

Two

George Clarke Interview

George Clarke
2 February 1992

I was born on 17 February, 1932, at the top of the southern end of Carrington Road in a small hospital which looked north over the Coogee valley. Paul Ashton has asked me a series of questions which I will try to address during the course of this oral history interview. Because I left the Sydney scene in 1978, these will be 'recollections in tranquillity'.

His first question is: *'As a student or young graduate how did you perceive the City of Sydney Council? Or how did the Council view people working from or coming out of the Universities?'* Paul was prompted to ask that question by an earlier discussion in which I gave him some anecdotal entertainment: the story of my first acquaintance with the Council of the City of Sydney, in 1954 when I was a new graduate in architecture. I was in the first year of the Town and Country Planning post-graduate course at the University of Sydney under Denis Winston, the first Professor of Town and Country Planning in Australia, who was both a wonderfully skilled teacher and an astute inspirational motivator — a true guru — for the whole profession throughout Australia. He had set an essay topic: *The View from the South East Pylon of the Sydney Harbour Bridge*. It was an opportunity to enquire into and speculate on the history and character of the Sydney Central Business District and the history and development of the City of Sydney over the previous one hundred and sixty six years. As a conscientious young graduate student — several months after my twenty-second birthday on 17 February, 1954 — I went to visit the offices of the Council of the City of Sydney.

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I went to the City Engineer's Department and asked for the then Town Planning Officer or whatever the job title was at the time. He was an employee in the Engineer's Department. His name was Dugald McLaghlan: a fiery Scotsman I perceived him to be. He came up to the counter. I stammered my request that, as a student of the town planning course at Sydney University, could I please have copies of some maps or access to some information that would help me do my student project. Well, he immediately started abusing all students and universities and then he abused Professor Denis Winston. He seemed to say that he had been working at the coalface of city planning for twenty or thirty years and he had done this, that and the other — or tried to do this, that and the other — over those years and had enormous difficulty. And that us johnny-come-lately university students and professors were a lot of nitwits and no-hopers trying to get free information out of him and bludge on him and he wasn't getting the proper acknowledgment, status and reward. He wasn't loved, or presumably, even given any genuine respect, and it hurt.

Well, of course, I was totally taken aback — I hadn't anticipated this. I retreated without getting any information or any maps, feeling that there really must be a serious problem here. That was my practical introduction to city planning and to the Council of the City of Sydney, on my first formal attempt, shall we say, to study planning in the City of Sydney.

Over the next twenty-five years to the end of 1978, I became increasingly involved in planning in the City of Sydney and with the Council of the City of Sydney. From 1970 to 1978 I took a leading role in initiating strategic and action planning for the City of Sydney. For about nine years I was an influential person, although I acted merely as a consultant team leader. I drafted or edited plans, I initiated policies, I organised research and planning as a consultant — as a relatively humble and obedient servant/assistant/advisor to politicians ready to run with at least some of my ideas. Those people happened to be the Civic Reform majority party that controlled the Council of the City of Sydney between late 1969 and, I believe, 1981. I worked closely with them from 1970 until 1978, when I left Australia and went to execute a World Bank contract in Indonesia, leading

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including *^* a team researching, planning and engineering a new satellite town for thirty thousand people, and for 'Kampung' improvement programs, for physical and social infrastructure, *insert* *comm* detailed engineering designs for improvement projects and urban renewal, in Semarang and Solo. That work gave me the satisfaction of feeling I was doing something really useful for people who appreciated it. All of the detailed engineering and building our team designed, was built, in use and occupied within eighteen months of our departure.

In Sydney between 1970 and 1978, the people that I worked with most closely were Alderman Andrew Briger and Alderman Leo Port, a pair of intelligent, ambitious, energetic and enthusiastic professional people. Briger was an Architect and Port a Mechanical Engineering Consultant. Both were in private practices. Their closest allies amongst the Civic Reform Aldermen seemed to me to be Alderman Nick Shehadie, Alderman John Harris and Alderman Barry Lewis, a practical fellow who was an accountant. Harris was a descendant of the Harris after whom Harris Street, Ultimo, was named. Barry was Chairman of the Works Committee. He was a very low key, low profile, but very hard-working and sincere alderman. Perhaps he is still to be found somewhere in Sydney: it may be worth seeking his views. But anyway, Port, Briger, Shehadie, Harris and Lewis were most active on the City Planning and Development side of Council's work, — and of course there were others as well, including David Griffin and Jeremy Bingham, except that Jeremy Bingham always concentrated on the finance side of Council's work. I sensed that Jeremy Bingham was ideologically opposed to 'unessential' restrictions on private developers. Perhaps planning wasn't something on which he was going to make his reputation and he sometimes seemed to resent the enormous publicity that Port and Briger generated, perhaps because many of the Civic Reform Aldermen hoped to have a turn as Lord Mayor and the competition was an incentive for productivity, achievement and publicity. Jeremy proved to be a stayer. He finally won through to the Lord Mayoralty in the late eighties.

But reverting now to my introduction to the Sydney City Council and its then Town Planner, Dugald McLaghlan: it was the experience of that strange and abrasive dismissal from the front counter of the City Engineer's Department that first led me to form the view that trying to plan

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anything in the City of Sydney was a foolhardy activity that tended to produce, over any extended period, a state of psychotic illness. This seemed to be the inevitable result of being involved with attempts to plan the City of Sydney through the agency of the Sydney City Council under the heel of the New South Wales State Government and its fragmented bureaucracies. (I say that seriously as a critique of our over-complicated and turbulent multi-level government structure).

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I think Dugald McLaghlan, from what little I know, was a sincere and dedicated town ~~or city~~ planning chappie. But of course Dugald McLaghlan was a relatively junior employee, as far as I could understand, of the City Engineer's Department. By 1954 he had suffered a lot, presumably. I think he was the unhappy custodian of the City Council's then draft statutory planning scheme which, I think, showed a redevelopment of Paddington — all done, according to the standard town planning theories that Dugald McLaghlan had learnt, possibly in the 1930s or the 1940s. But it did seem that Dugald McLaghlan had suffered a great deal of mental or psychological stress and agony through being the Town Planning Officer of the Sydney City Council. I've seen it happen to subsequent employees of the Sydney City Council who stayed there for many, many decades being involved in city planning at a senior level, suffering the pressures from politicians both state and local; suffering the atmosphere of hysteria, and the actual hysteria, created by the major political parties and by the enormous pressures from developers. Land in the City of Sydney is the most valuable in Australia. Fortunes are made or lost through seemingly minor urban planning decisions. The pressures to 'get things through', to get things approved, (even if such proposals are not in accord with plans or regulations or codes), to muck about with real estate one way or the other, are so enormous that anyone involved in these matters who is trying to exercise the very vague administrative discretions enshrined in our planning law, or to be creative in planning, or is merely trying to survive as a local government servant in the midst of all this pressure, suffers enormous stress. If an urban planner tries to be strong, he or she is often by passed. If he or she succumbs to pressure, demoralisation and cynicism soon set in, with psychosis often the eventual result.

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So there was my first experience — somehow symptomatic of a problem that intrigued me. I then spent twenty-five years attempting to address this problem. I finally retired from active involvement in Australian culture, feeling that, at age forty-six, I didn't want to go on from 1978 spending the rest of my life continuing to be involved in these rather unrewarding activities, constantly open to the abuse, resentment, flattery and exploitation of people in politics and real estate, so many of whom were ruthless and hypocritical beneath their thin veneers of civility. I think that I got out while I was ahead. I felt that 'I'd been there and done that'. I enjoyed the experience, but any more of it would stale: the benefit — cost ratio had peaked and declined over the years. I wanted to avoid the nadir of psychosis. Clarke Gazzard Urban Systems, our large consultancy group between 1960 and 1978, was quietly closed down and sold off in fragments divided among its individual members. Many people who had worked in Clarke Gazzard Urban Systems group — our 'graduates' — went on to win for themselves many professional achievements. Many of them afterwards said that we were the most productive urban planning school in Australia. I made myself available for overseas and local consultancies as a private individual, and between my occasional appointments, lived as quietly as I could in Indonesia and elsewhere, studying Asian cultures and languages.

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The second question which Paul Ashton has addressed to me is: '*Were there divisions (but I would say different specialities, different foci) within the planning profession in the 1950s and 1960s? And if so what were they?*'

Australia was in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s very advanced in world terms in overall *metropolitan* planning. The Cumberland County Plan, prepared between 1945 and 1948 and adopted by the New South Wales Parliament in 1951 so that it became a statutory planning scheme, a metropolitan land use zoning ordinance — including the famous green belt — was in fact very advanced in world terms. It was inspired by, and to some extent modelled on, the Greater London Plan and the County of London Plan prepared by the great Sir Patrick Abercrombie and colleagues during the second World War. These were excellent. Sidney Luker, after whom the Royal Australian Planning Institute's highest honour (the Sidney Luker Memorial Medal) was

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named, was the first County Planner; Rod Fraser was my boss when I went to work there in 1954; Wally Abraham and Peter Harrison had been there; and Geoff Faithfull was the Officer in Charge of Planning under whom I worked.

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Ninety-nine or more percent of people who thought of themselves as 'town planners' or ~~urban planners~~ or 'regional planners' or 'town and country planners' were specialised either in suburban 'subdivision' of 'estates', or in the broad scale, broad brush planning to do with suburbs, metropolitan areas or regions, road and rail networks, and all that sort of thing. There were very few people who had any feel (or knowledge or training) whatsoever in the problems and opportunities of the inner, higher-density areas, or of the city centre. The urban micro-geography and real estate economics of the CBD core and frame, were understood by only a handful of business (retail and real estate) people, who kept their secrets well. Now we of course in those days took most of our ideas from Great Britain. Our 'town planning' theory and practice derived from the great pioneering work of the English utopian and reform tradition — starting from Jeremy Bentham, the founder of utilitarianism and also of ~~University College~~, London; Ebenezer Howard in the 1890s; Lord Lever of Port Sunlight, the soap company's model town; some of the utopian urban social experiments of the nineteenth century; ideal towns, mostly small towns, new towns, often created by paternal bosses like Cadbury and Lever for their employees. This utopian tradition emphasised the half-town half-county suburban 'arcadian' ideal. This low density, home owning 'arcadia' of suburbia flourished in Australia for as long as Australians enjoyed one of the highest incomes per capita in the world, and there were waves of refugees from the Australian outback and from other parts of the world, to buy the suburban plots generated by real estate subdividers.

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But then some of us began to be aware of the more scientific, more modern, utopianism of, for example, Patrick Geddes, the Professor of Biology at the University of Edinburgh in the first twenty years of this century roughly, who was a great pioneer in thinking of cities as analogues of biological organisms or what, in the 1990's, we call 'complex systems'. He also saw cities, with 'syn-optic' vision, as social, political and physical entities or 'systems',

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requiring the application of intelligence so as to 'survey' before 'planning', with rational social and economic objectives defined and stated. Lewis Mumford's book 'The Culture of Cities' inspired and enlightened people throughout the world, including me. In 1958, I was lucky enough to be a student of Mumford's at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In Australia, nineteenth century land selecting and squatting and the return to the cities of failed selectors and squatters, accelerated suburban development (Henry Lawson is significant here: 'I'm back from up the country where I went, seeking out the southern poets' land on which to pitch my tent'); people came back from the bush or poured in from overseas and settled by the coast in what were later described by poet A.D. Hope as those 'parasite robber states', the state capital cities, 'where second-hand Europeans pullulate timidly on the edge of alien shores'. (A.D. Hope, 'Australia', *The Penguin Book of Australian Verse*, Ringwood 1958, pp 119 and 120.)

By 1945, when the Cumberland County Council (a federation of about forty ~~seven~~ then municipal and shire councils) was set up under Councillor Ron Luke, at the peak tide of idealism about 'post-war reconstruction', Australia's inexperienced 'planners' were most enthusiastic to learn to develop planning skills from a base of surveying, architecture, engineering, valuation or geography. The Cumberland County Plan proposed a green belt around Sydney, a network of district or Sub-Regional Centres, a freeway system, a greatly extended public transport rail system, the decentralisation of industries, and other proposals. The successor of the Cumberland County Council was the State Planning Authority which replaced it as a state government instrumentality in 1962, I think. The State Planning Authority was in turn replaced by the Planning and Environment Commission. Power was politically centralised, by the Wran Australian Labor Party Government, in the Minister, assisted and advised by a new Department of Environment and Planning, which in turn has since been cut back to merely being the 'Department of Planning'. These bodies have been primarily concerned with broad brush techniques, standardisation, co-ordination and control of land use throughout the Sydney Region and the State of New South Wales. The whole story of the involvement of a

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multitude of other 'special purpose' State authorities and Departments in the City of Sydney has exhibited a learning curve with a very low trajectory. State Ministers, bureaucrats and planners have been very slow to grasp any comprehension, let alone develop any skill, in managing the fine, subtle textures of the inner areas and the city centre. The story includes, of course, that greatest urban disaster in Australian history — the Woolloomooloo disaster — which was created and prolonged by State Ministers Askin and Morton, and by the State Planning Authority of New South Wales, and to a lesser extent by the City Commissioners and the Civic Reform Aldermen, from the late 1960s through to the late seventies.

