

2. A brief history of Fitzroy/Collingwood

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Introduction

It will be some considerable time before the [Fitzroy / Collingwood image - the spirit of courage and determination in the face of adversity... -passes from the collective memory of Melbourne. (Hibbins 1997:70)

The following chapter provides a brief overview of the history of the Fitzroy/Collingwood area with a particular focus on Smith Street and its environs. The history of this area is complex, rich and colourful. Consequently, this short chapter cannot cover all of it in great detail. However, we shall discuss some main points under the broad headings of demographic, commercial, physical, and political changes to the area.' Whilst being mostly concerned with changes in the last 10 or so years, an examination of the area's wider history seemed necessary in certain sections to provide an adequate background to recent events. Data for this chapter has been sourced primarily from ABS Census Data 1986 to 1996, various books written about the area, and archival material held at Fitzroy Library.

Demographic Changes

Census Data

From Census Data available for the years 1986, 1991 and 1996, the following changes occurred in Yarra - North ² between 1986 and 1996.

The **overall census population** increased by 2.8%, from 40833 persons in 1986 to 41973 persons in 1996. The number of **unemployed** people resident in the area increased 15.8% while for the same period there was an increase of 7.7% in the number of employed residents. In 1996 there were 65.4% more overseas visitors than in 1986. Lone person households increased by 21.5% as did one-parent families by 32.7%, and shared households by 14%. There was a decline of 4.5% of couples with children, and a 20.3% decrease in the number of couples without children. The number of **Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander** residents decreased 16.2% between 1986 and 1996.

Education levels increased, with those who held a higher degree, postgraduate diploma, bachelor degree, undergraduate or associate diploma increasing 142.7%, 117.1%, 82.7% respectively. Conversely, those with a basic vocational qualification as the highest level of education attained decreased by 66.9% between 1986 & 1996. This is reflected in resident **occupations** with a 91.9%, 24.9%, 86.4%, 44.4% respective increase in managers & administrators, professionals, associate professionals and intermediate clerical workers. Tradespersons, production & transport workers, elementary clerical, sales & service workers, and labourers decreased by 30.7%, 43.6%, 21.5% and 49.2% respectively.

Home ownership in the area increased 2.2% in the 10 year period as did those renting their residence by 3.4%. However, there was a 19.7% decrease in those renting from the State Housing Authority and an increase in private rentals by 17.5%. In 1996, 43% of the census population owned or were purchasing their home, 50% rented and 7% had some other unstated tenancy. It is interesting to note that this is only a small change from figures from around 100 years ago which show that approximately 33% owner or were purchasing their homes and 66% were tenants (Hibbins 1997:27).

(1) Changes to policing in the area are dealt with in Chapter 5.

(2) Yarra North is a ABS Statistical Local Area which covers the suburbs north of Victoria Parade to Park Street & May Street, east to the Yarra River, west to Nicholson and Lygon Streets. That is, suburbs including Fitzroy, Collingwood, Abbotsford, Fitzroy North, Carlton North, & Clifton Hill.

In terms of **languages spoken at home**,³ there was an increase of 3% in those who speak English only, a 27.1% increase in Chinese languages, a 114.7% increase in Japanese, a 600-fold increase in Korean, an 81.5% increase in Serbian, a 72% increase in Filipino, an 18.2% increase in Ukrainian, and a 76.9% increase in Vietnamese speakers. Others which increased, though by less significant percentages, were German (8%) and Dutch (1.6%). Conversely, those languages spoken at home which decreased over the '86-'96 time period were: Arabic (32.7%), Australian Indigenous languages (89.3%), Croatian (15.3%), Czech (48%), French (30.6%), Greek (38.5%), Hindi (23.9%), Hungarian (40%), Malay (100%), Italian (32.6%), Khmer (48.9%), Macedonian (16%), Maltese (60.6%), Polish (36.1%), Portuguese (23.5%), Russian (44.1%), Spanish (33.5%), Turkish (35.4%).

