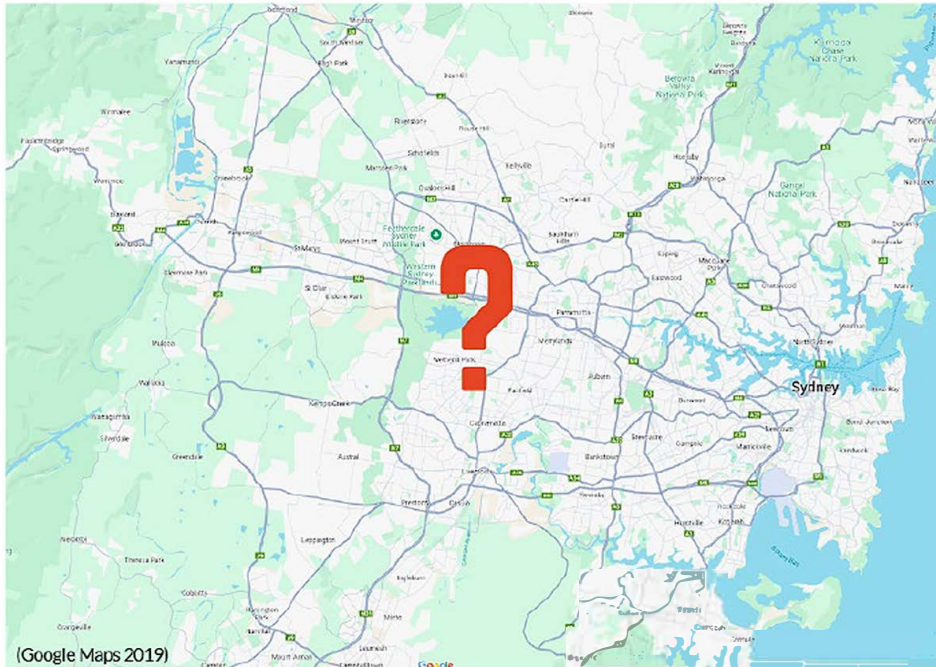


M I S S I N G

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS AREA?



‘WESTERN SYDNEY’

“Where in the world is ‘Western Sydney’?”

How identities and boundaries can shape urban inequality and segregation: an empirical experiment

Jodie Vo

A dissertation submitted to fulfil requirements for the Master of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Sydney School of Architecture, Design and Planning

Statement of Originality

This is to certify that to the best of my knowledge, the content of this dissertation is my own work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or other purposes.

I certify that the intellectual content of this dissertation is the product of my own work and that all the assistance received in preparing this dissertation and sources have been acknowledged.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	vi
List of Tables.....	x
List of Appendices.....	xi
Abstract.....	1
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	2
1.1 Background.....	4
1.1.1 City-regionalism.....	4
1.1.2 Spatial inequalities and ‘left behind places’.....	5
1.2 Spatial representations of inequality and segregation in metropolitan Sydney between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’.....	6
1.3 Bounding ‘Western Sydney’.....	8
1.4 Research problem: Who gets what and where in ‘Western Sydney’ in addressing spatial urban inequality and segregation in metropolitan Sydney?.....	10
1.5 Research question and objectives.....	11
1.6 Significance and originality.....	12
1.7 Overview of chapters.....	12
Chapter 2 Literature Review.....	13
2.1 Critical urban theory and its application to the research.....	13
2.1.2 With what critical lens to see “where in the world is ‘Western Sydney’?”.....	15
2.2 Conceptualising ‘region’ and ‘regional identity’.....	17
2.2.1 Concepts of ‘region’ and application to the research question.....	17
2.2.2 Concepts of ‘regional identity’ and application to the research question.....	18
2.3 The role of maps in representing spatial concepts and power dynamics.....	20
2.3.1 Maps as texts of power discourses and social construction.....	20
2.3.2 ‘Counter-mapping’: maps as objects of spatial resistance and alternative realities.....	21
2.4 Bounding practices of urban spatial inequality and segregation.....	22
2.4.1 The role of physical and spatial considerations of cities.....	22
2.4.2 The role of cultural, social, and symbolic capital in distinctions within ‘legitimate culture’.....	23
2.4.3 The role of institutions.....	24
2.5 A tale of multiple Sydneys: perceptions and images of ‘Western Sydney’ in the media.....	26
Chapter 3 Methodology.....	31
3.1 Approach.....	31
3.2 Research design.....	31
3.3 Reliability and validity.....	35
3.4 Ethics.....	36
3.5 Limitations.....	37
Chapter 4 Results.....	38

4.1	‘Formal’ boundaries – boundaries of public institutions.....	38
4.1.1	Impacts of NSW Local Government ‘Fit for the Future’ Reforms	38
4.1.2	Minister for Western Sydney.....	44
4.1.3	‘Western Sydney’ in metropolitan strategies and plans of Greater Sydney.....	48
4.1.4	Other boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ used by government bodies.....	62
4.1.5	Current state of ‘Formal’ boundaries	70
4.2	‘Quasi-formal’ boundaries – boundaries of self-identified regional advocacy bodies and local government groupings	73
4.3	‘Informal’ boundaries – boundaries of metropolitan Sydney’s residents.....	75
4.3.1	Survey respondents’ boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’	75
4.3.2	Individual maps and personal bounding practices of ‘Western Sydney’	79
Chapter 5	Analysis and Discussion	88
5.1	Power dynamics in cities through spatial boundaries	88
5.1.1	“They’re not us”: socio-cultural segregation in metropolitan Sydney.....	88
5.1.2	Who gets what and where in ‘Western Sydney’?.....	97
5.1.3	The role of boundaries in shaping urban inequality, segregation, and ‘left behind places’	118
5.2	Shifting public perceptions of spatial imaginaries’ boundaries.....	134
5.3	Citizen participation in mapping and implications for urban planning policy and practice	137
5.3.1	The importance of socio-cultural boundaries.....	137
5.3.2	‘Bottom-top’ perspectives of what spatial bounding practices matter	140
5.4	Schrödinger’s region: is ‘Western Sydney’ an institutionalised region?	149
Chapter 6	Conclusion.....	155
6.1.	Key findings	155
6.2	Lessons for Australian and international planning literature and practice	155
6.2.1	“The future of Sydney is Western Sydney”: towards as a new and critical focus in Australian planning literature	155
6.2.2	Implications for studies in urban spatial inequality	155
6.3	Research limitations	156
References	157

List of Figures

Figure 1 Metropolitan Sydney's current boundaries.....	3
Figure 2 The three dimensions of city-regionalism as a societal process.....	4
Figure 3: Searle’s hierarchy of planning outcome constraints	5
Figure 4: Multi-dimensional elements of ‘left behind places’	6
Figure 5 Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage, SEIFA by LGAs in Sydney, 2021	7
Figure 6 The “Latte Line” of professional and managerial employment distribution across Greater Sydney	7
Figure 7 Self-identification and belonging within ‘Greater Western Sydney’ residents from a survey commissioned by the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue.....	9
Figure 8 Sample of current boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’	9
Figure 9 Greater Sydney: a metropolis of three cities.....	10
Figure 10 Eligible WestInvest Local Government Areas, 2021 (annotated by author).....	11
Figure 11: David Harvey’s four strategies of ‘urban entrepreneurialism’	14
Figure 12 Pierre Bourdieu’s concepts of social, cultural, and symbolic capital	16
Figure 13: Anssi Paasi’s framework on the institutionalisation of regions.....	19
Figure 14: Comparative median houses prices of Greater Sydney by LGA, 2016.....	27
Figure 15: Greater Sydney’s ‘Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Concern’ during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021	28
Figure 16 Perceptions of spatial imaginaries of Greater Sydney by chicken shop distribution – Honi Soit (University of Sydney).....	29
Figure 17 Perceptions of spatial imaginaries of Greater Sydney – Tharunka (University of New South Wales)..	30
Figure 18: Structured thematic literature review	33
Figure 19: Spatial distribution of study participants by Greater Sydney LGA of residence	36
Figure 20: Metropolitan Sydney LGA Boundaries prior to ‘Fit for the Future’ Reforms and assessed ‘fitness’ ...	38
Figure 21: Proposed LGA Mergers (Inner Sydney).....	39
Figure 22: Proposed LGA Mergers (Outer Sydney).....	40
Figure 23: New Member Councils of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils as of May 2016 ..	41
Figure 24: Pre-‘Fit for the Future’ Visualisations of Socio-economic Disadvantage in Greater Sydney (left) and Non-Amalgamated LGAs (right), 2011.....	43
Figure 25: ‘Western Sydney’ LGAs defined by the Office of Western Sydney (pre-2016 LGA reforms).....	44
Figure 26: Excerpt of NSW Budget 2023-24 – Our plan for Western Sydney.....	45
Figure 27: Excerpt of NSW Budget NSW Budget 2024-25 – Our plan for Western Sydney.....	46
Figure 28: Excerpts of NSW Budget 2019-20 – NSW Regions + Western Sydney.....	47
Figure 29: Key strategic metropolitan plans of Greater Sydney.....	48
Figure 30: Cumberland County Council and its Constituent Local Government Boundaries	49
Figure 31: County of Cumberland Planning Scheme - Functional Plan	50
Figure 32: Prelude to a Plan – Sydney Region: Growth and Change - Population capacities in metropolitan Sydney	51
Figure 33: Prelude to a Plan – Sydney Region: Growth and Change - Geographic distribution of employment types across metropolitan Sydney.....	52
Figure 34: Sydney Region: Outline Plan 1970 – 2000 A.D proposed development of metropolitan Sydney’s ‘Existing Urban Areas’ (annotated by author)	53
Figure 35: Sydney Into its Third Century – Population Estimates for Statistical Subdivisions of the Sydney Region.....	55
Figure 36: City of cities: a plan for Sydney’s future – boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ and Greater Sydney’s sub- regions (annotated by author)	56
Figure 37: Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 – boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ and Greater Sydney’s sub- regions (annotated by author)	57
Figure 38: A Plan for Growing Sydney – boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ and Greater Sydney’s sub-regions by identified LGAs (annotated by author)	58
Figure 39: GSRP – District and City Boundaries within Greater Sydney (annotated by author).....	60

Figure 40 (left): Western Sydney City Deal - boundaries of 'Western Sydney' and Figure 41 (right): Greater Sydney Regional Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities – boundaries of 'Western Sydney'	61
Figure 42: NSW Health Local Health Districts in NSW and Metropolitan Sydney (annotated by author).....	62
Figure 43: NSW Health Metropolitan Local Health Districts.....	63
Figure 44: Extract of NSW Local Health Districts Wall Map.....	64
Figure 45: Extract of Committee Report – Total Annualised Budget per LHD resident.....	65
Figure 46 NSW Employment Regions used by Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) .	66
Figure 47 DEWR Greater Sydney Employment Regions by ABS SA4 Areas	67
Figure 48 DEWR Greater Sydney Employment Regions by NSW Local Government Areas	68
Figure 49 Variations in DEWR Greater Sydney Employment Regions by NSW Local Government Areas	69
Figure 50 Formal Boundaries of 'Western Sydney' defined using pre-2016 LGA boundaries.....	71
Figure 51 Formal Boundaries of 'Western Sydney' defined using current LGA boundaries	72
Figure 52 'Quasi-formal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney'	74
Figure 53: Extract of Online Survey Question 5.....	75
Figure 54: 'Western Sydney' as a ranked collection of NSW Local Government Areas by online survey respondents.....	76
Figure 55: 'Informal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney' as a collection of current LGAs by online survey respondents.....	78
Figure 56: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 1	80
Figure 57: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 3	81
Figure 58: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 5	82
Figure 59: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 6	83
Figure 60: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 7	84
Figure 61: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 8	85
Figure 62: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 9	86
Figure 63: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 10	87
Figure 64: Excerpt of interviewee sentiments of 'Western Sydney'	90
Figure 65: Interviewee Word Cloud – Top 100 positive (left) and negative (right) sentiments about 'Western Sydney'	91
Figure 66: Response to Online Survey Question 13	92
Figure 67: Characteristics of survey respondents who answered 'No' to Online Survey Question 13	93
Figure 68: Characteristics of survey respondents who answered 'Yes' to Online Survey Question 13.....	94
Figure 69: Examples of variations in 'informal' Western Sydney by survey respondents' LGA of residence.....	95
Figure 70: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Overall Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution.....	98
Figure 71: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Formal' Western Sydney (Western Parkland City) Boundaries	99
Figure 72: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Quasi-formal' Western Sydney Boundaries.....	100
Figure 73: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Central Core) Boundaries.....	101
Figure 74: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) Boundaries.....	102
Figure 75: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Marginal Fringes) Boundaries	103
Figure 76: Uptown Grant Program – Overall Distribution of Round 1 (2023) and Round 2 (2024)	105
Figure 77: Overall Uptown Grant Program Round 1 (2023) Distribution	106
Figure 78: Uptown Grant Program Round 1 (2023) Distribution by 'Quasi-formal' Western Sydney Boundaries	107
Figure 79: Uptown Grant Program Round 1 (2023) Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney Boundaries....	108
Figure 80: Overall Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution	109
Figure 81: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by 'Formal' Western Sydney Boundaries	110

Figure 82: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by ‘Quasi-formal’ Western Sydney Boundaries	111
Figure 83: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by ‘Informal’ (Central Core) Western Sydney Boundaries.....	112
Figure 84: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by ‘Informal’ (Marginal Fringes) Western Sydney Boundaries	113
Figure 85: Eligible LGAs - Western Sydney Culture Up Late Grant Funding	114
Figure 86: Summary of ‘Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late’ Grant Funding Distribution by LGA.....	114
Figure 87: Overall Distribution of ‘Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late’ Grant Funding by LGA.....	115
Figure 88: Distribution of ‘Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late’ Grant Funding by LGA by ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Central Core) Boundaries	116
Figure 89: Distribution of ‘Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late’ Grant Funding by LGA by ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) Boundaries.....	117
Figure 90: Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient for Greater Sydney	118
Figure 91: Greater Sydney Commission – Metropolis of 3 Cities: A Vision to 2056	119
Figure 92: Metropolitan Sydney Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA	120
Figure 93: ‘Formal’ Western Sydney (Western Parkland City) by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA	121
Figure 94: Quasi-formal’ Western Sydney by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA	122
Figure 95: ‘Informal’ Western Sydney by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA.....	123
Figure 96: ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Central Core) by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA	124
Figure 97: ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA	125
Figure 98: ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Marginal Fringes) by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA	126
Figure 99: Metropolitan Sydney – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO).....	127
Figure 100: ‘Formal’ Western Sydney – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO).....	128
Figure 101: ‘Quasi-formal’ Western Sydney – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO).....	129
Figure 102: ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Central Core) – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO)	130
Figure 103: ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO).....	131
Figure 104: ‘Informal’ Western Sydney (Marginal Fringes) – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO)	132
Figure 105: Word cloud of top 100 frequently used words for associations of ‘Western Sydney’	135
Figure 106: ‘Western Sydney’ as mapped by all survey respondents (Map A left) and by respondents who self-identify as ‘Western Sydney’ residents (Map B right)	136
Figure 107: Online Survey Questions 6a and 7a	137
Figure 108: Image Comparisons – Extract from Online Survey	138
Figure 109: Interviewee 10's Personal Map of 'Western Sydney'	140
Figure 110: City of Cities (2005) - Metropolitan Regional Plan for Greater Sydney	141
Figure 111: Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 (2014) - Metropolitan Regional Plan for Greater Sydney.....	142
Figure 112: Western City District Plan (2018) - Future of the Western City District (Western Parkland City) ...	143
Figure 113: Online Survey Questionnaire – Question 2 and Response	144
Figure 114: Online Survey Questionnaire – Questions 3 and 4	145
Figure 115: Responses to Online Survey Questionnaire - Question 4.....	146
Figure 116: Responses to Online Survey Questionnaire - Question 4.....	147
Figure 117: Top 100 frequently used words from interviewees mapping ‘Western Sydney’	148
Figure 118: Online Survey – Question 1 and Response	149

Figure 119: Example of institutional 'Western Sydney' regional consciousness 152
Figure 120: Online Survey Questions 18 and 19 and Responses 153

List of Tables

Table 1: Overview comparing multiple 'Western Sydneys' within metropolitan Sydney	8
Table 2: Boundary categories and corresponding regionalisation principles.....	18
Table 3: Overview of Western Sydney and South Western Sydney LHDs	65
Table 4: Summary of key 'Western Sydney' regional advocacy bodies.....	73
Table 5: Ranking of metropolitan Sydney LGAs selected as 'Western Sydney' by more than 100 survey respondents.....	77
Table 6: Study participant sentiment comparison of Images 1 and 2 as accurate and complete images of 'Western Sydney' today.....	137
Table 7: Excerpts of survey respondents' commentary on Images 1 and 2	139

List of Appendices

- Appendix A: Metropolitan Boundaries of Sydney, NSW, Australia
- Appendix B: Human Research Ethics Committee – Approval Letter (HREC 2024/001479)
- Appendix C: Online Survey Questionnaire (Qualtrics)
- Appendix D: Voluntary Interview Participant Form – Online Form (Qualtrics)
- Appendix E: Raffle Entry & Study Summary Form – Online Form (Qualtrics)
- Appendix F: Qualtrics XM to Microsoft Power BI – Metropolitan Sydney LGA Mapping Questions Index
- Appendix G: Participant Consent Form (Interview)
- Appendix H: Participant Information Statement (Interview)
- Appendix I: Semi-structured Interview Questions and Mapping Exercise (Interviewees 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10)
- Appendix J: Study Advertisement (One-pager)
- Appendix K: Study Advertisement (Poster)
- Appendix L: Email Invitation Template – Local Councils (Greater Western Sydney)
- Appendix M: Email Invitation Template – Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue
- Appendix N: Email Invitation Template – Centre for Western Sydney
- Appendix O: Email Invitation Template – Planning Institute of Australia (NSW Branch)
- Appendix P: Approval of r/Sydney reddit Post Request
- Appendix Q: Exported Online Survey Questionnaire Qualtrics XM data set (1 April 2025)
- Appendix R: Example of mapping visualisation method (Microsoft Power BI)
- Appendix S: Example of Word Cloud visualisation method (Nvivo 14)
- Appendix T: NSW Local Health Districts Wall Map (NSW Health 2023)
- Appendix U: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 1
- Appendix V: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 3
- Appendix W: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 4
- Appendix X: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 5
- Appendix Y: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 6
- Appendix Z: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 7
- Appendix AA: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 8
- Appendix AB: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 9
- Appendix AC: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 10
- Appendix AD: Interview Transcript – Interviewee 11
- Appendix AE: Signed Interview Consent Forms (Interviewees 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11)

Abstract

Boundaries are typically used to determine 'who gets what' or how areas are governed but they are produced through social processes but what implications do lines on a map and identities associated with the people who live within them have in shaping inequalities and the formation of 'left behind places' in cities?

In Greater Sydney, Australia's largest urban region, 'Western Sydney' as an ambiguous spatial imaginary is shorthand for the 'other' part of the city – its working class, multicultural and multilingual populations, industrial-based economies, and high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. At time of writing, 'Western Sydney' is also in the process of being transformed into an economically productive region stimulated by significant government investment to redress spatial inequality in Greater Sydney.

This project investigates relationships between boundaries, urban inequality and segregation in the spatial imaginary of 'Western Sydney' and its various boundaries to examine the extent they shape or reflect spatial inequalities in cities, what differences in boundaries from institutions and residents mean, and how conflicts between boundaries are reflected in questions of regional identity.

This project's data was collected from current Greater Sydney residents through an online survey questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, and a review of published documents from government and non-government bodies. Collected data was transformed to produce maps, tables, graphs, and word clouds to visualise boundaries of 'Western Sydney' and elements of its regional identity.

The project found that multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' exist and are vastly different from each other in terms of geographic coverage, classification, and use. Institutional boundaries have the greater degree of variation while resident boundaries are the most accurate in capturing the 'spatial footprint' of socio-economic disadvantage in Greater Sydney and their bounding logics provide a nuanced understanding of power dynamics, multi-dimensional urban inequality, and the changing characters and history of cities. Institutions' use of boundaries for resource distribution has been inconsistently applied and, in some instances, can mask or exacerbate inequality through funding/not funding areas of higher socio-economic disadvantage. Other themes include the importance of socio-cultural considerations and associations of regional identity in residents' bounding practices which contrast to institutional practices which are typically economically driven.

These findings indicate a need to emphasise spatial justice in institutional practices designed to address spatial inequalities in cities and whether resource distribution based on boundaries, and not inequity indicators, should be reconsidered. The findings also support 'bottom-top' approaches to spatial mapping exercises in observing multi-dimensional power dynamics in cities, and the degree to which institutional boundaries are accepted, can also foster greater civic engagement in strategic metropolitan planning.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Boundaries are used to delineate space in urban planning for statutory planning activities, resource allocation, or territorial governance but their production occur through fundamentally social processes 'linked effectively with...social and spatial division of labour, the control of resources and social differentiation' (Paasi 1998, p.15).

Tonkiss states 'urban inequalities are not only about who gets how much, but also *where* they get it...processes through which urban populations are sorted in space, [how] resources and risks are dispersed across it...are key domains for thinking about how inequality plays out in spatial terms' (2020, p.6). Processes of 'sorting' that maintain unequal status-quo are evident in practices like 'underbounding' in the United States where municipalities exercise powers to refuse boundary changes to include adjacent poorer, largely racial minority-majority neighbourhoods, leaving them without basic municipal infrastructure (Marsh, Parnell, & Joyner 2010) and no representation in local politics (Mukhija & Mason 2013). Critically examining intertwined relationships between boundaries, urban inequality and segregation is becoming increasingly important in the context of governments around the world engaging in broad-scale spatial planning to address challenges of contemporary capitalism, globalisation, and rapid urbanisation.

Spatial planning policies and practice pertaining to 'city-regions' – 'combinations of an urban core or cores, linked to semi-urban and rural hinterland by functional ties...[involving] a more complex governance structure, characterised by the horizontal and vertical coordination of numerous public and private actors' (Rodríguez-Pose 2008, p.1025) – have been established in Europe, the United Kingdom and increasingly in Australia. These regions are used for governing territories based on constructed imaginaries of agglomerated economies to unlock centralised funding, and drive productivity and economic development (Hoole & Hincks 2020), and exemplify dynamics between boundaries, urban inequality and segregation.

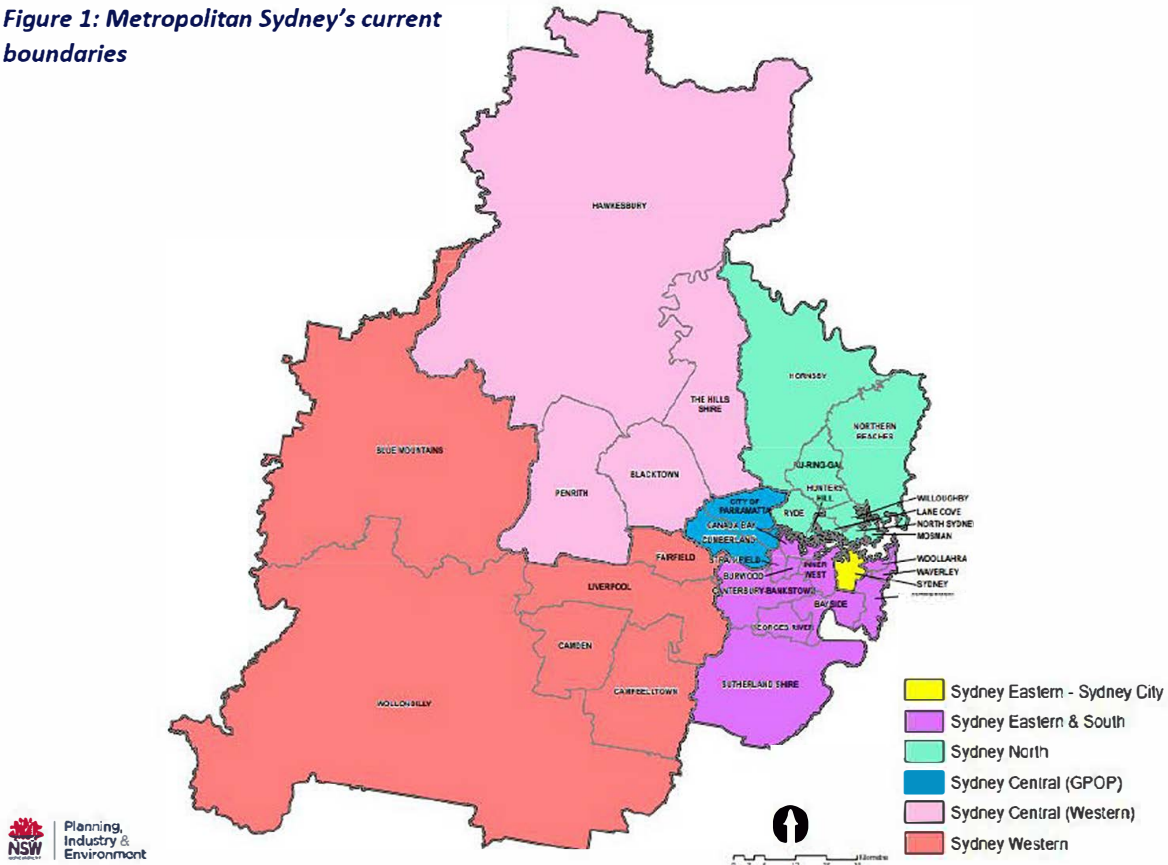
While the formation and development of regions based on constructed imaginaries is not new and remains a consistent feature of spatial planning (Hincks, Deas & Haughton 2017), existing literature has predominately viewed spatial imaginaries and tensions within them – particularly city-regions - from institutional perspectives (Granqvist, Humer & Mäntysalo 2021), 'top-bottom' construction and legitimisation processes in the context of national state interests (Jonas & Moisiu 2016) or, in reference to regional identity, conflicts between constructed imaginaries and historically and culturally shaped identities from perspectives of privileged political actors (Gherhes, Hoole, & Vorley 2023). This dissertation aims to contribute to existing literature in regional and boundary studies by providing a 'bottom-up' critical analysis of constructed urban imaginaries, their bounding practices, and what boundaries indicate as to how historic and existing urban inequalities and segregation play out in spatial terms.

"Where in the world is 'Western Sydney'?"- intertwined relationships between a city's internal boundaries, urban inequalities and segregation, and regional identity in the 'other' Sydney and burgeoning city-region

Greater Sydney - also referred to as 'metropolitan Sydney' - is Australia's largest urban region of approximately five million residents (ABS 2021c). Metropolitan Sydney is defined per Figure 1 overleaf (Appendix A), as a collection of 33 spatial administrative units called Local Government Areas (LGAs), used for municipal governance, defined by the New South Wales (NSW) Government.

Within metropolitan Sydney there is 'Western Sydney' – simultaneously 'Australia's third largest economy...[producing] 31% of [NSW's] Gross Regional Product (\$104 billion)' (Montoya 2015, p.1) and spatially and culturally considered the 'other' Sydney' (Gwyther 2008b) - home to large working class and marginalised multicultural and linguistically diverse communities (Poynting et al. 2004; Turner 2008), declining manufacturing and industrial-based local economies (Burchell 2003; Searle 2002), and high socio-economic disadvantage (Hodge 1996). While 'Western Sydney' has formal administrative boundaries and informal cultural boundaries as an urban imaginary, Hodge asserts that its constructed identity and stigmatisation, 'as disadvantaged rather than simply different introduces notions of empowerment and disempowerment' (1994, p. 35) has resulted in 'decisions to restrict delivery of ...services based on notions of innate disadvantage...[which] only exacerbate structural disadvantage' (1994, p.43).

Figure 1: Metropolitan Sydney's current boundaries



(NSW Government 2023b)

Despite extensive analysis of segregation and inequality in Greater Sydney – typically with a pronounced focus on housing (Randolph 2002), income distribution (Sarkar et al. 2016), and employment markets (Lee, Piracha, & Fan 2018), or in hyper-local case studies of vertical segregation (Kenna 2007) - there is little literature investigating the boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ and the extent its regional identity plays in reflecting or perpetuating urban inequality and segregation within the city.

As a specifically bounded territory, ‘Western Sydney’ is currently subject to city-region shaping policies as one of three cities of polycentric ‘global Sydney’ in the latest iteration of the *Greater Sydney Regional Plan [GSRP]: A Metropolis of Three Cities* (GSC 2018c) with its 40 year vision of integrated land use and transport planning and the *Western Sydney City Deal* (Commonwealth of Australia 2018), a 20 year multi-lateral partnership of Australian local, state and federal governments centred around coordination and delivery of Greater Sydney’s second international airport and associated infrastructure investment.

As an ambiguous urban spatial construct, ‘Western Sydney’ has generated a great quantity of literature examining its ‘otherness’ within state and national discourse (Collins & Poynting 2000; Turner 2008) and socio-economic disadvantage in comparison to broader metropolitan Sydney (Gwyther 2008b; Hodge 1994) but very little of its multiple boundaries and what they represent as spatial sorting processes.

This is a mixed method study which combines analysis of government and non-government ‘grey literature’, fieldwork with ‘metropolitan Sydney’ residents, and visualisations of the multiple boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ to critically analyse relationships between boundaries, urban inequality and segregation, and regional identity. In view of this introduction, the question posed by this paper’s title is not just an exercise visualising a city’s internal boundaries, but a broader one examining power dynamics in bounding practices which construct and maintain internal territories and the extent these practices reflect or perpetuate spatial inequality and segregation.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 City-regionalism

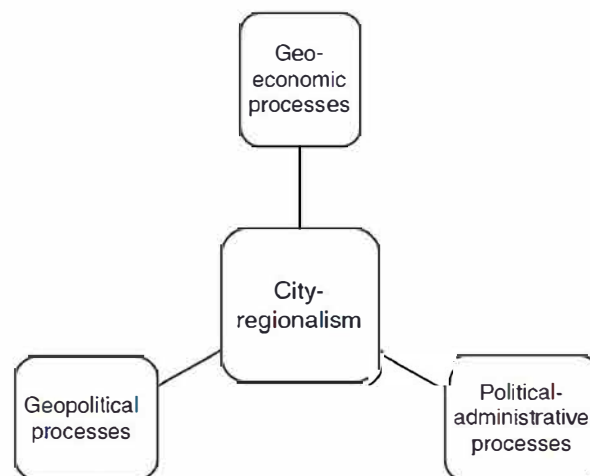
City-regionalism is ‘essentially, a socially mediated process of producing, maintaining and transforming space’ (Moisio & Jonas 2018, p. 288) and, with multiple state and non-state actors’ roles in transforming space into city-regions as self-sustaining economic units, may also be construed as political constructs (Jonas & Ward 2007; Sykes & Nurse 2021) which challenge existing and embedded institutional norms (Granqvist, Humer & Mäntysalo 2021).

Figure 2 visualises key dimensions of city-regionalism as societal processes briefly summarised below:

- Geopolitical processes: where territories are shaped as business units and economies by nation states to enhance authority of their international ‘global city’ and connectivity into the global market.
- Geo-economic processes: where territories are spatially shaped as functional clusters of economic activity and workforces conducive to self-sustaining flows of knowledge, learning and innovation.
- Political-administrative processes: where territories are spatial units as ‘both outcomes and mediums of politics’ (Moisio & Jonas 2018, p. 291)

Figure 2 The three dimensions of city-regionalism as a societal process

(Moisio & Jonas 2018, p.289)



Dimensions of city-regionalism indicate not only transformation of space but people’s interactions with the distribution, production, and consumption of capital as city-regions become sites where social processes are reproduced as the ‘politics of the everyday: work, living, access to services, right to public spaces’ (Jonas & Ward 2007, p. 174) are strategised and play out by residents and institutions.

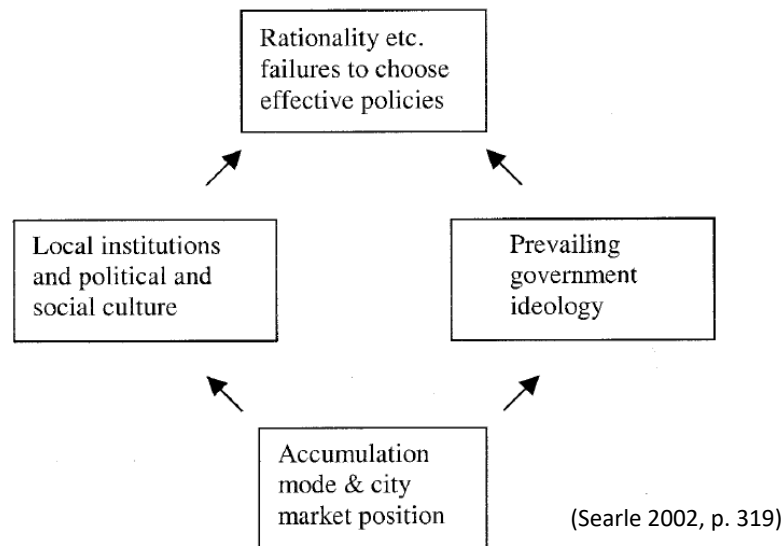
City-regions are prominent in the United Kingdom - 31 ‘city deals’ have been established since 2011 (Ward 2024) – in devolution of governance to local authorities to identify priorities and opportunities for economic development and improve local civic engagement (Sykes & Nurse 2021; Burton 2016). In Australasia, the Australian federal government has arranged ten city and regional deals – including the *Western Sydney City Deal* – modelled on the United Kingdom’s approach to infrastructure development (DITRDCA 2023) and New Zealand’s central government published its *Regional Deals Strategic Framework* in 2024 which outlines ‘Regional Deals’ as 10-year strategic partnerships between local and central governments in collaboration with the private sector and indigenous Māori organisations (New Zealand Government 2024).

However, critiques of city-regionalism note that the formation of city-regions as competitive economic units is assumed to be complementary in relation to resource distribution (Rodríguez-Pose 2009) and that spatial politics of capital consumption and provision within specific geographies may override politics of ‘city-region’ investment decisions - or as Ward and Jonas ask succinctly: ‘city-regions are optimal sites for redistribution: optimal for whom?’ (2004, p. 2131). And it is precisely the question that Ward and Jonas ask that this paper seeks to examine in part of the broader question of “where in the world is ‘Western Sydney’?”.

1.1.2 Spatial inequalities and 'left behind places'

Spatial inequalities are expressions of failures to achieve equity in urban planning outcomes (Searle 2002) and Figure 3 broadly summarises relationships between institutional, cultural, economic, and political dynamics that result in a mismatch of policy choices and spatially equitable outcomes for economic development.

Figure 3: Searle's hierarchy of planning outcome constraints



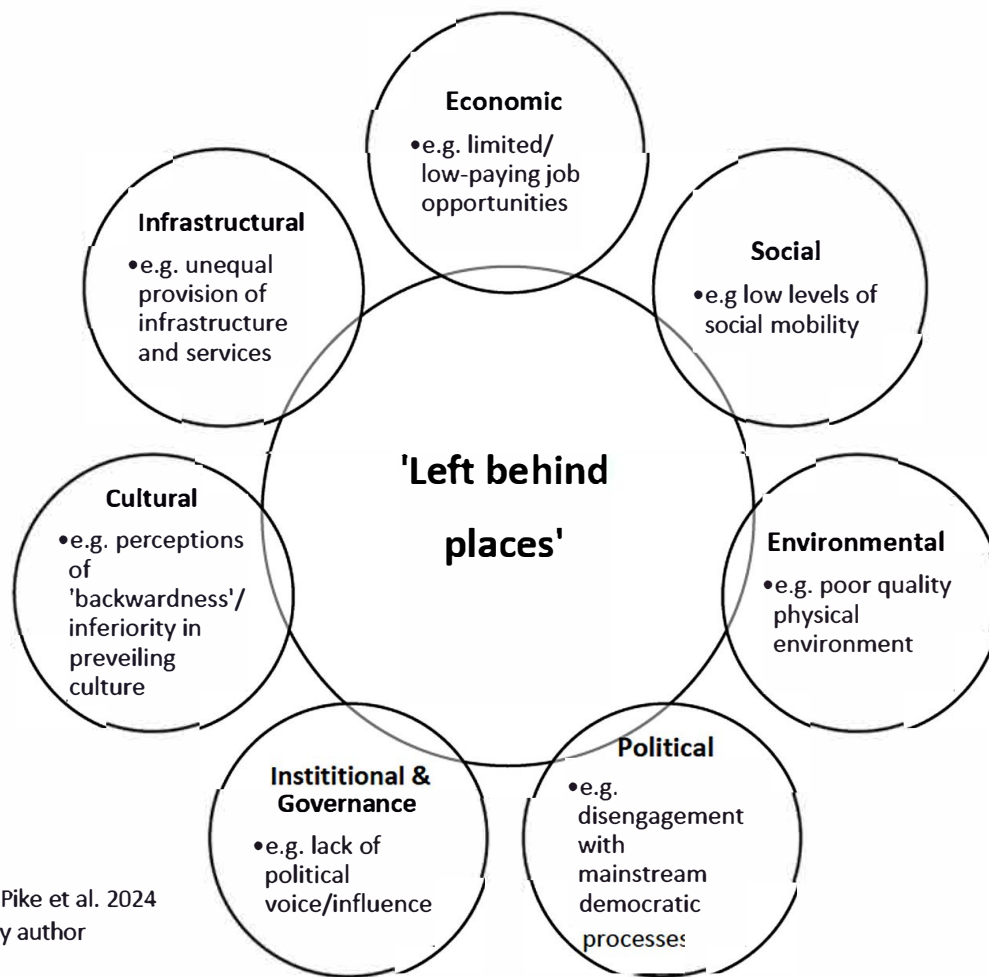
Spatial inequality studies have been on a marked increase in the global context of rapid urbanisation (Brenner & Schmid 2015; Wang et al. 2012), economic reconstruction and development following the 2007-2008 Global Financial Crisis (Pike et al. 2024) and their impacts on urban inequalities (Nijman & Wei 2020), and flow-on consequences for social cohesion and political stability (Iammarino, Rodríguez-Pose & Storper 2019). Regional studies literature is increasingly investigating urban inequalities and spatial justice dynamics beyond economic development considering the upward trend of political discontent and populist politics in geographies of discontent or 'left behind places' (Pike et al. 2024).

'Left behind places' are typically rural or formerly industrial areas associated with the following (MacKinnon, Béal & Leibert 2024):

- high rates of political dissatisfaction with 'cosmopolitan elites' and institutions
- declining economic performance and concentrated socio-economic disadvantage due to selective out-migration of the young, health and/or the educated
- dependency upon larger cities for provision of funding and resource allocation
- disconnect from physical and knowledge networks due to decision-making in political power centres
- stigmatisation through creation and reproduction of negative perceptions that invoke a sense or marginalisation in 'being ignored/ left behind' and long-term, entrenched 'regional embitterment' (Hannemann, Henn & Schäfer 2023).

'Left behind places' literature has predominantly focused on place-based economic solutions (Rodríguez-Pose 2018), like city-regions, but increasingly is taking a multi-dimensional view (see Figure 4) for a comprehensive approach to regional inequalities as processes of socio-spatial structuring. This paper considers that with strategic urban planning shifts towards city-regionalism, there should be a closer examination of spatial politics in cities which account for multi-faceted factors of urban inequality and segregation.

Figure 4: Multi-dimensional elements of 'left behind places'



Source: Pike et al. 2024
Image by author

Noting documented broad connotations of 'Western Sydney' as the 'other' Sydney, it has an alignment as a perceived 'left behind place' and this paper aims to contribute to ongoing investigations into socio-spatial dynamics of 'left behind places' as both defined territories and spatial imaginaries through bounding practices considering urban planning trends towards city-regions as place-based solutions to spatial inequalities.

1.2 Spatial representations of inequality and segregation in metropolitan Sydney between 'haves' and 'have-nots'

Informal discussions and representations of spatial inequalities and segregation in Sydney often refer to the 'Latte Line', a theoretical diagonal boundary with areas below it considered more socio-economically disadvantaged than those above. The 'Latte Line' was acknowledged as a conceptual boundary by the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC), author of the *Greater Sydney Regional Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities* (GSC 2018c), in its economic commissioner's statement before the plan's release: "we talk about the Latte Line...if you are north of that line you are largely a 'have'...if you are south of that line, you are largely a 'have-not'" (Saulwick 2016).

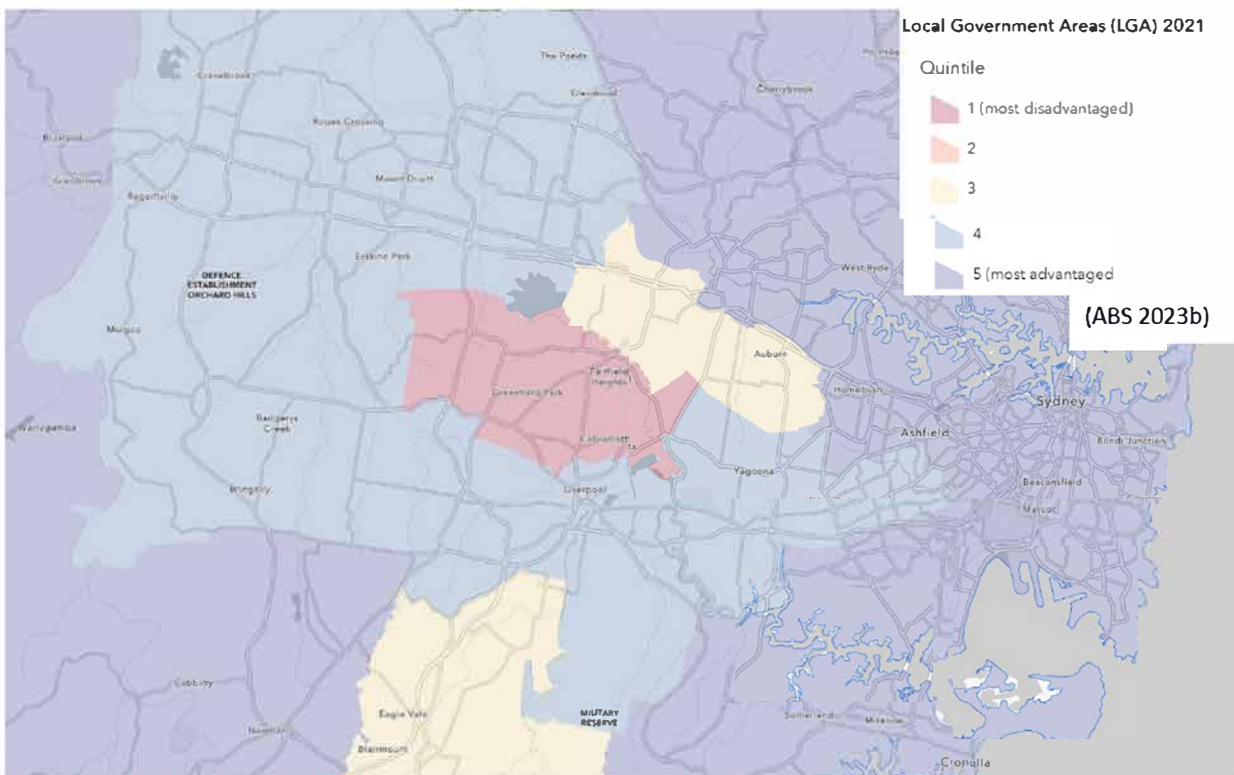
Figure 5 depicts use of 'the Latte Line' as a broad indicator of Greater Sydney's employment market segregation with darker areas representing concentration of managerial and professional 'white-collar' jobs. This is a single dimensional visualisation but many other variables, such as income distribution (Sarkar et al. 2018) and levels of tertiary education qualification attainment (Lee, Piracha & Fan 2018) align to produce the same hypothetical division.

Quantitative support for the 'Latte Line' hypothetical boundary is evident in maps produced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) (see Figure 6 for example), based on data from the national census of households and individuals conducted every five years (ABS 2022), which broadly defines advantages and disadvantages in 'people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society' (ABS 2023a).

Figure 5: The "Latte Line" of professional and managerial employment distribution across Greater Sydney



Figure 6: Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage, SEIFA by Greater Sydney LGAs, 2021



1.3 Bounding 'Western Sydney'

In Australian literature, 'Western Sydney' is typically associated with urban sprawl (Johnson 1997), varying degrees of urban inequalities and structural socio-economic disadvantage (Collins & Poynting 2000; Powell 1993).

'Western Sydney' has two formal administrative boundaries as:

- Geographic 'Western Sydney' indicated as 'Sydney Central (Western)' and 'Sydney Western' comprising of 10 LGAs.
- 'Western Parkland City' comprising of eight LGAs defined by *GSRP* (GSC 2018f) which align with the boundaries of the *Western Sydney City Deal*.

When viewed by self-identified regional bodies and institutions, like the Western Sydney University, 'Western Sydney' is sometimes called 'Greater Western Sydney' and comprises of 13 LGAs (Western Sydney University 2022; .id (informed decisions)).

Table 1 and Figure 7 overleaf illustrate differences between these multiple 'Western Sydneys' to show the extent of their geographic coverage of metropolitan Sydney.

Table 1: Overview comparing multiple 'Western Sydneys' within metropolitan Sydney

	Geographic 'Western Sydney'	'Western Parkland City'	'Greater Western Sydney'
Number of Local Government Areas (LGAs)	10	8	13
Land Area (km²)	8,715	8,089	8,982
Estimated Population recorded at 2021 ABS Census	1,763,370	1,154,718	2,606,544
Population Density (resident population / km²)	202.34	142.75	290.20

Source: .id (informed decisions) & The Parks n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c; .id (informed decisions) & Western Sydney University n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c

Evidently there are overlaps and conflicts in the three boundaries 'Western Sydney' shown in Figure 7 and even between supposed residents themselves in reference to a sense of belonging shown in Figure 8. Noting this, there is little mention in Australian planning literature in boundaries of various 'Western Sydneys' and their implications for metropolitan planning policies and practice in Greater Sydney despite the term's various applications to a substantial portion of the city's five million residents and its enduring presence as an ambiguous urban imaginary.

1.4 Research problem: Who gets what and where in 'Western Sydney' in addressing spatial urban inequality and segregation in metropolitan Sydney?

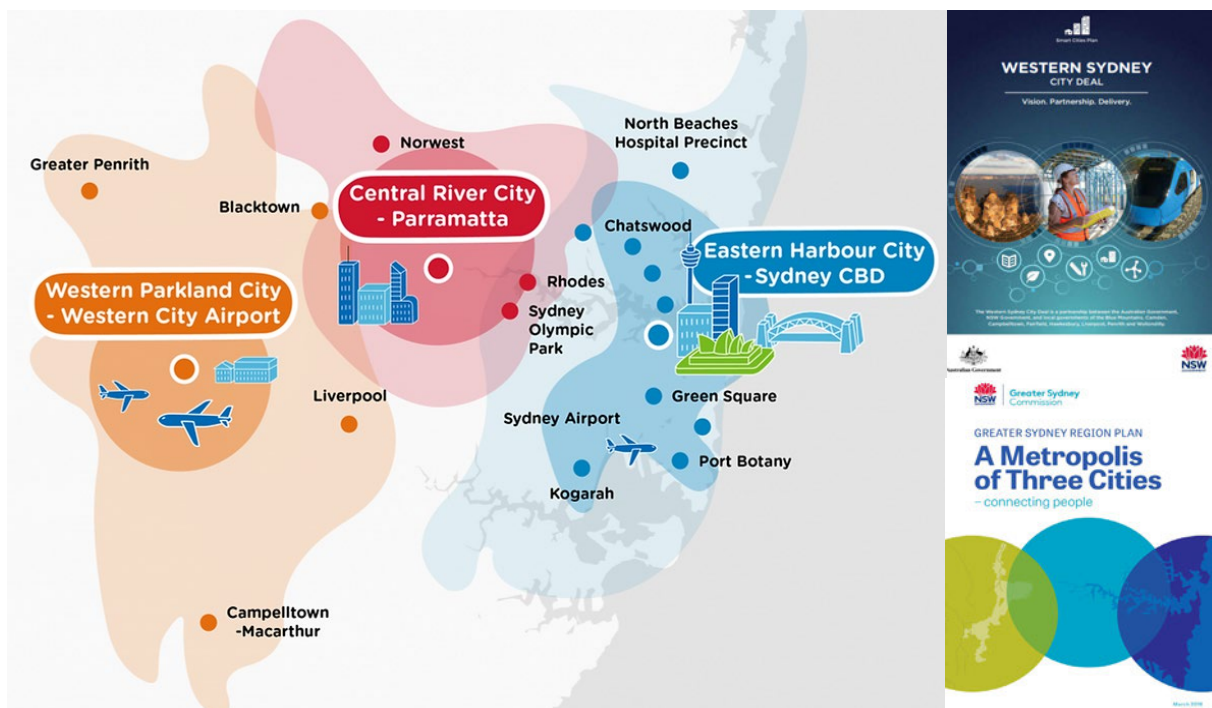
Institutional efforts to rebalance 'the Latte Line' has resulted in the *GSRP* positing 'global Sydney' as a polycentric city of three cities: 'Eastern Harbour City', 'Central River City' and 'Western Parkland City' (refer Figure 9) in conjunction with the *Western Sydney City Deal*.

The three cities are to specialise in specific internationally competitive industries:

- 'Western Sydney' as the 'Western Parkland City' is to have a strong core in 'freight, logistics, [and] advanced manufacturing' (GSC 2018c, p. 17)
- 'Central River City' specialising in 'world-class health, education and research institutions' (GSC 2018c, p. 18)
- 'Eastern Harbour City', home of the Harbour Central Business District, is 'Australia's global gateway and financial capital' (GSC 2018c, p. 20).

The *Western Sydney City Deal*, centred around the completion and economic impacts of the Western Sydney Airport, provides overarching governance with direct *GSRP* alignment of the spatial definition of 'Western Sydney' to stimulate long-term economic development and greater education and employment opportunities for residents.

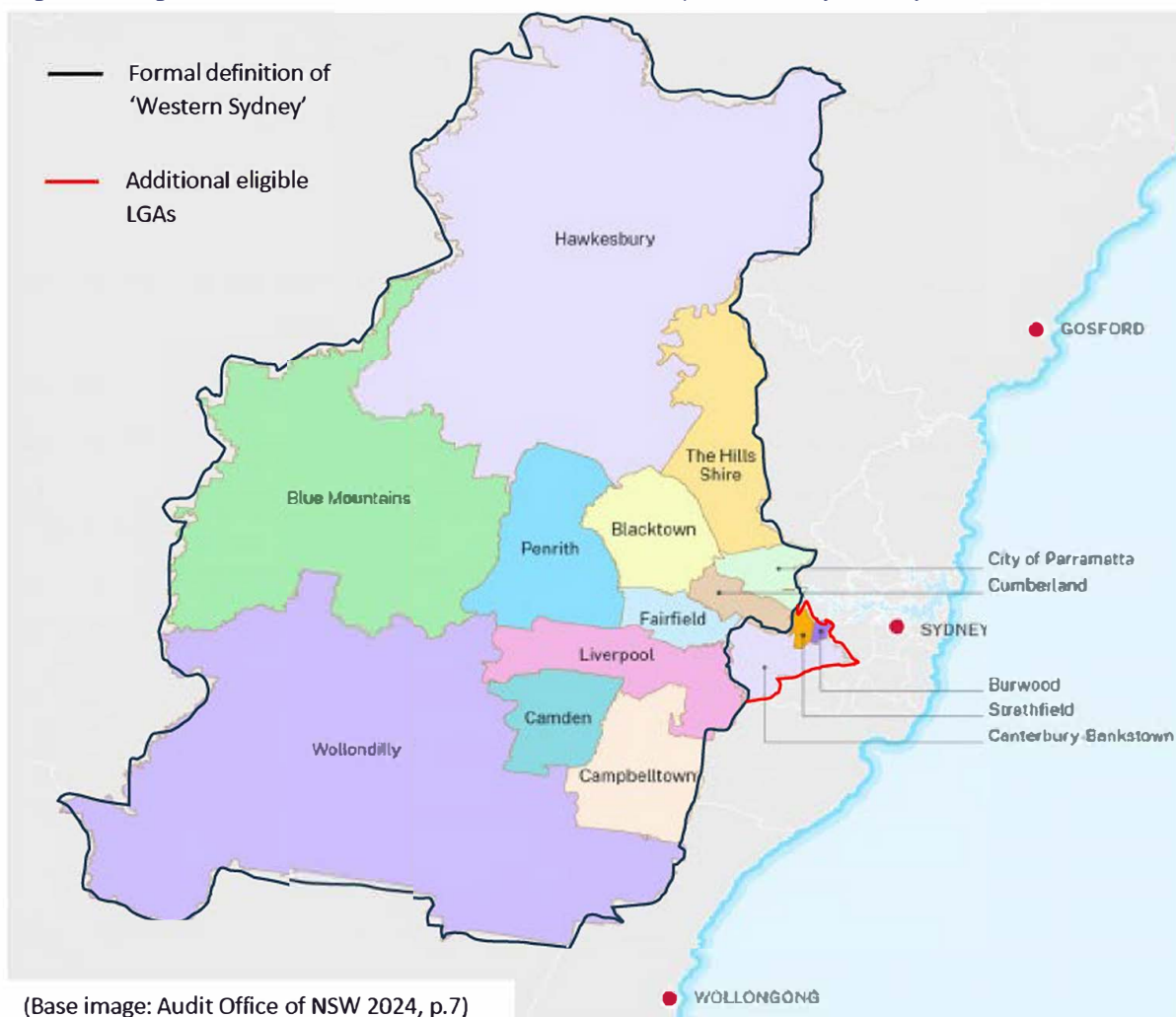
Figure 9: Greater Sydney: a metropolis of three cities



Clockwise from the left: GSC 2018c, Commonwealth of Australia 2018, GSC 2018c

However, government resource distribution to 'Western Sydney' has not been consistent with formal administrative boundaries - notably in the NSW Government's WestInvest program (later the 'Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program') which was a \$5 billion program funding local infrastructure projects 'to help communities hit hard by COVID-19 [and] create jobs, at a critical time, as NSW begins its economic recovery from the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic' (Audit Office of NSW 2024, p. 6). Within this program, 15 LGAs were deemed eligible for funding (Premier's Department 2022) and they included, at the time, the NSW Government's definition of 'Western Sydney' of 12 LGAs documented in NSW Budget papers (Audit Office of NSW 2024; NSW Treasury 2018) plus three additional LGAs.

Figure 10: Eligible WestInvest Local Government Areas, 2021 (annotated by author)



Considering ongoing government investment and coordination activities in ‘Western Sydney’ as a specific area bound by a ‘City Deal’ at time of writing, ABS data on socio-economic disadvantage, and the ambiguously imaginary of ‘Greater Western Sydney’ and degrees of self-identification from purported residents, critical analysis of the area’s multiple boundaries is important to examine the extent they reflect or perpetuate inequalities and segregation in metropolitan Sydney with regards to resource distribution and consistencies in government policy and practice.

1.5 Research question and objectives

This paper investigates how boundaries shape or reflect urban segregation and inequalities and, in using ‘Western Sydney’ as a case study, examines the following:

1. The extent to which perceived boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ align or conflict with formally defined administrative boundaries.
2. How conflicts between perceived and formally defined administrative boundaries are reflected in questions of regional identity.
3. The extent to which these boundaries perpetuate or reflect urban inequality and segregation in metropolitan Sydney.
4. Implications for citizen participation in spatial representations within urban planning policy and practice.

Mixed methods will be used to answer the research question and visualise boundaries of 'Western Sydney' in three categories:

- *Formal* – 'hard' administrative boundaries established by Australian federal, state, and local government policies, strategies, and practices to govern and distribute resources.
- *Quasi-formal* – 'soft' and 'hard' boundaries established by self-identified advocacy bodies and groupings of local governments bodies to influence decision-making.
- *Informal* – 'soft' cultural boundaries established by metropolitan Sydney residents formed by personal contexts.

1.6 Significance and originality

The paper does not aim to define a single or final boundary of 'Western Sydney', nor does it recommend methods for how to define them. Instead, it aims to contribute to and fill gaps in current urbanism literature, namely: how does a city's internal boundaries perpetuate or reflect inequalities and segregation within it?

This paper is significant in its examination of the multi-dimensional implications of perceived multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney', considering current multi-lateral coordination and significant investment in it as a specifically bounded 'city-region', for strategic planning, government policy and practice, and spatial representations of metropolitan Sydney and its internal boundaries.

This paper makes conceptual and methodological contributions to urban and boundary studies literature, particularly examination of boundary formation and maintenance processes, and regional studies, in its mixed methods approach to critically examine bounding practices in cities and their implications for spatial equity and planning policy and practice.

1.7 Overview of chapters

This introductory chapter provided context to the identified the research problem in the case of the boundaries of 'Western Sydney', namely: how does a city's internal boundaries reflect or shape urban inequality and segregation?

Chapter two is a literature review that situates the dissertation's application within critical urban theory and its contributions in the context of current literature in urban inequality and segregation within boundary studies, regional studies, critical cartography, and ends with an overview of media perceptions and representations of 'Western Sydney'.

Chapter three outlines the paper's mixed methods methodology. Chapters four and five detail results and analysis. Finally, chapter six concludes with a summary of key findings, considerations and lessons for planning policy and practice in the Australian and international context, and future research directions.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Critical urban theory and its application to the research

Critical urban theory responds to the question of “who has the right to the city?” (Harvey 2008) by asking ‘whose right is it about, what right is it, and to what city?’ (Marcuse 2012, p.33). The field and its scholars critique market-based and economic development-based stances in urban theory by

reject[ing] inherited disciplinary divisions of labor and statist, technocratic, market driven and market-oriented forms of urban knowledge...[and] emphasize[ing] the politically and ideologically mediated, socially contested and therefore malleable character of urban space – that is, its continual (re)construction as a site, medium and outcome of historically specific relations of social power’ (Brenner 2009, p. 198).

Conceptual foundations of critical urban theory were established by a generation of Marxist scholars – Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Manuel Castells amongst others - in the context of mass political and social movements and active political mobilisations of the 1960s and 70s in the global North (Rossi 2018). In contrast to the urban theorists of the Chicago School who viewed urban culture and dynamics of differentiation and segregation as ecological phenomena (Sennett 1969), these scholars did not accept the ‘politically neutral account of capitalist society’ (Rossi 2018, p. 1) and explicitly sympathised with left-leaning politics of their times. The influential text of contemporary critical urban theory, *Cities for People, Not for Profit* (2012), continues in this vein with explicit references to the Occupy Wall Street Movement and observations of continued institutional racial inequality in the backdrop of the historic election of Barack Obama as the first Black president of the United States (Brenner, Marcus and Meyer 2012).

Noting geospatial constructions of ‘Western Sydney’ in its multiple boundaries and perceptions as the disadvantaged ‘other’ Sydney, a critical lens is required to examine what bounding practices, and the boundaries produced by them, do in driving or reflecting inequalities and segregation in metropolitan Sydney; but in what form, if any, does the lens of critical urban theory apply? In acknowledging that critical urban theory has key foundations in the works of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey (Brenner 2009; Marcuse 2009), with their respective contributions to urban studies in power dynamics in cities between citizens and the state and urban politics under late capitalism, an examination of the applicability of the theory to this paper cannot proceed without examining Lefebvre and Harvey’s influential concepts.

Henri Lefebvre’s *Right to the City* (1996) and David Harvey’s *From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism* (1989)

Henri Lefebvre coined the phrase ‘the right of the city’, in contrast to the alienation of urban space from inhabitants caused by the city’s role in the accumulation of capital (Purcell 2002), as a call of ‘a transformed and renewed right to urban life’ (Lefebvre 1996, p.158) and desire for greater public participation in urban affairs management instead of token participation facilitated by society elites to obtain consent of concerned citizens (Purcell 2013).

Lefebvre’s ideal of the ‘urban’ as a space claimed by inhabitants’ ‘right to the city’ is one that replaces state-based urban administrators and managers with collective citizen power in a rescaling of democratic participation in a wider struggle for revolution. Even now, Lefebvre’s critique of superficial public participation in urban affairs is evident in contemporary planning practice seen in the primary conclusion of Mahjabeen, Shrestha and Dee’s examination of NSW Government community consultation for the *City of Cities* (2005) metropolitan strategic plan where ‘key policy objectives and provisions...were largely pre-determined by government elites and...public participatory processes were really there to give the Strategy a degree of political legitimacy’ (2009, p.59).