There has only occasionally been any person in Australia (let alone in Sydney) with: (1) any significant sensitivity to; (2) any practical capability in; and (3) any political opportunity of addressing; the complex system of problems *and* opportunities of the higher density city core and the inner and outer frames of districts around the core. There was no one in the 1950s and 1960s. The bulk of the planning profession, if given any opportunity, could be reasonably good at metropolitan regional, low density, arcadian, utopian, suburban, planning and housing. By dint of self-education, people like Rod Fraser, Peter Harrison and their colleagues and successors, have been excellent pioneers in metropolitan, regional planning, and in the detailed design and implementation of new greenfield, broadacre, low density urban development. Their great creations have been the green belt, and later the satellite city of Campbelltown (Macarthur as it is now called), and Canberra. Peter Harrison went on to the NCDC in Canberra, and helped to achieve wondrous things in low density, controlled, 'dirigiste' [a French term I believe to mean 'directed'], planning, development and building during the 1970s with virtually unlimited subsidies from profligate, status-seeking, Federal Governments from Menzies through Whitlam to Fraser.

I left Australia for the first time before my twenty-fourth birthday, in January 1956, after having worked (following graduation in architecture) for two years. I had decided in Second Year Architecture that I wanted to be an 'urbanist' and *not* an architect, and coasted through the rest of the five year course, spending most of my time with the

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Andersonian Philosophy students, the Freethought Society, and with individual creative people like Harry Hooton, Lillian Roxon, Margaret Elliott (later Fink), Bob Klippel, Jim McGuire and John Olsen. During 1954 I worked for six months as site supervisor of a subdivision, land sale and construction project for fifty single storey timber framed cottages at Bankstown for what later became Stocks and Holdings Ltd. And then from August 1954, I joined the Cumberland County Council as a planning officer. When I got the job, Professor Denis Winston took me aside at the planning school that night and said, 'It's wonderful George, that you've joined the great crusade.' And that was the way in which Denis Winston, and later I, regarded it — we dissembled, but in our hearts, we were utopian crusaders out to change the urbanising world. First of all we tried to understand it — we shared some ideas with Marxists, but inverted them: I used to say: 'our task, gentleman, is not merely to *change* the world but also, prior to attempting that, to understand it'. We were a mixed group of Socratic enquirers and Marxists, but I never succumbed to Marxism or Communism.

Later, following the scholarly writings of Sydney University Philosophy Professors John Anderson and Percy Partridge in the AJPP (The Australasian Journal of Philosophy and Psychology), we became 'Sydney Realists'. Later still, modern management and planning theorists and practitioners caught up with Anderson and Partridge.

I worked for the Cumberland County Council from August 1954 and all through 1955. Then I won an Italian Government Borsa di Studio, a scholarship, to study urbanistica, or urban design and city planning, in Italy. I left Australia at the beginning of 1956 with a free first-class passage on the Italian motor vessel 'Roma'. After so many years of studying architectural and urban design books, pictures and photographs, plans and sections, thus began my personal, face to face, feel and touch introduction to the historical and environmental glories of Europe, particularly the urban and rural glories of Italy and France. A true provincial, I first experienced Television, Pizza and Espresso coffee, in Napoli. When I left Australia in January 1956, I'd only ever seen one multi-storey building under construction. That was the concrete frame of a new office building in about the middle of the block fronting the east side of

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Elizabeth Street between Martin Place and King Street. That building was one of the first buildings ever to be built in the central business district of Sydney after the Second World War. After the war, building materials were rationed and we had all sorts of price and other controls. Suburban development for homes — homes for returned soldiers — and for essential projects — were given priority access to building materials. The commercial pick-up after World War Two was not such that much in the way of new office buildings were required until the sixties were well under way. But when they came, they came in a chaotic rush, as is well documented in our much too late 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan, and in the book 'Sydney Boom and Sydney Bust', by the urban geographer Maurie Daly.

I was early familiar with some of the inner suburbs and with the central business district of Sydney. I had been for four years (1945-48) a school boy at Sydney Grammar School on College Street coming in and going home on the Clovelly tram, going to sports at Rushcutters Bay by tram, and walking after school across Hyde Park to the Queen Victoria Building which I inhabited as my second home, being a great user of the City of Sydney Municipal (Free Lending) Library where between 1945 and 1948, I went through the entire shelves on architecture, painting and sculpture, & much else.

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My father had been, in my eyes, an important man in AWA Beam Wireless, later the Overseas Telecommunications Commission. Until he died of war-induced stress in 1943, he worked in the AWA Building at 47 York Street which I used to visit. That was then the highest building in Sydney. The AWA tower, a mini Eiffel, sat on top of this building which was already one hundred and fifty feet high. So I remember as a child in the 1930s catching the lift to the very top of the AWA tower and looking out over the whole of Sydney. It's from there that I had the second opportunity that I remember in my life to take what Patrick Geddes described as a 'synoptic view'. This concept of synopsis — in Greek, 'syn' means all together and all round about, all encompassing, and 'optic' of course means eye. So synoptic implies an overall view, an all encompassing view which of course is what Gods and planners like, and indeed need, to take. I first of all had this view from the living room window of the house at 147 Carrington Road Randwick where I sat

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at a very early age and pressed my nose against the window pane absorbed in a synoptic view over the suburban Coogee-Randwick valley (see the ABC TV documentary 'See if My Way' 1972, by Brian Adams). Later, I had a second memorable synoptic view from the top of the AWA tower. And those were perhaps some of the experiences which led me, as in Walt Whitman's poem 'There was a child went forth', to try to be a city planner or urban designer in our real-estate dominated society. Until the nineteen eighties, urban land and building has been little respected by Australians for any intrinsic qualities but has been most highly regarded for its potential for capital appreciation and manipulation providing financial security, comfort and peace of mind in middle age for everyone who plays the real estate game. The historical record shows that, during the period 1950-1980 at least, a higher percentage of Australians had title to land and other real estate, than of any other people in the world. *Greed and folly have since ended that.* < add

But I digress — I just wanted to make the point that there was little building of any significance in the City of Sydney, to the best of my knowledge, from some time in the 1930s until some time in the 1960s. Now is it any wonder that the skills and the interest in regulating, governing and managing urban change had died, disappeared — they were not there. I spent the years 1960-68 as the Honorary Editor of the Australian Planning Institute Journal. I tried to create a high standard professional, semi scholarly Journal and slaved through many nights and weekends soliciting, editing and writing 'papers' that I felt could gradually create urban planning as a respected intellectual and professional discipline. All such efforts had failed completely by the mid 1970s.

To a considerable degree, Sir John Sulman and the Royal Commission of 1908 created and defined the subject matter of urban planning for Sydney. When I later came to look for my predecessors I found them in Sir John Sulman and the 1908 Royal Commission. Previous to that the only people I remember finding were Lachlan Macquarie and Francis Greenway, Colonel William Light, Sir John Mitchell, Walter Burley Griffin, ~~and~~ a few other surveyors and architects, and a few of the 'post-war reconstruction' public servants, like Grenfell Rudduck and David Wilmoth's father. So I've always said that my Strategic Plan of 1971, (updated by me in

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1974 and 1977 and by others in 1980 (and 1988) was the third strategic plan for the City of Sydney. Macquarie and Greenway had done the first before 1815; Sulman and the 1909 Royal Commission had done the second; and I, through the agency of Port and Briger and Civic Reform, had done the third. I think that's entirely legitimate and realistic. But that's for history to judge.

When the boom of the 1960s came, there had been a long standing lapse or gap in urban cultural experience; there were no trained, sensitive *and* influential civil servants, there were no or few planners with any skills in inner city ~~urban~~ ^{delete} geography, real estate economics and urban design. Despite all my slaving to create and maintain the Australian Planning Institute Journal as an instrument for urban institutional development, the boom in investment in office building took New South Wales and Australia by surprise, leading to a series of disasters during the seventies. The archetype of all urban planning disasters, of course, was the 1968 plan for Woolloomooloo prepared under Nigel Ashton, Peter Kacirek and Rod Pegus of the State Planning Authority of New South Wales at the instigation of Premier Askin and Local Government and Planning Minister Morton, who seemingly wanted to 'Get rid of the Labor voters in Woolloomooloo'. Whatever the details were, the Minister instructed the new (1967-69) City Commissioners, in effect, to get rid of the Labor voters in Woolloomooloo, and presumably instructed the SPA to act as consultants to the City Commissioners in finding a way to do it as quickly as possible, so that new, smaller, City boundaries would ensure non-Labor majorities at future City Council elections.

The 'experts' at the SPA rushed to show the Minister and the Premier as well as the City Commissioners how they could fix inner city precincts just as easily as they could fix the western suburbs. Over the decades since then, they have succeeded in both.

Kacirek had experience in Whitehall, London, seemingly keeping tabs on statistics covering the Greater London conurbation, where I had visited him in 1957. Ashton was an architect, who survived as the chief New South Wales Public Servant in charge of urban and regional planning from the early post war period until he finally retired when the

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SPA was replaced by the Planning and Environment Commission, a span of close to thirty years, and spent his life as a good State public servant with a soul full of architectural utopianism and sensitivity that was constantly being outraged I suppose. Nigel is a gentle man, and a sincere man, but I was never happy with what he presided over. Pegus was an architect who could draw zippy towers and plazas.

The SPA prepared a plan for accelerated comprehensive redevelopment of Woolloomooloo which was to create such a vast social, political, economic and every other kind of disaster for Sydney and was ultimately salvaged by Federal Government money. Perhaps one can see this as a consequence of what I have called the great gap; there was absolutely no urban culture there, there was no governmental comprehension of urban geography, urban economics or urban transport, let alone urban cultural history. Whatever urban cultural awareness had been stimulated by John Sulman and the 1909 Royal Commission was long since dead by the 1960s.

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Sydney was completely unprepared for the changes wrought by the worldwide economic boom of the sixties, and was almost overwhelmed by it. Sydney was only saved by the fact that no one had yet found a way to build on Sydney harbour water, and later, by the 1971 Strategic Plan and the bust that co-incided with its adoption.

The third question that Paul Ashton has asked is; *'What was your involvement with the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme and how successful or otherwise in your view was this scheme.'* Well, I went to work for the Cumberland County Council in August 1954 and stayed there for a period of about 18 months until I sailed off to Italy to investigate urbanistica and to Paris, ~~and~~ London to pursue a specific interest in high density city planning and urban design and the management of urban change in city centres. Now my involvement with the County of Cumberland Scheme was only minor. I worked there with people such as Judith Fitzhenry under Geoff Faithfull and Rod Fraser, my bosses, one of whom later became a partner of mine, the other, as Chairman of The Town and Country Planning Board, Victoria, becoming a client for a 1967 study

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recommending an 'Organisation for Strategic Planning' for the Melbourne Metropolitan Region.

cap B → The County of Cumberland was a local government federation. I had a particular interest in political structures and their effectiveness in marshalling the power and skills necessary to guide and control change in the urban environment. The County of Cumberland was a federation of local government bodies; it had interests different from those of state government; it did not therefore have State government support. It was isolated in that respect and it was destroyed — abolished — by the State Government power structure in 1962, and replaced by a State Planning Authority, a confederation of the leaders of about ten of the major urban developers in Sydney and New South Wales such as Water, Sewerage and Drainage, Main Roads and so forth: a corporatist approach to co-ordination, which was a sensible idea, or seemed so, at the time. The Cumberland County Scheme was, I think, of world class significance in its day, and for what it was. I wrote what may still be the only serious paper ever written on the history of the Green Belt, 'Policy Conflict in the Green Belt controversy', in an Australian political science journal, *The Australian Quarterly* (December 1960). But that's all another story. I remember that Henry Mayer, Professor of Government at Sydney University at that time, particularly commended it because, he said, it dealt precisely and concisely, with conflicts of interests, which up to that time were not often canvassed in Australia. It was my attempt to apply to a concrete urban planning issue, the 'critical apparatus' urged by the Sydney realist, Percy Partridge.

