The case of
Sydney, Australia

by Joe Flood

Contact
Dr. Joe Flood
Urban Resources
37 Horne St Elsternwick Vic 3185, AUSTRALIA
Tel. +61 3 9532 8492
Fax. +61 3 9532 4325
E-mail: joeflood@gravity.net.au

Source: CIA factbook

I. INTRODUCTION

Australia, the *"Great South Land"* is the size of continental USA, but has a population of only 19 million. Much of Australia is extremely arid and unsuited to cultivation or settlement, and the bulk of the people live in the temperate south-eastern region and other coastal areas.

Australia was settled as six separate British colonies during the period 1788-1840, displacing some 750,000 indigenous inhabitants to the more remote parts of the continent[1]. Following a sheep farming boom in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the discovery of gold in the 1950s, the colonies prospered and joined to form the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901. The nation operates under a Westminster-style federal system of government in which the Commonwealth collects and distributes most of the taxes, the states provide most of the human and physical services, and local governments have more limited responsibilities than is usual elsewhere.

Although most of Australia's exports are raw agricultural or mineral commodities, only about 3 per cent of the population are employed in primary activities. In fact, Australia is 80 per cent urbanised, one of the highest levels in the world, and two thirds of the population live in the five primate cities that are the capitals of the former mainland colonies.

Australia has been called the *"Lucky Country"* – with some justification. From 1890 to1920 it had the highest per capita income in the world. It was the first country to introduce a social service safety net through universal age and other pensions. It consistently rates among the top few countries in terms of human development and liveability indices. It is regarded as one of the world's most egalitarian nations in which everyone gets a chance to improve their situation. Yet the largest cities have had slums in the past to equal those of any country. Despite a century of slum clearance and redevelopment, it is still easy to identify areas of considerable social disadvantage, although they would not now be called slums. Recent pressures associated with globalisation have conspired to increase inequality in both the social and the spatial senses, so that in the longer term, the cycle through which neighbourhoods become slums could turn again.

A. SYDNEY: THE CITY

"The growth of suburban Sydney had no parallel among the cities of the Old World. Even in America the rise of the great cities has been accompanied by a

corresponding increase in rural population. No charac- teristic of development has been more marked than the concentration of people in the cities". (Coghlan, NSW Statistician, 1895).

Sydney is a coastal city of 4 million people about a third of the way up Australia's eastern seaboard. It has a temperate climate with over 340 sunny days per year, and has an average rainfall of 1,210mm. It covers an area of about 1,580 km2 - similar to London, and 15 times the size of Paris. It is intensely cosmopolitan, with more than a million people born overseas, and another 900,000 second-generation immigrants, with just about every national and ethnic group represented.

Sydney was the site of the first European settlement in 1788, and is the capital of the most populous Australian state of New South Wales. Apart from a period of about 70 years from 1860-1930 when it was eclipsed by the Victorian capital of Melbourne in popu- lation, wealth and political importance, it has been regarded as Australia's premier city. It has a spectacu- lar position astride Sydney Harbour, and is famous for its bay scenery and beaches, its picturesque structures including the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Opera House, and its cosmopolitan inner-city precincts, many of them former slum areas. In 2000 its international profile was raised when it hosted the 20th Olympiad. It has increasingly taken over the roles of the major Australian business centre, the preferred location for the headquarters of Australian and international firms, and the tourist, information and air traffic *"connectivity hub"* for Australia.

Sydney has both gained and lost from its spectacular site. On the one hand, this has given it global prestige, a *"must-see"* status for tourists, and good access to Asian markets. On the other hand, the obstacle of the

Great Dividing Range some 100 km inland and substan- tial waterways to the north have given it poor surface access to the interior, and have set limits to urban resi- dential growth. The generally hilly aspect of the inner and northern areas, and the waterways on which Sydney is built, have caused problems of internal traffic flow and access, and have contributed to real estate prices some 30% higher than other Australian cities.

To the south-west of Sydney, however, stretches some 60km of flat, rather dreary suburban sprawl, standing in sharp contrast to the tinseltown precincts of the city and the wealth and privilege of the northern suburbs. It is here that the bulk of population increase is taking place, where the new immigrants increasingly settle, and the disadvantaged can find affordable housing and support mechanisms. It is fairly inevitable that Sydney would be residentially divided between those who could afford the higher amenities and accessibility of the inner and north- ern areas, from those located in the fairly monotonous plains lying to the west inside the escarpment of the Divide; and that the jobs to which richer households would aspire would also tend to be centrally located.
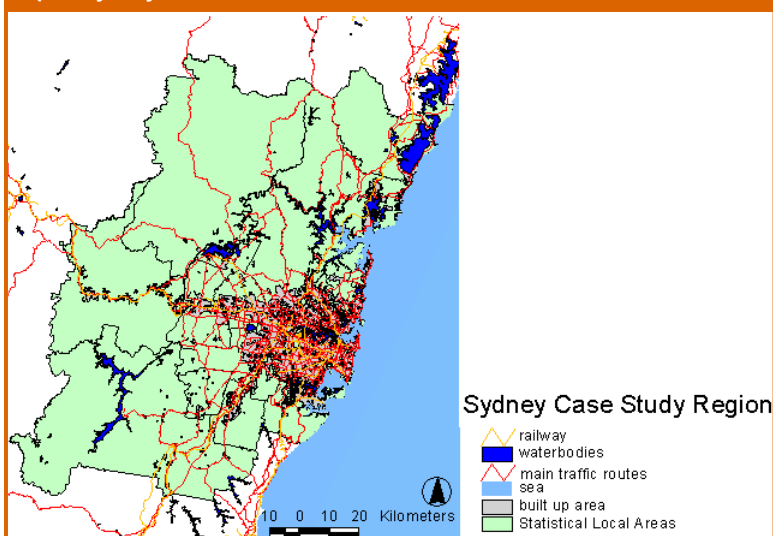
Sydney has been the preferred destination for some 30 per cent of immigrants to Australia, and therefore it has supported a large and ethnically diverse immigrant population, while being (with Melbourne) the major locus for the growth of the semi-skilled adult labour force. As in other cities, immigrants have tended to gather around specific locations, particularly around former migrant hostels where jobs and facilities suited to recent arrivals are concentrated, and where formal and informal social supports for particular ethnic groups can be found.

Apart from a few rundown suburban blocks and areas, Sydney no longer has any slums as conventionally contrived. What it does have is a rich and very well docu- mented history of traditional inner city slum areas and their passage from squalor to mixed income status; a history of multicultural development which has given a great deal both to the city and the nation; and a fairly profound spatial separation of social and income groups mediated through globali- sation, and through which the slums of the future might possly emerge.

