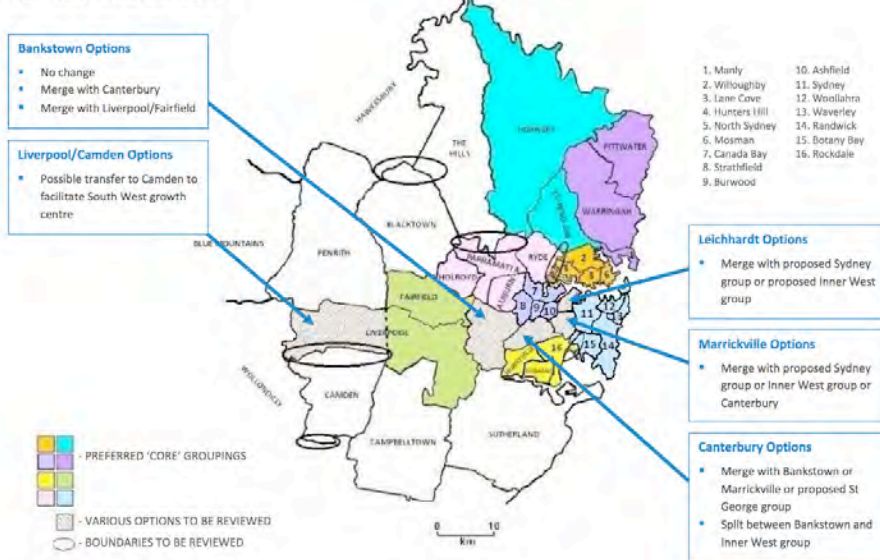


Hunters Hill Trust Journal

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dealing with each document in turn, firstly -

Map 4: Sydney Metropolitan Options



FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR NSW LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Report's goals

A more sustainable system of democratic local government. The review states that this is currently hampered by the local government sector that is "weighed down with too many out-of-date ideas, attitudes and relationships. *At the heart of the problem we still have too many councils chasing too little revenue.*"

Achieving financial sustainability. According to TCorp's report, "in 3 years time 48% of councils could have a weak or worse financial sustainability rating."

Stronger regional and metropolitan governance.

Keeping 'local' in local government
Strengthening Far West NSW

How this might be achieved and the need for amalgamations

This is set out in the document *20 Essential Steps*, which looks at finance, infrastructure, productivity and improvement, better governance, structural reform, Western NSW and how all this can be implemented.

Of most interest to the residents of the Sydney Metropolitan Area is a section called *the need for amalgamations*, which makes the case that greater efficiencies could be achieved by reducing the number of councils in NSW generally and, in the metropolitan area, suggests a reduction from 38 to 15 councils.

It restates the Liberal government's policy of "no forced amalgamations" and as an alternative suggests pursuing ways to provide incentives for voluntary mergers. It doesn't see much hope for this approach though, stating that there is little likelihood of voluntary amalgamations occurring, especially in the metropolitan area.

AMALGAMATIONS BACK ON THE DRAWING BOARD ACCORDING TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW PANEL'S REPORT

PLANNING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM IN NSW

The State Government has embarked on two major reform programs at the same time. One program is designed to improve the way local government operates and the other is directed towards rearranging and "improving" the way planning is carried out in NSW. The objectives of both programs were set out in the Green Paper that was circulated for public comment in November 2012. The reforms outlined in each are supposed to complement each other – the reform of local government is designed to facilitate the implementation of the planning reforms, particularly on the regional level.

Following a public exhibition period, the government has now issued two further papers that purport to have taken into consideration the submissions made by various interest groups including Local Government, community groups,

developers' lobbies and the general public.

Proposals for the reform of local government are contained in the document *Future Directions for NSW Local Government*. Proposed changes to the planning process are set out in the so-called White Paper, *A NEW PLANNING SYSTEM FOR NSW*. Both these documents are now on exhibition for comment, prior to final reports being submitted to the government for consideration later on this year.

This has produced an avalanche of material to digest – 212 pages in the White Paper and 62 pages in the *Future Directions* document. A full understanding of all the information also involves a reading of the 109 pages of the 2013 Local Government Performance Report and Treasury Corporation's April report. Daily press reports and commentaries on the proposals add to the pile of information. Here is a brief overview



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Publications

Heritage of Hunters Hill \$15
The Vision and the Struggle \$15
Members discount 25%

MEMBERSHIP

The Trust anyone interested in preserving the unique character of Hunters Hill to become a member.

Single membership \$20
Family membership \$40

Contact the secretary to join or download a form from the website.

Amalgamations back on the drawing board – continued from page 1

It sets out in a series of tables “preferred options” for council amalgamations.

Possible backlash

Anticipating a community backlash against amalgamations, the Panel notes that, “opponents of amalgamation rely heavily on the argument that local identity will be lost in bigger local government units; that larger councils will pay less attention to specific needs of different suburbs or neighbourhoods and will fail to take steps to maintain their character.”

The Panel contends that “arguments about amalgamations are essentially a distraction from the core issue, which is how the role and capacity of NSW local government can best be strengthened in the interests of the communities it is expected to represent. That objective will not be achieved by self-interest or special pleading. It requires a willingness to take a fresh look at the system of local government and its relationship with the State, and to explore new options with an open mind.”

Keeping the ‘local’ in local government
The Panel believes that keeping the “local” in local government is possible and notes a range of methods including,

- Place management
- Creating wards within local government areas
- Using new techniques such as online forums to keep communities informed
- Using modern customer service systems
- Considering the option of setting up ‘Local Boards’ (mainly in rural areas).

Much of the rest of the Panel’s review is to do with “confronting the financial realities” of maintaining financial sustainability and produces a map of *Councils at Risk*. Also noted are,

- The need to ensure councils’ fiscal responsibility and
- The need to bolster the revenue base of councils including increasing rates, reviewing rate pegging and development contributions

Another large section of the review looks at a range of issues including tackling the infrastructure backlog, promoting innovation and productivity, improving accountability and political leadership (including ongoing mandatory professional development for councillors, attracting quality candidates and councillor remuneration), and enhancing the status of mayors.

There is also a section on building strong regions, which concludes “a more robust statutory framework is required at a regional level” to allow “the structure and functions of a County Council to be tailored to the particular needs and circumstances of the region concerned.”

Much of the review is focused on improving governance at the local and regional level.

