

## **‘Why do we need social mix?’**

### **Analysis of an Australian inner-city public housing estate redevelopment**

Abdullahi Jama and Kate Shaw

*Policies to introduce social mix are increasingly being adopted across the liberal west as a solution to the ‘problems’ that characterise socio-economically disadvantaged localities. The benefits of social mix to low-income people are ambiguous, but to the extent that they are presumed to accrue, they are based on social mixing between the different demographics. This study examines the theory and practice of introducing private housing onto a public housing estate in inner-Melbourne, Australia. Through an analysis of policy intents and outcomes, the study concludes that the social mix redevelopment model is not leading to social mixing, that the purported benefits for public housing tenants are unlikely to materialise, and that the implementation of social mix policies can disadvantage existing residents. These findings are in line with a growing body of literature that challenges the premises of public-private tenure mix on public housing estates. The paper concludes that the social mix approach to inner-city estate redevelopments in Australia is driven more by an imperative to capitalise on the sale of public land than it is to assist public tenants.*

“The lights are off *again* man. No ball tonight I guess”

“I don’t get why those folks across the road complain about the noise at night all the time... they live in the city. It’s loud here”

“Ya amm, this is just the beginning. When all these *Cadaan* [white people] start moving in here forget about the court, we’re all gonna be slowly kicked out”

*A conversation overheard on the estate at the start of the redevelopment. If existing public housing tenants see little benefit from the introduction of private tenants onto their estates, then the questions need to be asked: Why do we need social mix? Who does it benefit?*

## **Introduction**

The inner-city Carlton public housing estate is the second major estate to undergo redevelopment in Melbourne, Australia. It follows the demolition and rebuild of public housing and construction of new private housing on another inner-city estate, in Kensington, initiated by the Victorian state government in the late 1990s. Kensington was the pilot for a social mix model that was to inform all subsequent public housing estate redevelopments. State-imposed or 'introduced' social mix, when functionalised through policy as in these redevelopments, is intended to 'balance' the demographics of low-income neighbourhoods by bringing in higher-income residents, with the declared objective of improving social, economic and physical conditions for the existing low-income residents.

This paper examines the implementation of this model at Carlton, comparing it with the claims made for the redevelopment by the state government, and claims made for social mix in the international literature. Crucially, the extent of actual social mixing between public and private residents on the estate is assessed.

Social mix policy has been discussed extensively in the literature and divides into two broad camps: one that promotes the benefits for low-income people, and one that argues that imposed mix produces limited benefits and sometimes harmful outcomes. The Carlton redevelopment adds a case study to this literature. The findings from this research also contribute to the discussion about social mix in inner-city public housing estate redevelopments in Victoria, which to date has been limited by the government's decision to not release the report from a state-commissioned evaluation of the initial Kensington redevelopment pilot (Shaw 2013).

## **Social mix and its foundations**

Arthurson (2012) observes that the meaning of the term 'social mix' can depend on who's using it, though it generally refers to a mix in housing tenure or socioeconomic status. The latter terms "refer respectively to the balance between social housing renters, homeowners and private renters, and middle-income and low-income residents in a particular spatially defined area" (2012, p.2). When introduced by the state or market, social mix is usually achieved through building higher-income housing in low-income areas, and specifically, private housing on public housing estates. While the term can also apply to age, ethnicity, gender, education and household type (Kleit and Carnegie 2011), social mix policies in Australia tend to synthesise into the process of bringing middle-income homeowners into low-income rental neighbourhoods.

The concept has its roots in mid-nineteenth century Britain in a context of declining urban quality and

inadequate housing as poor working-class individuals crowded into industrialised inner cities (Arthurson 2008; 2012). They concentrated in low-cost areas, precipitating associations between the physical qualities of these areas and the residents themselves who were increasingly perceived by middle and upper-classes as ‘threatening’ (Arthurson 2008). It was in this setting that state interventions to introduce social mix were pioneered by George Cadbury (1895) and Octavia Hill (1890s) in the belief that middle-class propinquity would help the poor to become respectable citizens (Sarkissan 1976).

### **Social mix and its manifestations**

The literature identifies different manifestations and arrangements of social mix. Morris et al. (2012) distinguish between ‘organic’ and ‘inorganic’ social mix, with the former occurring more ‘naturally’ over time and the latter a result of active state or market intervention. ‘Organic’ mix (which consists of more than just a mix of housing tenures and socioeconomic groups) tends to be seen as more successful in achieving the benefits as framed by those who promote social mix. Of course, the processes that result in ‘organic’ social mix are not necessarily independent of state or market forces; the distinction is meaningful only as a counterpoint to the notion of ‘inorganic’ social mix actively introduced into existing communities.

Physical arrangements affect patterns and extent of social mix. Policies to introduce a public-private tenure mix tend to be implemented through two main design principles: ‘salt and pepper’ or ‘block by block’. The former creates a fine-grained mix within buildings and streets, whereas the latter balances the demographics at a wider, neighbourhood scale but retains homogeneity of tenure within individual buildings or precincts (Levin et al. 2014).

### **Arguments for social mix policies**

Arguments for social mix policies centre on two related outcomes. The first is facilitation of social mixing across differences, which is seen as a good in itself and necessary to the creation of local social harmony and cohesion. The second is a reduction in ‘concentrations of disadvantage’ and therefore mitigation of associated ‘negative neighbourhood effects’ – what used to be called ‘cultures of poverty’: generalised low education levels, poor work ethics, high crime rates and stigma – that are seen to hamper the social and economic welfare of low-income people. As mitigation of neighbourhood effects is thought to occur through role modelling and other ‘rub-off effects’ resulting from disadvantaged people’s interactions with more privileged residents – that is, through active social mixing – the former is essential to the achievement of the latter.

The idea that social mix reduces concentrations of disadvantage and therefore neighbourhood effects is premised on the belief that spatial concentration of low-income individuals exacerbates and intensifies poor welfare outcomes – a view widely held by politicians and policy makers in the liberal west along with some academics (see Wilson 1987; Buck 2001; Overman 2002; Byrne 2003; Friedrichs and Blasius 2003). Proponents of social mix policies argue that middle-class residents reduce these negative effects by providing social and material benefits such as ‘normal’ middle-class behaviour, employment routines, social mobility, networks and job opportunities that “alleviate the social constraints posed by neighbourhoods where large numbers of residents are disadvantaged” (Arthurson 2002, p. 251). The rationale for policies to increase social mix is therefore that close physical connections between different groups will translate into closer social connections (Wood 2003; Davidson 2010). This implies that physical distance is the most significant barrier to the achievement of social mixing, and that the location of different groups ‘cheek by jowl’ will improve outcomes for disadvantaged people and facilitate community cohesion.

The link between social mixing and the creation of balanced and harmonious communities receives further support according to Lees (2008) from the “liberal desires of the new middle-classes for difference and diversity in the city”, such that the benefits of social mix have become “unquestioned gospel in policy discourse” (pp. 2449-50). Yet, Lees says, there is poor evidence for the widespread policy assumption that social mix will create a more diverse and tolerant city, and she quotes Rose’s (2004 p.280) observation of the “uneasy cohabitation” between social mix and gentrification.

