

PUBLIC HOUSING

SELF LEARNING GUIDE

(a) Introduction to Welfare Housing

P. Spearitt, "Sydney Since the Twenties", 1978, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney

Failure of public housing - pp 12-15 Slums - pp 73-76 Peace and housing shortage - pp 83-89 Building post war suburbia - pp 99-105

(b) Glebe

"Glebe Project", Dept. of Housing & Construction, AGPS, 1980, Canberra

(c) Government and Housing

M. Neutze, "Urban Development in Australia", 1977 George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Government and Housing? pp 167-172

L. Kilmartin & D.C. Thorns, "Cities Unlimited", 1978, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Public housing, pp 116-125.

WELFARE HOUSING 1

#100 INTRODUCTION

Shelter is a fundamental need of man but private enterprise cannot provide welfare housing because of the profit motive intrinsic in the capitalist system

The objectives of welfare housing are to provide those with special housing needs housing of an acceptable standard. Generally, new housing for those who could not afford to buy. Welfare housing has always been tied to urban renewal schemes.

#110 DEVELOPMENT OF WELFARE HOUSING

(a) Welfare housing in Australia started in Queensland in 1909 where the state government established a policy of supplying loan funds ^{10%} 1X less than that applicable to the long term bond rate for welfare housing.

(b) The the most important need was immediate post WW2 when an acute shortage of housing had to be overcome. New federal agreements were entered with the states under which home ownership was to be encouraged by both sale, and lease. Terminating building societies played an important role.

#120 HOUSING DIFFICULTIES IN AUSTRALIA SYDNEY

(a) The gold rushes of the 1850's brought a huge influx of population to Australia.

(b) Factories brought cheap "workmen cottages" built near the factories.

(c) There were no minimum building standards resulting in low quality and size of houses. For example, in Erskineville, & Waterloo.

(d) Land values rose dramatically during the industrial stages leading to a spiral in rents. The already small dwellings were subdivided into smaller residential units.

(e) In 1906 legislation was introduced which provided for minimum standards for buildings. This increased costs.

(f) Single dwellings often contained a number of families.

DACEY GARDEN

(g) Royal Commission on Housing, 1912 Housing Act 1912; Dacey Garden Suburb Councils had powers under the Local Government Act to undertake housing schemes. NSW Housing Board 1912 abolished in 1924

(h) Happy Valley settlements, 1930s
Homes for Unemployed Trust, 1934
The Housing Improvement Board, 1936

(i) The Australian Government constituted the a Housing Commission under the National Security Regulations in 1943. Upon the recommendations of the commission a Commonwealth State Housing Agreement was drawn up in 1945.

#130 BASICS OF WELFARE HOUSING

(a) Private enterprise cannot be expected to provide homes on a rental basis where no profits will be obtained.

(b) Higher wages alone will not create an effective demand for good housing. A stable relationship between income and housing costs is required.

(c) Home building requires expert technological and legal knowledge which is often beyond the layman.

(d) Rebuilding and rehabilitation of slums because of scale is beyond private enterprise.

(e) The operation of government housing authorities will be required indefinitely.

(f) There is evidence in the Henderson Reports on Poverty that the rental effect on poverty is greater today than ever before.

(g) All state housing authorities are squeezed in their efforts to provide adequate housing for low income earners. The waiting list has increased remarkably over recent years.

(h) The situation has been compounded by the Federal government's restrictions on "cheap" money provided under the Commonwealth and State housing agreements. Further, the Commonwealth has abandoned any new approach such as the HAVE scheme modelled on the American system.

#140 OTHER HOUSING HELP

(a) Defence Services Home Scheme 1918+

".. make provision for homes for Australian soldiers and female dependents of Australian soldiers".

In 1973 eligibility was extended to those who served in the armed services during peace time, and no limit on when the loan can be taken up. Basically long term, and low interest rate loans.

Such loans play a relatively small part in the provision of welfare housing.

(b) Aged Persons Homes Act 1954+

Funds for non profit bodies for the housing of aged persons. Before 1969 housing authorities made housing available to pensioners at heavily rebated rents.

(c) Home Savings Grant Scheme 1964+

Basically the grant has been based on the amount of money saved under approved saving schemes.

(d) Interest Rate Control

Interest rate controls and availability of funds through the 30/20 rule.

#150 OTHER STATES

In Victoria most funds are used for redevelopment including high density.

South Australia has concentrated on housing for middle class families. For example, the "expandable house".

