

BUILDING LIVES, BUILDING COMMUNITY IN CRAIGIEBURN AND ROXBURGH PARK

Report to the Community



Dr Belinda Robson, Research Fellow

The McCaughey Centre: VicHealth Centre
for the Promotion of Mental Health & Community Wellbeing

Melbourne School of Population Health,
The University of Melbourne



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Dr Belinda Robson, Research Fellow

The McCaughey Centre: VicHealth Centre
for the Promotion of Mental Health & Community Wellbeing

Melbourne School of Population Health,
The University of Melbourne

Phone: 8344 9101

Fax: 8344 2832

Email: info-mccaughey@unimelb.edu.au

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FOREWORD

Crossroads Youth and Family Services (Crossroads) are very pleased to present this report researched and written by Dr Belinda Robson at the McCaughey Centre: VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of Mental Health and Community Wellbeing. This is the first report from a larger project on the urban fringe in the northern suburbs of Melbourne which in 2009 will include additional suburbs in Whittlesea.

The research was undertaken in 2008 and provides a unique insight into the lives, views and aspirations of people living in the suburbs of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park. These two areas, located in the rapidly growing outer northern suburbs of Melbourne, represent the types of communities which Melbourne and indeed Australia are likely to see a lot more of in the coming decade as cities grapple with the need to accommodate burgeoning populations. Those who are seeking to live in urban fringe communities are a diverse and pioneering group who deserve to be given an opportunity to access the same services as those who live in other parts of the city. The process of building these communities, as this research shows, is not always easy.

This is why Crossroads supported this research. We need to understand why and how these communities are forming in order to orientate services to better fit the new Melbourne where new communities are being built at the margins of the city.

So often we think that we already know an area because we drive past it in on the highway or know about other fringe communities. This sort of research tells us that we are not always even asking the right questions, let alone taking the best steps to respond to a community as a unique entity with its own stories and aspirations. As we develop new services to meet the needs of outer-northern communities, this sort of in-depth area-based research is invaluable in informing service directions for the future.

The findings of the research clearly tell us that there is a potential for more community development work to bring divergent groups together, and to build social cohesion so that these communities can build vibrant and sustainable local identities. It also tells us that

young people need to be considered more by planners and service planners. Crossroads can hear the voices of residents coming through this research and commits to supporting them to thrive, now and in the future.

As this research has identified, while there are problems in these areas, there are also residents who are happy with their local neighbourhood. They love where they live even though they may despair of the challenges they face. But that is the point. They know their lives better than we do and they have the knowledge and networks to make their community a success.

We thank all the people who were involved with the research, especially the residents who were interviewed and the service providers who supported the research project. We hope that this research will be useful to other stakeholders in these areas and policy makers with an interest in supporting urban growth.

Finally, we acknowledge that urban fringe communities face environmental challenges that we all need to learn to manage. The tragic bush fires of 7 February 2009 are a brutal wake-up call that we need to look at the impact of climate change, drought and fire-risk in populated areas, and to be mindful that the growth of the population on the urban fringe can have unintended and frightening consequences.

This research was conducted before the fires and as such represents an era that will never be repeated. Fire risk is now on the radar in the urban fringe in a way it never was before. However, it is important that the ideas contained herein continue to be considered, even while the prevention of any further bush fires in populated areas must continue to also occupy planners and policy makers.

I commend this report from the McCaughey Centre and thank them for delivering such an interesting and important report about these two communities.

Noelle de Clifford
General Manager
Crossroads Youth and Family Services
The Salvation Army

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are a range of people who made this project possible. Firstly, Janet Jukes and Noelle de Clifford of the Crossroads Youth and Family Services along with Marion Frere of the McCaughey Centre initially had the vision to start the project. Each helped develop the project's conceptual framework. Marion provided on-going assistance with the project including focus group facilitation and advice on the draft report. Noelle saw the project through its final stages. The local Reference Group met over the life of the project and provided useful guidance and advice. They are thanked for their time in supporting the project over its 12 month duration. Its members were:

Reference Group Chair:

Janet Jukes (until September 2008),
Noelle de Clifford (after September 2008)
 Crossroads Youth and Family Services

Marion Frere
 McCaughey Centre

Michelle Hall
 Crossroads Youth and Family Services

Captain Gary Grant
 Salvation Army (Salvos 3064)

Denise Shearer
 City of Hume

Sue Moger (until March 2008), then
Maureene Foster
 Dianella Community Health

Lee Turner
 Anglicare

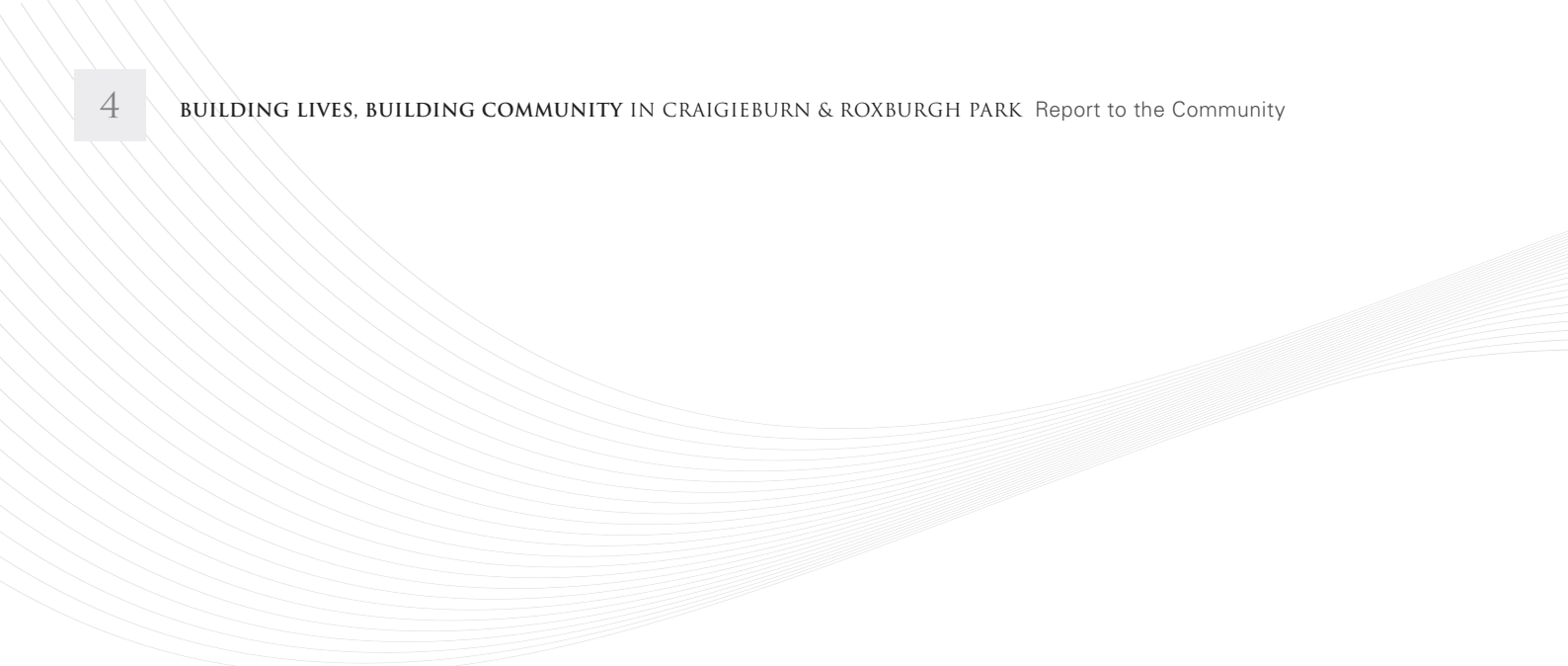
Noemi Garcia
 Centre for Multicultural Youth

Catharine Hydon
 Brotherhood of St Laurence

Other people who helped with the practical running of the project were the staff from the Brotherhood of St Laurence, the Craigieburn library, Anglicare, Hume Council staff and youth workers, Salvos 3064 and Homestead Learning and Arts Centre who all assisted with sending fliers and organizing venues for interviews. Special mention must also be made of the Arabic Welfare service and the Roxburgh Park Chaldean Women's Group who assisted in organizing and running focus groups. Many service providers made time to be interviewed and provide their valuable insights and their support is much appreciated. The Craigieburn Community Renewal project run by Hume Council also offered support during the project.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge all the residents who were prepared to become involved and have their voices heard.

