

OPEN FOUNDATION AUSTRALIAN HISTORY, 1988

TRANSCRIPTION OF RECORD OF INTERVIEW.
THIRD TERM ASSIGNMENT.

INTERVIEWEE: MR. JIM CARTER
INTERVIEWER: MARGARET J. REES
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: THE NEWCASTLE STATE DOCKYARD
WITH EMPHASIS ON THE CHANGE IN
MANAGEMENT AND WORK PRACTICES
DURING PERIOD 1955 - 1987.
DATE: 4th JULY, 1988.

Day?
Time?

UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE

OPEN FOUNDATION COURSE

1988

I, JIM CARTER give my
permission to MARGARET JOAN REES

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Signed J Carter

Date 4th day of September, 1988

Interviewer M.J.Rees. 

SUMMARY.

Mr. Jim Carter lives at Beresfield, a suburb of Newcastle, New South Wales. Mr. Carter has always lived in the Newcastle area and has been a party to the many socio/economic changes which have occurred in the area during the past fifty years.

Mr. Carter was apprenticed to the Newcastle State Dockyard in 1955 as an apprentice shipwright and he served a five year apprenticeship at the Dockyard. He was continuously employed as a shipwright at the Dockyard from 1955 until the closure in 1987, apart from a lay-off period of a few months in 1977, when the Dockyard had insufficient work orders to keep an approximate workforce of 2,000 men in full time employment. During the lay off period, Mr. Carter was fortunate to find alternative employment as a shipwright with Carrington Slipways, however as soon as men were being re-employed at the Dockyard he reapplied for a position and was successful. After this lay-off period the workforce at the Dockyard was dramatically reduced for a number of reasons, including fewer Contracts being placed with the Dockyard, and also due to rationalisation and new work practices which were introduced into the shipbuilding industry.

Mr. Carter recalls his years of employment at the Dockyard as being personally satisfying and financially rewarding. He says that the Dockyard was "a good place to work" and also says that the wages and conditions at the Dockyard were amongst the best in the industry for many years. He also recalls the friendship between the men in the yard, and how "every one knew each other". Mr. Carter recalls that "for many years", the Manager of the Dockyard was Mr. McLardy, and Mr. Lardy was a very good manager who not only managed the workforce at the Dockyard efficiently, but also had excellent rapport and industrial relations with the men in the yard. Mr. Carter feels that this relationship was never again established with the succession of Managers who followed after Mr. McLardy's death. He recalls that there was a change of Managers every few years, each with new ideas and ways of doing things and he feels that this constant change of managers and work practices, without sufficient consultation with the workmen caused ill feeling and insecurity in the workforce. Mr. Carter also recalls that there were two separate work ethics in operation at the Dockyard. The Management and Staff were State Public Servants, and operated in that capacity, whilst the Dockyard and the men employed in the trades were made to operate as a private enterprise in an open and competitive market place. The two modes of operation were never compatible and caused dissension which Mr. Carter feels was a contributing factor to the closure of the Dockyard.

Mr. Carter recalls the hardships which confronted many men and their families, once rationalisation, and finally closure came to the Dockyard. He feels that young couples suffered severe hardship, as whilst the men were in full time employment, they inevitably lived to a standard of living relative to their wage earning capacity, and many faced heavy financial burdens such as home loan repayments, child support and education expenses, hire purchase commitments etc. Not only were the men who were employed at the Dockyard hard hit by the closure, but many small business houses and small engineering workshops who relied on the Dockyard and the men for their livelihood faced financial dilemma and often closure.

In summary, the closure of the Newcastle State Dockyard has had many far reaching effects, both economically and socially in the Newcastle area.

TOPIC: Regional History of Newcastle with emphasis on Newcastle State Dockyard for a period of 28 years between 1955 and 1987. The gentleman that I am interviewing is Mr. Jim Carter who lives at Beresfield, New South Wales. The date is the 4th July 1988.

The reason that I have decided to do my research on the Newcastle Dockyard is because of the interest that the Dockyard has historically for Newcastle and also because the closing of the dockyard was the end of an era, which will never come again, also because it had such far reaching effects both socially and economically for the people of Newcastle.

MARGARET: Jim, around about what year did you start at the dockyard.

JIM: 1955.

MARGARET: And, did you work at the dockyard continually between 1955 and 1987.

