estate Institute should collaborate to ensure greater coordination between enforcement agencies

Many issues relating to backpacker tourism within a specific locale should properly be addressed by law enforcement officers not council officers. Greater collaboration could result in more effective

procedures and protocols, ensuring greater coordination between enforcement agencies, and a clearer sense of enforcement responsibilities. In relation to building compliance however, councils remain the best body to address relevant issues, but such collaboration would help inform their practices and ensure other stakeholders are aware of any issues.

4.ii.c Anti-social behaviour

NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, the NSW Police, the Australian Hotels Association and NSW Local Government & Shires Association should consolidate and monitor the numerous local strategies addressing anti-social behaviour linked to excessive alcohol consumption in public places

A review of 'late night' closing practices/regulations, operating hours of licensed premises and the responsible behaviour and alcohol consumption by young people including travellers is much needed. Currently this is occurring through local Liquor Accords, but warrants a more comprehensive approach involving the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, the Police and the Australian Hotels Association together with Local government.

Binge drinking is associated with youth culture, and significant anti-social behaviour resultant from excessive alcohol and drug consumption. Part of this problem is addressed via other recommendations: 3. 'Local Community and Visitor Planning Group'; and 4 i.a. 'Education and expectation management'. Liquor Licensing is not a tourism issue and is not managed by Local government, but the negative effects are experienced at the local level with concentrations of late night closing establishments in tourism precincts. While it is recognized that the issue is not confined to visitors, it gives tourism and backpackers a bad reputation, so is deserving of separate mention and attention.

Drink related and other forms of anti-social behaviour require a collaborative approach between councils and other law enforcement bodies. As noted in 4.i.a Resident Information Pack, forms of public education should advise residents of appropriate reporting procedures.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Council Profiles

A.1.1 City of Sydney Profile

Number of legal backpacker hostels (beds):

65 approved hostels in May 2006, about 8000 beds

Number of illegal backpackers:

2000-3000 units used illegally for short-term accommodation

Number of DAs for backpackers in last 10 years:

3-4 in DA process (May 2006)

Number of visitors/tourists:

"In the year to December 2006, over 2.6 million international visitors came to the Sydney Metropolitan area. This represented more than half of all international visitors to Australia. With 60 percent of all hotel rooms in the Sydney Tourism Region, the City played nightly host, on average, to just over 25,000 accommodation visitors, which equates to a record 9.14 million guest nights in 2006".

"In the year to December 2006, annual room nights occupied in the City of Sydney totalled an estimated record annual 5.6 million. Despite global uncertainty, this room night demand represented an increase of 165,000 or 3.0 percent over 2005" (City of Sydney website: City Research: At a glance: Visitors to the City of Sydney).

Occupancy rate in all tourist accommodation has been more than 75 percent during the past three years. In the December 2006 quarter, it was 84.2 percent

In addition – about 475,000 day visitors

Greatest reasons for residents' complaints:

Noise, unauthorised accommodation, and in this type of accommodation: facilities use and costs (for eg. cleaning of shared facilities like lifts and pools, false fire alarms), security

Main issues in council's view:

Unauthorised accommodation, loss of boarding houses

Other issues for council:

Fire and safety

Major compliance issues:

Inconsistency of definitions, loopholes and dodges (for eg sub-leases) and lack of legislation on subletting; definitions also in terms of planning; changes of definition in LEP template; resources limited (for eg there are some 50 internet sites for advertising unauthorised accommodation, also limited powers to fine street advertising for unauthorised premises)

Strategies on backpackers/tourists:

Policy for the Provision of Tourist and Visitor Accommodation 2001; Policy for the Provision of Tourist and Visitor Accommodation in Central Sydney 2001; Visitor and Tourist Accommodation DCP 2006; involvement in Backpacker Taskforce

Measures on unauthorised accommodation:

- DAs for residential apartments have a condition of consent requiring all units in a residential approved building must be either owner occupied or rented under a Residential Tenancy agreement (Residential Tenancy Act 1987); two adults per bedroom
- contractors commissioned to remove advertising around city (power poles and other public places) for shared accommodation (Graffiti Policy)
- liaison with Backpacker Operators Association and private industry on unauthorised accommodation, for eg on advertising in magazines
- submission to Department of Planning on increased power of entry for council officers to premises suspected of offering short-term accommodation (section 118J of Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979); submission to Office of Fair Trading on excluding short-term accommodation from Residential Tenancy Act

Precinct and other committees:

Eight Local Action Plans (LAPs) and regular Community Forums.

Measures to retain boarding houses:

Boarding Houses DCP 2004

Other major concerns/priorities:

Shortage of appropriate accommodation (boosting unauthorised premises); economic gain versus social impact; volume of international students

Unauthorised accommodation: undesirable impact on residents, unfair competition for legitimate short-term accommodation operators, affects standards of tourism accommodation and experience of Sydney.

A.1.2 Manly Profile

Number of registered backpacker accommodation premises (beds):

10 backpacker premises – 553 beds in 2008.

Number of illegal backpackers:

No data available in 2008.

Number of DAs for backpackers in last 10 years:

Four (2008)

Number of visitors/tourists:

"Manly is a national icon, attracting an estimated 6 million visitors per annum, with increases of up to 6.2 percent anticipated each year as a result of Federal and State marketing campaigns." (Manly VIC Business Plan 2005 – 2007).

In 2004, visitor surveys found that between 75 and 88 percent of visitors were day visitors, varying over different periods of the year - some 73 percent of these day visitors were domestic

Greatest reasons for residents' complaints:

Unauthorised accommodation, night time noise and fears for safety

Main issues in council's view:

Co-existence of tourism and residents' values; anti-social behaviour; liquor; illegal budget accommodation

Other issues for council:

Loss of low cost budget housing; excessive use of public amenities/picnic facilities & barbeques in competition with local residents; public health risks associated with unsafe sex practices and excessive drinking

Numbers of complaints directly linked to backpackers:

Three to council during financial year 2007/08, including a complaint from two British backpackers who visited the two largest backpacker accommodation venues in Manly about (what was considered to be) the "state of neglect of the premises, unhygienic facilities, fire safety practices not being observed (electric cords on the floor everywhere), and total ignorance from the management when asking for assistance" (Council correspondence, October 2008)

Five to council during financial year to June 2006 but "maybe more to police" (June 2006); were getting "huge number of complaints" until about 2004 but meetings and discussion brought improvements in management

"Summer in Manly is becoming unbearable due to the amount of backpackers in the area. This will impact heavily on the area in the long term." (Report of the Manly after Midnight Working Party May 2005 – quote from community survey)

Number of suspected unauthorised use investigations: six - but there were no access orders served by council to investigate complaints about unauthorised use of premises (June 2006)

Strategies on backpackers/tourists:

Backpacker accommodation DCP 1998 (amendment 1, 2001); 1993 Manly Tourism Plan of Management; Short-term and Tourist Accommodation Working Party Report and Complaint Handling Procedure 2004; Short-term and Tourist Accommodation Working Party Report 2005; Sea Change for Sustainable Tourism (Report of the Manly after Midnight Working Party May 2005; Crime

Prevention Plan 2000-2004, LEP 1988 [updated Sept 2006], Sect 94 Contributions Plan, Manly Plan 2006-09)

Precinct and other committees:

Twelve precinct community forums.

Boarding houses – numbers now:

Three in 2008.

In May 2006, there were six reported boarding houses. "However, it is thought by council officers, that the number may in fact be as low as four. Boarding houses have been impacted by the growth in property values, the demand for backpacker accommodation and conversion to other forms of tourist accommodation, as well as escalating public liability and other insurance costs." (Planning for Affordable Housing in Manly and Warringah, 2005)

Boarding houses – numbers 10 years ago:

88 in 1983, 55 in 1989, 16 approximately in 2004

Measures to retain boarding houses:

Planning for Affordable Housing in Manly and Warringah, 2005

Other major concerns/priorities/suggestions regarding backpackers:

New LEP template does not take into account community values.

Explore opportunities for 'home stays' for backpackers.

A.1.3 North Sydney Profile

Number of legal backpacker hostels (beds):

Unknown – Council does maintain a register of legal backpackers

Number of illegal backpackers:

Unknown - Council does not maintain a register of illegal backpackers.

Number of DAs for backpackers in last 10 years:

Nil

Number of visitors/tourists:

Council does not keep records of visitors/tourists to the LGA. 2006 ABS Census figures indicate that 1,304 overseas visitors were within the LGA on Census night (8 August 2006).

"Council does not actively encourage or promote the development of tourism-related facilities in North Sydney, particularly if those were to be located in residential areas or have impacts upon residents of the area." (LGA survey May 2005)

Greatest reasons for residents' complaints:

Minimal complaints have been received by council regarding backpackers. Where complaints have been received, they primarily relate to the impact of unauthorised premises on the amenity of long-term residents, namely acoustic privacy.

Main issues in council's view:

Boarding houses being unlawfully used as backpackers (mainly in Kirribilli and Neutral Bay); conflict between boarding house accommodation and backpacker industry; boarding houses being converted to backpacker's accommodation; determining existing use rights of premises due to changes in definitions over the years; unlawful use of apartments as "serviced apartments" for short-term accommodation are a more pressing issue than unlawful backpacker premises.

Other issues for council:

Ensuring compliance with fire safety requirements.

Major compliance issues:

Council does not keep a register of unauthorised premises but deals with each reported unauthorised use on a case-by-case basis; definitions ("backpacker accommodation" was not specifically defined until 1995 within council's LEP. Conversions prior to this time could not be stopped); also lack of clarity in definition of serviced apartments.

Strategies regarding backpackers/tourists:

Council does not actively promote backpacker or tourist accommodation. "Backpacker accommodation" is currently prohibited in all zones within the LGA. "Serviced apartments" and "hotels" are permissible in the Mixed Use and Commercial Zones only. DCP only contains controls relating the built form and operation of boarding houses.

Precinct and other committees:

There are 25 Precinct Committees. Council is not aware of any major issues that have been raised by Precinct Committees or other committees with respect to tourism or backpacker facilities.

Boarding houses – numbers now:

Unknown – Council does not keep a Boarding House Register. However, on the 24 October 2004, a report was put to council regarding preliminary findings from its Boarding House Review 2004 (which has not been adopted), who were informed that approximately 40 boarding houses exist in the LGA. However, this figure was never confirmed through formal investigation. In addition,

council has approved a number of developments since October 2004 that have resulted in the further loss of boarding houses and or boarding house beds.

