The Road to Nowhere?

Urban Freeway Planning in Sydney to 1977 and in the Present Day

David Ball

Urban Research Program
Working Paper No.51
February 1996
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# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While this paper is entirely my own work, I extend thanks to and gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the following: Dr Shirley Fitzgerald of the University of Sydney Department of History for supervising the thesis on which this paper is based; Professor Graeme Davison of Monash University for his helpful advice and critical comments; Mr Tom Uren, former Federal Minister for Urban and Regional Development and Mr Peter Cox, former New South Wales Minister for Transport, for formal interviews; Mr Max Solling for other discussions, for making available documents in his possession and for providing further personal contacts; Mr Noel Gurney from the RTA Records Section; Ms Anne Picot. RTA Corporate Archivist; Ms Helen Ahern and the staff of the State Archives Authority for assistance in gaining access to DMR documents.
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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>AUREC</td>
<td>Anti-Urban Radial Expressway Committee</td>
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<td>BLF</td>
<td>Builders Labourers' Federation</td>
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<td>CBC</td>
<td>Campaign for Better Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>Central Business District</td>
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<td>CBR</td>
<td>Commonwealth Bureau of Roads</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td>Cumberland County Council</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Cumberland County Plan</td>
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<td>CRAG</td>
<td>Coalition of Resident Action Groups</td>
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<td>CUMTAC</td>
<td>County of Cumberland Transport Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DLC</td>
<td>De Leuw Cather Pty. Ltd.</td>
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<td>DLR</td>
<td>Department of Main Roads</td>
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<td>DURD</td>
<td>Department of Urban and Regional Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EIS</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Statement</td>
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<tr>
<td>GAEAG</td>
<td>Glebe Anti-Expressway Action Group</td>
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<td>GLA</td>
<td>General Loan Account</td>
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<td>LAUREC</td>
<td>Leichhardt Anti-Urban Radial Expressway Committee</td>
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<td>MRB</td>
<td>Main Roads Board</td>
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<td>MRDP</td>
<td>Main Roads Development Plan</td>
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<td>NRMA</td>
<td>National Roads and Motorists Association</td>
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<td>RTA</td>
<td>Roads and Traffic Authority</td>
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<td>SPA</td>
<td>State Planning Authority</td>
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<td>SATS</td>
<td>Sydney Area Transportation Study</td>
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<td>SROP</td>
<td>Sydney Region Outline Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCPAC</td>
<td>Town and Country Planning Advisory Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>URTAC</td>
<td>Urban and Regional Transport Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>CCF</td>
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<td>DPL</td>
<td>Department of Urban Affairs and Planning Library.</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLRB</td>
<td>Fisher Library Rare Book Collection.</td>
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<td>LL</td>
<td>Leichhardt Municipal Library, Local History Collection. Files on Expressways.</td>
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<td>MS</td>
<td>Max Soiling Collection.</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTAA</td>
<td>Roads and Traffic Authority Archives. (The records cited originally belonged to the Department of Main Roads, which the RTA replaced in 1989.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>RTAL</td>
<td>Roads and Traffic Authority Head Office Library.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAA</td>
<td>State Archives Authority. Government Records Repository.</td>
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This work explores the rise and fall of proposals, which were current between 1945 and 1977, for an inner suburban radial freeway network in Sydney. Conceived in terms of the planning process operating in New South Wales during this period, the focus throughout is on the inner western suburbs of Sydney where the most significant local opposition to the proposals emerged. When the proposals were first formulated by the Department of Main Roads in the late 1940s, ushering in the era of fixed grand plans for entire regional areas, freeways promised a safe, fast, efficient means of private travel which would provide the solution to all the city's transport needs. As Sydney underwent decentralisation in the 1950s and 1960s, however, and as car numbers rapidly increased, important questions emerged about whether freeways were appropriate forms for the urban environment.

The first half of the work identifies the complex range of attitudes towards urban freeways taken by the participants in the planning process, and shows how the DMR and its proposals remained unchallenged in the state political arena until the 1970s. The second half discusses the emergence and operation of external political forces - in the form of the Whitlam labor government, the New South Wales Builders' Labourers Federation, and residents' groups - which opposed the freeways. It describes how they were able to make an impact on the state planning process and gives an account of process which led to most of the radial proposals being abandoned by the state government in 1977. The closing section gives a short review of current freeway and tollway schemes in Sydney and draws out some of the lessons of the earlier period.
CHAPTER 1

THE STRUCTURES OF OUR AGE

Freeways which carry the automobile are amongst the most beautiful structures of our age. Along with skyscrapers they are certainly the most typical of our civilisation.¹

Freeways have done terrible things to cities, and in many instances have almost irreparably destroyed large sections of the cities which they were meant to serve.²

Urban development, planned or unplanned, is essentially a political process of choosing between a range of competing possible land uses, broadly consisting of housing, employment, recreation, natural sanctuary and transport infrastructure. Developing and implementing any urban plan, being an exercise in directing urban development to achieve desired outcomes, is therefore a political process in which the priorities between different forms of land use are debated.

The New South Wales Department of Main Roads (DMR) put forward its first proposals for urban freeways in Sydney in 1945/1946.³ Over time, the proposed network was expanded by the Department to move traffic from as far afield as Penrith, Campbelltown, Wollongong, Bondi Junction, Newcastle and Windsor directly into the Sydney Central Business District (CBD). The Department embarked on a program of land acquisition and large swathes of inner suburban land became ‘DMR affected’. Financial constraints meant that progress on the actual building was slow however, and by 1970 only the Cahill Expressway and the first stage of the Warringah Expressway had been built. During the 1970s the sections of the DMR’s freeway plans in the vicinity of the CBD fell from political favour and were abandoned by the State Government in 1977.

This paper aims to account for the rise and fall of the proposed freeways through suburbs close to the CBD, with a particular focus on the inner west, in terms of the way in which the political process of planning Sydney’s land use operated during the lifetime of the radial freeway proposals. As forms of transport infrastructure, freeways are voracious users of land. A freeway with a

¹ Lawrence Halprin, Freeways, Reinhold, New York, 1966, 17
² Ibid., 24
³ Department of Main Roads, Main Roads Development Plan for the Sydney Metropolis and the County of Cumberland, DMR, Sydney, 1945
three lane carriageway in each direction (two such roads were planned for Glebe and Annandale) cuts a corridor of at least one hundred metres through the landscape it traverses. Accordingly, its impact on other land uses, while negligible where the density of other existing land use is low, will be disproportionately high in areas which have high existing land use densities.

Responsibility for freeway policies and proposals in New South Wales ultimately rests with the state politicians. Politicians do not operate in a vacuum, however. They make decisions in the context of a range of heard opinions on relevant subjects voiced by a range of opinion holders. Whether an opinion is heard depends on the vocal strength of those holding it, on the strength and the number of other competing voices, and on the politicians’ inclination to hear.

Political voices articulate the meanings which plans and policies hold for them. Many different individuals and classes of people will come into contact with a freeway, with each giving it some kind and degree of meaning. Even if a person ignores it completely, they are making an implicit statement either that the freeway means nothing to them, or that they are perfectly satisfied with it, or that they believe that they cannot influence its course. Further, any one assignment of meaning can potentially suppress other possible meanings. Human nature ensures that any assessment of meaning is based on an individual’s own situation and their own ideological, political and pragmatic interests. Therefore, conflict between the different meanings of a freeway and ambivalence about its function and role are inevitable. These conflicts may be between individuals, or within individuals. For example, urban planners, motorists, engineers and motor industry workers can also be users of public transport, residents of areas affected by freeway proposals or conservationists, and vice versa.

In the 1940s, professional planners working within the New South Wales Government based their plans for Sydney on a modernist ideology of urban development in which the central ideal was the rational efficient pursuit of and progress towards the goal of happiness, assisted by experts and by modern technology such as the automobile. Urban freeways, together with skyscrapers, were the ultimate symbols of this ideology. The very terms ‘freeway’ and ‘expressway’ derived from the simple efficient ‘express’ rationality of the unbroken straight line or smooth curve which are its perfect aesthetic forms.

Supported by State and Federal Labor Government enthusiasm for post-war

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4 E. R. Jefferay, Planning and Design of Urban Expressways in NSW with Particular reference to the County of Cumberland, Institute of Engineers, Sydney, 1963, 4
5 L. Kilmartin, Cities Unlimited, Allen and Unwin, Hornsby, 1978
6 Halprin, op cit., 12
reconstruction, the planners produced plans which they believed could usher in a ‘better world’. By designing fixed grand plans for entire regional areas, by improving physical conditions through the construction of gardens, parks and playgrounds, and by using freeways to clear the undesirable ‘slum’ areas of the inner suburbs, they thought that they could eliminate all the unwanted social and economic consequences of the industrial revolution, including crime, overcrowding and ill health.