Migration has been a feature of the Fitzroy/Collingwood area from around 1851 when gold was discovered and Victoria became a colony. At this time there was an acceleration of immigration from the British Isles (Hibbins 1997:12). Another 'wave' of immigration occurred after the cessation of World War 11 when many European migrants settled in the area. In the 1970s there was an increase in the number of immigrants from South East Asia, particularly from Vietnam, with many of them refugees.

Demographic Medians were unavailable over the time period 1986 to 1991. However the 1996 figures are as follows: median age 31, median individual income \$332pw, median household income \$692pw, and average household size 2.2. In terms of **income**, Yarra North is 35th out of 199 local statistical areas with Melbourne Inner having the highest median personal income of \$677 per week.

Summary

In terms of demographic changes in Fitzroy/Collingwood and the surrounding suburbs, there have been notable changes in the overall population in the past 10 years. For instance, so-called 'traditional' populations of these areas - that is, non-professional, non-tertiary educated, low-income families - have decreased. In their place are increasing numbers of young, single, professional or semi-professional, tertiary educated, middle to high-income residents. There has also been, as will be discussed in more detail later, a corresponding increase in property values and rental prices in the area in the past 10 to 20 years. In addition, there are more individuals who rent their residences privately as opposed to those renting from the State Housing Authority.

There have also been changes in those residents from non-English speaking backgrounds. European and Australian indigenous language speakers have decreased whilst speakers of Asian languages have increased. What was once an area of mainly British and European migrant populations now has much more of an Asian constituency.

These changes, which have occurred most significantly in the past 10 years, have resulted in certain tensions. For example, the expectations and styles of living of the various groups are often contradictory, or at least differential. As will be discussed later, this is reflected in the major commercial centre of Smith Street in the recent changes in its mix of business types and market orientations.

Fitzroy/Collingwood, then, is an area that is very much in transition in terms of its population and residential demographics. Certainly, changes which were just beginning to emerge in the 1980s would seem to have accelerated in the 1990s. It is also unique in its mix at this point in time. The change from working class to middle class inner city area is not complete and, given the presence of large estates of public housing, is unlikely to ever

⁽³⁾ *Using statistics related to languages spoken at home seemed to be a more accurate way of determining cultural representation than country of birth statistics as the former would include first generation Australians.*

achieve any kind of complete transformation. However, due to rising rents and property prices, it is increasingly weighted towards a 'gentrified' residential population. In other words, Fitzroy/Collingwood has a bimodal population with an increasingly visible gap between high-income earners and low income earners, with the midrange rapidly disappearing. As is noted in *Fitzroy: Melbourne's First Suburb*,

In the 1960s came a wave of young settlers from suburbia setting the fashion for terrace-style living and by the late 1980s Fitzroy had become the most heterogeneous of Melbourne's suburbs: the largest numbers are clustered in the highest and lowest income brackets. (Cutten History Committee, 1991.jacket)

This is also noted in an article in *The Age* on 19 April 1998 which states that residents of the inner suburbs are most likely to

have moved there within the past five years, be renting their property, have either a very low or high income, live in a double income household, be attending university or have done so, work as a manager, administrator or professional, be aged between 15 and 24 or over 60, have no children, and live in either an apartment, warehouse or unit. (Shiel & Lyon, 1998: 10)

This is also accompanied by greater visible distinctions between income groups as well as between lifestyle choices, education levels, life-course patterns and consumption patterns.

Commercial Changes

While other sections of this report focus **primarily** on the last ten years, in this section our frame of reference is expanded to look at Smith Street from the time of its inception. A discussion of only the previous ten years would overlook important elements which provide a background to the street's emergence and the characteristics and tensions peculiar to it. Generally though, it can be said that Smith Street has always been an important space from the time of its creation as a major road in 1837:

There was an irregular track already worn north-east from the top of Bourke Street towards the road which forded the Merri Creek. It was neatly rerouted into the new Eastern Road (Smith Street), one of only four government roads proclaimed in the surveyed parish called Jika-Jika. (Hibbins 1997:7)

Smith Street as a shopping strip has undergone a number of changes since that time. The following is a description of some of the more notable of these.