JIM: No, I worked for the first 10 years after '55, had a break for about 2½ years and then returned to the dockyard in 1969 until a slight unemployment time in 1977, and re-employed again in '78, right up until the time of the closure in 1987.

MARGARET: And, when you say 1977 you had a slight lay-off, did you want to be laid off, or were you put off work during that time.

JIM: No, there was a lay-off in the work force and they did it by seniority, and I did not want to go, but it was because of my seniority.

MARGARET: And did you find it very difficult to pick up some other work during that period

JIM: At that time the work was not very accessible, and at the time I did try to get a job and after a short time I got a job at Carrington Slipways.

MARGARET: Did you have a similar type of trade there.

JIM: Yes, I worked as a shipwright.

MARGARET: Did any other members of your family work at the Dockyard?

JIM: No, I was the only one.

MARGARET: I was just wondering about that, if it was a little bit like the mines where fathers and sons work there as a tradition.

JIM: Well, that did happen at the Dockyard, if a member of the family worked there, sometimes their children got a job as an apprentice at the Dockyard.

MARGARET: Would it have been easier for a child whose father worked at the Dockyard to get an apprenticeship at the Dockyard.

JIM: I don't think it was any easier, but with the parents there, they would know the type of person that the apprentice would be.

(Recording number 34)

- MARGARET: Is there any basic history that you could tell me about the Dockyard. Do you know much of the history of the Dockyard. I think it used to be on Walsh Island originally.
- JIM: Yes, it was on Walsh Island, then during the War, they shifted down to the new place, to the State Dockyard, to construct new ships for the Navy in 1942, and the old graving dock which was up at Walsh Island, was towed down around the river to be placed at Carrington; and from then on it just went from the Navy ships and on to public works, dredges, and then up into the big commercial ships for other companies around Australia.
- MARGARET: Can you remember what your starting wage was when you first got your apprenticeship as a shipwright there, roughly?
- JIM: Yes, my first year was Four pounds and eighteen shillings. For the first year apprenticeship of a five year apprenticeship. My first wage as a tradesman was about Nineteen pounds, at the time.
- MARGARET: Can you remember how the general economy of Newcastle was at the time you became a tradesman.
- JIM: Yes, in the early 1950's it wasn't buoyant in the shipbuilding industry, but after about 1955 the work gradually picked up until the 1960's, when the Shipbuilding Industry was very buoyant, and the workforce at the Dockyard was up at well over 2,000 men.
- MARGARET: And I suppose that wages and conditions would have improved at that time.
- JIM: As the economy of the country went up, wages and conditions improved. The wages and conditions at the Dockyard were always some of the highest wages in the industry in Newcastle, it was a very good place to work.
- MARGARET: Do you think that the type of men who came to work at the Dockyard after these good conditions arrived changed much.
- JIM: No, the dockyard always seemed to attract a better class of tradesman into the workforce, because shipbuilding is a specialised industry, and not only with the shipbuilding, they had a very big heavy engineering works there also.
- MARGARET: I know for example, that the B.H.P. had many people of German and English descent working at the B.H.P. Steelworks at Mayfield, did you find that there were many immigrants employed at the Dockyards.
- JIM: No, not so many at the Dockyard, as in the main workforce, it was mostly Australian tradesmen from around the district and a few came from other shipyards in Queensland and Sydney, when the workforce needed more tradesmen.
- MARGARET: When you first started to work at the Dockyards, after you finished your apprenticeship, when you were a tradesman, can you recall how the industrial relations situation was then, was there good industrial relations at the Dockyard.
- JIM: Yes, it was very good in the 1950's and 60's, we had a very good Manager, Mr. McLardy, for a long time, and the workforce and the management had a good relationship, and the workforce was productive because there was

(Recording number 96)

a bonus scheme operating at the time, and as you worked harder and made more money, therefore you got a bigger bonus and this went on for many many years, and then eventually after Mr. McLardy died and there was a change in management, they cut the bonus out because of the change in management's attitude. Everything changed at the Dockyard then, but the Manager, McLardy was there from the beginning of the Dockyard, right up until the time of his death.

MARGARET: And when was that.

JIM: I just can't recall the date when he retired.

MARGARET: Many years before you finished working there.

JIM: Yes, but he was there for quite a number of years when I was working there.

MARGARET: And who took over as the Manager after that time.

JIM: Mr. Harding, who was the Assistant Manager at that time.

ME: Another local man.

JIM: Yes.