The Department of Main Roads’ legislative brief was to ‘provide for the better construction, maintenance and financing of main roads’. It was therefore bound to seek to build roads because that was its job. Consequently, its staff were drawn largely from the engineering profession, since road construction requires engineering technical experience and expertise. Aside from giving the ‘cult of the expert’ a chance to take hold in their dealings with outsiders, the need for their expertise gave DMR engineers opportunity to show off their skills and gain professional pride by building ever more sophisticated roads. When the Department first proposed its freeway network, no such roads had been built in any urban area anywhere in the world. The DMR was therefore at the forefront of urban transport infrastructure planning and design.

Successfully overcoming the peculiar problems of inner city freeways, including the need to reduce pollution levels to avoid irritating the local residents, can be seen as the pinnacle of professional road engineering expertise. Consequently, DMR engineers were usually keen to propose or accept such challenges and continually justified their proposals as ‘the best possible answer anyone could produce’ for traffic problems. Engineers, in common with all other interest groups, also have unconscious biases which affected their view of Sydney’s freeways. Building and construction occupations are mainly concerned with quantifiable facts, resulting in an intellectual climate in which all decisions tended to be made on the basis of such facts. Since methods for quantifying pollution and other environmental effects were not developed until the introduction of Environmental Impact Statements in the late 1970s, these effects

9 Main Roads Act 1924
10 Albert Mispel, Speech to Anti-Freeway Rally - Fig St, Ultimo 5/10/74 (LL)
11 Ken Dobinson (DMR traffic service engineer (1976), Deputy Chief Engineer by 1987), quoted in Jenny Salmon, Forgotten Suburbs, 1987 (video recording) (DPL)
were commonly ignored by Sydney’s freeway proponents.

The most striking way in which the attitudes of freeway engineers coincided with the ‘better world’ ideal is that they tended to be mainly concerned with safe and efficient traffic movement. Since freeways provide no access to adjoining properties, have no cross traffic and physically separate the two directions of movement, engineers were inclined to assume that they must necessarily be the safest, most efficient traffic movement device available. If so, freeways should be located and designed to ‘carry as many vehicles as possible in the most direct, feasible route, between points of demand’. The engineers’ ideals here also coincided with those of the motoring public who valued the ability to travel at high speeds under one’s own control. Many of the difficulties and problems associated with mass automobile usage in Sydney, moreover, did not become apparent until car numbers started to boom in the 1950s and 1960s, and until then cars encountered very little opposition and a great deal of support from the general public. Many of those who could not afford a car would have bought one if the means had been available.

Aside from the engineering influence and the popular appeal of motoring, the DMR’s attitude to freeways was also given an extra dimension by its bureaucratic nature. The ‘expert’ bureaucratic psyche is often extremely resistant to change, and even if it is willing to adopt changes, the high cost of large programs, some of which may already have been outlaid (for example, for property acquisitions or for drawing up detailed plans), makes continuation of the programs imperative in order to justify the capital investment promised or already outlaid. The Department’s other main pragmatic interest in promoting freeways was that it had to compete with other government departments for scarce government resources, which are allocated in the context of the next election. The DMR owed its formation and continuing existence to lobbying from other roads interest groups, such as the National Roads and Motorists Association (NRMA), insurers, vehicle manufacturers, oil companies and the large retail stores for whom greater motor vehicle use means a potentially larger customer base. Such organisations have a clear interest in ever increasing the use of motor vehicles and therefore of motor vehicle insurance, fuel, new cars and spare parts, and the DMR therefore needed to show these groups that it was acting with their interests at heart. Consequently, the Department had both a


13 Andrew Jacubowicz: ‘The city game: urban ideology and social conflict’ in Donald Edgar (ed.), Social Change in Australia, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1974, 331
duty and a need to protect and further private interests rather than to control 
them through public policy. It is therefore not surprising that roads interest 
groups thought that a description of the proposed Sydney freeways read ‘like a 
fairy story’, since they were designed to enact their dreams of increased 
automobile use. Although some freeway critics in the 1970s suggested that the 
DMR did not then recognise, as it openly does today, that increasing road 
capacity generates more traffic, in view of the argument’s widespread currency 
it seems much more likely that the Department understood its truth only too well, 
although it was not in its political interest to say so publicly. Other state planners 
accepted the argument as early as 1948 and numerous supporting studies 
appeared in subsequent years as more experience was gained of the effects of 
freeways on traffic volumes. By the 1970s almost all other traffic planning 
experts were convinced the argument was correct.

Aside from personal and institutional biases, much of the failure of 
Sydney’s original freeway planners to appreciate the complex problems posed by 
urban freeways can also be traced to the fact that previous large scale road 
development had been focused on country areas, due to the powerful political 
influence of rural interests which have continued to restrict urban road funding 
even to this day. The roadmakers therefore had little or no awareness of the 
detrimental effects of freeway construction on the urban environment. The 
DMR therefore spent nothing, for example, on studying the social cost of 
destroying the ‘slums’ which lay in the path of its radial freeways, since they 
were assumed to be worthless and undesirable, and next to nothing on 
investigating cheaper alternative transport schemes.

On the other side of the freeway debate were the users of and lobbyists for 
public transport, the residents of the affected suburbs, and the conservationists. 
Advocates of public transport are subject to many of the same vested interests, 
such as professional advancement, as the promoters of freeways, and the 
provision of adequate and effective public transport throughout a large urban 
region such as Sydney would impose a considerable burden on natural and public 
resources. Freeways and public transport, moreover, do not always conflict 
since fast and efficient roads can, for example, assist public transport by allowing 
the provision of faster bus services. On balance, however, public transport 
supporters were opposed to the proposed super-roads, not only by reason of the

14 National Roads and Motorists Association, Open Road, August 1949.
15 ‘On the Road to Nowhere’, Sydney Morning Herald, April 9, 1994, 25
16 Cumberland County Council, Report on the Planning Scheme, 166
17 Hugh Stretton: Ideas for Australian Cities, Georgian House, Melbourne, 1975, 271
private car worship implicit in the disparity between the finances being allocated to each transportation form (even in the 1974 Sydney Area Transportation Study (SATS) the ratio of road funding to public transport funding was 2.5:1), but also because the radial freeways were proposed for high density corridors which could be served just as well by the existing radial public transport network.

The radial freeway proposals also met with criticism from residents of the areas they affected. Drastic attempts at imposing change on a residential area inevitably meet with local criticism, since the inhabitants generally view their local environment as an area where they can exercise some degree of autonomy in constructing their lives, free from many pressures of outside authorities. When existing housing is replaced by any new land use, moreover, it is the residents who feel the hidden economic costs. The official 1970s costings for the freeways only included the market value of the required house purchases and ignored other costs associated with the reallocation of resources, such as: the difference, if any, between the market value of the property and the actual purchase price; the costs of finding equivalent housing elsewhere; the costs of removal; a possible increase in the amount of money spent travelling to and from work; and increased rents due to a greater demand for the remaining houses in the affected area.18

More intangibly, forcing people to move to make way for a freeway can be extremely socially and personally destructive. Firstly, there were concerns about congestion, air and noise pollution from the traffic on the freeway and the aesthetics of the freeway structure itself. Secondly, there was concern about diminishing local social relationship networks, or communities, built around shared locality and cultural heritage. When a freeway is built, those living in its path are forced to move elsewhere. Moreover, when a community is diminished in size or cultural quality, all its remaining members suffer loss, in proportion to the strength of the network, which cannot be prevented, as the DMR suggested, by providing links such as footbridges ‘to keep the community together’.19

Although the freeway supporters argued that communities are constantly changing from within anyway,20 this fails to recognise the greater acceptance of voluntary rather than involuntary change. The latter can seem profoundly alienating and depowering, especially if those affected do not feel they have contributed to the decision making process. The inner suburban freeway

18 Planning Research Workshop Pty Ltd, Social Effects of Freeways. March 1979
19 Department of Main Roads official quoted in Andrew Jacubowicz, 'What About the People', in Institute of Engineers, op.cit. 3:10
20 Terence Byrnes, 'The Urban Comprimise', in ibid., 5:8
opponents were not totally opposed to all change, as long as it did not affect them in ways which they were not themselves prepared to accept. For example, in 1970 they successfully suggested that part of the North Western freeway be located underground.21

A stronger attack on the idea of community, however, could have been mounted on the grounds that the leaders of the inner-city anti-freeway campaigns were newly arrived professionals and therefore that the threatened ‘communities’ were constructs of the defence movement, but it is equally true that older residents appropriated forms of the concept in order to use it themselves. There were frequent complaints, for example, from such residents being forced to move to new areas where ‘you don’t know nobody’.22

A more conservative perspective on freeways than that held by local residents is that of heritage groups, who are concerned with preserving significant links with the continuing past, and environmental conservationists. The construction of a radial freeway network brings with it a vast, sudden destruction of that portion of the cityscape nearest the points of convergence, with the heritage reaction being largely determined by the scale of the construction and the perceived historical significance of the area under threat. Further, in addition to consuming land space, freeways also generate increased usages of fuel resources through encouraging more traffic, with such increases being sometimes seen as an unjustifiable expense of natural resources – especially in times, such as the 1970s, of perceived resource scarcity.