The County of Cumberland Planning Scheme simply zoned as 'County Centre', most if not all, of the area of the City of Sydney. I remember that the 'County Centre' zone, even as late as 1971, still included Woolloomooloo, Oxford Street, Ultimo and the Rocks — an enormous area of 540 acres in gross. The SPA bureaucrats rushed to gazette the City of Sydney Planning Scheme Zoning Map and Ordinance after twenty years of preparation since 1951, on 16 July 1971 just one week before we unveiled the City of Sydney Strategic Plan. In this gazetted County Centre Zone, almost any use was permissible. Floor Space Ratio and Height were not specified. The whole problem was duckshoved and

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called upon to prepare a detailed planning scheme for its area. And I've seen, on various files, bits and pieces of remnants of this kind of effort. The whole matter was eventually taken out of the hands of the City Council and taken over by the State Planning Authority, just as it was also taken over again from 1987, by the New South Wales Department of Planning and the Central Sydney Planning Committee. Much of what Australians do in cities can be likened to people from a war-minded pre-industrial culture trying to manage the operations of a space station. And so Mr McLaghlan, and various retailers who would have been Aldermen of the day like Alderman Nock, perhaps, of Nock and Kirby, argued about what should be done. I believe that a sub-culture which Whitlam and Wran supporters used to describe as the Australian Labor Party (ALP) right wing 'Redfern Irish Mafia' was in control for most of the period 1948-67: the ALP 'Redfern Irish Mafia' seemed only to be concerned with its members and supporters in the inner suburbs (such as Woolloomooloo, Surry Hills, Pyrmont, Ultimo and Redfern), and was uninterested in the central business district. Council staff prepared some kind of draft planning scheme. The various interest groups had the usual arguments about it. I seem to remember looking at files which showed that the retailers and the capitalists were a bit worried about the restrictions on land use; some of the Labor aldermen thought that there should have been more workers' housing. The only action the ALP ever took that I can remember was to stop, or try to stop, the demolition of any houses for redevelopment, and to commission 'package dealers' to build 'worker's flats' some of which (near Blackwattle Bay) were cheaply thrown together as high rise slums. I think the draft planning scheme in one of its various forms showed the demolition and redevelopment of areas of terrace housing such as Paddington.

Apparently the institutional gap, the weakness and inadequacy of political and governmental culture and structure, meant that nobody could prepare an effective plan for the City of Sydney. Most people were more concerned with new residential and industrial areas, regional open space acquisition, green belt zoning, expressways and so on, outside the City. The 'action' was mostly westward sprawl over the easy and cheap to develop Cumberland Plain, and later, in the push to the south west, rather than where it

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relegated to discretionary consent of whatever proposals were put forward. Now that was fair enough for a regional metropolitan planning scheme in 1951. The County of Cumberland Planning Scheme Ordinance of 1951 was mostly concerned with zoning and reservation of land so as to shape and form the entire metropolis — the metropolitan area, the mother-city region. The County Planners were concerned with deconcentration to regional sub-centres, with open spaces and green belts and with decentralising industrial areas. The big issue of the day was decentralisation of industry and of traffic congestion from the inner areas such as the CBD and Mascot to outer areas — that's another question, another history. But with respect to the City, they simply lumped most if not all of the City — the core of the city and the frame of the city and the inner districts and precincts — into this blob they called County Centre and said, 'Right, that's somebody else's problem for some other day'. And that was fair enough in 1948 and 1951. But not in 1961 or 1971. < add

That meant that the Sydney City Council and the fragmented baronies which together made up the State Government were (in a muddle of ways) responsible between 1951 and 1971 and beyond, for controlling development and managing change in this vast (for the microcosm of a city centre) undifferentiated area called the County Centre. And if you wanted to do anything inside that, you applied to the Council of the City of Sydney or to the Minister as the case may have been in any particular spot in any particular week. And then somebody tried to make a decision in the light of whatever they thought right, or who the Applicant was, or which political party he seemed to favour. But they certainly had no coordinated guidance from the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme or from anything or anyone else. And that was the situation right through the 1950s and 1960s. It was not significantly, if at all, changed by the embarrassed ~~and~~ delete ~~embarrassing~~ gazettal of the City of Sydney Planning Scheme in July 1971. delete

Now the Council of the City of Sydney during the fifties and sixties through its City Engineer's Department — through Mr Dugald McLaghlan, its town planning officer — apparently tried to prepare a town planning scheme pursuant to the *Town and Country Planning Act* of 1945 and the County Scheme Ordinance of 1951, whereby each Council was

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When I visited Sydney in late 1959, after working on central city planning and renewal plans and projects in the US, notably with I.M. Pei and 'Big Bill' Zeckendorf, I discovered that Nigel Ashton was still in charge of the Town and Country Planning Branch — quite a small operation with very few people and no power and no research and seemingly, no effective longer term creative ideas. I put to them a proposal for a work program for research, investigations and planning for the central and inner areas of Sydney. I put it to Nigel Ashton in late 1959. He rejected it saying he had no power, no influence, no money to do such an ambitious thing such as to study the inner ring of suburbs and the CBD. And so nothing continued to be done.

I had another research and planning work program which I put to Rod Fraser at the then Cumberland County Council, for a study of what to do with the green belt, and how to save it by promoting satellite towns beyond the green belt, so that development could 'leap frog' the green belt. But at that stage the Cumberland County Council didn't have time, or money, or energy or power to proceed with that work program. It was already being subverted by Minister for Local Government and ex Lord Mayor of Sydney, Paddy Hills of the Redfern ALP Irish Mafia, ~~and~~ State authorities were preparing a take-over bid to dispose of the fractious Cumberland County Council and its stubbornly serious and sincere Chief Planner, Rod Fraser.

The Cumberland County Plan was, shortly afterwards, upstaged by the Minister for Local Government and Planning, Paddy Hills, who told Walter Bunning, the then Chairman of the Minister's Town and Country Planning Advisory Committee, that because of pressures from the Housing Commission and other housing developers and voters, he wanted to get rid of this difficult nuisance called the green belt zone, wherein subdivision was restricted to a minimum of five acres. Walter Bunning in 1959 told me that as Chairman of the Town and Country Advisory Committee advising the Minister, he'd spoken to the Minister about the green belt and Paddy Hills had said 'Fuck the green belt, I want to get rid of it; its a bloody nuisance, it's in the way. And I want to get all that land available for the Housing Commission and other developers to start to build housing on before the next election.' Paddy wasn't interested in any

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should have been, with early capitalisation of rapid mass rail transport, busways and freeways up and down the North and South Coasts, to and beyond Newcastle and Wollongong, in what I called 'urban pearls on a transport string' ensuring national parks in between coastal cities, where Australians want to live.

So in Sydney City, nothing much happened. From 1945 to 1948 the idealistic Cumberland County Plan team prepared the first County Plan. Then 1948 to 1951 Parliament debated what to do with this funny, newfangled thing. And then in 1951 Joe Cahill, the Minister for Local Government, pushed it through as a statutory planning scheme, which was very good. He later, as Premier, pushed the Opera House Stage One, or base, into construction before the top parts, the sails, were designed or even known to be feasible. Joe Cahill thus made what Pascal would have called two brave 'leaps of faith' of major historical importance for Sydney.

From 1951 onwards, until the matter was taken over by the SPA, the Council of the City of Sydney had the responsibility of preparing a local plan for the area then within the then municipal boundaries of the City of Sydney. But they failed in that challenge to the extent that they never seemed to agree on a plan. And if they did agree on a plan and submitted it to the Town and Country Planning Branch of the Department of Local Government, and later, to the State Planning Authority, Nigel Ashton and his staff didn't know what to do with it, except to placate other government authorities, and to simplify things to the satisfaction of the bureaucratic baronies. And the powers that be — that is, the politicians of the day didn't know what to do except to avoid facing up to politically difficult issues. Nobody in authority seemed to have any real idea of what was to come or else wanted to postpone decisions until after the next elections. The too-short three year election period universal throughout Australia until recently, has crippled honest and firm planning and good decision making in Australia. Consequently, whatever was done was pathetic and inadequate. Some major issues publicly debated concerned the huge length, area and cost of the highway and traffic engineers US style expressway system, and the mythological Eastern Suburbs Railway first planned, I think, as far back as the 1909 Royal Commission.

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sort of staged development that would salvage parts of the green belt. He did it his way, in one fell swoop. He was a victim of the requirement that his party face elections every three years. A five year period, as in the UK, could have saved the green belt.

That was Paddy Hills, whose power base, I had been told, was in the Redfern ALP Irish Mafia. Someone in the ALP alleged to me that his family/supporters/friends controlled the Labor Party throughout Redfern and the inner city suburbs of Sydney. Well, the Labor Irish Mafia weren't interested in planning. They weren't interested in the central business district. They were simply interested in self-preservation and survival for themselves and their families, friends and supporters, their sub-culture, in the finest, most admirable, Australian cultural tradition of 'mateship' between 'little Aussie battlers', in some of what were later recognised as the potentially best precincts and houses in the whole of Australia. They resisted till the end, until the final heroic Churchillian and Trotskyite fighting in the streets and houses, as in the Balinese 'puputan' of 1906 against the Dutch, reinspired in Sydney by Jack Munday between 1972 and 1975.

So, due to the ignorance and irresponsibility of the State Government and the City of Sydney Council during the 1950s and the 1960s when the City of Sydney was presided over by Paddy Hills, Harry Jensen and a large but ineffective Labor Caucus, right up to and through the 1967-69 period when Askin and Morton dismissed those Labor aldermen and appointed Pettingel, Shaw and Treatt as Commissioners — nobody grasped the nettle of doing anything positive for the long term best interests of the city except perhaps the transport planners, who put forward some good, but large, proposals requiring long term capital programming, which the three year election period inhibited the politicians from taking seriously, until it was too late.

In Sydney, it is normally the blind who lead the blind. Donald Horne once said something to the effect that Australia has been a lucky country, but unlucky in its elites (or leadership and management).

An historian doing the history of planning in the City of Sydney ought to get some clues from the work of Barbara

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(and more recently, women)
Tuchman. Her book, entitled *The March of Folly: From Troy to Vietnam*, encompasses premonitions of the history of planning in the City of Sydney. I adapt her quote from Joseph Campbell: 'And I can see no reason why anyone should suppose that in the future' (of the planning of the City of Sydney) 'the same motifs already heard will not be sounding still ... put to use by reasonable men to reasonable ends, or by madmen to nonsense and disaster.' Well, we've had a lot of reasonable men in Sydney, sliding from nonsense to disaster. Tuchman's central theme is 'The pursuit of policy contrary to self interest'. There's the nub of conflict: the democratically unresolved, continuous clashes of short term, individual self interests, against longer term, technically well based, participatively planned programs to define and implement a consensus on shared self interests, so characteristic of other cultures, such as Balinese or Japanese. In fairness, however, ~~and~~ in planetary, historical dimensions, Sydney's mismanagement pales into insignificance. I am emphasising, in this particular interview, the underside of what local publicists call 'Sydney, the vibrant City, the cluster of shining towers, the coming financial centre of South East Asia and the Pacific Rim'. This theme also characterises the 1988 coffee table book entitled the 1988 Sydney ~~City~~ Strategy.

insert (unreal)
insert (Central)
correct name:
Central Sydney Strategy
Paul Ashton's next question is: 'How did you become involved with the preparation of the City of Sydney Council's first Strategic Plan in 1971?'. The answer to that question starts with my gaining much experience, knowledge and inspiration during my studies and travels (January 1956 to late 1959) in Italy, France, England and the United States, most specifically in London with the London County Council, and in the US at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT); in Providence, Rhode Island, with the Downtown Providence Master Plan Project; and my work based in New York for I.M. Pei and Associates, then the Architects and Planners for 'Big Bill' Zeckendorf and his development company Webb and Knapp. I also had inspiration from the Philadelphia City Council and the great plans and the highly participative, annually updated for five years forward, capital budgeting and programming procedures of the Philadelphia City Council and its strong City Planning Commission — a model for all of us practical, hard-headed, utopian idealist planners and urbanists of that period, even those few
insert:
and at University Colleges

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amongst us influenced by the Sydney realists and the sardonic nature of the Australian born and bred. I note that Kerry Nash, who was effectively, I believe, responsible for a major review and updating of the City of Sydney Strategic Plan in 1980, made a brave and bold attempt to get someone to pay attention to the need for longer term capital budgeting and programming for the City. *But no one did. <add*

By the time I returned to Sydney in late 1959, having observed and participated in some wonderful processes of urban creativity overseas, I must have been, for what little it was then worth, the most educated, experienced and knowledgable person in the history of Australia in terms of central city problems and opportunities. I knew a little about (at least I knew they existed, and were useful disciplines) urban economics and urban geography; I knew a little about urban planning; land law; transportation planning; urban design; urban housing; heritage conservation; urban community power structures and politics. I was familiar with Italian concepts of urbanistica; I had been exposed to the great French tradition of urban design and planning; I was familiar with the great English tradition of social justice in the sharing of access to urban land and urban services, and the organisation of local government, and various other practical things that the British were then still very good at; and I was familiar with American aspirations and their legal and financing technologies for urban renewal and urban redevelopment, together with US urban research, real estate economics, traffic planning, landscape architecture and other US urban endeavours. The people of the United States were the first in the history of the human race to aspire to abolish the 'either-or' proposition, in an economy of abundance. I strove to put this aspiration into practice, 'to build Jerusalem among these dark Satanic mills'.

