INNER SYDNEY VOICE
regional social development council

Inner Sydney VOICE

AUTUMN 2018 · ISSUE 133

DEVELOPING SYDNEY

WHY BUILDING SUSTAINABLE, RESILIENT COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE A PRIORITY FOR OUR INNER SUBURBS

+PLUS

MAKING SUSTAINABILITY CHOICES
NEW PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL NEEDS
UNIVERSAL PUBLIC SPACES
ABORIGINAL LAND & PLANNING
PREPARING FOR DISASTERS
BOARDING HOUSE REFORM
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY
NDIS & MENTAL ILLNESS
DISABILITY STATISTICS

THE JOURNAL OF THE INNER SYDNEY REGIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT INC

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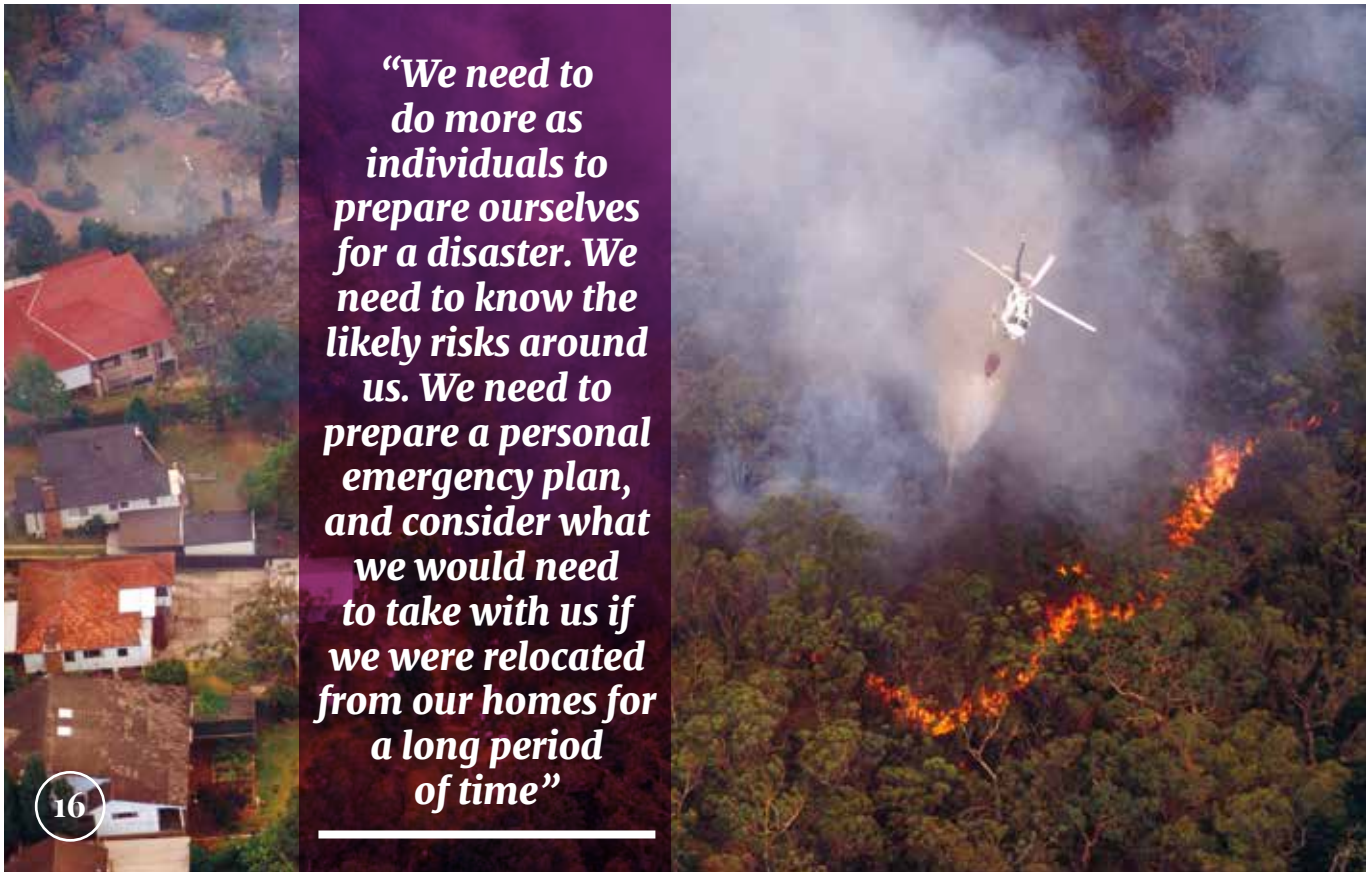

"We need to do more as individuals to prepare ourselves for a disaster. We need to know the likely risks around us. We need to prepare a personal emergency plan, and consider what we would need to take with us if we were relocated from our homes for a long period of time"

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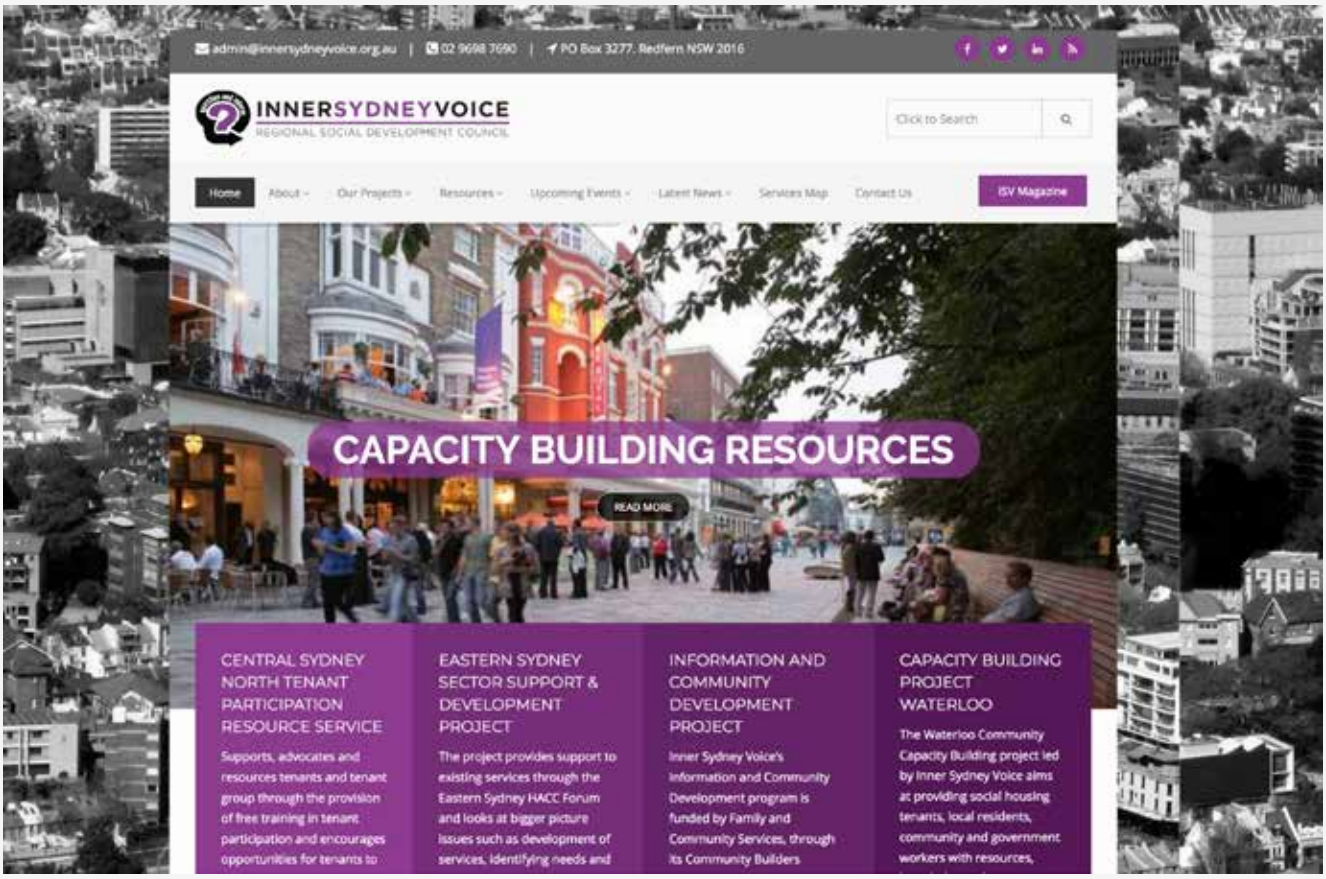
VISIT THE NEW ISV WEBSITE WITH NEW RESOURCES



www.innersydneyvoice.org.au

• FEEDBACK REQUEST •

Human service system reform

ISV is looking for input on what needs to change to deliver people-focused human services, especially for public housing tenants, that can be fed into various human service discussions.

Inner Sydney Voice is currently working in partnership with Counterpoint Community Services, REDWatch, Family and Community Services and Sydney Local Health District to address human service issues not only in Waterloo but also across the wider FACS reforms and in ageing and disability delivery.

Human Services are those which provide a service to society, particularly in times of crisis. Human Services are designed to help people navigate through crisis or chronic situations where the person feels they need external help and guidance to move forward with their life and rediscover their self-sufficiency. Sometimes the situation the person needs help with is external, such as the loss of a job or income, the need for food or housing or for help getting out of a dangerous situation, such as family violence.
For other people the difficulty is an internal challenge such as depression, a physical ailment, disability, or other mental or physical health crisis. [Adapted from humanserviceedu.org]

If you have examples of problems that could be addressed by changes to the human service system, its administration or policy, please pass the information on to us.
Charmaine Jones email char.jones@innersydneyvoice.org.au

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ABOUT
Inner Sydney Voice Magazine is the journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc trading as Inner Sydney Voice. We are 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.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY
We acknowledge and pay our respects to the traditional custodians of the lands across the areas we service, particularly the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, traditional custodians of the land on which our office is located. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present.

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www.innersydneyvoice.org.au

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Autumn 2018 • Issue 133

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Editorial

New developments market the promise of sustainability, walkability and amenity. Too often, what eventuates falls well short of that promise.

Chippendale's Central Park development promised a balanced mix of commercial and residential development with best practice environmental outcomes. Apart from some iconic green buildings, the main commercial proposal evaporated, replaced by student housing, increased density and some very ordinary buildings through incessant project modifications. As a symbol of the failure, artificial turf is needed to accommodate the resulting density and recycled water still does not feed the iconic green buildings.

The developer is not solely responsible for liveability and amenity. The state government, that encourages and approves such developments, has a responsibility to ensure that the infrastructure necessary to support the promise is put in place by the developer. It also needs to ensure the increased population has the publicly supplied infrastructure it needs.

> ***The developer is not solely responsible for liveability and amenity***

Walkability is not possible for primary school children if their school or recreational space is not within easy walking distance or if it requires them to negotiate a number of main roads. Blackfriars Public School in Chippendale was one of the inner city schools closed due to declining numbers that is now needed to accommodate new developments like Central Park.

In this issue of ISV we are looking at some things needed for the promise of liveable inner city precincts to be delivered. We look at the comprehensive public high school black hole in *New public high school needed in Eastern Suburbs* (page 6). *From the Vault – School closures* (page 31) takes us back to 1980 when the decision was made to close these high schools.

We explore how to make the public domain truly accessible in *Out and about with universal design* (page 10). A look at the *Disability statistics* (page 23) tells us how important accessibility is for people with a disability as well as children and older people.

Sustainability is a complex interactive issue taking in traffic, waste, water, nature, energy and food production. We explore different levels of sustainability and possible trade-offs in *Sustainability: Exploring development options* (page 12).

The planning system is one of the reasons Aboriginal land rights has not delivered the economic benefits that many expected. *Rethinking Aboriginal land and infrastructure* (page 20) explores that issue.

London's Grenfell Tower fire focused attention on what happens when a disaster strikes a high-rise public housing building. In *Redfern – Surry Hills Community Resilience Committee blossoms* (page 19) we find out about a project exploring these issues in Sydney. We also explore how prepared you might be in *Disaster resilience: How does it impact you?* (page 16).

Continuing our NDIS coverage are *The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and mental illness* (page 26) as well as *People with intellectual disability and mental illness: A forgotten minority* (page 24). Five years after the NSW Boarding House Act it's time for *Evaluating boarding house reform* (page 28).

In community notices: ISV has a redesigned website with new resources; and we are also looking for input on what needs to change to deliver people-focused human services, especially for public housing tenants, that we can feed into various human service discussions (page 4).