The 1800s

Between the years 1837 to 1865, Smith Street underwent a transition from thoroughfare to a manufacturing, service and shopping centre:

By 1865 the borough's numerous manufactories and mills included a steam sawmill in Smith Street, ... numerous hotels, [and] a branch of the ESA Bank..

(ibid 1997:16)

The Observer noted later in 1875,

The working man comes home after his toil and has his tea and his pipe and evening Rerald; his wife engaged all day in household duties, gets herself tidy, and they go out for a stroll. They naturally face to Smith Street; the pleasant, bright shop windows are seen, and the wares, goods, groceries, meat and other commodities seen and admired, or condemned as the case may be.

(*The Observer* 29 April 1875 cited in Hibbins 1997:22)

Hotels in the local area provided meeting venues for a diverse range of society's and associations. One of the most prominent was Clark's (later Mac's) Hotel at 168 Smith Street where, for example,

In the 1850s the Industrial Society of Operative Stonemasons ... initiated the first steps in the campaign to achieve the eight hours' working day ... [and] later [was the place from which] political candidates harangued ... voters. (ibid 1997:18)

As a writer of the time noted,

'Very remarkable' was Mac's at 168 Smith Street. It was the focus of many of the agitations by which the Collingwoodites used to be convulsed. It was the headquarters of Stumperdom, for there was an open space in front, and an open space in rear, where the great mass of meetings used to be held ... A roaring trade in 'rum' and 'two ales' used to be driven at the Tavern bar where the 'calls' were incessant on a stump night. (Finn cited in Hibbins 1997:18)

As well, Smith Street was witness in 1886 to a "riotous demonstration" against shopkeepers who continued trading after the earlier hour of 7pm as prescribed in the recently passed Factories and Shops Act. By this time, Smith Street was not only a major thoroughfare but also the major local shopping centre, meeting area and a site of political activity and sometimes agitation. In 1869, there was an expansion of Smith Street traffic resulting from the commencement of a horse-drawn bus service to the area when:

The Melbourne Omnibus Company began its horse-drawn buses conveying passengers from the city railway stations via Bourke Street to the Birmingham Hotel at the corner of Smith and Johnston Streets. (Hibbins 1997:20)

The advent of cable trams in 1887 further expanded the potential customer population on Smith Street. Initially, this development brought some opposition from local traders who believed that fewer people would now come to Smith Street for their shopping, going to the city instead. However, this was not the case and, for example:

At Christmas large crowds promenaded Smith Street until late on Christmas Eve, admiring the shops decorated with evergreens ... (ibid 1997:20)

In the late 1870s through to the boom years of the 1880s, many of Smith Street's wooden buildings were replaced with "more substantial buildings" (ibid 1997:23). This included the expansion of Foy and Gibson:

Mark Foy had set up a drapery shop that had flourished, occupying six shops by 1880, and his son briefly joined with William Gibson in 1882 to become a 'universal provider'. In the late 1880s William Pitt's first multistorey building for Foy and Gibson was completed ... (ibid 1997:23)

In 1891, Smith Street had the addition of a post office. In this same year, the Foy and Gibson building was completed:

The boom [of the 1880s] expired with a last splutter as the veranda and newly tiled floor way at Foy and Gibsons' store was finished in 1891. Two hundred feet long and designed by the mayor William Pitt, the veranda admitted light by various cupolas rising from the ceiling of the veranda which were filled with brilliantly coloured glass. At night ten arc lights powered by a steam engine and dynamo below ground, lit the front, and inside more than forty Edison bulbs illuminated the goods. And, glory of glories, the Public Works Department had responded to the representations of local parliamentary representatives, George Langridge and William Beazley, to build a wonderfully flamboyant post office in Smith Street with tower, arched bays and a trabeated facade. (ibid 1997:3 1)

1900 to 1970

There was further expansion of Foy & Gibson throughout the 1910s and 1920s. In 1914, "potential rival" George Coles arrived. Coles

[opened a 3d, 6d and 1 shilling variety store next to the Post Office and then a larger store, in partnership with his brother, at 170 Smith Street in 1919 with the slogan 'Nothing over 216'. (ibid 1997:37)