So there I was, a very full even overflowing, young bottle on a vast number of scientific, we might say, urban research and investigation techniques; with a large number of aesthetic aspirations for urban design such as you find in continental Europe, particularly in Italy and France; and with the great English aspiration to common sense, and to social justice — the great post-war effort of the English to produce social welfare and social justice in city planning and urban management, which has since, so tragically, failed.

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The response to my proposed research programs for the City and for the Sydney region was: 'Well, you know, we can't go and do such creative, dynamic things — we don't have the money, we don't have the authority. We'd be happy to give you a job, come and sit down at a desk and see what happens'. Peter Harrison invited me to join the fledgling NCDC in Canberra, but I said: 'Peter, you've no problems here you can't solve, you have the power and the money to plan, develop and build whatever you wish. I want to grapple with the intractable problems of the great unwashed metropolitan cities'.

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Well, then I went off and saw a redoubtable up-and-coming young man, Dusseldorf. He was (and I trust still is) a remarkable person, perhaps one of the greatest urbanists, one of the greatest contributors to Australia between 1955 and 1980. He was certainly a person who through his own personal magnetism, self-disciplined dynamism, energy, intelligence and strength of purpose was able to create from nothing an organisation of people (Lend Lease) which today ranks as about the seventeenth largest (in the market value of all of its shares) company in the whole of Australia and one of the top thousand in the world. He offered me a position as head of all Lend Lease and Civil and Civic urban development research, planning and design operations, to launch a special subsidiary company that would handle all those matters. I was still young and foolish enough to turn that down, saying that I wanted to retain my 'professional integrity and independence', and control my own consultant organisation which would be pleased to have him as a client, which we thereafter did, continuously between 1960 and the mid seventies, for ~~projects and strategies~~ outside the Municipality of the City of Sydney.

major
strategies
and
projects

In 1960 I knocked at the door of Harry Jensen, the then Lord Mayor of Sydney, successor to Paddy Hills. He was sufficiently impressed by the materials I had to show him to invite me to address the whole of his ALP Caucus — thirteen or fourteen ALP aldermen — at a weekend conference arranged at a guest house in Katoomba, just south-east of the railway station. We all lollied about in what the Sydney Morning Herald later called a 'secret meeting in the "pink room"'. I took slides and reports from Britain and the United States on good housing projects, pedestrian plazas and

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malls, good traffic and transport schemes and good city planning schemes, all carefully selected. It was all rather chaotic. The Labor aldermen couldn't, or didn't want to, understand what I was talking about. Then they didn't pay attention and they walked in and out and they made jokes. Harry Jensen was called away in the middle of it (I think to the birth of a child). He later told me he could lead his Caucus to water, but he couldn't make it drink, and, since the Lord Mayor of Sydney had only a single vote in his Caucus, with no real executive power, was unfortunately unable to do any of the things I advised him to do. Later, he fed the press an idea of his own, which got 'headlines' for 'headline' Harry: a proposal to demolish the Queen Victoria Building and create a City Square or Plaza. After Civic Reform came to power, Peter Keys and I and our team as a whole, with Port and Briger, persuaded them to resolve to preserve the Queen Victoria Building for future compatible new uses, and to create what is now Sydney Square from the sheds and parking spaces and fences between the Sydney Town Hall and St Andrews Cathedral. Ancher Mortlock, ~~and~~ Murray, were appointed architects for Sydney Square, and did a very fine job.

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x Woolley

I had the same sort of disappointing experience when I presented a lot of good material and ideas to the ~~then~~ 1960s Minister for Housing, Mr Abraham Landa, of the then ALP State Government, who watched the slides and looked at all the plans and listened to all the talk about urban renewal and urban development. And after about an hour he said 'Urban ... what's that word mean', he said, 'That word, Urban, that means to do with the country, doesn't it?'. And so I gave up on him.

delete the
insert 1960s

In 1961, apparently, Harry Jensen rang Dusseldorf and said; 'Look, there's this keen young man George Clarke wandering about town. Can you get him fixed up with something to do for the City of Sydney?'. Dusseldorf spoke to [Denis] Winston, and Dusseldorf and Winston between them lined up and solicited contributions from a number of property owners around Circular Quay — such as the Macquarie Ladies' Club, British Tobacco, the AMP and a number of others. Denis Winston, George Clarke, Donald Gazzard and John Toon, with Ivan Boileau and Ray Bunker, did this special Sydney Cove urban renewal — urban design — urban replanning scheme for the area between Circular Quay and

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Bridge Street. (A record of it is preserved in a 1962 issue of the Australian Planning Institute Journal). We presented this to the Labor controlled City Council and the State Government in 1962. But they just couldn't understand or were not interested. Again, it was like pre-industrial people trying to address the problem of managing a space station and flying to the moon. The Aldermen made jokes. One of them, Gil Roper, who I came to be very fond of, said 'Oh, I can see you've got a tall building on the left and a tall building on the right and you're leaving the centre open so the views to Macquarie Place and the Lands Department tower can be preserved', he said, 'Oh, so it's a gateway!'. And that's the origin of this word gateway which was taken up by politicians and the media, and has since been applied to that area, and specifically to the shiny tower which now stands just slightly off the centre of the gateway. It took years of muddled controversy to get the tower to be slightly off the centre. The matter was simply taken over by the State Planning Authority — it was referred by the Minister to them, taken away from the City Council, as were all important issues. And they never did anything with it — they never produced a scheme. In the seventies, the Civic Reform City Council did a major streetscape remodelling, and later Neville Wran sponsored Andrew Anderson's and Darryl Conybeare's designs for Macquarie Street and the eastern and western edges of Sydney Cove. These concepts had been Action Priorities of the 1971 *Strategic Plan*. But the size, height and location of what should be built around there, has remained an impossible problem ever since, as 1991 controversies about the future of East Circular Quay continue to demonstrate. Again, its been handled in the way war-like pre-industrial cultures would handle the problem of what to do with a sophisticated, modern, late twentieth century operation under their management — total ignorance, quarrelling, some violence and much procrastination (remember the Green Bans and The Rocks riots).

There were many such incidents when I and others tried in the early 1960s to put forward some ideas for the centre of Sydney. One of them was when I wrote to the Returned Soldiers Sailors and Airmen's League of Australia — the RSL — and suggested that they ought to be seen to support the idea of a pedestrian plaza around the Cenotaph in Martin

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Place between Pitt Street and George Street. They didn't know what to do with the idea and referred it to the City Council. I got back a copy of a letter initiated by the City Engineer — or possibly by Dugald McLaghlan, the Town Planning Officer — saying that the City Council couldn't possibly consider such an idea because Martin Place was a vital and essential link in the city-wide traffic system.

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later Urban Systems,

In the meantime, I'd started in 1960 a new type of consultancy practice — ^{insert} called Clarke, Gazzard and Yeomans, ^{initially} which combined the aspirations of urban research, urban planning and urban design. And we had some success — we were sought after, particularly because of Peter Yeoman's retailer and developer clients and contacts and because of my then up-to-date planning qualifications and ideas; I was sought after in many places in Australia and overseas. So I tended to spend less time on the City of Sydney after 1962 because my services were in so much demand in so many other places. I was in demand in Western Australia, in Tasmania, in Queensland and in Victoria. We set up six regional offices throughout Australia, and I was kept busy trying to maintain quality control. I was invited to Iran (Persia) by the then Minister for Urban Development (later executed by an Islamic fundamentalist firing squad) on two separate missions. I was, for one month of a special review process, adviser to the Government of Iran's National Council on Urban Development, on the planning of the great city of Shah Abbas, Esfahan. But Persian urban management and design culture had sunk even lower than Australian: my advice seems not to have been understood or acted on. I also prepared a Report for the Shah's National Plan Organisation (staffed by Harvard and Sorbonne PhDs) on a potential National System for Urban Development Land Use Planning and Control. I visited Ankor in Cambodia, Fatepursikri in India, Ayuthia in Thailand, and the major cities of the Middle East. I had a big job for the Anglo-Mauritius Insurance Society in Mauritius. And I was Chairman of the Canadian-sponsored Sydney Study Group (1965-67) that studied metropolitan problems together with similar groups in thirty-nine other cities around the world. That's how I first met Leo Port. In 1967, I led Australian delegations to international conferences on metropolitan problems in Paris and Toronto. I also prepared concept plans for the two new towns on Bougainville and in other parts of New Guinea and Papua, for detailed engineering by others. So I was always

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busy, passionately engaged, cocky and zealous, and only slowly became older, sadder and wiser.

One day in 1968 or 1969, my architect partner, Don Gazzard walked into my office and said: 'Look, the Askin State Liberal Government has sacked the City Council Aldermen, installed Commissioners, and in a short time there will be elections. It looks as if, reading the papers, this new crowd Civic Reform is going to get in. They will probably be looking for ideas about what to do when they've won power. What ideas could we put forward for a project that would be likely to gain their approval, and that we could then become architects for?' And I replied, immediately, 'the most simple, obvious and innovative architectural project that needs to be commissioned by the City of Sydney is to create a pedestrian plaza in Martin Place around the Cenotaph between Pitt Street and George Street'. I said, 'It's not an important traffic route and the traffic could easily be diverted around the perimeter and it's all pretty straight forward. It would be terrifically popular, and would dramatically demonstrate the benefits of the future, much larger strategies the City so desperately needs'. So Don said, 'Righto', and he went away and organised some photomontages of what Martin Place could look like. He got Alan Hayes of Rankine and Hill, traffic engineers, to produce some simple figuring on the consequences of closing that little piece of Martin Place to traffic. We prepared a simple presentation to the City Commissioners which was made in September 1968 or 1969. We brought in Professor Denis Winston, Professor of Town and Country Planning, to give it some gravitas. But the Commissioners were quite cold to the idea. Vernon Treatt, the Chief Commissioner, didn't want to know about it because he wanted to go down in history as the man who created a new park below Elizabeth Bay House. He wasn't interested in anything else; he wanted to spend a lot of the Council's money on buying up all this expensive private land to create a park. Bill Pettingel wasn't able to pay much detailed attention to the City and, anyway, was supposed to be an expert on management and finance. And Jack Shaw, the ex-Main Roads Commissioner, said, 'Arr, bloody rubbish', he said, 'We need Martin Place as part of a through-traffic way from Pyrmont to Woolloomooloo. Stuff and bloody nonsense', he said, 'Having places where cars can't go. We ought to knock down Sydney Hospital and

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the (then) Bank of New South Wales Head Office, and extend Martin Place both eastward and westward.'

Leo Port, however, embraced our Martin Place proposal and, I think, persuaded Civic Reform to support it before the election in September 1969. When they came to office this was one of the things they had in mind to do — it had some endorsement from them. Neither Don Gazzard nor I played any part whatsoever in their election; we hadn't contributed anything to their election campaign, we hadn't played any role in it, we hadn't met Briger or Port — oh, I'd met Port. That's right, of course, he had been a member of the Sydney Study Group. But I'd never met Briger, I'd never spoken to him. But after they had won the election, I think it was, I sat down and wrote them a letter. I said that what the City of Sydney needs — and what you need to do in order to bring about any significant improvement in the City of Sydney — is to commission a 'strategic plan'. I outlined briefly the advantage of commissioning a new type of plan that would be a plan for management by objectives; that would set objectives and strategies, policies and priorities for action to achieve those objectives for the city and would enable the new Civic Reform administration to manage change and development, creatively and practically.

Well, I got some positive response to that. Briger and Port said that that was the sort of thing that Civic Reform could be persuaded to do. But, they said, our colleagues insist we'll have to advertise world wide for the best consultants to do it. And I said, 'Well I hope you'll appoint us. But we'll go all out and make an impressive submission.' So Bruce Hyland and I wrote a brief that was circulated as being the Council's brief on which consultants would be invited to make proposals or tenders. We gave Civic Reform some advice on plain paper about how they should be taking their first steps to reorganising the city's administration and planning. [This document, along with other related material, is held in the Council of the City of Sydney Archives.] Some of those first steps are only now, twenty years later, being taken by local government in New South Wales. Then we went away and prepared a submission for appointment as strategic planning consultants. We brought in as associates some other firms and big names to make our submission look terribly impressive and as good as anyone could make from anywhere in the world. Meanwhile, we'd obtained an

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indication as to how much money Council budget makers thought might be worth investing on this strange new idea they called the 'strategic *master* plan'. We were led to believe that about one hundred thousand dollars would be about as much as the Council would risk on this strange new idea. So we arranged to put in a proposal that we'd do some wonderful things for \$99 967.43 or thereabouts. We ultimately contributed work worth many times that: it was a labour of love, of professional dedication to the science and art of urban research, planning and design, in our home town.

