

Impact of Shifting Demographics: Implications for Housing Requirements and Public Policy

Gary Garner¹ and Hoon Han²

Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that the demographic shift in the Australian population is characterised by several significant changes including an ageing population, increased life expectancy, lowering mortality, and reduced household population density. This is concurrent with global trends of continuing urbanization and population aging. This paper looks at the impact on housing requirements of such changes – in particular the composition and location of the population, and the structure of households - with a focus on the impact of population density and reduced household sizes.

In more developed countries of the world, extreme conditions such as overcrowding, lack of basic sanitation, garbage accumulation and poor construction, are less apparent. The Australian context challenges the notion that population agglomeration is necessarily undesirable - a significant decrease in population density does not always automatically result in favourable outcomes. In this context, the impact of increased population density may be unexpected .

Over the last century, reduced mortality in Australia has been attributed to improvements in living conditions which incorporates infrastructure changes such as improved water supply and sewerage systems, however continuing reduction in mortality has been associated with improving social conditions and advances in medical technology . This includes increased public access to specialist medical services, a greater awareness of dietary needs and fitness, and changing attitudes to workplace health and safety (e.g. to passive smoking and asbestos). Accessibility of public health services as well as neighbourhood quality are also significant factors.

The deleterious effects of increased population density caused by arrangements such as co-residential living are often based on unsubstantiated or slanted interpretations of the research literature on crowding, sometimes wrongly extrapolated to suggest that increased household density inevitably results in negative consequences. There are clearly significant implications for policymakers.

KEYWORDS: health, housing, property economics, demographics, population density, co-residential

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Garner, Gary O. and Han, Jung Hoon (2007) *Impact of shifting demographics : implications for housing requirements and public policy*. In: 2nd Australasian Housing Researchers' Conference, 20–22 June 2007, The University of Queensland, Brisbane.

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Demographic shifts in the Australian population

- Characterised by several significant changes
 - ageing population
 - increased life expectancy
 - lowering mortality
 - reduced household population density
- Concurrent with global trends of continuing urbanization and population aging
- This paper looks at the impact on housing requirements of such changes – in particular **the composition and location of the “older Australian” (age 65+) population**

The Australian context

continuing trends

- growth in the number of households
- ...but concurrently with a much slower population growth rate.
- As a result, average household size in Australia is projected to decrease significantly over the next decade.
- Resultant changes in household size might suggest that there will be an increasing demand for smaller size dwellings.
- However, in Australia the average size of houses has actually continued to increase, and accordingly population density in individual households is becoming less and less

For older Australians some of these trends may not necessarily hold true.

- The propensity for intra-urban moves is a dynamic feature of the urban landscape for this population group
- a relatively complex set of factors lie behind residential choice.
- “Traditional” features of the post-modern era:
 - significant increases of older people living in South-east Queensland, especially in coastal resort areas (“sea change” events for older Australians);
 - low numbers continue in outer suburban areas.
- New evidence of interesting, new trends: for example, increasing concentrations of older people living in high rise units in city areas, or near city areas including within urban renewal precincts

The impact of housing consumption of older people on housing market fragmentation

- In recent years Australia has undergone significant socio-economic and demographic change, which has had strong geographical repercussions in terms of social polarisation and consequent location advantage and disadvantage in the segments of local housing markets (Baum et al., 2006).
- In particular, the recent property boom (2000-2005) has tended to reinforce the segregation of individual housing and location choices in Australian metropolitan areas
 - some neighbourhoods prosper
 - others stagnate in relative terms.

Housing Market Analysis

- The underlying geography of urban social spaces as a factor for creating house variations across areas, particularly the housing consumption pattern of older people, has yet to be given sufficient attention.
- Many studies of housing careers and location decisions have a tendency to disregard the powerful influence of neighbourhood and geographic reality on housing sub-markets (Galster, 1996).

