

**THE IMPACT OF THE SYDNEY CASINO  
ON THE SOCIAL COMPOSITION AND  
RESIDENTIAL AMENITY OF THE  
RESIDENTS OF PYRMONT-ULTIMO**

**Final Report to the Casino Community Benefit Fund  
September 2000**

Michael Bounds  
Alan Morris  
Terri McCormack  
Carla Moore  
Glen Searle

**Funded by the  
Casino Community Benefit Fund**

***The Urban Studies Research Centre***  
University of Western Sydney Macarthur  
Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences  
P O Box 555  
Campbelltown NSW 2560  
Australia

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Benefit Fund-Sept 2000.**

**Bounds M., Morris A., McCormack T.,  
Searle G., Moore C**

**Published & distributed by the Urban Studies  
Research Centre  
University of Western Sydney  
ISBN: 1-86341-881-4**

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## INTRODUCTION

The following paper is the final report of the Urban Studies Research Centre in the Casino Community Benefit Fund funded research on The Impact of the Sydney Casino on the Social Composition and Residential Amenity of the Residents of Pymont Ultimo.

Although this report sums up the findings of earlier reports and highlights the most recent research, the reader is referred to earlier reports for a detailed review of the study.

The research was initially funded for a two year period from 26 March 1998 to 26 March 2000. This period was extended to 26 September 2000 in the course of the research to enable the growth of population and the evolution of the social character of Pymont Ultimo to be more effectively represented.

Stage 1, Report 1 in November of 1998 addressed the history of the area, provided a literature review on casino impacts, undertook a transport study of Pymont Ultimo and analysed the social composition of the area based on collector district mapping.

Report 2 in May of 1999 analysed the findings of the Pymont/Ultimo safety audit and surveyed the views of stakeholders and residents in the area. It addressed issues of social and transport impacts and broader planning effects of development on the area. In addition it provided a detailed traffic study of the area to assess the impact of the Casino.

Report 3 was based on 25 in-depth interviews conducted with residents, workers and gatekeepers in Pymont/Ultimo between November 1999 and March of 2000. Although canvassing the original domains covered by earlier research it sought specifically to identify new areas of concern effecting the study area as a basis for the final stage of research from April to September of 2000. New areas of concern were the development of community, the divisions between Pymont and Ultimo, the emerging urban densities and population composition and the changing socio-economic character of the area.

This final report integrates and synthesises the findings of the previous studies and our most recent research including further interviews, a postal survey and a more detailed history of the peninsula as a framework for our observations. It also includes a sociography of the area to illustrate to the reader the characteristics of the 17 precincts identified in the first report as areas of study based on the collectors district data from the 1996 census. In the final analysis the process of development and scale of our research precluded a detailed analysis of each of the precincts. The research design did facilitate an appreciation of the uneven composition of the population across the peninsula and in particular enabled the identification of divisions in the genius loci of Pymont and Ultimo.

The project undertook to assess the impact of the Sydney Casino on the social composition and residential amenity of the residents of Pymont Ultimo with particular reference to:

- traffic effects
- settlement of patrons and employees of the casino in the area
- friction between patrons and residents
- resident sense of proprietary rights over local public domain
- the changing genius loci
- sense of attachment to the area.

The Pymont Ultimo population dropped from 4007 in 1961 to 2598 in 1971, 1590 in 1981 with an increase to 2805 in 1986. It is estimated that there are currently about 9000 residents in Pymont Ultimo and the ultimate projected population is double this. Pymont Ultimo is in many ways an archetype of the Sydney of the future. The conclusions in this final report support this contention.

We believe the research has thrown considerable light on the character of the area of its evolution and on the role of the casino in this process. The reports will form the basis for further study of Pymont Ultimo and casino impacts. Earlier published reports have been in high demand from the centre.

The Urban Studies Research Centre would like to express its appreciation to all those respondents who have so generously given their time to this research, and to the Trustees of the Casino Community Benefit Fund and Mr Roupén Manjikian of the fund for their support and consideration in the conduct of the research.

Dr Michael Bounds  
Director  
Urban Studies Research Centre  
University of Western Sydney  
September 2000

## 1. PART 1 - PYRMONT ULTIMO TODAY

This section of the final report outlines the findings of research conducted between March and September of this year. As with earlier reports on which it draws, it analyses the impact of the Casino in the context of the rapid process of redevelopment occurring in the Peninsula. This process of rapid development has been part of the City West Urban Strategy and is a product of an historic agreement between the NSW and Commonwealth governments signed in 1992, whereby \$241 million under the building better cities program was directed to the development of physical and human infrastructure in the peninsula. The impact of the Casino must be seen in the context of this overall process of change in the peninsula under which the population is envisaged to grow from 3132 in 1991 to 20,000 residents in 2013 with 26,000 workers in the peninsula. The history section deals with these changes in more detail.

Estimations of the current population vary given the rapid process of development but the population has probably doubled since the 1996 census when many of the precincts identified in the first report, and appended here, were subject to construction and had been depopulated for many years as outlined in the history section.

It is estimated by the SHFA that approximately 2,500 new dwellings have been completed since 1996 housing approximately 4,500 residents. Much of this construction has occurred during the period of our research. We are consequently pleased to have been able to extend the period of our research to tap into this expanded population in our interviews and survey.

Appendix A shows the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority estimation of construction of residential units occurring over the past four years some 46% or 1309 units were completed since June of last year. This has been a massive process of construction and change by any historical estimation let alone in the context of Sydney and Pyrmont Ultimo. In consequence the impact on the character and social composition of Pyrmont Ultimo has been vast and in the wake of this construction boom we may expect the character of both areas to crystallise. As in other sections of the report we highlight here the distinction between Pyrmont and Ultimo. The historical roots of this separation are well canvassed in other sections of the report.

The physical separation as a product of topography and history exacerbated by the imposition of the freeway breaking up the peninsula in the 1980s should not be forgotten. This division in the peninsula has been further aggravated by the process of construction in the more recent past. This process has seen an increase in the quality of developments and depth of infrastructure directed to Pyrmont as residential construction in Ultimo has declined.

As we postulate elsewhere in the report this process of new building may have led to what has been termed churning in the housing submarket of Pyrmont Ultimo as earlier entrants into the market have upgraded from their units to the more prestigious offerings coming onto the market in the past year.

It is in this context that we report on our latest findings based on earlier reports and a new series of resident and gatekeeper interviews, supplemented by a postal survey of a

stratified random sample of 120 respondents living in the peninsula. The methodology is discussed in Appendix 1.

## 1.1 Social Composition of the Area

### 1.1.1 Age and Sex of the Population

The most apparent feature of Pymont-Ultimo is constant redevelopment which to date has insured that the social composition of the Pymont-Ultimo area is in constant flux. The 1996 census found that fifty per cent of the Pymont-Ultimo population was between the ages of 20 and 34 and 71 per cent between 15 and 44. Many of the key informants noted that in the second part of the 1990s a new phenomenon in the social composition of the area has been the increase in the number of people over fifty, often referred to as 'empty nesters'. Many of the units in the upmarket Jackson's Landing development have been bought by this age group. Ron Cutler, the development manager for the Jackson's Landing project, commented that "these buyers have made a life-style choice in that they have decided to sell their homes in the suburbs and opt for a more inner-city type existence". The size of the units and their extremely favourable location appeal to people over fifty whose children have left home and who are now finding their homes are too large and too much effort to maintain. The prices of these apartments exclude younger buyers. In April 1999, the marketing director of Jackson's Landing residential projects, Graeme Meers, said that more than 80 per cent of the first four residential developments "had sold off the plan for an average price of \$823,750." (*The News, Pymont and Ultimo*, April 1999). Prices ranged from \$590,000 to \$1.875 million (*Ibid*). Other upmarket developments in the area are also encouraging empty nesters. Con Grigoriadis of Harris Street Reality reported that he was "getting plenty of interest from empty nesters who are selling their larger family homes in suburbs like Sylvania, Strathfield and St Ives". (*Ibid*).

Table 1 suggests that the trend noted by a number of key informants is making an impact on the age composition. Amongst the respondents, although the 20 to 30 year-old age cohort is the largest grouping, close to half of all the respondents were over 40, and close to three in ten are over 50.