While all this was going on, Don Gazzard and Leo Port were trying to overcome the strong resistance to and the blunt rejection of, the Martin Place idea, by every single State Government Department that could possibly object, led and endorsed by Nigel Ashton's SPA. Australia had had 182 years of achievement in opening new roads. No one (in authority) could dare contemplate such a reversal of what had become embedded as a cultural imperative. Finally, the gordian knot was cut by Tom Lewis, Minister for Lands, who persuaded State Cabinet to let the City Council try it. The rest is history.

Meanwhile we ran the gauntlet of Strategic Plan interviews. I think that we had the best proposal. We were appointed. We agreed to come up with something originally called a strategic 'master' plan (to placate Civic Reform) within eleven months at a cost of no more than \$99 000 odd. Then I and whole lot of other enthusiastic, highly participative people, a great and overlarge team (which, like St Crispin's day, has grown larger over the years during the retelling of the story by all the observers) threw all of our energies into this and, regardless of our personal costs, we did come up with ~~something~~ in eleven months. It was only a rough outline guide for cultural change and for management by objectives. It was designed to initiate a new intra-governmental management process for continuous and integrated city planning and development. But for the first time in recorded Australian urban history we did urban planning and management by objectives, for Management, Accessibility, Diversity and Environment; four major objectives; sixteen major policies and about eighty-four action priorities. That made a statement of one hundred sentences — a totally

a big book

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revolutionary new type of 'plan', something short enough for busy politicians on the run, and which the media could comprehend and communicate. There were, of course, hundreds of pages of detailed discussion, Technical Annexures, illustrations, and supporting documents. The nitty gritty was in the Technical Annexures and in the recommended program of detailed Action Plans and Control Codes to be initiated.

Well, I think you know most of the history of that. It was enthusiastically taken up by the new Town Clerk, Leon Carter, and used and developed by him as a 'Corporate Plan' for the whole of the Council's administration. It was a powerful catalyst for changes in attitudes. The early Action Plans for Martin Place and scores of other pedestrianisation and streetscape projects quickly began to transform the City.

There's an interesting story to tell about the way in which Civic Reform went about agreeing on the wording of, and committing their organisation to, those initial hundred sentences. I still have the original documentation: my original draft, and the minor but subtle and significant amendments, clarifications and obfuscation, made after exhaustive Parliamentary debate by all twelve Civic Reform Aldermen, under the Chairmanship of the President of Civic Reform, a prominent businessman of the day.

With the full participation of our talented, enthusiastic and very large team of specialists, I drafted a set of Objectives, Policies and Priorities (about one hundred sentences each starting with an imperative verb). Civic Reform convened a Weekend Caucus at a Leura Convention Motel. They adopted Parliamentary procedure and spent forty-eight hours debating, and then voting on the exact wording and punctuation of each of the one hundred sentences. They adopted the big concepts quickly and spent hours debating specifics such as agreeing to preserve the Queen Victoria Building for new uses. Thereafter they all loyally held to the result of the vote. That's how the 1971 COSSP was settled prior to publication, prior to open debate in the Council Chamber, and without any involvement by the then Council staff, which was in those days quite lacking a City Planning Department.

PLANNING SYDNEY

George Clarke
9 February 1992

Paul Ashton asks: 'What were the strength and weakness of the strategic planning process?'

To address that question one has first to note the nature of strategic planning as practised by businesses, by corporations, by governments, and traditionally by military leaders throughout history. The term strategic planning was introduced to urban development in Australia by me for a particular purpose with proper reason. In the Oxford dictionary the word strategy is defined as the management and direction of the major movements of a campaign. Tolstoy gives a fuller and more realistic description of it in 'War and Peace', which needs to be quoted here in full. In 1958 at MIT, I wrote a term paper entitled 'Approaches to Planning: mixing knowledge, power and consensus in scientific, empirical and utopian strategies'. Strategy planning was, in the late sixties, known by corporations and governments in terms of corporate planning. I had read Chester Barnard and other US management practitioner-scholar-gurus. And the word had already begun to be used overseas with respect to the planning of complex systems such as urban areas and metropolitan regions. I ~~was~~ noted ^{insert} ~~reminded of~~ a United Nations preliminary report on planning for Singapore by Ken Watts of UNDP, long prior to the Australian firm, Crooks Michell, being appointed to prepare a 'Master Plan' for Singapore Island, City and State. And so the word strategy and the concept of strategic planning was recognised by the military tradition and increasingly, since the Second World War, by business and corporate management; and it was beginning to be recognised and adopted into sophisticated, indicative ~~urban~~ ^{delete} planning and management technologies in the capitalist world, which spawns complex urbanising systems. Such complex systems cannot be managed by inflexible plans.

Of course, the concept was not widely understood in ^{insert} provincial Australia. I had previously prepared and given the name of 'strategic plan' to a quick overview I had prepared for the Gold Coast urbanising region a couple of years previously where I ~~tried to~~ ^{ed} address the runaway problems of that area - the fastest urbanising area in Australia - when invited to do so by Bruce Small, the famous strategic business planner

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who made a fortune in bicycles and then retired to the Gold Coast. I had also used the concept in Victoria in 1967. The notion had been developing slowly in Australia up to 1970, but the New South Wales SPA had not got beyond the tentative and timid notion of an 'Outline Plan'. The situation at the end of the 1960s was such that a strategic approach was necessary in light of the then chaos within the City of Sydney.

In 1972, when I was appointed to prepare a new type of plan for the City of Adelaide, I did *not* find it necessary to prepare only a 'strategic' plan. Adelaide was *not* so complex a system, nor so chaotic. In addition to defining a strategy, I was able to produce a complete, specific detailed set of planning and development control instruments, and a cyclic process of five yearly reviews and revisions which was properly institutionalised on my strong recommendation, and has become a continuing cyclic process enjoyed and intelligently used by the Adelaide City Council, under Town Clerk Michael Lwellyn Smith, who earlier had closely followed the work in both Sydney and in Adelaide, and secured appointment as Deputy City Planner for Sydney, and later, City Planner for Adelaide.

A similar tentative approach had, I suppose, been adopted in 1968 by the State Planning Authority when it published the Sydney Region Outline Plan. But the state bureaucrats had not had the courage or the flair to come out and call that a strategic plan; they called it an outline plan. They were still following the ~~rather constipated and~~ slightly old fashioned and hesitant ~~linguistic technology~~ that they had inherited from Rod Fraser's earlier innovations in the Cumberland County Council, even though they got rid of Rod Fraser and had 'new' men, more supple, in charge. I seem to remember that the 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan was prepared under the direction of Peter Kacirek, who had come out from England where he had had experience in observing the major trends within the London regional conurbation. So the State Planning Authority, although in essence trying to prepare a regional strategy, preferred to use and officially adopt that less galvanising concept of a Sydney Region Outline Plan for the document they produced in 1968.

"outline"
concept

The economic boom in central Sydney office building — the boom in overseas investment which M.T. Daly later

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documented in his book 'Sydney Boom and Sydney Bust' — really only began in the sixties after a long period of quiescence during the World War and the immediate post war period. The boom mounted to a crescendo by 1969. It was in that iniquitous period of 1967-69 that the city was allowed to continue to run totally out of control — totally without any overall management whatsoever. The Commissioners seemed to approve whatever was put in front of them by the City Building Surveyor. There was a rush of development applications because developers had heard that changes were coming. So from 1969 to 1970 there was a rush of development applications to get consents before any new 'strategy' plan or new floor space ratio code could be introduced. During 1970, Civic Reform took a pious, albeit defensible view, that they could not change the long standing free and easy traditions set by both Labor and Liberal Parties over many decades, without having at least a 'strategic plan' (adopted on 2 August 1971) and a new, properly researched and considered, set of Floor Space Ratio and Parking Control Codes (adopted on 6 December 1971).

Chaos had been unleashed by the totally iniquitous and juvenile plan for Woolloomooloo prepared for the State Planning Authority and the City Commissioners, later found by the Supreme Court of New South Wales to be a negligent exercise. The entrepreneurial disasters of the late 1980s might amount to more in terms of dollars, but in terms of urban disasters the Woolloomooloo disaster of 1968-78 must rank as the largest in terms of physical and social impact. However, it may in future be overshadowed by the looming disaster of the great south western and western suburbs and exurbs.

The other movements at the time were that the State Planning Authority and the Height of Buildings Advisory Committee [HOBAC] were mucking about ineffectually and very tentatively trying to indicate that something ought to be done about density control — the floor space ratio and height and such things — in the central business district. But nobody knew quite what to do and the State Planning Authority was very diffident in putting forward any ideas that would not be well received by the then very pro-development — at any cost — government. They tried, but

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their papers were most unconvincing, not being based on any knowledge of, or research in, urban geography, urban planning or real estate economics.

So all in all, the period of 1969-71 was a very chaotic time in which no one with any authority had any concept of the direction in which the City of Sydney and the inner parts of the Sydney region were headed. The State Planning Authority Sydney Regional Outline Plan of 1968 had given a theoretical shape to a strategy for the region as a whole, particularly the west and south-west thrusts which have since proved to be so questionable, but had said nothing of any practical significance about the central part of the region except that it should maintain its economic and political leadership role and dominance, a sop to the powers that be. The management of the central area of the region was at that time as fragmented as it has ever been in terms of having no guiding idea or central co-ordinating body for the exchange of ideas, let alone the exercise of any control, authority, guidance, advice and discipline. There was no focus of research, debate or power for the governance of the central part of the Sydney region. This fragmentation of authority and attention has since 1986, been compounded by the fragmentation of Sydney and South Sydney City Councils, the City of Sydney Planning Committee, the Sydney Cove Redevelopment Authority, the Darling Harbour Authority, Walsh Bay, the Transport and Traffic Authorities and all the other key State Ministries and special purpose authorities.

The Cumberland County Plan still had the whole of the central area zoned in a statutory way as County Centre within which anything could be permitted anywhere and the County Centre stretched from Kings Cross right across to Pyrmont-Ultimo and down into Surry Hills. Office developers, were planning skyscrapers everywhere — in Woolloomooloo, on the Kings Cross ridge, along Victoria Street, down into the Surry Hills industrial area and across on Harris Street, Pyrmont. The Civic Reform Aldermen, including Briger and Port, had been seduced into supporting Sid Londish's larrikin megalomania to implement the SPA plan for Woolloomooloo, and I had to subvert them by every device and strategy I could muster. I have given Paul Ashton some original documentation of my activities in that matter. Sydney was facing the prospect of going the way of cities like Detroit

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and Houston. Now at that time, for example, Houston, Texas, was an interesting example of the city in the world that had absolutely no building regulations and no planning or development control regulations. So the development of Houston and the number of other North and South American cities went ahead in a laissez faire way, responsive only to the dynamics of real estate economics and the flair and imagination of individual entrepreneurs. Sometimes that can work well for a while, and many agree with Keynes that in the long run, we'll all be dead.

Such a pattern of fragmentation was common in many American cities and today we can see that total fragmentation, that total destruction of any kind of 'sense of place' or coherent public environment or street environment in such cities as Detroit as well as many others. In some US cities, however, for short periods you have had a focussing of power, guidance and inspiration through various kinds of quasi private or entirely private initiatives by old line establishment and civic/community power structures and various other processes, often supported by US Federal government direct grants and subsidies. These, for a short period, made a big difference in some cities such as Philadelphia (the city of Brotherly Love) where the old Quaker Main Line aristocracy saw to it that the Philadelphia City Council — the City Planning Commission — became, for a time, a great leader in the exercise of intelligence and imagination through a strongly directed and guided participative City governmental structure and process. This has since withered and died.

Philadelphia in the 1950s, when I was in the United States, seemed to be a model of city government and city planning which I wanted to try and introduce to Australia if at all possible. Throughout the sixties, I kept quoting the Philadelphia idea. I was so busy though, throughout the length and breadth of Australia and in Papua New Guinea, Iran, Mauritius, Paris and Toronto, during this period, that I didn't have a great deal of time to be watching what was happening in the City of Sydney. During this period when the City was rearing out of control, I'd practically given up. There seemed to be nothing I could do. The insensate forces presided over by Mr Askin and Mr Morton were running amok, Mr Treatt was running dead, Mr Jack Shaw was

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crusty on the sideline, Mr Peter Kacirek and Rod Pegus were bidding to be urban designers, and by 1970 Sid Londish was sweet-talking everyone, including the State Planning Authority, Civic Reform and the Moscow Narodny Bank.

