Report

Addressing concentrations of disadvantage

Russell Island case study report

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1   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Case study area overview

Russell Island is among a group of islands known as the Southern Moreton Bay Islands (SMBI), located off the coast of South East Queensland in the Moreton Bay Marine Park some 43 kilometres from Brisbane city. The islands are administered by the Redland City Council (formerly the Shire of Redland). With a 2011 population of 2475, Russell Island is the largest of the Southern Moreton Bay Islands; the others being Lamb, Macleay and Karragarra. Together, the four islands have a combined population of 5630 (as of 2011) which makes them the second largest offshore island communities in Australia. The islands are also experiencing significant growth, with a 33 per cent population increase in the period between 2006 and 2011 (Redland City Council 2013). Residential development is largely concentrated around the northern end of the island although some properties are scattered across the island. The southern end is mainly designated a conservation zone. Most of the limited services are located in the northern end within the vicinity of the ferry terminal. While the island has a supermarket, pharmacy, cafe, doctor's surgery, primary school and other such provisions to meet the daily needs of residents, access to all other health, recreational and commercial services requires a ferry trip of approximately 20 minutes to the mainland. Employment on the island is also limited, with most employed residents commuting off the island for work.

According to 2011 ABS data, Russell Island is a socioeconomically disadvantaged suburb, with all of the SA1s in the suburb belonging to the lowest quintile of SEIFA Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSD) within Australia. This means there is a concentration of low-income households, with more than one-fifth of all households earning less than $600 gross income per week. Of the four disadvantaged suburb types identified in the AHURI study (of which this report forms a part), Russell Island falls into the category of Type 3 'marginal' suburb: located on the urban periphery and thus somewhat disconnected from mainstream housing markets. Type 3 suburbs have higher rates of residential mobility than other suburbs, but this mainly comes from domestic rather than overseas movers. The population is typically older, comprised predominantly of retirees, and housing is dominated by outright home ownership and the private rental market.

1.2   Case study research aims

The study of Russell Island was undertaken as part of a larger project funded by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) entitled 'Addressing Concentrations of Disadvantage' which sought to examine the diversity of areas with identifiable concentrations of disadvantage in Australia's major capital cities—Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. The overall aims of the project were to investigate:

→ How concentrations of social disadvantage are conceptualised, defined and measured?

→ What housing and urban processes contribute to the creation and perpetuation of these patterns?

→ What are the consequences of living in a disadvantaged area for the residents concerned?

→ How can policy-makers and others respond to spatial disadvantage in 'best for people, best for place' terms?

Stage 3 of the project involved detail case study research into six selected localities, two each in the cities of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. In Brisbane, the two sites were Russell Island in the Redland Bay area, and Logan Central in the city of Logan. The main objectives of the case study work were to better understand the experiences of living in an area characterised as disadvantaged and the effect this concentration of disadvantage has upon the places themselves and the people who live there. This refers to the possibility that living in a 'poor neighbourhood' can compound the impact of poverty and disadvantage affecting an individual (Atkinson & Kintrea 2001), as well as the imposition of negative stereotypes or labels by external parties who are not familiar with the place. Part of the task, then, is to critique these stereotypes by examining the efforts of local councils, federal and state governments, and the business and community sectors to address concentrated disadvantage; as well as focussing on the lived experience of place for those who reside and work there. These experiences may include a sense of being disadvantaged, or of finding life difficult, but they may also feature positive accounts of a strong sense of community, attachment to place, a strong civil sector and narrative of change and growth.

1.3   Case study methodology

The case study work took place between April and November 2013 and involved five elements:

1. Background analysis of 2001 and 2011 census data on the island.

2. Media coverage relating to Russell Island (and, in this instance, the broader SMBI area).

3. Document analysis—government and other reports about Russell Island and the SMBIs as a whole.

4. In-depth interviews with local stakeholders.

5. A resident focus group meeting.

Spanning the period 2003–13, the media analysis covered two major newspapers *The Australian* and the Queensland *Courier Mail* as well as radio (ABC) and television news broadcasts. Local issues were reported in the *Bayside News*—a free newspaper produced for the Moreton Bay region, and an online news forum specific to Russell Island: *RussellIsland.com.au*.

Stakeholder interviewee selection was, to some extent, guided by a standardised list of potentially relevant participants which included local council officers, real estate agents, social housing providers, police representatives, support service providers, education and training providers, representatives from the business sector, and community group spokespeople. These came from on and off the island and included state government agencies that provide 'outreach' services to the island community. However, selecting stakeholders also involved a process of 'snowballing'—that is, being guided by interviewee recommendations as to other potentially appropriate contributors. In line with ethical requirements to maintain confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, the views represented in this report are not attributed to individuals, but are indicated by a generic term (e.g. local government officer, state housing provider or industry/commerce representative). In total, 13 stakeholders participated in interviews for this research.

Alongside these interviews, a resident focus group was held to capture the views of island residents. A letter was sent out to a diverse list of 60 residents who were selected with the assistance of a University of Queensland PhD student, Julie Conway. Nine residents agreed to participate. Stakeholder interviews and resident

focus group discussions were structured according to master topic guides common to all case studies within the wider project. For stakeholder meetings, however, these were necessarily adapted as appropriate to the area of knowledge or responsibility of the interviewee concerned.

2　BACKGROUND TO THE AREA

2.1　Historical development of the island

Understanding the experiences of those living on Russell Island and the issues they face requires some historical context of the island's development. As various other reports have identified (see e.g. GHD 2002; Urbis 2012), the present limits on infrastructure development and growth of the island, and the needs and expectations of the islanders, continue to be shaped by historical factors.

Until 1973, Russell Island operated outside local government boundaries and was viewed as a 'rural backwater' (Sutton 1989, p.45) accommodating a handful of relatively poor farming families and war veterans. However, the island gained notoriety during the 1970s as a result of what is widely known as the 'Russell Island land scam' where over 7000 individual sub-divisions were created and put up for sale despite being located in swamp land or subject to tidal flooding. While charges of fraud were laid against 16 developers, surveyors and estate agents in 1979, the case collapsed in court. Fraudulent activities relating to the sale of land on Russell Island and misleading advertising continued through the 1980s, with charges finally laid by the Commonwealth Trade Practices Commission against a real estate company in 1986.

In 1973, Russell Island was gazetted into the boundaries of the then Redland Shire Council. The council estimates that of the 19 000 blocks which have been created on all four islands, there are still 8440 vacant land parcels suitable for residential development (Redland City Council 2008, p.12). According to a land use study completed by consultants GHD in 1999, this has created a situation where the islands have the potential to develop to population densities greater than those found in inner city suburbs, but without the associated infrastructure or services to support them (GHD 2002). Further, GHD noted that at the time of sub-divisions, few provisions were made for urban infrastructure, with the effect that the retrospective provision of roads and sewerage facilities has been poorly planned and expensive to supply.

Given this, and following the establishment of the Moreton Bay Marine Park in 1992 to recognise and preserve the ecological significance of the islands and surrounding area, the council commissioned a planning strategy (SMBI PLUS) (Redland City Council 2011a) to ensure that further development of the islands occurred in an ecologically sustainable manner. Placing a limit on the total number of people who could sustainably live on the islands to a maximum of 22 600 people, the council implemented a raft of measures to manage population growth, which included the provision of restrictions on further subdivisions, subsidised land amalgamation and voluntary land acquisition schemes (Ison 2006; Wyeth 2008). In 2014, much of the remaining vacant land on Russell Island will be zoned for conservation purposes, which initially meant that residential development would no longer be permitted. This proved unpopular among those owning land and intending to build a property at some later date (*The Courier Mail* 24 July 2004; 25 August 2004) but the laws have since been relaxed to allow owners to build on their land even while it remains part of a conservation zone.

Additionally, the GHD study observed how many of the blocks created on the islands have been marketed and sold at inflated prices. It argued that this has created unrealistic expectations among residents and the payment of relatively high levels of rates and levies on the basis of these expectations. According to the GHD report, this has been further fuelled by ongoing speculation over the construction of a bridge to connect Russell Island to the mainland: an idea devised in the 1960s as part of a

broader project to connect Stradbroke Island to the mainland, possibly via Russell Island. However, both the Redland City Council and the Queensland State Government have since rejected the idea of a bridge, both on financial grounds as well as on the argument that it would compromise the island's 'unique non-urban lifestyle' (2011a, p.17). In 2012 the Redland City Council contracted Urbis Pty Ltd. to undertake an analysis of the long-term financial sustainability of the SMBIs. According to the completed report it is estimated that the cost of upgrading and providing essential infrastructure to the islands, both in terms of roads, waste water and health and community services is around $500 million (Urbis Pty Ltd. 2012, p.5). This degree of investment in the islands is financially infeasible.

2.2   The socio economic profile of Russell Island

The suburb of Russell Island (comprising the entire island) displays some unique characteristics relative to the Brisbane Metropolitan Area and even the Cleveland-Stradbroke region of which it is part. To begin with, as Table 1 illustrates, it has a relatively older population according to 2011 ABS figures, with a median age of 51 (compared to 35 for Brisbane and 41 for the Cleveland-Stradbroke region). As such, it has almost twice the proportion of residents aged over 65 than the Brisbane area and, commensurately, a lower proportion in the younger age groups.

Table 1: Age profile of Russell Island

	Russell Island		Cleveland-Stradbroke region		Brisbane metropolitan area	
Total population	2,475		76,460		2,065,995	
Males	1,229	49.7%	37,217	48.7%	1,019,556	49.3%
Females	1,245	50.3%	39,243	51.3%	1,046,439	50.7%
ATSI	78	3.2%	1,604	2.1%	41,906	2.0%
Median age	51		41		35	
% aged 0–14 years	393	15.9%	15,183	19.9%	414,501	20.1%
% aged 65 or older	587	23.7%	12,875	16.8%	242,791	11.8%
% aged 0–4 years	144	5.8%	4,518	5.9%	144,169	7.0%
% aged 5–11 years	165	6.7%	7303	9.6%	189,288	9.2%
% aged 12–17 years	172	6.9%	6699	8.8%	164,932	8.0%
Median weekly individual income	$347		$580		$633	

This older age range of island residents is symptomatic of its status as a place for low-cost retirement living and is reflected in other socio-demographic features of the population. First, the proportion of persons who need core activity assistance is high (almost three times as high as in Brisbane), which has implications for the type and level of care required by an ageing island population. Second, the median weekly income is lower on Russell Island, most likely because of the high proportion of residents on aged pensions.

Third, Table 2 illustrates how, by virtue of its older demographic, labour force participation is low on the island (half the rate compared to the Cleveland-Stradbroke region and Brisbane). Nevertheless, not all of this can be attributed to the presence of a large cohort of retirees since the unemployment rate for young people is considerably high. Indeed, almost 90 per cent of the entire youth population not

attending school are out of work on Russell Island, compared to 12.2 per cent in the broader Cleveland-Stradbroke region and 21.3 per cent in the greater Brisbane metropolitan area. It is notable, however, that absolute numbers for Russell Island are small (only 35 unemployed youth) and this is likely to provide inflated proportions. Finally, the predominant household type is the lone person household, mostly likely comprised of single (divorced or widowed) older persons. There is a similar proportion of couple only households as found in Cleveland-Stradbroke and Brisbane; many of these couple only households may comprise empty nesters whose children have left home. As such, there are lower proportions of couple families with children on Russell Island. Culturally, the island is largely homogenous, substantially comprised of people from Australian and Western European backgrounds.

Table 2: Employment profile of Russell Island, 2011

	Russell Island		Cleveland-Stradbroke region		Brisbane metropolitan area	
% employed full-time [1]	291	14.0%	22,301	36.4%	654,899	39.7%
% employed part-time	234	11.2%	11,312	18.5%	296,516	18.0%
% employed but away from work [1]	42	2.0%	2,071	3.4%	59,203	3.6%
% unemployed [2]	136	19.3%	2,034	5.4%	62,862	5.9%
Participation rate [2]	703	33.7%	37,718	61.6%	1,073,480	65.0%
% in low-skilled/low-status jobs [4]	303	52.8%	11,595	32.5%	323,594	32.0%
% youth (15–24) unemployed [4]	35	89.7%	792	12.2%	25,390	21.3%
Managers [3]	41	7.2%	4,802	13.5%	117,054	11.6%
Professional [3]	78	13.8%	6,009	16.8%	224,568	22.2%
Technicians & trades workers [3]	98	17.3%	5,688	15.9%	136,905	13.5%
Community & personal service workers [3]	64	11.3%	3,523	9.9%	97,524	9.6%
Clerical & administrative workers [3]	71	12.5%	6,011	16.8%	163,675	16.2%
Sales workers [3]	66	11.7%	3,713	10.4%	95,326	9.4%
Machinery operators and drivers [3]	58	10.2%	2,014	5.6%	64,295	6.4%
Labourers [3]	94	16.6%	3,341	9.4%	92,929	9.2%

[1] % of population aged 15 or older.

[2] number of unemployed persons as % of the total labour force.

[3] % of employed persons aged 15 or older.

[4] % of youths aged 15–24 years in the labour force.

2.3   Socio-demographic change

Table 3 outlines the key aspects of socio-demographic change on Russell Island over the decade from 2001. It reveals that the island has experienced rapid growth since 2001, with the population doubling from its relatively low base of 1309 to 2475 in 2011. As Table 3 outlines, the increase in population has also been accompanied by

changes to the socio-economic profile and residential tenure of islanders in the following ways:

→ The employment profile of residents changed little during 2001–11 although workforce participation has increased. Around one third of the population are in some form of employment.

→ Unemployment appears to have declined for the population as a whole apart from youth unemployment, which has increased significantly. It is important to keep in mind, however, that the absolute figures are still low and the number of unemployed youth has increased from 24 in 2001 to 35 in 2011.

→ A slightly higher proportion of the population completed high school in 2011 than in 2001. There was a higher proportion who attained vocational qualifications than in 2001 although there are fewer residents with tertiary qualifications (165 residents compared to 258, representing a decline from 23.5% of the population in 2001 to a mere 6.7% in 2011).

→ The number of occupied private dwellings on Russell Island doubled during 2001–11: a much more rapid rate than in the Brisbane metropolitan area. With a higher number of occupied private dwellings, almost half of the population have moved from elsewhere over the last five years. At 49.2 per cent, this is slightly higher than the 2001 figure of 46.2.

→ Most of these new dwellings are occupied by mortgagors (24.5%) or private rentals (30%). As a result, the proportion of full home ownership has declined to 34.1 per cent from a 2001 figure of 51 per cent.

→ Family composition now takes less of a traditional form on the island, with a small decline in the proportion of couple family households with children. At the same time, the proportion of couple-only households has also declined from 41.2 per cent in 2001 to 28.2 per cent in 2011. Single parent households have increased significantly (four times as many and twice as high proportionately) which may well be indicative of increasing disadvantage.

→ The total number of young people under the age of 14 has grown significantly from 140 in 2001 to 393 in 2011, such that children now comprise 15.9 per cent of the population (up from a 2001 rate of 10.6%).

→ The Russell Island community continues to be relatively white with Australian and Anglo-Celtic backgrounds continuing to dominate. A Filipino population is slowly emerging although at only 1 per cent of the total population, this group still comprises a very small number and proportion of residents.

Table 3: distinctive features of socio-economic change in Russell Island, 2001–11

	Russell Island				Brisbane metropolitan area			
	2001		2011		2001		2011	
Employment & education profile								
% unemployed	74	23.1%	136	19.3%	62,271	7.8%	62,862	5.9%
Employment participation rate	320	29.1%	703	33.7%	802,107	63.1%	1,073,480	65.0%
% youth (15–24) unemployed	24	53.3%	35	89.7%	24,471	15.1%	25,390	21.3%
% who left school at Year 10 or before	657	59.9%	1,020	41.2%	507,633	39.9%	522,068	31.6%
% who left school at Year 12	234	21.3%	595	24.0%	549,006	43.2%	872,764	52.8%
% with vocational qualification	52	4.7%	575	23.2%	269,821	47.3%	431,710	26.1%
% with tertiary qualification	258	23.5%	165	6.7%	177,061	31.1%	332,608	20.1%
Residential profile								
No. of occupied private dwellings	635		1,225		601,146		828,197	
% at different address five years ago	605	46.2%	1,148	49.2%	723,423	47.6%	861,571	44.8%
% Fully owned	324	51.0%	418	34.1%	210,655	35.0%	214,186	25.9%
% Owned with mortgage	120	18.9%	300	24.5%	174,029	28.9%	295,512	35.7%
% Private rental	120	18.9%	367	30.0%	152,428	25.4%	222,597	26.9%
Household composition								
Couple family household with children	85	14.5%	150	12.2%	198,984	34.0%	255,184	30.8%
Couple household without children	242	41.2%	345	28.2%	149,450	25.6%	205,031	24.8%
Single-parent family household	42	7.1%	164	13.4%	70,253	12.0%	94,371	11.4%
Lone person household	189	32.1%	387	31.6%	133,644	22.9%	159,971	19.3%

2.4   Key issues facing the island

All residents who participated in the study spoke enthusiastically of how much they enjoy living on the island, citing its natural beauty, relaxed lifestyle and community spirit. They described high levels of sociality among residents; of walking to the shops and stopping to chat with the people they met; and of feeling 'part of something'. This

was reflected in the large number of community associations on the island, particularly sporting and arts clubs, but also (to name just a few) dancing groups, a bingo club, craft groups, children and babies groups, men's clubs, table tennis and model aeroplane clubs. Outside stakeholders also pointed to the presence of a large cohort of retired professionals who were passionate about the island and proactive in organising community events and advocating on behalf of the community. In the words of one, this had created an island population that was 'entrepreneurial, talented and motivated to change'.

