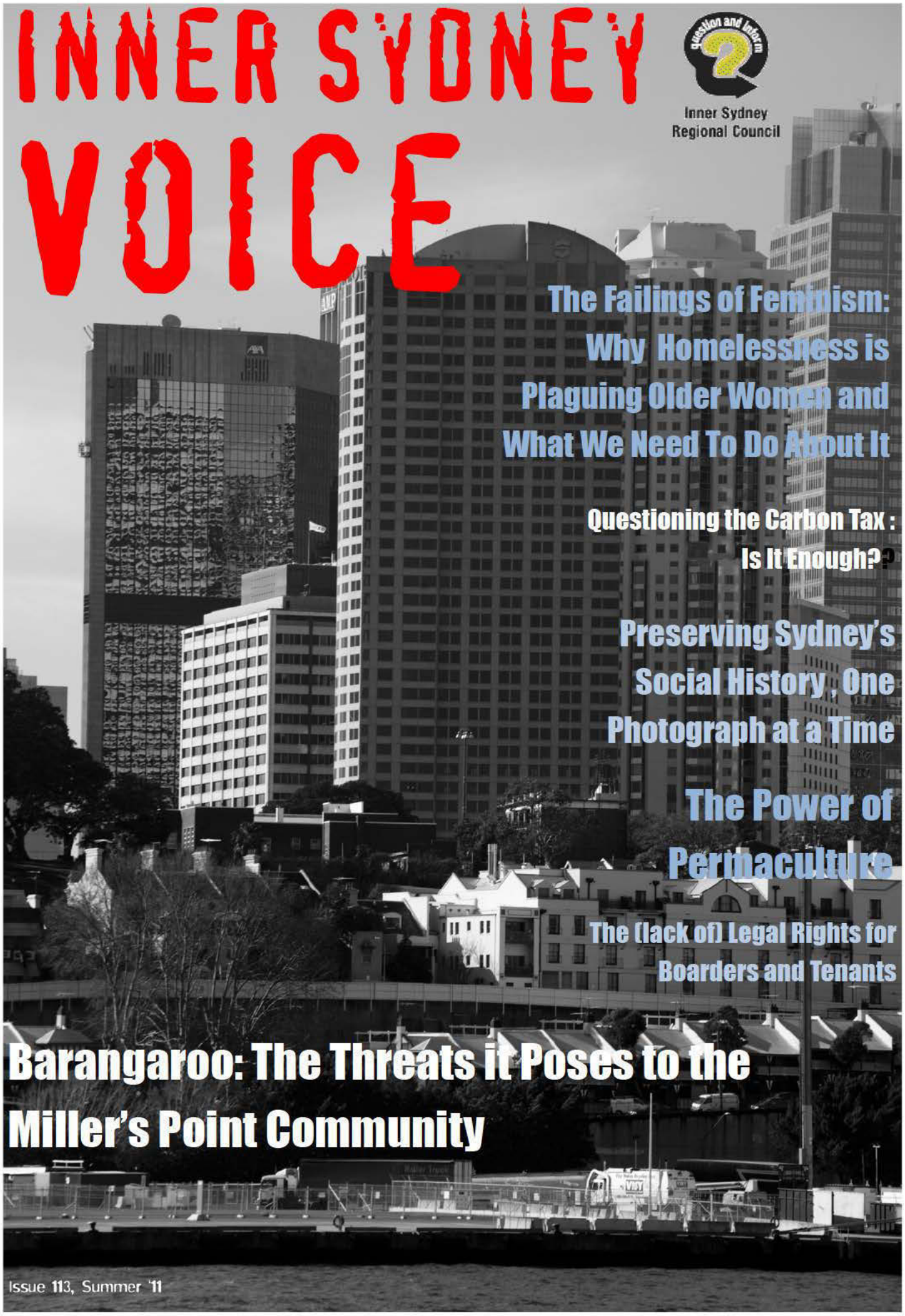
INNER SYDNEY VOICE



question and inform

Inner Sydney Regional Council

The Failings of Feminism: Why Homelessness is Plaguing Older Women and What We Need To Do About It

Questioning the Carbon Tax : Is It Enough?

Preserving Sydney's Social History , One Photograph at a Time

The Power of Permaculture

The (lack of) Legal Rights for Boarders and Tenants

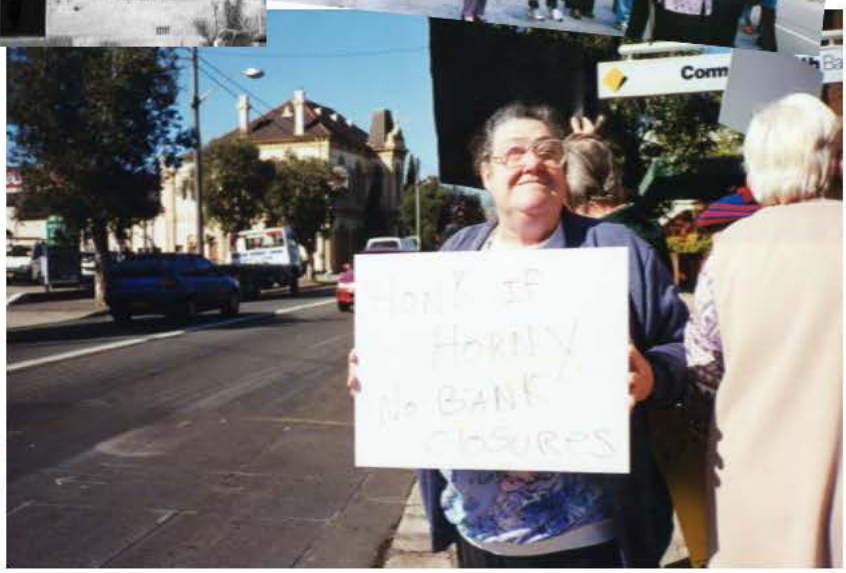
Barangaroo: The Threats it Poses to the Miller's Point Community

Issue 113, Summer '11

Front cover image: Stephanie Simcox

Desktop Publishing: Holly Miller

Many of the photographs in this edition of Inner Sydney Voice come from Inner Sydney Regional Council's collection of photographs about which Lisa Murray writes on page 16.



These photographs come from Inner Sydney Regional Council's collection of images that document the past 30 years of Sydney's social history. These images are being donated to the City of Sydney archives.

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Inner Sydney Voice is the journal of the Inner Sydney Regional Council

Inner Sydney Regional Council

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

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

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Contents

Note from the Chair

Welcome to the November 2011 edition of Inner Sydney Voice. While I have been on the Board of Regional Council for some time I have recently taken on the role of Chair of the Board. I have worked in Redfern for 10 years and lived in Waterloo for 4. I coordinate the Inner Sydney Tenants' Service at Redfern Legal Centre and am involved in local organisations, childcare and schools.

While I am not a long term local of the area I now call it home and I love it. I love the location and new parks and greening by Sydney City Council, but mostly I love the people. It really does have a village feel where people know each other and are friendly and down to earth. I don't know about you but I felt insulted when the government decided they had to 'rebrand Redfern' and I encourage all locals to be active and involved in the looming redevelopment of the area.

Some of the websites you can use to find out information and get involved are www.redwatch.org.au and groundswellcoalition.org.au

Another very current issue in the inner city area is the poor foresight of the government in closing down many of the schools such as Redfern Public. Some schools that were nearly shut down, such as Erskineville Public are now full to the brim. Many of the schools closest to where I live are either selective or for a particular purpose such as for children with behaviour difficulties or intensive English, to the point where there is a real lack of mainstream public and high schools. Many of us want to stay in the inner city after we have kids and we want to support the public system. You can read further about the work of CLOSE on page 15 and get involved in their work at www.facebook.com/groups/122612377823378. They are also asking for people to sign a petition they will shortly present to Parliament.