Dr Belinda Robson
 McCaughey Centre,
 VicHealth Centre for the Promotion of
 Mental Health and Community Wellbeing



SUMMARY

This report is the outcome of consultations with over 100 people who live or work in the suburbs of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park, including young people, parents and community service providers. It describes how this community sees itself, the experiences and aspirations of its residents and the way it sees its future. The project had a focus on understanding the assets as well as challenges in living in a community on the urban fringe, especially during a period of rapid population growth. Its findings are summarized below:

Rapid population growth is bringing new groups of people into the area but this process needs to be managed carefully

- Local service providers as well as residents are concerned about the increased demand on services such as education and health.
- There is increased traffic on the roads which creates more noise and a perceived level of risk which changes the nature of the area for longer-term residents.
- The new train line is welcome but car parking at the station is inadequate.
- There needs to be more work done to build relationships between people living in the new housing estates and the older housing in Craigieburn as the geographic distance can create a gulf between the two areas of the suburb.

Both young people and their parents identify a gap in activities for young people in their local area

- There are limited opportunities for young people to try different activities and to find local part time work.
- Costs of travel as well as practical issues with transport mean that many young people are not able to participate in different activities.
- Many young people and their parents feel concerned that the lack of things to do in the local area lead to some young people engaging in anti-social behaviours.

New households are at risk of mortgage stress as many face problems juggling the financial demands

- Some families with young people are in a position of struggling with both mortgage repayments and the costs of supporting their children.
- Young people, especially those aged over 15, can be very aware of the financial demands placed on their families. This leads to a potential for family clashes over money and budget priorities.

People who live in the area have a wide range of backgrounds and experiences which influence the way they see the area

- People from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have experienced a range of issues in the area, with some feeling a strong investment in the area and wishing to make it their home, while a small group also reported being the victim of racist actions.
- Some people felt that the area lacked cohesion as many residents travelled out of the area for employment or education, and there was a potential for social isolation.
- Others expressed optimism about the area based on their commitment to work with others to develop a stronger pride in the area.

Natural assets and existing resources

- The open spaces, parks and creek are an asset for young people and adults and give them a strong sense of place.
- There is a network of informal support amongst some families.
- The library and schools play an important role in building bridges across different groups in the community.
- Local service providers have a strong interest in building the community's involvement in their service through community development activities.
- There is evidence of new energy and resources, especially through the Craigieburn Community Renewal Project, which indicates that the area's potential is increasingly being recognized.



PART A: INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This report tells a story of an outer suburban community through the eyes of its residents and those who work with families in the area and explores their experience of living and working in these locations. This report to the community is a condensed version of a longer Interim Research Report also produced by the McCaughey Centre. The longer Research Report is recommended for readers who wish to have more detail about the project's findings and their implications for policy makers and service provision. The outer suburban areas of Melbourne have experienced rapid population growth due to the availability of affordable land and houses. It is also likely that the area of Craigieburn will experience much more growth with the government's plan to revise the Urban Growth Boundary in growth areas to accommodate 284,000 new houses.

The Victorian Government has expressed a commitment to manage this process carefully as it considers the impact of expanded growth options on existing communities. A 2009 policy statement describes the ways they wish to preserve a sense of place in growth areas:

'The character of a region, town or neighbourhood is unique. This sense of place reinforces a feeling of belonging. Heritage, landscape and neighbourhood character are some of the components that contribute to a feeling of community identity. New development in growth areas should respond to the existing sense of place and cultural identity and respond to its context' (Department of Planning and Community Development, 2009).

This project explores the sense of place in two suburbs, Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park, located in one of the five growth corridors of Melbourne in the local government area of Hume. This research explores some of the factors which influence how a community identity is formed.

It draws on recent work about young people and place which alerts us to the way that young people are not considered in planning (Stretton 2005; Jackson and McDonald 2005; Gleeson 2006; Kenna 2007; Williams and Pocock 2006; Williams, Pocock, Bridge 2009). Such research is important as it can assist to frame further work in growth areas. These suburbs have experienced rapid growth and Craigieburn will see a continued rapid rise in population.

The McCaughey Centre project, known as 'Family, Community and Place in Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park' ran from January to December 2008. It emerged through a need for a better understanding of the needs of communities in the outer northern growth areas of Melbourne. One of the challenges for these debates is developing a deeper understanding of how place is experienced so that the aspirations of residents themselves are placed in the foreground of these debates. To this end, this research has deliberately conducted an open-ended process of inquiry to further our understanding of residents' perceptions of the changes taking place in their community.

The project was also informed by previous research conducted in the area. In 2002, a research project conducted by the Brotherhood of St Laurence found that there were four critical factors that contributed to the issues faced by the population of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park. They were:

- isolation and access (with many in the area having to travel long distances to get to the city or other supports);
- high financial commitments related to mortgages and subsequent financial vulnerability;
- inadequate public transport; and
- gaps in social services, such as youth services health services especially mental health services, lack of shopping areas, inadequate child care services, low number of high schools and lack of low cost housing (Kelly, Levi and Denny, 2002).

Given this previous research, there were two areas of particular focus for the McCaughey Centre research. One was on the ways young people aged 12 to 18 living within the context of families experience their community. This focus on young people is particularly relevant for the areas of Craigieburn/Roxburgh Park. In 2006, the Census records that there were over 45% of the population aged 24 and under. The high numbers of young people are projected to continue to grow, with estimates in 2001 suggesting that the 15 to 19 age group in Craigieburn would increase by 97% by 2021 compared to a decline of 0.5% in the North West Region (Nygaard, Pengilly, Berry, Wood and Murphy 2006, 16).

Secondly, it looked at how housing stress impacts on the wellbeing of families and young people and their connection to their community. According to the 2006 ABS Census, a total of 31% of Craigieburn households and 37% of Roxburgh Park households, were paying over 30% of their income on housing costs, compared to the Victorian average of 27%. These figures indicate a higher potential for housing stress in these areas. While these figures are not necessarily a completely accurate way of measuring housing affordability, they provide an indication of the potential impact of housing costs on families. This project looked at the experiences of such households who are struggling financially, as well as those who are managing despite rising costs. Overall, this project aimed to consider the experiences of families and young people through their own eyes to understand more about how residents are working together to build communities on the urban fringe.



ABOUT CRAIGIEBURN AND ROXBURGH PARK

Craigieburn is located 25 kilometers north of Melbourne and until the last twenty years or so has been a rural area dominated by farming. In 2006, Craigieburn had a population of 20,785. Craigieburn is bounded in the north by Mt Ridley Rd, the Hume Fwy and Donnybrook Rd; in the east by the Merri Creek; in the south by Patullos Lane, the Melbourne-Sydney Railway Line, an east-west line south of Abercarn Ave and Yarcombe Cr and north of Candlebark Dve and south of the Aitken Hill Conference Centre; and in the west by Mickleham Rd, Craigieburn Rd and a line running North-South following Whites Lane.

Craigieburn was first settled in the 1980s but has experienced intense development since the 1990s. It has a slightly higher average weekly household income (\$1118) compared to Melbourne's average weekly household income (\$1079). It also has a high percentage of couples with children (58%) who live in houses being purchased (60%). Compared to Roxburgh Park, Craigieburn has a much higher level of English speakers (70%) and households living in separate houses (93% compared to 65% in Roxburgh Park and 71% in Melbourne).