Boarding houses – numbers 10 years ago:

There has been a steady decline in the number of establishments and boarding house beds over the last thirty years. Most of these have been lost to private residential dwellings or residential flat developments. Council's 1995 *North Sydney Housing Database* identified that in 1978 there were 155 boarding houses existing in the LGA. This number reduced to 74 in 1988 and then down to 68 in 1995. This number had further dropped to 48 boarding houses by 1998 as identified in the *Inner Sydney Boarding House Report* conducted by the University of Sydney.

Measures to retain boarding houses:

Council formalised its position to maintain affordable housing in the 1970s. This was underpinned by its *Housing Strategy* introduced in 1982 and *Affordable Housing Strategy* in 1994. Boarding houses were recognised as an important form of affordable housing within the *Affordable Housing Strategy*. As part of the *Affordable Housing Strategy*, and to facilitate the provision of affordable housing, council sought to obtain funds for affordable housing through its Section 94 Contributions Plan. Under this Plan, developers who are directly responsible for the loss of affordable housing are required to contribute money towards replacement affordable housing stock. The provisions of SEPP 10 – Retention of Low Cost Rental Accommodation are also considered where a development will involve the loss of boarding house beds.

Other major concerns/priorities on backpackers:

Improved definitions for “backpacker’s accommodation”, “serviced apartments”, “hotel accommodation” and “tourist accommodation” are provided within the Standard Instrument, with which all council’s will be required to comply with by 2011. The new mandatory definitions will help to reduce some levels of confusion between interpreting particular activities.

Council is currently in the process of updating its current LEP into the Standard Instrument format and anticipates its coming into force in March 2009. However, backpacker’s accommodation is likely to remain a prohibited use in all zones throughout the LGA.

A.1.4 Randwick Profile

Number of legal backpacker hostels (beds):

Three approved premises (two in Coogee and one in Clovelly) - 253 beds; only allowed in 3A General Business zone (since November 2001) only one of the three approved hostels is in a 3A zone (the others have "existing use" rights and are in 2A and 2C zones)

Number of illegal backpackers:

69 investigations of premises suspected of illegal use from 1999 to 2006 (may be incomplete because of lack of computer recording at first)

Number of DAs for backpackers in last 10 years:

Only one DA in recent years – council rejected but approved by court

Number of visitors/tourists:

"Randwick has a number of key regional facilities including beaches, sporting, educational and medical institutions which attract over 23 million non resident visitors each year" (Management Plan 2005-2008 June 2005).

2001 census - 2917 international visitors on census night (2.4 percent of population); 7236 total visitors (6 percent of population)

Greatest reasons for residents' complaints:

Late night and other noise; anti-social behaviour; overcrowding; rubbish; fire, public health and safety concerns; general disturbance and loss of residential amenity - primarily to do with unauthorised premises (houses, flats and boarding houses used as backpackers)

Main issues in council's view:

Unauthorised premises, loss of boarding houses

Other issues for council:

Hard to know how representative resident complaints are, while councillors must consider political agenda; high cost of investigations and mounting cases

Numbers of complaints directly linked to backpackers:

Few complaints relating to authorised places, but many complaints about alleged unauthorised premises

2005 – 8 premises investigated till October;

2004 – 2 premises investigated;

2003 – 6 premises investigated;

2002 – 5 premises investigated;

12 months to October 2001 – 8 premises investigated (100 complaints about alleged unauthorised premises)

2000 – 24 premises investigated

"...there has only been one (1) occasion during the relevant period [1999 to 2006] where council found it necessary to obtain a Search Warrant (pursuant to s.118K of the EP&A Act) to enter a premises that was being used to provide unauthorised backpacker accommodation. The evidence obtained upon the execution of the Search Warrant, inter alia, resulted in the bringing of successful contempt proceedings in the Land and Environment Court in 2004 (confirmed on Appeal in 2005) for a breach of Court Orders (made as a result of successful class 4 proceedings in 2000) restraining the premises (an approved boarding house) from being used for the purpose of providing backpacker accommodation".

"I can only recall one other occasion relating to another premises, where council brought class 4 proceedings in the Land and Environment Court in the relevant period. These proceedings resulted in Orders (by consent) restraining the premises (again an approved boarding house) from being used as backpacker accommodation." (Allan Graham, June 2006)

Compliance officer numbers:

Three compliance officers; two building and development control officers

Major compliance issues:

Many older buildings which are not subject to specific development consent and are covered by "existing use" provisions so council cannot regulate them or add any conditions on their operation; inconsistency of definitions in various planning instruments; limited powers of entry to residential premises; reluctance of building owners and landlords to cooperate on details of operations; limited health and fire safety provisions to apply; loophole leases

Strategies on backpackers/tourists:

Backpacker DCP 2000; council resolution to ban backpackers at Coogee via LEP 1998 amendment (June 2005) but rejected by DIPNR (August 2005); Backpacker Task Force (submission being prepared for State Government; Task Force will also recommend a community education / awareness campaign to explain offensive noise and council powers and people's rights.)

Precinct and other committees:

Twelve precinct committees; Safety Committee (night time noise and other issues)

Boarding houses – numbers now:

71 (June 2006)

Measures to retain boarding houses:

LEP Amendment 22 on Affordable Housing 2006 (LEP 1998)
SEPP No. 10 – Retention of low cost rental accommodation
(Inner East Sydney Housing Strategy Nov 2005)

Number of boarding houses converted to backpackers:

One existing boarding house granted consent (by court in 2005) to change its use to provide backpacker accommodation (from 1999 – June 2006)

Other major concerns/priorities on backpackers:

Would like to see limited time approvals/licences on backpacker premises to allow variation of conditions; also would like adequate enforcement and penalty provisions; these to apply to places regardless of their history and "existing use".

A.1.5 Waverley Profile

Number of legal backpacker hostels (beds):

Five hostels, 570 beds: four in Bondi and one in Tamarama (March 2006) - only allowed in commercial zones

Number of illegal backpackers:

76 in early 2006; have had up to 316, during Olympics (May 2006)

"The most concerning development in Waverley is that... a small group of people appear to have become organised owners and operators of growing networks of properties seemingly for the explicit purpose of providing illegal backpacker accommodation. The owners appear aware of the law and how to work around it. At the same time some have become more brazen about their activities." (Alleged Illegal Backpacker Accommodation Report 2004)

Number of DAs for backpackers in last 10 years:

Last three years or so: two DAs (2006)

Number of visitors/tourists:

Roughly 150,000 backpackers in 1999; 162,000 in 2000 (19 percent of international visitors); over 48 percent of international backpackers to Sydney visit Bondi Beach.

Overall visitors (most on day trip basis) total 2-3 million a year (including 860,000 international - 35 percent of all international visitors to Sydney in 2000).

Over three times as many international visitors in 2001 as in 1996.

2001 census - 1906 international visitors on census night (3.1 percent of population); 3720 visitors all up (6.1 percent of population)

Greatest reasons for residents' complaints:

Unauthorised premises; anti-social behaviour, especially noise, rubbish and dumped cars, vandalism; loss of diversity of services and loss of services geared to long-term residents as opposed to tourism

"There is a strong feeling that there is too much tourist accommodation in the Bondi Basin (both legal and illegal)... There is a view that there are too many visitors, particularly backpackers, staying in the Bondi basin area, often in rented flats which operated as alleged illegal backpacker establishments. The concerns resulted from amenity impacts, especially noise, rather than any objection per se to such visitors... A greater mix of accommodation types is desired" (Visitor and Tourist Management Strategy 2002).

Main issues in council's view:

Need to balance community and visitors' needs; concentration of backpackers in certain areas: social and environmental costs and loss of demographic diversity; not wide enough mix of types of accommodation; high costs of managing visitation

Other issues for council:

Unauthorised accommodation premises, loss of boarding houses; fire and safety; lack of awareness on beach use; lack of or poor definitions hampering regulation

Numbers of complaints directly linked to backpackers:

Over 100 a year

2002-2003 – 199 complaints received

Complaints about alleged unauthorised premises investigated:

November 2005 – 23 investigated: 9 resolved, 14 outstanding

December 2005 – 16 investigated: 7 resolved, 9 outstanding

Jan 2006 – 27 investigated: 10 resolved, 17 outstanding

Feb 2006 – 31 investigated: 16 resolved, 15 outstanding
March 2006 – 22 investigated: 7 resolved, 15 outstanding
April 2006 – 17 investigated: 4 resolved, 13 outstanding
May 2006 – 17 investigated: 6 resolved, 11 outstanding
June 2006 – 11 investigated: 3 resolved, 7 outstanding (sic)

Major compliance issues:

Law restricts what councils can do (some powers via Fire, and Health and Safety regulations but these are fairly limited); notice of 7 to 9 days to be given on inspections – time for operators to clear out illegals; problems with definitions and loopholes in legislation (eg definitions too broad - difficult to prove illegals in court)

Costly process to mount cases - would like to see burden of proof on property owner/operator

Strategies on backpackers/tourists:

DCP 12 Guidelines for Boarding Houses, Backpacker accommodation and Bed and Breakfast establishments (1997, with amendments to 2001); Visitor and Tourist Management Strategy 2002; Alleged Illegal Backpacker Accommodation Report 2004; LEP 1996 (Division 3 Affordable Housing – updated Feb 2005)

(Bondi Forum; Place Management Model at Bondi and Bondi Junction; Safe Summer initiative; Management Plan 2006-2010, Social Plan 2005)

Measures such as: management plans to be included with any DA for backpackers, liaison with police who keep lists of complaints and premises involved, etc.