**Table 1. Age and Sex distribution**

Age	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
20-30	11	21,2	22	32,4	33	27,5
31-40	14	26,9	15	22,1	29	24,2
41-50	11	21,2	12	17,6	23	19,2
51-60	12	23,1	13	19,1	25	20,8
61-70	2	3,8	4	5,9	6	5,0
71-80	2	3,8	1	1,5	3	2,5
Total	52	100,0	68	100,0	120	100,0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

The survey results as regards the gender composition of the area are interesting. There were many more female respondents - 57 per cent of the respondents were female.



Whether this reflects a shift in the gender composition of the population is impossible to say. The 1996 census indicated that the sex composition was almost fifty-fifty. There were slightly more female residents in the area.

### 1.1.2 Children in Pyrmont-Ultimo

Many informants argued that in the late 1990s there has been a substantial increase in the number of families in the area. The increase in the number of families with children in Pyrmont-Ultimo since 1996 is illustrated most concretely in the increase in the number of pupils enrolled in Ultimo primary school, the only primary school in the area. The school only accepts pupils from the Haymarket/Pyrmont/Ultimo area - Pyrmont supplies approximately two thirds of all the pupils. At the beginning of 1996 the school had 150 pupils. In August 2000 it had 262 pupils of which 42% were from countries in Asia. Mainland China (including Hong Kong), Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Taiwan and the Philippines were the main countries of origin. Families from these countries are the driving force behind the resurgence of the school - about 78% of the children whose names are down to start kindergarten in 2001 are the children of parents who originated from the Asian countries mentioned (figures supplied by Jim Ironside, the principal of Ultimo Primary).

Most of the families moving into the area, view it as a convenient locality and are not put off by apartment life. Many of the Asian families have come from high residential densities and the area is thus viewed as perfectly acceptable for rearing a family: "I grew up in Hong Kong. This is normal for me", commented one Asian resident (Informant 1). Although many of the Asian families are fairly recent arrivals, there are also many that have had a long history in the area. The principal of the Ultimo Primary School said parents of his pupils had shown him photographs of their families in the area when the locality was constituted mainly by market gardens.

The increase in the number of families was also encouraged by a shift in the policy of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP). Robert Black, the acting director of the Sydney Central Region of DUAP in late 2000, explains:

It was a policy decision to encourage families. Four or five years ago it was a young transient population -very few families or kids. Very few. This was not the balance we were seeking and we tried to fix it. Policy documents, were geared towards influencing development to encourage families by creating a mix of units, numbers of bedrooms, larger storage spaces ... Jackson's Landing has a number of large units. A large number of them are 110-120 square meters - larger than average.

The survey found that just under one in five households had at least one child living at home. Four in ten respondents either had children living at home or elsewhere.

**Table 2. Households with children living at home**

Number of children	Frequency	%
0	96	81.3
1	14	11.9
2	4	3.4
3	2	1.7
4	2	1.7
Total	118	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

### 1.1.3 Marital Status

The 1996 census found that 58 per cent of the males and 61 per cent of the female population were unmarried. Many of the key informants sensed that there had been an increase in the proportion of married couples in the area since the 1996 census as many of the new, upmarket developments are orientated towards couples and families. Ron Cutler of Lend Lease, commented that the selling price of the apartments means that often only two income families can afford to purchase them. The survey we conducted suggested that the proportion of households occupied by couples is increasing. Six in ten respondents were either married or cohabiting. Female respondents were far more likely to be married than male respondents.

**Table 3. Marital status**

Marital Status	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Married	23	44.2	28	41.2	51	42.5
Single	22	42.3	19	27.9	41	34.2
De facto	6	11.5	14	20.6	20	16.7
Widow(er)	1	1.9	1	1.5	2	1.7
Divorced	0	0.0	6	8.8	6	5.0
Total	52	100.0	68	100.0	120	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

### 1.1.4 Occupational Structure

Older informants pointed to the massive changes in the social class composition of the population. Most residents in Pymont are now in white-collar occupations. The rents in Pymont-Ultimo and the cost of the units means that it is difficult for people in low-income jobs to live in the area. The respondents to the survey were overwhelmingly in white-collar positions, many were highly skilled, none fitted into the category unskilled manual and only four could be classified as semi-skilled manual.

**Table 4. Occupations of residents<sup>1</sup>**

Occupation	Frequency	%
Professional	8	6.7
Managerial	24	20.2
Skilled non-manual	36	30.2
Clerical	10	8.4
Sales and service	16	13.4
Semi-skilled manual	4	3.4
Retired	9	7.6
Unemployed	1	0.8
Student	6	5.0
Home duties	5	4.2
Total	119	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

An insignificant proportion of the respondents was unemployed and only 7.4% of the female respondents said that they were housewives.

### 1.1.5 Income Profile

The income profile of Pymont-Ultimo has shifted dramatically over the last 20 years. With the recent completion of part of the Jackson's Landing project and other prestigious developments, the number of high income earners has increased. About 35 per cent of the respondents to the USRC survey earned more than \$60 000 a year.

**Table 5. Annual income**

Income in thousands	Frequency	Percent
0-15	12	10.4
16-30	6	5.2
31-45	33	28.7
46-60	23	20.0
61-75	14	12.2
76-90	11	9.6
91+	16	13.9
Total	115	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

Male respondents tended to earn more than their female counterparts. Whereas only 6.1 per cent of men earned less than \$30,000 a year, 29 per cent of women did.

<sup>1</sup> Professionals refer to people who have high status professional qualifications and are employed or self-employed in this capacity. Examples would be lawyers, doctors, engineers and accountants. The managerial band refers to people who are managing other people. This band is in some ways the most ambiguous as people who classify themselves as managers may be in fact engaged in very different tasks as regards levels of skills and responsibilities. Skilled non-manual refers to trained professionals such as teachers, librarians, media workers and nurses. Clerical workers included people working in office administration. Sales and service workers encompassed people working in the hospitality industry. Gaming workers were placed in this category.

### 1.1.6 Educational Qualifications

The Pymont-Ultimo population is a highly skilled one. The 1996 census found that 17 per cent of the residents had a university degree and 39 per cent a post-school qualification. With the continuing influx of young professionals into the area it is probable that the proportion of residents with tertiary qualifications has increased. The survey suggested that this was the case. About four in ten respondents had a university degree and about seven in ten had a university degree or another post-schooling qualification.

**Table 6. Level of education**

Qualifications	Frequency	Percent
No qualifications	3	2.5
Secondary education	30	25.0
Trade qualification	11	9.2
Diploma	21	17.5
Bachelor degree	34	28.3
Higher degree	17	14.2
Other	4	3.3
Total	120	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

There were no significant differences in the qualifications of male and female respondents. Noteworthy is that having a bachelor degree did make a significant difference in terms of earning power, but those 17 respondents who had higher degrees were, overall, significantly higher earners than their fellow respondents.

### 1.1.7 Tenure Profile

The 1996 census found that two thirds of residents were tenants. Most of the key informants felt that the proportion of owner-occupiers had increased since then. Sylvia, the chief planner with a major residential developer in Pymont Ultimo, said that about fifty per cent of their units in Pymont were now owner occupied. The survey revealed a very similar trend. Exactly half of all respondents said that they were owners. Interestingly, there was no relationship between ownership and annual income. Respondents earning between \$15 000 and \$31 000 were as likely to own their unit as were respondents earning over \$70 000 annually. Gender differences were also insignificant. The age of respondents was a major factor. Residents older than 40 were more likely to own their dwelling than were respondents under 40. Just under seven in ten were owner-occupiers in comparison to one in three respondents under forty.

**Table 7. Tenure profile**

Living arrangement	Frequency	Percent
Owner	30	25.0
Mortgage/owner	30	25.0
Private rental	42	35.0
Public housing rental	13	10.8
Other	5	4.2
Total	120	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

The tenure profile of an area is an important determinant of residential stability, which in turn is an important criterion for a sense of community developing and sustaining itself. This is discussed in the next section. It is likely that the owner-occupiers and the tenants of public housing will be a lot more stable than the tenants in private dwellings.

