

Voice

INNER SYDNEY

The Journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development



SUMMER 2005
ISSUE 102

Malabar Headland
Magnificent piece of
Sydney's coastline in
danger

Eastern Suburbs
Getting crowded out

**Cornelia Rau
& Vivian Alvarez**
The case for a Royal
Commission

ASIO
Back to their old tricks of
harassing the Left

PRINT POST APPROVED
PP2479988/00009



**Eastern Sydney -
Developer's Delight**



resources

How we get to work

One of the major implications of new developments and overdevelopment in inner and eastern Sydney is more traffic on our increasingly gridlocked streets. The ABS figures from the last census show how each municipality stacks up on how we get to work - and the alarming trend of rising car ownership in already congested suburbs.

Leichhardt

Most common means of getting to work

50% by car, 38% used public transport
7% walked or cycled to work

Trends

Vehicle ownership up by 6% since last census.

Randwick

Most common means of getting to work

Car as driver 49%, bus 27%

Walking and cycling

5.4% walking, 1.0% cycling

Trends

The number walking to work fell by 8% since 1996 while the number cycling rose by 22%.

Waverley

Most common means of getting to work

Car as driver 40%, by train 21%

Walking and cycling

5.4% walking, 1.1% cycling

Trends

The number walking to work rose by 3% since 1996 while the number cycling rose by 60%. The number travelling by public transport increased by 22%. Vehicle ownership per household increased by 12%, since last census.

Woollahra

Most common means of getting to work

Car as driver 46%, by train 15%

Walking and cycling

7.7% walking and 0.7% cycling

Trends

The number travelling by public transport increased by 7%. Vehicle ownership per household increased over 1996-2001 by 8%. The number walking to work rose by 12% since 1996 while the number cycling rose by 38%.

Botany

Most common means of getting to work

Car as driver 52%, bus 22%

Walking and cycling

5.9% walking and 1.0% cycling

Trends

The number walking to work fell by 1% since 1996 while the number cycling rose by 5%.

The number travelling by car increased by 4% with the number of drivers up by 6%. The number travelling by public transport increased by 23% with travel by train up by 53% (new Mascot station).

Former South Sydney

Now incorporated into Sydney Council area

Most common means of getting to work

Car as driver 32%, by train 21%

Walking and cycling

13.7% walking and 2.2% cycling

Trends

The number travelling by public transport increased by 27%. The number walking to work rose by 1% since 1996. Vehicle ownership per household increased over 1996-2001 by 12%.

City of Sydney

Now includes parts of Leichhardt and all of the former South Sydney

Most common means of getting to work

Car as driver 25%, by bus 17%

Walking and cycling

26.7% walking and 1.1% cycling

Trends

The number walking to work rose by 50% since 1996 while the number cycling rose by 65%. Vehicle ownership per household increased over 1996-2001 by 12%, compared with the rise of 6% for Greater Sydney - 34% of households had no vehicles, far higher than Greater Sydney's car-less rate of 13%.

contents

Feature Articles

Booming Botany	10
Green Square disaster	11
DIMIA - a disgrace	16
ASIO on the rampage	17
Spinning a Plan	22
DOCS extinguishing small organisations	23
Seniors Information Service sunk	24
<i>Regional Council</i> IR Forum	26

and heaps more

Regular Sections

Environment	13
Health	14
Education	18
Resources & orgs.	21
Employment	27

Malabar Headland in danger Page 8

Friends of Malabar Headland believe the incredible biodiversity and history of the Headland should be protected and retained for future generations to enjoy in perpetuity.



Eastern Suburbs overdevelopment Page 6

Bondi Junction has been turned into a wall of high-rise apartments, offices and shops. The roads are always clogged and you can't move down at the beach.



Agitprop

Inner Sydney Voice is the journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development



Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (ISRCSD) is a non-profit organisation committed to the idea of information as a tool for community development. The organisation defines Inner Sydney as being the local government areas of Botany Bay, Leichhardt, Randwick, City of Sydney, Waverley and Woollahra.

The journal is funded jointly by the Department of Community Services, Randwick and Sydney City Councils, and by members and subscribers.

All articles and artwork are contributed on a voluntary and unpaid basis.



Editor

Faye Williams

Deputy Editor

Jack Carnegie

Contributors

John McIntyre, Emily Mayo, Debbie Coulter, David Smith, Joy Cumming, Janice Wilson, Clover Moore

Photography & Desktop Publishing

Jack Carnegie

Subscription Co-ordinator

Edwina Tohi

Printing

Complete Design

Publisher

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc.
770 Elizabeth Street
Waterloo NSW 2017
Ph: 9698 7461
Fax: 9318 0852
Email: innervoice@iinet.net.au
Website www.innersydney.org.au

The opinions expressed in *Inner Sydney Voice* do not necessarily represent the views of the publisher nor the publication. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information, no responsibility can be accepted by the publisher for omissions, typographical or printer's errors, inaccuracies or changes that may have taken place after publication.

Regional Council reports

On the 19th October Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development held its Annual General Meeting. Terry Murphy reported on our activities over the past year and his report is reprinted below.

As Chairperson of Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, I have the task of reporting to our members how our organisation has fared in 2004 - 2005. There have been several highlights in the past twelve months. The most successful activity was the special function we held in April 2005, which combined the *Inaugural Marg Barry Memorial Lecture* and the launch of the 100th edition of *Inner Voice*. It was great to see a room full of local people and those who have been connected with 'Regional Council' over the years, enjoying the solidarity of people committed to social justice.

Another important milestone was the notification that *Regional Council* has received its Certificate of Incorporation effective from 9th August 2004. While we were happy enough to be a co-operative since our inception, the reporting requirements were becoming increasingly onerous and we are now pleased to have a form of incorporation that is more suited to our level of activity. It also allows us to put more of our efforts into working on social issues, rather than filling out forms!

From a policy perspective *Regional Council* has been active in responding to the state government inquiry and subsequent reforms in Redfern and Waterloo. We presented at the Upper House Enquiry and have supported non-government agencies in responding to proposed reforms, some of which we found to be counter productive to effective service delivery. We anticipate this will be a major piece of work for us in the coming years.

This year has also been characterised by a degree of change brought about by staff changes. At different times during the year, we have had the resignation of the co-ordinator, the Housing Communities Assistance Program (HCAP) worker and two Home and Community Care (HACC) officers. The part time Media Officer contract finished early. The reasons for staff leaving were varied, from leaving the community sector, to taking up a different position within the organisation, to leaving the country to be married. This has meant some gaps in our capacity to provide services. It also has financial implications that have been explained in the financial report. We must thank Edwina, the Office Manager, who stepped into the breach and kept things running while other staff members were being recruited. We have been really fortunate to find good replacement staff to fill those gaps. The new Executive Officer has a combination of extensive community sector experience, as well as knowing our organisation intimately, having been the Treasurer for many years.

During the first half of the year, from July to December, we did not produce an *Inner Voice* so we made a special effort with our 100th edition and now have a bound copy of all those editions, plus an index of all significant articles. Thanks to Martine Brieger and Jack Carnegie for getting out the 100th edition, organising the launch in April and doing the hard yards in the development of a new website. We now have Jack on board, working on publications and the website. Here, we need to pay a special tribute to Martine Brieger, who has shown outstanding commitment to *Regional Council*. She has been volunteering her expertise over many years and now has a full time job so has had to let us manage on our own. Thank you Martine.

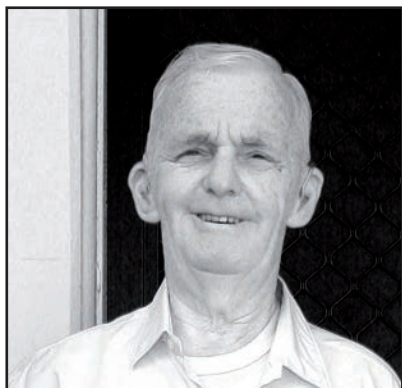
The changing of staff gave us the opportunity to have a look at our major directions and we were able to identify the following new initiatives for the new staff members to work towards.

- Operating more fully as a regional organisation
- Raising our profile across the region
- Improving our communication - which included getting Inner Sydney Voice out regularly and getting the website well known
- Preferring to run regional projects which meant withdrawing from the local HCAP project.

We are also very fortunate to have excellent and experienced board members and I want to thank them for their dedication during some challenging times this year. Despite some difficulties, we still have enthusiasm and capacity and look forward to a successful year in 2005-2006.

Terry Murphy

Chairperson
Inner Sydney Regional Council
for Social Development



Terry Murphy is a former union official and alderman on South Sydney and Sydney councils. Terry has lived in Erskineville all his life, where he is known and appreciated for his community activities.

Editorial

Development to the max

In this issue we have a feature on overdevelopment in the Eastern Sydney Area. There are manifold attractions in this topic for *Regional Council*. One is that it affects the lives of thousands of residents. The second is that it raises issues broadly across our region. Overdevelopment impacts on the wealthy in Woollahra and Bondi, as well as displaced pensioners in Inner Sydney. It is both simple and complex at the same time. The evidence is before our eyes every day, but is also embedded in all levels of our community interaction, from going for a walk, doing the shopping, travelling to work, or attending a community festival. It is also a major concern of our state and local governments. Finally, as a regional organisation involved in social justice and community development, we also concern ourselves with the breadth and depth of issues in our region – not just community services, but the impact of planning, infrastructure, environment and economic issues on the lives of residents.

Farewell John Mac

The inner city will lose a good friend when John McIntyre departs to become Bishop of Gippsland in January. John has been rector of Saint Saviours Church Redfern for fifteen years.

His commitment to the disadvantaged, Aboriginal people, youth, public housing tenants and the communities of Redfern and Waterloo has been outstanding. He has been a committee member and tireless worker for the Factory Community Centre and a productive board member here at *Regional Council*. John is also a strong supporter of multiculturalism and our ethnic communities. He recently had Kaysar Trad, from the Islamic Friendship Association of Australia, as a guest speaker at his church.

John is a good Christian and a good bloke. He goes about his work in an unassuming, non-judgmental, tolerant way. He has a genuine affinity with working class and underprivileged people.

Julia Baird writing in the Sydney Morning Herald had this to say on John's departure "This week, the Redfern rector John McIntyre was appointed Bishop of Gippsland. Just months ago, his nomination to be the new rector of the wealthy parish of St John's Darlinghurst was, surprisingly, knocked back by the diocesan nominators in a matter of minutes. They were not required to give a reason and did not. The only hint McIntyre - a powerful advocate for Aboriginal ministry and women's ordination, member of the synod's inner cabinet, its standing committee and a friend - was given was that, after years of battling in another inner-city parish, he had "no proven capacity to grow a church.

