History of 35–85 Brougham Street, Woolloomooloo

Once wholly a residential suburb, the Woolloomooloo Basin has been eroded over the years by small and piecemeal industrial and commercial intrusions.

The first of the non-residential incursions was made before 1920, so that gradually the district has become a jumble of terraces and small businesses, flats and government workshops.

Particularly since the war, the 'Loo has been the subject of confused planning and a variety of proposals for redevelopment which have often been criticised for overlooking the people who lived there.

And though many of the people of the area have left in recent years, there are many who are still there — families who have lived in the 'Loo for three and four generations.

It's the people who have helped Woolloomooloo retain its character through the intrusions and confused planning. The project being designed now aims to return the basin to its residential state.

WOOLLOOMOOLOO NEWSLETTER AUGUST 1975   PAGE 4

A report prepared for Shakeup Architecture by Dr Naomi Parry, Professional Historian

11 November 2019

35–85 Brougham Street, Woolloomooloo

The townhouse complex at 35–85 Brougham Street is on the eastern, waterside end of the Woolloomooloo Basin, near the cliff face that separates the Basin from Potts Point. It is in two sections – the main eastern section fronts Brougham Street, just across from Butler Stairs, which lead up the cliff to Victoria Street. The smaller western section faces the line of McElhone Street. Between the two sections is a walkway filled with jacarandas, creepers and balconies of flowers in hanging pots: 'a clandestine rainforest … a domestic version of the hanging gardens of Babylon.'[1]

The northern end of the complex is separated by a pathway from St Columbkille's Catholic Church, which sits at the intersection of Pring Street and McElhone, opposite 'Mariner's Court' (the Dalgety Building and former Royal Australian Navy Stationery Depot). On the south is Sydney Place. The townhouses overlook the Woolloomooloo Playground and Dowling Street, and beyond to what is now the Sydney Distance Education High School and Plunkett Street Public School. This is and has always been the heart of Woolloomooloo, Sydney's second oldest suburb – the 'Loo.

The site of 35–85 Brougham Street was hotly contested in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Developers, with the full support of Sydney City Council and the NSW Government of Robert Askin, tried to overwrite this enclave of working people's terraces, small businesses and pubs with high-rise office buildings, retail malls and hotels. Woolloomooloo and Victoria Street became the epicentre of vociferous protests while developers exerted financial and physical pressure on residents to leave. The Woolloomooloo Residents Action Group and the Builders' Labourers' Federation won over the Whitlam Government, who funded the NSW Housing Commission to work with the community to renovate existing housing in Woolloomooloo and replace lost housing with buildings that were sympathetic in scale to the surrounding terraces.

The townhouses at 39–85 Brougham Street were one of these infill projects, built in 1980–1981 on the abandoned WH Lober's Garage the International Radio Company, which had displaced housing in the 1940s. The Brougham and McElhone Street townhouses mark the return of Woolloomooloo to community and innovation in social housing.

Main themes

- Brougham Street has housed working Woolloomooloo families for nearly 200 years
- The site was at the epicentre of the Green Bans and represents the victory of community organisation against gentrification in Woolloomooloo and the inner-city
- The buildings, designed by the firm of eminent architect Philip Cox, are an example of collaborative and consultative Housing Department policy.

[1] L Nowra, *Woolloomooloo*, Sydney: UNSW Press, 2017, Kobo ebook

Gadigal land – The Sydney Tribe

Woolloomooloo occupies the land of the Gadigal people (also spelled as Cadigal and Caddiegal) who were one of the 19 language groups that made up the Eora nation of the area Europeans called Port Jackson, which is now known as Sydney.

Gadigal country stretched from Port Jackson and South Head south through what is now Surry Hills and Redfern to Petersham and Marrickville to the Cooks River. Midden and campsites like Yurong Point (Mrs Macquarie's Chair), Tinker's Well at Pyrmont, Moore's Wharf at Miller's Point, Lilyvale Camp in The Rocks, Blackwattle Creek at Sydney University and Ultimo and an Aboriginal campsite at Junction Lane in Woolloomooloo (discovered near the Eastern Distributor in the 1990s) speak to deep time.[2]

Shirley Fitzgerald in *The Dictionary of Sydney* notes the importance of Woolloomooloo to the Gadigal people as a hunting ground and sedentary residential space is referred to in various early records. When the Colonial commissary-general John Palmer was granted land in the basin in 1793, he built a house, Woollomoola, on an important Aboriginal ceremonial ground, and though it became a centre of fashionable entertaining for the elite of the Sydney community, local Aboriginal people continued to congregate there.[3]

Some of the earliest maps label Woolloomooloo as Garden Cove, or Garden Island Cove, as it was adjacent to Garden Island, but 1791 recordings of local names assigned *Ba-ing-hoe* for the island and *Walla-mool*, *Woollamoola* or *Walla-bah-mulla* for the valley.[4]

When the First Fleet arrived in Port Jackson on 26 January 1788 there were 1500 Aboriginal people within a 10 mile radius of Port Jackson in 1788. In the first years of contact, smallpox dramatically reduced the local Aboriginal community. Almost half of Sydney's Aboriginal population died in the smallpox epidemic of 1789 and by 1788 just three Gadigal men were thought to survive.[5] Despite this, Woolloomooloo remained a significant place for Aboriginal people, and many of the Aboriginal members of early society in the Colony of New South Wales retreated there at night to camp and fish, often in their hundreds. Botany Bay man Mahroot lived with David Allen at

---

[2] P Irish and T Goward, Yurong Cave and Yurong Midden, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/yurong-cave-yurong-midden/, Tinkers Well, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/tinkers-well/; Moore Park, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/moore-park-campsite/; Lilyvale Camp, sydneybarani.com.au/sites/campsite-lilyvale/; https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/blackwattle-creek/; Junction Lane Camp, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/junction-lane-campsite/

[3] Shirley Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo

[4] Anon, 'Vocabulary of the Language of N.S.Wales in the neighbourhood of Sydney (Native and English, but not alphabetical)', MS41645(c), Marsden Collection, School of Oriental and African Languages, University of London, London, c1790, cited Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo

[5] A Heiss and MJ Gibson, Barani, Aboriginal People and Place, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/aboriginal-people-and-place/

Woollomoola in the 1810s. Edward Riley, who bought Palmer out, is said to have accepted Aboriginal people as nightly residents in the areas surrounding the house and Gadigal possibly shared The Fig Tree Baths (on the site of the Domain Baths [Andrew Boy Charlton Pool]) with colonists who used it for bathing.[6]

Paul Irish writes that the division of the area into stately villas in the 1820s and 1830s and its conversion to a residential suburb made it difficult for Aboriginal people to occupy the site, but their identity remained. Young Bungaree, son of the notorious local figure Bungaree, supervised ceremony in Woolloomooloo in the 1831:

> A "corrobbora" of the aborigines took place at Wooloomoolloo on Monday night. Young Bungaree did the honors of the ceremonies. Before the party broke up, his sable Majesty became done up with *bull*; and in consequence of some pranks played by him he was floored by a waddie, on which a regular melee ensued, the company espousing different sides of the question ; and after a hard fought battle they parted good friends, some of their *cobberas* having sustained considerable damage.[7]

There was a substantial independent campsite at Barcom Glen, near Rushcutters Bay.[8]

> A few individuals are briefly mentioned at this time, sometimes living with sympathetic Europeans, and more are likely to have at least passed through the area on their way to town from other settlements to the east such as Rushcutters Bay and Barcom Glen.[9]

Aboriginal people camped at Moore Park and Watson's Bay into the 1890s, until they were forced by government intervention to settle where Dharawal people were living at La Perouse.[10] In the twentieth century Woolloomooloo again became a centre of city life for Aboriginal people, as Irish notes:

> A century later in the 1970s and 1980s, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people began moving into community housing at Woolloomooloo and formed a new community. There are currently around 100 indigenous people living in the area, and their stories are only beginning to be explored.[11]

European arrival

To European eyes, the Woolloomooloo Basin was a swampy valley, drained by the Yurong Creek. It ended in mangroves and mudflats and was approached via a foot-track around the rim of the valley. Surveyor Thomas Mitchell formed the track into Woolloomooloo Road in 1831. The area

[6] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo
[7] *Sydney Herald*, cited P Irish, 'Woolloomooloo Bay, Woolloomooloo', Sydney Barani, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/woolloomooloo-bay/
[8] P Irish, Barcom Glen, https://www.sydneybarani.com.au/sites/barcom-glen/;
[9] P Irish, 'Woolloomooloo Bay, Woolloomooloo'
[10] Aborigines Welfare Board records cited by Naomi Parry, '"Such a longing": black and white children in welfare in NSW and Tasmania, 1880–1920, PhD Thesis, UNSW, 2007, p 169; see also M. Nugent, *Botany Bay: Where histories meet*, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), pp 45–50
[11] P Irish, 'Woolloomooloo Bay, Woolloomooloo'

flooded regularly and was a haunt of thieves. Still, it was fertile, and John Palmer, who was granted land in Woolloomooloo in 1793, was a successful farmer. He replaced native *melaleucas* and *casuarinas* with fruit trees and grew tobacco so well the valley was known as The Farm. His house Woollamoola bestowed its name on the whole area, including East Sydney and Darlinghurst.[12]

Figure 1: John Palmer's residence Woolloomooloo House, circa 1818, By Edward Charles Close
National Library of Australia [nla.pic-an4563834-s10]

The creation of Brougham Street

After 1822 Palmer sold out to Edward Riley who was piecing together a huge estate from the valley south into Surry Hills.[13] Riley's mental health was precarious and he committed suicide in the house at Woolloomooloo on 21 February 1825.[14] The next year, Governor Ralph Darling decided the area east of town would be a high status area and made land grants to his colleagues and friends who were required to build grand houses and landscape them to approved standards. In 1831, Justice Sir James Dowling was given the section bounded by William, Dowling and Victoria Streets, and gave a portion of his land for the creation of Victoria Street, Brougham Street (after Scottish jurist Lord Brougham), Duke Street and Forbes Street (in honour of the Chief Justice of NSW). Fine houses appeared on the elevated Woolloomooloo Heights (Victoria Street), appropriately renamed Darlinghurst Heights, but subdivisions occurred on the low land in the Basin and cottages began to appear on the eastern edge of the valley.[15]

---

[12] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo
[13] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo
[14] J Conway, 'Riley, Edward (1784–1825)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/riley-edward-2592/text3557.
[15] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo.