### **Arguments against social mix policies**

The arguments against social mix policies can be divided into three sub-categories:

- i. Social mix policies produce limited benefits
- ii. Social mix policies can produce harmful outcomes
- iii. Social mix policies disguise their true intent.

#### **i. Limited benefits**

A key criticism of social mix policies is that the mitigation of neighbourhood effects thesis is based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the ‘problems’ to be corrected. Bolster et al. (2007), Cheshire (2007) and Manley et al. (2012) among others challenge the premise of negative neighbourhood effects thesis and show that most studies that find evidence for the existence of such effects suffer from a problem of causality, with the concentration of economic disadvantage in a locality being mistaken as the cause and reinforcement of that disadvantage rather than evidence of low-income people being priced out of expensive areas. Manley et al. (2012) argue that on many social housing

estates there is little evidence that living in these areas makes the poor poorer, and that the policy implications of this finding are significant:

If there is no solid evidence that neighbourhood effects exist, there is no evidence base for mixed tenure policies, or more generally, social mix policies. Creating more socially mixed neighbourhoods is unlikely to create more opportunities in life for the original residents. (Manley et al. 2012, p. 166)

Critics of the neighbourhood effects theory dismiss the 'deconcentration of disadvantage' approach to redevelopment of low-income areas as one that pathologises individual and communal poverty. They favour instead a more structural economic analysis of the uneven distribution of wealth, arguing that better income support, healthcare, education, skills training and job creation would produce better outcomes for the poor.

A second critique relates to the patronising assumptions about role modelling and 'rub-off effects', as exemplified in 'new urbanist' Andres Duany's oft-quoted notion that social mix "rebalances a concentration of poverty by providing the tax base, rub-off work ethic, and political effectiveness of a middle-class, and in the process improves the quality of life for all of a community's residents. It is the rising tide that lifts all boats" (Duany 2001, 37). Lees et al (2008) criticise this as a "sort of trickle-down theory applied to housing and neighbourhoods" used by "developers, speculators, wealthy homeowners and other advocates of gentrification" (p.84). Observing that the jobs aren't necessarily available, they argue that "the poor and working-classes have no less of a work ethic than today's gentrifiers, many of whose main source of wealth is ... house price appreciation"; and that the "politically effective middle-classes have been more willing in recent years to villainise renters, the poor, the homeless, and any other individuals whose presence might possibly undermine property values" (2008, 84).

A third doubt about the benefits of social mix policy comes from those who accept that in certain circumstances benefits may accrue from social mix, but who maintain that physical proximity alone is insufficient for the facilitation of genuine cross-tenure and cross-group mixing. Amin (2002), Blokland (2003), Butler with Robson (2003), Valentine (2008), Fincher and Iveson (2008) and others have variously argued that meaningful interactions develop through purposeful gatherings and shared activities, which do not necessarily follow from simplistic policy interventions. Butler with Robson (2003) detail how new middle-class residents claim to celebrate diversity but rarely interact with other social groups, operating instead like social 'tectonic plates' where people of different tenure and income levels simply slide past one another. Le Gales (2012) says that arriving middle-class residents

may have little issue with mixing with their lower income neighbours as long as they can control the interactions and 'exit' when they see fit, limiting the mutual and reciprocal benefits of social mixing. Galster (2007) posits that policy makers in fact give very little consideration to how different groups will actually mix as neighbours.

## **ii. Harmful impacts**

A stronger criticism of social mix policies maintains that, far from creating more balanced and harmonious communities, their implementation can produce harmful impacts. Ley (2012) and Allen (2008) show that social mix policies can disrupt support networks and social structures in low-income neighbourhoods (eg. casual childcare and class solidarity). Involuntary displacement from local networks and services has long been shown to have serious physical and mental health effects, especially for the poor (Fried 1963; Marris 1974; Hartman 1984; Marcuse 1985; Davidson 2008). Tomlins et al (2002) argue further that 'minority' communities can benefit from concentration among group members as it affords them increased protection and an ability to maintain their cultural heritage. All these authors suggest that social mix policies tend not to replace the social capital they displace. Other scholars identify situations of imposed social mix as leading to or exacerbating tensions between different groups (Amin 2002; Valentine 2008; Cole and Goodchild 2010).

## **iii. Disguised intents**

The most trenchant critique of policies designed to increase social mix says that, far from helping low-income neighbourhoods, they are vehicles for gentrification and pursuit of hidden and selected interests. Slater (2006) follows Smith (1996) in arguing that the true intent is often enough to change the class character and wealth base of low-income areas even if this means moving the rich in and the poor out. Lees et al (2008), Bridge et al. (2012), Rose et al. (2013) and other gentrification researchers show that social mix is a temporary phase in the transition of low-income to higher-income neighbourhoods, not via any 'rising tide' but through the "recapture [of] prime urban real estate" (Joseph and Chaskin 2010, 349). Kipfer and Petrunia (2009) regard public housing redevelopment as a "multipronged, racialized strategy to recolonize ... potentially valuable central city space in the name of diversity and social mixity" (p.111). Lees (2008) summarises social mix rhetoric as a neutralisation of "the negative image the process of gentrification brings with it", and a deliberate legitimisation of neoliberal state intervention into low-income neighbourhoods in the interests of some kind of 'social cleansing' (p.2451).

## **Policy context in Melbourne, Australia**

Social mix policies in Australia have largely been oriented to solving 'problems' on and relating to

public housing estates with the objective of ending 'social exclusion' (Morris et al. 2012). Public housing has been viewed by Australian policy makers as problematic for decades, in part because its small proportion of the total housing market (around 5 percent) means applicants with high and complex needs are given priority. Most of the high-rise and walk-up estates in Australian cities were built in the 1960s and have suffered funding cuts over many decades, and consist now of poorly maintained and conspicuously ageing housing stock. As waiting lists continue to grow for diminishing supply, the perception of public housing has moved from what was originally "an important adjunct to industry and economic development policy" to a "tenure of last resort" (Archer 2010, p. 10; Atkinson and Jacobs, 2008).

While public housing estates and their residents have become increasingly demonised by white middle-class Australians, it is important to note that the estates in the inner-cities of Melbourne and Sydney in particular are well-resourced by public transport, parks, and community facilities such as government schools, libraries, healthcare centres, pools and sports centres, senior citizens centres and so on. As the inner-cities gentrify many of these facilities have been improved. These estates can be characterised as islands of public housing in seas of private housing (Wyly and Hammel 1999) where the local shops are a walk away and the opportunities for interaction between public tenants and surrounding home-owners and private renters are plentiful. Nevertheless, government responses to the 'residualisation' of public housing have engaged the sweeping rhetoric of the need to disrupt these 'concentrations of disadvantage' and 'negative neighbourhood effects' with a one-size-fits-all redevelopment program irrespective of their specific context and location.

