



*Final Report*

# **Living with place disadvantage: community, practice and policy**

authored by

**Lynda Cheshire, Hal Pawson, Hazel Easthope  
and Wendy Stone**

with

**Gethin Davison, Andrea Sharam and  
Gina Zappia**

for the

**Australian Housing and Urban  
Research Institute**

at The University of Queensland  
at The University of New South Wales  
at Swinburne University of Technology

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<b>Authors</b>	Cheshire, Lynda Pawson, Hal Easthope, Hazel Stone, Wendy	The University of Queensland The University of New South Wales The University of New South Wales Swinburne University of Technology
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## **ACRONYMS**

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
CD(s)	Collector District(s) [of census data]
CHP	Community Housing Provider
GMA	Greater Metropolitan Area
LGA	Local Government Area
LRI	Logan Renewal Initiative (Queensland)
MYRP	Multi-Year Research Project (AHURI)
NRP	Neighbourhood Renewal Program
NRAS	National Rental Affordability Scheme
PCYC(s)	Police Citizens Youth Club(s)
SA	Statistical Area (ABS)
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas [of census data]
SSC	State Suburb (ABS)

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Aim

This report is one of a series drawing on an AHURI Multi-Year Research Project on addressing concentrations of disadvantage in Australia's major cities. The project's overall aim was to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how disadvantage is shifting across the urban landscape; what role housing markets and systems play in this process; and how policy-makers and communities might better respond to the forms of disadvantage that ensue. Conceptually, the project sought to advance previous understandings of spatially concentrated disadvantage as manifested in Australia. To date this has been largely informed by US and UK scholarly work, seeing disadvantage as located in inner city areas, especially those where large and problematic public housing estates could be found. Instead, through the development of a typology of spatial disadvantage in Australia, the project identified the diverse forms and urban settings in which concentrated disadvantage is now manifest.

The aim of this third stage of the research was to drill down into the experiences of, and responses to, disadvantage in a few localities selected as exemplars of the four disadvantaged suburb types already identified in Stage 2 (see below). Six sites were selected for detailed qualitative research; two each in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. These case studies served two purposes. First, an opportunity to 'groundtruth' the validity of the typology by assessing whether the category assigned to the suburb held explanatory power in accounting for the experiences of the places in question and/or held meaning for those familiar with the locality. Second, to assess the various policy and practice responses applied to different areas of disadvantage; to identify any variation in the kinds of interventions found across localities; and to determine whether any discernible variation could be accounted for in terms of the spatial typology.

## Research approach and methods

The six areas selected for study were:

- Type 1. "isolate" suburbs': high on young people and single-parent households; high on social renting—*Emerton, NSW*.
- Type 2. "lower priced" suburbs': high on overseas movers; high on two-parent families—*Auburn, NSW; Springvale, Victoria*.
- Type 3. "marginal" suburbs': high on residential mobility but low on overseas movers; high on older people; high on private rental; high on outright home ownership—*Russell Island, Queensland*.
- Type 4. "improver" suburbs': high on overseas movers; high on reduced unemployment and on reduced incidence of low status jobs—*Braybrook, Victoria; Logan Central, Queensland*.

Primary data were generated mainly through in-depth interviews with local stakeholders and community representatives; interviews with state-level actors and policy-makers; and focus groups with residents in each site. In total, 69 stakeholder interviews were conducted for the project and 68 residents participated in focus groups across the six case study areas.

## Conceptual framework

The project was informed by the goal of formulating a new way of thinking about disadvantage in Australia that reflected its contemporary spatial patterning. Most notably, it attempted to capture two key features of the current context:

1. The suburbanisation of disadvantage.

## 2. The cross-tenure nature of social disadvantage.

In considering how these two processes influence experiences of disadvantage in particular localities, the project identified two, potentially overlapping, ways of conceiving of disadvantage in a spatial manner. The first refers to disadvantage in terms of the spatial concentration in particular localities of disadvantaged people according to their socio-economic and socio-cultural circumstances (i.e. high levels of unemployment, low educational attainment, etc.). In short, this can be understood as *places where disadvantaged people live*. The second—*locational or place disadvantage*—arises when the characteristics of a particular neighbourhood put its residents at a disadvantage, often because the place is physically inaccessible or services are limited. Importantly, attention was focused on the ways that these two forms of disadvantage intersected, such as in cases where disadvantaged people found themselves spatially concentrated in particular areas that could compound the difficulties faced by individuals.

While reference to the operation of housing markets and ‘neighbourhood effects’ helped us understand the way this process works, it was a priority of the research to move beyond, and critique, pathologising discourses that embed the causes of poverty within the socio-cultural characteristics of residents themselves, as well as to avoid seeing residents as unwittingly trapped in places from which they might prefer to escape. Understanding different forms of mobility in and out of disadvantaged areas, and recognising their connectivity to other areas through economic, social and housing market linkages, thus required that local narratives of place and community were brought to the fore.

### **Places where disadvantaged people live**

As seen by local stakeholders and residents across all or most of the case study areas, certain sub-groups of the local population were especially prone to disadvantage. These included children and young adults, elderly people, single parents, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) people and those with alcohol or other drug abuse problems. For members of these groups, the risk of an individual being disadvantaged was compounded by recent migrant status, especially when this was associated with having limited literacy in English.

Among young people, the relatively high risk of being disadvantaged was evident in abnormal unemployment rates, potentially contributing to the high incidence of anti-social behaviour reported in some (but not all) case study localities. Low educational attainment was often cited as a ‘root cause’ of employability limitations. Within the ‘elderly’ at risk group, most concern attached to that group of former migrants and others who had failed to secure home ownership and were therefore liable to be pushed into poverty in retirement due the high cost of private rental housing.

### **Places that may disadvantage people**

Places that may disadvantage people refers to the possibility that an area’s location, connectivity or local provision of employment and services could negatively impact on residents. By and large, reflecting the wider distribution of disadvantaged suburbs (see above), the six chosen localities were fairly distant from main metropolitan centres, although all but one (Russell Island, Brisbane) lay on major arterial road and/or rail routes. To the extent that higher quality employment was unavailable in or near their locality, residents were disadvantaged by the time and cost barriers imposed by travel to central cities or other centres where such opportunities were concentrated. This was particularly problematic in suburbs such as Emerton/Mount Druitt (Sydney) and Russell Island (Brisbane) which were not only remote from CBDs but in which there was also little local employment of any kind. Residents of suburbs such as Auburn (Sydney) and Springvale (Melbourne) were less economically disadvantaged by location partly because of being relatively well-connected to CBDs by rail and road, but also because of the status of these suburbs as active commercial hubs where employment (albeit

potentially of a lower waged kind) was relatively plentiful. A key indicator here was the level of youth unemployment which, in contrast to the other four case study suburbs, was no higher than city-wide norms.

In terms of their access to services, however, many research participants were sceptical that residents of our chosen localities were generally subject to the 'place disadvantage' which would be associated with living in an 'un-serviced area'. An exception here was Russell Island which represented a perhaps unusual instance in that the Queensland Government had taken an explicit decision to restrict local provision on the grounds that people 'choosing' an 'island lifestyle' needed to accept the limitations as well as the benefits following from that choice. Russell Island aside, the case study areas appeared arrayed along a continuum of service provision from those in which there was a mix of service provision and service deficit, in which some existing services were over-subscribed; to places richly endowed with well-used services (in some cases provided by third sector or charitable entities, as well as by government). Indeed, some interviewees took the view that certain areas of the latter kind were problematically 'over serviced', and that there was an associated danger of institutionalising a locality's social profile by attracting (or retaining) those needing the services concerned.

In several instances, areas enjoying the benefits of economic revival after periods of economic decline were continuing to undergo significant changes. These included a perception of reduced crime and job growth. Notably, however, pathways into employment for local residents were impeded by a skills/experience mismatch.

Overall, while many residents had benefited from long-term changes in the case study areas, others were 'left behind' or pushed out. These include younger generations who cannot afford to remain in place, as well as elderly residents who do not wish to leave, and who—in some cases—endure substantial hardship to remain in place.

## **The experience of living in a disadvantaged place**

Closely related to the idea of 'place disadvantage' is the damaging effect that an area's negative external reputation can have on local residents. All the case study areas had been subject to many years of problematic media coverage, much of it seen as sensationalising social dysfunction and irresponsibly playing on popular stereotypes. This was reflected in the comments made by some residents and stakeholders who saw the interventions of external organisations (including businesses and governments) as treating their areas with little respect. Moreover, according to numerous research participants, local people were directly impacted in terms of their employment prospects. Whether such alleged discrimination in fact occurs is an open question well beyond the scope of this research. What is, however, clear is that many residents strongly believe this occurs.

However, across all the case study areas, local residents' and stakeholders' own narratives of their communities were generally much more positive than might be imagined from an external perspective. These were very definitely not places from which most—or even many—residents would wish to 'escape'. On the contrary, substantial community pride and community loyalty were much to the fore in the testimony of numerous interviewees. In some cases, this appeared to be borne out of perceived struggles (e.g. enduring the hardships associated with refugee settlement or the decline of local manufacturing and associated economic downturns). In areas characterised by contemporary dynamism, there was a widespread acceptance of the positive impact of change, albeit mitigated by concerns about certain consequences—such as housing cost inflation. The only cases where divisions within communities appeared to have a significantly polarising effect (e.g. in the case of Russell Island) were where migration dynamics were regarded more warily.

## **The role of housing markets in contributing to socio-spatial polarisation**

In most disadvantaged places within Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, the past 10 years have seen housing markets becoming generally more pressurised. Associated with this, the decade to 2011 saw some limited convergence of local house prices and rents with citywide values. Declining availability of affordable rental housing in many of these areas has reduced this component of their magnetism for low-income or vulnerable households from other areas (or recently arrived from overseas). It has also led to rising levels of housing stress in terms of people enduring unsatisfactory living conditions, as well as impacting on quality of life due to the impact of unaffordable housing costs on household budgets.

In some places, housing system effects continue to concentrate disadvantage. Most obviously, targeted tenancy allocations criteria for social housing institutionalise a highly disadvantaged social profile for areas where such accommodation is present at scale. However, in most cases it is probable that this is more significant in terms of concentrating vulnerable people within a suburb or locality than in drawing disadvantaged households into disadvantaged places from surrounding or more distant areas. In some areas the on-going availability of relatively low-rent tenancies continues to draw in poorer households and the disproportionate expansion of private rental provision in low-value areas seems likely to compound historical tendencies towards the suburbanisation of disadvantage.

## **Practice and policy: interventions to address or remedy disadvantage**

In examining the ways that policy-makers and practitioners might respond to disadvantage, it can be seen that policy interventions have typically adopted either a *place-based approach*, targeting designated areas for a range of improvement activities that relate either to the physical environment or some characteristics of the population as a whole or, alternatively, through a *people-focused approach* by addressing the needs of a specific group or groups who live in a designated area. More rarely, integrated policy approaches to disadvantage simultaneously seek to address people and place-based concerns—for example via neighbourhood renewal initiatives. Across the six case study sites, we found examples of all three types of interventions, but also significant variation in the nature and extent of policy interest and activity across the six sites, which, to some extent, mapped onto the spatial typology of disadvantaged areas.

Integrated neighbourhood renewal programs no longer appear a popular approach to tackling disadvantage, but Emerton, Logan Central and Braybrook had all been subject to previous strategies of this kind. A common factor here was a relatively high concentration of public housing which had formed the main focus of associated interventions. On completion of these programs, there were attempts by local government to progress the agenda of area-based action although the limited powers and resources available to municipalities meant that this tended to be limited to the formulation of an area 'action plan'.

Place-improvement strategies were relatively common across the case study sites, taking the form of physical improvements (e.g. the de-concentration of public housing or the upgrade of the town centre); image re-branding in a strategic attempt to eradicate a negative reputation; or attempts to instil positive behaviours in the population at large around issues of community cohesion, capacity building or healthy lifestyles. One of the potential risks of place-improvement, however, is that disadvantaged groups can easily miss out on its benefits or, worse, that it can compound gentrification pressures which may displace lower income local residents to cheaper areas, potentially with inferior support services and local networks.

In numerical terms, people-based activities appeared to dominate the landscape of service provision and policy intervention in all case study sites, providing valuable forms of support to

particularly disadvantaged groups such as young people, newly-arrived migrants, and the unemployed. However, these types of activities were generally localised and piecemeal and funded through federal or state government grants to local community groups. Increasingly, though, it was local government taking the initiative and delivering programs and policies that once would have been considered beyond municipal responsibilities. Across the case study areas, the time-limited nature of many state and federal funding programs and (notwithstanding formal neighbourhood renewal initiatives) the absence of program coordination proved a source of frustration.

Finally, where some localities were described as being both 'service rich' and frequently subject to government interest and activity, others appeared to receive little. Springvale, for example, has observed significant investment into nearby Dandenong, which had generated feelings among some stakeholders that Springvale had been forgotten. In contrast, Russell Island had been deliberately sidestepped in the provision of funding because of its status as an island, but this made life more difficult to those attracted to the area by the low-cost housing.

## **Conclusions**

This qualitative study has richly confirmed the diverse range of social, economic and housing market characteristics to be found among places objectively defined as 'disadvantaged places' in urban Australia. Perhaps the greatest commonality was around the challenge of countering a deeply entrenched negative identity.

Beyond the problem of stigmatisation, other features of such 'poor neighbourhoods' can compound the disadvantage affecting some residents as individuals—especially in the increasingly typical situation where such areas are located far from metropolitan centres of higher quality employment.

However, far from being effectively places of resident entrapment, we can broadly conclude that suburbs characterised by concentrations of disadvantage in urban Australia are places with substantial social capital and community pride. It is therefore important to avoid stereotyping disadvantaged areas as poverty-stricken sink-holes at the bottom of the suburban pecking order where people live only because they lack the means to escape.

Equally, while most of the case study suburbs appeared to have seen considerable economic development and improving service provision over the past 10 years, such 'positive' changes had not necessarily benefited the most disadvantaged groups within each locality. Moreover, particularly in 'migrant gateway' areas, a continuing flow of in-comers, appeared to be contributing to local housing cost inflation, beneficial to existing owner occupiers and landlords but detrimental to all others.

In terms of our typology of disadvantaged places, the findings from this part of the study are consistent with those of our quantitative analysis (Hulse et al. 2014) in suggesting that Type 1 ('isolate') and Type 3 ('marginal') suburbs are those of greatest concern in terms of the capacity for residents to either access opportunity, or benefit from local economic growth.



# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

As it has been used in the Australian urban policy literature, spatial disadvantage refers to the tendency for disadvantaged people to be clustered in particular localities, but also to the way that certain features of a locality—such as limited access to employment or services—may serve to disadvantage those who live there. Although these two dimensions do not always intersect, their coincidence can compound the disadvantage, marginalisation and social isolation of those who are already vulnerable.

Where once it was commonly accepted that disadvantage in Australian cities reflected similar spatial patterns to those found in other developed countries such as the US and UK, with low-income households generally concentrated in the inner city, it has since been recognised that ‘the spatial distribution of the poor in our big cities is [becoming] much more ambiguous’ (Badcock 1997, p.246). Contributing to this growing ambiguity have been various changes in housing and labour markets, driven by broader neoliberal social and economic policies, which have led to the ‘residualisation’ of social housing into a last-resort tenure and the growing significance of the private rental market for low-income households. The effect has been a filtering out of poorer households away from the inner-city core and into middle- and outer-suburban areas in a process that has been described as ‘the suburbanisation of disadvantage’ (Randolph & Holloway 2005a; Pawson et al. 2012).

Clearly, in addition to the above-mentioned changes in social housing, a driving force underlying these processes has been the wider housing system, defined by Hulse and Pinnegar (2014, p.1) as ‘the housing markets which structure and define the dynamics of that system, and associated government policies (or absence of policies)’. As Hulse and Pinnegar (2014) also point out, with the majority of Australia’s dwellings encompassed within the private market, the key housing-related drivers of socio-spatial disadvantage are primarily market based, rather than being the outcome of past government housing policies on public housing.

In seeking to make sense of the complexity of these various processes and their outcomes, the primary aim of the AHURI Multi Year Research Project (or MYRP) *Addressing concentrations of disadvantage* has been to examine the role of housing, housing markets and housing policies in how we understand and respond to concentrations of disadvantage in Australian cities. Guiding the project were three overarching issues that have structured the work program. These are:

- How concentrations of social disadvantage have been conceptualised and how this relates to our broader understanding of the operation and impacts of housing and urban systems.
- The impacts of spatial disadvantage, and the importance of housing and place in mediating the incidence and experience of residents of disadvantaged areas.
- How policy, practitioners and communities can respond to spatial disadvantage in ‘best for people, best for place’ terms.

These issues provided a framework for three corresponding research streams which have addressed separate, but interrelated, themes as follows:

- *Stream A—Conceptualising spatial disadvantage*: this involved the development of a typology of spatial disadvantage for Australian cities and regions that captured the dynamic nature of localities, and an audit of the spatial impacts of housing and non-housing policy settings and programs in creating, accentuating and addressing disadvantage.
- *Stream B—Living in areas of social disadvantage*: which sought to obtain an in-depth understanding of residents’ experiences of living in disadvantaged localities through the use of a structured residents survey in four selected suburbs of Sydney, exploring the

extent to which individual/household-level disadvantage relates to, and reflects, locational disadvantage.

- *Stream C—Community, practice and policy*: this focused on individual case study areas in order to explore specific issues of community, policy and or practitioner interest within the wider guiding framework of the MYRP.

These streams have generated a series of standalone reports. At the time of writing, two reports from Stream A have been published: Pawson et al. (2012), and Hulse et al. (2014). The first of these was a comprehensive literature review on concentrations of disadvantage. The second reported on the development of the typology of disadvantaged places in urban Australia in which four distinct area types were identified.

A key foundation for the typology analysis was the decision to adopt the ‘suburb’<sup>1</sup> as the appropriate spatial scale for the research. While partly based on practicalities around data availability, this decision (further discussed in Hulse et al. 2014) was also informed by the need for a geography that would have some inherent meaning to the local residents and policy-makers who would be involved in the qualitative case study work. As conceptualised in the typology analysis, ‘disadvantaged suburbs’ were defined as places containing concentrations of disadvantaged people.

This report documents the research and findings of Stream C based on case study fieldwork focused on six selected sites, two in each of the three cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. As explained in Section 4.1, the six suburbs were chosen to represent the four typology categories (with either one or two areas of each type included). At the heart of this work were several key objectives. These were to:

- ‘groundtruth’ the spatial typology (Hulse et al. 2014) by piecing together local perceptions of social life within identified suburb types.
- complement the residents survey evidence on residents’ experiences of living in a disadvantaged area.
- understand the ways that disadvantage impacts on different social groups within a locality.
- identify local perspectives on the assets and challenges of the locality, as well as informed views on the area’s socio-economic trajectory.
- identify policy and practice responses applied to different areas of disadvantage in the form of people- and place-focused initiatives.

## **1.2 Groundtruthing the spatial typology**

Where Stream B (Living in areas of social disadvantage) focused on the individual experiences, housing needs and trajectories of local residents in different types of disadvantaged locality, Stream C (Community, practice and policy) was a more broadly targeted, yet in-depth, investigation of selected disadvantaged places. Groundtruthing the validity of the spatial typology involved examining the plausibility of the disadvantaged area typology category assigned to the suburb in question. This was progressed through a qualitative approach mainly involving in-depth interviews and focus groups with community stakeholders and local residents to examine whether residents even considered their suburb as disadvantaged and whether the forms of disadvantage identified aligned with the typology.

## **1.3 Community, practice and policy**

This second component of the fieldwork focused on the specific challenges facing each of the chosen localities and on the implementation of policies and programs to address related local issues. Given the project team’s interest in disadvantage rather than simply poverty, along with

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<sup>1</sup> Defined, as ‘State Suburb’ or ‘SSC’, by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (see cat. no.1270.0.55.003).

the commitment to an inductive approach to understanding how local people experience disadvantage and disadvantaged places, the potential range of challenges was intentionally broad and encompassed the following:

- availability and quality of housing
- access to education, health and employment opportunities
- service provision, access and integration
- transport access and affordability
- population mobility (or immobility)
- groups of residents particularly susceptible to disadvantage
- exposure to harm from discrimination, crime and stigma
- the incidence of social tensions and other social problems (e.g. crime).

This was followed with a review of policies and interventions applied in each area over the last five to 10 years with a view to identifying the major policy directions for addressing concentrated disadvantage; the key actors involved; the different interventions rolled out in different localities; and the way local context shapes the operationalisation and outcomes of these interventions. In attempting to deal with the complexity of mechanisms designed to address disadvantage (including those with no place-based concerns), Randolph's (2004) conception of 'place-focused initiatives' was used as a guide for selection, allowing mainstream social welfare and economic policies to be excluded. Randolph (2004, p.65) defines place-focused initiatives as programs that do not have an explicit locational focus, yet do have impacts on specific places 'due to the fact that much of the activity they fund or support takes places in areas of high disadvantage'. In breaking this down further, we drew on a framework provided by Griggs et al. (2008) in the UK who identified four different types of policy objectives based on the relative importance they attach to people and place with respect to their principal areas of focus and their intended impacts.

## **1.4 Institutional context**

For the benefit of the international reader, it is worth providing a brief description of the institutional context in which housing management and responses to place-based disadvantage are framed and initiated in Australia. As Burke and Hulse (2010) have pointed out earlier, Australia's federal (as opposed to unitary) system of governance is highly influential in shaping the policy context of housing management, not least because the funding levers to influence housing policy are provided at the federal level, but implemented by the states or, more locally, by local councils. As has been seen consistently in Australian policy debates, this creates a situation where the responsibility for poor policy outcomes is constantly bounced between the state and federal levels, with each blaming the other for either a lack of funding or ineffective service delivery. In the field of social and affordable housing then, it is the Federal Government that has set the aspirational targets for reform to the social housing sector, and the state governments that are to implement these reforms. Most recently, this includes plans to increase the share of social housing managed by community housing providers (CHPs) (Pawson et al. 2013) rather than through state housing agencies who have traditionally been responsible for management of this sector. In contrast to other countries where local governments have been active agents in the management of social housing, Australian local government has been almost entirely absent. While this has been attributed to the relatively minor role that local government has traditionally played in service planning and delivery (Gurran 2003), recent reforms to local government have seen an increase in its responsibilities and functions in this regard, although often as an outcome of 'cost-shifting' by the states (Dollery et al. 2007). As shown later in Chapter 9 of this report, this is readily apparent through

the growing role and leadership of local government in addressing place-based disadvantage, often as state government interest in area-based interventions appears to wane.

## **1.5 Structure of the report**

This report is structured in two main sections. The first part (Chapters 1–4) sets out the context and explains the methodology used to generate the original findings presented in the second part (Chapters 5–9).

Chapter 2 briefly outlines the way that socio-spatial disadvantage has been conceptualised in this project, which later guides the analysis of the case study findings. Next, Chapter 3 summarises the typology of disadvantaged suburbs developed earlier in the project as part of Stream A. This identified four distinct disadvantaged place scenarios according to socio-demographic composition, which provided the framework for case study area selection. Chapter 4 provides details on the selection process and the fieldwork methodologies applied in these areas. This shows how consistency of design was achieved across the study as a whole while still allowing for case-specific variation. Finally, Chapter 4 also sets out brief summary details about each of the chosen case study areas.

Key research findings are presented in Chapters 5–9. These draw on detailed, working papers prepared for each of the case study areas which have been made available separately on the AHURI website to complement the broader synthesis of results across all areas as presented in this report. Chapter 5 considers the localities as places where disadvantaged people live. Chapter 6 examines the forms of locational disadvantage that may arise in these localities and their effects on different social groups. Chapter 7 discusses the ways in which the case study participants spoke about the experiences of living in disadvantaged places. Chapter 8 outlines the role of the local and extra-local housing market in contributing to the causes of socio-spatial disadvantage and as a manifestation of its effects. Chapter 9 provides a broad assessment of the policy and programmatic responses to such forms of spatial disadvantage. Finally, Chapter 10 draws together overall conclusions from this part of the project.

## **2 SOCIO-SPATIAL DISADVANTAGE IN AUSTRALIA: CONTEXTS AND CONCEPTS**

### **2.1 The Australian experience of socio-spatial disadvantage**

In an earlier Critical Perspectives paper for this MYRP, Hulse and Pinnegar (2014) observe how Australian understandings of disadvantage have been heavily influenced by a range of international concepts concerned with 'concentrations of poverty'. Most influential have been the work of US scholars on the experiences of poor ethnic minorities (particularly African Americans) living in inner-city public housing projects (see e.g. Massey & Kanaiaupuni 1993; Valdez et al. 2007) and British research on large inner-city public housing estates where poverty, unemployment, anti-social behaviour and crime are seen to concentrate (Hastings 2004; Pacione 2004).

However, Hulse and Pinnegar argue that the above scenarios do not accord with the Australian experience of socio-spatial disadvantage which appear more consistent with those of European countries outside the UK. Burke (2013, p.1) concurs, noting that the scale of disadvantage in Australian cities compared to the US and the UK 'has not been as wide or as deep, nor has it been as permanent', largely because of different historical and institutional contexts. In terms of the impacts of these different national contexts for the patterning of disadvantage, two key issues stand out. The first is that where concentrated poverty has long been synonymous with high concentrations of public housing, this is less so in Australia. Second, that poverty concentration has long since ceased to be primarily an inner-city problem (Burke 2013).

#### *2.1.1 The suburbanisation of disadvantage*

Changes in the geography of disadvantage in Australia generally mirror those found elsewhere, particularly western European nations such as Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Germany and France (Andersen & van Kempen 2003; Andersson & BråmÅ 2004). While lower-income households were historically concentrated in the older, inner-city suburbs, scholars have been noting a growing trend since the 1970s towards what Randolph and Holloway (2005a) term 'suburbanisation of disadvantage'. In Australia, the result is a growth in poverty, disadvantage, unemployment and social exclusion among those living in the deteriorating middle ring suburbs (Randolph & Holloway 2005a). In Europe, on the other hand, social exclusion, tension and unrest is most profound on the margins of large cities in poorly-serviced low-rent outer city housing estates which were initially for working families in the period after the Second World War (Dekker & van Kempen 2004).

These changes result from a converging set of historical trends and more recent shifts taking place in contemporary cities. These include the shift from a fordist to a post-fordist urban regime (Wacquant 2008) which has led to the demise of the manufacturing sector once located in areas now experiencing deindustrialisation and decay. Subsequent gentrification of inner-city areas has also compounded the trend towards the suburbanisation of disadvantage in recent years as growing demand among higher income earners for heritage housing in inner-city areas has priced low-income groups out of the inner-city housing market and displaced them to the urban periphery. Further, there is a discernible ethnic dimension to these processes. In Australia, declining physical housing stock in middle-ring areas has been transferred to the private rental market which attracts those seeking low cost housing. Among these are migrant populations, including the most recent arrivals who are either directed into these areas by refugee settlement programs, or who subsequently relocate to them to access cheap rental housing and/or social and community support networks (Bunar 2011). As Randolph and Holloway (2005a, p.59) describe, this creates a diverse and multicultural community, but also one with 'no higher-end incomes and few stable households to hold the community together and bring income to the area'. Writing of the Swedish case, Andersson and BråmÅ (2004,

p.518) similarly observe that distressed areas all have a large ethnic population, but note that this is made up of a large variety of ethnic groups 'with very little in common, apart from the marginal position and the immigrant experiences as such'. Such places are well represented in the case study research and are detailed later in this report.

### *2.1.2 The cross-tenure nature of social disadvantage*

A second notable feature of disadvantage in Australia is its cross-tenure nature. Historically, much academic and policy interest in disadvantage has focused attention on the relationship between public housing and concentrated disadvantage, in part inspired by recognition of the close association between public housing and disadvantaged places in some other countries such as the UK and the US. Yet even historically, the coincidence of poverty and social housing has not been as acute in Australia as elsewhere. As Burke (2013, p.14) explains:

... the scale of public housing in areas of disadvantage has been less, and does not dominate to the same degree; the dwelling form has been different (more detached than high rise); and, probably most importantly at least in comparison to the US, for the first thirty to forty years public housing was not designed for the disadvantaged but for low-income working households. It is only with the changes in allocations policy of the last two decades and the high degree of targeting that public housing in Australia has become housing for the disadvantaged.

With access to public (and community) housing tenancies now subject to rigorous 'targeting', it is well recognised that the sector has become a tenure of last resort for those with multiple forms of disadvantage—not only low incomes, but also issues such as physical and intellectual disability, drug and alcohol abuse and mental ill-health. But its small and proportionately declining size—now reduced to under 5 per cent of total dwellings—means that social housing cannot accommodate all of those experiencing the kinds of challenges listed above. Hence, other housing tenures—most notably the private rental market—also need to be considered for the role they play in the spatial distribution of disadvantage in Australia.

## **2.2 Conceptualising socio-spatial disadvantage**

In this study, it is recognised that there are two ways of thinking about disadvantage and the manner it manifests spatially across the metropolitan landscape. The first is the spatial concentration of disadvantaged people and the second is place disadvantage, referring to the inherently problematic characteristics of localities and the negative consequences for residents. Both are elucidated in turn, followed by a brief discussion of the way these two features of disadvantage can intersect and the effects that arise when they do.

### *2.2.1 Places where disadvantaged people live*

In the first sense, disadvantage is understood in terms of the spatial concentration in particular localities of disadvantaged people according to their socio-economic and socio-cultural circumstances. These are often identified according to relevant census variables including high levels of low-income households or those living in poverty; low labour force participation or high levels of unemployment; low educational attainment; poor English skills; high levels of housing stress (paying greater than 30 per cent of income on rent or mortgage repayments); high proportions of single parent families; and high proportions of recent overseas arrivals (see Baum et al. 2006). Scholars such as Vinson (1999) extend these indicators to incorporate 'social pathology' indicators such as drug and alcohol abuse, child neglect, low birth weight, truancy from school and crime.

### *2.2.2 Place disadvantage*

Place or locational disadvantage arises when the characteristics of a particular neighbourhood places its residents at a disadvantage. This occurs when the available services, facilities, and opportunities are below standard, distant and/or physically inaccessible, or when certain

features of the physical environment impose limitations (through geographic isolation) or risk (e.g. high levels of pollution). Saunders (2011, p.3) describes locational disadvantage as follows:

Locations, like individuals, differ along a spectrum of disadvantage that reflects differences in local labour markets (and hence job opportunities), the availability and adequacy of local services, social and community facilities and the strength of informal networks that provide support to individuals and families in times of need or crisis.

Of course, a less accessible location itself may not 'cause' disadvantage if residents have the resources to mitigate the resulting limiting effects, or if they have consciously moved to a place for lifestyle or other reasons and thus view any perceived disadvantage as a virtue or acceptable trade-off. Instead, as Maher (1994, p.186) points out, locational disadvantage creates *social* disadvantage when 'a lack of choice of location places a household in a location where access to basic facilities and resources is difficult'. Further, locational disadvantage often interacts with, and compounds, existing forms of inequality when disadvantaged groups are concentrated in such areas, often because they lack the resources to make choices about where they live or the means to overcome the limits imposed by space.

### 2.2.3 *The intersections of disadvantage*

The development of a typology of socio-spatial disadvantage undertaken earlier in this project was based on a population-based conceptualisation of 'disadvantaged areas'—that is, the spatial concentration of disadvantaged people. However, following Vinson (1999), the case study work aims to understand the processes underlying such concentrations and the outcomes that arise for the people who live there. There are two components to this.

The first is concerned with the compounding effects of disadvantage when low-income or vulnerable groups are spatially concentrated in particular types of areas, such as ageing middle- and outer-ring suburban areas with inadequate public transport facilities or recently built fringe developments that are poorly serviced (Hulse & Pinnegar 2014). Processes that locate disadvantaged people in areas disconnected from the rest of the city, thereby limiting access to employment, services or social networks, or that locate them in poor quality and inappropriate housing need not be inevitable even if they appear so in many cases. As the case study analysis later reveals, there is clear evidence in some cases that the search of low-income households for affordable housing (mainly in the private rental sector) can channel them into areas that leave them trapped and disconnected from mainstream services and support. Yet these relationships are far from immutable and in other cases we find concentrations of disadvantaged people in areas that are relatively well serviced and well connected. A critical issue, then, is to understand the differential processes at work that create these contrasting scenarios and the diverse interventions that may be required to address the specific challenges encountered in different localities.

Second, there is the issue of what researchers term 'neighbourhood effects' (Atkinson & Kintrea 2001). The argument here is that living in deprived neighbourhoods has profound—and usually negative—consequences for a range of health, welfare and social outcomes such as personal wellbeing (Farrell et al. 2004), child mental health (Caughy et al. 2003), crime and disorder (Sampson 2003; Ross & Mirowsky 2009) and social exclusion (Bauder 2002). These negative effects are seen to arise through four core sets of neighbourhood mechanisms as identified by Galster (2012). The first are environmental and relate to key attributes of a given space that may disadvantage its residents (e.g. the quality of the physical environment as outlined above). The second are geographical which Galster points out are not so much a feature of the area itself but rather arise 'because of a neighbourhood's location relative to larger-scale political and economic forces' such as accessibility to employment prospects or transportation (2012, p.26). Third are institutional mechanisms and the availability and/or quality of local resources or institutions such as schools and health clinics, which are often

controlled and determined by outside actors. Where these three types of mechanisms are acknowledged as arising independently of the characteristics of the residents themselves (Friedrichs et al. 2003), the fourth type is seen to be more endogenous and occurs through 'social-interactive mechanisms (Galster 2012, p.25) that generate, transmit and reproduce the negative outcomes observed. Such an approach has its roots in the 'culture of poverty' thesis (Lewis 1966), which argued that living in poor neighbourhoods instils in residents certain dysfunctional norms and values that perpetuate their disadvantage and marginalise them from mainstream society.

While such conclusions have been contested on methodological and empirical grounds, they have also been subject to critique for attributing disadvantage and social problems to the socio-cultural characteristics of residents themselves, rather than emphasising the influence of structural forces such as the labour market, economic restructuring and government policy on the life-chances of the poor. Hastings (2004, p.236) explains this with reference to a 'pathologising discourse' that 'not only emphasises the moral failings and cultural distinctiveness of the urban poor, but argues that it is these deficiencies which cause poverty'. In populist terms, this pathologising discourse frequently manifests itself in powerful negative stereotypes of disadvantaged people and places, portraying them as exhibiting a culture of welfare dependency, anti-social behaviour, and low moral standards (Bauder 2002). As Hastings (2004) and others point out, sourcing explanations for disadvantage within the culture or characteristics of those who encounter such disadvantage reinforces an ideology of 'victim blaming'.

Despite these critiques, there is substantial evidence that neighbourhood effects of poverty can be discerned in some instances, although their causes are both complex and structural, rather than cultural (Bauder 2002). In criminological research for example, studies have shown how disadvantaged people living in areas of high crime and social disorder lack the economic and social resources to avoid or manage such threats in their local area and thus feel vulnerable or powerless to act. The effect is that they become distrustful of others, interact less with their neighbours and have a heightened fear of crime (Ross et al. 2001; Palmer et al. 2005). As Ross et al. (2001, p.569) suggest, the cumulative effect is a process of 'structural amplification' whereby the conditions of disadvantage undermine the collective resources (e.g. social cohesion and collective efficacy) that assist residents in overcoming the negative effects of their environment. Conversely, however, other research has indicated that even where there is hostility and mistrust among residents, this in itself can create a sense of neighbourliness among some cohorts of residents as they band together for protection against trouble (Evans 1997; Foster 2007).

