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INNER
SYDNEY

VOICE



SOLD

**THE PILLAGING
OF PUBLIC LAND**



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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.

EDITOR Christopher Kelly

CONTRIBUTORS

Rebecca Benson | Mike Brown
Kathelijne Buitenweg | Steve Duckett
Elizabeth Farrelly | Jake Kendall
Luke Pearson | Tim Richie | Anita Stobart
Will Tregoning | Tone Wheeler | Richard Wouters

DESIGN Stevie Bee

MEMBERSHIP + SUBSCRIPTIONS

Saskia Eichler-Cheney

PRINTING Goliath

WEBSITE innersydneyvoice.org.au

PUBLISHER

Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development Inc trading as Inner Sydney Voice
ABN 86 770 127 254
Rear 770 Elizabeth Street Waterloo NSW 2017
PHONE 9698 7690
EMAIL admin@innersydneyvoice.org.au
FACEBOOK [facebook.com/innersydneyrcsd](https://www.facebook.com/innersydneyrcsd)
TWITTER [@innersydneyrcsd](https://twitter.com/innersydneyrcsd)

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There are plenty of reasons to love living in Sydney. There's the picture-perfect harbour; the glorious beaches; the lengthy summers and mild winters. We've a vibrant, multicultural population. But it's not all unicorns and galahs.

Sydney is a city enslaved by the financial sector and in thrall to international property investors. Meanwhile, the government pillages public land and sells it off for a quick buck to developer mates and corporate cronies — Barangaroo being the perfect example of public land pimped out for private profit. “For them,” writes Elizabeth Farrelly on page 26, “with their predominately private-school educated, suburban-domiciled white male ministers, the city is just a cash cow to be milked, exploited.” All in the name of ‘renewal’ and ‘revitalisation’.

One of the best/worst examples of the government’s gluttony is the peddling off of the iconic Sirius building. Sold last year for \$150 million to private investment firm JDH Capital, the public housing units are to become boutique luxury apartments. Nestled in The Rocks, Sirius was public housing at its purest: Aussie egalitarianism set in concrete. “Where some of Sydney’s most disadvantaged citizens shared multi-million-dollar waterfront views alongside film stars, prime ministers, and bombastic talkback hosts (see page 20).” To the government, however, Sirius was nothing more than a land grab.

Then there’s the historic Franklyn Street estate in Glebe. Sitting on one of the original sites of Tom Uren’s

ambitious plans for public housing in the city, the block is to be bulldozed and rebuilt in order to accommodate private units. At the same time, “The poor, working class, elderly and sick are being pushed out as the neoliberal state government pursues policies of gentrification by stealth (see page 10).”

And it doesn’t stop there. Eveleigh, Waterloo, and the Ivanhoe estate in Macquarie Park have all been earmarked for redevelopment as the NSW government continues to procure public land on prime real estate. While the polities spin their rapaciousness as



“Sure, it will be an eyesore, but after we build a lot of them, it’ll fit right in!”

CHRIS WILDT

a bid to renew public housing, the truth is, it’s about profiteering from it. To quote Elizabeth Farrelly once again, it’s time to end “the habitual prostitution of our public lands and buildings to private corporations”. It’s time to stop the relentless speed and sprawl and time to “start applying just a little more long-term wisdom”. The cash cow has been well and truly milked.

Christopher Kelly
comms@innersydneyvoice.org.au

Donate to IndigenousX



The “why” of IndigenousX is simple: “We do not need other people to tell our stories for us.”

When teacher and Aboriginal education consultant Luke Pearson launched IndigenousX in 2012, his objective was to challenge representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the mainstream media by providing a platform to showcase the diversity of First Nations peoples in Australia. While the objective of IndigenousX was nothing new, unlike in the past, IndigenousX harnessed digital media in innovative ways and @IndigenousX began providing a focal point for Indigenous agency and non-Indigenous support through Twitter. @IndigenousX quickly became a leading online community that brought Indigenous voices into direct contact and interaction with more than 40,000 followers.

Since its inception, IndigenousX has campaigned on a number of Aboriginal issues. It has, for example, been pushing to change the date of Australia’s official national day. It has also aligned itself with the Black Lives Matter movement. Perhaps the biggest impact IndigenousX has had is on the direction of the constitutional recognition campaign. IndigenousX has long expressed concern that constitutional reform necessitates

respect, trust and good faith between negotiating parties — the federal government and First Nations peoples of Australia — and that such good faith does not currently exist.

“At the moment,” write the IndigenousX team, “our governments claim to act in good faith, but do so on the basis that their gestures are acts of charity rather than legal requirements. This creates an unacceptable presentation . . . one where Indigenous peoples should be grateful for whatever non-Indigenous people decide for us and denies our rights to control our own destinies.”

In order to create good faith — and in an effort to “reshape the country’s national identity towards one that truly honours and protects the rights and responsibilities of First Peoples” — IndigenousX is campaigning for the ratification of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into Australian law. The declaration is a universal framework of minimum standards for the “survival, dignity and wellbeing of the Indigenous peoples of the world”.

■ IndigenousX is urging you to support its upcoming campaign and its ongoing commitment to independent journalism by making a donation at indigenousx.com.au/donate

Volunteer at Twenty10

Twenty10 is a Sydney-based organisation providing a broad range of specialised services for young LGBTIQA+ young people aged 12-25.

People of all ages and many different backgrounds enjoy making a difference as a volunteer at Twenty10. If you are selected to join the volunteer program, you will be joining a long history of people who have been the cornerstone of much of Twenty10’s work since volunteers started the Campaign Against Moral Persecution in 1970, took the first calls at ‘Phone a Friend’ in 1973 or set up the ‘2010’ youth refuge in 1983.



The roles on offer are diverse — ranging from behind the scenes to face-to-face. Kate is a peer support volunteer. “For me,” says Kate, “volunteering on the phones is a profoundly community affirming experience. Working with fellow volunteers and listening to callers makes me feel a sense of solidarity and support amongst my queer peers.” Whether you have specific expertise or are just wanting to lend a hand, Twenty10 wants to hear from you.

■ To apply, visit twenty10.org.au

Last lockdown laws lifted

Sydney's remaining lockdown laws have been repealed in a bid to revive the city's COVID-hit economy.

Venues in Kings Cross — the last remaining area to have restrictions in place — are now allowed to open beyond 1.30am with last drinks

being served at 3.30am. The controversial lockdown laws were enacted in 2014 following the death of 18-year-old Thomas Kelly who was fatally injured in an unprovoked, one-punch attack while out drinking in the Cross.

Responding to the move, Sydney lord mayor Clover Moore said: “This is a huge win for Sydney’s nightlife — a win for musicians, artists, hospitality



workers, business owners and many thousands who campaigned to keep Sydney open.” Describing the Cross’s history as “rich and colourful”, Moore added: “We’re confident its next chapter will be safe and lively, with a thriving residential community and a diverse economy that includes fabulous bars and restaurants, theatres and shops.”

Meanwhile, independent MP for Sydney Alex Greenwich said: “Global

cities don’t tell people when to go to bed, they help them have a fun and safe night with a diverse night-time economy and transport options to get them home. Well done to the NSW government, the City of Sydney and the wider community for ending the lockdowns.”

While the lockdown laws were lifted from all venues in Sydney’s CBD in January last year, the restrictions in Kings Cross remained in place. Jobs minister Stuart Ayers said the lifting of the laws will help breathe new life into the precinct. “Sydney is already an iconic international city and Australia’s number one tourism destination, it’s time to enhance our vibrant nightlife, arts and culture scenes as we bounce back from COVID-19.”

Aged care overhaul needed

The long-anticipated royal commission report into aged care landed on March 1 and, as expected, it revealed a system in dire need of an overhaul.

Perhaps most damning, the report found that — due to “bare minimum” funding — elderly Australians have suffered ever-declining quality of care over recent years. Indeed, at least one in three people accessing residential aged-care and home-care services had experienced inadequate care, says the report. This, said commissioner Tony Pagone, was “unacceptable, deeply concerning, and has been known for many years”. Food and nutrition, dementia and palliative care, and the use of restrictive practices — such as chemical restraints — came under specific focus.

In all, the report makes 148

recommendations. Among them, a call for much stronger regulation and transparency. Ineffective governance and weak regulation of aged care must end says the report. “The government has been in a position to create mechanisms for measuring performance of the aged-care system and identifying areas for improvement,” it said. “It has been responsible for the design of an effective regulatory system. It has failed to discharge these responsibilities.”

The report also stresses the urgent need for a new Aged Care Act to establish the rights of older people, including their entitlements to care based on their needs and preferences. Gone would be the current capped-based system. Instead, older Australians would be independently assessed and allocated care accordingly. This, says the report, would offer older Australians more

choice and control over the care they receive. The report also calls for improvements to working conditions. It recommends an increase in staff wages and a new national registration program for all aged-care workers.

The 2,800-page report also proposes universal funding for care services. This would mark a shift away from the current means-tested arrangement toward a rights-based approach. Commissioner Lynelle Briggs wants the government to introduce an aged-care levy of one percent. Prime minister Scott Morrison, however, has already backed off such an idea, saying he was “wary” of introducing a new tax. Meanwhile, the federal government has committed \$450 million to the aged-care sector, with the PM promising a more “comprehensive” response in the next budget. (See page 23.)

Time for change?

Sydney councillor Dr Kerryn Phelps has announced her intention to challenge long-time political rival Clover Moore in this year's mayoral election.

"I think it's time for change," said Phelps. The former federal MP for Wentworth said that — after almost two decades of the same leadership — it was time to usher in a new era. "It's time to place the City of Sydney in new hands," she said. "Sydney is the best city in the world, but we're not performing at our best."

When the local elections are held on September 4 (after being postponed last year in the wake of COVID-19), Sydney lord mayor Moore will be looking to win her fifth consecutive term in office. Phelps admits the contest will be tough. "I am up against an incumbent with massive resources."



PHELPS INSISTS HER DECISION TO RUN AGAINST MOORE ISN'T PERSONAL.

Promising "transparency in all governance processes" and campaigning on behalf of "the most vulnerable", Phelps said: "What I want to do is make it clear that the people of Sydney are my foremost concern, and any politics and personal interactions are very much not on my agenda."

Phelps's comment was directed at her widely publicised feud with Moore

dating back to 2017 when she served as deputy lord mayor. The pair fell out after Moore accused Phelps of being driven by ambition. "She, I think, likes the position but perhaps not the work," Moore said at the time.

Phelps sensationally quit the post but stayed on as an independent councillor. "I put up with it for a number of months but when it got to a point where it was clear that things were not going to improve, I decided to stay on

council but to stay on as a true independent."

Despite the bad blood between the pair, Phelps insists her decision to run against Moore isn't personal. "An element of good governance is to make sure that there is regular change at the top. We've had the same leadership for 17 years, and it has grown stale."

Facebook face-off

The broad, blanket ban on Australian news providers implemented by Facebook in February saw the feeds of charities and community organisations blocked.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service, the Women's Legal Service NSW, the Australian Council of Trade Unions, 1800 Respect, NCOSS, and Mission Australia were among the organisations affected by the embargo. Public health departments and emergency organisations were also muted.

As were independent news services,



such as First Nations media organisations — including NITV. "Having our voices restricted," said

vice-chair of First Nations Media Australia Naomi Moran, "is unacceptable. Our communities have been traumatised and silenced enough." She added: "Never before have our news sources been more needed than during a global pandemic entering the vaccine phase."

Facebook imposed its arbitrary ban in response to the federal government's media bargaining code. The social media platform has

since struck a deal with the government and the ban has been lifted. (See page 12.)

Delivering for riders

The Transport Workers Union has announced that seven health and safety representatives have been elected to represent Sydney riders at Deliveroo — the first such delegates ever elected at a gig economy company in Australia, despite the roles being commonplace at most workplaces.

The representatives (who are all riders) will be able to help enforce the rights of fellow co-workers. This is especially important because riders typically deal with dangerous risks including collisions with other vehicles, lethal falls from their bikes, and heat stress. The reps will also have powers and responsibilities to take action to



improve rider safety. They'll be able to give emergency stop-work directions; issue improvement notices over breaches; and force the company to consult on safety matters.

TWU national secretary Michael Kaine described the election of the health and safety reps as “a milestone for the gig economy” in Australia. “This

is an important step towards holding these companies to account for ensuring a safe working environment. Now Deliveroo riders have representatives to turn to when they need assistance on keeping safe,” he said. The election of the health and safety reps follows the deaths of five riders in September and October of 2020.