1. Sydney: a Short History of Inequality

New South Wales was established in 1788 as a penal colony for surplus British prisoners during the social dislocations of the Industrial Revolution. The transporta- tion period until 1840 was one of very slow growth and an artificial society based on the work of convicts and agricultural products. Sydney slowly became a market and government centre, in which develop-

Map 1: Sydney

Sydney Case Study Region

△ railway
■ waterbodies
△ main traffic routes
■ sea
■ built up area
■ Statistical Local Areas

10 0 10 20 Kilometers

Source:http://business.carinthia.com/bgolob/bilder/case_area_Sydney.gif

Table 1, Population, Sydney 1788 to 2001

Year	Population	Rate of growth
1788	1,050	
1800	2,537	7.6%
1810	6,158	9.3%
1820	12,079	7.0%
1833	16,232	2.3%
1841	35,507	10.3%
1851	53,924	4.3%
1861	95,789	5.9%
1871	137,776	3.7%
1881	224,939	5.0%
1891	383,283	5.5%
1901	481,830	2.3%
1911	-	-
1921	-	-
1931	-	-
1941	-	-
1951	-	-
1961	-	-
1971	-	-
1981	3,279,500	
1991	3,672,850	1.1%
2001	3,997,321	0.9%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics; Kelly (1978).

ment was largely unplanned, containing both fine mansions and ramshackle informal settlements[2].

Since the 1840s, Sydney's housing development has historically followed a ring pattern: the cycle of boom, in which large areas of poor quality housing were hastily erected on vacant land; and bust, in which poverty and misery combined with rapidly deteriorating and unserviced housing to create traditional slum areas. The first economic and population boom, coinciding with the discovery of gold in the 1850s, was followed by a depression in the 1860s in which Sydney's first large slum areas were born.

Two subsequent severe boom-bust cycles occurred, the first in the 1880s and 1890s, based on a pastoral boom and the development of railways; and second in the 1920s and 1930s, based on manufacturing industry, by which time Sydney was a large city in the British Empire. The structure of Sydney and its slums was therefore to a fair extent dictated by global financial markets, just as in other entrepôt ports such as Liverpool.

The unplanned development of the early years was succeeded by several rounds of redevelopment or slum clearing – the first following a small plague outbreak in 1900; the second in the 1920s; and the third in the 1960s and 1970s, which was strongly opposed by resident action groups who sought to preserve the historical character of inner areas. During this period of planning interventions, the almost complete separation of workplace and residential areas became the norm. Most workers commuted to the central city, first by train and later by car. Secondary employment centres began to be constructed as the city expanded.

The Second World War caused a major reorientation in economic and military affiliations, with the USA ultimately becoming the major source of imports, and Japan and other countries receiving Australia's raw materials. A major wave of assisted immigration began that was to triple Australia's (and Sydney's) population within 50 years. Huge new sprawling suburban areas of the *"Australian dream, the house on a quarter acre block"* were built for single family housing, which were equally popular with immigrants and the native born. Assisted by the easy availability of housing loans at concessional and capped interest rates, the home ownership rate soared to the present levels of 70% by 1960[3]. The construction of urban services at these low densities was expensive and providers had a great deal of trouble keeping up (Sydney was not fully sewered until the late 1980s).

By the 1970s high interest rates, demographics and changing tastes were moving against this land-intensive urban expansion. In the following 25 years, the formerly ubiquitous *"couples with children"* fell to only 25% of households, and women rapidly entered the workforce. The new dominant producer services industries were linked into the global economy and required a younger, well educated workforce. Workplaces and factories began to move out to the suburbs, and higher paid workers to the inner city[4]. Commuting to the CBD began to lose its attraction as the city expanded. The new DINK (*"double income no kids"*) and single person households, who had higher proportionate travel costs and therefore tended to locate centrally, were more amenable to higher density living, especially in Sydney where land prices were high and apartment living had always been more acceptable than in other Australian cities. Inner city areas with their historical precincts came to be seen as better located and more colourful than bland suburbia, and most inner city slum areas were steadily redeveloped, sometimes by building new houses but more often by refurbishing. Whole streets were remodelled dwelling by dwelling, leading to very mixed neighbourhoods of newly arrived *"yuppies"* or *"trendies"*, older working class people, and remnants of the *"underclass",* mixed with service sector firms and

light industrial areas. Virtually every former inner slum area in Sydney, even Redfern, has now been redeveloped by stealth, and house prices have reached levels that would have been unimaginable 20 years ago.

From the 1980s a concern with the costs of urban expansion[5], and environmental concerns about traffic and energy use led state and local governments to adopt urban consolidation policies. These encouraged medium density redevelopments in most inner areas, especially those near suburban employment centres and railway stations, limiting the avenues for existing residents to block developments through planning appeals. The result has been an acceleration of inner city redevelopment, and some increase in densities in the low density *"death ring"* of middle suburbs. New suburbs were also built to higher densities and began to include a proportion of medium density terrace or cluster housing.

2. Slum Clearance and Planning

"A new domestic ideal had been successfully implanted …The suburban bungalow became a symbol of middle class virtues and values - respectability, individualism, order and material success via hard work and thrift."

Following a relatively minor outbreak of plague at the end of the depression years of the 1890s, a reformist council took office. From 1906 the so-called inner city slums or working class areas were emptied of residents and razed to make way for commercially profitable redevelopments. A Royal Commission in 1908 found that congestion *"stunted bodies, polluted minds and worked against social and racial improvement"*, and tenement and flat living were spurned on *"social and hygienic grounds"*[6].

Up until the 1870s Sydney had virtually no urban services or planning. In the 1880s, a time of prosperity, the size of the city almost doubled to 225,000 people. Most of the new dwellings in this building boom were terraced houses of four or five rooms with primitive facilities, built ahead of infrastructure of any kind, and most were rented. Yet by the end of the decade much of Sydney was sewered, had gas lighting and water, railways, steam trams and omnibuses, and most urban services.

The twenties was another prosperous era of rapid change, and most houses in Sydney had electricity by 1930. In 1947, 91 per cent of dwellings had gas connected. In 1920 67 per cent of dwellings in Sydney were sewered; this fell in the 1930s but by 1940 it had risen to 73 per cent. The outer suburbs were steadily sewered throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

At the edge of the city, new *"garden suburbs"* were under construction. As in other Australian cities, these eventually spread more than 50km from the city centre, first along the railway lines and then through infill as

motor transport became universally available. The County of Cumberland Planning Scheme of 1951 attempted to preserve a green belt around the city, thereby limiting its growth, but it was rapidly undermined by developments seeking quick profits. It was replaced in 1968 by the Sydney Region Outline Plan, which has guided growth ever since.

For a period of 20 years from the 1960s, corruption was widespread, involving liaisons of politicians, developers, police and shady characters. By 1970 it appeared that the whole inner city area would be completely redeveloped for business purposes and the working class inhabitants would be displaced.

However at the same time, affluent and articulate professionals began to move into the inner city and to remodel the historical precincts. A struggle developed between a network of citizens action groups and developers, culminating in a series of unique "Green Bans" by the rank and file of the Builders Labourers Federation in 1970-72 to prevent areas of cultural and heritage value being demolished or redeveloped. From this time on, complete tracts of land were seldom cleared, and remodelling or reconstruction of individual dwellings and streetscapes became the dominant method of urban improvement.