World War 11 shortages forced the closure of many small retailers on Smith as larger retailers received the major share of rationed goods. During this time, "a black market flourished in practically everything." (ibid 1997:47). With the post-war European migration of 1950 to 1970, there was the appearance in Smith Street of "Greek and Italian shops selling cappuccino, olive oil and statues of David.." (Hibbins 1997:55). Hibbins goes on to note that:

In many ways, life became easier but less warm and personal. Corner stores disappeared as supermarkets opened, such as the New World in Smith Street, only two doors from the original Coles Store. (ibid 1997:58)

Whereas previously, especially in the 1920s and 1930s, a favourite pastime was to parade down Smith and window-shop (ibid 1997:37), now "[t]elevision took people off the streets and inside their houses." (ibid 1997:58).

The 1970s to the present day

The years 1970 to 1990 saw much demolition and many building changes in the Fitzroy/Collingwood area. In Smith Street:

[the Diamond Cut Lingerie building was the only Foy & Gibson building left ... although the closed subway remains, now seen only by Council inspectors ... The nineteenth century verandas ... were demolished in a disastrous Melbourne-wide clean sweep in the 1960s, and endeavours to restore Smith Street to its former glory in the mid 1980s were not successful. (ibid 1997:65)

In the late 1970s, the Fitzroy and Collingwood Chamber of Commerce seemed to be quite active in attempts to revitalise Smith Street as a regional shopping centre. For example, in December 1978, they published 'advertorials' in local newspapers to promote Smith Street as a Christmas shopping alternative to the city. In a later article, the then secretary of the Chamber, Paul Young, remarked that

"[Smith Street] could develop into an exciting place for the new young groups of people moving into the inner suburbs." (O'Neil 1979)

In April of 1978, Jeffrey Wolinski was commissioned by the Fitzroy & Collingwood Councils and the Collingwood and Fitzroy Chamber of Commerce to "investigate the viability, promotion and development of Smith Street." (Bellamy 1983). He submitted his report in July 1979, with Fitzroy Council adopting 10 out of 11 recommendations. The recommendation not adopted by Fitzroy Council concerned the demolition of several sites on Smith Street. Those adopted by Fitzroy included that Councils take a more active planning, promotional and management role, that the provision of parking be a priority, and what Wolinski declared to be "the single most important recommendation", (Wolinski 1979:11), that a Smith Street Joint Agency comprising members of the council, residents, ratepayers and chambers of commerce be established.

Following the submission of the Wolinski report, there was a public petition submitted containing 400 signatories concerned about "the rapid deterioration of the Smith Street shopping centre' and related parking problems." (Bellamy 1983). Around this time an application was received by Council for a "Saint David Square Project to be built on the blocks bounded by Smith, Gore, Hodgson and St David Streets, Fitzroy. It was to house offices, a supermarket, medical suites, a restaurant and 136 car spaces. However, the specifically formed Gore Street Action Group formally opposed the development and recommended instead that parking projects ought to be investigated on the Collingwood side of Smith Street, and that the Saint David Square Project also be shifted to the Collingwood side of Smith Street. Opposition to the

recommendations of the Wolinski report did not only come from residents. Newspaper reports from the time describe in particular the conflict over certain of them between Councils and traders. For instance, on 23 May 1979 under the headline *"Traders move on Smith Street"*, Helen O'Neil writes,

Traders and local councils are heading for a confrontation over the future of the Smith St shopping centre. (O'Neil 1979)

Then a week later, an unnamed journalist writes under the headline, *"Smith St traders slammed"*,

A Collingwood councillor this week attacked Smith St traders over their demands for refurbishing of the shopping centre. (*The Melbourne Times* 1979)

The concern and conflict over the proposals continued into 1980, and as late as 1983 when *The Melbourne Times* ran a story headlined *'Smith Street's war of words goes on ... and on'*. However, the coverage in 1980 did seem to be tempered by a more optimistic mood with some articles focussing on the potential positive effects changes to inner-city residential demographics might have on local shopping areas (4). In part this was a result of a continued publicity campaign by the Fitzroy and Collingwood Chamber of Commerce around the street markets they sponsored. As well, on June 4 1980 an action group, comprising council and Chamber members, was formed to *"co-ordinate and advise the two councils on the implementation of the Wolinski Report."* (*Melbourne Times*, 1980)

