

Market Analysis

Social Research

Feasibility

Evaluation

Consulting

Fact file

34% of Sydneysiders have never married. Up 2% since 1996.
(ABS)

10% of Sydneysiders are divorced/separated. Up 1% since 1996. (ABS)

26% of Sydney dwellings are apartments. Up 3% since 1996. (ABS)

Tipping over

2007 is turning out to be a year when several balances in our social landscape have tipped over. Underlying forces have built up till the point of equilibrium has passed and the weight of opinion has fallen in a different direction.

The most prominent shift in this election year is the accumulating evidence of community desire for a change of leadership.

All the political polls are saying that the Howard Government is not likely to be in charge in 2008. New leadership will bring new policies/programs along with a subtle change in how we see ourselves and what we stand for.

The second balance to tip is that of Climate Change. When the Murray-Darling ran out of water, Brisbane adopted Level 5 water rationing,

Make things happen: mechanics of change

Many social changes unfold across the generations, but others are pushed along more quickly by factors such as changing economics, education, and government policy.

Like an oil tanker, social changes are hard to get moving, they respond sluggishly to attempts to steer, and they can seem impossible to stop.

To bring about effective social change, you need to use four levers.

1. Knowledge. Before we make changes, we need to know the WHY and the WHAT. Why should I change? What do I need to do?



Clover Moore gave us Earth Day, incandescent globes were slated to become heritage objects and Al Gore won an Academy Award, the Australian community tipped over into acceptance that Climate Change is a real and urgent problem.

So, what will tip next? We anticipate that 2008 will see:

- Australian withdrawals from Iraq;
- Higher fuel prices driving increased energy-efficiency;
- Growing market for apartments – the dwelling of choice.



2. Support. It is much easier to make changes that have broad community support – we're all in this together.

3. Relevant. We are much more likely to act if we think the issue is relevant to us.

4. Doable. We can only act in our own sphere of influence.

Community opinion on David Hicks changed because of widespread reports and debates, growing support, relevance to important Australian values and the looming election where voters could act on their views.



Climate change

Leisure

Arts + Culture

Travel + Toursim

Housing

Communication

The Australian community, business leaders and media have made the leap. The debate has shifted from “Will it happen?” to “How bad will it be? What will happen to me?”

Television home make over programs like *CarbonCops* are a clear signal that the community as a whole is aboard this issue. The Howard Government is scrambling to keep up with the debate.

At Environmetrics, we find that it is no longer business as usual for our clients.

Museums are looking at ways to provide accessible and interesting information. Lynda Kelly from the Australian Museum shares her experiences with visitor research into climate change on her blog – <http://amarclk.blogspot.com/2007/06/climate-change-and-museums.html>.

Many of our developer clients have been going green for several years now. Government initiatives like BASIX have pushed the market towards better practice. Developers have been concerned that there may be little demand for houses with environmentally friendly features.



Now, greater awareness and growing knowledge, home buyers are becoming more discriminating about energy efficiency and water conservation. Developers are likely to find that buyer demand, not just regulatory compliance, will begin to drive demand for more environmentally friendly housing.

‘Couple + kids’ households in Sydney have fallen from 58% to 49% in the last 10 years.
(ABS)

‘Couple + no kids’ households in Sydney have risen from 28% to 33% in the last 10 years.
(ABS)

On current rates, 24% young women in Australia will have no children.
(ABS)

Why things bite back

This is the title of Edward Tenner’s book in which he catalogues a series of planning, policy and forecasting initiatives that have failed because the proponents failed to identify the unintended consequences of their actions.

Change is rarely linear and uncomplicated but all too often planners operate as if it is. “Causes” and “Effects” in real life are rarely neatly separated and easily distinguished yet we act as if they are. The result is that the world we are tinkering with “bites back”.

A simple example. We see increased traffic congestion on the road between towns A and B and so we improve the

road. The increased ease of driving makes B more appealing as an area for development. The development drives an increase in traffic and promotes congestion. We have, with considerable expense, come full circle.



Many of our projects involve working with our clients to identify the underlying system and the cycles of so-called “causeeffect” that are relevant to their strategic planning. Taking a “systems” approach to community planning, for example, brings a clearer focus on considering what will happen over time and helps identify the things that lurk, waiting to bite back.

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