Precinct and other committees:

13 precincts

Boarding houses – numbers now:

72 (but probably many being used otherwise)

Boarding houses – numbers 10 years ago:

In the 60s/70s there were over 230 with accommodation for over 3000;

1974-83 there were 128 closures

Concerns about further loss re LEP template, which would allow strata subdivision without consent

Measures to retain boarding houses:

Rate rebates to boarding houses; (Inner East Sydney Housing Strategy Nov 2005)

Other major concerns/priorities on backpackers:

Large number of English language students – add to a backpacker type of group of people and demand for short-term accommodation

A.1.6 Woollahra Profile

Number of legal backpacker hostels (beds):

None; two approved "pseudo-backpackers" (boarding houses which were for sale in May 2006)

Number of illegal backpackers:

Four premises known in May 2006, mainly houses full of backpackers, often places set to be demolished

Number of DAs for backpackers in last 10 years:

None in recent years

"Council does not actively pursue DAs for short-term accommodation and it is not a problem in Woollahra." (LGA Survey, May 2005)

Number of visitors/tourists:

2001 census figures: 1052 international visitors and 1827 Australian visitors on census night (adding up to about 5.8 percent of the population)

Greatest reasons for residents' complaints:

Noise and anti-social behaviour in and around unauthorised accommodation premises

Main issues in council's view:

Unauthorised accommodation premises and their impacts on neighbouring amenity (noise, drinking, etc); loss of boarding houses; fire safety; dual use of boarding houses also accommodating backpackers

Other issues for council:

Tourism as such not an issue

Numbers of complaints directly linked to backpackers:

No complaints for twelve months up to May 2006

Major compliance issues:

Need simpler planning to allow for enforcement; issues of definition (for eg permanence of stay, principle place of residence); dodgy leases and loopholes; time and effort needed to get evidence and mount cases, as well as prohibitive costs; theoretically can use existing regulations for noise and such but in practice very hard because of shifting population; owners of places won't accept responsibility (for eg. how the place kept, lots of garbage, noise)

Strategies on backpackers/tourists:

General only in LEP

Precinct and other committees:

No precinct committees but resident action groups

Boarding houses – numbers now:

About 15 in November 2005 (at least a couple being used illegally)

Measures to retain boarding houses:

SEPP 10 contributions for low-cost housing
(Inner East Sydney Housing Strategy 2005)

Appendix 2: Tourism NSW Backpacker Statistics



International Backpackers# to NSW ⁽¹⁾ Year ended December 2007

Visitors to NSW	441,200
Nights in NSW (million)	12.8
Expenditure in NSW (million)	\$983
Expenditure per visitor in NSW	\$2,228

Overnight visitors



NSW received over 441,200 international backpackers - up by 4.1% on YE Dec 06. Backpackers represented 15.5% of visitors to the State - up by 0.3% points on YE Dec 06.

Note: Consumer confidence improved in 2004 and, due to pent-up travel demand, many markets increased their international travel. Changes to the Working Holiday Maker scheme in 2005 improved Australia's competitiveness as a long-haul destination.

Visitor nights



International backpackers spent over 12.8 million nights in NSW - up by 0.2% on YE Dec 06. Backpackers contributed 22.4% of nights in the State - up by 0.1% point on YE Dec 06.

Market share

NSW's share of international backpackers in Australia was 78.0% of visitors and 31.7% of nights. Compared to YE Dec 06, the share of visitors was up by 0.2% points and the share of nights was down by 0.8% points.

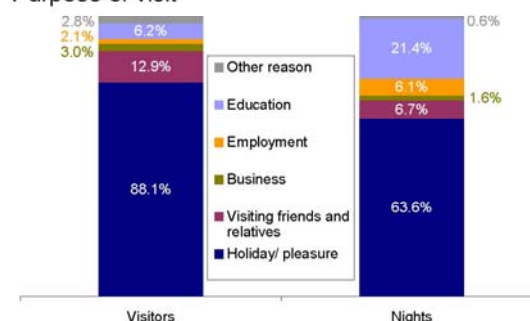
Accommodation

Over 1/3 (35.4%) of international backpacker nights in NSW were spent in 'Backpacker / hostel'. 'Rented house / apartment / unit / flat' (33.7%) was the 2nd most popular accommodation type used, followed by 'Home of friend or relative' (12.9%) and 'Homestay' (5.3%).

Transport

Almost 2/5 (39.4%) of international backpackers used 'Aircraft' to destinations in NSW. 'Long distance coach or bus' (26.3%) was the 2nd most popular transport used, followed by 'Local public transport' (21.0%) and 'Private or company car' (17.9%).

Purpose of visit



Visitors: 'Holiday/pleasure' (88.1%) was the largest purpose for international backpackers to the State. 'Visiting friends and relatives' (12.9%) was the 2nd largest, followed by 'Education' (6.2%).

Nights: 'Holiday/pleasure' (63.6%) was the largest purpose in terms of international backpacker nights in NSW. 'Education' (21.4%) was the 2nd largest, followed by 'Visiting friends and relatives' (6.7%).

Length of stay

Purpose of visit	Ave length of stay (nights)		Median stay (nights)	
	NSW	Australia	NSW	Australia
Holiday/pleasure	20.9	62.9	9	29
Visiting friends and relatives	15.0	35.2	12	21
Business	16.0	31.5	5	12
Employment	86.6	134.5	93	116
Education	100.8	138.7	97	135
Other reason	6.3	65.4	9	11
Total	29.0	71.4	9	31

International backpackers stayed on average 29 nights in NSW, while their average stay in Australia was 71.4 nights. The median length of stay in the State was 9 nights, compared to 31 nights in Australia.

International 'Holiday/pleasure' backpackers had an average stay of 20.9 nights and a median stay of 9 nights in NSW.

Origin

Ranked	Country	% of backpackers to NSW	Ranked	Country	% of backpacker nights in NSW
1	United Kingdom	22.7%	1	United Kingdom	20.9%
2	Germany	10.2%	2	Germany	9.7%
3	USA	9.1%	3	USA	8.1%
4	Korea	6.3%	4	Korea	7.9%
5	Scandinavia	5.4%	5	Japan	7.0%
6	Japan	5.4%	6	France	5.4%
7	New Zealand	4.7%	7	Ireland	5.2%
8	Canada	4.5%	8	Scandinavia	4.6%
9	Ireland	4.5%	9	Canada	4.3%
10	France	3.9%	10	Netherlands	2.9%

'United Kingdom' was, by far, the largest source market of international backpackers to NSW. This market contributed 22.7% of visitors and 20.9% of nights.

Note: Percentage change figures provided in this market profile do not necessarily represent statistically significant change.

(1) Source: International Visitor Survey, YE Dec 07, Tourism Research Australia (TRA) - unless otherwise indicated

www.tourism.nsw.gov.au



Tourism New South Wales

International Backpackers[#] to NSW⁽¹⁾

Year ended December 2007

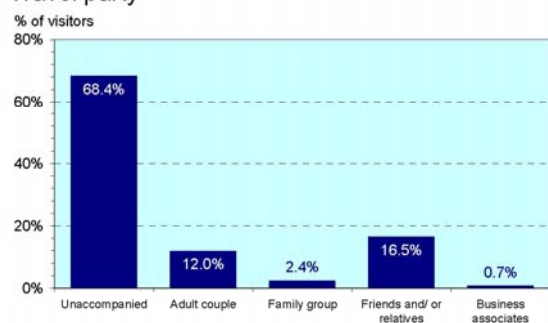
Top 5 places visited in NSW

Ranked	Region	% of backpackers
1	Sydney	95.3%
2	Northern Rivers	32.1%
3	Mid North Coast	15.8%
4	The Hunter	7.3%
5	Blue Mountains	6.2%

Nearly all (95.3%) of international backpackers, who had been to NSW, had spent at least one night in 'Sydney'. 'Northern Rivers' (32.1%) was the 2nd most visited region, followed by 'Mid North Coast' (15.8%) and 'The Hunter' (7.3%).

International backpackers to Australia: 'Sydney' (74.3%) was the most popular region. 'Melbourne' (43.9%) was the 2nd most visited region, followed by 'Brisbane' (39.9%) and 'Tropical North Queensland' (39.2%).

Travel party

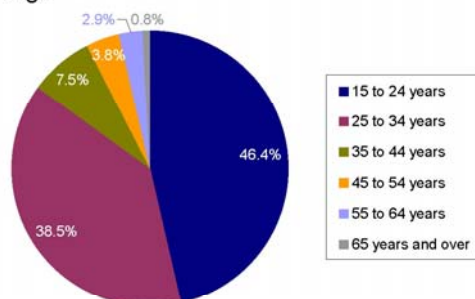


Over 2/3 (68.4%) of international backpackers to the State travelled 'Unaccompanied'. 'Friends and / or relatives travelling together' (16.5%) was the 2nd biggest travel party, followed by 'Adult couple' (12.0%).

Gender

Over 1/2 (51.6%) of international backpackers visitors to the State were female, while 48.4% were male.

Age

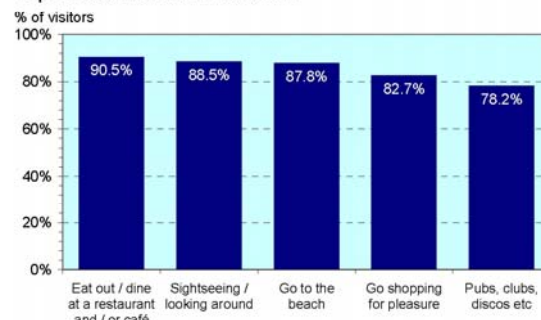


'15 to 24 years' (46.4%) was the biggest age group of international backpackers to NSW. '25 to 34 years' (38.5%) was the 2nd biggest age group, followed by '35 to 44 years' (7.5%).

Note: Percentage change figures provided in this market profile do not necessarily represent statistically significant change.

(1) Source: International Visitor Survey, YE Dec 07, Tourism Research Australia (TRA) - unless otherwise indicated

Top 5 activities in Australia



Over 9/10 (90.5%) of international backpackers, who had been to NSW, 'Ate out / dined at a restaurant and / or café' during their trip to Australia. 'Sightseeing / looking around' (88.5%) was the 2nd most popular activity, followed by 'Go to the beach' (87.8%).

First time or repeat visit

Nearly 3/4 (73.8%) of international backpackers, who had been to NSW, were on their first trip to Australia.

Package tours

Nearly 1/10 (8.4%) of international backpackers, who had been to NSW, arrived in Australia on a travel package.

'Some accommodation in Australia' (43.0%) was the most popular travel arrangement included in the package (other than 'International airfares'). The next most popular was 'Airfares within Australia' (40.8%), followed by 'Most ground transport within Australia' (30.4%).

Group tour visitors

Only 2.6% of international backpackers, who had been to the State, were on a group tour in Australia.

Information sources

Over 1/2 (51.4%) of international backpackers, who had been to NSW, had used the 'Internet' as an information source for their trip to Australia. 'Travel book or guide' (32.6%) was the 2nd largest source, followed by 'Travel agent' (24.4%).

Nearly 1/10 (7.8%) obtained no information.

Expenditure⁽²⁾

Destination	Total (million)	Per visitor	Per night
New South Wales	\$983	\$2,228	\$77
Australia	\$3,102	\$5,481	\$77

International backpackers spent \$983 million in NSW. In total, they spent over \$3.1 billion in Australia.