Charmaine Jones and Geoffrey Turnbull Co-editors Inner Sydney Voice

NEW PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL NEEDED IN **EASTERN SUBURBS**

FOR MORE THAN A DECADE THERE'S BEEN A BLACK HOLE FOR COMPREHENSIVE HIGH SCHOOLS ACROSS 14KM OF AUSTRALIA'S MOST DENSELY POPULATED SUBURBS FROM ROSE BAY TO BALMAIN. IN A PRESENTATION LAST YEAR, **LICIA HEATH** OUTLINED THE PROBLEM IN EASTERN SYDNEY.

There have been problems in planning for new schools in the Inner City and East for a long time. Community for Local Options for Secondary Education (CLOSE) were screaming from the rooftops, between 2011 and 2015, about problems such as increased birth rates, increased density, more families in apartments and incorrect modelling for demographic forecasting.

After a sustained campaign by CLOSE — citing evidence of failed demographic planning and hard numbers showing a 50% increase in primary enrolment since 2010 — the NSW Minister for Education, Adrian Piccoli, announced in 2015 that a new $60m local high school would be developed on the site of the Intensive English High School (previously Cleveland Street Boys High School), near Central Station. That high school is due to open in 2020.

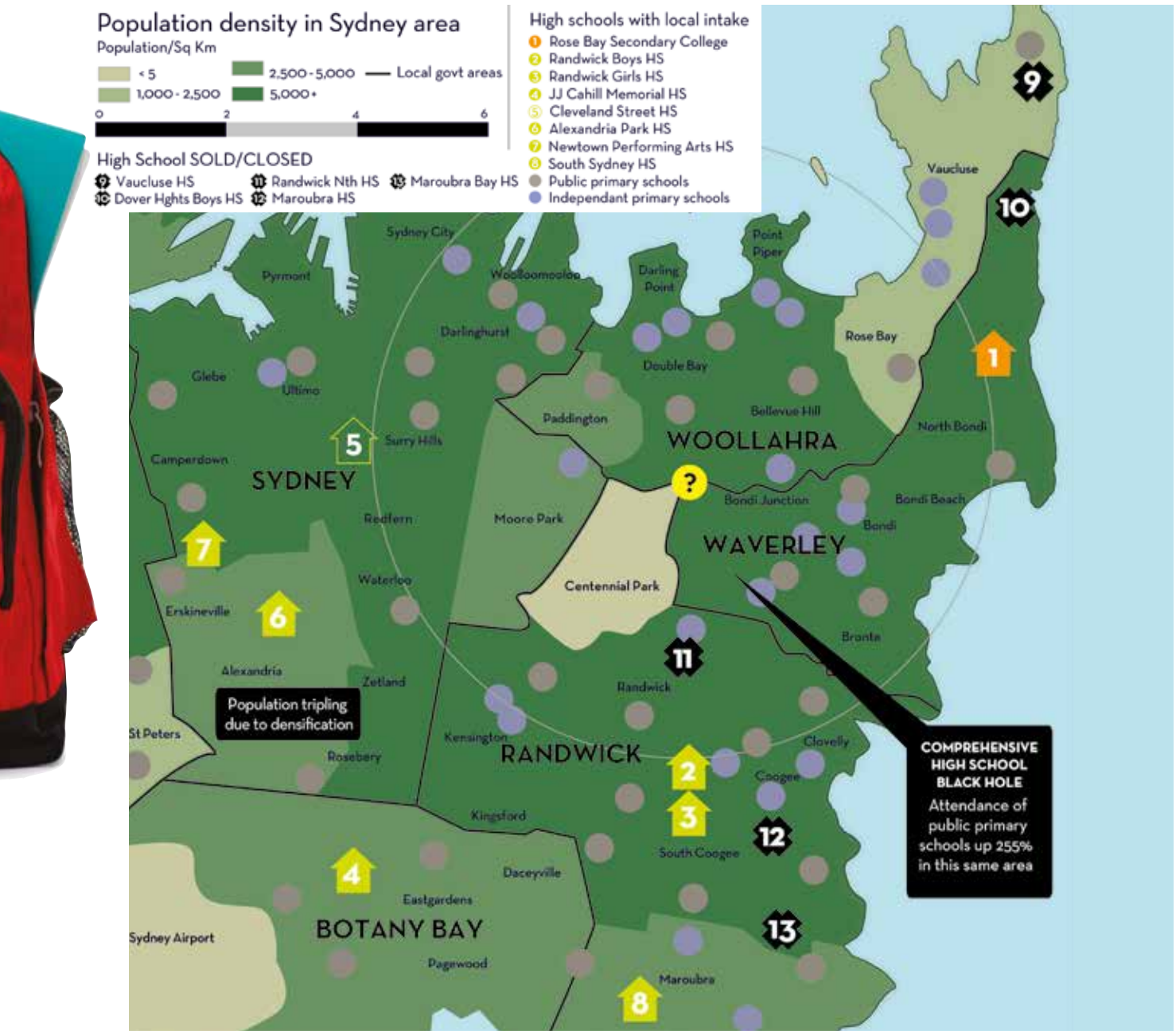
In 2016, CLOSE turned its attention to Sydney east forming CLOSEast. Rose Bay Secondary College is at capacity and public schools are under significant enrolment pressure due to a tailwind of school closures, some of the highest birth rates in the country, increased residential density and more families choosing public education. An overview of public schools in the Sydney area can be seen in the map, which shows population density and current, sold and proposed schools.

CLOSEast is a group of concerned parents and residents lobbying government to prioritise solutions including another public high school in Sydney's east. It wants an urgent audit of public land in Sydney's east and a moratorium on the sale of public land in the east until an inquiry is held into the need for a new public high school.

CLOSEast was encouraged when a Legislative Council *Inquiry into Inner city public primary school enrolment capacity and redevelopment of Ultimo Public School,* in February 2017, arrived at similar conclusions in its recommendations. Modelling needs to improve, third party review needs to occur on demographic forecasting, there needs to be greater co-ordination between government departments and greater involvement between the Department of Education (DoE), local councils and the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) when planning for schools, and the government should conduct public land audit in all areas of significant population growth.

The recommendations were music to CLOSE's ears and it looked like things were moving. In June 2017, the government announced $4.2billion in the state budget to build/redevelop schools, and fund a new NSW Schools Infrastructure Unit. Also a new School Assets Strategic Plan (SASP) was issued by the DoE. At the same time DPE announced a new ***Education and Child Care State Environment Planning Policy*** (SEPP).

Locally, CLOSEast learnt that $18.6 million would be spent to upgrade Bellevue Hill PS (Public School), to include 27 new classrooms in October 2017. A $9.9 million upgrade at Bourke St PS to include new classrooms, a library, a hall and outdoor learning spaces would be in place in late 2017. Rainbow Street PS would get 35 new classrooms and Randwick PS to get 10



new classrooms, early in 2018.

At the same time as these announcements, it also became apparent that the DoE was not acting on many of the Upper House Inquiry recommendations and that, while community consultations were occurring, the decisions had already been made.

With 20,000 new dwellings planned for the east by 2031, in the ***Eastern Suburbs Economic Profile of December 2013***, it still looked like there would be no new schools. On top of this public land suitable for new school sites was being sold to developers at a faster rate than ever. Since 2011, the State Government has sold more than 380 DoE properties.

Analysis of DPE and DoE data by Inga Ting graphed population growth in pre-merged Local Government Areas (LGAs) against primary school enrolment growth from 2013-7. It highlighted LGAs with rapidly growing primary school enrolments that are now also facing a boom in the population aged 10-19 years. The hotspots for rapid growth (in order) were Camden, Waverley and Ryde.

There is a perfect storm of factors making some LGAs in the east worse than other LGAs. The eastern suburbs has a larger birth rate than Greater Sydney and the birth rate has been more prolonged, resulting in the increase in numbers of school-aged kids being larger than Greater Sydney. Over the decade, 2006-2016, the eastern suburbs has experienced stronger annualised growth in young children (0-14) than Sydney and NSW.

The east has more kids per square kilometre. Of all metropolitan LGAs, Waverley has the highest number of children per square kilometre, with more than 1,200 and Woollahra ranks fifth highest, with around 870 children per square km.

In 2008 Waverley and Woollahra LGAs combined had My School primary enrolments of less than 4,000 students, by 2016 they accounted for 5,542 full-time equivalent primary school enrolments. Across the east pre-school, primary and secondary enrolments have all been increasing. Most notably primary school enrol-

"Large-scale residential development have resulted in higher density in the East than in Greater Sydney with more families with children living in apartments than in Greater Sydney. Long gone is the belief that 'no families will live in 2 bedroom apartments'"

ments have increased 4% each year between 2011 and 2016.

Large-scale residential development has resulted in higher density in the east than in Greater Sydney with more families with children living in apartments than in Greater Sydney. Long gone is the belief that "no families will live in 2 bedroom apartments".

There was also an assumption that people living in the eastern suburbs would use the private school system. Private school fees, however, have priced out many families. Sydney's private school fees have soared by up to 20 per cent over the past four years, with some parents paying more than $35,000 a year despite record levels of public funding. The rate of growth in fees at some schools has been up to twice the rate of inflation since 2013.

During the 1990s and 2000s, five government high schools were closed in the east: they were Vaucluse, Dover Heights Boys, Randwick North, Maroubra and Maroubra Bay High Schools. The remaining government high schools are selective, single sex and / or have restrictive catchments.

As a result of the cumulative impact of all of the above, Waverley and Woollahra top the table for the most number of students per public high school, with approximately 6,800 12-18 year olds per public high school.

To help understand the choices and wishes of parents in the Eastern Suburbs CLOSEast has been combining the hard demographic data with surveys of parents of pre-school and primarily school children in the east, to better understand their reality and to provide evidence to politicians and officials. The findings below came from surveys of 1,042 parents of primary school children and 148 parents of pre-school age children undertaken by CLOSEast.

As an average, 85% of parents surveyed preferred a co-educational public high school education for their kids. The key reasons given were that private schools fees are unaffordable (76%), the local community is valued (68%), preference for co-educational to single-sex schools (62%) and rejection of faith-based education (58%).

There are some differences between school cohorts reflecting demographics. For example, half of the parents with children in Coogee PS, 46% in Bondi PS and 40% in Randwick PS say they do not fit with, or wish to support, a private school system - compared to a 33% average for the survey.

In the multi-choice survey, public selective (30%) and private co-educational (24%), such as Reddam House and International Grammar), were next preferred. Lower preferences were for private faith-based co-educational schools (9%) and private non-faith-based single-sex schools (8%).

In the northern part of the east, the only co-ed public high school, Rose Bay Secondary College, is considered a 'school of choice' by those surveyed. Overcrowding and the potential for decline in education quality is a key concern for parents surveyed at one of its ten catchment schools, Bondi Beach PS. Eighty percent said they feel forced towards the private sector when they cannot afford it. Concern about capacity, reach and having to join multiple waiting list for private schools are a symptom. Pre-school parents and those who have children who have not yet started school expressed similar pressures and concerns when surveyed.

Looking specifically at the inner city sample of 71 parents with kids at Darlinghurst PS, Bourke St PS and Crown St PS, this group has the strongest interest in co-ed public secondary

• **Verbatim responses reveal a high level of anxiety and dissatisfaction with quality and choice of public education amongst many families in the east. Below is one from a Bondi Beach parent:**

"I believe that a high quality public secondary education is a basic right for all children. There are really so few options in the Eastern Suburbs for families who value education highly (and are well educated themselves), who support secular, public education and in any case, do not have the means to pay for a private education.

There is a fear among many parents that Rose Bay Secondary College is too large and overcrowded, and only those in the selective streams thrive. Surely bright children, who may perform inconsistently (or do very well in some subjects, but not all) should have the right to thrive too. Parents who can't afford or aren't willing to pay $30k a year or more to send their child to an "elite" private school (whose values they don't share); or aren't willing to go through the charade of pretending they're Catholic; or aren't prepared to put their children through hours of extracurricular coaching, are really stuck. They are also fighting the perception that they don't care enough about their child's education. I can't believe that in the 21st century in Australia, parents in the Eastern Suburbs are having to turn to religious schools or pay through the nose to feel their children won't slip through the cracks. The government is doing a huge disservice to all children (and Australians across the board) by not offering more high quality public secondary options". BONDI BEACH PARENT

"During the 1990s and 2000s, five government high schools were closed in the East ... the remaining high schools are selective, single sex or have restrictive catchments"

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INQUIRY INTO INNER CITY PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT CAPACITY AND REDEVELOPMENT OF ULTIMO PUBLIC SCHOOL FEBRUARY 2017

Recommendation 1 - That the NSW Department of Education amend the inner city school cluster model to acknowledge that public schools provide an important sense of community and to afford greater emphasis to connecting schools with their immediate neighbourhood and community.