Neighbourhood effects can be most pernicious when they are based on processes of what Bauder (2002, p.88) terms 'cultural labelling', primarily through the imposition of negative stereotypes and labels upon disadvantaged areas and groups. Drawing largely on the work of Goffman (1963), researchers have shown how certain meanings, assumptions and stereotypes associated with particular attributes of disadvantaged neighbourhoods—such as the presence of social housing, high crime rates, and high levels of unemployment or single-parent families—can lead to the imposition of a 'deeply discrediting' stigma (Goffman 1963, p.53). The effects of this stigma upon residents can be profound, with stigmatised neighbourhoods experiencing residential instability (as residents gaining the resources to do so move away), a lack of business investment, declining property prices and difficulty in attracting and retaining key public sector personnel such as teachers (Hastings & Dean 2003; Hastings 2004; Kearns et al. 2013). Residents themselves may also suffer from the tarnish of stigma by encountering discrimination in the employment market (Bauder 2002).

In examining the process through which stigma arises, researchers have highlighted the role of the media in perpetuating and reinforcing negative images of neighbourhoods through selective and excessive reporting of negative events at the expense of more positive stories



(Palmer et al. 2005; Kearns et al. 2013). Yet, residents themselves have also been shown to internalise and reinforce negative images of their neighbourhoods, rather than necessarily rejecting them outright. For example, in their study of young adults in disadvantaged areas, MacDonald et al. (2005) observe how the experience of social exclusion can become every day, widespread and normalised for young people, while Wacquant (2010) demonstrates how residents manage stigma by acknowledging its presence but applying it to other groups or areas in their neighbourhood rather than to themselves.

## **2.3 Mobility and entrapment**

A final point to consider in conceptualising disadvantage in the spatial context is to avoid the tendency to view disadvantaged areas as bounded containers characterised by fixity and stability where people become trapped. Hulse and Pinnegar (2014) point to the empirical and conceptual reality of mobility—particularly as it relates to the dynamics of the housing market—as a way of contesting the assumption that people inevitably get stuck in disadvantaged areas. Following Castells (1996), they argue that neighbourhoods are not just ‘spaces of places’ in which people share common experiences by virtue of living in the same (disadvantaged) area, but are also ‘spaces of flows’ whereby localities are connected to other places and are subject to the daily and migratory movement of people, ideas and information. People move around for housing, jobs, family, education, access to services and social connections, such that mobility in one domain (e.g. housing) intersects with, and has implications for, mobility in another (e.g. employment).

Empirically, the above argument is based on the relatively high levels of mobility in Australian cities compared to international contexts, which are linked to the high proportion of households living in private rental housing and the greater propensity for mobility in this sector. Hulse and Pinnegar (2014) also outline the way that migration intersects with housing markets to produce particular patterns of mobility and disadvantage in Australian cities, pointing out that 70 per cent of new migrants move into the private rental sector, at least in the beginning of their residency. There is a long-established correlation between those places exhibiting high levels of disadvantage and those that attract recent migrants.

This emphasis on residential mobility, particularly around housing markets, informs the current research in several ways. First, it raises further empirical questions over where and why people move to particular (disadvantaged) areas and the effects of their mobility on access to services, social networks and employment, as well as upon their sense of stability and wellbeing.

Second, as outlined above, the very fact of residential mobility, even in disadvantaged areas, requires us to interrogate the assumption that people become trapped in such places. Robson et al. (2008), for example, have identified how some disadvantaged areas can function as ‘transit’ or ‘escalator’ neighbourhoods where people move in as part of their progression to a ‘better’ area, or as ‘improver’ neighbourhoods that attract in-movers from less-deprived areas and become partially gentrified in the process.

Third, and importantly, there is the obvious point that mobility is an unequal resource to which not everyone has access (Skeggs 2004). At the least, mobility can be constrained, as is often the case for social housing tenants who may become ‘stuck in place’ by housing allocation processes and long waiting lists that give them few opportunities to move elsewhere. But mobility can also be involuntary where choices only exist between a limited range of (undesirable) options. The extent to which mobility between suburbs that are equally or more deprived represents a form of entrapment is captured by Robson et al.’s (2008 p.2698) concept of ‘isolate areas’: ‘neighbourhoods that are associated with the degree of entrapment of poor households who are unable to break out of living in deprived areas’. In other words, mobility and entrapment are not mutually exclusive. Instead, their relationship is mediated in important ways by the roles that different localities play ‘in the sorting mechanism of different households’

(Robson et al. 2008, p.2694) and in the subjective experiences of residents as they relate to a sense of being trapped. Hulse and Pinnegar (2014) make a similar point about the confluence of mobility and entrapment, particularly for those in the private rental sector, observing that with flexibility of tenure comes instability and involuntary mobility. These issues of mobility, agency and entrapment, and the relationship between them, are explored later in the case study analysis.

Finally, and related to this, are the potential impacts of mobility in transit or escalator suburbs when the socially mobile leave disadvantaged areas, but are succeeded by poorer populations moving in. Otherwise known as 'selective migration', this often means that even when there is social mobility, the dynamics of an area as a whole remain unchanged or worsen. In their study of selective migration in Swedish suburbs, Andersson and Bråmås (2004) also make the observation that area-based interventions for addressing disadvantage can unintentionally contribute to this process because it is often unclear whether they are designed to improve the profile and position of the areas themselves, or the social and economic position of (certain groups of) residents within them. As a result, they argue that it is quite possible for well-meaning policy initiatives to sustain neighbourhood-level disadvantage and for otherwise dynamic and relatively unstable neighbourhoods to display considerable *structural* stability in the reproduction of place-based disadvantage over time.

Writing from a different geographic context, however, Maloutas (2004) argues that social mobility does not necessarily lead to residential mobility if upwardly mobile groups elect to stay in their resident neighbourhood. Maloutas illustrates his point with reference to the city of Athens where he observes how family ties act as a means of 'spatial entrapment' (2004, p.207) by preventing upwardly mobile family members from leaving their native area:

... upwardly mobile working class offspring do not usually leave their native area, mostly because of kinship ties and family networks on which they depend. These ties still remain the most influential factor in households' choice of residential location, especially for the lower middle-class and the working class. (2004, p.203)

In Athens, a city with relatively low residential mobility, the contribution of what Maloutas terms 'endogenous' social mobility in fostering residential segregation is seen to be significant. However, Maloutas recognises that these findings may not be internationally applicable, suggesting that housing markets and the distribution of services and infrastructure are likely to be more important in shaping the patterning of advantage and disadvantage across cities than the presence of socially or residentially mobile households. While this proposition cannot be tested in this study, Maloutas' work reminds us to consider social mobility alongside residential mobility as possible factors driving residential change, especially in areas inhabited by particular ethnic groups for whom family ties and obligations remain especially influential.

### **3 A TYPOLOGY OF SOCIO-SPATIAL DISADVANTAGE IN AUSTRALIA**

A key premise of this project has been that if policy-makers are to address the problems of disadvantaged areas effectively, there needs to be better understanding of the complexity of both the spatial distribution of disadvantage across the urban landscape and the nature and diversity of localities where disadvantaged populations are clustered (Pinnegar et al. 2011). Only if the spatial pattern of concentrated disadvantage is fully understood, together with its diverse manifestations, can policy-makers target and tailor interventions effectively. Measuring, mapping and classifying disadvantaged areas thus becomes paramount.

The main thrust of the current study, in its initial stages, was to develop a typology of socio-spatial disadvantage in Australia to capture the diversity of disadvantage and the ways that multiple components (e.g. housing, ethnic diversity, age profiles and employment rates) collectively work to produce different forms and expressions of disadvantage across the city. The overarching questions driving the development of the typology reflected these aims:

- What is the geography of poverty across the cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane?
- How can we understand and capture the heterogeneity of disadvantaged areas?

The design and methodology of the typology has been documented in detail in the separately published AHURI Final Report generated by the current study (Hulse et al. 2014). Focusing on Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, this proceeded in two main steps: the identification of disadvantaged places and the classification of these places. Given the central significance of this analysis in framing the case study work reported in Chapters 5–9, these steps are summarised below.

#### **3.1 Classifying disadvantaged suburbs according to the spatial concentration of disadvantaged people**

Using the ABS-defined suburb as the unit of analysis, the first step in the process was to identify cohorts of disadvantaged suburbs in the three cities. This involved the use of the ABS SEIFA Index of Relative Disadvantage and the selection of localities where more than 50 per cent of all component collection districts (CDs) were identified by SEIFA as being most disadvantaged (i.e. in the lowest quintile of SEIFA ranked CDs, nationally) according to the 2006 census (the most recent available data at the time of the analysis). In total, 146 such suburbs were identified across the three cities—77 in Sydney, 45 in Melbourne and 24 in Brisbane. In all three cities it was found that these suburbs contained the majority of all disadvantaged CDs, which indicated some spatial clustering of disadvantage. After some refinement of the methodology, this figure was revised to 177 suburbs.

The next stage involved development of the typology. One option would have been to impose a deductive framework—employing prior knowledge to define a set of hypothesised ‘ideal type’ functional area categories (e.g. drawing on classifications developed in previous studies). These area type categories would have been operationalised through the identification and use of relevant socio-economic/housing market indicators available at a suitable spatial scale. Instead, however, we opted for an inductive model—assembling relevant variables at the suburb level and subjecting this to statistical analysis in the expectation that this would reveal distinct ‘clusters’ or areas with common combinations of values on specific variables. Approaching the typologising task in this way could be termed ‘letting the data speak’. While consideration was given to a more ‘theory-led approach’ this was considered less appropriate given the relatively under-developed state of knowledge about the spatial manifestation of disadvantage in such settings.

Under our inductive model, relevant socio-economic data for all identified ‘disadvantaged suburbs’ were subject to a cluster analysis to reveal distinct suburb types sharing similar socio-economic characteristics. The 14 specific indicators used for this process were selected to embody three dimensions: social/residential mobility (Dimension A); lifecycle stage/family type (Dimension B); and change over time in socio-economic status (Dimension C). With two of the 177 suburbs needing to be eliminated from the analysis as ‘outliers’, this produced four suburb groupings distributed across the three cities as shown in Table 1 below.

The distinguishing features of each typology category are outlined in the next section.

**Table 1: Summary of typology distribution**

Suburb typology category	Sydney		Melbourne		Brisbane		All	
	No. of suburbs	Pop. (000s)	No. of suburbs	Pop. (000s)	No. of suburbs	Pop. (000s)	No. of suburbs	Pop. (000s)
Type 1	13	49	-	-	1	2	14	51
Type 2	48	534	25	388	-	-	73	923
Type 3	13	68	2	17	11	43	26	128
Type 4	15	106	23	261	24	184	62	550
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>757</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>1,652</b>

Source: Hulse et al. 2014

Note: Total populations may not match sum due to rounding.

### 3.2 Disadvantaged area typology refinement through housing market analysis

Having established the basic disadvantaged area typology as outlined above, the resulting framework was then subjected to an in-depth analysis of housing markets in the three cities (see Hulse et al. 2014). Focusing on both house sales and rental markets, and incorporating a 2001–2011 change over time analysis, this exercise looked to compare and contrast market performance in disadvantaged areas with the remainder of the greater metropolitan areas (GMAs) of the ‘parent cities’ concerned. Through this analysis (see Hulse et al. 2014) it was found that—paralleling their socio-economic diversity—each of our disadvantaged suburb types could be broadly distinguished in terms of distinctive housing market features.

### 3.3 Disadvantaged suburbs typology in socio-economic and housing market terms

Table 2 below summarises the key distinguishing *socio-economic* characteristics of each typology cohort and, alongside these, shows the *housing market-related* labels subsequently ‘mapped onto’ each category. Importantly, it should be emphasised that the cluster analysis technique defined each disadvantaged suburb as regards a basket of 14 distinct socio-economic indicators. Not every suburb classed within a particular category necessarily conformed to every ‘distinguishing characteristic’ among the limited number highlighted in column 2 of Table 2.

**Table 2: Disadvantaged suburbs typology in socio-economic and housing market terms**

	<b>Distinguishing socio-economic characteristics</b>	<b>Housing market designation</b>
Type 1	High on young people and single-parent households	“isolate” suburbs’—High social rental; median sales prices and rents far below city-wide norms
Type 2	High on overseas movers	‘lower price suburbs’—Relatively affordable house prices and distinct low rent market
Type 3	High on residential mobility but low on overseas movers, high on older people	“marginal” suburbs’—Markets detached by distance from mainstream markets; high concentration of low sales prices and rents
Type 4	High on overseas movers, high on reduced unemployment and incidence of low status jobs	‘dynamic “improver” suburbs’—Sales prices and rents moving rapidly towards city-wide norms

Sources: Column 2—authors; Column 3—Hulse et al. 2014

As shown in Table 1 above, ‘isolate’ suburbs are largely limited to Sydney. Across the three cities, ‘lower priced’ and ‘improver’ suburbs are the most common although ‘lower priced’ suburbs are absent in Brisbane. They are the spatially most distinctive suburbs, generally located in peripheral areas, possibly associated with the location of low-cost housing in these areas.

### *3.3.1 Type 1. ‘isolate’ suburbs: high on young people and single-parent households; high on social renting*

In housing market terms, ‘isolate’ suburbs are located in the outer metropolitan areas where access to resources such as employment opportunities and transportation is limited. In effect, they are a distinct low-rent market, comprising almost only lowest quartile rentals. They are highly associated with the incidence of social housing, both in terms of scale and location, with 42 per cent of householders in the Sydney ‘isolate’ suburbs being public or community housing tenants. This makes them vulnerable to the impacts of government policies of housing renewal, redevelopment and re-sale, an observation reflected in the decline of public housing in the Sydney ‘isolate’ suburbs from the 2001 figure of 46 per cent. These areas have relatively low rates of home ownership and private rental, although the latter had increased significantly in the decade to 2011. In terms of housing stock, such areas have very high rates of single detached houses (83% for Sydney ‘isolate’ suburbs compared to 61% for the city more generally).

Of all disadvantaged suburbs, isolate areas exhibited residential turnover rates which were not only strikingly low, but which had fallen substantially in the 2001–2011 period. A major factor here will have been the ‘silting up’ of social housing, as the ever more disadvantaged cohort of newly housed tenants are some of those with least capacity for onward voluntary moves, a factor exacerbated by the widening gap between social housing and private rentals. However, even within their private rental markets, ‘isolate’ suburbs have a low turnover rate, suggesting disproportionate occupancy by families who are traditionally less mobile than other household types. As well as linking with the high proportion of administratively controlled dwellings, the ‘isolate’ label applied to Type 1 suburb housing markets also refers to the very low house prices; these areas indicating a disconnection with mainstream markets.

### *3.3.2 Type 2. ‘lower priced’ suburbs: high on overseas movers*

Typically, ‘lower priced’ (disadvantaged) suburbs have somewhat higher rates of private rental and a higher percentage of social rental than the cities in which they are located. Correspondingly, they tend to have lower rates of home ownership. Reflecting national trends,

these suburbs have also experienced a sharp decrease in outright home ownership, an associated (albeit lower) rise in home purchase and a greater rise in private rental. These suburbs have a relatively high incidence of affordable one to two bedroom 'other' dwellings (i.e. attached houses and flats).

'Lower priced' suburbs have relatively low levels of residential mobility; levels which also declined markedly during the decade to 2011, particularly in Sydney. This may have resulted from home owners in such areas (especially those living in 'other dwellings' in Sydney) facing greater difficulties in moving to other suburbs due to price differentials.

### *3.3.3 Type 3. 'marginal' suburbs: high on residential mobility but low on overseas movers; high on older people; high on private rental; high on outright home ownership*

'Marginal' suburbs have been identified as existing at the urban periphery and thus somewhat disconnected from mainstream housing markets. As a result, they can be understood as being 'marginal'. They tend to have relatively high rates of outright ownership and private rental, a tenure that grew disproportionately in the decade to 2011. The geographic location of 'marginal' suburbs at the fringes of cities suggests they may be attractive to households priced out of city markets or influenced by 'sea change' or 'tree change' motivations.

Of the four disadvantaged suburb types, marginal areas had the highest rates of residential mobility, probably associated with their private rental markets. However, home owners in 'marginal' suburbs also showed relatively high rates of residential mobility. This may be due to demographic change, along with households moving from 'mainstream' city housing markets to buy more affordable housing available in such areas. The factors behind this shift may relate to a lack of affordability in mainstream housing markets; a desire to cash in on the equity accrued from a house in a mainstream city housing market by moving to a cheaper area; or the pursuit of a different lifestyle in a 'fringe' area. In the private rental market, 'marginal' suburbs were the only one of the four disadvantaged suburb types where median rents had not moved closer to city means between 2001 and 2011.

### *3.3.4 Type 4. 'improver' suburbs: high on overseas movers; high on reduced unemployment and on reduced incidence of low status jobs*

'Improver' (disadvantaged) suburbs are generally well-located, established residential areas. They are particularly important in Brisbane where they account for 76 per cent of all households living in disadvantaged suburbs. They are distinguished from 'lower priced' suburbs' partly by the extent of tenure diversity, but also for the general tendency for house price convergence with city-wide norms. Again, they show significant increases in private rental (along with a small decline in social rental), which may indicate that rental investment is a key driver of housing market change. In housing market terms, then, they are the most dynamic in terms of housing market change and can be termed 'improver' suburbs.

These suburbs had turnover rates that were higher than those found in 'lower priced' suburbs, but lower than in 'marginal' suburbs. Their relatively lower decreases in turnover from 2001 to 2011 are due largely to the increase in (relatively mobile) private rental.

## 4 CASE STUDY AREA SELECTION AND FIELDWORK METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Case study area selection

The typology of disadvantaged areas sensitises us to the diversity of disadvantage found in urban Australia, but it also requires empirical testing or ‘groundtruthing’ in order to assess its utility as a heuristic device. Partly in order to achieve this, six case study sites were selected for detailed empirical study and comparison: two in each of the three capital cities covered by the study.

Case study selection was framed by the area typology. Each disadvantaged suburb type was to be represented by at least one case study area, with ‘lower priced’ suburbs (Type 2) and ‘improver’ suburbs (Type 4)—the most strongly represented types—to be represented by two chosen places in different states.

The selection process began by short-listing from the overall population of 177 disadvantaged suburbs to form a smaller sub-group of ‘eligible areas’. This was achieved through a sampling framework prioritising ‘extreme values’ (Flyvbjerg 2006), which involved restricting consideration to those suburbs with the greatest levels of disadvantage. The rationale for this approach was that selecting areas with more ‘extreme values’ in respect to the distinguishing characteristics of each typology category would be more likely to capture the essence of what differentiates the suburb from those in different categories.

To operationalise this, the 177 suburbs were subject to a new SEIFA analysis to identify those with at least 50 per cent of CDs falling into the lowest decile (rather than quintile) of national distribution. This reduced the number of eligible areas to 68. This cohort was then subject to a second process of analysis to identify those with the most extreme values in relation to the census variables noted as distinctive for each suburb type (see Hulse et al. 2014 for more detail). The resulting 18 suburbs, and their distribution by state, are listed in Table 3.

**Table 3: Disadvantaged suburbs (2006 SEIFA decile threshold): areas with ‘extreme values’ on one or more variables differentiating their respective typology category**

	Typology category			
	1	2	3	4
Sydney	Airds, (Bidwill), Claymore, (Emerton)	Auburn, Wiley Park	The Entrance, Canton Beach, Ettalong Beach	Warwick Farm, Miller, Watanobbi
Melbourne	–	Dandenong South, Meadow Heights (Springvale)	–	Braybrook, Eumemmerring
Brisbane	Carole Park	–	Booval, (Russell Island), (Bongaree)	Logan Central, Riverview

Source: Hulse et al. 2014

The suburbs in parentheses were added as substitutes from the shortlist of 68 after local knowledge and stakeholder consultation had determined that there were valid reasons for excluding from consideration some of those 18 areas originally identified. Acutely aware of the need to avoid participant fatigue in some areas recently subject to intensive evaluation and similar studies, suburbs deemed ‘over-researched’ were removed from the selection. The ‘over-researched’ suburbs removed were Airds and Claymore in Sydney and Dandenong South in Melbourne. Consideration was also given to the possible impact of localised events on specific areas, which were likely to have more explanatory value in accounting for their

trajectory and socio-economic composition than general processes of disadvantage and housing market functioning. This was particularly the case in the Brisbane suburbs of Riverview and Booval, which had experienced widespread flooding in 2011. Finally, any suburbs with a small population (less than 2000 people), such as Carole Park (Brisbane) and Eumemmerring (Melbourne), were also removed.

The final selection of case study areas, by state and suburb type, thus took the following form (see Table 4). Particularly valuable in terms of groundtruthing was the opportunity presented to compare circumstances in places classed by the typology framework as ‘similar’ (i.e. the two ‘lower priced’ suburbs and the two ‘improver’ suburbs).

**Table 4: Final selection of case study areas**

	Typology category			
	1	2	3	4
Sydney	Emerton	Auburn		
Melbourne		Springvale		Braybrook
Brisbane			Russell Island	Logan Central

Source: Hulse et al 2014

## 4.2 Case study methodology

### 4.2.1 Overview

In developing a suitable methodology for the case study research, it was important to strike a balance between maintaining consistency across the six sites on the one hand, and being sensitive to the individual contexts and experiences of each place on the other. This balance was achieved through the use of standardised techniques for generating data that were flexible enough to allow each case study team to purposively select research participants and questions most relevant to the individual site. An overarching set of research questions guided the inquiry but, again, allowed the teams to focus on issues specific to each locality.

Data were generated using the same set of five methods in each site:

- Desk top review of data, documents and media reports.
- Introductory meeting with case study main contact.
- Interviews with local stakeholders and community representatives.
- Focus group discussions with local residents.
- Interviews with state-level actors and policy-makers.

Each of the above elements is explained in more detail below.

### 4.2.2 Groundtruthing

While the practice of groundtruthing in the natural sciences involves the collection of field data to verify otherwise hypothetical and abstract models or images, its application to qualitative data is a little more problematic when social life is understood as being subjectively defined and research understood as an act of interpretation. As a result, it was not expected that stakeholders would necessarily identify with the ‘objective’ classification of their locality, since one of the tenets of this project has been that experiences of disadvantage are diverse and that different individuals may experience disadvantage in different ways. Rather, the purpose of the groundtruthing exercise was twofold. First, as a way of discerning whether participants saw the locality as disadvantaged in the same terms as objective classifications or whether they understand it differently (and if so, how). Second, the groundtruthing exercise enabled us to examine how residents and stakeholders engage with external classifications of place and



disadvantage by rejecting or refuting them, by accounting for them in particular ways, or by appropriating features which assisted them as they lobbied for more resources and funding.

#### 4.2.3 *Desk top review of data, documents and media reports*

Background data were collected and analysed for each of the six localities as a way of orienting the research teams to the case study sites and the key issues of inquiry. An area profile was created using comparable disadvantage indicators, as well as other socio-demographic census variables. This included both 2011 values and 2001 values to illustrate changes over time. The census analysis was supplemented with a thematic review of key documents relating to each area (and sourced online) with a view to identifying specific concerns and perceptions around disadvantage in the case study areas on the part of local stakeholder organisations and community members. The review aimed to identify any recent local events with implications for levels of disadvantage or policy responses; stakeholder organisations and representatives who might be included as research participants; and recent, present or planned policies or programs potentially relevant to addressing disadvantage in a place-focused manner. Key sources of data for this desktop review included:

- ABS census community profiles including social mix, tenure mix and types of home ownership, along with changes over time.
- Detailed maps showing the socio-economic geography of the place including transport infrastructure (major roads, rail lines, etc.) that may serve to divide communities.
- Material on the local history of the place including its history of disadvantage.
- Local and national media reports pertaining to popular representations of the case study area and key events that relate to questions of disadvantage (In all cases, the media review spanned the period 2004 to 2013 and included the national newspaper *The Australian* as well as the major metropolitan newspapers for each city (*The Courier Mail* for Brisbane; *The Age* and *The Herald Sun* for Melbourne; and *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Daily Telegraph* for Sydney). Television and radio news broadcasts, as well as selected news and information programs on the ABC and commercial television channels, such as *A Current Affair*, *7.30* and *Today Tonight* were also included).
- Documents and websites from local government; state government departments such as those responsible for issues of housing, planning or communities; relevant regional organisations such as Regional Development Associations; and relevant social service and housing providers, non-government organisations, taskforces, and other not-for-profit organisations. These documents were reviewed for information on the challenges facing the local areas, their histories and details of local strategies for issues such as crime control, social inclusion, housing and community renewal.
- Reports and publications from academic, policy and practitioner research, including previous AHURI projects.

#### 4.2.4 *Introductory meeting with local council main contact*

As an introduction to local issues and for informed advice on local key players, each tranche of case study fieldwork began by identifying and meeting with a key contact in the relevant local authority. In all cases, this was a local officer from the local council. These meetings were conducted as an interview and covered the same questions that were directed at other stakeholders. They are included in the total number of interviews identified below.

#### 4.2.5 *Interviews with local stakeholders*

As well as helping to groundtruth the spatial typology, the interviews served two key functions. First, to understand, from a local perspective, the nature of area-based disadvantage, its causes, manifestations and effects. Second, to help identify the principal interventions adopted for addressing disadvantage in each locality, how they are enacted in particular places, and

local views on their effectiveness. In addition, they also worked to facilitate stakeholder interest and engagement in the broader project, and to foster new relationships and collaborations between the research teams and the communities in which they work.

While stakeholder participant selection was necessarily guided by local conditions, this occurred within an overarching framework that operated across each of the six case study sites and specified the categories of stakeholders who should be included while leaving the final selection of specific actors within each group to the individual research teams. Approximately 10 interviews were planned for each site with representatives from among the following stakeholder groups:

- Local government community development, social planning and economic development departments.
- Housing providers and managers—both state government and community housing providers, as well as real estate agents.
- The business sector (e.g. local Chamber of Commerce).
- Local police (e.g. local area commander, community liaison officer, PCYC).
- Education sector (local secondary school or similar).
- Non-government/community sector organisations working in the locality.
- Local amenity groups/community associations.

In total, 61 stakeholder interviews were conducted across the six sites (seven in Auburn, 12 in Emerton, 11 in Russell Island, 12 in Logan Central, eight in Braybrook and 11 in Springvale). The mix of participating interviewees varied from area to area, partly influenced by the need to tailor local approaches to specific local issues, but also because not all invited participants were able or willing to engage. In line with university ethics obligations, prior to interviewing, participants were sent the project information statement and informed consent form. Most interviews were conducted individually although in some cases two or three stakeholders participated in a group interview. Generally, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, with only a few participants preferring otherwise. A copy of the interview schedule is provided in Appendix 1.

#### *4.2.6 Interviews with state actors and policy-makers*

In recognition of the key role of state governments in fields such as housing, policing and strategic planning, a small number of interviews were conducted with departmental personnel in appropriate government departments in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. In total, eight state government interviews were conducted (three in Brisbane, three in Melbourne and two in Sydney). These were also audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

#### *4.2.7 Resident focus groups*

In addition to some individual interviews with ‘community spokespersons’, resident focus group meetings were held in all six case studies, with between six and 14 participants taking part in each instance. Focus group recruitment was targeted on ‘ordinary residents’ rather than particularly on ‘engaged citizens’. While it was aimed at achieving a diverse set of participants (e.g. in terms of age group and ethnicity), it was recognised that strict representativeness was an unrealistic aspiration because of the purposive/volunteer sampling framework. Recruitment was progressed with the assistance of community organisations or the local council who either recommended specific people the researchers might contact, organised a mail out to residents or sent e-mails to community organisations seeking resident participation on behalf of the research team. Nevertheless, some diversity was captured in the age, sex and residential tenure of participants and—in all but one suburb (Russell Island)—ethnic background.

Reflecting the demographic of Russell Island as overwhelmingly White Anglo-Saxon, there were no other ethnic groups represented in this focus group.

The focus groups were organised around a number of broad topics for discussion (see Appendix 2), including perceptions and experiences of disadvantage and the presence of disadvantaged social groups in the locality; perceptions of community change; sense of community and attachment to place; problems experienced, such as crime, poor service provision and a lack of transport; the experience of stigmatisation derived from living in a disadvantaged area; and awareness of any policy interventions that had occurred in the area. All participants were compensated for their time via payment of a \$50 voucher and all focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed.

In terms of the data generated, it is important to acknowledge that interviewees' accounts are not objective truths based on empirical realities, but subjective interpretations drawn from the experiences, perspectives and motivations of specific actors elicited in an interview or focus group setting. Despite this caveat, the views of the stakeholders collectively provided a coherent, although by no means complete, picture of the issues and challenges facing each area despite the relatively small size of the sample in each site. Comparison across case study sites also provide additional analytic rigour in the analysis of these data.

### **4.3 Ethical considerations**

Ethical clearance for the project was granted by the ethics committees of the three participating universities. Aside from these procedural matters, there were other ongoing ethical concerns that informed the research process, both during the fieldwork stage and in the process of incorporating participants' accounts into the research report.

The first was informed consent, which was addressed by ensuring that participants were fully aware of the nature of the research and their role within it, and by inviting them to confirm their informed consent prior to an interview or focus group. Second, was the practice of maintaining participants' confidentiality and anonymity. It is common practice in social research for this to be managed through the removal of any identifying features and descriptors from participants' accounts, including names and titles, and their substitution with pseudonyms or generic labels. In this case, the latter strategy was selected and all participants are referenced in this report through ten general categories: local government officer; state housing provider; state or federal government officer; not-for-profit housing provider; education/training provider; police/justice; NGO community worker/service provider; industry/commerce; community representative (including local councillors); and resident.

It was recognised, however, that even this practice may not be adequate in preserving the identities of participants who are readily identifiable in a local community by virtue of the positions they hold—especially when the number of people holding such a position is limited (e.g. a community housing provider or a local government officer). Rather than provide assurances of privacy that may be breached, therefore, it was considered more appropriate to inform participants of these potential risks of identification and to encourage them only to disclose information that they were happy to treat as public.

Second, it was appreciated that, in investigating 'concentrations of disadvantage' and categorising suburbs according to a typology of disadvantage, there was a risk of contributing to negative labelling processes and reinforcing unhelpful stereotypes already in circulation. We sought to address this through an emphasis on the lived experience of residing in a disadvantaged place as much as on the structural indicators of disadvantage imposed by others. In focusing on the experiences and voices of residents and other local stakeholders, we sought to provide opportunities for alternative narratives of place to emerge in the research and demonstrated the ways in which experiences of disadvantage might be mediated by individual circumstances and strategies without resorting to pathologising explanations.

In practical and ethical terms, this was also reflected in how the research was presented to participants. It was important to explain to participants that places had been selected for investigation on the basis of well-known indicators of disadvantage (e.g. the incidence of low income and unemployment which inform SEIFA rankings) but that we were more interested in looking behind these external referents to examine how residents understand and experience the places in which they live, and to assess which government policies and programs are seen to be effective. We also emphasised that we were not studying disadvantaged *people*, but that individuals had been selected for inclusion in the project because they lived in the selected locality (see Bashir et al. 2009 for a similar discussion on this issue). This appeared well understood and participants were willing to engage with narratives of disadvantage as they applied to their locality although they were often also critical of the stereotypes attached to the place by outsiders, which they tended to see as imposed by those lacking a full appreciation of the area's positive features.

## **4.4 Introduction to the case study areas**

### **4.4.1 Type 1: 'isolate' suburbs**

#### **Emerton, New South Wales**

Emerton is one of a group of suburbs that make up the Mount Druitt area of Western Sydney, approximately 45 kilometres from the Sydney CBD. In practice, since Emerton is a relatively small spatial unit in area and population terms (2011 population: 2393) within a larger area with a fairly strong common identity, much of the case study work relates to Mount Druitt more generally rather than to Emerton specifically. Administratively, Mount Druitt lies within Blacktown City Council, the third largest local government unit in Australia by population. For the purpose of this study, the area is generally taken to refer to the 11 suburbs of Bidwill, Blakett, Dharruk, Emerton, Hebersham, Lethbridge Park, Mount Druitt, Shalvey, Tregear, Whalan and Willmot. Importantly, eight of the ten localities other than Emerton are socio-economically similar to Emerton in terms of (a) falling within our definition of 'disadvantaged suburbs' (at least 50% of CDs in lowest decile of national SEIFA ranking) and (b) being classified as 'isolate' disadvantaged suburbs in terms of their socio-demographic characteristics.

Originally developed by the New South Wales Government in the 1960s and 1970s as a very large public housing estate (8000 homes), Mount Druitt lies on the outer fringe of the Sydney metropolitan area. While initially intended to cater for working families rather than specifically for disadvantaged people, Mount Druitt was identified from the start as a low status locality with many residents experiencing 'entrenched hardship'. The area was immortalised as such in Mark Peel's seminal work on socially stressed outer metropolitan areas, *The lowest rung: voices of Australian poverty* (Peel 2003). While it has become somewhat more demographically and economically diverse over time, Mount Druitt remains one of Sydney's most disadvantaged areas and struggles to shed its historic image as a 'problematic place'. Yet this is clearly far from the reality of life in the area for most residents. For some, nevertheless, the area imposes significant 'costs' through its stigmatisation and other more concrete aspects of place disadvantage.

### **4.4.2 Type 2: 'lower priced' suburbs**

#### **Auburn, New South Wales**

Auburn is a middle-ring suburb in Sydney located approximately 17 kilometres west of the Sydney CBD. It is located within the Local Government Area of Auburn and the Level 3 Statistical Area (SA3) of Auburn. In 2011, the Auburn suburb had a population of 33 125 residents. Auburn's role as a culturally diverse gateway suburb for recent migrants (including humanitarian refugees) is evident in that only 32 per cent of its 2011 population was born in Australia (compared to 60% across the greater Sydney metropolitan area). Auburn has seen

many waves of new migrants since the post-World War II period, partly as a result of housing affordability, but also in response to the provision of a range of cultural, community and commercial services that cater to the needs of particular ethnic groups.

Auburn is a dynamic suburb, experiencing considerable growth and with a mobile population. It is a relatively advantaged place in terms of access to transport and services and these features attract a relatively disadvantaged population. The main concern regarding disadvantage in Auburn is housing affordability, especially in the private rental market, as a result of the high demand for housing from people looking to move into the area, which has not been matched either by the supply of private housing or of affordable or social housing. There is, therefore, a tendency for residents to move out of the area to suburbs further west as a result of these housing constraints although they often return to Auburn to shop, visit places of worship or use community services. The desirability of Auburn as a location for new arrivals to Australia and the associated population growth is likely to continue to put pressure on housing and service provision, with Auburn Council and other service providers being challenged to keep up with the pace of both population growth and change.

### **Springvale, Victoria**

Springvale is a Melbourne suburb located approximately 23 kilometres south-east of the CBD. Administratively, Springvale lies within the City of Greater Dandenong, which has the lowest ranked SEIFA Index of Disadvantage of any local government area in Victoria. Of the eight suburbs comprising the City of Greater Dandenong (Dandenong, Dandenong North, Dandenong South, Keysborough, Noble Park, Noble Park North, Springvale and Springvale South), Springvale is the second least disadvantaged suburb. The private housing estates built at Springvale in the 1950s and 1960s are emblematic of the optimism of the post-World War II era, and reflected the booming industrial growth in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Australian-born home purchasers moved from established areas while migrants arrived from Britain and Europe attracted to the vibrant manufacturing in the area. Since the 1970s, it has also become a destination for refugee groups from the rest of the world.

In the 1990s, the region was heavily impacted by the decline of manufacturing, resulting in significant job losses among blue collar workers, of which a large proportion were of non-English speaking backgrounds. This economic restructuring is seen as a major reason for persistently high levels of long-term unemployment. The 1990s was also a period of street drug dealing in central Springvale, which was deeply associated with the contemporary influx of Vietnamese migrants. Negative aspects of Springvale's reputation largely stem from this period, although the drug issue is no longer viewed by local people as problematic. Indeed, the reputation Springvale developed as an undesirable place to live following the 1990s decline of local manufacturing has evolved into a celebration of diverse local food and cultures. House prices have also increased in recent years relative to city medians; public transport continues to be readily accessible and is being improved; and many residents profess pride in their community. Much of this is founded on years of consolidated grass-roots responses to community needs, most notably accommodating newly arrived migrants in the area. Also stemming from this is the high level of community cohesion and acceptance of diversity among residents.

