

YES

Summer 2003/2004 survey findings

**A profile of the young people who use
Ballina Street Lennox Head after dark.**



YES survey volunteers and some of their children December 2003

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Summary.

YES is a group of people from the Lennox community who came together to address the escalating anti social youth behaviour in their town. The group immediately identified the problem; that there is nowhere for young people to go and nothing for them to do when they get there. YES incorporated, as an association, and their committee is attempting to identify and address the needs of young Lennox residents. The first priority of the committee was to create a profile of the highly visible young people on the streets of Lennox, they did this via the survey detailed in this document.

The demographics of the survey site indicate that the age range of the respondents was from 12 to 20+. Whilst the mix of sexes was almost equal, a significant portion of the survey population was 16 year old females. Interestingly, respondents aged 19 and 20+ were predominantly male.

Overwhelmingly young people surveyed stated that they resided in Lennox Head and attended Southern Cross High School. Considering that most of the young people were Lennox residents it was not surprising that over 50% of those surveyed nominated walking as their mode of transport to and from the CBD.

Young people resoundingly stated that their main purpose for being in Ballina Street after dark was to socialise outside of school and that there was “nothing else to do”. When asked to comment on the positive aspects of the survey area it is interesting to note that young people focussed on opportunities to socialise rather than the physical environment. On quantifying the negative features of the survey area a large portion of the survey group clearly stated that the worst feature of the site was that there was “nowhere else to go”.

Binge drinking is defined by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre as drinking to get drunk or consuming five or more standard drinks in one sitting. We discovered that the survey respondents regardless of sex consume over 9 standard drinks in one sitting. This clearly poses a significant risk to the health and well being of the young residents of our community.

Note worthy results were uncovered when analysing the data related to the supply of alcohol. Half of the females state that they obtain alcohol from a ‘friend’, while nearly half of the males nominate themselves as the source of supply. It is possible that the large portion of older males using this area after dark obtain alcohol on behalf of the young women who use the same area.

Young people are reluctant to record illicit drug use on paper for fear of retribution and as such the results of this section do not reflect the observations of the surveyors and the dialogue they exchanged with the respondents. Importantly, the survey was able to identify that many young people participate in polydrug use.

Young people are united in their wish for youth facilities in their town. Their common vision is a safe and welcoming space where they can socially interact,

participate in fun learning activities and access services related to their specific needs from local youth friendly professionals.

Recommendations.

Young residents of Lennox require a space where they can meet, learn and socialise in safety. A relocated house would be ideal to accommodate youth specific services and activities. The many rooms of an old house allow the facilitation of service provision from professionals based in the youth field. In addition to this, the building needs to provide a large open section to allow for social interaction as well as creative and skills based workshops.

With this in mind the best option at the moment would be an old house relocated to Williams Reserve between the cricket nets, the Recreation Hall and the CWA Hall. The current use of this space is unformed car parking.

The survey verifies this space as the most appropriate through analysis of the data concerning young people's places of residence and their major modes of transport. Lack of regular and timely transport is an issue for Lennox youth and supports the recommendation for the centre to be located in the CBD.

To ensure sustained success it is imperative to have Ballina Shire Council support and endorse this facility, similar to their involvement with the creation and ongoing support of the Wardell Access Space.

The youth house should be staffed by paid local youth workers and volunteers from the Lennox Community. YES has database of over 60 local residents who are willing to donate their time and skills to this project.

It is imperative that these recommendations be used in creating a space because they come from the young people themselves.

It is important to note that this should be a temporary solution to the immediate need for youth facilities in Lennox Head.

Background Information on Lennox Head.

- Lennox Head is located in the Ballina Shire local government area.
- In November 2002 Ballina Shire Council released the Lennox Head Community Aspirations Strategic Plan within this plan the council identifies the broader Lennox Head district as; the original village subdivision, the housing estates along North Creek road, Skennars Head, Fig Tree Hill and Sanctuary Village.
- As at September 2001, 6510 people reside in this area.
- During the 1991 – 1996 census period the population grew at an average annual growth rate of 9.4%.
- During the 1996 – 2001 census period the population grew at an average annual growth rate of 5.3%.
- By way of comparison the average rate of growth across the shire was 1.41% during the same period.
- Although the population growth has slowed, the area remains the fastest growing within the shire.
- Ballina Shire Council has identified that social infrastructure has not kept up with the rate of permanent population growth within the area. (*Lennox Head Community Aspirations Strategic Plan*, p. 3,12,37,57)
- Current council policy requires the provision of a neighbourhood centre or multipurpose use hall for each additional 1500 dwellings, which equates to around 4000 people. (*Lennox Head Community Aspirations Strategic Plan*, p.81)
- There is currently one community hall in Lennox Head, being the recreation hall. The hall is in high demand, small and relatively old. Hence inadequate for permanent youth space.

Background on YES.

- Yes was formed in response to a community meeting held in November 2003.
- The meeting was called to address the escalating anti social youth behaviour occurring on our streets and in our parks after dark and to promote a community response to the issue.
- From the initial meeting we were able to identify the underlying problem. Which is; a lack of youth friendly spaces in our town and a lack of planned and organised activities. Nowhere to go and nothing to do when you get there.
- Our long term goals involve the attainment of a youth centre for Lennox Head. From this centre we will create and run programs specifically tailored to the needs of our young people.
- Our short term plans are to raise our profile and finances through a number of relatively large scale events in order to gain support from the wider community and to fund interim initiatives for our young people.
- Integral to our philosophy is creating a community response. That is, to unite the many different organisations and groups within our community to work towards a common objective. Securing our future, our young people.
- In the interim we have conducted a survey of the young people who 'hang' on our streets after dark. The purpose of the survey was twofold; to gather accurate information about our young people and to begin to establish dialogue between Yes and young people.

Objectives.

The summer 2003/04 survey sought to establish a profile of the highly visible youth element that use Ross Park, the Bus Shelter and Ballina Street as a place to socialise with their peers.

The survey area can be identified in figure 1.

The survey also endeavours to identify positive social opportunities that have been endorsed by the young residents of Lennox Head.

Another objective that was determined by the YES committee was the desire to establish dialogue between the community and the young people of our town.

Methodology.