While the preservation of inner city areas seemed assured, conditions at the city edge were not so sanguine. In the manner of a century before, the building of huge greenfield public housing developments in the 1960s at Green Valley and Mt Druitt in the Outer West was conducted with limited regard to the timely provision of services and social infrastructure. Although these developments did form part of an integrated economic strategy where the estates were to be provided with regional shopping centres and work opportunities, this public housing-led form of development turned out to be extremely problematic. The growth expectations of the time were not realised, and industry was slow to develop. Meanwhile, the composition of public housing tenants was changing from working class families to largely welfare-dependant and often single parent families. Public transport and community services were poor or non-existent. As a result of these various developments, when coupled with the high number of new migrants being housed in Fairfield, the location of a major migrant hostel, the South Western and Western Sydney sectors quickly became more stigmatised. Social exclusion of these communities has been further reinforced by economic restructuring over the past 20 years.

The centre of the city tends to attract those with a low demand for space and a high demand for accessibility, including small families with several workers, a subgroup of disadvantaged people who need central access for livelihood, rental housing or welfare opportunities, and professionals who tend to work in the centre. **Figure 1** is instructive in showing the distribu-

tion of several key indicators of socio-economic status as one moves away from the central city. Incomes fall, as does the proportion of workers in key occupations.

However, this radial distribution is not the only dimension, and in fact inequality in Sydney is demarcated axially, according to direction, with the western and south-western areas housing the bulk of low income population, as can be seen in **Map 1.**

The south-west and western sectors contain the majority of:

- low income households
- unemployed people
- people without qualifications
- people with trade qualifications

Conversely, Central Sydney, the eastern suburbs and the northern suburbs contain the majority of:

- high income households
- high employment levels
- people with university qualifications
- managers, administrators and professionals

These various social dimensions may be used to construct a more detailed map of different socio-economic areas of Sydney.

The six different clusters shown in **Map 3** are

1. Flat dwelling households without children, in the centre

2. Affluent professional households to the north

3. Overseas-born households to the south-west

4. A scattering of areas of high disadvantage throughout Cluster 3.

5. Outer areas of high familism and middle-class occupations

6. Coastal areas of retired Australian-born people

II. THE SLUMS

B. SLUMS: THE PLACES

"Due to high rents, gross overcrowding was common and sanitary provisions were virtually non-existent. Open drains and communal cesspits were particularly common and the water used by the working classes came either from public wells or from the water cart."

This report deals with two very different suburbs. Surry Hills is a typical inner city former slum with a lurid history to equal any other. Over 160 years it has undergone virtually every kind of urban change, and been the victim of every kind of mistaken planning policy, while preserving its unique culture and identity. Fairfield/Cabramatta is a colourful area in the Outer West that would not qualify as a slum on the basis of poor housing or infrastructure, but because of its highly diverse ethnic population and concentration of low
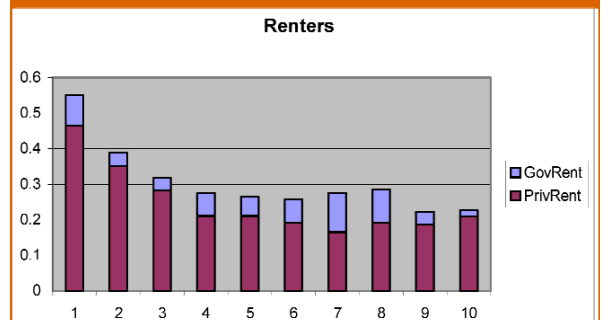
Figure 1. Income, and Percentage in Key Occupation Groups vs km from the Central City
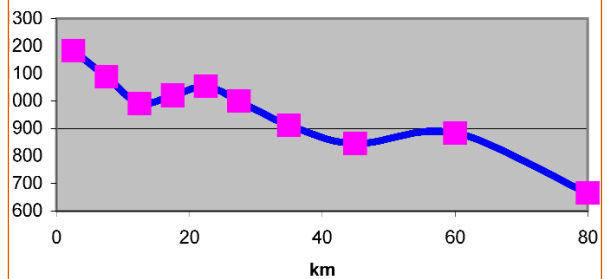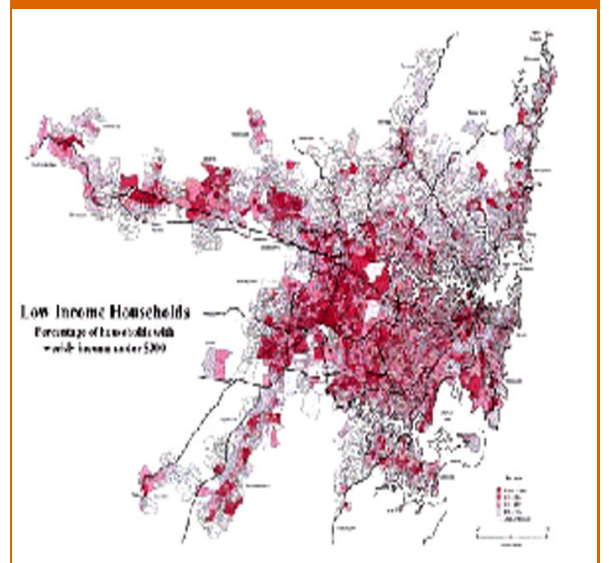

a) Average household income
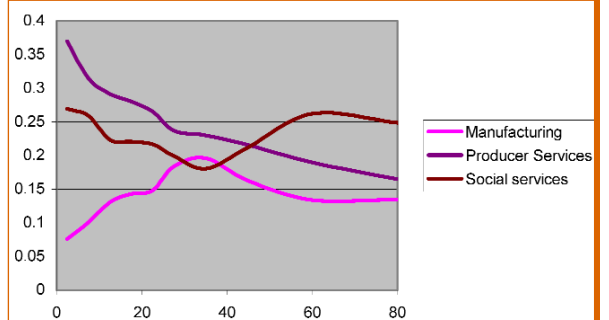
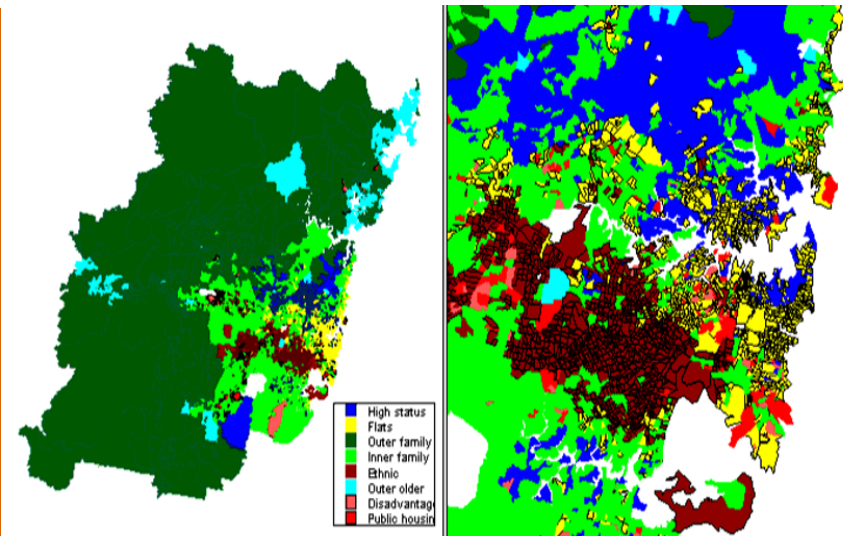b) Key occupational classes

c) Percentage of renting households

Map 2. Distribution of Low-income Households, Sydney 1996

Map 3. Clusters of Socio-Economic Groups in Sydney, 1996

income people, it has been singled out in the popular imagination in ways that normally define a slum area. Both places form part of a mosaic of changing demographic and economic circumstances against a broad background of globalisation and transformations in international capitalism over two centuries.

