

**Social mix in our cities:  
conference proceedings, November 12<sup>th</sup>,  
2002**

Shelter NSW  
December 2002

## **Acknowledgments**

Thanks to the panellists who presented papers at the Social Mix in Our Cities conference: Bill Randolph, Peter Murphy, Gary Moore, Peter Phibbs, Bruce Judd, Col James, Karine Shellshear, Lara Dominish.

Organisation of the conference and chairing: Flora Armaghanian, Hazel Blunden, Phillip French, Alex Panagopoulos, Mary Perkins, Harvey Volke.

Original background paper: Craig Johnston.

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## **SOCIAL MIX IN OUR CITIES AGENDA**

**Tuesday November 12th 2002**

**University of Sydney, Architecture Faculty, 148 City Road, Chippendale.**

- 8.30 Registration and coffee/tea
- 9.00 Welcome to the Land and Introduction from Phillip French, the Chairperson of Shelter NSW.
- 9.15 Opening address by the Minister Planning, Aboriginal Affairs and Housing, Dr. Andrew Refshauge.
- 9.30.1 Social Mix: A Departmental Perspective. Carol Mills from the NSW Department of Housing.
- 9.45 **Panel 1:** Socio-economic polarisation in Sydney.  
Bill Randolph, University of Western Sydney; Peter Murphy, University of NSW.
- 10.45 Morning Tea
- 11.00 Michael Richardson, Shadow Minister for Corrective Services and Housing.
- 11.15 **Panel 2:** Social inclusion and public housing estates: do we ask too much from housing policy?  
Annette Wade, Tenants Union; Peter Phibbs, University of Sydney; Bruce Judd, University of NSW; Gary Moore, Premiers' Department.
- 12.45 Lunch
- 1.30 **Panel 3:** Affordable Housing and Social Mix.  
Col James, Uni of Sydney; Karine Shellshear, Association to Resource Co-operative Housing; Lara Dominish, Willoughby Council.
- 2.45 Afternoon tea
- 3.00 Workshops
1. What Role for Local Government? Affordable Housing strategies and social mix:  
Daniel Thorpe, South Sydney Council
2. Socio-Economic Polarisation - discussion of issues coming out of Panel 1 -  
Hazel Blunden to facilitate
3. Social Inclusion and Public Housing estates - discussion of issues coming out of  
Panel 2 - Harvey Volke to facilitate
- 3.50 Wrap up
- 4.00 Finish

## **Workshops**

### **Local Government and Social Mix workshop**

#### **Facilitator: Daniel Thorpe, South Sydney Council**

Daniel Thorpe gave a brief summary of the affordable housing strategies being developed by South Sydney City Council and the operation of the Green Square Affordable Housing Program.

#### **Key issues identified by participants:**

1. The need to review the relevant legislation to identify all opportunities for local government to become involved in the provision of affordable housing, eg the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 and Amendment Act 2000, Local Government Act 1993, relevant SEPPs etc
2. The urgent need for the NSW State Government to release the Affordable Housing SEPP to provide a policy framework for local government's involvement in the provision of affordable housing. Compulsory provision of affordable housing for private developers would be desirable rather than a voluntary scheme. Without a coordinated whole-of-government approach, local government housing policy will continue to develop on an ad-hoc basis, with little opportunity for regional innovations or policy responses.
3. Local government needs to change its approach, or philosophy, to its role in the provision of affordable housing and identify practical policy and regulatory actions. Councils should facilitate the development of affordable housing but then transfer the management of these units to community-housing providers who have the skills and expertise.
4. Councils have unique knowledge of their local areas which can be utilised to undertake targeted research on local housing and planning issues. The findings can be used to develop housing policies and strengthen the ability of councils to retain their existing stock of affordable housing. Councils can also develop linkages to new and/or alternative organisations, such as the cooperative housing sector and CRASH Sydney.
5. Local communities need to be consulted with on housing and social mix issues and their views communicated to councillors and state government departments. The community can have a real role in identifying the type of community that they want in the future, which can assist councils to develop policies that respond to these needs. Councils can work with local residents and workers to help create sustainable long-term communities.

## **Social and economic polarisation workshop**

**Facilitator: Hazel Blunden, Shelter NSW**

Key issues identified by participants:

1. There should be a people and place-centred approach at the ground level as well as at the top level.
2. Program alignment is necessary.
3. Local infrastructure and existing communities require investment.
4. There should be a mandatory affordable housing requirement for all LGAs, in the form of a revised Affordable Housing State Environment and Planning Policy.
5. One obstacle to lessening socio-spatial polarisation is the Not in My Back Yard attitude of many people, who may resist the inclusion of affordable housing in a new development or nearby. Councils, also, can be unwilling to do this.
6. Homeless people sometimes choose to be homeless in their areas (such as in inner Sydney) rather than be housed somewhere far away, isolated from social and support networks, and unfamiliar.
7. Even middle and outer suburbs such as Liverpool are showing signs of increased polarisation - new developments for the wealthier people moving into the area are sitting alongside older, established housing estates.
8. Socio-spatial polarisation cannot be lessened without a supply of jobs. All the ameliorative community renewal in the world doesn't give people access to better incomes through working. Income differentials are growing.

## **Social inclusion and public housing estates workshop**

### **Facilitator: Harvey Volke, Shelter NSW**

1. The group felt there was a lack of clarity as to what was being discussed -- social inclusion, or social mix? Definitions of these terms, together with terms like “tenure mix” were generally discussed.
2. The group felt that to define the problems of estates as something to be addressed by encouraging social mix was fundamentally mistaken. The problems of the estates were related to issues like poverty, health, education, unemployment, transport, poor design, lack of maintenance etc. Addressing these problems directly was more likely to be effective than trying to restructure estates to encourage social mix. It also required a much broader approach than that of simply seeing it as a housing problem or a matter for housing policy alone.
3. Even if greater social and/or tenure mix was to be obtained, this would not necessarily resolve the problems – e.g., there was no indication mixing tenures on the estate would provide greater social integration – indeed, there was some evidence to suggest people from different social classes were less likely to mix if they were in the same estate; it would not solve problems of crime, vandalism, etc.; putting middle-class people in public housing estates would not necessarily result in improved services – indeed, it could result in the withdrawal of services needed by people with high levels of need.
4. Given that the problems of dysfunctional estates were at the least exacerbated by reductions in government funding and ever-tighter targeting of public housing to people with high and complex levels of need, it was unfair to blame the people for the problems, or to seek to resolve the problems by forcing already underprivileged people to move yet again.
5. Perhaps it was too sweeping simply to regard estates as dysfunctional, and therefore attempt to break them up. There were different ways of establishing community and different forms of community, and perhaps the department should look more closely at what communities of interest and what networks were developing, and build on those, rather than effectively threatening them. To take people out of established networks and require them to move elsewhere and develop new networks could be simply adding to their problems.
6. It was patronising to attempt a form of social engineering by seeking to get “social mix” by requiring public tenants to move out. And given that sale of stock was more likely to lead to stock reductions (e.g., on public housing estates it will be difficult to achieve sales at replacement cost), not merely would it mean more tenants chasing less housing, but would also lead to even greater delays for applicants.
7. There was a certain irony in the fact that tenants displaced by gentrification and redevelopment pressures in the inner city should now, in their broad-acre estates be forced to relocate yet again by another form of gentrification and redevelopment. In addition, was this gentrification or colonisation or both?

## Further reading

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### **Research underway on social mix**

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[www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/clps/rhrsm.htm](http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/clps/rhrsm.htm).