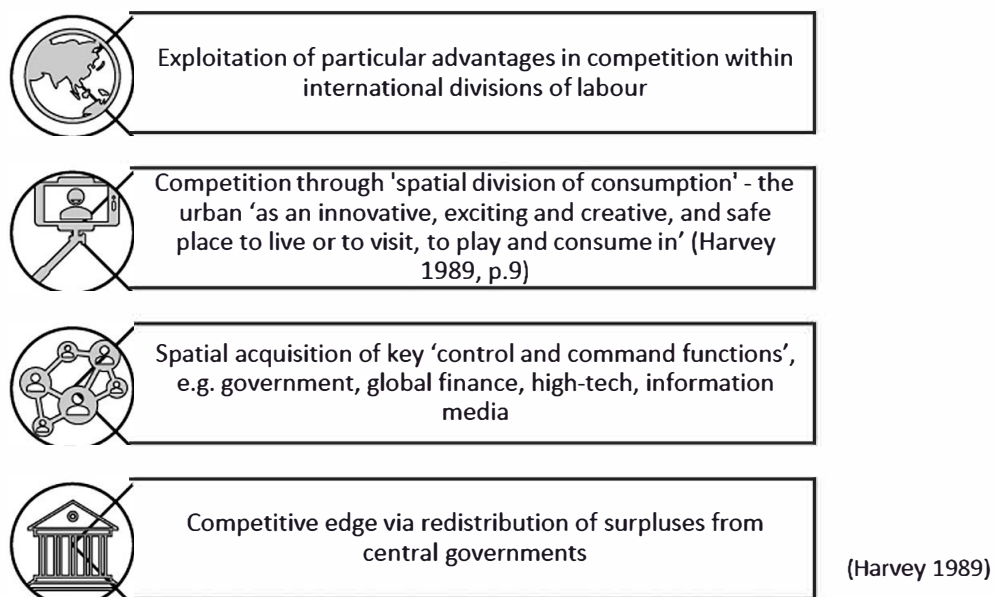
In contrast to Lefebvre’s radical and utopian view of the ‘possible urban’ (Purcell 2013) through collective democratic participation, David Harvey’s *From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism* (1989) viewed the city as a site of economic capital circulation and accumulation from a classical Marxist perspective. Harvey argued that urban governance transformed from

'managerialism', concerned with human and social services provisioning, to 'entrepreneurialism' as seen in the growth of 'private-public partnership' models for economic development and efforts to maximise the attractiveness of cities and urban regions in response to the prevailing transition from industrial to post-industrial economies and their associated 'deindustrialisation, widespread and seemingly 'structural' unemployment, [and] fiscal austerity' (1989, p. 5).

Harvey (1989) notes that spatial processes of urbanisation, particularly fragmentation of urban space and growth of decentralised forms, requires examination of 'entrepreneurialism' across spatial scales as it often involves 'class alliance formations' of property developers, financiers and business leaders, and coalitions of educational institutions and various layers of government. These types of coalitions are typically strategised in contemporary city-region frameworks and neo-liberal approaches to spatial planning.

As summarised in Figure 11, Harvey posits four strategies of 'urban entrepreneurialism' of metropolitan regions which stimulate 'intra-urban' competition for attraction and mobility of capital. Harvey specifically noted the success of any of the four strategies is dependent on the coalitions that have formed, mix and timing of strategies, baseline resources of the metropolitan region the strategy/ies are intended to work in, and the strength of competition.

Figure 11: David Harvey's four strategies of 'urban entrepreneurialism'



While Harvey identifies some critical perspectives in practice and implications for social processes and structures of inequality, notably differences between the 'mask of successful projects' and actual realities of unresolved underlying socio-economic problems (1989, p.16), they, and contemporary writings on urban entrepreneurialism, are largely class-based conflicts of economic capital flows (Peck & Tickell 1995; Wood 1998) and omit considerations of race relations or influences of post-colonial power dynamics, pertinent in the Global South and settler colonies of the Global North like Australia, in the transformation of urban spaces and their imagery to attract increasingly globalised flows of capital.

In the case of 'Western Sydney' and its ongoing institutional construction as a competitive city-region within polycentric 'global Sydney', it is clear urban entrepreneurialism, encompassing a degree of all four strategies, is viewed as a solution to redress inequalities in metropolitan Sydney for the bounded region's residents but this raises questions: to what degree do state-led boundaries motivated by urban entrepreneurialism align or differ from those formed by broader social and cultural contexts? What implications do institutional processes to induce intra-urban competition using boundaries have in shaping or perpetuating existing inequalities in cities?

2.1.2 With what critical lens to see “where in the world is ‘Western Sydney’?”

This paper’s examination of relationships between boundaries, urban inequality and segregation, and regional identity combines the theory’s central premise with an empirical social survey lens, where the voice of citizens becomes data which is analysed and visualised to explore the ‘politically and ideologically mediated, socially contested and therefore malleable character of urban space – that is, its continual (re)construction as a site, medium and outcome of historically specific relations of social power’ (Brenner 2009, p. 198) to facilitate a richer perspective of the research question and its objectives with respect to boundaries as social processes. Additionally, this paper applies a multidisciplinary lens encompassing facets of political economy, urban sociology, cultural studies, and human geography to enrich insights considering the complexities of the research’s scope.

Critical urban theory purports to critique mainstream forms of urban knowledge but it is important to examine how and where conceptual underpinnings or developments reproduce them in its objective to articulate struggles and wishes within the contemporary urban condition produced under capitalism. Examinations of urban conditions from diverse perspectives, such as Indigeneity, race, gender, and sexuality, are distinct and contribute to a multi-faceted understanding of urban space as historically specific contested sites of power. Oswin and Pratt argue, in discussing their engagement with Brenner and Schmid’s ‘planetary urbanisation’ framework that sees the urban as ‘a worldwide condition in which all aspects of social, economic, political and environmental relations are enmeshed, across places, territories and scales, crosscutting any number of long-entrenched geographical divisions’ (Brenner & Schmid 2015, p. 173),

We do not need a *new* epistemology of the urban... because we have multiple necessary tools to diagnose and work against the ills of capitalist urbanization [sic] at the planetary scale already. They are just sidelined and under-appreciated within critical urban studies (2021, p. 589).

Noting the multi-faceted nature of the urban condition, this paper integrates perspectives of diverse and marginalised contributions within critical urban studies as it is typically socially marginalised groups who are disproportionately impacted by bounding practices that exacerbate or shape urban inequality and segregation as seen in racial and post-colonial dynamics respectively in Du Bois’ (2002) examination of socio-economic segregation affecting Black American social mobility in the 1890s and Seale’s observation of the contradictions of ‘everyday iterations of Aboriginal identity’ (2016, p. 84) in Australian cities’ built form amidst ongoing displacement of urban Aboriginal communities through renewal projects in inner-city suburbs with significant Aboriginal populations.

In examining how a city’s internal boundaries perpetuate or reflects its own inequalities and segregation, this paper’s application of critical urban theory aligns with the theory’s proposition that it ‘should help deepen the exposé, help formulate responses that address the root causes thus exposed and demonstrate the need for a politicized [sic] response’ (Marcuse 2009, p. 194).

The ‘right to the city’ in relation to suppressed and latent forms of urbanism

One of critical urban theory’s propositions is to investigate alternate and latent forms of urbanism that have been systemically suppressed in cities (Brenner 2009) in the pursuit of Lefebvre’s ‘right to the city’ utopian view of democratic collective action. As stated in the introduction, the title of this paper is not just a question of spatial geography but geographies of power considering significant institutional efforts to address inequality and segregation in metropolitan Sydney – that is, who has the right to ‘Western Sydney’ and who does not? Does this right reflect or perpetuate existing inequalities and segregation? Who determines and maintains this right, and how?

Noting this paper has explicitly stated that its goal is not to define a single final boundary or methods to bound ‘Western Sydney’, it will engage in a broader discussion of the role of citizen participation in bounding formal spatial imaginaries and their ‘right to the city’ in the construction and reproduction of their city’s internal boundaries in informal spatial imaginaries.

A broader view of capital in power relations in the era of 'urban entrepreneurialism'

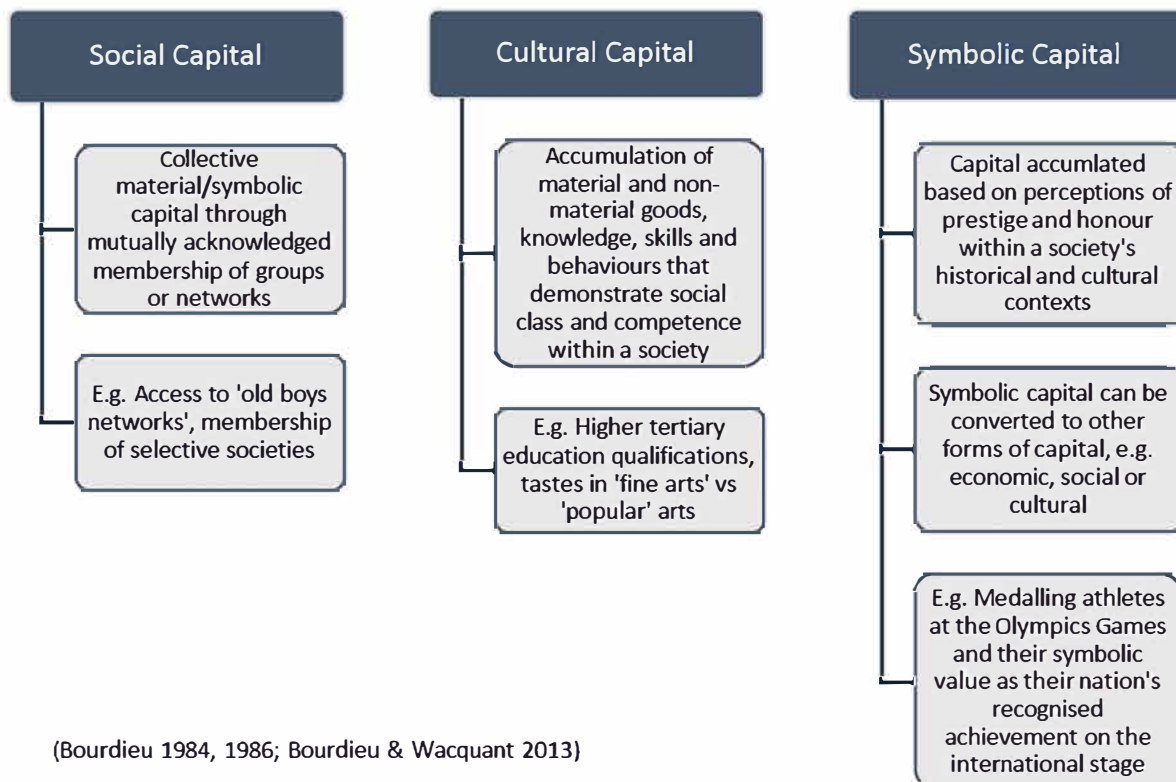
Within current urban planning orthodoxy, Florida's concept of the 'creative class' (2002a, 2002b), an economic class with distinct cosmopolitan socio-cultural lifestyle tastes whose members work in knowledge-intensive industries - as they 'do not own and control any significant property in the physical sense' (2002a, p.145) - has been internalised by cities in their pursuit of being a 'creative city'. Florida posits the mass concentration of the 'creative class', whose innovations and ideas are key drivers of post-industrial economies, lead to thriving and vibrant cities (2002b) and efforts from urban policymakers to cultivate these 'creative cities', including elaborate place-making and place-activation programs to attract creative workers to live, work and play (Scott 2006), and has a direct correlation to Harvey's second 'urban entrepreneurialism' strategy (refer Figure 10) which sees the urban as a space for social and cultural consumption (Harvey 1989).

In reference to this paper's primary question about bounding practices considering transformations of urban space for consumption as a survival tactic in globalised intra-urban and inter-urban competition in post-industrial economies: what cultures, lifestyles, and values are deemed worthy and attractive enough to be marketed for consumption (and conversely, which ones are not) and why?

With the backdrop of 'Western Sydney' as an administratively bounded 'city-region' and ambiguous spatial imaginary, critical urban theory's primary focus on a Marxist view of economic capital and central role of capitalism to 'politics of the city and urban life and its consequences for social and economic inequality' (Marcuse et al. 2014, p. 1905) does not allow for examination of other social processes that account for ongoing reproduction and maintenance of urban politics and bounding practices.

To complement the critical lens of this paper, Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social, cultural, and symbolic capital (see Figure 12), which are viewed as alternate expressions of power that can be 'reinvested' to back into each other or economic capital for further accumulation, will be used to supplement the analyses of social processes of differentiation which shape bounding practices of a city's internal boundaries with respect to inequality and segregation.

Figure 12 Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social, cultural, and symbolic capital



(Bourdieu 1984, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant 2013)

2.2 Conceptualising 'region' and 'regional identity'

This paper aims to contribute to an Australian understanding of regional studies and the construction, maintenance and reproduction of the concept of 'regional identity' within an urban context; noting this, the author acknowledges that a notable portion of literature cited in this section is derived from European and North American literature on nation-state and regional formation, and metropolitan spatial transformation. The use of European and North American literature in this paper has been influenced by an absence of Australian literature as studies on 'regions' and 'regional identity' tend to focus outward on perceived and projected national identity within the Asia-Pacific region (Dalrymple 2018; Walker 2010) or internally along broad 'metropolitan urban – non-metropolitan urban/rural' divides (Eversole 2016; Paül & McKenzie 2015).

As an interesting aside, a sizeable portion of Australian literature exploring issues within 'Western Sydney' / 'western Sydney / Greater Western Sydney', including those who note belonging from 'Western Sydney' as core findings (Butcher & Thomas 2006), tend to refer to the region in broad terms in relation to geographic distance from the eastern Central Business District (Gannon 2009; Ho 2012) with few exceptions using boundaries established by regional advocacy bodies (Lally & Lee-Shoy 2006; Stevenson 2018).

2.2.1 Concepts of 'region' and application to the research question

'Regions' have been an enduring concept in literature across many disciplines, notably in urban planning through revitalisation of spatial planning concepts such as 'new regionalism' (Wheeler 2002), political science in economic policy development (Maza & Villaverde 2011), divisions of governance (Brown & Deem 2016) and international geospatial relations (Paasi 2009), and in social sciences as complex social, economic, cultural and experiential structures and relations within space (Claval 1987). This paper considers that a 'region', for the purpose of responding to the primary research question, straddles all three of these broad disciplines as they are subject to transformative processes to meet multi-scalar spatial challenges of globalisation, urban development and governance (Rodríguez-Pose 2008; Moisió & Jonas 2018), and are complex sites where boundaries are continually constructed, maintained and reproduced by concurrent and, at times, conflicting 'top-bottom' and 'bottom-top' approaches.

In current literature, there are two distinct lines of enquiry on the concept of a 'region' delineated by Marek (2022) as the 'European tradition' which sees regions as social constructs and dynamic processes – notably the influential works of Anssi Paasi who explicitly examines 'regions' and 'regional identity' as 'practices and discourses [that] shape socio-spatial consciousness and can be used to reproduce structures of domination and legitimation' (2002, p. 139) - and the 'American tradition' of cultural geographers who examined 'perceptual regions' that centred individuals' perceptions of spatial classification and distinction (Brownell 1960; Jordan 1978).

Marek (2022) combines both European and American traditions to distil three regionalisation principles from existing literature:

1. **Formal regions** – these are 'based on scalar data' (Klapka & Halás 2016) and typically defined by homogeneity of specific phenomena (Johnston & Sidaway 2016).
2. **Functional regions** – these are viewed considering spatial linkages, flows, movements, and interactions of human geography (Klapka & Halás 2016).
3. **Perceptual regions** – these are 'the subjective image a region whose delimitation is based on the perception of an individual person' (Marek 2022, p. 84).

Table 2 overleaf summaries the application of Marek's three principles are applicable to this paper's investigation of its identified boundary types to ground the latter with principles established in literature. This study's mixed-methods approach captures data to facilitate critical analysis of multiple boundary types, and the application of regionalisation principles within a case study, to provide a broader understanding of relationships between a city's internal boundaries, regional identities, and inequality and segregation.

Table 2: Study boundary categories and corresponding regionalisation principles by Marek (2022)

Study boundary category	Marek's regionalisation principle
Formal – 'hard' administrative boundaries formed by governments for governance and resource allocation strategies and activities	Formal and functional regions
Quasi-formal – 'hard' and 'soft' boundaries established to influence decision-making	Formal, functional, and perceptual regions
Informal – 'soft' cultural boundaries formed by individuals	Perceptual regions

2.2.2 Concepts of 'regional identity' and application to the research question

Although intertwined with concepts of 'region', 'regional identity' literature typically examines conflicts of identity between new spatial imaginaries imposed by institutions and pre-existing cultural and historical regional identities on a multi-scalar level from city-regions (Gherhes, Hoole, & Vorley 2023) to municipal amalgamations (Šerý & Daňková 2021; Zimmerbauer, Suutari & Saartenoja 2012), or the importance of regional identity in the maintaining nation-state conceptualisation (MacLeod 1998). However, by far, Anssi Paasi's contributions have an enduring influence on regional studies literature and any consideration of regional identity within this paper cannot proceed without reference and application of his concepts.

'Regional identity' and its relationship with 'regions' according to Anssi Paasi

Paasi's substantial 40-year body of work on 'regions' and 'regional identity' (1986, 1998, 2002, 2009 & 2011) as social and historical processes is rooted in his examination of European regional formation and identification. Despite this context, Paasi's concepts are applicable to the examination to the construction and reproduction of internal city boundaries and the case of 'Western Sydney' as a region in current institutional efforts to shape it as a city-region within a polycentric city model of metropolitan Sydney.

In respect to regional identity, Paasi observes the orthodox

implicit assumption that a regional identity joins people and regions together, provides people with shared 'regional values' and 'self-confidence', and ultimately makes the 'region' into a cultural-economic medium in the struggle over resources and power in the broader socio-spatial system... identity has become concomitantly a conceptual tool for grasping how globalisation reinforces cultural differentiation (2002, p. 137)

and further observes that regional authorities have commenced with exploiting regional identity in marketing campaigns to convert their regions into products 'that will attract tourists, skilled professionals and capital' (2002, p. 137).

Both observations align with Harvey's proposition of a trend towards 'spatial division of consumption' within urban entrepreneurship in late capitalism (1989) and reiterate linkages between institutional boundary formation and the role of boundaries in spatial power dynamics. Paasi argues that a region and its identity are inexplicably intertwined as a 'region' is a historically continuous process institutionalised through four successive stages which are summarised in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13: Anssi Paasi's framework on the institutionalisation of regions



(Paasi 1986)

If city-regionalism includes representative institutions and agencies in the production, maintenance, and transformation of space as legitimised and fixed entities, what does this say (or not say) about the role of ordinary citizens in region-shaping exercises?

Evidently, there are logical links between Paasi's concepts and framework and this paper's study of the multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' and the role its perceived regional identity in the construction of these boundaries for the former's application to the central investigation into the relationships between boundaries, segregation and inequalities in cities. This research uses Paasi's framework by using the core concerns of each of the four stages as lines of enquiry in its fieldwork, described in chapter three, by utilising them as themes in data collection activities to capture a comprehensive view of social processes of bounding practices to facilitate this paper's examination of boundaries' role in shaping urban inequality and segregation.

2.3 The role of maps in representing spatial concepts and power dynamics

'Critical cartography' is a growing body of literature across human, political, and cultural geographies, and social sciences disciplines that question maps as logical, objective representation of territories and spatial concepts (Herb et al. 2019). Critical cartography investigates assumptions of mapping authorship, legitimacy, and the role of maps as objects of knowledge transfer and reproduction of understandings of space: who can make a map? (Kim 2015) How do maps legitimise political power of the state and the elite? (Harley 1992; Perkins 2003) How do maps reflect or reproduce power relations, i.e. who is spoken for and who is not? (Crampton 2001).

Maps are typically 'top-bottom' representations of state-led strategic planning policy and aspirations, with 'bottom-top' approaches centring local knowledge and insights generally limited to neighbourhood-specific exercises facilitated by community activists (Parker 2008) or research relating to participatory civic engagement (Gordon, Elwood, & Mitchell 2016; Kim 2015). In the era of city-regions and their increasing presence in strategic urban planning on an international scale, the core questions of critical cartography are key to understanding alignment and conflicts within the production and maintenance of bounded spaces and geographies of power.

2.3.1 Maps as texts of power discourses and social construction

Harley's *Deconstructing the Map* argued against assumptions that maps were objective documents. Instead, he contended they should be viewed as texts and practices of power within their specific socio-cultural contexts to establish structure and order:

Power comes from the map and it traverses the way maps are made...by this I mean the way maps are compiled and the categories of information selected; the way they are generalized, a set of rules for the abstraction of the landscape; the way the elements in the landscape are formed into hierarchies; and the way various rhetorical styles that also reproduce power are employed to represent the landscape. To catalogue the world is to appropriate it, so that all these technical processes represent acts of control over its image which extend beyond the professed uses of cartography. The world is disciplined. The world is normalized [sic] (1992, website).

The relevance of Harley's seminal text in contemporary cartography has been subject to reconsideration with shortcomings identified in omissions for the potential of 'counter-mapping' in expressions against state-led power (Dodge & Perkins 2015) and technological advances in digital mapping, like OpenStreetMap, in 'democratising' the map (Krygier 2015).

Conversely, Crampton built upon Harley's perspective of maps as texts of power discourses, especially 'where [they] are ordered by government (or derived from them)' (1992, website), by viewing maps as social constructions - texts interpreted and constructed in multiple and contradictory ways (Herb 2017) - underpinned by two main ideas: that maps should be considered contesting representations noting their underlying social histories as representation of spatial concepts and as 'strategies and relations of power-knowledge' (2001, p. 243). Crampton's ideas and questions: 'How do notions of accuracy vary with time? Are there particular moments...where lack of accuracy has led to a deprivileging?...Who is knowledgeable and who is not? (2001, p.243), and Harley's reading of maps as social texts, are key considerations in this paper's fieldwork exercises and 'grey literature' analysis to identify, visualise and analyse multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' in reference to the central investigation of relationships between boundaries and urban inequalities and segregation.

With respect to Australian literature in metropolitan spatial planning, in the case of 'Western Sydney' there is a significant absence of critical perspectives or questioning of its boundaries as depicted on state-published maps and strategic planning documents (Bunker, Freestone & Randolph 2018; Morrison & Van den Nouweland 2020; Pham 2018) despite explicit recognition of its importance as a 'major distinctive sub-region of metropolitan Sydney' (Bunker, Freestone & Randolph 2018, p. 87). Even in Dühr's commentary on Greater Sydney spatial strategies that 'cartographic representation of spatial concepts is often essential in ensuring their widespread acceptance, but also such concepts are inherently selective and can therefore contribute to

distortions and power asymmetries by highlighting certain aspects while neglecting others' (2000, p.84), and examinations of Australian metropolitan governance (Kübler & Randolph 2007; Wetzstein 2012), 'Western Sydney' is an unchallenged spatial concept in strategic metropolitan planning, despite its enduring presence as an urban imaginary, which normalises its 'other' status and reproducing existing power discourses in Greater Sydney.

Noting the above, Harley's observations on the ability of maps to silence (1988) and that 'it is still easy for bureaucrats, developers and "planners" to operate on the bodies of unique places without measuring the social dislocations of progress' (1992, website) remains pertinent and, in the case of metropolitan Sydney's internal boundaries, may be applied to a portion of Australian planning and urban literature which this paper aims to address with its contributions.

2.3.2 'Counter-mapping': maps as objects of spatial resistance and alternative realities

As maps are used in 'top-bottom' approaches, they have also been used as resistance tools by community activists and special interest groups to represent alternate realities like local neighbourhood knowledge (Parker 2006), racial geographies of urban inequalities and segregation (Faber 2020; Marsh, Parnell & Joyner 2010), and Indigenous place mapping in opposition to colonial and legal constructs of land and property (Kent & Vujakovic 2015; Wood 2017).

'Counter-maps' offer opportunities for marginalised or silenced groups to articulate their worlds as they occupy and navigate it and can act as foundations of collective identity (Kent & Vujakovic 2015), or depict resistance narratives where urban space is contested (Hwang 2015), to move beyond non-participation or token steps of citizen participation (Arnstein 1969) towards genuine citizen power and Lefebvre's vision of the 'right to the city'.

This paper facilitates the creation of 'counter-maps,' albeit with limitations, to facilitate visualisation of alternative spatial realities and critically examine them in the context of power dynamics in metropolitan Sydney. With respect to the increasing presence of city-regions as a 'top-bottom' spatial planning trend which produce internal boundary divisions and metropolitan governance mechanisms, 'counter-maps' are important to analyse for alignment or contrast with 'official' boundaries while spaces are transformed as sites of capital accumulation and consumption in the age of 'urban entrepreneurialism'.

2.4 Bounding practices of urban spatial inequality and segregation

Robert Park in his influential essay, *The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behaviour in the Urban Environment*, wrote that 'processes of segregation...make the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate... making it possible for individuals to pass quickly and easily from one moral milieu to another, and encourages the fascinating but dangerous experiment of living at the same time in several different contiguous, but otherwise widely separated, worlds' (2019, p. 40-41). So how then do spatial imaginary boundaries like 'Western Sydney' as the 'other' metropolitan Sydney come to be?

Neighbourhood studies in boundary formation show that individually perceived boundaries can be flexible, contradictory and symbolic in the case of race, ethnicity, class, religion, duration of residence (Albeda et al. 2017), perceived stage of gentrification (Hwang 2015), and physical markers like infrastructure (Minnery, Knight & Spencer 2009). Differences between boundaries formed by individuals and institutions are pivotal to understanding place-based interventions in bounded spaces for spatial inequalities with respect to potential conflicts between those 'within' and 'outside' that may foster 'left behind places' and perpetuate existing inequities. This section provides an overview of literature to illustrate three key elements of bounding practices: physical and spatial considerations, conceptual considerations relating to cultural, social and symbolic capital, and the role of institutions, in the formation, maintenance and reproduction of bounding processes of distinction that drive spatial inequality and segregation.

2.4.1 The role of physical and spatial considerations of cities

Physical elements like the natural or built environment, or spatial considerations such as city size and location of functions, have long been recognised in planning literature as major influences in residents' experiences of social segregation and inequality as they act as physical barriers and/or symbols which induce and reproduce 'macro' spatial segregation and 'micro' interpersonal segregating behaviours.

Roberto and Korver-Glenn's study of local resident perceptions in Houston, United States (2021) found that neighbourhood divisions based on race and social class were seen to be exacerbated through transport infrastructure location by creating physical and symbolic barriers based on perceptions of safety by white residents and disparities in access to the common downtown area and policing services by residents of racial minority-majority neighbourhoods. Recent literature is also considering impacts of land elevation on income distribution as seen in Ye and Becker's work on impacts on elevation gradients in urban real estate markets in Hong Kong (2017) and simulated models of flat and hilly cities in the United States (2024) with preliminary findings of a correlation between uneven land gradients with neighbourhood income segregation due to perceived amenities at the higher elevations such as low crime rates, suitable microclimates, and lack of access to public transport which restricts accessibility.

Within metropolitan Sydney, mismatch of affordable residential housing in the city's west and proximity to knowledge-based employment centres, located in the city's north and eastern districts, are significant drivers of macro and micro spatial socio-economic segregation and inequality (Randolph 2002; Sarkar, Phibbs and Simpson 2017) and form a 'double disadvantage' for lower-income residents because of their physical displacement in the pursuit of affordable housing and access to higher paying employment centres (Sarkar, Gurrán and Shrivastava 2024). City size and scale are currently being examined as components of spatial sorting in respect to income distribution with indicative findings noting a relationship between large city size, relative to population size and density, and high-income growth (Sarkar et al. 2016) and effects on housing markets and affordability as areas offering the best amenities and opportunities become out of reach for lower income residents (Sarkar 2018) and induce self-segregating behaviours and compound socio-economic inequality in available residential choices (Sarkar et al. 2021).

Institutional responses to address spatial disparities in metropolitan Sydney are transforming 'Western Sydney' as a specifically bounded area through major infrastructure investment to stimulate knowledge-intensive employment and education opportunities. However, bounding practices formed from physical and spatial features of a city cannot be viewed in isolation from a city's distinct socio-cultural role in urban life and the next subsection utilises Bourdieu's concepts of capital to examine processes of distinction that result in socio-cultural bounding practices of aesthetic, taste, and social class differentiation.

2.4.2 The role of cultural, social, and symbolic capital in distinctions within 'legitimate culture'

Bourdieu (1984) argued that people are socialised to transmit and reproduce dominant 'legitimate culture' within a society, the 'highbrow' culture of the ruling class '[who] only have to be what they are' (1984, p. 23) and 'tastemakers', through systems - particularly education, language, and family structures - that attribute social value or 'taste' in the consumption of 'cultural goods' which legitimise this culture. However, recent critiques of Bourdieu and his concept of cultural capital, contextually located within a Eurocentric view of 'traditional high culture' such as appreciation of opera houses and modernist art, posit an 'emerging cosmopolitan cultural capital' (Prieur & Savage 2013) and its application to contemporary urban culture. This new form of cultural capital is commonly generated in large cosmopolitan centres and places greater value on participation, an orientation to international 'tastes', and focus on the aesthetics of everyday life in displays of consumption (Savage et al. 2018) such as personal fashion, choice of residential neighbourhood, or even one's coffee order.

Considering this paper's focus on the inequality in Greater Sydney with its ongoing construction as a 'global city', this subsection considers bounding practices which produce or reflect urban spatial inequality and segregation as expressions of social class distinction - in short, cultural snobbery or judgment - within dominant 'legitimate culture' through the lens of Bourdieu's concepts of alternate forms of capital (refer Figure 12) with an emphasis on cosmopolitan cultural capital.

A city's function and image in maintaining and reproducing a society's 'legitimate culture'

Kevin Lynch articulated the importance of a city's production of a visual image for structure and 'legibility' in *The Image of the City*: 'as an artificial world, the city should be so in the best sense: made by art, shaped for human purposes' (1960, p. 95). Lynch saw the city as a space where beauty and function are interdependent features of highly legible urban form - that is, a visually appealing city is also a functional one by making its spaces easier to physically navigate, easy to distinguish against other cities, and produces high levels of satisfaction within residents and visitors - which in turn enhances social cohesion and instils a sense of civic pride, 'impelling the citizen to act upon his visual world' (1960, p. 119). Lynch's romantic view is in sharp contrast to Harvey's argument that the construction and maintenance of the 'urban image' under late capitalism is a means of social control through competition for flows of economic capital:

Bread and circuses was the famous Roman formula that now stands to be reinvented and revived, while the ideology of locality, place and community becomes central to the political rhetoric of urban governance which concentrates on the idea of togetherness in defense [sic] against a hostile and threatening world of international trade and heightened competition (1989, p. 9).

If we view constructed functions and images of the cosmopolitan global city as expressions of 'legitimate culture' and symbolic capital in transmitting a society's reputation and prestige, which accumulates and circulates social, cultural and economic capital as part of a city's role as a site of capital exchange, then both Lynch and Harvey's contrasting visions are complementary and true. Bourdieu, in writing on the role of the working class in the system of aesthetic positioning - in terms of 'tastes' - of proximity to dominant culture, argued 'perhaps their sole function in the system...is to serve as a foil, a negative reference point, in relation to which all aesthetics define themselves, by successive negations' (1984, p. 57). In applying this argument to the contemporary cultural capital in the new forms of aestheticised 'tastes' as expressions of 'legitimate culture', socially constructed and acknowledged internal boundaries within a city - 'creative neighbourhoods', 'leafy suburbs', 'suburban sprawl' - serve as points of distinction and reference points which further reinforce this dominant culture by reflecting an element of it or representing a deviation from it.

This paper aims to contribute supporting evidence to this logic of internal bounding practices within 'legitimate culture' by investigating 'Western Sydney' within metropolitan Sydney through the lens of perceived regional identity to examine the role of socio-cultural perceptions which result in whole territories being socially constructed as reference points - either marginalised or elevated - within dominant culture and its relationship to spatial urban inequality and segregation.

Social class distinction in the consumption of neighbourhoods and housing as 'cultural goods'

Bourdieu (1984) argued that individuals' accumulation of cultural capital, embodied through 'taste' in cultural goods and cultivation of personal disposition, are used as demarcations of social class. Furthermore, Bourdieu noted 'hierarchies of legitimacy' (1984, p. 86) induce perceptions of 'symbolic profits' (1984, p. 86) in the consumption of 'cultural goods' – that is, the closer 'cultural goods' are to expressions of dominant culture, the more they are valued and desired because they represent promising returns on investment in different markets like employment or education. Consumption of neighbourhoods and housing as 'cultural goods' under this lens, noting cosmopolitan cultural capital's value in aesthetics of everyday life (Prieur & Savage 2013), can then be read as representations of 'micro' individual and 'macro' societal processes of distinction based on economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital which reflect and shape spatial segregation and inequality as expressions of desires, fears and aspirations for physical, social, psychological and cultural security (Lozanovska 2022; Nelson et al. 2016) within dominant culture.

There is extensive literature on the role of the residential housing market in inducing spatial sorting based on income levels and economic class relating to affordability and proximity to labour markets (Azpitarte, Alonso-Villar & Hugo-Rojas 2021; Sarkar et al. 2021) or access to social capital and networks (Mijs & Roe 2021). Current literature has also examined ethnic sorting due to macro government immigration policy and micro access to economic capital (Sydes 2018), differential access to the private rental market due to racial discrimination (Nelson et al. 2016), and poor levels of social mobility (Chetty, Hendren, & Katz 2016). However, the importance of neighbourhoods and housing as 'cultural goods' in social class distinction is most evident in literature examining functional and symbolic value in the correlation of desirable 'aesthetic views' with high property prices (Jayasekare, Herath, Wickramasuriya, & Perez 2019) or 'fashionable / trendy' residential real estate (Bridge 2001), push and pull factors of gentrification in access to 'good schools and communities' and housing with 'aesthetic value' (Bridge 2006), and 'taste' debates pertaining to suburban 'McMansions', supersized family homes, as either threats to local neighbourhood character (Allon et al. 2006; Goffman 2015) or expressions of aspirational suburbanites looking to maximise economic investment in housing (Wiessel, Pinnegar & Freestone 2013).

In literature relating to 'Western Sydney', Johnson argues that negative historic connotations of the region as 'feral suburbia' (1997, p. 7) exemplify the ongoing marginalisation of 'memories and continuing struggle of people to be involved in the active creating of a place in the world' (1997, p. 125) in urban consolidation debates within contemporary Australian planning. In contrast, Stevenson's study of 'unfashionable cultural workers' located in 'Greater Western Sydney' (2018) comments on the absence of policy support for creative workers outside the stereotypical 'inner city' imaginary. However, both touch on the role of social class 'taste' distinctions and cosmopolitan cultural capital in their respective papers' concerns – the role and social value of the suburbia and policy support for cultural workers far from centres of contemporary cultural capital - but do not extrapolate further on the impacts of constructed perceptions of 'Western Sydney' in proximity to dominant cultural narratives on these concerns. As such, this paper seeks to fill a gap in Australian literature in its socio-cultural examination of role of class distinction in boundaries of 'Western Sydney' to complement investigations into socio-economic drivers of spatial sorting and contribute to research on the maintenance and reproduction of psychological boundaries on a regional scale and what these perceptions denote about spatial power dynamics within a city with respect to its 'legitimate culture'.

2.4.3 The role of institutions

Considering this paper's critical lens on mainstream urban knowledge and processes, it would be amiss to not define what an 'institution' is. Noting the range of definitions of an 'institution' across economics and social sciences from abstract systems of rules which structure social interactions (Hodgson 2015) to organisations and systems which exert power across hierarchies, social practice or government procedures (Durão & Seabra Lopes 2011), this paper views institutions as key organisations in a society recognised for their significant decision-making abilities – civic bodies such as government authorities - or wielding considerable influence on decision-making bodies and society – such as the media, universities, businesses and community organisations.

Institutions' roles in influencing urban spatial inequalities has been extensively covered in urban planning literature in reference to formation and implementation of economic development levers (Searle 2002), resident skills mismatch due to strategic policies aimed at cultivating creative cities and knowledge-based economies (Donegan & Lowe 2008), and resource allocation, stewardship and incentivisation of land development (Tonkiss 2005 & 2020). From a social science perspective, the built environment profession, including architects and urban planners, is also an institution because the built environment 'functions as a symbol, expressing the views of those who create it and imposing those views on those who interact with it each day' (Schindler 2015, p. 1997).

Arguably, institutions' role in shaping and perpetuating urban inequality and segregation in bounding practices can be simultaneously subtle and blatant – the former in that institutions produce, maintain and replicate inequalities as norms within dominant culture, and the latter in that bounding practices are often expressed as physical objects or artefacts in the case of policies, strategies and maps.

Nevertheless, institutions' roles in producing and maintaining inequality and segregation – especially based on race and class - in bounding practices are particularly contentious because they are rooted in a society's particular history and socio-cultural norms, constructed and reproduced as part of dominant culture, and typically subject to debates of intent and culpability. These debates are exemplified in academic discourse on 'redlining' practices in the United States which are associated with the establishment of colour-coded maps categorising neighbourhoods' credit service risk levels by the federal government-sponsored Home Owners' Loan Corporation and widely perceived to have disproportionately impacted racial minorities, particularly Black Americans (Faber 2020; Nelson & Winling). The prevailing narrative in 'redlining' discourse is that discrimination from civic institutions had long-term effects on residential racial segregation in reduced homeownership rates (Aaronson, Hartley & Mazumder 2021) and access to private credit (New York University, Cornell University & University of Virginia 2023), however, recent contestations of the culpability of government agencies (Hillier 2003a, 2003b & 2005b) have argued that assigning blame to public institutions 'at worst... absolves the private sector for its integral role in producing and maintaining racial housing segregation' (Markley 2023, p. 202). Conversely, instances of discriminatory institutional bounding practices that have been accepted with regard to intent and culpability can be seen in Australia in the case of metropolitan Brisbane's 'Boundary Streets' used to segregate indigenous Jagera and Turrbal people from European colonists (Hinchliffe 2016; Atfield 2016), albeit with some reservations about the intention of the city's boundary posts as physical bounding markers (Kitson 2016), maintained in through curfews enforced by the police (Kidd cited in Schafer 2012).

While case studies investigating relationships between institutions and urban inequalities and institutions are not new in urbanist literature, examinations of multi-dimensional bounding practices and comparisons of institution-led boundaries and citizen boundaries are limited. This paper's critical comparison of the multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' aims to contribute to insight into internal boundary formations in cities and the transformation and production of constructed regions under late capitalism.

2.5 A tale of multiple Sydneys: perceptions and images of 'Western Sydney' in the media

'Western Sydney' has flexible meaning: at times it seems to just refer to Lindsay [an Australian federal electorate], at others it seethes with Middle Eastern migrants...Aspirational, battlers, McMansions – it's whatever you want it to be (Brent 2016).

A divide of the imagination and the material

As noted in the introduction, the 'Latte Line' as a conceptual boundary – sometimes also called the 'Red Rooster Line' in reference to the distribution of the eponymous fast food restaurant franchise across Greater Sydney – is typically used in informal discussion of the spatial dimensions of metropolitan Sydney's inequalities and segregation in relation to 'Western Sydney' as a broad imaginary. While material socio-economic disparities associated with 'Western Sydney' such as 'white-collar' / 'blue-collar' job distribution (Lee, Piracha & Fan 2018; Saulwick 2016), levels of higher educational attainment (Baker & Wade 2021, WSLD 2019), and housing affordability (see Figure 14 overleaf) are well documented there are also social, cultural and political elements constructed and reproduced in the media.

Peter Shergold, former chancellor of the Western Sydney University, urged the city's residents to overcome the "divide of the imagination" with 'snobbish and outdated notions about the western suburbs...holding Sydney back from achieving its full potential as a global city' (Knott 2022) and noted 'the perception of western Sydney as "a disadvantaged area of gritty people living in gritty conditions" lingered among those who rarely venture west of Mascot airport [Sydney's international airport located eight kilometres south of the eastern CBD]' (Knott 2022).

In observing shifts in dimensions of Australian culture, Turner comments that 'the bourgeois focus upon lifestyle factors, in particular, privileges consumption over production, and pleasure over work...[and] given such developments...it is not surprising that the traditional suburb has lost some of its centrality to contemporary Australian culture' (2008, p. 571) which places suburbia on the outer of privileged sites within the Australian imaginary which encapsulates the outback bush and the coastal beach (Turner 2008).

The absence of 'legitimate' cultural capital within 'Western Sydney', in the absence of landscapes linked to Australia's global image (Turner 2008) or contemporary cultural capital in 'hipster', cosmopolitan inner-city tastes bounded by 'Goat's Cheese Curtain' – unlike the 'Red Rooster Line' of 'middle, suburban, family-based Australia' (Salt 2016) – places it in a marginalised position in metropolitan Sydney's 'hierarchy of legitimacy'.

'Western Sydney' is strongly associated with concentration of culturally and linguistically diverse populations who are marginalised and 'othered' by Australian society and institutions, particularly those from the Middle East (Collins & Poynting 2000; Poynting et al. 2004), as perceived threats to Australia's Anglo cultural domination and national identity (Hage 1998). Significant portion of negative representations of 'Western Sydney' and its residents have been produced by *The Daily Telegraph*, a metropolitan Sydney based newspaper with populist leanings, with respect to 'ethnic gangland wars', youth crime, (Collins & Poynting 2000; Poynting et al. 2004) and debates on social welfare and immigration policies (Hage 1998), which sit alongside depictions of the region as home to 'aspirational battlers' (Brent 2016) struggling with housing costs (Edwards 2007) and access to healthcare (Trogenza 2024).

Recently, there has been a concerted push to highlight positive elements of 'Western Sydney' as home to vibrant multicultural communities reflecting modern Australian life (Hayman 2021) and sexual minorities despite the region's reputation for social conservatism (Michie 2024). Perhaps because of the contrasting, multi-dimensional connotations of 'Western Sydney', the imaginary has an oversized symbolic presence and perceived influence as the heartland of suburban Australian in political discourse in federal and state politics (Bowring 2023) which has seen *The Daily Telegraph* run campaigns to influence electoral decision-making for place-based interventions (Clennell & Godfrey 2015).

Figure 14: Comparative median houses prices of Greater Sydney by LGA, 2016

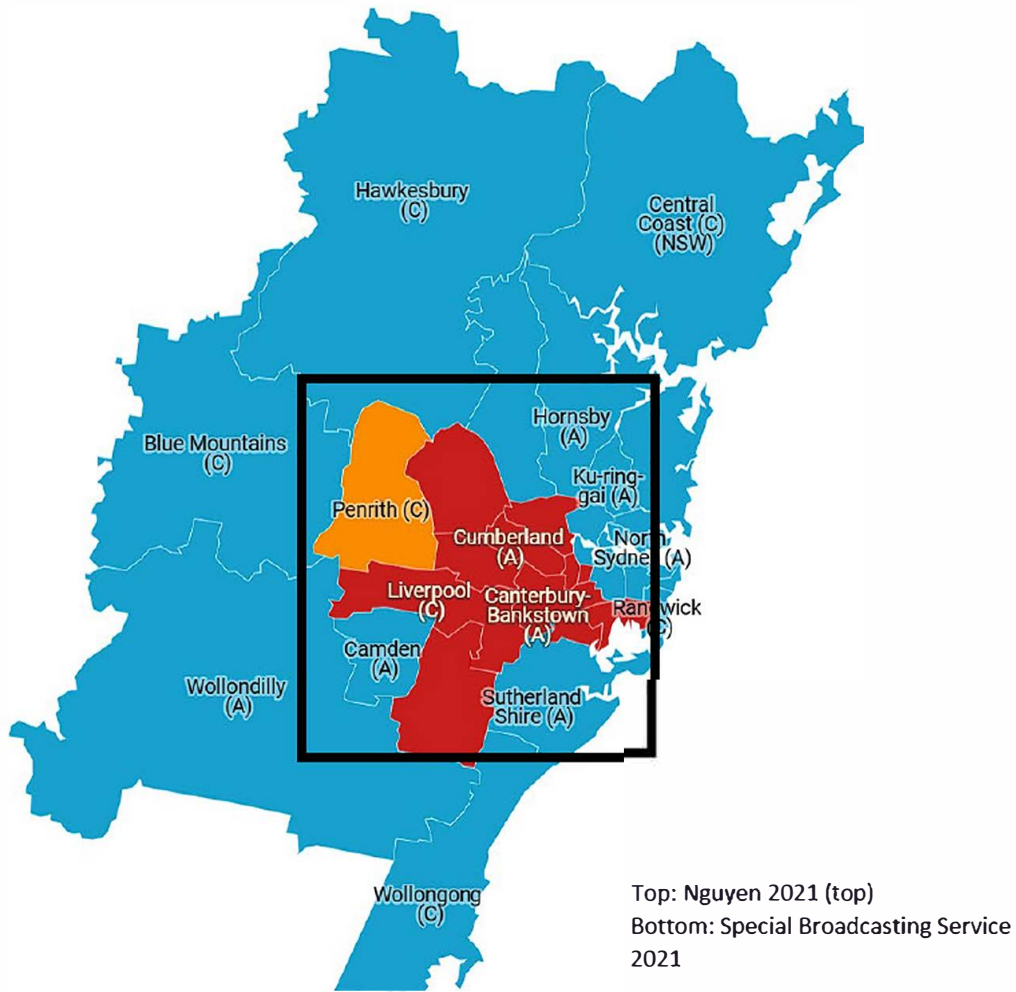


(Bangura & Lee 2020, p. 1120)

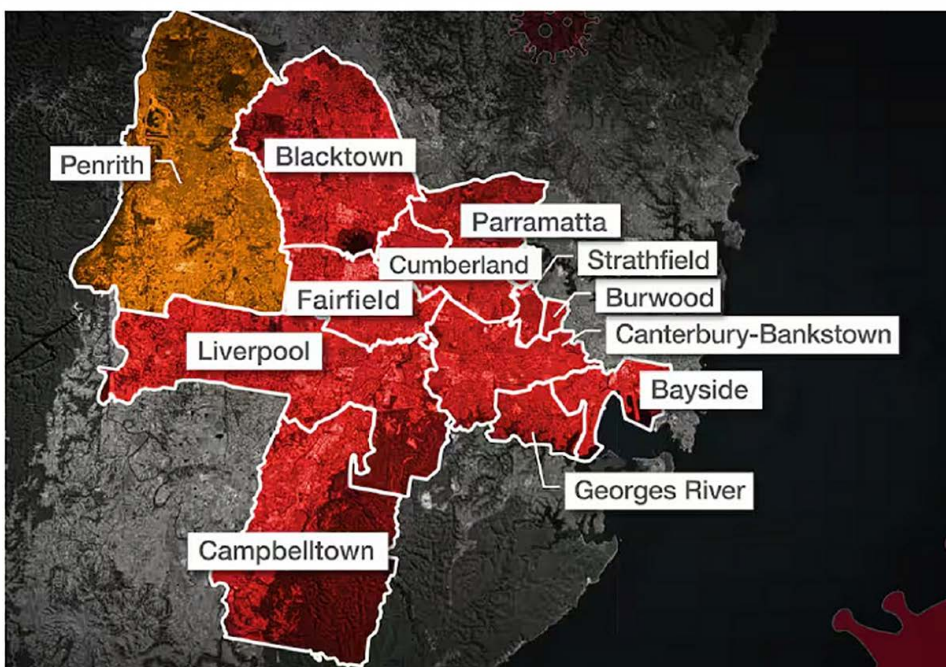
Despite the region’s perceived electoral influence (or ‘symbolic capital’), a material divide within metropolitan Sydney is evident in the perceived treatment of segments of ‘Western Sydney’ and its residents in the NSW Government’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Material spatial disparities in Greater Sydney in the historic and ongoing mismatch of east-based knowledge-based employment centres and westward urban development, meant that a significant portion of ‘Western Sydney’ residents who did not work ‘white-collar jobs’ had to commute for employment and risk infection.

As part of the NSW Government’s pandemic response, 12 LGAs of Greater Sydney were identified as ‘LGAs of Concern’ (refer Figure 15 overleaf), many of them included in various boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’, and subject to overt policing practices and movement restrictions under public health legislation (Nguyen 2021). These practices provoked comments from local politicians and community leaders who felt their communities, notably those with high concentrations of working-class racial minorities, were being unfairly targeted by institutions in reference to the city’s structural spatial inequalities (Shad 2021) and following the lifting of pandemic restrictions, many of the ‘LGAs of Concern’ emerged with higher rates of unemployment (Wade 2021). Noting the above and current institutional efforts to redress spatial inequalities in metropolitan Sydney in a distinctly bounded ‘Western Sydney’, who in where is benefiting / ‘left behind’?

Figure 15: Greater Sydney's 'Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Concern' during the COVID-19 pandemic, 2021



Only some suburbs of Penrith are subjected to harder lock-down orders.
Map data: PSMA Australia Limited • Get the data • Embed • Created with Datawrapper



Out there, somewhere – where is ‘Western Sydney’?

‘Western Sydney’ as an ambiguous spatial imaginary has been, and continues to be, constructed and reproduced as ‘a chimera against which the rest of Sydney could positively and confidently appraise itself’ (Gwyther 2008a) in a sharp contrast to global Sydney in its function and image as an internationally recognised cosmopolitan hub of high finance, culture and government (Turner 2008). The informal and formal constructed function and image of ‘Western Sydney’ serve as points of distinction for bounding practices within ‘legitimate culture’ but in different ways; as a broad imaginary, encompassing urban inequality and segregation within metropolitan Sydney, and as a formally defined city-region, bounding an envisioned economically productive region of ‘global Sydney’.

Political actors have historically used ‘Western Sydney’ as a broad imaginary in public communications and reserved specific bounding definitions for policies and programs, like the Western Sydney Area Assistance Scheme which ran from 1979 to the late 1980s (Fulop, Noesjirwan & Smith 1988). Increasing, ‘Western Sydney’ is being used to refer to the bounded ‘Western Parkland City’ centred around the incoming Western Sydney International Airport (DITRDA 2021), however, conflation of this definition to include areas outside of the defined city-region continues to occur in state government publications such as recent Budget Papers (NSW Treasury 2018, 2023 & 2024).

The satirical spatial imaginaries of Greater Sydney produced by university student newsletter (refer Figures 16 and 17 over the next two pages) allow for interesting observations of the socio-cultural bounding practices within the city and associations of ‘Western Sydney’ as both cultural and residential wasteland and home of refugees and the ‘ethnic west’ – nothing but a homogenous suburban yet multicultural ethnic space ‘out there’.

Figure 16 Perceptions of spatial imaginaries of Greater Sydney by chicken shop distribution – Honi Soit (University of Sydney)



(Chrysanthos & Ding 2017)

Figure 17 is notably egregious for the absence of a perspective of Greater Sydney ‘according to ‘Western Sydney’ and a critical reading of the image would align this omission with Harley and Crampton’s view of maps as texts of socially constructed and reproduced power relations because why does the ‘western suburbs’ not have a corresponding map too and what would it say about the other parts of the city?

Figure 17 Perceptions of spatial imaginaries of Greater Sydney – Tharunka (University of New South Wales)



(Arc & University of New South Wales 2011)

With this section in mind, this paper facilitates a critical investigation into the intertwined relationship between boundaries, regional identity and urban inequality and segregation in its 'bottom-up' approach by enabling individual 'counter-mapping' to locate 'Western Sydney' and its regional identity, to compare against established institutional boundaries for a holistic view of dimensions of the construction, maintenance and reproduction of spatial inequality through boundaries.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Approach

A mixed methods was used to facilitate visualisation of the boundaries of 'Western Sydney' in line with three classifications:

1. *Formal boundaries* – 'hard' administrative boundaries established by Australian federal, state, and local government policies, strategies and practices used to govern and distribute resources.
2. *Quasi-formal boundaries* – 'soft' and 'hard' boundaries established by self-identified regional advocacy bodies and groupings of local governments bodies to influence decision-making.
3. *Informal boundaries* – 'soft' cultural boundaries established by metropolitan Sydney residents which are formed by their personal contexts.

The approach was selected as a multi-faceted examination of boundaries and intertwined relationships between regional identity, urban inequalities and segregation requires a robust approach to produce qualitative and quantitative outcomes that facilitates visualisations of multiple 'Western Sydneys' and avoids weaknesses of a single approach (Schoonenboom & Johnson 2017; Turner, Cardinal & Burton 2015).

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Data types and data collection activities

Current residents of 'metropolitan Sydney', specified as the 33 LGAs identified by the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in Appendix A, were the study's targeted participant group.

Primary data

All proposed primary research activities were approved by the University of Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) before commencement of data collection (Appendix B). The active data collection period was 1 February 2025 to 1 April 2025.

Online survey questionnaire (n = 782)

The questionnaire (Appendix C) was designed and hosted in the University of Sydney's Qualtrics XM instance to recruit study participants. Participants were offered voluntary options, in separate online forms, to participate in semi-structured interviews (Appendix D) and to enter a raffle or a chance to win one of five gift cards valued at AUD \$200 each (Appendix E).

Each of metropolitan Sydney LGAs were assigned a static index number in Qualtrics XM (Appendix F) for each of the survey's following four mapping questions to facilitate data analysis and visualisation in Microsoft Power BI:

- **Q5.** How would you show 'Western Sydney' as a collection of NSW Local Government Areas (local council areas) containing suburbs from the map below? Select names of the local council areas to make your choice. You can select as many or as few options as you want from the map below.
- **Q11.** Please select the name of the relevant Local Government Area (local council area) you currently live in. Select only one option.
- **Q12.** If applicable - please select the relevant Local Government Areas (local council area) where you currently work and/or study. You can select up to three options.
- **Q14.** Where are the top three areas you regularly socialise in from the map below? Select three names of local areas below to indicate. Social activities include shopping, visiting, dining out at cafes / restaurants, or playing / watching sports.

The questionnaire also collected participants' personal information – limited to age, occupation, LGA of residence, work/study, and socialisation – for data visualisations based on participant variables.

Semi-structured interviews (n = 10)

All prospective participants were provided a Voluntary Interview Participant Information Statement and Participant Consent Form (Appendices G and H) to complete before interviews were conducted.

The interview questions and accompanying individual mapping exercise is provided at Appendix I and were used to obtain qualitative data and spatial representations of the 'Western Sydney' boundaries on a personalised level that would not be effectively facilitated in the online survey.

Participants were provided two options for their interview: online via Zoom or in-person in four locations (the University of Sydney's campus in Darlington, Penrith, Liverpool, and Parramatta). Providing in-person interview locations was to stimulate different perspectives and sentiments from participants that may be affected by the environment they choose out of convenience or proximity (Bjørvik, et.al 2023) and personal comfort with the interviewer (Elwood & Martin 2000; Gagnon, Jacob & McCabe 2014).

Advertising strategy

The study was advertised online and in physical locations using approved advertising collateral (Appendices I and J). Specific organisations were approached via email to discuss distribution of advertising collateral through their networks in reference to the study's relevance to their organisational remit or interests (Appendices K to O), and social media, specifically Reddit, an online forum, and its Sydney-based community '/Sydney' (Appendix P) was used to advertise the study to prospective participants.

Secondary data

Desktop review of publicly available 'grey literature'

'Grey literature' can be quite broad, ranging from documents produced outside of peer-review processes to materials not easily catalogued or located (Mahood, Van Eerd, & Irvin 2012) but this paper considers the term to include all aforementioned documents produced by all levels of government, academia, business and industry primarily for organisational purposes that are uncontrolled by independent evaluation or commercial publishers (Erlinger 2019).

Publications from Australian government (local, state, and federal), and non-government bodies were reviewed to identify 'Formal' and 'Quasi-formal' boundaries as supporting collateral for data visualisations and analysis. Key documents reviewed included strategic Greater Sydney land use plans published by government agencies, parliamentary debates, non-government reports and materials, and government policies and programs to demonstrate real-world examples of the implications of bounding practices.

Publications were located using online databases and search engines such as Trove, Google and Google Scholar, Analysis & Policy Observatory (a public policy research portal), the University of Sydney library catalogue, and various government and non-government webpages archived on the Internet Archive Wayback Machine.

Literature review

This paper includes a thematic literature review that identifies current trends, gaps, and omissions to the two sub-elements of this paper's research question pertaining to Australian and international contexts:

1. What is the relationship between boundaries, urban inequalities and segregation?
2. Why do boundaries matter and what role does regional identity play in their formation and maintenance?

While there are perceived weaknesses and potential for biases in a thematic approach to a literature review (Grant & Booth 2009), there are substantial strengths in the approach's structured focus on specific themes in relation to the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the research question and its objectives. The thematic approach allowed for the identification of insights, patterns, gaps, and emerging trends and connections across a range of disciplines to explore and synthesise a broad understanding of relevant literature.

Criteria

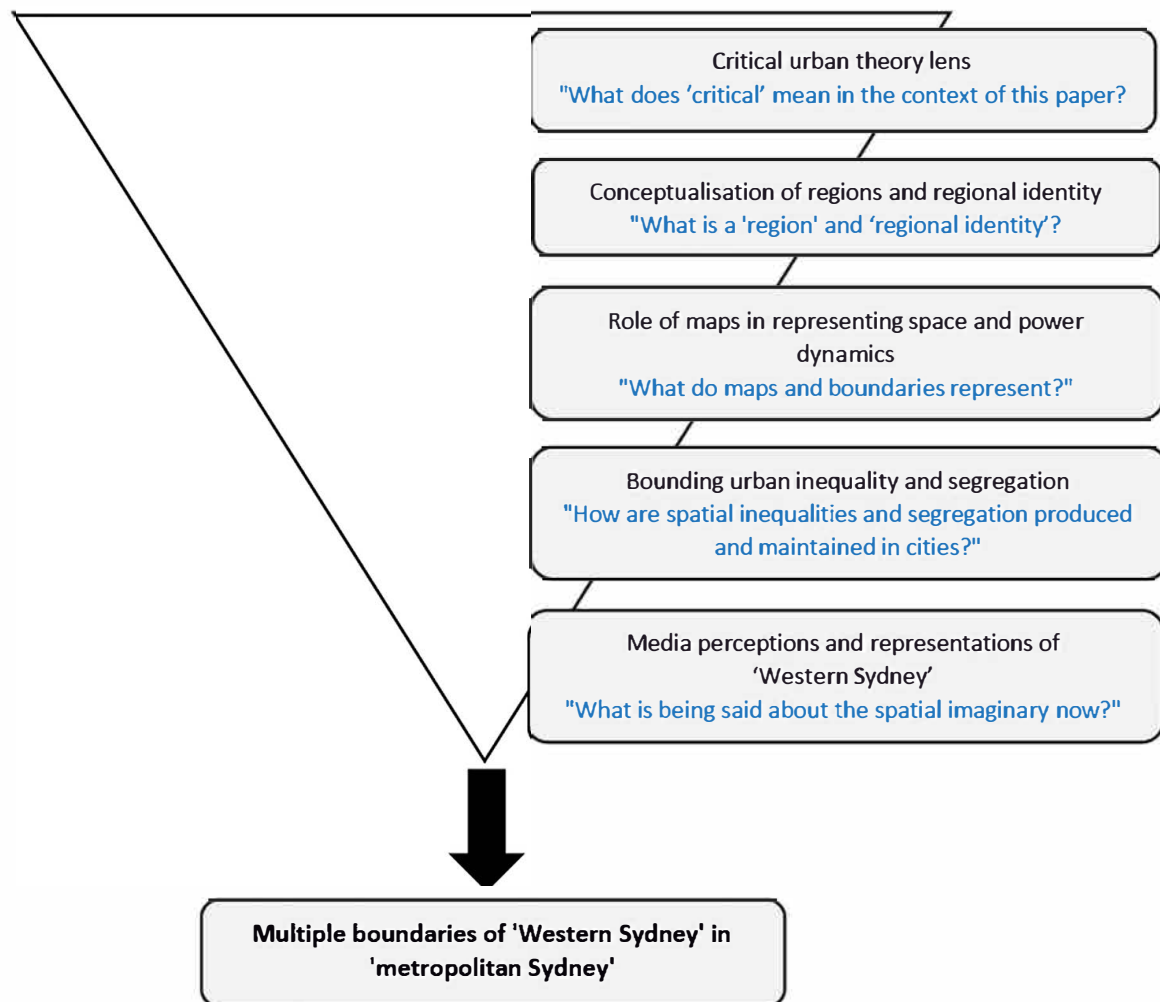
These keywords were used to locate and gather articles via Google Scholar and the University of Sydney Library database across fields of urban studies, urban planning, sociology, regional studies, and social/political geography:

- Boundaries, neighbourhoods, boundaries in cities
- Urban inequality, urban segregation
- Regional identity, city-regions, spatial planning
- Critical cartography

Structure

Figure 18 below summaries the structure of this paper's literature review.

Figure 18: Structured thematic literature review



3.2.2 Data analysis

Data visualisations

Microsoft Power BI was the primary software used to generate the maps and graphs in this paper. Base maps of metropolitan Sydney were produced using geospatial files of boundaries produced or used by the ABS, including current Greater Sydney LGAs and variables, such as resource distribution of government grants/programs, were distilled by the author as part of the grey literature review or reference established data points created by the ABS, such as the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas, to critically examine dimensions of urban inequality and segregation captured in the boundary classifications.

Data forming the three boundary categories were gathered through the data collection activities – typically specifically listed LGAs in grey literature or captured in Qualtrics XM (Appendix Q) – were distilled into sources (csv or Excel files) and imported, cleansed and coded in Microsoft Power BI as filters on the base maps (Appendix R). These maps were used to examine relationships between boundaries and urban inequalities and segregation in metropolitan Sydney by providing visualisation of resource distribution or governance filtered by the study's boundary categories.