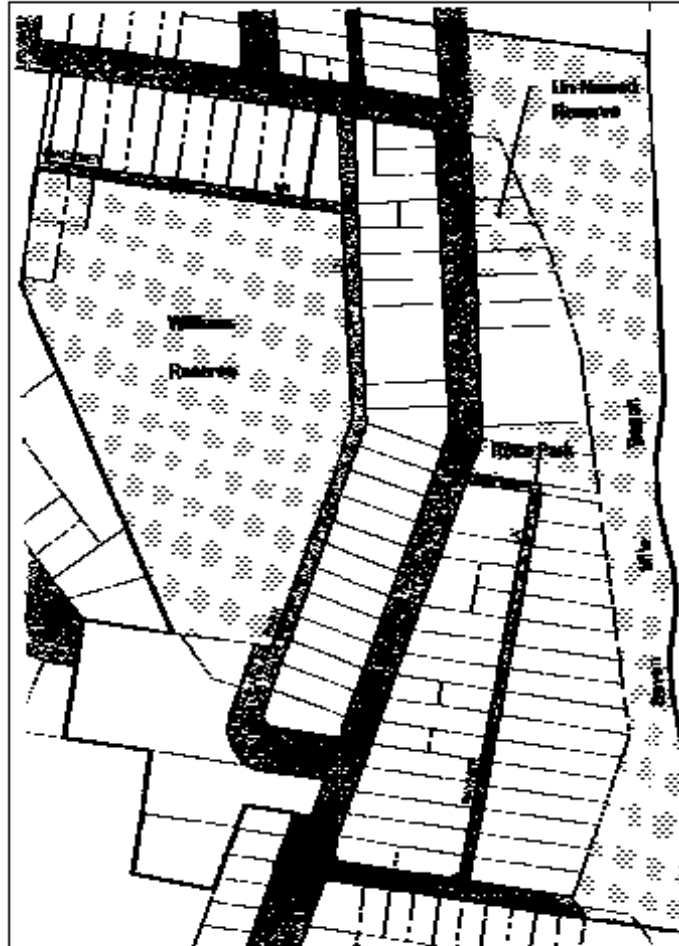
YES volunteers conducted a survey of young people who frequent the Bus Shelter, Ross Park and the stretch of Ballina Street between these two locations. (Figure one – survey area)

The survey was conducted during the summer holiday period (December – February). Pairs of YES volunteers spent Friday and Saturday nights between 8pm and 1am in the previously mentioned locations.

The volunteers spent the time talking with young people and encouraging them to participate by completing a questionnaire.

During the survey period we surveyed 180 young people between the ages of 12 and 24 inclusive.

Figure One.
The survey area.



8.1 Demographics.

Questions 1 through 4 of the survey sought to establish a profile of the young people who use the survey area during 8pm – 1am.

As you can see from figure 2, most of the young people surveyed were aged between 14 and 17 inclusive. The major proportion of respondents were aged 16, closely followed by 15 year old age bracket.

We encountered no respondents aged 18. It is assumed that these young people, now legally able, were socialising on licensed premises.

Respondents aged 19 and 20+ composed a large share of the survey population. This age bracket was identified as being predominantly male.

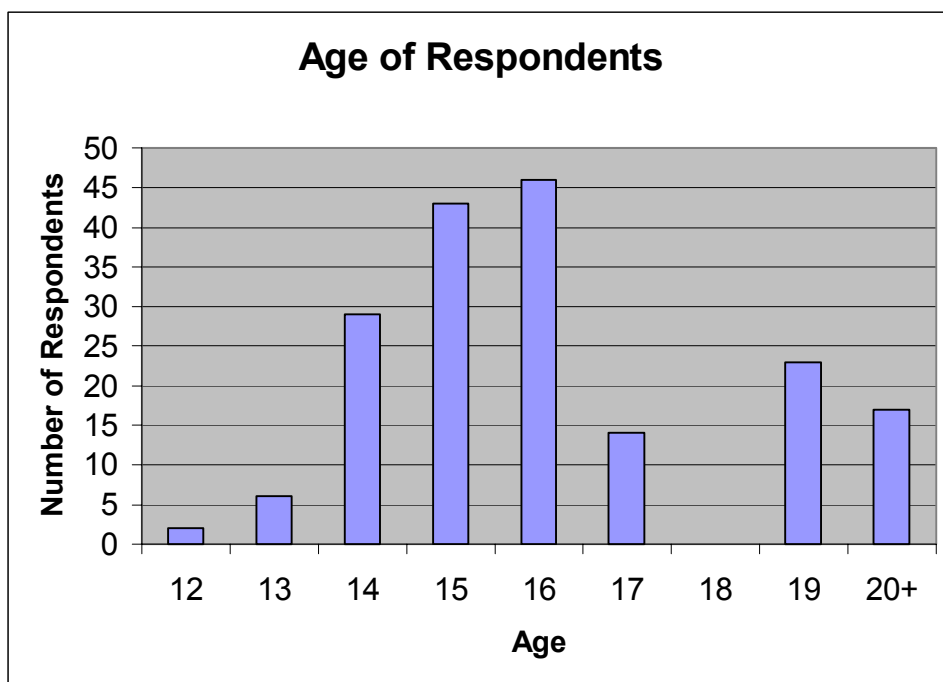


Figure 2

Figure 3 shows that the sex distribution was almost equal with males featuring slightly more than their female counterparts.

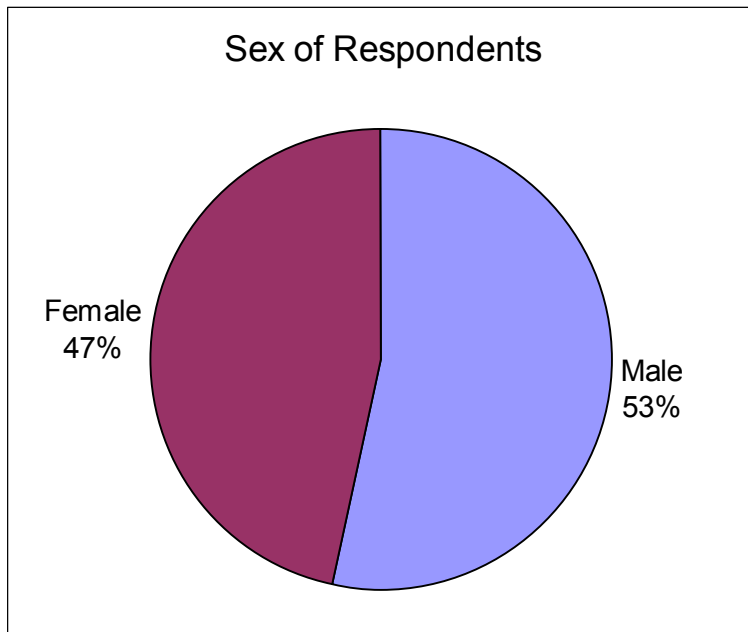


Figure 3

When respondents were asked to nominate their place of residence most indicated that they lived in Lennox Head.

