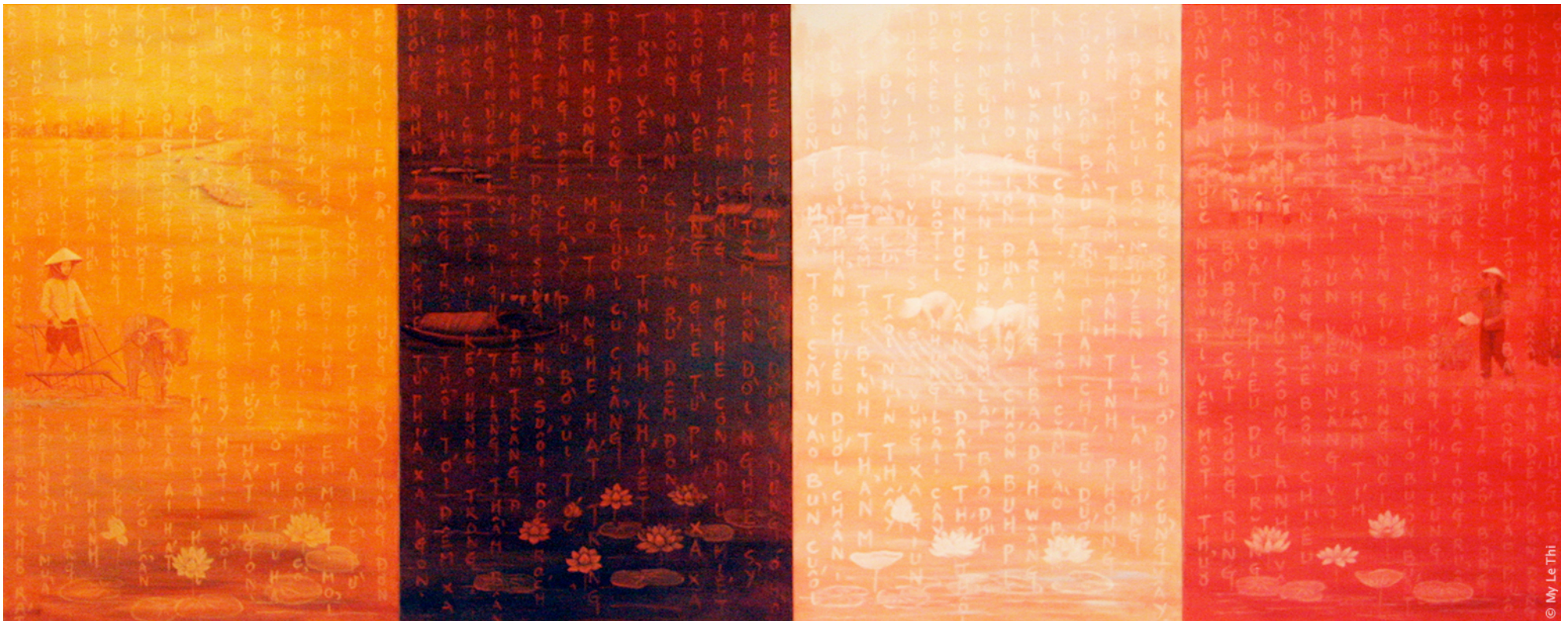


# Waterborne

Vietnamese Australians and Sydney's Georges River parks and green spaces



Allison Cadzow, Denis Byrne, Heather Goodall  
with Stephen Wearing

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Two of our interviewers Cuong Nguyen (the son of Mr & Mrs Nguyen, also featuring in the book) and Alison Pham.

## Interviewees

Huy Pham, Thanh Hue Nguyenphoc, Vinh and Kim Nguyen, Anh Linh Pham, Thi Pham, Boi Tran Huynh Beattie, Danh, Lily, Long, Thi, Cuong Nguyen, Nuoi, Bach, Cuong Le, Dai Le, Ngoc Quynh Truong, Stephen Phan, Alison Phan, Cuong Ngyuen, Bich Dien Tran, Huy Phan, Trinh Tung, Thuan, Alexander Tran, Thi Nguyen, Giang Tran, Hoai Niem Pham, Tammy Tran, Phuong Ly, Bang Khac Trinh, Tam Nguyen, Ty Tran, Van Nguyen, Anh Nguyen, Trang Mai, Trinh Phan, Thomas Nguyen, Trong Cuc, Le, Duong, Hoang, Thao, Bay, Cung, Mark Infield, Vo Quy, Ba Thu Nguyen.

A number of other people were interviewed, but for reasons of privacy declined to be identified in public reports. We thank them for sharing their insights and experiences with us in developing the project.

## Artist biography : Cover image

**My Le Thi** was born in Buon Ma Thuot, in the Central Highlands of South Vietnam and came to Australia in 1985. She studied Arts at the Northern Territory University and Art Management at the University of Technology in Sydney. She practices her art through multi-media, installation, painting, sculpture, sound, music and video. Her work concerns the human condition, and in many aspects her work speaks about multiculturalism and against racism and discrimination. Her work has been used as a HSC case study since 2004, and has been included in many major exhibitions in Australia and the USA as well as many Asian and European countries.

Image: "Nhị Vàng Bông Trắng lá xanh, gần bùn mà chẳng hôi tanh mùi bùn." The lotus grows from dirty water and mud, but has no trace of a bad smell. We too can be like the lotus flowers growing beautifully no matter what circumstances we live in.

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## PART 1: INTRODUCTION/FORWARD

# CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SYDNEY'S GEORGES RIVER

### Background to the Parklands, Culture and Communities project

This series arises from **Parklands, Culture and Communities**, a project which looks at how cultural diversity shapes people's understandings and use of the Georges River and green spaces in Sydney's south west.

We focus on the experiences of four local communities (Aboriginal, Vietnamese, Arabic speaking and Anglo Australians) and their relationships with the river, parks and each other. The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (previously DECCW and the National Parks and Wildlife Service) has realised that the cultural backgrounds of people using parks, especially in cities have changed. Culturally diverse uses and views have not often been recognised in Australia in park and green space management models, which tend to be based on Anglo-Celtic 'norms' about nature and recreation.

OEH and UTS initiated this research to find out more about how culturally diverse communities use parks and waterways. What ideas do they bring to natural environments from their homelands and how do they change here or endure? These organizations are interested in how these multicultural knowledges might be drawn upon in managing green spaces more effectively.

*As an intensively used culturally diverse urban park, Georges River offers a chance to observe, research and develop strategies for other parks which are inclusive, relevant and welcoming to communities.*

Local and overseas studies in multicultural communities recognise that cultural groups DO think differently about nature and it is important to understand the views of major groups of park users in the area to manage these places into the future.<sup>1</sup> To this end, we have worked with four culturally-identified groups - although each is internally diverse. We have researched and interviewed members of Aboriginal, Anglo-Irish, Vietnamese and Arabic Australian communities.

This is one of a number of publications which focus on each community to explore the results of this research. One book, ***Rivers and Resilience***, looks at the past and present relationships of Aboriginal people with the Georges River (2009, UNSW Press). A major report, ***Place Making in National Parks*** (online at the Office of Environment and Heritage) analyses the interaction of all these four groups with national parks generally as well as the Georges River National Park. Then there are two books which each report the results of research and interviews on how one community relates to the Georges River parks and the river itself.

***Rivers of Belonging*** focuses on the Arabic Australian community living near the Georges River.

This book, ***Waterborne***, includes the stories of Vietnamese Australians about the parks and rivers of their homeland as well as those of the Georges River.

### Parks and people along the Georges River area

But all parks in Sydney are not the same - and it is important to explain firstly how the parklands along the Georges River are situated in relation to all the communities of the area.

The suburbs stretching along the northern shore of the Georges River from Liverpool, through Fairfield, Bankstown and Lakemba to Canterbury have the most ethnically diverse and most dense population of the Sydney Metropolitan area. They also have the least amount of greenspace.<sup>2</sup>

Although small parks are scattered through the suburbs, the long period of intensifying immigration after WW2 and the industrial development in which many migrants were employed all led to increasing population density without any real expansion of the public open space available to them. The main open space has been the bushland along the river - and then only because it was sandy or rocky or swampy and could not be developed.

The two major plans for the city - one in 1948 (the County of Cumberland Plan) and the other in 1968 (State Planning Authority)



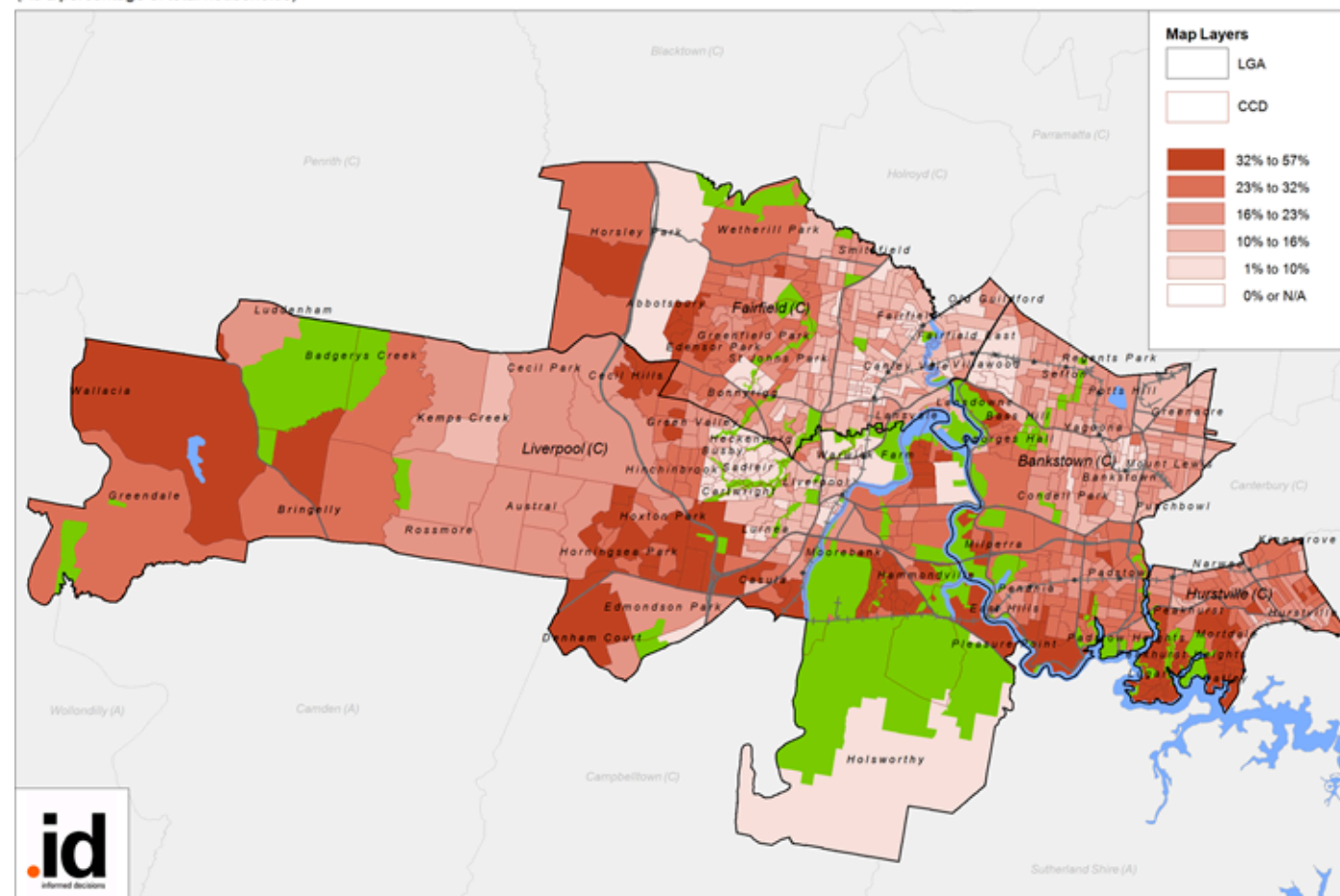
- encouraged protection of the green areas along the Georges River. But both plans were frustrated because industrial or residential development was usually built on the land expected to remain as parkland. Since 1970, the rising value of 'water view' properties has sent the cost of land along the river skyrocketing, eating away more of the potential parkland as greater profits were to be made from land sales.

A clear pattern can be seen in the detailed results of the 2006 Census for these Local Government Areas (LGA) along the river (the cities of Liverpool, Fairfield, Bankstown and Hurstville). The lower income communities include Aboriginal Australians but otherwise they are often the most recently arrived migrants and, although multilingual, the least proficient in English. These lowest income communities are living in parts of the LGA which are the furthest away from the river frontage land and therefore the furthest from the parks.<sup>3</sup> These include many of the Vietnamese and the Arabic Australians who have been the participants of this study.

