

# **Save Our Brisbane Suburbs**

Part of the Australia wide *Save Our Suburbs* network

Factsheet #5

## **Why protect some "character" housing ... but not others?**

Cities are in a continuous state of re-invention. However, some cities choose to maintain their history while others choose not to. The question is really one of extent, diversity and arguably, most importantly, the role that historic built environments may play in describing our past and in providing opportunities to experience the sense of place, albeit in another time.

Some cities have chosen to keep their history as intact as possible so even traffic is restricted to preserve that historic amenity while others allow renewal and build freeways to promote that view of modern amenity. Others compromise so that precincts of old provide an alternative to precincts of new. Importantly however, it is the recently new and the new which if maintained will provide the historic precincts and elements of tomorrows heritage.

**Brisbane's postwar housing** After World War 11, houses were severely restricted in size to provide equity of access to housing and to adjust the supply of both labour and materials. While all sorts of ruses were in place to overcome the restrictions, the results emphasised the importance of what might be described as "practical design" leading to a housing industry which reflected use of new materials and designs developed in response to new needs and restrictions. Many of the "new" designs were by architects.

With the lifting of the building restrictions in the early 1950's, many new housing areas were opened up ... many with larger blocks of land in locations suited to architect designed larger houses. Suburbs such as St Lucia and Holland Park illustrate a mix of smaller houses on more easily developed sites with more expensive hilly sites a challenge to architects designing for wealthier clients or those desiring personalised houses. These suburbs and there are many of them, still provide a rich, but increasingly threatened, resource of diverse post war housing.

With an increase in wealth post war, "estates" were increasingly developed to cater for a more specific, not necessarily wealthy, clientele. These people were adventurous and often, while unable to afford houses in the established wealthy suburbs, recognised the potential of moving to new areas and building houses to suit their needs. In the early 1950's, perhaps the most typical of these precincts, later known as "estates", are in Indooroopilly East eg Gilgandra Street, where virtually every house in a street was designed by different architects, many in an adventurous "modern" style reflecting the climate, location, space and size sought by the owners. Although some are brick with tiled roof or a "cottage style", houses typically have large areas of openings, light timber framed walls often sheeted with weatherboards, and low pitched, often corrugated "fibro" roofs. These houses provided opportunities to develop a "new Queenslander", later frequently copied at a smaller scale, but arguably the fore-runner of the current light weight housing so well regarded nationally and internationally. Later "estates" eg in Chapel Hill, provide another "generation" of important post war housing in the 1960's. This architectural heritage is not recognised and is currently unprotected ... unlike "timber and tin".

These "estates" are now a prime focus of developers due to Council's promotion of small lot housing and lack of control on housing type and "fit". Why is this important future heritage not recognised and protected before it is destroyed by those encouraged by Council's policies?