In Melbourne, public housing estates are now lined up for socially-mixed redevelopment involving the dispersal of tenants, demolition of ageing stock and construction of new public and private housing in an effort to 'better balance' the demographics. The program involves private developers in the construction, with the transfer of land and sale of private housing constituting their profit, and is promoted as a way of "broadening the mix of housing and resident types to better integrate the estates with the surrounding neighbourhoods" (Department of Human Services [DHS] 2011).

The first estate to undergo redevelopment was in Kensington, in Melbourne's inner-west (see supplementary figure 1). Kensington became the template for the redevelopment of the Carlton estate, with the Prahran, Richmond and Fitzroy estates soon to follow (the latter two were later abandoned after significant opposition). In 2017 a brief was released for the redevelopment of nine more inner-city and middle-suburban estates (Department of Health and Human Services [DHHS] 2017).

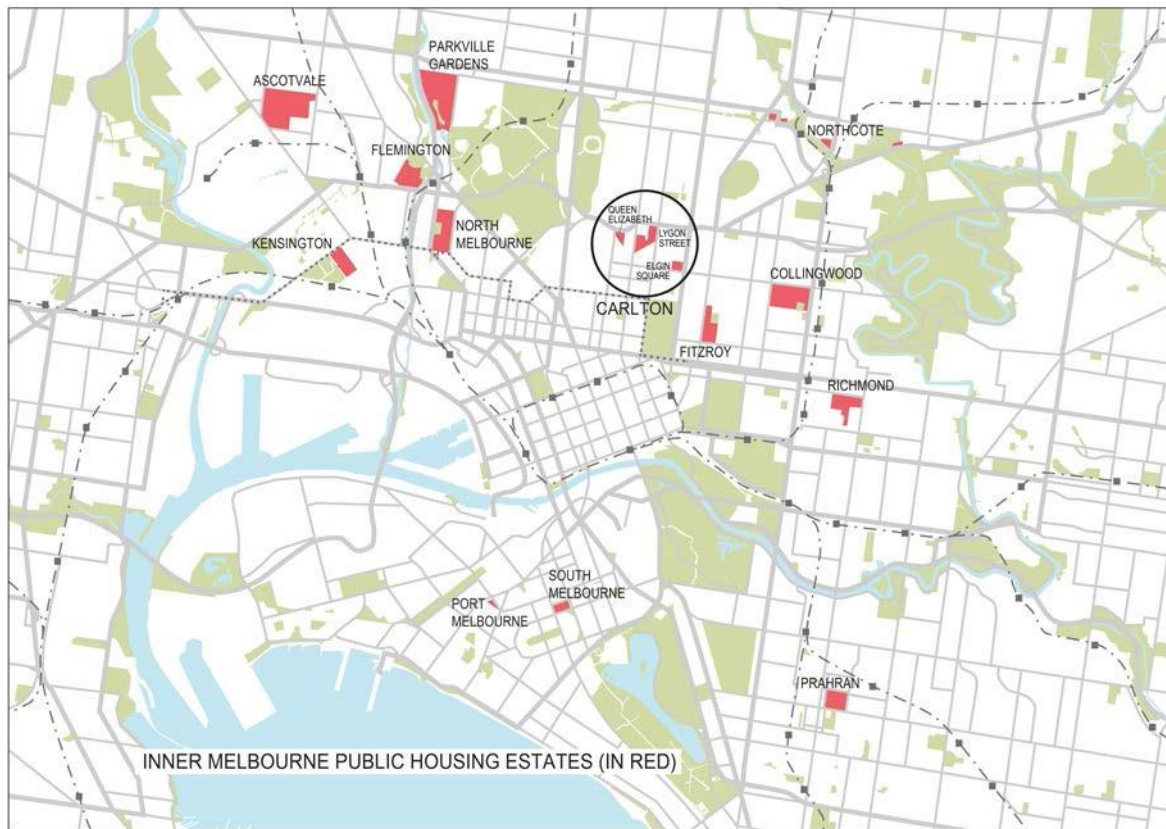


Figure 1: Map of the inner-Melbourne public housing estates, with the Carlton estate circled

### The Kensington Model

Kensington was one of the last industrial inner-suburbs of Melbourne to gentrify. In the late 1990s, when property prices there were still relatively low, the Victorian Premier of the then Liberal- National (Tory) coalition government announced his intent to demolish the 18 walk-up (four storey) buildings and three 20-storey towers on Kensington's public housing estate and replace them with private housing. The concept of social mix did not surface until the early 2000s, when a new Labor government resolved to continue with the project as a model for inner-city estates elsewhere (DHS 2011). But rather than a fully private new-build, the redevelopment would introduce a 50:50 public-private mix to the estate with the object of "countering social disadvantage and integrating residents and built form with the broader community" (Kensington Management Company 2008). The redevelopment would also pilot the funding model – a public private partnership (PPP) in effect – in which all the walk-ups were demolished (only one of the three towers was taken down, in the end – see Shaw 2012 for an explanation of that process) and replaced with a combination of new public and private housing. The state sold the land allocated for the private housing to the developer, which was then sold on without constraint to constitute the developer's substantial profit.



There were 694 public units on the estate prior to the redevelopment, of which 486 (all the walk-ups) were demolished. These were replaced by 205 new public units and 16 additions to the two remaining towers. There are now 224 units in the towers, resulting in a total of 429 public units on the estate – a reduction of 265 public units. The new build at Kensington is 30:70 public to private. There were 512 private units built (57 more than in the original plan, with the approval for the increase given in 2008 when the global financial crisis began to be felt by the developer) of which 15 were sold to a community housing association. The finished project therefore has 497 private units, 15 community units and 429 public units – a total of 941 dwellings. Counting the community housing as public (although it is strictly in a third category) the total public to private mix is 47:53.

| No. of bedrooms       | Public units           |                    | Community | Private units | 2012 total |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------------|------------|
|                       | 1998 before demolition | 2012 on completion | 2012      | 2012          |            |
| Studio and 1 br units | 142                    | 231                | -         | 133           | <b>364</b> |
| 2 br family units     | 256                    | 122                | 15        | 323           | <b>460</b> |
| 3 br family units     | 296                    | 68                 | -         | 41            | <b>109</b> |
| 4 br family units     | -                      | 8                  | -         | -             | <b>8</b>   |
| Total units           | 694                    | 429                | 15        | 497           | <b>941</b> |

Table 1: Housing stock at the Kensington estate before and after redevelopment (Hulse et al 2004; and DHS 2009; 2012)

The Kensington estate has two-thirds of the public housing stock it had prior to the redevelopment. While there was discussion of a distribution of public and private housing in each of the new buildings, the final arrangement was predominantly ‘block by block’, with only four of the 21 buildings on the estate eventually having a mix of tenures. The other buildings are exclusively public or private, with separate entrances. The project was completed in 2012, with the state government lauding it as evidence of the success of the social mix model (DHS, 2014b). The official, more critical, evaluation was never released. (\*note: in May 2018 a parliamentary inquiry into the public housing redevelopment program issued a summons to the authors to provide the report. It is now on-line on the parliamentary website: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lsic/inquiries/article/4048> )

### **The Carlton estate redevelopment: approach to this study**

The supposed benefits of middle-class proximity to low-income people will not surface immediately after the implementation of a social mix policy of course, if they do surface at all. The logic of these outcomes, which entail significant changes to the socio-economic reality, requires that they would only emerge over time, perhaps even a generation or two. As the Carlton redevelopment is new it is

not possible to assess these effects in this research, however the state objective of deconcentrating poverty and the arrangement of the housing mix can go some way to indicating the likely extent of mixing as a necessary precursor to any benefits. The research used qualitative methods – document and policy analysis, interviews and participant observation – to assess the implementation of the social mix model in the Carlton project against the claims made for the model by the state government, and against claims made for social mix in international literature.

