

21.10.1972

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pamphlet in the "It's time" series defined the schools commission's brief as being to assess each school's needs — "their staff, accommodation, equipment, everything."

In attempting to assess one by one, the "needs" of each of Australia's 10,000 or so primary and secondary schools, the ALP's new schools commission would be entering an administrative and political minefield. In relation to the state education systems, the schools commission in Canberra would be making a complete takeover bid for the major decision-making sections of the state education departments. In relation to independent schools, to get both capital and recurrent grants on some assessment of need, a schools commission would buy a host of problems. For one thing the independent schools would no longer be independent. The present Liberal government has been doing a great deal to destroy their independence by allocating science laboratories, library grants and now — most importantly — general purpose capital funds on the basis of need as determined by small bureaucratic establishments. But at least it is making its contributions to their recurrent costs on a simple per capita basis. The ALP schools commission would make these grants on subjective, discriminatory bureaucratic assessments. It would also set in motion all kinds of perverse incentives to school administrations to maintain and demonstrate "needs" of various kinds.

In making its state aid to independent schools a fixed proportion of the costs of government education costs (rather than a money sum which can be eroded in value by inflation), the Commonwealth government has got itself right onside politically with the independent schools. These account for 22 percent of the nation's school-pupils, 22 percent of the nation's parents with school-age children and probably the people most conscious of education as a public issue. The ALP on the contrary has got these people seriously offside politically — partly by the direct attacks on independent schools by so many Labor spokesmen, but also through spreading nervousness about just how a "needs" system would work.

A Liberal backbencher from Tasmania, Dr Bob Solomon, remarked smugly in a recent parliamentary debate: "If they (the ALP) ever think of getting into the vote-winning business, they should take account of who is interested in their proposals."

In fact an increasing number of the brighter Labor people have the sense to admit that their education policies are now an electoral liability and are pressing to see them played down in the election campaign.

**They thought they could walk over the people of Surry Hills. No such luck.**



Andrew Jakubowicz in Surry Hills: "Is it too late?"

## Shaping up in Surry Hills

By ELISABETH WYNHAUSEN

JUST DOWN the road, Arthur Stace, now dead, kept nick for the two-up school at a Foveaux Street hotel before World War I. Arthur went on to writing "Eternity" in loving copperplate on Sydney pavements.

Now blackhaired women sprawl on the pavements, some leaning against a decayed wall, one sagged on the factory stoop. Lunch eaten, she naps in the sun for 10 minutes before a whistle blast orders them back to work.

Workers in this Sydney suburb have a reason for eating their lunch al fresco. Surry Hills — precisely, the as-yet-unplanned west of Surry Hills, which slides down the hill from Dowling Street to Central Railway and the seediest corners of Elizabeth Street — doesn't have much in the way of parks.

One of the two parks it does have is merely an unadorned square of grass, hemmed by roads on all four sides. The roads define this section of Surry Hills. It is virtually a traffic grid, sliced and quartered by what the planners call desire lines, most running east-west, separated by single blocks of terraces or factories. This can happen to a community thought to be powerless and fragmented, an area where no one really seems to care, which is zoned 4B (light industrial) anyway. The Labor city council had a plan to raze the area and give it over to low cost housing.

Suddenly everyone cares. The Sydney Strategic Plan put down the skeleton of a revitalised Surry Hills in 1971. And some months ago action plans for the east and west precincts were commissioned by the city council. The eastern slice, "the village" to its intimates, who have all along asserted that planning in Surry Hills should stress the village-like residential pattern of the area, gives a clearer form for the future. It is, and presumably will remain, residential.

Property values started climbing a few years back, just ahead of the Paddington sandstock and cedar syndrome, and when the boom hit, prices of down-at-heel terraces doubled and tripled within two years. There was an exodus of immigrant families, mainly Greeks, to Randwick, Kingsford and Marrickville, to their minds more salubrious; trendies took their places and Ian Kiernan, "Australia's Duke of Westminster," smiled as the money rolled in from the rows of terraces he'd quietly accumulated and restored.

As far as thoughtful planning goes, west Surry Hills is still in embryo. Zoned light industrial throughout, it is actually about half residential — mostly terraces, some moldering, built "for the poor" last century. Just over half its inhabitants are immigrants: enclaves of Greeks, Italians (who are leaving), Turks, Chinese, Portuguese, Spaniards and Yugoslavs. Since 1954 the

population has declined by about half. As they moved out, their houses were swallowed up as factory sites and more questionably — given the zoning — as office sites, sometimes disguised with light industry on the ground floors.

At the moment west Surry Hills is a muted battle ground. The forces that make up any town planning exercise have now gathered. They are ready to defend their notions of what west Surry Hills ought to become.

## THE SYDNEY CITY COUNCIL

**OVERLORD** and protector. The council's dominant party, the Civic Reform group, say they want to amend the damage caused by neglect, lack of planning and a short-sighted view of the suburb as the split level lanes of a super freeway heading west. The council has commissioned 23 action plans to sketch in the details of the Sydney outline plan. Among them, those for east and west Surry Hills. All will be revealed at an action plan seminar the council has slotted in for November.

Andrew Briger, chairman of the council's city development committee, says the council aims at the co-operation of the locals. They have circularised residents and commercial users of the area about its possible future. But of course the real test of the council's idea of participatory planning comes later, when it is possible to gauge to what extent residents count in decision-making.