### 1.1.8 Residents' Length of Stay in Pymont-Ultimo

An area which is characterised by significant residential instability is less likely to develop a sense of community. One of the key reasons for the very strong social ties that existed in Pymont and Ultimo up to the 1960s was the long history of most residents in the area. Most of the residents spent their whole childhood in the area and even after they married many stayed in the area. They therefore knew many people in the area. James, a 69 year-old Ultimo resident, who has lived in the same house in Ultimo since he was seven, said that they had the same neighbours on both sides for thirty to forty years and that many of his school friends had remained in the neighbourhood for much of their adult lives (Informant 3). Clearly Pymont-Ultimo is a far more transient community now. The transience is indicated by the fact that of the 1,000 questionnaires sent out to Pymont-Ultimo residents, 11.5 per cent or 115 were returned to sender. The sample was drawn from the latest electoral role, which was assembled six months prior to the survey. We can thus conclude that all 115 had moved within the last six months or about one in five residents in Pymont-Ultimo moving in the past year. Some of this movement will be in the area as residents seek out better accommodation as it comes on to the market.

**Table 8. Number of years resident in Pymont-Ultimo**

Years	Frequency	Percent
0-3	50	41.7
3-6	35	29.2
7-9	7	5.8
10-19	16	13.3
20 +	12	10.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

Table 8 shows that about four in ten respondents had been in the area less than three years. Although many of the respondents are recent arrivals, the table does suggest that the area has a solid core of residents. One in ten had been in the area longer than 20 years, and about one in four had been in the area for ten years or longer.

There was a strong relationship between tenure status and length of residence. Thus, if we compare owner-occupiers to renters, about six in ten of the former had been in the area for more than three years compared to four in ten private renters. Not surprisingly, the occupiers of public housing had been in the area the longest. Only 2 of the 13 respondents in public housing said that they had been in the area less than three years. Four had been in the area for more than 20 years. There was also a strong relationship between length of residence and age. Respondents under 30 were far more likely to have been in the area less than three years, than were respondents older than 30.

## 1.2 Sense of Community

Long-established residents who were interviewed invariably lamented the lack of community in the contemporary period and spoke of how strong the sense of community was when Pymont Ultimo was primarily a working class area. A resident who has been living in the area since 1939 painted the following picture of Pymont-Ultimo in the 1940s and the 1950s.

There was a strong sense of community in those days. Everybody helped one another. You never closed your door. Your door was always open. Even if you went to town you left your door open. We shared with one another. Even shared food. People would pop in for tea. Everybody knew one another. There was very little movement out of the area. People didn't move (Informant 3).

A resident in her mid-forties who has lived in the area her whole life had the following view: "In those days everybody knew each other. A lot of people were related. It was a nice suburb. When I walk down the street now there is nobody I know. Even the people I know aren't the same. Everybody is different. That sense of it being a village - that's gone." (Informant 4). Not only did she feel that Pymont-Ultimo lacked a sense of community she also felt that some of the people who had moved into the area, had deliberately tried to undermine the old residents and their community: "Some of the new people who came in were very disruptive. They undermined the community and didn't take the older more established residents seriously. They operated for their own gain. They didn't want any heritage left."

The age of the incoming residents, the fact that many are tenants and the cost of the accommodation means that many of the newer residents stay in the area for a short period of time. Constant residential movement is not conducive to the development of strong social ties or a sense of identification with an area. A long-established resident graphically expressed this accepted sociological findings; referring to the Pymont-Ultimo population she commented - "it's transient young people, not long stayers, so there's never anyone to push for things. If the stacks (under the tunnel at Darling

Harbour) get to them, or the buses aren't good, they can leave. They're all high-income earners. Good luck to them." (Informant 5). The former chairperson of the Ultimo Precinct Committee, felt that the quality of the developments meant that many units will continue to be investor owned which in turn will mean that there will be a high level of transience and it "will remain difficult to engender any form of community spirit." (Informant 13).

Some informants argued that the increasing diversity of the area made it very difficult for there to be a sense of community and that what you had instead was the development of 'ethnic villages', that is different national groups clustering and creating social ties and networks within their particular grouping. David of the Ultimo Community Centre made the following argument:

When the community was predominantly white working class there was a greater sense of community. As diversity has increased so the population has become more fragmented. There is little or no cross-cultural interaction. I think there is within some groups a sense of community.

Residents who had moved into the neighbourhood more recently were evenly split around the question of whether a sense of community existed in the area. The expectations of the key informants in this grouping were generally different to those of the long-established residents. They did not expect to know a large proportion of the population and many found the increasing diversity exciting and refreshing rather than a threat. This view is captured in the observations of an informant who has lived in Pymont since 1998. He has a delicatessen in Pymont:

We enjoy living here. It is a café society. Very 'villagey', very friendly population. There is a nice mix. Everybody has got complaints but there are also a lot of good things. ... There has always been a sense of community here but I think it is growing even more. (Informant 6)

His delicatessen had one large rectangular table. He has many regular customers who come to the deli and meet other regulars around this table. This activity is overwhelmingly confined to the new, more affluent sections of the population in the area: "We do get some of the old working class residents coming in but they rarely buy anything or sit down to eat." Referring to drinking coffee at a café a Housing Commission resident said derisively, "I don't have time for that." (Informant 7).

The diversity of the population was viewed by some residents as a key reason for there being a sense of community in Pymont. A young, single female resident articulated this in the following way: "Its like Britain just picked up and moved here. They are very open to becoming friendly with people. They want to make friends." (Informant 2). She felt that many of the young British people who came to Pymont in the late 1990s have made close friends in the area and have decided to stay. A great deal of the social contact takes place in the pubs.

It does appear that the social ties between residents in the Department of Housing area and the rest of the residents are minimal. Several informants claimed that there was a serious split between the Department of Housing residents. A businessman located

near the Department of Housing area in Pymont had the following contentious analysis:

There is definitely a split between Housing Commission and rest of community. Poorer people want what other wealthier residents have. There is an atmosphere of people being asked for money. People in the area are more wary. The situation creates suspicion, mistrust. There is a big divide between the Housing Commission area and rest - us versus them. (Informant 10)

A resident in Department of Housing accommodation agreed that contact with the new residents is minimal. She, however, had a different analysis as to why this situation prevailed.

We don't really know them ... I don't really know the new residents. Isn't the opportunity to meet them. Don't know how they feel. It's been heartbreaking. It (the old community) was a really nice community. They (the newcomers) made it hard. They had money, education. Did it (got involved in community activity) for their own gain. I keep away from things now. Can't bare the sight of these people. I was born here (Informant 4).

In the survey, not surprisingly there was a range of responses to the question of whether a sense of community prevailed in the residential area in which people resided. This is illustrated in Table 9.

**Table 9. Sense of community**

Sense of community exists in area	Male		Female		Total	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	2	4.0	9	13.6	11	9.5
Agree	14	28.0	22	33.3	36	31.0
Neither agree nor disagree	11	22.0	23	34.8	34	29.3
Disagree	21	42.0	7	10.6	28	24.1
Strongly disagree	50	2	4.0	5	7.6	7
Total	50	100.0	66	100.0	116	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

Only about four in ten respondents strongly agreed or agreed that there is a sense of community in the area in which they reside. Three in ten felt neither one way or the other, but three in ten either disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was a sense of community in their locality. Interestingly, the gender component was highly significant. Whereas close to half of the female respondents strongly agreed or agreed that there was a sense of community in their area, only one in three male respondents did. Men were far more likely to have a definite opinion about the lack of community.



Thus, 44 per cent of male respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that there was a sense of community in comparison to 17,6 per cent of females. Marital status was also significant. One in two married respondents were adamant that a sense of community did exist in comparison to one in three single people. It appears that married couples are more likely to establish or perceive the existence of networks of kindred spirits in the area of residence than are unmarried residents.

The relationship between the tenure arrangements of respondents and whether they agreed that a sense of community exists was very strong. Thus, half of all the respondents who were owner-occupiers agreed that there was a sense of community in their neighbourhood compared to one in five respondents who were tenants in private dwellings.