I think on my way back from Perth one day, where I was doing a lot of work, I picked up a newspaper — around about 1968 — and saw this splendid State Planning Authority Plan for Woolloomooloo spread over the front and back covers of the *Daily Mirror*. I looked at it and thought that it was a most revoltingly juvenile architectural student exercise. But I thought to myself, I can't go and fight city hall; I can't fight the State Government; I can't fight the influence of the speculators of the world who are jostling for a position in Sydney. And so I got on with all the other things that I was doing. Nevertheless I was later pleased to learn that competent professional developers and investors, such as Lend Lease and the AMP Society, refused to be drawn into the rush of Gaderene swine over the precipice into Woolloomooloo.

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So it was only after Briger the architect and Port the engineer had been elected that I suddenly realised that there may be a chance that this new group, with an architect and an engineer, might be willing to take a new approach to the City of Sydney.

So this was a turning point. By 1970 I was thirty-eight years old and I was at the peak of my strength and enthusiasm for taking on new and exciting challenges. Our consultant group had top quality staff specialists in research, planning and urban design. I felt that our group was qualified, able, ambitious and indeed, anxious to achieve that ultimate of success for Australians, or perhaps for anyone, to 'make it' in one's own home town and have some kind of positive influence.

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land use
and
transport

The planning situation that prompted me to propose this concept of a Strategic Plan for the City of Sydney was that we'd had a Cumberland County Plan in 1948 — gazetted in 1951 — which had set aside this enormous area of the heart of the Sydney region as so-called County Centre, within which, through a maze of 'discretionary' controls anything might be approved at any density, at any height, anywhere. There was a desperate need for research and intelligence to

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define Objectives, Policies and Action Priorities to guide the discretionary exercise of power within the County Centre Zone.

I remember one day mentioning to Mr Pat Morton the then Minister for Local Government and for Planning, how enormously difficult his job must have been because of all the small, individual cases, Interim Development Orders and statutory planning scheme ordinances which he had to decide and sign, because so many particular detailed matters were under the discretion and control of the Minister. I said to him that I often wondered how he coped and that there must be enormous stacks of paper piling up on his desk because, under the then planning system of New South Wales, any little matter — even a back fence — could depend upon the decision of the Minister. He looked at me and he smiled and opened his palms out wide and said: 'Oh!', he said, 'I love it. I love being able to do favours for people. I love being able to help people.' And it suddenly struck me that, within the limited comprehension of an ordinary man who could be made Minister, the thrill that he could actually personally decide this matter — whether it be the matter of the height of a fence somewhere that had to be referred to the Minister or whether it was a major matter such as getting rid of the Labor voters in Woolloomooloo by adopting some fancy piece of planning stuff cooked up by the state bureaucrats — obviously it was a heady prospect for a normally simple man.

Another aspect of the city in 1969-70, that should be remarked on here, is that not only were the City Council, the Commissioners, the State Minister, the Department of Local Government, the State Planning Authority and HOBAC, uncomprehending and unable to apply any kind of coherent research or planning skill to the central area of the Sydney region, the poor old City of Sydney was in fact also at the mercy of dozens of other uncoordinated authorities at local, state and commonwealth levels. (These are defined and listed on page 63, figure 54, of the 1971 *City of Sydney Strategic Plan*.) They included some very powerful bodies that I used to call 'feudal baronies' such as the Commissioner for Main Roads and the Maritime Services Board, which were later put under Ministerial direction by Premier Neville Wran. The Sydney Cove Redevelopment

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Authority marked the post-war renaissance of special purpose authorities which started to eat into land that used to be controlled by the Sydney City Council. Now there's the Darling Harbour Authority and Walsh Bay and City West as well. The Sydney City Council in fact was, and still is, a kind of a 'bits and pieces' authority over some aspects of some of the private land that could be used for private purposes within the boundaries of the City of Sydney, whatever they happened to be that week. The City Council only ever seems to have responsibilities and duties that no State Minister or bureaucrat wants to take on.

It was only after the election of Civic Reform in September 1969 that I wrote to Briger formally introducing myself and proposed the concept of a strategic plan for the City of Sydney in a two page letter. The plan was to be a document which could act as the statement of guiding principles which would coherently integrate a set of objectives, policies and priorities. It was also hoped that the document would provide some sort of moral leadership for all the various bureaucracies and powerful forces.

That letter received a positive response from these new politicians freshly elected to office who were wondering how they were going to implement their rather vague notions of doing wonderful things in the City. My concept of what a strategic plan could do was essentially limited then to the documenting of, first of all, some very basic urban geographic research of the role, functions, problems and opportunities of the central place — the heart or the core of the City of Sydney — and the definition of the major problems and opportunities in relatively simple terms that the politicians, the public at large and the power elites could understand. The document had to contain guiding principles, guiding objectives and guiding statements of priorities which could perhaps begin to act as a rallying point which all the various forces could begin to move from, in the exercise of their own powers.

So the idea of the strategic plan in my mind was to provide basic statements which everyone could agree on and on the basis of which we could gradually get people to calm down and recognise their common interests and co-ordinate all of the various forces at work. Co-ordination was always the keyword of the planning profession in the modern age. We

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wanted to bring some kind of co-ordination, either voluntary or directed, to all of the myriad of decisions that were being made in their hundreds every hour — decisions which shaped the urban area.

I think I started off with a good intellectual basis and that is that the future of any urban area, particularly the centre of Sydney, was being determined minute by minute, by scores of decisions being made by individuals and by committees, investment companies, superannuation funds, local, state and federal government. This was influenced by the media, by investors, speculators, poets and writers, as they all said and did particular things. All this resulted in the outward and visible shape and form of the city centre. *In order for all those separate endeavours to be harnessed towards an intelligible, coordinated purpose, a major cultural shift was essential.*

Long before 1970, I full appreciated the truth of what Neville Wran put so starkly in 1976: '*The City Council has no more power than a crippled praying mantis.*' Power lay fragmented throughout the creaky, special-purpose, state-wide bureaucracies. State politicians were only responsive to suburban or state-wide constituencies. At state level, there was no motivation, no skill, no institutional arrangement, to analyse, synthesise and integrate environmental and transportation systems within the relatively tiny and vote-poor precincts of the CBD core and frame.

I knew that my generation of urban studies and planning professionals, if given an opportunity, could demonstrate knowledge, skills and concepts of urban systems management that could win outcomes for all major interest groups. In 1969/70, the state did not want to know; but the new City Aldermen did. So I seized this only available opportunity. I evolved a cyclic, holistic, strategic and action feedback, planning management process as an ongoing governmental and community learning process. To help induce cultural change, we sought the widest possible multi-disciplinary and interest group participation, and the maximum possible participation. I aimed to use knowledge and consensus to overcome a lack of power.

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GEORGE CLARKE

The essential first would be to research and define a coherent, overall City Structure Plan [1971 *Strategic Plan*, pp 78-91], to define pedestrian-focussed Precincts of distinctive characters and densities, integrated by improved mass public transport, fringed and separated by bypass roads feeding fringe parking stations. It was quickly obvious that the highest densities must be tightly restricted to the public transport/pedestrian networked 'Central Spine' between Sydney Cove ferry wharves and Central Railway Station and between Elizabeth and York Streets. It was equally, quickly obvious that the state government's plan to force CBD expansion away into the fringe service and residential Woolloomooloo Valley precinct would destroy any future hope of a workable CBD and a coherent, overall City structure.

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So in ~~early~~ 1970, immediately after starting to work with the City Council I started to wage a battle for Woolloomooloo. The only plan or comprehensible document that the Civic Reform people had inherited from the commissioners and from the state government and their bureaucracies was the so called plan for Woolloomooloo, this wonderful, glitzy plan for the complete demolition of Woolloomooloo as well as a strangely inspired piece of madness, the floor space ratio codes for Woolloomooloo.

The Civic Reform Group felt that the Woolloomooloo plan, endorsed by the expert SPA as well as the Minister for Local Government and the Premier, was in fact the one thing that they should hold to. And, of course, this did not go against the grain of Civic Reform because Londish and other opportunists, who by that time had begun to interest themselves in Woolloomooloo, had brought great elements of persuasion and support to Civic Reform, hopeful that Civic Reform would help them realise their dreams.

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So it was during the preparation of the strategic plan between the middle of 1970 and the middle of 1971 that I was under enormous pressure from Briger and Port and Civic Reform to endorse and incorporate in its entirety the Woolloomooloo plan into the emerging City of Sydney Strategy Plan. This was a pressure that I resisted which culminated in a straight up and down fight in about February 1971 when Briger and Port ~~and others~~ tried to persuade the then Commissioner for Railways, Mr McCusker, to alter the

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Andrew Briger was initially so enthused by Londish about Woolloomooloo that he publicised his own idea for a William Street Boulevard, requiring the demolition of the south side of William Street as well as everything north of it.

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plans of the eastern suburbs railway so as to provide a railway station at Woolloomooloo, all at the request of Londish and Co.

That is recorded elsewhere, particularly in the judgement of the San Sebastian case.

George Clarke
16 February 1992

In a student essay I wrote for Dennis Winston in 1954 on Observations of Sydney from the south-east pylon of the Harbour Bridge, I wrote to the effect that urban development is not good or bad in itself but only in relation to certain defined meanings of the 'good life'. People will themselves create that kind of physical environment as their cultural environment permits. The dominant town planning values spring from the ruling set of ideas of the dominant culture. If one understands the changing motivations and constitution of the dominant social/political groups, one can understand the urban development of Sydney to 1954. If the future is to be tackled with a closer adherence to more thoughtful principles of urban planning, then, in a democracy, the leading set of ideas held by the community *in general* must be changed. I knew that this could only be a slow process. We create our cities and our cities create us, in a highly interactive process.

I think that explains why I set out to win adherence to ideas about town planning, to persuade people and encourage community *participation* and learning to such an extent that some bureaucrats and town planners saw me as a terrible publicist. But I nailed my flag to the mast head in 1954 at the age of twenty two, saying that if we are to create a good city, that is a fine example of city or urban design in accordance with more thoughtful concepts of what is good and fine, then the leading set of ideas held by both the ruling social/political/economic culture and by the community in general, must be changed.

Australians have pioneered a lot through their democratic institutions such as the eight hour day, unions, and so forth. But Australians prior to 1970, lacked a strong '*will to form*' in urban areas except, of course, in the pursuit of suburban ideals. The City of Sydney, in particular, grew up to 1970 without much planning, without much forethought and with

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unregulated battles of competing interests. Individual land owners and developers, entrepreneurs and individual government authorities — individuals all over the place — have been daily making myriads of small decisions about the form and shape of change in urban areas. These have only rarely resulted in a coherent, efficient and effective whole. The whole, indeed, has been much less than the sum of the parts.

The result of decades of neglect and abuse was the 1973 to 1976 populist, Trotskyite rebellion in the streets and houses of inner Sydney led by Jack Mundey, which evolved into a middle class, Maoist 'cultural revolution' of resident action groups. Even after that, we still had to wait until 1979 before Wran and Landa were able to give us an up-to-date *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*, requiring Environmental Plans to state and be guided by Statements of Objectives etc, which we had pioneered in the 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan.

I decided not to continue my involvement in Sydney from about 1979 onwards after having spent twenty five years in pursuit of the creation of an intellectual, disciplined and participative approach to urbanisation in Australia and urban research, planning and design. By 1979, much had been achieved. Environmental Planning and Assessment had been institutionalised. I needed and wanted a change.

I decided that I would go off and pursue my interests in other worlds in Asia, Africa and Europe and restrict myself to occasional employment on interesting projects.

George Clarke
Medan, Indonesia
16 March 1992

I believe that the greatest *single* achievement in implementation of the City of Sydney Strategic Plan up to its twenty-first birthday on 5 August 1992, might be recognised by urban historians as the 'Central Spine' concept and the restriction (by general agreement to stick as closely as possible to our December 1971 Floor Space Ratio Control Code as a guide to the exercise of administrative discretions), of the highest density and tallest building to what I named the 'Central Spine' of Sydney. This is the

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north-south axis centred along what I hoped would one day be a fully pedestrianised, roofed 'bazaar' (as in Esfahan) along the Pitt Street valley of the original Tank Stream.

