

Cultural policy in an Australian suburb:

A study of Campbelltown, Sydney,

from the mid-1950s to 1988

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## **CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP**

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAP	Area Assistance Plan
ABA	Australian Bicentennial Authority
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission
ACA	Arts Council of Australia
AETT	Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust
AGNSW	Art Gallery of New South Wales
ALP	Australian Labor Party
AUS	Australian Union of Students
BCC	Bicentennial Community Committee
CAB	Community Arts Board
CAE	College of Advanced Education
Campbelltown Council	Campbelltown City Council
CARDP	Community Arts and Regional Development Program
CCC	Cumberland County Council
CEP	Commonwealth Employment Program
DURD	Department of Urban and Regional Development
Friends	Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery
IAC	Industries Assistance Commission
MDB	Macarthur Development Board
MDC	Macarthur Development Corporation
NSW	New South Wales
NSWBC	New South Wales Bicentenary Council
NSWRGA	New South Wales Regional Galleries Association
SROP	<i>Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD (1968)</i>
Three Cities	<i>New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin Structure Plan (1973)</i>
SWMRADC	South Western Metropolitan Regional Arts Development Committee

SPA	State Planning Authority
UK	United Kingdom
UNSW	University of New South Wales
US	United States of America
WSI	Welfare State International

## **ABSTRACT**

From the mid-1950s to 1988 Campbelltown, an area located fifty kilometres south west of Sydney's central business district, underwent physical and social change that was unparalleled elsewhere in Australia. Overarched by the post war nation-building project, a series of ambitious metropolitan and national growth plans re-imagined rural Campbelltown as an outer suburban utopia. A new city centre surrounded by carefully planned residential, neighbourhood and industrial estates was proposed and residents would enjoy a high quality of life. By the 1970s, however, the realities of Campbelltown's suburbanisation had deviated radically from these post war ideals. Whereas planners had based Campbelltown's future success upon a set of characteristics that had defined it since the early 1800s—its sense of independence, civic pride and white settler history—by the 1980s, it had become a notorious suburban 'bad land' and 'a welfare electorate par excellence'.

Concepts of culture featured within the ideologies and processes that were at play in the creation of 'new' Campbelltown. Governments at three levels—local, state and federal—fostered cultural activity in order to achieve specific policy objectives as Campbelltown became incorporated within the Sydney metropolitan area. At the same time that cultural policy directions were employed to determine what sort of place Campbelltown would be, local leaders were pursuing agendas for cultural development that encompassed a set of particular aspirations. As these various developments and forces took shape and converged, tensions, ambiguities and paradoxes became apparent.

This study of the relationship between cultural policy and suburban Australia situates the topic within a particular place over a three-decade period—Campbelltown. By doing so, it provides an expansive account that considers how the cultural development objectives of governments and communities have interplayed within and contributed to the creation of suburbia itself. The complexity that arises from this situation adds weight to a viewpoint that suburbia is a multi-faceted and evolving concept. It is for this reason—combined with the importance that suburban life has had in Australia's development—that it merits a level of attention in cultural policy discussions, which is currently lacking.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2011 Hollywood star and Sydney resident Cate Blanchett and her Sydney Theatre Company co-artistic director husband Andrew Upton recounted their suburban youth in the 1980s for the purpose of securing further state and local government investment in Sydney's harbour-side cultural precinct. For them, Sydney's suburbs were 'flat, dry [and] filled with sinister silence', while 'town [the city] was the centre', a 'magnetic attractor', a chance to invent and create.<sup>1</sup> Blanchett and Upton insisted passionately that it is 'vital for the children of the suburbs that capital cities act like capital cities' and develop metropolitan inner city precincts filled with artists and cultural organisations. But they also stressed that the key to the success of such precincts lay in them being located where people live. Blanchett and Upton were unaware of the paradoxical nature of their statement. The majority of Sydneysiders, and indeed Australians, live in the suburbs.

Despite the inconsistency within Blanchett and Upton's position, soon after their plea, the New South Wales (NSW) Minister for the Arts, George Souris, voiced support for their ideas.<sup>2</sup> He announced that the state government would increase its investment in Sydney's harbour-side cultural infrastructure as a matter of priority. The Minister's decision was, no doubt, made with the intention of stimulating cultural activity in order to boost the arts' contribution to the state's economy. However, that it was framed in response to the views of Blanchett and Upton, who dismiss suburban Australia as a cultural no man's land, should not go without attention. Such anti-suburban pronouncements by the urban cognoscenti are a continuation of a long tradition that has existed amongst Australian cultural elites that cast the suburbs as places that are cultural voids. In its support for culture, the NSW Government sent a strong

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<sup>1</sup> Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton 2011, 'Sydney: creative, vibrant, sustainable: Fostering a green cultural precinct at Walsh Bay', podcast speech given as part of *City Talks 2011*, City of Sydney, 8 March 2011. (Online) Available: <http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/podcasts/citytalks/default/default.asp> (Accessed 9 November 2011).

<sup>2</sup> 'New minister no fan of censorship', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 May 2011. (Online) Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/new-minister-no-fan-of-censorship-20110514-1en80.html> (Accessed 20 July 2014).

message that the places where the majority of Sydney's population live are irrelevant and inconsequential.<sup>3</sup>

In 2013 the federal government released *Creative Australia*, the first national cultural policy since Paul Keating's *Creative Nation* (1994). The development of the policy began soon after the Australian Labor Party came into office in November 2007 following eleven years of Liberal-National Coalition Government led by John Howard. Representatives from Australia's arts and cultural sector were invited to contribute to the development of *Creative Australia*, and Blanchett was one of the most prominent participants in this process. But just months after *Creative Australia* was finally released, a Liberal-National coalition was again elected to office. Despite the change, Julian Meyrick has suggested that much of *Creative Australia* will stay in place during the current and probably throughout the following term of government.<sup>4</sup> This being the case, it forms an important part of the current cultural policy landscape.

Rich in rhetoric, *Creative Australia* sets out a case for the arts and creativity to be part of the daily lives of Australian citizens. Despite Australia being one of the world's most urbanised countries, Justin O'Connor has observed that the national cultural policy ignores its cities, and in particular, inner city areas where cultural industries are typically clustered. Deborah Stevenson and David Rowe share a broader perspective and argue that a range of metropolitan spaces and urban environments need to be included in the policy. Steven Crittenden expands this viewpoint and argues that Australia's suburbs and its resident communities need to be encompassed within the policy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See New South Wales Government, Infrastructure NSW, *First things first: The State Infrastructure Strategy 2012-2032*, Sydney, 2012, p. 51. See also Heath Gilmore 'Makeover plan could turn Walsh Bay into world arts capital', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 November 2013, p.15.

<sup>4</sup> Julian Meyrick, 'Assemblage of convenience: National cultural policy-making 101', *Australian Book Review*, no 351, 2013, pp. 12-3.

<sup>5</sup> Justin O'Connor, *Submission to National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper*, 2011. (Online) Available: <http://culture.arts.gov.au/submissions/justin-oconnor-individual> (Accessed 18 June 2012); Deborah Stevenson and David Rowe, *Submission regarding the National Cultural Policy Discussion Paper*, Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney, 2011, p. 3; Steven Crittenden, 'The Getting of Culture', *Global Mail*, 19 April 2012. (Online) Available: <http://www.theglobalmail.org/feature/the-getting-of-culture/200/> (Accessed 18 June 2012).

## Suburban nation

Australia has been described as a suburban nation.<sup>6</sup> Donald Horne called it the 'first suburban nation'.<sup>7</sup> It is estimated that today seventy-five to eighty-five per cent of Australia's population lives in cities that are predominantly suburban.<sup>8</sup> A life in the suburbs continues to be preferred by many established and new Australians.<sup>9</sup> Large-scale outer suburban developments remain a significant element within metropolitan planning agendas, despite the promotion of urban consolidation.<sup>10</sup> Suburbs are places where children are raised and educated. They are where the tasks and activities of day-to-day living take place. Understanding how suburbia has been produced and re-produced, as Roger Silverstone maintains, enables understandings of the character and contradictions of daily life.<sup>11</sup>

Louise Crabtree has observed that suburbia is 'fundamental to our identity' as Australians. Rose Lucas has commented that representations of the suburb and of the lives of Australians who live there 'play a crucial role in the construction of personal as well and public history and discourse'. Trevor Hogan has remarked that suburban life is 'tied directly to the ... cultural self-

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<sup>6</sup> See Trevor Hogan, 'Nature strip; Australian suburbia and the enculturation of nature', *Thesis Eleven*, vol 74, no 1, 2003, p. 54; Anna Hurlimann, 'Impressions from new suburbs in Melbourne's greenfields', in David Nichols, Anna Hurlimann and Clare Mouat (eds), *Green Fields, Brown Fields, New Fields: Proceedings of the 10th Australasian Urban History, Planning History Conference*, University of Melbourne Custom Book Centre, Melbourne, 2010, p. 222; Louise C. Johnson (ed), *Suburban dreaming: An interdisciplinary approach to Australian cities*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1994, p. 1; Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australian cities*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1970, p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1964, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Terry Flew and Mark Gibson, 'Melbourne and Brisbane: The claims of suburbs', in Helmut Anheier and Yudhishtir Raj Isar (eds), *Cities, Cultural Policy and Governance*, Sage, London, 2012, pp. 235-52; Bill Randolph and Robert Freestone, *Problems and prospects for suburban renewal: An Australian perspective*, City Futures Research Centre, UNSW, 2008, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Terry Flew, *Right to the City? Desire for the Suburb?* M/C Journal, vol 14, no 4, 2011. (Online) Available: <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/368> (Accessed 29 August 2011). See also Bernard Salt, *The Big Shift*, Hardie Grant Books, Australia, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Sydney's South West sector is one of three major growth centres required to meet the needs of metropolitan population expansion. This region spans 17,000 hectares and has the capacity for the development of approximately 110,000 new dwellings to house 300,000 people. It represents a large land tract within the greater Sydney footprint and as such, it offers a significant site for examination in policy discussions. See New South Wales Government, Planning and Environment, *Sydney's Growth Centres, South West Growth Centre*. (Online) Available: <http://growthcentres.planning.nsw.gov.au/TheGrowthCentres/SouthWestGrowthCentre.aspx> (Accessed 28 September 2014).

<sup>11</sup> See Roger Silverstone (ed), *Visions of suburbia*, Routledge, London, 1997, p. 5.

understandings of the Australian people'. Catriona Elder has reflected that 'whether we like it or not, the suburbs and suburban life reflect and reproduce stories of being Australian'.<sup>12</sup>

Suburbanisation has featured heavily in Australia's development as a nation and has become the dominant urban form in Australia's cities. For Chris Healy, 'suburb' represents an actual place or site, while 'suburbia' refers to a 'state of mind'. 'Suburbia', as Paul Ashton has aptly put it, is 'both on the ground and in the mind'. Suburbs are places that have evolved from a multifaceted set of factors such as historical circumstances, ideologies, politics, class, group dynamics and individual actions.<sup>13</sup>

This study commences with an assumption that 'suburb'—together with its semantic variations, 'suburbs', 'suburbia', 'suburban' and 'suburbanisation'—refers to both a physical and an imagined concept. It accepts the view that suburbia is an idea that is fundamental to Australian society. As such, suburbia looms large in the construction and celebration of Australia's cultural identity and this, as David Throsby has observed, is a fundamental objective of cultural policy.<sup>14</sup> Given Australia's identity as a suburban nation, the deficiencies that exist in how this is considered within cultural policy 'discussions'—a term which is defined here as the public realm, the media, community forums and the academy—becomes

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<sup>12</sup> Louise Crabtree, 'Sub/urban Dream(ing): Land Speculation and the Quarter Acre Block', in Zanny Begg and Keg de Souza (eds), *There goes the neighbourhood; Redfern and the politics of urban space*, Performance Space, Sydney, 2009, pp. 102-5; Rose Lucas, "'Round the Block": Back to the Suburb in Return Home', in Sarah Ferber, Chris Healey and Chris McAuliffe (eds), *Beasts of Suburbia*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1994, p. 111; Catriona Elder, *Being Australian: Narratives of national identity*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2007, p. 298. See also Sue Turnbull, 'Mapping the vast suburban tundra: Australian comedy from Dame Edna to Kath and Kim', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol 11, no 1, 2008, p. 17; Trevor Hogan, 'Nature strip', pp. 54-75.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Healy, *Beasts of suburbia*, 1994, p. xiv; Paul Ashton, 'Suburban Sydney', *Sydney Journal*, vol 1, no 3, 2008, pp. 36-8. See also Mark Gibson, 'Bildung in the 'burbs: Education for the suburban nation', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol 15, no 3, 2012, pp. 247-57; Aiden Davison, 'Stuck in a Cul-de-Sac? Suburban History and Urban Sustainability in Australia', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol 24, no 2, 2006, pp. 201-16; Graeme Davison, 'Australia: The First Suburban Nation?', *Journal of Urban History*, vol 22, no 1, 1995, pp. 40-74; See also Hurlimann, 'Impressions from new suburbs', p. 220; Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle, 'The making of the Australian family', in Ailsa Burns, Gillian Bottomley and Penny Jools (eds), *The Family in the Modern World: Australian Perspectives*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, p. 96; Brendan Gleeson, *Australian heartlands: Making space for hope in the suburbs*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2006, p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> David Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2010, p. 43.

a compelling issue. Thus my research question is: What has been the relationship between cultural policy and suburban Australia?

### **The concept of place**

Healy and Ashton's perspective that 'suburb' or 'suburbia' refers to a 'place' rather than simply a geographic location or spatial unit is significant. Conceptualised by human geographers in the 1970s, 'place', as Tim Cresswell has noted, was coined in reference to how particular locations are imbued with meanings and attachments. Not only does the material topography of a place—the streets, houses, gardens, shops and other physical features of a suburb—create a place. It is the way that people experience places through their social relations, daily routines, habits and mobility and the movement of commodities and ideas, that gives full conceptualisation to how a place is defined and how a sense of place is understood.<sup>15</sup> Critical approaches, such as those undertaken through Marxism, feminism and post structuralism, have explored how power is implicated in the construction, reproduction and contestation of places and their meanings. For Allen Pred, 'place' is a process where the activities of people and institutions produce and are produced by social structures that are saturated with power.<sup>16</sup> David Sibley suggests that the social processes that are involved in the construction of places reinforce social relations of systematically unequal power relations. Those with official or tacit authority to construct places create a situation that results in places being inclusive to some and exclusive to others. From another perspective, Edward Relph maintains that 'placeless-ness' is becoming a progressively defining feature of modern life. People's increased mobility means that they have no time to stop, linger or anchor themselves in places as they once did. Mass-produced housing estates, shopping malls and McDonald's

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<sup>15</sup> Tim Cresswell, 'Place' in Rob Kitchin and N. J. Thrift (eds), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, London and Oxford, 2009, pp. 169-77; See also David Seamon, 'Body-subject, time-space routines, and place-ballets', in A. Buttimer and D. Seamon (eds), *The human experience of space and place*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1980, pp. 148-65; Doreen Massey, 'Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place', in J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Roberston and L. Tickner (eds), *Mapping the futures: Local cultures, global change*, Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 59-9.

<sup>16</sup> Allen Pred, 'Place as historically contingent process: Structuration and the time-geography of becoming places', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol 72, no 4, 1984, pp. 279-97. See also David Harvey, 'From space to place and back again', in J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Roberston and L. Tickner (eds), *Mapping the futures: Local cultures, global change*, Routledge, London, 1993, pp. 3-29.



restaurants are 'inauthentic' places where there is no sense of place. For Marc Auge, such 'nonplaces' are not simply inauthentic; they are symptomatic of contemporary life where being bound and rooted to a place is less important or possible than it once was.<sup>17</sup> 'Place', as Cresswell has concluded, is a contested concept. Places 'are never truly finished and are always open to question and transformation'.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, as Arthur Jones, a long-term resident of the outer Sydney suburb of Bradbury, Campbelltown, has reflected, places are not created simply by 'structure plans ... it's what happens over time'.<sup>19</sup> Paul Widdup and David Cutts have studied how communities participate in publically supported cultural activity. They concluded that 'place is significant ... it clearly matters'.<sup>20</sup> Therefore in understanding the relationship between cultural policy and suburban Australia, the concept of place is a fundamental concern.

## **Methodology**

### **Identifying the research gaps**

In order to consider the research question fully, I undertook a wide-ranging review of literature that was relevant to the topic. The review revealed that others had considered the same or a similar question and undertaken quantitative-based research projects, such as measuring levels of cultural production and cultural industries employment in specified suburbs. More qualitative approaches towards the subject, however, were scarce.

The literature review also provided guidance as to where I situate my study. While various suburbs in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane had been the subjects of cultural policy studies inquiry, the outer suburban local government areas of Blacktown, Sutherland, Hornsby and Campbelltown, which encompass north, south and western metropolitan Sydney respectively, have not. In response to this, I initially set out to make a case study of each area. However, it became apparent that the scale of such a study went beyond the parameters of a doctoral

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<sup>17</sup> David Sibley, *Geographies of exclusion: Society and difference in the West*, Routledge, London, 1993; Edward Relph, *Place and placelessness*, Pion, London, 1976; Marc Auge, *Non-Place: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso, London, 1995.

<sup>18</sup> Tim Cresswell, 'Place' in Rob Kitchin and N. J. Thrift (eds), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, London and Oxford, 2009, p. 174.

<sup>19</sup> Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown.

research project. Early investigations into Campbelltown and the role that governments have played in supporting cultural activity there over a long period of time suggested that there was a rich story to be told and one sufficiently comprehensive to explore as a single case study.

As the review of literature looked to urban history, it became apparent that there were research gaps in Australian suburban histories from the post Second World War era onwards. This provided an opportunity to position my study of Campbelltown within this period, particularly given that suburbanisation did not commence there until the 1950s. The year 1988 was chosen to bookend the study period. This was the year that Australia celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of the arrival of British ships on the shores of the continent, and one of the events that took place in 1988 to mark this occasion was the opening of the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery – the first purpose built public art gallery in Western Sydney. Following the appraisal of the research question and the compilation of reviewed literature, I was able to settle on the doctoral research project topic – Cultural policy in an Australian suburb: A study of Campbelltown, Sydney, from the mid-1950s to 1988.

### **Situating myself in the research project**

My own experiences working in suburban communities to develop and implement arts and cultural policies have provided me with a way to situate myself in the research project. From 1999 to the present I have worked in a variety of arts and cultural development positions in the suburbs of Sydney. From Baulkham Hills to Blacktown, Penrith to Parramatta, Campbelltown to Canada Bay to Auburn, local and state governments, education-based and community organisations have employed me to produce a range of initiatives that utilise cultural activity towards delivering a range of public policy objectives. Through these positions I have engaged with a vast array of stakeholders such as elected representatives, ministers of parliament, major cultural institutions, state and federal government agencies, numerous incorporated bodies and unincorporated entities representing all sorts of people and interests. I have worked with cultural producers across all forms of practice, and have

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<sup>20</sup> Paul Widdup and David Cutts, 'Impact of place on museum participation', *Cultural Trends*, vol 21, no 1, 2012, p. 63.

undertaken projects with artists who have international reputations to early career practitioners. I have held positions on state government funding committees and chaired arts organisations that receive triennial funding from the Australia Council to deliver cultural services nationally.

From these experiences I have observed that vast anomalies and contradictions exist in the way that public policies define and understand concepts of culture, and the approaches that are taken by governments towards fostering cultural activity. Despite rhetoric suggesting otherwise, I have seen significant incongruities between the cultural policies of local, state and federal governments, and even within the same governments and agencies. I have also observed that the way in which local governments support the aspirations and agendas of local community cultural activity in relation to the priorities of state and federal agendas for the arts are wide and varied.

Many of these questions reflect my experiences from 2004 to 2010 at Campbelltown Arts Centre, a cultural facility of Campbelltown Council, a large outer suburban Sydney local government area. I was surprised to be asked immediately upon first meeting both the Council's General Manager and chairman of its cultural committee, a particularly prominent local solicitor, whether I was 'a local'. I quickly learnt to answer that I was from Mildura, my birthplace on the Murray River in country Victoria, rather than inner city Sydney, as this response was given short shrift. I noted that the Council seemed to place a high degree of emphasis and pride on employing local people, which I found to be rather curious given that Campbelltown is part of metropolitan Sydney and might, one would think, seek to draw employees from a wide range of places rather than the immediate locale.

When I first started working at the Arts Centre many people spoke in quiet tones about the specialness of the place. What did this mean given that it was essentially a suburban council arts facility? I encountered a cohort of dedicated retirees who were impassioned about their service to the Arts Centre and had a high level of ownership of it. Many referred to the Arts Centre as a 'regional gallery'. Yet to me, these sorts of facilities are typically characterised by their location in country NSW and not in Sydney's western suburbs. Prior to commencing my role at the Arts Centre I knew little about Campbelltown except that it was widely considered

to be an undesirable crime ridden place that was on the last stop to nowhere. Yet, the majority of local people I met expressed their satisfaction at the high quality of life it offered as a place that combined the best of the country and the city. On the flip side of this was another Campbelltown that was made up of some of Australia's most socially disadvantaged people. They lived on the other side of the street, shopped in different places, never visited the Arts Centre and existed in some kind of parallel universe. There was very little that I knew about Campbelltown or its much-vaunted Arts Centre prior to the 2000s, and given the situation that I encountered, this became my topic of interest.

## **Research**

The second part of the project methodology was to undertake historical research. This encompassed a range of secondary sources that concerned Campbelltown during the period under review including government reports, policies and plans, intra-governmental archival material including speeches and committee meeting minutes, parliamentary papers and transcripts of debates (*Hansard*), published local histories, media articles, news letters and ephemeral material. I also drew on unpublished personal memoirs, private collections, interviews and archival material. I gained access to this material—much of it stored in suburban garages—through the relationships that I developed with interviewees during the research project. This was a crucial aspect of the research methodology and one that enabled a wealth of otherwise inaccessible material to be examined.

The research process also drew on primary sources to offer new interpretations and provide nuances to existing material. I conducted a series of interviews with selected individuals in 2012 and 2013 who had been residents in Campbelltown, and who had played a key role in fostering community cultural activity and/or in the delivery of public policy from the 1950s. Interviews also took place with people who had been involved in similar activities more recently in order to understand the impact of such activity. Interviewees were selected based on their known profile and willingness to participate.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Individuals contacted for research interviews readily accepted the invitation to participate. The exception to this was Paul Tosi, General Manager of Campbelltown Council. While he accepted my invitation to participate in the project on two occasions when approached in person, he did not return

## **Analysis and findings**

To guide the critical analysis of the research material, I developed a series of foundational questions. In what ways have the imagined dimensions of suburbia interacted with the physical aspects of suburban planning and development? How have these elements intersected with parallel developments in cultural policy? How have cultural policy directions influenced the formation of modern suburban places and their identities? What ideologies have underpinned these policy directions, and whose agendas have these represented?

In my consideration of these questions, I have drawn from range of perspectives, most notably from the cultural policy studies, urban studies, history and cultural studies fields, and these were applied towards the analysis of research. References to the various positions are interwoven throughout the discussion. This approach enabled me to gain knowledge and understanding of the concepts and practices that underpinned developments in the different fields of urban policy and cultural policy as they each related to Campbelltown and to the situation in Australia more broadly. Deliberating on how these elements interacted with each other provided me with the hinge to form new interpretations concerning the relationship between cultural policy and suburban Australia.

A further technique that I applied towards my investigation of the research topic was to intermittently depart from historical contexts to examine more recent developments in cultural policy. I have interwoven these references into the discussion in order to reflect upon the way in which ideas and issues that underpinned cultural policy developments in earlier times continue to have resonance. By doing so, I aim to show that historical approaches towards the study of cultural policy are relevant to and can provide stimulus to current discussions.

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my subsequent phone calls, emails and letter. It is unfortunate that Mr Tosi was unable to participate, as his perspectives gained over a four-decade long career at the Council would have provided useful insights.

## **Thesis structure**

The structure of the thesis principally parallels the history of suburbanisation in Campbelltown and the development of cultural policy directions there and in Australia more generally from the post war period to the end of the 1980s. During this time, ideological shifts, structural change, growth and political imperatives resulted in different tiers of government vying to assume the reins for Campbelltown's expansion and, as part of this, its cultural development. Such positions, as well as agendas being advanced by local community groups, are brought to light in my discussion and constitute the thematic focus of the thesis chapters. Framed in this way, they can also be read as case studies into the development and implementation of cultural policy at a local, state and federal government level. Preceding this section of the thesis, however, are a series of chapters that articulate a set of definitional, historical and theoretical foundations that function to provide anchor points for the ensuing discussion.

Chapter 1 explores what is meant by 'culture' and 'cultural policy' and introduces a new term, 'cultural policy directions', into the lexicon of cultural policy studies. Chapter 2 discusses developments in cultural policy in Australia from the post war period through to the early 1990s in order to provide an overarching frame for the more specific analysis of cultural policy directions in Campbelltown. Chapter 3 investigates how discussions about cultural policy have considered suburban Australia. It shows how both prominent theoretical approaches and critical appraisals have caused the suburbs to be excluded from cultural policy discussions and finds that many of the assumptions that underpin these perspectives are flawed. Chapter 4 summarises the history of suburban development in metropolitan Sydney. It discusses how some of the physical and abstract concepts that underpinned the early stages of Sydney's suburbanisation re-emerged during the post war era and extended until the 1980s. It also explains how concepts of 'Western Sydney' evolved as a policy interest and the position that Campbelltown came to occupy within this.

Chapter 5 explores developments in metropolitan planning and urban policy from the post war period to the end of the 1980s. It shows how Campbelltown was considered to be crucial not only to Sydney, but to Australia's growth and urban future, and establishes that this situation was unique. Chapter 6 interrogates this further to illustrate how culture and cultural

activity featured in planning and policy agendas. It draws attention to how these concepts were envisioned in the creation of Campbelltown as a model for a new suburban Australia.

Chapter 7 discusses the evolution of cultural policy directions at a local government level. It explores how Campbelltown Council drew on the historical narrative of Fisher's Ghost to carve out a rudimentary cultural policy direction designed to manage the local community through the effects of suburbanisation. Chapter 8 extends the previous discussion into the 1960s and 1970s when suburban development accelerated. It outlines how agendas for the visual arts deviated from Campbelltown Council's fostering of community cultural activity more broadly. In particular, it discusses how steps were taken to institutionalise the visual arts in efforts to gain recognition for Campbelltown on the national cultural stage, create a sense of respectability and uplift its status as a city. It considers how the visual arts became the symbolic grounds on which those that were seeking to retain traditions associated with Campbelltown's past clashed with those who sought to embrace new ideas for its future.

Chapter 9 explores developments in cultural policy by federal, state and local governments from the early 1970s to the early 1980s. It shows how Western Sydney and Campbelltown were of particular interest to cultural policy makers in relation to the concept of 'disadvantage'. The chapter charts how cultural policy developments at three tiers of government converged in Campbelltown at a particular time, and considers how these intersected with the aspirations of the local cultural sector.

Chapters 10 and 11 examine how the Australia Council's Community Arts Program was implemented in Campbelltown from the early to mid-1980s. The work of Graeme Dunstan, Campbelltown Council's first community arts officer, and the approaches that he took to enact federal cultural policy objectives at a local level, are discussed. Both Dunstan and his successor Alice Spizzo's experiences are explored in relation to the wider structural changes that occurred in Australia that brought into stark reality the impacts of the policy agendas that had driven Campbelltown's suburbanisation.

Chapter 12 discusses the rise of a local social movement that was formed in the 1980s to campaign for the establishment of a public art gallery in Campbelltown. It shows how this was a continuation of earlier agendas that applied the visual arts towards the construction of

Campbelltown's identity in relation to Sydney and broader contexts. Chapter 13 examines how those at the helm of the art gallery movement sought opportunistic alliances with the policy agendas of various governments to expedite their campaign. Most significant to this was the Australian Bicentenary in 1988. The objectives for this event from its conceptualisation to delivery across three levels of government interacted with more general cultural policy objectives and with the cultural development desires of local communities. This dynamic, together with the contestations associated with celebrating Australia's British past, resulted in conflicts, debates and compromises, and Campbelltown was no exception to this.

Findings and observations made throughout the discussion are shaped into a suite of concluding remarks that offer new understandings of the relationship between cultural policy and suburban Australia. These conclusions are provided to enable fresh perspectives to be formed and to build additional dimensions into the Australian-specific and wider cultural policy discussions. It finds that as cultural policies are developed and implemented in the context of suburban Australia, tensions, ambiguities and paradoxes emerge.<sup>22</sup>

### **Campbelltown**

'Campbelltown' is used in reference to both Campbelltown central—the suburb that extends from the main street where civic facilities, services and other institutions are located—and to the Local Government Statistical Area more broadly, which forms spatial and demographic parameters for the function of public policy. Campbelltown is located fifty kilometres south west of the central business district of Australia's largest capital city, Sydney. It encompasses an area of 312 square kilometres that contains more than thirty separate suburbs. In 2011 the population of Campbelltown was 145,967, making it one of the largest municipalities in NSW.<sup>23</sup> Campbelltown was established as a township in the early 1800s as the Governor of the

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<sup>22</sup> As Roger Silverstone has suggested a strong sense of paradox and contradiction emerges about suburbia when it is placed within critical discussions. See Silverstone, *Visions of suburbia*, p. 5. See also Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*, New York, Basic Books, 1987, p. 206.

<sup>23</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2011 Census QuickStats*, 'Campbelltown Local Government Area'. (Online) Available: [http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA11500?opendocument&navpos=220](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA11500?opendocument&navpos=220). (Accessed 21 July 2014). See also Campbelltown City Council, *About Campbelltown*, (Online) Available: <http://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/AboutCampbelltown>. (Accessed 21 July 2014).



Colony of NSW, Lachlan Macquarie, extended settlement from Sydney Cove into Dharawal (or 'Tharawal') land, beyond the Cumberland and Liverpool plains in search of fertile agricultural lands. Campbelltown and its surrounding landscape of farms and scattered villages remained largely unchanged until the 1950s when metropolitan planning and urban development authorities began to consider its position in relation to Sydney's future growth.

The pressure of population growth after the Second World War resulted in an unprecedented rate and scale of suburban development in Australia's major capital cities. But unlike other outer western Sydney areas such as Liverpool and Fairfield, which had grown quickly to meet the housing demand generated by returned soldiers and new immigrants, Campbelltown, as Carol Liston has rightly noted, remained untouched by suburbanisation until the late 1950s.<sup>24</sup> From then to the end of the 1980s suburbanisation transformed Campbelltown from a country town and rural area into a modern outer suburban centre that was incorporated within the Sydney metropolis. Over the same period, there were significant developments in cultural policy in Australia, and these reflected the wide-ranging social, cultural, technological and structural changes that underpinned its growth and emergence as a post-colonial nation.

As a suburban Campbelltown was conceived, planned and built, various agendas attempted to determine what sort of place it would be. Government planners, urban policy specialists and private developers were designing suburban spaces out of divided up pastures of once-toiled farmlands that surrounded the township of Campbelltown. They, and others, were imagining it as a modern outer suburban utopia ensconced within the Sydney metropolis. Away from the desks and drawing boards of Sydney-based planners and Canberra bureaucrats, new communities were making Campbelltown home. Many were motivated by incentives that enabled affordable housing and the attainment of suburban home ownership. Others became residents as a result of their relocation at the hands of changing government housing policy. New residents brought different ideas and values with them and this challenged the established local social order. The then prevailing sense of identity that had underpinned Campbelltown since earlier colonial times had been relatively fixed. As the process of suburbanisation took hold, how Campbelltown was re-imagined and the way that cultural

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<sup>24</sup> Carol Liston, *Campbelltown: The Bicentennial History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 197.

activity was applied towards this process, became contested between those who wanted to hold onto its past and those who sought to embrace its future.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Culture and policy: Defining concepts and outlining the field of study**

This study commences when Australia was experiencing a period of growth and modernisation enabled by the post Second World War economy. In 1954 Australians had welcomed their young, recently crowned monarch, Queen Elizabeth II, to their towns and suburbs. Booming growth drove suburbanisation that quickly expanded the footprint of capital cities such as Sydney and Melbourne. While Prime Minister Robert Menzies considered the ‘forgotten’ middle class and their home-centred suburban lives as the foundation on which to build Australia’s post war society, others thought that such aspirations bred cultural blandness and social conformity. The late 1960s and early 1970s—Australia’s swinging sixties—was an era of social and cultural upheaval that led to widespread policy shifts, many of which came to a sudden halt in November 1975 with the dismissal of the Whitlam Government. The 1980s kicked off with a recession that gripped Australia and forced structural and economic reform. It concluded with the celebration of the two hundredth anniversary of the British arrival—or invasion—of the continent. This period, which spans just over three decades and saw Australia change enormously, provides a rich context to situate the study of cultural policy and the study of suburbia.

It is widely agreed that there is no singular or precise definition of what is meant by the term ‘culture’. Tony Bennet has observed that ‘culture’ is a highly complex concept that is difficult to analyse through the standard methods of inquiry. He has drawn attention to the difficulties regarding the vocabulary of culture and the multiplication of contexts in which the term is now used.<sup>1</sup> For James Clifford, ‘culture’ is a ‘deeply compromised idea, but one that is necessary’.<sup>2</sup> In 1976, Raymond Williams analysed the modern development of ‘culture’ and set out three categories of its usage as understood in the English vocabulary. The first, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, referred to ‘culture’ as a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development. The second defined ‘culture’ anthropologically, referring to a

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Bennett in Raymond Williams, Tony Bennett and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, Blackwell, Malden, 2005, p. 63.

‘particular way of life’, be it of a society, a group, period or in relation to humanity generally. The third employed ‘culture’ to describe a set of works and practices of intellectual and in particular, artistic activity.<sup>3</sup>

The anthropological definition of culture as ‘a way of life’ is now commonly adopted. Understanding culture in this way provides a flexible conceptual reach for encompassing the multiplicity of ideas, practices, traditions, beliefs and systems that exist among peoples and within periods of time. As Bennett has noted, historical definitions that once qualified ‘culture’ through concepts of class have declined and in its place has been an increase in its use in reference to forms of difference that transgress spatial or national boundaries—such as ‘gay culture’ or ‘black culture’—and the extension of its use towards the notion of lifestyles—such as ‘street cultures’. In recent decades, there has been an increase in the use of the adjective, ‘cultural’, in academic disciplines such as geography, economics, policy studies and history. This has accompanied a broader ‘cultural turn’ in the humanities. This has also been the case within spheres of government activity; a growing development which is evidenced by the pairing of ‘cultural’, for example, with ‘economy’, ‘policy’, ‘heritage’ and ‘regeneration’.<sup>4</sup> It is this application of ‘culture’ and the coupling of ‘cultural’ with ‘policy’ that this study explores. In order to do so, it is necessary to first trace how the fundamental concepts associated with the public administration of culture evolved. While I am concerned specifically with the context of cultural policy in Australia during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the history of its development both as an intellectual concept and as an activity of government in Australia can be found in how it evolved in Britain.

From the Industrial Revolution to and including much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century ‘culture’, in Britain and its colonised societies, came to stand for a general process of social improvement. The ideals of European Romanticism had elevated the role of art and the artist beyond worldly concerns. Art existed on an intellectual plane that transgressed the dirty, heaving effects of

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<sup>2</sup> James Clifford, *The Predicament of culture: Twentieth-Century ethnography, literature, and art*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1988, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, Fontana, London, 1976.

<sup>4</sup> Bennett, *New Keywords*, pp. 63-9. Some scholars have argued that defining ‘culture’ as an anthropological concept has not been universally adopted. See for example, Adam Kuper, *Culture: The*

industrialisation, the bodily efforts of labour and the disorder brought on by urbanisation. Art was considered to a self-contained aesthetic entity that extolled spiritual and moral value. By experiencing art people could undergo a process of aesthetic-driven spiritual enlightenment that elevated them from the crudeness of working urban life. It was a civilising process. Williams observed that the result of this was that ‘the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity’, came to be normalised as ‘culture’.<sup>5</sup>

European powers had stamped their authority on the globe by colonising people in other lands and by the start of the 1800s they were at the apex of civilisation, as it was then understood. Civilisation was the benchmark of material progress and it was expressed through a particular set of cultural practices and institutions that had evolved within in the traditions practiced by rulers over centuries, which in earlier times had been the monarchy and church. Such practices included ballet, the fine arts, the orchestra and opera. As industrialisation and urbanisation drove unprecedented social and economic change in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ruling classes feared anarchy, living with the memory of the French and later 19<sup>th</sup> century revolutions. To rein in the threat to social order, governing officials inscribed the symbols of civilisation and power upon society as it urbanised. They institutionalised culture by containing it materially within civic edifices that were constructed to occupy the central spaces of urban populations. Culture became a symbol of civic authority and status.

For Bennett, the pivotal shift in the modern usage of ‘culture’ occurred when the idea of self-improvement through the experience of art—‘culture’—transferred from the subject of the individual to that of society. It became an ideology that advanced the experience of culture as a process for improving societies—both morally and civically. The art gallery and the museum evinced the positive presence of the powerful ideology of ‘progress’. Thus the public administration of culture was built on a set of foundations that involved the convergence of aesthetic-moral and civic-institutional concepts. While as Eleanore Belfiore and Oliver Bennett noted, this ‘explicitly civic slant to the case made for the civilising power of the arts’ first

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*Anthropologists' Account*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1999; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, *Keywords*.

emerged during the French Enlightenment, it extended well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is still at work today.<sup>6</sup>

The political and social upheavals that occurred in developed nations in the 1960s and early 1970s, gave rise to the Rights movements and the disciplines of cultural studies. These developments reflected wider shifts that had taken place as the New Left emerged in the West. Khrushchev's acknowledgement of Stalin's crimes and the uprisings against Communism in Poland and Hungary in 1956, had led to a crises of the communist movement. Authoritarian forms of socialist organisation were critiqued and approaches to social justice predicated solely on class struggle were challenged by other ideas that sought reform on a range of social, political, economic and environmental issues. The demise of the British, French and other old colonial empires led to inquiries based on the experiences of indigenous people and other minority groups and this variously paralleled and intersected with emerging and existing Left ideologies to create new fields of study such as second wave feminism, gay rights and gender studies. These shifts both responded to and were given a platform through the counter culture and anti-war movements, student uprisings in Europe and intellectual challenges to the assumptions and traditions upon which institutions had been built. The sheer number of baby boomers and their embrace of youth cultures provided a volatile critical mass that could draw on the ideas of the New Left and surge against the beliefs and conventions that they had rejected. Hall Greenland, who had been involved in the New Left in Australia, has reflected that at its essence the movement was 'an attempt to introduce democracy into the state, family, places of work, education and the schools and so on'.<sup>7</sup>

It was an era of participatory democracy. New approaches towards social planning and town planning, for example, promoted methodologies that involved cooperation between governments and local communities in the decision making process.<sup>8</sup> While the principles of participatory democracy had a strong rhetorical presence, in practice, however, the situation

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<sup>6</sup> Bennett, *New Keywords*, pp. 63-9; Eleanore Belfiore and Oliver Bennett, *The social impact of the arts: An intellectual history*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, pp. 131-7.

<sup>7</sup> Hall Greenland in 'Panel Discussion', in Beverley Symons and Rowan Cahill (eds), *A Turbulent Decade: Social Protest Movements and the Labour Movement, 1965-1975*, Sydney Branch, Australian Society for the Study of Labour History, Sydney, 2005, pp. 27-9.

may have been more tokenistic. Nevertheless, such ideas spread across governmental spheres and filtered into the policy developments and practices associated with culture and the arts.

These developments questioned the meanings, power, class structure and institutional powers associated with 'culture' as the high arts. Bennett has noted how Williams showed that the supposedly universal perfection association with the normative view of culture as 'art' turned out, in practice, to have strong connections with the particular values of ruling groups and classes. He extended the thinking of what might count as culture. As Bennett has observed, the democratic and egalitarian sentiment that grew out of the Rights movement made it harder for intellectual elites to claim any special value for their preferred cultural activities over other social groups. The result of this, 'by and large', was that 'the belief that a particular canon of literary, music, or artistic works can claim a monopoly of cultural value ... [was] ... no longer widely supported'.<sup>9</sup>

Developments in communications technology increased the methods, availability and reach of platforms to distribute and consume cultural material, and categorisations of culture as 'high', 'popular' or 'mass' lost currency.<sup>10</sup> David Throsby has noted that these changes impacted upon how culture was understood and applied within the policy sphere.<sup>11</sup> While a later section in the thesis looks how these developments played out in Australia, it is useful at this point to mention how they evolved in more a general context. But prior to this, as both discussions draw on cultural policy studies, it is necessary to briefly outline this field of scholarship.

### **The study of cultural policy**

Jennifer Craik has described cultural policy as the way that governments deal with cultural issues and the approaches that are applied in terms of strategies that facilitate, regulate and

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<sup>8</sup> See Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Voluntary action, social welfare and the Australian Assistance Plan in the 1970s', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 39, no 2, 2008, pp. 167-82.

<sup>9</sup> Bennett, *New Keywords*, p. 64.

<sup>10</sup> For a useful overview of these developments see David Hesmondhalgh and Andy Pratt, 'Cultural industries and cultural policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 11, no 1, 2005, pp. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, p. 14.

shape cultural development.<sup>12</sup> Cultural policy ‘studies’, as David Throsby has succinctly put it, is the field of inquiry that analyses cultural policy. He notes that cultural policy today involves multiple components that occur within and interface across government. The same is the case for cultural policy studies. Discussions can be framed through a diverse range of streams including the economics of culture, cultural industries, creative cities, cultural capital, cultural policy as regulation, protection and content quotas, nation building, the arts, cultural heritage, cultural diversity and cultural diplomacy. Throsby suggests that while there are many strands, agencies, agendas and theorists that are ‘at work pulling in different directions’ in the cultural policy studies arena, it has fundamentally been approached from two perspectives. One comes from the cultural studies disciplines and its ‘loose assembly of scholars and writers [who are] concerned with the fundamental nature of culture and how it evolves as a sphere of influence for the State’. The other extends from scholarly research and empirical analysis that is associated with ‘pragmatic’ policy making, such as economics and political science.<sup>13</sup> Toby Miller and George Yudice characterise these two perspectives in a similar way. The transformative approach to cultural policy studies extends from cultural studies’ concern with theory, history and politics. The functionalist sphere involves orthodox policy research that is concerned with efficiency, effectiveness and description.<sup>14</sup> This thesis draws from both perspectives, but considered in full, it leans towards the cultural studies approach.

Paola Merli has argued that from the late 1980s cultural policy studies took a ‘reformist-technocratic’ trajectory that became principally concerned with the activity of government, a perspective that can be seen in both Craik and Throsby’s definition of the field. Merli maintains that scholars such as Tony Bennett led a re-orientation of cultural policy studies away from hegemony theory and political radicalisation—approaches that had been at the foundation of cultural studies but were out of sync with the new direction. Since then, Merli suggests, the study of cultural policy has largely ignored the theory of hegemony that was advanced by Gramsci. Not simply understood as ‘domination’, Gramscian ‘hegemony’ refers

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<sup>12</sup> Jennifer Craik, *Re-visioning arts and cultural policy: Current impasses and future directions*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2007, p. 83. See also Jennifer Radbourne, ‘Creative Nation – A policy for leaders or followers? An evaluation of Australia’s 1994 cultural policy statement’, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, vol 26, no 4, 1997, p. 281.

<sup>13</sup> Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, p. 28; 231-5.



to the relational politics of civil society and the State. One social group influences another to the degree that it makes certain concessions to attain leadership of society as a whole. Thus, sectional interests are transformed and some concept of the general interest is promoted.<sup>15</sup>

The late 1970s and early 1980s saw fundamental shifts taking place in the public policy realm in developed nations. Advances in technology resulted in industrial decline and this, coupled with global recession, caused economic retraction in industrialised nations. Social-welfare policy models, which had underwritten post war reconstruction schemes and which had included 'special cases' like the arts, were being increasingly subordinated to economic imperatives. There was a re-assessment of the allocation of public monies towards objectives that were conceptualised through social-welfare and market failure models alone. A nation's economy and its growth became the overriding policy imperative from which social benefits would follow.<sup>16</sup>

In this context, culture was re-framed as an industry. The production, dissemination and consumption of cultural products could be understood and evaluated as part of the economy and the impact of public investment in culture could be measured quantifiably. The re-conceptualising of culture in this way meant that it could be measured and recognised in terms of its impact on and contribution to the economic development of nations, regions and localities. Rationales for government support of culture no longer depended upon arguments based on aesthetic or inherent value judgements alone but on assessments of public good that was measured in economic terms. The re-casting of culture within the cultural industries model forged a conceptual pathway that served to further broaden the parameters of what was defined as 'culture' to include media, entertainment, advertising, architecture and

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<sup>14</sup> Toby Miller and George Yudice, *Cultural policy*, London, Sage Publications, 2002, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup> Paola Merli, 'Creating cultures of the future: Cultural strategy, policy and institutions in Gramsci, Part I: Gramsci and cultural policy studies: Some methodological reflections', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 19, no 4, 2013, pp. 399-420. See also Tom Bottomore (ed), *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Blackwell Reference, Oxford, 2001, pp. 229-32.

<sup>16</sup> See Jamie Peck, 'Struggling with the creative class', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol 29, no 4, 2005, p. 766. See also Terry Smith, 'The Visual Arts: Imploding Infrastructure, Shifting Frames, Uncertain Futures', in Tony Bennett and David Carter (eds), *Culture in Australia: Policies, publics and programs*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 74; Louise C. Johnson, *Cultural capitals: Revaluing the Arts, Remaking Urban Spaces*, Ashgate, Surrey, 2009, p. 75; Franco

design.<sup>17</sup> This shifting paradigm towards placing culture in an economic context also gave cultural organisations that had a dependency on public support a new framework in which to use their outputs to advocate for greater public investment.

These developments gave rise to discussions that connected the concepts of ‘culture’ and ‘economy’ and to terminology such as ‘cultural economy’, ‘creative economy’, ‘cultural industries’ and ‘creative industries’. From the 1990s onwards these concepts have featured prominently within the discourses of cultural policy. Chris Gibson and Lily Kong, and Stuart Cunningham, John Banks and Jason Potts note that the theoretical and empirical uses of these terminologies are diverse and wide-ranging. The commonality among them, however, is that they ‘describe a space where the cultural and economic collide’.<sup>18</sup> The cultural economy approach has become particularly popular in the context of urban renewal and the development of city and regional economies, most notably through the creative cities thesis of Richard Florida, which is discussed in chapter 3.

While culture has taken a clear turn towards the economy, it has not wiped out arts-based ideologies from the cultural policy domain altogether. Even though Williams had made the observation in 1976 that the administrative arm of government responsible for policies concerning culture most often operated to a definition of culture as artistic practice, the situation would appear to remain so in some respects today. In Australia’s current national cultural policy, for example, the arts sit discretely and ambiguously in relation to the broader concept of the cultural industries and the Australia Council is delineated as serving no role beyond supporting and developing the arts.<sup>19</sup>

David Hesmondhalgh and Andy Pratt maintain that the arts or ‘welfare’ model forms a part of the cultural economy and it therefore remains a current concept within contemporary cultural

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Bianchini and Michael Parkinson, *Cultural policy and urban regeneration: The West European experience*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, *Cultural capitals*, p. 76.

<sup>18</sup> Chris Gibson and Lily Kong, ‘Cultural economy: a critical review’, *Progress in Human Geography*, vol 29, no 5, 2005, p. 542; Stuart Cunningham, John Banks and Jason Potts, ‘The cultural economy today’, in Helmut Anheier and Yudhishtir Raj Isar (eds), *The cultural economy*, Sage, London, pp. 13-5.

<sup>19</sup> See Commonwealth of Australia, *Creative Australia: National Cultural Policy*, 2013.

policy.<sup>20</sup> Cunningham, Banks and Potts hold a similar view and suggest that the same applies in relation to the analysis of cultural economy.<sup>21</sup> Throsby sees the creative arts as central to the conceptualisation and implementation of cultural policy, even within the discourse of the cultural economy.<sup>22</sup> Kate MacNeill, Jenny Lye and Paul Caulfield note in their study of arts spending among different Australian governments that public funding for arts and cultural activity—which includes funding artists, major organisations, museums and galleries, financing infrastructure projects and community-based arts activity—is a well-accepted form of support.<sup>23</sup> According to Andy Pratt, the reality is that many policy makers utilise a mix of approaches that draw from the economic, arts and social discourses of culture in the formulation of policy.<sup>24</sup>

Jennifer Craik, Glyn Davis and Naomi Sunderland provide a useful framework that shows the mix of approaches that Pratt alludes to. Support for arts and culture is one of four key domains within cultural policy. The other three are communications and media, including support for film and broadcast media (both publicly funded and commercial), as well as policies related to new media technologies, publishing, and intellectual property; citizenship and identity, including language policy, cultural development policy, multiculturalism, and questions of national symbolic identity; and spatial culture, including urban and regional culture and planning, cultural heritage management, and cultural tourism, leisure and recreation.<sup>25</sup> Many of these facets of cultural policy are what Miller and Yudice refer to as the systematic approach or ‘highly deliberate’ practices of government towards cultural policy design and implementation.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, ‘Cultural industries and cultural policy’.

<sup>21</sup> Cunningham, Banks and Potts, ‘The cultural economy today’.

<sup>22</sup> Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, pp. 15-6; 43; 92. See also David Throsby, ‘The concentric circles model of the cultural industries’, *Cultural Trends*, vol 17, no 3, 2008, pp. 147-64.

<sup>23</sup> Kate MacNeill, Jenny Lye and Paul Caulfield, ‘Politics, reviews and support for the arts: An analysis of government expenditures on the arts in Australia from 1967 to 2009’, *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, vol 1, no 1, 2013, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> Andy Pratt, ‘Cultural industries and public policy: an oxymoron?’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 11, no 1, 2005, pp. 38-9.

<sup>25</sup> Jennifer Craik, Glyn Davis and Naomi Sunderland, ‘Cultural Policy and National Identity’, in Glyn Davis and Michael Keating (eds), *The Future of Governance: Policy Choices*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2000, pp. 177-202.

<sup>26</sup> Miller and Yudice, *Cultural policy*, p. 2.

But Miller and Yudice suggest that cultural policy also exists on a less systematic, more ad hoc basis.<sup>27</sup> Indeed Craik characterises the early forms of cultural policy in Australia as being so. She suggests that throughout the history of cultural policy in Australia the situation has on occasions been so unsystematic to the extent that governments have pursued contradictory objectives simultaneously. Craik believes that ‘to some degree, this situation persists in much of arts and cultural policy-making’.<sup>28</sup> Paul DiMaggio also made reference to the presence of ‘unintended’ approaches towards cultural policy and noted that these exist alongside more specified actions that are purposed towards identified ends.<sup>29</sup> Despite such acknowledgements, scholarship in the case of Australia has generally favoured the analysis of systematic approaches through, for example, the examination of legislation and regulative measures, government plans and programs, commissioned reports and reviews, and the operations of the Australia Council. Much of this research has had a national focus and has concentrated on policy contexts that have the arts or culture as a sole concern.<sup>30</sup> Tony Bennett and Colin Mercer (1998) suggested that the prevalence of such approaches had the potential to limit the relevance of the study of cultural policy. They called for new and extended perspectives that included ‘interdisciplinary, historically attuned and comparative’ approaches.<sup>31</sup> In respect of this, cultural geographers such as Chris Gibson and Chris Brennan-Horley have made much headway, and this is discussed in chapter 3.

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Craik, *Re-visioning arts and cultural policy*, p. 8.

<sup>29</sup> Paul DiMaggio, ‘Cultural policy studies: What they are and why we need them’, *Journal of Arts Management and Law*, vol 13, no 1, 1983, pp. 241-48.

<sup>30</sup> Examples of published works that reflect this approach include MacNeill, Lye and Caulfield, ‘Politics, reviews and support for the arts’; Justin Macdonnell, *Arts, Minister? Government Policy and the Arts*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1992; David Throsby, ‘Public funding of the arts—1900 to 2000’, in Dennis Trewin (ed), *Yearbook Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2001; Jennifer Craik, *Re-visioning arts and cultural policy: Current impasses and future directions*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2007; Hilary Glow and Katya Johanson, ‘Looking for cultural value: Critiques of Australian cultural policy’, *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management*, vol 4, no 2, 2006, pp. 259-69; Katya Johanson and Ruth Rentschler, ‘The new arts leader: The Australia Council and cultural policy change’, *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 8, no 2, 2002, pp. 167-80; Lisanne Gibson, *The uses of Art: Constructing Australian Identities*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 2001; Tim Rowse, *Arguing the Arts: The funding of the arts in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985; John Gardiner-Garden, *Commonwealth Arts Policy and Administration*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> Tony Bennett and Colin Mercer, ‘Improving research and international cooperation for cultural policy’, paper presented at UNESCO *Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development*, Stockholm, 30 March-2 April 1998, p. 1.

Craik has used the term 'policy-in-practice' to refer to the analysis of cultural policy through the issues experienced at the coalface that shape and constrain the implementation, delivery and evaluation of cultural policy.<sup>32</sup> Hesmondhalgh and Pratt emphasise the point made by Susan Barrett and Colin Fudge (1981) that policy is nothing without implementation. For Pratt, the context and action of policy-making and its application are equally important to consider alongside objectives that lie at heart of cultural policies. With respect to this, Hesmondhalgh and Pratt suggest that closer attention to and analysis of the processes and institutions of policy-making and implementation would be useful.<sup>33</sup>

This thesis responds to these gaps in research and scholarship. While it explores developments in cultural policy at a federal level, it also moves beyond this to those occurring at a state and local government level. It analyses how cultural policy is developed, implemented and evaluated in relation to a specific place during a particular period of time when it became one of the most rapidly growing and changing places in modern Australia. It weaves into the discussion of cultural policy the experiences of people who worked at the coalface by researching their involvement then, and their reflections later. This approach draws on Deborah Stevenson's viewpoint concerning cultural planning, which has been a prominent cultural policy model in Australia since the early 1990s. For her, cultural planning is 'grounded' in how people live in places and within communities. It evolves according to peoples' utilisation of the arts and other creative practices to build upon and express these attachments.<sup>34</sup> While this study is placed within the cultural policy studies field, it draws from a range of other disciplines including urban studies, history, cultural studies and economics. In order to effectively bring these various theoretical strands together through research in the context of a particular place, I have coined the term 'cultural policy directions'.

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<sup>32</sup> See Jennifer Craik (ed), *Cultural policy case studies*, Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy, Griffith, 1997, p. v.

<sup>33</sup> Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 'Cultural industries and cultural policy', p. 11; Pratt, 'Cultural industries and public policy', p. 38; Susan Barrett and Colin Fudge (eds), *Policy and action: Essays on the implementation of public policy*, Methuen, London, 1981.

<sup>34</sup> Deborah Stevenson, "'Civic gold" rush: Cultural planning and the politics of the Third Way', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 10, no 1, 2004, p. 124. See also Sue Boaden and Paul Ashton, 'Mainstreaming Culture: Integrating the Cultural Dimension into Local Government', in Paul Ashton, Chris Gibson and Ross Gibson (eds), *By-roads and Hidden Treasures: Mapping cultural assets in regional Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2014, p. 23.

## **Cultural policy directions**

The Oxford Reference English Dictionary defines 'direction' (plural 'directions') as the course or line which a person or thing moves or must be taken to reach a destination. It also refers to the scope of a theme, subject or inquiry.<sup>35</sup> The addition of 'directions' to 'cultural policy' is used to denote the course of action that governments and other stakeholders take to shape and facilitate cultural activity in order to achieve particular policy objectives. A policy objective, for example, might be to widen participation in the arts in a specific place or amongst a particular group of people. It could be to develop community infrastructure to support local need. It may be to create a sense of identity that is unique to a particular place in order to stimulate economic development. The way that such objectives are enacted through projects, programs or other initiatives that are supported by governments to facilitate the arts is the cultural policy direction. Such actions may evolve as a result of 'bottom up' developments, for example in response to social movements, local agendas, histories and narratives. They may be carefully planned or occur on a more serendipitous basis. Cultural policy directions might also emerge through high-level, systematically designed 'top down' processes created principally by governments to advance specific ideological objectives. Directions shift as government priorities change, and within local contexts, the affects of particular directions may in turn influence policy objectives. In many cases, cultural policy directions that may appear straightforward at the outset become less clear once put into practice within places and communities.

Deborah Stevenson and Deborah Mills have each observed that cultural policy to a large extent becomes 'operationalised' through the arts and heritage spheres. Stevenson reached this conclusion by analysing the implementation of local government cultural policies that defined culture as 'a way of life'. She found that despite the enunciation of culture in anthropological terms, such policies usually materialised on the ground in arts-based

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<sup>35</sup> J. Pearsall and B. Trumble (eds), *Oxford Reference English Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 329; 402.

activity.<sup>36</sup> If the arts for Stevenson are central to the operationalisation of cultural policy, for David Throsby they lie at its conceptual heart.<sup>37</sup> Throsby argues that the core creative arts—music, literature, visual and performing arts—should not be considered simply as elite or ‘high arts’. Rather, they are categories that offer a departure point for structurally positioning the gamut of multiple forms that fall within the domain of cultural policy as it is interpreted through the cultural industries. Stevenson, Mills and Throsby’s findings are reflected in my adoption of a position that the arts and arts-based activity are central to cultural policy—and by extension, cultural policy directions—as they take shape and are implemented in local contexts.<sup>38</sup>

‘Cultural policy directions’ provides a flexible tool to explore and understand how particular approaches toward the arts and cultural activity evolve to have a presence on the policy agenda, particularly so in local contexts. As Catherine Althaus has noted of public policy in general, issues first need to make it through the voices competing for attention, and often this occurs via influential elites who are either already in government or who have access to decision makers. Issues also need to have a popular resonance or an audience and are advantaged if linked into those that are already receiving government attention.<sup>39</sup> Althaus’ observations offer a succinct appraisal of processes that assist in understanding why some cultural activities and not others receive official endorsement in the policy sphere and subsequently materialise on the ground. In order to examine how cultural policy directions evolved and were implemented in Campbelltown from the mid-1950s to 1988, three distinct phases of cultural policy in Australia during this period are discussed in the following chapter.

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<sup>36</sup> Deborah Mills, ‘The Necessity of Art’, *Dialogue*, vol 26, no 1, 2007, p. 36; Deborah Stevenson, ‘Cultural Planning in Australia: Texts and Contexts’, *Journal of Arts Management, Law & Society*, vol 35, no 1, 2005, p. 45.

<sup>37</sup> Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, pp. 15-6; 92.

<sup>38</sup> This position is also explored in Penny Stannard, ‘Western Sydney: Developing and implementing cultural policy’, in Paul Ashton, Chris Gibson and Ross Gibson (eds), *By-roads and hidden treasures: Mapping cultural assets in Regional Australia*, UWA Publishing, Crawley, 2014, p. 187.

<sup>39</sup> Catherine Althaus, *The Australia policy handbook*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2007, p. 49.

## CHAPTER 2

### Historical developments in cultural policy-making in Australia

Prior to the Federation of Australia in 1901, which amalgamated six separately governed, squabbling British colonies into one Australian nation, government funding of the arts had been through colony-based contributions towards public galleries, museums and libraries in capital cities and in rural areas. As discussed earlier, an ideology had evolved in Britain and elsewhere that exposure to the culture, aka the 'high arts', was thought to have a role in educating and civilising populations. Aisla Macpherson has observed that the situation was similar in Australia where the governing elite had transplanted the high culture of polite British society to the colonies. They believed that art could have a moralising affect on the poor and the working classes. Exposure to art would uplift both the morality and spirituality of people, and this would 'refine' society.<sup>1</sup> Institutions such as the New South Wales (NSW) Conservatorium of Music, set up in 1916 under the Holman Labor Government, became cultural links from which musical cannon and proper taste emanated to bolster both national sentiment and empire loyalty.<sup>2</sup>

In 1908 the Commonwealth Literary Fund was established to provide welfare to writers in financial need. This was the first formal program for funding individual artists in Australia. In 1932 the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) was established. This preceded a consolidated and more expansive era of public support for the arts that commenced in the 1940s. It is generally accepted that this is the starting point for discussions about cultural policy in a modern sense in Australia.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ailsa McPherson, *History of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Vol 2, Conservation Plan*, Department of Public Works, Sydney, 1992, pp. 3-5.

<sup>2</sup> See Sandra Ridgewell, 'Music in the service of state and the politics of style: Making music culture in Australia', Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Technology, Sydney, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> See Margaret Seares and John Gardiner-Garden, *Cultural policies in Australia*, Australia Council, Sydney, 2010; David Throsby, 'Public funding of the arts—1900 to 2000', in Dennis Trewin (ed), *Yearbook Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 2001; Tim Rowse, *Arguing the Arts: The funding of the arts in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985; Jennifer Radbourne, 'Commonwealth arts administration: An historical perspective 1945-1990', Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Queensland, 1992; John Gardiner-Garden, *Commonwealth Arts Policy and Administration*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2009; Louise C. Johnson, *Cultural capitals: Revaluing the Arts*,



## The post war era

Historian Stuart Macintyre has observed that as Australia prepared for the end of the Second World War, 'the wartime Labor government had assumed unprecedented controls over investment, employment, consumption, the moulding of public opinion and practically every aspect of national life'. The central objective of post-war planning and reconstruction, which was overseen by Australia's most senior public servant, H.C. ('Nugget') Coombs, was full employment.<sup>4</sup> David Throsby has noted that like John Maynard Keynes who was directing post war reconstruction efforts in Britain, Coombs 'was an eminent economist of his day with strong artistic sensibilities'.<sup>5</sup>

The post war reconstruction period has been described as a time of 'great national projects' and building Australia's cultural life was a part of these plans.<sup>6</sup> Kevin Mulcahy has suggested that cultural policies are 'particularly enmeshed with national histories and political cultures'.<sup>7</sup> The most significant project of all during this time was the Snowy Mountains hydroelectric scheme. It employed over 100,000 people from over thirty countries—two thirds of whom were post war migrants and displaced persons—between 1949 and 1974. Paul Ashton has noted that the Snowy scheme was an icon for the project of forging a modern, homogeneous Australia. It fulfilled the government's objective of assimilating migrants into 'white

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*Remaking Urban Spaces*, Ashgate, Surrey, 2009; Jennifer Craik, *Re-visioning arts and cultural policy: Current impasses and future directions*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2007; Deborah Stevenson, *Art and organisation: Making Australian cultural policy*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 2000.

<sup>4</sup> See Stuart Macintyre, *A concise history of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 201-05. It should be noted that the concept of 'full employment' was then an engendered term that excluded women. The employment of returned servicemen was paramount in government efforts to manage their repatriation into a post war Australian society.

<sup>5</sup> David Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2010, p. 65.

<sup>6</sup> See Justin Macdonnell, *50 years in the Bush: The Arts Council Movement in New South Wales*, Currency Press in association with the Arts Council of New South Wales, Sydney, 1997, p. 2. See also Tony Bennett and David Carter, 'Policy and industry contexts', in Tony Bennett and David Carter (eds), *Culture in Australia: Policies, publics and programs*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 11-7; William Hatherell, *The third metropolis: Imagining Brisbane through art and literature, 1940-1970*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 2007, p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> Kevin Mulcahy, 'The government and cultural patronage' in Joni Maya Cherbo and Margaret Jane Wyszomirski (eds), *The public life of the arts in America*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2000, p. 165.

Australia'.<sup>8</sup> Post war schemes not only provided employment, but governments saw them as a way to build a sense of nationhood and national identity, something which was thought necessary to manage the insecurity and upheaval that was occurring in the aftermath of the war.

As plans were scoped to build and fund Australia's post war cultural life, 'culture' was understood as the 'high arts'. This followed the Arts Council of Great Britain, which had been established in 1946 by Keynes to develop accessibility to and greater knowledge, understanding and practice of the fine arts—theatre, music, opera, visual arts and ballet.<sup>9</sup> The creation of the Arts Council was part of the broader post war reconstruction program, which aimed to stimulate employment and the economy to re-build Britain after the devastation of the war. Its objectives for employment were channelled into supporting professional artists. Jennifer Radbourne has suggested that the Arts Council of Great Britain provided the blueprint for arts administration in Australia.<sup>10</sup>

Oliver Bennett argued that in many respects post war cultural policy in Britain continued the belief in the civilising affects of the high arts.<sup>11</sup> Tim Rowse believes that this was also the case in Australia. For him, in the minds of those charged with building a national cultural life 'society was characterised by a good-natured and resourceful philistinism which could be challenged by presentations of ... the best of European culture'.<sup>12</sup> The practice, promotion and consumption of the high arts were seen as a way of building national identity and nationhood. Government intervention to provide support for these activities was justified as part of the post war reconstruction program.

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Ashton, 'The Birthplace of Australian Multiculturalism? Retrospective Commemoration, Participatory Memorialisation and Official Heritage', *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, vol 15, no 5, 2009, p. 383.

<sup>9</sup> Victoria and Albert Museum, *Arts Council of Great Britain Records, 1928-1997: Introduction and summary description*. (Online) Available: <http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/wid/ead/acgb/acgbf.html> (Accessed 29 January 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Radbourne, 'Commonwealth arts administration', p. vii.

<sup>11</sup> Oliver Bennett, 'Intellectuals, Romantics and Cultural Policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 12, no 2, 2006, p. 131.

<sup>12</sup> Rowse, *Arguing the Arts*, p. 9.

The period from the 1940s to the late 1960s is characterised by cultural policy studies scholars in a number of ways. Throsby distinguishes it in relation to the creation of three new national cultural entities. The Arts Council of Australia (now Regional Arts Australia) was formed in 1947. It aimed to bring art to all people by decentralising it from the city to the bush. In 1946 the ABC established symphony orchestras in each state to present concerts and live broadcasts. In 1954 the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (AETT) was formed to commemorate the visit to Australia in that year of its head of state, Queen Elizabeth II. It aimed to 'establish a native drama, opera and ballet which would give professional employment to Australian actors, singers and dancers, and would furnish opportunities for those such as writers, composers and artists whose creative work was related to theatre'. Its preference was for ventures that were 'national in character' and for those that provided examples of excellence.<sup>13</sup> Coombs was instrumental in the establishment of the AETT and was its founding chairman.

Rowse has characterised cultural policy in the post war era as the 'voluntary entrepreneurship phase'. It was distinguished by the efforts of a group of elite 'self-appointed cultural leaders'—most notably Coombs—and academics, bankers and representatives of the legal profession, who represented 'a governing elite of non-commercial culture' and 'never doubted their responsibility or capacity for cultural leadership'.<sup>14</sup> Ruth Rentschler has referred to this time as the 'reconstruction era', where emphasis was on 'preservation' and particular forms of culture that fostered symbols of national identity.<sup>15</sup> Jennifer Craik has split the period into two stages. The first, 1940 to 1954, set the parameters of Australian culture. The State's role was largely one of regulation, such as controlling broadcast licences or wartime censorship, rather than one of facilitation. The second, 1955 to 1966, was a time of 'organisational patronage'. In its establishment of the AETT, the Australian Ballet and the National Institute of the Dramatic Arts (NIDA), the State played the role of 'elite architect'—an 'interventionist approach in

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<sup>13</sup> See 'New Theatre Trust', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 April 1954, p. 6. Richard Waterhouse discusses how high culture in Australia during the post-war era was institutionalised through the establishment of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. See Richard Waterhouse, 'Lola Montez and high culture: The Elizabethan theatre trust in post-war Australia', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 1997, vol 21, no 52, pp. 148-58.

<sup>14</sup> Rowse, *Arguing the Arts*, pp. 6-11.

which the rhetoric and aims of arts and cultural policy might be broadly aligned with social welfare and national culture objectives'.<sup>16</sup>

Cultural policy from the 1940s to the late 1960s was predicated on ideas of nationhood and national identity, concepts of excellence and the assumption that exposure to the arts could have civilising affects on society as it went through upheaval and change. Governments, guided by the tastes of a governing elite, supported the development of the high arts to achieve these objectives. Rowse has suggested that this approach underpinned the architecture for the second phase of cultural policy—an era of 'statutory patronage'—where the systematic intervention of State support for the arts was founded with the establishment of the first iteration of the Australia Council in the late 1960s.<sup>17</sup> This event is considered to mark the beginning of the second distinct phase of cultural policy in Australia.