Recommendation 2 - That the NSW Department of Education subject its demographic projections to a regular third party review process.

Recommendation 3 - That the NSW Government formalise coordination between UrbanGrowth NSW, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and the NSW Department of Education to ensure that school building programs are determined with the most up-to-date and accurate information on development pressures.

Recommendation 4 - That the NSW Department of Education share its demographic projections with councils in appropriate cases and on a confidential basis, to ensure a cohesive and consistent approach to city planning.

Recommendation 5 - That the Minister for Education consider strengthening whole of government oversight and support for the NSW Department of Education in future land negotiations for schools.

Recommendation 6 - That the NSW Government conduct an audit of public land in all areas of significant population growth in New South Wales to identify suitable locations for new schools and expansion of existing schools.

Recommendation 7 - That the NSW Department of Education, when assessing land for the purposes of remediation, rely on the standards set by the relevant authority such as the Environment Protection Authority, unless the department can demonstrate that a higher standard is required.

education (93%), community connections were valued (86%), co-ed and secular schools were preferred (66%), and 42% did not fit with private school image/model.

CLOSEast is not anti-development. So far it points out communities have seen significant residential development at any cost, without the accompanying schools. Schools need to be prioritised in planning, not an afterthought. The Departments of Education and Planning need to speak with the Councils in the east about new multi-purpose high school sites built for school communities between 9am-3pm and accessible to the broader community out of school hours. Most importantly, governments need to start planning now for the east and adapt forecasting models to the trends of today, not of the 1990s.

I'm not sure where we went wrong in planning for public schools in NSW, but it's largely pointless to argue about that now. But I am glad to see both sides of politics making admissions that the status quo needs to change and forming plans accordingly. The NSW Government needs to impliment the Upper House Inquiry recommendations and undertake an urgent audit of public land in the east.

Yet, governments and politicians need to understand that every time a new residential development site is announced, a developer puts in a (non-complying) amendment to a DA site or community space is earmarked for residential development without the corresponding social infrastructure, the trust they're trying to build with the community and constituents erodes.

Another CLOSEast survey question pointed out that education is primarily managed by the state government, it asked to what extent high school capacity issues in the east and education-related concerns would affect people's consideration of candidates in the NSW election in March 2019. On average, a vast majority of parents in the east (78%) said that education concerns would strongly affect their consideration of local candidates in the upcoming state election.

CLOSEast points out that people want a response from all MPs standing for election and that people care about that response. The struggle, however, is not a party political but one of basic principle upholding Sir Henry Parkes' promise to every child in New South Wales: public education; free, compulsory, secular and democratic.

This article is based on a presentation, Competing Priorities: Where are our public high schools?, delivered to a community run forum on Planning Sydney's Future at NSW Parliament House on 18 October 2017.
For more information: https://www.facebook.com/CLOSEcommunity
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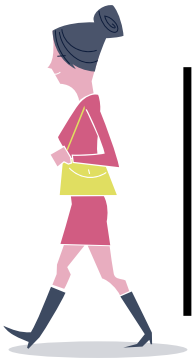

OUT AND ABOUT WITH UNIVERSAL DESIGN

THE THING ABOUT UNIVERSAL DESIGN IS THAT YOU ONLY NOTICE WHEN IT IS NOT THERE EXPLAINS **JANE BRINGOLF.**

Heavy doors, steep steps with no handrail, nowhere to sit, no shade to walk under, and inadequate lighting to see signage or read a menu are things most of us have experienced. As we get older, these things begin to matter more. And if you have problems with mobility and use a wheelchair or walking aid, or if you are blind and use a cane, the issues are magnified. And let's not forget parents with strollers and shoppers with trolleys. A poorly designed environment creates an unequal environment – unequal for people who cannot easily get out and about. So why does this happen?

Urban designers don't set out to create exclusion in their designs. Too often they think universal design is about disability access standards and can be left to an access consultant to work out later. There could be several reasons for this. First, universal or inclusive design principles, if included at all in study programs, are an elective sitting outside the mainstream topics in architecture and design. Second, a belief that applying the Standards Australia's Access to Premises Standard will take care of any access issues and that will be enough. Third, and most importantly, is attitudes towards people who are not seen as "The Normals". This attitude is often formed from misinformation about the number of people affected (see Disability statistics page 23). But universal design is more than that.

Public space is everywhere: around housing developments, commercial precincts, tourist attractions, recreation spaces, sporting venues, transport hubs, parks, playgrounds, and shopping centres. If each of these is considered separately, we end up with a piecemeal approach to inclusion, and that can create barriers to participation. For example, a cinema might have well designed access from the street or car park, flexible seating for patrons with mobility aids, closed captioning and audio descriptions of the movie, and an accessible website. This means wheelchair users and people who are blind or deaf are catered for. But if there is no footpath outside their house, no accessible bus, and just one missing kerb ramp along the journey, this can be a sufficient barrier for a wheelchair user or someone with a shopping trolley to be excluded, or at the very least, substantially inconvenienced.

Universal design is about joined up thinking. It is also about thinking differently for differences and dignity for all. So what is universal design and how does it apply to the built environment? Sometimes the best explanations for universal design are to say what it is not.

Universal design is not another name for compliance with standards for access for people with disability. These standards are based on disability discrimination legislation and provide designers with specifications and minimum requirements that are mandatory. They are only part of the process of designing inclusively. Also, it is possible to meet all the technical standards but end up with patches of inaccessibility.

Universal design does not "dilute" a design; it does not involve a series of compromises to the detriment of the original design concept. But if designing for diversity is left to the end of the design phase, it may well end up with compromises, such as a ramp that negatively affects the aesthetics of the design.

Universal design is not something just for people with disability and older people. Designing with the whole population in mind benefits everyone. Low floor buses, automatic doors, level access, good lighting, and well placed seating, all add to everyone's convenience.

So, what is universal design? It is a concept. It is not a design type. It aims for social integration and inclusion, social identity, social participation, and health and wellness. It responds to the context to which it is being applied and that includes the design of services. It is making things easier to use, healthier and friendlier, according to Steinfeld and Maisel in 2012.

Many people quote the classic seven principles of universal design that were coined in the 1990s. Design understanding has moved on and these principles are better expressed through Steinfeld and Maisel's 8 Goals of Universal Design. Below are some examples of how they apply to the built environment.

Body Fit: Accommodating a wide range of body sizes and abilities. Doorways, corridors and pathways need to accommodate people walking and wheeling with socialisation in mind. A narrow footpath does not encourage two pram pushers to walk side by side in conversation, or to walk with a small child. Too many footpaths and walkways are constructed with the notion that all people walk alone.

Comfort: Keeping demands within desirable limits of body function. Heavy door closers are a regular complaint on public toilets. Door closers can be set to close at a resistance level that it doesn't require one's full body weight to open. Seating with backrests is more comfortable and armrests help people to rise to a standing position. Dual height drinking fountains cater for adults, children and wheelchair users. Long winding ramps are not a good alternative to

steps. It takes a lot of effort to reach the entrance for the wheelchair user or pram pusher.

Awareness: Ensuring that critical information for use is easily perceived. The application and positioning of easy to read signage will assist newcomers and others with cognitive difficulties to know where they are and where they are going. Lighting without glare both day and night will also assist with reading signs, timetables, instructions and menus. Walkways need lighting to encourage use after dark.

Understanding: Making methods of operation and use intuitive, clear and unambiguous. For people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or people who are blind or have low vison, understanding what is going on around them can be difficult. Deaf people cannot hear emergency announcements, and blind people cannot see signs. Tactile markers and street signs help people who are blind, and LED emergency displays help people who are deaf. They also help everyone when the sound of the public address system is distorted or unintelligible.

Wellness: Contributing to health promotion, avoidance of disease and protection from hazards. Providing separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians is becoming more important for encouraging active travel and exercise. Improving the overall look of the environment with trees, planters, seating and public art gives a greater sense of wellbeing. Socialisation is important for wellbeing. Casual socialisation in pedestrian areas can be achieved with strategically placed seating with protection from the elements.

Social Integration: Treating all groups with dignity and respect. This goal can particularly apply to people with disability, children and older people. Providing the best possible access to, and within a precinct, is the first step to providing dignity for people with physical disabilities. Often less considered are those with invisible disabilities such as brain injury or dementia, mental health issues, or chronic disease. Everyone should be able to go shopping and have a cuppa at the café, go to work, or play in the playground, on an equal basis.

Personalisation: Incorporating opportunities for choice and the expression of individual preferences. Asking the community where they would like seating to be placed or what areas they would like for open space is part of personalising an area for the local residents. Street art and novelties, such as lampposts with knitted covers, add to the local flavour.

Cultural Appropriateness: Respecting and reinforcing cultural values, and the social environmental context. Designers need to consider the diversity of the local social and physical landscapes. The design of the development or precinct should allow for people to gather and participate in ways that suit their culture. Public art and performance spaces are part of this, as well as maintaining key social heritage venues or replicating them in some form.

INFRASTRUCTURE

ENSURE A PHYSICAL SPACE AND DESIGN THAT PROMOTES WALKING

1. Footpaths are sufficiently wide, in good condition, clean, unobstructed, and protected
2. Pedestrian Crossings are accessible for all pedestrians, safe to cross, and sufficiently wide
3. Traffic lights give priority to pedestrians to cross first and limit wait time, while ensuring enough time for all to cross

ACTIVITY

BRING PEOPLE AND ACTIVITIES CLOSE ENOUGH TO WALK IN SAFE AND LIVELY ENVIRONMENTS

4. A mix of activities and services activate the street from morning to night, making it safer and more interesting to walk
5. Street vendors and footpath amenities, such as seating, shade, lighting and garbage bins attract more users and activate footpaths
6. On-street parking, that is well-managed and well-priced, can calm traffic, while creating a buffer between moving vehicles and the pedestrian realm

PRIORITY

GIVE PREFERENCE TO WALKING, CYCLING, AND TRANSIT OVER PRIVATE CARS

7. Transport, such as bike share, bus, rail and rapid transit are reachable by foot
8. Small street widths are easier to cross
9. Slower speeds for traffic, by both design and enforced speed limits, make safer and more enjoyable walking environments

Adapted from www.itdp.org/walk

Dr Jane Bringolf is a founding director of the Centre for Universal Design Australia

SUSTAINABILITY:
EXPLORING DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

WHEN PEOPLE TALK SUSTAINABILITY THIS CAN MEAN MANY DIFFERENT THINGS. ROB ROGGEMA EXPLORED THE OPTIONS AND TRADE-OFFS AVAILABLE AT A RECENT WATERLOO CAPACITY BUILDING EVENT.

Many people think that creating sustainability is done to save the earth, or that increasing sustainability is more expensive. Instead, a practical approach to create a sustainable environment is much more productive and brings a better environment for everyone.

An approach in which several levels of sustainability are defined works better than to strive for the ultimate solution everywhere. Not every area is the same and some ideas are easier to realise than others. Defining different levels of sustainability makes it possible to make choices that fit the neighbourhood.

How does this work? For each of the themes – traffic, nature, water, energy, food and waste – three different sustainability levels are defined. These levels are based on international standards, and represent the ultimate sustainability (level A), good sustainability (level B) and business as usual (level C). You can see the key measures for each theme in a table on pages 14–15. Because each theme consists of a range of possible measures, choices are possible within every theme, for A, B and C levels alike.

These choices depend on the concrete context in which the measures need to be implemented. In the case of the Waterloo Estate, we are talking about the public space and the buildings in which these sustainability levels must work.

Also, understanding the different levels of sustainability and their trade-offs helps involved residents and other stakeholders to choose a certain level, and to use this knowledge as an input in the planning process, whenever they are asked to give their response to planning proposals.

What could this mean? General descriptions of the sustainability levels for each of the different themes are as follows.

TRAFFIC

The highest level for traffic is to swap the hierarchy of importance from car, public transport, cyclist, pedestrian to give preference to pedestrians and cyclists and the delivery of goods and services over the car. Concretely, this means designing the road to create more space for pedestrians and cyclists to move and spend time, and allowing the car in the street only to deliver people and goods to their houses. The

LEFT: "Car-free" public space, Hammarby, Stockholm. Photo: Design for Health Flikr

RIGHT: The Alternative Department of Transport UK continuous cycleway, The Netherlands.

parking then would be concentrated outside the estate or neighbourhood. This principle is currently used in the London city centre in a combination with pricing the use of space (for car use it is more expensive than public transport, and walking and cycling are free), and there are heaps of examples of car-free or car-guest neighbourhoods around the world.

