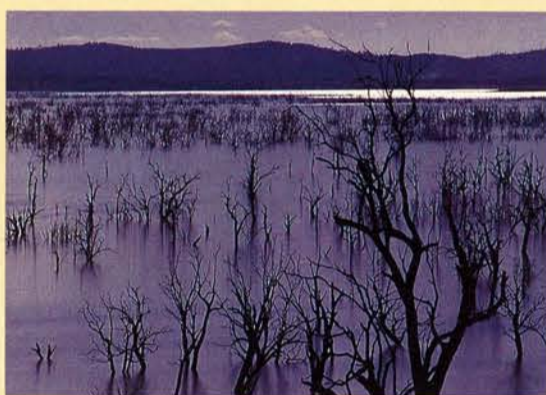


III LANDSCAPES

LANDSCAPES ARE PRODUCTS of natural forces and change wrought by humans. The first section of the atlas examined the physical nature of the Australian continent and the uses to which it has been put. Rural and urban landuse was mapped, as were the spread of railways and the development of mining and industry. Section two, People, took Australian society as its theme, showing the dramatic changes in the sources and location of the population over the last two centuries. Section two also mapped religion, schooling, government and major historical events like war and the Great Depression.

This section looks at the interaction between people and place, showing how the past has left its imprint on the city and country of Australia today. Landuse patterns have been influenced by imported animals and vegetation, and by people's attitudes to the land. Transport, commerce, housing and industry have all had an impact on the development of both city and country landscapes, as demonstrated in the two photographic essays that make up this section.



Australians changing the landscape. This forest was submerged during the construction of the Hume Weir. The reservoir is used for irrigation, drinking water, hydro-electric power generation and recreation. Photograph by Ray Joyce.

WELDON TRANNIES

CHAPTER 14

CITY



Melbourne and the Yarra River, from the east. Photograph by Leo Meier, 1985. WELDON TRANNIES

AUSTRALIA'S CAPITAL CITIES began as tiny port settlements. Today Sydney and Melbourne boast populations of around three million, while Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide each have populations of well over one million people. Of the state capitals only Hobart, with 170 000 inhabitants, has failed to show spectacular population growth.

With people come all the structures associated with urban settlements. This chapter explores the impact of housing, roads, railways, port facilities and industry on the landscape.

City

MOST VISITORS and settlers have come to Australian shores by sea. Approaching the Sydney heads by ship in 1988 the visitor is still struck by the majesty of the natural landscape, with its mighty cliffs and pounding surf. Little has been added to this gateway since 1788 or 1888. On closer inspection the visitor in 1988 may notice dwellings crouched along the cliffs of the eastern suburbs, but the cliffs themselves remain unchanged. Inside the harbour the visitor may be surprised to find that much of the foreshore remains unalienated, which is not the case in Australia's other port cities.

Most people who come to Australia in 1988 will not come by ship, but by aeroplane. From the air, they will see evidence of human occupation on a grand scale. At most of our airports the final approach is over land, so they may not even realise when touching down at Melbourne's Tullamarine or at Perth that they are landing in port cities. In every Australian city except Sydney and Canberra the visitor may notice that all the tall buildings are concentrated in and near the city centre with the rest of the urban landscape given over to one and two-storey structures, except for the odd block of flats or public buildings, such as hospitals. Only in Sydney and Canberra have high-rise centres been developed more than ten kilometres from their GPOs, and Parramatta and Woden are largely the products of governments' growing demands for office space. Their private-enterprise equivalents are the northern New South Wales and southern Queensland coasts, where international hotels and apartment blocks tower over some of the world's finest beaches.