Patterns of residential mobility in later life

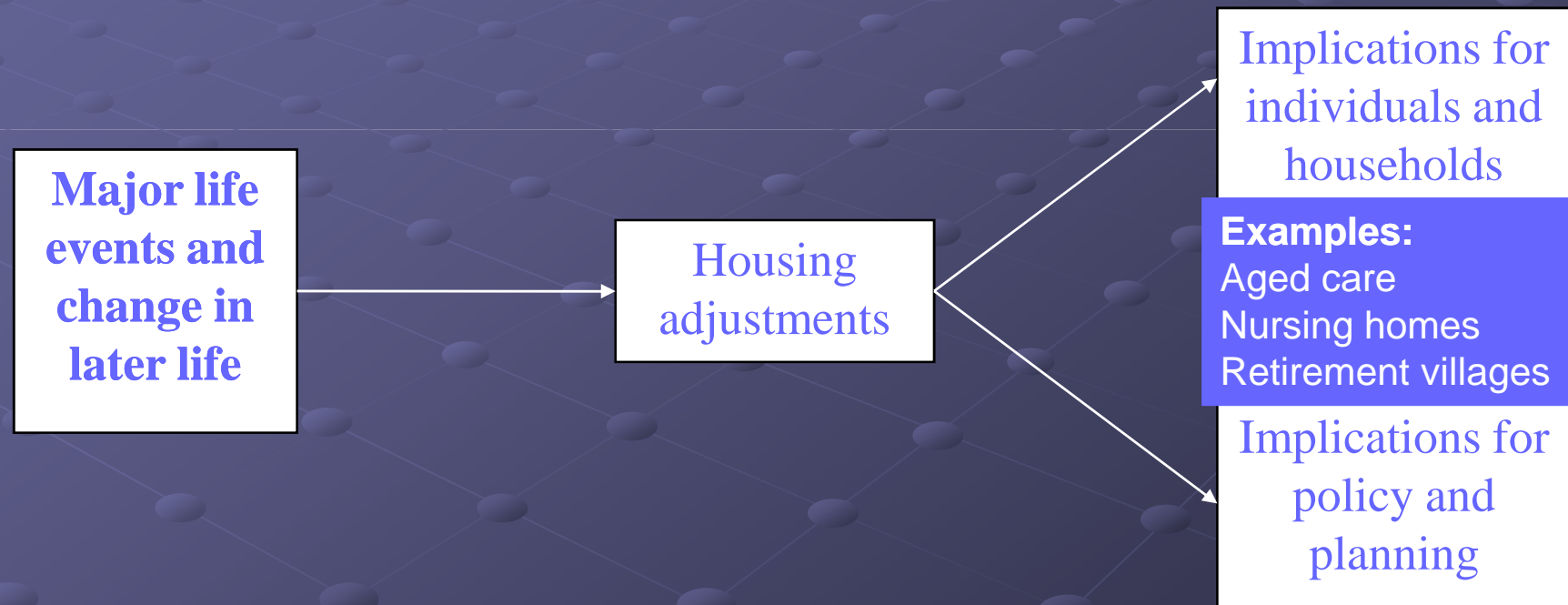
- Spatial differences: does segmentation exists for older Australians?
- Specifically:
 1. The extent of housing market fragmentation
 2. The extent of relationship segmentation, i.e. concentration of older people


This Research
...initial steps in answering:

What is the role of geographical factors in defining house market differentials within the South East Queensland (SEQ) which is a most popular destination of older people in Australia?

life events and housing adjustments of older Australians

An examination of changes in life course and housing careers in later life in Australia has significant implications both for individuals and for housing policy and urban planning





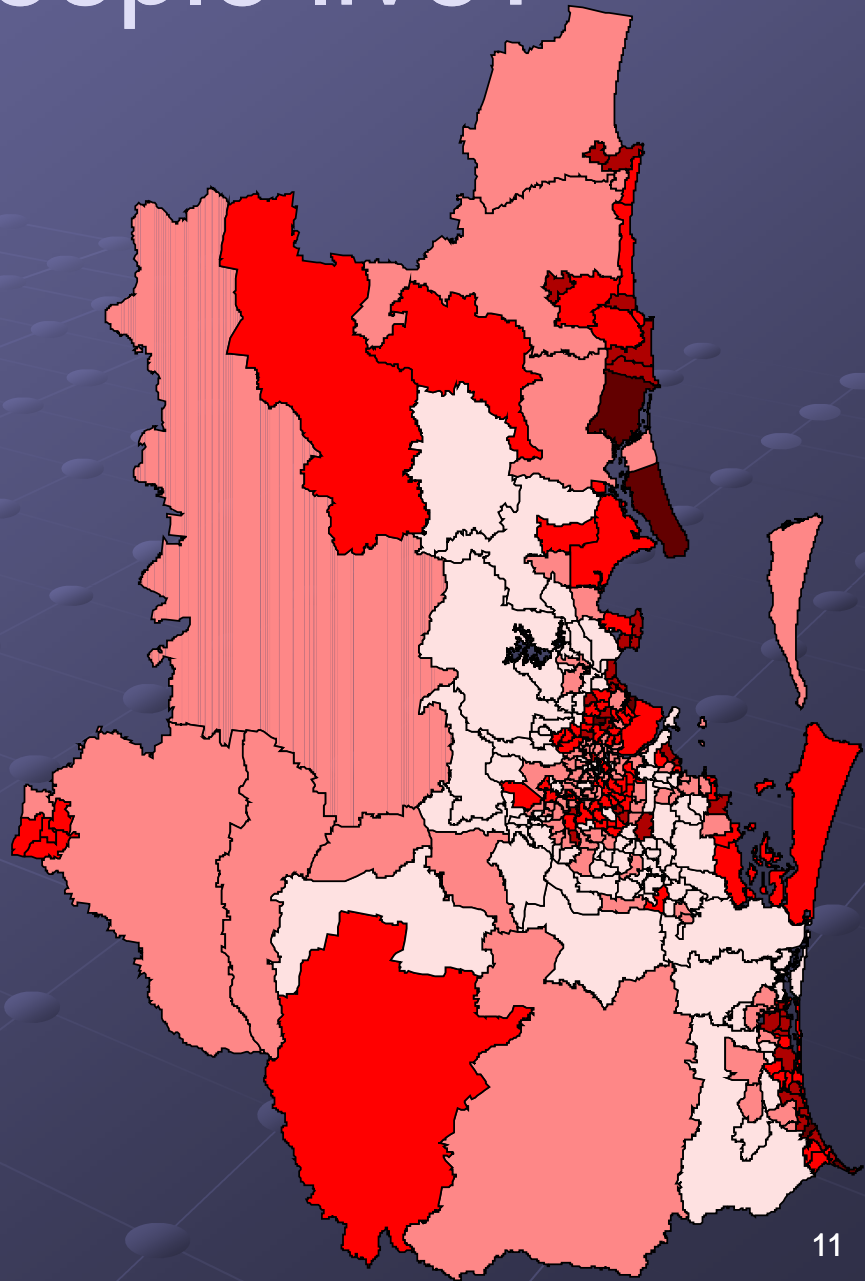
Where do old people live?