Most people would support the general thrust of this although there are not many specific recommendations as to how improvements could be made.

The major impact for Hunters Hill is the proposed amalgamation of the Council. The Panel’s preferred option is for Hunters Hill to merge with Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney and Willoughby to create a much larger Council to be known as the **North Shore Group**.



Community response to amalgamation to date

Prior to the release of the Future Directions Review, the Save Hunters Hill Coalition, kick-started the anti-amalgamation campaign that had lain dormant since 2003 when Ryde wanted to incorporate part of the municipality into its LGA.

The Coalition lobbied councillors and politicians, held demonstrations where kids held up anti-amalgamation signs in front of the Town Hall and got their photos in the local press. At a council meeting, Phil Jenkyn made an impassioned speech in favour of keeping Hunters Hill unchanged and councillors, the mayor and state and federal Liberal MPs all publicly came out against forced amalgamations.

The Liberal party confirmed its pre-election promise of ‘no forced amalgamations in its first term of office’ (this of course says nothing about what it might do in its second term) and a victory for the maintenance of Hunters Hill as a separate local government area was declared.

However, within the state government and both political parties, the imperative to amalgamate remains strong. Wholesale forced amalgamations have already happened in Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and The Northern Territory. In 2004 Sydney and South Sydney were forced to merge and bits of Leichhardt were incorporated into the expanded City of Sydney Council.

The Review Panel itself anticipated the need for forced amalgamations stating, *“there is little likelihood of voluntary amalgamations occurring on the scale required, and in a suitable pattern, to deliver the strategic outcomes needed to address future challenges”*.

As well, there is continuing pressure for amalgamation from influential lobby groups, the State Treasury, the national press and powerful members in the Liberal party. Clearly the prospect of the amalgamation of Hunters Hill into a larger local government area has not gone away.

Community opposition to amalgamation then and now

In 2003 the Hunters Hill Town Hall was packed out at a community meeting that unanimously voted to oppose Ryde Council’s proposal for boundary changes that would have moved a large chunk of the western part of the municipality into Ryde. However, from what I am hearing and for my own part, it seems that since 2003, community enthusiasm for the fight to preserve Hunters Hill as a separate local government has waned somewhat.

Perhaps there is a feeling of disenchantment with council’s track record as the custodian of Hunters Hill’s public assets and the protector of its heritage and character. Residents and Trust members will be only too aware of a number of examples where the character of Hunters Hill has been damaged. Examples of this would include,

The ugly and badly planned development at the overpass shopping centre and along Ryde Rd,

The failure of council to insist that the Hunters Hill Hotel development complied with its 3 storey height controls

The continuing intrusion of large inappropriate houses into areas once characterised by small, single-storey cottages

The failure of Council to maintain its roads and footpaths and to properly look after its public spaces and bushland. One major example is the ongoing disaster of Boronia Park Oval No 3 and Council’s abject failure to properly oversee its construction.

A lack of proper funding to employ sufficient fully qualified staff, which leads to an attitude that does not look for excellence in the planning of public places and the construction of public

facilities, but rather congratulates itself for having saved money by not using professionals to do the job.

A sense that the western part of Hunters Hill has recently borne the brunt of increased development.



No 62 Gladesville Road and the HHH hole

Trust members will no doubt have their own examples to add to it this list.

Perhaps, as a result of changes in Hunters Hill’s demographic, newer more wealthy residents do not share the history of the area are not necessarily as passionate about the protection of the character of the municipality.

Finally, the Review’s preferred amalgamation option for Hunters Hill with the other north shore councils, which seems a more logical and appropriate grouping than the 2003 proposition of a merger with Ryde, may also have an impact on the level of enthusiasm for the anti-amalgamation debate. Ironically it is now proposed that the eastern third of Ryde should join this new grouping.

Where should the Trust stand in relation to amalgamation?

The aim of the Hunters Hill Trust, as set out in its constitution, is *to maintain the unique and historical character of Hunters Hill*. In pursuing this aim our constitution sets out a series of objectives, one of which is *to maintain the integrity of Hunters Hill as a separate municipality*.

The other objectives are,

To limit the spread of home units, high density, industrial and commercial development;

To preserve all features of Hunters Hill having beauty, architectural and historical value;

To ensure that any planning of Hunters Hill should pay full regard to protecting and improving amenities enjoyed by the residents

To encourage high architectural and aesthetic standards;

To maintain a planning committee on council responsible for conservation and policy matters, which includes nominees of the Trust

To maintain the declaration of Hunters Hill as a protected area.

The objective to maintain Hunters Hill as a separate municipality should be seen in the context of what is the best way to preserve Hunters Hill’s unique and historical character. It should not be seen as a debate stopper that locks us into a position of having to fight to maintain the status quo no matter what.

In the debate it is important not to gloss over the existing council’s shortcomings and to consider whether or not a bigger, better-financed Council could do a better job in fulfilling The Trust’s charter.

None of this is to deny the many cogent arguments against amalgamation, which, in support of the case for the retention of NSW’s smallest council, are possibly best set out in the book by E.F. Schumacher; *Small is Beautiful: Economics As If People Mattered*. The press has also been full of articles pointing to a perceived fallacy that financial benefits flow from amalgamation. Former treasury official, Professor Percy Allan has argued that *“there is a strong case for making councils smaller and run more like a building body corporate that pays close attention to specific place needs and management.”*

The Future Directions paper is encouraging councils to voluntarily consider the preferred amalgamation options. However if, or more probably, when Hunters Hill is faced with a forced amalgamation, it will be extremely difficult to convince the state government that this tiny local government area, which includes the second wealthiest postcode in NSW after Darling Point, should be given special status and excised from the process.

Both The White Paper and Future Directions have emphasised the role of “community consultation” and how it will be a major driver in the ‘new’ planning process. It is essential that The Trust maintain its position as a leading community group that will continue to be consulted by local government and that we remain a respected voice for conservation and heritage in the community, regardless of whether or not Hunters Hill becomes part of a larger local government area. We need to ensure that Hunters Hill’s existing planning controls are maintained

and that *the "local" is kept in local government* as promised by The Future Directions Paper. The paper has suggested a number of ways the latter could be achieved including "Place management" approaches with community committees like the neighbourhood service centres in Glebe, the CBD, Green Square, Kings Cross and Redfern that are all under the umbrella of the City of Sydney.