Although given Council approval in 1983, the Saint David Square Project development as set out in the Wolinski report did not materialise in full; the proposal for a supermarket on the site did. On May 18 1987, after opposition by some local traders (5), Safeway opened a supermarket at the above site (243-255 Smith Street) in competition with the New World supermarket that had had a monopoly until then. The New World supermarket closed soon after (6). A Salvation Army Red Shield Store subsequently occupied the space selling secondhand clothing, shoes, furniture and miscellaneous homewares (a secondhand 'universal provider'). This store closed in mid-1998 with a discount emporium opening in its place.

(4) For example, the article *'Smith St revival'* in *The Melbourne Times* on February 20, 1980.

(5) For instance on January 30 1980, *The Melbourne Times* ran two articles titled *"New Smith St. proposals threaten traders"* and *"Smith St. supermarket plan threatens traders"* which reported trader fears regarding the Fitzroy and Collingwood Chamber of Commerce proposal, arising from the recommendations of the Wolinski report, for a second supermarket on the street, particularly amongst small shopkeepers. The Smith Street Working Committee (a committee set up in response to the Wolinski report recommendations) however saw the supermarket as *"the possible key to the shopping centre's revitalisation."* (6) An exact date was unavailable. Advice from both the Coles Supermarkets national office and state office was that the supermarket closed in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

Vietnamese migration since the 1970s has seen an increase in the number of Vietnamese-owned businesses appearing most prominently in Victoria Street, but also in Smith Street. Other Asian migrants have also contributed to the commercial environment evidenced by an increase in the number of businesses owned and run by, for example, those born in China and Korea.

A study commissioned by the City of Yarra in 1996 and undertaken by Henshell Hansen Associates stressed, as the Wolinski report had, that there was a need for increased parking if Smith Street was to encourage shoppers from other suburbs. It pointed out, though, that

"Clause 19 of the Regional Section of the Yarra Planning Scheme provides an inappropriate statutory basis for the on-going provision of parking in the Smith Shopping Centre." (Henshell Hansen Associates 1996:90)

This report also noted that,

Existing planning policies and controls at the local level fail to provide any guidance in relation to the planning and development of the Smith Street Shopping Centre [with p]ast planning decisions made on an ad hoc basis in the absence of any overall strategic framework for the Centre ... (Henshell et al 1996:vii)

In a contemporary context with regards to business types and numbers the following changes were noticed between 1995 and 1998:

Table 2.1. Business Types on Smith Street 1995 & 1998

Business Type	1995	1998	%change
Supermarket	1	1	0
Food - other'	52	22	-57.7
Clothing	29	34	+17.2
Large Household Good (2)	13	7	-46.2
Small Household Goods'	68	43	-36.8
Restaurants	26	47	+80.8
Other personal service (4)	40	85	+112.5
TOTAL	229	239	+4.4

(Sources: HHA Floorspace Surveys, October 1995 published in Smith St Shopping Centre Strategy Plan January 1996; University of Melbourne Department of Criminology Census of Smith Street Businesses 1998)

(1) All non-cafe/restaurant food outlets, eg. butcher, greengrocer, bakery, supermarket, takeaway

(2) For example, furniture stores.

(3) For example, giftware, manchester, kitchen goods, small appliances.

(4) For example, hairdressers, doctors, pharmacies, etc.

Summary

Since its first days as a commercial centre in the 1800s, Smith Street has been populated by a wide variety of retail and other commercial ventures, often at the same time. This is true of the **contemporary Smith Street**, where there is a great diversity of business types.

However, it is also true to say that over the past three years there have been significant changes to the Smith Street trading environment. The chart above shows that over this period there have been decreases in the number of businesses selling household goods, and businesses which are food vendors, for example, butchers and greengrocers. At the same time there have been marked increases in the number of cafes, restaurants, and personal services such as hairdressers operating on Smith Street. These changes could be seen as correlative to the population and demographic changes in the area. Younger, single, professional residents would seem more likely to access cafes and restaurants for meals than a butcher, baker or greengrocer, and likewise they would spend more on personal services.

