



Market Analysis

Social Research

Feasibility

Evaluation

Consulting

## Fact file

Nationally, housing finance in August 2008 was \$17,458m which is 25.6% lower than the same period in 2007. (ABS)

The proportion of owner-occupied dwellings fell from 71.4% in 1966 to 69.8% in 2006. (ABS)

Sydney has the highest proportion of residents living in flat/unit/apartments (32%), while Melbourne (19%) has the lowest among the capital cities. (ABS)

## Affordable Housing – Norwegian style

Sydney housing is in trouble, and the future can seem grim. Some estimates show that by 2031 Sydney will need 900,000 extra homes.

One of the worst affected groups are first home-buyers who have been squeezed out of the market by rising prices. The recent Federal Government boost for first home buyers is a short term initiative, but it is time to consider longer term options that give more first home buyers a foothold in the market.

Taking a broad view and looking to other countries to get new ideas can be one way of searching for solutions.

In Norway, many new units and houses are built with a joined studio/flat with the flexibility to be configured as a separate residence or incorporated into the main dwelling. This flexibility has two important benefits. First it gives buyers the potential for tax-free rental income that helps them pay the mortgage. Secondly, it delivers new rental properties to the market every year.

These affordable dwellings are built from standardised elements and do not allow for customisation and this helps keep costs to a minimum.

Most owners choose to rent out the studio, and, while a hidden door allows for easy integration into a single dwelling, most owners choose to move into something bigger when they need more space.

In Norway, one of the reasons this has worked so well is that when the owner lives in the greater part of the dwelling, the rental income from the smaller part is tax free.



Norwegian apartment

This is an important part of the total package that makes this housing so attractive to first home buyers.

In Norway, 79% of buyers in these schemes are aged 18-39 years. In one development, 76% said that the combined own/lease possibility was one of the main reasons for buying.

Environmetrics has contributed to several Sydney housing projects involving studios in masterplanned estates. The studios have sold very well, even in unexpected locations.

Perhaps it is time to take a closer look at the Norwegian model.

### Flexible floorplans in Norway





## V8 Supercars at Homebush

Leisure

Arts + Culture

Travel + Toursim

Housing

Communication

The NSW Government recently announced a five-year deal to stage the last round of the season V8 supercar championship at Homebush Bay. This deal gives motor racing a high profile boost by lending it the glamour and prestige of Sydney Olympic Park, instead of tucking it away in the motor sport precinct at Eastern Creek.



A lot of work has gone into the plan, and details have been announced about the cost to taxpayers (\$30m over five years) investment by V8 Supercars (\$50-60m over five years), return to NSW economy (\$100m), expected audiences (250,000), jobs created (110 full-time equivalent) and site refurbishment costs (\$20m) including the removal of 140 trees.

Objectors point to Eastern Creek as the 'right' place for the event. But large-scale carnival events like this need more than a track for the cars. They need a glamorous setting along with facilities like accommodation, bars

and cafes, display areas, and plazas/gathering places for the associated program of activities that contribute to the carnival atmosphere.

The Social Impact Study we conducted for the Eastern Creek Motorsport Precinct showed that motor sport has strong community support and delivers real social benefits.

Here's hoping the new V8 event at Sydney Olympic Park delivers some of this promise.

## Surprised?

Are you surprised by the range of things we do?

You may know us as consultants who understand visitors to museums and galleries, or as people who know about housing.

But you can see that our research and analytical skills have been applied to many topics.

What do they have in common?

Most of our projects examine how people respond to different kinds of built environments.

:: Culture :: Leisure ::

:: Housing :: Urban ::

:: Retail :: Events ::

:: Social Impact ::

:: Travel :: Tourism ::

## Retail Ecology

A retail shopping strip is best regarded as an ecosystem because success depends on a combination of several mutually-supporting elements. If any one of them is missing, the whole thing limps along. But if all the elements are in place, the strip thrives.

Four aspects of retail ecology are:

**Physical setting.** Quality of street environment including paving, lighting, seating, trees & banners, protection from traffic. Business premises that are well-maintained and interesting to look into.

**Perception/image.** The shopping area is seen as safe, inviting, relevant, and easy to use.



Hunter Street, Newcastle

**Economic mix .** There is a good range of businesses, which are located in complementary clusters that attract shoppers and encourage them to move between businesses.

**Business & government.** Local businesses, owners and government work together to coordinate activities and ensure that regulation is supportive and relevant.

Environmetrics can assist with strategies and plans to revitalise local shopping strips.