### 1.2.1 Community Organisation

Since the redevelopment of the area, community organisation has never been terribly strong. Like most residential areas, the number of actively involved individuals has always been fairly small, however, at times the remarkable commitment of a small group has resulted in significant victories. One of the most significant was achieved by what became known as the Point Street Tenants' Committee. The Committee was constituted mainly by Housing Commission Tenants living in Point Street. It was formed in November 1988 when the tenants were told that the only park in Pymont at that time, the James Watkinson Reserve, established in the 1930s and situated behind the housing commission homes in Point Street, was to be demolished. Residents were given a week's notice of the intended demolition and their frantic attempts to forestall the developer came to nought. On the 11 November 1988, the demolition team moved in and over a couple of months one of Sydney's most historic parks was destroyed. The tenants never stopped fighting for the park's restoration. The appointment of Gabrielle Kibble as Director of Housing in 1993, was a turning point in this struggle. After meeting a delegation from the Tenants' Committee and touring the area, she agreed to have the park partially restored. The Department of Housing homes, which at one point had also appeared to be under threat, were given new roofs and their continued existence and tenure were guaranteed. During the course of the dispute an elderly resident in the Housing Commission committed suicide. Former members of the Tenants' Committee are adamant that the stress induced by the destruction of the park contributed.

Most of the people involved in the Tenants' Committee have withdrawn from local politics. Some feel disillusioned and resigned to their lack of control over events. A resident of the Housing Commission who was a central player in the struggle to recreate the park articulated this in the following way:

Community organisation is very weak. We're burnt out. We've achieved all we could. Although we won back most of the park, it has been very difficult. Often the people we dealt with made as though they were listening but usually it was just a show. They often told us bare-faced lies. A lot of the meetings were a total waste of time. (Informant 4)

She felt that the new residents were generally not interested in community issues: "The new people have no appreciation of our efforts to save the park. They don't have any knowledge of the area." Some of the long-established residents argued that some of the newer, more affluent residents who had become involved in community activities were on the side of the developers rather than the community. They were referred to as the "White Shoe Brigade". This resident who had been extremely active for a large part of the 1990s had also decide to withdraw from local politics: "I've retired, I'm not as agile as I used to be, I want to take it easy, let someone else do the fighting." (Informant 5)

An extremely active committee historically has been the Ultimo Precinct Committee. It has been led by tireless community activists who from the early 1980s challenged development after development. Narelle Thirkettle, who was chairperson for about five years, describes the early days of the Ultimo Precinct Committee: "We had half a dozen applications in at once. It was a 25-hour a day job. It took your life. The legwork, homework etc was done by different sub-committees, human services, safety, etc."

Most of the residents who had been active In the Ultimo Precinct Committee had withdrawn completely or cut down on their activities. The main reason given was increasing disillusionment with the consultation process due to the sense that the Council was not listening to them. John Hutchinson, another former chairperson of the Ultimo Precinct Committee expressed this in the following way:

They've done something, which will take a lot of undoing. They've killed off the enthusiasm for consultation. Building a park or something, giving input, was always very difficult. Those who used to consult (with the Council) are now feeling very jaded and bitter because the consultation was just a matter of ticking boxes. They (the Council) were told how to do it but they weren't interested in the answers. It goes deeper than not acknowledging local views, so deep that people don't trust the process. Now there are only six or seven people at the Ultimo Precinct meetings ...We realised we weren't being consulted. The Council was just trying to protect themselves so that they could say they had consulted. The (Mary Anne) park is a major example of consultation not being used. Three or four years ago they built the first stage of the park for \$700,000 or \$800,000. Nobody used it because it didn't have what they wanted in it. The locals bit their lip from saying, "I told you so". So they bulldozed Stage 1 and started again. So that's the best part of one million dollars of public money gone because someone didn't listen.

In Pymont, the Precinct Committee disbanded some time ago, but the Council holds a meeting on the first Tuesday of every month. The meetings are fairly well-attended. Residents who attend estimate that up to 50 residents go to these meetings. The meeting is chaired by Frank Sartor, the Lord Mayor.

### **1.3 The smoke stack and pollution**

Usually, community organisation is activated and maintained by an issue, which many people in the locality in the area feel strongly about. In the case of Pymont-Ultimo,

the main issue in the second part of 2000, is the proposed smokestack, which the RTA wants to place in the region of Darling Harbour alongside the IMAX theatre. The stack is part of the cross-city tunnel project. Many residents are angry about the RTA's plan and have formed a group called the Sydneysiders Against Polluting Stacks (SAPS). One positive aspect of the RTA's plan is that it has united old and new residents and residents from Pymont and Ultimo. The SAPS are drawing 50 to 70 people to their meetings. Besides the threat of pollution, owners are also worried about what impact the stack will have on housing prices. SAPS is requesting that the stack be equipped with the best possible filtration equipment. Ms Bernice Dudley, a spokesperson for SAPs, said

There was increasing evidence that unfiltered stack emissions are a serious health risk. The state government would be guilty of neglecting its duty of care to the whole population if it allowed the construction of the tunnel to proceed without state-of-the-art equipment installed to clean up the pollution in tunnel air before releasing it into the atmosphere. (*The News, Pymont and Ultimo*, Issue 16, August 2000).

The RTA's cross city tunnel project manager, Mr Steve Arnold, has dismissed the fears of residents: "Treatment measures would make no significant difference to the emissions and extractors would add between \$5 million and \$10 million to the \$400 million tunnel" (Ibid). An elderly Ultimo resident who has been living in the area since 1939, said that he was worried about the stack. He felt that it was reminiscent of the government's historical lack of caring for the residents of Ultimo. He used the example of the powerhouse: "We had smoke from the powerhouses seven days a week". He constantly got bronchitis as a child which he blames on the powerhouse emissions and he feels that the community should do everything to make sure that the tunnel is not built: "The tunnel is a stupid idea. They shouldn't be encouraging cars. Rather spend the money on public transport" (Informant 3).

Already pollution is a major issue in the locality due to the large number of arterial roads that run through and alongside the locality. The pollution is accentuated by the density of the development. As John Hutchinson commented, "The high buildings create a canyoning effect and lock in lots of the pollution." In June 2000, Sheree Minehan was forced to leave Pymont because of high levels of lead in her one-year-old son. She was also extremely concerned about the new vehicle emission stack: "The State Government wants the peninsula settled by families but this proposed emissions stack would add to the unacceptable environment," she said. She went on to say, "It seems the Government is undoing all the good work carried out to develop an inner city urban utopian village." (*The News, Pymont and Ultimo*, June 2000)

#### 1.4 Inter-Ethnic Relations

The redevelopment of Pymont-Ultimo has led to an increase in the level of ethnic diversity in the area. The 1996 census found that only 55 per cent of the population was Australian born and there was a significant number of residents who hailed from either China, Indonesia, Britain or Korea. It is difficult to make any definitive statement as to the degree or nature of inter-ethnic relations. On the surface it appeared that while there is not a great deal of mixing there is little overt hostility. The

seniors club at the Ultimo Community Centre is solely Australian. David Cornett, the acting service manager, recreation and community services of City of Sydney, and who is based at the Ultimo Community Centre, commented that "the older residents don't like the shift (in the composition of the population)" A long-established Anglo Australian complained that "There's a very transient population here and I know this sounds racist but we're bloody Asianised [sic] here" (Informant 5). Lalita Lakshmi, community worker at the Harris Community Centre, felt that although overt racism is limited there is a tendency by the authorities to not take notice of the Chinese community.

At the local school, however, which is 42 per cent Asian ethnic group background, the principal, was adamant that there was no racism at the school and that the pupils played together with little or no notion of their fellow pupils' origins:

I can say with confidence that there is nil racism in this school. It is very harmonious. There is a long history of an Asian presence. Many Chinese families have long roots in the area and feel at home here ... About half of the Asian parents have been in Australia for ten or more years. About one third are very recent arrivals. The Asian pupils constitute a mixture of origins.

About seven in ten respondents to the survey were born in Australia, about one in ten was British, and a similar proportion had Asian origins. It is likely that the survey did not capture the true proportion of ethnic groups in the locality as limited English usage may have inhibited some Asian respondents from answering the questionnaire.