Decreasing levels of sustainability would increase the importance and presence of the car in the public space of the neighbourhood, with the business as usual level being that everyone can park their car freely on their own doorstep.

WASTE

Looking at waste, the highest possible sustainability level is that all waste fractions are separated and everything is recycled or reused within the area. The reuse of materials like plastics, tin, iron, glass, paper, and hardware and old appliances could form the basis for small enterprises and shops, which create new products out of waste materials. Organic waste can be centrally collected and used to generate energy after bio-fermentation (bio-gas or bio-electricity). At first glance, it could seem impossible to score 100 per cent waste recycling, but local initiatives for these small enterprises could be subsidised and stimulated and slowly grow in number. On the longer term, a high percentage of recycling materials is certainly possible.

WATER

A high level of sustainability for the water theme involves accommodating surplus rainwater to prevent flash-flooding, and cleaning and reusing grey and black water from households. Concrete in urban areas, including roofs and pavements, increases the problems of discharging rainwater. The historic creek system is not there to cope with the accumulation of water, which leads to flooding in the streets and buildings. This problem is relatively simple to overcome, but it requires smart design of the public space. If water can be stored on rooftops and in streets and parks and other green spaces, even temporarily, it will be released slowly to the current drainage system and not cause any flooding. Green roofs, temporary green basins and water squares are methods to capture water, store it and release it slowly.

A famous example of a water square is the Rotterdam Benthem Square, where a public school ground is used as a sporting court during normal circumstances, but once it starts raining this square fills up and stores the rainwater for a short period. After the rain has stopped the water is released into the bigger system.

Dealing with grey water (all household water except toilet water) and black water (toilet water) requires well-controlled natural treatment. Grey water can be treated in public spaces and form a green strip in streets or parks, and can be reused inside homes after cleaning, for instance as toilet water. Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD), as practised in the Netherlands and Australia, offer numerous examples of grey water treatment. Black water treatment is more sensitive but could, under the right circumstances, also be applied in public spaces, as the Portland City Council has proven.

NATURE

Even in an urban context there are many measures that can improve biodiversity and the quality of nature. In combination with the water features mentioned above, the habitat for local species can be improved. Green roofs also help. The main effort is to create green urban corridors connecting with the larger ecological grid of the city, in order for animals and plants to migrate to and from green spaces. Even though

"The reuse of materials like plastics, tin, iron, glass, paper, and hardware and old appliances could form the basis for small enterprises and shops, which create new products out of waste materials."

	• TRAFFIC	• WATER	• NATURE
BUSINESS AS USUAL	• Car is welcome in every street • Cycling in shared space on streets • Private car parking in front of every house, and in every street • Bus connections available	• One or two pilot projects of Water sensitive urban design are realised in one-two streets • Grey and black water are mixed and discharged to the water treatment facility • Green roofs on 10% of buildings	• Nature is restricted to few specific small areas • 25% of streets and squares have tree cover • None or very few connections with broader ecological networks • No urban nature measures on buildings
GOOD SUSTAINABILITY	• The car is a guest, streets are designed with minimal space for the car • Main streets have separate cycling space • In 50% of the area no private car parking • Frequent bus services runs trough main streets	• 70% of the rain and storm water is stored and captured in the area. • Part (2/3) of the streets and parks are used to store water • 50% of all grey water is cleaned and reused on site • Grey and black water are separated and transported to the water treatment plant as separate flows • Green roofs on 50% of the buildings	• Urban nature • Biodiversity is high with urban adapted species • 70% of streets and squares have total tree cover • Several connections to the main ecological areas • Urban nature measures on 50% of the buildings
ULTIMATE SUSTAINABILITY	• Car free public space; • Priority for pedestrians and cyclists • No private car parking on streets • Public transport close to every house; light rail system • Anticipating autonomous vehicles in street design	• Full Water Sensitive Urban Design • All rain and storm water is stored in the area, infiltrated in the soil, or released slowly • In every street there is space for capturing rainwater, treating it and storing it before releasing it to the soil, or the larger water system (creek/river/Sea) • Apply water squares • All grey and black water is cleaned onsite and reused • Green roofs (capturing water) on every building	• Values of the area similar as a natural environment • Biodiversity, number of species equal to nature reserve • Creating a natural habitat • Use tree cover (shade) in every street and square • Create ecological connections in a close knit network in all directions • Urban nature measures in/on every building (breeding homes for birds, nesting facilities, green roofs)

large green space may not be available, the connection of all smaller spaces and corridors creates an ecological system at a larger scale. Finally, trees play an important role for urban ecological quality, as they provide a lot of shade and mitigate the urban heat island effect, where urban temperatures can rise as much as 5-9 degrees above those in the countryside due to all the concrete and pavements in the city. The lesson here is to keep existing trees as much as possible, and plant many more in public spaces.

ENERGY

The highest sustainability level for energy means to use as little as possible, and if energy is used, to supply it from a renewable source. Most energy is used in buildings and by cars. When buildings are retrofitted, energy demand can be brought back to a minimum. In Europe, there are already retrofitted buildings that provide energy to the grid, such as the Prêt-a-Loger project in Delft, the Netherlands. Insulation and the way buildings are built are essential to keep homes cool in hot summers and warm in colder periods in winter. A heat and cold storage system – pumping water down into low surface earth layers and pumping it back up to provide a steady temperature in the homes – is a good way to achieve this.

Currently, one of the most energy demanding functions in a house is the electric appliances. A simple way to provide the electricity for those is to install solar panels on the roof. If the energy required is more than can be provided by renewable sources onsite, it may be necessary to source renewable energy from wind or solar farms outside the area.

When it comes to the energy use of cars, the future is electric and the number of electric cars, autonomous or

"Community gardens [are] a haven for people to meet, and they also increase biodiversity. People in the neighbourhood could consume their own produce, but a system by which the products grown collectively are sold in local markets also means the economic benefits stay inside the community"

• WASTE	•ENERGY	• FOOD
• All waste is collected and transported to waste treatment facility	• Energy demand is brought down with 10% • Renewables use is 50%, rest is coming from coal fired power plants • Renewables are provided from outside the city • No electric cars, 50% hybrid cars, 50% conventional	• 5% of food produced in area • 5% of trees are edible • 5% of rooftops have edible garden • One community garden in neighbourhood • No food market
• Only paper and plastic are separated and recycled. All other garbage is transferred to waste treatment facility	• Energy demand is brought down with 50% • 80% is provided using renewables, rest from coal fired power plants • Renewables could be off site (wind, solar farms outside of the city) • 25% of cars electric, 50% hybrid, 25% conventional	• 25% of food produced in area • 25% of trees are edible • 25% of rooftops have edible garden • Every other block a community garden • Monthly food market
• All waste is recycled and reused on site • All household waste is separated in reusable fractions (paper, plastic, organic and all is recycled • Set-up small and local recycling businesses	• Energy demand is brought to a minimum, houses are retrofitted as net energy positive buildings • Rest of energy needed is provided with renewable energy sources • Mainly solar on-site, housing cooling and heating through heat-&cold storage (geothermal) • All cars are electric	• 50% of food produced in area • 50% of trees are edible • 50% of rooftops have edible garden • Every block a community garden • Weekly food market

This guide to sustainability levels was used for a workshop on Sustainability as part of ISV's Waterloo Capacity Building programe. It sets out goals that are indicative of three levels of sustainability and provides a focus for discussion about what goals individual participants and the group thought were achievable.

not, will increase over the next decade. Provided that the electricity used for these cars comes from renewable resources (wind, solar), electric cars emit much less carbon than conventional cars. More importantly, the use of an electric car is much cheaper, as the energy from the grid costs much less than petrol.

FOOD

The production of food is currently invisible to most of us. Multinationals transport goods over enormous distances to the (super)markets. A more sustainable food system produces the majority of the food closer to where it is consumed, and can even involve local people in the production process. Food can be grown on rooftops, in community gardens and on trees. If edible trees are planted in the right places (not above car parks, for example), fruit could be picked from the street. Community gardens and rooftops, where people plant, manage, grow and harvest agricultural products, become a haven for people to meet, and they also increase biodiversity. People in the neighbourhood could consume their own produce, but a system in which the products grown collectively are sold in local markets also means the economic benefits stay inside the community.

This article concentrates on the higher ambition levels for each of the themes. It does not mean that a choice for the highest level is always necessary or possible. People who are living in the area and working together on these issues can discuss and decide what is achievable. This is already the biggest leap forward that can be made at this time and could be the first step towards the highest ambition level. It starts with engaging the residents in the process of making their own choices around feasible sustainability options that are not restrictive in nature, but that open up the space to grow towards increased wellbeing for everyone living in the Waterloo Estate.

This article was produced for community capacity building for Waterloo but is generally applicable. It was published in the February 2018 South Sydney Herald in the lead up to a workshop giving people hands on experience in looking at sustainability options and trade-offs. Further resources on this topic can be found on the Capacity Building Project page of the Inner Sydney Voice website.

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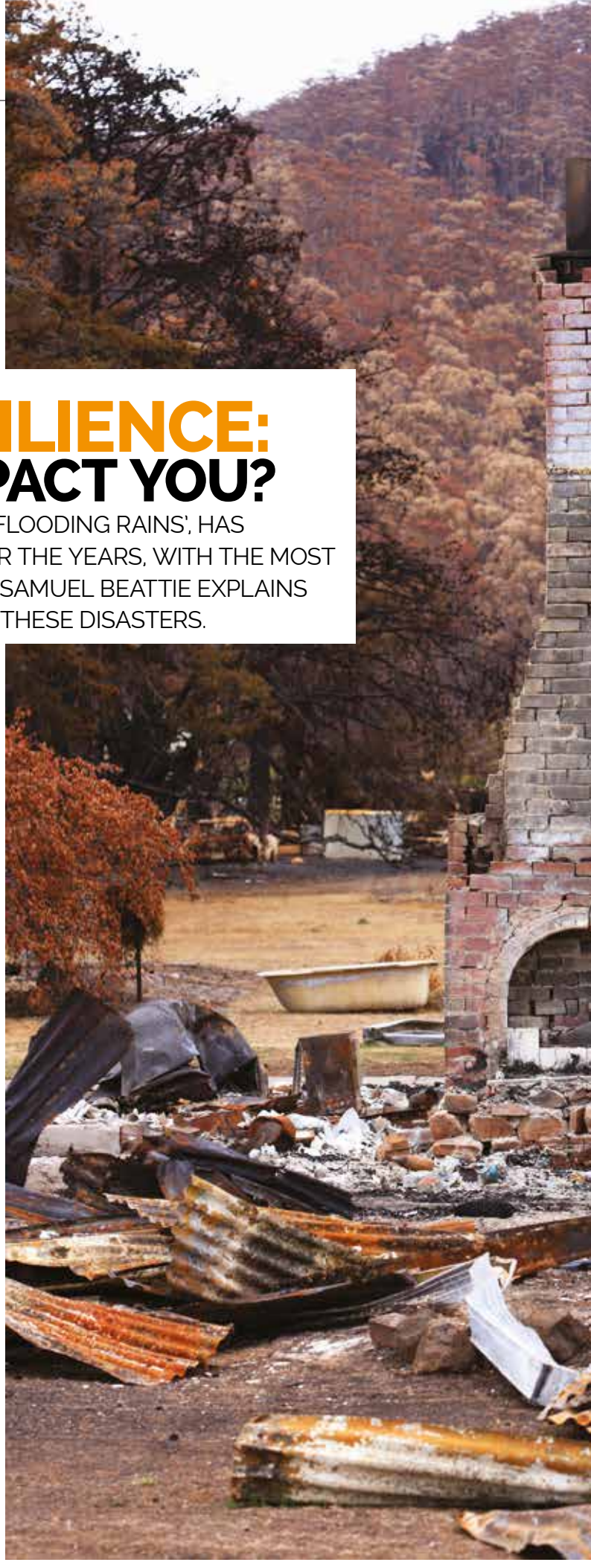


DISASTER RESILIENCE: HOW DOES IT IMPACT YOU?

AUSTRALIA, THE LAND 'OF DROUGHT AND FLOODING RAINS', HAS WITNESSED A NUMBER OF DISASTERS OVER THE YEARS, WITH THE MOST SEVERE OCCURRING IN THE LAST DECADE. SAMUEL BEATTIE EXPLAINS THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE AROUND THESE DISASTERS.

