

INNER SYDNEY VOICE

The Journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development



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ISSUE 103

Mental Health

On the frontline

The law & mental health

Government response

Santo Santoro

An unlikely Minister for
Ageing

Women's Lib

Has it stalled?

Axiom Education

Now running your
public school

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The Mental Health Crisis

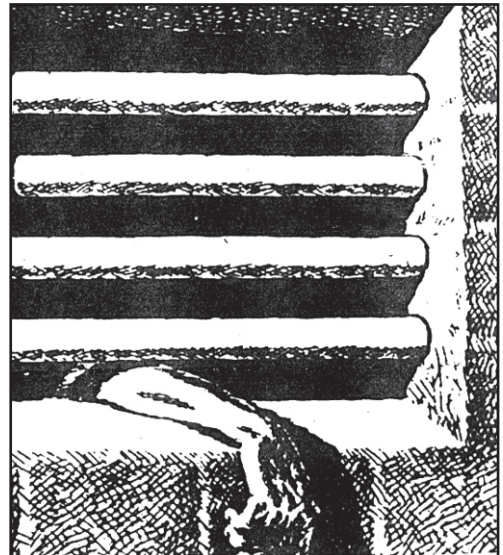


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Behind Bars

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has conducted a census of people held in Australian prisons on the night of 30 June 2005. The National Prisoner Census covers all prisoners in the legal custody of adult corrective services in adult prisons, but excluding persons held in juvenile institutions, psychiatric custody and police custody.

With Liberal and Labor politicians trying to outbid each other on how tough they can be on crime, it's no surprise to see our prisons are overflowing and those coming out will most likely go back.



In June 2005 there were 25,353 prisoners (sentenced and unsentenced) in Australian prisons, an increase of 5% (1,182 prisoners) since 30 June 2004. This represented an imprisonment rate of 163 prisoners per 100,000 adult population.

New South Wales held the largest number of prisoners (39% or 9,819), followed by Queensland (21% or 5,354), Victoria (15% or 3,692) and Western Australia (14% or 3,482).

Unsentenced prisoners comprised 20% (5,133) of the total prisoner population.

Most prisoners (60% or 15,308) had served a sentence in an adult prison prior to the current episode.

Intending to cause injury was the offence that accounted for the highest proportion (17% or 4,334) of all prisoners being in prison.

Of the total prisoner population, 7% (1,734) were female and 22% (5,656) were Indigenous. The median age of all prisoners was 32 years.

Changes in the prisoner population

The total prisoner population increased by 5% from 24,171 on 30 June 2004 to 25,353 on 30 June 2005. From 1995 the prisoner population increased by 45%.

Change in prisoner numbers between 2004 and 2005

Between 2004 and 2005, there was an increase in the number of prisoners in all states and territories except South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. Tasmania had the highest proportionate increase (23%) followed by Northern Territory (14%) and Western Australia (10%). South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory both declined by 1%.

Imprisonment rates

At 30 June 2005, the Australian imprisonment rate was 163 prisoners per 100,000 adult population, representing an increase of 3% on the rate of 157 prisoners per 100,000 adult population in 2004. Most states and territories recorded an increase in imprisonment rates between 2004 and 2005. The largest imprisonment rate increases

were in Tasmania (22%), the Northern Territory (12%) and Western Australia (8%). The Australian Capital Territory, South Australia and Queensland recorded decreases in imprisonment rates (each 2% or less).

Indigenous prisoners

The number of Indigenous prisoners increased by 12%, from 5,048 at 30 June 2004 to 5,656 at 30 June 2005, the largest annual increase since 1999. Indigenous prisoners represented 22% of the total prisoner population at 30 June 2005, the highest proportion since 1995. Northern Territory and Tasmania had the highest (both 19%) proportional increases in their Indigenous prisoner population over the year, rising from 556 at 30 June 2004 to 663 at 30 June 2005 for Northern Territory and 59 to 70 for the same period for Tasmania. Victoria followed with an 18% increase, rising from 186 prisoners to 220.

Most Serious Offence/Charge

At 30 June 2005, the most prevalent offences/charges for prisoners (either sentenced or unsentenced) were: acts intended to cause injury (17%); unlawful entry with intent (13%); sexual assault and related offences (11%); robbery, extortion and related offences (11%); homicide and related offences (10%); and illicit drug offences (10%).

Similar proportions of males and females were in prison for an offence/charge of homicide and related offences (10% of males, 11% of females) and acts intended to cause injury (17% of males, 15% of females). Other offences varied between males and females, with males more likely to be in prison for sexual assault and related offences than females (11% of males, 1% of females) and robbery, extortion and related offences (11% of males, 7% of females). Females were more likely than males to be in prison for deception and related offences (12% of females, 3% of males), theft and related offences (11% of females, 6% of males), and illicit drug offences (13% of females, 10% of males).

Australian Bureau of Statistics - Prisoners In Australia Dec. 2005

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agitprop

*Scenes from outside the
Asia Pacific climate con-
ference held in Sydney
earlier this year*



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



Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development (ISRCS D) 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.

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Editorial

Because of fear

This edition is featuring one of the most pressing social issues being faced by the community sector both in the Inner Sydney Region and nationally – Mental Health. While the issues of mental health used to be the concern of health clinicians, the lack of adequate mental health services is now a problem that the whole community has to come to grips with as 1 in 5 people are affected sometime in their lives.

One way the profile of this issue has been raised is our politicians having spectacular incidents caused by mental health issues and may be one reason why governments are now moving on this issue.

The impact is on several fronts. Foremost must be the incredible amount of human suffering that unsupported mental health problems cause both the person with the illness and their families. The second impact is the pressure on frontline staff who have a revolving door of high need clients they do not have the resources to deal with adequately – not a recipe for attracting long term skilled professionals. The third aspect receiving most attention in this edition, is the spill over of mental health issues into many human service, justice and housing areas. This results in people with mental health receiving inexperienced and inappropriate support and huge strains being placed on organisations that are ill equipped to cope. They find they have to prioritise emergency situations for people with mental health issues above their 'regular' clients. Or, their regular long-term clients develop mental illness and there is no-where else to send them.

In this edition we look at the governments attempt to address some of these issues; the anguish of a caring judiciary without the necessary processes; the numbers of people who end up re-institutionalised in gaol and the impacts on community centres.

The recent deaths of older people living on their own and not being discovered for a long time is also linked. We are very concerned that the Minister for Housing can visit an Inner Sydney Department of Housing estate and exhort tenants to "have a cup of tea with their neighbour", while the current policy of her department is to make this neighbourliness very difficult by placing huge numbers of high need people (including many people with mental illness) next door to each other with inadequate supports. Neighbourliness is happening in DoH properties and needs government support, not policies that make it harder.

To use a quote by Steve Mark, International Council of Jurors:

"People in the community.....end up creating abuse by ignorance – they "don't become interested". Because of fear, they just want to get people causing problems off the streets."

.....the lack of adequate mental health services is now a problem that the whole community has to come to grips with as 1 in 5 people are affected sometime in their lives.

Meet the Minister for Ageing

Santo Santoro, a Queensland Liberal senator, was appointed Minister for Ageing in January this year. His CV includes working as a purchasing officer, a stint at the Queensland Confederation of Industry and a job as political minder for a few years. Then it was off to a safe state Liberal seat in Brisbane from 1989 until he lost it in 2001. He was Queensland's Minister for Training and Industrial Relations from 1996 until 1998 and he introduced the anti-union Workplace Relations Bill 1996. Santoro was elected to the Senate in 2002.

In Canberra he has sat on a number of Senate committees but he has never been near, nor shown any interest in, the Community Affairs Committee that covers family and community services, health and ageing.

His background in IR led John Howard to appoint him Deputy Chairman of his Taskforce on Workplace Relations Reform.

The senator is a vocal critic of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. To keep an eye on it he has established a network of volunteer radio and TV monitors. These people report to him daily any fearless journalism that gets out of the broadcasters self-censorship net. It is then reported in the Senate as a left-wing, anti American, pro-union, anti-family, anti-business, Green, or whatever bias. The Sydney Morning Herald described his Senate inquisition of the ABC.

Santoro asked ABC Managing Director Balding to investigate the way Lateline had dealt with film smuggled out of the Curtin detention centre. He asked him to investigate the anti-US bias of a Four Corners program on postwar Iraq. He asked Balding to justify certain comments

made by AM journalists during the war. And much more. The clear implication of Santoro's McCarthy-like attack was that inside the ABC there existed a nest of anti-US leftists, against whom it was the clear responsibility of management to intervene.

While his own career is advancing nicely, Santoro has been involved in a fair degree of chaos in the Queensland Liberal Party. Crikey.com has the following bio on him.

In the 12 year long Santoro regime, the Liberal Party in Queensland has distinguished itself as easily the worst performing State Division - and has been close to financial collapse on more than one occasion.

In 1991, the Liberal Lord Mayor of Brisbane, Sally Anne Atkinson, lost an



Senator Santo Santoro

In 2001, with Santo still very much in control, the Liberals waffled again over One Nation - and dropped from 9 seats to 3. One of the losers was Santo himself, who lost the safe Liberal seat of Clayfield.

As Minister for Ageing, Santoro will be responsible for the following programs and a lot more : Home and Community Care, Residential Care, Carer Respite

Centres, Aged Care Assessment and Community Care Packages.

It appears as if Santoro has been rewarded with this ministry for his loyalty to Howard's political agenda, rather than for any obvious talent or interest in aged and community services.

□

Jack Carnegie

.....he has never been near, nor shown any interest in, the Community Affairs Committee that covers family and community services, health and ageing.

'unlosable' election after a campaign orchestrated by Santo's team.

By the 1998 State Poll, the Santo faction has regained control of the state division and embarked on its strategy of trying to 'accommodate' Pauline Hanson's One Nation by refusing to put One Nation last on its how to vote. The ploy backfired massively, and the Liberal Party dropped from 15 to 9 - losing official party status once again.



Lawyer to the poor

When I was first asked to write this article the man from *Inner Sydney Voice* said “Tell us about the murders, robberies and so on”. I said “We don’t do much crime at Redfern Legal Centre”. (Legal Aid has many solicitors who specialise in criminal law).

There have been Redfern Legal Centre clients who’ve been murdered (endnote 1), raped, assaulted and battered, but most of our clients have been ripped off by banks, finance companies, telephone companies, investment companies, private lenders, so-called ‘educational institution’, car yard and white goods salesmen and organisations selling kitchen renovations and home alarms. We’ve had people whose children have been taken by DOCS or by their ex-partners; tenants who’ve been evicted unfairly from Department of Housing premises; and marital and de facto partners separating. One solicitor represented a student who was charged with doing something to a small animal during ‘an artistic’ performance. Another assisted some people whose relative’s urn (with the ashes in it) was dropped and hence broken open by a post office.