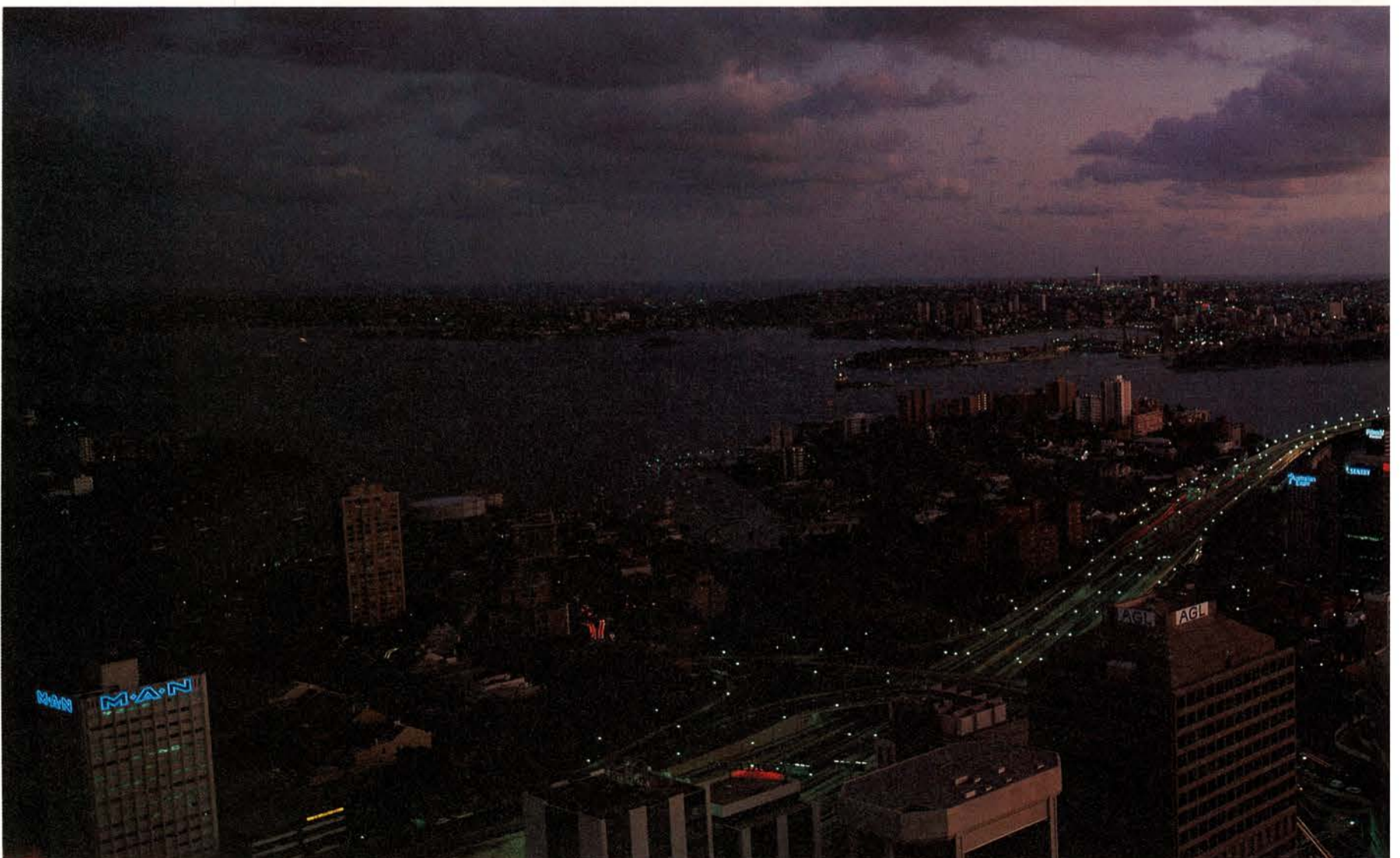
But the overwhelming impression for the airborne visitor to an Australian city is of sprawling low-rise residential, commercial and industrial structures. Nowhere is this impression stronger than when landing at Tullamarine, with the suburbs of Melbourne stretching out below and the city

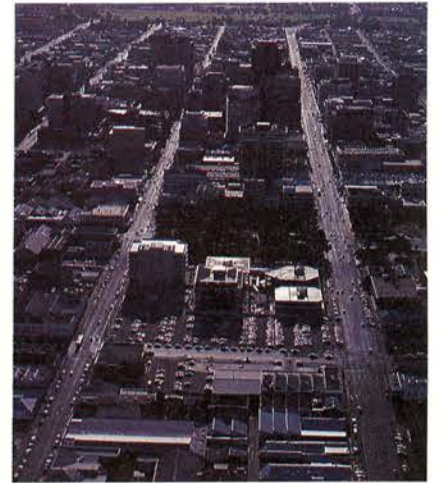
centre a tiny high-rise cluster on the horizon. By 1988 about fourteen million Australians will live in four million houses and just under three million will live in over one million flats, terraces, semidetached houses, townhouses and caravans. Of these five million dwellings, more than 70 per cent are in the capital cities and other cities with populations over 100000, such as the Gold Coast, Newcastle, Wollongong and Geelong. More than three-quarters of the nation's commercial, public and industrial buildings are also in these cities. The impact on the natural landscape of this proliferation of buildings, railways, roads and domestic gardens is as great as that of such rural developments as wheat-belt farming and open-cut mining.