In our endeavors to remain relevant, The Trust can take some heart from the fact that community groups like The Paddington Society, The Balmain Association and The Glebe Society have all survived amalgamations and that these areas have kept the specific planning controls designed to conserve their special character.

Tony Coote

HAVE YOUR SAY

The committee wants to know what you think about amalgamation and how you think The Trust should respond to the proposals put forward in White Paper and Future Directions paper. Write to the Trust at PO Box 85 Hunters Hill 2110 or email me at tony@tonycootearchitect.com



BUT WAIT THERE'S MORE PLANNING REFORM BEING PROPOSED

THE WHITE PAPER – A NEW PLANNING SYSTEM FOR NSW

Planning in NSW is mostly not about real planning. State governments these days rarely initiate or invest directly in large infrastructure projects or the making of places.

Now both State and local Governments rely on the private sector to come up with the money for almost all development and they see their role as a facilitator of development rather than a player. The means by which governments facilitate development is mostly through land rezoning, whereby private developers are encouraged to invest in projects by the prospect of windfall profits flowing in the main from the increased value of land. They are even encouraged to bring their own planning schemes to government

for consideration, which is how we get Dubai on Darling – Jamie Packer's casino at Barangaroo.

In NSW, governments of both parties love to muck about with the planning system. Each of the major parties approaches this in slightly different ways. Because Labor, purports to be the workers' party, it tends to be a bit shy about its relationships with the development industry, which only come to light when ICAC gets involved.

By contrast the Liberal party makes no bones about the fact that it is the developers' party. Its belief in the "trickle-down" theory of economics provides a philosophical base for its open support for developers.

With a multi-pronged approach that includes the Future Directions review, The White Paper, and the TCorp report, the O'Farrell government is proposing to muck about big time with the planning system.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE WHITE PAPER

The White Paper proposes a "new planning system (that) is simpler, strategic, more certain, focussed on improving outcomes, and places people and their choices at the heart of planning decisions". It aims **to make NSW number one** and to promote economic growth and development in NSW by facilitating **sustainable development** while protecting the environment and enhancing people's way of life.



Kyarra by Cedric Emanuel

Community participation

The White Paper makes a big play that all decisions will involve "community participation in the preparation of plans" and that "community participation is at the centre of the new planning system". Planning authorities will be required to prepare a Community Participation Plan.

Strategic Planning

The White Paper proposes "a major shift to evidence based, whole of government strategic planning" and "is the key tool for better facilitating **housing and jobs** (my emphasis) in the right locations, while

managing the environment and the quality of life." A new approach to strategic planning will develop Regional, Subregional and local Plans with more effort directed at *agreeing on the big picture upfront*.

Development Assessment

According to The White Paper, "development assessment will be transformed through a performance based system. This will make greater use of online tools and remove layers of assessment. 80% of all developments will be complying or code assessment. However, there will be greater access to appeal rights through expanded low cost appeal rights. Independent expert decision-making will be promoted through the use of the Planning Assessment Commission, Regional Planning Panels and Independent Hearing and Assessment panels.

Provision of infrastructure

Planning for infrastructure that supports development will occur at the same time as planning for housing and jobs. Planning will involve the private sector earlier in process, developers' contributions will be simplified and major projects will be declared *Public Priority*.

Building Regulation

There will be an expanded system of accountability for building professionals, additional requirements for certification of buildings, improved levels of documentation and increased support for certifiers through peer review and enhanced decision support.

COMMENTS ON THE WHITE PAPER

The White Paper purports to strive for clarity and simplicity in the "new" planning process. However its language and presentation is far from clear. Compared to the Future Directions Review, which is reasonably easy to understand, The White Paper is unnecessarily long and difficult to read. It is full of corporate speak, overly complex diagrams and irrelevant photographs and graphics. It contains many generalisations but few specifics.

A NEW Planning System

Its claim to be a **New** Planning system is an exaggeration. Most of what it proposes already exists under other names and much reform has already taken place. Councils across NSW have spent the last couple of years working to change their local Environment Plans to conform to the Department of Planning's Standard Instrument. Hunters Hill Council has just released its draft Development Control Plan (DCP) that combines 16 existing DCPs into a single document that is in line with the new local Environment Plan (LEP).

The White Paper proposes that most of these existing documents will be folded into their **new** local Plans.

Much is made of increasing the use of the electronic media as though this is a new idea but most NSW councils already have planning information, DA tracking, electronic lodgement, customer support and a bunch of other information available on their websites.

Community Consultation

The White Paper makes much of the promise to involve the community in the early planning stages. "Plans will be developed based on a vision shared by a well informed and properly engaged community, industry and government". Anyone who has ever endured a butchers paper, white board and yellow stick-it session of "community consultation" will not necessarily be champing at the bit to engage with the process.

Despite the emphasis on the need for community consultation, as a result of the changes to neighbour notification, individual property owners won't know anything about what's been proposed to be put up next door until it's built.

Currently the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (EPA Act) requires neighbouring properties be advised about Development Applications for works in their vicinity. The White Paper proposes to abandon this in the name of speed and efficiency. It proposes that all community consultation happens at the planning stage and not again.

This is a deeply flawed and dangerous idea. It makes the following assumptions:

- that the community will be able to have a meaningful input into the planning process in the first instance,
- that the new local plans will have anticipated all foreseeable problems that might arise from a particular new development and
- that Code or Merit Assessment by council officers or certifiers of a proposal will pick up all possible adverse impacts of that proposal.

The reality is that only a handful of individuals from the community will be involved in the planning process and the so-called "community consultation".

As Alan Miller from Hornsby wrote in a recent letter to the Herald, "the government proposes to strip this right in exchange for its assurance that locals will somehow help write new strategic planning documents, which are so complicated that specialist

planners and lawyers spend months and reams of paper drafting them. All this from a government whose idea of community consultation thus far can be summed up by the image of a casino-heliport on top of a coalmine with hunters lurking under the poker tables."



Madeline Street

The dangers of the proposed new zoning categories

The White Paper proposes to simplify zoning categories by combining a number of different zones into one. For example it is proposed to collapse 6 different categories of residential zoning (General Residential, Low Density Residential, Medium density residential, large lot residential, Village, Environmental Living) into one single category to be called Residential. This category will also include Character Areas and areas with special ecological attributes.

This seems like a step back to the bad old days of spot rezoning. It means there will be an increased level of uncertainty about what can be built where and an increased potential for corruption. A block of land is worth more as a development site than for a single dwelling, so who will decide whether town houses can go up on the next-door lot?