We’ve had two fires in our premises, one at night, found to have been deliberately lit and the other during the day. During the daytime fire, one of our solicitors with her five-week old baby and I had to crawl down a very long set of stairs, underneath the smoke. We’ve had people shouting outside the window when a film crew from a current affairs show was trying to interview me about a client. (endnote 2)

In ‘the olden days’ (as one volunteer law student has described them) we were in the old mental hospital building in George Street for a while. It’s no longer there, and that’s probably just as well. Aboriginal clients told us it was haunted, so we got it smoked by Uncle Max. When I asked him what type of eucalyptus he was using, our Aboriginal community worker at the time said “ghost gum”.

The old building was scary at night. One night it was storming heavily – thunder, lightening, pouring rain. Nevertheless, all the clients who had face-to-face appointments (endnote 3) that night, and three or four extra people wanting advice, turned up. Only two volunteer night solicitors did. The clients were lined up on seats along the dingy, thin, grey corridor, facing each other almost nose to nose, dripping wet. I apologised for the delays; explained that we were short-staffed; suggested to them that they could swap to another night if they wished; but only one or two responded by murmuring slightly. They mostly stared straight ahead, glassy-eyed. And they all stayed there. It occurred to me that some of them just wanted to be out of the rain.

After the loudest thunderclap of the night, the lights went out – everywhere. We could hardly see each other. We kept working, with cigarette lighters (in those days, I usually had at least one in each pocket) and candles. I’ll always remember seeing the young volunteer solicitor from

a big firm in town, in her crisp suit, facing into the corner of the corridor (to try to get some reflective light off the grey walls) with a massive volume of Ritchie’s Supreme Court Rules in one hand and a cigarette lighter in the other, both held up high above her head; a bit of flickering light around her; and 14 wet, cold, perhaps terrified, but impressed clients, watching her efforts. (endnote 4)

The work is extremely stressful. Many clients have almost insurmountable difficulties. Being born poor is bad enough. Having a mental illness or a disability (whether physical or intellectual) is difficult. A lack of education makes things difficult. Not knowing how to read, write, or speak English, is difficult. (I don’t like it when people say “well, they should learn English”. The people who say this nearly always speak only one language themselves. I’ve often wondered how long it would take them to learn Chinese or Vietnamese).

Being black in a white society is difficult. Being sucked in by a con artist is bad (for your finances). Being sucked in by a con artist can happen to anyone, despite your background. Con artists are often charming, friendly people. If they weren’t charming and friendly, they wouldn’t be good con artists.

Being a victim of domestic violence is bad. Going through a divorce or separation is bad. Having hopeless parents is bad – and I mean hopeless in both senses of the word. I remember a middle-aged Aboriginal man in Redfern Street wearing a printed T-shirt which said “Full of hope and full of shit”.

Being arrested – for anything – is difficult. Being in prison is difficult. Having been in prison in the past (and hence having a criminal record) makes things more difficult. Being homeless is bad, unless you don’t want to live in a home – and then, lack of appropriate services is bad. Being unemployed is bad for most people, unless they have some other form of sufficient income. Centrelink income is not sufficient.

Not being able to get copies of your own medical records is bad. Being misdiagnosed is bad. Having assumptions made about you is bad. People not trusting you is bad. People not believing you is bad, unless you are a liar. On that note, a person whom I esteem said many years ago that people with significant disadvantages such as poverty sometimes have no option but to lie, because if they didn’t, things would be far worse for them.

Having a finance company threaten to take your house from you when you live alone, at 83 years old, and have worked as a cleaner all your life, is bad. It is worse when the reason the finance company wants to take your house is that you took out a loan to help an in-law, who then nicked off with the money.

I have had clients in all of these situations. Often they

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Redfern Legal Centre Today

Redfern Legal Centre (RLC) was established in 1977 by lawyers, law students and academics, social workers and community activists outraged at the injustice created by the lack of affordable legal services for disadvantaged and marginalised people. The Centre opened with one paid staff member, barely any money and lots of volunteers with expertise, enthusiasm, passion, commitment and a vision.

Today's Redfern Legal Centre is motivated by the same ideals of promoting social justice as the founders. They achieve this by providing accessible and appropriate legal advice, information and referral.

Helen Campbell is the manager of RLC, where she has been for five years. She is a solicitor and prior to joining RLC she worked with Aboriginal and women's legal services, as well as the NSW Ombudsmen and the Consumers Telecommunications Network.

Helen is passionate about her work, staff and volunteers. She said legal staff and volunteers work there because of their commitment to human rights, justice and access to the law.

RLC usually has up to 300 legal files open at any one time. Services range from over the phone advice, one-off sessions with solicitors, ongoing support to full legal representation in court.

Helen has seen a big increase in workplace cases over the recent years from low-paid, marginalised workers who are not union members. She is concerned about access barriers to the law for people whose English is poor, are culturally different and are not highly educated.



Helen Campbell (on left) and staff in the Redfern Legal Centre front office

Lawyer to the poor continued

have many, if not most, of these disadvantages.

But all my clients have been wonderful and interesting people. I'd like to thank them for putting up with all the mucking around that comes with running a legal case. Despite their own pain and suffering, they have thanked my colleagues and I with words, presents, and occasionally, with small donations. I've had huge support from our volunteer solicitors and my colleagues over the years, with only the odd person creating problems.

In short, every minute of my work at Redfern Legal Centre has been worth it.

Penny Quarry, Senior Solicitor, (Credit and Debt) Redfern Legal Centre

ENDNOTES

1. If you're wondering how we could have a client who is not alive, she was alive when she first came to see us as a victim of domestic violence.
2. The client had given me permission to discuss her case with the TV show.
3. We also provide appointments to speak with a solicitor over the phone.
4. I felt impressed by her dedication, but also scared. What if she dropped Ritchies? It's extremely expensive. RLC doesn't have much spare money. Being a loose-leaf book, it'd split into a thousand pages, and we'd never be able to put it back together again in the right order.



Ruddock – all his own words

The following is not an exchange between funny men John Clarke and Bryan Dawe, as they do their weekly send up of politicians. This is for real, as Philip Ruddock is interviewed on ABC radio on the need for a national ID card.

PRESENTER: Would it be a crime to not carry your ID card on the streets in Australia?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Well first of all the question is whether you should have a form of national identifier and issues about how you might administer such a system would follow. But we do have a significant national identifier now. It's called a passport and people don't query whether or not they should have one.

PRESENTER: But you don't have to carry it with you?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No, and the question as to whether or not you would need to have a form of national identification which people were required to produce, and that would mean carry with them, is something that you would look at obviously.

PRESENTER: So how does an ID card help to prevent terrorism?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Well it can have quite significant import in relation to whether or not people who are coming from abroad who may intend to carry out a terrorist act are able to move readily without being identified or...

PRESENTER: People from abroad? They won't have an Australian ID card?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No, that's the whole point isn't it?

PRESENTER: But they'd be required to have a passport when they come into the country.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Well they may or may not.

PRESENTER: Well how does anyone enter the country without some form of identification or passport?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Well people

have entered Australia clandestinely at various points in time...

PRESENTER: Well if they enter clandestinely no-one is there to ask them for ID anyway?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That's not necessarily the case, is it? The point I'm making is that if you do have a universal system of identification it makes it much easier to identify those people who are not included in the system.

PRESENTER: Do you want an Australia though where I can be required to produce some form of ID as I walk down the street going about, doing the shopping, going to the beach, taking the kids to school?

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Well some form of ID is often required now in relation...

PRESENTER: If I'm driving a car, but not otherwise.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: For a variety of purposes. If you want to undertake a financial transaction you'll need to identify yourself.

PRESENTER: Well not if it's in cash.

ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No, but...

ASIO cleared of being political

In our last issue we reported on the saga of Scott Parkin and his deportation from Australia – *ASIO mugs peace activist*. Since then an inquiry by the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security has concluded an adverse security assessment which was the basis for cancelling his visa was based on "credible and reliable information" and met the legislative requirements, according to Attorney-General Philip Ruddock.

Ian Carnell Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security concluded his report by saying:

Detailed comments on the security assessment are contained in a separate classified document "Comments on ASIO security assessment in respect

of Mr Scott Parkin". For the reasons outlined in paragraph 18 it is not possible to put these into the public domain.

However, I can say in this report that I am satisfied that there is no indication whatsoever of outside influence on the ASIO process.

The actions taken by staff and the records kept are entirely in accordance with normal processes. There is no evidence (or even hint) of outside influence or any attempt at this. The two officers I formally interviewed under oath or affirmation were unequivocal in rejecting any suggestion that there had been outside influence or any attempt at such.

Given the appearance of normalcy and the absence of indications even suggestive of outside influence, as well as the firm sworn evidence, it must be concluded that outside influence was not attempted and did not occur. I can also say that ASIO had reliable and credible information (assessed by established procedures) that Mr Parkin was involved in activities which come within the definition of politically motivated violence in the ASIO Act. Given the secrecy that Carnell operates under we just have to take his word that the spooks working for ASIO are in no way influenced by politics and always operate inside the law.

Government closes satirical website

On the thirteenth of March an email began circulating that directed people to a website that looked very similar to John Howard's. Under the list of recent speeches by the PM was a confession on how badly the war in Iraq was going. The 'speech' said:

But it should be conceded that an impartial examination of actions of the Coalition of the Willing during operations in Falluja has raised uncomfortable issues for our Government. On the face of it, the Geneva Conventions and core articles of the UN Declaration on Human Rights have been ignored. During the siege of Falluja, many Iraqi women and children were caught in the line of fire and some civilians were

Continued next page

Careful what you say

Community organisations might have to register with the Australian Electoral Commission

Thousands of non-profit organisations will be required to make annual returns to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC), according to evidence given to a senate committee in March. The committee was examining the proposed changes to the Australian Electoral Act that could have serious implications for non-profit organisations across the country.

Following a public hearing by the Senate Committee, Shadow Special Minister of State, Alan Griffin MP, issued a media release that said: *Changes to the definition of an 'electoral matter' outlined in the Bill would mean that charity and community groups will be unable to even make passing reference to past or present public policy issues – greatly restricting their free speech.*

Paul O'Callaghan, from the National Roundtable of Non Profit Organisations drew these matters to the attention of the Committee. Mr Gallagher argued that the proposed changes to the act would require any non-profit, that mentioned in any printed form, the Government, Opposition or any issue connected with government will be required to submit an annual return to the AEC. O'Callaghan also suggested that these organisations may also have

to declare all of their government grants to the AEC.