1. Surry Hills and South Sydney[7]

"When their grandfathers and great grandfathers arrived in Sydney, they went naturally to Shanty Town, not because they were dirty or lazy, though many of them were that, but because they were poor. And wherever there are poor you will find landlords who build tenements, cramming two on a piece of land no bigger than a pocket handkerchief, and letting them for the rent of four." "Harp of the South", (Ruth Park).

For much of their history, the areas abutting the city to the south, including Surry Hills, Redfern and Waterloo have been recognised as the worst slums in Australia, the *"backyard of Sydney"* and a dumping ground for human and industrial refuse. These areas began as *"working men's housing"*, but in successive mercantile depressions, they became the low-income quarters of the city. During their long and often sordid history, there has been a fairly continuous process of redevelopment and renewal, culminating in the rapid gentrification of the last 30 years. Today, only very small areas such as *"the Block"* in Redfern would meet most people's ideas of a slum. Nevertheless, South Sydney still remains host to the greatest inequality and concentration of the disadvantaged and dispossessed; it has the highest

level of crime and the most social problems of any part of Sydney.

Surrey Hills initially began as a village or informal settlement in the 1840s. Over 80 per cent of the first dwellings were built by landlords who were "not very far above their tenants in social status", around a rudimentary system of roads. The remainder was mostly "small and shoddy" housing constructed by owner-builders. In 1845 there was a formal subdivision and sale of plots which led ultimately to the present structure of the suburb. There was no drainage, and water was bought from vendors.

By the time of the global economic downturn of the 1860s, the Sydney slums were the equal in dirt and squalor to any slum anywhere. Keating (paraphrased) relates various eyewitness accounts of Surrey Hills:

"The housing was admitted by all hands to be deplorably bad. The older cottages were in many places very wretched, with the inhabitants assuming a corresponding demeanour. The lines had no traps to stop the backflushing of sewage…many of the water closets were connected directly to the water supply…all the household slops were carried by pipes and discharged into the unkerbed, unguttered street... In one week the Council dumped 1690 cart loads of rubbish including 542 dead animals and 36 loads of stuff from earth closets into Moore Park opposite. New houses were springing up in great fetid pools. Shea's Creek (near the abattoirs) was a lethal brew of spent tan, lime and floating animal tissue… I encountered five children (alone) in the house, none of them able to go out and earn anything. They had a bed, at least a sort of bedstead if not a bed, made up of old clothes, a gridiron, a saucepan, and that was all I saw in the place."

Most *"decent tenants"* vacated this zone of blighted living conditions in this period or in the 1890s.

In the 1880s, various Mayors of Sydney made forays into the slum areas and condemned many houses for reasons that *"had little to do with structural deficiency and more to do the perceived filth, intemperance and depravity of the occupants themselves. In one day, 50 out of 80 dwellings inspected by the mayor were condemned. The reformers were blind to the fact that poverty was the cause of bad living conditions not a*

symptom of them, and they thus sought to solve the problems of working-class housing by evicting the inhabitants and demolishing the housing.... Newspapers revelled in tales of Chinese gambling[8] and opium dens, the lascivious child whores, the drunken fathers with their black-eyed wives and larrikin offspring that lurked in Surry Hills".

From the 1860s, several charities such as the Benevolent Asylum, and later the Sydney City Mission, were active or located in the area. There was a boom in the dispensation of private charity during the 1890s, with many religious organisations providing food and shelter to the deserving poor, *"leavened with sizable doses of Christian dogma and moral tub thumping."*

By 1890 the building of Surry Hills was complete and the population reached 30,000. It was largely occupied by tradesmen and working men, but its reputation was at the lowest ebb. It was typified, as most such settlements today, by *"a resilient self sufficiency, a wary cynicism of authority, and a collective reliance on close-knit networks of neighbourhood support".* Even in good times, family units were economically precarious, and many families could not meet minimal school fees and had to withdraw children to work selling newspapers, or in industry as soon as they were old enough. Women took in washing or worked in the many piecework textile sweatshops in the area, while their husbands might walk miles each day in search of casual labouring work. If a source of income was lost, the family was reduced to charity. *"To be poor was to live with fear".*

From the 1890s, much noxious industry located in South Sydney, and slum dwellings were gradually replaced with factories and warehouses, lowering the area's amenity and air quality. The population fell from 30,000 in 1890 to 19,000 in 1947, and by 1974 only 12,000 people lived there.

The seedy reputation of the area was heightened in the inter-war years. The *"Queen of the Underworld"*, Kate Leigh, ran high profile bordellos and sly grog establishments in the depression and war years, until more liberal liquor laws in the mid 1950s allowed legal drinking after 6pm. The late 1940s was probably the point of greatest deterioration of the suburb as a residential environment.

The phenomenal rate of encroachment in the 1920s and 1930s and the housing shortages of the 1950s and 1960s led the City Council to gazette large areas as purely residential, a complete change of attitude to the area - in opposition to many local businessmen who believed the whole area should be turned over to industry. After 1943, at the beginning of the post-war housing shortage, the council also began the remodelling of a number of streets and the construction of public housing.

As in a number of other countries, the razing of slum areas and their replacement with public housing tower blocks was not a success, although it did assist with the post-war housing shortage. On the one hand, it displaced residents and destroyed the intangible values of community and networks of support - the things that gave *"neighbourhood"* its meaning. Of 288 families resident in the area where Sydney's biggest postwar block of flats, Northcott Place, was built, only 43 were rehoused in the same area. Just as significantly, the planners and politicians missed the point that the problems of slum neighbourhoods were not caused by housing conditions but by the poverty of the residents, which could not be solved by pulling the houses down.

From the 1970s, the demand for inner city living made Surry Hills too valuable to be left to the indigent and marginalised, or to industry, and professionals and young households began to arrive in considerable numbers. Old factories were recycled as theatres, studio spaces and company offices. While the suburb was still very much on *"the edge of sleaze",* the bad old reputation of Surry Hills was soon forgotten, and it is now one of the most interesting and sought-after mixed areas in Sydney; regarded variously as "cosmopolitan, tree-lined and friendly", or *"hip and trendy".*

Resident action groups have been particularly forceful in Surry Hills in preventing unwanted developments or highway resumptions, in obtaining desired facilities, and in preserving the environment and heritage of the area. The familiarity of the new activist residents with the processes of government, and their persistent demands for public access to the decision making process has forced much greater accountability on governments in determining the future of the suburb. This enhanced resident power stems not just from the professionalisation of the resident population, but from the fact that Surry Hills is no longer seen as a worthless area for the destitute but an integral and valued part of the cityscape[9].