Impact on Conservation and Heritage



Coorabel Joubert St

The most recent reforms of the planning process, which introduced The Standard Instrument LEP, have already weakened controls on the protection of heritage by removing the classification of contributory buildings. As well, the NSW Department of

Planning has been reluctant to allow for any additional conservation areas to be gazetted.

There is virtually no mention of the word 'conservation' in The White Paper and you have to look very hard to find 'heritage'. The proposed new zoning categories will mean a reduced level of protection of existing heritage items from the impact of inappropriate development next door.

The White Paper's clear pro-development bias does not auger well for heritage protection and conservation. Developers do not like heritage. Having to deal with it cuts into their bottom line.

A new Part 3A that includes even more development

Honouring an election pledge, the Liberal Party repealed Part 3A of the EPA Act, which had allowed the minister to take over planning powers from local councils (it still applies to a number of projects submitted before this date).

However, The White Paper proposes to take away even more powers from councils by promoting "expert decision making" through the use of various appointed panels. This means that local communities will have even less say in what happens in their areas and contradicts the idea of community involvement in the process.



Craigie-Lea Campbell St

The old system really isn't that broke

The White Paper makes the case that the assessment of development applications by councils is too slow. In my experience most delays in the planning process occur either when proposed developments fail to comply with the planning controls or when insufficient information has been provided for council to properly assess a proposal, or both.

Generally properly documented proposals

that comply with planning controls get approved in a reasonable time.

In the inner suburbs, which have small lots, higher densities, more mixed development

and areas deemed worthy of conservation, a one-size-fits-all set of planning controls is impractical. In these circumstances councils are given some leeway in the assessment of developments that do not strictly comply with the controls.

The assessment of non-complying developments naturally takes a bit more time. But this needs to be considered in the context of the life span of the development. What are a few weeks compared to fifty years or more?

Speed and efficiency

The White Paper has proposed that within 5 years, 80% of all development approvals will be by complying development or code assessment. It proposes these approvals will be completed within 10 days for straight-forward complying developments and 25 days for code assessment approvals. This represents a massive change. For example, Hunters Hill council has a mean gross determination time of 106 days for determining DAs, most of which are single dwellings.

Clearly if these time frames are to be met then the assessment of development applications will become cursory and/or more assessment will be done by private certifiers. The latter is the preferred option of the Liberal Party, which does not see many votes coming from the public service and has an inbuilt belief that the private sector always does it better.

Inevitably this will lead to job losses in the public sector, particularly when coupled with the proposed council amalgamations.

More work for private certifiers and lawyers

It is ironic that The White Paper proposals will result in so much more work for private certifiers when there has been so much negative press about them. It is also ironic that The White Paper proposes dramatically increasing the amount of building regulation and certification, which will now apply to the entire life cycle of the building and will mean more complex documentation of buildings and more complex and expensive contract administration. All this will have a substantial impact on a developer's bottom line.

Inevitably when private certifiers are involved in the administration of development there is less chance for the community to have an input into the process, particularly if something goes wrong – just ask anyone who has tried to make a complaint to council about a construction site, “Oh there's nothing we can do about that – you'll have to speak to the certifier.”

What's really driving the so-called reform?

The reform is being driven by a perceived housing shortage of 70,000 homes, projections of increasing rates of population growth and the opportunity to use housing development to kick-start a sluggish economy.



1960s medium density in Woolwich

Despite its claims to promote sustainability, The White Paper is all about accommodating the ruthless drive for continuing economic growth, which relies on an ever-expanding population of consumers who all need to be housed. It is an insult to call such policies sustainable.

Who likes The White Paper?

The main support for the New Planning System comes from developers and groups with a vested interest in more development like The Institute of Architects. The main developer lobby group is The Urban Taskforce, whose CEO is a former government architect.

Inspirational planning

The White Paper emphasises the need to increase the speed of the development approval process, the need to improve efficiency and to encourage development by removing perceived barriers to it. There is nothing in the document about making beautiful places to facilitate people leading happy, healthy and fulfilling lives and little about real planning.

Real Planning requires inspirational thinking and boldness, just ask Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann about how they replanned Paris, or Austin J. Tobin, the executive director of the New York Port Authority in the post war period about the massive infrastructure that was added to the city of New York at that time, or, closer to home, ask Joe Cahill and Jorn Utzon about how they got the tram sheds on Bennelong Point demolished and replaced with the Opera House.

A star rating for The White Paper

One positive thing I found in the Paper was the proposal to categorise Granny flats as complying development when added to an existing house on a small lot. This is what

the Trust was encouraging Hunters Hill council to consider for the development of Ryde Road as an answer to increasing density without destroying the existing scale and pattern of the heritage subdivision. No doubt there are other positives hidden in the thickets of The Paper but I couldn't find them.

Because of its total lack of vision about creating wonderful places, because it takes away the rights of individuals to object to developments, because it seems indifferent to heritage and conservation, because it pays no heed to the idea of creating a truly sustainable society and because it is such a developers' plan, I can only give it half a star.

Tony Coote

PUBLIC MEETING

Hunters Hill Council is in the process of organizing a public meeting to consider the implications of the proposed changes to planning system and local government. Watch for the announcement.

Further information

Further information is available on the Future Directions paper at <http://www.localgovernmentreview.nsw.gov.au/documents/LGR/Future%20Directions%20Paper.pdf> This also includes instructions about submitting comments

Go to <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/a-new-planning-system-for-nsw> for the White Paper.

See also <http://betterplanningnetwork.good.do/nsw/email-the-premier-2/> for the Better Planning Network website.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESKTOP

The Hunters Hill Trust held its Annual General Meeting on Thursday 18 April. It was an apposite choice of day, being the first day of the National Trust's Heritage Festival and the same day as UNESCO's International Day for Monuments and Sites.

To acknowledge the latter, Elizabeth Farrelly wrote a piece for the *Sydney Morning Herald* with the suggestive title, “Time to stop knocking the past”.



One of the Bamiyan Buddhas

The article parallels the Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas in Afghanistan with the sinking into the waters of Port Hacking of an alabaster rederos by the Victorian architect, Gilbert Scott, by an Anglican dean. The examples highlight different cultural viewpoints and the resultant volatility of heritage: while for some these are major works of art of international stature, to others they are idolatrous icons.