Interview transcriptions and qualitative data analysis

For online semi-structured interviews, the recorded audio files were transcribed using Zoom or transcribed through the author's native Voice Memos application software on their mobile device for in-person interviewees. Qualitative data analysis was undertaken in NVivo 14 (NVivo) to identify key themes, sentiments, and recurring words/phrases from the interview transcripts.

Recurring words and phrases transcribed from the interview recordings were used to form word clouds (Appendix S) Appendix and 'word maps', inspired by Cidell's concepts of exploratory qualitative data analysis (2010) linking content clouds with geospatial mapping to examine information generated in different places on a single issue, facilitated by Power BI to create a base map for transcript excerpts to be overlaid on top of interviewees' stated LGAs of residence.

The semi-structured interviews included a mapping exercise which captured 'Informal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney' from interviewees on a granular, personal level which are provided in Appendix I.

3.3 Reliability and validity

Sample sizes

The ABS' sample size calculator (ABS 2024b) was used to provide an indicative ideal sample size of 385 for the online survey questionnaire for a simple random sampling of the targeted participant group using the following inputs:

- Confidence level: 95%
- Population size: 5,231,147 – Greater Sydney population from the latest ABS census data (ABS 2021c)
- Confidence Interval: 0.05

While acknowledging the final sample size (782), the author notes that participant incentivisation and study advertising strategies were implemented as controls to mitigate potential impacts to the representative nature of the targeted sample size (Rea & Parker 1992) from limitations of data collection periods and resources.

Noting the small sample size of interviewees which provided written consent to use their transcripts (10) or their personal maps (8), the author notes that the survey questionnaire also included free text sections to capture additional qualitative data from these participants.

Data quality

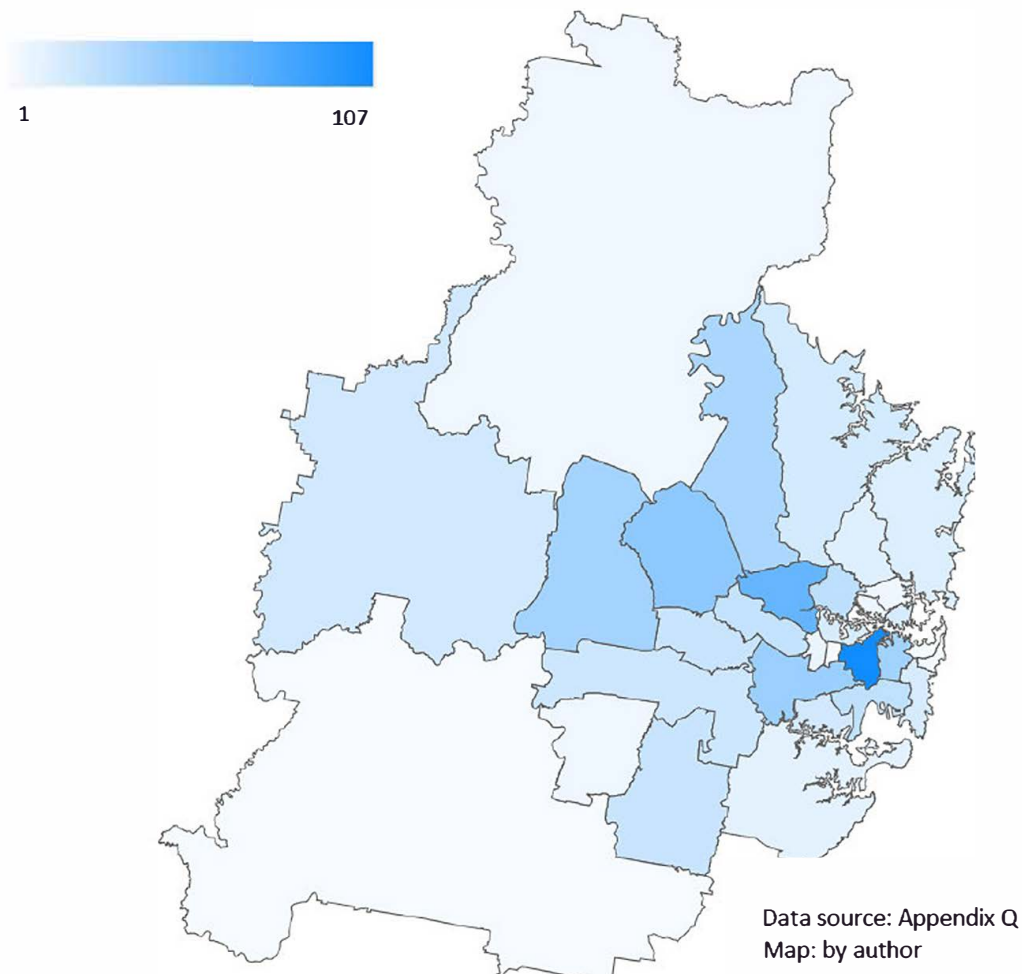
- Online survey was assessed for 'user-friendliness' utilising Qualtrics XM's in-built optimisation tool, 'ExpertReview', which assessed and optimised the survey's methodology and survey logic.
- Online survey was set to record completed responses only
- Online survey data exported in Appendix Q that were received outside the active primary data collection period were coded out of the dataset in Microsoft Power BI before use for visualisations.
- Multiple in-person interview locations made available to enable participation from a broader range of participants across 'metropolitan Sydney'. An online option was also provided to counter geographic limitations beyond nominated locations and participant availability – although participant behaviour may have differed from an in-person interview.
- Spatial representation of study participants by Greater Sydney LGA of residence is shown in Figure 19 on the next page and shows the sample size has captured a relatively diverse and representative catchment of metropolitan Sydney residents.

Audit trail

The online survey was built and hosted on the University-licensed Qualtrics XM instance to ensure a clear audit trail of completed survey responses and security settings was maintained.

All primary data research collateral prepared for commencement of data collection activities were submitted and approved by the University of Sydney HREC. All research materials, including previous iterations and drafts, were recorded in digital solutions specified within the approved Data Management Plan for this research project in line with the University of Sydney's data management policies and guidelines.

Figure 19: Spatial distribution of study participants by Greater Sydney LGA of residence



3.4 Ethics

Participant data collection and retention

The study established two distinct consent processes for the online survey questionnaire (Appendix C) and voluntary semi-structured interviews (Appendices G and H) that also explicitly stated how collected data would be used and retained in line with the University of Sydney's formal data management policies and practices.

The online survey questionnaire designed and hosted in Qualtrics XM was configured to deidentify all participant responses and all secondary optional participant inputs of personal information were directed into separate forms from the main survey to maintain anonymity within survey responses.

Participant incentivisation for online survey questionnaire

Conn, Mo and Purohit's comparative study (of web-based survey incentive strategies (2024) indicate that the use of 'egoistic incentives' in the form of small and large lottery conditions were most effective in yielding survey responses from Australian participants over no incentives and 'altruistic incentives' in the form of charitable donations for survey participation.

The study incorporated a non-financial incentive for prospective participants in the form of an opportunity to enter a raffle for a chance to win one of five gift cards valued at AUD \$200 each. The nominated sum was set for broad appeal to targeted participants and was strictly limited, and conveyed to prospective participants, to

the survey component as a token of appreciation for time and effort incurred by participants in than payment for the time incurred. The actual incentive amount and the conditions for eligibility were not disclosed in the study recruitment materials and was only disclosed in the survey's Participant Information Statement (Appendix B).

3.5 Limitations

Eligibility of study participants

Geographic scope

Restricted eligibility of study participants to current residents of 'metropolitan Sydney' limited participation that would have provided additional depth to the visualisation and analysis of 'informal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney' – particularly from participants whose associations with 'Western Sydney' are likely to be influenced by historic and contemporary media representations of the region like residents outside Greater Sydney or from other Australian states and territories.

Participant age restrictions

Age limitations for semi-structured interview participants were implemented (no interviewees under 18 years old) prevented the study capturing the perspectives of a relevant demographic for visualising and analysing 'informal' boundaries, considering that approximately 18 per cent of 'Greater Sydney' residents are aged 19 years or under (ABS 2021c), due to additional ethical considerations and resourcing to facilitate informed consent that could not be accommodated within the timeframe and resources of the study.

Sample sizes

The study's sample sizes for both online survey and semi-structured interviews were considered reasonable considering the timeframe for data collection and limited available resources. However, a larger sample size of interviewees, would have provided a richer depth to the qualitative portion of the study.

English language proficiency

In specific reference to the documented linguistic diversity of 'Western Sydney' (Turner 2008) and the proportion of population within Greater Sydney (42 per cent) who speak also speak another language other than English at home (ABS 2021c), a notable limitation of this study is that its primary data collection activities were conducted in English. Availability of resources to translate and conduct interviews in languages other than English could have provided significant depth to results along associations of 'Western Sydney' with specific ethnic enclaves or perceptions of its diverse population.

Depth of relevant grey literature

Noting that the scope of grey literature reviewed in this paper was specifically identified as publicly available, the author acknowledges the limitations of the study's timeframe in being able to conduct an exhaustive search for offline, paper-based literature to further inform the results and discussion within this paper.

Chapter 4 Results

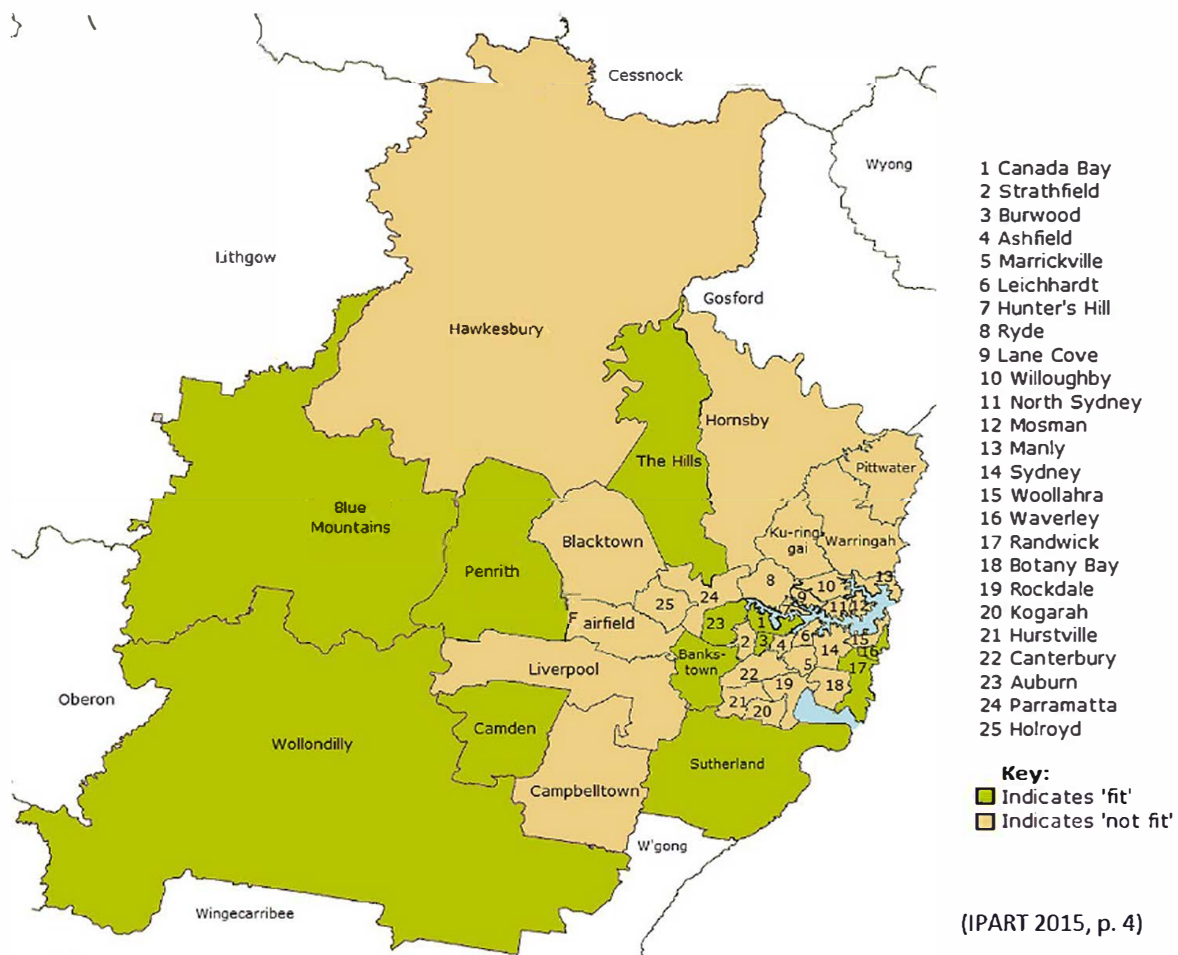
4.1 'Formal' boundaries – boundaries of public institutions

4.1.1 Impacts of NSW Local Government 'Fit for the Future' Reforms

LGAs are used to delineate space for territorial governance by municipal bodies generally called 'councils and resource distribution from state governments but their boundaries are not static and are subject to political decision-making.

In 2015-2016, the NSW Government embarked on 'Fit for the Future' local government reform based on councils' financial performance and sustainability, scale, and strategic capacity to address future needs of their communities (IPART 2015) which resulted in the current LGA boundaries (Appendix A). Pre-reform boundaries are provided in Figure 20 along with the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal's final assessment of councils' 'fitness' as administrative units.

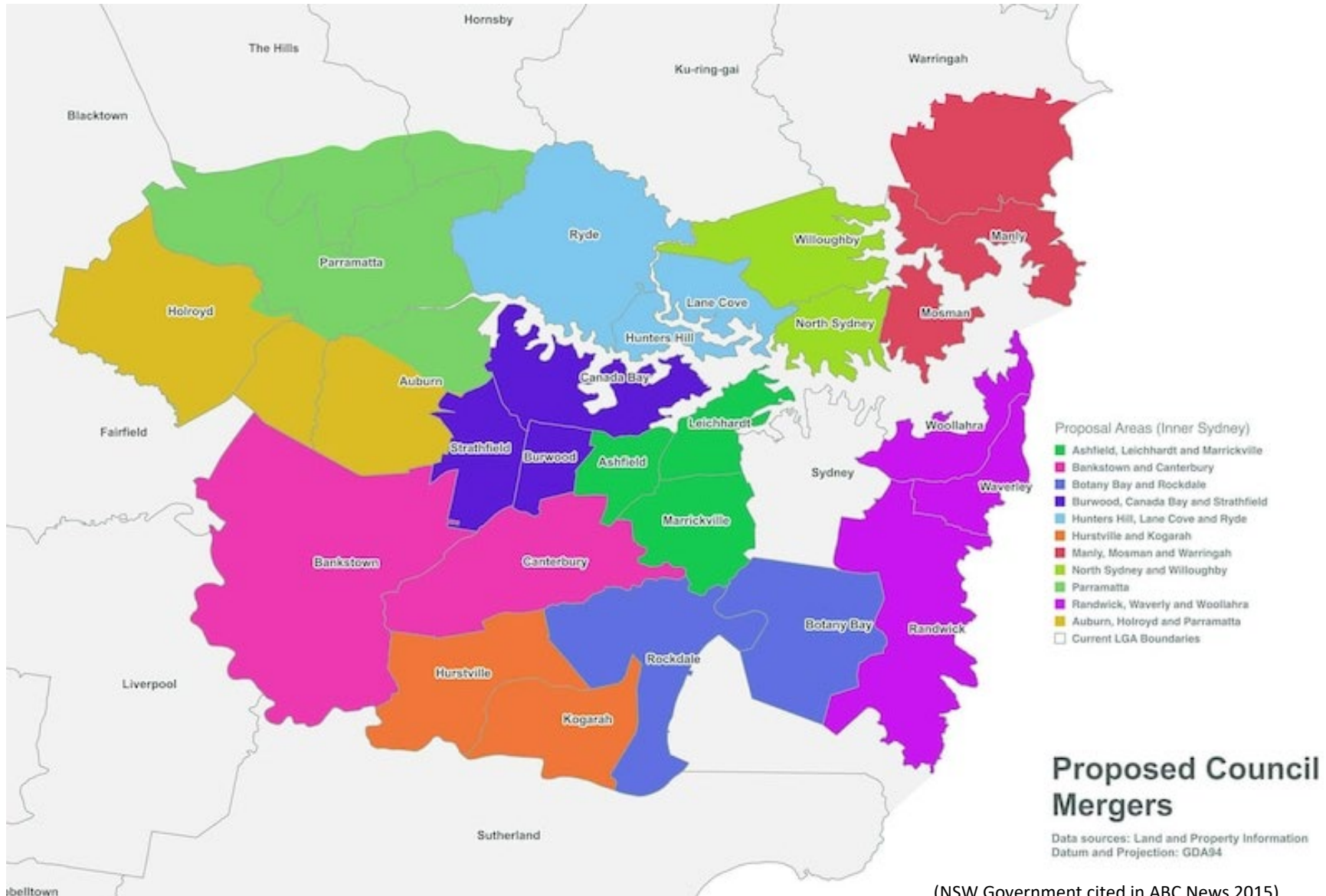
Figure 20: Metropolitan Sydney LGA Boundaries prior to 'Fit for the Future' Reforms and assessed 'fitness'



Proposed changes (Figures 21 and 22 overleaf) attracted significant media attention due to public and political contestation of perceived community benefits (Gerathy 2016) and implications for local representation in administrative processes (ABC News 2016).

With respect to boundaries of 'Western Sydney', the 'Fit for Purpose' boundary changes were acknowledged by the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC), a self-identified peak regional advocacy body, in its May 2016 press release welcoming three new member councils of Cumberland, Canterbury-Bankstown and Parramatta (see Figure 23) within its spatial remit, 'while WSROC's geographical area has only increased marginally, the region has seen a significant realignment of its local government boundaries' (WSROC 2016a).

Figure 21: Proposed LGA Mergers (Inner Sydney)



(NSW Government cited in ABC News 2015)

Figure 22: Proposed LGA Mergers (Outer Sydney)

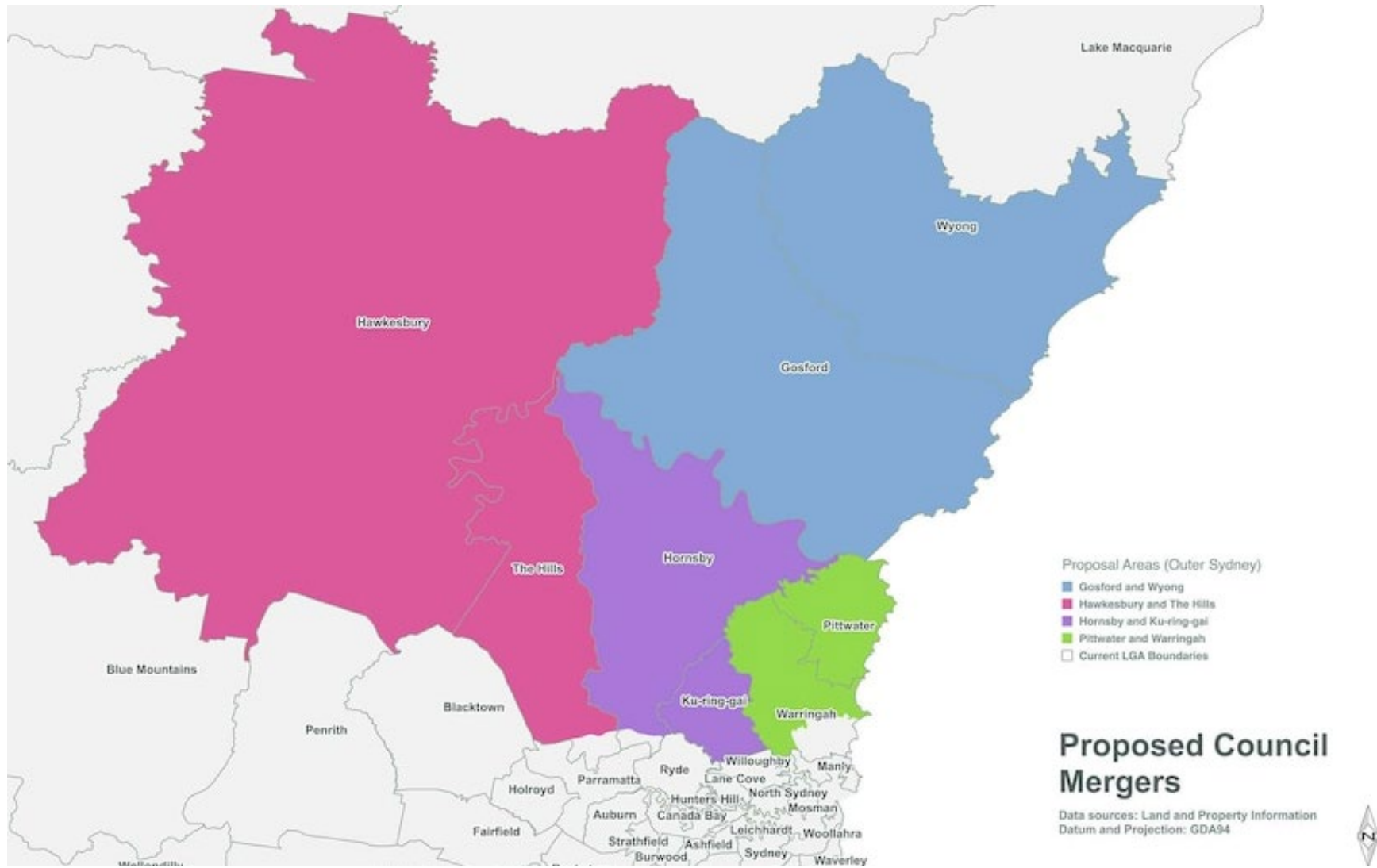
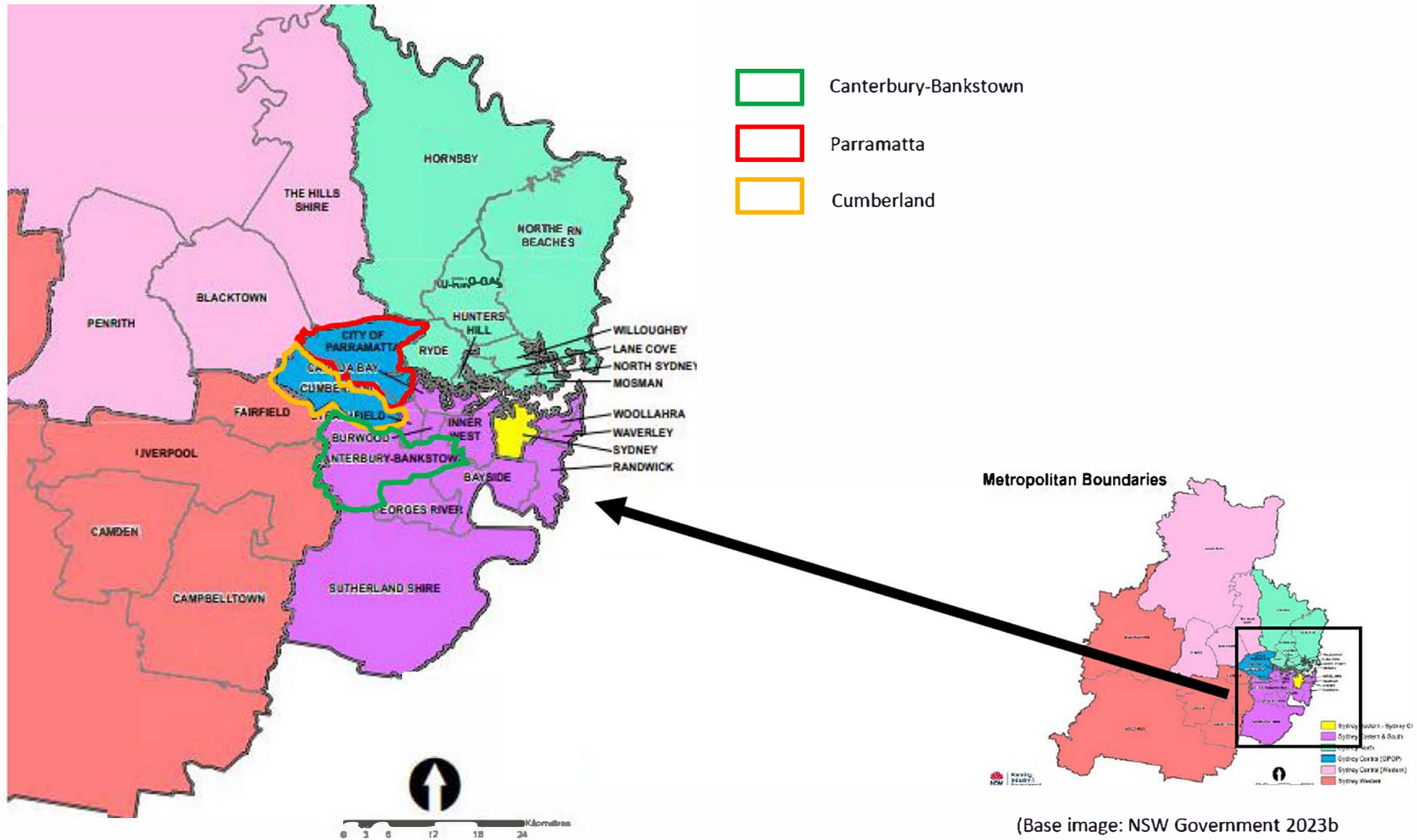


Figure 23: New Member Councils of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils as of May 2016



(Base image: NSW Government 2023b
Boundaries: WSROC 2016a)

Overall, 20 new councils were created from 'Fit for the Future' reforms by 2016 (Uddin 2017) with seven of them within the current Greater Sydney boundaries:

- Bayside (Botany and Rockdale)
- Canterbury-Bankstown (Bankstown and Canterbury)
- Cumberland (parts of Auburn and Holroyd)
- Georges River (Hurstville and Kogarah)
- Inner West (Ashfield, Leichardt and Marrickville)
- Northern Beaches (Manly, Pittwater and Warringah)
- Parramatta (Parramatta, and parts of Auburn, Holroyd, Hornsby, and The Hills Shire).

(Local Government (Council Amalgamations) Proclamation 2016 (NSW), Local Government (Bayside) Proclamation 2016 (NSW) & Local Government (City of Parramatta and Cumberland) Proclamation 2016 (NSW))

The proposed amalgamations of the following LGAs, some of which launched protracted legal action to block the mergers (Saulwick & Nicholls 2017), did not proceed due to the NSW Government's abandonment of the reforms in 2017 (Gerathy 2016; Glanville & Stuart 2017):

- Randwick, Waverley and Woollahra
- Ku-ring-gai and Hornsby
- Burwood, Canada Bay and Strathfield
- Hunter's Hill, Lane Cove and Ryde
- Mosman, North Sydney and Willoughby.

Interestingly, *The Sydney Morning Herald* provided an editorial comment on the power dynamics relating to the policy:

Now Ms Berejiklian [NSW Premier] has decided to abandon mergers for 14 councils where the process was still under legal challenge. That decision rewards all the councils that held out against the policy, and betrays all those who acquiesced, even if they may have preferred not to. The ones who held out happened to come from wealthier areas.

(The Sydney Morning Herald 2017)

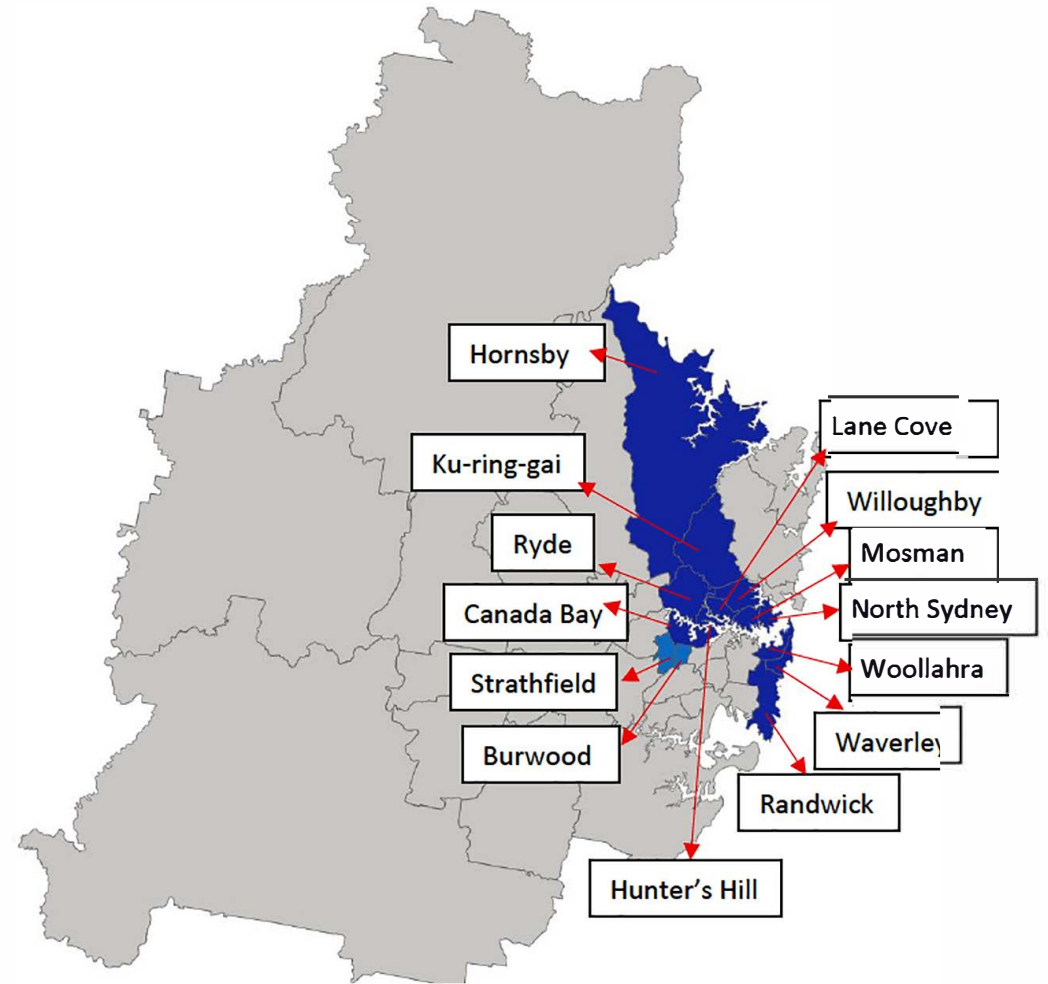
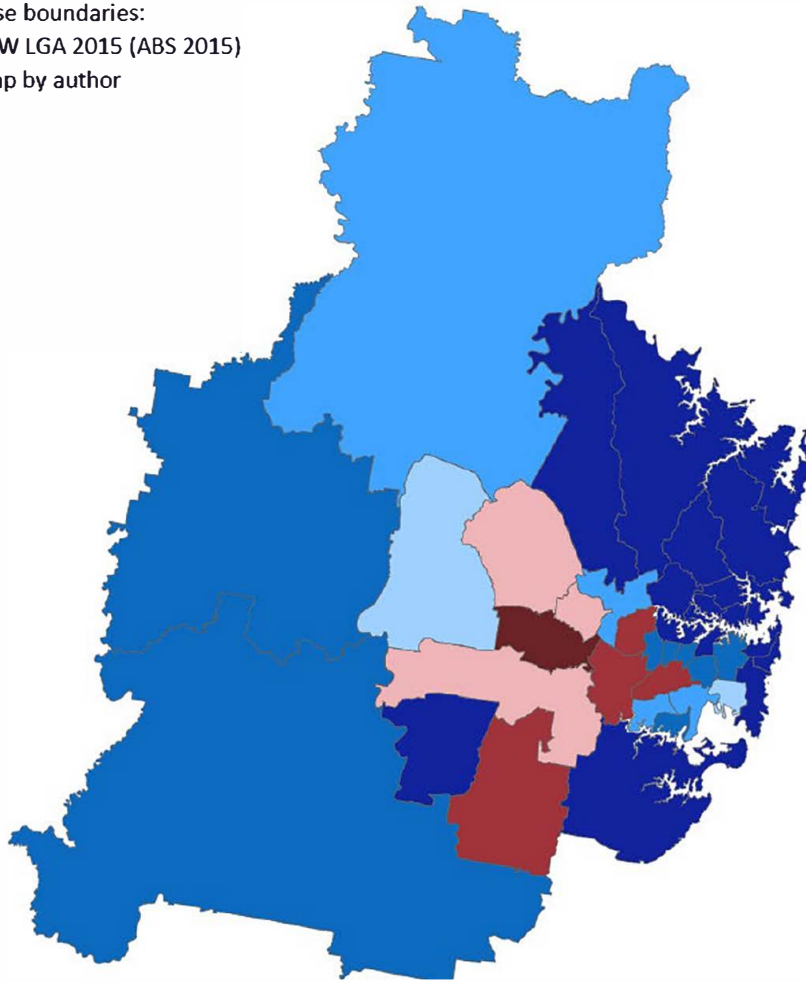
Figure 24 overleaf shows relative socio-economic disadvantage in Greater Sydney, as well as the isolation of results for LGAs which were not amalgamated, with pre-amalgamation boundaries applied to the ABS' Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD), which measures proportion of relatively disadvantaged people within an area (ABS 2023a), from 2011 national census data to illustrate the relevance of *The Sydney Morning Herald's* comment. The resulting visualisations reinforce *The Sydney Morning Herald's* commentary on underlying spatial power dynamics of Greater Sydney which sees advantaged LGAs, with notably smaller populations than their amalgamated counterparts (IPART 2015), defy institutional policies ostensibly designed to promote economic efficiencies and local government administration.

Figure 24: Pre-‘Fit for the Future’ Visualisations of Socio-economic Disadvantage in Greater Sydney (left) and Non-Amalgamated LGAs (right), 2011

IRSD Decile 1 4 6 7 8 9 10

IRSD Decile 9 10

Source Data: ABS 2013
 Base boundaries:
 NSW LGA 2015 (ABS 2015)
 Map by author



*An IRSD Decile of 1 denotes high levels of relative socio-economic disadvantage while a score of 10 denotes low levels of relative socio-economic disadvantage.

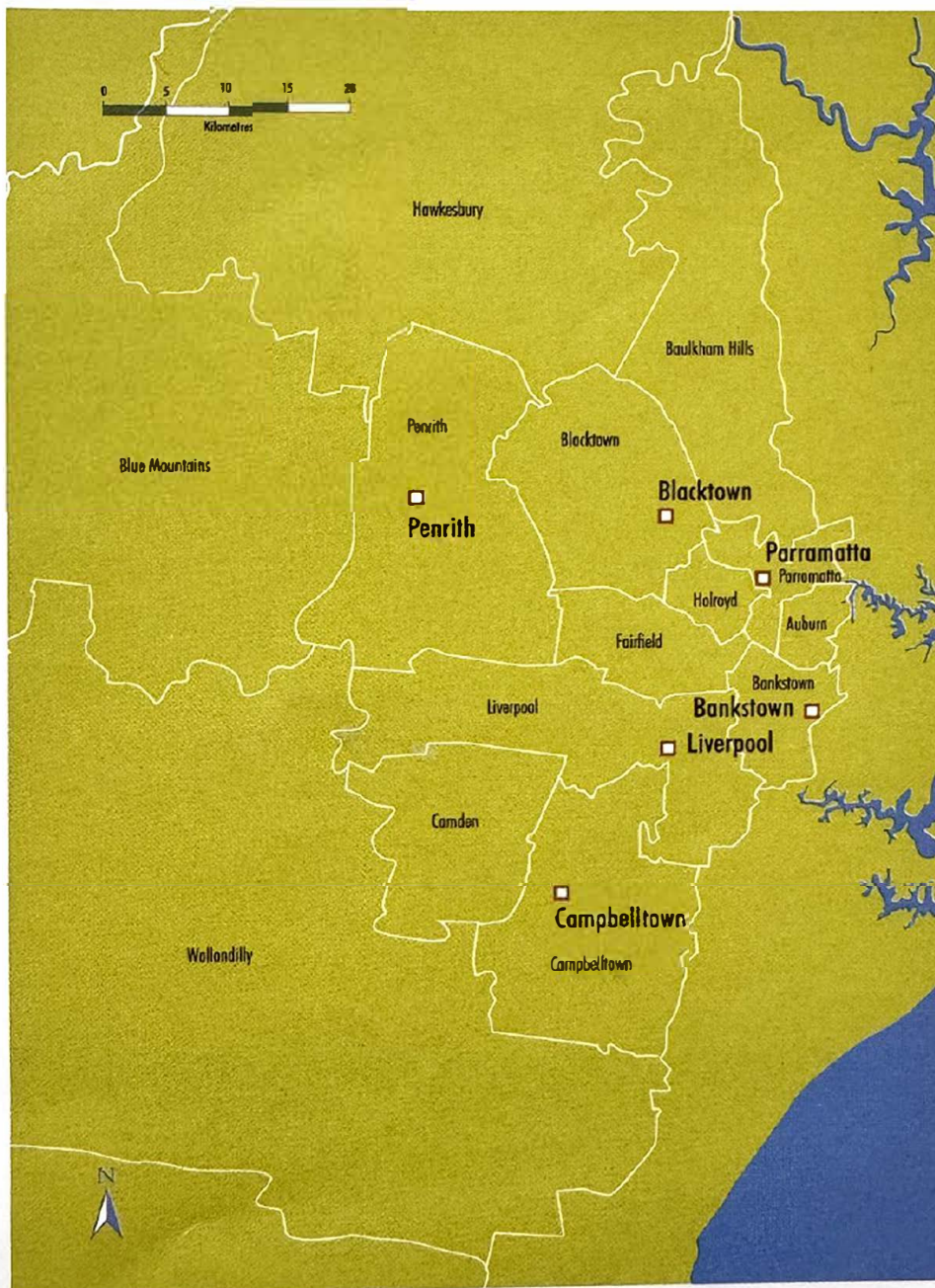
4.1.2 Minister for Western Sydney

The perceived importance of 'Western Sydney' as a spatial imaginary to the NSW Government is evident with the establishment of a 'Minister Assisting the Premier on Western Sydney' in 1997 and its enduring presence as a portfolio, and featuring increasingly as a distinct region within NSW Budget Papers, in the subsequent fourteen ministries since its creation (Parliament of New South Wales n.d.) which include at time of writing.

When the 'Minister for Western Sydney' portfolio was first established in 1999, an Office of Western Sydney (not existing at present) was created to support the position and documented the spatial remit of its responsibilities for regional development as seen below.

Figure 25: 'Western Sydney' LGAs defined by the Office of Western Sydney (pre-2016 LGA reforms)

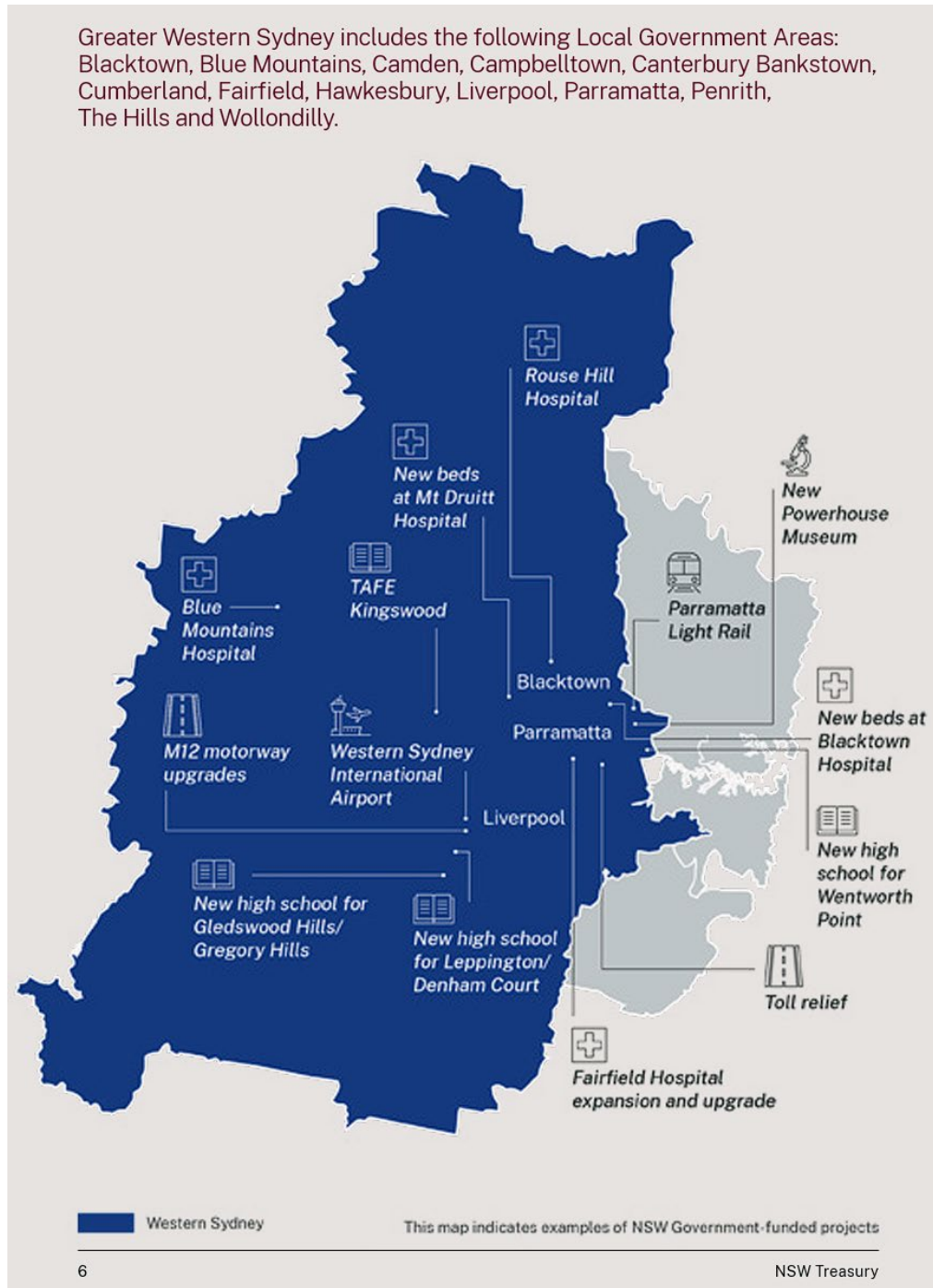
Western Sydney Region local government areas



(Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1998, p. 3)

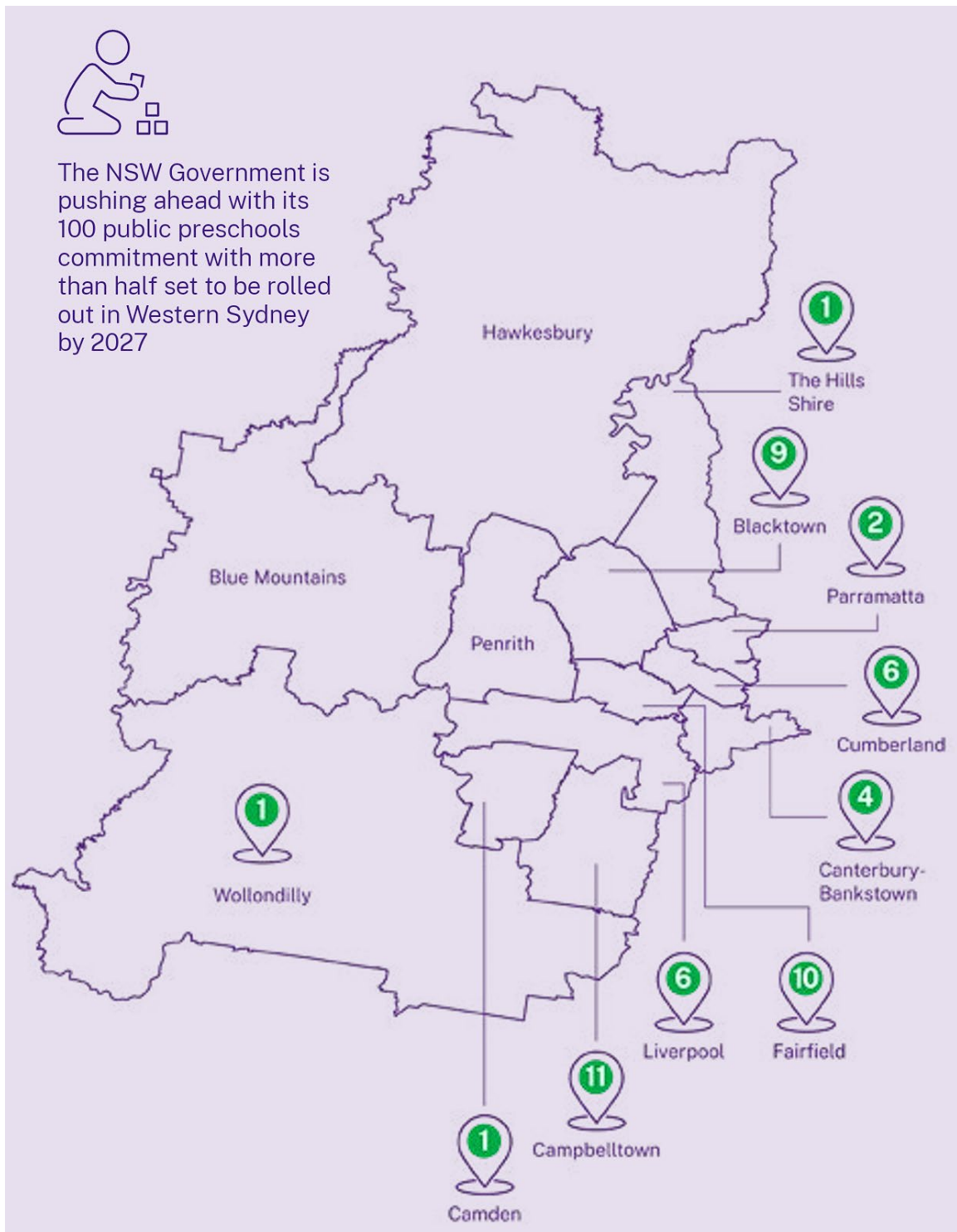
The current portfolio has not publicised a spatial remit although the current minister’s co-authorship with the NSW Treasurer for the foreword of the two latest NSW Budget Papers for ‘Western Sydney’ under the Minns government (NSW Treasury 2023 & 2024) and their visual depictions of the region (Figures 26 and 27), suggests a general alignment with pre-2016 LGA boundaries of the historic Office of Western Sydney.

Figure 26: Excerpt of NSW Budget 2023-24 – Our plan for Western Sydney



(NSW Treasury 2023, p. 6)

Figure 27: Excerpt of NSW Budget NSW Budget 2024-25 – Our plan for Western Sydney



(NSW Treasury 2024, p. 17)

However, it should be noted that boundaries of 'Western Sydney' between state governments ministries are also inconsistent as seen below in the excerpt from the 2019-2020 Budget Paper under the former Perrottet government.

Figure 28: Excerpts of NSW Budget 2019-20 – NSW Regions + Western Sydney

SUPPORTING Western Sydney

(NSW Treasury 2018, p. 29)

Framed by the State's protected Natural Area and Metropolitan Rural Area, Western Sydney is home to over a third of the New South Wales population and is one of the fastest growing areas of the State.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT CONNECTIVITY

An emerging 30-minute city, with public transport bringing residents and jobs closer together.

- **\$2.2 billion** over four years towards More Trains More Services delivering world class digital systems, enhanced fleet procurement, station upgrades and other infrastructure upgrades.
- **\$1.7 billion** over four years for New South Wales and Federal Government funded road upgrades to support the new Western Sydney Airport at Badgerys Creek including the Northern Road between Narellan and Penrith and the M12 Motorway.

CREATING JOBS AND SKILLS FOR THE FUTURE

Access to education and skills training to harness new investment and knowledge-intensive jobs.

- **\$79.6 million** over four years to deliver a new Western Sydney 'Mega TAFE' specialising in construction trades. It will provide modern facilities that support the delivery of specialised training in construction trades including carpentry, electrical and plumbing.
- **\$4.3 million** over four years to provide a co-working startup hub in Western Sydney. This will provide subsidised and affordable work spaces and programs for businesses and start-ups.



BUILDING A LIVEABLE AND SUSTAINABLE CITY

Integrating the unique and natural assets for an even more liveable and sustainable community.

- Significant New South Wales and Federal Government investment in the Western Sydney International (NancyBird Walton) Airport and surrounding Western Sydney Aerotropolis. This entails significant infrastructure investment as well as planning for future skills, jobs and educational opportunities, supporting industries to leverage the new airport.
- Strategic planning for the region will ensure green and open spaces are embedded in future planning to create high amenity for existing and future residents.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES

Blacktown, Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, City of Parramatta, Cumberland, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Hills, Liverpool, Penrith and Wollondilly

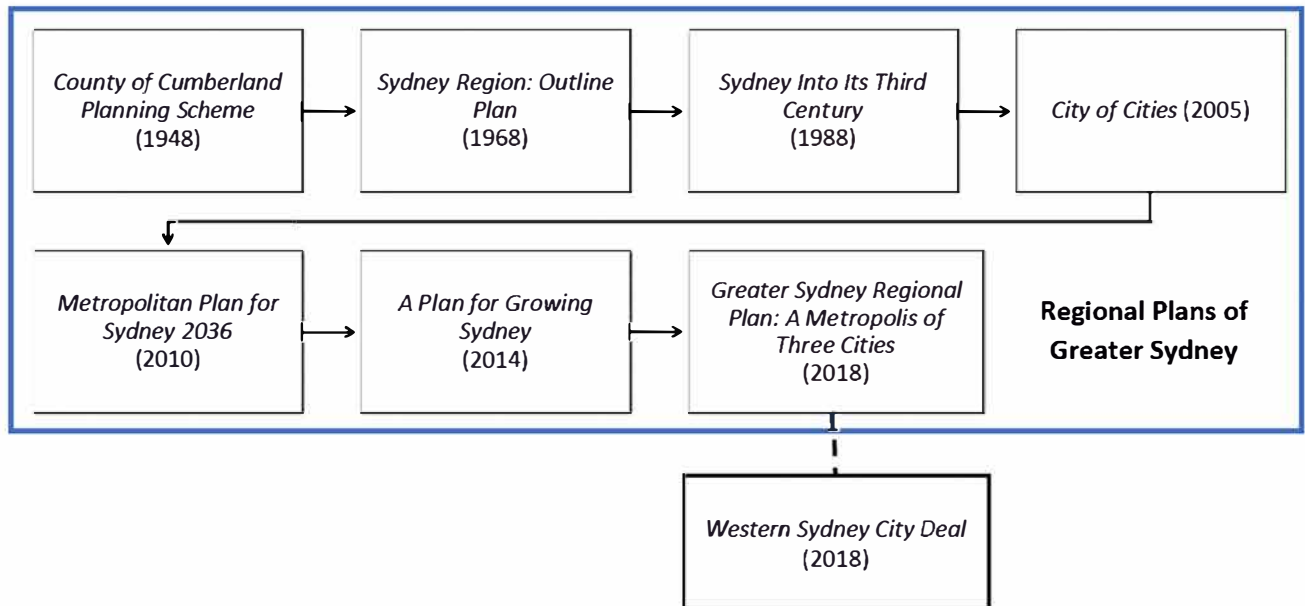
(Red bordered inset: NSW Treasury 2018, p. 30)

4.1.3 'Western Sydney' in metropolitan strategies and plans of Greater Sydney

Development and governance of Greater Sydney and its planning controls were generally not streamlined until the end of World War II when postwar reconstruction efforts provided the political impetus for large-scale metropolitan reform (Ashton & Freestone 2008).

Figure 29 illustrates all strategic metropolitan plans of Greater Sydney, including the *Western Sydney City Deal*, published to date that are examined in this subsection to locate boundaries of 'Western Sydney'.

Figure 29: Key strategic metropolitan plans of Greater Sydney



County of Cumberland Planning Scheme (1948)

The *County of Cumberland Planning Scheme* is viewed as the first attempt at a Greater Sydney strategic metropolitan plan (Winston 1957). This scheme was created by the Cumberland County Council, a statutory body formed by local governments under the *Local Government (Town and Country Planning) Amendment Act 1945* (Dictionary of Sydney 2008b), within the County of Cumberland that encompasses a significant portion of current metropolitan Sydney (Figure 30 overleaf).

The scheme's distinguishing feature was the proposed creation of a 'green belt' to delineate rural and existing residential areas, except for identified satellite towns of concentrated urban growth, to contain urban sprawl as seen in Figure 31. Despite the scheme's vision, it was considered a failure to address postwar population growth (Daniel 2018), and the Cumberland County Council was abolished and replaced with the State Planning Authority of New South Wales (Dictionary of Sydney 2008a).

Although 'Western Sydney' does not appear in the scheme itself as a broad imaginary or defined subregion, it is important to note that it includes significant portions of its current formally bound land as geographic 'Western Sydney' and informal spatial bounding as 'Greater Western Sydney' (see Figure 7).

Figure 30: Cumberland County Council and its Constituent Local Government Boundaries



(Winston 1957, p. 26)

Figure 31: County of Cumberland Planning Scheme - Functional Plan



(Cumberland County Council 1957, Figure 1)

Sydney Region: Outline Plan 1970 – 2000 A.D (1968) and Prelude to a Plan – Sydney Region: Growth and Change (1967)

Prior to publication of the *Sydney Region: Outline Plan 1970 – 2000 A.D*, which aimed to provide 30 years’ of guiding principles and policies for metropolitan Sydney’s development, the State Planning Authority of New South Wales published a preliminary report named *Prelude to a Plan – Sydney Region: Growth and Change* which provided contextual information on population requirements and land use challenges that changed since the *County of Cumberland Planning Scheme*.

Within this report, identified LGA groupings – notably ‘Western Suburbs’ and various ‘western’ portions of the city - began to emerge more prominently as spatial considerations in metropolitan planning as seen in Figures 32 and 33.

Figure 32: Prelude to a Plan – Sydney Region: Growth and Change - Population capacities in metropolitan Sydney

Table 4 shows, for groups of Municipalities and Shires, the 1947 and 1966 populations and the population capacities which were proposed by the County Plan.

Table 4.	Group of Municipalities and Shires (1966)*	Population 1947	Population Capacity County Plan	Population 1966
	City of Sydney	213,800	188,000†	158,800
	Inner Suburbs	159,100	133,000†	135,900
	Eastern Suburbs	257,500	295,000†	256,100
	St. George	147,400	193,200	194,000
	Canterbury	99,400	113,400	115,700
	Bankstown	42,600	121,500	160,000
	Western Suburbs	165,500	167,900	158,100
	Parramatta	124,900	193,000†	221,500
	Liverpool-Fairfield	39,700	78,300	170,100
	Sutherland	29,200	75,200	134,100
	Ryde	52,000	108,000†	95,500
	North Shore	199,600	258,500	246,300
	Hornsby	31,800	55,000	81,200
	Manly-Warringah	66,700	122,500	159,600

* Municipalities and Shires within these groups are listed on page 18.
 † Because of changes in Local Government Area boundaries, these figures are only approximate.

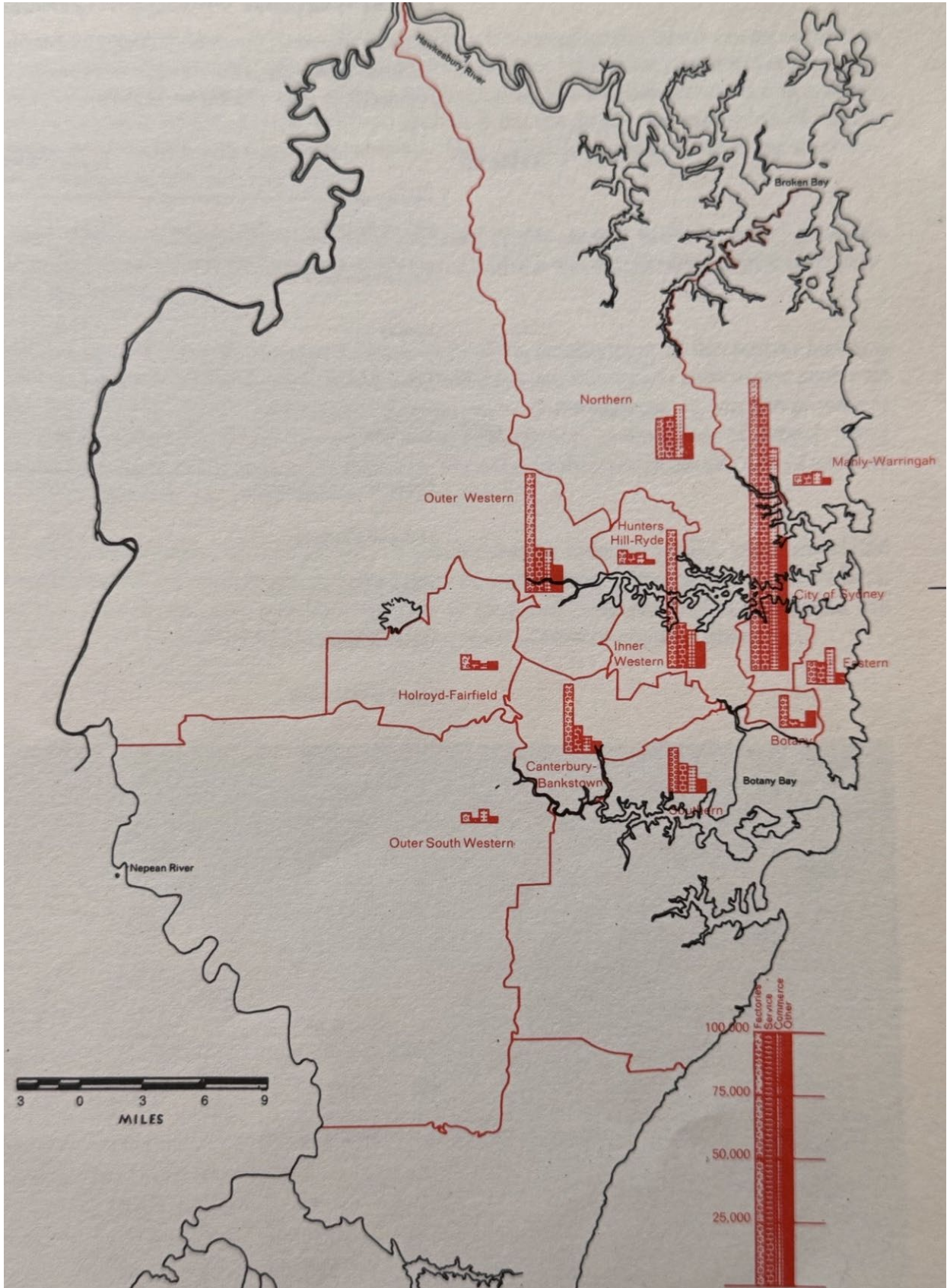
Groups of Municipalities and Shires shown in Table 4

- City of Sydney.
- Inner Suburbs: Leichhardt, Marrickville.
- Eastern Suburbs: Botany, Randwick, Waverley, Woollahra.
- St. George: Hurstville, Kogarah, Rockdale.
- Canterbury.
- Bankstown.
- Western Suburbs: Ashfield, Burwood, Concord, Drummoyne, Strathfield.
- Parramatta: Parramatta, Auburn, Holroyd.
- Liverpool-Fairfield.
- Sutherland.
- Ryde: Ryde, Hunters Hill.
- North Shore: Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Willoughby.
- Hornsby.
- Manly-Warringah.

