



state of **AUSTRALIAN CITIES**

national conference >03

Carlton Hotel, Parramatta

3-5 December 2003

Suburbs in the 'Global City': Labour markets in Western Sydney since the mid 1990s

Authored by:

Bob Fagan
Robyn Dowling
John Langdale

Department of Human Geography, Macquarie University

rfagan@els.mq.edu.au
rdowling@els.mq.edu.au

ABSTRACT

Since the early 1990s, ideas that Sydney is a 'global city' have had major impacts on urban economic and social policies attempting to deal with the city's growth. This discourse has also shaped understandings of Sydney's role in the period of sustained national economic growth since the mid 1990s. Yet there are two implications for Sydney's outer suburban areas. First, Australia's version of the global city script has been remarkably silent about the suburbs. Recent ideas about Sydney's 'global arc' appear to exclude or marginalise the outer west. Second, what makes Sydney global usually revolves around its role as an international node in financial flows, telecommunications, corporate decision-making and the financial and business services which support them. Although Western Sydney is one of Australia's largest manufacturing regions, this easily disappears off the global radar.

This paper challenges these interpretations of Sydney's outer suburban areas by exploring employment and labour market changes between 1996 and 2001. By 2001, some 70 per cent of Western Sydney's residential labour force found employment somewhere in these outer suburbs, a high degree of regionalisation but also indicating continued importance of commuting to various employment locations in eastern Sydney including the CBD. The paper compares changes in the manufacturing sector, widely held to have become 'over-represented' in both the outer suburban employment profile and residential labour force, with financial and business services sectors. These remain under-represented by comparison with eastern Sydney. Yet these representations can become stereotypes burying the complexity of recent change. While the usefulness of the 'global city' label can be debated, there is no doubting Sydney's outer western suburbs are an integral, rather than marginal, part of the daily workings of the globalised urban economy.

The full study will be released by WSROC on 27th February 2004 via the website:-

www.wsroc.com.au

STATE OF AUSTRALIAN CITIES NATIONAL CONFERENCE

SYDNEY, 2003

SPONSORS

University of Western Sydney
Australian National University
The University of New South Wales
Griffith University
The University of Melbourne
Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment
NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources
ACT Planning and Land Authority

 For all enquiries, please contact:-

University of Western Sydney
Urban Frontiers Program
Building 22, Campbelltown Campus
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith South DC NSW 1797

Phone +61 2 4620 3443

Fax +61 2 4620 3447

Email urbanfrontiers@uws.edu.au

Web www.urbanfrontiers.uws.edu.au