## **1.5 Crime in the Area**

Perceptions of crime differed markedly. Some people felt that it was a major issue while others were of the view that it was minimal. A common trend was for elderly residents to have a strong sense that crime had become a serious concern and its severity was far in excess of what it used to: "Crime was mainly territorial in the old days. Had the old policeman walking the beat. Also had the night watchman. Felt totally safe. I'm dead scared to go out at night now. People have changed." (Informant 3). He felt that not only was there more crime but that people were more violent. Younger residents tended to be far less concerned about crime. "I have not ever experienced any problem. I think it is more towards Ultimo and Broadway. I feel safe walking around. At night I walk around. I often walk home at midnight." (Informant 2). The president of the local Chamber of Commerce commented that business in the area has not raised crime as a major concern. He felt that it certainly does occur but it is generally late at night and in dark places. His wife did, however, witness the owner of the business next door to theirs been attacked by two men who ran off with his mobile phone. The incident happened at nine o'clock at night (Informant 6).

### **1.5.1 The casino and crime**

A common perception was that the casino had contributed towards crime in the area: "There's lots in the perimeter of the casino. It's a big concern ... Cars get stolen, petty theft. They can't get home and run out of money so they take someone's car.

I'm always nervous." (Informant 5). Break-ins into cars, the most common crime in the area, was invariably blamed on casino patrons. Informants noted that most break-ins occurred on Saturday night, the busiest night for the casino. Drug dealing was also viewed as being on the increase and was often associated with the casino. Mugging of casino patrons also occurred intermittently. A favoured spot for mugging is Union Square. The owner of a hotel that abuts Union Square had the following analysis:

Crime rate has escalated in the last year. With the casino there is a lot more night life and it is a 24 hour business. Muggings happen on Union Square. It is a real shame. The crime is related to the influx of people. People are coming in from the surrounding areas. People scavenging around the casino are a problem. Although crime hasn't affected my business, crime is the major issue that people in Pymont /Ultimo face (Informant 9).

After witnessing a few incidents he and the president of the local Chamber of Commerce wrote a letter to the Lord Mayor about the situation in Union Square.

There is a perception that over the last year the casino environs has become a base for drug dealing. A businessman whose premises are in the casino block, said that there had been a definite increase in drug dealing around the casino over the last year: "There are a lot of drugs around this area. I see the dealing around... employees of the casino and people using the casino are using drugs." (Informant 10).

Some informants also complained that there had been an increase in the number of brothels since the casino opened. Robert Black from the DUAP confirmed that "there's a growing demand and there's more of them in the area".

The widespread perception that the casino has led to an increase in the incidence of crime is illustrated in Table 10.

**Table 10. Casino has created more crime in area.**

	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	36	30.3
Agree	38	31.9
Neither agree nor disagree	34	28.6
Disagree	10	8.4
Strongly disagree	1	0.8
Total	119	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

The table indicates that about six in ten respondents were adamant that the casino "has created more crime in the area" and only one in eleven were sure it had not. Respondents living in close proximity to the casino were more likely to say that the casino had created more crime. Thus, 30 of the 44 respondents (68 per cent) in zones 2 and 3, the zones closest to the casino, strongly agreed or agreed that the casino had created more crime, in comparison to some areas in Ultimo where less than one third of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

### **1.5.2 The Housing Commission area and crime**

A common argument was that besides the casino contributing towards crime, crime was also committed by locals living in the housing commission areas. The veracity of this view was not possible to establish. A long-established housing commission tenant lamented,

They've stuck a lot of drug-affected people in the housing commission houses. It was much better when it was run by council. Some of the families are very rough. It is very difficult to relax in the park behind the housing commission now. If we have a 'barbie' they complain. (Informant 4)

### **1.5.3 Policing**

A widespread sentiment was that policing in the area was not adequate. There was a great deal of support for the sole policeman in Pymont-Ultimo, Senior Constable Rob McClennon, and his preferred method of patrolling the area, by bicycle, was viewed as very effective: "It means he can stop at any point and interact with people. The dominant view was that although Constable McClennon does an excellent job there should be more police in the area. As one informant said, "There's definitely a feeling that the police are miles away".

The police station in Pymont has been shut down for the duration of the Olympics and there is a fear that it will remain shut. Although many residents are concerned about this, there was also a view that it does not really matter as the Bay Street police station is only a couple of minutes away and that even when the police station at Pymont is operating, in many instances it is locked. "At least the police-station in the city is always open." (Informant 6).

Some informants felt that policing had become more visible especially during the pre-Olympic period. A local businessman commented, "Policing has improved. There is a bit more of a police presence. The odd patrol car is coming through. Mounted police are coming through." (Informant 10).

It appears that when there is a spate of incidents policing does increase when the number of incidents drops policing levels return to what they were.

### **1.5.4 The Casino and policing**

Only a third of respondents felt that the casino had attracted more police activity to the area. A quarter were adamant it had not. Close to half of the respondents felt that since the opening of the casino there had been an increase in private security, but interestingly, just over half either had no opinion or felt that private security had not increased in the area.

## 1.6 Business in the Area

One of the most significant changes has been the changing nature of business in the area. Whereas previously the area was dominated by industry and services linked to the wool industry and the harbour, the area is now dominated by high tech industries and associated services. Thus, the media companies, ABC, Foxtel and Channel Ten have located their headquarters in Pymont-Ultimo. At the end of 2000, Nokia, the mobile telephone company, is to move into new headquarters in Jackson's Landing. A major law firm, Thomsons, has moved into the area. To serve this highly skilled, high-earning work-force, many of whom also live in the area, a number of cafes, restaurants and delicatessens have set up shop and, especially in Pymont, the area has become a 'café society'. Another important customer base for the burgeoning café society, are the affluent empty nesters who have moved into the area.

The business people spoken to were generally very happy with the way the area has developed and their decision to locate in the Pymont-Ultimo area. A hairdresser who is situated right next to the casino and whose business is doing well, had the following observation when asked what changes had occurred since he was interviewed six months previously: "The growth factor. A lot of development is happening. A lot of businesses are setting up. The big drawcard is the location. In comparison to the city everything is here without being crowded." (Informant 10). He said that although more and more locals are trying him out, most of his clients walked to his business from the city. If they drove parking was not an issue as he had a "valet parking arrangement" with the casino. Although he was situated in the casino block, hotel guests and casino patrons were not an important part of his business.

All the business people interviewed mentioned the promise of continuing residential and commercial growth of the area as the key factor that initially drew them to the area and keeps them there. A hotel owner when asked about the positive features of doing business in Pymont said, "The growth is the big positive factor. There are more shops. It is more cosmopolitan. In 1987 when we bought the hotel it was extremely quiet. It was like a small village." (Informant 9)

Many residents felt that although there had been a burgeoning of cafes, the retail sector in the area was still undeveloped: "There are some good things about the new development. The transport, retail and coffee lounges. There's a choice of retail to encourage working and living here but there's still limited retail, lacking in fashion shops. Sure, there's Broadway, but it's far." (Informant 11). The major complaint of residents was the lack of a supermarket. For older residents who were generally less mobile and affluent, this was a big issue. The problem was intensified by the inadequate bus service between Pymont and Broadway.

## 1.7 Tourism and the Olympics

Most informants did not have a strong view on this topic. The business people felt that the impact of tourism on their businesses was fairly minimal. The men's hairdresser located in the casino building and facing on to Pymont, said that "tourists are not a big factor." He was not enthusiastic about the impact of the Olympics: "I think we won't be as busy. Regular clients won't be able to come in to the city. It will be a

pain to get into work and home again.” (Informant 10). Almost all the residents felt that the Olympics would create more congestion in Pymont-Ultimo, but most, just under three-quarters, felt that the Olympics will have a positive impact on the area.

The question of whether tourism “has made the area a more desirable place for you to live” evoked very dichotomous answers; six in ten respondents said yes and just under four in ten said no.