“Now we need to address the risks associated with the pressure riders are under to speed and work long hours,” Kaine said. “To do this we need federal government regulation in place. We need to ensure riders have appropriate minimum rates and the right to challenge an arbitrary sacking. They need the right to training, insurance and protective gear.”

Push for 30km speed limit

Walk Sydney — the peak advocate body for pedestrians in Sydney — is urging local councillors and state MPs to consider implementing 30km/h speed limits for urban and residential streets, with particular priority for those frequently used by children and young adults.

“The adoption of a default 30km/h limit is less confusing for motorists and pedestrians than targeting individual streets,” says Walk Sydney’s president, Dr Barnaby Bennett. While the default limit won’t necessarily apply to every road, Bennett says, “30km/h should be the norm and higher limits should be exceptions only where there is evidence that such a higher limit will be safe for pedestrians and cyclists”.

Last year, ministers from 130 countries announced support for the Stockholm Declaration, which commits to 30km/h speed limits in urban areas.



IF A PERSON IS HIT AT 50KM/H THEY HAVE ABOUT FIVE TIMES THE RISK OF BEING KILLED COMPARED TO IF THE PERSON WAS HIT AT 30KM/H.

Meanwhile, there is increasing political support for trialling and implementing 30km/h zones in parts of Sydney.

Indeed, trials in the City of Sydney, Liverpool City, and the Northern Beaches have already taken place. If a speed limit of 30km/h were to be adopted across the city, Bennett says it would be “better for children, better for elderly, better for pedestrians, better for people cycling, better for people with disabilities”.

Research shows that there is little benefit from motor vehicles driving above 30km/h on local roads and that impact on travel time is minimal. Furthermore — according to the latest Austroads guidance — reducing urban speed limits is the most effective way to improve pedestrian safety. In a vehicle-pedestrian collision, the probability of survival for a pedestrian increases dramatically at impact speeds below 30km/h. “Put simply,” says Bennett, “if a person is hit at 50km/h they have approximately five times the risk of being killed compared to if the person was hit at 30km/h.”

COVID support changes ahead

Australians are predicted to fall into deeper poverty when the federal government ends the JobKeeper scheme at the end of March.

JobKeeper is a wage subsidy program for businesses that was launched in late March last year after COVID-19 led to lockdown. The initial six-month run was extended in September to continue until March 28, 2021. While treasurer Josh Frydenberg concedes the transition from JobKeeper will be difficult for some businesses and employees, “it is one that can be managed”, he said.

However, without further financial support many businesses still adversely impacted by COVID-19 — tourism, hospitality, and retail industries for example — will come under renewed liquidity and employment pressure from April. “Solutions may be to permanently reduce employment, seek further concessions from suppliers or to take more drastic measures such as closure or insolvency,” said Tracey



Dunn of RSM Australia. “Such actions will have a knock-on effect, impacting employment and the broader economy.”

JobSeeker, meanwhile — the unemployment benefit that replaced the Newstart allowance last year — is to be increased by \$25 a week. The move followed a long campaign by welfare advocates such as the Australian Council of Social Service. However, the modest rise is by no means seen as a win. “An increase of \$3.50 a day would be heartless and measly,” tweeted ACOSS CEO Cassandra Goldie. “This is a betrayal of millions of people with the least, including hundreds of thousands of children, single parents, people with

disability, older people, students, people dealing with illness and injury, and others relying on income support.” ACOSS had been calling for a JobSeeker raise of \$25 a day.

Also, from July, the unemployed will be required to apply for 20 jobs a month. As well, a ‘doblone’ is to be established for employers to report welfare recipients who decline job offers. Australian Council of Trade Unions president Michelle O’Neil said the hotline was open to abuse. “This gives a huge amount of power to employers to coerce vulnerable people into jobs under threats of being cut off from payments.” Speaking to *The Guardian*, chief executive of the Council of Small Business Australia, Peter Strong said the plan lacked empathy. “Most employers actually feel for the unemployed. We need to show compassion and support.” He added: “You know a bludger when you see one, and the reality is most unemployed people are not dole bludgers.”

The Kid makes history

Waterloo-born, First Nations rapper The Kid Laroi became the youngest artist ever to make it to number one on the Aria album chart last month.

The 17-year-old reached the top spot with his album *F*ck Love (Savage)* on Saturday February 5. Responding to the news on Twitter, The Kid Laroi said: “#1 in my own country. Words cannot describe this feeling. Anybody who knows me, knows that where I’m from means everything to me. I’m more than blessed to have my country behind me, and I promise that I won’t let them down.”

The Kid Laroi — real name Charlton Howard — derived his stage name from his Kamilaroi ancestry. His great-great-



grandfather was part of the Stolen Generation. Rapping from early teenage-hood, Laroi began gaining international attention last year with the release of the video for his song *Let Her Go*. Since then, Laroi has amassed

a loyal following of fans, including Elton John, who has predicted the Sydneysider will become “one of the biggest artists in the whole wide world”.

Although currently living in LA with his mum and younger brother, Laroi’s Twitter feed still states his location as South Sydney. Not only proud of his Waterloo roots, Laroi is also keen to champion local talent. “One of my biggest goals in this whole music shit from the beginning has always been to show the rest of the world what Australia has to offer, and how much raw and unseen talent we have. It’s not an overnight process, but I can feel it slowly happening. Australia to the world.”

Gentrification by stealth

The proposed redevelopment plans for the Franklyn Street estate in Glebe is the latest example of a government profiteering from public land. **CHRISTOPHER KELLY** reports

Here we go again — inner-city public housing tenants being turfed out of their homes all in the name of “renewal”. More than 100 residents from Glebe’s Franklyn Street estate — near the Broadway shopping centre — are to be rehoused while the historic public housing block is bulldozed and rebuilt in order to accommodate private units.

Residents found out about the redevelopment plans November last year when the Land and Housing Corporation announced its intention to “renew the estate” with “new and better social housing” as well as “private housing in new apartment buildings”. In all, the Franklyn Street redevelopment will consist of 425 dwellings. But here’s the all-too familiar rub: only 30 percent (130 units) of the new estate will remain public housing; the other 70 percent (295 units) is earmarked for private buyers.

This, says LAHC, will enhance the estate’s social mix. “Social mix is a myth,” writes Hands Off Glebe spokesperson Dr Hannah Middleton in the *Sydney Sentinel*. “In the redevelopments, buildings are separated according to whether the tenants are public or private, usually with separate entrance halls, parking lots, separate gardens and facing different streets or parks. Public and private residents rarely mix.”

One of the original sites of Tom Uren’s ambitious plans for public housing in the city, the 30-year-old Franklyn Street estate has a special place in inner-Sydney’s history. Some of its residents



have lived there from day one. Such as 68-year-old Emily Bullock. “As a resident of Franklyn Street I know there will be a lot of distress caused to very vulnerable people by this cavalier approach to demolishing social housing,” says Bullock. “In previous moves like this in Cowper Street, Glebe and Millers Point people have committed suicide, been hospitalised and the stress levels have risen remarkably.”

The government’s response? Speaking to *Nine News*, NSW housing minister Melinda Pavey said: “We have to look at the value of this land right in the middle of Sydney and the opportunity for first-home buyers to be able to come into the market.” Meanwhile, LAHC has said the new public housing units would be “better matched to the needs of residents, especially for those ageing or with a disability.”

Dr Alistair Sisson, research associate at the City Futures Centre at UNSW, says the Franklyn Street redevelopment plans reveal a disturbing trend. “Between Glebe, Eveleigh, Waterloo, and Ivanhoe in Macquarie Park, the NSW government has been picking off public housing on prime real estate. This isn’t about improving or increasing public housing, but about profiting from it.”

The Franklyn Street sell-off has energised the community with residents and advocates flyer-ing, petitioning, and holding rallies. Unsurprisingly, the plans have also provoked a social-media backlash. “Once they make their

minds up it’s basically a done deal. Liberal governments have no interest in public housing.” posted Annette on Facebook. “They should think about putting money into homes and fix them up,” posted Shazza. “There are houses around [Glebe] that are falling apart — absolute joke.” Meanwhile, Paul posted: “Gladys and her farkwits are at it again — a developer’s dream.”

LAHC has said that, should the plans be approved, Franklyn Street tenants would be expected to move out mid-2022; they would not be able to return to the redeveloped estate until sometime in 2025. “Housing NSW must accommodate these families, elderly and needy tenants somewhere else in existing Housing NSW homes, with a promise of return,” says Bullock. “But those temporary homes could be permanent homes for the people on the [public housing] waiting list.” A waiting list of more than 50,000 people — 4,000 of which are flagged ‘priority’.

“There is a desperate shortage of social housing in Sydney,” says City of Sydney councillor, Dr Kerryn Phelps. “The NSW government is planning to demolish the homes of hundreds of people in Glebe and displace residents, hand the land over to developers, with only 22 extra social housing apartments and a loss of open space. This will destroy lives and alter the character of Glebe.”

It’s a sentiment shared by Middleton. “The poor, working class, elderly and sick are increasingly being pushed out as the neoliberal state government pursues policies of gentrification by stealth. Our suburb has been through many transformations but this latest is simply not acceptable. Some localities have lost what made them distinctive places, but Glebe has retained a strong sense of place and kept its own unique voice. We must not let the government and developers take this away from us.”

‘Staggeringly high’ levels of stress among LGBTQA+ youth

A new survey from La Trobe University shows that queerphobia has not been relegated to a by-gone age. REBECCA BENSON reports

More needs to be done to improve the mental health outcomes of young LGBTQA+ Australians. That’s one of the findings from the largest national survey measuring the health and wellbeing of queer youth.

Conducted by the Australian Research Centre in Sex, Health and Society (ARCSHS), more than 6,000 young people aged 14 to 21 were asked to comment on subjects such as education, homelessness, harassment, assault, community connections — and mental health.

Disturbingly, the survey showed 81 percent of respondents reporting high or very high levels of psychological distress — that’s at least three times higher than young people in the general population. Furthermore, 10.1 percent reported a suicide attempt in the past year, while a quarter of respondents reported attempting suicide at some point in their lives. “That’s a staggeringly high proportion that I think gives us a great deal to be concerned about,” said lead researcher, associate professor Adam Bourne from La Trobe University.

Meanwhile, 60 percent of respondents reported feeling unsafe or uncomfortable at school due to their sexuality or gender identity; 40.8 percent experienced verbal harassment; 22.8

percent reported sexual harassment or assault; and 9.7 percent experienced physical harassment or assault. “Every young person deserves to live free from harassment and exclusion, but as this report, and many previous reports make clear, LGBTQA+ young people continue to experience hostility in public, in their homes, on the sports field, and at school,” said Bourne. “We have to recognise that context as we reflect upon the very high rates of poor mental health we documented.”

What the ARCSHS survey unfortunately highlights is that — although Australian queer youth have gained more acceptance and obtained more rights than previous generations (marriage equality for example) —



queerphobia remains very much alive and well in 2021. This, say the survey’s authors, is especially true for trans and gender-diverse young people who suffer disproportionately poorer health and wellbeing outcomes across the board. “We clearly need to be doing more to tackle the homophobia and transphobia that still exists within society so that all young people can feel safe,” said Bourne.

Whilst many of the findings are

troubling, the survey clearly demonstrates that — among Generation Z at least — sexuality and gender identity no longer appear to be an issue. Indeed, 88.3 percent of participants felt supported by their peers when they came out as LGBTQA+. “It isn’t the case for people living in rural areas; it isn’t always the case for people coming from ethnically diverse backgrounds,” said Bourne, “but as a general trend, we’re certainly seeing a greater level of acceptance and support around the point at which young people connect.”

The ARCSHS survey — the fourth conducted since 1998 — allows policy makers, healthcare service providers and the wider community to understand the impacts that social isolation and discrimination have on queer youth. “We now have a mass of information that is providing a vital resource for those working to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for LGBTQA+ young people throughout Australia,” said Bourne.

One such organisation is LGBTIQ+ Health Australia. Commenting on the ARCSHS findings, acting CEO Zed Tintor has called for an urgent national response that includes

increased resources for community-controlled health providers “to ensure that LGBTQA+ young people can access culturally safe services — wherever and whenever they need help”. Tintor added: “Reducing and eradicating minority stress within LGBTQA+ communities starts with our young people — making sure they are given the respect, support and encouragement to be who they are and live happy and fulfilling lives.”

fake news

SAVE THE FACTS

Social media provides an unparalleled environment for the spreading and proliferation of disinformation. Although governments have begun to wake up to the need to regulate digital platforms — as **Kathalijne Buitenweg** and **Richard Wouters** discuss — they must adopt a more assertive approach if they are to hold the major players to account.