East Ballina and Ballina ranked almost equally, and second behind Lennox Head.

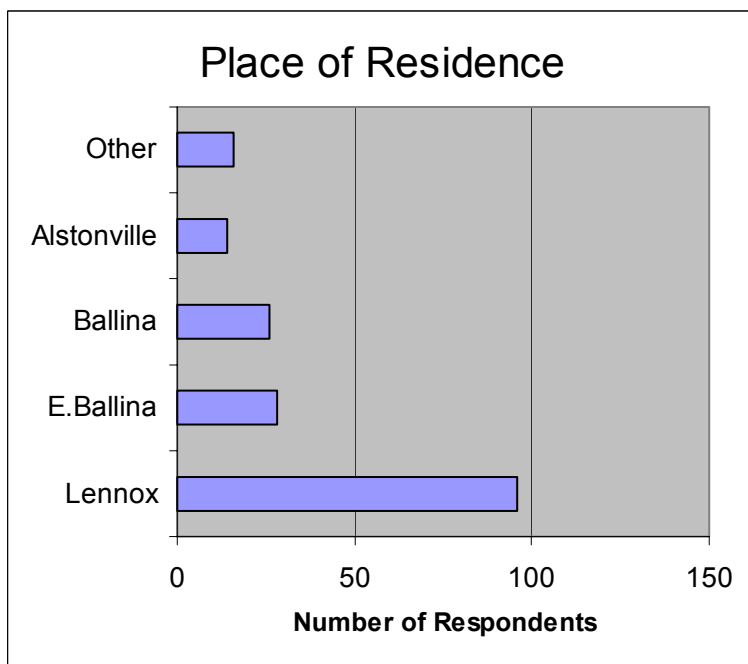


Figure 4

It is assumed that the prominence of young people from the wider Ballina area indicates a lack of planned regular youth activities within the whole shire. This figure also confirms conversations surveyors exchanged with young people,

that is, the main street of Lennox Head has established the reputation amongst young people as a place where there will be 'something going on.'

When respondents were asked to indicate what school they attended, overwhelmingly the largest proportion nominated the public high school, Southern Cross in East Ballina. Lennox Head forms a major component of that school's catchment area. This data is displayed in figure 5.

Xavier Catholic College was the second most nominated place of schooling. The school's physical location means that a large proportion of their enrolments would reside in the Lennox Head area.

Figure 5 also demonstrates that a significant portion of the young people surveyed attended Ballina High School. This data confirms Lennox Head's popularity as a place for young people within the shire to socialise.

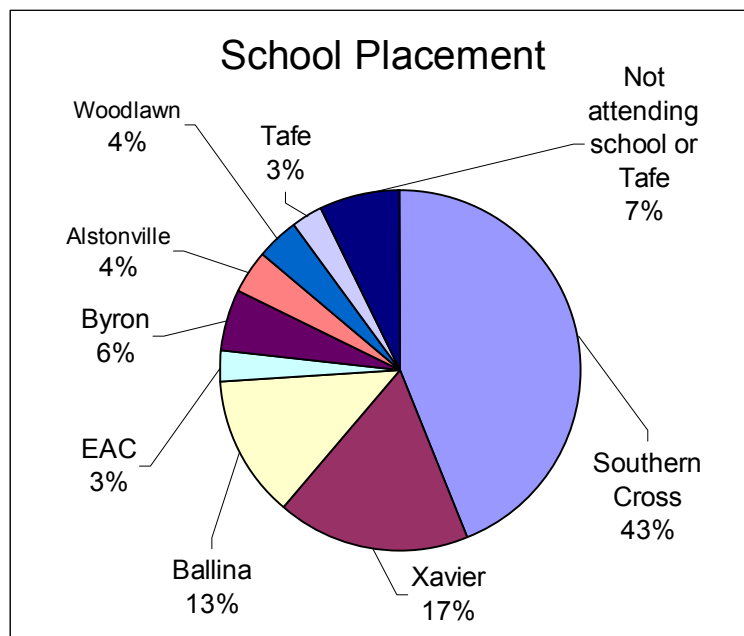


Figure 5

Question 5 asked young people to nominate whom they came to town with on the night that they were surveyed. The question was poorly phrased; as such the data collected from this question does not contextualise relationships amongst the respondents.

8.2 Mobility of Respondents.

The survey demonstrates that walking is the common mode of transport within the survey group. This reflects the data collated from question 3, and displayed in figure 4, where the greatest number of respondents resided in Lennox Head.

From the data gathered it is evident that parents are more likely to drop their children into the survey area, but one third of the parents who dropped them into the survey area did not collect their children at the end of the night. This leaves many young people with little option by way of a ride home. This is

verified in the increase of respondents accessing the Street Beat service and accepting lifts from others.

Street Beat has a strict policy of not dropping clients into the Lennox CBD, but the predominant client base for Street Beat originates from the Lennox Head locality late at night. This result becomes obvious in figures 6 and 7.

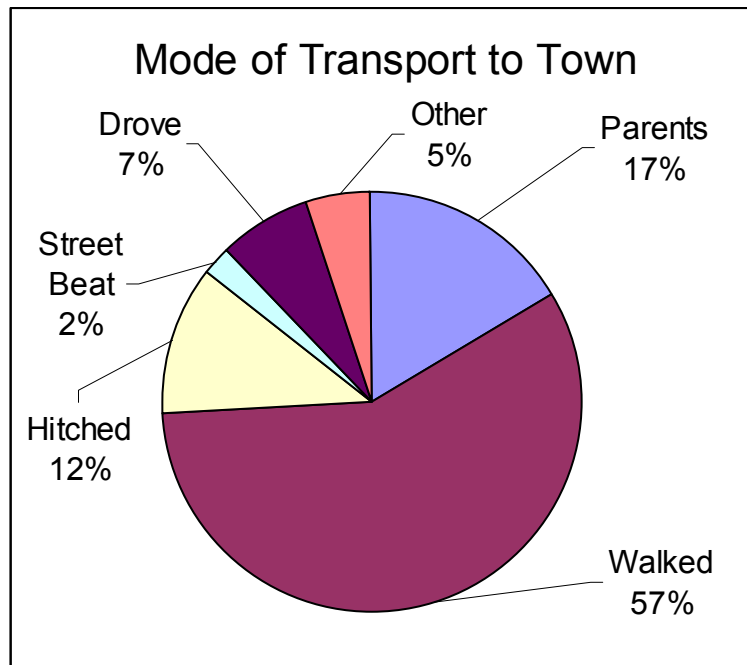


Figure 6

There is a marked difference in the amount of young people hitch hiking to Lennox Head compared with young people hitch hiking home. The results show that respondents were more inclined to hitch hike into the CBD rather than hitch hike home. It is assumed that this is tied to number factors. They are;

- The number respondents choosing to accept a lift home from an unidentified source
- The rules regarding the use of the Street Beat service

Many respondents opted to hitch hike because of unavailable youth transport services. This can be verified by the data displayed in figure 10, which shows that a large number of respondents identified that it was difficult for them to get home from the survey area.