Figure 2: Riley Estate 1844. City of Sydney Historical Atlas, http://cdn.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/history/maps/518/518_001.pdf

Brougham Street is shown on a map made by the Commissioners of the Riley Estate in October 1844, which also shows it was divided into four blocks – at the waters' edge was land given to Bushby, then Spark, Stephen, Baxter, Hallen (who built Telford Lodge, the oldest surviving house in Woolloomooloo[16]) and, up at the corner of William Street, Sir John Dowling.

City of Sydney Assessment books show that Brougham Street in 1845 was a series of one, two and three-storey wooden and stone or brick dwellings, with shingle roofs. The largest houses were towards the water's edge. They included a three-storey, eight-roomed stone building with a coach house and stable at number 7, owned by Mrs Burdekin; a three-storey stone building at number 10, owned and occupied by Charles Wyndier; and a two-storey six-roomed house with a coach house and stable owned by William Riley at number 6. Most of the local property owners had Irish names – McGuire, Bryan, White, and Murphy.[17]

[16] State Heritage Register, Telford Lodge, 157–161 Brougham,
https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/heritageapp/ViewHeritageItemDetails.aspx?id=2420520
[17] City of Sydney Archives, Assessment Books 1845–1948, Cook Ward, 1845, CSA027200_032
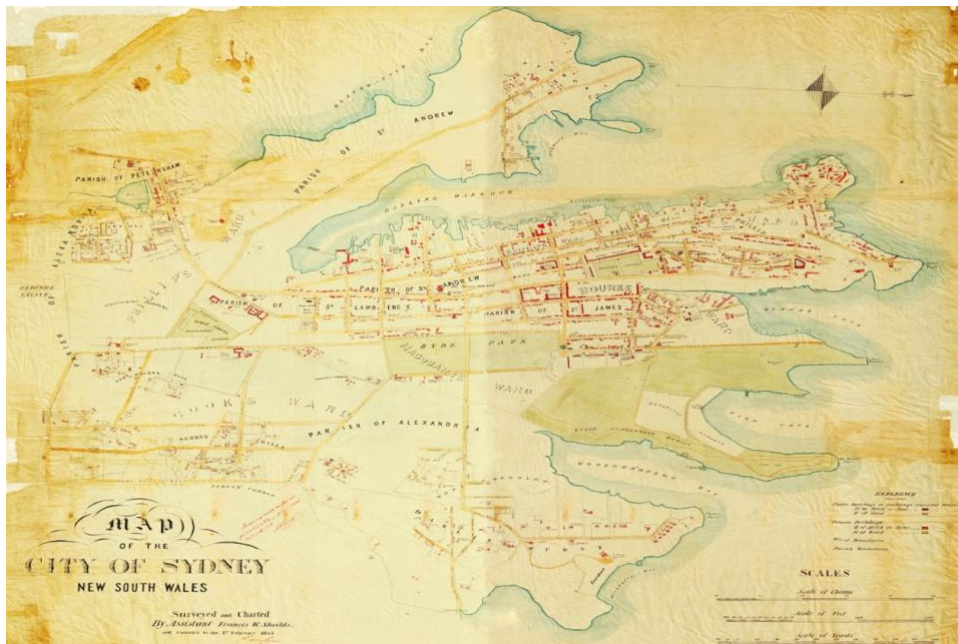
*Figure 3: City of Sydney 1845, Historical Atlas of Sydney, https://atlas.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/maps/city-of-sydney-sheilds-1845/
Brougham Street is marked in the bottom left corner.*

Figure 4: Residences in Brougham Street in the 1870s. The catalogue explains a typescript inscription with the item states "Home of M. Catley (Fernbank) (bookshop) / Fisherman's Hut Duke St. (?) Woolloomooloo". In Sands' Sydney Directory 1875, a John George Catley is listed at Brougham Street. In 1879, J. G. Cattley [i.e. Catley ?], wood & coal merchants, is listed at Fern Bank / Fernbank house, Brougham Street. State Library of NSW, Digital order no:a325062

Parts of Woolloomooloo remained fashionable and it was known for its pretty villas until the 1870s.[18] It was however, filling up.

18 Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo

Duke Street, now McElhone Street, first appears in rate books in 1855, at which time it was a series of one and two-storeyed brick and stone houses with three-to-four rooms each. Much of this area appears to have been owned by members of the Sheehy family.[19]

Social commentators like WS Jevons observed in the 1850s that the creek and air in Woolloomooloo were fouled and the laneways behind the houses were crammed with substandard dwellings. Judge, Duke and Brougham Streets were so narrow as to almost be considered lanes and were occupied by 'small second-class houses.'[20]

A working suburb

As the mangroves along the shoreline were drained in the 1850s and the land around where Sir John Young Crescent now runs was reclaimed, the suburb was pulled into a different shape. The installation of the semi-circular Cowper Wharf in 1866 led to the creation of new streets filled with small houses, pubs, brothels and billiard rooms. The Plunkett Street School was opened in 1855.[21] Woolloomooloo House was demolished to make way for smaller dwellings and many stately villas were turned into boarding houses.

Cowper Wharf was used by small coastal shippers, particularly timber traders, so the adjoining land became dotted with sawmills and timber yards and small-time boatbuilding. It was also the centre of Sydney's fishing trade and in 1872 the city council built a fish market at the corner of Plunkett and Bourke Streets, which operated until 1911. The presence of the fishery attracted Maltese and Italian families, with many of the latter from Calabria and Sicily. This historic connection was reinforced by the arrival of immigrants from Mediterranean countries after World War II.[22]

At the beginning of the twentieth century Woolloomooloo was the centre of shipping in Sydney, especially once Garden Island began to develop as a base for the nascent Royal Australian Navy. The Sydney Harbour Trust built the finger wharf on the Woolloomooloo shoreline between 1911 and 1915. It was the largest wooden-piled building and the largest finger wharf in the world.[23] Woolloomooloo became the departure point for the ships that took soldiers to the Great War and World War II, and the arrival point for overseas passenger and freight vessels.

---

[19] City of Sydney Archives, Assessment Books 1845–1948, Fitzroy Ward, 1855, CSA027274_092

[20] WS Jevons, Remarks Upon the Social Map of Sydney, Investigation into the City of Sydney 1858 and Pyrmont, Glebe, Camperdown, Sydney, 1858, cited Nowra, Woolloomooloo.

[21] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo

[22] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo

[23] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo
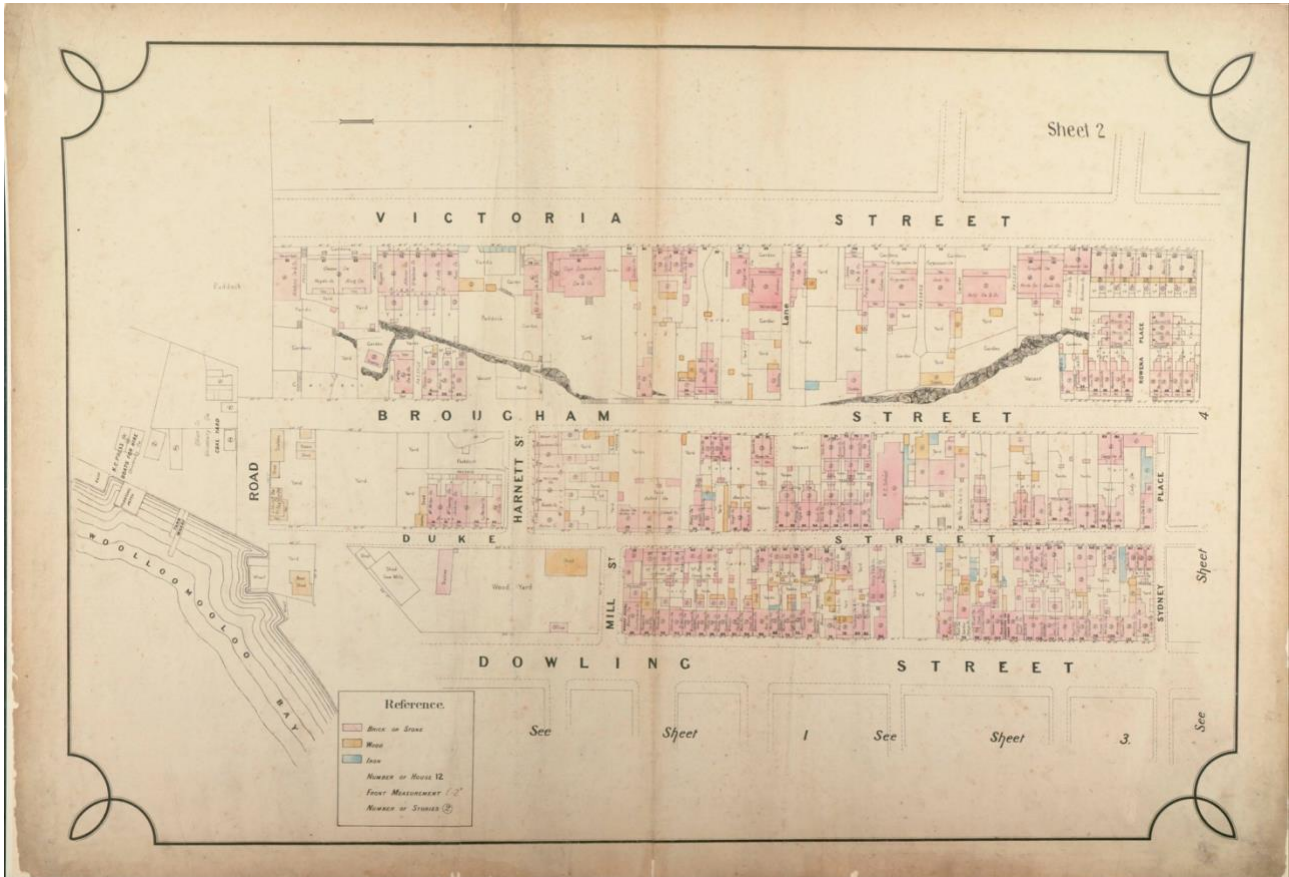
A working class community