In 2006, Roxburgh Park had a population of 16,908. Roxburgh Park is bounded in the north by a line that runs east-west north of Candlebark Drive, Coronet Avenue and Hayfield Road, and a line that runs east-west south of Edington Way and Abercarn Avenue; in the east by the North Eastern Railway line; in the south by Somerton Road; and in the west by the proposed E14 motorway.



Roxburgh Park was first developed in the early 1990s by the Urban Planning Authority (later by VicUrban). Its population has a slightly higher average weekly household income (\$1084) compared to Melbourne's average (\$1079) and has a high percentage of couple families with children (65% compared to Melbourne average of 48%). It also has a high percentage of houses being purchased (67% compared to Victorian average of 32.4%). As a planned community, it contains a large percentage of townhouses and semi-detached houses and its design aimed to balance homes with industry and open space reserves. It has a high percentage of people speaking languages other than English, and only 37% of its population speaking English at home compared to 68% in Melbourne, with Turkish and Arabic being the second and third most common languages.

Both Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park were developed on land that was originally used for agriculture and both have retained some of their rural character with large Red River Gums scattered throughout. Craigieburn is located 200 meters above sea level giving it views of Melbourne on its highest points and parts of Roxburgh Park enjoy views of the Greenvale Reservoir and access to the Broadmeadows Valley Park. The Aitken and Malcom Creeks wind through Craigieburn and the Merri Creek runs to the east of the Hume Freeway. These open spaces and green meandering paths give the area a semi-rural quality which most residents cite as a character they wish to preserve.

As Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park are located close to Broadmeadows, they have attracted young families from the northern suburbs who have sought more land to accommodate growing

families. Alongside the green open spaces, there is a range of employment centres close by which make the area a viable base for working families. Industries such as Ford, Tullamarine airport, Visy industries, BHP pipe line and Commonwealth Note Printing Branch were all in the vicinity, although the closure of Pacific Dunlop in 2008 was a reminder of how these industries are vulnerable to economic re-structuring.



Source: Department of Planning and Community Development, <http://www.localgovernment.vic.gov.au/>

While growth areas have been associated with a range of social needs, it is important to recognize that each area has a unique story. But one thing they all have in common is their location on the urban fringe. This has meant that these communities can be challenged by periods of financial stress due to their vulnerability to rises in petrol prices and interest rates (Dodson and Sipe 2008). They are also vulnerable to economic slow downs and industry closures, such have been experienced in 2009.

Urban fringe areas have also become a focus for policy with youth advocacy groups demanding greater attention to their population needs. The Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVIC) produced a report on young people in the urban fringe which called for improved funding to youth service providers on the urban fringe, improved public transport, closing gaps in human services, improved accessibility of mental health services, improved access to housing and assistance to young people experiencing homelessness, and improved educational and employment outcomes for young people (YACVIC, 2004).

These calls were reinforced when, in 2006, the Interface Council, comprising nine Councils in outer Melbourne which lie at the interface of metropolitan and rural communities, commissioned a report on the needs of young people in these areas. The report identified that young people in these areas are more likely to leave school earlier, have lower TER scores, are less likely to attend post secondary education and are more likely to disengage from school and employment. It also identified 'at risk' behaviours, such as substance abuse, anti-social behaviour, and mental health issues (Interface Councils 2006).

This report intends to look at how these problems are experienced on a day-to-day basis in these two areas and to go beneath the general picture of growth areas to understand their unique stories and character.

METHODS

The questions which guided the overall research were:

- What kind of community did families and young people hope for?
- How do families deal with contemporary challenges such as finding affordable housing, building a community for young people and making a safe community for all family members?
- What services could be developed or enhanced in Craigieburn/Roxburgh Park to meet these needs?

A qualitative research method was used, as it was decided that the voices of residents provided the most important tool for understanding hopes and challenges faced by residents. Qualitative research also enables new themes to emerge which can point to further topics for study and analysis. In this project, it was hoped to build a picture of how people experience their local area to inform policy and planning debates about new communities on the urban fringe.

There were 25 interviews conducted with service providers who work in the Craigieburn/Roxburgh Park area. These covered issues such as the types of issues facing young people and families in the area, the services available to meet these needs and the suggested changes that could accommodate any emerging needs. They were conducted during the period from February to August 2008.

Nearly all service providers had their primary work site in Craigieburn or Roxburgh Park, but a number covered a wider geographic area. The researcher selected agencies which were likely to have experience working with families and young people. Because their perceptions were influenced by the types of service they provide, and the types of contact they have with the community, their views reflect a close understanding of their client group. Most of the individuals consulted had worked in the area for five or more years, with a small number also living in the area.

Respondents were interviewed either by focus group (N=51) or individual interview (N=21). There was a total of five focus groups: one with young people aged 12 to 18 in Craigieburn (10 people), and one with parents of 12 to 18 year olds (10 people). The young people's group was held at the Craigieburn Youth Centre and included young people who did not normally attend the centre as well as regular users of the centre. The parent's group was also held in the Craigieburn Youth Centre and included a cross section of parents from the local area. Most of these had responded to fliers on display at the library, which adjoins the Youth Centre.

Women from diverse backgrounds were also involved, with one focus group held with Arabic-speaking women using an interpreter and facilitated by the Arabic Welfare Association (11 people), one with the Chaldean women and facilitated by a community representative and using an interpreter (16 people), and one with Iraqi women which was conducted in English (4 people). These groups covered issues such as feelings about living in the area, hopes for the future, and their feelings about how young people are catered for in the area. They also discussed concerns about families who struggle to cover housing repayments or costs, and the impact of these concerns on young people living in families.

There were 10 individual interviews with 12 to 18 year olds, and 11 with parents of 12 to 18 year olds. Two of the parent interviews also used an interpreter. These semi-structured interviews enabled the interviewer to explore in more detail the ways parents and young people feel about the area, especially when they are facing challenges with maintaining housing. It also enabled the project to consider their experiences of local community services and to look at the service system more generally.

Residents were recruited to focus groups and interviews through fliers at local agencies, including Craigieburn Library, Roxburgh Park Homestead Living and Learning Centre, Hume Council Youth Centre, Dianella, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Salvation Army, and Anglicare. In addition, the Hume Leader ran an article on the project, as well as a piece in the 'What's On' section promoting the focus group. The Chaldean women's group and the Arabic speaking groups were undertaken at regular meetings of these groups, but all participants had been given information in advance about the group so were fully aware of the event and freely chose to attend.

In total, over 100 service providers and residents were consulted for this project. All parents received a shopping voucher to the value of \$30 and all young people received a movie voucher and Met ticket and community resource pack.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

