

Chapter 6

The Parks to Westwood: Population, History, and Future of the Study Site

6. The Parks to Westwood: Population, History, and Future of the Study Site

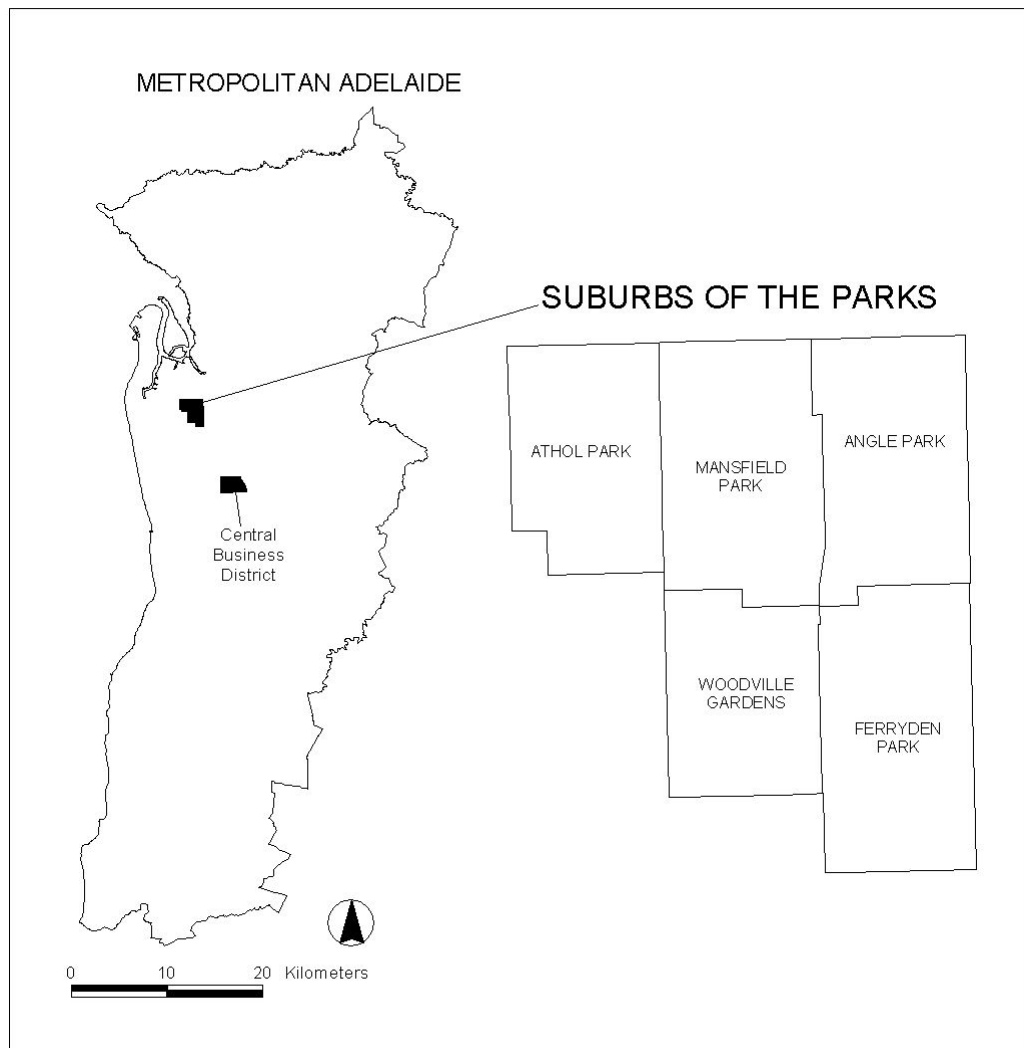
6.1. Introduction

The Parks is an area of approximately five square kilometres in North-Western Adelaide (Figure 6.1), in South Australia. It is a group of five suburbs: Ferryden Park, Angle Park, Athol Park, Mansfield Park, and Woodville Gardens. This group of suburbs is the site of “the biggest urban renewal project in the nation” (Brown, 2000). Large numbers of public housing tenants will be relocated from their homes to make way for this project, and it is these public housing tenants, the relocation process that they will undertake, and their relocation desires and choices, that are the focus of this thesis. This chapter introduces The Parks as a study area, its population, housing, history, and planned future as Westwood.

Located seven kilometres from the central business district of Adelaide, The Parks is a largely public housing area, with 56% of households residing in public dwellings at the 1996 Census (ABS, 1996). The visual appearance of The Parks is strikingly austere. Thomson (1999, p. 37) suggests that The Parks was named as a ‘grim joke’. “The words summon up images of big trees, lush lawns, thickets, secluded water features, [but, The Parks is] a bleak grid of bleached fibro and brick bungalows built in the late fifties by the South Australian Housing Trust”. The Parks is named merely for the fact that four of its five suburbs end in ‘Park’. Its appearance is due to a combination of factors. Firstly, the area was developed quickly by government to meet severe housing shortage in a time of post-war materials scarcity. This meant that dwellings were small and uniformly designed, with little decoration (Marsden, 1986). The general lack of streetscaping and street trees is probably also largely due to this historical fact. The established look of the area has probably contributed to the low level of maintenance by local authorities since. The fact that the South Australian Housing Trust built and currently manages a majority of dwellings in the area also contributes to the general amenity of the area. Not only do the population tend to be,

to a large extent, selected for their disadvantage, but the housing tends to be maintained uniformly and cheaply. The Housing Trust has experienced a significant funding crisis in recent years (as discussed in Chapter One), and this combined with a policy move away from concentrated stocks of public housing left the Trust pondering upon the future for The Parks and other such large-scale industry centred estates, such as Elizabeth in Adelaide's north. It has been suggested that The Parks had been largely abandoned by the SAHT for many years until the announcement of The Parks Urban Regeneration Project (for example Thomson, 1999).

