CHAPTER SEVEN

The Home and the Housewife

There can be no question that in some aspects women's role in the social structure in regional Queensland were the same, or similar to Brisbane, but when looked at in greater detail it is easily seen that the regional social climate cannot be judged by city standards. It is contended that the differences are significant; nowhere more so than in women's work which has been examined in Chapters Three, Four and Five. However not only were there differences for women engaged in paid work there were also differences for the women who "stayed at home". It is also pointed out that in rural areas where women were called upon to extend their housekeeping work to the outside work of the farm in an unpaid capacity, differences were even greater. It was usually perceived in rural communities that the needs of the farm should take precedence over the needs of the home. Alston cites the testimony of an interviewee who states that:

> Right now, our bedroom needs curtains, and before I can buy the material, the men, [husband, father-in-law and two brothers-in-law] discuss it at a meeting. They decide which daughter-in-law can have the money for curtains or some other thing for their house.'

A different sort of scenario was played out on a farm in Central Queensland. Joy described her role in helping her husband to plant cane when they first bought their

[1] M. **Alston,** *Women on the land: The hidden heart of rural Australia,* Kensington, **UNSW** Press **Sydney,** 1995, **p.7.**

cane farm. She said:

> It was the only way to manage. You couldn't afford wages when you're starting off…When you were young and fit you could do it…When we started off first we lived in a tent then we built a shed. I don't regret what I've done.[2]

After they consolidated their financial position Joy and her family moved into a home in Bundaberg, but Joy stated that although life was hard in the early days of their marriage she was not unhappy with her life at that time. She also mentioned other women who helped their husbands get started in the same way, even if when this was no longer a financial necessity they denied that they had done so. Joy maintained that in many instances in regional Queensland, it was an accepted way for couples to establish themselves financially.

Changes to women's roles in society throughout Australia brought about by the new roles they played during World War Two also brought changes to their social role in regional Queensland, but takes cognizance of the fact that it took more time to displace the long held belief that a woman's place was in the private sphere of the home in rural areas. It is further maintained that the new post-war suburbia of Australian cities was based on an assumption of a prosperous economy. This raised expectations of a better housing deal, and a family economy which would provide good living conditions and improved education facilities. It was also founded on the principle of slum clearance, and as quoted by Pam Rehak the expectation that, as one Victorian resident said:

[2] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with J.S. at Yandarin, 1 September, 1998.

> Everyone said everything would be different after the war, not knowing how different. No-one else could guess. They all stoked up their dreams and that included marriage, a family... a home.[3]

The concept of women's place in the home was paramount in the social mores pre-1939 and was still accepted in many instances despite women's changing roles in wartime society. It was reinforced during the late 1940s and beyond by state policies concerning paid work for women as demonstrated in Chapter Five. Additionally, pressure was placed on women to have larger families through the concept of "populate or perish", generated by the trauma of near invasion by enemy forces during World War Two, Moreover housework and caring for children was seen as a natural attribute of all women, simply because of their gender. Girls, as shown in illustration 7.1, were expected to help with the housework, and as is evidenced by the date of the photograph this was accepted as the norm in 1953.

[3] P. Rehak cited in B. and G. Davison, "Suburban Pioneers", G. Davison et. al. (Eds.), ***The Cream Brick Frontier,*** Clayton, Monash Publications, 1995, **p.43.**

Illustration 7.1: Children helped with the household chores.

Sorce: AA Brisbane

New technology for the home impacted first in the city, and although preparation of meals was an important part of women's role in every home, it took time before the use of electrical cooking appliances was established in the region. One interviewee remembered thinking at the time that "washing machines didn't get the clothes white". She also said that prior to the acquisition of the washing machine people remarked she "had the whitest babies nappies in the district".[4] Many women, especially in regional Queensland, believed that machines could not satisfactorily perform domestic work such as washing. This belief stemmed from a certain amount of mistrust of technology, and because primary industry which as previously stated was the mainstay of the regional economy, paid poor wages. Families therefore oRen resisted purchasing such equipment if they could manage without it. All this was endorsed by the notion of "women's place" in the home. However, as populations increased in Central Queensland towns, and new homes

[4] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with H.W. and F.S at Gladstone, 16 April, 1998.

were erected in which wood fired stoves were replaced by electric ovens, and adequate power points were a part of the electrical wiring installation, technology became accepted to an ever increasing degree.

Throughout the time frame of the thesis women's activities were very much home centred, albeit with periods of adjustment and difficulty. **A** report in *The Catholic Women's Review*, in 1935 states that:

> Woman... is truly the Lady of the family so she has the power over the souls of her husband and children, hence the words of St. Paul, 'the husband without faith is sanctified by the wife who has faith', will always be true.[5]

The philosophy apparent in this brief citation from the journal clearly states that according to the dictates of the Catholic Church the role of women in society is in the home, and that it equates with morality. The restrictions this placed on all women, not just those of the Catholic faith, resulted in the fallacy that "women don't work", and that their unpaid labour does not require skills. Throughout the period of the thesis church attendances remained relatively high, and both Catholic and Protestant churches used their authority to maintain this belief among their parishioners. Additionally, in regional and rural Queensland where social change for women was slower to become effective it took longer for new attitudes to women's emancipation to be accepted.

Together with the notion of "women's place" was the idea of classlessness which surfaced in the 1950s, and was closely associated with the philosophy of the

[5] *The Catholic Women's Review*, 20 December, **1935, p.17,** cited in S.Encel, et.al., *Women and society*, Melbourne, Cheshire, **1974, p.298.**

importance of the family. It was an ideological concept, based on what was seen as an affordable lifestyle, in new suburban developments of large housing estates in the suburbs of capital cities throughout Australia. As pointed out by Stewart Clegg and Michael Emmison class was subsumed as social inequalities were addressed by the feasibility of home ownership and better health and higher education became more widely accessible.[6]

The notion of classlessness implied that Australian society was homogenous, and that everyone enjoyed a secure and prosperous life style. At the core of the philosophy was the concept of the father as the provider for the family and the re-implementation of the woman's role as the wife and mother. Sociologist John Murphy states that the rhetoric in the immediate post-war period called on women to see themselves in terms of "their individual relationships with their homes, husbands and children".[7] The notion of classlessness also permeated the life-style of regional Queensland. Home ownership and the purchase of a car became goals for most people and once attained increased their social standing within their own social group.

In a dissertation on the place of the housewife in the nuclear family, Raymond Evans and Kay Saunders introduce their discussion by declaring that according to media advertisements and women's magazines, the housewife of the 1950s and

[6] S. Clegg and M. Emmison, "Classical and contemporary sociological debates", J. Baxter, et al (Eds.), *Class analysis and contemporary Australia,* South Melbourne, MacMillan, 1991, pp.23-24.
[7] Ibid, p.558.

1960s was "more house-proud than house-bound".' They maintained that media advertisements, the Housewives Association, and women's magazines presented housewives as, being "scientifically efficient" in the way they organised their household work and reared their children It was also implied that they were devoted to their nuclear families, completely satisfied with their roles as mothers and housewives, and that class differences did not exist. Furthermore representation of housewives as examples of "unified, confident, and consumer-smart femininity"[9] contributed to the notion of classlessness.