So a blow for the diversity of Sydney is a gain for Gippsland."
We agree.

Read it here first

In our Spring issue we made the point that the proposed desalination plant at Kurnell was flawed logic; as the generation of the electricity energy needed to operate it would contribute to the climate change that's causing Sydney's water shortage. The Herald caught up to ISV in November, when they made the same point in a feature criticising the project. And ABC radio and television recently discovered that Sydney Water is the biggest dumper of sewerage into the sea, of all of Australia's water utilities. We asked if that was a fact in our last issue, months before.



Overdevelopment in the Eastern Suburbs

When looking at issues in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney, the most common attitude from people in other suburbs is “what problems?” If you live, work, or study in the Eastern Suburbs, or read their local newspapers, you will quickly come up with what locals see as their biggest problem – development, or more precisely overdevelopment. Concerned locals are seeing older cottages on suburban blocks being pulled down and replaced with a development of 6 to 8 or more units, covering the entire site and adding to the numbers of people and traffic on the already clogged roads. Like Balmain, much of the Eastern Suburbs is located on a peninsular and there are only a couple of ways out. Add the hot tourist spots of Bondi and other beaches, the harbour side and Watsons Bay and the place is packed all week and all weekend.

A councillor from an Eastern Suburb's Council, who is also a geographer, has looked at shifts in demographic patterns such as population density and changing house prices. The figures show that certainly there is decline in the traditional housing and businesses. Despite an increase in developments he found that this did not always lead to more people living in the area. Between 1996 and 2001, Waverley's population actually fell by 0.2%. Yet Bondi Junction has been turned into a wall of high-rise apartments, offices and shops. The roads are always clogged and you can't move down at the beach. So what's going on?

The Eastern Suburbs is a classic example of 'the wealth effect' – the capacity to pay more for newer and bigger houses and apartments. A

few years ago, Bondi was mainly working class people living in flats. Since the advent of *The Block* and some other famous residents, the gentrification is racing ahead. And high prices attract developers.

The cost of providing car space

When developers want to rejuvenate older buildings, council requires them to provide off-street car spaces. The actual ratio of car spaces to rooms varies from council to council and is sometimes traded downwards in the horse-trading that takes place between councils and developers. Spaces are often excavated under the building and this is an expensive exercise. In order to increase their profits, developers expand the number or size of units to pay for the excavation, by having a larger footprint and/or adding another story. This provides one of the driving forces for development – excavation and expansion, which can increase the size of the building up to 30%. While councils try to keep a cap on the scale of development through their Local Environment Plans, there is always the Land and Environment Court that usually decides in the developers favour and costs the council a lot of money to defend. There is also an increase in the numbers of cars, providing a problem for urban traffic management.

Get out of my way!

Another feature of overdevelopment or 'development to the max' is the intensified use of public space. People need their outdoor urban space to be user friendly, especially if they live in units.

When a unit dweller who shares a building with many

other people comes outside, they often have no outdoor room on their own block. The roads are full of traffic and in some tourist precincts; the footpaths are full of outdoor cafes, local visitors and people walking their dogs. Add the extended retail hours and backpackers here for a lot of fun and a lot of noise and you have combined acoustic and privacy problems – there is no quiet space and a loss of community.

Councils need to find the balance between the needs of residents, business people and visitors. They are looking at how to make high-density use that is also a good place to live. This might be found in mixed use – light retail, offices and units above. But the car is the killer, so how to develop public transport – light rail perhaps? There is also the problem of having a social mix, with some affordable housing. People who have lived all their life in the area – working and paying rent, who are on the edge of retirement are faced with having to move out of the Eastern Suburbs they call home because they can no longer afford the rents.

Faye Williams



Clover Moore on the Cross City Tunnel

Currently, Government agencies work at cross-purposes with competing priorities, making our transport problems worse.

We need one authority to co-ordinate all transport (including roads), with an integrated transport plan to guide any proposal for private sector involvement—to enhance public rather than private benefit.

I have been raising concerns at every stage of the Cross City Tunnel planning process: In Parliament in September 2002, I called on the Government to abandon the revised scheme, which I feared would increase unplanned for traffic impacts on residential areas, worsen air and noise pollution, worsen congestion, impede local traffic access and visually degrade the local area.

I sought a full release of financial arrangements, as I believed obsession with the corporate bottom line had resulted in a flawed scheme that was not in the public interest. The final contract involved paying \$100 million into Government coffers, replacing a previous arrangement where the Government contributed \$40 million for a less environmentally damaging scheme.

In 2003 I continued to urge changes to the scheme when it became clear the EIS predicted overall reductions to public transport use. The further documents released confirm that it could cost the RTA millions of dollars if public transport is enhanced around the tunnel.

The Cross City tunnel experience provides the opportunity to take stock and rethink the current approach of looking at individual toll roads in isolation, with an ad-hoc approach to charges. We need to consider how to improve overall transport integration across the entire city.

*Clover Moore MP
Mayor of Sydney*

The community sector has a say on urban planning

A year ago The Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS), made a submission to Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) on the *Metropolitan Strategy Discussion Paper*. The submission was based on the debate and discussion held at the NCOSS two day forum *Bursting at the seams*, held in November 2004. It also incorporated dialogue with peak bodies, community networks and specific NGO forums, including the Forum of Non- Government Agencies (FONGA).

In their submission, NCOSS looked at all aspects of urban living and came up with many issues that planners and developers routinely overlook, when they are developing or redeveloping. NCOSS suggested a series of benchmarks for social impacts to create healthy communities and included the following in their submission:

- Adequate social mix - diversity of income types, household types and cultural backgrounds;
- Affordable housing - 15% of total housing units delivering public and social housing, low cost private rental and lower income home ownership. NCOSS considers a more effective benchmark would be 30%, to reflect the current undersupply of affordable housing in Sydney;
- Adaptable housing - 20 % of total housing units delivering positive designs for people with disabilities, older people and other people with mobility needs;
- Adequate levels of properly resourced services and facilities - at least equivalent to the state per capita average (services include children's, youth, community care, primary and community health, education and training, neighbourhood centres and family support, community and cultural development);
- Adequate resident access through public and community transport to services, employment, shopping, sport and recreation;
- Adequate service sector businesses spread across the development and appropriate resident access to job opportunities across the region;
- Public open space which ensures community life and enhances community safety;
- Genuine participation of all sections of the community and stakeholders in all facets of the land use decision making process (from concept to design to approval to implementation); and
- Best practice communication strategies implemented by developers and the responsible government agencies so as to genuinely involve local communities.

Give your suburb a mark out of 10 for how well it does with these strategies!



Malabar Headland

Coastal gem in danger of development

Malabar Headland is located between Maroubra and Malabar beaches and is a nationally recognised environmental treasure. It covers almost 200 hectares and is of great environmental and cultural significance. The Headland offers a startling diversity of flora and fauna. It includes the most diverse and highest quality coastal bushland in the Sydney region, supporting over 283 endemic native plant species and more than 200 bird species. It is a home to the almost extinct Eastern Suburbs Banksia and Themeda grassland. It contains Aboriginal engravings and significant World War II historic sites including forts, gun emplacements, underground defence tunnels and a sunken munitions railway. It offers a beautiful ocean setting with spectacular views of the coastline, dramatic sandstone cliffs and stunning coastal bushland.

However, Malabar Headland is under threat from neglect and the possibility of development.

The Headland is under the control of the Commonwealth

Government and administered by the Department of Finance and Administration. The western bushland on the site is currently zoned residential; the centre is occupied by the Anzac Rifle Range and the eastern bushland is zoned for future national park.

But for the past six years the federal government has refused to commit to the preservation of the Commonwealth land. It has closed the area to the public and left it in a state of limbo. It has not even carried out its existing responsibilities in relation to the Headland and has made little or no effort to reverse the degeneration of bushland and historic relics located on the site, or to deal with contamination caused by the Anzac Rifle Range.

The government's motive for this neglect is most likely environmental irresponsibility and money. Local residents and environmentalists are concerned that part of the site will be sold off for housing, becoming a developer's dream, rather than a public space for recreational use by the people of NSW.

The federal government has rejected proposals from Randwick

City Council, Friends of Malabar Headland (FoMH) and the former NSW Premier, Bob Carr, to hand the land over to the residents of NSW, and to re-zone the area to include two sections of national park and a central open space zone.

FoMH is a community group formed in April 2000, to protect the natural and cultural heritage of Malabar Headland. The group includes bush regenerators, legal experts, map makers, botanists and bird watchers. Above all, members share a love for the bush.

FoMH believes the incredible biodiversity and history of the Headland should be protected and retained for future generations to enjoy in perpetuity. They envisage a national park, with public open space between the two bush sections, revegetation corridors and a new section of the Eastern Suburbs coastal walkway. This proposal has the support of local residents.

In August 2002, Bob Carr helped launch a *Draft Community Plan of Management for Malabar Headland*. FoMH developed this plan in response to the Common-



wealth's lack of involvement with key stakeholders in planning for the protection of the area.

The key recommendations of the *Draft Community Plan of Management* include:

Transfer the ownership of Malabar Headland from the Commonwealth Government to the New South Wales Government.

Establish Boora National Park to be managed by NSW Parks and Wildlife Service in conjunction with the Aboriginal community.

Re-zone the western section of the Headland as a National Park and the ANZAC Rifle Range as public open space.

Community access for multiple use recreation.

Involve the community in developing the vision and planning for the Headland.

Acknowledge, conserve and appropriately interpret the values of the Headland that are relevant for the Aboriginal community.

In October 2005, the Commonwealth Department of Finance and Administration released Part 1 of its own *Plan of Management* for the site. The Plan was developed by consultants and without consultation with FoMH. Although it acknowledges the environmental and cultural significance of the site, it does not acknowledge many of the known plant species, which are located on the Headland and known to FoMH.

The Plan describes the land but does not make any recommendations for future use or a timeframe for developing them. The Commonwealth has invited Randwick Council to respond to this lengthy document by November 2005. Copies of this *Draft Plan of Management* are currently on display in Randwick Council libraries.

The state of limbo continues.

Join/support Friends of Malabar Headland

www.malabarheadland.org.au

Guess who's guarding Sydney's beaches?

The Minister for Planning, Frank Sartor has announced that he will take over planning powers for all major developments in NSW, within 100 metres of the coastline. He has had these powers for other parts of NSW, but has now expanded them to include the stretch from Shellharbour to Newcastle including all of Sydney's coastal suburbs.

Sutherland Mayor, Kevin Shriber, is not impressed. Speaking of Kurnell, he said that the State Government had desecrated the area with sandmining and the proposed desalination plant.

