Spatial Political Economy and the Persistence of Disadvantage:
An Analysis of Fairfield in Greater Western Sydney

Llewellyn Williams-Brooks

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Social and Political Sciences
Department of Political Economy
The University of Sydney
2026

Statement of originality

I certify that the content of this thesis is my own work. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree or purpose. I certify that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, and that all assistance received in preparing this thesis and all sources have been acknowledged.

I acknowledge the use of Google Gemini three for bibliographical referencing and citation formatting. The tool was used for technical organisation only, no AI-generated content was used in the research, analysis, or writing of this thesis.

All accompanying photographs were taken by the author unless otherwise stated.

This research was supported by an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.

Dedicated to the Communities of Fairfield

Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

Acknowledgement

This thesis has been a long time in the making and would not have been possible without many supporting voices and shoulders. I first pay respects to the traditional owners of the lands of Fairfield, the Cabrogal people of the Darug Nation. My many visits to Fairfield confirmed it as a very special place deserving collective attention and admiration. I thank Fairfield council staff for supporting my visit, as well as staff at the Whitlam Library in Cabramatta. Thank you for your archival investigation even if I could not include these materials in the final form of the dissertation.

I was lucky to spend several years with incredible researchers at the University of Sydney. A special thank you to Darius, Jay, Stu, Lee, Emma, Riki, Julian, Matthew, Marty, Claire, and Aila. Thank you for reminding me of the power and importance of the humanities and social sciences to create meaningful knowledge in a time of great need. Without the many long walks, chats, and late nights in the research lab I would have never completed this project. A shout-out to Alison Pennington—a kindred agitator for the things that matter.

I would like to thank the Political Economy department for providing the necessary foundations for sustained critical thought. I thank my supervisors Mike Beggs and Gareth Bryant for their considerate feedback and advice that supported this project to grow and develop. A special thanks to Elizabeth Hill for being an early supporting influence, and Adam Morton for his dedication to the department including running the Past and Present Reading Group. Thanks are due most of all to my academic mentor, Frank Stilwell, who inspired me, and many others, to become a working political economist and gave me the tools I needed to understand the city in which I spent most of my life.

I could not have developed this work without the incredible leadership and support of colleagues and friends at the Commonwealth Treasury. Building the material elements of economic and public policy has had a profound impact on my thinking and practice. In particular, I thank Kahlia for helping me make time for the inevitable redrafts needed to get the work completed. Thank you to all of my professional colleagues at the department for their inspired teamwork. I would also like to extend my appreciation to colleagues across the Australian Public Service contributing to place-based policy.

Finally, I thank my loved ones. Thank you to my dad for giving me my thirst for knowledge, and my mother for my fiery belief and spirit. I thank my brother for always offering to accompany me on trips all over Western Sydney and his exemplary commitment to supporting fairness and equity as a practicing educator. Elizabeth Day provided me with the professional motivation I finally needed to finish this project; I thank her for her many hours of constructive feedback with tremendous encouragement and empathy for my work. To Stephen and Adrienne, thank you for kindness and hospitality in these final months. To my partner Alexandra, I give my most profound thanks. You made this completion possible with your unconditional care, compassion, and belief in me. You make every day special, and I could not be luckier and more blessed to have you in my life. To this group, and the many more that made this work possible, I offer my thanks and sincerest appreciation.

Abstract

Persistent disadvantage remains a critical challenge for Australian public policy, primarily because traditional responses frequently overlook the specificity and importance of localised experiences. This thesis investigates the central question: Why did Fairfield become the most disadvantaged local government area in New South Wales? The research utilises a spatial political economy approach to bring into focus the specificity of geographical, historical, and institutional elements that underpin the dynamics of persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

The study employs a focused case-study methodology, drawing on empirical analysis. First, it utilises data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), including the 2021 Census and historical datasets, to unpack the demographic and socioeconomic elements of disadvantage in Fairfield. Second, it provides a critical engagement with relevant federal, state and local policy reports to provide an institutional perspective on the governance of disadvantage in relation to the case study. Finally, the research is situated within broader academic literatures exploring inequality and disadvantage across diverse policy topics in the Australian context. Together, this approach provides a rigorous empirical and theoretical basis to rearticulate the structural drivers that have historically limited social mobility in Fairfield.

The analysis reveals that Fairfield's disadvantage is driven by the interaction of two distinct structural pressures. ABS data, policy evaluation and academic evidence demonstrate that concentrated and sustained humanitarian settlement creates unique community susceptibilities, particularly during the early post-arrival period and during significant economic shocks. Simultaneously, the data highlight that a reliance on low-quality employment and lower female labour market participation suppress local incomes. Collectively, these factors generate an accumulative effect persisting across generations and dampening social mobility.

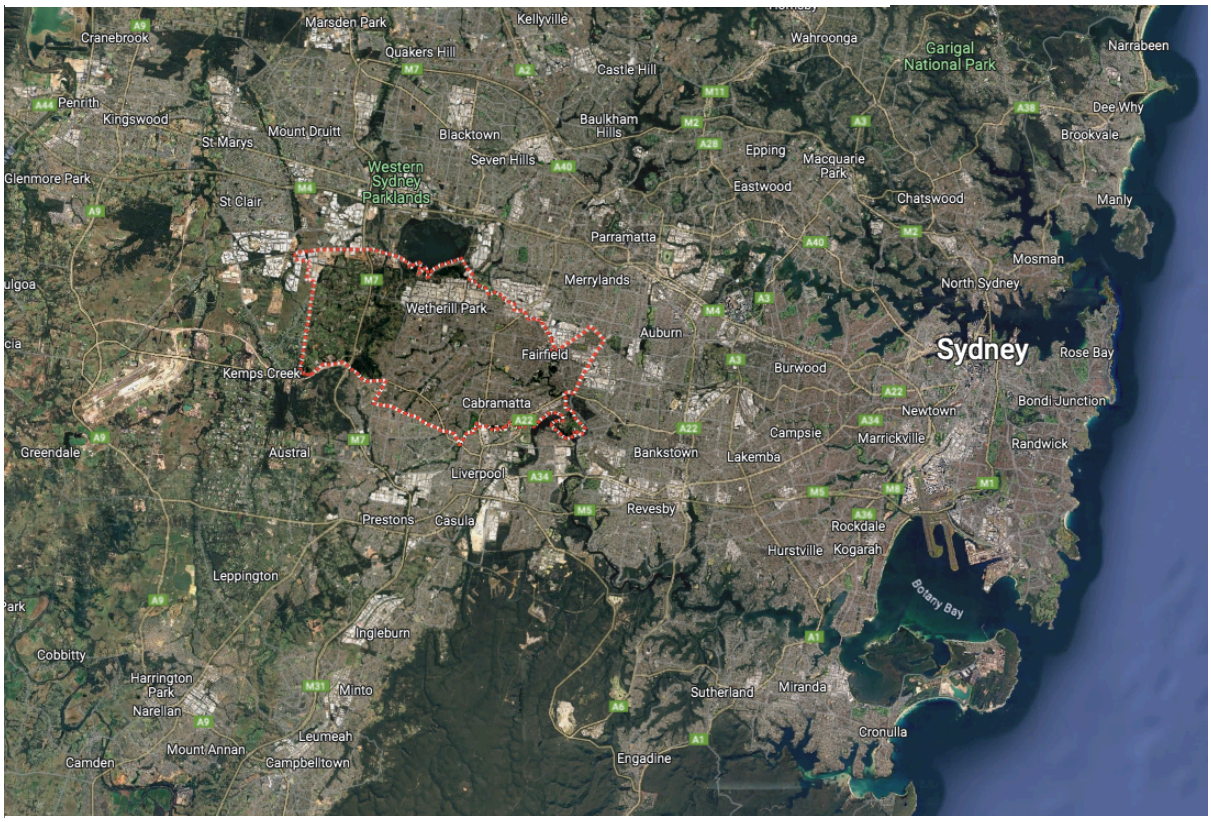
In response to these findings, the thesis advocates for a shift towards place-based policy and reformed fiscal arrangements within the Australian federation. It proposes a transformative solutions framework that empowers local decision-makers and facilitates community-led policy design. By identifying the specific mechanisms of persistent disadvantage, this research provides a scalable model for pursuing social opportunity across Australian communities grappling with similar vulnerabilities.

Part One: *Definitions*

Chapter One: Defining the Problem

This thesis confronted the problem of persistent disadvantage as it has emerged in one local government area in Greater Western Sydney: the City of Fairfield (see Figure 1).[1] The subject of persistent disadvantage is frequently broached as a policy enigma, eluding systematic analysis. Much like the uroboros, often depicted as *a snake eating its own tail*, persistent disadvantage is commonly understood as an intractable cycle, destined to continue in perpetuity. Adding to the complexity, the challenge of persistent disadvantage has seemingly only expanded in scale with time. By extension, and given these specificities, this common account would mean that disadvantage must always exist and cannot be unwound. However, such a reading denies underlying realities. Persistent disadvantage as an area of study is multilayered and contextual. The subject represents multiple, cross-cutting policy areas often considered so complex that, in lieu of whole of society transformational efforts, pessimism reigns over the quest for potential solutions. An outcome is that the challenge of persistent disadvantage is rarely able to generate the sustained attention and discussion required to deliver systemic change.

Figure 1 – *Map of Fairfield Local Government Area*



Note. Fairfield Local Government Area (LGA) is situated in the Western Sydney region bordered by Liverpool to the south and Blacktown to the north. In the east, its boundary is partially defined by the Georges River, with major suburbs including Cabramatta, Canley Vale, and Fairfield itself. To the north, the LGA comprises the Wetherill Industrial Park, a significant industrial precinct. The west incorporates Horsley Park, an area containing small farms and agriculture that reflects the region's rural past. Adapted from Google Maps, by Google, n.d.

[1] This refers to the Fairfield Local Government Area (see Figure 1), from here on simply as 'Fairfield'.

Australia exists within a dominant cultural narrative of a 'lucky country'[2] where social opportunity and, therefore, mobility is broadly attainable for all. While in relative terms Australia is home to broad prosperities, many Australian communities are disproportionately unable to access this luck. Structurally determined factors, outside of the immediate and complete control of these individuals, play a critical part in determining social outcomes. The structural and cyclic nature of this reality has been depicted, not without controversy,[3] on shows such as *Struggle Street* (KEO Films Australia, 2015–2019) and *Into the Hood* (Spanian, 2023). These shows demonstrate that the specificity of place and geography are critical aspects of disadvantage, playing out in unique community settings across urban, regional, and remote Australia. Yet approaches of policy makers exhibit a certain intellectual reticence to systematically address and respond to the structured nature of this challenge. In this regard, public policy must have specificity and consider the unique community settings in which decisions are to be taken. It is argued that solutions can better emerge from a holistic and coordinated policy approach that considers the spatial political economy. Clearly, no single, nor simple, solution to persistent disadvantage exists.

Based around an analysis of Fairfield, this thesis advanced the claim that persistent disadvantage can be best understood and responded to using the approach of spatial political economy (Stilwell, 1980, 1992, 1993), which will specifically elucidate the *geographic*, *temporal*, and *institutional* qualities of this subject matter. Through a detailed exploration of the conditions of persistent disadvantage within the contexts of Fairfield's spatial political economy, the thesis aimed to transcend traditional accounts of disadvantage, which may inadvertently treat the problem as a 'social fact' rather than an emergent, contingent, and political phenomenon. Offering an alternative account tempers policy interventions which narrowly advocate for enhancing the material endowments of the individual—their so-called human capital. Instead, the approach is to carefully consider and advocate for a collective and locally-informed collaborative set of interventions that are within the domains of place-based policy. The argument of this thesis is that by reinterpreting the problem of disadvantage and adopting a distinctive epistemology—spatial political economy—new and previously inaccessible responses can be developed and deployed. By unpacking a range of focused discussions across the thesis, new conclusions were reached including that by employing place-based policy principles cooperative federalism can help to achieve tailored responses to resolve persistent disadvantage, and public policy has a role and focus in building solutions. These insights were connected with the specific setting and challenges faced in Fairfield.

Critics of place-based approaches might draw attention to the fact that locally-based solutions cannot fix nation-level problems, and that place-based policy cannot solve the systemic inequalities generated across Australian society. They might add that efforts should instead focus on advocating for macroeconomic reform that contributes to inclusive

[2] Ironically, this much lauded phrase was originally an adage deployed by Donald Horne (1964/2008) in *The Lucky Country* to critique the quality of Australia's leaders, arguing that "Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share in its luck" (p. 233).

[3] Criticism of media depictions of poverty, such as the documentary *Struggle Street,* has focused on the ethics of depicting personalised accounts of disadvantage. Arguably, these depictions risk community stigmatisation and often take the form of 'poverty porn' consumption (c.f., Lawton, 2020).

growth and redistribution policy at the society level. It is accepted that there is validity to this line of reasoning. While the thesis broadly agrees that systemic, economy-wide change is necessary to address the magnitude and dispersion of persistent disadvantage at the society level, locally centred solutions are also necessary to adequately build required responses. There is also great public benefit in building upon the capability of local democracy and cooperation-based solutions in collaboration with all levels of Australian government.

Thus, it is argued that place-based policy solutions have the potential to extend and enhance direct, democratic opportunities for communities by advocating for a joined-up and scalable national vision. Experiments at the local level could then support broad society-level reimagining of new possibilities. Persistent disadvantage is frequently not generalisable as it is often highly specific to the context of a given location and its community. Attempts to aggregate all communities risk simplifying the complexity of this phenomenon. Therefore, this thesis brings a careful focus on one specific case study in order to pilot a method of analysis for other communities.

Sydney has some of Australia's richest people, with more millionaires and billionaires than any other city in the country (Henley & Partners, 2024)[4]. As will be explored, Fairfield's disadvantage is similar to levels in remote and regional parts of NSW, rather than metropolitan Australia. That Fairfield experiences such severe disadvantage within the boundaries of a city as affluent as Greater Sydney warrants close attention and analysis. A focus on Fairfield, with its unique and compelling history, will help unpack and better analyse the factors underpinning the formation of this specific site of persistent disadvantage. Fairfield has a unique community setting of very high humanitarian settlement,[5] which has sustained since the Second World War (1939-1945). Addressing this specificity, the thesis focused on the existing settings around humanitarian migration and employment in the South-west Sydney area, which may present parallels with similar communities. In this way, the detailed analysis of the Fairfield case study undertaken throughout the thesis was specific, while aiming to reposition and re-contextualise the national narrative on disadvantage.

Highlighting in granular detail a singular community case-study carries risks. In recent decades, Fairfield's community has faced significant public demonisation, with local leaders frequently responding to targeted racism and othering. Unfortunately, the recent COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2023), in which Fairfield earned the unenviable label as a 'LGA (Local Government Area) of concern', being identified as an epicentre of the spread of disease, has left a lingering, negative legacy for the community. Notwithstanding, and perhaps in spite of this, Fairfield community members, demonstrate a belief in their community as a place of social connectedness, tolerance, and multiculturalism (Fairfield City Council, 2024). For these community members, Fairfield is a place where individuals and communities

[4] According to the 2024 report, Australia had 147,000 millionaires and 20 billionaires (measured in USD). Melbourne was the runner up to Sydney with 97,900 millionaires and 10 billionaires. The median weekly household income for Sydney in 2021 was $2,077, which was substantially above the median weekly household national income of $1,746.

[5] Throughout the thesis, 'humanitarian entrants' refers to individuals granted a visa under an Australian humanitarian settlement program.

overcome unfair odds every single day. In this respect, it is hoped that the analysis presented throughout the thesis contributes to empowering local action and community self-determination. Fairfield is precisely the kind of community where local decision making through place-based policy can be a meaningful part of the solution to challenging and reshaping outcomes that unfairly impact real lives.

Australia as a Developmentalist State

It was critical that this thesis reckoned with the nature of the Australian state and the specifics of its form. A core component of this thesis was describing social change in Australia that has occurred since the 1970s to help understand the specificity of persistent disadvantage that occurs in Fairfield. For this to happen, a working theory of state transformation was required to understand how state and federal governments have managed economic and social change since the 1970s. It was argued that a structuralist account, which emphasises the state as *developmentalist*, best captured the complexities of Australia's economic development over the previous decades, with implications for the analysis of persistent disadvantage.

The developmentalist account (Weller & O'Neill, 2014), offers a practical approach to exploring the specifics of public policy development and path dependency in Australian, and is a compelling alternative to dominant critical narratives. It includes accounts which stress *neoliberalism* or *economic rationalism* as the main explanatory concepts for understanding social and economic change in Australia since the crisis of the 1970s. The developmentalist approach can be considered a 'middle road' in understanding significant change, without either over idealising or over criticising the path taken by state actors. Other approaches which contain such limitations are critiques of neoliberal[6] as well as glorifications of economic deregulation.[7] They create limitations because the former provides simplification economics and social change and being beset on presenting a critique, it cannot in entirety account for the upside, combined and complex aspects of political economic reform. However, the latter narrative tends to simplify elements of 1970s economic reforms, which have generated substantial negative outcomes, especially in relation to the acceleration of economic inequality (see Chapter 2).

The thesis instead argued that market-driven policy processes have been a core dynamic in Australia's development since the 1970s. When looked at more closely there have, in fact, been many more complex and contested elements of change and transformation. As the thesis suggested, humanitarian settlement policy (Chapter 3) is one such complex example

[6] Critiques of neoliberalism have frequently fallen into one of two camps. The former focuses on neoliberalism as a doctrine deployed by intellectuals to advance conservative political agendas, most prominently austerity programmes. The latter literature of 'actually existing neoliberalism' focuses more practically on the real-world outcomes of neoliberal ideas, including their contradictions (i.e. the expansion and growth of the state while advocating for small/limited state ideologies) (Cahill & Konings, 2017; Venugopal, 2015). This thesis provides examples of both forms that have been applied in discussions of the Australian context since the 1970s.

[7] A prominent example is provided in Paul Kelly's (1992) influential *The End of Certainty.* Kelly identified five aspects of Australia's federalism: the White Australia policy, protectionism, wage arbitration, state paternalism, and the influence of the British Empire. In his account, Kelly argued that the economic challenges of the 1970s were overcome by dismantling these oppressive systems in favour of an open and globalised policy paradigm (pp.1-15).

which can neither be comfortably explained by either the anti-neoliberal or pro-market explanatory frameworks. The 'developmentalist approach' is, instead, able to take a more historically grounded and agnostic approach to economic reform, acknowledging the negatives of deregulation while adequately appraising social reforms that do not fit the narrative presented under neoliberalism critiques. It is a complementary and more useful explanatory narrative for understanding outcomes in Fairfield, including the complexities of its spatial political economy.

The developmentalist approach, in the Australian context, was proposed by Weller and O'Neill (2014). It treats social changes as highly uneven, path-dependent, and complex by nature. This approach captures the complex interactions that have occurred in the development of Australian public policy. For example, Weller and O'Neill argued that the unique hallmarks of Australian political development into the 21st century have tended to impede any broad attempts to implement neoliberalism, identifying the following barriers to implementation:

1. Competition between the states and the federal government which prevent coordinated policy roll-outs;
2. Resource dependency and its implications which impede a coalition of rationality between import and export orientated capitalism;
3. The composition of Australia's business sector being largely duopolies with highly specialised local firms, and;
4. The dependency on commodity exports and imported capital.

As the authors summarised:

> for Australia the neo-liberal troika of liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation are not *inherently* neo-liberal but are options for a developmental state, for better or worse, in managing global capitalism in the search for optimum national outcomes. (Weller & O'Neill, 2014, p. 124)

This approach stands in contrast to those offered under the neoliberalism critique paradigm. Pusey (1991) and Bell (1997) each demonstrated implicitly the limitations of the dominant 'critical neoliberalism' literature. *Economic Rationalism in Canberra* (Pusey, 1991) remains a key and influential text in this tradition. Pusey's work explores the gradual turn of the Australian public service from traditions like nation building and welfarism towards one governed by 'economic rationalism'. One definition Pusey offered is: "[the] hyper-objectification of the market… with an uncoupling of the economic and socio-cultural context and premise of state action" (p. 171). Pusey further elaborated what is meant by economic rationalism:

> (1) the doctrine that economies, markets and money can always, at least in principle, deliver better outcomes than states, bureaucracies and the law; and/or (2) the doctrine that economies, markets and money offer, at least in principle, the only reliable means of setting values on anything. (Pusey, 2018, p. 12)

Pusey's account would suggest that, since the stagflation crisis of the 1970s, Australian governments of all persuasions turned to market-led, deregulation driven solutions as the primary mechanism to overcome economic crisis. Pusey's argument, while a compelling explanation of the state's response to macroeconomic crisis, is an oversimplification of Australia's policy development. The account places major emphasis on the power of the ideas of key decision makers—their conversion to economic rationalism—to explain broad changes in the structure of the economy and government decision making. It also suggests that *only* economic rationalism-based ideas have been used to respond to Australian public policy problems in the post 1970s order. The thesis suggested that the dominating ideas of policy makers are not the main driver of reform, nor have they been singularly economic rationalist in nature.

Other key texts have focused more on the elements of macroeconomic management as a driving explanatory framework. Focusing on the restructuring of Australia's macroeconomy, *Ungoverning the Economy* (Bell, 1997) gives a complementary account to Pusey's work. Bell (1997) advanced an explanation of change to Australian public policy since the 1970s, delineating instances where market forces have come to dominate in spaces previously occupied by the state. To quote Bell:

> The broad aim of what might be called the 'neoliberal project' has been to overturn earlier models of economic development and to establish a new economic and political order designed to enhance market freedom, boost profits and elevate the power of business interests and wealth holders relative to labour and the state (i.e., *a reversal of the postwar project*). (my italics, p. 277)

Bell's (1997) text explores the weakening of the Australian state and its implications for the domestic economy since the 1970s. Bell argued that over time, public sector investment, protectionism, and Keynesian economic management, including full-employment strategies, were abandoned. What emerged was a weaker and more precarious industrial relations system favouring the wealthy, with significant implications for Australian workers (pp. 1-20).

This thesis partially agreed with Bell's analysis, acknowledging that market deregulation and its implications, particularly for manufacturing, have had direct impacts on the local labour market and social outcomes in Fairfield. For example, deregulation had a central role in consolidating segmentation of the Australian urban labour market (see Chapter 4). As humanitarian settlement and its development also shows (Chapter 3), the immigration policy setting began to fully mature in the 1970s, largely reliant on global, humanitarian institutions and an overall commitment to the concept of resettlement as core aspects of global peace and security. Moreover, federal financial system's underpinning of transfers of funds from the federal to states to support key policy portfolios, has developmentalist complexities which can be traced back to federation and the evolution of Vertical Fiscal Imbalance throughout the 20th century (see Chapter 5). These examples serve merely to suggest that simple narratives in either camp cannot tell the specificity of the story of Australian capitalism, nor can it explain the specifics of Fairfield.

Sweeping narratives of 'neoliberalism' tend to oversimplify transitions since the 1970s. In agreement with Beggs (2011), it can be argued that "the structure of the social networks

through which the policy ideas take form and come into contest are shaped by selective pressures from the broader social conditions in which they emerge" (p. 1). That is to say, the activities of individual decision makers operating within complex and embedded systems cannot be taken as pre-determined. No policy consensus has ever arrived without debate, complexity, and contradiction as collective outcomes are reached. This serves as a partial answer to understanding the uroboros of persistent disadvantage beholden to multiple and contesting institutional pressures, none of which are serviced by simple narratives. The developmentalist approach, rather than starting with the foregone conclusion that all government decision-making is broadly neoliberal, will enable a richer and more locally informed approach.

Disadvantage, Persistent Disadvantage, and Measurements of Poverty

For the purposes of this thesis, disadvantage can be understood as a relational concept, connected to a lower level of life opportunities and/or life outcomes for an individual and/or a community over a period of time. To summarise, it is *contextual*, connected with *life chances*, occurs in relation to specific *cohorts*, and is *historic*. These criteria are relevant to the circumstances of Fairfield.

To provide an example, an individual can be said to be 'disadvantaged' because they have less opportunity to achieve social mobility, and/or a lower standard of well-being, as a result of their material and social circumstances in comparison with another person in that society. Disadvantage is rarely discrete; thus, is intimately connected with other deprivations (Ludwig, 2010, p. 6). For instance, an individual that has identifiable disadvantage might also face deprivation of fundamentals for a good life such as adequate nutrition, dry and warm shelter, psychological and physical safety, inadequate social connectivity, and other factors.

The historic dimension is also critical, with an important extension of disadvantage being the concept of *persistence*. Persistent disadvantage is disadvantage that is sustained over a long time period, either within the life of an individual or between generations of a social group or community. It is the opposite of temporary or transient disadvantage which resolves and does not have significant long-term implications. Disadvantage which is persistent is likely to create a range of additional challenges. This means it can become an enduring or permanent life factor which affects a person, specific community, or their descendants. Institutions, either intentionally or indirectly, can also contribute to enduring disadvantage, which may mean a social group can face ongoing, specific struggles requiring complex and targeted interventions. The settings of persistently disadvantage groups are highly specific and rarely generalisable, although they may face similar limitations in outcomes when compared with other disadvantaged groups.

The thesis primarily used the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) to understand and analyse disadvantage, warranting a brief explanation of its capabilities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023a). The SEIFA is the federal government's most complete area measurement of national disadvantage. It is an Australian Bureau of Statistics product that uses data collected as part of the 5-yearly national Census, and it the major Australian index for identifying disadvantaged areas. It ranks all areas in Australia with populations based on

their relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. It can also be used to spatially identify areas in need of funding for support services, while providing evidence around the outcomes experienced in a community. The primary function of the indexes is to compare vast differences in areas at a single point in time.[8] It weights certain variables collected as part of the Census to assign ordinal ranks to areas across Australia. Chapter Two offers a more complex account of the conceptual underpinnings of disadvantage.

Spatial Political Economy

Spatial political economy[9] offers a meaningful alternative to other modes of understanding persistent disadvantage. Most research that engages with the subject requires that the problem is treated as a 'given fact'.[10] That is to say, there is inadequate room to interrogate the deep specificity of any one community's story of persistent disadvantage. The search for comparable, nationally focused empirical studies across a diversity of communities and areas means that much of the specific complexity of place is minimised. As a result, methodological choices and focuses can inadvertently result in omissions of important empirical, locally significant insights. Hence, the problem of persistent disadvantage is frequently *ahistorical* (presented as an objective state), *de-spatialised* (individual differences are aggregated frequently at state and national levels to tell grand narratives), and *deinstitutionalised* (the political economy of decision-making and governance is removed in the outcomes of communities). For the sake of coherency, responding to these deficits will be described as the principal aim of 'spatial political economy'.[11]

Mainstream Approaches to Understanding Disadvantage

Strictly put, there is no internationally agreed way to measure the impacts of programmes in settings of disadvantage. Nonetheless, the normative language around interventions in disadvantaged communities has tended to favour a focus on outcomes, in which investments in programmes lead to improvements in employment, skills, and education. This broad framework has been deeply influenced by the concepts of human capital. A straightforward definition of its theory is as follows:

---

[8] SEIFA offers a 'snapshot' view of an area at the time of the Census; therefore, it cannot track longitudinal outcomes of individuals between census years (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The methodology and variables for SEIFA are adjusted every collection, making between year comparisons not preferrable. However, the presence of a consistent number of Local Government Areas between Census years points to the systemic nature of persistent disadvantage in high disadvantaged communities.

[9] While this thesis focused on Stilwell, a range of contemporary theorists are also influenced by and apply spatial political economy concepts, including Franklin Obeng-Odoom (see 2016) and Adam David Morton (see 2013). Both authors have used spatial political economy to understand the causes and consequences of underdevelopment in the Global South.

[10] Key analyses in this setting include publications by ACOSS (e.g., Davidson, 2022), and the Dropping off the Edge report (Tanton et al., 2021). These reports regularly provide important information on cohorts disproportionately impacted by disadvantage, and regularly refer to the long history of studying these subject matters. Given their national advocacy focus, they rarely focus on any one community in place as part of their insights.

[11] This is not to suggest that researchers of persistent disadvantage are disinterested in the issue's historical, spatial, and institutional dimensions. Rather, a more granular attention to methodology may provide more effective analysis and responses to persistent disadvantage.

> [human capital is] the stock of skills that the [labour] force possesses … it encompasses the notion that there are investments in people (e.g., education, training, health) and that these investments increase an individual's productivity. (Goldin, 2016, p. 1)

With human capital, individuals are assumed to hold a range of measurable attributes that can be enhanced by tailored investments to improve their overall marginal productivity and, therefore, achieve better economic and social outcomes.

There are clearly some advantages to a human capital centred approach to addressing disadvantage. For example, human capital theory attempts to define in measurable terms the impacts and effectiveness of programmes, in a way which is conscious of delivering value for money. A focus driven by data can help identify the benefits of initiatives within distinct cohorts or areas, helping support measurement and evaluation. Human capital influenced approaches can help build towards targeted interventions by observing measurable differences, supporting broader evaluation (c.f., Becker, 1995; Quang Dao, 2008; Attanasio et al., 2022).

That said, human capital has certain biases which do not always enable best practice. Consider education as an example: investments in education have been traditionally seen to improve overall productivity and, therefore, earnings. Human capital theory, however, has a tendency to treat education investment as 'linear' rather than a heterogenous good; that is, it is insufficiently robust to account for the complexities of real world problems in its pursuit of universalist insights. In this regard, human capital can struggle to explain the links between education level and overall productivity, changes in the structure of income levels over time, or the impact of status on overall productivity outcomes (Marginson, 2019, p. 287).

Criticisms aside, there is utility in pursuing benchmarks to support better policy evidence generation and evaluation. Human capital plays a vital part in supporting these efforts. Yet, there is also need for more open-ended approaches that are better equipped to deal with emergent specificities at the community level. Much like the developmentalist state thesis, a middle-path is needed that charts and appreciates the measurement of community level variables and links them with the specificities of history, geography, and institutional adaptation.

Stilwell's Approach to Spatial Political Economy

As discussed, there is a need for a specified approach to understanding disadvantage equipped for the realities of community, more specifically those of Fairfield. The developmentalist approach proposed a need for a bespoke methodology to deal with the specifics of Australian public policy. It is argued that spatial political economy is complementary to this demand by providing a spatially and historically informed approach to understand institutions and their path dependent development. That is to say, if the developmentalist approach exposed the *core problematic* required of critical analysis in the Australian setting, then spatial political economy is a central means of deconstructing, understanding, and proposing solutions to challenges like urban persistent disadvantage.

Over the course of his career, Frank Stilwell developed an approach for analysing spatially concentrated disadvantage, with close attention to the development of Greater Sydney. These contributions were wide reaching, with efforts undertaken to reflect on Stilwell's legacy in political economy (see Schroeder & Chester, 2013) focusing on areas such as his teaching, study of inequality, contributions to heterodox economic policy, and environmental economics. Gleeson (2013) provided an overview of Stilwell's study of cities and region, an approach greatly informing spatial political economy.

Stilwell was influenced by the broad currents in domestic and international literatures on urban and regional economics. Gleeson (2013) pointed out that from Stilwell's early writing in the 1970s there emerged a distinctly Australian urban political economy tradition. Writers and key texts other than Stillwell include Berry (1979), Sandercock (1975; Sandercock & Berry 1983), Kemeny (1978), and McLoughlin (1992). Thematically, these studies were interested in human geography and spatial systems as sites of socio-economic distribution. An overarching theme remained a critique of 'determinism' around city planning and the future of cities, as well as a preoccupation with the political nature of city growth and development. Spatial political economy has continued to provide a robust and versatile approach to understanding a range of complex urban and regional challenges, both in Australia and abroad (c.f. Marsh & Stilwell, 2023; Obeng-Odoom, 2016; 2022; 2023; 2025, Stilwell, 2003, 2024).

Reviewing Stilwell's key writings on cities and regions can help understand the richness of this approach. In Stilwell's (1972a) first text, *Regional Economic Policy*, the author made the case for a concerted regional policy programme to address the inequality between regions in the national economy. Stilwell's (1969) concern for structural change of the economy as a cause of unemployment had been earlier noted: "the experience of the sixties has been that of increasing regional imbalance" (p. 173). This reflexivity around the costs of economic growth would evolve to a methodology focused on the development of cities; specifically, his detailed study of Sydney.

In his early literature, "unsystematically controlled growth" (Stilwell, 1972, p. 5) was perceived as a major factor underpinning urban challenges experienced in Australia's largest cities. Growing population concentration and rapid land price inflation were seen to be indirect drivers of inequality. The argument was developed in Stilwell and Hardwick (1973) where city size and growth were seen, in themselves, as major drivers of structural inequality (p.26). The consequence being increased social polarisation amplified by government prioritisation of efficiency (or market driven solutions), overpowering calls for spatial equity. As discussed in Chapter Four, Sydney was becoming increasingly spatially polarised throughout the 1970s, driven by the end of full-employment and the rise of higher generalised unemployment. Stilwell and Hardwick (1973) noted a division of Sydney throughout this time as five distinct spatial clusters, with the 'Far western suburbs' of Parramatta, Auburn, Bankstown, Holroyd, Blacktown, Fairfield, Campbelltown, Penrith, and Liverpool forming a distinct area pattern of disadvantage (p. 24).

As part of this cluster, Stilwell (1979) observed the emergence of a distinct spatial form in the western suburbs of Sydney distinguished by low density semi-detached housing, lower access to social amenities, emergent issues around social isolation, longer work commutes,

persistently high rates of unemployment (especially for the young), as well as poorer health and higher crime rates (p. 528). For Stilwell, these urban problems reflected the fundamentally uneven nature of the development of Australia's cities, where the prosperity of the long-boom and uncoordinated city growth met the unemployment and restructuring crisis of the economy during the 1970s. There was also growing awareness that these changes were connected to international economic integration within a globalising economy.

Stilwell's (1980) next text, *Economic Crisis: Cities and Regions*, acknowledged that his previous work lacked an adequate framework to understand the economic challenges of the early 1970s. Breaking away from neoclassical accounts the text applied a new method, linking "the interactions between international, national, regional and intra-urban aspects of the current economic depression" (Stilwell, 1980, p. vii). The work advanced the spatial polarisation thesis, that certain workers were being disproportionately, and structurally, impacted by the recession. This was especially the case for those in the Western suburbs and recently arrived migrant communities. Stilwell observed that policy makers failed to systematically take the problems in an area as part of how the structure of the economy is implicated in many of these contingent outcomes.

As his ultimate statement on the subject matter, Stilwell's companion texts *Understanding Cities & Regions* (1992) and *Reshaping Australia* (1993) provide a clear articulation of the approach of spatial political economy. Stilwell (1992) contended:

> The key to systematic progress … is the application of political economy to the study of cities and regions, space and place … Progress in the social sciences has been impeded by the *artificial separation* of the disciplines of economics, sociology and political science. The hiving off of geography (the space dimension) and history (the time dimension) has further impoverished the residuals. (my italics, p. 15)

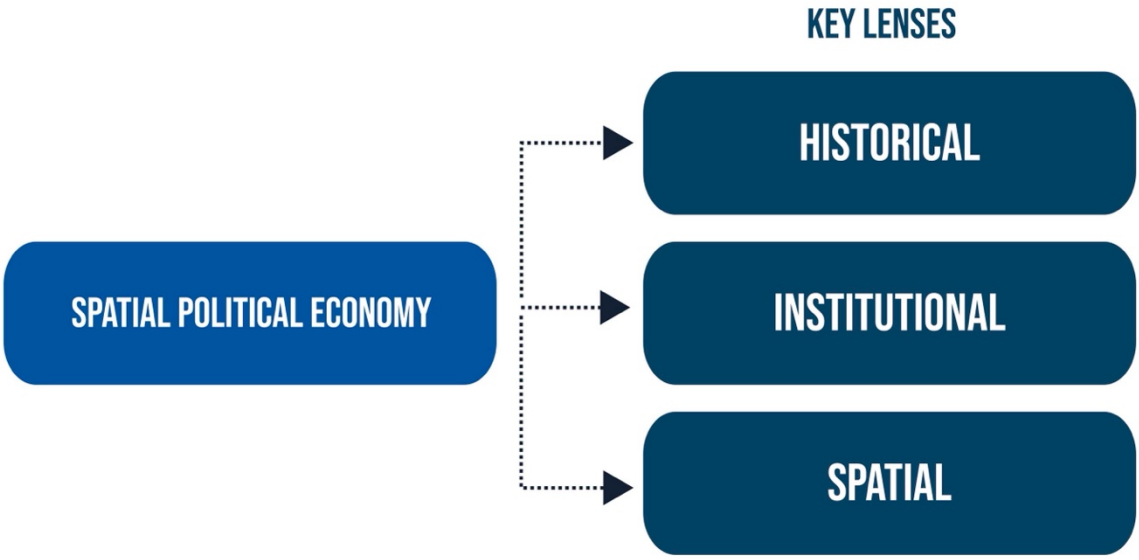
Here was a clear commitment to history and space as political economic dimensions. A final, critical component of Stilwell's approach is institutional economics.[12] An eclectic tradition, institutionalism draws on the writings of economics like Thorstein Veblen (1899/2017) and J. K. Galbraith (1958/1998) to analyse subjects such as corporations, comparative analysis of government, and trade unions. Connected to institutionalism, Stilwell introduced a key theory for understanding urban and regional inequality, the theory of 'cumulative causation' developed by Gunnar Myrdal.

Over the course of half a century, Stilwell (2014, 2017, 2024) remained steadfast in advocating for a political economic approach to understanding spatial inequalities in cities and regions, including better coordination across the three levels of government (addressed in Chapter 5), to achieve better spatial outcomes (Stilwell & Troy 2000). What is clear is that the interdisciplinary approach offered by spatial political economy offers a rich alternative

[12] Another major interest for Stilwell has been the writings of Henry George and the political economy of land ownership. While largely outside the scope of the thesis, Georgist economics proposes the implementation of land-based taxation policy to rectify such issues such as: "…declining housing affordability, growing economic inequality, and environmental decay." (Jordan & Stilwell, 2004, p.132).

to understanding the pattern and formation of disadvantage by placing historical, spatial, and institutional processes at the centre of understanding outcomes in place (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 – *Key Lenses of Spatial Political Economy*



Note. Drawing on the work of Stilwell, spatial political economy is a methodology for examining historical, institutional and spatial dynamics applied to social scientific questions. Adapted from *Understanding Cities & Regions: Spatial Political Economy,* by F. Stilwell, 1992, Plutopress Australia.

Cumulative Causations as a Concept in Spatial Political Economy

One influential institutionalist theory utilised by Stilwell is cumulative causation; a theory uniquely well suited for discussing the subject of persistent disadvantage and unpacking its ouroboros like appearance. In particular, the theory helps to explain the negative feedback loops that occur in settings of persistent disadvantage, which serve to deepen and perpetuate negative social outcomes. It also helps to explain why standard approaches to disadvantage neglect the specificity of social experiences in community.

The concept of cumulative causation was developed by Swedish institutionalist economist Gunnar Myrdal (1957) in his work *Economic Theory and Underdeveloped Regions*. In the text, Myrdal explored the characteristics underpinning the emergence of underdevelopment in regions, including the widening inequality between nations. He argued that 'backwash effects' (negative feedback loops) are catalysts for causal chains which prevent underdeveloped countries from taking advantage of the benefits of globalisation. This notion stood in contrast to the ideas exposed via 'equilibrium theory' which suggested that market forces would create general stability and a 'positive feedback' loop for nations (Fujita, 2007, p. 276).

There are four specific aspects to Myrdal's cumulative causation theory and praxis:

1. The concept of the *backwash effect* or 'adverse changes' as a result of 'trade, migration, and capital movement'. Backwash is the formation of a negative cycle that becomes self-perpetuating.
2. The 'spread effect', where less developed countries benefit from the demands of developed regions. Unlikely to overcome the negatives of the backwash effect, in reality, positive spillovers from development are not as prolific as theorised (Ho 2004; Stilwell 1992).
3. Institutions are critical agents in shaping outcomes. There is an active and practical role for policy makers, especially those in positions of institutional power, to impact real world outcomes.
4. Public political action is necessary to influence progressive interventionist economic policy and to help undo the negative effects of uneven development. (Fujita, 2007, p. 278)

Myrdal was focused on the plight of nations in this approach. However, he also argued that there were parallels in the unevenness between nations and the experience of people. He particularly drew attention to implications around racial inequality within the United States of America (USA) as an example of cumulative causation. Myrdal reflected on Ragnar Nurske's (1952) observation that 'a country is poor because it is poor', arguing that this belief fails to unpack the problem to deliver systemic change based around specificity (Myrdal 1957, pp. 12-13). Applying this sentiment to individual poverty may serve to perpetuate poor health outcomes, leading to high unemployment driving the backwash effects of the poverty cycle (Stilwell, 1992). The co-location of multiple disadvantages in specific, real-life, communities would seem to affirm this thesis (Hunter, 2007, pp. 186-187).

Spatial Inequality in Sydney

Sydney as a Case Study in Spatial Inequality

Sydney is marked by deep socio-spatial polarisation, with some of the richest and poorest areas in the country.[13] It has become such an entrenched fact of the city and its structure that the observation has ceased to generate much constructure, critical reflection, or scrutiny. As Stilwell (1992) noted, these changes have been many decades in the making. The specific inequities play out across a range of domains, including in the distribution of resources available to different communities (Farid Uddin & Piracha, 2023, p. 1).

No concept has captured the specifics of Sydney's deep divisions more than the so-called 'Red-Rooster line'.[14] In short, this 'line' can be drawn through the middle of Sydney from

[13] At the 2021 Census, six of the 10 most advantaged local government areas in Australia were in Greater Sydney: Woollahra (1), Mosman (2), Ku-ring-gai (3), North Sydney (5), Waverly (6), and Lane Cove (7). The most disadvantaged local government areas nationally were all in the Northern Territory and Queensland (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

[14] Red Rooster is an Australian fast-food chain that specialises in roasted and fried chicken. Within Sydney, the chain's geographic footprint is concentrated in Greater Western Sydney, making it a visual marker of differing

near the airport to Homebush, with the east having more socially advantaged neighbourhoods, and the west (Greater Western Sydney) much more disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This line, largely imaginary in the sense that no hard border exists, has the power to decide who has access to many of the city's opportunities. Unpacking how this line came into being, reveals a surprising, deep connection to the origins of Sydney, including its unique geography.

Precise information around these spatial divisions is not easily unveiled, although there is evidence that they have existed since the early colonial period. As Australia's first settler-colonial city, Sydney has endured extensive spatial change coinciding with the growth and economic development of the city. Aplin (1982) used Low's (1845) and Waugh and Cox's (1858) Census directory to draw an occupational map of Sydney. From this early time, Aplin (1982) found the professional occupation classes were living around high amenity areas, near commercial and administrative centres (Hyde Park at the time), with accompanying higher sanitation standards. In contrast, the Rocks was home to the city's derelict tenement housing, proximal to manual work, making it an epicentre for the labouring classes (p. 153). These observations are correlated in *Rising Damp* (Fitzgerald, 1987) which documented life in Sydney from the mid to late 19th century:

> [by the 1890s] *Sydney was no classless society*. Suburbs and regions varied enormously in the provision of amenities, both natural and built. Anyone who has the money for the bus fare knew that life in Woollahra or parts of the North Shore could compare favourably with the best in the world, both in terms of housing standard and environmental delights. And anyone who took the trouble to stroll through the West Sydney or Alexandria knew that for many life was mean and cramped, with generous amounts of filth, disease and economic uncertainty. (my italics, Fitzgerald, 1987, p. 41)

To simplify, it can be inferred that Sydney has, to some extent, *always* been marked by east-west spatial divisions along occupational and class lines.

Having established that there are invisible spatial borders within the city, it might be asked why did Western Sydney become an epicentre of lower socioeconomic groups? Cumulative causation can help explain this effect. The short answer is that quality and the cost of land, beholden to the general physical environment, have historically been of a lower rank. In contrast, the Eastern city with its natural harbour and plentiful beaches and waterways, has consistently been an expensive and desirable area to live. Capturing this idea, in Stretton's (1970) *Ideas for Australian Cities* he titled Sydney 'the magic place' in which everyone is trying to capture a slice of the city's beauty for themselves. However, in a city where only the richest can afford to buy or rent in prestige postcodes, this leaves the more disadvantaged with whatever remains. Because Sydney is surrounded by nations parks on all sides (e.g., Ku-ring-gai and the Blue Mountains), the available land is scarce and finite, intensifying competition for access to desirable locations.

culture and consumption patterns between eastern and western areas of the city (University of New South Wales, 2020).

The generally poorer quality land has always been 'west' of the harbour on the Cumberland Plain. The Cumberland Plain historically had some of the richest soil in Sydney, which has also rendered the area attractive for agricultural settlement and farming (NSW Government, 2013). Mass clearing of bushlands and the impacts of rapid urbanisation of the west has left Western Sydney prone to heat islands effects (Kong et al., 2023, p. 2). As Sydney has grown, the spatial bordering of the west has stretched and dispersed following the familiar pattern.[15] The Western suburbs remain more affordable rental areas to this day, continuing to attract and retain lower income, working-class households.[16]

Yet it is also important to not oversimplify this reality. While perception of Greater Western Sydney as a working-class epicentre capture a significant and important truth of the region, it cannot alone convey the full complexity of communities across its substantial human and built geography. To understand Greater Western Sydney, the region must be appreciated both for its immense diversity, but also as a space shaped by the agency of its communities. As Collins (2000) argues:

> …Sydney's west is not in any way simply a working-class ghetto. Rather it is home to a great diversity of people which, while it includes the unemployed and socially excluded, also includes everyone from working-class factory workers and labourers to white collar office workers, middle class professionals and the self-employed and small business owners. The west is not the legendary land of fibro and checked shirts. Nor does it fit the contemporary media image of a community in decay… Rather it is a very diverse cultural, linguistic, religious and social class space; a thriving community where people live and work and actively create for themselves in which they want to develop and grow (p.58).

For this reason, a granular analysis of Fairfield's spatial political economy helps to better grasp the complexity of this area.

Locating Fairfield

Fairfield is one of Australia's most culturally diverse communities with a residential population from over 150 nations (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).[17] Fittingly, its

[15] Gentrification has served as a major driver of the distribution of disadvantage in Sydney. Kendig (1979) was among the first to identify early phases of gentrification in inner-Sydney, where substantial older housing stock and lower income tenants lived (c.f., Stilwell 1993). Sydney's remaining lower income inner areas, including some of the oldest public housing stock, remain highly susceptible to continuing gentrification and privatisation (Thackway et al., 2023, p. 3).

[16] Outer Western Sydney has some of the city's relatively more affordable housing, particularly central western Sydney (i.e., Fairfield), north west (i.e., Penrith region), and south west (i.e., Campbelltown). These were the rental affordability measures for a dual income household with children, generally considered a higher status and socially mobile group (with an estimated gross annual income of between $200,560 and $234,000 in 2024 terms) (see SGS Economics and Planning, 2024).

[17] In 2021, the top 20 countries of birth for residents of Fairfield (excluding Australia) were: Vietnam (34,072), Iraq (24,983), Cambodia (7,507), Syria (5,768), China* (3,846), Italy (3,041), Lebanon (2,717), Philippines (2,385), New Zealand (2,185), Laos (1,855), Croatia (1,791), Thailand (1,526), Chile (1,411), Fiji (1,302), Iran (1,243), Serbia (1,241), Samoa (920), Uruguay (907), Bosnia and Herzegovina (894) and Malta (864) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). *excludes Special Administrative Regions and Taiwan.

official slogan for a time was 'all the world in one place' (Fairfield City Council, n.d.). It is a resilient community with a long history of multiculturalism, tolerance, and pluralism (Fairfield City Council, 2024). With a population of just under 210,000, Fairfield is also one of the state's largest local government areas by population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Fifty-six per cent of its population were born overseas from countries including Vietnam (16.3%), Iraq (12%), Cambodia (3.6%), Syria (2.8%), and China (1.8%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Fairfield faces extraordinary challenges, including those emerging from persistent community disadvantage. Arguably the greatest challenges for policy makers arise from providing adequate resources and opportunity to support the nation's largest concentration of humanitarian settlement. From 1991, Fairfield settled over 38,000 humanitarian entrants, twice the amount of neighbouring Liverpool (the area with the next highest amount, nationally). From 2016-2019 Fairfield received 11,836 humanitarian migrants, 41 per cent of NSW's total intake (Edmund Rice Centre, 2022). In 2021, Fairfield gained the unenviable title of the most disadvantaged Local Government Area in NSW according to the Census.

Substantiating these claims, Tanton et al. (2021) found the suburb of Fairfield a location of persistent disadvantage, with at least one indicator in the bottom 5 per cent of outcomes for both the 2015 and 2021 data sets. This finding suggests multiple disadvantages experienced over an extended period. The four major contributors overall to disadvantage in NSW for the study were: the percentage of families with low income (less than $650 per week), air pollution, below Year 10 education levels, and lack of access to internet at home. Using the SEIFA[18] reveals Fairfield has consistently ranked among the most disadvantaged local government areas in NSW over the past decade. The next section explains the historical factors at play in the area.

Fairfield Prior to 1945

Fairfield's development closely aligns with the economic history of NSW, moving from small scale farms and agriculture to eventual manufacturing industry and the growth of substantial small-businesses and the service economy. Fairfield may have been named after 'Fair Field'; a small medieval village outside of Somerset, England, established at least since the 12th century (Gapps, 2010, p.13). It was named by Captain John Horsley who developed a provincial estate around Prospect creek near George's river in 1818. This settlement occurred during the frontier wars of the period in which the Darug, Gandangarra, and Dharawl people fought against settler colonial dispossession. Migration always had a major impact on the locality throughout its history (Gapps, 2010, pp. 13-19).

Prior to colonisation, the Cabrogal people were likely the majority Aboriginal clan in the Fairfield City region, although there is greater complexity relating to tribal fluidity (through marriage and kinship) and the different territoriality of Indigenous society. Aboriginal communities continue to live in the Fairfield region, maintaining connections with country

[18] Taken from the SEIFA 'Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage' (IRSD) which measures overall extent of disadvantage by looking at the economic and social conditions of people and households. Low index scores indicate higher levels of disadvantage; higher index scores indicate less disadvantage (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023).

(Goodall & Cadzow, 2009, p. 132). The Cabrogal are the historic clan of the Darug people whose lands are around Cabramatta Creek. Following the Appin Massacre, which decimated the Dharawal people, Aboriginal people continued to live for the next 150 years on their traditional homelands, including in camps in and along the rivers and creeks of the region, up until the 1960s (Gapps, 2010, pp. 146-156).[19]

From the 1790s to the late 1800s, the south western region was a government cattle pasture, and land grants were not permitted. However, after 1809 the region's western border experienced land grants and small farms began to appear. By 1830, minor infrastructure and town settlement began to develop in the area including the first roads, small farms, estates, and a local pub. The Lansdowne Bridge was built in 1836, providing much needed overland travel across the Prospect Creek to south western Sydney, Fairfeld East, Yennora, and Villawood. Land holdings were increasingly divided up throughout the 1840s along the George's river, with wine production becoming a major industry (Gapps, 2010, pp. 141-192).

With the ending of convict transportation and the wool trade, large landholdings were frequently broken up to cover debts. The discovery of gold in the 1850s encouraged a short-lived population revival of the region, which supported the financing of a private railway line. The line was later purchased by the NSW government. Significant land speculation began at this time, marketed towards middle class and relatively wealthy persons. The building of the railway also allowed timber cutters to set up along its borders and deforest the area (Gapps, 2010, pp. 178-180).

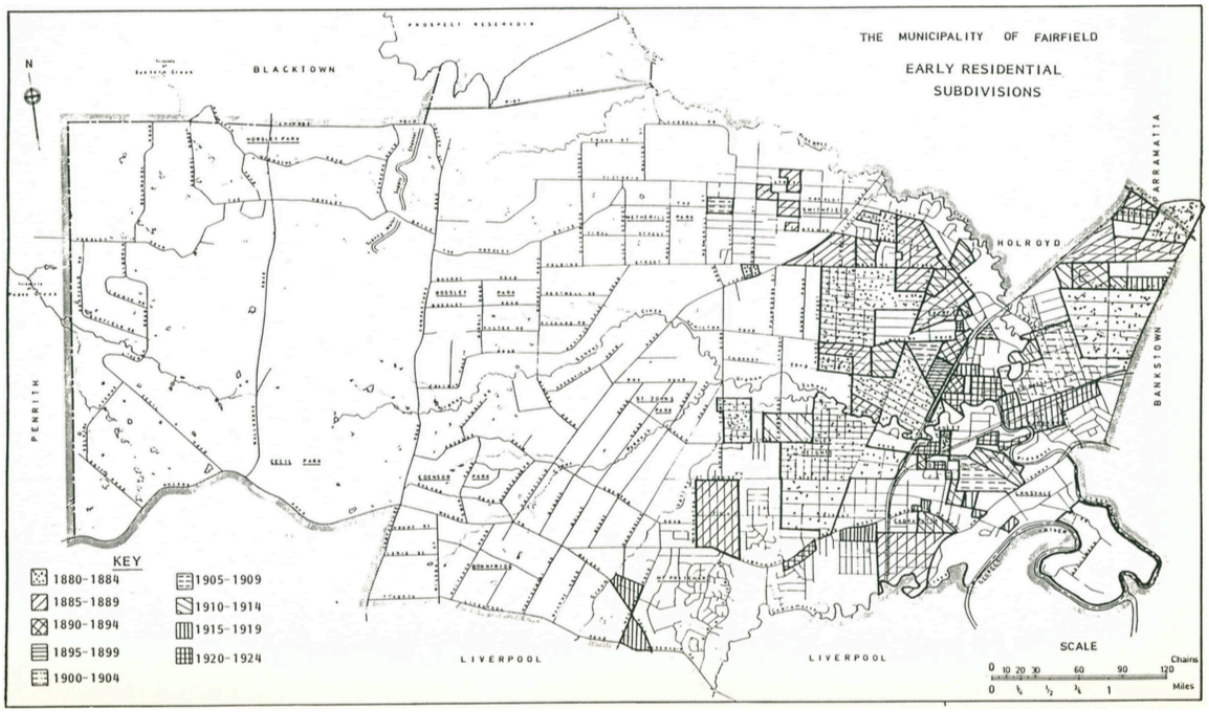
Fairfield at this time increasingly developed its agricultural-industry base which included, in 1878, the establishment of the Cumberland Fruit Growers' Association to promote the local fruit industry, and, later, to depopulate the fruit bat populations. The first non-British migrant populations also came at this time, including ethnic Chinese who worked in local market gardens for seasonable vegetables as the land was well suited for a range of agriculture and there were transport opportunities with the local railway. From the 1880s other nationalities began to arrive including Germans and groups from Southern Europe. Croatians and Serbians arrived to meet labour shortages in construction and mining. By 1891, around 1,400 persons lived in the area (Gapps, 2010, pp. 212-215).

Around this time, movements for local government emerged (see Chapter 5 for a discussion on local NSW government). In 1871, the Liverpool community founded a council that would include boundaries encompassing Fairfield. However, local business interests lobbied for a separate local organisation and were successful in 1888 with the linking of Smithfield and Fairfield with their own council. The first council sat in 1889 and was composed of local business interests: a vintner, an orchardist, and a hotelier and racehorse owner were represented. Small farms and market gardens continued to proliferate throughout the area (Gapps, 2010, pp. 216-217).

[19] For a complementary perspective, Yvonne Clayton (2006), a Wiradjiri woman, provides a compelling oral history detailing her experience living in the Bonnyrigg Housing Estate.

From the early 20th century urbanisation began to intensify, driven by the railway line linking Fairfield with Liverpool, and the continued subdivision of farming blocks into home-sized titles (see Figure 3). Italian migrants arrived in this period, and the returned service league and Cabra-Vale Diggers clubs would be established. In the 1920s Fairfield had a reputation for its pristine, 'English style' rivers bringing local tourism to the Sydney's edge. After the First World War (1914-1918), the soldiers' settlement programme and a railway extension bolstered further urbanisation and settlement (Gapps, 2010, pp. 260-262).

Figure 3 – *Subdivisions in Fairfield from 1880-1924*



Note. This map is a reproduction of an original 1924 subdivision map. From *Land Use in the Fairfield Rural-Urban Fringe* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Sydney], by Y. Wilson-Fuller, 1991, p.267. In the public domain.

Construction of dwellings continued, primarily of weatherboard and timber homes, throughout the period. Fairfield largely missed out on a boom in brick construction, with fibro and weatherboard housing remaining the dominant housebuilding materials. This housing was generally of poorer condition, with only partial electrification across the area for lighting. Cooking and heating were frequently fired by wood fuel and kerosene. The Great Depression (1929-1939) left many plots of land unsold as land prices collapsed. Factories began to open nearby in Granville and Merrylands, making use of the local railway, as '5-acre farms' were sold for gardens, poultry, and dairy farming. The period saw the arrival of Maltese farmers and continued Italian migration, with many working in local horticulture. The Second World War, with significant need for local farm goods, supported local agriculture (Gapps, 2010, pp. 227-268).

Fairfield After 1945

The relationship between migration and the structure of local employment is an important factor that continued to shape the region. While Fairfield's early history included the relatively slow arrival of diverse migrant communities and an agriculture-based economy, the post-war period witnessed rapid population growth that would define the modern character of the area. With improvements to both the railway network and local services, residential land subdivisions in the area would drive population growth from around 10,000 in 1940 to 60,000 by 1960. Population growth was facilitated by the rezoning of the western region from small land holdings to urban town centres. Policy makers had acknowledged a need to find cheap land and plentiful housing to deal with the population boom driven by migration. The population surge would support greater establishment of local manufacturing, with heavy industry emerging by 1949. Fairfield had many natural advantages for local industry with local railway access and relatively cheaper land. It was also close to major migrant hostels in the region, where many migrant communities would arrive in Sydney during and after the Second World War (Gapps, 2010 pp. 326-332).

Only a small portion of total land was reserved for industrial usage, but it would have significant bearing on the community. Farms were still a major feature throughout the period especially on the Western fringes. In the 1950s, factories continued to migrate into the area taking advantage of the lower cost of land. A munitions and chemical factory, opened during the war in Villawood, would attract similar industrial businesses. Between 1959 and 1962, 11,000 Housing Commission homes were created in the area, many prefabricated. The continuing population boom put increased pressure on vacant land to be used for suburban housing. The seemingly plentiful land would drive cheap housing construction, while increasing urbanisation and industrialisation drove pollution and degradation of the local water systems (Gapps, 2010, pp. 354-358).

Following the gradual dismantling of the White Australia policy from the 1960s, Fairfield welcomed the arrival or many migrant communities including: Vietnamese, Assyrians, South Americans, Ukrainians, Turkish, Lebanese, and Timor Leste (see Chapter 3). Land rezoning drove the establishment of major industrial estates, with factory employers tapping into the local, migrant heavy labour force (Gapps, 2010, pp. 357-410). By the 1980s, outworking had become a major means of employment for Indo-Chinese woman (i.e., working at home), which provided lower income but allowed work closer to family responsibilities. The economic restructuring of the 1980s led to the collapse of the garment industry, contributing to the broader rates of very high unemployment for Vietnamese men and women during the early 1990s. This led to and compounded existing levels of social deprivation and disadvantage (Gapps, 2010, pp. 411-454).

Throughout the post-war period suburbanisation of the west continued at a fast pace, absorbing diverse multicultural communities. Population growth was high in the 1980s, outpacing both Sydney and Australian averages. At the same time, Fairfield struggled with adequate service provisioning, with many of the city's poorest communities settling in and around the area. Local government felt pressured to release the remaining land for residential and industrial usages, contributing to the burden on existing services. Media amplified these challenges, providing negative commentary which labelled the community,

among other things, as 'ghettoised'. Stigmatisation did little to help the community which was battling the impacts of poverty and the rise of gangs and crime connected to drugs (Gapps, 2010 pp. 437-452).

Looking back over its long history, many community members have reflected on the trajectory of Fairfield's development. Cherished aspects of the region's heritage, such as its pristine waterways, bushlands, and regional qualities had been sacrificed to accommodate the demands of urbanisation and frequently delivered lower material standards of living (Gapps, 2010, pp. 455-461). The acceleration of population growth from the 1950s created sustained difficulties in urban planning and governance which were challenging to manage. Urbanisation had been pitched as a way for Fairfield to 'catch up' with the broader prosperity of the city but, decade on decade, the catch up has not yet materialised.[20]

The spirit of the community has not weakened in its determination to shape a brighter future. As the federal Independent Member for Fowler, Dai Le, articulated in her maiden speech:

> Our low socioeconomic profile eclipses our resilience, grit and determination. Our people and our families play a critical role in elevating Australia's economy. We are the backbone of the New South Wales economy, if not the country's economy … But, despite what has been thrown at us from mainstream media over the years, despite the lack of investment in our great city and despite the lack of resources to make life better for our hardworking citizens, our people soldier on, placing their hopes and dream on their children to study well, to do well, to live well and to give back to the community. (Le, 2022)

[20] A major exception to this line of argument has been the significant success of Cabramatta as an Asian cultural precinct in Greater Western Sydney. Drawing on the success of ethnic entrepreneurship (see Collins 2020), Cabramatta's business centre played a pivotal role in reframing public perceptions of the area as dangerous. Illustrating the substantial diversity of small business offerings, by 1988 the precinct comprised:

> "…bakeries, butcheries (at least 20), cake shops, children's clothiers, confectioneries, arts and crafts, dress materials and fabrics, bridal wear shops, adult clothing retailers and manufactures, electrical goods suppliers, fish markets (6), general food stores, take-away foods (10 shops), fruit shops (12), many groceries, hair and beauty salons (10), herbalists (15), jewellers, laundries, newspaper proprietors, newspaper publishers, delicatessens and food importers and manufacturers. There were 30 medical practitioners, 15 dentists, several physiotherapists, over 20 accountants, several land agents, and… travel agencies as it became possible for Vietnamese and Chinese to revisit South-east Asia. (Burnley, 2001, as cited in Collins, 2007, pp.74-75)

Argument of the Thesis and Chapter Outlines

The method of analysis for the thesis involved a detailed exploration of the SEIFA data from the 2021 Census to unpack the demographic aspects of the Fairfield case study (Chapters 3 and 4). This exploration is coupled with federal government document and programme analysis to understand perspectives of key policy makers and critical institutions. Theoretical aspects of spatial political economy are applied to each of the chapters, complemented by supporting literatures. Collectively, this approach supports a grounded understanding of the underpinning demographic data, informed by policy publications, helping to substantiate the central investigation of the thesis by providing a multilayered approach to the Fairfield case study.

The question examined throughout this thesis is: **'Why did Fairfield become the most disadvantaged local government area in New South Wales?'**[21] To answer the thesis question, each of the next five chapters focus on discrete aspects and solutions to achieve a robust understanding of persistent disadvantage and its potential response. Untangling each of the major planks of this question, contributes to a better understanding of how institutions, geography, and history shaped emergent outcomes, and the potential to respond to these challenges through place-based policy options. Each of the argument chapters[22] is structured around three core elements:

i) Engagement with the **relevant theoretical literature** and **historical context**
ii) Analysis of **key policy documents** and **programs**
iii) Application of theory, relevant data, and policy documentation to the **specific elements of the Fairfield case study**

The thesis comprises of three parts. Part one, *Definitions* (Chapters 1 and 2) outlines the problem of persistent disadvantage as a subject of inquiry for spatial political economy. Part two, *Challenges* (Chapters 3 and 4) explains the interactivity of the main drivers underpinning persistent disadvantage in Fairfield. Finally, *Solutions* (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) identifies an approach to responding to the challenges, concluding with the major findings.

An outline of the overall argument of the thesis is as follows. Over decades, Fairfield has experienced sustained levels of humanitarian resettlement in large concentrations. As cohorts, these communities are particularly vulnerable, especially in their first years following arrival where language, skill recognition, and employment have major impacts on longer-term outcomes. Limited spatial and occupational mobility, especially for humanitarian entrant background women, limit the quality of work they can access and their labour force participation rates. Compounding matters, Fairfield has a lower-skilled, manufacturing and warehousing dependent local labour market, with very high unemployment levels compared to Sydney averages. Functionally, the labour market is segmented, leaving Fairfield's population with lower access to the city's higher quality jobs.