The speed and variety of city building in Australia has varied remarkably over space and time. Initially, the tiny port settlements took little toll on the surrounding landscape; most dwellings were built near the centres of settlement and the remainder were scattered across the surrounding countryside. Local timber was the most commonly used building material, so it was not long before wooded areas around the settlements were stripped of vegetation. Except in Sydney and Hobart, where stone was a popular building material, very few structures built before 1850 survive. Sydney and Melbourne are predominantly products of the second half of the nineteenth century, when most of their roads, tramways and railways were created, and areas designated for parks and bushland. Sydney's growth to the north and south was restricted by the establishment of Australia's first two national parks, Ku-ring-gai Chase (1894) and the Royal National Park (1879), which were thought of as 'lungs' for the city. Melbourne's growth was not restricted by designated parklands, as Melburnians had to go further afield to find natural landscapes thought worthy of preservation; in 1898 the Victorian government created national parks at Mount Buffalo and Wilson's Promontory.

As a result of the rapid growth of office building in North Sydney since the late 1950s, Sydney now has a central business district which extends to both sides of the harbour. The approaches to the harbour bridge cut a swath through the city, but the topography, the harbour and the high-rise buildings diminish the impact of the road system on the surrounding landscape. Photograph by Leo Meier, 1985.

WELDON TRANNIES





Above. Motor traffic has been a dominant consideration for the planners of the central business district of Adelaide, just as in all other Australian cities. Street patterns, developed in the nineteenth century to cater for pedestrian and horse-drawn traffic, have had to accommodate a spectacular increase in the number of cars and trucks on the road over the last fifty years. Photograph by Leo Meier, 1985.

WELDON TRANNIES

Left. This aerial view of Walsh Bay and Darling Harbour shows extensive wharf development from the early 1900s. The Walsh Bay wharves, now redundant, are being renovated for new uses, while the Darling Harbour wharves are being redeveloped. 1913.

SYDNEY HARBOUR TRUST



In the twentieth century Australia's two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne, developed along predetermined paths, their growth rates dependent on general economic conditions. By 1901 Sydney's population had finally exceeded Melbourne's, having lost the lead in the late 1850s when the southern capital grew rapidly on the proceeds of gold. The provision of adequate water remained a problem in both cities, as did sanitation. A great deal of government expenditure went, and still goes, into water and sewerage systems in these and other Australian cities.

The inner city areas of Sydney, Melbourne, Hobart and Adelaide bear evidence of their nineteenth-century origins. For instance, Melbourne's Princes Bridge, completed in 1888, is still in use. Even Sydney's Harbour Bridge, opened in 1932, blended better with its nineteenth-century surrounds than most people imagined was possible, with vehicles on the bridge being hidden by the arch and deck.

Mass car ownership after World War II enabled the growth of new suburbs no longer dependent on trains, trams or buses. In cities that are predominantly creations of the twentieth century, such as Brisbane and Perth, the car has had a powerful impact on the inner city as well as on the suburban landscape. While the Story Bridge (1940) over the Brisbane River also conceals its traffic with a steel superstructure, nothing can hide the environmental devastation of the river by the freeways of the 1970s. In Perth the serene view of the city centre from King's Park is now interrupted by concrete bridges and freeways. Hilly topography and smaller populations have saved the inner areas of Hobart and Newcastle from the ravages of the car, while Adelaide is protected by a combination of sensible siting and good town planning. In Newcastle and

Wollongong the steelworks have become the dominant landscape image, even though both cities have picturesque coastal settings.

