

Chapter Four

How the West was Won: Retail Development in Sydney's Western Suburbs

This chapter examines shopping centre development in the outer west of Sydney during the 1970s – the decade when ‘Western Sydney’ became a ‘distinct region [of the city] with a definite identity’, and when Australia, along with much of the Western world, entered a new era of economic and social change.¹ The long boom came to an uncomfortable end as the economy suffocated under steep increases in oil prices; consumer spending dropped; several major property companies collapsed; inflation went through the roof and unemployment rose; retailers warned of union-driven wage increases; and real discretionary income declined.² Despite these difficulties, shopping centre development and expansion planned during the 1960s boom continued fairly steadily, although a slow down in the latter half of the decade can be seen as a direct result of the economic problems of the first. Some of the major shopping centres in the Western suburbs which were developed in the 1970s were: Penrith Plaza (1971), Westfield Liverpool Shoppingtown (1972), Westpoint Blacktown (1973), Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta (1975), and Macarthur Square, Campbelltown (1979).

From the Sixties onwards, the west was the city's major area of industrial and demographic growth, and a key area in the expansion programs of major retailers.³ This chapter will focus on four shopping centres which followed and helped stimulate this growth in Liverpool, Blacktown, Parramatta and Campbelltown. Liverpool and Blacktown illustrate the importance of big retail development to local government and communities in the outer west. Parramatta is important as the major city in the western suburbs, because it has traditionally been the strongest retail area outside of central

¹ Lesley Johnson, ‘Western Sydney and the Desire For Home’, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 32, no. 2, May 1997, p. 116.

² Forster, *Australian Cities*, pp. 28-29. For retail industry discussion on this subject, see E. L. Byrne (President, Australian Council of Retailers), ‘A year of continuing industrial and wage pressure, economic uncertainty’, *Australian Retailing* vol. 5, no. 9, September-October 1972, p. 4; Australian Council of Retailers submission to the Prime Minister's Sub-Committee of Cabinet in ‘All stem from wage increases, higher charges’, *Australian Retailing* vol. 6, no. 1, April-June 1973, p. 3; Editorial: ‘A hit on target’, *Australian Retailing* vol. 5, no. 8, June-July 1972, p. 3; ‘Junior department stores will suffer in future, say Woolworths general managers’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 276, 20 June 1977, p. 1.

³ See, for example, Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *FARMS039, 142*, Peter Hyde, ‘Suburban Opportunities in Sydney Metropolitan Area’, May 1965; Memo from R. W. Horsburgh to E. L. Byrne, 5 July 1965.

Sydney, and because it became a flagship centre for Westfield – the country's major shopping centre developer in the 1970s. Campbelltown has some unique characteristics as a government driven project following from the Sydney Region Outline Plan (SROP) of 1968. It is also illustrative of the development strategy of G. J. Dusseldorp and Lend Lease – shopping centre veterans that were heavily involved in the area's rise as a growth centre.

Western Sydney's economic and social environment

To understand the nature of shopping centre development in western Sydney, we need to examine its social, economic and cultural context. Early manufacturing, established as a major economic force in Australian capital cities with the creation of a federal tariff system and substantial capital investment from Britain in the 1920s, had traditionally been located close to inner city working populations and the crucial transport channels of water and rail.⁴ This remained largely the case through the Second World War when domestic production of munitions fuelled further industrial growth. In 1947, for the first time there were more Australians working in manufacturing than in primary industry.⁵ In the 1954 census, 27.8 percent of the workforce were recorded as working in the manufacturing sector.⁶ This level was roughly maintained until 1966, before structural change in the 1970s saw it decline to 17.7 percent.⁷

During the early post-war period, motorised transport – as it had done with residential populations – enabled a significant geographic restructuring of industry. Motor trucks had been the principal means of transporting goods in Sydney's suburbs since the 1920s (although milk and bread were in places still delivered by horse-drawn carts).⁸ Trucks

⁴ Forster, *Australian Cities*, p. 11; Grant Fleming, David Merrett and Simon Ville, *The Big End of Town: Big Business and Corporate Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Cambridge, Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 16-17

⁵ Forster, *Australian Cities*, p. 11.

⁶ Chris Maher, 'The Changing Character of Australian Urban Growth', in Stephen Hamnett and Raymond Bunker (eds) *Urban Australia: Planning Issues and Policies* (London, England; Bronx, N.Y: Mansell Pub, 1987), p. 13. In NSW there were 408,920 people employed in the sector in a workforce totaling 1,406,576. See Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1954.

⁷ Maher, 'The Changing Character of Australian Urban Growth', p. 13.

⁸ Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, p. 146.

became more important after the War as manufacturing spread westward. Improvements in roads and transport in the 1960s and 1970s then truly released industry from the city and its ties with water and rail.⁹ Manufacturing also experienced internal technological changes that affected site selection. The older city factories had been built over three or four floors and used gravity to move products from manufacture at the top of the building down to packaging and delivery at the bottom. Electrified processes now allowed goods, from cigarettes to motorcars, to be conveyed on one level for assembly, packaging if required and then to external transport. Large areas of land were required for such methods, and this land was only available, and affordable, in the west.¹⁰ Similar forces had led to the development of manufacturing in Melbourne's western suburbs and in Elizabeth, South Australia.

In a reflection of the economic interdependencies of modern cities, smaller manufacturers were attracted to the expanding industrial workforce.¹¹ Firms of all sizes saw potential in the growing western market, particularly in servicing the needs of the building industry. New businesses sprang up and old ones relocated: fabricating steel, producing building materials and industrial equipment, and manufacturing some of the appliances upon which suburban lifestyles now relied. Between the early 1950s and the early 1980s manufacturing employment within the City of Sydney (which also reduced slightly in size) dropped from forty-five to eighteen percent of the metropolitan area's total.¹² Between 1971 and 1976, inner southern municipalities lost 52,500 jobs, while the city's outer ring municipalities combined with Blacktown, Holroyd, Fairfield, Parramatta and Kuringai gained 60,700 jobs.¹³

Sydney's population flooded westward, drawn by employment possibilities, 'space, fresh air and the chance to own a home' that could be built on cheap land.¹⁴ As the

⁹ Grace Karskens, *Holroyd: A Social History of Western Sydney* (Kensington, NSW: NSW University Press, 1991), p. 184; Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, p. 115.

¹⁰ Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, p. 242; Frost and O'Hanlon, 'Urban History and the Future of Australian Cities', p. 10.

¹¹ For a discussion on the complexity of urban structures, see C. A. Maher, *Australian Cities in Transition* (Melbourne: Shillington House, 1982), p. 3.

¹² David C. Rich et. al., 'Urban Development and Economic Change', p. 27.

¹³ Sinclair, Knight & Partners, 'Towards a Centres Policy, Part 1: Summary Report / Sinclair Knight & Partners Pty Ltd., Plant Location International Pty. Ltd., R.J. Nairn & Partners Pty. Ltd. (Sydney: D. West, Govt. Printer, 1980), p. 3.

¹⁴ Lindsay Miller and Richard Fuhr, 'The Real Sydney', *Australian Society*, 1 April 1983, p. 4. See also Jim Rose, 'Opening Address', in D. Dragovich (ed.), *Proceedings of a Conference on The Changing*

Anglo-Celtic working and middle classes moved from crowded inner areas, a tide of immigrants washed in behind them, filling their places in the older inner suburbs. By the mid-1950s the geographic centre of Sydney's population was clearly shifting westwards.¹⁵ As one converted sceptic recalled:

Someone had suggested... that we buy a block of land... at Blacktown and we just fell about laughing and said, "Who would live out there?"... but as it came closer and the money became due we decided we would move to Blacktown, because it was cheap.¹⁶

Assisting the population shift was the construction of public housing by the New South Wales Housing Commission, which had been set up in 1942 following inquiries into unemployment, hardship and housing conditions in the city's inner suburbs during the 1930s.¹⁷ The largest estates in Sydney by the mid-1970s were those built by the Commission at Villawood (2138 houses), Dundas (558), Green Valley (6373), Lalor Park (2759), and the largest of them all at Mt Druitt, with 9150 dwellings.¹⁸ Income ceilings restricted tenancy in the Housing Commission bungalows to lower socio-economic groups, institutionalising social segregation and levelling social status and demographic characteristics in Commission developments to a relatively homogenous level: low income, 'young to middle-aged married residents with two or more children.'¹⁹ A study of similar suburbs in Melbourne found a corresponding demographic, 'heavily committed to hire-purchase contracts,' but generally satisfied with the living conditions which were cheaper and of higher quality than much non-Commission housing at the time.²⁰

People arriving in Sydney's West, however, found an unexpectedly stark social environment. There was space, plenty of it – but transport through it, or communication

Face of Sydney: Interactions Between the Physical and Human Environments of the Sydney Region, (North Ryde, NSW: Geographical Society of New South Wales, 1986), pp. 6-9; Lucy Turnbull, *Sydney: Biography of a City* (Milsons Point, NSW: Random House Australia, 1999), p. 439; Hugh Stretton, *Ideas for Australian Cities*, third ed. (Sydney, NSW: Transit Australia, 1989), pp. 256-7.

¹⁵ Terry Kass, Carol Liston and John McClymont, *Parramatta: A Past Revealed* (Parramatta: Parramatta City Council, 1996), pp. 369-75.

¹⁶ An interview conducted by Diane Powell, 27 July 1992, quoted in Diane Powell, *Out West: Perceptions of Sydney's Western Suburbs* (St. Leonards, NSW: Allen & Unwin, 1993), p. 68.

¹⁷ Forster, *Australian Cities*, p. 12.

¹⁸ Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, p. 94.

¹⁹ I. H. Burnley, 'Urbanisation and Social Segregation', in I. H. Burnley (ed.), *Urbanization in Australia: The Post-War Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 135.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

across it was difficult. While a shopping centre was built as part of the Mount Druitt development, shops in other areas were scarce and bus services infrequent. Residents faced long delays getting telephones connected, and lengthy walks to the nearest public phone. Newcomers, understandably, had little local knowledge; often they were isolated from traditional family support networks. Many men had to travel long distances to get to work, while women had to give up jobs because the distance and time involved clashed with their socially-prescribed, practically-required mothering roles.²¹

We saw in Chapter Two that the idea of shopping centres as community hubs can be traced back to Victor Gruen and his integrated urban planning concepts, and that this was used as a key argument for development in the early Sydney centres. In the outer west, where the developments had more in common with the American situation on which Gruen based his ideas, the argument was probably stronger. In America, centres were being built on greenfield sites at the intersections of freeways, amidst a residential sprawl in which Gruen could find no social beacon. Sydney's 1960s centres were located in built up urban environments, on public transport routes, surrounded by existing social infrastructure. Shopping centres added to this existing infrastructure, helping to accommodate population increases and changes in cultural tastes. But while the outer west was probably not as barren as Gruen's America, there was certainly a great demand for social infrastructure. That shopping centres became valuable sites of community space in the west was recognised in a report by the Department of Environment Housing and Community Development (DEHCD) in 1978. In a sign of their limitations, however, the report also called for more extensive programs to enhance this capability, suggesting the exploration of such possibilities as:

live entertainment programs; cinemas; pubs, bars and beer gardens; indoor-sports such as squash, skating, gymnastics, and carpet bowls; leisure education programs such as travelling exhibitions, demonstrations, discussions, classes, workshops and public information displays; video and radio access programs; and opportunities for travelling circuses, carnivals, side shows and amusement parks.²²

²¹ Powell, *Out West*, pp. 76-7.

²² Department of Environment Housing and Community Development (DEHCD), *The Shopping Centre as a Community Leisure Resource* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1978), pp. 9-10.

Before the War, such possibilities were hard to imagine. The western suburbs were more like country towns, relatively self-contained and independent of the metropolis. There were problems of isolation, but there was infrastructure that provided local employment, leisure and community activities.²³ As the city sprawled westward, cars clogged streets that had once been relatively safe and pleasant pedestrian thoroughfares, and social infrastructure struggled to keep pace with exploding populations (see Table 2.1). For city dwellers, a pleasant country environment easily morphed into ‘the sticks’, especially with television daily beaming images of modern consumer life into living rooms.²⁴

Pre-war towns became suburbs on the fringe of suburban sprawl in a mass production/mass consumption society, but did not always share the full fruits of this society. In the 1960s, the NSW government left the provision of infrastructure, to a considerable degree, in the hands of local governments funded by rates, and in community ‘self-help’.²⁵ Low income levels and land values in the west meant that local councils, left ‘to cope with a huge increase in demand’ for facilities, could not obtain sufficient income from rates to provide facilities for their rapidly growing municipalities.²⁶ This led Hugh Stretton to argue that resources were unevenly distributed across the city because of the very fact that wealthy eastern areas were able to garner more rates and investment than their poorer western cousins.²⁷

In the early to mid-1970s, the Housing Commission began providing some services; and the federal government’s Department of Urban and Regional Development (DURD) offered funds for civic and community facilities to help revitalise local government areas and maintain and build on their regional identities. Later, Section 94 of the NSW Environment and Planning Act required developers to pay cash contributions towards infrastructure.²⁸ But despite DURD’s contributions and sluggish State assistance, a

²³ Powell, *Out West*, pp. 49-50.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

²⁵ Stretton, *Ideas for Australian Cities*, pp. 260-62.

²⁶ Leonie Sandercock quoted in Miller and Fuhr, ‘The Real Sydney’, p. 4. On the importance of rates for local government finances, see Margaret Bowman, *Local Government in the Australian States* (Canberra: Department of Environment, Housing and Community Development, 1976), pp. 3-4.

²⁷ Stretton, *Ideas for Australian Cities*, pp. 259-61.

²⁸ Miller and Fuhr, ‘The Real Sydney’, p. 4.

considerable lag between need and provision remained, and some western councils – such as Liverpool – were facing grave financial difficulties by the mid-1970s.²⁹

Looking back at the Housing Commission program, Town Planner at Liverpool Council for thirty years, John Crawford, said that the Commission ‘moved [in] 25,000 people and did not put one swing in.’ Parkland and social infrastructure were all planned, but it was the Council which had to provide them. Crawford described the council playing catch-up during his entire tenure.³⁰ Liverpool’s population more than doubled between 1961 and 1966 to 68,959 people (see Table 2.1).³¹ In 1968, the Mayor of Liverpool and later State Labor minister, George Paciullo described a council ‘struggling’ to keep pace. The area was under-resourced in terms of schools, halls, parks and recreation venues. The Housing Commission had not even installed footpaths at Green Valley. Through the middle years of the decade, Liverpool Council spent \$300,000 on footpaths, parks and roads.³²

On top of infrastructure shortages, and despite the growth in manufacturing, the outer west also had significant shortages of employment – even before the economic crises of the 1970s. Although factory employment was increasing, it was not keeping pace with population growth, not least because manufacturing was becoming less labour intensive. In Liverpool, industrial employment increased by fifty-one percent between 1955 and 1966, while the population grew by 149 percent. In a similar time frame, the proportion of locals with jobs in Liverpool industry fell from one in nine to one in fifteen. Many people continued to commute from the outer west to Sydney for work, but the long hours this entailed placed great pressure on personal and family relationships.³³ An inadequate public transport system served to isolate people from both work and entertainment, and increased their dependency on cars.³⁴

Western Sydney municipalities badly needed injections of cash and capital, and in the absence of sufficient government support, it is not surprising that local government

²⁹ Keating, *On the Frontier*, pp. 205-6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

³¹ Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1961, 1966.

³² George Paciullo, Mayor of Liverpool quoted in *Sunday Telegraph*, 12 May 1968, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 201.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Miller and Fuhr, ‘The Real Sydney’, pp. 4-5.

welcomed the massive investment of regional shopping centres when developers came knocking at the door. Grace Karskens has noted in her social history of Holroyd that modern shops and services were considered indicators of the area's 'vitality and status', not only changing the population's everyday lifeways, but assisting 'in the modernisation of the area's image.'³⁵ Frank Lowy wrote, on the verge of massive success in 1971, that 'in order for a suburb to prosper and develop, it has to have a hard core from which to draw its strength... the shopping centre is such a core. It is the focal point of cultural social, medical, professional and retail activity.'³⁶ This is an argument covered already, but the issue of major investment in a solid retail core and the economic spin-offs this might generate remained critical context for western suburbs shopping centre development.

In Liverpool, Westfield Shoppingtown's opening coincided with the 100th year of local government in the municipality – a fitting opportunity to link progress, civic pride and economic growth with consumerist infrastructure. The city's mayor, Alderman K. H. Napier, paid tribute to Westfield's 'extremely good sense of judgment' as he warmly welcomed Premier Askin to its official opening. Napier described Westfield's investment as a sign of 'faith' in the future prosperity of the area offering in return the 'respect and gratitude of the Liverpool City Council.'³⁷ At Westpoint's opening, the president of the Blacktown Chamber of Commerce and Industry, P. M. O'Byrne, expressed a hope that the centre would aid Blacktown in its bid for city status, which had recently been refused because officials had failed to identify a substantive and 'pervasive identity' in the area.³⁸ This echoed Mayor, P. R. Stone's enthusiasm at Westpoint's opening as 'a most important event in the history of Blacktown'; the investment again signalling a vote of 'faith and confidence' in the district.³⁹

Similar expressions came from the industry side. Speaking on behalf of Westfield Liverpool's tenants at its opening ceremony, B. A. Grace declared that 'we have each

³⁵ Karskens, *Holroyd*, p. 191.

³⁶ Lowy, 'Regional shopping centres', pp. 278-283.

³⁷ Liverpool City Library, Local Studies Collection, Alderman K. H. Napier, Mayor of Liverpool, 'Speech – Opening of Westfield'.

³⁸ *Blacktown Advocate*, 11 April 1973, p. 23.

³⁹ *Blacktown Advocate*, 11 April 1973, p. 25; Westfield's first development fifteen years earlier was also said to be founded on 'faith in Blacktown's future', see *Blacktown Advocate*, 2 July 1959, p. 11. And note the same rhetoric in Chapter Two when Miranda Fair, Roselands and Bankstown Square opened.

elected to invest money and effort in Liverpool in the belief that this city... has a splendid future ahead of it'.⁴⁰ When Westfield opened the largest centre in the southern hemisphere in Parramatta in 1975, its manager, Bernard Brown, declared that the company's 'confidence in this great city' was 'well and truly expressed' in the creation of their own internalised 'complete city under one huge air-conditioned roof'.⁴¹



Figure 4.1: 'Faith in District'
Blacktown Advocate, 11 April 1973, p. 25.

Developers did have faith in the new retail frontier. In the early 1960s, the inner- and middle-western suburbs – areas such as Ryde, Bankstown and Canterbury – held the largest populations and attracted the major shopping centre developments to the west of the city (see Table 2.1). The fibro landscapes further west housed populations weighed down with mortgages and family expenses.⁴² But through the late 1960s, sluggish manufacturing employment notwithstanding, households in the west increasingly acquired two pay packets and higher disposable income. Retail development followed, chasing cash flow, the prospect of hundreds of commercial leases, and, like residents and industry before it, the lower cost and availability of western land.⁴³ In 1974, Sydney's fastest retail growth was occurring in Fairfield, Liverpool, Campbelltown,

⁴⁰ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 65, B. A. Grace, 'Speech on behalf of the Retailers of the Centre', 28 August 1972.

⁴¹ *Advertiser*, 21 May 1975, p. 44. See also Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 69, Promotional Booklet, 'Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta', c1974/1975.

⁴² Patricia Rolfe 'Revolution in the Suburbs', *Bulletin*, 19 December 1964, p. 25, quoted in Spearritt, 'I Shop Therefore I Am', pp. 134-5.

⁴³ Spearritt, 'I Shop Therefore I Am', p. 135; Hirst Consulting Services Pty Ltd, 'Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) Study of Major Urban Centres of Western Sydney', (Blacktown, NSW: WSROC, 1984), p. 34; 'Why National Mutual likes the Western Suburbs', *Inside Retailing*, no. 316, 24 April 1978, p. 6; 'Three new regional centres for Sydney', *Australian Retailing* vol. 5, no. 2, September-October 1971, p. 13. On the rising cost of land 'during the boom years of the late 1960s and early 1970s', see NSW Planning and Environment Commission, *Review: Sydney Region Outline Plan*, p. 8.

Hornsby, Penrith and Parramatta, all of which had been marked by the SPA as areas facing a 'population explosion'.⁴⁴ The largest competing retail concentrations in the west were in Parramatta, Blacktown, St Mary's and Penrith. More than half the retail floor space in these areas displayed comparison goods, with residents generally drawn to one of the four for major purchases. In between, smaller centres provided day-to-day convenience goods.⁴⁵ Further south, retailing in Liverpool and Campbelltown dominated their surrounding areas.

Having examined the background to centre development in the west, we now turn to specific areas, their local histories and some of the major shopping centres that were built there, to flesh out the general arguments outlined above, further explaining how and why centres were built in the west and the changes they brought to western communities.

Westfield Liverpool Shoppingtown

Liverpool was the first Macquarie town, lying on the Georges River southwest of Sydney.⁴⁶ Before the Second World War it was semi-rural, with a population of just 8,000 people. Much of its 115 square miles was made up of market gardens, poultry farms and orchards. The population climbed slowly after the War to 15,000 in 1950 and then, on the back of immigration from Southern Europe, doubled to 30,000 in 1960 when it became a city (see Table 2.1).⁴⁷ By the early 1970s, 85,000 people were living in the area, many arriving through the Green Valley housing scheme.⁴⁸ Almost half of the population resided in Housing Commission projects built during the previous decade.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ *Inside Retailing*, no. 116, March 11, 1974, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Clarke, Gazzard & Partners, 'Report on Retail Development of the Blacktown Town Centre prepared for Blacktown Municipal Council (Sydney: Clarke, Gazzard & Partners, 1969), p. 12.

⁴⁶ Turnbull, *Sydney*, p. 442.

⁴⁷ Conybeare Morrison & Partners, 'Liverpool City Centre Urban Design Study, prepared for Liverpool City Council' (Sydney: Conybeare Morrison, 1991), p. 7. A background history of Liverpool was included in a press kit prepared for opening publicity. See Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 65, Letter from Jon Powis to H. Berry containing Press Kit, 27 July 1972.

⁴⁸ 'Liverpool Centre Study', (Liverpool, NSW: The Council, June 1975), pp. 4-5; Census of Population and Housing, 1971. See also Liverpool Shoppingtown Feature, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1972.

⁴⁹ Paul Ife Horne, *The Emerging City, Liverpool* (Sydney: P. I. Horne, 1972), p. 10.

Retail rose to embrace the population boom. Marcus Clark opened an air-conditioned branch of their Bon Marche department store in Liverpool in November 1961 with free parking for 250 cars.⁵⁰ Waltons was another early major store, before Woolworths gave the city ‘a \$3 million vote of confidence’ when it opened a mini-shopping centre in 1966 containing a supermarket, Big W discount department store and a few small shops and services.⁵¹ Coles opened a New World Supermarket, Nock & Kirby introduced another branch in its spreading hardware chain (as well as a ten-acre warehouse nearby), and discount houses and bargain shops blossomed.⁵² The local paper declared Liverpool ‘booming’.⁵³

In December 1969, Westfield lodged a development application to build a regional centre opposite the existing Woolworths complex on Macquarie Street (see figure 4.2, which shows Woolworths on the block between Macquarie and Northumberland Streets). It was approved in principle later the same night, although some Independent councillors while supportive of the project objected to the hasty process. They argued that the Town Planner should have made a report on the application and that the development committee should have studied it, prior to it being submitted to the full Council. Retiring Mayor George Paciullo explained this away, saying that it was simply a means of enabling Westfield to continue planning during the council’s Christmas recess.⁵⁴

Michael Webb has described the American mall as a ‘non-denominational place of worship’.⁵⁵ Liverpool’s new secular cathedral was built on land previously owned by the Catholic Church, which had once been used for a school and seminary.⁵⁶ It opened on 28 August 1972 with a Grace Bros department store, a Target discount department

⁵⁰ *Liverpool Leader*, 11 October 1961, p. 1.