That single concept won grudging acceptance only because of its impeccable logic rooted in the sciences and arts of urban geography, urban history, urban transportation economics and real estate economics, and also because of its easily comprehensible simplicity. That Central Spine of the CBD, between the public transport interchange of Circular Quay and Central Railway Station, served by the underground rail loop linked to regional radials has since the early 1960's been extending from Redfern to St Leonards ^{insert} and ^{insert} Chatswood Railway Stations, as a lineal North-South 'Central Spine' of a Sydney Regional Central Business Spine, with its crossing of the East-West Harbour Water Regional Axis, crowned by the world-recognised 'icon' of Utzon's twentieth century cathedral, the Sydney Opera House.

That 1971 strategic non statutory concept of the Central Spine and the 1971 Floor Space Ratio (non-statutory) Control Code has preserved and enhanced the CBD's practical viability as a central place for the mutual face to face and hand to hand interaction and interchange of ideas, people, paper and parcels, a central place which can still, even if only with high costs of transportation infrastructure, traffic congestion, delays and pollution, be made accessible enough each twenty-four hours, to a sufficient number (more than five hundred thousand, I believe) of the regional population, so as to enable the Sydney Central Business Spine to continue to function tolerably, with economic benefits still exceeding economic costs, with such economic benefits not yet entirely negated by social and environmental degradation of the Inner Sydney Sub-Region on either side of the continuously extending Regional Central Spine.

The tacit consensus which that same 1971 strategic (non-statutory) objective and code has won for itself, has, furthermore, also achieved another major urban planning and design objective of the 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan: to preserve and enhance what one of my MIT Professors named 'The Image of the City' (refer to the book under that title by Kevin Lynch, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, published in the early sixties). Sydney's pre-dominant

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'image' is its concentrated north-south lineal cluster of tall buildings sharply defined by the 1971 COSSP, along its eastern and western sides, dramatically visible from all directions, most popularly recognised across an expanse of Harbour water, with the Sydney Opera House and/or Sydney Harbour Bridge in the foreground, with the lineal spine of tall buildings currently running from the TNT towers over Redfern Railway Station almost to St Leonards Railway Station, where a huge hole has finally been excavated, hopefully but not probably, for the multi-modal sub-regional transportation interchange that my 1971 Strategic Plan Team members, Peter Casey and Gavan McDonnell, so strongly urged be located at and over St Leonards Railway Station some kilometres north of the Municipal City of Sydney, and which should be, if at all possible, crowned by one or more tower buildings directly served by rail and bus transport.

Sydney in 1971 was only narrowly saved from the destruction of this now priceless economic and psychological asset of its 'image'. Schemes and trends then being encouraged by State politicians, which also tended to beguile the Civic Reform Aldermen and certainly bedazzled the media and wildcat speculative promoters, included, among many others:

- a. the official adopted State and City plan to fill the 90 acre Woolloomooloo valley with tall buildings up to Victoria Street just below the Kings Cross ridge. The first stages of this actually got built along parts of the northern side of William Street, before I was able to subvert the greater part of it;
- b. the 'Palisades' residential towers (as originally designed by Ian Mackay) just below the Darlinghurst Road, south of William Street;
- c. proposals for high buildings along College and Oxford Streets to Taylor Square some of which got built before the bust of the early 1970's and acceptance of the 1971 Strategic Plan, but which were not permitted to proceed during the boom of the 'eighties';

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- d. attempts by smaller scale commercial developers to transform the western part of Surry Hills (between Riley Street and Elizabeth Street/Central Railway) to a high speculative land profit, medium rent, extension of the CBD, with office buildings masquerading as 'flatted factories' in this CBD outer frame service/industrial zone;
- e. a massive high density 'World Trade Centre' to replace much of the Haymarket, and the old Darling Harbour Railway Marshalling Yards, which have since been redeveloped with a more appropriate general concept: a regional waterfront open space with exhibition convention, museum, hotel and other local and international tourist attractions, at low building height and density, and with some architectural flair, notwithstanding misjudgments on the Monorail and the failure to date to create an integrated urban precinct by including residential development;
- f. proposals for high rise office buildings along Harris Street, Ultimo, by speculators similar to those exerting pressure in Surry Hills;
- g. the original high rise, high density, office redevelopment of the Rocks precinct, north of the Cahill Expressway, a plan commissioned by the New South Wales government and prepared under the sponsorship of the otherwise distinguished Chief of the National Capital Development Commission, the low density planning supremo, Sir John Overall. The Gadarene swine fever of the sixties boom almost succeeded in implementing this crazy plan, but it was on its way to oblivion while we were preparing the 1971 COSSP, thanks to resident activists Nita McCrae with the support of Trotskyite Jack Munday and the Builders' Labourers Federation, in a slow process punctuated by street riots, violence and police suppression; the legacies of this and other glaring examples of uncontrolled macro ~~project~~ planning, in the absence of any integrated, overall central city real estate economic research and environmental planning, have been the shattering of public faith in

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GEORGE CLARKE

governmental planning processes; another vital part of the City cut out of the Municipality of the City and put under a special purpose Authority; and yet another large non-performing debt helping to exert pressure on the credit rating of the sovereign state of New South Wales;

- h. plans by State Government Education Authorities to create a centralised, high density, technical education ghetto for, if I remember correctly, thirty thousand or more tertiary students over a large area of the outer CBD frame in the Haymarket and Ultimo precincts. The education planners acted for a powerful special purpose group of authorities and institutions, who were unwilling even to discuss their plans and powers with any representatives of the mere Municipality of the City of Sydney;
- i. plans unveiled only after we had published the 1971 COSSP, for building over parts of Moore and Centennial Parks to create a regional Sports Complex with a possible future Olympic Games in mind to justify its initial capitalisation. These again were prepared in secrecy by yet another State government ministry (Lands) without any prior disclosure, to my knowledge, to the City Council; and certainly not to any representative of the Strategic Planning team. The mass public demonstrations and rallies against this scheme, led by world famous novelist Patrick White and supported by Jack Mundey, permanently scarred the trust of the middle classes in governmental competence to co-ordinate environmental planning, to a degree that The Rocks and Woolloomooloo and other fiascos had previously failed to achieve, because those earlier schemes had only threatened inner-city mixed use precincts still then regarded by many people as 'slums'! But the 1972 Centennial Park fiasco cut deeper and wider. I was abused by a few people at the mass rally and afterwards, because many people could not believe that neither I nor the City Council had any inkling of what the State bureaucrats were cooking up. It was widely assumed that because of Lord Mayor Alderman Sir Nicholas Shehadie's prominence as a patron of rugby union football, he must have known about it, and must have

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persuaded the City Council's strategic planning consultants to keep quiet about it. The 1971 COSSP was thereafter regarded with deep suspicion by Jack Munday and by many middle class resident activists.

The foregoing 'shortlist' still only represents the tips of a few of the icebergs that threatened physically and quickly to sink Sydney between 1970 and 1972 while the new City Council Aldermen, their new urban planning consultants, their new Town Clerk, and their embryonic City Planning Department, were starting to evolve new institutional arrangements, procedures, processes and participative working relationships.

Twenty one years on, it is saddening to realise that as was said of the Bourbons of France, State Government Authorities have a deep rooted tendency to 'learn nothing and forget nothing'. I will try to restrain myself from another 'short list' of similar fiascos over the twenty-one years between 1971 and 1992.

One recent example will suffice, one which I may have had a key role in attacking and subverting, the only one which I have allowed myself to be involved in since I left Sydney in 1978. That concerned negligence in technical advice by supposedly tightly coordinated State authorities on the 1989 or thereabouts proposal to over-develop the Moore Park Showground site, a throwback to the late sixties Woolloomooloo and The Rocks blunders.

The State apparatus is nowadays generally much more coordinated and integrated under the Premier's direct control than it was in the early seventies. The Wran years imposed a modern centralised 'command and control' system onto the previously fragmented multiplicity of quasi-independent Ministries, Departments, Authorities, Boards, Commissions, County Councils and the like. Legislative amendments, or radically new legislation like the 1979 *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*, made almost every corner of the State apparatus 'subject to the direction and control of the Minister' while the Ministers were made subject to tight political and administrative control by the Premier's own political advisers and the Premier's own Department. Corporate Planning and Strategic Planning techniques were

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introduced. A new generation of 'managers' took over. The 'Special Executive Service' was created.

Although Local Government benefited from the initial idealism of the 1979 *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*, this was rectified by legislative amendments and by tightening of, and a proliferation of, State and Regional Planning Instruments that made key issues of Environmental Planning and Assessment subject to the political will of the State Government of the day.

One of the major blunders of the Wran years was an action delayed by Wran for five years, but finally forced on Wran by his party. That was the sacking of the City Council in which Civic Reform won ~~the~~ successive elections despite Labor State Government alterations to the franchise and to voting procedures and the great enlargement of the City boundaries. The cyclic strategic plan reviews and revisions of 1971, 1974, 1977 and 1980, contributed, I believe, to Civic Reform's repeated success with voters despite the ALP tinkering with the City Council franchise before ~~the 1977~~ ~~and 1980~~ Local Government elections. delete as marked

delete The greatly enlarged City Council area, the great increase in the number of Aldermen, and any tinkering with the franchise, approximately between 1981 and 1987, still could not produce an ALP controlled Council, and could not produce an effective Council, I believe.

e The most sensible boundaries that I think the Municipality of the City of Sydney has ever had, in terms of a definition of a core and frame as per the science of urban geography, were those in place between 1969 and 1981, or whenever it was that Labor enlarged them with such disastrous effect. I must explain that a good urban planning training includes a grounding in the basics of the science of urban geography and those 1969-81 boundaries were a reasonable approximation for Sydney of what Murphy and Vance defined as the core and the inner and outer frames of a Central Business District, what most people would know as the heart of the city and the inner ring of higher density precincts and service areas that surround the heart, or core, or Central Business District.

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I seem to remember hearing that the City Council between about 1981 and about 1987, degenerated into a tragedy-comedy, which became such a practical problem that the ALP government was forced to abolish its own creation and look around for something completely different. Before the ALP Government could find anything, I believe, it lost the State Election of 1988 or thereabouts, and left the mess for Nick Greiner to play with.

The fix engineered by the Greiner Government after 1988 seems to have the tacit temporary approval of the ALP Opposition, led by another highly intelligent person, Bob Carr.

The City boundaries have currently been thinned down almost to the Central Business Spine, plus Pyrmont and Ultimo, which are ripe for redevelopment.

All significant City planning and development control decisions have been taken out of the hands of the City Council and given to a small State Government appointed Central Sydney Planning Committee, on which only the major interest groups have a voice, through senior and relatively restrained, cautious representatives. The most potent voice in recent years has been that of the Building Owners and Manager's Association. But since 1991 Lord Mayor Frank Sartor and his colleague, Elizabeth Farrelly, are on it. Directly and indirectly, the Central City Planning Committee, and, I imagine, some of the staff who prepare reports and recommendations to it, are sensitive to, and allow themselves to be guided by, the political will of the Government of the day. The Permanent Head of the New South Wales Department of Planning sits on the Committee, and her staff, I can only presume, directly and/or indirectly influence and/or control, through a variety of mechanisms and processes both formal and informal, reports and recommendations to the Committee.

This may well prove to be, for many years, the final solution to the 146 years history (1842-1988) of local government urban planning and development trauma for the vibrant, larrikin, free-wheeling City of Sydney, whose excesses have been sporadically curbed, and then compounded, by State

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Government, whose creature it was in the beginning, is now, and evermore shall be so (to quote the Vicar of Bray).

When the ALP wins control of the State again, it will easily be able quickly to shift the policy emphasis of the members and staff of the Central Sydney Planning Committee, or if necessary, to alter the membership of the Committee and redeploy staffs reporting to and informing the Committee. It seems as if it ought to prove to be a stable, flexible and docile instrument and also an excellent political shock absorber, for the State Government of the day.

That's how it appears to me, but I may be quite wrong, because my opinion is only based on what I read in newspapers and read in official publications. I have no access to, nor have I sought, any 'inside' information, since 1978. But I can now distil what I read and see through old eyes, with experience of observing city government and planning in many states of Federations like Australia and provinces and districts of unitary governments such as France and Indonesia, and a City Region State like Singapore.

There may be subtle irony in that New South Wales seems to have finally concluded, after 146 years of trauma in City planning and development control, that 'guided democracy' on the current Indonesian and Singapore, and historical French, model, is the only workable one for 'vibrant' Sydney. However, the current Indonesian and Singapore and historical French models each depend for their relative effectiveness on long term institutional development of relatively large numbers of highly educated, highly trained and highly intelligent and yet diligent, highly organised and self-disciplined urban development and infrastructure planning, programming, budgeting, implementation, control, review and replanning staffs, highly coordinated in a unified but multi level administrative system (and rolling time cycles) stretching all the way between the President of the Republic and the smallest neighbourhood or precinct, from one five to seven year period to the next.