The wave of gentrification spread south over the next thirty years to encompass much of the local government area, though improvement has been patchy and still eludes some areas. Industry still remains in the area although land is now too expensive for industry and much of it has relocated to the Outer West. The century-long population flow out of the inner areas has reversed: between 1995 and 2000, the population of Sydney's inner suburbs grew by an average of 15 per cent each year. Despite these social changes, large numbers of low-income people still live in the area in greater concentrations than any other part of the city. It is the middle class and families that are absent in their usual numbers.

Although there has been an enormous improvement in living conditions and reputation in South Sydney, there is still one area that might be recognised as a slum area. Aboriginal people[10] have always lived in the area of a reserve at Bunnerong on Botany Bay, near the power station. Following the establishment in 1973 of the Aboriginal Housing Company, Redfern became a

focus of the most destitute of Aboriginal peoples (Anderson, 1993b). As labour intensive manufacturing declined, Aboriginal unemployment rose, and problems of health, housing, crime, alcohol and policing became more evident. Today, the locality known as "the Block" is marked by signs of social dislocation on the one hand (abandoned dwellings, litter and broken windows) and Aboriginal people's pride on the other (tribal markings and flags) (Waitt 1999).

2. Cabramatta

While no-one would describe Cabramatta in the outer western local government area of Fairfield as a slum in terms of its housing, infrastructure or social quality, it nevertheless retains a number of the characteristics that areas designated as slums may have. It is a home for refugees from many countries, and other marginalised groups, containing many low-income people, unemployed and single parents. It is a centre for a thriving semi-informal sector that fulfils a particular economic role for Sydney. And it has been demonised by the press and in the popular imagination as the site of *"un-Australian"* activities such as drug dealing, street gangs and murders, although these are much more prevalent elsewhere.

The multiethnic phenomenon that is Cabramatta had its origins in the migrant hostel that was located there from the late 1940s until 1967[11]. Successive waves of immigrants of other nationalities, especially refugees, passed through the Cabramatta Hostel, and moved into more permanent housing in the area where work in the manufacturing sector was available. These distinct groups built community infrastructure and cultural icons such as shops, restaurants and religious buildings. As much subsequent immigration involved reuniting families, the numbers of foreign-born residents increased.

Australia's longstanding hostility to Asian immigration had broken down somewhat in the 1970s after the Vietnam War, and a substantial Vietnamese population immigrated to the suburb. Only around 11 per cent of Fairfield's population are Vietnamese-born, but they are quite localised to the extent that some streets now house 90 per cent Vietnamese families. Although over 100 languages are spoken in Cabramatta, the area has a distinct Vietnamese-Australian ambience.

It has been said that Cabramatta personifies everything that has made Australia worthwhile: the willingness to accept people of many cultures and to give everyone a chance, to keep their own cultures while accommodating the advantages of the new, and to share the rewards that can accumulate through hard work and organisation. Although the vast majority of Australians are strongly supportive of multiculturalism, which has added a new dimension and vibrancy to what was formerly a dull British outpost, the area has been specifically identified by a few conservative academics and populist politicians as a "ghetto" and a "little Saigon"

which is destroying Australian values (e.g. Blainey 1993). The print media have not assisted by portraying Cabramatta as the centre of crime, organised gangs connected with South-East Asia, drug magnates and violence (Brown and Sampson 1988)[12].

3. Attributes of Disadvantaged Areas

Table 2 shows typical average indicators of disadvantage for all severely disadvantaged areas (with and without public housing), for Fairfield, South Sydney, and Sydney as a whole.

4. Crime Rates

General crime rates by State are available from the Australian Bureau of Statistics at and the Australian Institute of Criminology at http://www.aic.gov.au/stats/ Very detailed crime statistics by statistical local area are collected from police records by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research at http://www.agd.nsw.gov. au/bocsar1.nsf/pages/lga_region

Attitudes to crime reporting have been mixed. A number of high profile incidents in Fairfield have been reported extensively in the press; including the murder of the local member of Parliament who campaigned against crime, the shooting of seven people at a wedding reception, the death of a child from heat exhaustion when the car was stolen for a joyride, acts of extortion by teenage gangs running protection rackets, the closing of 35 *"drug houses"* by police[13]. Local activists in Cabramatta seeking increased action against drug dealing were incensed when told by the Police Commissioner that crime in the area was rated on the low side, under an informal index used by police.

The actual crime statistics bear out the police position to some extent. Table 3 shows that Fairfield is below average in many reported crime categories, such as assault, sexual offences and malicious damage, and is quite high only in homicide, robbery and drug offences. Even here it does not compare with the traditional "slum area" of South Sydney, which is the leader in virtually every area of crime, with three times the average number of crimes per person, and six times the city average in robbery and drug offences[14]. It appears that crime in South Sydney is "old news" and not worth reporting, whereas Fairfield is something new and bears the stern gaze of Sydney.

C. SLUMS: THE PEOPLE

"No work, no hope, no escape…this is the prospect facing a growing number of Australians. Call it a welfare society, a workless class or an underclass, it is the same: a group of people excluded from mainstream society. It is a way of life that is being passed down from one generation to another." Sydney Morning Herald, reported in Murphy and Watson 1999.

Table 2: Profile of City Districts with Severe Disadvantages by Proportion of Public Housing, Sydney, 1996.

	High Public Housing (> 20%)	Low Public Housing (< 6%)	Sydney Average
% Dwellings with No Motor Vehicles	31.5	24.9	15.5
% One Parent Family Households	21.4	12.1	10.2
% Two Parent Family Households	28.9	35.7	37.4
% Owner Occupied Dwellings	18.3	32.8	40.3
% Dwellings Being Purchased	14.5	14.2	22.7
% Public Rented Dwellings	48.9	1.1	5.5
% Private Rented Dwellings	11.7	42.7	23.6
% Flats, Units and Apartments	27.5	40.4	22.2
% Households with Weekly Income less than US$150	32.9	21.5	16.3
% Unemployment Rate	18.9	19.5	7.5
% Persons Born Overseas	32.0	55.0	30.7
% Persons Not Fluent in English	7.5	18.7	4.8

Source: Randolph, B. (2000). Community renewal and disadvantaged areas: an agenda for action. pp 6-15

Table 3. Five Year Crime Averages 1996-2001 per 100,000 People, Sydney

Crime Category	Sydney	South Sydney	Fairfield
Homicide	5.3	16.6	13.2
Assault	830.7	2864.3	810.1
Sexual Offences	119.1	235.3	95.0
Robbery	252.1	1539.6	379.5
Theft	7276.1	21976.9	7117.0
Extortion	21.6	84.1	27.2
Malicious Damagea	1396.1	2745.6	1101.9
Drug Offences	296.8	1949.5	921.2
Offensive Behaviourb	201.5	825.3	257.7
Against Justicec	303.6	971.2	448.9
Driving	2359.3	3860.3	2851.2
Other	540.8	1372.1	879.6
TOTAL	**13602.9**	**38440.8**	**14902.4**

Note   a. Including arson
         b. Including prostitution, weapons and gambling offences
         c. Escaping custody etc

1. Defining Socio-Economic Disadvantage

While there is no official poverty definition, the Henderson Poverty Line is in common usage for a number of purposes. This measure takes 45 per cent of median male earnings to be the poverty line, and modifies it according to family type. Before and after housing poverty are calculated separately. The line was defined in the influential Henderson Poverty Report in 1978, and is still produced quarterly by Melbourne University. It has often been criticised as inappropriate for many purposes, but has never been replaced.