#### **i. Policy analysis**

Policy for the Carlton estate redevelopment is expressed in aspirational statements on the state department website and ministerial media releases, and in two essential documents: the panel report on the enabling Melbourne planning scheme amendment (Government of Victoria 2007) and a departmental baseline study of residents and conditions on the estate prior to the redevelopment (DHS 2009). These documents contain the original conception, objectives and design elements of the project. When the sources are combined, the original and changing manifestations of the social mix objectives become clear, providing strong foundation for reflections on their broader implications.

#### **ii. Interviews and participant observation**

In-depth interviews were conducted with users of space on the estate, former and current service providers, and a representative of the selected developer in early-mid 2015. Users of space were recruited through an initial observation of five spaces on or connected to the estate: the Drummond Street Open Space (figure 2), the Elgin/Nicholson Streets Open Space (figure 3), the Carlton Farmers Market at the Carlton Primary School (figure 4), the cafés at 497 Rathdowne Street (figure 5) and 478 Drummond Street (figure 6). These five spaces were selected because they are the most frequented and open to all, and contain facilities (playgrounds, green space, cafés and market facilities) that most naturally engender social mixing.

One of the researchers is a former resident of the estate, with continuing ties to both former and returned tenants. Observations occurred at different times of the day to detail how and when these spaces were being used and by whom. The researcher then approached users to gauge their interest in taking part in the study. They were questioned on their social activities on and off the estate, as well as their opinions on their own and observed social mixing. Former and current service providers and a representative of the developer, Australand, were also questioned on the changing dynamics of the redevelopment, with a view to assessing its effects.



Figure 2: Drummond Street open space (2017)



Figure 3: Elgin/Nicholson Street open space (2017)



Figure 4: Carlton Farmer's market (2017)



Figure 5: Café at the base of 497 Rathdowne Street (2017)



Figure 6. Café at the base of 478 Drummond Street (2017)

The Drummond Street open space acted as the central space of observation, as it is the space noted by the government as most successfully embodying the social mix objective (DHS 2013). Users of this and the other spaces were questioned on their social activities on and off the estate, as well as their general opinions on their own and observed social mixing. Former and current service providers and a representative of the developer, Australand, were questioned on the changing dynamics of the redevelopment, with a view to assessing its effects.

‘Users of space’ were grouped into three categories: a) public housing tenants of the estate, b) private tenants of the estate, and c) private tenants off the estate. They were categorised this way as this is how they’re referred to in government publications (DHS 2013). The study also collected data on gender, age, location of residence and cultural background, in order to fully grasp the dynamics of social mixing. Respondents who were of ‘white’ appearance and who identified as simply ‘Australian’ were categorised as ‘White-Australian’. Pseudonyms were used to identify participants unless requested otherwise.

### **The Carlton estate redevelopment: introduction**

The Carlton public housing estate is located in the inner-north of Melbourne (figure 1). Carlton is known for being the traditional home of Melbourne’s Italian community, as well as for its high cultural diversity, with 56 percent of residents born outside Australia (City of Melbourne 2013). With its inner-city status and as one of the earliest areas to gentrify in the 1970s, Carlton is one of Melbourne’s more expensive suburbs. The public housing estate is among the last bastions of pre-gentrified Carlton, and the redevelopment is the first major physical upgrade since its construction in the 1960s. The estate originally consisted of seven high-rise towers ranging from 12 to 20 storeys, and 15 four and five storey walk-up buildings on two separate precincts (see figure 1).

Figure 7 shows the walk-up buildings in Rathdowne Street before they were demolished. They are fairly typical of the public housing walk-ups throughout inner-Melbourne, consisting mainly of 2, 3 and 4-bedroom family units.





Figure 7. Former public walk-up flats at Rathdowne Street (DHS 2009).

The Carlton redevelopment was announced in December 2005 by the Labor state government (DHS 2005). The two precincts and a third former hospital site (marked 3 in figure 8) would be redeveloped in the largest mixed-tenure development yet, with all the walk-ups to be demolished and replaced with a mix of public and private housing. The project was managed by government, with Australand and the Citta Property Group as developers (DHS 2016).



Figure 8: The three redevelopment precincts of the Carlton estate: (1) Lygon/Rathdowne precinct, (2) Elgin/Nicholson precinct, (3) the new Keppel/Cardigan precinct (former hospital site) (DHS 2009).

Eight walk-up buildings at the Lygon/Rathdowne precinct (figure 9) were replaced by two higher density public housing buildings (figure 10).



Figure 9: Walk-up flats in the Lygon/Rathdowne precinct immediately before demolition



Figure 10: Replacement public units in the Lygon/Rathdowne Precinct (2017)



The new public and private buildings are intended to be indistinguishable.



Figure 11: New private apartments at the Rathdowne/Lygon Street Precinct



Figure 12: New public apartments at the Keppel/Cardigan Precinct (2015)

## **Objectives of the redevelopment**

The four departmental objectives of the redevelopment were:

1. Integration of the estate with the local Carlton community, primarily through the introduction of a mix of public and private dwellings on the estate.
2. High quality urban design of the new housing products and landscaping features on the estate that would amongst many things, seek to de-stigmatise the estate.
3. Supply of efficient modern units and buildings that address current housing demands.
4. To ensure the redeveloped sites add to community needs. (DHS 2009)

## **Social mix objectives of the Carlton estate redevelopment project**

The Victorian government's embrace of the benefits of social mix for the Carlton project is clear in objective (1), integration of the estate with the local community, primarily through the introduction of a mix of public and private dwellings on the estate. While DHS (2009) explains this objective in terms of connecting the estate with the local area, it can also be read in comments made by the then state representative for Melbourne and one-time housing minister in the Labor Government, Bronwyn Pike, who proclaimed at the project's inception that it would "break down the public housing ghetto" by reducing concentrations of disadvantage on the estate (quoted in Carlton Residents Association, 2011). The baseline study on the Carlton redevelopment produced by DHS (2009, p. 77) also emphasises the overall intent to "reduce concentrations of public housing".