Data analysis

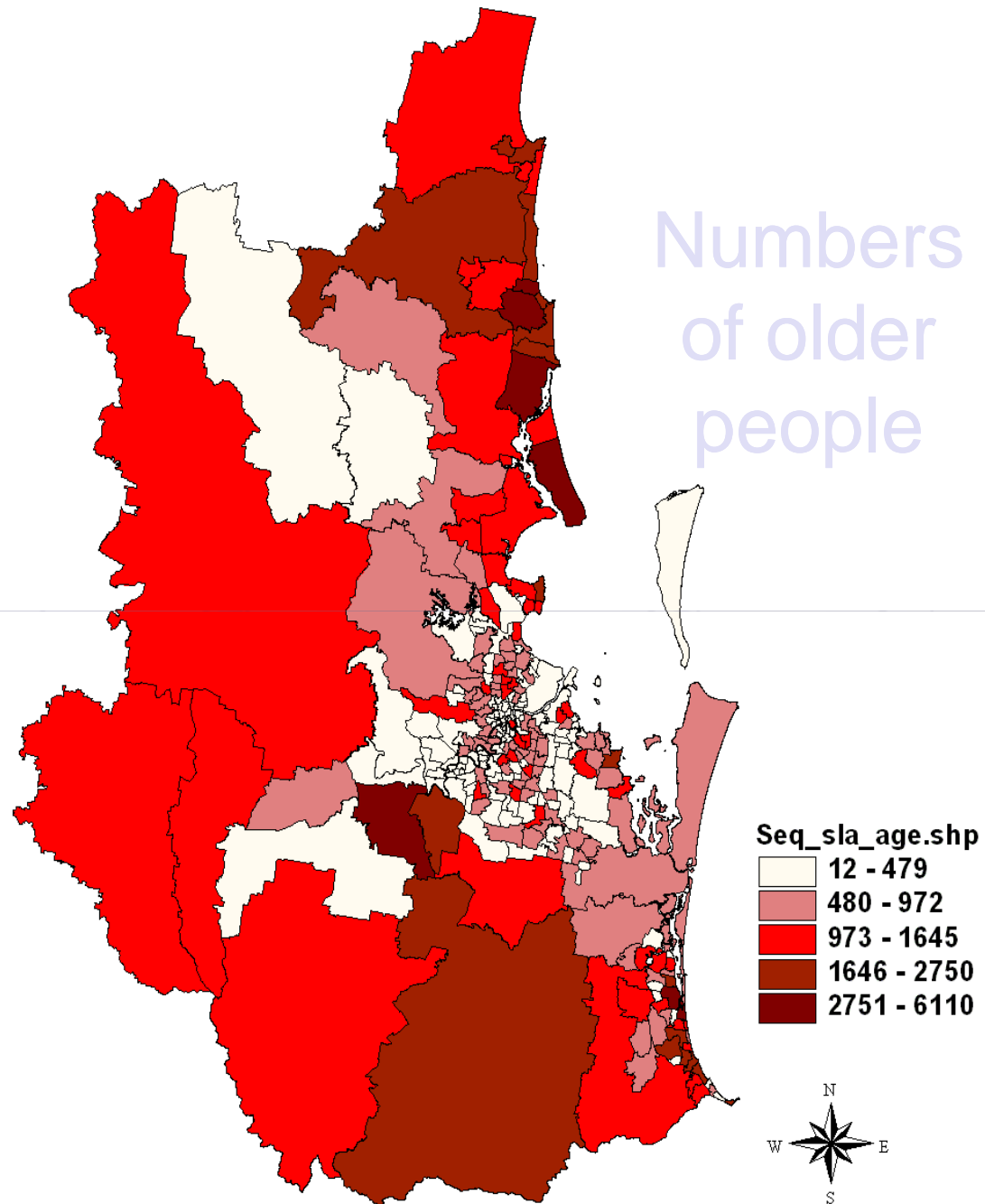
Source: **ABS 2001 Census**

Where do old people live?

- The thematic map shows the **proportion** of people aged over 65 years by SLA in **South East Queensland Region**.