MARGARET: Was there much socialising between the management and the people who were working in the yard at that time. Did you have many social functions?

JIM: No, there wasn't much socialising, but we did have our annual picnic every year, and we used to have cricket teams etc. We used to have concerts during the working lunch hour breaks, but just between the men in the yard, not really with the management and staff, especially after work, no.

MARGARET: And how about the young apprentices, as they were coming on, did many of the older men make fun of them, give them special nicknames, or was there a nickname for a particular job which they used to do. Things like that.

JIM: Oh yes, there was a lot of that. All apprentices I would say, went through the initiation ceremony at the dockyard and used to get nicknames after a while, when you'd find out something about them, and we used to play little tricks on the boys and the apprentices and tradesmen used to get on really well together. For example a tradesman might send an apprentice to the store to get a "long waite", or a "short fuse" or some such thing, and the boy would be standing there waiting to get his "long weight" or "short fuse", not knowing that a joke was being played on him, but they took it pretty well on the whole.

MARGARET: The general feeling in the yard of all of the men would have been a friendly relationship.

JIM: Oh yes. Everyone knew each other in the yard, even though there were so many men, most knew each other.

MARGARET: And over the years, did you notice many changes to the work practices in the yard, e.g. as the type of ships changed, which

(recording line 129)

being repaired or constructed at the yard, was there much re-training necessary, and did the management help to retrain men if there was any retraining necessary.

JIM: Yes, over the years with the new modern types of ships, we went from the small ships to the larger ships and with the new concept in methods of shipbuilding etc. it did change, the management did retrain different personnel throughout the yard, so it did go on, the retraining, right throughout the yard, yes. If it changed, then the management changed with it.

MARGARET: Did you find much difference in the attitudes of the men that you were working with. For example, would many of their wives have had to work during say the 1960's to help to buy a house, furniture, educate the children? Can you recall a time when that attitude would have changed? It seems to have changed more lately.

JIM: I think, when I first went there, in the 1950's, I would say that not many of the men had their wives working, but over the years, as things became harder, their wives did start working, and I know that when we had industrial trouble in the 1970's, strikes and the like, that the men couldn't stay out of work for long to really get what they wanted, like better working conditions and relevant money, etc., but some were lucky they had their wives working. I'd say, yes, it did change over the years.

MARGARET: And I suppose that not many of the men would ever have expected that the Dockyard would close for good?

JIM: No, we didn't and it came as a surprise, in the last eighteen months, you could say that a noticeable change came over the whole Dockyard. It was about this time that people from the National University in Canberra came to the Dockyard and took all of the old drawings of the vessels that had been built at the Dockyard and things like that. They took them away to Canberra. So they (the Government) must have known then that they did not intend to continue with the Dockyard. Other groups of people also came to the Dockyards before it closed and they held interview with us, but we never heard what happened to that, to what information we gave.

MARGARET: So, would you say that you had twenty good years at the Dockyard?

JIM: Yes, many good years, it was a very good place to work.

MARGARET: And did the atmosphere change much when the change was coming and when the closure seem imminent?

JIM: It did, yes, you could see the change in the men, and the men toward the management and the management towards the men. The change came over a period of years, because we had different managers all the time and I think this was one of the changes of the Dockyard, when we used to have a new manager about every three or four years, a new manager - and each one had different ideas, and he was trying to force his ideas on the yard and then they went over to the Japanese style of shipbuilding and they sent people over to Japan to learn the techniques. This did have a lot of effect on the Dockyard over the years.

(Recording number 162)

MARGARET: And did this have an effect on the morale of the men?

JIM: Yes, it did.

MARGARET: I suppose it must have been very hard towards the closure, for the men in the say twenty - fifty years of age bracket, who could still expect to be working for several years. That must have been a real worry for them.

JIM: Yes, it was, because a lot of them had commitments, buying new homes, cars etc. and they were relying on the Dockyard as their normal workplace, and when the closure did come they were worried because they had already tied themselves up to these commitments and they knew if the Dockyard closed they'd have to look for other employment and it was a worry to them.

MARGARET: It must have been a real hardship for you all, when you didn't get the submarine contract. There for a while it looked pretty hopeful for Newcastle.

JIM: Yes, well I don't know whether that would have helped a lot in Newcastle, for employment at the Dockyard that is, because there was a lot of outside contracts on the work and things like the electronics and such like were going to go to other big industries, and I think there would have still been a big layoff even if we did get the contract for the submarines.