New harbour park at Ballast Point

The former Caltex oil refinery at Ballast Point in Balmain will be converted into a harbour park by 2007.

A community campaign led to the NSW government buying the site in 2002. Since then a number of plans have been floated by the government until Frank Sartor released the master plan in October.

Announcing the plan Sartor said "The master plan guarantees public

access to this key foreshore site for the first time in more than a century. It also builds on the legacy of Premier Jack Lang, who returned the neighbouring Balls Head to public ownership in 1926."

Remediation works on the 2.6 hectare site will commence later this year, including the demolition of existing oil terminal buildings and the removal of contaminated materials. The Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority will then build the new harbour park.

A marine refuelling facility will remain at Ballast Point for use by *Sydney Ferries*, commercial and recreational vessels. The rest of the site will be revegetated with native plants and trees, while footpaths and cycleways will extend public access from neighbouring Mort Bay Park around Ballast Point to Snails Bay.

The site, once home to an historic harbour mansion, was used by Caltex as an oil terminal and grease plant from 1928.

CEO of the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Dr Robert Lang, said a number of items will be retained, including selected trees, sandstone and concrete block seawalls, mooring bollards, tanks and crescent-shaped cuttings in the sandstone cliff face.

Dodging questions on Malabar

In March this year the member for Kingsford Smith, Peter Garrett, asked thirty-six questions in parliament regarding the future of the Malabar Headland. Amongst the answers he got from Tony Abbott, representing the Special Minister of State, were these – indicating the government has plans it doesn't want us to know about, or it has no plans at all.

"The former Ministers for Finance and Administration and Sport and Tourism announced in September 1998 that future ownership of the Malabar site would be subject to negotiations with the State Government. This was in conjunction with and dependent upon relocation of the shooting groups to new firing range facilities at Holsworthy. The Australian Government has given no undertakings that the land would be transferred to the State."

Followed by:

"There has been extensive correspondence between the Australian and NSW Governments over the years on this issue, at Prime Ministerial, Ministerial and official levels. The Australian Government has responded appropriately to the State at all times. The Australian Government has not committed itself to transferring the land to NSW, rather it has indicated its preparedness to negotiate with the State Government on future use and ownership issues."

Booming Botany - for some

Old industrialised Botany is undergoing a transformation. At South Point, the price of a two-bedroom unit is above six hundred thousand dollars and comes complete with a twenty-four hour concierge, lap pool, tennis court, gymnasium and BBQ area. If this is the kind of stuff your dreams are made of, you'll have to put up with the view across the Orica chemical plant with ground-water so toxic you can't give it to your dog.

Although there is no systematic redevelopment of the area, expensive new apartments and town houses are replacing some factories and warehouses. The high cost of these new developments places them beyond the reach of the lower-income earners. Affordable housing is therefore becoming scarce, investors are taking over and subsequent rent levels have increased by 40% over five years. Multi-storey buildings at South Point on Bunnerong Road, Mirvac's Gardeners Road site and other suburbs are adding to the 'up-marketing' of the Botany LGA. Read any issue of the Southern Courier or stroll past a real estate agent and the new landscape is there for everyone to see.

Although small in area, there are competing forces that have kept Botany relatively ungentrified until now and may still impact on the rate of development. The northern side of Botany Bay includes nearly 4 km of foreshore that has been substantially redeveloped over the last 20 years. The Cooks River, the densely polluted Alexandra Canal, the Botany Wetland ponds and ground water all empty into the Bay. Reclamation for Port Botany wharves and Sydney Airport runways has resulted in heavy industrialisation.

There is considerable economic pressure on Botany Bay with Australia's biggest airport, a massive container terminal (about to get a lot bigger), chemical plants and storage, commercial fishing, large shopping centres, arterial feeder roads, numerous small industries, large warehouses and factories and an influx of workers that expands to well over one hundred thousand each day. Alongside this, Botany has one of the smallest populations in the Eastern Sydney Area with 35,897 people.

The Department of Housing is the largest owner of residential property in the LGA, with public housing concentrated in the suburbs of Eastlakes, Hillside, Pagewood and Botany. The suburb of Daceyville has a large heritage listed estate with over 500 tenants. Scattered throughout Banksmeadow are contemporary low rise units and Eastlakes has double high-rise termed 'mini estates'. The areas from Eastlakes to Hillside in the south are crammed with high density low rise apartments built over the last twenty years. This densification of social



housing intensifies the impact of low incomes and wages, poor public transport and a high level of health needs. House prices have risen and consequently rents have increased and more affluent people are moving in.

Botany has more than 6,517 people under the age of fifteen and is in chronic need of comprehensive youth services, workers and facilities beyond what is currently being funded by the state government. It is in desperate need of additional childcare facilities and there is a large ageing population, all of which adds up to a big social problem as urban renewal engulfs the LGA. In the next ten years Botany will face the same crisis that other areas have experienced; urban residential redevelopment will outstrip the community social infrastructure.

One of Botany's greatest strengths is its multiculturalism – 41% of its population is born in a non-English speaking country. There is an intrinsic beauty in Botany's coalescence that should be reflected in the Australian psyche. Whereas some Australia suburbs can only be distinguished by their postcodes, Botany is distinguished by its mosaic of people.

Gentrification can change the political landscape, but in Botany the increase in wealthier people will not necessarily have a big impact politically. The state government is more likely to carve up the municipality, rolling thousands of Labor voters into either the City of Sydney or Randwick. Whichever way it goes Botany will be closely watched as a prize to be scavenged by the vultures of opportunism.

David Smith



Green Square - a planning disaster

After many false starts, the redevelopment of Green Square will proceed soon – or so the Central Sydney Planning Committee thinks. They will shortly put on show a draft local environment plan for public comment and hope to finalise it by March 2006. The committee is the responsible authority for the area, after it languished in the hands of the now defunct South Sydney Development Corporation (SSDC) for seven years.

The Green Square saga is a good example of how not to do urban planning. From the start it has been a top-down approach to the built environment. South Sydney Council was excluded from the planning process, with only a token presence on the Development Corporation and now the NSW State Government appointed Central Sydney Planning Committee is driving it.

The official vision for Green Square sounds good – “The vision for the Town Centre is that of a new and vibrant centre, a place where people will live and work, a place to shop, for entertainment, restaurants and cultural and community activities.” The reality is very different. After nearly a decade there are a number of disconnected enclaves of high-rise apartment blocks adjoining Green Square, some with row after row of identical looking buildings with no vibrance, employment, shops or sense of community. It’s a precinct of mostly couples and single commuters who like being close to the city but can’t afford the desirable terrace housing stretching from Surry Hills to Marrickville.

Back in 1999 the SSDC commissioned the *Green Square Community Plan Issues Paper*. Marg Barry wrote in *Inner Voice* at the time. “What is different about this document is that it looks at urban renewal and the future nature of the area from a much broader perspective than usually comes from traditional disciplines and professional specialisations. It confirms that, in the absence of an overall strategy covering social, economic and cultural life, decisions about the built environment are gener-

ally tested against a narrow range of criteria, mainly building considerations.” She then asked, knowing the answer: “would the current good will and intent produce the goodies for the communities living in and alongside Green Square?”

Regional Council has a copy of the *Green Square Town Centre Master Plan – Social Considerations* prepared by PPM Consultants in 2003. By comparing this document with the community vision (page seven of this issue) you can see the difference between what residents and community organisations think are important social considerations and what planners think are important. Perhaps the inadequacies in social planning for Green Square explain why the area is currently a ghost town and why we got seen off the premises (the railway station) for taking photos of an empty space. Here is what the consultants say are social considerations!

Permeability or change of grain to enhance connectivity – meaning how well pedestrians can move around within the Town Centre (no problem at the moment – there is no one there).

Integration into surroundings

– achieved by the design of the roads and the influence of existing buildings on the scale and size of new buildings. (no problem here either as the existing buildings will be raised to the ground). **Legibility** or ease of finding your way around – done in Green Square by extending the existing grid like patterns and strong structuring effect of the arterial road system. Translation? It is on the corner of a busy five way traffic intersection – you can’t miss it, but where do you park?

Public Spaces – Active and passive recreation in parks and plazas have been planned with potential for a range of communities to use these spaces. This is to be funded by giving land-owners additional development rights if they contribute to essential infrastructure, which will be put in place as (if) new development proceeds. Deciding on new community facilities will be the province of council using the development levy and Section 94 contributions. Additional development rights – watch out!

Whatever happens to Green Square it will be driven by developers’ considerations not community wellbeing.

PPP – Public Private Paranoia

I recently spent half an hour at Mascot station on a Saturday morning, taking photos. During my time there I encountered two passengers and three staff members. The passengers ignored me but the staff confronted and harassed me for taking pics of an empty station. I was told I needed permission and that it was private property! I was also asked who I was and where I was from. As I was leaving the area I noticed the manager and a security-type person standing out the front looking around – for me I suspect.

Have people got so paranoid that every photographer is now viewed as a possible terrorist, or is this another consequence of public private partnerships, where public places become private property? Or, is it both?
ISV Photographer



Development in the Inner City Fringe

If you want real over-development and gentrification, you have to come in to the Inner City Fringe. There are several huge old industrial sites that are now being used for urban consolidation. Take a drive along Southern Cross Drive or down Bourke Street where there are now at least 20 new multi story apartment complexes either full of people or in the process of being sold and several vacant sites that are waiting for similar treatment.

The impacts of this new development are now bursting out in a variety of ways – from showing on the radar of statistical data to changing community experiences. The Tax Office notes the rise in average income in Waterloo, no longer the suburb with the lowest income. Voting trends have changed, with a decrease in the long-term Labor majority. Development Approvals have risen dramatically (even with the difficulty of comparisons with changing LGA boundaries).

The new street scene was evident in a recent community festival – the council-organised the

Danks Street Festival. Rather than the previous sausage sizzle, bands and community fun activities, you had more like a market set to music – well-dressed couples and families strolling, having coffee, visiting the galleries and buying Italian ‘freggies’ – the new Redfern Waterloo rubbing up against (or rubbing out) the old.

With the advent of the Redfern Waterloo Authority, the push to make money from development sees the state government in on the act! One of the main platforms of the RWA is that the reform they are seeking in the area has to be lead by property development. This is seen as the answer to all the other problems in Redfern and Waterloo – new private development will change the streetscape, alter the population mix, make the streets safer, offer employment to the unemployed (what about the unemployable?) and pay for the needed community services.

Erko village?