The Smith Street shopping centre, like its adjacent residential areas, is a space that is in transition. Many businesses whose primary market has been with the former traditional population of the area have moved away, and those serving the newer demographic have replaced them. However, given that Smith Street services the Fitzroy/Collingwood high-rise complexes, there are also a significant number of businesses that cater for a lower~ income market. As well, there are a larger number of Vietnamese and Chinese-run businesses on Smith Street compared to 15 years ago which reflects the changes in residents from a non-English speaking background.

Smith Street is also a location that has been embedded in a history not only of migration, poverty, industry and transition, but also of various conflicts. This conflict first saw itself played out in the political debates, scuffles and demonstrations of the 1800s, and in more contemporary times in negotiations between local governance and traders over proposals for changes to the street. It is also in evidence at a more micro level between traders, trader groups and nearby residents on Smith Street. It would seem that 'struggle' is a perennial characteristic of the street and, more generally, of the Fitzroy/Collingwood area.

Physical Changes

Two major changes have occurred to the built environment of Fitzroy/Collingwood in the past 30 years. Firstly, the demolition of many residences deemed 'insubstantial', and the erection of high-rise flats in their place. The second is the gentrification of other residential and commercial areas which includes the 'recycling' of buildings which formerly housed factories, mills, warehouses or other industries into 'warehouse apartments'.

Housing Commission High-rise

Between 1940 and 1960, 609 demolitions were carried out in Collingwood, 265 by the Housing Commission and 344 outside the Housing Commission's designated 'reclamation' areas [including those cleared in 19571 in the area bounded by Vere, Emerald, Harmsworth and Perry Streets. (Hibbins 1997:55)

Although many residents in the area reportedly felt considerable distress over the loss of their homes, Council felt that if *"the Housing Commission didn't come in, more factories would"* (ibid 1997:56). As one long-time Collingwood resident remembers:

When the Housing Commission flats were built along Hoddle Street there were something like 300 homes had to be pulled down. One we lived in in Francis St was among the number. Ours wasn't a very good building, it was only rented, but one a bit further along where Mrs Hughes lived, she spent nearly £1, 000 putting the place in proper order setting it up for her old age, and all that had to go, and she got no recompense for it - or very little. She wanted to stay there for the rest of her life. She didn't want to be moved around but she had to go like the rest. (Collingwood History Committee, 1994:63)

In place of the cleared residential spaces, two-storey and three-storey walk-up flats were constructed. In 1966 to 1967 a 20-storey block at 229 Hoddle Street and another at 253 Hoddle Street were constructed. In 1968 land was cleared for the construction of another block at 240 Wellington Street which commenced being occupied in 1971. The Atherton Gardens (Fitzroy) high-rise flats had been constructed some years earlier and were occupied between 1963 and 1965 (7). This slum clearance/high-rise construction process was as a result of a 1958 report by the Housing Commission which, based on European experience, recommended the construction of multi-storey apartment buildings. The belief was that they would be

an aesthetically pleasing and economic way to house large numbers of people at densities of up to two hundred per acre (0. 4ha). (Hibbins 1997:57)

Construction commenced in 1960 in South Melbourne with the allocation of finance for further complexes made the following year. As Hibbins points out,

Support for slum clearance and for high-rise development had become inextricably interwoven despite the fact that there was mixed support for such buildings. (ibid 1997:57)

However, high-rise apartments did not prove to be the great solution to "slum living" the Housing Commission report promised. Instead of horizontal slums, *"residents soon found high-rise blocks carried slum living into the sky."* (ibid 1997:57). Certainly, the flats did not have the problems of the dark, cold and damp which the old homes had. However, they were *"cramped and isolating"*, and without adequate recreation and playground spaces.