Figure 6.1: Location of the Study Area



6.1.1. The Housing

Figure 6.2: Typical Double Unit



Source: Urban Pacific Limited

At the 1996 Census there were just below 5000 dwellings within The Parks, and 2840 of these were public (ABS, 1996 Census of Population and Housing). This proportion (59 per cent⁹) of public housing represents a very high concentration of public dwellings for Australia, where only 5.1 per cent of households live in Public Housing Authority dwellings (ABS cat no 4182.0, 2000). The majority of the public housing stock in The Parks is two and three bedroom semi-detached ‘double-units’, similar to the dwelling portrayed in Figure 6.2. This dwelling style makes up 55 per cent of the total housing in The Parks (ABS, 1996, Census of Population and Housing) and 82 per cent of the public housing stock (SAHT and PPA, 1996, p. 154), which is unusual in Australia, where the dwelling preference is overwhelmingly for fully detached housing¹⁰. Table 6.1 below compares and summarises the incidence of the two dwelling styles in metropolitan Adelaide and The Parks at the 1996 Census.

Table 6.1: Proportion of Dwellings by Dwelling Type, 1996

| | Separate Dwelling (%) | Semi-detached Dwelling (%) |
|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Metropolitan Adelaide | 73 | 14 |
| The Parks | 30 | 54 |

Source: ABS, 1996, Census of Population and Housing

⁹ The slight difference between the proportion of public dwellings (59%) and households residing in public dwellings (56%) is accounted for by a small vacancy rate.

¹⁰ 79.3% of all Australian housing was detached in 1999-2000 (ABS, Australia Now)

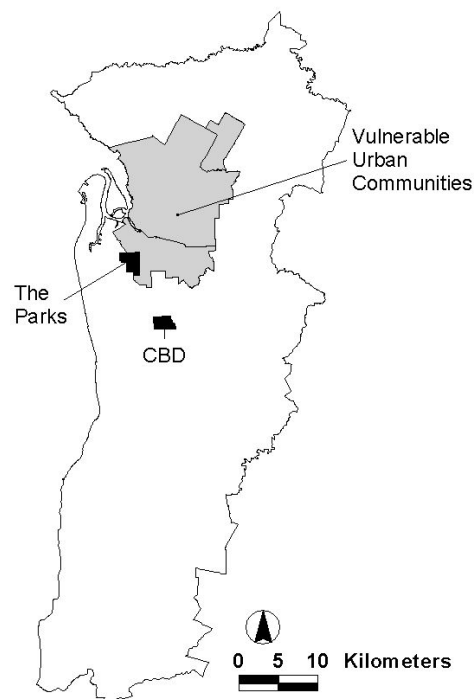
The SAHT dwellings within The Parks are “predominantly over 30 years” old (SAHT and PPA, 1996, p. 154), with over 80 per cent of Trust dwellings built before 1969 (Bowey, 1995, p. 4), and as described above, they were assembled quickly from inexpensive building materials. The result is that their condition is now regarded as deteriorating, with a declining asset value (SAHT and PPA, 1996, p. 146). As a result, the public housing in The Parks is expensive, and increasingly uneconomic to maintain. Public housing in The Parks still represents a sizeable asset for the South Australian Government because the land, sited so close to the city centre, is steadily increasing in value. The public housing stock in this area is most often sited on large blocks of this land, up to 1000m². This means that the SAHT asset in the Parks is comprised largely of low density, poor quality housing on valuable, but under-utilised land. As part of a recent State government push towards Urban Regeneration, enabling “better use of our existing investment in housing, infrastructure and services” as well as to “improve social and living conditions” (Government of South Australia, 1999, p.4), the reuse of this asset in The Parks has been examined. The Parks Urban Regeneration Project aims to replace much of the existing low-density public housing stock with a more medium-density mix of public and private dwellings, in the process selling some of the land and using the capital to fund the building of a limited number of replacement public stock. The Urban Regeneration Project will be detailed in section 6.3 below.

6.1.2. The Social Landscape

The Parks is an area that represents many of the most extreme characteristics of public housing areas in Australia. The suburbs that comprise The Parks are widely known as areas of particularly high levels of disadvantage relative to the general population. Three recent Australian studies that examined indicators of disadvantage across the whole of Australia have found The Parks to be among the most highly disadvantaged locations in Australia.

Baum *et al.* (1999a) found that South Australia had many of the nations most distressed urban communities¹¹, including six of the twenty most vulnerable, with three of these grouped together in metropolitan Adelaide, as shown in Figure 6.3. The vulnerability of these populations refers to low levels of “human capital, labour market engagement, employment in the ‘new economy’ industries and occupations, and ... a high incidence of social disadvantage” (1999a, p. 122). The Parks sits within this grouping. This vulnerability, it is suggested, is related to the historical concentration of manufacturing industries that were developed directly after World War II, and that have suffered “the painful restructuring that has occurred following deregulation and the reduction of protectionism in the 1970s” (Baum *et al.*, 1999a, p. 48). This industry-focussed explanation certainly fits within the profile and history of The Parks that is presented in this chapter.