On average, international backpackers spent \$2,228 per visitor and \$77 per night in NSW.

(2) Excluding package tours and prepaid international airfares.

Definition

[#] A backpacker is defined as an international visitor who spent one or more nights in a backpacker hostel or youth hostel during their stay in Australia.

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Appendix 3. Stakeholder Input

A3.1.1. Residents survey selected results

Table A-1: Selected responses to questionnaire for Sydney residents		
Question	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Q1. In which suburb do you live in Sydney?		
	n = 364	
Balmain	3	0.8%
Bondi	34	9.3%
Bondi Beach	17	4.7%
Broadway	2	0.5%
Clovelly	7	1.9%
Coogee	102	28.0%
Darlinghurst	4	1.1%
Glebe	5	1.4%
Kings Cross	7	1.4%
Manly	40	11.0%
Newtown	6	1.6%
North Sydney	26	7.1%
Paddington	2	0.5%
Potts Point	3	0.8%
Randwick	27	7.4%
Surry Hills	4	1.1%
Sydney City	14	3.8%
Ultimo	1	0.3%
Waverley	9	2.5%
Woollahra	1	0.3%
Woollomoolloo	2	0.5%
Other	42	11.5%
Q2. Do you:		
	n = 379	
Own your own home	259	68.3%
Rent	120	31.7%
Q3. Do you run a business locally?		
	n = 373	
Yes	60	16.1%
No	313	83.9%
Q4. How long have you lived in this suburb?		
	n = 381	
Less than 1 year	23	6.0%
1 – 5 years	110	28.9%
5 – 10 years	77	20.2%
10 – 15 years	50	13.1%
More than 15 years	121	31.8%
Q5. What do you like about living in this area?		
	n = 377	
Close to the beach	260	69.0%
Close to city	281	74.5%
Close to public transport	256	67.9%
Good community	199	52.8%
Good schools	57	15.1%
Close to family	95	25.2%
Close to work	166	44.0%
Other	57	15.1%
Q6. How has your suburb changed in terms of development in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 367	
Large decrease	4	1.1%

Slight decrease	6	1.6%
No change	76	20.7%
Slight increase	136	37.1%
Large increase	145	39.5%
Q7.How has your suburb changed in terms of amenity and services in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 362	
Large decrease	29	8.0%
Slight decrease	61	16.9%
No change	189	52.2%
Slight increase	67	18.5%
Large increase	16	4.4%
Q8.How has your suburb changed in terms of the number of boarding houses in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 345	
Large decrease	21	6.1%
Slight decrease	46	13.3%
No change	165	47.8%
Slight increase	73	21.2%
Large increase	40	11.6%
Q9.How has your suburb changed in terms of its diversity of community in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 357	
Large decrease	21	5.9%
Slight decrease	34	9.5%
No change	144	40.3%
Slight increase	119	33.3%
Large increase	39	10.9%
Q10.How has your suburb changed in terms of illegal/unauthorised shared accommodation in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 357	
Large decrease	9	2.5%
Slight decrease	12	3.4%
No change	113	31.7%
Slight increase	79	22.1%
Large increase	144	40.3%
Q11.How has your suburb changed in terms of its cosmopolitan lifestyle in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 357	
Large decrease	8	2.2%
Slight decrease	31	8.7%
No change	120	33.6%
Slight increase	144	40.3%
Large increase	54	15.1%
Q12.How has your suburb changed in terms of property value in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 363	
Large decrease	8	2.2%
Slight decrease	28	7.7%
No change	58	16.0%
Slight increase	131	36.1%
Large increase	138	38.0%
Q13.How has your suburb changed in terms of environmental quality in the time you have lived there?		
	n = 371	
Large decrease	75	20.2%
Slight decrease	97	26.1%
No change	135	36.4%
Slight increase	51	13.7%
Large increase	13	3.5%
Q22. What role do you believe tourism has played in these changes?		
	n = 372	
Major	190	51.1%
Minor	134	36.0%
No role	48	12.9%

Q23. What kind of visitors does your suburb mainly attract?		
	n = 365	
High end tourists	16	4.4%
Budget travellers/backpackers	140	38.4%
International students	40	11.0%
Mix of all above	146	40.0%
Other	23	6.3%
Q24. How would you define the term 'backpacker'?		
	n = 369	
Tourist	8	2.2%
Independent traveller	31	8.4%
Student traveller	13	3.5%
Working holiday maker	59	16.0%
Budget traveller	224	60.7%
Other	34	9.2%
Q25. In your opinion, what is the country of origin of most visitors to your suburb?		
	n = 362	
Australia	33	9.1%
Canada	1	0.3%
China	15	4.1%
France	0	0.0%
Germany	6	1.7%
Ireland	65	9.7%
Italy	0	0.0%
Japan	8	2.2%
Korea	6	1.7%
Netherlands	2	0.6%
New Zealand	4	1.1%
Scandinavia	2	0.6%
South America	11	3.0%
United Kingdom	207	57.2%
USA	8	2.2%
Other	24	6.6%
Q26. What are the benefits associated with backpackers?		
	n = 366	
Add character to the suburb	90	24.6%
Contribute to local economy	181	49.5%
Seasonal/agricultural work	53	14.5%
Rent local accommodation	58	15.8%
None	147	40.2%
Other	12	3.3%
Q27. What are the major problems associated with backpackers?		
	n = 369	
Unauthorised accommodation	221	59.9%
Anti-social behaviour	266	72.1%
Rubbish dumping	217	58.8%
Abandoned cars	142	38.5%
Loss of low cost housing	124	33.63%
Noise	280	75.9%
None	29	7.9%
Other	43	11.7%
Q28. How have you responded to problems associated with backpackers?		
	n = 341	
Confronted the backpackers personally	110	32.3%
Called police	130	38.1%
Formed a resident action group	42	12.3%
Contacted local member of parliament	40	11.7%
Lodged complaints with council	121	35.5%
Not applicable (no response)	121	35.5%
Other	32	9.4%
Q29. What was the outcome, if you "confronted the backpackers personally"?		
	n = 293	
The problem was solved	15	5.1%
Some changes	24	8.2%

The problem is ongoing	79	27.0%
Other	8	2.7%
Not applicable	167	57.0%
Q30. What was the outcome, if you "called police"?		
	n = 293	
The problem was solved	12	4.1%
Some changes	21	7.2%
The problem is ongoing	95	32.4%
Other	7	2.4%
Not applicable	158	53.9%
Q31. What was the outcome, if you "formed a resident action group"?		
	n = 276	
The problem was solved	3	1.1%
Some changes	21	7.6%
The problem is ongoing	34	12.3%
Other	3	1.1%
Not applicable	215	77.9%
Q32. What was the outcome, if you "contacted a local member of parliament"?		
	n = 273	
The problem was solved	1	0.4%
Some changes	7	2.6%
The problem is ongoing	42	15.4%
Other	4	1.5%
Not applicable	219	80.2%
Q33. What was the outcome, if you "lodged complaints with council"?		
	n = 291	
The problem was solved	6	2.1%
Some changes	58	19.9%
The problem is ongoing	40	13.7%
Other	135	46.4%
Not applicable	52	17.9%
Q35. If you lodge complaints with council, do you think that the council responds adequately?		
	n = 259	
Yes	51	16.2%
No	125	39.8%
Not applicable	138	43.9%
Q36. How do you think the council could respond better?		
	n = 292	
Better communication process between council and residents	145	49.7%
Designated backpacker tourist officer	138	47.3%
Council to organise community forums	73	25.0%
More council resources	108	37.0%
Other	51	17.5%
Q37. In your opinion, what kind of solutions could be proposed?		
	n = 337	
Earlier closing time for licensed premises (pubs, etc.)	171	50.7%
Enforce existing laws	234	69.4%
Introduce new laws	125	37.1%
Increase council powers	134	39.8%
Other	52	15.4%
Q38. What suggestions would you have for backpacker hostel operators?		
	n = 329	
Have a manager on site 24 hours	278	84.5%
No noise after 10pm	223	67.8%
Curfew in place	112	34.0%
No alcohol on premises	156	47.4%
Other	36	10.9%
Q39. Overall, what do you think backpacker tourism for Sydney is?		
	n = 360	
An asset	170	47.2%
A liability	126	35.0%
No opinion	25	6.9%
Other	39	10.8%

Q40. How old are you?		
	n = 371	
Under 18	1	0.3%
18 – 23	11	3.0%
24 – 29	43	11.6%
30 – 35	60	16.2%
36 – 41	48	12.9%
41 – 49	76	20.5%
50 – 59	62	16.7%
60 – 68	40	10.8%
Over 65	30	8.1%
Q41. What is your gender?		
	n = 365	
Male	155	42.5%
Female	210	57.5%
Q42. Are you:		
	n = 369	
An Australian citizen	323	87.5%
A permanent resident	38	10.3%
Other	8	2.2%
Q43. What is the dominant language spoken at home?		
	n = 373	
English	359	96.2%
Italian	2	0.5%
Japanese	1	0.3%
Chinese	2	0.5%
Spanish	1	0.3%
Arabic	1	0.3%
Russian	2	0.5%
Other	5	1.3%

A3.1.2. Backpackers Survey Selected Results

Table A-2: Selected responses to questionnaire for travellers		
Question	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Q2. Are/were you an international visitor or a permanent resident?		
	n = 298	
International visitor	271	90.9%
Permanent resident	27	9.1%
Q3. What is/was the duration of your visit?		
	n = 294	
Less than a month	28	9.5%
1 – 6 months	86	29.3%
More than 6 months, less than a year	68	23.1%
1 year or more	112	38.1%
Q5. What type of visa do/did you have?		
	n = 293	
Working holiday visa	195	66.6%
6 month holiday visa	33	11.3%
12 month holiday visa	16	5.5%
Sponsored employee visa	3	1.0%
Student visa	16	5.5%
De facto visa	1	0.3%
N/A (Australian citizen or permanent resident)	20	6.8%
Other	9	3.1%
Q7. How are you travelling/did you travel?		
	n = 295	
Alone	138	46.8%
With friends	117	39.7%
With partner	36	12.2%
Other	4	1.4%
Q8. Have you stayed in Sydney?		
	n = 297	
Yes	281	94.6%
No	16	5.4%
Q9. How long will you be staying/did you stay in Sydney?		
	n = 292	
1 – 3 days	10	3.4%
4 – 6 days	23	7.9%
1 – 2 weeks	40	13.7%
2 – 4 weeks	27	9.2%
1 – 2 months	36	12.3%
2 – 6 months	107	36.6%
More than 6 months	43	14.7%
Other	6	2.1%
Q10. What is/was your most usual means of transportation while in Sydney?		
	n = 290	
Bus	136	46.9%
Train	53	18.3%
Walking	72	24.8%
Car	18	6.2%
Other	11	3.8%
Q11. Do you think Sydney has a good tourist infrastructure?		
	n = 293	
Yes	272	92.8%
No	21	7.2%
Q13. How do you think backpackers are regarded by the wider Sydney community?		
	n = 284	