MARGARET: Did many of your friends have teenage children at the time of the closure, and do you think that the closure of the Dockyard and the rationalisation of the BHP had much of a psychological effect on the teenage boys around the area?

JIM: Well, I would say it has had a great effect, because they could see what their father's had been through and they would think what sort of employment they could possibly get for themselves to set themselves up for the rest of their lives, because their father might have worked at the Dockyard for twenty or thirty years and then all of a sudden, their life was cut off from their employment and I would say that there was an effect on the whole family.

MARGARET: Do you ever think that the Dockyard could be a viable proposition again in Newcastle?

JIM: I think it could have been a viable proposition - even when it was closing.

MARGARET: As a Government body or as a private enterprise?

(recording number 189)

JIM: Well, the workforce was made to work as a private concern, but on the staff side it was still a public service, run by a State and I can't see where that can work in any industry, when one side has to work and conduct their workforce the way a private concern does, but then the other side, the management side, doesn't. This was what our problem was.

MARGARET: That was one thing that I was wondering too, if many of the men who worked at the Dockyard, after they had done their apprenticeships, as shipwrights, boilermakers and welders etc.,

things like that, if many of them would have been in a position to start up a business of their own, once they had lost their jobs at the Dockyard. Do you know if many people actually managed to branch out into a business?

JIM: No, I don't know many who actually did, but I do know a few who have worked at the Dockyard previously and had left and set themselves up in business, but not when the closure of the Dockyard came, because when the Dockyard closed, it took all of the other little associated engineering industries with it.

MARGARET: And how about the small business people in the area. Around the Beresfield area, and the Carrington area particularly. Have you noticed that some of them have suffered hardships, eg. the butchers, the greengrocers, because there would have been a considerable lack of money coming into the community.

(recording number 200)

JIM: Well, it wasn't only the small business people in the areas, but when the Dockyard was working at its peak, it kept a lot of small businesses going in other areas, not only in the areas where the employees lived. It was all the other little workshops around and it affected other areas too, I believe that there were a lot of small business houses that went out of the employment scene because of the Dockyard's closure, and I would say that it would have had a great effect in an area where a lot of places, especially like Carrington, where there were a lot of people who worked at or around the Dockyard and they were affected by the closure of the Dockyard, in many ways and a lot of business houses were affected.

MARGARET: Do you know of many men who have had to leave this area and go, maybe interstate or to other areas to look for work?

JIM: Yes, I think a lot of the chaps went down to Sydney to look for work, some went to Melbourne, if they wanted to keep with the shipbuilding industry, but there's not much shipbuilding in Australia at the present time.

(Recording line 218)

MARGARET: And how do you think this has affected their families. Did many families break up because of this, did you notice much effect.

JIM: I don't know how many families broke up, but it caused a lot of hardship and a lot of strain on the younger families with big committments.

MARGARET: And Jim, you have got another job now. Did you have much difficulty getting another job.

JIM: No, as a matter of fact I have been employed now for eight months since I left the Dockyard, and I have another job, an entirely different sort of employment, to the shipbuilding industry, but I'm using a lot of the skills that I learnt at the Dockyard, and a lot of other people I'm working with are ex Dockyard employees, who were in the same situation as me.

MARGARET: And do you feel fairly secure in this new job now.

JIM: At the present time, no, because it's only short term employment, and we're waiting for another contract and it's just the same, the waiting in between contracts, just like when we knew that the dockyard was closing.

MARGARET: Have you always lived in this area.

JIM: Yes, I've lived here all my life.

MARGARET: And your family lived here too. Do you have any brothers or sisters in the area, who may still be in the workforce now.

JIM: Yes, I have a brother here and I have a sister in Newcastle and my brother is in the workforce around here. I also have a brother in Darwin.

MARGARET: And how about your brother, was he affected by anything to do with the closing of the Dockyards. Was he in similar employment.

(recording line 242)

JIM: No, I was the only one in the shipbuilding industry in Newcastle. I was sad, and a lot of other people were sad too, who worked at the Dockyard, seeing it closing, because it was a really good place to work and it just cut off another part of the industry in Australia, where young people cannot get employment. The industry used to employ a lot of young people, apprentices in all the different trades, and it has just been cut off. I think with these other big naval contractors that its going to be a long hard road for them to build the work force up again because most tradesmen are out of the trade now, as they have reached the age of retiring.