Responsibility for deciding between all these competing perspectives rests with governments. In Australia, for Constitutional reasons, it is the Federal Government which has provided most of the finance for main roads construction, either through its own Commonwealth roads program, through tied or untied grants to the states or, more recently, through tax concessions to private builders. This has been especially true of freeways, which require enormous capital investment. The New South Wales State Government was responsible for planning and implementing the radial freeway programs, but like other State Governments its ability to implement them unconditionally, except with the help of private enterprise, has always been extremely limited.

With rare exceptions, local councils in Australia have traditionally been


22 Quoted in Jenny Salmon, Forgotten Suburbs, 1987 (video recording) (DPL)
deprived of power over regional planning decisions. Although local planning schemes have been developed from time to time, the State Government approval and finance necessary to implement them has been conditional on the local council accepting State-initiated public developments. State Governments have therefore been virtually able to treat local councils just like any other interest group. It was only when Leichhardt Council started a public protest campaign on behalf of the local residents seeking to stop the radial freeways that local government was able to play a significant role in the political planning process with which the rest of this paper will be concerned.

24 Wilcox, Law of Land Development, quoted in Roddewig, ibid., 56
CHAPTER 2

THE MAIN ROADS GO ON FOREVER

Governments come and governments go, but the Main Roads go on forever.25

The one constant planning body during the life of the radial freeway proposals was the DMR, which by 1969 had developed into a highly independent bureaucracy and had repulsed all challenges to its authority. The Department’s life-blood was the motor car, and its political power was fundamentally built on the rapid growth in the numbers of cars in twentieth century Sydney. Car numbers in NSW more than quadrupled between 1950 and 1975, and whereas in 1920 there were only 16 motor vehicles for every 1000 Australians, by 1980 this figure was well over 500.26

As early as 1919, these trends led to the establishment of a New South Wales branch of the National Roads Association (known as the National Roads and Motorists Association (NRMA) from 1923). This body aimed to secure the establishment of a State main roads body to ensure that motoring interests were adequately represented within the Government.27 The NRMA’s intensive lobbying was decisively boosted in 1924 when the Federal Government made the first ever statutory grants to the States specifically for roads.28 Consequently, the New South Wales Government came under Federal pressure to establish a main roads administration to make it easier to use the Commonwealth’s money.29

Combined with the NRMA’s lobbying, the availability of Commonwealth money led to the establishment in 1924 of a Main Roads Board (MRB), which was given authority over both urban and regional main roads. The MRB was not especially successful in improving Sydney’s roads network, and groups such as the NRMA became increasingly frustrated and pushed for a stronger department. These efforts bore fruit with the creation of the DMR in 1932, a move which consolidated and strengthened the road lobby’s power. The DMR was a stronger roads lobby than the MRB in several ways: firstly, the DMR was

25 Mr Pat Smyth, Chairman of the DMR, 1974, quoted in interview with Tom Uren, Minister for Urban and Regional Affairs, 1972-5, April 23, 1994
28 Main Roads Development Act 1924
29 Minister for Works and Railways, quoted in Ian Manning, The Open Street: Public Transport, Motor Cars and Politics in Australian Cities, Transit Australia, Sydney, 1991, 58
controlled from its inception by engineers. The first Commissioner was H.H. Newell, a Public Works Department engineer and the Assistant Commissioner was T.H. Upton, formerly a Senior Lecturer in Engineering from the School of Civil Engineering at the University of Melbourne. Both these men had served on the three member MRB. However the third member of the MRB, J. Garlick, who had previously been the Under Secretary for Local Government, was not appointed to the new Department.30

Secondly, the substitution of an engineer for a local government bureaucrat as DMR head was indicative of its increased power over and separation from local government in general. Under the original provisions of the Main Roads Act, which gave control over the MRB to the Department of Local Government, the Board’s functions were to distribute Government funds for work on main roads and to assist and advise councils in the execution of these works. Only rarely could the board carry out the work itself.31 In contrast, by 1932 the Act gave the DMR, as part of the Department of Transport, primary responsibility for State Highways and for all proclaimed main roads in the County of Cumberland.32 Work on these roads was to be carried out mostly by the DMR itself, or else local councils on behalf of and at the direction of the Department.33

Thirdly, the three categories of ‘main roads’ defined in the Act – State Highways, Trunk Roads and Ordinary Main Roads – effectively gave the DMR control over all important arterial roads in Sydney and throughout the State. The DMR, moreover, could add to the network and then proclaim the addition as a Main Road. The Board could therefore build and proclaim authority over roads virtually anywhere, provided they fitted into the flexible definition of ‘Main Roads’. While the radial freeways eventually proposed did not fit comfortably into any of the existing ‘main roads’ categories, it is indicative of the Department’s independence and the political power of the automobile that it was able to develop such plans.

Another related development in the 1930s was the establishment of the Town and Country Planning Institute, the first professional planning institute in New South Wales. This was set up under the influence largely of the NSW Chapter of the Institute of Architects, but also of DMR engineers. Its president

30 B. R. Fishburn, The Department of Main Roads, (RTAL), 23
31 Ibid., 18
32 Ibid., 25
33 Department of Main Roads, Guide to Main Roads Administration for the use of Aldermen and Councillors, DMR, Sydney, 1970, 6
in the late 1930s was senior DMR engineer H.M. Sherrard. The professional design and construction emphases of each of these groups reinforced each other and a modernist planning ideology, in which beauty was a by-product of utility, started to become dominant. Between 1938 and 1946, spurred on by the new ideology and the importance of the car but delayed by World War Two, DMR engineers developed the Main Roads Development Plan (MRDP), which was the first attempt at formulating a comprehensive, long range plan for urban roads (including freeways) in any Australian city. Other Australian cities soon took a very similar course.

The MRDP employed methodology which was American in origin. It based its findings on a study of 'the existing transport relation between places of living and places of work', which was then extrapolated to the year 2000 based on an assessment of projected population growth. It claimed to adopt a scientific approach, but was in fact ideologically and methodologically biased towards road development. Although the Department had done little or no analysis of public transport use and planning or of land use planning (as opposed to describing existing land use), it assumed that land use patterns in Sydney would remain static between 1945 and 2000. When the MRDP was formulated the Sydney CBD was still the main location of those land uses - places of work and shopping - which generate the largest traffic volumes. If this pattern continued, the DMR’s proposed freeways would need to carry larger volumes of traffic than if those land uses became more decentralised. The greater the traffic volume, the greater the need for high capacity roads. It was therefore in the DMR’s interest to perpetuate the assumption that Sydney’s land use pattern was not to be changed.

The DMR explicitly hoped that the MRDP might be a valuable contribution to future urban planning in Sydney. What the MRDP did not make explicit was that the DMR was attempting to establish for itself a very strong position within the planning process. Although it stated that land use planning was ultimately the responsibility of the new Cumberland County Council (CCC) and that there needed to be parallel land use and transport

35 Sherrard, op cit., 12
36 Manning, op cit., 68
37 Sherrard op cit., 12
38 Department of Main Roads, Main Roads Development Plan, 13
39 Ibid., 15
40 Ibid., 14
it nevertheless effectively proposed a land use plan of its own.

The Cumberland County Council was established in 1945 as a condition for the states receiving Federal funds for public housing programs. The Council had authority to prepare statutory planning schemes 'regulating and controlling the use of land' by means of maps and ordinances. In particular, it had to prepare such a plan for Sydney – the first such plan in Australia in the post-war years – within three years from July 27, 1945. The CCC’s brief made it the DMR’s first rival Governmental planning body. Despite the size and complexity of its task, the Cumberland County Plan (CCP) was duly completed and presented to the Minister for Local Government on July 27, 1948.

Although the Plan incorporated the MRDP and adopted a similar planning ideology to that of the DMR engineers, being described as a democratic medium for the pursuit of happiness and aiming to plan waste and inefficiency out of existence, it contained two latent conflicts over freeway planning. Firstly, dispersing employment centres to the suburbs would encourage suburban sprawl, while the proposed radial freeway network had been designed by the DMR on the basis of the land use patterns existing before the decentralisation policy began to be implemented. Moreover, the possible effects of decentralisation on transport use were not considered. Secondly, the inclusion of the MRDP network conflicted with the CCP’s views that mass transport had the first claim for use of road space in a redesigned system and that private cars were not an efficient form of mass transportation since they consumed vastly more road space per passenger. Instead of restricting freeway development, however, the CCC decided that the solution was to eliminate contact between pedestrians and road vehicle streams and thereby to recast the uncontrolled pattern of road use ‘to satisfy the needs of the main user groups’. This decision exposed the CCP to the possibility that use of the private car would annihilate

\[41\] Ibid.
\[43\] James Colman: ‘Sydney’s Second Great Experiment’, Australian Quarterly, March 1969, 7
\[44\] Denis Winston, Sydney’s Great Experiment: The Progress of the Cumberland County Plan, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1957, 36
\[45\] Cumberland County Council, Report on the Planning Scheme, xv
\[46\] Cumberland County Council, You and the County Plan, 1945, 2
\[47\] Cumberland County Council, Report on the Planning Scheme, 167
\[48\] Quoted in Peter Spearritt and Christina DeMarco, Planning Sydney’s Future, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1988, 19
The fundamental shortcoming in the CCP was that the scale of population growth which occurred over the next twenty years was far greater than it envisaged. The resultant pressures to open up new subdivisions more quickly than was planned and to release land within the green belt and beyond, thereby undermining the social ideals of the CCC planners, led to rapid suburban sprawl and therefore to social inequalities arising from unequal ownership of the means of production.\(^{49}\) One example of this was the way in which the land distribution schemes in the CCP served as speculators’ guides, informing investors in urban land where to buy next in order to make quick profits.\(^{50}\) Such inequalities were the opposite of what the CCC planners had intended and began to destroy the philosophical credibility of their plan and its freeways.