Figure 5: City of Sydney Archives, Plans of Sydney (Rygate & West), 1888, Map 2

The busy wharves and associated industries entrenched the area as a working class suburb, where men, women and children worked in honest trades, although the activity at the wharf also encouraged larrikinism, fights, and brothels and lent the suburb a bad name. Rents declined, and landlords stopped maintaining their properties.[24] Certain residents began to petition for the renaming of the suburb, in an effort to redeem its reputation, but to no avail.[25]

Cheap rent and the area's proximity to the city encouraged those who felt moved to respond to social needs to set up shop in Woolloomooloo. The Central Mission Home for Neglected Children, also known as Waverley House and the Home for Waifs and Strays, ran in Woolloomooloo Street (Cathedral Street) from 1893 until 1900.[26] The Royal Blind Society was established on William Street in 1878. St Columbkille's Catholic church was built in 1885 and served as the spiritual base for the Irish, Italian and Maltese communities that called the area home. Sydney's first creche for

---

[24] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo

[25] "Re-Christening Woolloomooloo." *Truth* 8 April 1894: 5. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article167949549; "THE NAME WOOLLOOMOOLOO." *The Sydney Morning Herald* 27 February 1907: 12. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14832381.

[26] M Downing and N Parry, Central Mission Home for Neglected Children, Find & Connect web resource, https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/ref/nsw/biogs/NE00281b.htm

the children of working women, the Sydney Day Nursery (SDN), was founded in Dowling Street in 1905 and SDN retains a facility there to this day.[27]

Brougham Street was progressively subdivided over the later nineteenth century. Rate books show that by 1888 the street was almost entirely rental properties with the occasional workshop or yard.[28] People who had moved into the area in the 1850s, like John and Mary Coady, had become landlords in Duke and Brougham Street by the 1890s.
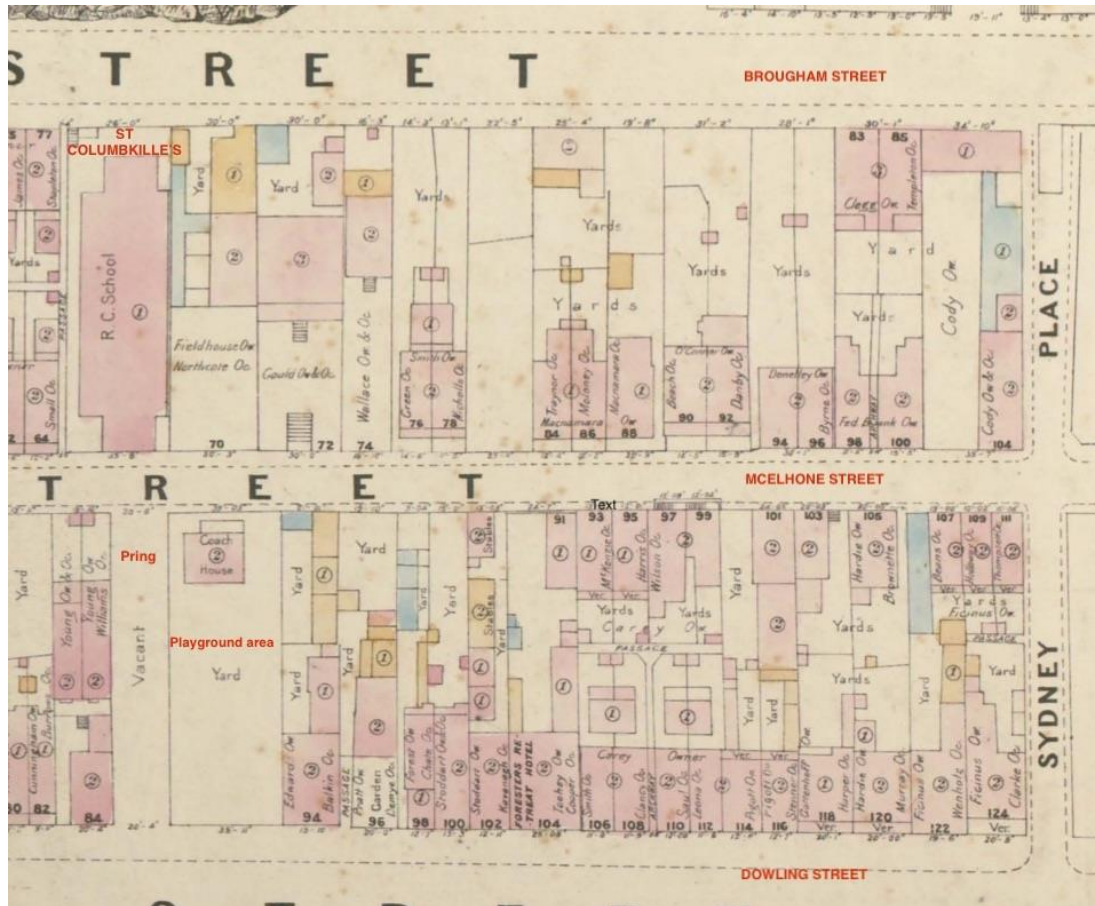
Figure 6: detail of Rygate and West map showing land now taken up by 35–85 Brougham Street and the Dowling Street Playground

In 1911 the Coady estate held of the eastern side of Duke Street. At the corner of Duke and Pring Streets (61–63 Duke Street) was a William Coad. These buildings were recorded in the City of Sydney's demolition books in 1912.[29]

27 Sydney Day Nursery, History, https://www.sdn.org.au/about-sdn/sdn-history/
28 CSA Assessment Books 2845–1948, Fitzroy 1891, CSA027284
29 CSA Assessment Books 2845–1948, Fitzroy 1911, CSA027289

9

Figure 7: 61–63 Duke Street (corner of Pring) 16 July 1912 Demolition books, 1900-1949, CRS 51/2764, City of Sydney Archives

Figure 8: Cnr McElhone (formerly Duke Street) and Pring Streets, Woolloomooloo – facing away from St Columbkille's and the site of the Dalgety Building and Royal Australian Navy Stationery Depot. Children line up across road with vacant block on R and a variety of houses. 16 July 1912. Demolition books, 1900-1949, CRS 51/2765, City of Sydney Archives

By 1914 the Municipal Council of Sydney owned much of Duke Street, including the area that is now the Dowling Street Playground, although at that time the houses were still standing and were tenanted to a number of different people, including Italians and Maltese.[30] The Commercial Building and Investment Company owned much of the upper part of Brougham Street and a large section of the lower part was controlled by the prominent Le Gay Brereton family, as well a few landlords with smaller holdings.[31] Duke Street was renamed McElhone Street around 1924, in honour of John McElhone, a Surry Hills-born Irish Catholic who had represented Fitzroy Ward on

[30] CSA Assessment Books, Fitzroy 1914, CSA027290_065
[31] CSA Assessment Books, Fitzroy 1914, CSA027290

the City Council and had been Member for East Sydney in the NSW Parliament. John Coady had supported his campaigns.[32]

Post-war industrialisation: Lober & Co and the International Radio Company

After World War II private developers began to buy up ramshackle houses and coal and timber yards and consolidate them into industrial lots for shops, printeries, and small factories. In 1932 WH Lober & Company Ltd, which had automobile showrooms on William Street, rented a store and garage at 80–92 McElhone Street from Roy W Sandford. By 1948 Lober owned 80–104 McElhone (adjoining Sydney Place) and had acquired a number of houses, garages, wood and coal yards and sheds in Brougham Street. Lober Service Ltd appears to have demolished these properties and built its store and garage over the whole block. In 1948, 83–85 Brougham was listed as Metal Craft Engineering Company, owned by WH Lober & Company.[33]