There is greater variety in the dwellings of Australian cities than a casual glance from the air might suggest. Critics of Australian housing often complain about the predominance of red terracotta roofs throughout the suburbs. This description was most accurate in the 1950s and 1960s. Before 1920 many dwellings — from terrace houses in Sydney and Melbourne to stilt houses in Brisbane — had slate or corrugated iron roofs. Since 1960 the proliferation of different coloured tiles, the renewed popularity of corrugated iron and a growing number of flat-roofed structures, especially home units, has changed the aerial appearance of many suburbs. On the ground the difference between the cities is even more marked, although about half of all urban houses are brick or brick veneer. In Sydney about one-fifth of all dwellings are made of fibro, while in Melbourne and Brisbane wood remains popular. Two-storey houses are most common in Sydney and least common in Adelaide and Perth. Flats (the term 'home unit' became common after 1960) house one-quarter of Sydney's population, one-fifth of Melbourne's and less than 15 per cent of the other capital cities'. Sydney's high-rise flats look down on the harbour foreshores and road and rail arteries, making them one of the city's most notable — and most debated — features.

Most surviving industrial buildings are products of the twentieth century. It has proved much more difficult to recycle buildings for new industries than to revamp terrace houses, flats or stilt houses for new generations of occupants. Few industrial buildings built before 1888 in Sydney, Hobart and Melbourne are still used for industrial purposes. Most that survive have been turned into shops, as have the

Below. In this poster from the 1930s, James Northfield emphasises the stateliness of Melbourne's roads, parks, trams and major buildings such as Flinders Street railway station and St Paul's Cathedral on the far side of Princes Bridge.
AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES



Right. In this photograph of Melbourne today the cathedral pictured above appears in the centre, dwarfed by the high-rise development of the central business district. To the south, across the Yarra River, the illuminated spire of the city's concert hall dominates the recently completed arts complex, while Flinders Street station with its extensive railway yards remains a significant landmark on the northern bank.