There has been great diversity between states;

(a) 1956-73 Great variation between the states on the means test adopted.

(b) 1973+ Under the Commonwealth-States agreement specified the maximum income per family.

#160 URBAN RENEWAL

Early urban renewal schemes were;

- (a) Philadelphia 1950s
- (b) Fort Worth 1950s
- (c) South Chicago 1950s

About 10X of all houses and flats in Australia have been built by a housing authority in 1971. There has been a continuous decline in the relative importance of the public sector in housing. Peaked in the 1950s.

#170 PROBLEMS WITH URBAN RENEWAL PROPOSALS

The following summarises problems with large scale redevelopment schemes;

(a) Difficulty in accumulating large areas which is almost impossible by the private developer. Statutory enforcements are unpopular.

(b) Problems in rehousing the displaced tenants;

"I do not think that a redevelopment project with good modern standards of space would get back into the area as many people as are now housed in the small cottages of a typical inner suburb of Sydney or Melbourne"- Winston, 1960.

(c) Problems that displaced persons have moving to new areas such as cultural shock, loss of friends and family, and greater distance from workplace.

(d) Building costs are difficult to forecast. There are more variables which affect cost in large scale redevelopments.

(e) Should the government invest in bricks and mortar on a long term basis?

(f) Is large scale urban redevelopment required in the 80s? Large improvement in environmental health compared with pre war conditions. That is, are there really any slums today?

(g) There is no guarantee that displaced tenants will not return but having to pay a higher rent.

(h) 50 present dwellings may be housing 100 families. With a 50,000+ waiting list the demolition of existing premises must be carefully considered.

(i) Resumption is usually costly because large available sites may have a higher and more valuable use than residential. Eg industrial.

(j) Towers are expensive and require high maintenance.

(k) Private enterprise does not have a place by way of sporadic renewal Dusse Idorp, 1961.

#180 ADVANTAGES OF URBAN RENEWAL

Many of the advantages discussed or promoted in urban consolidation also apply to urban renewal;

(a) Particularly the increase in population in the inner suburbs where resources, and public services are currently being under utilized. Benefits are difficult to measure as many are social factors.

(b) Public transport becomes more economical.

#190 TREND

Over the years there has been a trend from helping poorer families to obtain adequate rental housing to an increasing on helping people to become home owners.

#200 URBAN RENEWAL

The number of dwelling units in the inner city areas;

| <u>1960</u> | Dwelling Units |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| Redfern | 506 |
| Surrey Hills | 593 |
| Waterloo | 24 |
| Glebe | 87 |
| Paddington | 33 |
| N Sydney | 24 |
| Randwick | 17 |
| Balmain | 6 |
| Erskineville | 84 |

Source Bourke, 1960

#210 PRIVATE RENEWAL

(a) New York Area planning. Eg 15 buildings comprising Rockefeller Centre.

(b) Private renewal is a demonstration of urban vitality. For example, private cooperative enterprises in central Rotterdam, and Stockholm.

#220 PRIVATE TENDERS

Tenders are often asked by public bodies for site development, and architectural proposals.

Problem of comparing different designs from a cost benefit point of view. Therefore, it is better for the local authority to approve a scheme and then ask for tenders. It can safeguard it's interest by fixing a ground rent.

The authority should provide parameters for design such as open space and traffic flow. There is a basic conflict between the high profit motives of private developers and reasonable accommodation.

#230 ADVANTAGES OF TENDER

(a) Little input is required from the authority (b) Increase in ratable values (c) A greater variety of concepts to choose from

#240 DISADVANTAGES OF TENDER

(a) Unless detailed parameters and controls are given the variety above will mean unequal costs. Therefore, the bidders are not bidding on equal terms.

(b) Clear objectives are required

(c) It is rare to find a scheme both economically, and architecturally better. There are normally tradeoffs.

(c) A commissioned assignment will be better researched than the quicker tender.

(d) Tender prices are often adjusted after the contract is awarded. Sometimes parties are played off against each other, and the authority "steals" the ideas provided.

(e) Wasted effort by losing tenderers.

#250 REDEVELOPMENT

(a) To produce a new urban environment with distinguished appearance. (b) The authority must prepare a town plan and parameters (c) 3D models best promotes the "master design" (d) Scale and character of the environment should be taken into account.

#260 PROCEDURE

(a) Authority employs an expert consultant to prepare the master plan. Gives the authority complete control. (b) Arrange a competition, or tenders (c) Fix a sale price, or ground rent.

