

## Transcript of Interviewee #3 (12/03/25)

**Interviewer:** Hello, my name is Jodie. I'm a master student at University of Sydney's School of Architecture, Design and Planning. I'm the responsible researcher for this study and will be conducting this interview. Thank you for agreeing to participate. Please note you can withdraw from this interview at any time, even when we're finished and if you withdraw your responses will be removed from the research study.

For this interview, I'm gonna be asking you some questions about what you think of the boundaries of Western Sydney when drawn on a map and what makes the region different from the rest of Sydney.

There are no right or wrong answers, and before I ask you the questions, um just note I have sent you a map called Map 1. There will be questions in this interview where I ask you directly to draw on this map and when I ask you to stop, uh, please send your version of Map 1 to me on the same day of this interview after we're done. This map is for you to look at and think about the key question - where is Western Sydney? You can draw lines, arrows, images, write comments or mark anything on this map to show where you think Western Sydney starts and ends. You can draw on this map at any time before the interview, which I will let you know, and you can make as many changes as you like.

So now I'm going to start the actual interview question component. In whatever way you like, tell me a little bit about yourself and where in Sydney you live.

**Interviewee:** Okay. Alright, um, well, I actually live in Western Sydney, Jodie.

**Interviewer:** Oh, that you would call Western Sydney?

**Interviewee:** That I would call Western Sydney. So I currently live in the Blacktown local government area. So I currently live in a suburb called The Ponds but I'm just about to move to Schofields, which is still in the local government area, so yes, I would very much consider Blacktown as part of Western Sydney.

The reason I would consider it part of Western Sydney is I actually worked - I started my career in local government at Blacktown for five years and so uh know the area quite well um in the context of the broader region. And then after I finished up there, I've been in sort of research and consultancy roles um for about 10 years and part of that sort of research and consultancy component has been focusing on Western Sydney.

One of my roles was focusing on research in Western Sydney, so did a lot of thinking around boundaries, and what constitutes a Western Sydney and all the different types of boundaries that we look at when we constitute Western Sydney; so I suppose that's where my interest um uh has been and continues to be in that realm.

At the moment, I am a consultant at an urban planning consultancy firm, private sector um and so I have been here for just on a year um now um and currently sitting in the Parramatta office today - which I would also consider Western Sydney – they consider it the Western Sydney office. So so yeah I still do a healthy amount of Western Sydney projects, in terms of development, and you have a have a continual interest in the region and how it's developing so um very happy for you to ask me any other questions, but that's kind of the spiel as to me.

**Interviewer:** No, no, that's good. What are the first four words that come to your mind when you hear or read Western Sydney?

**Interviewee:** First four, um, first four words. Okay, I think of um diverse in terms of the population. Culturally diverse in that respect. I think it's quite large in terms of the land area in which it covers. I think it, I think of, another word I think of is growth. I think it's going through an incredible growth at this point in time um and the other word I think of I suppose is um very urbis, I think of development, so I think of how it's developing and um all the different things um that are happening, like the airport out near Badgerys Creek um and then all the other different sort of precincts that are that are being developed as a part of of whole sort of region. So yeah, though those would be my four words just off the top of my head.

**Interviewer:** That's good. Yeah. How has your view of Western Sydney changed over time?

**Interviewee:** That's a really interesting question, actually. I think, um yeah, yeah, that's really interesting question. Um I think well, I think it's changed positively. I will, I will say that. So I think, I think, there is a big um there's always been a negative stereotype when we when we speak about Western Sydney. Um so, you know, it's sort of the 'other' Sydney when we think of it in compared to sort of eastern Sydney. Um and I think um certainly in my days at council working at Blacktown, there was still very much that stereotype. I still come across it every now and then in my work so I don't think it's fully –

**Interviewer:** Do you work with a lot of people who would call themselves from Western Sydney or not really?

**Interviewee:** It's a mix. It's a mix, but I think without sort of being very stereotypical I think, you know, people who don't live in Western Sydney have a particular view of Western Sydney and that that can that sort of continues to this day - not everyone, not everyone - I think a lot of people, do even, if they don't live in Western Sydney, they see they see the value and of of the area and and all the benefits that come out of it but there are some still some against of stereotypical views that people hold on to.

So I think I sort of started my career um very much with that kind of ment - not my mentality - but it was it was very present. Particularly in the media, in, you know, people

you dealt with, you know, Western Sydney was um the 'other', the other side of Sydney. I think now, um my view has changed for the better um in the sense that there is just so much happening in Western Sydney as time goes on, there's so much development, there's so much growth. There's a lot of work to try and, you know, bring it up to um to par with other parts of Sydney in terms of infrastructure and development and services, um that I think the story of Western Sydney is really changing in that respect.

