

On the outer – the fuel, rates sting

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SUBURBS on Sydney's fringe with poor public transport are the hardest hit by the triple whammy of rising mortgage expenses, high petrol prices and inflation.

A Griffith University study has found the most financially vulnerable suburbs of Sydney were Cranebrook, Emu Heights and Erskine Park in the west and Currans Hill in the south.

The stress was most pronounced in the greater western region stretching from the Hills District in the north to Sutherland in the south, Camden in the south-west and the lower Blue Mountains in the west.

These areas were most exposed to housing debt and reliant on private vehicles, the study said. Suburbs within 15 kilometres from the city were least

AT RISK

- » Cranebrook
- » Currans Hill
- » Emu Heights
- » Erskine Park
- » Kings Park
- » Kellyville
- » Harrington Park
- » Horningsea Park
- » Macquarie Links
- » Glenmore Park



affected due to good public transport and higher incomes.

The report's authors, Jago Dodson and Neil Sipe, used census data on vehicle use, mort-

gages and household income to determine the new financial stress belt in five cities.

Proximity to a railway station offered some cushioning from the impact of high fuel prices for residents of suburbs such as Parramatta, Fairfield, Cabramatta and Liverpool.

Personal tax cuts were little help because they gave the biggest savings to those on the highest incomes, the report said. However, a reduction in excise could help the worst-hit households.

Dr Dodson said that upgrading public transport services in western Sydney to a similar quality to those in the eastern suburbs would make residents less vulnerable to rising fuel prices.

"It's a real issue across Australian cities that the quality of
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public transport declines as the distance from the CBD increases,” he said.

“Even [in] areas in the outer suburbs with a heavy rail line the access is quite poor – the bus services don’t connect well, they’re poorly timed, they’re not connected to the local shopping centre.

“Inner-city residents tend to use their cars much less and do not travel so far by car.”

Among the 15 worst-hit suburbs were Harrington Park, Glenmore Park, Kellyville, Mount Annan, Narellan Vale and Rouse Hill.

The city, North Sydney, the strip from the city to Hornsby and the eastern suburbs were “low vulnerability” areas. Areas more than 20 kilometres from the city were the most affected.

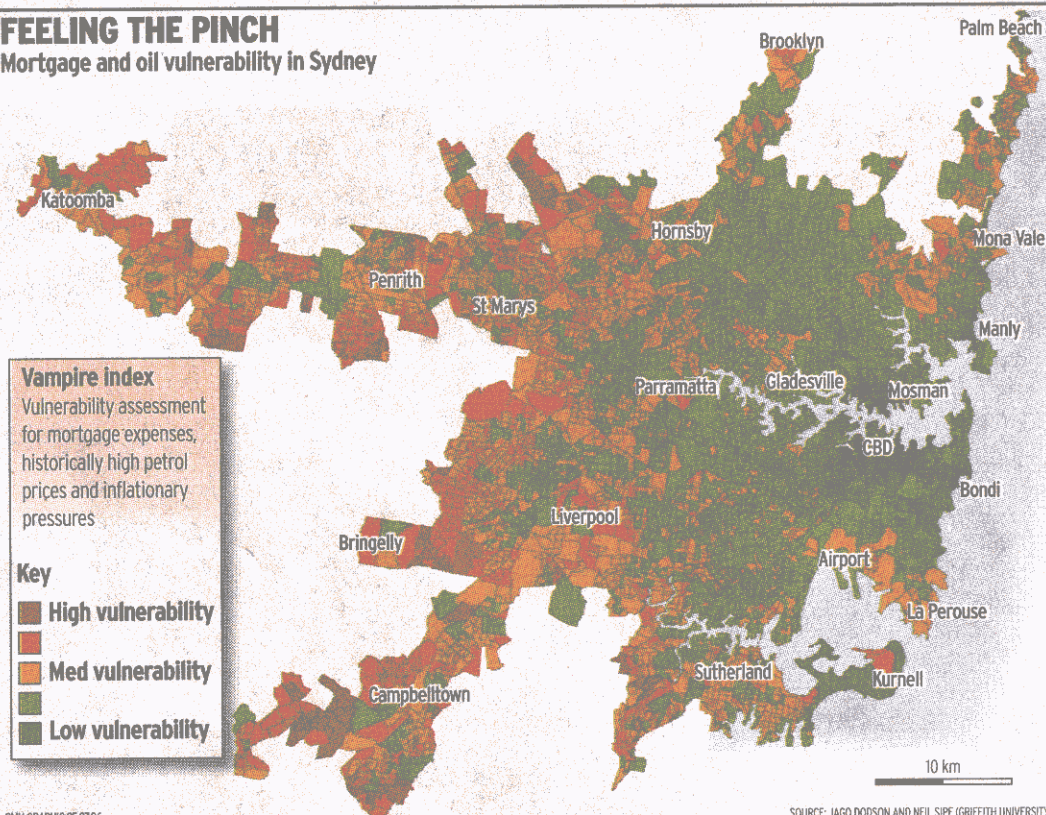
Twelve per cent of the population fell into the two hardest-hit of five brackets while the rest tended towards the low to moderate level, the study found.

The executive director of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils, Alex Gooding, said it was too simple to argue that rich suburbs had good transport and poor ones did not.

Some of the wealthier suburbs in the north-west also suffered from few public transport op-

FEELING THE PINCH

Mortgage and oil vulnerability in Sydney



SMH GRAPHIC 25.07.06

SOURCE: JAGO DODSON AND NEIL SIPE (GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY)

tions because of the lack of expansion of the rail network since the 1930s, he said.

The Government planned a north-west and south-west rail

link, and had moved to make the cost of private buses more closely aligned to that of buses run by State Transit.

“The problem is this is some-

thing that should have been done 20 or 30 years ago,” Mr Gooding said.

“We are playing catch-up across the region.”