Figure 6.3: Vulnerable Urban Communities in Metropolitan Adelaide

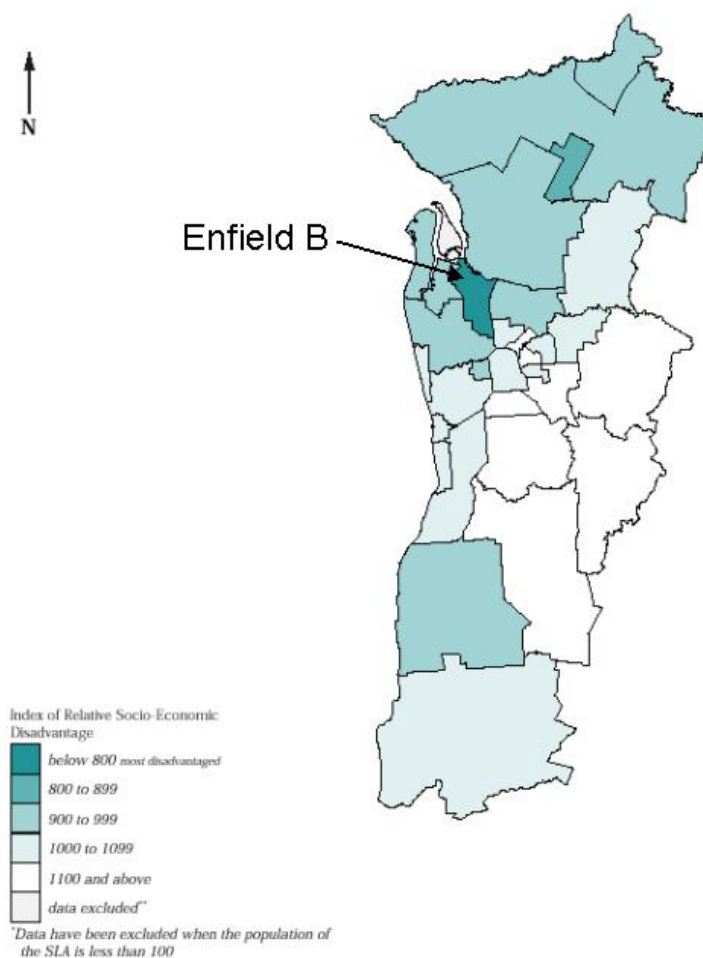


Data source: Baum *et al.*, 1999a

¹¹ This measure is an extension of the recommendations of the OECD (1998) for identifying Distressed Urban Areas.

Even before the changes to industry and employment that occurred in the early 1970s, the Local Government Area containing and immediately surrounding The Parks was already established as one with a relatively low socio-economic status (Stimson and Cleland, 1975). Even so, The Parks area had only moderate unemployment, few elderly residents, and a lower than average proportion of residents born overseas (Stimson, 1975, p.59, 87,115), all characteristics that are now notable for being well above the metropolitan average (as described in table 6.3).

Figure 6.4: ABS Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, Adelaide, 1996



Source: Glover and Tennant, 1999, p. 75

A recent analysis of data from the 1996 Census presents a profile of the population in the SLA containing, and immediately surrounding, The Parks (Enfield B). In this analysis, Glover and Tennant (1999) showed that in 1996 the area was one of high and concentrated disadvantage. Their discussion of selected census variables in

the Social Health Atlas of South Australia repeatedly featured the population of Enfield B as having characteristics associated with socio-economic disadvantage. Notably, Enfield B was found to have high proportions of single parent families, low-income families, unskilled workers, unemployed, and indigenous. In addition, there were very low rates of female participation in the labour force and motor vehicle ownership. Each of these factors were correlated with socio-economic disadvantage, and their combined influence is summarised in Figure 6.4 which maps scores for the Socio-Economic Index For Areas¹² (SEIFA). In this figure, Enfield B is shown to have the lowest score in the Adelaide metropolitan area.

One additional study highlighting the disadvantaged social conditions within The Parks area was conducted in 2001 by Canberra's National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (Lloyd *et al.*, 2001). This study sought to locate areas in Australia exhibiting high and low levels of poverty. They define individuals in poverty as those whose "living standards fall below some overall community standard" (p. 8), they use in this case the Henderson Poverty line¹³. Lloyd *et al.* found the population of Ferryden Park in The Parks to have the highest rate of poverty for a suburb in Australia. Almost 30 per cent of the total population, and 36.9 per cent of all children here, were defined as being in poverty. They state that:

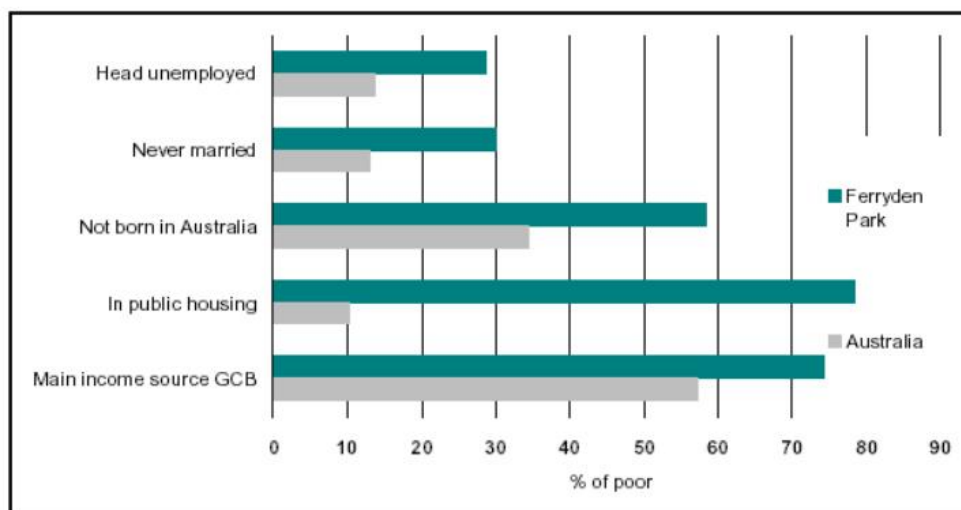
"The poor of Ferryden Park tend to live in households where the head has a very high chance of being unemployed (28.7 per cent compared with the national average of 13.8 per cent), never married (30.1 per cent compared with 13.0 per cent for Australia's poor) and not born in Australia (58.3 per cent compared with 34.6 per cent)...Most poor households in this Postcode live in public housing (a striking 78.4 per cent compared with the national average of 10.3 per cent) and almost three-quarters have government cash benefits as their principle income source." (Lloyd *et al.*, 2001, pp. 17-18).

These findings are summarised in Figure 6.5 below, and show the poor in Ferryden Park to be amongst the most disadvantaged of Australia's poor.

¹² The SEIFA index is an index created and used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics to reflect relative disadvantage among populations. The methodology is described in ABS, 1998, cat no. 2039.0.

¹³ In this case they used the Henderson Half Average Poverty Line, which defines those in poverty as having half of the national average disposable income.

Figure 6.5: Selected Household Characteristics of Poor Residents of Ferryden Park and All Poor Australians.



Source: Lloyd *et al.*, 2001, p.18

Note: GCB refers to Government Cash Benefits

Though The Parks is widely regarded as an area of concentrated social disadvantage, it is also recognised as an area with many long-term residents and a strong local community of “very tight knit social networks” (Badcock, 1997, p. 8). Over the last two decades this community has focussed around a purpose built community facility, The Parks Community Centre. Providing welfare, recreation, and education services since its creation in 1977, The Parks Community Centre has also successfully provided a focus for community development and seems to have been a galvanising force for The Parks community. The population of The Parks evolved a relatively high level of organisation and activism through the 1970s and 1980s (Thomson, 1999). This began to unravel somewhat in 1996 with the closure of the Parks school, which undermined the survival of the community centre. The Parks Community Centre, heavily reliant on funding provided by the school (Neldner, 2000; Thomson, 1999), suffered a resultant funding decrease, and has been recently downsized. Neldner (2000) presents an excellent, more detailed, discussion of the conditions surrounding the demise of The Parks Community Centre. There is still regarded to be a strong and well-organised community in The Parks (Neldner, 2000), and this is evidenced by the campaign undertaken by residents to save the Parks high

school, and protect the community centre. The Parks Education Action Group was formed in 1996 to save the Park High School (Lloyd, 1996), as was the Resistance Committee (Weekly Times Messenger, May 15th 1996). These groups were made up of local residents, parents, students, and local service providers surrounding the Parks school.

6.1.3. A Portrait of the Population

The population of The Parks is distinct from that of metropolitan Adelaide. Within the five suburbs, at the 1996 census, there were 10231 people, comprising around 1 per cent of the metropolitan population (ABS Census of Population and Housing, 1996). Many of the characteristics of the population in The Parks are experienced relatively evenly across all of the five suburbs, table 6.2 below summarises some of the major features.

This section examines the age and household characteristics, the ethnic diversity, and income and employment characteristics, of the population living in The Parks based on the Australian Census of Population and Housing of 1996. This portrait also surveys the housing tenure characteristics of the Parks population and presents a profile of public housing tenants who make up around 60% of the total population, and the entire population being relocated.

Table 6.2: Selected Population Characteristics, Parks Suburbs, 1996

| | Angle Park % | Athol Park % | Ferryden Park % | Mansfield Park % | Woodville Gardens % |
|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Couples with children | 35 | 49 | 41 | 46 | 35 |
| Couples without children | 14 | 16 | 18 | 16 | 19 |
| Single parents | 25 | 18 | 20 | 19 | 20 |
| 65+ | 12 | 16 | 17 | 16 | 22 |
| Born OS | 38 | 43 | 37 | 46 | 47 |
| Unemployment Rate | 33.6 | 26.9 | 28.2 | 27.7 | 28.2 |
| Public Renter Households | 77 | 36 | 69 | 46 | 49 |

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 1996

The most common household type within The Parks is households containing couples with children (41 per cent). This proportion is slightly lower than in

metropolitan Adelaide, where 49 per cent of all individuals live in households containing couples with children. 'Couples without children' households make up 17 per cent of the population, a figure very similar to that found in metropolitan Adelaide at the same time. The defining feature of The Parks household's structure is the prevalence of 'One-parent families'; this structure representing 20 per cent of the total households, double the level found in the metropolitan area as a whole. A high proportion of one-parent families within a community is widely used as an indicator of disadvantage (for example by Baum *et al.*, 1999a, Antolin, *et al.*, 1999; Glover and Tennant, 1999). The age structure of The Parks population is very similar to that in the metropolitan area, with just slightly more of the population in the extreme old and young age cohorts.