Public democracy is giving way to platform democracy. In a public democracy, the democratic exchange of ideas mainly takes place in the traditional media. In a platform democracy, the exchange of ideas predominantly happens on digital platforms.

The threshold for access to, and dissemination of, information has become much lower, and an increasing number of citizens are able to personally participate in the debate. They no longer need the mass media or political parties to reach out to other citizens or to mobilise themselves. But also increasing are opportunities to deliberately disseminate false representations of reality, often with political motives.

The pursuit of profit can also be a motive for disseminating disinformation. The longer social media platforms can keep us glued to our screens, the more they earn from advertisements. Accordingly, their algorithms reward extreme views that hold people's attention for longer with a greater

reach. Dealers in disinformation take advantage of this. By using sensational headlines in social media posts, they lure people to websites and YouTube channels full of junk news and conspiracy theories. The disinformation dealers make money from the advertisements they have arranged to appear alongside the texts and videos. These advertisements often come from respectable companies that don't realise whose coffers they are filling.

Political and commercial disinformation is often reinforced by the use of bots. These automated accounts increase the number of followers of an account and the number of interactions with its posts. As a result, these messages have a wider reach on social media. In June 2017, no less than a quarter of Twitter climate messages came from bots, according to US research. And the vast majority of these tweets and retweets denied the reality of climate change.

Propagators of disinformation know only too well that the press is their biggest opponent. In fact, the real creators of fake news and conspiracy theories are seeking to undermine

citizens' trust in the professional news media — as well as their confidence in other institutions that guard the truth, such as science, education, and the judiciary. If they succeed, we are in big trouble. A democracy cannot exist without shared facts. In the words of historian Timothy Snyder: "To abandon facts is to abandon freedom. If nothing is true, then no one can criticise power, because there is no basis upon which to do so. If nothing is true, then all is spectacle. The biggest wallet pays for the most blinding lights."

Facts are sometimes controversial, of course. That is especially true of social facts. Take a concept like 'public safety'. A politician might say that safety is deteriorating if surveys show that more citizens feel unsafe. But is this really a fact, if at the same time the number of reported crimes is falling? It is vital that journalists, scientists, judges, and even schoolchildren are taught to critically examine facts. But there are important rules of play. For example, people who criticise someone else's facts must substantiate their arguments. And vice versa, those who invoke facts must allow themselves to

be corrected. This is how shared facts come into being. The truth comes about through dialogue.

Facts matter also in politics. In addition to values, emotions, and visions, they are an indispensable element of any political discourse or debate. Without shared facts, it becomes difficult to argue about the issues we disagree upon, let alone to make compromises. Without facts, all politics becomes rhetoric. Fact-free politics and disinformation affect voters, by making them increasingly cynical. They start to find lying politicians normal, or even admire them because they manage to get away with their lies.

Under public pressure, some platforms have taken positive steps in the fight against disinformation in recent years. YouTube, for example, now brings journalistic news to the attention of its users more often. The video platform has engaged fact-checkers in three countries. Twitter and Facebook also hire fact-checkers to combat disinformation. Accounts that repeatedly spread disinformation are punished by Facebook with a diminished reach. Still, fake news is more sensational than fact-checks. In 2017, 50 of the biggest hoaxes on Facebook were shared or commented on 200 times more often than the fact-checks that accompanied them. This creates a snowball effect, since messages that generate a lot of reactions are shown to more users to maximise advertising revenue. The platforms' efforts to combat disinformation are thus undermined by their own algorithms.

A goose that lays golden eggs will not be keen to put itself on a diet. This is why legislation is needed against disinformation on social media. One simple rule would help: social media users who have viewed disinformation must also view the fact-check. This rule corrects the algorithms; finding the truth takes precedence over commerce. Showing a fact-check to social media users can reduce the number of people who believe the untruth by half, according to an experiment by

American researchers. It would mean that social media platforms would have to engage sufficient numbers of independent fact-checkers in order to debunk disinformation in a timely manner. In turn, the platforms must make it easy for users to submit dubious messages for fact-checking. Their own algorithms should also actively search for disinformation, including dangerous deepfakes.

Fact-checking untrue or misleading posts, coupled with reducing the reach of social media accounts that repeatedly post disinformation, is more compatible with freedom of expression than removing these posts. Bringing in independent fact-checkers — such as journalists or academic researchers — prevents the platform itself or a government from determining what is and what is not disinformation. Also, any social media user whose post is labelled as disinformation should be informed about it and given the opportunity to object to this judgment at an independent dispute settlement committee or in court.

Legislation for platform democracy is not complete without measures to strengthen journalistic media. Journalistic news helps to mitigate polarisation, filter bubbles, manipulation, and disinformation. Journalists — when acting according to their professional ethics — add nuance, puncture lies and alert us to facts and opinions that others want to keep hidden from us. A good journalist is truthful and impartial, verifies facts, uses multiple sources, rebuts, and rectifies his or her mistakes.

Most public broadcasters have editorial statutes that guarantee both their independence and journalistic ethics. Now that social media is the main source of news for part of the population, we should start treating these platforms — at least the large ones, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube — as news organisations. This does not mean they have to start practising journalism or that they are liable for their users' posts in the same

way as newspapers or broadcasters. Rather, it would mean that they bring news from a varied range of journalistic sources to the attention of their users.

The algorithms that now play on emotions and too often keep people locked into echo chambers are thus used to broaden their field of vision. The journalistic news that people see on social media, for example, can be attuned to the controversial topics that come up in their timelines. If a friend's post about, say, vaccinations or climate change appears in your timeline, you will also be offered a news video or background article on that topic. Transparency is essential here: it must be clear how an algorithm selects news items and the list of journalistic sources used by a platform must be public.

Governments should also start thinking about providing permanent subsidies for the free press — if they do not do so already. Of course, the subsidies must be distributed by independent funds, and newspapers, magazines, and digital news media must all be eligible for them. The generous funding of independent public service broadcasting also pays off. It increases social cohesion. Broadcasters need to be given ample opportunity to reach an online audience — not only through Facebook and associates, but also through new, non-commercial platforms.

It is precisely because information spreads so easily on the internet that the importance of the free press is growing. This is the paradox of platform democracy. A market square without gatekeepers, where everyone can sell their wares, needs arbiters of quality. Journalists and fact-checkers help us to distinguish facts from fables and fabrications. That's why our piece of advice to modern, digital citizens is this: if you can afford it, get yourself a subscription to a newspaper. (Editor's note: particularly independent publications such as ISV — see back page.)

■ Source Green European Journal



CARE IN CRISIS

The COVID pandemic has revealed the importance of adequate social protection and its role in safeguarding the wellbeing and security of our families, communities and economy.

As Australia charts its way out of the environmental and pandemic crises of 2020, households continue to face numerous and diverse challenges as they negotiate their work, care, and family responsibilities. These challenges will intensify as emergency measures — including income support implemented by state and federal governments — are rolled back. New policy architecture that moves Australia beyond crisis and resets the conditions under which we work and care is urgently needed.

Care is essential to human wellbeing and economic prosperity. High quality care — both paid and unpaid — enables the development of human capabilities, wellbeing, and economic productivity. Inadequate investment in care services and supports, uneven coverage of paid leave for workers in

casual and precarious employment, and low wages for the essential workers who keep our communities functioning, weaken our economy. Inadequate care infrastructure leaves communities vulnerable and exacerbates inequalities. The environmental and health crises of 2020 highlighted that — without adequate paid and unpaid care — the economy stops.

Care has important social and economic benefits in the short and long term. It is not a private consumer good for the well-off, or a commodity to be produced for profit. However, many of Australia's essential care services are delivered through private for-profit markets backed by large government subsidies. This model has not served Australians well. Accompanied by limited resources, ineffective regulation, and meagre quality standards — as well as inadequate governance arrangements — many services deliver sub-standard care. The COVID pandemic has exposed the false economy of reliance on an under-resourced, precarious, and low-wage workforce.

Care is a collective social responsibility. However, the limited social provision of care and inadequate resourcing of formal and informal care, has meant the burden of care has been unfairly distributed with women shouldering the greatest load. Better social provisioning of care services will help alleviate gender and other social inequalities. Policy settings must be reconfigured to invest in the both paid and unpaid care that sustains individuals over the life course and delivers wellbeing and long-term prosperity for all. We need a caring economy.

Governments have a vital role to play in providing increased and sustained investment in equitable, high-quality care systems that include decent wages and secure employment for the care workforce, and equitable access to paid leave for all workers. Only public investment in high-quality care infrastructure, in combination with strong supports for individuals who take on unpaid care work, and appropriate regulatory and governance arrangements, can address the diverse

needs of individuals and families on an equitable basis.

The tax and transfer system can play a vital role in delivering sustainable finance for public investment in care infrastructure and expenditure on care work, and in ensuring equitable and efficient access by individuals to market work. A sustainable and equitable tax and transfer system will apply on the basis of an individual unit and reduce, as far as possible, the inequitable and inefficient disincentives for women to engage in paid work. Tax reforms should ensure that those with higher incomes continue to contribute a greater share of tax revenues through progressive tax rates, while tax reform to broaden the base of the income tax will enable more equitable taxation of capital income compared to work. This will ensure sustainable revenues while not over-taxing low and moderate wage earners — many of whom are women who work in the care sector.

Investment in high-quality care infrastructure will enhance macro-economic stability and grow our economy. Good quality care services support employment, labour supply, and economic security — particularly for women. An expanded, secure, and properly paid labour force will help build public finances through the collection of extra tax revenue. The capability of children, youth, worker-carers, older people, and people with disabilities to fully participate in society and lead fulfilling lives will be enhanced and supported by investment in essential care infrastructure. This will improve social wellbeing whilst also delivering increased productivity and economic growth to enable Australia to grow our way out of the pandemic-induced recession.

The environmental and pandemic crises of 2020 have exposed and amplified widespread labour market inequalities. In particular, COVID-19 has exposed the structural inequalities within the Australian labour market and the vulnerability of millions of workers — particularly those in retail and

hospitality. Conditions of precarious employment, low wages, and insecurity — along with inadequate social protection measures — left millions in the hardest-hit industries vulnerable to emergency lockdown measures and ensuing economic insecurity. Lack of adequate income protection, paid sick leave, and carers' leave further entrenched worker vulnerability. Those in regular employment with higher wages and paid leave were less exposed to the economic impact of the sudden lockdown, although the rapid shift to working-from-home placed other significant stresses on workers.

The crises have had a disproportionate impact on women's paid and unpaid work, but have fallen most severely on single mothers, women from migrant backgrounds (especially those on temporary visas), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women with disability. The majority of Australian women work in part-time or insecure jobs, often in highly feminised and low-paid occupations. Precarious forms of employment do not provide adequate support for workers with care responsibilities and many women have struggled to manage the triple pandemic demands of supervising home-schooling, increased care responsibilities and paid work. This has led to widespread exhaustion and other health issues.

During the COVID-19 crisis, women have experienced higher rates of unemployment and underemployment than men. They are also disproportionately employed in essential frontline care jobs where they have been exposed to infection. How men and women fare over the long recession ahead is yet to be seen. But even at this stage of the economic downturn, the lack of minimum paid care and sick leave for workers in precarious employment along with inadequate access to affordable care services has seen women disproportionately withdraw from the labour market. This directly reflects and reinforces gendered inequalities in work and care and increases the risk of

poverty for women as they age.

Men with children increased their unpaid care load, but not as much as women did, and current workplace policy settings do not make it easy for households to share care between women and men. Policy architecture that relies on the exploitation of women's labour and time in the workplace and in the home, and the feminisation of poverty and inequality this gives rise to, is inefficient and discriminatory and can no longer be tolerated.

The pandemic has revealed the importance of decent work and adequate social protection, and their role in safeguarding the wellbeing and security of our families, communities, and economy. This includes adequate pay, secure working time and paid-leave provisions — such as paid parental leave, carers' leave, paid domestic violence leave and other forms of leave from work — that support women and men's equal right to combine family and community care responsibilities with stable and secure employment. Adequate social protection over the life course is also crucial. Temporary social protection provided during the peak of the pandemic through additional income support made a material difference to many worker-carers' lives. However, these measures also excluded many of the most vulnerable, including many casual workers and those on temporary visas.

A new social contract that recognises and supports the interconnections of work and care across society and the economy is urgently required. Our ageing population, declining fertility rates, and low in-bound migration, make a new policy architecture for decent work and decent care essential for an inclusive and gender equal recovery. It is time to look beyond short-term budgets and toward long-term investment in a caring economy that delivers prosperity, equality, and a better life for all.