The CCC planners, mindful of the risks posed by other influences on the planning process, had recognised from the start that the greatest fault in previous Government planning had been the ‘lack of co-ordination’.\(^{51}\) Most authorities had planned parochially, with no regard to overall regional requirements.\(^{52}\) Their starting assumption that the CCC could achieve co-ordination,\(^{53}\) however, was far too optimistic. It ignored the reality that the Council was a politically feeble institution. The CCC did not directly advise the Minister for Local Government, who was the final arbiter of planning objectives. His main advisers were officers of his department and of the Town and Country Planning Advisory Committee (TCPAC),\(^{54}\) both of which had been deprived of fuller town planning powers by the local government opposition to the original version of the 1945 legislation and were therefore hostile towards the CCC. The CCC, moreover, was hampered by being beholden to local government. Its component local council members tended to act in support of local rather than regional authority, and at least one councillor who took a broader metropolitan view was not re-elected by the local councils he represented.\(^{55}\) Further, the 1945 Act gave the thirty-nine local councils in the CCC area the responsibility for drawing up detailed land use plans for their own territory within the parameters of the

\(^{49}\) Sandercock ‘Urban Policy’, in B. Head and A. Patience (ed.), From Whitlam to Fraser, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1979, 145

\(^{50}\) Ibid., 144

\(^{51}\) Cumberland County Council, Statement on the Planning Scheme, 3

\(^{52}\) Cumberland County Council, Report on the Planning Scheme, 4

\(^{53}\) Cumberland County Council, Statement on the Planning Scheme, 3

\(^{54}\) Department of Transport Economics, op.cit., 24-27

Cumberland County Plan, but only a handful of councils complied.\textsuperscript{56} Most preferred to resist CCC interference in what they saw as local issues to be determined by local means.

In this climate, other state government authorities were willing and able to out-muscle the CCC in pursuit of their own agendas. This was especially true of the DMR which already had substantial experience in road planning. Although the first Chief County Planner appointed by the State Government, Mr S.L. Luker, was a former DMR officer, and although much of the DMR’s planning section was transferred to the CCC,\textsuperscript{57} the two institutions always had an uneasy association. The DMR only supported adoption of the CCP provided that the Plan’s function was simply to protect the Department’s proposals.\textsuperscript{58} The CCC, however, felt that main roads construction or widening should only occur if it did not conflict with the implementation of the CCP.\textsuperscript{59} As Sydney’s growth proceeded contrary to and beyond the CCC’s control over subsequent years, objections to the DMR’s freeways began to mount within the Council. Although the CCP was statutory, the CCC planners were arguing by 1955 that their plans should be ‘flexible, constantly under review, and amendable in the light of properly conducted surveys’.\textsuperscript{60} They began to support and accept the reality of a more rapid pace of decentralisation.

The DMR, however, sought to cope with decentralisation not by altering its existing freeway proposals but by planning additions to the system. Acting independently of the CCC, it engaged American engineering consultants De Leuw Cather (DLC) to review the existing freeway plans. Their August 1961 report, based on essentially the same research techniques as the MRDP, confirmed the DMR’s existing plans and recommended the addition of another 150 miles of freeways to the 1946 network.\textsuperscript{61} The CCC opposed these recommendations and called for a comprehensive review of the transport requirements of Sydney in relation to those land use changes which had taken

\textsuperscript{56} Harrison, Planning the Metropolitan Areas, 205
\textsuperscript{57} P. Wilenski, Public Power and Public Administration, Hale and Iremonger, Sydney, 1986, 242
\textsuperscript{58} Secretary, Department of Main Roads, to Chief County Planner, Cumberland County Council, June 8, 1948 (CCCF 79)
\textsuperscript{59} Chief County Planner, Cumberland County Council letter to The Secretary, Department of Main Roads, August 6, 1948 (CCCF 79)
\textsuperscript{60} Cumberland County Council, Progress Report, CCC, Sydney, 1955. 3
place since the CCP and which could be expected in the future.  

Tensions between the DMR and the CCC were heightened by newly developing anti-freeway arguments which were supported by Luker’s successor as CCC head, Mr Rod Fraser. Fraser argued from overseas experience that building freeways could never meet the ever increasing demand for them, that the DLC report had ignored the complex inter-relationship between land use and transportation, and in particular the way in which the metropolitan transport system had moved away from being predominantly radial in response to the development of complex focal points for destinations across the whole metropolitan area. Since public transport was at its best and cars at their worst in serving the high density CBD of a large city, he called for the much greater use of public transport to cater for peak hour commuter trips into the CBD as a means of solving the central area transport problems caused by automobile congestion. The CCC concurred with Fraser’s views, which also gained support from some planning academics, such as Dennis Winston. Other town planning experts, however, most notably Ross Blunden whose Chair of Traffic Engineering at the University of New South Wales was set up by the sponsorship of the DMR in the 1950s, considered freeways a sound investment.

In the event, political designs both overtook Fraser’s position and allowed the DLC Report to slide into political oblivion. The CCC was abolished in 1963 and replaced by the State Planning Authority (SPA). The structure of the SPA largely alienated Sydney local councils from the urban planning process and consolidated the institutional power of the State bureaucracy. On the administrative side, a planner from the Department of Local Government, Mr C.E. Ferrier, was appointed as Chief Planner. Rod Fraser, who also applied for the job, was never given a top position within the new authority, and he soon resigned altogether. It is quite possible that objections to his criticism of

63 Ibid., 4
64 Ibid., 17-18
65 Cumberland County Council, *Economics of Urban Expansion*, 1958
66 Denis Winston, *Sydney Expressways: Comments on the Report by De Leuw Cather*, University of Sydney, 1962
67 ‘Acclaim for Roads Scheme’, *Telegraph Mirror*, November 11, 1961
68 In 1968 the DMR still regarded a map of the MRDP (M.P. 180) dated June 1952 as current. DMR file 43M380, part 5, 1968, SAA, Box K294149
69 Department of Transport Economics, *op cit.*, 27
freeways were a contributing factor in these outcomes, and it may also be significant that most copies of his 1964 report critical of the DLC report were mysteriously destroyed before he could distribute them to all local councils.\(^70\)

Five years and a change of government later, the SPA produced the Sydney Region Outline Plan (SROP). In contrast to the detailed rigidity of the CCP, the SROP regularly declared itself as a non-statutory flexible outline of 'principles, policies and broad strategy',\(^71\) designed for a dynamic, not static, situation. The SROP philosophy, however, still reflected a planning vacuum, like that of the CCC era, which the individual departmental bureaucracies, with their much greater policy leverage and spending power,\(^72\) could independently exploit. This problem was particularly acute in transport, which was inadequately treated in the SROP on the basis that the data necessary to define specific proposals for Sydney’s greatly expanded metropolitan area had not yet been fully collected or analysed.\(^73\) In failing to deal more decisively with transport strategy, the SPA abrogated its responsibility to set guidelines for the DMR’s activities. The DMR’s proposals were given extra credibility (when they should have been doubted) by dint of their inclusion in the CCP, and the SPA accepted that the DMR could determine which of the proposals should be regarded as reasonably firm commitments for future regional planning purposes.\(^74\) The SPA then used these as a starting assumption in formulating the SROP.\(^75\)

By the end of the 1960s, therefore, through a combination of its own institutional solidity and influence and of the administrative weaknesses inherent in the CCC and then the SPA, the DMR was a law unto itself. The institutional power of the car during the 1960s can be clearly seen in the matter of freeway funding, which doubled in real terms during the decade,\(^76\) and also in the establishment in 1965 of the Commonwealth Bureau of Roads (CBR), which had responsibility for advising the Federal Government how best to spend the substantial sums of money now being given by the Federal government for road

\(^{70}\) 'S400,000 Traffic Plan Scandal', *Daily Telegraph*, March 13, 1966

\(^{71}\) State Planning Authority, *Sydney Region Outline Plan*, March 1968, 18

\(^{72}\) Planning and Environment Commission, *Sydney Region Outline Plan Review*, PEC, Sydney, 1980, 23

\(^{73}\) State Planning Authority, *op cit.*, 44

\(^{74}\) State Planning Authority Deputy Chief Planner, SPA Minute Paper, January 23, 1967 (Cumberland County Council Archives File 79/2)

\(^{75}\) Wilenski, *op cit.*, 242

\(^{76}\) Manning, *op cit.*, 74
construction. The 1969 Commonwealth Aid Roads Agreement increased the funds available for urban roads development by one third, with almost all of the increase to be spent on freeway land resumption and construction.\textsuperscript{77} The DMR at last had the money required to build the remainder of its inner city freeways, and announced that work on the first stage of the North-Western Freeway, between the CBD and Bridge Road, Glebe, would start immediately for completion by 1978.\textsuperscript{78} However, although it also had formidable institutional power and the support of the State Askin Liberal Government, which favoured the land use ideology in vogue since 1945 and the right of individuals to use whichever mode of transport they wished, more formidable external opposition was starting to emerge.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 83

\textsuperscript{78} ' $30 million Expressway for Sydney', \textit{Sydney Morning Herald} (LL - undated)
CHAPTER 3

AS A CITY GROWS

As a city grows, man may either add to or subtract from what he has done before. Great cities reflect the successful adaptation over time of a series of different cultural values.  