Individuals in The Parks are almost twice as likely as the wider metropolitan population to have been born overseas, and relatedly, more likely to speak a language other than English at home. Just over 60 per cent of The Parks population speak only English at home, compared to 82 per cent in the wider metropolitan area. There are strong Vietnamese and Aboriginal communities in The Parks, with Vietnam being the most common non-English speaking birthplace (SAHT and PPA, 1996, p. 33). The ethnic profile of the area is likely to have changed slightly since the last published Census, as a number of households have recently entered the area from Middle-Eastern countries and the former Soviet Republic.

The employment and income characteristics of residents of The Parks are no surprise, based on the demographic characteristics described above. A much smaller proportion of the Parks' population is in the labour force than the metropolitan average, and among those in the labour force, Parks residents are almost twice as likely to be unemployed. The income level of the Parks' population is uniformly low, with 60 per cent receiving less than the weekly median metropolitan income. This is more than twice the level found in metropolitan Adelaide. The fact that such a high proportion of residents of The Parks is living in subsidised public rental dwellings probably helps to alleviate some of the burdens of such low incomes. Just below 60 per cent of dwellings are rented from the South Australian Housing Trust, a six-fold

difference compared to the Adelaide metropolitan average of 9.9 per cent of households. Table 6.3 compares and summarises the main population characteristics in The Parks and metropolitan Adelaide.

Table 6.3: Selected Characteristics of The Parks and Metropolitan Adelaide Populations, 1996.

| | The Parks % | Metropolitan Adelaide % |
|---|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Born Overseas | 42 | 25 |
| Speaks language other than English | 41 | 14 |
| Unemployed | 9 | 5 |
| Employed | 23 | 42 |
| In the labour force | 32 | 47 |
| Not in the Labour force | 45 | 32 |
| Unemployment Rate | 28.7 | 10.6 |
| Persons 65 years and over | 17 | 14 |
| Persons under 15 years | 21 | 20 |
| Left school before 15th birthday | 25 | 15 |
| Persons employed as 'labourers and related workers' | 24 | 9 |
| Couple or family with children | 41 | 49 |
| Lone parent families | 20 | 10 |
| Lone person households | 12 | 10 |
| Dwellings owned or being purchased | 26 | 67 |
| Publicly rented dwellings | 60 | 10 |
| Persons over 15 years and receiving less than the median weekly metropolitan income | 60 | 27 |

Source: ABS, 1996, Census of Population and Housing.

The public housing tenants of The Parks make up 60 per cent of the total population. This tenant population has many characteristics which further distinguish it from the wider metropolitan population, such as significantly higher rates of non-participation in the work force, with up to 80 per cent of tenants deriving the majority of their income from government pensions and benefits; a higher proportion of elderly persons, almost 30 per cent compared to 14 per cent in metropolitan Adelaide; and a much higher proportion of the population born overseas, 50 per cent compared with 25 per cent in metropolitan Adelaide (SAHT, 2000b). Tables 6.4-6.6 present selected summaries of tenant characteristics.

Table 6.4: Birthplace of Parks Tenants (Household Heads)

| Birthplace Category | Total | % |
|--|-------|-----|
| Oceania and Antarctica | 784 | 51 |
| Australia | 772 | 50 |
| New Zealand | 10 | <1 |
| Europe and the Former USSR | 230 | 15 |
| Southeast Asia | 216 | 14 |
| Africa (excluding North Africa) | 13 | 1 |
| South America, Central America and the Caribbean | 11 | 1 |
| The Middle East and North Africa | 10 | 1 |
| Northeast Asia | 8 | 1 |
| Southern Asia | 4 | <1 |
| Northern America | 3 | <1 |
| Not Stated / Unknown | 258 | 17 |
| Total | 1537 | 100 |

Source: SAHT, 2000b, Unpublished Data Extract

Note: Birthplace Category derived from the Australian Standard Classification of Countries for Social Statistics (ASCCSS)

Table 6.5: Proportion of the Population Over 65 Years

| | % Population Over 65 Years |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Parks Tenants | 27 |
| Metropolitan Adelaide | 14.4 |
| South Australia | 14.3 |
| Australia | 12.2 |

Source: ABS, 1998, AusStats, ABS, 2000, Australian Housing Survey; SAHT, 2000b, Unpublished Data Extract.

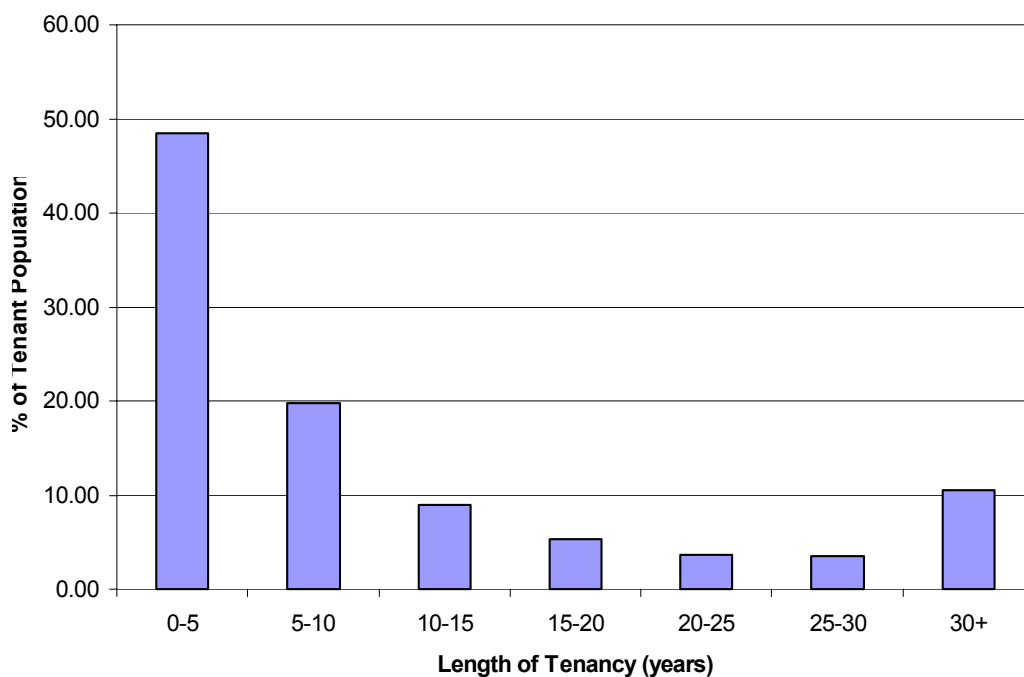
Table 6.6: Main Source of Income, Parks Tenants