**Table 11. Tourism has made area desirable to live.**

	Frequency	%
Yes	68	58.1
No	49	41.9
Total	117	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

### 1.8 Traffic

Traffic was viewed as an issue by many residents. The survey indicated that about two thirds of residents felt that there had been an increase in traffic in the area. The increase in the number of residents and number of workers in the area were viewed as key reasons for the increase:

It becomes an issue getting in and out of the city. It’s only 5 minutes away but it takes forever. The old saying: “All roads lead to Ultimo” is actually true. Getting through is hard. It’s banked up from Fig Street to Harris Street. The Harbour Bridge also, it all leads here. It really needs to be looked at (Informant 11).

Generally, the streets of Ultimo were viewed as far busier and inhospitable. About half of all respondents to the survey felt that not having enough parking places contributed towards increased traffic.

The increased traffic did have some impact on the everyday lives of residents. About one in three residents said that the increase in the traffic had made shopping and eating out more difficult and about one in ten residents said that the increased traffic had made participating in sport more difficult. Interestingly, about a quarter said that it contributed towards poor community relations and one in five felt that the increase in traffic had led to some friction with casino patrons. Possibly the most disturbing finding as to impact of increased traffic in Pymont-Ultimo, is that 44% of residents said that it has contributed towards road rage although this term was not defined.

#### 1.8.1 The Casino and traffic

About two thirds of residents felt that since the casino had started its operations, traffic in the area had increased. Respondents who lived near the casino were far



more likely to answer affirmatively to this question. Thus in zones 2 and 3 which are near the casino, 38 of the 43 respondents in these areas (88 per cent) said that the casino had contributed towards an increase in traffic, whereas in zones 1 and 6 which are in Ultimo, only eight of the 23 respondents in these two areas (34,8 per cent) attributed an increase to the casino. About a quarter of respondents felt that the design of the access to the casino was poor and that this contributed towards traffic problems in the area. Over half of the respondents felt that outsiders cruising in the area and the influx of casino patrons contributed towards traffic congestion.

One in four respondents felt that the increase in the traffic since the opening of the casino had contributed to delays in public transport and about one in five felt that public transport was now overcrowded due to the casino. Almost all of those residents who answered that there had been an increase in traffic due to the casino, said that there had been an increase in traffic noise.

The common perception was that the casino increased traffic only at certain times. Thus, very few respondents felt that the casino contributed towards changed traffic conditions on weekday mornings and afternoons, but half of the respondents who felt that the casino had contributed towards increased traffic felt that at night, during the week, the casino did contribute towards changes in the traffic conditions. About a quarter felt that during the day at peak hour the casino contributed towards changed traffic conditions. The main change, however, occurred on Saturday night. Almost all of the respondents who felt that the casino had led to increased traffic agreed that on Saturday night the casino has a noticeable impact on traffic conditions.

### 1.8.2 Parking

A much bigger issue, however, for many residents is parking. The feeling was that the authorities had completely overestimated the extent to which residents would renounce car ownership. Based on the notion that many residents would decide not to purchase a car, many of the early developments provided far too few parking spots forcing residents to use the surrounding streets. The building of the casino and the continuing influx of business and residential development has worsened the parking situation. The Council has partially resolved the problem by issuing residents, resident's stickers, and giving each household one visitor's sticker. The issuing of these has not resolved all problems. A resident explains a couple of the key issues:

You only get a resident sticker if you don't have a spot, so if you live in a flat and have a spot, you don't get a sticker, so when you go to the chemist or to the doctor, you don't have a sticker. Also, you may get an Area 14 sticker as opposed to an Area 20, and the doctor may be in Area 20 when you have an Area 14 sticker! ... You have to pay to go to Pymont Park if you live in a flat in Ultimo or somewhere with different stickers. (Informant 12).

For businesses, according to the President of the local Chamber of Commerce, Rohan Hankinson, and other informants, parking is a major problem:

For businesses in this area the number one problem is parking. This part of Harris Street from Pymont Bridge Road to Miller Street is designated

commercial and residential. Residents want parking but it is also a drop off for businesses. We do have business stickers. There is no easy solution but business feels that there should be a situation where the first 15 minutes are free.

There is no doubt that the parking problem makes shopping in the area more difficult and thus impacts on local business:

So you go to Glebe, to the chemist on the way home, where you can park for free, then the local businesses close down. It has a serious impact on businesses. It's real. The news agency, video shop - many go to Broadway for these things. If you can't just run the video back you can't support local businesses (Informant 12).

Mr Hankinson blamed the situation on the casino, arguing that the Council was forced to install 24 hour meters and levy a high metering fee in order to prevent casino employees and patrons from parking in the street the whole day. The survey indicated that just under half of all residents felt that the casino had contributed to an increase in illegal parking.

The constant development meant that business people were pessimistic about the parking issue being resolved. As one informant succinctly stated "more development leads to more activity which leads to more trades people, which leads to more demands on parking." (Informant 13).

## **1.9 Facilities in the Area**

### **1.9.1 Community centres**

There are three community centres each providing a range of services. The Ultimo Community Centre is the largest. It has six permanent staff and 3.5 casual staff. The Ultimo Community Centre is a well-used facility. In 1998 there were 73 000 visits or 6,083 a month. In 1999 there were 78,315 visits or 6 526 a month and in 2000 up to August there was an average of 7 436 visits a month. The largest regular activity is the provision of an after school service. This heavily subsidised service (users pay \$3 a week or one dollar a day) has 60 children. Another important regular activity is the seniors' club. It has about 20 members. An important generator of income is the hiring out of venues and courts. There is also a Chinese Cooking programme and a Chinese mothers only pre-school child-care group.

The Pymont Community Centre, another City of Sydney Council facility also offers a range of services. It is smaller than the Ultimo Centre and is more adult orientated offering programs on yoga, meditation, Latin American dancing and martial arts. It has about 2 500 visits a month.

At the Harris Community Centre, which is supported by Uniting Church Board for Social Responsibility, a range of support services are provided. Much of its services are orientated toward the migrant community in the area. It provides English classes and a Cantonese and Mandarin speaking worker is available to give assistance. The

Centre also plays a major role in facilitating community organisation. For example, it is a central player in facilitating community organisation in its fight against the smokestack.

### **1.9.2 The parks**

The parks in the Pymont-Ultimo area have been a hard fought for resource and appear to be fairly well used. The most recently opened large park, The Mary Anne Park in Ultimo, which purportedly cost over one million dollars to construct evoked a good deal of community involvement and controversy. Some people who were involved in the consultation process feel very let down by the final result and accuse the Council of not listening to them. John Hutchinson, former president of the Ultimo Precinct Committee explains:

It's very urban. People want a bit of the country. No more angular paved areas or lined up seats. They want random design. They did get something right. There's lots of grass and open spaces, but quality is important. A sense of ownership. It needs to be loved by the community. They need to say, "this is our park". A sense of propriety ownership - hasn't happened.

Lalita Lakshmi, from the Harris Community Centre, concurred with John Hutchinson. She said many of the users of the Harris Community Centre were not happy with the park, mainly because it has no shade. Clearly, substantial expenditure and scale are not the sole ingredients for a successful park. Some of the smaller parks in the area are very well used.

### **1.10 Darling Harbour and the Maritime and Powerhouse Museums**

The use and perceptions of Darling Harbour by residents were varied. Some residents were adamant that Darling Harbour was solely for tourists, while others were positive. One young resident described her use of Darling Harbour in comparison to that of the Powerhouse and Maritime Museums in the following way: "I use it heaps and heaps and heaps. Buy clothes, cigarettes, walk through it. It is a tourist attraction. Not really designed for day to day usage, but I use it a lot. I haven't been to the Powerhouse Museum or the Maritime." (Informant 2). In terms of attractions in the area seven in ten respondents viewed Darling Harbour as the number one attraction in the Pymont-Ultimo area. In comparison only four per cent ranked the Maritime Museum and six per cent the Powerhouse Museum as the top attraction.

### **1.11 Public Transport**

The area is served by buses, the light rail system, to a limited extent by the monorail and by train. Despite the numerous options, many of the residents are dissatisfied with the public transport system. The bus service was viewed as not regular enough and a major complaint was that from the top of Pymont there is no bus directly to the Broadway shopping centre. Ultimo residents also expressed dissatisfaction about the bus service: "The Public Transport could be improved. You wait a long time for a bus to the city, a 501 or 443. ... There's no shelter either. The buses are not regular enough." (Margaret). The former chairperson of the Ultimo Precinct Committee

commented, "We are two kilometres from the city, yet there are no direct buses to the city other than to the QVB. If you work at Wynyard you have to get two buses...two kilometres from the city!" She complained that "Ultimo has been forgotten. We only have the 501 and it's full of students so that you can't get on on the way to the city."