In his submission, Mr O'Callaghan stated:

The difficulty arises from the definition of the term 'electoral matter' defined to include:

- (a) the election;*
- (b) the Government, the Opposition, a previous Government or a previous Opposition;*
- (c) the Government or Opposition, or a previous Government or Opposition, of a State or Territory;*
- (d) a member or former member of the Parliament of the Commonwealth or a State or of the legislature of a Territory;*
- (e) a political party, a branch or division of a political party or a candidate or group in the election; or*
- (f) an issue submitted to, or otherwise before, the electors in connection with the election."*

He goes on to say

To avoid triggering the disclosure requirements, some organisations would choose to avoid such non-political communications, even to the extent of removing discussion of constructive relationships with governments from their materials. Where disclosure of government funds is required, organi-

sations may be compelled by the donor provision to identify government as the source of funding for the electoral matter. In this case the efficacy of government grant programs would be of the additional administrative burden on collecting and disclosing this information.

The impact on the non-profit sector could have been an unintended consequence of the bill, but comments by Eric Abetz, then Special Minister of State suggest otherwise. In a speech he gave at the Sydney Institute in October last year he said:

"A development of this issue is how third parties are dealt with during non-election periods.

For example, interest groups with 'charity' status spent well over \$540,000 on campaigning during the last Federal election, according to returns submitted to the Australian Electoral Commission. These groups included the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Wilderness Society, the World Wildlife Fund and the RSPCA.

And let's not forget the new online lobby group, GetUp!, who admit that their primary purpose is to campaign against the current Government, having run anti-Government campaigns on topics such as workplace reform, voluntary student unionism, David Hicks and Telstra. Yet, none of these groups are required to report annually outside of election periods....

Therefore, I am examining an accountability regime for third parties."

Other changes to the act will require stronger ID for enrolment to vote, prisoners serving less than three years will be unable to vote, as they now can. The closure of the electoral rolls on the day writs are issued could lead to hundreds of thousands of Australians not being able to vote.

Inner Sydney Voice spoke to Peter Phelps, from the office of Gary Nairn, who has replaced Eric Abetz as Special Minister of State. Phelps said he was unsure if the bill would have the consequences that O'Callaghan predicted and wouldn't comment on whether filing returns to the AEC would be an unreasonable burden on NGOs.

The bill is scheduled to go to the Senate in May.

Website closure continued

shot as they tried to swim across the Tigris. It has even been reported that weapons of dubious legality were used in Falluja, such as cluster bombs, napalm, incendiary white-phosphorus and thermobaric, or "fuel-air" explosives, which can have the effect of a tactical nuclear weapon without residual radiation.

The speech hadn't been written by John Howard, but by Australian journalist and satirist Richard Neville and loaded onto a site designed to look like the PM's.

Within a day, 10,500 hits were made on the site - then it disappeared. The website was hosted by Yahoo and calls were made to New York, where it was hosted, by Neville and other journalists to find out what was happening. Yahoo could find no problems with the site at their end and the mystery deepened.

After three days Richard Neville received a call from Melbourne IT, who register all Internet Addresses in Australia. Melbourne IT also has the ability to bring down any website originating from Australia. They told Neville his site had been closed following a request from the Australian Government.

Inner Sydney Voice contacted Neville and he told us that the site was not intended to deceive people into thinking that this was the actual PM's site and he had left clues there to prove this, including links to anti-war sites. He said the site was obviously a work of political satire and its removal had serious implications for free speech and political comment in Australia.

Richard Neville tells his version of events with the speech at:
www.richardneville.com/

Patches of Purple International Women's Day

'Putting on the purple' relates to women getting political about their issues.

Green, white and purple were the colours first used in 1908 by the women who fought for women's suffrage in England. These colours had special significance.

white represents purity

green represents liberty

purple for passion

Are women in Australia in 2006 'purple and passionate' or are we only picking up the issues in patches?

The 2006 Abortion Debate

Along with many other social issues that are under attack in the new millennium, women's issues have been slowly eroded. Consider the changes to:

Childcare – lack of availability, rising costs and privatisation

Work – no equal pay, loss of pay and conditions with the new Federal IR legislation

Housing – loss of public housing, replaced by welfare housing and the huge costs of buying a home

Work/family balance – more women have careers and do most of the housework and child care.

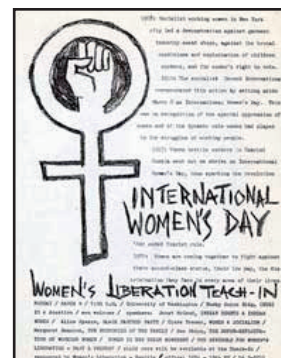
While these changes have been almost subliminal and wrapped up in economic reform, it has taken the RU 486 debate and its implied attack on abortion rights, to bring the women across Australia out and swinging.

Given the current unprecedented support for the Howard government's attack on a full range of women's issues, the success of the campaign to put the approval of the 'abortion pill' into the hands of scientists and away from conservative theology has been both relieving and heartening for the sisterhood. The bill was introduced by Democrats Senator Lyn Allison and co-sponsored by women senators of the National, Liberal and Labor parties. As the conservative men of the right hit back with a big chunk of money for church-based abortion counselling, we got some sense from a woman politician from the Labor party - Shadow Health Minister Julia Gillard. In an interview on *The World Today* with Catherine Mcgrath, she said

"Look, I do think there is a community concern about the number of abortions in this country. I think there is community concern about how little assistance people get when they are facing lifetime traumas, which could then lead them to develop depression and mental illness. Let's fix the whole lot, not just look at one circumstance, the question of a woman dealing with an unplanned pregnancy."

Each year women around the world recognise International Women's Day on the 8th of March. It is an occasion for all women to unite in celebration of their achievements. While the impetus for a day for women was the suffragette movement in England, it is generally recognised International Women's Day originated with the public demonstration by women members of the International Garment Worker's Union in New York in 1908, who were demanding a change in their intolerable working conditions. Many women at the time were cast as second-class citizens. They worked in appalling conditions, earned half of men's wages, died prematurely due to maternal health and were without the right to vote. Thirty thousand people marched, and three hundred thousand met them in the park.

In Sydney, International Women's Day was first celebrated in 1928 at a rally that called for equal pay for equal work, an eight-hour day for shop workers, no piece-work, a based wage for the unemployed and paid annual holidays. Rallies and marches have been held throughout Australia every year since. Some of the major issues about which women continue to campaign include workplace reform, international human rights, poverty, childcare and violence against women.



What did we do in 2006 for International Women's Day?

While a first look at IWD events in 2006 might appear a bit lightweight compared to the early days, there may be good reason. The first is that events are meant to be a celebration of what women have achieved and the second is that all the big ongoing issues of work, children, health and housing now have to be expressed and worked on in a global market-driven context.

There have been some interesting events held in Sydney this year. The NSW government has organised its second NSW Woman of the Year event. The winner is chosen from an honour role of women nominated from the electorate of their local MLA. The winner was Sandra Eades, the first Aboriginal medical officer to be awarded a PhD. The 10 finalists and the winner were announced at a reception at Government House. An IWD Breakfast was run by UNIFEM about Women in Leadership – Peace and Security.

The NSW government has provided grants of \$900 to be allocated to 75 local councils across NSW to hold IWD events. The eastern suburbs event was the recognition of community workers and volunteers run by Woollahra Council – see next page. And finally an IWD March and rally was held in Sydney where the women in Trade Unions group were marching under the banner.....

"Come so far....yet so far to go" Says it all really!

1975 "International Women's Year"

What things were women into in 1975- all under the title of Women's Lib? In addition to burning their bras, they were looking across the broad spectrum of women's lives - expectations on women as a wife, mother, consumer and worker. Many of these advances that commenced in the 70's, developed in the 80's and cemented in the 90's are today under threat.

The big issues for women in 1975 were:

Women's health – Women's Health Centres were into self determination, contraception, abortion, medication, health prevention and mental health.

Social issues such as sexism, rape, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and single parenthood saw the start of Women's Refuges, Neighbourhood Centres and Community Health services.

Activism – political activity, rallies (including burning bras) community organisations and newsletters

Employment – the fight for equal pay, equal opportunity, anti-discrimination, unionism

Child Care – Support for single mothers and wide-spread use of preschools and playgroups.

For a while men's issues were on the back foot, but they fought back and gave us economic rationalism, which has to be a male construct – except the girls get to go shopping!

Have things changed in 30 years?

A 1975 Paper from our library called *Impact upon Australian Women of Funding for Community Projects: New Roles as Grassroots Activists* by Roslie



H Rosenfelt and Sandra Smith opened by saying: *In Australia, women have had the longest opportunity any nation has offered for participation in political life, suffrage having been granted to women in the Commonwealth in 1902 and in all states by 1908. Notwithstanding this advance in nominal rights, women's ability to make impact upon public decision-making, either directly through election to public of women, or indirectly through political action was severely circumscribed by lack of legislative action, the low social and legal status of women and opposition by men, with particular hostility from organised labor. Equally significant in restricting the effectiveness of women in political life have been women's own attitudes. Early suffragettes were considered radicals and troublemakers by other women. Even now, when their status has substantially improved, Australian women still tend to believe that public money belongs for men to determine and in large measure they determinedly remain ignorant about and apathetic to political and policy issues.*

Thirty years later the NSW government has just closed down their Office for Women.

Faye Williams speaking at the International Women's Day celebration organised by Woollahra Council to pay tribute to the women who have worked hard for their community either as paid staff or volunteers in Woollahra and neighbouring LGA's.

Photo Edwina Tohi



from our library

In 1975 Regional Council received funding for International Women's Year and invited local women to tell us what they wanted to spend it on.

The Pauline Shelley mentioned in this flyer is now the Deputy President of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission. Pauline was a single mother living in Rozelle at the time she got involved in the feminist movement and local politics.

When we contacted her she was said how varied and exciting those times were and what great opportunities there were. She benefited from the Whitlam Government's initiatives in tertiary education and support for single mothers. Having left school at fifteen she enrolled in Mitchell College as a mature age student and studied journalism, where one of her fellow students was Andrew Denton.

After graduation, Pauline was offered a job in journalism in Tasmania. There she got involved in setting up child care, became a union organiser, moved up to secretary of the union, was appointed to the commission and is now Deputy President.

As far as Pauline could remember the money from the grant was used to establish a support network for inner city women who were isolated due to their economic circumstances or their language.

INNER CITY WOMEN



Have a say in money being spent on International Women's Year.