| Main Source of Income | Total | % | % |
|-----------------------------------|-------|--------|--------|
| Age Pension | 861 | 25.06 | |
| Disability Pension | 627 | 18.25 | |
| Unemployment Benefits (inc YA) | 478 | 13.91 | |
| Sole Parent Pension | 445 | 12.95 | |
| Other Govt Income | 294 | 8.56 | |
| Student | 22 | 0.64 | |
| Overseas Pension | 5 | 0.15 | |
| Total Government Benefits | | | 79.51 |
| Wage/Salary | 457 | 13.30 | |
| Other Non-Govt Income | 21 | 0.61 | |
| Total Wage/salary/non-govt income | | | 13.91 |
| Family Payment/Maintenance | 28 | 0.81 | |
| Nil/Unknown | 198 | 5.76 | |
| Total Unknown/Misc./Nil | | | 6.58 |
| Total | 3436 | 100.00 | 100.00 |

Source: SAHT, 2000b, Unpublished Data Extract of The Parks Tenant Characteristics

The public tenants of The Parks were shown in the SAHT and Urban Pacific study (SAHT and PPA, 1996) to have similar total mobility levels to the population of metropolitan Adelaide. This total likely masks two separate mobility profiles for the population. In addition to a highly residentially mobile population, many households in The Parks have lived in their current dwelling for over 30 years. A survey of tenancy lengths in The Parks undertaken by the SAHT (1996) shows this variation, and is represented in Figure 6.6 below. The figure is bi-polar, showing a large number of tenants whose length of tenancy was less than five years, but also a substantial number of residents that had experienced a long period of residential stability.

Figure 6.6: Length of Tenancy for Residents of The Parks



Data source: SAHT, 1996, unpublished data extract

6.2. History of The Parks

Chapter One introduced the history and development of public housing since the end of World War II. At the time, there were large numbers of people returning from the war, high levels of family formation, immigration, and the beginnings of the post war baby boom (for example Government of South Australia, 2000a; Harding, 1999). There was a need for much new housing. Winter and Bryson (1998) estimate

that Australia lacked approximately 350,000 dwellings at that time. There had been very few new homes built for nearly a decade, and very few built in the Great Depression, which immediately preceded World War II. At the same time there was a severe shortage of materials and labour.

Simultaneous with this period of shortage, the post-war period in South Australia was a time of growing employment and financial prosperity. Manufacturing industry was seen by the government of the day as the key to that prosperity. Government was also highly interventionist at the time in the economy and society of the state (Hayward, 1996). The SAHT had been formed in 1937, with two central objectives: to provide dwellings for rent for low-income workers, and to promote industrial development in South Australia (SAHT, 2001b). These objectives combined in the development of The Parks. As Marsden, notes,

“Wages were fixed by national institutions, but they were pegged to local costs of living. If South Australian costs of living could be held down, low money wages could attract industries exporting to higher priced areas, while the low costs-of-living kept labour content with satisfactory real wages. What local prices could be depressed without depressing local enterprises? 23.8 per cent of the cost of living index represented rent. ‘Low rent would hurt nobody if the government itself built and let the dwellings’ (Stretton, 1977)” (Marsden, 1986, pp. 23-4).

The South Australian Housing Trust initially rented dwellings to workers on modest incomes, they preferred families, and applicants were expected to have permanent employment (SAHT, 2001b). If they became unemployed, they received no reduction in rent, and could be evicted if they were unable to pay rent. The population of The Parks in the initial stages, was therefore, dominated by working families. They had low incomes, but because most were public tenants and only expending small amounts on rent, they were not poor. The majority of employment for this population was in manufacturing, and the level of employment was high. There was also a comparatively high level of female employment, because work was available close to home.

The Parks estate was developed around the industrial estates of GMH Woodville and Finsbury (Badcock, 1997). It was an area of vacant farmland, that was

rapidly developed to house many manufacturers including a car manufacturer, General Motors Holden; white goods manufacturers, such as Simpson; and a munitions factory (Neldner, 2000). There was a need to get a labour force assembled quickly, as well as provide housing quickly. The result was a large-scale housing development, consisting of small housing that was constructed of poor quality materials, and in uniform designs, few paved roads, and few basic services (Marsden, 1986). Little consideration was probably given to the long-term future of this housing, and though it was not exactly regarded as temporary housing, it was not built as a housing estate for the future. With such a significant social and economic investment in manufacturing, The Parks area was highly vulnerable to the later decline that the sector experienced. During the 1970s and 80s the manufacturing sector in Australia experienced a sharp decline. The government of Australia retreated from high levels of intervention, and undertook a process of economic restructuring that “actually forged particular suburban spaces as sites of urban poverty” (Winter and Bryson, 1998, p.60). The effects of restructuring were exacerbated in The Parks, as the manufacturing businesses that had formerly been the focus of employment in the area, were moved offshore or to more efficient outer-suburban locations. There were substantial job losses in the manufacturing sector, and of course this was concentrated in areas such as The Parks. With a general move away from the dominance of unskilled manufacturing employment, to more highly skilled, capital intensive types, the population of The Parks was left, unprepared and likely to experience unemployment. The inability to find jobs in the shrinking manufacturing sector, left many residents reliant on welfare.