My work as a tenants' advocate ties in closely to the work of Regional Council and closely with Regional Council on projects such as the recent launch of our Boarders and Lodgers Legal Kit. You can read about this further on page 18 and the kit can be downloaded from the publications page at at www.rlc.org.au. We are still campaigning for rights for boarders and lodgers and also for occupants in share housing.

I hope you enjoy this info packed edition of Inner Sydney Voice and don't forget to join the Facebook page for Regional Council at www.facebook.com/pages/Inner-Sydney-Regional-Council/255356625562 so you can get involved and keep up to date on all the events in between issues!

Jacqui Swinburne
Chair – Inner Sydney Regional Council

Inner Sydney Regional Council's Work in 2011

Lord Mayor Clover Moore speaks at ISRC's "Challenge of Change" conference in July

It's been a busy year for all the staff and board members at Inner Sydney Regional Council. We have been busy keeping across developments in the community sector, including the changes to Community Services funding from CSGP to Community Builders and Early Intervention and Placement Prevention (EIPP) Program.

We have assisted the Save Millers Point Community Group in their fight to preserve the Social Housing and Boarding houses in the Millers Point/Dawes Point area. We have also supported them in their consultations with the Barangaroo Development Authority.

We held a conference in July for community organisations called "Our Future Community – the challenge of change', in which we focused on the changes expected in the inner city area in the next ten years and how these would impact on small NGO's.

The Lord Mayor Clover Moore opened proceedings and the inimitable Eva Cox was our keynote speaker. Eva addressed the importance of looking for solutions, not just complaining about the problems.

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We spent many hours collating and organising our vast collection of photos, collected over 35 years in the area, in preparation for our exhibition at the Annual Marg Barry Memorial Lecture, which focused on the importance of preserving our social history. Dr Lisa Murray's speech on this can be read on page, where a number of the photos to be archived by the City of Sydney can be seen. We assisted NGO's in their lobbying of politicians and political parties in the approach to the NSW March 2011 election and we continue to build relationships with sitting members to keep them aware of the issues and concerns of the sector and the community.

We are in the unique position of having a Liberal, Labor, Greens and Independent members in our region. This makes for interesting discussions.

ISRC is looking forward to a busy and productive 2011/2012 and feel confident that we will be able to effectively respond to the changing needs of our region. ■

From the Editor

The carbon tax debate illuminates one issue very clearly. Our politicians and parliamentarians don't bother wasting time informing themselves, when time can been spent in vitriolic fear mongering. And the media love them for it.

The Gillard Government tells us if we don't act now, we are doomed to an environmental Armageddon; the opposition tells us if we do act, we are bound for an economic apocalypse. We of the electorate are between a rock and a hard place.

Has Australia always been a nation that allows debates to be won or lost by giving in to our baser fears? I don't believe so. As I reviewed the catalogue of almost half a century's photos for the Inner Sydney Regional Council social history project, it was apparent that people were once prepared to fully understand an issue, weigh the pros and cons, and *then* get off their couch to hit the streets to voice their informed opinions. And while people will still get off their couch, as the recent OCCUPY rallies around the world have shown, many of these people are informed by merely a Tweet or a Facebook status update.

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The corporate giants and governments against which the OCCUPY rallies are railing know this and use their powerful propaganda machines to best effect.

The media amps up the campaign of fear to distract us from the drudgery of our lives and the more important issues at hand. It was Joseph Goebbels who said "It is not propaganda's task to be intelligent, its task is to lead to success."

The other form of propaganda at which our politicians are adept is *Ad hominem* – the art of attacking one's opponent, rather than attacking their arguments. Although, let's face it, our pollies do make easy targets. Tony in his Speedo's; Julia and that voice. But I feel the blame can't be laid solely at their feet. Our media, especially the commercial enterprises, have taken the art of the scandalous and salacious news bite to new heights. In this new post-industrial technological society, the lines between journalism and propaganda have become significantly blurred. We live in a world where Kim Kardashian rules the headlines, while the thousands of dead and millions at risk in the Horn of Africa are but a footnote. How can we be informed regarding the important issues, when Shurley (Shane Warne and Liz Hurley's relationship) is the crucial news piece of the day?

The general public rely primarily on the mainstream media for information regarding what's happening in the world, and what the world's leaders are doing to respond to it. This is problematic, given that the mainstream media outlets are owned by the very corporate giants driving the propaganda machine that seeks to keep us uninformed.

The emergence and proliferation of social media applications such as Facebook and Twitter present their users with two options. The first: to obtain basic information through 50-word updates, to limit ourselves to this level of knowledge, use it to understand the events occurring in the world around us, and remain largely uninformed. The second, however, is to recognise that these applications put the media in the hands of the general public and provide us with an unprecedented opportunity to communicate and obtain information that is not always provided by the mainstream media. Detailed and critical information on the state of the world's economy, climate change, poverty, and the actions of governments can be found through links to blogs and to the work of independent writers published online.

We need to take back control over how we are governed, and we can only do this by ensuring that we access information that provides us with a critical viewpoint. In so doing, we will empower ourselves to work together to ensure that our communities have access to their basic rights.

When accessing information in any kind of media, keep your eyes and ears open and question everything. Whom does this benefit? Why did they do that? According to whom?

Knowledge is power. Lets take it back.

Charmaine Jones
A/Executive Officer, ISRC

WHAT *FEMINISM* LEFT *BEHIND*

Getting Back in the Ring to Fight for Women's Housing Rights

Holly Miller

Image: Stephanie Simcox

In the heat of the 1970s feminist movement, Germaine Greer said scathingly: "The house wife is an unpaid employee in her husband's house in return for the security of being a permanent employee."

And in the background, the battle raged on. Women chanted with placards in the streets, waving bras in the air that burnt with fire that couldn't match the fierceness with which they fought.

They fought for liberation - liberation from the shackles that came with being a woman. They fought for equality – equal rights, equal opportunities, equal pay. They fought to be equal with men.

With time, the feminist movement had, for the most part, cast the domestic trappings of womanhood aside. Women had moved on and out and into the workforce, into higher education, into the political arena.

And that seemed to be that.

Over the 30 or so years that have passed since the movement's heyday, feminist voices have become quieter. For a long time now, the mainstream media have questioned whether feminism is, in fact, dead.

The reluctance of younger women to be associated with what became known for a while as 'the F word' was hailed as a clear indication that, regardless of whether or not feminism was dead, being a feminist was no longer a mainstream political stand.

And in the Australian political arena, if you're not mainstream, you're generally not relevant, and you're certainly not powerful.

Perhaps feminism did die. Perhaps, as scholars have suggested, it moved on to join other elderly social movements and historical eras—such as modernism and colonialism—in the 'post' category (in which it is academically contemplated, but serves little other function).

Wherever feminism is now, it is not here, in NSW, in 2011.

> *"Research shows that boys get more pocket money than girls"*

While there are indications from time to time that society is still concerned with gender issues (the Rudd government's introduction of the paid parental leave scheme in 2009 was definitely a step forward), there is a general understanding that men and women are now equal.

It is perceived that, on the whole, the need for feminism has ceased to exist.

A frightening thought, really, given that age-old gender issues are still tightly enmeshed in the very fabric of Australian society. And today, they are having profound, devastating and very real effects. For instance, older women are quickly becoming the most prevalent demographic suffering homelessness in NSW.

The parameters of the problem are outlined in a ground-breaking report published by the Older Women's Network (OWN) in 2010. Ludo McFerran of the Domestic Violence Clearing House at the University of New South Wales worked with Sonia Laverty of OWN to compile the report, chillingly titled: "It Could Be You: female, single, older and homeless".

McFerran says that the report was commissioned in response to alarm bells raised by Homelessness NSW: "They came to us and said that older women had started showing up at services in increasingly alarming numbers. Since then, it's gotten to the point where older women are coming into services more than men."