Social mix can also be found in objective (4), that the redeveloped sites contribute to community needs. The baseline report (DHS 2009, p. 33) notes that project will "benefit the tenants, both social and private" through increased sense of community, engagement in local activities, and "perceived increased opportunities for employment". Promotional material on the extension of the Kensington model from Carlton to the Fitzroy, Richmond and Prahran estates claims:

Australian and international evidence shows that strong, connected communities generally include a diverse social and housing mix, with people on a range of incomes. These kinds of communities can support residents to break cycles of dependence, generally providing better employment opportunities, access to services and opportunities for people to engage with their community (DHS 2011, npn).

In 2013 the Tory government minister for housing, Wendy Lovell, reinforced the expectations of social mix in reducing concentrations of poverty and role-modelling in the following parliamentary exchange:



**Ms HENNESSY** — Minister, I just wanted to draw on some evidence you gave to the committee earlier in respect of some social housing projects. On two occasions you said that these projects were important because they would bring a better demographic of persons to the area. Could you explain what you mean? What does a better demographic of persons look like?

**Ms LOVELL** — It was not a better demographic of persons, it was a better demographic for the community. What we know is that if we concentrate disadvantage, we do not get great outcomes for families or for communities as a whole. I often refer to our Carlton housing estate. There is a great program going on there that will also — and this is one of the ones I referred to — improve the demographic of that estate. When it was just purely a housing estate there was more than 90 per cent unemployment on that estate. Young children growing up on the estate never saw mum and dad go to work, never saw a neighbour go to work and never went into the household of a friend whose parents worked to see what could be gained from economic participation for a family. It did not give those children something to strive for — something to aspire to in the future.

If we mix demographics, we decrease the concentration of disadvantage. It gives an opportunity for families to mix with other families, where they may get other examples given to them of working parents, or they may even be adopted by an elderly couple in the street, who give them a grandparent-type role. It just produces better outcomes, both for the family and also for the community. I think, Jill, you would be very aware that in some of our large housing estate areas, because of the concentration of disadvantage — that has led to very poor outcomes in those areas, and many people have asked for improved outcomes in those areas. That is why the former government invested in neighbourhood renewal: to try to lift the outcomes for people in those areas and, if we can, to mix those areas so that we can have a mix of social levels in the community. We do get better outcomes.

Figure 12: Transcript of the Victorian Public Accounts and Estimates Committee proceedings (Parliament of Victoria 2013).

Here we find Lees' "unquestioned gospel" (2008, 2449) referencing the taken-for-granted benefits of social mix that are implicitly or explicitly premised on the actuality of social mixing. DHS clearly stipulated the use of "social mix in spatial planning" for the Carlton redevelopment (2009, 57) without at any point detailing how it should be enacted.

### **Social mix enactment on the Carlton estate**

The building dimensions, tenure break-down, bedroom typology and resident demographics of the redeveloped estate are not available to the public, and requests by the researchers to examine the guiding masterplan, the 'Carlton Housing Precincts Redevelopment Plan' have been denied. In addition, the plan has been amended several times with the detailed changes not publicly available. This makes it difficult to assess the correlation of the final masterplan with the redevelopment's strategic objectives, and the compliance of the actual redevelopment with the masterplan. Nevertheless, it is possible to broadly measure the outcomes on the estate against the original expressed intents and baseline study.

Office of Housing data from 2006 shows tenure composition and population numbers of the estate pre-redevelopment, and projected numbers post-redevelopment (tables 2 and 3). There were 1,036 public units on the estate prior to the redevelopment, most of which were in the towers. The walk-ups contained 192 units, all with 3 bedrooms, housing 510 residents immediately prior to their

demolition (Office of Housing 2006). The 192 walk-up units were replaced by 246 new public units (five more than projected), producing a total of 1,090 public units on the estate in line with the government's claim that there would be no decrease in public housing (table 2) (DHS 2016; Office of Housing 2006). The new units are a mix of one, two and three bedrooms however (DHS 2016), necessitating fewer bedrooms (and therefore tenants) overall (table 3).

| Precinct                            | Pre-redevelopment public housing | Projected post-redevelopment |               |       | Projected total increase in dwellings |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------|-------|---------------------------------------|
|                                     |                                  | Public units                 | Private units | Total |                                       |
| Lygon/Rathdowne                     | 136                              | 107                          | 245           | 352   | 216                                   |
| Precinct<br>Elgin/Nicholson         | 56                               | 94                           | 140           | 234   | 178                                   |
| Precinct<br>Keppel/Cardigan         | 0                                | 40                           | 164           | 204   | 204                                   |
| Precinct<br><b>Total</b>            | 192                              | 241                          | 549           | 790   | 598                                   |
| Towers:                             |                                  |                              |               |       |                                       |
| Lygon/Rathdowne and Elgin/Nicholson | 844                              | 844                          | 0             | 844   | 0                                     |
| <b>Grand total</b>                  | 1,036                            | 1,085                        | 549           | 1,634 | 598                                   |

Table 2: Projected public and private dwellings post-redevelopment (Office of Housing 2006).

The 2006 projected data estimates an increase of 49 public units in the redevelopment (table 2) with a decrease of 161 tenants (table 3). The public housing part of the redevelopment is complete, with 246 units (five more than projected in 2006), therefore the increase is actually 54. On the (generous) assumption that the five extra units are occupied by three people, the drop in total public housing population can be estimated at 146. The 2006 projections had 729 residents in 549 private units. The private part of the development is still under construction, and the DHS website in 2016-7 forecast "approximately 800 apartments for private sale"; a significant increase in private units. The total public to private mix will thus be 1,090 to ~ 800, or 58:42. Excluding the public housing towers from the calculations, the new build component is 24:76 public to private, with a clear reduction in the overall as well as proportional number of public tenants on the estate (table 3).

| Precinct                            | Pre-redevelopment public housing | Projected post-redevelopment |                   |       | Projected total increase in people |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|-------|------------------------------------|
|                                     |                                  | Public resident              | Private residents | Total |                                    |
| Lygon/Rathdowne Precinct            | 369                              | 156                          | 342               | 497   | 128                                |
| Elgin/Nicholson Precinct            | 141                              | 140                          | 182               | 323   | 182                                |
| Keppel/Cardigan Precinct            | 0                                | 76                           | 205               | 281   | 281                                |
| <b>Total</b>                        | 510                              | 349                          | 729               | 1,101 | 591                                |
| Towers:                             |                                  |                              |                   |       |                                    |
| Lygon/Rathdowne and Elgin/Nicholson | 1,589                            | 1,589                        | 0                 | 1,589 | 0                                  |
| <b>Grand total</b>                  | 2,099                            | 1,960                        | 729               | 2,690 | 591                                |

Table 3: Projected residential tenure mix post-redevelopment (Office of Housing 2006).