In contrast, the river frontage housing is almost completely taken up by high income families with high fluency in English, who have Anglo and western European origins. This pattern is strongest near the Georges River National Park in the Bankstown and then repeated, just to the east, in the Hurstville City areas.<sup>4</sup>

## High income households, Georges River area 2006

(As a percentage of total households)



This pattern suggests strongly that it is economic and social class - that is income and other socio-economic advantages - which form an underlying influence on peoples ability to be direct neighbours to the river parklands.

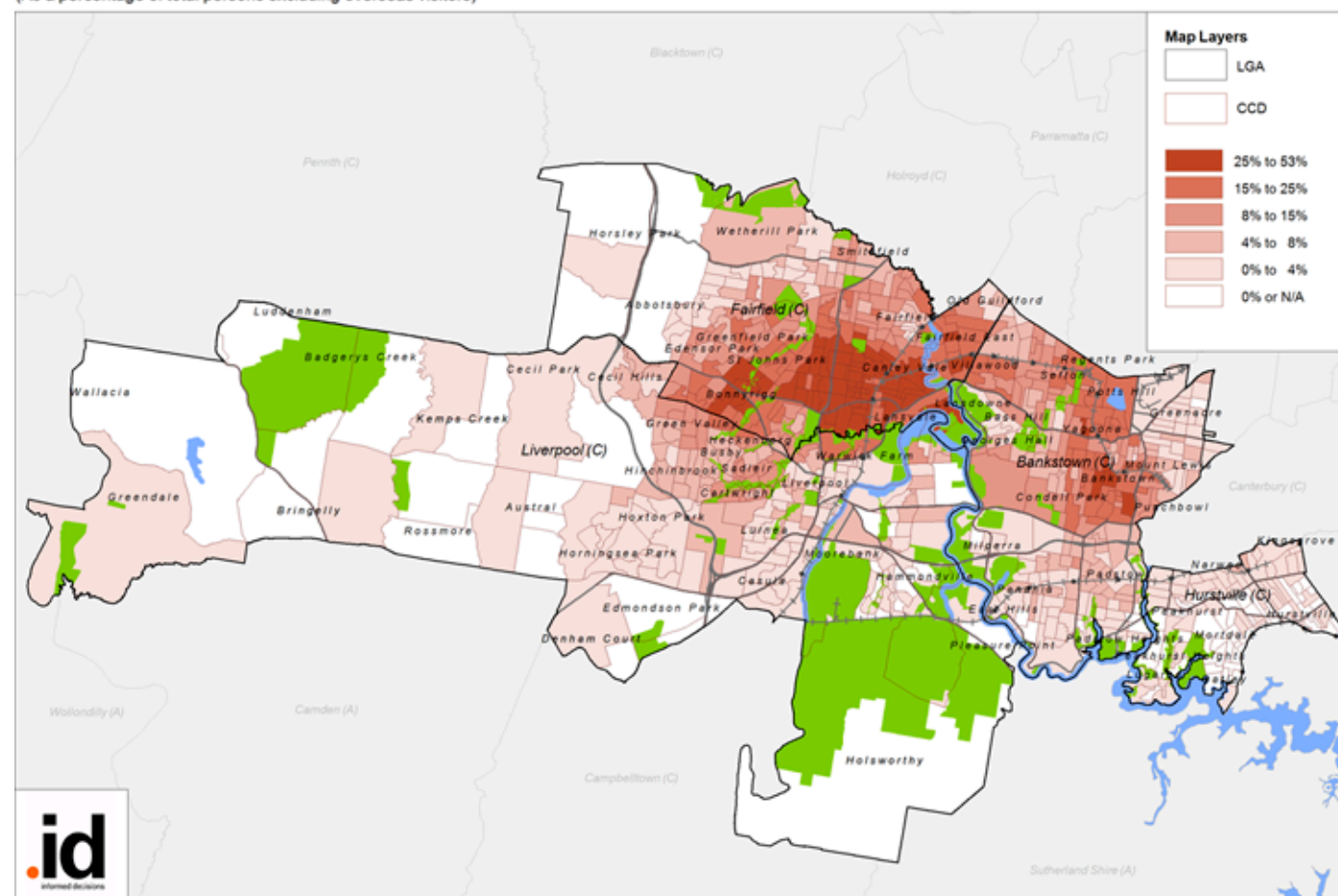
Yet despite the fact that the Vietnamese and Arabic Australians are living further away from the river, both these communities are very active park users.

We have asked them to explain to us more about the ideas around parks and nature in their home countries as well as telling us about their memories of parks there as well as their journeys - often long and dangerous journeys - to get to Australia. Then we have asked them what they hoped to do in parklands as well as what their actual experiences have been in the Georges River parks.

A clear pattern can be seen in the detailed results of the 2006 Census for these Local Government Areas (LGA) along the river (the cities of Liverpool, Fairfield, Bankstown and Hurstville). The lower income communities include Aboriginal Australians but otherwise they are often the most recently arrived migrants and, although multilingual, the least proficient in English. These lowest income communities are living in parts of the LGA which are the furthest away from the river frontage land and therefore the furthest from the parks.<sup>5</sup> These include many of the Vietnamese and the Arabic Australians who have been the participants of this study.

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(As a percentage of total persons excluding overseas visitors)



and dangerous journeys - to get to Australia. Then we have asked them what they hoped to do in parklands as well as what their actual experiences have been in the Georges River parks. This booklet sets out the themes raised in our research and which our interviewees have reported to us.

## Introducing Waterborne, the Vietnamese Australian booklet

This report builds on Mandy Thomas' Moving Landscapes findings, but also includes council parks, and other green public spaces of the south west and issues raised by our interviewees. By focusing on a particular area it allows for a closer look at park use.

We explore issues raised by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (now Office of Environment and Heritage) surveys, *Migrant Communities and the Environment*<sup>6</sup> (1996, 2004) which showed that people from language groups had different priorities about the environment. For example significant numbers (64%) of Vietnamese people in NSW interviewed grew vegetables and fruit in home gardens, were concerned about water and air pollution and safety, and were more likely than total sample to identify environment as a key issue (17% versus 6%).<sup>7</sup>

We explore issues raised by the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water (now Office of Environment and Heritage) surveys, *Migrant Communities and the Environment* (1996, 2004)<sup>8</sup> which showed that people from language groups had different priorities about the environment. For example, significant numbers (64%) of Vietnamese people in NSW interviewed grew vegetables and fruit in home gardens, were concerned about water and air pollution and safety, and were more likely than total sample to identify environment as a key issue (17% versus 6%).<sup>9</sup>

While a survey is a useful way to find out the general differences between groups of people, it

doesn't explain why such differences exist. This report explores what these findings mean.

Our research approach involved asking in depth questions, using repeat interviews, focus groups with community researchers, observation and historical and cultural research. The researchers spoke to 66 people and approximately 26 of these were in depth interviews, conducted in Vietnam and Sydney between 2002-2008.

We used this approach because we recognise that knowledge of nature is cultural. Parks are not 'pure nature', rather they have been set up by Anglo Celtic cultural groups with particular ideas about nature and recreation. Indeed, parts of Georges River National Park were created from mudflats and converted to grass in the late 1940s while Chipping Norton was sand mined before it became a parkland.

All of these areas were managed by Aboriginal people before that. Aboriginal people have become increasingly reinvolved in DECC initiatives in managing areas.

### Why explore Vietnamese relationships to parks?

Vietnamese Australians make up a large proportion of the population in south west Sydney, concentrated in areas around the parks such as Cabramatta and Fairfield.

They have been frequent users of the parks since the late 1970s – early 1980s both as neighbours and visitors.

Public friction and conflict with natural resource managers has arisen over some Vietnamese

peoples fishing and park use, emerging from different approaches to environments and resources.

Finding out more about Vietnamese Australians' relationships with the environment will allow all Australians to recognise and value the many roles Vietnamese Australians do and can play in caring for the area as neighbours and park visitors.



The Nguyen family at Olympic Park, Sydney



Thanh Hué, husband, a friend and her three children, East Hills Migrant Hostel soon after arriving in Australia, 1980-1



## PART 2

# VIETNAMESE AUSTRALIANS OF SOUTH WEST SYDNEY

### From Vietnam to Sydney

Many Vietnamese people now living in south west Sydney came from Southern Vietnam. Some had moved within Vietnam before arriving, from rural areas to cities, due to political and economic changes.

Many arrived as refugees post 1975-1980s after 'the American war'. Vietnam has experienced numerous invasions, trade and cultural change. Their history is marked by struggles for independence against China, their giant neighbour to the north followed by French colonists from 1883, Japanese occupation in WW2 and more recently the American (and Australian) war.

After 1975, the south became Independent under Ho Chi Minh. Many fled by boat and planes especially southern government associated people and Chinese Vietnamese. The latter left after the socialist government in 1979 closed private businesses. Many died trying to escape, but some made it to refugee camps and eventually to Europe, America and Australia.<sup>10</sup> Later arrivals tended to come to Australia as migrants.

At the beginning of 1975 only 1300 Vietnamese people lived in Australia. By late 1999, 224,000 Vietnamese people were living in Australia.<sup>19</sup> It was a sudden and visible population change and signaled the end of the infamous 'White

### QUICK FIGURES

- ➔ Sydney has the largest Vietnamese population of any city in Australia.<sup>11</sup>

#### Fairfield LGA

- ➔ Nearly 40% of NSW Vietnamese speakers live in this area. More than two thirds of the population of Cabramatta and Fairfield were born overseas.<sup>12</sup>
- ➔ 26.1% of the overseas born residents of Fairfield were Vietnam born – the largest overseas born population.<sup>13</sup>
- ➔ Vietnamese was the most widely spoken language in addition to English after Chinese, Arabic, and Greek at 6.1%.<sup>14</sup> Some Vietnamese people speak Chinese languages too, so the figure could be higher.
- ➔ Approximately 45% of the Vietnamese born population in 2001 identified as Buddhist.<sup>15</sup>
- ➔ Buddhist numbers rose with Vietnamese and Malaysian born people moving there.<sup>16</sup>

#### Bankstown LGA

- ➔ Vietnamese population is approximately 15%.<sup>17</sup>
- ➔ Over 80% of the population speaks a language in addition to English.<sup>18</sup>

#### Liverpool

- ➔ Vietnamese people make up the second highest overseas born population in Liverpool LGA (after Fijians).

Australia' Policy.<sup>20</sup> Arrivals of Vietnamese people coincided with recessions, and backlashes towards multiculturalism, from the 1980s-90s.

Racial harassment was directed at Vietnamese

and Arabic Australians.<sup>21</sup> The Vietnamese Australian community experienced much prejudice, though some commentators thought this changed as other Australians mixed with 'the Asian community' more.<sup>22</sup>

## Where in Vietnam have people come from?



Map of Vietnam

The Vietnamese Australians who live in south western Sydney and with whom we have spoken have come from a range of cities and towns in Vietnam, which include Saigon, Hue, Hanoi, Danang, Nha Trang and Dalat. These places, and the experiences of the people who shared their stories, relate to these major rivers: the Mekong River, the Perfume River (Huong), the Red River and the To Lich river.

For many Vietnamese Australians, either their own experiences, or those of relations and close friends, have included refugee camps. These have left their own associations of memories and particular environments, with camps like those in Thailand, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines and Hong Kong. All of these experiences - homelands, journeys and camps - have influenced Vietnamese immigrants' responses to Australian environments and open spaces.

The numbers of migrants from northern and southern Vietnam to Australia arriving under the family reunion category increased in the 1990s.<sup>23</sup>

Since 1975 many Vietnamese Australian people have arrived as children and have grown up here, and some were born in Australia. This younger '1.5' generation have experiences of Australian environments that are often different to those of their parents.

Migrants' relationships with Vietnam have not ended with their arrival in Australia. Returns and/or initial adult trips to Vietnam are important and regular among interviewees. Connections with relatives and businesses in Vietnam especially since *doi moi* (renovation) in 1986, when the Vietnamese government began to ease some restrictions, have endured. Large Vietnamese communities live in Canada, the US and Europe and links between these communities are strong too.

Most Vietnamese people visit Vietnam to see family.<sup>24</sup> With international language media and internet access it has become easier to stay connected with both places, and practices like ancestor worship which sustain the connection too.



Huy Pham (front, in UNHRC supplied shirt) and his mother (far left) in a refugee camp in Thailand, 1988.



Huy Pham, relatives and his mother Lien Thi Ho, in her hometown (approx 100 kms north of Saigon), 2002.



Thanh Hué (front) at Dai Lanh, Vietnam with her sisters and relatives, 2005.

## Where in south west Sydney do Vietnamese people live?

South west Sydney has a high population of Vietnamese Australians in the areas of Cabramatta, Canley Vale, Fairfield, Chipping Norton, Bankstown, Fairfield, Liverpool, all suburbs near the Georges River and its parks.