Photograph by Leo Meier, 1985.
WELDON TRANNIES



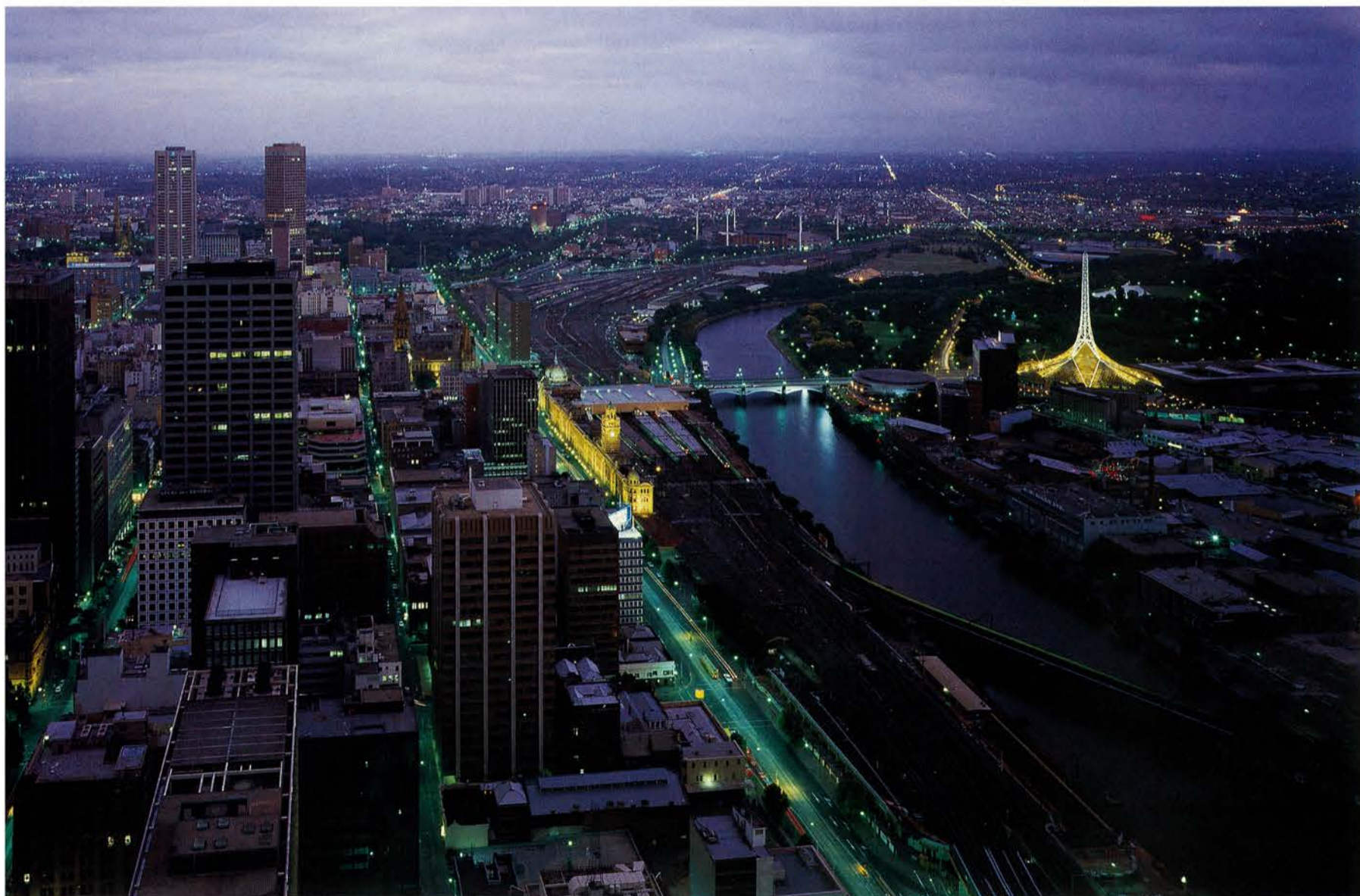
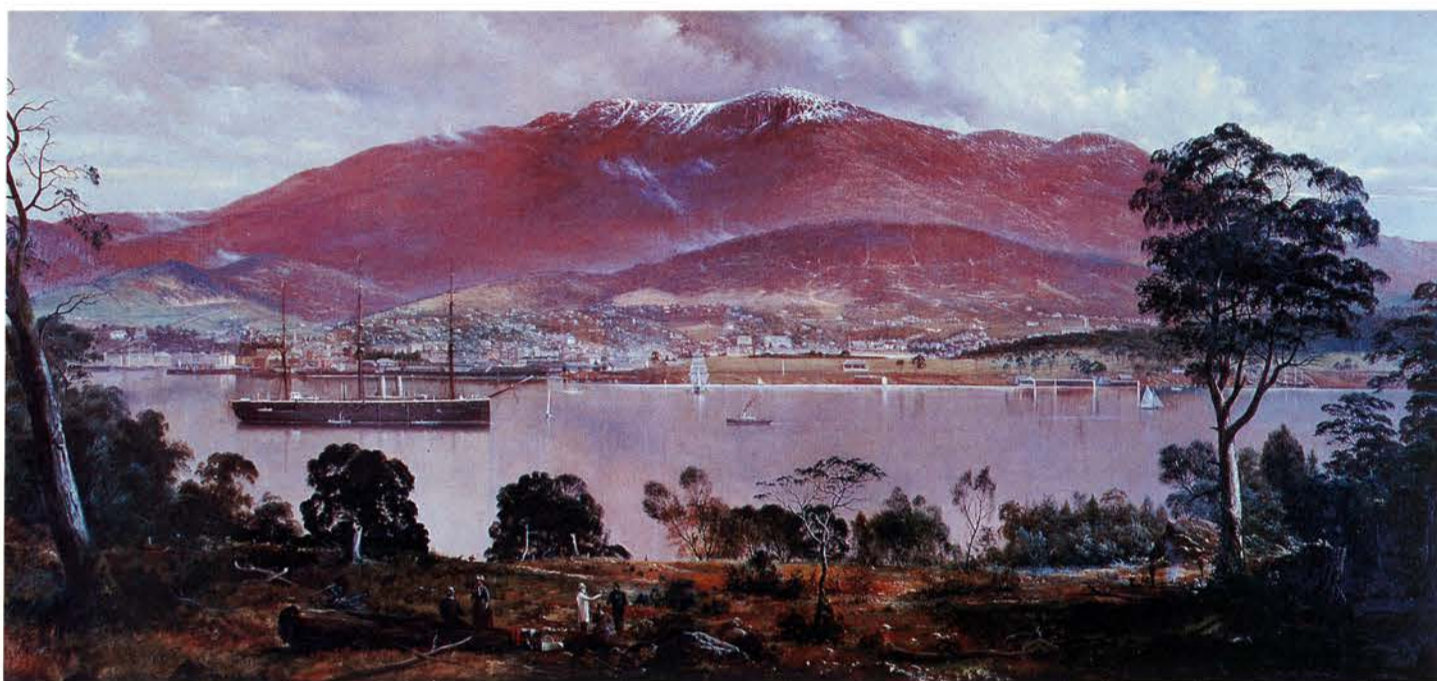


Left and far left. Melbourne's high-rise office blocks are slowly creeping into the surrounding suburbs, but the rest of the city is given over almost entirely to one and two storey structures. The main exceptions are blocks of flats, built not by private enterprise but by the Victorian Housing Commission in the 1960s and 1970s. These blocks are often criticised by the public, and by tenants, as blots on the urban landscape, and such attacks have put a stop to additional construction. Photograph by Leo Meier, 1985.

