



Nº1 Concept plan for Hackney North redevelopment area, from the early 1970s, by the South Australian State Planning Authority.

Nº2 Aerial photograph of the redevelopment area.



UNBUILT AUSTRALIA HACKNEY MODERN

An apparently modest proposal can have significant impact. Sean Pickersgill charts the political effects of an unbuilt Adelaide housing proposal from the 1970s.

The presence of a scheme to develop a small portion of inner suburbia in Adelaide shouldn't be as remarkable as it now seems. When you look at this plan by the South Australian State Planning Authority to rationalize and transform a small portion of the suburb of Hackney, there seems little to excite the eye – it's a reasonable mix of densities, makes provision for a spectrum of users and includes a significant measure of open space. And yet this unbuilt scheme had an impact well beyond these apparently modest attributes. So what was the problem in the early 70s when it was mooted?

For one thing, it involved the compulsory acquisition of a number of dwellings, which in democratic Adelaide was less than palatable. Secondly, it touched on a sacred edge of suburban Adelaide, St Peter's and College Park and even, whisper it, St Peter's College. An institution that has produced more cabinet ministers, Nobel prize winners

and general worthies than any other school in Australia was never going to be interested in social engineering on its doorstep. Thirdly, it meant the demolition of a number of significant heritage buildings, including the Hackney Hotel.

Such was the furore that this plan managed to spawn one of the most significant subterranean bodies to wield power in Adelaide, the St Peter's Resident Association, which became a model for grassroots revolt. Ironically, the association is now diametrically opposed to the placing of their houses on the local heritage register because it stifles property values.

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