At the same time, participants also spoke of a sense that the island was changing in character as newer, low-income and unemployed residents moved in, bringing to the island a range of social problems and anti-social behaviour that, in their view, had not previously been present. They were also realistic about the challenges of living on an island, particularly the difficulty of accessing services above their everyday needs. These issues are addressed in the following sections.

3 RUSSELL ISLAND: WHERE DISADVANTAGED PEOPLE LIVE

3.1 Indicators of disadvantage

Academic and policy research often conceives of spatial disadvantage in one of two ways: either on the basis of the socio-economic and socio-cultural circumstances of the resident population and/or the extent to which the places itself imposes limitations on the people who live there. This section examines disadvantage in the first sense to consider how, and in what ways, Russell Island may be understood as a place where disadvantaged people live. In so doing, it identifies they key indicators of socio-economic disadvantage on the island, which are often based on census variables such as a high proportion of low-income families or those living in poverty; low labour force participation and/or high levels of unemployment; low educational attainment; poor English skills; high levels of housing stress (i.e. low-income households paying greater than 30% of income on rent or mortgage repayments); high proportions of single parent families; and high proportions of recent overseas arrivals (see Baum et al. 2006).

Table 4 indicates how Russell Island performs on a number of these indicators of disadvantage relative to the Brisbane metropolitan region and Logan Central which is the second Queensland case study site for this project. It shows that over 68 per cent of households on the island are classified as being of low income.

Table 4: Indicators of disadvantage for Russell Island, Logan Central and Brisbane

	Unempl. rate	Highest educ Yr 10 (25–44 yrs)	Not in education, training or employment (inc. not in labour force) 15–24 years	Low-income households (proportion in approx. bottom 40% of Aust-wide hh income distribution)	Low status/skill jobs
Case study suburb name (ABS SSC 2006)		Per cent of all aged 25–44 yrs	Per cent of all aged 15 to 24	Prop. low inc households	Prop. empd. in low status jobs
Logan Central	14.9	23.2	22.0	53.3	59.3
Russell Island	18.9	25.5	41.9	68.2	50.1
Brisbane	5.8	9.5	9.8	30.9	31.5

On the basis of these figures, Russell Island is classified as a disadvantaged suburb by the ABS deprivation index 'Socio-Economic Indices for Areas' (otherwise known as SEIFA). According to the SEIFA Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, Russell Island has score of 787.8 which indicates higher levels of disadvantage than found in the Redlands City area which has a score of 856. Logan Central ranks slightly lower at 767.4.

The signs of disadvantage are most obvious for particular social groups. The first is children. Up to 70 per cent of children at the Russell Island State Primary School across all year levels and dimensions of learning for NAPLAN have been identified as

being at or below the minimum standard of learning (Russell Island State School 2010). *According to the School Strategic Plan*, these problems are being compounded by the isolation and the concentration of disadvantage generated by an island demographic, such that 5 per cent of students have 'verified disabilities', 10 per cent are indigenous and 30 per cent are 'deemed to require additional learning support' (2010, p.1). In light of these indicators, the Russell Island State Primary School has been designated a low socio-economic status area by the Federal and State Government education departments, meaning that it is eligible for additional funding under the School Communities National Partnership Scheme from 2010–14.

The difficulties facing children on the island were also raised during interviews where participants reported how parents often lacked money to purchase school books, uniforms and lunches. Students were also found to turn up without breakfast, prompting the primary school to put on a breakfast club each morning with some assistance from the local church. One stakeholder reported that while parents were highly supportive of the school's efforts to enhance student learning, the parents themselves were difficult to engage and few participated in reading schemes, open evenings and other school initiatives, particular when they were held on mainland high schools. Stakeholders from the school sector reported problems of truancy among local children and behavioural problems, both at primary and high school. The high school students were also reported as encountering learning difficulties and experiencing bullying (as well as engaging in bullying behaviour).

As a consequence, the issues facing young people have been identified as one of the most pressing challenges for the island, specifically as they relate to limited organised activities for young people or recreational provision; drugs and alcohol; social isolation; stigmatisation as 'island kids' when transitioning to mainland schools; high costs associated with participating in mainland sports and recreational activities; and few accommodation options if leaving home (including the absence of crisis accommodation on the island) (Redland City Council 2012, p.77).

The second social group identified as particularly disadvantaged was the growing cohort of island residents with complex or multiple needs, including drug and alcohol dependency, other forms of substance abuse and mental health problems. In its response to the *Draft Community Plan for SMBI 2030* The Department of Communities (DOCS) noted that the islands have proportionately higher levels of social disadvantage than the mainland and that this creates domestic and family violence issues (Redland City Council 2011b Appendix 1, p.4), DOCs also noted that traditionally the islands have received very little direct funding due to the small size of the population and the low capacity of the relevant organisations to service the needs of residents.

3.2   Community perceptions of change

The history of Russell Island suggests that it has always been a place where poor people live, beginning with the farming families and the war veterans followed by what some interviewees described as low-income alternative lifestylers wanting to retreat or 'hide' from mainstream society. From the 1970s onwards, however, the island began to attract retirees and other 'seachangers' wanting an island lifestyle, which they could afford by 'downsizing' their homes on the mainland and living mortgage-free. In the view of most research participants, this has created two dominant groups on the islands—the retirees and the 'welfare class', with the implicit suggestion that 'welfare' referred to those on unemployment allowances rather than aged pensions. The presence of other groups is also discernible, including a group of 'yachties' who use the island as a holiday home and the professional or middle class families who

commute to the mainland each day for school and work, but the retirees and the unemployed are recognised as the largest cohorts.

For the retirees, Russell Island is not a place of disadvantage and the objective indicators that denote it as such are viewed as inadequately recording the income and wealth of self-funded retirees who are neither working nor old enough to secure an aged pension. Nevertheless, they often engage with ideas of disadvantage in two ways. First, as members of local community groups they acknowledge that identifying the island as a place of disadvantage can be beneficial when applying for government grants that are allocated on the basis of need. As one resident pointed out, 'if we all say it's wonderful and we don't need any help, we won't get any help for anything'.

Second, they are acutely aware of the presence of others on the island who may be understood as being disadvantaged. This was articulated predominantly through narratives of the Russell Island community undergoing change as new groups move in who are 'unwilling to work' and who bring to the island a set of anti-social behaviours that have not previously been seen. These concerns were aired in the most public way in 2012 when Australian actress Val Layman, now resident of Macleay Island, publicly renounced the unemployed cohort of the SMBI population on the national television show *Today Tonight* claiming the island had become a 'ghetto and home to an army of 'dole bludgers' who don't want work; just a carefree life'. While most island residents disagree with Layman's views and resent the negative publicity she has attracted to the islands, those interviewed for this research nevertheless expressed concern about the arrival of a new 'element' who are highly visible in the public spaces of Russell Island and make it unpleasant for others through their public drunkenness, swearing, loitering and loud arguments. The following two excerpts illustrate these concerns.

> Interviewee: I'd say probably in the last five years it's really starting to change. Ten years ago it was just absolutely heaven.
>
> Interviewer: Tell us what it was like 10 years ago. Who was in the community then? What kind of people lived here?
>
> Interviewee: Well a lot of retirees, a lot of retirees. Once again, a lot of yachties because they're able to leave their boats here or their houses here when they go away on their boats. The sort of place where you share cars; those sorts of things. Everybody has dinner parties. A lot of interaction between people, those sorts of things and that's still going on. But then there's this different element that's come in.
>
> Interviewer: How does that manifest itself? I mean in terms of the island changing. How do you see it? What are the signs of this change?
>
> Interviewee: Well the signs are you go to the shop and there's a lot of people hanging around. Foul mouthed, absolutely terrible personal standards. They abuse people and we've never had that before. You go to the shops here and you can't get away for half an hour because you chat, chat, chat to everybody and it tends to be a lovely, social thing. Now you tend to go up and get out as quick as you can. So that's had a really deleterious effect on our lifestyle (resident).

> There is an element on the island that like to engage in these activities and speeding and dangerous driving, drunk or drug related, which spoil it for

everyone. They're only a minority but they're here, like they're on the mainland. But you can avoid them pretty well on the mainland because there are so many people, they sort of blend in … they'll argue, swear, in front of everyone in the shop—disgraceful. (Resident)

In academic parlance, such accounts are often viewed as part of a 'pathologising discourse' (Hastings 2004) that highlights the *moral* failings of disadvantaged groups—their welfare dependency, low standards, and anti-social behaviour—while overlooking the influence of structural forces that generate disadvantage. Such discourses are often viewed as being based on negative stereotypes that reinforce an ideology of victim blaming in which the poor are seen to be responsible for their own circumstances by virtue of their inferior attitudes and behaviours. In reality, however, the issues are more complex than this. To begin with, while our responsibility as researchers is to critically examine the way language works to demonise particular groups in society, particularly those who are disadvantaged, it is not our task to dismiss the lived experience of others whose sense of place may be diminished by behaviour that they see as threatening or undesirable. Second, it should be noted that residents did not explicitly connect low standards with low-income groups—indeed they were keen to emphasise the difference—although their tendency to view alcohol and drug dependency as an indication of low standards rather than manifestations of acute social and health problems may suggest a lack of awareness of the complexities of contemporary forms of disadvantage:

All right. I may be old-fashioned, but I have standards. That's the word, standards, underlined 500 times. People have got to have standards. It's nothing to do with poverty. Nothing to do with background or anything else. It's the standards which you have yourself … I watch people up and down the road with a can of beer in their hand. I think that's depressing. (Resident)

Because we're not saying because you're lower socio-economic we don't want you here. Definitely we want them here because it's a beautiful place to live, their children can grow up in a good environment. But it's the drugs and the drinking that we want to try and somehow curtail, so that those that insist on doing that will find it uncomfortable and therefore move. (Resident)

Residents also acknowledged that these kinds of problems are not exclusive to Russell Island and can be found in any comparable mainland suburb. But they did feel that they are more *visible* on the island, both because of the absolute increase in the number of low-income households (if not the proportion) and because of the island's isolation and small population. As some pointed out, it is much harder to avoid anti-social strangers on an island than it is in a city suburb.

The effect of this, however, is the emergence of what some described as a more polarised community. In several cases, both residents and external service providers characterised the distinction between island inhabitants in terms of a growing divide between 'the haves and the have nots', observing that there is very little interaction between the two groups; little understanding of the issues faced by those with more complex needs; and a growing anxiety about their presence on the island among those who are more affluent. In a group interview with state government service providers, this divide was summed up as follows:

Interviewee1:   I think the island is just struggling to cope with those two different classes of people, maybe having to live together …

Interviewee 2:   There's a real mix. You sit at that ferry stop and you'll see older couples walking down the street towards the ferry stop and they're clearly not—they've got blinkers on.

Interviewee 3:   They're not making eye contact.

Interviewee 2:   They're not looking side to side, but you'll see what appears to be an unemployed couple with numerous children playing in the park, drinking publicly, drinking alcohol publicly and right at the park on the water there. You can see—you just get this sense that the older folk, the retirees, they don't want to see that. They're not going to do anything about it either … It's a real dichotomy. So you've got the welfare class plus a retiree class and not much in the middle.

These divisions appear to manifest spatially as well, with the more affluent or comfortable residents reported to live mainly in the northern part of the island where most of the commercial centre is or along the coast, and the low-income groups living in the inland area where the roads are unsealed and difficult to access during the rainy season. It was reported that not all properties in this area have sewerage (waste disposal) or running water and it can become heavily infested with mosquitoes at certain times of the year. One service provider, for example, described how most of her work with at-risk families took place 'down the back end where the mosquitoes and the dirt roads are'. Echoing the findings of a 2012 report by consultants Urbis (2012, p.35), it thus appears that fears of 'a growing island underclass … [are becoming] a very real scenario'.

4   LOCATIONAL DISADVANTAGE ON THE ISLAND

> … the historic pattern of development, together with past decisions by government, has left as its legacy a divided community (sometimes hostile to Council and others), an absence of services to provide an adequate health and community safety net for the most vulnerable families, and a backlog of infrastructure provision. (Urbis Pty Ltd 2012, p.5)

Locational disadvantage arises when the characteristics of a particular neighbourhood places its residents at a level of disadvantage. This occurs when the available services, facilities, and opportunities are below standard, distant and/or physically inaccessible, or when certain features of the physical environment impose limitations (through geographic isolation) or risk (e.g. high levels of pollution). In the AHURI typology, Russell Island has been identified as a Type 3 suburb: located on the urban periphery and somewhat disconnected from mainstream housing markets. Given this, one might expect locational disadvantage to be a feature of living there—a conclusion drawn in earlier assessments of the island by the Redland City Council and other external parties (see the above quotation by Urbis 2012).

Locational disadvantage can impact different groups of residents in different ways. Some who have moved to a place by choice and have resources at their disposal may be able to negotiate the limits of where they live, or find they are less important than the benefits it derives, or even not notice them. For others, however, the place disadvantage compounds other forms of disadvantage that they experience, such as being unemployed, having limited mobility through ill health or having low income. In some cases, living in the area may not be a matter of choice, but the only option, often because of housing market factors such as access to affordable accommodation. These issues are addressed in detail below.

4.1   The disadvantages of island living

4.1.1 Transport

Russell Island is accessible only by ferry, despite well-established popular conceptions about the eventuality of a bridge being erected to connect the island to the mainland (see Redland City Council 2011a). However, this myth had now been firmly debunked by the Queensland Government, leaving passenger ferry and vehicular barge the only transport option for mainland access. The passenger ferries run frequently (approximately every half hour) from 4.00am to 11.00pm and the journey takes around 20 minutes. However, the costs are relatively high. A single paper ticket between Redland Bay Marina and Russell Island costs $10.30 for adults and $5.20 concession, making a return trip $20.60 and $10.40 respectively. A GoCard provides a minimum 30 per cent saving and an additional 20 per cent if travellers elect to use the ferry during off-peak times so that a one way concession fare off-peak falls to $2.82. A return trip for a standard car on the barge costs $95 ($114 for non-residents).

Until mid-2013, the Southern Moreton Bay Islands were serviced by Bay Islands Transit—a water taxi service initially set up in 1982. In 2012, however, the Redland City Council negotiated for island transport to be integrated into the wider Brisbane Trans-Link network which would not only enable island residents to access the same travel concessions as other south-east Queenslanders via the GoCard, but would also encourage mainland residents to visit the islands more often. As part of the negotiations, island residents were granted free inter-island transportation. The new arrangement was seen to significantly reduce the cost of ferry services although the charges continue to remain high.

However, the arrangement proved contentious when the council and Public Transport Department agreed that ratepayers would need to pay an $88 annual levy to help subsidise the service. This was met with uproar among some of the Bay Island residents on the basis that they were already paying an excessive rate charge; that it was unfair on the 6000 non-resident ratepayers who would subsidise others' travel but not use the service themselves; and that it was an additional burden on many of the island's elderly residents, especially those who used the ferry service infrequently. In their opinion, the only people to benefit from this new arrangement were 'regular working commuters'. In mid-2013, the council sought to ease residents' concerns by compensating them for the additional cost through a commensurate reduction in their general rates.

Nevertheless, the cost of transport is not the only problem. Commute times can be long as well. Some residents reported early starts of 4.20am just to make it to work on time at 9.00 in the city. Others explained the difficulty for young people to become involved in sporting teams and activities because of the cost of sending them over to the mainland for games and competitions. The local high school also expressed reluctance to provide island children with after school training sessions because it is too difficult for them to get home outside the designated school bus schedule. Facilities where students receive additional learning support are also difficult to access, with the nearest positive learning centre located at Capalaba, some 17 kilometres from the ferry terminal. Young people were also reported as encountering difficulty in transitioning from the local primary school to mainland high schools, partly because of the demands imposed by the commute—a bus to the ferry, then the ferry, and then a second bus to school.

The restrictions of transportation also impinged on the ability of service providers to meet their obligations to the island residents. This was reflected in the following comment from a service provider located on the mainland:

> So I can understand why a lot of services, say that we couldn't service the Islands because we didn't have the funds to do it. Now in looking at budgets and stuff, a service is provided; you will service this area. But I think there's limited research into how much it would actually cost. So of course there's certainly times where we've gone, 'whoa, we're going to have to curb our visits out there or see if we can do phone meetings or what have you.' (State government officer)

Further, in terms of travel around the island, there is no bus service since the island population is not large enough to meet the criteria for a subsidised service (Redland City Council 2011c). The only form of public transport is taxi, forcing residents to rely solely on private transport although special transport assistance for the aged or those with a disability has been provided on the islands since 2011 through a charitable organisation called Special Transport Assistance Redlands (STAR) Community Transport. According to the Redland City Council (2013), the majority of residents on the island (50%) have one car only. Typically, this is reserved for island travel, with residents relying on public transport when they arrive at the mainland because of the prohibitive costs of transporting vehicles on the barge. A further 22 per cent of islanders have access to two vehicles, many of whom leave one permanently near the ferry terminal for mainland travel and pay an annual fee for a long-term allocated parking space. Alternatively, residents living near the ferry rent out parking space on their own properties to island residents. In all cases, though, residents consistently encounter inadequate parking spaces at the mainland ferry terminal.

A further 13.1 per cent of SMBI residents have no access to a motor vehicle which is not only relatively high compared to the broader Redlands region (5.9%) (Redland

City Council 2013), but puts those residents at considerable disadvantage given the absence of other means of transport on the island and the inaccessibility of the southern end from the main services located in the north.