From a sociological point of view Aspin confirms that functional sociologists in the 1950s asserted that the family, the law, economy, polity, education and government, were the basic units that made up the structure of society." McDonald is in accord with Aspin and asserts that the nuclear family was made up of father, mother and children, and that the mother was not in paid employment. Additionally he sustains the view that this family form was able to perform effectively around the ideology of "individual achievement and social and geographic mobility"." He also endorses the reaffirmation of the ideal of the breadwinner model.

These social mores, and the return home of many men from service in the armed

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[8] R. Evans, and K. Saunders, "No place like home: The evolution of the Australian housewife", in K. Saunders and R. Evans (Eds.), *Gender relations in Australia,* Marrickville, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1992, p.191.

[9] Ibid.

[10] L. Aspin, *The family: An Australian focus,* Melbourne, Longman Cheshire, 1994, p.v.

[11] P. McDonald, "Australian families,: values and behaviour" , Australian Institute of Family Studies - Commonwealth of Australia, *Families and cultural diversities in Australia,* St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1995, pp.31-35.

forces during and after the war, helped to bring about the phenomenon of the baby boomer period. **A** number of theories have been developed about the circumstances which brought about the unwonted increase in the birth rate. Two publications concerned with the "Baby Boomers" are *Generations* by Diane Bell[12] and *Baby Boomers* by Helen Townsend.[13] These two books use a quantitative methodological approach, and provide a great deal of information about living conditions for women as housewives and mothers in the 1950s and 1960s. Townsend looks at the social conditions, social life and customs during the period at a national level, while Bell looks at changing social mores through three generations from the 1920s onwards. Hugh MacKay, demonstrates that the majority of women who were the housewives and mothers during the 1940s and 1950s, were those born in the 1920s.[14] These women had grown up with values such as saving and the work ethic, during the depression years. They then faced the uncertainties of changing societal values created by conditions in a country at war. He considers what he terms the "stresses of the postwar baby boomers generation".[15] The thesis contends that the concept of what had been seen as a "return to normal", through the re-implementation of pre-war social roles for women within a classless society was not realistic.

Marriage and the Family

During the war years the shortage of manpower meant that there was very little unemployment but the uncertainties, especially in the early 1940s, of the outcome of hostilities accounted for the disinclination of many couples to marry, despite

[12] D. Bell, *Generations,* Ringwood, Penguin, 1987.
[13] H. Townsend, *Baby Boomers,* Brookvale, Fitzroy, Simon and Schuster, 1988.
[14] H.MacKay, *Generations,* Sydney, MacMillan, 1997, p.29.
[15] Ibid, p.3.

high wages and an abundance of work opportunities for married women.[16] Graeme Davison and Tony Dingle suggest that the statement by English feminist Jean McKenzie in the early 1960s that "housework is a respected and highly regarded occupation for Australian wives", indicates that neighbourhood support was strong and that housewives had few expectations of life outside of the home.[17] However they also pointed to the fact that, as Jill Matthews and other historians have asserted, "suburbanisation and gender inequalities went hand in hand"." The evidence of full time housewives among interviewees for the oral component for the thesis supports the theory put forward by Davison and Dingle, and as will be demonstrated in Chapter Eight of the thesis many found self fulfilment through leisure time activities.

The absence of many men on active service, and the fear that they might not return, or if they did, doubt about how they may have been affected by the conditions of war was a disincentive to marriage at this time for some couples. Wartime living conditions such as these, accompanied by an accommodation shortage, and the severe restrictions placed on the building of homes were certainly deterrents to war-time marriage. Because little was known about contraceptive methods, there was always the possibility of an ill-timed pregnancy at a time when women were usually hospitalised for a week for childbirth. **As** stated in Chapter Three there was a shortage of nurses and many doctors had enlisted in the armed forces. It was not

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[16] This point is debatable as there were no censuses taken between 1933 and **1947.** There was certainly some increase with the arrival of the American forces in Australia but because of the difficulties facing women left alone to care for children it is highly feasible that the majority of couples in stable relationships preferred to wait until after the war.

[17] G. Davison and T. Dingle, "Introduction: The view from the Ming Wing", G. Davison et.al. *The creanz brick frontier*, Monash University, Monash Publications in History, 1995, p. 15.

[18] J.Matthews as cited in G. Davison et.al., Ibid, p.15.

until the late 1940s that doctors began to freely prescribe contraceptives for women, and it was the mid 1960s before the oral contraceptive pill for women, giving them greater control over their own sexuality, was developed and came into wide use.

During the war years the fear of the possibility of being killed in action or repatriation with physical or mental incapacities, was more of a deterrent to marriage for servicemen than women, the provision of a home and the role of breadwinner being seen as men's responsibility. These impediments were very real for many young couples, and were dissuasions to marriage until after the war. Additionally the allowance paid to wives and families of servicemen was barely sufficient to meet the cost of even basic necessities. An added incentive to defer marriage was that by remaining single, and unencumbered with a family, women could save money for their future home. These reasons for the deferment of marriage are endorsed by Heather Gunston.[19]

Nevertheless Peter McDonald argues that from the outset of World War Two young people had freedom to socialise, and that the uncertainty of war time stimulated the need for intimacy, and the belief that someone loved you, and cared about you. He maintains that because there was a war time sense of "now or never", this led to a drop in the age at which people married, and that fears of the outcome of the war did not defer marriage[20].

[19] H. Gunston, *Journey through families and adolescence*, Melbourne, Longman Australia, p.77.
[20] P. McDonald, op. cit., 1995, p.32.

Marriages for the years between 1940 and 1960, as shown in the Queensland Year Book 1961,[21] to some extent reflect the historical events which coincided with surges in the birth rate. The year 1940 shows a sharp increase to 10 287 from 9 108 in 1939, indicating an increased marriage rate prior to the embarkation of men in the armed forces for service overseas. This dropped back to 9 885 in 1941 when enlistment in the forces dropped, and the war in Europe was still being called the phoney war. In 1942 Japan united with the Axis powers, and in March of that year General MacArthur established his headquarters in Melbourne. With the large influx of American servicemen into Queensland the number of marriages jumped to 11 722. Numbers still remained high in 1943 with the arrival home of the Australian Ninth Division from the African theatre of war. The next big jump to 11 325 took place the following year when American servicemen returned to Australia for Rest and Recreation leave. Numbers dropped again in 1945 and the final big rise was in 1946 to 11 666 when large numbers of Australian defence personnel were discharged.[22] These figures seem to indicate that McDonald was correct in his assumption that young people married during war time, because of the emotions aroused by the knowledge that men leaving to fight on the war fronts might never return.

It has been stated that marriage at a lower age contributed to the baby boom post-war, and contributed to the baby boom post-war. Notwithstanding that there are no figures for the 1941-1946 years ABS data cited by Aspin, in table 7.1 clearly demonstrates the drop in the average age of women in first marriages did not reach

[21] Queensland Year Book, No.22, 1961, Queensland Bureau of Statistics, **p.439.**
[22] Ibid.

its lowest point until the 1971 - 1975 period. Thereafter ages of both males and females at marriage rose steadily until in 1991 when the age at which males married was 26.70 and females 24.50.[23]

Table 7.1: Average age of first marriage in Australia

Year/Period	Males (years)	Females (years)
1926-30	26.35	23.37
1931-35	26.47	23.40
1936-40	26.66	23.72
1947	25.30	22.50
1954	25.00	22.00
1961-65	24.20	21.30
1966-70	23.50	21.20
1971-75	23.30	21.00

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics data, as cited in L. Aspin

Betts asserts that the "baby boom" of the late 1940s and 1950s alleviated pressure on government to put welfare provisions in place to persuade women to accept "their place" in the home.[24] **As** an inducement to women in their effort to gain support at the 1949 Commonwealth elections, one platform of the Liberal Party's campaign was the introduction of child endowment for the first child. It was one of the first items to be presented to parliament after the Liberal Party Government was elected in 1949. This was a restatement by the Party of their philosophy of the sanctity and value of the family as the centre of the Australian social structure. Senator Annabelle Rankin announced that child endowment would be:

> a real contribution towards solving the problems of Australian mothers. It will help to give the extra nutrition to build the foundation of good health among children and through them a better and stronger nation.[25]

[23] L. Aspin, op. cit., p.39. Wartime austerity measures were probably responsible for the omission of the 1941-1946 figures.
[24] K. Betts, op. cit. p.51.
[25] A. Rankin, CPD, Senate, 19 April, 1950, vol.207, pp.1517-18, cited in J. Murphy, op. cit., p. 563.