DMR proposals, whether for inner suburban freeways through Glebe or for lesser distributor roads through Paddington, were not the only foci of union and local residential political protest and organisation in Sydney in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The other main sources of conflict were housing projects and other similar redevelopment projects. In all cases, the residents involved wanted to preserve their living environment as it was and to have their voices heard in the planning process. Frustration at their inability to do so through existing institutional means led them to take matters into their own hands.  

While there were attempts to establish city-wide umbrella groups, such as the Coalition of Resident Action Groups (CRAG), to foster co-operation between different resident groups, these largely failed due to the wide spectrum of class interests and ideologies they represented. Most opposition was conducted on the basis of individual regions or issues. 1970s resident opposition to the radial freeways emerged mainly in the Leichhardt Municipality, but also in other suburbs, such as Willoughby, Hunters Hill and Lane Cove, affected by the North Western or Warringah Expressways. The inner-most section of the Warringah Expressway, however, had already been built and Lane Cove and Hunters Hill were not scheduled to be affected until the 1980s. The only area in which an inner section of radial freeway was scheduled for construction in the early part of the 1970s was the inner west, and this area therefore provided the main crucible in which opposition ignited.

80 Sandercock, Cities for Sale, 206  
81 Ibid., 207-8  
82 David Scott, Don't Mourn For Me - Organise. Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1981, 128  
The politically important groups fighting the freeways were those which could effectively co-ordinate an opposition campaign, manipulate the media and give the impression for the media and the authorities that the anti-freeway protest was supported by the whole community and was not the work of isolated disruptive and disreputable trouble-makers. Although the campaign’s unity was fundamentally due to their common goal of halting the DMR’s proposals, the particular nature of Sydney’s inner western suburbs and their politics posed crucial problems and opportunities for those seeking to reverse the Government’s freeway policy.

Between 1900 and the 1950s, Sydney’s inner suburbs had become largely populated by people living on low incomes in small and often cramped accommodation units. These conditions were abhorred not only by planning ideologues, but also by working class organisations such as the Bricklayers and Carpenters’ Union which in 1937 called for ‘an immediate campaign to abolish slum areas and build better homes for the workers’. Impetus for inner-city residential revival did not arrive until the unexpected rapid post-war increase in Sydney’s population. In particular, many newly arrived migrants from Britain and from Southern Europe, together with the elderly and University of Sydney students and academics, moved into the vacated inner western residences. Much of the inner suburban housing stock was renovated as the financially constrained migrants enacted European values concerning the inner city. They revitalised the area and rendered the CCP an outdated blueprint for these suburbs.

As decentralisation continued, however, especially in the manufacturing industry, migrants were lured out into suburbia and were replaced by a rapidly increasing number of professionals and other white collar workers. As these groups moved in, house price rises in suburbs such as Paddington, initially, then Redfern, Balmain and Glebe outstripped rises across the remainder of the city. The price rises were accompanied by sharp rises in housing stock turnover and in the level of renovation activity. In many cases, especially on the Glebe Point

86 Spearritt, *Sydney’s Slums*, 69
87 H. Kendig, *New Life for Old Suburbs*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1979, 110
89 Kendig, *op cit.*, 125
90 *Ibid.*, 154
and Toxteth estates\textsuperscript{92} in Glebe, renovation restored terrace houses which had been converted into single rented rooms back to their former condition.\textsuperscript{93}

The attractions of suburbs such as Glebe, Balmain and Paddington for significant numbers of professionals and their ilk were very complex. The numbers of white collar jobs in the city and inner suburbs had grown enormously throughout the 1950s and 1960s. New suburban housing locations were now further removed from the city centre, and the relatively cheap prices of inner suburban housing, which could then be renovated, were attractive to those people, especially those who were products of the ‘baby boom’, who consciously wanted to reject the suburban lifestyle (and its associated commuting).\textsuperscript{94}

Since the ideology of suburbia was grounded in the post-war urban planning ideal, moreover, rejecting suburbia entailed rejecting that ideal. Far from being tainted by the ‘slum’ stigma, terrace housing became a fashion symbol amongst its new occupants. Simultaneously, a new appreciation for the city’s heritage and environment began to emerge as an antidote to the side-effects of ‘progress’, which included the deteriorating public environment.\textsuperscript{95} The year of the first sustained development of Glebe (1968) also saw the formation of the Glebe Society, the area’s first residents’ association.\textsuperscript{96} Its participants were the new professional residents and academics, and its first President was Bernard Smith, Professor of Fine Arts at Sydney University.\textsuperscript{97} Like its next-door counterpart, the Annandale Association (formed in 1970), the Society was ostensibly a conservative social and recreational club, organising activities such as bushwalks, arts and crafts sales, Christmas parties and local history tours.\textsuperscript{98} Despite its pretence of being ‘apolitical’, however, it also had more action-orientated functions, aiming to ensure adequate planning and to preserve places of historic interest within the suburbs.\textsuperscript{99} The Society was particularly concerned with the DMR’s freeway proposals and with the possibility that large blocks of

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{92} M. McAllister, \textit{Community Organization and Local Politics in Glebe}, Community Politics research project, Government III, University of Sydney, 1975, 3
\bibitem{93} Kendig, \textit{op. cit}, 127
\bibitem{94} Kendig, \textit{op. cit.}, 125-6
\bibitem{96} Department of Transport Economics, \textit{op. cit}, 48
\bibitem{97} Glebe Society Bulletin, No.1, July 1969
\bibitem{98} Various \textit{Glebe Society Bulletins} and \textit{Annandale Association Newsletters}
\bibitem{99} Glebe Society Bulletin, July 1969
\end{thebibliography}
flats would be built in the area. Moreover, its members had the means and the opportunity to fight for their aims against the encroaching developments, which would also have had significant adverse effects on the value of the locals’ real estate. Many of those campaigning against the freeways held salaried jobs - in large corporations, the public service and the universities - which were well paid and relatively free of job insecurity. They could therefore afford to devote time and other resources, both financial and intellectual, to the fight.

When the DMR commenced purchasing houses in Glebe, one broader strategy employed by members of the Glebe Society and a number of university students was to form the Glebe Anti-Expressway Action Group (GAEAG) to alert the public to the threat of the freeway proposals. GAEAG attracted members of a more ‘radical’ political persuasion and was the ‘grass-roots’ activist wing of the residents’ organisation. Its members engaged in concerted door-knocking, letterbox dropping, posteriing and letter writing, and generally tried to get the message out amongst the people. Their periodic newsletters, distributed by letterbox dropping, kept residents informed of the latest developments. The rhetoric of the early newsletters was extremely socialist and anti-American, viewing the Australian Government as dominated by American automotive monopolies, but as the freeway threat became more imminent the later publications largely ignored ideology and instead made pragmatic appeals to all local residents regardless of ideological leanings. The newsletters also constantly encouraged participation ('there's lots of things we can do') and outlined future strategies and visions for action, including rallies and marches. According to spokesperson Patsi Dunn, it was ‘most important for the people of Glebe to realise how much can be achieved through community solidarity'. Members of GAEAG were behind a number of attention grabbing activities designed to get maximum publicity for the anti-freeway cause, such as posteriing anti-freeway slogans over advertising billboards along Victoria Road.

100 Department of Housing and Construction, Glebe Project, 27
101 Jacubowicz, A New Politics of Suburbia, 340
103 Glebe Anti-Expressway Action Group, GAEAG newsletter (LL - undated)
105 For example, GAEAG newsletter, April 11, 1973
106 GAEAG newsletter (LL - undated)
107 Assorted GAEAG newsletters (LL)
108 'War Declared on DMR', unknown newspaper, 1971 (LL - undated)
White Bay. GAEAG allowed the minority of Glebe Society and Annandale Association members who so desired to take ‘radical’ action without diminishing the amenity societies’ image of respectability. The extent of such action under the Glebe Society or Annandale Association banners was much more limited.