And I think we need to uh I suppose promote that as much as we can um because, yeah, um that's certainly that piece around equity and having equitable access to services, no matter where you live, either sort of east or west Sydney kind of thing. I think that's slowly being closed um because, you know, there's been a lot of work and is still a lot of work being done to address that.

So yeah, I think my my view of Western Sydney over time is only growing more positively because I can see all the good things that are happening. um yeah, and I can only imagine that it'll only get better from here as well.

**Interviewer:** That's a really good segue because the second question I have is, what are your perceptions or associations with Western Sydney today? Well, what were there before? and then what are they now?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, I mean, I look, I grew up. I've born bred, grown up in Western Sydney. So it's kind of it's the only place I've ever um sort of lived and um sort of, I suppose, lived and played and all the rest. I mean, I suppose I've worked, I've also been in like, I've had periods where I've worked in Western Sydney, but that's not the case now like I kind of work in the city as well and that's only been in the last few years.

Look, I think my perception as a child, like just growing up um into sort of adulthood, I think you do kind of um feed into those stereotypes, like particularly if you don't if you grow up in sort of the bad, bad sides of sort of the area so you do see those sides, sides of things and and you can sort of um understand where where those mentalities come from but in saying that um I think that, yeah, as I've as I've grown up, my perceptions have changed.

One thing that I have always thought that Western Sydney, um, that is a strength of Western Sydney is its cultural diversity even since I was younger and now today. You know, I grew up again going to school in Western Sydney with a lot of different cultures and I think that's been a very positive impact on my life in terms of how I see people and interact people and particularly how I interact with other culture .and today now being as an adult, I still think the cultural diversity of Western Sydney is its strength. You know, we can tap into that diversity and make the region even stronger. So so some some perceptions I suppose, um have shifted over time, but others have sort of stayed the same if you know what I mean.

Yeah, and again, I think um I think just that the perception of, as I said before, that the the region is sort of the 'other' or the less than um than other sides of the um other sides of Sydney, for example, I think in - like for me personally that has that has definitely shifted. I think, like, Western Sydney's up and coming there's a lot happening and it's certainly the face of it is changing and so my perception of the place is, is one of, opportunity, not sort of going backward kind of thing.

**Interviewer:** Oh, I totally sympathise, I'm from also another part of Western Sydney with bad press. I'm from Canterbury-Bankstown, so the notorious for bad press, but it's always good to meet other Westies as well. I know you may or may not include me as being a Westie?

**Interviewee:** Oh well, I would actually, but anyway, we'll talk

**Interviewer:** It's a very contentious matter, actually. I guess it kind of comes into the last question of this section is what do you think makes Western Sydney a distinct part of Sydney?

**Interviewee:** Okay, that, that's, that's a good question too. Okay, so um again, without repeating myself, I think again, culturally, um it there's distinction so there's certain types of cultural groups where you'll find in higher concentrations in Western Sydney, than you will find in sort of eastern suburbs if you were to compare it to that. So I think, yeah, there's hundreds, hundreds of cultures represented in Western Sydney from all various backgrounds.

And I think you can't escape that. Um I think sort of socioeconomically there is um definitely a difference but then again, that is that varies across the region too. So I don't know if you've come across sort of the Latte Line in the sense that, you know, you have you still have real pockets of disadvantage in Western Sydney, but then you have it's juxtaposed pockets of high advantage. So it's, it's not sort of linear, but I suppose, um like at the moment, I'm working on a project down in the Macarthur region and a big part of that is sort of addressing the inequity in sort of jobs and being able to get into high paying jobs and providing high paying jobs close to home. So I think that, yeah, there's still, there's still that divide in the haves and the have nots.

**Interviewer:** Even within Western Sydney itself?

**Interviewee:** Even within Western Sydney, yes, but then if you think about it more broadly, if you compare it to the east, there's certainly, you know, there's still a lot of work being done to rectify that inequality, particularly around jobs access and employment, and and tapping into wealth, I suppose. So that's certainly, that's certainly another, another aspect of it.

The other thing, I think, just the other thing in terms of like access to services, should probably be mentioned, so definitely in the urban planning space, it's quite, like, well

known that, you know, lack of transport options, sort of difficulty in accessing certain services like health, and, um, cultural and arts and well it's getting better, um the disparity is actually quite well documented. So I think in that respect, um that should also probably be highlighted when we're talking about Western Sydney.