- The range of the proportion is from 1.6 per cent to 38.1 per cent
- The darker SLA refers to a higher proportion where older people live



Numbers of older people

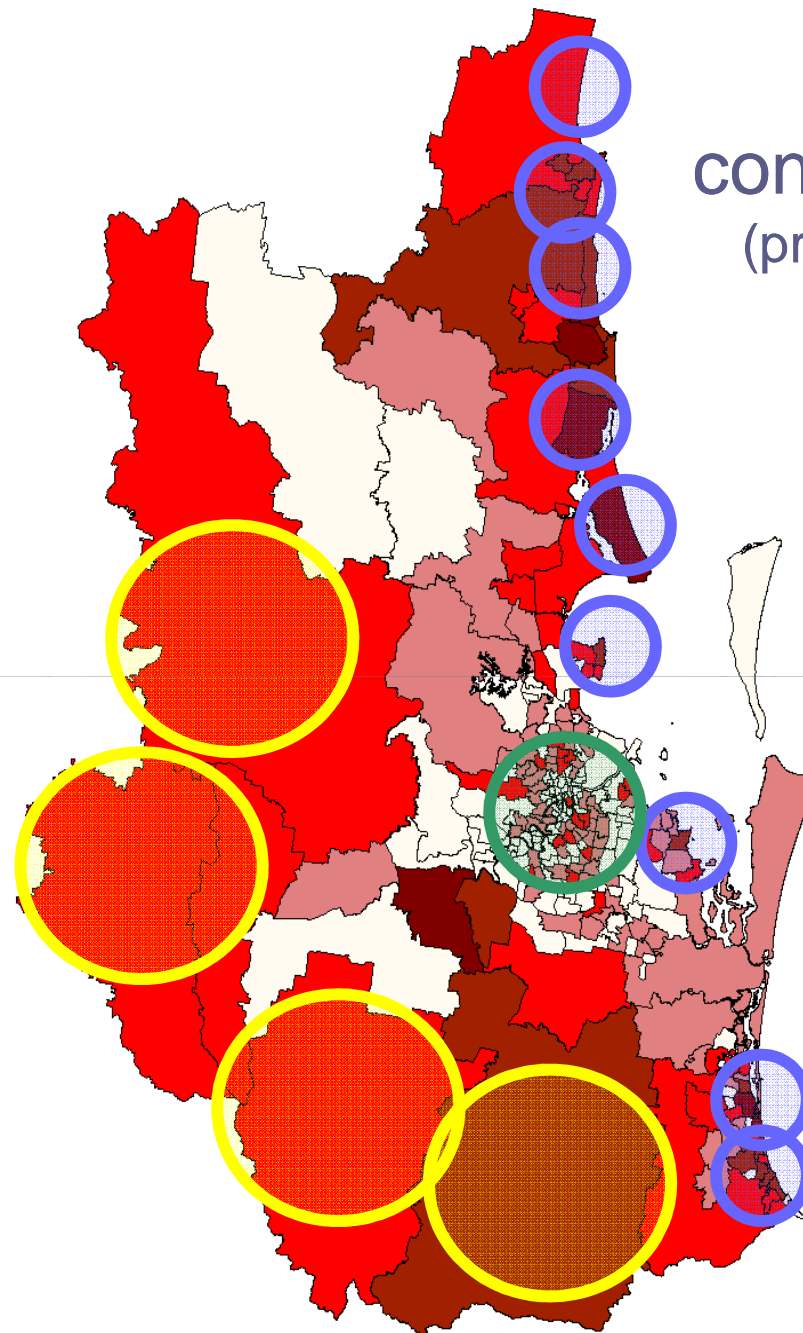


Heavy concentrations (proportions and numbers)