Residents of Erskineville have had their fair share of battles with developers over the years. The most recent has been for the old factory building on the Erskineville Road known to most as *The Mardi Gras Building*. Mardi Gras left a while back and the site was sold by the RTA to developers. A development application was then submitted to Sydney Council for some 30 commercial suites, two retail showrooms and a café. The three-storey development proposal towered over the neighbouring single and double story terrace houses and included only 30 car park spaces.

Through a series of well-attended meetings, residents overwhelmingly rejected the proposal and over fifty objections were lodged. After initially being advised that the development was considered ‘minor’ in terms of Council policy and would be decided upon by delegated staff, we were then advised that the developer had been asked to resubmit their plans addressing some of the residents concerns.

This resubmission saw the bulk of the development significantly reduced. So much so that Council delegates almost approved it without advising the objectors. By chance, a local resident was advised of the new plans and their intended approval in discussions with a council staffer about an unrelated matter. Worried about the process and the possibility of more surprises, residents demanded it go to committee. Council then advised of the resubmission, invited responses and allowed a few community representatives to speak (maximum of three minutes) at the committee meeting, where the redevelopment was approved.

Clover Moore has a vision of villages for the inner city. We already have a village in Erskineville, and aim to protect it. The next challenge will be PCYC, right next door to the Mardi Gras site that has been sold to a developer. We have now formed GUNAH, a residents action group, to fight overdevelopment in Erskineville and Newtown. If you would like to know more contact us at - emily.mayo@bigpond

Emily Mayo





NSW bypasses environmental laws

Amendments to the *NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act* which were passed earlier this year will enable the NSW Government to push through any development anywhere in NSW while excluding councils and the public from having any say or right of appeal.

The passing of the Act adds to the growing power in the hands of a few NSW ministers and senior bureaucrats. It is also a significant blow to democracy and public participation in NSW. The Act provides from the state environmental, heritage, conservation and planning acts, basically allowing the planning minister to ignore any of these if the government decides a particular development is of state significance.

Take the recently announced desalination plant at Kurnell. Very state significant as Sydney rapidly runs out of water. What environmental and planning acts will it be bound by during its construction and operation? None – if the minister so determines.

Any development can be deemed state significant or a 'critical infrastructure project' as they call them. The Act states: "Any development that is declared to be a project to which this Part applies may also be declared to be a critical infrastructure project if it is of a category that, in the opinion of the Minister, is essential for the State for economic, environmental or social reasons."

The Act allows for "Independent hearing and assessment panels" if the minister chooses. Just to be sure panel members don't get carried away and do something independent, the Act allows the minister to select them.

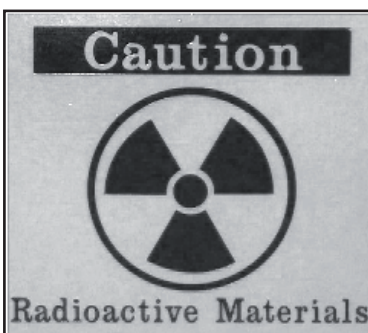
The Act not only amends the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* but a number of others as

well. Which means if you want to get the full significance of the legislation you need to read them too.

Nuclear power – not an option

On the day a multimillion-dollar key component (a neutron reflector) was lowered into the heart of Sydney's new nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights, former premier Bob Carr called for a debate on the merits of nuclear power generation. Since then the nuclear option has been getting plenty of publicity. As industry and governments have just about given up the idea that there is no global warming problem, nuclear power is being touted as being good for the environment. Even the HESTA super fund wants to invest our money in it – see letter from outraged HESTA member, page 13.

While the new Lucas Heights reactor has met a lot of opposition from residents and environmentalists, the prospect of a nuclear power station in NSW would certainly create a fiery debate and mass protests. Nuclear power plants are much bigger than research reactors, create thousands of times more radioactive



waste and can be used to manufacture weapons grade uranium or plutonium. Germany is phasing out its nuclear power plants and is aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the same time. No new nuclear power plants have been approved in the US since the accident at Three Mile Island in 1979.

Dr Alan Roberts from the Monash University School of Environmental Sciences, who is a physicist and opponent of nuclear power, had some pertinent points to make on nuclear power in a recent article. Roberts pointed out that the percentage of greenhouse gases emitted from power generation plants is only 20% of the total worldwide, and therefore even if all coal-fired power plants were replaced with nuclear plants, we would only get a modest reduction in gas emissions. He also pointed out that if the world went totally nuclear there would only be enough uranium to power those plants for nine years.

Feds cut grant to Nature Conservation Council

The Federal Government has axed funding to a number of groups under the *Grants to Voluntary Environment and Heritage Organisations Program*. Under the new guidelines grants are capped at \$10,000 and are only available for 'on-the-ground' activities such as tree planting, weed control and creek restoration. Organisations that lobby and organise on environmental issues such as global warming, land clearing, national parks, etc. are no longer eligible.

Grants from this program were always late, with groups not hearing if they were successful for any financial year until halfway through that year! Environmental organisations were not given an opportunity to apply for 2004/05 funds until April 2005, when new guidelines were announced. The Nature Conservation Council of NSW had previously received a grant of \$85,000 and had spent close to that amount on core activities, when they learnt they would receive nothing.



'Ice' 'speed', 'base', 'meth', 'crystal' or 'crystal meth' and 'amphetamines' are all names for methamphetamine, which an increasing number of Sydneysiders are using and becoming addicted to, according to National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC).

The Sydney methamphetamine market: patterns of supply, use, personal harms and social consequences, is the title of the report that concludes there are about 12,000 people in Sydney who are dependent on the drug, around two thirds of regular users.

The report includes data from a number of sources including:

- 310 regular methamphetamine users from metropolitan Sydney
- 55 methamphetamine dealers
- 54 health and law enforcement officials
- 2905 emergency department records from an inner Sydney hospital.

According to Dr Rebecca McKetin, the report's lead author, 58% of those who smoke methamphetamine are dependent, compared to 30% of those who snort or swallow the drug. Sixty seven per cent of those who inject methamphetamine are dependent on the drug.

"Smoking ice is a very addictive way to use methamphetamine," says Dr McKetin, an NDARC Research Fellow. "It provides an instant drug effect with few immediate deterring side-effects. The concern with smoking ice is that it could introduce non-injecting drug users into a form of drug taking that increases their likelihood of becoming dependent.

Ice is a particularly potent form of methamphetamine, which is associated with high levels of dependence and psychosis. Methamphetamine users are 11 times more likely to have had a psychotic episode than the general population."

Other research has found that one in ten Australians have taken the drug at some stage.

Is It A Fact?

New research from Europe has shown the reading age in children exposed to high levels of aircraft noise was delayed by up to 2 months in the UK and by up to 1 month in the Netherlands for a 5 decibel change in noise exposure?

Exposure to aircraft noise impaired reading comprehension, even after adjustment for socioeconomic differences between high-noise and low-noise schools?

Children attending schools near one airport improved their reading scores and cognitive memory performance as the airport shut down, while children going to school near a new airport experienced a decrease in testing scores?

Methamphetamine is used by a wide range of people for a variety of reasons. Common 'types' of methamphetamine users include:

- young ecstasy users who will snort speed or smoke ice on weekends with their friends,
- older injecting heroin users who will also inject methamphetamine, and
- people who regard methamphetamine as their drug of choice, who tend to inject the drug once to several times a week.

People usually take methamphetamine at home in the company of their friends, often before going out to socialise.

Aboriginal Health

According to the *Draft Redfern-Waterloo Human Services Plan* published by the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) new health services for Aboriginal people in Redfern and Waterloo are to be introduced.

The draft plan states "Health data for Redfern-Waterloo indicates substantially poorer health status for at risk groups such as Aboriginal children and children born to substance-using mothers. Babies of Aboriginal mothers are twice as likely to be of low birth weight, a key lifetime predictor of poor health outcomes. Also, there are low levels of engagement of children into formal children's services in Redfern-Waterloo."

The strategies for improving the health of Aboriginal children include bringing parents together in informal settings which encourage them to exchange ideas on parenting skills. These settings also provide an opportunity to develop peer support networks and links to local playgroups, childcare services and schools and to introduce parents to parenting experts.

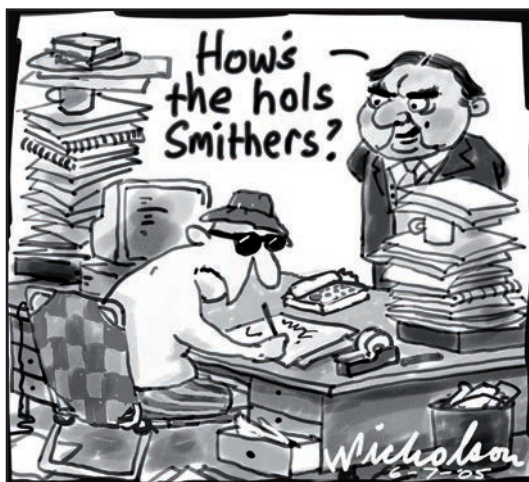
They then plan to improve information to women about the importance of antenatal care and encourage their attendance at antenatal services early in pregnancy, with a particular focus on:

- engaging Aboriginal parents;
- providing antenatal health education at the community health facility in Redfern; and
- improving antenatal shared care links with the Aboriginal Medical Service,

The RWA also plans to reduce drug and alcohol misuse amongst Aboriginal people. According to the draft plan in most of Waterloo and much of Redfern, rates of infectious diseases, mental illness, tobacco, alcohol and illicit drug use, domestic violence and sexual assault are at levels which are among the highest in NSW. Some of these health problems are especially prevalent among Aboriginal residents, although it is also important to recognise that they are not confined to that population.

Official - Howard is bad for your health

health



Nicholson of "The Australian" newspaper: www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au

The federal government's changes to industrial relations could kill people, according to a major study into the impact of the new laws commissioned by Unions NSW.

Drawing on research from social epidemiologist Sir Michael Marmot, the Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training argues that there is a direct link between income inequality, sickness and lower life expectancy. They have published their research in a report titled *The Shape of Things To Come*. Marmot argues that there is a 'social gradient' that operates along the entire occupational and social hierarchy, meaning the more egalitarian a society, the higher the life expectancy.

Where an individual lies on this hierarchy carries a direct link to life expectancy and fatal illnesses from conditions as diverse as stroke, heart disease, cancer, mental illness and gastro-intestinal disease.

The social gradient even operates in white-collar workplaces where employees are not poor or exposed to dangerous or hazardous work environments.

The report *The Shape of Things To Come* finds that the industrial relations changes will inevitably widen inequality by pushing down the minimum wage and promoting individual work contracts. This creates a steeper social gradient.

"The evidence from epidemiologists is that there will be health costs arising from industrial relations reforms that will turbo-boost inequality".