The concentrated nature of The Parks development and high reliance on manufacturing employment meant that when employment in that sector disappeared, the area was left with a concentration of disadvantage that self-perpetuated. The fact that the State government set up The Parks Community Centre in 1977 and attempted to concentrate welfare services in this area of high need, probably in the end, served to increase the concentration of disadvantage in the area. With a “one-stop shop of government agencies and recreation facilities that became the world’s best practice in its day” (Thomson, 1999, p. 38), The Parks attracted households from outside of The

Parks area with high, and multiple needs. This would have been a good thing, if the policy view of government had remained the same towards The Parks, but after attracting households with multiple needs, many services have since been removed or relocated out of the area, and The Parks is now left poorly funded, and just plain poor.

The situation in The Parks typifies that found throughout Australia in housing estates built in the same era to house a working population for industry (such as Moreland-Coburg and Hume-Broadmeadows in Victoria, as cited by Baum *et al.*, 1999a). By the mid 1990s, the situation of concentrated and significant disadvantage described in the previous section was acknowledged by the community, as well as all levels of Government and the South Australian Housing Trust (Hasan, 1997). The Parks was earmarked for re-development in November 1994 (Badcock, 1997), and a draft proposal for renewal was released in 1996 (SAHT and PPA, 1996). The Parks Urban Regeneration Project was officially opened in April 2000 (Petty, 2000).

6.3. The Parks Urban Renewal Project

Figure 6.7: Entrance to the Regeneration Project



Source: Taken by Author

The Parks Urban Regeneration Project is designed to address the area's significant and concentrated problems and “upgrade and replace the aging public housing” (Government of South Australia, 2000b) within The Parks. It is a joint venture between the Government of South Australia, the local government of Port Adelaide/Enfield, the South Australian Housing Trust, and a private developer, Urban

Pacific limited. The project is expected to take 12-15 years, and be managed in five separate stages. It will involve:

- Demolition of nearly 2000 of the most run down public housing dwellings; and will;
- Provide land for the construction of around 2400 new dwellings, of which 500 will be public.
- Refurbish around 500 existing public dwellings, retaining half and selling half.
- Reduce the concentration of public housing in the area from 60 per cent to around 25 percent.
- Provide an increased amount and quality of open space and public reserves. (Government of South Australia, 2000)

Images of the redevelopment process are shown below in Figures 6.8-6.10.

Figure 6.8: Demolition of SAHT Dwelling, The Parks



Source: Urban Pacific Limited

Figure 6.9: Renovation of SAHT Dwelling, The Parks



Source: Urban Pacific Limited

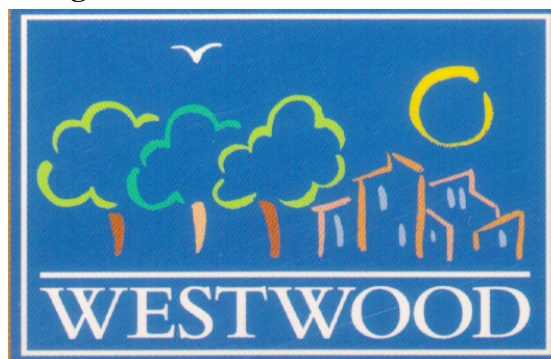
Figure 6.10: New Housing in The Parks



Source: Taken by Author

The Parks was re-named ‘Westwood’ in 1999 as part of the marketing strategy by the housing developer Urban Pacific Limited. The new name and logo was designed to “reflect our location within Adelaide and our links with neighbouring suburbs... [It] depicts the greening of our neighbourhood, new homes for the area and a bright future for those who live at Westwood” (Urban Pacific, 1999). The Westwood logo is depicted in Figure 6.11 below. This new name is also now depicted at the large entrance to the regeneration project, as was presented in Figure 6.7.

Figure 6.11: Westwood's Logo



Source: Urban Pacific Limited

6.3.1. Tenant Relocation

“Our job is to house people, certainly not to dislocate them” (Peter Jackson, Director of Asset Services, South Australian Housing Trust, Presentation to the Australian Institute of Urban Studies, Feb 1999).

“The relocation of public housing tenants is perhaps the largest cost of redevelopment. The disruption it can cause to peoples lives is enormous” (Hasan, 1997, p. 72).

Approximately 1750 public dwellings will be relocated during the next 12-15 years as part of the Westwood project. Though a proportion of this number (around 10 per cent) will be negated through natural vacancies, this is still a large number of relocations. The SAHT expects that a majority of tenants relocating from The Parks will choose to live not further than five kilometres from their original address (SAHT and PPA, 1996). This preference for short distance relocation has been discussed in Chapters Three and Five, and will be tested in the following chapter.