### **A cultural 'renaissance'**

The establishment of the Australia Council in 1968 occurred in the context of what is often referred to as Australia's cultural 'renaissance' or 'awakening'. It was one of a group of institutions, including the Australian Film Commission, which were established at the time that represented the manifestation of national cultural policy.<sup>18</sup> During the late 1960s the baby boomer population reached adulthood and it challenged many of the conventions and attitudes that had defined earlier generations. Baby boomers had grown up in the brisk economic environment that had followed the war and their development had not been encumbered by the financial hardships experienced by their parents. Their concerns were 'post material' and they had a broad outlook. With their consumption of mass and imported culture and higher levels of education enabled by the expansion of the university system, they believed in their collective power to change the world. A growing affluent urban middle class who shared many of the concerns of the boomers was receptive to issues associated with gender, race, ethnicity and the environment. Energised by the rise of social movements such

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<sup>15</sup> Ruth Rentschler, *Shaping Culture: Arts and Entertainment Management*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1998, pp. 21-2.

<sup>16</sup> Craik, *Re-visioning arts and cultural policy*, pp. 1; 76.

<sup>17</sup> Rowse, *Arguing the Arts*, p. 11. Also see Stevenson, *Art and organisation*, p. 53.

<sup>18</sup> See David Throsby, 'Where Boyer went wrong', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 October 1976, p. 6.

as Aboriginal rights, women's liberation and environmentalism, and catalysed by opposition to Australia's deployment of troops in support of the US in Vietnam, society was at a watershed of generational change. Political change soon followed with the election into office of the Gough Whitlam-led Labor Party in 1972 after twenty-three years of unbroken conservative rule.<sup>19</sup> As Australia's cultural landscape changed during the late 1960s and early 1970s so, too, did the cultural policy landscape.

In 1967 Prime Minister Harold Holt announced the federal government's intention to create the 'Australian Council for the Arts'. Chaired by Coombs—who had been at the helm of the AETT and instrumental in convincing the government to embark upon this new development—the Council had responsibility for distributing grants and advising the government on cultural matters. State governments followed this move and also set up bodies to provide cultural support within their jurisdictions. In New South Wales (NSW) in 1971 a Minister for Cultural Activities was appointed and the Ministry of Cultural Activities was established.<sup>20</sup> In 1973 the Whitlam Government reconstituted the Australia Council and combined various arts funding schemes, such as the Commonwealth Literary Fund, into its remit. Seven art form boards were established to make decisions on funding through the 'arm's length' principle and \$15 million, which was approximately double the total expenditure on the arts in the previous year, was allocated to the Council through the federal budget. Legislation to establish the Australia Council (as it was re-named) was introduced in 1974, and in early in 1975 it assumed its new role as a statutory authority.<sup>21</sup>

Throsby has noted that the late 1960s and early 1970s kick-started an era of 'great expansion' in cultural policy and the arts. New levels of public patronage enabled the creative arts to

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<sup>19</sup> See Paul Strangio, 'Instability, 1966-82' in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Cambridge History of Australia (Volume 2): The Commonwealth of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2013, pp. 135-61. See also Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest: Movements for change in Australian Society*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> See New South Wales Government, Government State Records, State Records Archives Investigator, *Arts Policy and Promotion*. (Online) Available: <http://investigator.records.nsw.gov.au/Entity.aspx?Path=\Activity\73> (Accessed 8 March 2012).

<sup>21</sup> A number of scholars have provided overviews of the development of the Australia Council from 1967 to 1975. In addition to the works referred to at note 57 see Stuart Ward, 'Culture up to our arseholes: Projecting post-imperial Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 51, no 1, 2005, pp. 53-66.

blossom throughout the country 'as never before'.<sup>22</sup> Craik has characterised the period as a time of 'growth and facilitation'. Various cultural organisations and funding bodies, such as the Sydney Opera House and the Australian National Gallery, were established.<sup>23</sup> Radbourne maintains that this phase of federal arts administration in Australia was marked by innovation, controversy, public debate, extraordinary growth and recognition of the professionalism of the arts.<sup>24</sup> For Rentschler, the statutory incorporation of the Australia Council sharpened the focus of cultural policy towards excellence, the preferences of the dominant upper classes and traditional monoculture.<sup>25</sup>

Stuart Ward maintains that the establishment of the Australia Council and the expansion of arts funding was a deliberate measure by Holt and his successor, John Gorton, to create a post-imperial Australian national identity.<sup>26</sup> Empire and Australia's identification with its old colonial master, Britain, was passing. The country's most senior Anglophile, Robert Menzies, had retired in 1966 after a sixteen-year term as Australia's Prime Minister. The 1967 referendum saw Aboriginal people recognised for the first time as Australian citizens. The 'White Australia Policy', which had favoured the immigration of people from Britain as a way of preserving the British ethno-cultural identity of the Australian nation, was retracted in 1973.<sup>27</sup> It was replaced by policies that promoted multiculturalism rather than assimilation. This was a recognition and acceptance that many migrants wanted to maintain their cultural identity.<sup>28</sup>

With the Australia Council supporting artists to create home grown cultural material, this, in turn, could assist in developing a national cultural identity that was independently Australian. A 'modern Australia' could be projected outwards into world where attachment to empire

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<sup>22</sup> Throsby, 'Public funding of the arts', p. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Craik, *Re-visioning arts and cultural policy*, p. 76.

<sup>24</sup> Radbourne, 'Commonwealth arts administration', p. viii; 213.

<sup>25</sup> Rentschler, *Shaping Culture*.

<sup>26</sup> Ward, 'Culture up to our arseholes'. See also Mark McKenna, 'The history anxiety', in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Cambridge History of Australia (Volume 2): The Commonwealth of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2013, p. 574.

<sup>27</sup> The *Immigration Restriction Act* (1901) was known as the 'White Australia Policy'.

<sup>28</sup> See Elsa Koleth, *Multiculturalism: A review of Australian policy statements and recent debates in Australia and overseas*, Parliament of Australia, Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2010.

was no longer ideologically palatable or viable in many countries, particularly in the South East Asia region.<sup>29</sup> For Jim Davidson, Whitlam encapsulated the figurehead of a post-imperial internationalist statesman and he possessed an assured understanding of what the arts could achieve in the context.<sup>30</sup> The Whitlam Government's cultivation of the arts, Paul Strangio has suggested, was part of Labor's 'new nationalism'.<sup>31</sup>

Government support for the arts going into this period continued to operate under the assumption that fostering the high arts was the primary way of achieving cultural policy objectives associated with concepts of national identity and nation building.<sup>32</sup> The high arts were hinged to concepts of excellence, institutionalisation and cultural status. But, as Rentschler has noted, as the 1970s advanced, academics and others, including those within the policy bureaucracy itself, contested many of the assumptions that had underpinned these concepts.<sup>33</sup>

### **The democratisation of culture**

Two key interdependent elements underpinned the development of cultural policy in Australia from the late 1970s to the late 1980s: the definition of culture was broadened and culture was conceptualised as an industry. As discussed earlier, the growth of the field of cultural studies during the years of the Rights movements questioned the meanings, power, class structure and institutional powers associated with 'culture' as the high arts. Tony Bennett observed that the re-defining of culture played a primary role in the democratisation of cultural policy.<sup>34</sup> For Tom O'Reagan it both justified the preservation and further development of the high arts system to enable it to include 'new' forms, and gave rise to

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<sup>29</sup> See Paul Strangio, 'Instability', pp. 140-4. See also Colin Mercer, 'Expanding the concept of cultural policy', in Javier Pérez de Cuéllar (ed) *Our creative diversity: Report of the World Commission of Culture and Development*, UNESCO Publishing/ Oxford and IBH Publishing, Paris, 1998, p. 232. Mercer notes how cultural identity was a major concern of post-colonial policy formation at the time.

<sup>30</sup> Jim Davidson, 'Mr Whitlam's cultural revolution', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol 11, no 20, 1987, pp. 83-91. See also Ward, 'Culture up to our arseholes', p. 59.

<sup>31</sup> Strangio, 'Instability', p. 147.

<sup>32</sup> See Shane Homan, 'From Coombs to Crean: Popular music and cultural policy in Australia', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 19, no 3, 2013, pp. 382-98.

<sup>33</sup> Rentschler, *Shaping Culture*.

<sup>34</sup> Tony Bennett, *Culture: A reformer's science*, SAGE Publications, London, 1998.

community-based innovations based on rationales of cultural democracy.<sup>35</sup> Assumptions that had underpinned support for elite-based arts were rejected.<sup>36</sup> Controversies erupted over what, why and to whom the Australia Council awarded public funds, and related debates ensued over the fiscal management of the national arts bureaucracy.<sup>37</sup>

The late 1970s also saw a questioning of what was meant by 'community'. As Shurlee Swain has noted, with the impact of multiculturalism and the increasingly visible presence of Indigenous people, the idea that there was a singular national Australian community was contested.<sup>38</sup> The notion of 'communities' emerged and with it the idea that an individual could identify with different sections of society and various social sub-groups simultaneously.

The shifts and debates about 'community' that occurred during this period affected the cultural policy environment. There was acknowledgement that Australia was a pluralist society made up of many different communities that each had the democratic right to express their particular values, beliefs and practices. There was recognition that there had been structural neglect shown towards certain groups and that this had disadvantaged their opportunities for participation in publically supported activities, including the arts.

Lucy Taksa has explored the complexities associated with the term 'community', in particular how it has been used historically and towards the advancement of ideological agendas. She suggests that 'community' has generally been understood in two distinct ways: in relation to the concept of social formation, such as an organised society or the people of a district; and to signify social experience, a concept that refers to the quality of holding something together,

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<sup>35</sup> Tom O'Regan, 'Too much culture, too little culture: Trends and issues for cultural policy making', *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy*, vol 102, 2002, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> See Graeme Turner, 'Reshaping Australian institutions: Popular cultures, the market and the public sphere', in Tony Bennett and David Carter (eds), *Culture in Australia: Policies, publics and programs*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 161-75.

<sup>37</sup> See Davidson, 'Mr Whitlam's cultural revolution', pp. 90-1, for an overview of the key debates as they played out through prominent media voices. Ward, 'Culture up to our arseholes', pp. 53-66, provides a useful summary of the key issues that were debated by members of the Australia Council as they grappled with its role during the agency's first iteration. See John Gardiner-Garden, *Commonwealth Arts Policy and Administration*, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 2009, p. 4, for Fraser's criticism of the federal government's mechanisms for arts funding, in particular, what he had argued was bureaucratic bloating and 'waste'.



such as the sense of a common identity. Despite these all-encompassing understandings of the term, Taksa believes that the static understanding of community as a fixed social entity bound to a specific or imagined geographical location that has come to dominate its use, particularly as it exists in the policy domain.<sup>39</sup> As the discussions in chapters 4 and 9 will show, Taksa's viewpoint has pertinence when applied in relation to the way in which Western Sydney was conceptualised in policy and how it has been defined and understood within the cultural policy domain.

Donald Horne was the Australia Council chairman from 1985 to 1991 and a public intellectual whose active commitment to cultural pluralism, cultural rights and the principals of cultural democracy significantly influenced the development of cultural policy discourse. As Lisanne Gibson observed, debates concerned with widening access to and participation in the arts increasingly came to be reframed in relation to questions of cultural pluralism, community arts and the devolution of support to local and state organisations.<sup>40</sup> For Rowse, this was an era of decentralised patronage. There were identifiable communities whose social or cultural interests could be served by the work of artists or arts companies who receive certain benefits of support. Public patronage could be devolved to 'non-culture' organisations such as local government, unions or migrant groups. They would participate in the creation and dissemination of art, and validate its merits.<sup>41</sup> Sandra Kirby called this approach 'cultural democracy'. She and Kevin Mulcahy have each distinguished this from the 'democratisation of culture', a term which they use in reference to ideologies that seek to bring the high arts to a greater proportion of the public.<sup>42</sup> This approach had informed the work of the AETT and the

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<sup>38</sup> Shurlee Swain, 'Society and welfare' in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Cambridge History of Australia (Volume 2): The Commonwealth of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2013, pp. 299-300.

<sup>39</sup> Lucy Taksa, 'Defining the field', in Patrick O'Farrell, John Ingleson, and Louella McCarthy (eds), *History and communities: A preliminary survey*, Community History Program, Kensington, 1990, pp. 11-30.

<sup>40</sup> Lisanne Gibson, *The uses of Art: Constructing Australian Identities*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 2001, p. 107.

<sup>41</sup> Tim Rowse, *Arguing the Arts: The funding of the arts in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985, pp. 25-6. See also Bennett and Carter, *Culture in Australia*, p. 13, and Stevenson, *Art and organisation*, p. 23.

<sup>42</sup> See Kevin Mulcahy, 'Cultural Policy: Definitions and theoretical approaches', *The Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, vol 35, no 4, 2006, pp. 319-30.

Arts Council of Australia.<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that Kirby and Mulcahy's use of the term 'democratisation' differed to Bennett's employment of it as a broader concept that referred to the breaking down of power structures that had caused some and not others to reap the benefits of publically supported cultural activity.

Following the dismissal of the Whitlam Government in 1975, there was greater scrutiny of public expenditure in providing value for money and public benefit. Radbourne has noted that the Australia Council alone was the subject of six different reviews simultaneously in 1975-76.<sup>44</sup> The Industries Assistance Commission (IAC) investigated public support for the performing arts. It rejected the rationale that the arts were a special case or a public good that governments had a moral duty to support.<sup>45</sup> Instead, it considered the arts to be an 'industry' like any other that received government support, and it used economic measures to assess to what degree investment in the arts delivered a return for the public. The IAC accepted the anthropological definition of 'culture' and it dismissed the concept of excellence and arguments for support that had been founded on this basis. It recommended that government funding be re-directed away from elite arts bodies towards objectives that were more reflective of community expectations and interests. Innovation, dissemination and education were the cultural policy principles that IAC recommended should underpin future government support of the arts.<sup>46</sup>

The IAC's findings received a hostile reception from artists and influential arts figures and the Fraser Coalition Government, which had inherited the Commission's inquiry from Labor. While the government rejected its main recommendations, the IAC report did cause some fundamental shifts in thinking about the arts and cultural policy, not just within the Australia Council, but also in broader policy circles. Its acceptance of culture as a concept that was not singularly concerned with the high arts suggested possibilities that many forms of cultural material and other spheres of practice could be justifiably supported. Positioning of the arts as

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<sup>43</sup> Sandra Kirby, 'An historical perspective on the community arts movement', in Vivienne Binns (ed), 'Introduction', *Community and the Arts: History, Theory, Practice*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991, pp. 19-30.

<sup>44</sup> Radbourne, 'Commonwealth arts administration', p. 213.

<sup>45</sup> See Hilary Glow and Katya Johanson, 'Looking for cultural value: Critiques of Australian cultural policy', *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management*, vol 4, no 2, 2006, pp. 259-69.

an industry that involved the employment of arts workers and the production, dissemination and consumption of cultural material meant that the arts could be understood and evaluated as part of the economy and the impact of public investment in the arts could be measured quantifiably.<sup>47</sup> While Tony Bennett and David Carter suggest that industry considerations about the arts had been present in the post war era—as the Keynesian model was essentially concerned with the employment of artists—it is widely agreed that from this point on, the balance turned towards cultural policy approaches that drew on economic rationales and the instrumental effects of cultural policy rather than the aesthetic value of the arts alone.<sup>48</sup>

Despite there being advances in re-orienting cultural policy objectives towards concepts of democracy, they were not, however, universally endorsed through the Australia Council's funding processes. Decisions about funding were made at the level of art form boards, and these essentially operated as independent entities each with their own agendas.<sup>49</sup> The traction gained in respect to cultural democracy was largely due the efforts of Horne and the initiatives of the Australia Council's Community Arts Board, which had attained the same institutional status as other, more powerful art form programs. (This is discussed in chapter 9.)

The release of the 1986 report, *Patronage, Power and the Muse: Inquiry into Commonwealth Assistance to the Arts*, otherwise known as the 'McLeay Report', which had been commissioned to define the role of government according to different artistic activity, assisted in arguments for a re-orientation of cultural policy objectives. It echoed much of the IAC Report from a decade earlier. It proposed that cultural democracy form the foundation of government support for the arts and recommended access and diversity as the principle objectives. It acknowledged that the Keynesian model had been useful during the post war reconstruction period, but argued that advances in technology and the evolution of new distribution platforms for cultural material, meant its orientation towards a set of particular art form practices was now redundant. The *McLeay Report* recommended that funding and advocacy for the arts remain the responsibility of the Australia Council, and that an alternative

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<sup>46</sup> See Australian Industries Assistance Commission Report, *Assistance to the Performing Arts*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976, p. 385.

<sup>47</sup> See Gardiner-Garden, *Commonwealth Arts Policy*, p. 7.

<sup>48</sup> Bennett and Carter, *Culture in Australia*, p. 12.

instrumentality be established to undertake policy development and manage support for activities that encompassed a broader, more contemporary concept of culture. Nearly thirty years later a similar recommendation was made in *Creative Australia* (2013) in its distinguishing of the arts from the cultural industries and the cultural economy. The *McLeay Report* signalled a further shift towards the conceptualisation of cultural policy through the cultural industries. Importantly, it recommended that a national cultural policy be developed that could reflect its findings and coordinate cultural development nationally.<sup>50</sup>

The Australian Labor Party, led by the sports-loving Bob Hawke and his one-time rock band manager Treasurer, Paul Keating, was elected into government in 1983. Australia was in the grip of a recession and unemployment was at critically high levels. Hawke cemented the primacy of the economy as the overarching policy centerpiece to tackling unemployment and driving Australia's national development. While this is explored in detail in chapter 11, it is important at this point to make reference to *Creative Nation*, the national cultural policy released by Keating in 1994 during his prime ministership. *Creative Nation* aimed to stimulate cultural activity by integrating it with new technologies, and promoting the independence and competitiveness of these forms with cultural products and services globally.<sup>51</sup> As Throsby observed, *Creative Nation* was a policy for the nation that was unapologetically both economic and cultural.<sup>52</sup> The release of *Creative Nation* is widely regarded as the watershed that cemented policy and discourse towards the cultural, and later, the creative industries. Louise C. Johnson has described its release as the 'full arrival of the cultural industries model in Australia'.<sup>53</sup> While *Creative Nation* falls outside the historical parameters of this study, its

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<sup>49</sup> Rowse, *Arguing the Arts*, pp. 26-7.

<sup>50</sup> Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, Standing Committee on Expenditure, and Leo Boyce McLeay, *Patronage, Power and the Muse: Inquiry Into Commonwealth Assistance to the Arts*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986. See Craik, *Re-visioning arts and cultural policy*, pp. 92-3, for a useful overview of the report.

<sup>51</sup> Glow and Johanson, 'Looking for cultural value', p. 261.

<sup>52</sup> David Throsby, *Does Australia need a cultural policy?*, Currency Press, Surry Hills, 2006, p. 14. See also Jennifer Radbourne, 'Creative Nation – A policy for leaders or followers? An evaluation of Australia's 1994 cultural policy statement', *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, vol 26, no 4, 1997, pp. 271-83.

<sup>53</sup> Johnson, *Cultural capitals*, p. 205.

importance as a turning point in the evolution of cultural policy in Australia necessitates its mention here.

Another significant development that happened in Australia during the 1980s was the expression and celebration of national identity through government support for cultural activity. In 1988 Australia celebrated the two hundredth anniversary of its establishment as a British colony—an event that has also been marked as the British invasion of a land inhabited for tens of thousands of years by Aboriginal people. The Australian Bicentennial Authority, together with state bicentennial councils and local bicentenary committees planned and produced a year-long program of events to mark the occasion. During this time, the various cultural policy directions pursued by three levels of governments intersected with the overarching goals of the Bicentenary. As the discussion in chapter 13 will show, from local community projects to major event spectacles, the Bicentenary became an event that saw concepts associated with cultural policy contested in the academy and beyond.

## CHAPTER 3

### **The Australian suburb: Derided by the cultural elite, celebrated by artists but ignored by cultural policy scholars**

The previous chapter outlined the development of cultural policy in Australia from the post war period up to the release of *Creative Nation* (1994). Here, I turn to how the discussion of cultural policy as it is encompassed through the public realm, the media, community forums and in the academy, has considered suburban Australia. As mentioned in the thesis introduction, arts luminaries Cate Blanchett and Andrew Upton promote a view that the suburbs are places that are ‘filled’ with cultural flatness and ‘sinister silence’, while inner city Sydney is full of cultural vibrancy and magnetism. Their viewpoint was advanced in the context of the way that governments support the arts and invest in cultural activity. As such, it clearly promotes a position that suburban Australia and cultural policy are mutually exclusive. While Blanchett and Upton dismiss the suburbs outright, the nation’s cornerstone cultural policy, *Creative Australia* (2013), completely fails to mention the place where the majority of the nation’s population live. This is despite its objective for the arts and creativity to exist within the daily lives of all Australians.

This chapter seeks to ascertain why the suburbs have been ignored within cultural policy discussions. It considers this through three key questions: are Australia’s suburbs bereft of cultural activity and therefore irrelevant to the discussion? What role do the suburbs play as a subject within Australia’s cultural life – the development of which is the object of cultural policy? And is it that suburban communities are so disengaged from discussions about government support for cultural activity that they are unable to offer any insights? The chapter then shifts its inquiry towards suburban histories and historical accounts of cultural policy in order to understand what might be garnered from those perspectives as to why the suburbs are overlooked in cultural policy discussions.

## The creative city

Australian cultural geographers such as Chris Gibson and Chris Brennan-Horley have challenged the assumption that the suburbs are devoid of cultural activity.<sup>1</sup> They have situated their inquiry within the cultural economy and its various offshoots such as the creative city and the cultural capital (grouped together here as the 'creative cities'), which are approaches that have been readily adopted in cities and by governments throughout the developed world over the past two decades. Gaining traction as a key policy idea in the late twentieth century, the concept of 'creativity' was harnessed as a strategy to underwrite the sustainability of cities in a post-industrial globalised environment. Richard Florida is the most well known of the creative cities proponents. To briefly summarise Florida, cities and regions have to develop and retain a 'creative class' in order to gain a competitive economic position within an increasingly globalised market place.<sup>2</sup> The creative class represents a section of the population who work or have a background within creative industries (broadly defined), or are highly motivated consumers of culture. The creative classes invest in places where there are urban attractors such as vibrant street life, café culture, ethnic diversity and interesting architecture. The policy response is that cities, by planning and competing to encourage the growth of members of the creative class, can improve their economic performance.<sup>3</sup>

Gibson and Brennan-Horley have suggested that the creative cities approach excludes suburban spaces. They argue that it contains an inner-urban bias that has resulted in the creation of a research and policy assumption that has normalised the geographic domain of cultural policy as the urban city-centre core.<sup>4</sup> Reinforcing this, Mark Gibson has succinctly

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<sup>1</sup> Chris Gibson and Chris Brennan-Horley, 'Goodbye Pram City: Beyond Inner/Outer Zone Binaries in Creative City Research', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol 24, no 4, 2006, pp. 445-71.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class; And how it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*, Basic Books, New York, 2002. Charles Landry is also a well-known promoter of the 'creative city' model. See Charles Landry, *The creative city: A toolkit for urban innovators*, Comedia, Near Stroud, UK, 2000. See Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson, *Cultural policy and urban regeneration: The West European experience*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1993, for an introduction to European experiences of city regeneration through cultural practices and policies.

<sup>3</sup> See Chris Gibson and Natasha Klocker, 'The "Cultural Turn" in Australian Regional Economic Development Discourse: Neoliberalising Creativity?', *Geographical Research*, vol 43, no 1, 2005, pp. 93-102; David Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2010, p. 136.

<sup>4</sup> Gibson and Brennan-Horley, 'Goodbye Pram City'. See also Chris Gibson, 'Guest Editorial Creative Geographies: tales from the "margins"', *Australian Geographer*, vol 42, no 1, 2010, p. 2.

argued that ‘to side with creativity is to side with the city’.<sup>5</sup> Gibson and Brennan-Horley have observed that areas located beyond urban city-centres—including suburban zones—do not fit the typology that underpins the creative cities thesis. Terry Flew has also remarked that ‘a focus on the suburbs is at odds with ... the creative class thesis, which stresses inner urban cultural amenity and “buzz” as the drivers of a creative economy’.<sup>6</sup> Suburban zones have thus been pigeonholed as ‘uncreative’, and have been excluded from the discourse of creativity and subsequently, cultural policy.<sup>7</sup>

Gibson and Brennan-Horley’s longitudinal study of creative employment in greater metropolitan Sydney from 1986 to 2001 found that fringe suburban areas experienced a higher proportion of growth in the creative workforce than the inner city. While noting that these areas were some of the fastest growing in Australia during the research period, which accounted for the parallel growth in the localised creative workforce—a fact that mediated their findings somewhat—they argued that there was a more complex story of creativity in cities waiting to be told than that which emerged from the creative cities paradigm.<sup>8</sup>

Terry Flew, Mark Gibson, Emma Felton and Christy Collis from the *Creative Suburbia* project (2010-13) examined industry and occupational statistical data to measure and quantify levels of creative activity in Brisbane and Melbourne suburbs. The project’s findings indicated a substantial level of creative activity taking place in suburban Australia, which, when aggregated, made a significant impact on regional economies. Even though some high profile cultural luminaries continue to believe that the suburbs are places of cultural ‘silence’, research has found that is not the case. Indeed, findings suggest that an increasing number of cultural producers are working in suburban Australia, and often for well-considered artistic, career and personal reasons including the unaffordability of inner-city housing. These

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<sup>5</sup> Mark Gibson, ‘Bildung in the ‘burbs: Education for the suburban nation’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol 15, no 3, 2012, p. 249.

<sup>6</sup> Terry Flew, *Right to the City? Desire for the Suburb?* M/C Journal, vol 14, no 4, 2011 (Online) Available: <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/viewArticle/368> (Accessed 29 August 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Gibson and Brennan-Horley, ‘Goodbye Pram City’.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*



researchers concluded that the consequence of their findings legitimises suburbia within the creative economy and demands attention within cultural policy discussions.<sup>9</sup>

Gibson, Brennan-Horley and the *Creative Suburbia* group have made significant ground in addressing the exclusion of suburban spaces in the creative cities approach to cultural policy, but their engagement with the subject has leaned towards quantitative and spatial concerns. Rob Shields has called for a balance to the focus on the physical geography or unitised spatial understanding of the topic. To this end, Gibson and Brennan-Horley have suggested that a range of approaches and more finely tuned analysis of the social and spatial complexities of creativity and creative work in metropolitan environments—which include suburban areas—are needed.<sup>10</sup> After all, as has been noted earlier, suburbia is more than a spatial concept.

### **The fascination of suburbia**

Even though *Creative Australia* (2013) omitted any reference to suburban Australia, the suburb has occupied a prominent position as a subject within the nation's cultural life. The suburb has featured in an expansive body of creative work that has become part of the cultural landscape in the Australian imaginary. A significant number of artists and cultural producers have examined and interpreted Australia's suburbs. These include Henry Lawson, George Johnston, Patrick White, David Malouf, Jessica Anderson, Tim Winton, Peter Carey, Melissa Lucaschenko, Howard Arkley, John Brack, Grace Cossington Smith, Margaret Preston, Clarice Beckett, Jenny Watson, Albert Tucker, Sali Herman, Danila Vassilieff, Ian Burn, Dale Hickey, David Ireland, Bruce Dawe, Christos Tsiolkas, Paul Kelly, Skyhooks, Urban Theatre Projects, the films *Newsfront*, *Return Home*, *Suburban Mayhem*, *Idiot Box*, *The Castle*, *Little*

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<sup>9</sup> The *Creative Suburbia* project included a qualitative research component that interviewed creative workers to understand their reasons for working in suburban areas and to ascertain whether the location of their practice impacted on their creativity. See for example, Emma Felton and Christy Collis, 'Creativity and the Australian suburbs: the appeal of suburban localities for the creative industries workforce', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol 36, no 2, 2012, pp. 177-90; Terry Flew and Mark Gibson, 'Melbourne and Brisbane: The claims of suburbs', in Helmut Anheier, Michael Hoelscher and Yudhishtir Raj Isar (eds), *Cities, Cultural Policy and Governance*, Sage, London, 2012, pp. 235-52; Terry Flew, 'Creative suburbia: Rethinking urban cultural policy - the Australian case', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol 15, no 3, 2012, pp. 231-46.

<sup>10</sup> Chris Gibson and Chris Brennan-Horley 'Goodbye Pram City: Beyond Inner/Outer Zone Binaries in Creative City Research', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol 24, no 4, 2006, pp. 469-70; Rob Shields, 'Thinking like a Region; Place-based policy', *Curb Magazine*, vol 1, no 2, 2010, p. 4.

*Fish* and television series *Pizza*, *Neighbours*, *Kath and Kim* and *East West 101*. Numerous scholars have examined such creative works as texts from which to generate new and re-considered understandings of suburbia.<sup>11</sup> Roger Silverstone (1997) noted in his introduction to *Visions of Suburbia* that the lived experiences of suburbia, as diverse and conflicting in character as they are, have been given a high level of visibility through their continued reflection and interpretation in narratives, images and fantasies of contemporary culture. For Silverstone, understanding how suburbia has been produced and re-produced is a prerequisite to understanding the 20<sup>th</sup> century. More importantly, he suggests, it can offer a way of understanding of the characteristics and contradictions of our everyday lives.<sup>12</sup>

Historians and urbanists, including Max Kelly, Peter Spearritt, Hugh Stretton, Graeme Davison, Robert Freestone and Patrick Troy, have written about the ubiquitous place of the suburb in Australian history and culture.<sup>13</sup> Suburban Australia has also been a subject of interest for

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<sup>11</sup> See Andrew May, 'Ideas from Australian Cities: Relocating Urban and Suburban History', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol 49, no 1, 2009, p. 71. For edited collections on Australian suburbia from the cultural studies field see Sarah Ferber, Chris Healy and Chris McAuliffe (eds), *Beasts of Suburbia; Reinterpreting Cultures in Australian Suburbs*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1994; Louise C. Johnson (ed), *Suburban dreaming: an interdisciplinary approach to Australian cities*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1994. For a select example of literature that examines Australian suburbia through interpretive analysis of cultural texts or art forms see Robin Gerster, 'Gerrymander: The place of suburbia in Australian fiction', in *Populous places: Australian cities and towns*, Anna Rutherford (ed), Dangaroo Press, Sydney, 1992, pp. 19-30; Joan Kirkby, 'The Pursuit of Oblivion: in Flight from Suburbia', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol 10, no 4, 1998, pp. 1-20; Andrew McCann, 'Introduction: Subtopia, or the problem of suburbia', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol 10, no 4, 1998, pp. 56-71; David McCooney, 'Neither here nor there: Suburban voices in Australian poetry', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol 10, no 4, 1998, pp. 101-14; John Slater, *Through artists' eyes: Australian suburbs and their cities, 1919-1945*, Meigunyah Press, Carlton, Victoria, 2004; Peter Lankas, 'A journey through the suburbs', Thesis, Master of Fine Art (Research), University of Newcastle, 2005; Nathanael O'Reilly, 'Between the city and the bush: Suburbia in the contemporary Australian novel', Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, Western Michigan University, 2008. Adding a further dimension is David Nichols who has noted that some of Australia's most successful popular music groups emerged from suburban garages and suburban based venues, such as Silverchair, INXS, the Missing Links, Jet and the Masters Apprentices. See David Nichols, 'On the outskirts of town; The suburbs get a bad rap but most of us live there', *Australian Literary Review*, vol 6, no 8, 2011, pp. 12-3.

<sup>12</sup> Roger Silverstone (ed), *Visions of suburbia*, Routledge, London, 1997, pp. 1-25.

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Max Kelly (ed), *Sydney: City of Suburbs*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1987; Peter Spearritt, *Sydney since the twenties*, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1978; Peter Spearritt, *Sydney's Century: A History*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999; Peter Spearritt and Christina DeMarco, *Planning Sydney's Future*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988; Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australian cities*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1970; Graeme Davison, Tony Dingle and Seamus O'Hanlon (eds), *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*, Monash Publications in History, no 19, Clayton, 1995; Graeme Davison, 'The past and future of the Australian suburb', in Louise C. Johnson (ed), *Suburban dreaming: An interdisciplinary approach to Australian cities*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1994, pp. 99-113; Graeme Davison,

cultural elites, critics and journalistic commentators. As noted earlier, there has been a long history of critiquing Australia's suburbs. In 1911 Louis Esson wrote that suburban living 'stifles' the 'creative spirit' and 'denounces art', the muses of which are 'immolated on the altar of respectability'.<sup>14</sup> Writing in the 1960s, Allan Ashbolt and Robin Boyd were scathing of what they considered to be the bland conformity and aesthetic vulgarity of the suburbs, drawing parallels with how they viewed the development of Australia's post war modern identity.<sup>15</sup> Hugh Stretton and Donald Horne subsequently drew attention to the fact that much of Australia's population, including its artists, lived productive lives in the suburbs, and in deriding the suburbs, Boyd and Ashbolt were disparaging the lives of the wider Australian community.<sup>16</sup> Sue Turnbull has noted that while Barry Humphries and later Gina Riley and Jane Turner, creators of the popular television series, *Kath and Kim*, satirise suburbia, they also claim to have a deep affection for it, something that Turner has suggested is evident in how their characters are warmly embraced by audiences. For Turnbull this is indicative of the ambivalence in which suburbia is held in the Australian imagination.<sup>17</sup>

Some scholars argue that the foundations of this ambivalence can be found in how suburbia has been characterised as either 'dream' or 'nightmare' or something to be viewed with either 'pure hatred' or 'mad love'.<sup>18</sup> Others have attempted to shift the discussion of suburbia away from one that is founded on such binary opposites to a more considered account of the

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'Australia: The First Suburban Nation?', *Journal of Urban History*, vol 22, no 1, 1995, pp. 40-74; Robert Freestone, Bill Randolph and Caroline Butler-Bowden (eds), *Talking about Sydney: Population, Community and Culture in Contemporary Sydney*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006; Robert Freestone, *Urban Nation: Australia's Planning Heritage*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, 2010; Bill Randolph and Robert Freestone, 'Housing differentiation and renewal in middle-ring suburbs: The experience of Sydney, Australia', *Urban Studies*, vol 49, no 12, 2012, pp. 255-75; Patrick Troy, 'Saving our cities with suburbs', *Griffith Review*, no 2, Summer 2003/4, pp. 80-90.

<sup>14</sup> Louis Esson, 1911, in Sue Turnbull, 'Mapping the vast suburban tundra: Australian comedy from Dame Edna to Kath and Kim', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol 11, no 1, 2008, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> Allan Ashbolt, 'Godzone: Myth and Reality', *Meanjin Quarterly*, vol 25, no 4, 1966, pp. 373-88; Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness*, Penguin in association with F.W. Cheshire, Ringwood, 1963.

<sup>16</sup> See Stretton, *Ideas*; Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1964. See also Bernard Smith, *The antipodean manifesto: Essays in art and history*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 84-94.

<sup>17</sup> Turnbull, 'Mapping the vast suburban tundra', p. 28.

<sup>18</sup> See Ian Craven, 'Cinema, Post-colonialism and Australian suburbia', *Australian Studies*, vol 9 (November), 1995, p. 45, and Chris Healy, 'Introduction', in Sarah Ferber, Chris Healy and Chris McAuliffe (eds), *Beasts of Suburbia; Reinterpreting Cultures in Australian Suburbs*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1994, p. xv.

complexity and diversity of suburban life.<sup>19</sup> This includes the experience of suburban life from diverse perspectives such as Aboriginal and migrant perspectives.<sup>20</sup> While it has been acknowledged that 'suburban reality is a complex social system made up of the personal histories and experiences of the people who compose them', much of the commentary, however, continues to be predicated on oppositional binaries.<sup>21</sup> In writing of cities for example, Elizabeth Farrelly has commented that 'suburbia guzzles land, wastes energy, pollutes air, generates traffic, disperses community, makes services expensive and public transport impossible'.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, Patrick Troy has remarked that the 'the virtues of suburbia [for growing backyard food and vegetation] may yet turn out to be the saving of our cities'.<sup>23</sup> Turnbull has suggested that the ambivalence towards suburbia has resulted in it constituting Australia's cultural fault line.<sup>24</sup> Alan Gilbert concluded that the underlying refrain to the discussion of the Australian suburb has been one of anti-suburbanism.<sup>25</sup> The suburbs thus warrant attention in policies that affect the arts and the development of the nation's cultural life.

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<sup>19</sup> See Healy, 'Introduction'. See also Lyn Richards 1994, 'Suburbia: Domestic dreaming', in Louise C. Johnson (ed), *Suburban dreaming: An interdisciplinary approach to Australian cities*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1994, pp. 114-28.

<sup>20</sup> For examples of the suburban perspectives of Aboriginal people see Gillian Cowlshaw, *The City's Outback*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2009; Kelly Greenup, 'Housing and identity in the urban indigenous community: Initial findings in Inala, Queensland', conference paper *Cultural Crossroads*, 26<sup>th</sup> International Conference of the Society of Architectural Historians, *Australia and New Zealand*, Auckland, New Zealand, 2-5 July 2009; Melissa Lucaschenko, *Steam Pigs*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 1997; Paul Memmott, 'An Aboriginal Culture of Suburbia', in Sarah Ferber, Chris Healy and Chris McAuliffe (eds), *Beasts of Suburbia; Reinterpreting Cultures in Australian Suburbs*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1994, pp. 53-75. An example of a migrant viewpoint of the suburbs includes Anthony D. King, 'Excavating the Multicultural Suburb', in Roger Silverstone (ed), *Visions of Suburbia*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, pp. 55-85. For a feminist perspective see Deborah Chambers, 'A Stake in the Country; Women's experiences of suburban development' in Roger Silverstone (ed), *Visions of Suburbia*, Routledge, London and New York, 1997, pp. 86-107.

<sup>21</sup> Alan Gilbert, 'The Roots of Australian Anti-suburbanism', in S.L. Golberg and F.B. Smith (eds), *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, p. 35.

<sup>22</sup> Elizabeth Farrelly, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 May 2006, (Online) Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/more-reason-than-ever-to-fight-for-human-cities/2006/05/16/1147545321501.html?page=2>. (Accessed 25 October 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Patrick Troy, 'Saving our cities with suburbs'. See also Lesley Head and Pat Muir, *Backyard: Nature and culture in suburban Australia*, UOW Press and Halstead Press, Wollongong, 2007.

<sup>24</sup> Turnbull, 'Mapping the vast suburban tundra', p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Gilbert, 'The Roots', pp. 33-49.

### **What happened to the locals?**

In 2010 an artist from Campbelltown started a debate that ‘sparked a furore’ by asking: ‘What happened to the locals?’ In a letter to a local newspaper Gary Makin questioned whether the core cultural policy direction pursued by Campbelltown Council through its award winning Campbelltown Arts Centre was actually delivering more for inner-city Sydney artists and audiences—the ‘Sydney arts scene’—than local residents. (See Figure 1.) He argued that the ‘neglect shown by the Campbelltown Arts Centre towards our local artists’ indicated that it was more concerned ‘in big noting with the Sydney mob’. The Mayor and the Council’s General Manager came out in defence of the Arts Centre and pointed to its recent achievement in gaining multi-art form status from the Australia Council. Highly sought after, this recognition meant that Campbelltown Arts Centre could secure more federal government support for its program. It also confirmed its position as not just a local arts facility, but part of the national cultural scene.<sup>26</sup> A short time later, the Council officially endorsed the direction that had been pursued by the Arts Centre over the previous seven years, praising it as ‘immeasurable and inspirational and as a result the Campbelltown Arts Centre has developed into a well-known facility not only nationally but also internationally’.<sup>27</sup> Noticeably absent in the Council’s appraisal was any reference to Campbelltown’s location, its residents or its artists, despite the Mayor’s rebuff of Makin’s argument that the Arts Centre’s core role ‘should be the creative hub for the local arts community’.<sup>28</sup>

The Campbelltown debate indicates that suburban communities are not disengaged from discussions that concern the approaches that governments take towards supporting culture and the arts in their locales. The issues that were raised in this discussion include the geo-cultural relationship between the suburban periphery and the inner city, the degree to which local government-run arts centres should be fostering the development of a local cultural sector, and the position that such centres occupy in relation to the national cultural sphere and the policy objectives that exist at this level. These matters have relevance beyond

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<sup>26</sup> Mandy Perrin, ‘Arts centre must retain relevance for local artists’, *Macarthur Chronicle*, 27 July 2010, p. 23; Gary Makin, ‘Letter to editor’, *Macarthur Chronicle*, 20 July 2010, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> Campbelltown City Council, Community Services Committee Meeting, 1 March 2011, *Minutes of the Campbelltown Arts Centre Sub Committee Meeting held on 16 February 2011*, p. 34.

<sup>28</sup> Perrin, ‘Arts centre’, p. 23.

Campbelltown alone, and need to be raised to ensure that a breadth of perspectives is considered in cultural policy discussions. These sorts of insights merit attention by those working in the field of cultural policy studies.

### **Place matters**

There may be another reason as to why cultural policy discussions have not dealt adequately with the concept of suburbia. Placing literature from historical studies of Australia's suburbs and historically orientated accounts of cultural policy side by side shows that the two research fields exist independently of each other. Of the 'historically attuned' studies of cultural policy that concern Australia, the focus tends to be on national contexts. These approaches are a-spatial, and while they garner overarching perspectives of the development of cultural policy in Australia, they do not tell the whole story. Significantly, they do not take into account how cultural policy directions take shape on the ground in places and in communities.



Figure 1: Campbelltown Arts Centre, photo, 2005, Campbelltown City Council.

From a historical perspective, Andrew May points to significant gaps in the stories of Australia's suburbs, especially those from the post Second World War period.<sup>29</sup> According to May, interpretations of suburbia by creative artists—which, following Gilbert, tend towards anti-suburbanism—and the stories of 1950s childhoods spent in the suburbs, sentimentally recalled as coming-of-age narratives by baby boomers, have dominated the story of suburban Australia to the degree that it has hampered the development of other, more complex histories. Also limiting the scope have been individual suburban histories. These are often simply catalogues of civic achievements for municipal sponsors that present a 'familiar chronology of the development of transport, parks and gardens, schools, and other institutions'. This, for instance, is the case in the two official histories of Campbelltown.<sup>30</sup> May believes that historians need to re-adjust their thinking about the suburbs. They should see them as sites of engagement rather than detachment, which he maintains is the current practice. By doing so, May believes that a fuller, more complex but genuine story of suburban Australia can be told.<sup>31</sup>

For May, the ideals that drove the process of suburbanisation in the decades after the war offer a rich context through which to examine suburban histories. The physical and institutional landscape of suburbia was galvanised by the pursuit of common goals, inspired by dreams of privacy, home ownership and a better environment to bring up a new generation.<sup>32</sup> In Sydney, these principles took shape on an unprecedented scale and pace of suburban

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<sup>29</sup> One study that does provide an account of the history of suburban development in post war Melbourne is detailed in Barbara Davison and Graeme Davison, 'Suburban pioneers', in Graeme Davison, Tony Dingle and Seamus O'Hanlon (eds), *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*, Monash Publications in History, no 19, Clayton, 1995, pp. 41-50. This, however, refers to a broader context than the individual suburban case studies that May refers to.

<sup>30</sup> These are, Carol Liston, *Campbelltown: The Bicentennial History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, and William Bayley, *History of Campbelltown, New South Wales*, Campbelltown City Council, Campbelltown, 1974.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew May, 'Ideas from Australian Cities', *Australian Economic History Review*, vol 49, no 1, March 2009, pp. 76; 83. Janet McCalman also shares a similar view to May in her observation that the 'suburbia' that exists according to the baby-boomer legend has rendered interpretations with a sense of 'sameness'. See Janet McCalman, 'Reviews: Suburbia from the Sandpit', *Meanjin*, vol 53, no 3, 1994, p. 549.

<sup>32</sup> May, 'Ideas from Australian Cities', pp. 70-86.

expansion that pushed the metropolitan fringe further westward, eventually giving rise to 'Western Sydney'. Such aspirations, however, were not unique to the post war period as May implies. Precedents can be found in the suburbanisation of metropolitan Sydney in earlier times.



## CHAPTER 4

### The tide of suburbanisation: From Sydney harbour to the western 'jungle'

Max Kelly observed that 'Sydney for much of its history has been one of the world's greatest suburban conglomerations, a conurbation in fact, wherein landed estates have given way to villages, villages to townships, townships to suburbs'.<sup>1</sup> As discussed in chapters 5 and 6, this process of transition was replicated in Campbelltown from the mid-1950s to 1988. Before that, however, it is necessary to outline the processes and ideals that underpinned precedent phases in the suburbanisation of Sydney. This chapter outlines the history of suburban development in Sydney from the early days of the metropolitan city up to the great period of growth and suburbanisation that followed the end of the Second World War. It gives further attention to the 'suburb' as a concept that is as much abstract as it is physical. The purpose here is to provide a backdrop and context for the later in-depth discussion of Campbelltown.

Graeme Alpin observed that the peaks and troughs in Sydney's suburban development throughout its history have, in general, paralleled the nation's economic prosperity, recession and depression.<sup>2</sup> While fluctuations occurred in rates of home building and land subdivision in Sydney from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, historians generally consider three periods—the 1870-80s, the 1920s and the decades following the end of the Second World War—to have been the most significant phases in the suburbanisation of Sydney. However, some have suggested it was at the outset of the development of the Colony of New South Wales (NSW), that Sydney's suburbs first took shape and, amid that, the laying out of ideological foundations that separated those who lived the suburban life from those who did not.

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<sup>1</sup> Max Kelly, 'Introduction' in *Sydney: City of Suburbs*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1987, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> See Graeme Aplin, 'The Rise of Suburban Sydney' in Max Kelly (ed), *Sydney: City of Suburbs*, pp. 192-209. For a historical overview of Sydney and Australia's suburban development see Aiden Davison, 'Stuck in a Cul-de-Sac? Suburban History and Urban Sustainability in Australia', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol 24, no 2, 2006, pp. 201-16. See also Renate Howe, 'Inner suburbs: From slums to gentrification', in Louise C. Johnson (ed), *Suburban dreaming: An interdisciplinary approach to Australian cities*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1994, pp. 141-59; Graeme Davison, 'The past and future of the Australian suburb', in Louise C. Johnson (ed), *Suburban dreaming: An interdisciplinary approach to Australian cities*, Deakin University Press, Geelong, 1994, pp. 99-113.

## **The suburbs in colonial Sydney**

Graeme Davison has observed that the point at which the colonisation of Australia commenced also coincided with the suburb emerging as a solution to the urban ills of England and the Old World.<sup>3</sup> Late 18<sup>th</sup> century British settlers who had arrived with or quickly attained social advantage in the colony laid claim to land and built Georgian style suburban villas at the most desirable sites overlooking Sydney Cove. Places such as Woolloomooloo Heights and The Rocks had the fresh sea breeze, good natural drainage and were within close proximity to the growing commercial and civic centre. Residents of these suburbs led a lifestyle that was detached from the streets and precincts below which housed the working classes in crowded and unsanitary clusters of shabbily built terrace-style dwellings.<sup>4</sup> During much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century only the well-heeled and well-connected members of society could achieve a suburban lifestyle. It signified social status, wealth, respectability and purity, and was protected from the industrial and commercial urban sites close to where the working population lived as tenants in terraces that were synonymous with disease and decay. Suburbia was something to desire and aspire to, but it was out of reach for all but the elite.

## **1870-80s: Suburban booms and urban scourges**

During the gold rush boom in the 1870s and 1880s, Australia's urban growth surged and a growing middle-class population led a new wave of suburban development in Sydney and other capital cities. Advancements in transportation and the construction of new urban transport infrastructure meant that villages on the periphery of Sydney could be networked and serviced by steam powered trams and trains. Kelly has suggested that during this time a belief in the benefits and privileges associated with owner-occupation emerged. The idea arose that home ownership could be possible for the working classes and not just the wealthy few.<sup>5</sup> The electrification of the tram and train lines in the early 1900s enabled further suburban expansion and provided the means for mass commuter passage from home to the

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<sup>3</sup> See Graeme Davison, 'The past and future', pp. 102-3.

<sup>4</sup> Kelly, *Sydney*, p. 2. See also Paul Ashton, 'Reactions to and paradoxes of Modernism: The origins and spread of suburbia in 1920s Sydney', Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, Macquarie University, 1999, pp. 15-6.

<sup>5</sup> Kelly, *Sydney*, p. 5.

city. A greater proportion of the population could pursue the goal of home ownership and a lifestyle away from the ailments of the inner city.<sup>6</sup>

An outbreak of bubonic plague in harbour-side areas in 1900 forced authorities to address the poor state of urban housing and the conditions under which the working classes lived and worked. Not only was the inner city a place of poor sanitation, inadequate sewerage and drainage, and overcrowding tenements, it was also viewed by moral reformers as a hive of degenerate behaviour, crime and disorderly agitation.<sup>7</sup> Anarchy was thought to be a real threat. Recommendations were made for urban improvements including the development of suburban housing for workers, new suburban rail lines and the electrification of the suburban rail system.<sup>8</sup> But as Australia moved towards the First World War these proposals were put on hold.

### **1920s: The suburban phenomenon**

Australia in the 1920s underwent a period of vast economic, social and cultural change. The end of the First World War brought with it the expectation of improved living conditions and a demand for better housing.<sup>9</sup> At the time more than fifty per cent of Sydney's population were tenants. Many homecoming soldiers rejected the prospect of a return to a life of tenancy in the urban slums. The need for a housing alternative to the inner city terrace was widely accepted by public authorities. However, it was private land speculators and property developers pursuing the opportunity of great profits who drove the subdivision and sale of land for suburban development. Existing transport networks enabled the boundaries of the metropolis to expand further. Single main street villages that had grown around the train lines splayed out into suburban streets. Ashton has noted that more dwellings were constructed in Sydney in the 1920s than in any decade previously in Sydney's history. This allowed many more people to live in the suburbs and commute to the city for work and there was a decline

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<sup>6</sup> Ashton, *Reactions to and paradoxes of Modernism*. See also Aplin, 'The Rise of Suburban Sydney', p. 131.

<sup>7</sup> See Alan Mayne, *Fever, Squalor and Vice: Sanitation and Social Policy in Victorian Sydney*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1982.

<sup>8</sup> Parliament of New South Wales, *Report of the Royal Commission for the Improvement of the City of Sydney and its Suburbs*, W.A. Gullick, Government Printer, Sydney, 1909. See also Peter Spearritt, *Sydney's Century: A History*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999, pp. 15-9.

<sup>9</sup> Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, p. 19.

in the proportion of the metropolitan population living in the urban centre.<sup>10</sup> For Spearritt, the rate and scale of suburban development, and with it, the construction of the semi-detached or free standing bungalow as the housing alternative to the terrace, gave rise to a 'powerful Australian ideology'—that the best kind of living was had in a private family house located on its own block of land.<sup>11</sup>

Ashton describes the 1920s as an era in which the spread of suburbia in greater Sydney was both 'striking in its extent and profound in its implications'.<sup>12</sup> He has explored the ideologies associated with suburbanisation during this time. The land on which the bourgeoisie had built their suburban villas in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was divided up and sold off for the development of suburban cottages and bungalows, which were purchased by the growing middle and working classes. If home ownership had been thought possible for the working classes in the 1880s, by the 1920s, it had become achievable. As an increasing number of the working and burgeoning middle classes purchased and settled in suburban homes, the symbols of suburban life that had their roots in the bourgeois ideals of respectability, individualism, order and material success were transferred onto the 'humble' suburban cottage and bungalow and its owners. Overarching this, as Ashton observed, was the rise of mass society. Perceptions of class were blurring as the old economic order was changing.<sup>13</sup>

For Ashton, Sydney's growth and suburban development in the 1920s was an era in which the idea of 'progress was paramount'. Indeed, he suggests that progress itself was being built in Sydney and this signified a middle-class ideology that material advancement would lead to better living conditions, which, in turn, would lead to moral betterment of society. The rise of the garden suburb movement promoted this ideology and new suburbs such as Haberfield, Castlecrag and Daceyville were heralded as 'harbingers of a new suburban order'.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ashton, 'Reactions to and paradoxes of Modernism', p. 40. Between the years 1911 and 1933 the proportion of great Sydney's population that lived in the City of Sydney local government area had dropped from more than one third to 16 per cent. See also Paul Ashton, 'Suburban Sydney', *Sydney Journal*, vol 1, no 3, 2008, p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Ashton, *Reactions to and paradoxes of Modernism*, p.2; 11.

<sup>13</sup> Ashton, 'Suburban Sydney', pp. 40-2.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*

The phenomenon of suburbanisation in the 1920s, and more broadly, the shifts that took place in Australia during the first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, resulted in a re-drawing of the geo-cultural boundaries of city and ‘the bush’—urban and rural—that had defined Australia throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While the population had been spread equally across urban and rural Australia, the pioneering spirit of the bush dominated the expression of a national ethos and identity.<sup>15</sup> According to Alan Gilbert, the bush was considered an ‘idealised dream’ and the city, a ‘practical necessity’.<sup>16</sup> By the end of the 1920s, Sydney had become a centre of commerce, industry, transport, communication, entertainment and culture that offered employment and education opportunities not available elsewhere. With this new economic and industrial reality, the population increasingly drifted from the bush to the city.<sup>17</sup> In this environment, Gilbert maintained, suburbanism offered a marvellous compromise between the myths and realities of city life and its ‘Arcadian’ alternative. But the suburb also came to be viewed as a ‘wedge’ between the city and the bush. For Gilbert, this shaped the foundations of ‘anti-suburbanism’ – a concept that can be described as the hostile and ambivalent view towards suburbia that has prevailed in the discussion of suburban Australia amongst the cultural elite. (See chapter 3.)

### **The post war suburban dream**

Australia experienced unprecedented population growth after the end of the Second World War. Expanding families, returned soldiers and thousands of Europeans who had been displaced by the war looked to settle in Sydney. Housing supply, however, did not keep up with demand. Many young couples took the dream of home ownership into their own hands and as Beverly Kingston has noted: ‘Buying a block of land on the outskirts of Sydney and camping there at weekends while building your own home became the hobby of thousands of

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<sup>15</sup> See Kate Murphy, ‘The modern idea is to ring the country to the city: Australian Urban Reformers and the Ideal of Rurality, 1900-1918’, *Rural History*, vol 20, no 1, 2009, p. 120. See also Vance Palmer, *The Legend of the Nineties*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1954; Russell Ward, *The Australian Legend*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1978; Chris Wallace-Crabb (ed), *The Australian Nationalists*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1971; Geoffrey Searle, *From deserts the prophets come: The creative spirit in Australia 1788-1972*, Heinemann, Melbourne, 1973.

<sup>16</sup> Alan Gilbert, ‘The Roots of Australian Anti-suburbanism’, in S.L. Goldberg and F.B. Smith (eds), *Australian Cultural History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989, pp. 34-5.

<sup>17</sup> Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, pp. 1-6.

couples in the late 1940s and 1950s.’ Sourcing building materials that were in scarce supply after the rationings of the war was a popular topic of conversation.<sup>18</sup> Ashton observed that for many couples that took this do-it-yourself approach, early-married life was a struggle. By the early 1960s, over one fifth of Australia’s population lived in the suburbs of metropolitan Sydney. Ashton has suggested that planning for the dream home increasingly took into consideration cars, television (from 1956), American-style freeways and shopping centres. While for some these aspirations were a reality, for others, they found themselves in an isolated house in a sprawling suburb.<sup>19</sup> R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving have observed that the greater physical freedom offered by life in the outer suburbs also brought with it a new economic dependence. Homeowners were committed to twenty or thirty year mortgages and the repayments on hire-purchased household appliances. Ownership of a car was essential, as, unlike the case had been in the 1920s, suburban development took place independently of the expansion of transport networks.<sup>20</sup>

Carolyn Allport has explored how the concept of owning a home in the outer suburbs became normalised during the post war years. ‘Young citizens growing to maturity in Sydney in this age of relative affluence’, she has written, ‘assumed that a home of their own in one of the newer suburbs was a normal and attainable goal’. Allport suggests that the various schemes introduced by the Department of Post War Reconstruction and later the NSW Housing Commission and the state government agency, Landcom, facilitated home ownership for an increasing proportion of the population, particularly the working classes and lower income earners. Allport maintains that ideological agendas underpinned many of these programs. For example, suburban development with free-standing houses on individual blocks of land would ensure that the moral and physical conditions associated with urban slums could be avoided; the creation of a private domestic environment in suburbia would encourage family bliss; and, by owning one’s house and land, a person could own a bit of the nation. Modern day yeoman values of having a stake in the country would engender a greater sense of patriotism among

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<sup>18</sup> Beverley Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. 171.

<sup>19</sup> Ashton, ‘Suburban Sydney’, pp. 45-66.

<sup>20</sup> See R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, *Class structure in Australian history: Documents, narrative and argument*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1980, p. 298.

citizens and this played a role in safeguarding national security in the upheaval that followed the war.<sup>21</sup> These ideals were given heightened importance through the rhetoric applied by developers, real estate agents, land speculators, politicians and, as Ashton notes, other 'experts'.<sup>22</sup> And they were unequivocally present in the position being advanced by local officials in their promotion of Campbelltown's 'modern progress'. They proclaimed that 'nearly all the homes in this district are owned by the occupants and consequently in the years to come will reveal all the beauty of home, gardens, lawns, streets and environs which is the natural corollary of home ownership'. For them, 'family life is still the greatest medium for good in any part of the world'.<sup>23</sup>

By the 1950s project builders such as Lend Lease had an increasing role in developing housing estates in outer suburban areas, particularly in Campbelltown, its largest ever endeavour.<sup>24</sup> As they and government programs carved up fringe metropolitan areas to rapidly develop entire new suburbs throughout the 1960s and 1970s, landscapes were irrevocably changed. (See Figure 2.) They were populated by new communities of people from elsewhere in Sydney and other further flung places. Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton have suggested that some new communities sought to fulfil a sense of desire to belong by creating a sense of the past. Elsewhere, from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, local historical societies had been established for this same purpose.<sup>25</sup> Chapter 7 shows how this was clearly the case as suburbanisation started to transform Campbelltown.

### **'Western Sydney' as a policy concept**

The intensity of the pace and scale of suburban development in Sydney's west throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s resulted in a raft of problems. There was a lack of community facilities and local employment opportunities. Transport was poor and there were backlogs in

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<sup>21</sup> Carolyn Allport 'Castles of Security: The New South Wales Housing Commission and Home Ownership 1941-61', in Max Kelly (ed), *Sydney: City of Suburbs*, Sydney; UNSW Press, 1987, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> Ashton, 'Suburban Sydney', p. 42.

<sup>23</sup> *Campbelltown Commemorative Festival, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> October 1956*, souvenir program, Campbelltown Commemorative Festival Committee, Campbelltown, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> See Lindie Clark, *Finding a common interest: The story of Dick Dusseldorp*, Cambridge, Port Melbourne, 2002.

<sup>25</sup> Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, *History at the Crossroads: Australians and the past*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 2010, pp. 40-1.

urban infrastructure. Compared with more established parts of metropolitan Sydney residents in the western suburbs experienced significant disadvantage.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, Sydney's west became politically important.



Figure 2: Aerial photograph of Campbelltown looking south showing Queen Street at bottom right, photo, 1969, Campbelltown City Library Local Studies Collection.

Soon after the Australian Labor Party led by Gough Whitlam came to office in 1972 Western Sydney was officially recognised as a policy specific area. Beforehand it had been included as part of the greater Sydney metropolitan region. The government divided Sydney into five subregional areas.<sup>27</sup> Ten municipalities were grouped together to form the first iteration of

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<sup>26</sup> See Liz Fulop and Dick Sheppard, 'The life and death of regional initiatives in western Sydney: The case of the Local Government Development Programme', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol 12, no 4, 1988, pp. 609-26; Clement Lloyd and Patrick Troy, *Innovation and reaction: The life and death of the Federal Department of Urban and Regional Development*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981, pp. 24-8; Leonie Sandercock, 'Educating planners: From physical determinism to economic crises', in Leonie Sandercock and Michael Berry (eds), *Urban political economy: The Australia case*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1983, pp. 51-3; Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australian cities*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1970.

<sup>27</sup> Fulop and Sheppard, 'The life and death of regional initiatives'.



Western Sydney. Prior to this three fringe municipalities, Camden, Campbelltown and Appin—referred to as the ‘Three Cities’—had been specified by the NSW Government as part of metropolitan Sydney’s west sector (a development which is discussed in detail in chapter 5). With the Blue Mountains shire, these areas form what is understood spatially as Western Sydney.<sup>28</sup>

Whitlam introduced a range of policy measures to rectify the locational disadvantage of residents in Western Sydney and the arts were included in this mix. (See chapter 9.) From this time onwards, in the formation of cultural policy at a federal and state government level, Campbelltown has been considered part of Western Sydney.<sup>29</sup> It should be noted, however, that while this has been the case in relation to cultural policy, ambiguities existed across other federal-level policy areas. As Geoffrey Sawer noted, for example, there were inconsistencies in how the specification of regions, including Western Sydney, correlated theoretically and in actuality across a range of the Whitlam Government’s regional development programs.<sup>30</sup>

While Western Sydney has been deemed a specific geographical location in the context of public policy for the past forty years it is not a static concept. As Liz Fulop and Dick Sheppard and others have noted, how it is defined varies according to political agendas, federal and state jurisdictions, the media and regional organisations.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Western Sydney, like suburbia, is not a concept that is defined by geography alone. Abstract and imagined notions inform how it has been understood as Mark Hutchison found in his study of the region from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. He concluded that Western Sydney ‘was an overlapping series of

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<sup>28</sup> See Robyn Dowling and Kathleen Mee, ‘Tales of the city: Western Sydney at the end of the millenium’, in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 274.

<sup>29</sup> See for example, NSW Government's Office of Western Sydney and NSW Ministry for the Arts; *A Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney*, 1999; NSW Government, Arts NSW, *Western Sydney Arts Strategy – 2006 Progress Report*, 2006; NSW Government, Arts NSW, *Western Sydney Audience Development*, 2007. NSW Government, Arts NSW and Multicultural Marketing and Management, *A Strategic Study of Non-Attendees at Cultural Venues and Events in Western Sydney: Who doesn't attend and why*, 2009.

<sup>30</sup> Geoffrey Sawer, *The Whitlam Revolution in Federalism: Promise, possibilities and performance*, 10<sup>th</sup> Allen Hope Southey Memorial Lecture, University of Melbourne, 10 October 1975. Reproduced in the *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol 10, June 1976, p. 325.

<sup>31</sup> Fulop and Sheppard, ‘The life and death of regional initiatives’. See also Dowling and Mee, ‘Tales of the city’, pp. 273-91.

political, social and economic locations and stereotypes, only some of which existed in the physical world'.<sup>32</sup>

Hutchison's findings would not have surprised Robyn Dowling and Kathleen Mee, who have drawn attention to the attitudes that prevail in how Western Sydney is defined. They single out the Sydney media, whose reportage of residents, events and places has perpetuated the idea of Western Sydney as a place of blandness, poverty and lack of cultural sensibility. Diane Powell shares this view, but goes further to suggest that authoritative interpretations and analyses of demographic data, which have predominantly focussed on socio-economic problems, have exacerbated negative attitudes.<sup>33</sup> This has generated a dominant view that it is a 'poor and undesirable relation'—an 'other' to inner, northern, southern and eastern Sydney.<sup>34</sup>

To counteract the 'otherness' of Western Sydney, some scholars have applied methodologies that explore the diversity of people, places and experiences that exist there. The analogy of a mosaic or patchwork is used to illustrate the point that many different fragments combine to make up the whole picture of what is meant by 'Western Sydney'.<sup>35</sup> The concept of suburbia has also been used to examine the complexity of Western Sydney and to emphasise how in an imagined sense, it is also suburban.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, for Hutchison, suburbanisation has been the one

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<sup>32</sup> Mark Hutchison, 'Trains, plains and automobiles: New South Wales political debates (1985) and the invention of Western Sydney', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 59, no 2, 2013, p. 224.

<sup>33</sup> Diane Powell, *Out West: Perceptions of Sydney's western suburbs*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993.

<sup>34</sup> Dowling and Mee, 'Tales of the city', p. 275.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Grace Karskens, 'Seeking Sydney from the ground up: Foundations and horizons in Sydney's historiography', *Sydney Journal*, vol 4, no 1, 2014, pp. 180-203; Bill Randolph and Robert Freestone, 'Housing differentiation and renewal in middle-ring suburbs: The experience of Sydney, Australia', *Urban Studies*, vol 49, no 12, 2012, pp. 255-75; Susanne Gannon, 'Rewriting place in English', *Place Pedagogy Change*, Sense Publishers, 2011, pp. 143-56; Susanne Gannon, 'Rewriting the road to nowhere: Place pedagogies in Western Sydney', *Urban Education*, vol 44, no 5, 2009, pp. 608-24; Therese Kenna, 'Consciously constructing exclusivity in the suburbs? Unpacking a master planned estate development in Western Sydney', *Geographical Research*, vol 45, no 3, 2007, pp. 300-12; Elaine Lally and Tiffany Lee-Shoy, 'Networking culture: A strategic approach to cultural development in Greater Western Sydney', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference, *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, University of Western Sydney, 23-24 November 2005; George Morgan, 'A city of two tales: Distinction, dispersal and dissociation in Western Sydney', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference 2005: *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, University of Western Sydney, 23-24 November 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Dowling and Mee, 'Tales of the city', p. 273. See also Fiona Allon, 'Suburbs for Sale: Buying and Selling the Great Australian Dream', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference, University of

common factor among what it otherwise a disparate area: Western Sydney's suburbs 'were a mixture of pre-existing, traditional communities gradually being swamped and incorporated by a more anonymous tide of suburbanisation'.<sup>37</sup>

Michael Knight, who was the Member for Campbelltown in the NSW Parliament throughout the 1980s and 1990s, offers an additional viewpoint. He believes that Western Sydney is 'a geographic and linguistic construct created by people who don't live there'.<sup>38</sup> The implication is that those in the policy and decision making realms have little real knowledge and understanding of the nuances that exist within the communities of Sydney's western suburbs.

Externally defined understandings of Western Sydney as some sort of 'homogenous' and 'amorphous' mass do not take into account what Jock Collins and Scott Poynting have noted is the high level of economic, cultural, linguistic, religious and class diversity that exists there. They maintain that Western Sydney is a complex and evolving place. But remnants of the Anglo-Christian values, individualism and materialism of the colonial age remain strong in some places. In, Camden, for example, residents sought 'cultural protectionism' from 'the multicultural jungle' in 2008.<sup>39</sup> They were, no doubt, referring to other Western Sydney places such as Auburn, one of the most linguistically diverse and fastest growing places in Australia, where less than one-quarter of the local population speak only English at home.<sup>40</sup>

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Western Sydney, 23-24 November 2005; Kay Anderson: 'Introduction', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference, *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, 23-24 November 2005; Robyn Dowling and Pauline McGuirk, 'Master-Planned Estates and Suburban Complexity', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference, *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, 23-24 November 2005; Marla Guppy, 'Cultural Identities in Post-Suburbia', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference, *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, 23-24 November 2005; Brett Neilson, 'Post-Suburban Sydney, Concluding Remarks', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference, *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, 23-24 November 2005; Sophie Watson, 'The Post-Suburban Metropolis: Western Sydney and the Importance of Public Space', proceedings from the Post-Suburban Sydney Conference, *After Sprawl: Post-Suburban Sydney*, University of Western Sydney, Parramatta, 23-24 November 2005.

<sup>37</sup> Hutchison, 'Trains, plains and automobiles', p. 224.

<sup>38</sup> Michael Knight interview with Penny Stannard, 16 April 2013, Sydney.

<sup>39</sup> See Gabrielle Gwyther, 'From Cowpastures to pig's heads', *Sydney Journal*, 2008, vol 1, no 3, pp. 51-74; Jock Collins and Scott Poynting, *The other Sydney: Communities, identities and inequalities in Western Sydney*, Common Ground Publishing, Altona, 2000, pp. 20-1.

<sup>40</sup> Approximately ten percent of people speak Arabic, Cantonese and Mandarin, at home with Turkish, and Korean also commonly spoken. See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *2011 Census QuickStats*, 'Auburn Local Government Area'. (Online) Available:

Applying the range of perspectives offered by Knight, Dowling and Mee, Hutchison and others about Western Sydney to the study of cultural policy is useful. Cultural policy is different from other public policy domains according to David Throsby because it deals with how governments intervene in the production of abstract or imagined concepts.<sup>41</sup> Accepting Throsby's observation, it could be said that when cultural policy is applied to Western Sydney, governments are interceding in how it can be imagined and built. This can be seen in the case of the most recent cultural plan for Western Sydney, *Authoring Contemporary Australia: A Regional Cultural Strategy for Greater Western Sydney*, which was released by the Western Sydney Region Organisation of Councils in collaboration with Macarthur Region Organisation of Councils in 2005. The title of the strategy clearly points to an intention to imagine and define what is understood as 'Western Sydney'.