MARGARET: So, there are not a great deal of skills left to pass on to the younger people then.

JIM: No, I think the skills are disappearing in the shipbuilding and associated industries and the longer they (Australia) stay out of the industry, it's going to become harder and harder to get men to be employed in that industry (associated trades).

(recording line 262)

NAME: MARGARET REES.

COURSE: OPEN FOUNDATION 1988

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN HISTORY (evening class)

ASSIGNMENT: REGIONAL HISTORY ASSIGNMENT
RESEARCH PROJECT.

TOPIC: THE NEWCASTLE STATE DOCKYARD
WITH EMPHASIS ON PERIOD 1955-1987

TUTOR: MARGARET HENRY

DUE DATE: 7th September 1988.

Newcastle between the late 1940's until the mid 1960's was trying to re establish itself in a changing labour market. Sir Robert Menzies was the Prime Minister between 1949 and 1966 and after this time there were three leaders in short succession and the party was seriously split until it was defeated by the Whitlam led Labour Government in 1972. The forty hour week had been brought in in 1948 and most workers had a two day weekend.¹ This was true of the Newcastle State Dockyard, although other industries operating in the Newcastle area, such as the B.H.P., Tubemakers and the Sulphide Corporation, all large employers of the main labour force in Newcastle, did operate on a seven day roster.

The cost of living increased dramatically during the 1970's and overtime was being worked. A bonus scheme was in operation at the Dockyard and the workforce was productive and buoyant from the late 1950's through to about 1977 when a depression hit the industry. It was after this time that the bonus scheme which had operated at the Dockyard was abolished. Rationalisation and cut-backs in the workforce took place.² The working population, who had generally lived within close proximity to their place of employment, now moved from the inner city areas and often spent up to an hour or more travelling to work. [During the 1950's European migration to Australia increased. Many of these migrants were displaced persons after the Second World War who, if they had remained in their home countries would have had no possibility of getting a job to support their families - so they migrated to countries, such as Australia to make a new start. It was personal circumstances which caused them to leave and many suffered much heart ache at leaving their home and remaining family behind and that is why so many of the immigrants worked so hard to send money home to their families, why they still tend to stay within their own communities and why their work ethic is often so different to Australian born people. Many of these migrants were initially housed in "camps" at Greta and Mayfield and entered the workforce. As they left the camps they tended to follow each other to specific areas such as Maitland and Cardiff, and many people of German descent still live in these areas.³ Women were brought into the workforce because their labour was needed and remarkable changes took place in the workforce. For example, in 1911, 44% of the male population over 70 years of age worked, by 1961 the percentage had dropped to 18%.⁴

1 Humphrey McQueen, Social Sketches of Australia. 1888-1975. Penguin Books.

2 Jim Carter, Personal Interview, conducted on the 4th July, 1988 at Beresfield.

3 Maree Kranz, Personal Interview, conducted on the 27th August, 1988 at Mayfield.

4 Humphrey McQueen, ibid.

The worker's⁷ demands for better wages, conditions and standard of living changed during the late 1950's and 1960's and when the Liberal-Country Party came to power in 1967 they strengthened the existing Law by making strikes illegal. There was industrial unrest in many industries and the unions became militant. University students held protest meetings at the Univer~~is~~ities during the 1960's and 1970's. They held public protest rallies, demanding access to education, the lowering of fees and generally "striking" for better conditions and freedom of personal rights. The workers became more confident of their power over the Government, and the Government became more aware of the workers attitudes towards Government's Policy and the Unionists attitude towards Management. Until approximately 1974 there was a combination of over-full employment and rapidly increasing prices and this gave the workers the opportunity to strike for higher wages.⁵ Management was often out of touch with the workers' everyday working conditions. The Newcastle State Dockyard was a prime example of how out of touch Management, who were State Public Servants and enjoyed State benefits and Public Service privileges, was with the work practices of the tradesmen, who worked in a competitive private enterprise situation and had to therefore make a sound profit to stay solvent. Management often had unreasonable expectations as to the output of industry and the level of profit to be had from investment. From 1942 until 1974 less than 5% of the Australian workforce was unemployed.⁶