Relocating tenants are to be given priority on public housing waiting lists over new applicants and voluntary transfers. By making available the maximum number of dwellings, the SAHT is attempting “to make a relocating tenants first move – a good move (if not the ‘best’) by making every reasonable attempt to provide them with the housing and location they prefer” (SAHT and PPA, 1996, p. 169). This policy of prioritising relocation tenants within the waiting list is beneficial to these tenants who are moved at the beginning of the relocation process, but it is an unsustainable practice. It must be noted that as the regeneration project continues, and during subsequent projects, the pool of desirable housing and locations will decrease, especially in an era of shrinking stocks and funding. The renewal project also bases its relocation and rehousing plans upon an estimate that up to 19 per cent (SAHT and PPA, 1996) of all tenants will choose to enter homeownership rather than relocate. Even with current low home loan interest rates, and government grants from first home buyers, considering the income and employment characteristics of tenants in The Parks, the proportion of tenants actually taking up this option is likely to be considerably smaller. Early unpublished figures from the SAHT indicate that up until

December 2001 only two households (~1%) have chosen home-ownership over relocation.

The tenant relocation process in The Parks follows the SAHT Relocation Policy (SAHT, 1999b, p. 1). This policy states that:

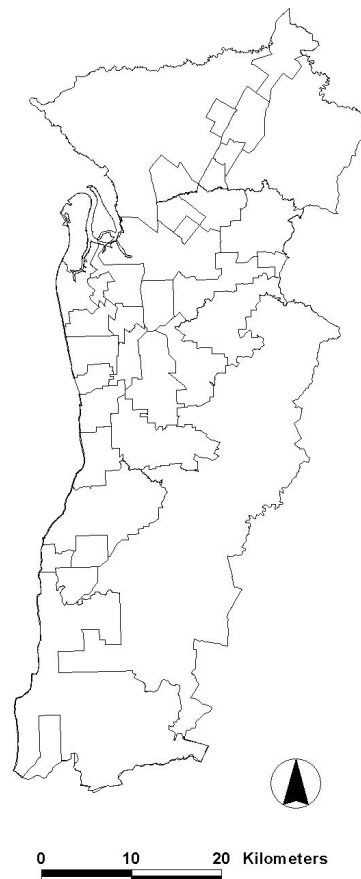
“The Trust consults with all tenants it wishes to relocate...to:

- Explain the reason for the proposed relocation;
- Minimise the impact of relocation;
- Explain any redevelopment plans, including expected time frames for relocation;
- Provide up-to-date information on redevelopment processes and activities;
- Identify the housing needs and aspirations of the tenant and discuss available housing options, including home ownership;
- Identify any issues which may affect the tenant’s ability to relocate, such as dependency on local community and health services, and length of tenancy; and
- Provide an opportunity for tenants to ask questions.”

The practical expression of this policy is that the SAHT employs tenant relocation officers that inform and negotiate with tenants. Once a tenant is informed that they are part of a regeneration project by letter they are contacted by a SAHT redevelopment officer. The relocation officer negotiates with the tenant household to establish what housing, locational preferences, and special needs they have. In practice, the relocation officer will obtain a list of available properties in the area that the tenant has selected, and present the ones which best meet the stated needs of the tenant. The relocation officer will often drive the tenant to the location of likely relocation dwellings. Under the relocation policy, the tenant can reject two dwellings, but on the rejection of the third, they are placed at the bottom of the waiting list. This rule has not been strictly applied in these early stages of the regeneration project, but with a decreasing number of vacancies toward the end of the project, it likely will be. In general, up to three properties are shown before a selection is made. Because the SAHT works on a structure of administrative regions (shown in Figure 6.12), this often limits the options that are offered to tenants. The metropolitan area of Adelaide is divided into these regions, and the relocation officer from each region is responsible

for relocations that occur from and to, that area alone. Tenant preferences can extend beyond the boundaries of the administrative regions. Relocation officers have a dual role, they must make dwellings available for the redevelopment, but they must also prioritise and house tenants within their administrative region. This dual role makes for administrative difficulties in finding vacant dwellings outside of the area, and it also allows a lack of transparency because relocation officers can give tenants from their own area priority in re-housing. In addition, the relocation officer is most aware of the vacancies within their own region.

Figure 6.12: SAHT Administrative Zones



Source: Unpublished SAHT data

What the regionalisation of Trust vacancy administration means for tenants is that they are often induced to make relocation decisions based only on information from their own region. If the dwelling's features are more important to the tenant than the location of that dwelling (as suggested in Chapter Five, and notably by Fuller,

1995), then by giving information which is limited to an artificial area like SAHT regions and inducing tenants to select vacant dwellings from within that area, it follows that tenants will often miss out on making “the best move”, not because the vacancy was unavailable, but because information about it was unavailable. This issue will be further examined in Chapter Eight.

6.4. Conclusion

The review of relocation effects discussed in Chapter Five, established that relocation has significant potential effects on households, and populations with characteristics such as those in Westwood, are especially prone to negative effects. Though the SAHT has recently gained experience in relocation of its tenant population at projects in Rosewood and Hillcrest, where a total of 340 tenants were relocated, the numbers that must be relocated for the Westwood project are significantly larger. The SAHT has a welfare responsibility to provide adequate housing, and to relocated tenants fairly.

This chapter has described the study area and its future as Westwood. Large numbers of the public tenant population living within Westwood will be relocated from the urban regeneration project. Their broad characteristics have been described in this chapter. The following chapter will focus upon relocating public tenants in The Parks, and investigate their relocation preferences and choices.