⁵¹ Horne, *The Emerging City*, p. 32; *Sunday Mirror*, 28 August 1966, p. 64.

⁵² Horne, *The Emerging City*, p. 32.

⁵³ *Sunday Mirror*, 28 August 1966, p. 67.

⁵⁴ *City of Liverpool Leader*, 10 December 1969, p. 1.

⁵⁵ Michael Webb, *The City Square* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1990), p. 205.

⁵⁶ Westfield Holdings Ltd, *The Westfield Story*, p. 119; *City of Liverpool Leader*, 14 August 1985. On shopping centres as secular cathedrals, see Peter Spearritt, ‘The Commercialisation of Public Space’ in Patrick Troy (ed.), *Equity, Environment, Efficiency: Ethics and Economics in Urban Australia* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000), p. 93; Spearritt, ‘Suburban Cathedrals’.

store, fifty-five specialty shops, and parking for 1,100 cars.⁵⁷ Grace Bros dominated the centre, taking around two-thirds of the retail floor space. The focal point of the upper-shopping mall was a huge tropical fish aquarium, ‘a jewel-like structure with an illuminated light column reaching towards the ceiling’. The fish, metaphors for the products and cultural internationalism of the centre itself, had been ‘caught by divers and imported from all over the world’.⁵⁸ Westfield Liverpool Shoppingtown was the company’s ninth regional centre and its sixth in Sydney. It was being described in the media as the country’s largest retail developer.⁵⁹

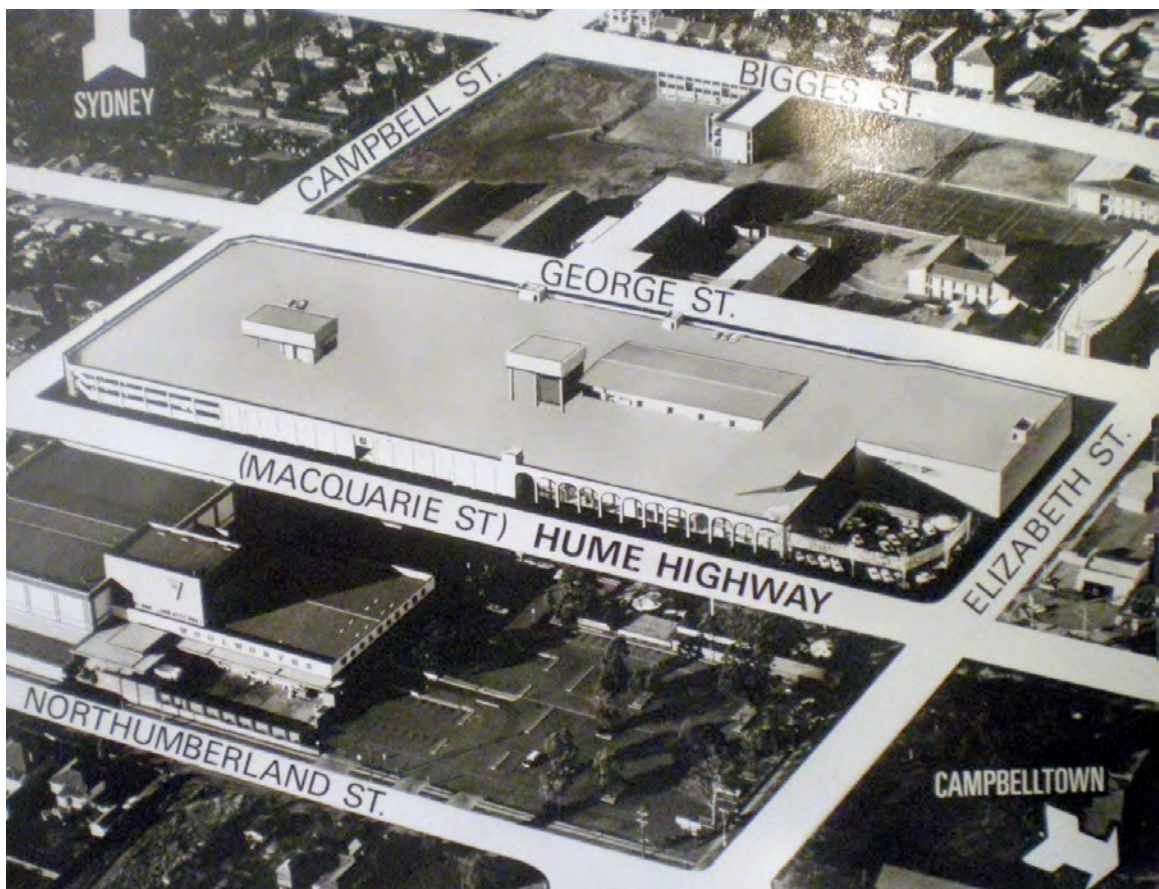


Figure 4.2: Westfield Liverpool Shoppingtown, Macquarie Street, Liverpool
Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 65, ‘Grace Bros at Liverpool Shoppingtown’, c1972.

⁵⁷ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 65, ‘Schedule of Official Opening of Liverpool Shoppingtown’, 28 August 1972; Letter from Marley Fitzpatrick, Westfield Liverpool Shoppingtown Promotion Manager to H. Berry, Grace Bros. Pty. Limited, 24 July 1972.

⁵⁸ Liverpool Shoppingtown Feature, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1972.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Some local businesses ‘achieved an ambition’ by moving into the new centre: Richard’s Fabrics in Macquarie Street became Rick’s Fabric Shoppe in the Shoppingtown. Chains, though, featured prominently: Sussan, Witchery, Katie’s, Williams the Shoemen, Angus and Robertson, Palings, Soul Pattinson (‘Australia’s superchemists’), Mansours, Angus & Coote, Mr Whippy and Dick Stone Butcher represented the growth in chain stores in Australia over the previous decades, and indicated the prominent place they would take in major shopping centre developments in the future.⁶⁰ The emergence and rise of chains and franchises, and their relationship with shopping centres will be explored in more depth in the next chapter. And for one local, at least for now, they remained peripheral. It was still the department store that mattered: ‘Liverpool needed a large store at that time, everyone [was] very happy. The small stores that accompanied it were a bonus.’⁶¹

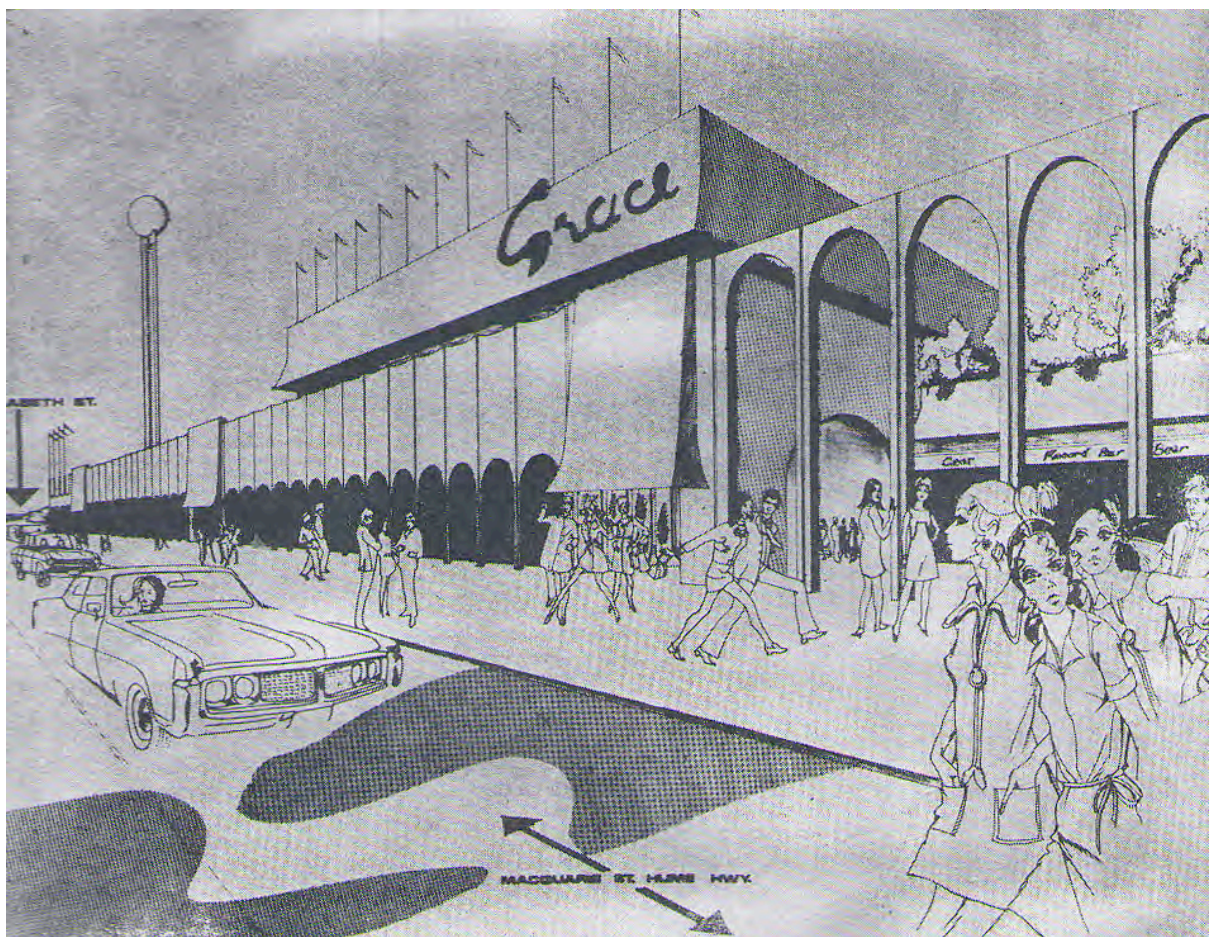


Figure 4.3: Westfield Liverpool Shoppingtown, artist's depiction
City of Liverpool Leader, 10 December 1969, p. 1.

⁶⁰ *City of Liverpool Champion*, 6 September 1972, p. 25.

⁶¹ Isobel, OHR no. 93, 8 January 2008 - 23 February 2008.

Opening promotion for the centre was focused around its bright colours and novelty décor, perhaps in an attempt to appeal to Liverpool's youthful population, which was amongst the youngest in the country.⁶² Liverpool had been a 'pram city' in the 1960s; new housing developments were filled with single mothers, young married couples and children.⁶³ In a break with shopping centre tradition, Westfield's architects designed novelty shop fronts. A jeweller had an entrance shaped like a giant engagement ring; a music shop had a ten-foot guitar and piano keys mounted above its door. Fantasy themes were used in the lower mall where moulded fibre-glass circular seating garishly complemented garbage containers disguised as alien creatures.⁶⁴ If the colours were appealing, the air-conditioning was embraced. One local resident recalls families spending entire summer days within the centre to keep cool.⁶⁵ And as elsewhere, it was most probably this cool comfort, the convenience of parking within walking distance to multiple shops, the attraction of Grace Bros, and the lure of consumer culture and 'the new' which underpinned the success of the centre.

Westpoint Blacktown

A year later, another regional centre opened in Blacktown, the birthplace of Westfield. There the population had also grown considerably since the war, and had jumped by over forty percent to 156,830 people between 1966 and 1971 (see Table 2.1).⁶⁶

⁶² Liverpool Shoppingtown Feature, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1972; *City of Liverpool Leader*, 23 August 1972, p. 1; *City of Liverpool Champion*, 10 September 1972; Advertisement, *Supplement to Campbelltown-Ingleburn News, Liverpool-Fairfield Champion*, 11-12 September 1973, p. 8. Doug Small (Westfield chief architect), quoted in Liverpool Shoppingtown Feature, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1972. For a Grace Bros demographic analysis of Liverpool, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 65, 'Liverpool Store Report', 2 June 1978. For a press release to the Liverpool Leader for 'Colour Your Life' promotions and articles, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 65, 'Liverpool Leader – Talkabout No. 8 (and last)'.

⁶³ Keating, *On the Frontier*, p. 199.

⁶⁴ Liverpool Shoppingtown Feature, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 August 1972. Note, however, that by 1978, Grace Bros was reporting dissatisfaction with the 'low budget' construction and the disinterest from Westfield in any ongoing beautification programs because of the low return they were receiving on their investment. See Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 65, 'Liverpool Store Report', 2 June 1978. That the complex's structural systems 'were primarily governed by the requirement of very rapid construction, consistent with construction economy', see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 65, 'Report prepared by Mateffy – Perl – Nagy, Consulting Engineers', for John Biro, Westfield Development Corporation, 30 June 1972.

⁶⁵ Bev Donald interviewed, 27 August 1994, quoted in Keating, *On the Frontier*, p. 203.

⁶⁶ Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1966; Census of Population and Housing, 1971. For an industry analysis of even higher growth in the 1950s, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468,

Considerable housing development was taking place and plenty more was planned. While nearly half the residents were engaged in blue-collar employment, there was a range of income groups in the area. The population was youthful with ‘a preponderance of young families’ and a high proportion of children.⁶⁷ It was a solid shopping centre demographic, and by 1969 there were four applications before council to build major centres within the municipality. The choice was narrowed to two after Westfield pulled out. This was surprising, especially as it had been planning a major development in Blacktown since at least 1964 when Farmer’s was approached as a potential anchor, but it is possible that Westfield’s Liverpool commitments precluded further investment at that point in time.⁶⁸

A proposal by the Hammerson Group (which had built Warringah Mall) was rejected because it directly conflicted with the SPA’s policy for retail development in the area. The remaining proposals, by the Coote Estate Group of Companies and W. McNamara Pty. Ltd. were examined in detail by external planning consultants. Despite their recommendation that the Coote proposal more completely satisfied the demands of the area, council went with McNamara – a local businessman and developer.⁶⁹ In a public relations exercise, McNamara decided to name the new complex through a competition carrying a prize of \$250. A novel variety of names were offered, demonstrating a linkage between shopping centres and popular culture in the public mind. ‘Cheyenne’, ‘Big Whiz’, ‘The Bee Hive’ and ‘Zorro’, however, were rejected in favour of the more staid ‘Westpoint Shopping Centre’.⁷⁰

FARMS039, 142, Letter from Richard Stanton & Sons Pty Ltd to The Managing Director, Farmer & Co. Ltd., 3 August 1964.

⁶⁷ DEHCD, *The Shopping Centre as a Community Leisure Resource*, pp. 21-3. For a comprehensive breakdown of Blacktown’s demography, and customer expenditure by suburb, see Farmer’s extensive research collated from census data and customer tracking. Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012, 73*, ‘Blacktown Store Report’, 1972.

⁶⁸ For the offer to Farmer’s, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *FARMS039, 142*, Letter from Richard Stanton & Sons Pty Ltd to The Managing Director, Farmer & Co. Ltd., 3 August 1964.

⁶⁹ Clarke, Gazzard and Partners, ‘Report on Retail Development of the Blacktown Town Centre’, pp. 4-40; Blacktown City Council Library, Local Studies Collection, Western Shopping Centres Pty. Ltd., ‘Westpoint Report, no. 1’, February 1973; *Blacktown Advocate*, 4 April 1973, p. 1; Westpoint Centre Feature, *Blacktown Advocate*, 11 April 1973, p. 23.

⁷⁰ Westpoint Centre Feature, *Blacktown Advocate*, 16 February 1972, p. 1.

DEPARTMENT STORES

Farmer's



MODERN SELF-SERVE RESTAURANT
Any day, between shopping, enjoy a quiet cuppa, or delicious lunch. And Thursday evening, bring the family to dinner.



A COMPLETE TAKE-AWAY FOOD CENTRE
Tasty hot and cold snacks with the gourmet touch plus a bar of scrumptious sponges by our own pastry cook.



A HAIRDRESSING SALON
Let our beauty experts pamper you with a shampoo, set, perm, cut, tint, manicure, chiropody.



FARMER'S CREDIT FACILITIES
We're a multiple credit account to suit everyone's needs, everyone's pocket. Come, let us advise you.



LEVEL 1
Toys
Sound Centre
Record Bar
Electrical
Manchester
Take-away Food Hall
Kitchenware
China, Glassware
Gift Hall
Books
Cameras
Stationery
Travel Goods
Confectionery
Hardware
Sports Goods
Young Man's Shop
Men's and Boys' Shoes
Menswear



LEVEL 2
Young Sydney Shop
Sportswear
Fashion Shops
Shoes
Fabrics, Patterns
Knitting Wools
Haberdashery
Hairdressing
Baby Change Room
Girls' Wear
School Wear
Children's Shoes
Little Girls' Wear
Little Fellas' Wear
Babywear
Nursery Furniture
Maternity Wear
Accessories
Cosmetics
Gowns
Underwear
Foundations

FARMER'S COMES TO BLACKTOWN

The first big, city-size department store that Blacktown's ever had.
Come see us, Tuesday

LEVEL 3
Lighting
Pictures
Mirrors
Rugs
Watches and Clocks
Furnishings
Restaurant
Furniture
Bedding
Wardrobes
Lay-by
General Office
H.C.F. Claims Office

Figure 4.4: Farmer's advertisement for its Westpoint store
Blacktown Advocate, 4 April 1973, p. 11.

Covering nine-and-a-half acres and costing \$15 million, Westpoint was situated in the heart of Blacktown. The Town Planner described it as one of the largest shopping complexes in New South Wales and the biggest development application ever approved by Blacktown Council. Farmer's had maintained an interest in the area, and opened a full-line branch in the centre. (see Figure 4.4), which also contained a Walton's department store that was seven times larger than the company's main street store

which it replaced (after twelve years of trading in the area);⁷¹ a Woolworths Family Centre that combined a food supermarket with a self-service department store; a Target discount store, Darin Lloyd Discounts and almost 100 other specialty shops and services. It was close to Blacktown railway station and major bus terminals with access from Richmond Road and the Western Highway. Shopping centre car parking statistics were inflated in the 1970s, being measured by the number of cars that might park in a day, rather than in terms of actual car spaces; Blacktown could accommodate around 10,000. The complex was intended to service an area bounded by Parramatta, Baulkham Hills, Richmond, Penrith and Fairfield.⁷²

Like 1960s centres in the inner suburbs, western centres targeted housewives as their key demographic. Even Mr Whippy at Liverpool Shoppingtown claimed to offer a 'range of products at prices which housewives' could afford.'⁷³ In promotions leading up to Blacktown's opening the Secretary of the Housewives' Association of New South Wales, Mrs Kay Adami, was invited to inspect the centre. She described it to the local newspaper as a 'housewives' Utopia':

Imagine! Air conditioned comfort throughout; every type of store to supply every housewife's needs; a children's supervised play centre on the roof [featuring trains, rides and ferris wheels], which will leave the mother free to shop with an easy mind; a women's rest centre, with feeding rooms and facilities for young mothers with children; parking space for 10,000 cars per day, and all under the one roof!⁷⁴

Members of the Riverstone Ladies Bowling Club were also given a tour of the centre prior to opening. A newspaper picture showed them lining up with hard hats and handbags ready to inspect the almost-completed complex (see Figure 4.5).⁷⁵ On opening day, in contrast, 'Groovy models... jived their way along the catwalk' wearing fashions

⁷¹ Westpoint Centre Feature, *Blacktown Advocate*, 11 April 1973, p. 25.

⁷² 'Three new regional centres for Sydney', *Australian Retailing* vol. 5, no. 2, September-October 1971, p. 13; *Blacktown Advocate*, 4 April 1973, pp. 1, 5; Blacktown City Council Library, Local Studies Collection, 'Western Shopping Centres Pty. Ltd.', *Blacktown Council Gazette*, 1977, p. 63; DEHCD, *The Shopping Centre as a Community Leisure Resource*, p. 26.

⁷³ *City of Liverpool Champion*, 30 August 1972, p. 37.

⁷⁴ Westpoint Centre Feature, *Blacktown Advocate*, 11 April 1973, p. 24; Kay Adami quoted in *Blacktown Advocate*, 11 April 1973, p. 62.

⁷⁵ Kay Adami quoted in *Blacktown Advocate*, 11 April 1973, p. 62.

from Westpoint's stores; while 'give-away girls' in knee-high boots distributed prizes to the pressing throng of viewers.⁷⁶



Figure 4.5: Mr Dan Waters, Westpoint's Operations Manager explaining facets of the Centre to members of the Riverstone Ladies' Bowling Club prior to their inspection of the Centre.

Blacktown Advocate, 11 April 1973, p. 62.

The 1978 DEHCD report, discussed earlier in regard to community facilities, found women to be the major visitors to Westpoint, and it offered revealing information about their uses of the centre and reasons for visiting it. Interviewing over 250 women shoppers, it noted that thirty percent of respondents visited the centre at least twice a week, with a similar proportion coming at least once a week. The former tended to live within eight kilometres of the centre, with the latter usually living further away. Proximity was a far more important determinant of frequency than attitudes to shopping. Fifty-eight percent travelled by car. Over eighty percent were favourable to shopping as an activity, nearly half reported enjoyment in 'just looking around' (a quarter came for this purpose alone), and almost forty percent recorded 'getting away from home' as a positive feature of the centre. Only eleven percent tended to stay in the centre for more than two hours. A quarter of all respondents' trips were unrelated to shopping, instead being for entertainment, socialising or 'diversionary activities'. A high proportion (almost seventy percent) spent time relaxing and or having a drink, snack or meal at the centre. The most annoying aspect of shopping was the need to bring along children (twenty-five percent).⁷⁷

⁷⁶ *Blacktown Advocate*, 18 April 1973, p. 1.

⁷⁷ DEHCD, *The Shopping Centre as a Community Leisure Resource*, p. 48.



Figure 4.6: Women shoppers at Blacktown, 1978.
DEHCD, *The Shopping Centre as a Community Leisure Resource*,
Inside Cover.

Shopping centres, then, continued to serve as a site of escape for suburban women by providing social and recreational space. They made a positive difference to women's lives, but the DEHCD report called for more. It recommended centres introduce high quality childcare facilities and disseminate information about local events. Recognising that not all programs would be profitable or well attended it suggested risk sharing or governmental contributions towards costs. The report further recommended that authorities make travelling to centres easier by re-planning public transport and adapting

it for the use of women with prams, strollers, loads of shopping and small children. Government offices that served women, children, families and immigrants, the report advised, might be relocated to major shopping centres to maximise accessibility.⁷⁸ Some commercially-adapted elements of the suggested programs were already a part of shopping centre industry and culture: live performances and promotional entertainment had been a fixture from the beginning; and centres had usually been built around public transport hubs with bus routes adapted or added to bring customers to their doors – but a combination of businesses' focus on profits, competition amongst local governments for

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

development in their area, and tight public purse strings at the state level, prevented full development in this direction.

Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta

Moving further down the road towards a community hub, albeit while remaining strictly commercial in its outlook, Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta offered Sydney its largest internal shopping environment yet, was closely linked to public transport and included a wide range of consumer leisure facilities. Parramatta had long been an important commercial centre with a strong retail trading area, and it had only been a matter of time before it attracted a regional shopping centre of its own. It may even have been the strength of local retail that held it off for so long. But by the early 1970s the attraction of the city to developers was overwhelming.