4.1.2 A lack of employment opportunities

The high level of unemployment among those of working age on Russell Island is a combined outcome of the limited employment opportunities that exist on the island and the restrictive costs of accessing mainland employment, particularly if the work is low paid. As consultants GHD (2002, p.40) explain, the lack of local employment is an outcome of economic activity on the island being predominantly 'population serving' in that it exists only to serve the day to day needs of the resident population. These kinds of economic activities include local retail, health and welfare services, local trades and education. In contrast, Russell Island has limited prospects for 'population supporting' activities, such as manufacturing or professional work, which employs more than just a handful of residents and which provides a base for some form of economic development.

4.1.3 Limited community services

Along with limited employment, there are few community services available on the island, with most being provided through outreach programs from mainland agencies. This contrasts Russell Island with other case study sites in this project, such as Logan, Emerton and Auburn, which have been described as being 'over-serviced' by virtue of the high number of health, community and social services available to support local residents, particularly those identified as disadvantage. The Bayside Child and Youth Services provides a child health nurse once a month and a school nurse, while Lifeline offers school-based counselling services to young people on a weekly basis. The Queensland Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services (DOCS) provides statutory child protection services for a few days per fortnight (Redland City Council 2012). The island also has a doctor's surgery, a methadone dispensing clinic and a visiting psychologist once a fortnight, but other agencies such as Bayside Mental Health and Drug Arm offer outreach programs (Redland City Council 2012). However, the island has no emergency housing for domestic violence victims, nor even a means for people to deal with incidents at night if the police are not on site.

Perhaps the most important source of on-island support to residents experiencing disadvantage is the Bay Island Community Service (BICS) which operates as an independent body under Careers Employment Australia and is jointly funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services (formerly FaHCSIA) and the Queensland Department of Communities. Much of BICS work lies in emergency relief, providing food parcels and vouchers as well as amounts of emergency cash for prescriptions, transport to the mainland and small medical bills. While BICS does not help with paying final notice bills, it will advocate on behalf of clients with power companies to facilitate payment plans. It also operates two op shops and oversees Work for the Dole on the island. BICS also provide a number of other community services including offering assistance to different local organisations with activities such as photocopying, public liability insurance, meeting rooms and acquittal of grants. Meeting rooms are also made available for outreach service providers.

Another issue to arise in the provision of essential community services was the difficulty of maintaining confidentiality among a small population, especially when there are limited private spaces to meet. A meeting room at BICS can be designated for visiting professionals, but residents can be easily spotted going in and out of the offices with others knowing, on any designated day, which specific professional is

visiting. It was also reported how outside professionals, particularly in areas such as child safety, would be easily recognisable on the ferry trip across to the island, signifying to other passengers that they were on their way. In one instance, an interviewee recounted how islanders travelling on the same ferry would sometimes ring ahead to warn others of the interviewee's imminent arrival:

> … people know when we're on the boat … and you go—and you can see the boat people talking and people talking—phoning. So you get over the island and everyone's gone. (State government officer)

4.1.4 A lack of services for the elderly

With a higher than average proportion of older residents on the island, there is invariably a need for specialist health and support mechanisms to care for this ageing population. In its 2006 *Strategy for Seniors*, for example, the Redland Shire Council (2006, p.3) noted that between 2006 and 2016, the Bay Islands were expected to increase their older populations over the age of 75 by 128 per cent and that, even then, the islands did not have the requisite infrastructure to support an elderly population:

> Health services are in short supply and residents with serious health needs are forced to access services outside their communities. Living on the Bay Islands poses additional challenges for residents needing constant medical attention. (Redland Shire Council 2006, p.3)

In the absence of such services, the needs of older residents have been recognised as particularly acute because of the difficulty they encounter in accessing off-island services as well as the frequent absence of informal family support networks. Some participants, for example, reported that even family located on the mainland nearby find it difficult to travel to visit elderly residents because of the high cost of the ferry service.

There are a number of agencies that service Russell Island although very few are located on the island itself. Blue Care and Meals on Wheels offer the few services available to older people on the island. Six Blue Care workers provide domestic, hygiene and nursing support to elderly residents while a registered nurse visits weekly. The Blue Care nurses also provide respite care, take people shopping, and provide social support and transitional care to those who have just come out of hospital. One service provider described a growing demand for the Blue Care services such that Blue Care was planning to phase out its assisted daily living service so it could focus more on the nursing side of its work which was becoming more demanding.

One issue that did emerge as a matter of concern for both residents and stakeholders is the absence of a nursing facility on the island. This makes it particularly difficult for couples in situations where one needs nursing care, with the only options at present being for both to leave the island or for one partner to move to a nursing home and the other to commute for visiting purposes. The Redland City Council is acutely aware of the need for more services to support the island's ageing population and, although it acknowledges that a government-supported aged-care facilities on the island is unlikely, it plans to explore the feasibility of an alternative, 'blended', model of aged-care provision in the future.

4.1.5 Limited education options

While Russell Island has a state primary school that accommodates approximately 200 students, it does not have a high school and current population projections suggest this will remain the case (Redland City Council 2012, p.10). Students

attending high school thus commute to the mainland and commonly attend the Victoria Point High School or other secondary colleges in the area. All participants spoke highly of the local primary school, which was recognised has having produced some high calibre students, but they nevertheless identified a number of challenges arising from the limited provision of education on the island.

The first is that the existence of only one school means that students who are expelled or excluded have no alternative local schooling option, but must instead travel to another island or to the mainland. According to one interviewee, students in this situation were actually more likely just to stay at home. Second there were reports of students encountering difficulty in transitioning to a mainland high school, both as a result of the long commute they faced each day, but also because of the stigmatisation they often encountered as island children. According to a summary of funded projects by the Department of Communities (undated), 'the transition process [to high school] is particularly difficult; as many island young people report that they are subject to systematic stereotyping and discrimination'. This was largely based on negative perceptions of the island children but also complaints about their behaviour at the ferry terminal and on the school buses. Participants reported problems of bullying at school, often instigated by island children, and a failure among island children to mix well with others at school. More than one interviewee described how mainlanders refer to the island children as 'island ferals', which the following excerpt illustrates.

> It's the general perception amongst the community that 'I don't want to send my child to Victoria Point State High because the Islanders go there' … the general comments that I've … [heard] in the past has been exactly that: 'I do not want my children to mix with the clientele that are the drug kind of students and the drug dealers of the region from the Islands' … I know the perception of the community was that Cleveland became an elite school when Vicki Point opened … Because they no longer had to take the Bay Island students. (Education/training provider)

4.1.6 A stigmatised identity for the island

Research has consistently shown how areas characterised as disadvantage can also suffer from the imposition of negative stereotypes, which have very real consequences for the people who live there (Hastings 2004; Hastings & Dean 2003; Kearns et al. 2013). Over the decades, Russell Island has been tarnished with such stereotypes, first as a result of the fraudulent land sales of the 1970s and, more recently, through media accounts of the island becoming a 'ghetto' for the unemployed. In 2012, several stories about the island were aired on the television show *Today Tonight*. The first, in April 2012, was part of a general story on 'unemployment havens'—holiday destinations that have become attractive for their low cost housing but which also have few job opportunities and leave many unable to find work. Russell Island was featured in this story which described it as 'the island paradise for the unemployed' where 'cheap rent and a great lifestyle' lure people into 'Australia's greatest unemployment trap'. With a 17 per cent percent unemployment rate at the time, the island was bestowed with the unfortunate name of 'Dole Island'.

This was followed a month later by Val Layman's attack on unemployed islanders as welfare dependent and unwilling to work. Those without work who were interviewed for the story identified the high costs of transportation to the mainland and the lack of on-island employment as principal barriers to finding work. Another spoke about the 'bad name' that had been bestowed upon the island, which made the task of finding work more difficult.

A third story, this time featured on the rival program *A Current Affair* (8 May 2013) claimed to provide a 'more balanced view' of the Dole Island story of Russell Island. The report interviewed a number of local residents who expressed more sympathy towards the unemployed and acknowledged the difficulties in finding work, conceding that it is easy for unemployed people to get stuck on the island because there is no work there and transportation costs to the mainland are too prohibitive. However, residents were also keen to emphasise the presence of a larger group of hardworking 'decent' people on the island who *are* in employment, and they expressed concern about the negative publicity potentially lowering the island's property values and desirability as a place to live. The *Today Tonight* Facebook page featured a number of posts after the show from residents complaining about the way their island had been portrayed:

> How about you do a story on the majority of islanders LIKE ME who commute for work & pay through the nose for the pleasure of living on the islands. Or interview any of the COMMUTERS stepping off the ferry in the pan shots thrown around. What a disgustingly shameful uninformed, non-researched, politically motivated piece of rubbish. Do your research—not that TT cares about facts—& speak to people & residents who know facts instead of spinning propaganda & nonsense. Oh, & thanks for telling all the bogans to come hang out in MY home. Hey on the upside, you've just lowered property & rental value on the islands … Lower rent will be a boon for us COMMUTERS. (8 May 2012, 2.14am)

Residents interviewed for this project also acknowledged that Russell Island has a negative reputation, which is rooted in its history, but has also been reinforced more recently by the media attention it has received. As with other places tarnished with a poor reputation, one participant gave an account of how local people are affected by this when looking for work:

> Some locals have told me that there's a stigma attached as well. They've applied for jobs and put down their addresses as Russell Island and haven't got a look in. Then they use a friend's address at Redland Bay and they've been able to get an interview and get a job. Whether that's an actual stigma of where they live or whether that's just a practical thing, people thinking it's going to take too long to get there or whether it's just a co-incidence with people I was talking to, I don't know. (Resident)

Other residents rejected the images of Russell Island that have been portrayed in the media and place the blame for its negative reputation firmly at the media itself for deliberately manipulating the image of the island:

> They've never come and done a positive story with the islands, it's always the negative on the island. The chap that they had on there [Today Tonight] was a newcomer to the island who was an alcoholic. They picked the people out that—we knew—when you look at the boats—and you could have—a lot of them are well groomed, come along, but they don't pick that, they pick the ones with the tatts and t-shirts and no teeth, so media's got a hell of a lot to do with helping perceive these islands. (Industry/commerce)

In an attempt to finally shrug off the negative image, the Bay Islands Chamber of Commerce submitted an application to the Redland City Council in 2013 calling for the name of Russell Island to be formally changed to its (reportedly) original name Canaipa Island (*Bay Island Breeze* 2013).

4.2 Locational disadvantage: the cost of an island 'lifestyle'

> People choose to live on islands because, well, they want to live on islands. (Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, quoted by the *Courier Mail* as she dismisses calls for a bridge to be erected between Russell Island and the mainland, 8 October 2007)

The lack of services and facilities on Russell Island—and indeed the other SMBI islands—is often attributed to the concept of the 'island lifestyle' which the island is seen to offer. In one sense, this lifestyle is based on a careful balance between the provision of appropriate local infrastructure that meets the community's needs and acknowledgement of the environmentally sensitive setting and unique characteristics of the islands within the Moreton Bay Marine Park. More explicitly, however, the concept of the island lifestyle also operates as a discursive tool to imbue residents with an understanding that their choice to live on an island invariably carries trade-offs in the form of fewer services than one would typically expect to find in other suburban locations. This view has been made explicit in previous assessments of land-use planning on Russell Island which state how 'residents will have made the conscious decision to trade-off immediate access to such facilities and services for an island lifestyle' (GHD 2002, p.10), and:

> … [a]rguably, it is the absence of these higher order economic activities (industry, major tourism entertainment centres etc.) which contributes to the Islands' character and which attracts residents seeking alternative lifestyles. This is a trade-off made with the convenience offered by a suburban lifestyle, and a theme which features strongly in the overall vision for the islands. (2002, p.9)

The GHD report also identifies how this trade-off informs government policy, describing how the Department of Education, in its rejection of a secondary school on the island, sees the islands as 'dispersal of growth at its worse' (GHD 2002, p.57) and 'holds the view that lifestyle choice is not a valid criterion for determining service priority' (2002, p.57).

When asked for their views on the lack of services in return for an 'island lifestyle', a small number of residents considered it inequitable and a poor excuse for neglect although most felt entirely comfortable with it. Not only did they feel that Russell Island has everything they need, but they also agreed it would be unreasonable to expect *any* suburb to have all required services located nearby, never mind an island they had explicitly moved to for its relaxed lifestyle. These—mainly retired and working residents—were quite happy commuting to Redlands or Cleveland for the bulk of their needs. Importantly, they referred to the choice they had made in moving to the island and understood that there is a trade-off, which had been part of the appeal. This was specifically acknowledged in the following exchange with a resident who was asked what she thought about the notion that in moving to the island she had willingly foregone the higher level of services available on the mainland in favour of an 'island lifestyle':

> I would say the original people, and people for many years, are well aware of that. We came here … understanding life would be more difficult. When I first came here, there was a tiny corner store. We had to go off and bring back groceries. You had to do that. It was a long-distance call to Cleveland. But these were all things you knew and accepted because you've come to live in this community. (Resident)

Nevertheless, she and others acknowledged that they would eventually leave the island as they got older when they felt that they could no longer receive the care and support they needed. This was contradicted by a health care provider who, contrary to published reports about the absence of adequate services for elderly people, expressed a belief that the island has everything people need as they aged:

> Interviewer: So from what you're telling us, living on Russell Island as an elderly person doesn't disadvantage you in any ways more than living on the mainland, is that your view?
>
> Interviewee: I don't think so; I don't think so, no. I can only go by my clients that I'm involved with; no I don't think it's a disadvantage at all.

In this sense, retirees did not feel that they were disadvantaged in terms of service provision. Where they did feel disadvantage was with respect to four things. First, the availability and costs of transportation, both to the mainland and around the island. Second, council planning and development laws which made building and development difficult, particularly the council's policy of preventing further development after the 10-year moratorium. Third, the high rates relative to the cost of land and property, with some interviewees expressing the view that too much of their rates were being channelled to mainland residents and not being invested back onto the island. Finally, residents also believed they have been disadvantaged by expectations at various times that they should subsidise their own services, such as through the proposed levy on the ferry services.

In contrast to the retirees or employed residents who said they had made an informed choice about living on an island and what it would mean, the unemployed groups were often viewed as not having fully understood that island living would in fact be more expensive. Recognising that jobs are hard to come by on Russell Island and that there are inadequate services to meet the needs of those with more complex mental health problems, there was a sense that Russell Island is not the place for these people and that moving there merely compounds their disadvantage and leaves them trapped. The role of the low-cost rental housing as a principal factor in enticing people who subsequently run the risk of becoming trapped is explored in the next section.

5 WHAT ATTRACTS PEOPLE ALSO TRAPS THEM: THE HOUSING MARKET AS A DRIVER OF DISADVANTAGE

In seeking to understand the drivers underpinning disadvantage and its spatial patterning across the urban form, it is recognised that the housing market is a key factor in determining choices people make about where they live. For some groups with moderate resources at their disposal, the island provides a rare opportunity for a 'sea change' existence in a place that has so far managed to avoid the trappings of coastal gentrification. For those with more limited resources, on the other hand, residential choices are heavily constrained and places like Russell Island, which are located on the periphery of mainstream city housing markets and still offer lower cost housing, inevitably seem attractive despite the disadvantages derived from their location. As outlined later, however, the risk for these groups is that the limitations imposed by the isolation of the island intersect with existing forms of disadvantaged to the extent that they become stuck in place and unable to leave.

5.1 The housing market on Russell Island

As Table 5 illustrates, the private housing system dominates Russell Island. In 2011, fully-owned homes and homes that were being purchased with a mortgage comprised 58.5 per cent of all occupied dwellings on Russell Island, with private rental making up the bulk of the remainder. Notably, there is no social housing provided on the island, meaning that all low-income households, including those with complex needs, are required to negotiate the private rental housing system.

Table 5: The dynamics of the housing market on Russell Island, 2001–11

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		2011		2001		2011	
% Fully owned	324	54.0%	418	34.1%	210,655	35.0%	214,186	25.9%
% Owned with mortgage [10]	120	18.9%	300	24.5%	174,029	28.9%	295,512	35.7%
% Private rental	120	18.9%	367	30.0%	152,428	25.4%	222,597	26.9%
% Social rental	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	26,043	4.3%	33,360	4.0%
% Other tenure type	26	4.1%	23	1.9%	17,117	2.8%	20,579	2.5%

5.1.1 Owner occupation on Russell Island

Table 5 also indicates that owner occupation is relatively high on Russell Island, particularly in terms of outright home ownership. This is likely to be a reflection of the age profile of the island (i.e. that older residents have had time to pay off their mortgages) although it is notable that outright home ownership has declined significantly in the decade from 2001, from 54 per cent of the population to 34.1 per cent. Conversely, the proportion of households paying off a mortgage has increased over time. The island has a high unoccupied dwelling rate due to its popularity as a place for second homes and holiday accommodation (Redland City Council 2011a).

House and land prices are low on Russell Island, with the median vacant land price reported to be $30 000 and a median housing price of $219 000 as of 2011. The real estate site *Realestate.com.au* presently shows median house prices for Russell Island sitting at $169 000, which signifies a fall in property values since 2011. This compares

to a median house price of $473 000 in Redland Bay and $239 000 in Logan Central. Some houses have reportedly been on the market for as long as three years, leaving residents with three options. Either they remain on the island, despite wanting to leave; or they sell at a loss, or they move out and turn the property into a rental investment.