The way in which the social mix is distributed in the new housing is also inconsistent with the government message. Levin et al. (2014), the Carlton Residents Association (2011) and a service provider interviewed for this study all mentioned that the original masterplan had a ‘salt and pepper’ arrangement with public and private units scattered throughout the same buildings. The panel report for the enabling planning scheme amendment, however, which considers the details of the project, concurs with submissions from government and the developer that a ‘block by block’ distribution would be preferable as a more “workable solution in terms of market response and future management of the overall site” (Government of Victoria 2007, p. 73). The panel refers to the Kensington redevelopment to support the case for separate public and private buildings.

The ‘block by block’ arrangement prevailed, with all the new buildings separated according to tenure with separate entrance halls and parking lots and some also facing different streets. Further, the private residents of the Lygon/Rathdowne precinct have exclusive access to a courtyard partitioned from the neighbouring public precinct by a 1.8 metre wall (Pascoe 2010; Levin et al. 2014). Levin et al. (2014) note that these changes are understood as a reflection of the financial pressures on developers during the global financial crisis (GFC), and justified by a concern that fully integrated social mix would have deterred potential private buyers and renters. The marketing of ‘Viva’, the name given to the private component of the redevelopment, emphasises its exclusivity, although it does allow a certain kind of mix:

Stretch out in Viva's own private garden. Manicured, tranquil and spacious, Viva Retreat is the ideal escape.... Private, quiet and secure, this large space is fully enclosed in the best tradition of a European courtyard garden....

Carlton offers an invigorating mix of sophisticated chic, heritage elegance and cultural vigour. You'll love the urban elan and festive spirit. Carlton is where Ferraris park nose to tail with Vespa scooters, while their equally fashionable owners sip espresso at al fresco cafes nearby.

Figure 13: Promotional material for the private precinct 'Viva' (Australand 2009a).

The private garden is indeed completely blocked off from the public units and the street, with access by key only (figure 14).



Figure 14: Private garden accessible only to private

Even as the number of public tenants has decreased, so has the proportion of land used for public housing (see figures 10, 11 and 12 for the necessary corresponding increases in built density, and tables 2 and 3 for the increase in total number of units and residents). The final development has in

fact produced not a decrease in the 'concentration of disadvantage', but an increase. At the scale of the neighbourhood, the area for public housing has shrunk while the surrounding private housing in Carlton has expanded.

### **Social mix or social tectonic plates?**

The interviews conducted for this study indicate that the social mix objectives of the Carlton project, insofar as they are premised on social mixing and even though it is early days, are not being realised. What has resulted is what Butler with Robson (2003) terms 'social tectonics', in which different tenure groups merely slide past one another. This is best illustrated in the use of Carlton primary school for the monthly farmer's market. While the school population consists overwhelmingly of children from public tenant households, the demographic is reversed on market days, with the vast majority of shopper clearly white and middle-class. The use of the open and café spaces tends also to be distinguished by tenure:

Most of the people I interact with here are public residents of the estate... mostly east African females and Muslim. A lot of them are around my age and we all went to the same school or worked together at the youth services. [*Rhonda, Public, 20-29, Somali, Drummond Street space*]

I'm usually cycling through this place to go to work or to run some errands, so I don't really have the time to stop and interact with people here. [*David, Private, 50-64, White-Australian, Drummond Street space*]

Higher income people tend to socialise in different places in the city. An example is that the private tenants never come to this café. [*Santo, 50-64, Public, Chilean, Café 478 Drummond Street*]

On my way to work, I often get coffee from downstairs and sometimes chat with the people there... some of them live in the same building as me or in the other private buildings. ... I can't say I've seen a public housing tenant there or ever spoken to a resident from there. [*Lauryn, Private, 20-29, Chinese, Café 497 Rathdowne Street*]

I have seen one parent from the private apartments bringing his kid to this space. I approached the parent and asked him if they live around here as I never seen him frequently, and he said we live in the new apartments. His kid was playing with my niece so I decided to

introduce myself. Other than this, the majority of them [i.e. both from the private apartments and the broader community] just walk through and don't stop.... we don't know them.

*[Qamar, Public, 40-49, Somali, Drummond Street space]*

It is well established in the literature that interactions among adults are catalysed by the kids, but the constraints on cross-tenure mixing are intersecting and complex in nature. They include the broader social characteristics defined at the outset. Consistent with the case study findings of Butler with Robson (2003), Beckhoven and Van Kempen (2003) and Arthurson (2010), public and private tenants of the estate appear to occupy different 'life-world spheres' for reasons related to but not necessarily dependent on their housing tenure. This is evidenced in the on/off estate social networks and activities of residents. The differences reduce the potential of cross-tenure social mixing on the estate in meaningful ways:

I interact mostly with Africans and particularly African Muslim women from the flats... it's usually small talk about children. If I have time, we may talk about personal matters. *[Aysha, Public, 40- 49, Ethiopian, Elgin/Nicholson Streets space]*

We only moved here two years ago so most of my social networks are based on where I used to live ... plus with work and all, you don't have that much time to interact with one anyone here really *[Matthew, Private, 40-49, White-Australian, Drummond Street space]*

Residents in the 20-49 age bracket irrespective of tenure tend to use the on-estate open space as thoroughfares and conduct most of their social activity off the estate, with the fast paced nature of city living often being raised by residents of both tenures in this bracket as an explanation for this:

Most of my networks now that I've grown up and life's gotten more hectic are outside the estate. Things aren't the same like they used to be. A lot of the old people aren't around anymore... facilities aren't there... back in the day people from the estate and off it from my communal ties, used to come and use the basketball court. Now I usually walk through here *[Farah, Public, 20-29, Somali, Drummond Street space]*.

It also has to do with the mentality of this country and especially in city areas... everything is so fast... people have told me 'I've been living in this area for 20 years and I don't know my neighbours'. *[James, Public, 50-64, Vietnamese, Drummond Street space]*



I walk my dog in the park and some of the kids come by and say hi to pat the dog... other than that I rarely interact with other tenants. Mostly just talk to my family here or go see the family in Fitzroy [*Tam, Public, 30-39, Chilean, Drummond Street space*]

The exceptions to this are public tenant mothers in the 20-49 age bracket who, alongside 50+ public tenants, tend to use the open spaces on the estate in a more sustained way. On close examination, this usage also occurs along segregated lines, with the mothers interviewed without exception interacting with mothers from similar cultural backgrounds, often citing comfort levels in their explanation for this. What brings these mothers together goes beyond their status as mothers. Gender, language and religious beliefs are also central:

I interact with people of my cultural background because we have understanding of each other... we face similar struggles. [*Nasra, Public, 40-49, Somali, Elgin/Nicholson Streets space*]

My social networks are both here and outside... here it's mostly other African women with children, especially Eritrean women. We bring our kids downstairs and talk... and outside it's mostly again the Eritrean and also Muslim communities I socialise with. [*Maryam, 30-39, Public, Eritrean, Drummond Street space*]