A public meeting is being held
to establish a program for women
in the inner city.

Funds have now been made available
through the Australian Assistance Plan.

What would you like to do with it?

Please come along and tell us your ideas

on
Sunday 8th June-3pm

at South Sydney Community Centre

118 Regent Street, Redfern.

If you need child-minding on the day,
or have any ideas you want to discuss
phone Pauline Shelley 827 2831



Competed out of business

The provision of adequate and affordable child care is the latest community service issue to hit the radar big time. Due to the federal governments changes to funding throughout the 1990's, community based child care centres have been failing. At the same time, aggressive private operators are buying up community based child care and building new centres. The most successful and highest profile private player is ABC Childcare. The Weekend Herald 11-12 March has run some amazing stats on their performance:

- Private centres now make up 70% of providers
 - Nationally, one child in five attending child care goes to an ABC Long Day Care centre
 - In Australia, ABC owns a quarter of the child care centres - 850
 - ABC company is worth \$1.2 billion
 - ABC has bought three private child care companies in Australia and the international Child Care Group, with 300 centres in USA
 - ABC plans to build or take over 200 centres this year in Australia. If we swallowed the Federal (and NSW) governments line that competition improves quality and reduces cost, here would be a good case to prove the point. Again thanks to the Herald, this is what massive privatisation has done to child care:
 - The child care costs increased 10% last year and over 60% in the last four years
 - Federal funding for child care has grown from \$200 million in 1990 to \$2 billion
 - ABC gets 44% of its income from government subsidies - \$128 million of its \$292 million revenue
 - ABC workers have to sign confidentiality agreements about their employment conditions so low levels of pay are not able to be verified
 - There have been some prosecutions of ABC for breach of standards
 - By 2008, \$167 million of taxpayers money will go to ABC shareholders.
- Another interesting aspect to this com-



Tanya Plibersek MP, Shadow Minister for Childcare, talks to the media in Surry Hills about the need for an overhaul of the child care system.

pany is the competitive and litigious way ABC operates, so information to assess standards such as workers qualifications, pay and safety of children cannot be determined publicly. As recent media reports have revealed, the level of government scrutiny is superficial.

It is becoming clear that due to privatisation there are insufficient services, they are costly to both parents and government and quality is unsure, while private owners pockets are being filled. One may ask why the federal government is continuing in this direction?

Free Trade Agreement is pushing privatisation

In March 2005, the Federal Government began a compulsory competitive tendering process for several community programs - National Respite for Carers Program, the Commonwealth Carelink Program, the Continence Aids Assistance Program and the Carer Information and Support Program. Senator McLucas, Labor Senator for Queensland and Shadow Minister for Aged Care, Disabilities and Carers reported that the Budget Estimates hearing said they introduced a competitive tendering process for these services because they "fell into a particular category which meant we had to have

it as a tender". "Also, it was subject to all the Free Trade Agreement requirements which have now been put in place". So we are now going through a competitive tendering process in this community, even though all of the academic literature tells us that it is the wrong way to deliver human services - because we have to comply with the Free Trade Agreement.

In NSW, we have recently seen the competitive tendering of several community services including the Seniors Information Line (see ISV 102) and the large DoCS Early Intervention and Prevention program.

Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Child Care and Federal Member for Sydney has been taking up many of these issues. In February she moved a private members bill to try to get the 30% child care tax rebate through earlier. Of the rebates promised by the federal government in September 2004, no parent has received a cent and will have to wait until the end of the year, only to get a part of what is owed.

Opinion is growing that the entire child care system needs an overhaul and over 40 Liberal and National backbenchers have released a proposal to modify the way parents receive child care assistance from the government.



Mental Health - the big issue

Mental Health is 'the' social issue at the moment. At last the suffering of people with mental health problems has got some response. We would like to think the governments newfound interest was based on concern for our fellow human beings, but unfortunately personal suffering does not always bring in the dollars. Government could just as likely be responding to the huge costs of caring for people with mental health needs as they crash into health, housing, policing, court and prison systems. Perhaps we have Cornelia Rau and subsequent deported detainees to thank and that action on human services is a political act in the end. Another motivation might be the number of politicians and other high profile men who have been severely affected by depression.

Senate Inquiry into Mental Health

The Senate Inquiry into Mental Health appears to be a genuine attempt by the Federal government to look at the issue seriously. As the Chairperson of the Senate Select Committee said "there is great community concern about the topic that has touched the life of every Australian". The Inquiry is looking at all aspects of Mental Health. Public Hearings have been held around the country in all capital cities and so far 1,197 responses have been received and the report deadline has been pushed out twice to allow the committee to read it all. The committee report is now due in May. The Senate website has listed a select number of submissions. One entry details the agonising attempts of a father to get support for his son with extreme schizophrenia over a period of six years. His problems included getting ongoing care; medication to the level required; controlling his son's use of illicit drugs; violent behaviour causing clashes with the law and the huge disruption to the whole family.

The terms of reference show the Inquiry is examining a broad range of

important issues and we couldn't have devised a better list ourselves. They will be looking at the success of the current National Mental Health Strategy. Most important is the adequacy of services, in other words, how all aspects of care work effectively - prevention, early intervention, acute care, community care, after hours crisis services and respite care. These need to be co-ordinated throughout an individual's episode of care. The individual services need to be delivered well, so the inquiry will look at funding and delivery of services, including private and non-government sectors. Unmet needs in associated services such as supported accommodation, employment, and support services or government services providing housing, employment, law enforcement and general health services are all under consideration.

Client needs will be considered, including special needs of particular population groups; socially and geographically isolated people and people with complex/dual conditions. There is a call for recovery-focussed care and services to be consumer-operated. Another huge issue is the overrepresentation of people with a mental illness in the criminal justice system and in custody, the extent to which these environments give rise to mental illness, the adequacy of legislation and processes in protecting their human rights. Social justice issues include detention and seclusion within mental health facilities and the extent to which it is compatible with human rights, humane treatment and care standards. Mental health research, its funding and dissemination of best practice and new modes of delivery of mental health care are also included.

Council of Australian Government (COAG) moves on Mental Health

While the Senate Select Inquiry is underway, it appears the Prime Minister and Premiers could not wait for the Senate report to be finished and

decided to deal with mental health at their COAG meeting in February. The COAG meeting decided to put \$1.1 billion into health care, including mental health, which they described as "an issue of national significance". As if the nature of mental illness is not compelling enough in itself, another 'good reason' given by the COAG documents, places mental health in a market context:

"Their vision includes making people healthier so they can stay in the workforce longer"

The COAG communiqué recognised that "mental health is a major problem for the Australian communityand that additional resources will be required from all governments to address the issues".

COAG has asked senior officials to prepare an action plan at the latest by June 2006. No doubt they are presuming a critical outcome from the Senate Inquiry! In addition to the items being looked at by the Senate Inquiry, the COAG report will also get a report on :

- the impact on mental health of illicit drugs and alcohol
- getting the right balance between hospital, community and primary care
- the best type of accommodation for people who are unable to manage on their own
- improving participation in the community and employment
- providing supported rehabilitation and respite care
- increasing the health workforce.

COAG has also agreed that the delivery of mental health services would be an integral element of the new National Health Call Centre Network.

STOP PRESS
EARLY RELEASE OF
SENATE COMMITTEE
MENTAL HEALTH
REPORT - PAGE 17

How the law deals with the mentally ill

The legal profession is rightly concerned about the plight of people with mental health issues in the justice system, in the context of human rights. Within the law, there are many regulations for dealing with people with mental health issues, but these have not translated into guidelines for an overall effective strategy.

It is generally agreed that the current problem situation started with the Richmond Report in 1983 that recommended deinstitutionalisation. The NSW government adopted the strategy, but without the dollars for group homes and support services. This resulted in re-institutionalisation for many unwell people into the prison system, which was not designed to cope. Within the walls of a prison these people are put out of mind's way and for many people in politics, this is the desired effect - the problem is fixed by getting people with mental illness off the streets. There is a great fear of people with mental health problems and these people are in gaol because we fear them. People in prison have few human rights, which is exacerbated when politicians get involved in a law and order auction, competing with each other to be "tough on crime".

Police lack knowledge, training and expertise to deal with people with mental health problems so there is no special support to keep them out of court. At the trial, a judge can have sympathy, but having a mental health problem does not make the person unfit to plea. After the trial, judges can make orders for treatment but this does not transfer into the prison system. There is no treatment in prison. After the person is released, little happens and the probation and parole officers are not the best placed service to help.

A vision of where we could be headed is evident in California, the fifth biggest economy on the planet. The residents there vote on how their taxes are to be spent. They end up creating abuse by ignorance – they "don't become interested". Because of fear, they just want to get people causing problems off the streets. California residents have voted many times to increase taxes used for prisons. At one stage, the prison budget rivalled the education budget. To help people in gaol who missed out on mainstream education, the government then put education into the prison system, so now, the prison education

budget rivals the education budget.

The figures on the level of mental illness in Australia are also frightening:

- 1 in 5 Australians experience some mental health episode
- depression is the most disabling illness and makes up 13% of mental health occurrences
- 27% of people with disabilities also have mental health problems
- Australia spends 6.4% of GDP on mental health, while other countries spend 10 – 14 %
- most young people with mental health problems start at age 15 – 25 so they can't complete their education, get a job or have normal family relations.

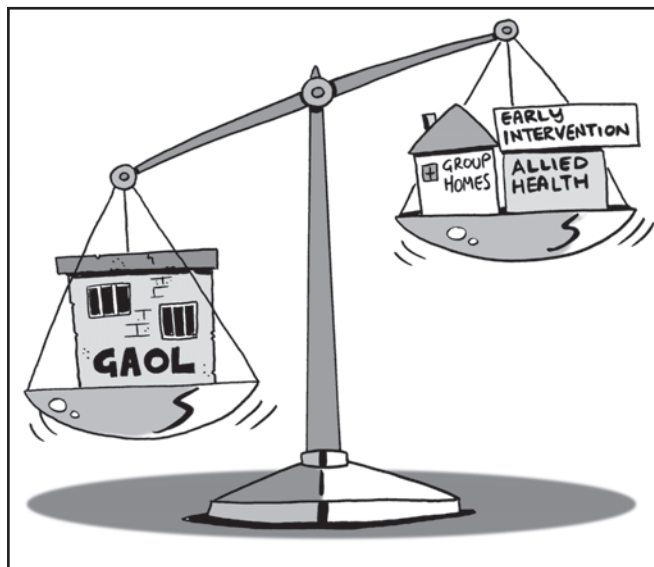


Illustration by Stephen Crowley

Some of the problems being faced by young people seeking treatment for their condition and trying to manage their lives are:

- poor access to psychiatric help
- poor access to allied health – no Medicare rebate
- can't find health workers
- no support in the workplace
- hard to deal with large bureaucracies when their circumstances change ie. Centrecare and housing
- pressure for acute care beds resulting in a revolving door experience where they are discharged as soon as possible and return quickly for another short stay

- lack of youth and early intervention accommodation
- lack of investment to enable deinstitutionalisation.