■ Source: The Australian Work and Family Policy Roundtable

EGALITARIANISM SET IN CONCRETE



When the NSW government put Sirius up for sale, it signalled the end for one of Australia's greatest public housing projects. **Christopher Kelly** reports

It's as polarising as Vegemite. As controversial as Pete Evans's social feed. As contentious as e-scooters in cycleways. It's either one of Australia's "most notable examples of Brutalist architecture" or "a sore thumb", blighting the Sydney skyline.

It is, of course, the Sirius building. When the design plans to transform the public housing block into boutique luxury apartments were revealed at the end of last year, it marked the end of a vigorous fight to keep the iconic property for the local community. Nestled in The Rocks, with expansive views of the Harbour Bridge, Circular Quay and the Opera House, Sirius was always going to be sold off and snapped up.

Public housing has a long history in The Rocks and its surrounds. Throughout the 19th century, the

district was home to sailors, traders, wharf workers and their families, and an assortment of ne'er-do-wells. When, in January 1900, the bubonic plague hit the area, the state government seized the opportunity to clean up the neighbourhood and, in the process, purpose-built homes for waterfront workers. "This is the birthplace of public housing in Australia," said Philip Thalís, independent City of Sydney councillor and public housing advocate. "It is all around you. These areas are public land because a far-sighted government in 1900 enacted legislation and resumed it all for public good."

In the 1960s and '70s, a construction boom gripped the city and the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority announced plans to demolish the public housing properties along the western side of Circular Quay to clear the way for high-rise office towers. "You had a NSW government who thought, 'The Rocks: ripe for redevelopment'," said Thalís. According

to Sirius architect, Tao Gofers, in a speech delivered at the 2018 NSW Architecture Awards, "[Former NSW premier] Bob Askin wanted to change Sydney into the New York of the south — even if he had to destroy communities and their heritage to achieve this."

But SCRA hadn't reckoned on the fierce resistance to their plans, led by Jack Munday and the all-powerful Builders Labourers Federation. "Tellingly," said Thalís, "the community turned to the unions for support." After much negotiation, the BLF agreed to allow SCRA to build its high-rise offices, but only if a large block of public housing was constructed nearby to accommodate displaced community members. A building application was duly submitted to SCRA in 1977. Construction began in 1979, completed in 1980, with the first tenants moving in shortly after. "Sirius," said Thalís, "is the one new work of public housing built, in a sense, to assuage the guilt of

former NSW governments.” Gofer saw it as an architectural solution to a political problem: “It was never a solution created for monetary profit.”

Gofer’s designs for Sirius were based on a three-storey prototype built at Sans Souci and was “a conscious effort to reduce the monolithic nature of the most high-rise residential developments”. Rather than three storeys, however, Sirius would have five, housing 79 units in all — with balconies, terraces, and roof gardens. “The roof gardens were part of the original design concept,” said Gofer, “not only to provide

additional private outdoor space but also to create a fifth elevation as 90 percent of Sydneysiders only ever saw Sirius from the Harbour Bridge approach.” Originally intended to have a white finish to compliment the nearby Opera House, due to budget constraints, the building kept its stark concrete skin.

Interior features included emergency call buttons and electronic locks on unit doors in case of accidents or medical emergencies. As well, in the foyer, a state-of-the-art distress-call panel was built into the wall, enabling residents to signal the alarm. Crucially, Sirius contained three internal community areas designed to encourage the varied mix of tenants to interact with one another.

The largest of these was the Phillip Room. Located just off the main entrance, the Phillip Room was used for all sorts of activities — including an amateur production of *Romeo and Juliet* — and functions, such as birthday parties and weddings. “The timber

linings and cave-art sculptures created a unique space for a housing commission complex,” said Gofer.

Another community space was established on the eighth floor, allowing the building’s elderly and disabled residents to view such events as the New Year’s Eve fireworks displays. Meanwhile, a large viewing platform on the top of the building was used by tenants for barbecues.

The NSW government first flagged its intention to sell-off Sirius in March 2014 — three years later it was finally placed on the private market. As for the 200-or so residents, they were informed that they had just months to vacate their homes of many years. The government pledged that the money from the deal would be reinvested toward more public housing, while insisting that the funds raised could house, not just hundreds, but thousands of people in need. Public housing advocates, meanwhile, perceived the move as nothing more than a grubby cash grab.

In response, a community conglomerate — supported by the National Trust of Australia — established the Save Our Sirius Foundation in the hope of keeping the building in public hands. But despite the marches, the protests — and a campaign to list Sirius on the State Heritage Register — eviction notices were eventually issued alongside offers of “alternative accommodation”. Gradually, unit by unit, the building began to empty. Until there was only one tenant left: Myra Demetriou. After almost 60 years, Myra eventually left Sirius in January 2018 to be rehoused in Pyrmont. She told the *Sydney Morning Herald*: “They finally got me out!”

A year on, the “stack of concrete boxes” was sold for \$150 million amid fears that Sirius would be bulldozed. However, the new owners — JDH Capital — insisted that the building would be retained. In a statement, JDH Capital said they were excited about the opportunity to “revitalise this iconic

Sydney building, which holds a special place in the heart of so many Sydneysiders. Once complete, we believe that the revitalised Sirius will be a building that all of Sydney can be proud of.” A strong supporter of Sirius, Sydney lord mayor Clover Moore posted on her Facebook feed that, while she was happy that the building was to be saved, she was “extremely disappointed that the public asset — purpose built to house people on low incomes — has been sold for market housing”.

The new, “revitalised” Sirius is to consist of 76 apartments — plus retail and commercial spaces — and a “holistic urban garden”. Internal walls will be demolished to combine units so as to increase floor space. To “clearly articulate the new against the restored concrete of the existing building”, prefabricated copper pods will be added to the main structure.

But never mind the pods, what of the people? Cherie Johnson had lived in Sirius for three decades or more. Speaking to the *Daily Telegraph*, Johnson said the sell-off amounted to a social cleansing of the area. “It is with great arrogance that they have treated us, as if we are not worthy of living here anymore. We need a mix of people living in Sydney otherwise it is them and us with classes and that is not Sydney, that is not Australia, that is not who we are supposed to be.”

And that’s it — in a nutshell. Sirius was far more than prime real estate. Sirius was Aussie egalitarianism set in concrete. Where some of Sydney’s most disadvantaged citizens shared multi-million-dollar waterfront views alongside film-stars, prime ministers, and bombastic talkback hosts. “Socially,” said Thalys, “there isn’t perhaps a more important work of public housing than Sirius. It’s hard to beat in terms of any project that I’m aware of in the state. They didn’t just build housing; they built a community.”

■ Source material: John Dunn millerspointcommunity.com.au

After every major war and depression there has been a push worldwide to address the resulting housing crisis. Unfortunately — as **TONE WHEELER** chronicles — Australia has missed, or misused, every opportunity.

1880–1890s

Housing in Victorian times was either freestanding — which were owner-occupied — or rows of terraces, which were rented. Terraces — so called for their repetitive sequence — were the principal typology in Sydney and Melbourne, and were built by the developers of the day. Named after their wife or daughter, they were rented out to families, with three generations and ten or more per house.

By the end of the century, 50 percent of houses were owner-occupied, 45 percent were privately rented. The remaining five percent were owned by local councils and others such as the Sydney Harbour Trust — which had acquired houses in The Rocks and Millers Point in 1900, when there was an outbreak of bubonic plague, and then let those houses to waterside workers. This was Australia's first publicly owned housing.

1900–1915

At the turn of the century, there was an international movement to reform housing from a social point of view, but that was not of interest to the newly formed federal government, which considered it a state matter — which it has remained ever since.

The NSW government was the first to address public housing with the Housing Act of 1912, and the NSW Housing Board planned the first public housing estates in Australia. Introduced by state treasurer Roland Dacey, he proclaimed: “We propose to establish a garden city and to offer people healthy conditions for living.” Sadly, Dacey died soon after and his vision was not built until after WW1, but his name is commemorated in the first of those garden city public housing estates — Daceyville — near UNSW, south of Sydney CBD. At the same time as the Housing Act of 1912



A HISTORY OF PUBLIC HOUSING

was passed, the NSW government also enacted legislation to advance the control of deposits and mortgage financing so that workers could own their own homes. Dacey's nascent, social liberal reform ran second to encouraging housing in the private market.

Post WW1–1929

Following the Great War, the federal government established the War Service Homes Commission in 1919, which offered low-interest loans to returned servicemen in order to construct or buy a house, thus promoting private home ownership and avoiding housing being dependant on the old private rental model. The NSW Housing Board was disbanded in the late 1920s — another instance where the government premiated home ownership over the public supply of rental housing.

1930–WW2

The provision of all housing was seriously delayed by the Great Depression, but then followed a number of public housing initiatives by various states in a desire to provide housing for those who were poor. Many of the old private and church housing estates fell into disrepair, and a Methodist social reformer, Frederick Oswald Barnett, drew attention to them as ‘slums’, and was instrumental in forming the Housing Investigation and Slum Abolition Board in Victoria in 1936. A similar committee was formed in NSW leading to a Housing

Improvement Board established from 1936 to 1942.

A building act inquiry committee in South Australia led to the creation of the SA Housing Trust in 1937; the Victorian Housing Commission was created in 1938, and the NSW Housing Commission in 1942. And in Tasmania, public housing provision was promoted through a housing division in the Agricultural Bank in 1935.

WW2

In 1943, the Commonwealth Housing Commission was established by a board of inquiry appointed by Ben Chifley, minister for post-war reconstruction. It concluded: “We consider that a dwelling of good standard and equipment is not only the need, but the right of every citizen, whether the dwelling is to be rented or purchased, no tenant or purchaser should be exploited for excessive profits.” Although the CHC promoted housing as a right for all Australians, it targeted low-income workers: “It has been apparent for many years, that private enterprise, the world over, has not adequately and hygienically been housing the low-income group.”

The CHC report of 1944 made detailed proposals and recommendations to the federal government, most of which were ignored and, instead, the 1945 Commonwealth State Housing Agreement was established for the commonwealth to



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fund public housing via loans to the states — a system which has continued in various forms to this day.

Post WW2

Immediately after the second world war, the states operated public housing schemes in varying ways. In NSW and Victoria the public housing focus was on slum clearance to rehouse those in poverty, preference being given to large families and those recently returned from service. In ten years after WW2, state housing authorities built almost 100,000 dwellings for public rental — one in every seven dwellings built in Australia. The NSW Housing Commission built almost 38,000 of those dwellings, 18 percent of all housing built in NSW. The majority of the housing built was detached houses in garden city plans in middle and outer suburban areas, such as Green Valley and Mount Druitt in Sydney.

Less in number, but more visually prominent, were the flats. These were initially walk-up blocks of three to four levels, but later became high-rise towers of 20 to 30 storeys in Sydney and Melbourne. In 1946, the Victorian Housing Commission repurposed a tank factory to produce concrete panels for prefabricated houses and flats. Eventually, 27 towers using those precast concrete panels were built across 19 suburbs in Melbourne. Housing towers were vilified in Melbourne and Sydney for their stark visual presence but, moreover,

for gathering too many people of the same socio-economic status in one place, typified by violence, drugs and suicides. The irony is there were far more tenants in suburban houses, largely indistinguishable from everyone else's housing.

1956–1970

In 1956, the first CSHA was concluded by the Robert Menzies government. Menzies had been agitating for some time for home sales not rentals. The government subsequently redirected 30 percent of commonwealth funds to building societies and state banks to subsidise finance for home ownership. Public housing completion declined to about nine percent of all dwellings, and the state authorities sold off much public housing; sometimes more was sold than was built in a year. By 1969, the NSW Housing Commission had sold almost 100,000 dwellings — one third of all the dwellings it had built. The conservative governments turned against public housing, reducing the size of public housing sectors, and shifted public housing clientele away from workers and their families to people on a social wage, or those who were unemployed.

1970s

The Whitlam government had big intentions for housing and urban renewal. Through the Department for Urban and Regional Development, the minister (and sometime deputy PM), Tom Uren, brokered deals with state and local governments for the provision of public housing in Glebe and Woolloomooloo, guided by the green bans promoted by the BLF and Jack Munday.

1980–1990s

The Hawke Labor government of 1983 negotiated building more public housing as part of the deal to encourage wage restraint. And Brian Howe, again deputy PM, took a particular interest in developing a joint program with the states called the Local Government and Community Housing Program, referred to as “Logchop”. The idea within the program was to provide public housing to those at the margins who were not normally housed publicly — artists, students, and refugees in cooperatives and local groups.