From my perspective, however, it seems odd that our ostensive Western European based society has to initiate programs of celebration to promote, acknowledge and ultimately value our heritage. It is not something that we can ever take for granted.

The AGM was held earlier in the calendar year than usual in an effort to link our annual membership subscriptions that are based on the calendar year with the finalisation of the Trust's yearly accounts.

The following President's Report is a summary of what I presented to the AGM and a full copy of the report is available on request from any of our members.

First and, most importantly, I want to thank my fellow members of the Executive Committee who manage to allocate time for the work of the Trust, despite very busy lives – Tony Coote (Vice President), Chris Hartley (Treasurer), Peter Stockdale (Acting Treasurer), David Gaunt (Secretary), Maureen Flowers, Kate Russell, Brigid Dowsett and Alister Sharp.

Chris has chosen to step down from the Committee this year after he returned from France in February, as a consequence of further travel plans that will make his contribution difficult. Chris has been with the Committee since 2004 and played a vital role as Treasurer, but also as sommelier extraordinaire at our many functions. We extend our sincere thanks - he will be greatly missed. The new Committee have, as a result, one vacancy and should there be any Trust members

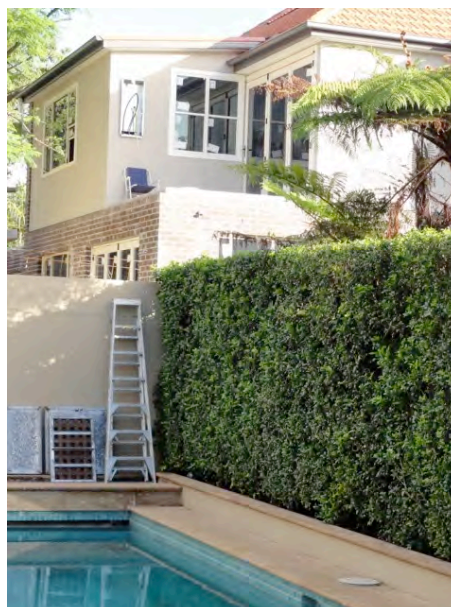
interested in joining the Executive and playing a more active role in the preservation of our local heritage, we would love to hear from them. If not now, perhaps you will consider it next year.

As always local campaigns form the major component of the Trust year's activities. Developments around Gladesville Road and Ryde Road in the Hunters Hill Village have proceeded at an alarming rate, creating what can only be described as an eyesore of gaping holes and new, ungainly oversized "teeth".

Excavation into the former Hunters Hill Hotel carpark goes deeper and deeper, while similar preparations are afoot at Mapledoram's corner. Although saved from demolition, Casey's buildings may become a token gesture of the traditional shop forms in the village, humiliated by an overbearing, new commercial-come-residential structure.



The HHH Hole



New units overlooking an Avenue Rd backyard

Along Ryde Road we have possibly the first in a series of multi unit dwellings replacing the small bungalows that punctuated the Joubert subdivision. The most frightening aspect, however, is the

impact of the scale of the new development on the heritage items in Avenue Road. One becomes cynical as to why we fight so hard to keep our heritage when all hell breaks loose around our treasured icons.

In terms of the campaigns that focussed on public reserves this year, the Trust supported the Friends of Riverglade Reserve (FERR)'s response to Hunter's Hill Council's draft Plan of Management that went to Council in March this year for endorsement. At Boronia Park we await the preparation of a Plan of Management by Council. While the Trust supports the Ryde Hunters Hill Flora & Fauna Society's concerns for the care and maintenance of bushland around the ovals, the area lacks a local residents action group, as at Riverglade.

The two sites raise wider issues. That Council has its Sport & Recreation Strategy still in draft form, suggests that the Municipality's public reserves are being retrospectively, rather than strategically, managed. Council should consult regularly with the community and is obliged to keep up to date with its Plans of Management for public reserves. Once adopted it must comply with its approved documents. Council should ensure that the allocation of active and passive recreation is appropriate to the community's needs and not outside interests. And this leads to the question of the privatisation of public land, whereby private money is invested in developments on public land for private interests.

At a wider level, local planning instruments have been the subject of review this year, and state planning legislation is undergoing a potential major overhaul. Council's new, Standard Local Environmental Plan was approved by Council in July 2012 and it is currently finalising an accompanying new, single Development Control Plan. The intention is to put the state required statutes and plans in place before undertaking major strategic revision of the detail in the DCP.

Better Planning Network

The White Paper, the State government's proposed new planning legislation was released literally two days before the AGM. We were very fortunate to have Corinne Fisher from Better Planning Network talk at the AGM. BPN is a network of local area groups that was formed in response to the original Green Paper in mid 2012. Corinne gave us a timely and concise overview of the issues surrounding the latest document. It never rains, it pours.

The other major issue of current concern is the proposed amendments to local government boundaries proposed by the State Government. As part of its constitution, "to maintain the integrity of Hunter's Hill as a separate Municipality", the Hunters Hill Trust supports the historic boundary of Hunters Hill. The Committee does not support forced amalgamation, and has offered to work with Hunters Hill Council and the local community to ascertain the best means of preserving the historic character of the suburb for the future.

These issues, together with other material, are covered more fully in other areas of the Journal.

Robyn Christie

NEWS UPDATE

Since December last year 3 Hunters Hill Trust stalwarts have died; Gil Wahlquist, Trude Kallir and Kath Lehany.



photo Tamara Dean

Gil Wahlquist

Gil Wahlquist, who died in December 2012 aged 85 had umpteen different careers in his long life, including seaman, journalist, radio presenter, music writer, sailor, wine maker, boat builder – the list goes on. As well he worked ceaselessly for whatever locality he happened to be living in, quickly becoming the leader of whatever group he happened to join. He sold the Botobolar organic winery, which he had founded in 1974 and came to Hunters Hill in 1994.

His daughter Asa wrote, "Gil said he regarded Hunters Hill as a big country town." His numerous activities "included recognition of seniors, Probus, The Hunters Hill Trust, The Hunters Hill Historical Society and the local Museum. He was awarded Hunters Hill senior citizen of the year, he received a centenary medal in 2000, and in 2002 was Hunters Hill Citizen of the Year.

Gil was a member of the Hunters Hill Trust executive committee from 1995 to 2003, president from 1996 to 2000 and editor of the journal from 1998 to 2003. Gil re-

edited the Green Book and oversaw the printing of its fourth edition in 2002.