"In the developed world, it is not the richest countries that have the best health, but the most egalitarian," the report says. For example, the United States is the wealthiest nation on earth, but only ranks 26th in terms of life expectancy."

Marmot's social gradient is not solely based on income distribution, but also looks at employee control, autonomy and satisfaction with work.

"Those in routine jobs with less control over their work and their lives had higher rates of heart disease, depression and other health problems...", the report says.

"The absence of reciprocity at work, rewards for effort, and outlets to control stress and balance work-life, affects health risks such as coronary disease."

Sir Michael Marmot is the Director, International Centre for Health and Society, and Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health, University College London

Reprinted from WorkersOnline <http://workers.labor.net.au/>

Your super goes nuclear

Recently I went to hear Helen Caldicott speak on the horrors of uranium mining and nuclear power. I was yet again chilled to the bone by what we are doing to the health of the human race and the entire planet. Then on Monday, I received a letter from HESTA (Superfund specialists for HEALTH!!! and the community sector) asking: "Should HESTA introduce uranium investments for Power Generation to HESTA's ECO Pool to Counter Greenhouse Gas Emissions?" Where/when/how has this rehabilitation of nuclear power taken such a strong foothold as to pass itself off as GREEN?!!! as Ecological? as a reasonable alternative to killing ourselves with greenhouse gases? I feel so outraged and I feel so hijacked at the thought that I have let this blasphemy slip under my radar to this degree.

So I rang HESTA and finally got through to their Investment Manager - Mr. Robert Fowler 03 8660 1600 in Melbourne. His argument was that they had an 'objective' evaluation done and the upshot was that it was felt "that screening out uranium investments is no longer appropriate for environmental funds" and are therefore putting it to their members for straw vote approval....although it isn't going to ALL members; just the 5000 in the ECO Pool.

We can't often do much as lone individuals. But we can impact on this one specific event. Ring up Robert Fowler, give him your membership number (if not a fund member, you are a planet member!) and let him know in no uncertain terms that you DO NOT support uranium mining and nuclear power investment in their ECO Pool. And just so you know, HESTA has BHP in their general investment pool and BHP has just recently bought heavily into uranium mining.

I'm looking for a different super fund.....

*Maggie McNulty, Coordinator,
Penrith Women's Health Centre*



Cornelia Rau And Vivian Alvarez The Case For A Royal Commission

The cases of Cornelia Rau and Vivian Alvarez demand a Royal Commission into the Federal Government's administration of Australia's Immigration Department (DIMIA). The Palmer and Comrie Reports on the Bakhtyari case and numerous other revelations about the everyday treatment of detainees in Baxter Detention Centre, and in transit between it and like facilities, make a compelling case for functionaries of the system, from the Minister down, to be called to account for their complicity in such rank injustice and ineptitude.

It is clear, beginning with the Palmer Report, that the key problem in all these tragic cases is the culture of DIMIA. Palmer states that the serious problems he outlines in his report "stem from a deep-seated culture and attitudes and a failure of executive leadership". The culture, he goes on to say, "is control-motivated", "process rich and outcome poor", and is characterised as an "assumption culture, sometimes bordering on denial". There seems to be no doubt in his mind that the problems of DIMIA are generated from the top in what he describes as a "rigidly hierarchical organisation" with "siloed divisions" that have "no effective communication links". He is careful to point out that many functionaries at various levels in the system do seem to care and take their job seriously, but are constantly thwarted by the culture and attitudes that pervade DIMIA.

The tragedy is, however, that the inquiries were "not called on to examine the corporate culture of DIMIA as a whole", as Palmer

indicates. Little wonder! Enquiries like his are commissioned only by the Minister for the information of the Minister. Vanstone, or for that matter her predecessor Ruddick, would hardly want a report that called to account those responsible for establishing the culture of the Department. The Minister and the Secretary of the Department are not going to put their own heads on the chopping block. Clearly they want to pass the buck to others down the line and blame them for the glaring mistakes that have been made. The fact that the Comrie Report has identified individual officers at fault in the Alvarez case will no doubt be used by the Minister to deny any responsibility on her part, the part of the previous Minister, or that of the recently promoted Secretary-past of DIMIA.

The irony is that even these internal government reports cannot avoid the obvious conclusion that DIMIA's culture is the critical issue. Only the Ministers and the Secretary of the Department can be held responsible for that. More the pity that recommendations to deal with those most responsible for the injustices perpetrated against Rau, Alvarez and who knows how many others, are not able to be included in reports they have commissioned for their own use only.

All this leads to the question as to how a government department could be reduced to such incompetence, despite the presence of theoretically workable systems. Palmer points out that lack of adherence to practices already in place and lack of training in due process already established were contributing factors to the failure that was the Rau case. While

he has many recommendations to improve the practice and processes of DIMIA, he is at pains to point out that if current practice and process been properly implemented, Rau would not have spent nearly a year wrongly incarcerated.

Comrie's report further indicates that the practice and processes in place were enough to identify Alvarez's true identity, but there was a failure of will to act when it was realised those processes had not been fulfilled. An entrenched culture dismissive of due process is the only explanation for such failures.

This being the case, there can be no confidence that the will to comply and to be accountable will exist in the future even if the numerous recommendations of Palmer and Comrie are implemented, and even if the thoroughgoing changes now promised are made. Not until there is a culture change and not until the Ministers responsible and Secretary-past are called to account is there any hope for real change.

One can only assume that an over-riding cynicism on the part of this government is the real cause of the pervasive culture problems of DIMIA. Could it be that this government is hoping that not many Australians really care about what happens to asylum seekers and refugees of un-Australian origin? Why bother with ensuring justice is done for those it is assumed not



Nicholson of "The Australian" newspaper:
www.nicholsoncartoons.com.au

many care about? It is easier to do as this government has consistently done and demonise these people as potential terrorists to be deported anywhere out of its hands. Ensuring due process and accountability and a positive culture in a system only a handful are assumed to be concerned about is hardly a vote-winner. And that is all that seems to matter to this government.

What the Ministers didn't count on was someone who looks a lot like the Anglo-Celtic majority of this country getting caught up in the system. Simply because of her appearance, Cornelia Rau, unlike Vivian Alvarez, could not be wrongly identified as a Filipino sex-slave and written off as so much undesirable trash by the Department. That Cornelia was mentally ill certainly didn't help her cause, however. That is another group of people to whom this government has shown little commitment. How easy is it to shove such matters out of sight and out of mind in the South Australian desert and hope they will all go away? How easy is it to do nothing about ensuring a positive culture in the Department assigned to address the needs of what this government hopes are forgotten people?

But it was not to be. We the people of Australia now know what has happened and why it has happened. It is a sad commentary that it took someone who looks like most of us, to alert us to what is the daily reality of injustice for so many who continue to suffer at the hands of a culturally deficient Immigration Department and its unaccountable Ministry and Executive. What the Palmer and Comrie Reports have revealed is only a beginning, a beginning easily forgotten in the wake of the recent announcement about broad-reaching changes to DIMIA. The question remains. Will those changes give effect to anything in relation to departmental cultural change unless the Ministers and Secretary-past are called to account by a Royal Commission?

John McIntyre

ASIO mugs peace activist

According to ASIO, US peace activist Scott Parkin was deported from Australia on September 15 for unspecified acts that made him a danger to Australia's security. Parkin has a background in non-violent protest and activism in the US, but ASIO refuses to say what they have on him here. Parkin had been in Australia for three months when he was arrested, held in gaol then deported, just two weeks before he was due to return to his home in Houston. His application to visit here had been approved by Immigration, so we're supposed to believe that our own spooks discovered the 'danger' he posed during his stay here. No one has suggested that Parkin was engaged in anything that would harm the public, so what was the threat from this outspoken peacenik?

ASIO watchers have their own theories on what our political police were up to. Guy Rundle wrote in a piece for Crikey.com: "Seasoned ASIOlogists are currently having a keen argument about whether the detention of Parkin has been ordered by the government after a request/demand by the US, or whether it is simply a case of the spooks reviving their role as an aggressive political player, directed against the Left. If the Bush administration has stepped in to silence Parkin, it's a spectacular own goal for all concerned, since the whole of the Australian public sphere has become a megaphone for Parkin's anti-Halliburton activities.

Alternatively it is quite possible that ASIO is off on a frolic of its own, as it has a history of taking its eye off the main game to pursue political dissidents. In the 1970s it spent so much time spying on dangerous lefties like Keith Windschuttle and Paddy McGuinness that it paid no attention to right-wing Croatian groups committing actual

bombings on Australian soil."

The Bush/Howard 'payback Parkin' theory is convincing given the decision to imprison Parkin for 5 days, in solitary confinement, was made personally by Andrew Metcalfe; the Secretary of the Department of Immigration and previous Deputy Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

While ASIO was saying he was a danger to our security they added he was not violent. This was conveniently ignored by the Murdoch press when they published a story saying he was out to get the police and their horses.

Writing in *counterpunch*, an American political newsletter, Parkin gives his side of the story. "Since my departure from Australia, an article appeared in *The Australian* - a Rupert Murdoch owned newspaper with right wing leanings - stating I had planned to teach violent protest tactics. Apparently, anonymous government sources informed reporters at *The Australian* that I would be discussing how to throw marbles under police horse hooves, how to spring protesters from custody and how to isolate police during marches and surround them. These charges are completely ludicrous. I am completely opposed to any actions that would harm police animals or officers. I have publicly stated during workshops previous to this entire episode that tactics such as this are not a good idea and lead to things like 'assault on a police officer'. I am philosophically and practically opposed to the use of such tactics. These are the same sort of stories put out by American authorities and right wing media about non-violent protesters since the 1999 protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle."

continued next page

Greens Senator Bob Brown had this to say about Parkin's arrest: "The arrest and forced removal of Mr Parkin on trumped-up charges by the Office of Attorney-General Ruddock is a frightening case of abuse of anti-terrorism laws by the Howard government. It debunks the idea that even greater incursions on civil and political rights under the next round of anti-terror laws will not be used for political purposes."

Hall Greenland, writing in *The Bulletin*, stated that Australia has spent more than \$4bn on domestic security since the September 11 attacks on New York and more than 1000 agents and police have been added to the counter-terrorism payroll. The result so far is that six men have been arrested. One, Jack Roche, was jailed last year for nine years after he dobbed himself in; he will be free as early as May 2007. Of the other five, judges and magistrates have granted bail to three, saying they represent no danger to the community.

Alarming, ASIO is set to double its number of spooks over the next five years from 980 to over 1800.

