Urban Decay—when the industry, infrastructure and housing stock become sufficiently run down to result in a loss of amenity and population from an area.
Urban Dynamics in Pyrmont

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Urban Decay—when the industry, infrastructure and housing stock become sufficiently run down to result in a loss of amenity and population from an area.
Maximise the experience

Integrating Urban Dynamics in Pyrmont within a teaching unit will increase the efficacy of the learning experience. Please let our office know whether you’ve decided to use the excursion as an introduction to the topic or as a refresher after completing the unit in class. This will help your Urban Excursions guide pitch the program to the right level.

The background notes and activity sheets in this pack are designed to form the basis of a complete unit of work. Additionally, Urban Excursions is currently developing web based exercises for revision and discussion purposes.
Syllabus links: stage 5

The Urban Dynamics in Pyrmont excursion provides effective links with the NSW Board of Studies Stage 5 geography syllabus.

Specifically addressed are outcomes related to:

**Focus Area 5A2 Changing Australian Communities**

Ways in which communities in Australia are responding to change

**Focus Area 5A3 Issues in Australian Environments**

Ways in which geographical understanding contributes to the sustainable management of issues affecting the Australian environment.

Values and attitudes

Through the study of Geography, students will develop interest in, and informed and responsible attitudes towards, people, cultures, societies and environments, with a commitment to:

- ecological sustainability
- a just society
- intercultural understanding
- informed and active citizenship
- lifelong learning.

**Fieldwork**

Fieldwork enables students to:

- acquire knowledge about environments by observing, mapping, measuring and recording phenomena in the real world in a variety of places, including the school
- explore the geographical processes that form and transform environments
- use different kinds of geographical tools including information and communication technology to assist in the interpretation of, and decision-making about, geographical phenomena
- locate, select, organise and communicate geographical information
- explore different perspectives on geographical issues

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<th>Focus area</th>
<th>Principal focus</th>
<th>Content</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>5A2 Changing Australian</td>
<td>Ways in which communities</td>
<td>Human characteristics that make Australia unique</td>
</tr>
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**Demographic characteristics:**

- age structure / gender / distribution / growth rates / ethnic composition / population size

**Types of communities:**

- types of communities in Australia including indigenous communities differences within and between

**Factors causing change in Australian communities & Factors causing change including an overview of:**

- changing nature and patterns of work / cultural integration / demographic change / globalisation of economic activity / lifestyle expectations / new technologies

**At least ONE Australian community:**

- factors that contribute to the community’s sense of identity / factors causing change in the community / individuals, groups and levels of government involved in the process of change / community responses to change/ purpose, structure and actions of community groups responding to change
Urban Decay—when the industry, infrastructure and housing stock become sufficiently run down to result in a loss of amenity and population from an area.

### Focus area

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5A3 Issues in Australian Environments</td>
<td>Ways in which geographical understanding contributes to the sustainable management of issues affecting the Australian environment</td>
<td>Geographical issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Geographical issues affecting Australian environments including:**

- air quality / spatial inequality / coastal decline / urban growth and management

**At least TWO geographical issues affecting Australian environments, selected from the list above (one study must include fieldwork):**

The geographical processes relevant to the issue / The perceptions of different groups about the issue / Individual, group and government responses to the issue / Decision-making processes involved in the management of the issue / Management of the issue and implications for sustainability, social justice and equity / Investigate a geographical issue through fieldwork by developing and implementing...
**Background information**

The location of the Pyrmont-Ultimo peninsula The Sydney suburbs of Pyrmont and Ultimo are located on a peninsula on the western side of Darling Harbour. In earlier days, the boundary between the two suburbs ran along Union Street. The current boundary lies along Fig Street.

Pyrmont occupies 92 hectares of land. Ultimo is half the size of Pyrmont at 46 hectares. Together the two suburbs are almost as large as the rest of central Sydney.

**Natural history**

The Pyrmont-Ultimo peninsula is a long, thin finger of land protruding into the deep waters of Sydney Harbour. It is bounded by Blackwattle Bay on the western side and Darling Harbour (once known as Cockle Bay) on the eastern side. The bay to the north-west of the peninsula is called Johnston's Bay. Harris Street runs over a central sandstone spine that rises gradually from near the present-day Broadway.