In 1948 the International Radio Company bought 81 Brougham and 76–78 McElhone, which it rented to Mary Vescia and Madge Judd.[34] The International Radio Co erected a multi-storey building across the block, from McElhone to Brougham. City of Sydney Building Surveyor's detail sheets show the International Radio Co, the narrow houses of Vescia and Judd, and Lober's blocks.
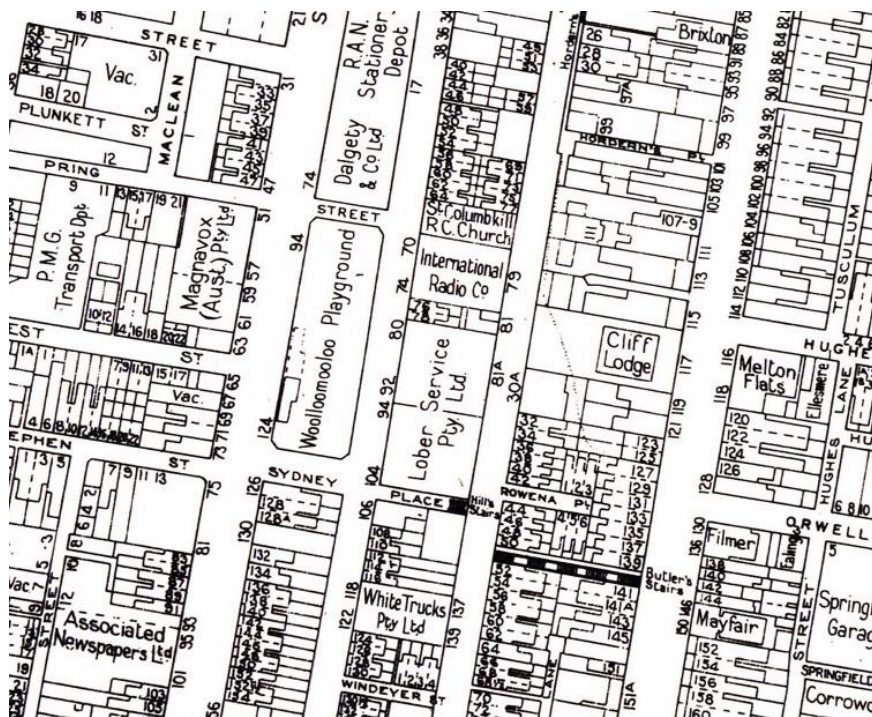
Figure 9: Detail from City of Sydney – Building Surveyor's Detail Sheets, 1949–1972, showing the site in approximately 1949. https://atlas.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/maps/city-of-sydney-building-surveyors-detail-sheets-1949-1972/.

---

[32] M Rutledge, 'McElhone, John (1833–1898)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/mcelhone-john-4087/text6529; "FITZROY WARD." *The Sydney Morning Herald (NSW : 1842 - 1954)* 26 November 1902: 12. http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article14516328.

[33] CSA Assessment Books, Fitzroy 1932, CSA027928_35; Fitzroy 1945, CSA027302_036; Fitzroy 1945, CSA-27303_040

[34] CSA Assessment Books, Fitzroy 1932, CSA027928_35; Fitzroy 1945, CSA027302_036; Fitzroy 1945, CSA-27303_039.

Figure 10: Looking E along Pring Street from Dowling St towards McElhone St, showing the RAN Depot (48-74 Dowling St) at L and Woolloomooloo Playground on L. St. Columbkille's Church and International Radio Co (70-74 McElhone St) are visible in distance. 23 August 1968, Sydney Reference Collection, SRC10574. Originally from file CRS 144, 0864/68, City of Sydney Archives.

Figure 11: View S from Pring St of Eastern side of McElhone St. WH Lober and Co Motor Vehicles on L. 23 August 1968, SRC8085. Originally from file 0864/68 (CRS 144). City of Sydney Archives.

Figure 12: WH Lober and Co Motor Vehicles, 80–104 McElhone St, Woolloomooloo. Looking N on Eastern side of street, 23 August 1968, Sydney Reference Collection, SRC8089. Originally from file 0864/68 (CRS 144), City of Sydney Archives.

Figure 13: Woolloomooloo Playground, 036/036610, 94–124 Dowling St. View looking easterly showing children (boys and girls) playing on equipment (slide and swings) & mural on wall. WH Lober & Co Pty Ltd (80-92 McElhone St) at rear with signs for ' Cadillac' & 'Holden'. 1960s, Sydney Reference Collection, SRC10208, City of Sydney Archives.

Figure 14: View looking S from elevated position at rear of No. 117 Victoria St. International Radio Co in foreground. Far L background Travelodge/Top of the Cross restaurant. 26 August 1968, Sydney Reference Collection, SRC14287. Originally from file CRS 144, 0864/68. City of Sydney Archives.

The Woolloomooloo Redevelopment Project

Woolloomooloo, like most of the inner-city, became run down during and after World War II. As Fitzgerald writes:

> Housing was crowded with too many children and boarders were taken in to supplement the household finances. Landlords would not get the repairs done. Sly grog traders and dealers in other drugs thrived in a world where pubs were legally shut from 6 pm. It was a world of street gangs and colourful cops, of a good deal of misery and a good deal of community cheerfulness and mutual support.[35]

At the end of World War II, McKell's Labor government estimated that New South Wales was 90,000 short of what was needed to house returning soldiers and the resulting baby boom, let alone displaced persons migrating from Europe, people from regional and rural areas relocating to the city, and a new wave of British migrants. The NSW Housing Commission was created in 1941 and began building new estates in Mt Druitt, Campbelltown and Green Valley.[36] Sydney City Council, meanwhile, wanted to clear slums.[37] It resumed thousands of houses in Surry Hills and Redfern/Waterloo, which the Housing Commission used to build its monumental Northcott Estate

[35] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo
[36] M Hogan, Postwar emergency housing in Sydney - the camps that never were, *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Vol. 97, No. 1, June 2011: 7–24.
[37] C Keating, Surry Hills: the city's backyard, 103, 108–109

and the tower blocks in Waterloo, permanently reshaping whole areas and obliterating communities.

Woolloomooloo and The Rocks, so close to the Central Business District, were not only considered slums but their proximity to centre of Sydney made them targets for private developers. Jack Mundey, the secretary of the Builders' Labourers' Federation, said the 1960s and 1970s was 'like a fishing ground' for overseas interests and banks, and the high-rise office towers they created quickly blotted out most of the CBD. Having exploited the city, developers began eyeing off surrounding areas of low-income housing, and trying to push people out.[38]

Woolloomooloo had been slated for redevelopment as early as 1951, when the County of Cumberland planning scheme zoned it as a 'county centre'.[39] In 1959 the first local draft planning scheme for Woolloomooloo rezoned the area as residential or industrial and in 1964 it was rezoned again as 'comprehensive redevelopment', with all development to be approved by the state government. In May 1965 the Liberal Party won government under the leadership of Robert Askin – a developer's politician, if there ever was one. According to Louis Nowra, the local Labor MP from 1956 to 1973 Albert Sloss, was also all too happy to go along with redevelopment plans.[40]

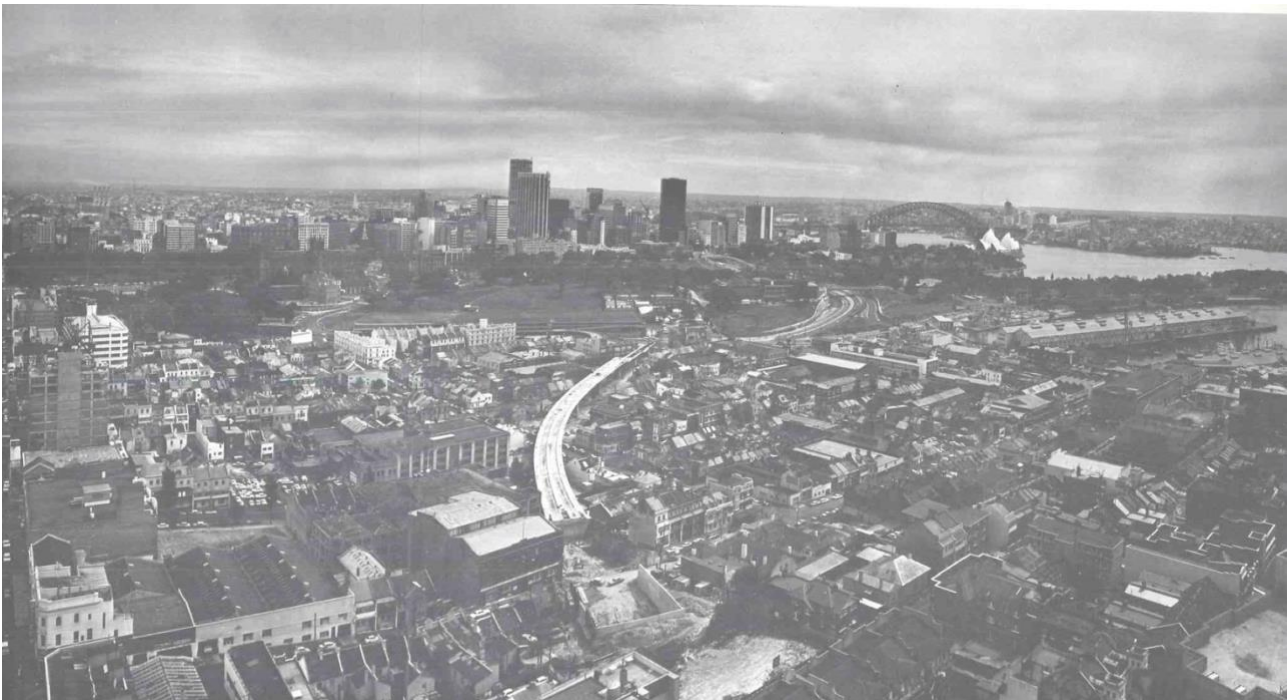*Figure 15: Woolloomooloo in 1971, showing the Eastern Suburbs Railway viaduct. Eric White, The Woolloomooloo Redevelopment Project: Project at a glance, 1971*

[38] D White, P Fiske and P Gailey, *Woolloomooloo* (1978) [film], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4Pc4ZK6s-M
[39] NSW Housing Commission, *Woolloomooloo Development Newsletter*, August 1975, page 2
[40] Nowra, Woolloomooloo.