Sea change / coastal areas

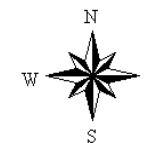
Semi-rural / rural

Metropolitan



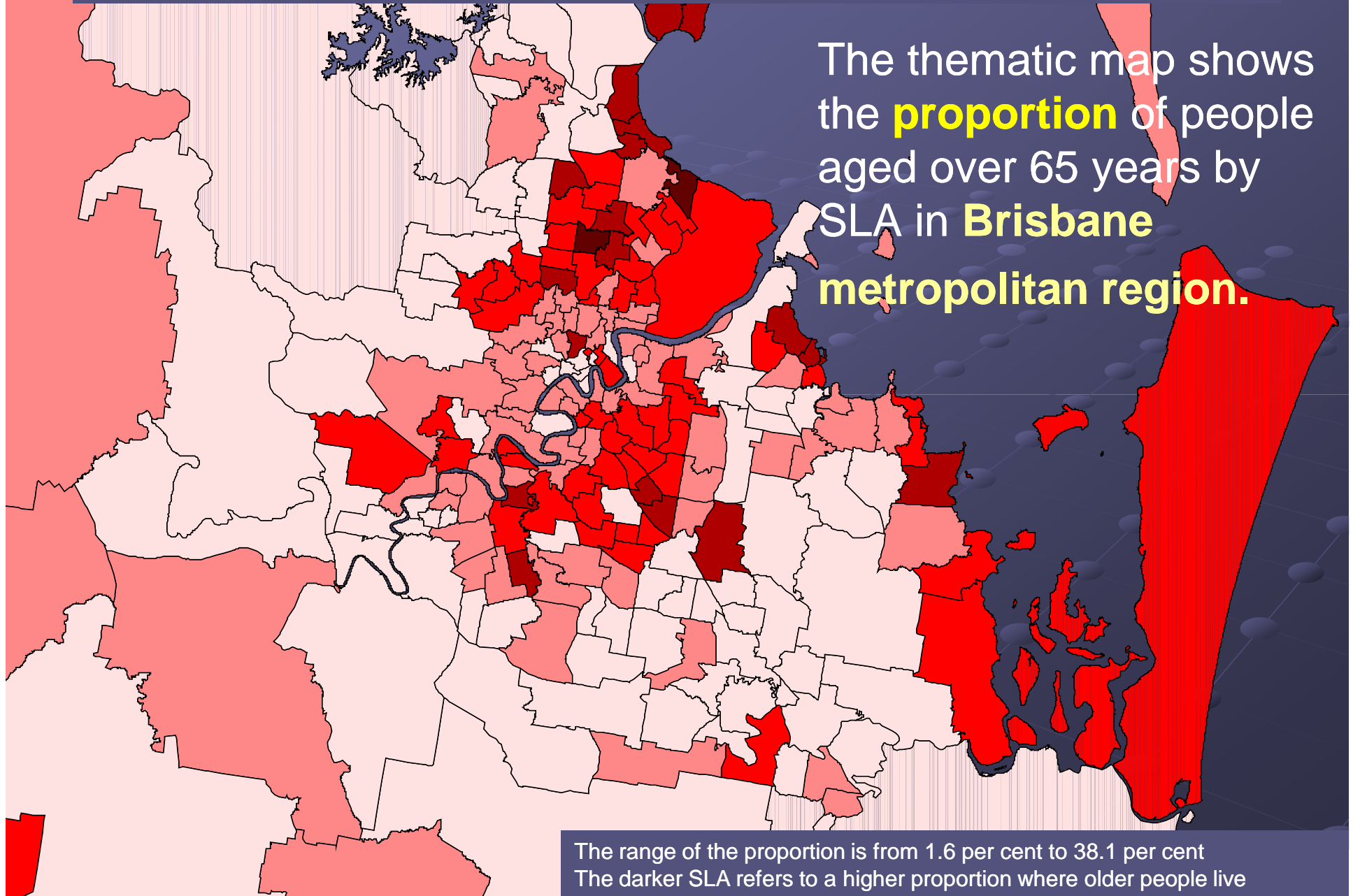
Seq_sla_age.shp

12 - 479
480 - 972
973 - 1645
1646 - 2750
2751 - 6110

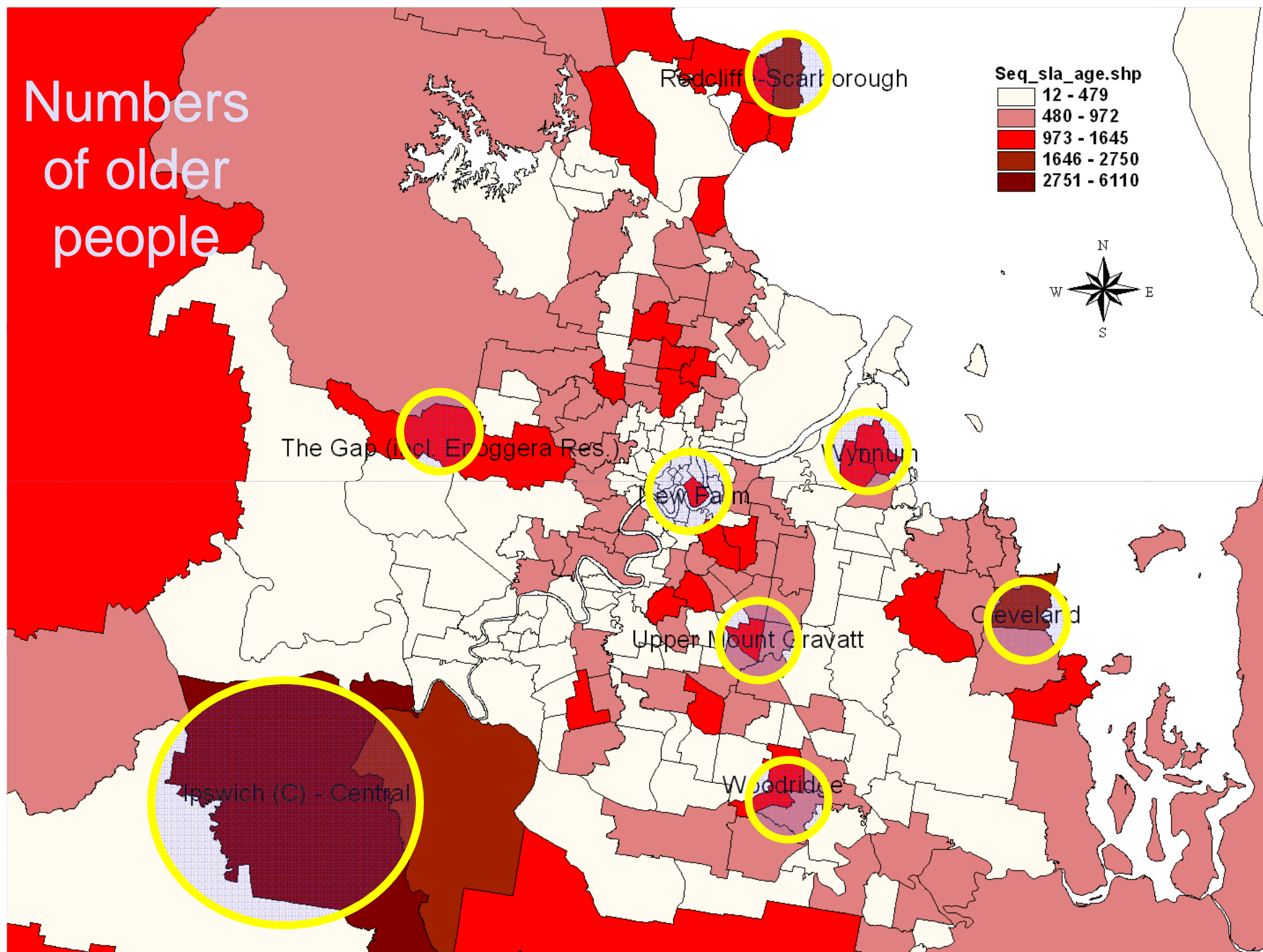


Where do old people live?

The thematic map shows the **proportion** of people aged over 65 years by SLA in **Brisbane metropolitan region**.



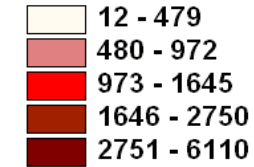
Numbers of older people



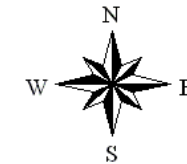
Heavy
concentrations
(proportions and
numbers)

Redcliffe-Scarborough

Seq_sla_age.shp



Brighton



Sea change / coastal

Suburban (middle
ring / outer)