#### **4.4.3 Type 3: 'marginal' suburbs**

### **Russell Island, Queensland**

Russell Island is among a group of islands known as the Southern Moreton Bay Islands located off the coast of South East Queensland in the Moreton Bay Marine Park some 43 kilometres from Brisbane CBD. It is administered by the Redland City Council (formerly the Shire of Redland) while the Quandamooka people hold Native Title over the waters of Moreton Bay and the land within. With a 2011 population of 2475, it is the largest of the Southern Moreton Bay Islands; the others being Lamb, Macleay and Karragarra. Together, the four

islands represent the second largest offshore island communities in Australia, largely serving an older, retired demographic. They have a 2011 population of 5630, representing a 33 per cent growth since 2006 (Redland City Council 2013). On Russell Island, residential development is largely concentrated around the northern and southern ends of the island, although most of the limited services are located in the northern end near the ferry terminal. While the island has a supermarket, pharmacy, cafe, doctor's surgery, primary school and other such provisions to meet residents' daily needs, access to all other health, recreational and commercial services requires a ferry trip of approximately 20 minutes to the mainland. Employment on the island is also limited, with most employed residents commuting off the island for work.

With high levels of unemployment, particularly among young people; high levels of housing stress; an above average proportion of households on low income; poor learning outcomes for a significant majority of school children; and a stigmatised identity, Russell Island is well recognised as a place of disadvantage. Yet, in many ways, Russell Island bucks the trend of how disadvantaged places have traditionally been conceived. To begin with, it has a coastal location, offering residents an increasingly rare opportunity for sea change living within an hour's commuting time from the metropolitan centre of Brisbane. Further, it contains no social housing, but features high, albeit declining, levels of home ownership. Third, the population is generally homogenous and of Western background, while pockets of considerable affluence can also be discerned. It is a place characterised by mobility and growth as people arrive, attracted by comparatively low rents, only to find that services are minimal, employment is difficult and travel is expensive. But for those who choose to retire there or to commute for work while enjoying an island lifestyle, it is an attractive place that is rich in social capital and strong in community spirit. These diverging experiences of the island appear to be creating a socially polarised locality as the community divides into those with resources and opportunities and those without.

#### *4.4.4 Type 4: 'improver' suburbs*

##### **Braybrook, Victoria**

Braybrook is a suburb in Melbourne's inner west, approximately nine kilometres from the CBD, with a 2011 population of 8181. Administratively, Braybrook lies within Maribyrnong City Council. While originally a public housing estate to accommodate manufacturing in nearby Sunshine, the proportion of public housing stock has reduced over many decades to its current 18 per cent. The suburb's image as a rough working class community has informed a later reputation associated with the growth in unemployment following de-industrialisation in the 1990s, increasing welfare dependency and marginalisation. Although much diminished by 2000, remaining public housing contained more highly disadvantaged households thanks to allocations from policy changes targeting households with the highest needs. With a relatively cheap housing market, and reflecting the proportion of public housing, Braybrook has also attracted new arrivals including refugees, adding to its diversity. As a result of these changes Braybrook is often compared, unfairly, to Sydney's Macquarie Fields' public housing estate, which was described as a 'failed social experiment' after a riot in 2005 (McKenna 2005). While Braybrook's negative reputation has exaggerated local problems, its low socio-economic status and concerns about marginalisation have ensured on-going policy interventions.

Braybrook is in the midst of transition, changing from being a 'forgotten' site of manufacturing decline to being one in which a great deal of change, development and infrastructure and housing investment is taking place. It is an area that has received a relatively large amount of public policy intervention toward revitalisation after a long period of very little investment in any public infrastructure and private disinvestment. There is ready access to the rest of the Melbourne metropolitan area and local business and shopping hubs on bus routes and other public transport; there are schools in the area; and a variety of long-standing and recently

emerging services are apparent. Many of these have responded to the needs of new arrivals from overseas.

### **Logan Central, Queensland**

Logan Central is an outer-ring suburb in Brisbane, located within the Local Government Area of Logan City approximately 20 kilometres south of the Brisbane CBD. Formerly part of the suburb of Woodridge, Logan Central is a mixed-use suburb and the administrative centre of Logan City, featuring the city council offices, art gallery and library, along with retail and business outlets and residential areas. As with Emerton, the issues facing Logan Central cannot be understood in isolation of the broader area in which the suburb is located. Logan City is physically divided by the Pacific highway, which runs through the LGA from north to south. On the eastern side of the highway are the affluent suburbs of Daisy Hill, Springwood and Shailer Park, while the western side contains the more disadvantaged suburbs of Logan Central, Woodridge, Kingston Slacks Creek, Loganlea, Eagleby, Beenleigh, Crestmead, Marsden and Waterford West. Reference to Logan as a place of disadvantage typically applies to these western suburbs—a practice that will be followed in this report.

Logan Central has historically contained a significant proportion of public housing which was initially designed to accommodate working class families but has long since become a tenure of last resort for the more disadvantaged and marginalised members of society. As a result, many of the problems identified in Logan—poverty, high unemployment, high crime and drug and alcohol dependency—are thought to be symptomatic of a deeper problem arising from the concentration of public housing and public housing tenants. As a result, the Logan City Council, along with the Queensland Department of Housing, is developing what is considered one of the most ambitious programs of housing reform: the Logan Renewal Initiative (LRI), which seeks to dilute the effects of concentrated disadvantage through a deliberate policy of creating mixed communities.

The LRI forms part of a broader suite of activities designed to re-brand Logan and shrug off its negative reputation. A series of high-profile crimes have captured national headlines in recent years which, along with high unemployment and the presence of social housing, have portrayed the suburb, and Logan more broadly, as a highly problematic place. This has generated a sense of outrage among local residents and the council who feel that the virtues of their city are not appreciated. Logan is ideally located to capture the opportunities afforded by economic growth in south-east Queensland. The city is proudly multicultural and boasts that it has welcomed residents from over 215 different ethnic groups (Logan City Council 2013a). It is also experiencing population growth and is rich in local services and facilities to address its disadvantage. Despite this, there are concerns that the problems facing Logan are deeply entrenched and that current renewal initiatives will either fail to address these underlying issues, or simply relocate 'problem' populations to other areas where housing is still cheap, but where services are lacking.

## 5 PLACES WHERE DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE LIVE

This chapter considers the socio-demographic characteristics of the local populations of the six case study areas that render them disadvantaged and compares the case study areas with the typology of disadvantage developed as part of the wider study as a means of groundtruthing the typology. Specific sub-populations identified as being particularly disadvantaged in each case study area are then discussed.

### 5.1 The socio-demographic profile of the local population

Despite sharing the common denominator of scoring poorly on the SEIFA Index, the demographic, employment and education and housing characteristics of the six case study locations varied considerably from each other, and also from their respective GMAs. Emphasising the findings of the typology analysis (see Chapter 3), this further illustrates the diversity of disadvantaged places in urban Australia.

#### 5.1.1 Demographic characteristics

As demonstrated in Tables A1–A3 in Appendix 3, the demographic profiles of the case study areas often differed quite significantly from those of the GMAs in which they were located. In each of the tables in Appendix 3, characteristics that differed greatly (with a percentage change of at least 25%) from the comparable metropolitan figure are highlighted in bold.

Table 5 below provides a summary of those demographic characteristics that differed greatly from the GMA figure in each case study location.

Of particular note is that the ‘lower priced’ and ‘improver’ suburbs all had a low proportion of the population born in Australia and a high proportion of the population who had moved in the previous five years from overseas addresses. Reflecting this diversity, in three of the four ‘lower priced’ and ‘improver’ suburbs, a language other than English was the most commonly spoken language at home (Tables A1–A3). These were Auburn (Arabic), Braybrook (Vietnamese) and Springvale (Vietnamese).

In regard to country of birth and language spoken at home, the five most common countries of birth and five most common languages spoken at home differed from the GMA in all of the case study suburbs, as indicated in Tables A1–A3 (Appendix 3).



**Table 5: Demographic characteristics, percentage difference from respective Greater Metropolitan Area, 2011**

	Auburn	Emerton	Braybrook	Spring-vale	Logan Central	Russell Island
Typology category	Type 2	Type 1	Type 4	Type 2	Type 4	Type 3
% aged five to 17	8%	46%	7%	-10%	22%	21%
% aged 65 or older	-36%	-17%	-21%	18%	-14%	101%
Couple family household with children	13%	-23%	-23%	-11%	-20%	-60%
Couple family household without children	-27%	-44%	-37%	-16%	-39%	14%
Single parent family	0%	124%	66%	22%	65%	18%
Other family household	108%	92%	100%	184%	68%	-40%
Lone person household	-36%	-2%	0%	-11%	18%	64%
Group household	24%	-32%	0%	2%	-15%	-22%
% population born in Australia	-47%	1%	-39%	-53%	-29%	-2%
% of households moved in previous five years from overseas address	132%	-59%	36%	85%	52%	-70%
ATSI population	-83%	417%	40%	-60%	105%	60%
% needed assistance with core activity	20%	45%	24%	40%	36%	186%

Source: ABS Census 2011

### 5.1.2 Employment and education

The employment and education profiles of the case study areas also differed from those of their GMAs. In Tables A4–A9 in Appendix 3, characteristics that differed greatly (with a percentage change of least 25%) from the metropolitan average are highlighted in bold.

Table 6 below provides a summary of the employment and education characteristics that differed greatly from the metropolitan average in each case study location. Of particular note, all case study areas had a particularly low percentage of the population with tertiary qualifications, a high unemployment rate, and a high percentage of people in low-skilled or low-status jobs, a low percentage employed full-time, a low median weekly income, and a high proportion of households earning less than \$600 per week compared to the metropolitan average. Five of the case study areas had a particularly low percentage of the population with a vocational qualification, four had a high youth unemployment rate, and three had a low participation rate compared to the GMA.

**Table 6: Employment and education characteristics, percentage difference from respective Greater Metropolitan Area, 2011**

Typology category	Auburn	Emerton	Braybrook	Springvale	Logan Central	Russell Island
	Type 2	Type 1	Type 4	Type 2	Type 4	Type 3
% who left school at year 10 or before <sup>1</sup>	-32%	19%	-14%	-6%	1%	30%
% left school at year 12 <sup>1</sup>	-25%	-60%	-30%	-23%	-53%	-55%
% with vocational qualification <sup>1</sup>	-46%	-43%	-47%	-35%	-44%	-11%
% with tertiary qualification <sup>1</sup>	-44%	-87%	-49%	-49%	-82%	-67%
% employed full-time <sup>1</sup>	-36%	-33%	-31%	-26%	-39%	-65%
% employed part-time <sup>1</sup>	-13%	-38%	-26%	-16%	-36%	-38%
% unemployed <sup>2</sup>	89%	133%	127%	91%	149%	227%
% youth (15–24) unemployed <sup>3</sup>	8%	162%	63%	14%	106%	321%
Participation rate <sup>1</sup>	-22%	-26%	-23%	-18%	-28%	-48%
% in low-skilled/low status jobs <sup>4</sup>	65%	119%	58%	88%	88%	65%
% households with weekly income less than \$600	29%	58%	60%	45%	61%	25%

Source: ABS Census 2011

<sup>1</sup> of persons aged 15 or older; <sup>2</sup> of the total labour force; <sup>3</sup> of the labour force aged 15–24; <sup>4</sup> of employed persons aged 15 and over.

### 5.1.3 Housing

As demonstrated in Tables A10–A12 in Appendix 3, a number of the housing characteristics of the case study areas in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne differed greatly (with a percentage change of at least 25%) from those of their respective GMAs, as summarised in Table 7 below.

**Table 7: Housing characteristics, percentage difference from respective Greater Metropolitan Area, 2011**

	Auburn	Emerton	Braybrook	Springvale	Logan Central	Russell Island
Typology category	Type 2	Type 1	Type 4	Type 2	Type 4	Type 3
% Detached houses <sup>1</sup>	-22%	31%	-13%	0%	-10%	26%
% Semi-detached dwellings <sup>1</sup>	-26%	14%	37%	2%	-73%	-100%
% Unit/flat/apartment <sup>1</sup>	61%	-76%	27%	-6%	126%	-97%
% Other dwelling type <sup>1</sup>	-33%	-100%	220%	220%	-75%	-25%
% Fully owned <sup>1</sup>	-21%	-42%	-35%	4%	-30%	32%
% Owned with mortgage <sup>1</sup>	-17%	-19%	-26%	-35%	-39%	-31%
% Private rental <sup>1</sup>	33%	-5%	-9%	36%	22%	12%
% Social rental <sup>1</sup>	-6%	390%	521%	-48%	273%	-100%
% Other tenure type <sup>1</sup>	45%	9%	126%	163%	8%	-24%
% low-income households <sup>2</sup> paying more than 30% in rent	55%	3%	2%	-1%	48%	20%
% who lived at different address five years ago <sup>3</sup>	9%	-23%	-1%	-3%	-13%	10%

Source: ABS Census 2011

<sup>1</sup> of occupied private dwellings; <sup>2</sup> households with weekly household income <\$600; <sup>3</sup> of total population aged five years or older.

#### 5.1.4 Relating area characteristics to the area typologies

The six case study sites were chosen to represent the four distinct types of disadvantaged suburbs identified through the typology analysis (see Chapter 3). In each case below we refer to the housing market characterisation and the socio-demographic features characteristic of each typology category (for further explanation, see also Hulse et al. 2014).

##### **Type 1: ‘Isolate’ suburbs—High on young people and single parent households: Emerton New South Wales**

Emerton in Sydney was selected to represent ‘isolate’ suburbs. Emerton was the only case study suburb to have a high proportion (more than 25% different) of the population aged five to 17 compared to its respective GMA. While Emerton also had a relatively high proportion of single parent families, this was also true of Braybrook and Logan Central (chosen as representative of ‘improver’ suburbs). In all these cases, this was probably associated with the relatively high proportions of social housing contained within the suburbs concerned (reflecting needs-based tenancy allocation criteria).

As well as its age and household profile, Emerton was also notable for having a high ATSI population, and a high proportion of the population needing assistance with core activities.

##### **Type 2: ‘lower priced’ suburbs—High on overseas movers: Auburn and Springvale**

Consistent with their typology designation, both Auburn (Sydney) and Springvale (Melbourne) had a relatively high incidence of overseas movers. However, in terms of demographic profile they were not wholly typical of Type 2 areas.

While both suburbs had relatively low ATSI populations by comparison with GMA-wide norms, they had a high incidence of private rental housing (Table A10).

**Type 3: ‘marginal’ suburbs—High on residential mobility, low on overseas movers, high on older people: *Russell Island***

Probably associated with the relatively high incidence of private rental housing, residents of Russell Island (Brisbane) were slightly more likely to have lived at a different address five years ago (49%) than the metropolitan average (45%). However, this difference was relatively slight (9% variance).

Russell Island was low on overseas movers compared to the GMA. Russell Island was the only case study area to have a particularly high proportion of people aged 65 and older. It was also the only case study area to have a particularly high incidence of outright home ownership compared to the metropolitan average. However, the proportion of outright home ownership notably declined from 51 per cent in 2001 to 34 per cent in 2011.

Russell Island was also notable for having low median monthly mortgage repayments, a low average household size, a high proportion of lone households, a low proportion of ‘other’ households, and a low proportion of social rental properties (there is no social housing on the island).

**Type 4: dynamic ‘improver’ suburbs—High on overseas movers, low on change in employment and change in incidence of low status jobs: *Braybrook and Logan Central***

Both Braybrook and Logan Central were high on overseas movers and also had a low percentage of the population born in Australia compared to their GMAs.

Both Braybrook and Logan were low in change in employment when compared to their respective GMAs, but while Braybrook was low in change in incidence of low status jobs when compared to its GMA, Logan was not (see Tables A7 and A9).

Braybrook and Logan Central were also notable for having a low proportion of couple families without children and a high proportion of single parent families. These suburbs also had a high ATSI population compared with their GMAs. Of particular note is that the ‘lower priced’ and ‘improver’ suburbs all had a low proportion of the population born in Australia and a high proportion of the population who had moved in the previous five years from overseas addresses. Reflecting this diversity, in three of the four ‘lower priced’ and ‘improver’ suburbs, a language other than English was the most commonly spoken language at home (Tables 15–A2). These were Auburn (Arabic), Braybrook (Vietnamese) and Springvale (Vietnamese).

While the typologies of disadvantage broadly fit with the case study areas chosen to represent these typologies, there were some exceptions:

- The ‘lower priced’ characteristic ‘high on two parent families’ did not apply to Auburn and Springvale, when compared with their GMAs.
- The ‘improver’ characteristic ‘low on change in incidence of low status jobs’ did not apply to Logan Central when compared to its GMA.

While the six case study areas differed significantly in terms of demographic characteristics (Table 5), there were also notable similarities. In particular, five of the case study areas (the exception was Russell Island) had a high proportion of ‘other’ family households, a group that includes extended family households. Four of the case study areas had a low proportion of the population born in Australia compared to their GMAs (the exceptions were Emerton and Russell Island); four had a high proportion of the population who need assistance with core activities (the exceptions are Auburn and Braybrook) and four had a notably high ATSI population, while two had a notably low ATSI population (Springvale and Auburn).

In regard to education and employment profile (Table 6), the case study areas shared more similarities. All case study areas had a comparatively low proportion of the population with a tertiary qualification, a high unemployment rate, a low proportion employed full-time, a high proportion of the population in low-skilled and low-status jobs and a high proportion of

households with a weekly income under \$600 when compared with their respective GMA. Five of the case study areas also had a low percentage of the population with a vocational qualification, four had a comparatively high youth unemployment rate and three had a comparatively low participation rate. As such, many educational and occupational characteristics were common across disadvantaged suburbs.

In comparison, housing characteristics (Table 7) differed greatly between the six case study areas, with few discernible commonalities across the six case study areas. Housing issues are discussed in more depth in Chapter 8.

## **5.2 Specific populations identified as being particularly disadvantaged**

In each of the case study areas, specific sub-populations were perceived by key stakeholders and residents to be particularly disadvantaged, while other groups were not considered disadvantaged. In this section, information collected during interviews and focus groups with residents and key stakeholders in each of the case study areas is presented to provide further description of the nature of disadvantage in the case study areas. Groups commonly seen as especially disadvantaged across all case study areas included children and young adults, elderly people, single parents, migrants, ATSI people, people with alcohol or other drug abuse problems, and people with poor literacy and educational qualifications. While many of these groups were over-represented in some of the case study populations compared to their GMA (see Table 5), some of these sub-groups were identified as disadvantaged in areas where they were not over-represented (e.g. children and single parent families in Auburn).

Not all of these sub-groups were identified as being disadvantaged groups in every case study area and, as such, not all case study areas are discussed under each sub-heading. For example, children and young adults in Springvale appeared to be faring well in terms of both education and employment and alcohol and drug abuse was not raised as an issue of concern in Auburn.

### *5.2.1 Children and young adults*

Young people were identified as a group particularly prone to disadvantage in five of the six case study areas (the exception was Springvale). Areas of particular concern were educational attainment, unemployment, anti-social behaviour and conflict, poverty and homelessness.

#### **Educational attainment**

Educational attainment and standards were raised as an issue of ongoing concern in half of the case study areas (Russell Island, Emerton/Mount Druitt and Logan Central).

In these areas, poor educational attainment was associated with truancy and behavioural problems. The lack of value placed on education by some young people was considered to be inter-generationally transmitted and connected to a culture of low aspirations and lack of self-esteem. This was considered symptomatic of the experience of entrenched disadvantage and the impacts of dysfunctional family life:

A lack of vision for their own lives. Hopelessness. Young people, it sort of manifests in different forms you know. So mental illness issues. A lot of kids are facing depression ... they can't see beyond their context. You know they can't see beyond their family support. Like when you look at their families you sort of understand why. (Logan Central, education/training provider)

However, ongoing concern regarding educational attainment was not universal across all case study areas. In one area (Braybrook), attention was drawn to rising education attainment, both in regard to school completion and vocational and tertiary qualifications, while in the two 'lower priced' suburbs (Auburn and Springvale) educational attainment was not raised as an issue of concern.

## **Youth unemployment**

Unemployment and disengagement among young people was raised as an issue of particular concern in several case study areas. In all of the case study areas, youth unemployment was above 20 per cent in 2011, and was significantly higher in some areas (see Tables A4–A9).

Youth unemployment was associated with poor educational attainment and a culture of hopelessness, with some areas experiencing inter-generational disadvantage and unemployment:

A lot of young people ... are disadvantaged in terms of not having any vision for their own lives because they come from families that have not seen or achieved or experienced success in terms of employment ... So we've seen a lot of young people that have that hopelessness. (Logan Central, education/training provider)

Often youth unemployment is related to poor schooling outcomes and a lack of 'working culture' in the local area—few role models. (Emerton/Mount Druitt, state housing provider)

Other barriers to employment included a shortage of local employment opportunities for young people, poor job seeking skills, and perceived discrimination by prospective employers against people from areas seen to have a poor reputation. For young recent migrants, additional challenges associated with English language skills and settlement issues can compound this disadvantage.

Concern was also raised that those young people who do access employment could find themselves subject to poor working conditions including racism and low salaries paid 'off the books'.

## **Poverty**

In addition to educational attainment and unemployment, the challenges faced by families in regard to caring for their children, which result from a lack of money, were also raised in several case study areas. Constrained finances within families sometimes meant that children and young adults were disadvantaged because they had insufficient funds for transport to and from school or workplaces, and insufficient money to pay for school costs such as textbooks.

Russell Island presented an extreme case, with stakeholders noting that some families not only lacked money to purchase school books and uniforms, but also school lunches and some students arrived at school without having eaten, prompting the school to put on a breakfast club each morning with some assistance from the local church.

## **Anti-social behaviour**

Anti-social behaviour involving young people was raised in most of the case study areas to some extent. Emerton/Mount Druitt interviewees referred to youth disorder as problematic in the area, including a perceived threat of violence, as well as vandalism and graffiti. From the police perspective, alcohol abuse was the single biggest contributor to youth disorder, particularly stemming from under-age drinking. With the increasingly strict control imposed on entry to licensed premises, the nature of this problem had changed over recent years, as the focus of youth drinking had consequently moved from town centre pubs to parties in residential areas. In terms of their disruptive effects on the community, and because such events are more difficult to monitor and police, this was a problematic development. In Logan, anti-social behaviour by young people was seen as a consequence of a perceived sense of hopelessness and boredom among some young people tied to high levels of unemployment and disadvantage. In Russell Island, anti-social behaviour among young people was a particular concern for those using the ferries to get to the mainland.

In Auburn, anti-social behaviour on the part of young people was not raised as a particular concern, with the exception of concerns raised by some focus group participants about the

bullying their daughters had been subject to in their neighbourhood as a result of their religion (Catholic), and the way that they dressed (wearing shorts or not covering their hair). One participant said that her daughter had left the area partly as a result of these experiences. Similar instances of name-calling and verbal harassment were reported by some public housing residents in the Braybrook area; however, overall anti-social behaviour was also not seen as a major problem in the area.

In Springvale, anti-social behaviour was seen as a thing of the past. Numerous residents and community workers acknowledged that while the area had previously experienced high levels of street presence and undesirable behaviours associated with drug dealing (mainly heroin), this was no longer problematic and residents now enjoyed a relatively high sense of public safety. In one recent example of how potential anti-social behaviour can be effectively addressed, a number of young African men/teenagers who were 'hanging around the streets' were invited to use a local learning centre facility to hold regular basketball clinics. This quickly addressed the problem of potential boredom and frustration for these young men and has become a highly successful, self-sustaining program.

### **Intergenerational conflict**

In several case studies, conflict between young people and their parents was raised as an issue of concern associated with other social problems. In some cases, such conflict was associated with young people being torn between identifying with the values of their migrant parents, and new 'Australian' values. For example, this was identified by police in Emerton/Mount Druitt as a major contributor to youth disorder (anti-social behaviour) in the area, while in Auburn this was raised as a factor contributing to youth homelessness.

A lack of emergency accommodation for young homeless people was also identified as a problem in several case study areas, and the more hidden issue of secondary homelessness (being homeless, but not living on the streets) was noted as a matter of concern in some areas:

... actually running away from home, not finding support elsewhere, moving in with friends then that actually turns a bit pear shaped and so we're finding that young people are not being supported. Because of the lack of accommodation, even emergency accommodation, young people have the sense that okay, the first and best option is to stay with friends. That puts pressure on the friends' families and it has the ripple effect. (Logan Central, education/training provider)

### **Varying opportunities**

The opportunities available for young people differed greatly between the case study areas. This is reflected in the range of youth unemployment figures between the case study areas, from 20 per cent (Auburn) to 90 per cent (Russell Island) (see Tables A4—A9).

For example, in more remote (Russell Island) and suburban (Emerton/Mount Druitt) areas, issues facing young people were identified as one of the most pressing challenges facing the area, with concerns raised about anti-social behaviour, drug and alcohol use, social isolation, stigmatisation and youth unemployment in particular.

In contrast, in well-connected and well-serviced locations, like the 'lower priced' suburbs of Auburn and Springvale, there are many more opportunities available for young people.

#### **5.2.2 Elderly people**

Groups of elderly people were noted as disadvantaged in some of the case study areas in view of the opportunities and services available locally. There were two distinct discourses surrounding this. The first related to challenges faced by older migrants with poor English language skills. The second, which was unique to Russell Island, was of poor access to services.

Elderly residents with poor English language skills could find themselves disadvantaged when they were no longer able to afford to live in the area where they had both cultural ties and access to services and facilities in their native language. Two groups fell within this category. The first were migrants who had lived in an area for a long time, who had not purchased housing in the area and faced high rental costs. The second were elderly people who arrived in Australia as family-sponsored migrants. Only after 10 years residence do people in this category become eligible for welfare benefits. In those cases where family support breaks down, older people in this situation can find themselves particularly vulnerable.

People in this situation could find themselves having to move out of the area, or making alternative housing arrangements. In Springvale, for example, local solutions to this problem included rooming houses, shared housing managed by real estate agents, and arrangements involving three or four unrelated older men sharing a single room in the house of an unrelated family.

In Russell Island, elderly residents were disadvantaged by a lack of services on the island, especially health services and nursing facilities:

Health services are in short supply and residents with serious health needs are forced to access services outside their communities. Living on the Bay Islands poses additional challenges for residents needing constant medical attention. (Redland Shire Council 2006, p.3)

However, few of the older people living on Russell Island who participated in the research considered themselves disadvantaged, arguing that they had made a considered choice to live on the island despite the lack of support for older people beyond the daily provision of Blue Care nursing and Meals on Wheels.

### *5.2.3 Single-parent families and women*

As demonstrated in Table 5 above, three of the case study areas had particularly high rates of single parent families when compared to their respective GMAs. This reflects the recognised correlation between single parenthood and disadvantage (McLanahan & Sandefur 1994). Single parent families, usually headed by a woman, were specifically identified as a particularly vulnerable group in several case study areas.

In some instances (Springvale and Auburn), single parenthood was not only associated with socio-economic disadvantage, but also with discrimination and persecution through their cultural or ethnic community because of their status as a single mother.

Two other groups of women were identified as being particularly vulnerable. The first group was women from non-English speaking backgrounds who remain at home to take care of their children and who could find themselves isolated on arrival in Australia. The second group was women who arrived in the country on a 204 visa subclass (women at risk). Those affected were seen as not only disadvantaged in terms of income and employment, but also at risk of discrimination and victimisation.

### *5.2.4 Recent migrants*

As indicated in Table 5 above, the 'lower priced' and 'improver' suburbs had a high incidence of international migrants: a group identified as particularly disadvantaged in these locations. Despite their relatively low representation, international migrants were also identified as a disadvantaged group in Emerton/Mount Druitt.

In Emerton/Mount Druitt and Logan Central, concern for migrant wellbeing was focused on the situation of Pacific Islanders, especially those having moved to Australia from New Zealand after 2001. Unlike earlier New Zealand citizen migrants to Australia, those concerned are excluded from social security benefits until gaining Australian citizenship. Resulting



disadvantage reportedly manifested in several ways. The trend for extended families to provide informal social support could result in overcrowded homes:

We also have the other dreadful issue with the Trans-Tasman agreement where we have literally families living on floors because they can't access any help. So if [some]one in the family manages to get a social housing property and a Centrelink payment, everybody moves in. (Logan Central, state government officer)

I've got a family in [location] ... and it's a four-bedroom two-story house. It's got two bathrooms, two toilets and an open space like a rumpus downstairs. There are 24 people living in that house. (Logan Central, education/training provider)

Additionally, young people seeking to undertake tertiary education faced financial barriers due to ineligibility for the Australian Higher Education Loan Program.

In Auburn, Braybrook and Springvale, concern for migrant wellbeing was focused on those from non-English speaking backgrounds. Low English literacy levels among migrants, especially those newly arrived, was viewed as a particularly significant problem, preventing people from accessing paid work, even when they were well educated and held qualifications. This challenge had been exacerbated by economic restructuring and the replacement of manufacturing by service sector jobs, with much higher requirements for English language proficiency:

To be work ready [is difficult], because these are changing requirements, more complex skills, more complex relationships. The old unskilled assembly work is disappearing. Need analytical skills now. (Springvale, education/training provider)

In addition to English language proficiency, migrants can be disadvantaged in navigating Australian systems, finding out what opportunities and supports are available and dealing with cultural barriers. Further, some highly skilled migrants hold qualifications unrecognised in Australia.

Recent migrants who have arrived as refugees can face additional challenges. They may have spent years in refugee camps or have come from tribal or subsistence cultures that did not provide them with these skills or make them work ready:

Many new arrivals experience multiple disadvantage including poverty, housing stress, previous experiences of trauma, interrupted education experiences, health problems, disability and unemployment which require additional resources to target their complexities of need. (Auburn City Council 2013, p.21)

In some cases, it was reported that these circumstances have resulted in migrants, including those without work rights, resorting to working in the informal economy in cash-in-hand jobs with unregulated wages and conditions.

#### *5.2.5 People with poor educational attainment and literacy*

Disadvantage related to poor English literacy is not a problem confined to migrant populations. In some of the case study areas, Australian-born residents with poor literacy and educational attainment were identified as a particularly disadvantaged group.

For example, in Emerton/Mount Druitt the relatively high incidence of crimes such as breaking into houses was attributed in part to high unemployment and low educational attainment:

Most of the people we arrest are in those groups; many can't read or write. (Emerton/Mount Druitt, police/justice)

As well as literacy and educational attainment, a lack of 'job readiness' was also raised as an issue in some areas. For example, in Logan Central, employers' expectations regarding employee punctuality and reliability were said to have prevented some locals from accessing entry-level positions in the area:

One of the issues that we've heard about recently ... is that they [local businesses] will say to us that they want to employ local people, but the local people that they want to employ don't necessarily have those—depending on their level of job, but say for entry level positions—local people don't have those entry level skills that necessarily make them employable. (Logan Central, local government officer)

### 5.2.6 *ATSI people*

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (ATSI) were over-represented in most of the case study areas with the exception of the 'lower priced' suburbs of Springvale and Auburn (see Table 5 above).

In Emerton/Mount Druitt, ATSI people were identified as a particularly disadvantaged group. Mount Druitt's expanding ATSI population is said to be the largest in metropolitan Australia. One factor probably contributing to this is the growing concentration of ATSI households within public housing. Rates of overcrowding among ATSI people in the area were high, in part as a result of a lack of larger properties suitable for extended families. Reflecting national figures, the local ATSI population was also disadvantaged in relation to literacy, employment and income.

In Logan, concerns for the wellbeing of ATSI populations were less around their perceived disadvantage, and more strongly associated with perceived tensions between ATSI and Pacific Islander families, which had spilt over into violent confrontations on occasions.

### 5.2.7 *People with complex needs*

In most case study areas, people with complex or multiple needs, including substance abuse and mental health problems, were identified as particularly disadvantaged. In areas with significant public housing provision (e.g. Braybrook and Logan Central) this is likely associated with the tenancy allocation criteria that prioritise people with high and complex needs. This includes poor physical or mental health, histories of trauma (including domestic violence) and associated difficulties in maintaining employment. One interview participant described this as including:

People escaping domestic violence, isolation, family trauma, family violence, mental health problems, and criminality. (Logan Central, not-for-profit housing provider)

The very nature of their existing vulnerabilities makes this group susceptible to homelessness and extreme disadvantage should they not be able to access appropriate housing.

Another group identified as being particularly vulnerable in some case study areas, who may or may not be living in public housing, were refugees who had complex needs associated with family care, employment difficulties and problems associated with the trauma they had fled.

An additional issue was that some areas may attract people with complex needs as a result of the availability of government-funded social support services catering to people with complex needs (e.g. Logan Central) or services provided by the not-for-profit sector for refugees and migrants (e.g. Auburn and Springvale) or, in the absence of such services, because of the availability of relatively affordable housing (e.g. Russell Island).

## 5.3 Conclusion

The typologies of disadvantage developed for the broader multi-year research project broadly fit with the six case study areas chosen to represent these typologies with two exceptions:

- The 'lower priced' suburb characteristic 'high on two parent families' did not apply to Auburn and Springvale, when compared with their GMAs.
- The 'improver' characteristics 'low on change in employment and change in incidence of low status jobs' did not apply to Braybrook or Logan Central when compared to their GMAs.

These detailed analyses of objective indicators of six case studies demonstrated that spatial disadvantage is a highly complex issue, which manifests in different ways in different areas. The detailed case study work provided an opportunity to examine this complexity in more depth.

As well as considering disadvantage at a whole-of-population level, we were able to explore in more depth how disadvantage was experienced by different groups of people within an area. In speaking with stakeholders and residents, we identified different sub-groups of the local population who were seen to be especially disadvantaged. These groups included children and young adults, elderly people, single parents, migrants, ATSI people, people with alcohol or other drug abuse problems, and people with poor literacy and educational qualifications. However, there were differences across the case study sites and not all of these sub-groups were identified as being disadvantaged groups in every case study area.

In addition to identifying disadvantage at a whole-of-population level, and identifying groups of people who can be particularly disadvantaged in different areas, it is also important to report on the lived experiences of those people who call these places home. Chapter 7 draws further on interviews and focus groups conducted with local stakeholders and residents in the six case study areas to provide a better understanding of the lived experience of living in places of concentrated disadvantage.

## 6 PLACES THAT DISADVANTAGE PEOPLE

Place-based disadvantage has typically been conceptualised in two main ways in Australia, drawing heavily on approaches adopted from overseas, in particular from the US and UK (see Chapter 2). The first of these focuses on how a geographic clustering of people with disadvantage (e.g. unemployment, poor health) can generate a ‘neighbourhood effect’ exacerbating the impacts of such disadvantage and leading to further ‘excluding’ effects. The second way that place-based disadvantage is conceptualised and researched focuses on the characteristics of areas themselves such as geography, local labour markets and other features of local areas that can either facilitate the wellbeing of residents, or disadvantage vulnerable households in a variety of ways—with those related to income disadvantage of concern in much poverty-oriented policy and research (Dodson & Sipe 2007, 2008). Often, these are referred to in short-hand as being ‘people’ and ‘place’ aspects of locational disadvantage (see Hulse et al. 2014 for discussion).

The extent to which there is a clustering of various types of ‘people’-based disadvantage within each of the six case study areas being examined in this research was explored at Chapter 5. In this chapter, the extent to which place-based characteristics in the same case study areas act to exacerbate existing forms of household disadvantage or mitigate such disadvantage is explored. Specifically, the focus of analysis in this chapter is upon: *how* and *whether* place-based characteristics of the six case study areas act to disadvantage residents, over and above any disadvantaging characteristics related to residents themselves.

The emphasis of this chapter is therefore on the ways that place-based characteristics in each of the case study areas act to either facilitate or impede access to social and economic opportunities that act as pathways out of poverty and/or enable residents to maintain social and financial independence to achieve a decent life quality. Physical and institutional aspects of each case study area are explored, based on analysis of observed place-characteristics and resident/stakeholder reflections of these factors and of their impact on residents’ lives. Consistent with the aims of the research, this approach enables a groundtruthing of physical and institutional aspects of place-based disadvantage.