Positively	121	42.6%
Negatively	49	17.3%
Indifferent	108	38.0%
Other	6	2.1%
Q14. What other cities/regions do you plan to or have you visited in Australia?		
	n = 276	
Adelaide	107	38.8%
Brisbane	204	73.9%
Cairns	201	72.8%
Darwin	107	38.8%
Melbourne	187	67.8%
Perth	124	44.9%
Other	54	19.6%
Q15. Which suburb are/were you staying in most of the time while in Sydney?		
	n = 276	
Balmain	1	0.4%
Bondi	69	25.0%
Bondi Beach	78	28.3%
Coogee	12	4.3%
Darlinghurst	1	0.4%
Glebe	25	9.1%
Kings Cross	30	10.9%
Kirribilli	1	0.4%
Manly	19	6.9%
Newtown	3	1.1%
North Sydney	2	0.7%
Paddington	1	0.4%
Potts Point	1	0.4%
Randwick	3	1.1%
Surry Hills	4	1.4%
Sydney City	12	4.3%
Ultimo	1	0.4%
Woollahra	1	0.4%
Woolloomoolloo	1	0.4%
Other	11	4.0%
Q16. What type of accommodation are you staying in/did you stay at?		
	n = 291	
Backpacker hostel	229	78.7%
Serviced apartment	8	2.7%
Shared accommodation	30	10.3%
With friends/relatives	17	5.8%
Other	7	2.4%
Q17. What is/was the main reason for your choice to stay in this particular place/suburb/hostel?		
	n = 282	
Close to city centre	43	15.2%
Close to beach	124	44.0%
Cheap	52	18.4%
Staying with friends	35	12.4%
Other	28	9.9%
Q18. How did you find out about your accommodation?		
	n = 290	
Flyer/brochure	18	6.2%
Internet	94	32.4%
Word of mouth	96	33.1%
Guidebook	51	17.6%
Other	31	10.7%
Q20. Have you had/did you have any problems or conflicts in this suburb?		
	n = 287	
Yes	31	10.8%
No	256	89.2%
Q21. How old are you?		
	n = 293	
Under 18	1	0.3%
18 – 23	148	50.5%

24 – 29	105	35.8%
30 – 35	28	9.6%
36 – 41	5	1.7%
Over 41	6	2.0%
Q22. What is your gender?		
	n = 287	
Male	174	60.6%
Female	113	39.4%
Q23. What is your country of origin?		
	n = 294	
Australia	16	5.4%
Canada	22	7.5%
China	1	0.3%
France	12	4.1%
Germany	38	12.9%
Ireland	43	14.6%
Italy	9	3.1%
Japan	2	0.7%
Netherlands	5	1.7%
New Zealand	3	1.0%
Scandinavia	16	5.4%
South America	5	1.7%
United Kingdom	97	33.0%
USA	7	2.4%
Other	18	6.1%
Q24. Have you worked/do you intend to work while in Australia?		
	n = 291	
Yes	228	78.4%
No	63	21.6%
Q25. How would you define yourself and your mode of travel?		
	n = 288	
Tourist	14	4.9%
Independent traveller	52	18.1%
Backpacker	83	28.8%
Student traveller	23	8.0%
Working holiday maker	85	29.5%
Budget traveller	23	8.0%
Other	8	2.8%