In 1969 the City of Sydney Council commissioned technical staff of the State Planning Authority to prepare a plan for Woolloomooloo, which they adopted in August. In 1972, houses were resumed for the Eastern Suburbs Railway extension, and its viaducts cast a shadow on the cottages that remained. The City of Sydney Planning Scheme endorsed the zoning of Woolloomooloo as a 'county centre' in 1971.[41]

The Woolloomooloo Redevelopment Project

> For 178 years, Woolloomooloo has existed with-out any particular identity—ignored like an ugly step-daughter. It achieved its only recognition during an 1880 period when it became a centre for crime and vice. Even in the early days of the colony, no one planned for the development of Woolloomooloo as a suburb. It grew up like an undisciplined child … The Woolloomooloo Redevelopment Project has accepted the challenge laid down by the Authority's plan-to make Woolloomooloo a dynamic, vital extension of Sydney, while, at the same time giving it something it had always enjoyed-its own inherent identity.[42]

In 1971 a consortium of developers led by Sidney Londish's Gateway Developments/Regional Landholdings, proposed an audacious scheme to raze large parts of old Woolloomooloo and build a high-rise complex tourist and commercial complex of hotels, shopping malls, multiple office towers of up to 34 storeys, multi-level plazas and rooftop gardens that would 'combine the business activities of the City with the tourist attractions of Kings Cross.'

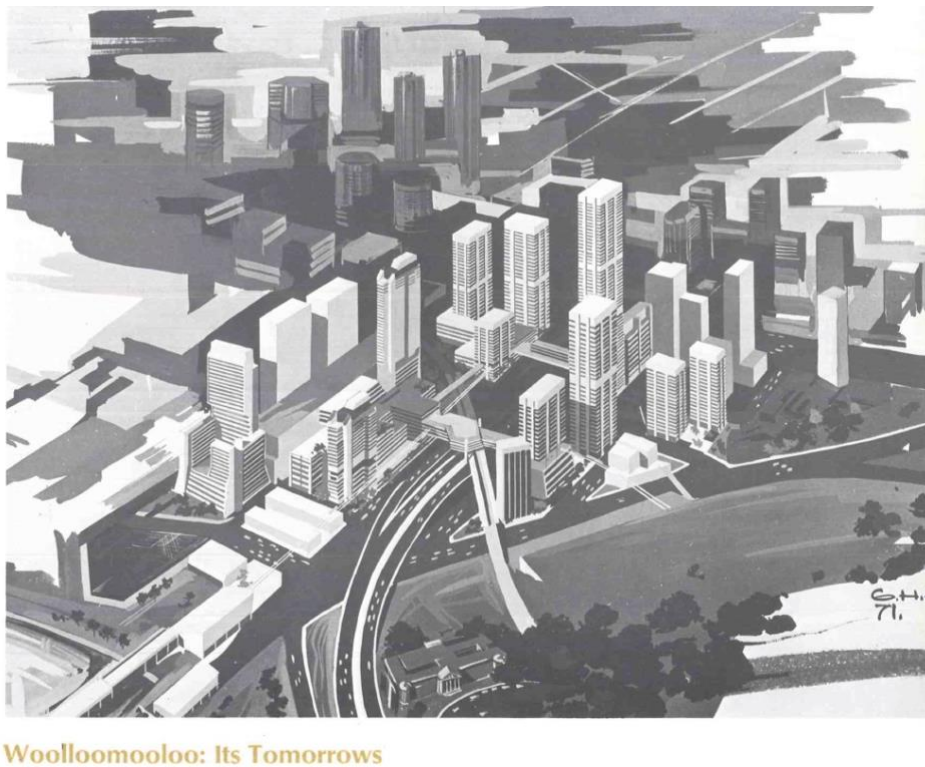**Woolloomooloo: Its Tomorrows**

Figure 16: Londish's vision – the Gateway Developments proposal for Woolloomooloo, 1971

[41] NSW Housing Commission, *Woolloomooloo Development Newsletter,* August 1975, page 2
[42] Eric White Associates, The Woolloomooloo Redevelopment Project [project at a glance], 1971.

Londish was raised in the suburb and attended Plunkett Street School but had no affection for old Woolloomooloo.[43] He and his associates acquired 11 acres (4.45ha) of Woolloomooloo, including the Lober and International Radio Company sites. Their plans conspicuously lacked a residential component but the City Council eventually approved it.[44] Andrew Briger, a City of Sydney alderman at the time, said the State Planning Authority had invited developers into the area with no sense of the impact that number of offices, hotels, people and cars would have on surrounding neighbourhoods and the city's infrastructure. He later told film-makers the developers were always going to be left holding the baby.[45]

Londish and the other developers were too excited by the thought of unlimited building heights and untold riches to hesitate. With a green light from the State Planning Authority and council controlled by a pro-development group Civic Reform, they began buying land in Woolloomooloo and Kings Cross. Londish's Gateway Developments was the major buyer in Woolloomooloo while Frank Theeman bought most of Victoria Street in Potts Point. The Commonwealth Government also wanted to build office blocks in Woolloomooloo and the NSW Government was keen to develop its own properties. At Londish's urging, Askin arranged a $7 million loan from Russian interests.[46] Developers strong-armed locals, offering high prices to owner-occupiers and tenants to shift out and when that did not work, attacking the buildings and sometimes the residents.

Figure 17: Tribune images of the green bans, Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW and SEARCH Foundation, c046240008

[43] Nowra, Woolloomooloo.
[44] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo
[45] D White, P Fiske and P Gailey, *Woolloomooloo* (1978) [film], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4Pc4ZK6s-M
[46] D White, P Fiske and P Gailey, *Woolloomooloo* (1978) [film], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4Pc4ZK6s-M

The green bans

Australian worksites were heavily unionised in the 1970s and building work depended on the good will of the Builders' Labourers' Federation (BLF). Although the BLF had prospered in the Sydney building boom, the leadership was sympathetic to heritage values and to working class people who were increasingly being displaced by developers. Led by Jack Mundey, the BLF first deployed green bans in Kelly's Bush at Hunter's Hill and then in The Rocks, often with the support of the National Trust. In Woolloomooloo and Potts Point, the Federated Engine Drivers and Fireman's Association (FEDFA) worked with the BLF.
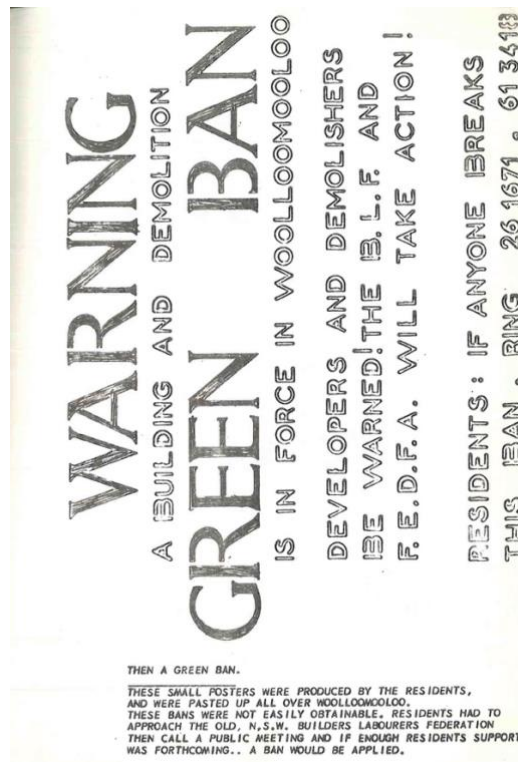
Figure 18: from Brenda Humble, Woolloomooloo, 1976

Campaigning to save Woolloomooloo began in earnest on the morning of Sunday 8 October, 1972 when the Woolloomooloo Resident Action Group (WRAG) was formed on the corner of Forbes and Cathedral streets. John Mulvena became president and Father Edmund Campion, who looked after the congregation at St Columbkille's, was secretary. In December 1972, the federal Whitlam Labor government came to power, having promised to 'save the 'Loo' as part of its housing agenda. Through Tom Uren as minister for urban development, it began working closely with the city council. Between 1973 and early 1975 Woolloomooloo was subject to a green ban and no work took place.[47] This ban coincided with the protests on the cliff above Victoria Street, where the BLF and a coalition of residents and squatters were trying to fend off Frank Theeman.

[47] J Colman, *The House that Jack Built: Jack Mundey, Green Bans Hero*, NewSouth, 2016, pp 182–186

Mundey and the WRAG were passionate and artful in their insight into the possibilities of preserving residential life in Woolloomooloo. Fortunately for them, although Londish was sure he had one of the best development sites in the country and cherished the opportunity to set a new direction for town planning in Australia, he was unable to carry the borrowing costs of his $24 million investment. By 1973, he was offering to sell the land to the NSW Government.[48] Londish eventually withdrew from the area.

