Understandings of Social Mix and Community Opposition to Social Housing Constructed under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan

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INTRODUCTION

Historically social housing has acted as a catalyst for community concern, resistance and activism (Bostock et al., 2004; Rose, 2004; Kleinman, 1999). Such resistance is couched in concerns over the changing nature of place and the character of local neighbourhoods and anxiety over social issues such as crime and stigmatisation (Jacobs et al., 2011; Arthurson, 2004; Randolph and Wood, 2004). However with the Australian context, under a neoliberal urban governance model, such conflict and community concern has been tempered as very few new social housing dwellings have been constructed (Jacobs et al., 2010; Beer et al., 2007). With the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) this position changed with major public expenditure on new social housing coming from the Federal government under the *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan* (*NBESP*) in 2009/2010. This new construction acted as a trigger for community opposition in a number of targeted neighbourhoods. Community concerns was as much about process as it was opposition to new social housing construction. As part of this resistance, the discourse of social mix was adopted to challenge construction.

The purpose of this paper is to neither provide a comprehensive review of academic writings on social mix nor to provide a detailed discussion of such policies in Australia, as this is done elsewhere (Randolph and Wood, 2004; Musterd and Andersson, 2005; Galster, 2007; Graham et al., 2009). Rather, while providing an overview of the perceived benefits of such polices at a broad level, here social mix is repositioned as a discursive construct which, at least in the context of the *NBESP*, has been adopted by local residents as a tool for challenging the legitimacy of new developments. Here rather than opposing social mix (or the development of social housing) residents are seen to support 'appropriate' social mix as a planning principal (echoing policy and some academics positions), but rather oppose the type and scale of mix thereby seeking to protect their neighbourhood. Social mix therefore moves from a policy objective (however loosely) associated with the management of social housing, to a discourse used to challenge the very process of providing social housing. This paper offers a unique opportunity to explore the ways in which social housing and notions of social mix are constructed by communities prior to new social tenants moving in. As such, this paper does not explore the actual interaction of public and private tenants, but rather focuses on the ways in which constructions of policy, community and social housing are mobilised to challenged the legitimacy of new social housing constructed under the *NBESP*.

SOCIAL MIX

Social mix has a long history of academic exploration. The term has been used in a range of diverse settings and can refer to a range of potential 'mixes' (Arthurson, 2010b). In the Australian context social mix has most often mean a mixing of household tenures–primarily private owners and social tenants–which, by extension, facilitates a mix of incomes (Darcy, 2009; Randolph and Wood, 2004). Nonetheless, the assumptions behind social mix often remain unchallenged in policy, with little attention being given the actual mechanics by which advantaged and disadvantaged groups might come together (Graham et al., 2009; Galster, 2007).

As a policy setting social mix is a response to social exclusion manifest in 'worst estates' (Cameron, 2006) and is seen to address localised disadvantage and social exclusion through transfer of skill and values from middle income owners to low income public renters (Darcy, 2009; Arthurson, 2004; Musterd and Andersson, 2005). At its most basic social mix is about breaking up concentrations of social housing through the introduction of new, private tenants.

The set of supposed benefits include: an increased propensity public tenants to access social networks which potentially facilitate employment opportunities and social engagement (i.e. promoting bridging social capital); the opportunity for owners to act as role models teaching social tenants how to act as 'good citizens', the capacity to reduce the level of stigmatisation experienced by locations with high concentrations of social housing; and, the opportunity to improved access to required services and infrastructure (Arthurson, 2004; 2010a, b). As a policy setting social mix has most often lain at the centre of estate regeneration projects which have sought to address localised issues of entrenched disadvantage, crime and stigmatisation (Jacobs et al., 2011; Arthurson,2004; Wood, 2002).