[21] As discussed, Fairfield frequently ranks at the top of the SEIFA IRSD list, suggesting sustained relative disadvantage in the area. Fairfield was ranked first (i.e., was the most disadvantage Local Government Area) in NSW at the time of the 2021 Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023).
[22] Excludes the conclusion chapter (Chapter Seven).

Taken together, these aspects have created an environment where vulnerable, culturally diverse populations are highly exposed to employment precariousness, lowering their social mobility opportunities and contributing over time to the persistent disadvantage. Successive financial and social crises, including the 1990s recession and COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2023), have only served to exacerbated and deepen this dynamic of persistent disadvantage.

Humanitarian settlement is the first core aspect of persistent disadvantage discussed in Chapter Three of the thesis. The humanitarian migration and settlement system determines the scale and composition of humanitarian settlement by location across Australia and can be considered a central system directly shaping outcomes within Fairfield. Australia's current immigration system is largely dominated by skilled immigration, which has meant that humanitarian entrant policy coordination rarely features as part of the federal public discussions on immigration settings. Humanitarian settlement policy has other key dimensions for the Government. The policy framework is entwined with Australia's role in the rules-based order and is thereby a means to project geo-strategic influence in the region and in the world system. Fairfield has a long history of humanitarian settlement in the post-war period including European migrants after the Second World War, Indochinese[23] communities following the end of the Vietnam War (1955-75), and more recently Assyrian[24] communities during the Syrian Civil War (2011-24) and related conflicts.

The next major component to consider is the local labour market in Fairfield, discussed in Chapter Four. Australia's national labour market changed fundamentally between the Second World War and the 1970s as the full-employment economy was lost to the stagflation crisis, bringing with it high and sustained unemployment. These changes came with an increasing decline in lower-skilled jobs, especially manufacturing. The remaining manufacturing industrial system out migrated to the outer suburbs of Australian cities. In Sydney, Smithfield industrial precinct being a core example of this process of outmigration (an area at the northern border of Fairfield). The issue of job to skill mismatch has persisted in the Western suburbs, where there continues to be too few jobs for both professionals and lower skilled workers. Major projects, such as the Western Sydney Airport and the development of Parramatta city, have frequently promised but not provided a clear and inclusive roadmap for Fairfield. The legacy of the 1990s recession and generally poorer labour market opportunities have created less work, both in quality and quantity. Clearly, migration and employment are critical components of Fairfield's social disadvantage specificity.

In Chapter Five, the Federal Financial Relations system, also known as the relationship between the federal government, the state and territories, and local governments, is discussed as a major compounding factor. Known as Vertical Fiscal Imbalance, the Federal Government collects more revenue than it needs to govern its primary policy

[23] The term 'Indochinese' is used throughout the thesis to refer to humanitarian entrants from the mid-1970s, who came to Australia following the collapse of non-communist political systems in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos (c.f., Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, 1982, pp. 1-2).

[24] Due to the availability of existing scholarship, the thesis focuses on Assyrian humanitarian settlement in Fairfield. However, it is respectfully noted that there is a growing demand for recognition of a broader Assyrian Chaldean Syriac (ACS) identity (see Hanish, 2008, p. 43-44).

responsibilities, requiring extensive transfers to states to maintain their delivery responsibilities. Local government, despite their strong community interface, lack constitutional recognition and the revenue powers to adequately drive systemic change. A cooperative federation, where all three levels of government work together to propose nationally consistent solutions is a major road to change for disadvantaged communities. However, weak fiscal positions will continue to act as a barrier to reform and must be overcome.

Extending upon these insights, in Chapter Six I argue that place-based policy is the key to coordinating and responding to the challenges. Place-based policy complements universal services, which have not delivered systemic change, by working with communities to build co-designed solutions. Place-based approaches have a broader application as policy interventions have influenced areas such as city planning, housing policy, early childhood development and First Nations self-determination. The federal government has a long history in place-based policy design and delivery. With its nation shaping capability, the federal government is uniquely situated to work with the community, state, and local governments to shape lasting change.

This thesis did not discount the possibility of other solutions contributing to solving the challenges of persistent disadvantage. It is acknowledged that cross-cutting policy settings in health, education, transport, housing, justice, and other systems can all contribute to building better lives in communities. The thesis, however, argued that Fairfield would benefit from a sustained, place-based intervention framework that focused specifically on the linkages between humanitarian settlement with necessary skills, language, and employment. Working with community leaders would also help retain a broader socioeconomic range of persons from leaving the community.

Fairfield is a unique and dynamic environment where communities shape their own future. The approach taken throughout this thesis cannot adequately account for the lived-experience of community in Fairfield. It is hoped and endorsed, however, that future studies should contribute to further illuminate qualitative and experiential strength-based narratives of community so that they can continue to tell their stories. Putting Fairfield's communities at the centre of decision making is critical to challenging the persistence of disadvantage.

Chapter Two: Persistent Disadvantage

In this chapter, the conceptual foundations for understanding persistent disadvantage in Australian communities will be further refined. To do this, the chapter articulates spatial political economy as a framework for understanding the linkage between disadvantage and distributional inequality. Starting with an analysis of the need for normative foundations for disadvantage policy, disadvantage will be explored in relation to agency, capability, and equity. Next, disadvantage is contextualised in relation to poverty measurements and quantitative measurement with SEFIA. Following Stilwell (2019), disadvantage is positioned as an issue of inequality and distribution. Finally, an exploration of the social intersections of disadvantage will be identified and applied to Fairfield.

This chapter supports a robust means of seeing disadvantage as a political economic issue. It informs a way of seeing persistent disadvantage as a tangible, existent challenge, which will inform subsequent chapters in their focus on: humanitarian settlement (Chapter 3), labour market segmentation (Chapter 4), federal financial relations (Chapter 5), and place-based policy (Chapter 6).

Normative Economics, Egalitarianism, and the Capability Approach

Critics may argue that disadvantage is unavoidable and a natural outcome of economic activity. By extension then, social inequity would not in itself be an issue; rather, a result and disadvantage then merely an *outcome*. To respond to this claim, it is important to unpack and demonstrate that disadvantage-based interventions necessarily require a normative understand and approach. This approach aligns with the concept of a moral economy, where economics "is about how we meet the responsibilities for others as well as our own needs" (Sayer, 2000, p. 99). Bolstering normative dimensions of disadvantage can also support notional pursuits of egalitarianism and a capability informed intervention approach.

Society requires that people enter economically defined relationships taking a variety of forms, both paid and unpaid.[25] A prominent example helps demonstrate the importance and potential inevitability of normative questions in the context of economic relationships. The division of labour is an important classical concept in political economy. It can be defined as the specialisation and separation of employment into separate roles to undertake tasks required to deliver an output, key components of economic growth, and development (Groenewegen, 2008, p. 517).

The division of labour was a core concept for Adam Smith, supporting his explanation of per capita income increases and the overall growth of the economy. Smith (1776/2003) presented a nuanced and seemingly contradictory view of the division of labour. On the one hand, in *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith reflected optimistically on both the moral and intellectual impacts on specialised work in an increasingly complex and extended divisions

[25] The economics of unpaid work is a developed field that explored issues of the gender division of labour, and the relationship between the Global North, Global South, and unequal exchange (Antonopoulos & Hirway, 2010; Ricci, 2019).

of labour, such as within factories. Smith argued that the division of labour increased productivity through improved dexterity, increased time saving and technological adoption (Groenewegen, 2008, pp. 519-520). On the other hand, Smith suggested that the division of labour could have other negative moral and psychological effects:

> [The factory worker's] dexterity at his own particular trade seems … to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues. But in every improved and civilised society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it. (pp. 987-988)

As mentioned, Smith positioned the division of labour as the central element determining living standards in society (West, 1964, p. 23). Yet, he understood division of labour as a necessity to raise living standards, while having significant consequences for individuals and broader industrial society (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 127).

This discussion serves to illustrate that economic development and growth are not zero-sum, and that the outcomes of economic activity are complex. They may inadvertently lead to undesirable outcomes, including undermining aspects of the living standards in society.[26] In addition, this observation supports that not all benefit equally in the outcomes of the economy. For this reason, it can be argued that equity and efficiency must be considered as key questions at the heart of economic enquiry. The debate over these core considerations form the foundations of questions in welfare economics[27] and theories of distributive justice.

Assuming economic activity has social consequences, then the following question would be do the state or other institutional actors have a responsibility to offer accountable policy responses? As mentioned, if economic outcomes should not be interfered with, it remains debatable whether economics should have an advocative role in achieving social outcomes. Stilwell (2019) identified this, writing that while mainstream economics treats 'normative questions' around distribution as outside of the realm of economics, adding that, "This is unsatisfactory, however, because distributional issues are, by their nature, entwined with ethical judgements … engagements with ethical issues is integral to the political economy of inequality" (p. 35).

If it is accepted that there is a normative responsibility emerging from economic outcomes, especially for powerful institutional actors, there is then a need for a working definition of what this style of intervention should look like. The obvious contender is egalitarianism.

---

[26] For example, these questions also interested critical geographers. The most famous early study was Engels' (1844) analysis of working-class living conditions in Manchester, which would influence the development of geography by focusing on the process of urbanisation, theorising cities, and the structural underpinnings of working-class communities (Royle, 2021, p. 166). What would become known as radical geography, and later critical geography, was developed further by new social movements from the late 1960s as identity groups came to build experientially informed accounts of the urban experience (Warf 2010, pp. 617-620).

[27] Welfare economics considers which policies lead to optimal outcomes at the societal level, including questions around competition and optimisation, the impacts of markets and competition, and the measurement of social welfare (Feldman, 2018, p. 14526).

Wolff and De-Shalit (2007), in their text *Disadvantage*, offer useful guidance on the principle of egalitarianism, building on the capability approach as a theoretical framework for alleviating and improving experiences of disadvantage. They defined the egalitarian principle as aiming to, "identify the worst off and [taking] appropriate steps so that their position can be improved" (Wolff & De-Shalit, 2007, p. 4). Their approach forwards that the most disadvantaged people should be prioritised in responses targeting disadvantage. This still raises the question of what the criteria should be in pursuing greater social equity.

Across debates three main metrics have been used by economists to measure efforts towards forms of equity. 'Resource-based' measurements advocate for equity of material endowments. These are popular due to their comparative ease of measurement. Next, 'welfare-based' measurements seek to find an equalisation of welfare and/or personal utility maximisation at the society level. Both approaches come into difficulties in accounting for natural or cultivated abilities (i.e., talents) and differences in tastes (i.e., voluntary preferences) (Sen, 1979, pp. 207-209). The third, and arguably the most persuasive, is the 'capability-based' measurement, which focuses on the maximisation of the preconditions of agency. It is persuasive for the following reasons. As Sen (1979) argued, resource equality cannot account for the specific and different needs of various people limiting its utility as an approach. Yet more individualised accounts of welfare-based equality are too subjective and cannot resolve the fact that those with most expensive preferences may desire more goods than those that have less. As discussed, capability focused accounts provide a solution to these limitations.

Capability-based measurements are sometimes referred to as relating to the maximisation of 'functioning', which emphasises the pursuit of freedom (i.e., capability) individuals need to live a life of self-actualisation. Capability measurements are persuasive because they place emphasis on individual agency which removes the challenges associated with talent and elevates personal preferences in settings where the person has the free ability to make personal choices (Brighouse & Swift 2008, p.797). The capability measurement is also compatible with multidimensional poverty measurement.

Another way of looking at egalitarianism through the lens of disadvantage is comparing monist (singular) and pluralist accounts (Wolff & De-Shalit, 2007, p. 21). This debate hinges on whether there can be any objective criteria for measuring disadvantage on a singular defined index (i.e., monist accounts). The alternative is the pluralist account, which identifies multiple co-existing experiences of disadvantage and is more sympathetic to personal experiences. However, at its most extreme, a purely subjective theory of disadvantage would fail to provide any clear set of principles to identify the activities required of policy makers within existing institutional settings. Clearly there is need for an approach offering a middle ground. The capability approach offers at least a partial solution to this dilemma.

Amartya Sen (1979), who popularised capability theory, observed that goods-based models may not in themselves be able to explain what is particularly useful between people.[28] For

[28] Sen's approach owed significant intellectual debt to the writings of John Rawls (1971, pp. 73-80), including his concept of 'fair equality of opportunity', in which any persons of equal talent and capabilities should have the same chance of succeeding in attaining social goods.

example, a level of income may not be able to buy all the things needed by every group or cohort of people (p. 203). A broader egalitarian approach needs to pay attention to distribution which enables the capabilities of a variety of people, including minority groups (Sen, 2008, pp. 20-22). Ultimately capability approaches are about "what people are actually able to do and to be" (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 33). This definition factors in conceptions of subjective personal utility, with socially specific (objective) needs.

Building on Sen's work, Nussbaum (2006) contended that there is a need for capability defined by 'primary goods', supporting people to live autonomous lives, and, in turn, helping institutions target the supports all citizens to attain a benchmark level of capability. For Nussbaum, beyond considerations of wealth and income, primary goods include access to adequate care and "health care, work conditions, and emotional well-being" (p. 75). In this respect, the capability approach offers genuine advantages by delivering multidimensionality, personal freedom with consideration for observable outcomes (Hick & Burchardt, 2016, p.88). It is of direct relevance to the Fairfield case study, as it helps identify the conditions of a connected Federal Financial Relations system (discussed in Chapter 5) and the activation of place-based policy (Chapter 6). It also serves as a means to identify the capabilities needed by community to flourish and overcome the impacts of disadvantage.

Implications of the Henderson Reports

Having outlined the normative, egalitarian, and capability-based principles it is important to explore the history of poverty analysis in Australia. From the late 1960s, researchers and community organisations became increasingly conscious that poverty was persisting in certain communities and across households, despite the emergent prosperity ushered in during the post-war period. This interest culminated in the early 1970s with Ronald Henderson (1974, 1975; Henderson et al., 1970) leading an influential nationwide inquiry relating to income poverty and income adequacy.

Henderson's reports offered a structural analysis of poverty with radical solutions. For example, the 1975 report recommended the introduction of a Guaranteed Minimum Income (GMI), raised from the revenue generated by growth in the economy. It also argued for raising of access to employment for citizens, while lifting the floor of social welfare payments to provide greater income adequacy (Regan & Stanton, 2019, p.61). The report clearly identified poverty as a socially determined problem: "poverty is not just a personal attribute; it arises out of the *organisation of society*" (my italics, Henderson, 1975, p.1). Many of these debates, including the socially determined nature of poverty, a minimum benchmarking of adequate income, and the desirability of full employment, remain relevant public policy questions concerning redistribution efforts to combat disadvantage.

The legacy of the Henderson reports was far reaching, most notably leading to the establishment of Australia's first attempt to define a poverty line. Henderson set the poverty line at 56.5 per cent of the average weekly wage,[29] accounting for the minimum wage (plus family allowances) required to support a family of four people's "food, clothing and shelter" (Johnson, 1987, p. 46). The calculated poverty line for individuals and families

[29] In 1973, this was $62.70 per week (Johnson, 1987, p. 46).

would also support advice to the Australian government on reforms to the welfare system (Whitlam, 1985, p. 635). The Henderson reports set the stage for income-based measurements of poverty which would be dissected and responded to over decades and influence the broader discussion around disadvantage. Henderson has continued to inform discussions around poverty, including demands for greater distributional equity that are relevant for considerations of persistent disadvantage.

Persistent Disadvantage

While Henderson helped define the measurement of poverty indicators, there still were significant gaps in identifying and codifying disadvantage, including over the longer term. The Productivity Commission's report, *Deep and Persistent Disadvantage in Australia* (McLachlan et al., 2013), represented a high watermark for attempting to demonstrate multidimensional accounts of disadvantage, which built upon the legacy of the Henderson reports, also informed by the capability approach. The report acknowledged that there could be no single definition of disadvantage, with income-based measurements being limited in their ability to capture the resources, needs, and circumstance that contribute to disadvantage (pp. 31-56).

Drawing on Sen, McLachlan et al. (2013) argued that 'impoverished lives', rather than income, should be the focus of analysis of disadvantage.[30] This focus also allowed the authors to look at deprivation, defined as: "exclusion from the minimum acceptable standards of living in one's own society because of inadequate access to necessary items" (McLachlan et al., 2013, p. 5). The influence of primary goods theory, where necessary items underpin capability, is evident (Nussbaum, 2006, p. 69). The other major concept used by the authors is 'social exclusion', which considers income, financial, and material deprivations and their interactivity with access to "participation and social connection" (McLachlan et al., 2013, p. 5).

Having drawn out important concepts, such as social exclusion and life impoverishment, it is important to also understand what *persistent* disadvantage is. The effects of disadvantage are most impactful when experienced over a long duration, due to its compounding and scarring effects on life opportunities. Disadvantage occurs for a range of people throughout their life cycle but, in most instances, it is only a temporary event.[31] Disadvantage is persistent when it does not resolve within a short period of time, usually 1-2 years. For some, bouts of poverty resolve and then reoccur, posing similar challenges emerging from persistency. Persistent disadvantage can be exacerbated by impacts of cumulative causation, where disadvantages in specific areas can spill over and deepen in other areas (c.f., Myrdal, 1957, pp. 30-37).[32]

[30] There are three major demographic groups to consider when looking at disadvantage over the long-term: individuals (i.e., those who experience personal disadvantage over a long period), communities (i.e., distinct geographic communities), and generations (through intergenerational disadvantage; i.e., protracted disadvantage experienced from one generation to the next) (McLachlan et al., 2013, p. 2).
[31] The measurement of time associated with periods of disadvantage has been referred to by the Productivity Commission as a 'poverty spell' (McLachlan et al., 2013, p. 20).
[32] An example could be poor mental health leading to lower employment outcomes, effecting the developmental vulnerability of children within the family context (Myrdal, 1957, pp. 30-37).

Once disadvantage becomes persistent it takes on new qualities as a distinct social pattern, shaping the distributional outcomes of those who experience disadvantage over the longer term, leading to broader social problems including social segmentation and exclusion. There is also propensity for certain groups to experience deep social exclusion, for instance those on long term social assistance, the unemployed, First Nations communities, persons with health issues and disabilities, single parents, and those with lower educational attainment (McLachlan et al., 2013, pp. 46-50).

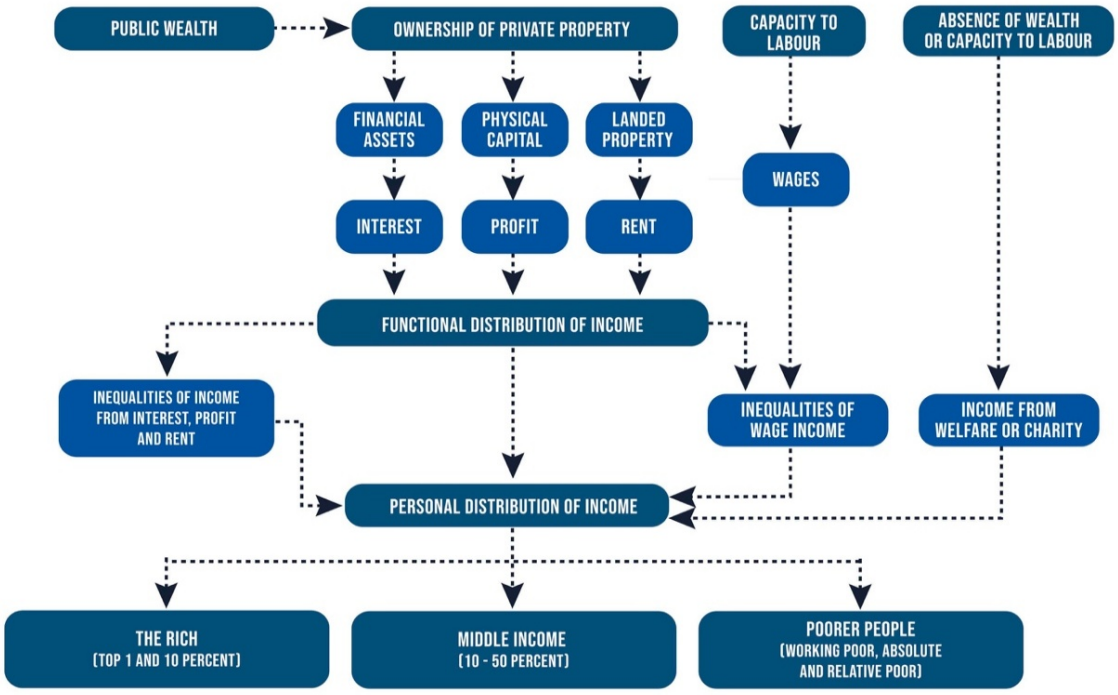
Disadvantage as an Outcome of Unequal Distribution

So far, the chapter has established the need for a normative economics which advocates for a form of egalitarianism that includes an approach to understanding disadvantage and exploring options for application of capability approaches. Taking a spatial political economy perspective, it is worth considering the broader historical changes to income and distribution as a critical factor shaping life chances. This requires a focused look at income and wealth inequality, as well the social intersections shaping advantage and disadvantage.

Stilwell (2019) provided a distributional model for understanding income and wealth inequality (see Figure 4). Disadvantage can be understood as an outcome of the unequal distribution of income and wealth within the economy. Public wealth (public sector assets) coupled with private property (financial, physical, and landed property) are the major non-wage sources of income. These are divided into interest, profit, and rent. On the other side is income gained from labour in the form of wages. Those that cannot generate income from one of these sources must rely on social service transfers (i.e., social welfare) and/or charities.

The total outcomes of these distributions lead to the major social groups of the affluent, middle income, and poorer households. There are broader patterns at play in considering the issue of inequality as it relates to income distribution including a sharp deterioration of real wages for workers since the 1970s across the developed world (Stilwell, 2019, p. 106). The reasons for this decline are complex but can be attributed to the global impacts of technology change contributing to larger firms adopting capital intensive practices and offshoring labour-intensive industry (Kheng et al., 2024, p. 1908).

Figure 4 – *Political Economic Factors Underpinning Distribution*

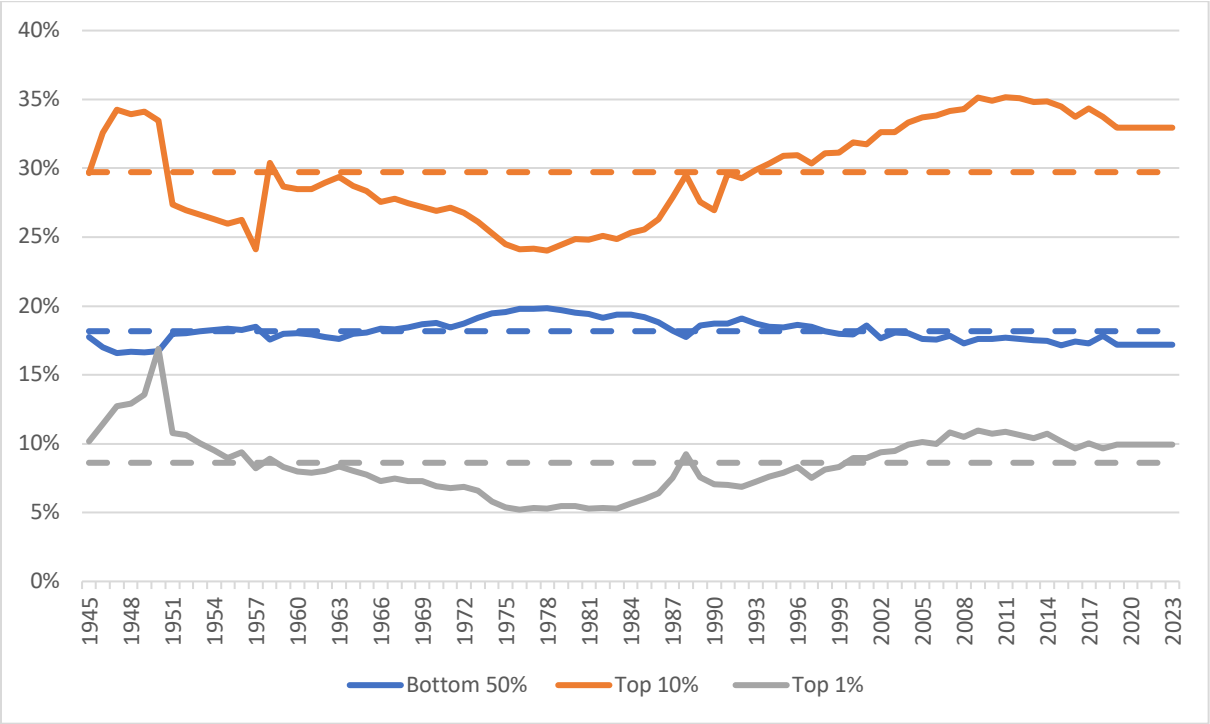


Note. Adapted from *The Political Economy of Inequality*, by F. Stilwell, 2019, p.12, Polity Press.

Income Inequality

Figure 5 demonstrates some of the broader trends at play around pre-tax income distribution. It is evident that the bottom 50 per cent of income earners peaked in their share of total national income, from 1975-1980 at 20 per cent, with a gradual but consistent decline to 17 per cent by 2023. Over the same period, income earners in the top 10 per cent saw their income rise from 25 per cent to 33 per cent of the total share. For the top 1 per cent of income earners, their share of the national income doubled over the same period, from 5 per cent in 1980 to around 10 per cent. Effectively, those in the bottom half have broadly gone backwards since the 1980s, when looking at the share of national income.

Figure 5 – *Share of Pre-Tax Income in Australia (1945-2023)*



Note. Averages are represented by the dotted lines for each income group. Adapted from *World Inequality Database* (Version 2025) [Dataset], by World Inequality Lab, 2025.

Broadly, social democratic policies have fallen out of favour in recent decades, led by the more insidious effects of the combination of globalisation, financialisaton, neoliberalism, urbanisation, and technological change (Stilwell, 2019, p.21). These factors are driving a higher income share to capital and landowners as well as top income wage earners. Together, these trends are disproportionately impacting already vulnerable and low-income communities in Australia and abroad.

Wealth Inequality

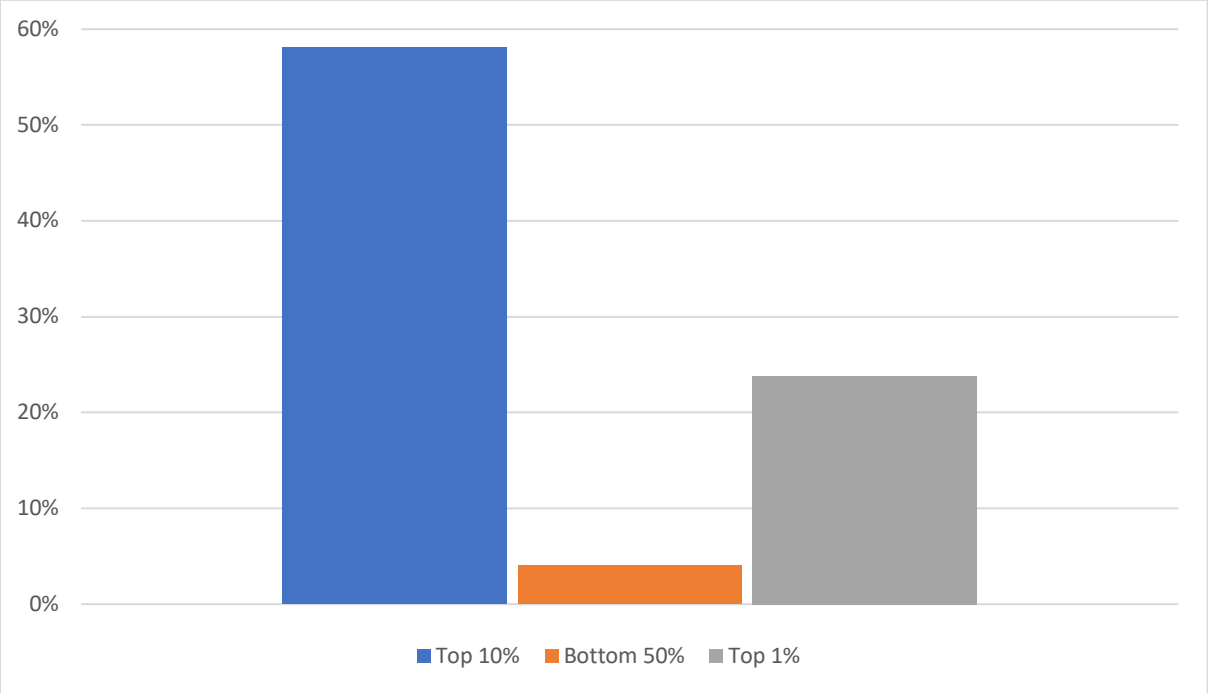
Evidence indicates a relatively unequal distribution of wealth between cohorts in Australia (see Figure 6).[33] The top 10 per cent owned 58 per cent of wealth in 2023, with the top 1 per cent owning 24 per cent of total net personal wealth. In contrast the bottom 50 per cent only owned about 4 per cent of national wealth. Between 1995 and 2023 these distributional shares remained relatively stable, suggesting wealth distributional trends are structural and persistent across Australian society.

These findings are elaborated in research published under the *Inequality in Australia 2024* report (Davidson et al., 2024). According to this work, wealth inequality is largely driven by

[33] The Gini co-efficient, a measurement of wealth and income distribution, where a lower number representing more equal distribution, is frequently used to assess inequality at the national level. In 2019-20, Australia's income inequality for disposable income was at 0.324, the 17th highest among the 34 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations. Wealth inequality was higher at 0.611, placing Australia the 19th highest in the OECD (See Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d.-a).

owner-occupied dwellings (38%); share, business, and other financial wealth (23%); superannuation (18%); investment properties (17%); and other non-financial wealth (5%). Some of the broader trends driving wealth formation are wages earned throughout the employment life cycle, which have the largest effect on the ability to generate income and personal savings. These effects tend to compound over people's lives as they age and accumulate personal savings.

Figure 6 – *Net Personal Wealth in Australia (2023)*



Note. Shares of personal wealth remained relatively stable across wealth cohorts between 1995-2023. Adapted from *World Inequality Database* (Version 2025) [Dataset], by World Inequality Lab, 2025.

There are troubling trends in relation to growing inequality. First, younger cohorts today have a higher rate of inequality within their peer group compared to previous generations, with a major determinant likely being intergenerational transfers from their parents.[34] In addition, over the last 20 years, wealth has continued to concentrate in older, wealthier households. Younger households throughout the same time saw their wealth grow much slower, accompanied by a faster rise in within generational inequality (Davidson et al., 2024, p.20).

Redistributive Policy

As has been argued, addressing disadvantage requires a form of normative redistributive policy. If inequality, and by extension disadvantage, are a product of the interaction of political economic factors of land, labour, and capital, a broad redistributive agenda would address this as a central concern. Stilwell (2019, p.193) championed a broad redistributive

[34] Sometimes referred to in the literature as 'the bank of mum and dad' (see Toft & Friedman, 2021).

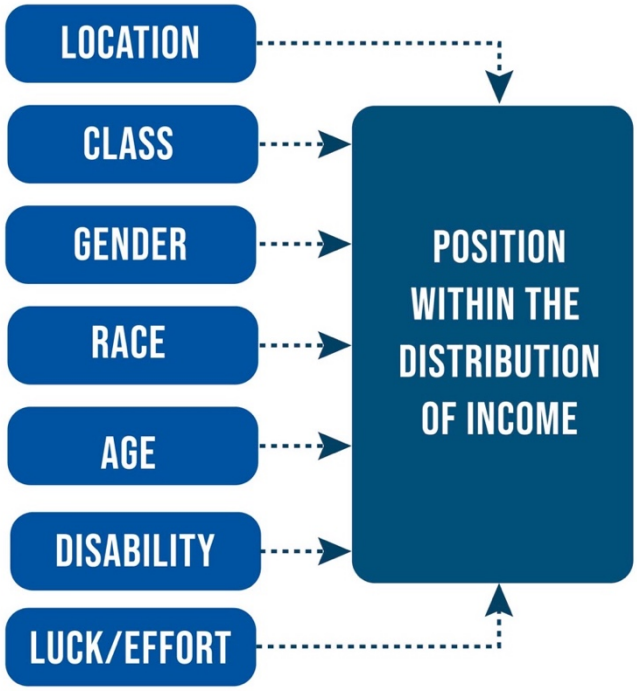
agenda across portfolios to help tackle the complexities posed by inequality, what he labelled 'pre-distribution' policy. There are three kinds of policy supported:

- *Raising the floor* – efforts to improve the standards and overall quality of work in society. Policy ideas include job guarantees, raising and better regulating the minimum wage across industries, and exploring opportunities around a basic income for all citizens.
- *Lowering the ceiling* – by capping executive remunerations, exploring alternative corporate enterprise structures that are more equitable (i.e., worker cooperatives), and extending the commons of public ownership to support sovereign wealth.
- *Equality of opportunity and social mobility policy* –include a range of policies that influence opportunity and mobility including policy which minimises any form of discrimination across social intersections outlined in Figure 7, early education, and school level policy, as well as urban and regional policies.

Social Intersection Model of Inequality

Income and wealth are major elements underpinning the unequal distribution of economic resources. Understanding how the social pattern of income distribution is determined can help to better understand where and why persistent disadvantage is generated in certain community settings. The specific factors predicting the pattern of advantage and disadvantage are beholden to cumulative causation; that is, "they tend to be *multiplicative*" (Stilwell, 2019, p. 89). Drawing on Stilwell, specific social intersections that contribute and interact to influence the overall pattern of distribution outlined above (see Figure 7) can be located.

Figure 7 – Social Intersections of Economic Inequality



Note. This model highlights factors predicting the pattern of the distribution of income rather than casual factors. Adapted from *The Political Economy of Inequality*, by F. Stilwell, 2019, p.72, Polity Press.

- *Location* – Australia has some of the starkest levels of urban and regional inequality in the world. For this reason, postcodes are a major predictor of social opportunity. Remote and very remote communities, as well as large regional towns, feature significant concentrations of disadvantage. While cities are some of the most advantaged places in the country (especially Sydney), many outer-metropolitan communities can face significant disadvantages.

- *Class* – There are multiple, contested definitions of what defines social class and how it should be applied in social scientific analysis (Barbeau et al., 2004; Brannon, 2017; Goudeau & Croizet, 2017). This thesis explores class as a product of the factors influencing and predicting place in the distribution of income, as discussed above (Stilwell, 2019, p.19). A substantial focus is around how access to occupation (including lack of access to employment) shape the formation of disadvantage. In turn, this impacts access to resources, shaping lifetime social opportunity and mobility.

- *Gender* – Women in general, and in Australian society, continue to face significant barriers to achieving parity with their male counterparts when it comes to income and wealth. There are still substantial 'motherhood penalties' associated with time taken out of the labour market to raise children (Casarico & Lattanzio, 2023, p. 1).

Unpaid housework is still disproportionately undertaken by women. Women also face significant safety inequalities as domestic and family violence continues to be a systemic crisis disproportionately affecting women (Foley & Cooper, 2021, p.464).[35]

- *Race and ethnicity* – Australia is composed of diverse multicultural communities, with many facing a range of social and cultural barriers, including underrepresentation in leadership roles and within research data (Marcus et al., 2022, p. 8). Language barriers and discrimination are contributing factors to significant socio-economic disparities (Stilwell, 2019, p. 83-84). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities also navigate substantial discrimination and experiences of institutional racism (see Elias & Paradies, 2021; Dawson et al., 2021).

- *Age* – In general, younger and older people are more vulnerable to disadvantage as they are less likely to derive their livelihood from stable working income. The 'not in education, employment, and training' (NEET) group has been a major focus of policy makers in recent years (Bynner & Parsons, 2002, p. 289). Older women, in particular, have been one of the fastest growing cohorts of homeless persons in society, likely a result of age and gender disadvantaged compounding (Ervin et al., 2021, p. 1059). Intergenerational inequalities are another factor, with young generations facing greater challenges in securing full-time work and purchasing a family home, compared to older generations (Davidson et al., 2024, p.20).

- *Disability* – People with disability face substantial hurdles in accessing equitable levels of income, employment, and support, and being provided with adequate accessibility in their daily lives (see Areheart & Stein, 2014; Wood et al., 2014). Invisible disabilities (including mental illness) can pose other challenges, which may prohibit an adequate amount of support and the necessary recognition to allow people with disabilities to succeed on equal terms in employment (Brouwers, 2020, p.36).

- *Luck/Effort* – Effort is an important and major determinant of opportunities and life outcomes, having a clear bearing on upward social mobility in highly mobile countries like Australia. However, there are always many factors outside the direct control of individuals that can have major, and irreversible, impacts on life outcomes. An example provided by Stilwell (2019) is choosing the right profession at the right, historic time. Timing and luck can be major determinants of overall social mobility, and chances to overcome disadvantage (pp. 86-87).

[35] Members of the LGTBQIA+ community are also subject to a range of discriminations, including institutional discrimination and acts of violence (Casey et al., 2019, p. 1454).

The above discussion represents some of the critical factors influencing positional access within the distribution of income. Those that face disadvantage are more likely to have lower net wealth and less likely to occupy high status, high income with good working conditions. Applying this model to Fairfield will help understand how social intersections are critical factors at play in their experience of persistent disadvantage.

Measuring Complex Forms of Disadvantage in Australia

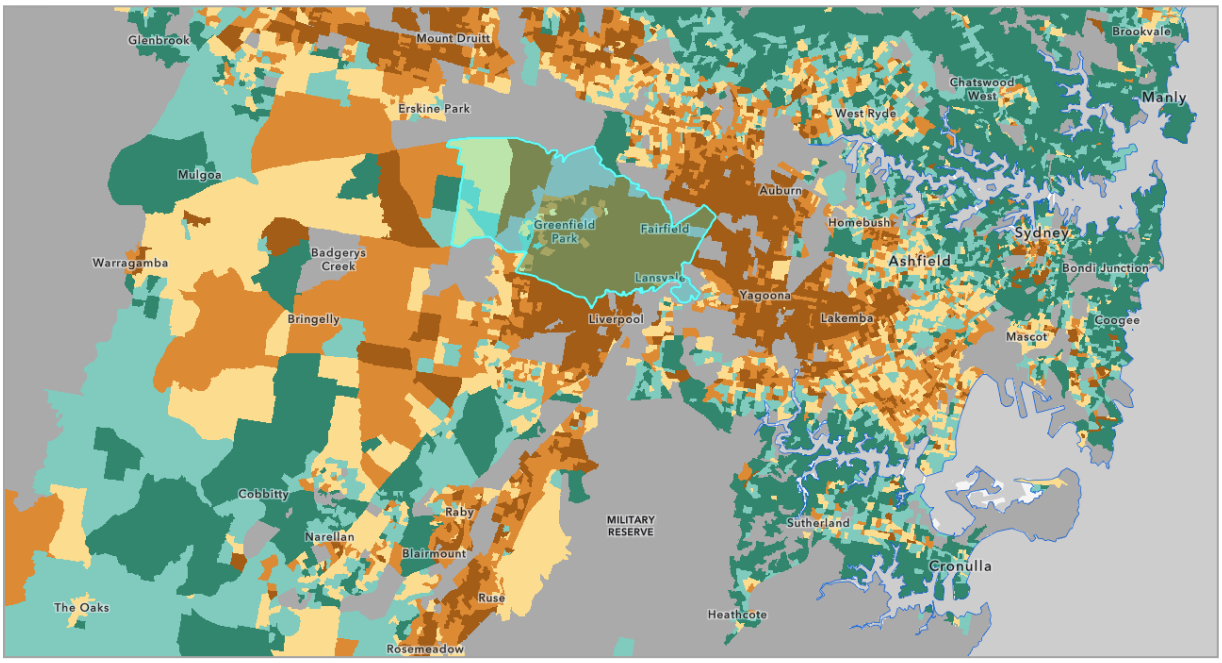
Having explored a range of conceptual models for understanding persistent disadvantage, this section applies them in the Fairfield setting. In Australia, there are two key multidimensional analyses for measuring disadvantage: the *Dropping off the Edge* (DotE) report (Tanton et al., 2021), and the Australian Bureau of Statistics' SEIFA.[36] These approaches take into account the complex and intersecting factors that influence disadvantage and provide a more fulsome basis to understand the problem. Both provide useful insights for understanding the specifics of persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

The Index of Relative Socio-Economic disadvantage (IRSD) is the main SEIFA index for indication of disadvantage, ranking all areas on a continuum from most to least disadvantaged, based on weighted variables derived from Census (see Figure 8). The IRSD uses the following variables (all in percentages of total population):

- **Low income** – People with an equivalised household income up to $25,999 per year.
- **Child in jobless household** – Families with children under 15 years of age, with no employed parents.
- **Lack of high school completion** – Persons who have a Year 11 attainment or lower.
- **Low rent householders** – Occupied dwelling costing less than $250 a week.
- **Unemployed** – Number of unemployed persons.

[36] The SEIFA (Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas) is released every five years as part of the Census. The most recent release (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023) uses the 2021 data to provide point-in-time perspective on locations of disadvantage across Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Figure 8 – *SEIFA Heatmap of Sydney*



Note. The map highlights the Fairfield LGA, which was NSW's most disadvantaged area according to the 2021 Census. The shading utilises the Index of relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) from the SEIFA index. Darker colours designate more disadvantaged areas (brown, the most disadvantaged, followed by orange and yellow), with light and darker shades of green designating lower disadvantage. This pattern illustrates that much of Sydney's disadvantage is concentrated in the Western Suburbs including the Central West (i.e., Fairfield), North-West (i.e., Mount Druitt), and South-West (i.e., Campbelltown). Adapted from *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2021,* by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023.

Other indicators contributing to IRSD include labourers and machinery drivers (occupation), need of social assistance (disability), single parent households, crowded homes, separated parents, no school education, lower skilled classification, lack of car ownership, and poor English-speaking abilities.

According to the SEIFA IRSD index, Fairfield has remained at the top of the most disadvantaged local government areas from 2011-21 (see Table 1). In 2021, Fairfield topped this chart for the first time, with several regional and remote towns also consistently featuring on the list. In the 2021 index, Canterbury-Bankstown and Cumberland, two Local Government Areas bordering Fairfield, also featured in the top 10 for the first time. This may suggest impacts emerging from the severity of the COVID-19 lockdowns as well as connected income and wealth effects in segmented labour markets (see Chapter 4; Tanton et al., 2021, p. 19). However, Fairfield's longstanding position near the top of the list indicates distinct, systemic factors at play.

Table 1 – *Most Disadvantaged Local Government Areas in NSW (2011-21)*

	2011	2016	2021
1	Brewarrina	Brewarrina	Fairfield
2	Central Darling	Central Darling	Brewarrina
3	Fairfield	Walgett	Central Darling
4	Walgett	Fairfield	Coonamble
5	Coonamble	Coonamble	Walgett
6	Kempsey	Kempsey	Kempsey
7	Wellington	Broken Hill	Cumberland
8	Richmond Valley	Richmond Valley	Glen Innes Severn
9	Broken Hill	Gilgandra	Broken Hill
10	Nambucca	Nambucca	Canterbury-Bankstown

Note. Grey shading indicates the ranking of the Fairfield local government area across the three census periods. Data adapted from *Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2021,* by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023.

The DotE report complements these insights using a domain-based measurement of disadvantage, the principle component approach (PCA). PCAs can construct new variables from inter-correlated variables, called 'principle components', from an existing data set to improve their comparability by representing these new variables as a pattern of similarity that can be mapped (Abdi & Williams, 2010). The advantage of the method in this context is that PCA is able to exclude weaker variables for understandings disadvantage. The PCA approach for DotE listed seven core domains (Tanton et al., 2021, pp. 22-24):

- **Social Distress** – Focuses on lack of access to services and lower abilities to participate in society. This indicator is also connected with social isolation and experience of mental illness.
- **Health** – Includes physical and psychiatric health as well as care access.
- **Community Safety** – Represents links between crime and disadvantage, including youth crime and juvenile convictions. It also includes family violence, child maltreatment, and prison admissions.
- **Economic** – Focuses on lack of income leading to a range of social distresses related to housing, unemployment, and other aspects required to live in a community.
- **Education** – Represents the level of education in a community. Higher education levels are associated with greater labour market participation and higher wages.
- **Lifetime Disadvantage** – Focuses on intergenerational disadvantage connected to teenage pregnancy and having an unemployed parent.
- **Environment** – Represents the impacts of climate and pollution as it affects disadvantaged locations.

These variables are consistent with multidimensional poverty measurements, taking into account income, resources, and social exclusion while also touching on other variables connected to well-being, such as environment quality and safety.

By identifying a full range of domains underpinning capacity to live a self-directed life, the IRSD index and DotE reports deliver a quantitative measurement responding to the

demands of the capability approach outlined by Sen (2008, pp. 20-22) and Nussbaum (2006, p.69). Beyond simple disadvantage metrics measuring material items and the level of income, the DotE report, in particular, helps identify potential primary goods related to health, education, environment, safety, and social inclusion. While the IRSD index is deficit (disadvantage) focused, it complements the DotE report by identifying the absence of a range of primary goods as well as correlated outcomes to underpin a model of multidimensional well-being. Together, they can help better understand the underlying dynamics of disadvantage in Fairfield.

The 2021 report found that 13 per cent of Statistical Areas level 2 (SA2s)[37] in NSW represented 55 per cent of disadvantage across all indicators with seven areas accounting for 11 per cent of the total disadvantage. Most of these locations were outside of Greater Sydney, with multilayered and persistent disadvantage highly represented in north and western NSW. Major challenges for areas experiencing multiple indicators of disadvantage include parental joblessness, family violence, and lower school attainment levels resulting in low attachment to the labour and skills system. There is a high level of persistence of disadvantage between study publication years (2015 & 2007), showing a consistent geographic and community profile of disadvantage across NSW (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008; 2013).

Fairfield is frequently identified on the multiple indicators of disadvantage list, representing a deeper form of disadvantage due to its cross-cutting character. This list identifies severely disadvantaged areas which are ranked in the top 5 per cent most disadvantaged across five or more distinct indicators; 73 distinct locations across the state fit this criterion. Several SA2s in Fairfield were towards the top of an indicator list of 8 or more indicators in the top 5 per cent of disadvantage, including: Fairfield; Cabramatta – Lansvale; Fairfield – East; and Fairfield – West (Tanton et al., 2021, p. 74).

Persistent disadvantaged is defined in being in the top 5 per cent of disadvantage areas in both the 2015 and 2021 datasets. There were 52 locations that met this criterion. However, there were also seven locations that had four or more indicators in the top 5 per cent between years. Of these, the Fairfield SA2 was the only SA2 in Greater Sydney which met this high threshold of persistent disadvantage.[38] Fairfield – East saw the biggest improvement as one of the highest rates of indicators moving out of the most disadvantaged category between 2015 and 2021, suggesting variability across discrete locations in the Local Government Area.

Using the PCI method, the report was also able to isolate the factors that most significantly contributed to the indexes within NSW. These include low family income (below $650 per week), environmental particular matter pollution,[39] low school completion (below Year 10),

[37] SA2 is a geographic category used for area analysis by the ABS, generally including populations from around 3,000-25,000 persons, with ≈10,000 persons being the average.

[38] Other areas that had four or more indicators in both 2015 and 2021, besides Fairfield, were outside of Greater Sydney. They include: Bourke – Brewarrina, Coonamble Far West, Moree, Moree Region, and Walgett – Lightning Ridge (Tanton et al., 2021, p. 76).

[39] Including nitrates, sulphates, organic chemicals, metals, soil or dust particles and allergens (such as fragments of pollen or mould spores) (NSW Health 2020).

low internet access, and no post-school qualification. The authors noted that income policy was the most critical policy intervention to support areas experiencing persistent disadvantage, given low income had the highest association with disadvantage outcomes as an indicator. They also suggested efforts towards raising school completion rates and post-school qualifications and increasing access to the internet[40] (Tanton et al., 2021). Both SEIFA and DotE provide a clear case that targeted interventions are warranted. An understanding of inequality helps further understand the distributional aspects underpinning persistent disadvantage.

Fairfield's Social Intersections and Disadvantage

Stilwell's (2019) 'social intersection' model supports cursory observations about how social intersections overlay with the specificity of Fairfield. Understanding these specifics helps understand tangible solutions (p.12) (explored throughout the following chapters).

- *Location* – From a national perspective, urban areas are frequently more advantaged locations. However, urban regions, such as Fairfield, can also possess areas of persistent disadvantage. There is the overall decline of traditional employment in manufacturing employment, creating a lower and precarious availability of local jobs (Baum et al., 2005, pp. 16-19). In addition, Fairfield has substantial spatial barriers to accessing higher paid employment and a larger concentration of unemployment (Fagan & Dowling, 2005) which can limit social mobility.

- *Class* – Fairfield has substantial numbers of lower income workers, as an epicentre of lower skilled manufacturing, warehousing, and transportation work, which are connected to the close proximity of the Smithfield Industrial Precinct (discussed in Chapter 4). While there are wealthy households in the community, these tend to be concentrated on the western periphery border, which historically experience land price inflation.[41]

- *Gender* – Fairfield has a high concentration of multicultural women from humanitarian entrant backgrounds. These women were more likely to face traditional cultural care expectations, potentially limiting their ability to pursue employment, especially anywhere far away from caring responsibilities (Itaoui et al., 2024, p. 14). Lower overall labour market participation rates for women in Fairfield is a major determinant of disadvantage, although solving this challenge in a culturally appropriate manner remains challenging (discussed in Chapters 3 and 4).

[40] Tanton et al. (2021) noted that internet connectivity is now a necessity to access government payments, complete tax returns, provide access to online banking, and undertake necessary activities associated with education institutional attendance (p. 28).

[41] Fairfield experienced significant land price growth in the 1950s and 1960s due its proximity to the then urban fringe and speculation around the expected pace of urbanisation. Existing landholders on the western frontier of Fairfield were beneficiaries of this land price inflation (Wilson-Fuller, 1991, p. 273).

- *Race and ethnicity* – Fairfield is one of Australia's most multicultural communities and has been a centre for humanitarian settlement for generations (Koleth, 2015, p. 238). This presents unique strengths and challenges. Humanitarian entrant communities, especially those that have language and cultural differences, face significant institutional barriers to participating in society (discussed in Chapter 3). Fairfield's multicultural community includes Vietnamese (including ethnic-Chinese), Cambodians, Laotians, Syrians, Iraqis, and other Arab Christians. In addition, discrimination remains a persistent feature experienced by multicultural communities, with additional implications for humanitarian entrant communities (Perales et al., 2023, p.18).

- *Age* – Fairfield has a very high average proportion of younger and older persons compared with Sydney (see Chapter 4). This places additional pressure on the suburb's resources, as younger and older cohorts are less likely to receive full-time incomes which can support local economic development of the community. Younger people may be moving back to Fairfield to support elderly family members.[42] Attracting professionals to support capital and service investment has been a focus of scholarship around local development (O'Neill, 2020b, pp. 16-18).

- *Disability* – While not widely the focus, the thesis explored some of the relationship between humanitarian migrants and mental health (De Maio et al., 2014). There is a connection between experiences in conflict zones (i.e., torture) and the development of mental health conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder; however, experiences in detention and arrival communities can compound mental health challenges for humanitarian settlement communities (Silove et al., 2017, p. 130). Humanitarian entrant communities that develop mental and other psychological conditions are also less likely to join and stay in the workforce, creating longer term implications (De Maio et al., 2014).

- *Luck/Effort* – humanitarian migrant communities have complex experiences of social opportunity in their arrival context. This can include both upward and downward mobility depending on a broad range of circumstances relating to the complex interplay of ethnicity, class, gender, and the arrival conditions of the new nation in terms of policy, institutions, and social relations (see Bankston III & Zhou, 2021; Platt, 2005). Coupled with the intersecting factors noted above, humanitarian migrant communities can struggle to access broader opportunities available within the arrival nation.

[42] This point was made by Dai Le, the member for Fowler (2022–present) in her maiden speech to the federal parliament (see Le, 2022).

Conclusion

This chapter has complemented Chapter One by expanding on how spatial political economy is uniquely placed to conceptualise the persistence of disadvantage. It concludes the first part of the thesis (*Definitions*), providing a starting point to analyse the challenges and solutions developed in the following chapters. It brought together key concepts, outlined below, to assist with this purpose. First, it was explained that normative economic questions facilitate the pursuit of greater egalitarianism, necessary to addressing issues of persistent disadvantage. This required an understanding of disadvantage as a problem of inadequate capability (i.e. the preconditions of agency) rather than simply a problem of income or material resources alone.

The specifics of the Australian traditions of poverty analysis were outlined, focusing on the Henderson reports (1974, 1975; Henderson et al., 1970). These materials helped define preliminary estimates of poverty in Australia, which accounted for broader household costs. Henderson also argued that poverty and disadvantage are structural problems, located within the broader distribution of income. This in turn supported the focus of spatial political economy as a means to engage with disadvantage in Fairfield.

Persistent disadvantage was identified as disadvantage which extends over a longer time horizon. Longer periods of disadvantage were identified as having more profound effects on communities and was associated with broader life impoverishments including social exclusion. Specific cohorts experience persistent disadvantage at greater rates, compounding the challenges they face in society.

To complement the spatial political economy approach, disadvantage was next explored as an outcome of unequal distribution. Consistent with Henderson's findings, Stilwell (2019) argues that broader patterns of distribution underpin income outcomes for socioeconomic groups. Compounding matters, income inequality has been rising in recent decades with an increasing share of returns at the top of the income distribution. Wealth also remains highly concentrated in Australia, suggesting a need for pre-distribution policies to create more egalitarian economies.

The social intersections of disadvantage were investigated as another key way to understand the distribution of income. Core aspects include an individual's location, class, gender, race and ethnicity, age, disability and luck. The social intersection model offers an important contrasting view to income focused accounts of disadvantage by helping to highlight the interactivity of identity and structural processes in determining social outcomes.

Disadvantage can be measured in multiple ways. This chapter argued that multidimensional models are superior in accounting for a capability informed account of disadvantage. The two major multidimensional models used in the Australian context have been the *Dropping off the Edge* report (Tanton et al., 2021) and the SIEFA approach as part of the Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023). These models affirm the case study interest in Fairfield including its characteristic of persistent disadvantage.

Finally, Fairfield was analysed from the perspective of social intersections of disadvantage. These include the outer metropolitan urban context, a high density of lower income workers and unemployed people, a high concentration of persons with humanitarian entrant backgrounds including multicultural women, a higher concentration of younger and older persons compared to city averages, and evidence of health challenges associated with humanitarian settlement. Throughout the thesis, these dimensions will be further contextualised to explain the specific elements of disadvantage in Fairfield and how they can be addressed through targeted interventions.

Part Two: *Challenges*

Chapter Three: Humanitarian Settlement

Introduction

This chapter considers humanitarian settlement as a distinct area of policy and regulation, separate from ethnographic focused studies and analysis of the migration system as a whole. In the context of Australia's history of migration and population planning, the academic study of humanitarian settlement has tended to focus on singular ethnic community experience or resettlement processes (Neumann et al., 2014, p. 5). This has led to important ethnographic insights around the unique experiences of humanitarian entrant communities across Australia. Yet, ethnographic focuses may inadvertently narrow appreciations of the central role of policymakers and the immigration system as a whole in influencing outcomes surrounding humanitarian settlement.

Compounding matters, humanitarian settlement as an issue of state regulation is rarely a subject of direct policy discussion. It is frequently couched in broader systems level analysis of the permanent migration system as a whole (c.f., Parkinson et al., 2023; Productivity Commission, 2016). This chapter proposes that there are benefits to looking at the common aspects of humanitarian settlement between various communities, as well as the distinct system regulation features of humanitarian visa pathways. Considering humanitarian settlement as a discrete system, within the migration institutional machinery, supports a greater understanding of Fairfield's specific spatial political economy.

More than any other area in NSW, Fairfield is influenced by the national humanitarian settlement system and accompanying policy decision making. Fairfield is a multicultural community with people from approximately 157 nation-states. At least 56 per cent of the Fairfield population was born overseas (Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d.-b). In the post-war period, Fairfield received a greater number of the overall humanitarian entrant population than any other local government area in NSW. Since 1991, Fairfield settled over 38,000 humanitarian entrants which included, from 2016-2019, 41 per cent of the state's total intake (Edmund Rice Centre, 2022, p. 23).

To demonstrate some of the structural challenges faced by humanitarian entrants in Australia, the chapter will analyse Fairfield's two major humanitarian arrivals: Indochinese communities, who began arriving in the mid to late 1970s, following the fall of Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City); and the Assyrian community, which began arriving in the 1960s in search of an Australian homeland but grew substantially following conflict in the region after the Iraq war in the 1990s and Syrian Civil War in the 2010s. Together, they show that humanitarian entrants face many similar barriers emerging from system level structural outcomes, despite unique historical and social circumstance. Overall, this situation serves as one of the major elements underpinning persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

Outline

This chapter explores the humanitarian settlement system as part of Australia's permanent migration system. The chapter focuses on the history of Australia's changing regulation of immigration, exploring the transition from White Australia policy through the assimilation era and, finally, the emergence of multiculturalism. Humanitarian settlement is a unique and emergent class of human settlement, connected to the broader patterns of migration in Australia. Humanitarian settlement has remained a broadly adaptive and dynamic policy landscape, driven by changing cultural sentiments in the Australia community especially in the post-'White Australia' period (after 1973).

Complementing the broad history of migration, the second section explores the specific policy settings of the contemporary migration system. It includes how the federal government selects 'offshore' humanitarian visa holders for settlement, and how ministerial and department decision making works today. The Parkinson (et al. 2023) review of the migration system is analysed, including its implications for the future of humanitarian settlement. Similar to recommendations around reforms to temporary immigration to support Australia's broader population planning, a more integrated view of humanitarian settlement as part of the broader structure of population planning is supported. As will be explored, lack of central coordination of humanitarian visas in the broader system means that humanitarian entrant communities are sometimes disproportionately impacted by economic downturns, compounding system level disadvantages.

Fleshing out the foregoing discussion is an analysis of two key case studies for Fairfield—the Indochinese settlement (ethnic Vietnamese and Chinese from Vietnam) from the late 1970s onwards; and Assyrian and Chaldean communities, predominantly resettled during the Syrian Civil War (largely Assyrians, Chaldeans, Iraqi's, and 'Arabs'[43]) beginning mid-2010s. Given both instances represent historically high intakes, discretionary political decision making was a critical factor in settlement coordination. An outcome has been evidence of segmented assimilation within humanitarian entrant communities, where more mobile groups leave areas of low opportunity, serving to further entrench disadvantage in those areas.

It is concluded that the nature of policy coordination within Australia's permanent migration system has contributed to adverse economic shocks and compounded the difficulties of humanitarian entrant communities during crucial years of settlement to support social mobility outcomes. Recognition of the history, dynamics, and specifics of humanitarian settlement via a political economy perspective can help create community level responses that maximise the potential of Fairfield. To complement this analysis, Chapter Four delves into the specifics of employment, education, and skill as drivers of disadvantage via the segmented labour market—the other major mechanic underpinning persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

[43] Self-described as Arab with 'no further definition' (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2022).

Australia's History of Humanitarian Settlement

Migration History Prior to the Second World War

Labour scarcity and race-based exclusions were definitive in the development of Australia's earliest immigration system, constraining economic development of the pre-federation colonies (Seltzer, 2015, p. 178). This was partially owing to Australia's relative geographic isolation, as well as its status as a colony within the British Empire. The result was development towards a highly coordinated British majoritarian labour immigration system, originally with elements of convict and 'free' transported labour. This combined system remained dominant in the early years of British colonisation, culminating between the 1830s until the late 1860s, when convict transportation was abolished and the migration system moved exclusively to free labour-based migration.[44]

By the time of federation in 1901, Australia had adopted the 'White Australia Policy' under the *Immigration Restriction Act* of 1901. This system deliberately excluded non-white migration, with the objective that Australia would remain a British immigrant, 'white' importing nation. As a result, into the early 20th century British subjects were offered assistance to migrate, and non-British European subjects could enter Australia if they paid and organised their own arrival costs. In the vast majority of cases non-Europeans did not have permission to immigrate (Price, 1986, pp. 81-82).

While racial exclusion was a major governing element of immigration, Australia simultaneously has a significant history of non-European migration, beginning from the mid to late 19th century. Between 1840 and 1900 over 100,00 Chinese people travelled to Australia as part of the gold rush and resultant domestic economic boom (Burnley, 2001, p. 29). By the 1860s, populist racism led all Australian colonies to adopt racial exclusion policies, preventing the immigration of non-white labour (Minns et al., 2018, p. 3). This dominating system of state coordination, discrimination, and control of migration would shape policy settings into the 20th century (Jupp, 2003, p. 158).

Post-war Reconstruction and Humanitarian Intake

A permanent migration system began to evolve in the post-war period, both as a result of Australia's national reconstruction agenda and the growth and development of global institutions. In 1945, Arthur Calwell became Australia's first immigration minister under the Chifley Labor government. Calwell oversaw the targeting of around 70,000 migrants per year, or 2 per cent population growth, to support national reconstruction after the war in critical industries such as coal, mining, timber, steel, building, and textiles (Collins, 1988, pp. 24-27). A quota of one non-British migrant per 10 British migrants had originally been adopted but was eventually deemed unobtainable (Whitlam, 1985, p. 487). As there was an

[44] It is acknowledged that into the early 20th century other labour practices continued to co-exist outside of this dominant model. For example, 60,000 indentured labourers were transported from the Pacific Islands to Queensland between 1863 and 1906 to produce sugar on plantations (Ryan, 2024, p.2). This dynamic poses intriguing questions; however, it lies outside the scope of the humanitarian settlement focus of this chapter.

insufficient supply of British immigrants, migration officials considered options for other European migration to support labour supply in areas of industry shortages.

The Second World War created the conditions for a global crisis of displaced persons. Many were people from Eastern Europe forced to live in internment camps as a direct consequence of the war. In 1946, the newly established United Nations created the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), to support a systematic resettlement of displaced populations (Carlin, 1982, p. 5). As a result, between 1947 and 1952, Australia would settle 170,00 displaced persons through arrangements made between the IRO and the Immigration department (Jupp, 2003, p.161). The IRO was disbanded in 1951, due to perceived ineffectiveness, and superseded by the permanent establishment of the United National High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950. The UNHCR was seen as a more durable and comprehensive solution to supporting the evolving global humanitarian settlement environment, and capable of overseeing necessary global resettlement (Carlin, 1982, p. 8).

These events led Australia to develop a distinct, if somewhat experimental, domestic humanitarian immigration policy system, the first in its history.[45] Major objectives for migration policy included supporting population growth (known as 'populate or perish') and addressing workforce shortages. Of the 1947 to 1952 intake, the dominant national groups were Polish (over 51,000); Baltics (nearly 33,000); Yugoslavians (nearly 19,000); Ukrainians (over 18,000), Hungarians (nearly 11,000); Czechs (over 8,000); and others (over 15,000). Humanitarian entrants would account for 40 per cent of the migrant intake in this period (Waxman, 2000, p. 57). Arrangements with the IRO required that immigrants had to be accepted regardless of ethnicity or religion,[46] and would be bound to work where the government dictated and adequately housed for a period of two years (Murphy, 1952, p. 181).

Given social prejudices surrounding non-British immigrants in the community, the government waged a public relations campaign to support community acceptance of large humanitarian settlement intakes. At the time, a major plank of the immigration strategy was 'assimilation' policy. While there was some acknowledgement that the post-war migrant communities would impact Australian cultural life (references to a 'new Australia' were made), overall, there was a belief that non-British migrants would gradually adopt an Australian cultural life and eventually be indistinguishable from other Australians with British heritage.

Eastern and Southern Europeans who arrived during this time were expected to acculturate into Australian society by being "economically well established, intermarried [with Australians] and bilingual" (Neumann et al., 2014, p.9). Critics have labelled this form of immigration policy as a form of cultural erasure (Damousi, 2013, p. 503). From the 1950s, other humanitarian entrant groups arrived in Australia, including 15,000 Hungarians fleeing

[45] Noting that the 1938 Evian agreement supported around 15,000 Jewish Europeans to settle in Australia (Waxman, 2000).
[46] According to Murphy (1952) 'physique and occupational skill' were a major consideration for those selected under the programme (p. 181).