At various times since development of the island, house and land prices have surged (Urbis Pty Ltd 2012) although such booms have been only temporary and followed by a fall. The impacts of the most recent global financial crisis have been particularly significant for the price of land on the island, with 2011 prices reported to be half the value that they were in 2007 (Urbis Pty Ltd. 2012, p.4). One real estate agent described a mini boom in 2007–08 which lead to a flurry of sales, but current prices have dropped significantly, such that a block of land that had initially been purchased for $80 000 was now likely to be valued at only $35 000.

The island also contains around 7000 vacant blocks owned by absentee landowners, some of whom intend to construct investment properties while others eventually plan to build a home and live there. Yet the imposition of restrictions on development beyond 2014 is reported to have stymied these plans, forcing some landholders to sell before development ceases altogether. In the opinion of one resident, this has created a 'perpetual glut on the market of vacant land' which is driving prices down further. This resident also pointed out an imbalance between the relatively high ratable value of a block of land compared to its low market value:

> Then you pay rates on those blocks of land, which in many people's mind is quite expensive and some of them are. I'll give you an example, I've got a waterfront block of land and it's got a general value of about $110 000 and I pay $3200 a year in rates on that. Whilst that comes down to a normal block of—a cheap block, you might be paying $1000 a year. If you've got a block of land that's worth $15 000 and you're paying $1000/$1200 a year, you're seeing that you're paying a big whack of the value every year in rates. (Resident)

Participants also reported that bank lending policies often discriminated against Russell Island, requiring a 30–40 per cent deposit from those wanting to purchase a house there, which further depressed the market. Others also reported that mortgage insurers would not service the island.

5.1.2 The private rental market

The difficult conditions of the housing market for owner-occupation is partially reflected in those of the private rental market, which has increased as a proportion of occupied dwellings from 18.9 per cent in 2001 to 30 per cent in 2011. While this is comparable to the general proportion of private renting in the greater Brisbane area, it is a significant increase for Russell Island where the stability of home ownership has been a more common state. But the fall in property values for homes on the island may have induced owners to consider renting their homes rather than selling them at a large loss. And with the rental market seemingly buoyant on the island, demand for rental properties appears high, particularly since rents are lower than they are on the mainland. As of December 2013, there were 118 properties registered for rent on realestate.com.au, some as low as $195 per week. A brand new three bedroom home with views of the water on what is colloquially known as 'Millionaire's Row' is available for $295 per week. The median rents on the island for a two or three bedroom home are $200 and $230 per week respectively which compares with $330 and $400 for the Redlands Bay area on the mainland.

Despite this, the likelihood of rental stress amongst low-income households on Russell Island is above average, with around half the island belonging to the two highest quintiles within the Brisbane GMA context, and the other half in the middle quintile. ABS figures suggest that just over a quarter of low-income households experience rental stress through paying more than 30 per cent of their weekly income on rent.

5.2 Residential mobility and entrapment: getting stuck on the island

According to a land planning report by consultants Urbis in 2012, housing affordability is a principal driver of population growth and this will likely remain the case for the foreseeable future (Urbis Pty Ltd. 2012, p.5). Residents and stakeholders interviewed for this project concur with this assessment and there is common agreement that just as cheap land once attracted retirees to move to the island and build a home there, so the low-cost rent is now a strong incentive for lower income groups seeking affordable living options. Those working in the real estate sector described how new residents are moving to Russell Island from all over Australia, as well as from nearby low-income areas such as Logan and regional centres such as Toowoomba and Kingaroy, predominantly because the island is one of the few remaining places where rent is so affordable. One service provider described an informal poll conducted with new clients on why they elected to move the island. He described the response as follows:

> … what I do with any new clients that come and that have been to the island a very short period, the few questions that I ask, and we document, is 'how did you find out about Russell Island'? They say, 'oh cheap rent, we got on the 'net and we found it's cheap rent.' (NGO community worker/service provider)

At the same time, there were reports of low-income people being actively recruited to the island, both by 'unscrupulous' real estate agents trying to boost their income and, more worryingly, by service providers treating the island as what one participant termed a 'dumping ground' for the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups. While there was consensus that many of the island-based real estate agents act responsibly because they will only accept people considered suitable as tenants, there was also a view that estate agents with no personal investment in the place— that is those who are not resident—display little concern for the effects of their actions upon others:

> This always worries me because when it was first done many years ago, I worked in the industry; the development industry. Russell Island was such a joke. The island wasn't the problem; it was the people who were trying to make money out of the island. I feel we've come full circle and we are back at that stage again. People who are coming here as an investment who are changing the face of the island again. People who have no ties. (Resident)

The claim that government and housing service providers deliberately encourage disadvantage groups to move to the island cannot be verified and no specific details were provided during interviews. Nevertheless, several independent stakeholders shared details of rumours they had heard, which generally went as follows:

Interviewee: I have been told that mental health is looking to bring people over here which I have a problem with because there are no services here for them.

Interviewer: You mean deliberately bring them over?

> Interviewee: Deliberately bring them here because of the cheap rental. (Resident)

> … it appears to me that the Federal Government is encouraging people to move to the islands if people are unemployed because of the costs of rent. The rental is cheap … but a lot of people have said to me that some of the agencies who provide the employment services—I won't name them or that they were funded—have encouraged a lot of people to go to the islands. Particularly if they see that they're going to be a difficult fit for employment, if they're going to be hard. They say 'at least you can afford to live here, you're not going to get a job, we haven't got a job for you, go there'. It's only hearsay, but I've had it said to me a number of times. (Community representative)

> But you have people from Centrelink, like on the mainland, want to get rid of some people, 'oh go over to the islands, go over to the islands'. Well we're not just going to get brushed off because you want to get rid of them. (Industry/commerce)

While the low-cost rental housing may be a large inducement for low-income households to move to the island, the corollary is that the disadvantages posed by an island lifestyle—such as the high transportation costs, the lack of available employment and the limited services—actually make life much more difficult, particularly for those who lack the resources to negotiate these challenges. As one local service provider argued, the lack of support for those with mental health problems was so profound that it would be better for them not to come at all:

> Interviewee: There are others with lots of mental issues, drug related and things like that. Not that we're looking after them, but I think as an outsider you can see it. It's very sad. Very, very sad. They shouldn't be here. They should not be here. But they're here because of the cheap rents.

> Interviewer: Why shouldn't they be here?

> Interviewee: Because we don't have the facilities to be able to look after them. (NGO community worker/service provider)

In this sense, the external representations of Russell Island as being a low-cost place to live do not reflect the additional complexities and limitations that come with island living. Many of those interviewed said they were well aware of this, but felt that new arrivals were not. As the following quotation illustrates, the effect is a spiral of unemployment and social exclusion that becomes difficult to escape:

> … we have clients who have moved here from as far away as Tasmania … .Victoria … thanks to some 'clever' real estate agent if you google 'cheapest rent in Australia' Russell Island pops up … but people don't do their homework … to live here you need to be able to run, register and service at least two cars, one for the mainland, one for the island…you need to factor in the exorbitant cost of the ferries … and that's always rising … if you don't have a car there's the cost of the bus … to work on the mainland and live here is actually a very costly and inconvenient exercise … you have to factor in at least another $200 on top of the cheap rent so it works out that it's not actually affordable … then they end up in a spiral … unemployed … social isolation … it's a typical story. (Manager of BICS, cited in Redland City Council 2012, pp.128–29).

'Being trapped' was a common term used to describe this situation which was largely, although not entirely, conceived as a problem for the low-income renters. Whereas

the retirees or employed residents believed they have made an informed choice about living on an island and what it means in terms of more limited access, the unemployed groups were viewed as not having fully understood that island living is in fact more expensive. Further, with rents higher on the mainland, those who decide that Russell Island is not for them are likely to encounter difficulty leaving and thus have little option but to stay:

> The attraction for people moving onto the island is it's an island community, it's lovely, it's back to nature, it's really quite a natural sort of island, it's untouched by anything that's advertisements and high rises and all of that sort of stuff. It's really quite, I was going to say virgin, I don't know that's—but you know, to that sort of exposure. But it's also a trap. What attracts people also traps them. The trap is that they are then, they're attracted to cheap accommodation, land, but they're attracted to that in the initial stages. But then it leads to isolation in other ways, whereby they can't just take their kids to the movies. (NGO community worker/service provider)

> So that sense of being trapped is very true on a day-to-day. You get there, it's cheap, but then everything else—the cost of living—is massive. To get off the island would be expensive to relocate. (State government officer)

A real estate agent talked about the high turnover of rental properties on the island and the frequency with which leases are broken as people simply get up and leave. Few participants had any idea where people might move to when they leave Russell Island although one believed that instead of returning to the mainland, a proportion simply rotated between the islands, particularly to Lamb and Karragarra which have lower rents and fewer services than either Russell Island or Macleay.

Aside from the rental tenants—most of whom were difficult to access for this project—a sense of being trapped was also articulated by some homeowners who had bought properties when prices were high and who were now unable to sell as prices dropped. Additionally, one resident expressed concern that the growing appeal of the island to groups of lower socio-economic status would also impact negatively on the island's already-poor image by cutting property prices further and making it more difficult for anyone to reintegrate into the mainland housing market:

> While we, I think while we all appreciate the fact that we have affordable housing for people who are looking for affordable housing, to turn an island—because we are remote—into a demographic of lower socio-economic, which we really are already—but to push it lower by continually providing that lower price housing, then it's going to make all of us that are living here—and yes we are thinking of ourselves. But it's going to make it harder to sell the houses at a reasonable price. It means we are trapped here. We can never move back to the mainland. (Resident)

6 PRACTICE AND POLICY: INTERVENTIONS TO ADDRESS OR REMEDY DISADVANTAGE

An ephemeral challenge for policymakers and other stakeholders is the question of how to address disadvantage in a way that is best for both the people and the places concerned. Yet one of the motivating factors behind this project has been recognition that Australian urban renewal policy has been guided by rather conventional understandings of disadvantage as concentrated on large public housing estates. In the 1990s, this lead to the implementation of housing renewal initiatives designed to address the range of issues facing estates considered most problematic. While this heralded an approach to addressing disadvantage that recognised its spatial manifestations, the effect has nevertheless been the neglect of other places in the middle and outer suburbs of cities where disadvantage takes more of a cross-tenure form (Pinnegar et al. 2011).

Russell Island is one such place. The island has a small, albeit growing, population which means it lacks critical mass to warrant anything more than the most essential services. It also lacks any social housing and has suffered a certain degree of neglect from the state governments on the argument that the pursuit of an island lifestyle is insufficient for residents to merit any additional support. Yet, over the last decade, disadvantage has become more entrenched on the island and there is growing recognition of the acute needs of some sectors of the population. As a result, there have been various programmes implemented on the island by state, federal and local government, along with organisations from the non-government and community sectors. Compared with other case study sites for the AHURI study, however, the number of such interventions still remains relatively small.

In this section of the report, these interventions are identified and, where possible, their effectiveness briefly analysed from the accounts of the stakeholders involved. The list is by no means exhaustive but what they share in common is that they are all examples of what Randolph (2004) terms 'place-focussed initiatives'. Randolph defines place-focussed initiatives as programs that do not have an explicit locational focus, yet do have impacts on specific places 'due to the fact that much of the activity they fund or support takes places in areas of high disadvantage' (2004, p.65). Drawing on the ideas of Stewart (2001), he also notes that few such initiatives are actually targeted at designated areas, but more frequently at specific groups within the population. In this sense, he argues, they operate more accurately '*in places for people*'—'primarily aimed at the problems facing groups within … [disadvantaged areas], rather than the problems associated with living in these areas *per se*' (Randolph 2004, p.65, emphasis in original). In this report, the place-focussed initiatives implemented on Russell Island take two forms. First, initiatives targeted explicitly at the island as a place of disadvantage and second at designated groups within the population who are deemed to experience particular forms of disadvantage (see Table 6 for a list of these interventions). A third type, which takes the form of housing market policies, appears absent, reflecting once more the tendency for place-focussed housing policies to orient themselves to areas where social housing is present.

6.1 Interventions targeted at disadvantaged places

6.1.1 The Redlands / Southern Moreton Bay Islands Place Project

The Place Project was implemented on Russell Island and the other SMBIs in 2007 and was designed as a collaborative initiative between the Queensland State Government departments of Housing (later the Department of Communities) and

Premier and Cabinet, and the Redland City Council. The aim was to develop an holistic strategy for addressing locational disadvantage in a number of targeted areas through the establishment of positive working partnerships between governments and the local business and community sectors. According to Thompson, Reddell, Woolcock, Muirhead and Jones (2003) in their evaluation of the first round of the Brisbane Place Project, the project was formulated to respond to the need for more spatially sensitive policies (2003, p.8) and to deliver positive community outcomes in response to complex issues such as community capacity building, community safety, employment and education, transport, youth and family needs and population growth.

The first phase (which did not include the SMBIs) commenced in 2000. The explicit aims of the project were identified as follows (Thompson et al. 2003, P.15):

→ Improve coordination in service planning and delivery across government and between the government and non-government sectors.

→ Improve community access to a range of flexible and locally-appropriate services that respond in an holistic manner to often-complex needs.

→ Make more effective and efficient use of existing resources; identify alternative sources of funding and support; and enhance opportunities to increase partnerships between business, community and government stakeholders.

→ Improve the capacity of communities to positively manage the challenges they face; and provide better integrated cross-sector strategies to respond to individuals, families and communities suffering social and economic disadvantage.

In the first round, three areas were selected for the project on the basis that multiple forms of disadvantage were present. These were Stafford/Zillmere; the inner city suburbs; and the south-west corridor of Inala, Darra and Carole Park. In May 2007, the SMBIs and Southern Redland Bay area was formally included in the Greater Brisbane Place Project, prompting the Redland City Council to incorporate a place-based approach into its own community development activities and grant schemes. Funding and staff resources were allocated to the project in the council's 2008–09 budget to work with local community organisations on priority projects. A Place Manager was also appointed within the Department of Housing to oversee the project although interviewees reported that the coordinator position did not last the duration of the project.

Under the auspices of the Place Project, a number of one-off local government, community and non-government initiatives were funded to the value of between $3000 and $40 000. These were either designed to address the issues facing the island as a whole, such as limited transportation or the need for a stronger sense of community, or were targeted at individual groups seen as particularly vulnerable. The following projects were included (Queensland Department of Communities undated):

→ The Bay Islands Digital Arts Project, designed to build connections between the disparate social groups on the island though the compilation of short stories documenting island life and history.

→ The Lifeline Family Support Initiative: a collaborative project between Lifeline and the Russell and Macleay Island primary schools for early intervention into at-risk families where children are not participating effectively in the education system.

→ The Bay Islands Welcome: Information Kit, designed to provide new arrivals with a more coordinated and formal sense of the essential services that are available to individuals and families in need. The islands reportedly have a tendency to operate on an 'unreliable' and informal word of mouth basis and this was thought to exacerbate problems.

→ The youth High School Transition Program developed by Bayside Adolescent Boarding Inc. (BABI) in conjunction with the local SMBI primary schools, the Department of Education, Victoria Point High School, Boystown and the Redland City Council. The aim of the program has been to ease the difficulties of young people from the islands in transitioning to mainland-based high schools in order to reduce the risk of early school leaving. It has also sought to address the negative perceptions held by young people on the mainland towards island youth and to 'enhance the relationships between these sometimes very antagonistic groups' (Department of Communities undated). At the time of interviews for this AHURI project, however, education providers had learnt of a change in priority for Education Queensland away from the transitions experienced by children in Years 7 and 8 as they progress to high school and towards those experienced by Year 10 students. What this means for ongoing funding for the Transitions Program was unclear at the time although several stakeholders expressed disappointment and concern at the news.

→ The Sustaining Local Action and Stakeholder Engagement project designed to enhance the capacity of the local community to contribute effectively to service delivery on the islands.

The Place Project was described in the Redland City Council's 2009 *Social Infrastructure Strategy* (2009) as a good practice example of multi-level collaborations between the Queensland Government and the Redland City Council. During interviews, one service provider observed that the project 'actually got a fair bit of traction' for a while but the lack of a coordinator caused activities to dry up. Few participants interviewed had any clear recollection of the project, with many arriving after it was completed. One explained that the project had been in operation five or six years ago which, in relative terms for government programs, was considered a 'lifetime ago'.

One outcome of the project that has sustained longevity was the establishment of a network of island associations through the SMBI Forum which aims to increase community involvement and to empower residents to act on their own behalf. It also seeks to foster the exchange of information and ideas, promote the well-being of island people and action priorities. The project also acted as a catalyst for the SMBI Sport and Recreation Strategy (Redland City Council 2008).

Thompson et al.'s review of the first stage of the Place Project identifies three features as being particularly innovative (p.11). These are:

→ Building relationships across diverse sectors through the project. A significant benefit of the project, as understood by stakeholders, is that it allowed for the development of new, or the strengthening of existing, relationships across and between all sectors of state and local government and the community (2003, p.89).

→ Enhancing the participation and representation of stakeholders and the ability of the local community to be involved in issues affecting them. However, Thompson et al. (2003, p.106) also report that community involvement was stymied by low levels of community interest and capacity to participate.

→ Promoting a more integrated approach to service planning and delivery.

Nevertheless, they also suggested two areas that needed further development: first, developing a clearer understanding of the goals, approach and implementation strategies of the Place Project; and second addressing the level and targeting of human and financial resources across the project. In its 2007 overview of the project's progress, the Department of Communities also observed that local government

support was crucial for ensuring the program's implementation and sustainability and that, while community involvement was also imperative, there was a tendency among the community to focus on 'narrow service delivery needs, not on a more strategic approach to the identification of needs and opportunities' (Department of Communities 2007).