The Newcastle State Dockyard was located on Walsh Island until 1942 and then, during the Second World War it was shifted to its present site at Carrington. New ships were constructed for the Navy and the old graving dock was towed down the river and placed at Carrington. After the War the Dockyard began public works, such as dredges, then went into the production of big commercial ships for other companies around Australia.⁷ The workforce at the Newcastle State Dockyard consisted mainly of Australian men and boys. Sons would often follow their father into trade, and the com~~pr~~adie in the yard was good. During the late 1950's the Dockyard was buoyant and the workforce gradually increased to over 2,000 men. The men had their own cricket teams and held concerts during their lunch break. Groups of men would prepare "sketches" to perform for their fellow workers. Nick-names were given to apprentices and the men would play jokes on the boys. For example, asking them to go to the store and get a "long wait" or a "short fuse". The working conditions and the rates of pay at the Dockyard increased proportionately over

5 Humphrey McQueen, Social Sketches of Australia. 1888-1975. Penguin Books.

6 ibid.

7 Jim Carter, Personal Interview, conducted on the 4th July, 1988 at Beresfield.

the years as the economic climate in Australia strengthened. Wages and conditions at the Dockyard were amongst the highest in the industry and the Dockyard always attracted the "better class" of tradesmen. A heavy engineering industry operated within the Dockyard and provided goods and services to many other associated industries.⁸

Wages and conditions improved rapidly during the 1960's and in 1969 a major victory was won, whereby there was a ruling that equal pay should be paid to all workers for equal work. In 1972 equal pay for equal value was won by the unionists. Women were to be paid 78% of the male wage and although no women were employed at the Dockyard, the living standards of many men increased as a result of their wives working.⁹ As wages and working conditions improved Management sought ways to reduce the workforce. Dissatisfaction and dis^sention crept into the workforce at the Dockyard. New techniques and applications were introduced.¹⁰ There was some retraining of the workforce, however, as men left their employment, were retrenched or retired they were not replaced. The Federal Government instituted measures to hold down private spending and the inevitable result was the loss of jobs.¹¹

In 1972 a labourer earned approximately \$57.00 per week after tax, and a typical budget would have been:

Rent of house.	\$17.00
Hire purchase commitments on T.V. and fridge.	8.50
Child care and maintenance.	2.10
Gas and Electricity.	4.50
Food	15.00
Clothing	5.00
Fares	5.00
	<u>\$65.10</u>

His working wife would have earned approximately \$31.00 from a job in a factory.¹²

During the early 1970's married workers were the hardest hit by rationalisation in industry. Between 1975 and 1976 one in thirty-six unemployed men attempted suicide.¹³ Unemployment benefits at this time were \$29.50 per week. In 1970 Bob Hawke, who is now Prime Minister of Australia was President of the A.C.T.U.

8 Jim Carter, Personal Interview, conducted on the 4th July, 1988 at Beresfield.

9 Barbara Curthoys, Information from notes taken during an interview with the 1988 Open Foundation Class, 20th July, 1988.

10 Jim Carter, ibid.

11 Humphrey McQueen, Social Sketches of Australia. 1888-1975. Penguin Books.

12 ibid.

13 Australian Government Publishing Service. Canberra. 1977
Victorian Mental Health Survey.

During the 1950's housing trends moved from the cities. New subdivisions were established and most of the trees were cleared. Stark bare landscapes took their place. High rise and medium density housing had taken over as the developers made a "quick buck". Television was introduced in 1956 and suburban life became more of a "suburban wasteland". A television set cost approximately \$300.00 in 1956 when the Olympic Games was held in Australia. By the middle of 1957 Melbourne and Sydney had six channels each, screening approximately forty hours of television a week. The contraceptive pill for women was introduced into Australia in 1960 and this enabled more women to enter the workforce, the proportion of married women in the workforce rose from 8% in 1947 to approximately 40% in 1974.¹⁴ By 1975 vandalism and juvenile crime was a problem. This was partly attributed to the changes in the education system, where more children were encouraged to stay on at school for a longer period, but also the additional period of education did not necessarily prepare them for the workforce and there was a high youth unemployment rate.¹⁵

In the Newcastle suburbs of Mayfield and Hamilton there was a large Greek and Italian Community after 1950. There was a high percentage of home ownership amongst this group. Many migrants were the proprietors of milkbars, coffee shops and restaurants, the culture mix of Newcastle changed noticeably. As these migrants prospered, they sponsored others from their home countries and these sponsored people would come to Australia, live with their hosts and work in the host's business. When they became established, they would sponsor another member of the family, many of the Greek and Italian immigrants during the 1960's and 1970's were taxi proprietors, and so the communities expanded but like the German immigrants, have always remained very closely knit. Migrant children did play with the other children at school, but they did not mix socially very often and did not regularly participate in fixed sporting activities like their Australian counterparts. Many of these migrant children had the added responsibility of assisting their parents who could seldom read or write English and often had a poor command of the spoken language.¹⁶