The activist members of the Glebe Society also extended their strategies to Leichhardt Council politics. The council had long been controlled by the three right-wing local branches of the Labor Party, which conducted local council politics on a Tammany Hall machine and boss system and which had failed to mount substantial opposition to the housing and freeway development proposed for the area. In the early 1970s the Glebe Society became increasingly frustrated at the Council’s inertia and organised the Campaign for Better Council (CBC) which won six of the twelve places on the Council at the October 1971 elections on a platform of protecting the lifestyle of the new class of residents and stopping the radial freeways. The other places were taken by four of the previous nine Labor aldermen and by Izzy Wyner and Nick Origlass. Wyner and Origlass, strong participants in the Left wing of Labor Politics, had recently been expelled from the Australian Labor Party (ALP) after voting against a right-wing caucus decision and had subsequently constructed the independent Balmain Leichhardt Labor Party, drawing support from the new professionals and from their old Labor supporters. Consequently, Origlass was politically bound on his election as Mayor to act in line with the strategies and tactics of the new residents’ groups. This outcome came at the expense of the local ALP right wing who only agreed to support the anti-freeway campaign after much deliberation.

In November 1971, at a meeting attended by 700 people, the Council formed the Leichhardt Anti-Urban Radial Expressway Committee (LAUREC). Chaired by Mayor Origlass, this group existed ‘to organise petitions and other manifestations of public disquiet’. Through LAUREC, the residents put their new-found (largely symbolic) power to good use through a series of high publicity meetings and marches. During these activities, such as a rowdy protest march of 300 people through Glebe on February 12, 1972, they were careful to portray themselves as respectable citizens who were so outraged by the

109 Conversation with Max Solling, June 1994
110 Annandale Association Newsletter, No.38, June 1973
111 ‘Homes to Go for New Expressway’, Westgate Weekly News, September 16, 1971
112 Conversation with Max Solling, June 1994
113 Jacobowicz, A New Politics of Suburbia, 347
114 Leichhardt Council, Mayoral Minute. Ordinary Meeting November 30, 1971 (LL)
115 ‘Protesters Leave their Mark’, Sunday Telegraph, February 13, 1972
proposals that they were prepared to use shock publicity tactics, such as using water-based paints to daub footpaths, roads, buildings and cars in the future path of the freeway, to register their dissent. The image of the Mayor, in full ceremonial regalia, joining in the painting spree was crucial to this portrayal, with the marchers quickly dispersing when Origlass was not present.\textsuperscript{116} 

Although led by the new middle class, older working class residents also began to participate in the anti-freeway movement as they were persuaded by the informative educational activities of the middle class and student activists to take up the campaign as their own cause outside the Labor machine. By 1975, 36\% of Glebe residents thought they could influence the planning process.\textsuperscript{117} The freeway proposals, which since 1968 had become the most pressing issue in the municipality, threatened the lifestyles of all Glebe residents and drew together the whole diversity of the suburb in opposing the DMR. Judging by the problems experienced a few years later by CRAG, it would have been impossible to do this if the main threat had been the construction of blocks of flats. In this case, the middle class would have been the main group affected and those less well off and/or more radically inclined could have complained, as they did in other areas such as Potts Point, of selfish exclusivism.\textsuperscript{118} 

For all its skilful organisation and presentation as a unified, comprehensive, intelligent movement, however, the residents' opposition campaign by itself could not have made much impact on the State Government or on the DMR bureaucracy's political power. The residents were an interest group from a safe Labor seat trying to attract the attention of a Liberal State Government. Moreover, there was no procedure established at State Government level for listening to representations by resident groups on planning issues. Meetings of the SPA were closed and the reports of its chief planners were not public documents. For the SPA and its Minister, its broad long term advisory planning, generated by top level policies, was 'not ripe for public knowledge' and there was no justification for disclosure.\textsuperscript{119} In such an institutional climate, the residents needed a way of making an impact on the SPA's plan formulation in order to complement their direct public campaign. They were therefore fortunate to find – in the Builders Labourers' Federation

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} R. Cain, Transportation Planning and Conflict in Sydney: A Case Study of Inner City Expressways in Glebe, Bachelor of Science in Applied Geography Thesis, University of New South Wales, 1975, 62
\textsuperscript{118} Nittim, op cit., 241
\textsuperscript{119} Quoted in Roddewig, op cit., 53
(BLF) and the Federal Labor Party - allies who could make such an impact.

According to Jack Mundey, who headed the Sydney BLF between 1969 and 1974 and who coined the phrase ‘green bans’, the imposition of such bans showed that a growing number of workers were demanding a greater say, a greater control, over their working lives and were insisting that the work performed should be beneficial to the community as a whole.\(^{120}\) Although the buoyancy of the construction industry in the early 1970s meant that the bans could be selectively imposed without threatening members’ employment, the BLF under Mundey developed the concept of the moral agency of unions much further than it had ever previously gone. With other unions remaining preoccupied with traditional concerns, moreover, the bans were not merely opportunistic.

Developers, the Government and the establishment press such as the *Sydney Morning Herald* sought to portray the BLF, and the one or two other unions\(^ {121}\) which took similar action, as disruptive radicals whose attempts to set themselves up as the arbiters of taste and protectors of national heritage were at best comical\(^ {122}\) and at worst abhorrent. The union also felt the class conflict implicit in such critiques, which were also fed by a fear campaign based on the avowed communism of the NSW and Victorian BLF executives. The NSW executive’s environmentalism, however, won out over class conflict,\(^ {123}\) while their commitment to radical democracy led to the adoption of the requirements for involvement that a resident group had to request help and that the request had to be approved at a local public meeting.\(^ {124}\) In the case of the freeway bans, the Leichhardt residents left the BLF with little doubt about the level of support they enjoyed. The bans the Union imposed severely inhibited the ability of the DMR to proceed with its necessary demolition work without the use of ‘scab’ labour, which was vigorously resisted. More importantly, they also generated intense publicity for the anti-freeway movement and further invigorated the freeway debate by forcing state planners to take notice of resident opposition.

The philosophies held by the residents and the BLF also converged with the attitudes of the Federal ALP. Gough Whitlam and Tom Uren, the major

\(^{120}\) Peter Thomas, *Taming the Concrete Jungle: The Builders Labourers Story*. NSWBLF, Sydney 1973, foreword by Jack Mundey

\(^{121}\) Jack Mundey, *Green Bans and Beyond*. Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1981, 113


\(^{123}\) Mundey, *op cit.*, 81

\(^{124}\) Roddewig, *op cit.*, 15
urban planning protagonists for the Labor Party, both lived in and represented outer-suburban electorates of Sydney, and the urban policies they developed were partly a personal response to the infrastructure problems of these areas. By 1972, the Federal ALP succeeded in establishing city planning and urban ‘quality of life’ throughout Australia’s urban regions as the major election issue, the scale of which called for large-scale federal intervention.

In these respects, Federal Labor’s urban reform efforts were a return to the democratic ethos of the Cumberland County Plan, but with radically different concrete planning consequences. Labor’s election chances were further strengthened after the incumbent Liberal Prime Minister William McMahon decided not to set up an independent urban development department and to leave the States with the responsibility, theoretically, for the planning and development of major population centres. Labor was duly elected and the new Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD), with Uren as its dedicated Minister, was soon established to implement the Whitlam and Uren agenda.

DURD’s transport planning was intended to avoid ‘technocratic isolation’ through educating all parties in broader perspectives on the issues at stake. Moreover, integrating and encouraging action at all levels of government through co-ordination and communication was ‘the most vital aspect of the Department’s task’. In contrast to the separateness of the DMR, DURD thought that planning had to proceed from the assumption that transport, far from being totally dependent on other forms of land use, was one of the most influential factors within urban and regional systems. In Uren’s view, the proposed radial freeways would not improve the communities through which they would pass and would eventually lead to more problems than their proponents claimed they would solve. They would force poorer inner suburban

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126 Lloyd and Troy, ibid., 27
127 Harrison, ‘City Planning’ in Peter Scott (ed.). Australian Cities and Public Policy. Georgian House, Melbourne, 1978, 163
128 Department of Urban and Regional Development. First Annual Report. DURD. Canberra, 1973, 7
129 Lloyd and Troy, ‘Federal Intervention’. in Lloyd and Troy. op. cit., 30
130 Department of Urban and Regional Development, First Annual Report. DURD, Canberra, 1973, 21
131 Department of Urban and Regional Development, Second Annual Report. DURD, Canberra, 1974, 2
132 Ibid., 35
residents to move into even more seriously disadvantaged outer suburbs, would aggravate over-building in the central areas of the city^133 and would do nothing to alleviate problems such as pollution while at the same time destroying the inner suburbs' social fabric.

The anti-freeway activities of Uren and DURD reflected a unique and novel government approach to planning issues. Uren began to cast himself as a national figurehead for urban planning reform and maintained close contact with the resident activists through Dick Smythe, the Head of DURD's transport division. Although in one sense the Labor party at the state and federal levels had little to gain locally from taking up the residents' specific cause (because the battle was taking place in already safe Labor seats), the Federal Government's stated urban agenda, combined with the high grass roots profile which the local opposition groups raised throughout Australia's cities, compelled Uren to become involved with the freeway opposition. If built, the freeways would have consumed resources better spent in servicing the more disadvantaged areas of the metropolis and would have deprived the inner suburbs of low income housing and urban amenity. The plans which were thought to promote equality in the 1940s clearly no longer did so in the 1970s and had no regard for the newly emerged importance of urban heritage and the environment.