In their promotion of *Authoring Contemporary Australia*, Tiffany Lee-Shoy and Elaine Lally suggest that as it conceptualises Western Sydney over a twenty-five year period, the strategy will guide not just cultural development but broader planning outcomes. Lee-Shoy and Lally's ambition for the strategy is based on it having evolved from within Western Sydney itself rather than having been prescribed from the 'top down' by state or federal government. Their claim, however, is somewhat confusing, as the regional cultural strategy was commissioned to meet one of the core objectives of the *Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney* (1999), which was the NSW Government's guiding cultural policy for the region for more than a decade.<sup>42</sup>

As scholars have noted, the concept of Western Sydney is multi-faceted. When it is positioned within the context of cultural policy these ambiguities intensify. Adding 'community' into the mix—such as in policy directions that are designed to foster community cultural development or community arts—when the very concept of 'community' has plural meanings, has the

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[http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census\\_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA10200](http://www.censusdata.abs.gov.au/census_services/getproduct/census/2011/quickstat/LGA10200). (Accessed 15 October 2014.)

<sup>41</sup> David Throsby, *The economics of cultural policy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, New York, 2010.

<sup>42</sup> Lally and Lee-Shoy, 'Networking culture', pp. 22-3. See also Western Sydney Region Organisation of Councils in collaboration with Macarthur Region Organisation of Councils, *Authoring contemporary Australia: A regional cultural strategy for Greater Western Sydney*, 2004; New South Wales Government, *A Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney*, Office of Western Sydney and NSW Ministry for the Arts, Sydney, 1999.

potential to result in conceptually unwieldy and difficult to manage policy schemes. Indeed, fourteen years after its release, Arts NSW implied that this had been the case with the *Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney*. It noted that the strategy had focussed on and invested in Western Sydney as a regional concept, but it had found that there was ‘little common ground’ between the area’s sub-regions. Arts and cultural development had not taken full account of Western Sydney’s sub-cultures and diverse audiences. The result of this was that arts and cultural development was at a ‘status quo’.<sup>43</sup> Understanding what is meant by ‘Western Sydney’ and ‘community’ through geographical parameters, as was the case of the *Strategy for the Arts in Western Sydney*, tends to prevail in the policy realm as Lucy Taksa observed.

Defining Western Sydney and its constituent local government areas such as Campbelltown in geographical terms was the approach taken when the federal government under Whitlam first formalised national cultural policy in the charter of the Australia Council. Prior to this, however, advances in metropolitan planning by the NSW Government, and later developments in urban policy at a federal-level featured concepts of culture in relation to Campbelltown. The following chapter examines this and discusses how through this process, Campbelltown was imagined as a model of a modern, outer suburban Australia.

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<sup>43</sup> See New South Wales Government, *Western Sydney Region Arts and Culture Snapshot*, NSW Trade and Investment, Arts NSW, Sydney, 2013.

## CHAPTER 5

### **'For a few years there was money to do things': Metropolitan plans, urban policies and an outer suburban utopia**

As Australia emerged from the upheaval of the Second World War, like other nations that had been drawn into the conflict, it needed to re-focus its efforts on the situation at home. Re-settling and repatriating servicemen, reuniting families, accommodating people from war-torn Europe, planning for the impending baby boom and re-orienting the economy away from the war effort back towards the domestic front were the critical issues facing Australia and its decision makers. While the federal government led Australia's post war reconstruction program, state governments also contributed to the effort by introducing measures that fell within their domain of constitutional responsibility.

New South Wales (NSW), led by Premier William McKell, began the process of coordinating Sydney's post war reconstruction. It introduced the *Local Government (Town and Country Planning) Amendment Act* (1945) and established the Cumberland County Council (CCC) to coordinate a plan for metropolitan Sydney.<sup>1</sup> CCC's release of the *Cumberland Plan* (1951) was the first in a series of metropolitan plans and urban policy initiatives introduced between the 1950s and mid-1970s that focused on Campbelltown as being central to the management of Sydney's growth into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Its successors, the *Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD* (SROP) (1968), the *New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin Structure Plan* (1973) or 'Three Cities Plan' and the Macarthur Growth Centre Project (1975), each proposed that Campbelltown be developed into a new outer suburban city to function as the urban centre of Sydney's South West region.

The roll out of these plans and the agendas that they represented forms the basis of this chapter. The discussion explores how as planning objectives converged, the significance of

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<sup>1</sup> Christine Steinmetz, Robert Freestone and Lauren Hendriks have noted that the establishment of the Cumberland County Council was one of a number of 'innovative arrangements' that were introduced through the Act which were in advance of most other states at the time. See Christine Steinmetz, Robert Freestone and Lauren Hendriks, 'Women, professionalism and leadership in State Government planning in New South Wales', *Australian Planner*, vol 50, no 4, 2013, p. 284.

Campbelltown in both Sydney and Australia's urban future intensified. It establishes that the position that Campbelltown occupied in this respect was unique. The elevation of metropolitan planning into the sphere of federal-level urban policy; the establishment of Western Sydney as a priority region; and new advancements in urban affairs as a policy area that encompassed a wide range of other domains were key developments that underpin this finding. The purpose of this chapter is largely to set the stage for the subsequent discussion that examines, more specifically, how concepts of culture featured within this evolving context as it played out 'on the ground' at Campbelltown.

### **Cumberland Plan**

The CCC was made up of elected officials from municipalities across the County of Cumberland. The County encompassed the geological footprint of the Sydney Basin, which is an area that extends from Sydney's most easterly coastal points westerly to the Hawkesbury and Nepean rivers, located up to 100 kilometres inland.<sup>2</sup> The *Cumberland Plan* had been first developed in 1948 to address the growing needs of metropolitan Sydney's expanding population and was modelled on other post war city plans such as those for London and Paris. Its core principal was to establish a green belt of open country on the outskirts of the metropolitan area in order to halt 'indiscriminate suburban sprawl', and to guide urban growth into self-contained satellite cities that existed beyond the belt line.<sup>3</sup> The town that the *Cumberland Plan* regarded as being 'most readily adaptable for expansion into a new city' was Campbelltown. Its location halfway between Sydney and Wollongong, and its situation beyond the specified green belt line, made it in a geographical sense the ideal place for satellite

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<sup>2</sup> The Sydney basin is part of the Sydney-Gunnedah-Bowen Basin, a major foreland basin system that extends from southern coastal New South Wales to Central Queensland. The Sydney basin is 350 kilometres long and an average of 100 kilometres wide with a total onshore area of approximately 44,000 square kilometres. See New South Wales Government, NSW Trade and Investment, Resources and Energy, *Sydney Basin*. (Online) Available: <http://www.resources.nsw.gov.au/geological/overview/regional/sedimentary-basins/sydbasin> (Accessed 29 April 2013).

<sup>3</sup> New South Wales Government, *Sydney Region Outline Plan, 1970-2000AD: A Strategy for Development*, State Planning Authority of New South Wales, Sydney, 1968, p. 14. See Robert Freestone, 'Planning Sydney: Historical trajectories and contemporary debates', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 128, for an overview of the *Cumberland Plan*. Freestone draws attention to the way in which the Plan was an adoption of British planning models and was designed accorded to a 'standardised package'.

development. The *Cumberland Plan* calculated that Campbelltown could accommodate 30,000 people, which was more than four-fold its then current population of 7000. Significantly, planners also based the rationale for the development of Campbelltown on a set of non-spatial attributes—its ‘strong individuality’, ‘civic pride’ and ‘historical past’.<sup>4</sup>

By the late 1950s, however, growth in the Sydney region had reached greater levels than the *Cumberland Plan* had forecast. This was due to a sharp increase in the population caused by the birth rate and also by changes in federal government policy that encouraged migrants from European nations to Australia. The population that the *Cumberland Plan* had forecast for metropolitan Sydney by the 1980s had been reached twenty years earlier than anticipated, and this had been the same also for Campbelltown. By the 1950s, growth had already reached figures that were predicated for the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Rural lands were hastily transformed into suburban homes as housing was developed for the rapidly expanding population. The pace and scale of development that was required to meet Sydney’s increasing population was unable to be accommodated within the parameters of the *Cumberland Plan*.

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<sup>4</sup> Cumberland County Council, *Campbelltown: A new city in the County of Cumberland*, Sydney, 1960, p. 9. See also New South Wales Government, *The New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin Structure Plan*, State Planning Authority of New South Wales, Sydney, 1973, p. 15; Carol Liston, *Campbelltown: The Bicentennial History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 197; William Bayley, *History of Campbelltown, New South Wales*, Campbelltown Council, Campbelltown, 1974, p. 175. The figure of 7000 was the combined population of the Campbelltown and Ingleburn local government areas. Ingleburn Council was amalgamated into Campbelltown Council in 1948.

<sup>5</sup> Liston, *Campbelltown*, pp. 6; 212. See also Jonathan Falk and John Toon, *Sydney, Planning or Politics; Town Planning for Sydney Region since 1945*, Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, p. 6; Vivienne Milligan, ‘The relationship between housing policy and urban development in Sydney’, in Jonathan Falk and John Toon (eds), *Sydney, Planning or politics; Town planning for Sydney Region since 1945*, Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, p. 45.



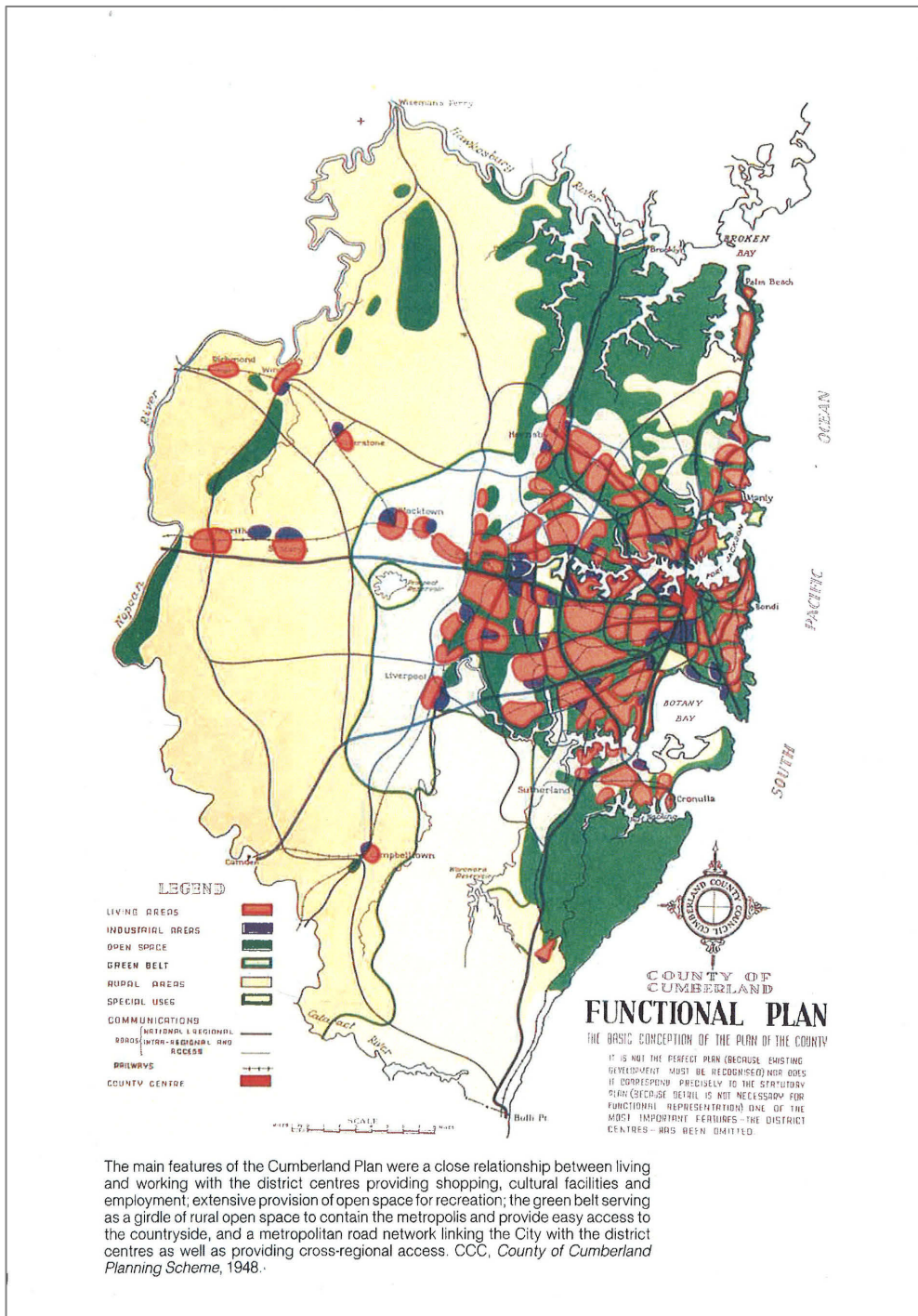


Figure 3: County of Cumberland Planning Scheme, 1948, in Peter Spearritt and Christina DeMarco, *Planning Sydney's Future*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988.

In 1963 the NSW Government dissolved the CCC and abandoned the *Cumberland Plan*. Peter Spearritt has explored the forces that led to its demise. The federal government had been unwilling to provide assistance for the implementation of the *Cumberland Plan*. This was despite its major landholdings in the Sydney basin and its introduction of immigration and

economic policies that had a significant impact on Sydney's metropolitan growth. Although the *Cumberland Plan* had been gazetted into NSW legislation, many state government departments had been un-cooperative and had consulted or ignored the plan as they wished. Spearritt has maintained that this greatly advantaged private developers, who were able to work in a largely unregulated fashion. The result of this had been that communities were left with grossly insufficient urban and social infrastructure.<sup>6</sup> The State Planning Authority (SPA) was established in 1964 to replace CCC. It wound back earlier planning restrictions and abolished the green belt. At this time, Campbelltown's population quickly headed towards 50,000, a figure that the SPA had assessed could be increased to 200,000 by the year 2000.<sup>7</sup>

Although the *Cumberland Plan* was never fully realised, urban policy scholars agree that it was a milestone for metropolitan planning in Australia. Spearritt, in emphasising that the *Cumberland Plan* was the first metropolitan plan in Australia to be made a statutory document, has suggested that it was the most important document to guide the growth of Sydney in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Raymond Bunker believes that its significance was in how it influenced the characteristics of numerous later plans, including the SROP.<sup>8</sup> Certainly in the case of Campbelltown, the *Cumberland Plan* introduced a number of concepts that would be reinforced in later metropolitan plans. Most significantly, it saw Campbelltown—which until then had been a relatively remote cluster of towns and villages—as a place that was important to the future of metropolitan Sydney.<sup>9</sup>

In 1968, in anticipation of the growth of the area and the expansion of Campbelltown Council's responsibilities, the state government, which holds legislative responsibility for local government in Australia, declared that Campbelltown would no longer be 'Town' but a 'City'.<sup>10</sup> Council-appointed historian William Bayley described this as Campbelltown's 'pinnacle'. The same day that the official proclamation was made, the first electric train from Sydney arrived

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<sup>6</sup> See Peter Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 1999, pp. 166-70.

<sup>7</sup> New South Wales Government, *The New Cities*, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond Bunker, 'Situating Australian Metropolitan Planning', *International Planning Studies*, vol 14, no 3, 2009, p. 235. See also Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, pp. 167-9.

<sup>9</sup> New South Wales Government, *The New Cities*, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> Liston, *Campbelltown*, p. 211.

and, rather curiously, a sister city relationship was established with Fontainebleau in France.<sup>11</sup> Jeff McGill, a local newspaper editor who has written a journalistic modern history of Campbelltown, described these events as a ‘coming of age’ that was celebrated with a ‘joyous community party that has probably never been outclassed’.<sup>12</sup> These developments also symbolised the final steps in a process of transition that was well underway in Campbelltown. The country town of Campbelltown, which had been surrounded by farmland estates that had been established in colonial times, was transitioning into a suburban centre that would soon be encircled by the vast expanse of greater Sydney.

### **Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD**

The same year that Campbelltown was made a City, the SPA introduced the *Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD* (SROP) to release ‘on a major scale as rapidly as possible’ new areas for industrial and residential development. The Plan laid out a set of principles, policies and broad strategies for managing metropolitan Sydney’s growth, which it forecast would reach 5.5 million at the turn of the century. It rejected the *Cumberland Plan’s* green belt and satellite-town concepts and instead proposed to establish new cities across the entire Sydney metropolitan area that would be inter-connected by linear corridors of rail networks, highway grids and public utilities. Each new city would have a commercial centre and provide ‘the widest possible range’ of employment and social facilities to service and support metropolitan growth areas. This was designed to stem the congestion that had gridlocked Sydney as suburban workers commuted to work in the inner city.<sup>13</sup>

SROP proposed four metropolitan growth centres and of these, the South West Sector, which encompassed the local government areas of Campbelltown, Camden and Appin, was considered the priority for new urban development. It forecast that the sector would house an additional 460,000 people by 2000—more than ten-fold the population recommended in

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<sup>11</sup> Bayley, *History of Campbelltown*, p. 198.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff McGill, *Campbelltown: A Modern History, 1960-1999*, Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, Campbelltown, 1999, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> New South Wales Government, *Sydney Region Outline Plan*, pp. 1; 15-18; 24. See also New South Wales Government, *The New Cities*, p. 16.

the *Cumberland Plan*, and more than double the SPA's earlier estimates.<sup>14</sup> Planner Bob Meyer observed that the growth rate and population target of the South West was higher than any new town or city in the world at the time.<sup>15</sup> SROP proposed to situate the South West Sector commercial centre in Campbelltown, in an area to the south of the town's existing main street, and it laid out radial district centres where schools, shops and other amenities would be built.<sup>16</sup>

These plans for the South West Sector were unprecedented and ambitious. In anticipation of the implementation of SROP, the SPA acquired 'massive amounts' of private land—a process that had required it to cooperate closely with local landowners and Campbelltown Council.<sup>17</sup> The SPA, however, resolved that it, rather than the Council's town planners, had the expertise required to deliver the first stage of SROP. It formed an internal multidisciplinary project team, which included the social anthropologist Caroline Kelly who had been a theatre producer in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The three other growth areas were the West Sector (Blacktown, Mt Druitt and Penrith), North-West Sector (Rouse Hill and Maralya) and South Sector (Liverpool and Sutherland). See New South Wales Government, *The New Cities*, p. 21; 66.

<sup>15</sup> Bob Meyer, 'Macarthur: Sydney's successful south western satellite?' *Australian Planner*, vol 28, no 3, 1990, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> New South Wales Government, *Sydney Region Outline Plan*, p. 34. See Freestone, 'Planning Sydney', p. 128, for a summary of the SROP and an overview of the State Planning Authority's role in planned land development in Macarthur.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown. See also Rex McDermott, 'Land Acquisition for the new City of Campbelltown', in Jonathan Falk and John Toon (eds), *Sydney, Planning or politics: Town planning for Sydney Region since 1945*, Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, p. 85.

<sup>18</sup> See New South Wales Government, *Sydney Region Outline Plan*, p. 16. Caroline Kelly (1899-1989) or 'Tennant-Kelly', worked for the State Planning Authority as a researcher and adviser on the sociological aspects of urban-planning. Her role focussed on examining the consequences and implications of Sydney's rapid post war expansion. This role was the last in her expansive career. In the 1920s she had worked as a playwright and theatre producer. In the 1930s and 1940s she began a career as an anthropologist working in Aboriginal Studies in Queensland and New South Wales. Following the end of the Second World War, Kelly centred her anthropological practice on post-war immigration. She had been a close friend and colleague of the famous anthropologist Margaret Mead, who Arthur Jones recalled in 2013, visited Campbelltown at the invitation of Kelly. For further information about Kelly and her work, see Kim de Rijke and Tony Jefferies, 'Caroline Tennant-Kelly collection discovered in a Northern Rivers farmhouse in New South Wales, Australia', *The Australian Anthropological Society Newsletter*, no 118, 2010, pp. 8–11. Steinmetz, Freestone and Hendriks' study of the historical and contemporary dimensions of leading women professional planners in post-war Sydney has included Kelly as one the leading figures of the 1960s. The authors noted that as a pioneering social planner and devotee of American anthropologist Margaret Mead, her work highlighted the special needs of mothers,

The project team established the Campbelltown-Camden Development Committee to advise the SPA and ensure a coordinated approach to local development. The Committee consisted of high-level representatives from state government agencies and the mayors of Campbelltown and Camden.<sup>19</sup> Long-time Campbelltown resident and former alderman, Arthur Jones has mused that their participation was ‘perhaps to make it [the Committee] look a little bit more democratic’ as the mayors had been barred from reporting on the Committee’s meetings to their respective councils.<sup>20</sup> The local community was therefore left guessing about its future. The Labor candidate for Campbelltown in the forthcoming NSW election, Cliff Mallam, claimed that the SPA was ‘working in the dark’, much like ‘Fisher’s Ghost’.<sup>21</sup> (The Festival of Fisher’s Ghost and the role that it played in forming local cultural policy directions in Campbelltown are discussed in detail in chapters 7 and 8.)

The SROP was the guiding metropolitan plan for Sydney for twenty years until *Sydney into its Third Century* was released in 1988. Bob Meyer and John Richardson have suggested that despite the numerous plans produced by the state government since then, it has remained constant in guiding Sydney’s growth.<sup>22</sup> SROP also marked a significant turning point for the future of Campbelltown. While the *Cumberland Plan* had proposed that it become a self-contained city existing beyond the boundaries of metropolitan Sydney, SROP brought Campbelltown well into its urban circumference.

### **Three Cities Plan**

In order to focus more specifically on the South West Sector, the SPA’s Campbelltown-Camden Development Committee published *The New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin Structure Plan*, or the ‘Three Cities Plan’ in 1973. It further advanced SROP’s recommendations for Campbelltown-Camden-Appin and presented a more detailed proposal for the

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children and teenagers in the outer suburbs. See Steinmetz, Freestone and Hendriks, ‘Women, professionalism and leadership’, p. 285.

<sup>19</sup> For the list of committee members see New South Wales Government, *The New Cities*, p. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Jones, interview.

<sup>21</sup> See McGill, *Campbelltown: A Modern History*, p. 31.

<sup>22</sup> Bob Meyer and John Richardson, submission by Cox Richardson Architects and Planners to ‘Sydney over the next 20 years – Discussion Paper’, June 2012. (Online) Available: <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/tabid/205/ctl/View/mid/1081/ID/78/language/en-US/Default.aspx> (Accessed 28 January 2013).

development of the new commercial centre and the attendant facilities to ensure that services and employment that were otherwise available only in inner Sydney would be established locally. While it referred to Campbelltown as the new 'metropolis' of the South West Sector, it also recommended that the 'long standing identity' that existed in the area be retained to ensure that an 'ethos stemming from the terrain, character and history of the locality' was in place.<sup>23</sup>

Through the *Three Cities Plan*, the SPA promoted Campbelltown-Camden-Appin as 'the largest and most difficult "new town" project ever attempted in Australia' but conceded that its ability to progress development to meet housing demand was hampered due to the financial and administrative constraints facing the state government. It therefore proposed that the delivery of the plan be an 'arrangement of compromise'. The SPA would re-focus its efforts on persuading private developers and other public authorities, including local government, to deliver the new city project and, after a two-year period, it would devolve responsibility for the implementation of the entire plan to local councils. It was anticipated that they would by then have developed their planning expertise to a sufficiently skilled level.<sup>24</sup>

The development of both SROP and the *Three Cities Plan* was overseen by Peter Kacirek, who was Deputy, and later Chief Planner, of the SPA. He had been a major figure in the British New Town Movement prior to his move to Australia in 1965. Kacirek was known for his ability to convince elected officials from all tiers of government of his vision for metropolitan planning and he had found a particularly keen supporter in the Whitlam Government minister Tom Uren both for SROP and Campbelltown-Camden-Appin.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> New South Wales Government, *The New Cities*, pp. 16-7; 24-5; 58; 78. See also Andrew Kremmer, 'Planning Macquarie Fields Estate: A large estate for the Housing Commission of NSW', in Jonathan Falk and John Toon (eds), *Sydney, Planning or politics; Town planning for Sydney Region since 1945*, Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, p. 99.

<sup>24</sup> New South Wales Government, *The New Cities*, p. 142.

<sup>25</sup> Bob Meyer, *Obituary: Peter Kacirek*, *Australian Planner*, vol 3, no 2, 1993, p. 62.

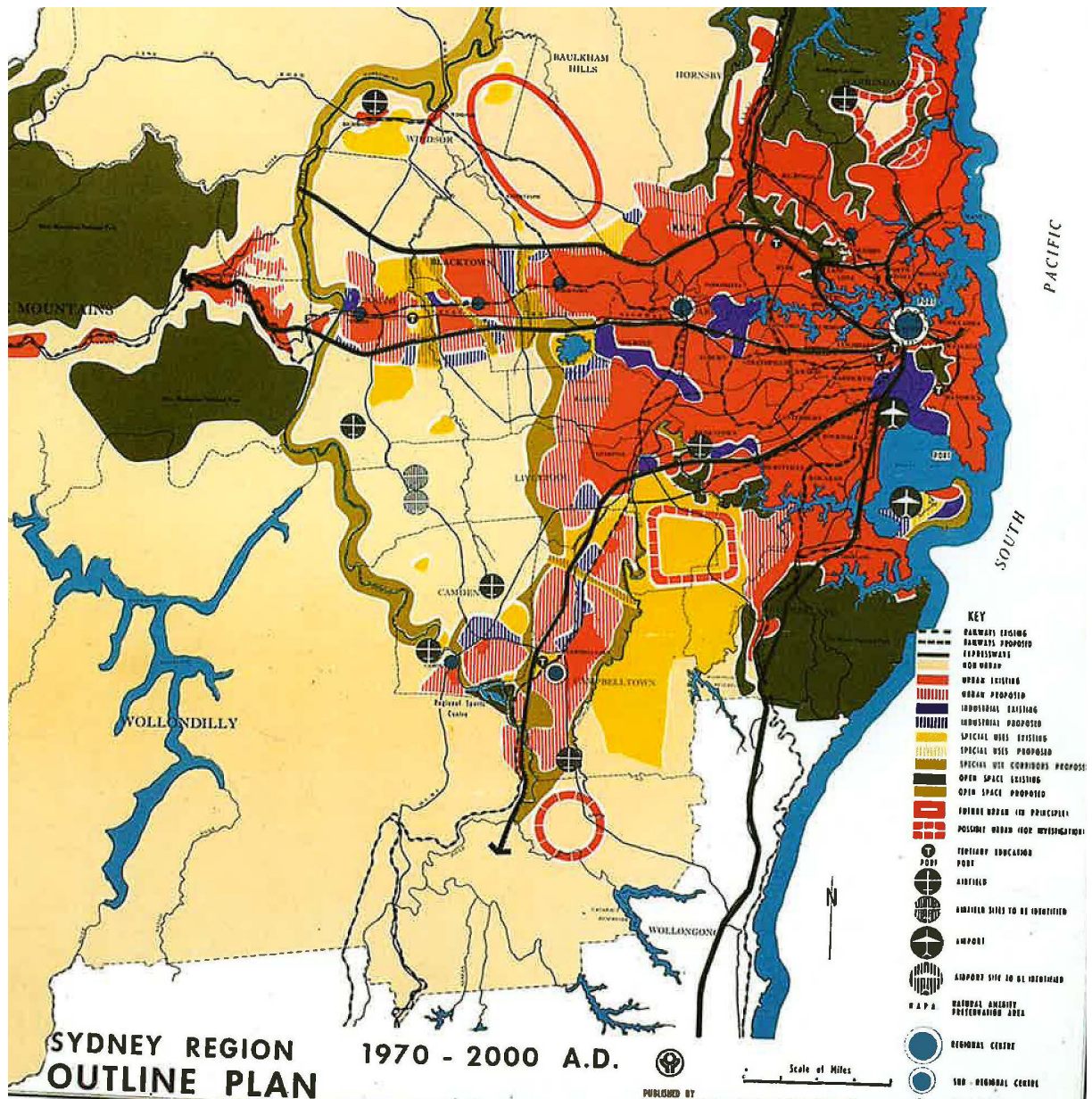


Figure 4: *Sydney Region Outline Plan, 1970-2000AD, 1968*, detail, in Peter Spearritt and Christina DeMarco, *Planning Sydney's Future*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988.

### Federal urban policy agendas

While the NSW Government had proposed Campbelltown-Camden-Appin as a major area of future growth for metropolitan Sydney in the late 1960s, the Whitlam Government, elected in December 1972, introduced new ideas that would result in the area being considered within a national urban policy context for the first time. Throughout the 1960s there had been a growing awareness that the way in which Australian cities had developed historically had

impacted on the efficiency of capital investment and the operations of urban services.<sup>26</sup> While many of Sydney's residents had sufficient services in their local area, others, such as those who lived in its outer suburbs, lacked basic urban infrastructure. The situation in Western Sydney was particularly acute. The growing resident based in Sydney's western suburbs also meant that political leaders could no longer ignore the voting power of the population.<sup>27</sup>

Urban affairs had been a major policy platform for both parties going in to the 1972 federal election.<sup>28</sup> But Whitlam promoted urban policy as a centrepiece in his promised program of national renewal and reform. Cities were a major element within this agenda.<sup>29</sup> He believed that Australia was a nation of cities and the problems of cities were the problem of the nation.<sup>30</sup> For Whitlam, 'not one aspect of our life can be seriously discussed in political, economic, industrial, social or cultural terms without reference to cities'.<sup>31</sup> While the idea that Australia's cities were essentially cities of suburbs featured obliquely in this urbanist rationale, a clear policy case existed for outer suburban western Sydney. But this was by and large an exclusive situation. The Whitlam Government quickly introduced legislation and administrative mechanisms to enable it to influence and support the improvement of urban services. It introduced the *Cities Commission Act (1973)* and formed the Department of Urban

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<sup>26</sup> See Patrick Troy, 'Can Canberra pull out now? Federalism and urban affairs 1972-75', first published in 1976, republished in *Australian Planning*, 2012, vol 49, no 2, p. 110. See also Lionel Orchard, 'Shifting Visions in National Urban and Regional Policy 1', *Australian Planner*, 1999, vol 36, no 1, pp. 20-5.

<sup>27</sup> See Mark Hutchison, 'Trains, plains and automobiles: New South Wales political Debates (1985) and the invention of Western Sydney', *Australian Journal of politics and History*, vol 59, no 2, 2013, p. 224.

<sup>28</sup> Leading up to the election McMahon Government had introduced the *National Urban and Regional Development Authority Act (1972)*.

<sup>29</sup> Whitlam's 1968 Walter Burley Griffin Lecture is rich with rhetoric that gives a sense of this. See Gough Whitlam, 'Responsibilities for urban and regional development', Walter Burley Griffin Memorial Lecture, delivered at the Academy of Science, Canberra, 25 September 1968. See also Stuart Macintyre, *A concise history of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2009, p. 237; John Roseth, 'The 1970s: The end of post-war optimism', in Jonathan Falk and John Toon (eds), *Sydney, Planning or politics; Town planning for Sydney Region since 1945*, Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, pp. 91-2.

<sup>30</sup> See Gough Whitlam, 'Personal papers of Prime Minister E. G. Whitlam - Campbelltown', 23 November 1972, p. 1, National Archives of Australia, Series no M170, Barcode 5024835. See also Troy, 'Can Canberra pull out now?' p. 110, and Geoffrey Sawer, *The Whitlam Revolution in Federalism: Promise, possibilities and performance*, the tenth Allen Hope Southey Memorial Lecture, University of Melbourne, 10 October 1975. Reproduced in the *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol 10, June 1976, pp. 315-29.

<sup>31</sup> Gough Whitlam, 'Urbanised Australia 1972-75', *John Curtin Memorial Lecture*, delivered at University of Western Australia, Perth, 12 July 1972, transcript, p. 5. Whitlam outlined his rationale and objectives for federal government involvement in cities. He proposed an administrative structure and a suite of



and Regional Development (DURD).<sup>32</sup> DURD was required to work in cooperation with local and state government jurisdictions in matters of city planning and development in order to rectify the issues of inequity and systemic disadvantage that existed in managing urban growth, infrastructure and services.<sup>33</sup>

For Uren, who held the seat of Guildford, and Whitlam, the seat of Werriwa—both electorates in Sydney’s outer west—the experiences of their constituents had provided the foundation for their comprehensive commitment to urban affairs. As Bruce Pennay observed, both Uren and Whitlam had personal experience of the urban problems encountered in Sydney’s western suburbs and they were intent on improving the quality of life for residents who lived on the fringe of capital cities.<sup>34</sup> Uren later said:

the future growth of Sydney's going to be in the western corridor and in the south western corridor ... and we foresaw this and we wanted to bring some equity and justice to the western region of Sydney.<sup>35</sup>

### **Urban and regional development policy responses to Western Sydney**

Sydney’s population had surged in the post war years and its suburbs had expanded further and further west as development attempted to keep pace with growth. But the provision of urban services and community facilities had not kept up. In his maiden speech to parliament in 1953, Whitlam had spoken about the situation in Werriwa. The number of enrolled voters

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mechanisms for enabling direct federal government support for responsibilities normally undertaken by local government.

<sup>32</sup> See Cabinet Minute, Canberra, 6 March 1973, Decision No. 261, pp. 1-2, National Archives of Australia, item barcode 6993187.

<sup>33</sup> See Tom Uren, ‘Amendments to the National Urban and Regional Development Authority Act, 1972’, Cabinet Submission No. 131, pp. 5-6, National Archives of Australia, item barcode 6993187.

<sup>34</sup> Bruce Pennay, *Making a city in the country: The Albury-Wodonga National Growth Centre Project 1973-2003*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Tom Uren, 1996, recorded by Robyn Hughes. Transcript of original interview conducted for the Australian Biography project, produced by Screen Australia Digital Learning. (Online) Available: <http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/uren/interview9.html> (Accessed 14 January 2013).

had grown from 38,000 in 1948 to over 57,000 in just four years, and it had the highest the birth rate in NSW. Yet residents were without hospital and high school facilities.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 5: Gough Whitlam talks with helpers at polling booths in his Werriwa electorate, photo, 1973, National Archives of Australia.

Twenty years later the situation in Werriwa and in the western suburbs more broadly, remained largely unchanged and Whitlam maintained that the region encapsulated the problems and challenges of urban development more acutely than anywhere else in Australia.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> See Gough Whitlam, maiden speech to the Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives, 19 March 1953. (Online) Available: <http://whitlamdismissal.com/1953/03/19/whitlam-maiden-speech.html> (Accessed 14 January 2013).

<sup>37</sup> Gough Whitlam, 'Labor and the Western Suburbs', *an address by the Leader of the Opposition, Mr E.G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P., to the A.L.P. Regional Assembly, Civic Hall, Cabramatta, 2 July 1972*. (Online) Available: [http://cem.uws.edu.au/view/action/nmets.do?DOCCHOICE=13466.xml&dvs=1393911386102~546&locale=en\\_AU&search\\_terms=western%20sydney&adjacency=N&VIEWER\\_URL=/view/action/nmets.do?&DELIVERY\\_RULE\\_ID=4&usePid1=true&usePid2=true](http://cem.uws.edu.au/view/action/nmets.do?DOCCHOICE=13466.xml&dvs=1393911386102~546&locale=en_AU&search_terms=western%20sydney&adjacency=N&VIEWER_URL=/view/action/nmets.do?&DELIVERY_RULE_ID=4&usePid1=true&usePid2=true) (Accessed 4 March 2014).

In 1973 the Government had invited leading international urban policy specialists to ‘stimulate community contributions’ to its urban and regional development policies.<sup>38</sup> These included William Alonso, who had urged for an extensive interaction with other policy areas such as education, social well-being and culture.<sup>39</sup>

Uren explained how he had considered this in relation to South West Sydney: if development were to occur without the inclusion of supporting social infrastructure, high levels of isolation would be experienced within the community. To prevent the social and economic costs that would arise from this, it was critical that ‘health and social issues and employment issues and cultural issues’ be addressed in tandem with the provision of housing.<sup>40</sup> Patrick Troy, Deputy Secretary of DURD, followed Alonso’s recommendation by recruiting people into the department who could ‘think about urban issues as broader policy questions’, rather than just town planning and design.<sup>41</sup>

Western Sydney was a priority area for the Whitlam Government—the first federal government in Australia’s history to give national-level comprehensive policy attention to urban and metropolitan affairs.<sup>42</sup> It required policy intervention to rectify the significant levels of inequity that had been experienced over a sustained period of time. It was also a place where Sydney’s future growth would be concentrated, and it therefore provided a site for thinking about urban policy as a broader concept.

The introduction of the *Growth Centres (Financial Assistance) Act (1973)* formalised Campbelltown-Camden-Appin within the Whitlam Government’s urban policy agenda and scheduled it within the legislation as an approved program for development. The Act was

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<sup>38</sup> Tom Uren, ‘Foreword’, in *Urban and Regional Development Overseas Experts’ Reports 1973*, Cities Commission Occasional Paper No. 1, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Australian Government Printer, Canberra, 1974, p. i.

<sup>39</sup> See William Alonso, ‘A Report on Australian Urban Development Issues’, *Urban and Regional Development Overseas Experts’ Reports 1973*, Cities Commission Occasional paper, no 1, July 1974, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Government Printer, 1974, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> See Uren, 1996, recorded by Robyn Hughes.

<sup>41</sup> See Patrick Troy, 2010, recorded by Alan Hutchings. Transcript of original interview conducted for the Don Dunstan Oral History project, p. 8. (Online) Available: <http://hdl.handle.net/2328/15063> (Accessed 22 March 2013).

created 'to provide financial assistance to the states for purposes connected with urban and regional development in certain areas' and \$24 million was allocated in the first year.<sup>43</sup> Federal agencies had to reach agreements with states as to which areas were 'likely candidates for growth' in order for funds to be devolved, and the direction of funds towards specific projects required cooperation with local government.<sup>44</sup> Pennay has described this process as an 'exercise in cooperative federalism'.<sup>45</sup>

The *Grants Commission Act (1973)* was also introduced to deliver a pre-election commitment to enable to local governing bodies to increase their capacity to provide urban services and infrastructure—factors that underpinned many of the issues that had detracted from the quality of life in outer suburban areas. Monies administered through the Commonwealth Grants Commission could be provided to regional organisations that were 'approved' to act on behalf of local governing bodies for the purposes of implementing the legislation.<sup>46</sup> The Commission distributed funding on a needs basis and Western Sydney received a significant proportion of the Commission's funding at the time. Guy Betts and Andrew Johnson have each suggested that while subsequent governments altered these arrangements, the model of releasing federal funds to local government, including those in Western Sydney, has continued.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Earlier federal-level involvement in metropolitan planning in the 1920s and 1930s had primarily related to Commonwealth housing schemes and the development of the national capital, Canberra. See *National Capital Development Commission Act (1957)*.

<sup>43</sup> Holdsworthy was added to Camden-Campbelltown-Appin. See *Growth Centres (Financial Assistance) Act (1973)*, Section 1, Part 2, p. 3; 16; Section 4, Part 1. The Act was repealed in 2010. See *Financial Framework Legislation Amendment Act (2010)*, Schedule 11, Part 1, p. 51.

<sup>44</sup> Troy, 2010, recorded by Alan Hutchings, p. 111. See also Andrew Kremmer, 'Planning Macquarie Fields Estate: A large estate for the Housing Commission of NSW', in Jonathan Falk and John Toon (eds), *Sydney, Planning or politics; Town planning for Sydney Region since 1945*, Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, p. 99.

<sup>45</sup> Pennay, *Making a city in the country*, p. 44.

<sup>46</sup> *Grants Commission Act (1973)*, Section 1, Part 6, p. 17.

<sup>47</sup> See Guy Betts, *Whitlam and Western Sydney*, 2013, Whitlam Institute. Online (Available): [http://www.whitlam.org/gough\\_whitlam/Western\\_Sydney](http://www.whitlam.org/gough_whitlam/Western_Sydney) (Accessed 14 January 2013). Andrew Johnson, 'Financing local government in Australia', in Brian Dollery, Neal Marshall and Andrew Worthington (eds), *Reshaping Australian Local Government*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2003, p. 53.

## Macarthur Development Board

By 1973 state and federal governments had both identified Campbelltown-Camden-Appin as a priority growth area. The state government had developed the *Three Cities Plan* and the federal government had scheduled the region in the *Growth Centres (Financial Assistance) Act*. Legislation was in place to enable the implementation of the *National Growth Centres Program* and there was provision to do so through the *Grants Commission Act*. In order to fully enact the strands of policy and legislation, a regional organisation to act on behalf of the Three Cities needed to be established via agreement with federal and state government. To achieve this, the NSW Government introduced the *Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act* (1974), and, in 1975, the Macarthur Development Corporation (MDC) was inaugurated ('Macarthur' having replaced 'Campbelltown-Camden-Appin'). The Macarthur Development Board (MDB), made up of federal, state and local government representatives, was appointed to oversee the MDC and Kacirek was appointed its chairman.<sup>48</sup> This aimed to ensure a sense of continuity in the adaptation of the directions of SROP and the *Three Cities Plan*. MDB was responsible for promoting, coordinating, managing and securing the orderly and economic development of the region. It was granted authority to plan and acquire land, and to develop and dispose of land for industrial, commercial, residential and recreational purposes. It dealt directly with the local council in relation to all planning matters, an arrangement that was designed to 'assist' local government in achieving the *National Growth Centres Program* objectives.<sup>49</sup>

The MDB described Macarthur as the largest growth centre project in Australia and arguably the largest planned urban growth area ever attempted in the world. At its 'nerve centre' was Campbelltown, which it characterised as a 'country town' on the verge of unprecedented urban expansion.<sup>50</sup> In 1974-75 the federal government provided \$10 million, and, in 1975-76, \$15.7 million, to the MDB.<sup>51</sup> These then large amounts of funding demonstrated how the

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<sup>48</sup> Meyer, *Obituary: Peter Kacirek*.

<sup>49</sup> *Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act* (1974), Part III, Section 7, vol 58, 1974, pp. 779-80. See also Les Hewatt and Robert Johnson, *Macarthur Growth Centre: Appin, Camden, Campbelltown*, Ruse Publishing, Campbelltown, 1980, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Macarthur Development Board, *Campbelltown City Centre*, Campbelltown, 1976, pp. 1-3; 7; 10.

<sup>51</sup> Liston, *Campbelltown*, p. 202.

Whitlam Government provided significant resources for specific projects.<sup>52</sup> The ambitions for Macarthur and, more broadly, the Growth Centres Program, however, would be short-lived due to the dismissal of the Whitlam Government in November 1975. The new conservative government led by Malcolm Fraser disbanded DURD, a move which Hugh Stretton observed signalled a return to the traditional Liberal view that cities were state-level responsibilities.<sup>53</sup> In 1976-77 funding to the MDB was reduced by nearly seventy per cent and by 1977-78 funded ceased altogether. Yet, despite the withdrawal of federal funds, the MDB was still pushing ahead with its plan, and Macarthur Shopping Centre, which had been earmarked as the commercial and business core of the new Campbelltown city, was already well under construction. Tensions had arisen as Campbelltown Council—fearful of being left with any unforetold pecuniary responsibility or political backlash—questioned how the MDB could continue with the growth centre project without any funding. By 1978, according to McGill, the situation had become so strained between the stakeholders that they were ‘almost at a state of war’.<sup>54</sup> The ‘cooperative federalism’ that the *Growth Centres Act* had sought to foster just a few years earlier was no longer guaranteed.

Operating without federal-level funding, but continuing to exist under NSW legislation, the MDB had its planning and development roles taken away in 1981. According to Glen Searle, MDB had attracted more investment in Macarthur than expected given its distance from Sydney. But development had not been rapid enough to pay for the upfront costs of buying land and providing infrastructure for Macarthur’s industrial estates. Carrying a debt of \$201 million, its Board members were dismissed and the MDC was reconstituted to exist solely to promote the growth centre.<sup>55</sup> Both Michael Knight and Arthur Jones have each recalled how the loss of these powers rendered the MDC ineffective. For Knight, it ‘became a failure which

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<sup>52</sup> See Michael Knight, Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Amendment Bill, Second Reading Hansard, 3 March 1992. Online (Available):

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parliament/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LA19920303026> (Accessed 10 February 2014). Between 1972 and 1975 the federal government devolved \$192M and the states \$120M in total on the *Growth Centres Program*. See Troy ‘Can Canberra pull out now?’, pp. 111-2.

<sup>53</sup> Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australian Cities*, Transit Australia, Sydney, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1989, p. xxiii.

<sup>54</sup> Knight, 1992, op cit. See also Liston, *Campbelltown*, p. 202, and McGill, *Campbelltown: A Modern History*, p. 47; 53.

<sup>55</sup> Glen Searle, ‘The demise of Place Equity in Sydney’s Economic Development Planning’, *Australian Geographer*, vol 22, no 3, 2002, pp. 317-36.

ended up doing nothing but flogging industrial land'. Stretton shared a similar view and further suggested that Sydney would have expanded down the main route to Melbourne to incorporate the town of Campbelltown independently of the MDB and the growth centres program.<sup>56</sup> In 1992, seventeen years after it had been established, the state government dissolved MDC.<sup>57</sup>

Notwithstanding these critical assessments of the MDB and despite its brief lifespan of real effectiveness—as Jones has said, 'for a few years there was money to do things'—the MDB did embody a unique policy situation.<sup>58</sup> Macarthur was the only metropolitan area legislated and promoted as being significant to both metropolitan and national growth and development. Unlike its *National Growth Centres Program* counterparts, Albury-Wodonga and Bathurst-Orange, Macarthur was not about decentralisation, but the restructuring of metropolitan Sydney, Australia's largest city.<sup>59</sup> Added to this was the fact that Macarthur was the sole metropolitan growth centre project covered by an agreement between state and federal governments, which, for H.W. Fawkner, indicated that there was recognition of its growth potential and the immediacy of its needs.<sup>60</sup> Between the late 1960s and the mid-1970s a generation of metropolitan plans and urban policies had propelled Australia's urban future into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and Campbelltown occupied a central place within these.

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<sup>56</sup> Knight, *Hansard*, 3 March 1992. Stretton concluded that the Macarthur Development Board was essentially a 'facilitator of private investment'. See Stretton, *Ideas*, p. xix.

<sup>57</sup> See *Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Amendment Act*, No 9, 1992. Online (Available): <http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/sessionalview/sessional/act/1992-9.pdf> (Accessed 22 March 2013).

<sup>58</sup> Jones, interview.

<sup>59</sup> See Joseph Elkouby and Francis Labro, 'Problems of Urban and Regional Development in Australia', *Urban and Regional Development Overseas Experts' Reports 1973*, Cities Commission Occasional paper, no 1, July 1974, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Government Printer, 1974.

<sup>60</sup> See H. W. Faulkner, 'Campbelltown's transformation from rural town to metropolitan dormitory: Spatial and social repercussions', paper delivered to the Department of Human Geography, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 23 August 1978, p. 15. See also Roseth, 'The 1970s', p. 91.

## CHAPTER 6

### **'The vision splendid'? Concepts of culture and the advancement of suburbanisation**

The previous chapter has analysed the key metropolitan plans and national urban policy initiatives that were released from the early 1950s until the mid-1970s. This period in Australia's planning history, Raymond Bunker has suggested, was fundamentally focussed on suburbanisation.<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan planning had been the responsibility of state governments up until the early 1970s when the Whitlam Government, driven by what John Roseth has described as an almost obsessive desire to concern itself with cities, also pursued policy objectives through this domain.<sup>2</sup> Campbelltown occupied a prominent position in the various planning and policy initiatives that were introduced during the period and as these agendas converged, the significance of Campbelltown became magnified. Not only was it thought of as a place that was crucial to Sydney's growth. But Campbelltown was also considered to be important to Australia's future as an urban nation. Examining this in relation to Bunker's observation raises a number of questions. How did the planning and policy agendas of state and federal governments imagine Campbelltown's future? Beyond spatial concerns, what drove these visions? And what was happening at a local community level in response to these agendas that were being prescribed from the 'top down'?

This chapter extends analysis of the material examined in the previous one by honing in on how concepts of culture featured in and intersected with developments in metropolitan planning and urban policy. By doing so, it sheds light on how the planners and policy makers who were determining Campbelltown's future, and that of Sydney more broadly, deliberately applied 'culture' within this process. I critique these perspectives by drawing on primary research and local histories in order to show how the approaches they had recommended from their Sydney and Canberra desks and drawing boards became less straightforward once they were implemented in Campbelltown.

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Bunker 'Situating Australian Metropolitan Planning', *International Planning Studies*, vol. 14, no 3, 2009, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> John Roseth, 'The 1970s: The end of post-war optimism', in Jonathan Falk and John Toon (eds), *Sydney, Planning or politics; Town planning for Sydney Region since 1945*, Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, Sydney, 2003, pp. 91-2.



'Culture' featured and was understood in a number of ways in the various plans and policies released during the period under review. The notion of local identity, 'the arts' and facilities for cultural activity appear as the main points of reference to culture. The broader sociological concept of 'quality of life' is also used, and in both an imagined and operational sense, culture was considered to have a fundamental role in providing this.<sup>3</sup>

### **Visions for the future hinge upon the past**

The *Cumberland Plan* (1951), *Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD* (SROP) (1968) and *New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin Structure Plan* (1973) ('Three Cities Plan'), were all released by the New South Wales (NSW) Government to manage Sydney's metropolitan growth. Each, as earlier noted, was underpinned by a rationale for development that emphasised how Campbelltown's future as a city depended not only on its geographic location, but on its sense of identity, which was characterised as its 'individualistic spirit, sense of pride and its history'.

SROP and the *Three Cities Plan* had each proposed that Campbelltown be developed to become the 'metropolis' of the South West Sector, which, of the four growth areas identified by the State Planning Authority (SPA), was the priority site for urban development. SROP had recommended that the 'long standing identity' that existed in Campbelltown should be retained to ensure that an 'ethos stemming from the terrain, character and history of the locality' was in place as the new city grew up from the soils of once-agricultural farmlands. While Campbelltown would be the civic and commercial centre of the three-city model, surrounding villages and towns such as Camden, Ingleburn and Minto would be developed as district centres. SROP recommended that in developing these precincts, their local character should also be preserved.

The attention given to Campbelltown by the federal government through the *National Growth Centres Program* and the establishment of the Macarthur Development Board (MDB) took the

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<sup>3</sup> The practice of the inclusion of sociological dimensions was a relatively new development in urban policy at the time. See Aaron Emanuel, 'A Report on the New Cities Programme and Urban and Regional Development Policy in Australia', *Urban and Regional Development Overseas Experts' Reports 1973*,

idea of promoting and celebrating Campbelltown's history and identity as a foundation for its future development to a new level. The MDB drew on the region's historical importance agriculturally, describing it as the 'effective birthplace of the Australian economy'. It claimed that just as land grantee John Macarthur had led the economic development of early Australia through his leadership in pioneering agriculture in the Colony of NSW, 'Macarthur' would once again be 'offering leadership in the development of the Australian nation'. This linking of the local identity to the nation's economy provided a language that amplified the aspirations that the MDB had for Campbelltown, which, once developed as a city, could re-claim its position as a place of national importance.<sup>4</sup>

### **Building quality of life**

The *National Growth Centres Program* was perhaps the most well known of the national renewal and reform initiatives undertaken by the Whitlam Government's Department of Regional and Urban Development (DURD).<sup>5</sup> It provided a pivotal point for the convergence of a wide range of policy areas including cultural policy—or arts policy—as it was then called. In an era of recession, de-industrialisation and the rise of agribusiness, which was seeing the decline of traditional agricultural jobs and farms, the arts were increasingly seen as being relevant to urban planning, regional development, social welfare, tourism, education, local government and other key policy areas. Given that cities and urban equity were a national priority, cultural policy was aligned with a range of programs and objectives designed to advance this agenda.<sup>6</sup> This was reflected in the way the arts were thought about in relation to Western Sydney, where the provision of cultural facilities, like other community infrastructure, had lagged well behind the pace of growth and development. It can also be seen in how the *National Growth Centres Program* envisioned entire new cities that contained the full breadth of urban amenity—including facilities for housing cultural activity—that enabled people to experience the same quality of life enjoyed by those who lived in

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Cities Commission Occasional paper, no 1, July 1974, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Government Printer, 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Macarthur Development Board, *Campbelltown City Centre*, Campbelltown, 1976.

<sup>5</sup> Patrick Troy, 'Can Canberra pull out now? Federalism and urban affairs 1972-75', first published in 1976, republished in *Australian Planning*, 2012, vol 49, no 2, p. 111.

<sup>6</sup> See Australia Council, *Annual Report*, Sydney, 1973, p. 21.

established city areas. Given that Campbelltown was considered both part of Western Sydney and at the core of the Macarthur Growth Centre project, culture was understood both as an issue of urban equity and of quality of life.

In 1973 Australia Council Chairman H.C. ('Nugget') Coombs had reported that a major long-term problem in support for the arts lay in the lack of the basic physical facilities for their practice and enjoyment. For him, the issue was most acute in rapidly developing outer suburban areas of Australian capital cities. A special initiative was established through the Council's Community Arts Unit to focus specifically on Western Sydney as a regional area and field officers were appointed to assess the need for cultural facilities.<sup>7</sup> The rationale that underpinned this policy response was that communities like those in Campbelltown did not have cultural facilities in their local area and this impeded people's opportunity to participate in arts activities. Building cultural facilities would rectify this situation.<sup>8</sup>

The *National Growth Centres Program* extended this thinking further. Cultural facilities, along with universities, schools, hospitals and business centres, were all considered to be part of the suite of essential urban amenities and services that were required for ensuring that people who lived in Australia's cities could all experience a high quality of life.<sup>9</sup> The MDB proposed that the new Campbelltown city, which would be the 'heart' of Macarthur, would contain a full range of cultural facilities: 'a concert hall, museum, art gallery, theatres and libraries'. For Chairman Peter Kacirek, it was the 'heart' that gave a city its 'particular and memorable character and identity'. The breadth of urban amenity proposed by the MDB would signify that Campbelltown was a modern and progressive new outer suburban city to the degree that it would, Kacirek predicted, affect a 'restructuring of urbanisation in the Sydney region'.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See The University of Sydney Architectural Psychology Research Unit, 'Leisure Pastime and Facility Study; Outer Western Areas of Sydney', Interim Report, 1973, p. 37; Coombs, *Annual Report*, 1973, p16; 26. See also Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1974, pp. 22-6.

<sup>8</sup> Since the *Grants Commission Act* (1973) had established the constitutional and statutory basis for directing federal-level funds to local authorities, the Australia Council had taken greater interest in the relationship between the arts and the responsibilities of local government. See Evan Williams, 8 September 1983, re-published in *Arts Alive*, no 12, December 1983, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> See Peter Scott, *Australian cities and public policy*, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1978, pp. 44-5.

<sup>10</sup> Macarthur Development Board, *Campbelltown City Centre*, pp. 1-3; 7; 10; 21-6.

The MDB's vision for the new Campbelltown city brought a number of key urban policy elements together. It followed the federal government's broader policy objectives concerning cities and urban inequity, as did the Australia Council in its focus on Western Sydney and cultural facilities. It also incorporated much of what SROP and the *Three Cities Plan* had proposed for the development of Campbelltown as the South West metropolis. In this vision for the future, Campbelltown would be pumping hard to generate a sense of identity for Macarthur as the model for a new urban Australia. Yet it would be doing this through a trajectory based on emotive connections with its past.<sup>11</sup>

The idea of transforming a town into a new city by preserving the spirit of its past might read as a straightforward process in planning terms. However, beyond the diagrams and reports produced by Sydney and Canberra-based planners, the linearity of such a proposal would seem to be more ambiguous once it takes form in places and within communities. A sense of ambiguity can also be found in the way that the MDB promoted its vision for the new city's suburban surrounds.

### **Forever in between**

At the same time as the MDB was advancing its plans for the new Campbelltown city centre, it was also promoting its vision for the surrounding suburban areas as an environment that 'combines the benefits of both city and country living'.<sup>12</sup> This was not a new concept but drew on a tradition established by earlier campaigners for urban reform who had a stake in advancing the suburban dream. However, while the MDB was selling its vision of outer suburban Campbelltown to future residents, it would seem that not everyone adopted its idea of a neat balance between city and bush.

Michael Knight (2013), who was the Council's Social Planner at the time, explained how Campbelltown was defined and claimed as country for some, and metropolitan for others. There was uncertainty as to whether Campbelltown was a country town on the fringe of Sydney or part of its suburban expanse. Knight's comments encapsulate what Sue Turnbull

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<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

has referred to as the 'instability' of suburbia. She and others such as David McCooey, Trevor Hogan and Chris Healy have each suggested that suburbia is an imagined and physical sort of 'third space'. It would seem that while the MDB was basing its vision for a future suburban Macarthur on the best of the city and the bush, it was also reinforcing its position as a place that was 'neither here nor there'.<sup>13</sup> The sense of ambiguity that was inherent in the way that the MDB constructed its vision and in how locals understood Campbelltown's position at the time would seem to be in contrast to what are, taken at face value, the clearly expressed rationales present in the planning documents.

### **Selling suburbanisation**

To promote their ambitions for Campbelltown, metropolitan planners needed more than diagrammatic models and urban policy-speak. They needed a language that could evoke the identity of Campbelltown in a more compelling way in order to sell their vision for the future. The MDB commissioned leading artists and designers, including the internationally acclaimed photographer Douglass Baglin, to contribute to its promotional material.<sup>14</sup> (See Figure 6 for an example of the kind of images that were used by the MDB in this way.) Knight recalled the impressiveness of the MDB's publications. But he maintains that they were more successful in creating a vision than delivering a reality.<sup>15</sup>

The MDB also differentiated professional artists from the hobbyist practitioner. It promoted the region as being home to the Wedderburn community of 'professional' artists, some of whom, it emphasised, had won international prizes. At the same time, it drew attention to the local arts and crafts societies and noted that 'the amateurs of the district are [also] well

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<sup>13</sup> See David McCooey, 'Neither here nor there: Suburban voices in Australian poetry', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol 10, no 4, 1998, pp. 101-14; Trevor Hogan, 'Nature strip; Australian suburbia and the enculturation of nature', *Thesis Eleven*, vol 74, no 1, 2003, pp. 53-4; Chris Healy, 'Introduction', in Sarah Ferber, Chris Healy and Chris McAuliffe (eds), *Beasts of Suburbia; Reinterpreting Cultures in Australian Suburbs*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1994, p. xvii. See also David Nichols, Kate Darian-Smith and Hanna Lewi, 'Contentment, Civic Pride and Progress: The built legacy of community and everyday modernism in Australia', *The Journal of Architecture*, vol 15, no 5, 2010, p. 589, who refer to the suburbs as being 'middle' and forever in between.

<sup>14</sup> See Charis Chang, 'Obituary: Douglass Baglin', 2010, <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/baglin-douglass-hinton-13392> Accessed 19 February 2014. See Macarthur Development Board, *Campbelltown City Centre*, Campbelltown, 1976, which is illustrated with Baglin's photography.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Knight, interview with Penny Stannard, 16 April 2013, Sydney.

catered for'. The MDB used Campbelltown Theatre Group's permanent housing in the old Town Hall as evidence of the 'general increase in awareness and participation of the arts within the Macarthur Growth Centre'.<sup>16</sup> Such a methodology might excite cultural policy makers in its promise to use participation in the arts to measure the success of metropolitan planning and urban policy objectives. However, beneath the rhetoric there appears to be little to support the claims.

The MDB's inclusion of local cultural activity in its promotional material would seem to have been designed to illustrate the quality of life that could be found in the area. Arthur Jones recalled how the MDB needed to persuade 'the captains of industry' to relocate to Macarthur to develop the capacity of the local industrial economy. But the biggest challenge, Jones remembered, lay in convincing their wives that the lifestyle on offer was as good as or better than Sydney's North Shore.<sup>17</sup>



Figure 6: Denham Court homestead, photo, Douglas Baglin, in Macarthur Development Board, *Campbelltown City Centre*, Campbelltown, 1976.

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<sup>16</sup> Les Hewatt and Robert Johnson, *Macarthur Growth Centre*, Ruse, Campbelltown, 1980, p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown.

Glen Searle has noted that providing enough jobs for the growing population had been the principal economic development issue for Western Sydney during the early 1980s. The second issue was providing the right balance of jobs. Western Sydney was missing out on the white-collar jobs that were being generated in metropolitan Sydney's eastern areas as it was strengthening its place as Australia's commercial and business centre.<sup>18</sup> Beverley Kingston observed that despite state government-driven schemes to increase managerial jobs in the western suburbs, professional-level workers were as reluctant to move there as they were to remote country areas.<sup>19</sup>

It is unknown whether the promise of a fulfilling cultural life and the sense of prestige that internationally acclaimed artists brought to a community was an effective strategy in securing the relocation of the professional classes to Campbelltown at this point in time. What is known, however, is that Lend Lease's development of the exclusive Glen Alpine lifestyle estate in the mid-1980s, which included a prestige golf course, did attract the desired 'executives' to Campbelltown. Former director of the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, Michael Hedger, believes that this created a 'whole middle class, which they [Campbelltown] hadn't had before'. In the past, a small but local 'elite' had held sway over Campbelltown. But suburbanisation in the 1960s and 1970s changed the social mix of Campbelltown and it became a working-class area. (See chapter 11.) The middle-class people that settled in Glen Alpine in the eighties 'had money' and, Hedger emphasised, they were able to support the gallery.<sup>20</sup>

It may not have been fully comprehended at the time, but the MDB's differentiation of the Wedderburn artists as 'professional' would become important a few years later. The categorisation would be a crucial element in gaining State support for the community-led campaign for a public art gallery in Campbelltown. Up until then, however, the proliferation of

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<sup>18</sup> Glen Searle, 'Conflicts and politics in precinct developments' in Bruce Hayllar, Tony Griffin and Deborah Edwards (eds), *City spaces, tourist places: Urban tourism precincts*, Elsevier, Oxford, 2008, pp. 203-20.

<sup>19</sup> Beverley Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. 219.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Hedger, interview with Penny Stannard, 18 December 2012, Manly. Jeff McGill, *Campbelltown: A Modern History, 1960-1999*, Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, Campbelltown, 1999, p. 70.

amateur and community-level cultural activity in Campbelltown had distinguished it from other parts of Sydney.

During the development of the *Sydney Region Outline Plan AD1970-2000* (SROP) and the *Three Cities Plan*, the State Planning Authority (SPA) had employed the anthropologist Caroline Kelly to study how urban development would impact upon the existing community. Part of her role was to ascertain how community groups could be supported through the enormous upheavals that lay ahead. Kelly had found that over two hundred community groups existed within the Campbelltown region and while they catered for a wide range of interests, music and drama were particularly strong.<sup>21</sup> A few years later Helen Colman, a field officer from the Australia Council, made similar findings and added that the level of cultural activity found in Campbelltown was much greater than elsewhere. (See chapter 9.)<sup>22</sup> This would not have surprised local people. As Graeme West, the Member for Campbelltown in the Parliament of NSW (2001-11) has noted, community cultural activity had flourished in Campbelltown since the first Festival of Fisher's Ghost event in 1956.<sup>23</sup>

Campbelltown was understood to place great value on its historic past and this had formed the basis of how it celebrated its sense of identity and had formed the foundations for its vibrant cultural life. This had also guided the thinking of metropolitan planners in how they advanced their plans. SROP and the MDB proposed a level of development for Campbelltown that was unprecedented on an Australian, and arguably, a world scale. The upheaval facing local communities would have been unparalleled. Planners needed to ensure that their ambitions had local support and in selling their vision for a future Campbelltown, they needed it to be palatable to people at large. However, the MDB's first attempts to do so backfired.

Local historian Jeff McGill has noted that some people had been upset that Campbelltown-Camden-Appin had been re-named in honour of John Macarthur, who established the vast agricultural estates in the region in the early 1800s. Many had thought of Campbelltown as a 'Macquarie town' in reference to its colonial founder, Governor Lachlan Macquarie, whose

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<sup>21</sup> New South Wales Government, *The New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin Structure Plan*, State Planning Authority of New South Wales, Sydney, 1973, p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> See Helen Colman, *Community Arts Inquiry; Campbelltown*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1976.



wife Elizabeth's maiden name was 'Campbell'. They considered Macarthur to have been an unscrupulous figure whose name they did not want to be associated with.<sup>24</sup> Ironically, a more recent generation of Campbelltown leaders have celebrated the name 'Macarthur' as the title for the region. Similar to the Camden situation in 2008, as referred to earlier, they have called for Macarthur to be extracted from the rest of South West Sydney and be redefined as a 'stand alone' place. For them, the high level of community pride felt in Macarthur, which extends from its 'rich colonial history' and the quality of facilities such as the Campbelltown Arts Centre, make it vastly different to other areas in the South West.<sup>25</sup>

### **Creating suburban dignity**

While the suite of metropolitan plans released between the 1950s and mid-1970s had dealt with the overarching development of Campbelltown and its surrounds, at a municipal level, processes had been introduced that sought to author a new suburban identity by inscribing the names of famous cultural figures into the landscape. Jeff McGill, Verlie Fowler and Keith Richardson have outlined how Campbelltown Council had taken control of the policy of naming local streets in the 1960s to enable whole suburbs to be developed under one 'theme'. They describe how when plans were made to develop the suburb of Leumeah in 1961, Mayor Kath Whitten had determined that its streets would be named after British writers and poets. The intention of this was to create a sense of 'character and dignity' for the area. Streets were named Milton, Middleton, Wordsworth, Chaucer and Cowper, and the area became known locally as the 'poets and writers' estate. The naming of streets in newly built suburbs went on like this for decades and the large-scale public housing estates that were developed in the 1970s and 1980s would have, no doubt, provided local officials with an extended scope to exercise their cultural fancies.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Graeme West, interview with Penny Stannard, 11 December 2012, Canberra.

<sup>24</sup> Jeff McGill, *Campbelltown: A modern history*, p. 45.

<sup>25</sup> Jeff McGill, 'Careful what you call south-western Sydney', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 May 2013. Online (Available): <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/careful-what-you-call-southwestern-sydney-20130522-2jzuv.html> (Accessed 27 February 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Jeff McGill, Verlie Fowler and Keith Richardson, *Campbelltown's Street and Suburbs: How and why they got their name*, Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, Campbelltown, 1995, pp. 19-20.

Paradoxically, some of the streets named in this way would later become synonymous with the most notorious events in Campbelltown's modern history. In January 2009, Macbeth Way, Malcolm Way and MacDuff Way—all in the suburb of Rosemeadow—became, as a daily tabloid newspaper reported, a 'scene of a blood-soaked rampage of guns and knives that left two people shot and four stabbed'. The area was described as a 'ghetto' where residents lived in constant fear. Mayor Russell Matheson's pronouncement of his city's Shakespearean-themed suburb as a 'war zone' would certainly not have helped with progressing his earlier mayoral colleague's attempts to develop a sense of pride in Campbelltown's suburbs.<sup>27</sup>

While the dimensions of Campbelltown's social and economic history were considered to be vital to its sense of identity, many residents also placed great value on the surrounding natural environment.<sup>28</sup> The seven scenic hills, for example, that encircle Campbelltown create a sense of distance from other parts of Sydney.<sup>29</sup> The *Cumberland Plan* had advanced the idea of Campbelltown's separation from Sydney and the establishment of a bushland green belt area to limit development. But SROP, the *Three Cities Plan* and the Macarthur Growth Centre Project recommended that Campbelltown be fully incorporated within metropolitan Sydney.

### **Local artists and 'other like-minded people' respond**

In the late 1960s as the SPA had accelerated its acquisition of land in anticipation of the implementation of the SROP, Campbelltown residents remained in the dark as to what the plans were proposing. Arthur Jones recalled the situation at the time. Greg Percival, a Campbelltown Alderman, who was also a member of the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, one of the agencies involved with the development of SROP, had attended a fundraising event at Minto High School where Jones was then Principal.<sup>30</sup> He 'dropped a few

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<sup>27</sup> 'Inside notorious Rosemeadow Housing Estate', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 January 2009. Online (Available): <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/inside-notorious-rosemeadow-housing-estate/story-e6freuy9-111118501112> (Accessed 25 April 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Sioux Garside, interview with Penny Stannard, 31 July 2013, Minto Heights, Campbelltown; Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown.

<sup>29</sup> Suburban fringe bushland areas were similarly valued within the Sutherland Shire and in parts of Hornsby Shire See Paul Ashton, Jennifer Cornwall and Annette Salt, *Sutherland Shire: A history*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006.