There were several movie houses in Newcastle until the late 1970's, however attendances dropped by as much as 30% in 1975 partly due to unemployment. It is estimated that 70% of cinema audiences are 26 years of age or under.¹⁷ Surfing and club football were popular pastimes for Newcastle youth and football especially, drew many spectators as well as players.

¹⁴ Humphrey McQueen, Social Sketches of Australia. 1888-1975. Penguin Books.

¹⁵ ibid.

¹⁶ Stuart Beal, Personal Interview, conducted on 9th August, 1988 at Raymond Terrace.

¹⁷ Australian Government Publishing Service. Canberra. 1977
Employment Prospects by Industry and occupation, July, 1977.
 Economic Studies and Information Branch Department of Employment and Industrial Relations. Labour and Market Trends. Pages 1 - 97 inclusive.

Business houses such as David Jones, Wynns and Bebafields were employers of many people and the central business district was a hub of activity. The economy of the Central Newcastle business area was buoyant during the 1960's and 1970's. At this time, upon leaving school, the boys and girls could virtually pick a job in their selected field and receive "on the job training". A Law Clerk employed by a Newcastle Solicitor in the 1960's received a starting salary of Six Guineas per week. He was well trained in the Legal Profession and did his Law Degree by correspondence. After finishing the Law Degree and possibly working for the same firm for a further period, the young solicitor was well qualified to set out on his own.¹⁸ The B.H.P. was a large employer of young people until the 1970's. However over the past seven years the BHP workforce has fallen by 51% due to rationalisation of the industry.¹⁹

From the end of World War II until mid 1974, Australia enjoyed three decades of virtual full employment. Any rapid return to such conditions appears unlikely and currently there is a serious and increasing mismatch between the pattern of labour demand and the outflow from educational institutions.²⁰ The education system has changed significantly over the past twenty five years with a proliferation of new courses and specialties, not necessarily related to the labour market needs. Economising on labour and the move towards "self service" in the retailing sector and the growth of computerisation is another contributing factor. Both heavy and light engineering such as was associated within and without the State Dockyard, has deteriorated rapidly and the employment decline has been due to a general decline in orders from all sectors of the economy for new capital plant and equipment.²¹ Declining orders and the effect of import competition following tariff reductions made the workforce uncompetitive and uneconomic. Many firms now complain of a shortage of tradesmen and in the event of a sustained recovery these are likely to develop into severe shortages as very few apprenticeships are available.

One of the main factors which led to the closure of the Newcastle State Dockyard was in 1975 when the Australian National Lines gained permission from the Government to purchase four new ships overseas and this caused the industry to run down its operations. Existing work neared completion and the State Dockyard was then mainly engaged in repair work, until closed. In 1978 the Dockyards at Whyalla were wound down due to no orders and a major shipbuilder was also forced to close in Queensland.²²

18 Stuart Beal, Personal Interview, conducted on 9th August, 1988 at Raymond Terrace.

19 Australian Government Publishing Service. *ibid.*

20 *ibid.*

21 *ibid.*

22. *ibid.*

Hotels, restaurants, clubs and hairdressers were also affected by the closure of the Dockyard and as a result apprenticeships in these areas no longer readily available.²³ Tight monetary conditions have been imposed and the cost of finance is high. The wholesale trade has declined and the annual percentage growth rate is now constantly negative. The building of private dwellings has dropped due to the lack of investor confidence in the Newcastle area and many building companies are faced with a liquidity problem in an uncertain future.

One industry that has expanded has been the Aluminium Industry and the Kurri Kurri Smelter of Alcan for example, has grown from 45,000 tonnes to 67,000 tonnes per year output and the workforce has increased during the last few years by approximately 100 men.²⁴ However, the closure of the Newcastle State Dockyard, together with the associated heavy and light engineering industries which operated both within and without the Dockyard has had vast social and economic repercussions on the Newcastle area not only for the men who were employed at the Dockyard but for many others who were employed in service industries.

23 Australian Government Publishing Service. ibid.

24 ibid.

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