

## A Community On Hold:

The impact of the proposed redevelopment of Ivanhoe Estate on the health and wellbeing of its Residents



November 2014



*“Your strong claws are tearing, ripping and destroying our nests. The children are scared and crying over the destruction of their home. The nests are crumbling down one after another and the birds are wandering around homeless but the eagle is enjoying the destructions and their suffering. It seems there is no love or sympathy in his heart and he is pleased that the birds have lost their way in the forest.”*

A poem written by a resident of Ivanhoe Estate about their experience and feelings regarding the proposed redevelopment. The poet uses the metaphor of a bird’s nest being attacked by a stronger and more powerful eagle to describe their feelings of fear powerlessness in this situation (Translated to English from Farsi).

*“I trust others will have expressed my overall despair at the thought of this family being torn apart and the horrors I have known in high rise government housing.”*

From a resident who was not able to be interviewed, but texted this response.

*“My only question [comment] is, please don’t move us.”*

A resident.

## **Table of contents**

Table of contents	3
Executive Summary	4
Acknowledgments	7
Introduction	8
1. Background	9
1a. Ivanhoe Estate	9
1b. Previous research	10
2. Method and sample	11
3. Life in Ivanhoe Estate	13
3a. A community transformed	13
3b. What people value about life in the Estate (extrinsic and intrinsic value)	13
3c. Place identity, place attachment and place disruption	15
Key points	16
4. Concerns and hopes about the proposed redevelopment and relocation	16
4a. Concerns over loss of community	16
4b. Concerns over change of physical environment	18
4c. Concerns over relocation	19
4d. Unanswered questions about community benefit	21
Key points	22
5. Concerns and hopes about the consultation process	22
5a. Lack of information and resident anxiety	22
5b. Communication of information	25
5c. CRG (Community Reference Group) meetings	28
5d. Sense of feeling 'voiceless'	29
5e. Hopes for improvement of the consultation process	31
Key points	32
6. Case studies: Alternative approaches	33
6a. Freezing of the Randwick and Anzac Parade UAPs	33
6b. Case study of community engagement: the Bonnyrigg Project	33
7. Recommendations	35
References	40
Appendix 1	42

## Executive Summary

On 18 March 2012 the NSW State Government, without previous consultation with residents, announced the potential demolition and redevelopment of the Ivanhoe Housing Estate at Macquarie Park. Ivanhoe Estate is the largest social housing development within the City of Ryde LGA. It is adjacent to Macquarie University, Macquarie Shopping Centre, the Epping to Chatswood Railway line and the fast-growing Macquarie Park CBD. Built 25 years ago, the Estate consists of 260 households, with the number of residents living in these households estimated at between 464 and 600.

Since this unexpected announcement the residents of Ivanhoe Estate have lived in a state of uncertainty about their futures, with a range of planning processes now underway, and inconsistent messages coming from authorities about the plans for, and timing of, future changes to the Estate. To date many of the residents basic questions remain unanswered.

This Report explores the impact of this ongoing state of uncertainty on the health and wellbeing of residents from Ivanhoe Estate. Drawing on research from 13 in-depth interviews, it describes what residents value about living in the Estate, and documents their concerns about the consultation process, proposed redevelopment and relocation. Residents also describe the impact this situation is having on them, their families and neighbours. The Report explores what has happened in similar proposed redevelopments and provides a number of recommendations.

The research was undertaken by The Salvation Army through a partnership with Macquarie University. A team of six psychology students conducted the research. The Salvation Army has played a significant role in the Ivanhoe Estate since 2001, contributing to its transformation from a place where gangs, vandalism, break-ins and drug-related crime were common, to what is now a well connected community, with strong social capital and community spirit, where people feel cared for and supported.

Residents who were interviewed reported a strong sense of attachment to their “tight knit community”, with some neighbours even sharing house keys. Many residents spoke of being dependent on neighbours for support, with some commenting that breaking apart Ivanhoe Estate would be the equivalent of “breaking up a happy family”. “There is an elderly man in my building and his friend has mental health problems. His friend brings him the newspaper every day. She can't read so the gentleman reads it to her. Every day she checks on him and they enjoy a coffee together. They depend on each other and without one another they would not be happy.”

Residents were very positive about their community and location, and appreciate being close to transport and medical facilities. They value the physical character of the Estate, with its mixture of town houses and low-density apartments, and plenty of green space. For many residents, their homes are not just ‘bricks and mortar’, but depositories of



memories. These are particularly significant for those suffering from mental illness, social isolation or the loss of a loved one.

Residents reported being shocked both by the announcement that their Estate was to be redeveloped and by the way in which it was made: “They should have talked to us before we found out on the news - you feel like nothing, like we are nothing.” Residents also reported anger, frustration, cynicism and sadness about the consultation and communication processes since then. “Did they take any notice at the meetings? Lots of input from residents, we put a lot of effort into it, very emotional for us but I don’t think it made much of a difference. It is like hitting your head against a brick wall.”

Residents reported that the ongoing uncertainty has had a profound psychological impact, particularly on the most vulnerable, triggering anxiety attacks in some. They fear that temporary relocation and redevelopment will compound this trauma: “The elderly are very vulnerable and worried; they thought they would be living in the same home until they pass but this is not the case.”

Residents are concerned about potential disruptions to their lives in case of temporary relocation, in particular regarding:

- Access to transport, medical services, amenities and essential services.
- Loss of support from a caring community.
- Closeness to family.
- Impact on their children’s schooling.

In the case of the redevelopment going ahead, residents are concerned about:

- Returning to a community which is not connected, or supportive of their needs.
- Loss of their quality of life.
- Changes in the physical environment, with townhouses being replaced by high-rise apartments.
- Losing their gardens and particularly their pets.
- Overcrowding and traffic congestion in the new estate.

Many residents do not understand why redevelopment is necessary at all, when the existing Estate is relatively young, in good condition and meets their needs.

In response to the strong reactions and adverse impacts outlined by residents through this research, The Salvation Army makes the following recommendations:

- Put on hold any decision to redevelop Ivanhoe Estate, as was done in Randwick in December 2013, pending further consultation with residents.

- Rebuild trust via an apology to residents for the initial lack of communication, and provide assurances that residents will be informed and consulted about any proposed changes affecting them before these changes are made public.
- Provide clear information and explain the community benefit of any redevelopment
- Build resident capacity to engage with the consultation process as key stakeholders, and as active rather than passive participants.
- Provide residents with a wider range of options for involvement in the consultation.
- Provide timely and consistent responses to residents questions.
- Resource a paid position, and/or engage special needs experts, to help residents deal with the current uncertainty and with the impact of any future redevelopment.
- Ensure that any redevelopment meets the needs of current residents, as expressed by them, and that facilities are at least commensurate with what residents enjoy now.

*“Come to the estate, knock on our doors and speak to us one on one, no cameras, no publicity. Think of the residents and talk to us residents.”*

The Salvation Army calls on the NSW Government to urgently meet with representatives and residents of the Ivanhoe Estate to hear their concerns and provide some reassurance about the processes and road ahead.

## **Acknowledgments**

The Salvation Army would like to thank the following for their contribution to the research and to this Report:

The team at the Macquarie University Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) Program, for providing the students to make the research possible.

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The Committee of the Ivanhoe Estate Tenant Group, for their support for the research and ongoing encouragement.

Above all, to the 13 residents of Ivanhoe Estate who willingly gave their time to share stories and insights.

## Introduction

This Report explores the impact of the NSW Government's proposed redevelopment of Ivanhoe Estate on the health and wellbeing of its current residents.

The Report draws on interviews with 13 residents of the Estate. A team of 6 psychology students conducted the research as part of Macquarie University's Professional and Community Engagement (PACE) program.

The research was commissioned and supervised by The Salvation Army, which has been active in Ivanhoe Estate since 2001. In commissioning the research, The Salvation Army (TSA) sought to create a space where residents could feel heard, respected and understood. Specifically, the aims were to:

1. Give voice to residents' views and concerns in a way that respects their experiences and feelings. To date, with the exception of the Ivanhoe Estate Social Impact Study (Cred, 2013), much of the evidence for the impact on residents has been anecdotal.
2. Provide documented evidence of the impact of the proposed redevelopment, which can be used to support the advocacy work of TSA and of the Ivanhoe Estate Tenant Group (IETG) on behalf of residents.
3. Increase awareness among residents of current information and opportunities to participate in the consultation process.
4. Provide recommendations for Housing NSW and the NSW Land and Housing Corporation regarding the proposed redevelopment and the consultation process.