<sup>30</sup> Greg Percival was a Campbelltown Council alderman from 1956 to 1987. He served two terms on the NSW Legislative Council in the 1970s and 1980s and was instrumental in forming the Campbelltown-Koshigaya Sister City Association. See Harriet Veitch, *Obituary: Greg Percival*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20

hints about big, massive changes that were going to take place'. Jones explained that among those present was the sculptor Tom Bass.

Bass was a prolific Australian artist who undertook major public art commissions for schools, universities, government, companies and religious institutions. He lived and worked at Minto, Campbelltown, from the 1950s to the early 1970s, during which time he produced 'Ethos', a monolithic public sculpture commissioned for Canberra.<sup>31</sup> Despite the profile of his commissions, Bass was never accepted as part of the art world establishment, nor did he seek its embrace. He held strong philosophical beliefs about the role of civic sculpture (public art) and felt that it served a social purpose that was necessary to Australia's development as a modern society. He argued that Australian artists should not replicate developments in European art, as was the tradition, but forge a new vernacular that had an aesthetic that was accessible to people more generally. Bass was also concerned with the rapid diminishment of Australia's natural environment and its replacement by the 'endless sprawling ordinariness of our cities, town and suburbs'. He urged for a response to this that could insert within these processes of change and development, a sense of imagination and the expression of socially orientated sentiments. In this context, Bass maintained that the civic artist had a crucial role to play.<sup>32</sup>

Jones, Bass and others were so concerned about the lack of information available to the community about the changes proposed for Campbelltown that they

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August 2011, p. 25. Campbelltown City Council stated that 'having been actively involved in the development of the City of Campbelltown, watching it grow from a small country town to the regional City it is today Greg [Perceval] never lost his enthusiasm, vision and confidence in the future development of the City'. Campbelltown City Council, Mayoral Minute, Council Resolution Minute Number 70 (Lake/Greiss), 10 May 2011. Online (Available):

[www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/Assets/385/1/MM110510.pdf](http://www.campbelltown.nsw.gov.au/Assets/385/1/MM110510.pdf) (Accessed 17 February 2013).

<sup>31</sup> For more about Tom Bass see Malcolm Brown, 'Bass, Thomas Dwyer (Tom) (1916–2010)', *Obituaries Australia*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. Online (Available): <http://oa.anu.edu.au/obituary/bass-thomas-dwyer-tom-16913/text28801> (Accessed 9 June 2014). See also Tom Bass and Harris Smart, *Tom Bass: Totem maker*, Australian Scholarly Publishing, Melbourne, 2006.

<sup>32</sup> Tom Bass, 'Should civic art make sense?' *Quadrant*, vol 2, no 4, 1958, pp. 64-5. See also, Zelig McLeaod, 'Huge figure for Canberra: Statue catches a city's spirit', *Daily Telegraph*, 7 December 1961, p. 7.

got together to see what they could find out about what was going to happen. And we didn't stick our noses into too much, but one of the things we looked for was ... an environmental report on Campbelltown, which gives a bit of an idea about what might happen.<sup>33</sup>

Jones recounted how from that point on, the group met regularly and Kacirek, who was then the SPA's Chief Planner, eventually attended a meeting to provide them with much-needed information about the impending changes. More and more people became interested in finding out what the impact of urban development would be on the environment and joined Jones, Bass and other like-minded people, including the artist and local high school art teacher, Joan Brassil, in their efforts. Jones described how 'later on when the council elections came to [sic], I actually suggested that we stand as a team, but everyone dropped out except me, and they supported me, so that's how I got into Council'.<sup>34</sup> While the group had provided Jones with the means for entering local politics, he credited Bass with having developed its aims and objectives—his election platform.<sup>35</sup> Alderman Jones was appointed onto the MDB as a community representative, thus ensuring that local concerns about the environment would not go unheeded at that level. His effectiveness in this role was acknowledged in the NSW Parliament in 1992 as it debated the dissolution of the *Growth Corporations Act*.<sup>36</sup>

Reflecting on his election to Campbelltown Council in 1972 and re-election in 1975, Jones commented that he had wanted to stir things up a bit and 'get [the] Council away from holes in the road'.<sup>37</sup> He had been influenced by the American urbanist Lewis Mumford, whose writings had introduced sociological concepts into city planning, and also by recent developments in NSW's southern neighbour, Victoria, where social planner positions had been established in local councils. As a result of his efforts and those of Town Clerk, Bruce

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<sup>33</sup> Arthur Jones, interview.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.* See also 'The twenty point plan of Tom Bass and others', *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 27 July 1971, p. 10

<sup>36</sup> See Michael Knight, Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Amendment Bill, Second Reading Hansard, 3 March 1992. (Online) Available: <http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/hansart.nsf/V3Key/LA19920303026> (Accessed 10 February 2014).

McDonald, Campbelltown Council established a Social Planner position in 1975, the first in NSW, and appointed a young Michael Knight to the role.<sup>38</sup> (See Figure 7.)



Figure 7: Group of people (all unidentified except for Michael Knight, centre back row) in front of Campbelltown City Library, Civic Precinct, Campbelltown, photo, nd, Campbelltown City Library Local Studies Collection.

Bass, Jones and others had inserted a community voice into the SPA's processes, and by doing so exemplified the sense of independent spirit that was seen as a characterising feature of Campbelltown's identity.<sup>39</sup> This local social movement involving artists and other supporters set a precedent for a later campaign in the 1980s for the development of a public art gallery and a later local artist-led movement that has come together, when required, to protect Campbelltown's natural environment.<sup>40</sup> (Indeed, due to the efforts of local people in this way, Campbelltown Council re-zoned the scenic hills to ensure their protection from development.)<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Arthur Jones, interview. Jones was elected to Council twice, serving his first term from 1972-74, and the second, 1975-77. See Arthur Jones email to Penny Stannard, 11 April 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Knight, interview. Knight went onto become the Labor state Member for Campbelltown in the 1980s and 1990s and later the Minister responsible for the Sydney 2000 Olympics.

<sup>39</sup> A number of interviewees commented on the sense of 'independent spirit' that they felt had been a characterising feature of Campbelltown's local identity. See for example, Pat Farmer, interview with Penny Stannard, 21 November 2012, Sydney, and West, interview.

<sup>40</sup> Garside, interview.

<sup>41</sup> See Scenic Hills Association. Online (Available): <http://www.scenichills.org.au/index.html> (Accessed 20 February 2014).

Bunker has rightly observed that metropolitan planning for Sydney from the 1950s to the mid-1970s was fundamentally about suburban expansion. He has further suggested that it wasn't until the 2000s that the spatial conceptualisation of 'abstract concepts' was included in this.<sup>42</sup> This study of Campbelltown, however, would indicate otherwise. Dimensions of culture—both in conceptual and more material forms—featured in and intersected with planning and policy agendas that were attempting to prescribe Campbelltown's future as an outer suburban city and new urban model in Australia. The notion of a sense of identity—a fundamentally abstract concept—featured prominently in this and formed the basis for how planners imagined Campbelltown's successful transition. They determined that its future identity as a modern suburban centre would be created from its past. This then informed the broad spatial determination of the new Campbelltown city, which would both physically and symbolically function as the 'heart' of the Macarthur. Paul Ashton has noted that as suburbs emerge from previously rural areas, the cultural and historical values associated with place can remain.<sup>43</sup> While Ashton may be referring to a more tacit process that occurs in communities in response to suburbanisation, planners and policy makers applied this concept as a deliberate strategy to imagine and promote their future plans for Campbelltown. Their plans laid out a logical process to guide the transition from 'old' to a 'new' Campbelltown, but once the process of implementing these within communities commenced, the cogency of such an approach was less assured.

The federal government's *National Growth Centre Program* had laid out aspirational goals for Campbelltown and Macarthur. However, the Program's disbandment after four years nullified any real effectiveness that it might have had. Yet, this era of federal-level investment in Campbelltown and Macarthur was significant. The MDB had adopted much of SROP's objectives for the region and it had remained in place as the guiding metropolitan plan for Sydney up until the late 1980s. The Macarthur Growth Centre Project also set a precedent in a modern policy sense for recognising Campbelltown within a national context and concepts of culture were very much part of this.

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<sup>42</sup> See Raymond Bunker 'Situating Australian Metropolitan Planning', *International Planning Studies*, vol 14, no 3, 2009, p. 241.

<sup>43</sup> Paul Ashton, 'Reactions to and paradoxes of Modernism: The origins and spread of suburbia in 1920s Sydney', Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, Macquarie University, 1999, p. 11.

## CHAPTER 7

### **'More Bowral than Blacktown': Fisher's Ghost and the development of local cultural policies**

This chapter investigates how the spatial ambiguities that arose from the metropolitan plans and urban policies that were designed to direct the future of Campbelltown were both imbued with and contested through concepts of culture. And Campbelltown's identity was at the forefront of this. State and federal government-led agendas from the 1950s to the 1970s had defined Campbelltown by its white settler historic past and sense of independent spirit, and these attributes had been applied towards the rationale for its development. But how did the people of Campbelltown themselves imagine and celebrate their sense of identity as opposed to Sydney-based planning professionals and Canberra's top public servants who had planned their city's future? And what action did Campbelltown Council take in response to the effects of suburbanisation?

Two core objectives were present in the Council's approach. One concerned fostering participation in community cultural activity to provide local opportunities and celebrate a sense of identity. The other involved promoting local cultural activity in an attempt to gain recognition for Campbelltown as a progressive and sophisticated place. As the Council developed cultural policy directions throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the objectives that it grafted them upon would be challenged by other agendas. Underpinning the contestations between these forces was the ambiguity in the way that different parties understood Campbelltown's position and its identity as it transitioned from 'old' to 'new'.

#### **Putting Campbelltown on the map**

While the *Cumberland Plan* (1951) had identified Campbelltown as a satellite city, no additional funds or further planning guidelines had been released. The future of Campbelltown for much of the 1950s and 1960s remained with the local council.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Up until the release in 1968 of the *Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD* (SROP). See Dennis Winston, *Sydney's Great Experiment: The Progress of the Cumberland County Plan*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1957, p. 81.

Campbelltown had been growing rapidly. In 1952 it had a population of 8840. By 1966, this had risen to 25,300—an increase of 265 per cent.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1950s, the effects of development—which had been led by private enterprise and had progressed at a substantial pace over a relatively short period of time—had resulted in there being gross inadequacies in community infrastructure and services. The rates income base alone was insufficient to finance the development of these new services. To address the shortage of funds Campbelltown Council took an entrepreneurial approach to raise money for services for these new communities.<sup>3</sup> The first initiative of this kind was the inaugural Fisher’s Ghost Parade in 1956.

The colonial-era story of Fisher’s Ghost had emerged in the years following the murder of local man Fred Fisher in 1826. A Campbelltown landholder, Fisher, had abruptly disappeared. His neighbour George Worrell had claimed that Fisher had gone to England, leaving him in charge of his property and general affairs. A few months later, a well-regarded local man, John Hurley, claimed to have seen a night-time apparition of a bloodied Fisher pointing to a particular location in a creek-side paddock. While Hurley’s supernatural account was initially dismissed, local authorities eventually investigated the site and found Fisher’s body. Worrell was tried and executed for the crime. Carol Liston has noted that the trial of Worrell was the best documented of all colonial New South Wales (NSW) legal dramas. Paranormal dimensions began to emerge in the story of Fisher’s murder as it was recounted through poems and published stories in the 1830s. From then on, as Liston has described it, the story of Fisher’s Ghost became ‘endlessly fascinating’.<sup>4</sup>

Poems, dramas, novels and journalistic work featured Fisher’s Ghost throughout the mid to late 1800s.<sup>5</sup> It entered the Australian vernacular in the early 1900s. In 1924, the accused in a

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<sup>2</sup> See Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1954, *Year Book Australia*, Canberra, p. 333; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1966, *Year Book Australia*, Canberra, p. 196.

<sup>3</sup> Carol Liston, *Campbelltown: The Bicentennial History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 211. See also Frederick Larcombe, *The advancement of local government in New South Wales: 1906 to the present*, Sydney University Press in association with Local Government Association of New South Wales [and] Shires Association of New South Wales, Sydney, 1978, pp. 443-4.

<sup>4</sup> Liston, *Campbelltown*, pp. 66-7.

<sup>5</sup> Liston, *Campbelltown*, pp. 64-6. Nineteenth century published works that were inspired by or referred to the Fred Fisher story included, Anonymous, ‘The Sprite of the Creek’ in *Bell’s Life in Sydney and Sporting Reviewer*, vol 2, no 50, 27 June 1846, p. 4; Anonymous, ‘Fisher’s ghost: A Legend of



civic corruption case was 'looked upon as a fisher's ghost to the officials at the Town-hall ... a nightmare'.<sup>6</sup> Earlier, in 1910, the *Brisbane Courier* used the headline, 'MR. FISHER'S GHOSTS' in reference to federal Labour Party Leader Mr Fisher's speech to Gympie constituents addressing socialism in relation to Federation. The use of the term 'ghost' implied that Mr Fisher's argument had not represented the true situation.<sup>7</sup> The silent film era produced the Raymond Longford film *Fisher's Ghost* that toured across Australia in the 1920s, screening at cinemas with packed audiences.<sup>8</sup> The film was described as an 'Australian historical drama, based upon a sensational criminal trial in the early days ... also made entirely by Australians'.<sup>9</sup> The Longford film was used as evidence in the *Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in Australia* (1927) that locally produced films could be as popular and commercially profitable as those imported from Hollywood.<sup>10</sup> In 1925 *The Advertiser* reported that Fisher's

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Campbelltown', published in *Tegg's Monthly Magazine*, March 1836, vol 1, reproduced in *The Colonist: Weekly Journal of Politics, Commerce, Culture, Literature, Science and Religion for the Colony of New South Wales*, vol 2, no 64, 17 March 1836, p. 6; Robert Montgomery Martin, *History of the British Colonies*, J. Chochrane and Co., London, 1835; 'Fisher's Ghost', *Household Words*, conducted by Charles Dickens, vol 7, no 154, 5 March, 1853, pp. 6-9; John Lang, 'The Ghost upon the rail', in *Botany Bay: True Tales of Early Australia*, J. Walch and Sons, Hobart, 1884, pp. 6-8; Marcus Clarke, *His Natural Life*, George Robertson, Melbourne, 1878; G.W. Rusden, *History of Australia, Volume 1*, Melville, Mullen and Slade, Melbourne, 1887, pp. 620-1; William Henry Suttor, *Australian stories retold, and, Sketches of country life*, Glydwr Whalan, Bathurst, 1887; A. Lang, 'The Truth about "Fisher's Ghost"', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, vol 162, no 981, July 1897, pp. 78-83.

<sup>6</sup> *The Mercury*, 14 November 1924, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Brisbane Courier*, 25 February 1910, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Screenings of the film were reported in local papers as follows: *The Mercury*, 10 February 1925, p. 2; *Sunday Times*, 14 March 1926, p. 3; *Morning Bulletin*, 28 September 1925, p. 5; *Advocate*, 20 July 1927, p. 5; *Brisbane Courier*, 17 December 1924, p. 23.

<sup>9</sup> *The Brisbane Courier*, 18 August 1928, p. 6.

<sup>10</sup> Amid growing concern over increased foreign dominance of the Australian film industry, the Commonwealth *Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in Australia* heard 250 submissions from local film representatives and members of the public. Its recommendations, released in March 1928, included the implementation of a quota for features produced in Australia and other Empire countries. Aimed at providing a guaranteed level of exhibition for Australian films, the quota legislation was never passed. See Commonwealth of Australia, *Royal Commission on the Moving Picture Industry in Australia*, Minutes of Evidence, Canberra, 1927. See also Andrew Pike and Ross Cooper, *Australian Film 1900-1977: A guide to feature film production*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1998, p. 87. In 1925 *The Hobart Mercury*, 13 January 1925, p. 2, reported 'When "Fisher's Ghost" was first placed on the market here it was subjected to a boycott by foreign agents, and it was refused by many picture-theatre managers. But it proved to be one of the best Australian successes yet produced'. In advocating for the popularity that Australian films have with local audiences, evidence given to the Commission by a Mr J. George, 'who is engaged in picture production' referred to an acquaintance of his who in screening *Fisher's Ghost* took only £1 less than the box office record set by his screening of the Hollywood film, *The Ten Commandments*. See *The West Australian*, 19 October 1927, p. 16.

Ghost was 'a world Australian story'.<sup>11</sup> And in 1932 the *Sydney Morning Herald* described it as the first really indigenous Australian ghost story.<sup>12</sup> By the 1950s L.A. Triebel, Professor of Modern Languages at the University of Tasmania, wrote that 'no single fact in its history is more responsible for putting Campbelltown on the map than the world famous story of Fisher's Ghost'.<sup>13</sup> Triebel's statement provides a contemporary view into how a local Campbelltown story had become internationally known and as such, functioned as a signifier of place for Campbelltown. This was a precursor to how the story as a cultural narrative would develop in the coming years to form an instrument of public policy as Campbelltown transitioned from a place of farms and villages into a part of Sydney's outer metropolitan suburbia.

### **Fostering local cultural development**

In 1955 a re-enactment of the Fisher's Ghost story had taken place in Campbelltown. Some local lads had placed a bed sheet over the rump of a cow to recreate the apparition of a ghost. Leading up to event, Sydney radio stations had promoted the possibility of the 'ghost's' appearance in Campbelltown. This had drawn a large audience of Sydneysiders to Campbelltown in anticipation of whether or not the ghost would appear. The popularity of the makeshift re-enactment convinced Campbelltown Council that the story had enough interest and popular currency to establish a special Fisher's Ghost annual event.<sup>14</sup>

In 1956 the inaugural Campbelltown Commemorative Festival—a major community cultural event—was held to 'make the name of Campbelltown and its great potential known throughout the country'. A 'grand procession' kick-started the event and the main feature was a Fisher's Ghost Parade that consisted of a much anticipated themed float. For the Council's official historian William Bayley, the festival marked the culmination of a series of developments in Campbelltown that had occurred in the preceding years. The first was the amalgamation of Campbelltown and Ingleburn councils in 1948. The second, the release of the *Cumberland Plan* and the acceptance of 'modern town planning methods', and the third,

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<sup>11</sup> *The Advertiser*, 21 April 1925, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 1932, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> L.A. Triebel, *Fisher's Ghost and other essays*, F. W. Cheshire, Melbourne, 1950, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Liston, *Campbelltown*, p. 211.

advancements in transport that made travel between Campbelltown and Sydney faster. For Bayley, the affect of these developments signified that Campbelltown had 'awakened' from its agricultural and pastoral past.<sup>15</sup> With the words, 'March of Progress', headlining the festival souvenir program, the aspirations for Campbelltown were clear: it was 'progressing and developing in keeping with the effort and spirit of our residents and the joy and gladness of an enterprising community'. There was a belief that Campbelltown's 'citizens of tomorrow are destined to become the sturdy leaders of a great nation'.<sup>16</sup> While the wide-reaching promotion of Campbelltown as a progressive and enterprising place was the primary objective of the event, a second aim was to make 'financial gains' that could support the development of community infrastructure.<sup>17</sup>

By 1960, the Fisher's Ghost parade and the Commemorative Festival had merged into one annual program and the Council purchased land adjacent to Fisher's Ghost Creek 'to perpetuate an event that had carried the name of the town far and wide'.<sup>18</sup> (This site is where Campbelltown Arts Centre sits today.) Reflecting these sentiments is an mid-1960s Festival of Fisher's Ghost float, which states on its banner: 'Campbelltown Municipal Council Fosters the Growth'. (See Figure 8.) Young women dressed in ballet tutus with tiaras and fairy wings sit astride a large sculptured mushroom, which is the centrepiece on the float's top. This quirky parade float with its featured fungus and accompanying council message no doubt represents the concept of growth.

That 'fairies' surround the mushroom suggests also that the float creator, whether guided by the Council or left to his or her creative devices, is perhaps promoting the idea that mystical elements abound in Campbelltown. The Festival of Fisher's Ghost and its predecessor, the Campbelltown Commemorative Festival were introduced to support specific policy outcomes.

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<sup>15</sup> William Bayley, *History of Campbelltown, New South Wales*, Campbelltown Council, Campbelltown, 1974, pp. 161-82.

<sup>16</sup> *Campbelltown Commemorative Festival, 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> October 1956*, souvenir program, Campbelltown Commemorative Festival Committee, Campbelltown.

<sup>17</sup> *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 23 October 1956, pp. 1; 11.

<sup>18</sup> Bayley, *History of Campbelltown*, p. 182.



Figure 8: Float entered by Campbelltown Municipal Council in Fisher's Ghost Festival parade, photo, c1966, Campbelltown City Library Local Studies Collection.

The first was the development of an ambulance station and the second, a music shell (Figure 9) in Mawson Park, Campbelltown's official City park.<sup>19</sup>

The Council's erection of the music shell in 1964 at a time when the suburban transformation of Campbelltown and its impending social change was certain echoed earlier town planning ideologies that had been promoted by Sydney and Melbourne-based urban reformers in the late 1800s and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The design and programming of city parks and open spaces formed part of their efforts to nullify the physical and moral decay that they believed resulted from urbanisation.

Just as public museums and galleries were developed in order to educate people in the fine arts and maintain social order to mitigate the threat of urban unrest, as discussed in chapter 1, so, too, for Ian Hoskins, 'a well-lit park with organised entertainment, clean seats and flowerbeds encouraged the presence of neat, well-behaved men, women and children'. The provision of concerts and the employment of military and civilian bands by councils to

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<sup>19</sup> See *Campbelltown - Ingleburn News*, 23 October 1956. Also Bayley, *History of Campbelltown*, p. 215.



Figure 9: Memorial music shell, Mawson Park, Campbelltown, photo, Geoff Eves, 1968, Campbelltown City Library Local Studies Collection.

the citizenry was, according to Sydney city's Town Clerk in the early 1905, a 'function of higher municipalism'.<sup>20</sup> In the mid-1960s, it would seem that officials in Campbelltown were replicating the approach taken by urban reformers generations earlier.<sup>21</sup>

The Council's 1956 Fisher's Ghost Parade venture attracted the attention of *The Australian Women's Weekly*.<sup>22</sup> In reporting that Campbelltown was planning a tribute to Fisher's Ghost columnist Dorothy Drain argued against a traditional civic style monument. Instead, she

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<sup>20</sup> Ian Hoskins, 'The core of the City: Public parks, respectability and civic regulation in Sydney', *National Identities*, vol 5, no 1, 2003, p. 17. See also Kate Murphy, 'The modern idea is to bring the country into the city: Australian Urban Reformers and the Ideal of Rurality', 1900-1918, *Rural History*, vol 20, no 1, 2009, pp. 119-36.

<sup>21</sup> The music shell no longer exists in Mawson Park and the most recent piece of cultural amenity developed there was by Tom Bass who created a bronze sculpture of Elizabeth Macquarie in 2006 as part of the Council's upgrade of its city park. See Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, *Elizabeth Campbell Macquarie*. Online (Available): <http://www.caahs.com.au/elizabeth.html> (Accessed 14 July 2014).

<sup>22</sup> *The Australian Women's Weekly*, which has been described as the most widely read magazine in the history of Australian publishing, reached its readership apex between the mid-1950s to mid-1960s while under the editorial direction of Esme Fenston. See *The Australian Women's Weekly (1933-), The Australian Women's Register*, published by the Australian Women's Archive Project. Online (Available): <http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE3520b.htm> (Accessed 13 October 2013).

advocated for a modern public artwork that could become part of the increasingly urbanised local environment. Drain wrote:

This is an age of plastics, and it should be possible to devise some illuminated plastic representation of Fisher ... fluorescent lighting, which can do some pretty ghastly things to living complexions, would be ideal ... Fisher's Ghost would be a night attraction and would doubtless, in time, be surrounded by snack bars and petrol stations.<sup>23</sup>

*The Weekly's* column captures the tensions associated with Campbelltown's transition into suburban modernity and how cultural policy directions can be implicated in such change. As the Festival of Fisher's Ghost evolved from this point as a local cultural policy direction, it was bound up in the upheavals that Campbelltown experienced as the tide of suburbanisation took hold.

### **A tradition of support for the arts**

Just as Campbelltown Council had organised the first parade in 1956, more than fifty years later it continues to produce the annual Festival of Fisher's Ghost—a ten-day event. On the first Saturday in November, a procession of local service organisations, businesses, community and cultural groups variously march, dance, play music or pose in costume on floats in a procession down Campbelltown's historic main thoroughfare, Queen Street. Thousands of onlookers line the street to see the spectacle and applaud the efforts of locally created displays. Other events that form the festival's overall program include the Fisher's Ghost Art Award, an exhibition of visual arts that showcases the work of professional, amateur and student artists from Campbelltown and beyond who compete for a range of monetary prizes; Fisher's Gig, a battle-of-the-bands style outdoor youth rock music event; Fisher's Ghost Carnival, a traditional night-time show with rides, fireworks and show bag stalls that is held at Bradbury Oval, a public park and sports field which is bounded by Fisher's Ghost Creek; Miss

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<sup>23</sup> Dorothy Drain, 'It seems to me', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, Wednesday 15 April 1956, p. 20.

Princess Quest, a competition held for local girls aged nine to twelve 'to make their dreams come true'; and the Fisher's Ghost Fun Run, held on the last day of the festival period.<sup>24</sup>

Former Member for Campbelltown, Graham West, who in his youth was a 'caller' for the festival, believes that the Festival of Fisher's Ghost is one of, if not the, longest continuously running community festival in Australia. West believes that its longevity lies in how it has been able to maintain its own identity as a home grown cultural program unique to Campbelltown. He makes a point that the festival was established independently of cultural programs in Sydney. Despite running for nearly six decades, it remains separate to Sydney's cultural life and has never been absorbed into its artistic landscape. From the very beginning, the festival involved local people in planning and presenting publically a program of locally generated cultural activity for the benefit of Campbelltown residents. West believes that the success of the festival parade in its early years created a sense of confidence that additional cultural endeavours could be explored. The consequence of this was that it evolved into a program of that included visual art exhibitions, theatre, music and other activities.

West has mused that this festival model might have been 'almost the Festival of Sydney idea long before the Festival of Sydney'.<sup>25</sup> He contends that what was pioneered through the Festival of Fisher's Ghost in Campbelltown may have been so visionary that it set the precedent for Sydney's major international arts festival. But West seems unaware that the Sydney Festival had its precedence in the Sydney Waratah Festival, which, like the Festival of Fisher's Ghost, was established in 1956. The last Waratah Festival was held in 1974, and the Sydney Festival was first staged three years later. While the history of the Sydney Festival extends back as far as the Festival of Fisher's Ghost, it has not been held every year.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See *Festival of Fisher's Ghost*, '2013 Calendar of Events', Online (Available): <http://www.Fisher'sghost.com.au/Fisher'sGhost/CalendarofEvents> (Accessed 22 September 2013).

<sup>25</sup> West, interview.

<sup>26</sup> The Sydney Committee, the NSW Government and the City of Sydney established the Festival of Sydney in 1977. See Sydney Festival, *Background*. Online (Available): <http://www.sydneyfestival.org.au/About/Festival-History/> (Accessed 16 September 2013). The Sydney Committee was established in 1956 by Sydney's Lord Mayor, Pat Hills, to 'celebrate special occasions and generally to focus favourable attention on this City and the State'. The first major activity of the Committee was the organisation of Sydney's first Waratah Spring Festival, held in October 1956, followed by the Australia Day Celebrations in 1957. The Committee continued this format until the final Waratah Spring Festival was held in 1973, in conjunction with the opening of the Sydney Opera House.

West believes that the Festival of Fisher's Ghost quickly established a tradition of celebrating the arts in the community and that this was understood and valued as a way of expressing a shared sense of identity. This point is important. He maintains that Campbelltown's civic leaders realised early on that social and economic benefits that could be gained from community participation in the arts. They valued what the festival could achieve for Campbelltown and they supported it. This laid the foundations for long-term local bipartisan support for the arts—an arrangement that enabled decades of government supported cultural development in Campbelltown.

The festival provided local people with a platform to respond imaginatively to the changes that were taking place around them both in a physical and a more abstract sense as suburbanisation took hold. It enabled them to author their shared sense of identity as something that was independent to the ideas of state government planners. From this, the local cultural life that had developed in Campbelltown provided an important way to not only celebrate Campbelltown's past identity but to imagine its future. While these developments were taking place on a local scale, the myth on which the festival had been founded had been elevated once again to a national level, but this time for the purpose of authoring Australia's modern cultural identity.

### **Creating a national identity from local myths and legends**

From the 1950s to late 1960s Australia experienced a period of social change with unprecedented levels of immigration and the rapid growth of cities through outer-metropolitan suburban expansion into places such as Campbelltown.<sup>27</sup> Modern Australia celebrated 175 years in 1963. There was a growing sense that it needed to develop its own cultural identity as an independent nation state.<sup>28</sup> Stuart Ward has suggested that with the diminishing appeal of empire and 'British-ness', there was a growing realisation among civic

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By 1974 the Waratah Festival had lost its major sponsor, and was thought to have outlived its usefulness. See City of Sydney Archives, Agency Detail, 'Sydney Committee', (Online) Available: <http://tools.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/AI2/Entity.aspx?Path=\Agency\171> (Accessed 16 September 2013).

<sup>27</sup> Katya Johanson, 'The Role of Australia's Cultural Council', Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Melbourne, 2000, p. 61.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*



leaders that the once-held assurance of a deep-rooted cultural inheritance from Britain was no longer certain. This led to a 'scramble' in the 1960s for the need to develop a national culture.<sup>29</sup> There was a renewed interest in home grown stories from which an Australian identity could be carved rather than one that was transposed from Britain. Art Historian Bernard Smith has observed that the development of Australian art at the time was underscored by a cultural sense of identity that had grown from local myths and legends.<sup>30</sup> The legend of Fisher's Ghost had qualified as genuinely Australian and was featured by *The Australian Women's Weekly* in its coverage of Australia's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.<sup>31</sup>

Television was to provide a new platform for interpreting and disseminating material relating to the development of an Australian cultural identity. Between 1956 and 1960 almost 250,000 television sets were purchased in Australia.<sup>32</sup> Concurrently, Australia's expanding population was increasingly residing in the rapidly developing spaces of metropolitan outer suburbs. The 1962 *Senate Committee Enquiry into the Encouragement of Australian Productions for Television*, known as the 'Vincent Report', had made recommendations addressing the need to increase Australian content in television programming.<sup>33</sup> It was thought that the 'field of drama—light, medium, heavy or musical'—offered the most effective form of creating a genuine Australian image.<sup>34</sup> Opera, a dramatic musical form, was regarded as being ideally suited to the task, and in 1963 the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) premiered John Gordon and Robert Allnutt's *Fisher's Ghost*, the first Australian television opera production and, also noted by *The Australian Women's Weekly* at the time, the first with an historical Australian story.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Stuart Ward, 'Culture up to our arseholes: Projecting post-imperial Australia', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol 51, no 1, 2005, pp. 54-5; 61.

<sup>30</sup> Bernard Smith, *Australian painting 1788-1990*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 348.

<sup>31</sup> See 'Anniversary celebrations', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 13 February 1963, p. 3; 'Ghost legend from the past', *The Australian Women's Weekly*, 25 September 1963, p.17.

<sup>32</sup> Johanson, 'The Role', p. 83.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* See also Tony Bennett and David Carter in 'Policy and industry contexts', in Tony Bennett and David Carter (eds), *Culture in Australia: Policies, publics and programs*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Senator Hanna, *Commonwealth Debates*, Senate 18 March 1964, p. 369 in Johanson, 'The Role', p. 84.

<sup>35</sup> Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 'ABC TV Firsts', *50 Years of ABC TV*. (Online) Available: <http://www.abc.net.au/tv/50years/didyouknow/firsts.htm> (Accessed 20 May 2012). See also *The Australian Women's Weekly*, Wednesday 25 September 1963, p. 17.

Gordon and Allnutt's *Fisher's Ghost* was an example of how the ABC enacted its charter to facilitate the development of a modern Australian identity, and also its role to 'encourage local talent and seek to establish musical groups for the purpose of high quality broadcasts'.<sup>36</sup> As well as re-interpreting an Australian home grown cultural narrative through a dramatic musical form, *Fisher's Ghost* was both created and performed by Australian cultural producers including the young soprano Marilyn Richardson, who was to go on to have an international operatic career. Apart from Gordon and Allnutt, other Australian composers at the time were creating new work on the subject of Fisher's Ghost. These included Marion Wilson and George Dasey who each wrote a work titled 'Fisher's Ghost' for voice and piano.<sup>37</sup>

The ABC's television opera production continued a tradition of appropriating the Fisher's Ghost story into cultural policy directions. Regarded as a genuine Australian legend that had been celebrated nationally and beyond in a range of cultural forms, television brought Campbelltown and its famous story into the cultural consciousness of an ever-expanding suburban Australia. The opera shared commonalities with the Longford silent film from nearly forty years earlier. The film had been produced with the most contemporary cultural form of the time—silent film—and had been an all-Australian production seen by audiences across the nation. Such contemporary cultural forms and practices offer an effective means to interpret and forge new-generation resonance with past cultural narratives and provide an effective means of renegotiating and inhabiting history.<sup>38</sup>

### **A 'hook' to bring people together**

The ABC considered the myth of Fisher's Ghost to be important as it was rooted to a time and place from which Australia as a post-invasion nation first grew. In this sense, it provided content that was ripe for re-interpreting for the purpose of developing a modern national cultural identity. West offers a different and, unsurprisingly, a more localised perspective. He believes that the myth of the ghost or the historical events in the story have never been of

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<sup>36</sup> *Australian Broadcasting Commission Act (1932)*.

<sup>37</sup> Marion Wilson, *Fisher's Ghost*, c1960, [sheet music], Australian Music Centre Collection; George Dasey, *Fisher's Ghost*, [sheet music], Castle Music, Sydney, 1961.

<sup>38</sup> '200 Gertrude Street submission', cited in Parliament of Australia, *Report of the Contemporary Visual Arts and Crafts Inquiry*, Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Canberra, 2002, p. 47.

consequence. It is, he suggests, more about the 'typical intrigues of money and power' than about individuals, colonial-era Campbelltown or early Australia. West maintains that the significance of 'Fisher's Ghost' is in how it has operated in the form of a festival as a 'hook' to bring people together for the opportunity to have a community celebration.<sup>39</sup> He goes further, however, and suggests that in this way Fisher's Ghost constitutes an important chapter in the story of modern Campbelltown itself. This position aligns with that of Andrew May who, as noted earlier, argues that in order for the complexities and nuances of Australia's suburbs to be fully comprehended, their histories need to be re-told through local events, people and places.

Sana Al Amar, a research interviewee who has spent more than twenty-five years living in the Campbelltown area and working with local migrant communities, holds a parallel view to West. She has suggested that people attend the parade simply because it is a public event with stalls, performances and activities for children. From her perspective, people view it solely as a community gathering and do not consider, or are unaware of, the story's original historical context. Al Amar qualifies this by saying that it would be quite difficult to explain the connection between the facets of the story of Fred Fisher—his murder, subsequent appearance of his ghost and execution of the accused murderer—with the festival as it now stands to recent migrants, many of whom are from non-English speaking backgrounds and who would have little knowledge of Campbelltown's colonial-era history.<sup>40</sup> For both West and Al Amar, any meaning derived from the original story is irrelevant to the festival named in its honour. Its *raison d'être* lies in how it functions as a vehicle to bring the local community together through forms of celebration founded in the arts. It is this that generates community pride and a sense of shared identity for the people of Campbelltown. This position, however, is not uncontested. For Lynne Marsh, the very concept that provided the foundation to the cultural activities named 'Fisher's Ghost' was the myth itself. She maintains that the

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<sup>39</sup> West, interview.

<sup>40</sup> Sana Al Amar, interview with Penny Stannard, 26 November 2012, Campbelltown.

mythology generated by the events of the original colonial-era story provided the conceptual basis that underpinned decades of cultural development in Campbelltown.<sup>41</sup>

As recent perspectives, West and Al Amar's views are most useful. They provide an insight into the long-term affect of Campbelltown Council's re-birthing of Fisher's Ghost as a cultural policy direction in the mid-1950s. During this time, the Council had embarked on a deliberate process of fostering community cultural activity as a mechanism to advance its policy agendas for Campbelltown as it underwent the first phase of suburbanisation. Civic leaders recognised that community participation in the arts could enable residents to express a shared sense of identity. This was important given that external Sydney-based agendas were advancing plans for Campbelltown that proposed its physical transformation and with it, the development of a new identity. The festival provided local people with the opportunity to create a sense of identity that was independent of these outside forces. The gains made socially and economically from the early festival events inspired a sense of confidence in City officials that community participation in the arts returned a value and, therefore, warranted support. In a modern sense, West attests that this is the real meaning of Fisher's Ghost. However, the numerous reproductions, interpretations and references to the story in earlier times cannot be ignored at the expense of a position that subjugates narrative or historical meaning altogether. Indeed, they were the very developments that had promoted Campbelltown in the Australian cultural consciousness in the first place. After all, if not for the widespread fame of the 'ghost', would so many Sydney-siders have made the journey to Campbelltown to attend the rump-of-a-cow re-enactment all those years ago?

For more than a century, the tale of Fisher's Ghost had been a subject of fascination to artists and told repeatedly through cultural forms to audiences far and wide. It had evolved both as a Campbelltown-specific and national cultural narrative and had functioned to construct an identity for Campbelltown that while local in its origins was known to an extent well beyond the area. The establishment of the parade in 1956 represented a turning point: local

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<sup>41</sup> Lynne Marsh, 'The History of the Fisher's Ghost Art Award', submitted through BA Hons program Historiography and Research Methods in History (institution unknown), Campbelltown City Council, Local Studies Collection, 1995, p. 10.

government harnessed the popularity that the Fisher's Ghost narrative had generated and applied this in a systematic way to advance public policy imperatives.

The evolution of locally generated approaches towards the development of cultural policy directions, particularly by city governments, have been overshadowed in recent times by the promotion of blueprints such as Richard Florida's 'creative class' and the creative cities thesis. As noted elsewhere, Florida, Charles Landry and other proponents of policy models that apply creativity, culture and innovation towards re-booting city economies to ensure their viability in a post-industrial world have been adopted globally by governments as a panacea to city decline. Such approaches, however, have not been without criticism, particularly in their ability to affect long-lasting social and economic change. Gerry Mooney suggests that rather than achieving economic and social revitalisation of entire cities, such approaches can result in the creation of a two-tier city that benefits some and not others. David O'Brien and Steven Miles describe these models as 'blanket' solutions that ignore or subjugate local cultural practices and communities. Yet it is these very things that Sue Boaden and Paul Ashton suggest offer the key to fostering to genuine social and cultural improvements within places.<sup>42</sup>

The utilisation of local community cultural activity through the celebration of the story of Fisher's Ghost as a platform to promote ideals of progress and 'manage' the effects of suburbanisation had driven Campbelltown Council in 1956. By the 1960s such activity became the grounds for contestation between the way in which community voices and local official agendas imagined Campbelltown's future.

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<sup>42</sup> David O'Brien and Steven Miles, 'Cultural policy as rhetoric and reality: A comparative analysis of policy making in the peripheral north of England', *Cultural Trends*, vol 19, nos 1-2, 2010, pp. 3-13. Gerry Mooney, 'Cultural policy as urban transformation? Critical reflections on Glasgow, European City of Culture 1990', *Local Economy*, vol 19, 2004, pp. 327-40; Sue Boaden and Paul Ashton, 'Mainstreaming culture: Integrating the cultural dimension into local government', in Paul Ashton, Chris Gibson and Ross Gibson (eds), *By-roads and Hidden Treasures: Mapping cultural assets in regional Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2014, pp. 19-36.

## CHAPTER 8

### **Advancing the institutionalisation of the visual arts**

In 1962 Campbelltown Council took a new turn in the Festival of Fisher's Ghost and the cultural policy directions that it had pioneered through the event. It introduced an art exhibition and acquisitive award—the 'Fisher's Ghost Art Award'—as it became known. The festival street parade had grown so big that additional funds were needed to produce it. Once again, in entrepreneurial mode, and with a greater sense of confidence, the Council had looked to community participation in cultural activity to generate capital. Monies would be raised from artwork entry fees and commissions made on the sale of works. The Art Award organising committee, however, pursued more than functional goals and sought to use the Art Award as a way to elevate Campbelltown's presence into the national cultural landscape. They had arranged that an eminent person from the Australian visual arts scene would be hosted in Campbelltown to judge entries. Sponsored prizes would be awarded to artists and the Council would acquire prize-winning works to develop a City collection. While it was established under the auspice of the festival, the Art Award quickly became an event in its own right.

This local annual art competition may seem to be an insignificant event in a study of cultural policy and the Australian suburb. However, the Fisher's Ghost Art Award is arguably unique. It evolved during a time in which Campbelltown was bound in a process of suburban development and growth that was unprecedented elsewhere in Australia. Within this context, the Art Award shone a spotlight on the organised visual arts as a stand-alone community cultural activity. Lynne Marsh has made some conclusions that are most useful in this respect.

Marsh researched exhibition reports and catalogues from the 1960s through to the early 1980s and categorised the collection of prize-winning works against art movements—for example, historic landscape painting or modernist art. These were then set emblematically against the routes that Campbelltown Council and the local arts community had each sought to take the program at various points throughout its history. Marsh found that the subsequent tensions that arose between these directions indicated that cultural agendas were bound up within the changes taking place in Campbelltown as it transitioned from a country town into a part of metropolitan Sydney. It should be noted that while numerous exhibition catalogues

and reviews exist for the various annual Art Award exhibitions, and local newspapers each year enthusiastically cover the prize winning works and artists, Marsh's study appears to be the sole work that attempts to engage with the Art Award in any critical sense or broader context.<sup>1</sup> It is for this reason that her study is referred to in some detail below.

The introduction of the Art Award does not appear to have evolved in isolation from wider cultural developments as Graham West has implied was the case for the festival activities. Across Australia at the time, efforts were being made to carve out a modern cultural identity that was founded on home grown myths and stories, rather than those that were indebted to British traditions. Hints of this overarching context were present at the launch of the inaugural Art Award. President of the Festival of Fisher's Ghost Art Sub-Committee, J.G. Farnsworth, had stated that 'without some appreciation of the arts, a community can well lose its place of dignity in a country which, while still in its infancy, is already rich in tradition and folklore'.<sup>2</sup>

Art historian Bernard Smith has made a link between the cultural developments taking place on a national scale and the way in which they filtered into suburban Australia. He noted that during the 1960s a growing cultural awareness had spread into Australia's suburbs and towns as an increasing amount of pictorial work by visual artists was entered into suburban and rural art prize competitions.<sup>3</sup> Such work explored Australian myths and legends and formed a 'prototype for popular art', which had a conceptual and aesthetic accessibility that enabled it to gain an audience with the wider community. Smith pointed to how the new conventions evolving within the aesthetics of Australian art, including those which would have been influenced by international movements, were exhibited to audiences not only in the galleries of inner-city Australia, but in the halls of its growing suburbs. Visual arts activity in this sense contributed to engaging suburban communities in the development of a modern Australian cultural identity. For Marsh, it was these broader developments that provided a context for

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<sup>1</sup> Lynne Marsh, 'The History of the Fisher's Ghost Art Award', submitted through BA Hons program Historiography and Research Methods in History (institution unknown), Campbelltown City Council, Local Studies Collection, 1995, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> J.G. Farnsworth, speech, 1962, reproduced in Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, *The City of Campbelltown Art Collection*, exhibition catalogue, Campbelltown, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Smith, *Australian Painting 1788-1990*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. 350.

the establishment of this Campbelltown-based activity.<sup>4</sup> Michael Hedger, a former director of the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, however, is more dismissive. He believes that 'having an art prize is something that regional places have always done'.<sup>5</sup>

Farnsworth held aspirations that the Art Award would set strong foundations for inspiring artists and foster an appreciation of the arts among local people. More than this, he believed that it would enable Campbelltown to carve out a sense of identity and pride within the context of the entire Australian cultural landscape.<sup>6</sup> These themes mirrored those that had underpinned the founding objectives of the Festival of Fisher's Ghost some eight years earlier, during which time Farnsworth had been the Mayor of Campbelltown. But there was a significant difference. Whereas the festival had been established to make the name of Campbelltown known throughout the country in general terms, the Art Award, more specifically, would aim to achieve this within the nation's cultural life. Yet, Campbelltown had previously been well and truly on the map in this respect. The difference this time was that a council—an authority normally responsible for more routine activity such as town planning, garbage collection and local regulation—was proceeding down this path. The question is why a peripheral municipality—which in 1962 was still classified as a 'town'—would have as a primary local cultural policy objective, recognition within Australia's cultural milieu.

Farnsworth's ambitions for national cultural recognition had been achieved sooner than anticipated according to Marsh. Some of the biggest names in the Australian visual arts community had entered works in the inaugural and early years of the Art Award. She credits the ambition of local arts supporters with having secured the participation of these artists.<sup>7</sup> Smith, on the other hand, offers a less parochial perspective and suggests that the involvement of such artists in suburban and town art competitions was fairly typical at the time.

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<sup>4</sup> Marsh, 'The History', p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Hedger, interview with Penny Stannard, 18 December 2012, Manly.

<sup>6</sup> Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, *The City of Campbelltown Art Collection*, exhibition catalogue, Campbelltown, 1983, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> See Marsh, 'The History', p. 5. Winners have included Elwyn Lynn (1962); Pro Hart (1963); George Gittoes (1974, 1990); Suzanne Archer (1977, 1982, 1983, 1991); Elizabeth Cummings (1979).



### **Battle lines are drawn**

During the late 1960s and 1970s the Art Award became the ground on which the cultural traditionalists and modernists drew battle lines. The 1969 Art Award marked an occasion in which the older rural values of Campbelltown clashed with the shift to modernity. Prominent veterinary surgeon, Dr Russell F. Rick, opened the show and remarked that the traditional 'Hans Heyson' [sic] style of landscape was more authentic than artwork that is 'completely devoid of formal arrangements' with a 'nature [that] forbids us to call it art'.<sup>8</sup> Rick was referring to 19<sup>th</sup> century Australian painter Hans Heysen who 'made the Australian gum tree monumental and the hero of his nationalistic pictures'.<sup>9</sup> Heysen's work represented a tradition of historical realist art that romanticised the Australian bush landscape and the 19<sup>th</sup> pioneering spirit.<sup>10</sup> Rick's comment was made in reference to an increasing number of modern art works being entered in the Art Award.<sup>11</sup> At the time, the *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News* reported that local art teacher Joan Brassil had given a talk on the 'abstract art' that was in the show. Her attempts to demystify modern art gained an 'enthusiastic audience', which suggests that she had been successful in her educative enterprise.<sup>12</sup> The fact that British-trained contemporary artists such as Suzanne Archer and Peter Laverty had been exhibited in the Art Award signalled for Marsh that there was an acceptance of cultural modernity by many. For her, this further indicated an endorsement of the changing face of Campbelltown.<sup>13</sup> But others, Marsh contended, resisted cultural modernity and sought a return to traditions of the past. The Council's position, for Marsh, was a case in point. Marsh found that while entries in the Art Award from artists from across Australia had been steadily growing, those from local artists had been diminishing.

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<sup>8</sup> *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 9 March 1969, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ron Radford in Anne Gray, 'Hans Heysen, A grand vision: strong forms and bold light', an Art Gallery of South Australia travelling exhibition, 14 May to 11 July 2010. (Online) Available: <http://nga.gov.au/exhibition/HEYSEN/Default.cfm?MNUID=6> (Accessed 14 June 2012).

<sup>10</sup> See Kate Murphy, 'The modern idea is to bring the country into the city: Australian Urban Reformers and the Ideal of Rurality', *Rural History*, vol 20, no 1, 2009, pp. 119-36.

<sup>11</sup> In 1969 this included the work of Suzanne Archer (b. 1945 -) and Peter Laverty (1926-2013), Laverty was the Director of the Art Gallery of NSW from 1971-1977. See Lynne Cairncross, 'An artist driven by his passions', Peter Laverty obituary, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 September 2013, (Online) Available: <http://www.smh.com.au/comment/obituaries/an-artist-driven-by-his-passions-20130913-2tq8u.html> (Accessed 17 September 2013).

<sup>12</sup> *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 4 March 1969, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Marsh, 'The History', p. 3.

The dedicated award category for local artists was ‘landscape painting’. Works were required to depict scenes of local landscapes and be executed in traditional representational styles. The shrinking of local artist entries prompted moves by the Council a few years later to reorientate the focus of the Art Award in its entirety towards traditional landscapes in efforts to boost local participation.<sup>14</sup> Not only did such art conventions symbolise values associated with an Australia of earlier times; the Campbelltown landscape itself had been the subject of paintings by famous colonial-era artists such as Conrad Martens. Sioux Garside, Director of the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery from 1988 to 1998, recalled that many local people valued these depictions of Campbelltown as significant cultural material that served to highlight the important position that it had had in Australia’s history.<sup>15</sup>

The Council’s moves to re-direct the Art Award had also triggered questions as to the whereabouts of the collection of the fifty prize-winning works that it had acquired since 1962.<sup>16</sup> Once the artworks were located it became apparent, according to Marsh, that the collection leaned more towards modernist styles—work that reflected the contemporary developments taking place in the Australian visual arts—than historic landscape painting or pictorial representations of local scenes.<sup>17</sup> With Laverty, Archer and other prominent contemporary artists such as Barbara Romalis, George Gittoes, Peter Pinson and Roy Jackson, who were by then represented in the collection, it would suggest that this was the case.<sup>18</sup> Marsh concluded that a paradox existed in the Council’s attempts to shift the Art Award towards the traditions of historic landscape painting while its own collection was in fact largely modernist. Furthermore, she believed that the Council was unwilling or unable to reconcile the fact that in its representation of prominent artists the collection was evidence that the Art Award had developed a profile well beyond Campbelltown—one of the underlying aims of its establishment in the first place. She concluded that ‘the apparent lack of recognition by ... Campbelltown Council for the increasing importance of not only the awards

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<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Sioux Garside, interview with Penny Stannard, 31 July 2013, Minto Heights, Campbelltown.

<sup>16</sup> Barbara Romalis, ‘Introduction’, in Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, *The City of Campbelltown Art Collection*, exhibition catalogue, Campbelltown, 1983, p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Marsh, ‘The History’, p. 5.

<sup>18</sup> See Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, *The City of Campbelltown Art Collection*.

but also the encompassing of art from a wider perspective than the local landscape can be seen as typical of a country town in conflict with the need to urbanise'.<sup>19</sup>

### Critical moments

By early 1983, tensions around the Art Award reached a critical point. Graeme Dunstan, Campbelltown Council's first community arts officer, was appointed coordinator of the Festival of Fisher's Ghost Art Sub-Committee. He and prominent local solicitor John Marsden had recently established the Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery ('the Friends') to campaign for a City art gallery. The Art Society of Campbelltown, which had been founded to foster the 'high' arts in Campbelltown, had been lobbying for a gallery since its inauguration in 1967.<sup>20</sup> An art 'expo' that it held in 1968 to bring the works of leading contemporary artists to Campbelltown had received favourable reviews from well-known city art critics.<sup>21</sup> Dunstan and others attempted to re-align the Art Award with the gallery agenda, but the festival organising committee did not endorse their proposal. Their response had been that 'the Festival of Fisher's Ghost Exhibition is, after all, a traditional festival event rather than an art event and is valued for its accessibility to local amateurs and its revenue earning capacity for the Festival as a whole'.<sup>22</sup> Some claimed that the reason for the committee's rejection was that it had been 'stacked with anti-Art Society feeling'.<sup>23</sup> The Society had been at the forefront of the art gallery cause for a generation and its President, Claire St Claire, had developed a reputation within the Council as a 'pain in the arts'.<sup>24</sup> Ruth Banfield remembered that she had 'unfortunately' managed to alienate many people.<sup>25</sup> Marsh concluded that the position of the festival organising committee, and thus the Council, was that it discouraged the advancement of 'high culture' for Campbelltown. For her, this signified an inability or unwillingness on the

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<sup>19</sup> Marsh, 'The History', p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> See *Music, Drama, Ballet and Art Expo 68*, Program, Campbelltown Art Society, 1968, p. 3, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

<sup>21</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald* had reported that Professor of Art, Bernard Smith, who awarded the Expo's \$1000 Penfold-Hyland prize to John Olsen had been 'surprised and delighted to see an exhibition of such magnitude in works and names in an area outside the city'. See 'Olsen work wins art prize', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 March 1968, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> See *ArtSoc News*, no. 5 July 1984, p. 3, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

<sup>23</sup> See Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Minutes of meeting 2 March 1983, p. 1, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>24</sup> Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown.

<sup>25</sup> Ruth Banfield, interview with Penny Stannard, 26 November 2012, Denham Court, Campbelltown.

Council's behalf to progress a cultural agenda that symbolised the growth and development of Campbelltown as a modern, major outer suburban city. And in this way, it was at odds with the future plans for Campbelltown that had been articulated by the Macarthur Development Board (MDB).<sup>26</sup>

For two decades the Fisher's Ghost Art Award had formed the crux of Campbelltown's official visual arts program. It had clearly developed a profile for Campbelltown in the wider cultural landscape as its founding president Farnsworth had hoped. Yet some, it would seem, rejected what was for others the logical next step for the Art Award. Marsh saw the rejection of Dunstan's proposal in these terms and she dismissed the Council's position as another example of its recalcitrance towards cultural modernity. However, this line of reasoning has some shortcomings.

Throughout Marsh's account of the history of the Art Award, she represents favourably the role of local art supporters, including a 'Mrs Joy Pender Marsh', a figure who coincidentally shares her surname. The Council, on the other hand, is depicted as a constant thorn in the side of their efforts. Marsh is not alone in an approach that pitches arts supporters against government agencies in the development of the arts in communities. Katherine Knight, in her recent history of the arts in Western Sydney, has a tendency to do the same.<sup>27</sup> The limitations of this approach are that it either ignores completely or downplays developments made in the cultural policy realm. Marsh, for example, makes no reference to the discourses, administrative mechanisms and policy models that had developed during the period of her study that had the arts and culture as a primary or secondary policy concern. For this reason, a re-interpretation of the response to the Friends proposal is warranted.

The organising committee held that the Art Award should not be an exclusive event that promoted the aesthetic qualities of art alone, but one that was valued for its contribution to local community cultural life more wholly. Perhaps in basing the need for an art gallery on an argument to advance 'high culture' for Campbelltown as the Art Society had done was

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<sup>26</sup> Marsh, 'The History', pp. 5-7.

<sup>27</sup> Katherine Knight, *Passion, Purpose, Meaning: Arts Activism in Western Sydney*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 2013.

ideologically unpalatable to the festival organising committee, which largely consisted of elected officials. Earlier objectives that had sought status for Campbelltown within the national cultural milieu may no longer have had the same level of currency as they had in the 1960s. Intense social upheaval had occurred there throughout the 1970s due to the effects of suburbanisation and by the end of the decade the shortage of social infrastructure had reached critical levels. Michael Knight recalled that as thousands of young, working-class families settled in Campbelltown's new suburbs, voting patterns had changed.<sup>28</sup> By the late 1970s the voices of the conservative 'old guard', which had dominated local politics, business and society—and community cultural life—were waning. Other, newer voices had entered the discussion about the directions that Council's policies should take, and the domain of culture and the arts was part of this.

Underlying these discussions was how Campbelltown was understood in a spatial sense. As the 1980s approached, community arts and principles of access and participation had developed in relation to Western Sydney and outer-suburban places more generally. The Australia Council promoted these approaches from the mid-1970s and by the new decade these ideas had started to gain traction within Campbelltown Council. Developing the 'high arts' in these places was not part of a community arts agenda. (This is discussed in the following chapters.) The state government at the time was supporting the development and professionalisation of cultural facilities in areas outside Sydney in regional NSW. For some, Campbelltown was still considered to be a big country town and not part of metropolitan Sydney as the *Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD* (SROP) and the *Three Cities Plan* had each proposed. Local art supporters had hinged the case for a gallery onto the policy objectives that were contained within the Macarthur Growth Centre Project. From this perspective Campbelltown was considered to be an important place nationally. The idea therefore of its visual arts having a presence on the nation's cultural stage would equate with this status. However, the Growth Centre Project proved to be short-lived and the cultural objectives that it promoted remained rhetorical only. In maintaining a position that aligned

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<sup>28</sup> Michael Knight, interview with Penny Stannard, 16 April 2013, Sydney.

with the Growth Centre, it would seem that the Art Society and those pushing for a gallery had not been aware of developments in cultural policy elsewhere.

For Marsh, those responsible for achieving recognition for Campbelltown on the national cultural scene, and thus fulfilling the aspiration of the Art Award's founders, had been its long-term local arts supporters. However, there is evidence to suggest that this particular section of the community—its cultural leaders—would have identified less with Campbelltown as a growing outer suburban city and more with its past as an independent town that was detached from the metropolis—a perspective that counters that put forward by Marsh. As Knight has aptly put it, for the 'self-defined elite', Campbelltown was 'more Bowral than Blacktown'.<sup>29</sup> The Southern Highlands town of Bowral, located in the NSW countryside over 100 kilometres from Sydney, had, like Campbelltown, been settled by colonial land grantees that had established expansive agricultural estates in the area. Sydney's 'high' or elite society would retreat to their Bowral manor houses, much like the London-based aristocracy.<sup>30</sup> Even up until the 1980s, according to Sioux Garside, Campbelltown valued its 'squattocracy': 'Lady Dorothy Macarthur-Onslow was still alive and very much important in that elitist community of people.'<sup>31</sup> Blacktown, on the other hand, a large local government area located further north than Campbelltown in Western Sydney, had undergone expansive suburban development from the 1950s to the 1970s. Its population largely consisted of thousands of young working-class families and public housing residents. While some agricultural lands still remained at the far west and northern peripheries of the municipality, Blacktown was regarded as an outer suburban centre, one that was characterised by social and economic disadvantage. If, as Knight observed, Campbelltown was defined as 'metropolitan' for some and 'country' for others, it would appear that the arts supporters were in the latter camp.

When the festival coordinators introduced the Art Award in 1962 the institutionalisation of the visual arts emerged as a separate local cultural policy objective. The Art Award had quickly developed as an event that was recognised in its own right and the visual arts became a

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<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> See Beverley Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. 248.

<sup>31</sup> Garside, interview.

specific avenue through which to advance the cultural development of Campbelltown. It was a pathway that was predicated on gaining a profile for Campbelltown on the national cultural scene, which, at the time, denoted the 'high' or elite institutional arts such as the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. The ambition was that through the Art Award, Campbelltown's visual arts would develop to a level that was sufficiently advanced and sophisticated for acknowledgment alongside the nation's flagship arts activity. Such objectives were associated with policy concepts of 'excellence', professionalisation and the institutionalisation of the arts and this became the theme that drove the efforts of local arts supporters. On the other hand, the Festival of Fisher's Ghost—the original auspice of the Art Award—leaned more towards objectives associated with the concepts of community access, opportunity and participation—principles that official voices had sought to re-instate within the Art Award. While these agendas had sat side by side at the inauguration of the Art Award, they had soon come into conflict. The result of this was that the organisation of the visual arts became the wedge that drove a bifurcation of local cultural policy objectives in Campbelltown.

### **Fifty years on**

In 2012 the Fisher's Ghost Art Award—held at the Campbelltown Arts Centre since 2005, and before that, from 1988 at the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery—celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. To mark the occasion, the Council provided \$40,000 cash for the major award—a significant sum for a suburban art prize. Eight hundred people attended the opening night and award ceremony. According to Joan Long and Vija Heinrichs, who have been active in the local arts scene for twenty years, this made it by far the most well attended event at the Arts Centre. For them, this was an indication of how well regarded the Art Award is in Campbelltown's cultural life. Each year, some of Australia's leading visual artists enter works in the Art Award and the major prize is competitively awarded. Many more local children, hobbyist artists and art students also enter works and have the opportunity to be in the running for a prize. The 2012 event marked a return after a number of years to an approach of exhibiting all submitted art works 'regardless [of] how bad, how good'. For Long and Heinrichs, this is the reason why the event remains so popular with local people. Long-term

Campbelltown arts supporter Ruth Banfield also shares this view.<sup>32</sup> They believe that the spirit of participation, inclusivity and opportunity that underpins the Art Award contrasts with the sense of alienation felt by many in the local community towards the Arts Centre in recent years. The implication drawn from this and the 2010 debate about the direction of the Arts Centre, referred to in chapter 3, is that in its pursuit of accolades within the national cultural scene, Campbelltown Council has neglected local community cultural needs. Conflicts that were present in earlier days of the Festival and the Art Award between cultural policy directions that pursue objectives for fostering local participation and generating opportunity on one level, and the need for national level acknowledgment, on the other, would appear to remain unresolved.

The process of suburbanisation, which had commenced in Campbelltown in the late 1950s, gained momentum throughout the 1960s. During the 1970s the implementation of state government housing and land affordability policies resulted in the development of vast suburban housing schemes throughout the Campbelltown local government area. The pace and scale of suburbanisation there was unlike anywhere else in Australia at the time. The introduction of metropolitan plans and national urban policies in the late 1960s and early 1970s elevated Campbelltown's position as a place that was not only important to Sydney, but to Australia's future, and 'culture' was a feature within these proposals. Throughout these years, the ABC and other national agencies such as the Australia Council had been charged with shaping Australia's modern cultural identity. The story of Fisher's Ghost had been drawn into this process by the national broadcasting authority. But even before this, the tale had made Campbelltown known throughout Australia. The harnessing of the popular story by Campbelltown Council into a 1956 festival formed a cultural policy direction that could assist in supporting the community through the upheaval caused by suburbanisation. It also gave civic leaders a focus for their desires to have Campbelltown recognised nationally for its progress and potential.

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<sup>32</sup> Joan Long and Vija Heinrichs, interview with Penny Stannard, 2 August 2012, Sydney; Banfield interview.



While the notoriety of the Fisher's Ghost story may have formed the impetus for Campbelltown Council to establish the festival, this became increasingly less relevant. The significance of the Fisher's Ghost narrative in a modern sense lies in how it gave a name to a program of Council-led community cultural activity that, over time, gave rise to Campbelltown's uniquely vibrant cultural life. It also established a tradition for celebrating the arts and an acceptance by civic leaders that participation in community cultural activity could provide social and economic benefits for the people of Campbelltown. The introduction of the Art Award saw cultural policy directions channelled through the visual arts. As groups other than the Council participated in the development of the Art Award, it was singled out from other art activities as a symbol of the tensions associated with Campbelltown's modernisation.

## CHAPTER 9

### **‘Popping in to see a few pictures while doing the shopping’: Cultural policy directions and community agendas converge at Campbelltown**

This chapter examines developments in cultural policy at three tiers of government—federal, state and local—from the mid-1970s to 1981. It explores how these developments evolved, the philosophies, objectives and practices upon which they were based and how this shaped particular cultural policy directions. It discusses how these developments converged at Campbelltown and intersected with the agendas being advanced by local arts supporters. What were the forces that led to the convergence? Who were the stakeholders involved? How did Campbelltown’s position within broader spatial and cultural landscapes impact upon the configuration of policy directions and local agendas? Why were local goals for cultural development being channelled through the objective of an art gallery? And did this approach reflect the needs of the population in general or more select groups? From this environment, a new phase of cultural development in Campbelltown took hold that would go on to set the stage for the establishment of the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery in 1988, a subject which is the topic of chapter 12. But, as this discussion will establish, underpinning the various developments and agendas were some fundamental inconsistencies and ambiguities, many of which continue to resonate within debates about culture and the arts in Campbelltown and more broadly, Western Sydney today.

### **‘Livin’ in the seventies’: Cultural policies emerge**

In the lead up to the December 1972 federal election, the leader of the Labor opposition, Gough Whitlam, announced a suite of cultural policy directions designed ‘to promote a standard of excellence in the arts; to widen access to, and the understanding and application of, the arts in the community generally; to help establish and express an Australian identity through the arts; and to promote an awareness of Australian culture abroad’.<sup>1</sup> Once Labor formed office, the arts became part of a broader policy sphere that was built on social

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<sup>1</sup> Gough Whitlam, ‘It’s time’, *Whitlam’s 1972 Election Policy Speech*, 13 November 1972 (Online) Available: <http://whitlamdismissal.com/1972/11/13/whitlam-1972-election-policy-speech.html> (Accessed 11 June 2012).

democratic principles such as equity, community access and participation and these underpinned the government's program of national renewal and reform. The Australia Council was remodelled in 1973 and a Community Arts Committee was established to take carriage of the agency's responsibility for broadening access to and participation in the arts.<sup>2</sup> These, according to Gay Hawkins, became the proprietary interest of the Community Arts Unit, which had been formed to administer grants awarded by the Committee.<sup>3</sup> In 1975 the Australia Council was made a statutory authority. The cultural policy objectives that it was originally anchored upon remain largely in place today despite the introduction of a new Act in 2013.<sup>4</sup>

As noted earlier, the late 1960s to the mid-1970s are widely regarded as having spearheaded a cultural awakening in Australia. The arts were progressively understood as having a role to play across a broad range of policy areas.<sup>5</sup> Hawkins has suggested that rather than having pioneered cultural policy in Australia, the Whitlam Government built on models that were in place prior to its election into office. Its injection of enormous funding into the Australia Council enabled it to develop new initiatives in the cultural policy field. For Hawkins, this, and the government's re-inscribing of the terms 'access', 'participation' and 'community' as part of its social democratic ideology, best defined the significance of its work in the area of cultural policy.<sup>6</sup> For Australia Council Chairman H.C. ('Nugget') Coombs, the Whitlam Government's 'spectacular increase' of funds to the Australia Council provided 'significant acknowledgement of the role of the arts in the quality of life'.<sup>7</sup>

The inclusion of cultural objectives by the Whitlam Government within the broader public policy arena and the resulting commitment of funds towards cultural activity nationally, gave some sections of the Australian population access to arts funding for the first time. Outer suburban areas had not featured in national cultural policy directions prior to the

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<sup>2</sup> See H. C. Coombs, 'Chairman's Report', *The Australia Council for the Arts: First Annual Report*, Sydney, Australia Council, 1973, pp. 9-52, for an overview of the establishment of the national arts agency and the Community Arts Committee.

<sup>3</sup> Gay Hawkins, *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing community arts*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p. 35.

<sup>4</sup> *Australia Council Act (1975); Australia Council Act (2013)*.

<sup>5</sup> Coombs, 'Chairman's Report', *The Australia Council for the Arts: First Annual Report*, Sydney, Australia Council, 1973, pp. 9-52.

<sup>6</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Coombs, 'Chairman's Report', p. 13.

establishment of the Australia Council despite growth being concentrated there from the post war period onwards. The decentralisation initiatives of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust (AETT) and Arts Council of Australia (ACA) led to touring city-based programs to rural Australia—‘the bush’—but the outer suburbs had been ignored and were largely dismissed as cultural wastelands.<sup>8</sup> Such attitudes towards Australia’s suburbs were indicative of the views that prevailed among leading cultural protagonists as discussed in chapter 3. It is no surprise, then, that national cultural entities such as AETT and ACA—charged with the task of creating a culturally sophisticated post war society—would have institutionalised and perpetuated such views and seen suburban Australia as symbolising the antithesis of their mission. The lack of access that suburban populations had to established cultural programs combined with the dearth of community facilities—including those for the arts—meant that people who lived in the growing outer suburban areas of the nation’s capital cities, in places like Campbelltown, were characterised by the Australia Council as ‘culturally disadvantaged’.

Research published in 1973, commissioned by the Australia Council, had found that there was a general lack of leisure and recreation opportunities available for people who lived in outer Western Sydney, particularly in relation to the arts. The causes of this included: the lack of local employment opportunities resulting in long commuting times; the proliferation of shift work and the number of families where husbands and wives both worked; poor transport; and the demographic age of the population which included a large proportion of children who required child minding. The Report, *Leisure Pastime and Facility Study: Outer Western Areas of Sydney*, found that insufficient information was available to identify community-based need for future leisure and recreation opportunities and it was unable to provide guidance to the Australia Council for decision-making in this respect. It recommended, therefore, that decisions ‘must ... be based on other grounds, such as social, political or moral considerations, than the expressed need of the community’.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See Penelope Stannard, ‘Cultural policy and suburban Australia: From the post-war era to the early 1980s’, *The International Journal of Arts Theory and History*, vol 8, no 3, 2014, pp. 19-27.

<sup>9</sup> The University of Sydney Architectural Psychology Research Unit, *Leisure Pastime and Facility Study: Outer Western Areas of Sydney: Interim Report*, 1973, p. 37.