Despite the policy objectives of social mix a number of studies have challenged the level of interaction of households of different tenure and income (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000; Ruming et al, 2004;). Other critiques centre on the impact of social mix policies on actually reducing the number of dwellings, potentially leading to increased waiting times (Arthurson, 2010b). Thus, despite a high profile within social housing policy, many of the assumptions and expected outcomes remain contested. However, these contestations aside, social mix in increasingly an accepted orthodoxy in policy circles and, increasingly, public discourse. While social mix may rest (implicitly) at the centre of contemporary social housing management practices in Australia and internationally, it is important to note that social mix was not heavily promoted through the *NBESP* which sought rather to develop large numbers of new social housing stock outside existing estates, in a very short time period. As discussed below, the relative absence of social mix in the policy, planning and delivery of new social housing under the *NBESP* acted as a catalyst for public opposition to new housing which is positioned as failing meet policy objectives (i.e. social mix criteria).

THE NATION BUILDING ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN AND SOCIAL HOUSING PROVISION

In the Australian context social housing has been 'residualised' and now represents a housing tenure of last choice for those unable to find accommodation through home ownership or private rental (Jacobs et al., 2010). Despite incremental steps in addressing issues of housing affordability, a new and unprecedented (in recent decades anyway) level of funding was allocated to new social housing provision in response to the Global Financial Crisis of 2009. In February 2009 the (then) Prime Minister Kevin Rudd introduced the *Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan* (*NBESP*), following endorsement from Council of Australian Governments. The *NBESP* was a two year, $42 billion plan seeking to 'support jobs and invest in the long term growth of the Australian economy" (COA, 2009, p. 7). Under the *NBESP*, $5.2 billion over two years would be allocated to the construction of 19,200 social housing dwellings across Australia (NSW Government, 2009a). Accompanying these funds the NSW government allocated $1 billion dollars to deliver 3,000 new homes (NSW Government, 2009). Together these investments were seen to represent "a once in a lifetime opportunity to reshape the public housing property portfolio" (NSW Government, 2009). In total 6,330 dwellings were constructed in NSW (Shepherd & Abelson, 2010). The increased funds allocated to social housing constructed was widely applauded by many associated with the provision of social housing (ACOSS, 2009).

Development of social housing under the *NBESP* progressed under two stages. Stage 1 centred on the acceleration of development projects already in train. Stage 2 required the submission of new projects which could be complete by June 2012. Under the *NBESP*, the NSW government developed the *Nation Building and Jobs Plan* (*NPJP*) in an effort to meet the criteria established by the Federal government. To deliver projects in a timely fashion the NSW government appointed an Infrastructure Coordinator General (ICG) responsible for implementing works funded under the *NBESP* and enacted the *Nation Building and Jobs Plan (State Infrastructure Delivery) Act* (*NBJP Act*) (Shepherd & Abelson, 2010). Under the *Act* the ICG was to coordinate State government agencies and, where necessary, undertake planning and assessment functions, where existing structure were seen as unable to meet project timelines established by the Federal government (Shepherd & Abelson, 2010). In NSW there was a belief that projects could not be completed in a timely fashion through existing assessment structure run through local council. According to Shepherd & Abelson (2010) the priority of the *NBJP* was 'to stimulate the economy and generate jobs', while the social

housing projects also sought to address issues of homelessness and provide stimulus to the building and construction industry (p. 25). The emphasis on fast delivery, left little room for consideration around developments–despite claims from the State government organisations that approval was based on 'comprehensive merit-based assessment' which were more responsive to the site characteristics than generic planning tools (Shepherd & Abelson, 2010, p. 58).