Soviet military interventions, followed by 5,500 Czechoslovakians fleeing Soviet occupation (Waxman, 2000, p. 69).

As a result, assimilation policy, including the White Australia Policy mandate, became increasingly unfeasible as Australia became increasingly conscious of having a role as a nation in Asia, and it became clear that a 'cultural absorption' model of assimilation was not possible. The dismantling of institutionalised 'White Australia' was a gradual and uneven process which began in the early 1950s and culminated in the 1966-1973 period, with the gradual easing of non-European migration to Australia. Throughout this period, there was significant political hesitancy for fear of public backlash on reforms and their implications; however, reforms ultimately reflected the evolving attitude of the Australian public (Tavan, 2004, p. 122). By the early 1970s, Australian immigration policy needed to evolve substantially to adapt to these changes.

Multicultural Reform in the 1970s

The election of Gough Whitlam's Labor Government in 1972 marked the introduction of non-discrimination migration and the end of the White Australia policy. The regulatory changes allowed Australia to practice for the first time an Asian humanitarian settlement policy, and transition from assimilation-based migration to integration-based policy (Cox, 1983, p. 332). For many, this was seen as the first articulation of an explicit population strategy around 'multiculturalism'. As Whitlam (1985) would recount of the period beginning in 1972:

> in a world increasingly hostile to any form of discrimination, Australia's racial discrimination policy … had emerged as a cause of concern at home and negative reactions abroad, particularly in South East Asia … [our priority] was to ensure that Australia was racially tolerant in immigration policies and supplied the ethnic population with adequate community services. (p. 499)

Whitlam set about dismantling the official White Australia policy, followed by ratifying the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees. This allowed the government to start preparing a humanitarian response to the fall of Saigon during the Vietnam War, including resettlement strategies for Vietnamese people from the non-communist South. An average of 1,000 Vietnamese people would be settled per year in Australia, prior to Malcolm Fraser becoming Prime Minister in 1975 (Waxman, 2000, p. 70). Fraser, leader of the Coalition, oversaw mass resettlement of Vietnamese humanitarian entrants, with Australia receiving the highest resettlement levels per capita of any nation.

Around this time, Lebanon entered a civil war and one third of the population sought refugee status internationally. Australia accepted 18,000 Lebanese persons between 1975 and 1978. Much of this intake was overseen without a formal humanitarian settlement policy, as one would not be adopted until 1977 (Cox, 1983, p. 332). Minister MacKellar was the first to outline the four major principles defining ongoing humanitarian settlement, that:

1) Australia acknowledged a humanitarian commitment and responsibility to admit refugees for resettlement.

2) The Australian Government would ultimately decide on acceptance of refugees in its territory.
3) Programmes, including special assistance, would need to be provisioned to support refugee settlement.
4) Australia may not always be the ideal settlement location for a refugee population. Australia will continue to fund and work with UNHCR and other nations to support suitable resettlement where possible (Commonwealth, 1977).

Humanitarian settlement policy today is largely influenced by outcomes achieved in the 1970s reform era. Policy makers at this time articulated a clear, humanitarian centred vision of settlement tempered by the rationale of responsible ministers, a need for specialised programmes and a commitment to work with UNHRC in instances where Australian resettlement was deemed unfeasible. In the 1970s, Australia also articulated a de-coupled vision of humanitarian settlement, as distinct from the 'skill' based migration pathway that had dominated all migration stream pathways in the post-war period. Despite reforms in the broader contexts of skills, under Howard and beyond, these explicit objectives, though sometimes in conflict, continue to define humanitarian settlement.

Impacts of the Howard Government

The election of John Howard's Coalition government in 1996, delivered a radical repositioning of skills at the centre of Australian immigration planning. It reflected a growing sentiment that the migration system had become 'slack', dominated by family visas. There emerged a view that the Hawke and Keating Labor governments had not paid attention to migration planning as an end in itself but as a means towards supporting a multicultural family reunion agenda. These ideas were, in part, driven by emerging political polarisation during the early 1990s recession. Significantly high levels of unemployment served to wedge public opinion, with polling around support for immigration policy noticeably beginning to decline at this time (Betts, 2003, p. 176).

A popular consensus began to emerge that the Howard government needed to reform the nation's immigration system. Under minister Ruddock, who became Howard's immigration minister, the government committed to an economy driven outlook where employment focused visas would dominate the distributional share of permanent visas. The reforms delivered improvements in labour force employment and lower levels of welfare spending (Hawthorne, 2005, p. 688); yet, they also contributed to a marked change in Australia's stance towards international asylum. Increasingly, the interests of national border sovereignty superseded the humanitarian demands of the refugee convention (McAdam & Purcell, 2008, p. 112).

In regard to refugee asylum, one particular speech has come to encapsulate the Howard government's position better than any other:

> this country has an obligation as part of the international community to conduct a generous refugee program and we have done so to our credit now for some decades. We are one of only nine countries in the world that has a resettlement program and we take more refugees on a per capita basis than any country in the

> world except Canada. But my friends, *we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come* and we'll decide that, applying humane equitable principles and international refugee assessment. (my italics, Howard, 2001)

Another major change in policy assessments of humanitarian settlement was the movement away from an expectation that humanitarian entrants would have a permanent and stable pathway to Australian permanent residency and citizenship. Humanitarian entrants increasingly received temporary protection visas with a political view that for many Australia would not be the final point of settlement. Mandatory detention of unsanctioned refugee arrivals was adopted through revisions to the *Migration Act* (Minns et al., 2018, p. 5).

From the 1990s Australia's policy makers moved to adopt a more restricted vision of the refugee immigration pathway, especially in regard to those deemed as illegal arrivals. Some of these clear changes included distinguishing between onshore and offshore applications in terms of legitimacy and culminated in the watershed events of the Tampa Affair in 2001[47] (Minns et al., 2018, pp. 4-5). This delivered a substantial re-interpretation of the multicultural reform agenda, giving the government a re-affirmed and ultimate control over the asylum vetting process.

Since the Howard administration was not returned to government in 2007, much has remained in place in regard to the national criteria for permanent humanitarian settlement. The national refugee discussion and focus has been on offshore detention preventing unsanctioned arrivals in Australia's territory, which served as a major campaign element of the 2013 Abbot Coalition government, and the sovereign borders programme. Offshore detention remains a major strategy in place to manage humanitarian settlement (Sharples, 2021, p. 82).

Yet, a relatively fixed level of humanitarian visa intake has had bi-partisan support throughout these periods. While initially the Abbott government pledged to lower permanent humanitarian settlement intake in favour of temporary protection visas, the government would ultimately commit to sizeable, historic intakes from the Syrian Civil War (2011–2024). Reporting from that time indicated that Australia had largely chosen Christian communities over other religious groups, with at least 80 per cent of the Syrian and Iraqi intake being Christians (Fitzgerald & Hirsch, 2023, p. 83). This highlights the political influence government ministers have in selecting potential resettlement groups in Australia.

Australia's humanitarian immigration system emerged from a long history of state sanctioned vetting and selectivity, where migration was a central element of the state's management of economic development and a means to resolve labour shortages. From the

[47] On August 2001, a Norwegian cargo ship *MV Tampa* took aboard 433 asylum seekers in international waters but were denied permission to enter Australian waters by the Australian government. The passengers remained on the vessel for several weeks before being detained offshore. This event would contribute to the implementation of the legislated 'Pacific Solution', under which refugees arriving via Australian waters would be denied access to onshore asylum pathways and placed in offshore detention on Christmas Island, Ashmore Reef, and the Cocos Islands (Fox, 2010, pp. 356-359).

1940s, humanitarian settlement coincided with a period where Australia was beginning to dismantle race-based migration principles, in favour of assimilation and later multiculturalism. Humanitarian settlement policy developed as part of changes in Australia society, as race-based discrimination was dismantled and the government committed to humanitarian ideals within a global community. Increasingly, as the migration system hardened, the Australia government articulated a right to determine the make-up of the humanitarian settlement community, including their mode of arrival. While the state has continued to articulate this approach, regulation of this system has begun to breakdown.

Humanitarian Settlement System

This section considers how the immigration system works, including how humanitarian entrants are selected by decision makers. Discussion is supported by an analysis of data on humanitarian entrants, pointing to the main trends around visa grants between periods. It is argued that the migration system has historically exposed humanitarian migrants to economic shocks in the economy, especially in periods of high unemployment (particularly in the 1990s recession). While a distinct mode of regulation is evident through this analysis, the Parkinson et al. (2023) review helps to identify that this system is increasingly unstable and requires significant planning-based reforms.

The Australian Immigration System

Australia has three major streams of permanent migration settlement: skill, family, and humanitarian.[48] Permanent settlement enshrines rights such as the ability to remain in Australia indefinitely, to work and study (including access to student loans) in Australia, and receive public healthcare. The level of permanent migration is set by the federal Minister for Home Affairs (the minister) based around economic and labour forecasts, modelling, research, and stakeholder consultation. Based on advice, the level of permanent migration is set and capped annually, including the subset of humanitarian visas. The number of permanent visas granted frequently reflects and is responsive to the overall health of the economy, with less visas granted during recessions.

Skill visas are the highest granted by number of the permanent visa categories and has become a central focus of the migration planning system. Skill stream migrants are frequently employer sponsored and/or meet qualification requirements on the skilled occupation list (Department of Home Affairs, n.d.). As discussed, the current skilled visa system was shaped by the Howard administration under minister Ruddock in the mid to late 1990s (Betts, 2003, p. 177). There are a broad range of family visas for permanent settlement, with the most common being for the partner of an Australian citizen or permanent resident. A smaller group of family visa applicants are granted for the parents of Australian residents (Australian Government, 2018a).

[48] Australia current issues over 70 different listed permanent and temporary visas including for: visiting, studying and training, family and partners, working and skilled, refugee and humanitarian and others (Department of Home Affairs, 2025b).

In 2023, the Department of Home Affairs released a systematic review of the Australian immigration system, chaired by Dr Martin Parkinson. The review was undertaken to assess how the migration system could be best fit for purpose in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2023) and current economic conditions, including 'stagnating productivity', 'geopolitical risks', and the 'ageing population' (Parkinson et al., 2023). A major finding was that the current migration system is no longer fit for purpose and failing to attract the most skilled migrants. This disfunction was found to also enable structural exploitation of migration via temporary visa pathways.

The review called on the government to produce a long-term (i.e., 10 year) strategic plan for migration, with centralised decision making within a single area of government, with a view that migration planning should be focused on net overseas migration level (the net gain or loss of population through international migration). This would require that permanent and temporary visas are coordinated under one coherent planning vision, to allow for "effective planning of infrastructure, housing and services to meet the needs of all Australian residents" (Parkinson et al., 2023, p. 2).

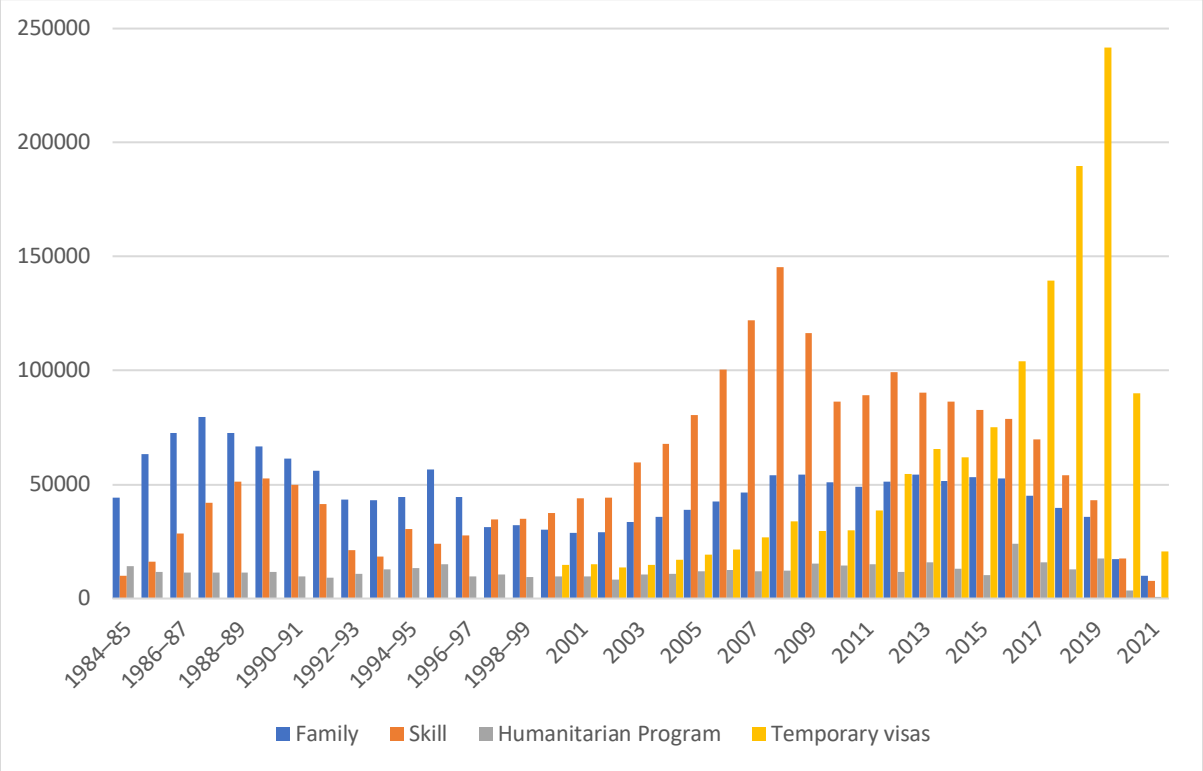
Analysis of the Migration Data

Recent data around immigration by visa type reveals the changing structure of immigration by visa type. Family visas peaked in 1988, with skills also being a relative high point by 1990. From 1990 onwards there was a sharp decline in both family and skill visa, likely driven by the longer-term effects of the recession. From 1994, skill visas ebbed from a low point before a longer-term increase reflecting increasing confidence after the recession. By 1998, during the early years of the Howard government, skilled immigration overtook family visas granted, with a rapid increase in this visa type up until 2016 (see Figure 9).

From the data there are at least three periods that can be identified. The first, prior to the Howard government, in which family visas dominated (until 1997-1998). As discussed, this period was a reaction to perceptions in the preceding period that the Hawke/Keating government had prioritised family visas over skill. With the introduction of the skill focused migration policy, skill visas continued to peak until around 2008, coinciding with the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) (2007-2908). From this period, temporary visa[49] numbers rose exponentially, peaking in 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Parkinson et al. (2023) the rise in temporary visas is directly related to Australian free trade agreements, including mobility clauses which drive temporary visas (p. 165).

[49] Including the following visa subclasses: Bridging A (010), Bridging B (020), Bridging C (030), Bridging (General) (050), other bridging visas, Temporary Work (Short Stay Specialist) (400), Training And Research (402), Temporary Work (International Relations) (403), Investor Retirement (405), Training (407), Temporary Activity (408), Retirement (410), New Zealand Citizen Family Relationship (Temporary) (461), Skilled - Recognised Graduate (476), Temporary Graduate (485), Temporary Protection Visa (785), Safe Haven Enterprise (790), Sponsored Parent (Temporary) (870), and Diplomatic (Temporary) (995) (Department of Home Affairs, 2025b).

Figure 9 – *Total Australian Visas Granted by Stream (1984-2021)*



Note. There are three permanent visa categories: skill, family, and humanitarian. Initially, family visas constituted the majority of permanent migration in the early 1980s. Conversely, during the Howard era (mid-1990s to mid-2000s), skill visas dominated. Currently, temporary visas have come to dominate the intake system. Humanitarian visas have been consistently issued throughout the full period, with approximately 10,000–20,000 visas granted each year. Adapted from *Migration, Australia*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021; *Review of the Migration System*, by M. Parkinson et al., 2023; and *Australia's Humanitarian Program*, by J. Phillips, 2015.

Overall, skill and accompanying family visas tend to rise as economic circumstances improve, and in recent years temporary visas have dominated under free trade-based exemption arrangements. Despite a small dip from 1996 to 2000, permanent humanitarian visas have not moved substantial and have remained between 10,000-20,000 visas granted per year. As will be discussed, this consistency meant that humanitarian settlement patterns did not dynamically adjust to economic conditions like other visa classes. The next section looks at the mechanics underpinning the selection of humanitarian entrants as well as the longer-term dynamic to uncover the system aspects underpinning this element of the visa system.

Humanitarian Visa Selection Criteria and Subcategories

Unlike other permanent migration visas, humanitarian pathways are connected with Australia's responsibility to settled displaced persons, which includes the promotion of humane and lawful settlement pathways (Parkinson et al., 2023, p. 26). As discussed, these priorities are linked to Australia's history as a humanitarian settlement nation after the Second World War, and developments since the 1970s Whitlam administration's dismantling of the White Australia policy.

Humanitarian settlement is closely tied to Australia's perceived role as part of global efforts to settle refugees. A recent discussion paper outlines the key department views of the programme:

> The [Australia] Government is committed to generous and flexible humanitarian and settlement programs that meet Australia's *international protection obligations*, and position Australia as a *global leader in international resettlement efforts*. The Humanitarian Program demonstrates Australia's commitment to global resettlement efforts while providing *ongoing economic and social benefits* to Australia. It highlights the ways in which humanitarian entrants can enrich Australian society and *boost the economy* with their skills, talent and diverse cultural vibrancy. (my italics, Department of Home Affairs, 2025a, p. 1)

Clearly there is a balancing between perceived international settlement obligations and Australia's reputation as a global leader in resettlement, while emphasising the economic and social benefits of humanitarian settlement. The minister wields decision-making powers for the composition of permanent visas, receiving input from a range of key stakeholders including: "[the] Australian public, state and territory governments, [federal] agencies, and peak refugee and humanitarian organisations" (UNHCR, 2022a, p. 3).

Yet major decision-making power is frequently couched by capped target numbers that are subject to change depending on government priorities and geopolitical events. The main visa categories (Refugee visa (subclass 200); Global Special Humanitarian visa (subclass 202); and women at risk visa (subclass 204)) provide pathways to permanent residence. They also allow recipients to work and study, and access a range of government support services including Medicare, language classes, and social security payments.

To apply, the applicant must be outside of their home country and not within Australia, with claim to being subject to persecution. For both the 200 and 204 visa, there is a requirement that UNHCR provides a referral of the person to the Australian government. Whereas, for visa class 202 the applicant needs to be proposed by a community member or organisation in Australia and must pay their own travel costs if accepted with some financial assistance from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) (Collins et al., 2018, p. 7). Offshore humanitarian visa applications are either largely sponsored by UNHCR or the community.

Australian policy makers undertake a range of assessments in determining the eligibility for humanitarian visas. Integration criteria are applied to the applicant, where both the applicant's connection with Australia and the Australian community's ability to support the person are considered. Candidates may also be refused if the persons application does not align with the government's regional and global priority areas, and if the person does not pass a character assessment, relating to a history of criminality or a risk to national security.

The integration possibility is applied at a group level, given the historic experience of the ethnic group within the Australian community. This means that groups who have a perception of greater civic participation (i.e., have not had high rates of crime) are usually considered as better candidates for humanitarian visas. Australia is likely to rely on the UNHCR and their host embassies via a dossier process, similar to methods used by other

Commonwealth countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and Canada (Brekke et al., 2021).

According to the UNHCR (2022a) resettlement handbook for Australia:

> The settlement location of humanitarian entrants is determined by a number of factors, particularly where family or friends permanently in Australia live. All [Special Humanitarian Program] entrants are proposed by family, friends or an organisation based in Australia. These entrants generally settle near their proposers as they provide settlement assistance and valuable social support … For 'unlinked' entrants. i.e. those without family or friends in Australia, the department considers a range of factors when deciding on a suitable settlement location. These include the specific requirements of the entrant, such as health needs, availability of service, and the community's ability to provide a welcoming and supportive environment. (p. 12)

Refugee admissions are vetted based on their connection to Australia, including their relationship to established communities. When unlinked, the applicant's personal circumstances, including their health as well as the capacity for existing communities to successfully settle the person, are taken into account.

Australia's humanitarian system is highly targeted, with substantial vetting and oversight. Once the annual cap is determined, the minister has significant abilities to select focus regions for resettlement based on perceived need, as well as Australia's geostrategic priorities. Like other areas of Australia's migration system, this oversight means that the system encourages selection based on probability of success of the visa recipient. However, the selection system is less sensitive to economic conditions compared to other permanent visa classes, due to its relatively low numbers and the overarching political nature of selection. To complement this understanding, the next section explores the long-term dynamics of humanitarian settlement.

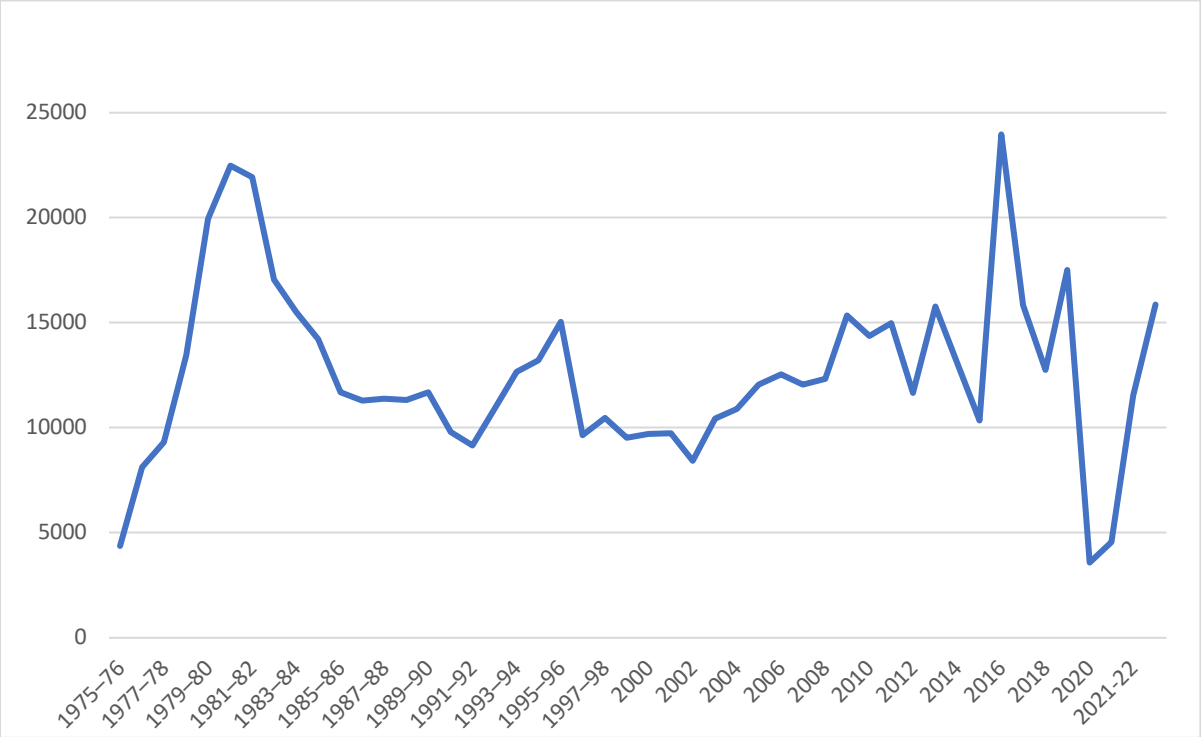
Humanitarian Settlement Data (1975-2023)

From 1975 Australia's humanitarian focus shifted from widescale Asian resettlement in the first wave, to a smaller shorter Eastern European wave in the mid-1990s. Since 2001, humanitarian populations have been dominated more by Middle Eastern and some African populations. Notably, several of the largest intakes have been undertaken during conservative Coalition governments, both in the late 1970s under Fraser (1975-1983), and during the early to mid-2000s under Howard (1996-2007), and again during the Abbot/Turnbull governments (2013-15; 2015-18).

Since 1945 Australia has resettled an estimate 920,000 humanitarian entrant and others requiring humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2022a). According to Phillips (2015) there were approximately 300,000 people settled between 1947-48 and 1974-75; 264,000 of these were assisted and 33,000 were unassisted (i.e., travel costs were paid by the individual or a supporting organisation, not government) (pp. 2-3). Over 200,000 of these immigrated to Australia between 1947 and 1952, largely of Eastern European origin (Price, 1986, p. 81).

From 1975-76 to 2022-23, it has been estimated that over 600,000 permanent humanitarian visa holders arrived in Australia (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 – *Number of Humanitarian Visas by Year (1975-2023)*



Note. Between 1975–76 and 2022–23, Australia accepted over 600,000 humanitarian entrants. In this period, there was a shift from a focus on Asian immigration, particularly Vietnamese (mid-1970s to mid-1980s), to the Balkans (mid-1990s), followed by African and Middle Eastern communities (early 2000s onwards). Data adapted from *Australia's Humanitarian Program*, by J. Phillips, 2015; *Migration, Australia*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 and *Permanent Humanitarian Visa Holders*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023b.

Throughout 1975-76 to 2022-23, the average number of permanent visas per year was nearly 12,600; median just under 11,900. The first wave of humanitarian settlement culminated in 1980-81 with the arrival of nearly 22,500 visa holders. Following the fall of Saigon (Ho Chi-Minh city) in 1975, Southeast Asian, especially Vietnamese, entrants were a major driver of this wave. From this point, humanitarian admissions trended downwards, although significant Cambodian populations arrived in the early 1980s. Asian humanitarian entrants populations continued to dominate arrival numbers during this downward trend, with a smaller number of persons from the Americas. The period 1991-92 saw a second smaller wave of growth, driven by humanitarian entrants from Europe (c.f., Hinsliff, 2007, p. 26). A major factor for this wave was ethnic conflict during the Yugoslav Wars in the Balkans from 1991-2001, especially the Bosnian and Kosovo wars.

Numbers peaked once again in 1995-96 on the eve of the election of the Howard government, trending downwards until 2002. From this point, Middle Eastern populations became the dominant resettlement group, following the fallout from the Gulf War and conflicts in the Middle East. A small African population became an important component in this third period. The third period peaks with the 2016 Syrian Civil War intake, the largest ever single year intake in Australia's modern history at just under 24,000 people. The

modern period has also been less predictable year on year. There was a brief decline in humanitarian entrant arrivals during the COVID-19 pandemic, with acceptance numbers trending back up above long-term averages in the 2022-23 year. In the 2022-23 year, Afghani humanitarian entrant formed the bulk of accepted numbers following the fall of Kabul in 2021.

Over the long term, the government's permanent humanitarian settlement policies have been driven by Australia's desire to broadly maintain its humanitarian responsibilities. There is ultimately minimal difference between political parties when it comes to the numbers of humanitarian visas. The best predictor of settlement numbers globally has been global demand (i.e., higher global numbers of displaced persons and asylum seekers), although Australia has one of the highest humanitarian settlement rates in the OECD (Lutz & Portmann, 2022, p. 7). Numbers have remained relatively constant throughout the 1975-2023 period, suggesting that Australia's process of humanitarian selection is highly reactive to international affairs and the domestic policy cycle.

Humanitarian Visa Holders in Domestic Economic Downturns

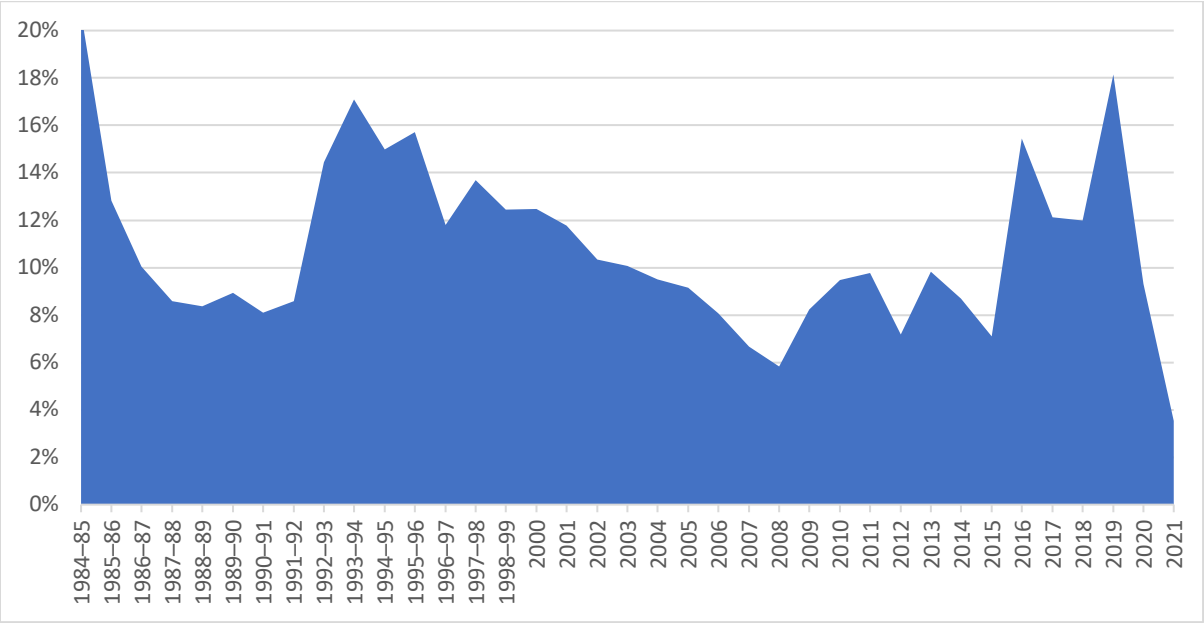
As discussed, humanitarian settlement is a result of ministerial discretion, coupled with international resettlement demands and geostrategic considerations. A result, humanitarian visa intakes actually increase as a share of the total visa population in periods of economic recession. This effect was most visible after the 1989 recession (from 1992-3 to 1995-6), where humanitarian intake numbers climbed to near historic levels. For this reason, the deep concentration of humanitarian settlement is connected to persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

Figure 11, below, charts the percentage of humanitarian permanent visas granted as a share of the total permanent migrant pool from 1984 to 2021 (i.e., the total of skilled, family, and humanitarian visas granted).[50] Humanitarian entrants as a percentage share averaged at 11 per cent throughout the period. As a general rule over the period the average and median were just over 12,000 persons, with the Syrian Civil War intake of 2016 the highest intake (n = 23,967) and the lowest being during the pandemic in 2021 (n = 651).

Humanitarian visas start to trend down from 1993-4, which is notable as this period saw the beginning of Australia's 'third long boom', a period of sustained economic growth (Broomhill, 2008, p.12). This decline coincided with a massive expansion in the receipt of skill visas, which peaked in 2008, just prior to the GFC. Skill visas did not recover following this period, likely due to heightened negative sentiments for the domestic economy. Humanitarian visas once again trended upwards at this time, remaining relatively subdued until the Syrian Civil War intake. This dynamic has additional implications for humanitarian settlement communities, who receive large numbers despite declining national economic conditions.

[50] This chart integrated historical data from Phillips' (2015) with current counts from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Phillips' data is based on financial years, while the ABS data uses calendar years. For this reason, there is a break in the data series from 1998-99 to 2000 where the data sets have been joined.

Figure 11 – *Humanitarian Visa Share (%) of Total Permanent Visas (1984-2021)*



Note. Humanitarian visas have tended to increase as a share of total permanent visas during economic downturns (e.g., the early 1990s recession) and periods of uncertainty (e.g., post-GFC). This chart integrates historical data from Phillips (2015) with data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021). Because Phillips' data is based on financial years while the ABS data uses calendar years, there is a break in the data series between 1998–99 and 2000 where the datasets were joined. Adapted from *Australia's Humanitarian Program*, by J. Phillips, 2015; and *Migration, Australia*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021.

.

Policy Objectives of Humanitarian Settlement

The Parkinson et al. (2023) review shed light on how humanitarian visas fit into the broader permanent immigration strategic outlook. It supports that humanitarian settlement policy frequently lacks the explicit focus required to deliver targeted outcomes for humanitarian entrant communities. As has been discussed, humanitarian settlement is mediated by the relationship between the Australian state's interest and the global humanitarian environment governed through UNHCR. However, given the programme's relatively smaller size, compared with skill and family visas, it frequently cannot be a central focus of the permanent visa system (Australian Government, 2023, p. 14). This can create confusion around the central aims of humanitarian settlement, including how domestic Australian policy interests should be coordinated with international commitments.

While humanitarian settlement is perceived as a small portion of the skill focused system planning, humanitarian migrants are considered a subset of a broader strategic framework built around demand centred labour markets, cohesive community building, and the promotion of Australia's strategic geopolitical interests. The approach taken under settlement policy supports humanitarian settlement as a means to 'protect Australia's interests in the world' by "contributing to international efforts to support refugees, displaced people and those experiencing humanitarian crisis and to promote humane lawful pathway" (Parkinson et al. 2023, p. 20). There is also growing regional consciousness that Australia should play an important resettlement role in the Indo-pacific as a result of climate change.

A major challenge for humanitarian entrant communities is adequate access to quality English language proficiency coupled with effective employment and skill matching programme. The Parkinson et al. (2023) report noted that humanitarian visa holders take longer (approximately 10 years) to meet employment averages as compared with Australian citizens. This suggests the need for targeted programmes that support 'catch-up' with other Australians. Compounding matters, humanitarian entrant women tend to have worse labour market outcomes than men, with 67 per cent of humanitarian entrant men in employment compared with just 39 per cent of women. More broadly, there is very little demand within the system for humanitarian entrant job applicants with low English skills and educational attainment. The report recommended providing services that are locally specific, reflect the needs of migrants, and support broad community integration via professional networks, work experience, and providing accessibly transportation (Parkinson et al., 2023, pp. 130-140). Chapter Four deals with existing humanitarian focused programmes in more detail.

As part of the Parkinson et al. (2023) review, a range of key stakeholders submitted reports; two of which are worth discussing as they provide important insights. They are the UNHCR report, as the peak organisation for international humanitarian settlement; and the NSW government report, as the state level government managing humanitarian settlement in the Fairfield context. The reports reveal both the inadequacy of economic driven approached to settlement (as compared to needs based), and the lack of central coordination in refugee selection and settlement.

The UNHCR submission outlines that humanitarian entry cannot and should not be measured under the framework of 'economically driven migration'. While noting that many humanitarian entrant communities do make economic contributions, it encourages Australia as a resettlement state to "invest in settlement programming to realise the potential of all refugee newcomers" (UNHCR, 2022b, p. 2). It also noted that low- and middle-income countries host 74 per cent of the global refugee population, raising questions around equity for richer and more developed nations.

UNHCR noted that the current planning system, determined year on year, did not adequately reflect the demand around refugee settlement in the global community, including in relation to global volatility. They proposed that Australia adopt a multi-year resettlement programme with relevant flexibilities to accommodate changes in the environment. Noting that refugee resettlement often takes years; the report suggested at least 3-year plans would support better integration with the objectives of UNHCR around resettlement.

The NSW government submission echoed the need for greater capacity to influence national immigration targets and decisions made by the federal immigration minister. State governments raised that they want a means to influence the annual allocation of visa subclasses, including by making the list relevant to localised needs around skill shortages. The NSW government suggested that it did not receive 'timely, granular' information on skilled and humanitarian migrants. There was a request for better data to help determine the correct linkages with employment, education, training, and services (NSW Government, 2022, pp. 7-8). This would seem to support the general view that timely, integrated data can support better settlement outcomes.

An additional barrier to focused humanitarian policy is the lack of access to quality data available around humanitarian settlement outcomes outside of the *Building a New life in Australia* study (discussed in Chapter 4). In response, the *Refugee and Humanitarian Entrant Data Plan* is a new government initiative, signalling work with the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, to link multiagency data on humanitarian entrant outcomes across key domains. There will also be an element focusing on the qualitative experience of humanitarian entrant integration, important for accounting for experience of community.

Summary

This section has concretised the specific dynamics underpinning the Australian humanitarian settlement system. It identified the specific power of ministerial decisions, guided by a desire to support international norms for displaced persons, coupled with a desire to meet the needs of domestic economic settings. It suggested that the system for selection is highly bespoke with significant powers to vet candidates for settlement. Yet, despite this broad outlook, humanitarian settlement frequently struggles to meet the broad aspirations desired by policy makers.

A major finding of the analysis is that humanitarian visas tend to rise, as a share of total permanent settlement, in periods of economic downturns or uncertainty. This is mainly because refugee selection is likely to be tightly geared to economic conditions, such as skilled based visas, and more likely to reflect ministerial discretion and global demand for settlement. This reality suggests that more targeted programmes for humanitarian entrant communities are needed to ensure they receive access to language, skills, and employment programmes, especially in the early years of settlement.

Australia's longer term, bipartisan commitment to humanitarian settlement is a good example of the developmentalist state thesis. Australia has continued to realise and respond to its expectation for high per capita humanitarian settlement number from organisations such as the UNHCR. This commitment is the product of decades of migration reform, culminating from the abolishment of the White Australia policy and the adoption of multicultural migration policy and human rights settlement policy. However, as the Parkinson et al. (2023) review demonstrated, the current arrangements are increasingly under strain. More should be done to construct multi-year settlement models targeted to local needs.

Fairfield as a Case Study in Humanitarian Settlement

To complement the historical and migration system perspectives, this section considers two key case studies of humanitarian settlement in the Fairfield area. They are the Vietnamese humanitarian settlement from the mid-1970s and the Syrian/Iraqi settlement from the mid-2010s. The discussion considers whether large scale settlement concentrations can contribute to community disadvantage, including analysis of the segmented assimilation. It is suggested that the varying experiences of humanitarian entrant communities are co-shaped by place, leading to the perpetuation of spatial disadvantage in Fairfield.

Ethnic Demography of Fairfield

Fairfield's ethnic population is dominated by migrant communities from four countries. Over 35 per cent of Fairfield's residents were born in Vietnam (16%), Iraq (12%), Cambodia (4%), or Syria (3%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). There is of course great ethnic diversity amongst these groups. For example, ethnic Chinese-Vietnamese make up a critical share of the Vietnamese population. Ethnic Chinese, particularly business owners, were a major displaced group following the North Vietnamese capture of South Vietnam in 1975. Khmer people (ethnic Cambodians) began to arrive in Fairfield following the rise of the Khmer Rouge and their capture of Cambodia in 1978. Ethnic Laotians and Hmong comprised a wave driven by similar political events in South East Asia (Gapps, 2010, pp. 30-33).

The vast majority of Syrian and Iraqi humanitarian entrants in Fairfield were ethnically composed of Assyrians and Chaldeans, with smaller groups of 'Arabs (nfd)' and Syrians. Assyrians are a stateless people descended from ancient Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq). Assyrians began migrating to Sydney in small numbers following the Second World War, working to establish the Assyrian Australian Association (AAA), which sought to advocate for common culture values and support the Assyrian diaspora in Fairfield.

Vietnamese Settlement in Western Sydney

Between 1975 and 1988 over 120,000 Indochinese humanitarian entrants would settle in Australia, making it the largest recipient of Indochinese resettlement per capita. During this time, NSW had the largest Vietnamese-born community at nearly 34,000 first generation persons (Hugo, 1990, pp. 187-191).[51] Fairfield was the major recipient of Vietnam-born persons in this period with over 9,600 persons by 1986 (Burnley, 1989, p. 136). After an initial wave of humanitarian settlement, people from Vietnam continued to arrive in Australia, and in Fairfield in particular.

In the mid to late 1970s, humanitarian entrants from Vietnam tended to arrive with none or limited possessions and were confronted with substantial language, employment, social, and cultural barriers. These early groups arrived by plane and were greeted by a range of government public servants offering a support service prior to their arrival at the migrant hostels (McCoy, 1996, p. 128). One of the deciding factors in settlement location was proximity to their arrival migrant centres (known as migrant hostels). In Western Sydney there were three major migrant centres during this period: Westbridge (near Fairfield station), Cabramatta, and East Hills (McCoy, 1996, p. 97). The Endeavour Migrant hostel in the Eastern suburbs would also receive a share of the total humanitarian entrant population, and in increasing shares after the closure of Cabramatta and East Hills in 1982, due to community opposition.

Migrant hostels were a critical component of arrival and settlement for communities: "provid[ing] a support infrastructure and a surrogate community in what was a foreign society" (McCoy, 1996, p. 93). Early arrivals in the Vietnamese community frequently

[51] By 1988 Australia had received 702 Indochinese humanitarian entrants per 100,000 resident population and an overall total of 117,997 resettled persons (Hugo, 1990, p. 186).

resorted to longer stays in the hostels, due to limited social networks in the broader community. Humanitarian entrants from Vietnam largely settled within 11km from the location of their migrant centre (Wilson, 1990, p. 155). As more humanitarian entrants from Vietnam arrived, the length of hostel stays tended to decline, as a broader external network and social fabric began to emerge in community (Wilson, 1990, p. 175). This can partially explain the Vietnamese community's continuing settlement within Fairfield.

The scale and concentration of Vietnamese settlement became a major point of academic and public discussion throughout this period, especially regarding questions around the formation of 'ethnic enclaves'. Research focused on the implications of concentrated clustering of vulnerable communities with little English abilities, lower incomes, higher unemployment, and lower skilled work which led to an attribution for this sub community as a form of 'spatial segregation' (Hugo, 1990, p.190). Others raised the political context of these debates, noting that concentrated settlement patterns of the Vietnamese community also provided joint strengths for a community adapting to a foreign culture and society (Viviani, 1997, p. 57). The Vietnamese community also became a visible 'other' and easy scapegoat for broader xenophobia and economic insecurity emerging in early 1990s recession.

Nonetheless, concentrated disadvantage was evident in Fairfield by the early 1990s, with some of the highest rates of unemployment in Australia. Birrell (1993) noted the high community rates of low skills and limited English language proficiency were likely to lead to high rates of unemployment and a longer-term reliance on social services (p. 31). There were calls questioning whether the analysis was stigmatising already marginalised communities, forced into concentrated settings as a survival strategy (Burnley, 1999, p. 1313; Viviani, 1997, p. 57). Similar calls have been made to focus on the issue of disadvantage more generally, rather than the specific ethnic groups in understanding broader socioeconomic effects (Coughlan, 2008).

Vietnamese Arrivals in Fairfield Between 1980 and 1990

The 2021 Census data show Vietnamese population arrivals in Fairfield first peaked around 1980 (see Figure 12). This seems to reflect broader historical settlement patterns for the group, as South East Asian migration was widely supported by government programmes. What is less clear is why these numbers decline from this point and rise again in 1990. A couple of theories can be offered. From 1982 the Orderly Departure Program (ODP)[52] around family reunification was applied, making is possible that family reunion was a driver of the second spike in arrival in 1985 and the ramping up of arrivals up until 1990.

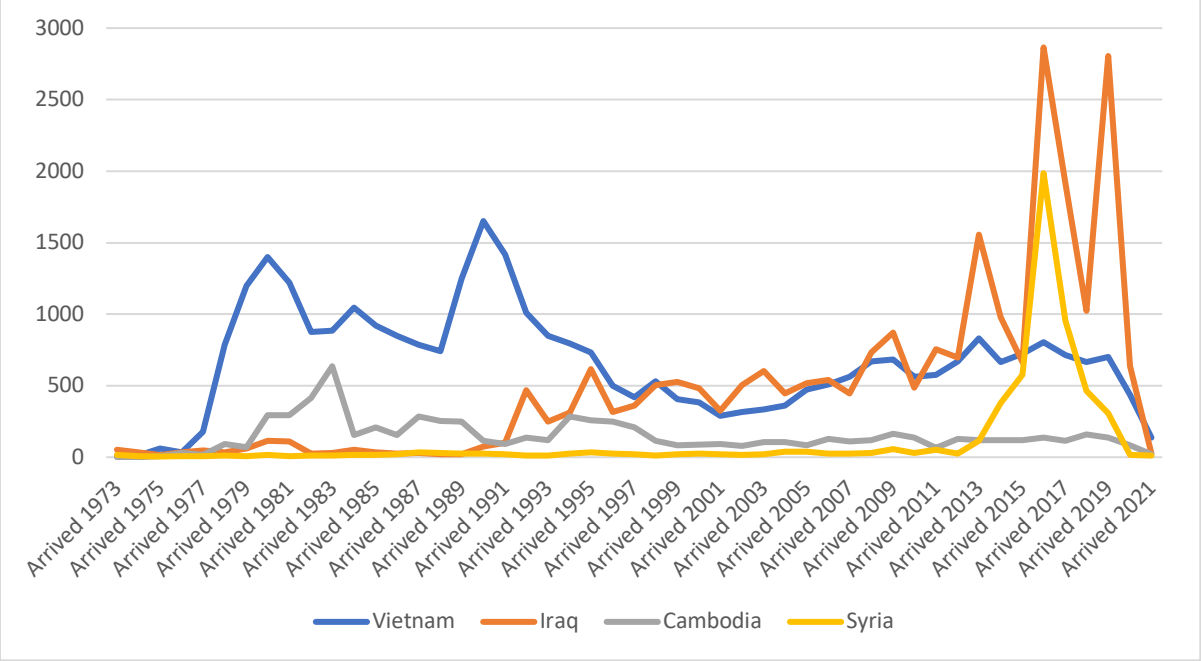
A second possibility is that members of the Vietnamese community left Fairfield during this period for opportunities across Sydney and elsewhere. Thus, the very high levels of Vietnamese arrival numbers in 1990 reflect harsher unemployment and economic

[52] Australia implementation of the UNHCR' ODP sought family reunion resettlement in over 50 countries from 1975-2000. Australia's ODP agreement was not signed until 1982 with a very small group arriving in the first years. By 1997, when the ODP expired, nearly 47,000 Vietnamese persons had been settled in Australia under the scheme (Nguyen, 2019, p. 126).

conditions, resulting in lower spatially mobility. Given the magnitude of the recession at that time, it is possible that many Vietnamese people with humanitarian entrant backgrounds never recovered from considerable retrenchment, experiencing significant labour market scarring during this period and, therefore, staying within their community. As discussed above, age and socioeconomic conditions can play an important role in determining the spatial mobility of populations. The long tail from 1990 may reflect a growing Vietnamese diaspora appeal in Fairfield given decades of settlement.

Looking closely at the ethnic composition of these waves, it becomes clear that the 1990s wave was more highly composed of Vietnamese than ethnic Chinese-Vietnamese people. Differences in ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese employment throughout this time have been discussed by some authors; for example, Viviani et al. (1993, p.48) argued that ethnic Chinese were better able to navigate the conditions of the recession and find gainful employment through their extended familial networks, compared with ethnic Vietnamese. This would tend to support the working hypothesis that poor economic conditions were a major contributor to many Vietnamese who arrived around the 1989 recession staying in the Fairfield area (i.e., having lower spatial mobility).

Figure 12 – *Select Country of Birth and Year of Arrival in Fairfield (2021)*

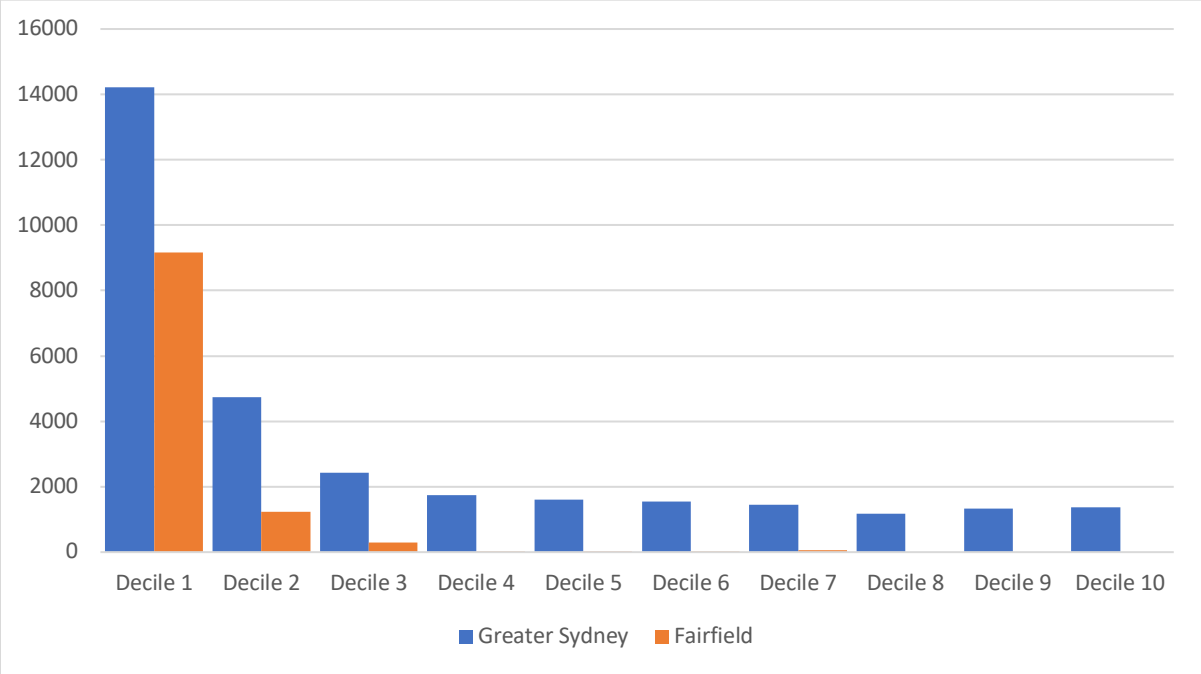


Note. According to the 2021 Census, many Vietnamese persons arrived in Fairfield in 1980, with an additional larger spike in the 1990s. This could reflect the relative spatial immobility of cohorts who arrived during poorer economic conditions, although a clear explanation cannot be drawn from the data. A long tail for Iraqi arrivals is seen from the early 1990s, peaking throughout 2010 at the same time as Assyrian community arrivals in Fairfield. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

Segmented Assimilation

So far it has been identified that Vietnamese humanitarian entrant arrivals in Fairfield coincided with significant periods of economic uncertainty and recession. This connects with the argument that humanitarian visa numbers rise as a total share of permanent visas during economic downturns due to lower coordination to economic conditions compared with skill and family visas. Bringing these arguments together it would seem that the Vietnamese communities that arrived in Fairfield during this time, may have faced greater spatial immobility and therefore higher likelihood of entering longer-term disadvantage. Looking closely at the SEIFA data seems to support this analysis. While many Australian born persons with Vietnamese ancestry are in the lowest 10 per cent of disadvantage (according to SEIFA), most of these persons are in the Fairfield local government area. This also suggests disadvantage may persist in second generation communities (see Figure 13).[53]

Figure 13 – *Australian-Born Persons with Vietnamese Ancestry by IRSD Decile (2021)*



Note. Australians with Vietnamese heritage are represented across all deciles of the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD). This includes those with none or minimal indicators of disadvantage. However, Fairfield's Vietnamese community is disproportionately concentrated in the lowest 10% of households by disadvantage, suggesting the strong effects of place on disadvantage concentration. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023.

One theory that can help explain why more disadvantaged Vietnamese background Australians remain in Fairfield is segmented assimilation. This approach, applied in settings of new migrant arrivals in developed nations, argues that there is no single or linear pathway to assimilation for migrants. Rather, there are multiple pathways available to

[53] Around 9,000 of the over 14,000 Australian-born persons with Vietnamese as their primary ancestry (first response) live in the Fairfield Local Government Area. Canterbury-Bankstown and Liverpool make up the majority of the remainder of persons in the lowest IRSD quintile (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2023).

migrants to join the new society due to the broader presence of inequality. For example, integration may include acculturation into a middle class, joining lower urban social classes, or the retaining of immigrant culture while achieving economic integration.

In short, segmented assimilation expresses that a range of factors impact the integration potential of migrant communities, including human capital, available modes of incorporation, and family structure (Xie & Greenman, 2011, p. 969). As Portes et al. (2005) claimed: "Downward assimilation does not emerge … as a deliberate path, but as an outgrowth of a web of constraints, bad luck, and limited opportunities" (p. 1031).

It is possible that clustering of the Vietnamese communities in Australia's major cities is also distinctly tied with social mobility opportunities for different sub-cohorts. Looking at the Brisbane settlement experience, Glavac and Waldorf (1998, p. 356) found that the main predictors of spatial mobility were initial settlement and age profiles. Those who arrived in migrant hostels and transitioned into the community were more likely to join into existing large spatial clusters. The second major predictor was age, with very young (15-29 years) and old (60+ years) being more likely to leave established settlement locations to seek more suitable living arrangements for life-cycle opportunities. The case study would imply that employment and age are important components determining social and spatial mobility.

Assyrian Settlement in Fairfield

As a stateless people facing significant persecution throughout the 20th century, there is a long history of Assyrian exploring options for planned resettlement.[54] Planning of Assyrian community settlement in Fairfield goes back decades, and is marked by deliberate and coordinated attempts to build a cohesive community in place. In 1937, Assyrians were briefly considered to support the population of the Northern Territory, although this plan was later abandoned (Gapps, 2008, p. 39).

The Assyrian community began arriving in Australian during the 1960s. In this period, around 8,000 Assyrians settled, forming the AAA in 1969 to begin selection of a place for broader community settlement. This early wave of Assyrian (from Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon) settlement featured as part of the group of refugees protected under the League of Nations High Commissioner. For this special group, travel assistance was often paid by 'relatives', 'ethnic churches', or 'recognised voluntary agencies' (Price, 1986, p. 82).

The AAA's main objectives include supporting social opportunities, cultural activities, English language training, employment, migration, and building Assyrian and Australian cultural partnership (Gow et al., 2005, p. 9). The continued growth of the area into the 1970s allowed for the group to sponsor the arrivals of a church leader to establish the Assyrian Church of the East (Gapps, 2010, p. 381).

[54] Assyrians are a Christian, Syriac-speaking community who trace their linage back to ancient Mesopotamia where they rose to prominence between 2000 and 612 BC. Following the collapse of the Assyrian empire, they became a minority ethnic group. Northern Iraq is widely considered a homeland; approximately one million Assyrians are estimated to reside there currently (Gow et al., 2005, p.3). The ethnic history of Assyrians, Chaldeans and Syriac people has been a subject of much discussion (see Hanish, 2008).

In a meeting in 1966, a map of the Fairfield district from the NSW Department Planning was used to identify the future growth and development potential of the Fairfield area:

> in 1966, a small meeting was held between the early settlers to decide the future of Assyrians in this country …. The reason [Fairfield was chosen] was to centralise the development of all Assyrian social, religious and sporting activities, allowing greater access and participation. If we remained in the Sydney area, we would have scattered. And so, four or five families purchased fibro houses in Fairfield … and a few bought blocks of lands. (Dinkha Warda cited in Gow et al., 2005, p. 8)

There are stark contrasts between this early cohort of Assyrian migrants and those who came after the mid-1990s. Many of the older community members were able to settle in some of the wealthier suburbs of the area, with post mid-1990s migrants becoming increasingly polarised by religious denomination, nationalism, and regions (Gow et al., 2005). Churches have been a cultural centre for Assyrians, with at least five in the community representing different faith practices. Gow et al. (2005) estimated that the community had at least 32 distinct cultural organisations in 2005, suggesting a strong community capacity for self-determination, despite growing challenges (p. 16).

By 2005, there were issues in Assyrians receiving cultural services that fully recognised their history, including their language, within the broader migrant resourcing environment. Increasingly internal ethnic tension seemed to have been a growing component of tension within the community, closely related to events happening in the Middle East within Assyrian communities (Gow et al., 2005, p. 9). Despite deliberate efforts to plan Assyrian settlement and build cultural and supporting institutions, the community has faced significant hardship linked to recent humanitarian settlement, which has continued to intensify.

The Syrian Civil War Intake

In 2015, humanitarian settlement from the Syrian Civil War was announced as a priority of the Australian Government under Tony Abbott. The then premier of NSW, Mike Baird, also shared a view that Australia should try to accept a larger share of the refugee population from the conflict (Holbrook, 2020, p. 86). Premier Baird appointed Peter Shergold, former Secretary of the federal government's Prime Minister and Cabinet department, as a coordinator General to oversee the process for this intake. He went about putting together an advisory body, the' Joint Partnership Working Group on Refugee Settlement' (JPWG). The group included representatives from the federal government, state government, and community sector, utilising an experimental model of collaborative governance.

The JPWG would seek to cut across conventional leadership advisory styles that focused too much on top down and government led perspectives, rather than views from front-line staff and organisations at the community level. The group secured additional funding from the state's 2016 budget to provide a range of specialised on the ground services for: "overseas skills recognition service, extension of fee-free vocational training, non-English language support materials and a major program of targeted case management" (Holbrook, 2020, p. 90). A range of other client centred services, including youth targeted services, were offered

across a broad range of central portfolios including health, employment, education, and training.

Between 2015 and 2017 Australia accepted just under 25,000 humanitarian entrants for settlement from Syria and Iraq, with over 14,000 settling in NSW. This group was composed of a diverse range of ethnicities, with the largest being Iraqi, Syrian, Assyrian, 'Arab', and Chaldeans (Collins et al., 2018, p. 10). The ethnicities of those involved in conflict resettlement may also be more diverse than is reflected in the Census.[55] The majority of this settlement group were Christian and almost half were tertiary educated (Collins et al., 2023, p. vi). Of the group, many were highly paid professionals in their home country, in fields including engineering, health, and management professionals. Many were also small business owners (Collins et al., 2023, p. vi). With respect to gender, many of the married women occupied traditional unpaid caring responsibilities such as home making, child rearing, and caring for elderly parents and relatives. The average family size was 4.5 people, which is slightly above the Australia average and would contribute to pressures around overcrowding depending on dwelling selection.

Over a period of three surveys (Collins et al., 2023), the group showed trends towards better language proficiency and high levels of personal life satisfaction (p. 49). Employment had improved substantially, although only just over half (55%) had secured employment by the third review round (Collins et al., 2023, p. 33). Overall, these outcomes demonstrate the importance of coordinated programme, governance, and committed funding to deliver improvements over the longer term for humanitarian entrant communities. However, Fairfield's status as the most disadvantaged community in NSW is a reminder that efforts have not solved the underlying challenges experienced by humanitarian entrant background communities.

Conclusion

In this chapter the Australian humanitarian settlement system has been understood historically, institutionally, and with reference to place and community specificity. Considering these aspects together can help better understand the specifics of persistent disadvantage as it exists in Fairfield. The following chapter, which deals with segmented labour markets in Greater Western Sydney, will further strengthen an understanding of the spatial specificity of disadvantage in relation to Fairfield.

The Australian state has always had a highly selective and structured approach to migration within the broader setting of economic development and the filling of labour shortages. Dealing with the global crisis of humanitarian displacement after the Second World War would radically transform the racialised compact that had emerged under the White Australia policy. From the 1940s to the 1970s, a gradual unwinding of White Australia emerged as both a pragmatic response to Australia's economic development needs, coupled with a growing progressive and humanitarian sense that migration based racial

[55] For example, Collins (et al., 2023) conducted surveys of the group and found that from the group in NSW, Victoria, and Queensland, Iraqi ethnicities included: "Iraqi, Assyrian, Chaldean, Syriac and Ezidii" and the Syrian groups included: "Syrian, Armenian, Assyrian, Arab, Syriac and Kurdish" among others (p. 2).

discrimination was unacceptable. By the 1990s, the Howard government rearticulated this settlement agenda in the context of harder borders, with emphasis on the Australian state's vetting-based humanitarian settlement. Yet, governments of all persuasions have continued to accept relatively high rates of humanitarian settlement in Australia in per capita terms.

The settlement architecture overseen by the Home Affairs minister is a product of this historic setting. Humanitarian ideals about supporting lawful settlement of displaced persons are coupled with a need to advance Australia's local economic needs with regional geostrategic interests. The humanitarian component of the permanent visa system has frequently been a smaller component of the broader migration strategy, with skill visas being tightly geared to economic conditions. The discretionary nature of ministerial oversight around humanitarian visas has frequently meant that humanitarian entrant visa numbers have gone up (as a total share of permanent visas) in periods of worsening economic outlooks. This reality has exposed humanitarian visa holders to adverse shocks. A logical solution to this dilemma would be a system of planned humanitarian settlement coordinated with programmes to ensure high levels of language, skill, and employment acquisition. The continued dominance of temporary visas also requires care coordination to maximise the ongoing success of the permanent immigration system.

Fairfield has experienced significant refugee settlement through the humanitarian visa pathway; the largest groups being Vietnamese, Syrian and Iraqi nationals. The first of these case studies demonstrated that economic shocks are coupled with a form of segmentation. Vietnamese people in Fairfield have much higher concentrations of disadvantage than other people of Vietnamese ancestry across greater Sydney. A possible explanation of this pattern is segmented assimilation, where less spatial mobile persons remain in an area that cannot guarantee greater opportunity. The following chapter explores the implications of this concentration in relation to segmented labour markets. The Assyrian community offered different insights, namely that deliberate planning over the longer-term has not protected their community from common disadvantages experienced by humanitarian entrant communities in place. Additional analysis might identify whether a pattern of segmented assimilation will dominate for this group over the longer-term. Future research could consider the overall effectiveness of the JPWG.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated how the regulation of the humanitarian visa system is a core element driving persistent disadvantage in Fairfield. As an epicentre of the humanitarian settlement system, Fairfield serves to benefit the most from more coordinated efforts to settle humanitarian entrant communities through targeted central planning, coordination, and programme delivery efforts. The following chapter explains in more detail how existing programmes service the Fairfield community, and how the employment system has contributed to challenges around disadvantage.

Finding solutions to these challenges is critical, with the world now facing the largest refugee populations since the Second World War. There are currently more than 100 million persons displaced and at least 21 million refugees. Climate change will lead to an increase in climate related displacement and interborder movements of people, especially in the Indo-Pacific (Parkinson et al., 2023, p. 20). Australia can play a meaningful role in addressing the reality of this environment by continuing to accept a high per capita share of humanitarian

visas, and maximising the life chances of these groups by proposing community-driven solutions to disadvantage in place. The following thesis chapters provide an approach that addresses this possibility.

Chapter Four: Segmented Labour Markets

Outline

The previous chapter identified the history, policy, and specific community settings within the humanitarian settlement system driving disadvantage formation in Fairfield. The current chapter builds on this argument by exploring the history of employment policy and the segmented labour market to show how it drives poorer labour market outcomes. Specifically, it explains how the structure of the labour market amplifies and extends the impacts of the migration settlement system to drive major elements of persistent disadvantage.

The interactivity of the humanitarian settlement system with the employment system generates interlocking and reinforcing outcomes within the Fairfield community. Highly concentrated humanitarian settlement, including in periods of economic downturns, delivers poor coordination in the critical early years of settlement. The existence of a segmented labour market in Greater Western Sydney means that those that do transition into local employment opportunities are likely to experience lower quality jobs impacting lifetime income, social mobility, and intergenerational mobility. Having identified the core challenge of persistent disadvantage, subsequent chapters will outline the role of coordinated federalism and place-based policy in driving adequate financial resourcing with local empowerment to address this challenge.

Existing employment policy, as well as the distribution of employment (i.e., where the jobs are), have been shaped by a distinct history of unemployment management, urbanisation, and industrial declining shaping outcomes for communities across Greater Western Sydney. Within this context, it is argued that the spatial structure of employment and industry create significant spatial barriers to employment, reinforcing community disadvantage and limiting skill formation. Within the broader pattern of unequal opportunities, lower incomes reinforce, and are central drivers of, worse social outcomes.

The first section explores the labour market system and its re-regulation following the crisis of stagflation. Structural unemployment re-emerged as a critical policy issue in the mid-1970s, with policy responses gradually adapting from demand-orientated public employment solutions to policy-driven solutions aiming to maximise activity and the human capital (i.e., skills, education and experience) of the unemployed. Gradually, this led to a rearticulation from ‘reciprocal obligation’, where government was expected to provide employment as a responsibility to ‘mutual obligation’ which focused on the unemployed as a focus of regulation emerged.

Beyond the regulation of unemployment, it is critical to also understand the role of industrial geography in Western Sydney as a drive of disadvantage. After the stagflation crisis of the 1970s, industrial centres began to leave the inner-city areas and Greater Western Sydney absorbed the vast majority of new factory work. This included employment centres near Fairfield, where an increasingly lower skilled and traditionally blue-collar workforce emerged. At the same time, an increasing concentration of white-collar professional service employment emerged around the City of Sydney.