**Interviewer:** When you say arts, what type of arts?

**Interviewee:** Yeah, that's a good question. I was thinking more along the facilities lines of things, so like performing art centres, places where people can come together and do sort of cultural activities, and do performing arts, and all the rest. I think there was a report a few years back that was that sort of really highlighted that,

**Interviewer:** Ah yes, the Western Sydney University's State of the Arts report.

**Interviewee:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, so I think I was thinking about it from that perspective in sort of the difference when you look between sort of east and west –

**Interviewer:** Do you mean in terms of the like, just the sheer dollars of funding, or like the types of infrastructure, or the types of art that people in Western Sydney can enjoy from like museums to -

**Interviewee:** I think it's all of the above, Jodie, so I think I think, you know, if you were to look at the numbers and again, I don't have the numbers in front of me, but I think if you were to look at the, like the number of facilities, the funding that was provided, and you know the exposure to types of arts and cultural activities, you probably find, if I, you know, without, again, without having the data in front of me, that Western Sydney still lags behind.

In saying that, there's a lot, of there's a lot of sort of commitment at the moment to change that, like as you would know, there's they sort of building the Powerhouse out of Parramatta, they're, you know, redeveloping Riverside, there's new, new, newish facilities like HQ at Rooty Hill, you know, and there's there's others. So there's a lot of other different things that are happening to try and address that, um, and to kind of provide Western Sydney with the, with the facilities that are needed for those types of activities. So, yeah.

**Interviewer:** I'm just going to give you some time. uh to draw into a map, so, the question is how you would show where Western Sydney starts and ends today on Map 1, um and then when you're ready, uh talk me through your process.

**Interviewee:** I've got the word document open. I'm assuming I can use the Word

**Interviewer:** Yep, you can use

**Interviewee:** There's a draw function.

**Interviewer:** Feel free to like insert shapes, text boxes, whatever you need.

**Interviewee:** Okay, so, sorry, I'm, I'm drawing what I think Western Sydney is?

**Interviewer:** Yep.

**Interviewee:** Okay.

**Interviewer:** Oh, and feel free to share your screen as well if you want to talk through it.

**Interviewer:** Oh, sorry about that. Yep, that probably helps. Um, I'm assuming you can see I could see that already?

**Interviewer:** Yep. I can see that.

**Interviewee:** Oh, it's okay, I'm assuming a rough is okay?

**Interviewer:** Yeah, yeah. That's, uh, whatever you want it to be.

**Interviewee:** But anyway. That is incredibly rough and doesn't take into consideration the LGAs, um, but this is what I consider greater Western Sydney, Jodie, and I'm happy to clarify.

**Interviewer:** Do you think there is a difference between greater Western Sydney and Western Sydney? Or are they the same term?

**Interviewee:** There is, so it depends on the way you look at it, in terms of the work that I've done in the past I've very much looked at greater Western Sydney, which the general definition would be Hawkesbury to the north, Wollondilly to the south, Parramatta to the east with the addition of sort of Canterbury-Bankstown, due to amalgamations, and then sort of Blue Mountains to the west.

In saying that there are different boundaries that have been used so Western Sydney can also be - when people refer to Western Sydney, they can refer to more sort of the northern sort of Blacktown, Penrith, um Parramatta, Cumberland area. I've seen that kind of been used.

**Interviewer:** Where do you think that comes from? Was that just people's - like where does that come from?

**Interviewee:** I don't know that - where I've seen that probably the most being used is sort of more in education and health boundaries.

**Interviewer:** It could be the local district boundary.

**Interviewee:** Yeah.

**Interviewer:** I think it's quite defined that region.

**Interviewee:** And the reason I say that is then, then it's kind of like there's a very clear distinction between like those western Sydney area, like that Western Sydney area, and then separating it out from sort of southwest Sydney.

**Interviewer:** Which is massive.

**Interviewee:** Exactly. So I've had a lot of discussions with people in the past where they're like "southwest Sydney is not part of, like southwest yeah, southwest Sydney is not western Sydney" and I'm like "it is".

So there, there is a bit of a...there is a bit of a debate around that, so there are different boundaries that are used for different um purposes, I suppose. I've also seen in the health boundaries that they, they do often, um, add in Blue Mountains um when they talk about sort of Western Sydney as well. So yeah, it's a little bit different according to the different sort of boundaries that I have come across anyway.

**Interviewer:** What is your boundary made of? Like why did you, did you just draw on your professional experiences, or do you see your personal bounding logic?

**Interviewee:** I have largely drawn on what professionally I have used in the past that this is again very poor drawing but this is what I would consider based on the boundaries that I've used in previous work. And again, this encapsulates what I would call greater Western Sydney.

So yes, um in terms of personally, I mean, personally, this, this is not far from what I would consider whether your personal boundary it's not that far from what I would consider Western Sydney.