Section 1 provides background information about Ivanhoe Estate, the proposed redevelopment and consultation, and previous research.

Section 2 provides an overview of the research method and sample.

In Section 3, the Report explores what residents value about living in the Estate, and how residents' sense of self is closely tied to their physical environment and sense of community.

Section 4 presents residents' concerns and hopes regarding the proposed redevelopment and possible relocation.

Section 5 presents residents' concerns and hopes about the consultation process.

Section 6 explores two case studies: the Randwick / Anzac Parade UAP; and the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project.

Section 7 presents a number of recommendations for consideration by stakeholders.

# 1. Background

## 1a. Ivanhoe Estate

Ivanhoe Estate is a public housing estate managed by Housing NSW. The Estate is tucked away behind a row of apartment blocks and student housing in leafy Macquarie Park, across the road from Macquarie University and Morling Baptist Theological College, and around the corner from Macquarie Shopping Centre and Australia's fastest growing CBD.



The Estate consists of two types of dwellings; townhouses and apartments. Ivanhoe Estate is home to between 500 and 600 residents. The social mix includes individuals and families from low incomes, single parent households, tenants living with diagnosed mental illness, disabilities, backgrounds in homelessness and recovering from addiction. 50 per cent of residents are aged over 55 and it is estimated that up to 40 per cent of residents are from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Residents first found out about the proposed redevelopment of the Estate via Channel 9 evening news on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2012. During the report, The NSW Finance Minister and the local member for Ryde announced that the redevelopment was a certainty. The report stated that *“the next stage of planning will be made public by the end of the year, and demolition won't begin for at least two years”*. The report shocked residents and caused widespread distress.

Subsequent communications between TSA and IETG on the one hand, and the NSW Government on the other, clarified that no decision had been made about a redevelopment, but that a consultation process would be put in place to discuss the possibility of redevelopment. While this clarification provided some comfort, the initial news report continued to cause confusion and concern.

**MACQUARIE PARK TASK FORCE**

NSW Land & Housing Corporation

May 2012

**What is the Task Force?**

The NSW Government has announced a specialist task force to advise on the redevelopment of Government land at Macquarie Park and opportunities to work with the private and tertiary sectors to maximise the potential for social development and job growth.

The Macquarie Park Task Force is made up of representatives from the Department of Finance and Services, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Infrastructure NSW, Greater Sydney Council, Ryde Shire Council, Department for NSW and Housing NSW, The City of Ryde Council and Macquarie University, and also includes a community representative.

The task force is expected to report back to Government in the next few weeks.

**Why is the Government looking at this area?**

Macquarie Park is one of Sydney's premier high technology business parks, close to the Sydney CBD and well served by the Macquarie University, with retail and other services nearby. The City of Ryde has a long reputation for being a high quality and vibrant community. Planning and development opportunities are being explored in the area.

Given the proximity of the Ivanhoe estate to transport, shopping centres and other services, there is potential to redevelop the land to significantly higher housing densities.

By releasing the same number of social housing units, public and housing residents will benefit from new housing in a mixed income area. In addition, any net increase in affordable housing can be applied to the shortage of affordable social housing elsewhere for those most in need.

**What land does the Government own in Macquarie Park?**

The Government has two large land holdings in the area.

- The State Revenue Authority has a 3.2 hectare parcel of Macquarie Park approximately 100m from Macquarie Park Station.

**Has the Ivanhoe estate already been sold?**

The Ivanhoe estate has not been sold. No decision will be made about the long term future of the Ivanhoe estate until the task force reports. In report to the NSW Government by the end of the year.

**What will happen to social housing in the area?**

If the Ivanhoe estate is redeveloped, the same number of social housing units will be built. There will be no loss of social housing in the area.

If the estate is redeveloped, existing social housing residents will be relocated to new or vacant social housing that is added to their needs.

Where tenants are moved out of the estate to allow redevelopment to take place, they will have the option of moving back to the estate provided that a new dwelling is available that is also suited to their needs. The timetable for any redevelopment will be determined by an agreed report that sets out social housing needs and how to meet them before the beginning of 2014 at the earliest.

**How will residents be kept informed?**

Residents will be kept informed and updated about plans for the estate through newsletters, meetings and community events.

**For more information**

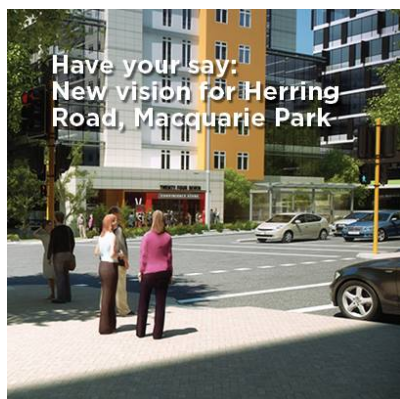
For more information about the task force please contact: Joshua Braxton, Development Manager, Strategic Projects Division, Department of Finance & Services on (02) 9226 2446.

LAND AND HOUSING CORPORATION

In May 2012, the NSW Land and Housing Corporation established the Macquarie Park Task Force to explore options for Ivanhoe Estate and the NSW Government land at 43-61 Waterloo Road, Macquarie Park, and to advise the NSW Government accordingly (NSW LaHC, undated). The Task Force consisted of representatives of Government Departments, as well as the City of Ryde and Macquarie University. Ivanhoe Estate did not have a representative on

the Task Force, but was indirectly represented by Housing NSW.

A Community Reference Group (CRG) was established in December of the same year, to provide a consultation forum where residents of Ivanhoe Estate could present their concerns and raise questions regarding the work of the Task Force. The CRG has met monthly (with some exceptions) since 13<sup>th</sup> December 2012.



A year later, in November 2013, the Task Force was dismantled and was superseded by the Herring Road Urban Activation Precinct Working Group, as part of the Urban Activation Precincts (UAP) program overseen by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (NSW DPE, undated (a)). The Working Group consists of state and local government representatives. Again, Ivanhoe Estate is not directly represented, however there is a standard UAP consultation process involving community forums, a public exhibition and opportunity for submissions (NSW DPE, undated (b)).

More than two years after the first news report, there is still no decision about the Estate, and residents remain uncertain about the future of their homes. This uncertainty remains a source of ongoing angst, particularly among elderly residents, as reflected in the Ivanhoe Estate Social Impact Study, and in a Channel Ten news report in late 2012 (Channel Ten news, 2012). This angst has intensified a recent news report that once again implied that redevelopment “will” take place (Channel Seven News, June 2014), followed by a newspaper article claiming that residents could be paying market rent after 5 years as part of a possible “public housing trial in Macquarie Park” (Daily Telegraph, June 2014) has only added to this angst. This Report explores the impact on residents of this protracted uncertainty by documenting the experiences of 13 tenants of Ivanhoe Estate.

## **1b. Previous research**

In 2013, Housing NSW commissioned a social research organisation, Cred Community Planning, to “undertake social research into the impacts on residents and the Ivanhoe Estate community of the potential redevelopment of Ivanhoe social housing estate (Ivanhoe Estate).” (Cred, 2013, p.3)

The research documented and mapped the social infrastructure around Ivanhoe Estate. It reported overall positive attitudes by residents towards living in the Estate, including the following findings that mirrored TSA research findings (Cred, 2013, p.5):

- 90% of residents like their homes
- 98% happy living here
- 89% planned to stay more than 10 years
- 83% felt design of the estate would work in 5 - 10 years
- 70% had never thought of leaving

- 47.1% state "family and friends" and 44.3% state "sense of community" are the main reasons they like living here
- 78.6% state the "shopping centre" and 72.9% state "public transport" are the main reason they like the area

Residents reported a sense of stress and anxiety due to no decision yet being made regarding the redevelopment, and concern about loss of connection, community and access to services (Cred, 2013, p.6). Cred documented residents' requests if redevelopment were to occur, and made a series of recommendations in the form of "mitigation measures" if redevelopment were to occur (Cred, 2013, pp.19-23).