### 6.1 Physical disadvantage: location and access

As set out in the introduction to this report (Section 1.1), geographic patterns of place disadvantage in Australian cities do not necessarily mirror those found internationally, where, in some countries, ‘poor’ neighbourhoods have acted as poverty traps and where processes of discrimination can underpin processes of spatial mismatch between residents and opportunity (Kain 1992). The spatial geography of metropolitan disadvantage across major metropolitan centres in Australia has been far from static in recent decades. Processes of economic and housing market restructuring in recent decades have resulted in a redistribution of many lower income households away from inner-city areas, into suburban locations (Randolph & Holloway 2005a; Pawson et al. 2012). Most recently, some major metropolitan areas have seen an extension of this process occur, to outer metropolitan or ‘fringe’ locations (Stone et al. 2013; Burke et al. 2014; Hulse et al. 2014).

In some ways this is akin to processes of the ruralisation of poverty seen in France and other European nations, whereby households with highest support needs move furthest from opportunity and services associated with larger metropolitan centres (Gerry & Nivorozhkin 2008; Bertolini et al. 2008).

Living in locations remote from the economic activities and opportunities associated with *central* business districts is not inherently problematic. Indeed, part of the response of many state and territory governments cross-jurisdictionally in Australia to problems of population density pressures within cities, coupled with low metropolitan housing affordability, has been to

invest in regional development processes that encourage industry, government jobs and household mobility into regional hubs (Beer et al. 2003; Costello 2009).

In contrast are circumstances in which low-income and disadvantaged households are 'pushed' to areas near or beyond the periphery of major metropolitan areas where there is limited local economic activity and low levels of service provision. In these cases we can expect that a deficit of economic opportunities or services and support may: (i) isolate residents from social and economic participation opportunities and the achievement of self-reliance; or (ii) fail to support vulnerable residents, thereby compounding any disadvantage they may be already experiencing. Where local area economic activity and service supports are limited, and transport connectivity to metropolitan hubs is also limited or inaccessible due to cost, these effects are likely to be compounded and will be of particular policy concern.

### *6.1.1 Location*

Reflecting the diversity of disadvantaged area types within metropolitan Australia, there was considerable variation in the physical distance of each case study site from the 'parent city' CBD, comprising one 'inner ring' area, two 'middle ring' suburbs and three 'outer metropolitan' locations. In order of distance from respective CBDs, these are:

- Braybrook is an inner-ring suburb, located 9 kilometres west of the centre of Melbourne and is part of the Western suburbs of Melbourne area.
- Auburn is a middle-ring suburb in Sydney, approximately 17 kilometres west of the Sydney CBD.
- Logan Central is a suburb of the Local Government Area (LGA) of Logan City, located approximately 20 kilometres south of the Brisbane CBD.
- Springvale is a suburb of Melbourne, approximately 23 kilometres south-east of the city centre, and is part of the City of Greater Dandenong.
- Emerton is one of a group of suburbs which make up the Mount Druitt area of Western Sydney, approximately 45 kilometres from Sydney CBD.
- Russell Island is among a group of islands known as the Southern Moreton Bay Islands, located off Redland Bay in the Moreton Bay Marine Park some 43 kilometres from Brisbane city.

### *6.1.2 Transport connectivity*

Integrally related to the geographic relationship of each site to its broader metropolitan context, as well as to economic opportunity in neighbouring areas, is transport connectivity.

Connectivity reflects geography, historical patterns of settlement and land use. It is also influenced by transportation costs and time. Given this range of influences it is not surprising that the transport options available to residents in the six case study areas was quite variable, ranging from extremely good in one case, to exceedingly poor in another. Springvale and parts of Auburn are examples of highly connected and very well linked local areas. Residents of Springvale and Auburn (with the exception of the south of Auburn) have ready access to well-run public transport in the form of regular urban rail network, and in addition have bus route options that run within the suburb and connect to neighbouring areas. Proximity to major road routes and freeways assists residents with private vehicles.

Local areas that are assessed by residents and local stakeholders as having 'mixed' transport connectivity appear to have only part of the suburb well serviced (as in the case of Auburn) or only limited transport options in place (e.g. Braybrook).

Despite its inner suburban status only 9 kilometres from Melbourne's CBD, Braybrook was perceived by residents and local stakeholders as having only limited connectivity. While ongoing investment in major road building and links to freeways was recognised as improving

this situation for some residents, the train network was perceived as servicing only part of the suburb, with buses considered of limited value by some residents.

Two areas—Mt Druitt in Sydney and Logan Central in Brisbane—were perceived as having relatively poor transport connectivity. Since both areas were relatively well-linked to major centres by road and rail this may have been more a matter of sheer distance making commutes to other areas costly or time consuming. The legacy of the mono-centred, radial railway systems characteristic of Australian cities generally means that even where rail services operated, connectivity was undermined by lack of local and regional bus services, poor coordination or lack of frequency. Moreover, low density development means that effective feeder bus services are needed to facilitate railhead utility for most suburban residents lacking their own car. The case of Logan Central illustrates these issues.

Transport's always been an issue, I think, in Logan City. I guess there are some key transport corridors where it's not a problem, so if you're on the train line or if you're on the bus route, then it's not drama, but a couple of our major industrial estates aren't necessarily on those transport lines, so getting around the city, or getting people to work is a challenge. Again, if you put in place initiatives to support the long term unemployed who don't necessarily have their own transport, getting people to work is a challenge and some of the industries' operating hours aren't necessarily in line with when buses or trains run. (Logan, local government officer)

Only one of the case study areas could be described as having very poor transport connectivity. Russell Island in Queensland is physically isolated from the mainland with only ferry access connecting residents to the economic, social and service options available in neighbouring areas, or within more central parts of Brisbane.

## **6.2 Institutional disadvantage: opportunity and assistance**

The institutional life of any local area will significantly affect the way residents live in that area including their access to economic and social opportunities locally. In this section, key economic and social features of local areas are explored. These are: local economies, employment and education/training; service provision and access; crime, law and order; and civil society.

### *6.2.1 Local economies and employment*

As a major route out of poverty, or as a means of avoiding welfare dependency, the role of local and neighbouring economies and the capacity of residents to access economic opportunity are critical. While unemployment was high in all case study areas (see Table 6 in Chapter 5), there was considerable diversity in terms of the nature and vibrancy of local economies. For example, Auburn and Springvale were commercial and economic hubs with relatively dynamic labour markets, while Emerton/Mount Druitt and Russell Island were mainly or wholly residential areas with little local employment. Russell Island was the most extreme case here, with employment limited to the small supermarket and local services, reflecting the settlement's origins as a retirement or weekend retreat. The island's environment values and beauty were seen as almost the only opportunity to grow employment. Employment opportunities off the island were also perceived as being limited by the high cost of transport and extensive commute time required.

Notwithstanding the diversity of local economies across the six suburbs, there was in all areas a strong perception among local residents and key stakeholders that recently emerging employment opportunities have typically failed to benefit local residents. One important explanation is the mismatch between the skills and experience of local residents and the requirements of new types of jobs being created. One dimension of this is the poor fit between former manufacturing employees and the highly networked, people-oriented service industries developing in areas such as Auburn, Braybrook and Springvale.

Springvale illustrates the point regarding the change in the economy. Following manufacturing decline in the 1980s and local job losses, Springvale has undergone something of a slow but steady economic up-turn. While new skilled jobs had been created in the broader region, interviewees believed that only a fraction of these had been filled by local residents. This reflected a gap (whether real or perceived) between the skill base of local residents and the capabilities required. For those displaced from employment by manufacturing decline, the gap was clear. The production and processing skills related to 'old occupations' do not translate into the service employment opportunities that have become available.

Significantly, as shown in Table 6 (in Chapter 5), youth unemployment rates in Auburn and Springvale were not (as in other areas) above citywide norms. Unlike the other case study suburbs, joblessness problems in these areas apparently bore more specifically on older (former) workers. However, issues associated with having the right skills and qualifications for the job also involve education and training to work pathways—issues of some relevance across the age spectrum. Work readiness in terms of basic skills, language and cultural awareness were themes across all the case study sites for specific groups of residents such as migrants and some Australian-born residents who had failed to master basic literacy and numeracy at school. Language barriers were particularly problematic for the large migrant communities living in some of the case study areas, and for whom English is not a first language.

The most pressing socio-economic issue is literacy, literacy, literacy, skills, skills, skills.  
(Springvale Education/training provider)

In some cases, where local employment was available in the emerging economies such as hospitality and other service-based industries, informal relationships between employers and employees (e.g. within the context of family or ethnically based businesses) were reportedly often associated with poor and insecure conditions and low pay.

People work phenomenal hours for little pay. That's how the families get on but the employment practices are very poor. When things go fine, it's great but when it breaks down, it's very difficult. (Springvale, NGO community worker/support provider)

In local economies that were less vibrant, such as in Logan and Russell Island, residents looking for work were reliant on opportunities in other areas. This was more achievable in Logan Central, where connectivity to neighbouring areas was more possible—yet was highly problematic for residents of Russell Island where transport connectivity was particularly limited and expensive.

### 6.2.2 *Schools, education and training*

Interviewees in all case study areas acknowledged the importance of education as a means of overcoming disadvantage. At the local area level, views of the quality and adequacy of local schooling options were highly variable across all case study areas. In some cases (e.g. Emerton/Mt Druitt and Braybrook) the run-down appearance of schools was perceived negatively by interviewees. However, in spite of this, in some cases parent groups could see and appreciate positive educational changes. This appeared to be an acknowledgement that school quality had been problematic (and hence may have contributed to 'place disadvantage').

Braybrook College has turned itself around. ... Results are quite high given the demographic. Extraordinary staff. Library tiny. They entered a book of poetry into the Melbourne International Writers Festival. Forty per cent of students are NESB [non-English speaking background] and largely newly arrived. (Braybrook, community representative)

In some case study areas it was perceived that the local structure of secondary schooling disadvantaged certain pupils by forcing them to travel long distances for their education. In

Auburn, for example, the only public secondary school in the area was for girls only. For boys, therefore, out of area travel was unavoidable. This was reportedly compounded by the reluctance of some non-Muslim parents to send their daughters to the girls school because of the proportion of Muslims enrolled.

More problematically, the lack of any local secondary school provision meant that all Russell Island secondary school students needed to travel by ferry to access their 'local' high school. Not only did such geographical dislocation come at a cost in terms of time and money, it also compromised participation in extra-curricular activities. In an attempt to reduce premature school leaving, various initiatives had been established to ease the difficulties of island youth in transitioning to mainland high schools (see Chapter 9).

Post-secondary training was also acknowledged by interviewees. A key theme across the case study sites was educational attainment and (re)training pathways. The 2001 Census indicated high rates of early school leaving and poor educational attainment. Between 2001 and 2011 each case study area showed considerable improvement in the percentage of early school leavers. Some areas were out-performing their respective metropolitan area. All except Logan Central showed improvements in the percentage that completed Year 12, although Logan showed a considerable jump in the percentage with vocational qualifications. In Braybrook it was evident that some of the improvement related to gentrification, but it was also clear that considerable efforts have been made to improve local schooling and training opportunities.

Across all the case study sites, stakeholders raised the need to embed local employment pathways within local training initiatives, the need for local economic development, and improved transport links to employment zones. The programs that had been delivered were not necessarily regarded as being at the scale that was required.

### 6.2.3 *Service provision, access and integration*

The extent to which local areas provide health, caring and additional social services appropriate to residents' needs has a significant impact on both service take-up and, ultimately, residents' wellbeing. One hypothesis explored in the research was the contention that an aspect of 'place disadvantage' affecting many lower income urban communities is the inadequate local provision of such services. On the other hand, there is an argument that such provision can institutionalise an area's 'disadvantaged' social profile by attracting (or retaining) those needing the services involved.

Whether a locality is well resourced with accessible, affordable services partly depends on historical factors (e.g. whether an area is well established or newly developed), as well as the actions and organisation of members of the local community itself (e.g. in the case of residents mobilising to address a perceived service gap or to prevent closure of facilities).

Resident and stakeholder perceptions indicated something of a continuum of service provision across the six case study areas. At one end were localities reportedly richly endowed with well-utilised services that had often evolved over many years through a combination of government funding and not-for-profit involvement. Mid-way along the continuum were local areas in which there appeared to be a mix of service provision and service deficit, and in which the established services were sometimes oversubscribed. Finally, at the far end of the continuum were localities in which only limited services were available, and where access to services elsewhere could be difficult (either due to cost or access issues).

Overall, therefore, it was clear that the chosen suburbs were far from uniformly 'service deprived'. On the contrary, in most areas there appeared to be a remarkably high level of service provision and accessibility in most areas. Indeed, four of the areas could be described as 'service rich', one as 'mixed' or 'emerging', and only one clearly 'service poor'.

At the high end of the service-provision continuum, Auburn and Springvale represented areas in which long traditions of service interventions—aimed at both the settlement and support of



recent migrants (including refugees and asylum seekers) and as a response to the local manufacturing decline—had underpinned the evolution of a wide range of local services. Some of the services were culturally specific and targeted (and where native languages are routinely used). In each case, residents and local stakeholders considered these to be well-served local areas, even though in each case, the pressures of need on local services can be hard to support with current levels of resourcing.

Indeed the relatively extensive provision of services in such areas was highly valued by residents. In some cases these services acted as both an advantage and a factor that precluded them from living elsewhere. In the case of Springvale, for example, numerous stakeholders spoke of problems associated with elderly Vietnamese who were unwilling to move to more affordable locations due to their high reliance on the local Vietnamese community and related services.

With substantial public housing provision in Emerton/Mt Druitt, and the typically high and complex needs of public housing residents (see Chapter 8), this was also characterised by interviewees as a service rich area, including for the expanding Indigenous population. The same was said to be true of Logan. This referred, in particular, to Logan's extensive health care facilities addressing the needs of retirees and elderly as well as some services targeted to culturally and linguistically diverse populations including newly arriving Pacific Islanders. Some local stakeholders questioned whether the level of service provision itself had tended to attract disadvantaged and in-need residents to the local area. This includes elderly and those with poor health who migrate to areas that can accommodate their health needs.

Related to this point, and to broader debates about poverty and self-reliance, high levels of service provision also led to debates about whether residents can become 'too dependent' on services rather than seeking financial independence (see e.g. Saunders 2000). Findings reveal, however, that opportunities for financial independence and self-reliance in many cases are slim, regardless of levels of services provided.

In sharp contrast to mainland areas included in this research, services on Russell Island were often perceived as inadequate by residents and other stakeholders. The small population of Russell Island and the cost of the ferry service mean the island cannot support many services, leading to a service deficit affecting both wealthier 'lifestyle' retirees as well as low-income families and individuals living on the island. Those with the capacity to access services elsewhere argued that they were not disadvantaged by this and that it was an acceptable price to pay for a 'sea change' lifestyle. There was general acknowledgement, however, that the island was unsuited to groups with the most complex needs (e.g. those with mental health problems or drug and alcohol dependency) because there was so little in the way of support for them. Further, some parts of the island lack sewerage and mains water, and unmade roads are often impassable in the rainy season and poor drainage means mosquitoes are a problem. The limits on future development mean infrastructure investment is highly unlikely, and investment in services is very uneconomic, resulting in a service-provision conundrum for the Redland City Council as it seeks to find a way of providing services in the context of competition for funds that are also needed in the growth areas.

#### *6.2.4 Crime, law and order*

Crime is important in relation to disadvantage in two respects. First because of the direct impact of crimes on victims (and perpetrators if caught), and second because of the impact that crime and fear of crime have on the way that area is perceived by its residents and other people. The impact of crime and anti-social behaviour on the stigma associated with the case study areas is discussed in Chapter 7. This section introduces concerns raised in the case studies regarding the actual incidence of crime in these localities.

The incidence of crime was raised as an important current issue in the case study areas of Emerton, Braybrook and Logan Central. Common concerns were around domestic violence, domestic burglary, and youth disorder including assaulting or harassed people on the street:

Yeah, when I used to walk down there with my ex-partner there were so many people who would just look at you, if you didn't give them a cigarette, violence and things you call the police about it and nothing gets done. (Braybrook, resident)

Current crime problems across the areas were partly attributed to alcohol abuse and drug abuse and social disadvantage:

We have a substantial drug problem here, lower socio-economic, and people tend to engage in a bit of drug activity. They engage in gambling activity and they engage in liquor consumption activity. Now, when that happens, of course, the money is taken away from the family unit, so therefore there's a need to operate in unlawful processes in order to obtain the staples of life ... we've got a direct correlation between drug activity and property offences, for example. (Logan Central, police/justice)

In both Auburn and Springvale, many stakeholders noted that crime had become less of an issue now than in the past (although residents' survey evidence in Auburn illustrated the tendency for this to be inaccurately perceived by the wider public). However, it was unclear whether any local reduction in crime was greater than the national decline seen over the past 10–20 years. In any event, lawlessness remained a concern in these as well as other case study areas. For example, in the Auburn Community Safety Survey,<sup>2</sup> 63 per cent of residents of the Auburn LGA indicated some level of anxiety about crime in their local area and 23 per cent said they had felt at direct risk of becoming a victim of crime. There had been similar improvements in Springvale in regard to actual crime rates, in this case also accompanied by improved perceptions of safety in the area.

Perceptions of anti-social behaviour as a 'local problem' were mentioned in all six of the case study areas. This was compounded in local areas in which infrastructure such as street lighting and road-side visibility was poor. These kinds of issues were a concern in most case study areas.

Clearly, across the diverse case study areas included in this research, patterns of settlement, stigmatisation, gentrification and cultural changes associated with these factors influenced actual and perceived safety and crime in each of the case study sites. Also important however are various aspects of housing design and local infrastructure (e.g. lighting and transport). In some ways, the issues of crime and victimisation discussed by research participants in Emerton/Mt Druitt, Braybrook and Logan Central areas reflects Sharkey's 'stuck in place' (2013) US thesis, in which processes of system failure and discrimination have led to particular groups of residents being spatially 'stuck' in disadvantaged communities, and more likely to be involved in crime and victimisation as a spatial consequence. In the case of the present research, racial groupings are far less clear than in the US examples that Sharkey writes about. However, processes of disinvestment in particular local areas and population groups are arguably associated with similar neighbourhood frustrations and consequential criminality/concerns about personal and property safety.

As discussed in Chapter 9, engaging would-be perpetrators of crime or anti-social behaviour in purposeful activities within their local communities may have a beneficial effect on actual and perceived levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

### 6.2.5 *Civil society*

Poverty studies consistently suggest that even in the most disadvantaged of neighbourhoods, networks of relationships between residents can be highly beneficial for various aspects of

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<sup>2</sup> This was a survey with 308 people who live, work or visit the Auburn LGA, undertaken by Auburn Council.

wellbeing including, in some cases, ameliorating the impact of financial disadvantage through resource sharing and economies of scale (Peel 2003). Debate about the *types* of relationships that form in impoverished local areas underpin a vast body of US and UK literature, in particular, related to the idea of welfare dependency and the moral underclass (Mead 1986; 1992; Murray 1994). With some traction in Australia (see e.g. Saunders 2000), the underlying policy concern is that relationships within disadvantaged neighbourhoods can serve to exacerbate 'low aspiration' and a disengagement from mainstream educational and economic participation.

From a different perspective, the concept of social capital and its application by agencies such as the World Bank illustrates that there are different types of networks and relationships that operate in any given society, and that poorer neighbourhoods may often be rich in 'bonding' social capital (links between close friends, families and neighbours), but they tend to be less well-equipped in both 'linking' relationships (relationships between residents and others who have different resources than themselves) and 'bridging' ties (relationships between residents and formal institutions and other forms of power) (Narayan 1999; Woolcock 2000; Stone et al. 2003).

However they are conceptualised, relationships within local areas and the range of ways they operate, relate to 'how places tick' and in turn significantly affect the experiences of local residents, including the capacity of disadvantaged residents to access opportunity. To varying degrees, at least five of the six case study areas examined here illustrate the rich informal civic ties that can exist in areas that are classified as disadvantaged using observable demographic statistics, such as in the typology used for site selection.

Vibrant civil society and well-networked communities in the case study areas were underpinned by a range of historical factors. These included historical struggles to support migrant settlement and hardships associated with the rise and fall of manufacturing, for example. Recent initiatives such as culturally focused activities supporting ATSI culture and practices also supported community relationships. As well, resident-based campaigns associated with 'saving' public infrastructure such as school or hospital closures also 'built' community.

In some of the case study areas, the ways these relationships appear to manifest are extremely open and inclusive and welcoming of new arrivals to the area (including new arrivals to the country, e.g. asylum seekers). In other cases, close and supportive community engagement existed within parts of communities, and not others, and in some cases these led to tensions between groups either along ethnic/cultural grounds or economic/welfare grounds.

Of significance, where high levels of open civic engagement occurred (e.g. in Auburn and Springvale), this ultimately led to enhanced service support for community members in various forms of need, and significantly bolstered other local service provision and community capacity building initiatives within these communities (see Chapter 9).

Council now has a strategy of engaging with the community through community leaders, community volunteer organisations and settlement workers to try to reach smaller and emerging communities. (Auburn, local government officer)

### **6.3 Conclusion: places that disadvantage people**

The economic life of local areas, their services, safety and civic vibrancy not only affect the life chances of disadvantaged and vulnerable residents but also affect the whole community. In the six case study areas examined in this research there was wide variation in the nature and combination of these factors. These various combinations of types of place disadvantage were seen to shape the way places themselves act to compound individual disadvantage, or enable vulnerable and other residents to access social and economic opportunity (locally or elsewhere).

Table 8 illustrates in short-hand form key characteristics of the six case study areas explored in this chapter. What becomes very clear when both the physical *and* institutional features of disadvantaged places are considered is the significance of the relationship between physical and institutional aspects of places for the outcomes and experiences of residents.

Specifically, the table shows that in places in which local economic opportunities are scarce or inaccessible, transport connectivity to more ‘healthy’ economies is critical for the capacity of residents to access opportunities for education, training and employment. This is the case for youth pathways to adulthood, as well as for adults who have experienced significant disruption such as through migration and settlement, family and demographic change, or as a result of industry decline and labour market restructuring.

**Table 8: Summary of resident and stakeholder perceptions of place characteristics across six case study areas**

<b>Case study areas</b>	<b>Employment for residents</b>	<b>Education/ training</b>	<b>Services</b>	<b>Crime/ anti-social behaviour</b>	<b>Civil society</b>	<b>Transport/ distance</b>
Auburn	Limited (or informal)	Adequate	Rich; diverse	Crime fear; anti-social behaviour	Rich; culturally diverse	Mixed (divided geography)
Braybrook	Limited; proximate	Adequate	Emerging/ mixed	Anti-social behaviour	Dynamic/ emerging	Mixed (buses/road some rail)
Emerton/ Mt Druitt	Limited; proximate	Adequate	Rich	Crime fear; anti-social behaviour	Strong ('rallying')	Remote/ expensive
Logan Central	Limited	Poor/ adequate	Rich	Crime fear; anti-social behaviour	Strong ('rallying'); culturally diverse	Limited/ uncoordinated
Russell Island	Very limited	Poor/ limited	Very poor	Anti-social behaviour	Lifestyle/ welfare polarisation	Very poor/ limited
Springvale	Limited (or informal)	Adequate; proximate	Rich; diverse	Anti-social behaviour	Rich; culturally diverse	Well serviced (public/ private)

Source: Authors

Also apparent from Table 8, and throughout the analysis presented above, is the relationship between economic factors within local areas and service provision and support. Many of the most advantaged areas within Australia are both economically vibrant including in local economic opportunities for residents, rich in education and training facilities, as well as being well serviced in terms of health and other social infrastructure. In contrast, among the disadvantaged areas examined here we find—as we might expect due to the bases on which the areas were selected for the study—local economic opportunities for residents are either highly or relatively limited but, in many cases, high levels of service provision are achieved.

As noted in the discussion above, high levels of service provision can be seen in highly positive ways, and as reflecting a societal response to the needs of some of the most disadvantaged members of the community. In other ways, however, some of the local residents and other stakeholders interviewed perceived high levels of service provision in clustered ways as either attracting needy residents to already disadvantaged areas, or as keeping needy households in place (e.g. in the case of elderly Vietnamese in Springvale). The latter case is in many ways

likely to be a desirable and positive outcome, yet is rendered difficult in many cases by the rising cost of housing in the case study areas, examined later in Chapter 8.

Perhaps most significantly, it is the opportunities available to those of working age and who have long potential working lives ahead of them, that are most significant for the long-term implications of disadvantage in the places examined here. Decent primary and secondary schooling, coupled with pathways to training, higher education and employment, are essential for young people; as are pathways for those whose working lives have been disrupted in various ways through migration, family disruption or labour market and economic change.

Finally, and perhaps counter-intuitively, one of the major findings of this chapter is that far from compounding 'people-based' disadvantage, most of the places we have examined provide residents with access to the education, training and potential for economic opportunity and hence the possibility for social and economic 'self-reliance'. A key aspect of understanding this finding is that places are not static in the Australian metropolitan context: each of the places has undergone significant degrees of change within recent years that are altering the nature of the areas over time. We return to the trajectory of the case study areas over time in the concluding chapter.

## 7 THE EXPERIENCE OF LIVING IN A DISADVANTAGED PLACE

This chapter focuses on resident and stakeholder understandings of living in 'disadvantaged areas'. The case study suburbs were chosen for analysis because, as exemplars of the broader cohort classed as 'disadvantaged', they met selected measurable criteria. However, such socio-economic metrics tell only part of the story of these and individuals' subjective beliefs and perceptions are also important in understanding a community's standing and wellbeing. Clapham (2010) argues that individuals' sense of happiness, self-esteem and self-efficacy are crucial in shaping their response to external social conditions. In other words, how people experience living in a place can mediate the extent to which they are disadvantaged by living there. This point has also been made in Australia by Arthurson (2012) who suggests that, while often aware of their neighbourhood's negative reputation, social housing tenants do not experience their localities in these pejorative terms.

This chapter addresses these issues by considering the ways that residents and other stakeholders view what we consider as 'disadvantaged places' and the narratives of community in the case study areas.

Recognising the possibility that residents may see their locality much more favourably than outsiders does not detract from an appreciation of the significant impact of poverty on the wellbeing of those directly affected. Certainly, case study area stakeholder interviewees acknowledged this, manifest most starkly in the reliance of some families on charity to avoid hunger:

I was taken aback by how disadvantaged they are. Food is provided for them at the neighbourhood house. They feed them lunch. For a lot of these people it's the only meal they'll have that day. (Braybrook, police/justice)

Loaves & Fishes or Tribe of Judah [two charitable organisations] I think have a Free Food Friday, and they have thousands of people turn up and queue, waiting for food. (Logan Central, NGO community worker/service provider)

However, in recognising the understandings of local residents and stakeholders of their areas, we acknowledge the agency of those people, and their ability to make positive change in their suburbs. Such an understanding is important in the framing and development of policies aimed at mitigating social disadvantage (Wiesel & Easthope 2013).

### 7.1 Negative stigma

Research has consistently shown how areas characterised as disadvantaged can also suffer from the imposition of negative stereotypes, which can have very real consequences for local residents (Hastings & Dean 2003; Hastings 2004; Kearns et al. 2013). Living in a place with a negative reputation can compound the experience of disadvantage, affecting an individual's health and wellbeing (Bauder 2002; Permentier et al. 2007; Kelaher et al. 2010).

Across most case study areas there was a keen awareness of this issue. Numerous resident and stakeholder interviewees complained about the negative stigma sometimes associated with their suburbs. The exception was Springvale where the dominant (although not universal) view seemed to be that a negative stigma was no longer attached to the suburb.

Usually considered as grossly distorted or outdated, these unflattering images were often seen as originating in, or perpetuated by, the media. As argued by some, this was more than a matter of hurt local pride, since residence in an affected area was thought to negatively impact on residents experiencing discrimination by potential employers (e.g. Emerton/Mount Drutt and Russell Island) as well as on property values (e.g. Russell Island).

In all case study areas there had been attempts to counter such negative images, in certain cases with some apparent success, as more positive place narratives gained prominence. Despite this, negative stigma still affected residents' lives. For example in Auburn, focus group participants discussed this issue. One noted her daughter's reluctance to admit to her Auburn address because of the stigma associated with the area while another had been cautioned by friends that he would struggle to find good husbands for his daughters if he continued living in the area. A third participant explained that when her real estate agent recommended a property in Auburn, she was initially cautious because of the area's poor image, although she subsequently noted that 'when we actually moved in, the feeling is different than when you think about it from the outside'.

In case study areas with a higher concentration of public housing, negative stigma associated with welfare dependency was seen as a particular problem. For example, Braybrook suffered from a particularly poor reputation in the 1990s associated with serious problems with drugs, crime, violence and youth disengagement in the area, partly associated with a change in public housing policy at around this time in favour of targeting the most needy applicants (Burke & Hulse 2005). Similarly, sections of Logan Central's community were consistently portrayed as being entrenched in a culture of welfare dependency. 'Bogan from Logan' is a disparaging quip well recognised by many Queenslanders and used to label Logan residents more broadly. Logan research participants believed that such negative stereotypes had limited investment in the area (RDA 2013), and in Braybrook and Emerton/Mount Druitt, images of this kind were seen to result in discrimination against job seekers based on their home address:

We've had this stigma put on us for years ... I wanted to get an apprenticeship. I sent away 35 applications ... Since I put Mount Druitt on there I was knocked back on every one. My last one—I put St Marys—I got that apprenticeship. (Mount Druitt, resident)

While Russell Island has no public housing, the large number of people living on the island who are reliant on welfare has had a similar effect:

Some locals have told me that there's a stigma attached as well. They've applied for jobs and put down their addresses as Russell Island and haven't got a look in. Then they use a friend's address at Redland Bay and they've been able to get an interview and get a job. (Russell Island, resident)

Whether such alleged discrimination in fact occurs is an open question well beyond the scope of this research. What is, however, clear is that many residents strongly believe that associated prejudice limits their prospects.

Concern was raised by research participants in all of the case study areas about the role of the media in perpetuating these negative stereotypes. Certainly, our 2004–2013 review of media coverage related to the case study areas featured numerous negative media stories focused on crime and anti-social behaviour. Box 1 below provides some examples of the kinds of media stories often generated about the case study areas.

### Box 1: Typical (negative) news stories of disadvantaged areas

A SENIOR member of the Muslim Brotherhood Movement gang has been quizzed by police after a man was shot in the neck. Police are investigating whether the Auburn shooting on Tuesday night is linked to gang rivalries in Sydney's southwest ('Car pair quizzed', *The Daily Telegraph*, 03 March 2011).

One Busways driver was held at knifepoint and forced to hand over cash and his mobile phone at Jersey Road, Emerton ('Bus drivers to avoid danger zones after attacks', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 March 2011).

That leaked report in fact reveals little that a sharp-eyed reader wouldn't have figured out over the years, with one news item after another about people chopped up outside nightclubs, stabbed in Springvale, arrested in their dozens for drug trafficking or chased to their deaths from Asian-themed events ('Cops hid the gang reality', *The Herald Sun*, 21 May 2010).

An elderly woman bashed by local thugs faces a 10-year wait to move to a new public-funded house. The 68-year-old grandmother, who does not want to be identified for fear of retaliation, is now too scared to leave her Office of Housing home in Braybrook ('Granny living in fear', *The Herald Sun*, 30 May 2005).

Racial violence erupted in Logan again last night, as police struggled to separate a group of Pacific Islanders and Aborigines for the third night. Premier Campbell Newman joined police in appealing for calm, while Logan mayor Pam Parker demanded an immediate increase in police presence and a 'zero tolerance' approach in the multicultural community ('Race tension erupts in simmering south', *The Courier Mail*, 15 January 2013).

Not long after Athens declared itself the cultural capital of the known world it was over-run by uncouth barbarians, namely the Macedonians, who then went on to conquer half of Asia. By way of perspective, it was a bit like if Woollahra had been taken over by the residents of Mt Druitt, who then went on to invade New Zealand ('Laziness the key to Greek plan for world domination', *Daily Telegraph*, 25 August 2012).

Charlotte Feldman, a member of the [Darling Point] action group, dismissed suggestions anyone had harassed Mrs Jones. 'This is not Mount Druitt. People know how to behave' ('Locals in a lather over Moran heir's shindigs', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 February 2012).

For Russell Island, the stigma was more associated with the high unemployment rate rather than crime:

The television icon and multi Logi winner, Val Layman, from the hit show *Prisoner* is taking a stand to save her island home. She's concerned it's being turned into an island ghetto; home to an army of people who don't want work, just a carefree life ('Island Haven', *Today Tonight*, 8 May 2012).

In some cases, such media coverage was considered unnecessary and a gratuitous reinforcement of negative images. An example cited by one interviewee concerned the treatment of a 2013 visit to Western Sydney by Julia Gillard when:

... the only people they interviewed in [the Mount Druitt] mall were people who conformed to the stereotype (tattooed, wearing thongs, appearing drunk)—that's the story they wanted to tell. [Local people] ... do find it really distressing'. (NGO community worker/support provider)

This suggests that the reality of the situation is often in stark contrast to outsiders' accounts:

But things can get out of control and that is when bad news sells and that is when we're portrayed as a city out of control. I can assure you, in the 17 years I've been here, these out of control moments are very, very short-lived. (Logan Central, police/justice)



Associated with the negative stigma often attached to their areas by outsiders, some research participants believed their locality was treated as a 'dumping ground' by external stakeholders, including businesses and government. This idea was raised in a number of different contexts:

Outside perception? They think it's a dust bin for new arrivals. Much maligned and unfairly, they don't see the vibrancy. Most people haven't been here. (Springvale, police/justice)

Auburn has traditionally been seen as a bit of a dumping area, with industry, and no matter how many people they bring in, there's the idea that Auburn can take it. (Auburn, resident)

But you have people from Centrelink, like on the mainland, want to get rid of some people, 'oh go over to the islands, go over to the islands'. Well we're not just going to get brushed off because you want to get rid of them. (Russell Island, industry/commerce)

Everybody always considered Mount Druitt a 'dumping ground' but it is actually an over-serviced suburb. (Emerton, state housing provider)

The government isn't looking after the Western Sydney area, they feel that Western Sydney is a dumping area, they can dump rubbish real estate here because no one will question. (Auburn, resident)

In Russell Island, there were claims that low-income people were being actively recruited to the island, both by 'unscrupulous' real estate agents drumming up custom and, more worryingly, by service providers. The allegation that government and housing service providers deliberately encouraged disadvantaged people to move to the island is a claim we cannot verify and no specific details were provided. Nevertheless, independently of one another, several interviewees cited this belief.

In all of the case study areas, local stakeholders had attempted to challenge the negative stereotypes of their areas and to encourage more positive investment and attention for their areas. In some cases this had included actively seeking and promoting positive media coverage of the area, such as in Auburn where the Auburn Community Development Network has frequently contributed to positive news reports on the area on SBS and ABC.

In other cases, this has included formal policies to 're-brand' the area, such as Logan City Council's *Rediscover Logan* campaign (discussed in more depth in Chapter 9) or the application submitted by the Bay Islands Chamber of Commerce to formally change the name of Russell Island to its original name Canaipa Island (*Bay Island Breeze* October 2013).

## 7.2 Narratives of community

As discussed above, stigmatised portrayals of case study areas were rarely accepted by resident and stakeholder research participants. Not only were such portrayals actively challenged, but many participants spoke about their communities in largely or wholly positive terms. This provided a more nuanced view of life in areas of concentrated disadvantage than may be painted by socio-economic statistics or by media accounts. Given the uniqueness of each suburb, we present a brief summary of some of the dominant narratives of community identified for each area below.