Top: State Planning Authority of New South Wales 1967, p. 17

Left: State Planning Authority of New South Wales 1967, p. 18

Figure 33: Prelude to a Plan – Sydney Region: Growth and Change - Geographic distribution of employment types across metropolitan Sydney

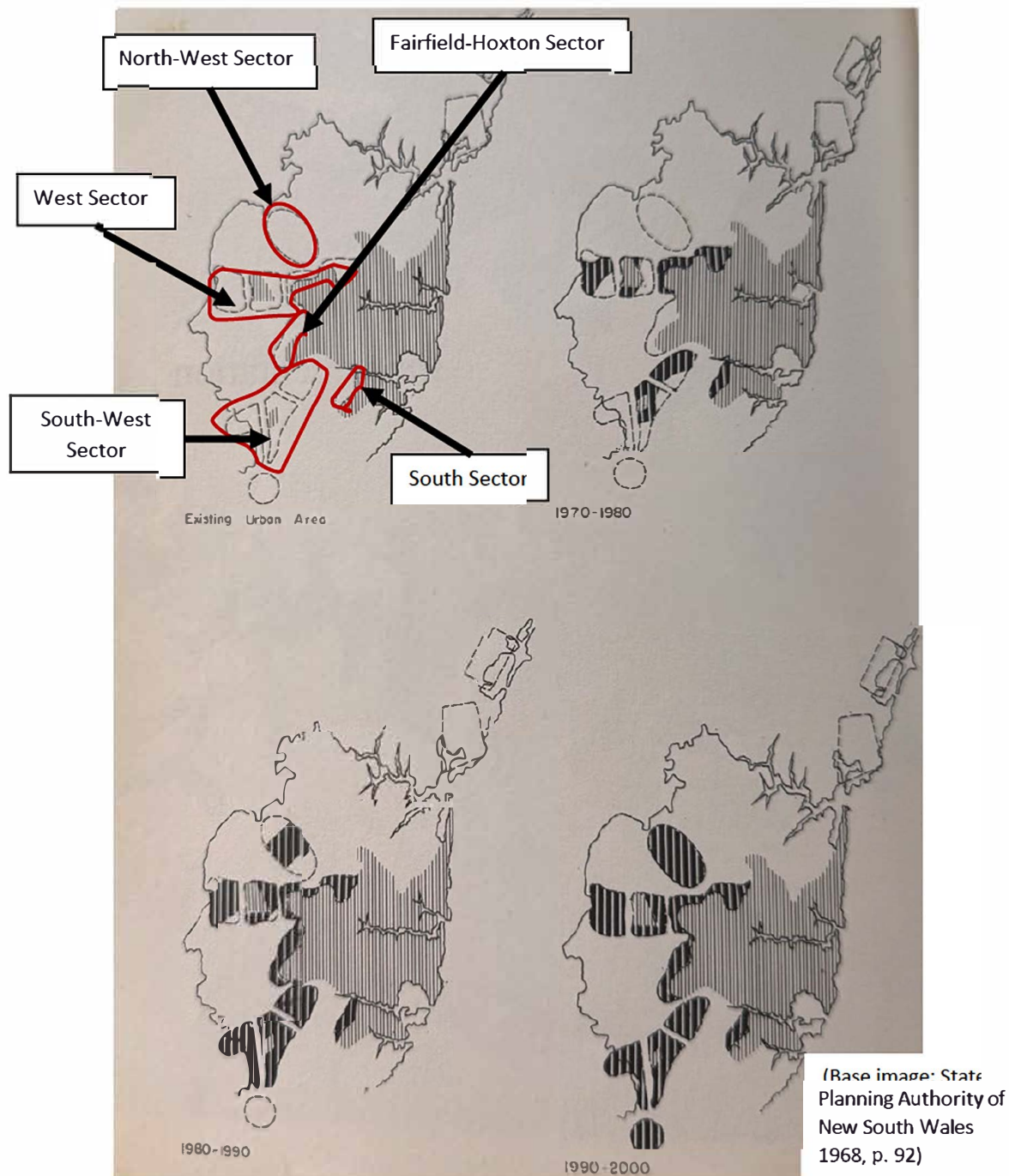


(State Planning Authority of New South Wales 1967, p. 23)

Interestingly, the prelude report is notable in that it articulated, to a degree, the potential implications of spatial disparities in metropolitan Sydney with regards to distribution of employment and journeys to work which have been extensively investigated in Australian literature (Sarkar, Gurran & Shrivastava 2024).

The *Sydney Region: Outline Plan 1970 – 2000 A.D* did not advance any specific boundaries of 'Western Sydney' but did establish the new areas of urban development located west and south-west of the existing urban area identified below that would later eventuate and be bound by present boundaries of metropolitan Sydney and various boundaries of 'Western Sydney'.

Figure 34: Sydney Region: Outline Plan 1970 – 2000 A.D proposed development of metropolitan Sydney's 'Existing Urban Areas' (annotated by author)



Sydney Into its Third Century (1988)

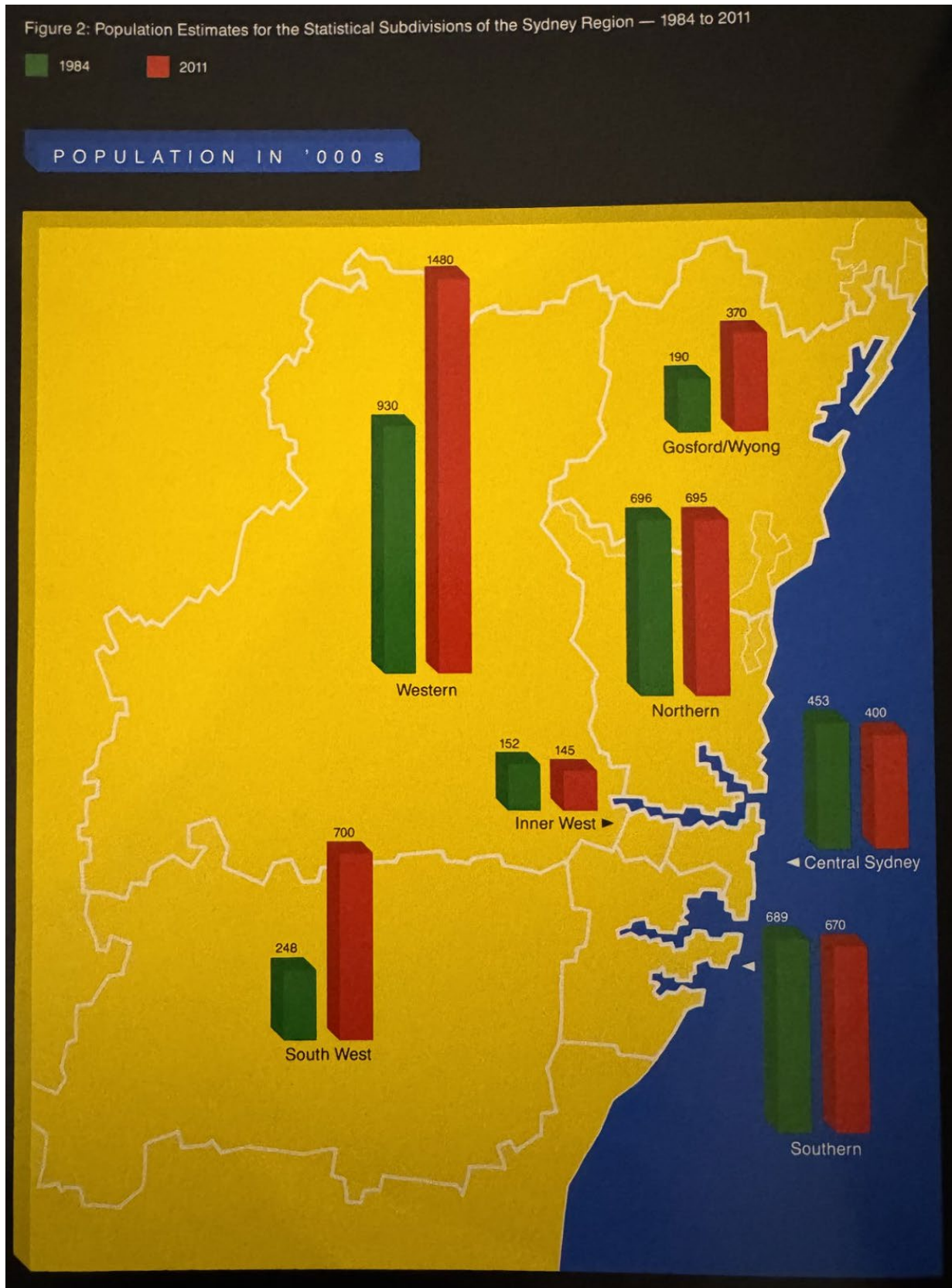
Twenty years after the *Sydney Region: Outline Plan 1970 – 2000 A.D.*, the NSW Government embarked on a renewed metropolitan strategy focusing on managing the city's population growth and distribution within *Sydney Into its Third Century* (Department of Planning 1998).

Despite recognising the increasing population of 'Sydney's western suburbs' (NSW Government 1998) and migration patterns within metropolitan Sydney pertaining to immigrant settlement within 'central Sydney', 'inner western suburbs' and 'Western Sydney' (NSW Government 1988, p. 24), these terms are not defined. Instead, the closest spatial classifications provided in the strategy is provided in Figure 35 overleaf, showing 'statistical subdivisions of the Sydney region', shown in abstract form with no discernible data source.

Throughout postwar development, Greater Sydney's manufacturing sector was located its areas denoted as 'western suburbs' / 'Western Sydney. The region's dependence on manufacturing sectors, declining from the 1970s with jobs moving overseas to Asia (Searle 2002), as key employment markets and its ongoing jobs deficit for residents have been observed by successive state governments as obstacles to spatial equity since the 1980s (Fagan & Dowling 2005). However, continued oversight of increasing spatial mismatch of population growth and employment markets within the city is evident within this strategy in the absence of sub-regional strategies of metropolitan development and its overarching promotion of the eastern harbour CBD as the centre of knowledge-based employment and commercial recreation in efforts to position the city as a major commercial, financial and tourist hub in the domestic and international market.

Metropolitan strategic plans since – seen in the next three plans – have largely concentrated on Parramatta's development as the regional centre and 'white collar' employment hub for 'Western Sydney' (Searle 2002) to address the city's spatial mismatch of knowledge-intensive jobs and growing worker populations, with little reference to structural unemployment in the region from declining manufacturing industries (Fagan & Dowling 2005), until the current *GSRP* which strategises a specific 'Western Sydney' as a hub of advanced manufacturing stimulated and complemented by the 'Western Sydney Aerotropolis' and its associated industries.

Figure 35: Sydney Into its Third Century – Population Estimates for Statistical Subdivisions of the Sydney Region



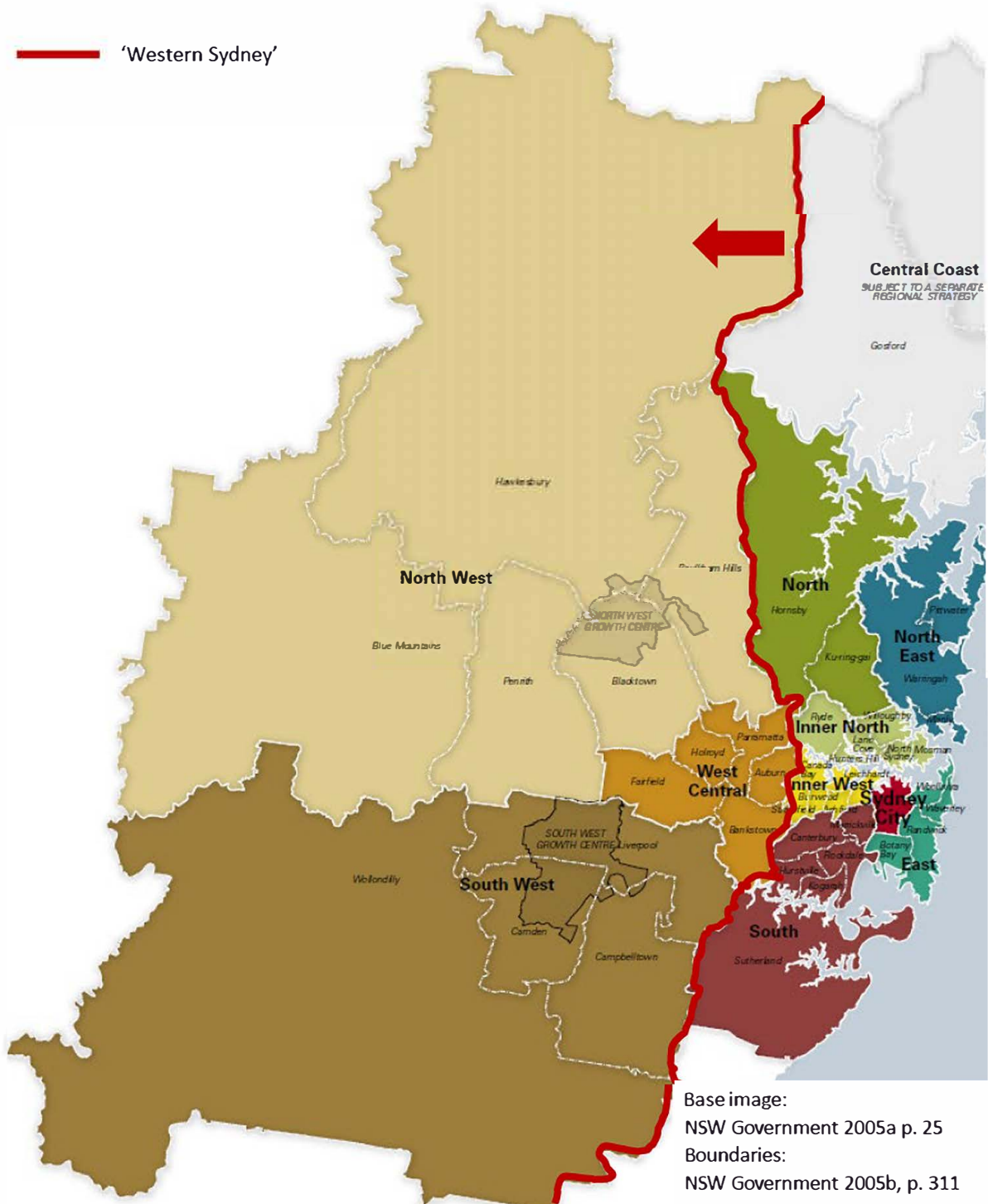
(Department of Planning 1988, p. 10)

City of cities: a plan for Sydney's future (2005)

This plan represented a shift in strategic metropolitan development in the pursuit of sustainable growth towards sub-regional planning, spatial linkages within the city, and prominence of socio-economic spatial inequalities between 'Western Sydney' and the rest of Greater Sydney.

This strategy is the first of the Greater Sydney metropolitan plans to specifically define 'Western Sydney' as a collection of 14 LGAs (left of the red line) within the plan's sub-regions. These LGAs correlate to the initial spatial remit of the Minister for Western Sydney.

Figure 36: City of cities: a plan for Sydney's future – boundaries of 'Western Sydney' and Greater Sydney's sub-regions (annotated by author)

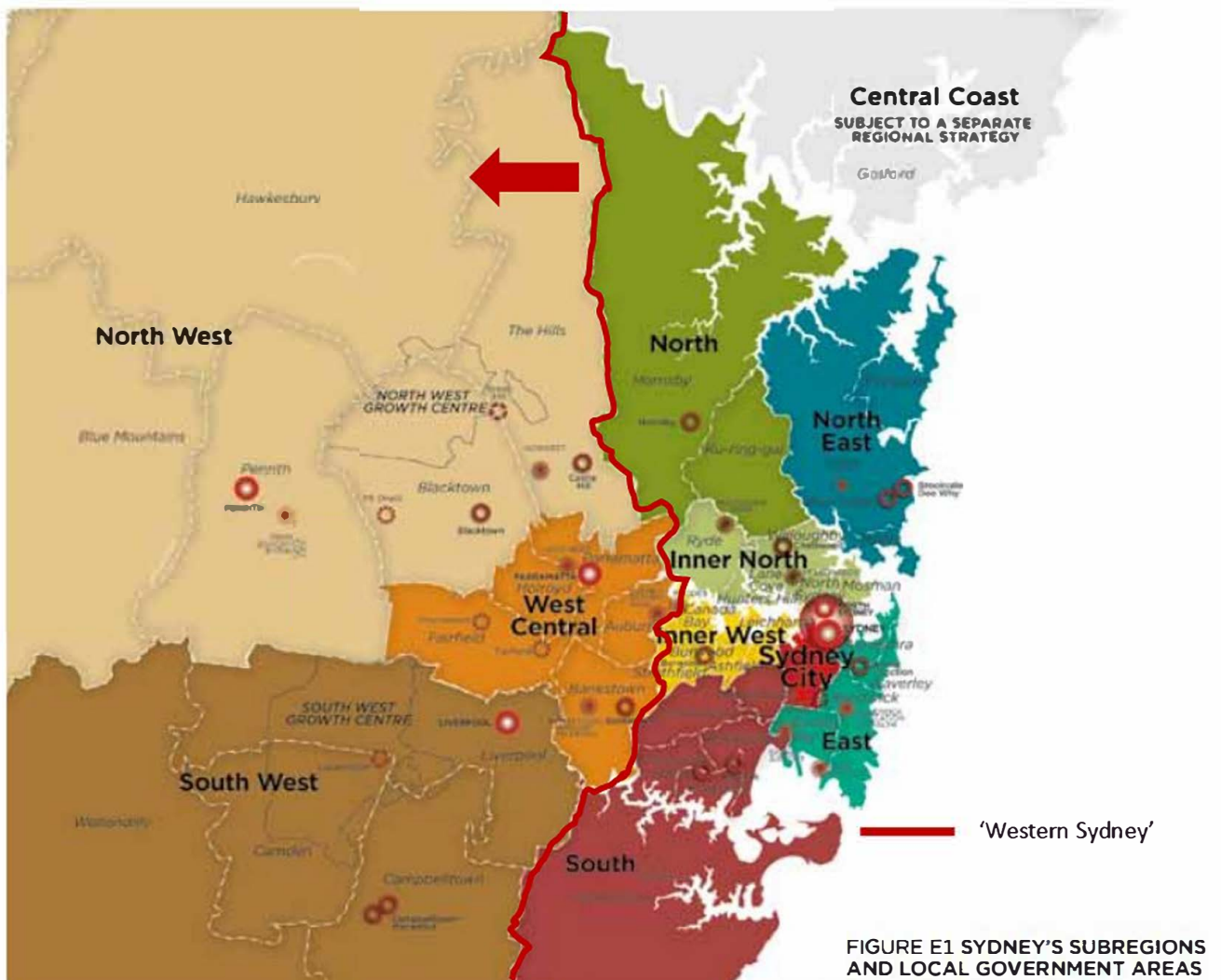


Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 (2010)

This plan updated its predecessor by integrating land use and transport planning within a single framework while retaining a focus on sustainable development and addressing spatial inequalities in employment and education opportunities for the growing population of ‘Western Sydney’. This plan focused on strategic transport corridors and identified ‘Major Centres’ across the city to guide sustainable commercial and residential development.

This plan retains the same definition of ‘Western Sydney’ as a collection of 14 LGAs and sub-regions used by *City of cities: a plan for Sydney’s future* (2005).

Figure 37: Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 – boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ and Greater Sydney’s sub-regions (annotated by author)



Base image: NSW Government 2010b, p. 133.

Boundaries: NSW Government 2010c, p. 272

A Plan for Growing Sydney (2014)

This plan's key priorities were strengthening of the international competitiveness of Greater Sydney through infrastructure investment, expansion of global economic corridors and strategic centres, and continued focus on supporting economic development and transport infrastructure of 'Western Sydney' to facilitate productivity of the city and state.

The strategy retains the same definition of 'Western Sydney' as a collection of 14 LGAs and sub-regions as utilised by *City of cities: a plan for Sydney's future* (2005) and *Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036* (2010) and illustrates close to a decade's worth of consistency in strategic metropolitan regional planning bounding practices of the NSW Government pertaining to 'Western Sydney'.

Figure 38: A Plan for Growing Sydney – boundaries of 'Western Sydney' and Greater Sydney's sub-regions by identified LGAs (annotated by author)



Base image: NSW Government 2014 p.107
 Boundaries: NSW Government 2014, p. 140

Greater Sydney Regional Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities (2018) and Western Sydney City Deal (2018)





The current plan, the *Greater Sydney Regional Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities (GSRP)*, posits Sydney as a global polycentric city as part of a broader institutional push towards city-regions as a solution to housing, economic opportunities, and urban development constraints within an increasingly urbanising and globalised world (Roberts 2022). The strategy represents a significant shift away from previously defined sub-regions towards three cities comprised of districts grouped by LGAs and governed by separate strategies. Although the three cities are defined in this plan, these boundaries are not designed to function as 'hard' borders but instead designed to force collaboration across local governments (Pham 2018).

This plan represents a significant shift in integrated land use and transport planning definitions of 'Western Sydney' as it implicitly identifies 'Western Sydney' as the 'Western Parkland City', subject to a specific Western City District Plan (GSC 2018f), comprising of eight LGAs (refer Figure 39), with direct correlation to the bounded area of the *Western Sydney City Deal* (Commonwealth of Australia Government 2018). Here, 'Western Sydney' is a specific area subject to a multi-lateral coordination of funding and activities to facilitate economic and wellbeing development and actively shaped by significant investment in the upcoming Western Sydney Airport as an emerging aerotropolis.

As evident in Figures 40 and 41 respectively, the remaining LGAs which had previously been defined as 'Western Sydney' in the previous three plans are largely encapsulated within the boundaries of the 'Central River City' except for Bankstown LGA, now Canterbury-Bankstown LGA following the 2016 local government reforms, now bound within the 'Eastern Harbour City'.

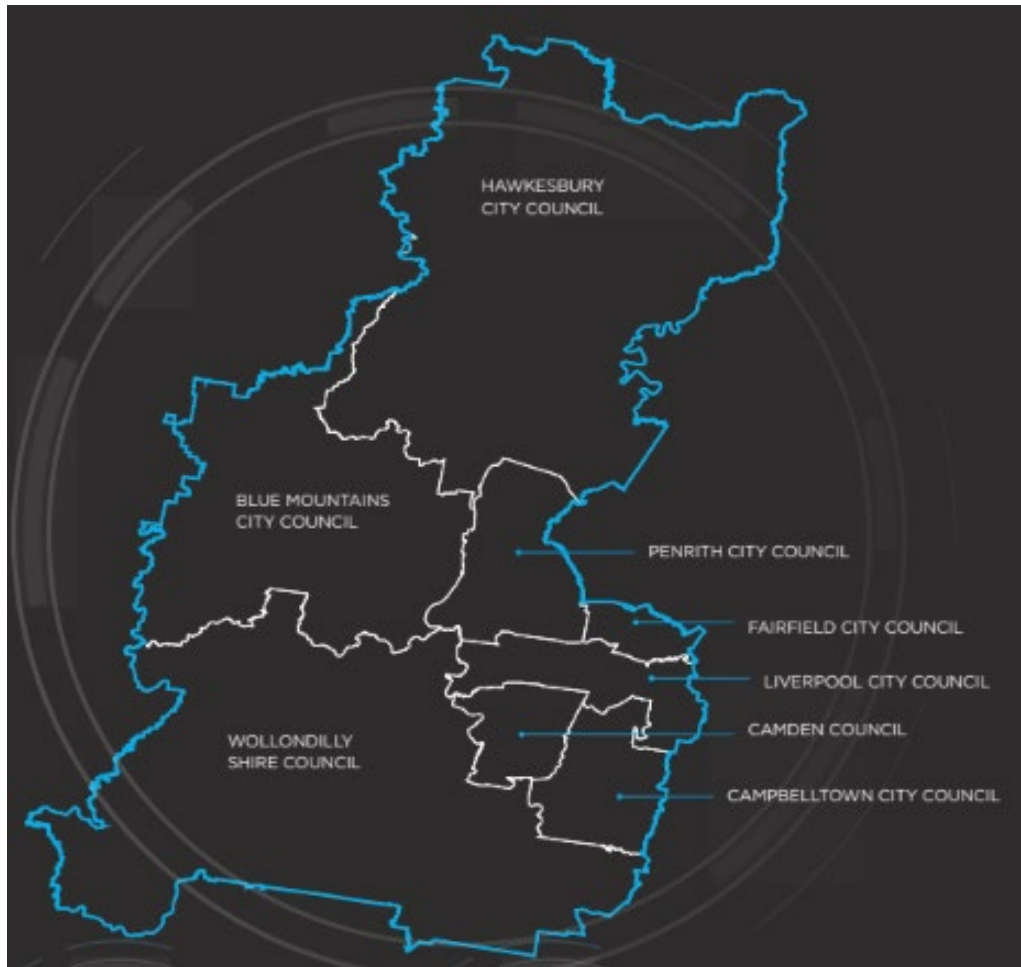
Figure 39: GSRP – District and City Boundaries within Greater Sydney (annotated by author)



	Region Boundary	DISTRICTS	
	District Boundary	Central City	Blacktown, Cumberland, Parramatta, The Hills
	Local Government Area	Eastern City	Bayside, Burwood, Canada Bay, City of Sydney, Inner West, Randwick, Strathfield, Waverley, Woolahra
	Waterways	North	Hornsby, Hunter's Hill, Ku-ring-gai, Lane Cove, Mosman, North Sydney, Northern Beaches, Ryde, Willoughby
	City Boundary	South	Canterbury-Bankstown, Georges River, Sutherland
		Western City	Blue Mountains, Camden, Campbelltown, Fairfield, Hawkesbury, Liverpool, Penrith, Wollondilly

Base image: GSC 2018c. Boundaries: GSC 2018a, 2018b, 2018d, 2018e and 2018f

Figure 40 (left): Western Sydney City Deal - boundaries of 'Western Sydney' and Figure 41 (right): Greater Sydney Regional Plan: A Metropolis of Three Cities – boundaries of 'Western Sydney'



(Commonwealth of Australia 2018, p. 5)



(GSC 2018f, p. 2)

4.1.4 Other boundaries of 'Western Sydney' used by government bodies

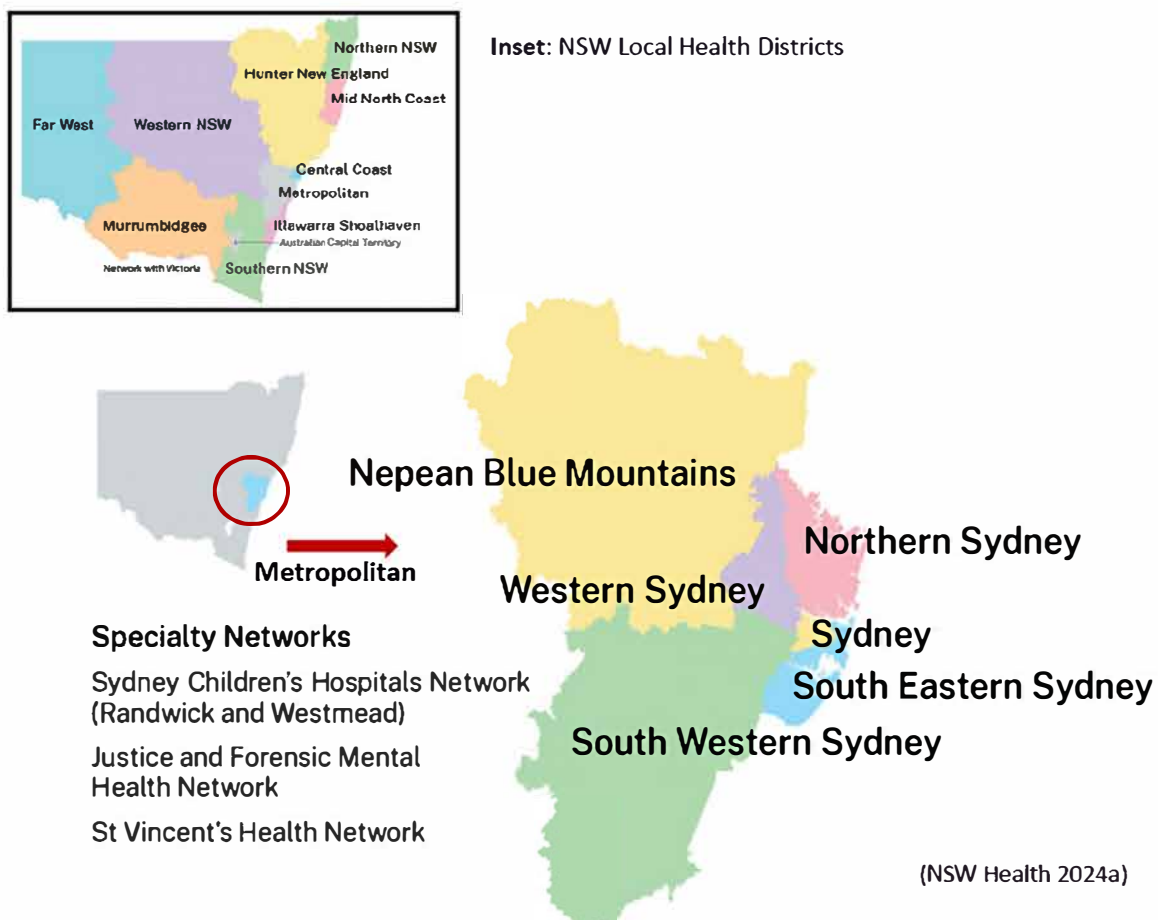
NSW Ministry of Health

The NSW Ministry of Health (NSW Health) is responsible for managing the state's public health services, providing health infrastructure, and overarching protection, maintenance and improvement of the population's health and wellbeing (NSW Health 2024b).

NSW Health categorises 15 regions in spatial units called Local Health Districts (LHDs) which are separately governed by a Local Health District Board (NSW Health 2022a). The 15 LHDs are shown broadly in Figure 42 with an overlay of the six Metropolitan LHDs across a map of metropolitan Sydney provided at Figure 43.

A detailed map of NSW Health LHD boundaries is provided at Appendix T (NSW Health 2023).

Figure 42: NSW Health Local Health Districts in NSW and Metropolitan Sydney (annotated by author)



There is no publicly available documentation of the methodology of LHD boundaries but they incorporate LGA boundaries of the pre-2016 local government reforms as evident in the extract provided at Figure 44, which clearly include now amalgamated councils such as Bankstown in 'South Western Sydney' and Manly in 'Northern Sydney'.

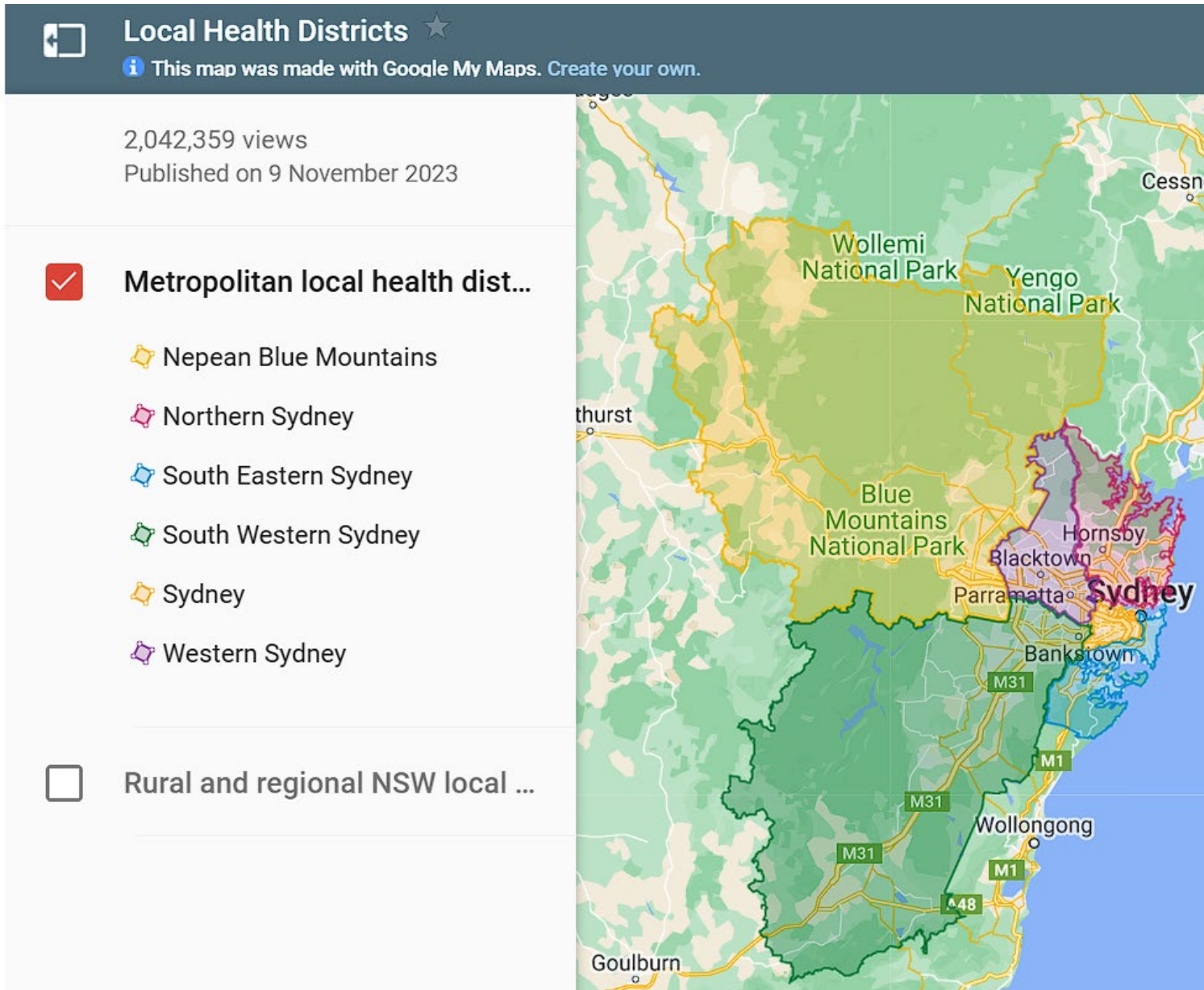


Figure 43:
NSW Health Metropolitan Local Health Districts

(NSW Health 2022b)

In observing boundaries of 'Western Sydney' as Local Health Districts, 'Western Sydney' is clearly a distinctly bounded area, however, taking a broader interpretation, South Western Sydney LHD may also be included under a broader small 'w' 'western Sydney' umbrella. Together, these LHDs are home to approximately 44 per cent of metropolitan Sydney's population (refer Table 3) in reference to the five million residents recorded at the latest national census (ABS 2021c).

Table 3: Overview of Western Sydney and South Western Sydney LHDs

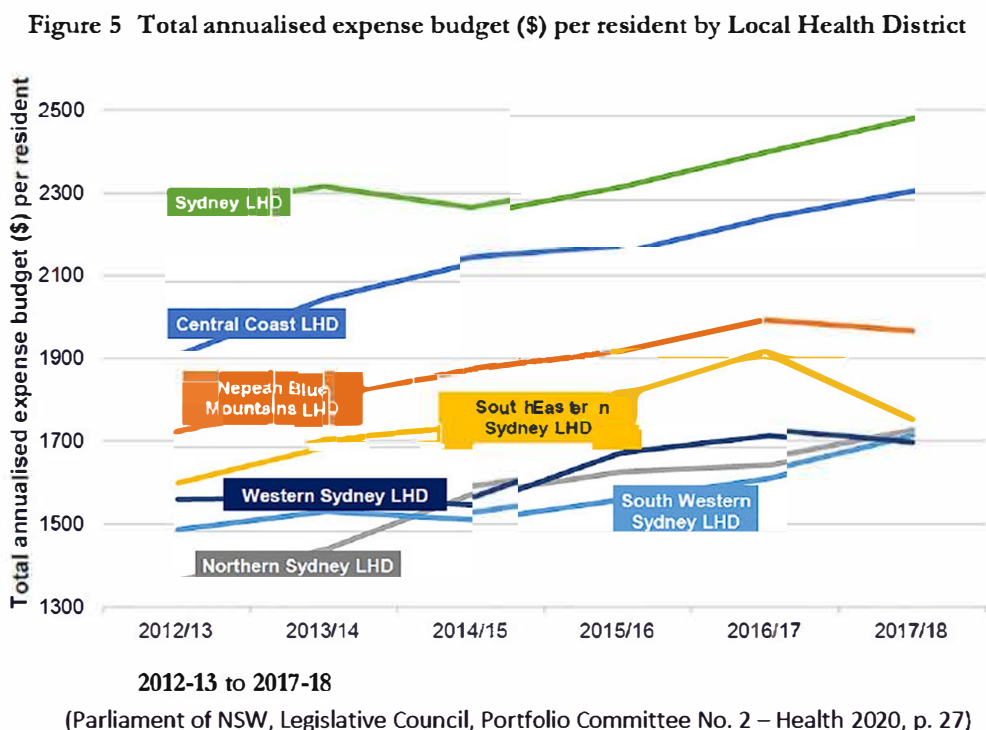
	Western Sydney LHD	South Western Sydney LHD
Population as of 2021	1,144,280	1,038,534
Area (km²)	780	6,243
Current LGAs * Partial location within current LHD boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blacktown • Parramatta • Cumberland • The Hills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbelltown • Camden • Canterbury-Bankstown* • Liverpool • Fairfield • Wollondilly • Wingecarribee

Source: NSW Health n.d.a, n.d.b; NSW Health, South Western Sydney Local Health District & South Western Sydney Primary Health Network 2019; Western Sydney Local Health District n.d

With respect to urban inequalities within NSW Health boundaries, the Parliament of NSW Legislative Council's inquiry *Current and future provision of health services in the South-West Sydney Growth Region (2020)* found there had been historic underfunding of health and hospital services in the South Western Sydney LHD and included materials showing distinct spatial inequalities in health funding across metropolitan LHDs.

The extract from the inquiry report below, in addition to Table 3, show that Western Sydney and South Western Sydney LHDs each receive disproportionately lower public funding per resident considering their respective population sizes, exacerbated by lower uptake of private health insurance compared to other metropolitan LHDs (Parliament of NSW, Legislative Council, Portfolio Committee No. 2 - Health 2020), and notably large extent of geographic coverage in the case of the latter.

Figure 45: Extract of Committee Report – Total Annualised Budget per LHD resident



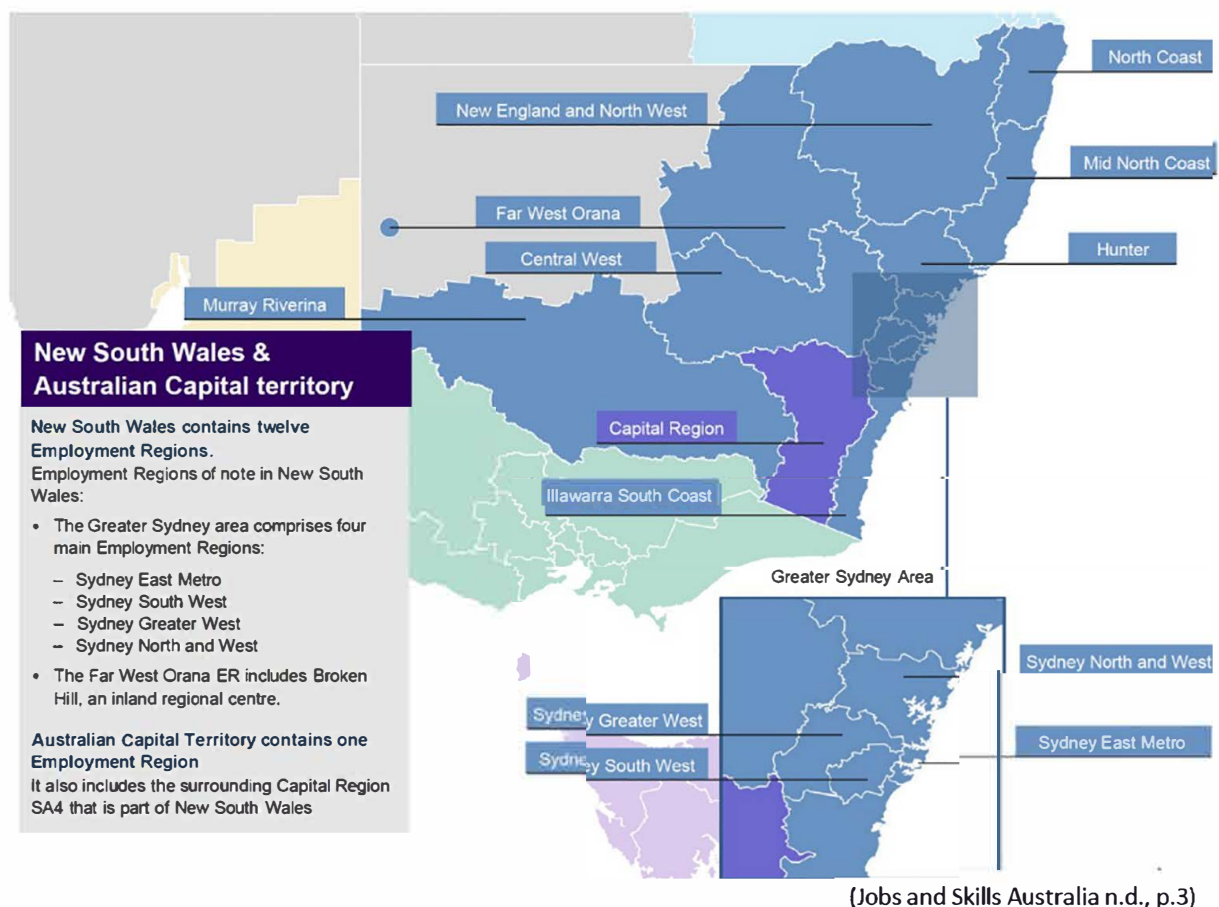
Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), an Australian federal government agency, is responsible for promoting economic productivity and competitive labour markets (DEWR 2023) and collects data on Australian employment trends and indicators.

DEWR is responsible for the Local Jobs Program, a national place-based policy aiming to target local employment needs and facilitate solutions by bringing together businesses and community organisations for 51 identified Employment Regions, with a corresponding Local Jobs Plan (DEWR 2024). The Local Jobs Program includes an allocated Employment Facilitator for each Employment Region who connects people with job training, employment, and support services and two funding initiatives – Local Recovery Fund (DEWR 2025a) and National Priority Fund (DEWR 2025b) - to support local employment activities.

As seen below, ‘Greater Sydney’ has been spatially defined as four distinct Employment Regions in which ‘Western Sydney’ is not a clear or distinctly separate entity.

Figure 46 NSW Employment Regions used by Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)



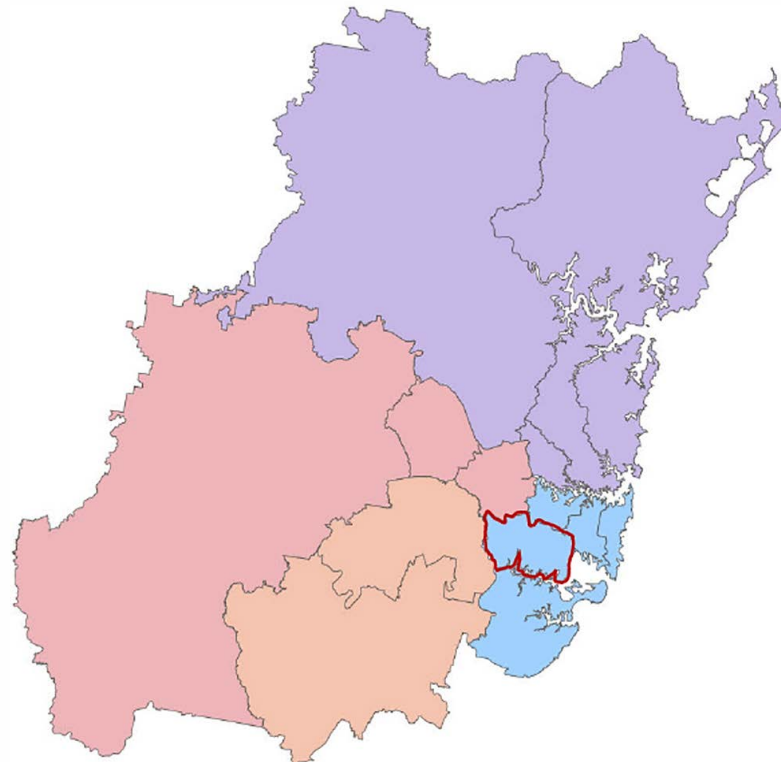
Unlike the previous examples in this section, Employment Regions are based on groupings of ABS ‘Statistical Area Level 4’ (SA4) standards, derived from national census data and to represent regional labour markets and functional areas of Australian capital cities (ABS 2021a, 2021e). Mapping concordance of Employment Regions to ABS SA4 areas to NSW LGAs, identified in the data source methodology of Jobs and Skills Australia, another federal government body which advises on national workforce skills and trends, is provided in Figure 47.

Figures 48 and 49 show that Employment Regions’ concordance with LGA boundaries results in notably different configurations of geographic ‘western Sydneys’ across Greater Sydney which hint to its fluctuating state as an urban imaginary even in formal institutions’ methodologies.

Figure 47 DEWR Greater Sydney Employment Regions by ABS SA4 Areas

Employment Regions

- Sydney East Metro
- Sydney Greater West
- Sydney North and West
- Sydney South West



DEWR Employment Region	ABS SA4 Areas
Sydney East Metro	Sydney - City and Inner South Sydney - Eastern Suburbs Sydney - Inner South West* Sydney - Inner West Sydney - Sutherland
Sydney Greater West	Sydney - Blacktown Sydney - Outer West and Blue Mountains Sydney - Parramatta
Sydney North and West	Central Coast Sydney - Baulkham Hills and Hawkesbury Sydney - North Sydney and Hornsby Sydney - Northern Beaches Sydney - Ryde
Sydney South West	Sydney - Outer South West Sydney - South West Sydney - Inner South West*

Source: Jobs and Skills Australia 2024

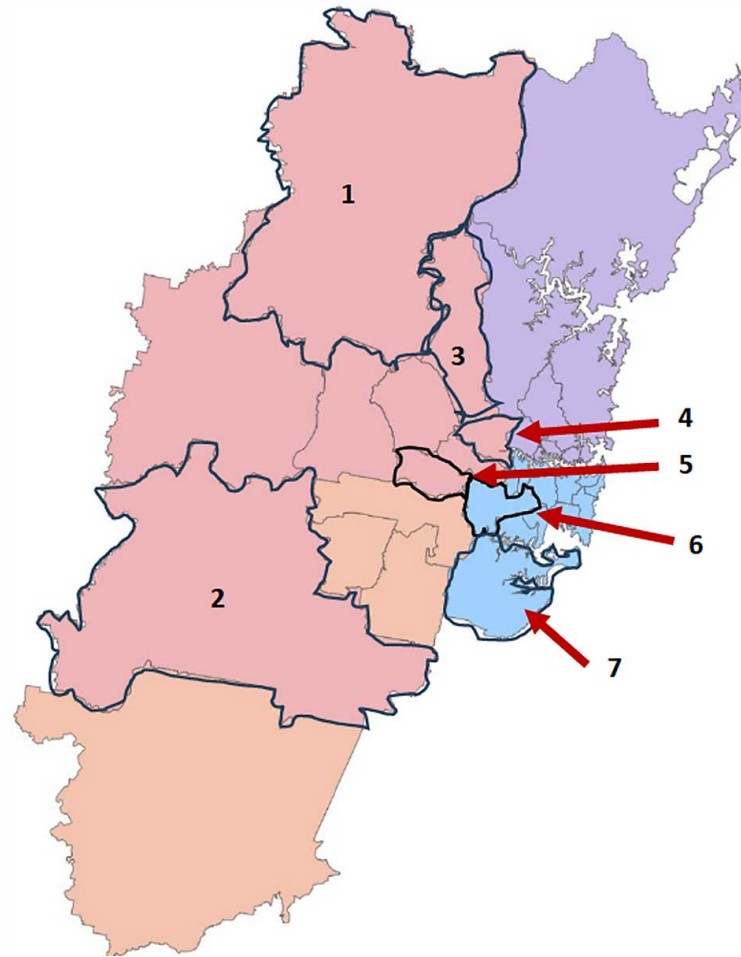
*'Sydney - Inner South West' (indicated in red outline) is counted across both Sydney East Metro and Sydney South West Employment Regions by DEWR.

Base image and annotations: By author
 Base boundaries: SA4 2021 (ABS 2024a)
 Employment Region Boundaries: Jobs and Skills Australia 2024

Figure 48 DEWR Greater Sydney Employment Regions by NSW Local Government Areas

DEWR Employment Region

- Sydney East Metro
- Sydney Greater West
- Sydney North and West
- Sydney South West



The identified LGAs are also considered to have approximate concordance with other DEWR Employment Regions which are shown as variations in Figure 47:

1. Hawkesbury: Sydney North and West
2. Wollondilly: Sydney South West
3. The Hills Shire: Sydney North and West
4. Parramatta: Sydney North and West
5. Fairfield: Sydney South West
6. Canterbury-Bankstown: Sydney South West, Sydney Greater West
7. Sutherland Shire: Sydney South West

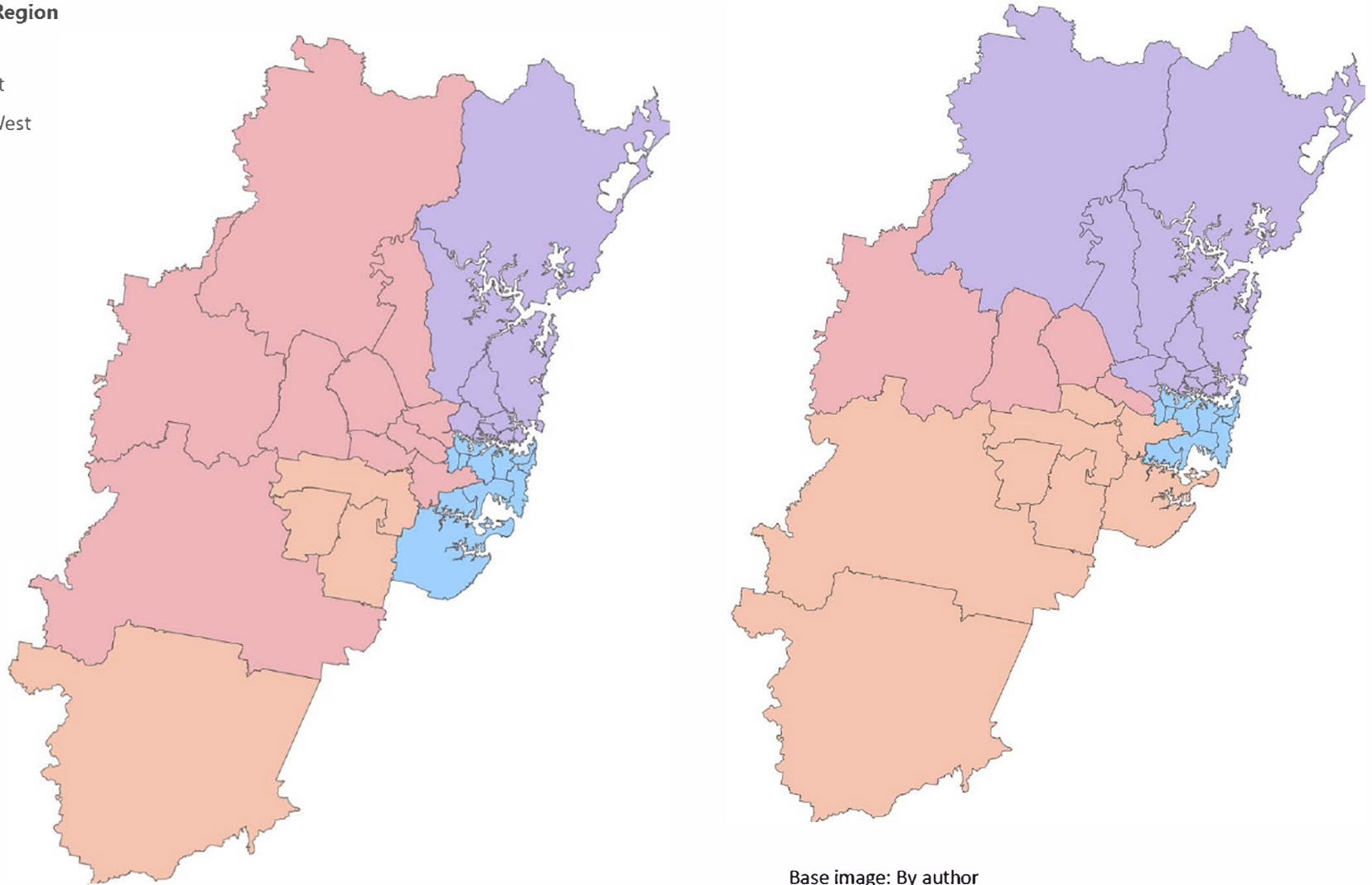
(Jobs and Skills Australia 2024)

Base image and annotations: By author
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Employment Region boundaries: Jobs and Skills Australia 2024

Figure 49 Variations in DEWR Greater Sydney Employment Regions by NSW Local Government Areas

DEWR Employment Region

- Sydney East Metro
- Sydney Greater West
- Sydney North and West
- Sydney South West



Base image: By author

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Employment Region boundaries: Jobs and Skills Australia 2024

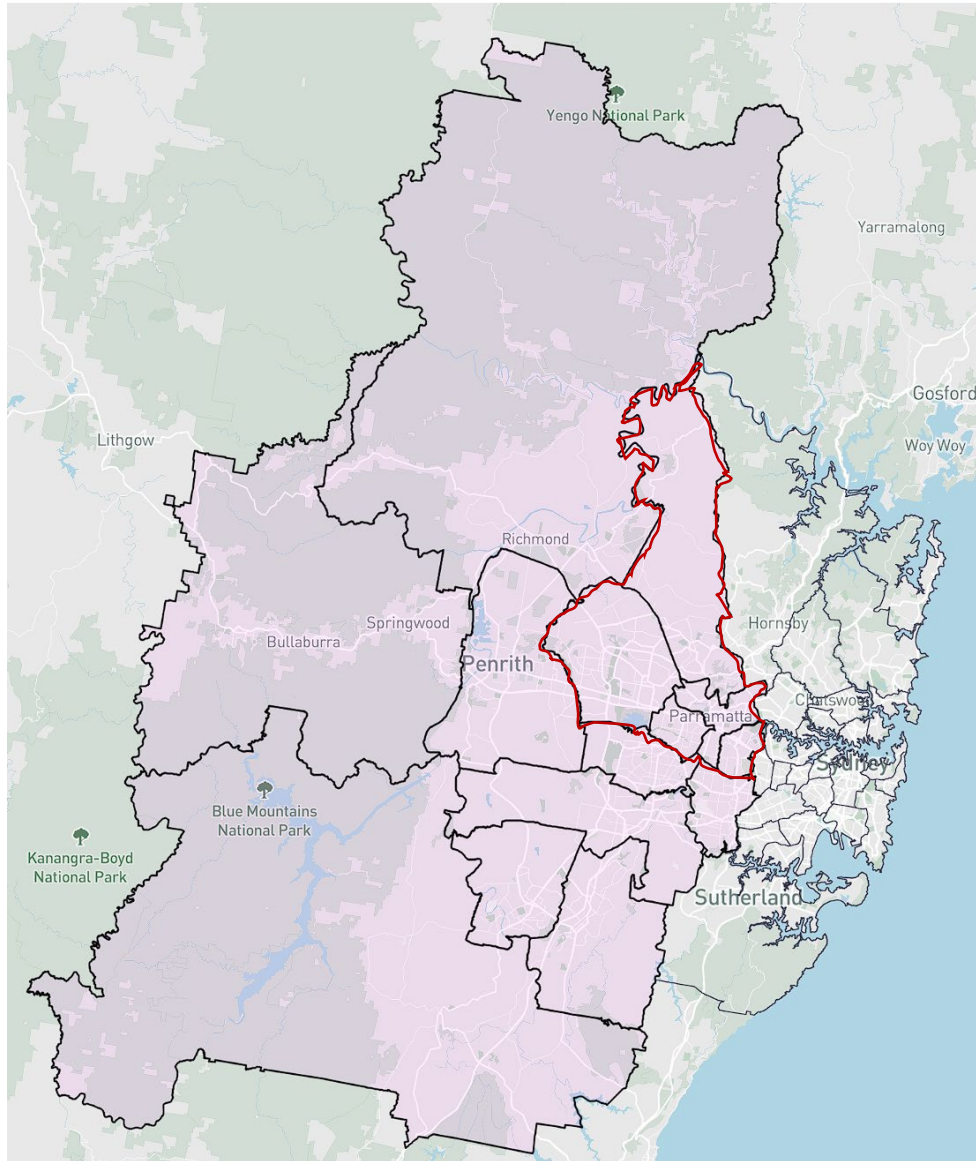
4.1.5 Current state of 'Formal' boundaries

There are notable differences in the spatial bounding of 'Western Sydney' in historic and current 'Formal' institutional boundaries as illustrated in Figures 50 and 51 overleaf. These difference indicate the absence of central coordination and inconsistencies in spatial definitions across state government bodies and jurisdictions in line with the usage of 'Western Sydney' in the political realm as a broad imaginary for highly context-specific purposes.

The differences between boundaries identified in this section, and their respective methodologies, illustrate the arbitrary nature of institutional bounding practices that have real implications for resource distribution and governance. While the historic convention of NSW Government agencies using LGAs as a bounding methodology remains current practice, LGAs boundaries are ultimately subject to decision of the state government of the day.

Considering that 'Western Sydney' as a city-region in a strategic planning context now represents a concerted institutional push to position and redress spatial inequalities through government policies and investment, this paper asks several critical questions: is this current boundary of 'Western Sydney' shared by residents of Sydney? What does this boundary and its implications as an administrative delineation of city-region building activities mean for existing spatial inequalities in metropolitan Sydney? Are parts of historic urban planning 'Western Sydney', or 'Western Sydney' for non-urban planning purposes, being 'left behind' by the current boundaries and its intended purpose?

Figure 50 Formal Boundaries of 'Western Sydney' defined using pre-2016 LGA boundaries

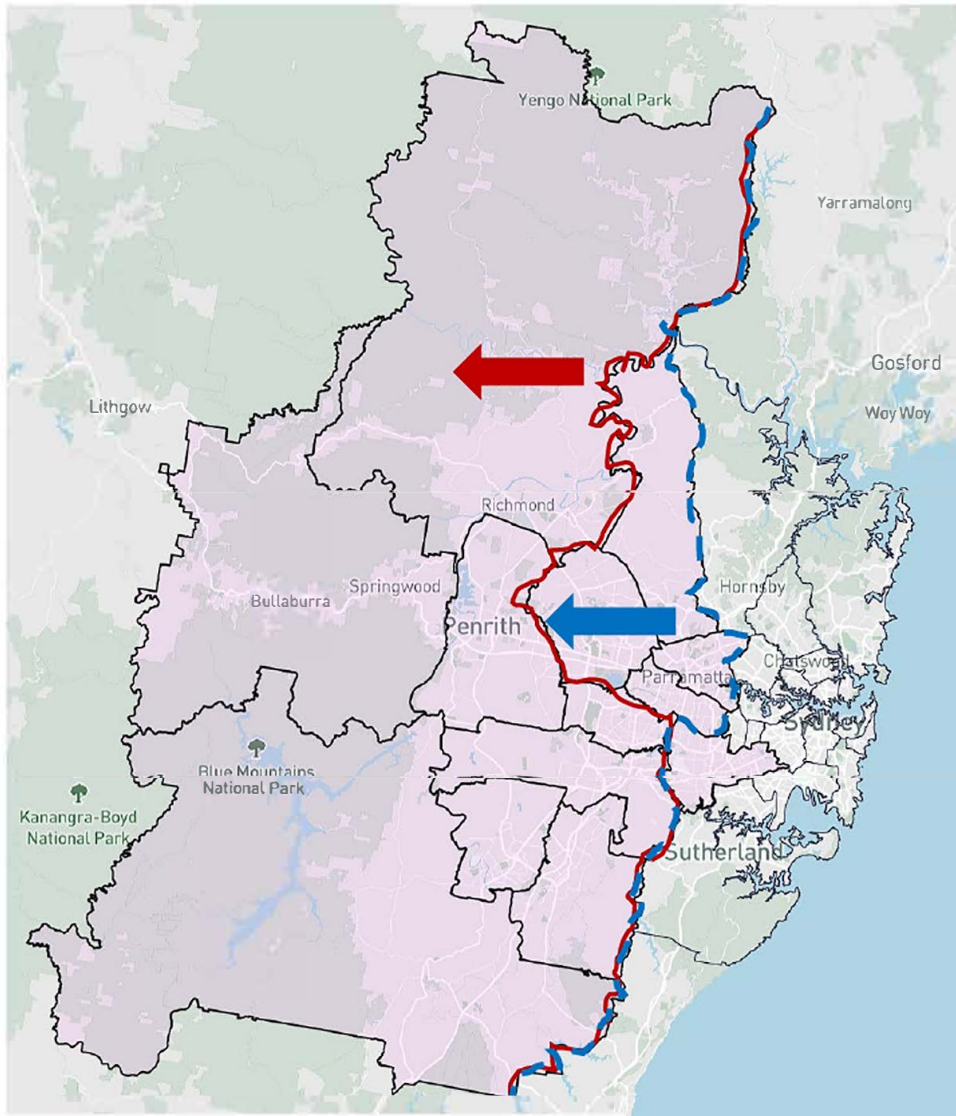





- Historic remit of the Office of Western Sydney as of 1998
- Historic Greater Sydney strategic metropolitan plans (2005 – 2014):
City of Cities (2005)
Metropolitan Plan for Sydney (2010)
A Plan for Growing Sydney (2014)
- Western Sydney NSW Local Health District

Base map: By author with Mapshaper n.d
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2015 (ABS 2015)

Boundaries: Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 1998; NSW Health 2023 & NSW Government 2005b, 2010c & 2014

Figure 51 Formal Boundaries of 'Western Sydney' defined using current LGA boundaries



-  'Greater Western Sydney' / 'Western Sydney' per NSW Treasury budget papers 2023 – 2025 (Minns government)
-  'Western Sydney' per NSW Treasury budget papers 2019-20 (Perrottet government)
-  'Western Parkland City' / 'Western Sydney City Deal'

Base map: By author with Mapshaper n.d
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Boundaries: GSC 2018c; Commonwealth of Australia 2018; NSW Treasury 2023 & 2024

4.2 ‘Quasi-formal’ boundaries – boundaries of self-identified regional advocacy bodies and local government groupings

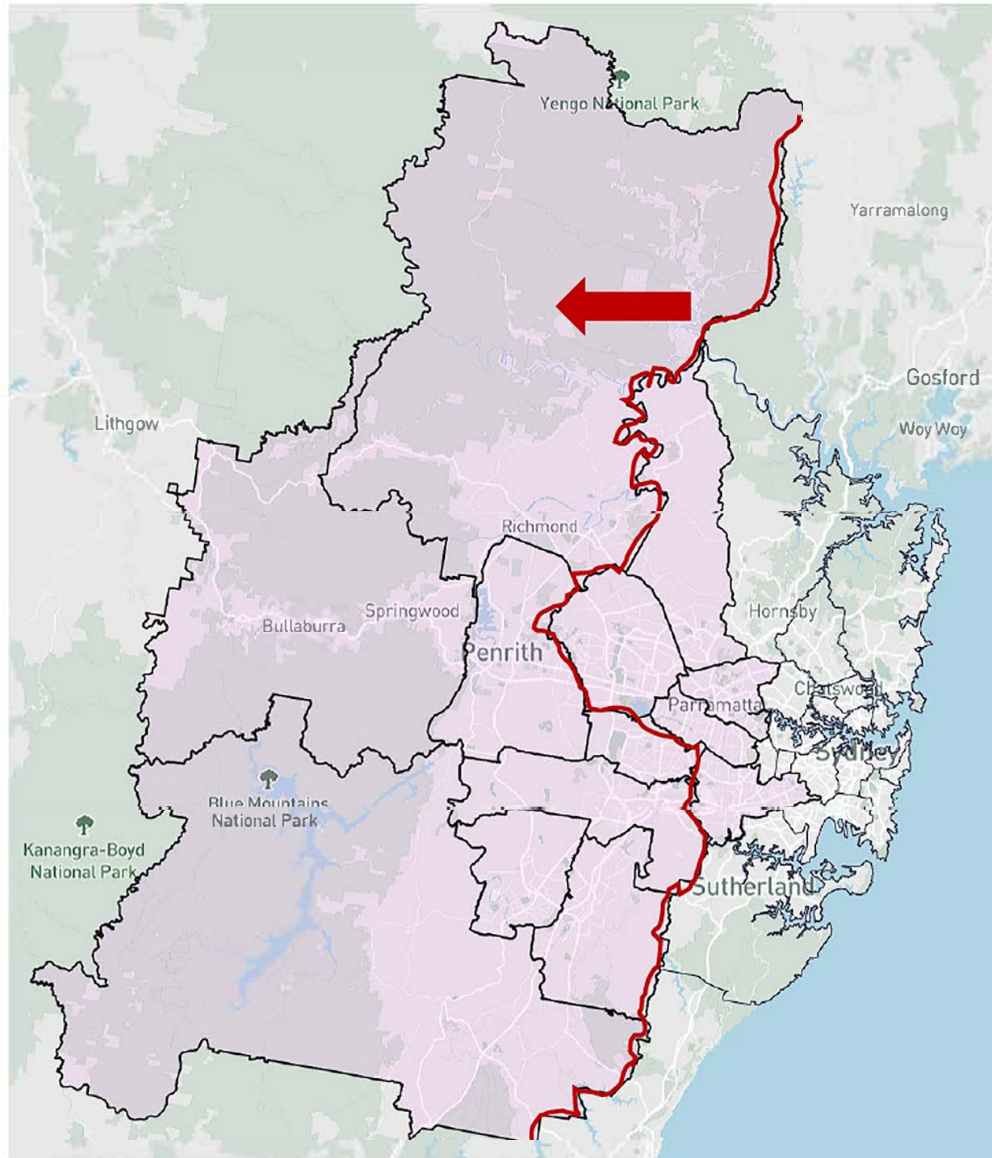
‘Western Sydney’ as a broad region is known for its deep-rooted localism and territorial politics (Morrison & Van Den Nouwelant 2020; Bunker, Freestone & Randolph 2018) and this is exemplified in the range of active self-identified regional advocacy bodies which engage in lobbying various levels of government and industry.