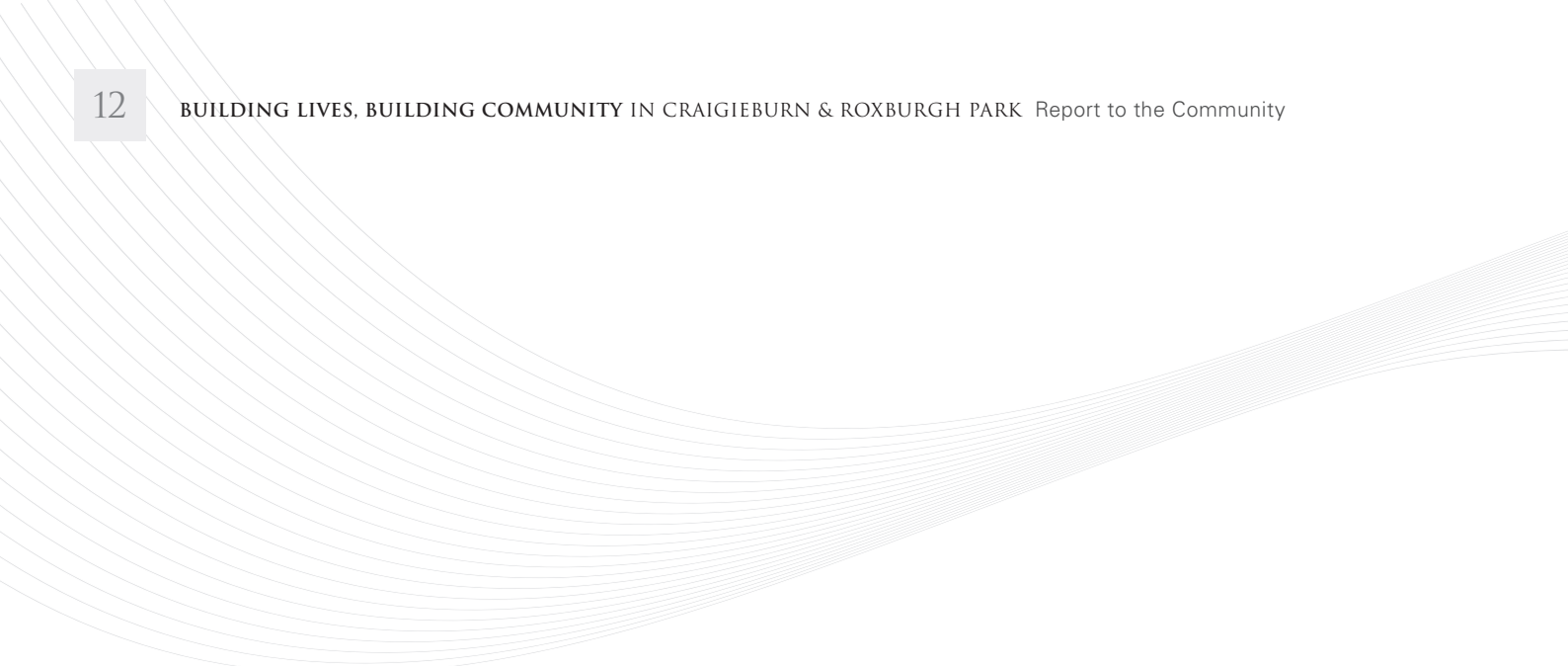
It proved to be difficult to recruit residents from Roxburgh Park. Despite wide publicity, all but one of the respondents who approached the researcher to be involved in individual interviews were from Craigieburn. All young people consulted were also from Craigieburn. This meant that the project overall was limited in what could be concluded about residents from Roxburgh Park. However, specific language groups were consulted to ensure that their views were incorporated.

As the project did not systematically collect demographic data on residents, it is not possible to analyse the impact of variables such as age, length of time living in the area, or cultural background on the responses. However, some general characteristics were collected. Of the 72 resident respondents, 66 were female. The project is therefore clearly skewed toward women's perceptions of the area, despite concerted efforts to recruit men. This perhaps reflects that many men are working full-time and less involved with their local community. The researcher met more men through the Highlands and Craigieburn Residents Groups who are not included in these statistics as these were not formal research interviews. Their perceptions of the area did not appear to be particularly different to women's, but without a larger number in the sample, no definite conclusions can be made. Further research with men would be helpful to identify gender differences in responses.

We were also able to identify the length of time many adult respondents had lived in the area from many of the interviews despite it not being formally collected. The period ranged from under 12 months (4 people) to over twenty years (6 people) with an even spread between. A project which targeted a larger number of respondents using an appropriate sampling method could be of interest to explore whether the period of time living in the area leads to different responses.

As mentioned above, the cultural backgrounds of respondents were diverse, with Iraqi and Chaldean being the largest groups after Anglo-saxon. However, with small numbers there are limited conclusions which can be drawn. A project which looked more in-depth at some of the main cultural groups would be of value.

Despite these limitations, this project was able to arrive at conclusions which have emerged through a synthesis of both service provider and respondent responses. There was strong agreement between the residents and service providers about the challenges and assets faced by the area. This suggests that the conclusions made in this research are reliable and, even with the limitations outlined above, provide important information to inform future planning in growth areas.



PART B: RESEARCH RESULTS



ARRIVING: 'THE PLACE FOR US TO RAISE THE CHILDREN'

It was clear that people came to these areas to build a new life in an area they identified as having a good mix of natural assets, affordable land and other young families wanting to build a community that was safe for children. For many, the excitement about building a new home was one of the reasons they came to Craigieburn. One woman decided to move to Craigieburn even though she had been looking at other areas, because it was *'inviting and really nice'*, especially in the new estates. It *'would be the place to raise the children'*. She felt the surroundings were safe compared to the inner city suburb they had lived in earlier. There was also the fact that *'a lot of new people in Craigieburn are kind of ... working together to develop the area and make it a better community'*.

Another woman spoke about how much she enjoyed the process of building her first home – *'it was very exciting to go and just check, oh that's too much or that is OK'*. For a family who built their home in the new estate 8 years ago, it was about a *'bit of a country change'* and the features of having a lake and kindergarten and school nearby. She also spoke about the low cost of housing and the fact that it was a *'young community'* that was growing.

Another person from Roxburgh Park, who lived in the very first street of the new suburb, moved to the area because she had always lived in the Broadmeadows area and she also worked close by, so she felt she wanted to stay in the same area *'but everything was very difficult'*, due to the lack of basic facilities such as shops, childcare and schools. She looks back now and wonders how she managed. She has always seen Broadmeadows as the centre for service provision but is very impressed with how Roxburgh Park has improved. She recalls when she first arrived in Roxburgh Park, it was *'just bushes'*. Before that, from her house in Broadmeadows you could look out from the verandah and see the area that is now Tullamarine airport, with *'just thistles and bushes'*. The setting of Roxburgh Park was commented on in most interviews. Another respondent described Roxburgh Park as *'beautiful, peaceful and has magnificent views'*.

There were more recent arrivals to the suburb. The group of Arabic speaking women from Roxburgh Park considered that one of the reasons the area had been so popular was because many migrants and refugees had initially settled close to the city, in areas such as Coburg, Brunswick and Fawkner and then they *'had the opportunity to buy land and build big houses and new houses - modern houses, beautiful houses'*. This group felt happy with the family contacts they have in the area, but were worried about whether their children would fit in, find work, and find other useful activities to engage in, rather than getting caught up with some of the problems they perceived to characterize youth culture in the area, such as alcohol and crime.

Their arrival was also marked by difficulties finding accommodation and one woman moved to the area because she could not find anywhere closer to the city. Her children, *'they cry, say "mum, too far"'*. In this case, the distance from the city made the move more unsettling for family members.

Some respondents had only recently arrived in Australia and the newness of the suburb overlapped with the newness of Australia. For example, two women from an Asian background found Craigieburn to be a safe and welcoming place. One of the women explained: *'Because of this country, wherever you live there will be someone to look after you. I like this country very much'*. However, the ability to speak some English was a critical factor in how well newly arrived communities can settle. According to another woman: *'It worries me that I can't find any information in the library in my language, so when I come home all I can do is just cleaning the house, do the cooking and things.'* The children, she felt, were also struggling at school and did not play with other children as they did not know enough English.

For young people, there was a different sense of arriving. Most of the young people interviewed had lived in the area all their life. Only those young people who had moved to the area from elsewhere were able to compare their life to the one they had earlier. Their views were often connected to changes in the family such as parents separating, repartnering or with the desire of parents to buy a house rather than rent. One young person felt after four years *'I'm just getting used to the place still'*. For another, the move was associated with starting a new life after a difficult family situation. Making friends was the most important way to feel connected to the area. If they went to school out of the area, then neighbours could still play an important part in their social life.