With all this additional money, manpower and resources ASIO and the Australian Federal Police have a lot of time on their hands to target anyone who challenges the hard right politics of those in power in Canberra. It looks as if Scott Parkin was one of them.

ASIO pays for Mascot raid

ASIO has settled out of court for an undisclosed sum after a Mascot resident took them to the District Court, following a raid on his home.

Bilal Daye and his wife Fatme Iali claimed they were threatened with guns after heavily armed ASIO agents and police raided their house with a warrant for a different address. The raid took place shortly after September 11 2001.

Under Australia's new anti-terrorism laws their fate could have been a lot worse. They could have been held in detention for two weeks, then confined to their home for up to a year, all in secret.



education

Sale of Redfern School



The Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA) has announced the sale of the prime, centrally located Redfern Public School to the *Indigenous Land Council's National Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Youth*. The schools sporting grounds and buildings will be transformed by the ILC under a \$25 million project to develop a centre of Aboriginal cultural, social and sporting excellence. The ILC was set up to buy land for Indigenous people in places where native title has been extinguished.

For local community service providers trying to work with the RWA Human Services Plan, there is some confusion about whether the new use will be educational or part of the new youth services precinct model. The RWA Human Services people are saying it is educational, while the Sartor version is "it will form the heart of a new youth precinct for the local community, as outlined in the RWA's Human Services Plan".

Meanwhile, community services now based at Redfern School were told the new buyers wanted vacant possession, so the four displaced services are looking for new premises. Apparently the reason they are not considered eligible to stay is because their leases were short term (though they have been there for five years).

The RWA has been using their 'influence' to help look for other suitable premises. The services being displaced are South Sydney Community Aid Co op Multicultural Neighbourhood Centre, Redfern Computer Centre, Aboriginal Resource Centre, Montessori Play Group, Street Beat Office and Benevolent Society Inner Sydney Family Support Centre, all with strong Koori usage. However, the RWA has negotiated for Murawina Aboriginal Child Care Centre to stay, due to it having a long-term lease.

The Exodus Foundation run by Reverend Bill Crews, is also included in and will set up its *Tutorial Centre Program* on the site, which will help young people aged 10-14 to improve literacy, school attendance and behaviour. The Exodus Foundation has been working with some kids from Redfern-Waterloo through its Ashfield tutoring program. Children will begin accessing services at the site from mid-2006.

Education Minister Carmel Tebbutt described the agreement reached as "an excellent outcome for the whole community" that would ensure that the former school site will be used for education and community purposes. Redfern Public School closed to students in 2002.

Literacy and numeracy needed for dispute resolution

In legal disputes, alternative dispute resolution processes are promoted as providing quick, inexpensive and fair outcomes.

The adversarial nature of Australian court procedures requires a 'winner' and a 'loser'. Alternative dispute resolution aims to provide a 'win-win' solution and is promoted as a largely oral process, focusing on communication between parties.

However, this system of dispute resolution does involve considerable paperwork to access the system, and ongoing written activities, numerical calculations and oral communication by the mediator and parties. It also requires prior documentation of the dispute. Some recent research for the *National Centre for Vocational Educational Research* examined the paperwork and the reading and writing required for alternative dispute resolution.

Equity issues in accessing the law for those who do not speak English as their first language have been recognised. In the criminal law context, the impact of poor literacy and numeracy is often discussed as a factor in criminal history and recidivism. However, the equity issue of access to the civil law for Australians who speak English as their first language, but with limited literacy and numeracy, has not been addressed.

The majority of alternative dispute resolution practitioners agree that the processes of alternative dispute resolution could present an equity barrier to those with limited literacy and numeracy skills. A number of practitioners indicated that they had drawn

upon the general principles for dealing with issues of equity and power relationships contained within the procedures for alternative dispute resolution. Some practitioners were concerned that, with the benefit of hindsight, an issue of limited literacy and numeracy may have been overlooked.

Alternative dispute resolution processes do present high literacy and numeracy demands for the involved parties.

While many alternative dispute resolution practitioners are aware of potential literacy and numeracy issues, and a number identified strategies to manage the situation, many practitioners may not be aware of the limited literacy and numeracy skills of parties to disputes, or may rely on others to identify these prior to alternative dispute resolution.

While alternative dispute resolution practitioners undertake training to address general issues that cause equity imbalances, they may need specific training for dealing with the issue of limited literacy and numeracy for English speaking Australians.

Perhaps most importantly, it is possible that the literacy and numeracy demands of accessing alternative dispute resolution may prevent Australians, for whom these alternative processes are most suitable, from participating in these processes to resolve disputes.

Based on research by Joy Cumming and Janice M Wilson Griffith University, Queensland

Is it a fact?

that the number of parents sending their children to private schools is increasing across Australia?

in 2004, 32% all enrolments were in independent and catholic schools?

this figure is expected to rise to over 35% in the next five years?

private schools receive 38% of their funding from governments?

public funding for students at government schools in 2003/04 was \$9,605 per student and in private schools \$4,580 per student?

ninety two percent of private schools have a religious affiliation?

an audit report into public schools has revealed that NSW needs to spend an extra \$90 million per year for two years for maintenance catch-up?

an increase of only \$10 million for maintenance was announced in this years budget?

in June 2004 there was a \$115 million backlog for school maintenance work?

the number of new schools to be financed through public private partnerships will increase in NSW?

Treasury still measures the increase to Education and Training by comparing the Budget allocation with the previous year's Budget allocation, rather than with what was actually spent, called the revised allocation?

Treasury produced percentage increases are therefore higher?

education

from our library

If you think things are pretty crook in the community sector, have a look at what Harvey Volke had to say in 1982. We didn't have enough money and resources then, and we don't have them now.

Registered by Australia Post—publication number NBH 2488. ISSN 0155 7106

DEPRESSION VOICE

October, 1982

Published by:

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Co-op Ltd.

Weary Welfare Workers!

I feel like writing a story about this morning's Regional Council Board meeting, but I'm too pooped. Everybody's pooped.

Instead of discussing business it turned into a group therapy session.

It turns out I'm not mad after all. Everybody else has the same problem. To use Paul Murphy's sociological jargon, we're stuck with 'crisis management' and don't get a chance to move into 'programme development'.

What that means is that we are running hard not to lose much ground.

We're all facing the same problem—so many things are happening as a result of the Depression, that we can't cope. We've learned Depression isn't just an economic term.

We don't have the time or energy to return phone calls or attend meetings, or do social research or find out what the hell is going on or hassle bureaucrats.

We're dealing with staff crises and frustration. We're trying to work out how to make impossibly thin resources stretch even more thinly, without treating people inhumanely or making moral judgements as to whether they deserve help. We're dealing with a steep increase in people facing problems, an increasing range of problems—all of the problems a direct result of poverty.

Some of our people went to see some bureaucrats from Youth and Community Services (YACS) the other day and told them some of the usual hard-luck stories about how people aren't coping any more.

Usual? These people were shocked. Why didn't anybody tell us, they say? That's dreadful, they say. Where the bloody hell have they been all this time?

Don't they know the routine? Wednesday fortnight is pension day. Pretty quiet for three days. Next week we're stacked to the gills with people looking for food, food vouchers, cash hand-outs—the lot. People are **pleading** for help. They are **crying**.

There's no way people can afford to pay rent **and** get enough food. And you have to have shelter. At Community Aid we are going to run out of money long before the end of the grant period, no matter how rigorous our guidelines. It's a good idea to give people cans of soup 'cause you can put water with it and make it stretch.

We don't park our cars out in the side lane because they're certainly going to be smashed up. A car was left out in the back lane for a couple of days and then the wheels disappeared. What's left of it is still there.

The other day I was walking down the street and a guy chucked an empty bottle out of the window on the upper floor. The splintering glass just missed me.

People are moving out of some houses around here either because they can't afford the rent or they can't handle the harassment after closing hours.

Why don't the bureaucrats take a walk down Louis Street some time? We wouldn't need to argue any more about the effects of poverty.

We're giving out supplies of surplus bread—and sometimes (not always), people are literally fighting for it.

cont'd page 3

NO 28



resources & organisation

Online news for housing department tenants

Garry Mallard is a public housing tenant, a director of the Australasian Housing Institute and the founder and sole voluntary worker of the Tenant Support Network (TSN). From his home in Bega, Garry has established an impressive, free email distribution system covering public and community housing (social housing), and related issues to thousands of subscribers.

To get the information together he has modified search engines to trawl the Net, plus he's on the receiving end of press releases from stacks of politicians, housing bureaucracies and research institutes. The only one who won't put him on the mailing list is the NSW Housing Minister and her department – he gets those from friends in the media.

Mallard's background is as varied as the topics of his emails. His CV includes working as a gumshoe (a job that vanished when Australia's divorce laws changed), barman and singer. He's in big demand as a speaker at housing conferences and his service is used by tenants and housing workers around Australia.

Once you register with TSN the emails start pouring in - up to ten a day. I received this warning: "You are more than welcome to subscribe to the National Tenant Support Network, my friend. But first, a brief cautionary tale... Some people are shocked by the sheer quantity of news they receive via the National Tenant Support Network. You should be aware that National TSN participation is not for the faint hearted."

TSN e-bulletins come as either TIDBITS or NOTIFY.

TIDBITS is a media monitoring service that provides you with references to social housing that appears in newspapers, radio or websites from around Australia, and occasionally overseas. It also monitors the various Hansards around Australia to see what the polities are up

to and forwards MPs press releases. All the pieces are sourced, usually with a link back to the originating website. Garry adds an occasional comment on the item. This is what he had to say in response to the Minister for Housing, speaking on some anti-social behaviour in Dubbo. "As a public housing tenant, I'm getting just a tad bored with being stereotyped by officialdom. "The Government is the landlord of last resort" - this statement identifies every public housing tenant as the tenant of last resort, by definition. Gee, ta!"

NOTIFY are e-bulletins that direct you to papers, conferences, studies, changes to legislation etc. Recent dispatches have included: ● "*Housolink*: Satirical News Site for NSW Public Housing Tenants. HousoLink will be standing up for those of us whose dreams of secure housing are rapidly being towed away by an unholy alliance of Federal Liberals and State Labor."

● "*An End To Silence*: The Crisis In Supported Accommodation For People With A Disability In NSW. This report lifts the lid on the size and impact of the chronic under-provision of supported accommodation services for people with disabilities. Behind each of the figures cited in the report lies many thousands of stories of people with a disability, their carers and families doing the best they can under extremely trying circumstances. Sixty of these stories have been collated and are presented in this report."