The program was never able to effectively

take off before the government changed to the Howard coalition, which made further cuts to funding social housing under the CSHA. Each return to conservative government saw a continuing fall in public housing: the share of dwelling completions fell from an average of 16 percent from 1945 to 1972, to nine percent over the 1980s, and down to five percent in the 1990s.

2000–today

By the millennium, almost no public housing estates were being built, and state governments were being encouraged to sell off the most valuable stock in order to build new housing. Most recently, the NSW Berejiklian government has done so with alacrity, selling off the buildings in Millers Point that had been public housing for 120 years — together with the purpose-built Sirius apartment building (see page 16).

The other direction is privatisation, where public housing stock is passed into the ownership of Community Housing Providers — not-for-profits run by a board with an imprimatur to maintain the stock and expand it from the rental income. CHPs are in their infancy, and it may be too early to judge their success.

Now

Our obsession with providing houses for ownership has blinded governments to the need for social housing for the poorest 20 percent, but at the same time they have failed in their mission to provide home ownership. Lose – lose. Public housing in Australia has now shrunk to four percent of all dwellings, compared to say Denmark which has 20 percent (and 60 percent home ownership).

Australia has not had a coherent housing policy, ever. The likelihood of a conservative government developing one is about equal to teaching a kangaroo to do the macarena. But we cannot despair. We need to plan big for the day when we have a government in Canberra that has a social agenda as well as an economic one — one that includes social housing.

■ Tone Wheeler is principal architect at Environa Studio, adjunct professor at UNSW, and president of the Australian Architecture Association



SYDNEY'S SEVEN DEADLY SINS

In her new book, columnist **Elizabeth Farrelly** offers a warning: little by little, our politics is being debased and our environment degraded. The tipping point is close. Can the home we love survive?

Sydney faces a choice. Early in 2019, for reasons I'll never fathom, New South Wales re-elected the most destructive of neoliberal governments for a further four-year term: another four years of park-shaving, tree-logging, fossil-fuel-polluting, sweetness-destroying exploitation. Another four years of role-playing 'liberalism' while actually centralising power and handing it to corporate and developer mates.

Already people are moving out. People are finding that other, smaller and less aggressive regional towns are actually rather nice. If Sydney is not very careful, a further four years implementing this arrogant presumption that the rich can continue making the place nastier, barer, harder and more asphalted will come back to bite. Sydney has always been so glamorous, so sexy, that people put up with anything just to be here. But, as its charm diminishes, that will change. People will vote with their feet. I thought perhaps we were already seeing this shift when, through 2019, property prices in the surrounding towns like Newcastle and Wollongong, Mudgee and Wagga Wagga, Orange and even Cowra kept growing even as Sydney's crashed.

But then came the fires. My phone weather app acquired a new category. Not cloud or rain or sun. Smoke. For weeks the city air was grey. In the country it was thick and brown and acrid for well over a month. A fire season of unprecedented duration and ferocity across much of Australia destroyed towns, burned farms and killed or displaced some three billion animals, generating a full year's worth of carbon emissions and the most devastating threatened species habitat loss in recorded history.

Then, within moments, a virus was enabled by just such habitat loss to jump the species barrier and send the world into a tailspin. So who can tell

how our living patterns might change? Indeed, who can tell whether Australia will even be habitable in a future that right now feels borderline apocalyptic? Even so, it makes sense to start applying just a little more long-term wisdom.

Of Sydney's two distinct city-making traditions — one about speed and sprawl, the other about people and place — it is the first that still drives (and I use the term advisedly) both state and federal governments. For them, with their predominately private school-educated, suburban-domiciled white male ministers, the city centre is just a cash cow to be milked, exploited and driven through. This is unacceptable. Our city is our home and our planet is our home and this dumb thinking is destroying both.

In Sydney, it plays out like the Seven Deadly Sins of urban planning. The Seven Deadly Sins are: **sloth, wrath, gluttony, lust, avarice, envy and pride**. Let's consider each in turn. **Sloth**, or laziness, drives our government's refusal to put the necessary effort into properly defining contractual relationship, as in the new Sydney light rail, where 'undue haste' meant the needless loss of mature trees and archaeological heritage. We see it too in the stadium redevelopments, and the Powerhouse move, where contracts were let before a business case was even developed, much less published or approved.

In public housing, and in planning generally, such laziness gives far too much control of public amenity to developers, concerned only with private gain. But there's a more generalised and covert form of sloth, too, in our hell-bent determination to do everything in the easiest possible way. It impels our ubiquitous Australian devotion to what philosopher J.S. Mill called 'the unearned increment' — in exploitative mining, agricultural practice and speculative development. It's also what makes us drive to the shops, or the movies, when with a little effort we could walk. It makes us deploy polluting and noisy leaf-blowers when with a little effort we could

sweep. It makes us prioritise our comfort today over our survival tomorrow.

Gluttony is evident everywhere. Gluttony, as defined in the medieval texts, is not just over-eating but dwelling too much in earthly thoughts. We see it in the government's flogging of our public institutions and assets, and in their pandering to the fossil lobby, but also in our cultural disdain for heritage, where a failure to rise above the mundane, to recognise the critical importance of narrative in our shared lives, has allowed the wanton and repeated destruction of listed heritage. In Parramatta, but also in the ghastly, ultra-shiny proposals for the massive Sydney Bays Precinct, the rich storeyed nature of our city is repeatedly trashed by planning tsars with little imagination and less courage.

Wrath is anger, and it demonstrates throughout our culture in impatience with and violence against that which cannot be directly measured and exploited: the feminine, the beautiful, the old and the natural. The urge to dominance, as epitomised by Australia's angry white male culture, is fuelled by a desire for revenge on these steadfastly unquantifiable values. Every tree-destruction and motorway project is fuelled by this anger but perhaps its ultimate built instance is WestConnex, controversial from the start for its fossil-fuel belching stupidity, it stomps blindly through our streets and houses, our neighbourhoods and parklands, furthering only speed, efficiency and planetary catastrophe.

Lust drives the habitual prostitution of our public lands and buildings to private corporations. Consider, for example, Barangaroo, pimping out hectares of the last remaining public inner-city waterfront for private profit, or Crown Casino, or the Bays Precinct or the Powerhouse, scandalously destroying a venerable institution so land can be privately redeveloped.

Avarice, or worship of mammon, is of course the market's sole and guiding principle. No longer a sin, avarice has been rebadged as a virtue. Greed is good. Here we have all examples of

active government corruption but also market-mindedness, driving the disgraceful sell-offs of Sydney's treasured and irreplaceable sandstone buildings for a quick buck, and impelling government to demolish perfectly good and largely under-utilised public assets such as the Allianz stadium for a newer, bigger version that consciously prioritises private commercial interests.

Also in this category, of course, is our own reinvention under market ideology as insatiable bundles of desire. Consume, consume, consume.

Activists and politicians who argue for housing justice, or that wealthy suburbs like Woollahra, Hunters Hill or Ku-ring-gai should not be specially protected from medium-density development, are accused of stoking the politics of envy. But there's envy, too, on the part of governments, institutions and universities that self-conceive as corporations. If they're not ruthlessly profit-focused, they seem to think, they're not doing it properly. This makes governments almost ashamed of any impulses they might have towards fairness, beauty or decency.

itself can be polluted again and again and will respond with limitless forgiveness. So we build motorways, knowing that they drive sprawl, destroy farmland and warm the planet. We strive constantly to get more than we deserve and take more than we give. Swollen by this hubris, we act as though our economy is our creation, rather than an entity wholly dependent on ecology.

I'm conscious that any sort of idealism sounds ludicrous in the context of Australian politics. That's because ours is a country increasingly run by dunderheads and bowver boys. The self-censorship that results is a form of intimidation. It means loving Sydney sometimes feels like an abusive relationship, where your hopes are constantly dashed, but, somehow, your love is such that you keep coming back for more.

A glance at other countries, though, shows that idealism is possible. People everywhere are making genuine strides towards more enlightened cities — which is why the world was so aghast at the Australian government's complacency towards our 2020 fires. "You have the second highest carbon emissions on earth and you are burying your head in the sand," said meteorologist Laura Tobin on Britain's ITV in January 2020. "Australia shows us the road to hell," headlined the *New York Times*.

International planners, urbanists and city lovers feel the same about how we treat our lovely cities; shocked by our governments' naked cronyism and at the complacency that lets them get away with it. Now, as climate protests fill the streets it is impossible not to feel that Sydney — like the country, like the world is at something of a crossroads. We can choose business as usual, notwithstanding all the signs that this is a path to disaster. Or we can shift our thinking, just a little, onto a path of greater empathy, modesty and beauty.

■ An extract from *Killing Sydney* by Elizabeth Farrelly (Pan Macmillan Australia). Dr Farrelly holds a PhD in Urbanism from the University of Sydney and is a former associate professor at the University School of Urbanism.

I'm conscious that any sort of idealism sounds ludicrous in the context of Australian politics. That's because ours is a country increasingly run by dunderheads and bowver boys. The self-censorship that results is a form of intimidation. It means that loving Sydney sometimes feels like an abusive relationship, where your hopes are constantly dashed but, somehow, your love is such that you keep coming back for more.

This governs our behaviours from the endless acquisition of cheap goods to the obesity epidemic to our ongoing suburban sprawl. Get everything you can; eat, grab, gobble. And perhaps, in the short-term, it is good for the economy but, as is now evident, it's excruciatingly bad for the planet.

Envy may sound like an improbable sin in city planning, but it's there all right. There's the misplaced kneejerk reaction of the political classes when anyone points out the injustice of governments giving ear to corporate lobbyists while ignoring the populace.

Pride is in some ways our overweening sin. Pride, as an expression of our sad, solipsistic conviction that we as human animals are here to dominate the earth and everything in it, enables us without conscience to destroy century-old trees to save a few contractual weeks and pretend that six-inch seedlings are some sort of substitute. Neoliberalism, as noted earlier, relies on cultivating us as desire-driven consumers rather than duty-focused citizens. But in the end it can only rebound, allowing us to pretend that the oceans, the forests and the air



A FLAWED SYSTEM

As the royal commission report into aged care reveals, the sector is severely underfunded. As a consequence, write **Stephen Duckett** and **Anika Stobart**, many older Australians don't have the support they need.

The federal government's announcement of \$850 million for an extra 10,000 home-care packages goes some way to addressing the long waiting list of people who need support at home. But it's not enough. The announcement, worth \$1 billion in total, formed part of the mid-year economic and fiscal outlook (MYEFO). It also encompasses funding for various COVID-related response measures in aged care — such as further mental health and allied health support for people in residential care.

When Australians need care and support in older age, the vast majority want to receive it at home. Yet most of Australia's aged-care funding goes to people in residential care. Unlike Medicare, where anyone can see a doctor without interminable waits, aged care is a rationed system, with available home-care plans limited by government planning and budget controls.

Australia's capped system leaves many older Australians without the support they need when they need it. As of June last year, 102,000 people were waiting for a home-care package at their level of need. Currently, about 115,000 people receive care at their approved level, which means the number of people waiting is only marginally less than the number with a

package that meets their needs. This is unacceptable.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety urged the government to immediately address this significant shortage of home-care packages, calling it a "cruel and discriminatory system" (see page 18). The government's recent announcements, in the October federal budget for an extra 23,000 packages, and now in the MYEFO for an additional 10,000 packages, recognises the increasing demand for home care. It will go some way in supporting many older Australians who are languishing on waiting lists for more than a year.

But these additional packages are still inadequate. You would expect the extraordinary demand to call for extraordinary measures, yet the extra 10,000 packages announced in the MYEFO is nothing out of the ordinary. Indeed, prime minister Scott Morrison stated the government has provided, "10,000 additional home-care packages at MYEFO every year for the past three years". Not nearly enough to make an acceptable dent in the waiting list.

Home-care packages operate on a spectrum from level 1 to level 4. Level 1 is designed for people with the lowest needs and level 4 for those with the highest needs. The 23,000 extra packages announced in the October budget included a disproportionate number of cheaper, lower-level packages. About 22 percent of new

packages were at level 1, even though people assessed as needing a level 1 package made up only three percent of people waiting for a package at their level.

The misallocation problem looks set to continue; it's been reported that one-quarter of the 10,000 new packages are also at level 1. It's not enough for the government merely to dribble out more packages to look like it's doing something. What's more, simply announcing more packages, without also introducing improvements to how the money is used, just puts more money into a flawed system.

The government must do more to solve the problems in the home-care system, such as bloated administrative fees — which average almost one-third of package costs — and a lack of information to help people choose the most appropriate home-care provider. Importantly, the government should immediately phase in the obvious changes needed to improve the system, especially to expand home care to reduce the waiting list for higher-level care, as flagged in the royal commission's interim report. That report, the many hearings since, and Counsel Assisting submissions, provide ample evidence that the aged-care system needs to be fundamentally transformed. This will take years, and the government cannot afford to wait.