The BLF and WRAG managed to negotiate a tripartite agreement between the state government, which owned the houses, the Council of the City of Sydney, which owned the roads and services, and the federal government, which had the funds, to come up with a project that would provide medium-density housing. The federal government would provide the funds needed to resume or buy the land. The Woolloomooloo Project was a landmark in participatory processes as it required all parties to 'take account of the bona fide interests of long-standing residences in all stages of the project.'[49] Londish was ruined but undaunted and said the idea was sterile and would set planning back 100 years.[50]

Uncharted waters – the creation of the Woolloomooloo Project

WOOLLOOMOOLOO NEWSLETTER PAGE 2 JULY 18 1975   WOOLLOOMOOLOO NEWSLETTER PAGE 3 JULY 18 1975
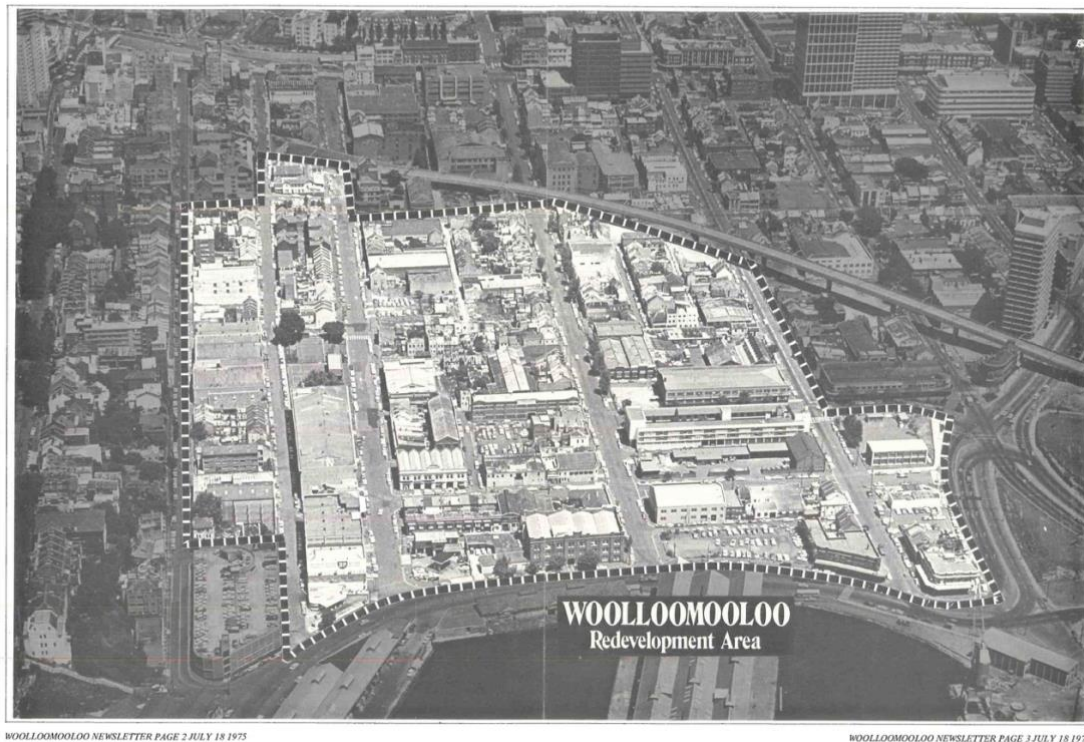
Figure 19: The Woolloomooloo Plan area. International Radio Co and Lober's on Brougham Street are clearly visible on the left

---

[48] J Webb, "Waterloo at Woolloomooloo Londish: hard economic reasoning", *The Bulletin*, Vol. 095 No. 4866 (11 Aug 1973), https://nla.gov.au/nla.obj-1343101310
[49] Colman, The House that Jack Built, pp 182–186
[50] D White, P Fiske and P Gailey, *Woolloomooloo* (1978) [film], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4Pc4ZK6s-M

Figure 20: Two images of the degraded condition of the International Radio Co Pty Ltd, taken for the Woolloomooloo Redevelopment Project, 1970s. Woolloomooloo photo collection: 63028 and 063017 respectively, City of Sydney Archives.

Redeveloping Woolloomooloo was a challenging process. During the period of the developer push and the green bans Woolloomooloo had deteriorated. In 1966 there had been 1,430 houses in Woolloomooloo but a decade on, in 1976, less than 60 per cent of these remained standing, and over half were empty. A population of nearly 5000 had shrunk to just 1000.[51]

The Housing Commission assembled a project team of keen young public servants who went about getting to know the neighbourhood and engaging with local residents with surveys, personal approaches and by appointing WRAG members to liaise with established residents. They produced the *Woolloomooloo Development Newsletter* and adopted a refreshing informality and transparency. They also worked with the City of Sydney's Deputy Lord Mayor Briger and its planners, including Col James. The result was a notable example of planning for sustainable neighbourhoods that would come to incorporate open space, greenery, playgrounds and utility areas and achieve the overall project goal of preserving housing for longer-term and low-income residents while arresting the proliferation of office building intrusion into the rest of the City of Sydney.[52] It was a comprehensive overhaul of the entire suburb and was only completed in the 1990s.

---

[51] Fitzgerald, Woolloomooloo

[52] RC Rauscher and S Momtaz. Sustainable Neighbourhoods in Australia: City of Sydney Urban Planning, Springer, 2015, pp 50–58

An 1923106

ML
9711.409999791/1

Government Grant

The federal government will grant $17 million to the state government towards the redevelopment of the Woolloomooloo basin, under the agreement signed on June 27.

The non-repayable, non-interest bearing grant will be used for property acquisition and site development.
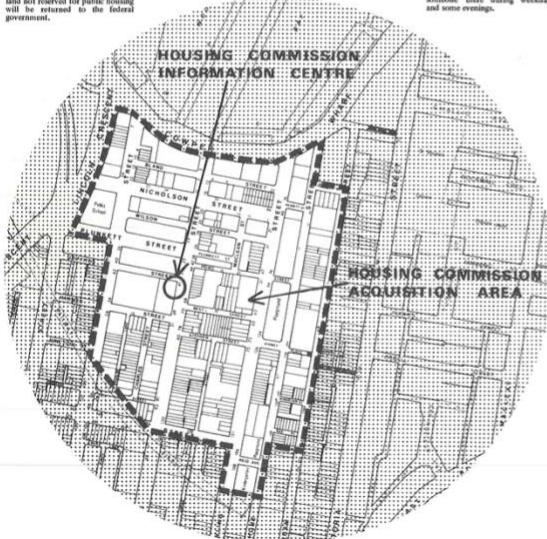
But the grant will not be all the money spent on the project. Some land will be set aside for the State Education Department. But any additional land will be bought by the department from the Commission for $500,000 a hectare.

The commission will meet the cost of development and construction or renovation out of its normal financial sources.

Receipts from the sale of any land not reserved for public housing will be returned to the federal government.

ACQUISTION AREA

The redevelopment area falls within the Woolloomooloo Precinct nominated in the 1971 City of Sydney Strategic Plan.

The precinct is bounded by Sir John Young Crescent, Lincoln Crescent, Cowper Wharf Road, Victoria Street, William Street, and the eastern boundary of Phillip Park between Boomerang Street and Cathedral Street.

The development partners have named an acquisition area within the precinct where the project will be developed. That area is described in the map and photo that appear in this initial issue of the Newsletter.

Land in the acquisition area — with some exceptions — will be the subject of the forthcoming resumption order.

Information Centre

The Housing Commission will open an information centre and development site office in the Woolloomooloo area.

Premises on the corner of Forbes and Griffiths Streets have been leased, and the office is expected to open within a fortnight at the longest.

Until the office is open and staff are available, contact with the Commission can be made through the following phone numbers:
* Public relations officer — 20951, ext. 206
* Project team — 20981, ext. 560

Once the office is open staff will be able to answer any questions you may have. Plans are to have someone there during weekdays and some evenings.

WOOLLOOMOOLOO NEWSLETTER PAGE 4 JULY 18 1975

WOOLLOOMOOLOO
Development Newsletter Number 1

W'loo's $17m Development Agreement Is Signed

A unique partnership of federal, state and local government last month signed a multi-million dollar agreement to redevelop the Woolloomooloo basin.

Under the terms of the agreement, the federal government will provide basic finance for the project, the state government will provide technical knowhow, and the City of Sydney Council will lay down planning guidelines.

The Housing Commission of New South Wales has been made constructing and managing authority for the redevelopment project.

Planning is necessarily at the earliest stage. But the tri-government arrangement asserts that "in the public interest the precinct should be re-established in its historic role as a residential area within the City of Sydney".

The parties to the arrangement agreed in principle to the zonings outlined in the City of Sydney's draft Interim Development Order for the Woolloomooloo precinct. They acknowledged that minor alterations to these zonings might be necessary.

In the statement of arrangements, the parties agreed to take into account at all stages of the proposed redevelopment the bona fide interests of long term residents in regard to continued residence in the precinct.

The parties determined six basic guidelines for final urban design controls to take into account:
* that residential uses predominate in the redevelopment area,
* that any new residential development should be mainly medium to high density, with building heights predominantly low on the floor of the basin,
* that all buildings should be in harmony with the topography and with the residential development,
* that about 65 percent of housing units yielded by the project should be for public housing,
* that the final development plan should allow for open space within the precinct "for use by the community to the maximum extent practicable, and
* that the Department of Main Roads shall consult with the City Council to co-ordinate planning of the proposed road linking the Cahill Expressway to William Street and beyond.

Further, the partners to the arrangement have recognised that a proportion of existing houses will be retained for rehabilitation. The estimate is that about 90 houses will be retained.

Each of the three government bodies will make available land in their ownership which falls within the project area.

Privately owned land will be publicly acquired in a resumption order expected to be gazetted late in July.

(The resumption area is outlined elsewhere in this edition of the Development Newsletter, and an explanation of resumption procedures also appears.)