## Why have Vietnamese immigrants lived in south west Sydney?

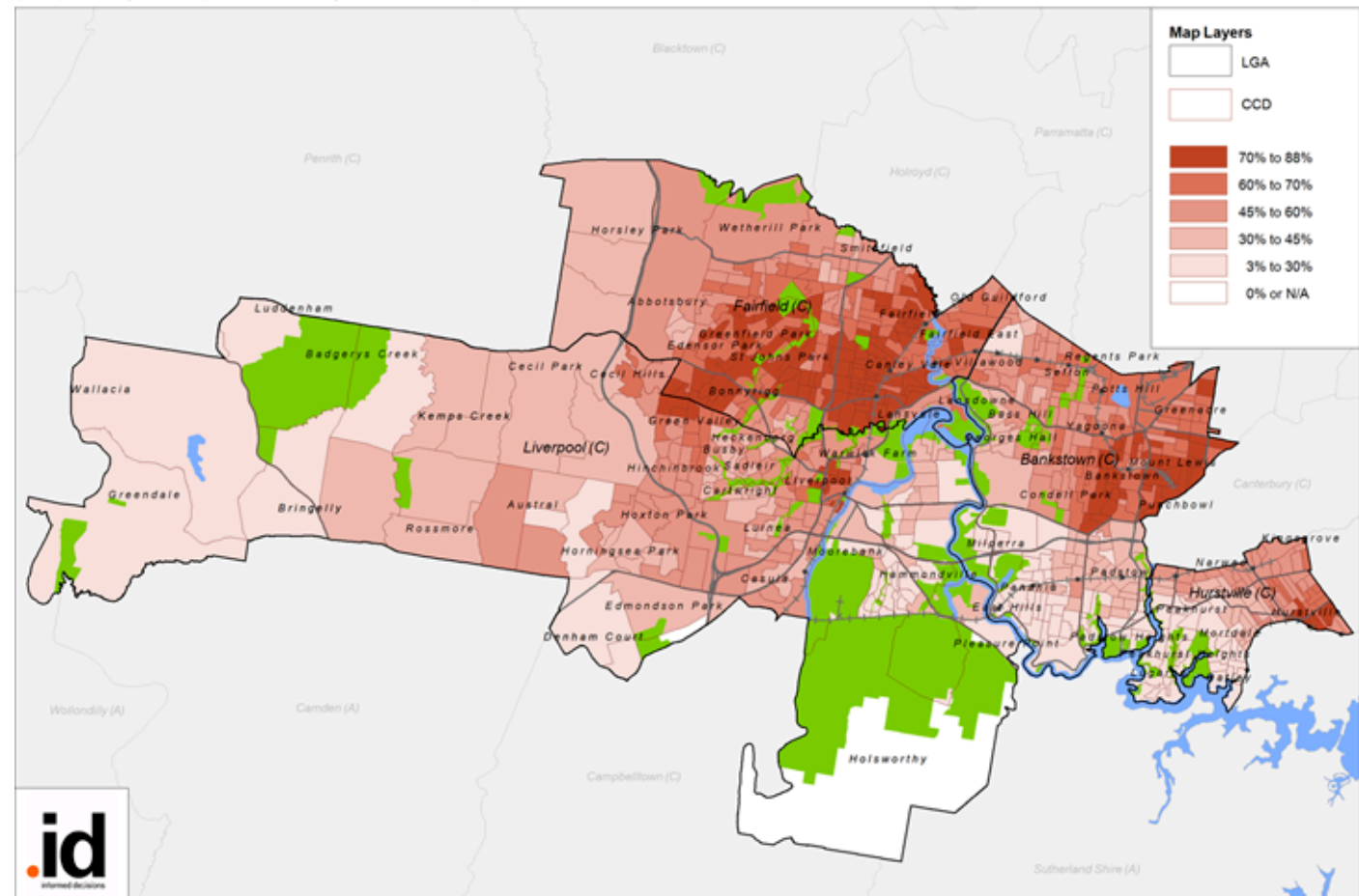
People have tended to move close to hostels (such as Villawood and East Hills) where they lived on arrival.<sup>25</sup> Communities grew up around this area especially Cabramatta, where people were assisted by Vietnamese networks in finding housing and jobs. For Vietnamese speakers unfamiliar with English this was important for access to services.

Atmosphere, community, food and shops are other attractions.

Dulwich Hill/Marrickville communities are also increasing (nearer to the Cooks River which faces many issues similar to the Georges River).

## People speaking a language other than English at home, Georges River area 2006

(As a percentage of total persons excluding overseas visitors)





## PART 3

# WHAT DO VIETNAMESE PEOPLE BRING TO THE GEORGES RIVER PARKLANDS?

### Traditions of nature: cultures, religions and artistic influences

#### Water and rivers in traditions of nature: Creation narratives

Vietnam is shaped by rivers, with a river every appearing every 20 kilometers or so across the land. Stories of how key places and the Vietnamese people were made involve the actions of an ancestral dragon, who brings rain and is associated with waterways. For example Ha Long Bay means Dragon Landing.

These stories are also a way of explaining history, the importance of wet rice agriculture and links between different groups. Vietnamese children are taught that the Vietnamese people were born from the union of a mountain fairy and a dragon of the seas, explaining the movement of people from the foothills to the delta, the construction of dykes and the struggle against Chinese 'invaders'.<sup>26</sup>

The Mekong delta in the tropical south is known as Cuu Long – or nine dragons, where the nine branches of the river head into the sea, bringing water and fertile soils to their surroundings.

Strong attachments to rivers, lakes and coasts are found in stories about them. Vietnamese

words for their country also show this. For example *Đất nước*, a term for homeland is made of the words land + water, while *non sông*, a term for country is made up of words for mountain + river.<sup>27</sup>

#### Poetry and songs about Vietnamese nature

Rivers and nature feature frequently in songs and poems, part of a long and rich cultural heritage of spoken poetry in Vietnam.<sup>28</sup>

Folk poetry used natural imagery and focussed on practical aspects of relationships with nature, such as the correct seasons to plant in.<sup>29</sup> Rivers appear frequently especially as places of reflection on regrets and exile in poetry.<sup>30</sup>

In these songs and poems, nature is not empty of signs of humanity. Boats, fishermen, huts with smoke coming from chimneys, and farmers tending fields appear. Connections between people and environment are recognised and valued.

Vinh Nguyen from Hanoi, who came to Australia to study TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) in 1987, after working as a languages teacher in Hanoi. He recalled this folk tradition when asked what he had learnt about environments in Vietnam:

*"The [river] also gives fish and food. Children spend time in the river, swimming, jumping up and down, dive-bombing there... in the countryside, on a moonlit night you see the river drift, slowly and quietly and gently down there and some lonesome country lad's singing along the river, some folk song. It's beautiful... and it's all coming to you, like a part of your soul."*<sup>31</sup>

Some 20<sup>th</sup> century poems recall home town memories, a way of life in the south that has vanished, and unification of north and south by using river imagery.<sup>32</sup>

In the favourite song of one interviewee, composed by Pham Duy, a popular Vietnamese songwriter family and intimate relationships are identified with the Mekong River:

*'Mekong River, the wind laughs on the waves  
Water entwines as if it was nine dragons  
hugging their children  
He comes from Tien Giang and heads to further  
and further lands...'*

Several interviewees wrote poetry connecting them with this cultural inheritance from Vietnam.

## Vietnamese Nature & Art

Visual art is complex in Vietnam as it draws on many cultural traditions. Dinh art, for example, seen in communal meeting houses, features folk art images of fishing, hunting, animals and plants.<sup>33</sup>

Dinh art is often presented as a 'national' style, however, there are in fact 54 different cultural groups in the Vietnam, with historic influences from Indian and Chinese art and French colonialism, as well as new regional styles emerging in the north and south of the country during the years of warfare and partition during the mid twentieth century. Many feature aspects of the environment, with peaks and rivers also appearing frequently in Vietnamese artworks such as pottery, sculpture, lacquer work and woodcuts from early Vietnamese history until now.

After 1975 especially, socialism shaped representations of nature – heroic soldiers, farmers and workers appeared in art.<sup>34</sup> Since *doi moi*, (that is, the emergence of a market economy and a relative acceptance of greater cultural diversity from the mid 1990s) it has again become more common to see lotus ponds, buffalos and village spiritual beings drawn from folk art traditions, reappearing to become popular, especially with Vietnamese communities abroad.<sup>35</sup>

Vietnamese people's relationships with nature are also represented in the work of Nha Trang photographer Long Thanh. His photographs capture boys in paddy fields with water buffalos, fisher people and salt production.<sup>36</sup>



Detail from one of the nine urns at Hue Citadel, which records plants and animals from different regions in Vietnam.

Rivers and paddy fields also appear in the work of migrant and refugee artists like My Le Thi in Australia.

### Spirituality, religion and nature influences

Shrines for offerings to Gods of the sea and mountains and to ancestors are found all over Vietnam. In Vietnamese popular religion, gods are often associated with rivers and springs.<sup>37</sup> Land, water and trees have spirits and nature is believed to have seen and unseen elements.<sup>38</sup>

Ancestor worship, animism, Buddhism, Confucian thought and Taoist beliefs

intermingled in pre-colonial Vietnam.<sup>39</sup> These beliefs have not vanished and are expressed in movements like the Buddhist revival which has occurred after *doi moi*.<sup>40</sup>

Religious pilgrimage was a reason for visiting mountains in Vietnam.<sup>41</sup> In Taoism, sacred mountains are regarded as the homes of deities, making them sites for temples, shrines and monasteries. A tradition of visiting natural areas which have had temples or shrines built on them continues at places like the Marble Mountains/Five Elements Mountains near Danang, where people take photos of each other making offerings.



The ancestors presence in the soil of Vietnam connects generations and country and is important to interviewees. Shrines to ancestors in the private homes and businesses in the South West continues this respect in Sydney. Huy Pham, who left Saigon, as a child with his family explains:

*Vietnamese also have a very strong bonding to the land, this is where all their ancestors lived and they always look after the ancestors graves. So to some Vietnamese it's a big shock that they have to leave their homeland... they are very sad to not to be able to look after the graves of their ancestors which is the Vietnamese culture.<sup>42</sup>*



Huy Pham & his mother Lien Thi Ho paying their respects to departed relatives at his grandmothers grave in Vietnam, 2002

## Feng Shui

For some Chinese Vietnamese, water is connected with positive *feng shui* (wind and water).

It has influenced not only the layout of cities like Hanoi and Hue, but also the layout of many rural landscapes in east Asia - especially in the location of houses, temples, paths and graves.<sup>43</sup> What appears to be an 'Asian' looking scene is often shaped by the principles of *feng shui*.

Some interviewees said the feng shui geography of the dragon had traveled to Australia with older Vietnamese people and was used here to



Vietnamese people visiting a pagoda in Hue, Vietnam, on a Sunday afternoon, 2006.

explain the positive associations of places along Georges River.<sup>44</sup>

## Plant knowledge – symbolism and medicine

Several plants and animals in Vietnam have important symbolism for Vietnamese people. For example, banyan trees are seen to be spirit homes, and marigolds which appear in mass plantings in parks mean long life.<sup>45</sup> They are used in Sydney too during Tet (Vietnamese new year).

The lotus which appears on ancient ceramics in the Red River Delta is associated with purity of the soul in Buddhism and is appreciated.<sup>46</sup>



Inside the 'Mysterious Cave', Marble Mountains, Vietnam, 2006



In a popular folk poem the lotus flower's beauty is celebrated along with its ability to rise above its surroundings *"Always near the mud it never smells of mud."*<sup>47</sup> Ponds and lakes with them appeal to many Sydney Vietnamese people.

People bring with them to Australia their knowledge of plants as sources of medicine and tonics. For example, plants like ginseng impart energy, which make these plants valuable and meaningful to them.

Bilingual educators were pleased to spot mulberry trees on a short 'bush' walk in Casula as they knew how to use the leaves as medicine for stomach ailments. While the walk leader called it a 'weed' this did not match with their experience of the plants usefulness.<sup>48</sup>

Wild animals are also used for medicines in Vietnam and Asia with strong animals imparting powers to the person eating them through a transfer of energy. Live birds as pets are a status symbol in Vietnam.<sup>49</sup> Habitat degradation and export of wild animals are decreasing their numbers.