Many young people put themselves at risk by hitch hiking to and from Lennox Head. They do this because there are no alternatives to the situation. Busses run at irregular hours, are expensive and are often not available at the times when young people are most in need. Bus routes are only available on mainroads leaving young people often far from their final destination.

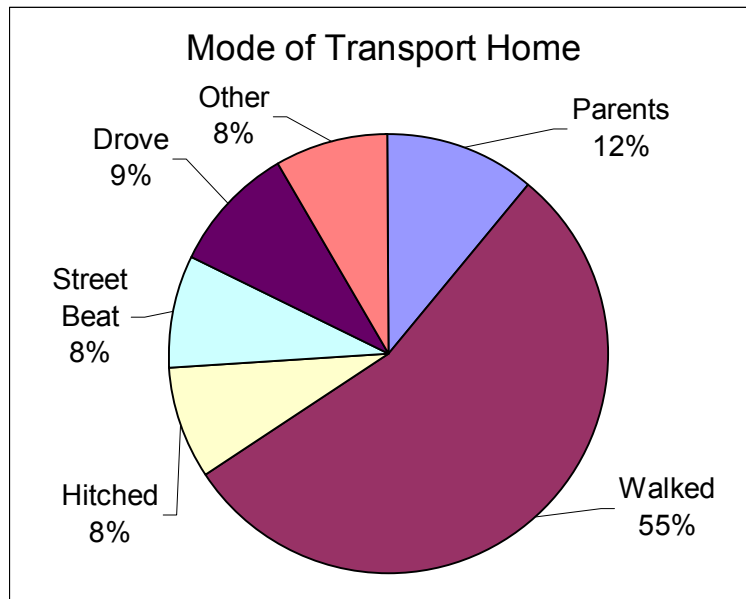


Figure 7

8.3 Youth Perceptions of the Survey Area.

In question 7 young people were asked to qualify their reasons for coming to the CBD of Lennox Head. The respondents overwhelmingly provided answers that identifies a lack of planned regular activities or facilities that enabled them the opportunity to socialise with their peers.

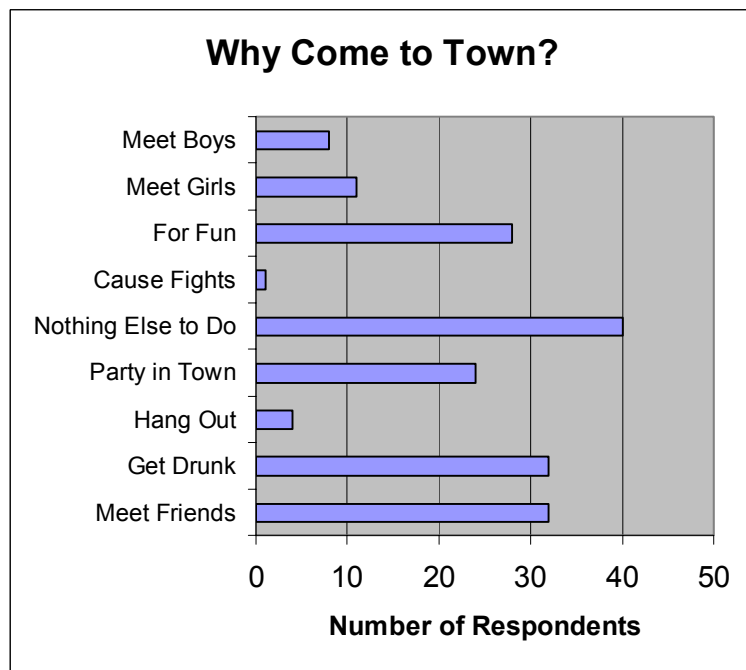


Figure 8

Every response encountered focussed on some facet of socialisation. Figure 8 shows that most responses indicated that young people sought socially acceptable activities.

'Nothing Else to Do' featured as the highest single response to the reasons for coming to town. Again, it is clear that the young people of Lennox Head need somewhere to go and something to do when they get there.

Question 8 within the survey asked respondents to list the positive and negative aspects associated with socialising in the survey area.

When asked to qualify the positive features of the survey area in this question the responses were again focussed on opportunities to socialise in some way.

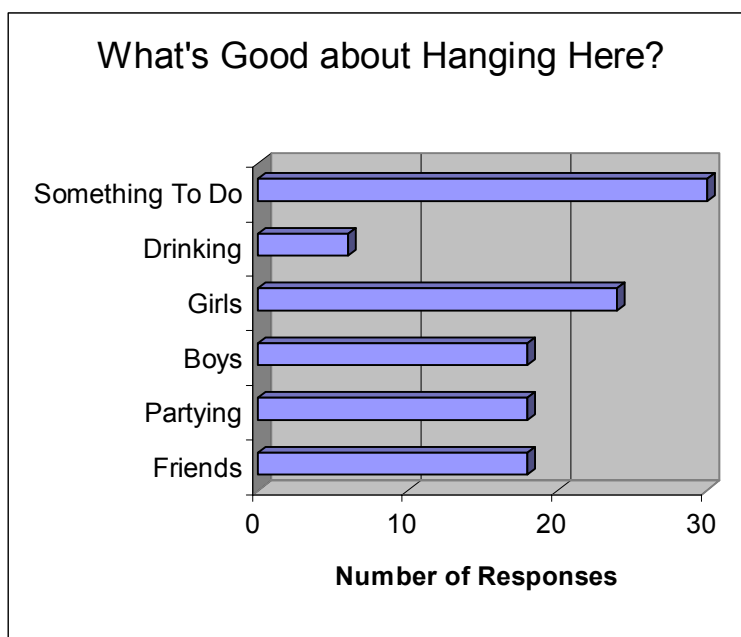


Figure 9

Young people liked socialising in the survey area because of its location – its proximity to Lennox Head's CBD, the beach, the pub and within walking distance of most places within Lennox Head.

Over a period of time the survey area has established the reputation as a place for teenagers to meet friends from their own school as well as those who attend different schools. The large portion of males aged 19 – 20+ and the large proportion of females aged 16 indicates that this area and the activities practised within it leave our young women vulnerable.