In 2009, the Black Saturday bushfires swept across Victoria and destroyed more than 2,000 homes and were responsible for the death of 173 people; in 2010/2011, severe floods in Queensland forced the evacuation of thousands of people from their homes, causing over $5 billion worth of damage to the state; and for the 10 years between 2004 and 2014, Local Government Areas in NSW were impacted by natural disasters 905 times.

Clearly, disasters impact all Australians across the country and have the ability to cause large-scale disruption to people's lives and communities. It is, therefore, important to ask ourselves the question, how do we prepare for a disaster?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DISASTER RESILIENCE

The term 'resilience' was first used in psychology to describe the ability to cope with or to 'bounce back' from adversity and trauma. It has been central to the community sector for decades and viewed as a means from which to provide support and care to individuals during times of stress. In recognising the important role that communities play before, during and after a disaster, resilience has been increasingly incorporated into the emergency management sector.

From the international level down to the local level, various emergency management frameworks have been actively incorporating the role of the community into disaster risk reduction.

Have you heard of the Sendai Framework? In 2015, representatives from 187 countries came together in Sendai, Japan to discuss the future of disaster risk reduction globally. After 10 years of using the Hyogo Framework, governments wanted to create a document that spoke to more people across all aspects of society, with a more explicit focus on individuals' health and livelihood. The Sendai Framework is ***the*** international framework for disaster risk reduction and is changing the way communities and emergency services work together.

"Clearly, disasters impact all Australians across the country and have the ability to cause large-scale disruption to people's lives and communities. It is, therefore, important to ask ourselves the question, how do we prepare for a disaster? "

Interestingly, Sendai is a location that bore long lasting impacts of the 2011 Japanese Tsunami, which followed a 9.0 magnitude undersea earthquake off the eastern coast of Japan. The once quiet and rural region of Japan, known for its green mountains and sweet summer peaches, was inundated by a 40m wave that crashed across the country's vast coastline, destroying a large number of coastal towns and causing the infamous Fukushima nuclear power plant to meltdown. Seven years on, the region is still recovering, making the Sendai framework all the more relevant to understand today.

There is a well-known story in Japan that describes how communities reacted to similar disasters hundreds of years ago. The story of ***Hamaguchi Gohei and the Tsunami*** is one of an elderly man, Hamaguchi, living in a large thatched hut on a plateau of a mountain devoted to rice fields. From his house, Hamaguchi sees the ocean withdraw from the coast and recognises the early warning signs of an impending tsunami. In the absence of early warning systems and disaster education, the elderly man lights his rice fields on fire, destroying his life-long investment. One by one, some 400 villagers, in a bid to extinguish the fire, run up the hill leaving their curiosity of the changing ocean behind. Amongst cries from those of young and old upon witnessing Hamaguchi's destroyed farm, the villagers looked to the bottom of the hill only to see their village now under the ocean; the tsunami had engulfed their small coastal village. Hamaguchi, having remembered stories of old passed down to him by his grandfather, had destroyed his investment for the sake of saving the local people.

The story of Hamaguchi illustrates how local knowledge can serve to empower communities in times of disaster. More importantly, it highlights how national and international frameworks can benefit from incorporating the local level into emergency planning.

And how fitting that this is where the Sendai Framework came to be. Sendai has incorporated a much stronger voice of resilience, that is, what we do to prevent the impacts of disasters before they occur, rather than only to rebuild after the disaster has been and gone.

But what is a 'disaster'? Sendai recognises that disasters 'occur within society, not nature', meaning that as a society, it is our perception that turns an event into a disaster. A light afternoon shower is not deemed a disaster, because people are not seen to be ***vulnerable*** in this situation, unless of course you have a wedding planned.

Given this new wave of resilience-based language throughout the 2015 Sendai Framework, populations and communities that are deemed vulnerable to a disaster need to be placed front and centre in disaster planning and emergency management. Those that are worst impacted by a disaster now need to be prioritised.

So while Sendai may be a global framework that sits within the United Nations system, the core of Sendai speaks about the importance of incorporating local knowledge into resilience building, starting with the most vulnerable first. It highlights the role of local government. It aims to bring everyone together, both within and between communities, to make sure that people are resilient to risk.

Yet, despite this new language outlined by the Sendai

"We need to do more as individuals to prepare ourselves for a disaster. We need to know the likely risks around us. We need to prepare a personal emergency plan, and consider what we would need to take with us if we were relocated from our homes a for long period of time"

framework, there is still a way to go in placing the most vulnerable at the centre of emergency management in NSW and Australia.

PLACING COMMUNITIES AT THE CENTRE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

If communities are disaster resilient, every member is aware of the hazards and risks in their own life, and how to respond to these hazards when they occur. The Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP) project, currently based out of the Inner Sydney Voice office, aims to do exactly that – bring people together within social housing communities to provide a platform to voice priorities, needs and wants.

It's about creating a two-way communication stream between policy makers, implementers, and community members of Australia so that we can learn to work together to build lasting partnerships for a stronger, more resilient community. Yet, partnership building is a long-term process that not only requires strong collaboration, but requires a culture shift between emergency services and communities at large.

"The greatest good for the greatest number of people" is a phrase often heard within emergency service circles. The statement refers to the quick decisions that first responders need to make when choosing, for example, which unit or floor to search during a building fire and, thus, which people to assist first. Here, preference is usually given to protecting the most number of people in the limited time available.

It is important to remember that disasters occur within society, not in nature. In this example, those who are prepared have a personal emergency plan, listen to early warning systems and have a bag packed ready to leave the building early, so often won't need assistance in evacuating. The negative impacts of a disaster can be mitigated, and one could see the fire for just what it is – a fire – and not a disaster.

The opposite can also be said. Those who are more vulnerable to a disaster, such as those who are less mobile, need regular medication, have a particular disability, or are already a member of a marginalised societal group, are more likely to perceive a hazard as a disaster. Why? Leaving a 20 storey building when the elevator isn't working can be tiring for the best of us, forgetting your urgent medication when you are already out of the building could become fatal. And what if you are now forced to live in an environment where you don't feel comfortable? Past experiences will influence the way people, as individuals, perceive an event. Is a building fire an event or a disaster to you?

Clearly, people experience events in different ways. That's why ***vulnerability*** needs to be front and centre in emergency management, and not a secondary business. We need to do more as individuals to prepare ourselves for a disaster. We need to know the likely risks around us. We need to prepare a personal emergency plan and consider what we would need to take with us if we were relocated from our homes for a long period of time. We need to think about our friends, our family, our neighbours and our pets in these situations. Above all, we need to take responsibility for our own disaster resilience and, as a community, share the responsibility of looking after the more vulnerable around us.

WHERE TO FROM HERE?

Take these simple steps to be prepared today:

- Know your local risks
- Make a personal emergency plan and discuss with friends, family, or neighbours.
- Pack an emergency kit

Samuel Beattie is the Community Resilience Innovation Program (CRIP) Project Officer at Inner Sydney Voice.

References for this article and further information can be found with the online version of this article on the ISV website.

If you would like to know more about disaster resilience and how you can be involved, contact Sam on 9698 7690 or email projectworker@

REDFERN - SURRY HILLS COMMUNITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE BLOSSOMS

STATE AND LOCAL SERVICES HAVE BEEN TALKING THROUGH POSSIBLE EMERGENCY SCENARIOS IN PUBLIC HOUSING HIGH-RISES TRYING TO IDENTIFY WHO IS ACTUALLY RESPONSIBLE IN DIFFERENT SITUATIONS. **PETER MURPHY** LOOKS AT THE PROGRESS TO DATE.

Now in its seventh month, Inner Sydney Voice's Community Resilience Project has advanced through its first stage of community consultation about the issues in coping with an emergency, to building a working group that can identify priority tasks and start to create education programs to address them.

"We now have 15-20 people in the Committee, and they have met four times. People are coming to me asking if they can come to the meetings, rather than me reaching out to people to take part," said Samuel Beattie, the project officer based at Inner Sydney Voice, the tenant advocacy organisation.

The Committee involves the NSW Fire and Rescue, Police, community organisations, and tenants from the Northcott and Poets Corner Estates, in Surry Hills and Redfern. The Land and Housing Corporation, the part of the NSW Department of Family and Community Services which owns public housing assets, is an active member of the Committee and best able to implement the learnings of the project across social housing communities across NSW.

"In practice, emergency services and community organisations rarely interact with each other, yet both have very important roles to play when a disaster occurs. Our Committee is helping to bridge these chasms", said Samuel Beattie.

"One of the issues we came up against early is 'alarm fatigue', because the smoke alarms continually go off in the estates, triggering the Alert Alarm on relevant floors. Everyone ignores these alarms, and so there is very low awareness about another alarm, the Evacuation Alarm, let alone the need for a Personal Emergency Plan," said Samuel.

"Behind every door is a 'Floor Evacuation Plan', which hasn't been checked and upgraded in years, and which no one reads. But if there is a major fire, or flooding, residents will have to know what to take and how to get out, and the relevant building management will have to be able to assure the safety of the residents in the emergency," he said.

The Redfern Surry Hills Community Resilience Committee has been talking through the possible emergency scenarios, and trying to identify who is actually responsible in these situations.

Inner Sydney Voice project officer Samuel Beattie. Photo: Peter Murphy

"Key partnerships in the community enable the initial shock of an emergency to be absorbed, the recovery to develop faster, and the community to emerge stronger"

The project is a direct response to the Sendai Framework, an international collaboration in 2015 on how to respond to calamities. Sendai is the region of Japan where earthquakes and a tidal wave devastated communities and then triggered the Fukushima nuclear meltdowns, in 2011. The Australian government played a strong role in the Sendai Framework, which developed the concepts of an "all-of-society" approach and "shared responsibility" in coping with an emergency.

"Key partnerships in the community enable the initial shock of an emergency to be absorbed, the recovery to develop faster, and the community to emerge stronger" said Samuel.

The Committee is now grappling with the very clear but narrow focus of Fire and Rescue and the Police in an emergency, and the vague sense of responsibility of land owners and body corporates.

"While commercial buildings and workplaces are legally required to have emergency plans, regular drills, and a structure of Fire Officers to implement the plan, public housing estates and private residential buildings are not," said Samuel. "We are discussing the need for new laws".

The project has another 17 months to run, and is yet to start its third stage, the rollout of programs to address the priorities identified by the Committee. After stage three, the lessons learned will be available for application across Australia.

This project has been running since June 2017. For more information please contact Samuel Beattie on projectworker@innersydneyvoice.org.au or phone 9698 7690 or 0413 596 583. Peter Murphy is a Surry Hills resident who writes for the South Sydney Herald. This article first appeared in February 2018 issue of The South Sydney Herald

RETHINKING ABORIGINAL LAND AND INFRASTRUCTURE

PLANNING LAWS IN NSW WOEFULLY CONSTRAIN THE ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE POSSIBLE THROUGH LAND CLAIMS. **LEON BATCHELOR** EXPLORES THE PROBLEM IN NSW AND FINDS SOME ENCOURAGEMENT IN RECENT QUEENSLAND PLANNING CHANGES.

When the office of Surveyor-General disembarked at Port Jackson it brought with it the contemporaneous tools of land use planning and conveyancing – the survey and section, the cadastral map. In addition to geospatial information, these tools were used to represent the benefits and burdens that ran with the land, part of a limited set of interests in land recognised under English law – the ***numerous clauses***.

They also served another purpose – to erase the history of ownership and land use that existed already, something that was supported by its own highly developed ancient law. As the crude segments of the Surveyors-General were mapped out and sold, places renamed, towns created, and the former inhabitants forced out, economic power was wrested from the Aboriginal population.

Largely ignored was the knowledge of land and water management possessed by Indigenous minds, as the colonial project organised the new settler relationship to land under the dictates of Western capital – speculation, exploitation, alienation and profit.

The practice and law of land use planning has failed to adequately recognise and promote a more comprehensive set of relationships to land. Aboriginal communities, despite gaining back some economic power, continue to face planning regimes full of shocking ironies and anachronistic perceptions of Aboriginal political and economic life.

LAND RIGHTS: COMPENSATION WITHOUT CAPITALISATION

In 1983, the NSW Labor government under Neville Wran enacted the ***Aboriginal Land Rights Act*** (ALRA). The ALRA was to be something of a Trojan Horse set loose in the former colony under which Local Aboriginal Land Councils (LALCs) – statutory bodies elected by and comprised of Aboriginal people –

would have Crown land transferred to them, ordinarily as fee simple estates, as compensation for colonial dispossession and as an asset base for future economic independence.