Assessment of new social housing under the NBJP could progress through three avenues. First, approval could be granted by the ICG under the *NBJP Act*. The *Act* facilitated the assessment of large developments of more than 20 units. Second, Housing NSW could self approve applications under the *Affordable Rental Housing State Environmental Planning Policy* – for project of up to 20 dwellings and of no more than 2 storeys. Finally, approval could come from local councils through a conventional development assessment process. The majority of both projects (58%) and total units (50%) were self approved by Housing NSW. The ICG was responsible for approving 17% of projects but 31% of units. Only 25% of projects or 18% of total units were processed by local councils. The removal of local consultation and approval in many locations was seen by residents and local councils to reduce the capacity to provide locally appropriate developments. Importantly residents and local councils argued that both process and outcomes at a number of development sites were poor and did not acknowledge the long term functioning of the sites or the communities in which they sit. Thus, challenges from local residents sought to move beyond individual sites and to place these developments in a broader context. Indeed, the main concerns raised in submissions to the review of the *NPJP* centred on the fact that dwellings were 'constructed in inappropriate locations or out of scale or character with their location' (Shepherd & Abelson, 2010, p. 103). It is within the context of attempts to mobilise broader impacts of new development where understandings of social mix were adopted to challenge construction.

While the *NBESP* represent the first substantial intervention into new social housing construction in decades, considerations of social mix were not central to the selection, planning and development process. Rather, the objectives of the *NBESP* were 1) stimulate the economy through the residential construction industry and 2) address growing demand for social housing. Social mix was not high on the *NBESP* policy agenda. In other words, the sites selected for building under the *NBESP* were not chosen because the development would facilitate a desired mix or that there was the 'correct' type of residents already in the area who could potentially act as role models for social housing tenants. The selection of sites rested primarily on value for money, yield and speed of delivery.

CASE STUDY AND METHODS

A case study methodology was adopted to trace community resistance to new social housing construction. This approach facilitated the detailed exploration of the processes and issues associated with individual developments and communities. Fieldwork explored 21 developments sites, across four councils: Wyong Shire Council, Lake Macquarie City Council, Ryde City Council and Wollongong City Council. The case study development sites ranged in size from 9 to 56 dwellings and were selected as all had received extensive media coverage portraying community discontent and opposition to the new developments (e.g. Barnes, 2010).

The developments and communities explored here are not necessarily representative of all development sites under the *NBESP*, with many communities having no objections. The sites are, however, broadly representative of sites of significant resident opposition to development occurring in the Sydney conurbation, especially sites which did not previously have social housing. The focus on the controversial site is valid given that these are sites of expressions of public discontent over issues of planning and the nature of local communities. The primary method mobilised for this research was a series of interviews with residents, council employees, elected councillors and employees on the state government (including Housing NSW and the NBJP Taskforce [The taskforce run by the ICG charges with assessing applications under the *NBJP Act*]). In total 99 interviews were conducted between September and November 2010 (Table 1). At the time of the interviews all case study sites had received approval. However, in all sites construction was incomplete with no site having new tenants

moved into the dwellings. For local communities the timing of the interviews between initial battles over the selection and planning of the site and the imminent arrival of new tenants offers a unique opportunity to explore both residents' reflections of their attempts to change the developments and thoughts on the future.

Interview Type	The Entrance	Lake Macquarie	Ryde	Wollongong	State Government	Total
Residents	10	35	20	17	-	*82*
Council Staff	2	6	3	-	-	*11*
Councillors	2	-	1	-	-	*3*
HNSW	-	-	-	-	1	*1*
Taskforce	-	-	-	-	2	2
Total	*14*	*41*	*24*	*17*	*3*	***99***

Table 1: Interviews

SOCIAL MIX AND THE NATION BUILDING ECONOMIC STIMULUS PLAN

The remainder of the paper traces the complex construction and mobilisation of social mix as a means of challenging new social housing constructed under the *NBESP*. In particular, this section explores how social mix is positioned as a ideology and/or policy position supported by local residents and how, according to residents, developments constructed under the *NBESP* differ from the ideal of social mix promoted in their interpretation of government policy.