Segmented labour market theory supports an explanation of this bifurcation of industry and employment (Grimshaw et al., 2017; Leontaridi, 1998; Seo, 2021). The theory proposes that there are multiple geographically specific labour markets, with some advantaged and some disadvantaged. Disadvantaged workers can become trapped in disadvantaged labour markets, contributing to low incomes and driving unequal social outcomes, as is evidently the case across Sydney.

Analysis of the employment system, industrial structure, and segmented labour market is complemented by scrutiny of the evidence emerging from data documenting the experiences of humanitarian settlement in Australia. An analysis of the *Building a New Life in Australia* (BNLA) survey yields important insights on the challenges faced by humanitarian entrant communities. By tracking longitudinal outcomes across a range of domains, the BNLA survey helps concretise the specific barriers experienced by humanitarian entrant communities, which can include significant language and skill gaps, poorer mental health outcomes, and challenges in attaining employment. Most importantly, the report substantiates international evidence that the first 5 years of settlement are the most critical in determining life outcomes of humanitarian migrants. In particular, the BNLA report finds that humanitarian entrant women have some of the greatest employment challenges, with low labour market participation rates. This is due to the compounding effect of poorer job access and skill matching, with gendered expectations around family unpaid caring and household work.

The final section applies these discussions to the specifics of Fairfield to provide an enriched explanation of persistent disadvantage. Fairfield retains a higher reliance on industrial employment, including lower skilled and non-professional work in manufacturing. This is coupled with higher unemployment rates and low labour force participation rates, particularly for humanitarian entrant women. With Greater Western Sydney experiencing rapid population growth and significant planning projects, such as the Western Sydney Airport, Fairfield has struggled to gain adequate focused attention to support local regional investment and build appropriate local skills responses. This discussion substantiates the challenges emerging from the specific barriers highly concentrated humanitarian entrant communities face around employment, and the need for coordinated governance and local leadership.

Australian Labour Market Policy and Stagflation

The level of regular income an individual or family can receive has a defining influence of the opportunity and quality of their life, measured in terms of overall health (Marmot, 2002, p. 31), education level (Chevalier et al., 2013, p. 8), and even general happiness (Ball & Chernova, 2008, p. 497). Conversely, lack of income frequently leads to material deprivation (Benzeval & Judge, 2001, p. 3), limiting both how people participate in society and the agency they have to make decisions about how they live their lives. The length of time spent with low income also has an impact on longer term quality of life. Evidence suggests that longer periods of low income and poverty are major drivers of poorer health and well-being outcomes (Marmot, 2002, p. 42). Unemployment, a major cause of low income, leads to lower health outcomes and can amplify many other social problems including levels of crime, inequality, homelessness, and family breakdown (Wood et al., 2018, p. 237).

This issue is pertinent for new migrant communities. First generation migrants have been shown to experience substantial downward mobility both in terms of the skill level of their work and level of income (Papademetriou et al., 2009). Downward social mobility for migrants in high income countries can also lead to a range of mental disorders (Das-Munshi et al., 2012). While migrant groups frequently converge and, in some instances, exceed the outcomes of non-migrant communities, poor health outcomes and poverty can entrench lower social outcomes for already vulnerable communities (Case & Paxson, 2006, p. 168). For this reason, access to a reasonable income and higher quality employment has a major bearing on quality of life.

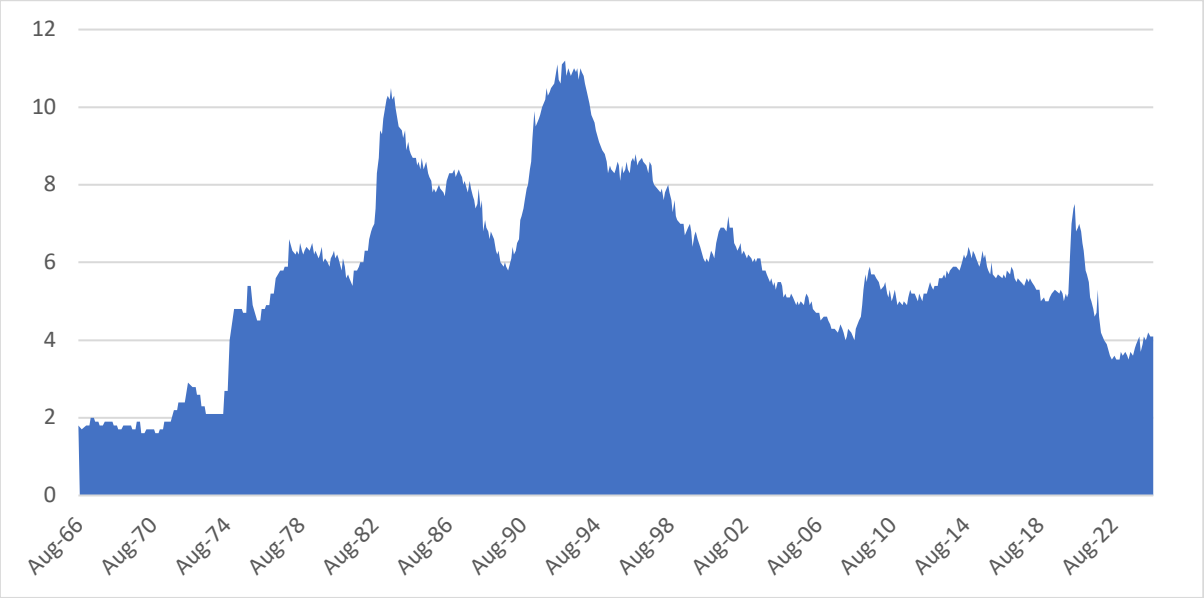
The decline of full-employment[56] radically transformed society and employment policy in Australia, with implications of deepening social inequalities. Like most developed economies throughout the full-employment period, which reigned from around the Second World War until the mid-1970s, Australia experienced a 1-2 per cent unemployment rate.[57] Since the mid-1970s, Australian policy makers adapted to a world of higher generalised rates of unemployment. The largest unemployment rate in the post-war period was around 11 per cent, reached during the late 1980s to early 1990s recession (Borland, 2011, p. 166) (see Figure 14).

While unemployment was emerging as a significant social issue, the industrial structure of industry in Australian cities was also changing. Increasingly, the growing post-war suburbs of Greater Western Sydney became a centre for the city's manufacturing and warehousing, as industry was pushed out of the inner city. Regional disparities, where population growth consistently outpaced the numbers and quality of jobs, began to define the western suburbs during a historical setting of higher general unemployment (Fagan, 1986, 1993; Fagan & Dowling 2003). This section explores the complex interactions of these elements throughout the 20th century.

[56] Full-employment is a complex concept that has evolved over time. The measure has frequently been associated with the non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment (NAIRU); that is, the level of unemployment that delivers stable wages or prices without creating further inflation. This relatively narrow definition does not take into account other aspects of employment, such as labour market underutilisation (underemployment). A range of minority groups are disproportionately impacted by worse labour market outcomes (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023, p. 23).

[57] This chapter principally looks at unemployment using the 'unemployment rate'. This rate is defined as "the number of people aged 15 and over that are looking for and available to work, but not currently working, expressed as a share of the labour force" (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023, p. 32). This measure is useful for identifying changes in headline trends in employment but does not provide a comprehensive across the multiple dimensions of unemployment.

Figure 14 – *Unemployment Rate (%), Seasonally Adjusted (1966-2024)*



Note. The 1960s in Australia were marked by historically low national unemployment rates. The mid-1970s marked the first major crisis with stagflation; subsequently, substantial rises in unemployment emerged in the early 1980s recession, the late 1980s/early 1990s recession, a small rise in the early 2000s, and again following the Great Recession, with the last major spike resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic (2019–2023). Adapted from *Labour Force, Australia,* by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024.

Labour Market Policy from the Early 20th Century to the Mid-1970s

To understand the emergence and management of higher levels of unemployment beginning from the 1980s, it is necessary to explore the origins and evolution of this policy environment. In Australia, in the early 20th century, government saw the management of unemployment centred on the discrete concept of relief (i.e., charity), taking the form of either rations provisioning (i.e., gifts of food) or access to temporary work programmes. Employment management, as a responsibility of the federal government, emerged as a consequence of the Great Depression (1929-1939) and in the aftermath of the war economy developed during the Second World War. The Depression cemented unemployment as a responsibility of government to manage and minimise, while the Second World War created the need for the promotion of maximising labour force participation. Government feared the social consequences of not preserving full employment[58] (Nevile, 2018, p. 447) which supported ongoing full employment and led to government committing to maximise labour force participation and full-employment in perpetuity (Harris, 2001, p. 12; Jenkins, 1945, p. 240)

As a result, the Labor Party commissioned the publication in 1945 of the *Full Employment in Australia* White Paper. The White Paper supported that government had a direct responsibility to influence the level of employment in society. Under this direction, proactive employment policy would be used as a counter-cyclical instrument to induce demand for goods and services via the provisioning of public works. As part of a broad social

[58] There emerged a deep belief that the impacts of high levels of unemployment were connected to the rise of Fascism and, therefore, social destabilisation (Nevile, 2018, p. 446).

compact, these efforts would, in turn, support the sustained growth of the Australian economy. Having absorbed income taxation powers from the states during the Second World War (see Chapter 5), the federal government grew its revenue raising power significantly, and was made responsible for the national delivering of social assistance programmes. This provided for the establishment of the National Welfare Fund which led to the establishment of the Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) (Harris, 2001, p. 12).

The CES was critical in managing unemployment to meet the full employment objectives. It required efforts to codify a technical definition of full-time permanent employment, as well as non-voluntary labour force participation. A working definition of unemployment was also needed so that a work test could be undertaken to assess eligibility for welfare payments. In this respect, the CES served a critical role in supporting the regulation of labour relations by providing a framework for the conditions for social services receipt for the unemployed (O'Donnell, 2003, p. 344).

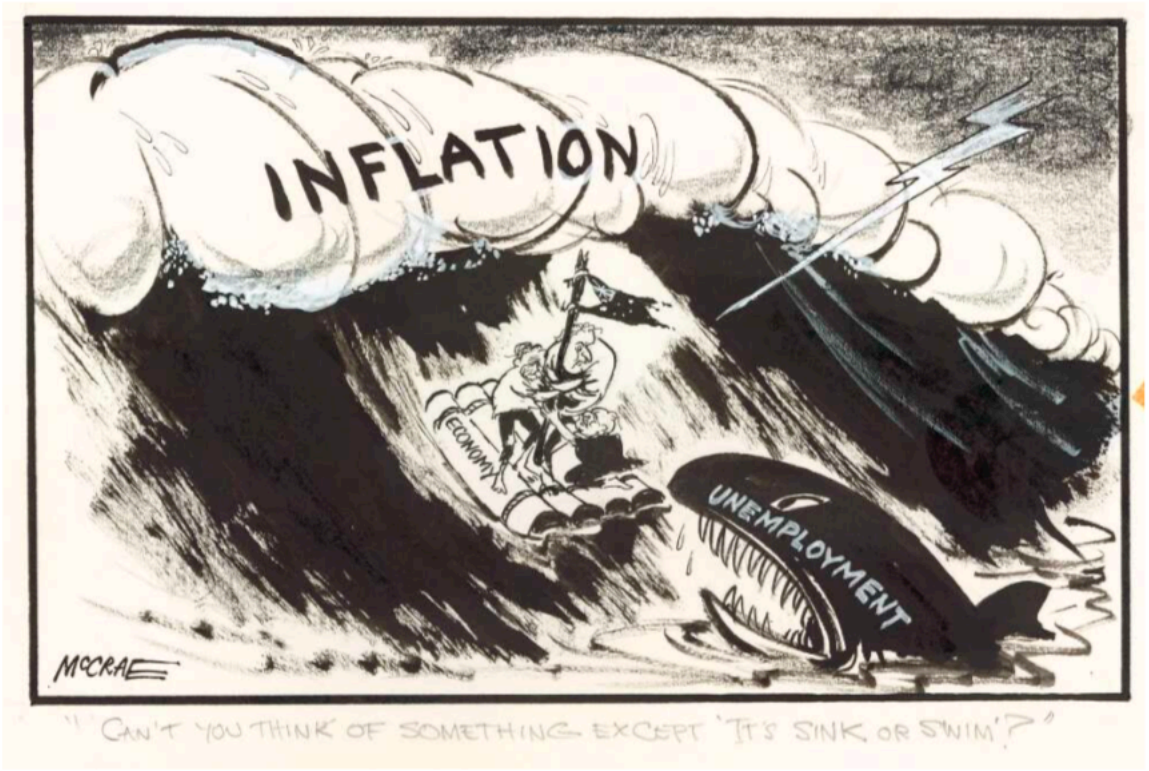
The full employment compact began to break down from the early 1970s due to a series of crises. These included a global oil price crisis, a slow-down in global growth levels, the collapse of Bretton Woods,[59] and the breakout in both inflation and unemployment. This combination became known as 'stagflation' (economic stagnation and inflation), which governments struggled to manage without either pushing economies into recessions or dramatically raising the unemployment level (see Figure 15). It led to the rise of monetary (inflation targeting) policy solutions as a means of managing the economy (Kilian, 2009, p. 10); in turn, diminishing the prominence of full employment as a principal objective for government.

Around this time, under the short-lived McMahon government in 1972, active labour market policies (ALMPs) were introduced. Initially, demand side programmes driven by public employment were used to lower the overall unemployment rate. An example included the Whitlam government's establishment of the Regional Employment Development Scheme in 1974; a grant programme for states and local government as well as community organisations to generate temporary employment. Under Whitlam there were also apprentice training and structural adjustment programmes to support workers impacted by the removal of the national tariffs system[60] (Cook, 2008, p. 31).

[59] Bretton Woods was a monetary management system introduced after the Second World War. It provided exchange rate stability with an adjustable peg system designed for periods of system disequilibrium. It can be argued that it avoided some of the negative aspects of floating rates, such as rampant speculation and beggar-thy-neighbour devaluations (Bordo, 1993, pp. 28-31).

[60] Tariffs are a tax raised on imported products, often argued to support domestic products and industry by stimulating local employment. Economists generally oppose tariffs because they reducing competition within sectors, lowering the efficiency and quality of products (c.f., Horridge, 1988, p. 61).

Figure 15 – *Stagflation Political Cartoon*



Note. The stagflation crisis of the 1970s had a profound effect on policy, caught between an inflation and unemployment crisis. From "Can't you think of something except 'it's sink or swim'?", by S. McCrae, 1972, *The Courier-Mail.* Reprinted with permission.

As mentioned, the pursuit of full-employment became increasingly untenable under the growing monetary focus of emergent economic policy. As a result, the Fraser government (1975-1983) was the first to articulate the need of an 'acceptable level of unemployment' to control inflation (Harris, 2001, p. 16). Under Fraser, the government would shift to youth unemployment policy under the Special Youth Employment Training Programme. This change began a movement away from programmes supporting public employment to training centred opportunities and non-public sector solutions.

The Fraser government also adopted welfare programmes targeted at disadvantage jobseeker cohorts including First Nations job seekers with the Community Employment Development Programme. Disability cohorts were later incorporated into specialised training programmes (Cook, 2008, p. 4). However, social welfare eligibility was tightened, requiring those who were voluntarily unemployed to wait 6 weeks before receiving welfare. Income reporting became a fortnightly requirement and persons over 18 years would be expected to move to a location where there were jobs if they could not find them in their locality (Harris, 2001, p. 16). The stage was set for a policy compact that directly sought to manage and regulate higher general unemployment as a normal state of affairs.

Active Labour Market Policy in the 1980s

By the 1980s, policy makers had accepted that returning to full employment would simply not be possible. In the new economic environment, prioritisation increasingly focused on inflation rate (price) stability. The concept of activity-based labour market participation, where engagement and capacity to engage in employment is monitored, was proposed as a potential solution to managing unemployment (Harris, 2001, p. 17). The Hawke Labor government (1983-1991) promised to focus on structural unemployment as a major policy objective, creating the Community Employment Programme (CEP) which provided award wages to the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged for a three to nine month period. The CEP targeted a broad range of cohorts experiencing unemployment-based disadvantage including: First Nations, migrant communities and the disabled (Cook, 2008, p. 4).

Increasingly, the long-term unemployed and disadvantaged would become central foci of active labour market programmes. Major reviews in the period, such as the 1985 *Kirby Inquiry into Labour Market Programs*, challenged job creation programmes and supported better training options. The review also suggested better targeting of existing welfare programmes, as well as tailored assistance services to those facing long term unemployment. This culminated in the creation of Newstart in 1989, a specialised programme for the long-term unemployed. The Newstart programme envisaged programme recipients as 'jobseekers' which included an 'activity test' to ensure those in the unemployment welfare system met a threshold of attempting to find employment and/or further training (Cook, 2008, p. 6).

In 1994, under the Keating Labor government (1991-1996), the *Working Nation* White Paper promoted the creation of a jobs compact to tackle longer term unemployment by facilitating job placements for those that had been unemployed for longer than 18 months (Harris, 2001, p. 18). The work programme sought to eradicate long-term unemployment through a broad range of interventions such as regional development initiatives, microeconomic reforms, and education and training. Importantly, the introduction of this new model was geared around the notion of 'reciprocal obligation'. It represented a view that governments were *obligated* to work with the unemployed to find long-term employment solutions, thereby seeking to avoid unemployment (Cook, 2008, p. 5).

This shift coincided with a turn away from systemic macroeconomic strategies to solve unemployment. Instead, there would be a move towards a deepened focus on managing the unemployed, while supporting privatisation-based case management strategies (Harris, 2001, p. 22). Reciprocal obligation, while iterating the government and individual relationship as well as the structural obligation of government, represented a shift in unemployment policy towards individuals as the main unit of the policy system. The full-employment mandate that had dominated policy after the Second World War was by now unattainable, representing a long-abandoned aspiration.

From Howard to Jobkeeper

The election of the Howard government (1996-2007) brought about the widespread abolishment of labour market programmes, with both spending and programme

participation rates falling substantially. The CES was closed and replaced with the Job Network, where agencies were expected to provide a competitive marketplace to find jobs for the unemployed (Harris, 2001, p. 18). The concept of 'reciprocal obligation' also rebuilt as 'mutual obligation' which continued the trend of an individualised unemployment system, in which the unemployed were increasingly scrutinised as recipients of public funds. The result was an increasing focus on the obligations of the unemployed to the public (i.e., taxpayers), with mandating of legislated training and employment arrangements. The result was the 'Work for the Dole' programme (i.e., compulsory employment programmes). The programme sanctioned compliance checks as a condition for ongoing payment for welfare recipients (Cook, 2008, p. 5). Evidence has suggested that the Work for the Dole programme actually lowered the probability of participants actively seeking employment (Borland & Tseng, 2011, p. 21).

Since Howard, key active labour market policy included the establishment of Job Services Australia and Disability employment services, under the Rudd government (2007-2010) (Borland, 2011, p. 170). Critics contended reforms under Rudd merely represented continuity with Howard's unemployment management system. For example, many of the trademarks of the Howard government, including privatisation of services, supply focused human capital approaches, mutual obligation, and welfare to work remained under the Rudd programme (Cook et al., 2008, p. 3).

A significant experiment within the employment and job system emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. JobKeeper (2020-21) was a 12-month programme designed to protect households and businesses through periods of extended lockdowns to manage the spread of the virus, with the federal government covering employers to retain employees and pay wages. This allowed the employed to retain their existing work connections to their employer, lowering the overall potential burden of unemployment. The programme bolstered wages to protect households overall, although the limited targeting in its early phase was expensive and likely led to regressive redistribution[61] (Borland & Hunt, 2023, p. 116). This intervention, coupled with the simultaneous temporary rise in the JobSeeker payment under the Coronavirus Supplement, significantly lowered potential unemployment and the level of poverty[62] (Davidson, 2022, p. 9).

More recently, attention moved away from the activity system towards efforts to address the increasingly precarious nature of work. Since the 1980s, deliberate efforts to dampen wage growth coupled with the dismantling of sector negotiation and arbitration in favour of enterprise agreements, coincided with declining union membership. This had the overall effect of strengthening the power of employers, increasing the atomisation within employment (Stanford, 2019, p. 178). As a response, recent initiatives under the Albanese

[61] There were significant gaps in eligibility under the JobKeeper program. For example, casual employees with less than 12 months of service were excluded from the program. Full time and part time permanent employees, however received compensation regardless of tenure. This implies that communities with higher rates of casualisation were less likely to benefit from the programme (Borland & Hunt, 2023, p.116).
[62] According to Davidson (2022): "An estimated 2,613,000 people were in poverty in June 2020, much less than the 3,018,000 in 2019, and half the number that would have been in poverty (5,772,000) in June 2020 had the COVID income supports not been introduced" (p. 10).

government (2022-present) have included improved efforts to protect the rights of gig workers, providing pathways to permanent employment for casuals and raising minimum and award wages (Underhill & Quinlan, 2024, p. 88).

Technology and automation-based unemployment policy has also become increasingly visible as critical frontier of public policy. The 'Robodebt' scandal, where taxation office data were automated to predict income averages, and cross checked with reported income, led to egregious outcomes from the issuance of incorrectly calculated personal debts. This led to significant personal harm (including suicide) in some instances. The scheme garnered significant media attention and criticism, with the federal government called to take responsibility for the social impacts of the scheme (Braithwaite, 2020, p. 248). Regulating and understanding the role of technology-based automation in public policy decision making remains a debated area.

Summary

Employment policy in Australia has evolved significantly since the Second World War. Initially envisaged as a policy means to prevent social unrest while rebuilding the nation economy, full-employment policy became a central focus of government. After the stagflation crisis, there was growing acknowledge of the need to accept higher levels of unemployment along with inflation management as a stabilisation mechanism for the economy. Unemployment and active labour market focused policy increasingly focused on individuals, as more targeted programme measures were adopted to support cohorts experiencing disadvantage.

The Work for the Dole scheme marked a significant shift towards mutual obligation, where the unemployed were positioned as responsible agents in relation to government. Reform efforts have since been targeted at lifting the standard of employment. However, there are growing risks from the use of technology and automation-based practices to govern the unemployed. The JobKeeper and social security supplement introduced during COVID-19 showed government willing to underrate interventionist measures during times of crisis. The *Working Future* White Paper (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023) and the Local Jobs Programme (discussed below), demonstrated a revived interest in responding to the systemic nature of unemployment and disadvantage with localised labour market solutions and supporting wraparound programmes.

Development of Labour Markets in Greater Western Sydney

While labour market regulation was developing and evolving after the Second World War, so too was migration policy (see Chapter 3) and accompanying suburbanisation to support larger urban populations. From 1950 to 1970 Greater Western Sydney's population grew substantially, driven by more affordable and desirable housing options, supplying a considerable market for goods and services and an expanded labour market. Over this period, Fairfield's population ballooned from 27,000 to 132,000 (Fagan, 1986, p. 12). Factories and manufacturing work over the period continued to blow-out into greenfield estates.

Sydney specialised in specific whitegoods and manufacturing components including "chemicals, metal fabrication, industrial machinery and equipment, printed and published materials and processed foods" (Blakely & Fagan, 1988, p. 13). By the 1970s, factory estates were increasingly relocated to areas in Greater Western Sydney, due to their lower cost industrial land and space for facilities. Local manufacturing goods serviced demand in both domestic and international markets. The outward growth also supported a significant local construction sector, housing the growing suburban population (Fagan, 1986, p. 12). As a result, a regional labour market was highly consolidated by this time, shaped by suburbanised housing and industrial growth in small-scale manufacturing.

Overall, the local dependency on manufacturing was a great strength in the first instance. During the prosperity of the post-war era, Western Sydney experienced a full employment rate comparable to the rest of Sydney, with no significant regional divides in access to jobs. In 1971, Sydney's average unemployment rate was just 1 per cent with only a couple of outer metropolitan suburbs sitting slightly above this figure at around 2 per cent.[63] However, by 1978 these conditions had sharply unravelled, and Sydney's average unemployment rate was at 6 per cent. Fairfield, at this time, held an unemployment rate above this average at 8.5 per cent. Economic downturns had a severe impact on manufacturing and construction, impacting Greater Western Sydney's unemployment rates. In the 1981-82 recession, the male unemployment rate in Greater Western Sydney reached around 26 per cent at its peak (Blakely & Fagan, 1988, p. 4).

By 1983, 'food, beverages, and tobacco' became the major focus of local factory production, as declines in textiles and clothing as well as metals and engineering occurred. Significant declines in metal trade works, particularly around equipment related to transport and machinery, were highly impactful. Jobs in these areas had made up a significant share of the skilled industrial workforce, leading to an increasingly lower quality employment base for the remaining industrial work in the area. This trend would continue with major branch closures, while smaller factories continued to hone a range of small niches with lower skilled and smaller workforces (Fagan, 1986, p. 15).

Diminishing availability and quality of jobs amplified the severe impacts of the 1990-91 recession. By 1992, Fairfield had an unemployment rate of 14.6 per cent, substantially above the national average of 9.6 per cent. By 1993, Fairfield's unemployment rate would peak at 20 per cent, with a youth unemployment rate of 39 per cent. Overwhelmingly, non-English speaking background communities, youth, and males were the most affected by the high rate of unemployment (Fagan, 1993, p. 18). The severe impacts on Fairfield likely compounded many of the settlement challenges faced by humanitarian migrants, as will be discussed.

By the mid-1990s, Sydney had become a capital for corporate finance with clear divisions emerging between the city's high-income professionals and lower status workers (Baum, 1997, p. 1884). These trends have been underpinned by high differentiation in the quality of jobs and the concentration of unemployment. During this time Greater Western Sydney, as

[63] For example, Katoomba and Mount Druitt both had an unemployment rate closer to 2 per cent during the period.

an epicentre for tradesperson employment, fell behind the City of Sydney[64] in the number of available white-collar jobs (Fagan, 1986, p. 12). Fairfield has consistently experienced the highest city averages of unemployment during and after the rapid phases of deindustrialisation. To understand why unemployment has remained so concentrated in suburbs like Fairfield, it is necessary to explore approaches that can help explain this discrepancy.

Segmented Labour Market Theory

Since stagflation, there has been a growth in overall unemployment (compared to the full-employment period) and a growing regional divide in employment between Greater Western Sydney and the City of Sydney. Fairfield became one of the main epicentres of large-scale unemployment, due in part to dependence on employment in manufacturing. This section proposes a theoretical approach to why regional disparities exist within major cities, such as Sydney, to support a focused analysis of humanitarian settlement communities.

Segmented Labour Market theory[65] emerged in the 1960s, gaining prominence in the 1970s and 1980s, interrogating explanation of persistent community poverty and critiquing the mainstream view that labour markers were efficient overall. Segmented Labour Market theorists argued that minorities who experienced historical discrimination, such as the United States' African-American communities, could become trapped in 'secondary' or lower skilled employment. The Segmented Labour Market theorists made a case for cultural segmentation in employment and industrial relation systems, which penalise those who are excluded from access to higher quality jobs.

Segmented Labour Market theory challenged mainstream (neoclassical) views that wages were an outcome of the demand of hiring firms and the overall productivity and output of the employee (Seo, 2021, p. 488). Its proponents asked questions about how institutions and the division of labour shape outcomes for different cohorts of people in society (Leontaridi, 1998, p. 95). In this regard they also raised normative questions about the fairness of existing employment relations. In contrast, mainstream approaches drew on human capital theory, suggesting inadequate investment in labour was the primary source of lower wages and employment outcomes (Grimshaw et al., 2017, p. 3).

The Segmented Labour Market approach also focused on the spatial immobility of labour. It forwarded that due to the highly specialised nature of work limited by social, occupational, and spatial considerations, labour takes on a highly fixed character limiting the ability to take up new roles and positions that emerge in the economy (i.e., manufacturing workers tending to be both male and urban). This perspective aligned with views of classical economists, who noted that the demands on low-income manual labourers prevented them from undertaking further training that would create new opportunities for employment (McNabb & Ryan, 1989, p. 152).

[64] The City of Sydney encompasses a core financial and services district alongside inner city urban and harbourside suburbs.

[65] 'Dual labour market theory' is frequented associated with the Segmented Labour Market school due to a shared focus on similar questions regarding different labour market systems (Leontaridi, 1998).

Segmented Labour Market theory proposed the existence of a secondary labour market in which less desirable jobs (i.e., lower paid, lower quality, and potentially weaker autonomy) are located. As labour market roles are positional goods (i.e., relatively scarce and subject to competition) more advantaged labourers with greater professional and education status outcompete those in the secondary labour market for higher-income and more predictable, stable employment. This means that disadvantaged cohorts that seek employment are compelled to take jobs that have lower (or unpredictable) income, are insecure (or casual), lack opportunities for further career progression, and may create limited opportunities for improvement and social mobility over time (Seo, 2021, p. 489). In this respect, less desirable jobs are an outcome of the sorting mechanism within the labour market that distributes employment opportunities.

Applying the Segmented Labour Market approach, it can be argued that disadvantaged cohorts of workers have historically been more exposed to secondary labour markets due to historic discrimination or systemic undervaluing of their work. These include migrant communities, especially those without advanced language skills in the arrival country. Jobs for multicultural migrants have frequently been in manual labour and semi-skilled occupations, especially in manufacturing, construction, and warehousing. These jobs have generally been more precarious and more dangerous.

Another significant group in the secondary labour market is women, who historically experienced systemic underpayment for comparable work, lower social mobility opportunities in employment, and the devaluation of unpaid care and household work. Feminist and gender economics offer compatible insights with Segmented Labour Market theory, emphasising how gender inequality in employment has been linked to lower income and wealth outcomes, reinforcing financial precarity of women in the economy (Himmelweit, 2017, p. 73). Women who have worked have frequently been forced into lower paying care-centred work, such as health and aged care work.

Feminist economics has argued that comparable work can be systematically devalued due to the perceived value of different cohorts of people (Grimshaw et al., 2017, p. 8). Women from humanitarian entrant backgrounds face multiple barriers to employment and consistently experience worse employment outcomes than their male counterparts (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2017, p. 15). Structural disadvantage can take forms that systemically underprivilege certain cohorts leading to worse social outcomes (see Krahn et al., 2000, pp. 81-82). Understanding this cohort experience can help better address the systemic barriers that present themselves in communities experiencing structural disadvantage, including the Fairfield community.

A range of international studies support the existing pervasiveness of Segmented Labour Markets in various instances of humanitarian settlement. The European Union (EU) has been one of the major developed economic regions receiving large scale humanitarian settlement. One study in the EU found refugee communities experienced weaker income, occupation quality, and participation persisting for 9-10 years (Fasani et al., 2020, p. 16). Evidence suggests that people with refugee backgrounds perform worse overall in labour markets, compared with other migrant groups, even once controls are introduced for

language ability, age, and educational attainment (Ott, 2013, p. 1). This would suggest that Segmented Labour Market theory may equally apply in European settings, reflecting a more generalised experience for refugee communities.

Bakker et al. (2017) in the Netherlands, found a 15-year 'employment gap' between refugee communities and the general population, which gradually diminished over time (p. 1782). The study also indicated different longer-term outcomes for refugee groups by origin country. For example, Iranian people with refugee backgrounds were seen to have higher levels of employment over the longer-term, with the author speculating this is due to prior educational attainment. Women, particularly those from Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq performed worse over time in employment, potentially due to cultural and gender expectations around non-employment (i.e., caring responsibilities) (Bakker et al., 2017, p. 1787). Another critical factor was age, with younger refugee community members more likely to attain a higher level of language proficiency than older cohorts.[66] The study could support an understanding of cultural and gendered dimensions to Segmented Labour Market formation.

This effect of downward employment mobility for refugee communities is widely documented, with similar structural reasons identified within case studies. In the Canadian setting, Krahn et al. (2000) found that structural barriers including 'labour market shelters' (i.e., institutions protecting more advantaged workers) served to keep refugee communities in lower paid settings (p. 61). In the study, respondents reported frustration as a regular feature of being unable to find gainful employment in occupations where communities frequently had considerable professional and social status in their country of origin. The study also substantiated the existence of parallel labour markets, as asserted by Segmented Labour Market theory.

Humanitarian Settlement and Employment

This section explores the evidence around humanitarian settlement and labour markets in Australia and internationally and provides an interpretation using the Segmented Labour Market approach. The section opens with a review of Australia's most significant longitudinal study of humanitarian entrant communities—BNLA. Consistent with international studies, finding a job remains one of the most consistent challenges over the longer-term for humanitarian entrants. English language mastery is an important pathway to employment and better access to services. Humanitarian entrant women experience much lower rates of labour market participation, as would be anticipated, because of cultural expectations around women as primary carers for their parents and children. The international and domestic evidence are considered, with a focus on longitudinal studies to understand the persistent barriers faced by humanitarian entrants.

[66] Noting that the authors speculation hypothesis could not be tested directly due to data limitations.

Insights from the Building a New Life in Australia Study

BNLA[67] is a longitudinal study of specified cohorts of humanitarian migrants and their families who arrived or had permanent visas approved between May and October in 2013. The study is the longest undertaken in Australia on longer-term humanitarian settlement outcomes, allowing a focus on factors that contribute to successful resettlement outcomes. Surveyed domains include employment, language, and training attainment, housing, health, community support, and life satisfaction in Australia (De Maio et al., 2014, p. 357).

The BNLA survey sample has many demographic similarities with Fairfield's humanitarian migrant population, including a high Iraqi and Syrian settlement population, a relatively high Christian population, and a substantial NSW, metropolitan sample.[68] The study is helpful in affirming consistency between international and local evidence around humanitarian settlement. It confirms several major barriers to employment including English language ability, educational attainment, and overall health. Over a long term, humanitarian entrant employment did improve significantly. For example, by year 10 in Australia, around 54 per cent of the survey group were in the labour force.

Notably, the most dramatic improvements in labour market participation were made in the first 5 years after settlement, with minimal change between years 5 and 10. This suggests that major improvements in labour market participation are largely attained in the early years of arrival and settlement (van Kooy et al., 2024, p. 38). As noted in Chapter Three, humanitarian migrant communities have been more likely to be exposed to economic shocks as a percentage share of the total immigration take in periods of economic downturn. This demonstrates that the early economic environment of settlement, as well as existing targeted programmes, have a significant impact on employment, shaping mobility outcomes.

Beyond the clear barriers experienced by humanitarian entrants, minority sub-cohorts, including women, the elderly, and those with poorer English language abilities, fared worse in their level of social and economic participation. Survey respondents were also asked what major barriers they experienced in their search for work. Barriers included a lack of work experience in Australia (47%), limited English language ability (47%), limited skills and qualifications (37%), and a lack of suitable employment (35%) (van Kooy et al., 2024, pp. 26-38). These experiences fit closely with the Segmented Labour Market theory. As will be discussed, entry level communities, and the availability and quality of local employment opportunities, as influenced by local industry, are more limited in Greater Western Sydney.

---

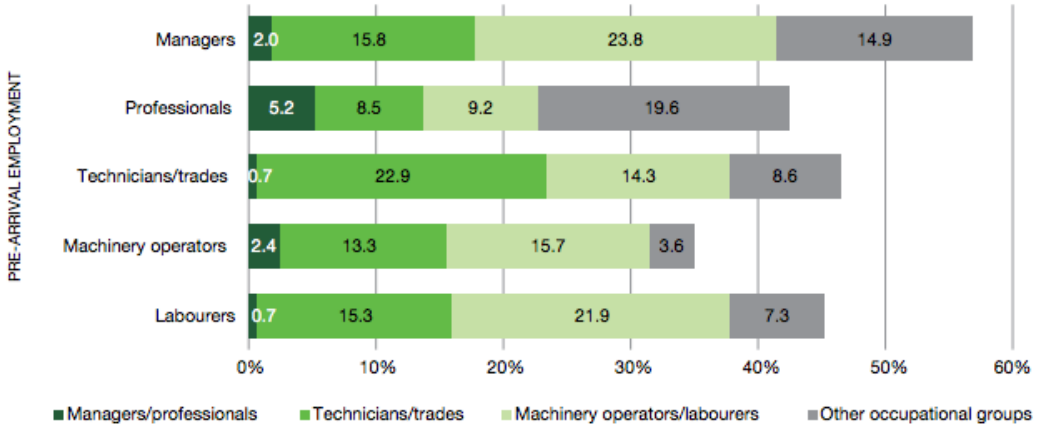
[67] The study is managed by the federal government, currently the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS). Previously in 2014, it was administered by the Department of Social Services, and up until 2013 the Department of Immigration and Citizenship.

[68] The majority of the BNLA survey group were born in Iraq and Syria (43.7%), Afghanistan (22.7%), Iran (10.6%), South Asia (10.3%), Africa (5.4%), and Myanmar (6.8%). Regarding religion, most persons were either practitioners of Christianity (43.9%) or Islam (34.8%), with small number of Buddhists, Hindus (14.8%), and the non-religious (6.5%). In terms of age, while the majority were under 35 years at the start of the study, by year 10 the majority were aged between 0 and 35 to 45 and 54 years. There is a relatively even split of male (52.1%) and female participants (47.9%). The majority presented with a high level of local socioeconomic disadvantage (73%). Geographically, almost all participants were in a major city (94%) with NSW the home state for 39.5 per cent of the original total group (van Kooy et al., 2024, pp. 23-24; De Maio et al., 2014, p. 356).

There is also a stark gender dimension to the BNLA statistics. After a decade, nearly 1 in 2 men (49%) were in paid employment, whereas only 13 per cent of women were employed by the same time. This suggests the compounding effects of humanitarian settlement difficulties with gendered barriers to employment, as will be discussed. There was also a noticeable industrial division of labour in employment, with just under 40 per cent of employed men working as tradespersons or technicians, while 37 per cent of women were in community and personal services. Confounding expectations, both employed men and women were equally employed as labourers (30% overall). This suggests some opening of traditional gender norms at the lower end of the skills spectrum (Department of Social Services, 2022, p. 11).

There is also evidence of downward occupational mobility (see Figure 16). For example, only 2 per cent of persons who were managers prior to arrival worked as managers in Australia, with most working as machinery operators and labourers (23.8% of the managers grouping). This is contrasted with technicians and trades, with those in employment largely retaining their status (22.9%). Machinery operators were largely split between technical and trades work and machinery operators and labourers, suggesting better pathways to retraining and skills recognition at lower levels. Those who were labourers were also mostly able to retain their occupation in Australia with 21.9 per cent continuing to work as labourers.

Figure 16 – *Downward Occupational Mobility of Humanitarian Entrants*



Note. When comparing the outcomes by profession, it is clear that many managers and professionals lose their occupational status when coming to Australia. In contrast, technicians and tradespersons, machinery operators, and labourers all show greater occupational consistency, suggesting that pathways to technical and manual labour are more accessible to humanitarian entrants than white collar professions and management. From *Australian Humanitarian Settlement Outcomes Report*, by Department of Social Services, 2022, p. 11.

As noted by Collins (et al., 2025), Iraqi and Syrian humanitarian entrant communities have tended to be more middle-class in their occupational demography, and still experienced substantial downward mobility. This group had the added settlement advantages of generally high levels of education, as well as Christian religious and cultural backgrounds. Despite this, many in these cohorts have not been able to retain their professional middle-class status, largely due to employment barriers such as lack of skill recognition by professional organisations (Collins et al., 2025, pp.361-2).

Beyond employment, the survey also provided answers on the key reasons humanitarian migrants decide not to work. These include the impact of "trauma, disabilities and longer-term health conditions" (van Kooy et al., 2024, p. 27) all of which can serve as permanent barriers to employment. For those who elected not to look for a job, the major reason was health related (at 46.9% on average; 53% for men and just under 44% for women). Those who cited health as their main reason rated their health as poor or very poor and/or met criteria associated with post-traumatic stress disorder. For women, the main reason for not wanting to have a job was needing to look after family and the home, which accounted for 48 per cent of the group (Department of Social Services, 2022).

After a decade of study, a large number of humanitarian migrants do not gain sufficient literacy to use access local services and employment. For example, looking for work was still something only 47 per cent of participants said they could undertake well or fairly well. Only 50 per cent said they understood the task of finding a school or care for children; and 56 per cent said they understood government payments and services fairly well. These figures suggest ongoing persistent barriers to employment, childcare, and accessing relevant government services. Reinforcing the discrimination of Segmented Labour Market theory, workplaces were also the main places where respondents experienced discrimination most frequently (31% of respondents) (Department of Social Services, 2022).

There have also been some important and complementary findings to the BNLA in other Australian studies. For example, there are substantial difference in the outcomes humanitarian entrants experience by origin country. Both men and women from Iraq experienced far worse employment outcomes than other humanitarian entrant cohorts. This is likely due to discrimination in the labour market based on religion, accent, and physical appearances (Perales et al., 2023, p. 18). Several studies have reported that humanitarian entrant individuals who had secondary and tertiary education were less likely to find a job than equivalents who did not (Cheng et al., 2021, p. 14).

Male humanitarian entrants from countries with worse gender inequality have performed better in the Australian labour market, compared with those from more gender egalitarian countries, suggesting that men continue to benefit from gender settings that favour males (Perales et al., 2023, p. 10). This is an intriguing finding given that both men and women in the BNLA study reported highly progressive views on male and female gender roles when surveyed on items like household and childcare, equality and traditional gender roles. This suggests more research is needed to better understand the mechanics around employment and education outcomes as they relate to institutional settings in home countries.

The BNLA and related studies confirm several of the core hypotheses of the Segmented Labour Market theory, including the existence of spatial immobility imposed by the limited access to work. As discussed, Fairfield has a high concentration of employment in manufacturing, warehousing, and transport logistics connected to industrial precincts. The SML theory of the 'secondary labour market' is demonstratable as it is imposed upon less powerful or minority workers. The significant downward occupational mobility, especially for more highly educated humanitarian migrants would seem to support this. Finally, the compounding disadvantages experienced by humanitarian entrant women would seem to support the Segmented Labour Market theory that multiply disadvantaged are magnified in

segmented labour markets. The ongoing informational asymmetry experienced by humanitarian migrants, in terms of ongoing challenges in accessing employment and services, is also a likely outcome of the Segmented Labour Market.

Humanitarian Entrants and Labour Markets

Agreeing with the Segmented Labour Market theory, several authors have substantiated that humanitarian entrant communities frequently operate in segmented labour markets.[69] For example, Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2006) studied humanitarian entrants from different backgrounds in Western Australia. They found an overconcentration of humanitarian entrant workers in industries considered 'lower status' such as cleaning, aged care, meat works, taxi driving, security, and construction. Factors contributing to these high concentrations included lack of skill recognition (as many humanitarian entrants arrived without prior identification of skills) as well as experiences of systemic discrimination (pp. 209-220). This substantiates that discrimination and low skill recognition facilitate Segmented Labour Market participation for these groups.

Another study by Colic-Peisker and Tilbury (2007) argued that 'visible difference' in perceived attitudes within the Australian community, shaped by beliefs around specific humanitarian entrant cohorts, can have major implications on workforce discrimination. The authors found greater forms of discrimination faced by both Middle Eastern and African humanitarian entrant communities compared with those from 'former Yugoslavia'[70] nations, who were more likely to be perceived as culturally similar to Australians with European heritage (i.e., 'white' Australians) (pp. 3-4).

Colic-Piesker and Tilbury (2006) argues that multicultural communities are particularly vulnerable to weaker development of social networks outside their dominant home community, leading to social exclusion and 'ethnic-path' dependency. This means that excluded multicultural communities may come to rely on ethnically and geographically determined labour markets, leading to continued dependence on lower skilled employment established within their ethnic community (p. 217). This becomes an issue for social mobility when the established work pattern is in centres of employment generally deemed low skilled and more vulnerable to retrenchment. It could explain ethnic concentration in instances of high levels of social disadvantage (as examined in Chapter 3).

Coordinated labour market programmes for humanitarian settlement communities can help improve employment outcomes. Delaporte and Piracha (2018) argued that short-term pathways into employment, including taking up lower standard and more precarious jobs, should not be prioritised above programmes that support longer term more permanent employment with a higher level of job matching (pp. 2-4). This provides a necessary

[69] Debates regarding the segmentation of working-class communities were a focus of Australian political economy in the 1970s. For example, Collins (1978) argued that: "…it is the *divisions* within the Australian working class—and their economic and political roots—that demands serious attention" (p.78). Collins suggests that ethnic, gender and national differences drive social division within marginalised communities, preventing greater coordination and the identification of collective social interests (p.79).

[70] Following the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1992, this region encompasses the modern nation-states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Slovenia.

counterpoint to short term approaches. The lack of longer-term evaluation of humanitarian entrant community outcomes may be neglecting the tangible labour market environments those communities are forced to navigate in their new country.

The importance of high language proficiency also goes beyond direct linkages with employment access. Language command has far-reaching impacts on the confidence and self-esteem of refugee background language learners. It leads to better mental health outcomes, positively correlated with employment (Cheng, Wang, Jiang, et al., 2021, pp. 8-10). Employment, too, has many indirect benefits for refugee communities including supporting financial, social, and mental well-being. The inverse is also true, that unemployment could contribute to exacerbating many of the challenges faced by refugee communities (Abur & Spaaij, 2016, p. 109). Clearly, programmes that maximise labour market outcomes and language attainment have major benefits for humanitarian migrant communities.

Time spent in asylum related pre-settlement settings appear to impact both the employment and mental health outcomes of refugees who were resettled (Brell et al., 2020, p. 115). One study suggested that one less year in asylum processing improved employment outcomes by between 4 and 5 per cent (Hainmueller et al., 2016, p. 1). Clearly the length of time in displacement impacts labour market outcomes in the arrival country, both materially in its impacts around damage to skill retainment, and regarding its general impact on health and well-being.

The above literature substantiates the damaging elements of Segmented Labour Markets in humanitarian settlement experiences, and their potential universality in developed economy settings. Nonetheless, there are some clear solutions including reducing the length of time spent seeking asylum; maximising early interventions, especially around mental health; and improving labour market integration (Brell et al., 2020, pp. 115-116). Fasani (et al 2020, p. 38) found that lowering the number of accepted refugees during a large intake period (i.e., a sudden adjustment in numbers) can disadvantage the group compared to a tapering off from a particular host country. The same study was critical of designated settlement locations to service local labour shortages, noting that this can prolong periods of lower labour market status in employment. The same was found in instances where low-income neighbourhoods were preferred for settlement due to cheaper availability of housing and other amenities.

Dispersal policy, as an alternative to concentration policy, has also been criticised due to the dampening effects dispersal has in reducing refugee network abilities to share labour market opportunities in areas of high settlement. However, the short-term advantages of concentrated settlement were lower when unemployment was high in the community (Beaman, 2012, p. 44). Bloch (2008) complemented this view, supporting means to remedy existing structural barriers to employment, such as securing the rights to work while under humanitarian visas, addressing employer discrimination, and ensuring a high level of available services in community (pp. 34-35).

Removing restrictions on settlement location helps ensure communities connect with cultural support networks and build social learnings in the arrival country (Brell et al., 2020,

p. 117). Bakker et al. (2017) argued for the importance of local degree attainment, with an implication that universities could focus on refugee occupational accreditation to maximise local opportunities in employment (p. 1779). The importance of integrated language and job experience programmes can also support minimising time spent out of the labour market.

Summary

Humanitarian settlement is a complex process, with clear underlying factors impacting successful employment outcomes in arrival settings. The Segmented Labour Market approach helps interpret and frame key elements of this experience as related to structural disadvantage. Core elements of Segmented Labour Market theory are found in the domestic and international literature. Namely, evidence of downward occupational mobility driving a filtering into a secondary labour market for humanitarian entrants. The time within the asylum-seeking process, including displacement, has a negative overall relationship with outcomes. The effects driving downward occupational mobility also have cultural and gender dimensions.

The specific experience in the arrival setting also matters, such as direct discrimination from employers and the availability of local ethnic communities where employment and other resources may be accessed. Dispersal policy remains a controversial option given implications that it may further atomise cultural diversity and vulnerable communities. Programmes supporting skill recognition, coupled with language and work experience programmes, can act as factors mitigating the outcomes of Segmented Labour Market. The following section identifies how distinct elements of Segmented Labour Markets exist in Fairfield, concluding the analysis of this chapter.

Segmented Labour Markets in Fairfield

Greater Western Sydney is one of Australia's largest economies, accounting for 32 per cent of Sydney's Gross Domestic Product, at $104 billion. By 2030, the population of Greater Western Sydney is estimated to increase by around 400,000 making it one of Australia's fastest growing regions. By 2031, Greater Western Sydney will be home to more than half of Sydney's total population (Western Sydney University, n.d.). Despite a significant economy and rapid growth, Greater Western Sydney remains beset by significant urban challenges, including a higher average unemployment rate, lower skill and income levels compared to the rest of Sydney (Marks et al., 2022, p. 3).[71]

Unemployment remains elevated in Greater Western Sydney, partially driven by a low working age population to job ratio population (Morrison et al., 2022, p. 16). Greater

[71] While outside the scope of this chapter, it is acknowledged that ethnic entrepreneurship plays an important part in the lives of humanitarian entrants in Australia, offering greater financial independence in the face of significant labour market exclusion (Collins, 2020, p.50). Entrepreneurship at scale also has a significant impact on the urban fabric, supporting the formation of ethnic precincts and the development of tourism economies (Collins 2007, p.82). Despite this, many humanitarian entrants face substantial barriers to entry including a lack of start-up capital, casual and weak labour market attachment, limited diasporic economies of scale to start ethnic business, and weak English language skills (Collins 2017a, p.7).

Western Sydney has consistently held a net deficit count of jobs per person. For example, in 1971 there were only 67 jobs for every 100 resident workers in Greater Western Sydney. This improved to 73 jobs in 1981 and 80 jobs by 2001 (Fagan & Dowling, 2005, p. 74). As section one explained, these disparities were partially driven by the crisis of stagflation and the outward migration of manufacturing in the 1970s, which grew the regional segmentation of unemployment in Greater Western Sydney compared to the rest of Sydney.

Similar to other urban areas, job growth in Greater Western Sydney remains concentrated in industries such as "construction, health care and social assistance, education and training, retailing and accommodation and food services" (O'Neill, 2020a, p. 14). From 2012-2018, these sectors accounted for 80 per cent of all jobs growth in the Greater Western Sydney region. By 2018, Greater Western Sydney had over 160,000 knowledge economy workers. While this represents positive employment developments for the region in its generation of higher quality jobs, major disparities continue to exist when compared to the rest of Sydney (O'Neill, 2020a, p. 13).

Another major factor driving Greater Western Sydney's employment profile has been urban decentralisation policy. Under the auspices of city planning, Paramatta[72] is being prepared to become a 'central' city in Greater Sydney as the Western Sydney airport reaches completion by 2026. The growth of Parramatta has been championed as a solution to Greater Western Sydney's job deficits, including for areas like Fairfield (Taylor, 2024, p. 439). However, as Paramatta has grown as a business district, it has tended to attract young professionals from parts of Sydney outside of Greater Western Sydney, without necessarily incorporating the more disadvantaged elements of local labour markets. This exposes the complex push and pull factors in local labour markets and the barriers to them being genuinely inclusive (Morrison et al., 2022 p. 20).

With many workers also continuing to reside in other parts of Sydney and commuting for employment, decentralisation policy may not succeed in growing local incomes in Greater Western Sydney and may, instead, promote satellite economies (Morrison et al., 2022, p. 20). This aspect is compounded by how deeply embedded Segmented Labour Markets are in Greater Western Sydney, in that while professional employment has grown in region, it has failed to coordinate and absorb the existing local labour force (as well as the unemployed).

The other major infrastructure initiative is the Western Sydney Airport, a joint initiative between the federal government and the NSW State government, promising 200,000 new jobs over 20 years. Under the Western Sydney city deal, an 'Aerotropolis' is envisaged to adjoin the city to the airport, focused on knowledge intensive jobs including in industries such as 'aviation, aerospace, defence and advanced manufacturing' (Australian Government, 2018b, p. 12). The airport is projected to contribute 13,000 jobs directly on initial opening, and by 2063, around 90,000 jobs are planned to be generated at the airport

[72] Parramatta is a major business district in Greater Western Sydney, located around 24 kilometres west of the Sydney CBD. The area was the focus of concerted urban planning initiatives, branded around the 'smart cities' concept to support technology-based investment. Paramatta has remained a major element of Greater Sydney planning strategies, noted for its strategic capability of building a professional employment profile within Greater Western Sydney (Barns & Pollio, 2018).

with around 27,000 also estimated to be generated via the linked business park. However, many of the estimated jobs will be contingent on future airport expansion after 2050, and the timeline for these proposed jobs is not yet clear (O'Neill, 2020b, p. 13).

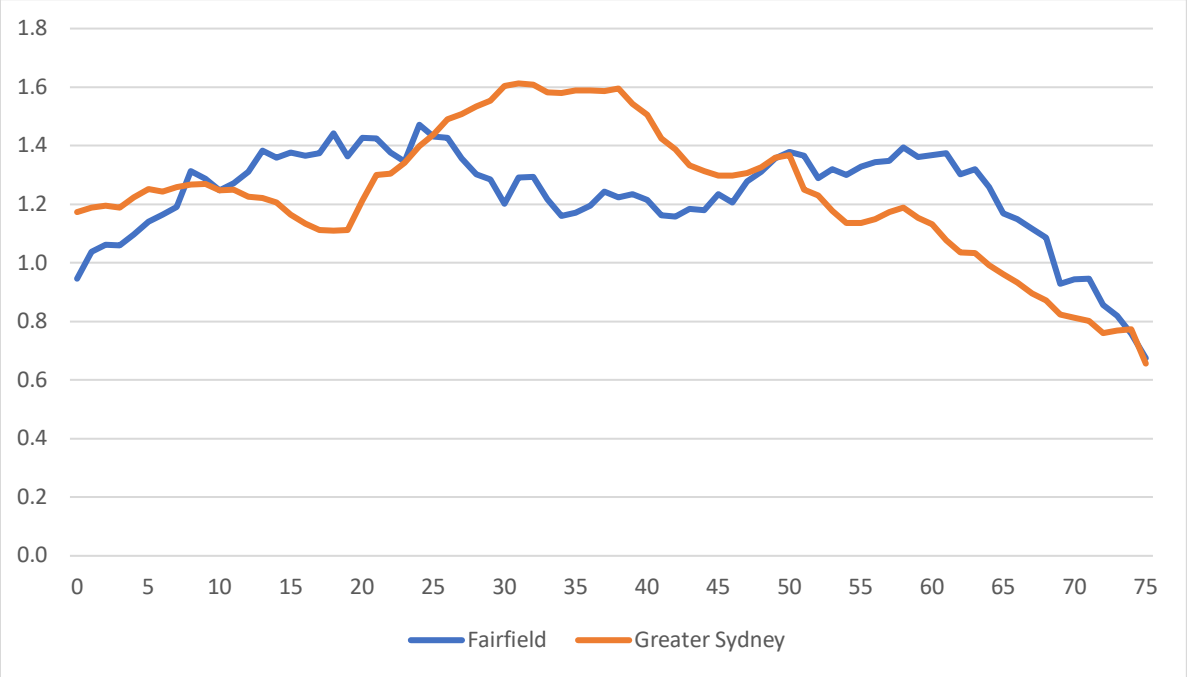
Greater Western Sydney has a growing skilled knowledge and professional employment workforce, supported by infrastructure and decentralisation agendas such as the Paramatta CBD, the Western Sydney Airport, and the Aerotropolis. As discussed, these initiatives, while necessary, often fail to inclusively provide opportunities to those in areas such as Fairfield. The ongoing challenge in ensuring Fairfield shares in the prosperity of these initiatives demonstrates the persistence of disadvantage in the region, expressed through a distinct Segmented Labour Market. An in-depth analysis of Fairfield helps to explain the specific aspects of its local labour market, and why its local profile means that it is marginally excluded from economic development opportunities occurring within Greater Western Sydney.

Labour Force Profile of Fairfield

The analysis in this section uses the 2021 Census to explore the demographic profile of Fairfield (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). The Census was recorded at the time of the COVID-19 lockdowns across Sydney. The lockdown had sharp dampening effects on a range of occupations. In terms of employed persons, low skilled workers were significantly impacted nationally by lockdowns, particularly labourers (7.4% decrease) and machinery operators and drivers (5.1% decrease). While younger women (15-34 years) saw an increase in employment during the pandemic, it is likely the very low participation rate in Fairfield offset this improvement overall (Birch & Preston, 2022, p.333). This context underpins the analysis presented below.

The first and most observable aspect of Fairfield's demographic profile is its unique age structure (see Figure 17). Proportionally, Fairfield has more teenagers to young adults (10-25 years) as well as more older persons (50-75 years) compared with Greater Sydney averages. Fairfield has substantially fewer working-age persons from 25-50 years, which are ages traditionally associated with highest wages and professional attainment. It is likely that Fairfield's age profile could be a driver of their lower employment rate (see Figure 18), as both younger and older persons are less likely to be employed. Having a lower share of people at the prime ages of their working lives means lower overall incomes for the region, with likely effects for local businesses and their economy.

Figure 17 – *Share of Population (%) by Age in Fairfield Compared to Greater Sydney (2021)*

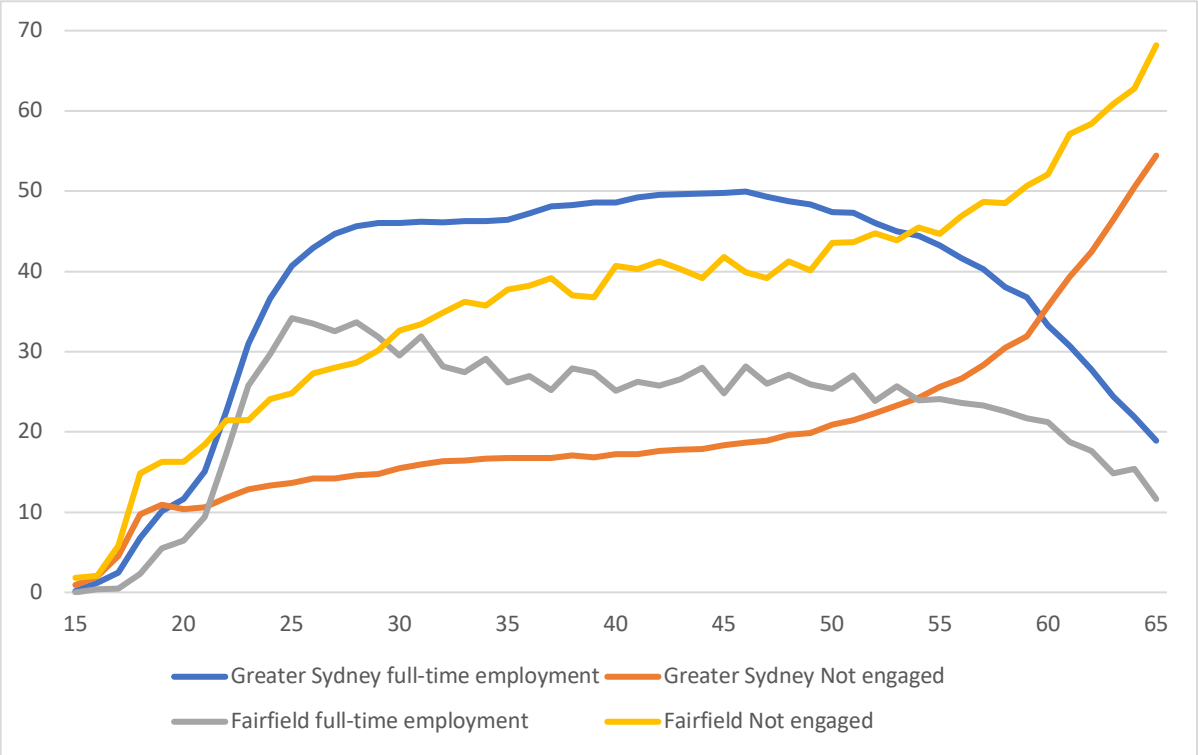


Note. Fairfield's age structure shows a higher proportion of younger and older persons relative to Greater Sydney. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

There are large numbers of working age people not attached to education or training (see Figure 18). While the beginning and end of age ranges show some convergence with Sydney population averages, working age persons had the greatest differences compared with averages. Taken together this means that there are less people on average living in Fairfield in their prime working years, and that those that are in Fairfield are far less likely to be building skills.

People in Fairfield have overall much weaker attachments to employment, and their working lives are significantly shorter (see Figure 18). When contrasting broader trends in employment and disengagement ('not engaged' in education or employment) between Fairfield and Greater Sydney, non-engagement for Fairfield surpasses employment by age 30 years; whereas this does not occur in the general population until age 60 years. This suggests that the Fairfield community has a much weaker lifetime engagement with employment, training, and education than their wider Sydney counterparts. It may also imply a significant outward migration of more skilled and educated people from the local area in these critical working years.

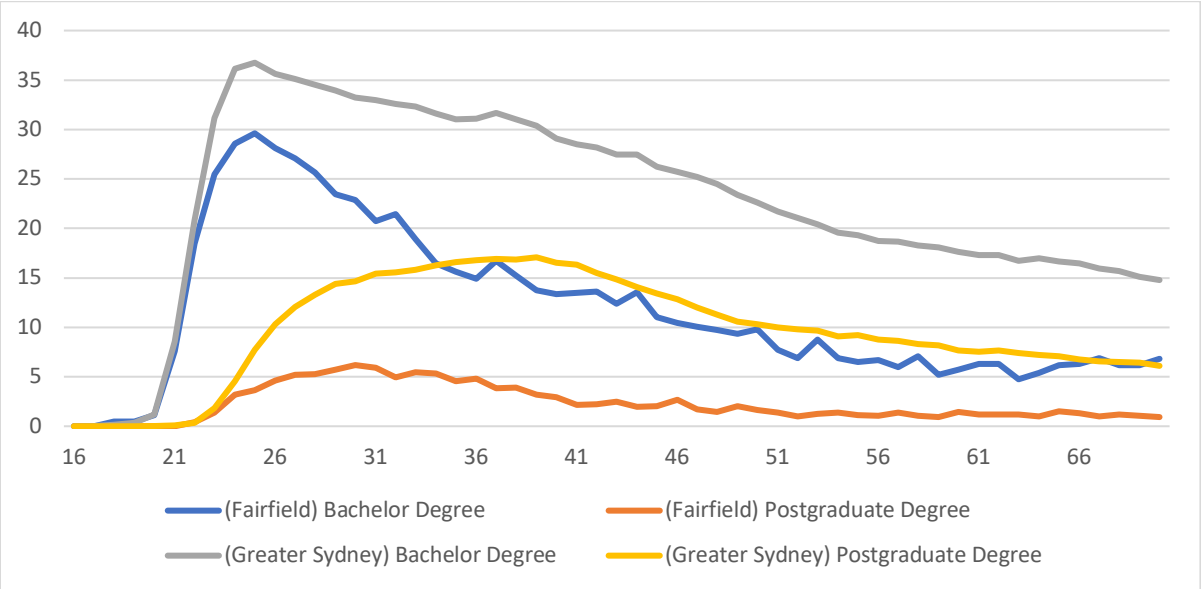
Figure 18 – *Participation by Age (%) in Fairfield Compared to Greater Sydney (2021)*



Note. In Fairfield, more people are not engaged in the labour force or training starting around age 30, relative to those who are engaged. At the Greater Sydney level, this does not occur until age 60. This demonstrates a significant labour force participation inequality. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

Younger people in Fairfield are, to an extent, closing some of the education gaps (see Figure 19). Comparing highest levels of degree achievement by region shows that for younger cohorts there is a convergence in the gap around bachelor's degree completion. However, the tighter gap quickly tapers off after peaking at age 25 years. In contrast, there is less convergence on postgraduate educational attainment, with 31 years being the peak age of postgraduate attainment for Fairfield, compared with 40 years as the peak age of postgraduate attainment across greater Sydney.