Despite the 33,000 unresolved land claims under the ALRA, locked up somewhere in the Department of Industry, NSW today represents a large share of the 33 percent of the Australian land mass that has been returned to the control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. Yet this land wealth has not come with a sufficient measure of economic power. It is the loud refrain from the LALC network that the ALRA does not address how to capitalise on that land wealth, once granted and transferred.

Standing in the way, among a raft of other NSW laws, is the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EPA Act), under which Aboriginal groups are all but ignored. There is not one substantial reference in the EPA Act to the ALRA, a glaring deficiency given the practical interpenetration of the statutes.

In practice, the general neglect of the objectives of LALCs in NSW planning laws means two things. Firstly, strategic decisions at the state and local government level about land use and infrastructure planning have historically not taken into account the statutory role of LALCs and the presence of land claims under the ALRA. Secondly, the 115 LALCs in the state are forced into costly administrative processes (or legal proceedings) to have land rezoned to allow uses more likely to provide an economic return.

LAND COUNCILS FORCED INTO DEFENSIVE STRATEGIES

Responding to these longstanding deficiencies, the NSW Department of Planning and Environment initiated the Aboriginal Community Land and Infrastructure Project (ACLIP), focussed on improving planning outcomes for Aboriginal communities. It has involved training courses and seminars for LALCs to build their capacity to engage with the planning system. Aboriginal Affairs indicates that in the past year the Aboriginal Community Training NSW Planning System course was held in seven locations across New South Wales, with representatives from 20 LALCs and Aboriginal Corporations.

The Department also released nine Regional Plans in consultation with Aboriginal communities, local governments and other stakeholders in 2017. The Regional Plans include "priorities" and "actions" that consider the economic potential of Aboriginal community owned land. The Central Coast Regional Plan goes one step further and sets specific actions for Darkinjung LALC land holdings. One key action is to "support the Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council in the strategic assessment of its landholdings to identify priority sites for further investigation of economic opportunities."

For Darkinjung, the elevation of its own economic interests in the Regional Plan is a significant win and places the land council in a unique position strategically. Darkinjung, like many other land councils, has in the past faced tough opposition from the local community and from government. Putting Aboriginal cultural and economic interests high up on the strategic agenda means LALCs are less likely to face this resistance.

Examples of the inverse abound. The former Wyong Shire Council moved, in 2012, to down-zone Darkinjung land at Halekulani, which permitted use as a caravan park, to an environmental zoning. To save their plans for the coastal site, Darkinjung pre-empted the council ratifying the decision by lodging a development application for a manufactured home estate. The application received 2,157 objections, more than double the number of objections to the controversial Wallarah 2 Coal Mine, also on the Central Coast.

"Everyone will have those examples," says Lynne Hamilton, Darkinjung's head of planning, who is currently running six rezoning applications on the Central Coast. In her view, there are less than a handful of LALCs in the network that have the capacity to execute complex rezoning zoning applications. She says there needs to be a shortcut.

"In the middle of a residential area there will be one block of bush that we have a land claim over that is zoned the highest environmental zoning – yet it's surrounded by residential development. It's a big problem," says Hamilton, whose LALC is the largest land holder on the Central Coast, much of it on the urban fringe.

Without proactive assessment and promotion of LALC landholdings by local councils and the state government, onerous rezoning applications are the only option. The EPA Act does nothing to force planning authorities to think differently about Aboriginal owned land.

NSW CHOOSES STRATEGY OVER LAW REFORM

In 2016, the Legislative Council Standing Committee on State Development's *Inquiry into economic development in Aboriginal communities* recommended the Department review planning legislation to better accommodate the aspirations envisaged in the Aboriginal Land Rights Act.

Opinions differ as to what the most beneficial approach might be within the LALC network and on the side of government. The political landscape in NSW, within and outside of the LALC

"Being viewed as environmentally irresponsible is just one in many ironies to confront LALCs looking to develop their own land, many of whom have had projects thwarted by legislation aimed at protecting the environment"

network, has proved a difficult space to initiate long term planning reforms.

Darkinjung has been a proponent of a separate State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) which specifically addresses Aboriginal community owned land. This would likely permit LALCs to develop land without the need to undertake rezoning applications. There is precedent for this in NSW in the *Housing for Seniors or People with a Disability SEPP*, which permits development of seniors housing on land that adjoins land zoned for urban purposes, subject to a site compatibility assessment and development consent.

Although less receptive to the idea of an Aboriginal SEPP, NSWALC has suggested LALCs be given the right to seek review or appeal of decisions made by planning authorities when they concern LALC interests and compensation for adverse planning decisions.

Citing circumspection from the Department of Planning and Environment, Lynne Hamilton, of Darkinjung, says LALCs are not likely to intensify land use where it would be environmentally or socially counterproductive. "I don't know what they're scared of – that land councils are going to want to rezone every parcel of their land? Land councils aren't that silly. They're not going to rezone land that's out in the bush because it's too expensive. There are no services," says Hamilton.

Being viewed as environmentally irresponsible is just one of many ironies to confront LALCs looking to develop their own land, many of whom have had projects thwarted by legislation aimed at protecting the environment. The same communities that have safeguarded biodiversity for tens of thousands of years are being told by government they cannot be trusted with the power to determine the attributes of their own land.

"Isn't that a small price to pay for the damage that we've done to their estate?" asks Ed Wensing, PhD Scholar at Australian National University. He maintains, with a nod to Australian historian Henry Reynolds, that the body of customary laws administered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people contains the "oldest continuing system of land use and occupancy planning in the world".

Wensing points to the Planning Act in Queensland, which came into effect in July 2017 following a broad consultation effort by the Palaszczuk Government, as an example of significant progress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups looking for better planning outcomes.

The Queensland Planning Act requires planning authorities and other agencies that perform functions under the Act to do so in a way that "advances the purpose of the Act". This includes "valuing, protecting and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, culture and tradition".

Although the Act does not explicitly provide development rights or promote the "economic" interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups, the provision has already been invoked to guide strategic decision-making.

Dr Sharon Harwood of James Cook University, who was instrumental to the inclusion of the clause in the Queensland Act, wrote to the Department of Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning after viewing a draft version of the South East Queensland Regional Plan, ***ShapingSEQ***, and realising it made no mention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes. The plan was intended to guide development for 25 years.

Her letter, it seems, was compellingly put. "[The Department] immediately swallowed humble pie," Wensing recounts, "They went through a whole series of workshops with the Traditional Owner groups in SEQ and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over a series of six to eight months and in the final draft of the plan almost every strategy has an action that relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' needs and better reflects the integration of their knowledge, culture and tradition in the plan".

Crucially, the "tenure blind" nature of the provision makes immaterial what the legal basis of the claim to land is. In urban areas, where the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reside, this could mean consultation with groups historically without a legal foothold in the planning process.

"What the provision in the Planning Act in Queensland does is to force the matter onto the table at an early stage rather than as an afterthought", says Wensing.

Despite the stalling tendency of planning reforms in NSW, the recent surge in metropolitan and regional strategic planning activity will provide a testing ground for the potential of "soft-law" options like regional and metropolitan plans to provide real economic benefits for Aboriginal land holders.

While these "actions" and "priorities" – some more nebulous than exact – make their indeterminate way into the minds of councillors, Aboriginal land holders are left with a planning system that places their unique interests near to last.

The strong, if somewhat accidental, leadership of Queensland in this respect could pave the way for other jurisdictions to place Aboriginal interests first in strategic decision-making and deliberations over land use planning. The current incapacity of the NSW planning regime to countenance a more comprehensive set of relationships to land only promises more development of limited ambition.

As the national locus of infrastructure construction and ascending urban populations, there is a real opportunity in NSW to turn Aboriginal community owned land into the social, economic and environmental assets of the future. That won't happen by accident.

Leon Batchelor is a writer with an interest in planning and urban affairs.

DISABILITY BY THE NUMBERS

THE AUSTRALIAN NETWORK ON DISABILITY PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING STATISTICS ON THEIR WEBSITE TO HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND THE SCALE OF DISABILITY IN OUR COMMUNITY. BY JULY 2019, THE NDIS EXPECTS TO COVER APPROXIMATELY 460,000 PEOPLE NATION-WIDE – NOT ALL THOSE WITH A DISABILITY WILL QUALIFY.

WHAT IS DISABILITY?

A disability is any condition that restricts a person's mental, sensory or mobility functions. It may be caused by accident, trauma, genetics or disease. A disability may be temporary or permanent, total or partial, lifelong or acquired, visible or invisible. For more information see www.and.org.au/pages/what-is-a-disability.html.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Over 4 million people in Australia have some form of disability. That's 1 in 5 people.
- 18.6% of females and 18.0% of males in Australia have disability.
- The likelihood of living with disability increases with age - 2 in 5 people with disability are 65 years or older.
- 1.8 million or 50.7 % of Australians aged 65 and over have disability, compared to 1 in 8 (12.5 %) aged under 65.
- 2.1 million Australians of working age (15 – 64 years) have disability.
- 35.9% of Australia's 8.9 million households include a person with disability.

TYPES OF DISABILITY

- Only 4.4% of people with a disability in Australia use a wheelchair.
- 1 in 6 Australians are affected by hearing loss. There are approximately 30,000 deaf Auslan users with total hearing loss.
- Vision Australia estimates there are currently 357,000 people in Australia who are blind or have low vision. They project this will grow to 564,000 by 2030. (Refractive errors not included).
- 45% of Australians aged 16–85 years, experience a mental health condition during their lifetime.
- 3 million Australians live with depression or anxiety.
- Research shows job or financial loss can increase a person's risk of health problems, such as depression and anxiety.

EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY

- People aged between 15 and 64 years with disability have both lower participation (53%) and higher unemployment rates (9.4%) than people without disability (83% and 4.9% respectively).
- There are 2.1 million Australians of working age with disability. Of these, just over 1 million are employed and another 114,900 are looking for work.
- Australia's employment rate for people with disability (46.6% in 2015) is on par with developed countries. In developing countries, 80% to 90% of people with disability of working age are unemployed, whereas in industrialised countries the figure is between 50% and 70%.
- 34% of people with disability are managers & professionals.
- Graduates with disability take 56.2% longer to gain fulltime employment than other graduates.
- People with disability aged 15–24 years are 10 times more likely to experience discrimination than those aged 65 years and over. The source of discrimination is an employer in almost half of those instances.
- 73 percent of employees who say they work at a "purpose-driven" company are engaged, compared to just 23 percent of those who don't.