A3.1.3. Additional Survey Figures

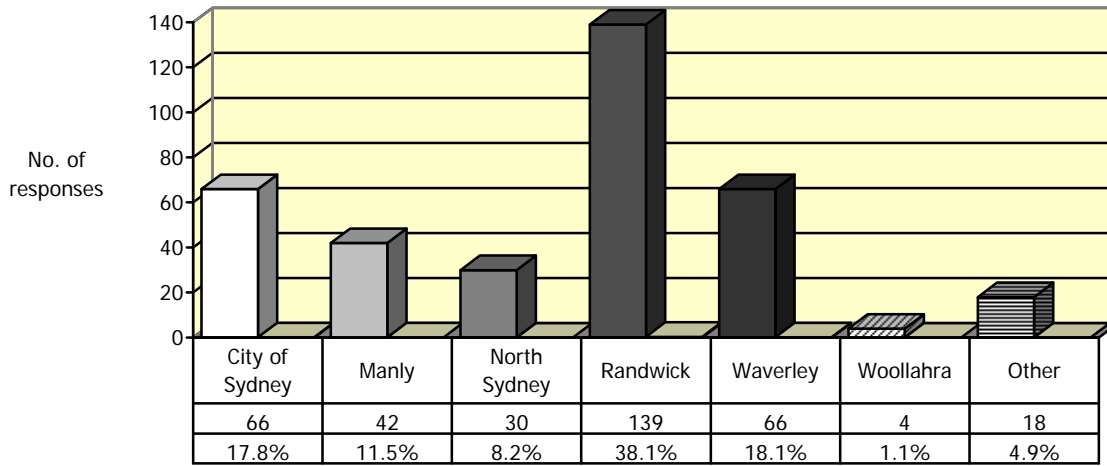


Figure A-1: Residents Survey responses, by LGA

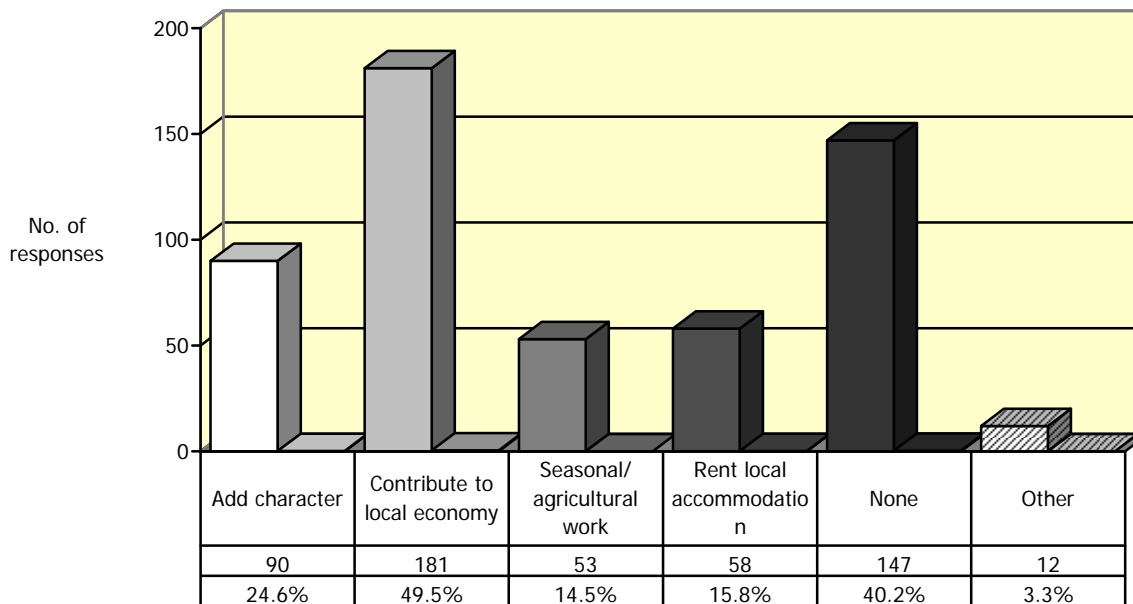


Figure A-2: Resident opinion of 'benefits' associated with backpackers

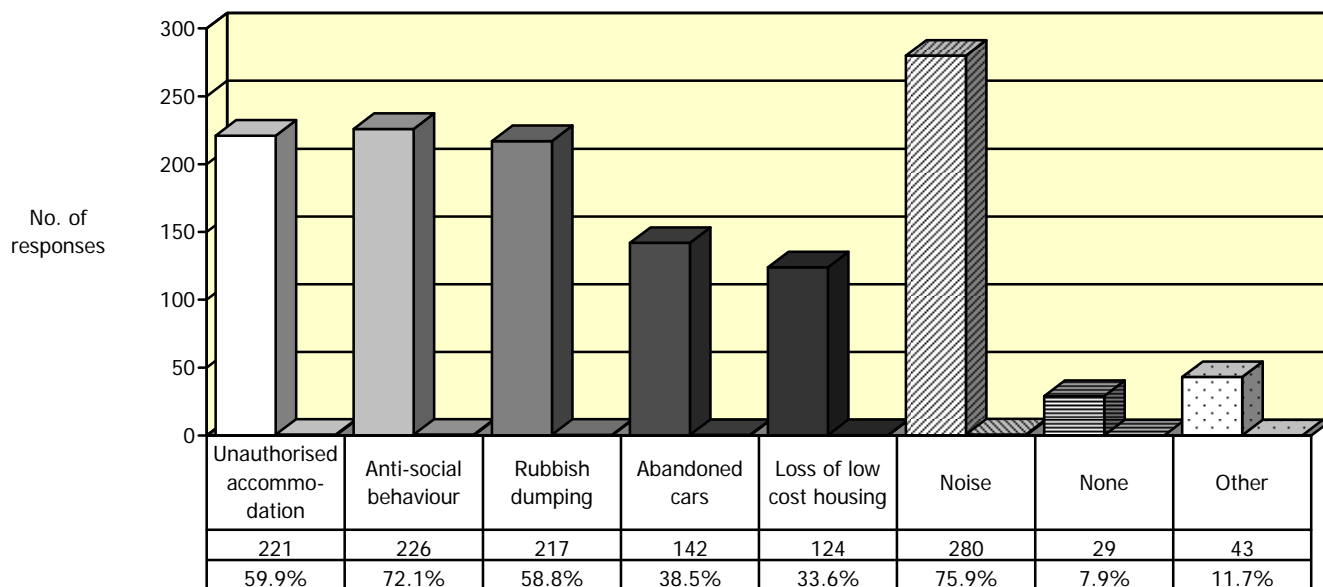


Figure A-3: Resident opinion of 'problems' associated with backpackers

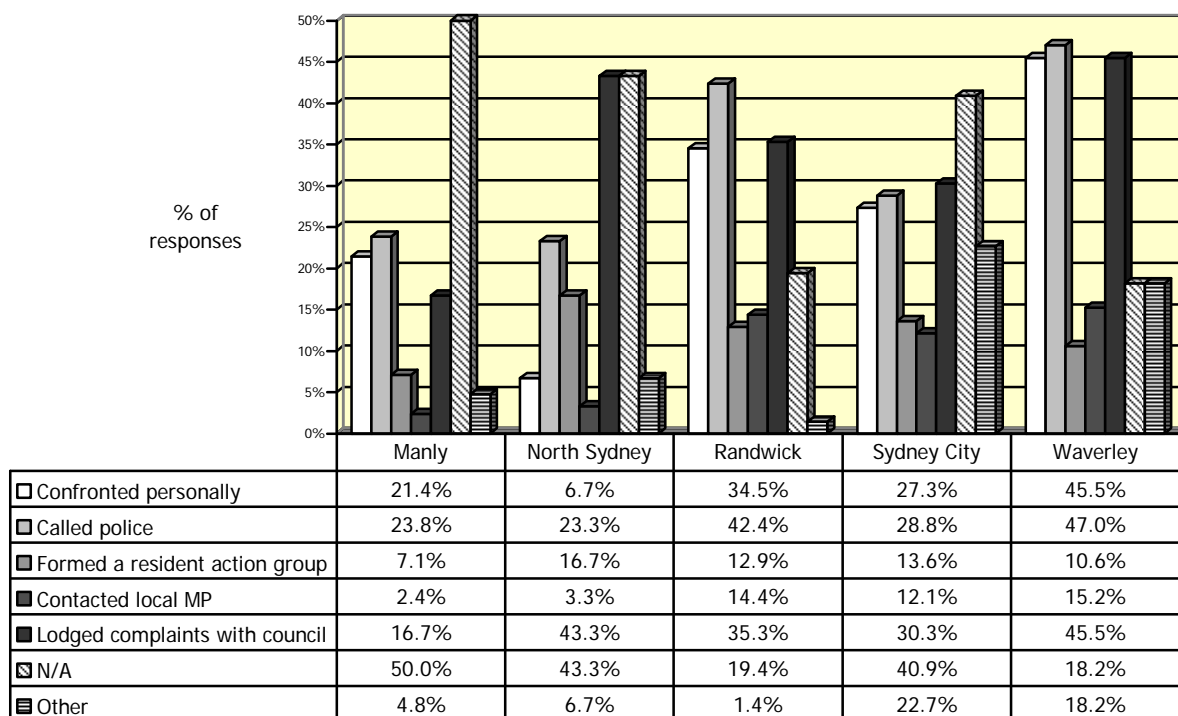


Figure A-4: Resident response to 'problems' with backpackers, by LGA

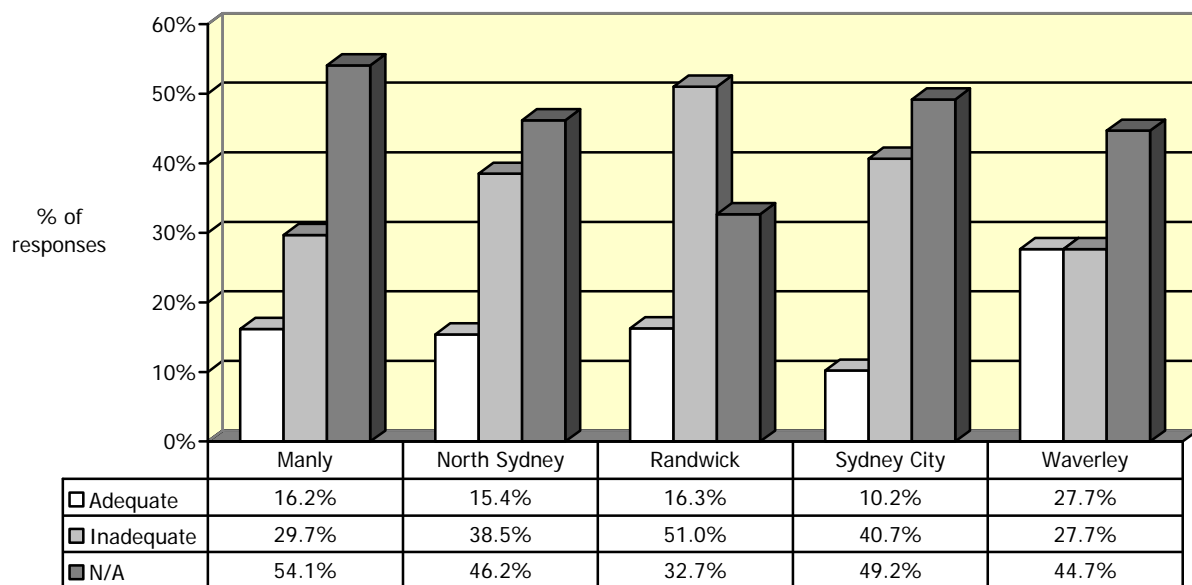


Figure A-5: Resident opinion of local council response to complaints about backpackers, by LGA