While acknowledging that their suburbs were places of disadvantage in some respects, many spoke of their allegiance to, and pride in, their communities. People cited feelings of belonging and attachment to their neighbourhoods, strong social capital, and civic responsibility. In those suburbs with significant populations of migrants (Auburn, Springvale and Logan Central), pride in the multiculturalism of the area was an important theme. There were also strong narratives of positive change across the case studies, and the opportunities that these places afforded to their residents were often stressed. While these observations applied across all six case

studies, there were also hints of a growing discord on Russell Island, with concerns being expressed by the retired or 'sea changer' cohort that their sense of community and island lifestyle was being disrupted by what they saw as an 'unwanted element'.

### 7.2.1 *Emerton/Mount Druitt*

Despite the area's external image as a troubled place, a strong allegiance to the area and pride in the community were dominant sentiments among Mount Druitt residents. While some people might feel trapped in a place they would prefer to leave, interviewee sentiment strongly suggested that these were in the minority. Such views were supported by a 2012 Blacktown Council survey demonstrating that 74 per cent of Mount Druitt respondents felt they 'belong[ed] to their local neighbourhood'. Similarly, while 64 per cent were 'satisfied with the Blacktown area as a place to live and spend time', only 12 per cent were dissatisfied. Moreover, as an indicator of social capital, 83 per cent felt they could count on their neighbours for help (Blacktown Council 2013).

Such generally positive views about the place were reflected in many of the case study interviews:

... this is a beautiful area and plenty of people live here by choice. They might have come here in the first place for economic reasons [to access low-cost housing] but when their situation improves they stay. There are many I class as millionaires who choose to stay here. (Emerton/Mount Druitt, community representative)

Phrases such as 'sense of belonging', 'local pride' and 'strong social capital' were recurrent in stakeholder interviews although these were often counterposed by frustration and resentment at the distorted image of the area that continued to be widely portrayed in the media.

### 7.2.2 *Auburn*

Resident focus group participants and interviewees spoke positively about the community in Auburn. They saw the area as 'dynamic' and positively influenced by its multicultural and diverse population having 'a real energy to it'. Residents spoke positively of the cultural diversity of the area. They cited examples of strong ties between neighbours, with reciprocal borrowing and gifting.

Focus group participants noted that young people in the Auburn area in particular had a tendency to socialise with people from many different countries and that this provided them with a strong foundation for adapting to change and accepting others. In the words of one NGO community worker/service provider, 'no one think's it's odd or weird or forbidden to hang out with people from different cultural backgrounds'.

Some interviewees noted that the Auburn community as a whole was made up of many different sub-communities. In some cases, people reportedly interacted mainly within their own language and cultural group. While there was also fragmentation within some communities, the dominant discourse was of a positive multicultural community supported by public events and a multitude of both cultural-specific and cross-cultural services.

However, some participants noted that many residents faced social barriers due to poor English skills. Relatively high resident mobility in some parts of the area was also an important factor limiting the scope to develop neighbourly relationships, both in properties set aside for recently arrived refugees, and more generally in apartment buildings with rapid resident turnover.

There were also reports of inter-generational divides in the community, compounded by the fact that many among the older population were from an Anglo background and had seen the area change significantly over the past few decades. Focus group participants noted that this had resulted in some older Anglo residents feeling excluded from the broader community and

the way that the community has changed over time, with the majority of services and facilities now geared towards migrants and younger people.

### *7.2.3 Springvale*

Similarly to Auburn, research participants in Springvale spoke about their pride in the multiculturalism of the area, and a discourse arose of Springvale as a place of welcome and opportunity with a deep and diverse civil society, including welfare and advocacy organisations and many faith groups. Indeed, given the high degree of multi-cultural mix in both Auburn and Springvale, there appeared to be remarkably little conflict and friction associated with ethnic differences and cultural needs.

Much of the pride evident in the community was founded on years of consolidated grass-roots responses to community needs, most notably meeting the needs of newly arrived migrants in the area. Also stemming from this was the high level of community cohesion and acceptance of diversity among residents.

The reputation Springvale developed as an undesirable place to live following the decline of manufacturing in the area in the 1990s was seen to have evolved into one in which diverse food and culture were celebrated.

As in Auburn, however, some of those apparently least supported were Anglo residents with multiple and complex needs and not connected with culturally specific networks (e.g. Indochinese communities). These included, for example, unemployed men who had 'lost out' during the decline of manufacturing and had subsequently experienced years of cumulative disadvantage and associated problems.

### *7.2.4 Logan Central*

While research participants recognised that Logan City faced challenges, including shifting social norms and behaviour in regard to welfare dependency among particular groups, they rejected the notion that this was the only story to tell about the city.

Logan City's community is culturally and linguistically diverse with over 215 ethnicities represented across the LGA (Logan City Council 2013a). In a similar vein to Auburn and Springvale, interview participants and residents described Logan's cultural diversity as a positive aspect of the region.

Resilience and strength were also identified as characteristics of the community, as illustrated by interview participants who expressed their sentiments regarding the people of Logan:

It's a community. I've never seen a community so reactive to events. ... They come together when there's a crisis. (Logan Central, state government officer)

There's a real strength in this community. (Logan Central, education/training provider)

There was a strong narrative of positive change underpinning the sentiments of research participants, focused in particular on nurturing and supporting young people in the area. Of particular note is the work undertaken by Indigenous and Pacific Islander elders to increase cultural awareness among the young people in an aim to engender respect through awareness and understanding:

Through this youth group we're ... getting all different nationalities, cultures ... we're going to bring a Tongan elder in one time, Aboriginal elder in one time ... So they explain to the whole group not only to their people ... so they get to understand each other's cultures. Because you see a lot of these wars are around religion and culture ... It's ignorance and just not understanding the other people. But there's things being done to address it like that youth group. (Logan Central, resident)

### 7.2.5 *Braybrook*

Braybrook had been a thriving working class community that was devastated by economic restructuring and impacted by changes to public housing policy allocation in the mid-1990s to target those most in need. The resulting stigmatisation added to the disadvantage faced by residents. However, local people had mixed feelings about reputation and reality:

People in Braybrook, in our consultation said they want to live in Braybrook. They think it's a great place. They don't want the label of disadvantaged. (Braybrook, local government officer)

As well as long term residents, there was a new group of people moving into newly built housing in the area. Among this cohort were young families and couples attracted by the relative affordability and the generous size of the housing blocks. Of these groups it was the new, mostly well-educated arrivals to the area who attracted most of the attention of existing residents. While the older cohort understood this migration as gentrification and were concerned about the impact on rents, they were overwhelmingly positive about the culture and energy of these newer residents. The new group was reported as being highly motivated by social and environmental sustainability; valuing cultural diversity; having a class consciousness; and actively seeking community:

The culture they bring is uplifting. Workers, not interested in dole, and environmentalists big on sustainability. This is a good thing for Braybrook. They're very social, want to join their kids up with things. Creating more social places people can join in like playgrounds and gardens. (Braybrook, community representative)

These newer and more vibrant communities were in some cases underpinned by clever and innovative use of social media to engage locals in local community enterprises and festivities. Related to this, there was also a thriving local arts and music scene, supported by investment by state and local governments and the not-for-profit sector that engages residents, particularly young people. Such changes reflected a significant growth in social capital.

### 7.2.6 *Russell Island*

Among the Russell Island research participants, statements about the virtues of living there were also forthcoming. While these were linked to an appreciation of the place as a 'sea change' location—one which was peaceful and beautiful—an equally strong discourse related to the strong sense of community that could be found there. Participants described, for example, how the island was small enough for everyone to know each other and they reported high levels of sociality through clubs, associations and informal catch-ups:

It's great being in a small community where you can wave to everyone you drive past and you see—your shopping takes twice as long because you have to have a chat on every aisle. It's very nice. (Russell Island, resident)

For these individuals, Russell Island was not seen as a place of disadvantage and the objective indicators that denote it as such were viewed as inadequately recording the income and wealth of self-funded retirees who are neither working nor old enough to secure an aged pension. Yet this represented only one side to the Russell Island experience and was one that was predominantly enjoyed by the large number of older residents who had moved to the island as a place of retirement. When asked to describe the 'Russell Island community', participants generally identified two dominant sub-groups. The first was the retirees, but a second group—one seen to be dependent on welfare payments and attracted to the island by its low-cost housing—was thought to have a quite different experience of island living. One resident, for example, explained that there were some people on the island who would not be enjoying the same level of community as others:

Well I come from working with the numerous isolated women on the island, so I appreciate your experience. But my experience is that there are a lot of isolated people on the Islands that don't feel included in the community. (Russell Island, resident)

In addition, there was a growing sense among the retirees that this second group were 'spoiling' the island by bringing with them a set of anti-social behaviours that had not previously been encountered, such as public drunkenness, swearing, loitering and loud arguments:

There is an element on the island that like to engage in these activities and speeding and dangerous driving, drunk or drug related, which spoil it for everyone. They're only a minority but they're here ... they'll argue, swear, in front of everyone in the shop—disgraceful. (Russell Island, resident)

The effect of this was the emergence of what some described as a more polarised community. In several cases, both residents and external service providers characterised the distinction between island inhabitants in terms of a growing divide between 'the haves and the have nots', observing that there is very little interaction between the two groups, little understanding of the issues faced by those with more complex needs, and a growing anxiety on the part of those more affluent about the presence of disadvantaged people on the island.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

All of the case study areas researched for this project had been the subject of some negative attention as a result of their disadvantage. This was reflected in terms of negative stigma associated with these areas and the ways in which they are perceived by outsiders and perpetuated in the media. It was also reflected in the comments made by some residents and stakeholders that they saw the interventions of external organisations (including businesses and governments) as treating their areas with little respect. However, across the case study areas, local residents' and stakeholders' own narratives of their communities were consistently in conflict with such stigmatised views, and actively challenged these.

Consistent with the diversity of case study areas included in the analysis, the basis for resident positivity and optimism across the areas also varied and might be described as 'adaptive'. In areas where many residents were long term, pride and connectedness was borne out of perceived struggles (e.g. enduring the hardships associated with refugee settlement or the decline of local manufacturing and associated economic downturns). In areas characterised by contemporary dynamism, resident and stakeholder perceptions appeared to include an acceptance of the positive impact of change, in addition to some potential concerns (e.g. house price rises). The only cases where divisions within communities appeared to have a significantly polarising effect (e.g. in the case of Russell Island) were where migration dynamics were regarded more warily.

Some of these findings appear to bear out evidence from our household survey covering 800 residents of four disadvantaged suburbs in Sydney. Undertaken as part of the same research project, but separately reported, this survey suggested that, within such areas, quite polarised views about place attachment may co-exist. While more than two-thirds of respondents (68%) expressed a feeling of belonging in their neighbourhood, more than a third (37%) said that, given the opportunity, they would leave their locality (Pawson & Herath, forthcoming 2014).

Finally, analysis of stigma and lived experience explored in this chapter illustrates the temporal dynamics of local area life. In some of the case study areas, residents were aware that negative stigma had arisen due to factors such as crime. The lived experience of these sites emphasises that stigma has a 'lag effect', and that over time the once negative stereotypes associated with place can accommodate new, more positive and optimistic narratives as local areas evolve. Equally, however, temporal dynamics can operate in reverse: places perceived as desirable can become stigmatised in negative ways over time as their characteristics change.

## 8 THE ROLE OF HOUSING MARKETS IN CONTRIBUTING TO SOCIO-SPATIAL POLARISATION

### 8.1 Background

As emphasised in Section 2.1.1, crucial in the backdrop to the current study is the already well-recognised post-1970s suburbanisation of disadvantage in Australia's cities (Badcock 1997; Gleeson & Randolph 2002; Randolph & Holloway 2005a). While at one time substantially located in inner suburbs, recent decades have seen progressive outward shifts in spatial concentrations of disadvantaged people. As documented by this project (Hulse et al. 2014), the contemporary geography of disadvantage in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane is entirely consistent with this analysis.

An earlier report associated with the current project (Pawson et al. 2012) identified two streams of literature on the underlying drivers of suburbanising disadvantage in Australia. One has stressed labour market factors, notably the decline of suburban and city fringe manufacturing activity and the continuing pre-eminence of central cities in accommodating higher status employment (Beer & Forster 2002; Dodson 2005). The other has centred on the housing system and housing market factors contributing to the process (Arthurson & Jacobs 2003; Yates & Wood 2005; Randolph & Holloway 2007). It is on this second set of factors and processes that this chapter focuses. The main body of the account draws on the case study work outlined in Chapter 4; in particular, interviews with key local stakeholders including housing providers, real estate agents and community workers. This material is contextualised and supported by secondary data analysis drawing on census data and housing market datasets.

Following on from the clearance of inner-city slums and the onward march of inner-city gentrification from the 1970s, the association between spatially concentrated disadvantage and housing factors was mainly argued in terms of issues connected with public housing. In particular, since public housing has come under increasing pressure to target lettings to the most disadvantaged (Burke & Hulse 2005), the associated filtering process has compounded the impact of economic change as described above, with the inflow of new tenants becoming increasingly dominated by workless or high needs households (Hulse et al. 2011).

However, it has been true for some time that more low-income households are resident in private rental than in social rental housing (Seelig et al. 2006). Hence, despite allocations targeting, the geography of disadvantage is no longer dominated by the geography of social housing. Hence, in their research on social disadvantage and housing tenure in Sydney and Melbourne, Randolph and Holloway (2005b) identified how large areas of high disadvantage were associated with both public and private rental sectors, but also (especially in Melbourne) with high levels of home ownership, and that such disadvantage was underpinned by poor quality and unsuitable dwelling stock.

Writing in 2007, Randolph and Holloway (2007) showed that, even then, concentrations of (private renter) households in receipt of Commonwealth Rent Assistance were already prominent in Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne. This is not to argue that the private rental sector is exclusively associated with low-income housing: rather, as argued by the authors, a bifurcation of the sector is ongoing, with higher-income, childless professionals accommodated in inner-urban neighbourhoods while lower income families with children are pushed outwards into middle ring or outer suburban locations. Implicit in the Randolph and Holloway argument was that the evolving geography of low-rent housing drives the changing spatial pattern of low-income households.

In an important contribution to this debate Yates and Wood (2005) analysed changes in the provision of private rental housing in Sydney 1991–2001 and changes in rents charged.

Specifically, they identified the factors affecting the likelihood of an existing rental dwelling maintaining the same real rent value over the 10-year period, ‘filtering down’—that is, moving from being a mid-rent dwelling to a low-rent dwelling—or exiting from the private rental market. Crucially, the analysis showed a positive correlation between the proportion of low-rent dwellings in a given area and the probability that existing dwellings would ‘filter down’—market dynamics were leading to ‘an increasing spatial concentration of low rent dwellings’ and thereby reinforcing existing spatial polarisation (Yates & Wood 2005, p.91).

Before discussing research evidence on links between housing system factors and evolving spatial patterns of disadvantage, this chapter first recounts findings on local housing market conditions in the case study localities; specifically in relation to the housing affordability pressures affecting many lower income households.

## **8.2 Housing costs and affordability in the case study suburbs**

### *8.2.1 Housing affordability pressures*

In all of the case studies there was a narrative of local residents being stressed by unaffordable housing. This came through especially strongly in the ‘overseas migrant gateway suburbs’ of Auburn, Logan Central and Springvale. Property prices and rents might be relatively low by citywide standards, but since typical incomes were even lower, it was widely argued that housing affordability was a severe and growing problem for many local people. To contextualise the detailed discussion of associated issues, this section first makes reference to our broader analysis of housing market dynamics in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in the decade to 2011.

As reported more fully elsewhere (Hulse et al. 2014), suburbs identified as ‘disadvantaged’ in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane were also generally characterised by relatively low house prices and rents. For example, as shown in Tables 9 and 10, median prices of detached houses traded in disadvantaged suburbs in 2011 were 67–79 per cent of citywide medians. Similarly, 2011 median entry rents for three-bedroom detached houses in these areas were 85–91 per cent of the GMA median. However, as also demonstrated in Tables 9 and 10, the 2001–2011 period saw a general ‘catch-up’ tendency; that is, percentage price and rent increases in disadvantaged suburbs tended to be greater than in other parts of the three cities. For example, whereas the 2001 median price for detached dwellings in disadvantaged areas of Melbourne was 69 per cent of the citywide norm, the equivalent percentage for 2011 was 79 per cent. Similarly, the 2001 median rent for a three-bedroom detached house in Sydney’s disadvantaged suburbs was 85 per cent of the GMA median, whereas the equivalent 2011 figure was 91 per cent.

**Table 9: Median house prices by dwelling type: disadvantaged suburbs versus other suburbs, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, 2001 and 2011**

	Detached/Torrens		Other dwellings	
	% of GMA median 2001	% of GMA median 2011	% of city median 2001	% of GMA median 2011
Sydney				
Disadvantaged suburbs	69.7	69.7	60.9	65.4
Other suburbs	110.6	111.5	106.3	107.2
Melbourne				
Disadvantaged suburbs	69.2	78.6	56.5	75.5
Disadvantaged suburbs	109.7	106.1	106.5	105.7
Brisbane				
Disadvantaged suburbs	56.3	67.6	70.6	82.7
Other suburbs	104.7	103.9	102.6	102.4

Source: Hulse et al. 2014

**Table 10: Median entry rents by dwelling type: disadvantaged suburb versus other suburbs, Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, 2001 and 2011**

	3-bed detached		1-2 bed other	
	% of GMA median 2001	% of GMA median 2011	% of GMA median 2001	% of GMA median 2011
Sydney				
Disadvantaged suburbs	85.4	91.3	65.4	74.4
Other suburbs	104.2	108.8	105.8	104.7
Melbourne				
Disadvantaged suburbs	85.0	88.2	77.8	80.6
Other suburbs	105	102.9	108.3	104.5
Brisbane				
Disadvantaged suburbs	84.6	85.7	75.8	81.7
Other suburbs	102.6	105.7	103	103.3

Source: Hulse et al. 2014

Focusing now on our six case study suburbs, as shown in Table 11 below, typical 2011 mortgage payments and rents in these areas were somewhat lower than citywide medians, although in some instances (especially Auburn, Braybrook and Springvale) the difference was modest. The larger margins found particularly in Emerton and Russell Island are consistent with the story revealed by our broader analysis for such 'isolate' and 'marginal' disadvantaged suburbs to be somewhat detached from mainstream metropolitan housing markets (see Hulse et al. 2014).



**Table 11: 2011 housing costs in case study suburbs (\$)**

	Median monthly mortgage payment			Median weekly rent (\$)		
	Case study area (a)	GMA (b)	(a) as % of (b)	Case study area (a)	GMA (b)	(a) as % of (b)
Auburn	1,800	2,167	83.1	362	412	87.9
Emerton	1,517	2,167	70.0	262	412	63.6
Braybrook	1,520	1,810	84.0	287	337	85.2
Springvale	1,500	1,810	82.9	287	337	85.2
Logan Central	1,430	1,950	73.3	262	362	72.4
Russell Island	1,083	1,950	55.5	212	362	58.6

Source: ABS Census 2011

Note: Rent figures relate to private dwellings rented from real estate agents or other private landlords; public housing rents are not included here.

Indirect evidence from our broader analysis (see Tables 9 and 10) is generally consistent with the widely held case study interviewee perception that recent years had seen declining housing affordability in their locality. Especially in Auburn and Springvale, historically reputed for their role in accommodating new migrants, research participants believed that the availability of lower cost housing was no longer a strong draw. In Auburn, for example, interviewees recalled circumstances around 2001 when the relative oversupply of private rental housing made it possible to negotiate with agents on rent free weeks. This was a far cry from 2013's highly competitive market. Areas such as Auburn and Springvale nevertheless remained attractive to many recent arrivals to Australia mainly due to the existence of minority ethnic cultural networks, facilities and relevant services, as well the fact that these areas were relatively well connected within the metropolitan area.

In other case study areas, it was appreciated that with rents continuing to run at levels well below GMA medians, the local availability of relatively low-cost housing remained a significant attractor of population from outside the area. Reflecting the figures shown in Table 11 above, this was particularly true for Russell Island. Exemplifying the norm for 'marginal' suburbs (see Section 3.2), Russell Island is geographically marginal to the Brisbane metropolitan area. For residents, therefore, high costs of travel to the mainland to access essential services and employment meant that the benefit of cheap rents could be offset or cancelled out by additional living expenses. There were interviewee concerns that many low-income renters may have arrived on the island without properly understanding this and, as a result, found themselves cut off from many activities and opportunities and trapped in an unsatisfactory situation.

Some of the recent migrants for whom places such as Auburn, Logan Central and Springvale have been particularly attractive can be especially disadvantaged in competing for suitable housing, for example due to lack of knowledge of the housing market and not having an Australian rental history. More generally, since these are fixed in value, irrespective of local housing market conditions, reliance on Centrelink benefits is highly problematic for people aspiring to live in any but the lowest-cost accommodations. For example, using the well-established norm that rental payments exceeding 30 per cent of income place a low-income household in housing stress, the 2013 rental affordability threshold for a single person reliant on benefits was about \$180 per week, with the comparable figures for couples and larger families around \$280 and \$340 respectively. However, in Auburn, for example, late 2013 *lower*

*quartile* entry rents for two-bedroom flats were \$350 per week, with the three-bedroom *lower quartile* at \$450 (Housing NSW 2013).

A real estate agent perspective linked the declining local availability of low-rent housing in one case study area to rising standards of provision associated with new investor landlord activity. A decade ago, it was claimed, standard practice had been to prioritise buying a property cheaply, investing the minimum amount in making it rentable and renting it out at a relatively low price. Nowadays, however, landlords were reportedly more inclined to upgrade purchased properties prior to letting and to work to higher standards such as air conditioning.

Also worth noting is that housing affordability problems were not entirely confined to private sector accommodation. While social housing tenants are generally understood as paying an income-related rent, they are not entirely insulated from the inflationary impacts of demand and supply pressures in the private market. The income-related rent ceiling for any area is the market rent for a 'comparable property' in the locality. Thus, the minority of public housing tenants in (predominantly low paid) employment can find themselves paying relatively large amounts if their home is located in an area of relatively high housing demand. In Braybrook, relatively well located within Melbourne and subject to active gentrification, this was reported as resulting in less impoverished public housing tenants being charged well over \$300 per week.

### 8.2.2 *Housing (un)affordability impacts*

Local impacts of growing housing unaffordability pressures affecting most case study areas were reported to include the expansion of a marginal or informal rental sector involving boarding houses (registered and unregistered), sub-letting and room sharing of overcrowded mainstream rental properties, and occupancy of make-shift accommodation such as sheds and garages:

We've got a family at the moment who came here on a bridging visa from [name of country] ... Mum, dad, a girl about three and the boy about five or six and they were sleeping in a shed here at [name of suburb] and paying \$250 a week for it. A shed: not lined, concrete floor, no furniture, no bed, no cutlery, no nothing. (Logan Central, NGO community worker/service provider)

... we've got families that sneak other families in just to help them, so you've got 20 people in some places. This is not unusual to have 15 to 20 people living in one house, especially some of the Islanders around these areas. (Logan Central, NGO community worker/service provider)

Auburn interviewees also reported how people priced out of adequate housing were forced to resort to boarding houses and garages for accommodation while it was 'not uncommon' for six to eight men to be sharing a two-bedroom unit with as many as 10–12 people sometimes resident. The same phenomenon and experience was also reported by residents and community workers in Springvale, a Melbourne suburb in which room sub-letting could be advertised on some of the major real estate web sites, normally reserved for full tenancies or purchase.

Attention was also drawn to the relatively high incidence of homelessness in some areas although precise numbers are difficult to discern since available census-derived statistics are published only at a larger geographical scale. In the Logan-Beautesert region as a whole, for example, there were estimated to be 1066 people homeless under the ABS definition in 2011, around 1 per cent of the entire national total (Queensland Audit Office 2013).

As might be expected, it would appear from case study evidence that the local expansion of 'marginal rental' accommodation has tended to be most prevalent in areas where, notwithstanding their 'socially disadvantaged' status, particularly high demand has pushed up rents to levels not far below citywide norms. This is true, for example, of the 'migrant reception'

areas Auburn and Springvale (see Table 11 above). In part, willingness to accept low-quality housing conditions may reflect a resistance to moving to lower-price neighbourhoods with this, in turn, partly attributable to the high value placed on social and cultural ties especially by recent migrants.

Notwithstanding significant resistance (see above), a final identified impact of growing affordability pressures affecting 'higher rent' disadvantaged suburbs was displacement from the local area in favour of lower price housing markets further towards the city fringe or beyond. In Brisbane, for instance, their relative positions in the housing affordability hierarchy meant that incomers to Russell Island were said to include people displaced from relatively nearby (but better connected) Logan Central.

### 8.3 Changing housing market structures and processes in disadvantaged places

To contextualise the housing-related qualitative case study findings discussed in this section we first set out key statistics on the housing market structures and characteristics of disadvantaged areas in general, and of the six selected case study suburbs, in particular. 'Disadvantaged areas in general' refers to the 177 suburbs within the three cities (10% of the total) defined as such according to SEIFA metrics (see Section 3.1 for a summary of the methodology, as fully explained in Hulse et al. 2014).

#### 8.3.1 Changing housing tenure structures

As shown in Table 12 below there were some notable contrasts between the housing market structures of disadvantaged suburbs and other areas of each city. While owner occupation remained the majority tenure for every area type category in 2011, rental housing was significantly more prevalent in disadvantaged places. In Sydney and Brisbane the difference was considerable, with rental housing accounting for around 40 per cent of all households in disadvantaged areas of these cities while in non-disadvantaged areas the proportion was under 30 per cent.

**Table 12: Comparing 2011 housing tenure distributions for disadvantaged suburbs with citywide norms**

	<b>% Outright owners</b>	<b>% Owned with mortgage</b>	<b>% Private rent</b>	<b>% Social rent</b>
Disadvantaged suburbs	25.7	28.4	27.0	12.7
Other suburbs	31.3	36.2	24.8	3.6
<i>Sydney total</i>	<i>30.4</i>	<i>34.8</i>	<i>25.1</i>	<i>5.2</i>
Disadvantaged suburbs	33.2	29.0	25.1	5.8
Other suburbs	32.6	38.0	22.9	2.4
<i>Melbourne total</i>	<i>32.7</i>	<i>36.6</i>	<i>23.3</i>	<i>3.0</i>
Disadvantaged suburbs	23.0	27.9	30.7	11.9
Other suburbs	27.6	38.1	26.7	3.3
<i>Brisbane total</i>	<i>27.1</i>	<i>36.9</i>	<i>27.2</i>	<i>4.3</i>

Source: Hulse et al. 2014; original data from 2011 ABS census. Notes: Disadvantaged suburbs in Sydney include the two outlier suburbs of Waterloo and Haymarket; Rows do not sum to 100% as total includes 'other rental' and 'not stated' categories which are not shown.

**Table 13: Comparing 2001–2011 housing tenure change for disadvantaged suburbs and citywide norms**

	Owner occupied	Private rent	Social rent
	Percentage point change		
Disadvantaged suburbs	-1.7	3.1	-1.4
Other suburbs	-0.2	1.9	-0.3
<i>Sydney total</i>	-0.3	2.0	-0.5
Disadvantaged suburbs	-6.1	6.0	-0.4
Other suburbs	-2.5	3.9	-0.3
<i>Melbourne total</i>	-3.0	4.3	-0.3
Disadvantaged suburbs	-3.8	5.3	-2.5
Other suburbs	-2.2	2.9	-0.1
<i>Brisbane total</i>	-2.2	3.2	-0.5

Source: Hulse et al. 2014; original data from 2001 and 2011 ABS censuses. Note: Disadvantaged suburbs in Sydney include the two outlier suburbs of Waterloo and Haymarket.

As shown in Table 13 above, however, there were marked changes in tenure distributions over the decade to 2011. These are shown in ‘percentage point’ terms. Thus, in Sydney, private rental dwellings increased from 23.1 per cent to 25.1 per cent of all dwellings. The overall picture shows some regularity, irrespective of an area’s disadvantaged/not disadvantaged status. Generally, both home ownership and social renting fell back while private renting increased. Perhaps significantly, however, in all three cities, there was greater volatility in disadvantaged areas than in other areas. Of particular note is that the expansion of private rental housing was more substantial in disadvantaged areas in all three cities. Collectively, disadvantaged suburbs in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane saw their private rental rate increase by 4.6 percentage points to 26.8 per cent of all dwellings, topping the increase in other areas of the three cities (up 2.9 percentage points to 24.4%). Such findings raise important questions about the role of investors in driving ongoing processes of urban spatial restructuring and, specifically, about the impacts of burgeoning private rental in low-income neighbourhoods.

As shown in Table 14 below, falling home ownership and rising private rental were seen in all disadvantaged suburb categories in the decade to 2011. The disproportionate increase in private rental was also seen in all four disadvantaged suburb classes.

**Table 14: Housing tenure change 2001–2011 by disadvantaged suburb type**

	Owner occupier	Private rent	Social rent
	Percentage point change		
Type 1 ‘isolate’ suburbs	-2.1	4.8	-4.2
Type 2 lower price suburbs	-3.2	3.5	-0.5
Type 3 ‘marginal’ suburbs	-4.5	3.6	0.3
Type 4 ‘improver’ suburbs	-4.4	5.8	-1.6
All disadvantaged suburbs	-3.8	4.6	-1.1
Rest of Sydney, Melbourne & Brisbane	-1.4	2.9	-0.3

Source: Hulse et al. 2014; original data from 2001 and 2011 ABS censuses. Note: All disadvantaged suburbs include the two outlier suburbs of Waterloo and Haymarket.

Table 15 below shows the changing housing market structures of the case study suburbs. Notable in terms of 2011 tenure distributions is that Emerton (Sydney), Braybrook (Melbourne) and Logan Central (Brisbane) have relatively large amounts of public housing while in Auburn (Sydney), Springvale (Melbourne), Logan Central and Russell Island (Brisbane) private rental is extensive by comparison with GMA medians.

In terms of changes over time, most of the selected suburbs exhibit similar movements to citywide and national trends—owner occupation and social rental generally fell over the period while private rental generally rose. This latter trend was seen especially in Braybrook, Logan Central and Russell Island. With the former two of these being ‘improver’ suburbs, this was consistent with the general pattern as shown by Table 14 above. That is, the tendency for such areas to exhibit the most rapid rate of private rental growth.

In most case study suburbs, the declining home ownership rate resulted from ongoing growth in owner occupation being outpaced by expansion of the overall dwelling stock (see Table 15). However, in two of the six areas (Emerton and Logan Central), the number of owner occupied homes actually fell in *numerical* terms as well as proportionately over the period. Generally, it would seem that the growth of private rental may be attributed to a combination of ‘tenure transfer’ from owner occupation, and renting out of newly built homes. Places where significant amounts of newly built housing are added to the local dwelling stock are likely to see an upward effect on local rents, given the premium associated with higher quality houses.

**Table 15: Case study suburbs: housing tenure change 2001–2011**

**(a) Auburn (Sydney)**

	Number			%		
	2001	2011	Diff	2001	2011	Diff
Owner occupied	4,215	5,793	1,578	57.8	56.3	-1.5
Private rent	2,565	3,890	1,325	35.2	37.8	2.7
Social rent	320	521	201	4.4	5.1	0.7
Other	197	84	-113	2.7	0.8	-1.9
Total	7,297	10,288	2,991	100.0	100.0	0.0

**(b) Emerton (Sydney)**

	Number			%		
	2001	2011	Diff	2001	2011	Diff
Owner occupied	468	373	-95	50.3	47.1	-3.2
Private rent	175	197	22	18.8	24.9	6.1
Social rent	266	203	-63	28.6	25.6	-3.0
Other	21	19	-2	2.3	2.4	0.1
Total	930	792	-138	100.0	100.0	0.0

**(c) Braybrook (Melbourne)**

	Number			%		
	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>
Owner occupied	1,081	1,511	430	51.8	52.0	0.2
Private rent	309	673	364	14.8	23.1	8.3
Social rent	597	584	-13	28.6	20.1	-8.5
Other	101	140	39	4.8	4.8	0.0
Total	2,088	2,908	820	100.0	100.0	0.0

**(d) Springvale (Melbourne)**

	Number			%		
	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>
Owner occupied	3,743	4,252	509	65.5	59.7	-5.8
Private rent	1,623	2,371	748	28.4	33.3	4.9
Social rent	98	113	15	1.7	1.6	-0.1
Other	247	386	139	4.3	5.4	1.1
Total	5,711	7,122	1,411	100.0	100.0	0.0

**(e) Logan Central (Brisbane)**

	Number			%		
	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>
Owner occupied	1,195	968	-227	51.8	44.3	-7.4
Private rent	665	790	125	28.8	36.2	7.4
Social rent	369	360	-9	16.0	16.5	0.5
Other	80	65	-15	3.5	3.0	-0.5
Total	2,309	2,183	-126	100.0	100.0	0.0

**(f) Russell Island (Brisbane)**

	Number			%		
	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>	2001	2011	<i>Diff</i>
Owner occupied	444	718	274	75.3	64.8	-10.5
Private rent	120	367	247	20.3	33.1	12.8
Social rent	0	0	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other	26	23	-3	4.4	2.1	-2.3
Total	590	1,108	518	100.0	100.0	0.0

Source: ABS Census 2001 and 2011. Note: Unlike previous tables in this section, 'other rental' and 'not stated' categories have been excluded from the total, so tenure percentages sum to 100.

### 8.3.2 Housing drivers of social polarisation: social rental dynamics

Perhaps not surprisingly, many interviewees saw the links between the disadvantaged status of their suburb and housing system factors as mainly involving the local scale of public housing in the area, given the sector's now entrenched safety net role for the most needy households. This kind of thinking was widely expressed in all three case study areas containing public housing stock on a significant scale—Braybrook, Emerton and Logan Central.

In Logan, for example, the area's relatively large body of public housing was seen by some as a major liability in ongoing attempts to boost the area's social status. From a local government viewpoint, especially, the locally significant representation of public housing was implicitly problematic:

An unemployed person moves into [name of suburb] because they can get access to public housing. They might then get in touch with an organisation like us who might help them find employment. They then get employment, they may get money, they move out of social housing ... then the next lot of unemployed people move in .... (Logan Central, local government officer)

Sentiments of this kind seem consistent with a view among local housing providers that the council would favour the scaling down of public housing as an objective to be incorporated within the planned Logan Renewal Initiative.

They would much prefer that we weren't here. There have been various political statements made that, you know, if [public] housing wasn't here, Logan would be better and all that sort of stuff. (Logan Central, state housing provider)

Under the state government's Housing 2020 Strategy, one of the initial goals is to provide 1000 units of social or affordable housing in the area by 2020. Council really did not like that at all. They said that, if anything, they want less social [housing]. (Logan Central, not-for-profit housing provider)

As shown in Table 15 above, in none of our case study suburbs did 2011 social housing numbers account for significantly more than a quarter of the housing stock. However, even at the scale of provision in suburbs such as Braybrook, Emerton and Logan Central, the effect of lettings policies on area-wide social profiles is likely to be substantial. With tenancy allocations now strictly rationed to 'greatest need' applicants, it would seem that the allocation of public housing vacancies has been a direct contributor to the concentration of disadvantage in such places.

However, as explored with public housing officials in Sydney, most of those taking up tenancies in an area such as Mount Druitt were people already local to the area (e.g. being rehoused from unaffordable or otherwise unsatisfactory private rental). Indeed, an unpublished figure kindly provided to the research team by Housing NSW showed that 74 per cent of the 203 public housing lettings in 2013 involved new tenants who already had a Mount Druitt address. The main impact of public housing allocation policies, therefore, was to concentrate disadvantaged people *from within a locality* rather than to funnel disadvantaged people *into the area* from elsewhere in Sydney. As reported by public housing officials, tenancy turnover in Mount Druitt estates was relatively low, with newly arising vacancies generally resulting from deaths, local transfers, incarceration or rent arrears evictions. In only a very small proportion of instances could newly arising vacancies be attributed to 'aspirational moves' where former tenants, having improved their financial circumstances, exit to a 'better area'. Only to a very small extent did the dynamics of tenant exits contribute to 'social sifting'—the replacement of better off out-movers by worse off in-movers. Bearing all of this in mind, it would be something of a caricature to portray the vacancy-generation and letting system in Mount Druitt as predominantly involving socially mobile out-movers replaced by highly disadvantaged in-

movers. There seems little reason to doubt that such conclusions would apply equally in areas such as Braybrook and Logan Central.