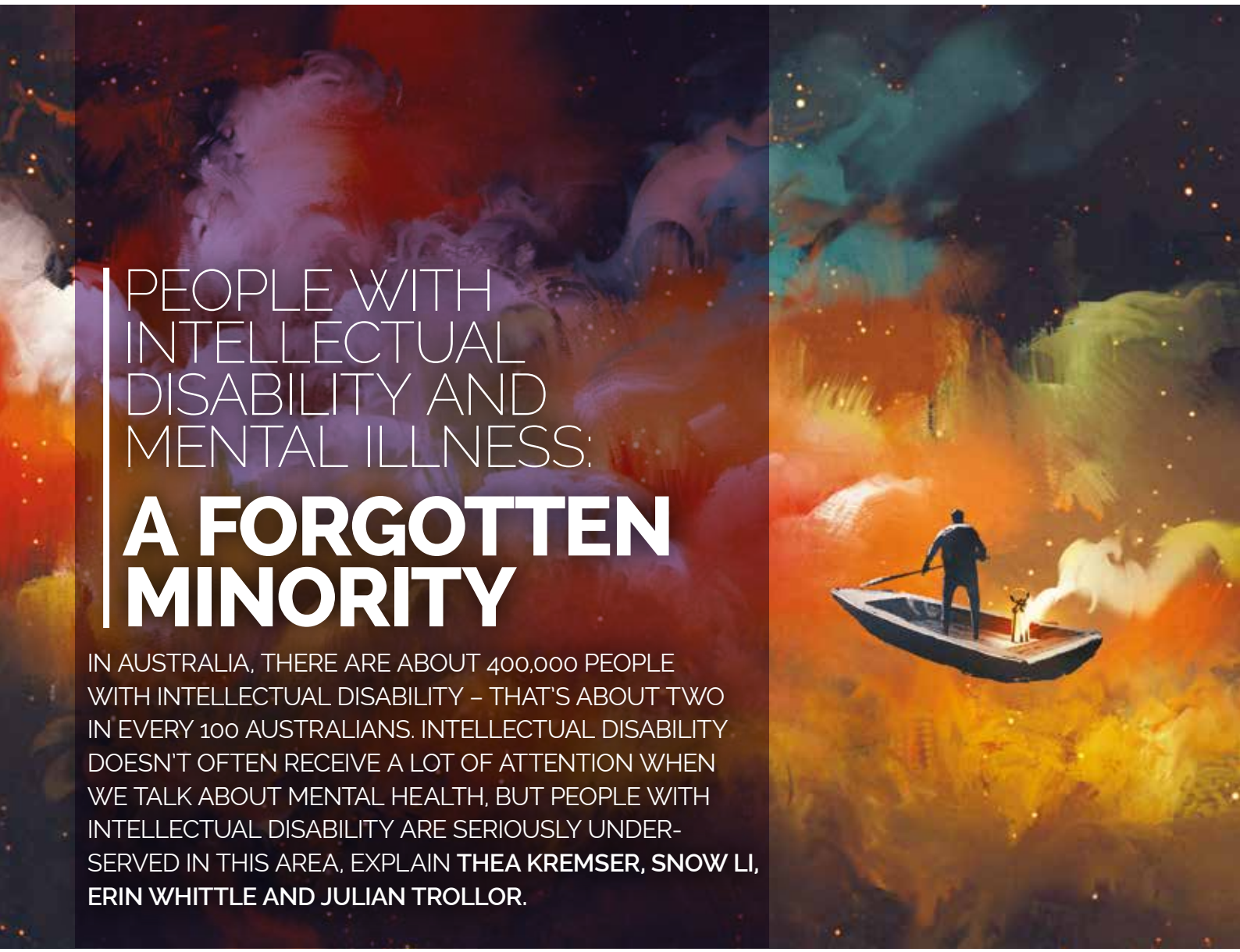
CUSTOMERS WITH DISABILITY

- People with disability are three times as likely to avoid an organisation and twice as likely to dissuade others because of an organisation's negative diversity reputation.
- 36% of people with disability are often treated less favourably than customers without disability.
- 28% of people with disability have experienced discrimination by one or more of the organisations they've recently interacted with.
- 1 in 3 people with disability report that their customer needs are often unmet.
- 62% of SME's have not done anything in the past 12 months to make it easier for customers with disability. For almost half of these, there is a perception of not being asked to. *"We have received no specific requests."*

OTHER DISABILITY STATISTICS

- The likelihood of living with disability increases with age; 31% of 55–64 year olds are living with disability. Almost nine in ten people aged 90 and over (88%) have a disability.
- Over one third (35.1%) of women and over one quarter (28.1%) of men aged 15 years and over had avoided situations because of their disability.
- Projections for 2050 indicate that one in every four Australians will have hearing loss. 90% of people born with hearing impairment are born into hearing families.
- Some 639,300 people with disability used mobility aids (14.9% of those with disability).
- Almost 500,000 people had made home modifications such as grab rails (337,800 or 8.2% of those with disability), modifying their bathroom, toilet or laundry (222,600 or 5.4% of those with disability) or installing ramps (100,200 or 2.4% of those with disability).

Source: Australian Network on Disability - www.and.org.au/pages/disability-statistics Links to sources can be found on the website.



PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND MENTAL ILLNESS: A FORGOTTEN MINORITY

IN AUSTRALIA, THERE ARE ABOUT 400,000 PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY – THAT'S ABOUT TWO IN EVERY 100 AUSTRALIANS. INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY DOESN'T OFTEN RECEIVE A LOT OF ATTENTION WHEN WE TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH, BUT PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY ARE SERIOUSLY UNDER-SERVED IN THIS AREA, EXPLAIN **THEA KREMSER, SNOW LI, ERIN WHITTLE AND JULIAN TROLLOR.**

Many people don't really know what it means to have intellectual disability. When someone's intellectual ability lies in the lower range from an early age, and this impacts on every day social and practical skills, we call this intellectual disability. People with intellectual disability are a very diverse group, ranging from people with milder disability — who are largely independent, work and are in relationships — through to a much smaller group with very severe and multiple disabilities who need intensive support.

Compared to Australians in general, people with intellectual disability have very poor physical and mental health. People with intellectual disability die up to 27 years earlier than people without intellectual disability and are much more likely to experience common illnesses and other disabilities. Mental illness is at least two to three times more common. Many people with intellectual disability experience relatively high levels of trauma, stigma and social isolation, poverty, financial and emotional strain on the family, and few opportunities to engage in a range of life choices. Intellectual disability often affects a person's coping skills, communication skills and social skills. These factors all create stress and increase psychological vulnerability.

Despite this high rate of mental illness, people with intellectual disability are seriously disadvantaged when it comes to mental health support. Instead of receiving consistent follow up and regular treatment in the community like other Australians, people with intellectual disability receive more one-off treatments, are more likely to visit emergency departments and psychiatric in-patient facilities, and are more likely to be misdiagnosed or receive an "unknown" diagnosis for their mental illness. Mental health professionals say they often don't feel confident in supporting people with intellectual disability and need more training in this area. Additionally, many state and national mental health policies don't acknowledge people with intellectual disability. The disadvantage doesn't end there. People with intellectual disability are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, and are on average only 15 years old when they have their first contact with police – the youngest of any Australians. This often happens because of the person's intellectual disability and untreated mental illness.

Overall, mental health and well-

being for people with intellectual disability is poor, and people with intellectual disability experience multiple barriers to accessing high quality mental health treatments and supports. This places a lot of stress on carers leading to burn out, distress and financial hardship. When the person's main support comes from a disability service it can mean that support workers feel overwhelmed and unable to meet the person's needs, and the person ends up falling through the cracks without support or care.

When Australia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2008, we agreed that people with intellectual disability have the right to the highest possible standard of health, without discrimination because of disability. However, this right is not being realised for many people with an intellectual disability and mental illness. Increasing our efforts to improve the situation for this significant minority is essential. There are a number of groups with key roles to play.

FEDERAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS

Governments need to start by acknowledging people with intellectual disability as a significant minority group, whose particular needs must be accounted for, in order to protect their human rights. Governments must formally consider the needs of people with intellectual disability in every health and mental health policy, and in every aspect of health services development.

State departments of health should make sure that all staff are trained to understand the mental health of people with intellectual disability, and to develop the skills they need to deliver mental health services to this group.

SERVICES

Primary health services, public and private mental health services, and specialised intellectual disability mental health services all share responsibility for mental health care of people with intellectual disability. Disability services and health services need to work in partnership, as many people require coordinated disability and mental health support. These services can significantly improve the quality of mental health care they provide by following these recommendations:

Taking a human rights approach

Public mental health services, in particular, need to recognise the mental health of people with intellectual disability as part of their core business, but all services should adopt a rights-based approach to mental health care of people with intellectual disability. Everyone involved in healthcare has an obligation to make sure that services are easy to access for people with intellectual disability. This means assessing every level of a service for changes that would allow someone with intellectual disability to engage just as easily as someone without a disability does. Adjustments such as providing information in easy English, allowing longer appointments and training staff in disability-specific mental health knowledge and communication skills, can make a service more accessible for people with intellectual disability.

Developing relationships with other relevant agencies and services

All services should establish links with other agencies and services, including disability services and other mental health sectors. Collaborating means that it is easier to get into services, and easier for service providers to work together towards the most effective service possible.

Training their staff

Training is a vital part of ensuring all staff, develop the necessary skills and knowledge to become confident in their ability to support people with intellectual disability.

Developing formal protocols and frameworks

Services are most likely to make the changes required if those changes are clearly written down. Services need to make formal decisions to take specific, concrete steps, and they need to communicate clearly with all their staff, so that everyone knows what principles and procedures to follow, and why.

The Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN) at UNSW was established in 2009 to improve health policy, practice and supports for people with intellectual or developmental disability, with a focus on mental health and wellbeing. In ***The Guide***, 3DN outlines steps that frontline service providers can take, in order to create accessible mental health services for people with intellectual disability. ***The Guide*** gives detailed, practical recommendations for creating the kinds of improvements detailed above. All mental health professionals and service providers are encouraged to embrace this responsibility to strive for equal access and to deliver the highest attainable standard of mental health care to people with intellectual disability.

Additional resources for services, carers, and professionals are available on the 3DN website https://3dn.nsw.edu.gov.au/content/education-resources .Thea Kremser, Snow Li, Erin Whittle, Julian Trollor work at the Department of Developmental Disability Neuropsychiatry (3DN), UNSW. Article sources can found on our web version.

THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) AND MENTAL ILLNESS

THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME (NDIS) OFFERS GREAT HOPE FOR PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE ONGOING MENTAL ILLNESS, BUT KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT IT CAN OFFER PEOPLE WITH MENTAL ILLNESS IS LOW. **JEN SMITH-MERRY** EXPLAINS HOW THE NDIS WORKS AND ADDRESSES SOME OF THE ISSUES PEOPLE APPLYING FOR THE SCHEME FACE.

THE NDIS AND PSYCHOSOCIAL DISABILITY: WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Many people think that the NDIS is only relevant to people with physical disabilities, but it is also open to applications from people with 'psychosocial disability'. The NDIS uses the phrase 'psychosocial disability' to refer to mental illness. People are more likely to be eligible if they have received support for severe mental illness (or should have received support) over an extended period, and their illness significantly disrupts their ability to actively participate in society (including through employment and social experiences).

In order to be eligible for the scheme a person with mental illness must:

- Be under 65 when they apply.
- Meet certain residency conditions and be an Australian Citizen, permanent resident or have a protected special category visa.
- Have a disability which is likely to last for their whole life (see below for how this fits with the ups and downs of mental illness).
- Have a disability which makes it difficult to participate in society, or live the life that an individual wants to live, without the help of other people and technology.

WHAT DOES IT OFFER?

The NDIS does not provide services itself, but a budgeted plan, which lists what items of service an individual will be eligible for. The individual can then get these supports provided by providers that they choose.

The NDIS has a set range of supports that it funds and items of support outside of this cannot be funded under the NDIS. They will fund only supports that are deemed to be 'reasonable and necessary'.

There are three parts to the budget that an individual will receive within their plan:

- Core: The items in this budget include supports which help with daily living, community participation, and sometimes transport.
- Capital: The funding in this part of the plan includes assistive technologies that are needed for daily living and community participation, such as specialised computers, wheelchairs, walkers, car modifications and home modifications.
- Capacity Building: The supports offered under this are designed to build an individual's capacity and provide resources related to: education (lifelong), choice and control, community participation, support coordination, health and wellbeing, daily activities, finding a job and staying employed, and relationships.

The NDIS does not fund medical treatment including dental treatments or medical treatment by psychologists and psychiatrists.

HOW DO PEOPLE GO ABOUT BECOMING INVOLVED IN THE NDIS?

If you are already receiving services, you should talk to those people supporting you as they may be able to help you with the process.

The first step should be to become familiar with the scheme, so that you know what you or the person you support are eligible for. The next step is to make an access request. Once an individual's request to access the scheme is made, it should be assessed within 21 days (see below for more about this). If this request is successful, the individual and, if appropriate, their carers will meet with a planner who will develop an individual plan. This plan should then be checked by the applicant and their carers so that it does in fact meet their needs.

Contact details for the NDIS and the Local Area Coordinators for Inner Sydney region are listed below.

WHAT DO PEOPLE NEED TO BE WARY OF WHEN THEY APPLY TO THE SCHEME?

Our recent report *Mind the Gap* looked at the experiences of service providers related to the implementation of the scheme. That report identified some areas where the scheme needs to be improved, so that it better includes people with mental illness. If you, or someone you care for, are applying for the scheme, you should be aware of some of these issues, so that you can make sure that they do not complicate the application process.

- Support for the applicant is essential: Because the NDIS will only fund services that are reasonable and necessary, it is essential that someone applying for and being provided a plan under the scheme is able to speak about their illness in a way that makes it clear to the planners and assessors that the supports requested are necessary. As some applicants can inadvertently talk down their illness and not fully explain its impact on their lives, it is helpful to have a carer or friend along who really knows the person and can help to explain their life and the impact of the illness on them. If the NDIS worker is not listening to carers or family members, then applicants have the right to have this addressed.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: It has been reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are less likely to join the scheme. If you are from an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander background, you can work with your existing support providers to access the scheme. If that is not available to you, please speak to the NDIS or the Local Area Coordinators, as there is a special strategy in place by the NDIS to enable your participation.
- Understanding of mental illness: Some assessors and planners lack an understanding of mental illness and can sometimes make assumptions about an individual's abilities. If you, or the person you support, believes that the assessor, planner or other NDIS worker is making assumptions that are not correct, you have the right to question this and have your application handled by someone else.
- Documentation for assessment: When deciding eligibility, assessors rely on information provided by GPs, specialists and other services. Individuals may need support to gather this information together and it may take some time to track down relevant information.
- Needs of carers: Carer-related supports are important and can be written into plans, but are currently being ignored in the development of many plans. This can be addressed by including carers in NDIS meetings. If they are not, applicants should ensure that their needs are included.
- Support coordination is a really important part of plans: Because of the complexity and range of needs associated with psychosocial disability, people sometimes need help to connect with services. Applicants and those supporting them should make sure that support coordination is built into plans.
- The assessment, planning and review processes are often delayed: While the NDIS states that requests to access the scheme must be assessed within 21 days, services have told us that in reality it can take much longer because there can be holdups at many steps of the application process. For that reason, make sure that an applicant's current supports remain in place until their plan has been activated.
- Language barriers: If you are attempting to negotiate with the NDIS, and you or the person you are supporting do not use English as a first language, you should make sure that appropriate translators are available to you.