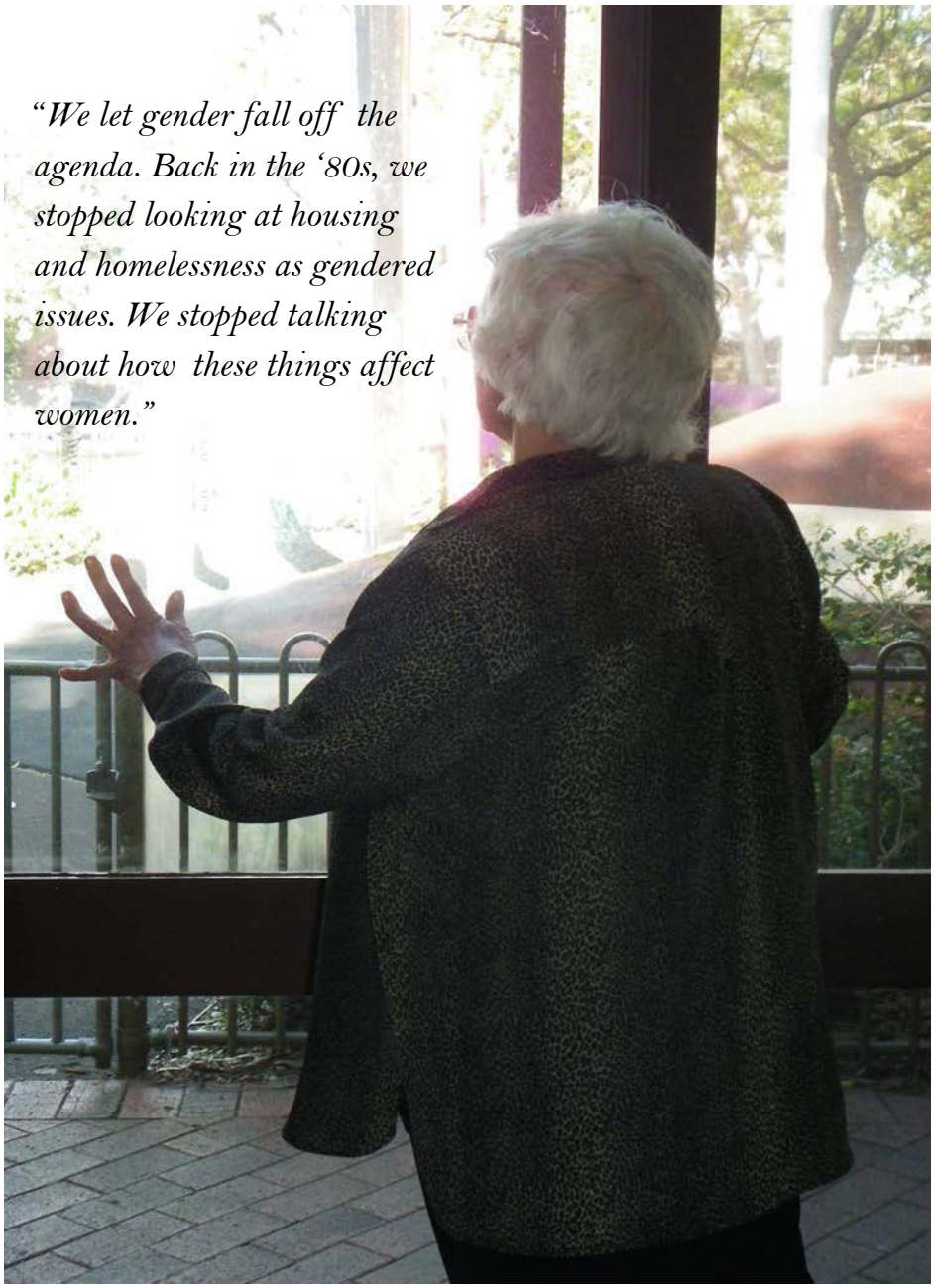
And so the investigation began.

McFerran says: "Obviously with research, the more people you interview, the more sound the results. But with this, it took just speaking to a few women to realise that the stories all sounded the same. I thought, 'Wow. We've really struck something disturbing here.'"

And how did the stories go? Not the way you'd probably expect. A 2008 report from the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs attributes homelessness to disability, mental illness, and the abuse of drugs and alcohol.

These findings confirm the stereotypes of homelessness that exist in the minds of the general public. However, what they do not do is distinguish between the reasons for homelessness in women and men. And this, says Sonia Laverty, is the key policy issue that must be addressed.

In a speech given in August this year, Laverty told the OWN forum in Lismore that the 31 women interviewed in the study did not conform to the findings of the Department's report. In fact, if disability, mental illness or drug and alcohol abuse were elements in these women's lives, they were the effects of homelessness, not its causes. She said, "Most of the women we interviewed had worked throughout their lives, raised children, and endured abusive and difficult relationships."



"We let gender fall off the agenda. Back in the '80s, we stopped looking at housing and homelessness as gendered issues. We stopped talking about how these things affect women."

Image: Charmaine Jones

McFerran says "It became apparent that we were dealing with a very clear chain of events and circumstances that had led women to homelessness—and this was a process that was happening to me and others like me, too." The path leading women out of their houses and onto the streets is a path that starts in childhood, says McFerran: "Research shows that boys get more pocket money than girls."

The fact that women still don't receive equal pay may seem like a small remnant of gender inequality left behind in the wake of the feminist movement, but its effects are dire, and tend to go unrecognized.

Women are usually forced to retire in their mid-50s, whereas men are forced to retire in their mid-60s.

Non-equal pay and the fact that female-dominated industries command less income are significant contributing factors to homelessness in older women.

Furthermore, research by the Brotherhood St Laurence shows that women are being pushed out of the workforce 10 years before men.

Lower incomes mean less savings, and less superannuation. When women are no longer able to find or hold down work, paying a mortgage or renting privately becomes impossible without a significant nest egg.

And these are not the only gender issues forcing women out of their homes late in life. Increasing rates of divorce and separation are also contributing to rising levels of homelessness. Says Ludo McFerran, "when the family home is sold, women are usually the losers."

McFerran also notes that the financial status of women in contemporary society is compounded by the fact that women and men have different relationships with money.

Women tend to choose to provide financially for their children throughout their lives, whereas men are more inclined to keep their money close to their chests.

And herein lies the crux of the issue.

As McFerran points out, women in their 20s *are* benefiting from the work of the feminist movement. They're out in the workforce, earning money, and for the most part, keeping up with their male contemporaries (despite their generally lower rates of pay).

It's when they reach their 30s, however, that women are "cut off at the knees". And it's one factor in a woman's life that disempowers her financially in one foul swoop.

Having children.

The enduring and seemingly unshakeable role of the mother – *woman* – as the primary care giver remains the central reason that women continue to be financially disempowered, and at risk of finding rights as basic as housing inaccessible.

Sonia Laverty points out: "The fundamentals have not changed in 40 years. Women continue to carry the burden of family care responsibilities and domestic work. They have broken patterns of part-time and casual labour-force participation in a highly gender-differentiated workforce, resulting in wage inequality."

…Precisely the conditions that feminists fought so long to abolish.

And so it seems that 1970s feminism left behind it a myriad of gender imbalances that continue to have profound and devastating impacts on women's lives. McFerran says "We let gender fall off the agenda. Back in the '80s, we stopped looking at housing and homelessness as gendered issues. We stopped talking about how these things affect women."

Apart from the fact that women are *becoming* homeless in a way that is different from men, women *being* homeless presents different issues from those faced by homeless men.

The ever-present threats of rape and violence mean that women living on the streets or in boarding houses become nocturnal, sleeping during the day to maximize their personal safety.

And this threat is not being adequately addressed. In the Inner Sydney area, there is only one refuge that caters exclusively to older women, and it is not a government-run facility. There are no female-only boarding houses, and nor is social housing designed to cater for the needs of women – which can differ vastly from those of men.

So what needs to happen to address the fact that – put simply – women are increasingly unable to access their basic human rights?

Ludo McFerran cautions that "the problem is not going to get smaller. It's going to get a lot, lot bigger.