Vietnamese interviewees in the DECC study of 1996 associated the word environment with litter, weather and hygiene. The association of weather with environment and health was also found in a Hanoi based study on attitudes to environment indicating some of the frameworks people see the environment within.<sup>50</sup>

### Meditation/Contemplation

Contemplation of mountains and rivers while fishing is part of popular imagery in tapestries, water puppet theatre and paintings in people's

homes in Sydney.<sup>51</sup>

The image of the fisherman by the river is something Vietnamese people have brought with them here.<sup>52</sup> The tradition of depicting a scholar reflecting by the river is not simply an act of leisure, but rather a valuing of learning and meditation.<sup>53</sup>

This image of people being seemingly at one with nature can be seen as influenced by Taoist ideas of nature as 'the way' as Nguyen explains:

*"In a typical landscape painting, with a background of mountains and a foreground of trees and water, one always finds a man sitting, appreciating the beauty of nature and contemplating the Way or Tao."*<sup>54</sup>

So, unlike the western concept of an opposition between 'nature' and human 'culture', it is the



Marigolds decorate the stage at Warwick Farm, Sydney, during Tet, 2006

case that in many traditions of South East Asia, nature and culture are intertwined.<sup>55</sup>

### Experiences of landscapes in Vietnam

#### Productive and peopled places: farming, gardens, harvesting and fishing

Wet rice cultivation is an important use of environment in Asian history with rich cultural associations. 'Water flexibility', the ability to change and adopt different influences but to maintain integrity, is a quality which is explained as emerging from the Vietnamese relationship with environment and wet rice culture.<sup>56</sup>

Though many Vietnamese Australians came from cities like Saigon they still identified with their home villages. People are expected to return there if possible for vital festivals like Tet.

Although many people live in Vietnam's cities today, there is still large proportion of the population which lives in rural areas and makes a living from occupations such as rice production.<sup>57</sup> The strongest memory and image many Vietnamese migrants have of their former homeland is that of the paddy field.<sup>58</sup> As demonstrated in the previous section, however, the strong impact of idyllic rural settings in literature and art ensures that even city dwellers are familiar with country life, an experience perhaps reinforced by visits to grandparents' homes as children. Furthermore, cultivated areas abut city boundaries in this densely populated and cultivated land, so the sounds, smells and sights of farming penetrate all city environments.

The Nguyens knew many stories where rural imagery was featured. Vinh said:

*"The literature was always talking about the beautiful nature, the good things about it and they describe the river as sort of happiness and wealth, as my wife said. It brought us all the soil, it waters all the fields, it gave us good crops."*

The environment was valued in resource terms too:

Vinh Nguyen: "...we look after our nature, because we belong to it... Kim: It is part of our life, it is our gold and our silver and our wealth..."<sup>59</sup>

Younger people recalled city places like the markets of Cho Lon, Saigon's Chinese district. Often their memories were about recent return visits, especially if they left when they were young. Stories of before leaving and after leaving flow into each other.

The American War however, left a damaged environment.<sup>60</sup> It destroyed forest cover and food sources. Landsat images from 1989 show vegetation scars from defoliants where no regrowth has occurred due to dioxin damage.<sup>61</sup>

Elsewhere, weeds have taken over, making land hard to cultivate. The effects are also worn on people's bodies as Kim Nguyen explains:

Kim: "Well, I don't want to blame anyone but

*actually the bombing, the Agent Orange killed and destroyed a lot of forests of Vietnam and land and is still effecting the environment now... It has effected generation after generation so we don't know when the Vietnamese people can overcome. That's terrible! It stays in the land and the soil and people live there, breathe and eat and grow food. So many people suffer from cancers and die and ... we can't find out why. And my uncle is dying because of the cancer, he actually took part in the front battle and we can't say that he was affected by that Agent Orange or not, but in his body there is still some piece of bullet there."*

Economic development and industrialisation have increased pressure on Vietnamese environments. This has occurred especially



Huy Pham in front of a farmer and water buffalo, Vietnam, 2002



Huy Pham at Ha Long Bay, Vietnam, 2002

through 'relocation programs', in which people were sent to the highlands to clear previously uncultivated forest and turn it into farmed land. This also affects local environments and resident minorities who have then in turn been displaced.

'Relocation' was of course itself a technique used during the American War to depopulate and militarise border areas, adding further to the disruption of environments which were often defoliated to maximise surveillance.<sup>62</sup> Minority 'hill tribe' groups however seldom migrate, so the experiences of immigrants to Australia tend to reflect those of lowlands and urban people.

Interviewees said they preferred cultivated places such as rural scenes and city parks. This is not surprising considering most lowland Vietnam is densely populated with around 83 million people and is heavily cultivated. Most land is used, even sheer rocky areas for grazing and collecting herbs. DiGregorio observed that this landscape preference arises from views held in the Vietnamese past: "...*The nature that was valued was a domesticated nature, a landscape willed with paddy fields, bamboo groves, canals, ponds, and villages, an ordered and largely humanized nature.*"<sup>63</sup>

### Food and nature

Use-based knowledge of environment is linked closely to the cultural importance of food for Vietnamese people. Professor of Environmental Studies, Le Trong Cuc used a food analogy to explain the importance of ecological protection: '*just like you need diversity at the table, you need diversity in the environment*'.<sup>64</sup> Other interviewees the importance of food in Vietnamese life and as a form of connection with

nature.<sup>65</sup>

The importance of productive natural places is evident in the home gardens of several interviewees in Sydney. The garden of Thanh Hue was filled with banana groves, papaya, dragon fruit and herbs which she uses to make Hue style dishes.

*"My garden, it's bushy, there is no landscaping at all, but you'll have an idea how gardens in Vietnam look. So a lot of people come and say 'Oh God! I feel so homesick when I look at it!'"*<sup>66</sup>

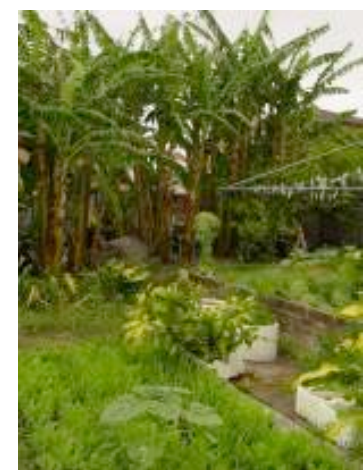
Food is a way of discussing environment, an important feature of life and culture in Hue where she grew up. Productive gardens are a key feature of Australian backyard gardens of migrants in Sydney. A 2004 NSW Department of Environment and Conservation report found that 64% of Vietnamese people grew vegetables and fruit at home.<sup>67</sup> This suggests the importance of



Rice paddies and powerlines outside Hanoi, Vietnam, 2006



Thanh Hué in the lush garden of her family home, Hué, 1949



Thanh Hué's home garden with herbs, green vegetables & bananas visible, Sydney, 2005

gardens as a means of connection with environments.

### Fishing/harvesting the sea

Interviewees such as Cuong Nguyen and Alison Phan explained that in country areas of Vietnam, fishing is accessible in backyard ponds and nearby rivers and women and men tend to fish.<sup>68</sup>

It is part of diet and daily life. Fishing was not a leisure/recreation activity (except for children and wealthier families).<sup>69</sup>

*Kim: As kids we went fishing in the small pond, and then caught some small, tiny fish just for fun, but it's not like a going fishing in Australia. It is so different. In Vietnam, when we were there, it was not a kind of sport at all, or leisure.*<sup>70</sup>

Many people had not fished recreationally until they came to Australia and actually started



fishing here. Overfishing in Vietnam to secure high prices in export markets has resulted in lower catches, while large scale prawn farming involves clearing of mangroves and turns soils acid.<sup>71</sup>



Fish nets in Hoi An, Vietnam, 2006

Such rapid industrialisation/urbanisation and transformation of environments have been peoples experiences within their own lives in Vietnam.

### 'National Garden' versus National Parks

Ho Chi Minh's Cuc Phuong National Park declaration speech in 1962 promoted the idea of environment as a national resource. He reputedly said: *"Forest are gold if we know how to conserve them and use them well they will be very precious."*<sup>72</sup> His socialist and nationalist approach to the environment is also apparent in his prison diaries.

In 1960 his Tet tree planting festivals recognised the importance of trees for timber, fruit, fuel, reforestation and stopping erosion.<sup>73</sup>

Since 1995 the number of National Parks has

increased.<sup>74</sup> Yet visitation by Vietnamese apart from middle class people and overseas tourists is not high. This is partly due to many National Parks being located in remote mountainous areas away from the cities. People said they were too busy working, tired, and 'why go there?' in response to questions about low Vietnamese visitor rates.

The creation and management of National Parks in Vietnam has been controversial as groups such as the Muong have been forced to move off their land. They have faced problems in accessing natural resources which they use. Some are now employed as guides in the National Parks.<sup>75</sup>

In Vietnam National Parks are seen to be improved by the presence of people, flowers and music.<sup>76</sup> An example is the karaoke bar which sits next to the entrance of Cuc Phuong National Park near the sleeping quarters.

Boat trips, orchid gardens and picnic areas appealed more to Vietnamese visitors than hiking. At Cuc Phuong National Park, the main sites that were popular and visited included a 1000 year old tree and a cave where offerings to ancestors were visible.

Revealingly, a direct translation of National Park in Vietnamese is 'national garden', according to Mark Infield.<sup>77</sup> His experience of managing



Tree protection poster at Cuc Phuong National Park Visitor Centre, Vietnam 2006

environmental programs with an Non Government Organisation in Vietnam is that Vietnamese people think 'nature is improved by people'.

The idea of the garden seems crucial to understanding Vietnamese use of parks, rather than 'wilderness', since Vietnamese landscapes have been managed for hundreds of thousands of years (as has Australia) and cultivation is highly valued.

The National Park, a particular form of land use which emerged from Anglo Australian, USA and northern Europe cultures is clearly not universally applicable. It has been revised and reworked in Vietnam.

### Personal Histories Memory & everyday interactions

Several interviewees mentioned their hometown rivers, the Perfume River of Hue and the To Lich and Red Rivers of Hanoi. River and family memories are entwined. Boi Tran explained how the river and her life course seemed to flow together:

*"The water always brings some calmness to me. I remember when I was very young, my father took me to the park... Later I knew that he went there because he wanted to have some private time to reflect... And I don't know if that connected me with the river, but I always loved the river. So when I married my former husband, whose house was... right on the bank of the river... I had more reason to love the river."*<sup>78</sup>

She also remembered the river as dangerous, bringing unpredictable floods and associated anxiety for her children's safety.

Hometown rivers of Hue and Hanoi are remembered as places of family, growth and identity for Thanh Hue: "Our house was on the riverbank... with a beautiful garden and the river, the beautiful river. All my students and my husband's students enjoy swimming, they always visited us and went swimming with my children."<sup>79</sup>

### What are parks like in Vietnam?

French colonial style gardens of Hanoi around the lakes and Saigon and the beach side

promenades in Nha Trang are popular places which are heavily used by city people.

Some interviewees had traveled before leaving and seen resort parks of Dalat in the highlands. It was frequently spoken of as beautiful and ideal (by interviewees here and in Vietnam) featuring lots of flowers, boats and people enjoying themselves.

Huy Pham saw parks as a key difference between the cities of Saigon and Sydney:

*"When you come here to Australia, you... find it very surprising, the spaciousness of the land here. I see so many parks here, in Sydney. In Vietnam, in Saigon I only know of one park... actually that park is in a zoo, and I've only been to the zoo once in my life. I do remember that the parks had green grass and plants, and flowers."*<sup>80</sup>

He noted that people didn't use parks to relax but rather they were places of public exercise and games: "With the parks in Vietnam, people actually don't use it to relax, to take a walk; they use it to play games and sports... My mother



Zoological Gardens, Saigon, 1966. Photo by Michael Barry Shannon, Australian War Memorial collection, SHA/65/0146/VN.



The 'Cave of the Ancient Man', with incense and offerings at the entrance, Cuc Phuong National Park, Vietnam, 2006



A park in Saigon, with neat borders, paved areas and statue of Ho Chi Minh, 2006.



Hoan Kiem Lake and bridge, Hanoi, 2006. A narrow strip of parkland and pathways border the lake.



Thanh Hue at the Perfume River, Hue, Vietnam, 2007



*used to ride her bike to the park and then do Tai Chi with a group of people... around six or five o'clock in the morning... and by the time she finished another group came to the park and took over. It's competitive over there to go to the park!"*<sup>81</sup>

Phuong recalled: *"Going to the park was not a habit for Vietnamese. Maybe now, but not in the past. And we've been at war for a long time and the curfew is another issue... And many people think that people who go to the park are either lovers or Viet Cong."*<sup>82</sup>

An interviewee who had left Vietnam later in her life said parks in Vietnam are seen as places

where prostitutes work and lovers go to rendezvous. Several interviewees in Vietnam echoed this idea.

Some interviewees saw parks in Sydney which reminded them of Vietnamese parks. Kim Nguyen said Auburn Botanical Gardens was more like a park in Vietnam, being enclosed and looking 'cared' for. The Asian influence on the park design was an attraction in early visits to parks in Sydney.

The Chinese Garden in Darling Harbour was described as being like parks in Vietnam. The differences in Sydney parks were striking though, as Alison Phan explained:

*"In Vietnam it's different. I mean you would probably go to the park by yourself because there's everything there, food and you know there's people selling things to you."*<sup>83</sup>

→ Personal histories of some interviewees are available at the *Gold and Silver* website: <http://www.migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au/exhibitions/goldandsilver>



Left: Huy Pham and his mother, Lien Thi Ho in Dalat, early 1980s. Huy's family went to Dalat for a holiday, not to visit relatives. This was unusual he said, as Vietnamese people don't have many holidays. He explained that it's very beautiful. This area is called the 'Valley of Love' and is considered to be romantic.