WELDON TRANNIES

Below. Hobart in 1886, depicted by the French-born marine painter, Captain James Haughton Forrest, who arrived in Tasmania in 1876. He was noted for his close attention to topographic detail. This painting shows how Hobart has expanded in 82 years. Oil on canvas,

TASMANIAN MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY



bond stores in the Rocks in Sydney and at Salamanca Place in Hobart, or converted for office and residential purposes, as has the Robur tea factory on the south bank of the Yarra. Outdated port and railway facilities have been similarly transformed. The Walsh Bay wharves in Sydney now house tourist shops and theatres, while the mortuary station near Central railway station is planned to become a restaurant, following the example of Kinsela's art deco funeral parlour, now transformed into a restaurant and cabaret. Adelaide has turned part of its central station into a casino.

Changes in production and technology have also left their mark on the urban landscape. Sometimes the evidence survives, sometimes not. Gasometers are fast disappearing as they are not needed to distribute natural gas. Likewise changes in the technology of electricity generation and distribution have made urban power stations redundant. Most power stations are now located near major supplies of coal and water, or, in the case of hydro-electric stations, of water only. With changes in the production and distribution of food, suburban dairies have disappeared and market gardening has moved further

Below. In Perth's central business district, insurance, mining and banking companies cope with limited space by erecting high-rise office blocks. But central Perth still retains an extraordinary number of much smaller buildings erected between the 1890s and the 1930s. Photograph by Kevin Diletti, 1985.

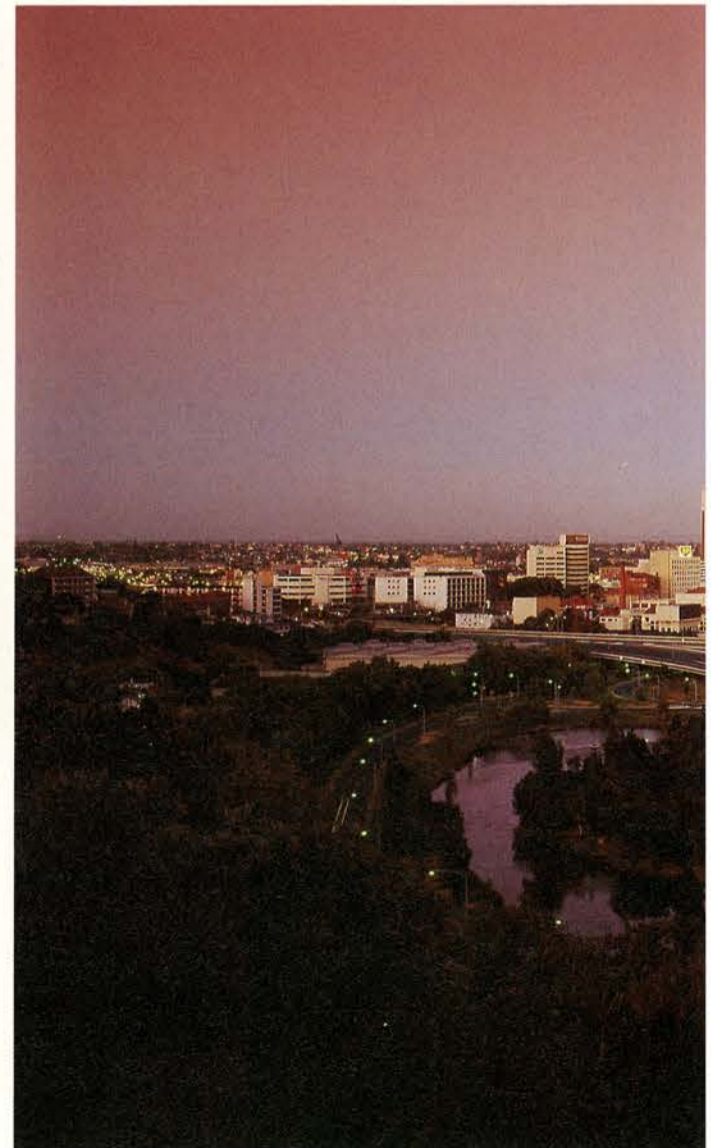


For a hundred years Perth's most popular vantage point has been King's Park. The serenity of the view is now interrupted by freeways. Photograph by Leo Meier, 1985.
WELDON TRANNIES