We have to come up with new ideas, because the ones that we've been working with for 40 years haven't worked out well for women. New feminism needs to tear to shreds what we've done… We need to start thinking outside the box."

McFerran's proposed solution is exactly that. She argues that men and women should lay the foundations of their working lives in their 20s, by acquiring skills in the workplace and starting their education.

At 30, she advocates, it should become mandatory for *everyone* to work part-time for a decade, which would properly level the playing field. It would give both men and women the opportunity to partake equally in the child-rearing process, and equal opportunities to pursue careers that would ensure long-term financial security for both parties.

Regardless of whether this is, in fact, the solution that feminism should be fighting for, one thing is certain. Feminism should be fighting. Feminists should be fighting to address the current "one size fits all" approach to policy. They should be fighting so that issues as dire as severe homelessness in older women are not invisible to policy makers. They should be fighting, as they once did, to ensure that the opportunities of women are equal to those of men.

Feminists need to get back in the ring, this time with greater wisdom and the benefits of experience.

In the 1970s, women fought for the freedom to get *out* of the home. Now we must fight to keep them in it.

For services and support if you find yourself facing homelessness, contact:

Homeless Persons information:	1800 234 566
Domestic Violence Line:	1800 656 463
Department of Housing Out of Hours Temporary Accommodation Line:	1800 152 152
To search for a service in your area, visit the Homelessness NSW website:	www.homelessnessnsw.org.au

Questioning The Carbon Tax

Alice McCredie-Dando

Since details of the Government's new carbon tax were released in July this year, our political leaders have been barnstorming across the country, engaging in a level of campaigning usually reserved for election years.

While Julia Gillard doggedly puts forward her case for a tax that she ruled out in the lead-up to last year's election, Opposition Leader Tony Abbott continues to call out the Prime Minister's "lie" - tapping into a public unrest that the Coalition clearly hopes will lead to federal victory in 2013.

The vehemence of this unrest in some quarters has threatened to dominate the tone of the debate. Speaking at a forum on climate change policy in Brisbane recently, Shadow Treasurer Joe Hockey was clearly taken aback when one audience member suggested that Australians take up arms against the Government - a variation on the revolutionary theme popular with figures including the talkback host Alan Jones, who has advocated a "people's revolt" on his 2GB breakfast program.

Of course, only very few take the rhetoric to heart, and as Hockey pointed out, this is a battle that will be fought with words. However, the revolutionary zeal in some quarters has served to focus debate over the tax almost exclusively on one concern: How much is this going to cost me?

The Government anticipated this question, of course. Gillard's announcement of the carbon tax coincided with the announcement of a series of further reforms intended to offset an expected increase in the cost of living.

The raising of the tax-free threshold to $18 000 and an increase in payments - including a 1.7% increase in the rate of all Government allowances - will ensure that the majority of Australians are no worse off under the scheme, the Prime Minister said.

Labor has been active in promoting this message. Speaking last month during a visit to the Northcott Estate, Sydney MP Tanya Plibersek was at pains to point out that proceeds from the tax - which will apply to Australia's 500 biggest-polluting companies only, at an initial rate of $23 per tonne of carbon - will largely be redistributed to taxpayers, 9 out of 10 of whom will receive some form of compensation.

These compensatory measures acknowledge that any cost to business will ultimately be passed on to consumers - with Treasury predicting a $10.10 increase in the weekly cost of living for the average Australian household. Labor's tax reforms, Plibersek stressed, will ensure that over two thirds of taxpayers receive compensation equivalent to 100 to 120 per cent of this increase.

All families earning up to $150 000 per year will be entitled to a payment or tax break of some kind.

The breadth of compensation reflects a demand that the cost of the new tax be distributed equitably, and the emphasis on support for low income earners recognises the higher proportional cost of energy for those households.

Promoting the tax, Gillard has relied on Treasury estimates that a price on carbon will result in a 58 million tonne drop in emissions by 2020. But such a drop does not fulfil the Government's 5% reduction target - and the Greens argue that the carbon price will have to reach $40 per tonne before renewable energy can compete in the energy market.

From 2015, with the introduction of an Emission Trading Scheme, the price of carbon will fluctuate, depending on a range of international factors. In such a changing environment, it is important that we focus not only on maintaining adequate compensation, but also on ensuring continued investment in the renewable energy field.

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The Government's policy is perhaps limited in its current scope. But it does at least signal the beginning of a serious commitment to tackling climate change.

The only alternative on offer is the Opposition's direct action policy, which essentially gambles on the non-existence of global warming. Under this scheme, business faces no restriction on emissions, with climate change action instead subsidised by the taxpayer in the form of governmental direct action, such as the planting of additional trees in public areas.

The policy has its detractors even among members of the Coalition. Speaking on the ABC's *Lateline*, the Shadow Communications Minister Malcolm Turnbull observed that “A direct action policy ... where industry was able to freely pollute, if you like, and the government was just spending more and more taxpayers' money to offset it, that would become a very expensive charge on the budget in the years ahead."

The Government's carbon tax, by contrast, starts in the right place: with the polluters. It may not go far enough, but it does begin to provide the incentives necessary to bring about the behavioural change that our climate requires.

Did you know?

In January this year, the Redfern Waterloo Authority released its Built Environment Plan II (BEP 2).The BEP 2 is a proposed planning framework for the urban renewal of Housing NSW sites in the Redfern and Waterloo area, which will be rolled out over a 20-25 year timeframe. The plan proposed an increase of an extra 3,500 dwellings (mostly private) and a loss of 700 social housing properties for the area. At around the same time, Housing NSW also announced that it had received Commonwealth funding - under the Affordability Framework - to draw up a preliminary Masterplan for the areas covered by the BEP 2.

There was concern within the community that many residents didn’t understand the planning framework. The community was anxious to ensure that any consultations with local residents were done in a fair and transparent manner, and felt that there was a need to ensure social housing and affordable housing remained key elements of the renewal. These community discussions were the genesis of Groundswell.

Groundswell is a coalition of local community organisations, non-government organisations and interested residents who are keen to provide an avenue for the Redfern/Waterloo community to stay informed and to ensure the community’s voices are heard during the consultative processes for the Built Environment Plan II and preliminary Masterplan.

More information about Groundswell can be found on the RedWatch website ww.redwatch.org.au or by calling Inner Sydney Regional Council on 9698 7461.

Work Disincentives: The Road to Worklessness

Charmaine Jones

The government's latest remedy for the poverty and inequity of those living in large social housing estates is 'social mix': the deconcentration of public housing through the creation of engineered mixed tenure/mixed income communities.

The theory is that by having wealthier neighbours, poorer people will have better opportunities for greater economic and social participation.

Many of these people don't work simply because work disincentives created by the tensions between Centrelink policies and Housing NSW policies prevent them from doing so.

While there is much debate in political and academic circles about social mix, one thing is certain. The model treats the symptoms of poverty rather than the causes, and does nothing to address the penury cycle created when a person resides in a social housing property and is supported by a statutory government payment.

The by-line of the blog, "Diary of a Desperate Houso", states that the blogger is "*caught in a poverty trap between the pincers of Centrelink and Housing NSW.*"

This is, unfortunately, a sad statement of fact for many social housing tenants who are capable of being gainfully employed. Many of these people don't work simply because work disincentives created by the tensions between Centrelink policies and Housing NSW policies prevent them from doing so.

Work disincentives are costs or conditions that discourage persons from increasing their incomes through work – in other words, finding yourself in a financial situation in which you would keep so little of your increased income for yourself that it is not really worth the effort of increasing it.

There is evidence that a Centrelink recipient who takes on lowly-paid work will, after the loss of the health care card and concessions related to it, have a net financial gain of between 15-35 cents for each additional dollar earned.

A person working part-time only has to earn enough to have $1 deducted from their Centrelink NewStart payment and they lose their transport concession. So, although they may only be working one day a week, they will pay full-fare anywhere they travel for the rest of the week.