Although the child endowment of 5/- (50c) for the first child helped working class families, it would not have had very much impact on the income of better paid middle class families. However, despite the fact that it was rather more a political gesture that a material one, it promoted the notion of an Australian egalitarian society and the concept of the Liberal sense of civic duty. Welfare provisions were minimal and conditional, so that in cases of need some women were forced to obtain paid work, and leave their children alone or in the hands of unsatisfactory care providers. Unmarried mothers, and women who had left their husbands received no welfare assistance whatsoever with the result that many found it virtually impossible to keep their children.[26] As previously mentioned, the increase in the birth rate in Australia in the post-war period was initiated by the numbers of young men and women, who had put off marriage, and/or starting families, during the duration of World War Two.

Hugh MacKay states that Australia wide, the birth rate, starting from a pre-war rate of 17 per thousand of population, to the post-war birth rate in 1946-47 to 24 per 1000, remained high through the 1950s, and only began to decrease in the early 1960s.[27] Another factor was the feeling of economic security fostered by an ample supply of work opportunities. He asserts that despite the fact that Australia's gross national product in 1966 rated seventh among the industrialised countries of the world, the average Australian was worse off in the 1950s than in the 1990s. Factors which contributed to economic growth were heavy increases in

[26] M. Gilding, *The making and breaking of the Australian family*, North Sydney, **Allen** & Unwin, 1991, pp.91-92.
[27] H. MacKay, op. cit., **p.** 29.

construction, including housing, dams to increase water supply and hydro-electric power. Additionally, there was the manufacturing boom and the early stages of the mining boom. These developments, together with the growth of the middle class, contributed to a sense of prosperity symbolised by material comfort during the period of the thesis. MacKay concludes that Australians were less prosperous during the period of the thesis than is commonly assumed. He states that:

> in the 1960s, a return airfare to London cost 21 weeks' average earnings; today it costs about three weeks earnings. The cost of **a** refrigerator is down from 110 weeks' earnings to less than two and the number of cars per person has increased by 75% since the 1960s. In terms of domestic appliances, gadgets and, in particular, telecommunications equipment, Australia in the 1990s appears far more prosperous than it did 30 or 40 years ago.[28]

He does not cite the source of these figures but in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg his argument is endorsed by oral evidence. **As** demonstrated in Chapter Three, statements by interviewees indicated that care had to be exercised in working out the family budget.

Nevertheless, in the 1990s the current assumption that what is known as the "baby boomer" period in the 1940s and 1950s, was a time of comparative prosperity for all persists. **As** MacKay points out the return to peace and the social emphasis on home and family produced an expectation of economic growth with a corresponding ***"sense"*** of prosperity.[29] It was this perception, fostered by the Menzies government, together with changes wrought by the war, the housing boom, and the concept of classlessness, that led to an easy acceptance in the 1980s-1990s of the notion that families were able to live very comfortably on a

[28] Ibid, p.60.
[29] H. MacKay, **op.** cit. p.60.

single income.

Throughout Queensland during children's pre-school years differences in the methods of maternal care for babies and toddlers, were mainly to be found between social strata rather than district. Women of reasonably comfortable means tended to slavishly follow the advice to be found in publications of the methods of infant care promulgated by Dr. Spock,[30] and the "expert advice" handed out by infant welfare centres. Gilding argues that mothers had fewer children and became more responsible for their own babies under the guidance of the experts. In an interview conducted by Gilding, a Melbourne mother recalled that she did her best to organise the household routine, so that she could follow the 'feed to time theory' which demanded that the baby be fed every four hours.[31] Gilding cites her statement that:

> the baby clinic tyrannised us about what we should feed our babies, what vegetables we had to sieve, custards we had to make, stewed fruit, eggs done in cups, boiled sago, Farex, and I forget what else...When the babies would not eat them, I always felt there was something wrong with me.[32]

Working class women in the suburbs, and usually those in regional towns and rural areas usually took their children along to the Infant Welfare Centres if these were available in the area in which they lived. Gilding maintains that they had their babies weighed, and ignored any advice they were given about routines for the baby, if it interfered with the management of their home. These mothers often just followed the same advice given to Gilding's interviewee by her mother:

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[30] Dr. Spock was the acknowledged **guru** of the correct methods of child rearing.
[31] M. Gilding, *The making and breaking of the Australian family*, North Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1991, p.92.
[32] Ibid, p.93.

> We used to just give you a bit of whatever meals we were having, with some gravy and bread.[33]

Housing

As pointed out by Helen Townsend home ownership has always been the aspiration of home owners in Australia, but until the post-war housing boom houses for working class people were oRen primitive.[34] Even then it took time before "the dunny" and grease traps made way for sewerage and inside toilets. This did not occur in many places in Central Queensland until during the 1970s. In this respect regional towns lagged behind Brisbane. In homes in rural areas, and to some extent in older homes in the towns which are the focus of the thesis, there were no bathrooms, no kitchen sink and the copper for boiling the clothes was in the backyard.[35] Floors were usually covered with linoleum or cheaper congoleum. These conditions made women's work in the home just that much harder. In fact it could be called drudgery.[36]

Poor housing was also a feature in less highly populated areas in Queensland. **A** drive though most rural areas of regional Queensland in the 1990s reveals the ease with which one can find the remains of one or two room cottages as demonstrated in illustration 7.2. They had detached kitchens which had a dirt floor, which together with the building as illustrated were home for families with four or five children, and sometimes more.[37] Very often there was only an outside pump for water, and the kitchen might only have one window so that cooking on a wood