Coombs observed that facilities to support the practice and enjoyment of arts were ‘sadly lacking’ in the less affluent, newer and growing suburban areas of Australia’s metropolitan cities. ‘Such facilities’, he wrote in the Australia Council’s 1974 *Annual Report*, ‘have so far come low in planners’ priorities’—a situation that the *Leisure Pastime and Facility Study* had found all too apparent. Coombs believed that the absence of this infrastructure had significantly compromised the Council’s ability to fulfil its responsibilities to widen access and increase participation in the arts.<sup>10</sup> In suburban Australia, the Council bemoaned, ‘arts activities are nightly sacrificed on the deluded altar of the multi-purpose municipal hall’. The Australia Council promoted a view that in the areas that were identified by government planners as ‘requiring special assistance’, community arts could offer ‘a valuable factor in improving the quality of life’.<sup>11</sup> As discussed earlier, planners had prioritised the urban development of the ‘Three Cities’ and Campbelltown was centrally placed for special attention and support.

In 1975, the Community Arts Unit’s Ros Bower reported that need in areas away from the arts facilities of the big capital cities had become critical.<sup>12</sup> In response to this situation, the Australia Council established the Community Arts and Regional Development Program (CARDP) ‘to develop broader distribution of artistic activity throughout the community’ and to stimulate interest and participation in the arts with people ‘who in the main, are not otherwise likely to respond’. A special Western Sydney project was scoped and field officers were appointed to ‘liaise with groups and stimulate interest in the arts’.<sup>13</sup> It was anticipated that their findings would provide important direction on community involvement in the arts and on regional arts development—something which the *Leisure Pastime and Facility Study* had been unable to do—and boost the Australia Council’s efforts to fulfil the responsibilities that Coombs had felt were not being adequately met.<sup>14</sup> Sue Boaden and Paul Ashton have

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<sup>10</sup> Coombs, ‘Chairman’s Report’, p. 16.

<sup>11</sup> Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1974, pp. 24-6.

<sup>12</sup> Ros Bower, ‘The Community Arts Program – In Retrospect’, *Community Arts and Regional Development Program Field Officers Seminar*, Wollongong, 9-10 December 1975, programs and papers, Section 1: 4.3, pp. 2-4.

<sup>13</sup> Australia Council, *Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Education, Science and the Arts*, 1975, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> See also Ross Hohnen and Paolo Totaro, ‘C.A.R.D. Grants to Local Government’, a paper presented to the Community Arts and Regional Development policy meeting, Australia Council, 30 September 1975.

suggested that it wasn't until the introduction of the CARDP that community arts 'really only got going'.<sup>15</sup>

### **Critical appraisals of cultural disadvantage**

Hawkins' influential work, *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing Community Arts*, provides some important insights into how the Australia Council responded to the policy objectives of access and participation and how the concept of cultural disadvantage was employed to deliver them. She observed that, unlike, Music, Theatre, Literature and other programs within the Australia Council, the Community Arts Program did not concern a single art form and it had no established client base of practitioners that required funding. Because of this, the Community Arts Unit needed to create a constituency for its program. It established a client base of people that were considered to be culturally disadvantaged. A common bond of cultural deprivation caused by spatial, economic and/or social circumstances united them. The Unit identified existing organisations that provided services to populations who were disadvantaged, such as prisons, migrant and community services and local government, and founded its client base on these groups.<sup>16</sup>

It was local government, Hawkins has suggested, which provided the Australia Council with a geographically coded space for defining 'community'. It established a fifty per cent subsidy scheme to support community arts officer positions in local government and the first cohort of these positions was based in councils in outer suburban northern and southern Sydney.<sup>17</sup> Recipients of welfare and social services also constituted 'community' in a non-physical sense. For Hawkins, the ambiguous and fluid definition of 'community' that the Unit hinged its

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<sup>15</sup> Sue Boaden and Paul Ashton, 'Mainstreaming culture: Integrating the cultural dimension into local government', in Paul Ashton, Chris Gibson and Ross Gibson (eds), *By-roads and Hidden Treasures: Mapping cultural assets in regional Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2014, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, pp. 35-7.

<sup>17</sup> In 1973-74 six direct grants were made to councils. In NSW they were Sutherland and Warringah. See Hohnen and Totaro, 'C.A.R.D. Grants to Local Government'. Also see Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1974, p. 22.

activities upon enabled it to encompass as many domains as possible in its remit and construct constituencies for community arts around several axes simultaneously.<sup>18</sup>

Following Tim Rowse and Tony Bennett, Hawkins has suggested that the culturally disadvantaged were also subjects that existed outside the paradigm of aesthetic 'excellence' that held hegemonic sway within the arts as it was institutionalised by the Australia Council.<sup>19</sup> The disadvantaged were thought to be without cultural sensibilities and the Council saw its role to 'foster talent' and 'cultivate taste'.<sup>20</sup> Such paternalistic attitudes towards the acculturation of the populace, Hawkins argues, were entrenched systemically within the Australia Council.<sup>21</sup> Lisanne Gibson has noted that the civilising and educative effects of culture were brought to bear upon sections of the community that were considered to lack not only physical access to culture but knowledge of it.<sup>22</sup> Deborah Stevenson adds a further perspective as to how the culturally disadvantaged lay beyond the values and systems that were dominant within the Australia Council. She suggests that the practices that were endorsed for this group were those that were tailored to express collective identity, rather than the mastery of an individual, which was the case with the art-form specific programs.<sup>23</sup> It would seem that for the culturally disadvantaged, as the *Leisure Pastime and Facility Study* had recommended, decisions were being made on ideological and moral grounds.

Existing on the outer fringes of Sydney, Campbelltown had no dedicated cultural facilities and its resident population was statistically younger, less educated, more likely to work in blue-collar occupations and earn lower than average incomes.<sup>24</sup> The Australia Council therefore

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<sup>18</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, pp. 35-7.

<sup>19</sup> Tim Rowse, *Arguing the Arts: The funding of the arts in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985, pp. 33-5; Tony Bennett, 'Really useless 'knowledge': A political critique', *Thesis Eleven*, 1985, vol 12 no 28, pp. 42-3; Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, pp. 12-3.

<sup>20</sup> Australia Council, *Annual Report, 1978-79*, 'Grants for the Arts: Some principles and precautions', p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, pp. 12-3.

<sup>22</sup> Lisanne Gibson, *The uses of art: Constructing Australian identities*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 2001, p. 102.

<sup>23</sup> Deborah Stevenson, *Art and organisation: Making Australian cultural policy*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 2000, pp. 55-7.

<sup>24</sup> See Jeff McGill, *Campbelltown: A modern history 1960-1999*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society, Campbelltown, 1999, pp. 43; 53. See also H.W. Faulkner, 'Campbelltown's transformation from rural town to metropolitan dormitory: Spatial and social repercussions', paper presented at Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, Canberra, 23 August 1978.

assumed that the people of Campbelltown and those across Western Sydney more broadly existed in a 'cultural desert' with little or no participation in, or sensibility for, the arts.<sup>25</sup>

### **Community arts intervenes in Campbelltown**

In 1975 Helen Colman was appointed through the Australia Council's Community Arts and Regional Development Program (CARDP) as the Campbelltown Field Officer. Colman mapped out Campbelltown's cultural sector and found that nine societies were devoted solely to the arts. Many more groups and activities had an arts component. Performing arts groups included the Campbelltown Theatre Group, Campbelltown City Orchestra, Campbelltown-Camden District Band, Campbelltown Scottish Pipes and Drums, the Bradbury Hotel jazz group, the Campbelltown folk music group and numerous privately run classical and jazz ballet classes held in church and community halls. Colman reported that Campbelltown was home to visual artists Tom and Lenore Bass, Barbara Romalis, Joan Brassil, Fred Braat, Neville Dawson, Peter Servass and Fonika Booth. Their success through exhibitions in regional and major city galleries generated a sense of pride within the community and their active participation in local exhibitions assisted in de-mystifying art for local people.

The Fisher's Ghost Art Award exhibition, Colman observed, was an important cultural program. Local residents 'popping into see a few pictures while doing the shopping' purchased a large number of art works, 'despite the [large] number of Sydney visitors'. The Airds Arts and Crafts Cottage offered popular activities, local evening colleges held pottery courses and many other groups met for crafts, hobbies, discussions and other social activities. Afterschool activities offered craft programs and playgroups were dedicated to providing 'an enriching experience for the very young through play, craft, music and movement'. Storytelling and children's afternoon activities were held at the Campbelltown Council library. 'Ethnic groups', Colman noted, included a Filipino dance group and *Familia Brave* and *Tamarugal*—two South American groups which 'until recently almost no-one in Campbelltown knew of'. Colman noted that the Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, which had been established

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<sup>25</sup> See Arthur Pike *Development of arts activities in the Sydney Western Region*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1975; Helen Colman, *Community Arts Inquiry: Campbelltown*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1976.



relatively early in 1947, reflected the interest of residents in local history.<sup>26</sup> She reported that while Campbelltown was 'physically in a cultural no-man's land', it had 'a remarkably active cultural life at the local level'. Indeed, she concluded that it offered a much greater range of cultural activities than in other parts of Sydney.<sup>27</sup> Colman was not alone in her discoveries. Caroline Kelly, as noted in chapter 6, had also pointed to the substantial strength and ambition of Campbelltown's cultural life but there is no evidence to suggest that Colman was aware of this.

Despite her findings Colman nevertheless recommended that the Australia Council appoint a community arts officer to Campbelltown. Colman outlined five core priorities for the position: investigate premises suitable for music and drama performance; establish a local music centre for teaching and workshops; establish a regional art gallery; coordinate tutors; and coordinate and develop the Festival of Fisher's Ghost.<sup>28</sup> In her recommendation to the Australia Council Colman was overriding local organic developments. Why was this the case? Perhaps the answer can be found in the central place of 'community' within the Whitlam Government's social democratic agenda. Katya Johanson has suggested that 'community' was 'a chief catchphrase of this government, the public services and newly forming social organisations'.<sup>29</sup> Hawkins observed that it had a vision for direct support from central government to the community, the consequence of which was that state and local governments were sidestepped in the process, a situation that Melanie Oppenheimer has also noted.<sup>30</sup>

It would seem that the Australia Council did not question its approach towards overriding the cultural policy directions that already existed in Campbelltown and which had originated with the Festival of Fisher's Ghost. Indeed, it operated on the presumption that none could exist in such cases without its intervention, noting in its *Annual Report*, that 'without the

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<sup>26</sup> Colman, *Community Arts Inquiry* pp. 3-10; see also *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 25 May 1976, p. 10. Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton found that the mean date for the establishment of Australian historical societies was 1973. See Paul Ashton and Paula Hamilton, *History at the Crossroads: Australians and the past*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 2010, pp. 40-1.

<sup>27</sup> Colman, *Community Arts Inquiry*, pp. 10-3.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Katya Johanson, 'The Role of Australia's Cultural Council', Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy, University of Melbourne, 2000, p. 129.

<sup>30</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, p. 32; Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Voluntary action, social welfare and the Australian Assistance Plan in the 1970s', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 39, no 2, 2008, pp. 167-82.

encouragement of a national perspective’ the ‘small fires’ of cultural activity at a local level ‘might never have been lit’.<sup>31</sup> The Council’s community arts staff also appeared to share this attitude, believing that the subjects of the Australia Council’s Western Sydney inquiry would have been, in the main, unlikely to be participating in artistic activity without their facilitation. Colman had also brought a similar attitude to Campbelltown, but she later conceded that she had been wrong.

The implementation of the Australia Council’s field officer initiative in Campbelltown was significant. It scrutinised the local cultural sector through the lens of the Australia Council and its policy response to and institutional arrangements regarding concepts of access, participation and cultural disadvantage—‘community arts’. Such an approach, however, did not mesh with local agendas, and the incongruity of this would later lead to a further bifurcation of cultural policy directions in Campbelltown.<sup>32</sup>

The previous chapter has shown how local cultural policy directions modelled through the institutionalisation of the visual arts had split off from other community cultural activity. This time, the division would occur between directions that evolved from the local agendas and those that were prescribed for Campbelltown from the top down. Colman’s recommendation for a community arts officer took six years to materialise. This hiatus could be put down to issues affecting the Australia Council that threatened the very existence of community arts.

### **Thriving in the eighties: Community arts expands**

The Fraser Liberal-Country Party coalition came into power in November 1975 and introduced sweeping cost cutting reforms across the public sector. The Australia Council was firmly on its radar. The ‘McKinsy Report’, as it was known, had been commissioned to review the workings of the Australia Council and had recommended that the agency be made leaner and more focused towards national cultural objectives.<sup>33</sup> Community arts programs were not considered to be of national significance, and were therefore not seen to be the responsibility of a

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<sup>31</sup> Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1975-76, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Penny Stannard, ‘What happened to the locals?’ in Paula Hamilton and Paul Ashton (eds), *Locating suburbia: Memory, place, creativity*, UTS Press, Sydney, 2013, pp. 154-69.

national arts funding body.<sup>34</sup> The community arts budget was to be slashed, but intense lobbying by funding recipients, who had formed a 'community arts movement', went into battle with the Australia Council to preserve the program. They were successful and the Community Arts Program not only survived but thrived. It was transformed from a Committee to a fully-fledged Board. This gave it equal institutional status with the art form Boards and meant that the Community Arts Program no longer existed on the margins of activity within the Australia Council.

By 1980 the Community Arts Program had an allocated budget of over two million dollars, which was substantially more than it had been over each of the previous four years.<sup>35</sup> It had introduced a number of initiatives in the 1970s that had been evaluated favourably and this validated the approach taken through the Program to date. The Community Arts Board (CAB), later renamed the Community Cultural Development Board, had much greater clout within the Australia Council and, with more resources at its disposal, was in a position to reinforce and accelerate its agenda to stimulate a wider involvement in the arts by reducing cultural disadvantage.<sup>36</sup> It continued to work across the gamut of art forms 'by meeting the needs of particular community groups, such as the ethnic communities, those in outer urban, disadvantaged and remote areas'.<sup>37</sup> Hawkins believes that the reason why the Community Arts Program emerged from the period of review and cost cutting in a better position than many other programs within the Australia Council was due to the ambiguity that surrounded how it defined 'community'. The broad constituency that this encompassed had secured a

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<sup>33</sup> McKinsey and Co. Inc., 'Strengthening Operations: Australia Council', unpublished report to Australia Council, Sydney, 1976, Section 1, pp. 9-10.

<sup>34</sup> Gay Hawkins, 'Reading community arts policy: From Nimbin to the Gay Mardi Gras', in Vivienne Binns (ed), *Community and the arts: History, theory, practice*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991, p. 46.

<sup>35</sup> See Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1980-81, p. 24; Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1978-79, p. 34; Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1977-78, p. 32; Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1975-76 p. 15. See also Hawkins, *From Nimbin* pp. 50; 59.

<sup>36</sup> Hawkins provides a detailed account of the events that took place from the time of the release of the *McKinsey Report* in 1976 to Fraser's announcement of the establishment of the Community Arts Board. See Hawkins, *From Nimbin* pp. 46-58. See also Gibson, *The uses of art*, pp. 105-6; Justin Macdonnell, *Arts, Minister? Government policy and the Arts*, Currency Press, Sydney, 1992, p. 208.

<sup>37</sup> Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1977-78, p. 33.

wide-range of stakeholders and this provided the CAB with strategic value to not only survive the Fraser razor, but to flourish as a result of it.<sup>38</sup>

Lisanne Gibson has suggested that the environment created by the establishment of CAB opened up ‘possibility spaces’, new ways of thinking about the relationship between art, government and the people.<sup>39</sup> Hawkins perspective is different. For her, the situation enabled CAB to promote a distinctive set of cultural practices and organisations that prescribed what was meant by ‘community arts’. Unsurprisingly, CAB did not endorse her assessment.<sup>40</sup> While the alleviation of cultural disadvantage remained central to CAB’s objectives, according to Hawkins, there was a re-orientation away from funding organisations and activities to do this, towards the merits of various methods of working ‘in the community’. The idea of the community arts practitioner emerged. These were arts workers who received grants, managed projects and ran arts centres. At the same time, broader ideas about concepts of cultural rights and cultural democracy started to intersect with these developments.

Murray Edmonds, who was at the forefront of developing strategies to spread community arts in local government across Australia, promoted cultural democracy as ‘the recognition of each person’s and each community’s right to its own form of expression of its culture; the seeking of ideal forms of expression and communication of what it feels like to be you, living in your city, in your circumstance’.<sup>41</sup> For Sandra Kirby, ‘cultural democracy’ referred to community participation towards the creation, promotion and distribution of art and as noted earlier, such approaches had grown out of the era of participatory democracy. Arts workers—or ‘officers’ as they were called if employed by local government—rather than artists, were seen as catalysts that could facilitate the processes of shared endeavour. Those who experienced cultural disadvantage could determine and participate in practices to mitigate it. In practice, however, these ideas may have translated into managing people to achieve pre-determined objectives.

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<sup>38</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin* p. 58.

<sup>39</sup> Gibson, *The uses of art*, p. 107.

<sup>40</sup> See Andrea Hull, ‘Community Arts: A perspective’, *Meanjin*, vol 42, no 3, 1983, p. 320.

<sup>41</sup> Murray Edmonds, ‘Man cannot live by bread alone’, keynote address delivered at the Local Government and Community Arts Seminar, 5 June 1981, Glenquarie, Campbelltown, reproduced in *Local Government Bulletin*, vol 36, no 7, 1981, pp. 13-7.

For Kirby, the establishment of the Community Arts Committee by the Whitlam Government had formalised the 'thrust' towards cultural democracy, and it went on to become a major feature of the community arts movement in the 1980s. While other chapters examine this in greater detail, significant at this point was the introduction of rationales that inscribed ideas of cultural democracy within local government's involvement in community arts. In this environment, the Australia Council ramped up its community arts officer scheme.<sup>42</sup>

In 1981 Edmonds completed an Australia-wide study that examined community arts in local government. He found that CAB's placement of community arts officers in councils had been the major contributing factor to advancing local government's participation in the arts. Six positions had been created in 1973, the first year of the program. By 1981 forty community arts officers were employed by local authorities throughout Australia, eighteen of which had transitioned into being fully funded by councils.<sup>43</sup> Two years later over seventy community arts officers were employed in this way.<sup>44</sup> Remaining central to the work of the scores of community arts officers, with CAB somewhat paternalistically overseeing them, was the aim of reducing cultural disadvantage as a strategy to widen participation in the arts.<sup>45</sup> While these developments had been taking place in community arts across Australia, Campbelltown was fast emerging as one of the country's most disadvantaged areas.

### **A suburban bad land**

From the late 1960s, development in Campbelltown had surged ahead to absorb much of metropolitan Sydney's swelling population. In the twenty years from 1966 Campbelltown's population grew by 15.4%. Growth in the Sydney region during the same period had been just 1.6%.<sup>46</sup> State metropolitan plans and federal urban policies had laid out a systematic and scaled program of residential, commercial and industrial development to manage

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<sup>42</sup> Sandra Kirby, 'An historical perspective on the community arts movement', in Vivienne Binns (ed), *Community and the Arts*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991, pp. 19-30; Hawkins, *From Nimbin* pp. 50-9; Edmonds, 'Man cannot live by bread alone'.

<sup>43</sup> Murray Edmonds, *Local government and the arts in Australia*, Community Arts Board, Australia Council, Sydney, 1981, pp. 49-50

<sup>44</sup> Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', p. 321.

<sup>45</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, p. 59.

<sup>46</sup> See Bob Meyer, 'Macarthur: Sydney's successful south western satellite?' *Australian Planner*, vol 28, no 3, 1990, p. 29.

Campbelltown's growth. But the funds to implement these initiatives had been withdrawn in the late 1970s. Despite this, development had moved ahead at an intense pace. Private developer Lend Lease had created entire new suburbs from farmlands that had been toiled since the mid-1800s. The New South Wales (NSW) Land Commission had released large tracts of land for affordable housing developments and the NSW Housing Commission had surged ahead with its program of developing large-scale public housing estates to re-locate tenants whose inner city terraces were being demolished for urban renewal. Such was the extent of the Housing Commission's program in the Campbelltown area, that Michael Darcy has suggested it largely pioneered its transformation from rural-urban fringe to an integral part of the Sydney metropolis.<sup>47</sup> It was a suburban transformation that led to seismic social change.

Ross Woodward observed that the NSW Housing Commission's planners had enthusiastically embraced the Radburn urban design model for its program of Sydney fringe development in the 1970s and 1980s. Between 1972 and 1989 nearly six thousand dwellings were built across the five Campbelltown suburbs of Macquarie Fields, Airds, Minto, Claymore and Ambarvale/Rosemeadow to the Radburn design.

This approach was named after the New Jersey town, Radburn, which was designed in 1928 by Clarence Stein and Henry Wright for an upper middle-class population to live a utopian, leisurely lifestyle protected from the hustle and bustle of the 'outside world' and, in the age of the motor car, in an environment that separated pedestrians from road traffic to ensure their safety and ease of access. The Radburn model consisted of 'super lots' of land containing large numbers of houses that were clustered around a network of small cul-de-sacs and wide, interconnected open spaces. Houses faced the open space and back doors faced the streets in a reversal of the norm. The idea behind this was to promote social interaction and a sense of community. However, when transplanted onto the metropolitan South West fringe to house a public tenant population that was displaced from Sydney's inner city and was disproportionately made up of unemployed people, single parent families and young people—all who had little access to social services, community facilities, jobs and transport—this

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<sup>47</sup> Michael Darcy, 'Housing: The great divide', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, pp. 232-3.

modern utopian ideal became a notorious failure of public policy.<sup>48</sup>



Figure 10: New housing estate at Campbelltown, photo, 1975, National Archives of Australia.

Starting with Macquarie Fields in 1972, the Housing Commission's program had intensified to the degree that within ten years 38,000 people, or 36.5% of Campbelltown's population, lived in public housing. Campbelltown had the highest proportion of public tenants of all Sydney local government areas. Soon, 46% of the population was aged under twenty, making Campbelltown the youngest of all Sydney areas. The majority of young people lived in the

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<sup>48</sup> Ross Woodward, 'Paradise lost: Reflections on some failings of Radburn', *Australian Planner*, vol 34, no 1, 1997, pp. 25-9. See also Tarsha Garvin, *Participatory governance and the policy-making process: A study of community engagement in NSW public housing estate renewal*, unpublished paper, Department of Government and International Relations, The University of Sydney, 2010.

housing estates, many in families that had lower than average or no working income. The effects on the economy wrought by the restructuring of industry and manufacturing that took place throughout the early 1980s across Australia caused unprecedented unemployment, particularly in outer suburban Sydney.<sup>49</sup> The promise of jobs in decentralised industry, which had lured many young families to Campbelltown in their quest for affordable suburban home ownership, had not eventuated.<sup>50</sup> (This is discussed more detail in a later chapter.) The high proportion of local people who were dependent on welfare payments led the (federal) Member for Werriwa, John Kerin, to describe Campbelltown in 1981 as ‘a welfare electorate par excellence’.<sup>51</sup>

These socio-economic scars became a symbol of outer suburban hopelessness and Campbelltown became well known for all of the wrong reasons. As media reports depicting large numbers of disengaged youth clustered in degraded public housing estates were broadcast across national media platforms, Campbelltown developed a reputation as one of Australia’s most troubled areas. This was the antithesis of how metropolitan planners’ had imagined Campbelltown’s future as a nationally important urban centre. They had envisioned that a sense of pride, history and civic endeavour—attributes that had characterised Campbelltown’s identity for more than a century—would continue to be the foundations of its modern identity, and they had anticipated that Campbelltown’s young people were ‘destined’ to be ‘sturdy leaders of a great nation’. As Diane Powell observed in her study of media representations of Western Sydney, statistics like those that had underpinned Kerin’s assessment were subject to a range of interpretations and symbolic representations that sensationalised the extent of the problems.<sup>52</sup> Places such as Campbelltown were painted as

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<sup>49</sup> Carol Liston, *Campbelltown: The Bicentennial History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, pp. 203; 212-3.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown. See also Meyer, ‘Macarthur’, p. 29.

<sup>51</sup> John Kerin, ‘Campbelltown Welfare Priorities from a National Level: 1986 and Beyond’, an address to the Community Dinner for the Social Futures Seminar, Gledswood, Campbelltown 28 October 1981, published in *Social Futures Seminar: Follow up Papers*, Campbelltown City Council, 1981.

<sup>52</sup> See Diane Powell, *Out West: Perceptions of Sydney’s western suburbs*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993. Powell applied cultural studies theories to analyse how media reportage and fiction published about the western suburbs from the post war era to the early 1990s constructed a set of stereotypes, beliefs and attitudes that led to the demonisation of the people and places that occupy outer suburban west and south west Sydney. See in particular pp. 1-16 for how the ‘westie image’ came to be constructed and how the western suburbs came to indicate a social category rather than a geographic zone. See p.



undesirable blights on Sydney's landscape. A narrative of outer suburban despair and dysfunction came to define Campbelltown and its people.<sup>53</sup> Understood and imagined in this way, Campbelltown would have provided a ripe environment for the Australia Council to intervene once again through the work of CAB.

By the early 1980s, Campbelltown was considered culturally disadvantaged because of spatial, social and economic causes, and therefore more than suitably positioned for the implementation of the Australia Council's cultural policy directions as they manifest through the work of CAB. Other ideological factors, however, may have entered the equation. Campbelltown's identity—proudly in place for generations—was fracturing, and the community was in a state of upheaval. Community arts promised more than improving peoples' quality of life; it held out possibilities to muster residents through arts-based activity, develop their cultural sensibilities and, by doing so, civilise populations. Evan Williams, the NSW bureaucracy's most senior arts figure who was charged with overseeing cultural policy and securing the support of local government, had been advancing such a position. For him, the arts could have a 'beneficial influence on the behavioural and social patterns of the community' and 'reflect something of the character of a community'.<sup>54</sup> Others working in the field, such as Helen Carmichael, claimed that community arts could help build a sense of civic pride and identity.<sup>55</sup> Given that many considered Campbelltown to be in state of free-fall, policy models that offered to ameliorate the crisis—real or perceived—would, no doubt, have been attractive to government authorities. Attempts to apply community arts in Campbelltown in this way took shape from 1982, and this is explored in chapter 11. While the Australia Council continued to craft methods that could reduce cultural disadvantage by broadening access to and participation in the arts, the NSW Government was also progressing

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128 for specific reference to Campbelltown and its representation in an early 1980s fictional telemovie, *Crime of the Decade*, that promoted a narrative of disaffected youth living dangerous lives who are subject to sexual and parental neglect and are without future prospects.

<sup>53</sup> See Penelope Stannard, 'From Greenfields to Edge Urban: Cultural Policy and Suburbanisation in Campbelltown, Sydney', *Spaces and Flows: An International Journal of Urban and ExtraUrban Studies*, vol 2, no 3, 2012, pp. 51-60. See also David Burchell, 'Trying to find the sunny side of life', *Griffith Review*, no 15, 2007, 'Divided Nation' issue, pp. 11-38; Scott Baum, 'Suburban scars: Australian cities and socio-economic deprivation', *Urban Research Program Research Paper 15*, Griffith University, 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Evan Williams, 'Public Art', *Local Government Bulletin*, vol 34, no 5, 1979, p. 6.

<sup>55</sup> Helen Carmichael, 'Local Government and community arts', *Local Government Bulletin*, 1979, vol 34, no 2, pp. 6-8.

a set of cultural policy directions that held similar goals.

### **No longer the domain of society's elite**

Led by Premier Wran, Labor had formed government in NSW in 1976 after more than a decade of conservative leadership. According to Graham Freudenberg, it continued implementing, albeit at a slower pace, much of the agenda that Whitlam had introduced at the federal-level, including support for the arts.<sup>56</sup> Wran established the NSW Division of Cultural Activities within the Premier's Department in 1976 and later, in 1984, the Office of the Minister for the Arts. He took on the arts portfolio, which another Labor Premier, Bob Carr, would also do twenty years later. Wran formed the Cultural Grants Advisory Council to advise the government on the distribution of grants and matters of policy. Funding criteria was tailored towards projects that could demonstrate strong community and local government support.<sup>57</sup>

The state government had obligations towards major inner city cultural institutions such as the Sydney Opera House and the Art Gallery of NSW. Wran was also developing new, large-scale cultural infrastructure projects at Darling Harbour to promote Sydney as an international tourist destination. Apart from these responsibilities, the government's overarching cultural policy principle was to make the arts accessible to the broadest range of people possible. Wran believed that the arts had been the domain of society's 'elite'—the educated, urban middle class who spoke English as a first language. His government would prioritise the culturally disadvantaged—the working classes, migrants and young people, the majority of whom lived in Sydney's western suburbs—as well as women and those who lived in country NSW.<sup>58</sup>

The Wran Government's main focus of activity was to improve the standards of accommodation for the arts. As examined in later chapters, this related to both the urban

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<sup>56</sup> Graham Freudenberg, *Cause for power: The official history of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labor Party*, Pluto Press in association with the NSW ALP, Sydney, 1991.

<sup>57</sup> Neville Wran, in *NSW Parliamentary Papers (Hansard)*, 9 February 1978, p. 11676; 26 February 1980, pp. 4679-80. See also Edmonds, *Local government*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>58</sup> See Wran, *Hansard*, 9 February 1978, pp. 11675-81; 26 February 1980, pp. 4678-81. Also Rodney Cavalier, *Hansard*, 13 September 1979, p. 838; John Renshaw, *Hansard*, 25 September 1979, p. 1242.

renewal of industrial foreshore at inner-Sydney Pyrmont in preparation of the 1988 Australian Bicentenary and to facilities for the arts across NSW. Wran introduced a capital assistance program to provide matching funds to local governments in priority areas for cultural infrastructure projects. Additional support was given to councils to employ professionally trained directors in regional galleries and museums. More people would have access to the arts if facilities existed in their hometowns, and communities would experience a greater number and higher quality of programs if appropriately qualified people managed these venues. The result would be a reduction in levels of cultural disadvantage in populations across NSW.<sup>59</sup> Thus, while the state government was aligned rhetorically with the Australia Council in respect of reducing cultural disadvantage, the mechanism with which it chose to deliver this cultural policy objective was vastly different. While it did provide some funding for community arts, its path was largely set on building infrastructure to institutionalise cultural activity within communities. There was, however, alignment between the state and federal government cultural policy imperatives in South West Sydney, and Campbelltown was central to these arrangements.

### **Regional arts development in South West Sydney**

The South Western (Metropolitan) Regional Arts Development Committee (SWMRADC) was established in 1980 through a joint funding arrangement with the Australia Council's Community Arts Board (CAB) and the NSW Division of Cultural Activities. Its role was to encourage councils to increase support for community arts, foster arts activity and access in communities and schools and 'promote the importance of the arts in society' across the local government areas of Bankstown, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Liverpool and Wollondilly. SWMRADC published *Arts Alive News*, a periodical that was created to promote and distribute information about the arts in the South West Sydney region. For five years until it was de-funded, it provided an important platform to lobby for greater public investment in the arts

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<sup>59</sup> See Wran, *Hansard*, 24 August 1976, pp. 18; 9 February 1978, pp. 11677-9; 26 February 1980, pp. 4679-80; 10 February 1982, p. 1779. See also Edmonds, *Local government*, p. 25. Evan Williams, Director, New South Wales Division of Cultural Activities, emphasised that the scheme was the government's main focus of collaboration with local government. See *Arts Alive News*, no 12, December 1983, p. 12.

and in the region's cultural sector.<sup>60</sup> Its chairperson was Mary Seaman, a Campbelltown alderman.

SWMRADC was not the only organisation established in the early 1980s that strove to develop Western Sydney's cultural sector. Katherine Knight and other arts activists in the Parramatta, Blacktown and Penrith areas had founded the Arts West Foundation and like SWMRADC it, too, published a periodical, with Knight its long-term editor. In her forty-year history of arts development in Western Sydney, Knight maintains a position that the advancement of the arts in the region had been possible only through the efforts of activists such as her and others. 'Government' is portrayed as an all-encompassing entity that sought to frustrate their efforts. Knight draws attention to the dissimilarity between Arts West and SWMRADC, claiming that the latter had a 'strong orientation towards government and government authorities'.<sup>61</sup> In providing this assessment, she casts doubt upon the authenticity of SWMRADC's role. Edmonds, on the other hand, suggested that arts-lobbyists alone lacked the ability to advance their cause in the political realm. They needed advocates within political institutions who could facilitate this.<sup>62</sup> SWMRADC chairperson Seaman would have fitted this bill. She brought considerable political nous to the organisation's work both through her position in local government and her appointment by Wran to his Cultural Grants Advisory Council.<sup>63</sup>

### **1981: Forces converge**

By 1981 a series of policy-driven forces converged both conceptually and on the ground at Campbelltown. CAB was reinvigorated and resourced sufficiently enough to ratchet up its attention to local government. It had prepared a ten-year nation-wide strategy to encourage and develop greater levels of participation by local government in community arts.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> See Tim Kelly, 'South Western (Metropolitan) Regional Arts Development Committee', *Arts Alive News*, no 1, May 1981, pp. 1-3. The last edition of *Arts Alive News* was published in 1985.

<sup>61</sup> Katherine Knight, *Passion, Purpose, Meaning: Arts Activism in Western Sydney*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 2013, p. 72.

<sup>62</sup> Edmonds, *Local government*, p. 64.

<sup>63</sup> It was reported in *Arts Alive News*, no 18, February 1985, pp. 2-3, that Mary Seaman who had been re-elected as Chair of South West Metro Arts (as it was now known) for the fourth consecutive year had been appointed by Premier Wran to the NSW Cultural Grants Advisory Council.

<sup>64</sup> Edmonds, *Local government*, p. 3; 73.

Advancing a community arts agenda within populations that were culturally disadvantaged continued to be its central focus. The state government supported the development of the arts regionally in South West Sydney with a Campbelltown alderman at the helm, and it was funding local councils to build cultural facilities in priority areas.

Campbelltown was chosen to host a Local Government and Community Arts Seminar in June that year. The NSW Local Government Association, CAB and the NSW Division of Cultural Activities sponsored the event, which was attended by elected officials, council staff and arts workers from across Australia. The Seminar, as keynote speaker Murray Edmonds stressed, was the first time that local government and community arts had 'got together in this way'. It addressed 'broad issues' that included employment of community arts officers, provision of community arts centres and support for community arts activities.<sup>65</sup> In his presentation, David Throsby explained that community arts could be thought of as a public good that delivered economic returns to communities. Other speakers emphasised its social benefits. Places like Campbelltown, for example, had a high number of residents who required support through welfare and community services schemes, and Seaman believed that community arts programs could function within this realm. Some local officials expressed a concern that in growth areas, the 'basics of life' such as housing had to take precedent in spending over support for arts activities.<sup>66</sup> Others, however, did not agree.

Barbara Romalis, a local artist who became a leading figure in the movement for a public art gallery in Campbelltown, voiced her belief that the arts were the cultural rights of all people, not just some sections of society. It is probable that her intention was to promote a position that all people—in Campbelltown and elsewhere—had the right to experience and participate in cultural activity. This concept of cultural rights was not in dispute by Seaman or others and it was a concept that Edmonds had particularly emphasised.<sup>67</sup> The issue at hand, it would seem, lay in how concepts of cultural rights and cultural democracy in their broadest sense could be most effectively enacted and supported. Romalis' position appears to have overlooked the fact that the population of Campbelltown contained a substantial cohort of

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<sup>65</sup> See Edmonds, 'Man cannot live by bread alone'.

<sup>66</sup> See 'Art, the community and local government', *Local Government Bulletin*, vol 36, no 7, 1981, p. 11.

residents that were systemically deprived of local services and activities. Understanding the situation through a narrow lens, as Romalis had, would become more and more evident as the movement towards a Campbelltown gallery gained momentum from 1983.<sup>68</sup> (See chapter 12.)

For the NSW Division of Cultural Affairs, councils were the 'logical focus' for community arts. They provided local coordination, a stable institutional base and had resources. The Australia Council also shared this view. Its long-term goal was to have local government increase its commitment towards community arts. When pressed about the feasibility of this, the Division's spokesman had conceded that it would be possible only within councils that had already accepted that their role was more than 'roads, rates and rubbish'.<sup>69</sup> While the Australia Council and its state counterpart, no doubt, presented community arts to local government in a compelling way, it is also probable that they had the less altruistic motive of government cost shifting.

### **Connections: Local government and community arts**

Consensus was reached at the June Campbelltown Seminar that 'a connection could be made between community arts and local government'.<sup>70</sup> In late 1981, the NSW Local Government Association adopted a cultural policy. It acknowledged that local government had a 'significant responsibility' towards the provision and encouragement of increased opportunities for the appreciation and participation in the arts. And it recognised the rights of communities to access and determine their own forms of creative expression. The policy directed that councils provide a range of cultural resources, delegate planning and management functions to the community and enter into joint undertakings for the provision of cultural facilities. It stressed that councils should enact their powers to employ arts personnel and provide funds for

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<sup>67</sup> See Edmonds, 'Man cannot live by bread alone'.

<sup>68</sup> See Knight, *Passion, Purpose, Meaning*, p. 79.

<sup>69</sup> See 'Art, the community and local government', *Local Government Bulletin*, for a full report of the seminar.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

'innovative and pilot programmes'.<sup>71</sup> Under the *NSW Local Government Act (1919)* councils could provide, control and manage art galleries and support other 'cultural endeavours'. The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979)* further specified that councils had a responsibility to provide and coordinate community services as part of their function to properly manage towns, villages and cities for the purpose of promoting better social and economic community welfare.<sup>72</sup>

Community arts, in its detachment from any particular art form and its reach across diverse population groups offered broad-ranging scope that could be moulded to meet the various requirements of the local government policy and Act. The Australia Council was at the forefront of shaping and funding local government's involvement in community arts and therefore the Association's ready adoption of underpinning concepts such as cultural rights and self-determination was not surprising. Neither was its inclusion of directions concerning cultural facilities. This was the focus of the state government's cultural policy directions and its primary mechanism for working with local authorities. Rather than encompassing any new ideas from the local government sector, the Association's new cultural policy melded the rhetoric and imperatives of the cultural policy directions of state and governments.

The most significant outcome of the Association's new policy according to Edmonds was that community arts was endorsed as a valid local government activity. Prior to this, as he noted, 'many municipal people' saw community arts 'as one of the exotica that poured out of Canberra in the early seventies'.<sup>73</sup> Edmonds was referring to the Australia Council's funding of unconventional or narrow-interest events such as the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival and the 1975 Bendigo Dahlia Festival, both, which had attracted much criticism.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps the sensitivities of municipal officials towards community arts had been inflamed by Whitlam's

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<sup>71</sup> Local Government Association of New South Wales, *Arts Policy*, released October 1981, reproduced in *Arts Alive News*, no 4, December 1981, p. 2. See also Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1980-81, 'Community Arts Board', p. 23.

<sup>72</sup> *Local Government Act (1919)*: Section 358; 359; 364, pp. 508-9. The Act remained in place until it was repealed in 1993. *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979)*: Section 5. (Online) Available: [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol\\_act/epaaa1979389/s5.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/consol_act/epaaa1979389/s5.html) (Accessed 23 November 2013).

<sup>73</sup> Edmonds, *Local government*, p. 71.

praising of his government's support for 'off beat' activities.<sup>75</sup> However, the idea that the Association's policy had made important advances for the arts in local government should not be accepted without qualification. The introduction of the policy coincided with the Fraser Government's awarding of substantial funding increases to CAB's budget and the expansion of its local government community arts officer scheme. From the perspective of local government, a cultural policy that aligned with federal-level imperatives could enable a process of straightforward endorsement and the funding of projects. For the Australia Council, the path was smoothed for CAB to implement its agenda and secure an increased commitment from local government to community arts. This, in theory, would ultimately release the national arts agency from the responsibility of funding local projects. This had been a key recommendation of the McKinsey Report, but it had not yet been enacted.<sup>76</sup>

### **Social planning re-imagines Campbelltown**

In 1981 a Social Futures Seminar was held to officially re-imagine Campbelltown. Previously, state government metropolitan planners and federal government urban policy specialists had imagined Campbelltown through the ambitious Growth Centre Project. The success or otherwise of their vision rested upon a belief that world leading planning methods could bring about structural change within cities and provide a better quality of life for populations. Campbelltown's future as a suburban utopia also rested upon its identity, and metropolitan planners had defined this through the prism of its past. Earlier, Campbelltown Council had sought to construct an identity for a modern Campbelltown. It had developed a set of cultural policy directions that were founded upon the local mythological subject of Fisher's Ghost and through these, Campbelltown was imagined as a progressive and culturally sophisticated city. Now, local, state and federal government, residents and community organisations came together to lay out a vision for Campbelltown as the 21<sup>st</sup> century approached. From their

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<sup>74</sup> See Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, p. xvii. See also Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1981-82, p. 13, for reference to the media's 'knocking of the arts', and the level of scrutiny that the Australia Council had been under since its establishment.

<sup>75</sup> Gough Whitlam, Prime Minister's Queensland Broadcast No. 20, 'Quality of Life', 3 August 1975. Transcripts from the Prime Ministers of Australia, (Online) Available: <http://pmtranscripts.dpmc.gov.au/transcripts/00003837.pdf> (Accessed 23 November 2013).

<sup>76</sup> See Justin Macdonnell, *Arts, Minister?*, p. 208.



contributions, a vision for Campbelltown would emerge, and policy responses would be developed, including those for culture and the arts.

The local federal Member of Parliament, Labor's John Kerin, gave the seminar opening address and set the tone of the event. He was unapologetically political. Kerin critiqued shifts that had occurred in the ideology and management of the Australia's economy under the conservative Fraser Government. The consequences of this, he maintained, had impacted negatively upon communities to the degree that, within Australia, there were now groups of people, including those within his electorate, who were segregated economically and socially from the mainstream. His view was that Campbelltown would not change while the current regime continued. The high profile Campbelltown solicitor John Marsden, who was later the President of the NSW Council of Civic Liberties, gave the response. He laid the blame for Campbelltown's ills firmly with governments—on all sides of politics—for poor planning policies that had created entire welfare dependent suburbs that were cut off from central services and support, the result of which had been segregation within Campbelltown itself.<sup>77</sup>

The Futures Seminar indicated that new attempts were being made by Campbelltown Council to embark upon social planning processes. Michael Knight recalled that during the mid-1970s when he had worked as the Council's Social Planner, the administrative reality and the needs of the community had dictated that he take on more of a service delivery role.<sup>78</sup> Now with social planning back on the agenda in 1981, community arts was included as part of the mix.

The Seminar's community arts workshop participants decided that what was needed to guide the future was a 'Campbelltown and District Cultural Development Plan'—a 'local environment plan for the arts'—inspired, perhaps, by the recent *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act*. This would bring individuals, government, non-government and commercial stakeholders together to support the provision of adequate space for the exhibition of two and three-dimensional objects and community facilities for post-school arts education and arts activities. These would function to encourage 'a diverse cultural identity that draws from

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<sup>77</sup> See John Marsden, 'Response to the Address', at Community Dinner for the Social Futures Seminar, Gledswood, Campbelltown 28 October 1981, published in *Social Futures Seminar: Follow up Papers*, Campbelltown City Council, 1981.

<sup>78</sup> Michael Knight, interview with Penny Stannard, 16 April 2013, Sydney.

both the old and new elements of Australian society'. The plan's most important aim would be 'the determination to develop Campbelltown and district in the cultural and artistic directions that its community wishes and is prepared to work for'.<sup>79</sup>

Workshop participants had voiced what they thought were impediments to these goals. For example, they felt that there was an attitude within government that the provision of cultural resources was not considered to be an essential service or need, but to be utilised only by society's elite. They believed that there was a wide and wrongly held assumption that the cultural facilities of inner city Sydney could serve the needs of people in Campbelltown and other similar areas. They complained about what they perceived to be politicians' acceptance of the 'myth' that 'the mass of Australians' were 'ockers', 'interested only in sports, television and drinking'. No common voice, the participants concluded, existed to lobby on behalf of the arts in and for Campbelltown at all levels of government.<sup>80</sup> These issues were hampering Campbelltown's future as local cultural spokespeople imagined it. The situation was exacerbated by what was perceived to be a lack of attention from those operating in the political realm. Participants concluded that the findings made by Helen Colman in 1976 still held true but had intensified due to the effects of Campbelltown's accelerating growth. Her recommendation for employing a community arts officer was re-endorsed and a job description was prepared based on her original findings.<sup>81</sup> There was confidence that the position would materialise this time around as aldermen and senior staff 'solidly support the creation of this job'.<sup>82</sup>

Analysis of the Futures Seminar brings to light some significant inconsistencies regarding the planning of Campbelltown's cultural development. According to the community arts workshop participants, it would be 'community wishes' that would determine Campbelltown's future cultural directions. But, as Kerin and Marsden had each noted, many local people were excluded from community life, and this would have extended to their absence in decision-

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<sup>79</sup> Tim Kelly and Jane Minikus, 'What Future have the arts in Campbelltown', *Arts Alive News*, no 4, December 1981, pp. 4-5.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> 'Community Arts Workshop Report', published in *Social Futures Seminar: Follow up Papers*, Campbelltown City Council, 1981, p. 21.

<sup>82</sup> Kelly and Minikus, 'What Future have the arts', pp. 4-5.

making processes. Furthermore, if, as the workshop participants maintained, the actualisation of cultural directions was dependent upon those who were 'prepared to work' for them, this too, would have excluded people not already involved in local community causes. Despite the rhetoric of community determination, an art gallery was pre-determined as a primary objective of the yet to be developed Campbelltown cultural plan and it was preordained who would assume the reins for advancing this. Who, therefore, was driving Campbelltown's cultural development and shaping its future?<sup>83</sup>

As well as a lack of methodological rigour in the cultural planning process at its outset, there were fundamental flaws in Colman's original research. This related to how she understood cultural disadvantage and subsequently made proposals for future cultural policy directions. Rather than researching the needs of people that lacked opportunities to participate in the arts—as the Australia Council's Community Arts Program had been premised upon—Colman studied the needs and aspirations of Campbelltown's arts community. Representatives from organisations such as the Campbelltown Art Society, the Festival of Fisher's Ghost organising committee and the Campbelltown Theatre Group, which had all been established between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s, had put forward their desires and aspirations to Colman. These groups had sustained a local cultural life in Campbelltown over many years and, as noted elsewhere, their very success stemmed from how they celebrated Campbelltown's sense of separateness to Sydney. From this perspective, Campbelltown's distance from Sydney was not a source of cultural disadvantage, but its strength.

Colman had attempted to interview groups of people that were cut off from local community activities and networks, including Campbelltown's cultural life. She had particularly sought to find out more about the needs of young people. Outside of the school environment, cultural activities for young people were non-existent. But when she had broached this with the research interviewees, their responses had been invariably fraught with tension. While some had a vague sense that something should be done to provide cultural activities for Campbelltown's young people, many others vehemently opposed any special allowances for

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<sup>83</sup> Stannard, 'From Greenfields to Edge Urban'.

them.<sup>84</sup> Yet statistics and social changes indicated that young people were forming an increasingly significant proportion of the population and would require specialised initiatives to meet their needs. Despite her efforts, the voices and needs of young people and other more recently arrived residents were very limited in Colman's work. It was those already actively involved in Campbelltown's local artistic life who were determining how it should evolve further.

### **Changing under their feet**

At the time of Colman's research the Australia Council had argued that cultural facilities were needed in growing outer suburban areas to widen participation in the arts. By 1981—when the Australia Council next participated in cultural policy exercises in Campbelltown—its emphasis had shifted well away from building facilities as the panacea for alleviating cultural disadvantage. The Community Arts Board (CAB) was promoting community arts officer roles and the concept of working in communities as the most effective way to reduce cultural disadvantage. However, Campbelltown's cultural leaders remained wedded to the idea of developing a facility—a position that was not predicated on developing opportunities for residents that were disengaged from community cultural activity, but on the institutionalisation of the visual arts as the means of gaining status and respectability for Campbelltown. Those at the forefront of this pathway, Suzanne Jones recalled, embodied 'old Campbelltown'—symbolic of a time, place and community that had existed prior to the onset of rapid suburban growth and development. Their unyielding commitment to an approach that was attached to the past can perhaps best be understood in Michael Knight's observation that many self-appointed community leaders had been unable to comprehend the changes taking place which were so substantial and so rapid that, for some, 'Campbelltown changed under their feet'.<sup>85</sup>

In his opening address to the 1981 Campbelltown Social Futures Seminar Kerin had singled out this 'old guard'. The 'old Campbelltown elites' were part and parcel of the local milieu, but,

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<sup>84</sup> Colman, *Community Arts Inquiry*, pp. 3-7; 13.

<sup>85</sup> Suzanne Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown; Knight, interview.

Kerin emphasised, they were not representative of the views or interests of the local population more generally. (See Figure 11 and Figure 12). This, he stressed, was regardless of the influence that they could exert through organised local society and local media. Marsden had expressed a similar view. He characterised the ‘elitist society of Campbelltown’ as having a ‘born to rule’ attitude towards ‘controlling the destiny of Campbelltown’. He claimed that they held ‘sanctimonious attitudes towards the lower areas’ but offered nothing in the way of assistance or support for them.<sup>86</sup> Marsden’s view is somewhat ironic given that he himself was a member of one of Campbelltown’s most prominent ‘old’ families. As one of the elite, Marsden’s position, influence and attitudes would go on to shape cultural policy directions in Campbelltown that led to the establishment of the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Gallery.<sup>87</sup> (See chapter 12.)

Between 1976 and 1981 the impact of growth and suburbanisation had been clearly felt within Campbelltown and this influenced how its sense of identity was understood. But the voices of an older Campbelltown were loudest in terms of its future cultural development. The challenge for the incoming community arts officer would be to advance the needs and ambitions of the local arts community while at the same time deliver the Australia Council’s objectives of ameliorating cultural disadvantage by inscribing community arts—its ideology and its practices—on Campbelltown. In the first instance, this would involve the very specific goal of developing a City art gallery. Colman’s recommendation for this had been based on a rationale of geographic disadvantage from inner Sydney cultural facilities. Local arts supporters, however, had based their case for a gallery on it being a symbol of Campbelltown’s historical, cultural and city status. The second case would require working with people in Campbelltown whose needs encompassed more than one axis of disadvantage and who, to date, had not been participants in its cultural life or community activities.

On top of these complexities were the shifts that were underway in Campbelltown’s political landscape. Its civic leaders were coming to terms with what it meant to be a modern, outer suburban city with its much-loved country town image facing obliteration in the face of a

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<sup>86</sup> Kerin, ‘Campbelltown Welfare Priorities’; Marsden, ‘Response to the Address’.

<sup>87</sup> Sioux Garside, interview with Penny Stannard, 31 July 2013, Minto Heights, Campbelltown.

rising narrative of despair and community dysfunction. Jim Marsden, brother of John and President of the Campbelltown Chamber of Commerce, unintentionally, it would seem, suggested that this was the case. In reference to effects of the Housing Commission developments on Campbelltown he stated that, over time, ‘the community will develop its sense of identity again’.<sup>88</sup> It was this highly complex environment in which the inaugural community arts officer would have to operate. It would take a special person to succeed in this role—someone who would have the skills and experience, both creatively and politically—to understand and cultivate these competing and contradictory forces and be able to deliver what was required by cultural policy imperatives that were driven from top down and those that evolved organically.



Figure 11: Unidentified participants at Community Youth Support Scheme, Blaxland Road, Campbelltown, photo, Richard Lawrance, 1985, Campbelltown City Library Local Studies Collection.

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<sup>88</sup> Jim Marsden, ‘The Future’, in Richard Lawrance and Verlie Fowler (eds), *Why Campbelltown? A social history of Campbelltown*, Campbelltown City Council, Campbelltown, 1985, p. 105.



Figure 12: Group of people in period costume at garden party held at Glenalvon to celebrate the centenary of local government in Campbelltown, photo, 1982, Campbelltown City Library Local Studies Collection.

## CHAPTER 10

### **Graeme Dunstan: Animateur or agitator?**

In February 1982 Graeme Dunstan was appointed Campbelltown Council Community Arts Officer. The appointment had been long awaited and much anticipated by Campbelltown's local cultural sector. The recommendation to do so had been made in 1976 by Australia Council Field Officer Helen Colman. Prior to this, community cultural activity had existed in Campbelltown for many years and it operated independently from what came to be known as 'community arts'. Notwithstanding this, there had been individual people in Campbelltown—such as artists Joan Brassil, Barbara Romalis and Eric Aarons, and others like Arthur Jones—who held sentiments that paralleled the philosophies of the community arts movement. Once the Australia Council intervened in the local cultural life of Campbelltown through Colman's work, the ideologies and practices that came to define community arts took hold in a purposeful way. Dunstan's entry onto the scene would take this to a whole new level as he brought with him a sophisticated and well-honed set of skills that he had developed prior to taking on his Campbelltown role.

Dunstan's position had been established through federal government cultural policy directions that were designed to reduce cultural disadvantage and increase the involvement of local government in the arts. His arrival at Campbelltown occurred at the same time that community arts was experiencing a level of authority and political support that it had not previously enjoyed. A critical mass of community arts workers, artists, scholars and organisations gave voice to an energetic dialogue about the role of the arts and culture in Australian society. Dunstan was active in this environment and was able to promote an ideological position for community arts in both local and wider contexts.

As Campbelltown Council's first community arts officer, Dunstan was required to work to a job description that had been developed from findings and recommendations that had been made earlier through a process that had been unintentionally flawed. Given that his position was funded equally by the Australia Council and Campbelltown Council, Dunstan was required to enact the policy objectives of the national agency concerning cultural disadvantage, access and participation and to fulfil the expectations that local government had of community arts



as a function to promote local identity and build a sense of community. Furthermore, his job description included a responsibility for assisting the local cultural sector to advance its ambitions, the priority of which was to establish an art gallery. Dunstan's own background as a political activist and practising artist also featured in the mix.

This chapter examines the approaches that Dunstan took in introducing the ideologies and practices of community arts in Campbelltown as it underwent physical, social and structural change in the early 1980s. It positions this in relation to developments taking place in the cultural policy field and in discourses and practices within the community arts movement at the time. It draws on the case of the British-based Welfare State International (WSI) community arts project for two inter-connected reasons. Firstly, in relation to how the Community Arts Board (CAB) drew on the WSI project as a model to develop the community arts in Australia during the 1970s and into the 1980s. And secondly, through Dunstan's personal commitment to the WSI's 'art of celebration' methodology. Here, I draw on Gay Hawkins' thesis that community arts—the suite of ideologies and practices that it encompassed and defined it as a movement—was a construct of a bureaucratic environment that had been established to implement social democratic federal government cultural policy objectives.<sup>1</sup> Until the intervention of the Australia Council, community arts had not been a feature within Campbelltown's local cultural milieu.

Dunstan was already well known as a festival director, community artist, 'counter culture' pioneer and political activist—a self-styled 'cultural entrepreneur'—prior to his appointment in Campbelltown.<sup>2</sup> Former Campbelltown alderman Arthur Jones has used the term cultural 'animateur' to describe him.<sup>3</sup> The Arts Council of Great Britain had introduced 'animateur' in the mid-1970s in an attempt to best define the growing number of artists who had chosen to work within communities rather than in studio and institutional settings. Animateurs took their work into the environment—into streets and public places—in an attempt to 'widen and deepen the sensibilities of the community ... and so to enrich its existence'. They typically

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<sup>1</sup> Gay Hawkins, *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing community arts*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993.

<sup>2</sup> See Graeme Dunstan in Ross Andrews, 'Festive task for Nimbin dreamer', *The Canberra Times*, 27 January 1979, p. 3.

operated from a community arts centre base and utilised a range of forms, media and methods to facilitate public participation and teach skills.<sup>4</sup> Either term—cultural entrepreneur or animateur—could be used to describe Dunstan. It is perhaps, however, former Member for Campbelltown, Michael Knight’s recollection of Dunstan’s work with the local cultural sector that best captures the impact that he was to have. Knight remembered how Dunstan had actualised the local arts community’s long-held dreams for Campbelltown. He had been a ‘catalyst for a shifting into reality and future’.<sup>5</sup>

‘Well known to police in New South Wales’ (NSW) but ‘respected by them for ... [his] peaceful and artful approach’,<sup>6</sup> Dunstan’s appointment to the Campbelltown Council staff would appear to have been a radical move by the then Town Clerk, Keith Garling. From Dunstan’s point of view, it provided him with

gainful employment after 13 years. Being paid to do the work I was doing in Nimbin. Community development with arts as a medium ... embrace the new challenge of working within the constraints of local government. If I can tailor it to my style, it means doubling in effectiveness.<sup>7</sup>

Dunstan wrote this personal note just before he started at Campbelltown, and it provides an insight into how he imagined himself in the Community Arts Officer role. His ‘style’ and how he grafted this onto Campbelltown in the early to mid-1980s would have long lasting impacts on the cultural development of the city. Dunstan’s experiences prior to his Campbelltown appointment need to be laid out in the first instance, however, as they provide an important insight into the approaches that he took in his three-year tenure at the Council.

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<sup>3</sup> Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown.

<sup>4</sup> See John A. Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Arts in 1970s Britain*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2002, pp. 130-1.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Knight, interview with Penny Stannard, Sydney, 12 April 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Graeme Dunstan in ‘Sydney “prepared” for APEC conference’, ABC Radio, AM program, Monday 3 September, 2007, Broadcast transcript. Online (Available):

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2007/s2022042.html> (Accessed 10 December 2013). Dunstan recalled his political activism in the 1960s in an interview with the ABC’s Sabra Lane in the lead up to Sydney’s hosting of the 2007 *Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation* meeting, which brought leaders from 21 member nations including Russia and the US to Australia for the first time in nearly two decades.

<sup>7</sup> Graeme Dunstan, c1982, Graeme Dunstan papers, unpublished, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 87372(2).



Figure 13: 'How does one describe this man ... Graham?', newspaper article, *The Leader*, 28 July 1982, p. 10.

### From Duntroon achiever to Terania shaman

Dunstan had been at the forefront of the counter culture movement in Australia, having co-directed the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival, Australia's equivalent to Woodstock. In 1966, in what has become a famous moment in the history of Australian political activism, Dunstan stopped the visiting US President Lyndon Johnson's car in protest against the Vietnam War, an action that reportedly prompted the NSW Premier, Robert Askin, to instruct the driver to 'run over the bastards'.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Murray Goot, 'Askin, Sir Robert William (Bob) (1907–1981)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University. Online (Available): <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/askin-sir-robert-william-bob-12152/text21773> (Accessed 10 December 2013). Goot has suggested that this comment is the main thing that Askin has been remembered for. Dunstan continues his efforts as a political activist. In 2013 he was convicted of

After completing his high school leaving certificate, Dunstan attended the Australian Royal Military College (Duntroon). He described this as an attempt to emulate the heroism of his grandfather who had been killed in the First World War and ‘as a way of winning my mother’s love’. His questioning, outspoken dissent and his pursuit of spiritual meaning had clashed with the rigid protocols and traditions of military authority at Duntroon. He had also begun to question Australia’s involvement in the ideological and political situation playing out in Vietnam and other parts of South East Asia. Rather than fronting an impending court martial for what he has described as his ‘freedom of conscience’ and his ‘principles’, Dunstan withdrew from Duntroon after three years and went to the University of NSW (UNSW) to complete his studies.<sup>9</sup>

During his time at UNSW Dunstan became involved in student politics and activism. It was during his presidency of the Student Labor Club that he had carried out his legendary anti-Vietnam War act. Further involvement with student unionism led to Dunstan’s appointment by the Aquarius Foundation—the cultural arm of the Australian Union of Students (AUS)—in 1972 to co-direct the 1973 Nimbin Aquarius Festival with Johnny Allen. The Foundation had staged the inaugural Aquarius Festival in 1971 at the Australian National University as a platform to protest against the Vietnam War and conscription. With the Whitlam-led Labor Party’s election into government in late 1972 came the hasty abolition of conscription and the withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam. These and other far-reaching changes that it introduced resulted in many of the then protest movement’s causes being defused. This led Dunstan and Allen to re-orientate the concept of the 1973 Aquarius Festival away from political issues towards broader concepts of ‘lifestyle’.

This new approach encompassed a range of values, ideas and practices that sought alternative ways of living to, what were viewed by some, the constraints and conventions that had led to the social, economic, spiritual and political ills of western society. As the festival was auspiced

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damaging Commonwealth property after using ‘radical methods’ to break into a secure Defence airfield in Queensland, causing \$160,000 worth damage to a military helicopter to draw attention to stopping the war in Afghanistan. See Jackie Dent, ‘War on trial’, *Sydney Morning Herald, Good Weekend*, 16 November 2013, pp. 30-5.

<sup>9</sup> Graeme Dunstan in William McInnes, *The Making of Modern Australia*, Hachette Australia, Sydney, 2010, p. 53.

by AUS, its organisers and participants were mostly university students from the urban middle classes who had the resources and capital to engage with ideas of anti-materialism and the rejection of conventional values. These were not, as Margaret Smith and David Crossley have emphasised, the under-privileged, who, unlike many students, had little opportunity to reject lifestyles and the accompanying social conventions that had been enforced upon them.<sup>10</sup>

Dunstan and Allen had invited proponents of different lifestyles that had been emerging around Australia to participate in the festival. They also brought in an array of 'thinkers, artists, writers, musicians and doers of all kinds', to ensure that the event had a strong arts focus.<sup>11</sup> Dunstan and Allen had chosen not to create a program based on a schedule of pre-determined activities, but to pursue a course in which the participants themselves defined the program organically. Five thousand students travelled en masse to Nimbin for the ten-day festival, the reality of which, Dunstan later wrote, had been quite different to the original vision. While the 'dream' had been to return to agrarian ideals of innocence that could enable individuals to collectively re-discover lifestyles free of conventional constraints, the experience for Dunstan was one of grinding and intense organisation. He was responsible for managing thousands of partying young people whose descent upon a small rural village was unprecedented in Australia. He had been required to deal with behaviors among some attendees that verged on the criminal, cope with the inclement weather, mop up a littered and degraded post-festival site and recoup significant operating losses. While Nimbin had been a sobering learning experience for Dunstan, it would go on to inform his future work.<sup>12</sup>

The Aquarius Festival had received funding from the Australia Council and at the time, this amount had been a significant portion of the Community Arts Program budget.<sup>13</sup> It described the festival as 'an experiment, an exercise in togetherness and the simple pleasures of arts and crafts activities'.<sup>14</sup> Gay Hawkins has suggested that the Council's way of justifying its

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<sup>10</sup> Margaret Smith and David Crossley, 'Is there a way out?' in Margaret Smith and David Crossley (eds), *The way out: Radical alternatives in Australia*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 1-4.

<sup>11</sup> See interview with Graeme Dunstan in Carol de Launey, 'Nimbin's MardiGrass: Protest and celebration', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol 30, no 89, 2006, pp. 125-35.

<sup>12</sup> Graeme Dunstan, 'Nimbin: The vision and the reality', in Margaret Smith and David Crossley (eds), *The way out: Radical alternatives in Australia*, Lansdowne Press, Melbourne, 1975, pp. 19-27.

<sup>13</sup> See Andrea Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', *Meanjin*, vol 42, no 3, 1983, pp. 315-24.

<sup>14</sup> Australia Council, *Annual Report*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1973, p. 22.

funding to the festival had been that the ‘hippie ethos’—which equated ‘with the recovery of an organic, pre-industrial community’—provided an antithesis to the ‘high culture’ activities that the Australia Council was supporting, such as the Perth and Adelaide festivals.<sup>15</sup> It was also one of those ‘off beat’ activities that Whitlam had encouraged the Australia Council to support.<sup>16</sup> AUS purchased a shopfront in the near derelict main street of Nimbin village to function as an administration base for the Festival organisers. This ‘gave the alternative movement the political power of presence’; something, which Dunstan maintained, had never been done before.<sup>17</sup> The proprietorship of the shopfront also gave the festival and its underpinning ethos a sense of institutional materiality, a move that Dunstan would repeat in a different context a decade later in Campbelltown.

A few years later, Nimbin was once again a site where the Australia Council’s Community Arts Program promoted practices that channelled people together in expression of a shared sense of identity through the celebratory arts. Dunstan later recalled the experience and the impact that it had on him:

In 1978 the Australia Council funded a residency of John Fox and Sue Gill, from the UK Outdoor Theatre Group, Welfare State International, in Nimbin. They taught me the art of festival creation ... We worked on a spectacular celebration of New Year's Eve at Blue Knob Hall ... all the people from the counter-culture community would gather there with their families ... [and] sit around and talk with friends, dance, listen to music ... we made an 8 metre giant, and paraded it through the town ... Behind the hall was a big fire, we had the giant in a big circle of lanterns ... A flaming straw man was floated across a dam ... It was the most amazing spectacle; I'd never seen such beauty in my life before, such amazing community focus.<sup>18</sup>

People had been invited to ‘bring out their vile memories of the old year—tax returns, old love

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<sup>15</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>16</sup> Gough Whitlam, *Prime Minister's Queensland Broadcast No. 20, 'Quality of Life'*, 3 August, 1975. Transcripts from the Prime Ministers of Australia. Online (Available): <http://pmtranscripts.dpmc.gov.au/transcripts/00003837.pdf> (Accessed 23 November 2013).

<sup>17</sup> Dunstan in de Launey, ‘Nimbin's MardiGrass’, pp. 125-6; See also Michael Hannan, ‘Music Making in the Village of Nimbin’, *Transformations*, no 2, March 2002, pp. 2-3.

letters, jaded theses etc—and stuff them in the belly of the giant’.<sup>19</sup> With the fire consuming the giant and the community’s symbolic refuse inside it, the old year was extinguished and the New Year was ushered in. Dunstan’s exposure to WSI’s work in Nimbin introduced him to a particular method of practice—the ‘art of celebration’—and from that point, it became his ‘particular passion’.<sup>20</sup>

### **Welfare State International: The art of celebration**

The Welfare State International project (WSI) was one of a number of community arts projects that emerged during the period of social and cultural experimentation that took hold in Britain in the late 1960s.<sup>21</sup> Art historian John A. Walker has described how many artists had become dissatisfied with the formalist view of art and sought to re-orient its content, social relevance and function away from the traditions, institutions and audiences that incorporated such views. Artists endeavoured to involve ‘ordinary people’ in creative processes and enable them to represent themselves. They advocated that art could be a resource and tool for community empowerment—not something that existed solely within the domain of society’s elite. Through performance art, in particular, artists could achieve these goals and forge a direct relationship with audiences outside institutions.<sup>22</sup> Sam Wetherell has posited that the move towards community arts in Britain that took place within this context was no less than a ‘cultural phenomenon’.<sup>23</sup> Although similar cultural shifts had been occurring in developed nations other than Britain, Vivienne Binns maintained that it was the situation there that was the major influence on the arts in Australia.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Dunstan in de Launey, ‘Nimbin’s MardiGrass’, p. 130.

<sup>19</sup> Graeme Dunstan, ‘In search of the sacred’, *Caper 3*, Community Arts Board, Australia Council, North Sydney, 1979, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Graeme Dunstan in Joan Long and Anita Bakker (eds), *Reflections of artists and Friends*, Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Campbelltown, 2001, p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Others, for example, included the Basement Community Arts Project and the Tower Hamlet Arts Project. See Sam Wetherell, ‘Painting the Crises: Community Arts and the Search for the “Ordinary” in 1970s and ‘80s London’, *History Workshop Journal*, vol 76, no 1, 2013, p. 237.

<sup>22</sup> Walker, *Left Shift*, pp. 6-8.

<sup>23</sup> Wetherell, ‘Painting the Crises’, p. 237.

<sup>24</sup> Vivienne Binns, ‘Introduction’, in Vivienne Binns (ed), *Community and the arts: History, theory, practice*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991, p. 12.

Established by John Fox in 1968, WSI held an ideological position that society had become overly materialistic.<sup>25</sup> The religious beliefs and myths that had been once universally shared had been dissolving rapidly. Coupled with advances in technology, this had resulted in a 'mythological near-vacuum' in which communities had lost the skills to create their own celebrations. To remedy this, WSI sought to integrate art with 'ordinary life' by removing it from the 'building-based middlebrow/middle class theatre' and returning to the traditions of working-class theatre—the carnival and fairground—'that vein of subversion ... that runs through ... folk theatre and song'. WSI staged theatrical enactments of mythology for the whole community and drew in 'local energies' in the process to ensure that a 'residue of skills' remained in place for communities to create their own future celebrations.<sup>26</sup> Characterised by large-scale public events created by a collective of artists combining sculpture, puppetry, landscape, food, fireworks, music, technology, dance, performance and weather, WSI, as Tony Coult has observed, 'drew its strength from a sense of being "avant-garde"; of pushing back musical, visual and theatrical barriers that were previously rigid and orderly', and ultimately removing all such boundaries.<sup>27</sup>

Furthering his commitment to the art of celebration and the work of Fox and Gill, Dunstan completed a six-month Australia Council study fellowship with WSI in 1981.<sup>28</sup> Once back in Australia, he replicated many of WSI's techniques such as critiquing powerful people and forces, creating large-scale puppets and incorporating fire into performance as a symbol of purification and community renewal.<sup>29</sup> While he had been able to adapt many of its

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<sup>25</sup> See Tony Coult, 'Introduction', in Tony Coult and Baz Kershaw (eds), *Engineers of the imagination*, Methuen, London, 1983, p. 3; 8-9. Welfare State International continued for thirty-eight years before being dissolved in 2006. Its work now exists as an archive at the University of Bristol. See *Welfare State International*, Online (Available): <http://www.welfare-state.org/> (Accessed 11 December 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Coult and Kershaw, 'Introduction', pp. 1-8; 'The Welfare State Manifesto', reproduced in Kershaw and Coult (eds), *Engineers of the imagination*, 1983, pp. 216-7.