### *8.3.3 Housing drivers of social polarisation: private rental dynamics*

#### **Drivers of expanding private rental provision**

As shown in Table 15, across all the case study suburbs, the past decade has seen substantial expansion of private rental housing. Collectively, across the six areas, provision expanded by over 50 per cent in the decade to 2011. Given the sector's increasingly central role in accommodating low-income households, the drivers of this process are clearly of interest to the current research. Fieldwork evidence from the case studies suggests that relevant (albeit partially overlapping) factors may include:

- Disproportionate recent investor landlord activity in lower value areas.
- Active disposal of public housing in certain localities and direct conversion to private rental.
- Owners of second homes being reluctant to sell in weak housing markets.
- The construction of new properties, such as units and apartments, which are predominantly purchased by investors.

As regards the first factor listed above, the past decade has seen investor housing finance approvals running at around 34 per cent of total national approvals (RBA 2014). In 2013 this rose to 37 per cent across Australia and 47 per cent in NSW (AFG 2014). Interviewed in September 2013, local real estate agents estimated that investor purchases in Sydney's Mount Druitt area accounted for 60 per cent of all local sales—significantly higher than the state-wide comparator. This was attributed to expectations of particularly strong returns from an 'undervalued' market.

Whether such disproportionately high activity would be more generally true across disadvantaged areas of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane remains uncertain, although the main motivating factor—as reported—may well be more generally applicable. Importantly, as other research on this project has confirmed, rent to property value ratios tend to be significantly higher in disadvantaged suburbs (see Hulse et al. 2014); hence, rental rates of return will be commensurately superior to citywide norms.

While some investor-purchased homes are likely to represent 'churning' within the existing private rental stock (i.e. investor purchase of formerly rented dwelling), the coincident contraction of home ownership suggests that significant numbers will involve this form of 'tenure conversion'. A smaller and more locally specific factor is the transfer of dwellings into private rental from public housing—the second above-listed factor—potentially contributing to high rates of private rental expansion in disadvantaged areas. Primarily motivated by the financially unsustainable condition of public housing, but also justified by public housing officials on grounds of 'poverty de-concentration', the Mount Druitt area had seen annual public housing sales running at 60–70 homes in recent years—around 1.5 per cent of total stock. While a few such disposals were to sitting tenants or open market purchasers planning to live in the acquired property, public housing officials estimated that 80 per cent involved a direct shift from public to private rental (albeit sometimes involving a transitional knock down and rebuild process).

The third above-listed factor refers to situations where properties are placed in the rental market by so-called 'accidental investors' (Seelig et al. 2006). This involves the renting out of properties not purchased for this purpose. 'Rent not to sell' is another shorthand for this situation, which often reflects an owner's belief that a currently weak local housing market is likely to strengthen. It can apply to formerly owner-occupied homes converted to rental (rather than sold) when the previously resident owner needs to move to another place. In Russell Island it was reported that the local housing market had experienced a relatively high level of



volatility. Global financial crisis impacts had been particularly significant upon the price of land on the island, with 2011 prices reported to be half their 2007 value. Reportedly this situation had been exacerbated by the imposition of council restrictions on development. In the opinion of one resident, this had created a 'perpetual glut on the market of vacant land' that was driving prices down further. In these circumstances it seems possible that the 'rent not to sell' motivation might have been a significant contributor to the trebling of private rental properties on the island in the period 2001–2011 (see Table 15).

Given its specific geography Russell Island might well be something of a special case, but the coastal locations of most other 'marginal' suburbs, similarly remote from metropolitan centres (e.g. on the outer northern fringe of Sydney) makes it possible that at least some of the issues discussed above could be relevant in such places.

### **Magnet effects of affordable private rental housing**

Notwithstanding growing private rental provision across all six areas, in certain of these suburbs the convergence of local rent levels with citywide norms meant that in some case study suburbs there was little sense that the local availability of low-cost housing was any longer a significant 'local attractor' of low-income households from other areas. As noted in Section 8.2.1 this was particularly true of Auburn and Springvale. However, in other areas—especially Logan Central and Russell Island—such dynamics were seen as continuing to operate:

I think it is a transient population in a lot of ways ... they don't move here for employment. The biggest thing Logan has going for it is [housing] affordability, (Logan Central, NGO community worker/service provider)

What I do with any new clients ... that have been to the island a relatively short period, [one of the] few questions that I ask ... is 'how did you find out about Russell Island?' They say 'oh cheap rent, we got on the net and found it's cheap rent'. (Russell Island, NGO community worker/service provider)

There are others with lots of mental issues, drug related and things like that. Not that we're looking after them, but ... as an outsider you can see it. It's very sad ... They shouldn't be here ... Because we don't have the facilities to be able to look after them. (Russell Island, NGO community worker/service provider)

This was a concern on Russell Island, not only in terms of the lack of appropriate local services and facilities for vulnerable people, but because the influx of such residents, as highlighted by the media under such tags as 'dole island', was seen as compounding negative images of the area to the detriment of the local housing market. A self-reinforcing cycle:

... while we all appreciate ... that we have affordable housing for people who are looking for affordable housing, to turn an island—because we are remote—into a demographic of lower socio-economic, which we really are already—but to push it lower by continually providing that lower price housing, then it's going to ... make it harder to sell the houses at a reasonable price. It means we are trapped here. We can never move back to the mainland. (Russell Island, resident)

As noted earlier in Chapter 7, local research participants believed that the channelling of low-income households from the mainland resulted not only from the exercise of 'consumer choice' but also from the active use of the area as a 'dumping ground'. While the rental housing market was a principal driver in this process, agencies including mental health and employment service providers, were said to have been actively encouraging clients to move from the mainland to benefit from cheap rents, despite the absence of mental health service provision and limited supply of local employment on the island.

... a lot of people have said to me that some of the agencies who provide employment services ... have encouraged a lot of people to go to the islands. Particularly if they see

that they're going to be a difficult fit for employment ... They say 'at least you can afford to live here; you're not going to get a job, we haven't got a job for you; go there. (Russell Island, community representative)

## **8.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has brought together quantitative and qualitative evidence on the association between housing factors and spatially concentrated disadvantage in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. In most disadvantaged places within these cities, the past 10 years have seen housing markets becoming generally under more pressure. Associated with this, the decade to 2011 saw some limited convergence of local house prices and rents with citywide values. Declining availability of affordable rental housing in many of these areas has reduced this component of their magnetism for low-income or vulnerable households from other areas (or recently arrived from overseas). It has also led to rising levels of housing stress in terms of people enduring unsatisfactory living conditions, as well as impacting on quality of life due to the impact of unaffordable housing costs on household budgets.

In some places housing system effects continue to concentrate disadvantage. Most obviously, targeted tenancy allocations criteria for social housing institutionalise a highly disadvantaged social profile for areas where such accommodation is present at scale. However, in most cases it is probable that this is more significant in terms of concentrating vulnerable people within a suburb or locality than in drawing disadvantaged households into disadvantaged places from surrounding or more distant areas. In some areas, the ongoing availability of relatively low-rent tenancies continues to draw in poorer households and the disproportionate expansion of private rental provision in low-value areas seems likely to compound historic tendencies towards the suburbanisation of disadvantage.

Although evidence specific to particular case study areas has been cited in this chapter, the main narrative has focused on disadvantaged suburb housing markets collectively, rather than attempting to draw clear distinctions between those classed in different typology categories. This is not to say that the four categories are indistinct in terms of housing market characteristics, processes and trajectories. Section 3.2, drawing on our separate secondary data analysis, makes clear that such type-specific distinctions are indeed clearly identifiable. However, these are not necessarily of a nature easy to observe or confirm through qualitative fieldwork on which this report is mainly based.

## **9 PRACTICE AND POLICY: INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS OR REMEDY DISADVANTAGE**

### **9.1 Chapter scope**

A constant challenge for urban planners and other policy-makers is the question of how to address disadvantage in ways that are best for both the people and the places concerned. In this chapter, we address this question by examining the kinds of interventions that have been implemented in the six case study disadvantaged areas to address both people- and place-based forms of disadvantage. Given the explicit focus of the study on the way housing systems contribute to, or ameliorate, concentrations of disadvantage, attention is also directed at recent and current housing interventions. Until very recently, such housing initiatives were almost entirely targeted at public housing, taking the form of physical and social renewal of what were viewed as problematic estates. While this heralded an approach to addressing disadvantage that recognised its spatial manifestations, the effect has been a policy neglect of the experiences of disadvantage among those in other housing tenures, as well as of other places in the middle and outer suburbs of cities where disadvantage takes more of a cross-tenure form (Pinnegar et al. 2011). The extent to which this criticism remains valid is a pertinent issue here.

The aim of this interventions analysis is not to provide an exhaustive and descriptive list for each case study site of the various policies, programs and projects that have been established to remedy the difficult circumstances of those who live there. Nor is it possible to undertake any kind of systematic evaluation of the interventions put in place. Rather, the objective is to offer insights into the *kinds* of interventions typically targeted at disadvantaged people and places; to identify points of variation or contrast across disadvantaged areas; to discern whether any patterns or variations can be accounted for in terms of the typology of disadvantaged areas formulated in this study; and to draw attention to any gaps in the way particular places or groups are targeted—or not targeted—for assistance.

This chapter begins by outlining a conceptual framework for identifying particular types of interventions as being for people, for places or for both on the basis of their target focus and potential impacts. It then draws on the case study material to identify three principal types of interventions commonly at work in disadvantaged areas. First, those that have taken an integrated approach via area-based interventions—most frequently in the form of neighbourhood renewal programs (NRPs). Second, those that have predominantly been place-focused, targeting places for intervention on the basis of their identification as sites of disadvantage, but lacking the coordinated or integrated framework of formal NRPs. These interventions typically occur either through physical or ‘social’ programs such as the provision or improved coordination of local services, or campaigns to improve the lives of community members via the promotion of healthy eating or social cohesion. Third are people-focused interventions, which are designed to provide support and assistance to designated groups thought to be most at risk. The chapter concludes with a comparison of these three types of interventions across the case study sites with a view to identifying and explaining whether different suburb types receive different types of policy intervention.

### **9.2 Conceptualising people- and place-based initiatives**

Disadvantage has traditionally been tackled through two kinds of policies. First are those targeted at disadvantaged individuals, often through universal or sectoral policies such as income support or rent assistance. Second are policies formulated according to recognition that disadvantage concentrates in specific places and that these places need to be identified and targeted for action. In earlier decades, people- and place-based interventions were viewed in oppositional terms and thought to represent diverging policy ambitions:

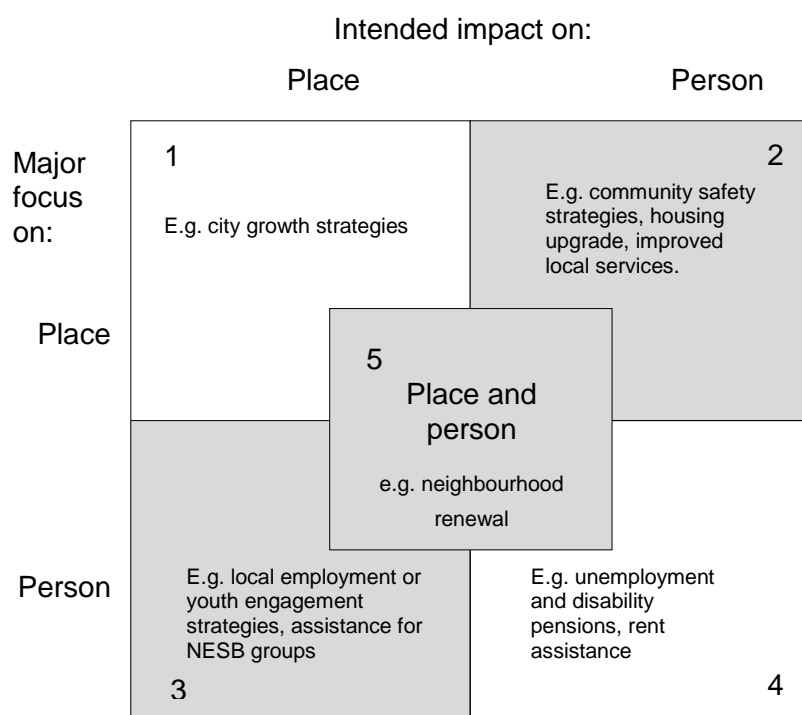
The conflict is between the idea of improving the welfare of deserving people, as individuals, *regardless of where they live* and the ideal of improving the welfare of groups of deserving people defined by their spatial proximity in places (Bolton 1992, p.187 emphasis in original).

However, contemporary approaches to tackling disadvantage reject the dichotomised nature of these two policy positions on the argument that the challenges facing disadvantaged individuals can often be compounded by the features of where they live (van Gent et al. 2009). Writing in the UK, for example, Griggs et al. (2008, p.xii) observe that while people- and place-based policies have been developed separately from one another:

... this separation does not reflect a reality in which poverty and disadvantage are mediated by place, and places are affected by the poverty or otherwise of their inhabitants.

In attempting to capture this connection between people- and place-based policies, Griggs et al. (2008) devised a matrix (see Figure 1 below) comprising four different types of policy objectives based on the relative importance they attach to people and place with respect to their principal areas of focus and their intended impacts. A fifth policy approach adopts a more integrated approach.

**Figure 1: Policy objectives and targeting in relation to person and place, with examples**



Source: Griggs et al. 2008

- Policy type 1—Place focused/place impact: these mainly focus on place improvement through local land development, city growth strategies and infrastructure development which *may* benefit local residents but which are implemented with relatively little attention to the effects upon them.
- Policy type 2—Place focused/people impact: these are similarly focused on local area improvements but do so with the explicit aim of improving the lives of both existing and future residents. Examples may include crime prevention strategies and improved community safety through increased city surveillance; the upgrading of housing or local

infrastructure; the provision of improved local services; and attempts to build community cohesion or capacity.

- Policy type 3—People focused/place impact: these target specific groups in a local area to improve quality of life for target group members and to impact positively on the locality as a whole. Examples include local employment schemes; attempts to connect with disengaged youth; and the provision of support for non-English speaking groups.
- Policy type 4—People focused/people impact: these address individual and welfare issues but do so without consideration of local circumstances. Examples include mainstream social welfare and economic policies such as unemployment or disability pensions and rental assistance schemes.
- Policy type 5—People and place focused/people and place impact: these arise in more limited cases in the form of integrated area-based interventions which simultaneously seek to improve both people and place by focusing on the linkages between the two.

Policy type 5 initiatives have been subject to significant policy and academic interest in recent years because they 'aim to simultaneously achieve people-based results as well as place-base changes' (van Gent et al. 2009, p.55). This occurs through a combined set of programs that target poverty, disadvantage, unemployment and low educational achievement among the resident population alongside territorially-based interventions designed to improve the physical condition of the housing and locale, ensure better access to and coordination of services, target crime and anti-social behaviour, and strengthen local community. Otherwise known as area-based interventions, these programs are seen to represent more than just an integration of physical and social interventions. Rather, they are indicative of a new political rationality of 'local governance' where top-down state-centred decision-making is eschewed in favour of locally derived solutions to locally identified problems. By definition, this is seen to rely on the formation of partnerships between state and non-state actors as well as extensive community involvement (Sharpe 2013). In the UK, the former Labour Government's *New Deal for Communities* is viewed as the archetypical area-based intervention (Lawless 2006) although similar initiatives have also been implemented throughout Western Europe and the US.

In Australia, Randolph (2004) has noted that official efforts to tackle concentrated disadvantage do not conform to the European-based model of area-based interventions because they have not explicitly targeted places within a defined boundary, other than in the limited instance of estate renewal programs pursued by state housing authorities. Yet he insists that people-focused policies continue to have intentional or unintentional place outcomes 'due to the fact that much of the activity they fund or support takes places in areas of high disadvantage' (2004, p.65). In this sense, he argues, Australian policies might, be defined more generally as 'place-focused' in that they operate '*in places for people*'—'primarily aimed at the problems facing groups within ... [disadvantaged areas], rather than the problems associated with living in these areas *per se*' (Randolph 2004, p.65 emphasis in original).

In applying this framework to the analysis of programs for addressing disadvantage in the six case study areas, the primary interest lies in the shaded area of Figure 1 where policies are more or less people *and* place-focused, either by targeting designated features of a local area in order to improve the lives of the people who live there (Policy Type 2) or in having an impact on place because of the local concentration of relevant target groups (Policy Type 3). Fully integrated area-based interventions (Policy Type 5) are also considered where these occur. While broader city-wide or regional planning strategies (Policy Type 1) are not thought to have an impact on people, we do briefly consider in this chapter the ways in which they can affect local residents, particularly those most disadvantaged. Mainstream social and economic welfare policies (Policy Type 4), however, are omitted from the analysis.

The programs identified are implemented by a range of actors, including state and federal governments, but—in line with policy discourses about the importance of local partnerships

and community engagement—increasingly involve collaborative working between a range of local stakeholder groups. Invariably, the emphasis on place-focused initiatives puts the activities and interventions of more local actors under the spotlight, including local government, but also community organisations, neighbourhood centres and local business groups. While some of these local initiatives may be clustered under overarching funding programs that have a broad set of objectives, they may also be highly localised, which often renders them ad-hoc and reliant upon short-term funding.

### **9.3 Integrated, area-based responses to disadvantage: neighbourhood renewal**

While Australian approaches to tackling concentrated disadvantage may have moved away from coherent place-based integrated programs—and indeed none were current in the six case study areas—this contrasts with the position a decade or so ago when policies to tackle the economic, social and physical manifestations of disadvantage in designated localities were far more mainstream (Randolph 2004). Indeed, among our six case study localities, three had been subject to an earlier NRP—Emerton (as part of a Mount Druitt program), Braybrook and Logan Central. What these three localities have in common are relatively high concentrations of social housing stock; respectively 25.6 per cent, 20.1 per cent and 16.5 per cent according to 2011 census figures. This illustrates Randolph and Judd’s (2000, p.93) argument that neighbourhood renewal has predominantly been driven by state housing departments in areas with concentrations of public housing. Reflecting this, Kintrea (2007) and Pinnegar (2009) have described neighbourhood renewal as a form of housing-led regeneration, while Klein and Knowles (2005) describe it as a ‘new housing paradigm’.

By way of contrast, the proportion of public housing in case study sites that have not experienced NRPs is negligible: Auburn (3.8%), Springvale (1.6%) and Russell Island (no social housing). Nevertheless, it must also be acknowledged that, in part due to their well-connected locations, both Auburn and Springvale appear to be relatively dynamic local economies offering significant potential for growth and development which may partly explain the absence of any extensive renewal program.

A review of relevant documents for the three NRPs implemented in the case study sites identified a number of common aims across the programs, as follows:

- Tackling multiple and interconnected causes of disadvantage through physical renewal of housing and the neighbourhood, combined with socio-economic interventions aimed at increasing employment, education and training prospects; building community pride and capacity; improving community safety through crime reduction; and promoting improved health and wellbeing.
- Improved coordination in service planning and delivery through a joined-up government approach.
- Increased partnership working between government, business and community stakeholders.
- Enhancing community participation in local decision making and empowering residents to identify their own solutions to the problems they face.

#### **9.3.1 Mount Druitt: Housing NSW Building Stronger Communities Program (2009–2012)**

The NSW Government’s \$66 million *Building Stronger Communities Program* was rolled out over a period of four years across six priority areas (NSW Department of Housing 2007). This included Mount Druitt and ten of its most disadvantaged suburbs, including Emerton. A Community Regeneration Team was specially convened within Housing NSW to oversee

program implementation (Housing NSW undated). In line with the broad aims of neighbourhood renewal, the Mount Druitt program focused on three core areas:

- Physical regeneration of social housing and capital works to upgrade community and commercial spaces, including attempts to address community safety concerns by improving the physical design of crime 'hot spots'. Some of this work has since been progressed via the Housing NSW Community Environment Project, a partnership with two universities to remedy aspects of urban design militating against community safety.
- Social regeneration through the provision of new and enhanced community services and increased opportunities for social inclusion, including community participation in local decision-making. Exemplifying the policy rhetoric underlying the plan, one of the 'community regeneration principles' advocated was 'a strong commitment to partnerships with agencies and residents' (Housing NSW, 2009 p.4). One of the principal social inclusion outcomes of the scheme was the establishment of a local neighbourhood management board—named C2770 to reflect the area's postcode—which has endured beyond the life of *Building Stronger Communities*. C2770 has sought to tackle a range of local issues such as alcohol misuse through the implementation of the Mount Druitt Alcohol Action Plan.
- Economic regeneration to improve literacy and numeracy, provide improved and ongoing education and training opportunities, and provide improved employment opportunities. Projects funded under the scheme included tutoring and literacy schemes delivered by Blacktown Youth College, industry traineeships and a building trade training scheme for Aboriginal people.

### 9.3.2 *Braybrook: Victorian Department of Human Services, Braybrook Maidstone Neighbourhood Renewal Program (2002–2010)*

Implemented for a period of eight years across 15 targeted areas, the Victorian Government's *NRP* was heralded 'a fundamental paradigm shift' by virtue of its aim to target the sources of inequality and disadvantage and not simply treat the symptoms (Klein & Knowles 2005, p.3). Communities with concentrations of public housing were targeted for the program, which was managed by a newly-established Neighbourhood Renewal Branch within the Victorian Department of Human Services. In the local government area of Maribyrnong, the suburbs of Braybrook and Maidstone were selected for the program and subject to a \$57 million upgrade in public housing and community facilities, along with the provision of new employment, economic and social programs aimed at: increasing community pride and participation; increasing participation in education and employment; improving personal safety and reducing crime; improving health and wellbeing; and improving government responsiveness and access to services. A project or 'place' manager was appointed in the targeted areas to oversee action across a whole suite of program areas. Key outcomes from the program in Braybrook included:

- Upgrade and maintenance of public housing.
- Demolition of unsafe public spaces that attracted anti-social behaviour.
- The construction of new facilities such as basketball courts.
- Variations to bus routes to ensure better access to services and commercial centres.

An evaluation of the program by the Victorian Government in its *Year Eight Report on Braybrook Maidstone Neighbourhood Renewal 2002–2010* (Victorian Department of Human Services undated) reported that the program had contributed to a positive change in two-thirds of the 36 identified indicators and that there had been a notable decline in unemployment, a reduction in primary school absenteeism, an increase in the number of students completing Year 12, and an increase in the proportion of the community obtaining educational qualifications.

### 9.3.3 *Logan Central: The Queensland Department of Housing, Community Renewal Program (1998–2009)*

The Queensland *Community Renewal Program* was initially implemented for four years in 24 of the most disadvantaged areas across the state, including the three Logan City suburbs of Kingston, Woodridge and Loganlea (at the time, Logan Central formed part of the suburb of Woodridge). Between 1998 and 2004, \$82.5 million was committed to the program, with further extensions of funding and activity taking it through to 2009, albeit in a slightly modified form. Essentially, the Logan program differed from those operating in Victoria and New South Wales by virtue of being a crime prevention, rather than a housing renewal, strategy by seeking to address the causes of crime and disadvantage (Stark & McCullough 2005). Nevertheless, the program was administered by a newly established Community Renewal Unit within the Queensland Department of Housing on the basis that many of the targeted areas had high concentrations of low-cost private-rental housing. In some areas, the program was rolled out in conjunction with physical regeneration of public housing, funded separately under the department's Urban Renewal Program. In Logan Central, however, renewal of public housing did not occur until later. Further, although community reference groups were established to enable local residents to set their own priorities and formulate action plans, the groups had limited success in involving participants beyond a small core of already active local residents (Cameron et al. 2004).

Despite having run its course, the *Community Renewal Program* was identified as a 'stand-out initiative' by Logan Central stakeholders interviewed for this project on the basis that it successfully combined the provision of much-needed local social services while also funding essential capital works projects. Combined, these included the following local initiatives:

- The establishment of a youth hub to allow young people to participate in various activities in a safe space.
- Truancy programs to re-engage young people with education and youth arts projects—Indigenous youth were especially targeted with cultural, sporting and personal development projects to reduce their risk of participating in crime and substance abuse.
- Funding to community organisations to help support and engage Logan's diverse ethnic and migrant groups.
- The regeneration of urban spaces, including the area around Woodridge train station and the installation of CCTV cameras in high crime areas.

### 9.3.4 *Reviewing neighbourhood renewal*

With the waning of area-based interventions in Australia, authors such as Randolph and Judd (2000, p.101) have sought to remind us that 'locality matters' and that government policy and action must continue to focus on the local level through explicitly spatial policies that do more than simply coordinate government services. Yet, area-based approaches are not without their critics and researchers have identified problems with them on two key grounds. The first is on process-related matters and the degree to which aspirations of community involvement and local partnerships are fully realised (Lawless 2006). In Mount Druitt, for example, stakeholders expressed concern that, despite the establishment of C2770, there continued to be an absence of local leadership and a continued reliance on Housing NSW. As one interviewee put it:

If Housing walks away, nothing happens. (Emerton/Mount Druitt, state housing provider)

Further, as already noted with the Logan initiative, community reference panels tend to attract the same cohort of residents who are already active in their community—often older, more educated residents—while failing to connect with the socially excluded groups at whom they are meant to be targeted (e.g. young people).



Enduring commitment to community capacity-building is a precondition for the empowerment of disadvantaged communities and, despite the rhetoric around 'popular engagement', this appears to be rarely recognised in Australian urban policy. One encouraging exception brought to light by our Emerton/Mount Druitt case study concerned the local 'community leadership' project which formed an important element of the New South Wales Government's Mount Druitt Community Solutions and Crime Prevention program in the early 2000s. The project identified 'already active citizens' who were offered a program of mentoring and training to build community capacity. Its aim was to empower existing local figures 'to be more confident and effective in their work'. Through this program, 37 residents benefited from short courses (some being TAFE-delivered) and other support. This was seen to have had a longer-term pay-off in that:

We are now seeing a group of community leaders present in Mount Druitt, many of whom participated in [the community leadership program]. (Local government officer)

Finally, concerns are often raised about the lack of planning and support for activities beyond the life of an intervention (Cameron et al. 2004); a concern expressed in Braybrook following the end of the neighbourhood renewal initiative:

People supported the neighbourhood renewal. Difficult when withdrawn; how do we sustain this? (Braybrook, community representative)

The second set of criticisms directed at area-based interventions is more fundamental and questions their entire basis as an appropriate mechanism for poverty reduction. To begin with, there is the rather obvious point that not all disadvantaged people live in disadvantaged places, meaning that many will miss out when interventions are restricted to defined localities. Springvale, for example, has received little in the way of extensive policy attention, but it has observed the effects of urban renewal programs in nearby Dandenong. Regarded as the capital of the south-east and containing 40 per cent of the state's manufacturing, Dandenong has seen extensive government intervention in recent years. Most notable is *Revitalising Central Dandenong*: a partnership between Places Victoria—the Victorian Government's urban renewal authority—and the City of Greater Dandenong. *Revitalising Central Dandenong* is primarily a place-based intervention aimed at promoting the local and regional economy and employment that has adopted a 'place-making' approach. An initial \$92 million and a further \$197 million have been allocated to the project, which is the largest renewal project since the redevelopment of the former industrial area known as Docklands. Being part of the same Greater Dandenong local government area, this appears to have generated feelings among some local people in Springvale of being forgotten or left behind:

I feel Springvale—we've been left out for a long time; they're Dandenong-centric. (Springvale, resident)

Further, interventions to improve one area may simply displace 'problem populations' to another, thus doing little to improve the overall circumstances of cities or regions (Walsh 2001). While not directly raised as an outcome of the specific neighbourhood renewal programs implemented in Mount Druitt, Logan Central and Braybrook, this point does flag a much broader set of issues that we identify later where improvements in one area potentially lead to the displacement of disadvantaged populations to more peripheral localities where social networks and services are more limited.

Finally, pointing to the potential for area interventions to pathologise places by attributing the causes of disadvantage to various features within them, van Gent et al. (2009) remind us of the potential for places to become further stigmatised when they are identified as targets for such initiatives. This would be true of any program geographically targeted on the basis of social disadvantage indicators (van Gent et al. 2009; Sharpe 2013) although the use of objective indicators to target areas for renewal has been less common in Australia than in the UK. However, this does raise a much broader issue for residents of local areas as, on the one

hand, they wrestle with the need to obtain service and funding to ameliorate disadvantage and, on the other, recognition that in order to do so, they must accept the label of being a disadvantaged place. We illustrate the way this tension operates on Russell Island—a place that appears to be missing out on external support—later in this chapter.

## 9.4 Integrated local government approaches to disadvantage: formulating action plans

While state government interest in area-based interventions presently appears to have waned, the case studies provide evidence of local governments taking the initiative in pursuing some core elements of area-based policy, notably the concepts of shared responsibility between government, the private and community sectors; the need to address the multiple and complex causes of poverty and disadvantage in an integrated manner; and building on previous regeneration efforts. Exemplifying these were the Maribyrnong City Council's *Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan, 2013–2015* and Logan City Council's leadership on the *Logan: City of Choice Action Plan, 2013–2015*—see Box 2 below.

### Box 2: Examples of local government integrated action plans

#### *Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan, 2013–2015*

The *Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan* was developed by the Maribyrnong City Council explicitly as a way of building on the work undertaken in Braybrook through the Victorian Government's *Neighbourhood Renewal Program*, which ended in 2010. The plan provided a framework for future, short- and long-term, action around four key pillars:

3. Investing in future generations by supporting families via early intervention programs and improving education.
4. Supporting prosperity through the promotion of economic development and the provision of appropriate employment and training.
5. Improving health and wellbeing and reducing health inequities.
6. Building liveable and sustainable communities by strengthening local neighbourhoods and communities (Maribyrnong City Council 2011, 2013).

A range of stakeholders assisted in formulating the action plan, including various state government departments, not-for-profit organisations, educational institutions, and local community groups. This reflected the integrated approach underpinning the plan, but also the fact that many of the issues to be addressed extend beyond local government responsibilities. Identified initiatives were thus to be resourced through a combination of local council funding and state government grants.

#### *Logan: City of Choice Action Plan, 2013–2015*

In 2013, a dispute between two neighbouring families of Aboriginal and Pacific Islander descent captured national media attention and branded Logan a site of simmering racial tension (*The Courier Mail*, 15 January 2013; *The Australian*, 16 January 2013). With local council—and residents—exasperated by the negative press directed at Logan, the event served as a catalyst for the *Logan: City of Choice Summit*, initiated by the Logan City Council in partnership with the Queensland Government. The three-day event brought together around 400 participants from across the city and resulted in the *City of Choice Action Plan*. Overseen by a designated leadership team comprising representatives from the community, local, state and federal governments, and subject matter experts, the plan operates as 'a strategic document to guide community, business and government decision-making over the next two years and beyond' (Logan City Council 2013b, p.7). Five key priority areas have been developed as follows, with key actions proposed for each and lead agencies identified: education, employment, housing, safety, social infrastructure. The three sub-themes of communication and community involvement; cultures; and transport were also identified as areas for action.

Local government's role in initiating and leading these kinds of activities can be understood in the broader context of the changes that have taken place in this realm in recent decades. While Australian local government is generally more circumscribed than many of its international counterparts—having been restricted to more traditional capital-intensive 'services to property' such as roads, water, sewerage and waste disposal—Dollery and Mounter (2010, p.220) observe an expansion of the responsibilities of local government towards non-core customer oriented 'services to people' such as aged care facilities, public safety programs and cultural or recreational facilities. Further, with a move away from top-down state action towards a local governance framework that promotes localised partnerships between state and non-state actors, there has been further pressure on local government to provide leadership in coordinating these new arrangements. Referred to by scholars as 'metagovernance' or the 'governance of governance' (Haveri et al. 2009; Sørensen & Torfing 2009), local government has been viewed as well placed to take on this role.

In some respects, there is logic to this argument. As Randolph (2004) notes, local government is an obvious actor to provide leadership in place-focused initiatives because it has a long-term stake in the area; is well connected to locally-based agencies that receive much of the funding channelled into the area; and has the knowledge to develop local solutions to local problems. However, there may also be significant capacity challenges for local government in this regard, particularly when it comes to implementing area-based interventions and ensuring that other agencies remain committed to agreed-upon actions or funding promises. Indeed, the only outcomes it really has control over are those that fall within its own remit and which can be progressed with existing council resources. In this sense, the most local government can achieve is the generation of action plans, as it has done here, rather than ready-to-go projects or programs. Aside from that, all it can do is encourage or lobby other agencies to adhere to the goals set out in the plan. The Maribyrnong City Council recognises this potential limitation in its following statement in the *Braybrook Action Plan*:

The strategic elements of the Revitalising Braybrook Action Plan (e.g. public housing, employment and training, public transport) fall within the responsibility of State and Federal governments and their agencies. As such, a key role for Council is to continue a strong and targeted advocacy agenda with these agencies (Maribyrnong City Council 2013).

## **9.5 Place-focused initiatives: impacts on place and impacts on people**

The second set of interventions examined here are those that Griggs et al. (2008) identify as being place-focused. In the model outlined earlier, interventions that focus explicitly on place can be further distinguished by whether they have an intended impact or improvement upon the places themselves, or upon the experiences and lives of residents. In practice, though, this distinction on intended impacts is difficult to sustain because it is difficult to imagine how place improvement would not affect the lives of local residents in one way or another. To break this down further, it is worth distinguishing between initiatives intended to impact on the resident population more broadly—or even of some future expected population in areas expecting high growth—and those that are specifically designed to address the needs of in situ groups or individuals considered to be disadvantaged. Examples of former place-focused projects may be upgrades to the central business district or shopping facilities; attempts to combat crime through the erection of mechanical surveillance or regeneration of crime 'hotspots'; or new private housing developments. Conversely, the latter may involve the physical upgrade of social housing or expansion of affordable housing stock for low-income residents. In both cases, though, it cannot be assumed that the benefits of area improvements will be felt equally by all social groups. Not only may some of the more disadvantaged groups miss out, they may ultimately find themselves displaced through the process if improvement leads to gentrification of the area and local housing becomes less affordable.

Several types of place-focused initiatives were discerned among the case study sites and incorporated capital investment as well as social service provision. These included:

- *De-concentration of social housing through policies of social mix, along with the provision of more affordable housing:* as outlined in more detail below, such strategies are generally a response to growing perceptions that social housing is a problem to be managed rather than necessarily a solution to the shortage of affordable housing. How this problem is managed raises questions about the extent to which marginalised groups really benefit from the changes.
- *'Designing out crime' to improve community safety:* in Mount Druitt for example, funding provided under the New South Wales *Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy* (2004–2006), along with subsequent initiatives under the *Building Stronger Communities Program* (see above), had helped to remedy aspects of the urban design that create 'hot spots' for crime, including shopping centres and road underpasses. In the city of Logan, limited public confidence in community safety has been addressed through expanded formal surveillance. Since the 2001 inception of Logan's safety camera program, more than 350 CCTV cameras been installed across the city (Logan City Council 2013c).
- *Place improvement and growth strategies:* discussed in more detail below as they apply to Logan Central and Auburn, these relate more broadly to metropolitan-wide or local government area planning strategies that set out the development objectives for the region pertaining to population, housing, employment, infrastructure, transport, community infrastructure and urban open space. While such plans and strategies are part of the legislative tools of local and state governments, and thus cannot be understood as interventions to address disadvantage, they are worthy of discussion here by virtue of their (often unintended) impacts on certain disadvantaged groups.
- *Investment in community facilities:* this refers to amenities such as libraries, community halls and meeting rooms. As exemplified by the recently-completed Mount Druitt hub, such facilities can form an important component of community capacity building. In the Mount Druitt instance, activities accommodated by the centre include council-provided education and training programs, along with free tutoring and IT training for local residents. Russell Island's Bay Island Community Services provides a similar service and makes its meeting rooms available for outreach service providers. Government grants are often used to fund these kinds of projects.
- *Enhancement of local service coordination:* while widely recognised by case study interviewees as vital to effective service delivery, there was, in practice, considerable variation in the success of collaborative effort and barriers to such efforts were often noted. On Russell Island, for example, the isolation of the island and the reliance upon mainland-based outreach services was seen as a major barrier to inter-agency collaboration given the difficulties of coordinating visits to the area. In the past, attempts had been made to rectify this through an initiative called *The Southern Moreton Bay Islands Place Project*, designed to improve coordination in service planning and delivery across government and between government and non-government sectors. A description of the project, its outcomes and perceived effectiveness are provided in Box 3 below.