Figure 19 – *Highest Education by Age (%) in Fairfield Compared with Greater Sydney (2021)*

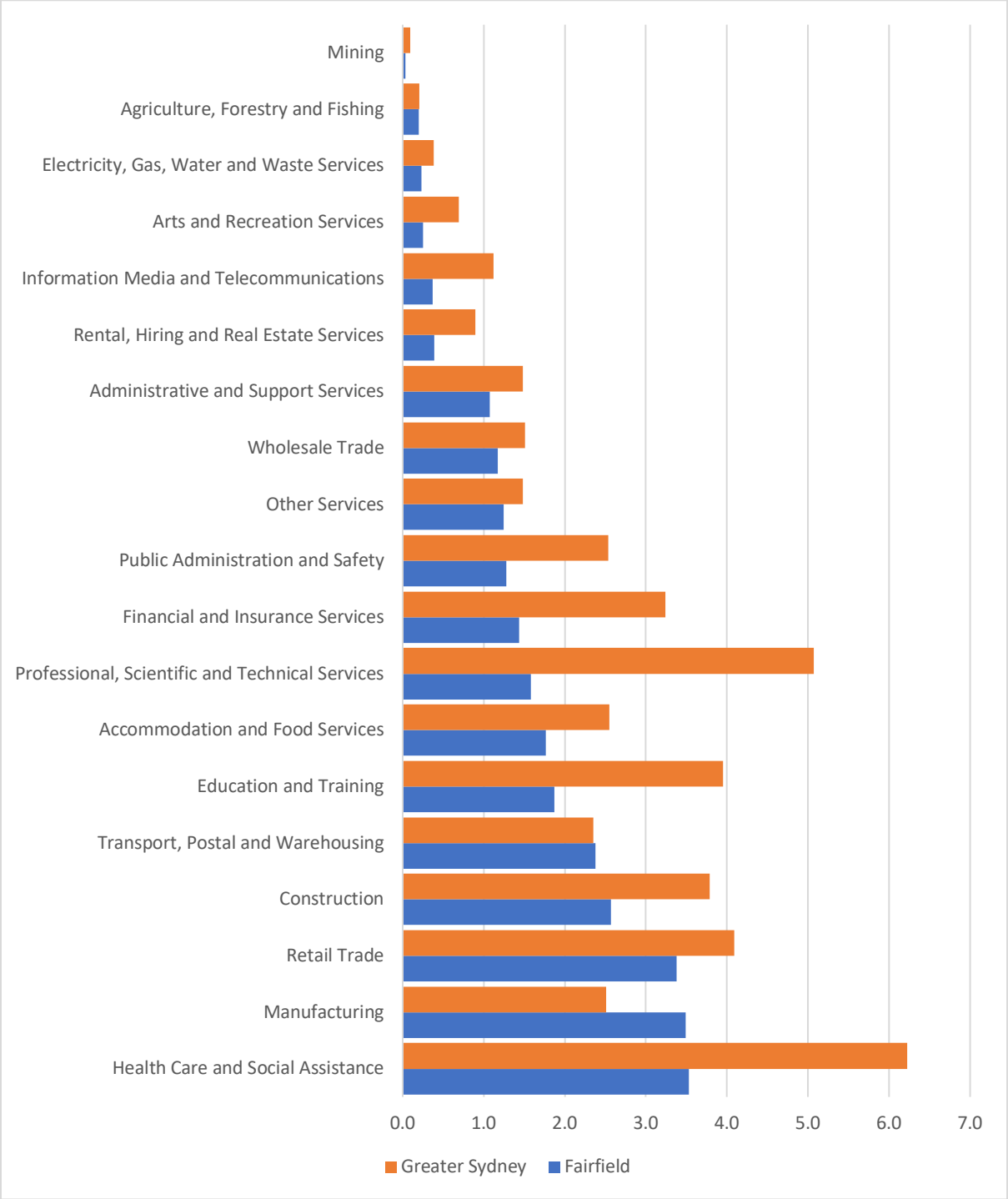


Note. Younger people are more educated both at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels relative to previous generations. The education gap between Fairfield and Greater Sydney is much smaller at younger ages, indicating that the education gap widens significantly for those reaching middle age. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021,* by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

Industry and Occupation of Employment in Fairfield

As a share of the total population, there is a greater proportion of manufacturing workers in Fairfield than there are across Greater Sydney (1% higher) (see Figure 20). Compared with Sydney, manufacturing is the only industry where Fairfield has more employed persons as a percentage of their total population. Given the long-term trends towards precariousness of the industry, this high level of manufacturing employment is likely to contribute to lower wage growth and vulnerability to unemployment. Conversely, Fairfield has a much lower share of professional, scientific, and technical services compared with Sydney averages (3.5% lower), with professional jobs tending to be a major driver of higher wages for the wider city.

Figure 20 – *Industry of Employment (%) in Fairfield Compared with Greater Sydney (2021)*

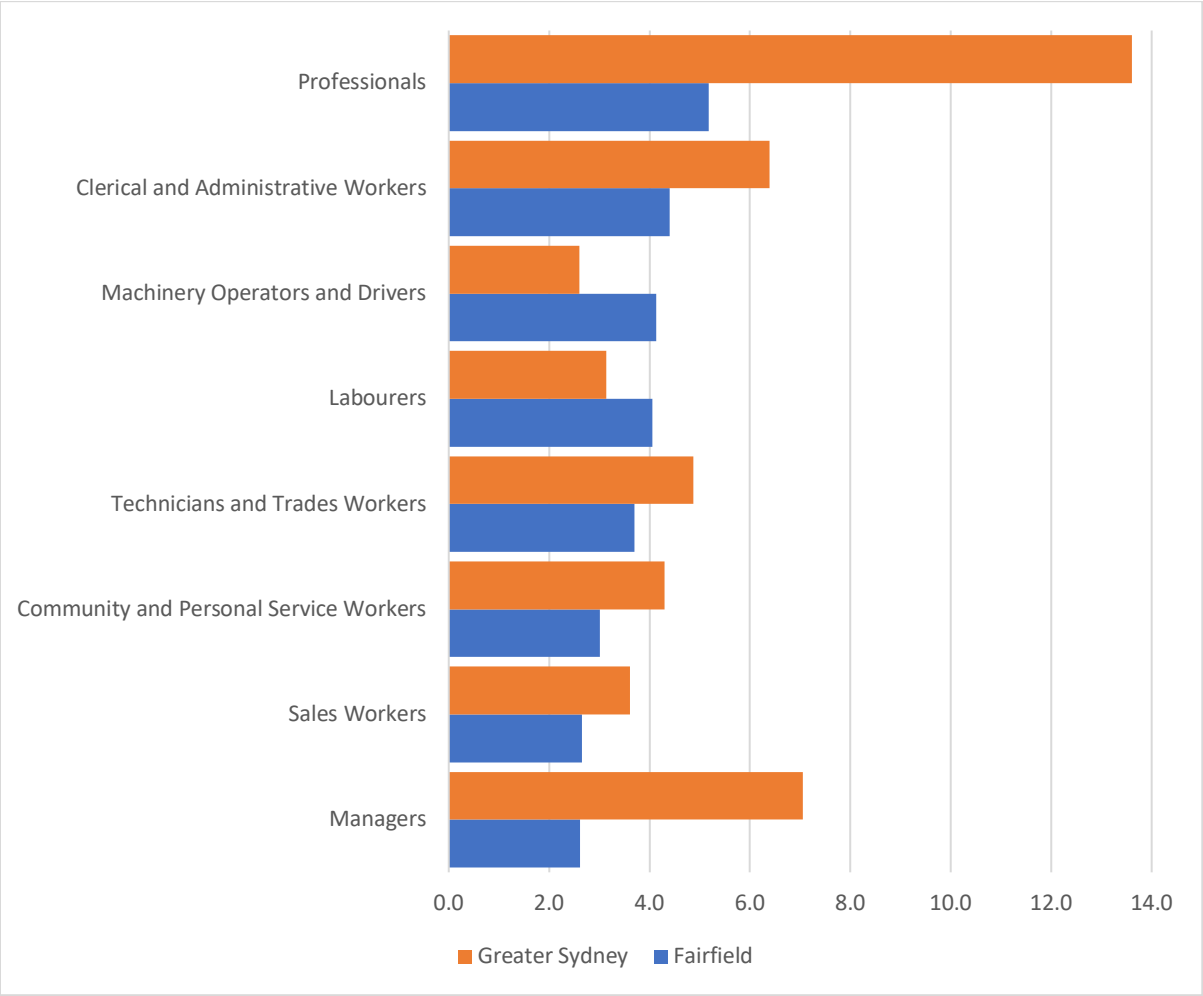


Note. Significant disparities exist between industries of employment when comparing Fairfield to Greater Sydney. This figure captures the industry of employment percentage for the full Census population; the "not applicable" category was excluded from the percentage totals. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

Focusing on occupations, while professionals were still the largest occupation group in Fairfield (5.2%), there is a significant gap when comparing with the average number of professionals in Greater Sydney (13.6%) (see Figure 21). Both machinery operators and drivers (4.1%) and labourers (4.1%) had a higher representation in Fairfield compared with

city averages, with managers the smallest group in Fairfield (2.6%). This reinforces that many of the jobs in Fairfield are of a lower skill level than those across Greater Sydney. Beyond skill levels, Fairfield exhibits significant industrial segmentation based on country of birth. While Retail Trade is the largest employer for those born in Oceania (12%), Healthcare and Social Assistance dominates for residents from North Africa and the Middle East (13.1%), Southern and Central Asia (18.6%), the Americas (20.3%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (39.9%). In contrast, Manufacturing remains the leading industry of employment for South-East Asian (20.1%) and North-East Asian (13.4%) workers, while Construction is the major employer for North-West European (11.5%) and Southern and Eastern Europeans (16.8%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022). This clustering provides supporting evidence for the segmented labour market hypothesis (c.f Collins, 1978).

Figure 21 – *Occupation (%) in Fairfield Compared with Greater Sydney (2021)*



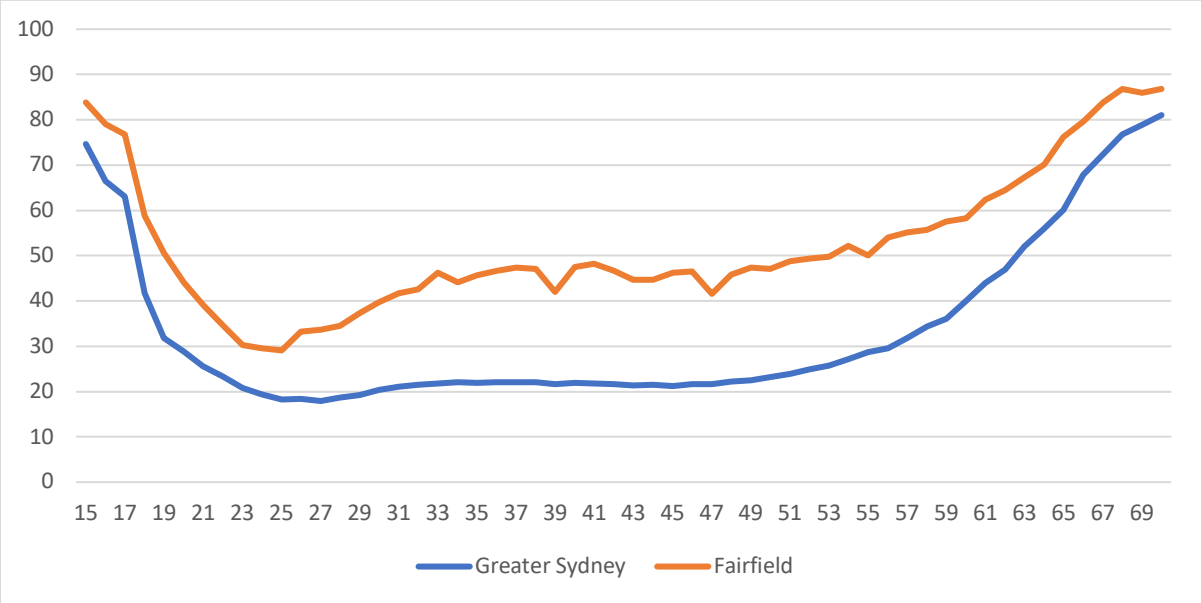
Note. Fairfield had a much lower concentration of professionals and managers compared with Greater Sydney. In contrast, Fairfield had disproportionately high levels of labourers, machinery operators, and drivers. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021,* by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

Gender and Employment

A major element of Fairfield's low labour market engagement is gendered, with women in Fairfield having among the lowest labour force participation rates in Sydney (see Figure 22). While 'Not in labour force' rates sit around 20 per cent for women across greater Sydney

from ages 25 to around 50 years, they reach around the mid-40s for women in Fairfield (see Figure 15). One possible explanation is that traditional cultural values are a major barrier for women from humanitarian entrant backgrounds continuing to work while undertaking unpaid care work. Another influencing factor could be the length of time spent in Australia. For example, women who arrived between 2011 and 2021 only had a labour force participation rate of 25 per cent, substantially below the Western Sydney average of 54 per cent and the rest of Sydney at 70 per cent (Itaoui et al., 2024, p. 30).

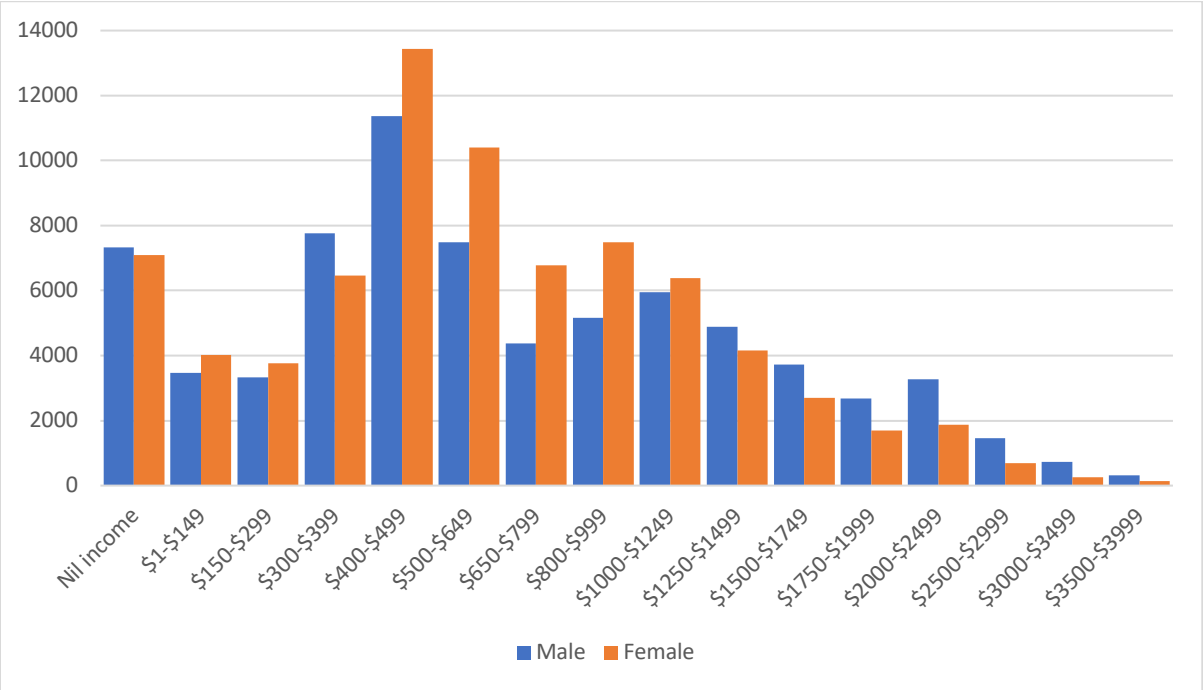
Figure 22 – *Women by Age (%) Not in Labour Force in Fairfield Compared with Greater Sydney (2021)*



Note. Women in Fairfield have higher rates of being "not in the labour force" relative to women in Greater Sydney. This trend is most pronounced from ages 25 onwards, with convergence from around age 60. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

There are also more women in lower paid work in Fairfield compared with men (see Figure 23). This could be influenced by what Itaoui et al. (2024) called the 'spatial leash', where women face grater spatial challenges in accessing work further away from their homes due to caring responsibilities (p. 14). Women in Fairfield with children were much less likely to be in the labour force, with single parent female headed households having some of the lowest participation rates in all of Greater Western Sydney (Itaoui et al., 2024, pp. 13-14). In addition, women in Fairfield have the lowest vehicle ownership rates in Western Sydney (Itaoui et al., 2024, pp. 47), suggesting women may need to rely on local employment to engage in the labour force, creating additional mobility issues around access to employment.

Figure 23 – *Weekly Income by Sex (No.) in Fairfield (2021)*



Note. Women in Fairfield are disproportionately represented in lower paid income brackets compared with men. Adapted from *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*, by Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022.

While being the most disadvantaged Local Government Area, women in Fairfield had a small gender pay gap of only $2 per hour (men earned $38 per hour and women $36 per hour on average) (Itaoui et al., 2024, p.25).[73] Lower gender pay gap is likely due to the fact that women are taking up 'non-traditional' gender jobs as machinery operators and drivers given these jobs are more readily available (Itaoui et al., 2024, p. 34). For example, 12 per cent of women in Fairfield worked as labourers (making up around 41% of Fairfield labourers), which was double the average of Greater Western Sydney and three times the average for the rest of Sydney (Itaoui et al., 2024, p. 40). While findings like this highlight the gendered nature of persistent disadvantage, it also demonstrates a need for spatially sensitive understandings of inequality. The following section reviews two key federal programme initiatives viewed through the lens of the Segmented Labour Market theory.

Local Jobs Program

This section reviews the federal government's Local Jobs Program (LJP) and related initiatives through the lens of Segmented Labour Market theory. Commencing in 2021, the LJP, led by Workforce Australia, was designed to find tailored pathways to employment by building linkages between employers, community organisations, training providers, and support services. In this regard, the LJP works as a wraparound hub for local employment and skill opportunities. The programme spans 51 regions nationally Australia, with Fairfield forming part of the Sydney South West Employment Region. This region also includes

[73] According to Itaoui et al. (2024), the Hills was the most advantaged Local Government Area in Western Sydney, with a gender pay gap of $12 per hour (on average, men earned $58 per hour and women $46 per hour) (p. 25).

connecting areas like Liverpool, Campbelltown, Picton, and Bargo. This area represents a highly diverse industrial region incorporating agriculture, manufacturing, construction, and health services (Workforce Australia, 2024).

There are four key components to the LJP: a local jobs plan, which manages local skills by region, including implementation pathways; a local jobs and skills taskforce incorporating a range of local stakeholders with expertise around skills to drive regional labour market needs; employment facilitators who lead stakeholder engagements and bring business, service providers, and education and training organisations together to drive outcomes; and the Local Recovery and National Priority Fund, designed to support the local jobs plan and drive innovation based solutions around barriers to employment (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2020).

The major priorities for LJP include creating employment pathways by linking training options to labour demand, implementing recruitment in skill shortage areas, and helping local entrepreneurship. There is also a priority around Net-Zero transition initiatives (i.e., climate change driven emission reductions programmes), closely linked to both the Aerotropolis and Western Sydney City Deal. For this second priority a region register of upcoming infrastructure projects is being developed, along with skills mapping of in demand programmes and current skill sets of participants.

The regional labour plan (the plan) plays an important role in acknowledging key barriers to employment to improve outcomes. It notes significant local labour market shortages in a range of key growth areas, including construction, hospitality, retail, warehousing and logistics, and aged care and disability care. It also raises the perceived skills gaps in growth area such as advanced manufacturing, scientific and technical services, health care, and tertiary education. The plan also responds to fragmentation and gaps in awareness around available services and training to support individual and the local business economy. It includes an acknowledgement of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on minorities, such as migrants and humanitarian entrants and young people, noting that these groups are particularly vulnerable to deepening disadvantage. Finally, the LJP provides a broad awareness around the challenges regarding lack of access to transport, and the problems this proses for shift workers and others who do not have a driver's license (Workforce Australia, 2024).

For migrant and humanitarian entrant communities, the local plan focuses largely on skills and vocational literacy, including helping to build skill recognition programmes. The strategies for the cohorts are locally tailored, including a campaign to make local business more culturally aware of the benefits of diverse workforce recruitment, the development of a register for businesses and industry in growth areas to support collaboration, and business-based training and recruitment that links with programmes and services to support migrant and humanitarian entrant communities.

Government interventions, like LJP, are a step in the right direction to help dismantle and minimise Segmented Labour Markets in Greater Western Sydney. By providing a locally embedded appraisal of employment opportunities, contrasted with local opportunities and the skill profile, bespoke solutions of low labour market participation can be better

achieved. As noted, Segmented Labour Markets emerge from conditions like limited local opportunity, which programmes like the LJP cannot in themselves overcome.[74] This is because the LJP is designed to improve local efficiencies in employment. For this reason, programmes like LJP need to be wedded with the broader decentralisation agenda to ensure it delivers solutions that also lift the economic development potential of regions. The other major arm to respond to Segmented Labour Markets in Greater Western Sydney is adequate language training.

The Adult Migrant English Programme

While employment and skill development are critical to support humanitarian visa communities, programmes to support English language proficiency, such as the Adult Migrant English Programme (AMEP) was established in 1947 to support humanitarian entrants. From its earliest inception, AMEP focused on language development, offering intensive full-time and evening classes. The AMEP ensured classes were available in a range of community settings withing the community including "migrant hostels, community centres, [and] church halls" (Allender, 1998, p. 3). In the 1970s teaching English as second language became a formalised accreditation allowing for an extensive network of adult language teachers working in line with the international standards associated with the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

The AMEP was legislated as a programme as part of the *Immigration (Education) Act 1971*, requiring that all eligible migrants receive 510 hours of free language tuition over a 5-year period. The programme is administered nationally in just under 300 locations across the country. In 2020, changes to the programme included scrapping the 510 hour cap on language learning, extending the eligibility from functional English to vocational English, and removing time limits on enrolling, starting, and finishing tuition for the majority of eligible programme recipients. These changes were announced following an evaluation of the business model (Social Compass, 2019).

An important and favourably reviewed programme is the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET), a capped sub-programme of AMEP which delivers tuition and work-related training to support transitions to employment and the Australian work culture environment. However, many participants noted that the course did not guarantee a pathway into employment, with many struggling to still find a job after completing SLPET. Feedback included that the programme was not long enough to provide adequate employment linkages and frequently not in preferred employment type by the attendee. Better data and evaluation are needed to understand why language and learning programmes are failing to support high completion and attainment levels, including understanding practical ways to make programmes more accessible (Australian Government, 2019).

[74] LJP's funding currently expires in 2027 (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2020). This lack of permanent funding arrangements is a further potential barrier to delivering local supports in place over the longer term needed to lower intergenerational disadvantage.

There are ongoing challenges for the programme realising its full potential. Humanitarian entrants have reported considerable challenges in balancing looking for work while handling English language learning, suggesting that greater integration of various supporting programmes was necessary to improve user experiences. In addition, language outcomes have been generally quite low, with only 7 per cent of participants having functional English at completion. In addition, the average hours used for the programme was only 289, suggesting issues in retention. Another issue relates to the lack of access and use of childcare in nearby facilities, which potentially serves as a major barrier to female programme completion (Australian Government, 2019).

While generous and long-standing, the AMEP struggles to adequately unwind the challenges posed by the Segmented Labour Market as it plays out in humanitarian entrant communities. As noted, participants frequently struggle to balance the demands required to attain language proficiency with employment and caring responsibilities. The BNLA survey suggested lower English language attainment is associated with worse labour market experiences as well as weaker understandings of existing systems and available support services. Efforts to coordinate the LJP programme with the AMEP, could yield stronger integration of language, skill, and employment outcomes sensitive to local settings.

Other Relevant Programmes

A major Department of Home Affairs programme for supporting humanitarian entrant employment is the 'Economic Pathway to Refugee Integration' (EPRI) grant. The EPRI seeks to improve employment participation for humanitarian entrant background persons with skill and language barriers. It has an open competitive tender for social enterprises that pitch pathways for improving economic participation of humanitarian entrant job seekers. Through EPRI, 20 programmes were awarded grants of between $50,000 to $100,000 per year for 3 years. Selected programmes varied greatly from industry specific training in areas like hospitality, to supporting small business establishment, to employment and language programmes, and mentoring specialised employment and training services.

'CareerSeekers' was a case study outlined in the Parkinson et al. (2023) review. The programme offers pathways for mid-career professionals and university students to gain work access via an internship. This programme is particularly helpful for those holding tertiary qualifications and work experience in their origin nation to restart their professional career (p. 160). According to their promotional material, more than 90 per cent of those accepted into the programme find ongoing employment after their internship (Career Seekers, n.d.).

Jobactive[75] was one of the main programs identified in supporting humanitarian entrant to find work. Under JobActive for the first 12 months participants are not required to actively seek work, allowing them to engage in language learning programmes. Women on the parenting payment need to transition to the jobseeker payment once a child turns 8 years

[75] JobActive (2015-2022) was replaced by Workforce Australia. The major changes between programmes are a shift towards online platform usage (i.e., self-service) over a service provider model, along with a points-based system replacing job application-based requirements (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, 2020).

of age, placing additional burden on mothers to find work while undertaking caring responsibilities (Due et al., 2021, p. 9). Services NSW also offers two language related programmes and a Multicultural Youth Linker to support young people from migrant and refuge backgrounds to navigate government and non-government services (Service NSW, n.d.).

The Ignite program was created specifically to support recent arrivals from Iran, Iraq and Syria by providing start-up capital. Of the 240 successful applicants who entered the program, 61 businesses were created over three years, generating at least 20 jobs and generating substantial savings by facilitating exits from the social security system. There is also evidence that these activities have improved social connection for humanitarian entrants supporting the development of more complex social networks (Collins, 2017b, pp.6-8).

Summary

This section considered how the Segmented Labour Market theory can help explain and provide insights into the labour market participation challenges faced by humanitarian visa communities. It highlighted the significant mismatch between the local skill profiles of areas like Fairfield, with broader urban development strategies in Greater Western Sydney. The history of industrial decline, coupled with a regionally segmented unemployment profile, amplifies the challenges of areas like Fairfield reaping the benefits of economic growth in Greater Western Sydney.

Looking closely at the Fairfield data, the area was shown to have a unique demographic structure reinforcing these spatial challenges. These include both a young and older overall population and, as a result, less working age people. There is persistently lower attachment to employment and training in Fairfield, likely compounded by industrial dependency on lower skilled manufacturing employment, as well as weak labour force attachment by humanitarian entrant women. It is speculated that cultural expectations around family care and domestic work reinforces negative gendered employment outcomes. Women in Fairfield who entered the workforce had higher rates of representation in traditionally male blue collar work, reinforcing the spatial specificity of the case study.

Noting these existing challenges, which generate disadvantage outcomes, existing government programmes must meaningfully respond to Segmented Labour Markets in Greater Western Sydney. The LJP is a new initiative bringing together local employment and skill opportunities to create greater information sharing and potentially better local labour market efficiencies. The programme itself cannot independently improve the standard of local employment offerings and must, as a result, be coordinated with broader urban development initiatives that provide long-term, intergenerational solutions to community disadvantage. As discussed, the AMEP, while a critical element of social mobility support by providing ongoing language support, frequently cannot overcome the complexities of employment and care demands places on humanitarian entrants. Programmes which better integrate local employment and language learning opportunities are vital to ensure humanitarian visa communities receive critical programme assistance. If local employment, training, and language programmes remain poorly integrated, they will struggle to

overcome the Segmented Labour Market and its effect in creating the conditions for persistent disadvantage.

Conclusion

In the previous chapter, core aspects of the humanitarian visa system were unpacked in the Fairfield setting. It was shown that the specific institutional history of Australian immigration results in a system where humanitarian settlement is often poorly coordinated and overly concentrated in disadvantaged areas. The current chapter explained what happens to these communities once they are settled in Greater Western Sydney, and some of the challenges underpinning poor employment, skill, and language attainment. Frequently, the outcomes are communities that disproportionately experience the negative effects of economic downturns and face weaker labour market prospects because of Segmented Labour Markets. It is argued that this interactivity is the major underpinning element determining outcomes of persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

In the first instance, it is hotly contested what the role of government is in relation to the unemployed. Multiple co-existing traditions have emerged, articulating the responsibility in vastly different ways. An early charity-based relief tradition gave way to federally coordinated labour market programmes during the Second World War. Policymakers for the most part kept the full employment tradition functioning, until a series of crises in the 1970s delivered higher general unemployment and a need to rein in inflation. This created the need for cohort specific unemployment support programmes, which followed.

However, reciprocal obligation (i.e., government responsibility to the public) eventually gave way to mutual obligation (i.e., the unemployed have a responsibility to the general public). What followed was a largely punitive set of programmes that could not address the underlying levels of structural unemployment. Governments are trying to wade through this confluence of traditions, with reforms to precarious work and local job coordination two promising developments. Yet, for already persistently disadvantaged communities, tailored and locally specific approached are needed.

Segmented Labour Markets are driving labour market exclusion and downward social mobility, especially for humanitarian entrants. These effects are even more compounded for humanitarian entrant women, who must also navigate complex family and household duties in culturally specific settings. Evidence shows that early years following settlement are the most important for longer term employment outcomes. Those who struggle to attain a baseline of English language mastery will continue to struggle to identify and access available services for themselves and their family. As some of the programme case study evidence shows (i.e., JobActive), completing language programmes while undertaking employment can be a difficult if not impossible undertaking. These elements can serve as formidable barriers to sharing in economic development opportunities emerging from significant urban decentralisation agendas, including in Greater Western Sydney.

At the demographic level, Fairfield has several qualities which reinforce weaker labour market participation and integration. This includes a below average level of working age people (and, therefore, lower incomes), lower levels of educational attainment and lower

skills occupations, shorter and more fragmented working lives, and a high level of labour market non-participation by women. This chapter argues that both the humanitarian settlement system coupled with the outcomes of Segmented Labour Markets in GSW are structural dynamics underpinning weaker labour market integration, driving persistent community disadvantage.

Government programmes are one of the key solutions to this specific case of persistent community disadvantage. As discussed, tailored labour market initiates, including LJB, as well as longer term language attainment support (including AMEP), are key to solving these challenges. However, there is a need to provide more integrated programme offerings to ensure that humanitarian entrants do not feel that they must choose between employment, skills, or language especially in the first 5 years following resettlement, which are vital to support opportunity and social mobility.

These is a need to grapple with the gendered dimension of these challenges, ideally by offering programmes for humanitarian entrant women that are culturally appropriate and conscious of gendered care obligations. Federally coordinated programmes that deliver all of the above in integrated settings are a tangible way to address persistent disadvantage. As a result, the following two chapters consider what federal financial cooperation (Chapter 5) and locally-led decision making (Chapter 6) can achieve to deliver targeted solutions for communities experiencing persistent disadvantage.

Part Three: *Solutions*

Chapter Five: Federal Financial Relations

Outline

The humanitarian settlement system and segmented labour markets have been argued to be core elements underpinning persistent disadvantage in Fairfield. This chapter commences discussion on potential solutions to these issues by exploring the Australian federation architecture. It is argued that the levels of government should find joint mechanisms for fiscal cooperation to address persistent disadvantage by fostering stronger cooperation and locating pathway for responding to these challenges. Local government is identified as a critical actor requiring greater fiscal power and autonomy to solve complex problems in community. Extending this analysis, in Chapter Six it is advocated for community decision making through a focused assessment and application of place-based policy.

The Australian federation, with its three tiers of government, is best understood by analysing its unique spatial, historical, and institutional dimensions. The central dynamic for understanding this system is Vertical Fiscal Imbalance, where the federal government collects more revenue than needed to fund its main direct expenses. States and territories (states), however, do not collect enough own-source revenue to cover their major funding responsibilities, creating the need for significant transfer systems from federal to state governments. Local government under Vertical Fiscal Imbalance also require transfers from state governments to retain financial sustainability.

Having identified these core fiscal elements, this chapter looks at potential cooperation mechanisms to overcome the more negative aspects of Vertical Fiscal Imbalance. Solutions to Vertical Fiscal Imbalance include integrated governance, revenue (taxation) reform, and opportunities to empower local government as a key actor in targeted area and place-based policy. To propose governance solutions, there is an exploration of fiscal federalism and Multi-Level Governance. For revenue reform, the history of taxation and its current state are examined to help propose federal funding solutions. The history and unique qualities of local government have been under appraised in academic discussion (Grant & Drew, 2017, p.v). The current chapter articulates a repositioning of local government and its history, arguing that it can serve as a critical starting position to pursuing locally informed responses to disadvantage.

To close the chapter, these insights are applied to an analysis of the dynamics of Fairfield local governance. Local government is found to lack sufficient fiscal and decision-making power. Due to constrained fiscal dynamics, Fairfield has been unable to build adequate momentum to benefit from major investment, leaving the region as a more marginal location within the city's economic development agenda. Fairfield's relatively weaker revenue collections compared with similar councils, forces a tight fiscal agenda, which impedes complex policy interventions. It is concluded that empowered local governance, which responds to the conditions of Vertical Fiscal Imbalance, can contribute to alleviating the core elements of persistent disadvantage.

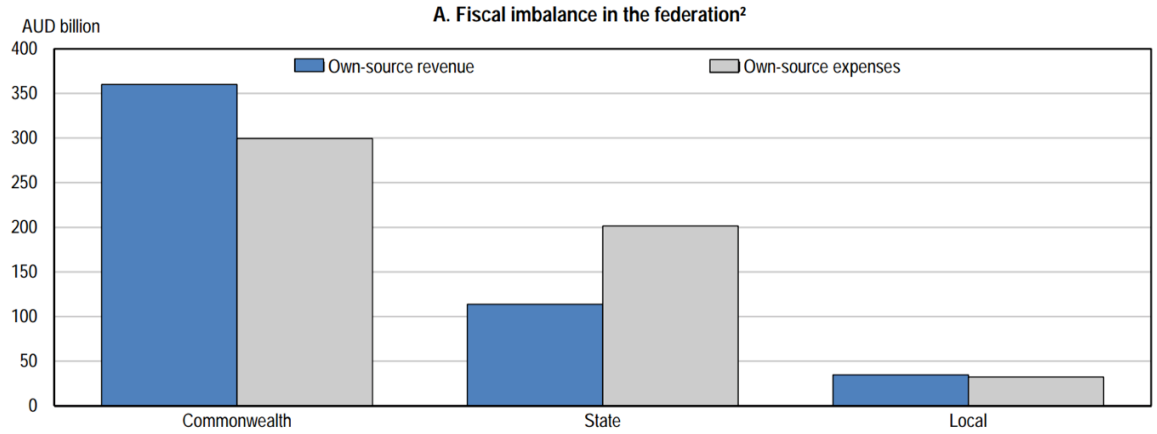
Understanding Federalism

Overview of Australia's Federation

Australia's federation, comprised of three distinct levels of government, is the country's overarching architecture for administrative government. Federation of the six self-governing colonies was achieved in 1901 with the establishment of the 'Commonwealth of Australia' under a national constitution. These six jurisdictions became the states;[76] subsequently, two mainland territories[77,78] were also established (Saunders & Foster, 2013, p. 87), with 537 local councils currently operating across Australia.[79] Together, the federal, states and territories, and councils are the three main tiers within the federation.

Australia is characterised as a particularly high fiscal centralised federation, where the federal government has powers to collect the major share of total revenue, compared to the states and local government. The federal government's revenue collection vastly exceeds their direct expenditure needs, especially when compared with the six states. States structurally lack adequate own-source revenue raising powers needed to pay for their direct policy responsibilities, known as Vertical Fiscal Imbalance. Comparatively, Australia has among the highest rates of Vertical Fiscal Imbalance levels of any country, with only around half of state spending being own-sourced (i.e., self-raised) (see Figure 24).

Figure 24 – *Vertical Fiscal Imbalance and the Levels of Government in Australia*



Note. The Commonwealth collects more own-source revenue than it spends on its portfolio responsibilities, whereas states collect only about half of their total expenditure. Local government generally spends in line with its collection, although a portion of local government finances come from grants. Adapted from *OECD Economic Surveys: Australia 2014*, by P. Koutsogeorgopoulou and A. Tuske, 2015, p. 10, OECD Publishing (doi.org). © OECD. Reprinted with permission.

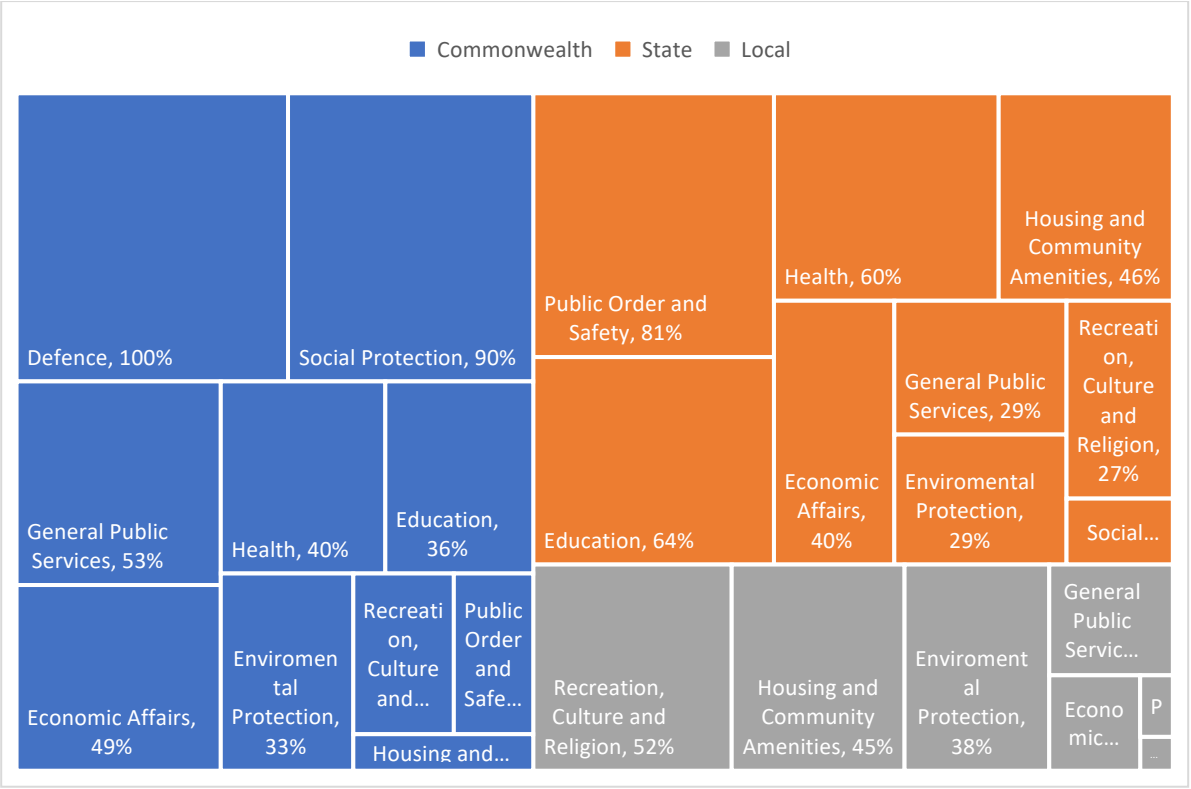
[76] They are NSW, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, and Tasmania.
[77] They are the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. There are also several external territories, including Norfolk Island and Christmas Island.
[78] From here on states and territories, which include the Australian Capital Territory and Northern Territory, are simply referred to as 'states'.
[79] There are currently 128 councils in NSW, the second highest number after Western Australia (n = 139).

Both federal and state governments have distinct portfolio areas for which they are primarily responsible. The federal government is principally responsible for spending on social security and welfare, as well as significant shares of health (i.e., aged care and the National Disability Insurance Scheme), education (mainly non-government schools and tertiary education), and defence. The states are primarily responsible for health (public hospitals, community health, and public dental) and education (pre-schooling and primary funders of public primary and high schools), followed by portfolio commitments in public order and safety (see Figure 25). Sharing of health and education portfolio spending between federal and state governments is relatively unique amongst federations, leading to distinct interactivities in portfolio delivery (Koutsogeorgopoulou & Tuske, 2015, pp. 16-19).

A key fiscal response to Vertical Fiscal Imbalance are fiscal transfers, and there are two major pathways in Australia. The first is via 'tied funding'[80] arrangements, also known as payments for specific purposes, which must be spent in certain portfolios with varying levels of conditionality dependent on the agreement type and portfolio. The other pathway is 'untied' general revenue assistance, which is mainly composed of transfers from the collection of the Good and Services Tax (GST).[81] Under the existing GST system, taxes are collected across a range of non-exempt goods and redistributed to states using the principle of horizontal fiscal equalisation (HFE).

[80] Tied funding, or 'payments for specific purpose' are the other major portion of transfers to states. These principally cover hospitals, schools, and major infrastructure (Koutsogeorgopoulou & Tuske, 2015, p. 13).
[81] GST is equivalent to Value Added Tax (VAT), which operates in other nations for similar transfer purposes (Koutsogeorgopoulou & Tuske, 2015, pp. 16-19).

Figure 25 – *General Government Expenditure by Portfolio (%) and Level of Government (2019)*



Note. Major spending commitments vary across levels of government. Defence (100%) and Social Protection (90%) are largely the domain of the federal government, with General Public Services (53%), Economic Affairs (49%), Health (40%), and Education (36%) sitting from half to just over a third of expenditure. States, in contrast, are largely responsible for Public Order and Safety (81%), have the major share of Education (64%) and Health (60%), and just under half for Housing and Community Amenities (46%). Finally, local government's major responsibility is Recreation, Culture, and Religion (52%), followed by Housing and Community Amenities (45%) and Environmental Protection (38%). Adapted from *Government at a Glance 2023*, by OECD, 2024.

The HFE system helps mitigate adverse elements of Vertical Fiscal Imbalance by giving more fiscal capacity to the states via grant provisions allowed within the constitution.[82] Australia's HFE system is among the most fiscally equalising transfer systems in the OECD, as it accounts for structural disadvantages embedded in state revenue raising capabilities. It is a 'gap-filling' transfer system, where the GST transfer is the major fiscal redistribution mechanism. The GST is fully equalised to reflect the revenue raising capability and average costs of each state and territory (Dougherty & Forman, 2021, p. 9). This HFE transfer system accounts for both differences in revenue and expenditure capacity to create its distribution methodology. This means that fiscally weaker (lower own-revenue raising) states with higher average expenditure responsibilities broadly benefit from GST redistribution.

Under the existing GST arrangement, and to ensure HFE principles are applied with a degree of neutrality, the Australian government works with a semi-independent agency. The Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC),[83] undertakes an annual assessment of the GST

[82] Section 96 of the constitution states: "the Parliament may grant financial assistance to any state on such terms and conditions as the parliament thinks fit" (*Constitution*, 1900, s. 96).
[83] Following the failed succession of Western Australia from the Commonwealth, the CGC was established in 1933 with the mandate of providing impartial and independent advice on the distribution of grants (Productivity Commission, 2018, p. 3).

distribution using an agreed upon methodology. While the system is broadly endorsed, various states have raised arguments that they deserve a bigger share of the total distribution based on differing interpretations of the equity principle of the redistribution (Productivity Commission, 2018, p. 3).

Income tax unification (i.e., the transfer of income to the federal government) has created new problems for state governments, who became structurally dependent on grant transfers to fund their general expenses. Subsequently, state owned revenue has since remained comparatively weak, fragmented, and volatile compared with federal collections. In addition, competition between states has frequently put downward pressure on state taxation; for example, the universal abolishment of inheritance tax. As a result, own-source revenue for states and local government has been composed of a combination of stamp duty (tax imposed on property transfers), payroll tax (business tax paid on a threshold of wage bills), and land tax (based on unimproved land value), with other smaller taxes including motor (registration) and royalties.

Evidence suggests that GST redistribution has been highly successful in minimising the Gini coefficient (a measure of inequality) between states, at among the most effective rates compared with other federations that have subnational financial transfer systems (Koutsogeorgopoulou & Tuske, 2015, p. 26). This suggests that the independence and principles underpinning the GST transfer system have been successful in their HFE aims[84]. It can be argued that an effective HFE system creates a level playing field for subnational actors, supporting dispersed form of governance.

Fiscal Federalism and Multi-Level Governance Approaches

To undertake an analysis of Australia's three-levels of government, it is critical to understand the key debates underpinning federal interactivities, also referred as Federal Financial Relations. Across federated governments, a core debate has frequently been between centralised (i.e., unitary) and decentralised (i.e., pluralist) federalism. The fiscal element of this debate remains among the most important, questioning whether financial control should be concentrated in a central decision maker or spread between sub-national actors. Fiscal federalism, a major disciplinary subliterature concerned with these questions, explores and identifies an appropriate level of government for fiscal and policy responsibilities (Oates, 2005, p. 349).

Fiscal federalism has a long tradition with roots steeped in the impacts of the Keynesian revolution in economics. As an approach, it is both ontological and normative in that it argues both for what federalism *is* and what it *should be* (see Williams-Brooks, 2019, p. 145). For this reason, its accounts are both material and theoretical. According to Oates

[84] Significant changes to the GST distribution arrangement were made in 2018 and have faced criticism. The new arrangements are scheduled for review by the Productivity Commission (see Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2025a).

(2005), a 'first generation'[85] of fiscal federalism theorists argued for central (federal) government as the ultimate and necessary provider of welfare outcomes for the broad public. This approach would require a range of committed positions including government pursuance of macroeconomic stability, support for an appropriate level of income redistribution, and economising the level of national output of public goods (pp. 350-356). As a practical consequence, advocation and practice led to greater central control of federal governments over policy matters, and a general shrinking of subnational government fiscal powers (Tanzi, 2008, p. 4).

During the 1970s, beliefs about the benevolent and mediating role of federal governments were increasingly criticised, especially relating to the perceived inefficiency of federally coordinated public spending, fiscal deficits, growing debt, and stagflation (see Chapter 4). Central governments were ultimately held accountable for the crises of the 1970s, and new theoretic explanations were explored as a result (Tanzi, 2008, p.9). One alternative account was offered by public choice theorists, who championed decentralisation (subnational governance) as a way to disperse the interests of a central government by creating localised fields of competition (Oates, 2005, p. 355).

In direct response, a 'second generation' of fiscal federalism theorists expressed scepticism to some of the key assumptions underpinning earlier fiscal federalism literature. They raised the self-interested nature of both decision makers and the general public, placing a greater focus on the role of incentives in political institutions. They also emphasised information asymmetry (lack of equal and complete access to information) as a major constraint on the rational decision making of key actors. The emphasis on the role of institutions, self-interest pursuance, and limited information were, therefore, key tenets of this account of fiscal federalism.[86]

Taking on the insights of the second generation of fiscal federalism theory, a key observed trade-off is greater public accountability of decentralised decision-making versus the coordination advantages of centralised policy. A critical factor in favour of centralised governments is their ability to manage subnational government and provide scope to provide fiscal protection. Oates (2005) concluded that there is a delicate balance in ensuring the dynamics of a federal system retain their stability and self-reinforcement over the longer term (p. 366). Fiscal federalism offers a useful starting point in articulating several key tensions, debates, and consideration of the trade-offs around centralised and decentralised governance arrangements.

Noting the key aspects of fiscal federalism, Multi-Level Governance (MLG)[87] is a complementary and relatively contemporary revival of the centralisation and

[85] Richard Musgrave's (1959) '*The Theory of Public Finance*' is considered the first major contribution to the field (Tanzi, 2008). Other key commentators throughout the 1950s and 1960s included Kenneth Arrow and Paul Samuelson (Oates, 2005, p. 350).

[86] The second generation of fiscal federalism supports local government as a greater vehicle for both revenue collection and expenditure, emphasising the necessity of local responsiveness. This includes increasing delivery of public goods through market processes (Weingast, 2009, pp. 280-282).

[87] The term was first used by Marks (1993) in the discussion of structural power of subnational decision makers in the EU setting (Bache et al., 2016, p .487).

decentralisation debate. MLG approaches emerged in the 1990s to study integration of nations in Europe as part of the EU and the structure of the block as a political decision-making body (Bache et al., 2016, p. 487). Leaving aside the context of the EU, MLG provides a theoretical approach to explore the challenges of decentralisation and a means to coordinate international pathways for fiscal and political decision making (i.e., climate change) (Schakel et al., 2015, p. 269).

For this reason, the conceptual ideas of MLG can be usefully mobilised to help understand practical and academic problems emerging within Australia's three-tiered federal system under Vertical Fiscal Imbalance. For example, Stilwell and Troy (2000) use MLG to explain the practical interlocking systems of the levels of government and their implication within the planning systems of urban development. A practical definition of MLG, Across a range of applied literatures, MLG

> refer[s] to systems of governance where there is a *dispersion of authority* upwards, downwards and sideways between levels of government – local, regional, national and supra-national – as well as across spheres and sectors, including states, markets and civil society. (my italics, Daniell & Kay, 2018, p. 4)

As Daniell and Kay (2018) noted, while MLG has been deployed in a broad range of literatures across public policy discussions, the field lacks an overarching foundation for analysis given the breadth of analysis (pp. 3-5). Rather than a negative, this offers unique advantages. Compared with fiscal federalist approaches, MLG approaches are an open-ended method and enquiry for exploring best practices for stakeholders within federations to deliver optimal public policy outcomes.

In this sense, MLG is best conceived of as a pluralistic approach, interested in understanding how a range of modes of cooperation can facilitate better outcomes for public decision making. For this reason, it is a suitable framework for exploring elements of persistent disadvantage identified in Chapter Two (i.e., capability approaches to addressing disadvantage). This is because MLG theorists aspire towards an ideal state that maximises the possibilities of federations cooperating in place-based settings. Daniell and Kay (2018) continue:

> MLG in the Australian context moves us away from simply viewing [federal]–state relations as a zero-sum game of formal authority and fiscal power to considering the possibility of enhanced policy capacity through *experimentation and innovation* in multi-level interactions. (my italics, p. 51)

Bringing these discussions together, it is argued that fiscal federalism and MLG perspectives can support a detailed investigation of Australia's Federal Financial Relations, by seeking to understand the trade-offs and necessary tools to address fiscal imbalances as well as helping to identify the level (or levels) of government that can best optimise social outcomes. The example of the COAG trials demonstrates both the benefits and barriers of MLG approaches as they relate to place-based policy delivery (discussed in Chapter 6).

The COAG Trials

Over recent decades, governments have sought to find new ways of working with First Nations communities to contribute to better social, economic, and well-being outcomes. This stems from a broad recognition that traditional mechanisms for government collaboration have generated poor outcomes and contributed to disillusionment for First Nations community. Under the Howard government (1996-2007), a new approach was proposed to contest established government cooperation mechanisms to address First Nations' disadvantage (Jarvie & Stewart, 2017, p. 212).

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG)[88] trials were 5-year pilot programmes announced in 2002, involving federal, state, and local governments finding innovative ways to cooperate and partner with First Nations communities to achieve a broad range of outcomes in areas such as health, education, economic, and well-being. The trials commenced between 2003 to 2004 in eight locations (Morgan Disney & Associates, 2006, pp. 10-12).[89] The model required collaboration between the levels of government to support flexible services, programmes, and initiatives while finding innovative ways of working to break down siloing of government actors.
In NSW, the chosen site was the Murdi Paaki region, encompassing 16 communities across western and northern NSW.[90] The area faces significant entrenched disadvantage across a range of social and economic areas, as well as challenges from regional drought. The Murdi Paaki region included around 7,500 First Nations people, who accounted for 14 per cent of the total regional population. Like other trial sites, the Murdi Paaki intervention has been labelled a 'patchwork' approach to MLG, that was envisaged as deliberate means of tailoring the offer to community to support emergent capability and flexible partnership. The COAG trial model included a federal and state lead agency that would be accountable to coordination efforts within the jurisdiction setting including working with First Nations communities (Jarvie & Stewart, 2017, p. 213).

The COAG trials identified several consistent roadblocks in MLG delivery relating to place-based policy considerations. Most critically, major changes around the authorisation environment, resulting from the merging and transference of First Nations functions, coupled with changing senior leadership, undermined the long-term vision of the programme. This issue was mirrored in community, with significant time and coordination pressures, competing factions and viewpoints undermining broader collaboration.

---

[88] COAG was formed by the Hawke government in 1990, emerging from the 'special premiers conferences'. It served as a critical forum for intergovernmental decision making, including the model's cooperative federalism, with representation from federal government, states, and local government through the Australian Local Government Association (Grant & Drew, 2017, p. 108). COAG was disbanded under the Morrison Government (2018-2022) in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and replaced by National Cabinet (Wannell, 2022, p. 133).

[89] The eight sites selected for the COAG trials were: ACT, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yakunytjatjara (APY) Lands (South Australia), Murdi Paaki (NSW), Shepparton (Victoria), North Eastern Tasmania, East Kimberly (Western Australia), Wadeye (NT), Cape York (Queensland) (Morgan Disney & Associates, 2006, pp. 10-12).

[90] These included: "Broken Hill, Wilcannia, Menindee, Dareton-Wentworth and Ivanhoe in the south-west, to Brewarrina, Bourke, Lightning Ridge, and Walgett in the north and Cobar in the centre ... [and] Gullargambone, Collarenebri, Goodooga, Enngonia, Weilmoringle and Coonamble" (Jarvie & Stewart, 2017 p. 213).

Coordination was also compromised by complex bureaucratic reporting systems, including the handing over of Indigenous policy coordination to the Department of Families, Community Services and indigenous Affairs, creating tensions within the core reporting dynamic. Finally, costs for the COAG trials extended significantly beyond what was already an expensive 5-year (considered long-term) programme, making ongoing funding hard to justify politically and administratively compared with standard government process (Jarvie & Stewart, 2017, pp. 226-227).

Reflecting on Murdi Paaki, Jarvie and Stewart (2017) argued that a major challenge for government was to maintain a slow approach to influencing community level outcomes and work with a 'light touch' approach. To succeed with this work, government needs to generate sufficient community trust, have a realisable vision, adapt as the project evolves, be open to compromise, create the conditions for collaboration, and work over longer time horizons to realise change (p. 228). The Murdi Paaki region remains a critical decision-making block for First Nations communities across North-West NSW, including recent local decision-making initiatives with the NSW government (O'Bryan & Markham, 2023, p. 2).[91]

Evidence has suggested success for the work relating to health and education outcomes. Murdi Paaki, for example, saw retention rates increase by 32 per cent for Years 11 and 12 (between 2001 and 2006), as well as positive outcomes in writing and reading. This included greater improvements in numeracy than the state average (including for non-indigenous students). There was some evidence of longer-term health improvements through reductions in substance and disease prevalence (Jarvie, 2008; Jarvie & Stewart, 2011).[92]

The COAG trials epitomise many of the challenges in building meaningful MLG style interventions in complex settings of entrenched community disadvantage. This challenge was seen in many trial sites, where representatives could not cooperate effectively with the machinery of government, with government struggling to articulate a clear vision of what working differently would mean practically across sites (Hunt, 2007). Jarvie and Stewart (2011) presented six key lessons for government from the Murdi Paaki experience: "build trust, start small, be flexible, negotiate, develop collaborative leadership and allow time to pass" (p. 228). Another key example of MLG in practice can be understood through tax reform through the lens of federalism.

[91] Murdi Paaki was first defined in 1989 by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), prior to the COAG trials (Bradbery, 2008).

[92] "Year 7 English Language and Literacy Assessment test results showed an 8% increase in achievement of national benchmarks in writing and a 4% increase in reading from 2006 to 2007; and over 2005 to 2006 MP Aboriginal students showed greater rates of improvement in numeracy than both Indigenous students in other parts of NSW and all students in NSW. In health there were substantial reductions in hospital separations due to alcohol, cardiovascular disease, and skin infections, and the rate of diabetes and acute respiratory infections (2005 compared to 1990s). The health improvements were built on the back of the strong Far West Area Health Service, including the Aboriginal medical services throughout the 1990 and 2000s. There were also reductions in crime." (Jarvie & Stewart, 2011, p. 272)

Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic

From an MLG perspective, the COVID-19 pandemic (2019-2023) tested the effectiveness of existing Federal Financial Relations and demonstrated opportunities for further reform. The need to rapidly contain and supress COVID-19 required cooperation to coordinate effective health and economic responses. The National Cabinet, where Premiers and Chief Ministers[93] held regular meetings with the Prime Minister, was broadly an effective vehicle to both coordinate government while incorporating select expert opinions.

As a result, National Cabinet representatives were able to build tailored jurisdictional responses coordinated with the national health response (Aroney & Boyce, 2022, p. 311). Overall, the approach demonstrated many of the strengths of the federation's ability to handle a national emergency with states playing a core role in crisis leadership, especially in coordinating health responses (Fenna, 2021, pp. 20-21). The approach was particularly impressive given the experimental risks in disbanding COAG to form National Cabinet.

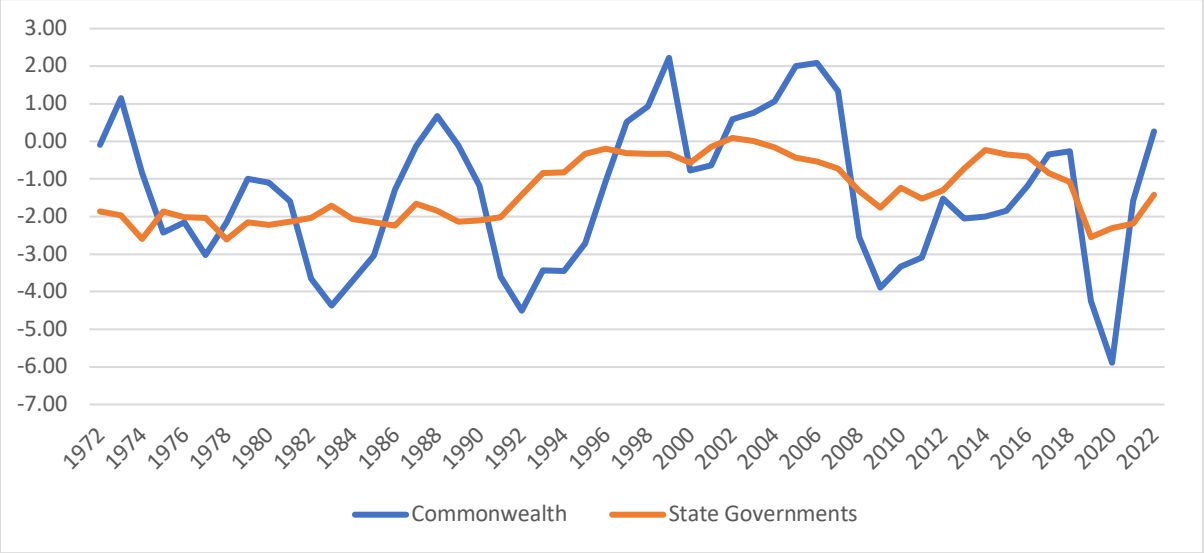
During the pandemic, local governments also created tailored local resources to support community members to navigate available state and federal programmes during the crisis. Local government played a central role in contract tracing reporting and encouraging testing and mask wearing, as well as supporting the rollout of economic stimulus measures for businesses while monitoring overall community well-being and providing additional tailored supports. Public amenities were put under pressure by the repeated lockdowns, with the federal government providing stimulus via a $1 billion Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Grant programme, and other trainee and wage subsidies at around $1.2 billion.[94]

While the MLG potentials of pandemic response were promising, the fiscal dimension was more fraught. The full legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic is still an emergent discussion, but there are clear implications both from a revenue and a governance perspective. From 2020, the federal government spent over $88 billion on fiscal stimulus package around job protection (JobKeeper, discussed in Chapter 4) (Borland & Hunt, 2023, p. 109). In total, the federal government spent or committed $198 billion by the 2020 October budget, including on health and economic measures (Aroney & Boyce, 2022, p. 312).

State debt is now at record highs (Fenwick, 2023, p.34). This is an issue given that states are consistently net borrowers as a percentage of GDP, compared to the federal government which experiences sharper volatility but frequently is a net lender (see Figure 26). This has reignited discussions around the vulnerability and unsustainability of subnational revenue for state governments, which have been decades in the making. As a result, there is urgent demand for significant tax reform to address structural weaknesses embedded in the Australian taxation system (Sainsbury & Breunig, 2020, p. 212).

[93] Chief Ministers are elected parliamentary leaders in the territory governments of the ACT and the NT.
[94] The Fairfield local government was commended for its proactive engagement with multicultural communities, who faced significant language and cultural barriers during the COVID-19 crisis (Fairfield City Council 2024).

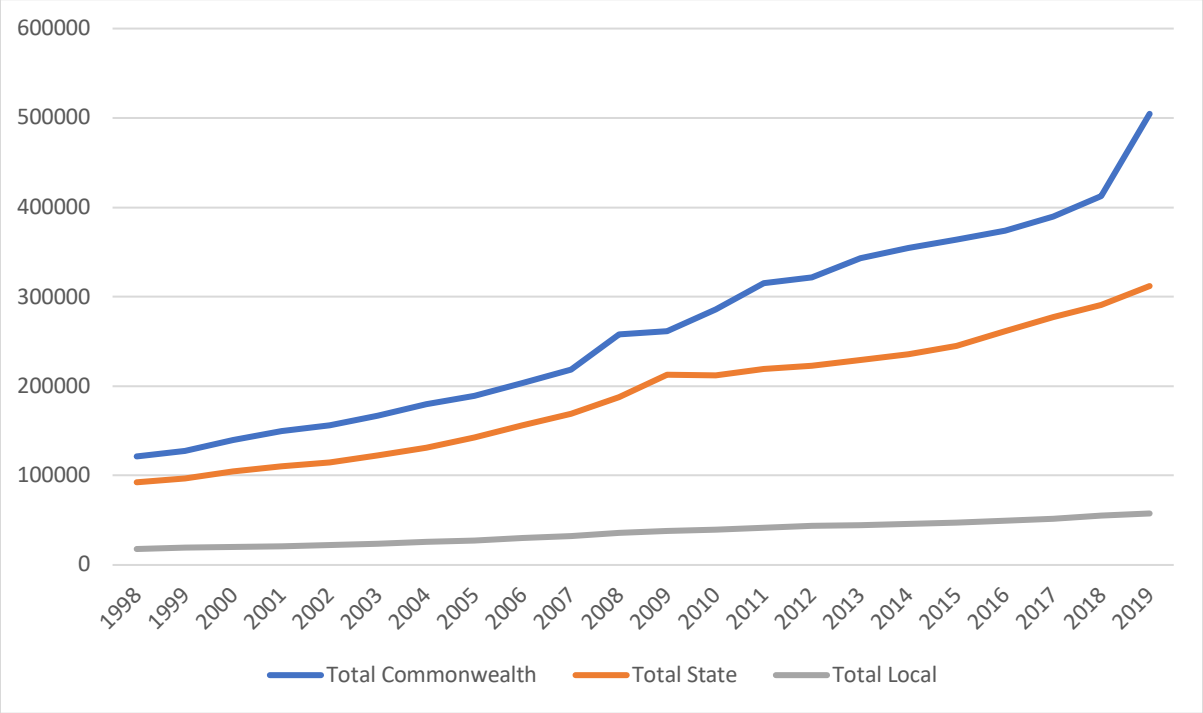
Figure 26 – *Net Lending/Net Borrowing as a Percentage of GDP, Commonwealth and States (1972–2022)*



Note. Commonwealth net borrowing/lending is more volatile than state ratios and runs larger deficits. In contrast, state lending/borrowing has remained consistently negative since at least 1972, suggesting states are overwhelmingly "borrowers" under existing Federal Financial Relations. Adapted from *OECD Economic Surveys: Australia 2023*, by OECD, 2024.

There are other pressures also at play in the emergent environment. The Intergenerational Report highlighted emerging pressures for the Australian economy into the early 2060s. It found that the government will face lower growth compared with previous decades due to declining population, lower productivity, and reduced participation rates due to population aging. In particular, the economy is expected to grow by only 2.2 per cent in the next 40 years compared to an average of 3.1 per cent over the last 40 years. These conditions are likely to put additional pressure on Australia's tax and transfer system, with higher debt-to-GDP being driven by spending on health, aged care, the NDIS, defence, and interest on government debt (Australian Government, 2023). Pressures in the health, education, and social security system have been building in both state and federal expenditure over the last decades (see Figure 27).