The federal government will give up about 2.6 hectares of land to the scheme. Some 2.1 hectares will become available immediately, and the remainder when existing use is historic.

The state government will give up a site at 208 Dowling Street, currently occupied by the Sydney Day Nursery and Nursery Schools Association. It will also give whatever land currently occupied by the Plunkett Street School remains within the acquisition area after determination of the Cahill Expressway-William Street link is made.

The Council will give some seven hectares of land. However, the Council depot in Nicholson Street is not included.

Some qualifications apply to the return of land. Land of an area equal to that contributed by the state government will be made available to it for education purposes, free of cost. If more land for education is needed within the final development, the state will purchase it from the constructing and managing authority.

In a similar manner, before the project is completed, seven hectares of land will be transferred to the council, for roads, open space and community purposes. Land within the area used for public housing will remain in public ownership, through the Housing Commission.

RESUMPTION ORDER

The Housing Commission's resumption of land within the Woolloomooloo acquisition area will not force any person — tenant or owner — to move out immediately.

Essentially, resumption is a way to take title of the land needed for the redevelopment at an early stage in planning.

The Commission, acting as construction and management authority in the Woolloomooloo project, is empowered to resume the land under the Public Works Act.

Standard procedures will be followed in the Woolloomooloo resumption, and these will be outlined personally by Housing Commission staff who will cover the basin area.

You may already have been visited by a Commission team, and letters advising details of the move and procedures, probably, have been sent.

25 MAR 1981
MITCHELL LIBRARY
DONATION

There are a number of general points to remember about resumption. Any specific questions you have can be directed to Commission field staff when they visit you.

Some of the points are:
* Compensation for land resumed is assessed by the Valuer-General's Department, based on current market values of land and improvements.
* Interest on compensation is payable at statutory rates.
* Disputes can be referred to the Land and Valuation Court.
* Owners and tenants can retain occupancy after resumption until the building is needed in development plans.
* Rehousing — residents currently living in the Woolloomooloo redevelopment area will be rehoused by the Housing Commission in arrangements to be discussed with them.
* The Commission will meet reasonable costs of independent valuations.

Each of these points will involve a complexity of questions for owners and tenants. Don't hesitate to ask Commission staff if you have any queries.

No Answer...

Because the Woolloomooloo development project is only just underway, there are a number of questions, of obvious importance, that we can have no answer for. They include these areas:

* Dates — we can't say yet when work will start, or when any phase of work will start.
* Resumption — we expect a resumption notice to be prepared and gazetted about the end of July. But that doesn't mean residents will have to leave their homes. Details are included in the story on resumption procedures elsewhere in this issue. And Housing Commission workers will personally contact all residents soon.
* Plans — no planning details have been formulated yet.
* Demolition — we won't know which individual buildings will be demolished and which will be retained until a comprehensive survey of the entire basin area is made.
* Bona fides — no definitions for bona fide or long-term residents have yet been set. This is important in light of the agreement to take account at all stages of planning of the interests of long-term Woolloomooloo residents.

First Newsletter...

This is the first edition of the Woolloomooloo Development Newsletter, a news-sheet designed to keep the people involved in the redevelopment informed of just what's going on.

The Newsletter is published by the Housing Commission's project team.

It will be widely distributed throughout the area.

Publication will occur as decisions in the planning of the project are taken.

The point of contact with the Newsletter will be through the Commission's information office, on the corner of Forbes and Griffiths Streets.

The Newsletter aims to do more than inform — it wants to be able to answer the variety of questions that residents, owners and interested people will have about the redevelopment.

WOOLLOOMOOLOO NEWSLETTER PAGE 1 JULY 18 1975

Faces Of The 'Loo

Once wholly a residential suburb, the Woolloomooloo Basin has been eroded over the years by small and piecemeal industrial and commercial intrusions.

The first of the non-residential incursions was made before 1920, so that gradually the district has become a jumble of terraces and small businesses, flats and government workshops.

Particularly since the war, the 'Loo has been the subject of confused planning and a variety of proposals for redevelopment which have often been criticised for overlooking the people who lived there.

And though many of the people of the area have left in recent years, there are many who are still there — families who have lived in the 'Loo for three and four generations.

It's the people who have helped Woolloomooloo retain its character through the intrusions and confused planning. The project being designed now aims to return the basin to its residential state.

WOOLLOOMOOLOO NEWSLETTER AUGUST 1975   PAGE 4

WOOLLOOMOOLOO
Development Newsletter Number 2

WORK GETS UNDERWAY IN NEW 'LOO PROJECT

The first physical work on the redevelopment of the Woolloomooloo Basin began on August 6 last, when a burnt-out shed and fence were cleared from Charles Lane.

Commission workmen also cleared another block of land backing onto the lane.

The project team expects to arrange similar clearing and cleaning up work around the acquisition area. In fact, they're keen to hear from residents who know of areas which need attention.

But the more significant physical work will not start until all the planning and design lead-up is prepared — and that will probably take the next six to nine months.

In that initial period, the first important step is to survey each building within the development site to determine which houses will remain for renovation, and which will be removed to make way for new residential buildings.

The three government partners in the redevelopment have already agreed to certain principles which will influence the final plans and make an exact survey necessary now.

First, it has been agreed that residential use will predominate in the final project, and that 65 percent of residences will be for public housing programs.

Second, the partners have realised the value in retaining a proportion of the existing housing stock within the basin for restoration. An early estimate is that some 90 houses will be renovated in the works program.

Finally, there is an agreement that the end development should retain something of the area's traditional character.

The project team will probably commission a team of architects to make the survey, and check previous studies of housing stock in the district.

The results of some earlier surveys have been conflicting.

Experienced consultants are required, and consideration is being given to using those who have done similar work in Glebe.

The architects will work from door to door around the acquisition area, costing the potential renovation work of each property, and judging its retention value.

Historical and/or architectural significance will be factors the team will be working on the development program from a site office in Forbes Street and is anxious to hear residents' points of view.

* Commission workmen begin the huge clearing job at Woolloomooloo, while the clearing up work continues, architects and planners will design the redevelopment project.

significance will be factors the team takes into account in its final analysis.

Hopefully, the survey work will begin in the next couple of weeks.

Planners Need Local Residents Involved

Housing Commission planners are keen to have Woolloomooloo residents join them in developing proposals for the rebuilding of the Basin district.

The commission's project team will be working on the development program from a site office in Forbes Street and is anxious to hear residents' points of view.

Already the team has met with members of two residents' groups — the Woolloomooloo Residents' Action Group and Residents of Woolloomooloo.

Daily the team answers direct queries from local residents who call into the office, or ring.

But to initiate contact with residents interested in helping formulate the plans, the project team has a series of questions:
* Most importantly, commission planners want to hear what Woolloomooloo residents think ought to be catered for in the development plan.
* Because the planning stage will take some months, the team also wants to know what residents think should be done first. During the planning period, the team will start some clearing and cleaning up work.
* If residents have any urgent problems with their own residences, or others nearby, the team wants to know, so it can provide assistance.
* Maybe the project team can help you in dealing with other authorities. As part of its management function, the commission liaises with a number of other government bodies and voluntary organisations.
* Let's hear your views and opinions, we can't expect everybody to agree about everything — but the more views we hear the deeper will be the understanding.
* Cont page 3

W'loo's Tenants Get New Landlord

Following last month's resumption of privately owned residential property within the Woolloomooloo Basin district, tenants will be required to pay their rent to the Housing Commission — construction and management authority for the area's redevelopment.

Tenants of residential properties will be asked to pay rents to the commission at much the same levels they were previously paying private landlords or agents.

All rents will be subject to a later review by commission management staff, and some adjustments may be found necessary.

All cases will be judged according to their individual circumstances.

Present tenants, if they are long-term residents of Woolloomooloo's Area "A", are virtually assured of continued residence in the district, either in renovated or newly built homes.

Residents paying rent to the
* Cont page 2

IN THIS ISSUE

This, the second issue of the Woolloomooloo Newsletter, marks the beginning of the physical and management side of the Housing Commission's involvement in the redevelopment of the Basin area.
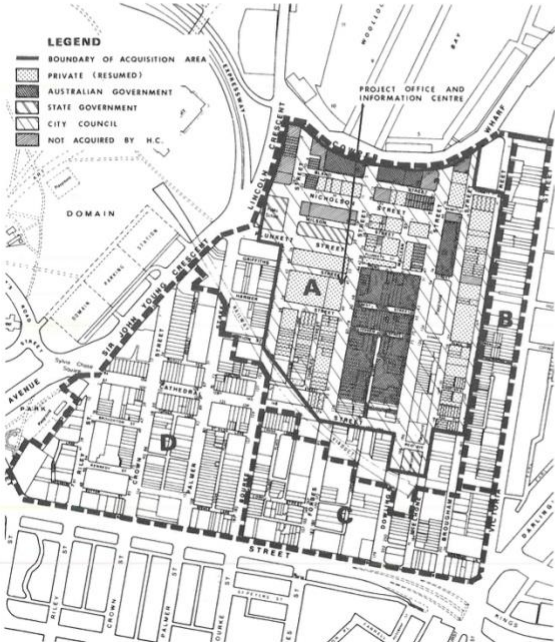
This edition of the Newsletter outlines these events. A map on page 2 shows just what property has been resumed. Page 3 includes a brief history of decisions leading up to the redevelopment agreement. And the back page introduces a pictorial feature designed to capture the character and atmosphere of the 'Loo.