At the small geographical area level, the Australian Bureau of Statistics has defined an Index of Advantage and an Index of Disadvantage, by taking a number of key variables from the census and performing a Principal Components Analysis to obtain indices similar to human development indices. These indices are sold to analysts with each 5 year Census. A number of inner city areas in Sydney register among the highest in terms of both advantage and disadvantage. Flood (1999b) also used factor analysis to obtain indices that correlate highly with the above. These are shown in Map 3.

Flood (1999) SEE ABOVE also showed that over a 25 year period, the composition of indexes of advantage and disadvantage have not changed very much; with a couple of notable exceptions. Some ethnic groups (particularly Southern Europeans) have been able to improve their circumstances, and it is more recently-arrived groups such as Vietnamese that now have low status[15]. It has been particularly heartening that studies have shown no essential difference between second-generation immigrants and the general population - which is not the case in other countries (Burnley 1986).

The distinction between blue collar (secondary industry) and white collar (clerical) workers that was clear 25 years ago has altered. The distinction is clearly now between knowledge workers (producer and government services) and other workers (lower paid clerical and industrial). As such the city seems almost to be dividing into two parts, a *"traditional ring city"* with its centre somewhere near Fairfield, which follows the older pattern of rings of commuters of different socio-economic status, and the new *"world city"* which lies on the Harbour.

In the 1980s and 1990s, as in most developed coun-

tries, the gap between the rich and the poor widened considerably, although in absolute terms everyone was better off. The cause of this is economic restructuring in line with global priorities and technological and organisational change, which has meant the loss both of manufacturing jobs and of many middle income service sector jobs, with an increase in both more skilled knowledge occupations and less skilled personal and domestic service occupations. Observations of the increasingly polarised nature of the city and its workforce have led some to speculate on the rise of a *"service class"* of people working in Macjobs and part time domestic activities, which has not been part of the Australian scene until now (McKay, reported in Murphy and Watson 1999:107).

2. Density

Sydney is reasonably dense for an Australian or North American city, but very sparse by European or developing country standards. Despite the size of the city, **Map 4** shows the Sydney Statistical Division to be still only partly settled, with urban areas stretching along the railway lines to the south and west, and a completely separate urban area on the north coast.

3. Voices of the People

Making a Living in the New World

Albert is a Lebanese Christian aged 35 who has been living in Fairfield for about 12 years. Some members of his family emigrated to Sydney in the 1970s when Christians were being

harassed, and he and his brother followed. He married a Lebanese girl and brought her to Australia about 8 years ago, and they have two children. He lives in a small house with his family and 4 other adults. With all of them working they have been able to buy a big house in the northern suburbs which they rent out for a good rate. By saving rapidly, their aim is to build up enough property that they can all live comfortably in their own houses. Abdul himself has had occasional factory and labouring jobs but now has a good job as a storeman. In the evening he often drives the cab of a relative for extra money. He never had much education but now he will get the best for his kids.

He rather likes the Fairfield area although there is too much crime and drugs, too many different groups doing there own thing, he wouldn't want his kids to go to school there much longer. Still, Australia is a much safer place than Lebanon was, it's a pretty good place. The Arab Christian community is quite large, including Lebanese and Assyrians, and the social and business opportunities are good, once you are well connected. Sometimes he misses home, but he's heard that people who try to go back find it all changed. He is not sure where he would move once he has put the money together, but it would be somewhere out in the Western suburbs where his people are and where he can get to church.

Australian-Vietnamese cultural connections

Do's parents fled Vietnam by boat when he was just two. They stayed in a refugee camp in Malaysia for close to a year before arriving in Australia, where they spent another year or more in East Hills Migrant Hostel. Do doesn't remember a great deal about it though he has heard all the stories such as the time they were nearly thrown overboard by pirates. His

Map 4: Sydney, Indexes of Advantage and Disadvantage
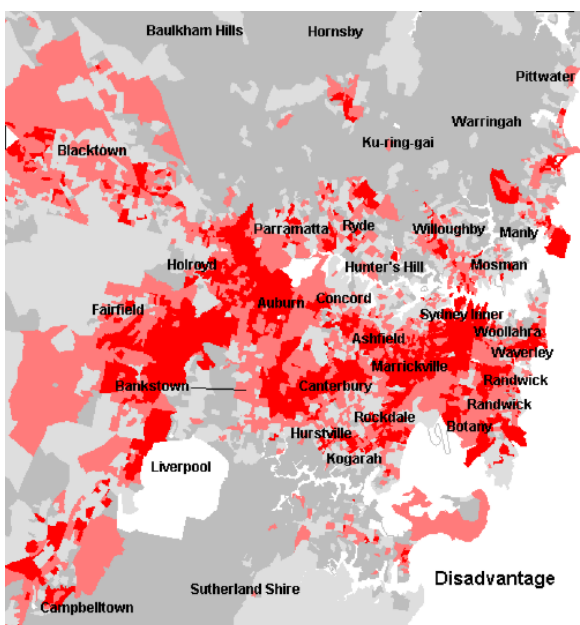
Map 4. Population Density of Sydney Collector Districts
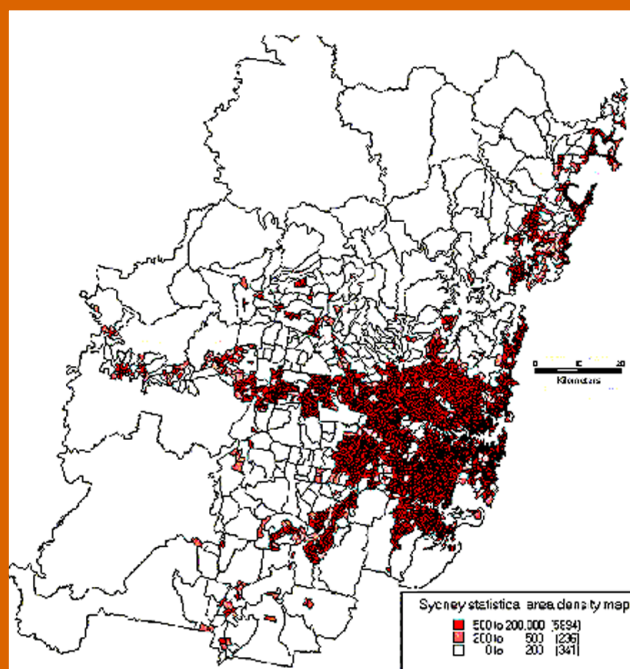
entire family is now in Australia and happy here. "But the whole experience of being a refugee, they carry that with them all the time," he says quietly. Do has a BA in Performance Studies from Sydney University and has written and performed in theatre and stand-up comedy. Recently named the Young Vietnamese of the Year, he works as a volunteer with people from different refugee backgrounds in Cabramatta. "Asylum Seekers" J Litsom. Artforce Issue 108:12, 2001.