Figure 27 – *Spending Total by Year (AUD$ Millions, Current Prices) and Level of Government (1998–2019)*



Note. The Commonwealth and states have faced growing cost pressures in recent years. The Commonwealth's expenses growth has been driven by key areas such as costs associated with aged care, the National Disability Insurance Scheme, defence, and health. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, interest on debt has been a subsequent driver. Comparatively, local government expenditure has remained relatively stable. Adapted from *OECD Economic Surveys: Australia 2024*, by OECD, 2024.

The current Federal Financial Relations system faces significant challenges, when viewed from the differences in perspective between the states and the federal government. States will need to find revenue-raising strategies that are more sustainable over the longer-term. Conversely, the federal government has its own fiscal pressures, adding to discussions on further tax reform. States are unlikely to abolish inefficient transaction-based revenue that they have become increasingly reliant upon. Vertical Fiscal Imbalance makes intergovernmental cooperation between the levels of government challenging without strong central leadership (Eccleston & Smith, 2015, p. 439).

Major tax reform will likely be a necessary part of a future agenda to support sustainability and prosperity under Vertical Fiscal Imbalance. Without ambition within the tax reform area, governments of all persuasions will struggle to build solutions to multilevel challenges across the federation. A major element of significant reform will be understanding the importance of a more integrated local government presence as part of MLG strategies. The next section explores the history and theory required to appreciate local government as a decision maker under Federal Financial Relations.

Local Government in Australia

So far, the chapter has focused on the fiscal relationship between the federal government and the states as they form a vital component of Federal Financial Relations. Local

government is the third, and often neglected, level of government. However, local government should be considered a core actor in MLG responses by enabling joined up solutions in community that can directly respond to persistent disadvantage. The historical origins, responsibilities, and revenue collection of local government are specific and have unique strengths favouring local decision making.

Local government collects its own-source revenue from land tax, fees, and charges associated with services, and is supplemented by grants transferred from state and territory grant commissions (Grant & Drew, 2017, pp. 266-271). Local government is largely self-funded, with around 90 per cent of its revenue being own-source collections. The largest collection is property rates which make up around half of total income, with the other half of revenue coming from other fees, charges on development, fines, and income from investment (Stewart, 2023, pp. 18-21). This means that unimproved value of land is a critical determinant of level of revenue that can be raised creating revenue inequity across councils.

Lack of constitutional recognition has frequently meant that councils are referred to as 'creatures of the state' (i.e., state government), and do not have clear and direct interactivities with the federal government, in the same manner as the states. The lack of constitutional recognition places significant constraints on federal advocacy as well as political self-determination for local government (Aroney & Boyce, 2022, p. 313). For this reason, state legislation has significant power over the activities and organisation of local government (Brown, 2007, p. 102).

Local government has different historical traditions in each state. In some instances, local government was a direct demand from local citizens in the pursuit of community services and infrastructure, while in other cases state governments advocated for local government formation to decentralise responsibility and control over local challenges and complexities. This has created discussion over whether local government is best conceptualised as an expression of self-government (i.e., an expression of local democracy) or a creature of expansionary state interests (Grant & Drew, 2017, p. 3).

A prescriptive theory is one that can advance organisational goals by offering both an effective explanatory capability for the theory to function, and practical utility to its cause (Clegg & Bailey, 2007). Grant and Drew's (2017) interpretation of Power et al.'s (1981) 'prescriptive theory' of local government is a useful framework for understanding what local government can aspire to become (i.e., a normative account). In this regard, Grant and Drew offer an approach that supports an advocation for a broad decentralisation agenda, which sees local government taking a broader role in the management of local settings.

Grant and Drew (2017) give three key advantages to local government as an actor ideal for supporting community self-determination (pp. 64-70), informed by Power et al. (1981). First, local government can be conceptualised as the 'local state', capable of defining and developing the governance of place, supporting local resource development in the process. Second, local government is 'intrinsically democratic', meaning that the proximity of local officials and representatives to the community provides greater accountability and transparency to local public policy supporting understandings of processes. Finally, they

argue that local government is 'developmentalist and expansive', naturally benefitting from and fostering cooperation which, in turn, can support local efficiency and innovation.

To conclude, in agreement with Grant and Drew (2017), it is argued that a more complete form of MLG should include local government as a key actor because of its potential to more adequately represent local demands. As argued, under existing Vertical Fiscal Imbalance arrangements the federal government remains the most powerful decision maker across the levels of government. While states have stronger interfaces with local councils, federal government has the fiscal capacity to intervene and shape national reform agendas. For this reason, it is worth considering historic episodes, where local-federal partnerships have been a point of policy focus, to draw lessons on what elements of experimental MLG have succeeded in the past, and which might be useful in settings of persistent disadvantage.

History of Federal-Local Government Partnerships

Federal governments infrequently attempt to intervene in local communities and regions, including forming partnerships with local governments with mixed success (see Table 2). In 1942, during the Second World War, the Australia federal government planned a division of the nation into around 100 regions led by Regional Development Committees (RDCs) under the directive of the Commonwealth Department of Post-War Reconstruction (CDPWR). The CDPWR supported an agenda around equitable redistribution of resources as part of national reconstruction, which included goals around raising living standards and sustaining employment while delivering housing and community planning priorities. In addition, the CDPWR prioritised the rebalancing of growth in regions that were less developed, for example, the Murray Valley. The CDPWR was promptly dismantled under the election of Menzies (1949-1966), who subsequently returned major planning powers to state governments (Kelly et al., 2009, p. 176).

Table 2. *Typography of Local-Federal Government Partnership Approaches*

Name	Approach	Locations	Timeline
RDCs	National Development (centrally led)	Nearly 100 regional areas	1940s (Chifley/Curtain)
ROCs	Social Equity (local government led)	All local council areas	1970s (Whitlam)
RDOs	Self-Reliance (local government led)	Voluntary council membership	1990s (Hawke)

Note. Adapted from "Regional Development and Local Government: Three Generations of Federal Intervention," by A. H. Kelly et al., 2009, *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, 15(2), p. 180.

The Whitlam government (1972-1975) would revive core elements of federal planning interventions advocated for during the Second World War and make efforts to strengthen the partnering powers of local government. This included tasking the Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) with overseeing transfers via states to local government. Whitlam also oversaw a failed referendum that would have seen local government formally

recognised in the constitution and strengthened the direct partnership powers of federal and local governments.

Under Whitlam, to apply for assistance grants, councils joined 'regional assemblies', later known as Regional Organisations of Councils (ROCS). The ROCs served as administrative interfaces with federal officials. ROCs were composed of local councils, and included all areas of Australia, with a total of 80 ROCs formed (Kelly et al., 2009, p. 177). The ROCs never managed to reach their full envisaged potential, serving largely as administrative entities rather than local advocacy bodies. While the constitutional referendum failed, federal assistance grants remain today and are overseen by the CGC, which continues to ensure the equitable transfer of funds to local government through state grant entities.

Another major component of the Whitlam Government's attempt at partnership reforms was the Australia Assistance Plan (AAP), supporting regional councils to lead local social welfare programmes. These did not rely on local government boundaries and were composed of citizen groups. The Area Improvement Plan (AIP) was a major initiative which cooperated with ROCs on welfare, infrastructure, and employment initiatives. State governments did not respond favourably to these arrangements, which they saw as an encroachment on their public policy domain (Kelly et al., 2009, pp. 178-179). The Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) was one of the ROCs that commenced at this time, and represented one of the highest funded regions under the programme. Although the initiative was terminated at the end of the Whitlam administration several ROCs continue to survive including WSROC.

In the 1990s the planning interventions shifted to self-sustainability, led by the taskforce around Regional Development which delivered the *Developing Australia: A Regional Perspective* report. Regional development would emerge as a critical dimension of the Working Nation report (discussed in Chapter 4). This programme supported initiatives led within communities themselves, promoting a framework of self-help under the Regional Development Program (RDP), supported by voluntary organisations known as Regional Development Organisations, (RDO), which communities would voluntarily elect (Kelly et al., 2009, pp. 181-183).

While the Howard government (1996-2007) dismantled the RDOs, they would make key interventions in local government policy including bodies established to investigate local resource management and the sustainability of local environments. The Roads to Recovery programme, designed to support the integrity of local roads, was also set up at this time for councils that could not adequately fund their ongoing infrastructure maintenance. Howard would also sign off on a major report highlighting the financial unsustainability of local government: *Rates and Taxes: A Fair Share for Responsible Local government* (Kelly et al., 2009, p. 185).

Local government was a critical element of responses to the Global Financial Crisis (Great Recession) in 2008-9 under the Rudd government (2007-2010), supporting the roll-out of fiscal stimulus. The Rudd government oversaw the setting up of the Australian Council of Local Government (ACLG), and briefly explored opportunities for constitutional recognition of local government, which were later abandoned (Grant & Drew, 2017). The period under

Tony Abbott (2013-2015) included the cessation of the ACLG and a freeze of the indexation of financial assistance grants. Initiatives for federal reform that were proposed during this time were discontinued following the transition to the Malcolm Turnbull government (2015-2018) (pp. 98-102).

Overall, a range of federal governments have recognised the importance funding local government, although with contesting beliefs surrounding how federal and local partnerships should work, as well as the ideal areas for collaboration. Federal interventions in local areas have failed to reach their full potential for a host of reasons. These included the inability to meaningfully deliver planning efficiencies, garner adequate political support, political leadership instability leading to the dismantling of initiatives, and the natural animosity generated by state governments driven by a view that local government is primarily their zone of influence. They have, however, created some unique MLG experiments, continuing to demonstrate the enduring relevance of federal/local partnerships in policy shaping. The WSROC and ALGA are two important examples of ongoing local to federal advocacy relationship.

WSROC and ALGA

Despite their varied dismantling after the Whitlam administration, some ROCs have remained important organisations. Local councils and state governments often come up against each other around the issues of who has the primary responsibility to govern and lead city development, creating a unique and compelling case for local council cooperation. ROCs tend to undertake activities across four areas including "Advocacy; Regional strategic planning; Service provision (either to the public or to member councils); and Information sharing and problem solving" (Gooding, 2012, p. 17). ROC organisations in NSW generally survived better than in other jurisdictions, due to the large number of councils across the state (Gooding, 2012, p. 13). While WSROC is still an active regional association, as of 2025, its membership has slipped to five councils from 10 in 2012.[95]

Current activities for WSROC include waste management,[96] climate policy, and environmental conservation. WSROC's (2025) current mission is to "bring a collective voice to issues crucial for Greater Western Sydney's growing population since 1973" (p. 25). Another critical issue for the success of ROCs is budget for staffing. In 2012, WSROC had 5.6 full-time staff, a relatively lean organisational capability. With a halving of its council membership in that time, it is likely that staffing numbers may also be substantially lower. This means WSROC likely relies on heavier steering and management through existing council officials, which already operate under tight budget conditions. While the mandate of WSROC is broad, and can promote an important array of coordination functions, it is hard to

[95] Fairfield is no longer a member of WSROC, current members include Blacktown City Council, Blue Mountains City Council, Hawkesbury City Council, Liverpool City Council, and Cumberland Council (Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, 2025a).
[96] These include addressing waste infrastructure, litter reduction, and food and garden organics (Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, 2025b).

see how WSROC builds a larger bargaining position in an environment crowded out by state and federal partnerships.

Another important body for local government is the ALGA, a peak body representing local councils nationally. Some of their key foci are financial stability, funding for roads and infrastructure, recycling and waste policy, community resilience, and responding to climate change (Australian Local Government Association, n.d.). Founded in 1947, the organisation created an ongoing secretariat in 1976 to reflect the needs for local government voices in federal settings. ALGA serves as a representative on boards and ministerial councils, providing a national perspective on local council and participating in submission and enquiry processes. In addition, ALGA raises awareness of issues faced by local council, pressuring government to adopt policy by running select campaigns and guide national decision making on local government.

Together, ROCs and ALGA form important elements of any future MLG for community, given their broad voices and coordination functions. Despite a clear case for a normative, prescriptive view of local government as a place-informing and democratic actor, there are clear fiscal constraints within the federation which prevent emergent leadership on complex problems. Applying these threads to the Fairfield setting helps articulate the practical challenges in achieving MLG and effectively advocating for communities experiencing persistent disadvantage.

The Tax System and Reform

So far, the chapter has investigated a range of case studies of MLG in practice. While this provides evidence around pathways for implementing cooperative governance arrangements, the raising and distribution of revenue is the other critical element in solving complex policy challenges. According to Tilley (2024) there have been three significant periods of tax reform in Australia's federal history. First, the Curtain government's (1941-45) unification of the income tax system that created a nationally regulated taxation standard for individuals and businesses. Second, the Hawke government's (1983-91) broadening of the income tax base. Finally, the Howard government's (1996-2007) introduction of a general consumption tax with the roll-out of the GST and reforms to federal-state finances. Federal tax reform efforts have thus broadly boiled down to efforts in better standardising and broadening of income, consumption, and business tax collection (pp. 29-59).

National tax reform would not have been possible without significant federal revenue power growth that occurred during the Second World War. During the war, the federal government took control of collection of income tax from the states, which was originally conceived as a temporary measure to support fiscal stability and coordinate national efforts. Despite the states rejecting the request for exclusive control of income taxes by the federal government, the 1942 committee on uniform taxation would recommend and oversee the forced unification of the tax system (Tilley, 2024, p. 146).

Aligning with fiscal federalism's first generation of theorisation, the unified income tax system arguably provided substantial benefits and was a major precondition to expansions of Australia's welfare state (Smith, 2010, p. 3). Income tax unification supported the growth

and further development of welfare services while simplifying inter-state income tax collection which had been fraught with logistical challenges. As discussed in Chapter Four, this allowed states to broadly step away from providing social protection, with the federal government taking on welfare and work functions across the national system (Smith, 2015, p. 682).

While much of the federal tax collection remained relatively stable throughout the post-war years into the 1960s, the fiscal crises of the 1970s saw the commissioning of the Asprey committee's report on the tax system, which would prove highly influential on successive tax reform programmes (including the first consumption tax recommendations). The major outcome of the report was a recommendation of a substantial reduction in the number of income tax brackets. Under the Whitlam government (1972-1975) tariff reduction was pursued as an anti-inflationary measure, with a 25 per cent reduction across all tariffs. The Fraser government (1975-1983) would further reduce the number of income brackets. Estate duties (i.e., death duties) would be abolished from the late 1970s, first in Queensland in 1977, by the federal government in 1979, and universally abolished by 1984 (Tilley, 2024, p. 164).

The Hawke government pursued a significant reform agenda in the 1980s. This included, making superannuation payments taxable, the abolishment of basic health insurance premiums, and an income levy to pay for Medicare. The three-step income system was adjusted to five steps, perceived as offering greater fairness. Other reforms included introduction of a capital gains tax, fringe benefit tax, a foreign tax credit system, and dividend imputations. In total these reforms saw a broader income tax collection as well as reforms for the business tax system. In addition, a petroleum resource rent tax was introduced for offshore petroleum. Finally, the Prices and Incomes Accords saw the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) agree to wage restraint in exchange for a broad range of tax reductions and social wage reforms (Tilley, 2024, pp. 173-196).

The Howard government oversaw some of the most substantial reforms to federal finances, since the Hawke-Keating era. The 'A New Tax System' (ANTS) reviewed broad-based consumption tax, federal-state finances, and options to reduce personal income tax. The major recommendation from the ANTS review was for a 10 per cent value-add tax, known as the GST. A range of items would be exempt from the tax, including health, education, childcare, charities, and religious services; fresh food would also be added to the exemption list after some discussion. GST was implemented in 2000 with exemptions on health and food items but still impacting 56 per cent of goods and services (Tilley, 2024, pp. 201-221).

The last major federal taxation review was *Australia's Future Tax System* (AFTS) (Henry et al., 2010) under Rudd (2007-2010). The AFTS review made recommendations for a robust and future orientated tax system from the federation, to meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, with a focus that the tax system should be designed efficiently, equitably, transparently, and effectively. Key revenue recommendations included a simplified and more comprehensive personal income system, reforming tax based on business income to support growth, simplified consumption taxation, and economic rents from natural resources and land (Henry et al., 2010, pp. xv-xxiv).

The review argued that with the application of the four above revenue instruments, a range of inefficient taxes could be replaced including insurance, payroll, property transfer, motor vehicle taxes, royalties, luxury vehicle taxation, superannuation contributions, taxes on pensions, allowances and benefits, and car related fuel and registration taxes with a road user charge (Henry et al., 2010). Of the 138 recommendations, the only major implementation was the introduction of the resource super profits tax (later known as the mineral resource rent tax), that was repealed during the Abbott government (2013-2015).

Debates surrounding tax collection have been about the broader efficiencies to improve outcomes for the Australian community. These have not always been successful, with significant reform requiring exceptional timing, public backing, and necessary political will. The tax reform process has been highly uneven and has dramatically slowed in the last decade, despite a growing view that the tax system is no longer fit for purpose (Phillips et al., 2025, pp. 1-2; Sainsbury & Breunig 2020, p. 212). In summary, tax reform has reinforced the centrality of the federal government as the most powerful fiscal actor, while failing to realise necessary reforms to make the system more sustainable. The inefficiency of this system and its top-down nature is a major barrier to realising the power of MLG solutions to complex local problems. The following sections address the specificity of these dynamics as it relates to NSW and Fairfield.

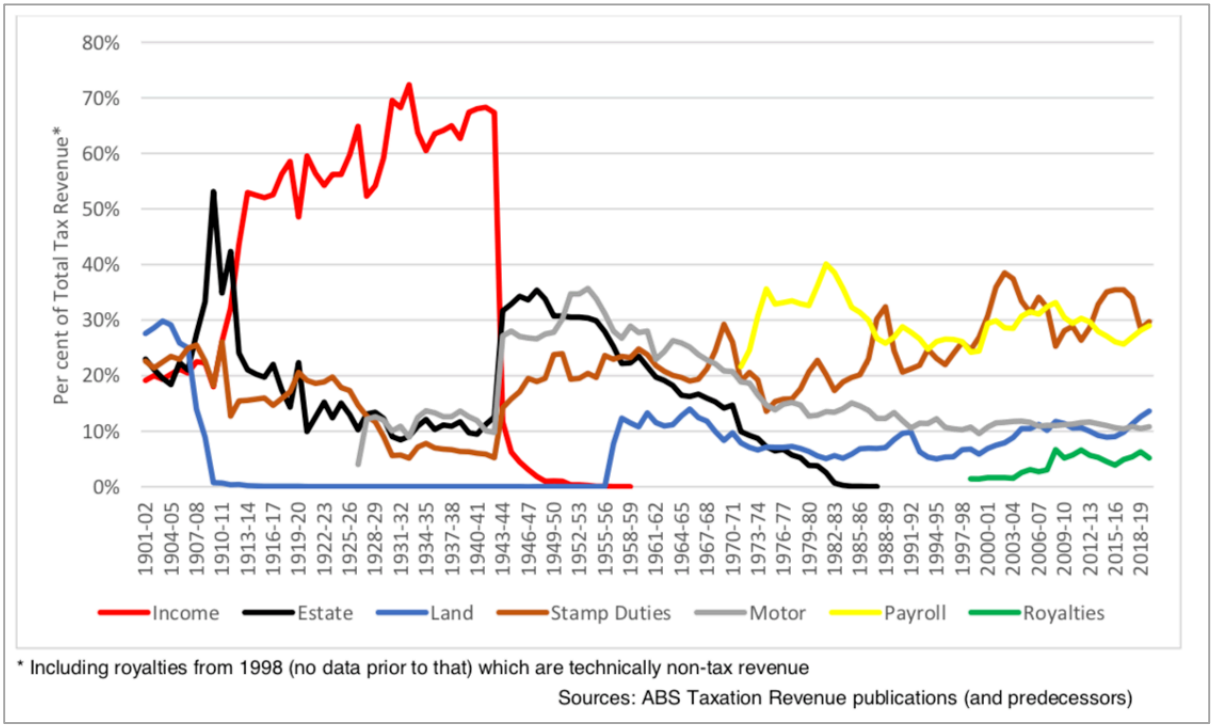
Fairfield as a Case Study in Federal Financial Relations and Place-Based Policy

Specifics of the NSW Taxation System

As the oldest colonial settlement, the development of NSW's state finances closely traces the emergence and evolution of domestic revenue raising. As discussed, states have had to build revenue bases outside of the income and excise domains to raise own-source finance. These have included stamp duties, vehicle taxes, estate and land taxes, gambling taxes, and entertainment and liquor taxes (Tilley, 2024, p. 253). NSW created the first Australian treasury which began operating in 1824, collecting wharfage dues and custom duties.

Estate duties commenced in 1851, and stamp duties in 1865. Income was first taxed in 1895, the same year that a land tax was introduced, although land tax would be handed over to local government from 1906 to 1956. After the federal government took over income tax collection in 1942, NSW major tax items were property conveyance, motor vehicle taxes and stamp duties. Since the 1970s NSW has largely relied on payroll and stamp duties as its major own source revenue, with motor and land tax making a small but important part of the overall contribution, and royalties also contributing to total revenue (Tilley 2022, see Figure 28).

Figure 28 – *NSW Tax Mix (1901-2019)*



Note. Like other states within the federation, NSW's tax mix has evolved throughout the 20th century. While land and then estate taxes formed a core component of the taxation regime, income tax dominated from the 1910s until the Second World War. From this time until the 1970s, estate, motor, and stamp duties were the dominant tax base. Since then, payroll tax has emerged as one of the two dominant revenue sources, along with stamp duties. Motor, land, and royalties comprise a smaller but meaningful portion of own-source revenue. Based on year-to-year fluctuations, these revenue bases are generally unstable. This figure includes royalties from 1998 (no data prior to that), which are technically non-tax revenue. Adapted from *State and Territory Tax Reform*, by P. Tilley, 2022, p. 253, Tax and Transfer Policy Institute – Working Paper, ANU. Reprinted with permission.

The NSW Government has conducted five reviews of its tax system since the 1976 Committee of Inquiry into State Taxation (Tilley, 2022, p. 272).[97] The most recent NSW tax review was the *Review of Federal Financial Relations* in 2020. It observed that the legacy of COVID-19 meant that state would be facing long term financial deficits undermining their credit ratings and domestic economic stability. This challenge comes at time of significant infrastructure backlogs and significant pressures on the health system. The review broadly concluded, like other subnational tax reviews, that the tax base is largely inefficient and overly reliant on stamp duties, with a need to improve and streamline payroll tax while shifting to a generalised land tax. They also noted that the GST system needed reform, given its importance in funding frontline services, while the overall pool continues to shrink due to exemptions on collection (NSW Government, 2020).

Local Government in NSW

Different states have different histories of local government, and NSW has a strong state imposition tradition (i.e., forced formation). The evolution of the NSW local government system has been framed around the 'state-interventionist', meaning the local government was imposed from the colonial government as a way of ensuing local infrastructure and

[97] Tax reviews in NSW occurred in 1976, 1988, 2008, 2011, and 2020 (Tilley, 2022, p. 272).

policing. The *New South Wales Constitution Act 1842* recognised 28 district councils for this purpose. Despite supporting local movements for the recognition of municipal governance, there was opposition to the levying of local rates which had previously not been imposed by the colonial government. The *Shires Act 1905* gave express power for the state government to create local government areas, creating 134 shires over 60 per cent of the land area (Grant & Drew, 2017, p. 30).[98] NSW state government also possess significant powers to limit growth in the revenue raising power of local government (Dollery & Wijeweera, 2010, pp. 59-62).[99]

The end of the Second World War brought about a fiscally empowered federal government and a push for greater intervention in local planning and economic development. The federally led design of amalgamated Australian regions under the CDPWR scheme (discussed above), was not well received by local government as it threatened to take decision making power away from local council. There were five state led attempts at Sydney level reforms between 1898 and 1931. A major logistical triumph was the County of Cumberland Planning Scheme, which developed a 3-year plan for Sydney from 1945. Council amalgamation became a dominant theme of the period, with a 1973 committee recommending reducing the number of Local Government Areas from 223 to 97 (Grant & Drew, 2017, p. 36). This theme of forced amalgamation has continued.

Sydney's local councils were subject to a series of reviews throughout the 2010s, culminating in significant mergers of several key councils. The mandate for the amalgamations was the perceived lack of financial viability of several of the smaller councils. This was followed by the independent local government review panel, culminating in a review recommendation that 32 local government areas in Greater Sydney should be reduced to 14 in a voluntary process (Grant & Drew, 2017, pp. 364-372).

Reviews of subsequent council amalgamations have largely concluded that they failed to deliver on the promise of better streamlining of services and improved economies of scale (Drew et al., 2022). Instead, Drew et al. (2022) argued that better outcomes might be achieved via the costs of amalgamation going towards improved, untied grant funding. This reinforced the need to fiscally empower local government as decision makers, rather than more punitive activities such as forced amalgamations (pp. 13-14).

NSW State Government and Fairfield Council

The 2024-25 NSW state budget can be analysed to help understand the state's current priorities for investing in Greater Western Sydney. It argues for the need to invest in

[98] As discussed in Chapter One, Fairfield is an outlier to this NSW history. Local government emerged in Liverpool in 1871, including Fairfield; however, in 1888, local business interests supporting a separate council for the areas of Smithfield and Fairfield. This detail confirms a persistent presence of local business interests in Fairfield as a major element in local politics. State sanctioning, however, remains the overarching setting framing the tradition in the state (Gapps, 2010, p. 116).

[99] NSW uses a rate pegging system determined by the Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, which caps the maximum percentage amount councils can increase their general revenue. For example, in 2026-27 this was set at 2.5 to 4.2 per cent. Councils may also apply for a special variation, which allows increases above the rate peg (Dollery & Wijeweera, 2010, p. 61).

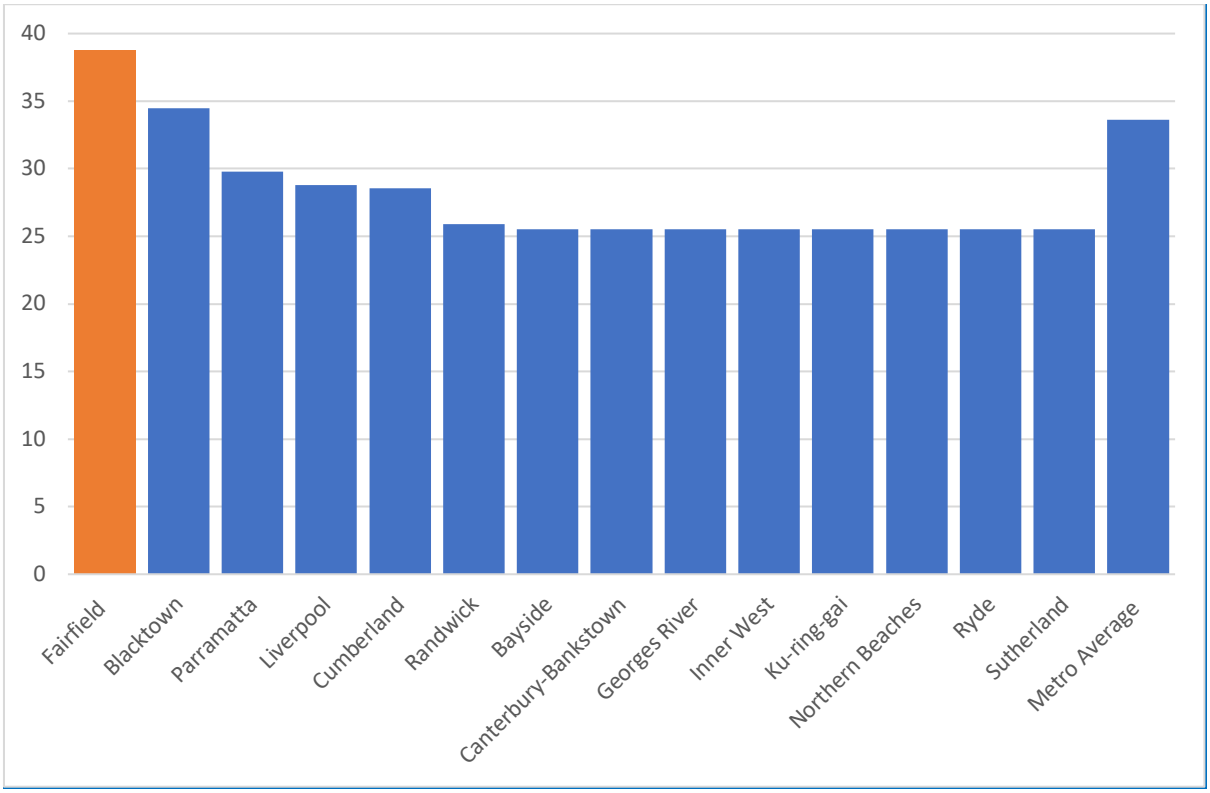
Western Sydney to support the population growth that will occur in the coming decades, describing the region as “the engine room of the NSW economy” (NSW Government, 2024, p. 9). The budget notes that the Western Sydney economy produces 29 per cent of all NSW businesses, and one fifth of gross state product in 2022-23, as well as 30 per cent of the NSW public sector workforce. This is underscored with a backdrop of significant cost of living pressures, and issues with housing affordability and access to services.

Budget investment in Western Sydney is focussed on public transport ($21 billion), schools and hospitals investment ($7.2 billion), road improvements ($5.2 billion), and a small fund for home construction ($137.9 million). Much of the transport investment focuses on City Deal related infrastructure, including $13.4 billion for the Sydney Metro West to connect Parramatta with Sydney CBD, and $5.5 billion for the Western Sydney Airport Metro which will link the new airport with the Sydney transport system.

In Fairfield, the budget similarly focuses on local infrastructure spending, especially in health and education. Major initiatives include the Fairfield Hospital redevelopment and the Karitane Carramar integrated Care hub to improve health services for families and parenting support. The budget also included new school halls at Tenora Public School and Verona School, and a range of new pre-schools to be attached to public schools in the Fairfield area. Other initiatives included bus services to support access to the Western Sydney Airport, a flagship component of the Western City Deal, and upgrades to the local M7-M12 highway systems. A range of grants are also provided to the Fairfield area including upgrades to the Fairfield Showgrounds as well as multiple sport park related grants (NSW Government, 2024). Fairfield also receives a relatively high level of financial assistance grants per capita compared with comparable councils (see Figure 29).

While this infrastructure and service-based investments are critical, they may not be at a sufficient level to support population demand given historical underinvestment in Greater Western Sydney (discussed in Chapter 4). Further, given the constrained fiscal environment of states, they are unlikely to target the specific local factors required to address community disadvantage. The following section substantiates that local government is inadequately resourced for targeted community investment suggesting a need for place-based policy (discussed in Chapter 6).

Figure 29 – *Financial Assistance Grants (AUD$) per capita across Greater Sydney (2024–25)*



Note. On a per capita basis, Fairfield receives a greater grant from the state government than similar Local Government Areas. Adapted from *Financial Assistance Grants 2024-25*, by Office of Local Government, 2024.

Examining Fairfield's Financial Reporting

Despite the potential of local government as an actor in MLG, significant fiscal constraints are imposed upon them by state government. For example, in NSW the state government caps the level of rates that can be collected by local councils, which has the effect of squeezing local budgets.[100] Due to debt being a major issue in governance and stability, local governments avoid debt-based financing. Local government is also not recognised in the constitution, meaning the federal government cannot directly fund local investment without the mediation of state governments (Grant & Drew, 2017, p. 83).

Assessing Fairfield's overall financial performance as a local government, it can be compared with similar Local Government Areas in the Western Parkland city (namely Penrith, Campbelltown, and Liverpool which are the most similar). In many categories, Fairfield performs well when compared with similar councils. This is especially impressive given the generally lower level of rates it can collect due to substantially lower housing values (see Figure 30). Fairfield also has a much higher level of own source revenue compared to both Local Government Areas in its region and the state average. Fairfield collected over 77 per cent of its own source revenue, which is above the state average of 56.7 per cent. It also had some of the lowest debt service ratios at below 1 per cent,

[100] Federal grants to local government in NSW are administered by the Local Government Grants Commission and are untied funding (Office of Local Government, 2024).

compared to the state average of almost 5 per cent. Its operating performance ratio, at 5.50 is also better than the state average of 3.80. Its councillor expenses at $67,000 is below the state average of $81,000. However, its total mayoral and councillor fees (at $552,000) were well above the state average ($266,514). By almost all accounts, the Fairfield local government can be seen as a competent financial manager given their relatively lower revenues.

Figure 30 – *Average Residential Ordinary Rates ($) in Fairfield and Bordering LGAs (2022/23)*

Note. Fairfield's rate collection is among the lowest in its region, due in large part to lower land values. Adapted from *Your Council* [Dataset], by Office of Local Government, 2023.

However, balanced financial management is not without it costs. When compared with similar council averages per capita, it spent less on a range of services, including environment, recreation and culture, community services, education and housing amenities, public order, safety and health (see Table 3). This may be a result of local government areas being risk averse and wanting to avoid substantial debt to the risks involved, as governments that are unable to manage their finances risk forced amalgamation and other disciplinary proceedings. As a result, Fairfield lacks the fiscal resources required to directly engage with targeted community interventions, particularly those that could address persistent disadvantage emerging from humanitarian settlement and labour market outcomes.

Table 3. *Comparison of Fairfield and Similar Local Government Area Expenses (2022-23)*

2022/23 ($ per capita)	Fairfield	Similar LGAs Average	Difference
Governance and Administration	$165.53	$301.84	$(136.31)
Environmental	$171.46	$268.15	$(96.69)
Recreation and Culture	$157.78	$279.59	$(121.81)
Community Services, Education, Housing, Amenities	$99.63	$178.92	$(79.29)
Public order, safety and health	$28.96	$68.72	$(39.76)
Other Services	$161.25	$ 81.54	$79.71
Roads, bridges and footpath	$133.04	$138.46	$(5.42)

Note. Data adapted from *Your Council* [Dataset], by Office of Local Government, 2023.

Conclusion

This chapter has identified the key barriers to cooperation across the federation as well as solution pathways. It is argued that MLG and fiscal reform must come together to meaningfully solve issues in local areas. MLG provides greater scope for innovative governance practices that empower local decision makers, while fiscal reform provides the financial means to support policy experimentation. First the chapter explored the practical dimensions of the Australian federation, including the core dynamics of Vertical Fiscal Imbalance. Two frameworks to unpack these arrangements were identified—fiscal federalism traditions and MLG. Examples were provided of several key case studies in the federation to demonstrate how MLG can be applied to support coordinated decision making.

The COAG trials epitomised the importance of transformational governance to better work with First Nations, as well as disadvantaged communities. Murdi Paaki helped consolidate the core elements underpinning successful government work in communities including flexibility, negotiation, collaboration, and broader time horizons. National Cabinet reforms during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed for new experiments in cooperation between the states and the federal government. Local government was also critical in directly providing health supports to vulnerable community members as part of a coordinated response effort. Nonetheless, subnational finances remain in a precarious position, without clear pathways to improve in the foreseeable future.

In addition, local government was identified as a critical actor to promote community level change due to its local, democratic and developmental qualities. Local government is substantially neglected, despite a history of federal partnerships. Efforts at cross-council coordination such as WSROC and ALGA serve to demonstrate the importance of organising strategically in local areas to advocate for community priorities. Outlining the history of tax

reform allowed an understanding of its importance to underpin fiscal reform within the federation while highlighting its limitations in delivering sustained and meaningful change.

Finally, these insights were applied to the NSW and Fairfield specific context. As was seen, the NSW state government is investing meaningfully in major education, health, and infrastructure in the Western Sydney region. However, the limited fiscal position of state governments means they are poorly placed to solve local challenges across regions alone. Local governments also lack the necessary fiscal capability to carry risks necessary to shape systemic change. Fairfield's local government would be an ideal actor to promote and lead change across their communities; however, their budget reveals a constrained position that is unlikely to be able to resolve challenges in place. In the next chapter, place-based policy is proposed as a potential MLG solution to help mitigate these challenges. A coordinated place-based approach which harnesses the respective community strengths is a critical piece for addressing persistent disadvantage.

Chapter Six: Place-Based Policy

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, improving the fiscal and cooperation elements of Federal Financial Relations through MLG by amplifying the role of local government is a core step in addressing the persistence of disadvantage. This chapter substantiates how place-based policy, through joint-decision making models, can further efforts by including community stakeholders in policy design processes. Doing so has the added benefit of delivering tailored programmes in local settings where community perspective can directly influence and shape a collective vision of change. This chapter also advocates for a revised place-based policy agenda for Fairfield, suggesting that the existing Fairfield Multicultural Interagency could provide a viable foundation for a new place-based programme to address the intersecting complexities of humanitarian settlement and segmented labour markets.

Place-based policy has a distinct Australian context and history. It represents a contemporary rearticulation of regional 'area policy', which was a major preoccupation of the Curtin-Chifley (1941-49), Whitlam (1972-75), and Hawke (1983-1991) governments. Place-based policy, through its democratic and disruptive elements, offers an alternative path and means to break from economic rationalist (i.e., market based) approaches to federal-local policy interventions. Focus areas for place-based policy in Australia are explored, and include urban and regional planning, early childhood, First Nations communities, and disadvantage focused programmes.

To support this programme analysis, place-based literatures, including evaluation materials, are examined. The Maranguka programme in Bourke NSW is analysed as an example of a locally led Justice Reinvestment programme. The Stronger Places Stronger People (SPSP) programme in Logan (known as 'Logan Together') is analysed due to its broad structure and alignment with MLG approaches to transformational governance. Together, these case studies demonstrate the breadth of place-based policy, and the opportunity for community driven transformation as an example of MLG.

Finally, Fairfield's setting is brought into focus, showing the ongoing potential of place-based policy in the community, coupled with potential barriers. An analysis of local survey materials highlight that the Fairfield community has retained much of its longstanding character of tolerance, cohesion, and resilience. However, the COVID-19 pandemic produced challenges for the community, creating an environment of fragmentation and weaker interfaces with services. In addition, the main existing place-based programmes operating in Fairfield cannot adequately address the specific demands emerging from the humanitarian settlement and local labour market experience. As a solution, the local council chaired Fairfield Multicultural Interagency could serve as a useful foundation for a place-based approach as they already focus on the intersecting humanitarian settlement and labour market needs in Fairfield.

Development of Area Policy in Australia

Place-based policy, as conceptualised today, only emerged in recent decades. Prior, federal government interventions to shape social outcomes (i.e., area policy[101]) was a long-standing tradition in Australia. The era following the Second World War was a period of centralised planning and experimentation under the Curtin-Chifley government. It included policy design spaces such as immigration (discussed in Chapter 3), labour market policy (discussed in Chapter 4), and planning and logistical interventions in state housing markets to address housing shortages. For the latter, the Commonwealth Housing Commission (CHC) oversaw negotiation of the first Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA), following release of their initial report. As an offshoot of the Department of Post War Reconstruction, the CHC engaged with the dual problem of growing suburban sprawl and inner cities slums, without sufficient oversight and regulation from policy makers (Ruming et al., 2010, p. 448).

While ambitious, implementation of the CSHA required compromises from the federal government which was unable to guarantee the distribution of building materials, ensure prioritisation of the most vulnerable into housing, or adequately control planning processes (Troy, 2009). Macintyre (2018) argued that the programme failed to generate sufficient housing delivery, ultimately contributing to the wide-spread adoption of owner-occupation as the preferred pathway to housing supply. Touching on a reoccurring element of area intervention, this would lead to a longer-term scepticism of mass intervention initiatives from the federal government in state matters (discussed in Chapter 5).

Another major chapter of area intervention emerged during the Whitlam government, which brought attention to federal intervention in relation to the planning and oversight of cities. Whitlam responded to the view that interventions were needed to challenge the interests of state planning and development, which had limited community-level input. According to Troy (2012), Whitlam sought to articulate a vision of Australia as a nation of major cities requiring reform to improve the quality of social outcomes (p. 110). As a result, a major reform institution established under Whitlam was the Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD) (Hart & Connolly, 2022, p. 149).

DURD supported a planning centred approach to managing urban development (Ruming et al., 2010), taking an eclectic mandate of city related policy areas including:

> urban land reform, the creation of new cities, addressing service backlogs [with a focus on modernising the sewerage system], upgrading facilities in outer suburban areas… rehabilitation of old inner-city housing, urban conservation and the development of the role of local government. (Orchard, 1999, p. 200)

They also oversaw a dedicated support programme for regions, including decentralisation policy that facilitated the planning of the major town of Albury-Wodonga on the NSW and Victorian border. Despite being dismantled by the Fraser government (1975-1983), which

[101] As will be discussed, 'area policy' is distinct from place-based policy. While it aims to change local landscapes to achieve desirable outcomes, it does not traditionally include joint decision making (i.e., community control) as part of its key elements. Nonetheless, the long history of area policy forged a critical runway for the establishment of place-based practices.

disagreed with federal intervention in state planning, the DURD initiative demonstrated the potential for the federal government to coordinate local planning.

In the 1980s and 1990s the Working Nation (see Chapter 4) and Building Better Cities (see Chapter 5) programmes represented federal efforts to rebalance regional and urban policy. The Building Better Cities programme began in 1991-92 and was a major return to federally driven city planning, focusing on efficiency, equity, and sustainability of Australian cities. It included microeconomic reforms to improve economic activity, promote and improve social democratic institutions and services in cities, supporting a sustainable environment and efforts to enhance urban consolidation efforts. Guidelines for states to qualify for targeted assistance were developed and areas were selected across states for funding (Neilson, 2008), including projects targeting 'urban consolidation, public transport, waste treatment, housing and inner urban redevelopment' (Bryant, 2016, p. 4).

According to Stilwell (1994), Working Nation was a critical government effort to articulate a compact on social inclusion through employment, health, and welfare initiatives. It provided a refocus on regional policy, as well as targeted initiatives, with a jobs compact to support the long-term unemployed and targeted initiatives for women, First Nations, and those with disability (p. 111). Together, Building Better Cities and Working Nation represented a shift towards city centred planning interventions by the federal government and linking spatial programmes with certain disadvantaged cohorts. Arguably this link between vulnerable cohorts and centralised planning was a key turning point towards contemporary place-based policy foci.

In the 1990s and 2000s few federal area policy interventions occurred. The major exception was the COAG trials, a whole of government pilot to improve the economic and well-being outcomes with First Nations communities (discussed in Chapter 5). With COAG, the focus was on building capability between First Nations communities and the government officials to address Indigenous disadvantage, with trial sites in each state and territory (Hunt, 2007, p. 155). Another major study of the period was the Australian Government Stronger Families and Community strategy, 2000-2004. The scheme provided funding to initiatives nationally for communities at risk of social, economic, and geographic isolation (Rogers et al., 2008, pp. 1-4). This pre-history set the stage for a particular awareness that federal interventions needed the cooperation of local people, including disadvantaged groups, to meaningfully succeed. This reflection would shape the emergence of place-based policy.

Defining Place-Based Policy

In recent decades there has been a move away from the view that federal policy makers can solve complex national problems alone (i.e., 'top-down' policy). Across a range of so-called 'wicked issues',[102] federal actors have moved to partner with diverse subnational government and non-government bodies to solve local challenges (Eckersley, 2017, p. 76). Local actors, including those in community, are increasingly seen as having the necessary

[102] According to Eckersley (2017), these have included, but are not limited to, issues as diverse as: "…climate change, obesity, overfishing, migration and teenage pregnancy" (p. 76).

viewpoint and capabilities to address regional economic disparities (Rodriguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2017, pp. 2-3).

Broadly, urbanisation across major cities has led to economic and population growth, driving poorer outcomes in many industrial and manufacturing regions[103] and social marginalisation in spaces of decline (Lupton & Power, 2004; Nel et al., 2019). These spatial (i.e., geographic) changes at a global scale have led to an understanding that 'space-neutral' policy cannot adequately address the specific nature of these challenges (Barca et al., 2012, p. 135). As a result of the embrace of space, 'place' has become a key consideration for policy.[104]

Although there is no single authoritative definition of 'place-based' policy, a useful definition comes from Klepac et al. (2023):

> *collaborative* programs, interventions, or initiatives in which multiple stakeholders, united by a *common vision*, draw on the skills, knowledge and/or experience of local people to address complex issues within a *specific geographic location*. Recognising and leveraging the influence of 'place' on population outcomes, place-based approaches are *context-dependent, responsive to the shifting needs* and priorities of the places in which they are implemented and include 'people in place' and/or local organisations in decision-making. (my italics, p. 8)

To summarise, place-based approaches emphasise joint collaboration efforts towards a common (and often longer-term) vision in a specific geographic area or community setting. These approaches are generally tailored to local circumstances and adaptive to changing needs in the community setting, where local leaders have genuine voice around policy design and implementation.

A major determinant as to whether a policy programme or initiative is 'place-based' is the influence and impact community stakeholders have in shaping programme outcomes. As such, place-based interventions arguably exist between two axes (see Figure 31). On the one hand, there are 'universal programmes' or non-place specific programmes designed for broader cohorts across the general population.[105] On the other hand, place-specific programmes are entirely tailored to one community or region. This axis considers the extent to which community representatives participate, shape, and deliver the policy programme or initiative. On one side are 'locally advised' processes, examples of which might include public survey-based consultation and townhall discussions. On the other side, shared decision making represents a much higher threshold of local community engagement,

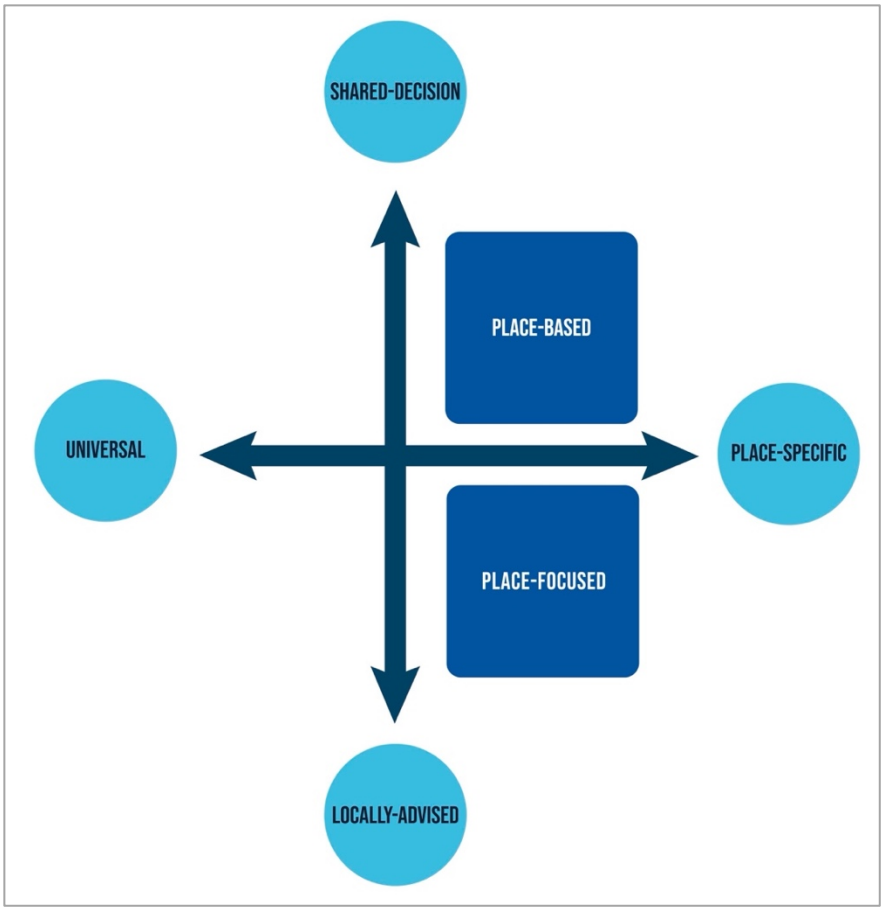
[103] The most famous industrial decline studies emerged in the so-called 'rust belt' region of the United States, and was first documented in the heavy manufacturing centres of Great Lakes. This was marked by declining secular shares, rising unemployment and stagnation real wages (c.f., Alder et al., 2014).

[104] For Reimer and Markey (2008), place policy includes analysis of environmental assets, the delivery of critical services, the location and structure of government, and the formation and operation of community identity (p. 8).

[105] An example of a universal programme are national employment support programmes such as JobSeeker. To access this payment, persons need to be aged between 22 years and pension aged, meet the income and asset threshold, and be physically in Australia and an Australian resident (See Services Australia, 2025).

where community stakeholders[106] are active decision makers in the policy design and implementation process.

Figure 31 – *Spectrum of Approaches to Place Policy*



Note. Place-based programmes and approaches can be understood across two axes. One accounts for the degree to which the policy is universal versus spatially targeted, the other on how much community stakeholders play a key role in shaping the design and implementation of the programme or approach. Adapted from *A Framework for Place-Based Approaches*, by Victorian Government, 2020.

A 'place-focused' approach attempts to adapt to perceived local needs, while governments and non-community stakeholders maintain control of many of the levers of policy delivery. 'Place-based' approaches, however, meet perceived local demands and encourage (and frequently formalise) an ongoing and active participation from the community in the development, implementation, and outcomes of programmes and initiatives. Breaking the traditional rhythm of policy, place-based approaches may encourage government policy makers to work at the pace of community. It is worth noting that many programmes and initiatives may also evolve over time (i.e., are not static) reacting to changing local leadership, opportunities to partner, and the direction and mandate of government. Overall, collaboration-based approach which emphasises community level joint-leadership is the main defining element of place-based policy in the Australian setting.

[106] The concept of a 'backbone team' is frequently used to represent a dedicate team of community level practitioners responsible with representing local voices through place-based policy (Hart & Connolly, 2022).

As an approach to community level challenges, place-based policy is relatively new for Australian governments.[107] According to Wilks et al. (2015), common identified themes across Australian place-based initiatives have included area and community level target setting, explorations of flexible funding and service system reform, amplified community influence over outcomes, and attempts to join-up government departments to improve coordination (whole of government approaches) (pp. 23-42). Drawing on international evidence, place-based interventions have included a very broad range of policy subjects including: "health, education, child development, family wellbeing, community strengthening, housing, urban regeneration, sustainability, liveability, crime, employment, participation, economic development, immigrant communities, social inclusion and social exclusion" (Wilks et al., 2015, p. 2).

Programme elements have also been specific. For example, capacity development, where stakeholders work with communities to shape their local capabilities, is a common focus. Consistent or sustained leadership has often been a critical factor underpinning success, as such efforts have been directed in maintaining the complex professional aspects required in community to minimise turnover and burnout. Longer-term planning is frequently required, especially when complex and sustained change is desired (i.e., in instances of persistent disadvantage). For this reason, a multiyear perspective is often articulated to shape outcomes that require longer term and stable funding commitments (Wilks et al., 2015, p. x).

International Evidence

Place-based policy is highly contingent on the specifics of regional development and the focus of policy makers, leading to wide variation across nations in the application of place-based policy. A brief consideration of the UK, USA, and Aotearoa New Zealand help explore some of these specificities. They respectively identify critical elements informing the formation of place-based policy exploration including productivity, regional decline, racial inequality, and childhood disadvantage. As will be explored, there are several parallels with the Australian experience.

The UK's place-based policy efforts emerged from observations that the country was experiencing significant productivity decline. This problem was alarming given that the UK did not experience a rise in unemployment following the Global Financial Crisis (GFC)[108] (2007-08), unlike many other European countries (McCann, 2019, p. 4). It became clear that this problem had deep geographic elements, with London, the surrounding hinterlands, and many of the south-east and south-west regions recovering quickly after the GFC. The Midlands, Northern England, Wales, and Northern Ireland, however, delivered little or no productivity growth. Indeed, the UK's productivity gaps were greater than many comparable

[107] In 2020, the Victorian Government released their framework for place-based approaches to support the delivery of place-based services. They usefully distinguished between 'place-focused policy' (i.e., policy design with sensitivity to community needs) and 'place-based' where specific circumstances and shared-decision making are taken into account (Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2020).

[108] As others have noted, these regional disparities began to emerge during the deregulation of the 1980s, which led to explorations around government decentralisation as a potential solution (Tilley et al., 2023, p. 2103).

developed economies (Moretti, 2024), leading policy makers to consider city level productivity drivers across the UK's regions to instigate meaningful reforms (Tilley et al., 2023). In response, a range of 'city deal' style local growth arrangements were designed to facilitate cooperation among the levels of government to support lifting the nation's productivity performance, delivering some meaningful results (Hildreth & Bailey, 2014). Wilks et al.'s (2015) review of the UK's New Deal for Communities programme from 1999 to 2008 found that the service cost only about 10 per cent of mainstream services. They also found a £1.6 billion benefit from £312 million for the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal, when measuring the value of net reduction in unemployment (p. 28). The Sure Start Local Programmes, targeted at children below the age of 5 years, had achieved £279 and £557 benefit per child (Wilks et al., 2015).

According to Hanson et al. (2025) federal area policy interventions in the USA can be traced as far back as the 1860s, when land grants college programmes were used to build public tertiary institutions. Following the Second World War, federal efforts shifted to scaled industry production programmes. From the 1960s, emphasis moved to public work and training programmes, the establishment of economic development agencies, and research and development programmes to support the space race and efforts towards the 'War on Poverty';[109] the latter of which was critical for support urban economic development policy, in areas of persistent disadvantage (p. 8). More recently, policy focus has been on neighbourhood improvements, supporting community mobility, and policies that seek to both improve the neighbourhood and the opportunities afforded to its community (Wilks et al., 2015, p. 2).

A major programme in the USA that has garnered much attention has the been the Justice Reinvestment Initiatives (JRI). Commencing in the early 2000s, JRI proposed the redirection of resources dedicated to incarceration of minority groups towards community development initiatives to minimise rates of recidivism and support public safety. Despite its significant international influence, it has been argued that the JRI programme failed to produce the desired cost-savings or recidivism reductions it targeted. Arguably JRI was unsuccessful partially because it failed to reinvest efforts into primary interventions at the community level (Sabol & Baumann, 2020, pp. 333-334). Others have noted the international influence of JRI, and the broader need of parallel rather than connected social change (i.e., improving investment in public services while pursuing justice reform) (c.f., Homel, 2014, p. 10).

Aotearoa New Zealand also experienced significant decline of smaller regional towns over decades, leading to a demographic hollowing out (Nel et al., 2019, p. 163). Following a 2015 Productivity Commission report on More Effective Social Services, government invested in place-based initiatives to support at risk children and young people aged 0-24 years.[110] In addition, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development utilised a place-based perspective

[109] The Presidency of Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-69) famously declared a 'war on poverty' in January 1964. This was largely influenced by social justice writing in the 1960s, which advocated for federal intervention programmes to alleviate poverty, especially for black Americans (40% of who were in poverty) (Haveman et al., 2015, p. 593).

[110] Manaaki Tairāwhiti and the South Auckland Social Wellbeing Board (SASWB) (See Ministry of Social Development, 2020).

to address Aotearoa New Zealand's housing crisis, improving the targeting of local housing solutions (Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2022). In short, across these three countries there have been a broad range of place-based policy applications to solve complex challenges, many of which have parallels with the Australian focus.

Challenges to Place-Based Policy

Place-based policy has not been without criticism, including the claim of market distortion effects. For example, Moretti (2024) noted that investments directed in areas that are economically depressed or 'uncompetitive', may merely create or intensify economic inefficiencies. This may, in turn, incentivise labour mobility and firm investment in regions that lack local competitive advantages (p. 627). However, this account underestimates the social and economic costs of concentrated disadvantage, and other community level social challenges. Local area interventions can create new local economies that may, in turn, drive national change. An example of area investment has included 'big push' manufacturing,[111] and more recently tech and life-science employment initiatives to promote decentralised human capital growth.

To an extent, efficiency critiques underestimate the social dynamics underpinning the demand for place-based policy solutions. According to Bryant and Spies-Butcher (2024), recidivism reduction programmes with Indigenous community controls (discussed below), emerged from grass-root demands to combat racial injustice. These place-based programmes developed as a response to long standing community driven campaigns around the over representation of minorities within the justice system, and demand for self-determination through community control (pp. 218-222). For this reason, market critique of place-investment underestimates the political elements of place-based policy as a form of demanded local democracy.

Viewing place-based policy beyond the market efficiency perspective helps consider the normative questions necessarily underpinning persistent disadvantage. As was argued in Chapter Two, the most compelling accounts of disadvantage are capability focused because they support the preconditions of agency, including the pursuit of individual freedom and self-actualisation (Brighouse & Swift, 2008; Sen, 1979). For this reason, place-based policy, given its focus on tailored local solutions and joint-decision making, is uniquely suited to support personal choice and the collective agency of communities.

However, this raises another challenge relating to the capacity of government and community to genuinely cooperate under substantial power imbalances. A key example has emerged with First Nations communities who have frequently expressed reservations in collaborating with government to achieve desired joint outcomes. The legacies of settler-colonialism and institutionalised racism have contributed to the perception that community disadvantage has been a direct outcome of government decision making, undermining the confidence and trust in partnerships (Bryant & Spies-Butcher, 2024, pp. 218-222). For this reason, place-based programmes involving partnerships with First Nations communities

[111] Associated with the New Deal, these initiatives sought to build a path out of regional decline by large scale government investment (c.f., Moretti, 2024, p. 627).

must often make efforts to embed cultural perspectives and Indigenous governance at the core of their practices, while also bolstering local capability to work with government to solve complex questions informed by local knowledge (Davidson-Hunt & O'Flaherty, 2007, pp. 292-295). Genuine knowledge exchange and cooperation are frequently a pre-condition to transcend existing power imbalances.

Another core challenge is the ability to adequately measure and evaluate the impacts of place-based policy interventions. Traditional evaluation methods such as randomised control trials[112] cannot often be undertaken in policy evaluation settings (Ahlfeldt et al., 2017, pp. 1-2). One way to address this challenge is through participatory evaluations that create adaptive methods, informed by culturally appropriate story-based measurements which evolve overtime (Mamaril et al., 2018, pp. 48-49). This can be best facilitated through government and the community collaborating with relevant evaluation professionals to build appropriate methods to suit the broader setting of place-based policy (Braga et al., 2011, p. 617).

At its best, place-based policy directly responds to a host of demands that have not been met by traditional policy approaches. To address these complex problems, place-based policy can provide better and more adaptive governance models that deliver collaboration, serving as a key example of MLG in practice. Place-based policy also aligns with the developmentalist state hypothesis (discussed in Chapter 1), representing the historical movement away from top-down decision-making towards complex, hybrid policy responses. In addition, it offers a direct pathway to realising demands raised through capability approaches to disadvantage, by advocating for social agency as a central element necessary in policy responses.

Australian History of Place-Based Approaches

Key Programmes in Australia since the 2000s

This section locates existing place-focused and place-based policy programmes to support a more detailed understanding of options available in the Fairfield context. Over the last 2 decades in Australia, a range of federally led or funded initiatives have emerged across the place-based spectrum focusing on infrastructure-based investment, early childhood and education, First Nations communities, and persistent disadvantage. Major initiatives have included the City and Regional (City Deals) deals, Communities for Children programme, Connected Beginnings, Empowered Communities, and Stronger Place-Stronger People. These initiatives have much in common with the international experience, especially around both urban and regional development as well as early childhood and community programmes to combat community disadvantage.

[112] Randomised control trials assign subjects to one of two groups—experimental and control—for an agreed treatment to intervention. These groups are studied over time to examine the effects of interventions. The experimental treatment can be evaluated based on the positive and negative elements experienced by the test subject (Akobeng, 2005).

The City Deals were envisaged as 'smart city' partnerships between federal, state, and local governments to improve productivity and liveability (Harris et al., 2022, p. 2). They are primarily statutory partnerships between the levels of government (Hart & Connolly, 2022, pp. 10-11), making them 'place-focused' using the earlier typography (Victorian Government, 2020). City Deals were proposed by the then Prime Minister Rudd (2007-10; 2013) in 2013 along, with a Minister for Cities, if Labor was re-elected. Following Labor's defeat, Prime Minister Turnbull (2015-18) revived the City Deals, driven by a political conviction that the levels of government should come together and collaborate to solve the emergent problems of cities (Hu, 2020, p. 202). The Western Sydney Deal (WSD) is the largest of the city deals across Australia's cities, involving eight of Sydney's 13 local councils including the City of Fairfield (Harris et al., 2022, p. 2).

Key components of the WSD agreement include providing viable infrastructure and amenities to achieve a 30-minute city (i.e., work to home), bringing a range of services and opportunities in closer proximity of Greater Western Sydney communities to better power the Greater Western Sydney economy. Integrated transport infrastructure was envisaged to support greater integration and linkages across the city as part of the City Deal. The WSD also included the promise of creating 200,000 new jobs based around employment connected to the Aerotropolis and Western Sydney Airport in industry investment; agribusiness, science and technology; and higher education (Harris et al., 2022, pp. 2-3).

Collective impact models are a major component of place-based policy in Australia, defined as: "cross-sector, interdisciplinary collaborative work aimed at addressing complex social problems" (Ennis & Tofa, 2020, p. 3). According to Hart and Connolly (2022), collective impact models emerge from an understanding that the delivery of universal services are often inadequate to support the complex needs of communities experiencing multidimensional precariousness and disadvantage (p. 13). Traditionally, this style of place-based programme relies on dedicated professional staff to oversee programme delivery (known as 'backbone' staff). Focus areas have included early childhood and family initiatives focused on health, education, and well-being. Collective impact models are also compatible with MLG frameworks as they seek pathways for coalition building to solve complex problems.

Communities for Children was an early and important predecessor for other collective impact programmes in operation, employing elements of collective impact in its evaluation. Commencing in 2005, the programme operates in 52 disadvantaged communities and focuses efforts on parental and family relationships. Local partnerships are developed through a leading agency who authorises funding for local service providers. Providers then work to target supports for vulnerable families, including "parenting support, group peer support, case management, home visiting, community events and life skills courses" (Hart & Connolly, 2022, p. 153). At least half of programme funding must be dedicated to evidence-based activities that are reported to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. The programme is discussed in more detail below, including its touchpoints with Fairfield.

Established in 2016, Connected Beginnings uses a collective impact model to improve early childhood outcomes for First Nations communities by strengthening access to early childhood education, health services (including maternal), and family services (Department

of Education, n.d.). The programme also contributes to the federal government's Closing the Gap implementation.[113] The programme involves a 'four-way' partnership between the federal education and health department, with parallel Indigenous controlled programme partners Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACHHO). Connected Beginnings originally operated in 14 communities, and now partners in around 50 communities across Australia. Evaluation has shown promising outcomes including a return on investment of between $2.12 to $4.24 for every dollar invested and greater collective collaboration in participating communities to deliver early childhood outcomes (Inside Policy, 2023, p. 7).

Empowered Communities was first federally funded in 2016, focusing on First Nations self-determination as a core mandate of its programme, operating in 10 sites across Australia.[114] Empowerment takes on a specific meaning for Empowered Communities,[115] focused on mechanisms to achieve First Nations' self-determination through the principle of subsidiarity; that is "that authority to decide and act should rest at the closest level possible to the people or organisations the decisions or action is designed to serve" (Empowered Communities, n.d.). Empowered Communities advocates for First Nations agency, by overcoming the problems of existing short term grant funding arrangements, deficit based appraisals of First Nations communities and building support throughout the policy life-cycle to support economic development in partnership communities (Klein, 2015, p. 6).

Stronger Place, Stronger People commenced in 2019, focusing on disrupting intergenerational disadvantage in 10 communities across Australia.[116] The communities were chosen based on evidence of existing disadvantage in place, community collaboration potential through existing social cohesion, local leadership and governance, a preparedness to 'work differently' (i.e., contest existing programme practices), demonstration of collective impact capability, and a vision for change. By addressing the drivers of entrenched disadvantage at the community level, the programme aspires to deliver a transformational change with community (Lata et al., 2024, p. 5).

[113] Following the then Prime Minister Rudd's 2008 apology to the Stolen Generation, the government set about a range of practical actions and measures to promote greater equity between First Nations and non-First Nations communities. Initial targets included improving literacy, numeracy, and employment outcomes, social opportunities, lowering First Nations' infant mortality and raising First Nations' life-expectancy (Altman, 2009, pp. 1-4).

[114] Empowered Communities include Cape York (Queensland), Central Coast and Inner Sydney (NSW), East and West Kimberley (Western Australia), Goulburn-Murray (Victoria), Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Lands, Central Australia, North East Arnhem Land (NT), Ngarrindjeri Ruwe and Far West Coast (South Australia) (Empowered Communities, n.d.).