As this spine climbs to the north-west, the landscape becomes more dramatic, dividing into two headlands towards the end of the peninsula.

The eastern headland, now called Pyrmont Point, once afforded spectacular views over Cockle Bay to the developing settlement of Sydney. The western headland, later to be quarried extensively, looked out towards Glebe and Balmain. A permanent spring, later known as Tinkers Well, once ran between the rocky outcrops on this headland towards the present-day Mount Street.

Originally, the shallow Blackwattle and Cockle Bays reached much further south than they do today and supported extensive seagrass meadows. Later they were both dredged to provide deep-water anchorages. Their southern ends were fringed with widespread stands of muddy mangroves extending up the creeks that drained into them.

Blackwattle Creek rose well south of the present-day Parramatta Road. It watered the low-lying ground north of the earlier Parramatta Street before draining into Blackwattle Bay. On the city side of Parramatta Street, many small creeks crisscrossed a small delta before draining into Cockle Bay—the modern Pier and Lackey Streets occupy land which was only uncovered at low tide.
Later, both of these marshy headwater areas were reclaimed and the southern end of Blackwattle Bay became Wentworth Park, while the headwaters of Cockle Bay became the land now occupied by Sydney Entertainment Centre, Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre and Tumbalong Park. Both headlands were fringed with sandy coves and beaches. Between the two headlands the land was lower and marshier. Close to the eastern headland stood a small, hilly island that later became known as Darling Island. It was attached to the peninsula by a tidal mudflat that was only exposed at low tide. Eventually, the hilly body of the island was leveled and the mudflat reclaimed to provide permanent access from the peninsula to the island.

1919 Lithograph by WW Withers for The Sydney Harbour Trust showing industrial growth
**A brief history of Pyrmont**

More than 200 hundred years ago, Pyrmont was an unspoilt peninsula covered in natural bushland and inhabited by native animals such as dingoes. For thousands of years, groups of Indigenous people from the Eora language group visited the peninsula as they followed seasonal gluts of food.

In 1788, the first Europeans created a settlement in Warrane now known as Sydney Cove. As the European population expanded they spread out into nearby bushland areas.

The first Pyrmont land grant was made to a soldier called Thomas Jones in 1795. In 1799, this land was sold to John Macarthur—a member of the NSW Corps—and he built a salt-making works there and a grain-grinding windmill. In 1834 Macarthur died and his land was subdivided and sold off by his son, Edward. The new owners built houses from local sandstone and the first industries such as quarrying, boat building and timber milling began to develop, however, it was the building of the first Pyrmont Bridge in 1858 that really encouraged Pyrmont to boom. The bridge provided easy access between the city and the peninsula, encouraging more businesses and people to move there.

![Pyrmont from City showing first bridge Circa 1890's](image)

**Industry**

The development of Pyrmont and Ultimo was in many ways typical of early nineteenth century industrial suburbs prior to the development of transport networks except they were occurring in the mid to late nineteenth century. The workers had to live in close proximity to their place of work because it was too expensive to travel to work on public transport or too far to walk. Thus we see in Pyrmont and Ultimo the development of residential accommodation and industrial complexes in close proximity to each other in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

One of the earliest industries to establish itself in Pyrmont was there by 1846 when the Hunter River Company (later part of ASN) built a shipyard. John Fyfe and Son opened up a foundry in 1855. This was more than ten years after the Chowne Brothers set up their shipyard. A small group of houses were built along Chowne Street following the establishment of the Chowne Brothers shipyard.
The increasing population required the provision of services. The first post office was opened in 1853 and in 1858 the suburb was linked to the eastern side of Darling Harbour by a bridge. The first street lighting was installed in the early 1860s and a twelve inch water pipe was laid in Harris Street in 1861 although it was not until the mid 1870s that reticulated water was generally available in Pyrmont and Ultimo. Sewerage was still not available in 1875. Some local families such as the Saunders and McCredies did well. Charles Saunders started quarrying on Harris’ land soon after his arrival in the colony in 1853, although in the later 1850s he is listed in Sands Directory as licensee of the Quarryman’s Arms on the corner of John and Mount Streets. The demand for Pyrmont stone meant that he took out a quarrying lease from George Harris in 1860 and started an operation which would stretch round to Johnstons Bay and the family wharf. Saunder’s quarry supplied stone for the construction of the University of Sydney and the GPO amongst many others. The Harris family required their quarrymasters, as a condition of their leases, to use some of the stone to erect new houses, which the family could then rent out. The houses were to be built to certain specifications, which at times even stipulated the number of coats of paint to be applied.