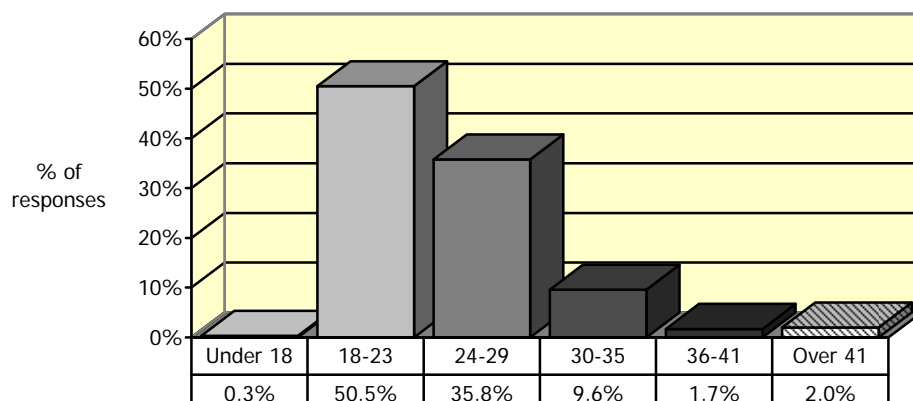


Figure A-6: Backpackers Survey response, by age

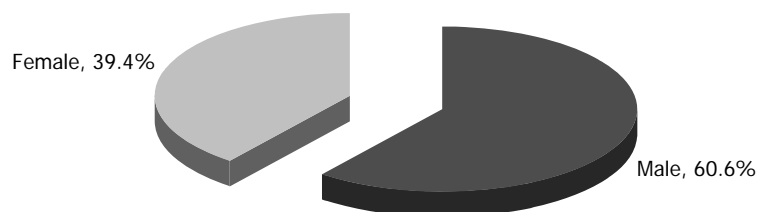


Figure A-7: Backpackers Survey response, by gender

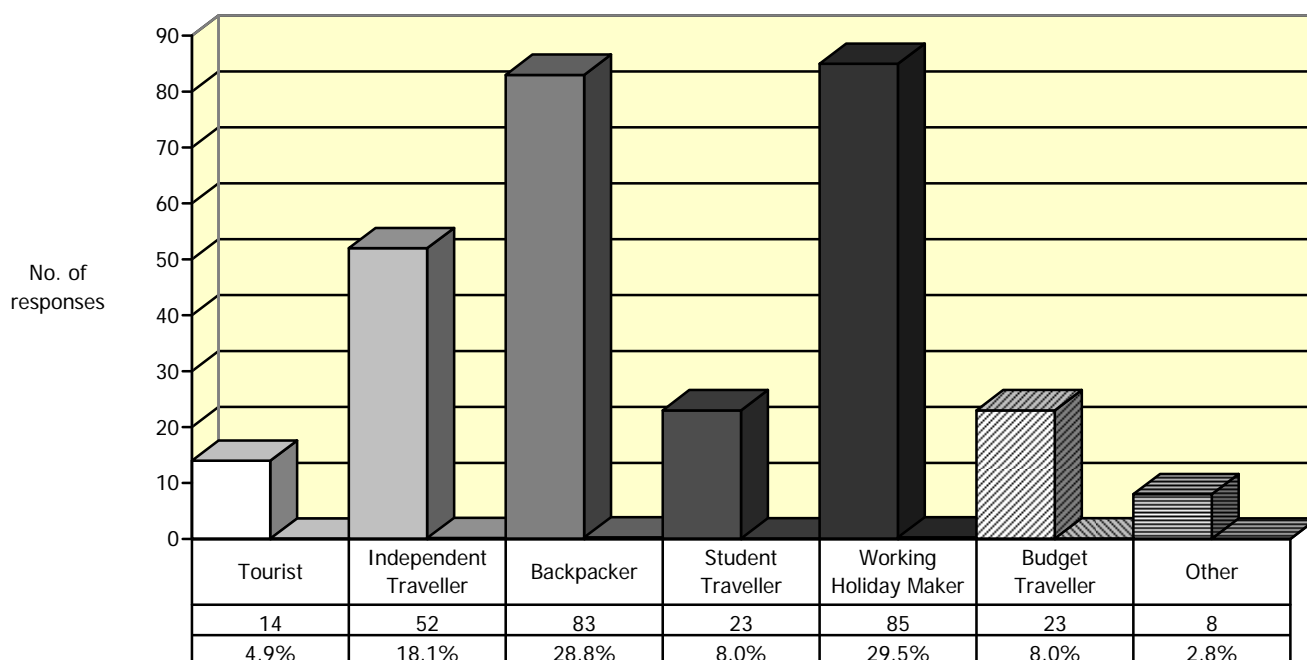


Figure A-8: Backpacker self-classification

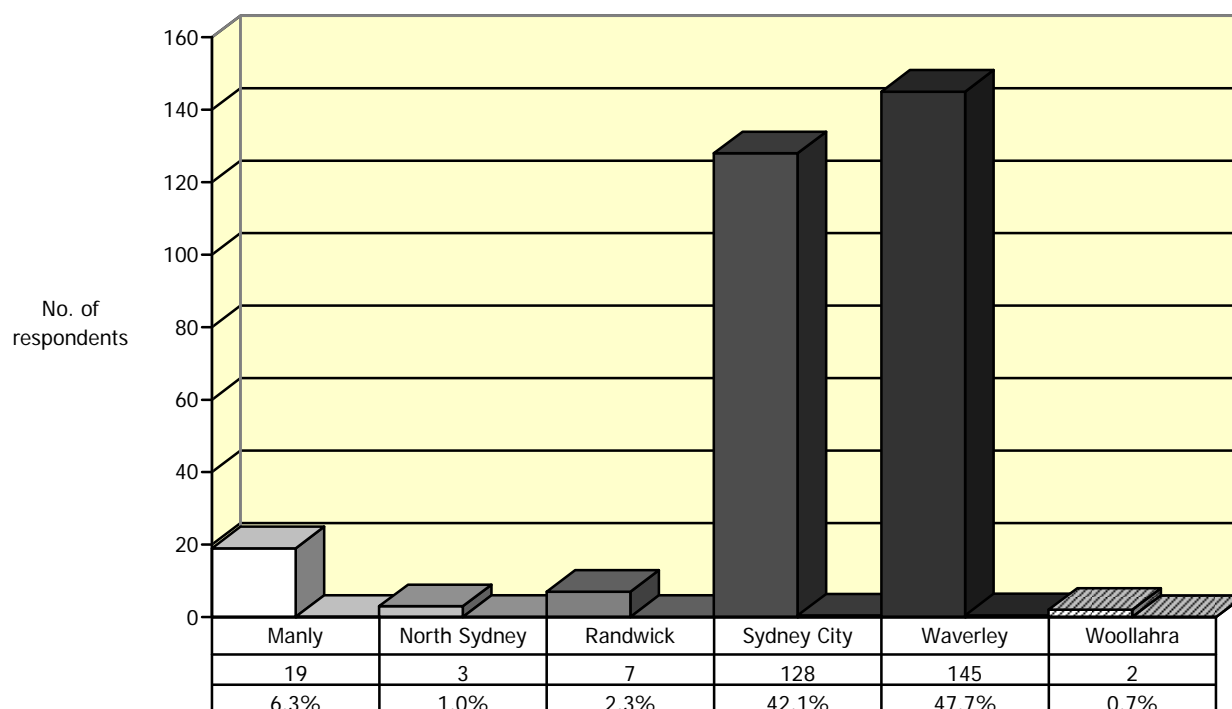


Figure A-9: Sydney LGA most frequented by Backpackers Survey respondents

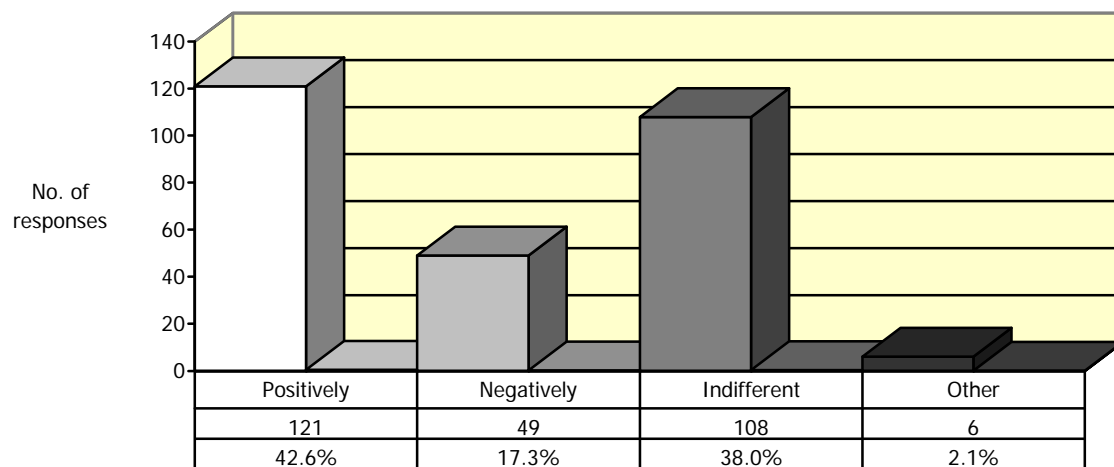


Figure A-10: Backpacker perceptions of local residents' views of backpackers

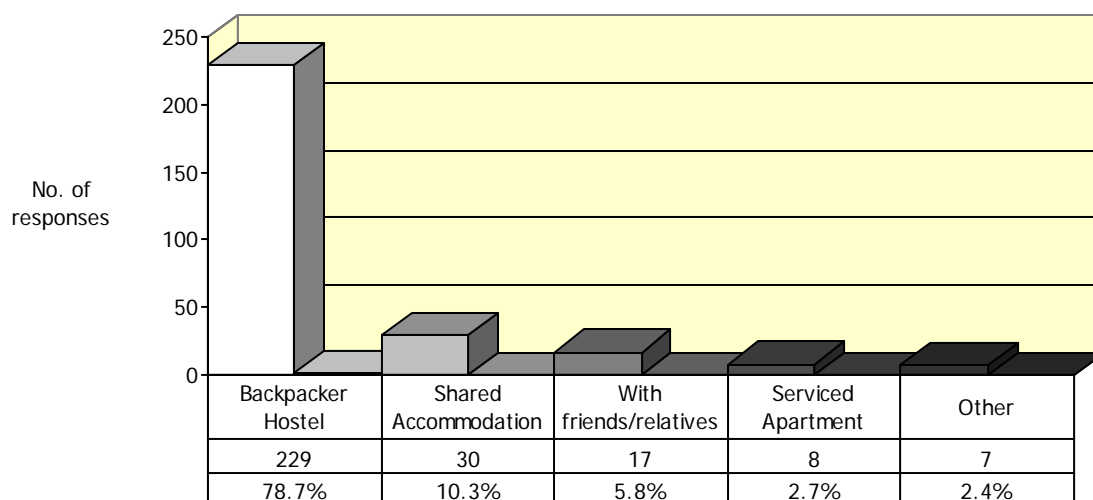


Figure A-11: Type of accommodation chosen by Backpackers Survey respondents

Appendix 4. Case studies of Successful Strategies

A4.1 Successful Strategies: City of Sydney

The City of Sydney takes a proactive approach to the backpacker market. They recognise its significance as a source of flexible local labour, particularly in the hospitality and service sector. 'Backpackers' are therefore importantly more than just tourists but can have a significant effect on local economic viability.

As a result they work closely with other levels of government and the private sector to encourage these visitors and at the same time ensure the safety of residents and visitors alike. For example The Sustainable Sydney 2030 Strategy which council has endorsed in principle has numerous relevant aspects.

The council already has a number of well-established initiatives. It published a Residents' Guide which includes information of various sorts, including educating residents about their rights and responsibilities. Council together with the NSW Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing, the Police, the Australian Hotels Association and licensed venues have established a Licensed Premises Accord which developed out of the 2003 CBD Accord. It involves a number of voluntary measures including patron education campaigns, all aimed at reducing alcohol related harm associated with licensed premises. They are currently reviewing 'late night' trading issues. Alcohol Free Zones have been implemented and closed circuit TV cameras have been installed in high-risk areas. The council is also working with other government and educational institutions on regulatory, enforcement and visitor management strategies.

The council supports NSW Health on the new Backpacker Safe Sex campaign. Posters and coasters are available to licensees. *Safe in the Sack* Phase III has been developed in partnership with South Eastern Sydney Illawarra Health's HARP (HIV/AIDS and Related Programs) Unit, Sydney South West Area Health, Northern Sydney and Central Coast Area Health, local councils including Manly, City of Sydney, Waverley and Randwick, and the Backpacker Operators Association NSW (BOA).

Data from the Sydney Sexual Health Centre (SSHC) shows that backpackers are more likely to report higher numbers of sex partners, drink alcohol to excess and have increased risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) compared to the local population. As part of the campaign, posters and drink coasters bearing the safe sex message are distributed in backpacker accommodation, pubs and bars throughout Sydney to educate young travellers and the local community about the risk of STIs. Backpacker magazines and maps provide details for the Sexual Health Infoline number. In addition to printed material, a team of young people will be visiting selected backpacker hostels and pubs to promote sexual health and distribute safe sex packs. Longer term activities for *Safe in the Sack*, include educating popular backpacker venues about the benefits of installing condom vending machines and establishing systems which support the promotion of backpackers' sexual health.

A4.2 Successful Strategies: Manly Council

Manly Council has been dealing with issues of anti-social behaviour, in particular noise, vandalism and safety issues - especially in The Corso - for many years. These issues, related to late night drinking, arise from the concentration of hotels with late trading licenses. Together with the concentration of backpacker accommodation places in close proximity to both the beach and The Corso, the area has become a magnet for local youth from the northern suburbs and visitors. This attraction has also created demand for shared accommodation that appears to be far greater than the supply of legal short-term budget accommodation. Manly does however have a good supply of short, medium and long term rental accommodation.

There has been considerable resident concern regarding illegal short-term letting, with young people letting what is not budget rental but making it affordable by the large numbers sharing. This leads to a number of issues, particularly noise as well as safety concerns. It is not only public health matters, but also anti-social behaviour toward neighbours leading to conflict and in some cases long battles with significant impact on the quality of life of those residents. In the case of Manly, evident from resident focus groups and surveys, as well as input from council staff, it is not only 'backpackers' but also international students who are attracted by the possibility of cheaper rents by illegal overcrowding of accommodation. In many instances, concerns were expressed not only about the impact of these 'households' on neighbours, but also the ethics of the landlords who in some cases knowingly encourage the practices.

The issues are well documented and known in Manly. The council commissioned a Tourism Management Plan in an attempt to shift the emphasis from day tripper and beach tourism to ecotourism in 1993. Since then numerous studies have been undertaken. While the ecotourism strategy was not successful and the Plan of Management did not overtly address the core issue, it did recommend the establishment of a Manly Community & Visitor Board. This has been a very useful vehicle for a range of opinions to be expressed. It shifted the emphasis from tourism marketing to managing tourism and provided an opportunity for elected councillors and council staff, residents, local police, education providers and the chamber of commerce/tourism operators to discuss issues. As a subcommittee of council, the Board is able to make recommendations directly to council on mechanisms to address a range of matters - supporting tourism but minimizing undesirable social and environmental impacts. It has given voice to concerns but has not ameliorated the effects. It has however given rise to issue-specific strategies, including a number of other committees that also address visitor and safety matters in relation to anti-social behaviour.