Starting a fresh life could be an adventure. In one case, according to a young person, they had initially missed their friends from their old school but this improved when they made friends in the area. For another, the experience of building a house was not straightforward as the builders *'kept stuffing it up'*. She told a detailed tale of all the work that her father had to do on the house. If she moved again, she felt she would move to the new part of Craigieburn but only because she knew someone there. Another who had moved to the old part of Craigieburn was looking forward to the next move to the newer area which she felt was nicer.

A number of residents reported that they were friends with their neighbours and this assisted them to feel safe in their home, and also that their children made friends with the neighbours and all would play outside in the street together. On the other hand, a respondent who has also lived in Craigieburn for many years felt that, looking back, her decision to move to Craigieburn as a mistake. She compared the life she had there to her upbringing in a housing commission house, and reflected that Craigieburn was where she wanted to live because she could get a *'nice new house'*. As she said, *'I didn't understand the concept of location'* as something that had implications for the value of housing. Her view was that this decision has not served her well as she came to feel the increase in the value of her property had not kept up with other areas she could have bought in at the time.

Young people and parents both had mixed experiences of arriving, with most people reasonably content with the decision to move to Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park. Parents generally had been looking for an affordable start to their family life and felt that the area was able to deliver this goal. For others, such as people from different cultures, the quality of their experience depended on an ability to speak English and to connect with others from their cultural group.



'YOU DON'T SEE COWS ANY MORE': FROM RURAL BLOCKS TO URBAN SUBURB

Service providers and residents commented on the changing identity of Craigieburn since it had first been settled in the 1980s.

For long-term residents, the memory of first arriving in the area was strongly linked to the country imagery.

'When I first moved up here [Craigieburn] it was lovely, it was very country style type of thing and people were lovely. They say hello to you even though they don't know you, so that was very nice and very welcoming' (parent interview).

The presence of country markers (such as cows and paddocks) was a reminder that the area was once seen as 'almost' country. For one resident, when she first moved in it *'felt like Sydney was just up the road'*. This city fringe appeal was for many participants one of the reasons they originally came to live in the area. While land affordability was the most common reason for moving to the area, there was also a sense for some that there was a desire for a slow lifestyle where space was available for gardens and animals.

One interviewee had been personally affected by industrialisation which would adjoin her block and put an end to her dream of a quiet lifestyle.

'It's very sad for us people that moved out here for fresh air, and we had kangaroos and emus running around our backyard. We walked outside with torches and we'd step on echidnas. But right behind our block is gonna be a four lane road built.'

The loss of this rural character was remarked upon by nearly all participants. One recalled having cows as neighbours, and observed that *'you don't see cows in the area anymore'*. For service providers and residents, the transition from country to urban is linked to population growth and the construction of new housing, seen by many residents as a signal of the area entering a new phase. This was a dilemma for residents who were torn between their desire to see the area become more economically sustainable and their wish to maintain the rural quality.

As one Craigieburn parent put it:

'I understand there's gotta be somewhere for people to work, otherwise the people of Craigieburn, how are they going to pay all their mortgages if they haven't got a job, but still I prefer if the place wasn't built.'

Residents were concerned that the increasing population created challenges associated with rapidly growing urban areas, such as higher demand for essential health and medical services, as well as education and recreational services which could not meet demand. Therefore, this country/urban dichotomy provokes both anxiety about how the existing infrastructure would cope, as well as anticipation about the future. For some, the sense that the rural qualities they initially sought are being replaced with a 'larger town' feel was a mixed blessing.

There was a clear understanding amongst residents that the area could no longer be seen as a semi-rural suburb and a desire for it to be recognized as an area which required services which other areas enjoyed. One of the main concerns was that infrastructure had not kept up with population needs. Its semi-rural image needed to be up-dated in the minds of policy makers to ensure that the needs of a rapidly-growing suburb were met.

The contrast between the past and present was mentioned by many service providers who noted how their work had changed because of the sheer increase in numbers, but also the ways different pockets of housing were generating new areas that were not yet receiving services due to resident's inability to get to the services that were available. The move from 'small country town' to urban community was a significant change for many.

REFLECTIONS OVER TIME

Over time, respondents find different ways to settle in to the area. One resident who had lived in Roxburgh Park for 16 years said;

'I don't feel we're missing out on a great deal because we've got like pretty much everything close by. I mean how far is it from Roxburgh Park to Broadmeadows? It's really only a few minutes away.'



Other residents expressed strong feelings of isolation:

'I find there isn't much community or we haven't participated in it. I don't know, yeah, but you could easily feel isolated. Everyone just lives in their houses and goes to work and that's it. Goes about their business.'

Breaking down isolation was a big challenge for many workers in the local community. There was a clear picture, which resonated with some of the residents' perceptions, that in many families there were two parents who both worked outside of the area and were not connected to their local community. As one resident observed,

'I've been in the same street for 20 years and I don't really know what the other people look like. I don't know if it's just Craigieburn or I suspect it's sort of everywhere now but I think people are isolated because of their problems and they don't want to talk.'

There were some disappointment, especially in Craigieburn, about infrastructure which was promised but had been slow to materialize. For example, according to one resident, the establishment of a new 'Town Centre', initially promised by Delfin when they moved in five years ago, was now classed by this resident as a 'deception'. This same resident was also unhappy with how certain planning covenants had not been implemented in their housing estate.

The 'Town Centre' was considered by nearly all respondents who had heard about it as a symbol of the neglect and poor planning that the area had suffered over the years. According to one resident, a new Town Centre had first been mooted when they moved to Craigieburn seventeen years ago. In the interviews, questions about this Centre often provoked laughter or rolling of eyes. Most took the view that they would believe it when they saw it.

Neglect was a strong theme in many interviews, with all interviewees observing that one of the main concerns about Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park was the lack of infrastructure, including health, entertainment and youth activities.

There were also marked differences between geographic areas which are becoming more pronounced with the establishment of the new housing estates. According to one parent consulted in a focus group:

'Well everything is so divided I feel. And its becoming more and more with the area too like people say "which part of Craigieburn do you live?" The old part, or I live in Fairways, or I live here. It's like little pockets. So even though its one suburb it's still segregated.'

The population growth in the area was largely seen as positive, as it was considered to offer the potential to allow the area to develop more resources, through the introduction of wealth, energy and enthusiasm. However, another respondent who had lived in the area for 25 years said that despite the growth in the area, her personal financial circumstances were making her feel less confident that she would share in the optimism:

'Maybe there is some optimism but I suppose it feels like a tired place for me because I have been here a long time and I want something new and I think the fact that I can't have it is making me feel a bit down.'



'THE TRAIN HAS MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE'

Nearly every participant commented on how much they valued the new stations in Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park and the direct rail connection to the city. Service providers felt it had made a very big difference to residents' ability to get around, but also to their community pride. A small number of residents consulted were concerned now that the trip to the city is longer than the old V-Line service and also that parking at the station is inadequate. However, parents in particular thought that this made it much easier for young people to travel independently.

Transport is also improved with the new east-west bus services that link the new Highlands Estate in West Craigieburn with Craigieburn station, but the half-hourly buses would make it difficult for commuters who need it at peak hour. One resident noted that her husband could not afford the time in the morning to walk to the bus station and wait for a train, so relied on the car. Car-parking, however, was cited by many as a problem at the station due to the overwhelming take-up of public transport which had not been expected in the planning phase.

When public transport may be available, costs could accumulate for families who wished to take public transport for outings. Service providers noted that young people especially may find tickets expensive and this restricted their ability to go to places independently. There was also a call for direct services between Epping and Craigieburn for people who wished to use the Northern Hospital.

Cars on Craigieburn Road were a particular complaint in Craigieburn, whilst residents of Roxburgh Park raised the need for more speed humps to slow down drivers, especially near schools. Many participants spoke of how much the traffic caused them to feel uneasy and anxious about the area and its growth.