Respondents specified that the survey area was a place where they could come and be sure that there was something to do.

Interestingly, drinking rated quite low as a positive aspect for attending the survey area amongst the young people surveyed.

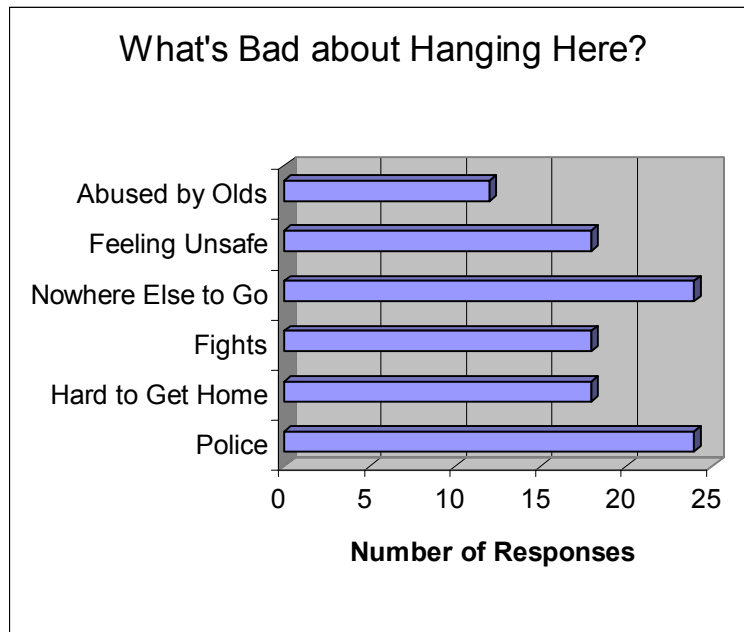


Figure 10

When asked to qualify the negative aspects of socialising in the survey area a large number of respondents indicated that they felt marginalised by the behaviour of the Police and adult members of the Lennox Head community.

A large proportion of respondents clearly stated that the lack of options in regard to places to meet and socialise was the only reason that they were socialising in Ballina Street.

Respondents voiced that feeling unsafe and fights were aspects associated with socialising in this area that they disliked.

A significant proportion of respondents highlighted a lack of regular after hours transport. They stated that the inadequate provision of cheap and regular transport made it difficult for them to leave the survey area when they were ready to go home. It is assumed that the group of young people who identified with this aspect lived outside of the Lennox locality.

Interestingly, it is not the physical aspects of the survey environment that rate positively; it is the opportunity to socialise with their peers.

It should be acknowledged that question eight was an open question and required a qualitative response. The response of partying in this question may parallel the response of drinking. The basis for this assertion is to be found in the data collated from question seven – *Why did you come to town tonight?* - where getting drunk achieved the third highest response.

8.4 Profile of Alcohol Use.

Questions 10 through 12 of the survey sought to establish a profile of alcohol use amongst the respondents. Figure 11 breaks down the mean number of drinks by sex to identify if there was a statistically significant variance in the drinking habits of the sexes.

A z-test indicated that there was no significant variance between the sexes.

	Females	Males	Total Population
Mean No. Drinks	5.863	6.6753	6.28
Median No. Drinks	6	8	7

Figure 11

While the amounts did not vary greatly between the sexes the type of drink consumed did. Figures 12 and 13 clearly show that; females preferred to consume pre mixed drinks, while their male counterparts clearly preferred to consume beer. Figure 13 also shows that young men also consumed a significant quantity of pre mixed drinks.

Our observations identify that females taste preference in pre mixed drinks tended to the sweeter 'lolly' flavoured drinks. Male's preference for pre mixed drinks tended to be bourbon and cola.

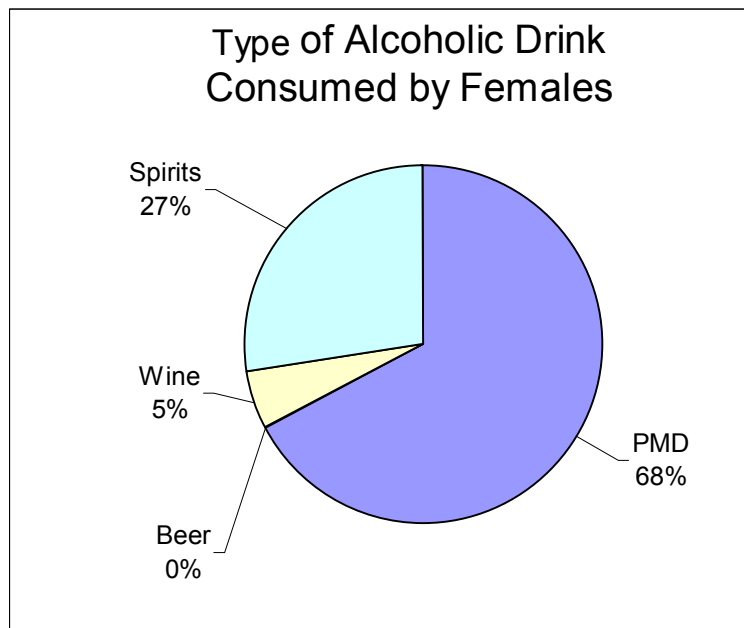


Figure 12

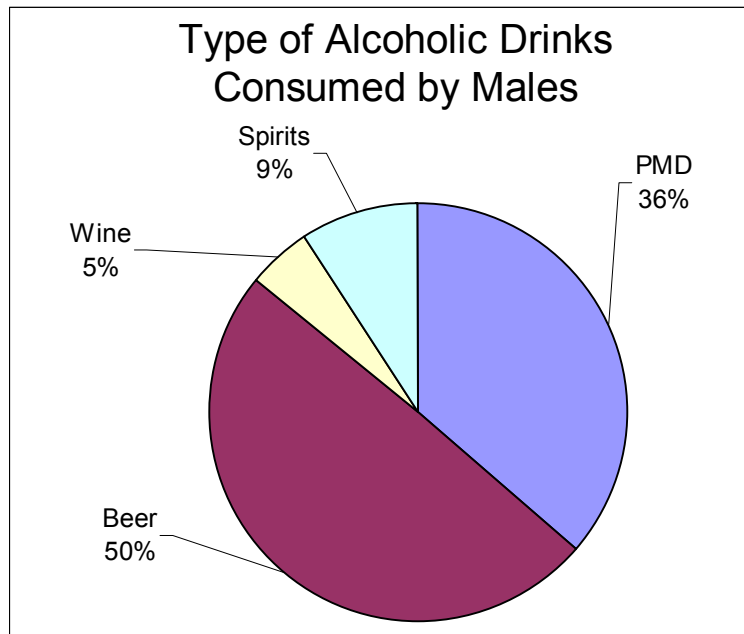


Figure 13

Binge drinking is defined as drinking to get drunk or consuming five or more standard drinks in one sitting. Most pre mixed drinks equate to 1.7 standard drinks, full strength beers are 1.4 standard drinks.