Table 4 summarises the purpose and membership of key regional bodies within ‘Western Sydney’ used as this paper’s identification of ‘Quasi-formal’ boundaries. Figure 52 on the next page illustrates boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’, per current LGA boundaries used by these organisations which show that, despite different memberships and purposes, there is a largely consistent boundary of ‘Western Sydney’ / ‘Greater Western Sydney’ between them and a degree of regional consciousness.

Table 4: Summary of key ‘Western Sydney’ regional advocacy bodies

Organisation	Purpose	Membership
Western Sydney Community Forum (WSCF)	Regional peak council for social policy and service delivery in Western Sydney (WSCF n.d).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local government bodies Not-for-profit organisations Community groups (WSCF 2024)
Western Sydney University* & Centre for Western Sydney * Formerly ‘University of Western Sydney’	Established in 1988 by the NSW Government through legislation (Western Sydney University 2023) to address spatial inequalities of tertiary education institutions located in ‘western Sydney’ (New South Wales, Legislative Assembly 1986). The Centre for Western Sydney is the university’s regional research and advocacy arm (Western Sydney University 2024).	Not Applicable
Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue	A not-for-profit think tank established in 2015 to stimulate discussion of ‘regional investment, growth, governance and social inclusion’ in Greater Western Sydney covering the Western Parkland City and the Central City (WSDL n.d)	Not Applicable
Business Western Sydney^ ^ Formerly ‘Western Sydney Business Chamber’	Advocates for ‘Greater Western Sydney’ / ‘Western Sydney’ in public policy across all three levels of government (Business Western Sydney 2024a).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Federal, state, and local government bodies Universities and not-for-profit organisations Businesses (Business Western Sydney 2024b)
Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC)	Established in 1973 (WSROC n.d) and aims to be a regional advocacy body that ‘will advocate in unified terms on the key issues of value to Greater Western Sydney through lobbying and relations with other organisations’ (WSROC 2021).	Council members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blacktown Blue Mountains Cumberland Hawkesbury Liverpool (WSROC 2016b)
The Parks* * Included in Figure 49 for completeness but excluded from use in this paper’s identification of ‘Quasi-formal’ boundaries considering its direct correlation to the formal boundary of ‘Western Sydney’ as a city-region identified in Section 2.5.1.	Collaborative partnership of all eight local government signatories of the multi-lateral Western Sydney City Deal (The Parks 2024; Commonwealth of Australia 2018) to coordinate and facilitate delivery of the city deal’s long-term objectives.	Council members: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blue Mountains Camden Campbelltown Fairfield Hawkesbury Liverpool Penrith Wollondilly

Figure 52 'Quasi-formal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney'



'Western Sydney' / 'Greater Western Sydney'
 Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue
 Western Sydney University
 Western Sydney Community Forum
 Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils*
 Business Western Sydney

* WSROC's website link under 'Regional Profile' refers to the boundaries of 'Western Sydney' provided by .id (informed decisions) & Western Sydney University n.d.

'Western Sydney' / 'Western Parkland City'
 The Parks

Base map: By author in Mapshaper n.d.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Boundaries: WSLD n.d; WSCF n.d; Itaoui, Merrillees & Gerace 2023; Astrolabe, Business Western Sydney & Centre for Western Sydney 2022; .id (informed decisions) & Western Sydney University n.d, The Parks 2024

4.3 'Informal' boundaries – boundaries of metropolitan Sydney's residents

4.3.1 Survey respondents' boundaries of 'Western Sydney'

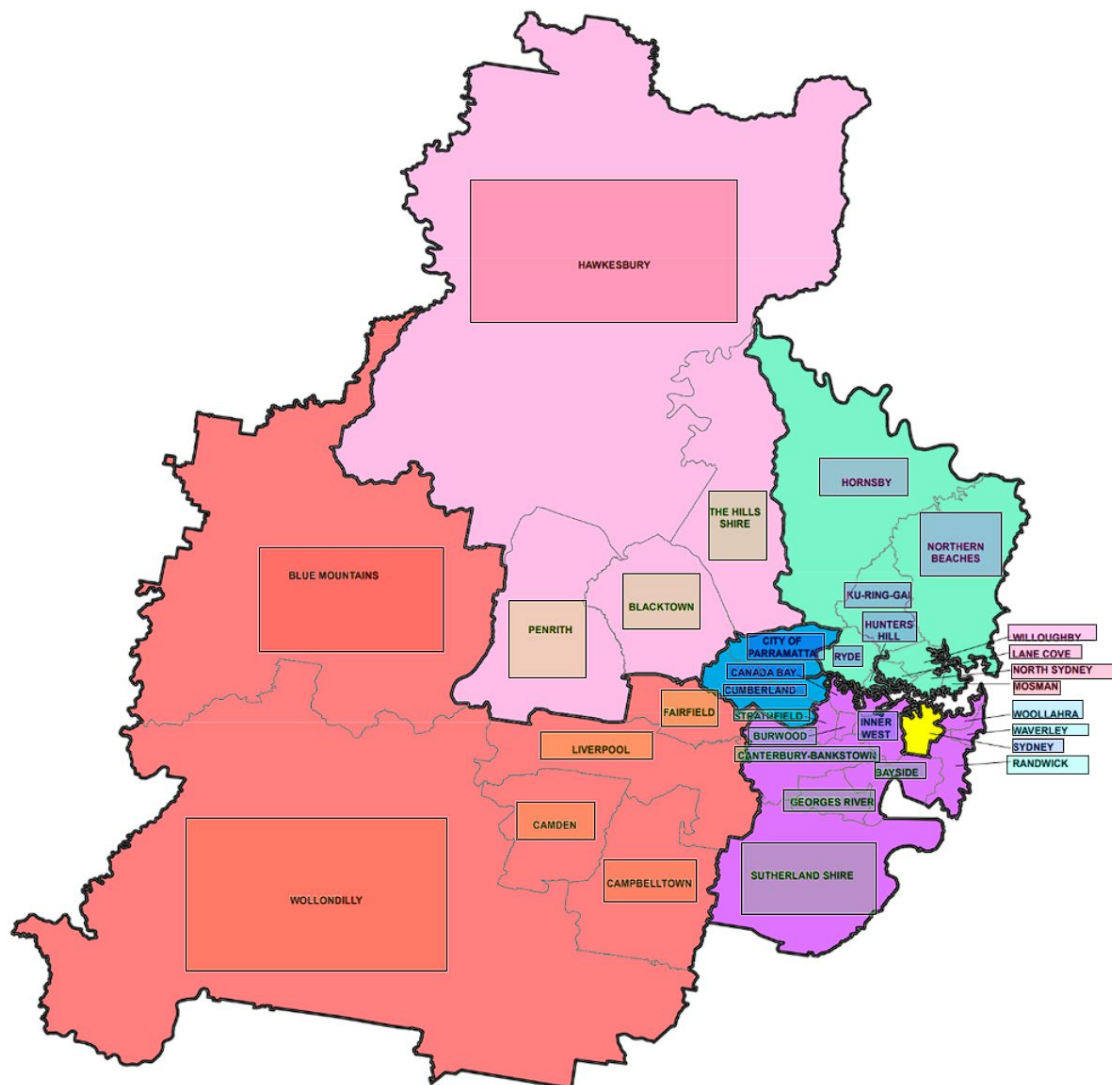
'Western Sydney' today as a collection of NSW LGAs

Study participants were asked to map 'Western Sydney' by selecting LGAs in the online survey questionnaire using a base map of Greater Sydney with current LGA boundaries (per Appendix A) as follows:

Q5: How would you show 'Western Sydney' as a collection of NSW Local Government Areas (local council areas) containing suburbs from the map below? Select names of the local council areas to make your choice. You can select as many or as few options as you want from the map below.

The base map and eligible LGA selections provided to study participants are provided below.

Figure 53: Extract of Online Survey Question 5



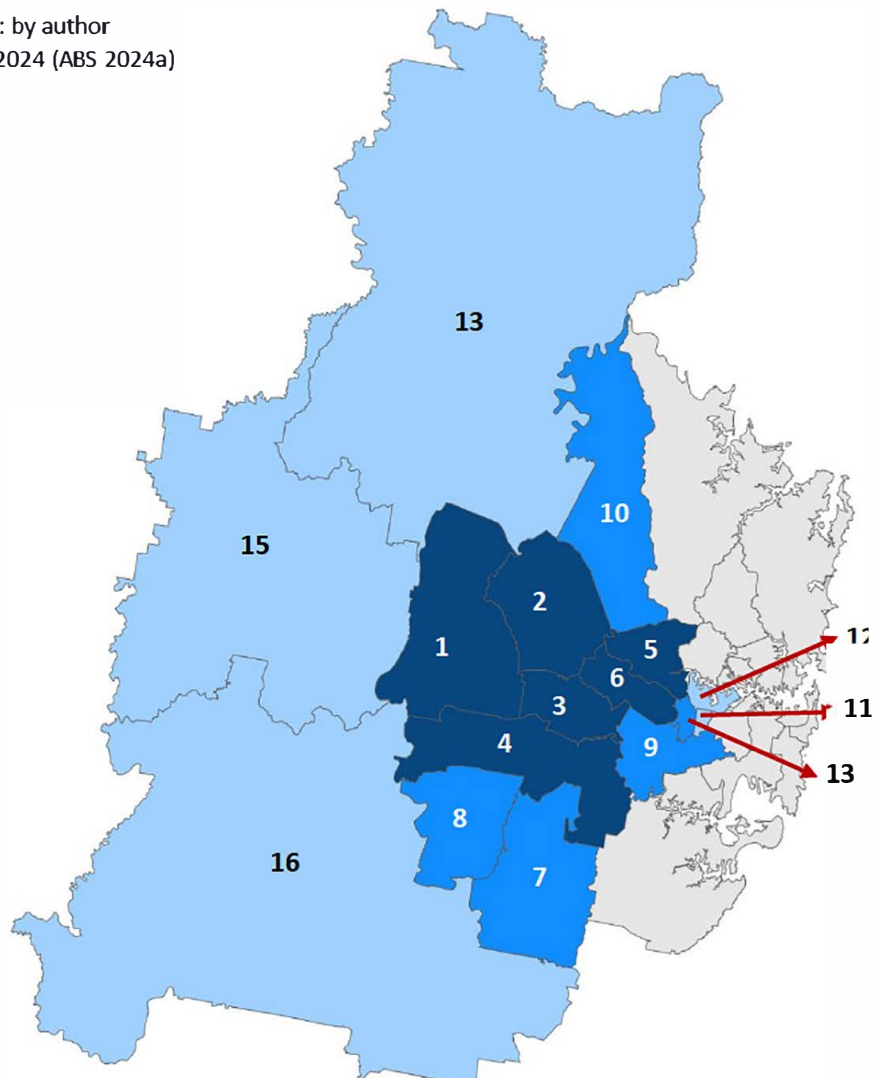
(Appendix C)

Figure 54 over the next page depicts the collated responses of the 758 online survey participants (out of 782) that proceeded through the survey to Question 5.

Figure 54: 'Western Sydney' as a ranked collection of NSW Local Government Areas by online survey respondents

Respondent Count as 'Western Sydney' ■ < 100 ■ < 250 ■ < 500 ■ > 500

Data source: Appendix Q
 Base image and annotations: by author
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)



The number allocated to each LGA in Figure 54 correspond to the rank achieved in measurement of frequency as being selected as 'Western Sydney' (by more than 100 survey respondents) summarised in Table 5 overleaf.

The 'informal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney' capture LGAs in metropolitan Sydney's geographic centre, including the city's secondary CBD of Parramatta, with varying degrees of inclusion for the immediate adjoining northern, southern, and eastern LGAs (except Canada Bay which achieved sub-200 respondent selections). Metropolitan Sydney's most western (Blue Mountains), northern (Hawkesbury) and southern (Wollondilly) LGAs all achieved sub-200 respondent selections.

Table 5: Ranking of metropolitan Sydney LGAs selected as 'Western Sydney' by more than 100 survey respondents

#	LGA	Number of Respondents that selected LGA as 'Western Sydney'	% of Applicable Online Survey Respondents (758)
1	Blacktown	739	97%
2	Penrith	726	96%
3	Fairfield	693	91%
4	Liverpool	663	87%
5	Parramatta	623	82%
6	Cumberland	527	70%
7	Campbelltown	499	66%
8	Camden	479	63%
9	Canterbury-Bankstown	368	49%
10	The Hills	308	41%
11	Strathfield	257	34%
12	Canada Bay	243	32%
13	Hawkesbury	190	25%
14	Burwood	186	25%
15	Blue Mountains	177	23%
16	Wollondilly	145	19%

Source: Appendix Q

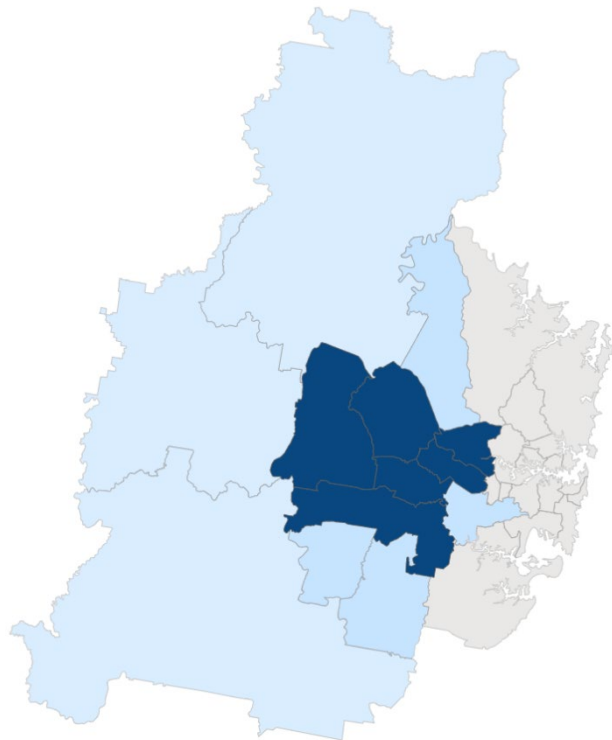
It is clear from Table 5 that there clearly different degrees of perceived belongingness to 'Western Sydney' as a fluid entity as opposed to a discrete hardline boundary. This paper considers current 'informal' bounding of Western Sydney derived through the study to comprise of three sub-categories (illustrated separately in Figure 55 overleaf):

1. *Central Core (LGA #1 – 6)*: these are considered definitive parts of 'Western Sydney' at time of writing.
2. *Secondary / Contended Frontiers (LGA #7 – 10)*: these are areas transitioning in or out of consideration as 'Western Sydney'.
3. *Marginal Fringes (LGA #11 – 16)*: these are areas with low numbers of consideration as 'Western Sydney' and are viewed by a significant number of Sydney residents as something other than 'Western Sydney'.

The 'informal' boundaries of the region and the extent to which specific LGAs achieve concurrence from metropolitan Sydney's residents as 'Western Sydney' deviate significantly from 'formal' administrative boundaries, identified in Section 4.1, which are used by institutions for resource distribution or governance but conversely largely overlap with the 'quasi-formal' 'Greater Western Sydney / Western Sydney' imaginary used by regional advocacy bodies identified in Section 4.2.

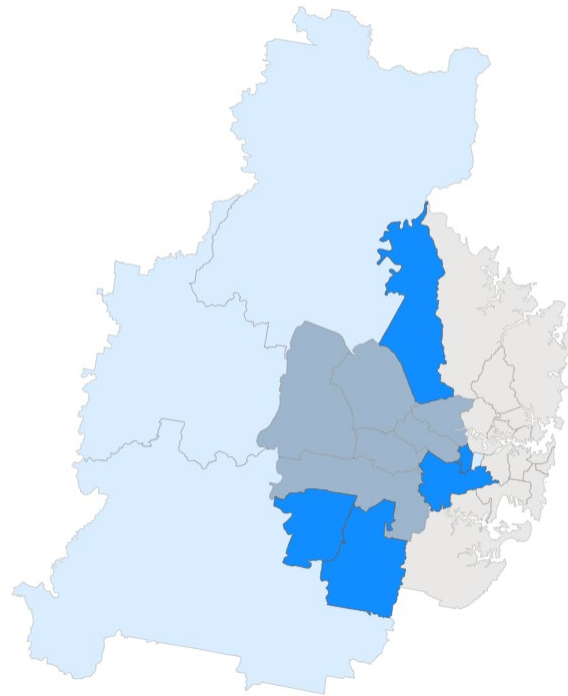
Figure 55: 'Informal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney' as a collection of current LGAs by online survey respondents

Respondent Count ● < 250 ● < 500 ● > 500



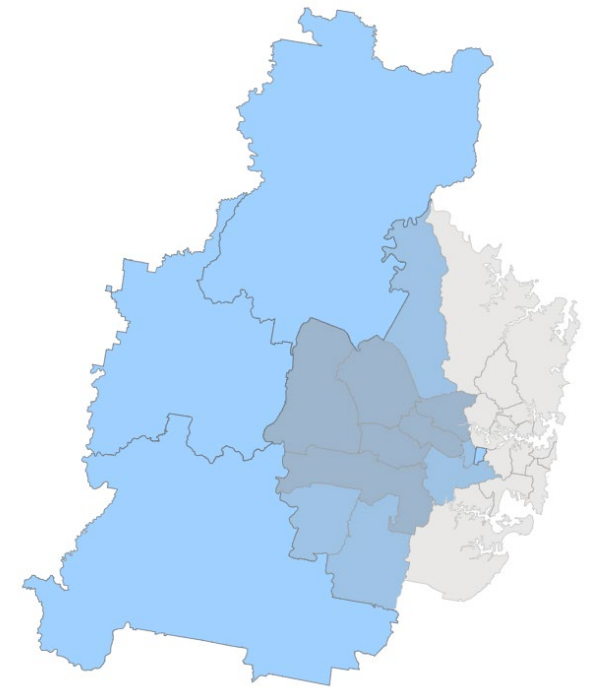
Central Core
(> 500 survey responses)

Respondent Count ● < 250 ● < 500 ● > 500



Secondary / Contended Frontiers
(< 500 survey responses)

Respondent Count ● < 250 ● < 500 ● > 500



Marginal Fringes
(< 250 survey responses)

Data source: Appendix Q. Maps: by author. Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

4.3.2 Individual maps and personal bounding practices of 'Western Sydney'

Out of the 11 interviews conducted for this study, eight individual maps of the current boundaries of 'Western Sydney' were provided to the author (Figures 56 to 63) as drawn onto the base map provided to all interviewees (Appendix I).

Generally, individual maps had a degree of correlation with the broader collective map produced by study participants. However, the following three key themes, discussed in detail in the next chapter, emerged from interviewees' rationales for their respective maps:

- *Drawing what you know/do not know*: interviewees who identified as being from 'Western Sydney' or having extensive social/professional networks had a clear geographic delineation of what was 'in' and 'out' based on personal experiences.
- *Emerging predictions for mapping 'Western Sydney'*: many interviewees discussed the fluid nature of 'Western Sydney' with respect to gentrification – increase in house prices, people being displaced and excluded, and perceived classification of places that would become 'Western Sydney'/'not Western Sydney' in time - and changes in socio-economic profile in specific LGAs, with many noting its history of negative media representation, and impacts of metropolitan Sydney's increasing urbanisation of its north-west and south-west portions.
- *Different types of bounding logics*: several interviewees explicitly used infrastructure (motorways, roads), landmarks, geographic features (the Blue Mountains, rivers), perceived presence of specific industries, concentration of ethnic groups in specific suburbs, or socio-economic disparities in metropolitan Sydney to delineate boundaries of 'Western Sydney'.

Figure 57: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 3



Figure 58: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 5



Figure 59: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 6



Figure 60: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 7



Figure 62: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 9

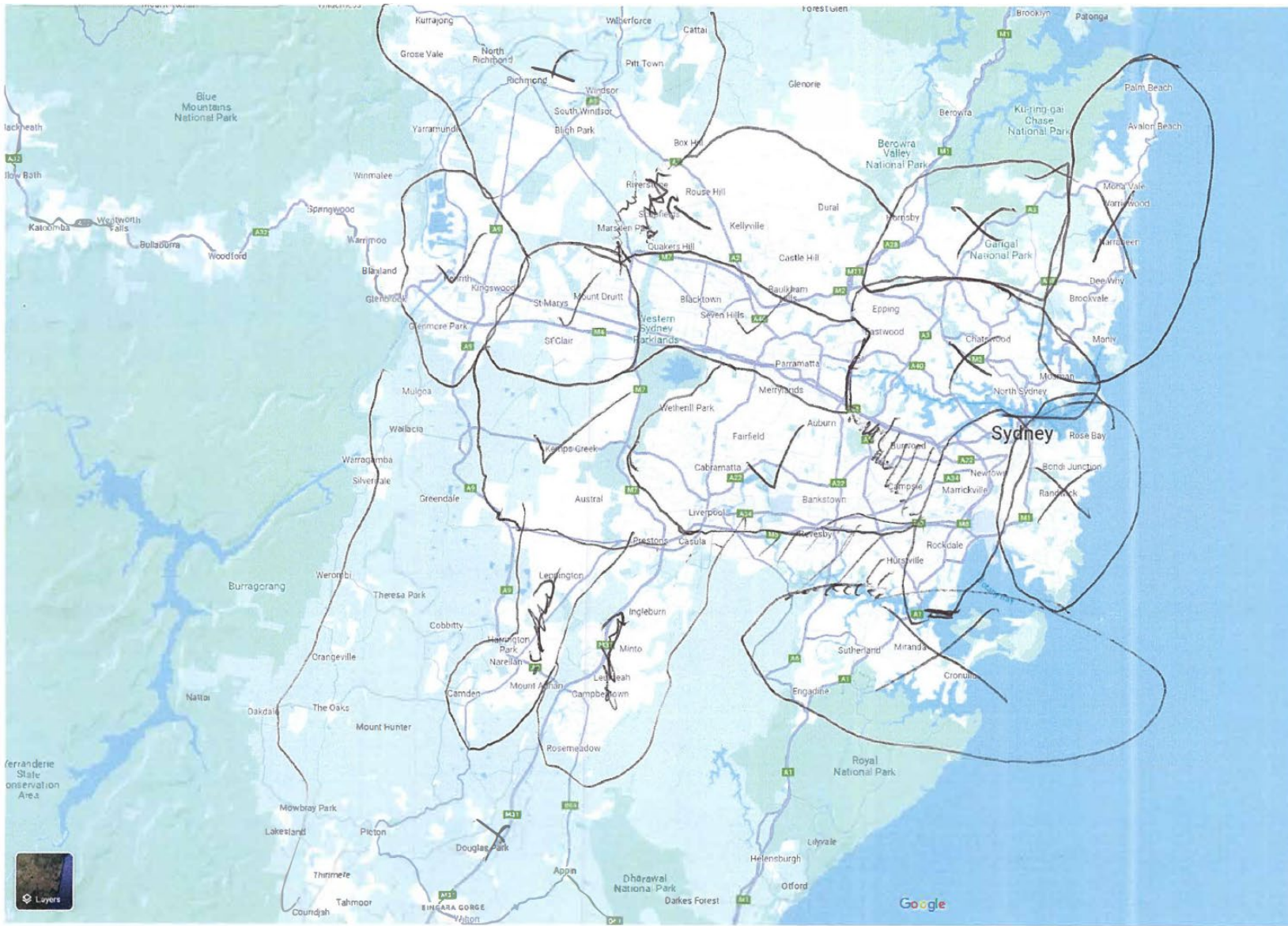
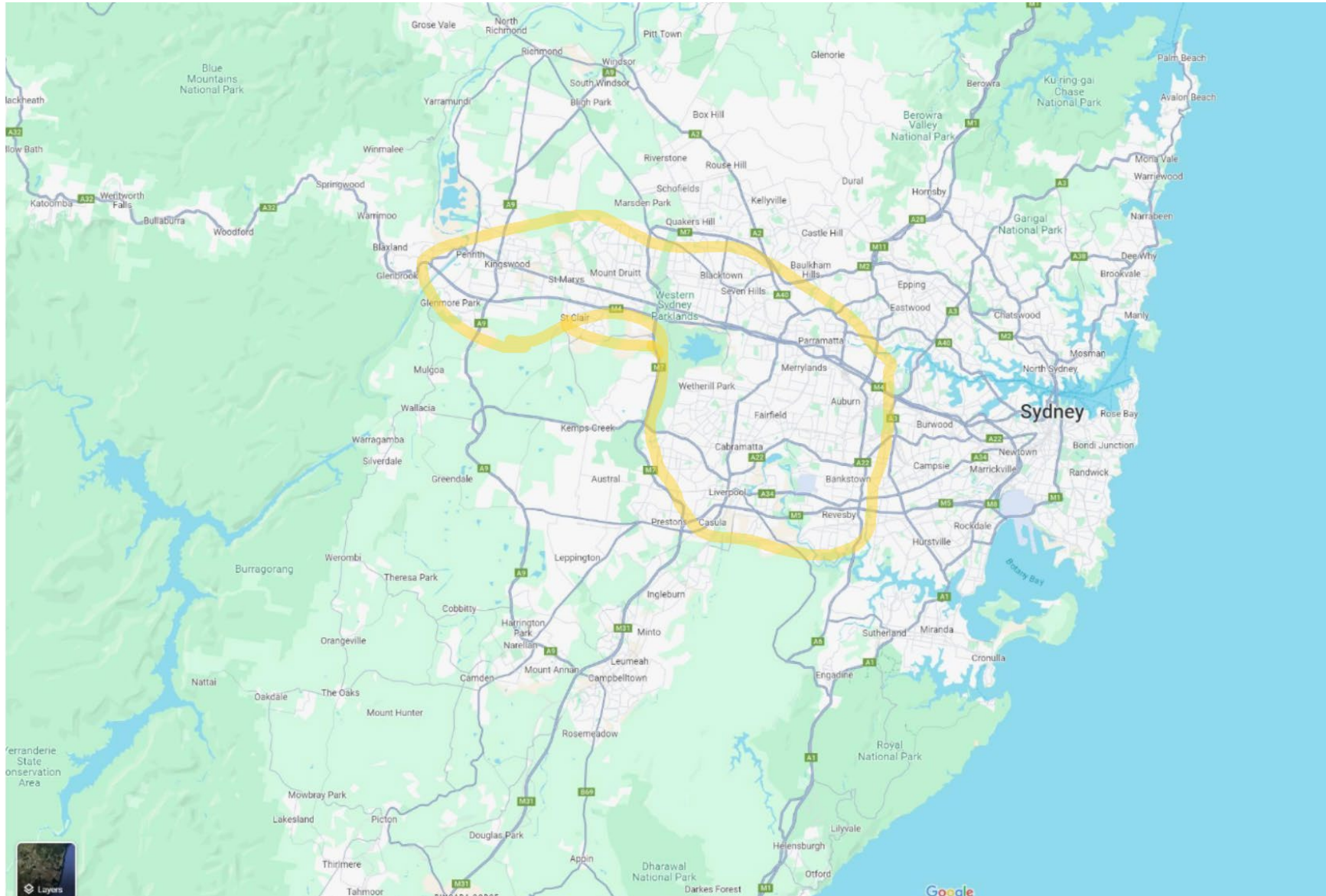


Figure 63: Map of 'Western Sydney' today – Interviewee 10



Chapter 5 Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Power dynamics in cities through spatial boundaries

5.1.1 “They’re not us”: socio-cultural segregation in metropolitan Sydney

There has been extensive coverage in Australian and international urban planning literature on dynamics of spatial sorting and segregation in cities, typically based on socio-economic disparities in education outcomes, and employment and housing markets. However, this subsection focuses on socio-cultural segregation – of which social class differences heavily influences – that see residents classify each other as belonging to, or associated with, distinct entities in the form of constructed regions and their perceived characteristics within a hierarchy of a city’s ‘legitimate culture’, and what this means for community wellbeing and integration as cities develop.

This paper contends from its data collection activities that a large reason for the marginalisation of ‘Western Sydney’ and identification as the ‘Other’ Sydney, and a key driver in residents’ processes of socio-cultural segregation, is its lack of perceived social capital,

Interviewee 7: People [from ‘Western Sydney’] who don’t have enormous money or power or influence...they don’t necessarily have the executive, executive jobs so they don’t have the power and that level. And [it’s] no longer, it’s not blue collar, but the white collar, but they’re not CEOs or executive levels.

(Appendix Z)

access to amenities and contemporary cultural capital,

Interviewee 3: If you think about it more broadly, if you compare it to the east...there’s still a lot of work being done to rectify that inequality, particularly around jobs access and employment, and tapping into wealth... 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...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.

Interviewee 9: Might be different for a resident, but... I associate Western Sydney with a certain form of bland suburbia...not a lot happening.

(Appendix V & Appendix AB)

symbolic capital with respect to its reputation for social conservatism or its associations with socio-economic disadvantage and broad public connotations of them,

“Refer to voting results of the 2017 [Same-Sex Marriage] plebiscite and 2024 [Australian Indigenous Voice] referendum. The west voted very differently to the east. They’re not us [Sydney].”

(Appendix Q)

Interviewee 4: If I hear it on the radio, if I read the news...if I was watching the nightly news or something, it’s a sense of derision, a sense of despair, or just where all the ‘bad stuff’ happens, or alternatively the only positive spin they may might put on it is, you know, the home of the ‘battlers’.

(Appendix W)

and treatment by institutions with regards to policy and resource distribution,

“I think western Sydney...is distinguished through policy and the built environment. I think this distinction was acutely observed during the COVID pandemic where the Berejiklian government [NSW state government] implemented heavy handed movement controls that weren't implemented in affluent or European parts of Sydney.”

(Appendix Q)

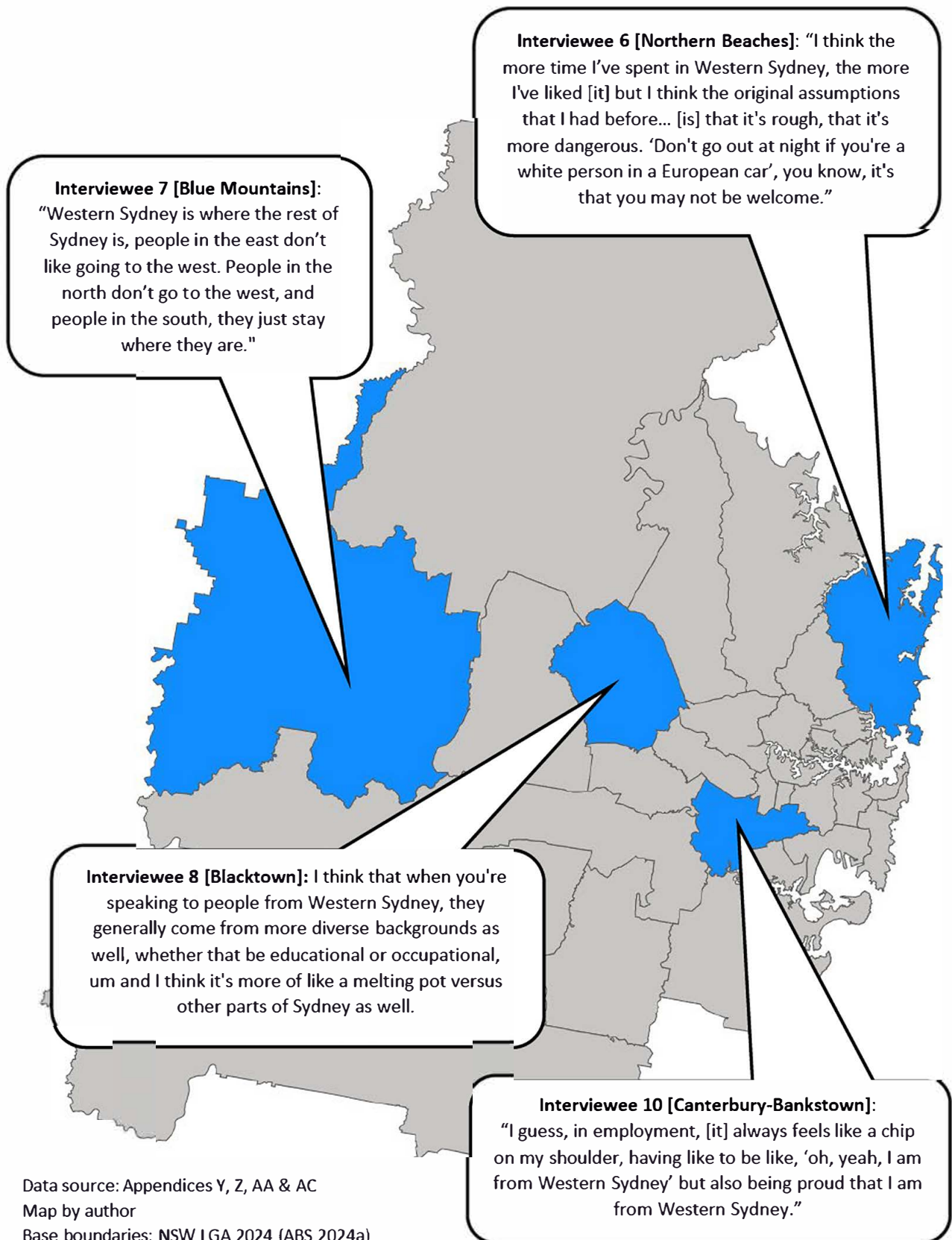
Interviewee 11: I think, from a political point of view, Western Sydney for a long time has been overlooked. I think it's only been the last sort of 5 to 10 years that they've kind of been given a look in terms of funding for infrastructure...so I don't know if there's, like, political motivations for why you're seeing more money being thrown at Western Sydney. But yeah, that's kind of why I've sort of described [it] in those sort of four terms of overlooked, developing.

(Appendix AD)

in reference to the dominant culture and ongoing construction of metropolitan Sydney as a cosmopolitan global city.

Interviews with residents provided insights into sentiments and perceptions of differences between 'Western Sydney' and the rest of Greater Sydney, as seen in excerpts shown in Figure 64 with interviewees' LGA of residence and Figure 65 summarising positive and negative associations, with the former certainly considered a distinct spatial entity with specific associations and used by residents to assign symbolic meaning to their interactions with others and the city.

Figure 64: Excerpt of interviewee sentiments of 'Western Sydney'



Data source: Appendices Y, Z, AA & AC
Map by author
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Figure 65: Interviewee Word Cloud – Top 100 positive (left) and negative (right) sentiments about ‘Western Sydney’

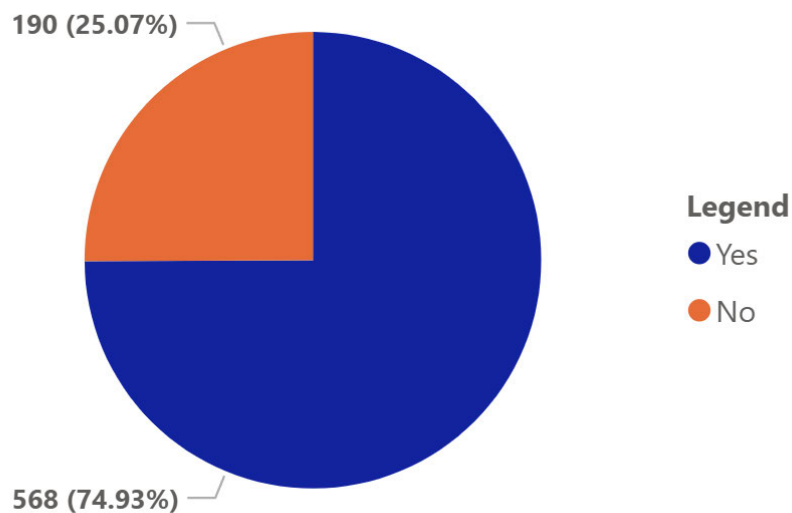


(Created by author in NVivo with interview transcripts at Appendix U - AD)

The extent of social segregation across Greater Sydney pertaining to 'Western Sydney' as a spatial imaginary was directly measured in the online survey as seen below.

Figure 66: Response to Online Survey Question 13

Q13. Do you regularly socialise with friends or family who live in what you consider 'Western Sydney'?



(Data source: Appendix Q. Graph by author)

Visualisations of respondents who selected 'No' and 'Yes' and key characteristics are provided respectively in Figures 67 and 68 over the next two pages.

The quarter of respondents who selected 'No' are generally located in the city's eastern and northern LGAs with a significant portion residing in the 'Inner West'. These respondents' 'work and play' patterns reflect their limited spatial footprints across the city and reflects the findings of Sarkar, Shrivastava, Gurran and Chapple (2021) regarding the clustered sorting of wealthier neighbourhoods with low levels of spatial integration as their spatial footprint remains confined to the eastern portion of the city. Conversely, respondents who selected 'Yes' represent a cohort from a diverse source of resident LGAs with greater social integration – although still predominantly from within the 'informal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney' – with a broader range of spatial footprints except for the eastern and northern districts.

In both categories of respondent, Greater Sydney's key centres of employment and amenities for socialising are clearly the eastern CBD and in the Inner West LGA which reflect the east-centred prioritisation of successive government policies and flow of capital that drives the distinct west-to-east spatial 'work and play' footprints.

Figure 67: Characteristics of survey respondents who answered 'No' to Online Survey Question 13

This is where respondents live by LGA This is where respondents work or study by LGA This is where respondents socialise by LGA



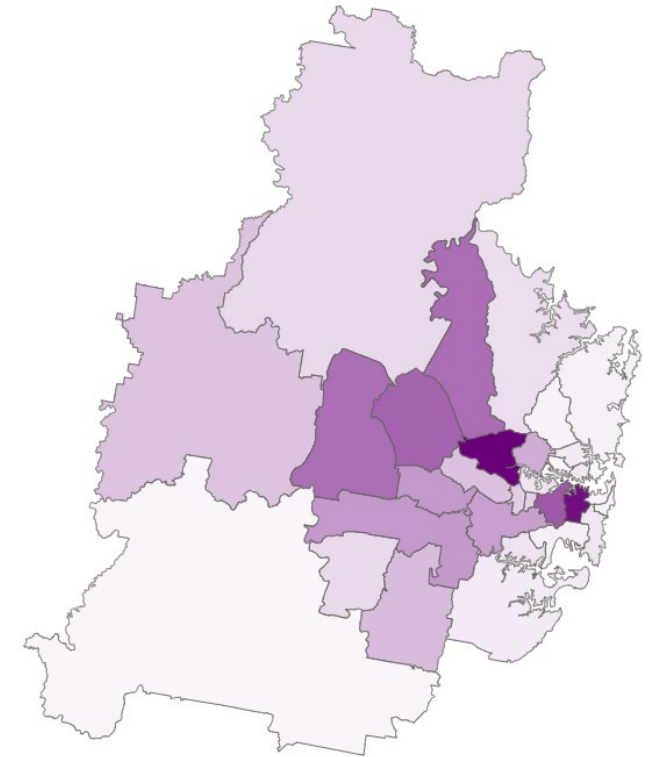
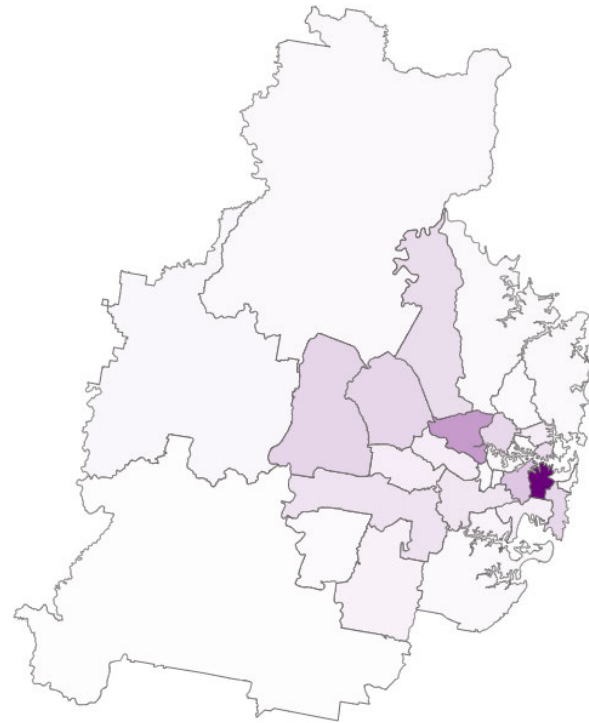
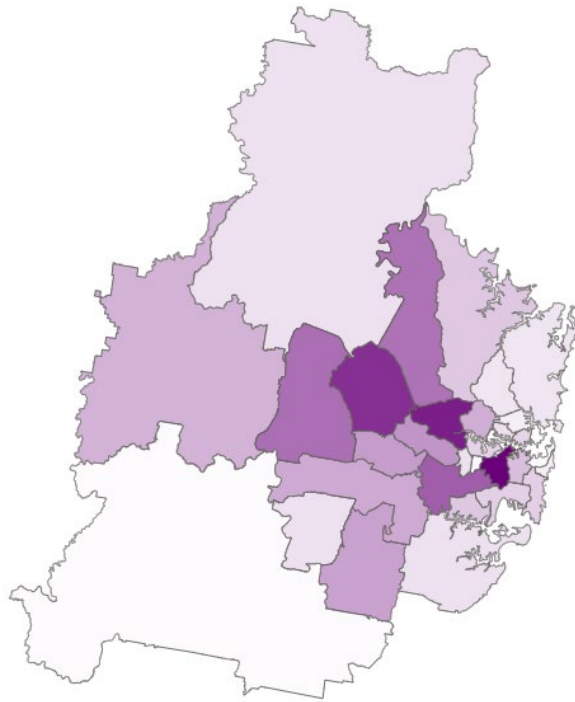
Data source: Appendix Q. Maps by author. Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Figure 68: Characteristics of survey respondents who answered 'Yes' to Online Survey Question 13

This is where respondents live by LGA

This is where respondents work or study by LGA

This is where respondents socialise by LGA

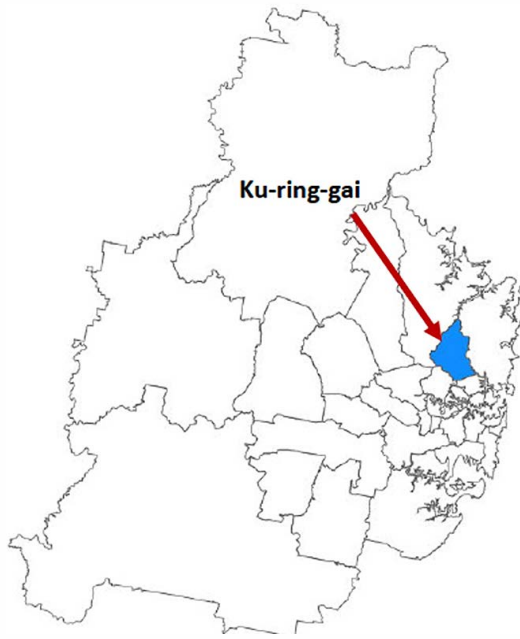


Data source: Appendix Q. Maps by author. Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

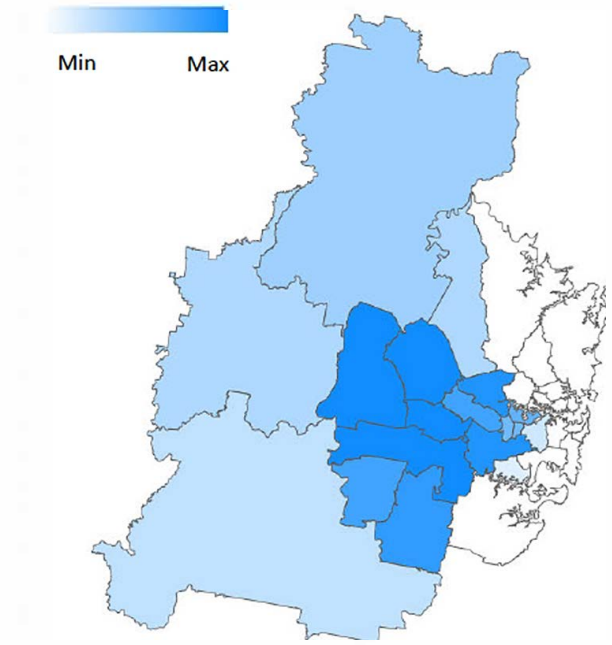
Interestingly, informal 'Western Sydney' does not substantially change when observing different variables captured in the online survey such as residents' age, occupation, industry or if they are from Non-English-Speaking Backgrounds, except for their LGA of residence seen below with examples of respondents from Ku-ring-gai (15), Hawkesbury (8) and Wollondilly (5).

Figure 69: Examples of variations in 'informal' Western Sydney by survey respondents' LGA of residence

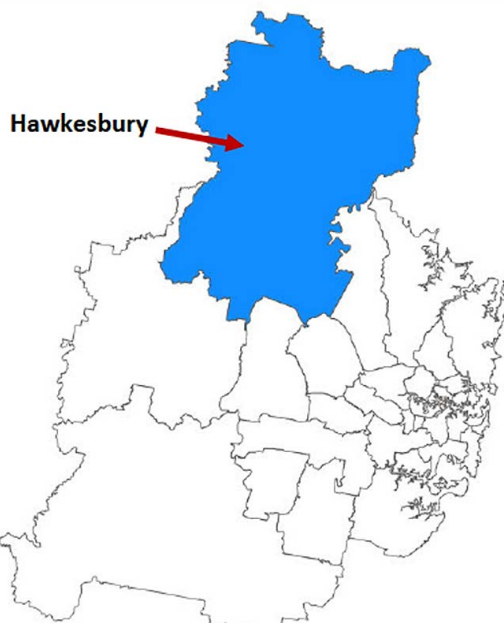
This is where respondents live by LGA



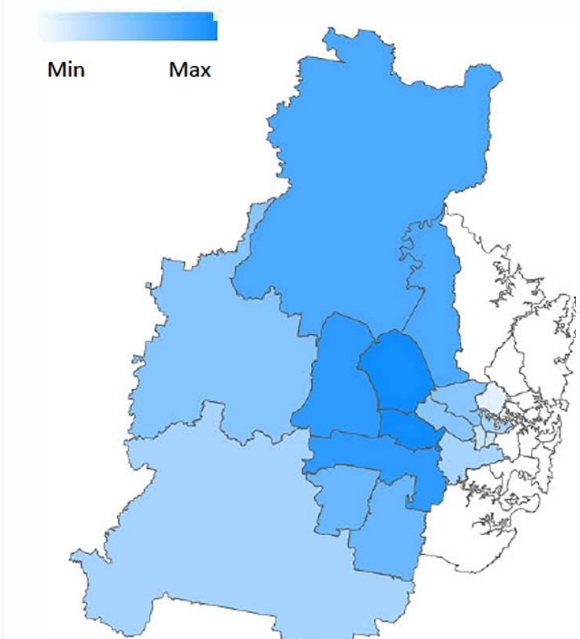
This is Western Sydney by LGA



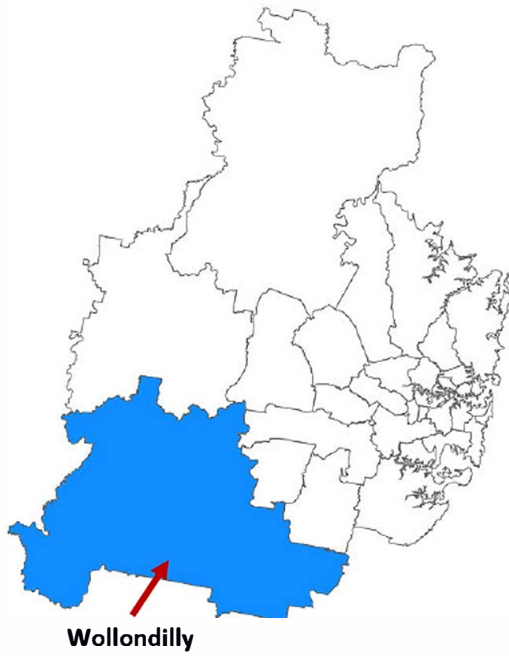
This is where respondents live by LGA



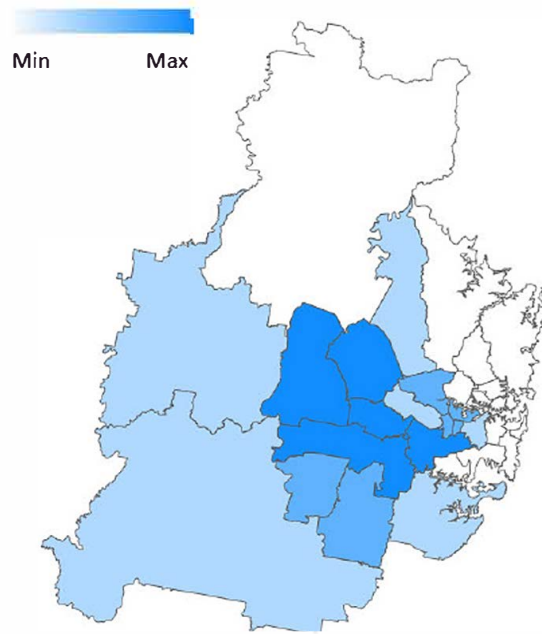
This is Western Sydney by LGA



This is where respondents live by LGA



This is Western Sydney by LGA



Data source: Appendix Q. Maps by author. Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

When viewing these maps, it is evident that 'Western Sydney' is a nebulous term as its spatial remit is highly subjective with respect to residential location within metropolitan Sydney but one that clearly associated with specific areas.

5.1.2 Who gets what and where in 'Western Sydney'?

As a spatial imaginary, observing the multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' with respect to institutional resource distribution designed to address spatial inequities is key to examining the extent to which boundaries perpetuate or reflect urban inequality and segregation.

This section applies the three categories of boundaries of 'Western Sydney' identified in Chapter 4 in two select areas of NSW Government grant programs to illustrate the effect boundaries have on the spatial dimensions of resource distribution across Greater Sydney and their broader implications which are examined in Section 5.1.3.

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program

This \$2 billion program is designed to fund 'transformational infrastructure projects to improve liveability across Western Sydney' (Premier's Department 2022) and consists of two portions:

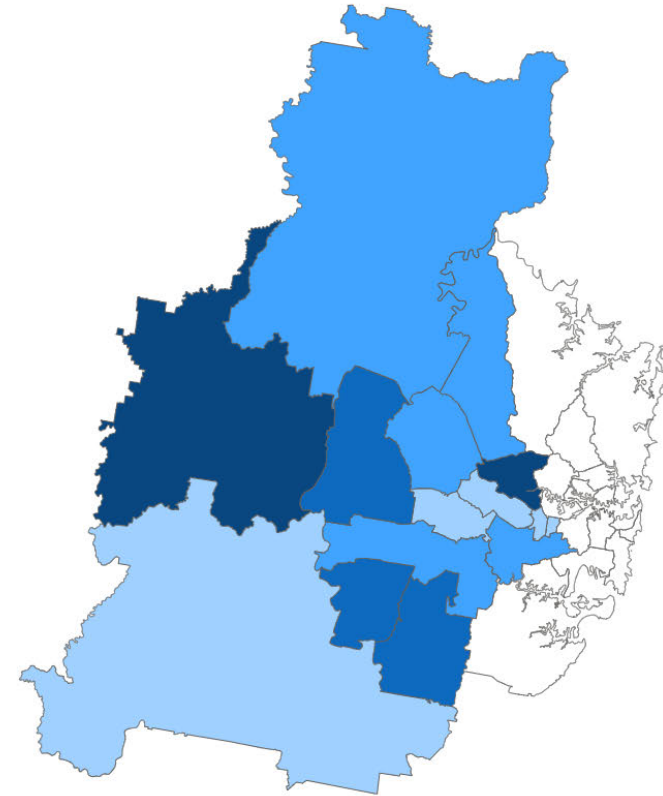
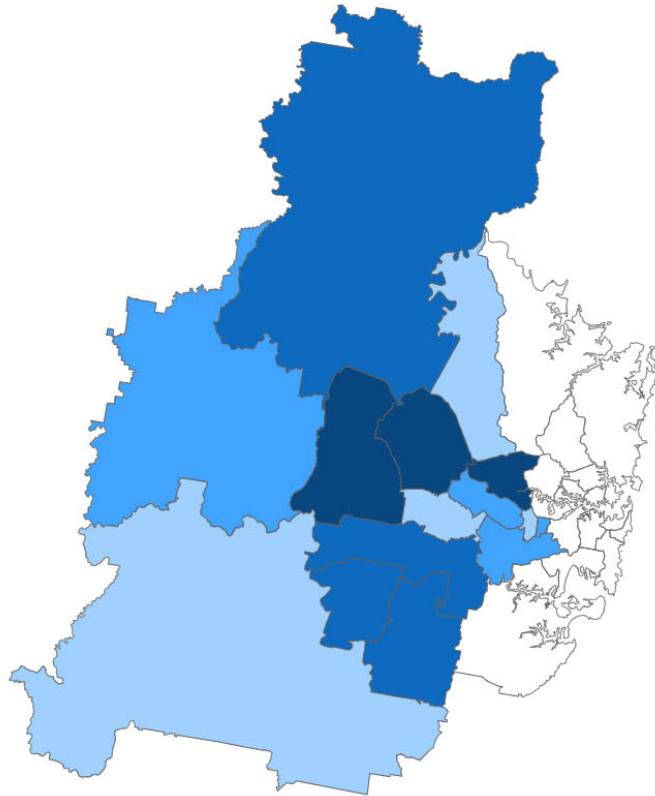
- Local Government Allocation: \$400 million available to 15 eligible LGAs, allocation of \$20 million - \$50 million for each LGA depending on population size.
- Competitive Round: \$1.6 billion allocation via a competitive grant process open to non-government organisations, local councils, and community groups.

The 15 eligible LGAs largely correlate to the broadest 'informal' (except for Canada Bay) and 'quasi-formal' boundaries of 'Western Sydney'. Visualisations of the program's distribution of the Competitive Round funding and funded projects using the identified multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' are provided over the next six pages in Figures 70 to 75.

Figure 70: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Overall Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Grants Funding (\$m) by LGA

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Count of Funded Competitive Community Projects by LGA



Total Grant Funding ● > \$200m ● < \$150m ● < \$100m ● < \$50m 0

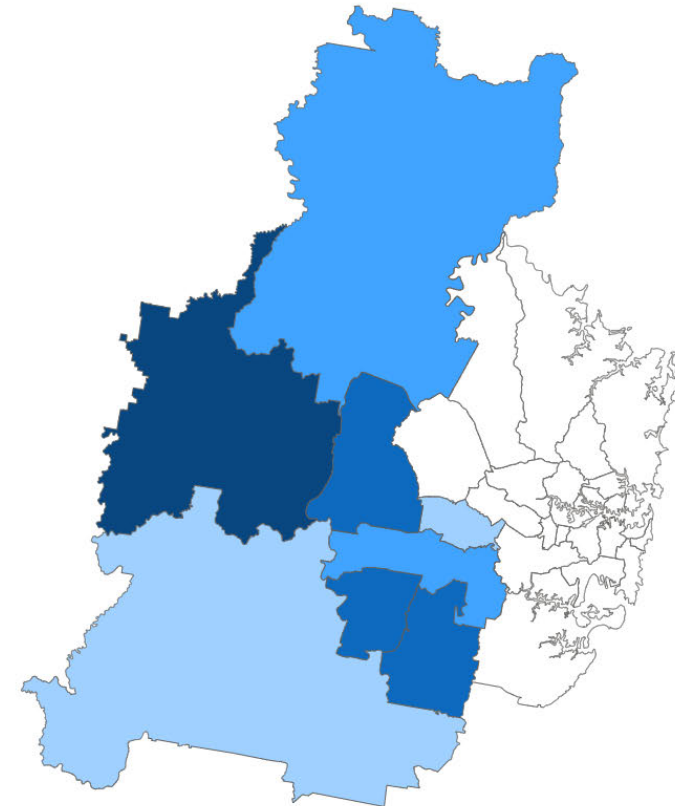
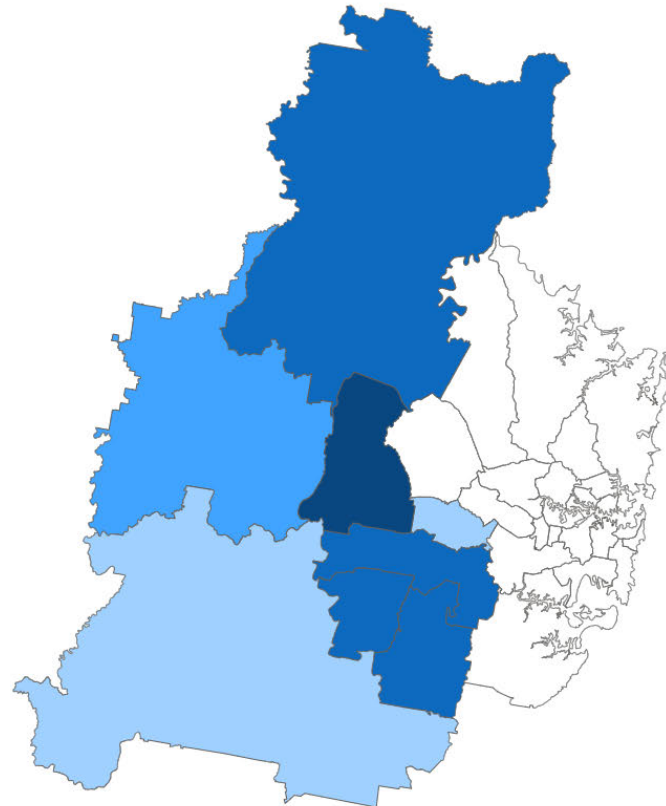
Funded Projects ● > 15 ● < 15 ● < 10 ● < 5 0

Data source: Audit Office of New South Wales 2024.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (2022a)
 Maps by author.