A shrine to the Mountain and River God, Tam Coc area, Vietnam, 2006



Kim Nguyen at Auburn Botanic Gardens, Sydney, 1980s



## Warfare, memory and trauma

As refugees many Vietnamese have experienced much trauma and this also shapes their responses to particular environments and experiences.

Boats and water have powerful associations for refugees as a means to freedom and escape. They appeared often as images in a community exhibition commemorating 30 years in Australia.

For Huy Pham the memory of escape by the sea is vivid:

*"...even though I was young, I could still have some fear, because you're in the water, you look left, right and back in front and you don't see any land, you don't see any buildings, you don't see anyone, It's just you and another... like a dozen more people and a fishing boat on the open sea."*<sup>84</sup>



Model boat made by a refugee, on display at the 30 years of settlement in Australia exhibition Campsie Library, 2005.

For some refugees water can be threatening unless contained though for others the calm water of rivers can provide some healing through practices like fishing.

Dai Le and her family associated large areas of green space such as parks and coastlines with freedom after spending four years in refugee camps. The children were 'constantly' being taken to the Royal Botanical Gardens during the first years of resettlement in Australia. Building positive shared memories, through park visits and other events helps to make places become significant. This is especially important after the trauma of fleeing homeland.<sup>85</sup>



The Nguyen family at the Botanical Gardens, Sydney, late 1980s.

Camping can have negative associations for some interviewees who experienced 're-education' camps and refugee camps. One interviewee explained that after all of the fleeing, hiding and anxiety, she experienced as a refugee escaping through Vietnam to Cambodia, she had no desire to camp, and her own bed in a safe space was important to her.<sup>86</sup>

People also bring some anxiety to national parks in Australia regarding authorities because of experiences in Vietnam. Suspicion of officials such as rangers and parking police was apparent in interviews.<sup>87</sup>

## PART 4

# VIETNAMESE EXPERIENCES IN GEORGES RIVER PARKS

### Cultural and spiritual experiences

#### Seeking connections: Rivers and gardens as reminders of homeland

A major part of the attraction of places like Georges River National Park and Chipping Norton is the calm waters of rivers and lakes which remind people of places in Vietnam, close to where they grew up. Others liked to go to the beach to look at the water.

Cuong Le, former Asian-Australian Community Cultural Development Officer at Casula Power House Arts Centre was born in Saigon and came to Australia in his 20s to study, noted that Vietnamese people feel very close to rivers, which were sources of transport, livelihoods and spirituality in Vietnam. In his broad experience with South Western Sydney Vietnamese communities, they are more interested in finding places like Vietnam than less familiar bush landscapes.<sup>88</sup>

Many of our interviewees spoke of intense homesickness during their first years in Australia.<sup>89</sup> People sought out or created familiar elements to make connections for themselves. Thanh Hue's garden served as a place where both worlds met – plants and cooking serving as a creative link.

Boi Tran Huynh-Beattie, an art historian who migrated to Australia from Saigon to study saw links with her homeland: *"I love the Georges River which reminds me of Dong Nai River in*



Lotus ponds near the Temple of Literature in Hanoi, Vietnam, 2006

*Vietnam where I was born and lived there most of my life before migrating to Australia."*<sup>90</sup>

For others the association of rivers and home exists too. Bach, a 73 year old grandmother from southern Vietnam, now living in Bankstown liked Lake Gillawarna as it reminded her of rivers in South Vietnam. It also appealed because it is full of people on weekends, another reminder of Vietnam. Many interviewees stated they liked seeing people in parks, which to them was reminiscent of bustling towns and cities of Vietnam.

People continued activities that were familiar from home such as feeding birds. Alison Phan's family came from the Vietnamese countryside and like to go to parks where there is water and ducks.



Lake Gillawarna, Mirrambeena Regional Park, near Georges Hall, Sydney, 2005

*"Something that resembles... what they had in their country". When they are in these surroundings "they would... talk about what happened in Vietnam..."*

The water lilies in the pond at Mirrambeena (Lake Gillawarna) are an attraction because *"it is very close to what is in Vietnam."*<sup>91</sup>

Many interviewees said the waters of the Georges River were the key attraction of Georges River National Park. This was more important to them than the bush.

#### Dragon Geography: Georges River feng shui

A young Chinese-Vietnamese focus group participant who enjoyed water while fishing and bushwalking said:



*"Water is calming I think and I mean Chinese, feng shui it's always good to even live by the water, it's good fortune."*<sup>92</sup>

Dai Le said her grandmother knew that certain places on the river are seen to be lucky, in relation to Cuu Long/Mekong (9 Dragons River) in Southern Vietnam.<sup>93</sup> She had also heard that in Sydney, the good place to live was around Chipping Norton. Some members of a Chipping Norton Focus Group noted:

*"Especially this street is one of the best for feng shui because of the position of the river... That means... the prosperity is going to you."*<sup>94</sup>

Some Chipping Norton residents said their neighbourhood's good *feng shui* was due to the closeness of the Georges River.<sup>95</sup> Another man chose to live at Illawong because it had good *feng shui* according to his friend.<sup>96</sup> Even for park visitors the presence of the river was favourable and a major attraction of Georges River National Park. Thanh Hue noted Vietnamese people in Brisbane tend to live in the suburb of Sunshine because this is the 'dragons head' of the river.<sup>97</sup> It could also be a way of explaining why people chose to live in certain areas, making sense of this phenomenon both in Brisbane and in Sydney. On the other hand, some Vietnamese Australian interviewees said it was a real estate agents PR trick!

### **Spirituality & sense of freedom in parks, valuing differences**

Dai Le recalled that Vietnamese refugees arriving in Sydney during the 1970s and 1980s had enjoyed visiting parks and beaches. They associated this in her view with the joy of escaping the refugee camps of Southeast Asia.<sup>98</sup>

Boi Tran who arrived as a migrant saw a direct link between Sydney Georges River and a sense of freedom associated with being in Sydney:

*"When we passed the bridge, over the Georges River, when it comes to the turn where you start to see the water, I felt like a bird let out of the cage."*<sup>99</sup>

Vinh Nguyen commented on space as something he had come to enjoy in Australia which suggested freedoms and a standard of

living different to Vietnam:

*"Over there [Vietnam] I would dream to have the space where I plant my clothes hoist to build a house, they would love it!"*

He also noted:

*"I like space to move around I don't want to live in confined space. A sense of space and freedom..."*<sup>100</sup>



Huy Pham's mother, Lien Thi Ho, at Georges River National Park



Thanh Hué (far right) and friends at Nelson Falls, Tasmania, 2004. So many waterfalls in Australia are 'a thread of water' compared to Canadian ones said Thanh Hué, but Nelson Falls was impressive.



## Seeking cultivated and open space parks

Many of our interviewees said they preferred Sydney parks which were more like gardens. Both Bach and Nuoi thought they looked at nature differently to Anglo-Australians. Bach said:

*I guess Australians [Anglo-Australians] go to parks more and they seem to like to leave nature as it is. We Asians are more homebound. We also like nature to be complemented by human efforts so it's less 'wild' and less empty or 'lifeless'.<sup>101</sup>*

Even young people who have lived in Australia for most of their lives agreed. Huy Pham from Bankstown said:

*"For me parks should be designed- so it's beautiful, people go there, they look at it, it's creative. Don't leave it too much for nature to decide."<sup>102</sup>*

## Enjoying crowds

Groups of people and activity in the parks made them more appealing to Vietnamese interviewees. There was a valuing of social places and human activity in the park, as with places like Darling Harbour and Hyde Park in the city.

A Vietnamese member of DECC's bilingual educators group said Vietnamese were not attracted to bushland because they did not like 'emptiness'. They liked Chipping Norton because there were plenty of people there, you could see living things and people walking around.<sup>103</sup>



Vinh, Kim and university friends meeting kangaroos at Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, ACT, 1987

## Enjoying the view

Parks were valued as scenery by Vietnamese interviewees. Ideal areas were like compositions with elements such as water and lotus ponds. Young Vietnamese park users mentioned 'enjoying the view' as a park use associated with Georges River National Park and areas around Chipping Norton in mapping exercises.

Swimming at the beach and bushwalking were seen as Anglo Australian activities though some younger focus group members did bushwalk. Most Vietnamese interviewed said they went to the beach to sit and watch the view.

## Reflection/meditation/Tai Chi

Thanh Hue and other Buddhist friends gather together and meditate as they walk along Cooks and Georges Rivers. They valued the river and paths along it as places of contemplation and often stopped for breakfast by the river.<sup>104</sup>



Thanh Hué at one of her favourite spots along the Cooks River walkway, 2006

Tai Chi was mentioned as an older person's use of the parks in Australia and Vietnam. Kim Nguyen recalled seeing older Vietnamese using parks in Cabra Vale and Lansvale in this way.<sup>105</sup> Public spaces like Freedom Plaza in Cabramatta were also popular as with urban parks in Asia where older people stroll, sit and chat.

## Poetry and creativity

For some interviewees the parks and the river were seen as a source of creativity and reflection and were valued for this. Kim Nguyen still writes poems about the sunset over the river in her hometown in Vietnam.

Tran Ngoc Hanh who was born in My Tho, came from Saigon to Sydney in 1991, expressed a sense of being torn between places in a poem she wrote in a Georges River park. She used to take her father there (the artist Tranh Thanh Nhan) to feed the birds. Poetry especially among older people who have left Vietnam often

records both their longing for the past and their relationship with a new environment.<sup>106</sup> Some young people also mentioned it as a place of inspiration for writing.

Huy Pham suggested the importance to him that the Georges River held for finding peace:

*"I think it's just a nice spot to relax, or you have some things to think about, you look at the water you'll find some serenity within yourself, and then some of your thoughts will be clearer."*<sup>107</sup>

### **Social: family, community, country experiences**

#### **Picnics and BBQs as family and social bonding**

People attended barbeques and picnics with family and friends at Chipping Norton and Georges River National Park and referred to this as a key park use for them.<sup>108</sup>

For Huy Pham and his family visiting Georges River National Park was an important part of their initial connections with the place. The family often visited Georges River National Park just five months after arriving in Australia in 1990. He still visits this spot and explained why it was his favourite spot in the area: "...you get the river there, also the barbeque facilities and parking. It's spacious

*there and we can play some sports like volley ball or badminton. Badminton is a big part of the Vietnamese culture".*<sup>109</sup>

Huy Pham described Vietnamese barbeques and the role of the extended family in preparing and participating in them:

*"People would normally... organise barbeques at the park... with other families... like a family catch up, then all members of the family would be there, the parents and the uncles, the aunts, the sisters, all the cousins and the grandpa and the grandma... It's a big event. So they would... bring all the barbeque [items], all the meat that they have marinated overnight or the seafood and the salad and then they also bring a couple of fishing rods there. Then they would start the day pretty early in the morning, so by ten o'clock they would get to the park and start barbequing, then play some sports, volleyball is quite popular and... find a spot and do some fishing. Then we'd go home around five o'clock. That would be a very nice day."*<sup>110</sup>

Family connection is evident here and the social and natural are interlinked. This sharing of food plays a role in bringing everyone together.

Visits to Georges River parks had an emphasis on family, a very important feature of Vietnamese cultures. This is apparent at Tet

#### **Unfrequented River**

*by Tran Ngoc Hanh, translated by Boitran Huynh Beattie (1996)*

*The unfrequented river flows peacefully in the late afternoon  
A boat floats on the roving water, over which birds soar  
On the bank, willow leaves hang like hair caressed by the wind  
Further away some houses come into view.*

*Oh how this reminds me of my former homeland  
Who goes back there – may I entrust a message from my heart?  
Bewildered with this landscape, sky, clouds and water,  
My soul writhes with painful thoughts of homeland.*

(Vietnamese New Year) too, originally held in Cabravale Park in the 1980s, and now held at Warwick Farm. Tet is also celebrated at temples, where ancestors are honoured and included as part of family across time.

For Vietnamese visitors an attraction of Georges River parks is room for large groups to sit on the lawn for picnics. Nuoi explains why parks is seen as suitable venues:

*"I go to parks when people organize events at parks. They are not too far from Bankstown so it's easy to get there. It has a nice river. There are areas for the kids to play and spots for fishing. There are also shades to sit under. It's cheaper to hire than a function hall. It has things for different people to enjoy."*<sup>111</sup>

The grass area is one of the key features for such activities while the bushland is more of a backdrop than primarily being a place to enter or explore for many interviewees.