[115] A definition of empowerment provided by Empowered Communities draws from the 1991 Royal Commission into deaths in custody: " [a] prerequisite to the empowerment of Aboriginal people and their communities is having in place an established method, a procedure whereby the broader society can supply the assistance referred to and the Aboriginal society can receive it whilst at the same time maintaining its independent status and without a welfare-dependent position being established as between the two groups". (Johnston, 1991, cited in Wunan Foundation Inc., 2015, p. 12).

[116] They include Logan, Rockhampton, and Gladstone (Queensland), Bourke and the Macleay Valley including Kempsey (NSW), Mildura (Victoria), Burnie (Tasmania), Far West Region including Ceduna (South Australia), Barkley Region including Tennant Creek and Gove Peninsula (NT) (Lata et al., 2024, p. 5).

Maranguka

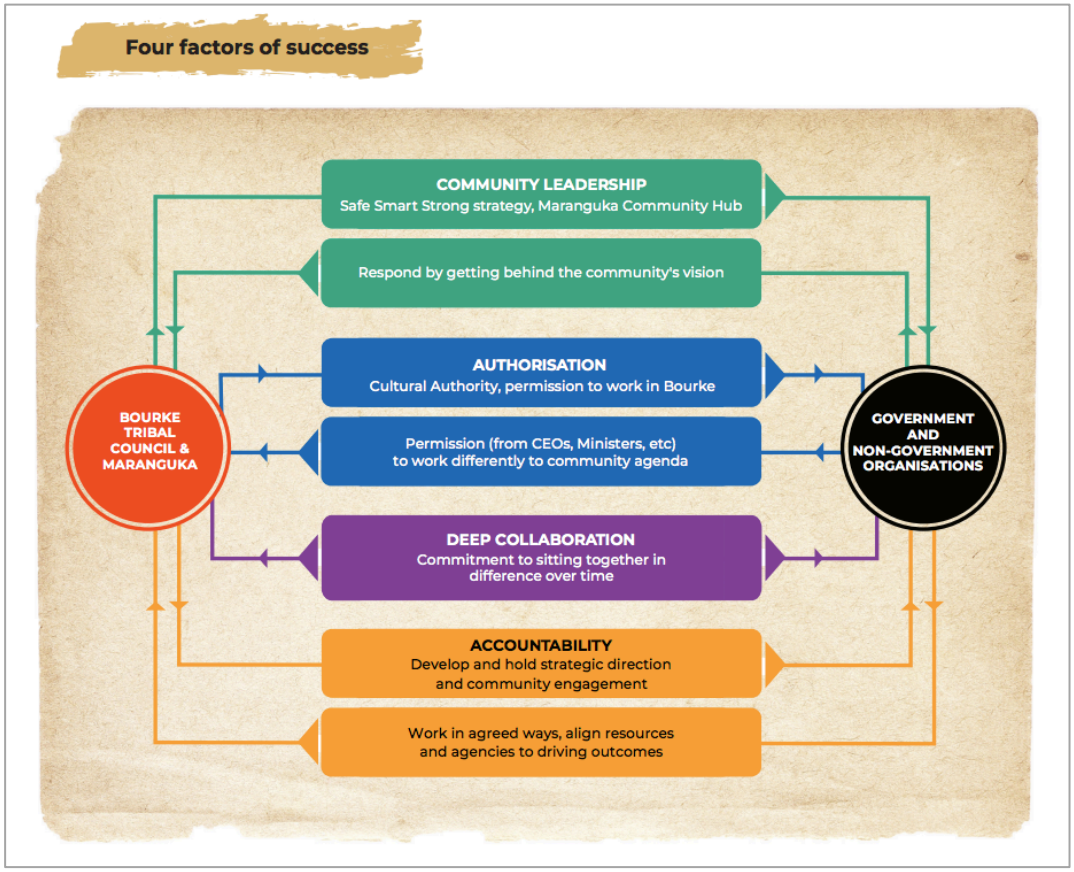
As discussed, JRI began in 2003 in the USA in an effort to reduce high rates of incarceration, find better ways to promote public safety, and support stronger communities (Haysom, 2024). The first JRI site in Australia emerged in Burke in NSW, under the name Maranguka.[117] Maranguka is based on a community hub model, with backbone staff coordinating existing and new services to reflect community priorities developed by the Tribal Council. Its mission is to improve the life-course outcomes of First Nations communities by addressing factors impacting incarceration in community, from early childhood and into adulthood. The programme proposes to reduce funding earmarked for the justice system and redirect it to causes that support community self-determination (Bryant & Spies-Butcher, 2024, p. 221).

From 2022, Maranguka became self-governing and a legal entity, supporting its self-determination mission. The strategic plan for 2023-25 outlines four priorities including community leadership, authorisation, deep collaboration, and accountability. To achieve these outcomes, Bourke Tribal Council[118] and Maranguka work as governance equals with government and non-government organisation to achieve the JRNSW vision (see Figure 32). KPMG (2018) undertook a review of the 2017 year of the programme making several positive findings. These included: a 23 per cent drop in recordings of domestic violence and re-offending, a 31 per cent improvement in Year 12 retention levels, a 38 per cent drop in charged in the top five juvenile offence categories, and a 14 per cent drop in bail breach as well as a 42 per cent drop-in days spent in custody. In addition, KPMG found a $3.1 million gross impact of the programme across the justice and economic impacts for the Bourke community (p. 6).

Maranguka's pursuit of a self-governing model driven by First Nations leadership serves as another example of MLG in practice. As part of the broader movement towards place-based programmes, JRI offers an important case study in First Nations' self-determination to both reduce economic and social costs, while improving outcomes and building capability for self-determination. As a growing movement, the model is an example showing how funds can be diverted from a committed portfolio to another delivering cost savings while challenging trends towards the marketisation of social services. It also highlights pathways for fiscal reform necessary to deliver better cooperation in the federation.

[117] Translating to 'caring for others' in the Ngemba language. Maranguka is a partnership between the JRI NSW programme, the Bourke Tribal council, and the broader community of Bourke (KPMG, 2018).
[118] Bourke Tribal council includes whole of community governance from 22 Indigenous tribes and families in and around the area. They lead the 'Growing our Kids Up Safe, Smart and Strong strategy', with JRI playing a supporting role (KPMG, 2018).

Figure 32 – *Maranguka Placed-Based Governance Model*



Note. Maranguka is self-governing and works independently from government and other stakeholders to drive community outcomes. From *Maranguka Limited: Strategic Plan 2023–2025*, by Maranguka, 2022, p. 5. Reprinted with permission.

Logan Together

Logan Together has operated in the south Brisbane local government area of Logan since 2015. As a collective impact model, Logan Together links community representatives with government, funders, and the service sector to support the health and well-being of Logan's children. A central focus of the programme is the 'first 2,000 days' of childhood development. Logan Together started with an initial goal of supporting an additional 5,000 children in Logan to reach age 8 years in 'good health' across a range of indicators. This emerged from early community surveying that suggested that in 2013-14, 10% of women in Logan attended fewer than four antenatal visits, almost half the state average (Logan Together, 2017, p. 8).

This focus led to the creation of the 'community maternal and child health hubs' strategy, aiming to provide universal access to antenatal, birthing, and early post birth facilities and services up to age 1 year, by creating community maternity centres. The maternal and child health clinics have been a major success, providing over a quarter of all birthing care for the area, lifting the coverage of antenatal care, reducing First Nations stillbirths, and generating moderate cost savings (Logan Together, 2019).

Logan has published a range of materials on its programmes, including a 0.3 per cent decline in stillbirths within First Nations communities; quality of life improvements at over $4 million dollars across the five community hubs in Logan; and 88 per cent of parents and carers reporting positive parenting abilities, confidence, and coping from using the services. In addition, there was a 42 per cent reduction in birthparents receiving no or inadequate antenatal care. Logan Together's maternal hubs provided 28 per cent of the total birthing population for the area, with a 13 per cent cost saving on hospital-based midwifery. For First Nations mothers, the rate of those who attended five or more antenatal meetings went from 77 per cent in 2015 to 88 per cent in 2022 (Logan Together, 2024).

Vulnerability rates of children at age 5 years have dropped by over 20 per cent across Eagleby, Yarrabilba, and Berrinba. There were also significant improvements in the number of children who commenced school developmentally on track in all domains: over 53 per cent in Yarrabilba (18% more than in 2018), nearly 41 per cent in Eagleby (a 23% increase compared with 2018), with increases also in physical and communication domains for children in Berrinba (Logan Together, 2024).

Child protection orders were also down by 2 per cent in 2022-23, suggesting improved child safety environments. The programme supports 2,800 children and families to engage in development discussions which has led to 735 health appointments, supporting early interventions in child health (Logan Together, 2024). Together significant evidence shows that the Logan programmes are making meaningful differences in their local community, contributing to better early childhood, maternity, and family outcomes.

Summary

Contemporary place-based policy emerged from a collective recognition that status quo programmes cannot solve complex challenges at the community level. Moving beyond the era of federally mandated 'top-down' area programmes, modern place-based programmes have drawn on domestic and international experiences to find new solution pathways. The extent to which this era of new programmes has been successful is hard to determine, given the varying standards of evaluation and the fact that these programmes are in an emerging phase of development and aim to achieve longer-term system change. Nevertheless, Maranguka, Logan Together, and Connected Beginnings show evidence of positive outcomes in community.

The broad range of current programmes show the potential for collaborative governance models to achieve sustained change, supporting decentralised decision-making with community leaders. They also collectively demonstrate MLG in practice, showing a range of experimental governance models to achieve community-led change. As Klepac et al. (2023) noted, a major barrier to successful place-based programmes is a coherent and specified definition of programmes (p. 15). Continuing to evolve and clarify the scope of place-based interventions will support ongoing collaboration with communities, while keeping governments accountable to programme delivery.

The final section of this chapter applies these insights as they relate to Fairfield. First, an analysis of the State of the City Report offers insight into aspects of community cohesion

that are increasingly under pressure following the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, an analysis of the Communities for Children programme in Fairfield sheds insights on the place-based activity undertaken in the community to date. Finally, new opportunities to build place-based capabilities are explored through the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency.

Applying Place-Based Policy in Fairfield

Introduction

This section reviews key place-based relevant publications and materials relating to Fairfield. First, the State of the City report is reviewed as a means of gauging and representing the broad community mood within the Local Government Area. Later, a revised place-based policy agenda is advocated for; thus, it is necessary to understand the beliefs and challenges emerging within the broad population. Community resilience and cohesion are major advantages within community but the COVID-19 pandemic has raised significant legacy issues. This is compounded by the undersupply of necessary public infrastructure which may play an important role in responding the persistent disadvantage

Next, the Communities for Children programme, its evaluation and specific standing within Fairfield, is considered. As the only collective impact style place-based programme in Fairfield, an analysis of Communities for Children can unpack some of the leading issues to which local place-based practitioners are responding. The analysis reveals that while there are community access points for influencing this programme, the programme neither meets the demands of joint-decision making models, nor does it address the key drivers of persistent disadvantage as identified in the thesis. For this reason, it is concluded that existing community infrastructure around the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency is the best starting point to build the capabilities needed for joint decision-making models that target humanitarian settlement and labour market outcomes.

Fairfield's State of the City Report

Place-based policy demands a comprehensive understanding of the community and its sentiments. Fairfield's State of the City report documents progress on the council's 10-year community strategy and is a useful snapshot of general well-being across the community. The report uses evidence generated from a telephone-based home survey, representing a broad range of community cohorts.[119] It also provides a framework for locating and evaluating community priorities including "long-term goals for health and wellbeing of [our] people, places and infrastructure, economy and the natural and built environment" (Fairfield City Council, 2024, p. 17). As a well-being-centred corporate plan, the report uses five domains as part of an aspirational community vision that "Fairfield City is a vibrant,

[119] The response sample involved 400 persons who participated in a telephone-based survey. Language services for these surveys were included for the major languages of the area including Arabic, Assyrian, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Khmer. This sample size is relatively small for a 200,000 person plus local government area, with over 63 per cent of those surveyed having lived in the area for more than 20 years. English was the most spoken language (58%), with Vietnamese being the second most spoken language (12%) (Fairfield City Council, 2024).

safe, connected and inclusive city, celebrating and embracing our diversity" (Fairfield City Council, 2024, p. 18).
Of the five domains, the highest scoring was vibrancy, where 72 per cent of participants agreed they experienced social and cultural tolerance. The lowest scoring domain was around connection, only 56 per cent of the sample felt that Fairfield was an attractive place to live. The remaining categories of safety (64%), inclusion (67%), and valuing diversity (64%) were in the mid to high 60 per cent range. The report acknowledged barriers to improving safety outcomes, particularly at night, as well as challenges emerging from low resourcing, systemic socioeconomic disadvantage, cultural and agency coordination challenges (Fairfield City Council, 2024, p. 18).

Cultural pride, an important dimension of Fairfield's multicultural cohesion, is evident from the report, showing reasonable attendance at and engagement with cultural events. Community satisfaction with events was at a very high level, with perceptions of tolerance trending up and a slight increase in community engagement with council events overall. In contrast, perceptions of cultural cohesion were down from 77 to 67 per cent; largely attributed to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on the population, particularly impacts on marginal and minority cohorts including the elderly, migrants, and humanitarian entrants (Fairfield City Council, 2024, p. 45).[120]

Health was seen as a major pressure for the council, with committed upgrades to Fairfield hospital perceived as a positive by the survey group. However, it was also noted that attracting high quality healthcare professional was challenging due to the low socioeconomic status of the area. In education, lack of space for students was perceived as a major challenge. All schools in the area were deemed over capacity, with the student to teacher ratio at 24:1 compared to the state average of 15:1. As a result, more schools were resorting to temporary spaces (from 30-50%) to manage the demand on the school system. This issue is likely to amplify, given projected enrolment increases of 10 to 15 per cent by 2026 in Fairfield (Fairfield City Council, 2024, p. 52).

Access to both Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and higher education has improved, with more youth and elderly support programmes, and improved disability access to programmes. Challenges remain in generating sufficient investment from state and federal government to adequately support community demand and need. The council strategy includes better linkages with TAFE and local industries to promote training, mentorship programmes to support pathways from school to higher education, and building of targeted programmes to support youth into employment (Fairfield City Council, 2024, p. 52).

Overall, the State of the City report demonstrated the Fairfield community is self-reflexive regarding its strengths and challenges. Many problems associated with major portfolios such as health, education, and infrastructure tend to be attributed to challenges in raising sufficient funding and adequate interest from the state government. Fairfield council has

[120] It is worth noting that Fairfield council was awarded for effective communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, including carefully designed material designed across a range of languages to support culturally and linguistically diverse communities. The council also delivered 140,000 cooked meals during the pandemic lockdowns via the Fairfield Food Hub Partnership (Fairfield City Council, 2024, p. 63).

overseen significant community-centred investment in programmes while undertaking major infrastructure rejuvenation projects at parks, pools, and showgrounds. Small business facilitation and enablement is also a clear priority, as is access to parking to better enable access to the transport system. However, Fairfield continues to face issues including overcrowding in the school system, deteriorating infrastructure, and declining social cohesion.

The report confirms analyses presented in Chapter Five, which suggests that while there is state and local investment in key areas of concern, government actors are fiscally stretched and cannot fully meet the demands of the community of Fairfield. It also raises the importance of cooperation between the levels of government to achieve desired outcomes (discussed in Chapter 5), and deliver policy that addresses humanitarian settlement system (discussed in Chapter 3), segmentation of the labour market towards lower skilled work and lower educational attainment opportunities (discussed in Chapter 4). For these reasons, there is a need to discuss the programmes operating within Fairfield that are directly attempting to address challenges in place.

The Communities for Children Programme

The Communities for Children (CfC) programme began in 2005 in Fairfield and is the only collective impact place-based programme operating in the area. As discussed, CfC is one of the older place-based programmes, incorporating collective elements under a grants model that allows an agreed spectrum of activities. The national CfC programme was evaluated in two phases from 2006-08 to 2011-12, to measure benefits for children and their families living in sites, with control sites introduced with similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Results from the evaluation were mixed. While there were initial benefits from CfC enrolment, beneficial outcomes were not sustained for participants. In general, early intervention services have trouble demonstrating benefits over the longer term. Edwards et al. (2014), who evaluated the programme, did find evidence of increased well-being in CfC sites, although the differences were not statistically significant (p. xvi).

A key finding from the study was a reduction in jobless families in CfC communities; however, this effect was no longer observable by the time children had reached 7 to 8 years of age. One explanation for this convergence is that primary school attendance creates broad opportunities to undertake employment, especially for primary carers. The Australian welfare system also requires parents to seek part-time work by the time children are 6 years of age, increasing the likely uptake of employment across the cohort. It is possible that CfC supported a 'head start' by getting parents into employment sooner, but that there are natural floors in the level of employment which converge once children begin primary schooling (Edwards et al., 2014, p. xiii).

Other positive effects included improved child verbal and vocabulary ability, and improved parenting practices by reducing harsh and hostile parenting. Negative findings from the programme included lower child physical functionality as well as poorer health levels for families with mothers with low school level attainment. The first of these could possibly be attributed to the programme improving the odds of parents recognising and seeking professional assistance for health issues with their children. Lower socioeconomic

environments are generally less likely to seek out ongoing or complex medical support for children compared to other households (Edwards et al., 2011, pp. 63-64).
There have also been favourable appraisals of the work of CfC. Analysis by Equity Economic using the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC, 2021) found that communities with CfC coordinating partners potentially outperformed state average trends of non-site communities in one or more domains (Geatches et al., 2023, p. 19). Noting the evaluated outcomes of the CfC programme, it is worth examining how the programme operates in Fairfield.

CfC in Fairfield is delivered by the Smith Family[121] starting in 2005. As part of their contract arrangement, the Smith Family delivers regular reporting and strategic planning on the forward direction of their delivery. The Smith Family CfC report for Fairfield noted that 28 per cent of children in Fairfield are developmentally vulnerable compared with 20 per cent across NSW, with one in two children between 0 to 14 years living in poverty in 2016, three times above the national average. In agreement, AEDC (2021) data show children in Fairfield exhibit significantly higher levels of developmental vulnerability in all domains except emotional maturity (see Table 4).

Table 4. *Number and Percentage of Children who are Developmentally Vulnerable*

	Number of children	Physical health and well-being	Social competence	Emotional maturity	Language and cognitive skills (school-based)	Communication skills and general knowledge	Vulnerable on **one** or more domains of the AEDC	Vulnerable on **two** or more domains of the AEDC
Australia	305,015	28,341 (9.8%)	27,788 (9.6%)	24,271 (8.5%)	21,107 (7.3%)	24,064 (8.4%)	63,264 (22.0%)	32,718 (11.4%)
NSW	95,744	8,513 (9.4%)	8,458 (9.4%)	6,550 (7.3%)	5,576 (6.2%)	7,618 (8.4%)	19,067 (21.2%)	9,510 (10.5%)
Fairfield	2,295	246 (11.4%)	277 (12.8%)	153 (7.1%)	210 (9.7%)	354 (16.4%)	617 (28.6%)	333 (15.4%)

Note. Data adapted from *Australian Early Development Census National Report 2021*, by Australian Early Development Census, 2022.

The Smith Family report also noted the connection between these figures and Fairfield's very high level of unemployment, which impacts well-being, education, and housing opportunities. The report noted that only 65 per cent of children in Fairfield were on track across the five AECD domains, with Fairfield having the greatest risks of childhood vulnerability in south-west Sydney. The report also reiterated the impacts of COVID-19 on the already highly vulnerable community amplifying housing and resource scarcity (Smith Family, 2022, p. 6). As anticipated, the report serves to reiterate how labour market vulnerabilities (discussed in Chapter 4) have substantial impact on childhood and family outcomes, contributing to persistent disadvantage.

The new vision statement from the CfC provider is "Our community is inclusive, resilient and aspirational, where families and children feel safe, empowered and connected" (Smith

[121] The Smith Family is a registered non-for-profit charity that has operated in Australia since 1922, with a focus on childhood poverty and disadvantage-focused interventions (Smith Family n.d.).

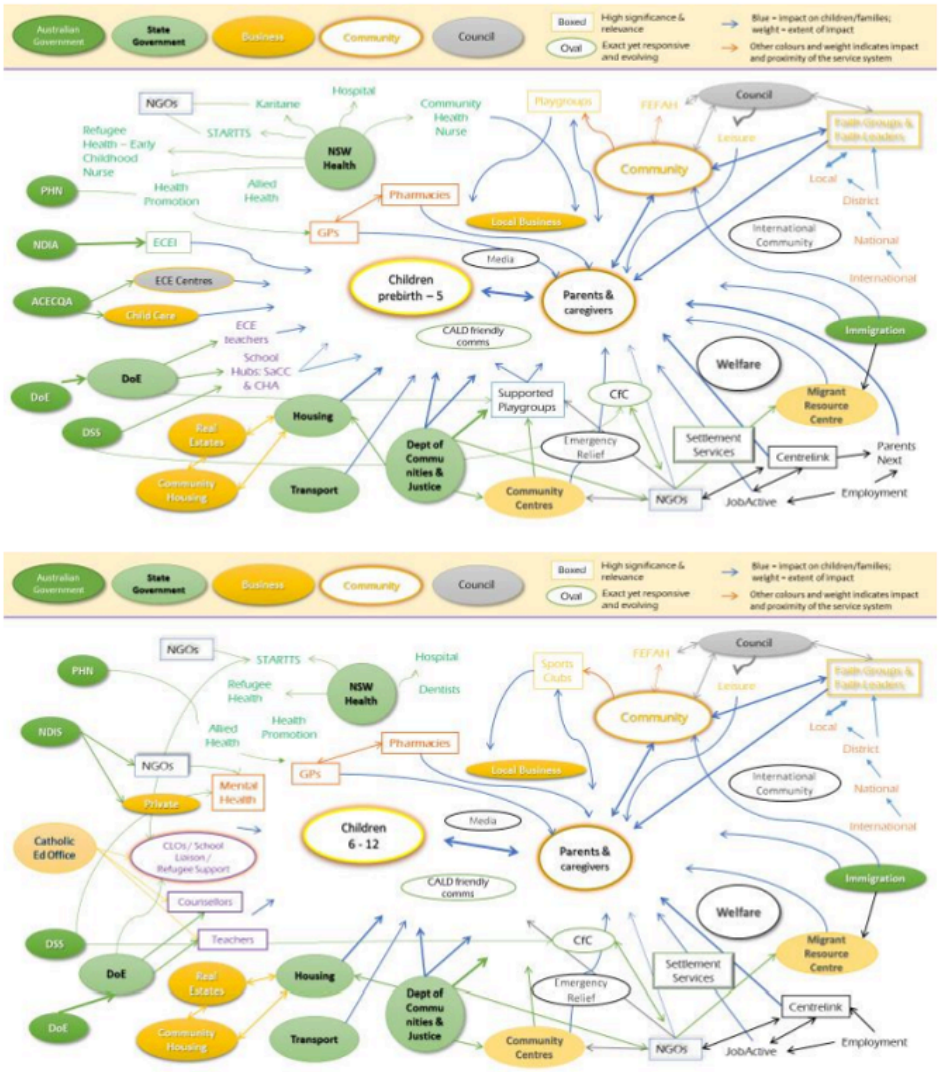
Family, 2022, p. 16). Key priorities include the provision of education transition pathways, strengthening the whole community by building community social capital and broad partnerships to support wrap around services. While early development goals can help support the community of Fairfield, they could be better supported by a systemic vision to combat the specific complexities of disadvantage in the Local Government Area.

Like other collective impact style place-based programmes, CfC Fairfield is governed by a backbone committee with six groups, including "parents, community partners, other service providers, school leaders and personnel, local authorities and government agencies as well as local businesses" (Smith Family, 2022, p. 13). As part of its focus on young people, engagements are also held with youth organisations and children's groups. Meetings are held twice a month and encourage active participation from members. Beyond the community, specific key stakeholders include the Fairfield Child and Family interagency Network, Fairfield Multicultural Interagency, Fairfield Engaging Families of Aboriginal Heritage (FEFAH), with the Fairfield Council and Department of Education also playing supporting roles.

Identifying some of the major barriers, the report shows community members who access their services also have substantial challenges in trusting governments due to previous trauma experiences, including community level fears concerning the child protection system and the risk of losing their immigration status. Western cultural values do not adequately map on to diverse cultural experiences, particularly individualism over collective cultural practices. Traumatic stress, feelings of shame and guilt around protecting their children, as well as stigmatisation, were all shown to be influencing factors.

These reflect observations from the State of the City report around the COVID-19 pandemic and reiterate the importance of targeted place-based programmes able to practice greater cultural awareness through community leadership. The interplay of services and systems can be complex and unintuitive to community, government actors, and service providers (see Figure 33). Clearly, both the local CfC programme and the State of the City report provide a joined-up view of community sentiments, highlighting that while many of the key issues have been identified, there are limited pathways to solve these challenges through existing institutions. The next section advocates for coordinated council led leadership, consistent with the MLG framework and capability approach.

Figure 33 – *Communities for Children Systems Map of Fairfield*



Note. System complexities are substantial and a major barrier in supporting childhood outcomes in Fairfield. From *Families and Communities Program: Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Community Strategic Plan*, by The Smith Family, 2022, p. 26. Reprinted with permission.

Analysis of the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency

Fairfield council has a range of cohort specific strategies to support community well-being. These have included a disability inclusion plan (2022-2026) and an ageing population strategy.[122] Fairfield council also leads an Aboriginal Advisory Committee, 'Warin Tiati', composed of council staff, councillors, and community representatives; and oversees the implementation of the Reconciliation Action Plan (Fairfield City Council, 2023). Fairfield has a Youth Advisory Committee composed of 14-24 year olds living in the area, nominated for a 1-year term. The Youth Committee are expected to advocate for young people and steer the annual 'Bring it On! Festival' during Youth Week. These examples involve broad consultation and collaboration with community members, service providers, and local public officials.

[122] Currently out of date, with the last released update occurring in 2021-22 (Fairfield City Council, 2022).

It is argued the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency is the key stakeholder group for the community to address persistent disadvantage. This group is chaired by Fairfield local council and the CORE community service providers (see Table 5), bringing together a broad range of services and supporting organisations for migrants and humanitarian entrants in the area. Membership includes local ethnic groups, neighbourhood centres, government and non-government organisations. A key subcommittee for this forum is the Community Capacity Building Working Group, which supports capability building, provides mentoring and volunteering support, and grant application and service advice.

Table 5. *Membership of the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency*

Stakeholder	Key focus areas
Fairfield City Council, Social Planning and Community Development branch (Co-chair)	Social and community issues including policy and strategy to address disadvantage
CORE Community Services (Co-chair)	Children's Services, Youth Services, Multicultural Communities Services, Aged and Disability Care
Assyrian Australian Association	Supporting Assyrian community identity and assist new Assyrian migrants and humanitarian settlement in Australia
Family Planning Australia	Supports universal access to quality reproductive and sexual health
Navitas Skilled Futures	Tailored support to help migrants and humanitarian entrants find employment and improve English literacy, bolstering settlement in the community
Settlement Services International	Delivers Humanitarian Services Programmes across NSW
NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation for Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS)	Delivers the Community in Cultural Transition programme to support new and emerging humanitarian entrant communities develop skills and leadership
South Western Sydney Local Health District (SWSLHD) Health Promotion Services	Works on developing, implementing and evaluating community-based programmes supporting population health and minimising health inequalities
TAFE NSW	Vocational education and training provider across Australia

Note. Adapted from *Fairfield Multicultural Interagency*, by Fairfield City Council, n.d.-a.

The Fairfield Multicultural Interagency and Community Capacity Building Working Group should be the starting point for new place-based collaboration efforts in Fairfield as they already possess touchpoints and linkages with the central dynamics underpinning persistent disadvantage in the area. However, the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency was not established as a place-based programme as it does not have a community backbone in place and does not meet the threshold for a collective impact initiative. In addition, the federal government does not play an active role in these forums and is not directly represented.

Given the fiscal and convening powers of federal government, this is a key barrier to establishing the governance and financial settings required to support place-based interventions and MLG cooperation.

There are already important touchpoints across the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency to address and respond to persistent disadvantage in Fairfield. For example, the Assyrian community have a prominent cultural role in the group through the AAA, which reflects the significant Assyrian humanitarian settlement population. Settlement Services International, contracted to manage humanitarian settlement in community, is also represented on the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency. To support skills and employment needs CORE, Navitas, and TAFE NSW are also represented. There is also evaluation and health specific representation via South Western Sydney Local Health District Health Promotion Services.[123] All these stakeholders are necessary to support place-based responses in the community.

However, in its current form the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency has missing community linkages required to represent broad community perspectives to address persistent disadvantage. There are a range of locally available community organisations and services that can be drawn upon.[124] For example, Fairfield has existing multicultural, First Nations, and youth groups that could shape meaningful place-based outcomes. In addition to the AAA, Fairfield has a range of other active ethnic welfare services and culture associations which would support targeted multicultural representation of the broader community.[125,126] While it is less clear how disability and elderly stakeholders are represented across local council forums, the council's published materials would suggest that many linkages are available to facilitate broader community collaboration. Linkages with the Local Jobs Program would also facilitate a greater integration of labour market and federal considerations.

A reinvigorated place-based agenda utilising the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency would deliver stronger community leadership, creating authorisation pathways between community and decision makers for collaboration with necessary accountability mechanisms. As has been argued, this would require the creation of a community backbone that represented the multicultural community membership and other community groups to directly address the specific geographic, historical, and institutional elements of persistent disadvantage in Fairfield. Doing so would help realise a joint-decision model with

[123] As noted in previous chapters, settlement can be traced back to the 1960s for the earliest Assyrian migrant arrivals.

[124] Historically, migrant communities have played an active role in leading a range of formal and informal community organisations to support their communities. From the 1970s, the Fairfield Neighbourhood Centre emerged as an outcome of efforts to support the changing demographics of the community and bolster services for the young, elderly, and culturally diverse communities. A range of other supporting institutions were also established, including: the "Cabramatta support Centre … a Parent Support Centre, Immigrant Women's Health Service, Youth Refuge and Housing Referral Service" as well as at least five neighbourhood centres (Gapps, 2010, p. 438).

[125] Listed cultural associations within 10km of Fairfield included: Phillipino, Chaldean, Congolese, Iraqi Christians, Vietnamese, Latin American (Spanish speakers), Khmer, Maltese, Sikh, Arghan, Iranian, Sri Lankan, Latvian, Ukrainan, Lebanese (See Fairfield City Council. n.d.-b)

[126] There are also women led and focused organisations, such as Shakti NSW, which support women and children at risk of homelessness (See Fairfield City Council. n.d.-b).

community at the helm of social change efforts. This reinvigorated agenda is explored in greater detail in the concluding chapter.

Advocating for a Transformative Place-Based Agenda for Fairfield

In summary, bringing the insights of the preceding analysis together supports a transformative agenda for Fairfield. The Maranguka, COAG trials, and Logan Together case studies demonstrate that working differently and challenging established modes of governance is difficult but necessary to make institutional change. There is a need for governments, community, and supporting stakeholders to commit to long term change at the pace of community, which outlives the political cycles of governments.

This thesis argues the key drivers of disadvantage in Fairfield, and therefore what must be addressed to deliver real impact, is the interaction between Fairfield's humanitarian settlement experience and the broader segmented labour market in Greater Western Sydney. This conclusion emerges from an application of the spatial political economy approach, focusing on historical, spatial, and institutional causes of persistent disadvantage in Fairfield. Place-based policy provides a direct response to the root causes of persistent disadvantage that spatial political economy identifies and can be an ideal application of MLG.

Chapter Five argued that local governments face significant fiscal constraints and are politically underestimated, limiting their ability to be effective advocates within the federation, a condition further compounded by Vertical Fiscal Imbalance. State governments also face significant resource constraints and are therefore unable to conjure a national vision of intervention, making them an unideal actor for leading placed-based reforms. Only the federal government has the necessary fiscal capability and national focus to effectively create a nation-wide vision of reform in place. MLG proposes that all three levels of government, along with a broad coalition of non-government actors, should cooperate to decentralise power and solve complex policy challenges including persistent disadvantage.

It is also clear that the issues called out in the State of the City Report would be best addressed with a targeted place-based effort that responds to the demands of the community. While the Communities for Children programme in Fairfield in many ways poses appropriate questions and seeks viable solutions for the community, it is limited in what it can deliver. Firstly, the programme uses an advisory council rather than being embedded in true joint-decision making processes. This is a critical difference from other collective impact placed-based programmes including Empowered Communities, Connected Beginnings, and Stronger Places Stronger People. In addition, the programme is constrained in its focus on early childhood and family outcomes, limiting its ability to address the root causes of persistent disadvantage in Fairfield (e.g., parental barriers related to humanitarian settlement and labour market outcomes). Finally, there is a lack of ongoing evaluation for the Communities for Children programme, preventing a detailed assessment of whether it has succeeded over the longer term. This is a major limitation to successfully advocating for further government intervention.

Bringing these ideas into practice, there is a clear need for a committee embedded in the Fairfield community that can jointly respond to the challenges of migration and employment and provide advocacy for the community. Fairfield council already possesses an institutional mechanism for this model in the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency. However, two key challenges would need to be overcome to adequately leverage the existing infrastructure: the fiscal constraints of the local council (who co-chairs the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency), means there is inadequate resourcing to provide substantial responses in community (discussed in Chapter 5); and the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency is not strictly a placed-based programme, meaning it lacks community authorisation.

In addition, the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency is not connected to federal government decision-making, limiting its MLG potential. The strength of the Fairfield Multicultural Interagency is its direct focus on humanitarian settlement and connected social outcomes, giving it a unique institutional standing to identify solutions to disadvantage in Fairfield. An ideal committee would also take a capability-informed approach (discussed in Chapter 2) to ensure disadvantage is framed around the preconditions of agency. This would mean assessing the basic goods required to limit disadvantage and support the agency of community members, so they can achieve the lives they desire.

Chapter One put forward that Australia is a developmentalist state where policy making is contingent, complex, and responsive to national and local circumstances. A place-based model that responds to the complex interplay of factors emerging from humanitarian settlement is itself the best expression of the developmentalist thesis. Scaling a place-based approach to disadvantage also offers an alternative path to economic rationalist approaches to policy, providing a normative vision of transformative change for Australian society. The concluding chapter will explore the implications and potential future direction of this work.

Conclusion

Place-based policy emerged as a response to a recognition that market driven economic policy could not be solved with ‘top-down’ style solutions. This chapter has provided an overview of place-based policy and advocated for it as a solution to persistent disadvantage in Fairfield. As demonstrated by the comparative analysis of Indochinese and Assyrian groups (Chapter 3), the shared structural vulnerabilities of both communities highlight the need for community driven coordination to facilitate meaningful social transformation. Focusing on collaboration with community stakeholders and longer-term decision making, place-based policy attempts a new path for working with community that is different from traditional government approaches.

Australia has a distinct history of working in place. What first began with area experiments overseen by the federal government around local housing supply in the 1940s, extended out to considerations of social welfare and disadvantage in the 1970s. Subsequently, while city deals and regional planning have remained a core, traditional locus of place-based policy, First Nations, early childhood, and disadvantaged community engagements have created a richer and more diverse tradition. Collective impact models are beginning to build a body of evaluation and other evidence to support continued investment through place-based

programmes. The success evidence from Logan Together, Maranguka, and Connected Beginnings shows the benefits to community across a range of outcomes.

Community centred welfare services are a long-standing part of the Fairfield experience, and something deeply embedded in community and civic life. Fairfield has much to gain by adopting more community led place-based programmes, initiatives, and approaches. While the area has active federal programmes, these are weakly connected with activities occurring at the council level, suggesting fragmentation of the local environment. Community cohesion, a traditional cornerstone of Fairfield cohesion and success, has been substantially tested by the COVID-19 pandemic, suggesting a strong need to draw on the community to lead sustained change. Fairfield's community has faced significant adversity in its past, as well as a willingness to overcome these challenges.

The Fairfield Multicultural Interagency demonstrates the possibility of a deep network of connectivity to steer the take up of targeted place-based initiatives at the community level. As this capability has been tailored to manage the complexity of humanitarian settlement, it interacts with a broad range of touch points for the community necessary to demonstrate positive outcomes. The community's broad ethnic cultural community organisations could form important advisory linkages, along with First Nations, youth, and other stakeholder representation. Local representatives can serve as the foundation of a new approach to addressing persistent disadvantage. Beyond a cooperative federal system, this offers the genuine opportunity for community-led change, that meaningfully addresses persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

Chapter Seven: *Conclusion*

Chapter Seven: Conclusions

Whither Fairfield, the Settlement City?

Over generations, Fairfield has been an epicentre of diverse multicultural community settlement. So much so that it was once known as 'all the world in one place' (Fairfield City Council, n.d.). There is much to celebrate around the community's continuing resilience. However, there now lingers a genuine question of how 'settlement cities', like Fairfield, can facilitate opportunity and social mobility. Fairfield faces formidable challenges, including around its future identity.

Troublingly, Fairfield has become increasingly unaffordable in recent years, much like the rest of Sydney. In this setting, without adequate levels of services and spending, the area faces population pressures. Fairfield Mayor, Frank Carbone (2012-present), recently described the situation thus:

> [Fairfield is] a very welcoming community, we've always been a *settlement city* … we just feel that sometimes the government uses the western suburbs to populate this country, but not necessarily puts back [sic] the infrastructure that is needed to maintain all of that quality of life … Because Fairfield used to be very affordable, unfortunately it's not affordable anymore. Rents are high, prices of houses are high, quite simply, how many more people can you fit in? *If you look at Fairfield – Fairfield is full.* (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2025b)

This statement raises broader questions connected to the problem of persistent disadvantage. If the state's most disadvantaged community can no longer serve as an affordability and settlement location, it raises concerning implications about the future of Sydney and the country. Federal Assistant Treasurer, Andrew Leigh, recently said Australia was on track to reach American style inequality without adequate interventions (Leigh, 2025). At least two-thirds of the world's population are living under rising income inequality[127] (Qureshi, 2023). In this setting, discussions around persistent disadvantage will continue to remain relevant, if not grow in importance, in coming years.

The thesis argued against a typical neoliberal account of state transformation since the 1970s in Australia. Rather than a strict 'market rationalist' road to high inequality, policy has been deeply specific to the circumstances underpinning decision making. It has been observed across the issues examined in the thesis, that market rationalist accounts hold best only in certain policy settings, such as employment policy. Whereas the humanitarian settlement system, the Federal Financial Relations system, and place-based policy are all examples of hybrid policy spaces operating with complexity. For this reason, the thesis forwarded that Australian governments have chosen their own developmental paths, while still failing to solve the underlying problem of persistent disadvantage.

[127] The impacts were most pronounced in developed countries including the USA, and in developing world nations such as China, India, and Russian (Qureshi, 2023).

Implications of the Research

Writing in the 1980s, Stilwell had grave concerns about the future of Australian cities following deindustrialisation and higher generalised rates of unemployment. Of the industrial centres of the post war period,[128] which were driven by large-scale immigration and national industrial development, Stillwell acknowledged their structural role in the economy was largely ending. In its place would arise a more globally integrated national economy, offering many benefits to Australians, but whose prosperity would not be shared equally. For those communities that had been part of national industrial development, communities like Fairfield, many of the prosperities of the post-war period were seen to be increasingly eroded, with predictions of mass unemployment.

It might be asked what Stilwell (1980) demanded as a solution. Stilwell suggested that organised labour (i.e., trade unions), would be ill equipped to confront the outcomes of the recession. He argued that there would thus be "no quick fix" to the crisis; instead there would be a need for broad coalitions incorporating unions, urban social movements, and public policy experts to oversee an income and wealth redistribution agenda. In Stilwell's (1980) words, this group would: "become part of the movements towards a regionally decentralised society base on *human needs rather than profit*" (my italics, p. 176).

Stilwell's position now seems prophetic of what was to come. Both the 1980s and 1990s recessions ushered unemployment rates that were the worst possible cases, and Fairfield was among communities deeply impacted. Many impacted by these crises in communities never worked again. Moving towards the present, major economic crises such as the Great Recession (Global Financial Crisis) (2007-08) and COVID-19 pandemic (2020-23) have also created adverse mobility effects for disadvantaged communities (Andrews et al, 2020; Jiang et al 2022). Labour market scarring has profound effects on communities, extending between generations and impacting the future of intergenerational mobility. Clearly, a more locally informed and democratic political language and praxis is needed.

Major Challenges Outside the Thesis Scope

There are many aspects influencing persistent disadvantage that the thesis did not have scope to directly engage with. As argued, attempting to address all underlying aspects of persistent disadvantage risks solving none of them. It is acknowledged that policy responses to persistent disadvantage must be both long term and multi-portfolio. While the thesis has focused on the humanitarian settlement and employment relationship, and pathways to stronger cooperative federalism via place-based policy, there are a host of other important dimensions worth investigating in future research.

Sydney is in the grips of a systemic housing crisis, where housing remains unaffordable and a major determinant of inequality (Morris, 2023, p. 86). Fairfield is a community exposed to the broad spectrum of homelessness, demonstrated by the very high level of overcrowding in households (Randolph & Holloway 2005, p.5). Many low-income renters are also

[128] Stilwell (1980) included: "Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong, the La Trobe Valley, Melbourne, Geelong, Adelaide" and the 'Iron Triangle': "Whyalla, Port Augusta and Port Pirie" (p. 166).

stretched in their ability to service the price of renting a home, including in south-west Sydney (Bangura & Lee 2019, p. 295). Efforts which directly improve the supply and affordability of housing for low-income households make a significant impact.

Australia is home to significant levels of gambling disorder, with legal forms of gambling costing Australians $25 billion each year (AIFS, 2023, p. 1). Unfortunately, this is also linked to a range of other social problems including family and domestic violence, substance addiction, food insecurity, and household debt (Lane et al. 2016, p. 24). Fairfield has one of the highest community level concentrations of gambling, making the issue a great amplifier of existing community challenges (Bestman et al. 2018, p. 16). Efforts to better regulate and prevent problem gambling can help support communities to retain more of their own wealth to invest back in local services while minimising other harms associated with gambling (Kolandai-Matchett et al. 2018, p. 376).

Australia has highly privatised primary and secondary education systems. Many students from middle and high-income households leave the public school system in favour of Catholic and Independent schools (Anderson, 2005, p. 204). Despite the legacy of the Gonski et al. (2012) review,[129] which proposed a benchmark education funding level, public school students, overwhelmingly in lower income areas, are not receiving the student resourcing standard. Public school students are also underrepresented in university pathways compared to more advantaged peers in the non-government sectors. Creating a fairer and more streamlined education system, including for children from humanitarian entrant backgrounds, would provide a better safety net to ensure all students get the best chance at high quality education (Wanti et al. 2022, p.279; Molla, 2021, p.5).

The social security net in Australia, represented by the level of unemployment benefits, remains low when compared with other OECD nations, relegating the unemployed to high levels of poverty (Whiteford, 2017, p. 21). Changes to welfare support during COVID-19 saw improvements in the level of income security for low-income persons, allowing them to make discretionary purchases to live better lives (Phillips & Narayanan 2021, p.21). Lifting the benchmark levels of income supports for the unemployed would provide greater dignity to those already suffering multiple challenges from disadvantage, providing better pathways out of poverty and disadvantage.

The climate crisis is deepening, with lower income communities more exposed to heat island effects and higher fuel prices, due to reliance on petrol-based transport (Dodson & Sipe, 2008, p. 395). Areas in Greater Western Sydney like Fairfield face the potential for greater fatality rates as climate change intensifies the impacts of heatwaves (Morrison et al 2022, pp. 29-31). Greater Western Sydney stakeholders should continue to be at the front of an agenda to advocate for better solutions for safer local climate conditions, avoiding unnecessary health impacts in community. All these areas represent complex intersecting challenges, with solutions benefitting the specific community setting of Fairfield and other disadvantaged communities in Greater Western Sydney. Cooperative federalism and place-

[129] The Review of Funding for Schooling (Gonski et al., 2012) was directed by an expert panel led by David Gonski (hence the nickname 'the Gonski review' or simply 'Gonski'). The report observed an overall decline in education outcomes, coupled with growing gaps between disadvantaged cohorts within the schooling system. The review proposed the introduction of needs-based funding in schools to address these inequities.

based policy are likely to also be complimentary to joined-up responses across these diverse policy areas.

Argument of the Thesis

The thesis sought to tackle one of society's more complex problems—persistent disadvantage. It centred on a case study of its emergence in one distinct local area, the city of Fairfield, NSW's most disadvantaged Local Government Area. It told a story of urbanisation, mass immigration on the outer city fringe, and the decline of manufacturing following the stagflation crisis of the 1970s and the rise of segmented labour markets in Greater Western Sydney. Compounding these challenges is the bespoke structure of the federation, contributing to the disempowerment of local agents to shape change. For this reason, place-based policy offers a circuit breaking opportunity. Through joint decision-making, it can locate pathways to utilise local knowledge and capabilities, empowering Fairfield to shape its own policy agenda.

The thesis defined persistent disadvantage as a problem of spatial political economy. It was argued that disadvantage appears in many ways, limiting understanding of its complex, specific, and emergent forms. This is not helped by the narrow approach in most analysis which takes the problem as a social fact. It was argued a political economy perspective, which allows for an understanding of institutions, the role of historic change, and the importance of space and place, is needed. The specificity of both Sydney and Fairfield was discussed as a case study epitomising the challenges of understanding persistent disadvantage in a tangible geographic setting.

To summarise, spatial political economy enables a clear account of the specifics of disadvantage formation in Fairfield. The interactivity of the humanitarian settlement system with the segmented labour market, including the gender division of labour, drives weaker income, skill formation, and employment outcomes. This creates and sustains persistent disadvantage. The weakness of the federation to directly engage with this challenge, and the fiscal weaknesses of the local level of government, requires a place-based agenda where the full diversity of community in Fairfield is represented. This would include humanitarian entrants as central decision makers. Ideally, this would take the form of a rebuilt Fairfield Multicultural Interagency, leveraging community groups and service provides within the region, to work directly with the state and federal governments to create sustained interventions to disrupt disadvantage.

Core Elements of the Thesis

Chapter Two made the case for a more egalitarian economy driven by normative economic questions to respond to persistent disadvantage. This required an understanding of the specific legacy of the Henderson reports, including recognition of the structural nature of poverty and the need for multidimensional measurements. In response, the capability approach, which is concerned with primary goods and the chance to live the life one desires, was argued to be the most aligned with the demand for multidimensional measurements of poverty. It was put forward that these perspectives should also be situated in a complex

understanding of inequality and distribution, to support robust spatial political economy analysis.

The chapter also highlighted the social intersections of disadvantage as a complementary means to understand the inequality of outcomes in society. Following Stilwell (2019), the dimensions of geography, class, race and ethnicity, gender, age, disability and luck were argued to be major elements underpinning social outcomes. These intersections are in turn mediated by broader structural processes, including broader patterns of income and wealth distribution, in determining the material access to resources underpinning the preconditions of agency (i.e. the ability to actualise a self-fulfilling life).

Chapter Three focused on humanitarian entrants in Fairfield. Indochinese settlement was responsive and experimental (i.e,. a reaction to outcomes of the Vietnam War and perceived responsibilities of Australia). In contrast, Assyrian settlement began deliberately in the 1960s as a community driven effort to realise a stable homeland but was still impacted by the broader challenges associated with humanitarian settlement. What was observed in both the Indochinese and Assyrian settlement case studies in Fairfield, is that the broader context of humanitarian settlement creates path dependencies reinforcing disadvantage, requiring tailored policy interventions.

As discussed, the first five years following arrival are critical for the social mobility of humanitarian entrants, requiring dedicated language, skill, and employment programmes. For this reason, efforts to resettle large and complex humanitarian entrant populations need to be conceptualised along longer time frames, with collaboration across levels of government and with community stakeholders. Policy reform of the broader migration system is now needed, with a view to resolving the systemic challenges emerging from large-scale temporary migration. A broader multi-year plan for migration coordinated with other policy systems, is part of a solution to this challenge. Ideally this would also deliver a stronger total coordination of humanitarian entrants to minimise the development of persistent disadvantage.

Chapter Four highlighted how labour market segmentation serves to amplify the challenges experienced in areas with higher humanitarian entrants. Segmented Labour Market theory recognises that lower status workers, such as those from multicultural backgrounds, are relegated to poorly matched and lower paid jobs. The segmentation of the labour market has effects for humanitarian entrant women. They experience both the lowest labour market participation rates in Sydney while simultaneously bearing primarily responsibility for unpaid caring and family work. Fairfield has also struggled to attract the quality of jobs desired to ensure that workers have access to a reasonable level of income. This coincides with a lower level of job to employment matching, where residents of Greater Western Sydney struggle to access the quality of professional jobs found in other parts of Sydney.

System reforms, which leverage and minimise job mismatch, while supporting local training of this unique workforce, are a clear solution to some of these challenges. More work needs to be done to understand what humanitarian entrant women need to participate in the labour market and achieve income that can support their financial independence and the well-being of their family. Employment programmes that link local opportunities with the

existing skill base represent movement in the right direction. However, there is a need to broaden coordination efforts that connect to the specifics of the humanitarian settlement pattern, with integrated efforts at city building and planning. This points to the importance of getting federal cooperation working effectively.

Chapter Five discussed Australia as a fiscally vertical federation. Over decades, the federal government came to exert greater power over revenue collection, while states retained significant policy responsibilities that cannot adequately be met with their existing, complex own-source revenue base. Cooperative federalism needs to account for and accommodate the role of all levels of government in decision making. It was advanced that local government is frequently overlooked as an actor in Federal Financial Relations, but must play a central role in ensuring that community and local concerns are featured as part of broader fiscal decision making.

Governments face substantial revenue challenges, making them financially conservative and unlikely to oversee complex and sustained investment in community to alleviate the effects of disadvantage. For this reason, regional coalitions of local decision makers, like those exhibited via the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils and the Australia Local Government Association, need be reinvigorated with a unifying mission. This will allow local actors to effectively advocate alongside the more fiscally powerful state and federal governments. Direct partnerships between local, state and federal government are a step towards linking national and local challenges to re-shape the economy and society. As a vehicle for these broad cooperation-based efforts, place-based policy has unique advantages.

As Chapter Six argued, place-based policy has a distinct history in Australia. A range of programmes have emerged around early childhood, disadvantaged communities, and First Nations' self-determination. Despite its historic role in Australia as a means for the federal government to intervene in state matters (i.e., housing policy), in recent decades it has matured to recognise the importance of community-led, joint-decision making as a critical enabler to shape lasting change. Increasingly there is a push for local actors to be joint-decision makers, solving complex community level challenges. In this regard, place-based policy will be an important future means to solve increasingly complex and connected social problems, offering an alternative path for policy makers. This will ultimately help to unwind the negative effects of marketisation and the outcomes of growing inequality.

Options for Multilevel Governance in Fairfield

MLG is a normative form of system governance advocating for the 'dispersion of authority' challenging the traditional concentration of decision making in the control of senior public officials and ministers (Daniell & Kay, 2018). It is complementary to place-based policy, supporting a pluralistic approach to local action and decision making to empower community as a viable actor. It is worth considering what a MLG and place-based model would look like in Fairfield.

Fairfield local government already possess a local decision-making forum which is capable of directly engaging and responding to the challenges of concentrated disadvantage. The

Fairfield Multicultural Interagency, convened by the local council, is responsible for coordinating settlement with community needs of both the humanitarian entrant and general migrant populations. This body works with service operators; cultural associations; health, education, and skills; and settlement actors. To provide the foundations of a true place-based programme, this group could be augmented by incorporating better community representation and including a broader remit to directly address the challenges faced by longer standing communities in Fairfield to tackle challenges emerging from persistent disadvantage.

This revised mission would consider the thematic raised in this thesis: supporting humanitarian settlement in the first five years (particularly for non-working or precariously employed women), supporting access to skills and employment, cooperating with the levels of government to shape change in place, and finding pathways to empower local decision makers through place-based policy. Other active community groups and strategic networks such as the youth, disability, and First Nations areas, could also directly contribute to this change agenda.

Federal place-based programmes already have some clear touch points in Fairfield that could be leveraged by this group; for example, the Local Jobs programme which has a mission to better support job matching between local residents and the local labour market through dedicated regional coordination resourcing and department support. The Communities for Children programme is another key touch point, with a focus on improving the early childhood outcomes for children in Fairfield; although it was noted that the programme lacks the broad focus on settlement and labour market outcomes needed to directly address persistent disadvantage in Fairfield.

The Western Sydney Airport is another place-informed programme that a revamped Fairfield Multicultural Interagency could seek to directly engage. Working closely with federal and state counterparts to link employment, early childhood and infrastructure planning with community leadership would leverage local knowledge and experience to shape mutually desirable outcomes. The renewed Fairfield Multicultural Interagency could also look closely at existing settlement programme infrastructure such as the Adult Migrant English Program to ensure it is fit for purpose for community.

A community-led Fairfield Multicultural Interagency would still face significant challenges. As discussed, the greatest challenge is typically around fiscal autonomy. Local governments are already stretched to deliver the services that are expected of them. Even if contributors could be financially compensated, there would still be significant barriers to allowing major policy decision makers to listen directly to community; not to mention that many in these focus communities are facing the challenges of temporary or persistent disadvantage, a major barrier to advocacy. For this reason, state and federal policy makers would have to be amenable to better accommodate place-based policy, both in programme and strategic advisory settings.

In an ideal setting, this forum would possess bespoke knowledge about the specific challenges and necessary focus areas of the community to start the process of transformation. This thesis would serve as a jumping off point for community-led decision

making for this group, identifying potential place-based solution. It would offer a unifying framework to adequately consider the key elements of persistent disadvantage, utilising the holistic perspectives of spatial political economy.

Where to Next?

The thesis did not set out to provide an experiential, ethnographic or oral historical account of Fairfield. There are many excellent resources that tell many complex stories in this community (c.f., Gow, 2005; Dreher, 2006; Bartleet, 2009), but there is a need to continue to support the community to tell their stories in their own words. Place-based policy can play a meaningful role in this setting by enabling community voices to participate, both as documentation and a means of developing policy.

More work needs to be done to understand the complex ethnography of communities in Western Sydney, where people navigate complex culture landscapes. Building a better understanding of this social fabric could help researchers understand, for example, how multicultural communities were able to self-organise with local government to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding how resilience is built in a major urban Australian setting would have broad lessons for other communities across the nation's cities.

In addition, the data used to tell these stories are incomplete and limited. The Census, while a useful data set, cannot provide an adequate basis to tell the data stories communities want to tell. There will continue to be a need for community access to public data to allow them to work with public policy officials and experts to access services, grants, and build community profiles. There will be an ongoing need to collaborate with community to determine the best courses of action in each place setting.

Place-based policy is still in its infancy, with continued fragmentation across government agencies and over extensive geographies. Bringing the landscape into focus by simplifying and streamlining programmes, while supporting a broad range of communities with varying abilities to partner with government and non-government stakeholders, will provide broad public benefit, helping to better democratise decision making.

A Forward Agenda

Sydney's future trajectory is perilous, despite the potential for transformative change. As Daly (1982) noted in *Sydney Boom, Sydney Bust:*

> The materialism, waste, fake hopes and wrong direction of the property booms have sapped some of the spirit and potential of Sydney; a city set in one of the most magnificent urban sites in the world, and as the largest city in a rich nation which alone developed its complete urban system after the rise of industrial capitalism, one which might have set new standards for the world. (p. 202)

Despite its affluences, Sydney is yet to achieve a more radical vision of spatial equity for all communities. Returning to the comments of Mayor Carbone, if 'Fairfield is full' this has existential implications for those in Fairfield and others with limited structural agency to

find greener pastures and live self-actualised lives. It remains unclear whether relevant policy makers will take up the call for community informed decision making to shape an alternative vison for the city.

A developmentalist state should chart its own path, learning from the implications of historic decisions but avoiding the pitfalls of narrow ideological positions. Spatial and intergenerational inequality have become a rolling crisis, demanding nuanced political discourse and a broad perspective to support a vision of national prosperity. Community must be enabled to play a decisive role in these discussions, participating in institutional settings while ensuring that the democratic potential of civil society is continually realised. Long-term strategic thinking, accounting for the institutional, geographic, and historical features of place, should be promoted to find real world solutions. This will ensure a more inclusive future, one where Australia's decision makers, empowered by the voices of community, have properly reckoned with the persistence of disadvantage.

References

- Abdi, H., & Williams, L. J. (2010). Principal component analysis. *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Computational Statistics*, *2*(4), 433-459. https://doi.org/10.1002/wics.101
- Abur, W., & Spaaij, R. (2016). Settlement and employment experiences of South Sudanese people from refugee backgrounds in Melbourne, Australia. *Australasian Review of African Studies*, *37*(2), 107-128. https://doi.org/10.22160/22035184/ARAS-2016-37-2/107-128
- Ahlfeldt, G. M., Maennig, W., & Richter, F. J. (2017). Urban renewal after the Berlin Wall: A place-based policy evaluation. *Journal of Economic Geography*, *17*(1), 129-156. https://doi.org/10.1093/jeg/lbw003
- Akobeng, A. K. (2005). Understanding randomised controlled trials. *Archives of Disease in Childhood*, *90*(8), 840-844. https://doi.org/10.1136/adc.2004.058222
- Alder, S., Lagakos, D., & Ohanian, L. (2014). *Competitive pressure and the decline of the Rust Belt: A macroeconomic analysis* (No. w20538). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Allender, S. C. (1998). *Australia's migrants and refugees: Opening the door to lifelong learning. How adults learn a new language*. Institute of Education Sciences.
- Altman, J.C. (2009). *Beyond closing the gap: Valuing diversity in Indigenous Australia* (Vol. 54). Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU.
- Anderson, D. S. (2005). Public schools in decline: Implications of the privatization of schools in Australia. In H. Beare & W. L. Boyd (Eds.), *Restructuring schools: An international perspective on the movement to transform the control and performance of schools* (pp. 204–220). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203973066
- Andrews, D., Deutscher, N., Hambur, J., & Hansell, D. (2020). *The career effects of labour market conditions at entry* (Working Paper No. 2020-01). Treasury. https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-06/p2020-85098-202006.pdf
- Antonopoulos, R., & Hirway, I. (Eds.). (2010). Unpaid work and the economy. In *Unpaid work and the economy: Gender, time use and poverty in developing countries* (pp. 1-21). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Aplin, G. (1982). Models of urban change: Sydney 1820–1870. *Australian Geographical Studies*, *20*(2), 144-158. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8470.1982.tb00401.x
- Areheart, B. A., & Stein, M. A. (2014). The disability-employability divide: Bottlenecks to equal opportunity. *Michigan Law Review*, *113*, 877.
- Aroney, N., & Boyce, M. (2022). The Australian Federal response to the COVID-19 crisis: Momentary success or enduring reform?' In N. Steytler (Ed.), *Comparative Federalism and Covid-19* (pp. 298-316), Routledge.