Add to this the effect of rent-setting and tenancy tenure based on income, and social housing tenants face a double disincentive to gain and sustain employment.

Housing NSW offers all new clients who fit the eligibility criteria fixed term leases of 12 months, two, five or ten years, depending on the extent and length of the need. A tenant is not eligible for an extension to their lease if the total weekly household assessable income is more than the weekly income limit for lease review, which is $694 Gross for one adult

or a combined income of $885 Gross for a couple.

So after having waited (in some cases for years) to be offered social housing, an entry into employment may mean a tenant loses their eligibility status and is given a notice of termination.

In a market where there is only one affordable rental property for every four low-income households, this is a frightening prospect.

If we consider the reasons people met the eligibility criteria for social housing in the first place, we must presume some crisis or disability had led them to this point. Employment may be possible, but is not always sustainable, and to maintain rent in the private market is too heavy a burden for some to bear. They are left with the choice: job or roof? And as it is very hard to maintain a job without a roof, by necessity, most choose the roof.

If a tenant continues to work, but earns less than the $694, or they are on continuing leases, they are still faced with a rent based on income.

A social housing tenant paying 25-30% rent on gross income can find that after tax, HECS/HELP, the medicare levy and other deductions, up to 70-85% of net income is being paid in rent.

Also, tenants who live in properties without separate water meters pay for their water as a percentage of their income, so despite there being no increase in the use of water, the tenant experiences an increase in the water cost.

...Housing NSW is unlikely to offer a tenant a transfer solely on the premise that they need to be closer to employment opportunities.

The increase in rent and the loss of tenancy are factors often cited by tenants as disincentives to move into work. But rent-setting is not the only discouragement to work when living in social housing. The nature of public housing estates means they are often in fringe areas.

For people living in these estates, employment can mean hours of daily travel, and Housing NSW is unlikely to offer a tenant a transfer solely on the premise that they need to be closer to employment opportunities.

Housing NSW has created a Catch 22. To be financially sustainable, Housing NSW needs to have some tenants paying market rent or close to it. But due to a shortage of properties, its policy of targeted eligibility means only those on a statutory income are housed. These are the very tenants who are unlikely to find financial benefit in employment.

Academics and politicians continue to make noise about generational welfare dependency, but until the federal and state government realise housing and employment are linked (and therefore their governing bodies need to be), little is likely to change. There needs to be a means for the capacity of all people to contribute meaningfully to economic and social development of their communities. The federal and state governments need to recognise this and institute policies accordingly.

Images: Stephanie Simcox

Permaculture

Synchronicity and the Spring of Hope

Jessica Perini

The warmth of spring holds so much promise. A few more stolen moments of daylight, each day closer to planting. Green leaves bursting from their buds. Potted seedlings on my balcony stretch for the sky, ache to sink their feet into the warming soil. The pineapple sage unfurls its pretty red promise of a flower.

Ideas in my mind over the last decade have slowly formed roots. I feel them pushing through the surface, their imminent burst.

These ideas germinated early in the new century, when I started volunteering as a writer and editor with the Asylum Seekers Centre in Surry Hills.

Since then I've met so many people, the cheeky French-speaking African boys, the erudite Burmese scholars, families with ever-so-curious children, and so very many lone quiet men and women.

Their characters as diverse as those in any community. Neither devils or angels. Just regular people like you and me.

The first five years were not exactly easy. Asylum seekers are terribly demonised, and fighting against that takes its toll. In 2005 I decided to stretch my wings into an area that had a more positive focus.

I was passionate about the environment, so I did bush regeneration and joined a community garden. In this garden I met so many lovely people, with open hearts and minds.

It was a real break from the dog-eat-dog world out there as they shared produce and knowledge. The rejuvenation I so badly needed.

I took part in organic gardening courses, learning about permaculture along the way. I wanted to know how ecologies worked, how pests and beneficial insects functioned and how water flowed on a site. More formal permaculture courses taught all these things and more; they gave a path to addressing not just gardening issues, but a way to forming sustainable systems, solutions to so many problems. And always – in the back of my mind – the question whirred, 'How can I apply this to human rights?'

In 2008 with City of Sydney funding I helped plan, build and now maintain a permaculture garden at the Asylum Seekers Centre. Each Tuesday we sit and work together, sharing stories about each of our cultures, but mainly we talk about food! What our mothers cooked for us. How we cook now.

In 2010, again with City of Sydney funding, the garden was extended to a native food 'mini' forest in the front with the help of local Aboriginal legend Frances Bodkin (of the Bidigal – Swamp People Country of the Sydney Basin),. One of the asylum seekers loved Aunty Fran so much they dubbed her Queen of Australia!

Permaculture is a system of design founded by two Australians in the 1970s and is now popular around the world. It is inspired by nature – the endless recycling of a forest that produces no waste; the slow and steady building of soil through composting, instead of using fast-track non-sustainable synthetic fertilisers or pesticides – working with nature instead of against it. A permaculturist spends time observing nature and attempting to find or come back to a place of balance. It is practiced by many groups including organic gardeners, biodynamic farmers, and even people re-designing business systems and homes. Its three ethics are: care for people, care for land and fair share.

Asylum seekers and permaculture groups were still a world apart. (Sure we had our mini-garden in Surry Hills, but we were cut off from other groups that were active in the area and beyond.) How could I bring them together? That's when I came up with Permaculture for the People.

For the People

Part of the Asylum Seekers Centre's essential work is an employment program, helping asylum seekers find jobs (where visas allow). Permaculture for the People suggests an extension of that program into green skills – such as permaculture.

Via strategic alliances with training providers such as Milkwood Farm Inc, the project intends to train asylum seekers for jobs in the burgeoning field of sustainability. I'm also working to create alliances with community gardens, councils, and other organisations to create volunteer opportunities and employment in industry.

The response has been extraordinary. When I shared my idea with Milkwood Permaculture they offered fully funded scholarships in their courses. Local groups have raised money for travel and food. Others have offered free plots so asylum seekers can grow their own organic produce.

Once these connections are established, a free flow of skills, education, work and companionship can take place. This will happen both ways as asylum seekers will bring their own skills to the experience.

Through my work helping establish the Asylum Seekers Centre garden I have seen these exchanges at play. They are greatly rewarding for clients and volunteers alike.

Inspired by the efforts of Sustainable South Bronx I envisage a path to urban renewal in some of the most depleted parts of our city.

Sustainable South Bronx (SSBx) was founded by an environmentalist called Majora Carter. Walking with her dog through an illegal dumping ground one day Majora's furry friend led her to a river. She thought, 'If only this area could be cleaned up and accessed residents and visitors could appreciate it'. The concept for the new Hunts Point Riverside Park was born. SSBx runs the Bronx Environmental Stewardship Training (BEST) program, which takes students through 'green collar jobs' training covering tree pruning, remediation, estuary maintenance and job–life skills. Green Roof programs help poorer residents have warmer homes in what can be brutally cold winters, and provide jobs for the long-term unemployed. South Bronx is a poor urban area with not only dire social problems but also great environmental challenges. By addressing both issues, training people in green skills, she and the organisation have helped to create a greener, more socially cohesive society.

Using the combined forces of those on the fringe of society, the unemployed, homeless people, Indigenous people, people with disabilities, those with mental health problems, refugees and asylum seekers perhaps we can bring our city back to a place of balance and greenness. So many are already treading this green path. It's just a matter of bringing groups together.

This journey is in its early stages and will – no doubt – evolve with time. These are its first tentative few steps.

Meanwhile back at the Asylum Seekers Centre the plants reach their heads towards the sky. Finally, winter ebbs, and that little bit more sun in the backyard, is enough to tempt the flowers from their winter hibernation.

The asylum seekers, volunteers and staff venture out with the warmth for meetings, teas and lunch. Some sit on the benches made from recycled bottles generously donated by nearby pubs and restaurants. Benches double as garden bed walls.