Supporting Social Mix

Opinion over the value of social housing as a social infrastructure provided to citizens in need varied considerably for participants in this project. Feelings towards social housing ranged from outright opposition and anger over provision to residents who saw social housing as a vital support network for those in genuine need. More research participants fit in the latter category than the former:

> I don't have any problem with Housing NSW developing the land but I just think that how they've developed it is just en masse. (Resident 1 – Ryde)

While the housing produced under the *NBESP* did not represent a deliberate attempt to promote social mix as would be the case in estate regeneration, the underlying principals of social mix were adopted by local residents. At the case study sites, the majority of the residents uncritically accepted the perceived (yet academically challenged) rationale and benefits of social mix:

> It's a good idea that they're dispersed throughout the community … there's far greater possibility of there being more interaction within the community and [they can] contribute. (Resident 2 – Wyong)

> It ensures that you get a reasonable social mix and therefore … better overall social capital. You don't have lots of very like people living in ghettos. (Council Officer 1 – Lake Macquarie)

The opinions of local residents, council staff and councillors echo policy directions surrounding social mix. Here social mix is positioned by locals as a means for promoting moral responsibility (i.e. showing social housing tenants how to act and expecting them to conform to these ideals), by promoting the values of community, education and employment embedded in the notion of social capital. Social mix is seen as a means of addressing issues around disadvantage.

Central to the promotion of the ideal of social mix by residents was the normalisation of home ownership. Here home ownership is positioned as the 'correct' tenure, but its very nature endowed with the capacity to improve the life chances of social housing via osmosis. While such positions are far from new and have received considerable academic focus (Ruming et al., 2004; Arthurson, 2010a) these perceive benefits of social mix were adopted by local residents–the majority of whom owned their home–claiming that they can effectively act as role modes and teach new tenants how to act and what is appropriate behaviour:

> People like us could perhaps guide the people better … can't you pass it onto them. (Resident 3 – Lake Macquarie)

A position supported by local councillors:

> [Social mix can] provide a culture where people understand about work ethic, those critical elements are missing. (Councillor 1 – Wyong)

Another central component of resident understandings of social mix is built form. In an effort to promote the values of social mix, residents mobilise other locations which are seen to conform to the ideals of social mix, particularly in terms of density and appearance. According to residents, in areas of successful social mix dwellings look 'normal' and blend into the existing streetscapes:

> Scattered around the area are still a lot of [Housing NSW] houses … it took you a while to even figure out that there were sort of thing because they were all normal very similar brick houses. (Resident 4 – Ryde)

In addition to supporting the alleged benefits social mix, many residents across all case study sites, claimed knowledge of social housing policy (i.e. policies of social mix) implemented by Housing NSW over recent decades. Not surprising given the uncritical adoption of the ideals of social mix, it was identified as an appropriate policy approach:

> [Housing NSW] several years ago decided after having to demolish a lot of those complexes … that they wouldn't do any more complexes and they would spread people throughout the community. That was a very good idea because it gave people a chance to get out of the stigma and also hopefully lead them to live more normal lives. (Resident 5 – Wollongong)

Opposed to appropriate policies promoting social mix, residents position development under the *NBESP* as an approach which runs counter to contemporary housing policy. Indeed, many residents go as far as to suggest that the new social housing developments represent a return to unsuccessful policies, centred on developing housing concentrations, which have resulted in significant poor outcomes:

> When you get your governments turn around and say 'we're not going to do this' - then all of a sudden they turn round because they're trying to house people - do exactly what they said they weren't going to do. That doesn't sit too good with the community. (Resident 6 – Wyong)

Indeed, residents routinely enrolled estate locations it the debate in an effort to present a picture of the future for their area as a result of new housing provided under the *NBESP*. While policies of social mix are (ideologically) supported by the majority of residents in locations undergoing development, residents argue that increasing the density of social housing actually runs counter to the perceived benefits of social mix. In short, residents see these new developments, no matter what the scale, as a process promoting concentration and 'estates' or at least sites where those perceived issues and challenges of estates (crime, drugs, violence, anti-social behaviour) might manifest in the future. These developments are, according to residents, mini-estates, which fail to meet the requirements of integrated housing promoted under a paradigm of social mix:

> *[There is a large estate in the area] which they vowed would never happen again. Here we are, ten years, twenty years down the track and here we going again. (Resident 6 – Wyong)*

> *[A Housing NSW representative] said, "[a nearby estate] is a really bad place, there's a lot of illicit activity up there", quote. I'm thinking, what the hell are you doing replicating that in my street? (Resident 7 – Lake Macquarie)*

Further, there is a fear from many residents that the scale of development will result in their location being labelled as the location of high concentrations of social housing – an estate:

> *Teralba is going to be known as the place that's got all the Housing Commission [social housing]. (Resident 8 – Lake Macquarie)*

If lower levels of social housing were developed–a more appropriate mix–residents claim that the areas would be less likely as a whole to be identified as 'estates'. While the actual definition of what constitutes an 'estate' in the Australian context is vague at best, even the largest of the developments funded under the *NBESP* is much smaller than many of the large public housing estate based on Radburn design which are routinely mobilised as the antithesis of good housing development and social mix. What is clear, however, is that the majority of residents actually have a very limited understanding of these estates themselves. Rather, the construction of estates is built on what they have read in newspapers, see on television or hear from friends and family:

> *These groups of public housing that have been put in all sorts of places and we've read about it and we've been told about it. It doesn't work. (Resident 9 – Lake Macquarie)*

Just as residents mobilise an uncontested view of social mix, so to do residents mobilise a generic, stereotypical construction of social housing, often manifest in large estates. Resident knowledge of policies of social mix are therefore based on large-scale regeneration projects which did facilitate the reduction in the concentration of social housing stock on 'estates' in their area.

In addition to the concerns of local residents, many of the council staff and elected councillors also support the foundations of social mix and policies which decreased concentrations and promoted mix in their local area. Council staff questioned the style of development facilitated under the *NBESP*. While not as emotive or negative about new construction as residents, council staff were concerned that the new developments would result in problems characteristic of previous concentrations of social housing. Projects funded under the *NBESP* were seen to move away for the ideals of social mix:

> *Areas within the Shire [have been] stigmatised … I know Housing NSW is working with their policies now to do a more salt and pepper approach rather than having those large concentrations because there are issues… I'd hate to see that repeated again. (Council Officer 2 – Wyong)*

For some residents, the return to old and unsuccessful housing policy which failed to promote the benefits of an appropriate mix was seen to rest on the need for fast spend of Federal funds from the *NBESP*. Residents mobilised the conflicting objectives of the *NBESP* to challenge development. Here residents positioned the fast spending of funds (in response to the GFC) as incompatible with appropriate design and scale of new social housing development:

> *They're trying to get them mixed in amongst the people [but] I think that it has been indecent haste because of the allocation of the money. (Resident 10 – Wollongong)*

Thus, in each of the case study sites characterised by conflict over new social housing construction, residents were seen to support the integration rhetoric of social mix. While smaller developments may facilitate better integration within local community (at least

according to residents), it should be noted here that such an approach which promotes lower densities runs counter to the realities of social housing provision in Australia which is increasingly characterised by limited Federal funding and growing waiting lists. There is tension here between local communities which are seeking to facilitate the best outcome for their neighbourhood (i.e. appropriate mix) with a State government trying to deal with high demand addressed best through maximising the number of units provided under the *NBESP*.