<sup>27</sup> Coult and Kershaw, 'Introduction', p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> See Australia Council, 'Community Arts Board', *Annual Report, 1981-82*, pp. 31-7.

<sup>29</sup> See 'Graeme Dunstan CV', *The Peace Bus*. Online (Available):

<http://www.peacebus.com/graeme/cv.html>. (Accessed 11 December 2013). See also Ken Healy, 'A diverse line up of Festival attractions', *The Canberra Times*, 5 March 1982, p10; Graeme Dunstan, in 'Letters to the Editor: City of dreams pageant', *The Canberra Times*, 27 February 1979, p. 2.



techniques in his work, Dunstan had been searching for a way to adapt the full dimensions of the WSI model to an 'Australian landscape'.<sup>30</sup> Campbelltown would provide this opportunity.

Starting with its promotion of the work of Fox and Gill in the 1970s, key elements of the WSI model can be clearly seen in the way that CAB formed community arts policy, determined funding and designed its initiatives, which included training artists. All of these steps defined and constructed community arts in Australia and these will be examined below. While both the Arts Council of Great Britain and the Australia Council were incorporating community arts as a policy concern in the mid-1970s there was arguably a fundamental difference in the trajectory that each took towards this. Both Walker and Wetherell place the starting point of the development of community arts in Britain with the work of radical and disenfranchised artists in the late 1960s.<sup>31</sup> As the critical mass of these artists and the number of their projects grew, an increasing number of funding applications for community projects were being submitted to the Arts Council. With this taking place, in 1974 the Arts Council developed formal policy responses to enable it to support community arts.<sup>32</sup> In this way, the formation of policy and systems of support had been driven from the 'bottom up'. From Hawkins' perspective, the pathway to policy formation in Australia was the reverse. Rather than the Australia Council responding to a movement founded by artists, it was designing the directions, and indeed the entire concept, of community arts from the 'top down'. As both architect and patron, the Australia Council steered artists along its agenda to develop the community arts movement. Hawkins' view, however, needs qualification. As Binns has observed, interpretations have varied as to whether the community arts movement was constructed by the Australia Council, or whether it was a movement driven by arts workers as part of the social and political changes that had been taking place across the nation to which the Australia Council had responded to.<sup>33</sup>

Hawkins study starts at the point that the community arts program was established within the Australia Council in 1973. For Hawkins, from that point on, what community arts came to

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<sup>30</sup> Dunstan, c1982, Graeme Dunstan papers.

<sup>31</sup> Walker, *Left Shift*, p. 130; Wetherell, 'Painting the Crises', p. 238.

<sup>32</sup> Arts Council of Great Britain, *The Report of the Community Arts Working Committee*, London, 1974, p. 34.

mean and how it was prescribed as a practice, was a construct of bureaucracy and an official invention.<sup>34</sup> She does not dismiss earlier activity that may have encompassed or paralleled the ideas and practices that came to be understood as community arts. Indeed, such activity was present in a range of social and political contexts, including at universities, and within the union, protest and counter culture movements as Deborah Stevenson, Sandra Kirby and David Watt have each discussed.<sup>35</sup> However, as Watt has observed, the situation in Australia was unique. While the upheavals of the time may have been where the origins of community arts lay, its development after that was intertwined with the government bodies that funded it.<sup>36</sup>

In its early years, the Australia Council had been under attack in the media. As mentioned elsewhere, critics had questioned the use of public funds for what appeared to be a hodge podge of activities that ranged from small town flower shows to hippie festivals. Such projects had been funded through the Community Arts Program budget. As well as having external detractors, many within the Australia Council itself had been hostile to the concepts of community arts. Hawkins has argued that in order to gain credibility within this environment, CAB needed to carve a niche for itself as a specialist division that worked above and beyond art-form based categorisations and, furthermore, to claim institutional authority for the policy objectives of access and participation.<sup>37</sup> In many respects, the WSI approach offered CAB a ready-made model for actualising this.

Unlike the other program areas of the Australia Council, which were framed according to specific forms such as the visual arts, music and theatre and their attendant institutions, CAB funded a wide range of art forms and festival practices. The WSI model demonstrated a way of integrating many diverse forms and techniques and promoting them on a large and publically visible platform. It provided a blueprint for how artists could reside in local places

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<sup>33</sup> Binns, 'Introduction', p. 12.

<sup>34</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, p. xviii.

<sup>35</sup> See Deborah Stevenson, *Art and Organisation: Making Australian cultural policy*, Queensland University Press, St Lucia, 2000, p. 56. See also Sandra Kirby, 'An historical perspective on the community arts movement', in Vivienne Binns (ed), *Community and the Arts: History, Theory, Practice*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991, p. 19; David Watt, 'Interrogating 'Community': Social Welfare v. Cultural Democracy', in Vivienne Binns (ed), *Community and the arts*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991, p. 55.

<sup>36</sup> Watt, 'Interrogating 'Community'', p. 55.

<sup>37</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, p. 35.

and with communities for considerable periods of time to secure the participation of people who did not normally access the arts in an institutional context. It was also strongly oriented towards local skills development. WSI's platform to de-institutionalise the arts—both from art form categories and cultural institutions—and place it in wholly the public sphere suited the needs of CAB. Its manifesto to reclaim lost societal mythology made the model, in theory, adaptable to almost any context—urban, rural or suburban—and in any society. While its focus on the traditions of the British working classes would seem to be less important in the Australian context, the issue would become significant when the WSI approach towards community arts was adopted in Campbelltown in the early 1980s.

### **Professionalisation and de-institutionalisation**

Just weeks after starting at Campbelltown Council, Dunstan had participated in CAB's Artist-in-Community training program. Policy recommendations had been made as early as 1973 to support the training of community arts workers, but it hadn't been until the early 1980s, following the Fraser Government's increasing of CAB's budget, that the recommendations were enacted.<sup>38</sup> An array of training projects, community arts conferences and state-based community arts peak bodies were introduced. New publications such as CAB's *Capers* occasional papers series and festival directories were produced, and the provision of community arts related resources and information was expanded. These efforts resulted in the establishment of a well-informed and committed community arts constituency that Hawkins maintains went some way to vindicate the work of CAB in the eyes of its detractors both within the Australia Council and beyond.<sup>39</sup>

Dunstan was one of twenty leading Australian community-based artists chosen from over seventy applicants to participate in the training program. His initial application had been unsuccessful and he had mused at the time that he was 'persona non grata in the inner circles of community arts'. At the last minute Dunstan had slipped in 'under the back door after having sworn a solemn oath on a stack of *Capers* and ethnic arts directories that I understood

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<sup>38</sup> See Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1980-81, pp. 23; 31-6.

<sup>39</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, pp. 66-72; See also Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', pp. 322-4.

that the programme was set and I was not to intercept it'.<sup>40</sup> No doubt with the agenda set in place to train some of Australia's most highly regarded artists in accordance with its recipe for community arts, the last thing that CAB would have wanted would have been to be derailed by Dunstan's questioning and 'dissent'. After all, as Ruth Banfield, a long-term supporter of the arts in Campbelltown and friend of Dunstan later recalled, 'Graeme was a bit of an agitator and stirrer'.<sup>41</sup>

The Artist-in-Community concept was promoted as a methodology that embedded artists within communities to enable them to identify, distinguish and strengthen their values, priorities, history and self-image.<sup>42</sup> It was also a way of working beyond the institution—the art gallery, theatre or museum—to de-institutionalise artists and enable community creative expression.<sup>43</sup> By bringing artists and communities into a new and direct relationship with each other, the level of participation in and basis of support for the arts would expand. Australia Council Chairman Timothy Pascoe considered this approach to be one of the Council's greatest achievements. He sought to grow the Artist-in-Community program as a way of better incorporating the arts within day-to-day living. To this end, Pascoe proposed that the future direction of the Australia Council needed to be one that was built on creativity, innovation and the integration of the arts with daily life.<sup>44</sup> Significantly, almost exactly the same sentiments were expressed in 2013 in the most recent national cultural policy, *Creative Australia*. The difference, however, was that *Creative Australia* pronounced these policy ideals not in terms of the future of the Australia Council itself—which it recommended a complete review of—but in relation to the role that culture, the arts and creativity have in delivering a 'social dividend' to the nation and in driving its economy.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Dunstan, c1982, Graeme Dunstan papers.

<sup>41</sup> Ruth Banfield, interview with Penny Stannard, 26 November 2012, Denham Court, Campbelltown.

<sup>42</sup> Graeme Dunstan in *Arts Alive News*, no 5, May 1982, p. 4. See also Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', pp. 315-6.

<sup>43</sup> Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', pp. 321-4.

<sup>44</sup> Timothy Pascoe, 'Setting priorities for the Second Decade', *Artforce*, vol 44, Spring, 1983, pp. 8-10;

Timothy, Pascoe, 'Australia Council Funding Priorities', *Meanjin*, vol 42, no 2, June 1983, pp. 264-73.

<sup>45</sup> See *Creative Australia: National Cultural Policy*, Commonwealth of Australia, 2013. Online (Available): <http://creativeaustralia.arts.gov.au/assets/Creative-Australia-PDF-20130417.pdf> (Accessed 26 January 2014).

The Artist-in-Community concept was claimed by CAB as one of its own inventions. But WSI had based its foundations on embedding artists in communities and de-institutionalising the arts, and this had preceded CAB's adoption of the approach. Perhaps in making the claim to its ownership, Australia Council community arts staffer Andrea Hull may have been referring to the outcomes that could be achieved through the methodology rather than the idea itself. Hull's assertion, rhetorical or otherwise, together with Pascoe's support for the Artist-in-Community program, meant that CAB was 'strongly encouraging' the approach.<sup>46</sup> It is not surprising then that in training community artists CAB advanced this methodology.

The pedagogical methods of CAB's Artist-in-Community training program had left Dunstan less than impressed. He had immediately critiqued the program as being more like a business management course that strove to develop 'conformity' than a forum for artists to express and build on their passion, creativity and sense of expression. Nevertheless, he was able to present an account of his 'personal mythology' which he described as, 'from Duntroon achiever to Terania shaman, from despair to a re-lighting of the fire', in a performance piece to an audience of participants.<sup>47</sup> Despite the shortcomings of the two-week program, its cost, which, at \$60,000, had been a substantial investment at the time—combined with the calibre of the artists involved—had signalled for Dunstan 'that community arts is the arts movement of the moment'. Regardless of the constraints of the program, he concluded that its main achievement had been that participants had formed an agreement on the theoretical basis for the practice of community arts. Community arts was 'based on the concrete realities of everyday life and experience' and enables people to take an active role in the arts and a greater control of their lives.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', pp. 321-4.

<sup>47</sup> 'Terania' refers to the 1979 battle between conservationists and loggers to preserve an area of 'big scrub' rainforest near Nimbin. It was the first time in Australia's history that citizens had physically defended a rainforest by placing themselves in front of police and loggers. For many involved, it provided a springboard into long-term environmental activism. The campaign was successful and led the Wran Government to gazette the area as National Park. See Jay Cronan, 'Remembering the battle at Terania Creek', *Northern Star*, 17 July 2009. Online (Available): <http://www.northernstar.com.au/news/remembering-the-battle-at-terania-creek/275633/> (Accessed 4 July 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Dunstan, c1982, Graeme Dunstan papers. See also Graeme Dunstan in *Arts Alive News*, no 5, May 1982, p. 4.

This was a position that strongly paralleled the WSI manifesto. CAB had introduced and promoted its work in Australia and had funded community arts practitioners to train with the project in the UK. Now, under the auspice of CAB, the fundamental concepts of the WSI approach had been endorsed by some of Australia's leading artists as the basis for the further development of community arts in Australia. With the Australia Council now promoting the Artist-in-Community concept at the highest level as the key to integrating the arts with daily life, something which it saw its very future to depend upon, the core principles and practices that existed in the work of WSI were cemented within the policy architecture and the practice of community arts in Australia. While this was taking place at a cultural policy level, on an individual level Dunstan had already embraced the WSI model and was committed to adapting it further in Australia. Yet, how would such an approach, which combined a particular set of ideological beliefs and cultural practices that had their roots in late 1960s Britain, take shape when grafted upon the outer suburban area of Campbelltown which, by the early 1980s, was in a state of intense upheaval as a result of massive ill-planned suburbanisation?

## CHAPTER 11

### **Life on the fibro fringe: Ordinary folk and the ideologies and practices of community arts**

Three key concepts that existed within Welfare State International's (WSI) methodology would have a particular relevancy to Campbelltown. Firstly, was the overarching objective to integrate art with ordinary life by removing it from cultural institutions and returning it to the traditions of the working classes. In many ways, Campbelltown in the early 1980s would have met the criteria of 'working class' as it was understood within WSI's founding philosophy. At the same time, discourses in community arts equated the concept of 'ordinary life' with the lives of the working classes. Drawing these two perspectives together, Campbelltown would have represented the spatial embodiment of Australia's ordinary people. In doing so, it provided an ideal place to exercise the policy imperatives of the Community Arts Board (CAB).

Second, was WSI's artist-in-community methodology. Apart from de-institutionalising artists and forming a direct connection with communities, WSI's process of embedding its practitioners within places was underscored by the idea of a 'skills residue'. By engaging people to work with artists during its long-term residencies on a multitude of tasks, WSI aimed to leave local communities with a skill set that could enable them to stage their own community arts projects. This idea would intersect closely with Dunstan's application of the WSI model in Campbelltown and, in particular, his ideas about the possibilities of community arts in a post-industrial economy.

Thirdly, WSI sought to reclaim lost mythologies through their theatrical re-enactments for the whole community. Campbelltown had a well-established local mythology, especially in the Fisher's Ghost story. It had been the foundation for the development of a particularly vibrant local cultural life. But this was something, which, as noted previously, did not extend to the whole community. This meant that there were a significant proportion of local people excluded from the celebration of Campbelltown's mythology.

## Ordinary people

While the WSI had authored its manifesto during a time when widespread economic and technological upheavals had been taking place across Britain and other western nations that would blur historical class divisions, it was still well understood in Britain that the term 'working class' referred to the urban poor and the blue collar workforce of industry and manufacturing. The 1956 National Readership Survey, a social grades classification model that had been widely adopted by governments and businesses in Britain and was still used up until 2001, had determined social class according to the occupation held by the head of a household. Unskilled and skilled manual workers who were employed in industry or in manual labour as well as pensioners and the unemployed were classified as 'working class'.<sup>1</sup>

From the Industrial Revolution through to the post Second World War era the working classes had traditionally occupied urban city centres. Life and work were thought of as closely bound together and the cramped and unsanitary conditions that existed in these environments had led them to be derided as the 'urban slum'. With the rise of the technology economy from the late 1960s onwards and the progressive wane of industry and manufacturing, the workers that had powered these economies became increasingly redundant and the spaces they occupied vacant. John A. Walker has suggested that the development of community arts in Britain during this time was a 'last-ditch attempt to nurture and preserve ... the traditional values and spirit' of the working class.<sup>2</sup> Sam Wetherell has maintained that there was an assumption that 'community' and 'working class' were synonymous, and that at its very outset community arts had as its point of departure the 'ordinary' working class.

While class-based alliance had been the starting point for community arts in Britain, Wetherell has noted that it was quickly displaced as the primary category of social analysis by other categories such as feminism and other minority groups. The ideas that underpinned the New

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that social class is no longer defined by occupation alone in Britain, but rather by the different kinds of economic, social and cultural resources or 'capital' that people possess. As my study here is largely historical, the definitions of social class that were present during the period under review are referenced in relation to the contemporaneous discourses and policy environments. See Mike Savage, Fiona Devine, Niall Cunningham, Mark Taylor, Yaojun Li, Johs Hjellbrekke, Brigitte Le Roux, Sam Friedman and Andrew Miles, 'A New Model of Social Class: Findings from the BBC's Great British Class Survey Experiment', *Sociology*, vol 47, no 2, 2013, pp. 219-50.

<sup>2</sup> John A Walker, *Left Shift: Radical Arts in 1970s Britain*, I.B. Tauris, London, 2002, p. 130.



Left, as discussed in chapter 1, filtered into the discourses and practices associated with culture and the arts. And by the end of the 1970s, as Wetherell has explained, many artists had re-orientated their work away from the 'authentic' working-class experiences towards a more inclusive concept of community.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, in the case of WSI, its manifesto clearly pointed to a commitment to renewing cultural traditions associated with the working classes. Yet for Tony Coult, this itself needed qualification. While WSI saw its work as avant-garde and boundless, its dedication to revitalising traditions of working-class theatre signified a conservatism that created a fundamental paradox within its manifesto.<sup>4</sup> The affiliation with the avant-garde—the doyenne of elite university art schools—also points to a dichotomy between ideology and practice in WSI's commitment towards ordinary people and the de-institutionalisation of art. Robert Hughes believes that the avant-garde was a redundant concept by the end of the 1970s, having been defused as a result of the cultural upheavals of the preceding decade. Therefore, WSI's attachment to the avant-garde may have been a moot point by this time.<sup>5</sup>

While community arts projects in Britain had founded their ideologies on radical politics and the reactivation of the cultural traditions of the working classes, in Australia many people would have considered class divisions to be a thing of the past. In making this observation, Stuart Macintyre and Sean Scalmer have noted that by 1961 the number of professionals in the workforce equalled that of clerical and trade workers. Furthermore, an increasing number of 'affluent suburbanites' owned a house, a car and an array of modern home appliances. This suburban lifestyle and its domestic materiality clearly delineated a separation between work and home. No longer was it necessary for workers to live in the inner city. Rather, they could commute from their own homes to their places of work. Once back home, they could experience more leisure and family time. In this sense, the situation experienced by many

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<sup>3</sup> Sam Wetherell, 'Painting the Crises: Community Arts and the Search for the "Ordinary" in 1970s and '80s London', *History Workshop Journal*, vol 76, no 1, 2013, pp. 237-8.

<sup>4</sup> Tony Coult, 'Introduction', in Tony Coult and Baz Kershaw (eds), *Engineers of the imagination*, Methuen, London, 1983, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup> See Robert Hughes, '10 Years That Buried the Avant-Garde', *The Sunday Times Magazine* (London), 30 December 1979, p. 17.

working Australians was markedly different to the lives and conditions that would have faced earlier generations.<sup>6</sup>

While the indicators of social class divisions were eroding as Macintyre and Scalmer have suggested throughout the 1960s, the ideologies associated with concepts of class continued to be present within community arts discourses well into the 1980s. The community arts sector, which CAB had fostered through its program of professionalisation, had become a vocal force in cultural policy discussions. Vigorous debates amongst practitioners, academics and cultural leaders about the community arts during the early 1980s have been referred to as the 'politics of community arts'. Within these discussions, the notion of 'ordinary people' and what it meant in terms of the arts, culture and policy concepts such as cultural democracy, featured prominently. Hawkins has suggested that the term 'ordinary' was used 'as a handy, all-purpose category' and 'an alternative name for the working class'. What was meant by 'ordinary people', and whether this denoted the working classes alone, or encompassed other social groups such as women, migrants and Aboriginal people for example, was contested. However, the most prominent voices within this environment, Hawkins' maintained, had been those of the Left.<sup>7</sup> This was perhaps unsurprising, given Sandra Kirby's assertion that it has been the political left which had historically and consciously sought to organise and engage 'ordinary people' in the nation's cultural life.<sup>8</sup>

Hawkins categorized the Left's rhetoric into three core themes: a critique of elite or 'bourgeois' art as part of what was considered to be the wider problem of capitalism; a view that 'community' could provide the panacea to the social ills thought to be gripping contemporary life; and that cultural practice in its essence was a vehicle for social change.<sup>9</sup> R.W. Connell, for example, held that capitalism's secular deification and institutionalisation of art had created a position of privilege, which had authorized how art came to be defined as culture and something that existed beyond the reaches of all but society's elite. Culture

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<sup>6</sup> Stuart Macintyre and Sean Scalmer, 'Class', in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Cambridge History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2013, pp. 370-1.

<sup>7</sup> See Gay Hawkins, *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing community arts*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1994, pp. 18-26.

<sup>8</sup> Sandra Kirby, 'An historical perspective on the community arts movement', in Vivienne Binns (ed), *Community and the Arts: History, Theory, Practice*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1991, p. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Hawkins, *From Nimbin*, pp. 19-21.

needed to be reclaimed for the 'ordinary people' and redefined as the 'side of human life that has to do with meaning, symbolism, forms of expression, self-conceptions, images of the world' rather than on concepts of excellence (as it was through the Australia Council) and 'the image of a creative minority'. Connell argued that in most areas of public policy, the criterion of interests of the majority applied, and that cultural policy should follow this rather than representing the palates of society's elite, which he considered the situation in Australia to be.<sup>10</sup> However, prior to doing this, Tim Rowse pointed out that those with a high level of 'cultural capital'—academics and arts managers—needed to interrogate how concepts of cultural democracy were predicated on the oppositional status of high 'Culture' and low 'culture', the latter of which was assumed to correlate with the lives of 'ordinary people'. He argued that Australian society was far more plural than what was signified by these divisions and he called for the establishment of a structural process that decentralised arts funding to an intermediary—'a community'—which would then vouchsafe for the necessity and usefulness of subsidised activities. Rowse felt that CAB's Art in Working Life program, which funded trade unions to provide arts activities for their members, demonstrated this.<sup>11</sup> However, Rowse's position is not unproblematic. Given that the union movement in the history of Australia has symbolised the collective working classes, his validation of the program would seem to reiterate the interchangeability between 'working class' and 'community'.

Hawkins has been careful to distinguish between the politics of community arts and community arts policy as it was promulgated by CAB which, itself, did not apply 'community' as a euphemism for 'ordinary people' or the working classes. She has noted that any reference to working-class populations was mediated in terms of social groups such as trade union members or people living in the western suburbs of Sydney whose socio-economic status was statistically lower than other populations. Yet these arbitrary classifications still pointed to populations of working-class people. As Gabrielle Gwyther has noted in her account of the proliferation of owner-built houses from the post war period to the 1970s, Western Sydney was fibro central and fibro cement was the most popular and affordable building material for

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<sup>10</sup> See R.W. Connell, 'Democratising Culture', *Meanjin*, vol 42, no 3, 1983, pp. 295-307.

<sup>11</sup> Tim Rowse, 'Doing away with Ordinary people', *Meanjin*, vol 44, no 2, 1985, pp. 161-9.

the working class.<sup>12</sup> For Rimi Khan, who has examined ethnicity and community arts in Australia in the 1970s, the movement was primarily aimed at bringing the arts to the working classes.<sup>13</sup> While cultural policy at a federal government level did not openly apply a language of social class classifications, the New South Wales (NSW) Labor Government certainly did. Premier Wran explicitly referred to the 'working classes' in statements about cultural policy and he did so unambiguously to promote his government's position that the arts would no longer be the domain of the elite—which it defined as the educated, urban, English-speaking middle class.<sup>14</sup>

CAB may not have explicitly referred to 'ordinary' or 'working-class' people in promoting the WSI model in its design of community arts in Australia and in its professionalisation of the sector. But it was clearly endorsing its methodological fundamentals, which were underpinned by an assumption that 'ordinary life' and, by association, 'ordinary people', were synonymous with the working classes. However, Australia was not Britain, and the imaginary place that the WSI model was attempting to re-create within the ruins of the working-class urban slum was more likely to be a newly built outer metropolitan suburb. As Gwyther has observed, during the 1970s Sydney's urban working class were more likely to be found in its west and south west suburbs than in the inner city.<sup>15</sup>

### **Suburbanising the working classes**

At the same time as the NSW Housing Commission had been implementing its expansive public housing program in the 1960s and 1970s, the NSW Land Commission had established a scheme of low cost land for housing in Campbelltown. As Bob Fagan has explained, this affordable housing program was designed specifically to help maintain the participation of working-class people in suburban home ownership.<sup>16</sup> Thousands of young, working-class families moved to Campbelltown to fulfil the dream of suburban home ownership in

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<sup>12</sup> Gabrielle Gwyther, 'From Cowpastures to pig's heads', *The Sydney Journal*, vol 1, no 3, 2008, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> Rimi Khan, 'Re-thinking cultural capital and community-based arts', *Journal of Sociology*, vol 49, nos 2-3, 2013, pp. 357-72.

<sup>14</sup> Neville Wran, *NSW Parliamentary Papers (Hansard)*, 9 February 1978, p. 11676; 26 February 1980, pp. 4679-80.

<sup>15</sup> Gwyther, 'From Cowpastures', p. 59.

<sup>16</sup> Bob Fagan, 'Industrial Restructuring and the metropolitan fringe: Growth and disadvantage in Western Sydney', *Australian Planner*, 1986, vol 24, no 1, pp. 11-2.

anticipation of the large-scale decentralisation of industry from the inner city and growth of manufacturing that had been proposed through the *Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD* (SROP) and the Macarthur Growth Centre Project.

Both Fagan and Carol Liston have noted that manufacturing played a more important role in Western Sydney throughout the 1970s than in other parts of the metropolis, and by the cusp of the 1980s, Campbelltown was statistically well above average in its concentration of tradespeople and transport workers than elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> As the affects of de-industrialisation from the 1970s and the economic downturn of the early 1980s took hold, the closure of industry forced worker redundancies and the automation of manufacturing resulted in the creation of fewer new jobs than expected.<sup>18</sup> Campbelltown was hit hard. Within metropolitan Sydney alone, 178,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector were lost between 1970 and 1985 and, as Fagan has observed, people who lived on the suburban fringe bore a disproportionate share of the social and economic costs of this structural change.<sup>19</sup> Given that a higher percentage of Campbelltown's population had been employed in these sectors than in other metropolitan places, it followed that there was proportionately a greater number of the community's breadwinners without a job. While Sydney's economy had been quickly re-booting through the rise of the information economy, the spatial concentration of this sector was in the Sydney central business district, North Sydney and the North Shore. But the western suburbs remained largely untouched by these new advancements. By 1981, Campbelltown had the second highest rate of unemployment of all Sydney metropolitan areas.<sup>20</sup> John Kerin's description of Campbelltown as 'a welfare electorate par excellence'

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.* See also Carol Liston, *Campbelltown: The Bicentennial History*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, p. 212.

<sup>18</sup> For an overview of the 1980s economic downturn in Australia see Paul Strangio, 'Instability, 1966-82', in Alison Bashford and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Cambridge History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2013, pp. 159-60.

<sup>19</sup> See Bob Fagan, 'Industrial change in the global city: Sydney's new spaces of production', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Oxford University Press, South Melbourne, 2000, pp. 144-66; See also Andrew Beer, 'The economic geography of Australia and its analysis: From industrial to post-industrial regions', *Geographical Research*, vol 50, no 3, 2012, p. 271; Fagan, 'Industrial Restructuring', pp. 11-2.

<sup>20</sup> See Fagan, 'Industrial change'. See also Bob Meyer, 'Macarthur: Sydney's successful south western satellite?' *Australian Planner*, vol 28, no 3, 1990, p. 29; Jeff McGill, *Campbelltown: A modern history 1960-1999*, Campbelltown and Airds Historical Society, Campbelltown, 1999, pp. 49; 53. See also H.W. Faulkner, *Campbelltown's transformation from rural town to metropolitan dormitory; spatial and social*

referred to the situation his constituents faced.<sup>21</sup> Many young families, who had been encouraged to settle in Campbelltown in the 1970s through affordable housing schemes, were now drawing unemployment benefits. Thousands of public tenants who had been re-located from the inner city and clustered together in Housing Commission developments relied entirely on government welfare support. The sheer numbers of people involved, the social impact of the situation and how it was reported in a broader context, dramatically changed the perception of Campbelltown and, as discussed elsewhere, it came to be stigmatised as a suburban blight upon the metropolitan landscape.

### **Suburban slum stigma**

As part of policy-driven urban slum clearance programs from the 1960s and, also, as a side-effect of gentrification, poorer citizens from Sydney's inner city—pensioners, the unemployed, migrants and Aboriginal people—had been relocated by the NSW Housing Commission into large public housing developments in Sydney's west. In the 1970s these developments were most intense in the Campbelltown suburbs of Macquarie Fields, Minto, Airs and Claymore. By 1981-82 more than one third of the Campbelltown area's overall population lived in public housing.<sup>22</sup>

Early on during the commencement of the Commission's activities, Peter Spearritt had predicted that the stigma that had been associated with the urban slum—which had geographically encompassed most of inner Sydney's working-class residents—would not simply disappear as a result of their relocation. Its focus, he argued, would shift to outer metropolitan working-class 'suburbia'.<sup>23</sup> Grace Karskens later confirmed this in her observation that many of the suburbs developed by the NSW Housing Commission in Sydney's

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*repercussions*, Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, 23 August, 1978, p. 16; Liston, *Campbelltown*, pp. 212-14.

<sup>21</sup> John Kerin, 'Campbelltown Welfare Priorities from a National Level – 1986 and Beyond', an address to the Community Dinner for the Social Futures Seminar, Gledswood, Campbelltown 28 October 1981, reproduced in *Social Futures Seminar, Follow up Papers*, Campbelltown City Council, 1981. See also Department of Environment and Planning, *Macarthur Regional Environmental Study*, 1985, in Meyer, 'Macarthur', p. 29.

<sup>22</sup> See Liston, *Campbelltown*, pp. 203; 220. See also Meyer, 'Macarthur', p. 29.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Spearritt, 'The Australian slum stigma', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol 9, no 2, 1973, pp. 41-5.

west during the 1960s and 1970s had become its 'new slums'.<sup>24</sup> Diane Powell has maintained that as the characteristics of the urban slum transferred to Sydney's western suburbs it stigmatised communities and stereotyped them as an urban blight in the eyes of the broader Australia population.<sup>25</sup>

Spearritt has traced the origins of slum stigma and how it became conventionalised in town planning via the attitudes held by middle-class moral crusaders, town planners and post war reconstruction professionals who had believed that the moral and physical health ailments experienced by inner city residents would be healed by their relocation to airy suburbia. Among these had been H.C. ('Nugget') Coombs, who, during his tenure as Director-General of Post-War Reconstruction, had categorically referred to the inner city as a 'slum' and its habitation as 'blighted'.<sup>26</sup> Spearritt has suggested that while attitudes such as Coombs' had been losing currency amongst the international planning community by the 1960s, these changes had been slow to reach Australia. This situation was particularly evident in the activities of the NSW Housing Commission throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s, which had justified its new outer suburban development program through the 'old-school' planning rationale.<sup>27</sup>

Coombs later became the first chairman of the Australia Council. He had been instrumental in its establishment and that of its precursor, the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust. Coombs had modelled it on the Arts Council of Great Britain and the approach that founding chairman John Maynard Keynes had taken towards fostering the arts as part of the post war reconstruction of the British nation. Anna Rosser Upchurch has noted that other British luminaries—the 'intellectual aristocracy'—have followed Keynes in chairing the Arts Council. Indeed, she has suggested that not only have those at its helm been some of Britain's most

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<sup>24</sup> Grace Karskens, *Holroyd: A Social History of Western Sydney*, New South Wales University Press, Sydney, 1991, p. 223.

<sup>25</sup> See Diane Powell, *Out West: Perceptions of Sydney's western suburbs*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993, pp. 62-5

<sup>26</sup> H.C. Coombs, 'Foreword', in Walter Bunning, *Homes in the sun: The past, present and future of Australian housing*, W.J. Nesbit, Sydney, 1945, pp. 7-8.

<sup>27</sup> Spearritt, 'The Australian slum stigma'. See also Andrew Jakubwicz, 'A new politics of Suburbia', *Current Affairs Bulletin*, vol 48, no 11, 1972, pp. 338-51.

prominent elite, but its workforce has mirrored this as well.<sup>28</sup> Upchurch concluded that the Arts Council of Great Britain has been a situation where society's elite have guided, administered and benefited from the intervention of the State in the cultural development of Britain. From a similar perspective, Coombs' political and administrative influence as Australia's most prominent public servant in the post war generation cannot be underestimated. His beliefs and attitudes concerning a range of policy areas would have directly impacted upon the conception of policies and operational mechanisms put in place to deliver them. Tim Rowse certainly believed that this was the case in relation to the development of the arts.<sup>29</sup>

From this perspective, it is worthwhile to consider how Coombs' ideas about urban environments and the arts might have intersected, if not directly, in the values and attitudes that underpinned policy formation under his watch. He had considered the inner city to be a slum and believed that it ruined the lives of those who lived there. Such thinking had underpinned the policy rationales for the development of public housing on a massive scale in Campbelltown. However, as Spearritt had observed, despite the physical demolition of urban slums, the stigma that surrounded those who had lived in 'blight' didn't disappear. Rather, it dogged them in their relocation to suburbia. Coombs was at the helm of the Australia Council when the Community Arts Program was formed and had identified those who lived in places such as Campbelltown as being priority communities for its intervention. Issues such as geographic distance from Sydney's cultural life and the lack of cultural venues in the locale indicated to Coombs that outer suburban communities were disadvantaged in their access to the arts.<sup>30</sup> But was there also an unspoken sense that when thousands of former inner city dwellers—the working classes and the urban poor—were re-settled in Campbelltown, that it acculturated a sense of stigma in how it was perceived? If so, given the ethos of the Australia Council—modelled as it was on the Arts Council of Great Britain—did Campbelltown also

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<sup>28</sup> Anna Rosser Upchurch, 'Keynes's legacy: an intellectual's influence reflected in arts policy', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 17, no 1, 2011, pp. 69-80. See also Clive Gray, *The politics of the arts in Britain*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2000.

<sup>29</sup> See Tim Rowse, *Arguing the Arts: The funding of the arts in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985.

<sup>30</sup> Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1973, Sydney, pp. 21-2.



require the intervention of cultural policy directions to rectify the stigma that had taken hold of its identity?

There is no doubt that the expansive development of public housing in Campbelltown changed how it was perceived and, in turn, its sense of local identity. Michael Knight has explained how public housing developments in other areas that were similar in scale to Campbelltown, such as Green Valley in Liverpool and Mount Druitt in Blacktown, were joined 'cheek by jowl' in a continuous mass that created a sense of a large single entity which had little, if any, affect on the central business areas of their local government areas. The situation in Campbelltown had been very different. Public housing had been grouped in disjointed areas and scattered across the entire local government area. There was no sense of there being a single, separate entity. The result of this had been a devaluing affect on the whole of Campbelltown. Knight has further observed that by the 1980s, public housing increasingly became 'welfare housing ... underclass housing'. The consequence of this, for Knight, was that the perception of Campbelltown changed.<sup>31</sup>

Pat Farmer who was the Member for Macarthur (2001-10) and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Education, Science and Training with special responsibility for Western Sydney in the Howard Coalition Government (1996-2007) spent his youth in Campbelltown in the 1970s. He also recalled the changes that took place then. Farmer explained how a lot of young people had moved to Campbelltown because it offered the only affordable housing within the Sydney basin: 'the correlations between education and financial rewards [which] has already been proven by many people' meant that many of these new Campbelltown residents were the 'least educated' and that this resulted in 'higher crime rates and ... disdain for ... financially well-to-do people living in the area'. The gist of his perspective is that the large numbers of young and socio-economically disadvantaged people who populated the area as a result of housing policies changed the social mix and identity of Campbelltown. For Farmer, this was a significant shift in what had up until then been Campbelltown's 'rich history' as a proud and

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<sup>31</sup> Michael Knight, interview with Penny Stannard, 12 April 2013, Sydney. See also Michael Darcy, 'Housing: The great divide', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 233.

independent town that had prided itself on its colonial-era cultural heritage and the role that it had had in Australia's agricultural economy.<sup>32</sup>

Michael Darcy observed that the stigmatisation of public tenants and the housing developments in which they reside 'are depicted in policy discourse and the public mind as undesirable, crime ridden, dangerous and degraded places'.<sup>33</sup> Given that Campbelltown had a much higher than average proportion of public housing residents in its population than other places, the stigma that was associated with this would have multiplied significantly. As Jeff McGill has noted, the entire area of Campbelltown became painted as an 'ugly, "houso" wasteland'. He has described how there had been reports that 'Campbelltonians' had been so embarrassed by their address that they would not admit to it when they were in inner city-based 'sophisticated company'.<sup>34</sup>

By the 1980s, Campbelltown had met a number of indicators that pointed towards it being understood as a 'working-class' community as the concept was meted within community arts discourses. If working class was interchangeable with 'ordinary' people, then Campbelltown was the symbolic place of the nation's ordinary folk. It would certainly become a microcosm of the economic structural change that affected many Australians during the early 1980s.

### **Unemployment: Policy responses and personal theories**

Unemployment and its broader effects on the community was not only becoming Campbelltown's most pressing issue in the early 1980s, it had reached a crisis point across Australia. The deterioration of Australia's labour market, which had started in the early 1970s, had become critical by the time the global recession hit in 1982-83. Over this period there had been an alarming rise in Australia's unemployment rate. In June 1970 for example, 1.4% of the population had been unemployed. By 1983 this figure had reached more than 10%. While periods of unemployment in the early 1970s had been comparatively short, the early 1980s were marked by incidences of long-term unemployment. In 1983 nearly 53% of people

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<sup>32</sup> Pat Farmer, interview with Penny Stannard, 21 November 2012, Sydney.

<sup>33</sup> See Michael Darcy, 'From high-rise projects to suburban estates: Public tenants and the globalized discourse of deconcentration', *Cities*, vol 35, 2013, p. 366.

<sup>34</sup> See McGill, *Campbelltown*, p. 49.

receiving unemployment benefits were the long-term unemployed, whereas in 1976, this rate been just over 16%. These figures led to a re-orientation of policies towards targeting job creation for the long-term unemployed and, in particular, those who were found to have been most affected by unemployment—women, young people, Aboriginal people and migrants who had poor English skills.<sup>35</sup> These groups were considered the most vulnerable to long-term and potentially permanent unemployment. They were also groups that were over-represented in Sydney's South West, particularly in places such as Campbelltown.

Labour market programs had been introduced by the Whitlam Government in the early 1970s focussing on public sector job creation in priority regions of high unemployment. Income support and training programs had also been introduced during this time. These initiatives had been wound back by the succeeding Fraser Government as part of its public sector spending reform agenda and replaced with wage subsidy schemes to generate youth employment in the non-government and private sector. With an election looming in 1983, and in response to what Alan Streeton and Bruce J. Chapman and Beth Cook have suggested was a perception that its youth subsidy programs had failed, Fraser re-introduced job creation schemes and a focus on the long term unemployed.<sup>36</sup>

If CAB's Artist-in-Community training program had left Dunstan thinking that community arts was the art movement of the moment, his participation in the Australian Labor Party's (ALP) arts policy workshop in May 1982 gave him a sense that community arts had been elevated to a new political status. The ALP, then in opposition, had held a series of workshops across Australia to ensure that its new arts policy would be built on the perspectives of people working in the arts. Judith Brett, who was also an attendee, had noted that while this approach had been welcomed, many participants, pre-occupied with their potential loss of funding in an environment of diminishing government arts coffers, had been focused solely on pleading their particular case to the panel of politicians in the room. This, she believed, had

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<sup>35</sup> Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, *Community Employment Program: The First Year*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1984, pp. 1-3.

<sup>36</sup> See Alan Streeton and Bruce J. Chapman, *An Analysis of Australian Labour Market Programs*, Discussion Paper, no 247, Centre for Economic Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra, 1990, pp. 19-21. See also Beth Cook, *National, regional and local employment policies in Australia*, Working Paper, nos 08-06, Centre for Full Employment and Equity, University of Newcastle, 2008, p. 3.

impeded the breadth of the discussion from addressing the more general question of the role of arts and culture in Australian life. Brett had cautioned that this would limit the depth of the ALP's resulting cultural policy.<sup>37</sup> Dunstan had a slightly different take on the outcomes of the workshop. High-level and well-respected parliamentarians Susan Ryan, Shadow Minister for the Arts, and Barry Jones, Shadow Minister for Science and Technology, had addressed the attendees and despite what Dunstan had considered to be the 'boring and tedious' policy speak, he was 'stunned' that community arts was 'in at top levels'. With an election looming, community arts, in Dunstan's view, now occupied a position of political currency.<sup>38</sup> The economy would be the overarching policy centrepiece and long-term unemployment would be the main issue that would dominate the platforms of both the ALP and the Liberal Party in the lead up to the forthcoming election. Joining the dots together, Dunstan formed a view that community arts had a role to play on a structural scale within this policy paradigm, and Campbelltown provided the perfect context for him to develop his vision.

Dunstan had seen first-hand the affects of economic restructuring on Campbelltown and sensed how it would impact on the community there in the long term. In late 1982, no doubt inspired by his recent experience at the ALP's arts policy workshop, Dunstan had authored a treatise—*Towards an Artful Dole life*—which argued that community arts offered an alternative possibility within the current policy mix for managing unemployment. He believed that while high unemployment in the area was looming and would become a potentially ongoing issue, it was something that planners and policy makers had not been confronting. He pointed out that the entire premise for the planning and development of Campbelltown had been founded on attracting young families to the area through employment opportunities in what was predicted to be a growing industrial and manufacturing sector.<sup>39</sup> Dunstan had rightly cautioned that while manufacturing would develop in Campbelltown, advances in technology would mean that work would be automated and there would be far fewer employment opportunities. The consequence of this, he maintained, would be that many Campbelltown

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<sup>37</sup> Judith Brett, 'ALP Arts Policy Workshop', *Meanjin*, vol 41, no 4, 1982, pp. 549-52.

<sup>38</sup> Graeme Dunstan, c1982, Graeme Dunstan papers, unpublished, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 87372(2).

<sup>39</sup> A situation that was also pointed out in the NSW Government's conclusions on implementation of the *Sydney Region Outline Plan*. See New South Wales Government, *Review: Sydney Region Outline Plan*, NSW Planning and Environment Commission, Sydney, 1980, p. 37.

residents faced a future of short or longer-term life on the dole. With this being the case, a cultural shift would be required in which being employed did not indicate the achievement of a successful life. Other factors would need to come into play as indicators of value rather than economic ones alone. This is where Dunstan saw the potential of community arts. 'It is a matter', he wrote, 'of promoting positive alternatives to employment and establishing a favourable social climate for them'.<sup>40</sup> Dunstan's position clearly drew on ideologies associated with alternative lifestyles and the organised movement that he had been at the forefront of a decade earlier.

Studying Dunstan's thesis today reads as a hugely ambitious goal for community arts. It was given a leg up when the ALP was elected into government in 1983 with Prime Minister Bob Hawke at the helm. This, however, did not occur through developments in cultural policy, but through a special employment initiative. Labor came into office in March that year with a National Recovery and Reconstruction Plan, which promoted strong and sustained economic growth as the 'essential ingredient' in solving Australia's unemployment problem. It quickly introduced the Community Employment Program (CEP), a job creation scheme developed under the *Community Employment Act (1983)* 'to assist the most disadvantaged groups of unemployed' in securing permanent employment in the general labour market by providing work experience and training on 'worthwhile' projects as a pathway into general workforce re-entry. CEP funded projects had to be sponsored by federal or state government agencies, local government or the community sector. Ranging from thirteen to fifty-two weeks in duration, projects were required to provide facilities and services that would deliver social or economic benefits to the community.<sup>41</sup>

Occupations in the creative arts and cultural heritage—which included the visual arts and crafts, writing and performing arts—were specified as part of the general labour market, and they therefore qualified for support through the CEP, as did community service jobs. These occupations combined accounted for 16% of total jobs created nationally in 1983-84 through

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<sup>40</sup> Graeme Dunstan, 'Towards an Artful Dole life', published in *Arts Alive News*, no 8, December 1982, p. 14.

<sup>41</sup> See Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, *Community Employment Program: The First Year*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1984, pp. 1-3; 53-7.

the Program.<sup>42</sup> Community arts, which was framed as an activity that combined the creative arts with community development, was seen as providing a service that had social and, arguably, economic benefits. It therefore met the criteria of the CEP. Campbelltown had a high proportion of unemployed people and a proliferation of groups that were considered to be most at risk of long-term unemployment. Campbelltown Council took full advantage of programs that provided state or federal monies for localised community services.<sup>43</sup>

In its first year, the CEP allocated one million dollars towards arts projects in NSW. Over thirty per cent of this was granted to organisations based in South West Sydney, including Campbelltown Council. By contrast, inner-Sydney arts organisations, which normally received the majority of arts funding, received little through the program.<sup>44</sup> The South West Metro Regional Arts Development Committee (SWMRADC), which Dunstan had joined at the time of his appointment to Campbelltown Council, had earlier promoted job creation in the arts as a major priority and it had published *Towards an Artful Dole life* in its *Arts Alive News* periodical. CEP funding to the South West Sydney region had far exceeded that provided by the traditional arts funders, and while Dunstan and others had considered this to be a great step forward, the Australia Council saw it otherwise. It maintained that the administrative workload required to manage 'such large amounts of funds' had directed the energies of community arts officers away from planning for the longer term. It also argued that too much emphasis had been placed on community arts projects. This attitude seemed to be contemptuous of the CEP as a new player in cultural policy; its approach regarded as being too community-oriented. The Australia Council's opinion regarding SWMRADC's promotion of such approaches was similarly dismissive. It pronounced that *Arts Alive News* was simply a 'well presented tabloid'.<sup>45</sup> Despite the misgivings of the Australia Council, and the discontinuation of CEP after only three years in favour of new labour market initiatives, the

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<sup>42</sup> Department of Employment and Industrial Relations, *Community Employment Program: The Second Year*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1985, p. 51.

<sup>43</sup> Both Alice Spizzo and Pat Farmer have drawn attention to the way in which Campbelltown Council took full advantage of such schemes. See Alice Spizzo, interview with Penny Stannard, 13 December 2012, Sydney; Farmer, interview.

<sup>44</sup> See Tim Kelly, in *Arts Alive News*, no 13, April 1984, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Colleen Chesterman and Jane Schwager, *Arts Development in Western Sydney*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1990, pp. 11-2.

impact of the program was significant for South West Sydney.<sup>46</sup> With the injection of CEP funds, over fifty full-time paid community-based arts worker positions existed in the region by the end of 1984. Four years earlier there had been just one.<sup>47</sup>

Dunstan had been looking to adapt the full dimensions of the WSI model to the Australian context and the CEP provided additional policy imperatives and funding streams to do so. The demography of Campbelltown pointed towards the mix of attributes that prevailing community arts discourses considered to symbolise working class or ‘ordinary people’—a constituency through which culture could be de-institutionalised and reclaimed from the clutches of the elite. Campbelltown was located in Western Sydney, which the CAB considered to be a culturally disadvantaged area. CEP provided funding for local unemployed people to work with artists undertaking community residencies and be trained in the processes and techniques of community arts. In theory, they would retain these skills for the purpose of producing their own future projects once the artists departed. This aligned with Dunstan’s philosophy, which envisioned the incorporation of community arts into the skill sets of individuals and communities as a pathway to managing Campbelltown’s post-industrial future. The last element in the adaptation of the WSI model in Campbelltown involved the concept of re-claiming local mythologies through the productions of theatrical re-enactments for the whole community.

### **Ghosts, TV thugs and artists**

The WSI model operated on an assumption that society had degenerated into an almost mythological vacuum in which communities had lost the skills to create their own celebrations. Its approach was to rediscover and re-claim local myths by producing whole-of-community theatrical re-enactments of them. However, this assumption was at odds with the situation in Campbelltown. Local mythology had been well and truly alive in Campbelltown in the form of Fisher’s Ghost and this had been celebrated each year since 1956 through the Council-produced annual festival. As discussed earlier, twenty years after the first festival

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<sup>46</sup> See Streeton and Chapman, *An Analysis*, pp. 25-7. They reported that over the life of CEP nearly 145,000 people had been placed in 23,000 projects.

<sup>47</sup> See Tim Kelly, in *Arts Alive News*, no 16, October 1984, p. 2.

parade, Australia Council Field Officer Helen Colman had reported that Campbelltown had a uniquely vibrant local cultural life. Yet, as she had emphasised, it did not include the participation of those who had settled in affordable and public housing developments—the working classes.

By the early 1980s it seemed that what was required was a re-claiming of the celebration of myth, not the myth itself. Colman may have hinted at this in her recommendation that within the community arts officer's role should be responsibility for the coordination and development of the Festival of Fisher's Ghost.<sup>48</sup> As she did not extrapolate beyond this, however, it is hard to know how much of a sense she had about the intense social changes that lay ahead and the need for cultural activities to incorporate the involvement of new suburban communities, or whether it was simply that the festival as it was had grown so large that it needed professional staff rather than community volunteers to manage it.

In 1983 Dunstan wore the mantle of community artist and conceived and directed the *Battle of the Ghosts*. He described the project as a piece of environmental theatre. It aimed to produce new work to 'enliven' the Festival of Fisher's Ghost and create a 'meaningful community ritual'. *Battle of the Ghosts* was conceptualised around the conflicts associated with 'progress' and its 'modern horrors'. Two protagonists, personified as giant puppets, went into battle over the preservation of Campbelltown's heritage verses its urban development. One figure was the ghost of Fred Fisher who represented the 'traditionalist', concerned with conserving and promoting Campbelltown's past heritage. The other figure was named 'Arthur Macarthur', in reference to the powerful colonial-era agricultural entrepreneur John Macarthur. It was modelled on the character of Ronald McDonald, the ubiquitous yellow and red coloured clown employed to promote the McDonald's global restaurant chain. This figure symbolised the 'forces of progress and their effect on the environment' and was adopted in reference to a new McDonald's restaurant, which had been built in Campbelltown at the site where the ghost of Fred Fisher had supposedly been seen.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Helen Colman, *Community Arts Inquiry: Campbelltown*, Australia Council, Sydney, 1976, p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> See Graeme Dunstan, 'Project Ghostfisher', *Lowdown: Youth Performing Arts in Australia*, vol 6, no 2, March 1984, p. 28.



*Battle of the Ghosts* followed the WSI formula closely in many respects. The 'tools of the theatre', as Dunstan called them, had included specially composed rock music, projections, giant puppets, dance and fireworks that had been created by a collective of independent artists formed specifically for the project. The artists included Victoria Monk from Sydney's well known Black Wattle studios, composer Brian Yeomans, Wedderburn-based theatre makers Fred Braat and Janine Hilder as well as local historian Verlie Fowler.<sup>50</sup> The event was staged on the last night of the Festival of Fisher's Ghost at a large unfinished and abandoned circular concrete structure that overlooked Campbelltown, known in local vernacular as the 'rings of Saturn'.<sup>51</sup> This was an unofficial public space that was popular already with young people and close to where they lived in housing estate suburbs. It was a site that embodied the space of 'ordinary life'. The application of an already well-known local myth required audiences to have no specialist cultural knowledge and in this sense it already existed conceptually in people's daily lives.

Dunstan's project drew in local unemployed people through the CEP, which provided \$45,000 to employ nine people for thirteen weeks to work on the production. Dunstan had worn this development in particular as a badge of pride. For him, it signalled that 'authorities' were willing to consider 'the preparation of community celebrations as good work for job creation programmes'. The scheme also provided an alternative source of funding for community theatre that could enable it to overcome what he considered to be the 'blocks to its growth presently imposed by the conservative and elitist policies of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council'.<sup>52</sup> Dunstan had reported that the scale of the event had demanded an enormous effort from those involved, and the eight hundred spectators had been 'astonished' by what they had seen.<sup>53</sup> For Dunstan, the *Battle of the Ghosts* 'represented a breakthrough into an area which could give rise to a new form of popular theatre in this country, one capable of

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<sup>50</sup> See Graeme Dunstan, in *Arts Alive News*, no 12, 1983, pp. 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> 'The Return of the Ghost - Fred Fishers meets Ronald McDonald', *Campbelltown District Star*, 2 November 1983, p. 7.

<sup>52</sup> Graeme Dunstan, *Arts Alive News*, no 12, 1983, pp. 6-7.

<sup>53</sup> Graeme Dunstan, 'Project Ghostfisher', pp. 28-9.

involving mass audiences outside the preciousness which confines much of traditional theatre to a limited and static audience'.<sup>54</sup>

While Dunstan had promoted the *Battle of the Ghosts* as a project to renew the Festival of Fisher's Ghost it was not repeated in that context. Instead, the funding that was committed to the project for the following year was re-directed to establish a New Year's Eve Festival in Minto.<sup>55</sup> This was variously referred to as 'Project Ghostfisher II' or the 'Minto New Year's Eve Festival'.

### **Minto**

The NSW Housing Commission had built the largest public housing development in Campbelltown in the suburb of Minto. Between 1976 and 1980 it constructed 1098 dwellings. During the same period more than 7000 people had moved into Minto; and 87% of residents were aged below thirty-four.<sup>56</sup> Minto was one of the first public housing developments in Australia undertaken using the Radburn urban design model.

By the mid-1980s Minto had become one of Campbelltown's most troubled areas. A tradition had developed each New Year's Eve amongst groups of young men who would torch cars and engage in other disorderly acts. Altercations would take place between them, police and fire fighters. A Council report described how 'rioters have transformed the housing commission areas ... into an ugly battleground against police—exploding cars, lighting bonfires fuelled with furniture, and showering emergency servicemen with debris and abuse'.<sup>57</sup> Dunstan felt that the Sydney media's reporting of the clashes generated widespread notoriety out of what was essentially a local fracas. This subsequently created and reinforced a negative image of Minto. Dunstan also maintained that the media reportage further exacerbated the situation by promoting Minto as the place to go to on New Year's Eve if one was looking to 'barney' with

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<sup>54</sup> *Arts Alive News*, no 12, 1983, pp. 6-7.

<sup>55</sup> See Graeme Dunstan, 'Project Ghostfisher Two: The Minto New Year's Eve Festival 1984', in Richard Fotheringham (ed), *Community Theatre in Australia, Methuen Australia*, Sydney, 1987, p. 141.

<sup>56</sup> Campbelltown City Council, *Population Report 1976-83*, Campbelltown, 1983, p. 20; 35. See also Jeff McGill, Verlie Fowler and Keith Richardson, *Campbelltown's Streets and Suburbs*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society, Campbelltown, 1995, p. 70.

<sup>57</sup> Campbelltown City Council, *Community Arts Officer's Report; May 1985-August 1986*, p. 1.

police.<sup>58</sup> Dunstan's assessment of this paralleled Powell's later thesis that the negative perceptions that came to define Sydney's western suburbs resulted from the way that the Sydney media framed its reportage.<sup>59</sup>

Dunstan had established the event to 'transform the negative aspects of the New Year celebration into something that would be a source of pride to the Minto community'. With support from CAB and the NSW Office of the Arts, artists Fred Braat and Maggie Turner were employed for ten weeks to develop and design the festival event and were assisted by workers employed through the CEP. They worked with the Minto Neighbourhood Centre and other local stakeholders and authorities such as the Campbelltown Police and local primary schools, whose cooperation, Dunstan noted, had been readily gained. In the weeks leading up to the festival the artists had held arts workshops with school children to make monster-themed masks and other paraphernalia that would be paraded in the street on New Year's Eve. While Dunstan had found that their participation had been secured with ease, this was not the case with adult residents whose desire for engaging in public activity, let alone in community celebration, he believed, had been severely demoralised as a result of the effects of 'the loose knit gangs of dead end kids [that] roamed uncontrolled in the public spaces'. Despite the artists' attempts to engage with these troublesome young people, they had found them 'incapable of sustained concentration or effort—one minute helping, the next destroying'. They were 'young TV thugs and alcohol space-cases [who] were setting, by default, the community self-image' and were 'trashing the suburb both literally (through vandalism) and metaphorically'.<sup>60</sup>

To produce the festival in this environment, Dunstan and the artists had 'realised that the event would have to encompass their destructiveness and go beyond them and create the possibility where people of goodwill could seize the public domain and experience and define the community in a more convivial manifestation'. They determined that it would need to be a festival model that people could 'plug into' on the night, rather one that had evolved through a staged developmental process as they had initially hoped for. With performers from

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<sup>58</sup> See Dunstan, 'Project Ghostfisher Two', p. 141.

<sup>59</sup> Powell, *Out West*.

<sup>60</sup> See Dunstan, 'Project Ghostfisher Two', p. 141.

established community groups and students from the Nepean College of Advanced Education imported for the festival parade, enough of a carnival atmosphere was created to entice people from their homes and join in the public celebration. The climax and end of the event had been the burning of a large bonfire, which had been constructed out of sixteen wrecked cars and the various parade trappings atop a prominent neighbourhood hill. A giant puppet 'worry monster' was created to lead the parade.<sup>61</sup> This figure symbolised the collective anxiety of Minto and drew on local mythology that a monster-like animal that resembled the extinct Tasmanian Tiger had lived in Minto and terrorised residents during the 1970s.<sup>62</sup> The Festival climaxed with the laying of the monster on the bonfire and, with accompanying fireworks, the event and the year 1984 ended in a blaze.

The Minto New Year's Eve Festival was deemed a success. Local media had reported that 'with the support of a team of artists, local people turned what was becoming an annual expression of frustration and anger into a spectacular event around a bonfire', something which, it qualified, had beforehand, 'meant burning cars in the street'.<sup>63</sup> Campbelltown Council's Social Planner, John Brookfield, had put its success down to the fact that it was a 'festival organised by the people of Minto for the people of Minto'.<sup>64</sup> Dunstan credited positive broadcasting by the Sydney media with turning around the community's perception of itself. More significantly, Dunstan believed that the artists had provided a 'gift' which had enabled the transformation of civic disorder into an 'acceptable tradition' and had introduced a new festival into the 'cycle of festivals' in the 'new city'.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps it should not be surprising that Dunstan employed such persuasive rhetoric in support of a festival that he had devised. After all, he was a self-described entrepreneur of culture.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> See McGill, *Campbelltown*, p. 40.

<sup>63</sup> *Campbelltown City Star*, 19 December 1985, np.

<sup>64</sup> *Macarthur Advertiser*, 13 August 1985, np.

<sup>65</sup> Dunstan, 'Project Ghostfisher Two', pp. 141-3; See Graeme Dunstan, c1985, Graeme Dunstan Papers 1983-1996, textual records, graphic materials, unpublished, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 87372(2).

<sup>66</sup> Graeme Dunstan in Ross Andrews, 'Festival task for Nimbin dreamer', *The Canberra Times*, 27 January 1979, p. 3. See also Graeme Dunstan, in 'Letters to the Editor: City of dreams pageant', *The Canberra Times*, 27 February 1979, p. 2.

In many ways the Minto festival replicated the 1978 Nimbin New Year's event, which had been produced by WSI's John Fox and Sue Gill and funded by CAB. That event had provided something of an epiphany for Dunstan. It had shown him how the WSI model of community arts practice—the art of celebration—could bring a community together as one in celebrating a collective sense of identity. There was a big difference, however, in staging such an event in Nimbin in the 1970s to Minto in the 1980s. The Nimbin participants had been young, university educated and politically conscious embracers of alternative lifestyles who were raising families in an environment of natural beauty and idealistic intent. The Minto community on the other hand, consisted of some of the most socially and economically disenfranchised people in Australia who had been clustered together—many unwillingly—in large numbers in outer suburban Campbelltown in an experiment of public housing that further exacerbated their sense of social alienation. Despite the rhetoric of success, it would seem that the adaption of the WSI model into this environment struggled to affect lasting community change. Was it simply a case of Dunstan's misplaced idealism? Or was it an indication that the Australia Council in promoting a particular community arts approach was unable to accommodate some of the most disadvantaged people of all? Dunstan's successor in the community arts officer role, Alice Spizzo, has hinted at the latter in her reflection on the Minto New Year's Eve Festival nearly thirty years later.

Spizzo oversaw the second and last Minto New Year's Eve Festival held in 1985. At the time she, too, had promoted what the festival could do to 'transform the negative energy into something positive'.<sup>67</sup> In remembering the event, she recalled that a group of non-participating residents had started a fire with mattresses and the fire brigade had been called in. With the event taking such a turn, Spizzo had 'felt like a bit of an intruder'. She now believes that 'it was a bit patronising of us trying to think that doing this one festival was going to make such a difference: A lot of that stuff in retrospect, is a bit tokenistic in quite highly dysfunctional communities'.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, the view held by proponents of community arts at the time was that such interventions were needed in communities. Founder of the Australia Council's Community Arts Program, Ros Bower, urged community artists to hold fast when

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<sup>67</sup> Alice Spizzo, *Daily Mirror*, Thursday 19 December 1985, np.

<sup>68</sup> Spizzo, interview.

introduced to communities who could be 'defensive, hostile and even smug in the face of this strange invasion'. Andrea Hull, then the Director of the Australia Council's Policy and Planning Division, had stated that: 'The [Community Arts] Board has to remember that communities may not welcome with open arms the colonisation of their leisure time by outside missionaries preaching the gospel that art is good for you—even though it may be'.<sup>69</sup> Somewhat paradoxically, while this statement stamped the authority of the 'top down' approach of the CAB, Hull had then urged that its initiatives must respond to the needs, interests and resources of the community.

Reading these words today there is an uncomfortable sense that a degree of arrogance existed among community arts staff at the Australia Council. If not, then there is certainly an insinuation of paternalism. After all, CAB was part of the elite institution of the Australia Council and from this position it operated both as the architect and patron of community arts. Perhaps, however, such attitudes more simply reflected the absolute faith that those involved in the development of the community arts held in the efficacy of their work. Combining Spizzo's recent conclusions with the comments made by Dunstan on the realities of working in Minto suggest that efforts to acculturate the community through the Australia Council's policy directions were, in hindsight, somewhat misguided. Such reflections offer insights into how developments in 'community', cultural policy and other spheres, which had been influenced by the New Left movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, had underpinnings that were somewhat contrary to the values and principles that they espoused. Ann Curthoys, for example, who has written from a feminist perspective drew attention to how New Left men in their focus on the liberation of oppressed peoples in the Third World, had ignored their own complicity in the exploitation and domination of women involved in the movement.<sup>70</sup> Yet, Dunstan and his Minto collaborators were able to adapt and produce their event within the constraints of the environment, and it had been considered a success.

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<sup>69</sup> Ros Bower, 'The community arts officer: What is it all about', *Caper 10*, May 1981, p. 4. See also Andrea Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', *Meanjin*, vol 42, no 3, 1983, p. 324. Hull was Director of the Community Arts Board from January 1980 to February 1982. See also Australia Council, *Annual Report*, 1981-82, p. 35.

<sup>70</sup> Ann Curthoys, *For and against feminism: A personal journey into feminist theory and history*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp. 79-80.

In recent years another Minto Festival was also produced in the vein of the community arts, now termed, 'community cultural development'. 'Minto Live', as it was called, was produced by Campbelltown Arts Centre in 2009 and was designed to bring residents together in celebration of local life to assist in managing Minto's public housing tenants through a process of change brought on by a new generation of housing policies.<sup>71</sup> Having been widely regarded as a failed experiment, no less for the stigmatisation that had been created by locating of thousands of public tenants together in mass housing estates, developments such as Minto had been superseded by a policy of de-concentration, which provides a mix of home ownership and private and public tenancies.<sup>72</sup> By the late 2000s, public dwellings throughout Minto were being demolished and residents relocated elsewhere.<sup>73</sup>

Thirty years after Dunstan and Spizzo's respective events, the art of celebration, albeit in a different guise, was back in Minto. While supported once again by the Australia Council, this time Campbelltown's local cultural institution produced the project. It was programmed by the Sydney Festival to meet the requirement of providing activities in Western Sydney. *Minto Live* received widespread coverage and critical acclaim. Yet few, if any involved in the organising of the event would have known of the activities that had been held in the same place some three decades earlier. These, too, had used cultural policy directions to manage the impact of urban and social change. The event's production and presentation by two established cultural institutions is somewhat ironic given that the fundamental model from which it and community arts evolved was ideologically committed to the de-institutionalisation of culture. Dunstan had been dedicated to this approach and had found in the work of WSI a model to enable this. In Campbelltown, he had found a place to enact it. Yet while Dunstan and the CAB had been pursuing this trajectory in Campbelltown, the local arts community had been pursuing another—the institutionalisation of the arts. They saw Dunstan as their means of accelerating their long-held dream for a public art gallery. Indeed

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<sup>71</sup> For a report of the event see 'MINTO LIVE: A triumph', *The Minto Messenger*, no 20, February 2011, p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> See Michael Darcy, 'From high-rise'.

<sup>73</sup> See Judith Stubbs, *Leaving Minto: A study of the social and economic impacts of public housing estate redevelopment*, Minto Resident Action Group, Minto, 2005. Stubb's sociological study seeks to 'accurately reflect' the perspectives, events and decisions that led to the progressive demolition of the Minto public housing estate.

his very terms of employment with Campbelltown Council compelled him to assist them. This conflicting situation was not lost on Dunstan or on Spizzo, who has reflected quite rightly that 'there was a political ideology division ... between the Australia Council Community Arts Board and galleries. They didn't think galleries were a priority and they were certainly not the home of [the] community arts'.<sup>74</sup> Spizzo would ultimately take the gallery campaign to its conclusion. But it was Dunstan who found a way to tread the fine line between these conflicting agendas.

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<sup>74</sup> Spizzo, interview. Spizzo followed Dunstan as Campbelltown City Council's Community Arts Officer. She held the position from 1985 to 1987.



## CHAPTER 12

### **Ambition, status and respectability: The push for a public art gallery in Campbelltown**

In December 1988, the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery was officially opened. The event marked the end of a local social movement and its campaign from 1982 to 1986 to have a dedicated public art gallery established in Campbelltown. It also represented a significant milestone in the development of the arts in metropolitan Sydney. At that time, no such institution existed elsewhere in the Western Sydney region.<sup>1</sup> Twenty years of lobbying Campbelltown Council to establish a facility had preceded this. Yet in just four years, what had up until then been a desire for a gallery became a concrete reality. In reflecting on the events some thirty years later, Ruth Banfield and Alice Spizzo, who were each heavily involved in the art gallery campaign, believe that the people and events that came together in Campbelltown during the 1980s to develop an art gallery was remarkable and would not be possible today.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter investigates Banfield and Spizzo's observation in detail by examining the community-led processes and developments in cultural policy that resulted in the establishment of a public art gallery in Campbelltown. It maps out events that took place between 1982 and 1986 that led to the formation of a social movement and the enabling of what became a successful campaign. What were the forces that compressed twenty years' worth of efforts for an art gallery into a four-year campaign? How did local agendas feature in this and which voices held sway over others? To what degree did the cultural policy directions of state and federal governments impact upon local efforts and what were the outcomes that resulted from their coalescence on the ground? Given that the impacts of Campbelltown's suburbanisation had peaked by this period, how did the movement for a gallery correspond

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<sup>1</sup> The only other public gallery that existed in Western Sydney prior to 1988 was the Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest. Unlike the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery 'The Lewers' was not a purpose built art gallery. It had been the homestead of the late Gerald and Margo Lewers whose family had donated the property to Penrith Council in 1980 for re-adaptation as an arts facility. See Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest, *History*. Online (Available): <http://www.penrithregionalgallery.org/aboutus-history.php> (Accessed 2 May 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Alice Spizzo, interview with Penny Stannard, 13 December 2012, Sydney; Ruth Banfield, interview with Penny Stannard, 26 November 2012, Denham Court, Campbelltown.

with this? What ideologies came into play as different agendas sought to influence the shape of cultural policy as it materialised in bricks and mortar in this South West Sydney area?

These questions bring to light the complexities involved in the way that cultural policy directions took shape in a part of metropolitan Sydney that was the place undergoing the most profound change in urban Australia at the time. The discussion will show how the construction of the City's first art gallery—'Campbelltown Arts Centre' as it is now known—came about as a result of competing goals, conflicting agendas, incongruous policy objectives and the aspirations of different individuals as they imagined how Campbelltown might develop its cultural future.