### Box 3: An example of coordinated service provision

#### *Russell Island: The Southern Moreton Bay Islands Place Project (2007–2012)*

The Place Project was a Brisbane initiative to address locational disadvantage in targeted areas through the establishment of positive working partnerships between governments, local businesses and the community sector. Initially implemented in three sites across Brisbane in 1999, the project was jointly established by the Brisbane City Council and 13 state government agencies and coordinated by the Department of Premier and Cabinet. As with neighbourhood renewal programs, the Place Project was explicitly designed to create more spatially-sensitive policies in response to complex issues such as community capacity building, community safety, employment and education (Thompson et al. 2003). Unusually, however, it focused mainly on local service delivery, partnership working and the formulation of cross-sector strategies for addressing disadvantage. Physical renewal was entirely absent and the funding pool remained limited (\$7 million across three sites).

In 2007, Redland City Council joined the program, identifying Russell Island and the other Southern Moreton Bay Islands as suitable target communities. A 'place manager' was appointed to oversee activities and a number of one-off local government, community and non-government projects were funded to the value of between \$3000 and \$40 000. These included a digital arts project, a Bay Islands welcome kit for new residents, a transition program to ease the difficulty of island students moving to mainland high schools, and a community capacity-building project. An island-wide forum—the Southern Moreton Bay Islands Forum—was also established to help bring the four islands together and this group is still running. In its 2009 Social Infrastructure Strategy (2009) Redland City Council cited the project as a good practice example of multi-level collaborations between state and local governments. A University of Queensland review of the earlier phase of the project reported positively on its effectiveness in building relationships across diverse sectors; enhancing the participation and representation of stakeholders and the community; and promoting a more integrated approach to service delivery (Thompson et al. 2003). An interviewee for this project also observed that it had 'actually got a fair bit of traction' for a while but that the activities eventually dried up when the place manager position was terminated.

- *Programs to address low education outcomes by targeting underperforming schools:* the main program here has been the joint federal and state governments' *Low Socio-Economic Status Communities Smarter School National Partnerships Program* (otherwise known as the *Partnerships Program*) which seeks to improve wellbeing and learning outcomes for students from disadvantaged areas by providing additional funding exclusively to schools designated as being of low socio-economic status. All six case study sites contained schools involved in the program that were using the additional funds to support a range of initiatives including the employment of school truancy officers and counsellors; home visits to truanting students; subsidies for school equipment and excursions; and the provision of breakfast and lunch to students turning up hungry. With the program due to terminate in 2014, there is concern among some stakeholders about whether funded initiatives could continue.
- *Place image re-branding to combat stigmatisation:* research evidence highlights that—even if 'successful'—local economic and social renewal may fail to erase the negative image historically attached to a disadvantaged area (Hastings & Dean 2003; Gourlay 2007). As a result, researchers have argued that specific strategies to improve the image of a locality and reduce stigma may need to be adopted, such as public relations and marketing campaigns to illustrate an area's positive features and to secure more positive news coverage. As already outlined, all six case study sites had been bestowed with a negative identity on the basis of high concentrations of social housing, high unemployment rates and perceptions of high crime in the areas. In Logan Central, though, this was beginning to be addressed head-on through a city-wide *Rediscover Logan* campaign devised by the Logan City Council in the wake of the *City of Choice* Summit. Forming part of a wider suite of

measures to address local disadvantage, the campaign aimed to highlight positive features of the area including: its heroes and stars in the cultural, sporting and commercial worlds; its business success stories and community volunteers; and its facilities, lifestyle options and vision for the future (Logan City Council 2013b).

- *Whole of community interventions targeted at certain social and cultural dimensions of local populations viewed as problematic:* the aim of these programs has been either to instil positive values and behaviours seen as lacking, or to eradicate those considered dysfunctional. In the case study sites, low community capacity, a lack of leadership, low social cohesion and poor health behaviours were most common areas of intervention. Where neighbourhood renewal programs had been implemented, these issues had been identified as priority concerns and addressed as part of an integrated package. In Emerton/Mount Druitt, for example, social inclusion and empowerment had been priority issues for the *Building Stronger Communities Program* through the C2770 project; in Logan Central, increasing community capacity had been one of the three priority outcomes; while one of the six key objectives of the *Braybrook Maidstone Neighbourhood Renewal Initiative* had been increased community pride and participation. In other areas, or indeed in places where neighbourhood renewal had ceased, there was a tendency for these goals to be addressed as separate issues (i.e. decoupled from other concerns, such as housing, education and employment) and—in some cases such as poor health—to target the problematic behaviours, rather than the underlying causes. Generally, local government took the lead on many of these initiatives. But the work was also undertaken in partnership with local not-for-profit groups and funded either directly from local government revenue or from community grants. Box 4 below provides details of how these two types of interventions played out in the case study areas.

Of the different types of place-focused strategies described above, two are worth exploring in more detail in that while they may function as place improvement strategies, their potential effects on people (specifically disadvantaged people) need to be more closely examined. These are initiatives designed to de-concentrate public housing and place improvement and growth strategies.

#### **Box 4: Whole-of-community interventions to tackle problem behaviours**

##### *Fostering community cohesion*

Concerns about low social cohesion were generally highest in Logan Central and Auburn—both of which were overseas migrant gateways—and there was considerable activity to address this. The main perceived problem was a lack of cohesion between different ethnic groups, fostered by a lack of cultural awareness, ongoing conflicts between ethnic groups that had developed in their countries of origin, and a perception that some groups were receiving more in the way of government assistance than others.

Initiatives to address these divisions took several forms. First, the formulation of local government cultural diversity strategies, which set a framework for action around embracing diversity and supporting different cultures as well as attempting to foster better coordination among not-for-profit service providers working for different ethnic groups. Second, and as part of this, were community events aimed at celebrating cultural diversity, mainly through local festivals incorporating food, dance and music. These included (in Auburn) the annual Auburn Festival, the Africultures Festival, the Lunar New Year Multicultural Food Festival, and the Pacific Unity Festival; and (in Logan) the Kaleidoscope, Logan Drumming, and Harmony and Refugee week celebrations. Third were schemes to improve cross-cultural awareness through local training and information sessions. In Logan Central, city elders from various cultural groups took part in this process by visiting local clubs, associations and businesses; mentoring their own young people to engender respect for others through increased awareness and understanding; and forming an Ethnic Leaders Advisory Group to provide advice and guidance on cultural matters.

##### *Building healthy communities*

With poor health outcomes long associated with household socio-economic disadvantage and neighbourhood context, public health interventions adopting a place-based approach to health improvements have become increasingly prevalent. Given the complexity of this relationship, it is widely agreed that area-based interventions are the most suitable policy mechanisms for this purpose because they can address the broad range of contributing factors; target aspects of both the physical and social environment; and adopt a collaborative approach between all relevant stakeholders (Kelaheer, Warr & Tacticos 2010). Such a view firmly underpinned the *Braybrook Maidstone Neighbourhood Renewal Initiative* where better health and wellbeing were identified as priority areas and addressed through a range of initiatives that linked health outcomes to better housing, improved employment prospects, better access to health services and improved recreational opportunities (Klein 2004). In other case study areas, however, healthy community initiatives were somewhat removed from these integrated programs and tended to focus entirely on behavioural changes within the local community through healthy eating and exercise programs. Again, Logan Central and Auburn feature here.

In Auburn, much of the drive for change had come from the local council via its *Auburn Healthy Communities Initiative* funded by the former Federal Department of Health and Ageing (now Department of Health). Key components of the initiative included: a 'healthy mums' program; a women's swimming program; the 'try a sport a month' scheme, and an Auburn local cookbook. The same program had also been rolled out city-wide in Logan and supported a range of local initiatives including BEAT IT: a ten-week physical activity program, various health and wellbeing programs to maintain a healthy lifestyle, the provision of free walking tours, yoga and other sporting activities, and a healthy gardening, shopping and cooking program called *Grow It. Eat It. Live It.* In addition, the Logan City Council has also put in place an *Active Logan Strategy* and, in 2012, co-hosted Jamie Oliver's Ministry of Food mobile kitchen where 240 Logan residents learnt how to cook healthy food on a limited budget.

#### **9.5.1 Deconcentration of social housing**

While neighbourhood renewal initiatives may have had some positive impacts in their time, housing allocations policies restricting tenancy allocations to 'greatest need' applicants mean that the perceived problems associated with social housing are institutionalised. Indeed, as Chapter 8 revealed, in case study sites with high concentrations of social housing, there were

widely shared concerns about the local consequences. In part, these concerns reflect a view that spatially concentrating disadvantaged people is likely to compound individual disadvantage and socio-economic isolation (Buck 2001), and to have a stigmatising effect on local areas and residents. In *Revitalising Braybrook*, for example, there is explicit mention of high levels of public housing and current housing allocations policies as causes of disadvantage (Maribyrnong City Council 2011).

Given the above view, now dominant in the policy discourse for at least a decade, many social housing interventions over this period have focused on the dilution of spatial concentrations through mixed-tenure redevelopment. This is justified by the belief that 'socially mixed' communities improve social cohesion and increase the social and economic participation of residents because they provide a means of connecting social housing tenants to social networks that may help to improve their circumstances, provide positive role models, increase informal modes of social control, and reduce area stigmatisation (Pawson et al. 2012).

Such thinking was embedded within the Maribyrnong City Council's *Braybrook Revitalisation Plan* although, as outlined earlier, since social housing falls within the responsibility of state rather than local government, the council can only play an advocacy role in arguing for a reduced concentration in public housing and the dispersal of public housing to other areas (Maribyrnong City Council 2013). In Logan Central and Mount Druitt, state government programs to de-concentrate public housing were already active, albeit in very different forms. The heritage of spatially concentrated public housing in Mount Druitt has served to justify Housing NSW targeting of the area for the property disposals necessitated by its parlous financial condition (as previously discussed in Chapter 8).

Somewhat in contrast, Logan Central and nearby suburbs have been designated for inclusion in the *Logan Renewal Initiative*, a major long-term regeneration program being developed by the Queensland Department of Housing and Public Works (2012). This is based on two components. First, there is a renewal of the physical stock through the construction of affordable housing for both rent and sale (predominantly in the form of multi-unit dwellings such as townhouses and duplexes) that will be interspersed with public housing stock to dilute social housing concentration. Second is the restructuring of social housing governance involving the management transfer of the existing public housing portfolio to a community housing provider. As with earlier 'stock transfer' schemes implemented in Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania, the process of stock transfer is anticipated to increase the viability of the social housing sector primarily through the ability of community housing providers to attract Commonwealth Rent Assistance and leverage private investment to supplement affordable housing supply (Pawson et al. 2013).

While there is general agreement that the principles of social mix are worthy, research has shown that the aims are not always achieved and that the outcomes may actually be deleterious to the groups they are designed to assist. There is no guarantee that incomers will be the higher-income or working homeowners envisaged, or that physical proximity will trigger the development of mixed-income social networks (Atkinson 2008; Randolph et al. 2004) Indeed, critics have contended that social mixing amounts to a form of 'gentrification by stealth' (Bridge et al. 2012) through the active displacement of existing social housing tenants to non-regenerated areas. In Logan, however, it is not yet clear whether redevelopment plans will necessitate any off-site re-location of existing public housing tenants. Nevertheless, as plans for the initiative unfold, there is some unease among local service providers that the prime aim is to help shed Logan's negative reputation, rather than to attend to the underlying disadvantage facing the area:

... it's probably more focused around beautifying Logan more than actually getting to the real underlying issues and dealing with that because you see that with some of the NRAS [National Rental Affordability Scheme] properties. You build these fantastic



properties and that's great, but you're still going to be housing the same people. (Logan Central, NGO community worker/service provider)

An alternative viewpoint is that any improvement in the area's reputation will lead to disadvantaged people being pushed out to other low-income areas through a reduction in the availability of affordable housing:

When you're trying to create opportunities for people, part of that is about creating jobs, creating a place where people want to live and work and play, all those things that councils like ... There's a possibility that people who are more marginalised get pushed out of those areas, that's traditionally what happens. (Logan Central, NGO community worker/service provider)

### 9.5.2 Place improvement and growth strategies

City-wide state and local government growth strategies are not conventionally viewed as a form of intervention to address disadvantage, but the empirical findings of the case studies indicate that they potentially have profound impacts on disadvantaged populations and are thus worthy of comment. While it is a requirement of state-based planning acts that each local government has its own local planning scheme to map out the future direction of its area, some of the case study areas had been designated sites of strategic importance for broader metropolitan planning strategies. As a result, they had been earmarked for various place improvement initiatives such as new residential dwellings, infrastructure upgrades, new retail developments and renewal of their town centre. For example:

- Logan Central has been identified within the *South-East Queensland Regional Plan* as a 'Major Regional Activity Centre' and a 'strategic civic and cultural centre accommodating regional government and commercial precincts to service the sub-region' (AECOM 2011, p.2). In line with this, Logan City Council has formulated a draft master plan for Logan Central to guide land-use, transport, infrastructure delivery and the provision of quality urban spaces in the locality. This incorporates proposed new infrastructure developments such as a new town square accommodating a cluster of niche retail activities; new roads and a relocation of car parking beyond the town centre core; new affordable, medium-density housing; and a new education precinct (AECOM 2011).
- In New South Wales, Auburn has similarly been flagged as a potential site of expansion as part of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure's *West Central Sub-region Draft Strategy*. With Auburn LGA containing the Sydney Olympic Park at Homebush, the plan is to promote the facility as a major draw card for the area and to offer additional residential, business and educational uses within the region. It is expected that 17 000 new dwellings will be located within the Auburn LGA by 2031 (Auburn City Council 2011, p.22). Additionally significant numbers of apartment developments have been, and are being, built in the Auburn LGA. These areas lie adjacent to the Parramatta River and are attracting more affluent residents. Once these new developments are complete, they will increase the population of Auburn LGA by approximately 30 000 people, and will collectively have a population equal to that of Auburn suburb.

The impact of these broader metropolitan and sub-regional strategies on the ground in Auburn was already evident in 2013. Within the private housing market, there was already significant (mainly small-scale private) investor activity, leading to extensive construction of new, multi-unit dwellings. Further, the area was reportedly drawing in increased custom for local shops and restaurants.

The cases of Auburn and Logan—and indeed other case study areas—provide insights into the complexity of growth and development in disadvantaged suburbs. On the one hand, they can improve the physical appeal of run-down areas that existing residents can enjoy, while attracting new residents with higher disposable incomes. They can also help generate a sense of pride among the local community and shake off negative stereotypes. But these outcomes

may come at a cost. As the example of Auburn illustrates, disadvantaged populations may suffer some negative consequences of area improvement. To begin with, the higher population density of the area will place increased pressure on existing facilities, including parks and open space, as well as the capacity of the council to manage growth and cater for the more marginalised groups. Further, council representatives reported that the council had been successful in attracting funding for services to support its disadvantaged community, but expressed concern that with an influx of wealthy residents into the LGA, Auburn may experience a dilution of indices of disadvantage which would make it more difficult for Council and other local groups to argue for funding on the basis of the area's disadvantaged status. Finally, while the gentrification of Braybrook and displacement of low-income groups described earlier in this report had primarily been driven by the suburb's proximity to the Melbourne CBD and changes in its housing market, the local council was well aware that publicly funded amenity improvement may have accelerated that process.

## **9.6 People-based interventions**

In turning now to policy measures targeted explicitly at disadvantaged people, it is worth remembering the point made at the beginning of this chapter that such policies continue to have significant place outcomes 'due to the fact that much of the activity they fund or support takes place in areas of high disadvantage' (Randolph 2004, p.65). Generally, such interventions come in the form of policies, programs and projects targeted at specific populations considered to be particularly vulnerable. Numerically, these appear to be the most prevalent forms of interventions into disadvantaged areas although, in identifying them, it is often difficult to distinguish between designated projects and programs and the day-to-day activities of local service providers whose core business is to assist those in need. These types of interventions are also diverse in form and range from small-scale single issue activities, such as crime prevention among young Pacific Islanders in Emerton/Mount Druitt and youth high school transition schemes on Russell Island, to fairly integrated programs that address various dimensions of youth disadvantage in Logan and Braybrook through mentoring, training and social inclusion activities. In some cases, they also involve capital investment in low-cost housing for specific groups such as the elderly or those at risk of homelessness. Most interventions were funded through federal or state government programs and delivered by not-for-profit community associations, although local government was also increasingly involved.

Since it is impossible here to document the wide-ranging examples of targeted people-focused interventions across the six case studies, the list below provides an indication of the types of programs available and the broad categories of social groups who are commonly seen in need of this support:

- Skill development schemes, apprenticeships and volunteer activities to help unemployed people transition back into the workplace.
- Measures to combat the specific problem of youth unemployment, reflecting concerns about the intergenerational nature of poverty and disadvantage in the six case study areas. Box 5 below provides further detail of a Logan-based program designed to increase social and economic participation among young people.
- Social inclusion programs for migrants and ethnic minority groups (see Box 5 below for an example in the suburb of Emerton/Mount Druitt).
- Service coordination activities for young people who otherwise find it difficult to negotiate the complex landscape of social service provision.
- Improved employability and literacy programs for target youth groups (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth).

- Crime prevention strategies designed for early intervention for young people most at risk of becoming involved in the youth justice system or being subject to family violence, substance abuse and violent behaviour.
- Intensive support services to improve employment, education and social wellbeing outcomes for young people with mental health problems.
- Intensive casework services for youth offenders identified as being at serious risk of re-offending (through programs such as the New South Wales' *Youth on Track Program*, which has been rolled out across the Blacktown city municipality, including Mount Druitt).
- Strategies to create more child-friendly environments to prevent child abuse and neglect, such as the former *Play a Part Program* developed on Russell Island by the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect.
- Initiatives designed to combat intergenerational conflict among some migrant communities.
- The provision of affordable and emergency housing for groups considered at risk of homelessness. In Auburn, the local council was attempting to address housing affordability concerns through the provision and management of 76 affordable housing units for seniors, while various neighbourhood associations in Logan were providing transitional accommodation to young or single people who needed help sustaining a private rental tenancy.
- Council strategic planning documents to map out and address the challenges facing identified social groups such as young people, migrants and the elderly. On Russell Island, the high proportion of older residents prompted the then Redland Shire Council to formulate a *Strategy for Seniors* (2006) in which it explicitly identified the challenges facing older residents living on the Southern Moreton Bay Islands. Indeed, there were few funded programs to support seniors on the islands except for some social activities provided by Blue Care. We turn to consider where and why activities appear to be more limited on the island shortly.

As is common, a constant complaint about these programs was their time limited nature, such that those unable to obtain recurrent funding generally disappeared. Even though new projects covering similar issues sometimes emerged, this did not compensate for the uncertainty and frustration that arose when a well-developed and popular project was forced to cease through a lack of funding, or when government priorities were suddenly seen to shift.

## Box 5: Examples of targeted youth-focused initiatives

### *Logan Central: Better Futures Local Solutions (Department Of Human Services)*

One of the most integrated approaches to youth issues was the federally-funded *Better Futures, Local Solutions* program that provided funding to increase social and workforce participation through local community projects. Convened by a Local Advisory Group responsible for administering grants to local projects, the scheme had funded seven such projects in Logan Central. One of the most innovative, and acclaimed, of these is *Breaking the Cycle*: a community-based mentor program administered by the Queensland Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) that enables disadvantaged youth to accrue 100 hours of logged driver training required to achieve their driver's license. As well as improving their employment prospects by helping them secure a core life skill, the program was also designed to provide young people with older community-based mentors; to promote driving safety and reduce driving offences among the young; and to attract disengaged youth into the activities of the PCYC.

### *The Pacific Islanders Mount Druitt Action Network*

Originally funded under the New South Wales Government *Community Solutions and Crime Prevention Strategy* (2003–2005), The Pacific Islanders Mount Druitt Action Network is an advocacy, lobbying and support provider agency dedicated to the fast growing Pacific Islander minority community in Mount Druitt. Among other activities, the network works to promote community cohesion—especially as regards the common division between Pacific Islander young people and their parents, which reflects confusions around national and cultural identity. This generational divide has been seen as one factor contributing to disruptive behaviour by some Pacific Islander youth in and around Mount Druitt and increased law-abiding behaviour among younger people has been directly attributed to the work of the network:

Groups like [The Pacific Islanders Mount Druitt Action Network] have had a massive impact in getting these kids off the street ... [thanks to this] over the past five or so years the gang culture within Mount Druitt has diminished considerably ... I strongly believe these strategies and these groups help places like Mount Druitt and without them we'd be on the back foot. (Emerton/Mount Druitt, police/justice)

## 9.7 Comparison of interventions across the case study areas

The discussion above provides some indication of the nature and extent of policy interventions that are targeted at areas considered disadvantaged. What is also becoming evident through this comparison of six, highly diverse, case study areas is the degree of variation in the way different localities are targeted for attention; the kinds of interventions they may be targeted with; and the key actors involved in driving the various initiatives. Several important observations emerge through this analysis.

The first is that some of the case study sites (Emerton/Mount Druitt, Auburn and Logan Central) appear to be well stocked in terms of local services and organisations. Most stakeholders in those areas agreed with this assessment, with some going so far as to describe the localities as being 'over serviced' or 'service rich'. In terms of government funding programs, there was a view in Logan that the city as a whole was frequently used as a site to pilot new federal and state government projects and that this, according to one stakeholder, was beginning to create problems of coordination:

Every government, every time there's an initiative that's announced, Logan seems to be the place where they're going to run pilots. We've had to put together a coordinators group to talk to each other, the three levels of government, made up of representatives from just about every department that actually have something to do with Logan. (Logan Central, federal government officer).

Yet, as the Logan Central interviewee pointed out, with so many actors and projects involved, coordination of activities has become a major challenge—a point raised earlier in this chapter

and a common complaint about the highly fragmented institutional landscape of service delivery in general. Further, as various stakeholders in Emerton/Mount Druitt noted, the high density of social services locally (and indeed academic attention on the place as a site of poverty) might actually compound the area's negative external image. Similarly, other participants (including community workers and housing managers in both Logan Central and Emerton/Mount Druitt) saw a risk that easy access to such provision might even promote 'welfare dependency' or perpetuate disadvantage by continually attracting the neediest people into the area. It was this latter concern that gave rise to the common expression in all areas except Springvale that their suburb had been used as a 'dumping ground' as described earlier in Chapter 7.

In comparison to these localities, Braybrook appears to be an area that has received a relatively large amount of public policy intervention towards revitalisation and growth after a very long period of private disinvestment and very little investment in any public infrastructure. Indeed, the Victorian Government's *Neighbourhood Renewal Program* which has been implemented in Braybrook over the last eight years is anecdotally viewed as a particularly well-designed and funded example of such programs.

Together, these three case study sites share several common features. Most notably, they represented two of the four disadvantaged suburb 'types'—'isolate' suburbs (Emerton) and 'improver' suburbs (Braybrook and Logan Central). What they also share, though, is a history as working class suburbs with concentrations of social housing that have come to accommodate marginalised social groups with a wide range of complex problems. As outlined earlier, it is their status as places where the 'problem' of public housing persists that most likely accounts for their highly visible status as disadvantaged areas in need of attention. That this attention has largely come in the form of integrated neighbourhood renewal, and that these integrated programs are gradually being replaced with a diverse and complex set of individually funded projects and programs, suggests that service providers will continuously need to secure ongoing funding if existing service levels in these areas are to be sustained. Further, there is the challenge of maintaining community interest in supporting local projects, with community workers in Emerton/Mount Druitt observing an emerging cynicism among the community about short-term programs introduced by state and local government agencies, and a reluctance to participate in them as a result.

But what of those places not remarked upon as service rich? In Auburn, it would seem that the place does not suffer from a lack of community services, but that these are much more localised and the main initiating agency is the local council, rather than a state or federal government agency. Conversely, we found little to report on interventions in Russell Island, apart from the *Place Project* implemented in 2007 and various important initiatives targeted at the island's youth, while Springvale appears to have received almost no policy or program to address disadvantage outside of what might be considered regular service delivery. These two localities have very little in common to explain this policy vacuum aside from a very small (or absent, in the case of Russell Island) public housing sector. Along with Auburn, Springvale represents a 'lower priced' suburb in our typology: well located in terms of access to services and the central business district; high on overseas movers; high on two parent families and operating as purchase entry points on the basis of its lower median housing prices. As a marginal suburb, Russell Island stands in complete contrast, being located on the urban periphery and somewhat disconnected from mainstream urban housing markets. It operates as a 'sea change' locality for retirees and a smaller number of working families, but increasingly recognised as a place of disadvantage, both by the SEIFA index and by stakeholders who work with the island community.

The lack of policy attention to Russell Island is, in some ways, easy to explain because of its distinct geography as an island. Historically, the Queensland Government has made no secret of its view that people who move to the island do so because they are seeking an 'island

lifestyle' where the absence of higher order services is a self-chosen trade-off (GHD 2002, p.10; *Courier Mail*, 8 October 2007). This view has informed government policy, including the decision not to provide a secondary school on the island, with the argument that the island lacks the population to justify additional service provision. As a result, limited services are provided through an outreach model but this, in itself, creates challenges of additional cost, time and difficulty in coordinating multiple agencies.

Local residents and stakeholders of Russell Island had their own theories of why the island attracted such little attention from policy-makers, which they believed was a result of the island being seen as insufficiently 'disadvantaged'. In the Russell Island focus group for example, residents discussed why nearby Logan received so much more in the way of support despite the island having similar kinds of issues to tackle:

I didn't realise that the government pours funding into places like Logan. But they will not pour the funding into us because it's not recognised. It's not labelled. You've got to be labelled. (Russell Island, resident)

In their view, a process of labelling needs to take place in order for a place to be defined as 'disadvantaged' and in need of investment. While stakeholders in places such as Auburn and Braybrook were concerned that any process of gentrification may undermine their identity as a site of disadvantage and reduce the funding channelled into them, for Russell Island, it was more a case that the label was yet to be bestowed. Yet residents were also concerned that attracting such a label would further entrench the negative reputation the island had already developed. According to one group of service providers interviewed, this meant that while Russell Island community groups might be in a position to apply for local grants to ease the burden of disadvantage facing the island, those with the capacity to lead such initiatives were unwilling to do so because they did not wish to further promote their island as a place where disadvantaged people live:

Interviewee A: I think that's probably been a part of the issue, that in order to get anything, they've had to prove that they're ...

Interviewee B: no good.

Interviewee A: ... no good, yeah. And they're very—the older people and the people that are functional—are really loathe to do that, because they know it will impact on their businesses and they know it will impact on their presentation of the island. So they're not prepared to say things they should here to get money and to get funding. (Russell Island, state government officers)

In Springvale, it appears that government attention has been diverted towards nearby Dandenong, which has received significant investment and renewal through the *Revitalising Central Dandenong* scheme. It is possible that residents of Springvale have benefitted from these investments as they spill over into neighbouring areas, and it would also appear that Springvale has not suffered as a result of inattention even if there is lingering resentment that the place is too often ignored. Importantly, despite objective indicators denoting the suburb as disadvantaged, Springvale is a sought after area, generally affording residents a great deal of amenity and access to opportunity. It also lacks the stigma of other case study areas, having moved on from earlier problems of drug and crime. As a result, the suburb does not present itself as a typical disadvantaged area, which may explain why it frequently appears to be overlooked for interventions to address disadvantage.

## 9.8 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to provide an overview of the different ways in which state, federal and local governments, not-for-profit-agencies and community groups attempt to address disadvantage in particular localities. With the opportunity to undertake this analysis

across six case study sites, encompassing four disadvantaged area 'types', the diverse experiences of different localities in terms of policy interventions are clear. That is, different suburb types appear to receive different types and levels of intervention. While 'isolate' (Emerton/Mount Druitt) and 'improver' suburbs (Logan Central and Braybrook) appear to have received, and continue to receive, extensive intervention through a combination of integrated programs and plans operating alongside a multiplicity of overlapping projects, 'lower priced' suburbs rely mainly on local initiatives funded through ad-hoc schemes by local government or community service providers (in the case of Auburn). Where local effort appears to be absent (as with Springvale), policy interventions to address disadvantage are limited although, in the case of Springvale at least, this does not appear to be a significant problem for residents or service providers. In contrast, our 'marginal' suburb—Russell Island—also appears to have received little external support, but the consequences of this are much more profound than in Springvale given its ageing and vulnerable demographic.

In thinking about suitable policy interventions that are 'best for people and best for place', a question of 'best for whom' or 'best for *which groups of people?*' emerges since different policy interventions have differential effects on different groups. Place improvement strategies, the de-concentration of public housing and the provision of housing for purchase in the private rental market may lead to the influx of new and more affluent residents, improve the image of the locality and help it shrug off its disadvantaged label. But they may also serve to displace more disadvantaged groups and undermine the provision of support when areas are no longer conceived as being in need. Conversely, strategies to improve the prospects of the local population can lead to the departure of residents when their economic position improves, thereby reinforcing area-based disadvantage even as individuals prosper. Moreover, while interventions explicitly targeted at disadvantaged places provide essential support to those who need them, they are acknowledged as further entrenching the negative identity of places as sites of disadvantage and appear to be lacking in localities where resistance to this label is strongest. These are complex issues requiring policies that are both sensitive to local context and informed by a broader understanding of the different ways and places in which disadvantage is played out and reproduced.

## 10 CONCLUSION

As outlined at the beginning of this report, the overall aims of this project have been to develop a more sophisticated understanding of how disadvantage is shifting across the urban landscape; what role housing markets and systems play in this process; and how policy-makers and communities might better respond to the forms of disadvantage that ensue. In the earlier stages of this research, the first of these questions was addressed through the development of a typology of spatial disadvantage for Australian cities that sought to capture the diverse ways in which disadvantage plays out across the urban landscape. This typology identified four distinct 'types' of disadvantaged area, each with its own demographic and housing market dynamics, and provided compelling evidence of the way disadvantage was simultaneously becoming more suburbanised and cross-tenured (Randolph & Holloway 2005a; 2005b).

In this report, with the aid of detailed qualitative case study work in six areas, we have been able to populate these typology categories and provide a better insight into the kinds of places that encounter disadvantage today. Through this process we have not only been able to test, or 'groundtruth', the veracity of the typology as a way of understanding how spatial disadvantage manifests itself, but also to garner a sense of the experiences of those who live and work in such places. A third aim was to identify the various policy interventions targeted at disadvantaged areas and our findings suggest that policy and practice has been relatively slow in responding to the changing nature of disadvantage.

In drawing this report to a close, we find several common themes and overarching conclusions that can be drawn from the experiences of the six case study areas. These insights comprise five summary conclusions around the impact of place-characteristics in the context of disadvantage in Australia. A notable exception to this trend is also apparent in the form of Russell Island, which, in some ways, operates as an outlier to the other five areas given its remote location and island status. But it may also offer an early warning of the way disadvantage is already beginning to shift beyond the suburbs and into the urban periphery, while also providing insight into the way housing and place-based policies can act to concentrate the experience of disadvantage or compound it, if not addressed.

### 10.1 The diversity of place-based disadvantage

The first conclusion confirms the need for a typology of disadvantage, such as the kind developed in this project, by confirming that there is indeed a variety of 'disadvantaged places' in the urban context. Across the six case study areas, we found extensive diversity related to:

- distance from, and connection with, the metropolitan centre and other regional hubs
- the economic base within each area
- the residential cultural mix and the impact this has had on organisations and investment locally
- housing market structures and built forms—substantially resulting from varied historical origins and evolution.

Considerable diversity could also be discerned in the way disadvantage was experienced and understood across the case study areas, including conceptions of who was likely to be most exposed to disadvantage. Young people, the elderly, and recent migrants were all identified as at risk groups, but still not in every suburb. Further, problems of crime, anti-social behaviour and low educational achievement were also differentially experienced. But there was also commonality, particularly around the challenges of dealing with a deeply entrenched negative identity that had been attached to the localities and around housing affordability pressures. Although perhaps hardly surprising given our explicit research aim of examining the diversity of local disadvantage, these are nonetheless important observations.



In empirical terms, the findings illustrate how Australia echoes international patterns of local area-based disadvantage by revealing that disadvantage is no longer solely concentrated in large-scale public housing projects in inner city areas. While such trends have been observed predominantly in Europe rather than the US, to date, even this is beginning to change, as a recent edited collection of essays on *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America* observes:

... [d]espite the fact that 'poverty in America' still conjures images of inner-city slums, the suburbanization of poverty has redrawn the contemporary American landscape. After decades of growth and change in suburbs, coupled with long-term economic restructuring and punctuated by the deepest U.S. economic downturn in seventy years, today more Americans live below the poverty line in suburbs than in the nation's big cities. (Kneebone & Berube 2013, p.2)

Perceptively, they make the point that current policies addressing urban disadvantage are not aligned to this new geography and are thus ill-equipped to address it—a point we turn to later in the Australian context.

## **10.2 Disadvantaged areas as dynamic rather than dysfunctional**

Second, far from being simply places of entrapment for disadvantaged residents, we can broadly conclude that suburbs characterised by concentrations of disadvantage in urban Australia are, nevertheless, places with substantial social capital and community pride. While this, too, may appear a self-evident observation, it is an important one if we are to avoid stereotyping disadvantaged areas as poverty-stricken sink-holes at the bottom of the suburban pecking order where people reside only because they lack the means to escape. In some instances, local dynamism plays out through the potential for individuals and groups to become upwardly mobile particularly in terms of education, employment and income, although in other cases, the potential for place disadvantage to stifle the potential for upward social mobility can be more of a problem, leaving families stuck in disadvantaged neighbourhoods over multiple generations (see Sharkey 2008 for a discussion of this in the US context).

In addition to the integral role played by changes within local housing markets, we also found that internally 'propagated' and externally 'invested' economic and support strategies, policies and programs directed at each area have acted to stimulate change and general improvement over a period of some years. As detailed in Chapter 6, this relates in part to broader societal and economic trends regarding the changing nature of manufacturing, economic opportunity, training and labour market engagement that has occurred in Australia in recent decades. Also influential are changes that have occurred in the major metropolitan areas of which they are a part.

The dynamism of these areas is not only reflected in the trajectory of change that we have identified, but also in the views and activities of the people who live and work there. Again, rather than being trapped and hopeless, there was a sense of agency among the resident participants; an attachment to place; a belief that theirs was a cohesive community even if, in some of the more ethnically diverse localities, this was still a work in progress; and a sense that outsiders had failed to comprehend the strengths of their place and community.

In all cases, the most common responses to the stigma attached to their area was frustration and indignation, but for many, these were coupled with a darker view that their suburb had also been used as a 'dumping ground' for low-income or 'undesirable' groups. Of course, the number of people interviewed for this project was necessarily limited and although residents' focus groups were socially and ethnically diverse, we acknowledge having engaged only indirectly with the most vulnerable groups—for example, people with mental health problems or substance abuse; those at risk of homelessness; disenfranchised youth; and the long-term unemployed. Their voices are not present in this report and their experiences cannot be assumed to be reflected in the accounts of local stakeholders or active citizens who participated in the group interviews. But it is important to acknowledge that not everyone who

lives in a 'disadvantaged area' is disadvantaged. Indeed, the Springvale and Russell Island cases illustrate most clearly that there can be considerable affluence in disadvantaged areas. The challenge, though, is to harness the energies of these social groups towards positive change rather than to have them leave or 'hunker down' and segregate themselves from those who are less well off.