In 1948 the Cumberland Plan had designated Parramatta as the second most important urban centre in Sydney after the city itself. Local manufacturing boomed as a result of Cumberland Council zonings and infrastructure such as courts, a hospital, big retail, an accumulation of professional legal and medical services, and some of the country's 'earliest decentralised branches of government departments' saw Parramatta develop further as an administrative and commercial centre.⁷⁹ The SROP of 1968, designed by the SPA, which had replaced the CCC in 1964, proposed further expansion of Parramatta into a major commercial employment centre.⁸⁰

Population and business growth fuelled retail development, which had a long history in the area. Murray Bros had been a local institution since opening as a hardware store in 1876. Store expansion, vertical integration and diversification as a department store saw it grow with the city through much of the twentieth century, including the introduction of a supermarket in 1958 (see Figure 4.7).⁸¹ Following the arrival of Grace Bros in the 1930s, other city retailers moved in during the 1950s: Waltons and Bebarfalds opened

⁷⁹ Kass, Liston and McClymont, *Parramatta*, pp. 373-5.

⁸⁰ NSW Planning and Environment Commission, 'Review: Sydney Region Outline Plan', p. 22; Alan Hyam, (Mayor of Parramatta), address to the 15th Royal Australian Planning Institute Congress, Sydney, August 1978, in 'Regional Centres: Parramatta, Townsville and Launceston', *Royal Australian Planning Institute Journal*, vol. 17, February 1979, p. 108.

⁸¹ Parramatta Heritage Society Archive, Murray Bros Folder, 381.141099441 HIS, 'Murray Bros'.

department stores in 1954, Nock & Kirby followed with a mixed hardware and agricultural supplies store two years later.⁸² While much of this development saw the conversion of older buildings, Grace Bros again stamped their mark on the city with their new store in 1956. Modelled on ‘American designs’, it included a supermarket on the ground floor, rooftop parking for eighty cars, a designated play area for children – also on the roof – and air conditioning with the second stage of construction in 1957.⁸³

With a strong customer base established in the prosperous east and north sides of the city, David Jones, too, found Parramatta an appealing prospect as an entry-port to the west. Rather than build in the established retail area, though, the company gambled that its ‘world class store’ offering car parking and ‘first class facilities of every kind’ could draw customers northwards towards its picturesque location opposite the Parramatta River.⁸⁴ David Jones’ isolationist experiment eventually failed when Westfield and Grace Bros combined their drawing power around the train station in the mid-1970s.



Figure 4.7: Curly Fraser, ‘Facade of Murray Bros. (Parramatta), drapers, wine and spirit merchants’. SRL NSW, Australian Photographic Agency – 17704, 6 October 1964.

In 1961, Parramatta and its surrounds had the second highest retail sales per head of population in the metropolitan area – sitting only just behind the northern harbourside – with a ‘sphere of influence’ extending throughout the Western suburbs as far as Richmond and Windsor.⁸⁵ A 1978 Grace Bros store report described it as the ‘logical capital of the West’, with a market of 900,000 people, and a workforce of 500,000 with

⁸² Kass, Liston and McClymont, *Parramatta*, p. 62.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 373-7. See also Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 3236, ‘Macquarie Shopping Centre North Ryde’, Section 2, p. 1.

⁸⁴ Beed, *The Growth of Suburban Retailing in Sydney*, p. 162-5.

⁸⁵ Kass, Liston and McClymont, *Parramatta*, p. 378; Jeans and Logan, ‘The Problems of Growth’, p. 35.

a total pre-tax income of 1.9 thousand million dollars a year.⁸⁶ In the late 1960s, according to SROP, Parramatta was ‘the most important shopping centre outside the metropolitan area’.⁸⁷ While it had several department stores, supermarkets, and a wide range of specialty shops, though, the shopping precinct itself was still, structurally, ‘traditional’ – formed from an assorted conglomeration of individual retailers and landlords. Victor Gruen’s enclosed and centrally owned one-stop model had yet to plant a base in Parramatta’s heart, although his spirit was circling.

In the mid 1950s, the Mayor of Parramatta, E. A. Hunt, had returned from a ‘world tour’ warning of the commercial threat posed by regional shopping centres, and the need for the city to prepare for their coming competition.⁸⁸ Very real evidence was provided to support his claims when Top Ryde opened shortly afterwards, drawing shoppers away from Parramatta. When other centres such as Roselands opened in the mid 1960s, they too, despite their distance were believed to have a considerable impact on the Parramatta retail sector.⁸⁹ The council responded with an increased focus on parking provision, before Westfield arrived with a comprehensive solution – a regional shopping centre for the city. Table 4.1 shows Westfield’s projected population figures for the centre’s trading area, while Figure 4.8 indicates its projected trade area.

Table 4.1			
Westfield Parramatta Trade Area⁹⁰			
Population	1966	1974	1980
Within 10 minutes’ drive	152,621	179,673	188,657
Between 10 and 20 minutes’ drive	311,258	397,271	417,135
Total within 20 minutes’ drive	463,879	576,944	605,791

Westfield began planning a centre at Parramatta in the early 1970s.⁹¹ It purchased the Grace Bros building that had once marked the height of progress, and sought permission to redevelop it as part of a new integrated shopping centre.⁹² Grace Bros resumed

⁸⁶ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 69, ‘Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta Store Report’, 1978, p. 4.

⁸⁷ Sydney Region Outline Plan, quoted by Hyam, ‘Regional Centres’, p. 108.

⁸⁸ Kass, Liston and McClymont, *Parramatta*, pp. 373-7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁹⁰ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 69, ‘Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta’ promotional booklet, c1974/1975.

⁹¹ ‘Westfield Holdings Limited, 25th Anniversary Report’ (Sydney: 1985), pp. 4-5.

⁹² *Daily Telegraph*, 1 June 1972, p. 28.

trading in the centre while the remainder was still being built in 1974. The major openings began in May 1975, with a Woolworths Family Centre, Coles, Target and forty-four specialty shops joining the revamped department store.⁹³ Its latest, and to be upon completion its largest centre, positioned close to the railway station in the designated capital of Sydney's largest growth area, Westfield Parramatta was considered the company's flagship – the 'pinnacle of perfection' as its manager, Bernard Brown described it.⁹⁴ In one local newspaper article he gave eloquent voice to the reasons why people would come to his centre. While he mentioned the size and number of shops, the most compelling motivations, were the same environmental conditions in play at other major suburban centres:

Shopping habits for many years have become a necessary evil. You have battled with traffic and tried to find parking spaces. You've frozen in winter, perspired in summer, and have been soaked to the skin. You've walked the length of roads when you've had to visit more than one store, and you've worried about your child running onto the street or getting lost. All of your problems went into one big melting pot and has[sic] emerged as Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta.⁹⁵

The conglomeration of shops was, of course, the other principal attraction. One local, Diane, recalls that people saw the Westfield development as 'a sign of progress', and that 'it offered the local community the products which they otherwise would have had to travel to many locations and long distances to purchase.' She remembers that 'the idea that all the customer's needs and more could be satisfied in one location was a powerful incentive to visit Westfield.' For Diane, Westfield Parramatta 'was a "dizzying" experience... it was exhausting but... also very exciting because of the novelty of having what you needed or wanted instantly.'⁹⁶

⁹³ *Advertiser*, 21 May 1975, p. 43.

⁹⁴ Bernard Brown (manager, Westfield Parramatta), quoted in *Advertiser*, 21 May 1975, p. 44.

⁹⁵ Bernard Brown quoted in *Advertiser*, 24 September 1975, p. 45.

⁹⁶ Diane, OHR no. 52, 28 January – 03 February 2007.



Figure 4.8: Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta, projected trade area
 Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 69, 'Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta'
 promotional booklet, c1974/1975.



Figure 4.9: Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta, artists depiction
 Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 69, 'Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta' promotional booklet, c1974/1975.

The centre continued its development with Stage Two opening in September: enlarging Grace Bros; moving the Walton's department store in from down the road and in the process expanding it to be the company's largest in the country; and adding a further sixty specialty shops. Stage Three towards the end of the year established Westfield Parramatta as the country's largest centre, and possibly the 'largest free-standing building in the country'.⁹⁷ There were now seven major stores, over one hundred specialty stores, a Village Twin Four Cinema complex, four banks, two travel agencies, eight eateries and the Westtower Tavern.⁹⁸

The Tavern opened as part of the Macarthur Mall arm of the Shoppingtown, and was one of the centre's unique features. Its developers described it as 'the' new concept for a night out in the suburbs – its 'better surroundings, décor and service' marking a shift away from the corner pub or registered club. Like the shopping centre it was casual, but was still an upmarket alternative to the suburban pub, offering a neatly packaged hint of

⁹⁷ 'Westfield Holdings Limited, 25th Anniversary Report', pp. 4-5; *Advertiser*, 26 November 1975, p. 44.

⁹⁸ *Inside Retailing*, no. 195, 6 October 1975, p. 10; *Parramatta Advertiser*, 25 October 2000, pp. 30-1.

the city. Its Tower Bar, the ‘top cocktail bar in the area’, offered the area’s social elite a 360-degree view of surrounding development. Patrons could relax in large cane chairs on ‘plush carpet’, or sip Manhattans at the ‘hand tooled leather bar’, while mood music oozed through ‘special lighting effects’. Downstairs, a nightly ‘Play it Again Sam’ pianist entertained twenty to thirty-five year olds in the ‘French Moroccan’ styled Casablanca Bar. The more staid drinker could enjoy the pastoral charm of the Elizabeth Farm Bar. Businessmen were beckoned to the ‘exclusive club’ feel of the James Ruse Bar. A Gourmet Restaurant catered to the more affluent diner, while a large bistro offered self-service to the multitudes. A disco targeted young folk eager for a night out.⁹⁹ As the Mayor of Parramatta said when welcoming the new centre, it sought ‘to cater for all aspects of [consumer] life’.



Figure 4.10: Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta, ‘Colonial Court Bar’, artists depiction.

Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 69, ‘Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta’ promotional booklet, c1974/1975.

Note that the booklet refers to the bar as the ‘Colonial Court’, celebrating the site where ‘James Ruse established Australia’s first farm’.

⁹⁹ *Advertiser*, 26 November 1975, p. 43; 26 November 1975, p. 48; 5 March 1986, p. 10.

Macarthur Square, Campbelltown

Rounding out the development of shopping centres in the West during the 1970s, Macarthur Square opened in Campbelltown in September 1979. Its late start was due largely to its distance of around fifty kilometres from the city centre, which had kept the old town, founded in 1820 by Governor Macquarie, more a quite country village than a burgeoning urban centre for much of its history.¹⁰⁰ In 1947 the area had a population of just 7,000.¹⁰¹ The Cumberland Plan had recommended that Campbelltown become a satellite town of around 30,000 people, and although little action was taken to implement this goal, people did slowly move into the area. Population jumped in the mid 1960s to around 50,000 people when the SPA suspended some of the provisions of its predecessor's planning scheme. Under instructions from the Minister for Local Government, the SPA then investigated the feasibility of expanding Campbelltown into a small city housing up to 200,000 people.¹⁰²

The idea of satellite cities was an international trend in planning. 'New towns' and the importance of policies to manage urban growth 'had become internationally recognised' in the 1960s and 1970s, although there were calls for such moves, and precedents such as the British New Towns Act of 1946, that well pre-dated this identification.¹⁰³ In Australia, the idea for satellite cities 'grew out of the movement for decentralisation', which was in turn based on the belief that Australian cities were becoming too large and that the concentration of population in them was adversely affecting regional and country areas. The movement gained momentum when it became clear that continual expansion also had negative impacts – such as traffic congestion, limited access to the countryside, and pollution – on metropolitan areas themselves.¹⁰⁴ Satellite cities would

¹⁰⁰ Macarthur Development Board (MDB), *Campbelltown City Centre* (Campbelltown, NSW: Macarthur Development Board, 1976), n.p.

¹⁰¹ SPA, *The New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin: Structure Plan* (Sydney: SPA, 1973), p. 14. Note this figure includes population outside of the census statistical area, which only held 3,725 people. See Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1947.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 15. Again, note that the SPA was counting population from outside of the census statistical area.

¹⁰³ Gideon Golany, 'Preface', in Gideon Golany (ed.) *International Urban Growth Policies: New Town Contributions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1978), p. vii; Frank Schaffer, 'The New-Town Movement in Britain', in Gideon Golany (ed.) *International Urban Growth Policies: New Town Contributions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1978), pp. 13-4.

¹⁰⁴ G. M. Neutze, 'The Case for New Cities in Australia' in J. C. McMaster and G. R. Webb (eds), *Australian Urban Economics: A Reader* (Brookvale, NSW: Australia & New Zealand Book Co, 1976), pp. 446-7; Lyndsay Neilson, 'New Cities in Australia: The Australian Government's Growth Center

be independent urban environments. Rather than stretching the limits of existing metropolitan centres, they would alleviate the strain upon them. With their own infrastructure, economy, social and cultural life, they would distribute the resources and the population of the wider metropolitan area more evenly, and ease the burdens carried by the city centre.¹⁰⁵

In the late 1960s, Sydney was feeling the strain of expansion.¹⁰⁶ The growth estimates in the Cumberland Plan had been far exceeded, requiring a re-evaluation of the city's planning framework.¹⁰⁷ In 1968, the SPA's *Sydney Regional Outline Plan* argued that Sydney's future growth, rather than sprawling forever outwards, should be redirected into relatively self-contained cities.¹⁰⁸ This planning philosophy had been advocated over the previous five years by urban researcher Max Neutze in his influential work *Economic Policy and the Size of Cities* (1965), by the authors of the federal Vernon Report on the national economy, and in the *Report on Selective Decentralization* by the Development Corporation of New South Wales.¹⁰⁹

The *Outline Plan* proposed that Campbelltown, Camden and Appin be formed into a new city complex populated by around 500,000 people.¹¹⁰ The SPA bought up all the land it could secure and finance, with some additional assistance from the State Treasury in key areas, and in 1973, released the *New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden and Appin Structure Plan*, setting out more specific detail. Rail, road, water and sewerage infrastructure continued to be developed, and by 1975, the Federal Government recognised Macarthur as a growth centre.¹¹¹ It threw in more funds – \$6.7 million in 1974-5 and \$15.7 million in 1975-6 – and plans were confirmed to build a

Program', in Gideon Golany (ed.) *International Urban Growth Policies: New Town Contributions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1978), p. 316.

¹⁰⁵ MDB, *Campbelltown City Centre*, n.p.; David Wilmoth, Robert Purdon, Andrew Strickland and M.I. Logan, 'Towards a National Strategy for Urban and Regional Development', in J. C. McMaster and G. R. Webb *Australian Urban Economics: A Reader* (Brookvale, NSW: Australian and New Zealand Book Company, 1976), pp. 9-45.

¹⁰⁶ *Australian*, 2 May 1974, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Nigel W. Ashton, 'Australia', in Arthur Ling (ed.) *Urban and Regional Planning and Development in the Commonwealth* (Lincolnshire: Howell Publications, 1988), p. 251.

¹⁰⁸ SPA, *The New Cities of Campbelltown, Camden, Appin*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Stretton, *Ideas for Australian Cities*, pp. 247-8.

¹¹⁰ MDB, *Macarthur Growth Centre* (Campbelltown, NSW: The Board, June 1977), p. 2; *Macarthur Advertiser*, 23 August 1989, p. 2.

¹¹¹ Ashton, 'Australia', p. 252; Lyndsay Neilson, 'The Growth Centres Programme', in J. C. McMaster and G. R. Webb (eds), *Australian Urban Economics: A Reader* (Brookvale, NSW: Australia & New Zealand Book Co, 1976), pp. 477.

new metropolis constructed on an old golf course, one kilometre south of Campbelltown's CBD.¹¹² Office blocks, transport interchanges, a hospital, tertiary facilities and a massive new regional shopping centre were to form the hub of the new city. This was despite earlier promises to Campbelltown's Queen Street retailers – the old heart of the town – that 'no Roselands type of development' would be built on the golf course.¹¹³

The NSW and federal governments agreed to set up the Macarthur Development Board (MDB) in 1975 to implement the Structure Plan.¹¹⁴ Such industry development boards, on which local government and business representatives served, were designed to oversee and attract economic development to regional areas.¹¹⁵ Although the local council was represented on the Board, there are reports that it found itself in continual disagreement with the MDB, resenting the fact that the unelected Board consistently overruled its democratic authority.¹¹⁶ In 1978, the MDB was still determined to push ahead with its plans for the integrated city centre outside of the existing township, despite the fact that federal funds had been withdrawn from the project following the change of government at the end of 1975. The retail component of this centre, Macarthur Square, was already being constructed by Lend Lease with finance provided by the State Superannuation Board.¹¹⁷

Lend Lease had been heavily involved in Campbelltown's construction over the previous twenty years. With his company's first residential developments around Sydney and Newcastle in the 1950s proving successful, G. J. Dusseldorp identified Campbelltown as a growth area. Lend Lease bought eighty hectares in 1959 and made further acquisitions in following years. It started by developing residential estates, but with a shortage of shops and community facilities limiting the value of, and demand for houses, the company expanded its scope. It built shops and subsidised shopkeepers to

¹¹² Neilson, 'New Cities in Australia', p. 318.

¹¹³ Jeff McGill, *Campbelltown, a Modern History: 1960-1999* (Campbelltown, NSW: Campbelltown & Airs Historical Society, 1999), pp. 38-9; 'Macarthur Square to be built on the old golf course', *Inside Retailing*, no. 233, 26 July 1976, p. 8.

¹¹⁴ MDB, *Macarthur Growth Centre*, p. 3; NSW Planning and Environment Commission, *Review*, p. 24.

¹¹⁵ Bruce Pennay, *Making a City in the Country: The Albury-Wodonga National Growth Centre* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), p. 150.

¹¹⁶ Neilson, 'New Cities in Australia', p. 327; McGill, *Campbelltown*, p. 53.

¹¹⁷ McGill, *Campbelltown*, p. 53; Carol Liston, *Campbelltown, the Bicentennial History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p. 208.

set up business. The Council built a pool on land provided by Lend Lease, who then constructed a sporting complex next to it. When the SPA began working on plans for the area, it acquired land from Lend Lease to build its new city centre. The company leased back a portion of this, next to the new railway station, on which it built Macarthur Square.¹¹⁸

The NSW Minister for Planning and the Environment, Paul Landa, opened the Square on Tuesday 11 September 1979, while it was still being completed: live music and audio advertising barely drowned out drills and hammers, while gardeners outside were still laying turf and pebbles.¹¹⁹ Macarthur Square covered twenty-five acres, incorporating the area's first major, multi-story department store, David Jones, along with Woolworths, Big W and 100 specialty shops. The local paper described it as 'the district's most dramatic evidence of progress and expansion'.¹²⁰ Advertising declared that:

Magnificent is the word for Macarthur Square... Magnificent in concept and design. Magnificent in its range of shops and merchandise. Magnificent in its spaciousness inside and out, ushering in the style of shopping you'll enjoy through the "eighties" (see Figure 4.11).¹²¹

This advertising incorporated traditional shopping centre idioms of abundance and progress, but also reflected an optimistic outlook after the economic upheavals of the 1970s – although as we see in Chapter Seven, considerable structural problems remained. The advertisement also tapped into local sentiment. One resident, Llewena, remembers that: 'Living in [the] Macarthur region, Camden in particular, we didn't have a major shopping centre for many years. Then they opened Macarthur Square and everyone thought it was huge.'¹²² There is a sense here of being brought into the fold – the outlying region finally incorporated into the modern consumer culture of which its residents were a part, but could not effectively access. This is supported by Ann Marie's

¹¹⁸ Lindie Clark, *Finding a Common Interest: The Story of Dick Dusseldorp and Lend Lease* (Cambridge, Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 188-95.

¹¹⁹ *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 11 September 1979, p.1; *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 11 September 1979, p.1.

¹²⁰ McGill, *Campbelltown*, p. 54; *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 11 September 1979, p.19.

¹²¹ 'Magnificent Macarthur Square' advertisement in *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 11 September 1979, p.13.

¹²² Llewena, OHR no. 90, 8 January 2008 - 23 February 2008.

recollection that: ‘The local community welcomed the events as this is one of the fastest growth areas in Australia and major centres were considered overdue and necessary.’ She describes the ongoing relationship between the Square and residents: ‘Both... [Macarthur Square and Campbelltown Mall built a few years later close to the traditional retail heart of the city] cater for the district very well and have become leisure, entertainment, eating and meeting destinations.’¹²³



Figure 4.11: ‘Magnificent Macarthur Square’
Campbelltown-Ingleburn News, 11 September 1979, p.13.

Despite its magnificence, advertising campaigns, and appeal to many local residents – and not withstanding its negative impact on Queen Street traders – Macarthur Square struggled through much of the 1980s.¹²⁴ Population growth estimates, on which planning for Campbelltown had been based, fell short of expectations; and local manufacturing and employment did not reach hoped-for levels, resulting in long commutes, and economic uncertainty for many residents in the area.¹²⁵ The Square was

¹²³ Ann Marie, OHR no. 91, 8 January 2008 - 23 February 2008.

¹²⁴ Liston, *Campbelltown*, p. 208.

¹²⁵ NSW Planning and Environment Commission, *Review*, p. 27.

isolated from Campbelltown's existing retail precinct until new road openings in 1987, so the shoppers stayed away.¹²⁶ Many retailers felt that Macarthur Square had been built 'ahead of its time' – that is, that there was not a big enough, nor sufficiently developed, market to support it.¹²⁷ At the beginning of the decade, David Jones, facing ongoing profitability problems blamed losses at its Macarthur Square store as a significant contributor to its overall difficulties. Specialty stores in the centre, though, blamed David Jones itself, claiming it was a poorly performing anchor. A specific gripe was the department store's 'low-key promotional approach' that some retailers claimed was holding back 'the entire centre, including itself'.¹²⁸

David Jones was a mismatched anchor for the outer west. Sydney's most upmarket department store may have been above the reach of the average Campbelltown resident; despite advertising claiming that its time payment plan offered 'the best terms in town'.¹²⁹ Lend Lease had ambitious plans for the area and may have looked to David Jones to add prestige, but in 1982, 36.5 percent of Campbelltown's population still lived in dwellings built by the Housing Commission. While Lend Lease had targeted a more affluent demographic with its residential estates, the area's largest land developer was the Land Commission of New South Wales, Landcom, which Neville Wran had set up in 1976 to spread home ownership through the provision of low-priced, fully-serviced land. Landcom supplied half of Campbelltown's residential sites between 1981 and 1984. Most of the purchasers of Landcom sites were young couples establishing their first home.¹³⁰

More in line with the Campbelltown demographic was the massive K mart store that opened in 1984 in Campbelltown's second big shopping centre, Campbelltown Mall. The Mall was adjacent to Queen Street, the traditional shopping precinct of the city located near the railway station. The largest K mart then operating in the Southern Hemisphere, its proximity brought some hope of local retail revitalisation.¹³¹ It also

¹²⁶ Liston, *Campbelltown*, p. 208.

¹²⁷ 'Railway terminus and road link promise centre growth', *Inside Retailing*, no. 650, 1 April 1985, p. 16.

¹²⁸ 'Retail profit results: David Jones' low-key promotion holds back new shopping centre', *Inside Retailing*, no. 435, 29 September 1980, p. 3.

¹²⁹ 'Looking for curtains? Look at David Jones', advertisement in Macarthur Square Supplement, *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 25 September 1979, p. 9.

¹³⁰ Liston, *Campbelltown*, pp. 203-4.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 208.

provided further problems for Macarthur Square, with the managing director of Lend Lease retail, Rod Parking, admitting that its K mart and Target anchors were drawing customers away.¹³² In 1986, Lend Lease hedged its bets, buying Campbelltown Mall, fully leased, for \$45 million from Coles Myer. Coles Myer leased back the K mart and Target stores on long-term agreements.¹³³ Lend Lease claimed that while the Mall and Square would be 'virile' rivals, they would also complement each other: the former suiting 'budget-minded families', the latter, 'with David Jones as anchor... the broad middle market.'¹³⁴ The size of this market in Campbelltown, though, was questionable – especially as David Jones catered to its upper end.