Alternative methods of transport are encouraged through the use of bike paths but there are unexpected hazards. One young person was annoyed by broken alcoholic drink bottles puncturing his bike wheels. Other young people did use public transport and went to Broadmeadows or the city with friends for an outing. These young people had access to money from their parents.

Most parents acknowledged that while public transport was possible, they often end up driving. This was difficult for families who were struggling with petrol prices. The train has made a big difference for residents of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park. It has brought them into the metropolitan rail network, which is a significant step toward the area seeing itself as a city suburb.

‘THERE’S LIKE NOTHING TO DO’

As identified earlier in the report, previous research has identified that young people in urban fringe communities can face challenges in accessing a variety of activities. This research confirms this view and notes that young people in Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park lack recreational outlets. The Hume Council Craigieburn Youth Centre, located behind the library, was one place that provided an important site for recreation and social connection. Unfortunately, during the period of this research the Roxburgh Park Youth Centre experienced staff changes which made it difficult to organize a visit to that centre, but Council staff reported that there was a group of young people who also attended that centre.



The sense of security and safety for young people involved in the activities was an important consideration for parents. One Craigieburn parent in the focus group said:

‘They need more outlets for kids, where kids can go and feel safe. Like that skate park or whatever it is over there, that bowl. I cringe every time I drive past it when I see the characters hanging around.’

On the other hand, in Roxburgh Park there appears to be good design which allows parks to be visible from the house. As a participant at the Arabic speaking focus group observed:

‘And even if the mother doesn’t have to be with the children. Even she can sort of watch for her children from her home because most of like, she lives across the park so it is really wonderful to see that they have that flexibility and the safety for children.’

But there was still a clear call for social clubs, recreational activities and other groups for young people in Roxburgh Park. The parents felt that in the last three years there was an increase in incidents involving young people, especially around the school, which was, according to a participant in the Arabic speaking women’s group *‘mainly because of lack of entertainment places. The only place they can gather is the McDonalds and the other shopping centre, and sometimes we have terrible things happening’*.

Parents in Roxburgh Park were also seen by some to be experiencing a lack of activities. This exchange took place at the Iraqi women's focus group:

Here we have to make places for the teenagers to make them always busy about it yeah.

Busy. So they don't have time for doing problem.

Yeah. I ask my son about this and what you need to hear, and he said we need cinema near us, we need playing tennis

Soccer

Yeah. Too many things (Arabic-speaking women focus group 2)

Young people tended to agree with this general view. The young people in the Craigieburn young people's focus group discussed how boredom can lead to social problems when young people don't have access to sport:

Researcher: What about other things that people do for fun?

Basketball

Basketball, sport

Or like graffiti

Yeah graffiti's pretty cool

Alcohol and then they do drugs, but that's all the bad stuff that we do when you get bored

And later at the same focus group, another young woman agreed with this, making a stark summary of the area as she saw it.

I'm just narrowing Craigieburn down to one thing

Boring

Boring, or two things, boring and dangerous.

Young people also noticed that their desire for different sorts of activities increased once they got older. At the focus group, two women also commented on this contrast:

It was like better when you're younger cause you don't like go out very much.

Yeah cause like people didn't touch you.

You didn't get smashed

And you weren't allowed out, but now that you're allowed out you can see how shit, crappy it is.

You get smashed.

But you want to go out because you're young people and want to get out.

But you can't get out because something could happen.

Yeah and you want to go, you're eager to go and you get out there and like you hear what's happened and you're scared. But then you get bored and restless at home, and you get into trouble and then like boom, everything goes down hill (young people in focus group)

Some young people wanted to explore alternative places and people, and look out of their local area to find different groups of people and the possibility of anonymity. However, this demanded money.

'I have to travel way of out of Craigieburn to actually do something. I just don't have the money for it. Not anymore' (young person in focus group)

Young people in the focus group in Craigieburn spoke of travelling to the nearby suburbs of Broadmeadows, Epping or other shopping centres for cinemas and shops. There was general discussion about the relative merits of the different shopping centres, with Craigieburn's shops labeled as inadequate. There were also comments about how the new town centre would finally bring a cinema to Craigieburn, indicating that there were expectations of improvement. However, a young

person thought this was still ten years away, and they would be *'out of here'* before then. Service providers who worked with young people noted that young people in the area needed a wider variety of activities. Police noted that they were sometimes called out to attend to parties which had been gate crashed by large numbers of young people and this problem was mentioned by many other service providers as a noticeable problem in the area. Binge drinking was raised by most service providers as an indicator of youth boredom.

One service provider noted that the young people who attended her program would probably be there every day if the service was available. She felt young people wanted skills development, a youth centre with longer hours, and more active recreational opportunities such as sports. There was a general frustration amongst service providers that young people had to look far and wide to find what they were interested in and that this involved travel, which was a burden for some families that ultimately meant that young people missed out all together. It also meant that young people were tempted to engage in other activities to alleviate their boredom.

'KIND OF EMPTY BUT LOTS OF THINGS TO SEE'

The uncertainty about the impact of residential expansion was expressed in a number of ways. For example, there was some ambivalence amongst respondents about whether the open space was something to enjoy on its own merits or to fill with new buildings or services. One parent in an interview observed that young people *'make up their own fun, like there's not much to do so we just use what we have'*. This sentiment was expressed by others, almost reflecting a pride that young people did not need to be entertained all the time but had the capacity to generate their own activities. One young person summed up her feelings about the place as *'kind of empty but lots of things to see'*. A parent also made a similar point: *'we have so many things in Craigieburn that sometimes you don't really see. Even the natural resources that we have, we have nature strips and all that'*.



This sense of space and openness was an asset for many people. One young person was able to fish in a lake close to his home. Other residents were dismissive of the lakes and asked why they could not have a pool instead, which would be considered more useful and practical.

Some residents were clearly very proud of the physical beauty of parts of Craigieburn and this had inspired them to be part of its future. Two young people spoke about their connection to the landscape, with one commenting that he would like to build his own house in Mt Ridley because of the views, and another spoke of how she would like to buy part of Fairways housing estate:

My friends and I even though we're not really supposed to, we go up on top of the hill and take photos and stuff up there, and it's just really nice. You can see all the way to the city and ocean. If I could, I'd love to buy that entire hill, build a house on top of it, have it all just glass walls all the way around.

'Hanging around with friends' was a common thread in their responses to what they did and this often took place in parks. For young people, the parks and creeks were also an important component to how they saw the area. Many thought these were nice places to be, but some thought they needed to be cleaner. One young woman said *'when you sit on it like there's something on it that's sticky. I don't like that'*.

The open spaces, while adding to the areas' natural beauty, were also the sites of drama and violence. There were stories of people jumping out of bushes and grabbing young women's breasts, and some young women reported verbal harassment at the skate park. For one young man in an interview, he felt that *'the people on the streets and everything, they're always being idiots, can't walk anywhere you want a lot of the time. Can't be safe at night when you're walking'*. Another young person said there were *'certain hang out spots but you don't really want to do there cause you get told off for loitering, and there's certain parts of Craigieburn you don't want to go to at all'*.

The physical features of Craigieburn and Roxburgh are considered by both parents and young people to be one of its greatest assets. However, part of belonging to the area involved learning which areas were safe and which were not. There are possibilities to promote these more actively and to build on the pride that its residents feel in the creeks, hills and parks by creating more safe spaces for young people which incorporate the existing creeks and parks.

CHALLENGES TO COMMUNITY COHESION

As mentioned earlier, the demographic make-up of the two areas is quite different, with Roxburgh Park having 63% speaking a language other than English at home. Residents spoke about this in different ways, with some taking pride in the area's capacity to manage cultural difference, while others saw a rivalry between the two suburbs which, for some, was along racial lines. This was especially so amongst the young people. Participants at the young people's focus group at Craigieburn made the point that Roxburgh Park was a place to be avoided *'because you get wogs and Arabs on the train with their knives and they're like rah at ya, and you're like the only Aussie on the train'*. Whilst it is hard to know whether these statements were based on a real experience or cultural stereotypes, there is no doubt that



there was a view amongst some young people in Craigieburn that Roxburgh Park was seen as violent and that this was linked to its cultural makeup. Others, however, had friendships which crossed the boundary of the two suburbs.