■ Courtesy of *The Conversation*

THE ROAD TO RECONCILIATION

The 2021 reconciliation report examines the progress we have made so far, while pointing the way forward toward unity.

The demand for reconciliation in Australia is as old as its European colonisation. Since the first Europeans arrived on Australia's shores and commenced an unequal, uneasy, and often violent relationship with the continent's hundreds of distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, our shared history has seen calls for, and denials of, reconciliation and justice.

From the earliest days of the British colonies there were demands from a few lonely voices to treat Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultural protocols with respect. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

peoples — despite the dispossession, violence, and repressive racist policies they endured — have shown a generosity towards the new arrivals; and since 1788 have repeatedly called for reconciliation and a coming together. Progress has been slow, but in the past few decades Australia has made advances towards the goal of a reconciled nation. But how do we define what Australian reconciliation is, and how will we know when it has been achieved? By attempting to capture the mood of the country, the Australian Reconciliation Barometer aims to do just that.

So where we are right now? According to the 2020 ARB, 79 percent of Australians in the broader community agree that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are important to Australia's national identity. And the proportion of Australians in the general community

who believe in the possibility of national unity remains optimistically high, at 72 percent. "We see greater support for reconciliation from the Australian people than ever before," says Reconciliation Australia CEO, Karen Mundine. Furthermore, 93 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also support the concept of unity.

Drawing on interviews with key leaders of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, the 2021 State of Reconciliation report also attempts to review how far along the road to reconciliation the country is. While the report acknowledges that there have been some improvements in how the First Nations perceive the relationship between non-Indigenous Australians and themselves, it also lays bare the uncomfortable truth that Aboriginal and

KEY MILESTONES IN AUSTRALIAN RECONCILIATION

Approximately 80,000 BCE

First evidence of Aboriginal occupation in Australia.



1788

British establish a colony at Port Jackson, Sydney on Gadigal Country.

1901

The Commonwealth of Australia is formed without any consultation with Australia's First Nations.

1938

Day of Mourning protests by Aboriginal men and women gathered at Australia Hall in Sydney. The participants at the first Day of Mourning came from across Australia to continue a struggle that had begun 150 years previously.

1948

The Commonwealth Nationality and Citizenship Act 1948 creates "Australian citizenship" for the first time. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people are

technically included as citizens but are still unable to vote — one of the key privileges of citizenship.

1962

The Commonwealth Electoral Act 1918 is amended to enable all Indigenous Australians to enrol to vote in federal elections.

1967

More than 90 percent of Australians vote 'yes' in a referendum to allow the

Torres Strait Islander peoples' experience of racism "remains consistently and unacceptably high".

Before reconciliation can be achieved, says Reconciliation Australia's inaugural chairperson Shelley Reys, our nation's collective racism has to be confronted head on. "Now is the time to take a deeply personal journey and have conversations." Bravery, says Reys, will be the change agent. "Are you willing to challenge those you love despite the fear of losing their respect? Are you willing to risk social isolation or your popularity at the next dinner party because you've challenged a racist comment? Let's take an unapologetic, brave stance on racism to propel us faster toward a reconciled nation."

Encouragingly, there appears to exist an ever-increasing proportion of Australians who acknowledge racism and want to do something about it. Indeed, 43 percent of the broader community agree with the view that Australia remains a racist country. "Many more Australians now understand and acknowledge the impacts that British colonialism and the modern Australian state have had on our First Nations families and communities," says Mundine.

Addressing the many justice issues that have been the subject of significant government inquiries and acting on findings and recommendations should be paramount in order to improve the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

people, government, and government institutions. "More broadly," say the report's authors, "overcoming racism must be a national priority." They call for a "zero-tolerance approach to racism", backed by effective institutional and legislative settings, and supported by public education. "Australian institutions must be more active in calling out and condemning all racism both at the individual and systemic levels, including any racism in our parliaments. Workplaces, schools, and individuals should also consider how they can support a greater understanding of how unconscious bias can function, and how we can actively intervene, disrupt, and challenge racism."

Although a broad consensus agrees that Australia has made some progress toward reconciliation, the report reveals a level of frustration at the slowness of that progress. There exists a clear view that politicians are lagging behind public opinion and "dragging the chain". Many of the stakeholders interviewed for the report look to the lack of progress in relation to the Uluru Statement as an indicator our politicians are not keeping up with the community in progressing reconciliation. "There are signs of increasing impatience as to why this is not all fixed," said one. Another commented: "In a broader sense the issue of reconciliation has been a positive story. In a political sense, though, we are seeing a bare minimum of support."

That lack of support flies in the face

of public opinion. In a 2019 Essential Poll, 79 percent of respondents backed the Uluru Statement and its call for constitutional recognition of First Nations people. Support for the Uluru Statement by some of Australia's biggest companies — including BHP, UBS, KPMG, Qantas, Goldman Sachs, Citi Australia and Lendlease — is further evidence that politics needs to catch up.

The 2021 State of Reconciliation report outlines the five dimensions of reconciliation: race relations, equality and equity, institutional integrity, unity, and historical acceptance. "The dimensions form the basis upon which we understand the reconciliation effort, track progress and identify areas of greater need," says Mundine. "These dimensions are interdependent, meaning sustained progress towards reconciliation can only occur when advancements are made in every dimension."

The report also lists the key actions needed to reach reconciliation: maintain legal protections against racism; support public campaigns against racism; provide public education on First Nations' cultures and histories; reform mainstream service delivery and workplaces to promote cultural safety and improve accountability; and address the issues that impact the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and institutions — including over-incarceration, rates of family violence,

Australian government to make laws for ATSI peoples.

1972

The Aboriginal Embassy is erected in front of Australia's Parliament House in Canberra to demand land and other rights.

1985

On October 26, the governor-general handed Uluru back to its Anangu owners with the Anangu leasing the land back to the Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service (now Parks Australia) for 99 years with joint management arrangements.

1988

The Barunga Statement — demanding rights and recognition for Aboriginal peoples — is presented to prime minister Bob Hawke and tens of thousands of Australians protest the lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights during Australia's bicentenary.

1990

The Hawke government establishes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission in an attempt to provide greater First Nations control of affairs.



1991

The Australian parliament unanimously passes the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation Act 1991, formally launching a process of national reconciliation.

1993

The Keating government passes the Native Title Act 1993, providing a mechanism for ATSI peoples to claim back some of their ancestral lands.

1996

The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation expands the Week of Prayer for

and children in out-of-home care. “We are seeing examples of this substantive work with a number of partners coming out in support of the Uluru Statement and increasingly speaking up on issues important to First Peoples,” says Mundine. “For example, engaging in Indigenous-led initiatives such as justice reinvestment to reduce engagement with the criminal justice system. We are seeing it too in the level of community support.”

It is within local communities where reconciliation is lived and felt. One of the stakeholders interviewed for the report noted that, “It was an enormous grassroots movement in the early days with the local reconciliation action groups. Mums and dads of Australia came together to learn and to start to build relationships with Aboriginal people in their area.” Other respondents also pointed to the effectiveness of reconciliation in local communities and stressed the important role of local government in such a process.

There are many examples of community initiatives to draw from. The Mossman State School in Far North Queensland is currently teaching its students the local Aboriginal language, Yalanji, with great success. Fifty years ago, speaking Yalanji in the playground of this same school was a punishable misdemeanour, but today the Elders who experienced this repression of their mother tongue are working with teachers and education officials to bring their language to the broader

community. In the small historic town of Braidwood in NSW, local non-Indigenous residents advocated for, funded, and erected a large tribute to the local Dhurga Yuin, acknowledging their ancient connection to local Country. Local Catholic school, St Bedes, is also running language classes in the local Dhurga language.

Supporting similar projects on a national scale, and ensuring our institutions are progressing the broader community’s understanding and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture is important to progressing unity. It is also an opportunity for the whole nation to forge a national identity that is uniquely Australian, of this continent, and inclusive.

But, say the report’s authors, more needs to be done. “It is imperative that governments engage in the partnership discussions and negotiations in good faith and act on the advice of those who know best how to address the issues that affect them.” And not just governments — corporations, the media, and educational institutions can all contribute to progressing reconciliation and supporting initiatives that promote First Peoples’ histories, cultures, and achievements. “This should become part of everyday business as a way of enhancing our national identity and celebrating the oldest living culture on the planet.”

This includes presenting a more truthful representation of Australia’s past. Just as Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people are missing from the Australian constitution, their occupation by the Europeans has also been airbrushed from history. “Too often,” say the report’s authors, “our history covers up the brutal nature of colonisation. All Australians need to understand a fuller account of our shared history and its impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander society post-colonisation — as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ contribution to the nation.” Most Australians, according to the ARB (83 percent), believe that education about our shared past is critical and agree that it’s important for Indigenous history to be taught in schools. “Action on [reconciliation] can only be realised by being truthful,” says Reys. “Truthful to ourselves and truth-telling.”

Many young Indigenous people are already taking the lead. “We have heard their voices demanding to be heard with a palpable sense of urgency,” says Reys. “They will be our leaders in decades to come and we, as a reconciliation community, have a duty now to help them reclaim their narrative.” Reys believes, that as a nation, the measure of our success in achieving reconciliation will be the position that those same young Indigenous people find themselves in years from now. “That is, a safe, equitable, equal and fair environment filled with prospect and hope.”

■ Source: Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation to launch Australia’s first National Reconciliation Week.



1998

National Sorry Day is commemorated for the first time.

2000

Hundreds of thousands of Australians walk across Sydney Harbour Bridge to show support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations.

2001

Reconciliation Australia is established.

2008

Kevin Rudd formally apologises to the Stolen Generations on behalf of the Australian parliament and people.

2013

The Australian parliament passes with bipartisan support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Recognition Bill 2012, recognising the unique and special place of First Nations peoples as the original owners of the Australian continent and islands.

2017

The National Constitutional Convention at

Uluru releases the Uluru Statement from the Heart, a unified statement to the Australian people calling for an Indigenous voice to parliament, the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to develop agreements or treaties, and a process of truth-telling.

2020

Tens of thousands of Australians attend Black Lives Matter marches in cities across the country to protest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths in custody and high rates of incarceration of First Nations peoples.

LEARNING FROM EMERGENCY MEASURES

When the pandemic hit this time last year, it set in motion a response to homelessness that would normally have been considered impossible.

At the start of the COVID crisis in early 2020, homelessness policy responses to the pandemic concentrated primarily on the fringes of Australia's urban street population. From late March, four state governments — NSW, Queensland, South Australia, and Victoria — activated programs to rapidly move as many people as possible into safe temporary accommodation. For the most part this involved large-scale hotel bookings. The governments concerned authorised substantial funding to meet associated costs, including hotel charges, meals, and floating support for hotel-housed residents provided by contracted NGOs.

However, it soon became apparent that Australia had no coordinated strategy whatsoever regarding homelessness and COVID nationally. As highlighted by a new report for the ACOSS-UNSW Poverty and Inequality Partnership, research shows that a number of homelessness responses were spearheaded by advocacy groups and only later folded into official policy directions. This proactive approach paralleled developments elsewhere in the world where frontline workers enacted innovative new ways of working to cope with the perils of the pandemic. Governments have also since been criticised for the speed of the official Australian response on homelessness, which was relatively slow (reflecting its low prioritisation compared with support for the unemployed and businesses affected



by the pandemic).

Australia's homelessness response also emphasised the significance of the way that social problems are framed. During COVID-19 in Australia, say the report's authors, the representation of homelessness departed from "the prevailing neoliberal/individualising framework that has dominated homelessness policy in recent decades". Rather than characterising homelessness by placing an emphasis on illness and disability, or misbehaviour and irresponsible choices, homelessness was suddenly reframed as a threat to public health of the broader population.

This reframing of homeless people as vectors for community disease saw the launch of emergency policy innovations on homelessness of scale and significance that few could have imagined possible. Without a doubt, Australia's emergency measures played a part in preventing the spread of disease among the street homeless population and forestalling, or even preventing, the new homelessness surge that would otherwise have been expected to result from the pandemic-triggered economic downturn. "During the pandemic," says Australian Council of Social Service CEO Dr Cassandra Goldie, "governments did the right thing by providing emergency housing to prevent a sudden surge in homelessness."