David Jones' Campbelltown location was an issue for that particular branch, but the company's overall profitability problems were symptomatic of a more serious malaise facing department stores during the 1970s.¹³⁵ The arrival of shopping centres had posed a threat, but their need for anchor tenants to draw shoppers had allowed the big stores the opportunity to continue their expansion through the suburbs. Shopping centres served to sustain department stores rather than disrupt their business model. But they had also replicated many of the ingredients for their success. As shopping centres expanded through the 1970s they attracted thousands of small tenant-operated stores. These competed strongly with the big stores, providing 'better service, more exciting décor, specialisation and better buying'.¹³⁶ And they were now gathered together, grouped by centralised management, with all the convenience and facilities that had once been unique to department stores.¹³⁷ Customers could park their car, browse a whole range of stores, break for coffee and return to shopping. If it was an extended trip, meals were available. Prices and goods could even be compared with the department store itself. And by the early 1980s, after the latter had cut staff through the previous decade, specialty shops held a mortgage in the customers' minds on service

¹³² 'Railway terminus and road link promise centre growth', *Inside Retailing*, no. 650, 1 April 1985, p. 16.

¹³³ 'Lend Lease pays \$45 million for Sydney Centre', *Inside Retailing*, no. 721, 8 September 1986, p. 7.

¹³⁴ 'Neighbouring centres for Lend Lease won't be twins', *Inside Retailing*, no. 722, 15 September 1986, p. 5.

¹³⁵ David Jones closed six of its Western Australian stores in 1978, and Waltons closed down its Mark Foy's stores in 1981. See Stuart Rosewarne, 'The Political Economy of Retailing into the Eighties: Part I', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, vol. 15, 1983, p. 26.

¹³⁶ 'Two thing killed department stores' reliance on top quality goods', *Inside Retailing*, no. 262, 14 March 1977, p. 5. See also Kingston, *Basket Bag and Trolley*, p. 109.

¹³⁷ For a general American assertion of this trend, see George Sternlieb and James W. Hughes, 'Introduction: The Uncertain Future of Shopping Centres', in George Sternlieb & James W. Hughes (eds) *Shopping Centres U.S.A.* (Piscataway: Center for Urban Policy Research, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, 1981), p. 6.

and product knowledge.¹³⁸ Department stores drew customers into shopping centres, but by making them comfortable in that environment, and helping to educate them in the new style of shopping, they ‘sowed the seeds of their own obsolescence’.¹³⁹

Economic and social changes were also shifting the ground under the big traditional stores. They struggled to sell (quality) expensive merchandise to a more casually dressed society in a tighter economic environment.¹⁴⁰ And crucially in such a climate, they lost their monopoly on credit provision when Bankcard was rolled out in 1974.¹⁴¹ Department store credit cards had kept customers tied to particular stores, but Bankcard provided credit to virtually anyone in virtually any store.¹⁴² The transfer of credit allegiance was not immediate, and was slowed further by the chauvinistic logic of the mail-out: Bankcards were sent, unsolicited, to most Australian male ‘household heads’, leaving women, who made the bulk of purchases, more likely to continue using their department store cards.¹⁴³ Most of the major stores were in fact reluctant to sign up to Bankcard. Myer held out the longest, only coming on board in the late 1970s. By March 1976, though, 700,000 Australians had used Bankcard, and other credit card providers such as Diner’s Club were also reporting greater usage and a growing public acceptance of credit cards.¹⁴⁴ A year later, there were 1.1 million Bankcards in use, with 65,000 merchants signed up and card holders growing at 30,000 a month. Retailers reported Bankcard increasingly replacing facilities such as hire purchase and store credit mechanisms.¹⁴⁵ In the year to June 30, 1978, the Commonwealth Bank alone reported that its Bankcards were used to purchase \$222 million worth of goods, as well as fund \$74 million in cash advances.¹⁴⁶ The spread of Bankcard usage was one of the factors in

¹³⁸ *Inside Retailing*, no. 490, 16 November 1981, p. 2.

¹³⁹ Clayton M. Christensen and Richard S. Tedlow, ‘Patterns of Disruption in Retailing’, *Harvard Business Review*, January–February 2000, p. 43.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Two thing killed department stores’ reliance on top quality goods’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 262, 14 March 1977, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Sinclair, Knight & Partners, ‘Towards a Centres Policy’, p. 51.

¹⁴² Jack Taylor (Billy Guyatt electrical chain), cited in ‘Discounter attacks major retailers’ service, prices, staff wages and “buttoned-up-boots”’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 379, 6 August 1979, p. 4; Brian Robins, ‘We’re Gonna Beat It’, *National Times*, 13-19 May 1983, p. 36; Sternlieb and Hughes, ‘Introduction’, p. 6.

¹⁴³ ‘Grace Bros card stays popular’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 328, 10 July 1978, p. 7; ‘Retailers credit “far exceeds Bankcard”’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 330, 31 July 1978, p. 10.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Credit card usage growing’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 213, 8 March 1976, p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ ‘Bankcard is expanding at 30,000 a month and cutting heavily into retailers’ credit systems’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 261, 7 March 1977, p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ ‘Commonwealth Bankcard purchases totaled \$222m’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 338, 25 September 1978, p. 3; ‘No Christmas gift from Bankcard’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 335, 4 September 1978, p. 12.

the growing accumulation of household debt in Australia, which rose from nineteen percent of total debt in 1964 to thirty-two percent in 1981.¹⁴⁷

Within shopping centres, bankcard provided shoppers with credit in any of the dozens of specialty stores gathered around the department store anchor. When he made the customary inspection of Macarthur Square's shops and facilities prior to its opening, Paul Landa claimed that 'he could feel his hand reaching for his bankcard'.¹⁴⁸ His throw-away line signified the public acceptance and familiarity with bankcard as a credit option; the pull of the centre in encouraging spending; and the natural fit of credit cards with the shopping centre environment. Its huge array of goods could now be obtained more easily. Shopping at the centre had become even more convenient.

The discount revolution

On top of its other challenges, the 1970s department store confronted a new rival.¹⁴⁹ Discount department stores had rocked American retail in the 1960s, surpassing the total sales volume of conventional department stores by 1965.¹⁵⁰ Lean, efficient and hungry for sales, they conquered Australian retailing in the 1970s. They became anchors in 1970s shopping centres, and in Sydney were particularly suited to western suburb's budgets.¹⁵¹

Discount department stores were designed around the simple formula of applying 'supermarket methods of merchandising to non-food items.' This meant mass-produced, branded merchandise that would sell itself at low profit margins in single-floor, self

¹⁴⁷ Jocelyn Horner, 'The Diffusion of Bankcard in Australia: A Note', *Australian Journal of Management*, vol. 11, no. 2, December 1986, p. 192.

¹⁴⁸ *Campbelltown-Ingleburn News*, 11 September 1979, p.1.

¹⁴⁹ Robins, 'We're Gonna Beat It', p. 36. It was described as 'a new way of shopping' in promotions, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS001*, 456, Press Release to Ronald Plater from R. B. Coles, 'Blacktown K Mart Opening October 22', 1969.

¹⁵⁰ Barry Bluestone, *The Retail Revolution: Market Transformation, Investment, and Labor in the Modern Department Store* (Boston, Mass.: Auburn House Pub. Co., c1981), p. 18.

¹⁵¹ On the number of offers being fielded by K mart from developers, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS003*, 493, 'K mart Corporation Proposal', 1978.

service, checkout stores.¹⁵² The expensive ornamentation, carpeting and amenities of the department store were done away with; shop layouts were configured to efficiently handle streams of customers.¹⁵³ Discount stores operated in suburban areas where rentals were lower than in the city, achieving large sales volumes per square foot of retail space, dollar of investment and sales personnel.¹⁵⁴ In a Coles company presentation in 1969, L. R. Robinson summed up the 'new concept of selling', arguing that lower investment, 'better' wage structures, more advertising, higher unit sales, a wider range but limited assortment of goods and one floor level trading produced lower selling prices, more customers, lower wages and consequently 'MORE PROFIT'.¹⁵⁵

In the United States, the emergence of big discount stores was seen as a severe threat to both large department stores and small retailers. Although department stores had originally created cost advantages of their own through lower service levels than the local merchants they out-competed in the late nineteenth century, this downscaling innovation had been lost to memory, and in the twentieth-century high-service levels were considered a feature of department store retailing.¹⁵⁶ Discounters replaced the department stores' cycle of ritual seasonal sales with 'everyday low prices', where bargains, and therefore savings, were a feature of every buying trip.¹⁵⁷ In the early 1960s, Australia's big retailers were aware, from their (constant and long-running) observations of American retailing trends, of the looming discount challenge. Ten years down the track, the continued success of discount department stores in the United States left little doubt that they were the future of retail growth. So just as big retail had adapted and branched into the suburbs now, with the help of direct American expertise

¹⁵² Christensen and Tedlow, *Patterns of Disruption in Retailing*, p. 43; Philip Luker, 'How Woolworths missed the bus and is not striving to catch K mart, Target', *Inside Retailing*, no. 335, 4 September 1978, p. 13.

¹⁵³ Joan Magretta, 'Why Business Models Matter', *Harvard Business Review*, May 2002, vol. 80, no. 5, pp. 86-92.

¹⁵⁴ *Retail Trader*, vol. 42, no. 6, January 1961, pp. 26-9; 'NZ looks at our discount stores', *Australian Retailing* vol. 5, no. 4, February 1972, p. 20.

¹⁵⁵ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS003*, 493, Overhead projections for a talk by L. R. Robinson, 1969.

¹⁵⁶ Christensen and Tedlow, *Patterns of Disruption in Retailing*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁷ Zukin, *Point of Purchase*, pp. 79-80. That bargains were 'available all day every day' at K mart stores, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS001*, 456, 'Sunnybank K Mart – A Revolutionary Principle', Press Release issued by G. J. Coles & Coy. Limited, c1973.

and investment, it brought discounters in-house.¹⁵⁸ Coles, Woolworths and Myer expanded their operations to embrace the new phenomenon.

Australia's big supermarkets were in the best position to take advantage of the new model. Discount department stores were essentially supermarkets focused largely on non-food items. For Coles and Woolworths there was also a synergy with their variety store foundations and their existing non-food range. After plunging into supermarkets in the early 1960s, they had both begun cutting the margins on food in an intensely competitive market. In the 1970s, targeting the higher margins available, they included more non-food items in their supermarkets.¹⁵⁹ From here there was a natural transition to the discount department store model. As they had done in America, supermarkets educated the customer to the benefits of giving up personal service in exchange for lower prices, paving the way for all goods to be sold along the same lines.¹⁶⁰

Along with Coles and Woolworths, Australia's other major retailers to set up discount department stores were Myer which operated Target, and South Australia's John Martin's department store chain which ran Venture. A number of Venture stores opened in Sydney, beginning at Merrylands Mall in 1972, and then at Liverpool and in the Great Western Shopping Centre, Mt Druitt. More followed in Cabramatta, Campbelltown, Caringbah, the Seven Hills Shopping Centre, Auburn, Baulkham Hills and Penrith. Venture, though, eventually fell behind the big three, cut back on its merchandise range, and dropped out of the discount department store category.¹⁶¹

Myer, however, while based in Melbourne was heavily engaged with Sydney: involved in shopping centre development; running stores in Sydney centres; and in the 1970s, bringing Target to the NSW market. The first Target store built by Myer opened in Adelaide in October 1970, and followed Myer's long running orientation towards

¹⁵⁸ Luker, 'How Woolworths missed the bus', p. 13; 'Myer's unlikely to diversify far from retailing says broker's report on industry', *Inside Retailing*, no. 209, 9 February 1976, p. 9.

¹⁵⁹ Philip Luker, 'The top of the trade (3): Biggest in sales, innovations and store types', *Inside Retailing*, no. 273, 30 May 1977, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Magretta, 'Why Business Models Matter', p. 7.

¹⁶¹ Retail Surveys Pty Ltd, 'Retail Space Requirement Sutherland Shire: Report Prepared for Westfield Developments Pty. Ltd.', (Sydney: Retail Surveys Pty Ltd, 1981), p. 12.

softgoods.¹⁶² American discount principles were followed, including the reduction of stocked items to those which ‘would give it the greatest profit, and doing without items that would not pay off’.¹⁶³ Myer had taken sixty-three years to open or acquire 7,000,000 square feet of trading space in fifty-five department stores. In the mid 1970s, after just a few years of operations, its discount arm had the same number of stores, accounted for around a quarter of Myer’s trading floor area, and made fifteen percent of its sales.¹⁶⁴

With a shared demographic and the ongoing need for strong anchor tenants, discount department stores were naturally attractive to shopping centre operators. As we have seen, there were already good working relationships between the big discount owners – Woolworths, Coles, and Myer – and developers. In Sydney, an impetus for the discounters was the absence of suitably zoned land on which to build stand-alone stores.¹⁶⁵ Target’s first Sydney store opened in 1970, in the Wallace Way Shopping Centre in Chatswood.¹⁶⁶ This was a small centre, close to the train station, with several specialty stores lining the walkway to the Target store around which the centre had been built. In 1972, Target opened as one of the anchors in Westfield Liverpool Shoppingtown, as well as in Balmoral Street Blacktown, where it competed directly with K-Mart’s original Sydney store. The following year, Target moved this store into Westpoint Shopping Centre, and opened another in Westfield’s Burwood centre. Further stores followed in Fairfield (1974), Eastwood, Leichhardt, Parramatta (1975), and at St Marys and Rockdale later in the decade.¹⁶⁷

Coles entered department store discounting by buying American discounting expertise through a joint venture with United States’ discount giant Kresge.¹⁶⁸ It was an immensely profitable operation, going from strength to strength as the decade wore

¹⁶² Luker, ‘How Woolworths missed the bus’, p. 13; ‘NZ looks at our discount stores’, *Australian Retailing* vol. 5, no. 4, February 1972, p. 20; Philip Luker, ‘Target from the Inside’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 452, 23 February 1981, p. 8.

¹⁶³ Neil Neville (Myer Target Marketing Director), quoted in *Inside Retailing*, no. 113, February 18, 1974, p. 2; ‘NZ looks at our discount stores’, *Australian Retailing* vol. 5, no. 4, February 1972, p. 20.

¹⁶⁴ Philip Luker ‘The Discount Department Store Revolution’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 130, 17 June 1974, p. 8; ‘Myer’s unlikely to diversify far from retailing says broker’s report on industry’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 209, 9 February 1976, p. 9.

¹⁶⁵ Retail Surveys Pty Ltd, ‘Retail Space Requirement Sutherland Shire’, p. 12.

¹⁶⁶ *NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages*, 1971, p. 1456.

¹⁶⁷ *NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages*, 1970-1980.

¹⁶⁸ Luker, ‘How Woolworths missed the bus’, p. 13; *Inside Retailing*, no. 329, 24 July 1978, p. 2.

on.¹⁶⁹ K mart's operating profit after net tax for the year ending 31 December 1977 was \$7,950,659.¹⁷⁰ The profitability of K mart and its importance to the company's overall fortunes encouraged Coles to buy out Kresge's share of the operation in 1978 – exchanging it for twenty-percent of Coles' total operations.¹⁷¹ Retail commentator and editor of *Inside Retailing*, Phillip Luker, described it as one of the most important transactions in the company's history.¹⁷² K mart led the charge of the discount department stores nationally, and was first into the Sydney market. It started at Blacktown in 1969, but paused until 1972 when it opened another in Merrylands Mall.¹⁷³ A store at Fairfield followed in 1974, and then another at Westfield Shoppingtown North Rocks, which claimed to provide 'all the things a great store should': '50 great departments for the whole family... first quality merchandise', a money back guarantee, air conditioning, free parking and hire purchase facilities (see Figure 4.12).¹⁷⁴ But after North Rocks, Sydneysiders had to wait until 1978 for another K mart to open at Hornsby, and then 1979 for two more: one at Bankstown Square and the other at Warriewood Square which tapped into the upper Northern Beaches of Sydney some ten kilometres north of Warringah Mall.¹⁷⁵

Coles' nation-wide success with K mart was Woolworths' missed opportunity. In the 1960s it dabbled with a junior department store model under the Big W badge, and tried a move towards full department store status with its Liverpool Big W in 1966, but the supermarket brand did not translate well to traditional department store retailing.

¹⁶⁹ 'Discount department stores lead the revival in retail development and sales growth', *Inside Retailing*, no. 270, 9 May 1977, p. 9.

¹⁷⁰ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS003*, 493, 'Directors Report', K mart (Australia) Limited, 24 June 1978, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS003*, 493, 'Closing Memorandum re K Mart (Australia) Limited Reconstruction – 20th December at 2.30pm at the Offices of G. J. Coles & Coy Limited', 18 December 1978; 'A Suggestion for a Coles Takeover of K Mart Activities', n.d.; 'Coles Proposal', n.d.; 'K mart (Australia) Fee Agreement', 8 December 1978; 'Australia Registered Users Agreement', 8 December 1978; 'Basis of a premium on issue to KMC for 51% equity in KMA plus licence fee', n.d.; 'Coles passes Woolworths in Sales: K marts average \$172,868 sales and \$4,582 profits weekly', *Inside Retailing*, no. 330, 31 July 1978, p. 11.

¹⁷² Phillip Luker, 'Retail transformation (3): The "X" factor takes Coles back 65 years', *Inside Retailing*, no. 357, 5 March 1979, p. 11; 'Coles passes Woolworths in Sales: K marts average \$172,868 sales and \$4,582 profits weekly', *Inside Retailing*, no. 330, 31 July 1978, p. 11.

¹⁷³ *NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages*, 1973, p. 825. On the Blacktown opening, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS001*, 456, Press Release to Ronald Plater from R. B. Coles, 'Blacktown K Mart Opening October 22', 1969.

¹⁷⁴ Advertisement, 'Grand Opening North Rocks Shoppingtown K mart', in *Advertiser*, 24 September 1975, p. 21.

¹⁷⁵ *NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages*, 1979, p. 252; *NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages*, 1980, p. 266.

Woolworth's management believed that Australia was not yet ready for large-scale discount department stores and instead tried smaller 'Family Centres' – the first of which opened on 8 July 1970 in the Indooroopilly shopping centre in Queensland (see Figure 1.3).¹⁷⁶

GRAND OPENING

NORTH ROCKS SHOPPINGTOWN

Kmart

DISCOUNT DEPARTMENT STORE

IS ALL THE THINGS A GREAT STORE SHOULD BE

- 50 GREAT DEPARTMENTS FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY INCLUDING FOOTWEAR AND AUTO ACCESSORIES.
- FIRST QUALITY MERCHANDISE SOLD.
- SATISFACTION GUARANTEED OR YOUR MONEY CHEERFULLY REFUNDED.
- AIR CONDITIONED FOR YOUR COMFORT.
- FREE PARKING FOR HUNDREDS OF CARS.
- HIRE PURCHASE FACILITIES AVAILABLE.
- THIS IS THE 23RD GREAT STORE OPENED THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA SINCE 1969.

LOOK FOR THE BIG NORTH ROCKS SHOPPINGTOWN SUPPLEMENT BEING DELIVERED TO THOUSANDS OF HOMES, INCLUDING 16 EXCITING DISCOUNT-PACKED PAGES ESPECIALLY FOR Kmart SHOPPERS!

ALREADY 6 STORES IN NSW
 BLACKTOWN • MERRYLANDS MALL • FAIRFIELD WEST
 WARATAH • WARRAWONG • FIGTREE

AND NOW

NEW NORTH ROCKS *Westfield SHOPPINGTOWN*
 CNR. OLD NORTH ROCKS ROAD AND BARCLAY ROAD

OPENS WED. OCT 1 AT 8.30 A.M.

Inset map showing the location of the store at the corner of Old North Rocks Road and Barclay Road.

Figure 4.12: K mart advertisement
 Advertiser, 24 Sept 1975, p. 21.

¹⁷⁶ Philip Luker, 'How Woolworths missed the bus and is not striving to catch K mart, Target', *Inside Retailing*, no. 335, 4 September 1978, p. 13; *Retail World*, vol. 23, no. 21, Wednesday, October 14, 1970, p. 5.

Family Centres were fully self-serviced discount stores, principally focused on food, which, at around 40,000 sq. ft., were half the size of K mart and Target stores (see Figure 4.14). Kim Humphery comments that: 'Family could not exactly be bought here, but it could be consolidated by way of the family outing, and the company promoted these centres as the place to do so.'¹⁷⁷ Family Centres, though, proved too small to compete effectively with Target and K mart, and in 1976, Woolworths introduced its own genuine discount department stores under the revitalised Big W brand.¹⁷⁸

Figure 4.13: Woolworths Family Centres advertisement
Blacktown Advocate, 4 April 1973, pp. 24-25.

In the early 1970s, there were junior department Big W stores in Bankstown Square, Chatswood and Liverpool.¹⁷⁹ By 1973, Woolworths had divided its operations at Bankstown Square into a supermarket, a variety store and a Family Centre. Other Family Centres provided valuable small anchors for Westpoint at Blacktown, and the

¹⁷⁷ Humphery, *Shelf Life*, p. 144.

¹⁷⁸ Philip Luker, 'The top of the trade (3): Biggest in sales, innovations and store types', *Inside Retailing*, no. 273, 30 May 1977, p. 5; Dennis Turner, *The Revitalisation of Woolworths: Case Study* (Kensington, NSW: Centre for Corporate Change, Australian Graduate School of Management, The University of New South Wales, 1991).

¹⁷⁹ *NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages*, 1972, p. 170.

Great Western Shopping Centre, Mount Druitt.¹⁸⁰ The following year, a Woolworths Homemakers store was added to Bankstown Square, the Phoenix Plaza shopping centre had opened at Liverpool with a Family Centre and Homemakers store, and further Family Centres had been introduced to Miranda Fair and Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta.¹⁸¹ In 1979, Sydney's first re-branded Big W's returned to Sydney in Chullora and Macarthur Square.¹⁸²

Discount stores were the success story of a depressed retail industry, as the 'glamour, excitement and newness' that had surrounded modern retailing forms gave 'way to a more mundane emphasis on cheapness.'¹⁸³ In five years from K mart's first store in Melbourne, over 5 million square feet in 113 discount stores had been built in Australia.¹⁸⁴ As advertising suggested in regards to its even larger model: 'If there isn't a Super K mart near you now... there eventually will be'.¹⁸⁵ Discounters were not immune to the economic travails of the 1970s, but as budget retailers, they were more aligned with people's spending limitations, and their practical conformity suited a broad middle market that had little need or interest in high fashion or the nuances of fine design.¹⁸⁶ Although economic conditions slowed what would have been an even faster rate of expansion, there was safety in the middle-ground – the prime demographic of shopping centres themselves – and all the major stores, like the Australian population itself, were shifting towards it: 'the department stores by moving down-market, variety stores by moving up-market.'¹⁸⁷ 'Whatever happens to the economy and real incomes',

¹⁸⁰ NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages, 1974, p. 1710.

¹⁸¹ NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages, 1975, p. 383.

¹⁸² NSW Telephone Directory, Sydney, White Pages, 1980, p. 528.

¹⁸³ Humphery, *Shelf Life*, p. 144.

¹⁸⁴ Luker 'The Discount Department Store Revolution', p. 8.

¹⁸⁵ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS001*, 460, Store #1110 Albury, NSW (Super K mart), 'Welcome to Super K mart Albury' brochure.

¹⁸⁶ That 'economic setbacks reawakened shoppers' interest in low prices', see Zukin, *Point of Purchase*, p. 83.