While having similar aims, the two research projects had different approaches and focuses. The Cred report presented summaries and analysis of resident responses, while this Report contains direct quotes from residents in order for their voice to be clearly heard. The Cred report used a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods (including a survey), and subsequently had a large sample size (over 200 residents were engaged), whereas this Report uses a case study approach and is based on in-depth interviews with 13 residents.



## 2. Method and sample

The research participants were 13 residents of Ivanhoe Estate (8 females and 5 males), with an age range of 53-74 years. Seven participants were of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background, namely Afghani, Armenian, Indian, Iranian and Russian. We were not able to recruit young people for the research, as the research period unfortunately coincided with exams and, for some, the HSC.



<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Length of Tenure in Estate</b>
1.	F	57	18 years
2.	M	58	15 years
3.	F	57	23 years
4.	F	60s	23 years
5.	F	56	24 years
6.	M	74	5 years
7.	F	60	23 years
8.	M	69	13 years
9.	F	62	25 years
10.	F	53	1 year
11.	M	54	25 years
12.	M	52	6 years
13.	F	48	6 years

The research team consisted of 6 Macquarie University third year psychology students undertaking their internship as part of the University's Participation and Community Engagement program (PACE). The students were co-supervised by two leaders of TSA at Macquarie Park: Nathan Moulds, the team leader; and Dr Armen Gakavian, a volunteer.

The participants were recruited through flyers that were translated into the key languages spoken by the Estate community and placed in the mailboxes of every home in the Estate. The research was conducted according to Macquarie University ethics guidelines, and ethics approval was obtained from the University's Faculty of Human Sciences Ethics Committee.

The research team developed a menu of interview questions (see Appendix 1) consisting of a core questions, as well as sub-questions to be used for clarification as needed. The interviewer(s) obtained the participant's informed consent prior to conducting the interviews, and took notes during the interviews. These notes were then edited, de-identified and collated into a single document for analysis.

The research used a case study approach rather than a 'quantitative sampling' approach. This allowed us to undertake an in-depth analysis of the impact of the proposed redevelopment on a select group of tenants. The sample included both active and non-active residents, that is, residents who have been active in the

proposed redevelopment consultation process, and those who have not been active in that process.

### **3. Life in Ivanhoe Estate**

Residents of Ivanhoe Estate value both extrinsic aspects (location and facilities) and intrinsic aspects (feeling of belonging) of living in the Estate, and described their strong sense of attachment to the Estate.

#### **3a. A community transformed**

Ivanhoe Estate was not always a safe place to live. Several residents recalled chronic problems with gangs, vandalism, break-ins and drug-related crime. In some cases, they did not feel safe walking the streets. This began to change with the arrival of TSA in September 2001, when Craig and Danni Stephens moved into the Estate and established the Number 47 Community Home, offering a range of activities and services from physiotherapy and social gatherings to counselling and advocacy. Within two years, according to local police, crime had “reduced quite substantially”, and the local school principal reported that:

*“Young students coming through from the primary grades now who come out of that area seem to have more willingness to learn. They are more socially appropriate, they wear uniforms, their attendance is much better ...”* (The Salvation Army, 2008, p.4)

Since 2012, the IETG has also strongly contributed to the development of a sense of community in the Estate. The IETG has advocated on behalf of tenants on matters ranging from parking issues to the proposed redevelopment. IETG also runs arts and crafts groups, computer classes and social activities, particularly for elderly tenants, many of whom are socially isolated. The IETG has complemented the work of TSA and strengthened resident solidarity around issues of common concern.

#### **3b. What people value about life in the Estate (extrinsic and intrinsic value)**

Residents often cited the facilities, accessibility and convenience associated with the Estate’s location.

*“It’s a quiet neighbourhood, good people. The setting of this place is good. Girls are happy. We have a backyard. Macquarie University nearby, so when they finish school it’s close for them. They love their school. They have their friends. They love their rooms ... We love here.”* (M, 52, 6 years)

The Estate is within walking distance of Macquarie Shopping Centre and Macquarie



University, and close to local clubs and restaurants. Residents value easy access to medical facilities, including Ryde Hospital and Macquarie Hospital (a major psychiatric hospital) as well as local churches and social groups. Many have relatives living nearby. The area has a good public transport network, with the Macquarie University train station and local bus stops making it easy to travel locally and across Sydney. For families with children, there is a good selection of local primary and high schools. This confirms the findings of the Social Impact Study (Cred, 2013) that 78 per cent of residents liked living in the estate due to easy access to transport and the local shopping centre.

Residents also value the sense of community, describing Ivanhoe Estate as a “*lovely neighbourhood*” and “*tight knit community*”, and in some cases “*better than family*” (F, 57, 23 years)

*“It is a tight knit community, everyone is very close in the street, and we share house keys, have watched the children grow up, and there is a lot of trust amongst the neighbours. We are a family.”* (F, 57, 18 years)

Many residents reported feeling a sense of cohesion within the Estate, with strong bonds between neighbours who look out for each other:

*“I have a very close relationship with neighbours and we look after each others’ houses and pets when needed.”* (F, 57, 18 years)

*“People keep to themselves, but if someone needs help they can call out to a neighbour ... When Monty (dog) jumped out of my window while I was at work ... it was raining and I was calling him. Neighbours came out, asked what happened. I was devastated ... neighbours all came out and helped me search.”* (F, 60, 23 years)

One resident explained the mutually beneficial relationship between an elderly man and his neighbour, who suffers from mental health issues:

*“There is a neighbour in my building who is an elderly man and his close friend has mental health problems. His friend brings him the newspaper every day. She can’t read so the gentleman reads it to her. Every day she checks on him and they enjoy a coffee together. They depend on each other and without one another they would not be happy.”* (F, 53, 1 year)

Involvement in the activities of TSA and IETG has “*brought the community together*”, and one resident described her involvement in community groups as a “*highlight*” (F, 57, 23 years).

This sense of community and familiarity has helped maintain cohesion and a sense of safety. Residents interviewed do not want to leave their community, two residents said that until the announcement of the proposed redevelopment they had felt secure in the knowledge that they could stay here for years to come and enjoy the company of good neighbours.



### 3c. Place identity, place attachment and place disruption

‘Place identity’ refers to the way in which physical space shapes an individual’s sense of identity and belonging (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). It follows that threats associated with ‘place disruption’ – such as through forced relocation – can not only create anxiety, but can also threaten one’s place identity or sense of self, resulting in depression, feelings of loss and a sense of displacement (Fullilove, 1996, as cited in Devine-Wright, 2009). This sense of loss is felt at a deep level, even physically, as described by one resident who feared she and her neighbours would “lose from (their) bodies”. (F, 60s, 23 years)

Particular places and objects provide ‘anchors’ for identity and provide continuity and a context for current experiences. These can be physical landmarks associated with a person’s earlier life, or with a loved one who has passed away (Silver, 1996). One resident expressed deep pain and anxiety over potentially losing her late son’s bedroom in the event of a redevelopment, stating that it was preserved as he had left it and that “this is where he [still] is”. (F, 60, 23 years) Other residents take great pride in personal collections of records, books and other valuable items, in which a significant amount of

time, money and energy have been invested. These anchors become ‘identity markers’ and a person may feel that they would not be ‘themselves’ without them (Belk, 1988).

If places and objects are so critical, then the reverse is also true: “forced displacements are among the most serious forms of externally-imposed psycho-social disruptions and discontinuities” (Fried, 2000, p. 194). Identity disruptions are especially significant for those who are socially isolated, disconnected from family, and/or lacking outlets or sources of identity.

## Key Points

- Residents have a deep sense of rootedness in and attachment to their community.
- Many residents are dependent on neighbours who love and care for them.
- Some residents commented that breaking apart Ivanhoe Estate would be the equivalent to breaking up a happy family.
- Residents also appreciate the convenience of their location, which is particularly important for those who are immobile or have chronic medical needs (both mental and physical).
- Residents value the physical character of the Estate, with its mixture of town houses and apartments, and plenty of green space.
- For many residents, their sense of self is tied in closely with place. Buildings are not just ‘bricks and mortar’, but depositories of memories that are particularly significant for those suffering from mental illness, loneliness or a general sense of loss.