Indeed, the emergency

accommodation programs rolled out last year have been widely seen as a successful public health emergency operation, and the collaboration between state governments and specialist homelessness services have been described as "a stand-out example of coordination". There is much to learn from this

experience: about how such crisis policy innovation might be better handled in a future disaster scenario; about how the latter stages of the present crisis may play out for people at particular risk of homelessness; and about the dispositions and capacities of the institutions and actors comprising Australia's homelessness systems. "It is only through an in-depth understanding both of the pandemic emergency measures and of their institutional contexts that we can assess the prospects for building back better after the crisis has subsided," conclude the authors.

One thing is certain. With rough sleeping almost eliminated in several Australian cities in mid-2020, the pandemic has clearly demonstrated that effective action reaps results. Who knows? COVID-19 may be seen as a focusing event in shaping homelessness policy in the future. The 2020 public health crisis may prove to signal the beginning of a new national approach to homelessness. "Governments, particularly the federal government, have the power to prevent this worsening homelessness crisis," says Goldie, "and to build on the good work during the pandemic and finally get us on track to end homelessness in Australia."

■ Source: UNSW Sydney/ACOSS: COVID-19: rental housing and homelessness impacts — an initial analysis

GIVING SYDNEY'S STREETIES A VOICE

Whether calling for greater investment in crisis accommodation or helping young people break the cycle of sleeping rough, AJ was a committed champion for Sydney's homeless.

Jake Kendall reports

He was the ideal advocate for the homeless. He had the lived experience. “I lived on the streets of Sydney, sleeping rough, for six of the past 12 years,” AJ wrote in his memoirs. “The circumstances that put me there were my own inability to come to grips with a drinking problem. I have never sought help for this nor has it ever been offered, not that it would have made a difference. We are what we are.”

AJ — who passed away at the beginning of the year — was the founding member of StreetCare, the Public Interest Advocacy Centre's advisory committee on homelessness. StreetCare began as a grassroots movement in late 2008 on the streets of Woolloomooloo. It was there that AJ would be found encouraging mates to join with him in persuading NGOs to consult and engage with their users — the ‘streeties’. “AJ was a tenacious and committed champion for people experiencing homelessness,” says PIAC. AJ and other StreetCare members would consult with

people on the streets and ask them what they needed. That feedback would then be passed on to government departments. “Through his involvement with StreetCare,” says PIAC, “AJ effectively represented the views of the homeless to the highest levels of government.” Such consumer participation and engagement has since become commonplace and is now regarded as standard practice in the sector.

AJ's advocacy took many forms: he produced an evocative series of photos documenting life on the streets of inner Sydney and was known for his thoughtful and powerful writing. “What I called home was two layers of cardboard — the ‘orthopaedic king’,” reflected AJ in his memoirs. “I would wake at 5.30am after a night of being interrupted by street-sweeping machines, trucks and buses whose drivers in the early hours treat the streets of Sydney like Le Mans. Why do streeties drink? Sometimes it's just to get a decent night's sleep. I pack up and am on the streets by 5.45am. It's best to get an early start so you do not have to endure the evil looks of the public — it is as though they spit on you

with their eyes.”

To those who knew him, AJ's memoir perfectly encapsulates his forthright demeanour. “AJ was well-known within the sector for his down-to-earth outlook,” says PIAC. “AJ was never afraid to tell you, or anyone for that matter, exactly how it was.” As this extract, describing a visit to the department of housing, demonstrates: “My name and number are called so I proceed to the designated booth and go through the motions with the smug person sitting on the other side of the counter. She tells me that I must be patient. I suddenly snap and ask her what the criteria are for a homeless person to be housed and can she put it in a written statement so I can shove it up her arse.”

It was AJ's unique insights into the difficulties and frustrations of dealing with government agencies and service providers that made him such a powerful and credible advocate for the city's homeless. “PIAC is indebted to AJ for his many years of service and contribution to the

StreetCare group and we honour his impressive legacy.” That legacy includes campaigning for greater investment in crisis accommodation and public housing; it's a legacy that helped shape initiatives to assist young people break the cycle of sleeping rough; a legacy that helped establish a holistic approach to tackling homelessness. But it is perhaps this remark that best sums up the essence of AJ's advocacy: “I think it's very important that people who have lived on the street have a voice,” he once said. Thanks to AJ, they did.



CAVING IN TO MORAL PANIC

Fear of punishment prevents people experiencing drug problems from seeking help. Removing the stigma of criminality, argues **Will Tregoning**, opens up a space for a rational drugs policy.

Reports the NSW government was considering removing penalties for personal drug use were met with the usual backlash.

At the end of last year, Gladys Berejiklian's government was considering "decriminalising" drug use in NSW, following a leak from cabinet. It didn't take long for the moral panic to set in. "Bunch of dopes!" screamed the front page of the *Daily Telegraph*. The deputy premier, John Barilaro, was on 2GB reassuring the ageing talkback demographic the government would not go "soft on crime". The premier swiftly ruled out decriminalisation, saying the government would maintain its "tough stance".

And it wasn't just the Liberal Party fuelling the panic. Former Labor premier Kristina Keneally said she was "highly concerned" and recommended the NSW government "slow down and listen to some experts". That off-the-cuff remark is ironic when the experts are already clear: decriminalisation makes sense.

What the NSW government was reportedly considering was not even the full decriminalisation of illegal drugs, but rather a 'three strikes' scheme where warnings and fines would be

used prior to a person being charged for drug possession. It's a step professor and senior counsel Dan Howard has encouraged the government to make in his comprehensive 1,000-plus page report from last year's special inquiry into ice and drug use. He listened to communities and experts right across the state.

Howard's recommendations included eliminating the offence of using and possessing prohibited drugs and improving referrals to health and social services. Repeated social surveys with Australians have shown high levels of support for that sensible approach. The government was reportedly considering something far less than that, but it would have been a step in the right direction if they'd held their nerve.

Criminalisation does not, on the whole, prevent people from taking drugs. But it does prevent the open and honest conversations that we need to have to manage drug use well. Removing the stigma of criminality opens up a space for a fresh conversation and a rational approach. And a rational approach includes asking why we are saddling people with criminal records and even jailing them for taking drugs. NSW police even set targets for their officers to search more than 200,000 people across the state each year. Those targets aren't popular with frontline officers, and they waste time that would be better spent on violent crime.

Part of a rational shift in drug policy is changing those police key performance indicators and freeing police up to focus on other issues, including the epidemic of domestic violence, which is one of the real blights on society. This is also imperative given our current approach to drugs disproportionately affects

people of colour, and those who are young and poor. A wealthy person in their 40s who uses cocaine and cannabis every now and then (while stockpiling a legal drug — fine wines — in their home) generally doesn't have to worry about criminalisation or the threat of arrest — at least until their kids start attending music festivals.

At the heart of politics as usual when it comes to drug use is the fear of being seen to 'normalise' drugs. To basically admit something that cuts right to the heart of the issue: drug use is normal, and the difference between illegal and legal drugs is often based on politics — not on science or common sense.

Decriminalisation doesn't mean a drug-use free-for-all. The reality is that prohibited drug use is also already normalised in the sense that most people who use prohibited drugs live otherwise normal lives. All sorts of people — from politicians to tradies — use drugs. Drug use can be managed and managed well.

Of course, all the frantic backpedalling in NSW on any suggestion that a mainstream political party would ever consider decriminalising drugs may ultimately boil down to semantics. Hopefully, serious consideration is being given to removing criminal penalties for possessing drugs for personal use under another name. But whichever way the government and the opposition want to spin the current conversation, the fact remains that until we are mature enough to have an honest conversation about drugs in Australia the least privileged in our society will continue to bear the cost.

■ Will Tregoning is co-founder and director of Sydney-based grassroots drug advocacy group Unharm!

opinion

WHY I WAS GUTTED WHEN AUSTRALIA APPLAUDED THE ANTHEM CHANGE

opinion

The move to change one word of the national anthem was hailed as an important step toward reconciliation. But, as Gamilaroi man **LUKE PEARSON** writes, the change reconciles nothing.

On New Year's Eve our prime minister announced he had solved racism by changing one word in our crappy anthem — he had changed 'young' to 'one'.

Somehow this change, he claimed, recognised both Indigenous and migrant Australians and put to bed both the myth that Australia was a young country, but also any reason that Indigenous people (or anyone else) had to not sing the anthem at national sporting events.

His minister for Indigenous Australians, Ken Wyatt, wrote an article calling it “real reconciliation” and claiming that the word ‘one’ magically “demonstrates the hope of Australia, the Australian dream that opportunity is not defined by skin colour or postcode but by grit, endeavour and a commitment to achieve. ‘One’ signals our genuine commitment to ensure that no Australian is left behind.”

And while I laughed a derisive laugh and prepared to share my mirth with

the rest of the nation who would surely see the sick joke that lay underneath this pointless and superficial change, instead, they applauded. It was a resounding success across the political divide. The nation agreed, it was real reconciliation. And I was simply dumbfounded . . . I shouldn't have been, but I was.

How could anyone think this change meant anything when it clearly achieved nothing? When it symbolised nothing. When Australia is made up of hundreds of First Nations — not just ‘one’. When nobody had been calling for it? When nobody had been marching for it? When nobody had shown through any form of consultative process that this is something that Indigenous people wanted. How could white Australia not see this? How could they not know it?

And then I remembered words that Celeste Liddle had written back in 2015: “You'd know if you listened.” You would know . . . if you listened. When Celeste wrote those words years ago it was in response to a survey IndigenousX had released, countering one by Recognise that claimed 87 percent of Indigenous people would vote ‘yes’ in a referendum that had no question and which also had a lot of opposition from Indigenous people. The [IndigenousX] survey showed almost the exact opposite. Our findings surprised a lot of people, even though the truth of our findings was already self-evident to anyone who was paying attention.

If you had been listening, then you already knew.

And here history was repeating itself, but for some reason this one

stung much more than the Recognise survey had. Constitutional law is tricky, I told myself, and at the time, Recognise enjoyed no-partisan support, aggressively enforced media support, and a budget that any Australian-made feature-length movie would envy.

But the anthem? That's not complicated. It's very simple and very crappy — and changing a crappy lyric in a crappy song when that is aggressively not the reason why mob were refusing to sing it at football games is obviously bullshit. Or so I thought. In that moment, the simple truth of Celeste's words echoed back into my mind. It was not a new realisation, but it felt soul-crushingly profound all the same. They'd know if they listened. Australia chooses not to listen. It chooses to ignore. IndigenousX was built on the idea of amplifying Indigenous voices, but no amount of amplification will ever be enough to reach those who choose not to listen.

It's not because they weren't taught it in school, because in the time since they have left school the internet has been invented. Social media, NITV, IndigenousX, more Indigenous authors being published, more Indigenous writers writing for mainstream publications, more Indigenous researchers, more Indigenous commentators appearing on their screens than ever before.

It's like Jack Charles said in 2015: “Australia's a unique country. It's peculiarly racist against us. You have to know this. If you don't know it, I can't see why you don't know it now. But we

We want our rights as Indigenous peoples to be honoured and protected. We say it every day, in a million different ways. We write it, sing it, shout it, paint it, sculpt it, put it on shirts and on banners and then march down the street with them while chanting it.



see it. Australia itself is uniquely racist against Aboriginals. And I can't put it any more succinctly than that. That's my observations, that's the observations of many other Aboriginals in Australia."

You'd know if you listened.

To live in Australia, to be a product of Australia, and to not know this, to not see this, can only be a wilful choice. A person must either choose to see it and then wilfully lie about it, or they have to wilfully ignore it with a force of will so strong they could use it to bend spoons. There is simply no other excuse for it after 242 years of forced occupation and cohabitation.

We want respect.

We want justice.

We want our rights as Indigenous peoples to be honoured and protected. We say it every day, in a million different ways. We write it, sing it, shout it, paint it, sculpt it, put it on shirts and on banners and then march down the street with them while chanting it. It is available in every format to suit your preference.

And we will keep doing so. Every Invasion Day — and every day — because just as invasion has never stopped, so too will our voices never stop until they are heard, and not just heard, but respected and responded to. But until people listen to us, and stop listening to the wilful and malicious racism that fuels the colony, we will still have to deal with this:

- "Why do Aboriginal people want/get free handouts?"
- "Real Aboriginal people live in the bush!"

- "Why do Aboriginal people just want to make white people guilty?"
- "It's OK to be white!"
- "Living on homelands is a lifestyle choice that Australia can't afford!"
- "European settlement was the best thing that ever happened to Aboriginal people!"
- "A country can't have a treaty with itself!"
- "I can't be racist; I have a friend who is Aboriginal!"
- "Australia is not a racist country!"
- "There was no invasion, there were no wars!"
- "Before 1788 Australia was nothing but bush"
- "Aboriginal people will claim your backyard if they get land rights!"
- "We won, you lost!"
- "Get over the past!"
- "We already said sorry, what more do you want?"
- "We said sorry, you should say thank you!"
- "A Voice to Parliament would be a third chamber of government!"
- "Why do Aboriginal people always make it 'us and them'?"
- "Why didn't Aboriginal people invent the wheel?"