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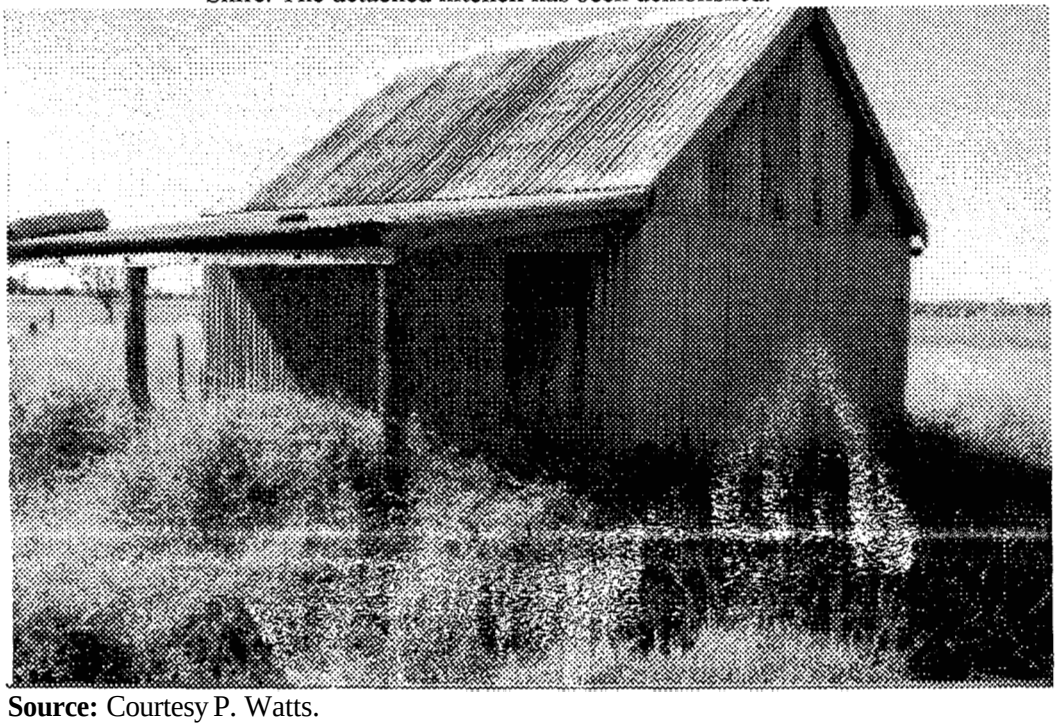
[33] Ibid.
[34] H. Townsend, op. cit., P.11.
[35] D. Bell, op. cit, pp.49-71.
[36] Ibid.
[31] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with P. Watts at Ridgelands, 21 June, 2000.

stove in a Queensland summer must have been trying, to say the least. Hessian partitians if they were installed, were certainly not conducive to privacy for any of the occupants, While some household pests might not have been so prevalent as in inner city areas, flies, snakes and spiders certainly were. Strips of sticky paper used as fly catchers were commonly used.

Illustration 7.2: Home for two adults and four children at Laurel Bank in the Fitzroy Shire. The detached kitchen has been demolished.

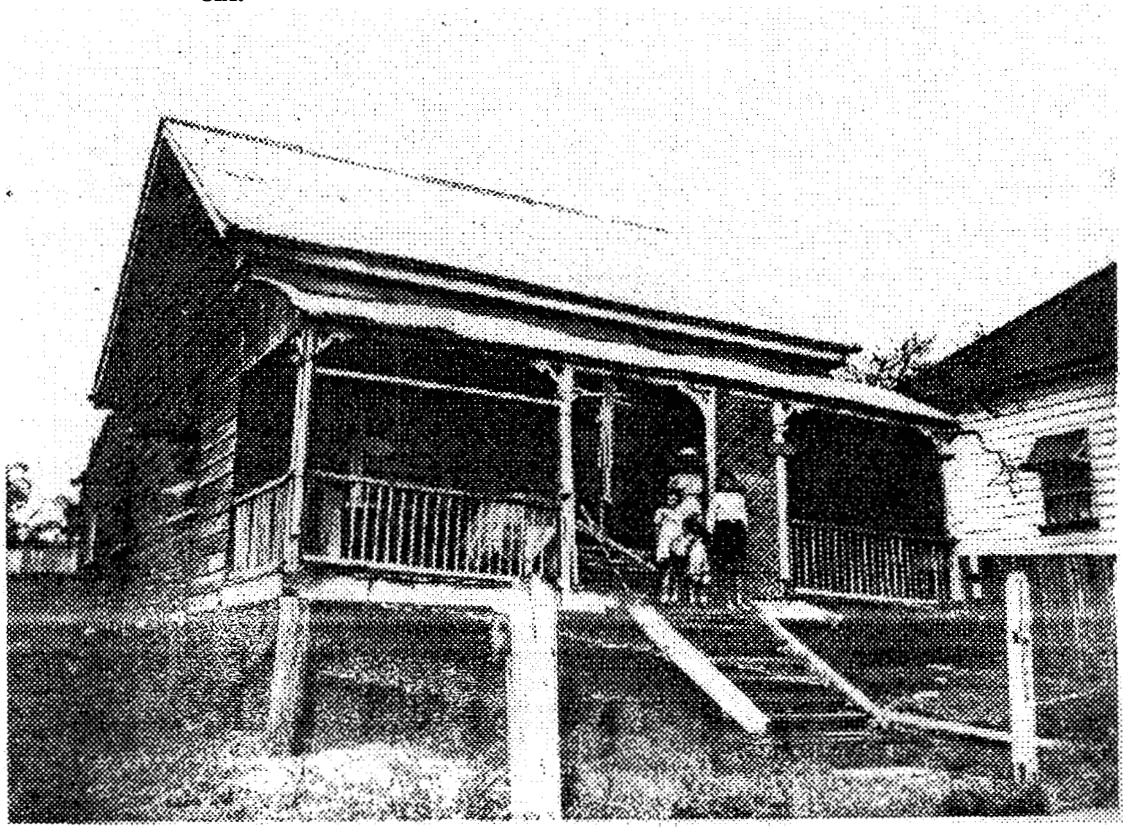


Source: Courtesy P. Watts.

A local survey conducted in 1941-1943 at Sunshine, a working class suburb of Melbourne, demonstrates that poor housing conditions were not confined to Queensland. The report states that one house 40-50 years old was let at 15/- ($1.50) per week, to a widow with four children, two of whom were working. The house was in a bad state of repair, there was no kitchen sink, and the taps were in the wash-house. The mother tried to keep the hessian and canvas walls clean although the bedrooms were in a bad state. The window frames were rotting and this had caused the glass to break. The cracks were covered with paper. The report

states that this house was not considered to be part of a slum![38] No comparable report to the one made by Prest, was found for Brisbane or Queensland regions. However, as demonstrated by Illustration 7.3, it is obvious that the claim that similar conditions existed in Queensland is not without foundation.

Illustration 7.3: This condemned house in Brisbane in **1943** housed a woman and her family of **six.**



Source: John Oxley Library

Throughout Queensland others who were often forced to live in sub-standard housing were the indigenous people of Australia and the Torres Strait. During the period of the thesis these people, particularly in regional towns, lived in a state of apartheid. **As** stated by F.G. Clarke Aboriginal children were not allowed in local council swimming pools with white children, nor were they admitted to school prize giving nights even if their children had won prizes. Additionally, he asserts that adult Aborigines were not permitted to hotel bars or cinemas with people of

[38] W.Prest, *Housing, income and saving in war-time,* Typescript, Dept of Economics,

European descent.[39] Health and housing for these people at this period in time was scandalous, and it was not until 1962 that they were granted citizenship and the right to vote. As cited in Chapter Three, Patsy who was interviewed in Gladstone, provided an insight into living conditions for Aborigines on what was then the outskirts of Gladstone[40]. She testified that they lived in extremely poor conditions in what she described as a shanty town. Dwellings were similar to that shown in illustration 7.4. It is small wonder there were health problems and a high child mortality rate among Aboriginal children living in these conditions, especially as Gladstone had a severe sandfly and mosquito problem. In a scenario such as this mothers would have had little chance of protecting their children from diseases carried by these insects.

Illustration 7.4: Typical of the type of dwelling used by Aborigines during the 1940-1965 period.