Freedom and a new land

Australia is my second country. I arrived in Australia in November 1978. That was already 18 years ago, but the memories are as fresh as if it happened yesterday. I still remember the midnight we escaped Vietnam. The sky was dark. We were worried and nervous very much because we didn't know what could happen in the future if the police caught us or if something else happened at the sea. But we had to go on....because we needed freedom.

Very luckily after 3 nights we saw the islands of Malaysia. We stayed there for 3 months and then we flew to Australia. I still remember that day - it was a wonderful day. I was interested in everything I saw. From the airport the bus took us to the Cabramatta Hostel. They gave us a unit with one bedroom and one family room. After showering we fell asleep and when we woke up it was nearly 6 o'clock. We had very interesting food for dinner. It was the first time I'd eaten lamb and drunk milk. I liked milk but I didn't like the way they cooked rice.

After dinner we took a walk around the hostel. For me everything in Australia was different from my country. Every house in Australia had a big backyard, had a clothes line and nice grass. We saw many parks with trees and flowers. That was a wonderful country. Very deeply in my heart I always say: "Thank you Australia", thanks to the people who helped us, brought us to a free country. We like Australia but we still never forget Vietnam, the mother country where we were born.

Nga Lang. "Write Away: A showcase of writing by Australian adultmigrants". http://www.nceltr.mq.edu.au /writeaway /Home.htm

Racial Tensions in Redfern and Waterloo

On 21 June and 22 June 2001, residents rioted on the streets of Waterloo following two separate incidents. In the first, witnesses said that a small Aboriginal boy accidentally bumped a cyclist and then ran off as two police chased him in a paddywagon. As he tried to climb a cyclone wire fence, the police car rammed it at 40 kph and he fell, breaking his collarbone. "He lay there having a seizure and vomiting and the cops just stood around," said a 10-year-old girl who saw the incident. "A few people came over to try to help but police wouldn't let them."

The boy's friends then began throwing stones and rocks at the officers. One officer was struck and the windscreen of the paddy wagon was smashed. A number of other residents joined in the attack as police called for back-up. Police arrived in full body armour with dogs. About 20 residents continued to hurl rocks and stones at police as the trees were set alight. A number of cars parked along the street were damaged and

some residents were injured. A respected Aboriginal community leader, Lyall Munro, commented that some younger police were targeting Aboriginal children.

The following night, his son Jason Munro, 28, was celebrating a relative's 21st birthday party at a hotel. Jason attempted to intervene in a scuffle which started at 1am when a group of non-Aborigines arrived. A bottle was smashed over his head cutting deeply across his forehead and he was hospitalised. Stones were thrown through the windows of taxis and an injured taxi driver was taken to hospital. Police made no attempt to move in as fighting and stone-throwing swept through the streets for almost five hours. Lyall said he felt Jason would be saddened to learn his attempt to stop a small fight may have set off a larger conflict.

Two days later, the first episode was being reported differently by several newspapers. It was stated that a group of youths had tried to rob the cyclist, "a major crime event", and police attempting to intervene had been stoned. Bylines read, "Anger as police let kids of 10 take over the street." A local MP blamed the continuing drug crisis, which was now affecting children as young as 10. Without radical intervention, she warned, "today's toddlers wandering around the neighbourhood will becomes tomorrow's car-jackers''.

Minor events like this are commonplace in some countries but are very rare in peaceful Australia, and may owe something to a general awareness of much larger scale events in the USA. Attacks by frustrated urban youths on cars and taxis as symbols of property are also common in riot situations in many countries.

D. SLUMS: THE POLICIES

1. Poverty Alleviation

Most interventions are available to all eligible citizens and do not vary by locality. A range of fortnightly income transfers are provided by the Commonwealth to various groups such as the elderly, handicapped, single parents, the unemployed and low income families, which are calculated to bring them above the poverty line. Other benefits such as a family benefit payments, reduced health and public transport costs, child care subsidies, and reduced utility and tax payments are available to low income people. State hospitals and schools are essentially free to all, though there are more expensive private alternatives which also receive subsidies.

The two major government housing programmes are public housing (mostly since 1945) and rent assistance (since the late 1980s). Also, very large programmes of concessional housing loans were made to lower middle income groups from 1945 to 1990, though these have become less necessary in an era of low interest rates and secondary mortgage markets. In the late 1980s it became obvious that public housing construction was never going to keep

up with increasing demand, and that the majority of disadvantaged people would remain in the private rental sector (Flood and Yates 1986). Rent assistance was introduced, which is a payment of up to AU $50 a week (US$28) to welfare recipients. It has become the largest housing programme, with outlays of about $1.3 billion annually.

About 5 per cent of the stock has been constructed by state housing authorities and is used to house eligible people, normally at no more than 20 per cent of income. Almost everyone now in public housing is a welfare recipient. Some 15 per cent of the stock is used for crisis or emergency housing, and a special stock is maintained for Aboriginal people. Most of these houses were initially constructed in large estates, many of which are in the West, and which have become very run down. Since the 1980s a mix of dwelling types and better-located dwellings has been obtained[16], but construction has virtually stopped in Sydney.

Most emergency and crisis housing such as homeless or women's refuges is provided under the Commonwealth Supported Accommodation Assistance Programme, which provides a per capita subsidy to NGOs or local governments managing hostels and boarding houses.

Indigenous people are eligible for the above programmes as well as others available under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Council, a national co-ordination body that supports various housing and co-operative programmes among others.

2. Social Welfare

The state government provides a range of welfare and health services for handicapped people and others in difficulty. It is also responsible for urban planning and most social and physical services, including police, hospitals and education. Local governments provide refuse collection, child care centres, maintain local roads and enforce building and planning regulations.

3. Slum Improvement and Local Government

"The massive resumptions of the 1920s were remarkable for their lack of resident action. The residents of the seventies and eighties however could bargain from a position of considerable power. By then Surry Hills was seen as an area vital to the image and amenity of the city as a whole." (Keating 1991: 109).

The changing attitudes to slum clearance have already been described. It is unlikely that wholesale redevelopments will occur in the future as in the period from 1860-1960; small government with minimal inter-

ventions except for income redistribution is now the preferred approach. Nevertheless, local and state governments play a substantial role in working with local developers and investors while ensuring that the rights of citizens are preserved and due process is followed. They also have a key role in controlling local traffic and rejuvenating streetscapes.

4. Community Action

Many community groups have formed to fight particular issues, to advance the cause of minorities, or to engage in self-help in disadvantaged areas. For example, friendly night-time patrolling by tenants from the Pacific Islands in some outer estates has proven extremely effective in reducing crime and other problems. Unless they are a recognised charity or peak group (such as the NSW Council of Social Services or National Shelter), it is unlikely that such groups will have access to government assistance or formal recognition as part of the system.