What can be done to help people with mental health needs in the legal system?

One solution is to allow people unfit to plead to have their case reviewed by a Mental Health Tribunal. In Ontario, the special Drugs Courts added mental health issues, so before people plea, the court looks at their background. The barristers who deal with these cases need to be skilled in this area. Even if we bring in something like this, our Minister for Health is unlikely to release people with mental health illness who are now in prison.

Concerned people in the legal profession are looking to COAG for some answers, especially the provision of decent health, accommodation and support services to keep people with mental health illness out of the legal system wherever possible.

From speeches given by Steve Mark, International Council of Jurors and Sebastian Rosenberg, Deputy Chief Executive, Mental Health Council of Australia, speaking at Politics in the Pub on 24 February 2006

On the frontline

The Eastern Sydney Interagency is a lively forum attended by a wide range of community and government services in Waverley, Woollahra, Botany and Randwick areas. Members were feeling increasingly desperate as they watch mental health services deteriorate more and more, day by day in the area. In November 2005, the Eastern Interagency sent a letter to Prime Minister Howard and NSW Premier Iemma stating that people living with mental illness in Eastern Sydney are in an extremely vulnerable position and their carers and community service workers are exasperated and fearful for their health and social well being.

The Eastern Sydney Interagency made several demands to improve the situation, such as having the Area Health Service provide immediate parity of funding for people living with mental illness; implement the National Standards for Mental Health; take immediate steps to ensure that no person who needs it is denied a mental health service and stop exploiting the community services sector which cannot cope with the neglect of the needs of the mentally ill people and their carers.

Deinstitutionalisation, without adequate community care has resulted in a new forms of institutionalisation - homelessness and imprisonment. Access to inpatient care, even in crisis situations is now difficult and increasing numbers of still psychotic patients are now discharged under pressure for hospital beds. So, mentally ill people are ending up in prison, on the streets, homeless and destitute, according to the 2005 *Not for Service Report* produced by the Mental Health Council of Australia, Brain & Mind Institute and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Homeless and mentally ill people in Eastern Sydney are now being released from hospitals into crisis accommodation or given a list of boarding houses and expected to look for accommodation when they are not even well enough to be out of hospital.

A number of community groups in the eastern suburbs recently went public about the chronic shortage of

service for the mentally ill. They said there was a lack of treatment plans for clients, problems with co-ordination, lack of after-hours crisis care and huge burdens on families and carers. A health spokesperson denied there were major problems and indicated that patients were well cared for after discharge.

Inner Sydney Voice has since talked to three neighbourhood centres to see what these frontline services think of the standard of services for the mentally ill.

Barbara Kelly from Junction Neighbourhood Centre at Maroubra said the current situation was "an absolute disgrace" and has been for a long period of time. She said there was only a crisis service available and little ongoing care and case management. They regularly have people with moderate to severe mental health problems visit the centre who are alone, sometimes homeless and are not receiving any care or support.

The centre does not have the funding or resources to deal with many of the people who come in. There have been safety and security issues for the staff and volunteers who work there.

Apart from visitors, Kelly has observed an increase in the numbers of people with mental health problems who receive Home and Community Care services, provided by Junction Neighbourhood Centre. She said the HACC program was totally unprepared for this and the funding body, Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care, was in denial about the extent of the problem.

She said the area needed a service that would ensure the mentally ill had regular visits to a doctor, activi-

ties, follow-up casework, medication supervision and a supply of regular meals. In addition there needed to be a drop-in centre where people felt secure, could engage in activities, could have a shower and receive counselling.

Michel Lohan from Echo Neighbourhood Centre Bondi Junction and Lisa Burns from Newtown neighbourhood Centre had similar stories of an



increase in people with a mental illness using their centres and the need for counsellors and case workers to work from there. Both centres dealt with people that were living in sub-standard boarding house accommodation and reported that people's conditions were aggravated by boredom, loneliness and lack of good accommodation.

All three neighbourhood centres are experiencing increases in dealing with people with mental health problems that they are not resourced to deal with and they are unable to find appropriate health services and support for these people.

Senate releases mental health report

On the 30th March the Senate Select Committee on Mental Health released their first report on Australia's mental health system. The report confirms what those working with the mentally ill have been saying for the past decade. *There needs to be more money, more effort and more care given to this neglected part of our health care system. There is not enough emphasis on prevention and early intervention. There are too many people ending up in acute care, and not enough is being done to manage their illness in the community.*

While wholeheartedly endorsing the recent Council Of Australian Government initiatives, the committee sees a need for big increases in the funding for mental health services *The committee recommends a substantial overall increase in funding for mental health services over time, to more closely reflect the disease burden and to satisfy the very significant unmet need.*

The report recommends that a national system of community mental health centres be established over the next 4-5 years. *The committee recommends the establishment of a Better Mental Health in the Community initiative, comprising a large number of community-based mental health centres, the distribution primarily determined on the basis of populations and their needs. Assuming one new centre for every 60 000 people, this would represent 300 to 400 community based mental health centres nationwide.*

The senators from all parties have also called for reforms to the Medicare system to better accommodate those with a mental illness. *Include a new set of Medicare mental health schedule fees and rebates for combinations of private consulting psychiatrists, GPs and psychologists who agree to work together or in conjunction with mental health centres under integrated, collaborative arrangements in the management of primary mental health services.*

Full report: www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/mentalhealth_ctte/

Private schools double dip on public funding

The Greens NSW education spokesperson, Dr John Kaye, thinks private schools are double dipping and getting far too much government money.

"Federal Education Minister Brendan and his predecessor, Dr Kemp, supported their massive increases in funding of private schools by arguing that the money would make these institutions more affordable."

"Continued growth in fees well above the inflation rate for the elite institutions and the introduction of private schools for profit proves that this policy has failed"

"Despite annual subsidies of more than \$110 million going to the wealthiest private schools in NSW alone, they are becoming much less affordable.

"The NSW State government, which gave \$50 million to the wealthiest private schools continues to fund these institutions without regard to the increases in the federal government subsidies." Dr Kaye said.



Is it a fact?

John Howard's decade of massive HECS increases means students commencing university in 2006 are paying up to \$30,000 more for their degree?

students will be paying \$20,000 for a science degree, \$40,000 for a combined law degree and nearly \$15,000 for an arts degree?

students are paying up to \$5,000 per year more HECS because of these increases, leaving Australian families with an 'Americanised' education system and massive bills which they may never be able to repay?

students who commenced their courses before 1997 would have paid only \$2,943 in HECS (in 2006 dollars), compared to annual rates of up to \$8,170 for those starting this year?

last year the Howard Government's contribution to the finances of our national public vocational education and training system increased by just 0.8 per cent?

parents of a child born this year face a bill of up to \$250,000 to cover their child's education costs?

34,200 Australians were unable to gain a place at TAFE in 2005, up from 34,100 in 2004?

69,400 Australians were unable to gain a place after application to a university, TAFE or other post school institution?

the number of ESL teachers in NSW public schools has remained static at 876 for decades, despite an increasing need for ESL services?

in 1983 there was one ESL teacher for every 55 secondary student with English language needs. Now there is one teacher for every 110 students?



education

Big business moves into public schools



*Glenwood High -
built and
operated by
Axiom Education*

The New Schools Project, an initiative of the Carr Government, began in 2000 when the Department of Education and Training (DET) began investigating the building and maintenance of schools as privately financed projects. Expressions of Interest were called for in 2001 and contracts signed in 2003. Nine new schools were then built - four in 2004 and five the following year. NSW Treasury recently released their own review of the process and have announced another nine new schools will be built by the private sector.

According to Treasury, getting the private sector involved makes the whole process quicker and cheaper. The then Finance Minister Michael Costa said that they saved taxpayers \$10 million and got the schools two years earlier than "using traditional financial methods"

Greens MP and education spokesperson Lee Rhiannon said that Michael Costa's plan to expand the involvement of the private sector in public schools was more about his obsession with balancing the budget than delivering quality public education.

"When Minister Costa states that the new Public Private Partnerships in building and operating schools saves money he is misleading the public. The public will pay rent for these schools for decades,"

"Private corporations are not interested in building and using school facilities to benefit the public. Their aim is to make money".

Simon Benson, writing in the Telegraph, saw Treasury's report as a strong pointer for schools to raise more of their own funds. He said in his piece in January :

"Schools will be urged to enter into money-making schemes such as providing childcare services or hiring out facilities to private organisations in a plan aimed at generating new revenue."

The NSW Treasury plan applies to new public schools,

to be built and operated with the assistance of the private sector.

While the State Government insists the commercial activities would not compromise educational values, teachers fear the influence of business could conflict with the best interests of students.

The Government has not specified what commercial activities may be allowed but has opted not to place restrictions, apart from prohibiting anything that might conflict with educational policy of the school. However, in planning for future privately built schools, Treasury commented that a battle for control of the schools between the principal and private consortium could take place.

The contractor for the first nine schools was Axiom, a consortium five companies including Hansen Yuncken, Spotless and St Hilliers. They are involved in a variety of property management, labour hire, catering, financial, banking and investment enterprises.

St Hilliers is a property group providing expertise and services in contracting, design management, property development, asset management and funds management. Spotless is publicly listed in Australia and New Zealand and is in the top 200 listed companies by market capitalisation. Hansen Yuncken is one of the largest privately owned construction companies in Australia

Axiom provides their own on-site manager for each school who deals with maintenance, security, furniture, contractors, maintaining the grounds etc. These managers will also be responsible for commercial activities at the schools and Treasury has indicated there is the potential for conflict with the school principals.

While Treasury feels the whole exercise has been an outstanding success, their review is based on just one years operation at these new schools. Axiom will be required to provide cleaning, maintenance, security, safety, util-

continued next page

Tough times for student unions



Shadow Minister for Education, Jenny Macklin MP, turned up at the University of NSW for Orientation Week in February, to see the last group of students who will have to pay union fees. The new bill, which bans compulsory student unionism, will come into force from the 1st July 2006. The bill makes it illegal for universities to charge a compulsory levy on students for a range of services and facilities. She said apart from loss of amenities the legislation would lead to the loss of 4000 jobs across Australia.