Cuong and Vinh Nguyen spoke of the pleasure of laying down on the grass as something Australian parks and backyards offered, in sharp contrast to Vietnam:

**Vinh:** *You don't worry about dirtiness, and you can lay back [on the grass], enjoy the fresh air, look at the sky, it's so high and so clear. The environment here is good!*<sup>112</sup>

Chipping Norton Focus group 2007 members had a clear sense of their preferences for picnics over other activities:

*"Westerners like bush walking. For Asians we like to have a barbeque. By the river, to drink and eat and have a picnic. And a view."*<sup>113</sup>

The extended family gather together from time to time, to play, talk, share food, tell and hear stories from the past to maintain these connections. Parks like Georges River National Park have an enabling role in social bonding.

Long and Thi both in their 40s, saw getting together with family as something they valued and wanted their children to do in future.<sup>114</sup>

Picnicking and barbequing is something Vietnamese do in Australia as Dai Le pointed out. In Vietnam people tend not to picnic in parks. It is socialising in large groups of family and friends and sharing food together that is the link.

### Places for caring work – elderly and children

For some women experiences of parks are wrapped up in caring for others. Anh-Linh Pham was sponsored to come to Australia by her mother in the 1980s and is a social/ community worker. The park that meant most to her was in Cabramatta where she took her mother everyday in her wheelchair to get some fresh air. She said this daily ritual made her and her mother happy and the park provided a change of scenery. Taking children to the park was part of her work life too.



Huy Pham's mother and father at Georges River National Park, just five months after arriving in Sydney, picnicking and fishing, 1990



Left: Huy Pham at Black Muscat Park, Chipping Norton, 2005. This park and others around the lakes were favourite spots for Huy and his university friends to meet up. And, far left, at Georges River National Park, 1990



Concern for the elderly and respect for family are key features of Vietnamese culture which influence women's park use here.<sup>115</sup> Younger interviewees like Alison Phan spoke of taking grandparents to Lake Gillawarna as a major reason for going to the park.

### Young people: driving, social bonding and night use

Cars are a key element of night-time park use for young Vietnamese Sydneysiders especially men. A young Vietnamese man spoke of how in Year 12 he began driving to national parks at night with his friends:

*"We'd stop the car at the lookout point and stand there for about half an hour or an hour and have a chit chat... last night we were there until about two in the morning."*<sup>116</sup>

He also mentioned walking with friends on a bush track at night trying to reach a waterfall.

Parks were also used at night for storytelling. A 23 year old interviewee went to Chipping Norton several times a year with her friends in student groups *'to have a bonfire and bonding session'*.<sup>117</sup> Younger people saw their park use as more spontaneous and distinct from their parents, which they attributed to mixing with people of different backgrounds and spending more time in Australia.

### Education about homeland

Parks were seen by several interviewees as places of cross generational education. Connections with memory and educating



A park site around the Chipping Norton Lakes where young people like to gather. Photo by Cuong Nguyen, 2002

younger people through repeat visits to parks and celebrations was mentioned by older interviewees. The natural environment here in Australia was contrasted with previous disruptions. Bach said:

*"The joy of it is to see all your children and grandchildren playing together, enjoying each other's company. I get to talk about old times, to teach and remind my children and grandchildren of their background and cultural origin."*

*It's also fun sometimes when we catch fish, but it rarely happens. However, it's a wonderful feeling to see your family having fun, no more war, no more poverty, no worries about work."*<sup>118</sup>

Parks like Georges River National Park serve as sites for shared memories. For later generations, their new home is the place of main attachment but they often have a strong attachment to a place they have grown up hearing about from their elders and also visiting.



'Don't stand on the grass' sign  
Temple of Literature, Hanoi, 2006

### Community gatherings: family and beyond

Vietnamese community organisations use parks for barbeques and gatherings on a regular basis. This has become another way of connecting with people and environment beyond family and affirming identity as Vietnamese Australians.

Thanh Hue through her work with the Riverwood Community Centre had organised numerous excursions along Georges River for elderly Vietnamese people. She has also visited Chipping Norton on numerous occasions with Vietnamese Senior Scouts:

*"I have activities with... the Vietnamese senior scout group. Every two months, we gather together and if it's good weather like summer or spring, we go to the parks and usually it's Garrison Point [we] always have a very good relationship."*<sup>119</sup>

Community days where money is raised for

community projects here and in Vietnam are often held at parks. Fund raising gatherings were mentioned as a memorable park use by a member of the Chipping Norton focus group:

*"Once a year one of the charity organisations, they celebrate the festival ... for fund raising... It's getting bigger and bigger because the park has many places for children and facilities and barbeques and shade. Last time they had about 10,000 Vietnamese people... I enjoyed that."*<sup>120</sup>

Vietnamese Students Associations at universities also organise trips to national parks.

Public Tet celebrations were previously held in CabraVale Park, close to Cabramatta Station and the busy town centre mall. It has become so popular that it is now held at Warwick Farm racecourse where there is more space to cater for larger numbers of people attending.

### **Fishing: social and productive experiences**

Fishing is strongly associated with Vietnamese people. Interviews, visits to parks and blogs suggest there is much Vietnamese fishing occurring in Sydney.

The Vietnamese community has been stigmatized as overfishing and catching undersize fish by fisheries organisations, and they have experienced hostility from other fishers. As a result they are reluctant to talk about it.

The Ethnic Communities Council of Australia (FECCA) undertook a major survey of Vietnamese fishing in Australia, released in 1997. It recognized that different ideas might be held



Tet at Cabra-Vale Park, 1991, Fairfield Local Studies Collection, Cabramatta.

about fishing in Vietnam where it was often a means of surviving and was unregulated.<sup>121</sup>

Often the reasons behind Australian legislation about on catch sizes had not been adequately explained. The report emphasized education, through field trips and talks – such as those organised by Hai Chung of NSW Fisheries. Consumption patterns – that is eating a wide range of aquatic life – is central to Vietnamese cuisine and may influence what is kept and used.

Vietnamese prawn netting was raised as an issue by several members of a Chipping Norton Focus Group. A woman in the group said:

*"During the season it's every night. They take the net and throw it out and just catch all the prawns and all the fish".*

Another member said: *"And the problem is they're Vietnamese and I can't go and approach them... because they know where I live... And I see the prawns they catch are in the market the next day [at Cabramatta]."*<sup>122</sup>



Tet at Warwick Farm 2006 with lucky money tree and open air food stalls

They expressed their frustration at overfishing in their neighbourhood and the health risks which arose from this (as Chipping Norton Lake is polluted and toxic). These interviewees had approached local MPs and NSW Fisheries. There was much discomfort and embarrassment in interviews about fishing in terms of the sale of toxic fish within the community.<sup>123</sup> FECCA noted that at times, members of the Vietnamese Australian community have internalised some of the misinformed and negative stereotyping which their study had identified.

Vinh Nguyen explained that Vietnamese people fish in parks partly because they need *'something to pass the time'*.<sup>124</sup> Many Vietnamese people interviewed said they felt they needed a purpose for going to a park.

While fishing serves in some senses as a familiarising activity in a new place, some city-based people didn't fish before coming here. Dai Le said practices like fishing, shell collecting and photography in parks are about sharing activities with other displaced Vietnamese. They are ways



to make new memories in Australia rather than being familiar activities or landscapes; it was about being together *“doing things with other Vietnamese.”*<sup>125</sup>

For Vietnamese people, fishing in the Georges River evokes not just the memory but the physical feel and experience of that other place.<sup>126</sup>

Dahn explained why recreational fishing appealed to him:

*“It’s healthy, economical, fun and relaxing. Fishing with my brother was also fun because it reminded me of the time we spent in Vietnam.”*<sup>127</sup>

The pleasure of being by water was also a reason Vietnamese Sydneysiders chose to go fishing.



Vietnamese people talking with fishermen, Georges River National Park, 2004

Women fished much more in Vietnam than Sydney. In Vietnam women are visible, working in fields, washing clothes along rivers. There is less distinction in private/public, and footpaths are like an extension of household space.<sup>128</sup>

### **New environments: exploring and settling in**

#### **A new importance for water in a dry place?**

Water is important for Vietnamese in Australian parks perhaps because Australia is so dry compared to Vietnam - a ‘waterworld’. Members of a focus group picnic in 2004 said:

*“I think the water features in the park make it more enticing. You go to the park and if you see a river running through it... you think that might be a bit more beautiful... you feel cool as well.”*



Sign at Garrison Point Mirambeena warning against eating fish from the Chipping Norton waterways, 2006

*“You feel a bit dry if there’s no water in... any park really. I don’t just want to see trees, a little bit of water might help the view.”*<sup>129</sup>

Huy Pham explained clearly the many different ways water is important here for Vietnamese people:

*“... in Vietnamese culture, we think of water as life, it’s calming. The river is a big part of Vietnamese culture because in rural areas, people use the water from the river for the rice fields... so there’s that connection of the river, and also the land and the rice fields there. To some people when they look at the river it makes them feel a bit at home... it reminds them of their memories in Vietnam. The river is a big part of our life and that’s why a lot of people do fishing.”*<sup>130</sup>

Other communities seek resemblances in mountains seen here in Australia.



Huy Pham and his father at Georges River National Park soon after their arrival in Sydney, 1990.



Vinh Nguyen said his use of parks in the area was partly determined by water: *"We like to stay near the water; I think a lot of people do. It gives you some sense of freshness and cleanness."* He also valued 'the coolness' of the river being inland in south west where temperatures often soar in summer.<sup>131</sup>

For a Chipping Norton focus group (2007) member the lake and park were highly valued for their rarity in the area:

*"...if you look at Chipping Norton particularly the park and the lake, it's the only one in Liverpool really. You can't find anywhere in western Sydney with a park and a lake."*<sup>132</sup>

Thanh-Hue relished the sound and sight of water, especially waterfalls. She said waterfalls gave her:

*"A feeling of something fresh, of life..because everything needs water. I don't like the ocean much, because of the sand, and sun, but hills with water, especially springs... I love it... last year I went to Canada... and at the back of the chalet was a spring. I always left the window open so I could hear... the sound of the water running."*<sup>133</sup>

### **Parks as ways to explore new environments and leisure**

As refugees and migrants, after finding jobs and places to live, finding out about their new environment was an important part of starting to feel more settled and 'at home' in Australia.

Chipping Norton parks and Picnic Point/Georges River National Park were often mentioned as key



Vinh Nguyen in Ku Ring gai National Park, Sydney, 2002



Kim Nguyen and a friend at Berowra Waters, 1980s.



Vinh Nguyen with his children Neil, Karen and their uncle in Hanoi, 2000.



places where people forged a relationship with new environment.

People also bring curiosity about Australian environments, and park visits can be an adventure rather than a nostalgic trip. Dai Le and the Nguyens said they had a great enthusiasm for exploring new places since their arrival. Kim teaches younger Vietnamese people in the Cabramatta area English, and sees her enthusiasm for experiencing different environments mirrored in the attitude of her students:

*"They love excursions, and they love exploring. Like we did in the past, they want to adjust themselves into the environment - and everyone thinks the same opinion that the environment in Australia is the best."*<sup>134</sup>

She spoke of the isolation many students felt upon arriving and how as teachers they planned activities to help make the place familiar –such as trips on the *Rivercat* and picnics in parks and gardens.

This desire for new experiences continued after arrival in Australia. A woman participant in the Georges Hall focus group expressed a keen interest in new sights in parks:

*"I particularly like the open space and I like the nature... When I go to the park I like to explore it to see what they've got living in there. Maybe some wonderful plants or new design or birds."*<sup>135</sup>

Visits to Vietnam often sharpened people's sense of attachment to environment in Australia as did raising children here. Children are a



Kim Nguyen's students at Cabra Vale park, Cabramatta, late 1980s.

strong connector with place, and emotional connections grow here with them too, over time:

Vinh: *After we spent about eleven years here in Sydney and in Canberra and had two small children here... we went back to Vietnam, for the first time after we left. It brought us to tears, to look down from the plane and see the paddy fields down there. 'Oh! this is home'.*

*And then we went back there [again] and we've got nothing left there except for the relatives...*

*After a while all the kids, they miss Australia, because they were born here.*

Kim: *"And we realise that Australia is our home. Vietnam is our home country but Australia is our home."*<sup>136</sup>

It was the scent of gum leaves and sounds of gums in the wind which made another interviewee realise they felt at home in Australia.<sup>137</sup>

## PART 5

# COMMUNITY CONCERNS

This project also asked people what issues interfered with their use of the parks. They expressed concerns about some issues they had experienced in parks. In these discussions, people also made suggestions about what would improve their experiences. These are included here and have been incorporated into the following section, Project Recommendations.<sup>138</sup>

### Safety concerns

Safety was frequently mentioned by women interviewees, both for themselves and for their children. Fear of rape is a factor in women's anxiety about public spaces across communities.

Lily said that there were many stories among young Vietnamese of assaults occurring at the 'strip' of parkland along Henry Lawson Drive:

*"I guess that is also why we opt for cafés and beaches more often than parks: you never know who might be in the bush or behind a tree."*<sup>139</sup>

Young Vietnamese people interviewed in 2002 said they had not personally experienced violence in parks at night. However, women focus group members who were older had experienced harassment at Mirrambeena.