For example, the 2004 'Manly Crime Prevention Plan', involving input from the Manly Community Safety Committee, the Manly Main Street Program and The Manly After Midnight Committee, are groups with broad representation that have all been addressing the problems associated with liquor licensing regulations and the concentration of several late night closing venues in The Corso and on the Manly wharf following the major refurbishment of recent years. In years gone by, the local tourism industry supported these operators as it was considered to be generally good for business and cash flow. Wide media coverage of the broader community concerns about responsible service and consumption of alcohol and the numerous costs to society has meant that Manly has been singled out as an 'unsafe place'. This is potentially very damaging to the reputation of Manly as a tourism destination and as a desirable suburb in which to live, work or visit. The challenge has been in working to deal effectively with the issues, not just shift the problem somewhere else. Manly Police have worked hard to develop a Venue Management Plan and the Liquor Accord. This Manly After Midnight committee has achieved a voluntary reduction in trading hours with licensees agreeing to cease trading at 2.30am. This has just been introduced so it is too soon to discuss the outcomes, but the initiative represents a good example of collaborative problem solving, giving voice to resident concerns and taking a holistic rather than regulatory approach. As part of this initiative, council has implemented many improvements to the public domain and made a policy decision to increasingly focus on family friendly activities to encourage the local community to actively utilize the key areas, particularly The Corso. They also made the decision to limit the New Year's Eve celebrations to a family-oriented close of 9 pm. Each of these strategies has contributed to improvements.

Council has also clearly highlighted the misconception that all the problems were caused by visitors, in particular day visitors and backpackers, and confirmed that these were inaccurate perceptions. As a result council is keen to continue the education about the social costs and health implications of alcohol abuse. The Mayor, Dr Peter Macdonald, hopes this will result in a real shift in attitudes and behaviours and benefit to the community.

In 2004 council also developed a 'Short-Term and Tourist Accommodation Procedure' through a working party with representation from residents, councillors, chamber of commerce

representatives, and council staff to review issues and develop clear policies and complaints handling procedure. Short-term accommodation within residential premises in Manly has been a feature of the rental market within Manly for some time. As a result council produced a communication to leasing agents and operators of tourist facilities reminding them of planning policies and zoning regulations which apply within the Tourist Area under the existing local environmental plan. Under the controls, tourist facilities are permissible only with the consent of the council.

A4.3 Successful Strategies: Waverley Council

Bondi has been a traditional favourite place for backpackers. It has also been a site of considerable tension amongst residents. Whilst not having data readily available on formal complaints that are backpacker-related, council staff indicated that over the past few years complaints seem to be reducing. Bondi was quieter this year in the summer, with December through to April the period when most problems have occurred.

Most of the complaints are lodged via local precinct committees and councillors, though some such as noise, dumped rubbish and alleged illegal backpacker premise complaints are lodged at the councils customer service centre or by phone. Rangers and other council staff also lodge observations.

Over the past few years some residents and councillors have tended to generalise problems and attribute them all to 'backpackers'. This is increasingly regarded to be mostly perception rather than fact. In a location with a high number of rental apartments, Bondi has a large transient population. The traditional 'backpacker' market in Bondi is now more accurately split into short- and long-term residents, budget travellers and students.

The 'backpacker' behaviour that has attracted the most complaint is noise. Illegal backpacker premises also commonly attract complaints, and usually this is flagged through noise complaints.

Litter is a concern to council and the community, but is more widely blamed on visitors in general, particularly 'day trippers' visiting the beach and/or markets and/or shopping centres. Council recognises that 'locals' are equally at fault. Backpackers receive some blame for dumped rubbish, the assumption being when they move on they throw out their old furniture. However, the council rangers believe that a lot of the dumping is from locals and/or people driving into the area and dumping, as well as the culture of the area being highly transient.

Other forms of anti-social behaviour including graffiti are attributed to local children; vandalism to property, including urinating, is mostly attributed to young people and generally not backpackers specifically. But this is closely correlated to late-night drunken behaviour, and there is a perception that some late-night venues are frequented by travellers, while others attract a more local clientele. For example The Cock and Bull at Bondi Junction is a popular venue with English and Irish travellers.

Christmas Day has previously been a day in which budget travellers from all over Sydney would come to Bondi Beach to binge drink and party. It created numerous health and safety problems as well as generating a lot of rubbish and noise. This, however, is changing due to direct intervention by council developing the 'Sober Santa' Campaign (see image, embedded in Figure A-12, "Safe Summer Initiative 2007/8", p.117). This is an example of a successful initiative that addressed a particular local issue relating to an escalating problem.

In regard to backpacker accommodation, the negative perception and/or issues relating to legal premises have quietened down considerably over the past five years. Some issues (especially noise and drinking) get a mention a few times each year, but the more recent matter for residents is noise from house/street parties. Backpackers are not directly blamed for this. Like the late-night drinking,

it appears to be attributed more to resident youth and their visiting friends. These residents can be long or short- term ones.

Council and police have worked hard together over the past five years to mitigate problems including noise, litter and anti-social behaviour, and shift some of the perceptions through education. Examples include the appointment of a Place Manager for Bondi who liaises with other council staff, local businesses, residents, police and Waverley lifeguards. In 2002 council established a Tourism and Visitor Management Advisory Group. The group included three councillors, a representative from the combined precincts, a representative from the backpacker operators, a representative from the Bondi District's Chamber of Commerce, a resident from highly impacted areas, a resident from an area relatively less impacted by visitation and representation from tourism in the Sydney area. In 2004, an Eastern Suburbs Liquor Accord was developed between local licensees, police, the council and the Department of Gaming and Racing to help prevent alcohol- related harm.

Some examples of council actions include the 'Safe Summer' Initiative; dropping the word 'backpacker' from a lot of council documentation, reporting on some statistics that indicate locals (ratepayers or long-term residents) also contribute to problems. Also important has been a shift in focus, promoting the positive more than just the issues, and encouraging businesses to emphasise how 'backpackers' contribute to the local economy and are valuable to the workforce.

As part of the 'Safe Summer' Initiative introduced in 2004 and which has evolved, council has produced a free *My Bondi Summer* booklet updated each summer. The 'Safe Summer' Initiative aims to provide safe, controlled venues for people to celebrate Christmas and New Year festivities at key locations; reduce anti-social activity relating to alcohol and other harmful substances; provide events and activities that cater for different demographics including residents, families and visitors; minimise the impact on the public amenity and residents as a result of large crowds; prevent incidences on the beach due to visitors mixing alcohol (and other harmful substances) with sun and surf at Waverley's beaches; and to generate sufficient revenue to contribute to the cost of additional services required to manage, clean, and maintain public infrastructure during this peak period. The campaign combines three key elements - education about the safety issues, promotion of licensed managed events and regulation. It is also combined with a 'Sober Santa' Campaign – for the education and enforcement of beachside Alcohol Free Zones. Further, there are three additional projects implemented in 2007 to complement the Safe Summer Initiative. These were: Wake Up Waverley Alcohol Awareness Campaign, Beach Theft Campaign and the Beach Runner bus transport initiative.

Due to these actions the type of visitor is changing - with a noticeable shift in nationalities other than UK and Irish, such as Asians, being attracted. Families are also returning to the beach on Christmas Day. A good indicator of this is the backpacker licensed dance party on Christmas Day in the Bondi Pavilion that has failed to sell out for the past two years.

There will always be noise problems due to high density living but council staff responsible for these areas currently see issues - surf safety, litter, and anti-social behaviour (relating to alcohol and youth drinking) in public places and around license premises, relating more to day trippers than backpackers. Council is currently reviewing noise management protocols with police to tackle house parties this summer.

Council continues to work closely through their Place Managers (for Bondi and beaches and neighbouring commercial centres and for Bondi Junction and neighbouring commercial centres), with precinct committees, community safety committees, Bondi Forum and Bondi Junction Forum. They also have a Customer Call Centre. Council will be engaging a Project Officer shortly to collate existing statistics, seek new data, and identify gaps where more research is required in order to establish more accurate and reliable information on visitor numbers and types.

Council is concerned that increases in rent, lack of supply of rental accommodation in Sydney, and lack of cheap holiday/short-term accommodation in Waverley, particularly Bondi, may see an increase in illegal accommodation premises (eg. 6 people sharing a 2 bedroom place for 6 months) and/or shift the travellers to neighbouring areas like Sydney and Coogee. Some other changes occurring in Bondi bearing on budget accommodation include: Noahs Backpackers' proposal to totally refurbish to a more functional and higher graded backpacker establishment (reflecting the change in trends of the type of people seeking accommodation); Ravesi extending their boutique accommodations; the Swiss Grand being sold and re-developing into self contained accommodation, private residences and commercial space; and the Hakoah Club being sold and possibly converted to Medina apartments.

Council is looking to greater representation from the backpacker accommodation premises onto existing committees dealing with tourism matters. It is also planning to host a Real Estate forum to have a platform for open communication and create an opportunity to build relationships and share information as a proactive mechanism to resolving problems. Council continues to work to dispel the assumptions the community has about 'backpackers'.

For more information, see Waverley Council, Draft Policy Statement on Tourism, March 2008 and the Visitor Management Action Plan regarding strategies to be implemented, 2008/09: provided courtesy of Bobbi McIlwraith, Divisional Manager, Bondi and Beaches.

Christmas 1991–1993



Christmas Day revellers at Bondi Beach, in 1991...



... and in 1993

The annual aftermath... Boxing Day 1992



Figure A-12: Waverley Council Christmas 1991 – 1993

Safe Summer Initiative 2007/08



"Sober Santa" campaign at Bondi Beach on Christmas Day



Christmas Day at Bronte Park



"Sunburnt Xmas" event celebrated at Bondi Pavilion



Bondi Summer of Fun



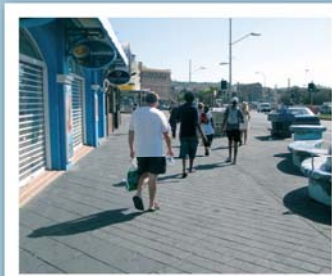
Bondi Beach, New Year's Eve



Post event New Year's Day, Bondi Park



Post clean up New Year's Day, Bondi Park



Post clean up New Year's Day, Bondi



Dudley Page Reserve, New Year's Eve



Dudley Page Reserve, New Year's Eve

Figure A-13: Waverley Council Safe Summer Initiative 2007/8

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