His lasting contribution to Hunters Hill is the Three Patriot's Walk along the foreshore of Hunters Hill High. The idea of creating a public walkway around the foreshores of Hunters Hill was one of the Trust's original proposals, which was included in its landmark report of 1969. Gil worked to make the walk happen, tirelessly threading his way through the bureaucratic thickets of the various government departments involved, the High School community and even managed to get funding for the walk from Council. It became a bi-centenary project and was officially opened in 2000.

Gil got me involved with the Trust committee and I quickly came under the spell of his tireless enthusiasm, powerful personality, no-bullshit attitude and fine wines, which he would bring to our monthly meetings to help deliberations.

Kath Lehany



Kath Lehany and Trude Kallir are probably best known as members of the Battlers for Kelly's Bush and their names have gone into history as a result of the success of the campaign to save Kelly's Bush and for the world's first Green Ban that the BLF placed on the proposed development as a result of the Battlers' campaign. At the time this campaign split the community as Christine Dawson wrote in *The Battlers for Kelly's Bush*, "We found that after we had enlisted the help of the unions, there were people in the community who were horrified at this action. Prince Edward Parade became known as "Red Square."

Kath died in February this year aged 93. She was secretary of Battlers for Kelly's Bush from 1971 to 1983. In an interview for the NSW Government's Teaching Heritage Board of Studies, she said:

"We were never really a very organised group. I get comments on this from my fellow members but we weren't really, you never quite knew what somebody else in the group was doing. I think we just went ahead and we'd suddenly get an inspiration to go and see the Jennings' representatives or go and see somebody else and somebody'd hive off and see

them and then when we had our meeting everybody would report as to what happened, we went off like a lot of ants in other words.

We tried to get the support of the Australian Conservation Foundation who wrote back saying they didn't think we were of any regional significance, and that was the opinion of the Minister for Local Government and Lands and what not.

So we wrote to the Duke of Edinburgh who was the Patron of the Conversation Foundation and he wrote to them and asked them to support these women. So we got their support. So we really got the support of a tremendous number of people just by our sheer perseverance and I think, I think that they all thought it was rather ridiculous this group of women standing up against a very large corporation (AV Jennings the would be developer of Kelly's Bush), and that was going to be their entry into New South Wales from Victoria.



Kath with fellow battlers Betty James, Miriam Hamilton, Monica Sheehan

There was one [situation] that we identified with at the stage when the Premier was thinking about us, and it was a place called Winston Hills where there was a new sub-division, out near Parramatta, Carlingford out that way, and people who'd bought their homes there, this was probably early 70s, these young women, young marrieds who'd mortgaged themselves up to the hilt to buy a home or a block of land in this area were quite assured that the central part of it was going to be a nice public area, and instead of that as soon as they had all bought their houses, along came a service station and people and [they] started bulldozing to build a big service station there and something else, and these young women stood up to fight and it was quite inspiring, they came to see us to see what we'd done, and they were daubing themselves all over with lipstick and saying 'Mobil Go Home', and whoever the oil company was and they were putting sugar in the bulldozers, they were being much more militant than we were, but I felt that's quite

inspiring to me, and they stopped it, because at that stage it was a matter of the Premier either supporting them or us.

It was sort of swinging seats and he'd promised us that he'd do his best for us and then our local Liberal member got in by a whisker and so the Winston Hills' women won. I even had a telegram from the Premier saying 'hopeful to have solution to your problem' signed Robert Askin, and a couple of days later, or a few days later, we sent him a telegram saying "still awaiting for your solution to our problem", signed The Battlers, but we didn't hear any more.

Kath was missed at our recent AGM, as she was always such a welcome presence at HHT events. I remember, years ago, when Gillian was chatting with Kath at one of the Trust's Christmas parties. Kath was talking about the great generosity of Hunters Hill gardeners, how people shared information and cuttings, creating a strong sense of community.

Gillian asked whether Kath knew her grandparents, the Barkers, who lived nearby on Woolwich Road. Kath said "Of course! I still have Mrs Barker's flowering white peach. Why don't I pot up one of its offspring for you?" "Mrs Barker's white peach" now grows outside our kitchen and when spring comes and the flowers bloom, Kath will be there along with the gardening community of Hunters Hill.

Trude Kallir



So often it's only after someone has died that you find out what little you really knew about them. Trude Kallir died in December 2012 aged 90. Lynne Cairncross wrote a wonderful obituary for Trude, parts of which are reproduced here.

Trude Kallir and her family escaped from Vienna in 1939 and fled to Sydney. In 1948 she married Harry Kallir, also a Viennese refugee, who had been wooing her with dozens of long-stemmed red roses. The young couple moved to a new housing estate in Boronia Park. It was so new that there were few facilities, and no sewerage. Trude, as she was known to everybody, immediately set about trying to

improve the lot of her community. It was the start of a long career of volunteering and community activism.

One of her first projects was the nearby council dump, where burning rubbish and smoke wafted over neighbouring houses. Kallir, working with the Ryde-Hunters Hill Flora and Fauna Preservation Society, successfully fought to have that land converted to a bushland reserve, now the Field of Mars Reserve. This brought her to the attention of the Battlers for Kelly's Bush.

In the late 1940s, she was nursing at Narrabri Hospital and she became aware of the conditions of Aboriginal Australians and became part of the struggle to improve those conditions and bring about reconciliation. She also campaigned for nurses' rights and became a founding member of the NSW College of Nursing.

She was involved in many organisations, often in time-consuming roles as president, secretary or treasurer. Her feminist background led her to work with the Women's Electoral Lobby, and later she held various offices in the Older Women's Network, helping to fight for improvements in health, transport and the rights of older women.

She was also involved with the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and was a member of the Conservation Foundation and the Sydney Bush Club. It was for her outstanding work in environmental causes that Kallir was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 2011.

Kallir was an attractive, athletic woman who looked as much at home chest-high in a muddy creek as she did at a formal ball, dressed in her mother's jewellery. Music also remained a passion. She held a subscription with the Sydney Symphony Orchestra for 63 years, and was usually seen with a musical score in hand as she followed the performance.

Her sense of humour was on the wry side. An old friend recalled a time in the early 1970s when she approached Trude for some advice. The friend had been invited to speak to a conservative Anglican mothers club and was wondering what she should talk about. Give them Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer, she was told. Kallir laughed when her friend relayed how that bombshell was received.