Source: *Fringe Dwellers*[41]

[39] F.G. Clarke, *Australia: A concise and social history,* Marrickville, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Group, 1992, p.302.

[40] This interviewee is a long time resident of Gladstone who is of European descent.

[41] Prepared under the authority of the Minister for Territories for the celebration of National Aborigines' Day in Australia, 10 July, 1959. Held by John Oxley Library.

In a study of homeless young Aboriginal women in Rockhampton in 1992, Karyn Olive demonstrated that homelessness of young women then as now, was disguised by the Aboriginal belief in "sharing and helping their own people".[42] As she commented, this led to overcrowding, increased risks of disease, and financial strain. It is a reasonable assumption therefore that adequate housing for other young Aboriginal women who were fringe dwellers throughout regional Queensland during the period of the thesis were no better off. As stated by Robert Hall, advancement towards Citizens' Rights for the indigenous people of Australia and their acceptance by white communities in this country was only in the early stages of development.[43]

Descendants of those South Sea Islanders brought to Australia to harvest the sugar cane, who had been allowed to remain after the enactment of the Pacific Islanders Act of 1901, were also forced to live in sub-standard housing. A second generation Australian woman with a South Sea Islander background was interviewed at North Rockhampton in 1998. She testified that:

> [Her grandfather] came from the Ambrym Island, now Vanuatu.] We lived in a tin shack up in Creek Street and that's where I grew up. My mother lost my father in 1945 and my mother died in July in the following year. Mum fretted for Dad you know. But we lived there. We had a ground floor but we were happy. There were nine of us and we had a happy childhood... I went to work at Maxwelton. That's out past Richmond on the Mt. Isa line. I was out there when the bad floods were in Rockhampton. I was worried about the old tin shed we lived in, but that old tin shed stood up to that cyclone.[44]

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[42] K. Olive, *A woman's place: A study of homeless young Aboriginal women in the Rockhampton area,* October 1992. p.34.

[43] R.A. Hall, "War's End: How did the war affect Aborigines and Islanders?" in *Queensland Review,* Vol.3, No.1, April 1996, pp. 32-35.

[44] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with N.D., at Rockhampton, 22 April, 1998.

This cyclone and subsequent flooding in Rockhampton caused a great deal of damage.

Colin Clark's Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Industry states that a Housing Policy Committee, consisting of the State Insurance Commissioner, the Parliamentary Draughtsman, and the Director of the Bureau of Industry, was appointed in 1941[45]. Its commission was to examine future housing needs and investigate means by which they could be met. In October 1941 it reported that 87 000 new houses would be needed between then and 1950. Previously the rate of building houses had been 6 000 homes per year, but by 1942 home building had practically ceased.

As stated by W.J. Hudson industrialisation in Australia reached maturity in the 1950s and 1960s.[46] Britain and Europe were still recovering from the effects of the Second World War, and demands for primary products were high. Manufacturing industry boomed, and the unemployment rate reached an all-time low. Many men held down two jobs as the rush to establish themselves in new homes in the new suburbs steadily increased. New housing units and a proliferation of blocks of flats and home units became conspicuous in inner city suburbs, but the majority of people opted for a home of their own in the new outer suburban areas.

In Brisbane as in other cities and industrialised areas of Australia the boom in the

[45] The Bureau of Industry, Ninth Annual Report, p.549.
[46] W.J. Hudson, "Hudson/1951-72", F. Crowley, *A new history of Australia*, Rschmond, Heinemann, 1974, p.531.

manufacturing sector of the economy was the result of an increase in the demand for building materials and consumer goods. The industry covered a large range of production plants including those which catered to the fulfilment of the demand for those goods which had been in short supply during the war years. In regional Queensland, although there was the development of some minor manufacturing industries providing some work for women such as shirt making in Rockhampton, and dressmaking establishments in most towns, primary industry remained as the mainstay of regional economies. **As** mentioned previously this was primarily a sphere for male employment.

As noted by Mark Peel, Queensland men who had grown up in the inner suburbs of Brisbane made the most of the "good times" when unions were strong, and there was steady work with frequent wage rises.[47] He goes on to add that their wives for the most part had followed the path of late teenage work and marriage in the early twenties, after which they reared their children and then pursued a course of low paid work in factories, employment in domestic work, or filled their time with voluntary work. He describes how working class people who are the subject of his dissertation had a common background of growing up in the 1930s Depression, and surviving the war years. For them the 1950s were years of uncertainty clouded by fears of insecurity:

[41] M. Peel, "**A** new kind of manhood', *Australian Historical Studies,* Melbourne, MUP, Vol.28, No. 109, October, 1997, p.147.

> …when many people still lived in poverty, when illness and accident and bad luck could still have terrible consequences.…Their 1950s is about removal, rehousing and the battle to secure footpaths, schools and immunisation clinics, for raw new suburbs. It is about ferocious industrial battles and the conviction that struggles at work and in life were about basic rights and basic freedoms.[48]

Peel's description of life for women in the new suburb of Inala as Spartan, devoid of shops, footpaths, and transport is supported by Denoon's interview with Len and Dot Dolan at Mt. Gravatt as cited in Chapter Three. After life in the inner suburbs with its network of family and neighbours women's life was very lonely and failed to live up to expectations. Under these circumstances they had the option of either seeking the company of others, or keeping themselves pretty much to themselves. However as he pointed out the houses were new and clean and "most remembered it as a struggle that led somewhere".

In the private housing sector in Brisbane steps to overcome the housing shortage resulted in post-war housing developments in which houses, usually brick veneer, built by private contractors, and financed by agreements with banks or other financial institutions, sprang into being in new outer suburbs. By the 1950s the popular concept of housing for the nuclear family was firmly entrenched. As described by Donald Horne it provided a place to live for "Every man and his Holden".[49] Lawns were neatly manicured and flower beds adorned the front yard, much in the style of an English cottage garden. The back yard was mostly a playground for the children, with the Hills Hoist in a prominent position where it would catch the breeze on wash days. There was privacy and space, and the home

[48] Ibid, **p.** 149.
[49] D. Horne, *The lucky country*, Ringwood, Penguin, **1964.**

was equipped with up-to-date household technology such as a washing machine, electrical cooking equipment, a hot water system, a refrigerator and vacuum cleaner.

The man of the house left home every morning, Monday to Friday, to catch the **8** am train to the city to commence his working occupation. His wife remained at home, saw the children *off* to school, and attended to the household chores for which she had modern labour saving devices. Sewing, knitting, and embroidery were not only pastimes they also lessened expenditure on clothing. Shopping occupied a regular place in the week. She would have time to undertake some sort of voluntary work for such organisations as the Red Cross, or socialise with her friends before returning home when the children arrived back from school, Additionally, as pointed out by Janet McCalman, church attendances were high and children regularly attended Sunday School.[50] Women were also active in the various women's church organisations. At the weekends the man of the house would get out his Victa motor mower, and join the rest of the men in neighbourhood who were likewise engaged in lawn mowing. After 1956 a Holden or a Ford car might be seen in the driveway.