I come here most days, mostly in the afternoons and evenings... mostly talk to other residents... they are mostly Muslim... especially with my friend Mustafa. We talk about life, family, politics... like Labor, Liberal and things happening in the Middle East. [*Lokman, 65+, Public, Turkish, Drummond Street space*]

People group themselves on the estate mainly on ethnic grounds. Some people might think it's more about religion. Yeah, it might be that one ethnic group might be mostly part of one religious group, but it's more of an ethnic thing. You will see more of the Ethiopians interacting even if they might be Christian or Muslim, the Somalis interacting with the Somalis, the Vietnamese interacting with the Vietnamese... [*Hamdi Ali, current service provider*]

These findings are in line with Tomlins et al.'s (2002) argument that minority communities, in this case ethnic and religious communities, tend to concentrate due to the perceived social benefits gained from such association. They also indicate intersections with other social categories. Stigmatisation by

private residents of public housing tenants also appears as a factor in the social tectonics. While private tenant respondents are generally in favour of cross-tenure mixing, they are hesitant about the issue of 'salt and pepper', citing issues of crime and safety in their discussion of this arrangement:

The only way I would be supportive of such a thing would be if they did some type of screening... you know to make sure that the people moving in are decent people and not criminals or drug users. That would be my biggest concern on this 'salt and pepper' thing... it could easily lead to unsafe situations for the rest of us and I didn't move here for that.

*[Brianna, Private, 40-49, Macedonian, Elgin/Nicholson Streets space]*

The lack of social interaction across tenure groups is reinforced by the lack of integration in housing and shared spaces. Public and private residents share no common entries and exits, allowing residents to enter and exit their buildings without ever having to see residents of the other tenure, preventing what Amin (2002) describes as 'prosaic negotiations'. In the case of the Lygon/Rathdowne apartment complexes, the private courtyard space was noted by one public housing tenant as having the potential to engender cross-tenure mixing had all residents been given access.

We assumed when we moved in that the courtyard would be open to everyone, and if we're all facing each other, everyone would have access to it... it would have been a perfect space to mix if it was ever going to happen. But we don't have access to it. When I go to balcony, I see them talking to each other from their balconies on different floors, but I've never seen them interacting with public residents. And you can't really, because there's a little barrier that prevents public residents from seeing into that courtyard from the ground floor. *[Khadija, Public, 20-29, Somali, Drummond Street space]*

At the Drummond street complexes, there was a battle over a garden. The developer would not allow public housing residents access to the garden but the private tenants could all access it. We fought long and hard because the developer had said it would be a socially inclusive project. And they had clearly changed their minds... It was more of the developer saying that we have sold this land to this company and they have the right to decide who they will and will not allow on their property. So we felt that was creating an artificial barrier between the communities. *[Mary Parfrey, current service provider]*

This situation is exacerbated by the absence of organised communal activities on the estate, the result of the DHS refusing responsibility for this, according to one service provider:



There was a consistent drive from the community groups, such as Church of All Nations, the Neighbourhood Learning Centre and St. Jude's Church to have social inclusion programs on the estate. And it wasn't out right rejected by the government, but the DHS said it wasn't its responsibility. [*'Tony', ex-service provider 2007-2011*]

I moved here a year ago and I haven't seen much promotion of community events to bring people together... maybe if that was done there would be more interaction between the different groups here [*Tanya, Private, 20-29, Malaysian, Elgin/Nicholson Streets space*]

These findings accord with the conclusions of Briggs (1998), Jupp (1999) and Levin et al. (2014) on the importance of design in at least creating the conditions for cross-tenure and cross-group mixing.

Most respondents were in favour of increased cross-tenure interaction:

I think it's great. I don't think there's any drawbacks in expanding your networks. When I step outside and get to know more people, I usually do it for professional networks. So there could be some benefit there. [*Mussa, Public, 20-29, Somali, Elgin/Nicholson Streets space*]

The biggest benefit I can see from more mixing here would be we could all share our cultures and experiences in life... it'd benefit all of us. [*Nat, Private, 40-49, Chinese, Drummond Street space*]

We can't just smack them together and see what happens... It has to be a gradual understanding of each other... just can't force people into the same space and expect them to mix. [*John, Public, 65+, White-Australian, Drummond Street space*]

Some respondents did however express reservations about the assumed benefits of social mixing:

I think if everyone is all minorities, I think mixing can happen, but in other cases, you'd need to do a lot of work. You need to educate white people... like they are the hardest community to mix with. They still think it's their country and they are better than everyone else. They'll be advantaged by society... to be honest I don't think mixing with them can happen till they get educated [*Mohammed, Public, 20-29, Eritrean, Elgin/Nicholson Streets space*]

I figure it's wrong for me to think this... but you know, there's that mainstream perception of public housing as places of crime and drug peddling... and it's hard to get over those thoughts, which isn't good because it leads one to hesitate to interact with residents from there.

*[Catherine, Private, 30-39, White-Australian, Drummond Street space]*

Respondents also have different views on the necessity of cross-tenure mixing for social harmony:

The no-mixing creates a division in the community. It's a negative thing, because you want a community to be united. It's hard to explain... You don't want people to be segregated like apartheid South Africa. *[Rakim, Public, 20-29, Somali, Drummond Street space]*

I think two groups can exist side by side with minimal mingling but it's not like one big community. It's just two separate communities... mixing doesn't also mean that you become one and the same thing. It doesn't mean different cultures will be diluted or assimilated or things of that sort. It can be a mutual respect thing. For it to be a community there has to be a fair degree of mixing. If it's minimal, then there is no community. *[Thomas, Private, 20-29, White-Australian, off-estate].*

Mixing is not the most important thing... we've lived in Carlton for 20 plus years, we've had private tenants living close by, in the houses, and they've left us alone and we've left them alone and we've lived perfectly... it wasn't a problem. People can use spaces separately... I don't think you need to mix to be in relative harmony. You just need two-way respect *[Samira, Public, 30-39, Somali, Drummond Street space]*

I don't think social mixing is a pre-requisite to social harmony. What is more important to creating that, is the government providing services that are common to everyone. *[Hamdi Ali, current service provider]*

This raises the question: would there be a significant increase in cross-tenure mixing if the design of the new housing complexes were more integrated and communal spaces and shared activities were facilitated? It is likely that even if they were, the delineated nature of intra-public housing social mixing along primarily cultural and religious lines would continue. Those public tenants interviewed who do not mix beyond their cultural and religious group have shared the same buildings and open spaces for sometimes many years. If free-flowing social mixing was not occurring across these lines in a situation of shared space and common tenure, it is possible that cross-tenure mixing will never

be significant. This finding supports Galster's (2007) argument that social mix policies ignore fundamental social and economic realities. It suggests that the link between physical and socialities is weak, and that the 'rub-off' effects of social mix for public tenants – the mitigation of negative neighbourhood effects (even if they exist), the benefits of role-modelling, social mobility, job opportunities and so on – are unlikely to materialise.