Figure 71: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Formal' Western Sydney (Western Parkland City) Boundaries

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Grants Funding (\$m) by LGA

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Count of Funded Competitive Community Projects by LGA



Total Grant Funding ● > \$200m ● < \$150m ● < \$100m ● < \$50m

Funded Projects ● > 15 ● < 15 ● < 10 ● < 5

Data source: Audit Office of New South Wales 2024.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (2022a)

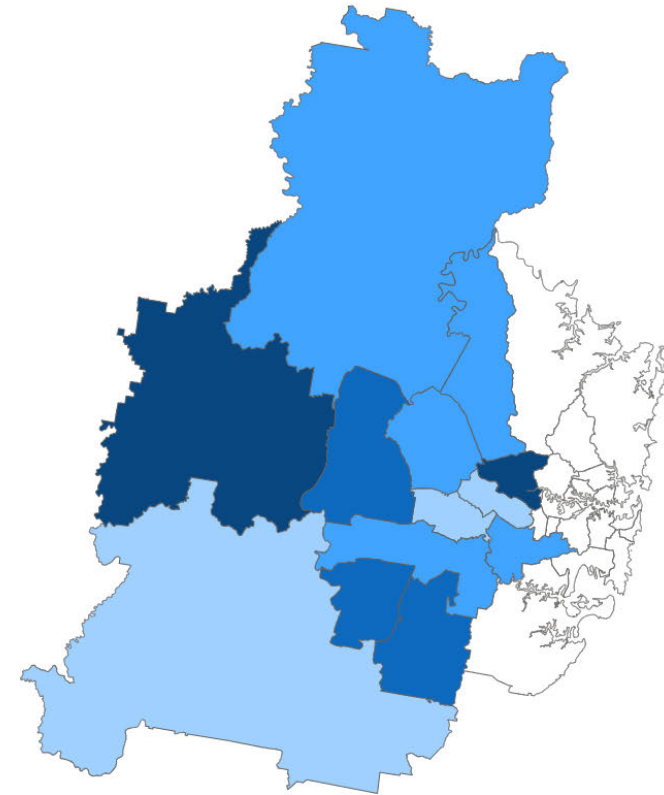
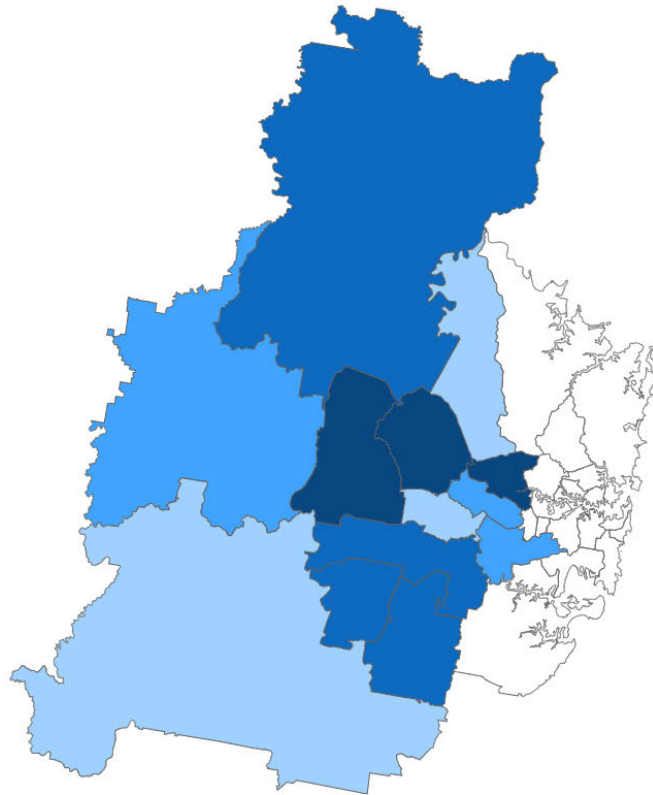
Maps by author.

Student ID: [REDACTED]

Figure 72: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Quasi-formal' Western Sydney Boundaries

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Grants Funding (\$m) by LGA

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Count of Funded Competitive Community Projects by LGA



Total Grant Funding ● > \$200m ● < \$150m ● < \$100m ● < \$50m

Funded Projects ● > 15 ● < 15 ● < 10 ● < 5

Data source: Audit Office of New South Wales 2024.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (2022a)

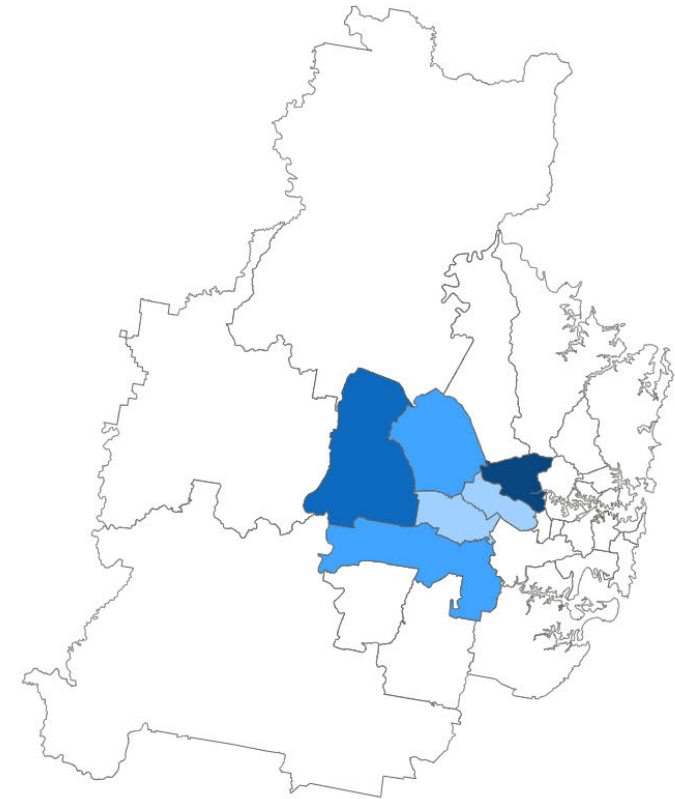
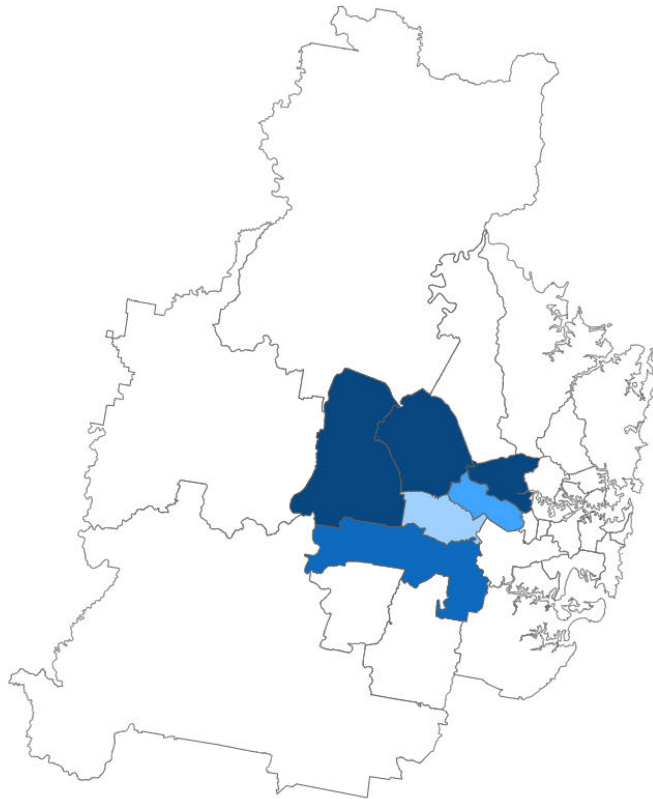
Maps by author.

Student ID: [REDACTED]

Figure 73: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Central Core) Boundaries

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Grants Funding (\$m) by LGA

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Count of Funded Competitive Community Projects by LGA



Total Grant Funding ● > \$200m ● < \$150m ● < \$100m ● < \$50m

Funded Projects ● > 15 ● < 15 ● < 10 ● < 5

Data source: Audit Office of New South Wales 2024.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (2022a)

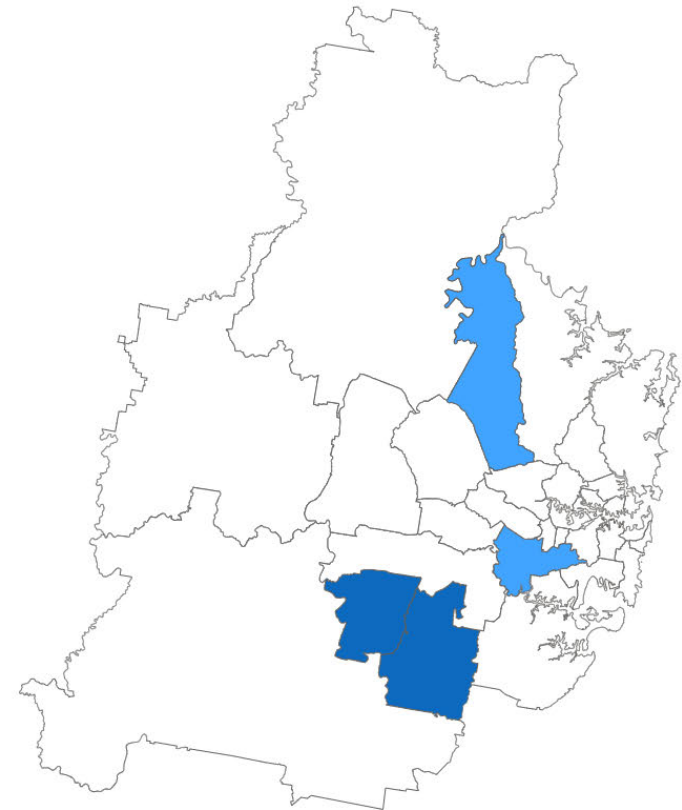
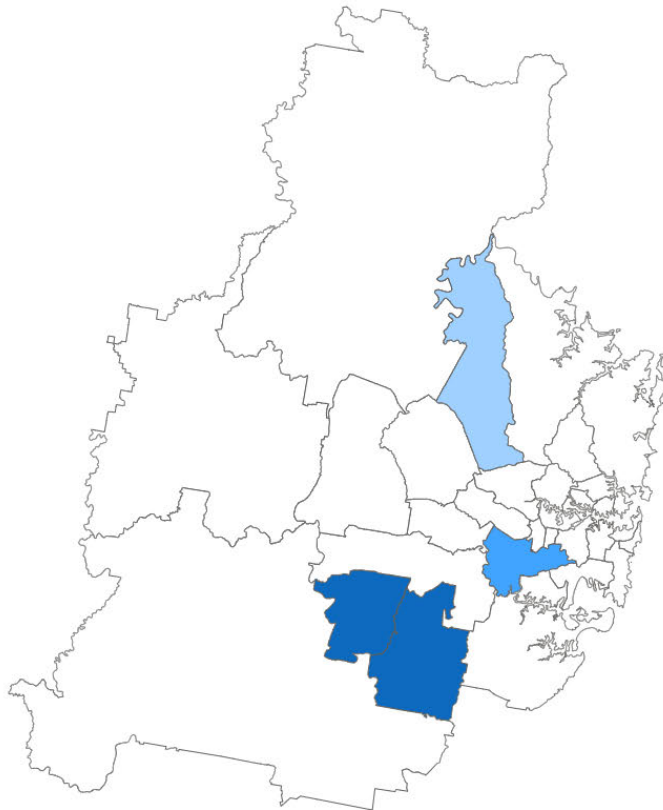
Maps by author.

Student ID: [REDACTED]

Figure 74: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) Boundaries

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Grants Funding (\$m) by LGA

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Count of Funded Competitive Community Projects by LGA



Total Grant Funding ● < \$150m ● < \$100m ● < \$50m

Funded Projects ● < 15 ● < 10

Data source: Audit Office of New South Wales 2024.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (2022a)

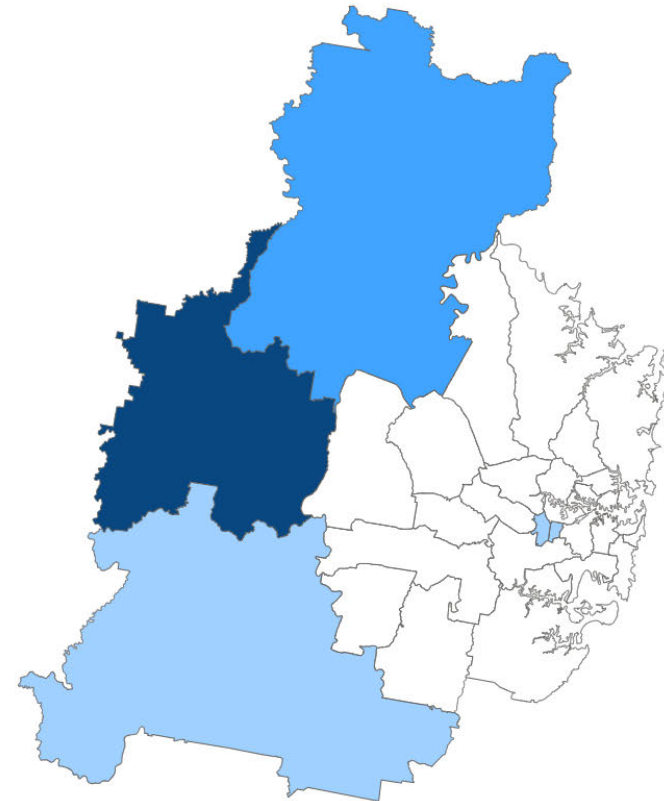
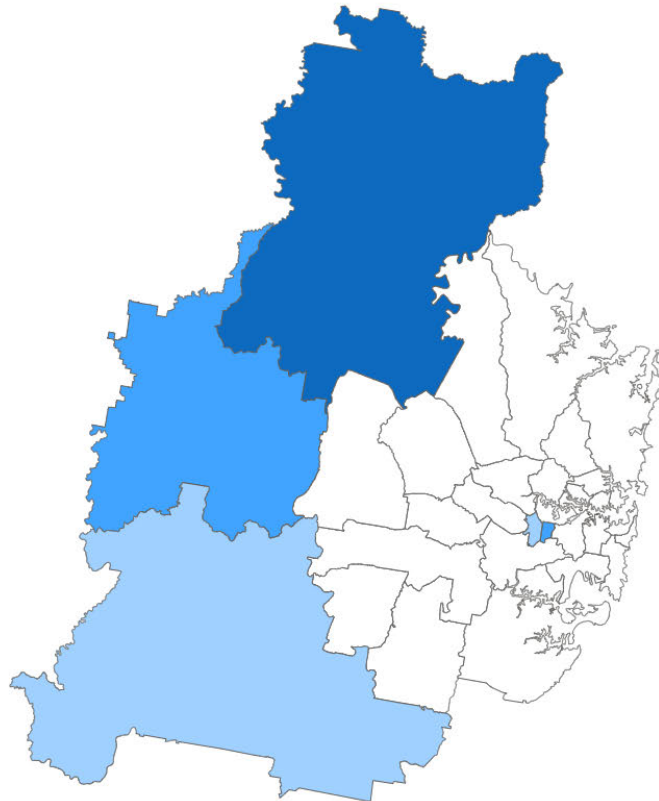
Maps by author.

Student ID: [REDACTED]

Figure 75: Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Funding Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Marginal Fringes) Boundaries

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Competitive Community Project Grants Funding (\$m) by LGA

Western Sydney Infrastructure Grants Program - Count of Funded Competitive Community Projects by LGA



Total Grant Funding ● < \$150m ● < \$100m ● < \$50m 0

Funded Projects ● > 15 ● < 10 ● < 5 0

Data source: Audit Office of New South Wales 2024.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (2022a)

Maps by author.

Student ID: [REDACTED]

Cultural and Arts Funding

Disparities in cultural and arts funding for 'Western Sydney' are notable with funding allocations of 36.6% of the state's cultural infrastructure funding and federal allocation of 3.4% between 2015 and 2023 (Itaoui, Merrillees & Gerace 2023) for its largest geographic iteration as 'Greater Western Sydney' despite containing a significant proportion of NSW's population.

Recent institutional efforts to address this spatial inequality can be seen in grants programs examined in this subsection and the recent Commonwealth Government commitment to a subsidiary hub of the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS), headquartered in the Greater Sydney's northern districts, one of two national broadcasters and its only dedicated multicultural television network, somewhere in 'Western Sydney' (DITRDCA 2024).

Uptown District Acceleration Program

The program's key focuses include improved coordination between businesses in specific geographical areas, marketability of unique districts, supporting business models with mass appeal to encourage partnerships with government, brands, and major events (Office of the 24-Hour Economy Commissioner 2023).

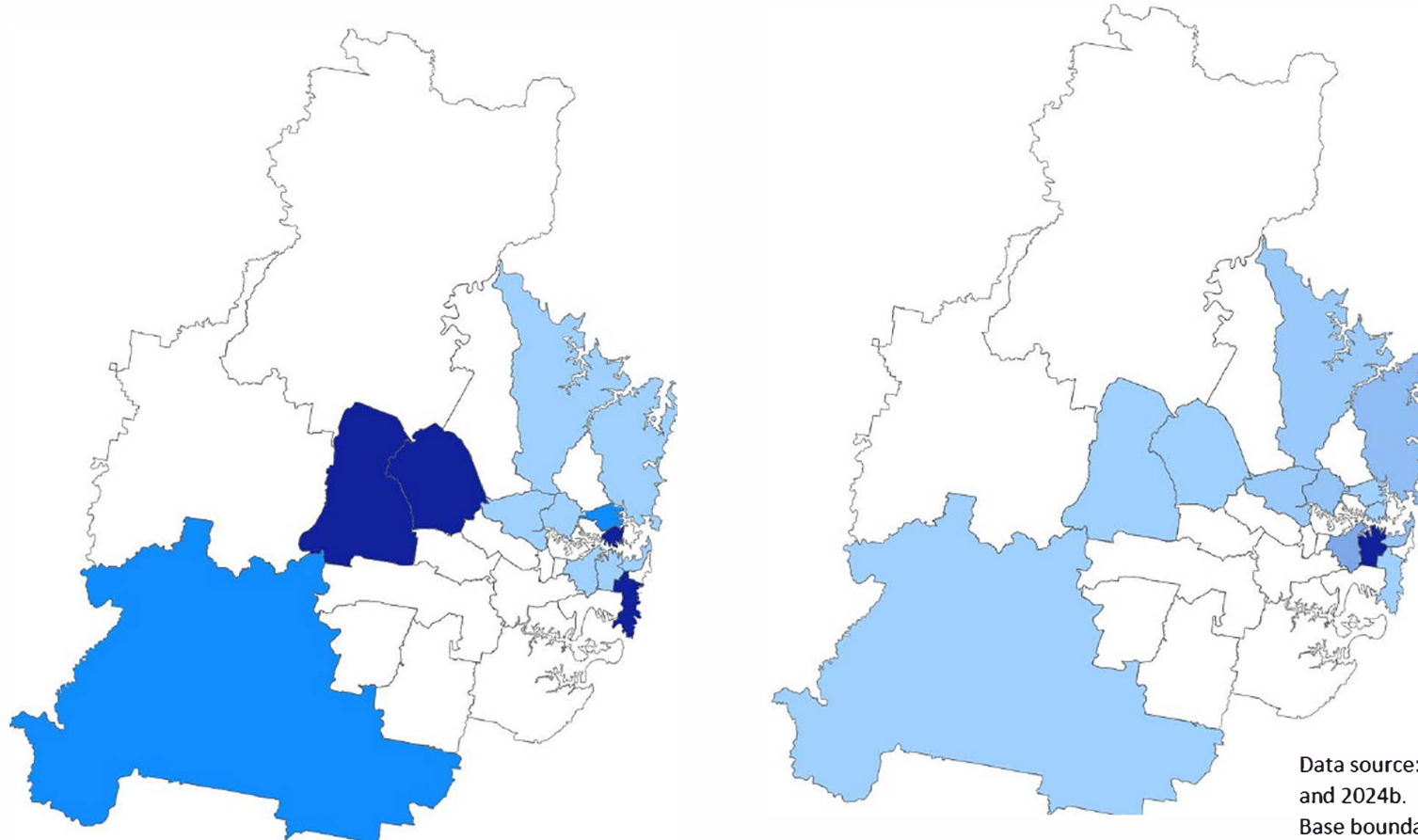
Rounds 1 (2023) and 2 (2024) were open to Greater Sydney LGAs and the latest round has now expanded to include other NSW regions. This program's spatial distribution pattern is notable for its substantial eastern harbour focus. Figures 76 to 84 over the next nine pages illustrate the spatial distribution of this program's funding across eligible LGAs.

Figure 76: Uptown Grant Program – Overall Distribution of Round 1 (2023) and Round 2 (2024)

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$150,000 ● < \$200,000 ● 200000

Funded Projects by LGA



Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Maps by author

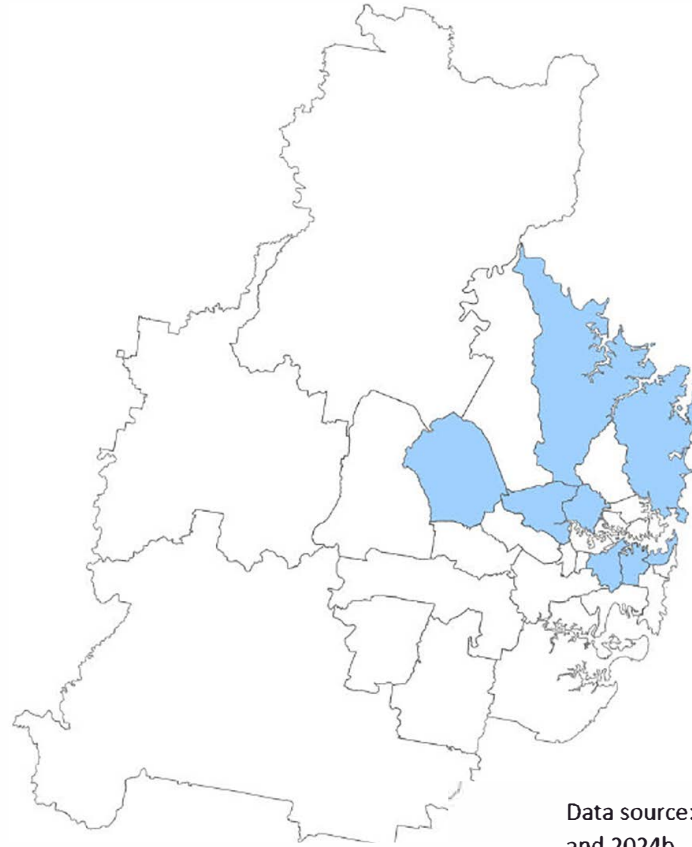
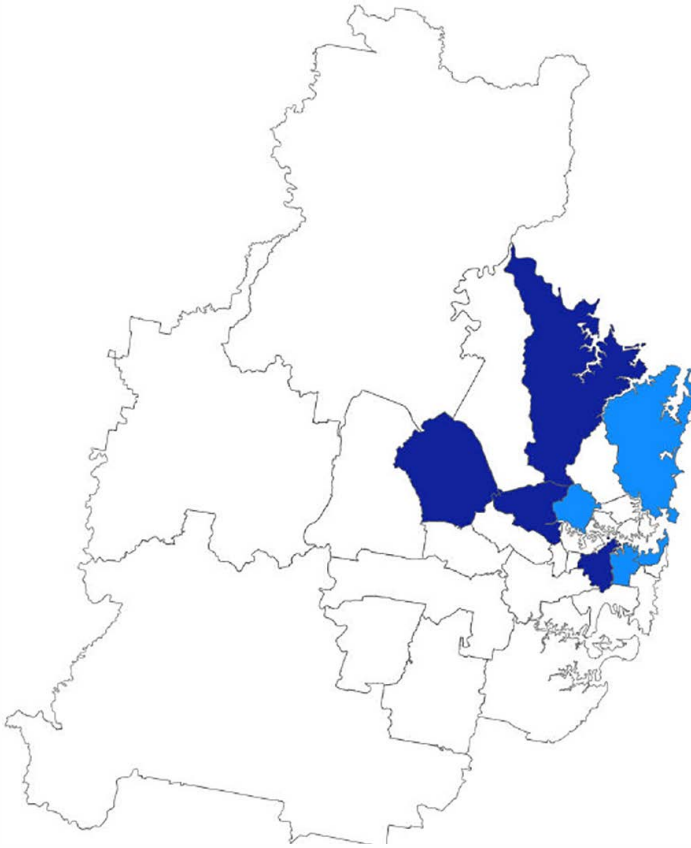
Figure 77: Overall Uptown Grant Program Round 1 (2023) Distribution

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$200,000 ● 200000

Funded Projects by LGA

■ 1



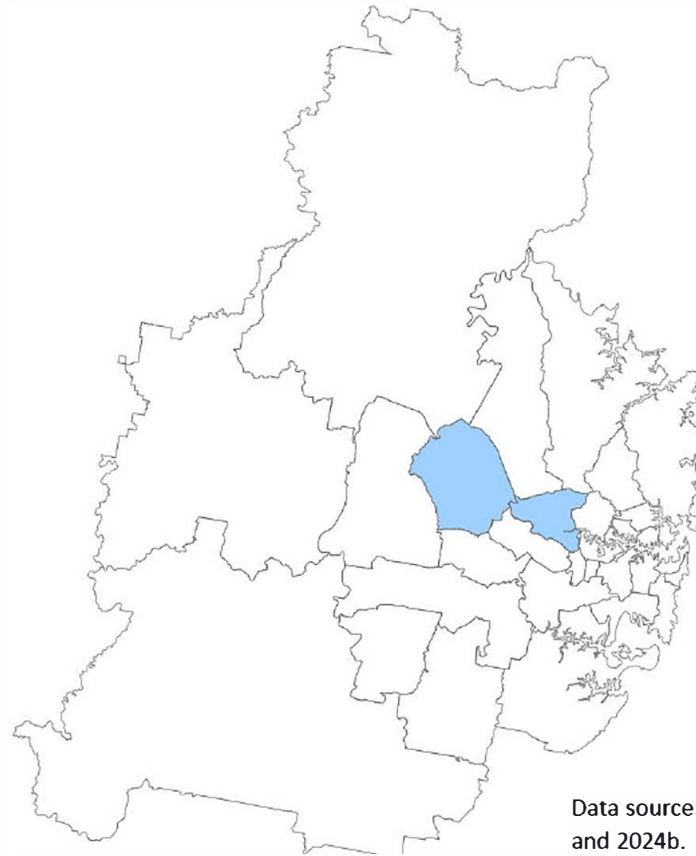
Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

Figure 78: Uptown Grant Program Round 1 (2023) Distribution by 'Quasi-formal' Western Sydney Boundaries

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● 200000

Funded Projects by LGA



Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

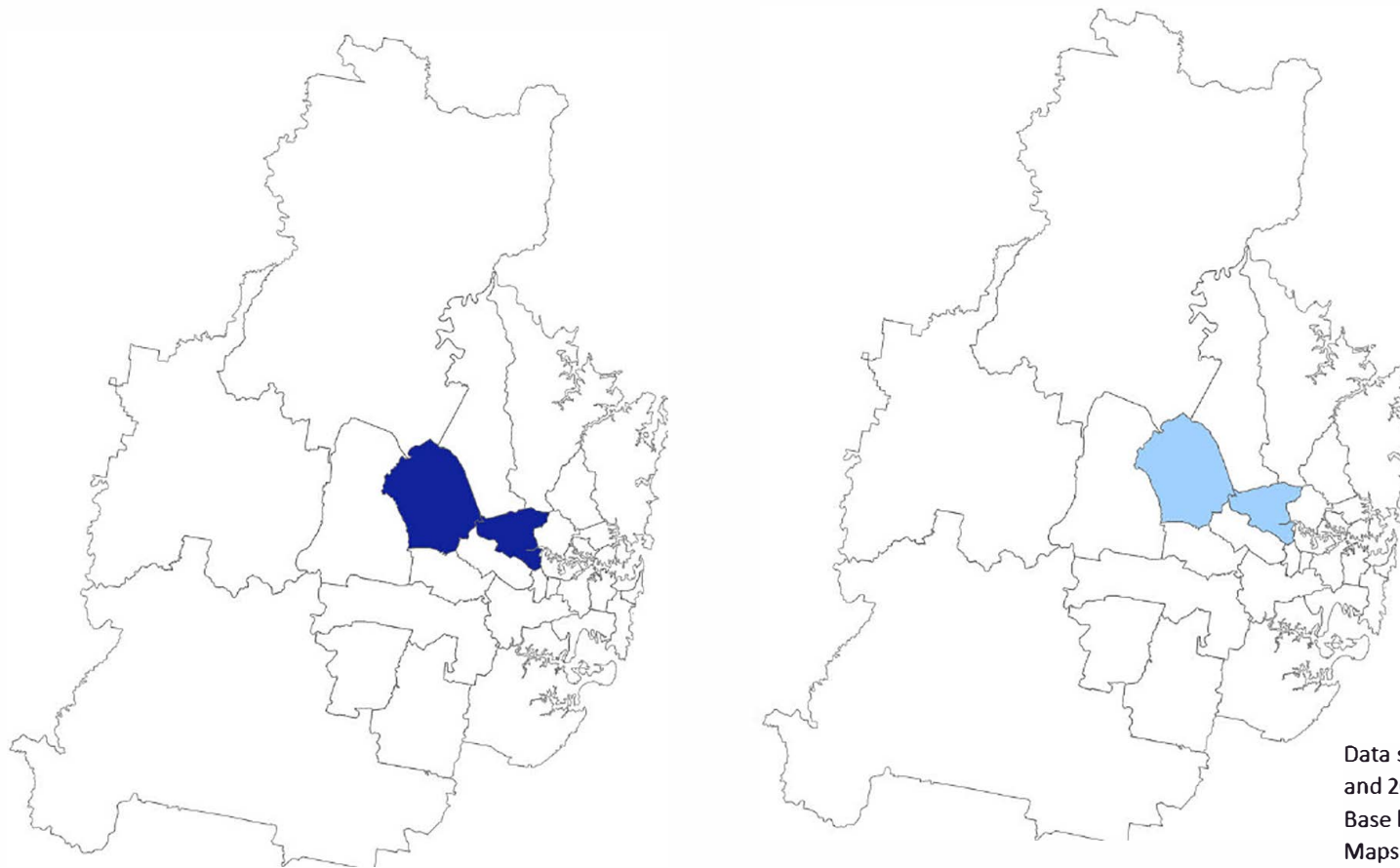
Maps by author

Figure 79: Uptown Grant Program Round 1 (2023) Distribution by 'Informal' Western Sydney Boundaries

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● 200000

Funded Projects by LGA



Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.

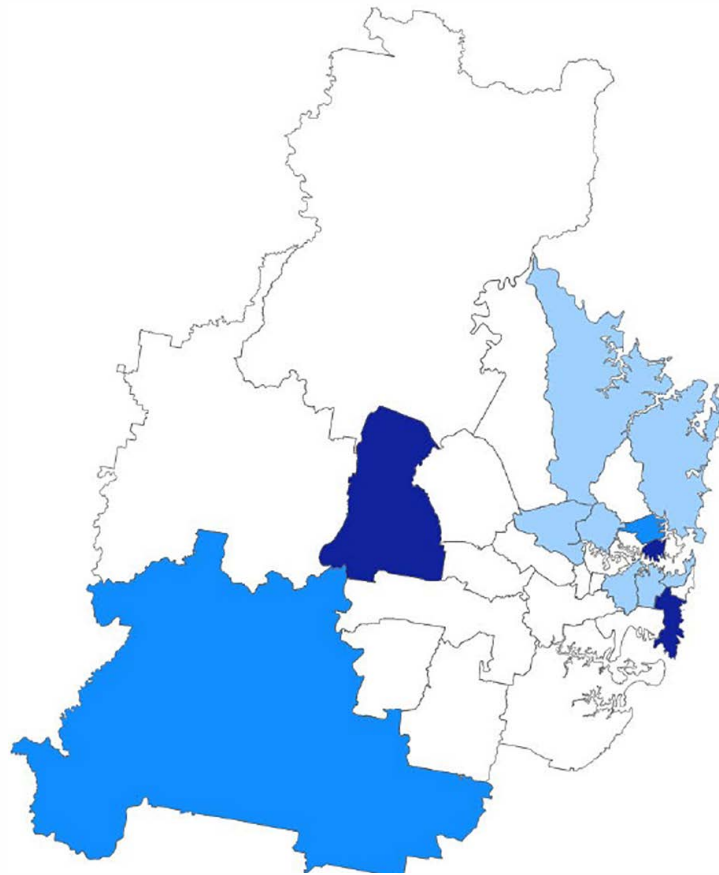
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Maps by author

Figure 80: Overall Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution

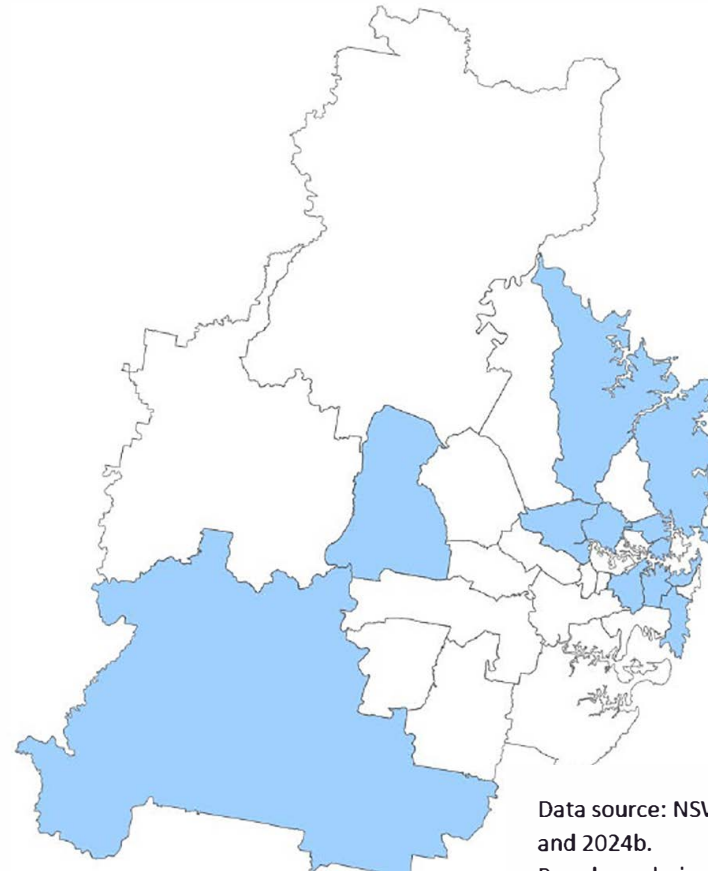
Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$150,000 ● < \$200,000 ● 200000



Funded Projects by LGA

■ 1



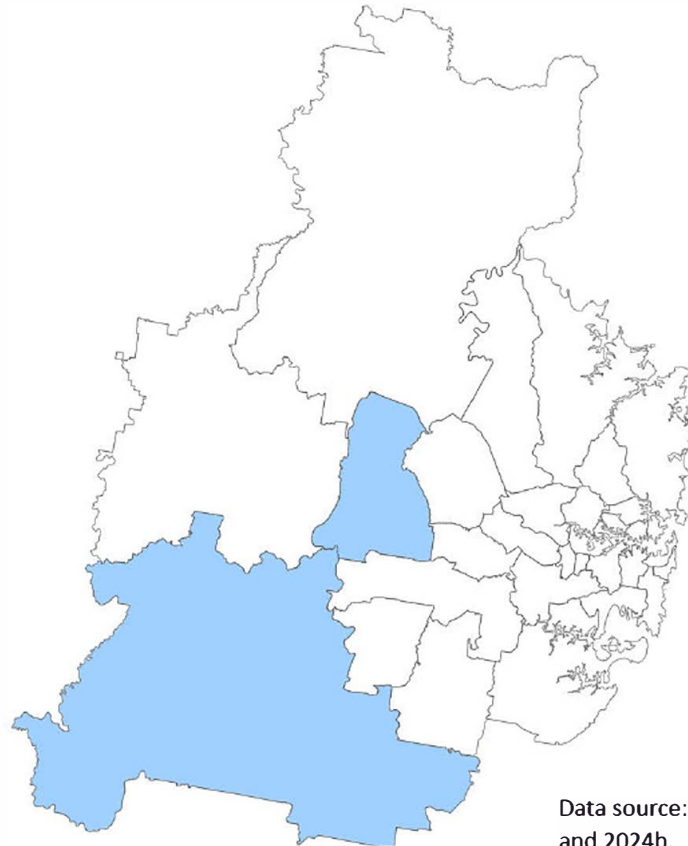
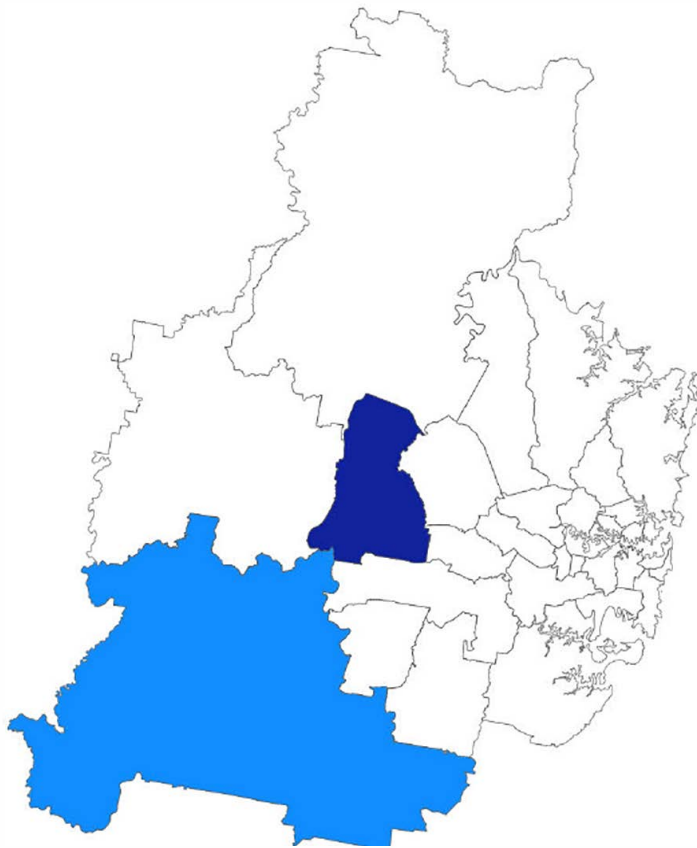
Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

Figure 81: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by 'Formal' Western Sydney Boundaries

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$200,000 ● 200000

Funded Projects by LGA



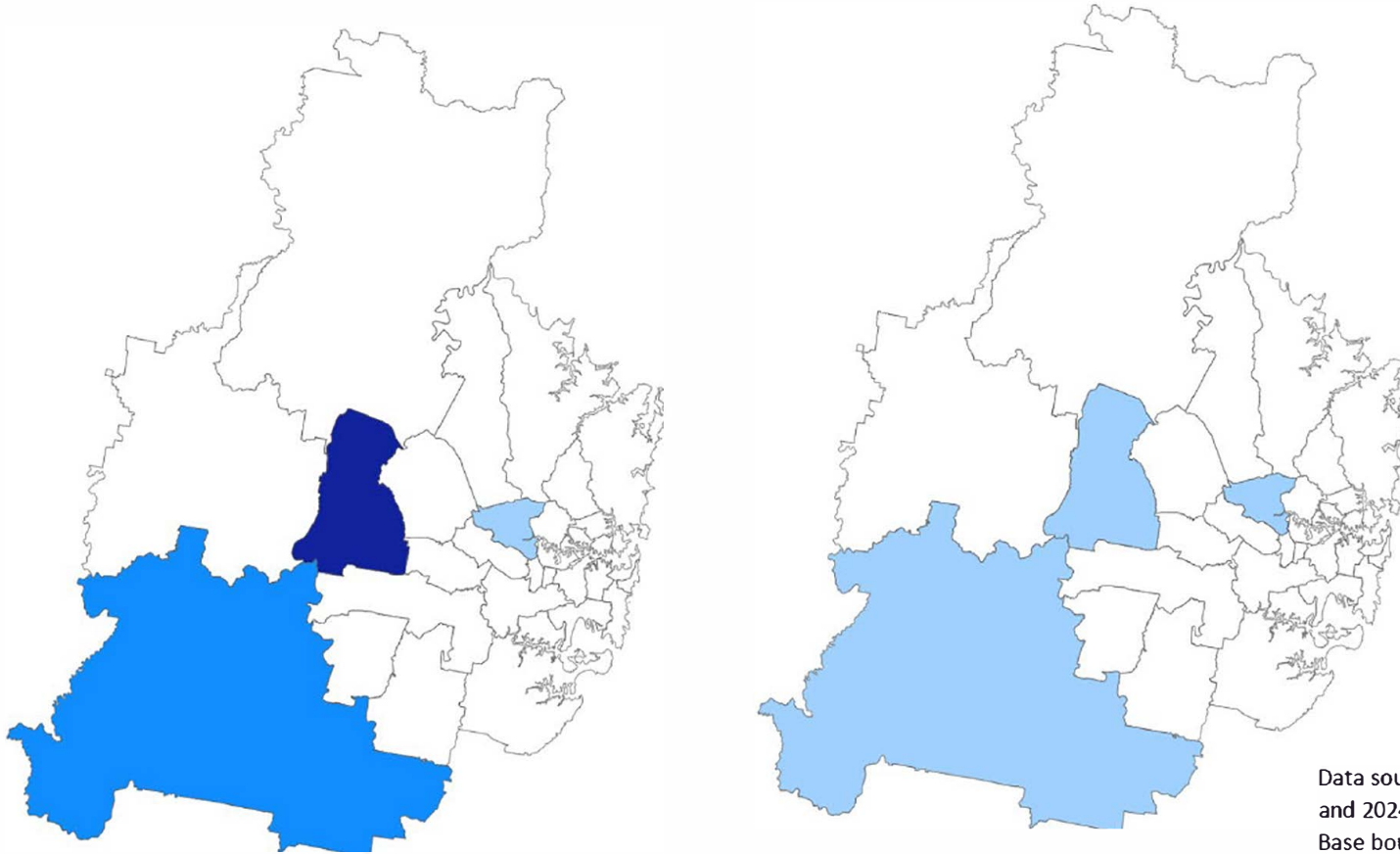
Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

Figure 82: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by 'Quasi-formal' Western Sydney Boundaries

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$150,000 ● < \$200,000 ● 200000

Funded Projects by LGA



Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.

Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Maps by author

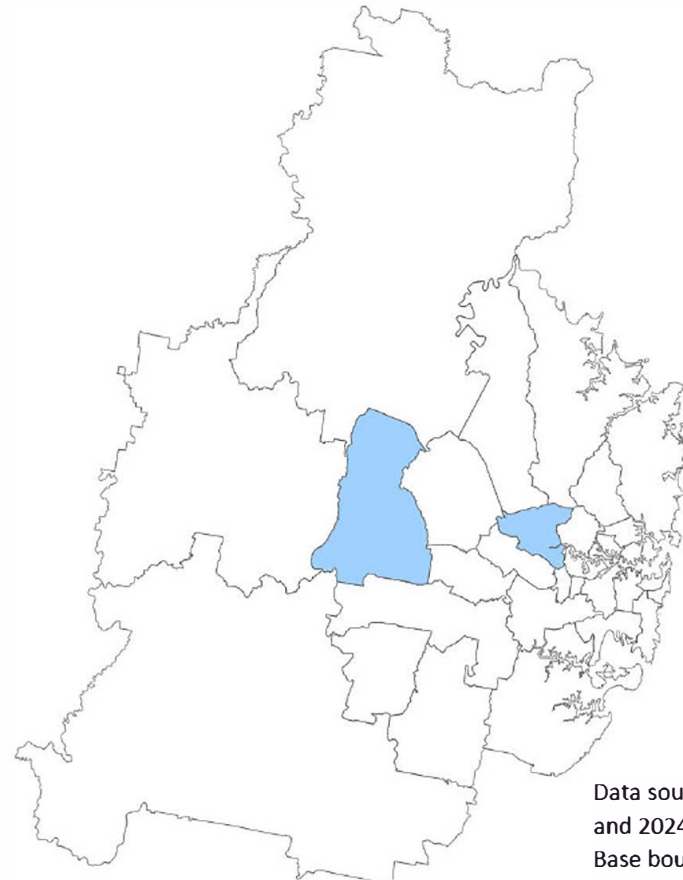
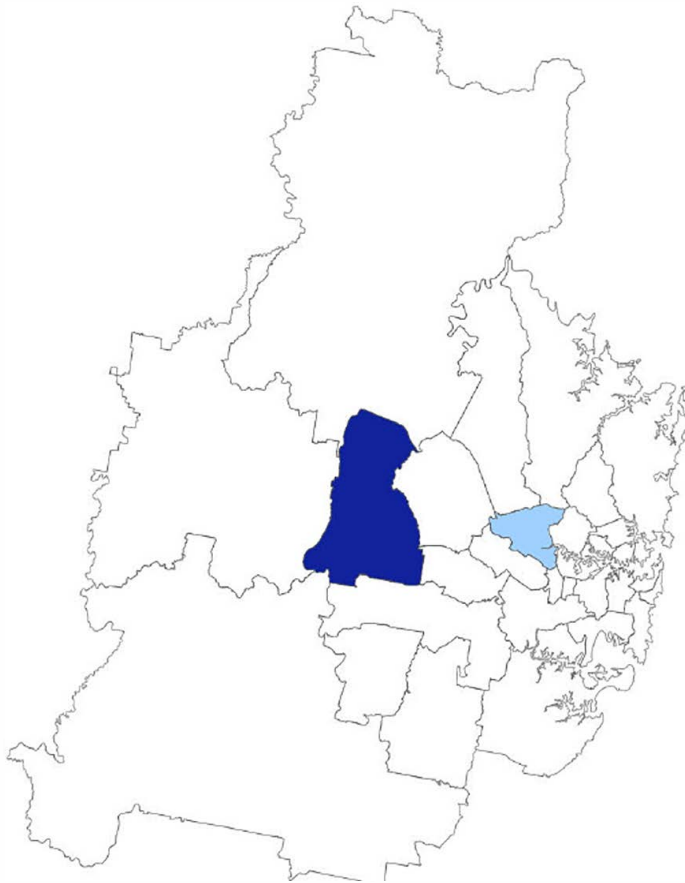
Figure 83: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by 'Informal' (Central Core) Western Sydney Boundaries

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$150,000 ● 200000

Funded Projects by LGA

■ 1



Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

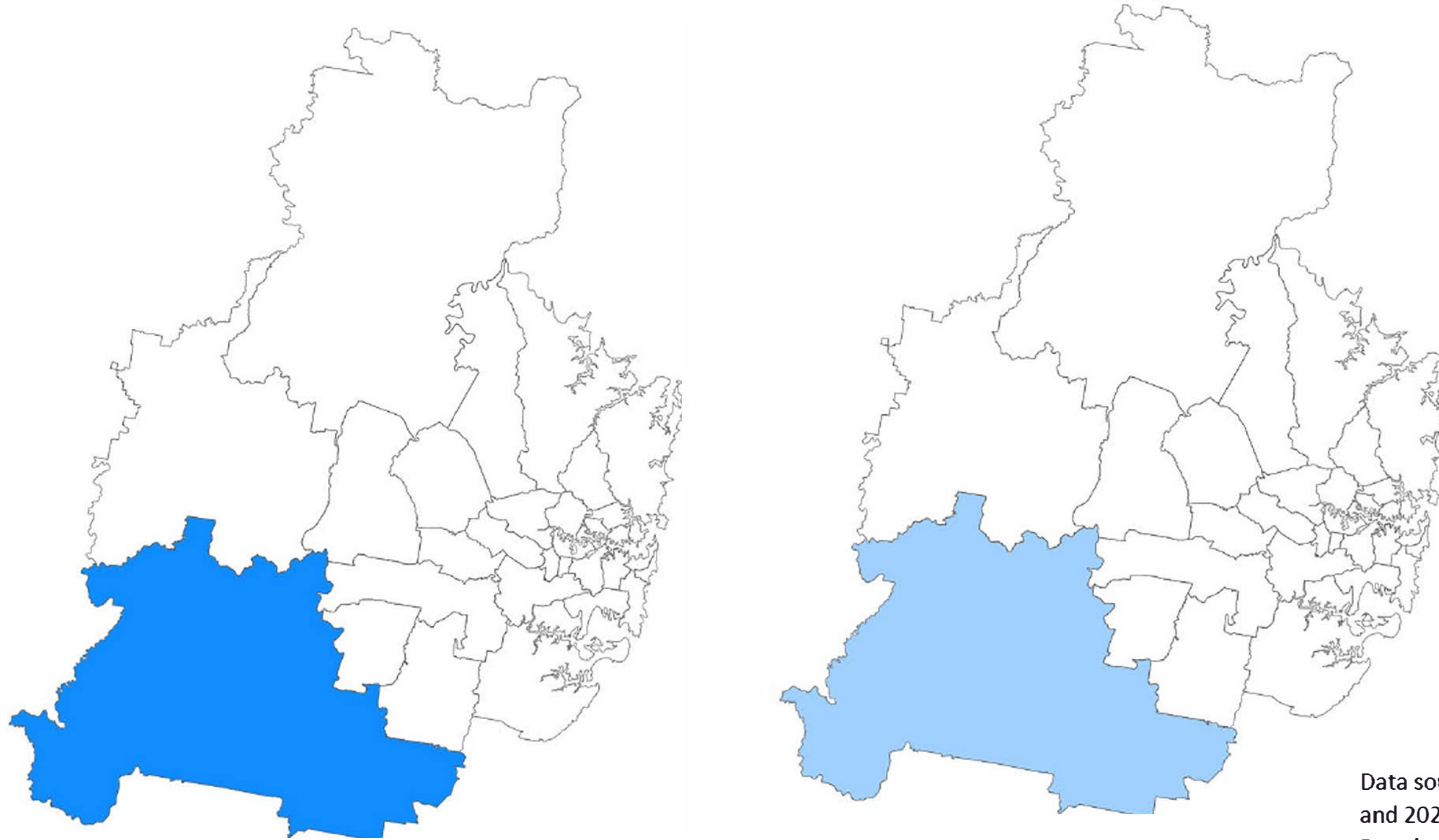
Figure 84: Uptown Grant Program Round 2 (2024) Distribution by 'Informal' (Marginal Fringes) Western Sydney Boundaries

Awarded Amount by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$200,000

Funded Projects by LGA

■ 1

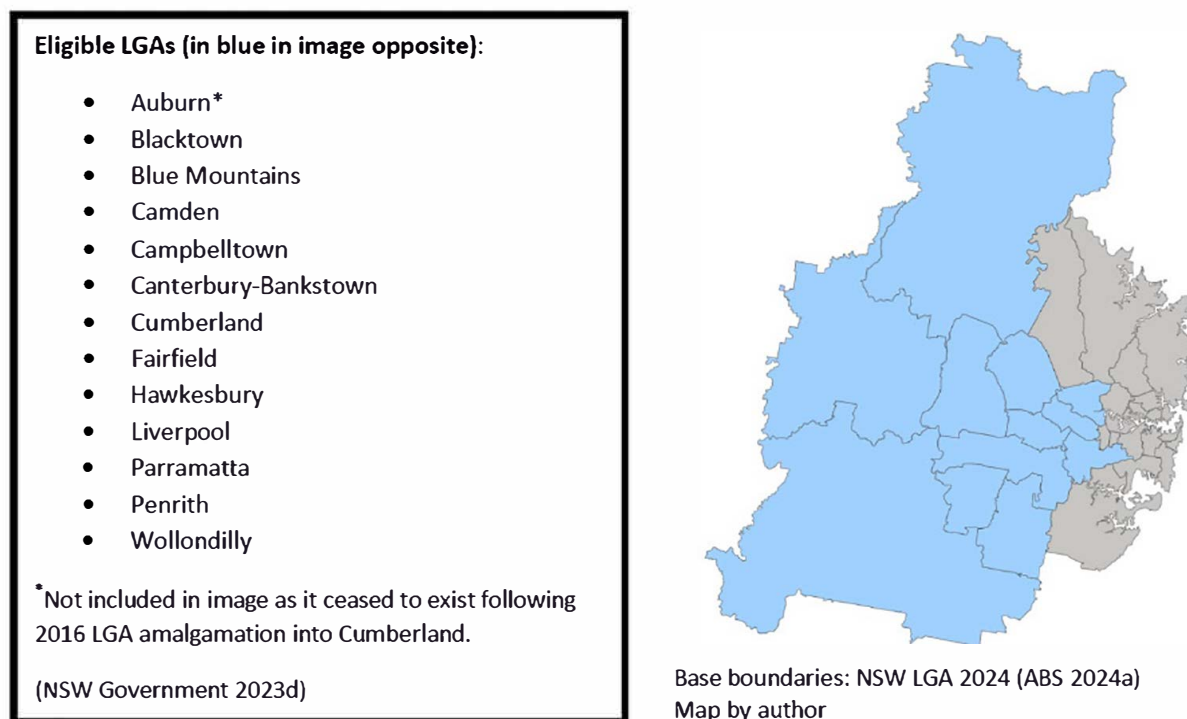


Data source: NSW Government 2023c, 2024a and 2024b.
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

Western Sydney Culture Up Late

This program was designed to foster after-hours audience engagement and stimulate economic development in the creative sector across 'Western Sydney' (NSW Government 2023a). This program targeted cultural venues for grants up to \$200,000 to present activities after 5PM between 1 September 2023 to 29 February 2024 (NSW Government 2023c).

Figure 85: Eligible LGAs - Western Sydney Culture Up Late Grant Funding



Of the 23 applications received, 11 applications were approved (NSW Government 2023d).

Figure 86: Summary of 'Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late' Grant Funding Distribution by LGA

NSW LGA	Funded Project	Approved Funding
Parramatta	ACE After Dusk	\$86,065
Canterbury-Bankstown	Art Nights: Culture Alive @ Bankstown	\$200,000
Blacktown	Blacktown After 5	\$200,000
Camden	Camden's Cultural Fusion	\$129,450
Liverpool	Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre Up Late Program	\$178,140
Penrith	Creative Penrith By Night	\$118,052
Campbelltown (NSW)	Culture Up Late @ Campbelltown Arts Centre	\$200,000
Fairfield	Culturvate - Powerhouse Youth Theatre	\$200,000
Cumberland	Granville Centre Art Gallery	\$185,147
Parramatta	Parramatta Up Late Program	\$198,000
Fairfield	TO YOUR DOOR Fairfield Nights	\$200,000
Total		\$1,894,854

(NSW Government 2023d)

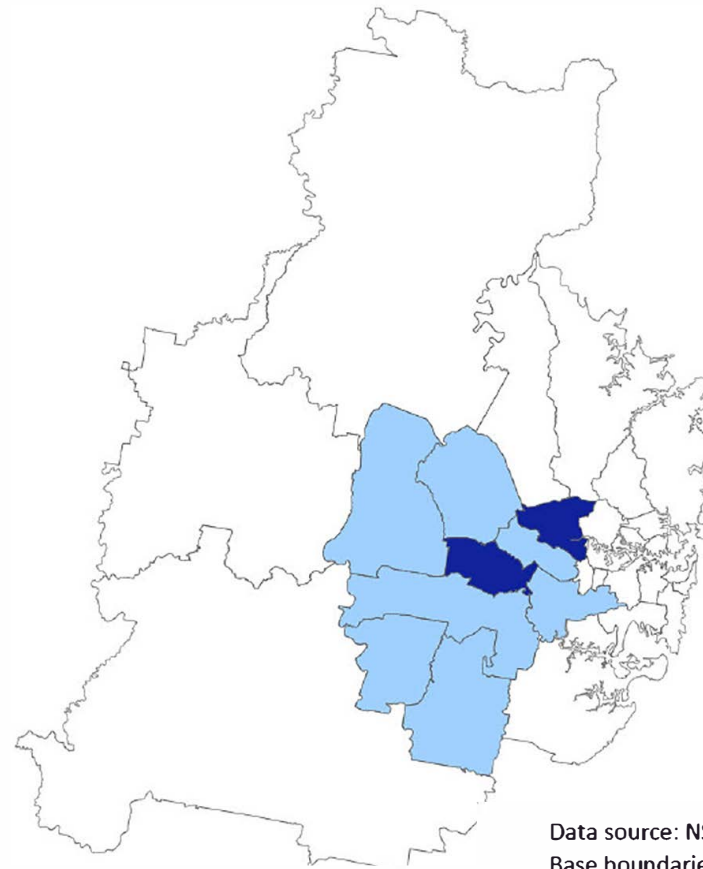
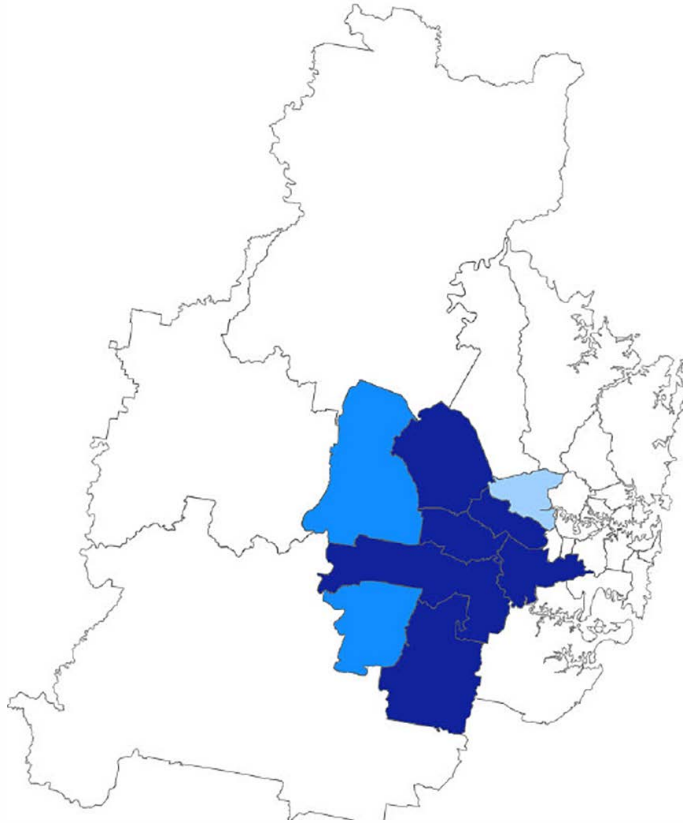
Figures 87 to 89 overleaf illustrate the grants distribution of this program across eligible LGAs.