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE SCHEME?

Speak to your current service providers about how you can access the scheme and visit the NDIS website www.ndis.gov.au

The Local Area Coordinator organisation for Inner Sydney is St Vincent de Paul. It can provide individual support for people accessing the scheme and their carers and family members. To contact the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW Local Area Coordination, team please call 1800 794 934 or email LAC@vinnies.org.au or search NDIS on www.vinnies.org.au.

Jen Smith-Merry is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Sydney. She conducts research on mental health services and policy systems. She has a particular interest in the experiences of people with mental illness and regularly collaborates in research with people with a lived experience of ill-health.

She was on the project team that produced the 'Mind the Gap' report, **that highlights problems with the current state of the NDIS for people with psychosocial disability such as eligibility criteria that exclude many, slow uptake and engagement due to a disconnect between the notion of 'disability' and 'mental health', and inadequate involvement models for carers and families. The link to** 'Mind the Gap' **report and references can be found with the online version of this article.**

"Carer-related supports are important and can be written into plans, but are currently being ignored in the development of many plans. This can be addressed by including carers in NDIS meetings. If they are not, applicants should ensure that their needs are included"

EVALUATING BOARDING HOUSE REFORM

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE NSW BOARDING HOUSE ACT WAS PASSED, THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS ABOUT TO EVALUATE HOW EFFECTIVE THE ACT HAS BEEN. PAUL ADABIE EXPLORES THE CHANGES IN THE SECTOR AND THE IMPACT OF THE NEW ACT.

The Boarding House Act 2012 was passed in October 2012. Its intention was for a whole of government response to concerns for the rights and safety of people living in boarding houses. The State Government is about to evaluate these changes. The community should also take the time to assess if the boarding house sector has improved and if the Act achieved its objectives.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre (NNC) has had a dedicated Boarding House Service that supports residents of general boarding houses for several years. Such immersion in this marginalised sector provides NNC with first-hand exposure to the experiences of people living in boarding houses and a unique insight into the changes within the sector.

The Act was largely framed from a disability perspective. It was the preventable deaths of six residents in a Marrickville based boarding house that was the final straw in forcing the State Government to take action. As a result, 75 percent of the 2012 Act is concerned with Assisted Boarding Houses (formally known as licensed boarding houses); these properties today make up only 0.03% of the boarding house sector and their numbers are set to further reduce.

In 2011, newspaper articles estimated there were around 455 boarding houses in the State (SMH 13/6/11). At the end of October 2017, there were 1033 properties on the Boarding House Register, representing 16,753 bed spaces. The numbers on the Register have continued to increase month on month, challenging the prevailing view that the boarding house sector is in decline.

The establishment of a Boarding House Register was one of the key provisions of the 2012 Act. It required both General and Assisted boarding houses to register. The fact that it's possible to quote the number of registered boarding houses in the state is to some degree a marker of the success of the Act, perhaps one of its few successes? Prior to 2012, there was no state-wide register and data collection varied across local councils. Hosted by NSW Fair Trading, the public assessable register has a limited search function, and could be improved; nevertheless, it's a step in the right direction.

The Boarding House Team at NNC believe the Register captures only half of the sector. Many properties remain unregistered, and there are as many properties operating as a boarding house without registration as there are on the Register.

There are a variety of reasons for non-registration, including operators being unaware of the requirement, and those wishing to evade scrutiny and oversight. Whilst the Register is hosted by Fair Trading, responsibility for promoting and enforcing the registration requirement was passed to Local Councils with no additional resources. Very few local governments have embraced this responsibility and as a result the Register should not be relied on to give a complete picture of the sector.

There are increasing government

'benefits', such as land tax exemptions, resident's access to rent bond loans and fire safety grants, that require a boarding house to be registered before the proprietor can access such products. This 'carrot' approach to encouraging registration must be seen as a positive change. A determined effort to increase registration still needs to be undertaken, though.

Information from the Register is compromised by confusion in the term 'boarding house'. In its rush to increase housing supply as way of addressing the housing crisis, the State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009 introduced the term to a new style of premises that bears little resemblance to our more traditional understanding of what a boarding house is. Developments under this policy find their way onto the Register, because Fair Trading do not actively manage it, but simply list those that seek to register.

Sometimes referred to as mega or new generation boarding houses, there are a number of concerns regarding these developments, which can be seen all over the city. They are, in reality, mini flat-lets or super studios — living spaces can be as small as 12 square metres — and, for the most part, they are not affordable. Using the term 'boarding house' for such properties, developers can evade paying land tax. Unsurprisingly, they are increasingly popular with developers.

"In its rush to increase housing supply as way of addressing the housing crisis the State Environmental Planning Policy (Affordable Rental Housing) 2009 introduced the term to a new style of premises that bears little resemblance to our more traditional understanding of what a boarding house is"

Such confusion exemplifies how the 'boarding house space' sits at the intersection of a number of competing interests and influences, and thus, remains marginalised. The drifting of attention to the new generation properties, which have little in common with the traditional sector, leads to a misunderstanding of the term 'boarding house' and in turn a neglect of the true nature of boarding house residents and their occupancy rights.

A further challenge is that boarding houses are not uniformly spread across the state and not all local governments have to deal with them. Those that do have a high concentration (this includes Sydney and the Inner

INNER WEST BOARDING HOUSE GOOD PRACTICE AWARDS.

The Boarding House Outreach Service team members visit many boarding houses as part of their work and can see the real difference that living in a well-managed, safe boarding house can make in someone's life. Moreover, many residents are isolated from friends and family when they move into a boarding house, so a positive, welcoming environment can be a crucial aspect of their wellbeing.

In acknowledgement of this understanding, the Good Practice Awards were created — to celebrate good practice in the provision of boarding house accommodation and to acknowledge the important role a person can play in encouraging a sense of community and belonging amongst residents and to the local area where they live.

In the pilot year of this project, three awards were created:

- Large Boarding House of the Year (13 or more residents)
- Small Boarding House of the Year (less than 13 residents)
- Community Connection Award, recognising an individual who shows commitment to encouraging a sense of belonging amongst residents.

The project was supported by a number of local organisations with an interest in supporting boarding house residents, through their involvement in a steering committee, and as members of the awards judging panel, with financial support kindly provided by the Eastern Prudential Insurance Group.

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre was excited by the positive response of this inaugural awards process and is currently considering the further development of the Boarding House Good Practice Awards.

West) have no additional resources to respond to the challenges presented i.e. enforcing registration, ensuring the use of occupancy agreements and looking out for residents with 'additional needs'.

Regarding the improved protection for residents, the impact of the Act remains, at best, patchy. Many boarding house operators remain reluctant to spend money on repairs to their properties, resulting in poor quality accommodation and substandard facilities. The problems go beyond disrepair. There are numerous boarding house properties that lack even basic facilities such as a kitchen, yet rents for a small single room are easily $190 a week, if not more.

The affordability issue is beyond the scope and remit of the Act. The sector is not immune to the housing and rental affordably crisis that grips Sydney. Those on Newstart payments are most exposed. There are many residents paying very high rents, sometimes 60 or 70 percent of their income, for very poor conditions. There are few avenues to seek redress and the fear of retaliatory evictions remains as prevalent as it ever was.

Despite this glum picture, there are some glimmers of hope. There are a few operators who work hard in trying to provide decent housing for poor people. To recognise this, NNC launched the inaugural boarding house awards, earlier in the year. The aim was to change the negative narrative that accompanies boarding house style accommodation, by focusing on the better properties and operators, rather than on the horror stories. (see box)

Providing decent housing for poor people is perhaps at the crux of the problem; how can the private sector make a profit from housing poor people? Many residents have complex histories and have experienced multiple traumas. The social housing system is 'broken' and unable to meet the demands placed upon it. The private sector can cherry pick applicants, leaving many exposed to operators who choose to operate outside of any regulatory systems.

Linked to this challenge, the Boarding House Team at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre is seeing increasing incidents of 'reno-victions', where older, sometimes run-down boarding houses are being redeveloped into modern, high-standard properties, often self-contained with kitchenettes and bathrooms. On the surface, this is a good thing. Modern amenities should raise the living quality of those relying on the boarding house sector for housing. The problem is that the vast majority of these redevelopments have been accompanied by steep rent increases, which price out the original residents. We recently witnessed a weekly increase from $140 to $220 a week!

These refurbished Boarding Houses are marketed to university students and younger workers. This demographic shift is concerning as it pushes out vulnerable older residents and those dependent on welfare payments. FACS Housing services are unable to pick up the displaced residents who may have no priority need, and society is left with a problem of increasing homelessness.

While the sector is growing, the pool of housing accessible to the most vulnerable members of society is shrinking rapidly, and the gap between affordability and quality is widening.

It will take more than a revised Act to reduce this trend.

Paul Adabie works with the Boarding House Project at Newtown Neighbourhood Centre

"Providing decent housing for poor people is perhaps at the crux of the problem; how can the private sector make a profit from housing poor people? Many residents have complex histories and have experienced multiple traumas"

Summer 1980/81

School closures

With population increasing quickly, the time has come to reinvest in inner city schools. Between the 1980s and 2000s, many inner city schools closed. *Inner Voice,* in December 1980, reported the proposed inner Sydney high school closures as the first time a state school would close since World War II.

school closures

Five inner city and Eastern Suburbs high schools will be shut by the State Government over the next 5 years because of falling student numbers. It will be the first time a State high school has been closed since World War II.

As part of a 10 million dollar reorganisation the Government has also decided to build a new high school in Glebe and convert Vaucluse Boys High School to a co-educational high school.

The changes will begin on 1982 and are expected to be completed by 1985. Students from the closed schools will be moved gradually to nearby schools.

The decision, made by the State Cabinet on December 17, 1980, means that all single-sex comprehensive high schools in the inner city and Eastern Suburbs will be shut. The selective inner city high schools, Sydney Boys High and Sydney Girls High will remain single-sex schools.

The schools to be closed are:

Cleveland Street Boys High School,
Waterloo High School,
Dover Heights Boys High School,
Newtown Boys High School,
Wilkins High School, Marrickville.

The announcement follows reports last month by two working parties looking at the future of high schools in the inner city and Eastern Suburbs. It is understood that the Government's decision follows closely the majority reports of the two working parties.

The Teachers' Federation representatives on both working parties opposed the majority reports and gave the minister alternative reports which would have kept all the high schools open with smaller enrolments. (see Inner Voice, No 17, p47).

Teachers' Federation President , Barry Manefield, said he expected teachers to be 'very angry' because they had not been consulted before the announcement as promised by the Minister.

The Teachers' Federation Conference held in December last year voted that teachers at Dover Heights Boys High would refuse transfers if the school was closed. Dover Heights Boys High has been the centre of industrial disputes for several years. It has been an open secret for several months that the school would be one of the first to close if the Government adopted any or all of the working party's report.

Job Losses

The school closures mean the possible loss of 75 teaching positions. This is despite the fact that there are already more than 8,000 teachers waiting for jobs and an additional 4,700 new teachers expected to enter the labour market in 1981.

Teachers' Federation unemployment officer Steve Storey says 9 out of 10 teachers graduating in NSW in 1981 will not get permanent jobs for 5 years.

The changes at a glance are:

Amalgamation

Cleveland St Boys High School and Waterloo High School, moving to new premises in Alexandria.

Dover Heights Boys High School and Dover Heights Girls High School, using the girls school site.

Newtown Boys High School and Petersham Girls High School, using the girls school site.

Randwick Boys High School and Randwick Girls High School. The two schools are on adjoining sites.

Marrickville High School and Wilkins High School, using the Marrickville school site.

Co-educational

Vaucluse Boys High School.

Redevelopment

Glebe High School. Students are now on the site in demountable classrooms.

A publication of:

INNER SYDNEY VOICE
regional social development council

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