● "*Housing Action Plan for Refugees Asylum Seekers and Migrants in Queensland*. It is widely acknowledged that there are many challenges facing refugees, asylum seekers and migrants when they arrive in Australia and whilst not all of these issues are directly related to housing, all of these problems do have a negative impact on their housing experiences. In general the more problems that surround settle-

ment, the more difficult it is to provide affordable and appropriate housing for individuals and families."

If you think you are ready for an avalanche of useful and interesting information you can join the network by emailing:
gmallard@thenexus.org.au

Drive East

Eastside Radio has a unique program called *Drive East* every afternoon, 4.00 to 6.00 Monday to Friday. The program covers a variety of community interest topics affecting people living and working in the eastern suburbs and the inner west. Issues relating to health, welfare, justice and the environment are discussed and analysed – it's a bit like Inner Sydney Voice on air.

If your group has an event, function or issue Phone 9331 3000
Eastside Radio is on 89.7FM

E-magazines

Does the mainstream media turn you off? Some refreshingly alternative views can be found on the Internet. **Crikey** is a cheeky website dedicated to politics and the media. It was founded by Stephen Mayne, a former media adviser to Jeff Kennett, who now has a go at all sides of politics. The site is updated regularly and you can subscribe to a daily email news service.

www.crikey.com.au/

NewMatilda is a serious, quality online magazine with good writers and articles. Some stories are free on the website or subscribe for a full weekly e-magazine.

www.newmatilda.com/

Both Crikey and NewMatilda allow you to try the subscription service for a free trial period.

For international news it's hard to beat **Znet**. Contributors include Noam Chomsky, John Pilger, Robert Fisk and George Mombiot.

www.zmag.org/

Spinning a Plan

The long-awaited Human Service Plan for Redfern and Waterloo has been released by the Redfern Waterloo Authority (RWA), or at least a draft version has. The community organisations that are affected have anxiously poured over the plan to see what their future holds. We were given one month to put together a response, so the community consultation processes we would normally use were not possible. This lack of respect for community input by the RWA is not an encouraging sign.

As we are learning in dealing with the RWA, it is very hard to tell how much is genuine intent and how much is spin. We have been advised not to take the plan too literally “as we will be developing things as we go along”. Yet the draft version has been signed off by the CEOs of NSW’s human service departments.

Regional Council’s fundamental concern is that the plan, as a government initiative, provides a bureaucratic approach to solving human service issues in the Redfern and Waterloo area. The answer the RWA has come up with is to restructure existing community organisations. In order to justify this, the document served up this rationale:

- services in the area are under-performing (based on inadequate or inaccurate information)
- restructure will fix the serious socio-economic issues in this community caused by poverty, poor health (including mental health), drug and alcohol addiction and violence
- actions must include departments current ‘in-favour’ issues such as back office savings, co-location, electronic referrals
- there are sufficient resources in community organisations (or that may be achieved by integrating them) to deal with the huge de-

mand in this area and no additional resources are needed.

Our response to the ‘restructure option’ is an ancient one that *Regional Council* has used before, but remains true today.

“We trained hard, but it seemed that every time we were beginning to form up into teams, we’d be reorganised. I was to learn later, that we tend to meet any new situation by reorganising; and a wonderful method it can be for creating the illusion of progress, while producing confusion, inefficiencies and demoralisation”

Gaius Petronius 75AD

It is disheartening for local service providers, that this plan continues the negative tone of the discredited Morgan Disney Report, completed last year. What residents and organisations would have liked included in the report is the valuable information given at their cluster meetings.

We believe that the social problems in Redfern and Waterloo are long standing, deep seated and complex, and in the end are about both systemic disadvantage and lack of a significant government response over a long period of time. The adjustments to community organisations proposed in this plan will have little effect on the lives of people living in this area. This is disappointing, as we may not have such a good opportunity to make a real difference for some time.

We urge the Redfern Waterloo Authority and those working with Human Services Reform to take a different approach.

Visit existing community organisations and see what we do that works – lessons that have been learned over many years of working with the local community.

Take a more supportive view of the work of existing community organisations.

Look at the importance of qual-



ity relationships and building of trust as outlined in social capital literature.

Consider the value of good interactions between local residents and community workers at ground level, over a long period of time.

Advocate (as we all do) for systemic fairness at all levels of government.

In general, we agree with desired outcomes of the plan, but strongly disagree on how to achieve them. If you want to “improve the capacity of services to meet the needs of vulnerable people” you will need more than just “integration, co-location and common referral procedures” for community organisations. These actions are government priorities. Local community services could come up with a whole different list of what will achieve this outcome. Many of the ‘improvements’ look like ambit claims, rather than well-analysed strategies that link what is happening at present, with the practical steps required to achieve the outcomes.

We have special concerns about how the plan approaches community development. We cannot accept that community strengthening “is a process whereby communities, governments, business and philanthropic organisations work together to achieve agreed social economic and environmental outcomes and share ideas” All the experience and literature that describe community development and building social capital talk about it being local and about process. It is the people who identify their needs and are facilitated to work out solutions to their problems and issues, supported by those who have resources.

This should be about building power in people to act in their own best interests, not having people with power exercising it over them.

Docs Funding Policy – are small organisations for the chop?

the not-for-profit sector

Sometimes the most bland-looking government document contains some hot stuff and we ignore them at our peril. The Department of Community Services (DoCS) *Funding Policy, August 2005* a product of their Funding, Business Analysis Division is one such case. Unless we are speaking a different language from DoCS policy makers and have misunderstood the document, small community organisations in NSW have some real worries. DoCs are saying that they “will require a major change in the way services are currently funded and delivered”. The stunner is the statement that small community organisations (under \$1,000,000 funding) are not viable and should amalgamate.

We have seen some of the trends in this document in previous DoCs funding policies, but there was not much detail in the earlier attempts. The detail in this one comes from DoCS recent experience in distributing the Early Intervention Funding. Another impetus is to consolidate internal arrangements for all their funded programs. Instead of building from what has been working in the community sector for a long time, the existing community organisations now have to be reconfigured to meet the new policy (whether it works or not). So we have a new untested process that has the potential to be disastrous to the existing services.

DoCS say they will “implement this policy in partnership with the sector and in close communication with service providers and peaks”. All we can say is that they better do it soon, because this service provider will no longer be in existence if the policy is implemented (unless our funding gets a big top up). DoCS is calling on peaks to “work alongside us”, which might

be a bit difficult if the under one million \$ test is applied – as none have that kind of funding from DoCS!

DoCs intends to “review historical funding programs” and will “approach all system growth in a planned and co-ordinated manner”. Given that all historical system growth was put in place by DoCS in the first place, it looks like they are the problem in all this. How come small community organisations are the ones to blame for the current situation and have to make all the adjustments? The policy does say that DoCS has lots of work to do in performance measurement and data collection. The other element that DoCS needs to fix while it is on the job is the political imperative behind much historical funding.

The biggest worry is the failure to understand and value the integrity of small community based organisations. They are not seen as organisations in their own right, with their own authority and interaction with their community. DoCS (and most other government departments) see them as an extension of their own service provision, there to meet the funder’s needs.

The increasing amount of spin that government departments put out in policy documents means that real situation is often the opposite of what is being said. “Promoting the Viability and Capacity of Small Service Providers” somehow manages to end up saying DoCs has “a fragmented service delivery framework consisting largely of small individual projects ... that are...inefficient to administer”. Their answer is to “review the current project configuration and work towards achieving more sustainable projects”. But there is



no research to prove this assertion. They also want to “reconfigure services to get better outcomes with available funding.” What was that about “Promoting the Viability and Capacity of Small Service Providers”?

Many small organisations are holding their 30th birthdays over the next few years, and they still deliver huge quantities of good quality services under ever tightening budgets on a daily basis. Our message to DoCs is “look out for what you destroy – someone has to do the work”. The problem for small organisations is that they do not look and behave like a government department or a corporation. We can recommend another job for DoCS - do a proper efficiency and effectiveness analysis of the outcomes provided by small organisations in contrast to the big organisations. Include free governance, free volunteer workers, subsidised premises, support from local small business, free promotion by word of mouth in the community and finally the value of social capital versus the cost of additional police, prisons, hospitals needed by dysfunctional communities. Small services are flexible, efficient, resilient and effective. You do not improve services on the ground by restructuring and measuring, when what is needed is adequate funding and an occasional genuine “well done”.



Up for grabs - Seniors Information Service

The NSW Seniors Information Service (SIS) provides information on just about anything for older people. The service is user friendly, with no buttons to push once you dial, and the SIS slogan of *where real people answer the phone* is carried out in practice. SIS is part of the NSW Council on the Ageing (COTA) who have run the service for nearly ten years. In the ten months I worked there, I found myself providing answers to questions on pensions, public housing, retirement villages, how you get into a nursing home, how you get out of a nursing home, wills, power of attorney, what countries we have reciprocal Medicare agreements with, where you can get travel insurance when you're over eighty, HACC services, legal aid, loans on your house - repaid from your estate, how to get a photo ID when you have no licence, where you can get an umbrella repaired, computer classes, free glasses for pensioners, funerals, transport concessions.... to mention a few. The five information officers working there had access to a database with five thousand organisations and service providers.

Apart from providing information over the phone, SIS staff would mail out an average of 100 packages a day, containing leaflets from our library of thousands and our own fact sheets. SIS staff also travelled around NSW addressing meetings of seniors informing them of what we did and what they were entitled to. SIS provided a quality service to the older people of NSW with style and enthusiasm.

The Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care (DADHC), which funds the service, announced nearly two years ago that the service was to go out to competitive tender. After missing three of their own deadlines, the Request For Tender (RFT) appeared on the Department of Commerce website in September

2005. RFT 0500543 was not for an information service like SIS - it was for a call centre to be located anywhere in Australia. It appears the nationalists at DADHC had a victory over the economic rationalists and the centre would not be located in India.

RFT 0500543 was not just for SIS, it was also for the operation of the NSW Seniors Card Call Centre. The Seniors Card is operated by DADHC, and they have contracted out the actual application and issuing of cards to a private operator called Security Mail. The pace at Security Mail is fast and furious, with the average call lasting 81 seconds. At SIS calls range from a few minutes up to fifteen minutes or longer. That's how long it can take to explain some complicated pension arrangement or accommodation options for older people.

DADHC has decided that SIS should be more like the Security Mail operation, with fast calls and information to be given by scripts provided by them. The promotional and community development side will also be done by DADHC, with only the phone answering being contracted out. The tender states that the preferred option is for the one operator to do Seniors Card and SIS. The tender does not have a fixed operating cost - tenderers must estimate the cost per call.

The new tender specifications are very specific and as the following extracts show, DADHC want total control of the operation down to deciding how call centre staff will answer questions.