Like so many back yards in Surry Hills it's not a voluminous space, and with little sun in winter, gardening can be a struggle, but we do our best. Like so many on the fringes of society we may not survive in the best of all conditions. We don't have full sunlight, unlimited budgets, bountiful time and skills. But do we have the seed of an idea, and hopefully that will germinate and take root.

You can read more on http://www.permacultureglobal.com/projects/436-asylum-seekers-centre-permaculture-garden

If you wish to join our project as a participant, training provider, volunteer or offering work, you can contact us at Permaculturefortheopeople@gmail.com

Images: Jessica Perini

Community Lynchpins

Holly Miller

The past 20 years have seen gentrification gradually make its way through the veins of the Inner Sydney area, and come to rest in the spaces between the multicultural communities, the social housing estates and the elderly who have owned their homes for decades.

The social and economic changes that are occurring in the area are attracting different sub-communities, and those who have lived in the Inner Sydney area over the decades remain. As a result, Sydney is increasingly becoming home to a colourful and broad spectrum of individuals and communities: people of different ethnic backgrounds, different ages, different socioeconomic statuses, and different sexual orientations.

In the midst of the changes in the social landscape of the inner city, one characteristic has endured the ages: the strong sense of community among Sydney's residents.

Sydney has, in years gone by, been assessed as being home primarily to singles, but the past ten years have seen a significant increase in the number of families living in the area, which is often put down to the city's prolific gentrification.

Families living in Sydney, however, say that the strong sense of community that characterises the city is its main drawcard. Parents are keen to provide their children with the social environment that a strong community provides, and feel that they find this in the "city of villages".

It stands to reason, then, that a growing chorus of concerned parents' voices is becoming louder on an issue that they perceive threatens the community that their children, while young, are a part of. CLOSE (Community for Local Option for Secondary Education) are a group of parents working together to make a noise about the distinct lack of accessible high schools in the inner Sydney area.

Balmain is the local high schools designated to inner Sydney residents. Many feel that Balmain is largely inaccessible given how far it is from suburbs like Surry Hills.

Emma Cotterill is a Darlinghurst resident who has lived in the area for ten years. She is a mother of 2, and a member of CLOSE. Her oldest child is 8, and attends Darlinghurst Primary school. Emma, like many others, values the community that her family is a part of, and points out that the local public school is one of its lynchpins: "It's through the school that parents meet each other, fetes are held, and community events take place."

Emma says that the school is a meeting point where everyone living in the area can come together, regardless of their socioeconomic or demographic position. She is frustrated that the only options for high school within the community's proximity are private or selective.

"There's an assumption that if you live in the inner city, you're rich," says Emma. "We're comfortable, but not rich. We can't afford to send our children to private schools, but there seems to be an assumption in Sydney that that's just what you should be able to do. As tax payers, we should be able to access a public school anyway, whatever our income might be. I think a lot of families feel like that."

The lack of public high schools in the inner city undermines the old Australian value in egalitarianism, and removes key social infrastructure that serves to facilitate interaction between different communities living in the same area.

Tim Ritchie is a Crown Street resident who lived in the inner city for ten years before having his daughter, who now attends Crown Street Primary School. Crown Street, says Tim, is a school that "a multicultural and diverse range of kids attend. There is a good mix of kids who come from middle to high income families, kids whose families live in the area's social housing estates, as well as kids from a range of ethnic backgrounds. It's important for my daughter to be able to interact with people whose lives are different from hers. That's what community in Sydney is all about."

Darlington Primary School band performing at the ISRC Conference earlier this year.

While CLOSE don't advocate for a particular solution, they are calling on the state government to find one and implement it. They want to ensure that their children have the same access to Sydney's diverse community as they do, and believe that as taxpayers, this should be provided for by the government.

Says Emma Cotterill: "It doesn't seem fair. We need another school."

Advocating for Accessible Schools for Inner Sydney

BARANGAROO: Threatening the Local Community?

Mara Barnes

It is no wonder the locals of Millers Point are feeling under siege.

Firstly, despite promises from the government of the day that no more public housing properties in the area would be sold, regardless of the community's desperate attempt to stop further sales, another 20 or so properties are earmarked to go under the hammer.

On top of this, a number of boarding houses, which have been home to many of the area's working poor have closed, because Housing NSW is choosing not to renew the 30 year leases held by the boarding house landlords.

And then there is Barangaroo.

The Barangaroo development will see the old AGL gas works site at Millers Point turned into a waterside public space. Much of this will become parkland. Parts of it will be allocated to office blocks, stores, cafes and bars. The site is currently used as a wharf for incoming cruise vessels.

The Barangaroo Delivery Authority (BDA) claims that the Barangaroo venture is one of the most ambitious and significant waterfront greening projects anywhere in the world and will reaffirm Sydney's standing as Australia's global city.

The BDA maintain that the Barangaroo project is supported by the government, the private sector and sections of the community, and uphold that it will attract new investment.

But there is anger in Sydney about the development.

On the 5th of May, 2011, Clover Moore MP tabled a petition in Parliament expressing the concerns of NSW citizens regarding the process, consultation, design and environmental impacts of the development. The petition's whopping 11,000 signatures are a reflection of the uncertainty that Barangaroo has inspired among Sydney-siders.

Community groups - who represent Sydney's concerned residents - are calling for full transparency and better planning controls for the site. The National Trust of Australia (NSW), Friends of Barangaroo, and Australians for Sustainable Development have banded together to demand that the development goes ahead only on the back of thorough community consultation.

And the NSW government hasn't been entirely non-responsive.

Prompted by the demands of community groups and the petition flagged by the Lord Mayor, the NSW Government promised – and delivered - a review of the Barangaroo development.

On 31 May, 2011, the Honorable Brad Hazzard MP, Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, announced the review open to the public.

And the review looked relatively favourably on the community. One of its key recommendations was that a peer review be conducted, and that groups such as Australians for Sustainable Development be consulted.

On 22 August 2011, NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell announced the commencement of the recommended peer review into Barangaroo's site remediation plans.

While the peer review is an apparent step in the right direction, the conditions upon which it will be conducted leave little room for the say of the community to have much effect.

The current review will take approximately three months. While it will be "conducted as a priority", the Barangaroo Review emphasised that a peer review need not delay work at the site.

This means that laying the foundations for the development as it currently stands – such as the commencement of basement construction at Barangaroo South and the headland park—should begin as soon as possible. Beginning as soon as possible - before the results of the peer review are in - will mean that the community's concerns are overlooked from the outset.

Millers Point residents (particularly those of Merriman and High Streets) are concerned with a number of aspects of the Barangaroo development, and the changes it is likely to bring with it.

Their primary concern, however, is the immediate threat it poses to residents' health and safety.

Accordingly, they have called for an immediate baseline health assessment of the residents living in close proximity to Barangaroo, in an effort to assess and document any health implications that may arise from the development and remediation process of the site.

The community is concerned that the sandstone extraction involved in the development of the proposed headland park will mean dust, airborne vapours, noise and vibration, and the ongoing usage of heavy machinery for long hours of construction in a residential neighborhood.

There will be very little respite for residents, which presents fears for their health and mental wellbeing.

On top of this, residual waste of the former AGL gasworks site present major threats to human life. A cocktail of toxic chemicals including coal, tar, lead, naphthalene, benzene and cyanide remain at Barangaroo. They are both toxic and carcinogenic, and their physical and chemical properties are largely non-degradable.

The BDA plans to remediate the contaminated soil in-situ, using a trial remediation process rather than the usual excavation method. Remediating the soil in-situ can involve treating contaminants with chemicals in order to neutralize them. These chemicals can cause their own contamination of ground water.

However the remediating process will take place, the gas site remains will not be left completely free of toxins and carcinogens. Add the remaining (and new) chemicals to the harbor pollution that will be caused when the present existing edges of the slab are cut away to create a fake shoreline, and the present headland park design is an environmental disaster waiting to happen.