Kallir's first visit back to Europe was after an absence of 44 years. It was an emotional experience, thinking of what

might have been. Australia was her home, and she had remained forward thinking throughout her life and career there, but it was her upbringing in Vienna that made her the woman she became.

Among the pitifully small number of items Trude Weinreb took with her when fleeing in 1939, and which she kept with her all her life, were music scores, school concert programs and her 1934 membership card of the Friends of Nature.

Until recently Trude, Kath and Gil were constants at Hunters Hill Trust AGMs and Christmas parties. They were from a generation of community activists that got up and did things and achieved great success. These days community activism is more sedentary – done either from the chair in front of the monitor or from a bus seat on an iPhone. Whether a click on a Get-Up or Change.org petition will be as effective as the old style remains to be seen.

Tony Coote

BORONIA PARK No 3 OVAL

This has turned into a perennial issue and has been featured in the last two Journals. **It is past time for someone to be held accountable for this disaster.** Alister Sharp reports on the stalemate.



Boronia Park's No. 3 Oval has been out of use for two years now, and won't be available until the end of 2013, at the earliest. What's happening and why is it taking so long?

For reasons that are not clear, Hunters Hill Rugby Club persuaded Council to let them convert No. 3 Oval into a full-sized rugby field. What was a small oval used for junior soccer and cricket is to become the main field used by the Club, and this, Council says, will make No. 1 Oval available for other purposes.

With the shift away from No. 1 Oval, Hunters Hill Rugby Club also plans to build itself a clubhouse between No. 2 and No. 3 Ovals. Seed funding for the project was provided by the Food & Wine Festival, and a State Government grant.

After some initial work by Council, supposedly to level and re-surface the oval, major earthworks began in September 2011 and hundreds of truckloads of ripped sandstone were used to raise and extend No. 3 Oval. As the level of fill increased a second sandstone retaining wall was added above the initial one.

Then, the following May, the project stalled, and since then there's been little activity except for the intermittent arrival of truckloads of contaminated fill and a recent attempt to plant dative shrubs along the high, steep, stony eastern edge.

As recently as December 2012 the Club predicted a completion date of April 2013, but with little activity in the past year the earliest the oval is likely to be usable is the end of 2013, again too late next cricket season.

Why has Council allowed No. 3 Oval to be unavailable for sporting use for two years and counting? No one seems to know, or, if they know, they don't say.

The details

The Rugby Club is converting No. 3 Oval at Boronia Park from a cricket oval into a full-sized rugby field (with a cricket pitch).

The drawing lodged with Council shows the field to be 120m x 73m, but aerial photographs show the levelled area to be substantially larger (approximately 155m x 80m).

Council classified the work as 'exempt development' so that it did not require a formal Development Application.

Consequently there has been no consultation with the community, either before or during this project.

The Rugby Club is managing the project, and has received grant funding towards its cost. However part of the work is being done by Council at ratepayers' expense.

Most of the fill for the project is said to be 'clean fill' from the widening of the M2 motorway, but some of the fill contains fragments of broken brick and concrete, ceramic pipe, steel and sewer pipe, presumably from building sites.

Long heaps of finer material (some contaminated with demolition rubble) are currently stockpiled on the southern part of the site. They are due to be spread over the fill to provide a base for turf.

The Rugby Club is said to have provided Council with an engineer's certificate verifying the structural adequacy of the two tiers of stone retaining wall that supports the eastern boundary of the field. It is not proposed to fill the batter to the

top of the wall.

Council is still awaiting an independent surveyors' report to confirm whether the level of fill conforms with that proposed in the drawings supplied at the start of the project. Certainly, the filled area extends further north than that shown in the drawings, creating a batter down to Princes St that is too steep to be mowed.

Whether the excess fill will be removed, and if so at whose expense, is uncertain.

The Rugby Club will install an irrigation system, to be supplied from the mains (the existing bore, which feeds the tank below No. 1 Oval, can't supply sufficient water even to irrigate Nos 1 and 2 Ovals).

After the turf is established (approximately 6 months after laying) Council will install the drainage system, plant mature trees at the northern end of the oval, and rehabilitate the surrounding area.

Council will fund the turf for No. 3 Oval (already budgeted), and is applying to the Department of Lands for a grant to cover a drainage system for the oval.



Argentinian Rugby player

The Club plans to install a fence, 1.1m high, along the eastern side of the field.

The Club plans to build a 'Community Facility' between Nos 2 and 3 Ovals, the site designated in the Plan of Management for a Community Centre/Hall. Costed at \$2.0 million the proposal is to include '... *toilets, canteen, etc. and lights for the oval incorporating storm water and water tanks.*'

Car parking for those using No. 3 Oval will be located between Nos 2 and 3 Ovals (reached via the lower part of Princes St which extends through the Park). Access will also be provided by a footpath running from the lower end of Boronia Ave, around the southern end of the field, along the western edge of the field (above the rock face).



Recent planting undertaken by volunteers on unprepared ground

The work is not scheduled to be completed until November 2013.

Council has stated that after the work on No. 3 Oval is completed, the Rugby Club will relinquish use of No. 1 Oval, making it available to other users. **Alister Sharp**

PROMOTING DESIGN EXCELLENCE



Toilet block at Middle Head – Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

One of the Trust's objectives in its constitution is to encourage high architectural and aesthetic standards. Recently we wrote to the new Council about its somewhat cavalier approach to the design of public spaces in the municipality and the buildings that are "plonked" into them.



Weil Park shed – designer Charles Elftita

Two examples from a recent edition of Council's *News to Residents* clearly indicate that Council has no overall approach to design for its public places and that design excellence is not something Council is striving for. Council seems more interested in thriftiness, writing in the News, "One of Council's works staff, Charles Flfita, has saved thousands of dollars by designing and building the shade structure himself".

This approach is clearly apparent in the redevelopment of Boronia Park's No 3 oval. Similarly it would appear that the design of the "urban design works" at the corner of Gladesville Road and Joubert St will also be going ahead without any assessment at all from Council's Conservation Advisory Panel.

This lackadaisical attitude to Hunters Hill's public spaces is in stark contrast to that of other councils and authorities with responsibility for development around the Sydney Harbour foreshores. Take for example The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust's work on the places under its control. SHFT takes great care in insisting on the highest quality of design in the layout of its places and the buildings and infrastructure that are placed within them.