The council has clashed with the State Planning Authority: there were some disagreements about floor-space ratios, now stalemated; and the SPA has vetoed developments on several sites. Elaborately ugly holes in the ground, they may stay that way for months.

It has been claimed that in the recent past the council OK'd development applications for office buildings minimally disguised as light industrial sites. Briger disputes it. "If a development application is obviously a try-on we refuse it." Still, a number of towers built recently are advertising office space to let. Briger suggests that there are good reasons for a limited number of offices; the eastern suburbs railway will eventually run through the suburb; central railway and strong bus links exist already and, of course, there is the residential village alongside.

But John Wickham, associate chairman of the SPA, says that its view is that office development in Surry Hills must be restricted to those which are a part of any factory development in the area.

Among the problems the council must face are increased property values and pressures on low income residents that flow from it. Briger says the council has no plans to move into provision of

low cost housing ("it's a housing commission job") but that they are thinking of pensioner housing, perhaps 100 units to be built on land the council now owns.

## RESIDENT ACTION

ANDREW Briger ends by saying "we might not go as far as the left-left-wingers would like us to go." The description is inexact but there is no doubt who he means. The Surry Hills Planning for People campaign had its first meeting early in 1971. The name comes from the comment of one leathery oldtimer, Surry Hills born and bred: "Are we talking about planning for profits or planning for people?" Surry Hills resident Andrew Jakubowicz, lecturer in sociology at the University of NSW, is spokesman for the group. Some 60 locals have joined: they drafted policy submissions to the planners and believe that several major suggestions will be implemented in the village, although a recommendation for low cost housing did not get anywhere and for their idea of halting commercial development on the west side, "they basically told us to get stuffed."

Jakubowicz says: "We don't think the planners will be able to stop effective commercial development on the west side. So many office blocks have been approved already it has increased property values at an even faster rate. Office towers generate traffic noise and the areas are dead and deserted at night."

According to Jakubowicz, some of the locals have already been muscled out of the area. Landlords threaten to take them to court over rent increases. It is a questionable threat on protected tenancies, but coupled with \$500 to \$1500 inducement to exit, it usually turns the trick. Jakubowicz is dubious about the consultant planner's determination to engage the people in planning their own area: "You can legitimise anything with talk of citizen participation."

## TOWN PLANNER

SONIA Lyneham of Urban Systems Corporation agrees, but is hoping that participation in west Surry Hills will be more than tokenism. The survey results are starting to come in and public meetings in several languages are the next step, perhaps followed by working groups of residents. She sees her job as planning for Surry Hills and, as well as local planning, seeing Surry Hills as part of a larger structure — the city of Sydney. This regional outlook is emphasised in the Sydney strategic plan.

It will entail Sonia Lyneham in delicate juggling between various demands within an urban structure of some complexity: housing commission flats, residential and commercial

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development, service industries, the railway, the putative railway and the traffic grid.

Sonia Lynham heatedly disputes Jakubowicz' claim that it may be too late to restore the precinct. "That's what is wrong with Australian thinking. It's so negative." For the moment she exudes optimism. Tentatively, her action plan will leave about half of west Surry Hills as residential. She envisages closing off streets to make parks and playing space. "We'll try to link activities and places — parks with residential developments and community activities with surrounding residential programs." There will be trees and street furniture.

The idea will be to get the warehousing and light industry as close as possible to the railway, and now an underground tunnel is to link the technical college and Central railway, Sonia Lynham sees the possibility of extending it beneath the railway to Surry Hills, and incorporating some student housing in the precinct plan.

### DEVELOPERS

IT'S NOT everybody's problem. Gordon Stewart, lawyer-developer and the biggest property owner in west Surry Hills: "I think all those new city areas should become the highest quality residential areas. If the low income people can't afford it, they'll just have to move a little further out of town." Stewart is unexpectedly honest about his interests in the area. He is willing enough to supply the figures but can't remember details. A house here, a row of terraces there escapes him. All in all, we work out together, he owns or part owns well over 100 properties in the area, mostly in strips of terraces over two large squares. Not surprisingly his notion of what is good for Surry Hills would be good for Gordon Stewart. But the council has mucked it up for Stewart by concentrating residential development away from his holdings. He'd planned "for all the area on the western side of Dowling Street to be consolidated into one site for high quality residential towers surrounded by parkland."

Stewart started buying in the area in 1968 but hasn't bought anything for 12 months. (He's buying up in Redfern, Chippendale and Bondi now.) He points out that the council policy "has had a very serious effect on land value." Of course when Stewart says serious effect, he means just the opposite of what most other interested groups mean. For Stewart the problem is that the increase in land values has flattened out over the past year. Not to say his only interest is money. "It didn't fit into the plan but I bought a house in McElhone Street because of a sentimental attachment."

# A message to all accountants at the 10th International Congress.

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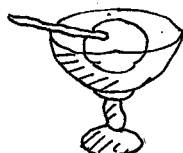
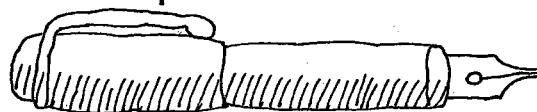
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