(7) Dates provided by DHS Area Housing Office, Fitzroy

Further high-rise development was abandoned after much resident protest and, of more significant influence, a terrace house development by

"the church trustees of a derelict Clifton Hill manse which demonstrated the cost efficiency and social benefits of medium density low-rise housing." (ibid 1997:57)

Subsequently, the Housing Commission built a group of 36 two-storey row houses in Noone Street. (ibid 1997:57). Although the high-rise development era ended, the buildings with their many small apartments and associated problems remained. Not the least of which is criminal activity, but possibly more the media attention and certain public perception of the blocks, to borrow a description of Collingwood from the late 1800s, as being the centres of a 'crime miasma'. Even in 1995, the high-rise flats received great public notoriety as "high-rise hell" furthering the notion that 'bad places make bad people'. (8)

However, as one long-term resident of Atherton Gardens says:

People out there have their minds made up about the flats. They have an impression, and it's normally a wrong impression, because all they see on the TV and in the newspapers are the bad

There used to be big families, lots of children ... One day it was like the Pied Piper came and instead of children there was sandblasted brick and cumquat trees in pots. (Sullivan & McDougall, 1983)

As the article suggests, there has been, and would still seem to be, a tension between these newer residents and the 'traditional' population of Fitzroy/Collingwood: 9

They always were a friendly lot round here: but things are not quite what they used to be. What has happened to Fitzroy? Pretty much what has happened in the rest of Australia in the past few years as the gulf between the haves and the have-nots deepens. Here the gulf is just as impassable: but the two worlds are tantalisingly close. (ibid 1983)

Moreover,

The eighties newcomers ... are wealthier and more concerned about themselves than the community. Up-and-coming doctors, barristers and architects pick for themselves the classier homes around Edinburgh Gardens, stay a few years and move on to bigger and better things in Kew or Camberwell. (ibid 1983)

This notion of transience could also be assumed from the demographic statistics as outlined in the first section of this paper. This transient population is mainly young, often single, and likely to be professional people who live alone in high-rent apartments, presumably between graduation and family commitments. Of course, there is also a case that could be made for a change in those types of trajectories or indeed their absence in the last 10 years or so.

It is also interesting to note that a similar process (though not as enduring or widespread) occurred in the boom years of the 1880s:

Richly decorated villas and double-storeyed brick terraces were built in Abbotsford and Wellington Street ... [with] the old Free Medical Dispensary of Dr Singleton ... replaced with an ornate Italian renaissance style building begun in 1887. (Hibbins 1997:23)

As this article states,

Despite the working-class image, the gentry were there from the beginning. In the 1850s they built handsome terraces in Gertrude Street and Nicholson Street, an easy walk from Parliament. In the building boom of the 1880s they built grand houses with the odd ballroom in North Fitzroy, always considered the classier end of the of the city. (Sullivan 1983)

It is also of interest that the Fitzroy/Collingwood area was initially an area populated by wealthy settler/ pastoralists who bought land at high rates from speculators after the first subdivision of land in 1839. As immigration increased the demand for land, and its price, further subdivisions were made between 1850 and 1854. In the absence of building regulations, and the relative poverty of the new occupants, housing erected was often insubstantial. This is in stark contrast to the first homes in the area which were, reportedly, "lavish", "grand" and with "elaborate gardens which stretch[ed] down to the river." (Hibbins 1997:8) However, by the 1870s,

Collingwood's timber housing, narrow streets, drainage problems, noxious and smelly industries and its reputation for miasma did not attract those who could afford to live elsewhere. In

(8) For example *The Age* article "High-rise Hell", 2 July 1995.

(9) *The Post* also published an article on February 26 1983 titled "Gentry squeeze inner suburb: poorer people forced out" which although explaining the change as being related to increasing transport costs, took a similar line to *The Age* in pitching longer term low income residents against the newer, what they called, 'gentry' and 'trendies'.

Collingwood vagrants, alcoholics, the mentally and physically incapacitated, and the opiate addicts lived on the streets or down alleys in hovels or mean tenements called rookeries. Destitute children ... scrounged for their existence. Some of the inhabitants had irregular work and sickness, and some managed lowly paid work and long hours of work. Then there were those who succumbed from frustration and misery to become criminals, gamblers and prostitutes. (ibid 1997:21)

Summary

Over the past 30 years, Fitzroy/Collingwood has seen the development of two very different types of residential spaces. On the one hand, the replacement of slum housing with high-rise apartment developments funded and managed by the State Housing Authority, and on the other, the renovation and redevelopment of remaining houses and vacant warehouse and factory spaces by private investors and owner/occupiers. These two very different types of residential space sit side by side in a somewhat stark contrast to each other that has often been a source of tension and sometimes, conflict. This is not, however, a contemporary phenomenon.