6.1.2 Redland City Council Interventions and Planning Strategies

The relationship between the Redland City Council and the SMBI islands has previously been described as 'hostile' (Urbis Pty Ltd. 2012, p.5) while even the council itself acknowledges that there is 'a sense among islanders that they have been 'neglected' (Redland City Council 2011c, p.5). Nevertheless, local government policy and planning has been at the heart of most attempts to address the challenges faced by the islands, as evidenced by the considerable number of reports, analyses and planning documents that have been specifically prepared on them. While many form part of the standard legislative tools of local government, such as land use, infrastructure and community planning strategies, at the heart of all of them lie recognition of both the unique challenges of the islands and the disadvantages that residents face, and of the distinct vulnerabilities facing certain groups on the island such as young people. Examples of these strategies include the following:

→ *Ageing Well in the Redlands: A Ten Year Strategy for Seniors.*

→ *Southern Moreton Bay Islands Sport and Recreation Strategy.*

→ *SMBI 2030: A Community Plan to Guide Future Planning by the Redland City Council for the Southern Moreton Bay Islands.*

→ *The SMBI Social Infrastructure Plan.*

→ *SMBI Integrated Local Transport Review.*

→ *Opportunity Analysis for the Southern Moreton Bay Islands.*

For the council, one pathway towards addressing disadvantage on the island is through economic development, albeit in ways that are sympathetic to the ecological significance of the region. In June 2013 the council hosted an economic development forum for the island to identify prospective new industries that would be in keeping with the island lifestyle, but which would also bring much-needed jobs to local people. These mainly relate to tourism such as canoeing, nature trails and day trips, but also arts and crafts, and residential development. At the same time, the council also works with other service providers to meet the social and community needs of the islanders through local projects such as parenting classes, employment training, the provision of a 'hut' for young people, and mobile play groups for children.

Strengthening what is often seen as a divided island community, building local pride, and empowering island-based groups to undertake their own community infrastructure projects has also been a key goal of the council through its Our Stories initiative. Our Stories recounts local efforts by businesses, individuals and community organisations to provide services and support to the people across the SMBIs. These include the stories of BICS, the Blue Care Nurse and the first police officer on the island and together 'paint a picture of how the locally developed social infrastructure (networks, services and facilities) on the islands has supported and benefited individuals, families, and the community' (Redland City Council 2012, p.16).

6.2 Interventions targeted at disadvantaged people: youth programs

6.2.1 The School Communities National Partnership Scheme

With young people identified as one of the most disadvantaged groups on Russell Island, and with some stakeholders asserting that the island is by no means child friendly, a number of initiatives have been set up to ease the challenges facing this group. In addition to the Youth Transition Program discussed above, two more have been identified. The first is the Federal Government's Low Socio-Economic Status Communities Smarter School National Partnerships Program (otherwise known as the Partnerships Program): a funding program provided exclusively to schools designated as being of low-socio-economic status. The Russell Island State Primary School has been identified as eligible for this additional funding, which is aimed at improving the wellbeing and learning outcomes of students from disadvantaged backgrounds This includes strategies to attract, develop and support highly qualified principals and teachers to schools in low socio-economic areas and to help lift student engagement, attendance and attainment.

As part of the scheme, the school receives an extra $200 per child per semester, which gives the school an additional $76 000 per semester. This funding is being used to provide a Lifeline counsellor for one day per week. It also helps subsidise essential school equipment that parents are unable to afford, such as school books, excursions and uniforms, as well as breakfast each morning (in conjunction with local charities). The scheme runs for a four year period and is due to cease in 2014, which is causing concern about how these initiatives will remain funded.

In an attempt to address the poor behaviour exhibited by some students, the school has also implemented two new programs: the Values Program and the Responsible Behaviour Plan which are reported to have made significant improvements in student behaviour and focussed learning time (Russell Island State School 2010, p.1).

6.2.2 NAPCAN's Play a Part program

The need to create a more child-friendly environment on Russell Island was also recognised by NAPCAN (the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect), which implemented its Play a Part program on the island: a local community engagement strategy that aims to prevent child abuse and neglect through the creation of child friendly communities. The program is explicitly designed to work collaboratively with local organisations and residents as a way of encouraging a whole-of-community approach to the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Initially wanting to replicate the success of its Child Friendly Community Consortium established in Logan, but finding insufficient traction on the SMBI islands, NAPCAN took a more grassroots approach to working with the island community and local organisations, beginning with a stall at Youth Week celebrations in 2010 and a blue light disco. These were followed with the establishment of Junior Advisory Group and the compilation of a *Speak Out* report which documented the specific needs of young people on the island and subsequently led to the development of a photo voice project where disengaged young people could share their story of what it is like to live on the islands. Those interviewed described the NAPCAN projects as a considerable success, precisely because of the grassroots approach to community engagement that NAPCAN adopted. The work on the islands ceased, however, once funding was withdrawn.

Table 6: Identified place-focussed initiatives recently implemented on Russell Island

Intervention	Objective(s)	Funding body/partners	Scale/location	Current or past	For people	For place	Housing
The Place Project	Addressing locational disadvantage in targeted areas through the creation of partnerships between government, community and the nonprofit sector	Queensland Department of Communities; Department of Premier and Cabinet; Redland City Council	Redlands / Southern Moreton Bay Islands	Past	x	x	
Place Project: The Bay Islands Digital Arts Project	Building a stronger sense of community on the islands and connecting different generations and disparate community networks.	Redland City Council in partnership with local schools, youth forums and the Bayside Community Services (BICS)	SMBIs	Past	x	x	
Place Project: Lifeline Family Support Initiative	Early intervention into at-risk families where children are not participating effectively in the education system	Lifeline Community Care with local schools and the Department of Communities (Child Safety)	Russell and Macleay Islands	Ongoing	x		
Place Project: Bay Islands Welcome: Information Kit	Providing new arrivals with a more coordinated sense of the essential services available on the island to individuals and families in need.	Redland City Council with BICS, the Bayside Community Forum and various businesses and organisations	SMBIs	Ongoing	x	x	
Place Project: Youth High School Transition Program	Smoothing the transition to mainland high schools for island children and addressing the negative perceptions held by those on the mainland of young islanders.	Bayside Adolescent Boarding Inc. with various schools, the Department of Education and Boystown	SMBIs	Past	x	x	

Intervention	Objective(s)	Funding body/partners	Scale/location	Current or past	For people	For place	Housing
Place Project: Sustaining Local Action and Stakeholder Engagement project	Enhancing the capacity of the local community to contribute effectively to service delivery on the islands.	Bay Islands Community Services Inc with Redland City Council and various local groups and stakeholders	SMBIs	Past	x	x	
Our Stories	Building local pride and community capacity to meet local community service delivery needs	Redland City Council	SMBIs	Past	x	x	
School Communities National Partnership Scheme	Improving the wellbeing and learning outcomes of students from disadvantaged backgrounds	Federal department of Education; Education Queensland and the Catholic and independent school sectors	Russell Island	Current	x	x	
Play a Part Program	Preventing child abuse and neglect through the creation of child friendly communities by working collaboratively with individuals, organisations and the wider community	NAPCAN	Russell Island	Past	x	x	

6.3 Factors affecting policy intervention

6.3.1 Perceived lack of cohesion among the islands

Previous reports have noted that despite a strong sense of community and a good number of local associations and groups on each of the four islands, there is little cohesion between these groups, both within and across them. As consultants GHD (2002) put it, there are brief periods when residents will unite over important issues but eventually they lose momentum. The outcome, they suggest, is that 'the island community as a whole is not well-represented, united or empowered to promote community development on the islands' (p.59). In our study, we found little evidence of this, apart from one local interviewee who suggested that inter-island fighting still occurred. More common, however, was a view that every island was different, but that the Southern Moreton Bay Islands Forum played an important role in coordinating island-based issues and activities.

6.3.2 The challenges of outreach

With few local service providers permanently installed on the island, the provision of community and professional services predominantly occurs by means of outreach where community and health professionals visit the island on a weekly or fortnightly basis, or as required. Staff from government and non-government organisations that provide outreach services spoken extensively about the challenges associated with this mode of delivery, including the absence of a suitable body for coordination of their activities at the local level. Partly this appears to derive from different sets of expectations among stakeholders of the role played by the island's only community service organisation—BICS. One the one hand, there is a view that BICS could play a role in coordinating the disparate services provided on the island and to act as a central conduit for outreach agencies that need access to the local community and a physical space to meet with clients. On the other hand, though, there was a view among external stakeholders that the core strength of BICS lays more in emergency relief provision and not in the kinds of community development activities that the island needed, nor in providing a point of connection for external agencies.

External service providers also identified challenges they faced within their own organisations in providing services to the islands, including a reluctance to invest the time and resources to travel across to the island for meetings. In Section 4.1.1, it was argued that transport and budget restrictions reduced the likelihood of external agencies visiting the island for face to face meetings. As the following quotation from a community worker illustrates, face to face encounters become even trickier when more than one agency or organisation is involved because of the difficulty in coordinating visits:

> Interviewee 1: Even though services might be funded to go there, A, they're outreach, B, they only go on certain days and certain hours of the day, C, they might do this but not that, so therefore they can't be involved in the network.
>
> Interviewee 2: Yeah, that's true …
>
> Interviewee 1: So …
>
> Interviewee 2: 'Want to be involved but no, my boss won't let me, it's not in my job description'.

6.3.3 Community cynicism

Extensive community consultation and planning activities that are not seen to result in tangible change are often recognised as creating a state of apathy, cynicism and disillusionment among local communities. Stakeholders reported a similar sense of weariness on Russell Island but also felt it extended more frequently to *any* form of community engagement when it is initiated by outsiders. In the opinion of two external stakeholders, there is a general culture of suspicion towards outsiders on the island and an unwillingness to work with them. Indeed, several participants expressed frustration at the lack of assistance they encountered from local organisations in trying to access the island population. Conversely, local actors described the unwillingness of external providers to properly understand that there was a 'right' way of working on the islands and indicated they had reached a point where support would only be provided to those who were willing to work the 'island way':

> I have different organisations that come to me, and I get emails or phone calls all the time: 'I'm so and so from such a place, I want to do a workshop. Can I do it?' The first thing they learn is that if you haven't got the planning in place, believe you me I'm not going to let you do it if you don't do it properly. So there's been quite a lot of people that I've told to bugger off, because they weren't prepared to do it the right way. If they do it right, I'll give them all the assistance that they want and I'll assist them with it. (NGO community worker/service provider)

Those who *had* encountered success in engaging with the local community confirmed the presence of 'the island way' and attributed their success to the fact they had taken the time to understand the local culture. By way of example, they indicated how they had learnt that the community generally responds better to face to face interactions.

> That's also one of the issues with the island people too. That if people do come over to work on the islands, they're not an islander, they don't understand. Which is really quite tricky, because until somebody or something happens whereby outsiders are embraced because of their individuality or what they can bring to the islands, or offer, then it's going to be a Catch 22, with the island people not wanting to bring or offer what they've got as well … there's certainly been people that have said, you know, 'gosh oh do you work on the islands? Oh I don't know how to get out there. I've just met with barriers all the time.' (NGO community worker/service provider)

In the view of these participants, residents would only ever feel ownership of services if they were locate *on* the islands *for* island communities. Yet with the islands lacking critical mass to support anything other than the most basic of local services, this situation appears unlikely.

7   CONCLUSION

The reason Russell Island was selected as a case study for the AHURI project 'Addressing concentrations of disadvantage' is because of its designated status as a place of disadvantage. With high levels of unemployment, particularly among young people; high levels of housing stress; an above average proportion of households on low income; poor learning outcomes for a significant majority of school children; and a stigmatised identity, its inclusion in this project seems understandable. Yet, in many ways, Russell Island bucks the trend of how disadvantaged places have traditionally been conceived. To begin with, it has a coastal location, offering residents an increasingly rare opportunity for sea change living within an hour's commuting time from the metropolitan centre of Brisbane. Further, it contains no social housing, but features high, albeit declining, levels of home ownership. Third, the population is generally homogenous and of Western background, while pockets of considerable affluence can also be discerned. In this sense, Russell Island may be indicative of a new and emerging form of urban disadvantage—located on the urban periphery, outside of mainstream housing markets and service poor. It is a place characterised by mobility and growth as people arrive, attracted by the cheapest rents, only to find that services are minimal, employment is difficult and travel is expensive.

But for many Russell Island residents, this depiction could not be more inaccurate. For those who choose to retire there or to commute for work while enjoying an island lifestyle, it is an idyllic place. In their experience, the island is rich in social capital and strong in community spirit. There are plenty of clubs and associations to belong to; opportunities for civic engagement; and the inconvenience of travelling to the mainland for commercial, health and social services is actually part of the island's appeal and the reason they moved there in the first place. Despite this, there is a real risk of homes losing value as the property market dips and as supply outstrips demand. There is also the arrival of an unwanted 'element' to contend with which is bringing change to the island and an increase in mental health problems, drug and alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour. Somewhat entertained by this, the commercial media sector has bestowed Russell Island with the status of 'Dole Island', apparently not caring about the impact of such labels on those who live there.

The conclusion to draw from this is that spatial disadvantage is a highly complex issue and that the 'area effects' of places objectively conceived as 'disadvantaged' are differentially experienced. As well as requiring new ways of conceptualising disadvantage that reflect this complexity, it is also important to look beyond the objective indicators and to report on the lived experience of those who call these places home. On Russell Island, these experiences are quite diverse and the trajectory seems to be one of increasing polarisation as the community divides into those with resources and opportunities and those with none. The challenge for policymakers is to find ways of addressing the multiple forms of disadvantage and inequality that exist on places like Russell Island in a way that does not deepen these divisions.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Case study area profile—Russell Island

This document has been prepared as part of a multi-year research project being undertaken by researchers at the University of New South Wales, the University of Queensland and Swinburne University, funded by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute entitled '*Addressing Concentrations of Disadvantage*'.

Document prepared by City Futures Research Centre, University of NSW.

May 2013.

Russell Island

This series of documents presents a demographic and socio-economic profile of the case study suburbs selected for further qualitative fieldwork to take place. Each document comprises five sections:

1. The disadvantaged typology as identified through an earlier analysis.

2. 2011 Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas, Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage.

3. A 2011 community profile, which includes main demographic and socio-economic statistics of the target suburb.

4. A time-series analysis of changes to main demographic and socio-economic statistics between 2001 and 2011.

5. Thematic maps highlighting transport connectivity, tenure profile, unemployment rate, low-income households and early school leavers of the target suburb using 2011 Census and other data.

Russell Island is an outer-ring suburb in Brisbane, located within the Local Government Area of Redland, approximately 43 kilometres southeast of the Brisbane CBD. In 2011, it had a population of 2476 residents.

Figure A1: Map of Russell Island suburb
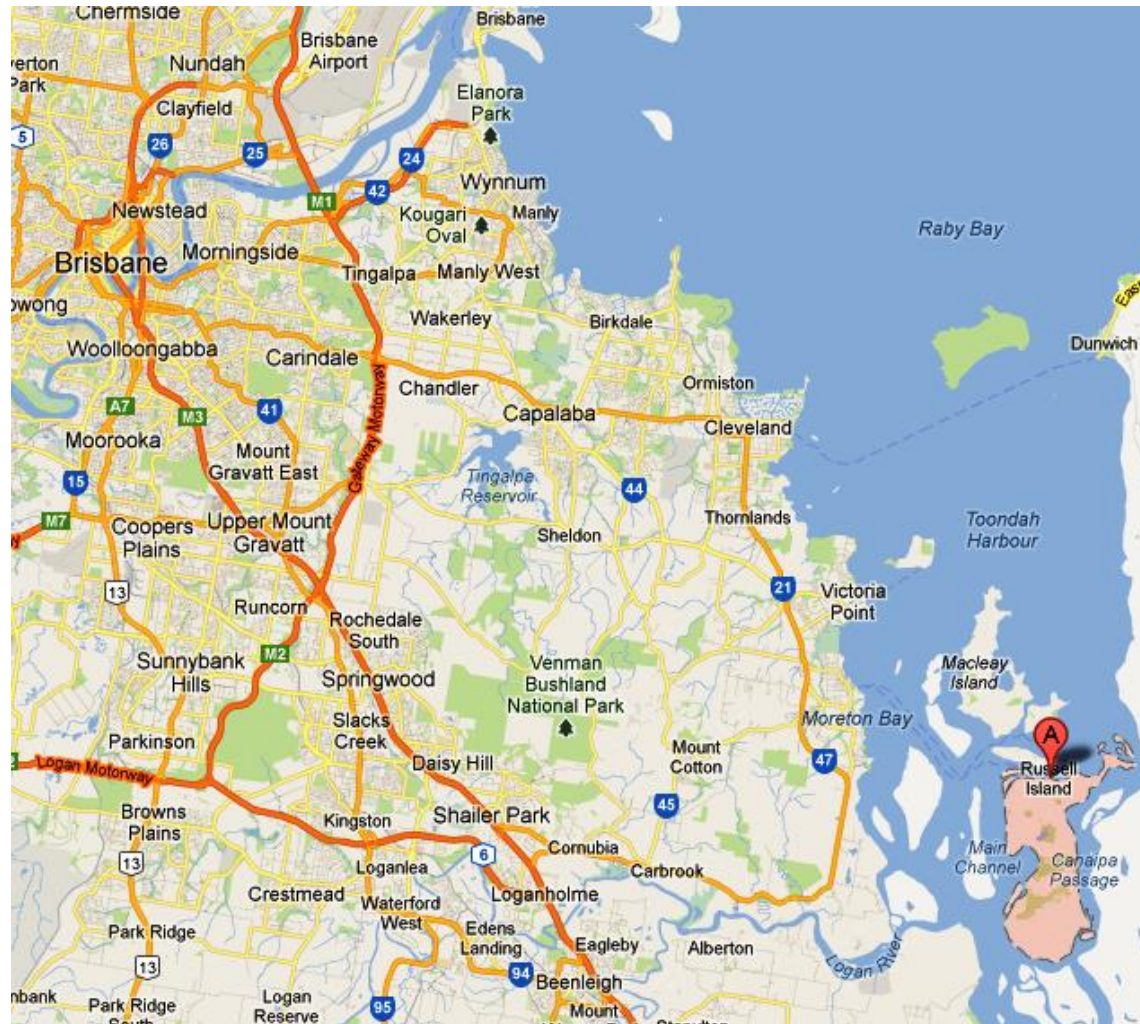
Source: Google Maps

Typology

Type 3: High on residential mobility but low on overseas movers; high on older people; high on private rental; high on outright home ownership.

Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)

Geography	Name	SEIFA IRSD
Statistical Local Area	Redland (C) Bal	856
State Suburb	Russell Island	797.8

In 2011, Russell Island is a socioeconomically disadvantaged suburb, with all of the SA1s in the suburb belonging to the lowest quintile of SEIFA Index of Relative Socioeconomic Disadvantage (IRSD) within Australia.

A low IRSD signifies the prevalence of the following characteristics:

→ low level of income

→ high level of unemployment

→ high proportion of workers in low-skilled occupation

→ low rent

→ overcrowding

→ high proportion of families with children under 15 and jobless parents

→ high proportion of single-parent families

→ high number of carless households

→ high proportion of non-age-related disability

→ poor English proficiency

→ high number of separated/divorced residents

→ high proportion of households with no or dialup internet connection.

Figure A2: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas—Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Source: 2011 SEIFA IRSD

Community profile

The suburb of Russell Island comprises the entire island of Russel Island, east of the Brisbane CBD. In 2011, it had a population of 2475, around 3 per cent of the population of the Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 to which it belongs. It has a relatively old population, with median age at 51 (compared to 35 for Brisbane GMA and 41 for the SA3), and as such has a higher proportion of residents aged 65 or older and lower proportions in the younger age groups. Coinciding with the older population, persons who need core activity assistance is high (almost three times as high as in Brisbane GMA). High proportion of older residents (most likely retired) is also reflected in the low median income Russell Island's residents have compared to the SA3 and Brisbane GMA.

Table A1: Selected demographic characteristics for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
Total population	2,475		76,460		2,065,995	
Males	1,229	49.7%	37,217	48.7%	1,019,556	49.3%
Females	1,245	50.3%	39,243	51.3%	1,046,439	50.7%
ATSI	78	3.2%	1,604	2.1%	41,906	2.0%
Median age	51		41		35	
% aged 0–14 years	393	15.9%	15,183	19.9%	414,501	20.1%
% aged 65 or older	587	23.7%	12,875	16.8%	242,791	11.8%
% aged 0–4 years	144	5.8%	4,518	5.9%	144,169	7.0%
% aged 5–11 years	165	6.7%	7303	9.6%	189,288	9.2%
% aged 12–17 years	172	6.9%	6699	8.8%	164,932	8.0%
% who needed assistance with core activity	296	12.0%	3,870	5.1%	86,454	4.2%
Median weekly individual income	$347		$580		$633	

Russell Island is relatively culturally homogenous, with most of its residents being of Australian and western European backgrounds both in terms of ancestries & birthplaces.

Table A2: Ancestry and countries of birth for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb			**SA3**			**Greater metropolitan area**		
Top 5 ancestries [1]	English	1,063	43.0%	English	33,862	44.3%	English	757,713	36.7%
	Australian	795	32.1%	Australian	27,550	36.0%	Australian	714,082	34.6%
	Irish	308	12.5%	Scottish	8,590	11.2%	Irish	238,602	11.5%
	Scottish	293	11.8%	Irish	8,499	11.1%	Scottish	201,525	9.8%
	German	139	5.6%	German	4,547	5.9%	German	122,719	5.9%
Top 5 countries of birth	Australia	1,701	68.7%	Australia	54,788	71.7%	Australia	1,452,895	70.3%
	New Zealand	150	6.1%	England	6,388	8.4%	New Zealand	99,285	4.8%
	England	141	5.7%	New Zealand	4,085	5.3%	England	90,727	4.4%
	Scotland	25	1.0%	South Africa	1,311	1.7%	India	22,116	1.1%
	Philippines	25	1.0%	Scotland	827	1.1%	China ^	20,975	1.0%

^ Excludes Taiwan and the Special Administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

[1] Based on multiple responses.

The strong presence of Australian/western European background is reflected in the languages spoken Russell Island homes (mostly English). It also has a similar religious profile compared to the SA3 though a larger proportion who have no religious affiliations than different Christian denominations.

Table A3: Language and religious affiliation for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb			SA3			Greater metropolitan area		
Top 5 languages spoken at home	English	2,124	85.7%	English	69,723	91.2%	English	1,695,612	82.1%
	German	12	0.5%	German	368	0.5%	Mandarin	30,867	1.5%
	Hungarian	12	0.5%	Afrikaans	337	0.4%	Vietnamese	19,346	0.9%
	French	11	0.4%	Mandarin	199	0.3%	Cantonese	17,709	0.9%
	Tagalog	10	0.4%	Finnish	188	0.2%	Samoan	11,806	0.6%
Top 5 religious affiliation	No Religion, nfd	570	23.1%	Anglican Church of Australia	17,243	22.6%	Western Catholic	497,896	24.1%
	Anglican Church of Australia	537	21.7%	Western Catholic	17,081	22.3%	No Religion, nfd	461,035	22.3%
	Western Catholic	447	18.1%	No Religion, nfd	15,933	20.8%	Anglican Church of Australia	353,751	17.1%
	Uniting Church	109	4.4%	Uniting Church	5,694	7.4%	Uniting Church	124,676	6.0%
	Presbyterian	107	4.3%	Presbyterian	2,904	3.8%	Presbyterian	65,269	3.2%

Table A4: Employment and occupation characteristics for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
% employed full-time [2]	291	14.0%	22,301	36.4%	654,899	39.7%
% employed part-time	234	11.2%	11,312	18.5%	296,516	18.0%
% employed but away from work [2]	42	2.0%	2,071	3.4%	59,203	3.6%
% unemployed [3]	136	19.3%	2,034	5.4%	62,862	5.9%
Participation rate [2]	703	33.7%	37,718	61.6%	1,073,480	65.0%
% in low-skilled/low status jobs [4]	303	52.8%	11,595	32.5%	323,594	32.0%
% youth (15–24) unemployed [5]	35	89.7%	792	12.2%	25,390	21.3%
Managers [4]	41	7.2%	4,802	13.5%	117,054	11.6%
Professional [4]	78	13.8%	6,009	16.8%	224,568	22.2%
Technicians and Trades Workers [4]	98	17.3%	5,688	15.9%	136,905	13.5%
Community and Personal Service Workers [4]	64	11.3%	3,523	9.9%	97,524	9.6%
Clerical and Administrative Workers [4]	71	12.5%	6,011	16.8%	163,675	16.2%
Sales Workers [4]	66	11.7%	3,713	10.4%	95,326	9.4%
Machinery Operators and Drivers [4]	58	10.2%	2,014	5.6%	64,295	6.4%
Labourers [4]	94	16.6%	3,341	9.4%	92,929	9.2%

[2] % of population aged 15 or older.

[3] Number of unemployed persons as % of the total labour force.

[4] % of employed persons aged 15 or older.

[5] % of youths aged 15–24 years in the labour force.

With a relative old population, labour force participation is low (half the rate compared to the SA3 and Brisbane GMA). The proportion of those employed in low-skilled/low-status jobs is higher, with more employed in sales, as Machinery Operators and Drivers and as Labourers.

With a higher proportion of the population who requires assistance with core activities, the proportion of the Russell Island population that provided unpaid care to persons with a disability is also relatively high. The proportions of residents who performed unpaid domestic work and who volunteered are similar to those in the SA3 and in Brisbane GMA.

Table A5: Unpaid work for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
% who did unpaid domestic work	1,352	54.6%	45,410	59.4%	1,206,145	58.4%
% who provided unpaid child care	426	17.2%	18,241	23.9%	481,257	23.3%
% who provided unpaid care for a person with disability	313	12.6%	6,837	8.9%	169,115	8.2%
% who did voluntary work	337	13.6%	11,536	15.1%	310,337	15.0%

Russell Island is not serviced by heavy rail or bus service and as such very few travelled to work or school by train or bus only (this small number may be the result of randomisation rather than reflecting actual residents who travelled to work or school by these modes only). Car use for travelling to work or school was half as common as in the SA3 and Brisbane GMA. This is partly because a significantly larger proportion of residents worked from home or used multiple modes in getting to work or school with the absence of public transport on the island.

Table A6: Travel to work for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
% who travelled to work by car [6]	206	35.8%	24,823	69.6%	649,143	64.2%
% who travelled to work by train [6]	6	1.0%	662	1.9%	39,744	3.9%
% who travelled to work by bus [6]	6	1.0%	683	1.9%	51,888	5.1%
% who walked to work [6]	19	3.3%	728	2.0%	31,319	3.1%
% who worked from home [6]	49	8.5%	1,896	5.3%	40,791	4.0%
% who travelled to work using multiple modes [6]	171	29.7%	1,598	4.5%	40,825	4.0%

[6] % of persons 15 or older who travelled to work or school.

Residents of Russell Island have relatively low educational attainment levels, with above average proportion of early school leavers and below average proportions of high school completions and vocational and tertiary qualification attainments. This is partly a result of it having an older population, some of whom grew up in a time period where there was a lesser emphasis on educational attainment beyond the secondary level.

Table A7: Educational qualifications for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
% who left school at Year 10 or before [7]	1,020	41.2%	23,823	38.9%	522,068	31.6%
% who left school at Year 12 [7]	595	24.0%	27,716	45.2%	872,764	52.8%
% with vocational qualification [7]	575	23.2%	19,339	31.6%	431,710	26.1%
% with tertiary qualification [7]	165	6.7%	8,293	13.5%	332,608	20.1%

[7] % of persons aged 15 or older.

Russell Island has a slightly more mobile population than the rest of the SA3 and Brisbane GMA. This is partly due to its significant population growth during 2001–11.

Table A8: Residential mobility for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
% who lived at different address one year ago [8]	504	21.6%	12,619	17.5%	355,086	18.5%
% who lived at different address five years ago [8]	1,148	49.2%	33,788	47.0%	861,571	44.8%

[8] % of total population aged five years or older.

There are relatively few occupied private dwellings on Russell Island (just over 1200), which also houses fewer number of residents on average. Housing cost is relatively low on Russell Island, with median mortgage repayment half that of the SA3's and Brisbane GMA's. Median weekly rent is also one-third lower than the SA3 and Brisbane GMA. Despite this, just over one-quarter of low-income households experience rental stress, a higher proportion than in the SA3 and Brisbane GMA.

Table A9: Housing characteristics for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
No. of occupied private dwellings	1,225		30,367		828,197	
Average household size	2.0		2.5		2.5	
Median monthly mortgage repayment	$1,083		$2,100		$1,950	
Median weekly rent	$200		$350		$325	
% household with weekly income less than $600	516	42.1%	5,969	19.7%	135,888	16.4%
% household with weekly income more than $3,000	13	1.1%	3,306	10.9%	95,084	11.5%
% low-income household paying more than 30% in rent [9]	138	26.7%	1,048	17.6%	30,362	22.3%

[9] % of low-income households with weekly household income < $600.

Lone person household is the predominant household type on Russell Island, mostly likely comprised of single (divorced or widowed) older persons. There is a similar proportion of couple only households as compared to the SA3 and Brisbane GMA; many of these couple only households may comprise of empty nesters whose children have left home. As such, there were lower proportions of couple families with children on Russell Island.

Table A10: Household type for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
Couple family household with children	150	12.2%	9,938	32.7%	255,184	30.8%
Couple household without children	345	28.2%	8,725	28.7%	205,031	24.8%
Single-parent family	164	13.4%	3,134	10.3%	94,371	11.4%
Other family household	39	3.2%	1,311	4.3%	43,625	5.3%
Lone person household	387	31.6%	5,699	18.8%	159,971	19.3%
Group household	44	3.6%	680	2.2%	38,367	4.6%

Russell Island is predominantly low-density, with almost all occupied private dwellings being detached houses.

Table A11: Dwelling characteristics for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
% Detached houses [10]	1,212	98.9%	26,363	86.8%	652,976	78.8%
% Semi-detached dwellings [10]	0	0.0%	2,931	9.7%	69,772	8.4%
% Unit/flat/apartment [10]	4	0.3%	851	2.8%	97,520	11.8%
% Other dwelling type [10]	7	0.6%	161	0.5%	6,386	0.8%

[10] % of occupied private dwellings.

Almost 60 per cent of occupied private dwellings on Russell Island is owner-occupied, a slightly lower portion than the rest of the SA3. There is no social housing on Russell Island, and private rental comprises just under one-third of private dwellings on the island.

Table A12: Housing tenure for Russell Island suburb, Cleveland-Stradbroke SA3 and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2011

	Suburb		SA3		Greater metropolitan area	
% Fully owned [10]	418	34.1%	9,695	31.9%	214,186	25.9%
% Owned with mortgage [10]	300	24.5%	11,192	36.9%	295,512	35.7%
% Private rental [10]	367	30.0%	6,510	21.4%	222,597	26.9%
% Social rental [10]	0	0.0%	877	2.9%	33,360	4.0%
% Other tenure type [10]	23	1.9%	819	2.7%	20,579	2.5%

[10] % of occupied private dwellings.

Time-series profile

The 2001 data was aggregated using data downloaded at Collection District (CD) level. Three CDs were aggregated: 3203403, 3203405 and 3203411.

Russell Island experienced a rapid population growth during 2001–11 having almost doubled (though this is mostly due to a small base population in 2001). Increases are noted across all age groups but especially amongst those aged zero to 14 and 65 or older.

Table A13: Selected demographic characteristics for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		**2011**		**2001**		**2011**	
Total population	1,309		2,475		1,627,535		2,065,995	
Median age	*Data not available*		51		*Data not available*		35	
% ATSI	28	2.1%	78	3.2%	26,967	1.7%	41,906	2.0%
% aged 0–14 years	140	10.6%	393	15.9%	337,963	21.0%	414,501	20.1%
% aged 65 or older	265	20.0%	587	23.7%	177,125	11.0%	242,791	11.8%
% aged 0–4 years	64	4.8%	144	5.8%	108,952	6.8%	144,169	7.0%
% aged 5–11 years	96	7.3%	165	6.7%	161,453	10.0%	189,288	9.2%
% aged 12–17 years	72	5.4%	172	6.9%	138,037	8.6%	164,932	8.0%

The Russell Island population has remained relatively white during 2001–11, with Australia and Angle-Celtic birthplaces and languages continuing to dominate. A Filipino population is slowly emerging, those this group comprises a very small number and proportion of residents on Russell Island still.

Table A14: Countries of birth and languages spoken at home for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb						Greater metropolitan area					
	2001			**2011**			**2001**			**2011**		
Top 5 countries of birth *	Australia	889	68.4%	Australia	1,701	68.7%	Australia	1,199,691	74.6%	Australia	1,452,895	70.3%
	The UK	135	10.4%	New Zealand	150	6.1%	The UK	92,643	5.8%	New Zealand	99,285	4.8%
	New Zealand	52	4.0%	England	141	5.7%	New Zealand	65,072	4.0%	England	90,727	4.4%
	Germany	30	2.3%	Scotland	25	1.0%	Viet Nam	10,794	0.7%	India	22,116	1.1%
	Netherlands	15	1.2%	Philippines	25	1.0%	South Africa	8,710	0.5%	China ^	20,975	1.0%
Top 5 languages spoken at home #	English	1,168	89.9%	English	2,124	85.7%	English	1,392,341	86.5%	English	1,695,612	82.1%
	German	21	1.6%	German	12	0.5%	Cantonese	13,829	0.9%	Mandarin	30,867	1.5%
	Netherlandic	6	0.5%	Hungarian	12	0.5%	Vietnamese	13,435	0.8%	Vietnamese	19,346	0.9%
	Croatian	3	0.2%	French	11	0.4%	Mandarin	13,237	0.8%	Cantonese	17,709	0.9%
	French	3	0.2%	Tagalog	10	0.4%	Italian	11,385	0.7%	Samoan	11,806	0.6%

* Note: The number of countries listed in the 2001 Census tables represents the 31 most common birthplaces across Australia only.

^ Note: excludes Taiwan and the Special Administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau.

Note: The number of languages listed in the 2001 Census tables represents the 34 most common languages spoken at home across Australia only.

The employment profile of Russell Island residents aged 15 or older changed little during 2001–11, with around one-third in the workforce. This low participation rate is partly due to the suburb's relatively old population, a reflected in the much higher median age in 2011 than compared to many other suburbs in Brisbane GMA. Youth unemployment has, however, increased, with almost all youths (15–24) in the labour force being unemployed in 2011 (compared to just over half in 2001).