The attempts to improve the bus service have purportedly been hindered by the agreement between the City of Sydney Council and the company that operates the light rail system that no new bus services can be introduced in the Pymont-Ultimo area unless the light rail company gives its approval. In June 2000, the new 444 route to Broadway and Glebe finally started operating. It took two years for the owners of the light rail to agree to the new route (*The News, Pymont and Ultimo*, June 2000).

The Light Rail System is seen as a positive development but two problems were highlighted - the cost of the service and safety on the platforms. Many residents felt that it was too expensive and people were worried about security on the platforms, especially at night. The expense was a major issue for the older residents many of whom have limited disposable income. Lalita Lakshmi, the community development worker at the Harris Community Centre, said that the cost of the light rail was a constant complaint of the seniors group that meets at the Centre.

Alex Cramb, the editorial director of *The News, Pymont and Ultimo*, said that "there was always the promise of a ferry service from Jackson's Landing but that it is not happening".

### 1.12 Children and Schooling in the Area

There is now only one school in the area. It would seem that when the development was first conceptualised there was an expectation that the number of children in the area would be minimal. As illustrated, this expectation has not been met. Although the proportion of households with children is still small, especially when compared to the situation that prevailed when the area was mainly working class, it is increasing.

Mr Ironsides, the principal, felt that Pymont-Ultimo, although dense and high rise, had some very positive features for children and the school:

The quality of life in the area is good. There are a lot of facilities and a lot of development to come. Darling Harbour is a key development. It is a very popular spot. The Powerhouse is also very popular. They give us previews. The teachers use the facilities in the area. They also use the Museum of Contemporary Art. We are the only public school in Sydney City Council area so we are invited to a lot of events.

Most of the children walked to school. He did not think that traffic was a major problem for the children but was very concerned about the section under the freeway which he felt was unsafe and a "very unpleasant space". The unsatisfactory nature of the overpass area has been recognised by Council and a cultural planner, Ms Marla Guppy, has been employed to turn the area into a liveable, useable space. The Australian Council for the Arts has given a grant of \$25 000. Ms Guppy is working

with the children at Ultimo Primary and other community groups to help formulate ideas to improve the area (*The News, Ultimo and Pyrmont*, June 2000).

Mr Ironsides expressed some concern about drug usage in the area. He noted that there had been allegations of drug dealing under the underpass and in some of the parks: "Children are warned to look out for syringes".

### 1.13 The Casino

#### 1.13.1 Perceptions of the casino's contribution to the area

The casino evoked three dominant responses - unambiguous opposition, a muted could not care one way or the other response and enthusiastic acceptance. Some informants, more especially the long-established residents, were vehemently opposed to the casino being located in Pyrmont. A resident who was born in the area commented,

We hate the casino. It was such a silly place to put a casino. Slap bang in the middle of a residential area. I don't feel comfortable catching the bus to town. People associate one with the casino. They ask questions 'like did you win?' I don't like that (Informant 4).

A resident who has been living in the area for 23 years had strong views:

It's the sleaziest place you've ever seen, I wish it never came, I'm really angry about it ... "The Great Unwashed" I call them, go to the casino and Darling Harbour. What happened to the dress regulations that they used to have at the casino? You used to get stopped as a resident walking around it, not even going in, if you weren't dressed properly. (Informant 5)

A resident who has lived in Ultimo for 15 years said that there "was huge, universal opposition, both to having it and to the design ... There were city sites available, this would have been better ... It is a monolithic building, out of scale with the suburb." (John). Another resident who has been living in the area for 20 years had the following observation:

I don't go to the casino. It's so intrusive, the development. A waste of money. It should have been a park on the waterfront, beachfront even. It's money, it's a global thing. Voices of the community were not heard. There were 500 signatures on a petition in objection. Everyone was against it. It's too big. It built a wall following Darling Harbour. They turned their back on us. So did the casino. (Informant 12)

Some city officials were also critical of the casino's location and its impact on the area. Robert Black from the Department of Urban Affairs had the following assessment:

The casino is atypical. It was a Government decision. There are big endeavours to make it fit, which is an enormous amount of work. Have to look at surrounding uses and types of uses. It is a 24 hour entertainment complex in a mixed use area. Not sure ... how can you make it fit? It should have been in the CBD.

He felt that the impact of the casino on the daily lives of residents was not significant:

I think it's fairly inconsequential to residents. It's not repugnant. There are some noisy air conditioners on the outside of the buildings, and drunk people walking through, but the biggest effect has been on car parking on the street. It would be good to prevent people from circling the streets looking for a park. There's signage, off street parking, all trying to make it fit.

For newer residents the casino generally did not elicit much passion. Many said that they did not like the building but that they did not mind the presence of the casino. Many of the younger residents liked the fact that it was a 24 hour facility and that when they were bored they could always go down to the casino. Newer Ultimo residents, especially, because of their physical distance from the casino, were likely to say that they did not have strong feelings about the casino and that it played little or no part in their lives. For Pymont residents the casino had a more direct impact. One important impact was noise. Some patrons left the casino premises drunk and made a good deal of noise walking to their motor cars. The fact that the casino is a 24 hour operation is an important feature. It means that casino patrons often leave the premises early in the morning. If they are drunk the noise can be excessive. Pymont residents were also more likely to be the victims of criminal incidents committed by casino patrons. Interestingly, just under a quarter of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that "since the opening of the casino there has been friction between local residents and patrons of the casino."

The survey elicited a range of responses to the question of whether the overall contribution of the casino to the area has been positive or negative.

**Table 12. Casino's contribution to the area**

	Frequency	%
Positive	58	48.3
Negative	47	39.2
No response	15	12.5
Total	120	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

Just under half felt it had made a positive contribution while about four in ten said its contribution had been negative. The responses of respondents who live close to the casino were similar to the responses of respondents living in other zones. It suggests that a fair number of people enjoy living close to the casino.

### 1.13.2 Perceptions as to the design of the casino

The design of the casino also elicited an array of strong responses. Most key informants were critical of the building. The size of the building was the main criticism. One informant had the following perspective:

The building is too bulky. There's a little memorial there and it's totally overcome by bulk. It's the saddest vista. It says it all. You stand there and look

up. It's so insensitive. No respect for what's there. Even from their perspective, you'd think they'd take advantage of the location. There's none that's looking to the view. It's not a Sydney thing to do that (Informant 13).

Some informants felt that it was reasonable building: "I quite like it. I like the waves." (Informant two).

**Table 13. Casino adds to appearance of area**

	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	11	9.3
Agree	41	34.7
Neither agree nor disagree	17	14.4
Disagree	20	16.9
Strongly disagree	29	24.6
Total	118	100.0

Source: USRC Pyrmont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

While 44 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the "casino makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the area", 42 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The data suggest that the casino will continue to polarise the community. What is interesting is that few respondents in the zones abutting the casino, zones 2 and 3 felt that the casino building added to the appearance of the area. Only 38,7 per cent strongly agreed or agreed that "the casino makes a positive contribution to the appearance of the area".

### 1.13.3 Usage of the casino by locals

For some residents the casino was clearly an important part of their lives. The general feeling, however, was that only a small proportion of residents use the casino on a very regular basis. Also, a good deal of the usage is not for gambling. The fact that it is a 24 hour facility many people found very attractive. The people who used the casino were not necessarily enthusiastic about it. One younger resident described her use of the casino in the following way: "The casino, I don't like it really but I do use it. There are a lot of drunk people. A lot of men gawking. If we really don't have anything to do, we go there. I think a lot of people use it." (Informant 2).

About one in ten respondents ranked the casino the number one attraction in the area and about one in six strongly agreed or agreed that "casino patrons are settling in the area to be closer to the casino facilities."