In Central Queensland towns, although there was an increase in population, there was not the same city sprawl with its problems of infrequent public transport, as there was in Brisbane. Nor was there the loss of networking with the extended family and friends, which had existed in the more closely populated areas close to

[50] J. McCalman, *Journeyings,* Carlton, MUP 1995, **pp.46-47.**

the inner city, from which people who moved to the new outer suburbs had come. Moreover in the city men were forced to spend considerable time commuting each day to jobs where they had worked prior to moving house to the new outer suburbs.[51] This contributed to isolation for women in outer suburbia until they met other women by participating in women's voluntary or recreational groups. Very often this was not possible if there were pre-school children still at home. Many of these problems did not exist for women in regional towns as members of their extended families very often lived in the same towns, and friends whom they had known all their lives still resided in the vicinity. Although most roads were still unsealed and there were no footpaths, shops, schools and medical facilities were situated at no great distance from their homes. However on the debit side most homes in regional Queensland did not have the modern technology which was installed in the new homes in suburbia, and few had telephones connected to their homes.

Like the women in the outer suburbs of Brisbane women in regional Queensland also saw the economic struggle to own their own homes as being worthwhile. In Gladstone, sisters Flo and Hazel, both interviewees for the oral history component of the thesis, spoke on the importance of home ownership. Prior to their marriages these women had lived and grown up in an hotel owned by their parents. Hazel's husband had built their home prior to their marriage but the loan still had to be paid back to the bank. Hazel's memories of what it was like were very exact as she moved from room to room to describe it, even speaking with pride about the

[51] Interview conducted by L. Doonan with L. & D. Dolan, at Mt. Gravatt, 15 March, 1993. Held at John Oxley Library, OH 25/4, Brisbane.

"bricked in" copper in the laundry for boiling the clothes. She spoke about how they had to buy the furniture as they could afford it. She also said how lucky she thought she was at that time to have had a vacuum cleaner, despite the fact that it had been bought on hire purchase.

Due to the economic situation in the 1930s many houses fell into disrepair and construction of new ones was very limited. From 1940 to the end of the Second World War, building came to a virtual halt as both men and building materials were requisitioned for the war effort. By the end of the war there was already a severe housing shortage, made even worse over the ensuing years during which there was a rapidly increasing marriage rate, and the unprecedented increase in the birth rate reached its peak of 24 per 1000 in 1947.[52] The problem was further exacerbated by the decision to accept European war refugees, and the implementation of the immigration programme.. As cited by John Western, male and female employment in the manufacturing industry in Australia accounted for 37.7% of employment in the workforce by 1954, after which it started to decrease.[53] As demonstrated in Chapter Four this boom in the manufacturing industry did not extend to Central Queensland, and this to some extent accounted for a slower growth in the housing sector in regional Queensland. Weston also states there was a steady decline of employment in the rural sector. Additionally farm mechanisation increasingly displaced farm workers resulting in a population drift to Brisbane from regional Queensland which further exacerbated the need for more housing in the city.[54]

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[52] H. MacKay, **op.** cit., p. 29.

[53] J. Western, "Class in Australia: the historical context" **,** Baxter, J. et. al. *Class analysis* in *contemporary Australia,* South Melbourne, MacMillan, 1991, **pp.** 14-22.

[54] The failure of the Soldier Settlement Scheme introduced after World War One also added to the housing shortage as farmers deserted their farms in a drift to the city to find work.

Articles in the *Gladstone Observer & Port Curtis Advertiser* concerning housing reveal that requests for more homes for Gladstone were largely political.[55] It was stated that because of a rise in the cost of living residents were no longer interested in taking in seasonal workers as boarders, and the Town Council wanted help from Swift's Meatworks. Headlines referred to a Civic reception for the Minister for Housing, implying that Gladstone's problem was housing. However the report revealed that the town residents were more concerned with industries, rail lines, defence and a works programme. This is supported by the testimonies of most interviewees in which they stated that they were unaware of a shortage of housing at this time. In Gladstone, even in the post-1960 period, housing developments tended to follow the established building pattern, as was demonstrated with the provision of a housing commission area in the vicinity of the Comalco Aluminium Refinery. Some time later a more up-market suburban area started to be developed at Seaview Heights on the outskirts of the city area.

Newspaper reports in the Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin* revealed very little of the extent of the shortage there,[56] but urban development did occur although not on the same scale as in Brisbane. The Bundaberg *News Mail* seemed intent on laying blame for the housing shortage on local government bureaucrats, maintaining they did not apply sufficient pressure on the government to overcome the shortage of building materials.[57] These news items endorse the statements of interviewees, and indicate that in Central Queensland with smaller populations and

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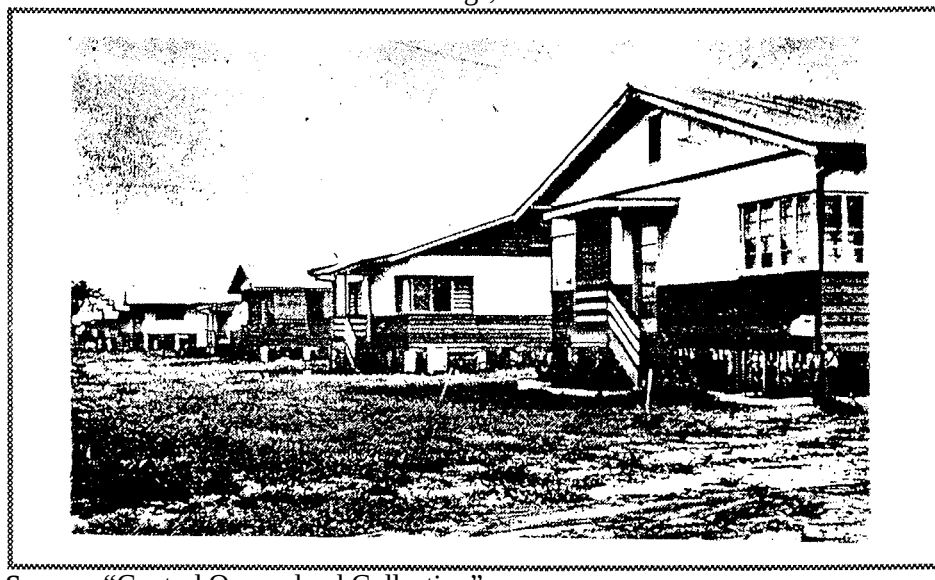
[55] The *Gladstone Observer & Port Curtis Advertiser,* "Housing Shortage", 2 October, 1948 p.1, "Civic Reception to Minister for Housing", 18 October, 1950, p.2.
[56] Rockhampton *Morning Bulletin,* 30 July 1947, p.5.
[57] Bundaberg *News Mail,* 24 December, 1946, p.1.

fewer immigrants, the housing shortage was not so acute as in Brisbane.

In Central Queensland, the greatest part of the population in the 1940-1965 period lived in older type Queensland houses that had few modern conveniences or household technology. Even the new homes which were built at this time in Brisbane as well as Central Queensland, were constructed in a similar style to older existing homes as shown in illustration 7.5.

Illustration 7.5: New Workers' Dwellings, 1949.



Source: "Central Queensland Collection"

They were equipped with wood fired stoves, there was no sewerage, and household drainage was filtered by means of a grease trap.[58] In some ways the lifestyle for women was similar to that in the suburbs of Brisbane. They had their set routines of attending to allotted tasks each day and although cars gradually became more visible as time progressed, in the main women still walked to the shops or caught a bus to attend to the weekly shopping. In some instances greengrocers hawked this produce through residential streets, and in some cases women still relied on ice chests in the 1950s. However housework was harder and

[58] G. Westacott, "Central Queensland, typescript 1 June, 1949, Held RDHS Rockhampton.

made more demands on their time. Very often the garden consisted of a flower bed along the front fence and a vegetable patch in the back yard. Gardening was usually the husband's job at the weekend and as one interviewee remarked vegetables were more important, "you can eat vegetables".