Kirstin Hunter president of *The Source* (formerly the student union), said that they currently take in \$9.5 million in fees and that could drop to 10-20% of that figure when VSU comes in. The types of services that will be cut or disappear include legal aid, childcare, advocacy, retail outlets including the cafeteria and bar, information and publications. Retail items will become more expensive on campus as they are subsidised by the compulsory fees. Hunter said the only hope of retaining amenities for students would be if UNSW makes up the huge shortfall that will happen in July. This appears unlikely given the budget cuts that universities are experiencing.

Play it again

NSW Premier, Morris Iemma, has announced that it will be compulsory for all schools to play the national anthem at assemblies from the beginning of this school year. Apparently Iemma thinks this is going to stop young people joining gangs and going on a rampage like they did at Cronulla.

The president of the NSW Teachers Federation, Maree O'Halloran, is not impressed with idea calling it window dressing and said it will not stop social

divisions in the community. She called on the Premier to invest more money in public schools to help address social problems (NSW schools have a maintenance backlog of over \$100 million) and to help build bridges across different cultural and religious groups.

Free university

If you are a pensioner or self-funded retiree earning less than \$36,000 p.a. you can enrol in an Australian university and never have to pay any fees.

The FEE-HELP program pays the fees for Australian citizens at any Australian university up to a maximum of \$50,000. The fees are paid directly by the government to the university, once you have enrolled. You only start paying the money back when your income exceeds \$36,185 p.a. Pensioners can be very secure in knowing they'll never have to repay and self-funded retirees earning less than that amount are also safe. If your income exceeds \$36,185 in any year then you have to pay a proportion:

\$36,185 - \$ 40,306 p.a. you need to pay 4% increasing in eight bands up to an income of \$67,200 p.a. where you need to pay back 8%.

If you die, the debt is cancelled and does not have to be repaid from your estate.

FEE-HELP can be used to pay for courses provided by Open Universities Australia, where you can study for a degree without any entry requirements. Open Universities is a consortium of seven universities including Macquarie, Monash and RMIT. The courses are identical to those done on the campus, except you do them at home and at your own pace.

Unfortunately *Inner Sydney Voice* is not the only one to have noticed this. The Centre for Independent Studies has released a paper calling on the government to restrict loans to those who are most likely to have the ability pay it back, just like banks. They also suggested claiming back loans from people's estates.

Open Universities: www.open.edu.au

Public schools continued

ity, furniture, equipment and grounds maintenance and other services for these school buildings until 31 December 2032, when the buildings will be handed over to DET.

In its first two months of operating the schools, Axiom incurred fines of \$3500 by the State Government for being too slow to deal with maintenance problems. The Public Service Association disputes this figures, saying that \$11,000 in fines had been levied at one school alone, over the same period. ■

Living and Dying in Public Housing

Garry Mallard writes: if people are withdrawing on the estates it's because of Housing Department policies.

We've all seen and heard the reports – people discovered in various stages of decomposition in public and private housing – apparently dying alone, their passing unnoticed by the community in which they've lived.

One of the more unreasonable, some would say offensive statements reported in the media, has been attributed to NSW Minister for Housing, Cherie Burton MP:

“Public housing tenants should take responsibility for the future of their communities — and that includes being a good neighbour” (Herald Sun, March 7th 2006).

The inference of this statement, drawn from a Ministerial media release, is clear. People are dying ‘lonely deaths’ because public housing tenants are failing in their duty of care; because they are irresponsible neighbours. The Minister goes on to suggest a number of remedial strategies aimed at putting an end to the ‘lonely deaths’ phenomenon.

If lives are to be saved, aid must be rendered quickly, when it's required. The Minister's suggestions, while almost certain to improve the quality of advice provided by the Medical Examiner, are unlikely to be very effective in the war against lonely deaths. There are far more practical and efficient ways of accomplishing a fast and helpful response than relying on scheduled visits and community activities to identify a ‘missing person’.

As I sit pondering recent media reports, it occurs to me that there is no evidence, whatsoever, that I am aware of – no research, no poll results – to support the suggestion that the recent discovery of a number of decomposing bodies can be attributed to a lack of community spirit. Such suggestions are the stuff of cynical, emotive guesswork at best, aimed at satisfying the wider community's demand for action, while attributing blame to those who have no voice with which to challenge allegations that they quite probably find offensive.

There is an alternative explanation for the lonely deaths phenomenon; one which is every bit as carefully researched as the Minister's well publicised negligent neighbour hypothesis, yet it has not enjoyed the same level of media exposure.

Elderly public housing tenants began to withdraw from their communities around the same time that state Labor's plans to tighten eligibility criteria and limit tenure began to filter through the community. It is not dysfunctional communities the elderly withdraw from, but rather hard-line economic rationalist policies aimed at rationing dwindling stock and gradually eroding security of tenure. The impact of statements such as, “Public housing is supposed to be a hand up, not a hand

out for life” have been extremely unsettling for the elderly, who are deeply concerned that even tougher ‘reforms’ might be just around the corner.

If the elderly are uncertain about the future, might they not be inclined to hunker-down, keeping to themselves in the belief that by maintaining a low profile they may not be asked to make way for someone more deserving?

Further, one might speculate that some tenants are keeping to themselves because they are afraid that some well-meaning neighbour or bureaucratic do-gooder with mandatory reporting obligations will determine that they are not ‘coping’, and that this might result in a one-way ticket to institutionalised care.

The Department of Housing is not in the community building business anymore. The recipe for a healthy community includes many ingredients – tolerance, optimism, energy, health, pride and security of tenure among them. But the most important ingredient of all is diversity.

Garry Mallard



Garry Mallard - Coordinator, The National Tenant Support Network, activist and Bega public housing tenant on a recent visit to Waterloo



material needs

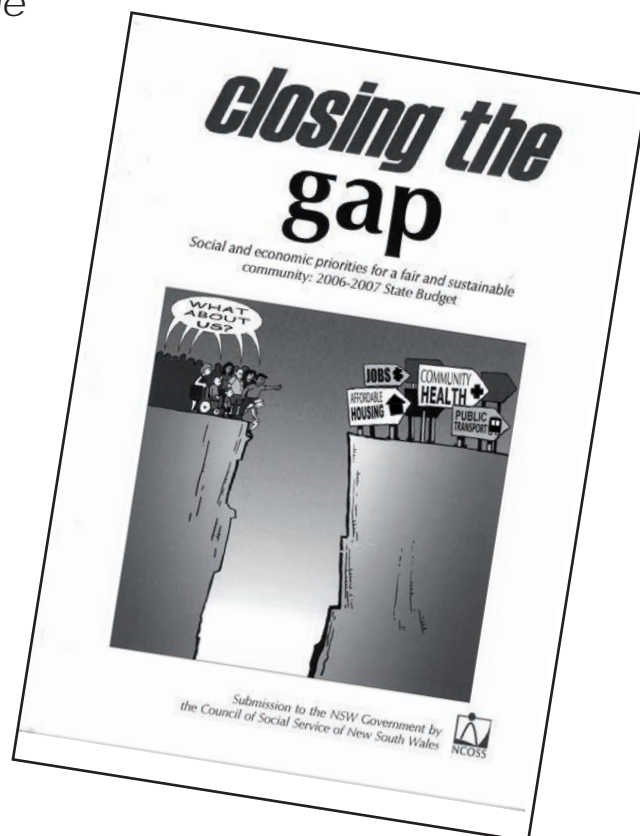
Budget Battle

NCOSS is pitching for the battlers while Australian Business Limited wants community services cut

George Monbiot in a recent piece in the UK Guardian wrote: "Never underestimate the self-pity of the ruling classes. In the submission it made to the chancellor's pre-budget report the Confederation of British Industry demanded that the government spend less on everything except business."

Closer to home we have lobby group Australian Business Limited (ABL) making a similar submission to the Audit of Government Expenditure NSW. Titled Kickstart NSW, ABL wants to slash what they see as unnecessary and wasteful spending. Their targets are a large number of important and valuable community and public services used by the people of NSW. Many of the cuts would impact on public housing tenants, women, children, pensioners, prisoners, the chronically ill, and people with disabilities. Kickstart also targets government expenditure on transport, the environment, the arts, independent film and TV production.

In representing the interest of the businesses and their shareholders, ABL have made an attempt to wind



back expenditure that goes towards the common good and the less well off. Their suggestions include:

Abolish the Community Relations Commission and contract out the provision of Government translation services.

Reduce the Department of Transport policy staff costs by 50%

Abolish the NSW Film and Television Office

Abolish the Back to School Allowance for Primary, Secondary and Non-Government Schools

Reduce Sydney Water Pensioner Concession by 50%

Abolish Commission for Children and Young People

Increase the level of cost recovery for sport and recreation services

Reduce the average cost of imprisonment per day in NSW to comparable benchmarks in part through increasing privatisation levels within the NSW prison system.

Move service costs for disability services towards interstate benchmarks in part by reducing administration costs.

Reduce the differential between the NSW and Australian expenditure per child for child protection

Continued page 22

New homeless service

A new \$1.5 million partnership between the NSW Government and the City of Sydney to help combat inner city homelessness was launched on the 2nd March. The launch coincides with the fourth National Homelessness Conference.

NSW Housing Minister Cherie Burton and Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore MP announced that the Haymarket Foundation and Mission Australia would be funded to provide the service.

Ms Burton said the new service combines a number of existing services into one streamlined service that aims to tackle the homeless problem in the city.

"This new outreach service will combine State and Local Government services to better meet the needs of homeless people in the inner city," Ms Burton said.

"By working together we will improve the way we support people who are homeless, helping them to find accommodation and provide them with

effective support."

"This is a great example of how State and Local Governments can work together in partnership to better deliver services to those most in need."

"This new service is about better addressing the problem of homelessness in the inner city by taking a more targeted and effective approach."

Ms Moore said that this was an important partnership between the State Government and the City of Sydney Council and community organisations.

"By working together we will improve the way we support people who are homeless, helping them to find accommodation or access health or mental health services, other community support services and provide them with effective support to do this."

"By pooling resources, State and Local Government services can now work together with one more effective service model for outreach and support for homeless people in Sydney."

"Skilled workers will go out onto the streets of Sydney to locate homeless

people, at night and during the day, and offer them support services and accommodation."

"Where homeless people are willing to take accommodation, the workers will support them and help them to independently sustain a tenancy."

Mission Australia and the Haymarket Foundation will receive funding for three years to manage the service, with a possible extension of funding for an additional two years pending an evaluation.

The Department of Housing and the City of Sydney have jointly funded the new service with a contribution from the Department of Community Services. The new service will work closely with other agencies in the inner city to provide services such as needs assessments, health care, counselling, transport, referrals to support agencies and sustainable housing options.