Figure 87: Overall Distribution of 'Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late' Grant Funding by LGA

'Western Sydney Culture Up Late' Funded Projects by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$100,000 ● < \$150,000 ● > \$150,000

Count of 'Western Sydney Culture Up Late' Funded Projects by LGA



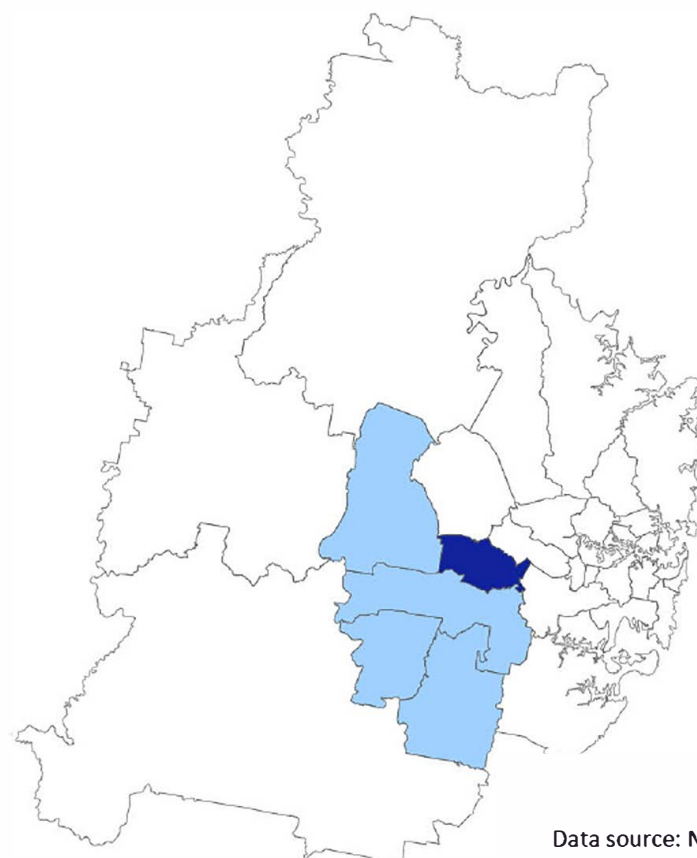
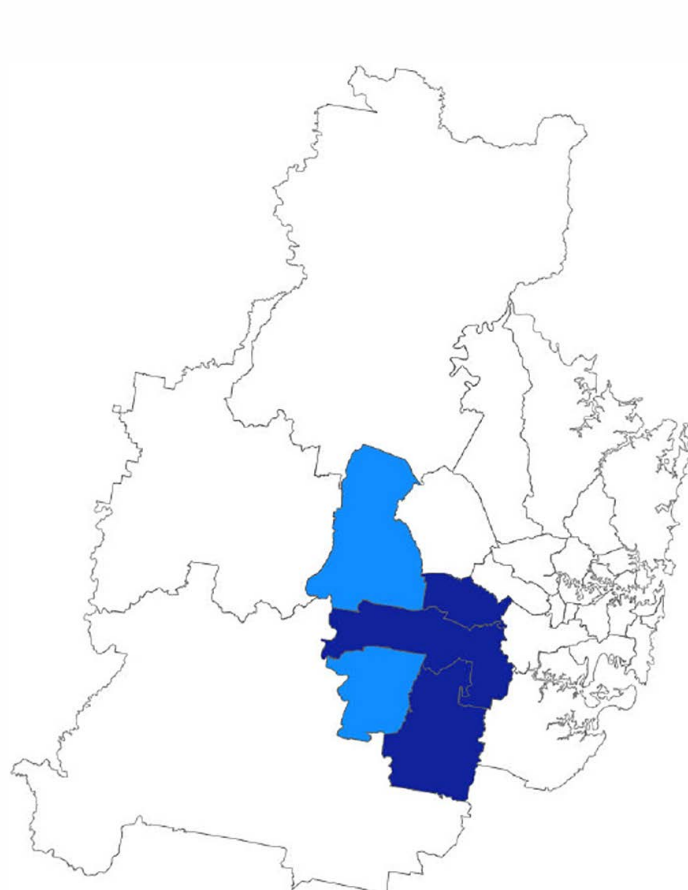
Data source: NSW Government 2023d
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

Figure 88: Distribution of 'Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late' Grant Funding by LGA by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Central Core) Boundaries

'Western Sydney Culture Up Late' Funded Projects by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$150,000 ● > \$150,000

Count of 'Western Sydney Culture Up Late' Funded Projects by LGA



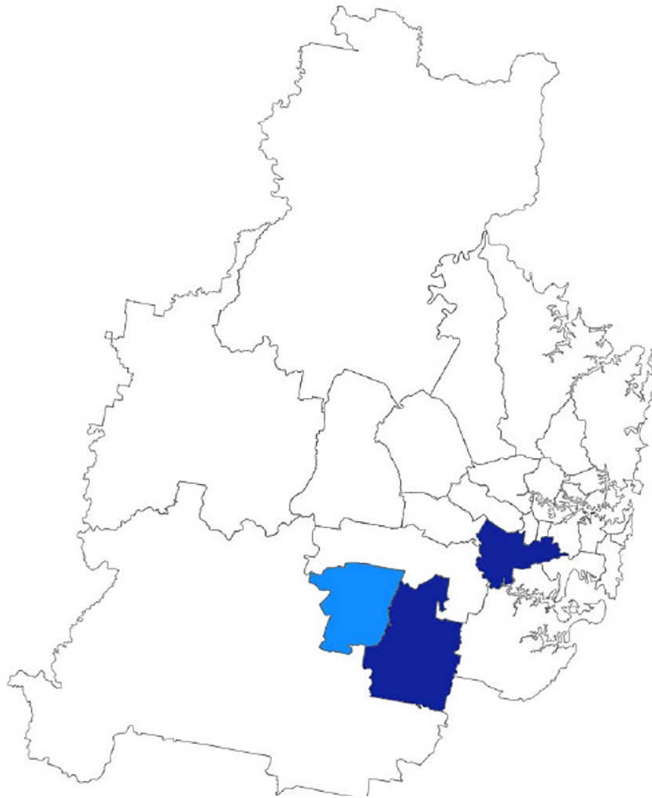
Data source: NSW Government 2023d
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

Figure 89: Distribution of 'Western Sydney Arts and Culture Up Late' Grant Funding by LGA by 'Informal' Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) Boundaries

'Western Sydney Culture Up Late' Funded Projects by LGA

Funding Range ● < \$150,000 ● > \$150,000

Count of 'Western Sydney Culture Up Late' Funded Projects by LGA



Data source: NSW Government 2023d
Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Maps by author

5.1.3 The role of boundaries in shaping urban inequality, segregation, and ‘left behind places’

As part of Fainstein’s argument for a ‘just city’, she writes ‘it is way too easy to follow the lead of developers and politicians who make economic competitiveness the highest priority and give little or no consideration to questions of justice’ (2010, p. 181). This paper raises questions for the role of boundaries and ‘left behind places’ in the case of a specific ‘Western Sydney’ which is being shaped as an economically productive city-region and the other ‘Western Sydneys’ identified in its findings, namely:

- What are implications of spatial politics articulated in institutional boundaries conflicting with informal citizen boundaries in relation to policies designed to address urban inequalities in supposedly ‘left behind places’ – who gains and who does not (and is it equitable)?
- To what extent do place-based interventions based on state-led spatial definitions address multi-dimensional urban inequality and segregation?

As the case of ‘Western Sydney’ demonstrates, boundaries are instruments and articulations of spatial politics in cities and are highly subjective, formed by place-specific historical and ongoing processes of spatial sorting in line with a city’s dominant culture, and used as informal classification for ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’.

As seen in Section 5.1.2, the application of multiple boundaries of a single spatial imaginary as overlays to spatial visualisations of government resource distribution produces variations in ‘who gets what and where.’ This subsection goes further to examine the extent boundaries reflect or perpetuate urban inequalities by observing the degree boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ reflect inequalities in Greater Sydney or instead mask them.

The Location Quotient below has been formulated to visualise concentrations of highest earning residents within and between Greater Sydney LGAs, as a portion of the city’s total income earners and highest earning residents, to illustrate, in bluntest terms, economic spatial disparities.

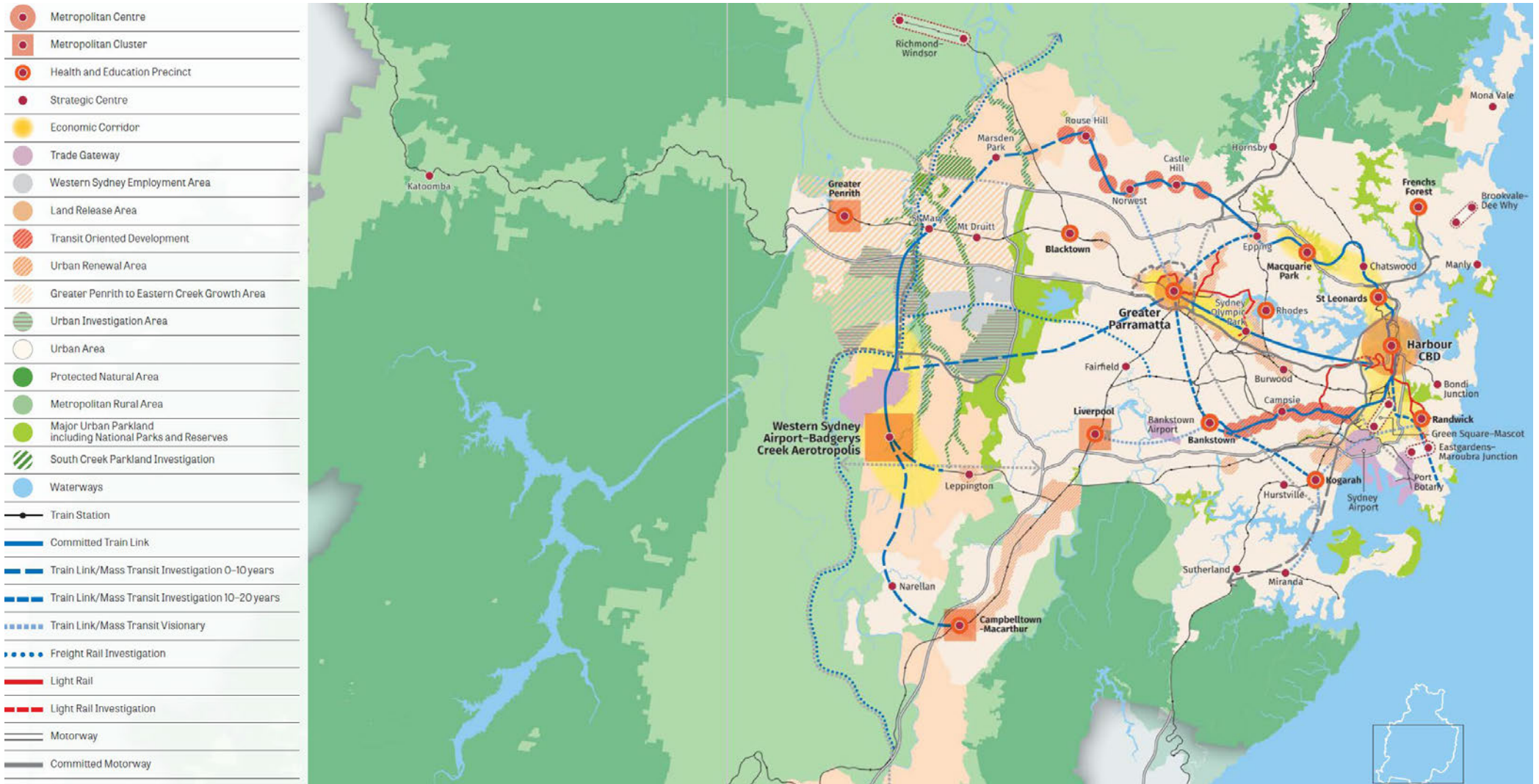
Figure 90: Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient for Greater Sydney

Location Quotient	=	$\left(\frac{x_{LGA}}{t_{LGA}} \right) \div \left(\frac{x_{Greater\ Sydney\ (197,036^*)}}{t_{Greater\ Sydney\ (3,299,749^*)}} \right)$
(iMathEQ, n.d).		
<p>Where <i>x</i> is the number of residents with recorded annual equivalised income within the highest bracket (\$182,000 or more) recorded in the national census in 2021 and <i>t</i> being the total number of income earning residents recorded in the national census in 2021.</p>		
<p>*Source: ABS 2021b</p>		

In the context of the current vision of Greater Sydney as a metropolis of three cities (Figure 91 overleaf) and the envisioned transformative effects of the Western Sydney Airport, it is pertinent to observe current spatial dynamics of inequality. The application of the Location Quotient by Greater Sydney LGAs is spatially visualised in Figures 92 to 98.

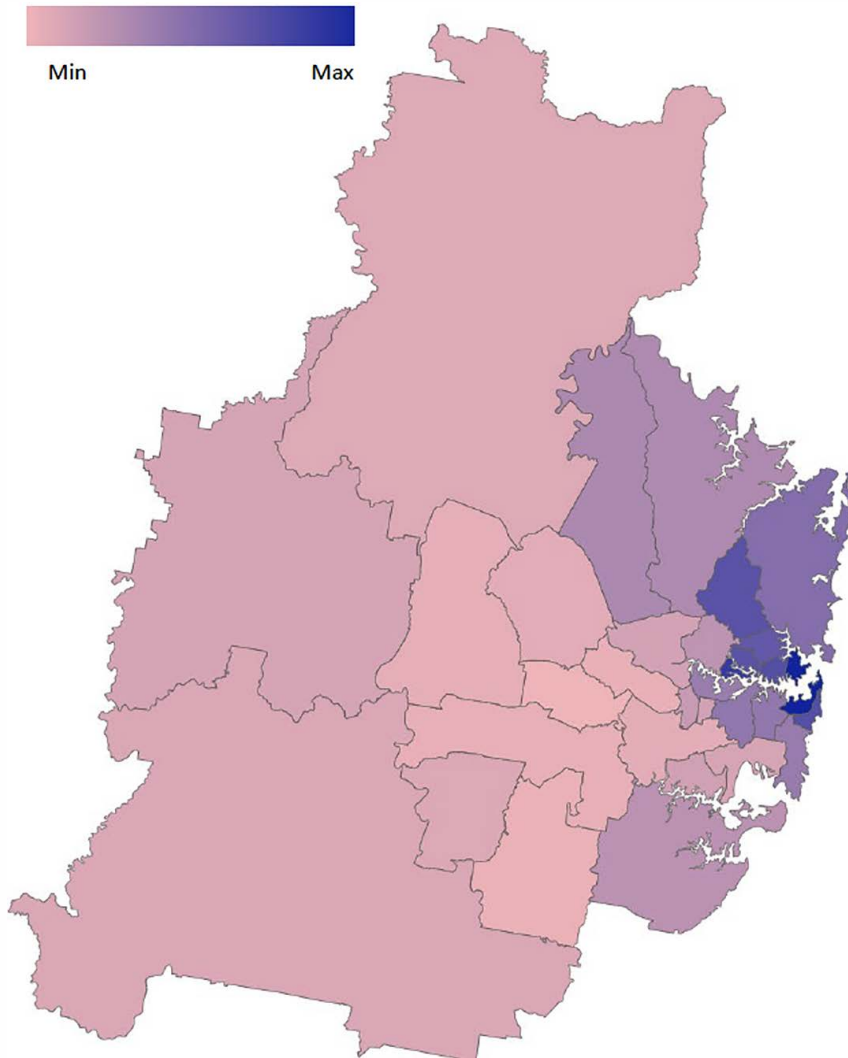
To further assist with analysis, the ABS’ SEIFA indices – specifically the IRSD and the Index of Education and Occupation (IEO), which measures relative proportion of people who are advantaged / disadvantaged with respect to educational and occupational aspects (ABS 2023a) – have been filtered using identified boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’ to produce maps showing the extent of inequality captured or not captured by these boundaries from page 127 in Figures 99 to 104.

Figure 91: Greater Sydney Commission – Metropolis of 3 Cities: A Vision to 2056



(GSC 2018c, p. 15)

Figure 92: Metropolitan Sydney Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA

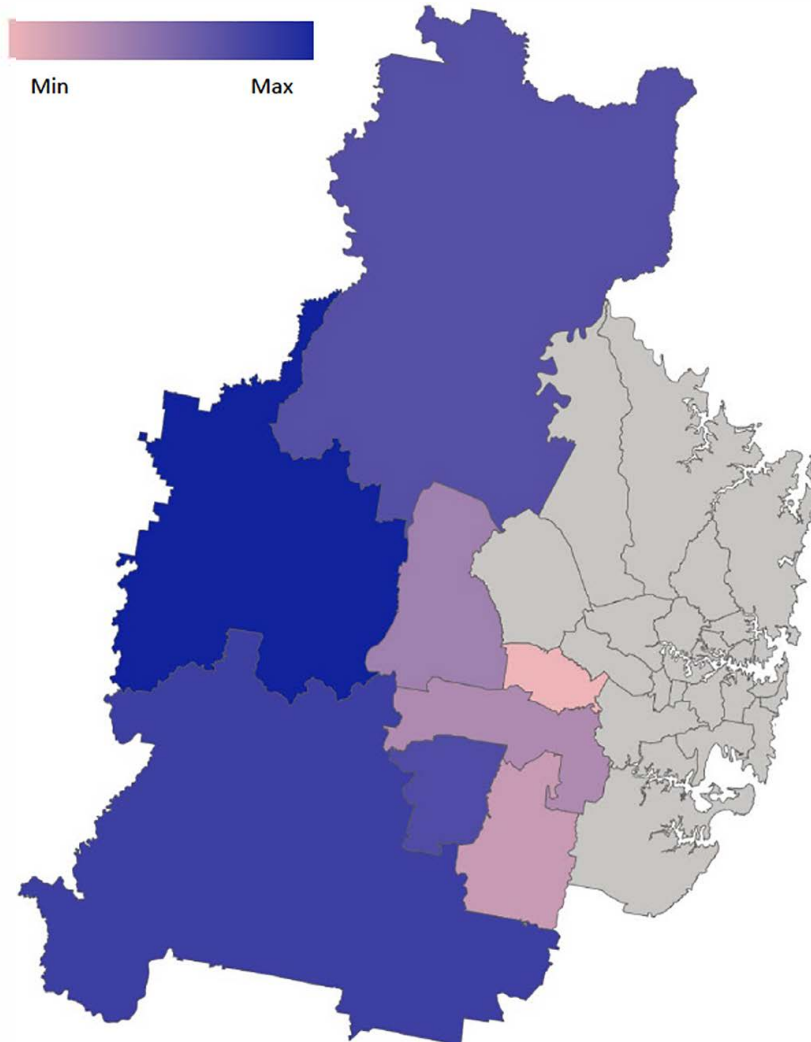


Data source: ABS 2021b.
 Maps and table by author.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Student ID: [REDACTED]

Metropolitan Sydney LGA	LGA - Total Income Earners	No. of Residents in Highest Income Bracket (\$182,000 or more) Recorded at ABS Census 2021	Location Quotient
Woollahra	38,632	8,985	3.89
Mosman	20,325	4,688	3.86
Hunters Hill	9,147	1,770	3.24
North Sydney	53,200	8,704	2.74
Waverley	49,412	8,057	2.73
Ku-ring-gai	83,664	13,273	2.66
Lane Cove	28,152	4,420	2.63
Willoughby	51,540	7,681	2.50
Northern Beaches	186,944	21,513	1.93
Inner West	135,648	13,846	1.71
Sydney	165,420	16,805	1.70
Randwick	95,262	9,094	1.60
Canada Bay	63,835	5,914	1.55
The Hills	127,503	9,498	1.25
Hornsby	103,907	7,545	1.22
Sutherland	163,503	9,733	1.00
Ryde	90,642	5,204	0.96
Strathfield	31,694	1,493	0.79
Georges River	105,697	3,983	0.63
Burwood	28,556	1,034	0.61
Parramatta	172,149	6,044	0.59
Blue Mountains	56,175	1,830	0.55
Bayside (NSW)	122,726	3,970	0.54
Wollondilly	35,857	989	0.46
Camden	76,524	1,951	0.43
Hawkesbury	46,339	1,153	0.42
Blacktown	247,106	4,805	0.33
Canterbury-Bankstown	232,288	4,223	0.30
Penrith	142,311	2,342	0.28
Liverpool	144,684	2,133	0.25
Cumberland	145,849	2,046	0.23
Campbelltown (NSW)	111,665	1,323	0.20
Fairfield	133,370	993	0.12
Total	3,299,726	197,042	43.88

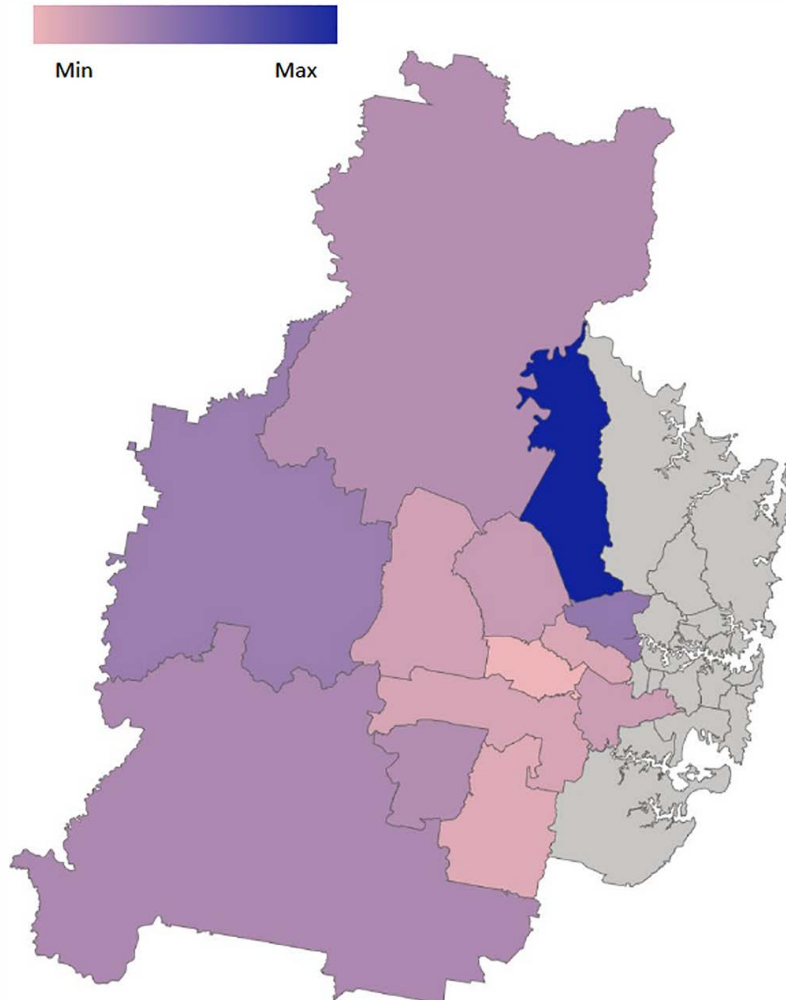
Figure 93: 'Formal' Western Sydney (Western Parkland City) by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA



Metropolitan Sydney LGA	LGA - Total Income Earners	No. of Residents in Highest Income Bracket (\$182,000 or more) Recorded at ABS Census 2021	Location Quotient
Blue Mountains	56,175	1,830	0.55
Wollondilly	35,857	989	0.46
Camden	76,524	1,951	0.43
Hawkesbury	46,339	1,153	0.42
Penrith	142,311	2,342	0.28
Liverpool	144,684	2,133	0.25
Campbelltown (NSW)	111,665	1,323	0.20
Fairfield	133,370	993	0.12
Total	746,925	12,714	2.70

Data source: ABS 2021b.
 Maps and table by author.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

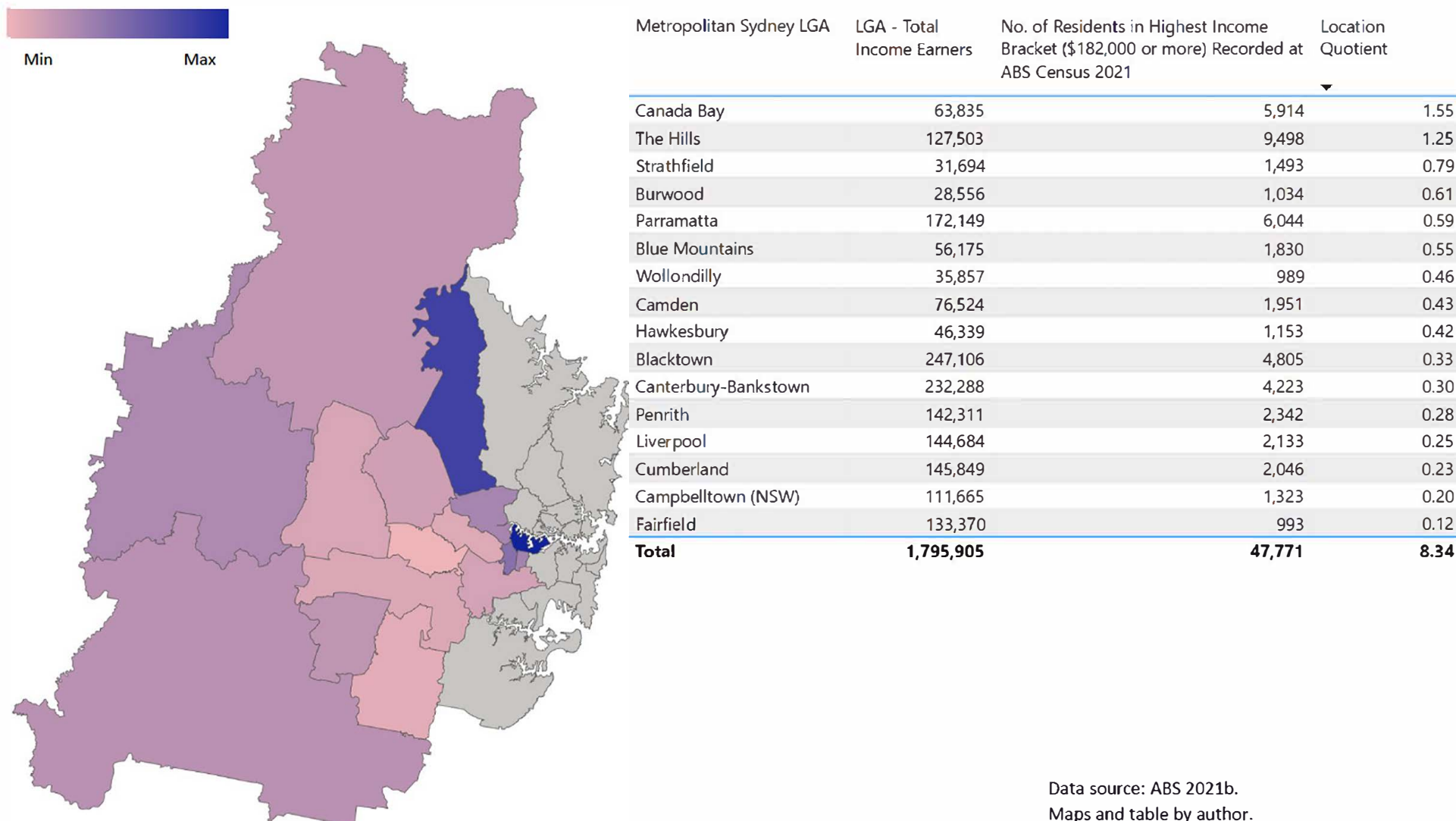
Figure 94: Quasi-formal' Western Sydney by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA



Metropolitan Sydney LGA	LGA - Total Income Earners	No. of Residents in Highest Income Bracket (\$182,000 or more) Recorded at ABS Census 2021	Location Quotient
The Hills	127,503	9,498	1.25
Parramatta	172,149	6,044	0.59
Blue Mountains	56,175	1,830	0.55
Wollondilly	35,857	989	0.46
Camden	76,524	1,951	0.43
Hawkesbury	46,339	1,153	0.42
Blacktown	247,106	4,805	0.33
Canterbury-Bankstown	232,288	4,223	0.30
Penrith	142,311	2,342	0.28
Liverpool	144,684	2,133	0.25
Cumberland	145,849	2,046	0.23
Campbelltown (NSW)	111,665	1,323	0.20
Fairfield	133,370	993	0.12
Total	1,671,820	39,330	5.40

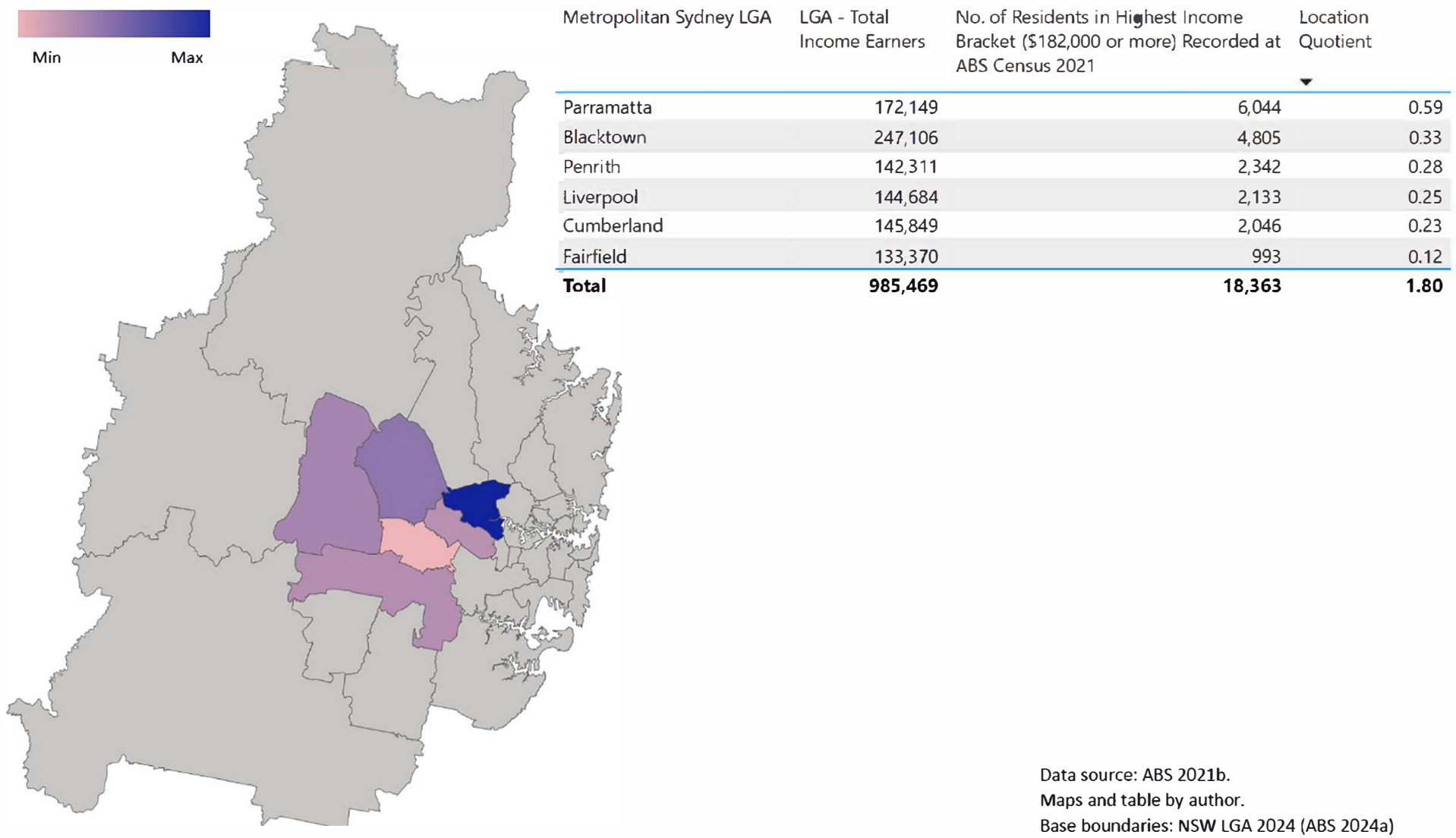
Data source: ABS 2021b.
 Maps and table by author.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Figure 95: 'Informal' Western Sydney by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA



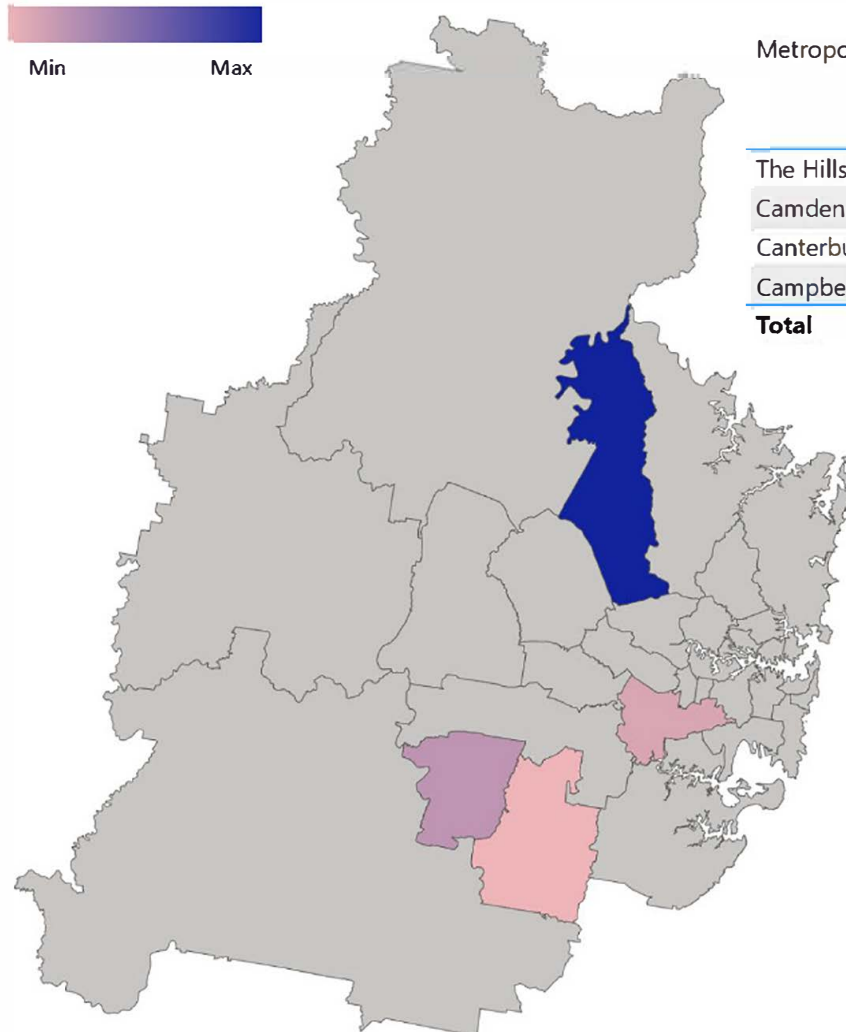
Data source: ABS 2021b.
 Maps and table by author.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Figure 96: 'Informal' Western Sydney (Central Core) by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA



Data source: ABS 2021b.
 Maps and table by author.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

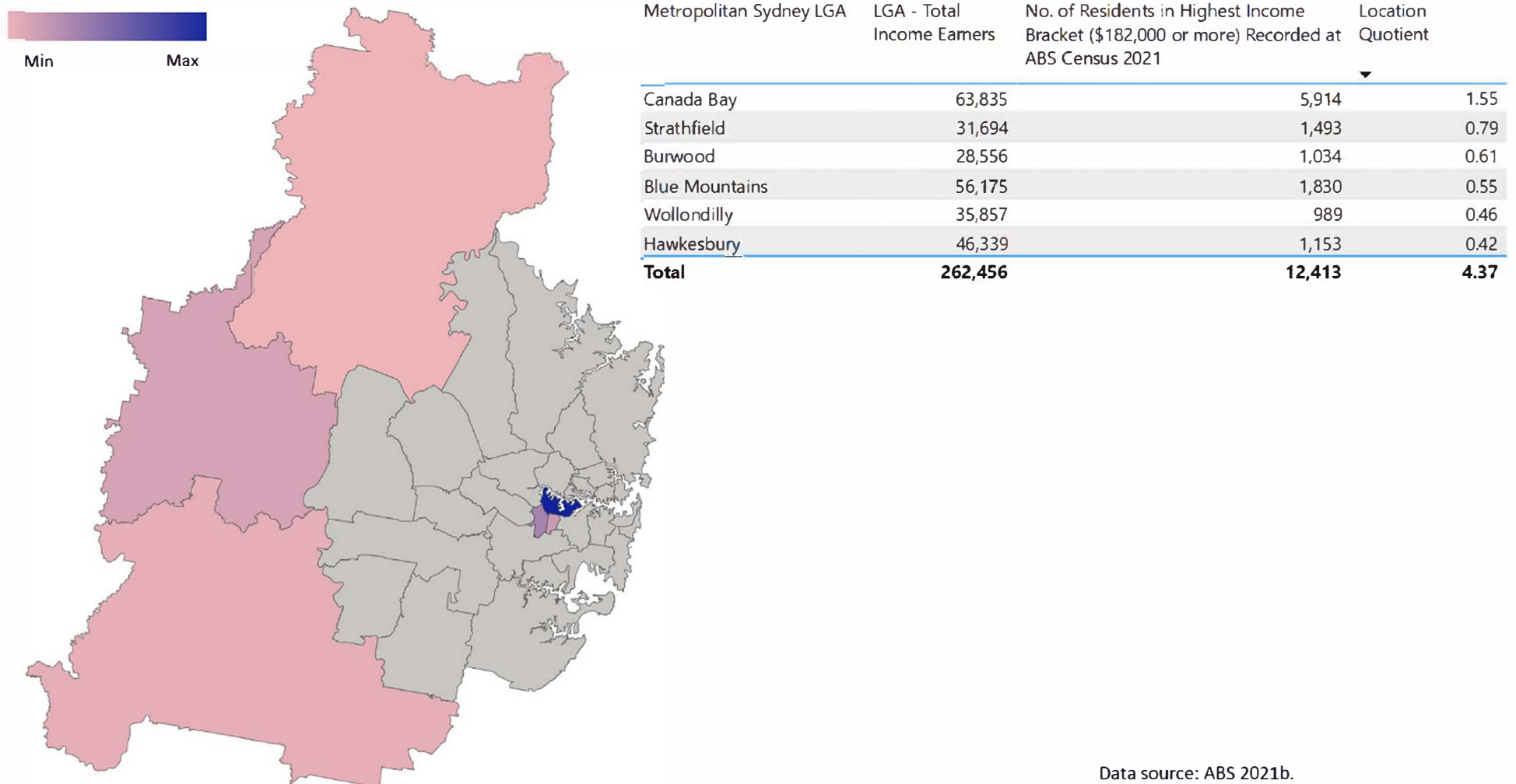
Figure 97: 'Informal' Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA



Metropolitan Sydney LGA	LGA - Total Income Earners	No. of Residents in Highest Income Bracket (\$182,000 or more) Recorded at ABS Census 2021	Location Quotient
The Hills	127,503	9,498	1.25
Camden	76,524	1,951	0.43
Canterbury-Bankstown	232,288	4,223	0.30
Campbelltown (NSW)	111,665	1,323	0.20
Total	547,980	16,995	2.18

Data source: ABS 2021b.
 Maps and table by author.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Figure 98: 'Informal' Western Sydney (Marginal Fringes by Highest Income Bracket Location Quotient (2021) by LGA

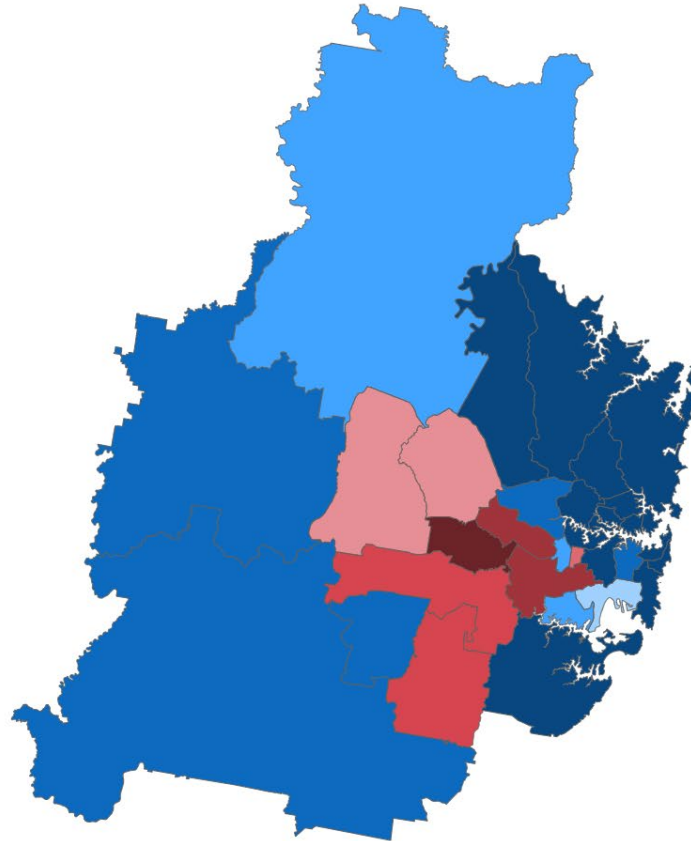


Data source: ABS 2021b.
 Maps and table by author.
 Base boundaries: NSW LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)

Figure 99: Metropolitan Sydney – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO)

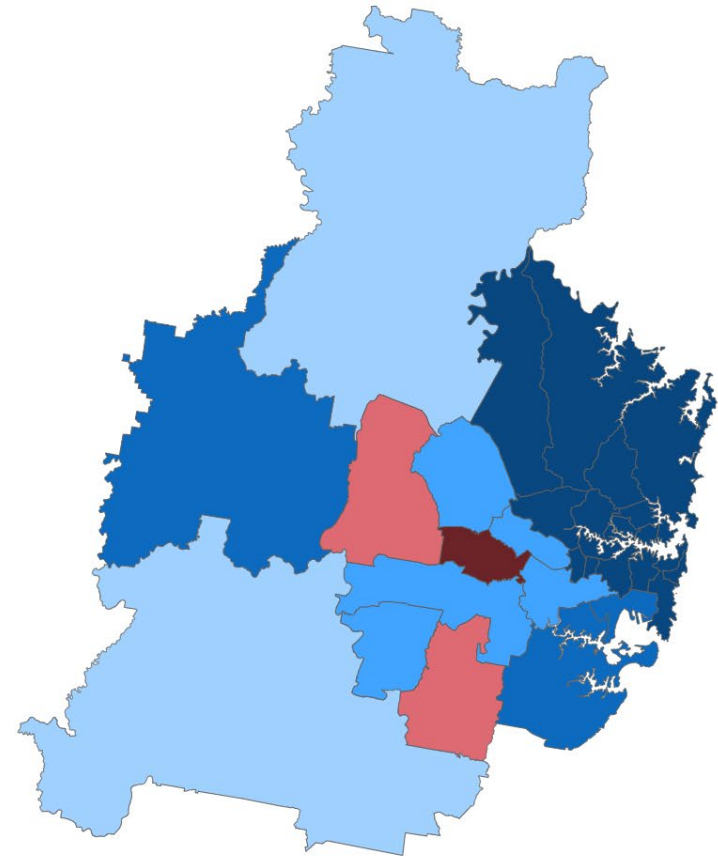
Maps by author
Base boundaries: NSW
LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Data source: ABS 2023c

Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD)
Decile by LGA



IRSD Decile ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10

Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) Decile by LGA

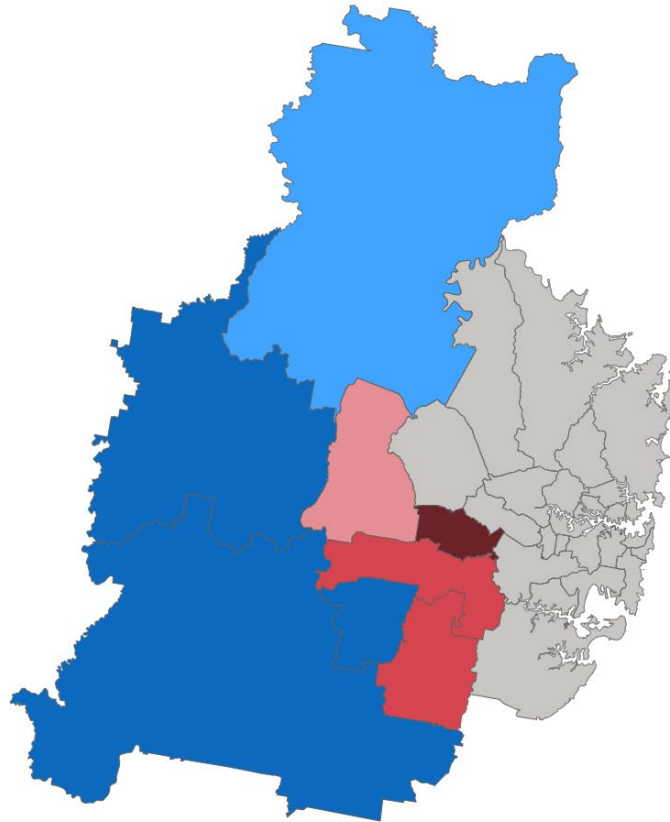


IEO Decile ● 4 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10

Figure 100: 'Formal' Western Sydney – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO)

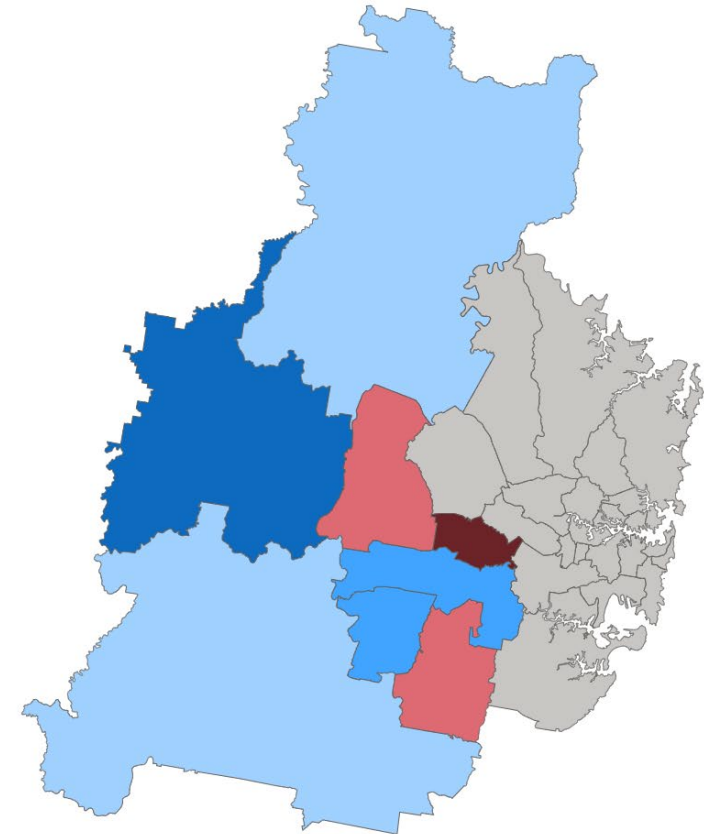
Maps by author
 Base boundaries: NSW
 LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
 Data source: ABS 2023c

Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) Decile by LGA



IRSD Decile ● 1 ● 3 ● 6 ● 8 ● 9

Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) Decile by LGA

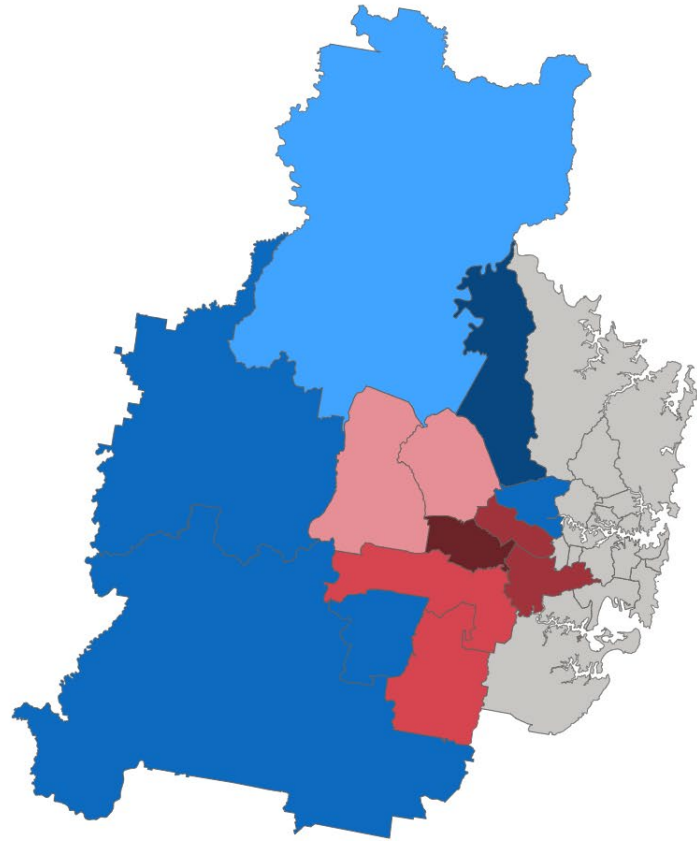


IEO Decile ● 4 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9

Figure 101: 'Quasi-formal' Western Sydney – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO) Decile by LGA

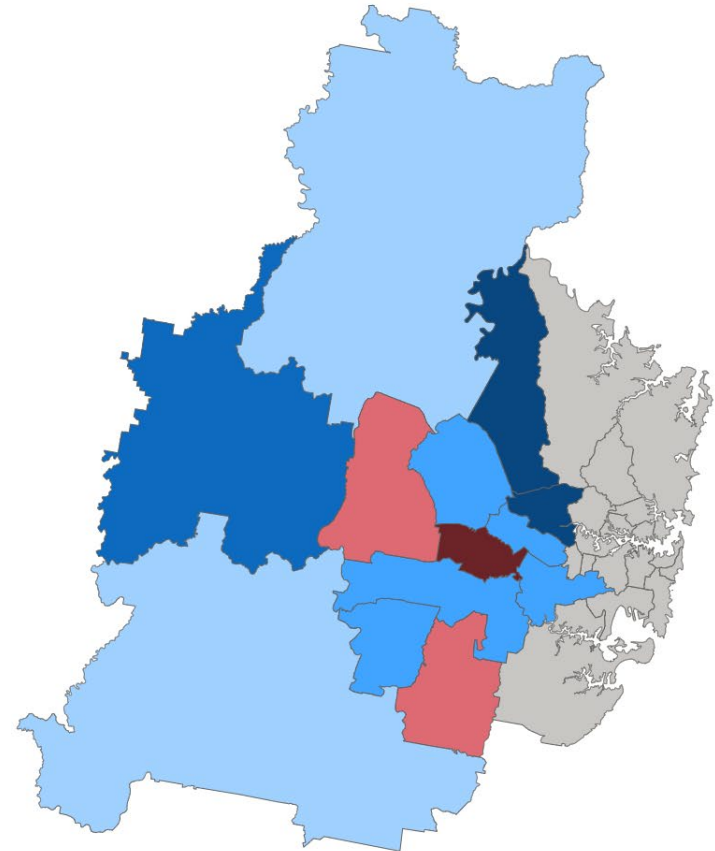
Maps by author
 Base boundaries: NSW
 LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
 Data source: ABS 2023c

Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) Decile by LGA



IRSD Decile ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 6 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10

Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) Decile by LGA

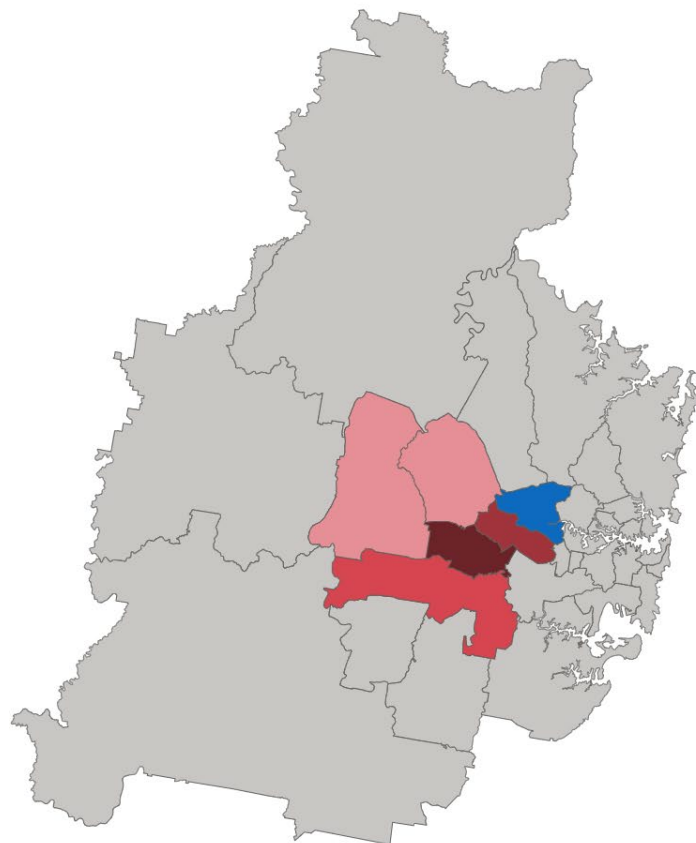


IEO Decile ● 4 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10

Figure 102: 'Informal' Western Sydney (Central Core) – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO)

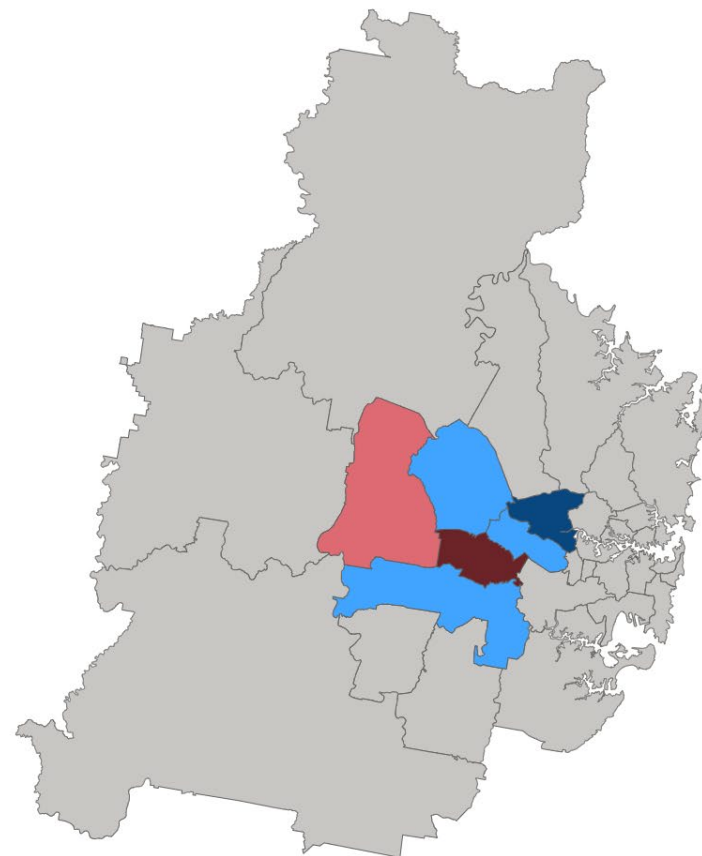
Maps by author
Base boundaries: NSW
LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Data source: ABS 2023c

Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) Decile by LGA



IRSD Decile ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 6 ● 9

Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) Decile by LGA

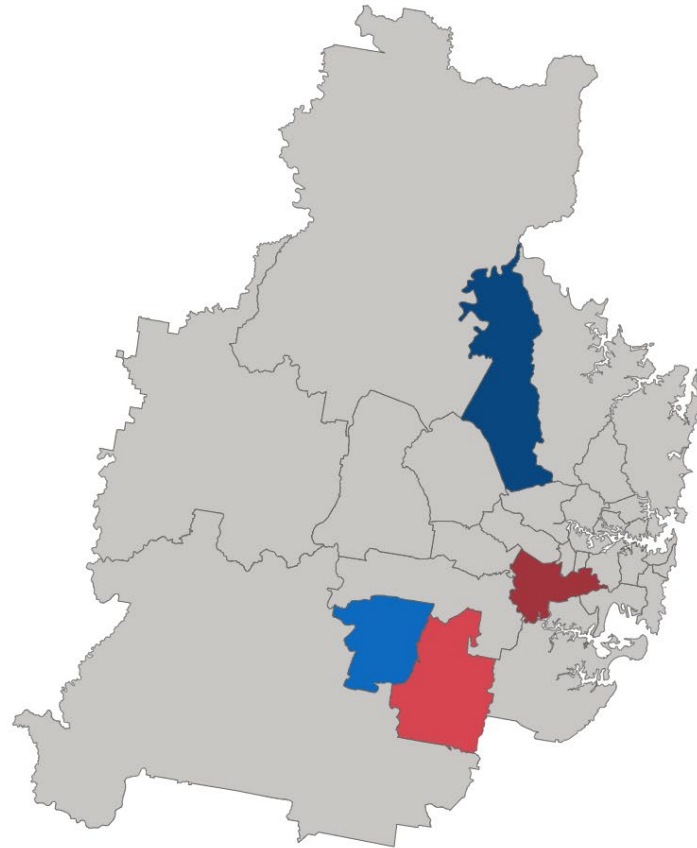


IEO Decile ● 4 ● 6 ● 8 ● 10

Figure 103: 'Informal' Western Sydney (Secondary / Contended Frontiers) – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO)

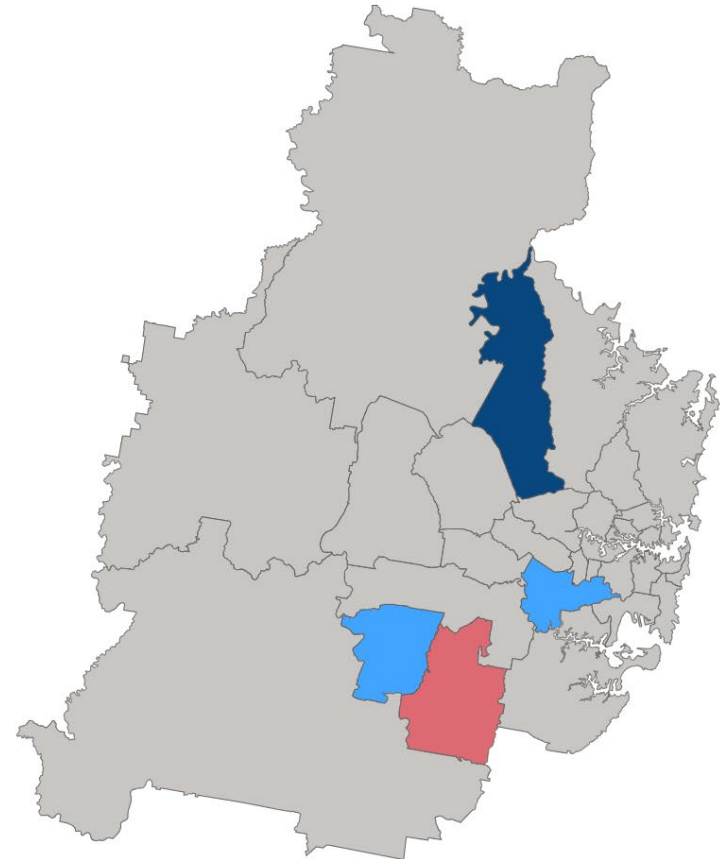
Maps by author
 Base boundaries: NSW
 LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
 Data source: ABS 2023c

Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) Decile by LGA



IRSD Decile ● 2 ● 3 ● 9 ● 10

Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) Decile by LGA

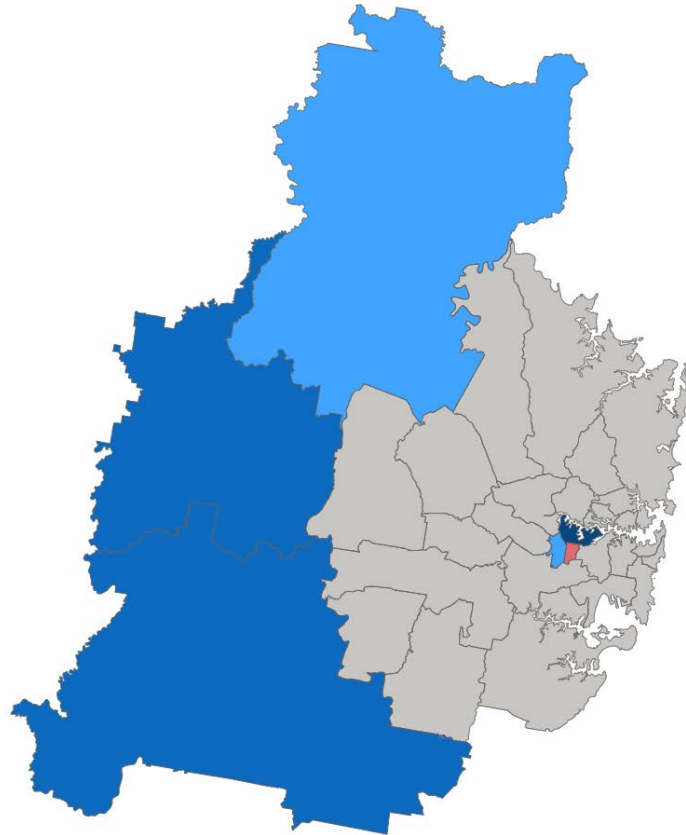


IEO Decile ● 6 ● 8 ● 10

Figure 104: 'Informal' Western Sydney (Marginal Fringes) – SEIFA Indices of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) and Education and Occupation (IEO)

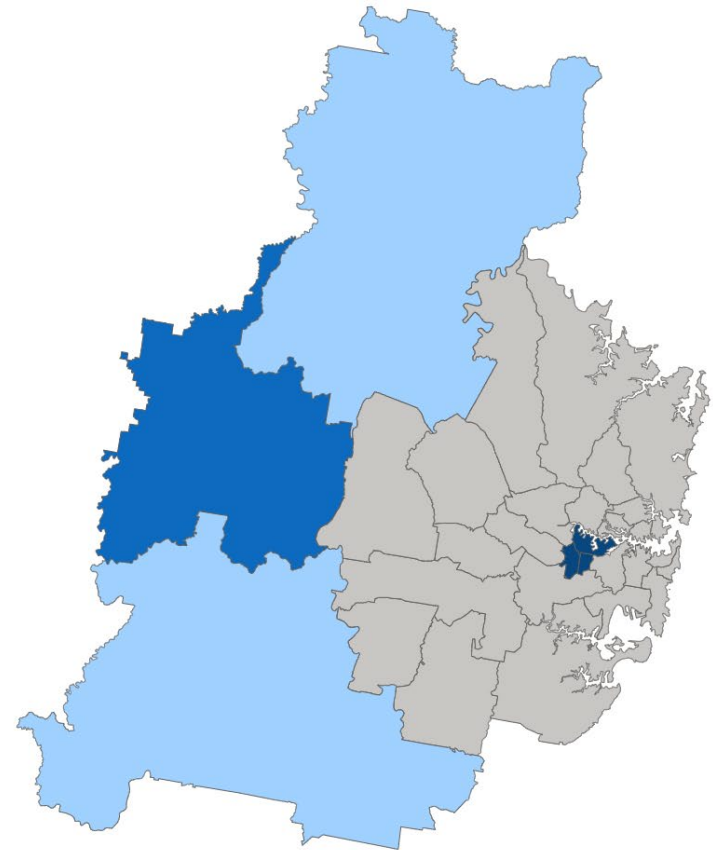
Maps by author
Base boundaries: NSW
LGA 2024 (ABS 2024a)
Data source: ABS 2023c

Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) Decile by LGA



IRSD Decile ● 5 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10

Index of Education and Occupation (IEO) Decile by LGA



IEO Decile ● 7 ● 9 ● 10

Together the Location Quotient and SEIFA maps produced with multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' show not only broad west-east economic divides associated with Greater Sydney but differences between LGAs in groupings of various 'Western Sydney'.