Millers Point residents are also concerned about the threats that Barangaroo development presents to their physical safety, as the new park will likely become a space that people will use to drink and use drugs in the evening. The community is fearful that break-and-enters and personal attacks will increase as a result.

And on top of all this, there are other proposed changes that will not only affect the Millers Point community, but also impact the wider Sydney area.

One is the removal of the cruise ship terminal from Barangaroo. Many Millers Point residents want the cruise ships to remain at the Hungry Mile wharf as a link to the site's rich maritime history.

The proposition that the terminal be relocated to White Bay in Balmain is ill-conceived. Accommodation in Balmain is limited, which would mean that visitors arriving in Sydney on cruise ships would have to get transport to the CBD. Apart from effecting a less welcoming arrival to Sydney, this would also add to traffic congestion on the Anzac Bridge.

The wider implications that the development will have for the city's public transport infrastructure are just as noteworthy. If the Barangaroo development goes ahead, it will eventually force thousands more workers to have to come into the city. They will come from as far away as the south and north coasts and the far western suburbs.

Hubs like Campbelltown, Penrith, the Richmond line, Blacktown and Parramatta are already at saturation point for workers having to come into the city.

Town Hall and Wynyard are now as good as at peak saturation point, much like the York Street bus precinct. Millers Point residents maintain that it would be common sense to build office high rises out closer to where workers live - if for no other reason than to save them hours of travel a day.

Whilst Millers Point residents are well aware that their community is located in the city, the Barangaroo development, especially the northern part, will turn what is a relatively sleepy part of the city into a major vehicle and pedestrian thoroughfare.

Resident parking is already at a premium due to the Hickson Road theatres. Not to mention tourist buses parking in the area, festivals, marathons, filming…the list goes on.

Street parking is already taken up by workers driving into the city. A massive underground carpark, which is part of the current plans for the Barangaroo development, will draw more traffic and pollution into the area.

Historically, Millers Point has been defined by its warehouses and dedicated housing for waterside workers, which has fostered a strong and loyal community with a sense of solidarity.

This community is protective of the unique identity of Millers Point: both its historical fabric and its social significance. The area's community and character was a key reason for its listing on the State Heritage Register: a clear indication that the whole state considers it valuable, and worth keeping - for what it is and has been.

The Barangaroo development shows little regards for Millers Point and its community, or for the residents of the greater Sydney area.

Above all else, however, there is no justification for putting development above the safety, health and security of the community.

LEGAL RIGHTS

For Boarders and Tenants

Holly Miller

Sydney's boarding houses are home to a great number of people whose lives are being severely affected by the fact that as boarders and lodgers, they do not have any legal rights.

The launch of The Boarders and Lodgers Legal Information Kit by Lord Mayor Clover Moore at Parliament House on the 4th August marks a clear response by the community to the lack of legal rights experienced by boarders in New South Wales.

Moore, who funded the Kit through her Lord Mayor Salary Trust, emphasized her commitment to the plight of boarders and tenants, and said that the conditions endured by people living in boarding houses are unacceptable.

The Kit provides an overview of the various laws that boarders and tenants can use in place of legislation that pertains directly to them. Jacqui Swinburne, Tenants Service Coordinator at Redfern Legal Centre said "If someone has paid their rent but is being evicted with no notice, or they can't get back their things or their bond, they need to try and rely on other types of consumer legislation and the common law. This makes their legal matters extremely complex and often unattainable due to the Court costs involved."

Boarders and lodgers – otherwise known as "marginal renters" – are distinguished as such by the very fact that they are not protected by the *Residential Tenancies Act 2010*, which covers the legal rights of tenants.

The Act does not define people who inhabit premises such as motels and residential colleges as tenants. Nor does it recognise private agreements – a boarding agreement between a private home owner and an individual, for example – as tenancy agreements.

> *"...People continue to live in squalid conditions because their landlord has no obligation to them..."*

The social consequences tend to be dire for those defined as boarders and lodgers – many of whom have come directly from a life on the streets and are boarding simply because they have no other option.

Paul Adabie of Newtown Neighbourhood Centre believes that fear is the primary issue that the lack of legal rights causes for boarders.

"Boarders tend not to complain about the conditions of the home that they live in because more often than not, they live in fear of their landlords, who can evict them at any moment. The law does not say they can't," he said. "This means that people continue to live in squalid conditions, because their landlord has no obligation to them as they would in a tenancy agreement. We see people living in spaces that are mouldy and have holes in the walls and roof all the time. It's not uncommon."

Adabie said that without being regulated by law, boarding houses tend to perpetuate the cycle of poverty.

(Continued from previous page)

"Many of the people who live in boarding houses are there because at some point or other they encountered mental health issues, which forced them onto the street, or into a situation in which mainstream tenancy stopped being an option. Others are there because they are dependent on drugs and/or alcohol. This means that some boarders end up being in a situation where they are afraid of the other people they live with, who may become aggressive and violent as a result of substance abuse. This perpetuates the cycle of mental health issues for many boarders, who then find it difficult to extract themselves from the situation they are in."

Adabie, who manages Newtown Neighbourhood Centre's Boarding House Outreach Project (BHOP), works with four project support workers to advocate for the rights of boarders and lodgers, and to help them better access community services, and work towards finding them social housing.

At the launch of the Boarders and Lodgers Information Kit, Jacqui Swinburne called for the new government of NSW to support Clover Moore's Private Members Bill – legislation that protects boarders and tenants.

She was joined by Sarah Bell, who has been a boarding house resident for 7 years.

Sarah Bell told the group that she had "experienced electric shocks coming through the switches in bathrooms because the wiring is all wrong."

Bell went on to say that in boarding houses, "lots of rooms are being sub divided. They are tiny and have no windows. I've known people who have come out of prison and they say these rooms are smaller than their cells in prison. But they have no other choice."

Ms Bell has turned to the Redfern Legal Centre for support in her dealings with boarding houses. She said: "I need the law to be on my side to help support me and get back on my feet to feel safe. We need human rights to help us get back into society and not separate us. When boarding houses are run with no rules we feel like we are outcasts and that's when things spiral downhill. We're all equal and we need to be able to have our say. Just because we earn less shouldn't give the right for boarding house owners to threaten us and say this is my house and you have no say."

The above images featured in the ISRC Social History exhibition that you can read about on page 20.

They are photographs of the Home and Community Care program from 1968.

Words of the Wise

:Poetry Competition

Inner Sydney Regional Council ran a poetry competition in February of this year. Public, Community and Aboriginal Housing tenants were invited to submit their work for the chance to perform on stage and to win a $100 Coles voucher.

Chris Rath, a social housing tenant living in Redfern, won the competition with his poem, "Mates". ➡

Mates!

As I live in a housing estate,
I love all of my good mates.
Harriet who lives downstairs
Is a happy lass without a care.
I love my neighbours. I really do!
But I ask you! Shouldn't everyone too?
My upstairs neighbour Jane
Has the IQ of a brain!
When we meet for afternoon tea,
She recites from Karl Marx and Trotsky.
I am, I believe, her greatest fan.
My love is easy to understand.
I even love my neighbour Michelle
Who lives on my level. She gives me hell.
If I don't take her to lunch each week,
She threatens that she will marry me!
This lovely, social housing estate
Is a wonderful place to love my mates.
Even my doctors say so too!
When I get out of the mental hospital too!
Why do they say I fabricate
Stories about my fictional mates?
Because I live in a housing estate?
But I really love me mental mates!

HISTORY MATTERS: POWER AND PRESERVATION

The annual Marg Barry lecture was held at Redfern Town Hall on the 7th of October. It was attended by a number of people who have been involved in the community sector over the last thirty years. This year, the lecture was held in conjunction with an exhibition of ISRC's collection of photographs from the last 30 years. ISRC have been working on a project that aims to label the images in this collection, and the event was held to bring together people who may have been able to help in doing this. A great many of the photographs were labelled throughout the evening, and overall, the event was, by all accounts, a great success.