Within Craigieburn, there are also new cultural groups with the recently arrived communities from Lebanon, Iraq, Ethiopia, Somalia and Sri Lanka, as well as a large group of Hmong settlers. In Craigieburn's Highlands Estate, there are at least 23 different nationalities. The impact of this change on the community, according to some service providers, is still difficult to gauge. However, the mix of cultural groups was often seen by service providers to pose a challenge to the earlier residents groups who tended to be from an Anglo background.

For those families who have moved from non-English speaking countries, making a home was about feeling connected to the local neighbourhood and being confident that their children were able to be educated and later go forward in the new country. For example, the Hmong speaking respondents expressed a wish for their children to have a place to grow up in where they would have a stable place to stay, a contrast to the recent traumatic experience of migration that they had faced moving to Australia.

Some residents described disturbing actions which they consider to have been racially motivated. On the other hand, there were residents who reported that they felt welcomed by the community and had not experienced any racism. In addition, one Craigieburn resident from an Anglo background made a point of saying that the increase in cultural diversity was a positive change for the area.

Service providers grappled with how to address racism and cultural intolerance. One service provider reported of pigs' heads being left at the doors of Muslim people's houses and used this as an example of how cultural diversity, especially in Craigieburn, was something that had fundamentally challenged the Anglo identity of the area. Many other service providers noted that this change was still being registered by the community and that, while they were trying to address the range of needs, it was hard to accommodate the depth of problems associated with newly arrived refugees, many of whom had faced traumatic experiences in their former country and had unresolved mental health issues. The library has taken steps to accommodate the needs of new arrivals such as the Hmong, Iraqi, Sri Lankan, and Assyrian groups but the wider community supports for these groups in the local area are limited.

The design of the houses in the area reflects a bias toward the traditional nuclear family, which is inconsistent with the range of views about what constitutes a family. For the Chaldean women, the houses were not big enough to accommodate the large number of family members who wished to live together under the same roof. One service provider also noted that there might be two parents with 8 to 10 children, as well as extended family members, all in a four bedroom house. On the other hand, an Anglo resident thought that there was a need to build smaller houses to meet the needs of single people and small families, to increase the variety of the population attracted to the area. It seems that the physical size of the houses can set limits on how a community can accommodate diversity.

Making a home in a new land is not easy. Once language, housing and employment are settled, issues such as spiritual and religious practices and recreational activities for young people become more important to these families. Finding an appropriate meeting place, or spiritual community, was one of the concerns for groups consulted and would help to make people feel that they were finally 'home'.

With the population growth, this community has had to learn to live with a wider variety of people. There are signs that this is very successful, with some residents actively reaching out to new community members. There is also a possibility that over time, the distinctions between different geographic parts of the community will evaporate. The process needs to be monitored and different views need to be heard and understood. How this takes place over the next period will be determined by the ways different residents groups work together on shared projects which build a vision of the future.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

While the project sought to build a picture of the impact of housing stress on families with young people, it was clear that there is no simple way to identify these families. Consultations with service providers confirmed that this area faces challenges related to the high number of families paying off mortgages, but many of these manage on a day-to-day basis and make adjustments as they need to. Those with young people at home may have to sacrifice activities or resources that they can no longer afford. Families also need to work longer hours or increase to two incomes to meet their financial needs, and this means that their struggles are often hidden from service providers because of the private nature of family life and the disconnection between 'ordinary' families and the existing community support system.

Money problems can be a constant feature of raising young people. Many of the young people consulted appeared to be aware when their families face financial hardship. This may be through overhearing parents complaining, or through direct conversations about what young people can and cannot buy.



The young people in the focus group felt this very strongly:

'Cause I asked my parents for like a dollar or something, and they kind of start yelling at me and like yeah.'

'Get your own money!'

'And it's harder for parents to pay for us to like go out and have fun with our friends because of the prices of houses.'

'Your parents expect a lot out of you'

'Yeah'

'Like, not that they shouldn't but like, a lot more than we can give'

Parents were also clearly aware that this was a problem in some families, and some related this to the pressures that young people were exposed to through the media to have the latest technology or keep up with peers. An Arabic speaker in the Arabic speaking focus group observed this problem:

'It's a real pressure when you have to pay the mortgage otherwise the house will be taken by the bank. So we have to deprive our children of some of the basic needs in order to keep up with paying the bank payments, and that's really hard when our children start asking us why you buy a house in the first place'

Another in the same focus group agreed with this:

'It's really upsetting the children and they are not able to be involved in most of the activities because we cannot afford it any more.'

'It's really hard to convince kids about cutting down things and the rearrange of the budget. No matter how much you explain to them they wouldn't you know.'

Even if parents were prepared to ask for help, it is not always easy to find the information, especially for people new to the area. The focus groups with Arabic-speaking and Chaldean women at Roxburgh Park reported that they had very little information about services they could use if they faced serious financial problems, especially written information in their language. The participants at the Arabic-speaking women's group said they did not receive pamphlets about services in their mail boxes. They did mention that some of them now get their clothes from the Smith Family, cut down on school lunch orders, and avoid going out because of the petrol prices. They also observed that many families sell their homes and go back to renting. This meant *they lose a lot. They lose their deposit, they lose so much by doing that.*

There was also a problem when young people from Arabic speaking backgrounds choose to no longer eat the same meals as their parents, which causes more work and financial hardship as the parents cannot afford to buy the variety of ingredients. They also could not do the things that their young people want to, such as take them to have a Chinese meal.

While there is no doubt that families can struggle with mortgage repayments, this research also provides a picture of families who are managing despite the general economic problems. One parent from Craigieburn noted in her interview:

'I mean a few of the ladies that I know from around here, we all complain about the prices of groceries but we never say "oh gee I'm gonna lose my house tomorrow".'

There were many participants involved in the research who were concerned about other families in the area, especially those with younger children just starting out with a mortgage. In addition, young people who leave home also face a battle getting into the rental market due to the high rents. Youth homelessness was something that was now a visible presence in some parts of the area, as this parent in the Craigieburn parents' focus group:

'It's the younger ones that are having trouble to find accommodation cause they don't have money to back them up and they don't have a rental history, so they could be the ones living underneath the bridge.'

Homelessness can take many forms, and while not constituting traditional homelessness, for some families housing stress can be compounded by the shortage of low cost rental in the area available if they do have to sell. According to many service providers and residents, there has been a notable increase in houses for sale and one local community-based worked noticed an increase in the numbers of people living in the local caravan park.

There was also a general awareness amongst both residents and service providers that these pressures were particularly real in an area with a high number of mortgage holders who may not be able to afford increases in repayments. In the twelve months of this project, there was an almost constant media outcry about the impact of higher interest rates and petrol prices on struggling families. In some instances, the suburb of Craigieburn was specified. For example, in May 2008, an article appeared in the Age with the headline 'Home Buyers Fall Behind on Payments' and there was a photograph of new houses on a green hillside in Craigieburn and the caption read: 'In the outer suburbs of Craigieburn, 3.8% of mortgages are in arrears'. This image of Craigieburn implies that the area is facing a crisis, which many service providers were careful to note was not the case. According to service providers, the cost of housing has

always been an issue in this area and, while there has recently been more of a problem due to interest rate rises, media images which depict Craigieburn as a struggling suburb do not help community pride and confidence.

It is also unclear what the best approach is to help families who may be struggling. In August 2008, the Community First Victoria company, which has been sub-contracted by Stockland to undertake community development work in the new Highlands housing estate, invited residents from across Craigieburn to a 'Managing Your Mortgage' session. They later reported that they did not have one response.