Figure 11 indicated that females consumed an average of 5.8 drinks and as the majority of these drinks consisted of pre mixed drinks this could equate to an average of 9.8 standard drinks. This is clearly binge drinking.

Figure 11 shows that males consumed an average of 6.6 drinks and using the male's most popular beverage of choice, full strength beer, this could result in the consumption of 9.6 standard drinks.

The above exercise indicates that whilst males consumed a greater volume their actual alcohol consumption may be marginally less than that of the females.

Figure 14 and 15 show the break down of the amount of drinks consumed by respondents in the survey area in one sitting.

This level of consumption is posing significant risk to the health and well being of the young people of our community.

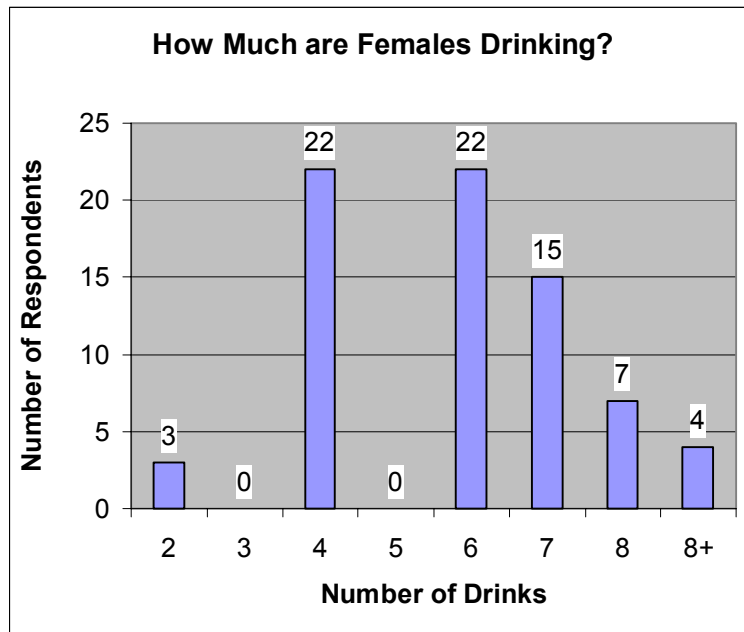


Figure 14

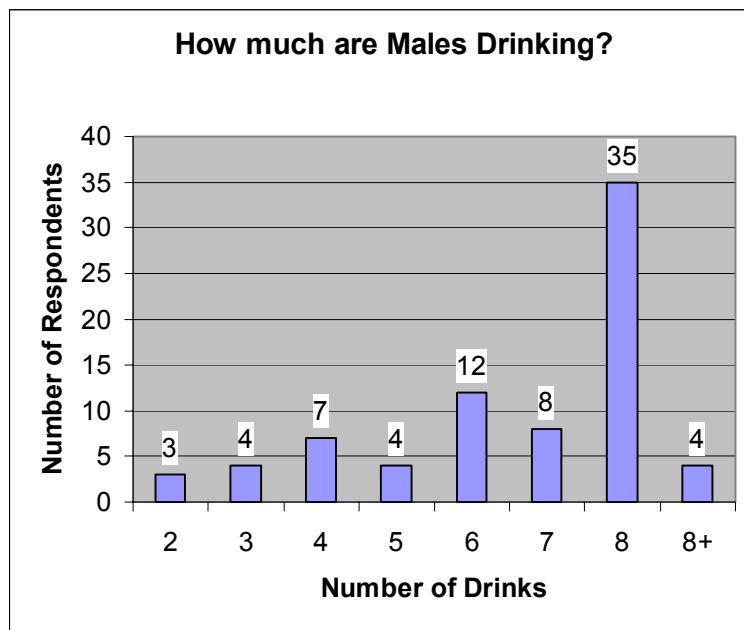


Figure 15

Question 12 in the survey was aimed at establishing where young people obtained their alcohol. Young people were asked to nominate the person who supplied them with their drinks on the particular night that they were surveyed.

Figure 16 shows half of the females obtained their alcohol from a friend. The large volume of young men in the survey area who were legally able to purchase alcohol suggests supply from this group.

The parents of surveyed females featured highly when asked to name their source of supply. This would suggest that a portion of parents condone the behaviour and practices of some of these young women.