Suburban (inner) /
urban renewal

Wynnum

New Farm

Coorparoo - Camp Hill

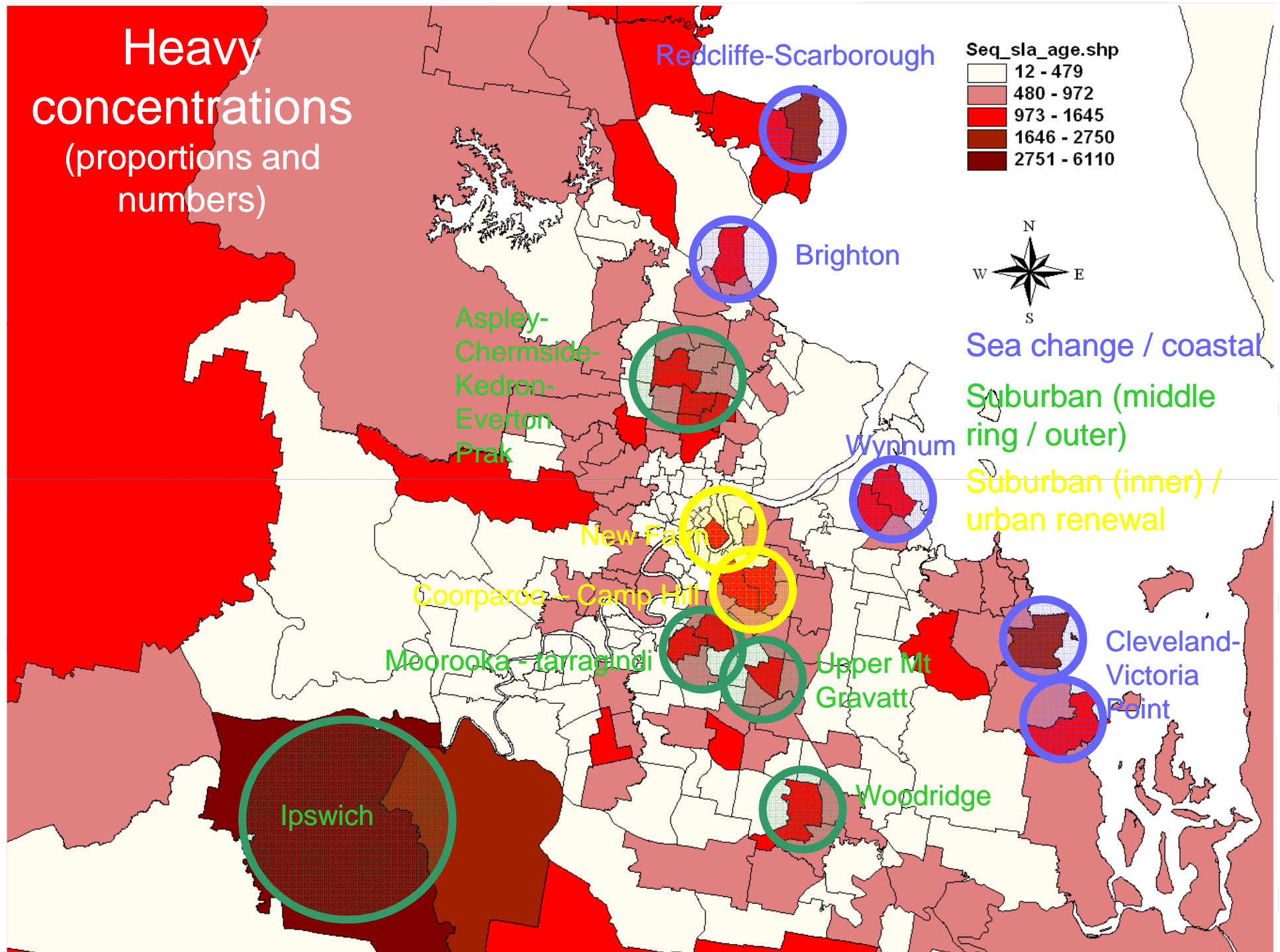
Moorooka - Iarragindi

Upper Mt
Gravatt

Cleveland-
Victoria
Point

Woodridge

Ipswich

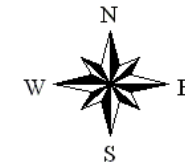
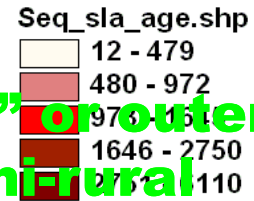


Sea change
Heavy

Traditional - remain in "older inner suburb"

Concentrations change to or remain in "middle ring" or outer suburb

Traditional remain in outer metropolitan or semi-rural
(proportions and numbers)



Sea change / coastal

Suburban (middle ring / outer)

Suburban (inner) / urban renewal

WHY?