Only one in four respondents said that the local population uses the casino regularly. Most had no opinion on the question indicating that they had no knowledge of the goings on at the casino.

**Table 14. Locals use casino regularly**

	Frequency	%
Strongly agree	4	3.3
Agree	26	21.7
Neither agree nor disagree	56	46.7
Disagree	22	18.3
Strongly disagree	12	10.0
Total	120	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

### **1.14 Perceptions of the Redevelopment of the Area**

Most informants were pleased that the area had been redeveloped. However, there was a good deal of criticism as to how the development had proceeded. John Hutchinson, a former chairperson of the Ultimo Precinct Committee had the following analysis: "In terms of urban form it's a disaster. As part of the Precinct Committee we tried but failed to get better form. The Land and Environment Court meant we couldn't." He argued that the Land and Environment Court constantly sided with the developers.

Another former chairperson of the Ultimo Precinct Committee felt that from a planning perspective a great opportunity had been lost:

I don't know anyone who opposed the redevelopment. We saw the need (for redevelopment). This is forgotten. The question is how? ...The opportunity's been lost. We have anonymous households. Even in Chippendale there is a variety of housing, not only Meriton. The same everywhere. They kept terraces, also in Erskineville, Alexandria, Forest Lodge. They're at street level. We fought for that style of development. Penitentiary style is what we call what we've got ... The result is a transient population. Anywhere with this proximity to the city is going to be transient, but you need a core group who call it home, and that's what we're lacking. Your needs are different if you're going to call it home. There's no storage aspect. Two-bedroom units are not going to encourage settling. We pushed for three-bedroom ones but they all became penthouses, so we pushed for them to be spread out over the whole building. Too little, too late though. You need variety in apartments.

Meriton-built apartment blocks dominate Pymont-Ultimo. They were severely criticised by some residents. One informant had the following assessment of Meriton: "The group who are dead against any change in the area are very much in the minority. There is however, a great deal of hostility directed against Meriton" (Jim).

John had the following observations on Meriton developments in the area: "The unit development is dominated by Meriton who has three for every one of other developers. They're defective and got much community criticism, but they all went through with only minor changes." He went on to argue that Meriton blocks are



generally characterised by "poor quality of design which leads to an absence of cross ventilation in flats, minimal solar access and low ceiling heights. They're built to conform, rather than to be lived in."

Narelle, who has been centrally involved in the Ultimo area since the 1980s, feels that some basic errors were made with many of the new developments. She lives in one of the earliest developments, a three-storey walk up with a garden along the side, which is open to the street. She feels the small scale and the style encourages interaction and a sense of community. People walk their dogs on the pavement and there's interaction between the terrace residents opposite and the three-story walk up. In contrast the newer developments have many more floors and units and are "solid, hard-edged with no surrounding garden". This architectural style, she argued, encourages little social interaction:

At least you walk in and out the doorway, you see the people opposite. Others you just drive in underneath. In ours, you stop at the letterbox, people walk their dogs on our side of the street because of the garden. The units are at street level... In the three storey, at least there's acknowledgment there. If you saw someone walking down the stairs with a TV set you'd know if he was friend or foe ...instead of hotel-style long foyers with 24 doors off a lift, and you have no idea if they actually live there, whether they're residents or burglars. Here, there's 'this is our home' feel ...

Sylvia, the chief planner for a major Pymont Ultimo developer, had a very similar analysis to Narelle. She agreed that the designs of many of the developments are wrong and do not work but she blamed it on Council:

A major problem is the street edge design. This was made mandatory by City Council planners. Inspired by the European example - Paris, Barcelona, etc. Have the courtyard in the middle of the block. There are a lot of problems with this design. It gives the area a bit of a hard edge and I'm not sure that the courtyards work ... There is no softening of the street. Also in some blocks there are no shops. If the blocks were more back, there would be more possibilities for shop frontages.

She claimed that although the developers were uncomfortable with the guidelines they did not want to contest them: "The mindset of statutory planners is very rigid and one doesn't want to fight with them. It takes too much time. Rather just listen to them. The bottom line is as long as the units sell." The negative publicity of Meriton blocks led to a reevaluation of their designs and the use of outside architects. Sylvia thinks that this has made a significant difference and that the quality of the more recent developments in Pymont-Ultimo is better. She still feels, however, that "there should have been more terrace-type developments" and that the "Potts Point style may have been a better model. More tower like development surrounded by landscaped gardens."

The Department of Urban Affairs and Planning feel that their major development goals in the area have been achieved. Robert Black of DUAP argued, "It's remarkably successful in terms of urban consolidation. We exceeded our objectives."

He was also upbeat about the mix and the increasing number of retail outlets in the locality but expressed his concern about the area not having a proper supermarket. This is a concern shared by many of the residents, especially the less mobile.

Most informants felt that the development must stop as the area was becoming too dense: "Council have done a good job but development must stop shortly otherwise we will have to look up to the see the sky." (Informant 10).

Table 19 shows that close to three quarters of respondents felt that the redevelopment was positive.

**Table 19. Redevelopment has been positive**

	Frequency	%
Positive	87	72.5
Negative	24	20.0
No response	9	7.5
Total	120	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

### 1.15 Perceptions of the Quality of Life in Pymont-Ultimo

Despite voicing concerns, most informants enjoyed living in Pymont-Ultimo. They enjoyed the easy access, the ability to walk to work and to many facilities, and the increasing number of cafes and facilities. It does appear that Sydneysiders who elect to live in units in the inner-city are enjoying the experience. A 22 year-old female resident expressed this sentiment in the following way: "Pymont is really good because it's so central but it's quiet. It's a suburban part of the city. I love Pymont. Everything is here. I can walk everywhere. I just love it. I don't want to live anywhere else." (Informant 2).

The positive sentiments of Pymont-Ultimo are clearly reflected in Table 20.

**Table 20. How residents rated the quality of life.**

	Frequency	%
Very good	30	25.4
Good	58	49.2
Average	24	20.3
Bad	3	2.5
Very bad	3	2.5
Total	118	100.0

Source: USRC Pymont Ultimo Survey, August 2000

It shows that three-quarters of respondents felt that their quality of life in Pymont-Ultimo was good or very good. Only five per cent said it was bad or very bad. Where you lived in Pymont-Ultimo did not have any impact on how respondents approached this question.

### 1.16 Pymont versus Ultimo

Many informants felt that there were discernible and important differences between Ultimo and Pymont. A common conclusion was that Ultimo was the "poor relation" in that most of the resources had gone into Pymont. The example most frequently used to substantiate this conclusion was Harris Street. Harris Street in Ultimo is inhospitable and extremely busy, while Harris Street in Pymont is characterised by a relatively sedate traffic flow, large pavements, a lovely square, traffic calming features and, related to this, an array of outdoor cafes and restaurants. This is how the former chairperson of Ultimo Precinct Committee expressed this:

A big unresolved issue is the flow on Harris Street which is an arterial road. There is a huge difference between Harris Street in Pymont and Harris Street in Ultimo. It used to be the commercial spine of the area, now it's a run-down thoroughfare. No one bothers with frontage on Harris Street - back lanes are used instead. The biggest problem for the future is to bring Harris Street (in Ultimo) back to life. (John)

Another informant had a similar analysis:

Pymont is perceived as the wealthier area and the area that gets all the resources. Ultimo is the poor cousin. Pymont is traffic free, Ultimo you have traffic chaos. Ultimo in some ways has been destroyed by traffic. There is also the perception that developments in Ultimo are less prestigious (Jim).

Lalita Lakshmi, the community development worker at the Harris Community Centre, saw the split between Ultimo and Pymont as a major issue. Ultimo residents she said feel that they are being poorly treated in relation to Pymont. "Pymont is getting the developments with the nice views and parks whereas Ultimo is steadily being built up more and more. Many of the views have been blocked." She also saw the difference between Harris Street in Ultimo versus Harris Street in Pymont as a big issue for residents.

Sylvia, the senior planner, also felt that Ultimo had been "somewhat short-changed" and that resources like parks have not been distributed in a equal fashion. She could not understand why this had happened "as there was plenty of government land in Ultimo and Government could have ensured that adequate amounts of land were reserved for public spaces."