¹⁸⁷ Note that when Grace Bros opened its Macquarie Centre store in 1981, it provided the same selling area as the company's other larger stores through minimising administration and distribution areas. See Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, 'The investment marriage at Macquarie'. On economic conditions and discount expansion, see 'Credit squeeze slows expansion of discount department store chains, but not for long', *Inside Retailing*, no. 169, 7 April 1975, p. 4; Cardew and Simons (1982) quoted in White, 'The Changing Nature', p. 33. Labour saving was a perilous business strategy for department stores; they could easily lose relevance. As they shed staff to drop costs, they risked becoming expensive versions of their cheaper young rivals. See 'Executive puts writing on the wall for department stores and tells why they went wrong', *Inside Retailing*, no. 572, 8 August 1983, p. 16; George Timms (group managing director, David Jones), quoted in 'The company that likes a fight will move into Melbourne when the time is ripe', *Inside Retailing*, no. 271, 16 May 1977, p. 6.

wrote Philip Luker, the editor and publisher of *Inside Retailing*, ‘most Australians seek value rather than quality’.¹⁸⁸

Sharon Zukin has written that the broad homogeneity and attraction of discount stores and Wal-Mart to diverse income groups in America ‘created the illusion of a classless society’; the false impression ‘that, by shopping for brand names at bargain prices, all shoppers can be “middle-class.”’¹⁸⁹ Although there were different operating methodologies between Wal-Mart and Australian discount houses – not least the latter’s frequent inclusion in shopping centres owned by external interests – Zukin’s understanding of the democratisation of lifestyle that ‘everyday bargains’ promised is useful for interpreting the impact of discounters on Australian shopping culture and social attitudes: ‘Connected not by our social positions, and still less by the things we can truly afford to buy’, she writes, ‘the culture of bargains makes us feel that we are all part of the same society.’¹⁹⁰

The growth of shopping centres accompanied the redefinition of Australia as a middle class society. In surveys before World War II, the majority of Australians defined themselves as working class. By the 1960s, the majority were self-defining as middle class.¹⁹¹ Despite this, one of Australia’s foremost recent historians of class, Craig McGregor, cautions against a thesis of post-war embourgeoisement whereby workers climb upwards to join an ever-expanding middle class. He argues that class mobility is not as pronounced in Australia as a surface-level analysis may presume, and that, as we saw Stretton also argue, significant disparities still separate large groups of Australians when incomes, opportunities, education, and personal autonomy are taken into account. One of the masking agents concealing these disparities, McGregor suggests, is ‘the development of consumerism, and the purchase of possessions... as a way of defining your status and possible class position.’ If you can afford to buy ‘a houseful of Myer furniture and gadgets’, he writes, ‘you may begin to think of yourself as just as middle-

¹⁸⁸ Philip Luker ‘Retailing into the 1980s’ (from an address by Philip Luker, publisher and editor of *Inside Retailing* to the Retail Management Institute of Australia, Sydney, June 1979), *Inside Retailing*, no. 373, 25 June 1979, p. 10.

¹⁸⁹ Zukin, *Point of Purchase*, p. 84.

¹⁹⁰ Zukin, *Point of Purchase*, p. 87. On every day bargains, see, for example, Super K mart advertising: ‘you pay lower prices at K mart whether there’s a sale on or not! Everything in K mart is discounted. See Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS001, 460*, ‘Welcome to Super K mart Albury’ brochure.

¹⁹¹ Craig McGregor, *Class in Australia*, 2nd Ed., (Ringwood, Victoria: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 87.

class as – well, as the shining white nuclear suburbanites who promote these things on the TV shows.’¹⁹² Suburbia, high levels of home ownership and mainstream consumer culture brought a degree of social and cultural homogeneity to Australia, as well as a lifestyle that has become identifiable as ‘middle class’, even for many manual workers or those who might be defined as working class under different criteria by outside observers.¹⁹³ A good example of the complexity of class is the casualisation, explored in Chapter Seven, that accompanied retail development into the 1980s and beyond. Employees in discount department stores may have been able to purchase a wide variety of consumer items, but they could well experience casualised, insecure working conditions.

The majority of early discount department stores in Sydney were built in the western suburbs where there were significant shortages of wealth, privilege and access to social capital compared with the affluent coastal areas of the city. In poorer areas across Australia, discounters made it possible for residents to move up a level in consumer purchasing power. While this could mean an over-extension of debt, lay-by enabled many to budget for purchases over time. When Target tried to remove its lay-by system in Broadmeadows, Victoria in 1972, local residents from ‘the lowest rung’ of society banded together. Arguing that the move was an attempt to shift people to credit cards, local activists organised a boycott of the store. Mark Peel has recorded their voices:

People stood outside and every time someone came into Target they’d have a discussion about why not to go in. They [Target] had stooges with trolleys and the whole thing. But they only got one-third of their normal business. We won that one...¹⁹⁴

Discount department stores certainly did not create the Australian self-understanding of their society as classless or middle class – although Westfield claimed in 1968 that shopping centres elevated people’s ‘sense of well-being’ – but they helped distribute budget consumables that when put together could look something like a middle class lifestyle.¹⁹⁵ This is not to say that people who shopped at K mart or Target necessarily

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 64-79.

¹⁹³ Leonard Broom and F. Lancaster Jones, *Opportunity and Attainment in Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1976) cited in McGregor, *Class in Australia*, p. 151.

¹⁹⁴ Mark Peel, *The Lowest Rung: Voice of Australian Poverty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 38.

¹⁹⁵ For Westfield’s claim, see Westfield Development Corporation, ‘The Story Inside’.

thought of themselves as middle class – clearly the Broadmeadows’ residents in Mark Peel’s study held no such illusion. Discounters, though, democratised the trappings of the consumer good life allowing more people to buy more things. As discount operations spread through the 1970s, virtually no social demographic was left untouched. People in the affluent east of Sydney were pulling the same products off the shelf as many in the western suburbs.¹⁹⁶ Through discounting and shopping centres, a wider range of the population obtained access to the fruits of affluence – albeit cheaper, designed-down, shorter-lived fruit – than they had previously.

Sociologist Michael Pusey has argued that ‘middle Australia’, defined as those with household incomes above the twentieth percentile and below the ninetieth, went backwards in the 1980s, as economics became the supreme arbiter of government policy.¹⁹⁷ In the mid-1990s, Steven Bridges from Byvan Management, which managed seventy shopping centre complexes across Australia, made a similar claim. He argued that the decline of department stores was reflective of Australia’s shrinking middle class. While up-market majors like David Jones still catered to a small elite around the top of the economic and social scale, discount department stores catered to the masses.¹⁹⁸ Department stores in the middle, as we have seen, were in trouble. The middle class that had formed the demographic base for their post-war suburban branch expansion was hollowing out.

If the middle demographic had experienced a change of fortunes, though, it remained the largest and most profitable for general retail. Describing K mart’s demographic in the early 1980s, the chief executive of Coles, Brian Quinn, declared: ‘The middle market is our market. We want to market to middle Australia.’¹⁹⁹ Target’s prime

¹⁹⁶ That ‘everyone likes a bargain’, see Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *KMARS001*, 456, ‘Sunnybank K Mart – A Revolutionary Principle’, Press Release issued by G. J. Coles & Coy. Limited, c1973.

¹⁹⁷ Michael Pusey, *Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes Its Mind* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Michael Pusey, ‘An Australian story: the troubling experience of economic reform’, *Papers on Parliament*, no. 40, December 2003, pp. 97.

¹⁹⁸ Justin Bicknell, ‘What’s In What’s Out - Changes in the Tenant Mix of Shopping Centres’, *Property Australia*, vol.11, no. 2, October 1996, pp. 34-35. That David Jones was ‘unassailable at the top end of the market’, see *Financial Review*, 24 August 1984, p. 68.

¹⁹⁹ Brian Quinn (chief executive, Coles) quoted in Philip Luker, ‘Why Coles is so successful’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 629, 1 October 1984, p. 9.

demographic, likewise, was the middle seventy percent of income earners.²⁰⁰ Its typical customer was:

a married woman, aged 25 to 35, with children and a family car, buying heavily for her family and used to having more disposable income before being married and having a family. She is used to buying better quality goods and seeks value for money rather than cheap prices. She shops for convenience rather than for enjoyment.²⁰¹

Target's customer, in this description, is a fallen consumer. She has dropped a price bracket. As Bridges suggests above, she is a metaphor for the broader society described in Pusey's work.

By 1980, Sydney's West held 4.7 percent of Australia's total retail establishments. Their sales

accounted for 7.5 percent of total sales, and they employed 5.2 percent of the industry's total workforce. Parramatta alone held over one percent of the country's retail sales. Sales per establishment in the west averaged \$379,000 compared with Sydney's total average of \$343,000. Wages and salaries took up a lower proportion of costs, while the average floorspace was considerably larger than that in the city overall.²⁰² Through the course of the 1970s, total numbers of shopping trips to major commercial centres in Sydney increased by a much greater percentage than did retail employment. In Parramatta, the latter dropped by twenty-seven percent over the period, while shopping



Figure 4.14: Target advertisement
Blacktown Advocate, 21 March 1973, p. 15.

²⁰⁰ Neil Neville (Myer Target Marketing Director), quoted in *Inside Retailing*, no. 113, February 18, 1974, p. 2.

²⁰¹ Philip Luker, 'Target from the Inside', *Inside Retailing*, no. 452, 23 February 1981, p. 7.

²⁰² WSROC, Study of Major Urban Centres of Western Sydney, pp. 30-1.

trips increased by forty percent.²⁰³ These figures reflected more recent construction in the west and modern business models that reduced 'total operating costs by substituting floorspace, inventory and more up-to-date operations for less efficient labour intensive methods.'²⁰⁴ In short, the West had been engulfed by, and had embraced, the 'discount revolution'.

²⁰³ State Transit Study Group of New South Wales, 'Sydney Region Commercial Centres Information Paper', Report no. 227 (Sydney: The Group, 1987), p. 57.

²⁰⁴ Hirst Consulting Services, 'WSROC Study of Major Urban Centres of Western Sydney', pp. 30-1.

Chapter Five

The Consumption of Leisure at Macquarie Centre

Having analysed the initial establishment of shopping centres in Sydney during the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter examines the aesthetics of shopping centre development in the 1980s and the shift towards leisure facilities that became characteristic of regional centres by the decade's end. It begins with the development of Macquarie Centre, built in North Ryde adjacent to Macquarie University in the early 1980s. Macquarie serves as a useful case study because it was one of the few centres built from scratch in this decade; it incorporated new design philosophies of open natural light and abundant greenery inside and out; it used a highly unusual internal layout; and it included, and expanded in following years, an extensive leisure precinct including an ice-rink. This chapter explores shopping centre aesthetics, strategies of store layouts and tenant positioning, and the establishment of leisure precincts containing multiplex cinemas, food courts and games arcades, as key shopping drawcards in the 1980s and 1990s.

Macquarie could well have been a 1970s shopping centre. Grace Bros bought sixteen acres of land at North Ryde in 1968 with plans to build a \$12 million centre.¹ David Jones, too, had shown interest in the area and had developed preliminary plans with Hooker Corporation for an elegant modern centre they proposed to call 'Garden City'.² But Grace Bros made the front running. When its initial development application was not approved by Ryde Municipal Council, the company appealed to the SPA. It, too, advised Grace Bros that the development was contrary to the strategy outlined in the SROP for the location of shopping centres in the Northern Suburbs, and turned it down. Undeterred, Grace Bros submitted a further appeal, with the support of three reports by town planners, which, it

¹ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Letter to Mr R. Kelly from B. A. Grace, 10 November 1969; Brash, *The Model Store*, p. 278.

² 'Instant City' project by David Jones', *Australian Retailing*, vol. 3 no. 1, April 1969, pp. 10-11.

argued, confirmed both the economic feasibility of the project, and that the nearby university was not opposed to the project.³



Figure 5.1: Macquarie Centre, projected trade area, 1969

Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 3236, 'Macquarie Shopping Centre North Ryde', Section 1, pp. 1-2 and Section 9, p. 2; Annexure B, Report by Professor D. F. Orchard, 5 January 1969.

Grace Bros purchased further land, received approvals in 1969, and continued preliminary construction work through the 1970s.⁴ In 1974, the local paper pictured earth moving

³ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 3236, 'Macquarie Shopping Centre North Ryde', Section 1, pp. 1-2 and Section 9, p. 2; Annexure B, Report by Professor D. F. Orchard, 5 January 1969; Annexure C, Report by Dr I. Boileau, 1 August 1968; Annexure C, Report by James Colman, Architect and Planner, January 1969.

⁴ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Letter to Mr R. Kelly from B. A. Grace, 10 November 1969. See also *Northern District Times*, 28 June 1972, p. 1; *Northern*

machinery digging up what had been the prized strawberry patches of the ‘Strawberry King’, and former Mayor of Ryde, Jack Matthews.⁵ But the company’s expansion program slowed with the economy, and little significant progress was made at North Ryde until an amended development application was approved towards the end of 1978.⁶ Grace Bros barely opened a store in the 1970s – their Macquarie anchor was their first full-line store in more than ten years. Work began in 1979 when the AMP Society agreed to become the majority shareholder and provide the greater share of the finances for the \$80 million complex.⁷



Figure 5.2: Macquarie Centre under construction, March 1981

Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 3236, Macquarie Centre Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 1, March 1981, cover.

District Times, 17 November 1976, p. 7; ‘Marked increase in small-to-medium retail developments and recovery in sight for big projects’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 206, 26 January 1976, p. 1.

⁵ *Northern District Times*, 15 May 1974, p. 1.

⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 November 1978, p. 31; *Northern District Times*, 21 November 1978, p. 1; *Northern District Times*, 6 September 1978, p. 3; *Northern District Times*, 29 November 1978, p. 3.

⁷ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, ‘The investment marriage at Macquarie’.

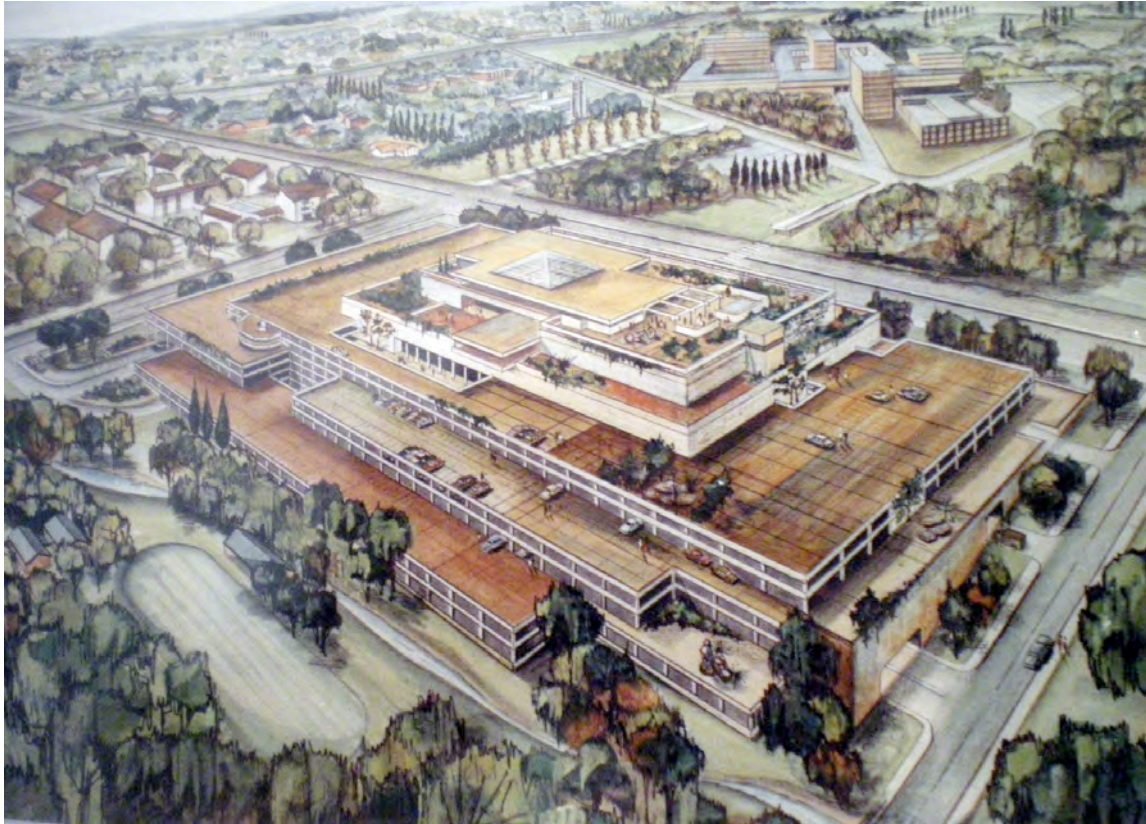


Figure 5.3: Macquarie Centre architects depiction
 Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 3236, Macquarie Centre Architects Depiction, c1980.

Construction began in March 1979, but was marred by industrial disputes.⁸ The Industrial Relations Commission awarded all site workers \$24 over their awards in November 1979 as a ‘major site allowance’. After further problems, workers were offered up to \$1,000 in shopping-centre vouchers, depending on their qualification level.⁹ Whilst these were accepted, disputes continued. A demand was put forward for an additional \$40 a week increase.¹⁰ This was rejected and by July 1981, only a third of the required workforce was on the job. Plumbers had been on strike since September the previous year. The Builders Labourers Federation was demanding that their workers plant trees for the internal ‘tropical rainforest’, not members of the Australian Workers Union who had initially been assigned

⁸ Grace Bros Holdings Limited, 22nd Annual Report, 1 October 1982, p. 5. See also *Inside Retailing*, no. 359, 19 March 1979, p. 15.

⁹ ‘Developers and retailers who suffer at unions’ hands fear worse if they reveal tactics’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 471, 6 July 1981, p. 3.

¹⁰ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Macquarie Shopping Centre Joint Venture, ‘The Position at Macquarie’, 29 June 1981.

to the job.¹¹ An Easter 1981 opening shifted to September, and finally to November.¹² The delays had a devastating impact on many small retailers who had stocked up for various opening deadlines. One claimed he had \$300,000 worth of goods waiting to be sold.¹³ Grace Bros, on the other hand, politely requested that its suppliers make a 'small contribution to the enormous cost of establishing a new store' by providing goods to the department store at a five percent discount. It suggested that the 'vast majority' of its suppliers were happy to make such a gesture.¹⁴

Macquarie was opened by then NSW premier, Neville Wran, via satellite link from Japan on 17 November 1981, while around 1,500 guests browsed the centre tasting buffet refreshments.¹⁵ The huge Grace Bros' department store was complemented by 130 other shops including three supermarkets and Woolworths' third Big W in Sydney.¹⁶ There was also a post office and a medical centre, and although the cinemas, tennis courts, gymnasium, and library had failed to make it through the development stage, there was a children's playground, 'a free hall' which was available to charities for fund raising events, and an Olympic-size ice-skating rink.¹⁷ For locals used to visiting Chatswood for their major shopping trips, the introduction of a massive new centre closer to hand offered new opportunities: 'I was a young mother at the time, and took a part time job at Grace Bros', writes Margaret. 'It was all pretty exciting because apart from Chatswood, there were no

¹¹ 'Developers and retailers who suffer at unions' hands fear worse if they reveal tactics', *Inside Retailing*, no. 471, 6 July 1981, p. 3. For an overview of the dispute and of contemporary industrial relations more broadly, see Bob Carr, 'Industrial Chaos Rips Through the Building Industry', *Bulletin*, 30 June 1981, pp. 20-22.

¹² *Inside Retailing*, no. 470, 29 June 1981, p. 2; *Inside Retailing*, no. 478, 24 August 1981, p. 2.

¹³ *Inside Retailing*, no. 470, 29 June 1981, p. 2; 'Macquarie Centre opens tomorrow', *Inside Retailing*, no. 490, 16 November 1981, p. 9.

¹⁴ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Form letter to 'The Chief Executive' from M. E. Grace, Managing Director, Grace Bros Pty. Limited.

¹⁵ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Letter to the Hon. N. K. Wran, Q. C. from Michael Grace, Managing Director, Grace Bros Pty. Limited; 'Interoffice Memo – Macquarie Opening'. The opening was attended by a major industry and business figures. See, for example, Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Letter from John Saunders, Joint Managing Director, Westfield Limited to Mr Mick Grace, Chairman, Grace Bros Pty. Ltd, 18 November 1981; Tony Harding, General Manager, Woolworths Limited to Mr B. A. Grace, Chairman Grace Bros Holdings Ltd., 18 November 1981.

¹⁶ 'Macquarie Centre opens tomorrow', *Inside Retailing*, no. 490, 16 November 1981, p. 9.

¹⁷ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, GRACS012, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, 'Macquarie Centre Opening'; 'Concrete Constructions at the Macquarie Centre', Concrete Constructions Holdings Pty Ltd, Potts Points, NSW. *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1981, pp. 22-23.

other large centres reasonably close.¹⁸ Others who had shopped on the local strips recalled Macquarie as ‘a wonder of modern convenience!’

By this stage we were living in Lane Cove. Shopping there in the supermarkets was very inconvenient because of the parking (Lane Cove is built on a ridge). It was worth the drive to Mac Centre for the ease of parking and getting trolley to car safely.¹⁹

Macquarie beautiful: Naturalising the internal environment

Macquarie provides a good example of a 1980s trend towards more pleasing retail environments.²⁰ Elite critique had been brutal in its appraisal of shopping centre design and appearance. In 1980, Brisbane town-planning consultant, Vic Feros, claimed that modern shopping centres had no soul, and that the spirit of a socially interactive marketplace needed to be reinvoked:

Shopping should be a pleasurable experience, not a chore to be endured. Shopping areas should be convenient, engaging and inviting, instead of a mish-mash of third-grade architecture in oceans of asphalt... Victor Gruen... envisaged them to be centres of community focus. The significance of Gruen’s contribution is his subsequent repudiation of it. The failure of his dream is tragic. Shopping centres date back to 500 B.C. and all we’ve got to show for 2,500 years of planning is inferior development.²¹

Such critiques were the hard edge of a surging international interest in the creation of more agreeable public shopping and commercial environments. This is examined in depth in Chapter Nine when we look at pedestrian malls, which were often built in an attempt to revitalise retail precincts that had faded beside nearby regional shopping centres. These malls, drawing on international planning philosophy and practice, had amenable

¹⁸ Margaret, OHR no. 26, 21 - 27 January 2007.

¹⁹ Lindsay, OHR no. 35, 21 - 27 January 2007.

²⁰ Richard Cardew, ‘Retailing and Office Development in Sydney’, in J. V. Langdale, D. C. Rich and R. V. Cardew, *Why Cities Change Updated: Urban Development and Economic Change in the Late 1980s*, proceedings of a Geographical Society of New South Wales Conference Held at Macquarie University, April 1989, p. 38.

landscaping, ‘human-scale’ development, and could provide some shelter from the elements. The ‘naturalisation’ of internalised shopping centres can be seen as a commercial response to such developments and design philosophies. Macquarie’s architects, for example, described its interior as ‘humanised’ and ‘intimate in scale’.²²

Market research at the time reported a customer preference for more natural environments. When Bankstown Square had opened in 1966, its architects celebrated the complete exclusion of daylight because it allowed retailers to ‘fully regulate the light intensity for the display of the merchandise’, without the distraction of glare and reflection from natural light.²³ This was a promoted feature – a new experience enabled by technological developments in air conditioning. In the 1980s, as urban commentators were arguing that natural light was a crucial component in a ‘vital, dynamic and inhabitable city’, research suggested that shoppers preferred sunlight and more subtle décor.²⁴ ‘Gloom’ had always been antithetical to the ‘modern’ shopping centre. Developers feared a shopper turn to the outside world.²⁵ Responding to market demand, though, designers in the 1980s brought more sophisticated décor, indoor gardens, and skylights to bring natural light into cavernous interiors.²⁶ Targeting a more affluent, mature demographic than earlier developments, 1980s centres incorporated more quality materials, while high density discharge lighting began replacing fluorescent lights that were not as ‘natural’, nor as flexible in their usage.²⁷

Interior decorations, indoor plants and water features had always been important in shopping centres, but in the 1980s, integrated landscaping to provide centre-wide ambience was being given more attention. Planters were designed to fit into the overall design, with

²¹ Vic Feros (Brisbane town-planning consultant), quoted in ‘Shopping centres have no souls, developers have no facts and some retailers have no hope’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 433, 15 September 1980, p. 16.

²² Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012, 71*, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Whitehead and Payne Architects, ‘Memorandum: Macquarie Shopping Centre’, 6 October 1981.

²³ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 September 1966, p. 20.

²⁴ Harvey Bryan and Susan Stuebing, ‘Natural Light and the Urban Environment’, in Anne Vernez Moudon (ed.), *Public Streets for Public Use* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 299.

²⁵ W. D. Dean, ‘Avoid the temptation to overdo’, *Australian Retailing*, vol. 1, no. 6, August 1967, p. 26.

²⁶ White, ‘The Changing Nature’, pp. 68-9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

plants selected for their appearance and ease of maintenance.²⁸ At Macquarie, around 4,500 plants from forty different species were used throughout the building. Journalist Marie Knuckey suggested that they served to ‘soften and romanticise our mental picture of a functional modern building devoted to hard selling’. The plants cost \$250,000 and had been acclimatised in special greenhouses to prevent excessive falling foliage (see Figure 5.4).²⁹ The ‘heart’ of the indoor landscaping was the ‘rain forest’ well, centred on a stone waterfall.³⁰ Knuckey described it as a ‘cylinder of dazzling light shafting down into the centre of the building, rimmed with greenery’. She saw it as a cooling, refreshing space where shoppers could rejuvenate in surrounding coffee shops in preparation ‘for another bout of shopping’.³¹

Other 1980s Sydney shopping centres followed suit, incorporating greenery and natural light to freshen their cavernous interiors. The long straight concourse at Westfield Eastgardens was given an open and expansive feel courtesy of a semi-circular skylight that ran its entire



Figure 5.4: ‘Plants being acclimatised under fibreglass screens at Dural’.

Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 3236, Macquarie Centre Newsletter, vol. 1, no. 2, May 1981.

length.³² A local paper described ‘living greenery’ lining the galleries and cascading from archways at Westfield Chatswood. Its great hall featured a glass canopy roof ‘studded with

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

²⁹ *Daily Telegraph*, 7 November 1981, pp. 22-23.

³⁰ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, ‘Concrete Constructions at the Macquarie Centre’, Concrete Constructions Holdings Pty Ltd, Potts Points, NSW.

³¹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1981, p. 7.

³² ‘Flagship centre sets pace’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 775, 19 October 1987, p. 16.

square ports housing acrylic lenses'. These worked 'like prisms on the light, casting it into rainbow bands that... [swept] the interiors with the movement of the sun'. Advertising claimed that these shafts of light combined with 'the constant gliding of travelers and escalators... [to give] the entire centre a natural, flowing motion.'³³

Shopping centres exteriors were also softened.³⁴ This complemented their interior designs, but also reflected changing planning requirements.³⁵ Main street frontages received coatings of paint and trees to soften their blank facades. Garden boxes in car parks were used to similar affect.³⁶ The harsh lines of Macquarie's concrete exterior were obscured with over 7,000 plants and trees in a variety of shapes, forms and colours. The centre's landscape consultant, David Loudon, compared himself to a painter using 'plant material like a palette', painting the centre with nature's tones and subtlety.³⁷ At Westfield Chatswood, steel trellises laced concrete walls supporting climbing shrubs and vines. It was hoped they would 'grow to cover every façade from roof to pavement.'³⁸ Older centres followed the trend with refurbishments. In 1989, Warringah Mall underwent an extensive aesthetic overhaul with new plants, seating, a glass covered walkway, replacement of external ceilings, new walkway lighting and an upgrade of the external facades of its different shopping blocks.³⁹

William Severini Kowinski, in his American odyssey *The Mall of America*, rails against such artificial life in the internalised mall. For Kowinski, the neutrality of the mall flattens life and hollows experience. Sitting by an artificial stream in an American mall called The Old Mill, and jaded by days spent travelling through other malls, he becomes depressed. The stream troubles him. It has 'no delicate and complex ecosystem giving it life, and no

³³ *North Shore Times*, Westfield Chatswood Supplement, 11 November 1987, p. 58.

³⁴ On the natural harmony between internal gardens and external landscaping, see 'Garden Treatment and Growing Trees Inside Shopping Mall', *The Concrete Constructions Group*, no. 9, March 1981, p. 1.

³⁵ See, for example, the requirement specified for Chatswood Chase in, Department of Environment and Planning (DEP), 'The Chatswood Town Centre', William Simpson, Presiding Commissioner, Charles O'Connell, Commissioner, 26th June 1981 (Sydney: Department of Environment and Planning, 1981), p. 9.

³⁶ White, 'The Changing Nature', pp. 71-2.

³⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 15 December 1981, p. 7.

³⁸ Westfield Supplement, 'Chatswood Comes Alive', *North Shore Times*, 11 November 1987, p. 58.

³⁹ White, 'The Changing Nature', pp. 71-2.

raw power or element of unpredictability or danger.’⁴⁰ It appears to Kowinski to be a dangerous distortion of reality. He wonders if it may be more familiar to the rising generation than nature itself. How then would they deal with a real stream; with environmental issues that surround it; with the knowledge that comes with a tactile, interactive environment?

You don’t learn about cycles and changes in the mall, except perhaps for the nearly secret way one store replaces another... It is basically unchanging, ideal and neutral, except that everything is linked to commerce... The absence of weather – of anything larger or more powerful than the mall itself and its commerce – intensifies the shopping experience until it assumes a disproportionate importance. The mall is the universe! There’s no relief, no contrast, no cosmic caveats; just the mall.⁴¹

Kowinski’s assessment may be approaching a caricature, but his point remains. If malls are cut off from their surrounds, as Sydney’s regional shopping centres have been; if one of our society’s key social sites is an artificially controlled environment where nature has been deliberately and effectively excluded, what effect does this have on our interactions, our consciousness, our sense of place? We saw in Chapter Two that some people link excessive consumerism in shopping centres to a decline in community sentiment. This is Kowinski’s ‘disproportionate importance’: because the mall is so intensely and narrowly focused, all besides commerce falls away. Of course, the shopping centre is more than this, even if commerce is the exclusive aim of its developers. Balancing the structure of shopping centre designs with the agency of those within their walls is the great challenge of assessing their impact. What Kowinski says is true: the exclusion of nature and the outside world from the mall has significant consequences for individual identity and social relations. But the vibrancy that others find in this artificial environment also remains an important aspect of its appeal, and our social history. Both need to be incorporated in a history of shopping centres: autonomy exists within structural parameters.

⁴⁰ Kowinski, *The Mall of America*, pp. 247-8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 129-30.

Guiding the shopper through a retail world

Macquarie Centre introduced an unusual interior architecture that no other Sydney shopping centre has hurried to emulate. In place of conventional flat levels joined by escalators, lifts and stairs, the architects built a 'three level spiral on a gently graded ramp'.⁴² It gave the centre one of the longest malls in the world.⁴³ While one could jump to other levels via the normal channels – a spiral staircase in the centrally located 'rainforest well', and escalators at either end of its concourse – it was possible to walk through the entire centre without ever climbing a step.⁴⁴ Although this offered convenience for people in wheelchairs or pushing strollers, the response to the design has been one of general confusion. As one shopper noted: 'I still have a problem working out which level to be on... even after going there for 20+ years...'⁴⁵

Despite its peculiarity, the premise of Macquarie's design followed a well-tested philosophy that had been in practice since the earliest days of development: the greater the number of attractively displayed stores that a shopper walks past, the greater the number of products they are likely to purchase. Centre operators sought to maximise turnover by strategically locating smaller stores around major anchors, to ensure that as many potential shoppers passed by them as possible.⁴⁶ Peter Benjamin, the manager of Top Ryde, explained in 1958 that:

Some stores are traffic generators while others are traffic users. We must attempt to predict the direction of pedestrian flow in the centre and place our traffic generators in such a way that as much pedestrian traffic as possible is routed past the traffic users.⁴⁷

⁴² *Northern District Times*, 21 July 1993, p. 41.

⁴³ *Macquarie Courier*, vol. 1, no. 2, 10 November 1981, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 71, Macquarie Centre Opening Folder, Whitehead and Payne Architects, 'Memorandum: Macquarie Shopping Centre', 6 October 1981.

⁴⁵ Rita, OHR no. 22, 21 - 27 January 2007.

⁴⁶ Spearritt, 'The Commercialisation of Public Space', p. 93; Malcolm Voyce, 'The Privatisation of Public Property: The Development of a Shopping Mall in Sydney and its Implications for the Governance of Space through Consumption', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2003, p. 256; Allan, 'Marion', p. 121.

⁴⁷ Peter Benjamin, Manager of A. J. Benjamins shopping centre at Top Ryde, 'Address to the 1958 Residential Conference of Retail Executives at Leura', *Retail Trader*, vol. 40, no. 5, December 1958, p. 42.

P. D. Yeomans, who partnered Benjamin in designing Top Ryde, told a real estate convention in 1961 that this was ‘something that *the customer may never notice*, but which strongly affects the developer’s pocket.’⁴⁸ The planners of Miranda Fair spelt out clearly the economic benefits of strategic tenant layouts:

Careful planning and design based on years of overseas experience have resulted in each store being individually located to permit maximum turnover on each square foot of selling space.⁴⁹

An analysis of shopping centre layouts reveals a consistent compliance with the anchor-centred design philosophy. David Jones and Big W stood at either end of Bankstown Square’s two level concourses, while 140 specialty shops lined the 900 foot concourses between them (see Figure 5.5).⁵⁰ Warringah Mall positioned David Jones on one side of the complex and Grace Bros and Woolworths at the other, with several rows of specialty shops between.⁵¹ Top Ryde revolved around Benjamin’s, Roselands around Grace Bros, Miranda Fair around Farmer’s.

In 1979, shopping centre consultant, Ralph Harris, claimed this successful selling philosophy was being undermined. He argued that some centre designs were being compromised because developers were allowing major tenants to dictate access points – typically directly from car parks – which resulted in poorer trade for specialty tenants.⁵² Some further evidence that this had been occurring was David Lowy’s assurance later in the decade to prospective Eastgarden’s tenants that it would not occur there. He promised maximum customer traffic passing their stores.⁵³ If additional entrances from ever growing car parks did compromise the principle, however, the practice of laying out centres around anchor tenants remained. If people walked the length of Macquarie’s concourse – as promotions reminded them was possible – they could pass virtually every shop in the

⁴⁸ P. D. Yeomans, ‘Address to the Golden Jubilee Convention’, p. 42.

⁴⁹ Sutherland Shire Council Library, Local Studies Collection, Miranda Fair File, ‘Miranda Fair: A Modern Regional Shopping Centre Being Developed by Suburban Centres Pty. Limited’, (c1960)

⁵⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald*, August 13, 1966, p. 8; *Retail Trader*, vol. 48, no. 3, October 1966, pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ Langdale, ‘A Study of the Trade Area of Warringah Mall’, p. 57.

⁵² ‘Developers who knuckle under to major tenants’ demands blamed for centre failures’, *Inside Retailing*, no. 354, 12 February 1979, p. 5.

centre.⁵⁴ This did not guarantee sales, but with a steady stream of research and innovation flowing into store displays and product packaging, it certainly increased their possibility.

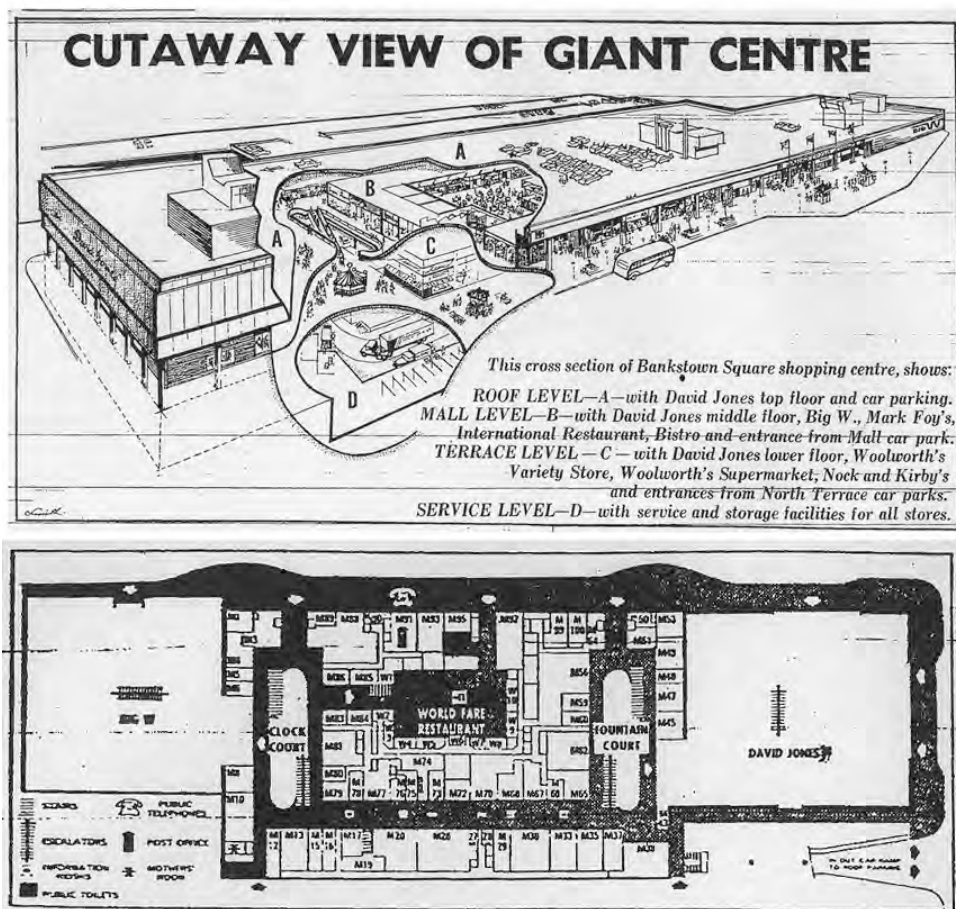


Figure 5.5: A cutaway view of the original Bankstown Square, and a layout of its 'Mall Level'

Sydney Morning Herald, 21 September 1966, Bankstown Square Feature, pp. 9-10.

Note the views are from different sides of the building, with Big W at the far right in the first diagram and the far left in the second.

While the principle of shunting as many customers past as many stores as possible remained intact, the way stores were organised within centres became more sophisticated in the 1980s. There was widespread acknowledgement within the industry of the advantages of grouping stores for comparison shopping: ladies' fashion together, food outlets together,

⁵³ 'Westfield's flagship', *Inside Retailing*, 29 September 1986, p. 8.

⁵⁴ *Macquarie Courier*, vol. 1, no. 2, 10 November 1981, p. 3.

and so on. Food courts were more likely to be on the bottom level, ladies fashions on the upper level. Escalators and travelators were positioned to encourage pedestrian movement from one grouping to another across the different levels of the centre. There were complications: banks grouped together created dead spots on Saturday mornings and Thursday evenings, so they tended to be spread out across centres. They could also, like medical benefit funds, be positioned in less favourable locations because they did not rely on passing trade: customers would seek them out. Dry cleaners and florists were likely to be located near entrances for ease of pick up and drop off for arriving/ departing customers.⁵⁵

This suggests a complex fusion of influences in the design and layout of shops within centres. There is the tradition of shifting customers past ‘traffic users’; the power of big retail to persuade centre operators to compromise this model; and the necessity of providing ready access to some facilities balanced against the benefits of making people traipse through the centre to find them. On top of these there is the diversity of customer attitudes to the system. For some shoppers, shopping centre layout is not an issue. Vanessa, for example, writes that she enjoys a leisurely stroll:

I visit the major shopping centres (Westfields, Macquarie Centre) mainly to relax, but also to look for that elusive gift. I find it very relaxing to walk around the centre in a systematic way and look in the shops which attract me on the way. Shopping is more a journey, from point A to point B.⁵⁶

Others, though, feel manipulated, aware of that the underlying purpose of shop distribution and centre layout is to make people ‘buy, buy and buy’:⁵⁷

I hate the way one is directed by the positioning of the escalators which means you have to walk further, obviously intended that you pass more and more shops selling the same items over and over.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ White, ‘The Changing Nature’, pp. 74-5.

⁵⁶ Vanessa, OHR no. 27, 21 - 27 January 2007.

⁵⁷ Zuhra, OHR no. 63, 04 - 10 February 2007.

⁵⁸ Vicki, OHR no. 50, 21 - 27 January 2007.

People complain of a lack of directories and maps, and of being forced to wander around to find what they are looking for; at Macquarie being ‘forced to walk to the ends of the earth to go anywhere.’⁵⁹ People also notice when layouts are modified. Ken remembered enjoying walking around Macquarie when it was new, but points to changes in the sequence of escalators: ‘I think that then from each floor as you got off one you got up to the next level by the adjacent escalator, whereas now, you have to go to the other side of that floor to get the next one up.’⁶⁰ The former model was certainly the one used in the old department stores. Getting to the section of the shop one required was seen as a selling point.⁶¹ Hugh Mackay has noted that many people in his social surveys record feeling trapped or manipulated by the structural layout of shopping centres.⁶² People are not fools, and they know when their environment is designed for purposes other than their convenience:

I resent being forced to use... [shopping centres] for essential services such as Medicare. They bury this in the basement and construct convoluted indirect pathways to force you past as many shopfronts as possible to get there. I resent having to fight through the foodcourt to get to the escalators. I hate how they deliberately made the (much more direct) lifts slow to discourage their use... I guess I resent being manipulated and I feel that very strongly when visiting the... shopping centre. Sometimes I feel as though I'm there to serve them.⁶³

The shopping centre as a culture industry: cinemas, leisure precincts and food courts

If the spiral layout at Macquarie received a mixed reception, its ice rink seems to have been largely welcomed and widely embraced (see Figure 5.6). Unique to Australian centres at that time, the Olympic size rink provided seating for 1,200 people and initially planned to operate twenty-four hours a day.⁶⁴ While this proved too ambitious, it was open seven days

⁵⁹ Carolyn, OHR no. 85, 8 January 2008 - 23 February 2008.

⁶⁰ Personal correspondence with Ken, 4 December 2006.

⁶¹ *Australian*, 8 August 1997, p. 37.

⁶² Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 90s* (Pymble, N.S.W.: Angus & Robertson, 1993), pp. 124-31. On the purposefulness of this model, see Spearritt, ‘The Commercialisation of Public Space’, p. 93.

⁶³ Simon, OHR no. 60, 28 January – 03 February 2007.

⁶⁴ *Northern District Times*, 21 July 1993, p. 41.

and nights a week, and was used as an effective promotional tool. In the centre's first year of operations, it featured appearances from the Canadian Ice Hockey Team and the Australian Speed Skating Team, and hosted the NSW Professional Figure Skating Championships.⁶⁵ 'Designed for all the family to enjoy', the skating rink became intimately aligned with many people's experience of Macquarie; a marketing feature that promoted itself by word of mouth, and around which the social life of the centre revolved.⁶⁶ One local recalls that Macquarie's opening was 'soo exciting' and remembers 'everyone talking about the ice rink.'⁶⁷ People brought their children to skate or have lessons, while they enjoyed a coffee or a casual browse amongst the shops.⁶⁸ Schools used the ice-rink for excursion activities. Students wandered over from Macquarie University for 'a brief sojourn off campus', to watch the skaters and perhaps pick up a book at one of the centre's stores.⁶⁹ Macquarie became a key social site for teenagers to meet up with friends, go ice-skating, or catch a bus into the city:⁷⁰

I remember the opening of the Macquarie Centre. It was important for teenage girls to visit the centre in its first month (it was a kind of rite of passage at my high school). It was the first major shopping centre I visited without my parents. Because the public transport links to the centre were good, I went regularly after school with a friend: we would window shop and ice skate.⁷¹

Macquarie's ice-rink was indicative of the path charted by the shopping centre industry in the 1980s towards providing more leisure and recreation facilities.⁷² The strong foundation of the shopping centre as a secure and comfortable place to access a full range of shops was successful, but developers faced competition for the consumer dollar from a myriad of eager hawkers in the service industries. From the 1960s the tourism industry expanded its

⁶⁵ Coles Myer Archive, SLV, MS13468, *GRACS012*, 3236, 'Macquarie Centre Press Release', 17 November 1982.

⁶⁶ *Macquarie Courier*, vol. 1, no. 2, 10 November 1981, p. 2.

⁶⁷ Rosanna, OHR no. 80, 8 January 2008 - 23 February 2008.

⁶⁸ Margaret, OHR no. 20, 14 - 20 January 2007.

⁶⁹ Robert, OHR no. 65, 11 February - 11 March 2007.

⁷⁰ Rosanna, OHR no. 80, 8 January 2008 - 23 February 2008.

⁷¹ Kate, OHR no. 19, 14 - 20 January 2007.

⁷² Cardew, *Retailing and Office Development in Sydney*, p. 39; Kingborough Council Development Services Department, 'Kingborough Council Planning Scheme Review: Commercial Development Issues', Paper 4, April 2000, pp. 2-3.

focus from the sale of products towards the provision of services and the creation of experiences.⁷³ Leisure became the major growth industry in westernised societies as more people ‘than ever before [we]re able to consume a large range of non-essential products’.⁷⁴ Another example of this trend was eating out, a habit ‘scarcely imaginable to earlier generations that rarely ate out for pleasure and did not actively pursue a varied cuisine as a form of gratification.’ But by 1982 a quarter of the money spent on food went on meals prepared outside of the house. By 1986 this had risen to thirty percent.⁷⁵



Figure 5.6: Macquarie Ice Rink

Picasa Web Album, Natalie's Gallery, 'MacQuarie Centre Ice Rink',
<http://picasaweb.google.com/lh/photo/yOsPVWAJPTXeV8KQN1oWmw>, accessed 21 October 2010.

So while there was a great increase in material accumulation through the 1960s, the actual percentage of national income spent on retail purchases dropped. Industry analysts

⁷³ Richard White, *On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia* (North Melbourne, Vic.: Pluto Press, 2005), pp. 167-73; Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt, *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870* (Carlton South, Vic.: Melbourne University Press, 2000), pp. 283-358.

⁷⁴ Dennis Altman, *Rehearsals for Change: Politics and Culture in Australia* (Perth: Australian Research Institute, 2004), p. 19.

⁷⁵ Walker and Roberts, *From Scarcity to Surfeit*, p. 148.

suggested that: 'in an expanding economy with rising incomes, more and more will be spent on services rather than goods... spending money on services such as entertainment and travel appeals to an affluent society.'⁷⁶ According to one retail executive, personal consumption spending on goods dropped from 56.3 cents in every dollar in 1960, to 51 cents in 1968.⁷⁷ In harder times an alternative prognosis was offered. In 1978, Grace Bros Chairman, B. A. Grace, blamed the uncertainties generated by rapid technological change and high unemployment, arguing that: 'the average consumer has tended to concentrate his spending on food and basics with a noticeable transfer of the spending dollar going towards travel and leisure.' Grace Bros responded by concentrating on soft goods, food, liquor, travel and entertainment.⁷⁸

The shopping centre industry, too, realised that it had to 'value-add', and broaden its appeal. As we have seen, it had always encouraged the fusion of casual leisure with shopping, but redevelopments in the late 1980s expanded tenancy mixes to incorporate a wider range of consumer leisure activities.⁷⁹ Most notable amongst these was the leisure precinct, built around a cinema complex and take-away eateries. These combined to attract people to centres and keep them there longer.⁸⁰ Over time, the success of cinemas became intrinsic to the success of centres as a whole.⁸¹ For big cinema operators, the shopping centre offered an avenue of revitalisation for an industry struggling against the home entertainment video revolution.