Pyrmont Quarry Sydney - by A Tischbauer C 1880-1895

The McCredies consisted of various brothers who worked mainly as builders. They were involved in the construction of the new Colonial Secretary’s building and the Pitt Street extension of the General Post Office in the 1880s. They had a stone yard in Bowman Street immediately adjacent to the archaeological excavations in Area C. Area C was located on McCredie Street, later Harvey Street. Members of this family had lived in a house in the study area but by 1860 they had moved into Bowman Street around the corner, although a McCredie continued to own the head lease at no. 1 Harvey Street until the twentieth century. In 1867 the City Iron Works, run by the Brown brothers, set up its operation overlooking Elizabeth Bay.
In 1875 the Colonial Sugar Refinery (CSR), their operation in Chippendale no longer viable due to pollution concerns, bought up five acres of Pyrmont, mostly by purchasing a lease from William Chowne.

The new site had a deep-water frontage and the company could have its own wharves. It was built of locally quarried sandstone and cost £200,000. There were few nearby residents to be affected by the various noxious odours emitted by the re-finishing processes.

By 1877 the Australian Tin Smelting Company set up operations at the end of Chowne Street on the western side of the CSR works. New industrial plants were opening throughout Pyrmont.

By the 1880s Robert Saunders operated large quarries in the northern part of the peninsula. He invested heavily in capital equipment such as cranes and steam cutting equipment. The McCredie Brothers were doing well enough to win the £130,000 construction of the Pitt Street extension of the GPO.

The 1880s witnessed the construction of twenty woolstores in Ultimo, the first being the Goldsbrough Mort Woolstore in 1883. It was soon followed by a large grain and produce store. These changes were responses to the development of nearby wharves and a goods rail line through Pyrmont-Ultilmo which were necessary for the booming export primary industries of the 1870s and 1880s.
The deindustrialisation of the eastern side of Darling Harbour was responsible for the establishment of many industries in Ultimo and Pyrmont. Aside from the large industrial complexes the 1880s saw the development of smaller scale industries which serviced the large industries, such as iron foundries. All this development tended to push out any remnant dairies or agricultural practices which were part of the early occupation of Pyrmont and Ultimo, as did the rise of refrigerated dairies. There were two dairies within the CSR site, one of which was excavated though few archaeological remains were found. These two dairies survived into the early twentieth century.

The population of the peninsula peaked in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with a combined resident and itinerant population of approximately 30,000. At this time, thousands of people were employed on the wharves, in wool stores and in the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR). However, as time passed and economic and industrial needs changed, the availability of good quality housing decreased and population numbers began to fall. By 1981 there were only 1,590 people living on the peninsula. Since then, the peninsula has undergone a massive program of urban renewal that continues to the present.
EXCURSION WORKSHEETS

Mapping

With your Urban Excursions guide, map out the route your group will walk during today’s excursion.
Human Geography, consultation and social equity

Why is the fish scaling table located at Pyrmont Point significant?

How has the urban renewal process affected long term residents?

Define mixed user philosophy and how it has been applied in Pyrmont.
Demographics today

Stand quietly to one side of the thoroughfare and record pedestrian traffic in Union Square for around 5 minutes.

Date time of observation: ________________________________
Weather conditions: ________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic</th>
<th>Resident</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Business</th>
<th>Blue collar</th>
<th>Tourist</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Tally</td>
<td></td>
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1. What conclusions can you draw about the people using Union Square?

2. How could you improve the accuracy of this exercise?

3. Who would gather statistics such as these?

4. What other enquiry methods could you use to determine the demographics represented in the area?
Urban processes

Fill in the map below based on your observations at this intersection.

The Terminus Hotel—Excellent example of Urban Decay. Why is it in this condition?

Tick boxes in the table below to indicate which urban processes are observable from this site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Decay</th>
<th>Urban Renewal</th>
<th>Heritage fabric</th>
<th>Transport infrastructure</th>
<th>Urban consolidation</th>
<th>Community facilities</th>
<th>Evidence of social equity</th>
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