The tender document states:

"Each incoming call will be treated in a friendly manner in accordance with a pre-defined call script that is acceptable to the delegate. The call script will be backed up by training materials and up-to-date reference materials provided by the delegate."

How can you have a script for a distraught elderly person who is about to lose their house or has just lost their lifelong partner?

"Historically the scope of work for the Seniors Information Service has been quite broad, and has included responsibility for day-to-day promotional activity such as talks and shopping centre promotions, as well as many administrative functions such as fact sheet production. Going forward, the Seniors Information Service will focus on the core requirement of providing telephone information and some data management services."

Going Forward! George Orwell would be proud of the writers down at DADHC. No face-to-face contact with seniors - just sit at that console and repeat what we tell you.

"The contractor(s) shall operate the telephone customer service(s) using its own telephone system (including Intelligent Voice Recognition and Computer Technology Integration technology) and will provide the necessary number of



The SIS staff facing an uncertain future

staff and lines to effectively manage incoming calls."

If you try Telstra Directories you'll know that *Intelligent Voice Recognition* hasn't been invented yet. The whole point of SIS was to avoid that complicated and cumbersome run-around you get when you call most large companies and government departments.

Then there's the method of funding – no money up front, the contractor must invoice DADHC after the first month and they say they will pay within thirty days. As DADHC have never done anything on time you better expect to wait at least another month. That means the successful tenderer must have three months operating costs from their own money to start the service. Payment will vary according to the number of calls coming in, which will make it impossible to offer permanent employment to information officers. Only a commercial call centre with a large number of clients and a casual workforce could operate in this environment.

My fellow workers and I have been informed by COTA that we will finish work on the January 31 2006, with the new contractor taking over on the 1st February. COTA has lodged a tender to continue the service, but as the function will be so different from the present one, staff will have to reapply for the new positions – if they don't mind acting like talking robots. I do, and won't be – if they get it.

DADHC have misunderstood the difference between a call centre, which has only one function - issuing a Seniors Card, and an information service that covers thousands of topics. Whether this tender is a one off from an increasingly dysfunctional DADHC, or the shape of a future way of doing business with NGOs remains to be seen.

Jack Carnegie

As we go to press DADHC is expected to announce the successful tenderer shortly.

Boarding house residents need protection

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) is campaigning for tenancy protection for people who reside in unlicensed boarding houses. Leigh Connell from the Centre said "The threat of homelessness is constant, particularly as people become unwell and their medication management becomes a burden that can be difficult for some to manage. The worst-case scenario is that becoming unwell and hospitalised leads to unpaid rent that can result in loss of accommodation and belongings. While the hospitals do what they can, the sad reality for some is homelessness. People have no shelter and no belongings and are left to fend for themselves on the streets."

As a result of a research project into Unlicensed Boarding Houses entitled *Opening These Doors*, NNC received Home and Community Care funding to help residents access HACC and other community and health services. The workers from that project were shocked at the terrible conditions they found many people living in and the ABC featured their appalling accommodation on a recent Four Corners program, *Out of Mind*.

Connell is also concerned about conditions in the Ageing and Disability Department licensed boarding houses. "Residents there pay up to 100% of their pension and rent assistance into a for-profit establishment with no guaranteed standards of quality of care. While some endeavour to provide the best care possible, it's a sad fact that the care and protection of some of the most marginalised and vulnerable individuals in our society can be at the mercy of unscrupulous operators" she says.

NSW Opposition discovers boarding houses

The Shadow Minister for Disability Services and Ageing, John Ryan, has accused the NSW Labor Government of neglecting to improve living conditions for vulnerable residents living in licensed boarding houses in NSW. There are at least one thousand people with mental illnesses, acquired brain injuries and intellectual disabilities living in licensed boarding houses. The current population of boarding houses consists of people who moved out of large mental health and disability institutions last decade.

Ryan said that the current Labor Government had ignored recommendations to reform laws protecting the residents of boarding houses and the legislation had not been updated for 30 years. He also said that the Allen Report, commissioned by the Government and released in 2003, found the existing legislation was "dated" and "unenforceable" and recommended the introduction of new laws.

John Ryan recently visited both licensed and unlicensed boarding houses in the inner west with staff from Newtown Neighbourhood Centre. After visiting a number of boarding houses and seeing living conditions first hand Mr Ryan said it was a great pity that the government had not acted to improve standards for vulnerable residents.

The NSW Opposition has now released its own discussion paper, which suggested the introduction of criminal history checks for staff and the improved co-ordination of personal care services and advocacy.

Mr Ryan will not have to travel very far to talk to a boarding house owner, as our newest MP, Alex McTaggart, owns one in Palmer St Darlinghurst. Word has it that it's one of the better ones, but residents can still be evicted without notice. Though residents are unlikely to fall behind in their rent, as that is deducted directly from Centrelink payments.

Regional Council Forum

Industrial Relations and the Community Sector

The stage was set – an Eastern Suburbs club, a group of people who work and hang around together, some food and drink - even an (ex) rock star on the stage. As part of our AGM, *Regional Council* had organised a forum of community workers and management to discuss the IR rollback by the Howard government.

Sally McManus, secretary of the Australian Services Union, gave us the latest on what the changes meant for the community sector. She said the whole thing is designed for big business, not the community sector and provides one set of laws, rather than the current diversity.

We do not even know if community services will come under the new Commonwealth laws or if they will remain with the State system. It all comes down to whether we are interpreted as trading / financial corporations, which would put us under the Federal Corporations power.

What were identified as the main impacts on community services?

Funding

A decrease in funding grants is likely as the government (especially the feds) will not want to pay for our current wages and conditions. It will be difficult to manage budgets as they are mostly based on wages.

It will also disadvantage us in competition with other organisations (for-profit?) who are prepared to pay lower wages.

Impacts on Management Committees

We foresee a huge negative impact on management committees, who will have to skill up on IR issues.



Community management does not have the usual employer/employee relationship. We like to co-operate so individual bargaining will be difficult for both parties. We are concerned that work place cultures will change and there will be more distrust.

Staffing levels & wages

It will be hard to maintain and retain skilled and committed staff if we don't pay decent wages. The difficult work and low pay is offset in many community organisations by conditions such as flexible hours and family friendly practices. The stripping of conditions to 5 allowable matters will do away with these compensatory conditions. Women will mostly be affected as women make up 85% of the local community sector.

Loss of Protection of Unfair Dismissal

Many of our workers need anti-discrimination protection as they are from multicultural backgrounds, are gay or have disabilities. We also have lots of part-time and casual workers who are vulnerable.

Restricted Union Access

We do not want to see a change in culture around unionisation and community action.

Impact on disadvantaged people

We are very worried about the impact on the people that we provide services to. Both their life and the work of the community organisations supporting them will be harder.

- Welfare to Work reforms reduce benefits so people will have to accept low paid jobs with poor conditions
- Many people on benefits will not be able to work and will have their benefits reduced
- Young people have limited bargaining powers
- People entering the workforce for the first time will feel the greatest impacts



- People in regional areas will have problems, as there is currently high unemployment

- People with disabilities are already disadvantaged in the workplace.

Research shows those most affected people will be sole parents and women with disabilities.

We were then joined by Peter Garrett MP and we raised the following issues with him:

If there is a link between our campaigning and the new anti-terrorist laws will we end up being arrested if we hold a demo about worker's rights? This legislation is a breach of civil liberties – Labour should oppose it.

How difficult will it be to reverse the IR legislation if the government changes at the next election?

We need the NSW government to keep the state IR system.

Impact on the community sector has not been raised enough.

Peter Garrett's Response

- Labor will oppose/debate IR changes but can't stop the legislation
- Labour will restore conditions and a fair minimum wage if re-elected
- Union shrinkage / restrictions are of concern to the Labor Party
- Loss of awards from funding agreements (i.e. Commonwealth capture)
- Labor has opposed the government media campaign
- Time for Bill of Rights – Governments increasingly infringing on civil rights

In closing, the meeting agreed to keep up the fight at all levels including supporting the ACTU campaign, strikes, community action, talking to the media and pressuring MPs.



employment

What they're saying about Howard's IR laws

Ross Gittins

Sydney Morning Herald

"But, though it's had remarkably little acknowledgment from commentators, his own industrial relations changes are an undisguised assault on the Liberal Party's traditional class enemies: the unions, unionised workers and workers generally.

By hitting so hard at the long-hated union movement, Mr Howard is also striking a blow against his political opponents of the past 30 years, the Labor Party. This consequence has escaped many people; you can be sure it hasn't escaped the most successful - and thus most carefully calculating - politician of his generation."

Ron McCallum

Professor of Industrial Law at University of Sydney

"It is the most extraordinary bill I have read and no other comparable country has even suggested putting this type of regime in place..... but our legislation elevates individual bargaining above collective bargaining,"

Old digger with tears in his eyes at the industrial relations rally

"I fought in World War II. I came home to fight for a job and a home. Then we fought the bosses and Menzies for fair conditions and a decent wage. I thought we had won at least basic rights for Australian workers. Now I find I am old and the fight is just starting up again."



And what Pope John Paul II said at a meeting with factory workers at Parramatta in 1986.

"Australia also has a long and proud tradition of settling industrial disputes and promoting co-operation by its almost unique system of arbitration and conciliation.

This system has helped to defend the rights of workers and promote their well being, while at the same time taking into account the needs and the future of the whole community. "



Reverend Elenie Poulos

National Director of Uniting Justice Australia

"People are not commodities in the service of greater profits and should not be exploited. The Government's proposal to strip so many workers of their rights to challenge unfair dismissal is immoral."

John Howard

"Trust me"



Did you enjoy reading Inner Sydney Voice? Do you like to hear about what is going on with social issues that impact on the Inner Sydney region? You might like to subscribe and get your quarterly journal posted out to you.

Subscribe

Cost of an annual subscription for four editions is:

Organisational Subscription \$22.00

Individual Subscription \$11.00

Concession \$5.50



Join up

If you are interested in supporting social development in the Inner Sydney Region, you could become a member of *Regional Council* for the same price and receive Inner Sydney Voice FREE!! Membership fee due on 1 July each year.

Fill out the form below for either subscription or membership and send with payment to:

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc.
Waterloo Town Hall, 770 Elizabeth Street, WATERLOO 2017

Please tick - Subscription ☐ Membership ☐
Individual ☐ Organisation ☐ Concession ☐

Name.....

Address.....Postcode.....

Ph.....Email.....

Date.....

Application for membership

I wish to be admitted as a member of Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc.

If this application for membership is approved I agree to support the objectives and rules of the association.

I am enclosing my subscription or annual membership fee of \$.....

Signed.....

More details about ISRCSD are on our website www.innersydney.org.au