Table A15: Selected employment characteristics for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		2011		2001		2011	
% employed full-time [2]	130	11.8%	291	14.0%	479,918	37.8%	654,899	39.7%
% employed part-time	98	8.9%	234	11.2%	238,815	18.8%	296,516	18.0%
% employed but away from work [2]	Data not available		42	2.0%	Data not available		59,203	3.6%
% unemployed [3]	74	23.1%	136	19.3%	62,271	7.8%	62,862	5.9%
Participation rate [2]	320	29.1%	703	33.7%	802,107	63.1%	1,073,480	65.0%
% in low-skilled/low status jobs [4]	138	65.7%	303	52.8%	444,506	60.1%	323,594	32.0%
% youth (15–24) unemployed [5]	24	53.3%	35	89.7%	24,471	15.1%	25,390	21.3%

[2] % of population aged 15 or older.

[3] number of unemployed persons as % of the total labour force.

[4] % of employed persons aged 15 or older.

[5] % of youths aged 15-24 years in the labour force.

A slightly higher proportion of the population completed high school in 2011 than in 2001. There was also a higher proportion who attained vocational qualifications than in 2001, though there are fewer residents who have tertiary qualifications in 2011 than in 2001.

Table A16: Educational qualifications for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		**2011**		**2001**		**2011**	
% who left school at Year 10 or before [7]	657	59.9%	1,020	41.2%	507,633	39.9%	522,068	31.6%
% who left school at Year 12 [7]	234	21.3%	595	24.0%	549,006	43.2%	872,764	52.8%
% with vocational qualification [7]	52	4.7%	575	23.2%	269,821	47.3%	431,710	26.1%
% with tertiary qualification [7]	258	23.5%	165	6.7%	177,061	31.1%	332,608	20.1%

[7] % of persons aged 15 or older.

Table A17: Housing characteristics for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		**2011**		**2001**		**2011**	
No. of occupied private dwellings	635		1,225		601,146		828,197	
Average household size	2.1		2.0		2.7		2.5	
% at same address 5 years ago [8]	576	44.0%	922	39.6%	720,974	47.5%	950,883	49.5%
% at different address 5 years ago [8]	605	46.2%	1,148	49.2%	723,423	47.6%	861,571	44.8%
% balance [8]	128	9.8%	405	16.4%	74,186	4.9%	253,541	13.2%

[8] % of total population aged five years or older.

The number of occupied private dwellings on Russell Island doubled during 2001–11, a much more rapid rate than in Brisbane GMA (again mostly due to a small base population in 2001). With a higher number of occupied private dwellings, almost half of the 2011 population was living elsewhere five years ago (a slightly higher proportion than in 2001).

Russell Island became less family-oriented in 2011 than in 2001, with a lower portion of couple families with children but also a lower proportion of couple only households. Single-parent families increased significant (4 times as many and twice as high proportionately) while other family households also increased.

Table A18: Household characteristics for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		**2011**		**2001**		**2011**	
Couple family household with children	85	14.5%	150	12.2%	198,984	34.0%	255,184	30.8%
Couple household without children	242	41.2%	345	28.2%	149,450	25.6%	205,031	24.8%
Single-parent family household	42	7.1%	164	13.4%	70,253	12.0%	94,371	11.4%
Other family household	3	0.5%	39	3.2%	9,030	1.5%	43,625	5.3%
Lone person household	189	32.1%	387	31.6%	133,644	22.9%	159,971	19.3%
Group household	26	4.4%	44	3.6%	29,052	5.0%	38,367	4.6%

Most of the new occupied private dwellings on Russell Island are detached dwellings, with other dwelling types continuing to be mostly absent in the suburb.

Table A19: Dwelling characteristics for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		**2011**		**2001**		**2011**	
% Detached houses [10]	622	72.8%	1,212	98.9%	481,333	80.1%	652,976	78.8%
% Semi-detached dwellings [10]	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	39,686	6.6%	69,772	8.4%
% Unit/flat/apartment [10]	0	0.0%	4	0.3%	69,886	11.6%	97,520	11.8%
% Other dwelling type [10]	13	1.5%	7	0.6%	6,542	1.1%	6,386	0.8%

Most of these new occupied private dwellings are occupied by mortgagors or private renters, resulting in a lower proportion of full ownership in 2011 than in 2001.

Table A20: Tenure for Russell Island suburb and Greater Metropolitan Brisbane, 2001 and 2011

	Suburb				Greater metropolitan area			
	2001		2011		2001		2011	
% Fully owned [10]	324	51.0%	418	34.1%	210,655	35.0%	214,186	25.9%
% Owned with mortgage [10]	120	18.9%	300	24.5%	174,029	28.9%	295,512	35.7%
% Private rental [10]	120	18.9%	367	30.0%	152,428	25.4%	222,597	26.9%
% Social rental [10]	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	26,043	4.3%	33,360	4.0%
% Other tenure type [10]	26	4.1%	23	1.9%	17,117	2.8%	20,579	2.5%

[10] % of occupied private dwellings.

Thematic mapping

Figure A3: Russell Island SSC, 2011

Russell Island is a low density island located south-east of the Brisbane CBD. It has parklands located throughout the island, and its main ferry terminal (for ferries to/from Redland Bay) is located at the northern end of the island on High Street. No bridges connect Russell Island to the Australian mainland.

a. Community profile in detail

Figure A4: Population distribution, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Legend

No. of residents in SA1

- > 517
- 431-517
- 359-431
- 285-359
- < 285
- Russell Island
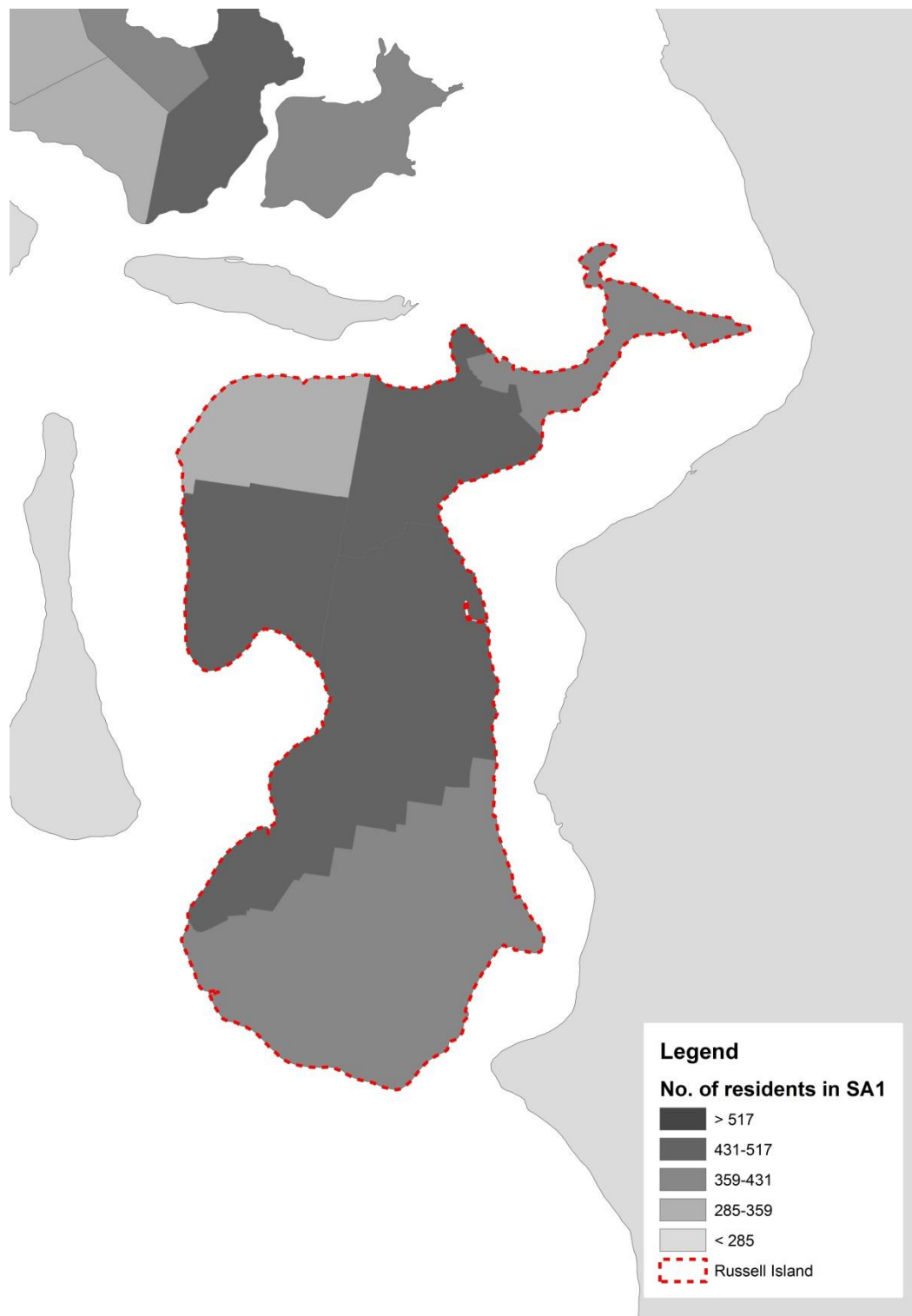
Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

SA1s on Russell Island generally has fewer residents on average than compared to other SA1s within Brisbane GMA.

Figure A5: Proportion of low-income household in in rental stress*, Russell Island SSC, 2011
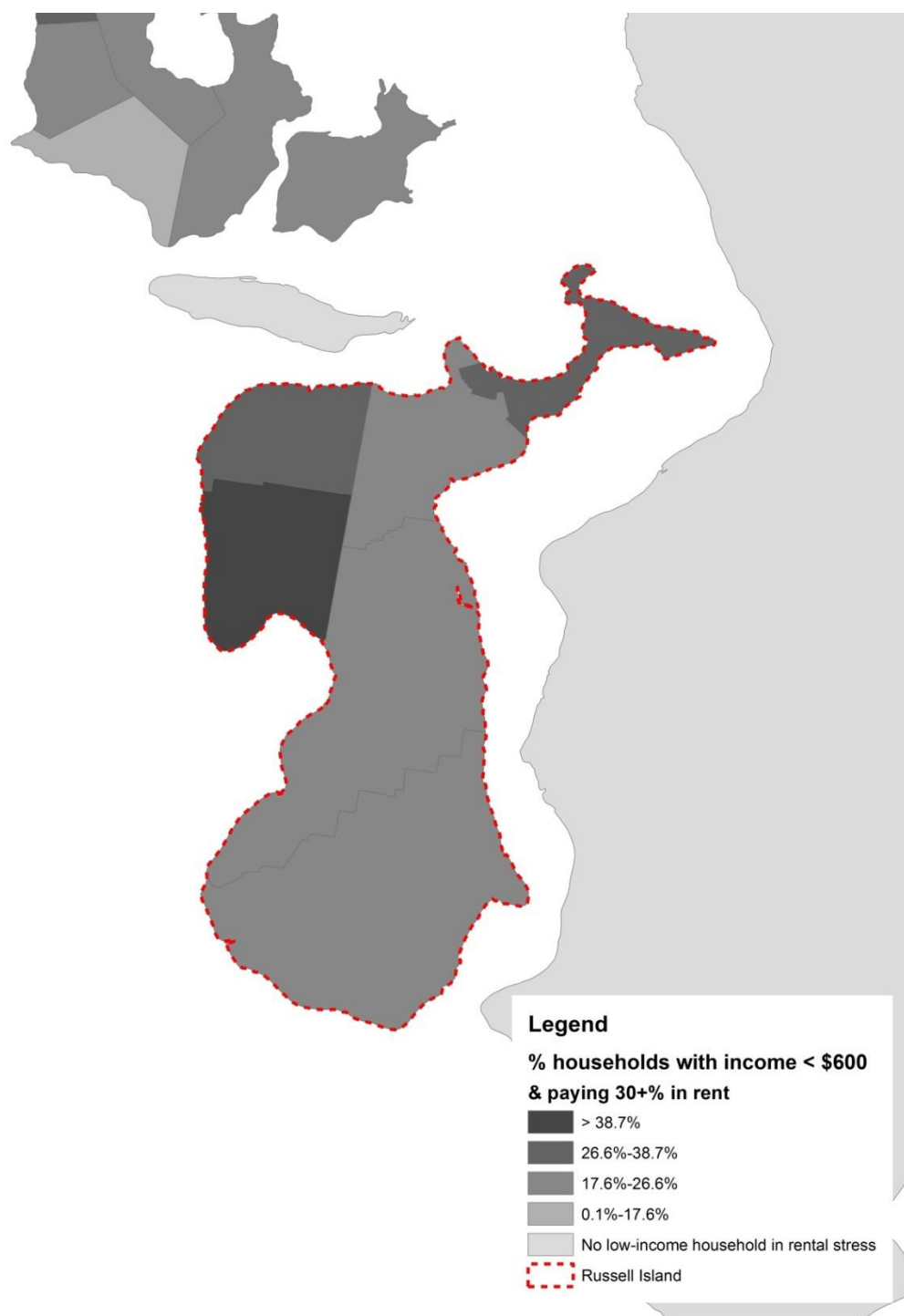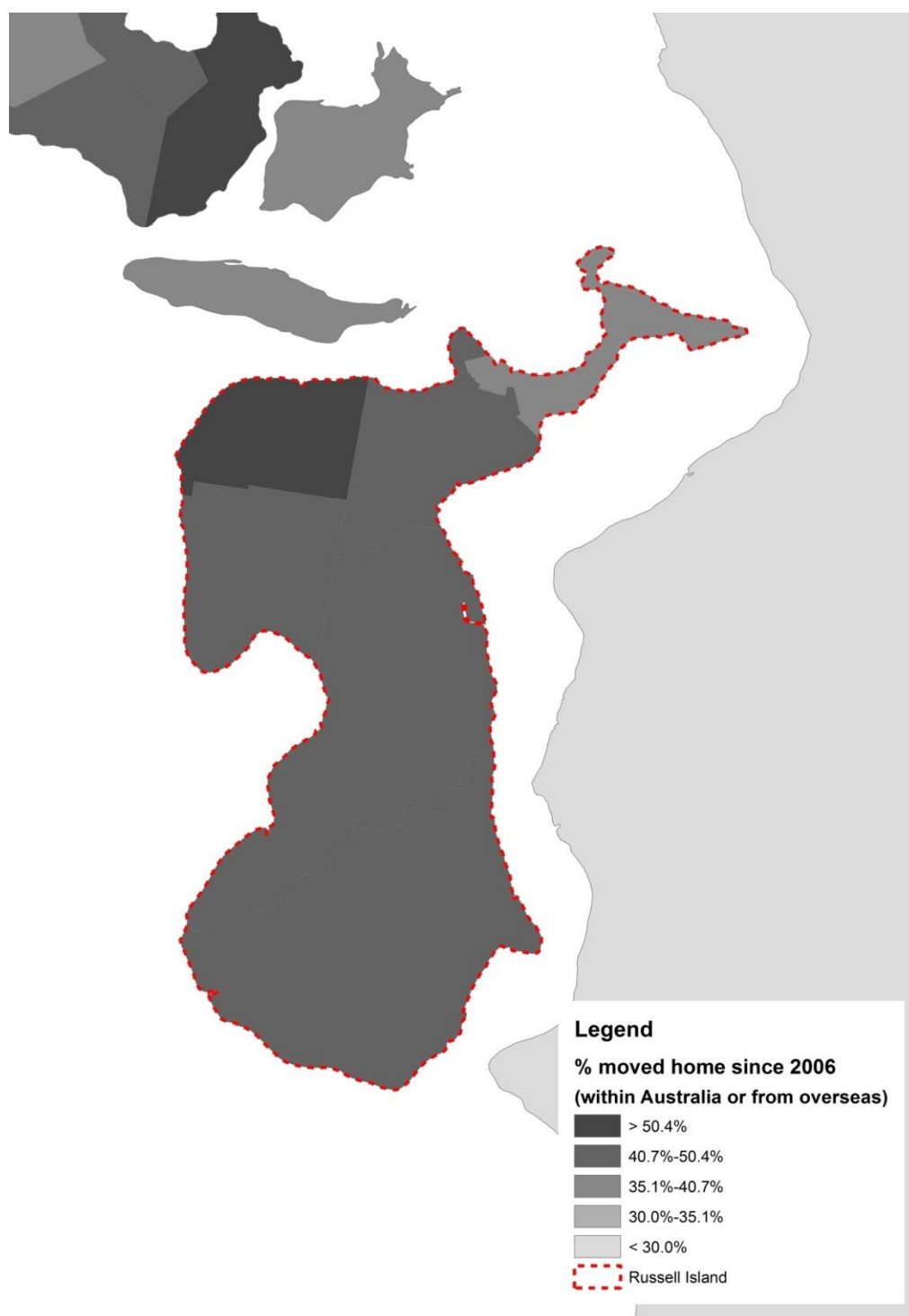

* Number of low-income households with weekly income less than $600 and paying weekly rent of $180 or more, as a percentage of all low-income households

Note: Due to data randomisation, cells with anomalous results were deleted prior to mapping. These SA1s appear blank in the map.

Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

The likelihood of rental stress amongst low-income households on Russell Island is above average, with around half of the island's SA1s belonging to the two highest quintile within the Brisbane GMA context, and the other half in the middle quintile.