Using Social Mix to Oppose Social Housing Construction

As presented above, residents position themselves as supporting social housing, but opposing new housing constructed under the *NBESP* as it is seen to run counter to the ideals of social mix. Opposition to new housing is based on size and scale of development and the potential lack of future integration:

> *Everyone was happy to have social housing. What we were objecting to was the scale of the development. It was too big. (Resident 11 – Wollongong)*

By mobilising social mix as a point of opposition to development, existing residents sought to also mobilise future social housing residents in their discourse of opposition. Residents promotion of social mix was, therefore, not about protecting the interests of existing residents per se (although this was clearly a motivating factor for many), but rather an argument based on advocacy for future residents. In other words, the promotion of successful social mix was most beneficial to future social housing tenants. Here existing residents who oppose new development on the basis of social mix claim to argue on behalf of future tenants who have no voice in the planning and development process and who, arguably, will be the most affected by the scale of the development. In particular, the developments were constructed as inadequate in terms of size, location and integration within the existing community–all of which will work to isolate future tenants:

> *The tenants are short changed (Resident 12 – Lake Macquarie)*

> *The main factor that would make me more [concerned is] … not parking, not the aesthetics associated with the development itself, but more the quality for the tenants. (Resident 13 – Ryde)*

Resident claims to act on behalf of future residents potential represents a strategy to oppose claims of NIMBYism or self interest, which potentially weaken residents position in opposing the new development on a range of issues entrenched in the discourse of social mix (such as social inclusion, community, employment, etc.). It is difficulty (if not impossible) to assess the extent to which existing residents may simply be mobilising the needs of future residents as a means of protecting their own self interests. However, this does represent a more complex resistance strategy which mobilises appropriate social mix as advantageous to the whole community, especially social housing tenants.

Concerns about the scale of social mix have been raised by a number of authors (Ruming et al., 2004; Arthurson, 2010b). Here issues of size and design of social housing are positioned as factors mediating the level and type of interaction between members of the community. In the case housing constructed under the *NBESP*, residents across all case study locations challenged the scale and design of developments, claiming that the development were easily recognisable and out of context with the local built environment:

> *It's still quite dense within those blocks as such. (Resident 2 – Wyong)*

> *Because we are such a small community we [are] against these proposals. Not so much having Housing NSW residents come to our area, but the design of the units, the large scale of them and how many there were. (Resident 8 – Lake Macquarie)*

In addition to concerns of size, the design of the dwellings was routinely identified by residents as a factor facilitating the identification of social housing – thereby running against the ideals of social mix. Ironically, many suggested that the modern or contemporary design

of many of the developments was an issue. The design is either too good, according to Housing NSW, too modern and out of character, according to residents, or inappropriate for affordable housing, according to come council staff:

> *They might stand out because they're better architecture than all the other stuff nearby. (State Officer 1 – Taskforce)*

> *There are grave misgivings about the design. We don't think it responds to the site that it's on and we think that it creates additional barriers for us in delivery of good social housing because people will point to these example and say "if that's what affordable housing looks like I hate it and I don't want it anywhere near me" … people will use to defend their opposition to good affordable housing development. (Council Officer 1 – Wyong)*

The fact that these developments could be identified was mobilised by existing residents as a means of challenging the new developments. According to residents, the fact that these developments could be easily recognised ran counter to the underlying logic of policies of social mix. In other words, the capacity of residents to identify social housing tenants decreased the potential for future integration within local communities. According to existing residents, the design of the developments inhibits engagement as it differentiates and labels the locations as 'public housing':

> *So to have them just there in one block, it almost be labelled as such, whereas if they were in smaller discrete bit. (Resident 14 – Wyong)*

> *They're going to be four storey, in a suburb that council was trying to keep to a single or a double storey. (Resident 15 – Lake Macquarie)*

In this sense the ideal of social mix around built form and integration were mobilised by local residents to challenge development. These developments were seen to fail to promote the objectives of social mix and should be redesigned and developed at lower densities to better promote integration within the local community. Smaller development would be more inconspicuous, lessening the chance of identification as social housing dwellings, there by promoting integration and all the benefits which are seen to accrue from areas of social mix.