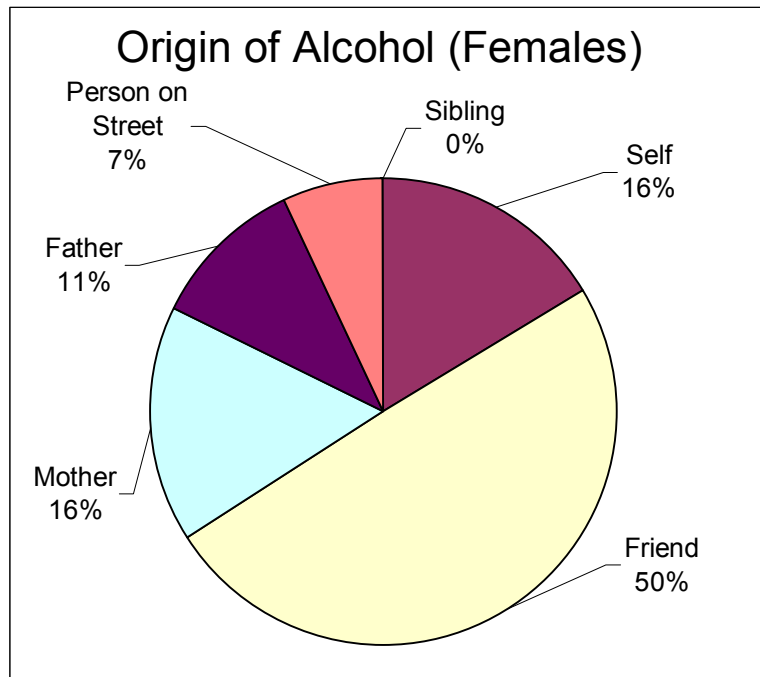


Figure 16

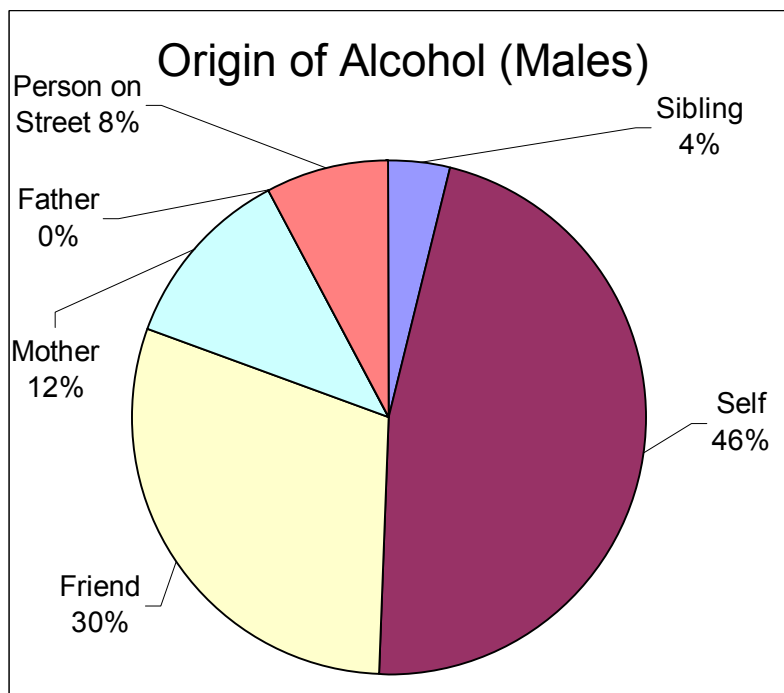


Figure 17

Figure 17 shows that young men drinking in the survey area were more likely to have purchased their own drinks. The data from the demographics section demonstrates that there is large proportion of young men of legal age using this area after dark, this would give rise to the skewed results shown in figure 17.

8.5 Profile of Illicit Drug Use.

Figure 18 does not accurately reflect our observations of the survey group. While surveying many young people verbally disclosed that they were under the

influence of illicit drugs. The respondents were reluctant to record their drug use on paper for fear of retribution.

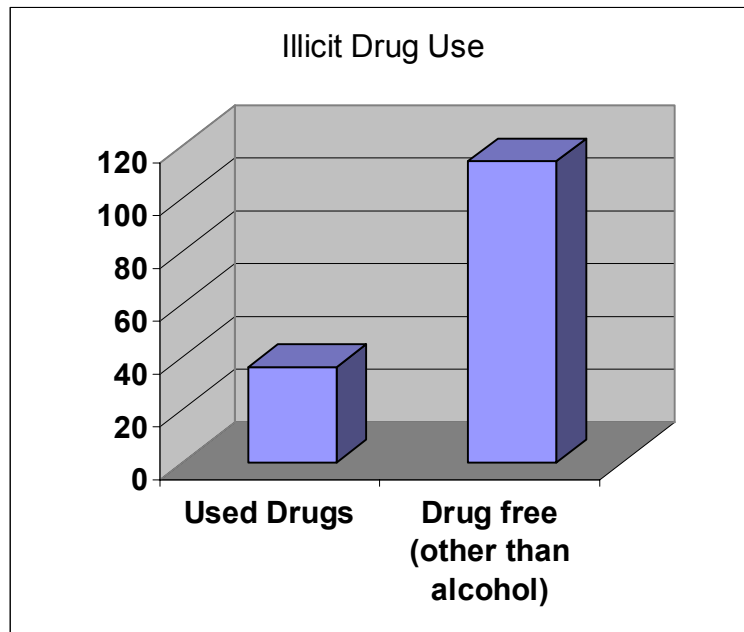


Figure 18

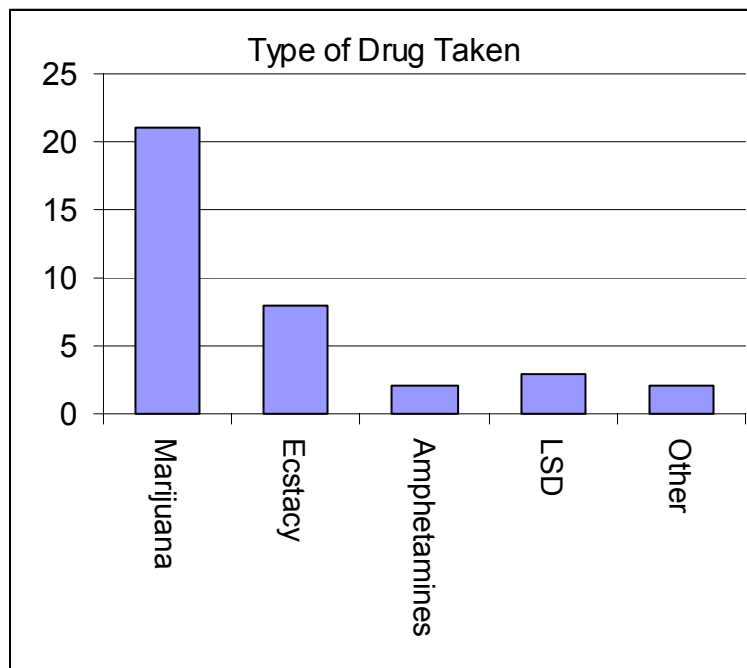


Figure 19

Of those who indicated that they used drugs the majority reported that they were under the influence of Marijuana.

Chemical drug use rivals that of marijuana use within the survey population. When all categories excluding marijuana are tallied the results show that 44.4% of confirmed illicit drug users indulged in chemically manufactured drugs, by way of comparison, the remainder in this cohort partook in Marijuana use (55.6%).

The survey indicates that many participated in polydrug use, that is, they consumed a number of different drugs (including alcohol) in one sitting.

8.6 What Young People Asked For.

In specific questioning regarding the introduction of youth services and facilities in Lennox Head a united theme became apparent.

In regard to the environment there was commonality amongst a large proportion of responses expressing a wish for an old house or hall with a welcoming and safe atmosphere.

When we asked young people what they would like to do in the space there was an overwhelming similarity in their responses. The majority of young people expressed the need to access a space that allowed them to relax and socialise with their friends.

The young people responding to the survey specifically requested that they would like the opportunity to attend creative arts and youth culture based workshops, run by local community members. A large number of young people stated that they would like to attend dances with live music.

Respondents also recognised the need for adult supervision. They were clear in what they wanted and this equated to young, respectful, easy going, friendly, adult members of their community.

Interestingly, they identified a gaping hole in professional services provided and accessible for the young people of Lennox Head. Such as, confidential medical and legal services as well as a need for counsellors.