Women interviewees in the Georges Hall focus group explained how anxieties about safety curbed their use of the park – both the areas and times they could go there:

*"I really want to go walking in the early morning around the park... to walk around at the*

*newness of the day but I couldn't do it because of safety."*<sup>140</sup>

### Walking groups

They suggested forming walking groups (among friends and through council) and said they would feel safer in a larger group doing this or tai chi. This would also serve a social purpose. The area discussed is large and during the working week there is rarely anyone there:

*"When we use the park on the quietest days... the children ride... and we just walk along with the children. On the weekend there's lots of people. But on the normal day, it would be better if the police or the ranger could just ride around."*<sup>141</sup>

A male member of the group suggested an emergency contact phone (like those on highways) where a ranger would come to assist would be useful if you felt that you were in danger *"so we can feel that at least there is someone there."*<sup>142</sup>

A lack of people made some Vietnamese people anxious about going to parks.

Younger people also mentioned frustration with patchy mobile phone coverage, which could be seen as a safety issue too.

### Lighting

Dahn said more lights in parks at night would make it safer for people fishing there. Night-time

park visitors are exposed to danger from those 'who don't like to be seen'. He sees lighting as a way of reducing or removing a risk factor.

Night use of parks and better lighting were also mentioned by Arabic speakers as an improvement which would be welcomed.

Phuong, a working mother who left Saigon aged 22 and has lived in the south west for 14 years, and was worried about the safety of her children at the park because she does not feel safe.

Chipping Norton playgrounds, she said, were *"too deep into the park and were old and dirty. It gives you the feeling of isolation"* and she doesn't feel safe. *"Last summer, I brought my son to the park... and when I went inside there was nobody there so I had to go out. I didn't want to go inside because there's a lot of trees."* She said that there must be some trees, but if it's too dense it makes people feel that *"they could get lost in the jungles. It doesn't give you a good feeling..."*<sup>143</sup>

Areas with open space and visibility seem to be essential to Vietnamese use of parks.

### Concerns about health and river pollution

Pollution of the Georges River made some people reluctant to go to the parks. One interviewee explained:

*"Before I would bring them [her children] to the Georges River, but now there is a lot of rubbish in the river. Too much. And before I saw swans*



*a lot. Now there's not many in there. [Boi Tran translates/explains]: She used to see a lot of swans before. Now they're all gone. Where did they go?"*<sup>144</sup>

Throughout the interview she said the colour of the river had changed and there were no fish now. As repeat visitors are not passive consumers of parks, but are actively observing environmental change this knowledge could be drawn upon more in the environmental planning and management of parks.

Boi Tran Huynh-Beattie and the Nguyens expressed sadness regarding environmental damage in Vietnam too. Boi Tran spoke of the increase in pollution in her hometown river since 2000:



Friends of the Nguyens at Magic Kingdom, Georges River

*"What is going to happen to our children later, the next two generations, you know? And during my lifetime I see the Dong Nai River turn colour already."*<sup>145</sup>

Rivers here were viewed with an awareness of pollution, as a way of measuring change. People had often come from very urbanized backgrounds in Vietnam, with a strong consciousness of river pollution.<sup>146</sup>

Numerous Vietnamese interviewees expressed anxiety about the sale of fish and prawns from Chipping Norton Lake, which is toxic, in Vietnamese food stores in Cabramatta. People who bought the prawns and other aquatic food were unaware of where it had come from and that it represented a health risk.



Moon Festival decorations and photos being taken before them at Freedom Plaza Cabramatta, 2007

## Cross cultural tension

Tensions have arisen between Vietnamese parks uses and other groups, although people were generally reluctant to talk about this. Our interviews with Anglo-Australian youths in the area indicated that they had on several occasions violently assaulted Vietnamese fishermen at night in misguided attempts to impose fishing regulations. FECCA has reported similarly unprovoked attacks by Anglo-Australian youths on Vietnamese fishing people.

Vietnamese interviewees expressed general fears for personal safety and one reported being aware of inter-group tensions between Arabic Australians and Vietnamese. However on only one occasion did an interviewee personally express concern about another identified ethnic group, saying he was bothered by 'Muslims' who had large gatherings at Chipping Norton with loud music – but such comments were rarely mentioned explicitly.<sup>147</sup>

## More Public events and activities in parks

As a counterpoint to any concerns about noise or interference by other groups of park users, Vietnamese Australian interviewees made a number of suggestions. For example, young people spoke of activities to make parks more appealing to them, such as organised roller-blading or abseiling, kayaking, bike-riding, competitions, a dance floor and the creation of more fishing spots which were better constructed.<sup>148</sup>

They also liked the idea of more people being in parks, and they were attracted by crowds. There were also numerous suggestions about

‘organised activities’.<sup>149</sup>

Similarly, parents in the Georges Hall focus group also expressed a desire for music and events like Australia Day concerts, boat hire and activities in parks to draw people into the parks. They proposed that such events would discourage troublesome park users and increase the safety and socialness of the park. A woman focus group participant said:

*“I think [there should be] more festivals in the park... They also have the children’s festival, the Moon Festival. They should have it here [Mirrambeena] because there’s lots of parking and then the park can be used more... Not just there as a nice national park. So I think when people use [it]... the park the bad people would stay away.”*<sup>150</sup>

‘Safe for the children and more family friendly’ was a theme expressed by the Georges Hall focus group.

The row boats at Audley in The Royal National Park were an attraction to interviewees. Dahn said more boat hire places would make it easier for people to fish and explore further up the river.<sup>151</sup>

### Play equipment

In another suggestion to maximise attendance and comfort in parks for all visitors, a number of parents suggested that play equipment for children would be a drawcard. For Anh Linh, as a social worker, it was an important factor in choosing which parks to attend with the children



Children celebrating the Moon Festival at Cabra Vale Park, 1985, Fairfield Local Studies Historical Photograph Collection

she looks after.<sup>152</sup> This was mentioned by other mothers we spoke with too.

Many Vietnamese park visits involved young children. The lack of play equipment at Georges River National Park was a reason for choosing council parks like Chipping Norton to visit instead.

Some people would like to have seen parks like

Chipping Norton and Georges River National Park ‘improved’ with gardens and water features while others clearly appreciated its naturalness.

When re-fitting or landscaping (especially in council parks) consideration needs to be given to visibility and location of playgrounds so women, Vietnamese or otherwise, feel able to access such places.



## PART 6

# PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PARKS & RIVER

Vietnamese people already have used green spaces and parks creatively and adapted particular spots to suit their uses. It is important to value the flexibility of the unstructured space the park offers. However, some modifications could improve experiences of Vietnamese park users (and other groups simultaneously).

Though interviewees often made little distinction between National Parks and council run parks in interviews, they have different management policies and possibilities – so a distinction is made here.

### Georges River National Parks & urban national parks

#### Discovery tours

The basis for tailored discovery tours for Vietnamese Australians is clear in this research. The Office of Environment and Heritage already employs both bilingual educators and Indigenous rangers and staff and has an established Discovery Tour program.

Discovery tours could, for example, emphasise the historic use by Aboriginal communities of river banks to cultivate yam beds around the Georges River, or to gather Cabra (cobra), the estuarine wood worms which are still prized as a food source. Today's Vietnamese Australian connection with Cabramatta suggests other possibilities. Tours could emphasise Vietnamese and Aboriginal cultural connections with the

dragon and rainbow serpent or food resources, in consultation with the appropriate Indigenous staff and advisors.

This could make the landscape seem more alive and useful. Discovery tours hold much potential in pointing out such connections and would show that Vietnamese cultural knowledge is valued and worth sharing too. Initial tours could include recently arrived migrants through migrant resource centres as with the innovative

Operation Blue Tongue program run by Leandro Mendes from the Ethnic Communities Council and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (previously DECCW) established specifically for recently arrived immigrants.<sup>153</sup>

Some interviewees said they thought of bush as something to fear until they were introduced to it, suggesting the importance of an actual introduction to such landscapes.<sup>154</sup>



Topiary dragon at Tet, Warwick Farm, Sydney, 2006



### Use 'open' spaces for gatherings

NPWS could host some key community gatherings to show that communities are welcome and that social uses and bonding is valued. While there are already major gatherings of Tet and Moon festival other events could happen in the lead up to it as a recognition of this park use.

Staffing issues such as providing extra rangers, parking and toilet facilities need consideration, but part of the National Park Act does include the possibility of social activities.<sup>155</sup>

### Support group park visitation

Vietnamese and Arabic Australians preferred visiting parks in groups rather than individually - including second and third generation members of these communities. This explains the attraction of areas such as the large sheltered picnic tables at Chipping Norton (which people gather at very early on the weekend to reserve, indicating just how popular they are!)

When refitting/landscaping occurs, ways of enabling such gatherings rather than providing standard nuclear family sized picnic tables should be considered, as could features which appeal to children near the grassy picnic areas.

### Staff presence/safety addressed

The cultural diversity of on-park park management staff in both Local Government and State Government bodies could be increased for programs in urban parks especially. Parks Victoria has targeted and trained volunteer

rangers. These volunteers guide groups through points of interest to their community and others.<sup>156</sup> Hiring people from diverse backgrounds and supporting employment opportunities needs consideration.

Park Managers from all levels of Government could invite members of Vietnamese Australian groups to join advisory or reference groups for urban parks of which they are heavy users. Many Local Government Council parks have less of a brief to protect bushland and fauna than do National Parks (though some do) and they could offer different opportunities to National Parks for volunteer community rangers and on-park attendants as well as more active roles for community reference groups.

### Improve access

Georges River National Park is only easily accessible by car (except for neighbours who can reach it on foot or bicycle). A link with Revesby train station for example by mini bus would make it more accessible, especially to elderly people without car access mid week.

Trial evening hour openings in summer is another possibility as night use was frequently mentioned.

### Support Cross-Cultural and interactive interpretation

River parks and places are repeatedly visited by Vietnamese Australians such as Chipping Norton and Picnic Point. Often like the Nguyen and Pham families whom we have interviewed, other Vietnamese Australian visitors have lived in the area for 20 years or more. The parks are their



A sign at Georges River National Park in Arabic and Vietnamese – the only bilingual sign present, 2009.

local places, and they have history here. Some recognition of this in interpretation and on site is worth considering.

Casula Power House right on the Georges River has open space around it which could be used for outdoor activities. Fairfield City Council Museum recently organised a series of community based exhibitions looking at rituals across communities, while Bankstown Council has, in collaboration with local community members, developed a series of multicultural artworks, called 'Cross currents: Georges River artwalks', along parts of the river to draw people to those areas.<sup>157</sup>

Shared interests and uses of parks over time by a range of communities like picnics, fishing and barbecuing could be useful ways of forging connections and looking at similarities and differences. This could encourage cultural exchange in a relaxed environment – such as an

event based around this or in an on-park exhibition.

### **Clean up Australia days**

This is a popular local activity organised through temples or community groups and schools.

Spouses of focus group members were involved in Clean Up Australia activities at Chipping Norton.<sup>158</sup> Chua Phuoc Hue temple (Wetherill Park) was involved in Clean Up Australia days.

Pagodas and temples are social spaces, rather than purely religious sites. These networks could be involved in other environmental activities.<sup>159</sup>

This activity has migrated back to Vietnam too. The Australian Vietnamese man who runs the Scout Café in Hoi An, ran Clean Up days for the river there too.<sup>160</sup>

The ongoing relationship forged through travel back and forth from Vietnam to Australia could be used for environmental programs in both places especially regarding water pollution.

### **Plantings**

In parks with non-native plantings, plants significant to people from their homelands could show a recognition of cultural diverse visitors.<sup>161</sup> It could be linked to key community seasonal

events, for example plantings of marigolds around Tet events or cumquats. A number of interviewees favoured visiting gardens with flowers so this would be likely to appeal.

Tet tree planting could be used here too, but given a local and/or transcultural perspective appropriate to the area.

### **Cater for popular park compatible activities**

Tai Chi friendly spaces, pebble pathways for older people to walk on to massage feet were mentioned in other studies as specific ways of catering for Vietnamese and Chinese park users.<sup>162</sup>

### **River Keeper**

Georges River Combined Councils Committee employs a Riverkeeper who engages in bush regeneration, river clearing and education. Groups such as those involved in Clean Up Australia days could be contacted and particular locations along the river which are significant to them could be targeted. for example, areas of Chipping Norton for bush regeneration and Tet tree planting.

### **NSW School Environment Education Centre**

Georges River Environmental Education Centre at Chipping Norton runs programs for school

children such as testing water quality at Chipping Norton and field trips to the headwaters of the Georges River. Discussions with staff there suggest enthusiasm for considering approaches to environments relevant to culturally diverse schools in the area who visit.

### **Valuing of social uses of river**

Recognising Vietnamese knowledge of Georges River, in relation to Aboriginal, Arabic Australian and other residents' knowledge of place, holds much potential.