out. Containerisation has rendered most wharves built before 1920 redundant, while the rationalisation of the Australian car industry in the 1960s and 1970s has caused many plants to be abandoned or given over to new uses. Other inner-city industrial buildings, such as breweries, have been sold, as industries relocate to cheaper suburban sites which provide more room for expansion.

Houses have often had to make way for industrial, retailing or other commercial uses. Over the last hundred years certain sections of Australian cities and certain types of housing have been regarded as slums and the state has been called on to demolish them. Some sites in the older suburbs may have had six different dwellings on them over a period of 150 years, while others have retained their original structures. Most suburbs in the larger cities have retained their town halls, churches and a large proportion of their original houses, but many other structures have been demolished or renovated. Even structures less than 40 years old have been knocked down. More than 1000 cinemas were built in Australian cities in the 1920s and 1930s. Few are still used for movies, the remainder having been demolished, converted to furniture warehouses, roller-skating rinks or fun parlours, or put to other more profitable uses. Shops and banks are also under threat, as are post offices, railway stations and schools of art.

Such changes point to the biggest difference between country and city landscapes in Australia: the pressure for constant redevelopment. As cities grow, their land values increase. Land in and near city centres, and sites in major suburban centres, become so valuable that developers can often afford to demolish and rebuild, sometimes twice within a generation. Our cities have lost many of their most notable buildings in this process. The pressures in small country towns and in rural Australia are rarely





Above. The inner suburbs of all large Australian cities are now subject to intense redevelopment pressures. This boarding house in Neutral Bay, five kilometres from the heart of Sydney, was demolished in 1982 to make way for a block of luxury apartments. Photograph by P. Spearritt.

Left. Red terracotta tiled roofs are still predominant for houses and flats in Rose Bay and the eastern suburbs beyond, mainly built between 1900 and the 1960s. While much of the foreshore on the northern side of the harbour has remained unalienated, most of the southern shore, settled much earlier, has been given over to the waterfront houses and swimming pools of the wealthy. Most of the foreshore of Point Piper, in the foreground, is privately owned, and land values in the area have soared in recent years. Photograph by Leo Meier, 1985.

WELDON TRANNIES



so great. Lobbying by National Trusts and by heritage bodies created in some states has enabled the preservation of a number of historic buildings and landscapes, but few environments can wholly withstand the pressures of urban change, especially pollution from motor vehicles.

Australian cities are vast networks through which people, goods and services move. They present not one landscape but many, from the well-tended gardens of established suburbia to the desolation of new housing estates on the fringes, from the mechanistic logic of new office blocks to tiny factories that somehow manage to survive. The cities offer a rich array of historic and contemporary landscapes. To the close observer these landscapes can be a source of education and fascination.



Above and above left. These stately terraces in Macquarie Street were once used as professional offices or boarding houses, and were demolished in the late 1950s and 1960s to make way for new office blocks, banks in particular, and there were few protests about the demolition. Twenty-five years later a nearby site became the centre of a bitter conservation battle when the State Bank of New South Wales proposed to demolish the elegant art deco headquarters of its predecessor, the Rural Bank, and replace them with a skyscraper. Photograph by John Storey, 1985.

SYDNEY CITY ARCHIVES



Left. Despite the high-rise office blocks, the riverside freeways and the new cultural centre on the far side of the river, Brisbane still retains some remnants of its interwar country town atmosphere. In the foreground, only minutes from the central business district, stilt houses built between 1880 and 1940 have somehow managed to survive. Photo Leo Meier, 1985.

WELDON TRANNIES

Below left, the creation of a new Brisbane suburb, with streets laid out in the foreground and housing on subdivided land behind. Below right, Adelaide's seaside suburb, Glenelg, with the city's central business district in the background. Photographs by Leo Meier, 1985.

WELDON TRANNIES