It will operate across the inner city and target rough sleepers in Darlinghurst, Kings Cross, Redfern, Surry Hills, Woolloomooloo, Sydney CBD, Circular Quay, Pyrmont, Ultimo, Broadway and Haymarket.

Budget Battle continued

services and out-of-home services by 75%.

Increase housing user charges to the Commonwealth Grants Commission standardised assessment for NSW.

Increase public hospital patient fee levels and eliminate the difference between NSW standardised assessment and actual revenue.

Abolish the Office of Women.

Like in the UK, our own ruling class is engaged in a relentless battle to redistribute public wealth back to themselves.

Unlike the Australia Business Limited's mean and self-serving attempt to redirect money to the wealthy, the NCOSS submission is a detailed and reasonable argument for increasing funding for human services in NSW. The submission also suggests how the extra funding can be raised by an increase in payroll tax, a parking space levy in the CBD and a congestion charge for cars driving into central Sydney. This would produce an additional \$200 million in revenue to fund services to those who need them in NSW.

The NCOSS submission included the following expenditure:

Increase funding to the Domestic Violence Court Assistance Scheme (DVCAS) to provide a more equitable, cohesive and consistent response to domestic violence and improved victim safety. Cost: \$1.136m

Strengthen the NSW Government's response to the vast unmet need within the Home and Community Care Program and to secure ongoing viability of service provision in real terms. This would ensure sufficient growth funding to allow existing services to meet expansion in the HACC target group and provide sufficient growth funding to allow for targeting of new services to meet greater and evolving needs. Cost: \$37.49m p.a.

Rapidly accelerate the availability of appropriate accommodation and support for adults with disability by providing improved access to support options which conform to the NSW Disability Services Act for people with disability in NSW. This would lead to increased independence and community participation of people with disability and a reduction in the unnecessary escalation of crisis. Cost: \$54.5m p.a. plus \$7.5m capital

Ensure the sustainability of services funded under the Community Services Grants Program by enhancing the program's capacity to deliver services that support communities through community development, prevention and early intervention. By doing this, communities are strengthened and supported and local needs identified and met. Cost: \$17.5m – immediate fixed costs and program requirements.

The full submission (90 pages) can be downloaded from: www.ncoss.org.au/bookshelf/

Stick with the sisters; not the party

Liquor, Hospitality & Miscellaneous Union secretary Annie Owens has called for a revolt by women coalition MPs to insist the Federal Government provide proper funding for childcare. Ms Owens made the comments after Federal Minister for Community Services, Mal Brough, attacked the union's childcare wages win.

"You can't keep this industry alive on the backs of poorly paid women. It's unjust. The Federal Government has to get serious about funding childcare," Annie Owens said.

"We're hoping that Jackie Kelly will lead by sitting down with her female political colleagues from across all the parties to find a good, positive, solution to the problems of this sector - a solution which the Government, the community, parents and the childcare workforce can support."

"It's International Women's Day today - now is the day for the women in Federal Parliament to throw off the shackles of their respective political parties."

"These female political representatives should also speak out together to defend the principle of pay equity for all Australian women," Ms Owens said.

Inner Sydney Voice spoke to Annie Owens following the Industrial Relations Commission decision. Owens said the win was possible after years of struggle because of the principle of pay equity established in NSW, following a test case by Unions NSW two years ago. She added that such a win would be impossible under the new federal IR laws.

Ms Owens said that conditions for workers in the childcare sector still needed improving, as sick leave was inadequate and workers were often required to work additional unpaid hours programming activities and attending meetings.

She was scathing of Employers First chief executive Steve Bracks who had argued for a decrease in wages for childcare workers. "This



employment

was a new low by employers and their representatives," she said.

Childcare workers will receive increases every six months for the next two years. Depending on their qualifications and experience, workers will receive an extra \$70 to \$166 a week.

Maybe these unemployed are unemployable

The opening chapters of the *Draft Employment and Enterprise Plan* put out by the Redfern Waterloo Authority, give the rationale for selling off large chunks of government land in Redfern and Waterloo as ..jobs...jobs....jobs. The Plan claims that 18,000 jobs will be created. Our analysis is that most of the 18,000 jobs will go to people who live outside the area or to new residents.

The fundamental premise is that "Wealth creation is seen as an antidote to welfare dependency." The experience of disadvantaged people is quite the opposite - that wealth creation tends to create more wealth for the wealthy. Not enough will 'trickle down' to people living in Redfern and Waterloo on welfare support. Wealth from the RWA changes will go to developers, businesses and the state government.

The RWA Plan is very excited that one third of the population is on welfare support. The document implies that these people will be able to start work, once the jobs are here and training completed. Organisations working with people on welfare support know that the real situation is much more difficult. People are usually on welfare support because they cannot work for some very good reasons - they have a disability, they are ill, they are old, have young children or are young children.

The concentration of people who are unable to work is a direct result of Department of Housing policy, which has put large numbers of people together with high social support needs. Only a small proportion will be able to take

advantage of work training and job creation. Our concern is for the great majority of DoH residents for whom the RWA initiatives will provide no benefit.

The strategy of diluting local 'difficult' people with large numbers of outside workers and residents is at the heart of the RWA Plan to 'improve' Redfern and Waterloo. We are very concerned that people on welfare benefits will become unwelcome in their own suburbs - between their pressured housing estate and a hostile suburb full of aspirational people who want them gone - a real recipe for disaster.

Community workers to be paid more

The Full Bench of the NSW Industrial Relations Commission has handed down its decision on a long running case around a range of union and employer claims and established a new Social and Community Services Employees (State) Award (2006).

The decision, based on an increase in work value, provides for annual increases of 3.5% per year from 1 July 2006, 1 July 2007 and 1 July 2008. There is also the capacity for the Australian Services Union to pursue a case from 1 September 2006 for new Level 7 and Level 8 classifications.

IR laws bite back

New research conducted by the Australian Council of Trade Unions shows that the public are deeply opposed to the Howard Government's new IR laws and that the community believes the laws show the Government is acting in the interests of big business over the rights of Australian working families.

The research shows that less than one in four Australians support the laws, and that almost 70% believe that while the laws will benefit big corporations and CEOs, they will hurt ordinary families.

Manufacturing the future in Redfern and Waterloo

Redfern-Waterloo Minister Frank Sartor has released the *Built Environment Plan* for public comment, detailing the Government's blueprint for 444,000 square metres of new employment space and 2,000 new dwellings.

Mr Sartor said the strategy is the third and final element of Stage One of the Redfern Waterloo Plan to promote social and economic revitalisation. "The best way to deliver long-term improvements for residents of Redfern and Waterloo is by creating more job opportunities," Mr Sartor said. "The Redfern-Waterloo Authority is already implementing plans to streamline human services in the area. I can also announce that an *Employment and Enterprise Plan* for the area has been adopted by Cabinet which targets the creation of 18,000 new jobs. "Today's draft *Built Environment Plan* shows how those jobs will be provided by regenerating strategic largely state-owned sites to establish a new Town Centre around Redfern Railway Station as a hub for community and commercial activity."

That's the spin, but will it happen? The RWA has no money for these plans - that's to come from developers. There hasn't been any commercial development in this area for a long time; in fact the trend has been in the opposite direction, with industries closing down and residential developments taking their place. The RWA is relying on a lot of things going right for them if they're to pull this off. A slight downturn in the economy would scuttle the whole show.

Sydney Mayor Clover Moore was not impressed with the plan, saying in a media release:

"I am concerned that this Plan may not benefit local residents, at least for some years. Instead, they could suffer a loss of amenity from increased development without any immediate improvements to infrastructure, open space, public domain, community facilities or transport."



Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore and Councillor Marcelle Hoff sit in the public gallery at a Redfern Waterloo Authority meeting, to hear what's planned for Redfern & Waterloo

Residents have been given two months to comment on the draft plan; not that the RWA has shown much interest in what locals think and because of the draconian RWA legislation they can do what they like anyway. There's a lot of the old Redfern and Waterloo that people want to keep. This includes buildings, the eclectic social mix, a strong aboriginal presence, a sense of community and a lack of toffs. In its twelve months of existence, the RWA has shown little inclination that it intends to make preservation a priority.

Geoff Turnbull from REDwatch has waded through the seventy page Draft Built Environment Plan to give a summary of what the RWA has in mind.

Australian Technology Park

The current ATP Master Plan is to be revised to increase floor space ratios with maximum heights increasing from 9 to 11 storeys. RWA estimates the final ATP floor space will increase by 20% to 200,000 square metres

providing 5,000-8,000 jobs. Approximately four times the current size.

North Eveleigh

Plans for the disused railway land between Wilson St and the railway line will see the old Carriage Workshop being renovated as a Contemporary Performing Arts facility in the middle of the site. On the western end, the RWA propose a predominantly residential development with mixed business and residential closer to Redfern station. Heights to be from 4 to 10 storeys with 16 storey iconic building towards Redfern Station.

South Eveleigh

Currently railway land to the north west of ATP will provide for further ATP expansion with 2:1 FSR and 4 to 12 storey heights and is zoned as Business Park and Special Purpose – Infrastructure. No zoning changes are proposed for adjoining private and DoH residential land.

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A mountain of mobiles



According to the Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association (AMTA) the number of Australians with a mobile phone will rise from 81% to a staggering 94% this year. That will be 19 million of us using mobiles and we also tend to replace them every 2 years. Australians have purchased over 30 million mobile phones in the past decade and 6 million were sold last year.

Mobiles and their batteries contain some very nasty metals and compounds and it's important that they don't go into landfill. They are made up by a toxic cocktail of arsenic, cadmium, lead and heavy metals, which have been linked to cancer and a range of reproductive, neurological and developmental disorders.

Since 1999 AMTA has been running a program called *Mobilemuster*, recycling mobiles. The program is paid for by a voluntary levy on the major carriers and phone manufacturers. The phones end up in Melbourne, where they are disassembled and the bits and batteries are sent overseas, where they are broken down to basic elements that are then reused. The program has recycled 1,400,000 batteries and 550,000 handsets since its inception. But that's not much of a dint

in the AMTA estimation of 12 million (and growing rapidly) disused mobiles. *Mobilemuster* is hoping to increase the number of recycled mobiles to one million a year by 2008 – which will still leave at least 6 to 7 million going into landfill every year.

The Total Environment Centre is not impressed, saying the mobile phone recycling scheme has collected less than 1/2% of mobile phones in circulation, leaving over 30 million that have been dumped or unaccounted for. They want government to mandate a regulated take-back scheme based on refundable deposits. "A deposit of \$10 on each phone will encourage consumers to bring back their old ones, which can go towards their new handset. It's hardly rocket-science," a spokesperson said.