^133 The Bulletin, op cit., 12
CHAPTER 4

CONCERN AND COMPASSION

The geographical focal point of confrontation over the radial freeways in 1970s Sydney was the area between Harris Street, Ultimo, and Bridge Road, Glebe, which included the historic nineteenth century home of Lyndhurst,\textsuperscript{134} other homes largely occupied by tenants, and Wentworth Park. This area was the only inner-suburban location in which freeway construction was planned for the early 1970s and the DMR would have had ample time to pass the point of no return in building the North-Western freeway had the local residents not campaigned so vigorously against it. Throughout 1971 the residents became increasingly concerned at the way in which the DMR was either ignoring or stifling their voice. For example, during that year the Department decided, in full consultation with the Department of Lands and the Trustees of Wentworth Park,\textsuperscript{135} for whom the Park's greyhound track provided a major source of income, to alter the freeway's proposed route to avoid interference with the track. This decision, which was taken without even informing local residents,\textsuperscript{136} was justified on the grounds that it gave the freeway a better and cheaper alignment, but it also increased the number of low-income households whose houses were scheduled for demolition and would have devastated a greater percentage of the Park's public recreation area.\textsuperscript{137} The DMR also pursued a policy of either demolishing their acquisitions or left uninhabitable for sustained periods of time. By November 1971, GAEAG was employing measures such as pickets and re-occupation 'flying squads' in order to prevent and defy evictions. Several confrontations between residents, police and demonstrators occurred into 1972. The resultant publicity, together with the impact of the green bans, soon led to the DMR temporarily withdrawing from Glebe.\textsuperscript{138}

Also around this time more and more planners, including Professor Blunden, started criticising the DMR's proposals, essentially on the basis that by the 1970s the rise of the automobile, far from being desirable, was now choking the very cities it was designed to serve and therefore had to be curtailed or

\textsuperscript{134} Glebe Anti-Expressway Action Group, \textit{Where do we go from here?}, August 1972 flyer
\textsuperscript{135} Commissioner Schmidt, Department of Main Roads, to Sir Charles Cutler, letter dated October 28, 1974, DMR File F3/412.127, Part 1. RTAA
\textsuperscript{136} Glebe Society Bulletin. No.9 of 71
\textsuperscript{137} Cain, \textit{op cit.}, 71
\textsuperscript{138} McAllister, \textit{op cit.}, 17
halted. These arguments were taken up by the BLF and by the residents, who claimed that the DMR’s radial freeway scheme had been demonstrated by overseas experience, especially in America, to be neither economic nor a solution to traffic problems.  

At the Federal level, Tom Uren, who had a policy of talking ‘with grassroots people’ and reacting ‘to some of their requests’ if he thought they were right, pledged his opposition to the DMR’s radial proposals as early as February 1972. Meanwhile, the residents continued to pursue their own confrontational and publicity grabbing strategies. In August 1972, for example, they decided to commence construction of a children’s adventure playground on the derelict blocks of land and to begin holding opposition meetings in an empty flour factory in Bridge Road which was owned by the DMR. The adventure playground became a symbol of resistance against the DMR’s environmental destruction, especially as the Department successfully used the area as a rubbish dump. As the residents were gradually driven out, however, by the end of 1972 the focus of anti-freeway activity had shifted to government battles.

While the external opposition was mobilising in 1970-1972, however, the State Liberal Government and monolithic bureaucracies continued to develop their thinking along the same paths as before. In 1970, to remedy the omission of a detailed strategic transport plan from the SROP, the State Government commissioned the Sydney Area Transportation Study. SATS was overseen by the County of Cumberland Transport Advisory Council (CUMTAC), which consisted of senior bureaucrats from Treasury, the SPA, the DMR and the Departments of Motor and Government Transport. CUMTAC employed a decision by consensus ethos, which meant that its decisions tended to reflect the power held by each of its constituent bodies. The SATS study, which was undertaken by a group of transport economists and highway engineers, led by Dr Robert Neilsen, therefore adopted essentially the same transport planning technique used to develop the MRDP and failed to recognise that different transport networks induce different patterns of land use. Although given the opportunity to evaluate the transport consequence of alternative land use/transportation plans, SATS in fact only analysed three minor variations of the SROP. Since the SROP still placed the Sydney CBD as the largest

139 ‘Mayor warns on expressway’, The Glebe, October 14, 1971  
140 Interview with Tom Uren, op cit.  
141 ‘Degen, Uren Join in DMR Road War’ The Glebe, February 17, 1972  
142 Sandercock, Cities for Sale, 193  
employment district in a Sydney area whose population was anticipated to undergo still further expansion, it was predictable that SATS should eventually recommend retaining the existing network and making middle and outer suburb additions.

Pending the SATS findings, both the Liberal State Government and the DMR continued to stonewall the freeway opposition groups and to treat them with contempt. The Department was extremely reluctant to answer questions relating to its internal structure, its planning techniques and its decision-making processes, and its refusal to acknowledge perspectives which conflicted with its aims meant that such official dialogue as took place between opposition groups and the DMR was inevitably conducted at cross-purposes. In State Parliament, meanwhile, Premier Askin trusted the DMR and attempted to conclude the debate prematurely by doubting that SATS would recommend changes to the freeway proposals. Such statements exasperated the freeway opponents, who in 1971 and 1972 found a new source of hope - the state ALP opposition which previously had always been in favour of the freeways. ALP politicians such as Peter Cox now argued in terms of the people’s right to be heard and of the inappropriateness of freeways as a means of social reform or of solving Sydney’s transport problems. Whereas in the early 1960s the ALP was calling for the acceleration of the freeway program so that the redevelopment of housing commission land in Glebe could occur, by 1971 it was arguing that ‘you do not have progress by forcing people from their homes’.

Labor’s concern turned the freeways into a significant party political issue, an outcome which was followed in 1973 by criticism of the freeway plans by the Minister for Transport and by CUMTAC. Both were frustrated at the DMR’s continuing bureaucratic independence. Also in 1973, the Whitlam Government took its first action against inner-city freeways by establishing several inquiries into aspects of Australian road development. The CBR produced several reports, culminating in early 1974, which opposed inner city freeways on the grounds of the high community impact of freeways in densely developed areas and of the high cost of property acquisition and freeway

Australian Quarterly. Vol.46, No.4, December 1974

144 Leichhardt Council, op cit.
145 ‘Askin rejects plea for roads inquiry’, unknown newspaper, early 1972. (LL - exact date unknown)
146 Cain, op cit, 66
147 N.S.W. Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, October 25, 1972
148 ‘Sloss, Cope, Degen Help Stop Expressway’ (LL - unknown, undated 1972 newspaper)
construction in these areas. The CBR recommended that Sydney’s radials be replaced by circumferential roads. Its reports were soon followed by a bipartisan House of Representatives Select Committee on Road Safety concluding that devoting the same funds proposed for expenditure on freeways either to upgrading the existing road system or to improving public transport would achieve a much higher safety return much more quickly.

One month later, in March 1974, the Federal Government purchased the ‘Glebe Estate’ from the Church of England, thereby preventing the North-Western freeway from proceeding. Perhaps more significantly, the Commonwealth Roads Grants Act of September 1974 cut the federal funding available for urban arterial roads by over 50%, based on a change in emphasis away from urban freeways towards inter-capital routes and on the Whitlam Government’s general dislike of disproportionate spending on private over public transport. Further, the Act allowed the Commonwealth to reduce grants to any state which continued with road construction of which Canberra did not approve, even if it were financed by state funds.

The impact of this series of interfering Federal Government actions, combined with the savaging that the hopelessly obsolete and inadequate SATS report received when it was published in 1974, inflamed the DMR to drastic action. Eleven days after the federal funding agreement, and two years after the last demolitions in Glebe, the DMR suddenly moved to demolish a hotel in Fig Street, Ultimo and then bulldoze houses further down the street. Although LAUREC had become defunct at the end of 1973 when the amenities groups lost control of Leichhardt Council and Origlass ceased to be mayor, and although GAEAG had also ceased to function in the belief that the freeway threat had been averted, the more stable amenities groups harvested the fruits of the anti-freeway publicity by hurriedly organising a large demonstration for Monday September 30 and preparing for sit-ins. Many protesters were dressed in suits to create an image of respectability. Officials of the BLF, who were called on for support, placed a green ban on continued work on the freeway in Ultimo. As demolition workers were deployed, demonstrators barricaded themselves into the buildings, climbed on the roofs and chimneys, and sat down in front of the

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149 Commonwealth Bureau of Roads, Assessment of Freeway Plans, State Capital Cities. CBR, Canberra, January 1974

150 ‘The anti-freeway movement crosses party lines’, Financial Review, April 26, 1974

151 Blackshaw, op cit.

152 McAllister, op cit., 17
bulldozers. In response, the police moved in to remove the demonstrators and the ensuing clashes resulted in twenty arrests.