### **Elusive promises and stark realities**

By the beginning of the 1980s, the provision of urban infrastructure, community services and facilities still remained well behind growth and development in Campbelltown.<sup>3</sup> The promise that the Whitlam-era Macarthur Growth Centre Project had held for the development of a range of facilities, including those for housing cultural activity, had not come into fruition. Federal funding for the project had been withdrawn by the Fraser Government. Hugh Stretton observed that by this time, the high level of policy attention that had been given to cities throughout the 1970s had dropped off. He suggested, however, that attention to urban affairs continued through resident associations, environmentalists, in local newspapers and in planning schools.<sup>4</sup> For some local residents, the lack of cultural facilities in Campbelltown remained a compelling issue. This was so when Graeme Dunstan started in his role as Campbelltown Council's first community arts officer in early 1982.

Campbelltown Council had established Dunstan's position through a funding arrangement with the Australia Council's Community Arts Board (CAB). In the 1950s and 1960s the Council had shown an entrepreneurial streak in using cultural activity to deliver public policy outcomes that benefited the local community socially and economically. There was an acceptance that community participation in the arts could provide benefits for residents and a

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Knight, interview with Penny Stannard, 12 April 2013, Sydney. See also Paul Ashton and Robert Freestone, 'Town planning', *Sydney Journal*, vol 1, no 2, 2008, pp. 11-23.

<sup>4</sup> See Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australian Cities*, Transit Australia, Sydney, 1989, pp. xxiii-iv.

tradition of support for the arts was established. The introduction of the Fisher's Ghost Art Award in 1962 separated the organised visual arts from other cultural policy directions and triggered a desire among local arts supporters for Campbelltown Council to establish a dedicated public art gallery. Through the Art Award, and later the Art Society of Campbelltown, visual art was seen as a way of gaining recognition for Campbelltown on the national cultural stage, which, at the time, denoted the 'high' or elite institutional arts. Concepts of excellence, the professionalisation of the arts and the development of a modern national Australian cultural identity underpinned these activities.

The ambitions of local arts supporters were that Campbelltown's visual arts would develop to a level that was sufficiently advanced and sophisticated for acknowledgment alongside national-level flagship arts activity. They believed that this would bring respectability and status to Campbelltown, promote its identity as a modern and progressive place and heighten a local sense of pride. Campbelltown's civic leaders thought that these objectives were necessary to support residents through the upheavals brought on by the process of suburbanisation that had dislocated this identity. At the same time as the local council was fostering community cultural activity to mitigate the affects of suburbanisation, state government metropolitan planners and federal government urban policy specialists were incorporating concepts of culture in their vision for Campbelltown's suburban future that mooted cultural activity as an essential part of modern urban life. In the mid-1970s the Australia Council had recommended that community arts-based policy directions be introduced in Campbelltown, despite acknowledging that a flourishing local cultural life already existed there.

### **Horizons for the new or renewal of the old?**

For Dunstan, the situation he encountered at Campbelltown would have been far more complex than that of his counterparts in other councils. He faced a set of competing expectations in a place that was undergoing urban and social change unprecedented elsewhere in Australia. Perhaps the most intense force facing Dunstan would have been local arts supporters, who, for two decades, had been pressing Campbelltown Council to establish an art gallery. By the early 1980s, however, they had all but conceded their failure to gain the

necessary support to further their ambitions. They keenly awaited Dunstan's arrival and the potential that it promised to fulfil their gallery dream.

The Art Society of Campbelltown had been the voice pushing the case for a gallery to Campbelltown Council since the mid-1960s, and this was still the case when Dunstan started. In his treatise on community arts, *Towards an Artful Dole life*, Dunstan gave the Art Society a leading role in assisting people living in Campbelltown who faced uncertain futures and unemployment. He pressed it to

lift its horizons and see itself as engaged in a major job of cultural development and reconstruction aimed at establishing the facilities, the infrastructure and the community acceptance and positive support for the arts as a path towards brighter futures for Campbelltown.<sup>5</sup>

This seems to have been an ambitious gauntlet to throw down to an organisation that had been founded by local arts supporters Claire and Arnold St Claire in 1967 to bring 'high art' to Campbelltown. It was also an organisation, which by the early 1980s, as Banfield has recalled, had lost the support that it once enjoyed. Its President, Claire St Claire, had 'put a lot of noses out of joint' and as a result of this, membership had dwindled to the point that the Art Society was disintegrating.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps Dunstan was aware of this and in setting such a task he was aiding the Art Society's passing. If the idea of a gallery was going to go beyond the wishes of a few local people, it would need to be revitalised as a focused social movement that could operate beyond a local context and find traction within the wider cultural policy sphere. Those at the forefront of such a movement would need to fully grasp how Campbelltown had grown from a small and independent country town into an expansive outer suburban metropolitan area.

### **Prelude to a cause**

The New South Wales (NSW) Labor Government's central objective for culture during the late 1970s and early 1980s had been to increase access to the arts. Premier Wran believed that the

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<sup>5</sup> Graeme Dunstan, 'Towards an Artful Dole life', published in *Arts Alive News*, no 8, December 1982, p. 14.

proprietorship of the arts should not belong only to the urban dwelling, educated 'middle classes', but to populations across the entire state. The primary mechanism that his government implemented this policy objective through was to support the construction of art galleries and museums in regional NSW in a dollar-for-dollar incentive scheme with local government. Dunstan was aware that the state government had supported sixteen galleries since it had introduced the scheme in 1979 and was unlikely to support many more.<sup>7</sup> With this being the case, he recommended quick action if funding was going to be sought for a Campbelltown gallery through this program. Any submission made in this regard would need to show that there was wide support for a gallery. Much like the situation regarding public policy more generally, as Catherine Althaus noted, the gallery idea needed to show that it had enough popular support to gain attention at a policy level.<sup>8</sup> Any proposal, Dunstan advised, would also need to outline how a Campbelltown gallery would have a 'special flavour' that would set it apart from facilities that existed elsewhere in the state. Furthermore, a proposal would have to indicate how a gallery would meet the needs of Campbelltown patrons in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>9</sup>

To further emphasise the requirement for prompt action, Dunstan drew attention to the 'immediate need' for space to store and exhibit the Council's collection of Fisher's Ghost Art Award works, which had accumulated over the previous twenty years. He also pointed to the need for the Art Award exhibition itself and those of the Art Society to have use of a proper gallery space rather than the old town hall.<sup>10</sup> The arrangement of using town halls in this way was not uncommon in the outer suburbs. It was situation that, as noted earlier, the Australia Council had grumbled about as being less than conducive to the development of the arts. In 1981 the Council handed the old town hall over to the local theatre society and therefore its use for other activities was restricted. To be eligible for the local government incentive funding Campbelltown Council would need to lodge a submission to the state government for a gallery project and match the monies requested. But while the gallery idea had received

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<sup>6</sup> Banfield, interview.

<sup>7</sup> Evan Williams, Director, NSW Division of Cultural Activities, in *Arts Alive*, no 12, December 1983, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Catherine Althaus, *The Australia policy handbook*, Allen and Unwin, Crows Nest, 2007, p. 49.

<sup>9</sup> 'Moves for a local gallery', *Campbelltown District Star*, 4 August 1982, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

encouragement from one or two aldermen, the Council had not been forthcoming with any commitment towards it.

### **Calling citizens with vision**

In November 1982 Dunstan launched ‘public efforts’ to establish an art gallery in Campbelltown with a dinner that was attended by ninety people. It had been organised under the auspice of the Art Society on the premise that ‘Campbelltown is a new city in which the work of matching its cultural life to its city status has only just begun’. Invited to attend were ‘citizens who have vision, who are concerned for the future of cultural development of our City and who have the wherewithal to manifest their visions’.<sup>11</sup> Michael Goss, Executive Officer of the Regional Galleries Association of NSW (RGANSW)—an organisation funded by the state government to oversee its program of support for regional galleries—was the guest speaker. Goss reiterated that an art gallery would only eventuate in Campbelltown ‘when state and local government are convinced there is a strong community demand for it’. Local government, he had stressed, was ultimately responsible for the establishment of such a facility.<sup>12</sup> John Marsden, an influential local solicitor, pointed out that local arts supporters needed both a commitment from the Council and residents that the gallery idea had currency. Marsden was from one of Campbelltown’s most prominent ‘old’ families and his local influence, as Sioux Garside recalled, extended from this.<sup>13</sup>

Marsden announced that a new social movement would be formed—the ‘Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery’ (the Friends).<sup>14</sup> Its purpose would be to provide ‘undeniable evidence’ that community demand for an art gallery existed. The Friends would demonstrate this by being ‘effective at fundraising; interested and capable of mounting quality art exhibitions; and persevering and discerning in the application of political pressure’.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See ‘Moves for local gallery’, *Campbelltown District Start*, 4 August 1982, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> See ‘Task force for art gallery’, *Macarthur Advertiser*, 9 November 1982, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Sioux Garside, interview with Penny Stannard, 31 July 2013, Minto Heights, Campbelltown.

<sup>14</sup> See ‘Task force for art gallery’, *Macarthur Advertiser*.

<sup>15</sup> Letter from Graeme Dunstan on behalf of the Campbelltown Art Society, 7 January 1983, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

It is worthwhile at this point to consider how the group known today as the 'Friends of Campbelltown Arts Centre' had once been a fully-fledged social movement. Banfield believes that the Friends was the first of its kind; it was formed before an 'actual gallery had been built or anything like that'.<sup>16</sup> 'Friends' of institutions—cultural or otherwise—are membership schemes which, as Alix Slater has noted, are often formed for strategic or tactical reasons to, for example, respond to a financial crisis, to campaign to conserve buildings or services, to engage audiences or develop a cohort of volunteers.<sup>17</sup> In the case of Campbelltown's Friends, there was no existing institutional or material entity that it formed around. Rather, its formation was principally concerned with the objective of compelling local government to establish a bricks and mortar institution. As Banfield noted, it was essentially a 'very strong lobbying group'.<sup>18</sup> In this way, the Friends operated like a single-issue resident action group or urban social movement.

Social movements from the nineteenth century until the post Second World War period had traditionally focussed on issues of labour and class conflicts. In the 1960s, the 'new' social movement era emerged through the Rights movements. In Australia, like other western societies, this focussed on women's, gay and lesbian, first peoples', black, peace and environmental rights.<sup>19</sup> These social movements had the effect of bringing about significant political change within nations and beyond. Lauren N. Costello and Kevin M. Dunn have suggested that resident action groups can also be characterised as social movements. At first glance, they might be considered too localised and parochial to be classified in this way. But as Costello and Dunn maintain, resident action groups similarly function outside of formal political channels, empower, are often a voice for women and other minority voices, and importantly, demand reactions by government.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Banfield, interview.

<sup>17</sup> Alix Slater, 'Membership and subscription in the performing arts: What have we learnt during the last 35 years?', in Daragh O'Reilly, Ruth Rentschler and Theresa A. Kirchner (eds), *The Routledge Companion to arts Marketing*, Routledge, London, 2014, p. 234.

<sup>18</sup> Banfield, interview.

<sup>19</sup> See Donatella Della Porta and Mario Dian, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, 2009, pp. 2-5. For an Australian perspective see Verity Burgmann, *Power and Protest: Movements for change in Australian Society*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1993.

<sup>20</sup> Lauren N. Costello and Kevin M. Dunn, 'Resident action groups in Sydney: people power or ratbags?' *Australian Geographer*, vol 25, no 1, 1994, pp. 61-76.

Costello and Dunn's study of urban social movements in metropolitan Sydney in the 1980s found that there had been a rapid rise in the number of groups in the western and south western suburbs during the period. They attributed this not only to population growth but also to increasing attempts to deposit urban 'nasties', such as waste facilities and prisons, in outer suburban areas. They noted that these differed to social movements based in the middle-class northern suburbs and gentrified inner city Sydney areas, which were more commonly associated with heritage and bushland conservation issues.<sup>21</sup> Earlier findings by Andrew Jakubowicz had suggested that urban activism was largely restricted to the more affluent pockets of Sydney, such as the suburb of Hunters Hill, where Australia's first Greens Bans Movement to save Kelly's Bush in 1971 had famously brought 'housewives' and the NSW Builders Labourers Federation together to campaign for its protection from urban development.<sup>22</sup> Jakubowicz argued that educated middle-class professionals had asserted moral and intellectual hegemony over urban activism as they had the resources to engage with issues in this way, unlike working-class populations, most of who lived in Sydney's western suburbs. J.S. Humphreys and Dennis Walmsley, however, disagreed with Jakubowicz's position and found that locational conflicts were not confined to certain areas of the city or to the 'articulate residents of middle-class suburbs'.<sup>23</sup>

Costello and Dunn have pointed out that while many urban social movements are a protest to maintain the status quo, such as protecting heritage areas from development, others are about demanding equitable service provision. Given the situation in Campbelltown, where there was a dearth of urban infrastructure and community services generally, the rationale for a social movement that strove to rectify this inadequacy, albeit through a specific cultural form, was in many respects about achieving equity.<sup>24</sup> This theme, however, did not seem to

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> See Terri McCormack, 'Kelly's Bush', *Dictionary of Sydney*, 2008. Online (Available): [http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/kellys\\_bush](http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/kellys_bush). (Accessed 23 April 2014).

<sup>23</sup> See Andrew Jakubowicz, 'The city game: urban ideology and social conflict, or Who gets the goodies and who pays the costs?', in D.E. Edgar (ed), *Social change in Australia: readings in sociology*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1974, p. 342; Andrew Jakubowicz, 'The green ban movement: urban struggle and class politics', in J. Halligan and C. Paris (eds), *Australian urban politics*, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1984, pp. 149-166; J.S. Humphreys and D.J. Walmsley, 'Locational conflict in metropolitan areas: Melbourne and Sydney, 1989', *Australian Geographical Studies*, vol 29, no 2, 1991, pp. 313-28.

<sup>24</sup> Costello and Dunn, 'Resident action groups'.



dominate the way that local arts supporters had articulated the need for an art gallery; they had been focussed on how it would symbolise respectability and Campbelltown's status as a city. It was, however, apparent in Dunstan's thinking, according to his recollections some years later:

I created the Friends as a new front to work specifically for the establishment of the Gallery ... planning for the Bicentennial was already underway and I knew funding would become available for major projects. The strategy was to get the Gallery recognised as the top priority local project and then make the Wran Government, which was spending billions on Darling Harbour and other inner city cultural facilities, embarrassed about the lack of cultural facilities amongst the Labor voters at the south western suburban frontier.<sup>25</sup>

Dunstan and others involved in the South Western (Metropolitan) Regional Arts Development Committee (SWMRADC) had been making representations for greater cultural investment in South West Sydney based on apportioned levels of grants funding in the region compared to inner Sydney. SWMRADC had published data from the 1981-82 financial year that showed that South West Sydney had received just \$0.05 in cultural grants per capita compared to central Sydney, which had received \$1.73 per person. It argued that this level of inequity in cultural funding meant that the South West metropolitan region was 'doubly disadvantaged'.<sup>26</sup> As chapter 13 shows, this argument intensified as the Bicentenary approached and debates ensued about where in Sydney funding associated with the anniversary would be directed.

### **Federal cultural policy concepts and local agendas**

At the end of 1982, Dunstan invited Banfield and a few other hand-picked people to assist him in establishing the Friends. His invitation stated:

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<sup>25</sup> Graeme Dunstan in Joan Long and Anita Bakkers (eds), *Reflections of artists and Friends*, Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Campbelltown, 2001, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> See Graeme Dunstan in *Arts Alive*, no 6/7 July and October 1982, p. 5; See also *Arts Alive*, no 8, December 1982, p. 2.

To date cultural development has been a low priority for the planners and builders of the new city of Campbelltown. Unless concerned citizens begin the work now to assert the authority of the arts, the community life we share will never move beyond the dabbings [sic] of the hobbyist, the entertainment of the Clubs, the provision of playing fields and vistas of excellent kerb and guttering ... Establishing an art gallery as a focus of quality in our community is, we believe, a necessary first step towards a general improvement of the quality of life we share.<sup>27</sup>

While Dunstan's call to 'concerned citizens' was spirited and, no doubt, aimed to rally the troops, scrutiny of it shows that he had not pioneered a new language. Rather, he had applied within the context of Campbelltown a set of existing cultural policy discourses that had been established at a federal level. His words echoed those of H.C. ('Nugget') Coombs. As noted earlier, Coombs had established a Community Arts Program soon after the formalisation of the Australia Council in 1973 and had complained that planning for cultural facilities had been absent in the development of outer suburban areas.<sup>28</sup> The lack of cultural venues in these places was considered to be an impediment to peoples' quality of life. This had been a powerful concept in the Whitlam Government's agenda to rectify inequity in Australian cities, and in particular, in how the plans for Campbelltown and the Macarthur Growth Centre Project had been drawn up.

'Quality of life' had also directly informed the conceptual basis for how community arts came to be constructed as a methodology to enact the cultural policy objective of increasing participation in the arts, which the Australia Council was required to implement. It is therefore not surprising that Dunstan drew on these concepts, as his position had been funded through the Australia Council's nation-wide strategy to increase the involvement of local government in community arts.

More specific to Campbelltown was Dunstan's reference to community life as being defined by amateur arts, sports and poker machines. Earlier research undertaken by the Australia

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<sup>27</sup> Graeme Dunstan letter to Ruth Banfield, 16 November 1982, Campbelltown City Council, record D7505E, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>28</sup> Australia Council, *Annual Report*, Sydney, 1973, p. 16.

Council had recognised Campbelltown as having an unusually vibrant cultural life. Community participation in an assortment of arts-based activities that had evolved through the Festival of Fisher's Ghost was high. But Campbelltown's cultural life was found to be elusive to its newer residents; its young, working-class families who had settled in public and affordable housing estates in Minto, Macquarie Fields, Airds and Claymore in the 1970s.

### **The campaign gets organised**

In February 1983 Dunstan organised a public meeting to formally start the campaign for an art gallery.<sup>29</sup> (See Figure 14.) Banfield attended the meeting, as did local artists Barbara Romalis, Alice Klaphake, Fred Braat and Janine Hilder. Other attendees included local business people and supportive residents. John Marsden's name sits at the top of the attendance list.<sup>30</sup> An analysis of the attendee's residential addresses as they are listed on the original meeting registration document shows that none were from Campbelltown's public housing suburbs.

As noted previously, in an earlier forum Marsden had argued that residents from these suburbs were segregated from local community life, so their absence at this event is not particularly surprising. However, evidence of wide-based community support for a gallery was needed for before the state government would consider any investment in local projects. Given that the establishment of a gallery was mooted as being the community's primary goal for Campbelltown's cultural development, it would seem that at the point of inauguration, it was an agenda that represented the aspirations of some residents and not others.

Yet, people from Campbelltown's public housing suburbs were not excluded from participation in cultural activity locally. They were the targets of the Australia Council's Community Arts Program and they provided the Community Arts Board (CAB) with a constituency to advance its objectives. (Figure 15 shows a community arts project taking place at the Housing Commission suburb of Airds.) While CAB espoused the need for the arts to emerge directly from 'the people'—as would seem to have been the case in relation to the art

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<sup>29</sup> *Campbelltown Art Gallery: A vision*, flyer to promote a public meeting, 17 February 1983, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>30</sup> *Inaugural meeting of the Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Civic Hall, Campbelltown, 7.30pm, 17 February 1983*, registration of attendance, three pages, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

gallery movement—the case for these residents was that a federal bureaucracy was directing their participation in local cultural activity. Spizzo, who followed Dunstan in the Campbelltown Council community arts officer role, has implied as much. She reflected: ‘It’s not like everyone was knocking on your door asking for an artist in residence’. Spizzo is referring to the Artist-in-Community initiative discussed in the previous chapter that the CAB was heavily focussed on during the early 1980s. She implies that in the case of public housing residents, cultural activity did not evolve organically, nor was it self-determined. Rather, it was directed by the work of community arts officers and the agendas pursued by the CAB.<sup>31</sup>

The Friends became a legal entity soon after the first public meeting, and Romalis was elected President.<sup>32</sup> Like Dunstan, although a generation earlier, Romalis had been involved in student politics prior to her move to Campbelltown. She, too, was an astute political operator who, as Banfield emphasised, wasn’t afraid to talk to people in high places.<sup>33</sup> As the daughter of a prominent eastern suburbs Sydney medical practitioner and wife of a first grade rugby player Romalis had attended society events in her youth.<sup>34</sup> This would have provided the perfect training for interacting with the political elite.

The Friends’ primary goal was set out by spokesperson Marsden:

By 1985, we aim to get a commitment from the Campbelltown City Council and the State government to provide a professionally managed art gallery in Campbelltown ... in terms of community development, we believe that establishing an art gallery is a necessary step if the cultural life of Campbelltown is to match its city status.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Spizzo, interview.

<sup>32</sup> See Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 2 March 1983; 17 March 1983; 6 April 1983; 4 May 1983, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Romalis oral history interview with Katherine Knight in Katherine Knight, *Passion, Purpose, Meaning: Arts Activism in Western Sydney*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 2013, pp. 27-8; 93. See also Banfield, interview; Garside, interview.

<sup>34</sup> See for example, ‘Social Jottings’, *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, 28 November 1956, p. 11; 23 July 1958, p. 15.

<sup>35</sup> ‘Meeting furthers gallery planning’, *Macarthur Advertiser*, 15 February 1983, p. 6.

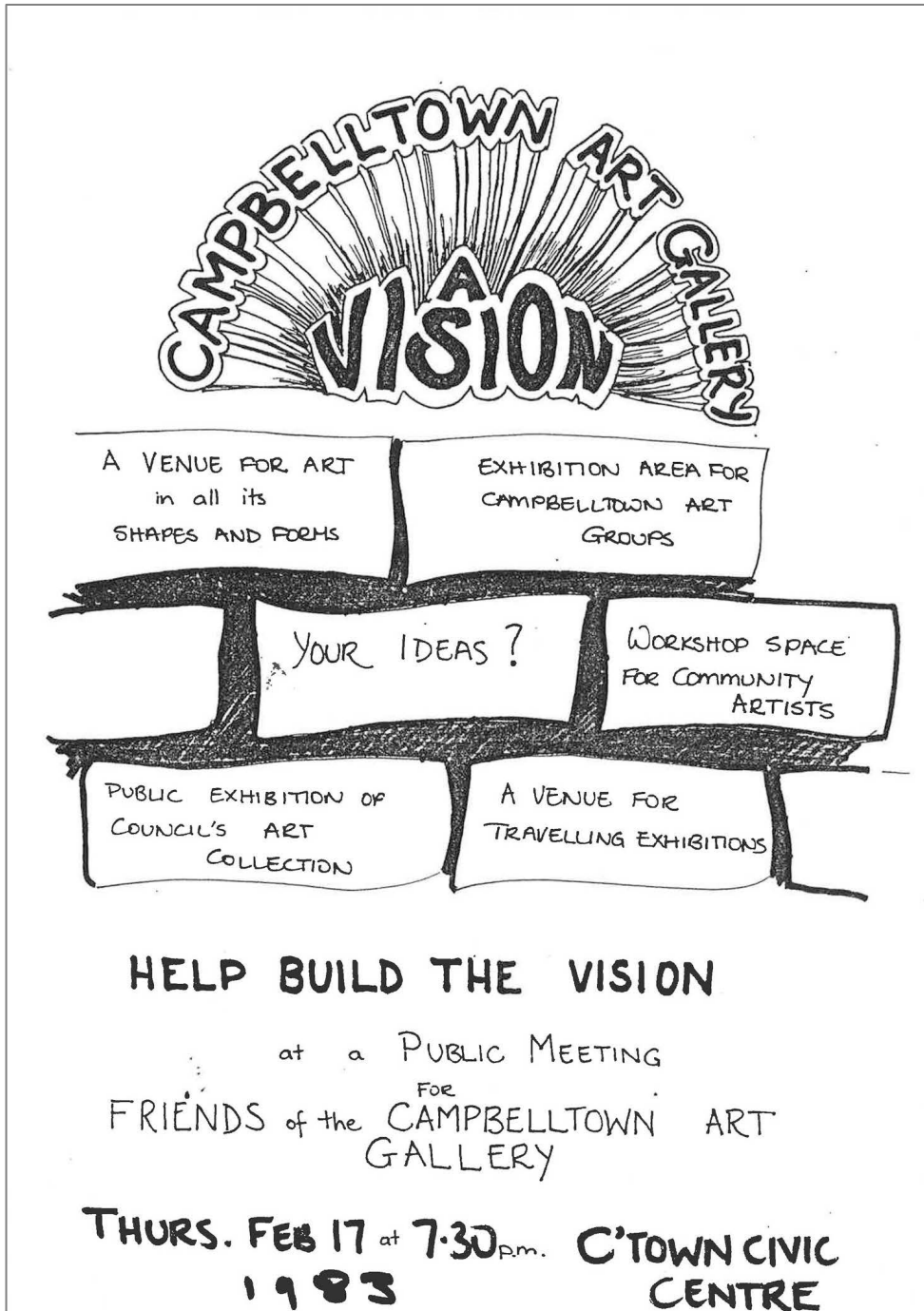


Figure 14: Friends of Campbells Art Gallery, *Campbells Art Gallery – A vision*, flyer, 17 February 1983, Campbells, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.



Figure 15: Concrete part-lizard/part-dragon/part-platypus monster under construction at Cheviot Place, Airds, photo, Verlie Fowler, c1982, Campbelltown City Library Local Studies Collection.

Marsden's involvement in Campbelltown's arts scene during his student days in the 1960s had led to him developing a great interest in the visual arts and he had believed that the Campbelltown gallery's 'role' would be 'artistic excellence'. He had joined the Friends upfront because he felt that he could play an effective part in highlighting Campbelltown's position in the broader art community and in encouraging elected representatives to support the gallery campaign.<sup>36</sup>

Soon after its incorporation, the Friends drafted a manifesto. It defined the Friends as 'a group of Campbelltown citizens who have set their sights on establishing a professionally managed art gallery in their city'. While acknowledging that the idea had first started with the establishment of the Fisher's Ghost Art Award, the Friends' inauguration signalled a 'clear intention' that the art gallery was 'going to move from the realms of hope to the realm of actuality in the near future'. The Friends formally defined Campbelltown as being no longer 'a quaint country town' but 'a city in its own right and part of the greater metropolis of

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<sup>36</sup> John Marsden, 1999, in Long and Bakkers (eds), *Reflections of artists and Friends*, p. 3.

Sydney'.<sup>37</sup> While the manifesto does not credit Dunstan with any authorship, it speaks unequivocally of his style. He was an experienced organiser who was able to mobilise people on ideological principles that promised to affect change. Yet, the rhetoric applied here and in other forums used to promote the gallery cause was full of paradoxes. The first can be seen in relation to how Campbelltown was understood as a city.

### **A symbol of C/city status**

The need to match Campbelltown's cultural life with its status as a city had provided the foundation to the local Art Society's pitch for a gallery in the late 1960s. As noted earlier, Campbelltown was then a 'new city' in the sense that it had been re-incorporated as a municipality in this way. The Art Society argued that Campbelltown needed the appropriate signifiers of this status, one of which in addition to institutions such as a court house was an art gallery.<sup>38</sup> Such a position, however, was not a new concept. It was part of a tradition that extended back to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

A rationale similar to the Campbelltown Art Society's had earlier underpinned the development of the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW). Moves had been afoot since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to establish a State art gallery in Sydney's Domain Parklands, and the AGNSW had opened in the early twentieth century. There was a belief that cities such as Sydney and Melbourne had to have an official art gallery in order to be considered a true city in the Empire. Fine art galleries administered by the State—'public galleries'—were thought to serve a moral, civilising purpose. An appreciation of the fine arts was seen as a necessity of refined society. This ideology differed from that which had underpinned the establishment of the mechanical schools of arts in Australian cities and towns from the mid-1800s. Ailsa Macpherson has noted that the schools of arts had a 'distinctly pragmatic and practical purpose linking art to social utility'. Public galleries, on the other hand, were arbitrated by the ruling elite, who, as Macpherson has written 'appeared fully confident in

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<sup>37</sup> Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, *Introducing: The Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery*, membership flyer, Campbelltown, 1983, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>38</sup> See Michael Goss, 'Introduction', in Michael Goss, Richard Heathcote and Catherine Lillico-Thompson (eds), *Regional Galleries of New South Wales: A design, planning and development manual*, Regional Galleries of New South Wales, Sydney, 1987, p. 6.

their own abilities to define fine art and taste'. For her, such attitudes were also present in Australia's post war reconstruction program, particularly, as they were framed within concepts of modern progress and expansion. In this context, leading figures promoted the view that art should be at the forefront of the modernisation of Australian cities.<sup>39</sup>

Tim Rowse has drawn similar conclusions in his characterisation of cultural policy in the post war era. A phase of 'voluntary entrepreneurship', self-anointed cultural elites governed non-commercial culture. They 'never doubted their responsibility or capacity for cultural leadership' and held an unquestionable assumption that the Australian public as a whole formed their constituency. Significantly, Rowse maintained that this same group was responsible for forming the architecture for the systematic intervention of State support for the arts that set the foundations for the Australia Council.<sup>40</sup>

A similar situation existed on a micro level in Campbelltown. Prior to suburbanisation and the influx of large numbers of new residents, which subsequently changed local voting patterns, Michael Knight has described how 'there was a self-conscious, self-defined elite who ran the joint and had a view how things should happen'. This group of people—the 'squattocracy', as Sioux Garside called them—had control of local business, churches, community organisations and politics. They also had a heavy influence over Campbelltown's cultural life, and their aspirations for its future cultural development had dominated local policy discussions.<sup>41</sup>

At the same time as the Art Society of Campbelltown was insisting that a gallery be developed to symbolise city status, metropolitan planners and urban policy makers were reconfiguring Campbelltown as the heart of a 'new city' in another sense. The *Sydney Region Outline Plan 1970-2000AD* (SROP) proposed that Campbelltown be the urban centre of the 'Three Cities'—Campbelltown-Camden-Appin—metropolitan Sydney's South West sector. In later years, the Whitlam Government's Growth Centres Program re-positioned the Three Cities or, 'Macarthur', into the sphere of national importance and Campbelltown was considered to be

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<sup>39</sup> See Ailsa McPherson, *History of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Vol 2, Conservation Plan*, 1992, Sydney, Department of Public Works, pp. 3-5.

<sup>40</sup> See Tim Rowse, *Arguing the Arts: The funding of the arts in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1985, pp. 6-11. See also Gay Hawkins, *From Nimbin to Mardi Gras: Constructing community arts*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1994, p. 5.



significant not just to Sydney, but Australia's urban future. As such, the Macarthur Development Board (MDB) proposed a suite of urban amenity to ensure that it would offer its residents the same quality of life that other Australian cities provided. An art gallery and other cultural facilities were included in this.

By the time Dunstan, Marsden and the Friends were advancing the argument for an art gallery on the basis of Campbelltown's status as a city, the concept itself meant two different things.<sup>42</sup> The Friends' position was that Campbelltown was unequivocally part of metropolitan Sydney and no longer a country town. As noted earlier, Campbelltown was also considered to be part of Western Sydney, and while it was grouped in with thirteen other metropolitan local government areas to form this policy construct, it was located on its geographic periphery. Campbelltown was also peripheral to Sydney in another, non-physical way. Even in the late 1980s, Sioux Garside recalled that there were attitudes that reinforced a sense of Campbelltown as 'an overgrown country town', particularly, she noted in relation to the deference held towards Campbelltown's 'old' families.<sup>43</sup>

'Country' NSW—the towns and their surrounding areas that exist across the state beyond the metropolitan circumference—were a priority in the cultural policy objectives that were being enacted by the Wran Government from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, specifically as they related to the development of public art galleries. (This is discussed in chapter 9.) While the Friends' position for Campbelltown aligned with SROP and the *Three Cities Plan*, the situation for many at the time was less clear-cut. As Knight reflected, Campbelltown was understood and claimed as 'metropolitan' for some and 'country' for others.<sup>44</sup>

While the Friends had included 'effective fundraising' as one of three strategic actions, members had quickly realised that this alone would not generate the level of capital required to build an art gallery. Substantial government investment would need to be secured for the project. This local endeavour would therefore need to align with state and federal

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<sup>41</sup> Knight, interview; Garside, interview.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Knight has drawn attention to how the concept of 'city' was variously employed in relation to Campbelltown. He noted that it was used to refer to a municipal entity, such as in the 'City' of Campbelltown and to the concept of an outer suburban business centre. See Knight, interview.

<sup>43</sup> Garside, interview.

government cultural policy objectives. The elasticity in how Campbelltown was defined as both a 'metropolitan' and 'country', 'city' and 'regional' would give the Friends a high level of flexibility that would enable them to graft their campaign onto a range of cultural policy directions that state and federal governments were each pursuing.

### **Excellence versus community development**

Not only did ambiguities around Campbelltown's status as a 'city' underpin the quest for an art gallery. Incongruities can be seen in how cultural policy concepts were understood and voiced by the campaign's leaders. Marsden, for example, believed that the core role of a local gallery should be to foster 'artistic excellence' to enable Campbelltown to achieve recognition in the wider cultural sphere. This was not a new position. The founders of the Fisher's Ghost Art Award had held the same view. However, Marsden also saw the establishment of a gallery as being 'community development', a term which, within the domain of culture and the arts, was more commonly associated with concepts of 'participation' and 'democracy' than 'excellence' and its connotations of elitism.

The apparent discrepancies that existed in Marsden's rationale are significant, as his objective was to exert influence over local representatives on the matter. Marsden was known to have a lot of contacts in politics who could assist in furthering his aspirations for Campbelltown—a place that he believed along with Rome constituted one the world's two greatest cities.<sup>45</sup> Indeed, so successful was Marsden in his ability to influence decision makers that some credit him alone with securing millions of dollars funding for the later redevelopment of the gallery.<sup>46</sup> But the basis upon which Marsden took the gallery mission to elected representatives contained a set of concepts that, when applied within cultural policy, were fundamentally incongruous. Coombs had recognised this as early as 1973 when he reported that the concepts of artistic excellence and participation in the arts were essentially contrary when forging and attempting to implement cultural policy. He had believed that the tensions that arose from pairing these two conflicting objectives together impeded the Australia

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<sup>44</sup> Knight, interview.

<sup>45</sup> See Garside, interview. See also Kate McClymont, 'Turkey is as good a place as any to die: Solicitor's journey ends abroad—John Marsden', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 May 2006, p. 6.

Council's ability to enact its legislative requirements.<sup>47</sup> Ten years later similar tensions were playing out in Campbelltown, although it would seem that Marsden was unaware of this.

'Community development' was what Dunstan had anticipated he would achieve as Campbelltown Council's first community arts officer.<sup>48</sup> It was also the basis upon which the Council had appointed him to the position.<sup>49</sup> The adoption of the concept of community development within the arts sector had been in line with shifts that had taken place in other fields including health, welfare and education in Australia in the 1970s.<sup>50</sup> Susan Kenny has suggested that various organisations, institutions and spheres of government assumed an interest in community development after it had been institutionalised through the introduction of Whitlam's *Australian Assistance Plan (1975) (AAP)*. The AAP was designed to encourage and support people at the local level to participate in the planning and development of their community. In place for just two years, the AAP has been described as an experiment that brought together an assortment of ideas to trial arrangements around regional governance structures, the role of communities in social planning processes and the targeting of regional specific approaches to social welfare.<sup>51</sup> Geoffrey Sawer maintained that the AAP was an attempt to give some effect to the principle of participatory democracy.<sup>52</sup> With the AAP as a starting point, Kenny maintains that what was understood as 'community

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<sup>46</sup> See Joan Long and Vija Heinrichs, interview with Penny Stannard, 2 August 2012, Sydney.

<sup>47</sup> Australia Council, *Annual report*, p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> See Graeme Dunstan, c1982, from Graeme Dunstan papers, unpublished, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 87372(2).

<sup>49</sup> Campbelltown City Council, *Minutes of the Community, Health and Services Committee Meeting*, 3 August 1982, published in Campbelltown City Council, Report, 10 August 1982, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

<sup>50</sup> See Andrea Hull, 'Community Arts: A perspective', *Meanjin*, vol 42, no 3, 1983, p. 317. By the 1980s 'community development' was also the basis on which leading proponents of community arts hinged local government's involvement in the arts. See Murray Edmonds, 'Man cannot live by bread alone', keynote address delivered at the Local Government and Community Arts Seminar, 5 June 1981, Glenquarie, Campbelltown, reproduced in *Local Government Bulletin*, vol 36, no 7, 1981, pp. 13-7.

<sup>51</sup> See Rachel Davis, 'Community Involvement in Government Resource Allocation Decisions', in *Social Change in the 21st Century Conference*, 28 October 2005, Queensland University of Technology, Carseldine, Brisbane, Online (Available): <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/00003538> (Accessed 14 August 2014). See also Andrew Kelly, Brian Dollery and Bligh Grant, 'Regional development and local government: Three generations of federal intervention', *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, vol 15, no 2, 2009, pp. 171-92; Melanie Oppenheimer, 'Voluntary action, social welfare and the Australian Assistance Plan in the 1970s', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 39, no 2, 2008, pp. 167-82.

development' evolved into various configurations and the three main strands to this were: a philosophical approach; a form of political activism operating outside paid employment; and a discrete profession within the community services industry. As political activism, community development was 'an articulation of the values associated with both interest politics and localist struggles' and it most commonly took shape around environmental and heritage issues and formed, for example, into urban social movements.<sup>53</sup>

Community development in this arrangement had activated in Campbelltown earlier when a group of concerned local residents, including Arthur Jones, Tom Bass and others, had become organised in response to SROP's proposal for the urban development of Campbelltown. This social movement had led to Jones' election to the Council on a platform of environmental protection and resulted in a re-drafting of planning controls to conserve prized bushland sites from development. It is probable that Marsden's understanding of community development referred to the localised political activism of the Friends and did not extend to how it was understood and applied as a cultural policy concept more broadly. It could also be the case that Marsden, whose agenda for cultural status and respectability was his primary concern, may have applied 'community development' to advance this ideology. Used in such a way, as Lucy Taksa noted, 'community' is invoked as a kind of 'spray on' solution to the deterioration of public institutions.<sup>54</sup>

The Australia Council's grafting of community development onto the arts was principally embodied through the professional community arts officer position. It was also inserted within the philosophies that CAB espoused in its prescription of community arts practice, which those working with its support were expected to adhere to. As a social movement, the Friends was composed of volunteers who were driven by a localist cause or desire to achieve

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<sup>52</sup> Geoffrey Sawer, *The Whitlam Revolution in Federalism: Promise, possibilities and performance*, the tenth Allen Hope Southey Memorial Lecture, University of Melbourne, 10 October 1975, reproduced in *Melbourne University Law Review*, vol 10, June 1976, pp. 315-29.

<sup>53</sup> Susan Kenny, 'Contestations of Community Development in Australia', *Community Development Journal*, vol 31, no 2, 1996, pp. 104-6. See also Jenny Onyx, 'Community development in Australia: trends and tensions', *Community Development Journal*, vol 31, no 2, 1996, pp. 100-1.

<sup>54</sup> Lucy Taksa, 'Defining the field', in Patrick O'Farrell, John Ingleson, and Louella McCarthy (eds), *History and communities: A preliminary survey*, Community History Program, Kensington, 1990, pp. 11-30.

cultural status for their city. Yet, it was Dunstan, not the Friends, who was the political activist. He had created the group as ‘a new front’ to lead a concerted campaign and his political activism occurred within his employment, something which, in itself, had been created by a federal-level bureaucracy—an entity which could be described as the most detached of all from local concerns. In this respect, the situation at Campbelltown appears to have been most unusual. From today’s perspective, it is hard to imagine how an officer-level employee of a local council’s community services department would be able to operate in this way. However, Knight—who Jones recalled was ‘very political’ in his role as the Council’s Social Planner—explained that unlike the situation today, the Council ‘ran the joint’ and professional staff had great influence in the Campbelltown community compared with now.<sup>55</sup> Thus Dunstan’s dual role as Community Arts Officer *and* political activist might not have been so out of the ordinary.

Where Dunstan’s role was extraordinary was in how it straddled such contradictory expectations. Through a local agenda, he campaigned to institutionalise the arts in order to attain cultural status and this was considered to be ‘community development’ according to Marsden and others. Guided by federal-level policy objectives, he pursued the de-institutionalisation of the arts by applying philosophies and practices of community arts. This, too, was understood as ‘community development’. In her recollections, as noted earlier, Spizzo has drawn attention to the ideological divisions that existed between CAB and the idea of cultural institutions. Galleries were not a CAB priority. They were definitely not considered to be the home of community arts nor ‘generally speaking’ part of a community arts officer’s role.<sup>56</sup> Notwithstanding this, Spizzo recalled she was able to use these incongruities to her advantage. The assistance she gave to the Friends with the gallery project gave her political ‘licence’ to do other things such as the more ‘alternative’ community arts projects.<sup>57</sup>

Since the establishment of an art gallery had been one of the aims of the Art Society, Dunstan, it seems, ‘picked it up and ran with it’ as a way of ‘laying the foundations for the infrastructure

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<sup>55</sup> Knight, interview; Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, Sydney, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown.

<sup>56</sup> Alice Spizzo followed Dunstan as Campbelltown City Council’s Community Arts Officer. She held the position from 1985 to 1987.

of arts and cultural development in Campbelltown'. An art gallery would 'create a community around the visual arts' and provide focus and advocacy for the visual arts in Campbelltown. This would stimulate recognition and support for local visual artists and the development of an aesthetic that was unique to Campbelltown. A gallery, Dunstan had believed, would 'influence and enhance the "ways of seeing" dialogue of the city'.<sup>58</sup> For Dunstan, the visual arts could play a primary role in the process of re-imagining Campbelltown's identity.

Dunstan's perspective here is important. It refers to the way that cultural policy directions foster the development of imagined dimensions, including the identity of a place. Developments in cultural policy during the post war years to the early 1970s were designed to forge Australia's modern identity. This had also been the case in Campbelltown on a micro scale. As to whether Campbelltown Council had consciously planned it or otherwise, its employment of community cultural activity to advance Campbelltown's identity as a progressive and independent place during this time was linked to the modern nationalist Australia project. By the 1980s the institutionalisation of the visual arts was being advanced as the policy direction that could best achieve this objective.

### **What sort of gallery?**

The idea of establishing an aesthetic and focus that was unique to Campbelltown was required by the state government in order for it to consider funding a gallery there. To determine what this might be, the Friends developed, firstly the design and, secondly, the functionality of a Campbelltown-specific facility. The adaptive re-use of heritage buildings was considered. A number of local Georgian-era buildings had been conserved by the MDB and the Council was also the proprietor of heritage properties. A mud brick building constructed through 'a mass participation effort by Campbelltonians' was earmarked as a favoured option. Fred Braat, who was developing a community arts practice at the time, had suggested this inclusive approach.<sup>59</sup> He was also a resident of a multiple occupancy that Romalis had established for artists.

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<sup>57</sup> Spizzo, interview.

<sup>58</sup> Dunstan in Long and Bakkers (eds), *Reflections of artists and Friends*, p. 6.

<sup>59</sup> Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 7 March 1984.

In the 1950s, Romalis and her husband had purchased one hundred acres at Wedderburn, a natural bushland landscape situated beyond a steep gorge on the Georges River, at the south-eastern boundary of the Campbelltown local government area. They had built their family home, 'Wombat', on the property from mud brick, recycled and natural materials sourced on-site. Braat and other artists including Elizabeth Cummings, John Peart, Roy Jackson and Suzanne Archer had each settled on small acreage sub divisions at Wombat, which Romalis had gifted for the purpose of establishing an artist colony which she did in the 1970s.

As a practising artist, Romalis had established the colony to have 'some like minds close at hand'. For years she had held exhibitions and open days in her studio at Wombat. With the arrival of other artists, many more open studio sessions were held to sell work and fundraise for the gallery campaign. Romalis had been careful to emphasise that the colony was not a 'commune', as each member-artist was 'independent' and could 'sell, lease or give away their homes in the colony as long as the next occupant is an artist'.<sup>60</sup>

John Page has undertaken a study of common property in early 1970s Australian rural planned communities and noted that the commune model was typically underpinned by the pursuit of common philosophical objectives and a de-emphasis on individualistic landholdings. The common property movement was most concentrated in far northern NSW, in and around Nimbin, where multiple occupancies had proliferated in the aftermath of the 1973 Aquarius Festival. While Romalis' colony did not share some of the features that Page observed to have defined common property arrangements of the time, it can be viewed as being part of the movement in some respects.

Romalis' enterprise was also the continuation of an earlier tradition of artist colonies established on the outskirts of major cities. Tony Moore has noted that the bohemianism that developed in Australia's literary life that was driven by the *Bulletin* periodical in the late 1800s—and which had resulted from a number of factors including the expansion of the press, economic depression and a renewed sense of nationalism—had found expression in the visual arts in Australian impressionist painting that centred around artist colonies in Sydney and

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<sup>60</sup> Margaret O'Sullivan, 'There are friends at the bottom of their garden', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 November 1976, p. 125. See also Romalis in Knight, *Passion, Purpose, Meaning*, pp. 28-30; 84-5.

Melbourne.<sup>61</sup> The most well known of these was the 'Heidelberg School', which included artists such as Arthur Streeton, Charles Conder, Tom Roberts, Frederick McCubbin, Walter Withers and Jane Sutherland. The artists established studios and living quarters in bush land on the outskirts of Melbourne in places such as Heidelberg and Mentone. They immersed themselves in the natural environment and created work that showed a new and authentic experience of the Australian landscape. Their methods went beyond the institutional conventions of the gallery, museum or academy. Another well-known artist colony was 'Montsalvat', which was established by Justus Jorgensen in 1935 on twelve acres at Eltham on the outskirts of Melbourne. A collection of mud brick and stone buildings which Jorgensen and his followers built provided residential, studio and exhibition spaces for a group of artists and friends until it was opened as a public facility in 1963.<sup>62</sup>

Like many others that had settled on common properties during the 1970s, Romalis and the Wombat artists were middle class, tertiary educated and representative of a set of disciplines, which, in this case, was the visual arts. They also had an environmental consciousness and pursued ideas and practices of self-sufficiency such as mud brick architecture.<sup>63</sup> While Romalis eventually left Wedderburn, the artists and others who remained there maintained these principles. Sioux Garside has noted that many of the artists were active in a movement to save the Georges River system and suggests that if the natural bushland at Wedderburn were threatened, 'you'd find people coming out of the woodwork'.<sup>64</sup>

Page observed that the common property movements manifested in both rural and urban areas. Romalis' establishment of the colony is particularly significant in respect of its location within the Campbelltown area. Firstly, it was being established at the same time as the development of Campbelltown seemed unstoppable. Suburbanisation was increasingly obliterating Campbelltown's acreages. Yet Romalis was developing a way to simultaneously

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<sup>61</sup> Tony Moore, 'Romancing the city – Australia's bohemian tradition: Take one', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol 22, no 57, 1998, pp. 172-83.

<sup>62</sup> Max Teichmann, 'Jorgensen, Justus (1893–1975)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, first published in hardcopy (1996). (Online) Available: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/jorgensen-justus-10644/text18919> (Accessed 6 November 2014).

<sup>63</sup> John Page, 'Common Property and the Age of Aquarius', *Griffith Law Review*, vol 19, no 2, 2010, pp. 173-4; 177.

<sup>64</sup> Garside, interview.



conserve and utilise the natural environment creatively and productively. Secondly, the colony provided a cohort of well-respected contemporary artists whose residency in Campbelltown contributed significant weight to the development and professionalisation of visual arts and the gallery campaign. Each artist had been developing national standing, and some had been awarded prestigious prizes. Importantly, the artists had made Campbelltown their home. This was not lost on the MDB, which, as noted elsewhere, had readily referred to Wedderburn's community of 'professional' artists in its glossy publications as a way of promoting the sophisticated lifestyle that Campbelltown could offer the business executive family.<sup>65</sup>

The Friends had decided that a facility should be designed and constructed 'for Campbelltown's art gallery needs', which they identified as being: a home for the City art collection; space for exhibiting touring exhibitions; an outdoor sculpture garden; spaces for 'performance art', Aboriginal art, 'ethnic' arts, local heritage, children's art, photography and crafts; a lecture theatre and reference library; a space for 'teaching children in a gallery context'; workshop spaces for artists-in-residence; space for local artists to exhibit work; and a capacity to accommodate technology-based art—a crucial factor in thinking about a gallery for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Friends also embraced Romalis' recommendation regarding the development of a gallery collection. She had recently attended the Regional Galleries Association of NSW (RGANSW) conference and had formed a view that a Campbelltown gallery should represent contemporary regional concerns and not attempt to develop a collection that represented the history of Australian art movements, as was the usual tradition.<sup>66</sup> The situation was that Campbelltown had a group of representative contemporary artists living within its catchment—at Wedderburn—that could enable the gallery's program and collection to develop as Romalis had suggested.

In the quest for a gallery in Campbelltown, 1983 had been a significant year. At the year's end Romalis believed that there was 'general acceptance' that an art gallery 'will be built in

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<sup>65</sup> Les Hewatt and Robert Johnson, *Macarthur Growth Centre*, Ruse Publishing, Campbelltown, 1980, p. 19.

<sup>66</sup> See Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 17 March 1983, pp. 1-3; 13 July 1983, p. 2, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

Campbelltown'.<sup>67</sup> However, while her claim no doubt further encouraged all those involved in the campaign, there was still no commitment from Campbelltown Council or other parties.

### **Aligning an art gallery with the Macarthur Growth Centre Project**

In 1983 the Friends had commenced formal discussions with the Macarthur Development Board (MDB), which, while receiving no ongoing federal government funding, had continued to press ahead with the Macarthur Growth Centre Project objectives.<sup>68</sup> The Friends were advised that the best option for attracting federal government funds for the development of an art gallery in Campbelltown would be to locate it within the site that had been proposed by MDB for a tertiary education institute.<sup>69</sup> There had been discussions between Campbelltown Council and the MDB about the provision of an art gallery in the new city centre plans as early as 1976, but much like the gallery idea more broadly, these had not advanced.<sup>70</sup>

The development of a tertiary education institution or College of Advanced Education (CAE) had been included in the Macarthur Growth Centre Project as key component of the Campbelltown new city centre development. From the 1950s university enrolments in Australia had grown and, as was the case across the western world, the university sector expanded significantly throughout the 1960s and 1970s. The abolishment of university fees in 1973 to make tertiary education more accessible to working and middle-class Australians further increased participation rates. In 1974 the federal government assumed full responsibility for funding universities and CAEs. Planned funding increases for universities were suspended following the federal political crisis of the 1975 Whitlam dismissal and also as result of economic recession. During this period, growth in higher education at a federal-level was directed to CAEs.

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<sup>67</sup> See Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Annual General Meeting Minutes, 7 March 1984, p. 3, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>68</sup> See Jeff McGill, *Campbelltown: A modern history 1960-1999*, Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society, Campbelltown, p. 53.

<sup>69</sup> See Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 2 March 1983, p. 2, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>70</sup> Campbelltown City Council, *Cultural Facilities and Community Buildings Select Committee Agenda*, 'Correspondence', 18 May 1976, Arthur Jones Private Collection.

It had been recognised in the early 1960s that universities were needed in the expanding outer metropolitan areas of Australian's capital cities, where growth was concentrated and the population of school leavers was forecast to peak in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>71</sup> In 1974 the Milperra College of Advanced Education was established in the South West Sydney suburb of Bankstown. In 1983 it was renamed the Macarthur Institute of Higher Education and a temporary campus was established at Campbelltown. Construction of a new campus on 162 hectares of land to the north of the Campbelltown new city centre began shortly afterwards and in 1987 the new campus was officially opened. The Institute was later dissolved under the *University of Western Sydney (Amendment) Act (1989)* and it became the Macarthur Campus of the University of Western Sydney.<sup>72</sup>

Following year long negotiations with the MDB, the Friends decided to abandon the approach of integrating the development of a gallery with the plans for the CAE. Romalis had undertaken a substantial amount of 'personal work' to establish that such an approach would be unsuitable to the Friends' requirements as: the location of the CAE site was too 'remote' from the city centre; a gallery on such a site would be inaccessible at weekends and at night; the College's management would most likely 'dictate' gallery policy; and federal government funding for such a project might not be available for another decade. In rejecting the 'the tempting offers of funding' that the CAE option presented, the Friends decided to 'go for a plan which offered a better chance of autonomy'. Despite their position, however, MDB was still making 'a big push' that the Friends accept the CAE option. It suggested another Growth Centre Project site—the old golf course.<sup>73</sup>

### **Other options**

The old golf course was the second of three sites that the Friends had identified in their search for a future gallery location. The course had been closed and the land banked as part of an

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<sup>71</sup> See Stephen Hodge, 'Disadvantage and 'Otherness' in Western Sydney, *Australian Geographical Studies*, vol 34, no 1, 1996, pp. 32-44.

<sup>72</sup> See NSW Government State Records, State Records Archive Investigator, Agency Detail, *Milperra College of Advanced Education (1974 -1983), Macarthur Institute of Higher Education (1983 - 1989)*, Online (Available): <http://investigator.records.nsw.gov.au/Entity.aspx?Path=%5CAgency%5C2956> (Accessed 25 March 2014).

acquisition program that had been started in the 1960s by the State Planning Authority in anticipation of the implementation of SROP and later the Growth Centre Project's new city centre. The course was located adjacent to the Macarthur Square shopping centre which had been completed in 1979 by the developer Lend Lease. Banfield noted that the MDB, which owned the old golf course site, was reluctant to sell, as 'they obviously wanted to keep it for shops'.<sup>74</sup> However, the location had become the Friends' preferred choice as the allotment allowed 'maximum expansion' for a facility. Romalis had 'set about' securing the site and had 'spent many long and frustrating hours with government bodies concerned with its future'. It was not until she had met with the prominent architect, Phillip Cox, in late 1983 that she had realised that the site would not be available within the 1988 time frame that the Friends had set for the completion of a gallery.<sup>75</sup>

The third site was the existing Civic Centre in Queen Street where Campbelltown Council's administrative building was located. The Council was extending the centre and plans were afoot to expand the existing library and create additional community meeting spaces. Keith Garling, the Town Clerk, had initially proposed that an art gallery be located within the Civic Centre's library extension.<sup>76</sup> The Friends had been utilising the Civic Centre foyer for staging exhibitions and this had generated a visibility for their efforts amongst aldermen, the Council staff and the public.<sup>77</sup> Showing its ability to mount quality art exhibitions had been one of the strategies that the Friends had set to generate demand for a gallery. The inclusion of a gallery within the complement of community facilities at the Civic Centre was an option that the Friends had readily considered. From this point, the concept of a combined gallery and library—or 'cultural centre'—entered the discussions.

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<sup>73</sup> Barbara Romalis, 1988, in Long and Bakkers (ed), *Reflections of artists and Friends*, p. 17. See also Barbara Romalis, 'Presidents Report', Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Annual General Meeting Minutes, 7 March 1985, pp. 1-2.

<sup>74</sup> Ruth Banfield, *History of the Campbelltown Regional Art Gallery: From Dream to Reality*, unpublished, c1988, p. 1, Ruth Banfield Private Collection. This site is now called 'Park Central,' an award winning master planned estate developed by Landcom between 2003 and 2009.

<sup>75</sup> Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 7 March 1984, p. 1, Ruth Banfield Private Collection

<sup>76</sup> 'Moves for local gallery', *Campbelltown District Star*, 4 August 1982, p. 3.

### **Broadening the scope?**

The Friends efforts were given further impetus by research that the South Western (Metropolitan) Regional Arts Development Committee (SWMRADC) was preparing for the Commonwealth Department of Territories and Local Government through its Regional Community Development Program. This program had been established specifically to undertake projects in Western Sydney in relation to growth and development. SWMRADC was charged with examining the provision of arts facilities in the western and south western outer suburbs of Sydney, and in particular to investigate the role of local government in the planning, development and management of venues.<sup>78</sup> A working party was established between SWMRADC and the Friends in relation to the establishment of a 'regional' arts facility in Campbelltown.<sup>79</sup> Romalis had written to the new MDB Chairman, Ian Henry, about the study. The Western Sydney Region Organisation of Councils (WSROC), the collective body for local government in Western Sydney, had been making representations on behalf of its constituent councils to the Department and other agencies on the issue of arts facilities. Campbelltown, Camden and Wollondilly, however, were not part of the WSROC group, and Romalis impressed upon Henry that the MDB should be assuming a similar role to it on the issue. 'Cultural planning', she insisted to Henry, was an 'essential and necessary compliment to the physical planning of a City'.<sup>80</sup>

Romalis' plea to the MDB on the basis of 'cultural planning' implied that the Friends may have expanded its thinking about 'culture' as a concept that was broader than the object of a gallery building. Was this the case? At first glance, a cultural agenda that was channelled specifically through the establishment of an art gallery that had its foundations in 'high art' did not reflect the concept of cultural planning, which was emerging as a policy idea and field of

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<sup>77</sup> Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Annual General Meeting Minutes, 7 March, 1984, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> See letter from Tim Kelly to Keith Garling, 15 May 1984, Campbelltown City Council record #10432; See also *Arts Alive*, no 14, June 1984, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> See Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 4 April 1984, p. 2, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>80</sup> Barbara Romalis, letter to Ian Henry, Chairman, Macarthur Development Board, 1 June 1984, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

practice in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia in the 1980s.<sup>81</sup> As Deborah Stevenson has noted, the theoretical foundation of cultural planning was underpinned by Raymond Williams' view of culture as a way of life, a concept that is discussed in chapter 1. In this way, 'culture' was not something that was limited to creative activities, artefacts or civilising processes such as, for example, the establishment of an art gallery for reasons of city status.<sup>82</sup> Following Williams, Franco Bianchini and Lia Ghilardi emphasised that cultural planning did not refer to the 'planning of culture' but to a cultural (anthropological) approach to urban planning and policy.<sup>83</sup> Despite Romalis' introduction of this new concept into the campaign, there is no evidence to suggest that the Friends had embraced a contemporary understanding of cultural planning or were widening their thinking beyond the establishment of an art gallery. Yet, as Stevenson has suggested, the inclusion of traditional art activities within the practice of cultural planning has not been uncommon in local contexts. This is despite the prevailing meaning that underpinned the concept itself arguing against the privileging of these forms of art.<sup>84</sup>

Tom O'Regan has offered a useful explanation to this seemingly contradictory situation. Defining culture anthropologically, O'Regan observed, gave rise to both an extension and pluralisation of the high arts system and to community-driven approaches that were founded on concepts of cultural democracy.<sup>85</sup> Sue Boaden and Paul Ashton have suggested that the complexities that arose from this divergence resulted in confusion for many in local government as to what role it should play in cultural development. They suggested that in many cases, those in charge of cultural planning within this sector adopted an approach that privileged the arts. But cultural planning, they have emphasised, also goes beyond the realm

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<sup>81</sup> For a comprehensive account of the history of cultural planning and how it has evolved and taken shape in cities internationally and in Australia, see Deborah Stevenson, *Cities of Culture: A global perspective*, Routledge, London, 2014.

<sup>82</sup> *ibid*, pp. 12-3.

<sup>83</sup> Franco Bianchini and Lia Ghilardi, *Culture and Neighbourhoods: A Comparative Report*, Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1997, pp. 84-5; Deborah Stevenson, "'Civic Gold" Rush: Cultural planning and the politics of the Third Way', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 10, no 1, 2004, pp. 121-3. See also Colin Mercer, *What is cultural planning*, paper presented to the Community Arts Network National Conference, Sydney, 10 October 1991.

<sup>84</sup> Stevenson, "'Civic Gold" Rush', p. 122; Deborah Stevenson, 'Cultural Planning in Australia', *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, vol 35, no 1, 2005, p. 43.

of bureaucracy. As noted earlier, Stevenson maintains that cultural planning is 'grounded' in how people live in places and communities and evolves according to the way that citizens 'use the arts and other forms of creative endeavour to enhance, consolidate and express these attachments'. Stevenson furthered her assessment of cultural planning, asserting that it is also concerned with the way that local government 'plans and manages these processes for a range of political ends, including social control and place management'.<sup>86</sup>

Since the 1960s local arts supporters had considered the institutionalisation of the visual arts and the development of a public art gallery as an expression of their attachment to and aspirations for a modern Campbelltown. This gained rapid momentum once Graeme Dunstan took up their cause in 1982. He was able to generate currency for the issue on the public policy agenda. That the issue of an art gallery was founded on the ambitions that 'old' or 'elite' Campbelltown had for the high arts and for Campbelltown's status seems to have gone unquestioned. This was despite Dunstan's responsibilities and personal commitment towards community arts, which occupied an ideologically opposed position. Given that many years later Dunstan offered an explanation that qualified this contradiction indicates that he was cognisant of the situation. Overarching this incongruity was how Campbelltown was understood and defined as being a place that was either within or beyond metropolitan Sydney. Adding to these ambiguities was how the concept of community development was understood and enacted by those involved in the gallery campaign, and the assumptions that they held regarding their representation of community need in Campbelltown. The equivocality of the situation meant that the art gallery project could be moulded to fit the most opportune political circumstances to accelerate its actualisation. This opportunity arose through the Australian Bicentennial.

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<sup>85</sup> Tom O'Regan, 'Too much culture, too little culture: Trends and issues for cultural policy making', *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy*, vol 102, 2002, pp. 9-24.

<sup>86</sup> Sue Boaden and Paul Ashton, 'Mainstreaming Culture: Integrating the Cultural Dimension into Local Government', in Paul Ashton, Chris Gibson and Ross Gibson (eds), *By-roads and Hidden Treasures: Mapping cultural assets in regional Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley, 2014, pp. 19-36; Stevenson, "'Civic Gold" Rush', p. 124.

## CHAPTER 13

### **‘Living Together’: Agendas collide and political conflicts erupt**

The year 1988 marked the two hundredth anniversary of the arrival of the First Fleet of British ships to the Colony of New South Wales (NSW) and to the shores of what later became the federated nation of Australia. The Australian Bicentennial Authority (ABA) had been incorporated in 1980 to plan, develop and oversee a yearlong program of Bicentenary events. State and Territory Councils were created to decentralise the management of the Bicentenary and each was subject to the respective State or Territory Government on state or local matters including the expenditure of State funds. The NSW Government had committed \$410 million to large scale capital projects for the Bicentenary including the re-development of Darling Harbour and the construction of the Powerhouse Museum, which were both located a short distance from Sydney’s central business district.<sup>1</sup> It had also established the NSW Bicentenary Council (NSWBC) under a charter to encourage communities to plan celebrations for 1988 and to establish the administrative procedures for managing federal government funds that would be devolved to the states under a range of Bicentennial activities.<sup>2</sup>

In 1984 Premier Wran expanded the NSWBC’s role, giving it leadership and responsibility for a state-wide community Bicentennial program that was to be independent but ‘parallel’ to the ABA national program. It was required to be ‘sensitive to community wishes’ and ‘leave tangible and practical reminders of the Bicentenary for future generations’. The program encompassed a broad range of activities that included the arts, the construction of new facilities, the environment, sport, history and education. These were grouped under five funding categories, with a total budget of \$75 million. Out of this, the ‘Commemorative’, or ‘bricks and mortar’ grants program was allocated \$49 million.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time that the Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery (the Friends) had been discussing site and funding possibilities with the Macarthur Development Board (MDB) in

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Ashton, *Waving the Waratah: Bicentenary New South Wales*, New South Wales Bicentennial Council, Sydney, 1989, p. 56.

<sup>2</sup> See Judy Mackinolty (ed), *Report to the New South Wales Government*, Part 1, New South Wales Bicentennial Council, Sydney, 1989, pp. 10-1; 44-5.



1983, it had also started a dialogue with NSWBC. Initial discussions had focused on the community-built mud brick gallery idea, which, as noted previously, had been suggested by Wedderburn artist Fred Braat. The Friends had thought that this type of facility would be ideal for an old golf course site. President of the Friends, Barbara Romalis, had discussed the project with the then Executive Director of the NSWBC, Ron Sevitt, who, she reported, had been enthusiastic about the idea. Sevitt had advised her, however, that all proposed Bicentennial projects required the backing of local government.<sup>4</sup> Shortly after the discussions with Sevitt, the Friends had written a letter to Campbelltown Council's Town Clerk, Keith Garling, notifying him of their intention to propose an art gallery as a local project for the Bicentenary.<sup>5</sup>

The NSWBC established a Bicentennial Community Committee (BCC) in each local government area to ensure widespread community participation in the 1988 celebrations. Most BCCs were linked to and often controlled by local government. This appears to have been the case in Campbelltown, as serving aldermen, past aldermen, past town clerks and serving council officers were well represented on the committee, as were local historical groups and pioneer families.<sup>6</sup> For some, this type of constituency gave rise to concerns that BCCs were not as representative of a broad cross section of local interests as they were intended to be.<sup>7</sup>

Heeding Sevitt's advice, the Friends embarked upon a process that would obligate Campbelltown Council to consider the 'cultural centre' as a local Bicentennial project. They developed a petition for their cause and received more than one thousand signatures. (See Figure 16.) Romalis believed that this measure of community support would be 'a powerful

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<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*

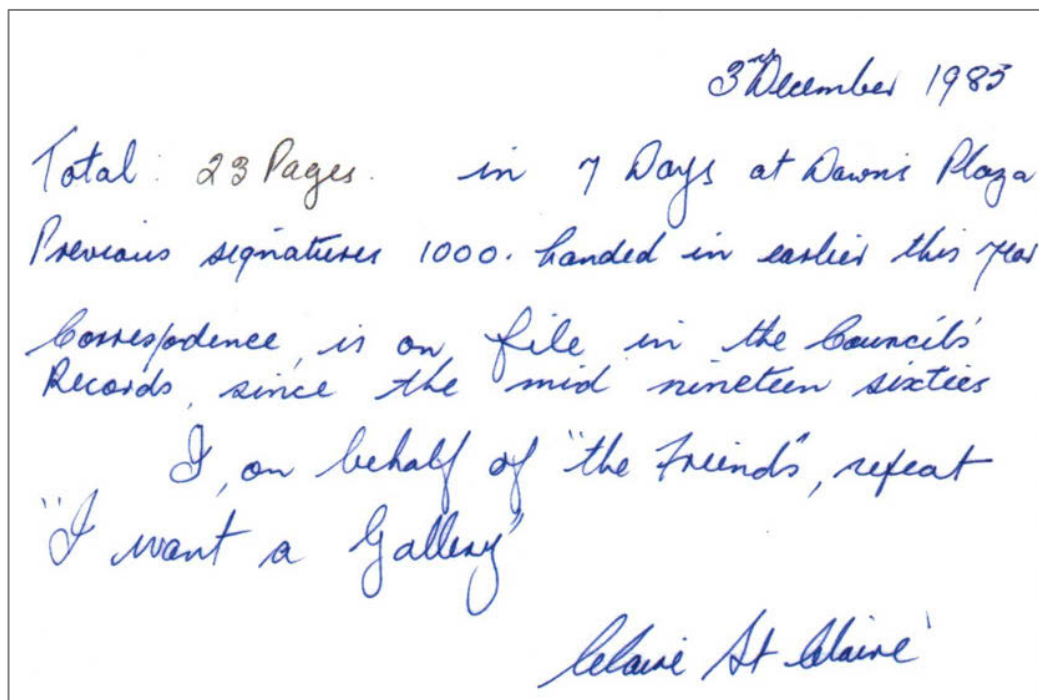
<sup>4</sup> See Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes; 6 April 1983, p. 2; 4 May 1983, p. 2, Ruth Banfield Private Collection. 'Sevitt' is incorrectly minuted as 'Peritt', probably in reference to Sevitt's business partner Brian Pettit. Ron Sevitt was the Executive Director of the NSW Bicentenary Committee during the first half of 1983. See also Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Annual General Meeting Minutes, 7 March 1984, p. 2, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>5</sup> See Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 13 July 1983, p. 1, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>6</sup> See Judy Mackinolty (ed), *Report to the New South Wales Government, Part 2 - Projects and People*, New South Wales Bicentennial Council, Sydney, 1989, pp. 202-3; 216; See also Ashton, *Waving the Waratah*, p. 59.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 36-8; 45; 49.

force' in influencing the Council's decision-making processes.<sup>8</sup> The strategy appears to have been successful.



3<sup>rd</sup> December 1983  
Total: 23 Pages. in 7 Days at Dawn's Plaza  
Previous signatures 1000. handed in earlier this year  
Correspondence, is on file in the Council's  
Records, since the mid nineteen sixties  
I, on behalf of 'the Friends', repeat  
"I want a Gallery"  
Claire St Claire

Figure 16: Claire St Claire, petition file note, unpublished, 3 December 1983, Friends of Campbelltown Arts Centre archive.