- "I'm not racist, I lived in Alice Springs for 12 years!"
- "Don't do the crime if you can't do the time!"
- "We are all Australian!"
- "You should be thankful it wasn't the Chinese who invaded!"
- "We are one and free!"

There is an almost infinite number of victim-blaming, stereotypes, justifications, lies and misrepresentations that are so painfully false yet usually go unchallenged within the colony. You could make 1,000 racist bingo cards and still not even come close to touching the sides of racist ideas that justify and maintain Indigenous peoples' exclusion.

But just as songs we carry were made for singing, so too is the truth we carry made for telling. So do not feel too disheartened when they say they wish they knew the truth that you are trying to tell them.

Do not ever feel that the problem is within your ability to speak the truth. It is with their ability to hear it. And don't ever stop trying to find new and better ways to speak the same truths we have always told. There is a joy in the search and in the discovery even if there is too rarely any joy in the measurable impacts of it. The problem is not you. You are not the problem. You matter. You carry the flame that has been burning in this country since time immemorial. They'd know that if they looked.

They'd know if they listened.

■ Courtesy of IndigenousX

‘IF YOU DON’T TRY TO FIND ME, I WON’T REPORT YOU TO THE POLICE.’

BY COMPILING STORIES OF REAL CASES, THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND JUSTICE SHINES A LIGHT ON WHAT CONTEMPORARY CHILD PROTECTION PRACTICE IS TRULY LIKE. HERE, THREE CLIENTS SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES.

Aneeka, MOTHER,
PROUD WIRADJURI WOMAN

I call Azahlee my little miracle. If it wasn't for her, I would be locked up or dead. I was in pretty deep trouble and I didn't care because I had nothing to live for. I'd been arrested, charged and was facing jail time. That's when I found out I was pregnant. I couldn't believe it and did eight or nine pregnancy tests. The pregnancy changed everything for me. Suddenly there was a reason to live. I got help for my mental health, stopped drinking and taking drugs, started counselling. I did everything I could to take care of myself, so I could take care of my baby. It was tough, but I wanted a healthy baby even more than I wanted drugs.

I've smoked heaps of cannabis for way too long. I didn't know any other way to be. My parents died when I was young, and I still miss them every day. Azahlee's middle name is my mum's, so

her nanna will always be with her, keeping her safe. I felt like the drugs helped me cope, but they also made me careless. My mental health really suffered. I love my two older children more than anything, but things were hard there for a while and they were taken from me six years ago. I wanted it to be different this time.

I didn't have a good relationship with DCJ, so I wasn't expecting much from my caseworker, Caitlin. Then when we started talking, she apologised that I'd not had as much help as I needed when things had been hard in the past. She said sorry a few times actually. This was the first time I'd ever heard that word come out of the mouth of someone from the department. I was surprised. At first, I was like, "you're all the same", but Caitlin proved herself to be different. She is one of a kind.

Throughout the whole pregnancy my biggest fear and stress was that I wasn't going to take Azahlee home with me. Caitlin reassured me over and over that that would be the last option. She told me she would do everything to give my baby a chance to be with me, but she was firm that we needed to be safe. That kept me on track and really motivated me to keep going.

I like that Caitlin is open and clear

with me about everything. But what I will remember most is that she is kind. It wasn't only Caitlin — I felt like I had a cheer squad around me. It makes me emotional to think about it now. I had the most beautiful Aboriginal midwife, Cheryl, who I clicked with from day one. We'd laugh looking at the ultrasounds because Azahlee had all this hair and we imagined her being born with a 'fro. Azahlee's dad and I are not together, and I don't have family I can rely on, so it made me feel less alone that people were invested in our future.

Caitlin, Cheryl, my social worker, my drug and alcohol counsellor and my mental health worker all came together for a pregnancy family conference. I felt like everyone was willing me to stay strong for my baby. The hardest part was having to draw up a Plan B if it wasn't safe for Azahlee to stay with me — who she could live with, what would happen at the hospital. I know it helps parents have a say and not get a shock when it happens, but it still felt awful. Everyone kept telling me we won't need the backup plan because I was doing all the right things. I tried to believe them and believe in myself too.

Even with all these amazing women around me, it was up to me to make the right choices every day I got up.



Caitlin kept her word and didn't rock up to the hospital after the birth. I will always be grateful she gave me space with Azahlee and waited until I was home to visit. Cheryl knitted me a baby blanket and tiny Aboriginal socks in black, yellow and red and came to see us at home. She is crazy for Azahlee!

Azahlee has the most outrageous smile. She likes to try and get in on the chats when her dad or my friends come around by making these cute little noises. I love cuddling up and reading her stories. My favourite books are by Aboriginal authors because I want Azahlee to grow up proud of her people and her culture. I'm now working with my older children's caseworker to connect them with their new baby sis. I would love to see the three of them together. That will be a miracle too.

Hope, 15 YEARS OLD

I planned my escape carefully. Hiding clothes, books and things I wanted to take in the front yard where my parents wouldn't find them. I even took coins from my little brother's money box. I feel bad about that now, but I needed the money to run away and the abuse to stop. I snuck out of my house before the sun came up. I left a note on the

kitchen table telling my parents I was tired of them hurting me. I told them I wanted more for my life. I even bargained — "If you don't try to find me, I won't report you to the police."

My parents hurt me a lot — verbally, physically and emotionally. My stepmum told me I was useless and that my dad regrets having me. Dad agreed with everything she said. I felt unworthy and that I didn't belong. The weird thing was that they never hurt my siblings, only me. Things got so awful I tried to end my life. More than once. I would always stop myself because of my baby sister — I couldn't do that to her.

Dad threatened that he would send me back to Korea to be locked up in a mental-health facility. That's when I knew I had to get away. I didn't want to end up abandoned and forgotten overseas, never to return home to Australia. I fled to Sydney where there is a big Korean community, which I thought may take me in. I feel safest around people from my own culture. The first thing I did was ask shopkeepers for a job. Everyone was kind, but they got worried when they realised I was all alone at the age of 14 and called the police. That's when I met my caseworker, Sarah. I was terrified I would have to go back to my parents.

Thankfully, Sarah believed me and reassured me she would keep me safe no matter what.

I like that Sarah listens to me and makes no judgements. After years of feeling helpless, it means a lot that Sarah cares about my opinion and includes me in decisions about my life. It helps me feel a sense of control. When I'm anxious she hears me out and I never feel ignored like I did at home. Sarah let me choose where I wanted to live and encouraged me to make the phone call to my new house parents to tell them I was coming to stay. I was feeling freedom for the first time in my life.

We hang out a lot. Sarah shares her experiences of being a woman from a different cultural background. We have that experience in common. She tells me about some of the mistakes she made as a teenager, which helps me feel less awkward talking about some of mine.

When Sarah and I are together we chat about school, my friends and my future. I hope other kids have a caseworker like Sarah, who really got to know me for who I am. When she asks me what I feel like doing and what I want to talk about, I feel I can share the hard stuff too. It all comes pouring out. Sarah motivates me to try hard at

I will always be grateful that Clarinda fought hard for us to get a house and it happened right before Christmas, can you believe it?! I don't even have the words to explain how it felt to have my kids with me — just us. It was the first time I was made to feel like I was their mother and that I could do it on my own.

Katherine

school and value who I am by telling me to aim high and go for my dreams. I don't feel useless anymore.

If you're a kid reading this and are being hurt by someone who is meant to care for you, please tell someone you trust. Remember you are not what they say you are — you are so much more. I'm so thankful to my friends and everyone who has helped me. I know that I have a generous heart. I work hard and will make something of myself — hopefully go to uni, get a car and one day buy a home. I want to prove to my parents I made it and I did it on my own. I am worthy.

Katherine, MOTHER

I hit my lowest point when I was homeless and sleeping in my car. I wasn't safe. Even worse, my five kids weren't either. But I never gave up. I was determined to get them back and not let anyone hurt them again. I hope my story helps other people get the support they need.

It all started with my ex-partner, who was violent towards me. He controlled me, abused me, and wouldn't let me have friends or money. He would tell me I wasn't good enough. He threatened to call DCJ to take my kids away if I left him. I was terrified and trapped.

I didn't know where to go for help. I became depressed and wasn't able to care for my children the way I wanted.

That's when my mum and dad started looking after them. It was also when things went from bad to worse. My parents hurt my children with their mean words and harsh punishments, just like they did me when I was little. It was like my nightmare starting all over again.

I tried everything to get people to listen. I told police and DCJ that my kids were in danger, but no one believed me. Instead I was told I couldn't stay in the same home as them. I felt like my intellectual disability was used against me. People kept saying I was making up stories. Heightened. But if your kids were taken away from you, wouldn't you be upset?

After years of only seeing my kids once a week I was desperate. That is when our caseworker Clarinda came into our lives — she created a path of hope to bring my family home to me. Clarinda took the time to learn about me. She understood that I sometimes struggle to get my message across or follow conversations. She changed her way of talking for me. Clarinda explains things a few times and repeats back to me what I've said, to check that she has understood me. She doesn't cut me off halfway through what I want to say. For the first time ever I felt heard.

I slowly opened up to Clarinda about what life was like for my kids living with their grandparents. She always says, "Katherine, thank you for telling me," even when I share hard things. If I'm worried or have questions, I know I can

call Clarinda and she reassures me I'm doing a good job or suggests a new approach. It can be daunting when DCJ is in your life, but Clarinda always makes me safe enough to trust her and be honest.

Clarinda recognised all the work I had already done to be the best mum I could be. I had completed parenting courses, and counselling was helping me to deal with the ongoing trauma from being abused by my ex. Even better, Clarinda listened to my kids. She gave them the gift of time and advocated for their rights.

I will always be grateful that Clarinda fought hard for us to get a house and it happened right before Christmas, can you believe it?! I don't even have the words to explain how it felt to have my kids with me — just us. It was the first time I was made to feel like I was their mother and that I could do it on my own.

Clarinda never judges me on my disability, but rather on my love for my kids and my capacity to be a mum. I think people with a disability need their rights protected even more than other people. I'm studying community services at TAFE and want to advocate for other people in my situation. The first thing I will ask is how I can help them. It's a good place to start — we all need a little bit of help sometimes.

■ Source: *Shining a light*, NSW Department of Communities and Justice

Urban photographer, Tim Ritchie, takes to his bicycle every morning scouting out Sydney's hidden delights 🌟 @timritchie

city glimpses



This is Wimbo Park in Surry Hills. It used to be a large block of apartments called Olivia Gardens. They had their own little community. That's gone. In front of me is Olivia Lane, full of shadows, angles and mystery, and this early morning charm disappears each morning as the day consumes the shadows and the people come out to play.

FROM THE VAULT AUTUMN 2013

With major inner-city developments underway, an editorial in the autumn 2013 issue of Inner Sydney Voice argued for the need to ensure that community infrastructure be built alongside.



Sydney has always been a rapidly growing city, but now we are not only growing out, but we are also growing up. Things are moving apace in the inner city and eastern suburbs; from The Block to Barangaroo, from Green Square to Ashmore Precinct, development work is underway. Planning needs to ensure these new developments have adequate open spaces, transport management, community facilities and services. There is already a need for a new inner-city high school and, indeed, with the predicted population growth that will come with the current and future developments, a number of new education and community facilities will need to be built. An increase in the number of people means an increase in the demand for services. With budget cuts already affecting vital infrastructure like our hospitals, NSW Planning and Infrastructure must work hand in hand with departments like health, education, and family and community services to build the foundations for human service delivery. It is our job as a community to demand the NSW government synchronises its human services along with housing development. Too often, basic community infrastructure is forgotten until long after the last builder/developer has left, and people are in desperate need of supports.

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We're always looking for new voices — opinion pieces, investigative articles, profiles of community organisations, interviews and more. If you have a feature idea, please contact the editor on **02 9698 7690** by email at **comms@innersydneyvoice.org.au**

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Of Sydney's two distinct city-making traditions — one about speed and sprawl, the other about people and place — it is the first that still drives both state and federal governments. For them, with their predominately private school-educated, suburban-domiciled white male ministers, the city centre is just a cash cow to be milked, exploited and driven through. This is unacceptable. Our city is our home and our planet is our home and this dumb thinking is destroying both.

Elizabeth Farrelly page 20