5. Partnerships

"A LATE-NIGHT team of social workers will patrol the streets of two inner-city suburbs as part of a $7 million package announced by Premier Bob Carr last week. Mr Carr said the package would assist the suburbs of Waterloo and Redfern which have a high rate of unemployment, child abuse and family breakdown and a high concentration of public housing. In June last year, a group of youths rioted in the streets of Waterloo after an 18th birthday party but State Government officials say the move towards a package was not sparked by this event." Daily Telegraph, 28 March 2002.

Countries with a developed and bureaucratic social security system are not normally very amenable to forming partnerships. Bureaucratic design by its nature seeks to divide functions, activities and responsibilities into discrete chunks, each to be handled by particular agencies, with overlap and interagency dialogue to be minimised; Australia is no exception. However, there are a number of circumstances where bureaucratic efficiency is not the prime concern and in which partnerships are the preferred means of operating. Urban regeneration and holistic poverty alleviation programmes are one area, issues dealing with immigrant groups or Aboriginal people are another.

Partnerships in New South Wales have taken a few limited forms:
■ Local governments and housing associations have received funding and some advice from the Commonwealth and state governments in obtaining social housing.
■ NGOs in the welfare area are partially funded under State and Commonwealth Programmes to conduct their activities

■ Occasional partnerships between private sector developers and finance groups and the state government to build public housing

■ Resident action groups or environmental groups are routinely contacted during development projects, but are not pro-actively involved.

A great deal more could be done to encourage partnerships between different actors. Randolph (2000) says:

"We must move away from the current approach of ad hoc, short-term and unlinked policy initiatives that are not self-sustaining once completed. …Partnership will be the key element of any renewal strategy - partnerships between Federal, State and Local government, charitable/non-government sectors, employment and skills/training agencies, community sector, employers and the business sector and private funders. Governments can't do this on their own. Models for developing effective multi-sector partnerships need to be researched and developed, and implemented in co-ordinated pilot programmes. All sectors of the community should be part of the solution."

REFERENCES

Barnard, M (1996) *Sydney: the Story of a City Melbourne* University Press, Melbourne

Baum, S (1997) *Sydney: social polarisation and global city status*, Urban Futures, 22, pp 21-36

Blainey, G (1993) *A critque of Indochinese in Australia: the issues of unemployment and residential concentration*, Bureau of Immigration and Population Research Bulletin, 9, pp 26-32

Brock, A and Macmillan, DS *The Sydney Scene 1848-78* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne

Burnley, I (1999) *Levels of Immigrant Residential Concentration in Sydney and their Relationship with Disadvantage* Urban Studies

Burnley, I H (1989) *Dimensions of Vietnam born settlement patterns in metropolitan Sydney*, Australian Geographical Studies, October, pp 213-234

Daly, MT (1982) *Sydney Boom Sydney Bust* George Allen and Unwin, Sydney

Dunn, KM (1998) *Rethinking ethnic concentration: the case of Cabramatta,* Sydney Urban Studies 4)Global Restructuring, the Australian Experience, Melbourne Oxford University Press, Melbourne

Flannery, T (ed) (1999) *The Birth of Sydney* Text Publishing, Melbourne

Hugo, G J (1992) *Atlas of the Australian People, State and Territory* Volumes Bureau of Immigration and Population Research, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra

Keating, E (1991) *The City of Surrey Hills Hale and Ironmonger,* Sydney

Kelly, M (1972) *Paddington 1840-90* Oak Press, Sydney

Murphy, G and Watson, S (2001) *Surface City:*

Nittim, Z *"The coalition of resident action groups"*, pp 231-248 in Rowe, J (ed) Twentieth century

Sydney: *Studies in Urban and Social History*

Spearritt, P (1978) *Sydney Since the Twenties Hale and Ironmonger,* Sydney

Playing Games with Sydney: Marketing Sydney for the 2000 Olympics Urban Studies

Woodward, R (2000) *"Community renewal in South Western Sydney Social inclusion: the quiet revolution in public housing"* pp 16-27 in Shelter WA, Creative Approaches to Urban Renewal Proceedings, June

ENDNOTES

[1] Numbers of Aboriginal people fell to about 74,000 by the 1930s, but there is now a sustained increase of over 2 per cent per annum to about 230,000, and a further 24,000 Torres Strait Islanders. About a quarter live in major urban areas. On average, the human development figures for indigenous households are much lower than for other Australian households, similar to less developed countries,

with life expectancies ten years less, illiteracy quite common, and social problems such as substance abuse widespread in some communities. SOURCE?

2 The first Governor, Philip, laid out an urban plan with attention to the location of public buildings, but this was soon outpaced by rapid population growth (Philip, in Flannery 1999:30).

3 Leading similar moves to home ownership in other developed countries by several decades.

4 Universities were a particular locus, both of employment in the "high tech" industries, and in acclimatising students to inner city living which they later continued.

5 In particular, many schools in middle areas had to be closed down because of population loss.

6 Even as late as 1929, the "flat menace" was said to be associated with European decadence, decline in the racial stock, and family breakdown.

7 Most of this section is paraphrased from Keating (1991).

8 The Chinese minority were particularly singled out as "mongrels" who lived in "dens or lairs" and made their "heathen living" from gambling and immorality. Compare with the situation in Fairfield more than a century later.

9 The area is by no means completely pacified or free from ethnically-based prejudice. According to the Daily Telegraph 15/11/2001 "It's noted that the "tentacles" of the Russian mafia have gripped the eastern suburbs while specifically in Surry Hills large gatherings of men of Middle Eastern extraction are intimidating and harassing passers-by nightly."

10 There are about 30,000 aboriginal people in Sydney, which has the largest concentration of indigenous people in Australia. Indigenous people are reliant to a fair extent on public housing because of low incomes, discrimination and high unemployment rates (Forster, 1995). Significant proportions of indigenous people also live in the Green Valley, Mount Druitt and Campbelltown public housing estates.

11 These hostels, which were located in many parts of New South Wales, were originally built as a staging ground for large numbers of assisted British immigrants. Migrants and their dependants were permitted to remain in the hostels from 3 to 12 months, and were given training to assist with resettlement. Much of the early accommodation consisted of disused army huts and other converted buildings.

12 Typical by-line: "Streets where decent citizens are afraid to walk must be cleansed of drug pushers and menacing local gangs" The Sun-Herald, 11 September 1994.

13 Academics and social commentators have seen such sensationalist reporting as a modern version of racist attacks from the goldrush era in the 1850s, when Chinese were persecuted, ostensibly as being sources of crime and disease. (Dunn 1998, Waitt 1999 NOT IN REFS).

14 Over a hundred year period, crime in most categories has decreased (Graycar 2001, NOT IN REFS Yearbook of Australia NOT IN REFS), although of course there are new categories of crime.

15 However, there has also been a wave of well-to-do East Asian migrants that have settled in a wedge in the high-status northern suburbs.

16 Following the negative experiences of the sixties and seventies, high-rise is regarded as inappropriate for most disadvantaged people. Most public housing constructed in the last 25 years has been medium density.