⁷⁶ 'Retail sales in the 60s', *Australian Retailing* vol. 4, no. 2, June 1970, p. 5.

⁷⁷ John S. Walton, Chairman of Executive Committee, Waltons Ltd., 'Retailing's role in the future – and the customer of the 1970s', *Australian Retailing* vol. 4, no. 3, July 1970, p. 5.

⁷⁸ *Australian*, 18-19 November 1978, p. 11.

⁷⁹ That 1990s' claims of shopping becoming a leisure activity are at least a hundred years too late, see Humphery, *Shelf Life*, p. 155; Cardew, 'Retailing and Office Development in Sydney', p. 39.

⁸⁰ On the American development of entertainment facilities, see Sharon Zukin, 'Urban Lifestyles: Diversity and Standardisation in Spaces of Consumption', *Urban Studies*, vol. 35, nos. 5-6, 1998, p. 830.

⁸¹ *Australian*, 12 September 1997, p. 37.

Decentralising cinema: Multiplexes in shopping centres

Australian cinema has a history of struggle against external forces. The Depression saw upmarket cinemas struggle to maintain their grand stalls and dress circles, out-competed by smaller, cheaper rivals. Television cut audience numbers when it was introduced – first black and white in the 1950s, then colour in the 1970s.⁸² The emergence and widespread popularity of videocassettes saw a further drop in attendances, with 1984 singled out as a particularly bad year.⁸³ Movie-going numbers had been poor for a number of years, only propped up by big films like *The Man from Snowy River* in 1982, and *Phar Lap* a year later.⁸⁴ The former took more money than any other movie in Australia's history, even surpassing *Star Wars*. Big Australian hits continued to pop up, but the market overall was dominated by American imports – particularly big budget 'blockbusters'. A long-time feature of the Hollywood system, these were relied on heavily throughout the 1980s to compete against both home video and lower-budget international films, which threatened Hollywood's market share.⁸⁵

Single-screen suburban cinemas had spread across Sydney's suburbs in the 1950s. Drive-ins followed, and through the 1970s twin or triple cinema complexes were built in all of Australia's capital cities and in some substantial regional towns. A Hoyts twin-screen cinema, for example, opened at Warringah Mall in 1975.⁸⁶ The city centre, however, remained the principal entertainment hub. In 1976 Hoyts opened Sydney's first multiplex complex – the seven-cinema Hoyts Entertainment Centre – in George Street. It incorporated banks of arcade and pinball machines, a bar, bookshop, jewellery counter and

⁸² *Age*, 24 September 2005, p. 7; Robert Milliken, 'The Lost Picture Show', *National Times*, 6-12 January 1984, p. 35; Barry Russell, 'The Regal Theatre', *Kino: The Journal of the Australian Theatre Historical Society*, no. 23, March 1988, p. 13.

⁸³ Garry Maddox, 'Audiences Return to the Big Screen', *Encore*, 30 January - 13 February 1986, p. 13.

⁸⁴ Michael Meagher, 'How Hoyts will Fight the Video Invaders', *Bulletin*, 24 April 1984, p. 104. (pp. 104-105); Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, *The Screening of Australia: Anatomy of a Film Industry*, vol. 1, (Sydney: Currency Press, 1987), p. 207.

⁸⁵ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, pp. 250-9. For the top grossing films in Australia and the dominance of American imports among them, see 'Top 50 films in Australia of all time, ranked by total reported gross Australian box office as at February 2010', Screen Australia, Get the Picture, <http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/gtp/wctopalltime.html>, accessed 11 April 2010.

⁸⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Northern Herald*, 15 September 1994, p. 6.

delicatessen.⁸⁷ Media historian and cultural critic, Gary Edgerton has suggested that from the late 1940s in America, cinemas had become increasingly dependent on the sale of secondary products such as candy and ice-cream, as the major distributors demanded higher box office shares from exhibitors. And in the 1970s the kinds of offerings available in Sydney's Hoyts centre – from pinball machines to merchandising – were being described as a 'total entertainment' package for movie consumers (see Figure 5.7). Edgerton argues that where the ornate picture palaces of the 1920s had intimated to punters upon entry that it was time 'to dream', the practical and economic space of the multiplex was fashioned around the message that it was time 'to buy'.⁸⁸ The Hoyts Entertainment Centre enjoyed instant success.

Diane Collins claims that while entertainers and showmen had developed the early Australian cinemas, multi-screens were the products of accountant's offices. With property prices escalating, multi-screen cinemas offered a more efficient and rational use of space: 'by screening several films concurrently in smaller cinemas', she writes, 'exhibitors were better able to meet the needs of their shrinking and more segmented audience; and, as with other efficient modern buildings, the labour economies proved irresistible.' Automation controlled the lights, curtains and advertising slides, as well as the films. Ushering staff numbers were reduced with smaller cinema sizes, and the sale of ice-creams and sweets was centralised in a candy bar which replaced the 'ice-cream girl' or boy who had once walked the aisles.⁸⁹

If blockbusters propped up the cinema industry, the problem of declining audiences remained a significant issue. In 1979, the home video boom hit Australia. That year videotape sales generated \$30 million. By 1983, this had jumped to almost a billion dollars in the year. One in every six Sydney households owned or rented a video-recorder. More than half of these played at least two pre-recorded movies a week. It was a boom in a depressed economy, with areas of high unemployment recording correspondingly high

⁸⁷ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 260.

⁸⁸ Gary Edgerton, 'The Multiplex: The Modern American Motion Picture Theatre as Message', *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, vol. 9, no. 4, Winter 1982, pp. 159-161.

⁸⁹ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 261-2.

levels of video usage.⁹⁰ Like the movies in their heyday, videos offered cheap, accessible, escapist entertainment. When the video boom hit, as Table 5.1 indicates, there was still a disproportionate number of cinema screens concentrated in the city – well away from the bulk of the city’s population. The convenience of video was magnified in such a disparate distribution network.⁹¹ For many people, Collins suggests, ‘home videos seemed part of the natural inheritance of suburbia – private, housebound pleasure’.⁹² She also argues that the comfort of modern households played a significant part in the decline in movie attendances: one reason people used to go to the movies was that cinemas were simply more comfortable than their homes. By the 1980s, this situation had been reversed.⁹³ People were comfortable; their lives were busy. There was little motivation to make trips to the cinema when movies were available in their living rooms.



Figure 5.7: John Mulligan, ‘Candy bar in Hoyts Entertainment Centre, George Street, Sydney’

NLA, John Mulligan photograph collection, ca. 1960-1976, Image No.: nla.pic-vn3098026, 1976.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p. 265.

⁹¹ *Sun Herald*, 20 January 1991, p. 30; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 1990, p. 19; Milliken, ‘The Lost Picture Show’, p. 35.

⁹² Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, pp. 267-8. On private entertainment in the suburbs – ‘the VCR, the television set and the stereo’, see Kenneth T. Jackson, ‘From the Garden City to the Garden State: Reflections on the Past and Future of Suburbia in the United States and Australia’, in Graeme Davison, Tony Dingle and Seamus O’Hanlon (eds), *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia*, (Clayton, Vic.: Monash Publications in History, Department of History Monash University, 1995), p. 20.

⁹³ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, pp. 267-8.

In an echo of the shopping centre phenomenon, and following in the footsteps of America and Europe where multiplexes had emerged in the early 1980s, cinema developers looked to the suburbs to recapture a lost audience.⁹⁴ In doing so, they forged links with shopping centre developers looking to expand their entertainment facilities. An early collaboration occurred in the Macarthur Mall development at Westfield Shoppingtown Parramatta in November 1976, with the opening of a four-screen Village 'quad' cinema complex. Each cinema was modelled on what was termed the 'modern "intimate" design' that limited its capacity to between 300 and 400 people. Promotions reminded potential viewers that this enabled higher quality sound and visual reproduction than old, larger, echoing, cinemas.⁹⁵

Small complexes such as those at Warringah Mall and Parramatta, predicated a boom some ten years later. With shopping centres in the late 1980s well established, offering free parking, eager to add to their entertainment facilities, and offering the big exhibitors low up-front development costs, marriages of mutual convenience were arranged at a number of locations.⁹⁶ Retail developers would build an outer shell, with a major exhibitor paying for the auditorium itself and all the equipment and facilities within it.⁹⁷ Managing Director of Greater Union, David Williams argued that cinemas were fighting against a push to turn lounge rooms into entertainment centres, and that in response they had to offer 'something better'.⁹⁸ Movie-going needed to become more convenient, and more attractive.⁹⁹ The chairman of the Motion Picture Distributors' Association, Mike Selwyn, declared in hindsight that 'the multiplexes took the cinema back to the people. In the suburbs, in shopping centres, they built them with good screens, good sound and parking to make the cinema accessible.'¹⁰⁰ A powerful duopoly was formed as Hoyts built ten multiplexes between 1986 and 1991, and a partnership formed by Greater Union, Village and Warner

⁹⁴ *Manly Daily*, 30 May, 1987, p. 32.

⁹⁵ *Parramatta Advertiser*, 26 November 1976, p. 45.

⁹⁶ *Sun Herald*, 20 January 1991, p. 30; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 1990, p. 19.

⁹⁷ *Australian*, 12 September 1997, p. 37.

⁹⁸ Milliken, 'The Lost Picture Show', p. 35.

⁹⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 January 1990, p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Sydney Morning Herald* 16 November 1994, p. 7.

Brothers pursued them with eleven between 1989 and 1991.¹⁰¹ Between the late 1980s and the late 1990s, at least \$500 million was spent developing cinema complexes.¹⁰²

Hoyts built its first suburban multiplex in 1986 at Chadstone shopping centre – the country’s first great regional becoming the first to host the anchor that defined a new era in shopping centre development.¹⁰³ In 1990, three multiplexes opened in Sydney shopping centres at Campbelltown, Hurstville and Warringah Mall. The last was a Hoyts redevelopment of their Twin complex. The company had wanted to provide up to ten screens, after a successful twelve years operating the Twin, but were limited by the amount of available space. Even an additional five screens worried some councillors who expressed concerns about parking provisions and the size and appearance of the complex on the busy Pittwater Road.¹⁰⁴ Equipped with ‘the best that modern technology’ had to offer, the complex included a Candy House, a Baskin-Robbins ice-cream parlour, and a licensed bar.¹⁰⁵ Other multiplexes followed, and by the mid-1990s they had transformed many of the city’s major shopping centres.

Table 5.1 Australian Cinema Screens by Location 1980 to 2005¹⁰⁶						
Year	Total Screens*	Seating Capacity	Theatres	City Screens	Suburban Screens	Country Screens
1980	829	378,000	713	–	–	–
1985	742	324,000	573	128	167	406
1990	851	295,000	510	119	322	350
1995	1137	332,000	557	113	500	469
2000	1817	453,000	554	129	949	700
2005	1943	466,000	519	108	1056	779

* Note that this includes a small number of non-commercial screens not included in the city/ suburban/ country breakdown.

Table 5.1 indicates the dramatic increase in suburban cinema screens between 1980 and 2005, even as the number of theatres housing them declined. The early 1980s saw the most

¹⁰¹ *Sun Herald*, 20 January 1991, p. 30.

¹⁰² *Australian*, 12 September 1997, p. 37.

¹⁰³ *Sun Herald*, 19 November 1989, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ *Manly Daily*, 30 May, 1987, p. 32.

¹⁰⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 January 1991, p. 3; *Manly Daily*, 13 January 1990, pp. 2, 12.

¹⁰⁶ ‘Total screens, seating capacity’ Screen Australia; ‘Number of screens by type of location’, Screen Australia.

theatre closures in the period, with a considerable drop in seating capacity recorded over the decade. Capacity climbed in the 1990s, although the total increase over the twenty-five years was not that dramatic. The big change was in the concentration of screens, with the number of theatres never really recovering from the 1980s' crash, but the total number of screens more than doubling over the period.¹⁰⁷ The increase in screens and the decline in theatres indicate the closure of small single screen operations. The other big change, in terms of our focus, was the growth in suburban screen numbers, driven by multiplex and then later megaplex (fifteen or more screens) development. Multiplexes signalled a return of the major exhibitors to the suburbs after they had left the field to small independents in the 1960s and 1970s. Between 1988 and 1998, suburban box office shares increased from thirty to fifty-two percent of total receipts.¹⁰⁸

Plans for a cinema complex in Macquarie's initial development had fallen through, and it was not until September 1994 that its entertainment facilities were rounded out with a 2,300 seat, eight-screen Greater Union multiplex and leisure precinct on the rooftop level. Cinema manager, Mark Lees, predicted that it would overtake the Greater Union 6-screen in Castle Towers Shopping Centre as the state's most popular multiplex, while Greater Union's general manager John Smith described it as a national flagship for the company.¹⁰⁹ More than 85,000 people visited the shopping centre on the Friday, Saturday and Sunday that the cinema precinct opened. More than 21,000 movie tickets were sold.¹¹⁰ Hollywood had hit Macquarie.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ 'Total screens, seating capacity and theatres in Australia, 1980-2009', Screen Australia, Get the Picture, www.afc.gov.au/gtp/wcsttotal.html, accessed 10 April 2009; 'Number of screens by type of location, 1985-2009', Screen Australia, Get the Picture, www.afc.gov.au/gtp/wcstlocation.html, accessed 10 April 2009.

¹⁰⁸ Ross Jones, 'Developments in the Cinema Distribution and Exhibition Industry, Report to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission', (Australia: The Commission, 1998), pp. v-vi.

¹⁰⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Northern Herald*, 15 September 1994, p. 6; *Northern District Times*, Macquarie Centre Special, 21 September 1994, p. B.

¹¹⁰ *Northern District Times*, 21 September 1994, p. 26.

¹¹¹ *Northern District Times*, Macquarie Centre Special, 21 September 1994, p. D.

Cross-promoting in the mall

Movie promotions in shopping centres began in America with relatively low-key events such as poster-giveaways and look-alike contests. However the possibilities of the mall soon became clear. By the mid 1980s, most American cinemas were built in or around malls. On top of this, malls had become the principle social space of American teenagers, even if they weren't going to the movies. Bill Minot, National Promotions Director at Twentieth Century Fox, placed promotions for *Return of the Jedi* in malls across America, explaining that: 'The malls are where the kids are... For

theatre going demographics – twelve to twenty-four year old – that's where you've got to be. It's the modern Main Street. It's where the action is.'¹¹² Minot had been pushing movie and shopping centre tie-ins since the early 1980s, arguing, and providing evidence, that promotions through chains stores or whole shopping centres boosted both ticket and retail sales.¹¹³

Merchandising tie-ins – the mass production and marketing of which began in the late 1970s, and with the first *Star Wars* film particularly – could all be sold in the mall where the film was showing.¹¹⁴ All the records, books, games, toys, clothes and eventually even the movie itself on video, could be distributed through the mall's stores. With a boom in



Figure 5.8: Star Wars merchandise
Star Wars - Boba Fett 12" RAH (Return of the Jedi),
Manufacturer: Medicom Toys, Product No.:
MED901088, Ikon Collectables,
[http://www.ikoncollectables.com.au/p6891/Star_Wars_-_Boba_Fett_12%22_RAH_\(Return_of_the_Jedi\)/product_info.html](http://www.ikoncollectables.com.au/p6891/Star_Wars_-_Boba_Fett_12%22_RAH_(Return_of_the_Jedi)/product_info.html), accessed 21 October 2010.

¹¹² Quoted in Kowinski, *The Mall of America*, p. 454.

¹¹³ Minot was also a pioneer of product placement in movies, see Jim Gluckson, "'Casting" Products in Films', *Boxoffice*, December 1985, p. 34.

video sales, movies became an advertisement for themselves – ‘a springboard for the lucrative tape market’.¹¹⁵ Video, too, in time became seen not as a competitor but as medium that increased interest and patronage of cinema.¹¹⁶ Kowinski claims that the merchandising system was so successful that product potential became a part of script evaluation when studios were deciding whether or not to make a movie.¹¹⁷ Changes in the way that movies were exhibited, and the secondary consumption that surrounded them thus changed the types of movies that were made.

At Macquarie stores linked their promotions to the new cinema. Muffin Break invited customers to ‘join us for a coffee and muffin before or after the movies’, and Packhams Newsagency offered kids *Lion King* and *The Flintstones* activity packs. Somewhat cheekily, Semicon Electronics promised ‘cinema quality at home’ with the purchase of Pioneer home entertainment systems. A Disney promotion brought ‘regulars’ Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck back to the centre for ‘Mickey’s Toontown Vaudeville Musical Show’ and a giant Disney Boardgame was set up inside the centre.¹¹⁸

Multiplex cinemas became crucial drawcards for attracting customers to shopping centre complexes.¹¹⁹ Despite its ups and downs, the cinema remained ‘the largest out-of-home entertainment in Britain, the United States and Australia’ in the post-war period.¹²⁰ It redefined the shopping centre as a site of entertainment and attracted customers who might not otherwise have visited.¹²¹ Shopping centre operators had a clear preference for either Hoyts or Great Union/ Village, with independents very rarely, and never in Sydney, succeeding in gaining leases. Even the major US cinema group Reading was frustrated in its attempts to enter the market.¹²² For moviegoers, the growing number and spread of shopping centre cinema complexes, with accessible car parking, next to restaurants and

¹¹⁴ Matthew Kapell and William G. Doty, *Jacking In To the Matrix Franchise: Cultural Reception and Interpretation*, (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2006), pp. 183-4.

¹¹⁵ Paul William, ‘The K-mart Audience at the Mall Movies’, *Film History*, vol. 6, no. 4, 1994, pp. 488-9.

¹¹⁶ Jones, ‘Developments in the Cinema Distribution and Exhibition Industry’, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Kowinski, *The Mall of America*, p. 456.

¹¹⁸ *Northern District Times*, Macquarie Centre Special, 21 September 1994, pp. C, D, E, F, G.

¹¹⁹ *Australian*, 12 September 1997, p. 37.

¹²⁰ Collins, *Hollywood Down Under*, p. 250.

¹²¹ *Australian*, 12 September 1997, p. 37.

¹²² Jones, ‘Developments in the Cinema Distribution and Exhibition Industry’, pp. 38-39.

shops made going to the cinema a lot more convenient.¹²³ Paul Johnson, general manager of operations for Hoyts Cinemas added a further argument, positioning the new cinemas' appeal within the middle class mores of the shopping centre market. He claimed that patrons wanted: 'the security of knowing their cars are not going to be stolen, that there aren't gangs roaming around and that the cinema has a friendly and familiar environment.'¹²⁴

For centre operators, a cinema complex within a shopping centre extended its trading hours, reducing the 'down-time' in which the centre was closed. Cinemas also provided direct income from rents, which were charged as a percentage of box office sales. The value of this can be seen in the growth in cinema takings: in 1990 box offices took \$99,985,000 – \$25 million more, than in 1989.¹²⁵ This was helped by rising ticket prices which 'crashed through the \$10 barrier' in time for the Christmas holidays at the end of 1989.¹²⁶ Centre operators argued that cinemas fed off customers drawn to the retail facilities of the centre. For such patrons, multiplexes offered a flexible delivery format – major films could be shown across a number of cinemas, spaced out at intervals, so that shoppers could easily 'make' the film at a time that fitted in with their shopping and other activities. One developer described the system as 'like catching a bus'.¹²⁷ It was entertainment on tap, all day, and well into the night. Movie visits grew markedly with multiplex development: annual cinema admissions per head of Australia's population increased from 1.9 at the peak impact of video rentals in 1985 to 3.9 in 1995.¹²⁸

Co-director of the independent Mandolin Cinema, Rob Gowland, suggested that shopping centre multiplexes provided a 'supermarket approach to film going'. He placed his faith in the selective audience, who wanted to see specific films for specific reasons, differentiating them from the film shoppers who would take pretty much what was on offer 'in the next

¹²³ Sandy George, 'Cinema Exhibition and Distribution in Australia: Trends in Cinema-Going', Screen Australia, Get the Picture, www.afc.gov.au/gtp/wcessaytrends.html, accessed 2 July 2008.

¹²⁴ *Sun Herald*, 19 November 1989, p. 12.

¹²⁵ *Australian*, 12 September 1997, p. 37.

¹²⁶ *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 January 1990, p. 3; *Sun Herald*, 25 February 1990, p. 31; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 1990, p. 4.

¹²⁷ *Australian*, 12 September 1997, p. 37.

¹²⁸ Jones, 'Developments in the Cinema Distribution and Exhibition Industry', pp. v, 7.

twenty minutes'.¹²⁹ Over time, however, the film shopper became the predominant demographic. The exclusivity of movie releases, where the grand inner city theatres received the first run and suburban cinemas had to wait their turn, changed in the 1970s with blockbusters being mass released through the major chains.¹³⁰ The prestige and competitive advantage of the old city cinemas was lost. Like the city department stores that shared their grand aesthetic and refinement, the old city cinemas became relics of another time, too expensive to maintain, too cumbersome to operate: beautiful, majestic; out-of-date. The smaller independents also struggled: too selective, unable or unwilling to provide plush seats, and exhibiting films that sat beyond the sensibilities of the suburban consumers who came to shop and watch, or watch and shop.¹³¹

Manuel Cuadrado and Marta Frasquet have analysed the audiences of multiplexes in Spain using a method of categorisation where cinema attendees are grouped based on their motivation for seeing movies. They identified three different 'types': those motivated by social reasons – attending movies for enjoyment or to 'cultivate social relations'; those who were relatively apathetic, registering low scores on most motivating forces; and cinema buffs who sought out specific directors and who saw film as a means of cultural cultivation. The first two groups were more likely to attend films in shopping centre multiplexes.¹³² This research is not definitive, and was conducted after our time period in another country, but it does support Gowland's analysis of 'supermarket' movie-goers. It also correlates with evidence gathered through this project's oral history survey.

Many respondents noted the convenience of cinemas in shopping centres as well as their social context. For some it could turn shopping trips into a 'day out for the whole family'.¹³³ Older children or teenagers might catch a film themselves – some allocating a whole day for shopping and a movie.¹³⁴ Parents reported this as a 'safe activity'. They

¹²⁹ *Sun Herald*, 19 November 1989, p. 12.

¹³⁰ William, 'The K-mart audience', pp. 489-92.

¹³¹ *Sunday Age*, 21 August 2005, p. 15; *Age*, 24 September 2005, p. 7; *Australian*, 13 August 2005, p. 19.

¹³² Manuel Cuadrado and Marta Frasquet, 'Segmentation of Cinema Audiences: An Exploratory Study Applied to Young Consumers', *Journal of Cultural Economics*, no. 23, 1999, pp. 262-3.

¹³³ Kate, OHR no. 19, 14 January 2007 - 20 January 2007.

¹³⁴ Anne, OHR no. 12, 14 January 2007 - 20 January 2007; Elizabeth, OHR no. 8, 14 January 2007 - 20 January 2007; Maire-Louise, OHR no. 33, 21 January 2007 - 27 January 2007.

would accompany younger children – sometimes as a reward for putting up with a shopping trip.¹³⁵ The infusion of shopping with leisure is evidenced in the number of people who, when responding to their usage of shopping centres conjoined the activities of shopping and movie-going.¹³⁶ Tanya, a manager in her thirties, combines a wide range of activities, overlapping chores with pleasure in her trips: ‘I shop, go to Medicare and my health provider, eat, go to the movies, and get a pedicure while I’m at it.’¹³⁷ She notes the changes that have occurred over the last twenty years, and the convenience of the retail leisure precinct:

when I was a child and in my teens... Cinemas were not part of shopping centres... These days I may shop during the day, eat an early dinner at the shopping centre and then go to a movie, all under the one roof.¹³⁸

Some people who find shopping centres unappealing go only for the movies.¹³⁹ The latter can be seen as a ‘necessity’, forcing an unwanted trip to a disliked location.¹⁴⁰ As Carolyn, a stay-at-home mum in her thirties writes: ‘that’s where the local cinema is so no choice there.’¹⁴¹

Eating with entertainment: Fast-food and take away food courts

Cinemas were thus fully integrated into shopping centres, which adapted their environment to provide supporting leisure and entertainment infrastructure. This primarily involved the provision of fast food outlets, take-away eateries and small entertainment facilities such as electronic games parlours. Australian department stores had restaurants and cafeterias from the 1930s. Coffee shops dated from the 1950s and had been an early feature in shopping centres – places for customers, particularly women, to sit and relax in between bouts of

¹³⁵ Maire-Louise, OHR no. 33, 21 January 2007 - 27 January 2007; Kate, OHR no. 19, 14 January 2007 - 20 January 2007.