Further, this report reflects the views of those who have 'chosen' to stay (if some element of choice can be said to be present) and it is perhaps understandable that they would collectively defend their suburb against injurious labels and identities. What we have not been able to elicit from this study are the view of those who leave, either as they transit to a 'better' area, or are forced out through the growing challenges of housing affordability. The role of migration in and out of disadvantaged areas, and the way it may reproduce place-based disadvantage over time, is an issue that requires more detailed investigation than we have been able to achieve here. Nevertheless, our observations of the drivers of mobility in and out of the six case study areas (most notably the housing market and the desire to be closer to local services and networks, especially among ethnic minorities) provide a useful starting point for analysis.

### **10.3 Connectivity and service provision**

Third, following on from the previous point, and with the exception of Russell Island, all of the areas afforded residents with access and connectivity to social and economic opportunity. This may or may not be within the local area. What appears to be most important to local residents is the extent to which each of the area sites is connected to opportunities within the broader metropolitan region. This is particularly so when locally-based opportunities are limited. Hence, we found the role of public transport and ready transport routes critical for local residents, as were the pathways for young people in each area from secondary schooling into training and/or higher education and training/re-training programs to assist those with limited English language and/or outdated employment skills. Physical (transport/access) and development (education, training, employment experience) pathways were essential for residents in all areas to live full and independent lives.

Earlier in this report, we outlined two of the principal drivers of suburbanising disadvantage in Australia. One was labour market factors, most notably the decline of manufacturing in suburban and city fringe areas and the continued dominance of inner city areas as sites of higher status employment (Beer & Forster 2002; Dodson 2005). The second was the housing system and housing market factors, with affordable housing in the private rental sector acting as a magnet for low-income groups (Arthurson & Jacobs 2003; Yates & Wood 2005; Randolph & Holloway 2007). In some cases, low-cost housing continued to play a significant role in attracting low-income groups to particular areas, but in others, declining housing affordability meant this was no longer a strong draw.

Instead, a third driver appeared to come into play, most notably in migrant gateway suburbs such as Auburn and Springvale. In these areas, it was the existence of minority ethnic cultural networks, the relatively well-connected locations of these places within the metropolitan area, and the provision of extensive facilities and services, that appeared to be driving population growth among migrant groups, even as housing became increasingly *unaffordable* and difficult to access. More broadly, there was a view among stakeholders that the availability of government support services catering to people with complex needs was also attracting disadvantaged groups into areas such as Logan Central and Emerton/Mount Druitt. With growing demand on housing placing pressure on the existing housing market, the result appears to be an expansion of the marginal or informal rental sector and the rise of make-shift accommodation, such as sheds and garages, along with sub-letting, room sharing and overcrowding of mainstream rental properties.

## 10.4 Left behind and pushed out

Fourth, and possibly most important in relation to policies aimed at addressing the concentration or production of place-based disadvantage, is that while the areas studied typically show a dynamic pattern of change and 'progress', a corollary to this is that some of the most disadvantaged residents within the local areas cannot access the benefits of these changes. In all case study sites, it was apparent that some residents are 'left behind' and residualised in place, and that others are pushed out of the local area and into housing and locational circumstances that can act to compound rather than ameliorate problems of access to opportunity. The role of the housing market within each local area type is critical to the ways such residualisation/ displacement occurs. For example, residents who have purchased or own their homes outright overwhelmingly benefit from general improvement in the local area. The areas they now have equity in are different and represent a 'better bag of goods' than those they originally invested in. In contrast, are public and private renters and individuals/ households in other more precarious housing arrangements for whom local area improvements (infrastructure improvements, reduced crime, economic growth) are experienced as problematic when housing becomes either unaffordable, unattainable or both.

This raises an additional question of where people go if/when they are displaced from some of the better-located disadvantaged suburbs. The story of Russell Island provides some clues here. Located on the urban periphery with a housing market that appears disconnected from that of the city more broadly, Russell Island is something of an unusual case in the typology of disadvantaged areas. As an island, with limited transport options and minimal education, social and commercial services, it probably constitutes something of an extreme case among the broader cohort of marginal disadvantaged areas (mainly arrayed around the coastal fringes of the Brisbane metropolitan area and clustered together on the New South Wales 'central coast' north of Sydney). Yet it may serve as a harbinger of concentrating disadvantage in dispersed locations. On Russell Island, it is the low-cost housing that appears to have been the main driver for the rise in population over the last decade, both for low-income retirees purchasing their own homes in a 'sea change location' and unemployed or low-income groups who are attracted to the low-cost rental housing. But this combination of housing, lifestyle choice and geography combine to isolate residents from the opportunities that residents in other sites tend to have access to. It can also trap them, making it difficult to leave and re-enter mainstream housing markets where both rents and purchase prices are much higher. While it is beyond the bounds of the present research to examine growth corridors of disadvantage that occur when residents from an 'improving' area move further away from metropolitan centres in order to access affordable/desirable housing, or the consequences of area improvement and/or gentrification for residualised residents, these issues are clearly a key focus for future research.

## 10.5 Policies to address disadvantage

A further conclusion from this study is that the diversity of disadvantaged areas is matched with a corresponding diversity in the way policy-makers and practitioners respond to place-based disadvantage. While we would like to claim that this indicates growing spatial sensitivity to the way disadvantage manifests itself (and is subsequently addressed), it appears more likely that policy and practice is yet to catch up with the empirical reality of disadvantage in all its forms. What we found is that conventional understandings of disadvantage as residing in places with high concentrations of public housing still appear to dominate policy design, such that localities which adhere to this model receive greatest support while others are forced to managed with local effort and limited funding.

But the extent to which this influences the trajectories of local areas is also variable. Compared to Emerton/Mount Druitt and Logan Central, which have attracted the greatest levels of government policy intervention, Springvale has attracted almost none, most likely because it is the most dynamic and least disadvantaged of the six areas we studied, largely as a result of

more private forms of growth and investment. Auburn is not dissimilar although there are clear and pressing housing affordability issues that, at present, only local government appears to be attempting to address (albeit with very limited powers and resources). On the other hand, Russell Island, has suffered from a deliberate Queensland Government policy not to service dispersed and isolated populations and there appears little capacity among service providers and local residents to make up for this shortfall.

## 10.6 Revisiting the area typology: common experiences and future trajectories

To finish, we reflect briefly on how the findings of the study relate to the area *types* we have studied and the metropolitan areas in which they are located.

- Type 1: *'isolate' suburbs*: high on young people and single parent households; high on social renting. Primarily limited to Sydney (apart from one Brisbane suburb), 2.7 per cent of disadvantaged households live in Type 1 suburbs. *Emerton, New South Wales*.
- Type 2: *'lower priced' suburbs*: high on overseas movers; high on two-parent families. 50 per cent of all households in disadvantage areas live in Type 2 suburbs, making them the most common type of disadvantaged suburb. *Auburn, New South Wales, & Springvale, Victoria*.
- Type 3: *'marginal' suburbs*: high on residential mobility but low on overseas movers; high on older people; high on private rental; high on outright home ownership. 9.7 per cent of disadvantaged households live in Type 3 suburbs. *Russell Island, Queensland*.
- Type 4: *'improver' suburbs*: high on overseas movers; somewhat low on change in unemployment and change in incidence of low status jobs. 38.4 per cent of disadvantaged households live in Type 4 suburbs. *Braybrook, Victoria & Logan, Queensland*.

In short, the Sydney and Melbourne examples of Type 2 'lower priced' suburbs, in which there is capacity for residents to remain in place for long periods or reside in the areas as 'stepping stone' locations, have seen steady improvement in many aspects of the local area. Additionally, residents have relatively high degrees of capacity to access opportunity either locally or in the broader metropolitan area. In each of the two examples, the intensely rich cultural mix associated with steady streams of overseas migration and settlement have acted to provide extensive networks of support for new and existing residents. These suburbs have become 'places of destination' largely due to this. But the increasing desirability of these suburbs as places to live has put upward pressure on both house prices and rents. While rising house prices may benefit some owner-occupier residents, the high proportion of people living in private rental accommodation means that it becomes increasingly difficult for them to remain in the area because they are unable to afford rising rents, or to purchase a property.

The 'improver' suburbs of Braybrook in Melbourne and Logan Central in Brisbane are similarly non-static areas. Logan is a place where policy attention has been intense for numerous years and there appears no sign that this attention is waning. With a new *City of the Future* plan that maps out a strategic direction for the city as a whole; new efforts to re-brand the city and shrug off its negative image; an extensive renewal initiative for its social housing stock; and a new master plan for the redesign of Logan Central into a cultural hub, there is considerable opportunity for re-development of the area.

While Braybrook has been largely perceived as a forgotten part of the broader western suburb area of Melbourne, substantial investment has since taken place. In recent years, Braybrook has witnessed a growth in housing values and is the last of the suburbs of the inner west of Melbourne to experience processes of rapid upward transformation associated with housing

market investment, gentrification and private infrastructure funding. At the time of the research Braybrook—like Logan Central—was in the midst of transition, changing from being a ‘forgotten’ site of manufacturing decline to being one in which a great deal of change, development and infrastructure and housing investment was taking place. Yet such forms of gentrification also bring with them challenges for those people who struggle to afford to stay in those locations as they become more desirable.

But it is the two typology categories of ‘isolate’ suburbs and ‘marginal’ suburbs that are of most concern in relation to the capacity for residents to either access opportunity or to benefit from changes in the local areas as part of broader metropolitan growth. Each in their own way is separate from the main dynamism of the cities of which they are part. Residents in public housing within Emerton/Mt Druitt in Sydney are primarily those unable to currently engage in mainstream economic activity (a function of tight targeting of housing allocation to those with high and complex needs) and hence clustering such residents geographically serves to create negative stereotypes and a poorer sense of amenity and safety as well as acting to stymie local area growth. Given this, Mount Druitt still struggles to shed its historic image as a ‘problematic place’, but this is clearly far from the reality of life in the area for most residents. For some, nevertheless, the area imposes significant ‘costs’ through its stigmatisation and other more concrete aspects of place disadvantage, particularly transport disadvantage, and for this group the suburb serves as home more by necessity than by choice.

The isolated geography and costly access to Russell Island in Queensland similarly acts to separate residents from economic opportunity in greater Brisbane and compounds resident dislocation from mainstream economic and social activity. For those residents who have consciously chosen the isolated lifestyle that the island affords—such as the retired homeowners or affluent families—this separation is part of the island’s appeal. But for those who make their way to the island for low-cost housing, there is a danger that island living may compound existing forms of disadvantage.

What each of these case study areas shows is that place-based disadvantage comes in multiple forms and that, while there are common drivers underlying each, the dynamics of local histories, conditions and circumstances also influence how disadvantage is manifested, experienced and addressed. Policies designed to ameliorate disadvantage thus need to be sensitive to the different ways in which disadvantage plays out across the urban landscape so that it is not overlooked, even when it comes in unexpected forms.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1: Interview schedule for stakeholders

1. Can you identify some of the strengths or challenges of [area name]?
2. [Where relevant] Can you tell me about [recent event of note—e.g. Logan summit] and what prompted it?

### Places with disadvantaged people

3. Can you tell me a bit [more] about the people of [name of suburb]. What sort of people live here?
4. Do people who move here generally stay?
5. Where do they come from or move to?
6. What is housing availability and affordability like here? Does it attract people to the area?

*[If discussion turns to people on low income, social housing, unemployed, etc.]*

7. What kinds of challenges does this create for the place? What are the most pressing economic and social needs of people who live in [area name]?

*[If no mention of disadvantage, poverty, etc.]*

8. Our analysis of census data has identified [area name] as an area which is comparatively disadvantaged when compared with other suburbs within [city name] when you take into account census data on socio-economic status, household type and mobility.

### Places that disadvantage people

9. What do you think has contributed to the problems faced in this area? Has this area always had these problems, or have there been changes to the place which has made things worse (e.g. decline in manufacturing)?
10. Do you think that the available housing in [area name] generally meets the needs of people living here?
  - In what way does/doesn't it meet their needs?
  - Does this vary for different groups of people, or for people living in different types of housing (e.g. different tenures, different dwelling types)?
11. Do you think that the public infrastructure in [area name]—such as public transport, schools and hospitals—generally meets the needs of people living here?
  - In what way does/doesn't it meet their needs?
  - Does this vary for different groups of people?
12. What are the surrounding suburbs like in this area? Are they similar to '[name of place]'?
13. Is [area name] well-connected with other surrounding suburbs? Is this useful or does it cause any problems?

### Policies and programs

*I'm interested in some of the policies and programs that have been designed to address some of the problems you identified.*

14. Are you familiar with any particular policies to address the problems you've identified? [Ask participants to identify them first then ask questions below. If they are unaware or miss any, name specific interventions and ask them to talk about them if they've heard of them].

15. Regarding [name of specific intervention of interest]:<sup>3</sup>

- Can you tell me what you know about how this intervention came to be introduced?
- What was the main purpose of [intervention name] when it was introduced?
- Who's been involved?
- Did [intervention name] roll out as expected?
- How effective do you think that [name of intervention] was in terms of [purpose of intervention]?
- What, if any, were some of the problems with it?
- Did [name of intervention] have any other impacts on [case study area] that you're aware of?

*[Once individual interventions have been discussed]*

16. Do you think these interventions have been well coordinated?

- Overall, have they made a difference to the area?
- What more, if anything, needs to be done?

### **Final question**

17. What do you think is the likelihood of change in the area in the foreseeable future? What do you think will be the nature of any change?

*TAILORED QUESTION FOR STAKEHOLDERS (insert at appropriate points in the interview)*

### **Council representatives**

1. What role has council played in addressing the problems faced by [name of suburb]?
2. How well do you think these efforts have worked?
3. What has worked well?
4. What challenges have you faced?
5. Have you been working with other stakeholders to address these issues? If so, which ones? How have you found that experience?

### **Housing providers**

1. How important is the provision of public/social housing to the area?
2. Is there a problem of homelessness in the area?
3. How easy/difficult is it to access social housing here?
4. Are you aware of, or have you been involved in, any housing initiatives that have been specifically targeted at this area?
5. Do you think there is good coordination between housing policy and other policies in this area?

### **Business sector**

1. Generally, how do local businesses fare in this area?

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<sup>3</sup> Repeat as necessary for other policy interventions of interest. If there are many interventions, ask them to focus on the last two years as a start.

2. In what ways, if any, are they affected by the disadvantage facing this area?
3. In general, is it easy for people living here to find a job?
4. Is it common for local businesses in this area to partner with or sponsor community groups? [Partner = promoting or helping to organise community events. Sponsor = provided cash or in-kind contribution without otherwise participating]
5. Are you aware of any economic development initiatives in place? Can you tell me about them?

#### **Local police**

1. Is crime much of a problem here? If so, what kinds of crime?
2. Do the police encounter any difficulties in enforcing control in this area (*e.g. lack of legitimacy*)?
3. Do you work with other agencies to address the issues facing the area? If so, which ones and what kinds of initiatives?
4. In your opinion, what are the underlying causes of the problems encountered in this area?

#### **Educational institutions/youth workers**

1. Are there any particular challenges that the young people of [name of place] encounter?
2. Do they transition well from the local school here to the high school?
3. How, if at all, do these challenges affect their education?
4. Do schools in [name of area] receive the levels of funding and support they need?
5. Are the teachers generally local people? Do they stay long in the area?

#### **Community associations**

1. Can you tell us a bit about [name of organisation] and the work you do?
2. Do residents generally get involved in local community activities and events?
3. Are some groups of residents more involved than others? If so, which groups?
4. Are there particular sub-groups of residents who are typically more active than others? Are there some groups who are more isolated?
5. What factors do you think influence the extent to which residents get involved in community activities and events? [*e.g. time, language barriers, access, cost, not feeling welcome*]

#### **Real Estate Agents**

1. What makes people come to this area to look for housing?
2. In relation to demand, what types/sizes of housing are in relatively short supply here?
3. What makes people leave this area to look for housing?
4. If people living in this area are looking to move elsewhere, is this because the desired housing isn't suitable in this area? If yes, what are their requirements that can't easily be met locally?

#### *Homebuying*

1. What is the current state of the homebuying market in this area? How do you think it compares with the rest of [name of city]?
2. When people are moving to this area looking to buy, what type/size of housing do they usually want? (flat/house, no. of bedrooms)



3. Roughly what would you estimate as the local split between investors, first home buyers and established owners trading up or down?
4. How does this compare with the rest of the city? What are the reasons for any differences?
5. To what extent are housebuyers in this area (either investors or owner occupiers) already local residents?
6. To the extent that people from outside the area look to buy in this area, is it possible to make any generalisation about where they come from?
7. Is there an ethnic dimension to the housing market in this area?

#### *Renting*

1. How active is the rental market in this area?
2. From which groups are private renters typically drawn in this suburb?
3. To what extent is that unusual compared with the rest of [name of city]?
4. When people are moving to this area looking to rent, what type/size of housing do they usually want? (flat/house, no. of bedrooms)
5. Roughly what is the mix of recent migrants and others among people looking to rent in this area?
6. How does the rate of private rental turnover in this area compare with what would be typical elsewhere in [name of city]?
7. When tenants move on from homes in this area what is their usual destination—in terms of renting or buying, in terms of the location of their next home?

## **Appendix 2: Focus group discussion guide**

### **Opening question**

1. Can you describe in your own words what [name of place] is like?

*Aim to capture what kinds of people live there. (Are people mostly similar or are there different groups of residents?) (e.g. based on ethnicity, age, employment, particular parts of the suburb)*

### **Resident satisfaction**

2. Are you happy living here? If so, why?
3. Would anyone leave this area if they had the opportunity? If so, why?

### **Community**

4. How much contact do you have with other people in the area? Do you feel like there's a strong sense of community here?

Possible prompts:

- Do different types of people in the area get along? (Are groups quite separate, is there a lot of mixing and cooperation, is there conflict?)
- What kinds of people live here? (Are people mostly similar or are there different groups of residents?) (e.g. based on ethnicity, age, employment, particular parts of the suburb)

### **Push/pull and churn**

5. How did you come to live in [name of place]?
  - Do you think your experience is typical of other people who live here?
6. Are most of your neighbours long-term residents or do people move in and out?
  - Why do you think that is?

### **Places with disadvantaged people**

7. What would you say are the most pressing economic and social concerns for people who live in [area name]? [Prompts: neighbourhood safety, crime, anti-social behaviour, physical appearance of the area, cost of living, housing costs, unemployment]
  - Are there particular places within [area name] where these problems are worse than others?
  - Are there any particular groups of people in [area name] who experience these problems worse than others?

### **Places that disadvantage people**

8. What's the housing situation like here? Does it meet your needs [i.e. is it affordable, of adequate size, location, etc.??]
9. Do you have good access to services like public transport, health care and community services?
10. Do you have access to facilities like parks and sports grounds, shops, and libraries?
11. Is it generally easy for people who live in this area to get to school or their workplaces?

### **Isolation/connectivity**

12. How easy is it to get to [name areas—i.e. important regional and metropolitan centres for employment, recreation and access to services]? Is this a problem for you?

### **Policy interventions**

13. Are you aware of any programs that have been put in place by government (local or state) or other groups (e.g. community groups, housing providers) to try to help people who live in this area? If so:

→ What are these programs? In what way are they trying to help? [Prompt: housing, employment, crime, community development]

→ Have you been involved with any of these programs (either in terms of helping to shape or run the programs, or receiving assistance through them)?

→ How successful do you think [program name(s)] has been in terms of helping people who live in this area?

### **Change**

14. Has this area changed much over the last five years? If so:

→ How has it changed?

→ Do these changes impact on you in any way?

15. Do you think this area will change much in the next 5–10 years? [Will any changes be for the better or worse?]

## Appendix 3: Case study areas, selected demographic, employment and housing characteristics

Table A1: Sydney case study areas—selected demographic characteristics, 2011

	Auburn	Emerton	Greater Metropolitan Sydney
Median Age	29	30	36
% aged 5–17	17.4%	<b>23.5%</b>	16.1%
% aged 65 or older	<b>8.3%</b>	10.7%	12.9%
Couple family household with children	37.4%	25.3%	33.0%
Couple family household without children	<b>16.0%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	21.8%
Single parent family	10.7%	<b>24.2%</b>	10.8%
Other family household	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>11.9%</b>	6.2%
Lone person household	<b>12.8%</b>	19.6%	20.0%
Group household	4.7%	<b>2.6%</b>	3.8%
% population born in Australia	<b>31.9%</b>	60.6%	59.9%
% of households moved in previous five years from an overseas address <sup>1</sup>	<b>14.2%</b>	<b>2.6%</b>	6.3%
Top five countries of birth	Australia China^ <b>Turkey</b> India <b>Lebanon</b>	Australia New Zealand <b>Philippines</b> <b>Cook Islands</b> <b>Samoa</b>	Australia England China^ India New Zealand
Top five languages spoken at home	Arabic English <b>Turkish</b> Mandarin Cantonese	English <b>Samoan</b> <b>Tongan</b> <b>Maori (Cook Island)</b> Arabic	English Arabic Mandarin Cantonese Vietnamese
ATSI population	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>	1.2%
% needed assistance with core activity	5.3%	<b>6.4%</b>	4.4%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

^ Note: excludes Taiwan and the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

<sup>1</sup> Note: While all other figures presented in this chapter are from the census analysis reports presented at the end of each of the case study reports that accompany this Final Report, this particular figure is from analysis of the 2011 Census data undertaken for the purpose of the cluster analysis to determine the typology of suburbs, which is fully reported in Hulse et al. 2014.

**Table A2: Melbourne case study areas—selected demographic characteristics, 2011**

	<b>Braybrook</b>	<b>Springvale</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Melbourne</b>
Median Age	32	34	36
% aged 5–17	16.8%	14.2%	15.7%
% aged 65 or older	10.3%	15.5%	13.1%
Couple family household with children	25.0%	28.7%	32.3%
Couple family household without children	<b>14.4%</b>	19.2%	22.9%
Single parent family	<b>17.6%</b>	12.9%	10.6%
Other family household	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>13.9%</b>	4.9%
Lone person household	21.0%	18.6%	20.9%
Group household	4.2%	4.3%	4.2%
% population born in Australia	<b>38.3%</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	63.3%
% of households moved in previous five years from an overseas address	<b>9.0%</b>	<b>12.2%</b>	6.6%
Top five countries of birth	Australia <b>Vietnam</b> India China^ <b>Philippines</b>	Australia <b>Vietnam</b> India <b>Cambodia</b> China^	Australia England India China^ Italy
Top five languages spoken at home	Vietnamese English <b>Cantonese</b> <b>Somali</b> Mandarin	Vietnamese English <b>Cantonese</b> <b>Punjabi</b> Mandarin	English Greek Italian Mandarin Vietnamese
ATSI population	<b>0.7%</b>	<b>0.2%</b>	0.5%
% needed assistance with core activity	5.6%	<b>6.3%</b>	4.5%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

^ Note: excludes Taiwan and the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

**Table A3: Brisbane case study areas—selected demographic characteristics, 2011**

	<b>Logan Central</b>	<b>Russell Island</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Brisbane</b>
Median Age	32	51	35
% aged 5–17	20.9%	13.6%	17.2%
% aged 65 or older	10.1%	<b>23.7%</b>	11.8%
Couple family household with children	24.5%	<b>12.2%</b>	30.8%
Couple family household without children	<b>15.2%</b>	28.2%	24.8%
Single parent family	<b>18.8%</b>	13.4%	11.4%
Other family household	<b>8.9%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	5.3%
Lone person household	22.8%	<b>31.6%</b>	19.3%
Group household	3.9%	3.6%	4.6%
% population born in Australia	<b>50.2%</b>	68.7%	70.3%
% of households moved in previous five years from an overseas address	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>1.9%</b>	6.4%
Top five countries of birth	Australia New Zealand <b>Burma</b> England <b>Samoa</b>	Australia New Zealand England <b>Scotland</b> <b>Philippines</b>	Australia New Zealand England India China^
Top five languages spoken at home	English Samoan <b>Karen</b> <b>Arabic</b> <b>Kirundi</b>	English <b>German</b> <b>Hungarian</b> <b>French</b> <b>Tagalog</b>	English Mandarin Vietnamese Cantonese Samoan
ATSI population	<b>4.1%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	2.0%
% needed assistance with core activity	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	4.2%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

^ Note: excludes Taiwan and the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

**Table A4: Sydney case study areas—selected employment and education characteristics, 2011**

	<b>Auburn</b>	<b>Emerton</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Sydney</b>
% who left school at year 10 or before <sup>1</sup>	<b>20.4%</b>	35.5%	29.9%
% left school at year 12 <sup>1</sup>	<b>41.3%</b>	<b>21.8%</b>	55.0%
% with vocational qualification <sup>1</sup>	<b>12.9%</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	24.1%
% with tertiary qualification <sup>1</sup>	<b>13.6%</b>	<b>3.2%</b>	24.1%
% employed full-time <sup>1</sup>	<b>25.5%</b>	<b>25.8%</b>	38.3%
% employed part-time <sup>1</sup>	14.4%	<b>10.2%</b>	16.5%
% unemployed <sup>2</sup>	<b>10.8%</b>	<b>13.3%</b>	5.7%
% youth (15–24) unemployed <sup>3</sup>	20.5%	<b>49.5%</b>	18.9%
Participation rate <sup>1</sup>	48.3%	<b>45.4%</b>	61.7%
% in low-skilled/low status jobs <sup>4</sup>	<b>46.1%</b>	<b>61.2%</b>	28.0%
Median weekly individual income	\$352	\$363	\$619
% households with weekly income less than \$600	21.8%	<b>26.7%</b>	16.9%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

<sup>1</sup> % of persons aged 15 or older

<sup>2</sup> number of unemployed persons as a % of the total labour force

**Table A5: Sydney case study areas—change in unemployment and job status 2001–2011**

	<b>Auburn</b>	<b>Emerton</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Sydney</b>
Change in % unemployed <sup>1</sup>	-4.1%	-0.8%	-0.4%
Change in % youth (15–24) unemployed <sup>2</sup>	-0.6%	+25.6%	+8.9%
Change in % low skilled/low status jobs <sup>3</sup>	-34.7%	-20.4%	-27.9%

Source: ABS Censuses of Population and Housing 2001 and 2011

<sup>1</sup> Number of unemployed persons as % of the total labour force

<sup>2</sup> % of youths aged 15–24 years in the labour force

<sup>3</sup> % of employed persons aged 15 or older. Low status jobs includes technicians and trades, community and personal service, clerical and administrative, sales, machinery operators and drivers and labourers, and excludes managers and professionals.

**Table A6: Melbourne case study areas—selected employment and education characteristics, 2011**

	<b>Braybrook</b>	<b>Springvale</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Melbourne</b>
% who left school at year 10 or before <sup>1</sup>	21.4%	23.3%	24.8%
% left school at year 12 <sup>1</sup>	<b>38.1%</b>	42.1%	54.6%
% with vocational qualification <sup>1</sup>	<b>12.6%</b>	<b>15.5%</b>	23.7%
% with tertiary qualification <sup>1</sup>	<b>12.1%</b>	<b>12.0%</b>	23.6%
% employed full-time <sup>1</sup>	<b>26.0%</b>	<b>27.7%</b>	37.6%
% employed part-time <sup>1</sup>	<b>13.4%</b>	15.1%	18.0%
% unemployed <sup>2</sup>	<b>12.5%</b>	<b>10.5%</b>	5.5%
% youth (15–24) unemployed <sup>3</sup>	<b>29.9%</b>	20.8%	18.3%
Participation rate <sup>1</sup>	48.3%	51.1%	62.5%
% in low-skilled/low status jobs <sup>4</sup>	<b>47.8%</b>	<b>56.9%</b>	30.2%
Median weekly individual income	\$339	\$352	\$591
% households with weekly income less than \$600	<b>28.7%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>	17.9%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

<sup>1</sup> % of persons aged 15 or older

<sup>2</sup> number of unemployed persons as a % of the total labour force

<sup>3</sup> % of youths aged 15–24 in the labour force

**Table A7: Melbourne case study areas—change in unemployment and job status 2001–2011**

	<b>Braybrook</b>	<b>Springvale</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Melbourne</b>
Change in % unemployed <sup>1</sup>	-10.1%	-6.2%	-1.1%
Change in % youth (15–24) unemployed <sup>2</sup>	-4.0%	+0.7%	+6.1%
Change in % low skilled/low status jobs <sup>3</sup>	-30.7%	-20.5%	-27.3%

Source: ABS Censuses of Population and Housing 2001 and 2011

<sup>1</sup> Number of unemployed persons as % of the total labour force

<sup>2</sup> % of youths aged 15–24 years in the labour force

<sup>3</sup> % of employed persons aged 15 or older. Low status jobs includes technicians and trades, community and personal service, clerical and administrative, sales, machinery operators and drivers and labourers, and excludes managers and professionals.



**Table A8: Brisbane case study areas—selected employment and education characteristics, 2011**

	<b>Logan Central</b>	<b>Russell Island</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Brisbane</b>
% who left school at year 10 or before <sup>1</sup>	31.9%	<b>41.2%</b>	31.6%
% left school at year 12 <sup>1</sup>	<b>24.7%</b>	<b>24.0%</b>	52.8%
% with vocational qualification <sup>1</sup>	<b>14.6%</b>	23.2%	26.1%
% with tertiary qualification <sup>1</sup>	<b>3.7%</b>	<b>6.7%</b>	20.1%
% employed full-time <sup>1</sup>	<b>24.3%</b>	<b>14.0%</b>	39.7%
% employed part-time <sup>1</sup>	<b>11.6%</b>	<b>11.2%</b>	18.0%
% unemployed <sup>2</sup>	<b>14.7%</b>	<b>19.3%</b>	5.9%
% youth (15–24) unemployed <sup>3</sup>	<b>43.8%</b>	<b>89.7%</b>	21.3%
Participation rate <sup>1</sup>	<b>46.7%</b>	<b>33.7%</b>	65.0%
% in low-skilled/low status jobs <sup>4</sup>	<b>60.2%</b>	<b>52.8%</b>	32.0%
Median weekly individual income	\$373	\$347	\$633
% households with weekly income less than \$600	<b>26.4%</b>	<b>42.1%</b>	16.4%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

<sup>1</sup> % of persons aged 15 or older

<sup>2</sup> number of unemployed persons as a % of the total labour force

<sup>3</sup> % of youths aged 15–24 in the labour force

**Table A9: Brisbane case study areas—change in unemployment and job status 2001–2011**

	<b>Logan Central</b>	<b>Russell Island</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Brisbane</b>
Change in % unemployed <sup>1</sup>	-4.2%	-3.8%	-1.9%
Change in % youth (15–24) unemployed <sup>2</sup>	+15.2%	+36.4	+6.2%
Change in % low skilled/low status jobs <sup>3</sup>	-22.8%	-12.9%	-28.1%

Source: ABS Censuses of Population and Housing 2001 and 2011

<sup>1</sup> Number of unemployed persons as % of the total labour force

<sup>2</sup> % of youths aged 15–24 years in the labour force

<sup>3</sup> % of employed persons aged 15 or older. Low status jobs includes technicians and trades, community and personal service, clerical and administrative, sales, machinery operators and drivers and labourers, and excludes managers and professionals.

**Table A10: Sydney case study areas—selected housing characteristics, 2011**

	Auburn	Emerton	Greater Metropolitan Sydney
No. of occupied private dwellings	11,366	846	1,720,333
Average household size	2.9	2.8	2.6
% Detached houses <sup>1</sup>	47.5%	<b>79.1%</b>	60.6%
% Semi-detached dwellings <sup>1</sup>	<b>9.4%</b>	14.5%	12.7%
% Unit/flat/apartment <sup>1</sup>	<b>42.5%</b>	<b>6.3%</b>	26.4%
% Other dwelling type <sup>1</sup>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	0.6%
% Fully owned <sup>1</sup>	22.8%	<b>16.7%</b>	28.9%
% Owned with mortgage <sup>1</sup>	28.1%	27.4%	33.7%
% Private rental <sup>1</sup>	<b>32.8%</b>	23.3%	24.6%
% Social rental <sup>1</sup>	4.6%	<b>24.0%</b>	4.9%
% Other tenure type <sup>1</sup>	<b>2.9%</b>	2.2%	2.0%
Median monthly mortgage repayment	\$1,800	\$1,517	\$2,167
Median weekly rent	\$320	<b>\$220</b>	\$351
% low-income households paying more than 30% in rent <sup>2</sup>	<b>32.6%</b>	21.7%	21.0%
% who lived at different address five years ago <sup>3</sup>	40.4%	28.7%	37.2%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

<sup>1</sup> % of occupied private dwellings

<sup>2</sup> % of low-income households with weekly household income <\$600

<sup>3</sup> % of total population aged five years or older

**Table A11: Melbourne case study areas—selected housing characteristics, 2011**

	<b>Braybrook</b>	<b>Springvale</b>	<b>Greater Metropolitan Melbourne</b>
No. of occupied private dwellings	3,253	7,682	1,595,463
Average household size	2.5	2.6	2.5
% Detached houses <sup>1</sup>	62.5%	72.3%	72.2%
% Semi-detached dwellings <sup>1</sup>	<b>15.8%</b>	11.3%	11.5%
% Unit/flat/apartment <sup>1</sup>	<b>19.9%</b>	14.8%	15.7%
% Other dwelling type <sup>1</sup>	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>	0.5%
% Fully owned <sup>1</sup>	<b>20.0%</b>	32.1%	31.0%
% Owned with mortgage <sup>1</sup>	<b>26.5%</b>	<b>23.2%</b>	35.6%
% Private rental <sup>1</sup>	20.7%	<b>30.9%</b>	22.8%
% Social rental <sup>1</sup>	<b>18.0%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	2.9%
% Other tenure type <sup>1</sup>	<b>4.3%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	1.9%
Median monthly mortgage repayment	\$1,520	\$1,500	\$1,810
Median weekly rent	\$215	\$260	\$300
% low-income households paying more than 30% in rent <sup>2</sup>	20.0%	19.5%	19.6%
% who lived at different address five years ago <sup>3</sup>	37.1%	36.2%	37.3%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

<sup>1</sup> % of occupied private dwellings

<sup>2</sup> % of low-income households with weekly household income <\$600

<sup>3</sup> % of total population aged five years or older

**Table A12: Brisbane case study areas—selected housing characteristics, 2011**

	Logan Central	Russell Island	Greater Metropolitan Brisbane
No. of occupied private dwellings	2,419	1,225	828,197
Average household size	2.6	<b>2.0</b>	2.5
% Detached houses <sup>1</sup>	70.8%	<b>98.9%</b>	78.8%
% Semi-detached dwellings <sup>1</sup>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	8.4%
% Unit/flat/apartment <sup>1</sup>	<b>26.7%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	11.8%
% Other dwelling type <sup>1</sup>	<b>0.2%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>	0.8%
% Fully owned <sup>1</sup>	<b>18.1%</b>	<b>34.1%</b>	25.9%
% Owned with mortgage <sup>1</sup>	<b>21.9%</b>	<b>24.5%</b>	35.7%
% Private rental <sup>1</sup>	32.7%	30.0%	26.9%
% Social rental <sup>1</sup>	<b>14.9%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	4.0%
% Other tenure type <sup>1</sup>	2.7%	1.9%	2.5%
Median monthly mortgage repayment	\$1,430	<b>\$1,083</b>	\$1,950
Median weekly rent	\$240	\$200	\$325
% low-income households paying more than 30% in rent <sup>2</sup>	<b>33.0%</b>	26.7%	22.3%
% who lived at different address five years ago <sup>3</sup>	38.9%	49.2%	44.8%

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2011

<sup>1</sup> % of occupied private dwellings

<sup>2</sup> % of low-income households with weekly household income <\$600

<sup>3</sup> % of total population aged five years or older

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Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute

Level 1, 114 Flinders Street, Melbourne Victoria 3000

Phone +61 3 9660 2300

Email [information@ahuri.edu.au](mailto:information@ahuri.edu.au)

Web [www.ahuri.edu.au](http://www.ahuri.edu.au)