The images exhibited showcase inner Sydney's social history, and the event celebrated this history, and the work that many of the attendees contributed to it. The lecture was given by City Historian, Dr Lisa Murray. Her speech, which commemorated the importance of preserving social history and highlighted the role that ISRC has played in this history, is below.

Dr Lisa Murray

The Marg Barry Memorial Lecture in 2011 commemorates a landmark event in the history of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development. The organisation has taken an important decision to donate its papers and photographic collection to the City of Sydney Archives.

This evening, I want to reflect upon the importance of preserving community records. As an historian I am delighted at the vision and commitment of the Inner Sydney Regional Council to preserve their records.

But why should you care?

One of the mantras of the Inner Sydney Regional Council is that information is a tool for community development. Indeed it is both a necessary prerequisite of, and a process for facilitating, community development.

The Inner Sydney Regional Council has worked hard to help people know, understand and influence what is happening to their communities for over 36 years.

In line with the Inner Sydney Regional Council's aims, I would argue that a history is both a necessary prerequisite of, and process for facilitating, informed community decision making. If you don't know your history – what's gone before, why certain decisions have been made, previous campaigns or plans – if you don't know this history, how can you possibly understand the current situation? And how can you plan for the future?

It is very easy for historians to access the voice of the government. Government decisions – at a federal, state and local level - have been published and documented through hansard, policy papers, council minutes, development applications, newspaper commentary etc. In addition, many of the papers associated with these decisions are captured, archived and preserved in the National Archives of Australia and State Records NSW. This is required by law.

But what about community records? So many community organisations run on a shoe-string and rely upon volunteers. Their time and energy is (quite rightly) put into their campaigns, events and activism – whatever they're set up to do.

Few community organisations have the energy or time to think about documenting their work or preserving their records. And yet, the records of community organisations provide a valuable insight into the everyday lives of ordinary Australians – the human story, not the government story.

The Inner Sydney Regional Council continues to show community leadership by its decision to donate its records to the City of Sydney Archives, to enable their preservation and to allow ongoing public access to the records.

> "If you don't know your history—what's gone before, why certain decisions have been made, previous campaigns or plans—if you don't know this history, how can you possibly understand the current situation?"

The organisation will not let the actions of the past go unnoticed and by preserving its records, the Inner Sydney Regional Council continues to ensure that the voices of the marginalised are being heard. And for that it should be congratulated.

The records of community organisations provide us with the grass roots viewpoint. In the case of the Inner Sydney Regional Council, its archives provide a valuable record of community development and activism

in the inner city from the 1975 to the present. The organisation's records are valuable and of interest to historians because when it was established the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, as an organisation, represented new ideas in community planning.

In 1973 the Australian Labor government under the leadership of Gough Whitlam instituted the Australian Assistance Plan, which was a visionary program for local and regional development. The aim was to provide support for local community organisations and get community input into the planning processes. This was played out through funding for the construction of neighbourhood centres and other community facilities, but more specifically through the creation of regional councils. The idea was that regional councils would be a place where the ideas of local residents and local people would sit alongside the ideas of local planning authorities, state and federal public servants. One of the slogans of The Australian Assistance Plan was "People Power". The regional councils were to be the conduit for the locals to provide input and feedback into government services.

In 1974 inner Sydney resident action groups banded together under the leadership of the Andrew Jakubowicz to explore the establishment of a regional social development council.

Seeding funds were provided in mid-1974, strategies and submissions were written and the organisation was gradually formed.

The Australian Assistance Plan was an exciting experiment – but the Whitlam government's dismissal at the end of 1975 saw support for the Australian Assistance Plan quickly dry up. Just as the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development was being incorporated in 1977, the Libs pulled the plug on the AAP.

Much of the early years were spent on the National AAP Survival Campaign. Now, as we all know, the campaign failed, but the ideas and commitment survived.

The Inner Sydney Regional Council continued to be an organisation through which the community could be heard. It was and continues to be an organisation where information provides resources, knowledge and access; where bureaucratic jargon is explained; where help is given to write a submission; where people are given the power to have a voice of their own.

The establishment of the Inner Sydney Regional Council came at a time in the heady 70s when locally, resident action groups were taking control of the planning process; and when nationally, wide-ranging reforms were being implemented in every field of public policy, including education and regional development.

As I've mentioned previously, the Inner Sydney Regional Council has provided a voice to marginalised communities and helped in a range of campaigns.

The roots of the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development are firmly planted in resident action and the battles and green bans for The Rocks, Woolloomooloo, Victoria Street Kings Cross, Fig Street (Ultimo/ Pyrmont) and Waterloo.

For me, though, it's not just this foundation, but <u>all</u> the campaigns in which the organisation has been involved.

The files that document these campaigns – the letter writing and submissions, the protests, the posters and newsletters are an amazing snapshot of community activism. I am currently writing a social and urban history of the former municipal areas of Redfern, Alexandria and Waterloo – and I am drawing heavily upon the records of the Inner Sydney Regional Council to flesh out the stories of the local communities.

In particular I am keen to represent the story of saving Waterloo – for the Green Bans are more than The Rocks – and the ongoing struggle against the Housing Commission.

The Inner Sydney Regional Council has over time developed close links with resident action groups, tenancy associations, neighbourhood centres, youth centres and police youth clubs. It has also brought government agencies and departments to the community to represent community needs. So the records of the Inner Sydney Regional Council allow the historian to grasp the policy positions and advocacy concerns of a whole range of community organisations.

Because of the organisation's broad interest in community amenity, a browse through the complete run of the Inner Voice provides a contained and informed view of current issues at any one period in time. This is something that organisation acknowledged in the 30th anniversary edition of the Inner Sydney Voice back in 2008 (and I quote):

If you want a chronicle of social history in the Inner City and Eastern Suburbs over the last 30 years – you have it. … The fascinating thing is that in reading back copies, it is clear that we are still struggling over the same issues.

Images featured have been taken from ISRC's collection which has been donated to the City of Sydney council.

The details might be different, but the fight for social justice is ongoing and detailed for posterity.

There are so many areas of advocacy in which the Council has been involved. Many of them are documented here tonight in the photographs on the walls. Let me just throw out a few slogans to remind you:

Planes or People. Which Count Most?

Save Our Homes. Save Waterloo.

The Great Eastern Disaster.

Inner City – ugly unhealthy ghetto? (no 37 May 1984)

The Hole in the Doughnut (destabilising public housing estates, closure of hospital facilities).

"Honk if you hate banks!" [said the placard – CBA closed its doors at Waterloo on 8 September 1994 – customers received just 2 weeks' notice (article Inner Voice Winter 1995)].Thirdly, I think that the records and photographs of the Inner Sydney Regional Council are a valuable collection because they document the contribution of significant individual people who have been involved in the organisation. Behind all the issues, all the policies, all the information, are the people who worked and campaigned for a better city.

Tonight's annual memorial lecture recognises one of those people – Marg Barry (1934-2001). Once described as the "Heroine of the 'hood", Marg Barry was a formidable force for good in the district.

Although she was involved in a range of organisations, including the ALP and the City Council, she was best known for her work as the Co-ordinator for the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development. She was an operator and a connector - a gossip in the best sense of the word. She befriended people in all places and stations, gave information and advice generously, and expected the same generosity and commitment in return. She put a lot of time and effort into the *Inner Voice*, a fantastic legacy for this organisation and for historians like me. Her contribution to the community just keeps on giving.

Marg was just one of the strong community members who made a difference through the Inner Sydney Regional Council. I know there are many, many more. The documents, annual reports and articles in the *Inner Voice* can give historians the names of the people. But it is the photographs that provide a dramatic and compelling view of these people and the campaigns and activities that have been covered by the Inner Sydney Regional Council.

Congratulations to the Inner Sydney Regional Council for its vision and commitment to preserving its records for future generations. It is making a valuable contribution to Sydney's history. It will provide source material for historians to come and will ensure that the community's voices are represented and shine through in Sydney's social history.

INNER SYDNEY VOICE

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