#300 EFFECTS OF BAD HOUSING

The main cause is the lack of suitable finance to overcome the deposit gap. This effect is exacerbated in Sydney.

Upon obtaining finance the repayments can cause further poverty. This can have social ramifications.

Ownership often means that a family cannot follow work. The main reason for a workin man to require home ownership is for security of shelter not for investments.

Many people cannot borrow because of age, newness to the country or state, or inability to work.

#310 EFFECTS

Poor housing can mean poor health which further aggravates the poverty cycle. Therefore there are important benefits from welfare housing which should be offset against the cost such as the lowering of disease, risk of fire, number of accidents, and crime. Other benefits mean an increase in the workforce, and a more reliable worker.

#320 TENANTS VIEWS

The Australian Government Commission of Inquiry into Poverty considered a number of Consumer Views on Welfare Services and Rented Housing - AGPS 1975.

Most groups felt that accommodation is a major factor in reducing family or individual income to the point where basic necessities and services cannot be adequately maintained.

"Not only do the poor have to pay a large percentage of their income for accommodation but also they have little chance of owning accommodation so that they are forced to spend their lives paying "dead money" to a wealthier group within the society; in other words, this is guaranteed negative income redistribution"- p11.

"Often Housing Commission housing is a mixed blessing. Rents are cheap, but housing lists are long. Flats provide inadequate facilities for children and rules and regulations are very restricting (1 member moved from Greenways because she felt it was like a prison) -Northside Pensioners- p11.

There is a need for involvement of residents in the planning and and development of residential areas. The low income tenants of the Housing Commission are totally excluded from the decision making .

The majority of tenants say they are living in Housing Commission accommodation because of the lower rents. About 60% say they have no other reason to be there. About 40% find the accommodation suitable or attractive.

About 1/3 there is no question of choice, they cannot manage renting privately. The remainder found that although they could make ends meet they could not save money. The usual reason for wanting to save is to be able to buy a house.

There was found to be great variation in satisfaction according to nationality -p42.

The study found that just over 50% of the sample had been paying higher private rent in their previous accommodation and over 40% had been in accommodation of an inferior standard.

There were great differences between ethnic groups -p44. Most considered that their housing commission premises were alright but they were subject to other disadvantages. This was felt by the majority of all nationalities.

English and Spanish peoples were the most dissatisfied. Yugoslavs, followed by Egyptians were the most satisfied- p45.

#330 CONSUMERS' VIEWS ON FACILITIES

Generally most tenants in the above study were satisfied with their flats. However, communal facilities, estate services, and facilities children were high on the list of disadvantages.

(a) Laundaries Laundaries were frequently complained about. About 2/3 found them unsatisfactory. The main complaints concerned the frequent breakdown of washing machines, long to repair, misuse by tenants, and left dirty.

(b) Lifts Less than 25% of the sample found the lifts satisfactory. The Yugoslavs were most satisfied with the lifts.

The remainder found them inconvenient and unreliable. Some found them frightening as machines, and the above frequent breakdowns have affected many children caught in them. Avoided using them at night for fear of assault-pp46/7.

(c) Heating & Hot Water Common complaints of insufficient hot water at peak periods, and the inconvenience of it being turned off.

(d) Facilities for Children "Even people who felt that there would be nothing for young couples or single pensioners to complain about agreed that the flats were unsuitable for children, or inadequately provided with facilities for them".

However the Egyptians were the most satisfied with facilities for children.

The sample showed the problem was greater for young children. Some parents appreciated the amount of open space available for older children, although one group was concerned with the social environment in which they were being brought up in.

(e) The Community Hall Few tenants used such activities which generally, were not controlled and run by tenants. Only about 13% considered that the community hall was being put to good use. Some ethnic groups wanted greater use for social and cultural activities.

(f) Outside Services

It was alleged that the estate nature of the estates produced discrimination. Generally of 2 types;

(g) Discrimination

The unwelcome attention of conmen, and canvassers, and salesmen.

Reseachers, students with projects, and social workers.

Outside bodies and companies will not readily service people in housing commission estates. The survey tended to show that police were efficient concerning personal safety but more indifferent to theft of property -pp48/9.

(h) Lack of Communication Generally, it was considered that problems arose because of lack of consultation with tenants- p48. 70% of the sample felt that the commission could have avoided problems on the estate by better planning -p48.

Some tenants felt that even with appropriate planning the commission did not care enough about tenants to implement them.