## 4. Concerns and hopes about the proposed redevelopment and relocation

Residents were clear about what they felt they stood to lose, and in a few cases to gain, from the proposed redevelopment.

### 4a. Concerns over loss of community

Residents were concerned that the proposed redevelopment would destroy their sense of community, and that close friendships and bonds formed over the years would be lost:

*“[We will lose] our community Spirit.” (F, 62, 25 years)*

*“The estate will not have its friendliness feeling, closeness to neighbours will be lost, and we will lose that sense of connection between neighbours and the community.” (F, 57, 18 years)*

*“I don’t know what sort of people will come (following the redevelopment). Maybe gangsters with drugs. At the moment everything is fine.” (M, 69, 13 years)*

Residents were particularly concerned about the impact on those suffering from mental illness, and for the elderly who represent approximately 46 per cent of residents (Cred, 2013):



*“The elderly are very vulnerable and worried; they thought they would be living in the same home until they pass but this is not the case.” (F, 57, 18 years)*

*“Elderly people worry too much and I worry about them, they don’t have any more money, everyone is worried.” (F, 57, 23 years)*

In the end, everyone will be affected:

*“All of us are equally distressed. I don’t know a lot of the elderly people, but I should imagine if they’re relocated without those supports it would be really devastating.” (F, 60, 23 years)*

There was a great deal of concern for elderly and mentally ill residents who rely on their neighbours on a daily basis, and participants hoped that these residents would be placed together in a similar setting in any future redevelopment. One resident was concerned about her mentally ill husband having to assimilate into a new community:

*“My husband has schizophrenia and has stability [because of living here. We] didn’t have to worry about anything as he is settled here, I get concerned that we have to move and not sure how my husband will react. I am worried, do not want my husband to go back to the way he was, he has improved a lot.” (F, 62, 25 years)*

Another resident commented that they would like a community that does not separate existing neighbours from one another, and that protects the vulnerable and non-English speaking residents (M, 74, 5 years). The evidence suggests that neighbours who are relocated near each other in similar circumstances fared better than those who were not (Fried, 2000), though this has only diminished the negative impact of the relocation or redevelopment – it has not eliminated it.

#### **4b. Concerns over change of physical environment**

Residents were concerned as to whether future housing would be adequate for their needs. Residents currently living in town houses were concerned about being placed in high-rise apartments, which would result in poorer quality of life, and reduced communication with neighbours that would destroy their sense of community:

*"We are humans too ... aren't we good enough to live here? I don't want to go live in a flat, I can't live in an apartment ... They would all be units, but I don't want to live in units ... I want to live in a house."* (F, 57, 23 years)

*"There will be high rise buildings ... We don't know where we are going to go ... Too many people will be in the same buildings. I feel upset."* (M, 69, 13 years)

*"People in flats are less cohesive. They're more insular ... The more density you have, the more social problems you have."* (M, 74, 5 years)

*"We're stealing sky and sun and earth ... they're going to deprive everyone of a healthy normal life."* (F, 60, 23 years)

Two residents suggested that a *"mixture of single and high level buildings"* (M, 74, 5 years) would be ideal, as it would cater for single residents as well as for families, and *"kids could go to parks"* (F, 60, 23 years).

Eight (8) of the 13 residents stated that they would not return to the Estate if the redevelopment resulted in a change of physical character, as it *"would not be the same"*:

*"I would like to find somewhere in the local area to live."* (F, 62, 25 years)

Some expressed concern about the impact of a changed physical environment on their children, and on disabled neighbours:

*"We [will] lose our hope, the good location, the place our children are growing up."* (M, 54, 25 years)

*"There is a Down syndrome girl, she is older, what happens to them? [They will lose] the familiarity of the area, they know where everything is."* (F, 62, 25 years)

At the same time, residents were concerned about the rise in value of their property, with one resident speculating: *"We will have to pay more rent"* (M, 69, 13 years). These fears were fueled by the recent announcement that residents might be paying full rent after 5 years, as mentioned earlier.

Residents were also concerned that the increase in population would worsen the already chronic traffic problems, especially during peak hour:



*"It would be inconvenient. It will be more difficult traffic-wise, parking-wise, there will be more social incoherence." (M, 74, 5 years)*

*"I don't understand how they'll manage the traffic. I assume they'll make other access ways." (F, 60, 23 years)*

Increased traffic would have a major impact on the Estate, which currently has only one entry point for vehicles.



#### **4c. Concerns over relocation**

All 13 residents interviewed were concerned about being relocated away from conveniences and from familiar neighbours during the redevelopment. Several residents asked: *"what will happen to us?"*, and one complained about *"the unknown of where they will put you and the neighbours"*. (F, 62, 25 years). Others commented:

*"What is the government's plan for residents?" (M, 54, 25 years)*

Some questioned whether they would be able to move back in to the Estate, indicating a lack of trust towards the government:

*"I don't think that the government will move you out and then move you back in. They say they will do that but I don't think that will happen." (F, 62, 25 years)*

Residents were also uncertain about what kind of assistance they would receive from the government for packing and moving their possessions, and whether they would be able to have pets in their new home.

One overseas-born resident expressed her feelings of being undervalued by likening the possibility of relocation to being transferred to Siberia in Soviet times:

*"I feel very bad, in your country in the night time they would kick [you out] from your house." (F, 57, 23 years)*

This comment underscores the importance of taking into account the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of residents. Overseas-born residents may have limited knowledge of Australian social customs and systems, which can lead to feelings of isolation and a reduced ability to effectively communicate with government departments. Furthermore, some residents may come from countries with totalitarian governments where citizens face severe negative consequences for questioning government decisions.



*"This place is my home ... I'm 52 years old. I had to leave my country at the age of 23 and ended up in Australia as a refugee ... It took me 10 years to settle down here after post trauma counselling.*

*After so many years, the past 6 years have been the only time I live in a place I can call home. We have a backyard, amenities, short drive. For me, it's very difficult to go to a new area and find new specialists, even for a short time [during the redevelopment]. ...*

*You've found your dream, and someone comes to shatter it – and you hear about it in the worst way possible ... This place is my home ... Here is the first place we have felt safe. In [our previous place], we lived in an apartment block. We couldn't let the kids play outside – here we can ... my anxiety settled down here with no anxiety attacks until the announcement.*

*I have been displaced many times [before coming to Australia], and don't want to be displaced again."*

*- M, 52, 6 years*

#### 4d. Unanswered questions about community benefit

The Cred report identified a number of benefits of the redevelopment for residents, such as improved housing and facilities, and providing residents with housing more appropriate to their needs. However, 10 of the 13 residents interviewed did not see any positive outcome from the redevelopment. Residents who did envisage positive outcomes, such as new and more modern homes, nevertheless felt that these changes would not compensate for the relocation and disruption, in particular of vulnerable residents. Overall, residents did not feel that the redevelopment was necessary:

*"The community is good and does not need to change."* (F, 57, 18 years)

*"Why us? If there is nowhere to put us then why are they targeting us?"* (F, 57, 18 years)

This indicates that the state governments communication methods have not been effective at informing residents of potential benefits or dispelling negative community perceptions. The majority of residents interviewed believed that the only motivation for the redevelopment was to generate profit for the state's budget:

*"Land is valuable ... The world is getting (all about) mass production ... not about family. Not about the quality of people and lifestyle, it's all about money."* (F, 60s, 23 years)

*"It's money, money, money."* (M, 58, 15 years)

*"The government is about money and they don't really care."* (F, 62, 25 years)

*"When will they make decisions based on humanity rather than economics?"* (F, 53, 1 year)

*"Money talks."* (F, 57, 23 years)

One resident explained that he understood that the government wants to redevelop Ivanhoe Place due to its land value and location:

*"Good place for the government - there are so many companies here, train station, university, they want to redevelop this North Ryde area, same as city and Parramatta. They want to shift all those companies here. I think it's a very valuable place here. But on the other side, there are so many people living here and are attached to the place they are living. Especially when you are in a very weak situation, you are attached to whatever you have, you don't want to be in an insecure place."* (F, 48, 6 years)

Residents perceive that the government is giving priority to those who are not in the public housing system, contributing to a sense that some residents have that “housos” are not valued members of the community.