Redcliffe-Scarborough

Brighton

Wynnum

New Farm

Coorparoo - Camp Hill

Moorooka - Jarragundi

Upper Mt Gravatt

Cleveland-Victoria Point

Woodridge

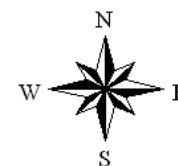
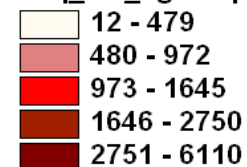
Ipswich

Aspley-Chermside-Kedron-Everton-Prak

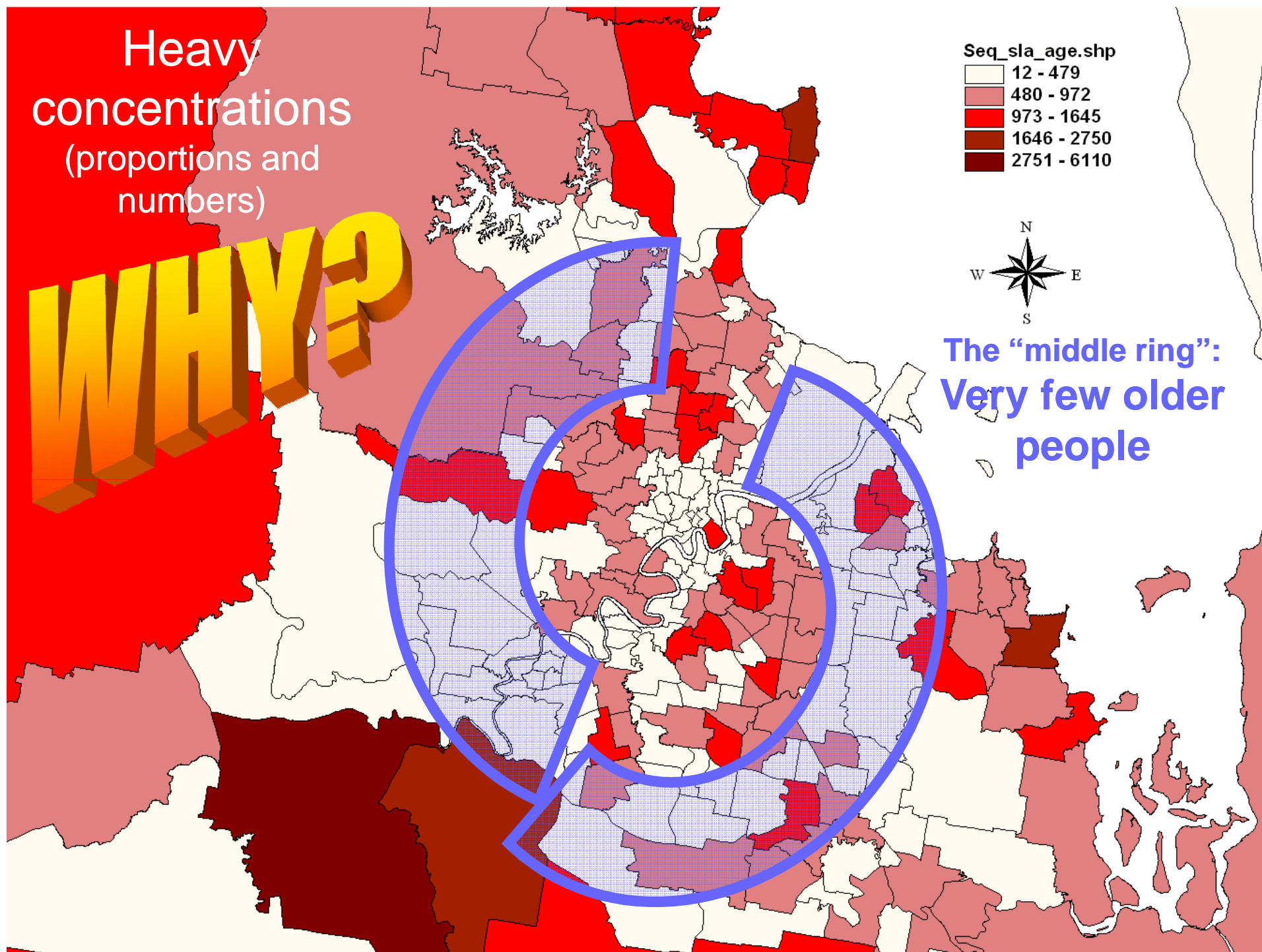
Heavy
concentrations
(proportions and
numbers)

WHY?

Seq_sla_age.shp



The “middle ring”:
Very few older
people



Future Research

- Ascertain the nature and degree of segmentation: in particular, differences that may be associated with lifestyle change **over time** (**compare this data with 2006 Census**).
- Test these differences in terms of life course
 - the extent to which segmentation might be attributed to cumulative life experience rather than isolated life events.
- Not only **what** are the housing choices elected by older Australians, but also the **reason** for residential mobility on later life

An examination of changes in life course and housing careers in later life in Australia will enable more informed consideration of the implications both for individuals and for housing policy and urban planning