WOOLLOOMOOLOO NEWSLETTER AUGUST 1975   PAGE 1

Figure 20: more pages from the Woolloomooloo Development Newsletter. Residents' voices mattered.
The map of the 'acquistion area' shows 35–85 Brougham Street as 'private resumed' land.

The team resolved not to move people out unless they had to. They identified buildings that could be retained and refurbished, with the goal of preserving them for at least 30 more years. They designed new buildings to fill in spaces that had been abandoned or lost to industry. After exhibiting several different plans the result was a pedestrian-friendly enclave, where original terraces were restored to good condition with sympathetic infill housing and street enclosures protected residents and their children and provided access to playgrounds, schools and parks.

Figure 21: The Woolloomooloo Project map, circa 1976. The shape of 35–85 Brougham Street is clearly marked but the footprint is different to the buildings that eventuated.

Plans for McElhone and Brougham Street appear to have been ready by 1979, when sketches of them appeared in Housing Commission pamphlets. The design was almost certainly provided by the architecture firm of Philip Cox, which was commissioned to work on the Woolloomooloo Project. Cox Architects has said its work on Forbes and Brougham Streets 'set a model for urban renewal that progressively impacted upon cities across the country' by 'creating housing environments that met contemporary demands while integrating into historic contexts' and showed 'the urban vernacular could be … interpretable into contemporary architecture.[53]

THE WOOLLOOMOOLOO PROJECT TEAM OF THE HOUSING COMMISSION OF NEW SOUTH WALES

THE PROJECT DESIGN

COMMISSION AIMS FOR BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

In pursuing its primary aim in Woolloomooloo, that of providing low cost housing for low income earners close to the city, the Housing Commission is not losing sight of another aim . . . that of retaining and rehabilitating existing buildings.

The plan includes 770 dwellings all told, among which will be 130 dwellings which are to be rehabilitated for public housing — 94 are terraced houses. There are 47 homes still privately owned in the Project area.

The Commission is required to keep a ratio of 65 per cent public housing and 35 per cent privately owned homes.

The Housing Commission dwellings will provide a range of accommodation.

There will be 15% of one-bedroom units, 40% two-bedroom dwellings, 40% three-bedroom houses and 5% four-bedroom houses.

These proportions may vary somewhat in the actual development.

The Commission's Woolloomooloo Project Team has sought to achieve compatibility between the new buildings and the old.

A minimum of one car parking space will be provided for every two Housing Commission dwellings.

Parking for visitors will be provided: one space for every five dwellings.

This, to some extent, goes along with the contention of the residents of Woolloomooloo (ROW) that a price must be paid for living so close to the city, and, that price could be, doing without a car.

This decision is based on car ownership ratios from Woolloomooloo and other Housing Commission projects.

Garages, as envisaged by the Housing Commission will not be unsightly attachments to dwellings. Instead, they will be provided integrally with dwellings when possible.

Otherwise there will be group parking within easy walking distance from their owners' houses.

This is the type of residential development envisaged along McElhone Street. Fronting the houses, in easy watching distance from the balconies, is a children's play area made attractive with planting, paving, grass and trees.

ESSENTIAL FEATURES OF OUR PLAN

Here is a quick run-down of features to look for in our plan.

- A total of 770 dwellings, including 500 public housing units.
- 219 dwellings are retained.
- A range of accommodation from one to four bedroom units.
- New buildings are restricted to three storeys over most of the site, four storeys on the eastern side adjacent to Brougham Street and up to eight storeys on a small site in the south-eastern corner adjacent to the railway viaduct.
- Vehicular access will be restricted to four points of entry. A circuitous route will allow traffic to move from north to south, but should discourage non-local and particularly port traffic.
- A new primary school.
- A new shopping and community centre established on the boundary of the project area, close to the centre of the precinct and around a nucleus of existing shops.

INFILL HOUSING—FORBES ST.

The above scheme for new townhouses was designed by architectural consultants Philip Cox and Partners. It infills between Victorian terraced houses on both sides and repeats their arches, parapets and verandahs.

The units are designed as generally identical plan forms with rendered brick walls on the street boundaries. Details and interest are created by adding on balcony, canopy and roof components in various ways. This allows an economical solution, providing individuality and unit identity in sympathy with the existing Woolloomooloo streetscape.

The buildings are designed as two-storey forms, with the third storey as a series of attic projections through the roof. This achieves a low scale whilst relating to the surrounding buildings.

This design was prepared by the Woolloomooloo Project Team and involves the rehabilitation of 19th Century Neo-Gothic houses, terraces and new infill housing.

The existing houses are picturesque and are significant in the streetscape of Woolloomooloo.

Their Forbes Street facades will be restored and the interiors rehabilitated to contemporary standards.

The new four bedroom townhouse faces Forbes Street and is designed to compliment the adjacent buildings. The slope of the new roof matches the existing houses. Other elements such as the verandah, roof and picket fence harmonise with the details of the existing buildings.

Figure 22: Cox created emblematic balcony and rooflines for Brougham and Forbes Streets. The houses fronting McElhone Street were intended to support family life, offering 'easy watching distance from the balconies' over the Dowling Street playground.

53 R Otmar, *Cox Architects*, Sydney: Images Publishing, 2000, p 13, p 60

Construction of 35–85 Brougham Street

Photographic records from the City of Sydney Archives reveal demolition works on the Lober and International Radio Company sites began in June 1979 and construction had begun by August 1980.

Figure 23: 118 McElhone Street, Woolloomooloo. Looking SE past the original site of the International Radio Coy on the left at 118 McElhone Street which is being demolished. Apartment block at the upper centre is the Oasis building at no 6 Windeyer Street. June 1979. Woolloomooloo photo collection: 62513, City of Sydney Archives.
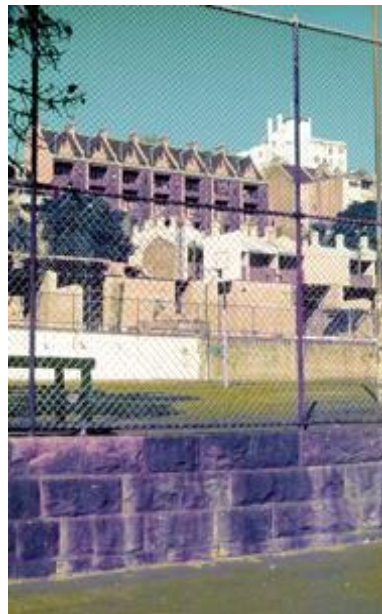

Figure 24: Looking SE across the Woolloomooloo Playground from Dowling Street towards work in progress at 80 to 104 McElhone Street, Woolloomooloo. Housing in the background is in Brougham & Victoria Streets, August 1980, Woolloomooloo photo collection: 63892, City of Sydney Archives

The new housing was completed and officially photographed by lauded photographer Max Dupain in 1982 – slides exist but were not accessed for this report as they remain in copyright, but they are likely to reveal the original interiors and other details and to confirm Cox was indeed the architect.[54] It is quite possible Dupain created some of the images held in the City of Sydney Archives.

---

[54] State Library of New South Wales, Job no. 12080: Housing Commission Units, Brougham Street, Woolloomooloo, April 1982 / photographs by Max Dupain, Call Number: ON 558, Box 106, nos. 984-992, SLIDES 316/nos. 468-475.

Figure 25: views of the common area between the McElhone Street block & the Brougham Street block of the Redevelopment Project section bounded by Brougham, Pring, McElhone Streets & Sydney Place, Woolloomooloo photo collection, 063268-70, not dated, City of Sydney Archives. Possibly by Max Dupain.

Figure 26: Brougham Street frontage, Woolloomooloo photo collection, 063265-66, not dated, City of Sydney Archives

Figure 27: Colour versions, September 1980, Woolloomooloo photo collection, 063882 and 063884, City of Sydney Archives

A clandestine rainforest

Nearly 40 years after its construction, 35–85 Brougham Street has settled into the streetscape. Kings Cross-based writer Louis Nowra is not fond of the newer buildings created for the Woolloomooloo Project but his memoir *Woolloomooloo: A biography* (2017) describes the space created by the Brougham and McElhone Street buildings and, perhaps grudgingly, acknowledges their part in protecting the residential qualities of an area that was once a slum and in the sights of developers:

> McElhone is cut off by the blank side of a block of units and a long colourful mural with profuse Aboriginal motifs … if you veer right there is a walkway one can use, hidden to the casual observer … And what an extraordinary passageway it turns out to be. It is a long rectangular courtyard between a block of units facing Brougham Street, and those oriented towards the basketball and tennis courts … Once you enter the courtyard it's like encountering a clandestine rainforest, with tall trees smothered with creepers and garden beds of tropical plants, luscious succulents and gaudy flowers. Even the balconies are a riot of flowers and plants in hanging pots, like a domestic version of the hanging gardens of Babylon. Most of the trees are jacarandas, but these ones are amazingly tall, as they have to grow beyond the height of the four-storey buildings on either side in order to reach the sun. Their struggles have resulted in the twisted shapes of their trunks, as if frozen in agonised writhing. It's a primeval arbour of nature where only dapped light reaches the ground. This lack of light has a malevolent aspect. On both sides of the garden are the back entrances to the apartment blocks, their covered walkways grim with shadows, moss and mildew, and fungal rot eating at the bottoms of the doors.
>
> This hidden courtyard is one of the many overlooked pockets of incongruous beauty in Woolloomooloo, and a reminder that to find these places you have to wander the street lanes with patience and a nosy curiosity. But it's also a stunning confirmation of just how lush Woolloomooloo has become, and how different from the barren streets of a century before.[55]

[55] Nowra, Woolloomooloo