**Interviewer:** You can draw your personal boundary.

**Interviewee:** Look, it's not that far off from what I would consider Western Sydney and the reason I say that is because um you know, I have lived, as I said, I live, I've lived, and now live in the Blacktown area and then I've also grew up for a bit of time in the Blue Mountains. So like for me, um seeing Western Sydney as an extended area has always been sort of personally, for me, not a stretch.

So in terms of that, um another sort of contentious thing that I talk about, with sort of my people in my personal life, so, I um, I have a sister that lives in the Hills, like the Hill Shire -

**Interviewer:** Very contentious.

**Interviewee:** Very contentious, and she, she will swear to you blue in the face, that the Hills Shire is not part of Western Sydney.

**Interviewer:** Why?

**Interviewee:** I don't know why. I don't, I don't think she wants to have that label on her. So I keep telling her, "well actually the Hill Shire is a part of Western Sydney".

**Interviewer:** In some definitions, yes.

**Interviewee:** Yes. But I think, I think, that that area of that area of west I'm trying to be kind. That area of west

**Interviewer:** Oh no, be brutally honest. This is what's it about.

**Interviewee:** Well, I suppose that area of the Western Sydney, where it's sort of straddles between sort of –

**Interviewer:** North Shore

**Interviewee:** North Shore and Western Sydney is big in terms of how people perceive it –

**Interviewer:** Big cultural difference

**Interviewee:** And, and, how, how people perceive themselves living in that area is um -

**Interviewer:** How do you think that people from the Hills, well from your sister's example - what difference does she think she has living in the Hills as opposed to living in Blacktown back in the day?

**Interviewee:** I don't know. It might be a status thing if I'm totally honest, you know, the Hills is, is a better suburb than for example, Blacktown, and, you know, like so socioeconomically, um socially, um, yeah, it's so I think that's probably where it's rooted from. Um, yeah, and that might be why there is a bit of a hesitation to wear the label of Western Sydney, if I were to hazard a guess, so yeah it's interesting.

**Interviewer:** I'm about to send you another map because that links to next question. So this is Map 2 that you've receive in your inbox.

**Interviewee:** I'm gonna stop sharing for a moment.

**Interviewer:** It should be now when you get it. So, when you get it, Map 2 is exactly the same as Map 1 but it's a satellite view of the land and patterns of urban settlement. After seeing Map 2, does it affect anything about how you have drawn Western Sydney in Map 1?

**Interviewee:** I have received it, which is good. Can you repeat the question, Jodie?

**Interviewer:** Oh sure. Now look at Map 2 –

**Interviewee:** Yep

**Interviewer:** The map is the same as Map 1 but is a satellite view of land and open settlement patterns. After seeing Map 2, does it affect anything about how you have drawn Western Sydney in Map 1?



**Interviewee:** Um, that's a good a question. I don't think it affects um what, how I have drawn Western Sydney because I'm pretty firm in my views, if you haven't noticed, um but I think this one does show um it's it's interesting for me.

It does show um sort of the level of, I suppose, open space within what I would consider Western Sydney um which is interesting um it also probably highlights to me a bit more sort of the um employment and commercial areas that make up Western Sydney so really looking at sort of the Parramatta, around Penrith even, or you can definitely see the airport in this one, um, you can see the industrial areas around Wetherill Park and Fairfield. Um yeah, so I think that's that's really um that's really quite, um obvious to me when I look at this one again, doesn't really change the boundaries, but it just reinforces why they're sort of a part of Western Sydney.

I suppose just looking down south, so I'm just thinking, like I'm actually doing some work around Douglas Park, Wilton area, um again, that could be adding Wollondilly into the boundary is probably still a bit of a contentious - when I say contentious, it's probably not a done thing.

**Interviewer:** For your personal boundary or professionally?

**Interviewee:** Uh, professionally, I think it's crept in over time because, I think, that you know, particularly the Wollondilly area has become sort of an extension of the south-west, like beyond Campbelltown and Camden. So, um but I just I suppose looking at this map, it doesn't, it's not as not as developed, if I can put it that way, then all the core of the regions so it it does just point out to me that, that that area is going through a lot of change, that sort of Douglas Park and Wilton area, which will sort of eventually, I suppose, connect with the broader region. Um, but I have, you know, I have seen, I have seen sort of boundaries where, that is, you know, Western Sydney just sort of stops it Campbelltown and that's it. So, yeah, that's, that's a sort of a bit up for debate, but I still added in personally, in my in my work um, and still consider it Western Sydney. So, um, again, that that sort of south area just highlights the need for transport across the region.

**Interviewer:** Uh, we're reaching the end of the interview, but if you had any other comments, feel free to make them, um otherwise, uh, thank you for participating in your inputs.