Class and the Concept of Classlessness

For working class people in Brisbane, Queensland Housing Commission laws were changed during the 1950s permitting purchase of homes originally built as rental accommodation for low income families. In new suburbs such as Mt. Gravatt working men and their families lived in new Housing Commission homes. The division of labour in the home was the same as in the more affluent suburbs. The inside of the home was a woman's domain while men attended to the garden and kept the car, if they had one, in good repair. Like women in Rockhampton, Gladstone and Bundaberg they were active in Parents and Citizen's Associations. They also often performed voluntary work for the Queensland Country Women's Association.

In Brisbane Sunday was frequently the day when the family would visit relatives they had left behind in the city areas. Ownership of their new home and the move to outer suburban centres also meant there was privacy and space, a place where it was possible to have a garden, and the ownership of a car and household technology was within reach, albeit through hire purchase agreements.[59] Thus ownership of a home and a car contributed to the appearance of homogeneity. This was enhanced in areas such as the Brisbane suburbs of Chermside or Geebung

[59] J. McCalman, "The originality of ordinary lives" W. Hudson and G. Bolton (Eds.), *Creating **Australia,*** **St.** Leonards, Allen and Unwin, 1997, p.87.

where housing commission areas were quite close to private housing developments and sometimes overlapped. Additionally as pointed out by R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving the expansion of "white collar" occupations increased the stratification of the working class in both regional Queensland and Brisbane. **As** they also demonstrate, the new environments in suburbia also played their part in the erosion of class distinctiveness. Nevertheless as the thesis shows class differences remained and the claim that Australia had a classless society, based on the steady increase in home ownership, and the affordability of the motor car, is not sustainable.

Prior to the period of the thesis the upper socio-economic section of the community in Rockhampton lived in high class residential areas on the Range, where both land and housing were more expensive. Determined by their structure and situation, houses were an expression of wealth and prestige, and placed unmarked, but nevertheless very real boundaries, between the residential areas of themselves and those less affluent. Rockhampton industry, including Lakes Creek Meatworks was situated in areas near the Fitzroy River. This Meatworks had its own housing development for its employees. Most other industries were also established in this area of the town and their employees tended to reside in the vicinity of their workplaces on the south side of the river. This pattern was followed in other regional towns and despite population growth was to a large extent maintained in the 1950s and 1960s. Such boundaries created a consciousness of class difference and contributed to a lack of homogeneity in regional areas. Nevertheless, although social distinction along class lines did exist, it did not create wide social barriers. due to the restraints placed on the development of regional secondary industry as discussed earlier in the thesis. Thus

the development of a sizeable new middle class which was highly visible was restricted.

In places like Gladstone class distinction was even less visible because of the small population in which a very small percentage belonged to the upper socio-economic group. Moreover, with a much smaller population, social distinction along class lines in Gladstone between 1940 and the mid 1960s were even less noticeable as most people shared a mutual interest in leisure activities. Additionally, most people in Gladstone had a boat and as Marilyn remarked during an interview:

> Everyone had a boat and when you were out on the waves it didn't matter whether you were a doctor or a fettler.[60]

To a minor degree status distinctions were more noticeable among the women, even to the point as demonstrated by an interviewee in Gladstone for the oral history survey which has been mentioned in Chapter Three, that women working in the retail industry in this town thought they rated higher socially than women working at the Meatworks.[61] However this situation changed in Gladstone after the closure of the meatworks, when the influx of construction workers in the early-sixties heralded the advance of the town from a quiet fishing village to a thriving industrial centre. Marilyn one of the "newcomers" to Gladstone testified that:

> I never had the feeling that this town was divided into class structures. Definitely when we arrived [1966] there were the "us", the former ones, and the "them" the new ones, but I don't think it had anything to do with a hierarchical system....There was generally a feeling of bitterness and they didn't like the invasion of Gladstone. They didn't like people to come and change their little idyllic place I suppose.[62]

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[60] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with M.H. at Gladstone, 16 April, 1989.
[61] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with B.J., at Gladstone, 4 May, 1998.
[62] Interview sonducted by G. Johansen with MH, at Gladstone, 16 April, 1999.

The construction of the new suburban bungalows by entrepreneurial developers, was mostly in brick as compared to Housing Commission homes which were usually built with timber or fibro-cement. These houses were in the main purchased and occupied by mostly middle class white collar workers, although class mobility through promotion in the booming manufacturing industry, and establishment of small private businesses by small business entrepreneurs accounted for a proportion of the purchasers. There were marked differences between the occupiers of the two types of housing. the majority of those living in Housing Commission developments being blue collar workers who despite continuity of employment had to exercise care in the management of the family budget. In towns throughout regional Queensland the same pattern emerged as has been discussed in Chapter Three. However despite these differences the notion of classlessness persisted, but the thesis maintains that in reality it remained a social construct. Moreover it contends that the assumption in the 1990s that the 1950s and 1960s was a time of comparative prosperity, is a generalisation which is not substantiated by the evidence.

This assumption is also countered by Mark Peel who states the realities of public housing, and repetitive factory work in industrial centres refutes the assumption that there was a movement towards homogeneity and a classless Australian society.[63] The thesis maintains that the capacity of maintaining a life style based on home and car ownership merely gave an appearance of affluence, and eroded a sense of class distinctiveness, thus giving rise to the semblance of a classless

[63] M. Peel, **"A** new kind of manhood: Remembering the 1950s", in *Australian Historical Studies,* Vo1.18, No.109, October 1997, pp.147-151.

society. Moreover the reality of a vast indebtedness made a nonsense of the notion. Additionally, throughout Queensland women's activities were more than ever home centred. Domestic work occupied much of their time while leisure pursuits consisted of home and family oriented interests.

Homemaking

Superficially family life for women who "stayed at home" during the baby boomer period was very much the same in the city and regional towns. Women led very ordered lives with specific tasks for specific days. Each day was organised in ways which fitted in with the time her husband left for work and arrived home; the children's school times, meal times; Parents' and Citizens' Committee meetings, tuckshop duties; and the countless other things that made up their days and weeks.

A large part of every woman's day was taken up with the preparation of meals and one day each week was usually put aside for baking. Throughout regional Queensland, and in some suburban areas of Brisbane, cooking was done in wood fired stoves, until electric stoves started to be installed. However many women still used wood fired stoves in country towns until they were no longer available. In rural areas of the Central Queensland region housewives had to bake bread as well as cakes and biscuits. In regional towns pies and fish and chips could be purchased, although they were not considered to be take away meals. Meat, and sometimes fish, with three vegetables followed by a pudding of some sort, was the staple fare in most homes. During the hot months salad would sometimes be substituted for vegetables, but these rarely varied from lettuce, tomatoes, cucumber and onion. Women's organisations such as the Country Women's Association often put

together recipe books from recipes gathered from members. These booklets were oRen prefaced with verses such as the following:

My Kitchen Prayer

Bless my little kitchen, Lord,
I love its every nook,
And bless me as I do my work,
Wash pots and pans and cook.[64]

Notwithstanding that it was unintentional, the above verse expresses the monotony that was the housewife's lot in her day to day existence.