In 1970, I and my fellow team members, and our client Council, realised the need for such strengthening of institutional structures and staffing of the planning and development control system. Large parts of each of the

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1971, 1974 and 1980 City of Sydney Strategic Plans were devoted to such institutional strengthening exhortations directed to all three levels of Australian Government.

The Civic Reform City Council implemented our 1971 Action Priority to set up the first separate City Planning Department in the City Council's then 130 year history, and the person appointed as Deputy City Planner was expected, perhaps unreasonably, to make the creative city planning process work. Within three years, he applied for and won a better paid, higher status position, in a less stressful and a more professionally satisfying working environment, where he was, not long after, promoted to be the Town Clerk and/or City Manager.

The State Government planning and co-ordination authorities in New South Wales have also proved to be relatively intractable to attempts to improve their managerial and technical performances. It often happens that competent, creative and ambitious people in New South Wales State and City Council planning staffs leave for greener pastures, often in different fields, without waiting around for years before they can be promoted to a senior and influential planning position. When they do achieve such positions, they find themselves subject to tight political control.

Despite the current seemingly final solution to the City of Sydney's immediate urban development political control problems, and thanks also to the current economic depression especially in City development, I doubt that significantly higher technical results will ever be achieved unless and until the quantity and quality of urban development research and planning is much increased and improved, and better integrated, particularly between traffic and transportation and land use development research, monitoring, control and longer term planning.

The actual trend over the past decade in New South Wales and in the City of Sydney, seems to have been in the entirely opposite direction, and the consequences of this decline have already appeared. A few major examples: beach and ocean pollution by sewage, costly to fix; many social, economic, environmental and transport problems in Western Sydney; the increasing but still camouflaged costs of traffic

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congestion and public transport inadequacy to and within the central part of Sydney Region which adds to the already excessive costs of Australians trying to compete in a world market economy; and particularly with respect to negligence in City parking supply and demand policies since 1981.

The truly frightening problem is that Australian debit levels are now so high after the 1980s spree, and Australian real per capita incomes are shrinking towards the rising per capita real incomes of the Asian 'tigers'. For example, I have read that Singapore's average per capita income has in 1992, risen above that of Australia.

The costs of New South Wales's and Sydney's long standing neglect of serious and coordinated urban development research, planning and programming, are mounting in backlogs of infrastructure development needed if international competitiveness is to be regained, and the quality of urban life is ever to be restored to that of past times. The most costly single fiasco to date has been the twenty year vacillation over the future airport needs of Sydney Region.

I grew up in 'the lucky country', but by 1981, it emerged that the much touted 'resources boom' had fizzled out, and McEwanist protectionism was finally starting to kill Australian competitiveness and choke Australian productivity. Instead of the then necessary re-orientation of Australian culture, attitudes and reliance on luck, the nation went on a wild holiday and spending spree, borrowing and wasting the capital savings of foreigners, on which high interest rates must be paid, often in harder currencies.

Valuations of Sydney CBD commercial land ~~has~~ have slumped by seventy per cent over the last three years ('89-'92) despite some monetary inflation and the slump in the value of the Australian dollar. The real, constant, hard currency market value of City of Sydney commercial land and buildings has declined more over recent years. It certainly would slump heavily again if all the current lenders to loan defaulters, and all the currently willing-but-not-overanxious sellers, were to foreclose and/or sell in a relatively short period of time. This has been the best kept confidential information in Australia because if it was talked about too much, it could cause financial collapse of a large number of

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companies, institutions, banks and others who are over-extended in the commercial property market, and ripple effects could spread to other sections of the economy.

Yet the news is leaking out. For example the Singapore *Straits Times* popular newspaper for 14 February 1992 had a feature page indicating just so widely so. Headed 'S'poreans get to pick from array of investment choices' in 'a buyer's bazaar in most categories of assets in Australia' it filled a page with ... property ... shares ... investments ... but ... 'Slump ahead for the Aussie dollar?' so 'quick pay offs unlikely', and 'there is little prospect for capital gain in the medium-term, possibly past 1995.'

In this situation, it now seems such a tragedy that the 1971, 1974, 1977 and 1980 City of Sydney Strategic Plans were never taken seriously enough by any State Government or by any subsequent City Council. Although they had, and have, many minor weaknesses the major weakness lay, and still lies, in those New South Wales governments and institutions which never took enough of the key strategies, policies and action priorities seriously; for example the neglect of land-use and transportation interactions and in transforming the Action Priorities into a fully statutory set of detailed development controls which even Sydney's capitalist 'image' role model, Manhattan, has in extraordinary detail. Many of even the key 1971 Action Priorities have not even yet been fully and properly implemented.

It was an even greater tragedy for Sydney that the 1988 'Sydney Strategy' was allowed to degenerate into a public political relations exercise in trendy macro-graphics, just ahead of the then approaching and predictable national slump which co-incided with, and deepened, the traditional cyclic 'Sydney Bust', particularly in unsalable and unrentable office space capitalisation, which will continue to overhang the market until close to the year 2000.

The 1988 ~~City of~~ Sydney Strategy appeared to me to have been prepared under the effective direction of senior staff of the New South Wales Department of Planning, subject to the political expedients of the Minister and Government of the Day. These dictated a 'confidence-building' exercise, which was then badly needed, and perfectly proper, in an

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appropriate manner. But the 'confidence-building' exercise became inextricably confused with, and swamped, any attempt at serious or deeper, high quality professional and technical urban development economic or transportation research, planning or programming.

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The two-coffee-table size of the glamour graphics book of the 1988 ~~Central~~ Sydney Strategy tells the story in itself. The whole exercise was an 'over-the-top' celebration of 'Sydney, the vibrant city', self-congratulatory about the dramatically compact cluster-of-tall-buildings image only preserved and enhanced since the 'Sydney Bust' of the seventies, by the perhaps accidental implementation of key elements in the 1971 Strategic Plan: restriction of high Floor Space Ratio and tall buildings to a relatively narrow north-south central spine.

Much has been made of the popular appeal of this Manhattan like 'image' of a 'vibrant' city, and an undue monopoly of emphasis has accrued particularly on ideas fashionable in the year of celebration of the two hundredth birthday of the awkward start of urban development and ultimately questionable environmental exploitation, of the Australian continent. These 'soft options' have included, for example, agonising and long drawn out, but half hearted, attempts to preserve the few remaining unprotected buildings and precincts of heritage value, and a playing up of urban archaeology. These are proper and important activities. But the undue proportion of overall resources and time (including media attention), given to them over recent years, consciously or unconsciously, has been paralleled by the neglect of other problems long since relegated to the 'too hard' basket, such as, for example, issues of parking supply and demand control, traffic and transportation and other basic infrastructure investment needs for integrated land-use and transport planning and programming for implementation.

One single example will have to suffice here: the new Sydney Harbour Tunnel, a fortuitous private initiative, is nearing its opening to traffic. Yet nothing appears to be being researched, done, or planned and programmed to be done, in response to the need for complementary action and investment, in view of the increasing economic, social and environmental benefit to cost ratio, about constructing

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Stages two and three of the Eastern Distributor tunnel bypasses under the Taylor Square bottleneck on the eastern edge of the City. The Minister for Transport is quoted as having said in 1988 or 1989 that 'We have put the Eastern Distributor on the back burner.' Immediate financing was arranged for construction of an interchange in Ryde, when the Liberal Party won the local seat by a tiny margin. It may well be, of course, that we will again be lucky in these matters in the near future as we have been lucky in the past. The economic depression has already cut into traffic and parking demand. It may well be that the closely closeted State traffic planners project that (a) traffic and parking demand will continue to decrease over a possibly extended depression period; (b) that the State of New South Wales in any case cannot afford to borrow the \$250 to \$300 million needed to complete Stages II and III of the Eastern Distributor; and so (c) the whole subject is so politically sensitive that it cannot be publicly mentioned.

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That might well be sane and prudent, if one could have faith that the left hand of government planning is yet capable of co-ordination with the right. Even the ever so tightly coordinated Homebush Bay Regional Sports Centre plan of 1989 or thereabouts, was technically negligent and politically obscurantist with respect to the obvious technical transport, financial, social and political consequences of the slap-dash, unthought through, attempt to rezone and sell off the very large and awkwardly located Moore Park Showground on the south eastern corner of central Sydney, for legally unlimited mixed commercial-entertainment-tourism-residential uses, while, to take one example only, presenting a traffic and transportation sketch outline study of only a few pages, based on the assumption that the site was proposed only for one hundred per cent ordinary medium density residential development, and would thus generate very little traffic.

Many of my thoughts expressed throughout this interview, may perhaps be easily dismissed as the obsessions of someone from a previous generation, out of touch with the dynamic realities of contemporary governmental managers who 'take things on board' in a 'pro-active stance' directed to perpetuating 'vibrancy' and delivering special executive services throughout the whole of the State of New South

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Wales as well as in that tiny pocket of it which is the entire Sydney Region, and the even more minuscule dot that is the State's Central Place.

I do sincerely hope that my fears will be proved wrong, and that Sydney will long continue after I am gone to be the 'Emerald City' in the 'Premier State' of the 'lucky country'.

Meanwhile, here I am in the heart of the mother-city-region of contemporary Northern Sumatera, one of twenty-seven provinces of the Unitary Republic of Indonesia, with a provincial population of about half the total population of Australia, and a mother-city-region population of about three million people. Indonesia's population is already eleven times larger than Australia's, and growing.

None of my critique of institutional arrangements and capabilities in New South Wales and Sydney, can take away from the fact that New South Wales and Sydney currently enjoy many times the average per capita income, and many times the average level of urban services than are currently available in North Sumatera and Medan, and elsewhere in most of Indonesia. But that is not the point.

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Some among many other differences may be that the Government of Indonesia commissions, recognises and publishes a great deal of professional technical work in the urban research, development, planning and infrastructure programming fields, including a National Urban Development Strategy, which in 1987 was 'gazetted' as the Official Guidelines of State Policy on Urban Development. The first stage of this is now being implemented on the ground, while the next stage (in which I have a tiny part), of decentralisation to and strengthening of, institutional capacity at Provincial and Local Government levels, is being planned. The heroic scale of the effort probably make it far and away the largest reasonably participative and reasonably democratic urban planning effort in any country in the history of humankind. Despite its weaknesses, which the newspapers expose and the government strives to overcome, it is a highly commendable effort with participation and equity stated to be major objectives. The Government of Indonesia recognises the urgency and scale of the need for professional and technical services for the strengthening of institutional capacities at local government



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level for 'continuous, participative, coordinated, cyclic, urban development planning, programming, implementation, operation, maintenance, evaluation and feedback' in rolling five to seven year programs.

Gol [the Government of Indonesia] has borrowed very, very large sums from the international development banks to pay for the very best professional assistance, advice and training that money can buy anywhere in the world. That seems to be why so many of the world's senior and most experienced urban development and institutional managers, planners, programmers, and trainers are crowding into Indonesian cities.

At least the Indonesians are intelligent and honest enough to openly proclaim that they need expensive and detailed professional research, planning and programming technical assistance, advice and training to develop institutional capacities for coordinated short, mid and long term work at decentralised provincial and local levels, if they are ever to catch up with ~~at least~~ the strategic issues of the ever looming future. even

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But I remember the dismissive attitudes of many Australians to Japanese industrial products of the 1930s. I also remember being told in 1956 by an English local government planner in Singapore, that 'of course these people will never be able to manage their own urban planning and development'.

That was said in Singapore only thirty-six years ago. Yet Singapore has been, for some years already, probably the most expertly planned and managed city region in the world.

It took less than the thirty-six years between 1945 and 1981 for the Japanese to create an economic and technological, if not yet an urban, miracle.

If the Japanese and the Singaporeans have achieved miracles of management and technology in three decades, and now have per capita incomes higher than Australians, and rising, while those of Australians, already lower, are falling in real terms, may it not be prudent for Australia, New South Wales and Sydney to 'get real' about urban economic,

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social and infrastructure development planning and programming, in addition to their high and commendable levels of concern for environmental, heritage and leisure related issues? *(insert in brackets but ineffective)*

Is it not time for a new attempt in Sydney, for example, to achieve a more honest, less party political, more serious, more professional and more technical institutional capacity for the management of urban change?

Must Australians in governmental urban planning and management jobs continue to survive only as 'Vicars of Bray'? *(delete hyphen)*

I hope that Paul Ashton's history of the management of urban planning and development control for and on behalf of the City of Sydney, will stimulate some one to rise to the challenge to act to improve Australian institutional capacities to manage urban change and development in a more coordinated professional and open, but hard headed, manner than has characterised their histories in the lucky country to date.