In March 1984 Romalis was able to report that the Council's Community Health and Services Committee had given 'in principle' support to the Friends' recommendation for the establishment of a 'regional arts facility'. The Committee had also endorsed the proposal that the facility be included within the Council's Civic Centre library extension and it moved to commission a feasibility study for this. Romalis reported to the Friends that it was likely that the Council would adopt the gallery project as part of its Bicentenary plans.<sup>9</sup> This may appear to have been rather presumptuous given that Campbelltown's BCC had not yet been established—something which Romalis herself had bemoaned. The process for determining the community's priorities for projects had not yet commenced.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Romalis, Barbara Romalis, 'Presidents Report', Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Annual General Meeting Minutes, 7 March 1985, pp. 1-2, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>9</sup> Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Annual General Meeting Minutes, p. 1; Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 4 April 1984, p. 2.

Campbelltown's BCC was established at the end of 1984 and Mayor, Guy Thomas, was appointed Chairman.<sup>10</sup> It submitted a list of nine potential local projects to the NSWBC, which had called for expressions of interest from each local government area in the state. An art gallery was not listed among the project submissions, which included a \$1 million indoor swimming pool at Bradbury, a \$2.25 million regional athletics stadium and a \$0.75 million urban garden.<sup>11</sup> In March 1985 Romalis reported that the Campbelltown BCC 'sees the need for a cultural centre as a high priority'. And she gave her promise that now as a member of the committee, she would ensure that the project 'goes forward'.<sup>12</sup> On 3 September 1985, just two days before the NSWBC's funding applications closed, Campbelltown Council overrode the wishes of the local BCC with a 'last minute bid' for the art gallery project. It placed the gallery as the top priority on the basis that demand had become 'urgent' and the project had strong support from a group of local residents—the Friends. A \$1 million funding proposal was submitted.<sup>13</sup>

### **Conflicts and debates**

Campbelltown Council's move in elevating the art gallery in this way would not go uncontested, and the tensions around local Bicentennial projects soon came to a head. In April 1986 it was announced that the Council would receive a grant of \$1 million through the state government's Bicentenary Commemorative Program. This would be specifically for the construction of an art gallery for the purpose of displaying touring works from the state's cultural institutions, the Council's own collection and other local works, fostering the local community of artists and providing easy access to arts activities for people in the area.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See 'Bi-centenary status', *Macarthur Advertiser*, 18 December 1984, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> See 'Group tasks in centenary', *Macarthur Advertiser*, 5 March 1985, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Romalis, *Presidents Report*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>13</sup> 'Art gallery hope rising', *Macarthur Advertiser*, 10 September 1985, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Mackinolty, *Report*, Part 1, p. 79. The Campbelltown gallery was one of more than a dozen new theatres and art gallery projects funded through the NSW Bicentenary Council. Most projects were in regional NSW in places such as Wagga Wagga and Griffith. Others such as the Parramatta Cultural Centre (now Riverside Theatres, Parramatta) had been a joint state and federal government program. While the art gallery was the only Bicentennial bricks and mortar project in Campbelltown, the NSW Bicentenary Council supported a range of local activities through other funding categories. These included harness racing, a table tennis tournament, activities associated with Campbelltown Council's Koshigaya Sister City program, a town square water feature, the construction of a Fisher's Ghost statue,

At this point in time, the gallery project was still incorporated within the Civic Centre library expansion—a project to which the Council had already set aside \$1.5 million of its own funds.<sup>15</sup> While many applauded the awarding of state Bicentenary funds for a gallery, it did not come without conditions. Premier Wran and the Member for Campbelltown, Michael Knight, had released a joint statement granting the monies to the Council with the stipulation that it commenced work on the Bradbury pool—the project that had been usurped by the gallery at the eleventh hour—before the end of the year. Mayor Thomas argued, however, that the million-dollar grant had been made ‘without any strings attached’.<sup>16</sup>

The discrepancies between Campbelltown Council and the state government’s position hit the local headlines. The *Macarthur Advertiser* reported that the prospect of grant conditions would be of little concern to the community but it would be of ‘vital concern to the political point scorers of Campbelltown’. It covered both Thomas’ and Knight’s account of the situation. According to Thomas, of the nine initial projects that the Council had submitted to the NSWBC, the urban garden project had been erroneously granted \$0.75 million. In rectifying this, the state government had offered to redirect the funds towards an ‘art gallery cultural centre’. Concerned that the Council had received nothing in writing about the offer, Thomas and Garling had set up a meeting with the NSWBC’s Chairman Gerry Gleeson—the long serving and powerful Secretary and Head of the Premiers Department—who had been appointed by Wran as Chairperson of the NSWBC in 1985. Thomas reported that Gleeson had informed them that a ‘local source’ had been applying pressure to change the Campbelltown project from an art gallery to a pool. He had assured Gleeson that the Council had already made provisions for the pool works in its budget and that it was not necessary for it to replace the gallery as the major local Bicentennial project. Upon these assurances, Gleeson had upped the funding by \$250,000 to \$1 million. Thomas’ point of contention was that as both the

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a Fisher’s Ghost fun run, the restoration of a church bell and the commissioning of a Bicentennial tapestry. See Mackinolty, *Report, Part 2*, p. 28; pp. 68-9.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Art gallery hope rising’, *Macarthur Advertiser*, 10 September 1985, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> ‘\$1 million for Bi-centenary’, *Macarthur Advertiser*, 15 April 1986, pp. 1; 68.

Campbelltown BCC Chairman and Mayor, he had not received 'official' notification of any grant conditions, thus he contended that they did not exist.<sup>17</sup>

For Knight, however, the paper trail of correspondence between Gleeson and Garling had clearly indicated the formalisation of grant conditions. He noted that the gallery project had been submitted by Campbelltown Council to the NSWBC as its first priority for funding, followed by the pool. His concern was that if funds were awarded for the gallery alone, the Council would claim to have insufficient resources to undertake both projects, and would lay the blame with the state government for having prioritised an art gallery over a pool. It had therefore been necessary to extract an agreement with the Council on this matter in order to ensure that both the gallery and pool projects would be undertaken.<sup>18</sup>

While these political manoeuvres had been occurring, another site, located further south along Queen Street and adjacent to the heritage listed Georgian era house, 'Glenalvon', where a council car park existed, was being considered for the cultural centre development. It was proposed that a library and art gallery be built on the site as well as a new multi-story car park to replace the existing one.<sup>19</sup> Knight and fellow Labor Party colleagues, Campbelltown aldermen Peter Primrose and Jim Kremmer, launched a challenge to this latest council plan. They estimated that the Glenalvon area development was more likely to cost \$4 to \$5 million than the \$2.5 million of combined Council and Bicentenary funds. This difference would need to be met by ratepayers. They claimed that the Council had developed its budget and plans 'in secret', questioned whether it had sufficient resources to accommodate such a cost variation and sought to ascertain if the project would in fact increase the net number of city parking spaces. Knight, Primrose and Kremmer released a 'Discussion Paper' that proposed another option for the gallery. They recommended that the Campbelltown Court House, a heritage state government property located next door to the Civic Centre, be purchased by the Council and re-adapted as an art gallery with the \$1 million grant. The state government, they argued, could use the property purchase funds to build a new court facility and the Council would be able to keep the gallery budget within a \$2 million limit. Savings that the Council would make

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

from the \$4-5 million could be used for acquiring land to construct a link road that was needed to alleviate traffic congestion in Campbelltown's central business district. Knight and others scrapped the library extension completely from the equation and conceded that while it was a necessary project, residents would have to wait a bit longer for it.<sup>20</sup> Such had been the 'stern and even vitriolic' response from other Labor Party aldermen to the 'Discussion Paper' that the *Macarthur Advertiser's* headline proclaimed: 'Labor splits over centre'.<sup>21</sup>

Thirty years later Banfield and Knight remembered the debate. Banfield, who was by 1986 the Friends' President, recollected:

Michael Knight and I had a big—well, we're still friends—but a bit of a debate. Michael said it was elitist to have a gallery in Campbelltown. He wanted sports fields and stuff like that. We were such a strong group that we said no, we don't get any art out here. It's like a cultural desert and it will be a significant point ... He wanted it in the old courthouse and we said no, we want a purpose built building. But he did say we were one of the strongest lobbying groups that he'd come across, which was quite complimentary.<sup>22</sup>

Knight recalled:

I really tried to stop the art gallery ... I saw it as being part of the fulcrum of [the] Council. Campbelltown Council took it upon itself to determine what the city's Bicentennial project would be. Ruth [Banfield] and others had done a terrific job of convincing the Town Clerk, Keith Garling, that the art gallery should be the city's Bicentennial project and he convinced senior [state government] bureaucrats ... I was displeased that this was happening around me and was not happy with what Council

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* See also 'Culture Centre by 1988; \$2MIL CITY ARTS HOME', *The Chronicle*, 16 April 1986, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Michael Knight, Peter Primrose and Jim Kremmer, 'A constructive alternative for the civic precinct', 'Discussion Paper, released 20 May 1986, Campbelltown, p. 4; See also 'Labor trio cuts art costs', *The Chronicle*, 21 May 1986, p. 6; 'Savings on gallery to build road', *Campbelltown-Camden-Wollondilly Star*, 22 May 1896, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> 'Labor splits over centre', *Macarthur Advertiser*, 27 May 1986, pp. 1; 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ruth Banfield, interview with Penny Stannard, 26 November 2012, Denham Court, Campbelltown.

was doing with its capital works program and [thought] that Council was going to fund an art gallery anyway and felt that the Bicentennial grant was a lost opportunity. Staff were extremely influential at Council and [it] got to the point that it [the art gallery] was going to happen anyway ... We should be funding an indoor swimming pool and not an art gallery. This caused a lot of distress and upset the Town Clerk enormously. So they had to do a deal with me that the state [government] would contribute to an art gallery on the proviso that Council would have to build an aquatic centre.<sup>23</sup>

Knight hadn't wanted to get into a debate about 'art versus recreation'. He wanted both and 'was prepared to carve a position in order to get to that point'.<sup>24</sup> Knight's actions at the time, however, must have been a surprise to the Friends. Committee members had hosted him at a dinner in 1984 to explain the gallery proposal and they believed that they had secured his support.<sup>25</sup>

Knight has maintained the view that Campbelltown Council was at the point of developing an art gallery independently and did not need to draw on state government Bicentennial funds to do so. That Romalis had been confident enough to pronounce that an art gallery would materialise, and that it would be a Bicentennial project, prior to the establishment of a local BCC—before any community consultation, selection or prioritisation of Bicentennial projects had occurred—gives weight to Knight's argument. So, too, does the fact that a gallery was not among the nine original projects that the Campbelltown BCC had submitted to the NSWBC.<sup>26</sup>

### **Reflections on Australia's past or financial opportunism?**

While Knight believed that the use of Bicentennial funds for an art gallery in Campbelltown was a lost opportunity, others believe that missed opportunities more broadly came to define the Australian Bicentenary. Not only were the ABA and State and Territory Bicentennial Councils at the centre of the physical and operational planning for the 1988 celebrations, they

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<sup>23</sup> Michael Knight, interview with Penny Stannard, 12 April 2013, Sydney.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Annual General Meeting Minutes, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Knight, interview.

were also driving an ideological agenda.<sup>27</sup> Central to this was the concept of Australia's 'national identity' and how the Bicentenary could affect a renewed sense of what it meant to be Australian.<sup>28</sup> This did not go uncontested. Stephen Castles, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis and Michael Morrissey for example, drew attention to how the notion of national identity essentially represented a unitary ideology of nation, something which, they maintained, was dissolved in Australia when policies of assimilation were replaced by multiculturalism in the 1970s. Where the Bicentenary was fundamentally contradictory, Castles and others argued, was in how it celebrated the moment of English colonial settlement and the emergence of a single nation at the same time that overarching public policy was pursuing principles of pluralism.<sup>29</sup> The ABA had adopted the theme 'Living Together' to signify the sense of unity within the community it hoped would be generated through the Bicentenary. For Castles and his co-researchers, however, the theme reflected the degree of equivocation that was needed for the Bicentenary to work in any way at all.<sup>30</sup>

The debates and political machinations that swirled around what was meant by 'Living Together' resulted in the theme being dropped and then later re-endorsed by the ABA. Many of the initial activities that had been scoped within the theme had been critiqued by prominent voices from the Right who argued that they were too focussed on 'minority' issues, Aboriginal people, multiculturalism and women, while traditions associated with the monarchy, Britain, the legal system and ANZAC had been ignored. Other, more liberal voices had hoped that the Bicentenary would be an opportunity to reflect critically on the nation's previous two hundred years, to learn from its past mistakes such as its treatment of Aboriginal people, or that it might affect a critical re-appraisal of the dominant pioneering colonial narrative. This did not eventuate and the opportunity for debate or critical discourse, as Peter Spearritt has maintained, was largely erased from the organising of the Bicentenary altogether in favour of an event spectacular that was centred on the arrival of the Tall Ships—replicas of

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<sup>27</sup> Peter Spearritt, 'Celebration of a nation: The triumph of spectacle', *Australian Historical Studies*, vol 23, no 91, 1988, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Ashton, *Waving the Waratah*, p. 6.

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Castles, Bill Cope, Mary Kalantzis, Michael Morrissey, *Mistaken Identity: Multiculturalism and the Demise of Nationalism in Australia*, Pluto Press, Sydney, 1992, pp. 103; 154.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*



the First Fleet that had sailed from England in 1788—in Sydney Harbour.<sup>31</sup> Some felt that this was a wasted opportunity for Australia’s development and forever marked 1988 as a disappointment.<sup>32</sup>

Castles and others believe that officials threw away the chance to engage with the ‘real issues and problems’ facing Australia. For them, the Bicentenary changed from something that could have had real social meaning to a public relations exercise. They concluded that the strategies employed by the ABA to promote social inclusion had been tokenistic gestures. But Paul Ashton and Duncan Waterson have suggested that the Bicentenary did stimulate greater official recognition of the multicultural nature of Australian society.<sup>33</sup> And Spearritt maintained that it did prompt some communities to reflect about the past in a different way. However, for him, these types of outcomes had not been facilitated by the ABA despite its rhetoric of participation, but by State and Territory Bicentennial Councils, which had taken carriage of community projects. Robert Crawford has suggested that the Bicentenary should be considered from a more nuanced perspective. He maintains that simply accepting that it was a failure does not take into account the different ways that Australian communities, both at home and abroad, and other nations such as Britain, whose history is also relevant to this chapter of the Australian story, interpreted and commemorated the Bicentenary.<sup>34</sup> Notwithstanding this, it is generally agreed that the Bicentenary did not propel Australia towards understanding itself anew as some had hoped.

Spearritt’s observation that Bicentennial funds went to many ‘worthy’ municipal and community projects that had no other possible source of funds would appear not to have applied in the case of Campbelltown if the assertion that the Council was moving towards developing a gallery independent of the Bicentenary program is accepted.<sup>35</sup> The Friends’ attachment to the Australian Bicentenary was more about financial opportunism than any strong interest in or reflection about its meaning, either as an historical milestone, or in terms

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<sup>31</sup> Spearritt, ‘Celebration of a nation’, pp. 3-20.

<sup>32</sup> Castles et al, *Mistaken Identity*, p. 148. See also Paul Ashton and Duncan Waterson, *Sydney takes shape: A history in maps*, Hema Maps Pty Ltd, Brisbane, 2000, p. 74.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Robert Crawford, ‘Celebration of Another Nation? Australia’s Bicentenary in Britain’, *History Compass*, vol 6, no 4, 2008, pp. 1066-7.

of concepts such as national identity and Campbelltown's position within this.<sup>36</sup> However, given that the 'bricks and mortar' program had been allocated over sixty-five per cent of the total NSWBC funding program budget, it is not surprising that many community projects emphasised the physical rather than the symbolic dimensions of commemoration. Spearritt's reflection that the more conceptual or critical meanings associated with the Bicentenary had been largely quashed also adds to the view that the situation in Campbelltown was not unusual. But for Dunstan, the Bicentenary had held significance for Campbelltown: the state government's expenditure on inner Sydney cultural facilities had provided the Friends with high stakes political leverage in geo-cultural terms and this too provided further impetus to their campaign.

### **Art gallery or cultural centre?**

Campbelltown Council eventually rejected the Glenalvon area site due to the findings of an independent architectural report and re-assessed the concept of a combined library-gallery facility. Town Clerk Garling and Mayor Thomas had visited the recently opened Orange Regional Gallery. This joint library, art gallery and tourist information complex located in central western NSW was considered to be a highly sophisticated modern facility that was said to be acclaimed by architects and the general public alike.<sup>37</sup> Garling and Thomas, however, decided after their visit that the 'multipurpose' model was no longer the best fit for Campbelltown: it should develop 'either one or the other'—a library or gallery.<sup>38</sup>

This put an end to another level of ambiguity that had emerged as the gallery project had evolved. The Friends and Campbelltown Council had used the terms 'art gallery' and 'cultural centre' interchangeably. The confusion that resulted from this had not gone unnoticed by the local media, which had questioned what the Bicentennial funding was actually being granted

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<sup>35</sup> Peter Spearritt, 'Celebration of a nation', pp. 13-8.

<sup>36</sup> Alice Spizzo, interview with Penny Stannard, 13 December 2012, Sydney; Joan Long and Vija Heinrichs, interview with Penny Stannard, 2 August 2012, Sydney. Graeme West, interview with Penny Stannard, 11 December 2012, Canberra.

<sup>37</sup> Richard Heathcote, 'Gallery profiles', in Michael Goss, Richard Heathcote and Catherine Lillico-Thompson (eds), *Regional Galleries of New South Wales: A design, planning and development manual*, Regional Galleries of New South Wales Ltd, Sydney, 1987, p. 56.

<sup>38</sup> Keith Garling in Joan Long and Anita Bakkers (eds), *Reflections of artists and Friends*, Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Campbelltown, 2001, p. 9.

for.<sup>39</sup> Was it for an art gallery? If so, would this concentrate on the institutionalisation of the visual arts and the conventions associated with this art form in a museum-like context? Or was the funding for a cultural centre? If this were the case, this would connote a broader, more inclusive concept of community cultural activity that encompassed a range of forms, people and practices. The Mayor seems to have regularly confused the nomenclature. Perhaps he had been attempting to appease those whose aspirations for local cultural facilities went beyond visual arts alone. Indeed, at the same time as the Friends campaign had been intensifying, other local residents, including Arthur Jones, had been trying to establish a community music facility in Campbelltown.<sup>40</sup> As well as this, the Australia Council had been investing heavily in dance, music, theatre and literature projects in Campbelltown.

Between 1983 and 1986 there were numerous Artist-in-Community projects in Campbelltown that operated in accordance with the prescription for community arts that the Australia Council's Community Arts Board was promoting. (See chapter 10.) Significantly, these projects were located entirely in Campbelltown's public housing suburbs. The first project was the Composer-in-Community which, according to the *Daily Mirror*, was the 'the first composer in residence for a NSW local council area'.<sup>41</sup> 'Project Campbellsong', as it was called, employed composer John Shortis from 1983 to 1984 to stimulate the development of music and musical expression in Campbelltown's 'new suburbs'. It aimed to involve local people in the creation and performance of their own music with the goal of producing and performing a newly composed opera. Before Shortis had even commenced in his role, Town Clerk Garling, had expressed his desire that the project culminate in a 'grand, grand performance at the [Sydney] Opera House itself'.<sup>42</sup> Patrick Veitch, General Manager of the Australian Opera, a

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<sup>39</sup> 'Points of conflict!' *Macarthur Advertiser*, 22 April 1986, p. 1. See also 'Culture Centre by 1988; \$2MIL CITY ARTS HOME', *The Chronicle*, 16 April 1986, p. 3; '20-year dream is realised', *The Chronicle*, 30 April 1986, p. 2; 'Decked carpark before gallery' *Campbelltown City Star*, 15 May, 1986, p. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Keith Garling, Town Clerk, Campbelltown Council, to Arthur Jones 17 June 1985. The letter refers to initiating 'imaginative and relevant musical activities with Campbelltown residents, especially children, and to identify the contacts and structures necessary to establish a community music centre for Campbelltown', Arthur Jones Private Collection.

<sup>41</sup> *Daily Mirror*, 2 August 1982, np.

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Keith Garling, Town Clerk, Campbelltown Council, to Patrick Veitch, Managing Director, Australian Opera, 1 June 1982, Arthur Jones Private Collection. See also Campbelltown City Council Report adopted on 10 August 1982; *Minutes of the Community, Health and Safety Committee Meeting 3 August 1982*, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

Sydney Opera House resident company, had replied that Project Campbellsong 'has the potential to be a very exciting model for a community/arts/education project' and 'an excellent way to bridge many so called gaps between high and low arts, youngsters and adult professionals, between the Sydney Opera House and Campbelltown'.<sup>43</sup> In 2012 Opera Australia (as it is now called) launched its new community choirs initiative to involve people from Sydney's outer western suburbs, including Campbelltown, in the operatic genre. Its promotion of the project, Opera Australia echoed similar sentiments to those expressed by Vietch.<sup>44</sup> Yet it would appear that the organisation was unaware that it had already 'introduced' opera to Campbelltown's communities some thirty years ago.

Despite the aspirations held by Vietch, an early contribution of \$5000 seems to have been the Australian Opera's only involvement in Project Campbellsong and it appears that a performance was never held at the Sydney Opera House.<sup>45</sup> The opera was created, however, and presented at the Menagle Park Paceway over two nights in April 1984. In his final report on the project, Shortis noted that there had been some difficulties in staging the opera, including 'the trots [which] were on directly behind us at the same time ... and the whooshing of an adjacent hot air balloon'.<sup>46</sup>

Another project was the Writer-in-Community in the suburb of Airds. Richard Lawrance was employed for two years to develop and publish a social history of Campbelltown that was 'especially accessible and relevant to young people of the area'.<sup>47</sup> The resulting publication, *Why Campbelltown? A social history of Campbelltown* was, as noted by Mayor Guy Thomas, 'written by local people for the local people'. (See Figure 17.) In tracing 'almost a century to the fast growing 1980s and the exciting years of development that lie ahead', Thomas proudly stated that *Why Campbelltown?* was the story of the 'little people who have played such an

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<sup>43</sup> Letter from Patrick Vietch to Keith Garling, 13 July 1982, Arthur Jones Private Collection.

<sup>44</sup> Opera Australia, *500 voices. 500 stories. One choir*, media release, Sydney Community Choirs, 29 October 2014.

<sup>45</sup> Letter from Jennifer Bott, Australian Opera, to Graeme Dunstan from, 2 August 1982, Arthur Jones Private Collection.

<sup>46</sup> John Shortis, *Project Campbellsong: Final Report to Campbelltown City Council*, 2 May 1984, Campbelltown City Council, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

<sup>47</sup> Campbelltown City Council, *Community Arts Officer Report*, 1986, p. 1, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

important part in the development of a city'. He concluded that *Why Campbelltown?* had been 'money well spent'.<sup>48</sup>

Also at Airds was the Death Defying Theatre Youth Street Project, which provided a program of performances and workshops in street theatre for young people. In Claymore there was a Dancer-in-Residence project, which employed dance artist Theresa Jackson, then Graeme Gray, to work with schools, youth centres and neighbourhood centres.

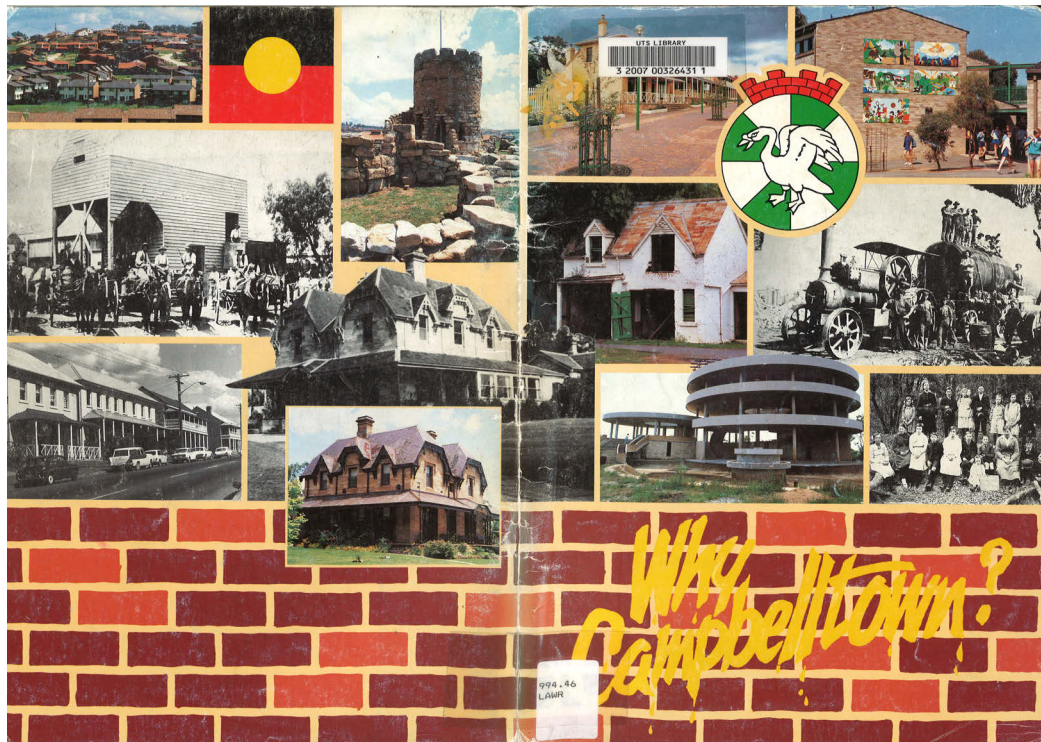


Figure 17: *Why Campbelltown? A social history of Campbelltown*, book cover, Richard Lawrance and Verlie Fowler (eds), Campbelltown City Council, Campbelltown, 1985.

In Minto there was a Photographer-in-Community and a Writer-in-Community, as well as a dedicated Community Arts Officer. There was a Community Mural Project and a Youth Theatre Project as well as Graeme Dunstan's Minto New Year's event in 1984, and the 1985 festival, 'Return to Minto Zone', named with a nod to the recently released film, *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome*. In Ambarvale the Artist-in-Community project employed public artist Peter Day. There was also a Gardener-in-Community project and a Children's Circus project,

<sup>48</sup> Richard Lawrance and Verlie Fowler (eds), *Why Campbelltown? A social history of Campbelltown*,

which employed the troupe Razzle Dazzle under the artistic direction of UK artist Reg Bolton. Also in Ambarvale was a community arts centre, 'Springfield', which was opened in 1983 and hosted a rotation of artists in residence. There was Project Playspaces, which was coordinated by Johnny Allen, who in 1973 had co-directed the Nimbin Aquarius Festival with Graeme Dunstan. In Eagle Vale there was a Gardener-in-Community project and a Drummer-in-Community.<sup>49</sup>

Each of these projects employed community arts officers and/or community artists for periods that ranged between three months to three years in duration. The federal government, through the Community Employment Program (see chapter 11), and/or the Australia Council, funded the majority of the projects. The NSW Government through the Office of the Minister for the Arts and Landcom contributed also, as did corporate sponsors who had an interest in Campbelltown such as Volvo and Unilever.

Dunstan wrote about these developments in his diary in 1984:

At Campbelltown, an overt success. Arithmetic shows the community work is now totalling \$138,000 ... and programmes begin to take off—every week now a press release. Doing and theorising. Chatting with the senior staff now, doing deals ... Three years I set myself to make a difference. The difference is manifest, now to anchor it some [sic].<sup>50</sup>

A number of community cultural organisations were inaugurated during the early 1980s besides the Friends of the Campbelltown Art Gallery. These included the Campbelltown Community Music Committee, the Macarthur Performing Arts Society, the Airds Arts and Crafts Cottage, the Live Music Club, the Campbelltown Community Arts Committee, the Ambarvale Film Club, the Campbelltown Youth Theatre Group, the Campbelltown Camera Club and the Macarthur branch of Australian Fellowship of Writers. The early 1980s saw a

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Campbelltown City Council, Campbelltown, 1985. See *The Chronicle*, Wednesday 26 February 1986, p. 6.  
<sup>49</sup> *Arts Alive News*, June 1984, pp. 6-7.

<sup>50</sup> Graeme Dunstan, c1984, Graeme Dunstan Papers 1983-1996, textual records, graphic materials, unpublished, Mitchell Library, MLMSS 87372(2).

proliferation of community arts projects and the establishment of a range of community cultural groups in Campbelltown. But why was it that the Friends' mission succeeded and the development of an art gallery overrode the consideration of other types of cultural facilities that may have applied a broader concept of culture and served more than just the visual arts?

The answer to this was twofold. Firstly, the history of the development of local cultural policy directions in Campbelltown shows that the visual arts had been singled out early on from other forms of community cultural activity to denote 'high' culture. The founders of the Fisher's Ghost Art Award and later the Art Society believed that investing in the institutionalisation of the visual arts would enable 'closer affiliation with the art galleries, art societies and cultural organisations within the Commonwealth'.<sup>51</sup> By doing so, Campbelltown would be celebrated on the national cultural stage and this would generate a sense of respectability and pride—something that City officials thought was crucial to managing residents through the upheavals wrought by suburbanisation. Secondly, although the terms 'art gallery' and 'cultural centre' had been interchangeable at a local level, in being awarded state government funds, Campbelltown's facility was required to conform to the conventions and functions of an art museum environment. This was the expectation of the state government as it asserted its regional galleries scheme.

### **Alignment of the NSWBC program with state government policy objectives**

The significance of the state government's cultural policy objectives should not be overlooked in recounting the events that led to the awarding of Bicentennial funds for an art gallery in Campbelltown. Neither should Gleeson's role as both Chairperson of the NSWBC and head of the Premiers Department. Local projects submitted for Bicentennial funding were assessed by the NSWBC, which then made recommendations to the state government for funding. Under Gleeson's watch, all recommendations made by the NSWBC to the state government were approved.<sup>52</sup> Significantly, Gleeson's dual role ensured that projects funded by Bicentennial

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<sup>51</sup> *Art Expo 68*, Program, Campbelltown Art Society, 1968, p. 3, Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

<sup>52</sup> See Gerry Gleeson, 1988, in Ashton, *Waving the Waratah*, p. 77. Of the 1700 project applications received by NSWBC through the Commemorative Program only 300 were recommended for funding. Of these, at least one project was supported in every NSW local government area.

monies were aligned with policy priorities that existed across the domain of state government responsibilities.

A major policy issue for the Wran Government in its early days, as Glen Searle has noted, had been the significant economic disparities that existed within metropolitan Sydney. It took steps towards bringing jobs to areas in Sydney that most needed them and Western Sydney was a priority. Unlike the *Sydney Region Outline Plan, 1970-2000AD* (SROP), which had used land rezoning to promote industry and business development as the basis for jobs creation, employment issues were now thought to be critical to planning. And they were to bring down the Fraser Coalition Government in 1983. The Western Sydney Employment Assistance Fund was established to incentivise firms to create new jobs. However, as noted elsewhere, once the recession of 1982-83 took hold and manufacturing contracted, the new jobs that had been anticipated for Sydney's western suburbs did not materialise. The state government's response to the recession—the worst in fifty years—was to introduce an expanded program of public works.<sup>53</sup> Searle has described this as the 'trigger' that led to the redevelopment of a Sydney's industrial harbour side into a major city tourism precinct, Darling Harbour. There were significant potential job gains from the Darling Harbour project and also 'the prospect for the city of transforming a run-down port area into a modern multi facility destination for local visitors and international tourists alike'.<sup>54</sup>

According to John Connell and Bruce Thom, Darling Harbour was presented to the electorate as a 'revenue generator to fund the social wage' and be a 'catalyst for future economic growth in Sydney and NSW'. Framed in this way, it was promoted as the NSW's Bicentennial gift to the nation.<sup>55</sup>

Treasurer Paul Keating's deregulation of Australia's banking system and introduction of economic reforms in 1983 had opened up Australia's financial markets. Global investment

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<sup>53</sup> Glen Searle, 'The demise of Place Equity in Sydney's Economic Development Planning', *Australian Geographer*, 2002, vol 22, no 3, pp. 320-2.

<sup>54</sup> Glen Searle, 'Conflicts and politics in precinct developments' in Bruce Hayllar, Tony Griffin and Deborah Edwards (eds), *City spaces, tourist places: Urban tourism precincts*, Elsevier, Oxford, 2008, p. 204.

<sup>55</sup> John Connell and Bruce Thom, 'Beyond 2000 The post-Olympic city', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 325.



companies had quickly settled in Sydney and not Melbourne, which had traditionally been the centre of commerce and business in Australia until the late 1960s.<sup>56</sup> Wran sought to place a greater emphasis on enhancing Sydney's international competitiveness and city status. Large-scale global city consumption, the development of entertainment facilities and the promotion of Sydney as an international tourist destination became cornerstones of his government's economic policies.<sup>57</sup> Maurie T. Daly and Bill Pritchard's discussion of Sydney provides an understanding of how its position in Australia and in the Asia-Pacific region shifted relative to the 'global city thesis'. This concept—where the world's corporate and financial power is concentrated within a small number of highly influential cities—together with the possibilities it generated caused by Keating's economic reforms was harnessed by Wran as the Bicentenary approached, and Darling Harbour became central to promoting Sydney for the occasion.<sup>58</sup>

Searle has noted that during this time the state government shifted its priority towards attracting jobs and investment in NSW as whole, rather than to specific areas of need. He argues that this was 'aspatial' policy; location was an incidental outcome of policy rather than a determining factor.<sup>59</sup> While this may have been the case in a theoretical sense, Pauline McGuirk has suggested that the Sydney city local government area was the public face of global Sydney and the main location of primary signifiers to this. This, she maintains, gave it spatial privilege in the determination of State hegemonic projects.<sup>60</sup> Given that the largesse of Bicentennial spending was directed towards activities in the City of Sydney, critics argued that the allocation of funding across NSW was inequitable.<sup>61</sup> Dunstan had recognised this issue early on and saw it as a compelling argument for grafting the Campbelltown art gallery

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<sup>56</sup> Margot Saville, 'Hedging bets of the future', *Griffith Review*, No. 25, Spring 2009, pp. 105-7.

<sup>57</sup> Pauline M. McGuirk, 'Producing the capacity to govern in global Sydney: A multiscaled account,' *Journal of Urban Affairs*, vol 25, no 2, 2003, pp. 201-23.

<sup>58</sup> See Maurie T. Daly and Bill Pritchard, 'Sydney: Australia's financial and corporate capital', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p. 170. See also Beverley Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. 214.

<sup>59</sup> Searle, 'Conflicts and politics', p. 322.

<sup>60</sup> McGuirk, 'Producing the capacity', p. 208. See also Mark Hutchison, 'Trains, plains and automobiles: New South Wales political Debates (1985) and the invention of Western Sydney', *Australian Journal of politics and History*, vol 59, no 2, 2013, pp. 233-4.

<sup>61</sup> See Ashton, *Waving the Waratah*, pp. 65-6.

campaign onto the Bicentenary. Even though new initiatives were introduced to pacify critics and spread funds across local government areas statewide, the amount of dollars involved was nominal compared with the hundreds of millions being directed towards Darling Harbour alone. As Beverley Kingston has quite rightly noted, with Darling Harbour forming the centrepiece of the Bicentennial program and the re-enactment of the First Fleet directing national and international attention towards the harbour, Sydney became the focus of the Bicentenary at the expense of rest of NSW.<sup>62</sup>

Kingston found that the Bicentenary did encourage short-term employment opportunities, especially, as Ashton has added, those that were integrated with the federal government's Community Employment Program (CEP) and other job creation schemes.<sup>63</sup> This had not been the case in Campbelltown. Jobs that were created through the CEP for stimulating local cultural activity there had been separate from the Bicentenary-funded gallery project. Instead, they were specifically geared towards community arts projects that promoted an agenda of cultural de-institutionalisation.

Kingston has further observed that while the Bicentenary provided a temporary boost to tourism, in the long term, it was hoped that businesses and tourists would be attracted to invest in Sydney and in NSW more widely. Yet even before the Bicentenary was over, much of the expertise that it had gathered had moved on.<sup>64</sup> Paul Ashton and Duncan Waterson have described how Sydney's Bicentennial celebrations had been part of a longer-term scheme that had commenced in the early 1970s to gain international attention for Sydney in bidding for a second Olympics' in Australia. (The first had been in Melbourne in 1956.) Attempts to secure the 1988 Olympics' for Sydney had failed, but Bicentennial activities had firmly focussed international attention on the NSW capital. The Bicentenary had enabled the development of major infrastructure and event know-how for a new Olympics' bid, and within the first few

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<sup>62</sup> Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, p. 214.

<sup>63</sup> Ashton, *Waving the Waratah*, p. 97.

<sup>64</sup> Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, pp. 222-3. See also Ashton, *Waving the Waratah*, pp. 141-2.

months of 1988, Gleeson and many of his staff had quickly turned their efforts towards Sydney 2000.<sup>65</sup>

At the same time as the state government had been finalising planning for the Bicentenary in 1985, its bureaucracy had started to scope out a new metropolitan strategy, the first since the SROP. Planners were considering how to stimulate economic development in Western Sydney, an area, which Mark Hutchison observed, featured as a prominent topic in debates in the NSW Legislative Assembly at the time. A range of measures was considered to stimulate the wider Sydney economy, including the creation of local distinctiveness in metropolitan regional centres such as Campbelltown.<sup>66</sup> As noted earlier, the Friends had scoped out a 'special flavour' to distinguish a Campbelltown art gallery from others in NSW. They believed that having a gallery would give Campbelltown a new status and consolidate its modern identity as an outer metropolitan centre. That it could be conceived as something that could boost Campbelltown's local economy would have given added strength to their campaign.

Hutchison maintains that in the parliamentary debates about Western Sydney during the time, the subject of the provision of culture through education was second only to the issue of roads and transport. Developments in policy that aligned local cultural activity with economic development were not new concepts for Graeme Dunstan who had started the gallery campaign several years beforehand. As discussed earlier, he had argued that local policy makers needed to embrace this paradigm shift in order to ensure Campbelltown's social and economic viability. By the mid-1980s ideas that linked 'culture' with 'economy' and the concept of the cultural industries was changing the discourse and field of cultural policy. (See chapter 1.) Despite these shifts, however, there is no evidence to suggest that the Friends or Campbelltown Council had re-orientated their thinking about local cultural activity in this way. But the state government's support for the development of cultural institutions did encompass economic concerns, and this would have contributed to its awarding of funds for

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<sup>65</sup> Ashton and Waterson, *Sydney takes shape*, p. 74.

<sup>66</sup> Kingston, *A History of New South Wales*, pp. 222-3. See also Ashton, *Waving the Waratah*, pp. 141-2; Tony Griffin and Deborah Edwards (eds), *City spaces, tourist places: Urban tourism precincts*, Elsevier, Oxford, 2008, p. 204; Robert Freestone, 'Planning Sydney: Historical trajectories and contemporary debates', in John Connell (ed), *Sydney: The emergence of a world city*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 128-9.

the Campbelltown gallery. Hutchison has suggested that many of the Wran Government's policy innovations came to fruition in 1985 and this included the funding of cultural institutions. For him, these were the 'visible symbols' of the success of many of its economic initiatives.<sup>67</sup>

The Arts was part of the state government's responsibilities and supporting the development of cultural facilities had been the focus of Wran's commitment to this area. The government delivered its cultural policy objective of increasing participation in the arts by channelling support into the development and professionalisation of galleries and museums in regional NSW. It funded the Regional Galleries Association of NSW (RGANSW) as the service body to facilitate this. Wran had introduced funding programs to assist RGANSW members—public authorities that had an existing, or were intending to establish, a professionally managed, public art collection, art museum or gallery—in capital works, professional salaries, exhibitions and collection development. The NSW Government also funded RGANSW's professional staff and enabled it to draw on the resources of the Art Gallery of NSW, one of the state's major cultural institutions.<sup>68</sup> Campbelltown Council had delegated its RGANSW membership to the Friends so that it could 'gain lobby leverage for state subsidy and have access to the touring exhibitions'. Association membership also assisted the Friends in implementing its campaign strategy of managing exhibitions in a professional way to create greater visibility and build support for the visual arts within the community. RGANSW managed an exhibitions program of works from the Art Gallery of NSW collection that toured the circuit of regional galleries.

Exhibitions that the Friends presented in the foyer of the Campbelltown Civic Centre were sourced in this way.<sup>69</sup> RGANSW's Executive Officer, Michael Goss, had known about the Campbelltown gallery campaign since 1982 when he had attended Dunstan's launch dinner.<sup>70</sup> The Friends was aware that his endorsement and that of senior state arts bureaucrats would

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<sup>67</sup> Hutchison, 'Trains, plains and automobiles', p. 233.

<sup>68</sup> Michael Goss, 'Introduction', in Michael Goss, Richard Heathcote and Catherine Lillico-Thompson (eds), *Regional Galleries of New South Wales: A design, planning and development manual*, Regional Galleries of New South Wales Ltd, Sydney, 1987, p. 8.

<sup>69</sup> See Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, Meeting Minutes, 13 July 1983, p. 2; 7 March 1984, pp. 2; 20 December 1983, p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> 'Task force for art gallery', *Macarthur Advertiser*, 9 November 1982, p. 5.

be essential if the gallery project was going to succeed. Spizzo recalled the efforts that were made in this regard:

We spent a lot of time with those people from the Ministry [Office for the Arts] wining and dining them. Ruth [Banfield] did a huge amount. One night I was at a dinner at her house with her husband and somebody else from Council, and Michael Goss and people from the Ministry of the Arts and they were quite 'oh yes, and Campbelltown will have its turn'. And so we did quite a lot of that formal stuff that, and I can tell you, that no other community arts officer was doing that in Western Sydney because galleries were not on the agenda.<sup>71</sup>

Supporting community arts officers in local government was the Australia Council's Community Arts Board's (CAB) centrepiece in implementing its objectives to broaden participation in the arts and fostering this tier of government's involvement in the arts. The method that CAB took towards this process was to de-institutionalise the arts by removing it from cultural facilities. Artists were embedded in communities and this secured the participation of greater numbers of people in the arts. The establishment of art galleries was not part of the philosophy or practice of community arts that the CAB espoused or supported. This differed significantly to the imperatives of the NSW Government's Office of the Arts, which, as Spizzo emphasised, 'were really pro regional galleries, much more conservative [and] traditional in arts funding than the Australia Council'.<sup>72</sup>

Hutchison's findings support Spizzo's comments. He observed that the state government put a disproportionate amount of funding into the institutional support of high culture during the 1980s. Despite its attempts to extend the arts into Western Sydney, Hutchison argues that there was 'little space in Australia's high cultural elite' for the 'indigenized cultures' of the western suburbs. Suburban, fringe rural, new indigenous cultures or relocated traditional cultures did not feature in an agenda that was unequivocally one of 'high arts'.<sup>73</sup> For Arthur Jones, the simple reason that an art gallery, and not a community music centre or another

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<sup>71</sup> Spizzo, interview.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

type of cultural facility materialised in Campbelltown was because the state government was 'really pushing' regional galleries.<sup>74</sup> This was an agenda that was unambiguously about the development of the high arts.

Once Campbelltown Council had become a member of RGANSW and the gallery project awarded state government funds, it was understood and known as a 'regional' gallery. This meant that it conformed to an established, finely honed set of traditions, relationships and programs that were set by the inner Sydney based RGANSW that delivered a keynote program for the NSW Government's Office for the Arts. RGANSW was an organisation that was predominately made up of membership from country NSW and its principal brief was to institutionalise the arts and drive the professionalisation of visual arts in these communities. This set of conditions became the overarching theme for the development of a cultural facility in outer suburban Sydney, and it was fundamentally incompatible with community arts as it was understood and practiced through the CAB lens.

As noted elsewhere, at the same time as the gallery campaign had been progressing, a range of CAB-funded programs were being implemented across Campbelltown's suburbs. These, however, were restricted to the housing commission suburbs where residents were considered to be disadvantaged on multiple levels and not just in terms of their distance from established cultural activity. Community arts as a trajectory for reducing cultural disadvantage and increasing participation was, it would seem, detached from the gallery agenda and the cultural, economic and political forces that were driving it. The one common factor among these different paths was the Community Arts Officer. As Spizzo recalled: 'we had to tread this line'. And in this respect, she observed, Campbelltown was unlike anywhere else.<sup>75</sup>

### **British Royalty, Fisher's Ghost and local officialdom**

As the decision had been made by Campbelltown Council to dismiss the multipurpose or cultural centre model, it had identified a new location for a stand-alone art gallery adjacent to Fisher's Ghost Creek. (See Figure 18.) This is where the gallery stands as Campbelltown Arts

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<sup>73</sup> Hutchison, 'Trains, plains and automobiles', p. 236.

<sup>74</sup> Arthur Jones, interview with Penny Stannard, Sydney, 3 January 2013, Bradbury, Campbelltown.

<sup>75</sup> Spizzo, interview.

Centre today.<sup>76</sup> Graeme West, who succeeded Michael Knight as the state Member for Campbelltown, believes that the location of the gallery was significant. The Festival of Fisher's Ghost had established the foundations for community participation in cultural activities and a strong tradition of supporting the arts in Campbelltown. West believes that it was fitting that the gallery was located in reference to a feature that made symbolic mention of this.<sup>77</sup>



Figure 18: Fisher's Ghost Creek, photo, c1970, Campbelltown City Council, Local Studies Collection.

On 1 December 1988 the 12<sup>th</sup> Duke of Argyll, Chief of the Scottish clan Campbell and kinsman of Governor Lachlan Macquarie's wife, Elizabeth Campbell, officially declared Campbelltown's City Bicentennial Art Gallery open. (See Figures 19 and 20.) The presence of the Duke at Campbelltown and the involvement of the British Royal Family—more of whom, as Spearritt has observed, were present in Australia than in any other year of its history up to then—in events elsewhere, would have provided reassurance to critics of the Bicentenary Program that

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<sup>76</sup> Campbelltown City Council, *Minutes of the Special Committee appointed to investigate the Cultural Centre/Library and decked Car Park Projects* held on Monday, 2 June 1986; Campbelltown City Council, *Minutes of the Ordinary Meeting of the Campbelltown City Council* held on 17 June 1986, pp. 6-7. See also 'Art project upheaval', *The Chronicle*, 18 June 1986, p. 3; 'Option three shifts art gallery site', *Macarthur Advertiser*, 2 July 1986, p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> West, interview.

# \$2m bicentenary art gallery nearing completion

## Monorail shopping concept

**CAMPBELLTOWN'S \$2 million art gallery will be officially opened on Foundation Day, December 1, as a major event on the city's bicentennial calendar.**

The centre will be the venue for the performing arts as well as music, dance, puppetry and theatre.

It was paid for on a dollar-for-dollar basis by the NSW Bicentennial Authority and Campbelltown Council.

Although the gallery will be open to the public well before December 1, the official opening on that date will be part of Campbelltown's birthday celebrations.

The Duke of Argyll, who is a kinsman of Governor Macquarie's wife Elizabeth Campbell, will officiate at the opening. The new gallery will not only feature paintings but also exhibit photography, ceramics, pottery and textile works.

It will contain three separate galleries, a lecture room, a workshop for the use of local craftsmen and visiting teachers and a painting studio on the top level flooded by natural light.

There is also a coffee lounge and bookshop and a caretaker's residence in the complex.

Gallery One is to contain travelling exhibitions from around Australia which will each be on display for about a month.

Gallery Two will house a more permanent collection of work, some already owned by people in the region, and works acquired under the guidance of the gallery director.

Gallery Three will give local artists space to use for a large range of exhibitions of their work.

It is also envisaged the gallery will function as a

A GIANT-sized banner Amade up to symbolise the region and commemorate Australia's bicentenary will hang in the new Campbelltown art gallery.

The banner project, organised in early 1987 under former arts officer Alice Spizzo, was intended to involve a wide range of people.

Early last year designs were drawn, materials estimated and costs established. All groups and individuals who could possibly contribute were contacted.

The public response since then has been described as "enormous" with contributions being received in many different kinds of textile medium including tapestry, applique, weaving, patchwork and knitting.

Much of the work received has been embroidered or hand painted. Some people have worked in rotation. For example, the elderly folk at Myrtle Cottage at Ingleburn have completed a montage on the history of the Australian wool industry.

NEWLY-appointed director of Campbell-

town art gallery Sioux Garside plans to involve community groups and school children in gallery activities.

"Art doesn't only involve painting but a whole range of other crafts such as ceramics, jewellery, costume, textiles, drawing and sculpture," she said.

"I want to put together an exciting and popular program of exhibitions and activities to attract people who aren't necessarily familiar with visiting galleries."

ART gallery director Sioux Garside outside the bicentennial project bringing culture to Campbelltown. The \$2 million centre officially opens in December.

### Third biggest in State

CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL  
part of the success story of Macarthur

Campbelltown City Council has met the challenge of planning for the needs of one of Australia's fastest growing areas

MONORAIL could alone day link Campbelltown and Macarthur Square shopping centres, Campbelltown Hospital and Macarthur Institute of Higher Education.

The concept is the brainchild of Leod Leese, owner of Macarthur Shopping Square and Campbelltown Mall.

The developer commissioned a study last year into ways of linking the centres, and a monorail or tram system were put forward as the ideal go-between.

When publicly announcing these possible transportation alternatives, then Macarthur Shopping Square manager Ian Hardy suggested the concept could be established in conjunction with the malling of Queen St and the provision of decked parking in the central business district.

Stressing that the monorail or tram system was just an idea he said: "It's a thought-provoker, if anything. "It's a matter of long-term planning."

Figure 19: '\$2M bicentenary art gallery nearing completion', *Macarthur Advertiser*, 2 October 1988, np.

'established traditions' were encompassed within the celebrations.<sup>78</sup> In the realm of local officialdom, it was the Art Society's Claire St Claire who was honoured as the force behind Campbelltown's new gallery. (See Figure 21.) While it is not disputed that she held the mantle for the quest for a gallery in the 1960s, the approach taken by the Art Society had become redundant within a generation.<sup>79</sup> It is clear that a gallery would not have materialised in Campbelltown without Dunstan's establishment of the Friends and the activation of a concentrated campaign.

In four years the Friends had achieved a remarkable feat by transforming years of wishful thinking into a bricks and mortar institution. As Banfield remembered, 'we were all really driven ... together [we] worked really, really hard and all voluntarily'.<sup>80</sup> It had been a focussed and intense effort.

<sup>78</sup> Spearritt, 'Celebration of a nation', p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Banfield, interview. See also 'Disbands, merges into Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery', *Campbelltown District Star*, 2 November 1983, p. 3. See also Friends of Campbelltown Art Gallery, *Notice of Annual General Meeting*, 7 March 1984, Ruth Banfield Private Collection.

<sup>80</sup> Banfield, interview.



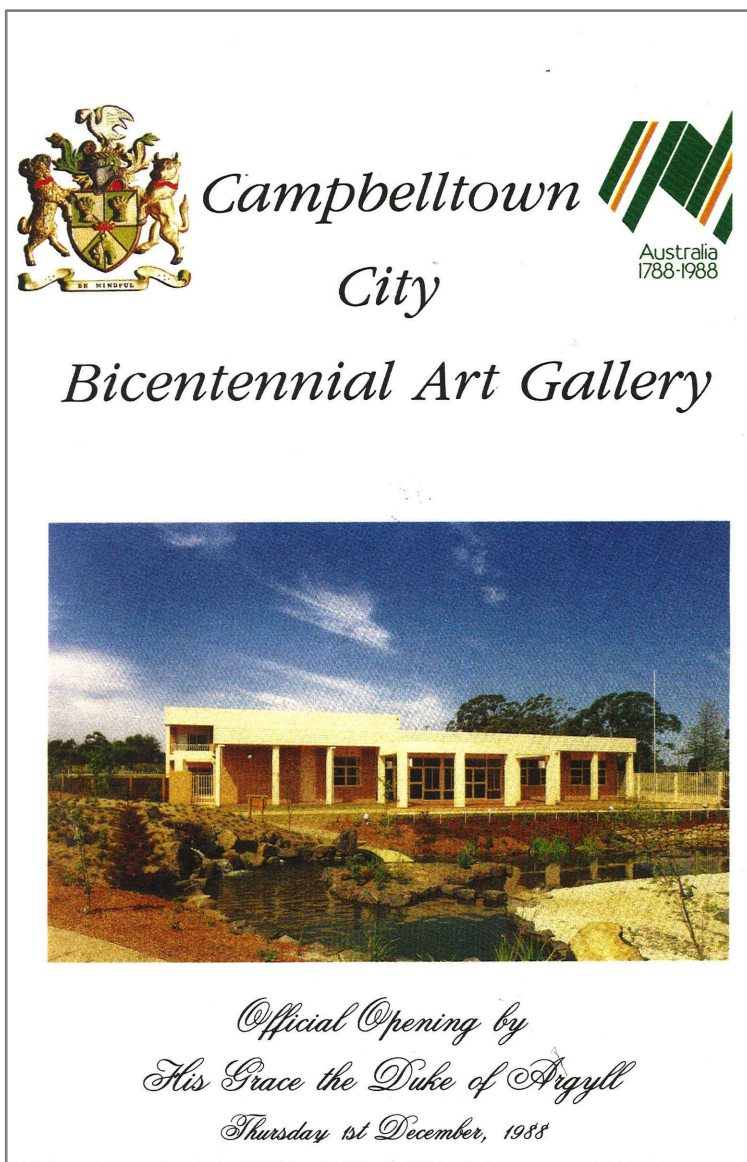


Figure 20: Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, invitation, *Official Opening*, 1 December 1988, Friends of Campbelltown Arts Centre archive.

However, as impressive as the Friends' effort was, it is unlikely that the labour of its members alone would have been enough to result in the establishment of the much-wanted art gallery. Without the developments that had been taking place in cultural policy at three levels of Australian government in the years leading up to the start of the campaign, it is probable that the quest for a gallery would have fizzled out altogether. Yet, without the Friends, it is equally unlikely that the same result would have been achieved through the cultural policy agendas of government alone.



Figure 21: Mayor Bryce Regan (left) and Claire St Claire (right) at the laying of the foundation stone for Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, 20 June 1987, Campbelltown City Council, Local Studies Collection.

Prior to the Friends campaign it is doubtful that Campbelltown Council would have taken stewardship of the matter despite having established activities that had enabled the city to develop a tradition of celebrating the arts. While Frederick Larcombe and Bob Meyer have each drawn attention to the entrepreneurialism shown by Campbelltown Council in undertaking capital projects that delivered social and economic returns to the community—a situation that they had found to be most unusual within local government—to the great frustration of local cultural voices, this had not extended to developing a purpose built art gallery.<sup>81</sup> It should be noted that not having an art gallery, or any cultural facility for that matter, was not unusual in outer suburban Australia at the time, given that the provision of community facilities in general were grossly inadequate compared to levels of population growth and development there—and even more so in Campbelltown than elsewhere. This

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<sup>81</sup> Frederick Larcombe, *The advancement of local government in New South Wales, 1906 to the present*, Sydney University Press in association with Local Government Association of New South Wales [and] Shires Association of New South Wales, Sydney, 1978, p. 443; Bob Meyer, 'Macarthur: Sydney's successful south western satellite?', *Australian Planner*, vol 28, no 3, 1990, p. 29.

being the case, it is not surprising that an art gallery was not at the top of the list for new community facility developments.

The Australia Council had found that Campbelltown Council had done more than most other local governments in supporting cultural activity, and the cultural policy directions that it had pioneered had enabled the development of a vibrant cultural life. It was an approach, however, that had evolved to be less concerned with the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the arts than was desired by local arts supporters. It was also an approach that had not met the cultural needs of new residents who had settled in the public and affordable housing developments that had driven the suburbanisation of Campbelltown in the 1970s.

Lynne Marsh has maintained that Campbelltown Council fought the efforts of local arts supporters—a symptom of its resistance to leaving behind Campbelltown’s country town past, despite the march of suburbanisation. For Marsh, it wasn’t until the Friends campaign had fully intensified that the Council was forced into a position to support the gallery project.<sup>82</sup> Banfield credits the Council, and in particular Town Clerk Garling, with whole-heartedly supporting the gallery project.<sup>83</sup> Knight acknowledges Banfield and the Friends with having convinced Garling of their cause and in doing so, secured the support of the Council and the state government.<sup>84</sup> Banfield’s observations extend back only to her involvement in the gallery quest, which was at the point of the Friends’ inauguration in 1983, while Marsh’s study extends back some twenty years earlier. What can be drawn from these perspectives is that once the Friends campaign took hold, the Council became supportive of the gallery quest and tailored the main thrust of its cultural policy objectives towards this. Where its approach had earlier promoted the institutionalisation of the visual arts through the establishment of the Art Award, it was now focused on a path towards a bricks and mortar institution.

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<sup>82</sup> Lynne Marsh, ‘The History of the Fisher’s Ghost Art Award’, submitted through BA Hons program Historiography and Research Methods in History, 1995 (institution unknown), Campbelltown Local Studies Collection.

<sup>83</sup> Banfield, interview.

<sup>84</sup> Knight, interview.

The institutionalisation and professionalisation of the visual arts was the key mechanism through which the state government delivered its core cultural policy objective. But it is unlikely that this alone would have led to the establishment of an art gallery in Campbelltown. Knight did not consider the development of an art gallery to be a priority given the needs that existed more broadly across Campbelltown. Furthermore, 'his' government focused its activity in this regard on regional NSW in country areas that were well outside metropolitan Sydney or the development of major cultural infrastructure in Sydney's inner city.

The Australia Council certainly would not have taken action on the development of an art gallery in Campbelltown. The CAB was ideologically opposed to galleries and the institutionalisation of the arts. But, significantly, it had funded Dunstan's position, and operating within this, he had founded the Friends movement and had been the architect of the gallery campaign. He had grafted a set of policy concepts—equity and quality of life in Australian cities—which underpinned major federal government reform initiatives established in the mid-1970s—such as the National Growth Centres Program, a scheme in which Campbelltown had occupied a prime position—to the gallery cause. These core concepts had formed the pillars of federal-level priorities across the public policy domain at the time that the Australia Council had been formalised and, subsequently, in the creation of its Community Arts Program. By the early 1980s, the Commonwealth Department of Territories and Local Government, a bureaucratic peer of the Australia Council, was pursuing an interest in cultural facilities in Western Sydney. It was assisted by the South Western Metropolitan Regional Arts Development Committee, which was ramping up its case for Campbelltown and the neighbouring local government zones to be apportioned a distribution of cultural grants equal to inner Sydney populations. Dunstan had observed that this situation would become glaringly apparent given the multi-million dollar capital investment in inner Sydney cultural facilities that was planned for the Bicentenary.

Half the budget for the gallery project had been secured through the Bicentenary Commemorative Program, but it is likely that it would have been developed independently of this. The Friends had been opportunistic in attaching a gallery to the Bicentenary. This did not appear to be in respect of any symbolic dimensions or historical concepts associated with the event. Rather, the Bicentenary offered money and a definitive time frame to ascribe a more

urgent impetus to the campaign. Campbelltown Council had given its in-principle support for a gallery and had included exhibition space as an amendment to its Civic Centre library plans. The Bicentenary, it would seem, proved to be the catalyst for the Council to further separate the visual arts from other community cultural activity and embark upon a fully-fledged commitment towards cultural institutionalisation. The Campbelltown City 'Bicentennial' Art Gallery was in name only, and it is therefore not surprising that reference to the two hundredth year anniversary was dropped altogether in 2005 when the facility was extended and re-branded as 'Campbelltown Arts Centre'.

Added to the mix of cultural policy forces that had converged in Campbelltown during the time had been Dunstan and his distinctive attributes. As Banfield explained, 'he was the most interesting person I'd ever met—so different from anyone I'd ever met'.<sup>85</sup> He was certainly unlike the other community arts officers who were working in Sydney's South West, who Spizzo has characterised as 'young middle class girls who had arts backgrounds'.<sup>86</sup> A leader in Australia's counter culture and protest movements, Dunstan brought years of experience as an organiser, political activist and change-agent to Campbelltown. The authority that he enjoyed as a professional council officer gave him a significant level of influence within the community. But he did not operate alone. Spizzo had continued what Dunstan had started, and took the gallery cause right up to the final hours of the Bicentennial grants closing date. Although she never met Dunstan or Spizzo, Sioux Garside, Director of the Campbelltown Art Gallery from 1988 to 1998, described them as having been 'quite famous'.<sup>87</sup>

Other key individuals also advanced the Friends' objective. Romalis had created an environment—perhaps the ultimate antithesis of Campbelltown suburbia—that had encouraged a collective of leading contemporary artists to settle in Campbelltown and by doing so, provided strength and artistic capital to the campaign. She, too, had a measure of political experience, was established in the community and worked persistently for the gallery cause, exploring all avenues possible through government policy and planning priorities. Hosting elected officials and senior bureaucrats, organising fund raising events and

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<sup>85</sup> Banfield, interview.

<sup>86</sup> Spizzo, interview.

exhibitions, had been Banfield's main role. Marsden worked to exert influence on local officials and he found a way to realise his personal aspirations for the visual arts and for Campbelltown through the Friends. He also facilitated its hasty incorporation, giving it the institutional basis it required to attach itself to RGANSW and pursue its cause there. Chairman of SWMRADC, Campbelltown alderman Mary Seaman, had also been appointed by Premier Wran to the state government's Cultural Advisory Committee, a point from which she could represent Campbelltown's gallery quest further.<sup>88</sup>

The 1980s, Spizzo recalled over a coffee thirty years later, had presented a unique set of opportunities. Many of the inroads made into cultural policy in the 1970s took shape in communities despite, or in some cases, assisted, by the effects of economic recession.<sup>89</sup> This would certainly appear to have been the case for Campbelltown. But it had been a unique set of circumstances beyond cultural policy alone, that had converged to enable the establishment of the first public art gallery of its kind in Western Sydney—a facility that can be seen as a precedent for further action, twenty years later through the *Western Sydney Arts Strategy*.

This chapter confirms Banfield and Spizzo's observation that the situation in Campbelltown had been one-of-a-kind. Three different but mutually dependent trajectories underpinned the establishment of the gallery: community-led processes as they formed through the activation of a social movement for a gallery; developments in cultural policy—particularly those at a federal government level that led to the appointment of Dunstan as Campbelltown Council's Community Arts Officer—and through the state government's program of support for the development of regional galleries and its Bicentenary Commemorative Program; and the actions of influential individuals who believed that Campbelltown should have an art gallery and who had the ability to turn their beliefs into affective action. Overarching this was Campbelltown's emergence as a modern outer suburban place and a sense that there was no turning back to its earlier position as a country town that existed independently of metropolitan Sydney. But Campbelltown was a place that had not yet fully come to terms with

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<sup>87</sup> Sioux Garside, interview with Penny Stannard, 31 July 2013, Minto Heights, Campbelltown.

<sup>88</sup> See *Arts Alive News*, no 19, 1985, p. 2.

its new identity and the fluidity that existed as a result of this enabled local residents, arts workers and policy makers who had a vision for its future in a cultural sense, to seize their opportunity.

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<sup>89</sup> Spizzo, interview.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has examined the relationship between cultural policy and suburban Australia through a case study of Campbelltown, Sydney, from the mid-1950s to 1988. My study of cultural policy over this period has found that when it is considered in relation to a specific place over an extended period of time, a complex story unfolds. Today, visitors to Campbelltown see a well-established and well-supported arts centre that is proudly promoted by officials as the city's 'jewel in the crown'. But its development was the outcome of a long and evolving set of cultural policy directions that can be traced back to the mid-1950s when Campbelltown was first considered within plans for metropolitan Sydney, and, later, as part of Australia's urban future. Concepts of culture featured in the imagining of Campbelltown as a modern Australian outer suburban utopia and governments fostered cultural activity in efforts to develop a sense of identity to define Campbelltown as a progressive and sophisticated place.

Throughout this thirty year period, various urban, growth and housing policy agendas and private development drove the process of suburbanisation in Campbelltown and thousands of residents settled in new suburbs that arose from once agricultural lands. By the mid-1970s Campbelltown's long-established identity that had been founded on its white settler past, its separateness from Sydney and sense of independent spirit, came into conflict with the reality that it was no longer a country town that was ruled by a long-standing social elite. Transformed within a generation, Campbelltown had become a young, working-class outer western Sydney suburban place. In the 1980s, it was one of Sydney and arguably Australia's most socio-economically disadvantaged areas. The social problems that resulted from this situation and their wide broadcast by the media propelled perceptions that Campbelltown was a suburban 'bad land'.

As suburbanisation gained momentum in Campbelltown during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, governments at three levels—local, state and federal—included cultural policy directions within their proposals for Campbelltown's future and its modern identity. Early local government rationales for fostering cultural activity were based on supporting or 'managing' local people through suburban transition and officials drew on the stories and concepts



associated with Campbelltown's historic past to do so. Ideals such as growth, progress and nation building had overarched the tide of suburbanisation that swept across Western Sydney during the post war period, and these informed the conceptualisation of culture in metropolitan planning for Campbelltown. In the 1970s concepts such as 'quality of life', 'access' and 'community' were advanced in federal-level policy agendas. These had direct impacts on the way that cultural policy directions were implemented through the Australia Council via its Community Arts Program in Campbelltown up until the mid-1980s. During this period, the policy principles of social democracy that were conceptualised through the philosophies and practices of community arts pursued an agenda of cultural de-institutionalisation. At the same time, however, community-driven agendas for Campbelltown's cultural development continued to advance the ideals of status, respectability and progress that had characterised earlier objectives.

As the impending envelopment of Campbelltown within metropolitan Sydney started to become a reality in the 1960s, Campbelltown's cultural leaders had sought to distinguish its identity through elevating local cultural activity directly onto the national stage. They attempted to reinforce the position of importance that Campbelltown had had in Australia's colonial-era history. From this point, cultural institutionalisation became the objective of community-led agendas and the visual arts were seen as the means to advance this. By the mid-1980s, bolstered by the Australian Bicentenary and the investment that the state government was making in cultural infrastructure to mark the occasion and transform Sydney into a global city, a local social movement for the development of a public art gallery was able to gain the traction it required to achieve the goal of cultural institutionalisation. This would not have been possible without Campbelltown Council's Community Arts Officer, Graeme Dunstan. This situation, however, when viewed from a cultural policy studies perspective, was incongruous. On the one hand, Dunstan was employed to deliver federal-level policy objectives for cultural de-institutionalisation. On the other hand, he was obligated to support the local cultural sector in achieving its long-held ambition for the development of a public art gallery. The financial incentives offered by the Bicentenary provided the catalyst for this to be adopted by Campbelltown Council as its key cultural policy direction. With the construction of the Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery came the status and respectability that local

cultural leaders had desired. Given that the affects of suburbanisation in Campbelltown had rendered its modern identity the antithesis of these values, the achievement, one would think, was imbued with considerable significance.

I have examined an Australian suburb—Campbelltown—through the study of cultural policy. Placing this research topic within a particular historical period in which Australia was being re-imagined, re-built and re-structured, has allowed me to examine the ideologies and agendas that underpinned both suburbanisation and developments in cultural policy. By doing so, I have explored how these forces evolved and interacted in the creation of suburban Australia itself. Competing goals, conflicting policy agendas, variations in the conceptualisation of policies at different levels of government and disparities within governments, local ambitions, community-led movements, contradictions and paradoxes in the aspirations of influential individuals all featured in the mix as cultural policy directions played out in Campbelltown. As recent debates have shown, such issues have not abated over time.

Understanding the dynamics that were at play between governments and local communities as they variously tried to attain dominance and secure concessions in the situation at Campbelltown has some significant parallels with Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony. Paola Merli has recently argued that Gramsci has been rarely discussed or used by cultural policy studies scholars.<sup>1</sup> Indeed amongst the literature reviewed for this project, I found scant mention of Gramsci in relation to or in the context of cultural policy studies. Notwithstanding this, a Gramscian reading of the topic, which is not pursued here, offers a future lens for an expansion of the research topic.

While cultural policies and other related domains, particularly at a state and federal government level, may have a sense of cogency in their conception and design, once implemented in places and in communities, the situation becomes less clear cut. The nuances that result from this give further currency to the view that in the study of cultural policy, place does matter. In the context of Australia—a fundamentally suburban nation—the study of

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<sup>1</sup> Paola Merli, 'Creating cultures of the future: Cultural strategy, policy and institutions in Gramsci, Part I: Gramsci and cultural policy studies: Some methodological reflections', *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, vol 19, no 4, 2013, pp. 399-420.

cultural policy must extend towards places such as Campbelltown. If, as the national cultural policy, *Creative Australia* (2013) proposes, cultural activity and participation in the arts are to be part of 'daily life', then the relationship between cultural policy and suburban Australia must be better understood. Only then can policy makers, cultural workers and other stakeholders be in a position to ensure that the actions taken by governments towards fostering cultural activity can be truly effective in delivering equitable, efficient and long lasting impacts for communities.

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