Vietnamese Australians bring knowledge of and interest in rivers, and cultivated places which could be drawn upon by park managers. They are not empty of ideas about environment and have much to offer in drawing attention to the importance of parks in social bonding and community building.

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- <sup>1</sup> Low, 2005 for example
- <sup>2</sup> ABS, Census 2006
- <sup>3</sup> ABS, 2006 Census
- <sup>4</sup> Winston, 1957, Goodall et al, 2010; Evans and Freestone, 2011; ABS Census 2006 results displayed for the LGAs of the Cities of Liverpool, Fairfield, Bankstown and Hurstville. These figures and maps can all be accessed on the websites of the City Councils)
- <sup>5</sup> ABS, 2006 Census
- <sup>6</sup> 1996, The Environment and Ethnic Communities, Community Profile, Vietnamese, 2004
- <sup>7</sup> DEC 2004 p48, p4
- <sup>8</sup> 1996, The Environment and Ethnic Communities, Community Profile, Vietnamese, 2004
- <sup>9</sup> DEC 2004 p48, p4
- <sup>10</sup> See Hawthorne, Guyen Chau, Hoag for escape narratives.
- <sup>11</sup> Jupp, 2001 p731
- <sup>12</sup> ABS, 2006, p26.
- <sup>13</sup> 2001 Census – Fairfield council website
- <sup>14</sup> ABS 2008, 32.
- <sup>15</sup> Australia in Profile, Census of Population and Housing 1993 p30.
- <sup>16</sup> Ibid p27
- <sup>17</sup> CRC for a Multicultural NSW, p60
- <sup>18</sup> ABS 2006: 32
- <sup>19</sup> Jupp, 2001 p728.
- <sup>20</sup> Viviani 1996 p7. The White Australia Policy was officially abolished in 1973.
- <sup>21</sup> Viviani citing HREOC report in 1996, p150, 34-37
- <sup>22</sup> Nguyen 2005 p141
- <sup>23</sup> Burnley 1991 p80, Jupp 2001
- <sup>24</sup> Nguyen T H, King B, Turner L 2003 pp 95-107
- <sup>25</sup> Burney 1991: 81-2
- <sup>26</sup> Ngoc 2004 :837
- <sup>27</sup> Ngoc 2004 : 555, 1055, Lam 2005
- <sup>28</sup> Nguyen Bich (ed) 1975 Introduction.
- <sup>29</sup> Nguyen Bich (ed) 1975, p41; Ngoc 2004
- <sup>30</sup> Nguyen Bich (ed) 1975 p116.
- <sup>31</sup> Vinh and Kim Nguyen interviewed by Allison Cadzow 12 July 2005
- <sup>32</sup> For example, 'The River Back Home' by Te Hanh in Nguyen Bich (ed) 1975:182-3.
- <sup>33</sup> Boi Tran Huynh- Beattie, 21 July2006, Taylor 2000
- <sup>34</sup> Viettouch website <http://www.viettouch.com/art> Taylor 2000
- <sup>35</sup> Taylor 2000 p155.
- <sup>36</sup> Long Thanh gallery, Nha Trang, 2006.
- <sup>37</sup> Brunn & Kalland 1996p12.
- <sup>38</sup> Dinh 2003, Cuc 1999.
- <sup>39</sup> Boi Tran Huynh Beattie, 2005p21
- <sup>40</sup> Le Trong. 1999, Malarney, 2003
- <sup>41</sup> Thomas 2002, pp61-4.
- <sup>42</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005.
- <sup>43</sup> Kenworthy Teather and Chow 2000, p 313, Yoon 1980
- <sup>44</sup> Denis Byrne et al, 2006; Dai Le interviewed Jo Kijas and Heather Goodall 9 August 2002 and interviewed by Allison Cadzow 20 June 2005.
- <sup>45</sup> Ngoc 2004.
- <sup>46</sup> Sumner and Osborne 2001
- <sup>47</sup> Nguyen Bich 1975 p43
- <sup>48</sup> DECC Bi Lingual educators meeting at Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre, 6 May 2008
- <sup>49</sup> Sterling et al 2006 p318, p321-23; Thomas 2002 p324
- <sup>50</sup> Pham and Rambo, 2003
- <sup>51</sup> Le Trong, 1999; Nguyen,1994.
- <sup>52</sup> Cuong Nguyen, Interviewed by Jo Kijas, 2003.
- <sup>53</sup> Mark Infield interviewed by Allison Cadzow, March 2006



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<sup>54</sup> Nguyen, 1994 p16.; Bich (ed) 1975 p84  
<sup>55</sup> Brunn and Kalland, 1996, Ole p11-12  
<sup>56</sup> Huynh-Beattie, 2005, p16-17  
<sup>57</sup> Sterling 2006 et al p315  
<sup>58</sup> Thomas 2002.  
<sup>59</sup> Vinh and Kim Nguyen interviewed by Allison Cadzow 2005  
<sup>60</sup> Vo Quy, 1990, Can, Le Thac & Vo Quy 1994  
<sup>61</sup> Sterling et al 2006 p39-42, Vo  
<sup>62</sup> Le Trong 1999,  
<sup>63</sup> DiGregorio 2001: 187.  
<sup>64</sup> Le Trong Cuc, Interviewed (unrecorded) by Allison Cadzow, 24 February 2006  
<sup>65</sup> Dai Le interviewed Jo Kijas and Heather Goodall 9 August 2002 2005, Thanh Hue  
<sup>66</sup> Thanh Hue interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 11 July 2005  
<sup>67</sup> DEC, 2004 p48.  
<sup>68</sup> Goodall, 200610  
<sup>69</sup> See the account of Ninh Nguyen in Carol 2001, p46  
<sup>70</sup> Vinh and Dung (Kim) Nguyen interviewed by Jo Kijas, 22 Sept 2002.  
<sup>71</sup> Sterling et al 2006 p342  
<sup>72</sup> Cited in McElwee, 2001; Sterling et al.2006  
<sup>73</sup> Sterling et al; 2006 p350  
<sup>74</sup> Sterling et al 2006 p21  
<sup>75</sup> Rugendyke & Nguyen, 2005; Sowerwine, (2004) Pham, Thi Tuong Vi and Rambo 2003.  
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<sup>77</sup> Mark Infield interviewed by Allison Cadzow, March 2006  
<sup>78</sup> Boi Tran Huynh Beattie, interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 21 July 2006.  
<sup>79</sup> Thanh Hue interviewed by Allison Cadzow 11 July 2005  
<sup>80</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005.  
<sup>81</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005.  
<sup>82</sup> Phuong Ngoc Quynh Truong 22 August 2006 Interviewed by Allison Cadzow & Boi Tran Huynh-Beattie (translator)  
<sup>83</sup> Alison Phan and Cuong Nguyen interviewed by Jo Kijas, 11 Sept 2002.  
<sup>84</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005.  
<sup>85</sup> Riley, 1992  
<sup>86</sup> Vietnamese focus group, 26 Sept 2004  
<sup>87</sup> Thomas, 2002  
<sup>88</sup> Cuong Le, discussion with Allison Cadzow, 11 February 2005  
<sup>89</sup> Thomas 2002.  
<sup>90</sup> Boi Tran Huynh Beattie, email 2006  
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<sup>92</sup> Vietnamese focus group, 26 Sept 2004.  
<sup>93</sup> Dai Le interviewed by Allison Cadzow 20 June 2005  
<sup>94</sup> Vietnamese Chipping Norton focus group 7 Oct 2007.  
<sup>95</sup> Vietnamese Chipping Norton focus group 7 Oct 2007.  
<sup>96</sup> Boi Tran Huynh Beattie, interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 21 July 2006.  
<sup>97</sup> Thanh-Hue Nguyenphuoc interviewed by Allison Cadzow, Sept 2005.  
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<sup>104</sup> Thanh Hue, interviewed by Allison Cadzow, Sept 2005  
<sup>105</sup> Vinh and Dung (Kim) Nguyen interviewed by Jo Kijas, 22 Sept 2002.  
<sup>106</sup> Huynh Thong 1996 – 2nd edition.  
<sup>107</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005  
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<sup>109</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005

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<sup>110</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005.  
<sup>111</sup> Nuoi interviewed by Alison Phan, Oct 2002  
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<sup>113</sup> Chipping Norton focus group 7 Oct 2007.  
<sup>114</sup> Long and Thi interviewed by Alison Phan, Oct 2002.  
<sup>115</sup> Thomas 1999  
<sup>116</sup> Vietnamese focus group, 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 2004.  
<sup>117</sup> Vvvy interviewed by Alison Phan Oct 2002  
<sup>118</sup> Bach and Nuoi, interviewed by Alison Phan, Oct 2002  
<sup>119</sup> Thanh Hue, interviewed by Allison Cadzow, Sept 2005  
<sup>120</sup> Vietnamese focus group, Chipping Norton residents, interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>121</sup> Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia [FECCA] for Recfish Australia. 1997. *We Fish for the Future: Recreational Fishing and People of Indo-Chinese Background*. Canberra: Department of the Environment; Starr, Paul. Troubled Waters: Vietnamese Fisherfolk on Americas Gulf Coast, *International Migration Review* v15, n1-2, spring summer 1981, p231  
<sup>122</sup> Chipping Norton focus group interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>123</sup> Commented on by Thanh Hue Nguryenphoc and Boi Tran Huynh Beattie, Huy Pham and also in Chipping Norton focus group 7 Oct 2007  
<sup>124</sup> Vinh and Dung (Kim) Nguyen interviewed by Jo Kijas, 22 Sept 2002.  
<sup>125</sup> Dai Le interviewed by Allison Cadzow 20 June 2005  
<sup>126</sup> Goodall, 2006  
<sup>127</sup> Danh interviewed by Alison Phan, October 2002  
<sup>128</sup> Drummond and Thomas 2002  
<sup>129</sup> Vietnamese Australian focus group 29 September 2004 interviewed by Allison Cadzow, Denis Byrne and Roseann Bell  
<sup>130</sup> Huy Pham interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 5 June 2005.  
<sup>131</sup> Vinh and Dung (Kim) Nguyen interviewed by Jo Kijas, 22 Sept 2002.  
<sup>132</sup> Vietnamese Chipping Norton focus group 7 Oct 2007.  
<sup>133</sup> Thanh Hue, interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 29 September 2005  
<sup>134</sup> Kim and Vinh Nguyen interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 12 July 2005, 19 August 2005  
<sup>135</sup> Georges Hall Focus Group, interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>136</sup> Kim and Vinh Nguyen interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 12 July 2005, 19 August 2005  
<sup>137</sup> Ngugen, Chau, 2005 p119  
<sup>138</sup> Georges Hall Focus Group, interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>139</sup> Lily interviewed by Alison Phan, 2002  
<sup>140</sup> Georges Hall Focus Group, interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>141</sup> Georges Hall Focus Group, interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>142</sup> Georges Hall Focus Group, interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>143</sup> Phuong Ngoc Quynh Truong 22 August 2006 Interviewed by Allison Cadzow & Boi Tran Huynh-Beattie (translator)  
<sup>144</sup> Phuong Ngoc Quynh Truong 22 August 2006, interviewed by Allison Cadzow & Boi Tran Huynh-Beattie (translator)  
<sup>145</sup> Boi Tran Huynh Beattie, interviewed by Allison Cadzow, 21 July 2006.  
<sup>146</sup> Pham, Vi, Thanh Hue & relatives, Boi Tran (ibid)  
<sup>147</sup> The possibility that self-censoring was occurring due to the projects interest in Arabic speakers use of parks is worth considering here.  
<sup>148</sup> Chi said a particular park in Hanoi was dull because there was 'no entertainment' there. Pers. Comm Allison Cadzow February 2006  
<sup>149</sup> Vietnamese Australian Focus Group 21 September 2002, Interviewed by Jo Kijas with Alison Phan and Cuong Nguyen  
<sup>150</sup> Georges Hall Focus Group, interviewed by Allison Cadzow 7 October 2007  
<sup>151</sup> Danh interviewed by Allison Phan, October 2002  
<sup>152</sup> Anh Linh Pham, discussion with Allison Cadzow 7 August 2005  
<sup>153</sup> DECC focus group, 29 November 2007  
<sup>154</sup> Bilingual educators discussion; Thomas 2002  
<sup>155</sup> DECC focus group, 27 November 2007  
<sup>156</sup> Interpretation Australia Association Conference, BUILDING BLOCKS Interpretation Australia Association National Conference, Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour = November 6-9, 2007.  
<sup>157</sup> Tao, 2008; Cross Currents: Georges River Artwalks.  
<sup>158</sup> Chipping Norton Focus Group, 7 October 2007  
<sup>159</sup> Snodgrass and Le, 2005  
<sup>160</sup> Personal communication, staff at Scout Café, Hoi An, 2006  
<sup>161</sup> Suter 2002 p19  
<sup>162</sup> Suter 2002 p19