### **Why do we need social mix?**

The original basketball court was demolished during the redevelopment, and the basketballers dispersed to other inner-city arenas. A replacement court was eventually built, but the culture of the estate has changed irrevocably. The lighting goes off soon after dark. Abdullahi says the old court was a central socialisation area for many of the boys on the estate:

There was a sheltered seating place and seating all around where people would sit for long periods of time watching the play. Every summer a whole lot of people would come down and play as late as 1-2 am, with the mothers and younger kids of the estate cooling off in the park (because it gets cooking upstairs). The court wasn't merely a place people played basketball – it was a community hub. The late summer nights are no more. The new court has this very clean, sterile look to it, and I think this might play a part in why it is not as popular as it used to be. Certainly for me, the old vibe was far more comfortable. The old courts were more than just courts, and I think the aesthetics contributed to this.

It is in this vein that we return to the question, why do we need social mix? The contention that social mix policies help counteract social disadvantage, irrespective of the veracity of that claim, is premised on actual social mixing, and the evidence suggests there is little basis for assuming that this does or will occur on the existing Carlton estate, at least. Creating the conditions for social mixing in new developments for new communities, through a genuine mix of tenures and opportunities for interaction and prosaic negotiations, is an innocuous if not laudable objective if no harm is done. On the Carlton estate, these conditions have not been created.

For those public housing tenants permanently displaced from the estate (to whom DHS has consistently denied research access) and for the community that formerly existed, it is reasonable to conclude that harm has been done. The basketballers have moved off the estate for their social activities, which continue to be defined by culture, religion and gender. For them, a further question remains: why do we even need social mixing? The tenant responses in this study indicate

that social mixing as a goal is not universally cherished, with several respondents proposing that mutual respect, even distance, is more necessary for social harmony (in line with the conclusions of Allen et al. 2005). Social mixing can be seen as an idea that reflects a liberal middle-class desire for diversity in the city (Lees 2008) but is not necessarily a good in itself, and certainly not a prerequisite for social harmony.

In any event it appears that in the course of the Carlton estate redevelopment project, the public and private partners agreed that the goal of social mix was dispensable. As the Kensington and Carlton redevelopments proceeded against the backdrop of the GFC, the viability of the developers became paramount. The private housing yield on both the Kensington and Carlton estates increased, we can presume to increase returns and ensure the developers would continue to completion. The final design of both estates, with separated tenure types and facilities and an increase in the concentration of public housing tenants on the public land that remained, reflected the concern that a fully integrated, socially mixed redevelopment would hurt the marketability of the private housing. As the responsible governments were entirely dependent on the private partner completing the project, the references to social mix slipped away.

The interviews corroborate this theory:

Most of the benefits that were spoken about the start were about community harmony and integration. After that, it became more about the physical benefits of the project... They also didn't really talk about improving services. [*Hamdi Ali, current service provider*]

I didn't hear much about the social mix model in the meetings I attended. They didn't mention many benefits outside of the physical benefits. The only times they espoused social benefits was when the Minister was presenting. [*Justine, ex-service provider*]

I think the marketability of the new housing products was a factor also. The thing that was discussed at the time was that whoever owned the private building wanted to sell a whole floor and felt that telling private tenants that 'hey you have public residents on both sides of you' would lead to them not buying in. Living next to public housing was definitely seen as undesirable. [*Mary Parfrey, current service provider*]

The representative from the company was clear that we would be separate from the public housing part; we could enter and exit the building without ever having to see them (public housing tenants). [*Jacob, Private, 50-64, White-Australian*]

Also a representative from the property developer said he had a duty to protect the private people from the public housing people... he didn't elaborate on what he meant and we didn't take it as a kind or accurate thing to say. [*Mary Parfrey, current service provider*]

If you had shared car parks, paths and other shared amenities, then that would entail shared payments between the government and the body corporate, which in the government's eyes would overcomplicate the financials of it all. [*Robert Pradolin, General Manager at Australand*]

The final housing arrangements tell a story of financial imperatives dominating the social agenda. The sale of public land funded the replacement of an ageing housing stock with new, aesthetically pleasing public housing and landscaped open spaces that promote the success of the model. The public housing is indistinguishable from the new private housing and the whole estate is integrated with the surrounding middle-class neighbourhood. The public housing is strictly separated from the private housing to ensure maximum returns to the developers: on the Carlton estate sales revenue was projected to exceed \$300 million (Australand 2009b). The concentration of disadvantage (public housing) increased in a smaller area, and an estimated 146 public tenancies was lost. The public tenants who live on the redeveloped Carlton and Kensington estates are of course delighted to have new housing, but this could have been funded and built by the state, indistinguishable from private housing elsewhere in the neighbourhood. It is not lost on anyone that there are fewer public tenants in Carlton and Kensington, and that they do not mix socially with their private neighbours any more or less than they did before.

Why then was the policy emphasis on social mix? Why was the social mix rhetoric employed at all? We suggest it's because the more accurate narrative – of funding new housing by privatising public land and displacing public tenants, and improving the estate grounds while substantially increasing housing densities – is politically unacceptable. Even the middle-class gentrifiers who would benefit from the integration of the estates into the wider neighbourhood might balk at the truth, and prefer that their “liberal desires ... for difference and diversity in the city” (Lees 2008, p. 2449) be sweetened by talk of social mix and its benefits for the poor.

The façade has been hard to maintain. The transfer of public land into private ownership, the losses of public tenancies and separation of public and private residents on the Kensington and Carlton estates have led to public questioning of the social mix narrative – of its veracity at least, if not its flawed premises (Cook 2013a; 2013b; ABC Radio Melbourne 2013). Government efforts to redevelop Fitzroy and Richmond in 2013 were met with such opposition that the program roll-outs on those estates have been indefinitely deferred (De Geest 2013; Bolton 2013). While it is clear that prime urban real estate has indeed been recaptured in Kensington and Carlton, it is far from clear that the partial privatisation of the rest of Melbourne’s public housing estates will roll out smoothly.

## Conclusions

The findings of this study add to the growing body of literature that challenges the premise of social mix policies as a solution to the socio-economic ‘problems’ facing low-income neighbourhoods. Further, they highlight that the issues facing inner-city public housing estates in Melbourne – of poverty and structural inequality – are not being solved but dispersed and spatially minimised in a context of private sector interest in valuable inner-city land. It is apparent that the primary beneficiaries of the public housing redevelopment model in inner-Melbourne are, firstly, the state government, with newer stock to manage from low financial outlay; and the developers and surrounding property owners. The low-income communities the model is purported to support see little benefit other than to those individuals who are lucky enough to move into the substantially improved if diminished stock of public housing in the area. This is important. A fully-funded state housing replacement program, partnering with non-profit housing associations if necessary and focused on increasing the social housing stock, would deliver better results. The privatisation of sections of public housing estates under the guise of social mix is unlikely to deliver the progressive social agenda suggested at its outset. This is becoming more obvious as the redevelopment program proceeds, and the outcomes are far from certain.

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