Firms such as Hancock's Golden Crust Pty.Ltd. published booklets filled with recipes using their products. These were available to customers at no cost from grocers shops. This particular firm used notions of food value and taste in the advertisement for their products printed in the booklet.[65] Another source of recipes in Victoria was *Selected recipes from The Leader Spare Corner*. This booklet and others like it also contained housekeeping hints for the housewife, particularly those in rural areas.[66] There is a section on pickling and curing meat, instructions on how to pluck poultry, how to preserve butter and eggs and how to make table salt from "ordinary" salt. There is a recipe for "good soap", the reader is told how to economise on floor polish, how to make a polishing cloth for the silver, how to

[64] Bundaberg West Rotaryannes, *Tarts, pies, pizzaz, undated.* Bundaberg had a large Italian population during the period of the thesis. This could account for the inclusion of pizzas. Book held by the author.

[65] No. editor or compiler, *Recipe book from Golden Crust Flour,* South Yarra, Hancock's Golden Crust Pty. Ltd., undated. Book held by the author.

[66] *The Leader: Spare corner cookery book*, Melbourne, David Syme & Co, Ltd,, undated. *The Leader* was a weekly newspaper in Victoria with news items orientated towards country people. "The Spare Corner" was a feature allocated to items of interest to women. Women frequently submitted favourite recipes for publication and this book is a selection of these recipes. It also points to the extra duties expected of the farm wife in her capacity of unpaid worker. Book held by the author.

remove print from flour bags, or waterproof hessian.[67] **A** recipe for oat cakes calls for the ingredient of one cup of oats, "the porridge kind"

When, mixmasters and vitamisers came on the market, purchasers found new recipe books included in the packing. Not only did the recipes start to reflect the early trend away from standard recipes of the past, with recipes for different ways to cook vegetables, a variety of salad dressings and savoury food, but instructions were given for such things as the adaptation of American recipes, and a table showing oven ratings for the various types of electric and gas ovens then on the market. However, in what may have been an effort to interest lower income housewives, it is interesting to note that the humble dripping was still recommended as shortening, albeit only for savoury pastries."' The Vitamiser recipe book emphasises the importance of vitamins. It states that:

> The vitamiser offers a wonderful means of processing in an attractive form all those Vitamin-rich (sic) dairy products, vegetables and fruit, which promote resistance to infection, healthy nerves, growth and vitality, and sound bone formation.[69]

It is interesting to note that although it was published after the ***Spare*** *Corner Cookery Book,* helpful hints for the housewife are included. **As** a rather more sophisticated publication it also contains a section of "Beauty Aids", and instructions on the pickling and curing of meat are missing. This reflects change, not only in the work of the housewife, but different processing and marketing

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[67] Flour bags had many uses. Before the days of plastic they would be used to cover meat and other food in the refrigerator **(if** there was one) or else in the coolgardie safe, as well as being made for aprons, oven cloths and a multitude of other uses.

[68] C. Collins (Ed.), *Sunbeam Instruction Book,* Mascot, c.late 1950s.Book held by the author.

[69] *Semak Vitamiser Recipe Book,* Semak Electrics Pty. Ltd.c. 1963. Book held by the author.

methods. The "helpful hints" are also indicative of the skills needed by the housewives of the day to cope with household tasks.

Young girls who had to take over the mother's role in the case of sickness or death did not have these skills. Bonnie left school at 12½ years of age to take care of her mother who was ill. After her mother's death she did not return to school but remained at home to take over the running of the household for the family. She testified that:

> I had to do all the work and I actually cooked my first meal then. I can remember carrying this big heavy iron pot from the stove into Mum's bedroom to see **if** it was going along nicely because it was firmly implanted on my mind that it was not to boil so **I** took it off the stove to make sure that it wasn't curdling or boiling. I had to do the washing... [boiled in] kerosene tins in the back yard. There were galvanised tubs under the house. There were no trolleys, you just lugged it in the best you could. There were no wringers you just squeezed the [the clothes] out as best you could.[70]

Reliance on young women to take the place of their mothers under similar circumstances was not confined to regional Queensland particularly among lower socio-economic families. It was not until 1945 that there was a social security system which provided unemployment and sickness benefits, and even then this was means tested, and did not supply benefits which may have helped families such as these. **As** May remarked "in those days girls did everything".[71] Men and boys did not assist in domestic chores. Bell whimsically describes washing day as:

> Mum was boss of the copper, the Reckitt's Blue rinse, the velvet soap shavings, the starch **mix..**We hated coming home from school because we knew Mum had spent the whole day washing and hanging out the clothes...With the left over soapy water she washed the floor, did the back steps with Lysol...and we usually ate leftovers.[72]

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[70] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with BS at Rockhampton, 15 June, 1998.
[71] Interview conducted by G. Johansen with MT at Bundaberg, 2 September, 1998.
[72] D. Bell, op. cit., p.13.

Women throughout the whole of Queensland and Australia, who lived through the 1940s can relate perfectly to Bell's description. Of course after the washing there was always the ironing. This was very often done in the evening.

In the outer suburbs of Brisbane, infrastructure providing schools, shopping facilities, churches and adequate transport facilities was slow to make an appearance. What has frequently been seen as a plus for housewives was the introduction of technology into homes. With respect to this facet of home care, the thesis argues that technological advance in general reduced the load of heavy manual labour in both Central Queensland towns and in Brisbane, but that any time saved was soon eroded in the provision of further services to the family. Additionally because of the reduced labour input in the use of the washing machine, compared to washing, boiling, rinsing by hand, clothes and linen would be washed more frequently. Moreover much of the technological equipment also required cleaning and maintenance which also took time.[73] In Brisbane any lessening of the time taken in home care by the introduction of technology was quickly taken up, as more and more women learned to drive, and assumed the responsibility of taking children to the many sports and recreation activities which had became available for them.

People concerned about the socialisation of their children hastened to enrol them in at least one organisation. This meant parents were called on to serve on

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[53] D. Broome, "Out of the frying pan: Technological change and domestic work" in *Proceedings of the Women and Technological Change Conference*, Melbourne, Status of Women Committee, 1982, pp.99-100.

committees and participate in fund raising activities. Very oRen this too was the mother's role. Not only in Queensland but also in the whole of Australia new ideas took a little time before they were accepted in regional districts. A possible reason for this may have been the notion, that what was good enough for the parents was good enough for children, was more firmly entrenched in rural areas. One outstanding example where children's activities were very actively encouraged in Queensland in the 1950s was Mt. Isa. Here nearly every sport had its adherents. Not only were there adult teams, each sport had its junior teams. Distance possibly played a part in this phenomenon as distance to other towns negated the possibility of competitions outside of Mt. Isa.[74] However in Central Queensland towns during the period of the thesis there was always the beach or the local swimming hole. As most children learned to swim at an early age, and it was relatively safe to allow them to spend time this way, organised activities were possibly not deemed to be as necessary.

The evidence which has been presented demonstrates that the concept of a classless society in the 1950s-1960s was little more than a social construct. It has also affirmed that there were significant differences in housing developments between Brisbane and Central Queensland towns, and that the new housing projects did not constitute a movement towards homogeneity either in the metropolitan or regional Queensland. Furthermore, it has been contended that the assumption that during the period of the baby boomers working class families who moved to the Housing Commission developments in the outer suburbs were

[74] The author spent some time in Mt. Isa during the 1950s and as her own children were involved participated in the organisation of children's sporting activities.

comparatively well off is a misconception. It has also been asserted that particularly in regional and rural areas the role of women in the home did not alter significantly from the philosophy of "woman's place" in the 1930s.