The Trust hopes that the new Council will take a much more responsible attitude to its public places and that it might even consider lobbying Transport Roads and Maritime Services to get them to come on board with Council to clean up the eyesore of the public land under the Figtree Bridge, which could be turned into a really beautiful park. At present it is so neglected that people have no pride in it at all and use it as a dumping ground.

THE CONTINUING SAGA OF TREE LOSS IN HUNTERS HILL

Hunter's Hill Council has developed policy in relation to the conservation and management of existing trees and vegetation within the Municipality.

The intention is to protect and enhance the garden suburb character and heritage values that are distinguishing features of the area. Trees and vegetation that contribute to environmental and scenic qualities of the natural and cultural landscapes should be particularly valued, from magnificent single specimens to those forming important remnant bushland and providing vital habitat and wildlife corridors. Council's Tree Preservation Order provides a level of protection in



A gaping hole in the green band along the river

recognition of the many ecological services that trees and vegetation contribute to our amenity. The relevant Australian Standards should apply to protect mature trees, particularly those at risk from re-development of a residential site. It is also recommended that notable trees are placed on the *Significant Tree Register* to give more guarantee of their security into the future.



Garages replacing front gardens

However, unfortunately, even with this commendable list of protections and today's emphasis on the 'urban forest', trees continue to be removed and abused in our garden suburb and the many safeguards are often not implemented or adequately monitored.

The Trust encourages members who consider there are trees in their neighbourhood worthy of inclusion on the *Significant Tree Register* to act, if they haven't already done so. Information is available from Council's Administration Centre or on the website.

Brigid Dowset

MUSINGS

An occasional column

South America

It's not until you visit a place that you really begin to come to grips with its geography, history, cuisine etc. I'd never been to South America and had never really thought of going there until this year, as Gilly had a meeting near Cordoba in

Argentina. After the meeting we went on to visit Chile, Peru and Bolivia. South America was colonised in the most brutal fashion in the 16th century by Spain. Like Australia it has an indigenous history that stretches back into the unrecorded past and a much more recent colonial history dating from the 16th century.

The infamous Pizarro brothers, Francisco and Gonzalo conquered the Inca kingdom of Peru in 1532 so that its colonial history is more than 250 years older than Australia's.



Town square in Cusco Peru

Throughout Argentina, Chile, Peru and Bolivia there are wonderful churches and cathedrals that date from the late 16th century and I was intrigued to know who designed and supervised the construction of these buildings. I've since found out that the colonial buildings and town squares were set out in accordance with the Laws of the Indies (*Leyes de Indias*), which were laws issued by the Spanish Crown for its American and Philippine colonies and covered everything including town planning. 500 years later in Australia we are not capable of making such beautiful urban spaces.



Machu Picchu

There is nothing in the Spanish colonial architecture to compare with the fabulous Inca ruins of Machu Picchu – the Acropolis of South America and without a doubt one of the wonders of the world.

An idiosyncratic house

The Chilean Nobel Prize winning poet Pablo Neruda owned a number of houses and three of them in Chile have been restored and are now museums. We visited two of them, one in Valparaiso the other at *Isla Negra*, which is on the coast 110 km west of Santiago.

Both houses are wonderfully idiosyncratic and chock-a-block with a great variety of objects that Neruda collected over his life. I loved these houses particularly because they are the antithesis of the current fad for spare sharp edged minimalism.

Casa del Isla Negra is a rambling collection of different building forms having the scale and appearance of beach shacks. It is in a wonderful setting just above the rocks where the ocean pounds in.



Neruda House Isla Negra Chile

It embodies many of the principles set out in *A Pattern Language* – an iconoclastic text by Christopher Alexander et al, which attempts to set out ways of building that enhance the way people want to live their lives rather than slavishly following the architectural fashion trends.



Neruda house interior

There is something very familiar about being on the west coast of South America

– the seasons are the same, the flora is similar - especially where eucalypts have become the dominant tree species, the southern cross is there in the night sky and the Pacific Ocean pounds away on the coast.

In praise of suburbia



Many critics and writers extol the virtues of urban living; the excitement of living close together and within walking distance of the centres of culture, entertainment and commerce. Except for living in the country or the bush, everything else is classified as sub-urban – beneath, under and inferior to the urban.

Writers, usually city folk, write in praise of life in the bush. Banjo Patterson in *The Old Australian Ways*, writes:

*The city folk go to and fro
Behind a prison's bars,
They never feel the breezes blow
And never see the stars;
They never hear in blossomed trees
The music low and sweet
Of wild birds making melodies,
Nor catch the little laughing breeze
That whispers in the wheat.*



Tawny frogmouth in the pepper tree

Apart from the laughing breeze in the wheat, he could be describing Hunters Hill, where not only do wild birds make melodies in blossomed trees, but water dragons, skinks, snakes and many other wild creatures share the place, all thanks to the trees, gardens and bushland that run through the municipality. When the

tree cover is diminished so too is the habitat of all those creatures that distinguish life in the suburbs from life in the city.

Tony Coote

AUSTRALIAN HOUSES NOW BIGGEST IN THE WORLD

In 2009 Peter Martin wrote in the Sydney Morning Herald that Australians are piling on sitting rooms, family rooms, studies and extra bedrooms at the fastest rate in the world, with the size of our homes overtaking those in the US as the world's biggest.



Provincial Homes' Latitude

The typical size of a new Australian home hit 215 square metres in the past financial year, up 10 per cent in a decade, according to Bureau of Statistics data. US figures show the size of new American homes shrinking from 212 square metres before the financial crisis to 202 square metres in September.

New homes in other parts of the world are far smaller, with Denmark the biggest in Europe at 137 square metres and Britain the smallest at 76 square metres. Australians had so many holiday houses that the latest census found 8 per cent more dwellings than households. Sydney houses are by far the nation's biggest with new free-standing houses typically spanning 263 square metres - providing more than 100 square metres of indoor space per person.

"Another way of looking at it is the number of bedrooms," said a Commonwealth Securities economist, Craig James. "Around 20 years ago only one in every six homes had four or more bedrooms. By 2006 it was one in every 3.5 homes. While the fast pace of population growth points to the need for more and more homes, we are living in the biggest homes in the world. The simple fact is they could be better utilised."

Will the planning reforms have any impact on this galloping consumption?