Figure A6: Proportion of the population that had a different address five years ago*, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Legend

**% moved home since 2006
(within Australia or from overseas)**

- > 50.4%
- 40.7%-50.4%
- 35.1%-40.7%
- 30.0%-35.1%
- < 30.0%
- Russell Island

* Excludes residents aged zero to four years.
Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

There is relatively high mobility for residents of Russell Island, with all but one SA1s on the island belonging to the two highest quintiles of proportion of residents having moved home since 2006 within Brisbane GMA.

b. Tenure profile

Figure A7: Proportion of households in fully owned homes, Russell Island SSC, 2011
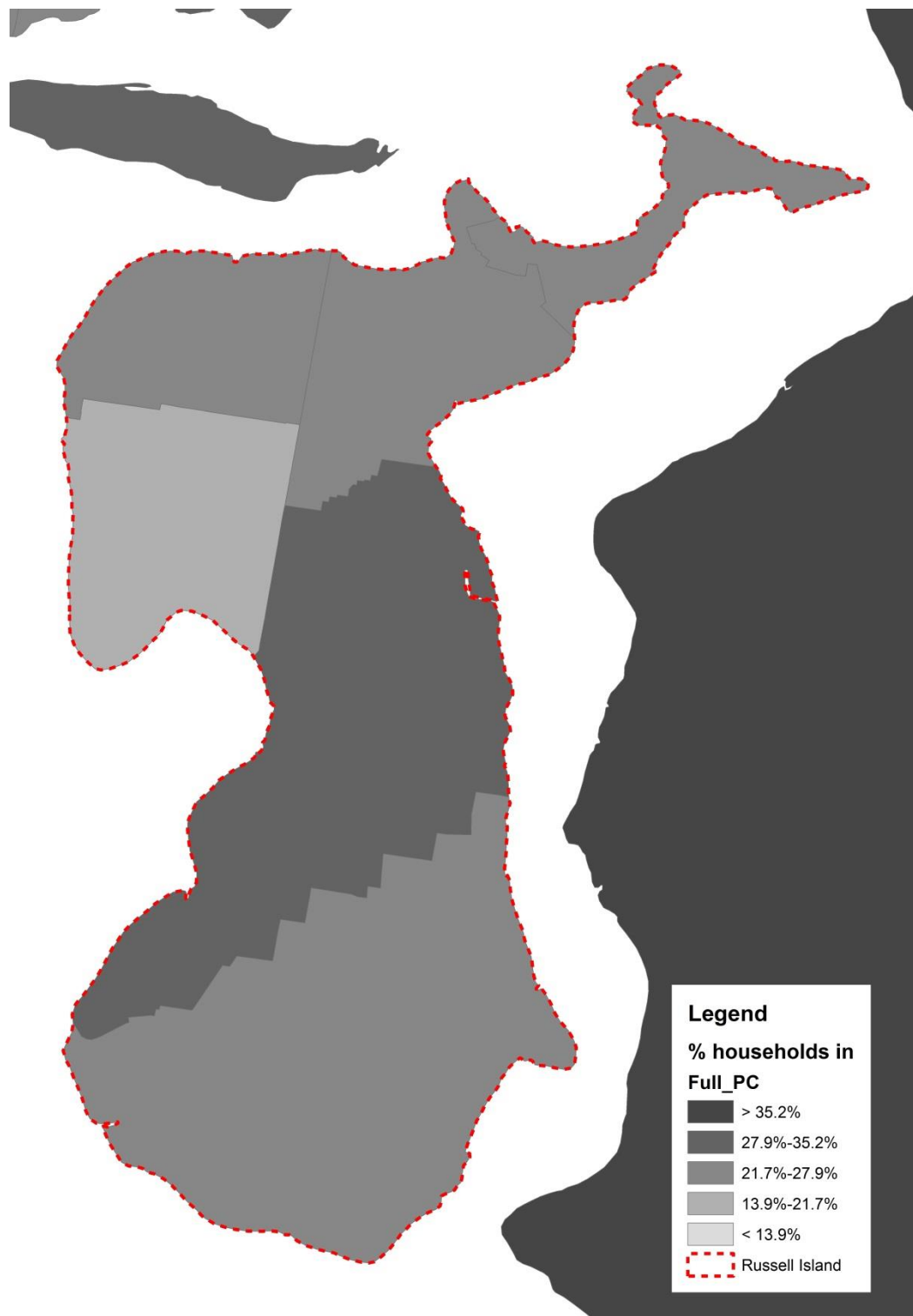
Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

Full home ownership on Russell Island is less common than in Brisbane GMA, with all of the island belonging to the middle quintile or below.

Figure A8: Proportion of households in mortgaged homes, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Legend

**% households in
mortgaged dwellings**

■	> 46.6%
■	38.2%-46.6%
■	30.9%-38.2%
■	21.8%-30.9%
■	< 21.8%
⌐ ┐	Russell Island
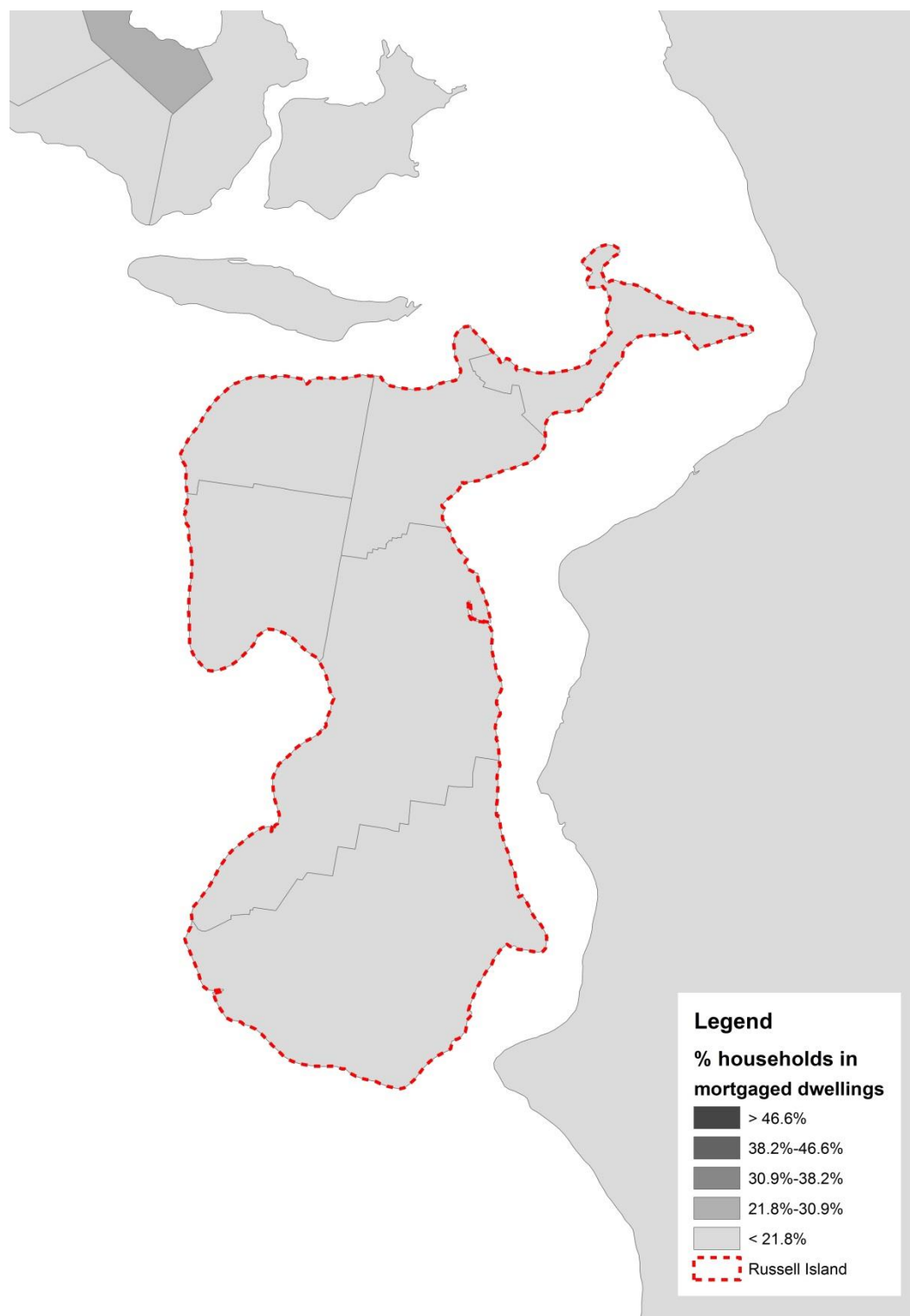
Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

Owner-occupation with mortgage is also not common on Russell Island, with all SA1s on the island belong to the lowest quintile within the Brisbane GMA context.

Figure A9: Proportion of households in private rental, Russell Island SSC, 2011
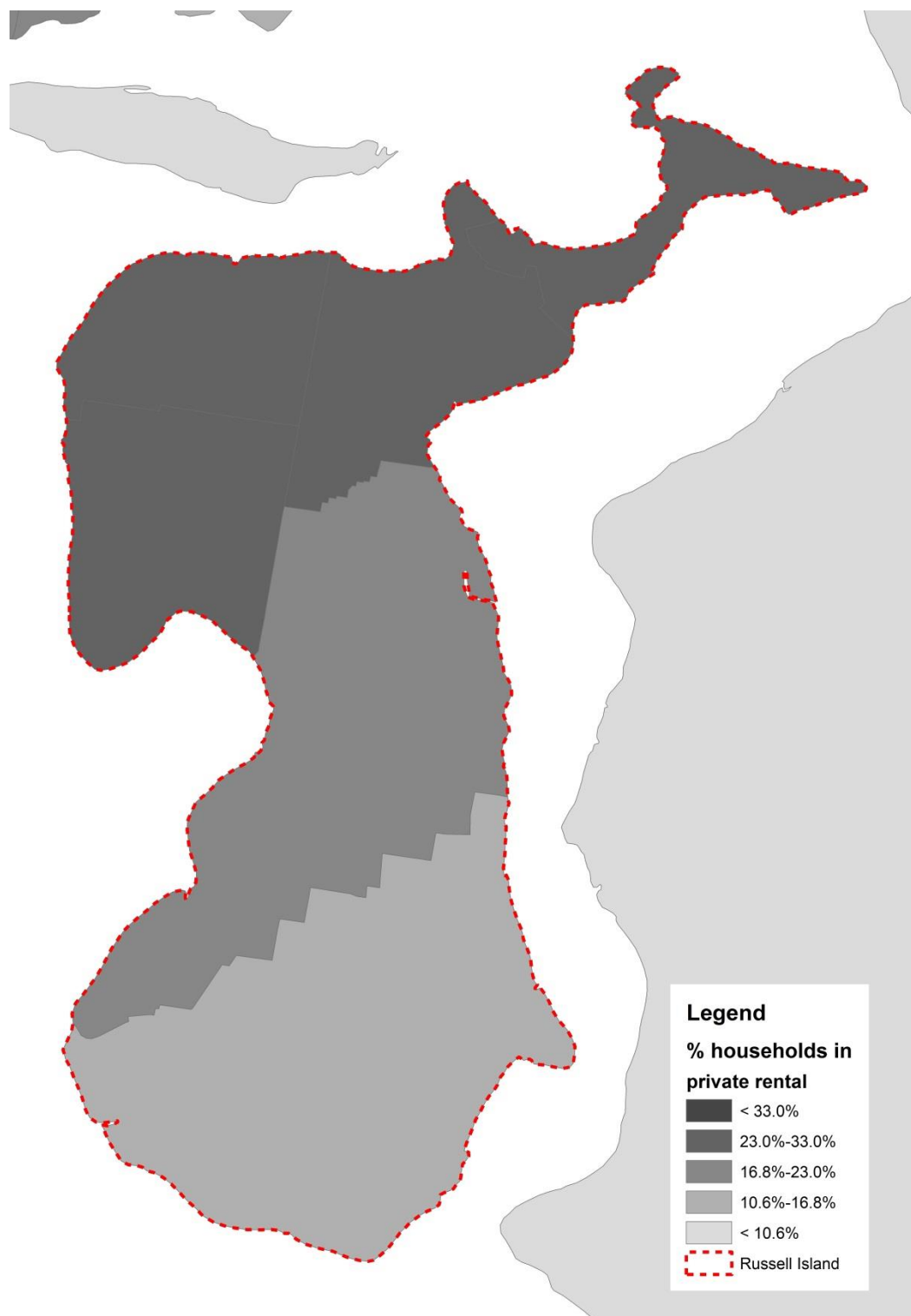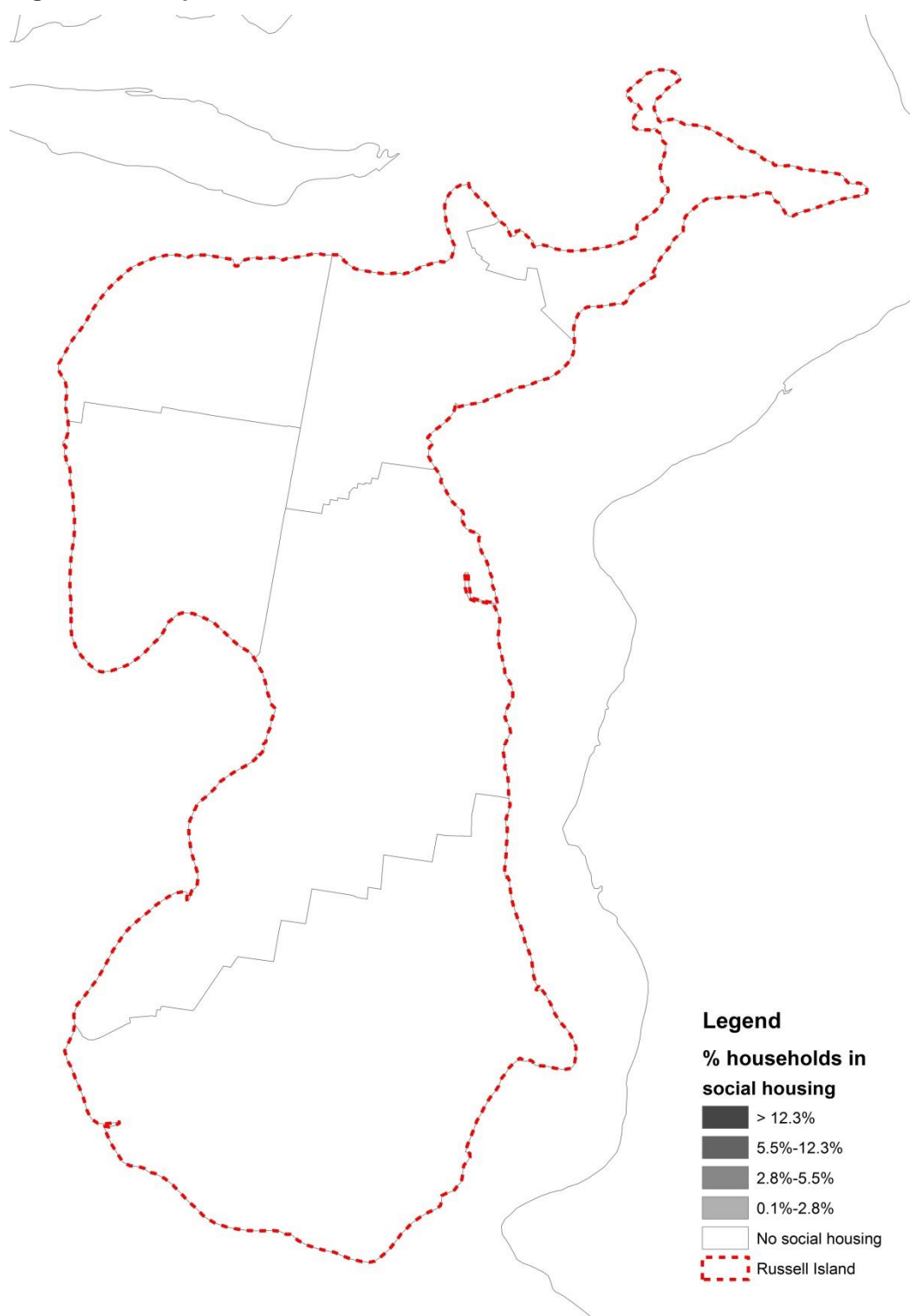

Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

Private rental is high in the northern end of the island, with all SA1s north of the Minjerriba Conservation Area belonging to the second highest quintile within the Brisbane GMA context. This concentration drops the further south (i.e. further away from its only transport connection to the mainland) it gets.

Figure A10: Proportion of households in social rental, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Legend

% households in social housing
- > 12.3%
- 5.5%-12.3%
- 2.8%-5.5%
- 0.1%-2.8%
- No social housing
- Russell Island

Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

There is no social housing on Russell Island.

c. Unemployment rate

Figure A11: Proportion of population (aged 15 or older) who are unemployed, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

Unemployment is relatively high throughout the island, with all SA1s belonging to the highest quintile within the Brisbane GMA.

d. Concentrations of low-income households

Figure A12: Proportion of households with weekly income less than $600, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Legend

% households with
weekly income < $600

> 21.8%

15.5%-21.8%

11.4%-15.5%

7.0%-11.4%

< 7.0%

Russell Island

Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

Russell Island is socioeconomically disadvantaged, with all SA1s on the island belonging to the highest quintile within the Brisbane GMA where concentration of low-income households (less than $600 gross income per week) is considered. This denotes that more than one-fifth of all households in each SA1 earned low income.

e. Early school leavers

Figure A 13: Proportion of population who left school at Year 10 or before, Russell Island SSC, 2011

Source: ABS 2011 Census, TableBuilder Pro

Educational attainment on the island is low, with all SA1s on Russell Island having at least one-third of its population with Year 10 qualification or below. All SA1s on the island also belong to the highest quintile within Brisbane GMA in terms of early school leaving.

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