What is clear from this section, and those on demographic and commercial changes is that the commentaries about the tensions in the physical and demographic environment of Fitzroy/Collingwood have changed little in the past 120 years. It is an area that socially and physically houses tension between the 'haves' and 'have nots'. Smith Street, as a main central thoroughfare operates as a conduit for these physical and social changes. That is, people, classes and demographics move through it and out to other places. This is a key to understanding the inherent tensions in and around Smith Street, located as it is in the centre of what has always been a set of rarely harmonious, always changing, contested spaces.

Political Changes

Prior to the formation of the City of Yarra in 1994, Fitzroy and Collingwood each had their own municipal councils. However, their amalgamation with Richmond to form one council *"had been discussed since at least the 1960s."* (ibid 1997:29) A Local Government Commission draft report prepared in

"1987 following a request by the Collingwood Council to examine the economic grounds for an amalgamation with the municipalities of Richmond and Fitzroy, suggested there were likely benefits." (ibid 1997:29)

In 1993 the Local Government Board under instructions from the Kennett Liberal Government to undertake municipal restructuring recommended that an amalgamation between the three areas take place.

The change was affected on 22 June 1994 with three commissioners for the new City of Yarra replacing the elected Councils of Collingwood, Fitzroy and Richmond. One of the commissioners was Frank Thompson, formerly the Collingwood Councillor whose election to the Council in 1972 tipped the weight in favour of the progressives on the Council. (ibid 1997:70)

The influence of what could be called progressive ALP policies on Collingwood Council is evident prior to this time. One of the notable events was the election of architect and Methodist minister Andrew McCutcheon in 1965:

McCutcheon's experience of local public housing, of terrace renovation, and of introducing modern interiors to old exteriors was to reflect much of what was happening in the Collingwood environment... (ibid 1997:67)

Of a similar spirit was the Social Policy Organisation that ran from the late 1970s until around 1987. It was approximate to a local Labor social policy think-tank. It devoted large sums from Fitzroy Council funds to social programs, and was notable for its role in setting up the Community Health Centre. Its members are still politically active today, peppered as they are through the Community Health Centre Board and the City of Yarra, for example.

With the amalgamation of the three municipal authorities in 1994, this pattern of 'movement', 'change', or what was viewed as 'progress', would seem to be continued. Certainly, there was the actual physical movement of Council chambers away from the Fitzroy and Collingwood Town Halls to Richmond. What effect this has had in terms of 'remaining in touch' with the local constituency is hard to say. But it does mean that local governance takes on a more remote or detached location than it may have had previously. This is perhaps also reflected in the continuing sub-contracting of essential services in the Fitzroy/Collingwood areas.

Whether or not this detracts from the quality of services and attention paid to the locale is difficult to determine. But it would seem to respond to and reflect a process of what Hibbins calls *"a dilution of a sense of community identity"*. (Hibbins 1997:70) Hibbins links this in part to a decline in the Fitzroy/Collingwood population as well as to a change in the locality's demographics, the elements which it was claimed precipitated the decision for council amalgamation in the first place.

In terms of government at a State and Federal level, the Fitzroy/Collingwood area has been a safe ALP seat for many years. This was reflected in local government where, until it was made illegal in the late 1960s, Council vacancies would be filled by the sitting ALP Members.

However, with the changing residential demographics, one might also conject that the political preferences of Fitzroy/Collingwood residents might also be changing. As is noted in an article in *The Age* in April 1998,

The trend nation-wide is for affluence to spread towards the inner cities, for poorer central areas to be gentrified and areas of disadvantage to grow in outer regions. [A] corollary in voting patterns [can be seen]. The old pattern was one in which the inner city was Labor and the outer Liberal. Now that's blurring. (Shiel & Lyon 1998: 10)