You can help keep them out of the ground by only buying from stores that agree to recycle your old mobile.

www.amta.org.au/aoiasp?ID=Recycling

Redfern Oval - green bans lifted

In February *Inner Sydney Voice* asked CFMEU secretary, Andrew Ferguson, whether the green bans placed on Redfern Oval would stay in place, now that Sydney Council had lodged their DA for the site. Andrew said they would stay as long as the community wanted them. Andrew also said that commitment would be reflected in the member's decision on whether the club was sold.

Following the vote by members to sell the club, the bans were immediately lifted and Council is pressing ahead with its plans for a new oval and sports complex.

As both the applicant and the consent authority, Council will appoint an 'independent planning expert' to assess the DA. Local residents will receive a notification in the mail regarding the application and it will go on public exhibition for 28 days to enable residents to make submissions.

Council's website states: A central aim of the oval refurbishment is to provide active sporting, athletic and recre-

ational opportunities for a broad range of community, school and sporting groups. As well, the upgrade will open up the area around the playing field to provide much-needed open space for use by the general community.

The upgrade will provide:

- A new grandstand on the same site as the existing stand, with a total ground capacity of 8,000 people
- Facilities such as change rooms, storage and weights room in the grandstand
- A professional-level training field to enable the Rabbitohs to retain their historical links with Redfern
- A playing and training field for all football codes and other sporting activities for junior and senior teams and individual athletes.
- Open access to the playing field for all sections of the community at other

Crowded city

The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources (DIPNR) released the *Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney*, late last year. The strategy is a thirty-year plan for the growth of Sydney and will dictate the way we live and work in eastern Sydney.

There will be 55,000 new dwellings in central Sydney, which means a lot more high-density developments. Bondi Junction is listed as a major centre, Green Square is to become one and there will be expansion of activities around Sydney Airport, Port Botany and Randwick.

Greens MLC, Sylvia Hale criticised the strategy "The government calls this 'containing Sydney's footprint.' The Greens call it unsustainable urban sprawl. This sort of uncapped growth in Sydney's environmental footprint will have serious consequences for the quality of life of those who live in Sydney and surrounding areas."

The Lord Mayor of Sydney, Clover Moore MP, thinks the plans for Sydney are a disaster as the city has just gone through a huge expansion of residential developments and the public transport system can't cope as it is.

Continued page 26

There is little hope that transport will get better under the strategy as there are only a couple of rail infrastructure projects listed (upgrade Town Hall station and train turnarounds at Bondi Junction and McDonsaltdown) and some new bus lanes. Light rail doesn't get a mention.

Shrinking Botany Bay

Member for Heffron, Kristina Keneally, recently announced the completion of a gross pollutant trap next to the stormwater channel at the eastern corner of Astrolabe Park, Daceyville.

"This trap will reduce the amount of litter, organic material, sediment and pollutants that enter the stormwater system before flowing into the Botany Wetlands and ultimately into Botany Bay," Ms Keneally said.

What Ms Keneally didn't say was there won't be much of Botany Bay left in the near future. With two runways, a major port facility about to encroach a lot further into the bay and a massive toxic plume slowly leaching into the bay from the Orica plant, the bay is in danger of turning into ecological ground zero.

Walk with a view

Sydney Mayor Clover Moore MP announced in February that construction has begun on a \$15 million civic project to create a continuous 2.2 km foreshore walk from Bicentennial Park in Glebe to the Sydney Fish Markets at Pyrmont.

"The project, when completed, will link 27.5ha of open space and provide residents and visitors with a legacy of unimpeded public access to Rozelle Bay and Blackwattle Bay," Ms Moore said.

"This is an exciting project which realises a long-term vision for the City. It will revitalise and enhance the foreshore while providing recreational

Eveleigh Street

Currently private land bounded by Cleveland, Abercrombie, Vine, Louis, Lawson and the railway line, this area has been divided into northerly and southerly portions by the RWA. In the South, which includes the Block, maximum heights increase from 2-3 storeys to 3-5. In the north heights increase from 3-4 storeys to 4-5 storeys. Zoned as Business – Mixed Use with Pemulwuy Park retained as Public Recreation.

Redfern Railway Station

Plans for a new Redfern railway station are being developed and are expected to be made available by the RWA later in 2006. The new station would probably not be finished before 2010.

Gibbons - Regent Streets

This area bounded in the north by Lawson Square and in the south by Margaret St is to be developed as the commercial core of Redfern with maximum heights changing from 4 storeys to 2-18 storeys. The RWA zoning creates 5 areas for buildings rising to 18 storeys surrounded by 5-7 storey developments. The northern section of the park between Rosehill and Gibbons Sts is built over by a 5 to 18 story building. A civic space will be created between the station and Regent St.

Former Rachel Forster Hospital

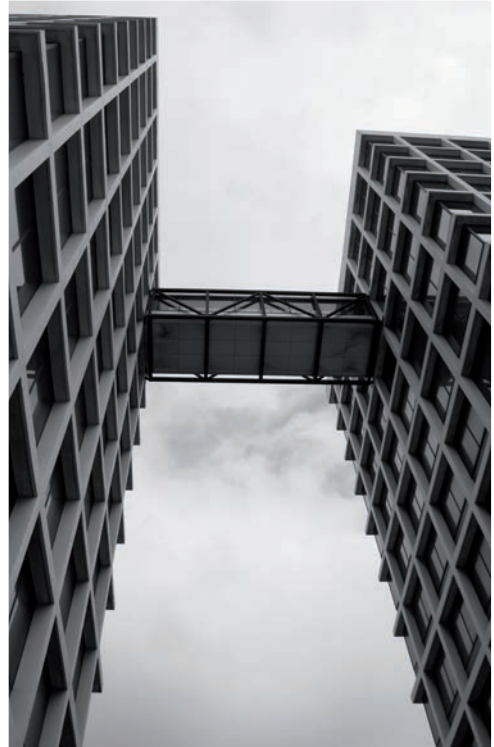
This site is to be zoned as medium density residential with maximum heights of 3 to 5 storeys.. It is unclear if the medical centre currently fronting Albert St would remain.

Former Redfern Police Station & Court House

The existing court house is to remain at its existing building height with the old police station to be replaced with a maximum 3 to 6 storey building.

Former Redfern Public School

This site is in the process of being sold to the Indigenous Land Corporation for a Centre for Aboriginal cultural, social and sporting excellence and is to be zoned as Special Purposes – Community. The RWA propose that the existing school buildings in the south east corner of the site be retained and that maximum heights of 4 and 7 storeys apply to other parts of the site.



More of this for Redfern

and social activities for local residents and visitors.

"We have carried out extensive consultation with the community and the private sector and negotiation with the public sector to make this vision a reality. In early 2004 the City purchased a critical missing link – the Anchorage site on Rozelle Bay – and finalised negotiations with Australand to open a section of the foreshore walk as part of their Glebe Harbour development." Work on the foreshore will include:

construction of new paths for use by pedestrians and cyclists;
planting of more than 400 new trees;
planting of some 8,500 plants and shrubs, including 850 square metres of mangrove habitat (less than one per cent of park), open grass areas; barbecue facilities and seats.

Access to the water will also be improved by the installation of sea wall stairs in a number of locations along the perimeter, two pontoons and a new launching area.

HACC turns 21

The Home & Community Care (HACC) program turns 21 this year. There is no doubt that it has become an important and successful community care program, growing to over 700 services in NSW, expanding from the initial Meals on Wheels and Home Care services to more than nineteen different types of service that meet a wide range of community need.

The success of HACC in providing a diverse range of quality services in the home has fuelled the expansion. The challenge for HACC services in the next 21 years is how to plan and manage increasing demand whilst ensuring quality service delivery with limited resources.

These issues were discussed at the Eastern Sydney Regional Planning day and some of these are outlined below.

HACC providers agree that since the program's inception, the demand to assist people with high, complex and multiple needs has steadily increased. Many clients are reluctant to move to more appropriate services such as the Community Aged Care Packages (CACAP). At the same time, Government policy continues to encourage more people to live at home, rather than in institutions and this has resulted in increased demand for service from people who have high needs like chronic illnesses, mental health or dual diagnosis issues and the marginalised. Many HACC services report that they have no choice but to case manage many clients because they cannot refer them on to other appropriate community or health services. This is because they too are at capacity. In some cases providers are re-defining their service to target resources more tightly and to create realistic demands.

HACC providers agree that case managing complex clients is at the expense of taking on new clients eligible for basic home support services. It may also result in less resources being allocated to HACC. This is because the quality and intensity of service provision is not necessarily reflected in the service data reported to the Department of Ageing Disability and Home

Care (DADHC), which is used in State planning and decision making about resource allocation.

The data held by DADHC needs to be made available at service and regional level planning. This would enable government data to be checked against more accurate information about community needs and gaps emerging from local and regional knowledge, planning and networks. Clear, accurate and transparent information about funding agreements, legislative requirements, monitoring and purchasing processes is also needed to ensure that services can meet their accountability obligations and plan for increased demands and expectations.

Other pressures raised at the planning session include the decline in volunteering and difficulty in retaining skilled workers, often because of low wages. These pressures are perhaps even more serious for ATSI and CALD service providers because of the need for specialist resources such as language skills and cultural knowledge. Increases in basic service delivery costs, such as fuel, workers compensation and OH&S, are limiting services' capacity to expand their service and or deliver at the same level of service.

Adequate funds for service development and capacity building are needed across the sector, especially to retain and make the most of existing skills and resources. Increasing funds is not the only answer. Adequate planning processes and transparent funding policies that aim to allocate funds effectively and meaningfully are also required.

Clearly, there is a need for HACC services to network and plan with a range of key stakeholders, especially DADHC, Area Heath, Mental Health, Department of Housing, Department of Health & Ageing, and CACP providers. However, current Federal Government reforms aim to simplify entry to the sector, increase competitive tendering and it would seem reduce services (see the Way Backward, *Inner Sydney Voice V issue 101*). These decisions are being made with limited consultation with the sector who provide the services.

I hope we can look back in 21 years and say that HACC providers continue to be innovative and drive improvements in the community care sector.

*Chris Bath,
HACC Development Officer*



The Food Distribution Network is a HACC service operating out of Redfern. Staff and volunteers buy fresh fruit and vegetables at the markets then box them up for delivery to the elderly and people with disabilities, throughout eastern Sydney. For only \$8 an overflowing box of healthy food is delivered to those who have trouble doing their own shopping.

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