## Key Points

- Residents are concerned that the temporary relocation will disrupt their access to essential services.
- Both the relocation and redevelopment will be particularly traumatic for the elderly and residents suffering from mental illness, exacerbating their anxiety and depression and creating a sense of dislocation.
- Residents are using each other as emotional support, which may be adding to the anxiety levels within the community.
- Residents expressed a sense of loss over the likely change of physical environment, particularly with town houses being replaced by high rise apartments.
- Many residents do not understand why redevelopment is necessary when the existing community is relatively young (25 years old), functional and meets their needs.

## 5. Concerns and hopes about the consultation process

Residents expressed a range of concerns about the consultation process, and were forthcoming with suggestions on how the process could be improved.

### 5a. Lack of information and resident anxiety

Residents first heard about the proposed redevelopment on national television. Twenty-nine months later, and despite an extensive and well-resourced consultation process, residents are still waiting to find out whether the redevelopment is going ahead. It is difficult to win back trust after such a bad start. Residents expressed their frustration with the process:

*“The problem has been communication. It takes so long to get it up and running. It is my retirement. I want to know.” (F, 62, 25 years)*

*“I don’t think the government has done a great deal. It is like they are dangling a carrot in front of us and taking it away, they are teasing us. Just let us know what is going on.” (F, 57, 18 years)*

*“The consultation has been ‘hopeless’. I tried ringing them once and they didn’t know anything about it.” (M, 58, 15 years)*

*"The left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing." (F, 57, 18 years)*

Many residents appear to be in a state of stress and anxiety while waiting for a decision. The anxiety of not knowing if or when they will move has affected people's moods. During the interviews, when discussing the possibility of moving, participants' emotional responses included anxiety, stress and anger. If the consultation process were improved, residents may still be disappointed with the outcome, however it could serve to mitigate the negative impact on their mental state:

*"Until we are told [what is happening], yes, I will be stressed." (F, 62, 25 years)*

*"I had anxiety attacks. The girls were worried, so we tried to comfort them." (M, 52, 6 years)*

*"I have been suffering from a mental illness and health issues and this has not helped me overcome these issues." (F, 57, 18 years)*

*"When I learnt about the redevelopment I was in shock. To this very day, when it comes to mind, I worry." (F, 60s, 23 years)*

*"I have enough going on in my heart ... I got very sick at Christmas time, dealing with the loss of my son. I wasn't cooking well for myself. I had Shingles and Bell's palsy. To get myself well again I've had to take a new approach to my thinking. What will be will be. I can't do anything to stop it. I have to sit and wait until they tell me. You need to prepare for that, and I don't know how much preparation they're going to give us." (F, 60, 23 years)*

*"The residents are all worried. It has affected their health issues, as it did mine. I'm getting myself as healthy again as I can, but there are some people who are as distressed as I was." (F, 60, 23 years)*

As mentioned earlier, the participants in our study were particularly concerned for residents with mental health issues and for elderly residents:

*"People with mental health issues are very scared." (M, 74, 5 years)*

This lack of trust means that some residents are constantly on high alert due to their uncertain future. Residents' anxiety has been fueled by rumours, producing fear and angst even after government representatives at CRG meetings clearly refute them. For example, at one stage a rumour was circulating that elderly residents would be taken to nursing homes. This was clearly refuted, but it was difficult to 'shake off' the impact of the rumour due to the information and credibility gap that now exists.





The lack of communication has led to a break in trust towards government. Some residents feel they are being lied to:

*"We're just being bluffed until the axe falls."* (F, 60, 23 years)

*"I think they have already made their decision but they just don't want to tell us."* (F, 57, 18 years)

At the end of a 29-month consultation process, residents still feel that their most pressing questions remained unanswered. When asked what question they would like to ask the government, residents suggested basic questions around what the proposed redevelopment would entail:

*"What is really going to happen?"* (M, 69, 13 years)

*"Why are you taking us away?"* (F, 60s, 23 years)

*"Why are you rebuilding?"* (F, 60s, 23 years)

*"How much longer is it going to drag out?"* (F, 57, 18 years)

*"Are they going to leave it or just do part of it?" (F, 56, 24 years)*

*"Where will they take us? There is no room." (F, 60s, 23 years)*

*"Why did you choose this area? Why do you want to move us?" (F, 57, 23 years)*

*"How much? Could they spend that money better on something else here?" (M, 74, 5 years)*

*"How is it going to help people like me ... to stay near support?" (F 60s, 23 years)*

*"What am I going to do with my cats, (I have) been told that we cannot take our pets. I am not going anywhere without my cats." (F, 57, 23 years)*

*"Couldn't they find somewhere else to do it? Why pull down 25 year old homes?" (F, 60s, 23 years)*

*"If you've got something that's worth something, then why destroy it?" (M, 58, 15 years)*

## **5b. Communication of information**

Most residents expressed disappointment over the process of communication of information regarding the proposed redevelopment. Only 3 out of the 13 residents interviewed had heard about the redevelopment from official government sources, including one woman who was informed when she moved in one year ago. Most others heard through neighbours or the Channel 9 news story.

*"That day, I sat down to watch the news, a video of those units over there saying this will all be demolished in 2014 ... It was my worst nightmare. And finally having a nice back yard ... I ran out straight to a neighbour, she only saw part of it. Man next door didn't see it. We started to communicate with each other about what we know, why didn't we know? What are we going to do?" (F, 60s, 23 years)*

*"On channel nine news, on a Sunday night. Neighbour texted me after." (F, 62, 25 years).*

*"[My] son informed me about the news report on television, at first I did not take it seriously and did not believe that it was real." (F, 57, 18 years)*



*"We first heard from our daughters whose school friends had seen the channel nine news report. Their friends asked them - what are you going to do?" (M, 52, 6 years)*

*"Got a letter." (F, 56, 24 years)*

*"Beginning of last year. They said they would finalise it by the end of the year. First heard about it at a meeting up at the hall." (M, 58, 15yrs)*

All residents interviewed had expressed shock and grief upon hearing of the news, but residents who were informed via the news program seemed particularly upset.



*"Very angry. It was a dirty way to find out and the elderly were very worried and upset. If it had not been on the news when would we have found out about it, how long would we have had to wait before someone told us about the proposed redevelopment. If it were not for the news report we would not have known even up to this date. It was the biggest mistake." (F, 57, 18 years)*

*"They should have talked to us before we found out on the news – you feel like nothing, like we are nothing." (F, 57, 23 years)*

*"Shocked and betrayed. This was meant to be our home." [Has a son who passed away, and hasn't disturbed his room.] "To be told like that ... How am I going to take 23 years of being a parent, we accumulated all these things, and suddenly where am I going? Shocked to be told that way, devastated. It ripped my heart out. Relates strongly to losing my son, which I'm trying to deal with. You never get over the death of a child." (F, 60s, 23 years)*

Communication of information following the announcement has followed a similar pattern, with many residents getting most of their updates from neighbours. Most have

received government newsletters, while some say they have not received them. Despite 7 out of 11 interviewees having attended meetings about the redevelopment, residents expressed varying levels of knowledge about the project:

*"I have not heard anything for 12 months, last year we got flyers, Housing had a chat to residents, but I was working. Pretty poor communication."* (F, 62, 25 years)

*"No, haven't heard anything about it. Not done anything. Committee might get stuff but not filtered down."* (F, 62, 25 years).

*"At bus stop – what's happening? People just don't know what's going on, hear rumours about decisions, not knowing what truth is."* (F, 56, 24 years)

Reliance on second-hand information is no doubt facilitating the spread of rumours. For example, on the question of how much help would be provided for the move by the government, residents gave mixed answers. Some believed all residents would be given assistance in packing and moving and unpacking, others thought only the elderly would be assisted, and others had not heard anything about moving assistance.