The disparities identified in this section clearly indicate citizen boundaries of 'Western Sydney' are much more accurate in capturing the current spatial footprint of socio-economic disadvantage across the city than their 'quasi-formal' and 'formal' counterparts. It is also clear that informal 'Central Core' and 'Secondary / Contended Frontiers' of Western Sydney largely encapsulate the city's areas of high relative socio-economic disadvantage – with the LGAs of Penrith, Blacktown, Cumberland, Canterbury-Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool and Campbelltown recording acutely low scores on the IRSD index. However, except for Campbelltown, Penrith, and Fairfield, the same LGAs largely have high IEO index scores which show that while levels of qualifications achieved by residents in the areas are relatively high, they have not materialised into improvements to IRSD variables.

Observing the state-led imaginary of the 'Western Parkland City' in Figures 93 and 100 sees that in this iteration of 'Western Sydney' its eastern portion captures a portion - but not all - relatively disadvantaged areas but the remaining western portions are 'left behind' and masked under the envisioned Central River City and Eastern Harbour City of the polycentric city. This begs further questions about what economic competitiveness of the three cities model means for the disadvantaged areas which are not situated near their immediate city and face a double layer of internal competition as the three cities compete for domestic and international flows of capital.

Additionally, when observing the maps in this section with the visualisations of resource distributions in Section 5.1.2, institutional responses, to a degree, exacerbate spatial inequities through inconsistent bounding practices, not funding areas of high socio-economic disadvantage as seen in the Uptown Grant Program, or distributing funds to areas which are relatively advantaged within institutional 'Western Sydney', such as the Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury, but not residents' 'Western Sydney'.

It is evident that the story of the 'haves' and 'have nots' in Greater Sydney is not simply a 'Western Sydney' VS the rest of Sydney narrative as presumed and that understanding the multi-dimensional nature of urban inequality and segregation in the city is a far more complex one about what is classified as 'Western Sydney' for what purpose and on what basis.

Paasi writes:

'As a consequence of the division of labour, some people and groups (elites) specialise in the active production and reproduction of regional consciousness, ultimately by maintaining the established, institutionally mediated structures of signification. The purpose of these groups and individuals can vary from purely cultural interests to economic and political ones. In this respect social consciousness and thus also regional consciousness is a sphere in which the power relations in society reflect different interests and ideologies' (1986, p. 1).

The bounding of 'Western Sydney', particularly for institutional resource distribution and major investment, and the conflicting views between institutional and citizen boundaries clearly exemplify conflicts in perceptions of economic, cultural, social and political interests that leaves some behind and elevates others by arbitrary spatial classification of where they live which may lead to the growth of 'left behind places' as people feel both stigmatised and disconnected from their institutions, fellow citizens, and their city.

5.2 Shifting public perceptions of spatial imaginaries' boundaries

Examining how people's bounding practices construct, maintain and reproduce spatial imaginaries is key to understanding contexts of urban inequality and segregation, particularly those with expanding metropolitan limits like Sydney, where place-based interventions are being designed or implemented.

Ongoing transformation of metropolitan Sydney's geographic borders with the growth of westward urban expansion and the city's history and patterns of migration settlement has given rise to spatial imaginaries which are used by residents as informal classifications of social, cultural, and economic differences within Greater Sydney.

From the data collected in this study, for a place in metropolitan Sydney to informally be considered 'Western Sydney' it must contribute, to a large degree, to the spatial imaginary's function as a cultural signifier of the 'other' in the city's dominant culture as and shorthand for the city's post-war development and changes in the city's historic limits in light of increasing urbanisation westward from its eastern harbour,

Interviewee 1: But Sydney was much physically smaller, and relating to my talk about the more car-centric design of Western Sydney, um coming from the fact that post-World War II Sydney...exploded like that and...the new places built at that time had like they had cars considered much more in the design of all the streets and everything like that, except for, of course, the little towns that were dotted around that that were eventually absorbed into each other.

(Appendix U)

shifts in perceptions of socio-economic disparities in contrast to spatial concentrations of affluence and power and socio-cultural disparities in proximity to contemporary cultural capital and amenities,

"I would also like to say disadvantage in terms of cultural capital and public recognition - concerns of Western Sydney residents are not given the same credence as concerns of Inner West or North Shore residents"

(Appendix Q)

Interviewee 7: So there was no 'Inner West' when I was growing up, it was just 'Western Sydney', which was west of the [Sydney] Harbour Bridge and then about the [19]90s or so, it became an 'Inner West'. Um, but then there was a divide between probably Strathfield [12 kilometres west of the eastern CBD] as the border of the 'Inner West' and then out, but then it keeps sort of moving out...the 'Inner West' has been gentrified and attracted the people who want to be the power and the money but can't afford to be east so they're in the 'Inner West'...then the people who can't afford to be in the 'Inner West'...so the divide is like, it used to be the yuppies, but there's no such thing as yuppies anymore, but it's the people who want to be close to the city that can't afford to be in the city for the amenity that the city provides.

(Appendix Z)

history and patterns of migration settlement – particularly 'non-Anglo' and often marginalised, working-class immigrant groups – noting that the imaginary's associations with concentrations of multicultural groups is relatively recent as the imaginary was historically associated with white working-class Australians until the 1980s (Simic 2008),

Interviewee 4: Uh, sort of depends on some of the suburbs to be totally honest...my perception is that it's a lot more, to a certain extent, a lot more um accommodating and there's, there's like a fine balance between it being homogeneous, and also extremely diverse as well, because you've got these wonderful little pockets of various different – not just socio-economic groups - but also the various different cultures that find a level of unity or safety among people of their own particular background.

(Appendix W)

5.3 Citizen participation in mapping and implications for urban planning policy and practice

5.3.1 The importance of socio-cultural boundaries

Informal boundaries of 'Western Sydney' are vastly different than 'formal' and 'quasi formal' boundaries identified in this paper. A significant factor in this difference is that individuals' personally formed boundaries largely take little note of official government policies or institutional regional advocacy positions and instead reflect experiences of Greater Sydney as they have lived (or not lived) it.

Deviation of 'informal boundaries from their institutional counterparts are clear in study respondents' sentiments when asked to provide responses to the questions below as they were provided two images of 'Western Sydney' (Figure 108 overleaf):

Figure 107: Online Survey Questions 6a and 7a

Q6a. Select the response that best describes how you feel about the statement in the table below.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Image 1 is an accurate and complete image of 'Western Sydney' today	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7a. Select the response that best describes how you feel about the statement below.

	Strongly disagree	Moderately Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Image 2 is an accurate and complete image of 'Western Sydney' today	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

(Appendix B)

Image 1 showed the current 'formal' boundary of the Western Parkland City, and areas captured under the 'Western Sydney City Deal', used by the NSW Government for strategic Greater Sydney regional planning while Image 2 showed the 'quasi-formal' Greater Western Sydney boundary used by some regional advocacy groups with annotations by the author. Both images were provided to participants without attribution of source or further commentary to remove potential for bias.

As seen in Table 6, participants disagreed with both representations with Image 2 having a slightly greater degree of overall agreement.

Table 6: Study participant sentiment comparison of Images 1 and 2 as accurate and complete images of 'Western Sydney' today

	Image 1	Image 2
No Response*		
*Respondents whose previous responses triggered a skip logic past the related survey questions	24	24
Strongly Disagree	218	134
Moderately Disagree	209	185
Somewhat Disagree	146	143
Somewhat Agree	97	125
Moderately Agree	73	124
Strongly Agree	15	47
TOTAL	782	782

Source: Appendix Q

Figure 108: Image Comparisons – Extract from Online Survey

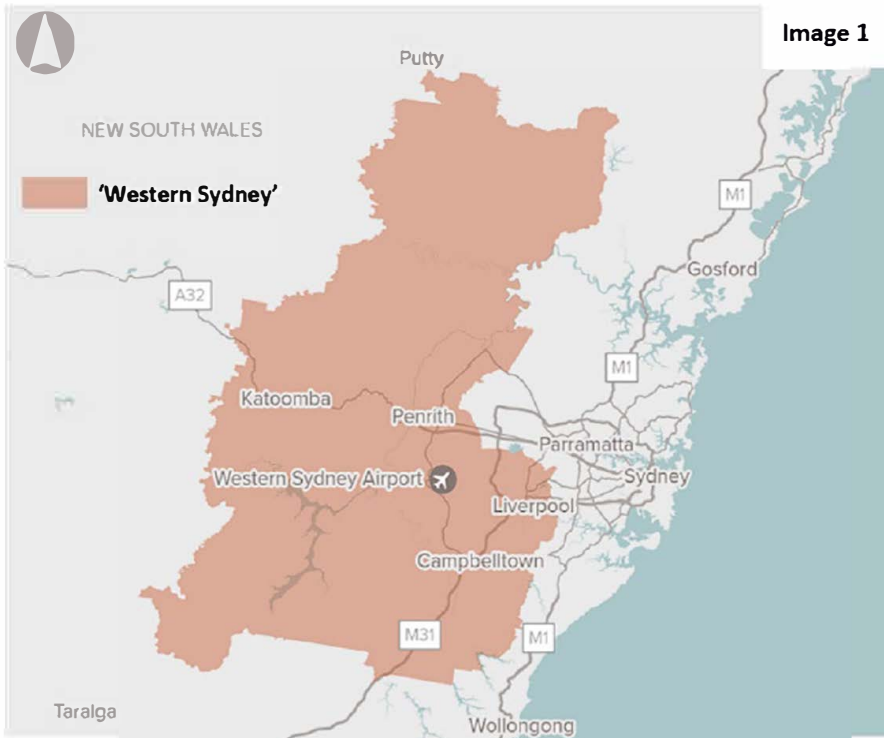


Image 1: DITRDCA 2021 with legend annotation by author.

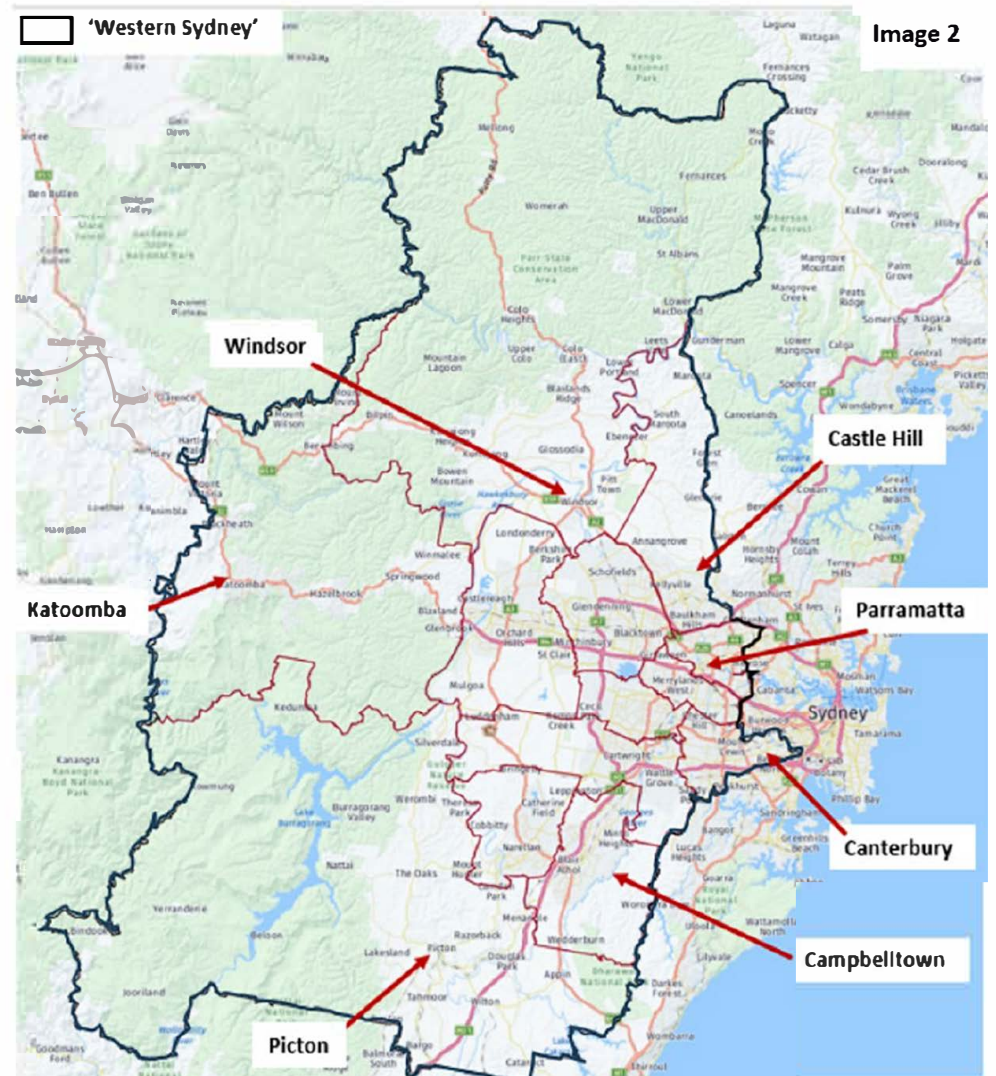


Image 2: id (informed decisions) & Western Sydney University n.d with legend and labelled annotations by author.

Participants also commented on socio-cultural considerations on Images 1 and 2 as accurate and complete spatial representations of 'Western Sydney' with samples provided in Table 7.

Table 7: Excerpts of survey respondents' commentary on Images 1 and 2

Image 1	Image 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Western Sydney is culturally and sociopolitically distinct from areas such as the Blue Mountains' • 'Most of that area isn't even Sydney' • 'Both Bankstown and Parramatta are the culture core of Western Sydney and should be included.' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'This may be accurate to anyone that lives on the North Shore, I find. A loud minority.' • 'Canterbury Bankstown is a tricky one as the Canterbury part should be Inner West' • 'Way too broad. The eastern border is pretty accurate but it goes way too far north and south.'

Source: Appendix Q

These strong views on perceived socio-cultural differences on a micro-spatial level differentiating 'Western Sydney' from other areas are supported by interviewees' personal mapping exercises. Interviewees expressed thoughts during personal bounding practices as seen in the excerpt of Interviewee 10's rationale to exclude 'Campbelltown' (Figure 109 overleaf) and the imaginary of 'south-western Sydney' from their personal map of 'Western Sydney':

Interviewer: Is that what you associate [with] Western Sydney, [a] melting pot of cultures?

Interviewee 10: I think that in itself is important, especially for Sydney, and like, I think it's the diversity of Western Sydney also helps like impact that but like, it's not just like diversity... so it's diversity, adversity, and also like the mentality, like, like everything that like pressure cooks you into becoming a 'Westie'.

Interviewee 10: I think Campbelltown is south-western Sydney, though.

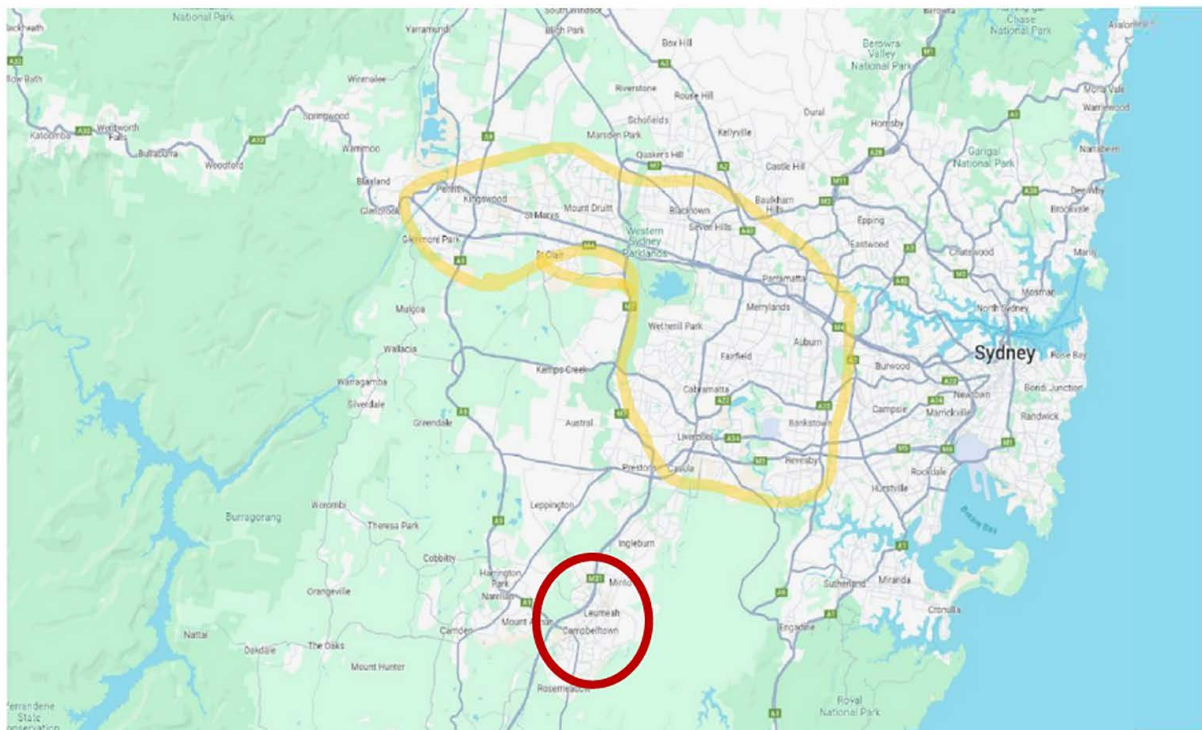
Interviewer 10: Oh, so you consider it different from Western Sydney?

Interviewee 10: Yeah, I think so. But it, but it doesn't mean that they don't have a, like, they don't have adversity and stuff as well. It's just I think you also don't find that people from Campbelltown will also call themselves Western Sydney. But it's a hard line to really toe, and, like, they can be considered Western Sydney, but I'd call them south-western Sydney, simply because they have a different culture upbringing in that sense as well, because there isn't as many different cultural melting points going down south-western Sydney.

(Appendix AC)

The increasing polarisation in Australian cities and pronounced divisions within specific spatial imaginaries has not been unnoticed in literature, notably Randolph's observations of suburban polarisation and 'five distinctive sub-regions' within 'Western Sydney' (2004), and this paper provides some evidence as to the extent and nature of these divisions on a micro and macro scale.

Figure 109: Interviewee 10's Personal Map of 'Western Sydney'



(Appendix AC, red circle by author)

The strong association of 'Western Sydney' as different from the rest of Greater Sydney is notably reflected in study participants' personal boundaries and their collectively firm positioning of 'Western Sydney' as a specific and smaller geographical area. The solid identification of a 'central core' in citizens' boundaries of 'Western Sydney' in contrast to the formal 'Western Parkland City' city-region, which includes only its western portions, or the quasi-formal 'Greater Western Sydney' region used in regional advocacy, which encompasses a greater geographic coverage, indicate the highly subjective and manufactured nature of maps as political texts and articulation of power struggles, and their notable deviations from views of the city's residents.

This study's public participatory mapping exercises demonstrate the power of citizen 'counter-maps' to identify perceptions of local geographies, elements of regional identity, and nuanced understanding of power dynamics within cities which are often omitted from 'official' maps, in a strategic planning context, typically driven by state-led policies or institutional agendas.

5.3.2 'Bottom-top' perspectives of what spatial bounding practices matter

Institutional spatial planning policies like city-region building or regional planning efforts are shaped as place-based interventions to address specific spatial inequalities through economic reconstruction and development but the rationale behind how particular spaces are bound – what is 'in' or 'out' – is typically subject to opaque political processes.

As seen in Figures 110 to 112 from page 141, Greater Sydney's strategic regional plans through recent iterations have evolved from a vision of the global city of five regional centres (Penrith, Liverpool, Parramatta, North Sydney and Sydney) to three distinct city-regions (Western Parkland City, Central River City and Eastern Harbour City) to 'rebalance the economic and social opportunities and deliver a more equitable Greater Sydney'

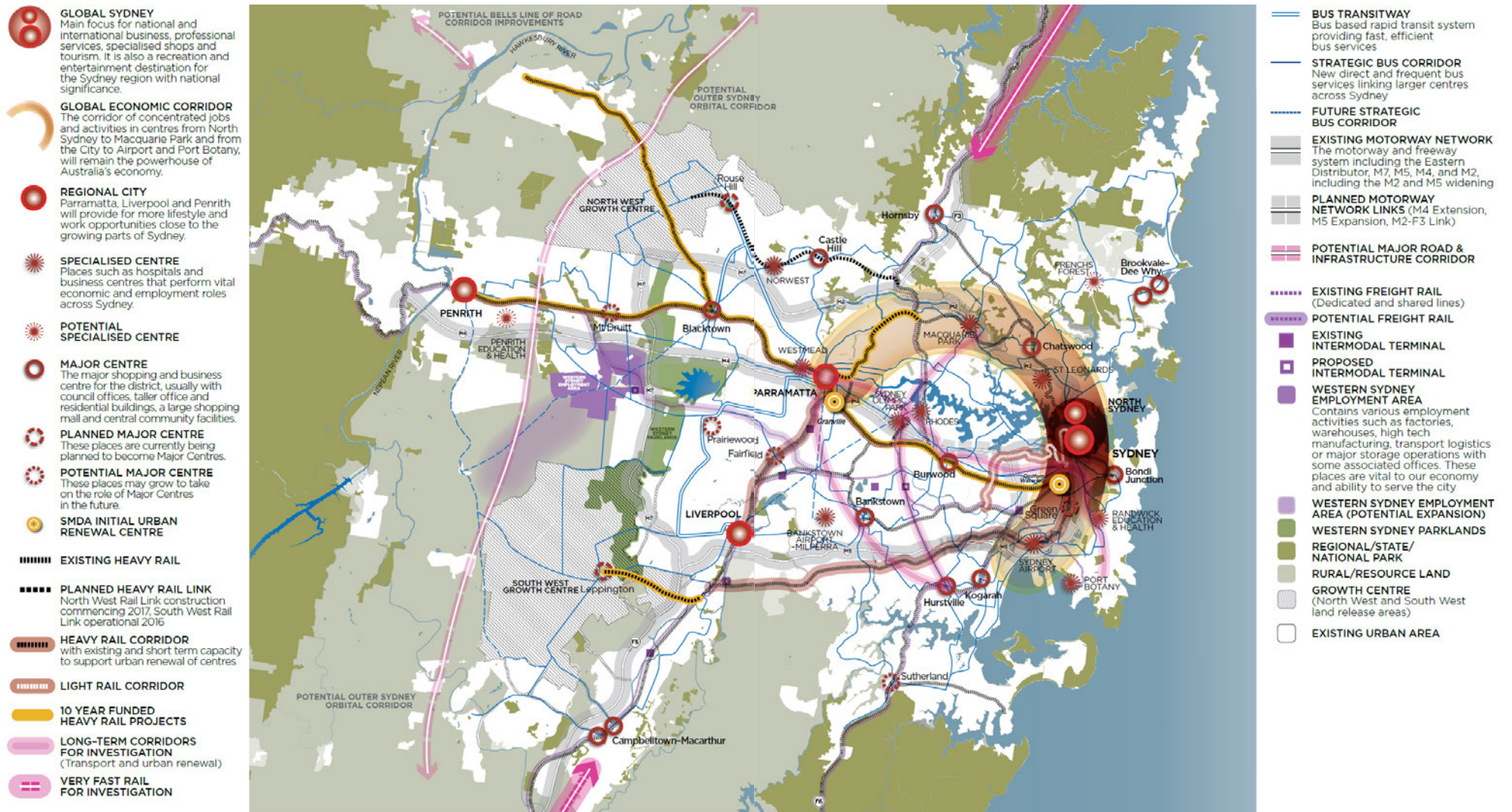
(GSC 2018f, p. 8). The *Western Sydney City Deal* (2018) has underwritten the Western Parkland City to facilitate coordinated investment activities over eight LGAs. However, 'informal' maps of 'Western Sydney' indicate significant conflicts with institutional boundaries and their priorities of spatial bounding practices which have key implications for public participation in spatial planning policies.

Figure 110: City of Cities (2005) - Metropolitan Regional Plan for Greater Sydney



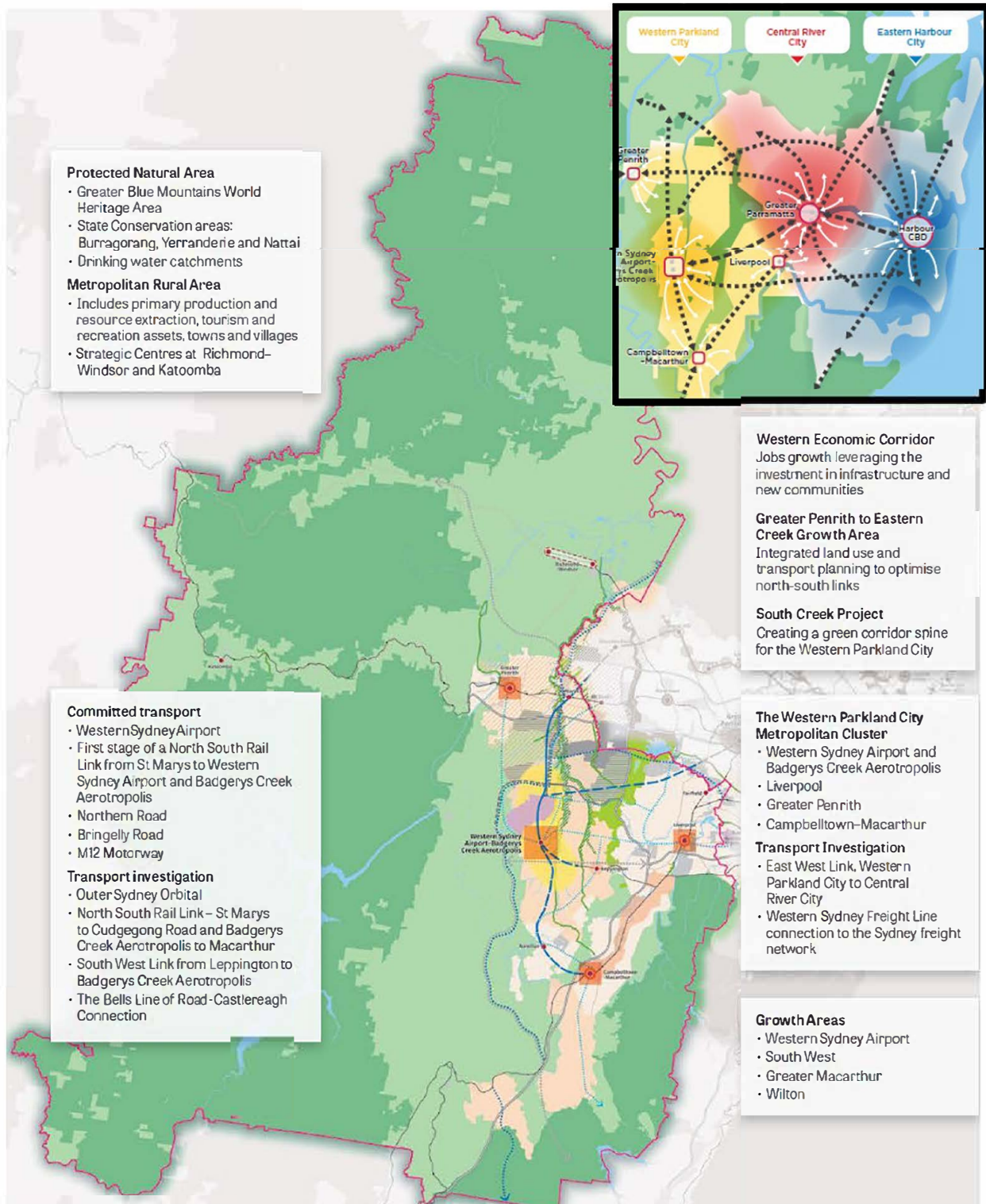
(NSW Government 2005a, p. 8)

Figure 111: Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 (2014) - Metropolitan Regional Plan for Greater Sydney



(NSW Government 2010a, p. 18-19)

Figure 112: Western City District Plan (2018) - Future of the Western City District (Western Parkland City)



Base image: GSC 2018f, p. 7

Inset: Commonwealth of Australia 2018, p. 6

Residents' awareness of administrative bounding measures was captured in this study's online survey below and indicate a stronger familiarity with 'micro' spatial measures citizens would interact with in their day-to-day lives as opposed to 'macro' spatial measures typically used by governments to administer political processes or policies.

Figure 113: Online Survey Questionnaire – Question 2 and Response

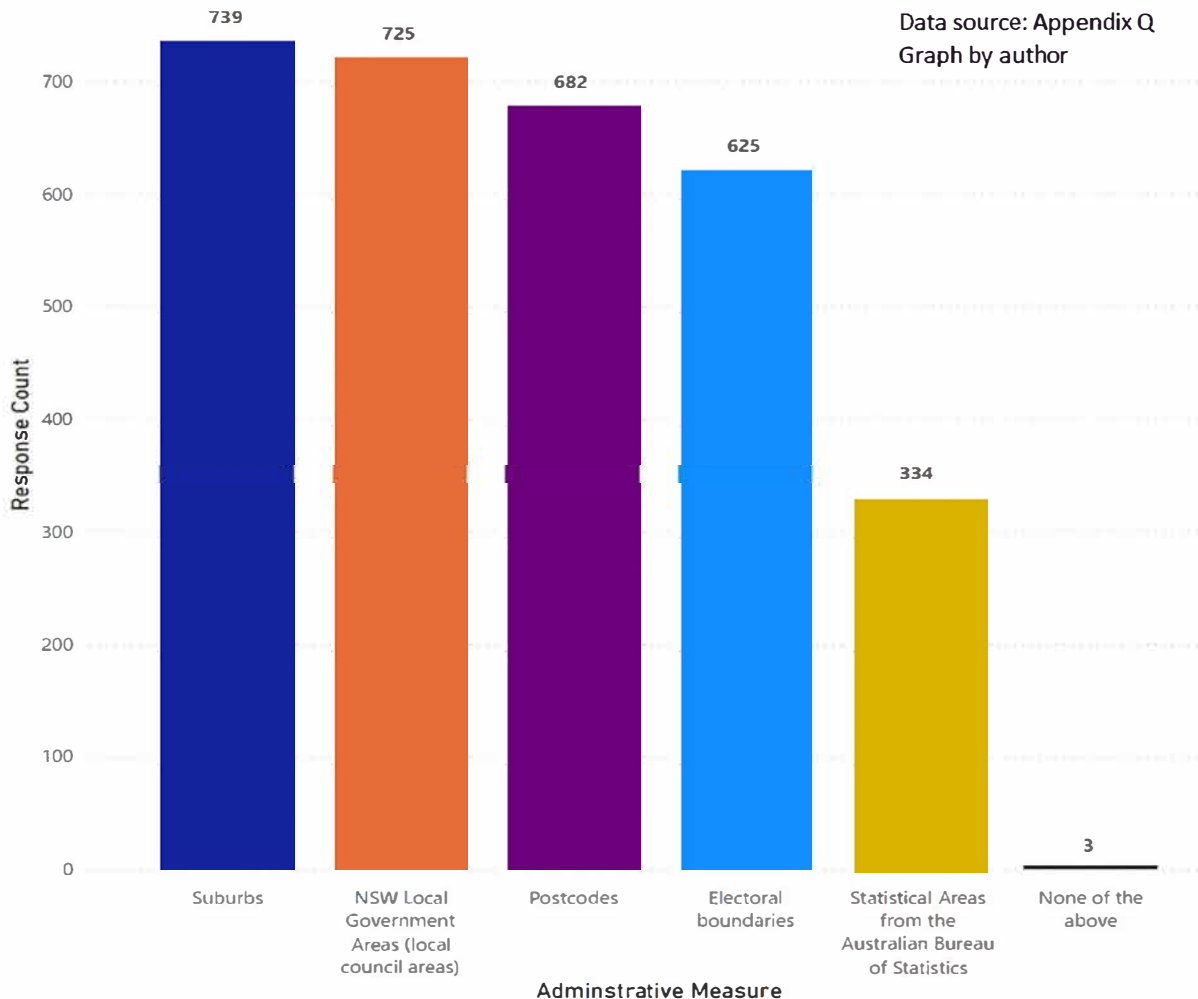
Q2. From the list of options of borders / limits used by government bodies to draw boundaries on maps of NSW, how many are you aware of?

You can choose more than one option.

(Appendix B)

- NSW Local Government Areas (local council areas)
- Suburbs
- Postcodes
- Statistical Areas from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (these reflect location of people and communities and are used for data analysis)
- Electoral boundaries (these are districts for voting and political representation)
- None of the above

Awareness of Administrative Measures used by Government Bodies



Two survey questions shown below specifically asked respondents to rank administrative and non-administrative measures for drawing boundaries of 'Western Sydney' on a map and the results of these questions are shown in Figures 115 and 116 across the next two pages.

Figure 114: Online Survey Questionnaire – Questions 3 and 4

Q3. By importance to you, rank the list of options below used by government bodies for drawing boundaries of 'Western Sydney' on a map of NSW.

Drag and drop the options below with the option ranked first being the most important and the option ranked last being the least important.

NSW Local Government Areas (local council areas)
Suburbs
Postcodes
Statistical Areas from the Australian Bureau of Statistics
Electoral boundaries

Q4. By importance to you, rank the list of options below for drawing boundaries of 'Western Sydney' as a space that starts and ends on a map of NSW.

Drag and drop the options below with the option ranked first being the most important and the option ranked last being the least important.

Social connections, e.g. showing areas where people and communities trust each other
Cultural connections, e.g. showing areas where people and communities share similar beliefs or activities
Economic connections, e.g. showing areas where there are similar or connected types of businesses
Location of infrastructure, e.g. showing specific roads, hospitals, train lines and stations, bus route stops
Natural environmental and geographical features, e.g. rivers, hills, parks

(Appendix B)

Responses to Questions 3 and 4 show citizens have a strong preference for 'micro' spatial measures and place a greater importance on geographic features, infrastructure location, and socio-cultural elements to be taken into consideration over perceived economic connectivity in drawing boundaries of 'Western Sydney'.

Figure 115: Responses to Online Survey Questionnaire - Question 4

Administrative Measures used by Government Bodies used to Draw Boundaries of 'Western Sydney' on a Map

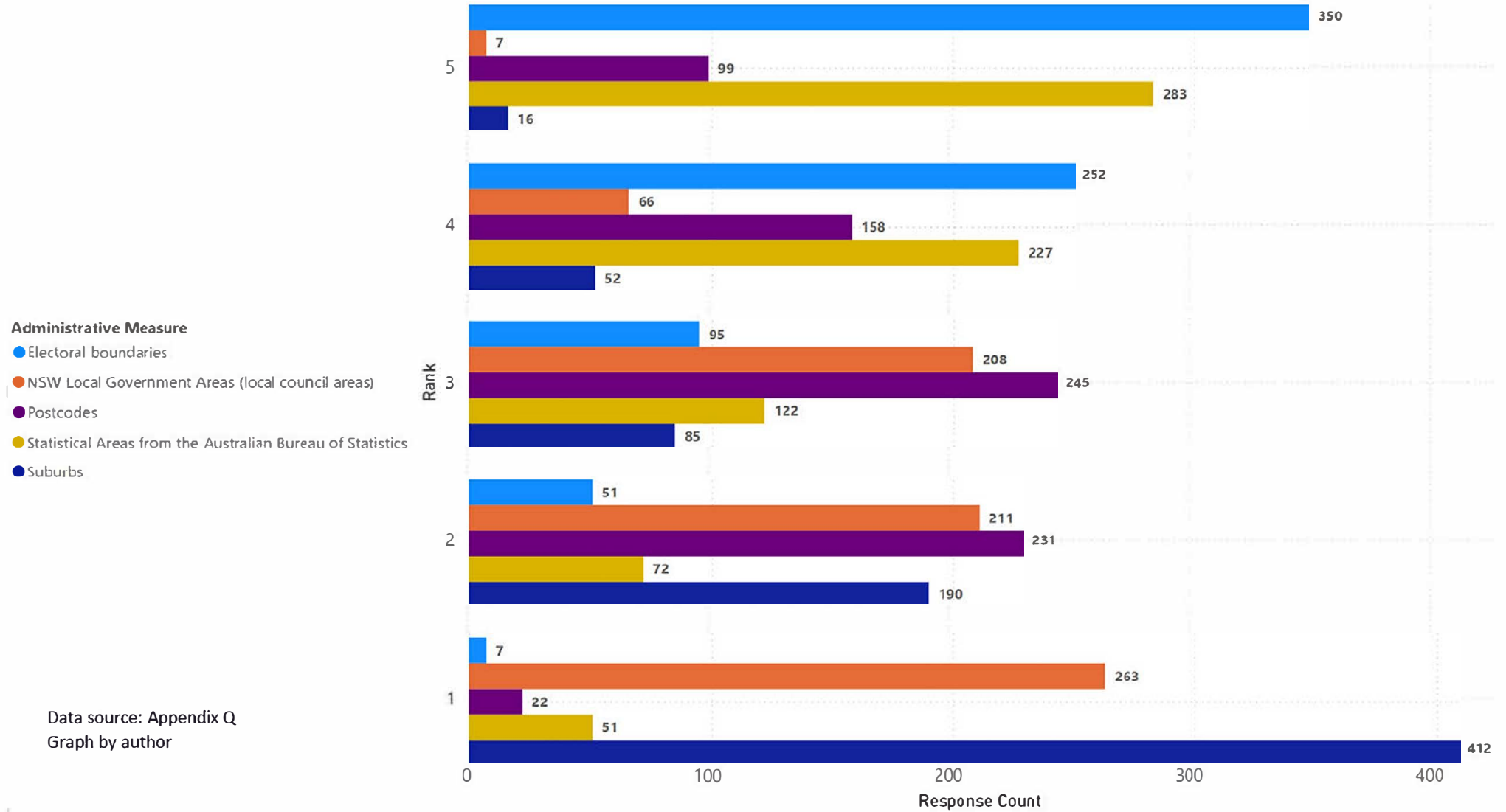
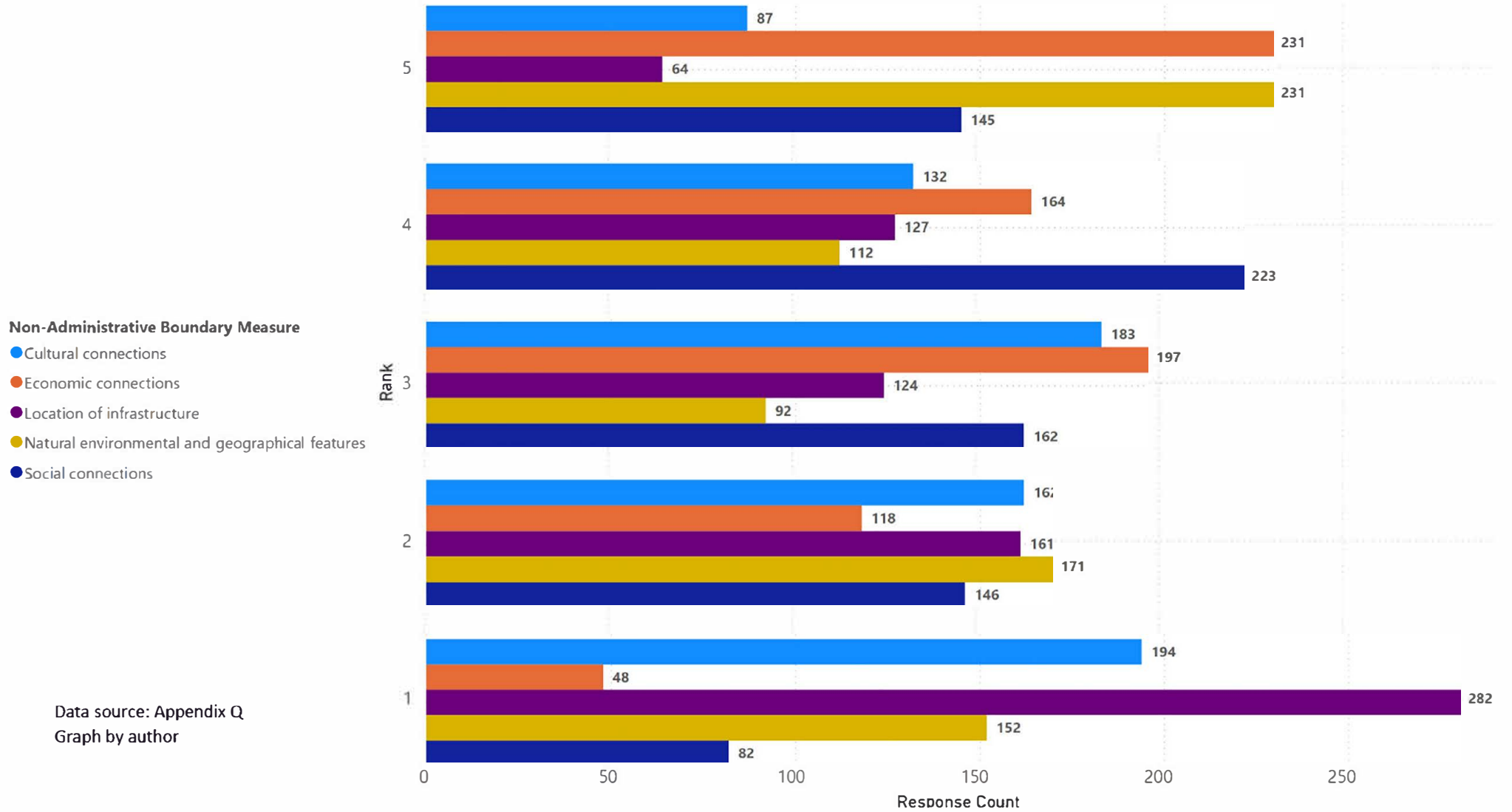


Figure 116: Responses to Online Survey Questionnaire - Question 4

Non-Administrative Boundary Measures for Drawing Boundaries of 'Western Sydney' on a Map



5.4 Schrödinger’s region: is ‘Western Sydney’ an institutionalised region?

Paasi argued that ‘the institutionalization [sic] of a region is a socio-spatial process during which some territorial unit emerges as a part of the spatial structure of a society and becomes established and clearly identified in different spheres of social action and social consciousness’ (1989, p. 121).

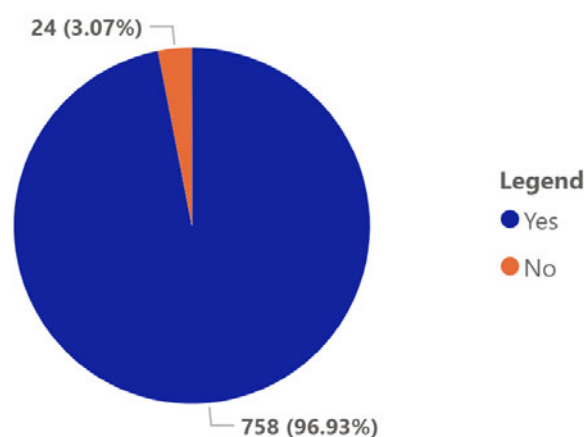
In Paasi’s four stages of the institutionalisation of regions (see Figure 13), the concept of a ‘structure of expectations’ is essential to identifying stages of a region’s institutionalisation through practices of cultural, economic or political institutions as they provide an understanding of a region’s collective character based on ‘knowledge or beliefs concerning the historical and cultural features of a given region’ (1986, p.123), how the past and future is reproduced and legitimised as a common frame of reference for a region’s inhabitants, and how images of a region are formed that ‘contain elements that represent real or mythical history of the region’ (1986, p. 124). Using Paasi’s four stages as a foundation, this section looks at the unexpected question this study raises: is ‘Western Sydney’ an institutionalised region?

1. Territorial Shape – does a region have boundaries for social classification?

An overwhelming majority of survey respondents view ‘Western Sydney’ as a region of Sydney as evident in the response to the first survey question seen below.

Figure 118: Online Survey – Question 1 and Response

Q1. Does ‘Western Sydney’ exist as a region of Sydney?



(Appendix Q, graph by author)

Respondents who answered ‘No’ gave a variety of reasons ranging from perceptions and use of ‘Western Sydney’ as a construct:

“It’s a socio/economic-cultural construct rather than a physical place. It exists as a policy construct”

“It’s a fluid definition that encompasses most of the city, it’s not a helpful definition and not a specific region”.

(Appendix Q)

To specific references to environmental and geographic features:

“While colloquially Sydney refers to the urban conglomeration and suburban sprawl, this is no longer really Sydney, but something else. Sydney is water. Maritime and to some extent river exposure and transportation are a vital factors in the soul of Sydney.”

(Appendix Q)

Conversely, respondents who answered 'Yes' noted the fluid nature of it as a region based on concepts rather than defined territorial borders:

"The agglomeration of different diaspora is what makes Western Sydney a rich cultural area and gives presence and personification of what it means to be Australian. The true boundary is cultural and fluid and can't be boxed with administrative borders."

"Low density residential housing with grey roofs and no supporting infrastructure on the fringes next to cow paddocks is sadly also how Western Sydney is being defined as different. It is also defined by its distinctly poorer health and wellbeing outcomes and lower socioeconomic status"

(Appendix Q)

Variations in the boundaries of 'Western Sydney' across this study reflect Paasi's argument that 'regions that are "ideas" rather than fixed administrative entities are not usually promulgated by any central authority, but have emerged with time through interplay between inhabitants and institutions of society' (1986, p. 125) and it should be noted that the greatest number of variation in boundaries of 'Western Sydney' are 'formal' institutional boundaries for specific administrative purposes.

Noting the above, 'Western Sydney' as a socially constructed space meets Paasi's first stage of assumption of territorial awareness and shape as it is strongly associated with specific structures of expectations:

'the shape of a region can be fixed...or vague, so that the idea of a region, e.g. various elements in its structures of expectations (nature, culture, landscapes, stereotypes of the inhabitants, etc.) can predominate over its limits and explicit boundaries' (1986, p. 125)

2. Conceptual Shape – does the name connect an image of regional consciousness within ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’?

Paasi’s framework sees the second stage of a region’s institutionalisation as concerned with the formation of conceptual or symbolic shape of a region associated with its name which ‘canonizes [sic] an apparatus for distinguishing the region from all others, and constitutes the frame of reference in which the structures of expectations are grounded and by means of which they are reproduced’ (1986, p. 125).

Interviewees’ associations with ‘Western Sydney’ capture images of regional consciousness in expectations of demographics, environment, degrees of spatial inequality:

Interviewer: What are the first four words that come to your mind when you read or hear ‘Western Sydney’?

Interviewee 6: Hmm. That’s it’s large. Like it's kind of everything west of the key city. Um I think about immigrant population groups, I assume that there is less wealth than in the eastern suburbs um, and I think it's more diverse.

Interviewee 9: Culturally diverse, hot, uh, I guess, suburban. I don't know, maybe a bit boring.

Interviewee 11: Overlooked, developing, future, work in progress.

(Appendices W, Z and AB)

This paper has shown that ‘Western Sydney’ as a spatial imaginary and term for space in metropolitan Sydney has clear symbolic connotations with reflecting the city’s multi-dimensional spatial inequalities, ongoing urban development and migration settlement history, which has become connected to an image of adversity and self-sufficiency and transferred to the region’s inhabitants and internalised as regional consciousness by both ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’:

Interviewer: How do people usually treat you when they tell you that you're from Western Sydney?

Interviewee 10: Just like more aware that I'm not like sheltered. I guess, they're more aware that I've had more experiences than they, like, I... might have and they assume that I've more or less more like, capable of doing things myself than relying on services of other people.

Interviewer: Is that...your self-perception, or what you think others think of you?

Interviewee 10: I guess it's a combination of both.

(Appendix AA)

3. Institutional Shape – does a region have institutions that reproduce a shared image of regional consciousness?

With respect to Paasi's third stage of institutionalisation which encompasses the production and consumption of space in the maintenance of a region's image and identity of its residents, this paper's investigation of 'quasi-formal' boundaries from self-purported regional advocacy bodies identified numerous institutions, which generally concern themselves with influencing government policy in addressing spatial inequities, and largely confine the remit of their work to a common territorial boundary of 'Western Sydney', shows that there are institutions which share a common image of 'Western Sydney' and supported by the study's interviewees' observations:

Interviewee 1: I think one thing that makes Western Sydney, I guess, distinct, is that is from the people themselves who call themselves part of Western Sydney and you can see that, you know...in businesses and sports teams and schools and things where they...put Western Sydney in their names or use Western Sydney as part of their identities.

(Appendix S)

The significance of media in shaping and reproducing a collective image of 'Western Sydney' is a recurring theme in the study with many interviewees explicitly commenting on the impacts that negative media representations of the region have had in shaping their personal views of 'Western Sydney' or, for self-identified residents, their interactions with people outside of 'Western Sydney':


Interviewee 1 [Moved to Greater Sydney from regional NSW]: On the news, like, I'd often just hear, you know, a lot of gang fights between gangs in Western Sydney or people getting arrested.

Interviewee 10 [Self-identified resident of 'Western Sydney']: Like my friends...growing up and knowing anything...about Bankstown is almost entirely from media, which is like dangerous and unfitting and kind of scary to go to versus growing up in [it] which is just like, like 99% families growing up and everyone just trying to get along in this world...I think, like the media does a poor job projecting...like Western Sydney to be really, like, substandard.

(Appendices S and AA)

Conversely, a positive example of 'Western Sydney' regional consciousness produced by cultural institutions in a positive and empowering manner can be seen in the case of the Western Sydney Wanderers FC below.

Figure 119: Example of institutional 'Western Sydney' regional consciousness

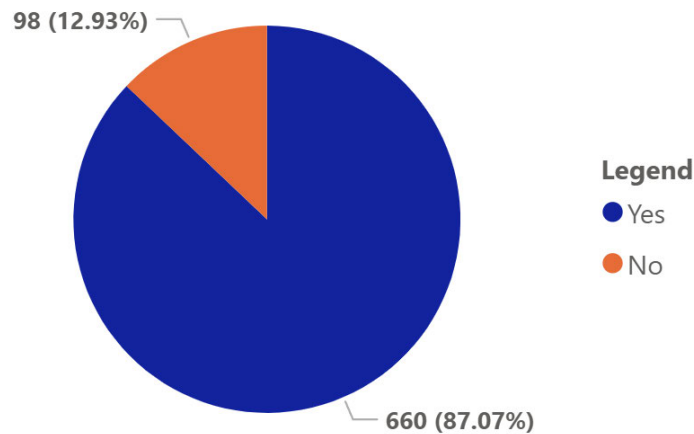
	<p>Western Sydney Wanderers FC</p> <p>One of three A-League (Australia's domestic professional soccer league) clubs based in Greater Sydney. It uses the regional identity of 'Western Sydney' as core branding, particularly the region's culturally diverse population (Western Sydney Wanderers FC 2021) and 'gritty, hard-working and unglamorous' (Marks 2013), underdog image.</p> <p>In 2024, the club became a subject of a documentary about its formation, particularly its community and cultural foundations, and media coverage of its fanbase (SBS 2024) which has exposed tensions between mainstream Australian expectations of football culture and the club's 'ethnic', 'working class' football culture (Lewis 2024).</p>
<p>(Western Sydney Wanderers FC 2021)</p>	

4. Shape in social consciousness – does a region have a distinct identity from its neighbouring regions?

This paper’s data collection activities have identified a strong and distinct regional identity of ‘Western Sydney’ that distinguish it from other regions of Sydney as evident below.

Figure 120: Online Survey Questions 18 and 19 and Responses

Q18. Does 'Western Sydney' and its residents have their own identity compared to the rest of Sydney?



Q19. In your opinion, what makes 'Western Sydney' different from the rest of Sydney? You can choose as many or as few options as you want.

Measure	Count
Diversity in local communities, e.g. languages, cultures, religions	567
Social, cultural or political beliefs of residents	526
Distance from Sydney CBD	468
Presence of businesses run by specific ethnic / cultural groups	381
Specific suburbs and postcodes	362
Employment and education opportunities	351
Types of local employment industries, e.g. construction, logistics	278
Types of jobs held by residents, e.g. retail, logistics	244
Institutions and bodies in it, e.g. football clubs, social / community associations	238
Natural environmental and geographical features, e.g. rivers	213
Administrative definitions from government bodies	100
Other	98
Distance from Parramatta CBD	73

(Data source: Appendix Q, graph, and table by author)

Paasi wrote that ‘at this stage the region is also ready to be taken into use as a weapon in ideological struggles, e.g. over resources, power, etc., within society’ (1986, p. 130) and it is evident in different boundaries of ‘Western Sydney’, particularly its ‘formal’ bounding as a developing city-region, ‘quasi-formal’ bounding for regional advocacy and ‘informal’ individual conceptions, that an essential pillar of the region’s identity is that it reflects a strong perception of being ‘left behind’ in metropolitan Sydney alongside being distinctly cultural diverse and urban:

“Always get the feeling that those from further east have less of an understanding of what its like having to travel into the city, what that means for work or study and the social opportunities that come”

“It is a melting pot of immigrant cultures both the good and bad that comes with that”

"Its urban character, with less natural areas, being more sparse & uniform with just flat, more open streets".

(Appendix Q)

However, some participants explicitly felt a sense of pride and an element of collective regional identity in the ideological struggles of its perceived marginalised status by other parts of Greater Sydney,

“I firmly believe western Sydney residents share a pride from being considered the underdog (or undesirable) by central/metro Sydney residents”.

“I think that the stigma around being a "Westie" from other parts of Sydney can be felt. I live in Penrith and work in Sydney city - even though I work in a white collar role I am still shaped by growing up and living in a traditionally blue-collar area. There is a sense of pride in it. We are unpretentious and laid back. We work hard and often have long commutes. I like to lean into it at work, and play up the joys and humour of being a Westie among my Northern Beaches and Eastern Suburbs colleagues - West Is Best!”

(Appendix Q)

Institutionalised region or not?

In observing ‘Western Sydney’ in light of Paasi’s framework, this paper argues that ‘Western Sydney’ is as an institutionalised region in that it is associated with a defined regional identity by ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ that is symbolically reproduced by institutions and individuals despite fluctuating boundaries, as the strength of its ‘structures of expectations’ as the ‘other (in terms of ‘legitimate culture’ yet distinctly urban) Sydney’ far exceed limits of territorial borders.

However, it is important to note that several respondents commented that the term ‘Western Sydney’ may become too cumbersome or extensive in its geographic coverage to derive any meaningful usage of it and this may require a reconsideration of the extent of its institutionalisation as a singular term for a spatial imaginary:

Interviewee 11: Honestly, I think you're gonna end up with Western Sydney having, like a north-western Sydney, a south-western Sydney, western Sydney, like you're gonna have to group it because there's just so much Western Sydney. I don't know how you track it all as Western Sydney.

Interviewee 6: [When drawing ‘Western Sydney’] I guess I'm underpinning all of that to me is, is that sort of social economic and cultural perspective...but I think geography as well, because I think when you make an area too big, it becomes meaningless.

(Appendix AB & Appendix W)

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1. Key findings

In response to the research question and the use of 'Western Sydney' as a case study to investigate how boundaries shape or reflect urban inequalities and segregation, this paper has found:

- Multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' ranging from those established by 'formal' civic institutions for strategic spatial metropolitan planning and resource distribution, 'quasi-formal' regional advocacy groups lobbying for resources, and 'informal' cultural boundaries of Greater Sydney's residents which show substantial variations and degrees of inconsistencies between them.
- 'Informal' boundaries – notably 'Central Core' and 'Secondary / Contended Frontiers' (to a lesser extent) – reflect areas most affected by urban inequality and segregation in Greater Sydney than their institutional counterparts.
- The regional identity of 'Western Sydney' to strongly shape its 'informal' boundaries as an imaginary that is distinctly urban and multicultural, associated with an acute sense of being 'left behind' but with fluid borders that reflect the history of city's ongoing development and changing socio-economic profiles of familiar spatial units.
- Significant inconsistencies in institutional practices with respect to bounding 'Western Sydney' for spatial planning and resource distribution with real implications of these inconsistencies exacerbating or masking inequality despite intentions to address specific metropolitan inequalities. While not examined in this paper, this finding raises further questions about spatial justice and the formation of 'left behind places' in institutional practices and whether resource distribution based on boundaries, and not inequity indicators, should be reconsidered.
- 'Counter-maps' and accompanying commentary producing 'informal' boundaries provide evidence that citizen participation in articulating spatial imaginaries is a useful exercise to comprehend a city's underlying power dynamics and multi-dimensional inequalities and can foster greater civic engagement in strategic metropolitan planning.

6.2 Lessons for Australian and international planning literature and practice

6.2.1 "The future of Sydney is Western Sydney": towards as a new and critical focus in Australian planning literature

This paper demonstrates the importance of 'Western Sydney' an urban imaginary where planning trends and concerns, respectively city-regions and 'left behind places', being investigated in academic literature are easily applied to an Australasian context.

This paper has specified a methodology that would enable recurring measurement of the multiple boundaries (but not a single or definitive one) and regional identity of 'Western Sydney', applicable to other spatial imaginaries, and future Australian research directions could continue observing its ongoing transformation as a city-region of 'global Sydney' but also as a distinct case study in urban sociology in reference to its complex, multi-faceted and changing socio-cultural boundaries, regional identity, and outsized prominence as a catch-all term in Australian society.

6.2.2 Implications for studies in urban spatial inequality

This paper's examination of urban inequality and segregation through the lens of boundaries and regional identity suggests a need for a broader consideration of spatial inequities and solutions beyond place-based economic competition and a closer view of boundaries outside of tangible or administrative artefacts.

Institutional approaches to spatial planning, particularly for administration and resource distribution, have been found to substantially differ between and within jurisdictions and from views of individuals in territory shape and measures of boundary formation. The identification of multiple boundaries of 'Western Sydney' for different purposes and further analysis of how boundaries may exacerbate or mask facets of spatial inequality is a key area of future research that is likely to extend knowledge in urban inequality and boundary studies.

6.3 Research limitations

The geographic remit of 'Western Sydney' and its specific socio-cultural contexts in metropolitan Sydney limits relevance to international contexts but the research's examination of multi-faceted dimensions of spatial inequality is applicable to the 'left behind places' concept in urban contexts and city regionalism as a solution to them, being examined in strategic planning and regional studies and political geography literature.

The paper is also limited in its predominant use of LGAs, a political instrument of spatial administration, observing bounding practices and further research could expand into the use of spatial units with established methodologies rooted in research and measurable variables like the ABS' Statistical Area standards.

Despite the above, it is hoped this paper provides the reader with more critical perspectives of 'Western Sydney' and its fluid boundaries and regional identity, and current power dynamics in metropolitan Sydney, beyond state-led urban planning strategies, media representations and motives of institutional actors in line with Johnston's aspirations:

But I do want to challenge the way in which 'Western Sydney' figures or is read as exemplifying a 'problem' to be solved by rational planners with their visions either of arcadia or a modernised population committed to a fully urban existence. Rather, I suggest, it can be read as speaking of a pragmatic vision of the creating of a place in which everyday life is given recognition and people can have a sense of the future: a place that is fought for, struggled for, and made by people themselves (1997, p. 125).

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