Concerns over the size and design of new dwellings constructed under the *NBESP*, together with ideological or discursive support of notions of social mix, together manifest in residents' debates around the 'appropriate' level of mix of social housing development in their neighbourhood. Despite policy and academic debates around an 'appropriate' level of mix and general acknowledgement that no such figure exists, many residents and council officials attempt to define the correct proportion of social housing in their location. The definition adopted by residents and local council officials draws on their understandings the policies and ideologies of social mix as well as the local character of development sites. Not surprisingly, in all locations the mix of housing resulting from new housing constructed under the *NBESP* did not meet the appropriate level defined by local actors:

> *Our [position is] not so much that we don't want social housing - we want appropriate social housing. That's the word - the key is the 'appropriate'. (Resident 16 – Ryde)*

> *The critical mass is one in 100 maybe, not one in five. Maybe it's one in 20. But whatever it is, that's just far too many concentrated into an area like that. … the development will put the ratio there up to somewhere around about 20 per cent, it's just too high a concentration. (Councillor 1 – Wyong)*

For local residents and local council officials social housing developed under the *NBESP* was, therefore, inappropriate as the scale of development exceeded and challenged the benefits of social mix.

In response to what local residents see as overly large developments, and in keeping with the discourse of social mix, residents promote a more 'pepper-pot' or 'salt and pepper' approach:

> *[The government is] making a ghetto type slum area if you put more in here … Look I'm not being snobby or anything like that but spread them out for goodness sake. (Resident 17 – Lake Macquarie)*

> *It certainly would be better if they were spread across the whole [area]. (Councillor 1 – Wyong)*

> *That's the absolute frustration of the local people is why do we have to bear this density? Why isn't it shared around a bit? (Resident 4 – Ryde)*

There was a level of cynicism expressed by employees of the state government, as well as from some council officials, over the level of concern actually expressed by local residents. Many felt as though the mobilisation of notions such as social mix were simply means of challenging new housing provision, not as a concern for the operation of their neighbourhood after social housing has been developed or for the lifestyle of the tenants:

> *[It] is really code for saying I don't want people in social housing living in my neighbourhood. (Council Officer 1 – Lake Macquarie)*

> *But so many of the conversations that I've had with protestors' groups [about why the site was chosen] ... very quickly the conversation will turn to, well you're going to put people in, crime, drugs, mental health and so on. (State Officer 2 – Housing NSW)*

The cynicism of government employees over the actual extent to which residents are acting in the interest of future residents through mobilising the ideologies manifest in understandings of social mix or acting in purely self-interest by attempting to resist social housing development, or a mix somewhere in-between is hard to substantiate in this (or any) research project. However, what is apparent is that social mix and the policy and academic ideologies embedded within it have now transitioned to public discourse and have been used to challenge social housing provided under the *NBESP*.

CONCLUSION

This paper has not explored the extent to which policies of social mix are or are not successful in achieving their stated aims of inclusion. Rather, this paper has explored how in an effort to resist the construction of new social housing, residents mobilised a vision of social mix, encompassing a set of idealised benefits and values. Ironically, in supporting the social mix, residents attempted to resist the construction of social housing. Drawing on research looking social housing constructed under the NBESP it is clear that the discourse of social mix has moved beyond policy and academic circles and now represents and accepted knowledge by the broader public. In attempting to resist social housing construction residents mobilise the perceived benefits of social mix, including the capacity of owners to acts as role models, the promotion of social capital and a level of integration. These ideals, according to residents (and echoing policy) are promoted through 'appropriate mix' which minimises the size and scale of developments and promoted appropriate design which does not identify social housing. According to residents, developments under the NBESP failed to meet the criteria established under the policies/rhetoric social mix. As a result, social mix was mobilised as a tool to challenge and delegitimise new social housing constructions as it was seen to run against the very models and policies promoted elsewhere in Housing NSW. Social mix is no longer just a policy or academic construct but an accepted public discourse of what social housing should be. This discourse can be mobilised to both support and resist social housing construction.

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