When questioned about availability of the space the respondents predominantly stated after school, weekends and holidays.

The summary above attempts to draw a common thread from the cross section of results recorded in figure 20. Figure 20 consists of a summary of similar responses directly from the survey sheets, in the words of the respondents.

Table 20

Environment. What would it look like?	Activities. What would you like to do there?	Supervision. Who would run it?	Services. What services would you like available?	Availability. When would you like to access youth services?
Funky and chilled.	A house where kids can hang out and have fun.	Fun, reliable and understanding.	Free, confidential advice. Health services, etc.	24 hours.
Like Byron YAC.	Skate		Pool table.	All night.
An old house.	Workshops, classes.	Fun and easy going.	Counsellors, family, etc.	Friday and Saturday night. Some days.
Indoors and safe. Not be harassed by Police.	Music, pool, sit and chat.	Easy going.	Access to youth services in my town.	Holidays, through the week and later on weekend nights.
Lots of space to dance and have fun.	Dances.	People who understand what it is like to be young.	Entertainment.	Mainly on weekends, but in the holidays. Sometimes after school.
Somewhere local that is safe and fun to sit.	Pool table, music, pin ball, dancing, talent nights.	Anyone who is open minded and understands teens. They should be local.	A safe place to be.	Friday and Saturday and Public holidays.

Environment. What would it look like?	Activities. What would you like to do there?	Supervision. Who would run it?	Services. What services would you like available?	Availability. When would you like to access youth services?
A safe, happy, friendly and fun place.	Pool table, music, dancing, seats, food and drink.	Anyone open minded.	Female health clinic.	6pm – 1am
A big hall or a house somewhere else sheltered.	Music, dance, socialise with friends.	Adults that aren't over the top.	Access to legal services and a confidential doctor.	Weekends.
A place to hang out and have fun and not have to stress out about getting home and Police taking you home.	Workshops.	Cool parents.	Anything that's cop free.	All night.
A big hall or an enclosed space with tables and chairs and a TV.	Pool, cards, board games, play station.	Happy friendly people from my town.	Night counselling for people who need to talk.	Thursday, Friday, Saturday – All day.
A big open space to be in.	Board games, pool table, dancing.	Friendly adults.	DJ and movie making workshops.	Everyday after school and weekends.
A happy, cheery, safe and friendly space.	Pool, singing, sport, dancing and pinball.	Open minded, respectful people.	Free doctors for under 18's.	After school and weekends.
A house or a hall.	Dancing.	Open minded people.	Music workshops, jam nights.	All the time.

Environment. What would it look like?	Activities. What would you like to do there?	Supervision. Who would run it?	Services. What services would you like available?	Availability. When would you like to access youth services?
A welcoming place just like home.	Dances.	Young people from our community.	Youth services.	After school.
Lounges, soft lights, music.	Pool table, dances, creative workshops.	Easy going people.	Doctors and a counsellor.	NOW!!
Somewhere close to town.	Games.	20+ locals.	Disco	Friday, Saturday and Sunday.
Somewhere like my home.	Watch TV and have movie nights.	My Dad.	More buses – to prevent hitching.	Nights.
A calm social area. Relaxed with no fights.	Pool table and air hockey.	20 –25 year olds.	Legal aid.	Thursday, Friday and Saturday Nights.
A youth home.	Teaching kids to skate, DJ workshops.	Adults that handle kids with respect.	Skate park and a youth bus.	24 – 7.
A youth house like Byron's.	Pool table, soft drinks and a graffiti wall	Fun people.	Condom machine.	Daily.
Somewhere comfortable and safe that has lounges to sit on.	Music, DJ's, somewhere for our band to play.	People who understand me.	Jam nights with older musicians.	As often as possible.

8.7 What We Learnt About the Survey Group.

Demographics.

- Most of the young people using Ballina Street Lennox Head after dark were aged 14,15 and 16.
- 16 year old girls made up the greatest proportion of young people using this area.
- The next biggest cohort who frequented the reserves in Ballina Street after dark was young men aged 19 and 20+.
- The majority of young people within the survey area lived in Lennox Head.
- A large proportion of young people from East Ballina and Ballina also came to Lennox with the express reason to socialise within the survey area.
- The group has a sense of ownership in regard to the survey area and as such the survey area has established the reputation as a youth meeting place.
- Most young people attended Southern Cross High School in East Ballina.
- A significant proportion of young people attended Xavier Catholic College.

Mobility.

- The common mode of transport amongst the survey group was walking. This is obviously a reflection on the nominated place of residence.
- Young people were more inclined to hitch hike into the Lennox CBD rather than hitch hike home.
- A large proportion of young people relied on their parents to pick them up and drop them off within the survey area.
- Street Beat provided services to an increased number of clients leaving the CBD.

Perceptions of Survey Area.

- Young people clearly stated that their primary purpose for being in the survey area after dark was to socialise with their peers.
- They liked meeting in the survey area because they were sure that there would be other young people to socialise with.
- Respondents identified in a negative light the fact that there was nowhere else for them to meet.
- They were also concerned about safety and the incidence of fighting amongst the group.
- Young people also stated that they felt the strong Police presence in the Lennox CBD impacted on them negatively.
- Time and again young people clearly stated and implied that inadequate public transport options impacted on them negatively.

Alcohol.

- Binge drinking was significant across ages and the sexes. With the possibility of both sexes consuming over 9 standard drinks at one sitting.

- The level of alcohol consumed is a significant risk to the young people surveyed.
- Females obtain their alcohol predominantly from 'friends'. The large number of adult males in the area suggested them as the source of supply for young women.
- A large portion of young women also obtained alcohol from their parents.
- Young men mostly sourced their own alcohol.

Illicit Drugs.

- Respondents felt reluctant to disclose that they partook in the consumption of illicit drugs.
- Of those who stated that they had consumed drugs, most smoked marijuana.
- Drugs that had been manufactured rivalled marijuana use in the survey area.
- Poly drug use was significantly recorded.

Their solutions.

- Respondents identified the need to access services on a regular basis, namely after school, at night time, on weekends and during holidays.
- Young people asked for access to services such as doctors, counsellors, legal aid, female health clinics, and a condom vending machine.
- They asked to access activities like pool, dancing, creative arts and youth culture based workshops.
- They also asked to for the opportunity or space to play games and music with their friends.
- The most common request in regard to the environment was a youth home or house.
- Young people asked for a place where they could feel safe, welcome and have some fun.
- Respondents were surprisingly realistic when asked to consider supervision of the area. They requests young adults from their community who were accepting and non judgemental.