The Fig St confrontation indicated that education was more crucial to potent resident opposition than good organisation, but also highlighted the importance of continued willingness to engage in high profile confrontation. The conflict received national media attention and the protesters received statements of support from DURD. At a public meeting at Fig Street on October 5 1974, moreover, the State opposition leader, Neville Wran, pledged his opposition to the freeway. The DMR, now fearful of the ugly publicity it was receiving, agreed to stop demolition until a funding agreement could be reached with the Federal Government. No such agreement was ever reached, DURD commissioned a study of alternatives, and work in Ultimo remained stopped.

The events of early October 1974 were the climax of external opposition to the State Government’s freeway plans. Although LAUREC, minus the Council, was resurrected as the Anti-Urban Radial Expressway Committee (AUREC), AUREC convenor Allan Sorrenson was soon confident that there was no further threat to Glebe. By the middle of 1975 there was again no longer any anti-freeway organisation as such, although Sorrenson incorporated its aims into his newly convened Save Public Transport Committee. The year 1975 also saw the demise of radical pressure from Canberra and the BLF as the Fraser Liberal Government repudiated Whitlam’s grand urban solutions and interventionalist centralism and as the power base of the activist NSW branch headed by Mundey was destroyed by a new state branch of the Federal BLF headed by Norm Gallagher. The new BLF would only impose a green ban if it was based on the intrinsic historic value of a building, or an a request by the respected National Trust that a ban be imposed, in each case supported by the general public rather than organised residents’ groups.

In the aftermath of Fig Street, however, there were signs that the State Government mind-set was changing in response to external pressure, to

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153 ‘All quiet in Ultimo’ The Tiger, October 3, 1974
154 Cain, op cit., 85
155 McAllister, op cit., 17
156 Cain, op cit., 86
157 McAllister, op cit., 17
158 Sandercock, ‘Urban Policy’, 154-6
159 Roddewig, op cit., 107
awareness of the scarcity of energy resources world-wide and to Labor’s growing electoral popularity. The Planning and Environment Commission replaced the SPA and in December 1974 produced a report recommending integrating land use and transportation planning, strengthening local planning decision making, giving greater emphasis to environmental considerations in planning, paying greater attention to the social and economic consequences of planning and opening up all stages of the planning process to full public involvement.160 In late 1975 the government also undertook a review of policy on freeway planning and construction which recognised the constraints imposed by the effects of freeway land acquisition on urban areas.161 The review made no specific recommendations about inner-urban freeways,162 however, and they were not finally abandoned until the Wran Labor government, elected in March 1976, had undertaken its own reviews.163

As well as abandoning the radial freeways, the new government decided that the acknowledged transport problem along Victoria Road was to be solved by the construction of a new Glebe Island Bridge and several grade-separated interchanges between Pyrmont and Gladesville.164 This proposal was formulated by the DMR overseen by a committee headed by former senior DURD officials165, but it was still based on meeting the ‘expected ultimate capacity of Gladesville Bridge [the highest capacity point possible] in peak hours’.166 The Department clearly retained considerable power to encourage car use instead of restricting it through planned congestion, but it had lost the battle to build its outdated radial freeways which would have devastated the urban environment, which could not be financed from available funds, and which did not recognise the strengths of public transport in servicing the CBD core.167

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160 Ibid., 110-1
161 Urban Transport Advisory Committee, Report to the Minister for Transport and Highways and the Minister for Planning and the Environment, February 1976, 8
162 New South Wales Parliamentary Debates, Hansard, November 8, 1977
164 ‘Now a mini-freeway instead of the western distributor’, Sun Herald, October 23, 1977
165 Memorandum from Peter Cox to the DMR, June 30, 1977, DMR File F3/412.127, Part 2, RTAA
166 DMR Memorandum to Peter Cox, July 15, 1977, DMR File F3/412.127, Part 2, RTAA
POSTSCRIPT

The 1977 decisions, which rejected the freeway and the motor car as the symbols of the ideal city and as unqualified goods, brought the transport planning process back into line with the realities of urban development in Sydney and shifted the freeway debate to a more sophisticated level. In particular, the much publicised grand plan for inner city radial freeways which had generated so much opposition was abandoned in favour of more complex approaches. As a result of external pressure, generated by new awareness of the problems of the motor car and applied effectively by the state and federal ALPs with the assistance of the residents of inner-western Sydney, professional planners and the State Government adapted to the expressed dissatisfaction by changing their plans where necessary and by assimilating the importance attached to heritage, the environment and to public participation.

Twenty years later, however, not much has changed within the processes of the state bureaucracy despite moves to entrench these concerns within the state planning ethos through the appointment of more environmentally aware staff and devices such as compulsory Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) on large development projects. The Department of Main Roads (as the Road and Traffic Authority (RTA)) remains a creature of roads interests and continues to use every possible opportunity to promote the building of more freeways. Aside from the M2 in Sydney’s north-west and the M5 extensions in Sydney’s inner south-west to link Kingsford Smith airport with Badgery’s Creek, another very recent example of the RTA’s aims to ‘piggyback’ freeway construction onto other developments is the proposal to connect the end of the City-West Link road to the end of the Western Freeway at Strathfield in order to link the two 2000 Olympic venues of Darling Harbour and Homebush Bay. If constructed, this proposed road, which will require the demolition of around 200 homes, will be a de facto replacement for Western radial freeway rejected in 1977. Similarly, the combination of the M2 and the Gore Hill Freeway to Lane Cove will produce a de facto North-Western radial freeway, albeit over a different route.

Although it has recognised the political foolishness of developing and publicly promoting rigid grand freeway plans, the RTA has been quite successful in pursuing its plans piece by piece with a reduced level of political fall-out. Moreover, plans for a number of other freeways also still exist within the department, including extension of the Warringah Freeway to the Warringah peninsula, construction along a route from Waterfall to Alexandria via Sans

168 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW) s111-112
Souci, and several circumferential freeways in Sydney’s western suburbs. Whether these and other freeways will eventually be built will depend on funding constraints, on the strength of local opposition and on whether the RTA’s hold over road transport planning in Sydney can be broken. Another important factor will be the relative local and regional merits of public and private transport - there is more merit in building the circumferential freeways in Sydney’s outer west than there is in paralleling the route of the Illawarra railway line in the city’s south.

Turning to the other factors, the reluctance of governments to finance freeway construction can be overcome by contracting with private road builders and/or by the imposition of tolls on motorists. The issue of tolls is a contentious one, especially in the case of freeways servicing less advantaged areas of a city. Tolls impose a significant burden on regular users of a tollway and discourage motorists from using the road. They therefore discriminate against people who need to use the freeway, a problem which current New South Wales Premier Bob Carr recently suggested overcoming by providing exemptions for such users, although this may well undermine the funding rationale behind the use of private contractors and tolls in the first place. Tollways also mean that the volume of traffic on surrounding streets is not as diminished as it would be if the road were truly a freeway.

Another condition favouring freeway construction is community ambivalence towards freeways. For example, in the north-western Sydney suburb of Epping there are residents’ groups supporting the M2 as well as groups opposing it. Those in favour see the tollway as improving residential amenity by removing traffic from other arteries such as Epping Road, while those against mostly consist of residents whose homes are in the path of or adjacent to the freeway corridor and who are worried about noise and air pollution and about social dislocation. Whereas suburbs such as Glebe and Annandale had nothing to gain and much to lose from the North-Western and Western freeways, with the result that resident opposition was almost unanimous, suburbs such as Epping will be benefited by the construction of the M2. Consequently, high-profile confrontationalist opposition to the M2 has been largely left to students and other environmental radicals, associated with Macquarie University, who can much more easily be dismissed by planning bureaucrats as an unrespectable minority fringe.

Given the ambiguous states of the other conditions affecting whether freeways will be built in Sydney, the politics of the State Government and its internal structures assume even greater importance, although due to the public
responsiveness of politicians on the issue it is almost inconceivable that some of the RTA’s plans, such as the Warringah freeway extension across Middle Harbour,\textsuperscript{169} will ever be implemented. At least up until the last State election, the RTA still held almost omnipotent sway over freeway planning in Sydney - it remains to be seen whether the newly elected Labor Government’s promise to establish a central co-ordinative land use planning authority for Sydney will come to fruition and prove effective in curtailing the RTA’s planning power. Meanwhile, the RTA continues to exist as an independent planning organisation, with responsibility for compiling EIS reports on its own projects, and the result is a disaster for coherent, co-ordinated urban planning within New South Wales.

More broadly, Environmental Impact Statements and other such investigations have professionalised the treatment of heritage and environmental planning issues - they have left final power in the hands of the bureaucratic interest groups and therefore arguably merely constitute devices for managing the expression of public opinion rather than for making government administrators responsive to it. This leaves open the possibility that the gap between planning and development may reopen and that militant, largely reactive opposition of the kind which arose in the late 1960s and early 1970s may arise once more in response to perceived alienation from the planning process. The only certainties are that the debate about freeways and other forms of urban development will not go away and that residents will not be dictated by bureaucracies such as the RTA in ‘the things which affect their lives’.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{169} ‘On the Road to Nowhere’, \textit{Sydney Morning Herald}, April 9, 1994. The same could probably also be said for the Waterfall to Alexandria proposal.

\textsuperscript{170} ‘Sloss, Cope, Degen help stop Expressway’, (LL - undated, unknown newspaper)
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