While not all families need this sort of direct intervention, this research indicates that many families were reexamining their budget, and cutting back on luxury items such as going to the cinema or out to dinner. For others, including those who recently arrived from other countries, the pressure of price rises meant that they had to use emergency relief services such as Anglicare and the Salvation Army. For some, there was a stigma associated with using this service, as well as a sense that the system was not to be abused. This was expressed by a parent in an interview:

'There's Anglicare here and they're fantastic. I've had to go to them once. You're allowed to go there six times a year but I won't use the system up'

This sentiment summed up a general view amongst those consulted that the service system is something that is important to maintain and to have available when needed, but that financial problems would have to be very serious to actually ask for help. Certainly there are some families who are accustomed to using services, but there is a pride and dignity which families wish to protect when they do face problems. The continuum of coping and not coping is a fluid one. In an area with high numbers of families taking mortgages and at the mercy of interest rate rises as well as increased petrol costs, these struggles tend to remain private.

HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

One of the most significant developments in Craigieburn during the life of this project was the Craigieburn Community Renewal Project. This was developed under the auspices of the Hume Council and the Victorian Government to revitalize neighbourhoods at risk of being left behind by adjoining new suburbs. It was too early to evaluate the impact of this on Craigieburn but it was clear that there was a great deal invested in the process. There was some satisfaction that the area was finally being recognized and that new projects would develop to lift the area's social and economic opportunities.

The initiative was seen as long overdue. While both residents and service providers agreed that services and community infrastructure had not kept pace with community need, there were many points of view expressed in this research about the future of the area. These reflected differing levels of attachment and investment in the area. One Craigieburn parent stated:

'I really hope that people would be aware that there are so many things that we can do as a community and so many opportunities that they can actually access here. Once Craigieburn has really grown as a community, helping each other and building each other up and really working toward making it a better place and safer for our children, hopefully that will happen, and I think it's happening, it's really happening.'

Another took a different view:

'I actually feel quite trapped here. I don't necessarily feel positive, I feel like I can't get out and it's all to do with cost and stuff.'

Nevertheless, there was also optimism from some that the future would now be brighter as the sheer numbers of residents would have to lead to improvements in infrastructure. In addition, there was a hope expressed by many residents that the community would pull together to make the most of its assets. But there were undeniable challenges. As one Craigieburn parent said when observing the population growth: *'hopefully everyone will pull together and make it a nice place to live. But everybody's different and when you put all these people together it doesn't actually mean everyone will get on.'*

There was a clear call for more community events to take place to bring people together. One young person in an interview thought more festivals would provide this.

Researcher: 'What kind of things would you like to see in Craigieburn for young people?'

More carnivals. Not once a year, like every season. That'd be cool.

Researcher: What would be good about carnivals?

It's family orientated. Every member of the family can have fun' (young person in interview).

When asked how others saw Craigieburn, one young person in an interview said it was referred to as *'Crudville'* by his friend when the station name was announced on the train. Another said it was a *'nice place to pass by, don't stay for too long'*. But there were some young people who felt positive about the area, one calling it *'nice and cosy'*. It was home because of the existence of friends and family. This distinction was mainly related to age, with young people aged 15 and over having more interest in entertainment that they could access independently from parents.

But there was a strong sense in the Craigieburn young people's focus group that if there were a new town centre, plus employment opportunities, *'Craigieburn would be a much better place and it would actually put us on the map for once'*.

One respondent who had lived in the area for 25 years said that despite the growth in the area, her personal financial circumstances were making her feel less confident that she would share in the optimism:

'Maybe there is some optimism but I suppose it feels like a tired place for me because I have been here a long time and I want something new and I think the fact that I can't have it is making me feel a bit down.'

Some of those who wished to leave were looking to re-create their rural lifestyle by moving further out of the town, but not one person had clearly formulated plans to do this. One spoke about maybe moving to the beach, but wanted to wait until her daughter had finished school. Another thought moving further out to the country could be a possibility for her family.

But one young person in the focus group described her ambivalence about staying in the area: *'If I leave I won't see my friends again. But if I go it will be like, I won't be here, I won't have to go through that unsafe. I want to go but I don't want to go.'*

It is clear that most families and young people plan to stay in the area and this indicates a high level of hope that the area will improve with new resources and the energy of new residents. The development of the new Town Centre was identified earlier as something which residents had been waiting many years. This initiative, in conjunction with the Craigieburn Community Renewal Project, were important indicators to residents that this improvement will happen very soon.

Roxburgh Park, on the other hand, was in transition from being a 'planned community' to one which needed to create its own identity and future. Parents consulted were aware of how their area compared to others, and felt that because the area had grown so fast they expected things to be planned for, such as a bigger shopping centre, bowling clubs, sports clubs or restaurants. One Iraqi woman hoped to see the area get the same resources as others:

Just to feel that we have similar things to any other area, not to be left alone yeah.

The service providers in Roxburgh Park felt that community pride many have declined in the period since the developer VicUrban withdrew from the area a few years ago. During the period VicUrban was involved, there were many community events such as barbeques and carols by candlelight as well as an active residents association and a newsletter. These had disappeared in the last three years, and, according to service providers, the community had not been able to sustain the initiatives started when the community was being developed and consolidated.

The Arabic speaking and Chaldean parents expressed concern that young people in the area were being neglected. There was a clear wish that the needs of families with young people in Roxburgh Park were addressed so that they could find activities to do as a family in their local area and not have to travel elsewhere for entertainment. Focus group participants were unhappy that young people were denied activities in their local area and this influenced their perceptions of their suburb.

There was also concern that the physical infrastructure such as roads, parks and shopping centre, were at risk of deterioration and that the rise in crime, especially burglary and graffiti, was contributing to a lower pride in the area. In addition, there was a clear need expressed for more health services, sports and recreation activities as well as the establishment of a local library. Similar to Craigieburn, the increase in traffic made residents of Roxburgh Park feel that the area was unsafe. Overall, this was a critical time to support those families and service providers who wished to improve Roxburgh Park and to enhance the community's sense of ownership and pride in their suburb.

CONCLUSIONS

This report has shown that growth areas do face challenges in accommodating new residents. The process of developing new communities involves attending to the range of expectations and experiences brought by residents and recognizing that not all residents may welcome change. Population growth is a double-edged sword. It brings new energy into a place but also places additional demands on infrastructure such as health services which worries existing residents who notice that services are more difficult to get. This can be exacerbated when new developments do not materialize when promised. Such delays can engender a feeling of neglect and sometimes envy when residents compare their area to others and find theirs wanting.

However, population growth also brings new resources to an area as higher population levels create potential for additional investment. More people in the area means there is a larger market for new shops and services. But there are also unwelcome flow-on affects. Increased traffic on the roads, for example, poses a threat to the peace and quiet which initially drew many residents to the area.

Young people in particular often experience challenges in finding activities to do and they can share the feeling that their area is somehow inferior to others. There was a general agreement that young people who do not find things to do might engage in binge drinking, graffiti or other concerning behaviour. This problem was recognized by the service providers and there was a continued effort to enhance youth services, sports and recreational opportunities.

The open space and natural assets of Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park are the pride of these communities. Many families use the parks, creeks, lakes and walking tracks and, although some areas can be unsafe at times, the physical location of the suburbs on the urban fringe makes these areas attractive to many.

Further development needs to be mindful of how residents use their community and the reasons they first moved to the area. While affordable housing is clearly part of the appeal of the area, this research has illustrated how the two suburbs contain other characteristics which have become integral to their identity over time. While there are proposed changes in the Urban Growth Boundary which may impact on places like Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park, the residents still wish to build their lives in a place that is safe, harmonious and cohesive. They also want to feel that they have some control over how their area grows. This is the challenge for the future.



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