Similarly, residents were uncertain as to whether they would be allowed to bring their pets back to their new dwelling:

*"They said they would take into account our personal circumstances, but no one has come to talk to me. Do they know I have a dog? ... I assume they'll have to do something for Monty (dog)."* (F, 60, 23 years)

*"What am I going to do with my cats, (I have) been told that we cannot take our pets. I am not going anywhere without my cats."* (F, 57, 18 years)

At the same time, the government is in a 'catch-22' situation: When they do provide information, residents have indicated that they are distrustful regarding what they read or hear, due to the 'poor start' discussed earlier. This could mean that even if communication were to become more systematic from this point onwards, it may not be enough to alleviate many residents' anxieties about the project:

*"The neighbours believe the government isn't telling the truth."* (F, 53, 1 year)

*"We're just being bluffed till the axe falls. No real info will come till it's decided."* (F, 60s, 23 years)

*"I don't think the government has done a great deal. It is like they are dangling a carrot in front of us and taking it away, they are teasing us. Just let us know what is going on. They know they are going to a safe home at the end of the day, have a heart, think of us."* (F, 57, 18 years)

*“Tend not to ask any questions since I am fed up with the bullshit. No questions that have been answered.” (F, 57, 18 years)*

*“They don’t say anything, they make promises, they won’t kick you out straight away, they promise the moving fees, they will come personally to talk to you before they do, they don’t hold much hope for them to come and talk to them before they go.” (F, 57, 23 years)*

*“Process was handled badly, told us the news then didn’t hear anything about it. Daughter called Housing, said they don’t know anything about it. Shouldn’t have told us if they don’t know anything about it. In meetings they were going round and round in circles. Still haven’t heard anything.” (F, 62, 25 years)*

*“Artificial. That’s how it works. It’s all artificial feedback.” (M, 74, 5 years)*

If residents do not trust that the government is working in their best interests, they are unlikely to believe information from official sources, and the rumour mill will continue. We have suggested some ways to address this challenge in the recommendations at the end of this report.



### **5c. CRG (Community Reference Group) meetings**

Most of the residents interviewed had attended at least one CRG meeting, however some residents believe that the meetings had become ineffective:

*“I haven’t gained any info during the meetings. Nothing new.” (F, 60s, 23 year)*

*“Not useful information, meetings are a waste of time. Information provided is mainly from the community nothing from the government.” (F, 57, 18 years)*

*“I attended a few meetings, 7-8 times, but at the end I got some disappointment. They are going to do whatever they plan for. I stopped going to meetings. Victor Dominello came to one of the meetings and he said you are just a few people and have to be organised and prepared and do ... I can’t*

*remember exactly ... He undermined the people over there in the meeting. He was more on their side, not to do something for people here.” (F, 48, 6 years)*

Several residents appreciated the fact that the government representatives running the CRG meetings did not have any further information:

*“Yes, we were given the opportunity to be heard, and they came to hear what we wanted to say. But even Housing agreed this place should be demolished, as this is a good area and is good for the government.” (F, 48, 6 years)*

*“... we don't want to go to CRG meetings because they say they don't know any more than us.” (M, 52, 6 years)*

Some residents questioned the sincerity of the process:

*“Artificial. That's how it works. It's all artificial feedback.” (M, 74, 5 years)*

*“Did they take any notice at the meetings? Lots of input from residents, we put a lot of effort into it, very emotional for us but I don't think it made much of a difference. It is like hitting your head against a brick wall.” (F, 57, 18 years)*

Two residents reported that CRG meeting minutes were sent out too late for them to be able to prepare for the meetings, or to undertake or follow up on action items, reducing the effectiveness of the meetings:

*“Information should be given out prior to meetings so we know what we can discuss.” (F, 57, 18 years)*

Some residents were unable to make it to meetings as they were held during the daytime:

*“I'm not available for the meetings, I work in childcare, work all sorts of hours, can't do much 9-5 Monday to Friday. Everything has always been on weekdays. Working people can't come and have their say.” (F, 60, 23 years)*

#### **5d. Sense of feeling 'voiceless'**

Most residents interviewed acknowledged that the government had made attempts to communicate with residents, particularly through the CRG meetings. However, they did not feel that they were being heard or that their voice would have any impact. One resident who wrote to the relevant minister report that:

*“I didn't get a reply from the minister, months and months later to reply.” (F, 56, 24 years)*

One interviewee stated that he would like *“more contact from representatives”* to feel that he was being heard. Some residents hoped that, if they could reach the right person, that they would be listened to and that their opinions would be acted on.

*“If they sat in this room today, they would understand.”* (F, 60, 23 years)

*“I’m hoping ... whoever read it, saw it on a personal level.”* (F, 56, 24 years)

This feeling of not being heard has, in turn, contributed to a feeling of powerlessness amongst many residents:

*“One person is not strong enough to lead, to change, to be heard.”* (F, 57, 18 years)

*“You do not get spring from one flower.”* (F, 57, 23 years)

Out of desperation, two residents suggested more dramatic ways of being heard:

*“Maybe chain myself to my property.”* (F, 57, 18 years)

*“If we all banded together, maybe they will hear us ... almost 1000 people in the estate so (we would) need more.”* (F, 57, 23 years)

Surprisingly, as at November 2013, none of the residents interviewed were aware of the opportunity for making a submission. When informed of the upcoming opportunities to write a submission, the majority of participants initially said that they felt writing a letter would not make a difference:

*“I’d want to but who would listen?”* (F, 57, 23 years)

*“I would be worried - it’s a waste of time.”* (F, 53, 1 year)

*“No, I have not made any submissions, don’t think one person can make a change or be heard.”* (F, 57, 18 years)

However, when asked directly at the end of the interview if they would like to be kept informed of any future opportunities to make their voice heard, most stated that they would write a submission if they had some help, and if they knew it would be beneficial in some way:

*“I would only be willing to write a submission if I received help.”* (F, 62, 25 years)

*“I’d include the environmental impact by focusing on the community ... try to get them to see people.”* (F, 56, 24 years)

*“If I knew it would be useful, I would write 10 letters.”* (F, 60, 23 years)



This feeling of powerlessness, and frustration over a lack of information, has affected the turnout at the 'town hall meetings' with government representatives, hosted by the IETG. The first meeting had a turnout of 115 residents, however subsequent meetings had a much smaller turnout, highlighting the need for further communication to address the concerns and questions of Ivanhoe Estate.

However, all interviewed residents were interested in remaining involved in other ways, such as attending meetings and workshops run by IETG, writing submissions, spreading information around the community or just ensuring that their “*story could be used to help somehow*”.



### **5e. Hopes for improvement of the consultation process**

All residents hoped for more definite answers: “*Tell us what is going on*” (F, 57, 23 years). They wanted an end to the feeling of “*hanging on*” and “*lingering*”. Ivanhoe Estate residents want to know what is happening, where they will be moved to and how much notice will be given before they are required to move.

Residents expressed a desire for a more personal consultation process, including personal visits. One resident suggested that the best way to move forward would be for

a representative to come and speak with residents one-on-one or in small groups to address their concerns. A resident called on the State Government to:

*“Come to the estate, knock on our doors and speak to us one on one, no cameras, no publicity. Think of the residents and talk to us residents.”* (F, 57, 18 years)

Another resident suggested that the government should

*“Contact each individual, send a letter or go in person ... before talking about redevelopment they should talk about the future of the residents – should offer them recommendations according to their rights – once that’s done then they can say they will redevelop.”* (M, 54, 25 years)

Another resident, however, was against the idea of one-to-one conversations, seeing this as a divide-and-rule approach (M, 52, 6 years)

A number of residents were concerned about how much assistance they would receive. They were hopeful that both financial and physical assistance would be provided to help with the relocation to a new home, but were unsure if this would occur due to poor communication between residents and the government. Some residents reported being told (it was unclear by whom) that only the elderly would be provided with assistance, whilst others were confident that assistance would be provided.

Ultimately, the residents hoped for better communication so that they can make definite decisions about their life in the near future.