¹³⁶ Margaret, OHR no. 26, 21 January 2007 - 27 January 2007.

¹³⁷ Tanya, OHR no. 64, 4 February 2007 – 10 February 2007.

¹³⁸ Tanya, OHR no. 64, 4 February 2007 – 10 February 2007.

¹³⁹ Carol, OHR no. 42, 21 January 2007 - 27 January 2007.

¹⁴⁰ Kate, OHR no. 78, 8 January 2008 – 23 February 2008.

shopping. There had also been some early examples of food courts: Bankstown Square (Figure 5.9) and Roselands (Figure 5.10) both advertised eateries serving international cuisine; gastronomic symbols of consumer capital's global reach as well as the range of choices it provided.¹⁴²



Figure 5.9: Artist's depiction of Bankstown Square International Foodcourt
Sydney Morning Herald, Bankstown Square Special Feature, 21 September 1966, p. 8.

Hungry or curious shoppers at Roselands could choose from fourteen food stalls, grouped together in the 'Four Corners Central Dining Hall', which offered dishes 'from all the kitchens of the world'.¹⁴³ The 'Chuck' Wagon sold a variety of 'all American' burgers; seafood was available from The Whistling Oyster; The London Roast served 'the best of old England'; and The Red Dragon lumped Asia into one neatly packaged melting pot providing Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Indian dishes. The outlets were takeaway and surrounded tables and chairs where people would take their meals. It was billed as 'the most exciting eating out adventure ever introduced into Australia.'¹⁴⁴

It was not until the 1980s, however, that food courts became a feature of most Australian shopping centres. Following American trends, they were introduced as centres looked to expand their leisure and entertainment facilities. They made it easy to extend the one-stop shopping trip to include a meal, and encouraged shoppers to spend more time and money in

¹⁴¹ Carolyn, OHR no. 85, 8 January 2008 – 23 February 2008.

¹⁴² *Sydney Morning Herald*, Bankstown Square Feature, 21 September 1966, p. 8.

¹⁴³ Canterbury City Council (Campsie) Library, Local Studies Collection, Roselands File, Grace Bros promotional brochure, 'Corners at Roselands Shopping Centre', c1965.

¹⁴⁴ *Torch*, 13 October 1965, p. 20.

centres.¹⁴⁵ An American research report in 1987 found that food courts kept shoppers in centres for, on average, an additional thirty-five minutes, and that over sixty percent of customers visiting a centre made a food purchase.¹⁴⁶ A 1994 survey, also in America, found that sixty percent of respondents consumed a snack whilst visiting malls, and thirty percent a full meal.¹⁴⁷ Food courts were important additions to many centres in the 1980s, being added or extended at Warringah Mall, Miranda Fair and Roselands. Other 1980s centres built after Macquarie – Westfield Eastgardens, Chatswood Chase, and Westfield Chatswood – all opened with large food courts.¹⁴⁸



Figure 5.10: Artist's depiction of Roselands Four Corners foodcourt
Torch, 13 October 1965, p. 20.

¹⁴⁵ That the aim of mall entertainment revamps is to extend people's time in them, see Humphery, *Shelf Life*, p. 153.

¹⁴⁶ White, 'The Changing Nature', p. 81.

¹⁴⁷ Peter H. Bloch, Nancy M. Ridgway and Scott A. Dawson, 'The Shopping Mall as Consumer Habitat', *Journal of Retailing*, vol. 70, no. 1, 1994, p. 30.

¹⁴⁸ White, 'The Changing Nature', p. 82.

One of the distinguishing features of 1980s food courts was the introduction of branded fast-food outlets. The American invasion of these enterprises began in 1968 with Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), which opened in Guildford NSW. By the late 1970s, KFC, McDonalds and Pizza Hut were firmly established, although the latter distinguished itself as a cheap restaurant with patrons having to wait up to twenty-five minutes while their pizza was cooked. With busier lifestyles and more women in the paid workforce, Australian eating habits were changing. Nutritionists and food industry commentators claimed Australian's were now more likely to 'graze' than 'sit down to three solid and separate meals each day'. With products foreign to Australian tastes, sales for the big fast food chains were initially slow, but by the late 1970s, almost twenty-five percent of Australian money spent eating out was on fast food, with the average customer in the middle-income bracket.¹⁴⁹

Big fast food chains attributed their success to advertising, brash display, standardised products, familiar concepts and meticulous organisation.¹⁵⁰ But social researcher Hugh Mackay notes that if McDonalds began in Australia as a means to 'eat and run', it became a social space where families and people could 'stop and talk to each other'.¹⁵¹ If the early customers were middle class, the appeal soon broadened. For perhaps the first time, working class people could eat out, not worrying about how they were dressed, and be served in comfort. Shopping Centre foodcourts, similarly, were based on quick service, standardisation and convenience, but they too were used as social space that people did not necessarily rush through:

In [my] early teens late night shopping was introduced and [I] used to meet friends at 'The Square' and go to the 'World Fare Restaurant' which we thought [was] very cool at the time, early 1970's, [We] used to pool our limited pocket money to buy fried rice, very exotic, one teenage girl used to bring her younger siblings to eat peoples leftovers as I think her parents were alcoholics and neglected them.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ Walker and Roberts, *From Scarcity to Surfeit*, p. 147; Shelley Gare, 'The Fast Food Phenomenon: Let Them Eat Hamburgers', *Cleo*, March 1977, pp. 19-21.

¹⁵⁰ Gare, 'The Fast Food Phenomenon', pp. 19-21.

¹⁵¹ Mackay, *Reinventing Australia*, p. 284.

Fast food's relationship with shopping centres began on their fringes: built on ground floors, adjacent to car parks, providing access to patrons seven days a week and after regular shopping hours. In the 1970s, outlets of the big three began to appear, and by the late 1980s, most major shopping centres had at least a couple perched on their perimeter.¹⁵³ The first McDonalds inside a major Sydney shopping centre opened in Westfield Chatswood in 1987. McDonalds' foray became a trend: Macquarie's food court – down the escalators from the cinema precinct with seating overlooking the ice-rink – offered eight owner-operated outlets, coffee shops and outlets from each of McDonalds, KFC and Pizza Hut.¹⁵⁴

Playing games, ruffling feathers: The games parlour in shopping centres

Completing Macquarie's leisure precinct were newer fast food shops such as the United States' hamburger chain giant, Fuddruckers 2, as well as a Family Games Parlor.¹⁵⁵ Like cinemas, games parlours were an end distribution point of a massive cultural production industry.¹⁵⁶ Games like *Dragon's Lair*, *Mortal Kombat* and *Time Crisis*, drew on cutting edge graphics and gameplay that in the 1980s and early 1990s were far beyond the capacity of home consoles.¹⁵⁷ As a key social site for teenagers, shopping centres were an obvious location for games arcades, particularly given the establishment of multiplex-anchored leisure precincts. Timezone was a widely established enterprise, and opened outlets in some Australian shopping centres, but it was soon swamped by supersized Intencity games parlours. Created through a partnership between Kerry Packer and Frank Lowy, after early input from James Packer, Intencity was launched in 1995 at Westfield's Hurstville complex. Twenty outlets were subsequently built across Australia. Ranging in size from

¹⁵² Patricia, OHR no. 76, 8 January 2008 - 23 February 2008.

¹⁵³ White, 'The Changing Nature', pp. 80-1.

¹⁵⁴ *Northern District Times*, Macquarie Centre Special, 21 September 1994, p. E.

¹⁵⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Northern Herald*, 15 September 1994, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Tom Panelas, 'Adolescents and Video Games: Consumption of Leisure and the Social Construction of the Peer Group', *Youth & Society*, vol. 15, no. 1, September 1983, pp. 54-8.

¹⁵⁷ David Braue, 'Step up and play', *Bulletin*, vol. 121, no. 27, 8 July 2003, p. 60.

3,200 to 5,200 square metres, they were considerably larger than Timezone arcades, which had until then dominated the market.¹⁵⁸

If arcade operators and shopping centre management saw a natural fit for their operations, members of the community resisted. Three months before Macquarie's parlour opened, Epping Boys High School Parents and Citizens' Association expressed concern that it would 'attract gangs of youths and lead to an increase in petty crime'. A spokesman claimed that there were already incidences at the centre where older children were bailing up younger ones and taking their money. Macquarie's manager, Alan Davis, argued that any risks raised by the introduction of a gaming parlour would be more than discounted by the police station that was being built within the centre as part of the accompanying renovations.¹⁵⁹

...it's up to the police to do better policing and we are building them a \$50,000 to \$60,000 police station... It will be at no cost to them and we are foregoing rent. It is our contribution back to the community. The beat police will be here for two shifts, about 16 hours a day all week. It will be a very high profile police station.¹⁶⁰

Shopkeepers later called for a greater police presence claiming that the station always seemed to be closed. At the leisure precinct's opening, Gladesville Liberal MP, Ivan Petch, argued that the new police premises did not constitute a station as such, but was simply a place from which officers could work when they came to the centre. He put the onus back on the Centre to provide sufficient levels of security.¹⁶¹

Young teenagers interviewed by the local paper argued that the centre would 'keep kids off the street and out of trouble'. Some said it would make life easier by saving a journey to Timezone at Castle Hill Towers or Bankstown. They claimed there was never any trouble at these other venues: 'Heaps of us would go if it opened here because it gives us

¹⁵⁸ *Herald Sun*, 18 Aug 1998, p. 29.

¹⁵⁹ *Northern District Times*, 15 June 1994, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Northern District Times*, 1 March 1995, p. 2.

something good to do'.¹⁶² Their enthusiasm echoed the findings of a 1980 Victorian survey of approximately 700 secondary school students, in which more than fifty percent said they enjoyed playing amusement machines at least occasionally.¹⁶³ At Macquarie, councillor Terry Perram looked over the heads of these youngsters arguing that: 'We don't have any of these facilities in the city of Ryde at the present time, and I think that's something we can all be grateful for'. His position echoed a long line of local government objections to such parlours through the late 1970s and 1980s.¹⁶⁴ Other councillors, though, argued in favour citing sound management practices, the fact that an entertainment facility was being provided for young people, and that the centre was a preferable place for them to congregate than the 'back streets'.¹⁶⁵

Against legal advice the council blocked the application. An appeal was lodged with the Land and Environment court, which the council lost. The costs incurred saw public condemnation from those councillors who had supported the parlour, or recognised the futility of fighting it. Perram, argued that the council had a moral duty to look at the broader social implications of development rather than at the narrower town-planning focus of the Court. He claimed that he had 'received a lot of community support from people who didn't want it to go ahead.' In Parliament, the member for Eastwood Andrew Tink supported Perram's position. Tink cited a youth development officer, Darlene Keenan, who claimed that amusement centres encouraged truancy, increased petty crime (undertaken 'to feed the machines'), lowered self-esteem and sapped motivation.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶² *Northern District Times*, 6 July 1994, p. 4.

¹⁶³ Harry van Moorst, 'Amusement Centres As Leisure: Local Government, Its Responses and Responsibilities' in Harry van Moorst (ed.), *Research Papers on Electronic Leisure and Society's Reaction to Amusement Machines*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹⁶⁵ *Northern District Times*, 6 July 1994, p. 5; 13 July 1994, p. 43.

¹⁶⁶ Andrew Tink, Private members statement, 'Macquarie Shopping Centre Games Parlour', Parliamentary Debates, NSW, Legislative Assembly, 21 September 1994, p. 3469.

COURT 'FIASCO'

Green light for games parlor

**Slot machines
'an invitation
to break rules'**

'Parents' win'

Centres 'attract gangs'

**Big 'no'
to fun
parlor**

Parents fight parlor

F

Figure 5.11: Headlines in the Northern District Times expressing community comments about the proposed games parlour at Macquarie Centre.

Northern District Times, 15 June 1994, p. 3; 13 July 1994, p. 3; 14 September 1994, p. 1.

The stigma of delinquency attached to pinball machines has a long history. In 1941 they were banned in New York because their visual similarity to gambling devices raised

concerns about their effect on children.¹⁶⁷ Tom Panelas has argued that as pinball machines, and later video games, became established as staples of youth culture, the level of concern that surrounded their usage may well have been driven by the simple fact that most ‘users’ were adolescents.¹⁶⁸ Harry van Moorst adds some flesh to this contention detailing the fears of idleness that surround youth and the ‘suspicious glance’ that moralisers throw ‘at any place where young people may gather’. ‘Sooner or later’, he writes, ‘such a place will be seen as a potential breeding ground for sin, vice and unwholesome leisure.’¹⁶⁹ White and Sutton likewise suggest that the visibility of youth gatherings as well as young people’s social and political vulnerability makes them easy targets for ‘moral panics’.¹⁷⁰ Pinball culture was foreign to those who decried it, many of whom worried about impressionable youth. This is not to repudiate the experiences of Keenan – as Tink noted, she worked at the coalface with disadvantaged youth – but cause and effect are inevitably hard to untangle, and the roots of a problem are always broader than its symptoms.

Felena Alach has described shoppers in Perth feeling intimidated and being suspicious of a hip-hop crew that regularly gathered in the city’s Murray St Mall outside the entrance of Myer. She analyses this as a fear of the unknown and a subversion of the ‘comfort zone’ cultivated so assiduously by the department store.¹⁷¹ At Macquarie, the opposition to the parlour was couched in terms of exclusion: the elimination of certain character types from a safe, respectable social site. It tells us more about the bourgeois values associated with the shopping centre – which people clearly wanted to maintain – than it does about the influence of pinball and video games on young people. Moorst’s studies find no clear evidence that young people frequent pinball parlours because they have nothing better to do – pinball is just one in a variety of interests. He notes the lack of critique involved in the scapegoating of young people and their activities, suggesting that there is a ‘general trend

¹⁶⁷ Philip Sharp, ‘Peep-boxes to Pixels: An Alternative History of Video Game Space’, *Situated Play*, Proceedings of DiGRA 2007 Conference, p. 281.

¹⁶⁸ Panelas, ‘Adolescents and Video Games’, pp. 51-2.

¹⁶⁹ Harry van Moorst, ‘The Policing of Leisure: Amusement Parlours As Scapegoats’ in Harry van Moorst (ed.), *Research Papers on Electronic Leisure and Society’s Reaction to Amusement Machines*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁷⁰ Rob White and Adam Sutton, ‘Social Planning for Mall Redevelopment: An Australian Case-study’, *Local Environment*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2001, p. 69.

¹⁷¹ Felena Alach, ‘Youth Subculture and Urban Space: Appropriating a Sense of Autonomy’, *Studies in Western Australian History*, no.17, 1997, pp. 116-138.

by older people to oppose any form of activity in which young people “congregate” unless considerable discipline can be imposed on the activity’.¹⁷²

Even support for the Macquarie Games Parlor argued in terms of respectability and responsibility, insisting that middle class values, aesthetics and behaviours would not be compromised. The owner of the parlour argued that he had \$500,000 invested in the enterprise – money he had no intention of risking by allowing troublemakers in his premises.¹⁷³ Ryde Councillor Edna Wilde, claimed that there had been a misconception that it was to be some sort of ‘sleazy pinball’ joint.¹⁷⁴ Opening advertisements declared that the parlour: ‘boasts the very latest in technology to excite and stimulate your mind!... the huge variety of games will suit all ages – from little kids to big kids (including Mum and Dad)!’.¹⁷⁵ It was a sign of change brought about by new gaming environments, technological advances in home gaming, and, perhaps, a shared enjoyment of shopping centre culture amongst children and parents.

Inroads into public gaming were made by increasingly sophisticated home gaming consoles beginning with the Playstation in 1994, and followed by The Nintendo 64 (1996), Sega Dreamcast (1998), PlayStation 2 (2000), and Xbox (2001). In response, public gaming shifted to more physical forms of interactive entertainment such as air hockey, basketball, ‘whack-the-crocs’ and Sega’s simulative Daytona racing game. ‘Redemption games’, which allowed users to win tickets that could be traded in for merchandise became major earners for arcades. According to Juan Uribe, the general manager of Avel which owned Timezone, the new style of games were bringing parents to parlours by the mid-1990s as they sought ways to bond with children whose social worlds were entwined with technological consumption.¹⁷⁶ The ‘sleazy pinball joint’ was becoming ‘family friendly’, but in the process may have lost some of its allure. Intensity was in trouble just a few years after its launch with David Lowy describing its mega-store format as a failure and its products overpriced. Unable to draw sufficient revenue to pay for its floorspace, Intensity turned to

¹⁷² van Moorst, ‘The Policing of Leisure’, pp. 13-14.

¹⁷³ *Northern District Times*, 20 September 1994, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁴ *Northern District Times*, 14 September 1994, p. 1

¹⁷⁵ *Northern District Times*, Macquarie Centre Special, 21 September 1994, p. H.

smaller parlours – a format which seems to have stood the test of recent times.¹⁷⁷ The youth dollar, as Hodge, Fiske and Turner argue in their study of gaming behaviour, is recycled and spent thriftily.¹⁷⁸ Arcade games are not poker machines; they are elements in a complex social milieu, which, for teenagers and other ‘users’, form a departure point for interaction and engagement with one another.

The success of leisure shopping

The combination of blockbusters, comfortable seats, candy bars, games parlours, big-brand fast-food outlets, and food courts all conveniently positioned next to public transport hubs, free parking, and a vast array of shops and services proved magnetic.¹⁷⁹ By the mid-1990, marketers suggested that forty-five percent of people visiting shopping centres did so primarily to be entertained.¹⁸⁰ In the late 1990s, a retail survey reported that:

The ageing of the population, increased participation of women in the workforce and general lifestyle changes have resulted in lower spending on fashion and higher spending on entertainment, recreation, gambling, mobile phone costs, travel, health and services.¹⁸¹

In 1984 there had been 29 million visits to movies in Australia. This climbed to 37.5 million in 1988, and to 45.5 million in 1992.¹⁸² Suburban cinema attendance rose by almost forty percent from January to October 1989, to the same period in 1990, even as city-based cinemas saw a decline of around eleven percent.¹⁸³ Big budget movies in multiplexes

¹⁷⁶ Braue, ‘Step up and play’, pp. 60-61.

¹⁷⁷ *Herald Sun*, 18 Aug 1998, p. 29.

¹⁷⁸ Fiske, Hodge and Turner, *Myths of Oz*, pp. 80-81.

¹⁷⁹ On this as an international pattern, see Bloch, Ridgway and Dawson, ‘The Shopping Mall as Consumer Habitat’, p. 24, and Youn-Kyung Kim, ‘Consumer Value: An Application to Mall and Internet Shopping’, *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, vol. 30, no. 12, 2002, p. 595.

¹⁸⁰ Kim Humphery, ‘Talking Shop: The Past and Future of the Supermarket and Regional Shopping Centres’, *Arena Magazine*, no.19, October/ November, 1995, p. 33.

¹⁸¹ *Retail Property Market Forecasts and Strategies 1997 to 2007* quoted in Lynne Blundell, ‘Following the Shopping Dollar - Changes in Retail Spending Habits Are Here To Stay’, *Property Australia*, vol.12, no.6, March 1998, pp. 12-14.

¹⁸² *Sunday Age*, 11 April 1993, p. 14; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 June 1992, p. 27; *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Northern Herald*, 7 May 1987, p. 1.

¹⁸³ *Sun Herald*, 20 January 1991, p. 30.

revived the industry and saw Australian audience numbers reach ‘a modern peak of 93 million in 2003’, before a new decline set in under the combined weight of cheap, quick-release DVDs, internet downloads, rising ticket and cinema food prices and mediocre Hollywood production.¹⁸⁴

The multiplex was a long way from Ros and her boyfriend watching *Endless Summer* from the roof of his VW at Warringah Mall.¹⁸⁵ The seats were more comfortable; the vagaries of weather eliminated; marketing and advertising more seamlessly integrated into the experience. There were clear continuities or similarities: teenagers, together enjoying consumer culture, watching movies in a shopping centre. But the experience was now more tightly packaged; the paraphernalia surrounding the event more readily turned to profit. We do not have to argue that 1980s teenagers had lower degrees of agency than their forebears, to recognise that the image encapsulated in the rooftop open-air theatre suggests a different experience from the more commercially controlled 1980s’ multiplex. If the sensory load was intensified – the special effects thrills of the blockbuster amplified in small air-conditioned cinemas with high quality sound – it was also more narrowly focused. Like film production, which had moved from an early 1970s auteur focus on mise-en-scène, direction, set design and lighting to the commercially oriented post-production special effects and editing of Spielberg and Lucas, film consumption shifted to a more tightly controlled and managed environment.¹⁸⁶

Much has been written on the influence of Hollywood in creating acquisitive desire and promulgating consumption practices around the world in the twentieth century. While there are critiques that question the extent of this influence, there is little doubt that Hollywood played a part in the emergence and expansion of consumer culture.¹⁸⁷ With the

¹⁸⁴ *Australian*, 13 August 2005, p. 19; *Sunday Age*, 21 August 2005, p. 15.

¹⁸⁵ Ros, OHR no. 14, 14 - 20 January 2007.

¹⁸⁶ Jon Lewis, ‘The Perfect Money Machine(s): George Lucas, Steven Spielberg and Autism in the New Hollywood’, *Film International*, vol. 1, no. 1, January 2003, p. 12-19.

¹⁸⁷ For some questions requiring critique, see Richard Maltby, ‘On the Prospect of Writing Cinema History from Below’, *Tijdschrift voor Mediageschiedenis*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2006, pp. 74–96. On Americanisation via Hollywood, see, for example, Mark Glancy, ‘Temporary American Citizens? British Audiences, Hollywood Films and the Threat of Americanization in the 1920s’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, vol. 26, no. 4, October 2006, p461-484; Reinhold Wagnleitner, ‘The Empire of the Fun, or Talkin’ Soviet Union Blues: The Sound of Freedom and U.S. Cultural Hegemony in Europe’, *Diplomatic History*, vol. 23, no. 3,

development of multiplexes in Australian suburban shopping centres, the historical image-generator of consumer society and one of its principal end nodes of product distribution were joined. Rosie, a student in her twenties, argues that being in a shopping complex is 'like that movie, ... all about being clueless.'¹⁸⁸ This is a somewhat harsh critique. As we have seen throughout this thesis, people make divergent uses of shopping centres. What we can say is that leisure precincts changed both shopping and movie-going. There was a convergence of sorts. The former became more closely aligned with entertainment; the latter was touched by the everyday. Leisure precincts broadened the appeal of shopping centres, expanding their profit base through horizontal integration. They demonstrate the industry's ability to transform and reposition itself with changing market forces, social trends and cultural tastes. This was a crucial accompaniment to the expansion and consolidation of shopping centres in urban retail geographies that we will observe in coming chapters.

Summer 1999, pp. 499-525. For some Australian examples, see Teo, 'The Americanisation of Romantic Love in Australia', pp. 189-90; Goldsmith, 'The Comfort Lies in All the Things You Can Do', pp. 153-64.

¹⁸⁸ Rosie, OHR no. 97, 8 January 2008 – 23 February 2008.