  Attanasio, O., Cattan, S., & Meghir, C. (2022). Early childhood development, human capital, and poverty. *Annual Review of Economics*, *14*(1), 853-892. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-economics-092821-053234

- Australian Broadcasting Corporation. (2025a). *Productivity Commission to review state and territory GST deal*. ABC News. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-09-24/australia-gst-review-under-review-wa-gst-deal/105813372
- Australian Broadcasting Corporation. (2025b). *Immigration debate, federal election*. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-21/immigration-debate-federal-election/105182544
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (n.d.-a). *Income and wealth inequality*. ABS Website. Retrieved October 1, 2025, from https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/measuring-what-matters/measuring-what-matters-themes-and-indicators/prosperous/income-and-wealth-inequality
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (n.d.-b). *Data by region, region summary: Fairfield (Census 2021)*. ABS Website. Retrieved November 12, 2025, from dbr.abs.gov.au
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2008). *Socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA), Australia: Data cubes* [Data set]. Website. https://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/A09988C1A5A10C9CCA257B3B00116EB7?OpenDocument
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2013). *Census of population and housing: Socio-economic indexes for areas (SEIFA), Australia, 2011* [Data set]. ABS Website. https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/2033.0.55.0012011
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2021). *Permanent migrants in Australia methodology* (Cat. No. 34170D0001_2021). https://www.abs.gov.au/methodologies/permanent-migrants-australia-methodology/2021
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2022). *Census of Population and Housing, 2021*. TableBuilder. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder. catalogue number 2001.0
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023a). *Census of Population and Housing, 2021: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)*. TableBuilder. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/microdata-tablebuilder/tablebuilder. catalogue number 2033.0.55.001
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023b). *Permanent migrants in Australia*. https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/people-and-communities/permanent-migrants-australia/latest-release
- Australian Early Development Census. (2021). https://www.aedc.gov.au/data
- Australian Local Government Association. (n.d.). *About ALGA*. alga.com.au
- Australian Government. (2018a). *Inquiry into horizontal fiscal equalisation: Government interim response.* https://assets.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/horizontal-fiscal-equalisation/hfe-government-response.pdf
- Australian Government. (2018b). *Western Sydney city deal.* https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/sites/default/files/migrated/cities/city-deals/western-sydney/files/western-sydney-city-deal.pdf
- Australian Government. (2019). *Investing in refugees, investing in Australia.* https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-integration-employment-settlement-outcomes-refugees-humanitarian-entrants.pdf

- Australian Government. (2023). *Migration strategy: Getting migration working for the nation*. https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/programs-subsite/migration-strategy/Documents/migration-strategy.pdf
- Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2023). *Gambling participation, experience of harm and community views*. https://aifs.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-03/2302-overview_gambling-participation-harm-views.pdf
- Bache, I., Bartle, I., & Flinders, M. (2016). Multi-level governance. In C. Ansell & J. Torfing (Eds.), *Handbook on theories of governance* (pp. 486-498). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Bakker, L., Dagevos, J., & Engbersen, G. (2017). Explaining the refugee gap: A longitudinal study on labour market participation of refugees in the Netherlands. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *43*(11), 1775-1791. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1251835
- Ball, R., & Chernova, K. (2008). Absolute income, relative income, and happiness. *Social Indicators Research*, *88*(3), 497-529. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-007-9217-0
- Bangura, M., & Lee, C. L. (2019). The differential geography of housing affordability in Sydney: a disaggregated approach. *Australian Geographer*, *50*(3), 295-313. http://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2018.1559971.
- Bankston III, C. L., & Zhou, M. (2021). Involuntary migration, context of reception, and social mobility: The case of Vietnamese refugee resettlement in the United States. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *47*(21), 4797-4816. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2020.1724411
- Barbeau, E. M., Krieger, N., & Soobader, M. J. (2004). Working class matters: Socioeconomic disadvantage, race/ethnicity, gender, and smoking in NHIS 2000. *American Journal of Public Health*, *94*(2), 269-278. https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.94.2.269
- Barca, F., McCann, P., & Rodríguez-Pose, A. (2012). The case for regional development intervention: Place-based versus place-neutral approaches. *Journal of Regional Science*, *52*(1), 134-152. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9787.2011.00756.x
- Barns, S., & Pollio, A. (2018). Parramatta smart city and the quest to build Australia's next great city. In A. Karvonen, F. Cugurullo, & F. Caprotti (Eds.), *Inside smart cities: Place, politics and urban innovation* (pp. 197-210). Routledge.
- Bartleet, B. L. (2009). Sound links: Exploring the social, cultural and educational dynamics of musical communities in Australia. *International Journal of Community Music*, *1*(3), 335–356.
- Baum, S. (1997). Sydney, Australia: A global city? Testing the social polarisation thesis. *Urban Studies*, *34*(11), 1881-1902. https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098975295
- Baum, S., O'Connor, K., & Stimson, R. (2005). *Fault lines exposed: advantage and disadvantage across Australia's settlement system*. Melbourne: Monash University Press.
- Beaman, L. A. (2012). Social networks and the dynamics of labour market outcomes: Evidence from refugees resettled in the US. *The Review of Economic Studies*, *79*(1), 128-161. https://doi.org/10.1093/restud/rdr017

- Becker, G. S. (1995). *Human capital and poverty alleviation*. Human Resources Development and Operations Policy. https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/121791468764735830/pdf/multi0page.pdf
- Beggs, M. J. (2011). *Inflation and the making of macroeconomic policy in Australia, 1945-85*. [Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney]. Australia. http://hdl.handle.net/2123/7710
- Bell, S. R. (1997). *Ungoverning the economy: The political economy of Australian economic policy*. Oxford University Press.
- Benzeval, M., & Judge, K. (2001). Income and health: The time dimension. *Social Science & Medicine*, *52*(9), 1371-1390. https://doi.org/10.1016/s0277-9536(00)00244-6
- Berry, M. (1979). *Marxist approaches to the housing questions*. University of Birmingham, Joint Center for Regional, Urban and Local Government Studies.
- Bestman, A., Thomas, S. L., Randle, M., Pitt, H., & Daube, M. (2018). Attitudes towards community gambling venues and support for regulatory reform: an online panel study of residents in New South Wales, Australia. *Harm Reduction Journal*, *15*(1), 15. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12954-018-0218-x
- Betts, K. (2003). Immigration policy under the Howard government. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *38*(2), 169-192. https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1839-4655.2003.tb01141.x
- Birch, E. R., & Preston, A. (2022). The Australian labour market in 2021. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, *64*(3), 327-346.
- Birrell, B. (1993). Ethnic concentrations: The Vietnamese experience. *People and Place*, *1*(3), 26-32. https://doi.org/10.4225/03/590abfb9ba25b
- Blakely, E. J., & Fagan, R. H. (1988). Metropolitan strategy in Sydney: Employment distribution and policy issues. University of California. https://escholarship.org/content/qt72r9s7dx/qt72r9s7dx_noSplash_ab0590f357c924fea96c3a30a5923e07.pdf
- Bloch, A. (2008). Refugees in the UK labour market: The conflict between economic integration and policy-led labour market restriction. *Journal of Social Policy*, *37*(1), 21-36. https://doi.org/10.1017/s004727940700147x
- Bordo, M. D. (1993). The Bretton Woods international monetary system: A historical overview. In M. D. Bordo & B. Eichengreen (Eds.), *A retrospective on the Bretton Woods system: Lessons for international monetary reform* (pp. 3-108). University of Chicago Press.
- Borland, J. (2011). The Australian labour market in the 2000s: The quiet decade. In *The Australian Economy in the 2000s, Proceedings of a Conference, Reserve Bank of Australia, Sydney* (pp. 165-218). Reserve Bank of Australia. https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/confs/2011/pdf/conf-vol-2011.pdf
- Borland, J., & Hunt, J. (2023). JobKeeper: An initial assessment. *Australian Economic Review*, *56*(1), 109-123. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8462.12503
- Borland, J., & Tseng, Y. P. (2011). Does 'Work for the Dole' work?: An Australian perspective on work experience programmes. *Applied Economics*, *43*(28), 4353-4368. https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2010.491457

- Bradbery, P. (2008). Management education for Australian Aborigines: The Murdi Paaki experiment. *International Journal of the Humanities*, *6*(3), 89-98.
- Braga, A. A., Hureau, D. M., & Papachristos, A. V. (2011). An ex post facto evaluation framework for place-based police interventions. *Evaluation Review*, *35*(6), 592-626. https://doi.org/10.1177/0193841x11433827
- Braithwaite, V. (2020). Beyond the bubble that is Robodebt: How governments that lose integrity threaten democracy. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *55*(3), 242-259. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.122
- Brannon, T. N., Higginbotham, G. D., & Henderson, K. (2017). Class advantages and disadvantages are not so Black and White: Intersectionality impacts rank and selves. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, *18*, 117-122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2017.08.029
- Brekke, J. P., Paasche, E., Espegren, A., & Sandvik, K. B. (2021). *Selection criteria in refugee resettlement. Balancing vulnerability and future integration in eight resettlement countries.* The Refugee Hub, University of Ottawa. https://resettlement.plus/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/20210728-Research-Alert-Selection-Criteria-in-Refugee-Resettlement-Expert-Report.pdf
- Brell, C., Dustmann, C., & Preston, I. (2020). The labor market integration of refugee migrants in high-income countries. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *34*(1), 94-121. https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.34.1.94
- Brighouse, H., & Swift, A. (2008). Egalitarianism. In MacMillan Publishers (Ed.), *The New Palgrave dictionary of economics* (pp. 1-7). MacMillan Publishers.
- Broomhill, R. (2008). Australian economic booms in historical perspective. *Journal of Australian Political Economy,* (61), 12-29. https://www.ppesydney.net/content/uploads/2020/05/Australian-Economic-Booms-in-Historical-Perspective.pdf
- Brouwers, E. P. (2020). Social stigma is an underestimated contributing factor to unemployment in people with mental illness or mental health issues: position paper and future directions. *BMC psychology*, *8*(1), 36. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-020-00399-0
- Brown, D. M. (2007). Federal-municipal relations in Australia. In H. Lazar & C. Leuprecht (Eds.), *Spheres of influence: Comparative studies of cities in multilevel governance systems* (pp. 97-124). McGill-Queen's University Press. https://www.queensu.ca/iigr/sites/iirwww/files/uploaded_files/Spheresofgovernance.pdf
- Bryant, G., & Spies-Butcher, B. (2024). From marketisation to self-determination: Contesting state and market through 'justice reinvestment'. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, *56*(1), 216-234. https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X221125797
- Bryant, L. (2016). *Investing in Australian cities: The legacy of the Better Cities Program*. Queensland University of Technology.
- Buchholz, M. (2023). Does urbanization increase inequality? Race, gender, and the urban wage premium. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *47*(6), 1923-1941. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2023.2252538
- Burnley, I. (1999). Levels of immigrant residential concentration in Sydney and their relationship with disadvantage. *Urban studies*, *36*(8), 1295-1315. https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098993006

- Burnley, I. H. (1989). Settlement dimensions of the Vietnam-born population in metropolitan Sydney. *Australian Geographical Studies*, *27*(2), 129-154. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8470.1989.tb00599.x
- Burnley, I. H. (2001). *The impact of immigration on Australia: A demographic approach*. Oxford University Press.
- Bynner, J., & Parsons, S. (2002). Social exclusion and the transition from school to work: The case of young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). *Journal of vocational behavior*, *60*(2), 289-309. https://doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.2001.1868
- Cahill, D., & Konings, M. (2017). *Neoliberalism*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Career Seekers. (n.d.). *About*. https://careerseekers.org.au/about
- Carlin, J. L. (1982). Significant refugee crises since World War II and the response of the international community. *Michigan Journal of International Law*, *3*(1), 3.
- Casarico, A., & Lattanzio, S. (2023). Behind the child penalty: Understanding what contributes to the labour market costs of motherhood. *Journal of Population Economics*, *36*(3), 1489-1511. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-023-00937-1
- Case, A., & Paxson, C. (2006). Children's health and social mobility. *The Future of Children*, *16*(2), 151-173. https://doi.org/10.1353/foc.2006.0014
- Casey, L. S., Reisner, S. L., Findling, M. G., Blendon, R. J., Benson, J. M., Sayde, J. M., & Miller, C. (2019). Discrimination in the United States: Experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer Americans. *Health Services Research*, *54*(Suppl 2), 1454-1466. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6773.13229
- Cheng, Z., Wang, B. Z., & Taksa, L. (2021). Labour force participation and employment of humanitarian migrants: Evidence from the building a new life in Australia longitudinal data. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *168*, 697-720. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04179-8
- Cheng, Z., Wang, B. Z., Jiang, Z., Taksa, L., & Tani, M. (2021). English skills and early labour market integration: Evidence from humanitarian migrants in Australia. *International Migration, 63*(1), e12889. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12889
- Chevalier, A., Harmon, C., O'Sullivan, V., & Walker, I. (2013). The impact of parental income and education on the schooling of their children. *IZA Journal of Labor Economics*, *2*(1), 8. https://doi.org/10.1186/2193-8997-2-8
- Clayton, Y. (2006). *Oral history interview with Yvonne Clayton* [Transcript]. Interviewed by Shirley Kingsford McLeod. Fairfield City Museum & Gallery Collection. heritagecollection.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au
- Clegg, S., & Bailey, J. R. (Eds.). (2007). *International encyclopedia of organization studies*. Sage publications.
- Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2006). Employment niches for recent refugees: Segmented labour market in twenty-first century Australia. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *19*(2), 203-229. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fej016
- Colic-Peisker, V., & Tilbury, F. (2007). *Refugees and employment: The effect of visible difference on discrimination*. Centre for Social and Community Research, Murdoch University. https://researchportal.murdoch.edu.au/esploro/outputs/report/Refugees-and-employment-The-effect-of/99100554540610789 1#file-0

- Collins, J. (1978). Fragmentation of the working class. In E. L. Wheelwright & K. Buckley (Eds.), *Essays in the political economy of Australian capitalism* (Vol. 3, pp. 42–85). Australia and New Zealand Book Co.
- Collins, J. (1988). *Migrant hands in a distant land: Australia's post-war immigration*. Pluto Press Australia.
- Collins, J. (2000). The other Sydney: Cultural and social diversity in Western Sydney. In J. Collins & S. Poynting (Eds.), *The other Sydney: Communities, identities and inequalities in Western Sydney* (pp. 34–62). Common Ground Publishing.
- Collins, J. (2007). Ethnic precincts as contradictory tourist spaces. In M. Rath & S. S. Fainstein (Eds.), *Tourism, ethnic diversity and the city* (pp. 85–104). Routledge.
- Collins, J. (2017a). *Private and community sector initiatives in refugee employment and entrepreneurship*. Lowy Institute.
- Collins, J. (2017b). *From refugee to entrepreneur in Sydney in less than three years: Final evaluation report on the SSI Ignite Small Business Start-ups Program*. UTS Business School.
- Collins, J. (2020). Immigrant entrepreneurship in Sydney: Australia's leading global city. In *Immigrant entrepreneurship in cities: Global perspectives* (pp. 47–65). Springer International Publishing.
- Collins, J., Reid, C., Groutsis, D., Hughes, S., Watson, K., & Kaabel, A. (2023). *Refugee and family futures in Australia: Settlement outcomes of recently arrived refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan.* University of Technology Sydney.
- Collins, J., Reid, C., Groutsis, D., Watson, K., & Ozkul, D. (2018). Syrian and Iraqi refugee settlement in Australia. In *Public Seminar on Responses to Syrian-Conflict Refugee Settlement in Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Sweden, and the UK. Sydney: University of Technology* (Vol. 14). University of Technology Sydney.
- Collins, J., Reid, C., & Groutsis, D. (2025). Spatial and transformative dimensions of recent Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan refugee family settlement in Australia. *Australian Geographer*, *56*(1), 1–18. doi.org.
- Commonwealth. (1977). *HistoricHansard*. https://historichansard.net/hofreps/1977/19770524_reps_30_hor105/#subdebate-29-0
- Commonwealth of Australia. (2023). *Working future: The Australian Government's White Paper on jobs and opportunities*. https://treasury.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-10/p2023-447996-working-future.pdf
- *Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia*. (1900). www.legislation.gov.au
- Cook, B. (2008). *National, regional and local employment policies in Australia*. Centre of Full Employment and Equity, University of Newcastle.
- Cook, B., Mitchell, W., Quirk, V., & Watts, M. (2008). *Creating effective local labour markets: A new framework for regional employment policy.* Centre of Full Employment and Equity report prepared for Jobs Australia.
- Coughlan, J. E. (2008). The changing spatial distribution and concentration of Australia's Chinese and Vietnamese communities: An analysis of 1986–2006 Australian population census data. *Journal of Population Research*, *25*, 161-182. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF03031947

- Cox, D. (1983). Refugee settlement in Australia: Review of an era. *International Migration*, *21*(3), 332-344. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.1983.tb00081.x
- Daly, M. T. (1982). *Sydney boom, Sydney bust: The city and its property market.* George Allen & Unwin.
- Damousi, J. (2013). "We are human beings, and have a past": The "adjustment" of migrants and the Australian assimilation policies of the 1950s. *Australian Journal of Politics & History*, *59*(4), 501-516. https://doi.org/10.1111/ajph.12029
- Daniell, K., & Kay, A. (2018). *Multi-level governance: Conceptual challenges and case studies from Australia*. ANU Press.
- Dau, D., & Ellis, K. (2023). From Bondi to Fairfield: NSW COVID-19 press conferences, health messaging, and social inequality. *Media International Australia*, *188*(1), 34-51. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X221087732
- Davidson, P., Bradbury, B., & Wong, M. (2024). *Inequality in Australia 2024: Who is affected and how*. Australian Council of Social Service and UNSW Sydney
- Davidson-Hunt, I. J., & Michael O'Flaherty, R. (2007). Researchers, indigenous peoples, and place-based learning communities. *Society and Natural Resources*, *20*(4), 291-305. https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920601161312
- Davidson, P. (2022). *A tale of two pandemics: COVID, inequality and poverty in 2020 and 2021*. ACOSS/UNSW Sydney Poverty and Inequality Partnership. http://povertyandinequality.acoss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Build-back-fairer-report-3_FINAL.pdf
- Dawson, J., Augoustinos, M., Sjoberg, D., Canuto, K., Glover, K., & Rumbold, A. (2021). Closing the gap: Examining how the problem of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage is represented in policy. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *56*(4), 522-538. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.125
- De Maio, J., Silbert, M., Jenkinson, R., & Smart, D. (2014). Building a new life in Australia: Introducing the longitudinal study of humanitarian migrants. *Family Matters*, (94), 5-14.
- Delaporte, I., & Piracha, M. (2018). Integration of humanitarian migrants into the host country labour market: Evidence from Australia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *44*(15), 2480-2505. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1429901
- Department of Education. (n.d.). *Connected Beginnings*. Australian Government. Retrieved October 15, 2025, from www.education.gov.au
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2020). *Sydney South West local jobs plan* (Publication 8361). //www.dewr.gov.au/download/8361/sydney-south-west-local-jobs-plan/37740/sydney-south-west-local-jobs-plan/pdf
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. (2022). *Workforce Australia*. https://www.dewr.gov.au/workforce-australia
- Department of Home Affairs. (n.d.). *Working in Australia: Skill occupation list*. Retrieved June 24, 2025, from immi.homeaffairs.gov.au,
- Department of Home Affairs. (2025a). *Australia's humanitarian program 2025-26 (Discussion Paper).* https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/PDFs/2025-26-humanitarian-program-discussion-paper.pdf
- Department of Home Affairs. (2025b). *Visa list*. Retrieved June 30, 2025, from https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing

- Department of Premier and Cabinet. (2020). *A framework for place-based approaches*. Victorian Government. https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-03/Working-%20together-in%20place-Policy%20Framework.pdf
- Department of Social Services. (2022). *Building a new life in Australia (BNLA): The longitudinal study of humanitarian migrants wave 5 Update (Addendum to the Wave 3 Report).*
- Dodson, J., & Sipe, N. (2008). Shocking the suburbs: urban location, homeownership and oil vulnerability in the Australian city. *Housing studies*, *23*(3), 377-401. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030802015619
- Dollery, B., & Wijeweera, A. (2010). An assessment of rate-pegging in New South Wales local government. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, (6), 56-76. https://doi.org/10.5130/cjlg.v0i6.1619
- Dougherty, S., & Forman, K. (2021). *Evaluating fiscal equalisation: Finding the right balance.* OECD Publishing. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/04/evaluating-fiscal-equalisation_4a02edbe/253da2b8-en.pdf
- Dreher, T. (2006). From cobra grubs to dragons: negotiating the politics of representation in cultural research. *Cultural studies review*, *12*(2), 90-106.
- Drew, J., McQuestin, D., & Dollery, B. (2022). Did amalgamation make local government more fit for the future?. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *81*(2), 383-398. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12530
- Due, C., Callaghan, P., Reilly, A., Flavel, J., & Ziersch, A. (2021). Employment for women with refugee and asylum seeker backgrounds in Australia: An overview of workforce participation and available support programmes. *International Migration. 63*(1), e12848. https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12848
- Eccleston, R., & Smith, H. (2015). Fixing funding in the Australian federation: Issues and options for state tax reform. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *74*(4), 435-447. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12176
- Eckersley, P. (2017). A new framework for understanding subnational policy-making and local choice. *Policy Studies*, *38*(1), 76-90. https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2016.1188910
- Edmund Rice Centre. (2022). *Settlement cities: A place-based study of Australia's major centres for refugee resettlement*. Australian Catholic University.
- Edwards, B., Gray, M., Wise, S., Hayes, A., Katz, I., Muir, K., & Patulny, R. (2011). Early impacts of Communities for Children on children and families: Findings from a quasi-experimental cohort study. *J Epidemiol Community Health*, *65*(10), 909-914. https://doi.org/10.1136/jech.2010.118133
- Edwards, B., Mullan, K., Katz, I., & Higgins, D. (2014). *The stronger families in Australia (SFIA) study: Phase 2*. Australian Institute of Family Studies.
- Elias, A., & Paradies, Y. (2021). The costs of institutional racism and its ethical implications for healthcare. *Journal of Bioethical Inquiry*, *18*(1), 45-58. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11673-020-10073-0
- Empowered Communities. (n.d.). *Homepage*. https://empoweredcommunities.org.au/

- Engels, F. (2009). *The condition of the working class in England*. Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1844)
- Ennis, G., & Tofa, M. (2020). Collective impact: A review of the peer-reviewed research. *Australian Social Work*, *73*(1), 32-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2019.1602662
- Ervin, J. L., Milner, A., Kavanagh, A. M., & King, T. L. (2021). The double burden of poverty and marital loss on the mental health of older Australian women; a longitudinal regression analysis using 17 annual waves of the HILDA cohort. *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*, *56*(6), 1059-1068. https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-020-02019-z
- Fagan, B., & Dowling, R. (2005). Neoliberalism and suburban employment: Western Sydney in the 1990s. *Geographical Research*, *43*(1), 71-81. https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1745-5871.2005.00298.X
- Fagan, B. (1986). Industrial restructuring and the metropolitan fringe: Growth and disadvantage in western Sydney. *Australian Planner*, *24*(1), 11-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.1986.9657290
- Fagan, B. (1993). Western Sydney as outer suburbia: Marginalisation in practice. In R. Howitt (Ed.), *Theory and practice* (pp. 11-28). https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Richie-Howitt/publication/235222046_Marginalisation_in_Theory_and_Practice/links/568b042e08ae1975839dbfbb/Marginalisation-in-Theory-and-Practice.pdf
- Fairfield City Council. (n.d.-a). *Fairfield Multicultural Interagency*. https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/Community/Our-People/Multicultural-Community/Fairfield-Multicultural-Interagency
- Fairfield City Council. (n.d.-b). *Community directory*. Data Diction Pty Ltd. https://www.datadiction.com.au/bin/dd.dll/Lincs?xps3&mbr=FFLD&mode=8&g=3364&k=1207_17&a=11&_bc=%26amp;a%3d11%26amp;k%3d17
- Fairfield City Council. (2022). *2021-2022 strategy on ageing*. https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/documents/community/2021-2022-strategy-on-ageing.pdf
- Fairfield City Council. (2023). *2023-2026 Reconciliation Action Plan*. www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au
- Fairfield City Council. (2024). *State of our city report: Reporting on the Fairfield City Plan 2022-2032.* https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/files/assets/public/v/1/documents/community/grants/2022-2032-fairfield-city-plan.pdf
- Fairfield City Council. (n.d.). *The spirit of Bonnyrigg walk*. https://www.fairfieldcity.nsw.gov.au/Business/Town-Centres/Bonnyrigg/The-Spirit-of-Bonnyrigg-Walk
- Farid Uddin, K., & Piracha, A. (2023). Neoliberalism, power, and right to the city and the urban divide in Sydney, Australia. *Social Sciences*, *12*(2), 83. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12020083
- Feldman, A. M. (2018). Welfare economics. In Palgrave Macmillan (Ed.), *The new Palgrave dictionary of economics* (pp. 14536-14549). Palgrave Macmillan.

- Fenna, A. (2021). Australian federalism and the COVID-19 crisis. In R. Chattopadhyay, F. Knüpling, D. Chebenova, L. Whittington, & P. Gonzalez (Eds.), *Federalism and the response to COVID-19* (pp. 17-29). Routledge India.
- Fenwick, T. (2023). Borrowing to compete or survive a pandemic? - New directions in Australian fiscal federalism. *Cuadernos Manuel Giménez Abad, 9,* 33-53. https://doi.org/10.47919/FMGA.CM23.0112
- FitzGerald, D. S., & Hirsch, A. (2023). Norm-busting: Rightist challenges in US and Australian immigration and refugee policies. In K. Nattar & H. Thiolett (Eds.), *Migration politics across the world* (pp. 73-92). Routledge.
- Fitzgerald, S. (1987). *Rising damp: Sydney, 1870-90*. Oxford University Press.
- Foley, M., & Cooper, R. (2021). Workplace gender equality in the post-pandemic era: Where to next?. *Journal of Industrial Relations*, *63*(4), 463-476. https://doi.org/10.1177/00221856211035173
- Fox, P. D. (2010). International asylum and boat people: The Tampa Affair and Australia's Pacific solution. *Maryland Journal of International Law, 25*(1), Art. 17. https://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1529&context=mjil
- Fasani, F., Frattini, T., & Minale, L. (2020). (The Struggle for) Refugee integration into the labour market: evidence from Europe. *Journal of Economic Geography*, *22*(2), 351-393.
- Fujita, N. (2007). Myrdal's theory of cumulative causation. *Evolutionary and Institutional Economics Review*, *3*, 275-284. https://doi.org/10.14441/eier.3.275
- Galbraith, J. K. (1998). *The affluent society*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. (Original work published 1958)
- Gapps, S. (2008), *Fairfield: Evolution of a migrant city.* Fairfield City Museum & Gallery, Smithfield.
- Gapps, S. (2010). *Cabrogal to Fairfield city: A history of a multicultural community*. Fairfield City Council.
- Geatches, L., Preston, C., & Putnis, A. (2023), *Where are we? Place-based approaches to tackling community challenges in Australia*. Paul Ramsay Foundation.
- Glavac, S. M., & Waldorf, B. (1998). Segregation and residential mobility of Vietnamese immigrants in Brisbane, Australia. *The Professional Geographer*, *50*(3), 344-357. https://doi.org/10.1111/0033-0124.00125
- Gleeson, B. (2013). 'A challenging task': Political economy in/of the urban age. In S. K. Schroeder & L. Chester (Eds.), *Challenging the orthodoxy: Reflections on Frank Stilwell's contribution to political economy* (pp. 203-220). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Goldin, C. (2016). Human capital. In C. Diebolt & M. Haupert (Eds.), *Handbook of cliometrics* (pp. 55-86). Springer Verlag.
- Gonski, D., Boston, K., Greiner, K., Lawrence, C., Scales, B., & Tannock, P. (2012). *Review of funding for schooling: Final report.* Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Goodall, H., & Cadzow, A. (2009). *Rivers and resilience: Aboriginal people on Sydney's Georges River*. UNSW Press.

- Gooding, A. (2012). *A comparative analysis of regional organisations of councils in NSW and Western Australia.* Australian Centre of Excellence for Local Government.
- Google. (n.d.). [*Map of Fairfield, NSW*, including satellite view]. Retrieved November 10, 2024, from www.google.com ansl?entry=ttu&g_ep=EgoyMDI1MTIwOS4wIKXMDSoKLDEwMDc5MjA2OUgBUAM%3D
- Goudeau, S., & Croizet, J. C. (2017). Hidden advantages and disadvantages of social class: How classroom settings reproduce social inequality by staging unfair comparison. *Psychological science*, *28*(2), 162-170. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797616676600
- Gow, G. (2005). Rubbing shoulders in the global city: Refugees, citizenship and multicultural alliances in Fairfield, Sydney. *Ethnicities*, *5*(3), 386–405. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796805054962
- Gow, G., Isaac, A., Gorgees, P., Babakhan, M., & Daawod, K. (2005). *Assyrian community capacity building in Fairfield city.* The Centre for Cultural Research, University of Western Sydney.
- Grant, B., & Drew, J. (2017). *Local government in Australia*. Springer.
- Grimshaw, D., Fagan, C., Hebson, G., & Tavora, I. (Eds.). (2017). A new labour market segmentation approach for analysing inequalities: Introduction and overview. In *Making work more equal:* A new labour market segmentation approach (pp. 1-32). Manchester University Press.
- Groenewegen, P. (2008). Division of labour. In Palgrave MacMillan (Ed.), *The new Palgrave dictionary of economics* (pp. 1413–1422). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Hainmueller, J., Hangartner, D., & Lawrence, D. (2016). When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees. *Science Advances*, *2*(8), e1600432. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1600432
- Hanish, S. (2008). The Chaldean Assyrian Syriac people of Iraq: An ethnic identity problem. *Digest of Middle East Studies*, *17*(1), 32-48. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1949-3606.2008.tb00145.x?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle
- Hanson, G. H., Rodrik, D., & Sandhu, R. (2025). *The us place-based policy supply chain* (No. w33511). National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Harris, P. (2001). From relief to mutual obligation: Welfare rationalities and unemployment in 20th-century Australia. *Journal of Sociology*, *37*(1), 5-26. https://doi.org/10.1177/144078301128756175
- Harris, P., Fisher, M., Friel, S., Sainsbury, P., Harris, E., De Leeuw, E., & Baum, F. (2022). City deals and health equity in Sydney, Australia. *Health & Place*, *73*, 102711. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2021.102711
- Hart, A., & Connolly, J. (2022). Commonwealth place-based policies for addressing geographically concentrated disadvantage: A typology and critical analysis. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *81*(1), 145-162. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12498

- Haveman, R., Blank, R., Moffitt, R., Smeeding, T., & Wallace, G. (2015). The war on poverty: Measurement, trends, and policy. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *34*(3), 593-638. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.21846
- Hawthorne, L. (2005). "Picking winners": The recent transformation of Australia's skilled migration policy. *International Migration Review*, *39*(3), 663-696. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2005.tb00284.x
- Haysom, L. (2024). Justice reinvestment—Local solutions for young people in contact with the criminal justice system, but should more be done?. *Australian Journal of Social Issues, 59*(3), 773-782. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.318
- Henderson, R. (1974). *Poverty in Australia: Interim report*. Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, Australian Government Publishing Service. https://ssrn.com/abstract=3172564
- Henderson, R. (1975). Poverty in Australia: First main report, April 1975. Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Henderson, R., Harcourt A., & Harper R. J. A. (1970). *People in poverty: A Melbourne survey*. Cheshire for the Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research.
- Henley & Partners. (2024). *World's wealthiest cities report 2024.* https://www.henleyglobal.com/publications/wealthiest-cities-2024
- Henry, K., Harmer, J., Piggott, J., Ridout, H., & Smith, G. (2010). *Australia's future tax system review, final report*. Commonwealth of Australia.
- Hick, R., & Burchardt, T. (2016). Capability deprivation. In Brady, D., & Burton, L. M. (Eds.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Social Sciences of Poverty* (pp.75-92), Oxford University Press.
- Hildreth, P., & Bailey, D. (2014). Place-based economic development strategy in England: Filling the missing space. *Local Economy*, *29*(4-5), 363-377. https://doi.org/10.13140/2.1.4602.9448
- Himmelweit, S. (2017). Feminist economics: Why all economists should be feminist economists. In *Rethinking economics* (pp. 60-75). Routledge.
- Hinsliff, J. (2007). *Integration or exclusion?: the resettlement experiences of refugees in Australia* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Adelaide]. https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/5fd7f2a9-6a8f-4f0c-b2ca-b9c44fedcf91/content
- Ho, P. S. W. (2004). Myrdal's backwash and spread effects in classical economics: Implications for multilateral trade negotiations. *Journal of Economic Issues*, *38*(2), 537-544. https://doi.org/10.1080/00213624.2004.11506715
- Holbrook, C. (2020). Redesigning collaborative governance for refugee settlement services. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *55*(1), 86-97. https://doi.org/10.1080/10361146.2019.1686116
- Homel, R. (2014). Justice reinvestment as a global phenomenon. *Victims & Offenders*, *9*(1), 6-12. https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2013.860937
- Horne, D. (2008) *The lucky country.* Penguin Books. (Original work published 1964)
- Horridge, M. (1988). Tariffs in Australia: Theory, history and effects. *Australian Economic Review*, *21*(2), 61-73. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8462.1988.tb00543.x

- Howard, J. (2001). *Address at the launch of 'A Stronger Tasmania Policy'* [Speech]. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. https://pmtranscripts.pmc.gov.au/release/transcript-12332
- Hu, R. (2020). Australia's national urban policy: The smart cities agenda in perspective. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, *55*(2), 201-217. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajs4.104
- Hugo, G. (1990). Adaptation of Vietnamese in Australia: An assessment based on 1986 census results. *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, *18*(1). 182-210.
- Hunt, J. (2007). The Whole-of-Government experiment in Indigenous affairs: A question of governance capacity. *Public Policy*, *2*(2), 155-174. https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/server/api/core/bitstreams/b49b811a-e70f-457a-995a-a6995516e7ee/content
- Hunter, B. (2007). Cumulative causation and the productivity commission's framework for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, *10*(3), 185-202.
- Inside Policy. (2023). *Connected Beginnings mid-term evaluation: Final report*. Australian Government Department of Education; Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. https://www.education.gov.au/early-childhood/resources/evaluation-connected-beginnings-midterm-report-2023
- Itaoui, R., Smith, A., & Huppatz, K. E. (2024). Unlocking women's potential: Labour force participation in Western Sydney. Center for Western Sydney. https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/content/dam/digital/images/centre-for-western-sydney/IWD_2024.pdf
- Jarvie, W. (2008). Working differently to make a difference to Indigenous communities. *Public Administration Today*, (14), 5-13.
- Jarvie, W., & Stewart, J. (2011). Working with complexity: Community engagement and the Murdi Paaki COAG Trial 2002–2007. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *70*(3), 259-274. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8500.2011.00734.x
- Jarvie, W., & Stewart, J. (2017). Multi-level governance in Aboriginal community development: Structures, processes and skills for working across boundaries. In K. A. Daniell & A. Kay (Eds.), *Multi-level governance: Conceptual challenges and case studies from Australia* (pp. 211-230). The Australia and New Zealand School of Government. https://doi.org/10.22459/MG.11.2017.09
- Jenkins, S. (1945). Australia plans full employment. *Far Eastern Survey*, *14*(17), 240-242.
- Jiang, S., Qi, L., & Lin, X. (2022). The impacts of COVID-19 shock on intergenerational income mobility: Evidence from China. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, *19*(18), 11546.
- Johnson, D. (1987). The calculation and use of poverty lines in Australia. *Australian Economic Review*, *20*(4), 45-55. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8462.1987.tb00677.x
- Johnston, E. (1991). *Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody: National Report Volume 1.* Government of Australia.
- Jordan, K., & Stilwell, F. (2004). The political economy of land: Putting Henry George in his place. *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, (54), 119–134.

- Jupp, J. (2003). Refugees and asylum seekers as victims: The Australian case. *International Review of Victimology*, *10*(2), 157-175. https://doi.org/10.1177/026975800301000204
- Kelly, A. H., Dollery, B., & Grant, B. (2009). Regional development and local government: Three generations of federal intervention. *Australasian Journal of Regional Studies*, *15*(2), 171-193.
- Kelly, P. (1992). *The end of certainty: The story of the 1980s*. Allen & Unwin: Sydney.
- Kemeny, J. (1978). Home ownership and finance capital. *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, (3), 89-97.
- Kendig, H. (1979). *New life for old suburbs: post-war land use and housing in the Australian inner city*. George Allen & Unwin Australia.
- KEO Films Australia. (2015–2019). *Struggle Street* [TV series]. SBS.
- Kheng, V., Mckinley, J., & Pan, L. (2024). The decline of labour share in OECD and non-OECD since the 1980s. *Applied Economics*, *56*(16), 1899-1915. https://doi.org/10.1080/00036846.2023.2177604
- Kilian, L. (2009). *Oil price shocks, monetary policy and stagflation*. CEPR Discussion Paper No. 7324. https://www.rba.gov.au/publications/confs/2009/pdf/kilian.pdf
- Klein, E. (2015). *Empowered communities: Review of the empowered communities design report*. Australian Policy Online.
- Klepac, B., Mowle, A., Riley, T., & Craike, M. (2023). Government, governance, and place-based approaches: Lessons from and for public policy. *Health Research Policy and Systems*, *21*(1), 126. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12961-023-01074-7
- Kolandai-Matchett, K., Bellringer, M., Landon, J., & Abbott, M. (2018). A process evaluation of the 'Aware'and 'Supportive Communities' gambling harm-minimisation programmes in New Zealand. *The European Journal of Public Health*, *28*(2), 369-376. doi:10.1093/eurpub/ckx120
- Koleth, E. (2015). Multiculturalism at the margins of global Sydney: Cacophonous diversity in Fairfield, Australia. In S. Castles, D. Ozkul, & M. A. Cubis (Eds.), *Social transformation and migration: National and local experiences in South Korea, Turkey, Mexico and Australia* (pp. 237-254). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Kong, J., Zhao, Y., Strebel, D., Gao, K., Carmeliet, J., & Lei, C. (2023). Understanding the impact of heatwave on urban heat in greater Sydney: Temporal surface energy budget change with land types. *Science of The Total Environment*, *903*, 166374. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scitotenv.2023.166374
- Koutsogeorgopoulou, V., & Tuske, A. (2015). *Federal-state relations in Australia.* OECD Economics Department Working Papers No. 1198. https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2015/03/federal-state-relations-in-australia_g17a261b/5js4h5mx7bg0-en.pdf
- KPMG. (2018). *Maranguka justice reinvestment project: Impact assessment 2018*. Just Reinvest NSW.
- Krahn, H., Derwing, T., Mulder, M., & Wilkinson, L. (2000). Educated and underemployed: Refugee integration into the Canadian labour market. *Journal of International Migration and Integration/Revue de l'integration et de la migration internationale*, *1*, 59-84. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-000-1008-2

- Lane, W., Sacco, P., Downton, K., Ludeman, E., Levy, L., & Tracy, J. K. (2016). Child maltreatment and problem gambling: A systematic review. *Child abuse & neglect*, *58*, 24-38. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2016.06.003
- Lata, L. N., Reddel, T., Head, B. W., & Craven, L. (2024). Advancing collaborative social outcomes through place-based solutions—aligning policy and funding systems. *Policy and Society*. https://doi.org/10.1093/polsoc/puae018
- Lawton, W. (2020). 'Struggle street': Re-staging the private for public consumption. *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*, *26*(1), 40-52.
- Le, D. (2022). *Dai Le MP's first speech in Parliament*. Dai Le. https://daile.com.au/dai-le-mps-first-speech-in-parliament/
- Leigh, A. (2025). *Interview with Ellen Fanning, Brisbane Drive, ABC Radio* [Radio program transcript]. Australian Government, Treasury. https://ministers.treasury.gov.au/ministers/andrew-leigh-2025/transcripts/interview-ellen-fanning-brisbane-drive-abc-radio
- Leontaridi, M. (1998). Segmented labour markets: theory and evidence. *Journal of Economic Surveys*, *12*(1), 103-109. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-6419.00048
- Logan Together. (2017). *Annual report.* https://www.logantogether.org.au/_files/ugd/494bc3_b4d3f89eac2d4d95bd666048b2edbba1.pdf
- Logan Together. (2019). *Outcomes data – Mapping the contribution of Logan Together*. https://www.logantogether.org.au/resources.
- Logan Together. (2024). *Statistics card on the state of Logan's children and young people.* https://ceb01032-9be4-4b1e-908d-72018e9c2c0b.filesusr.com/ugd/f0f1eb_ad152fbcf1744432b8e31be353b58850.pdf
- Low, F. (1845). *The city of Sydney directory for 1844-45.* Reprint by Library of Australian History, Sydney, 1978.
- Ludwig, J. (2010). Improving the life chances of disadvantaged children. *NBER Reporter Online*, (3), 6-8. https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/61952/1/688559751.pdf
- Lupton, R., & Power, A. (2004). *The growth and decline of cities and regions*. CASE Brookings census briefs, 1. Centre for the Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics and Political Science.
- Lutz, P., & Portmann, L. (2022). Why do states admit refugees? A comparative analysis of resettlement policies in OECD countries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *48*(11), 2515-2539. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1999222
- Macintyre, S. (2018). Owners and tenants: The Commonwealth Housing Commission and Post-War Housing, 1943–1949. *Australian Economic History Review*, *58*(3), 265-282. https://doi.org/10.1111/aehr.12160
- Mamaril, M. N., Cox, L. J., & Vaughan, M. (2018). Weaving evaluation into the Waipā ecosystem: Placing evaluation in an indigenous place-based educational program. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, *56*, 42-51. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.stueduc.2017.10.005

- Maranguka. (2022). *Maranguka limited: Strategic plan 2023-2025.* https://www.justreinvest.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Maranguka-Strategic-Plan-2023-25.pdf
- Marginson, S., (2019). Limitations of human capital theory. *Studies in Higher Education*, *44*(2), 287-301.
- Marks, A., Itaoui, R., & Bergan, T. L. (2022). *Untapped talent: Western Sydney's remarkable but inequitable labour market.* Western Sydney University.
- Marks, G. (1993). Structural policy and multilevel governance in the EC. In A. W. Cafruny & G. G. Rosenthal (Eds.), *The state of the European community* (pp. 391-409). Lynne Reinner.
- Marmot, M. (2002). The influence of income on health: Views of an epidemiologist. *Health Affairs*, *21*(2), 31-46. https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.21.2.31
- Marsh, F., & Stilwell, F. (2023). Housing affordability, inequality and the asset economy: A study of Queensland regions. *The Journal of Australian Political Economy*, (91), 83–106.
- McAdam, J., & Purcell, K. (2008). Refugee protection in the Howard years: Obstructing the right to seek asylum. *Australian Year Book of International Law*, *27*, 87-113. https://doi.org/10.1163/26660229-027-01-900000007
- McCann, P. (2019). *UK research and innovation: A place-based shift*. University of Sheffield.
- McCoy, D. (1996). *From hostel to home: Immigration, resettlement and community, the ethnic-Vietnamese in Australia, 1975-1995* [Doctoral dissertation, UNSW Sydney]. https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/5417
- McCrae, S. (1972). *Can't you think of something except 'it's sink or swim'?* [Political cartoon]. The Courier-Mail. https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-145832435
- McLachlan, R., Gilfillan, G., & Gordon, J. (2013). *Deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia*. Productivity Commission.
- McLoughlin, J. B. (1992). *Shaping Melbourne's future?: Town planning, the state and civil society*. CUP Archive.
- McNabb, R., & Ryan, P. (1989). Segmented labour markets. In D. Sapsford & Z. Tzannatos (Eds.), *Current issues in labour economics* (pp. 151-176). Springer.
- Ministry of Housing and Urban Development. (2022). *Our place-based approach*. New Zealand Government. https://www.hud.govt.nz/our-focus/our-place-based-approach
- Ministry of Social Development. (2020). *Place-based initiatives: Evaluation findings and long-term funding* [Cabinet paper]. New Zealand Government. https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/2020/place-based-initiatives-evaluation-findings-and-long-term-funding.html
- Minns, J., Bradley, K., & Chagas-Bastos, F. H. (2018). Australia's refugee policy: Not a model for the world. *International Studies*, *55*(1), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1177/0020881717746797
- Molla, T. (2021). Refugees and equity policy in Australian higher education. *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, *5*(1), 5-27. https://doi.org/10.1080/23322969.2020.1806727

- Moretti, E. (2024). Place-based policies and geographical inequalities. *Oxford Open Economics*, *3*(Supplement_1), 625-633.
- Morgan Disney & Associates. (2006). *Synopsis review of the COAG trial evaluations*. https://formerministers.dss.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/COAGsynopsisreport_220207.pdf
- Morris, A. (2023). Housing and inequality in Australia. *The economic and labour relations review*, *34*(1), 86-103.
- Morrison, N., Cmielewski, C., O'Mara, A., O'Neill, P., Pfautsch, S., & Power, E. R. (2022). *Wicked urban challenges in Western Sydney: Researchers respond.* Western Sydney University.
- Morton, A. D. (2013). *Revolution and state in modern Mexico: The political economy of uneven development*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC.
- Murphy, H. B. M. (1952). The assimilation of refugee immigrants in Australia. *Population Studies*, *5*(3), 179-206.
- Musgrave, R. A. (1959). *The theory of public finance: A study in public economy*. McGraw Hill Book
- Myrdal, G. (1957). *Economic theory and under-developed regions*. Methuen.
- Neilson, L. (2008). The 'Building Better Cities' program 1991-96: A nation-building initiative of the Commonwealth Government. In J. Butcher (Ed.), *Australia under construction: Nation building past present and future* (pp. 83-117). Australia and New Zealand School of Government.
- Nel, E., Connelly, S., & Stevenson, T. (2019). New Zealand's small town transition: The experience of demographic and economic change and place based responses. *New Zealand Geographer*, *75*(3), 163-176. https://doi.org/10.1111/nzg.12240
- Neumann, K., Gifford, S.M., Lems, A., & Scherr, S. (2014). Refugee settlement in Australia: Policy, scholarship and the production of knowledge, 1952–2013. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *35*(1), 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2013.864629
- Nevile, J. (2018). Learning from full employment history: The 1945 Australian White Paper in practice. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, *29*(4), 446-458. https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304618810973
- Nguyen, N. H. C. (2019). Years of separation: Vietnamese refugees and the experience of forced migration after 1975. In K. Darian-Smith & P. Hamilton (Eds.), *Remembering migration: Oral histories and heritage in Australia* (pp. 123-139). Springer.
- NSW Government. (2013). Recovering bushland on the Cumberland Plain. https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/CumberlandPlainManagementGuidelines.htm
- NSW Government. (2020). *Review of Federal Financial Relations final report.* https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2021-04/apo-nid312935.pdf
- NSW Government. (2022). *Submission to A Migration System for Australia's Future.* https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/migration-system-aust-future-submissions/m-r/NSW_Government.pdf

- NSW Government. (2024). *NSW budget 2024-25 'Our plan for Western Sydney'*. https://www.budget.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-06/NSW-Budget-2024-25-Western-Sydney-glossy-accessible.pdf
- NSW Health. (2020). *Particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5)*. https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/environment/air/Pages/particulate-matter.aspx
- Nurkse, R. (1952). Some international aspects of the problem of economic development. *The American Economic Review*, *42*(2), 571-583.
- Nussbaum, M. (2006). Poverty and human functioning: Capabilities as fundamental entitlements. In *Poverty and inequality* (pp. 47-75). Stanford University Press.
- O'Bryan, M. M., & Markham, F. (2023). *OCHRE local decision making stage 2 evaluation: Murdi Paaki regional assembly evaluation report.* Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.
- O'Donnell, A. (2003). Inventing unemployment: Labour market regulation and the establishment of the Commonwealth Employment Service. *Federal Law Review*, *31*(2), 343-372. https://doi.org/10.22145/flr.31.2.3
- O'Neill, P. (2020a). *Where are the jobs? Part 1: Western Sydney's short-lived jobs*. Boom.
- O'Neill, P. (2020b). *Where are the jobs? Part 3: Western Sydney workers in 2036*. https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws/policy
- Oates, W. E. (2005). Toward a second-generation theory of fiscal federalism. *International Tax and Public Finance*, *12*, 349-373. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10797-005-1619-9
- Obeng-Odoom, F. (2016). *Reconstructing urban economics: Towards a political economy of the built environment*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Obeng-Odoom, F. (2022). *Global migration beyond limits: Ecology, economics, and political economy*. Oxford University Press.
- Obeng-Odoom, F. (2023). Urban economics in the Global South: A study of The Economist. *Urbani Izziv*, *34*(1), 107–118. doi.org
- Obeng-Odoom, F. (2025). Property and power. *Journal of Economic Issues*, *59*(3), 980–985.
- OECD. (2024). *Fiscal decentralisation database*. https://www.oecd.org/en/data/datasets/oecd-fiscal-decentralisation-database.html
- Office of Local Government. (n.d.). *Compare councils: Finances* [Data visualization]. NSW Government. Retrieved December 5, 2025, from www.yourcouncil.nsw.gov.au Office of Local Government. (2024, August). *2024–25 financial assistance grants: Recommendations schedule*. https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024-25-Financial-Assistance-Grants-Recommendations-Schedule.pdf
- Office of Local Government. (2023). *Your Council* [Dataset]. NSW Government. nsw.gov.au
- Orchard, L. (1999). Shifting visions in national urban and regional policy 2: The Whitlam Program, the Backlash and the Keating Revival. *Australian Planner*, *36*(4), 200-209. https://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.1999.9665761

- Ott, E. (2013). *The labour market integration of resettled refugees.* UNHCR Evaluation Report, 6. https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/5273a9e89.pdf
- Papademetriou, D. G., Somerville, W., & Sumption, M. (2009). *The social mobility of immigrants and their children.* Migration Policy Institute.
- Parkinson, M., Howe, J., & Azarias, J. (2023). *Review of the migration system*. Australian Government. https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/review-migration-system-final-report.pdf
- Perales, F., Lee, R., Forrest, W., Todd, A., & Baxter, J. (2023). Employment prospects of humanitarian migrants in Australia: Does gender inequality in the origin country matter? *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *21*(3), 382-396. https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.1984622?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle
- Phillips, B., & Narayanan, V. (2021). *Financial stress and social security settings in Australia*. ANU Centre for Social Research and Methods.
- Phillips, J. (2015). *Australia's humanitarian program: A quick guide to the statistics since 1947*. Parliamentary library.
- Phillips, J., Webster, R., & Joseph, C. (2025). *A fairer tax and welfare system for Australia*. Australian National University. https://polis.cass.anu.edu.au/files/docs/2025/6/ANU_-_A_FAIRER_TAX_AND_WELFARE_SYSTEM.pdf
- Platt, L. (2005). The intergenerational social mobility of minority ethnic groups. *Sociology, 39*(3), 445-461. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038505052494
- Portes, A., Fernandez-Kelly, P., & Haller, W. (2005). Segmented assimilation on the ground: The new second generation in early adulthood. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *28*(6), 1000-1040. https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870500224117
- Power, J., Wettenhall, R., & Halligan, J. (Eds.). (1981). *Local government systems of Australia*. AGPS.
- Price, C.A. (1986). Refugees and mass migration: Australia. *International Migration Review*, *20*(1), 81-86.
- Productivity Commission. (2016). *Migrant intake into Australia: Inquiry report.* https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/migrant-intake/report/
- Productivity Commission. (2018). *Horizontal fiscal equalisation, Report no. 88*. https://assets.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/horizontal-fiscal-equalisation/report/horizontal-fiscal-equalisation.pdf
- Pusey, M. (1991). *Economic rationalism in Canberra: A nation-building state changes its mind*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pusey, M. (2018). Economic rationalism in Canberra 25 years on?. *Journal of Sociology*, *54*(1), 12-17. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783318759086
- Quang Dao, M. (2008). Human capital, poverty, and income distribution in developing countries. *Journal of Economic Studies*, *35*(4), 294-303. https://doi.org/10.1108/01443580810895590?urlappend=%3Futm_source%3Dresearchgate.net%26utm_medium%3Darticle
- Qureshi, Z. (2023). *Rising inequality: A major issue of our time*. Brookings Institution.

- Randolph, B., & Holloway, D. (2005). *A social profile of households in higher density housing in Fairfield* (No. City Futures Project Reports: Report based on research commissioned by Fairfield City Council). City Futures Research Centre.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Belknap Press.
- Regan, S., & Stanton, D. (2019). The Henderson Poverty inquiry in context. In P. Saunders (Ed.), *Revisiting Henderson: Poverty, social security and basic income* (pp. 49-61). Melbourne University Publishing.
- Reimer, B., & Markey, S. (2008). *Place-based policy: A rural perspective*. Community Research Connexions.
- Ricci, A. (2019). Unequal exchange in the age of globalization. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, *51*(2), 225-245. https://doi.org/10.1177/0486613418773753
- Rodríguez-Pose, A., & Wilkie, C. (2017). Revamping local and regional development through place-based strategies. *Cityscape*, *19*(1), 151-170. https://www.penniur.upenn.edu/uploads/media/Rodriguez-Pose_-_Wilkie_PennIUR-Philly_Fed_working_paper_091616.pdf
- Rogers, P., Humble, R., Helman, Z., Funnell, S., Scougall, J., Hassall, K., Tyler, P., Elsworth, G., Kimberley, S., &Stevens, K. (2008). *Evaluation of the stronger families and communities strategy 2000-2004.* RMIT University. https://doi.org/10.25439/rmt.27345411
- Rosenberg, N. (1965). Adam Smith on the division of labour: two views or one?. *Economica*, *32*(126), 127-139.
- Royle, C. (2021). Introduction: Friedrich engels and geography. *Human Geography*, *14*(2), 165-172. https://doi.org/10.1177/19427786211024211
- Ruiz, I., & Vargas-Silva, C. (2017). Are refugees' labour market outcomes different from those of other migrants? Evidence from the United Kingdom in the 2005–2007 period. *Population, Space and Place*, *23*(6), p.e2049. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2049
- Ruming, K., Tice, A., & Freestone, R. (2010). Commonwealth Urban Policy in Australia: The case of inner urban regeneration in Sydney, 1973–75. *Australian Geographer*, *41*(4), 447-467. https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2010.519694
- Ryan, M. D. (2024). 'A great many of them die': Sugar, race and cheapness in colonial Queensland. *Journal of Agrarian Change*, *24*(2), p.e12574. https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12574
- Sabol, W. J., & Baumann, M. L. (2020). Justice reinvestment: Vision and practice. *Annual Review of Criminology*, *3*(1), 317-339. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-011419-041407
- Sainsbury, T., & Breunig, R. (2020). The urgent need for Tax Reform in Australia in the COVID-19 World. *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, *23*(2), 211-230.
- Sandercock, L. (1975). *Cities for sale: property, politics and urban planning in Australia*. Melbourne University Press.
- Sandercock, L., & Berry, M. (1983). *Urban political economy: The Australian case*. Allen & Unwin.
- Saunders, C., & Foster, M. (2013). The Australian Federation: A story of the centralization of power. In *Federalism and legal unification: A comparative empirical investigation of twenty systems* (pp. 87-102). Springer Netherlands.

- Sayer, A. (2000). Moral economy and political economy. *Studies in Political Economy*, *61*(1), 79-103. https://doi.org/10.1080/19187033.2000.11675254
- Schakel, A. H., Hooghe, L., & Marks, G. (2015). Multilevel governance and the state. In S. Leibfriend, E. Huber, M. Lange, J. D. Levy & J. D. Stephens (Ends), *The Oxford handbook of transformations of the state* (pp. 269-285). Oxford University Press.
- Schroeder, S. K., & Chester, L. (Eds.). (2013). *Challenging the orthodoxy: Reflections on Frank Stilwell's Contribution to Political Economy*. Springer Science & Business Media.
- Seltzer, A. (2015). Labour, skills and migration. In S. Ville & G Withers (Eds.), *The Cambridge economic history of Australia* (pp. 178-201). Cambridge University Press.
- Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence. (1982). *Indochinese refugee resettlement: Australia's involvement* (Parliamentary paper no. 364/1981). Australian Government Publishing Service. https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Completed_inquiries/pre1996/refugee_resettlement/index
- Sen, A. (2008). Egalitarianism. In M. Vernengo, E. Perez Caldentey, & J. Ghosh (Eds.), *The new Palgrave dictionary of economics* (pp. 7176-7182). Palgrave MacMillan.
- Sen, A. (1979). *Equality of what? The Tanner Lecture on human values*. Stanford University.
- Sen, A. (2008). The idea of justice. *Journal of Human Development*, *9*(3), 331-342.
- Seo, H. (2021). 'Dual' labour market? Patterns of segmentation in European labour markets and the varieties of precariousness. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research*, *27*(4), 485-503. https://doi.org/10.1177/10242589211061070
- Services Australia. (2025). *Who can get JobSeeker Payment*. Australian Government. https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/who-can-get-jobseeker-payment?context=51411
- Service NSW. (n.d.). *Book a multicultural youth linker appointment*. NSW Government. Retrieved June 21, 2025, from https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/book-a-multicultural-youth-linker-appointment
- SGS Economics and Planning. (2024). *Rental affordability index.* https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:AP:91e847dc-1687-4425-9c2d-ebaf0193cc96?viewer%21megaVerb=group-discover
- Sharples, R. (2021). Disrupting state spaces: Asylum seekers in Australia's offshore detention centres. *Social Sciences*, *10*(3), 82. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10030082
- Silove, D., Ventevogel, P., & Rees, S. (2017). The contemporary refugee crisis: an overview of mental health challenges. *World Psychiatry*, *16*(2), 130-139. https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.20438
- Smith Family (2022). *Families and communities program, Communities for Children facilitating partner community strategic plan*.

https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/-/media/files/programs/communities-for-children/fairfield-cfc-community-strategic-plan.pdf
- Smith, A. (2003). *The wealth of nations*. Bantam Classics. (Original work published 1776)
- Smith, G. (2010). Australian tax reforms: Past and future. In I. Claus, N. Gemmell, M. Harding & D. White (Eds.), *Tax reform in open economies* (Chapt. 12). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Smith, J. P. (2015). Australian state income taxation: A historical perspective. *Australian Tax Forum, 30*(4), 679-712.
- Smith Family. (n.d.). *Our history*. Retrieved October 13, 2025, from https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/about-us/our-story
- Social Compass (2019). *Evaluation of the Adult Migrant English Program business model.* https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/amep-subsite/Files/amep-evalution-new-business-model.pdf
- Spanian. (2023). *Into the hood* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL05cuRzu6qZXEie2FX3Zb3WKJM2e2U14H
- Stanford, J. (2019). A turning point for labour market policy in Australia. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, *30*(2), 177-199. https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304619835075
- Stewart, M. (2023). Australia. In J. F. Tremblay (Ed.), *The forum of federations handbook of fiscal federalism* (pp. 1-58). Springer Nature.
- Stilwell, F. (1972). *Regional economic policy*. Macmillan Press.
- Stilwell, F. (1992). *Understanding cities & regions: Spatial political economy*. Pluto Press.
- Stilwell, F. (1994). Working nation: From green to white paper. *Journal of Australian Political Economy,* (33), 110-123.
- Stilwell, F. (2003). Refugees in a region: Afghans in Young, NSW. *Urban Policy and Research*, *21*(3), 235–248. doi.org
- Stilwell, F. (2014). Neoliberalism in the city: Economic theory, class interests and political practices. *Housing, Theory and Society*, *31*(1), 42-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/14036096.2013.841554
- Stilwell, F. (2017). Divided cities, divided country. *AQ-Australian Quarterly*, *88*(3), 18-24.
- Stilwell, F. (2019). *The political economy of inequality*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Stilwell, F. (2024). Inequality, sustainability, and public policy: Historical and spatial perspectives. In R. Freestone, B. Randolph, & C. J. Martin (Eds.), *Australian urban policy: Prospects and Pathways* (p. 429). ANU Press.
- Stilwell, F. J. (1969). Regional growth and structural adaptation. *Urban Studies, 6*(2), 162-178.
- Stilwell, F. J. (1979). Australian urban and regional development in the late 1970s: An overview. *International Journal of Urban & Regional Research*, *3*(1-3), 527-541. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.1979.tb00805.x
- Stilwell, F. J. (1980). *Economic crisis: Cities and regions*. Pergamon Press.
- Stilwell, F. J. (1993). *Reshaping Australia: Urban problems and policies*. Pluto Press.

- Stilwell, F. J. B. (1972). Welfare economics and planning. *Royal Australian Planning Institute Journal, 10(1), 5-8.*
- Stilwell, F. J. B., & Hardwick, J. M. (1973). Social inequality in Australian cities. *The Australian Quarterly, 45(4), 18-36.*
- Stilwell, F., & Troy, P. (2000). Multilevel governance and urban development in Australia. *Urban Studies*, *37*(5-6), 909-930. https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980050011154
- Stretton, H. (1970). Ideas for Australian cities. *Built Environment, 41*(3), 419-434. https://doi.org/10.2148/benv.41.3.419
- Tanton, R., Dare, L., Miranti, R., Vidyattama, Y., Yule, A., & McCabe, M. (2021). *Dropping off the edge 2021: Persistent and multilayered disadvantage in Australia.* Jesuit Social Services.
- Tanzi, V. (2008). The future of fiscal federalism. *European Journal of Political Economy*, *24*(3), 705-712. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2008.09.001
- Tavan, G. (2004). The dismantling of the White Australia policy: elite conspiracy or will of the Australian people?. *Australian Journal of Political Science*, *39*(1), 109-125. https://doi.org/10.1080/1036114042000205678?
- Taylor, J. (2024). Governing Greater Sydney: The democratic promise and contention of local governments' metropolitan integration. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *83*(3), 433-456. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8500.12601
- Thackway, W., Ng, M., Lee, C. L., & Pettit, C. (2023). Building a predictive machine learning model of gentrification in Sydney. *Cities*, *134*, p.104192. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2023.104192
- Tilley, H., Newman, J., Connell, A., Hoole, C., & Mukherjee, A. (2023). A place-based system? Regional policy levers and the UK's productivity challenge. *Regional Studies*, *57*(10), 2102-2114. https://doi.org/10.1080/00343404.2022.2152436
- Tilley, P. (2022). *State and territory tax reform*. Tax and Transfer Policy Institute – Working Paper, ANU.
- Tilley, P. (2024). *Mixed fortunes: A history of tax reform in Australia*. Melbourne University Publishing.
- Timms, P. (2017). Fairfield struggles to cope after threefold increase in refugee arrivals. *ABC News.* https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-01-02/fairfield-struggles-to-cope-after-increase-in-refugee-arrivals/8145250
- Toft, M., & Friedman, S. (2021). Family wealth and the class ceiling: The propulsive power of the bank of mum and dad. *Sociology*, *55*(1), 90-109. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038520922537
- Troy, P. (2009). *The Commonwealth Housing Commission and national housing policy*. 4th State of Australian Cities National Conference, 24-27 November 2009, Perth, Australia.
- Troy, P. N. (2012). Australian Planner March/June 1976: Can Canberra pull out now? Federalism and urban affairs 1972–75. *Australian Planner*, *49*(2), 110-116. https://doi.org/10.1080/07293682.2012.663333
- Underhill, E., & Quinlan, M. (2024). The struggle to regulate precarious work arrangements to minimize their adverse effects on health and safety in Australia. *International Journal of Social Determinants of Health and Health Services*, *54*(2), 87-94. https://doi.org/10.1177/27551938241234753

- UNHCR. (2022a) *Resettlement handbook: Resettlement country: Australia.* https://www.unhcr.org/resettlement-handbook/wp-content/uploads/sites/153/2023/04/Country-Chapter-Australia-2022.pdf
- UNHCR. (2022b) *Submission to review: A migration system for Australia's future December 2022.* https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/reports-and-pubs/files/migration-system-aust-future-submissions/s-z/United_Nations_High_Commissioner_Refugees_UNHCR.pdf
- University of New South Wales. (2020). *The imaginary line: Exposing a real Sydney divide*. UNSW Newsroom. https://www.unsw.edu.au/newsroom/news/2020/03/the-imaginary-line-exposing-a-real-sydney-divide1
- van Kooy, J., Woldegiorgis, M., & Rioseco, P. (2024). *Building a new life in Australia: 10 years of humanitarian settlement outcomes*. Australian Institute of Family Studies. https://aifs.gov.au/building-new-life-australia/major-report/10-years-humanitarian-settlement-outcomes
- Veblen, T. (2017). *The theory of the leisure class*. Routledge. (Original work published 1899)
- Venugopal, R. (2015). Neoliberalism as concept. *Economy and Society*, *44*(2), 165-187. https://doi.org/10.1080/03085147.2015.1013356
- Victorian Government. (2020). *A framework for place-based approaches*. https://www.vic.gov.au/framework-place-based-approaches
- Viviani, N. (1997). Vietnamese in Sydney and Melbourne in 1996: Some preliminary results from the census. *People and Place*, *5*(3), 54-57. https://doi.org/10.4225/03/590ab9bdbb2ea
- Viviani, N., Coughlan, J., & Rowland, T. (1993). *Indochinese in Australia: The issues of unemployment and residential concentration.* Bureau of Immigration Research, Canberra.
- Wannell, E. (2022). Confidentiality and executive accountability: The case of national cabinet. *Australasian Parliamentary Review*, *37*(1), 126-148.
- Wanti, M., Wesselink, R., Biemans, H., & Brok, P. D. (2022). Determining factors of access and equity in higher education: A systematic review. *Equity in Education & Society*, *1*(2), 279–296. https://doi.org/10.1177/27526461221092429
- Warf, B. (2010). Critical Human Geography. In Warf, B. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of human geography* (pp 617-622). Sage publications.
- Waugh and Cox. (1858). *Directory of Sydney and its suburbs (1855).* Sydney, Waugh and Cox.
- Waxman, P. (2000). The shaping of Australia's immigration and refugee policy. *Immigrants & Minorities*, *19*(1), 53-78. https://doi.org/10.1080/02619288.2000.9974983
- Weingast, B. R. (2009). Second generation fiscal federalism: The implications of fiscal incentives. *Journal of Urban Economics*, *65*(3), 279-293. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jue.2008.12.005
- Weller, S., & O'Neill, P. (2014). An argument with neoliberalism: Australia's place in a global imaginary. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, *4*(2), 105-130. https://doi.org/10.1177/2043820614536334

- West, E. G. (1964). Adam Smith's two views on the division of labour. *Economica*, *31*(121), 23-32.
- Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils. (2025a). *Issues brief: 2025 federal election*. https://wsroc.com.au/media-a-resources/reports?task=download.send&id=392&catid=3&m=0
- Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils. (2025b). *President's message: The future of Western Sydney is looking bright*. WSROC. https://wsroc.com.au/media-a-resources/wsroc-news-stories/president-s-message-the-future-of-western-sydney-is-looking-bright
- Western Sydney University. (n.d.). *About greater western Sydney*. Retrieved April 1, 2025, from https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/rcegws/rcegws/About/about_greater_western_sydney
- Whiteford, P. (2017). *Social security and welfare spending in Australia: Assessing long-term trends* (TTPI – Policy Brief 1/2017). Tax and Transfer Policy Institute, Crawford School of Public Policy, Australian National University.
- Whitlam, G. (1985). *The Whitlam Government*. Viking, Melbourne.
- Williams-Brooks, L. (2019). Understanding the capitalist state in Australia: Insights from the Australian new left. *Journal of Australian Political Economy,* (83), 140-155.
- Wilks, S., Lahausse, J., & Edwards, B. (2015). *Commonwealth place-based service delivery initiatives: Key learnings project.* Australian Government.
- Wilson-Fuller, Y., 1991. *Land use in the Fairfield rural-urban fringe* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Sydney]. https://hdl.handle.net/2123/26428
- Wilson, W. (1990). Residential relocation and settlement adjustment of Vietnamese refugees in Sydney. *Australian Geographical Studies*, *28*(2), 155-177. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8470.1990.tb00610.x
- Wolff, J., & De-Shalit, A. (2007). *Disadvantage*. Oxford University Press.
- Wood, A. J., Burchell, B., & Lewis, A. (2018). Unemployment and well-being. In A. Lewis (Ed.), *The Cambridge handbook of psychology and economic behaviour* (pp. 234-259). Cambridge University Press.
- Wood, T., Dolmage, J., Price, M., & Lewiecki-Wilson, C. (2014). Where we are: Disability and accessibility. *Composition Studies*, *42*(2), 147-50.
- Workforce Australia. (2024). *Local jobs plan; Sydney South West employment region.* https://www.dewr.gov.au/download/8361/sydney-south-west-local-jobs-plan/37740/sydney-south-west-local-jobs-plan/pdf
- World Inequality Database. (2025). *Income inequality, Australia, 1912-2019*. https://wid.world/country/australia/
- Wunan Foundation Inc. (2015). *Empowered communities: Empowered peoples: Design report*. National Indigenous Australians Agency.
- Xie, Y., & Greenman, E. (2011). The social context of assimilation: Testing implications of segmented assimilation theory. *Social Science Research*, *40*(3), 965-984. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssresearch.2011.01.004