## **Key Points**

- The proposed redevelopment has created an apprehensive community whose residents are anxiously awaiting further information about their future.
- This anxiety and distress stems from the fear of losing their home and neighbourhood, uncertainty about the future and where will they be moved, amongst other things.
- Families raised concerns about their children’s schooling, availability of transport, the adequacy of accommodation and its closeness to amenities.
- Residents expressed concerns about the loss of their community, quality of life and neighbours, the closeness to family, their local doctors, amenities as well as transport facilities.
- Residents feel that their basic questions remain unanswered.
- Some residents have been proactive in seeking out information.



## 6. Case studies: Alternative approaches

Two other cases of redevelopment or proposed redevelopment are relevant to the discussion about Ivanhoe Estate: the Randwick and Anzac Parade UAP freeze; and the strong community engagement strategy around the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project.

### 6a. Freezing of the Randwick and Anzac Parade UAPs

In Randwick and Anzac Parade, there were plans to rezone areas along Anzac Parade as part of the plan to accommodate 30,000 new homes across metropolitan Sydney. The project was halted at the end of 2013, in response to concerns that the community has not been appropriately consulted about the process, and concerns around the impact the increased density of housing would have on the community. The Mayor referred to the process as being “wrong and lots more work now needs to be done”, and in response the Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure stated that:



*“No proposals will progress to public exhibition for this precinct (Anzac Parade South) until issues raised by Council and the community have been fully considered.”*

The government announced in December 2013 that it would come back to the community in early 2014 with “a new round of community participation and engagement” (NSW DPE, 2014). Concerns expressed by residents of Randwick and Anzac Parade echo the concerns of Ivanhoe Estate residents regarding poor communication and limited consultation process.

### 6b. Case study of community engagement: the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project

Bonnyrigg is a public housing estate in Western Sydney. The Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project, which began in 2004, was an attempt to improve the quality of life of residents by providing them with better services and a stronger community, and by renewing the houses and public areas. This included the replacement of the existing 833 public housing dwellings with 2330 new homes, of which 30% would be new public housing homes. (Housing NSW, 2008, p.6)

The Bonnyrigg Project used a community engagement strategy to develop a collaborative relationship with the Bonnyrigg community. The ‘Telling the story: community engagement in Bonnyrigg’ report defined community engagement as:

*“Activities and processes that seek to inform affected people about the project, include them in project decision making structures, consult them about their views, involve them, where possible, in decision making, provide opportunities and support for residents to participate in community projects, committees and events and partner with them on specific aspects of the project. This has entailed significant capacity building to provide them with the skills and confidence to enable local people to make a meaningful contribution to the project.” (Housing NSW, 2008, p.3)*

The Bonnyrigg project is an example of a successfully implemented community engagement strategy and should serve as a blueprint for future projects. A community engagement strategy was also used during the proposed redevelopment of Ivanhoe Estate, but experienced limited success for reasons that have been outlined in this report.



The ‘Telling the story: community engagement in Bonnyrigg report’ noted that the Bonnyrigg project engendered high levels of community participation, with 60% of households attending one or more events and 25% attending four or more events. It also achieved broad participation across language groups, with 60% of participants who attended events coming from non-English speaking backgrounds, matching the proportion of non-English speaking people in the local population.

A household survey conducted within the Bonnyrigg Estate by the Department of Housing found that residents of the Estate were well informed about the redevelopment due to the use of an effective consultation process, and that the community generally supported the project, with 65% of respondents indicating that they supported or strongly supported the project.

The first step in the Bonnyrigg Project was to conduct preliminary research by interviewing residents and identifying community leaders. This helped to identify the physical, social and psychological needs of residents, and allowed the government to address these needs.

A key difference between the proposed redevelopment of Ivanhoe Estate and the Bonnyrigg project is that residents at Ivanhoe Estate enjoy living in their community and the majority would prefer to stay or for things not to change. This makes it much harder to put forward a case for the redevelopment of Ivanhoe Estate and to promote it as being beneficial and desirable. Furthermore, the Bonnyrigg project was not part of a UAP process, so it was easier to make a case for the direct benefit for current Housing NSW residents as well as those on waiting lists.

Nevertheless, key lessons can be gleaned from the Bonnyrigg Project both for Ivanhoe Estate and for future developments. These will be addressed a number of recommendations in the next section.

## 7. Recommendations

The following are recommendations regarding the consultation process, and the proposed relocation and redevelopment, based on the findings of our research.

### 1. Put a hold on any decision regarding the development of Ivanhoe Estate

Residents feel that they have not been adequately consulted about the possible redevelopment and that important questions remain unanswered.

- Any decision relating to the Ivanhoe Estate in the Herring Road UAP, be put on hold to allow further consultation with residents and proper consideration of its impacts on residents.
- Processes be put in place that will empower residents and provide for the communication of more timely and helpful information.

### 2. Rebuild the trust of residents

Residents interviewed for this research found it difficult to trust the government, but several were open to government initiatives to restore that trust.

- An acknowledgement of the negative impact of the initial TV news report, and a direct apology to residents.
- Assurances that residents will be consulted about and/or notified of any proposed or actual changes affecting them before these changes are made public.
- Timely responses to resident questions through the Community Reference Group, Ivanhoe Estate Tenants Group, The Salvation Army and other channels.
- Consistent responses by representatives across departments and agencies.

### **3. Enhance the consultation process**

Residents suggested ways of strengthening and diversifying the consultation process, to ensure broader engagement by a larger number of residents. This aligns with the Bonnyrigg experience.

- Residents are provided with a wider range of opportunities to contribute to the consultation process.
- Continue to hold CRG meetings and community forums where residents can voice their concerns, ask questions and find out new information.
- Government representatives at CRG meetings are sufficiently briefed by government and consistent in their responses.
- CRG minutes sent out in advance of the next meeting.
- Additional meetings and forums held outside of business hours so that working residents are able to attend.
- Appropriate interpreters and information be made available for CALD residents, including Chinese, Korean, Armenian, Farsi and other key languages.
- Establish small-scale consultations that target specific groups by age, locality or ethnicity.
- Morning coffee sessions in individual homes hosted by residents who invite their friends and neighbours to meet a person from the project team.

#### **4. Capacity building and evaluation**

Despite the different circumstances, the Bonnyrigg project provides a model of how to take community engagement from passive information exchange to active engagement that builds resident skills, leading to an increased capacity to engage with the project.

- Residents are given the opportunity to shape the consultation process as key stakeholders, and as active rather than passive participants.
- Training for community members in media, presentation skills, activism, meeting procedures, etc.
- Including residents on project staff recruitment and selection panels.
- Facilitate interaction between resident groups in different localities.
- In-built mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of community engagement strategies.
- Evaluation strategies could include: tracking attendance of residents; analysing attendance data to identify the reach into population subgroups; conducting surveys to record resident views on the successes and shortcomings of the process; etc.

#### **5. If redevelopment is to go ahead, clearly identify and explain the community benefit**

Ivanhoe Estate residents need to understand the longer term benefits of the redevelopment, to both themselves and the broader community.

- Factsheets providing clear, easy to follow, measurable and transparent data on what residents stand to gain or lose during the relocation and from the new development, and the benefits to the broader community, to allow residents to intelligently evaluate any proposal and to offer their suggestions.

**6. If redevelopment is to go ahead, provide clear information**

Residents requested answers to questions for which they feel satisfactory responses have not yet been given.

- Information available on likely policy regarding pets in the new development, size and allocation of types of residence, etc.
- FAQ sheet outlining the concerns and suggestions raised by residents, and responses by the government, to assure residents that their opinions have been heard.
- FAQ document translated into relevant languages.
- A timeline of the redevelopment process, even if approximate.
- All residents are aware of the submission process and of relevant workshops.

**7. If redevelopment is to go ahead, provide emotional support for residents**

Residents interviewed for this research had experienced, or knew people who had experienced, varying degrees of stress and anxiety due to the proposed redevelopment and possible relocation. Of particular concern was the impact on some of the more vulnerable groups living in the Estate, namely the elderly, disabled and those of CALD backgrounds.

- Seek advice from consultants - 'experts' or residents - regarding the special needs of some residents.
- Cultural liaisons to engage with specific groups.
- A designated position be funded and managed by a local community group to assist residents in dealing with the current uncertainty and with the impact of any future redevelopment. Such a role would reduce the anxiety and stress of residents and could help residents prepare emotionally for the move and listen to their concerns.
- Residents feel knowledgeable and empowered enough to access community support services, such as: Lifeline; Centacare (counselling and family support); the Benevolent Society (services for women and families); social workers; etc.
- In the event of redevelopment, ensure that individual needs are given consideration, and that residents are moved back in proximity to their current neighbours.



### **8. Ensure that any redevelopment addresses the needs and desires of current residents**

Residents were clear on what they liked about Ivanhoe Estate, and sought assurances that their voice regarding the nature of a future development would be heard.

- Access to local facilities, infrastructure and public space in any new development is at least commensurate with what residents enjoy now. E.g. ensure community meeting spaces are available, The Salvation Army, IETG and other groups have facilities to continue serving the community etc.
- Consideration be given to the need for larger dwellings to accommodate the needs of existing families with children, so they can return to the area.
- Recognise and accommodate existing social ties, and enhance rather than diminish neighbourly engagement.
- Incorporate elements of the existing environment into the new design, such as places of significance, trees and landmarks.

### **9. Conduct further research**

Residents wondered whether the social cost of redevelopment justified the financial and strategic gains.

- Commission research into the economic cost of damage to resident's health and wellbeing compared to the cost of providing qualified staff who could help to prevent or minimise this trauma and damage.

In summary, it is recommended that Housing NSW and Land & Housing Corporation reconsider the place of the Ivanhoe Estate in the broader Herring Road Urban Activation Precinct, and take immediate steps to rebuild the trust of residents. A redesigned and diversified consultation process should be implemented that recognises that residents are key stakeholders in this process and builds their capacity to participate.

If the redevelopment were to go ahead, residents would need to clearly understand the benefits and to have adequate information about options and processes. Emotional support would be required for vulnerable groups in particular, and the redevelopment would need to address the needs, fears and concerns of current residents. Resourcing a community organisation to undertake this support and assist in individual planning with residents is also recommended.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Menu of interview questions**

Effects of the Proposed Redevelopment of Ivanhoe Estate  
on the Health & Wellbeing of the Residents

Macquarie University PSY399 internship  
Session Two, 2013

Name of interviewer(s)

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Name of interviewee(s)

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Place of interview \_\_\_\_\_

Date of interview \_\_\_\_\_

Consent forms completed and signed, and a copy given to the interviewee(s) Yes / No

Part 1. Observation/discovery questions

- Find out the facts. Explore the history. Uncover experiences, especially positive ones.
- Discover what people value about their history, experience and community.

If you don't mind, I would like to start with a few general questions about you.

- How old are you?                      What is your marital status?                      Gender:
- How long have you been living in the Estate?
- Do you have any children or dependents living with you? If so, how many?

I'm interested to find out more about life in Ivanhoe Estate.

What do you enjoy most about living in Ivanhoe Estate? What do you enjoy least?

Do you feel like you are part of the community here? Why / why not?

Have you noticed any changes while living in Ivanhoe Estate? If so, please give examples.

I'd like to understand how the announcement of the proposed redevelopment affected you personally, and others in the community.

When and how did you first hear about the proposed redevelopment of Ivanhoe Estate?

How did you feel when you found out about the proposed redevelopment?

Why do you think the government is considering redeveloping the Estate?

How has the announcement about the proposed redevelopment impacted you?

- Has it affected your mood / mental health?
- What are your concerns and fears?
- Do you feel more or less stressed / concerned now, 18 months on? Why?

How has the announcement about the proposed redevelopment impacted the community?

- How has the community responded?
- What sorts of conversations have been taking place between residents?
- Are there residents you are particularly worried about (elderly, migrants etc)? If so, why?

I'd like to find out about the various ways in which the government has tried to keep residents informed and to get them involved in decision-making – in other words, the communication / consultation process.

What information have you received about the possible redevelopment?

- Has the communication (consultation) process been helpful to the community? Why/why not?
- Have you found the information they have provided to be useful? If so, what in particular?
- Have you received answers to your questions? Give examples.

Have you attended any of the workshops, information sessions or meetings of the Community Reference Group organised by the government or by the Ivanhoe Estate Tenant Group?

- If no, why not?
- If yes, what were the highlights? What disappointed you?
- Have any groups been left out?

Overall, how have you felt about the communication (consultation) process?

- How do you feel about the people running the communication (consultations)?
- Do you feel that your opinions are being heard or taken seriously? Why / why not?
- Do you believe the process has been handled in an appropriate way? Why / why not?

#### Part 2. Reflection/envisioning questions

- Develop and explore hypotheses through analysis and interpretation of facts.
- Reflect on what has been identified and what is valued.
- Envision, imagine and dream of new possibilities through "passionate thinking".

I'm interested to hear your thoughts about what you would change regarding the government's handling of the announcement and communication (consultation) process, if you had the power to do so.

If we could take the clock back 18 months, what do you think could have been done differently?

- What do you think would have been the best way for the government to announce the news?
- What communication (consultation) process would you have suggested?
- How would you have liked the community to respond?
- Can anything be done differently now that would make a difference to the final outcome?



I'm also interested in your hopes for the redevelopment process.

If the Estate were redeveloped, how would this affect you personally?

- What do you think would change?
- What would stay the same?
- What might you gain?
- What might you lose?
- How do you feel about this?

If the Estate were redeveloped, what impact do you think this would have on residents?

- How would the proposed redevelopment affect the sense of community?

If the Estate were to be redeveloped, what would you like the new Estate to look like?

- What type of development would be acceptable to the community?
- What positive changes, if any, could the new development bring?

If the Estate were redeveloped, would you be likely to want to come back and live here? Why / why not?

And just a few questions about your expectations from the government...

From what you've been told, how much assistance will be provided to you, if you need to move out temporarily?

What sort of assistance would you ideally want from the government, if the proposed redevelopment were to go ahead?

What do you think the government could do to make the proposed redevelopment easier on residents?

- What further information or resources could the government provide?
- What further help could they give?

Part 3. Planning/engaging questions:

- Discuss and share discoveries and possibilities for bringing about change.
- Discuss and address obstacles and risks.
- Turn individual vision into shared vision through dialogue.

I'm interested to know how informed you feel about the government's communication (consultation) process, and whether you feel your opinions are valued.

What more would you like to know about the proposed redevelopment?

- If you could ask the government a question about the proposed redevelopment, what would it be?

Do you feel that your opinion would impact the likelihood of the development happening?

If yes:

- What makes you say that?

If no:

- What do you think is preventing you from being heard?
- What would need to change for you to be heard?
- What can you do to be heard?
- What can others do for you to be heard?

Do you know about the Community Reference Group meetings?

If so:

- How did you hear about them?
- Have you been to any meetings?
- Would you ever consider attending?

Do you know about the Ivanhoe Estate Tenant Group (IETG)?

If so:

- How did you hear about them?
- Have you ever contacted them? Explain.
- Have you been to any meetings?
- Would you ever consider contacting them?

4. Action/creation questions:

- Implement the plan.
- Create the future through innovation and action.
- Evaluate outcomes and reflect on the next step.

Leading to:

- What actions might you take based on your conclusions? What will you change?

Finally, I'd like to ask you about your involvement in the communication (consultation) process.

The government has invited people to write to them with their thoughts about the proposed redevelopment, in the form of written submissions. Have you made any submissions to the Taskforce, Urban Activation Precinct Working Group, or any other agency?

- Why/why not?

Do you think you are likely to make a submission at some point?

- If yes, what would you write?
- If you were to make a submission, do you think you would need help to do so?

Do you think that, at some stage, you will talk with other residents about the proposed redevelopment and what can be done about it?

- If no, why not?
- If yes, what information or resources might help you do this?

Do you think you are likely to get involved in the process of communication (consultation) regarding the proposed redevelopment?

If yes:

- How do you see yourself doing this?
- What is the best way to keep you informed?

If not, why not?

Would you like to be kept informed about what is going on and opportunities to get involved?

- If yes, ask them for their contact details.

Do you have any questions for us?

Thanks very much for your time!

Again, if you have any questions about the research, please don't hesitate to contact Dr Wayne Warburton or Dr Armen Gakavian (see consent form for details).