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TAKARO: DEMOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL
CHARACTERISTICS OF A STATE HOUSING SUBURB

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Geography
at Massey University

By
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State housing areas are an accepted and typical part of the New Zealand urban landscape. However, little research has been carried out on this topic and existing findings in the disciplines of geography, sociology, education and architecture are largely unrelated. The need for further and more intensive investigation has been stressed by Pool in his study of the areal groupings of the social characteristics of inhabitants of the Auckland urban area. Pool defined state housing areas as one of his ten 'social regions' and concluded that "State suburbs are unique and their character and problems require separate research".¹ This thesis aims to investigate the physical, characteristics of a state housing suburb and the demographic and social characteristics of its residents. The hypothesis will be explored that within a suburb planned by the State, different policies on housing administration have led to different demographic patterns.

The name 'Takaro' is applied loosely and inconsistently by residents in Palmerston North to a wide area to the west of the city. For the purposes of this thesis Takaro is defined as the part on the outskirts of the city that was planned as an entity by the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works, also including Horowhit Street as a boundary (Figure 3). Takaro covers an area of 287 acres and contained in August 1969 an estimated 3,368 people. It is a relatively new housing suburb, for the main period of building construction was between 1959 and 1966. The majority of houses are State-built (52 per cent) or State-financed group houses (22 per cent). The remaining private houses include a number built for the Department of Maori Affairs.

This study consists of a survey and an analysis of findings and their implications. The basic research tool was an interview survey carried out in order to gain information related to the aims of the thesis. The nature of the survey and the methods used are detailed in Appendix A. The work is
in three parts. The first establishes the legislative setting, in which the introduction of State housing in New Zealand, its growth and development are outlined. The second consists of the study of Takaro, its physical growth and structure, and of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the residents and their patterns of community interaction. In the third part the implications of State policies are discussed upon the basis of research findings and suggestions are made for future policies.

The author is grateful for the supervision and encouragement of Professor K.H. Thomson and Mr B.C.R. Saunders of the Geography Department, Massey University. Appreciation is also extended to the members of the Housing Division of the Ministry of Works, Palmerston North, for their very willing assistance; to the Town Planning Department of the Palmerston North City Council for their co-operation and providing the base map for Figure 3; to Mr B.J. Allen for his constructive criticism; to Miss E. Scott of the Central Photographic Unit, Massey University, for reproduction of photographs, maps and graphs and to Mrs J.C. Herbert for typing the final manuscript. Thanks are also due to the many others who have assisted in a variety of ways, including the people of Takaro for their interest and co-operation in the interview survey.

References:

1. Pool, 1959(a), 115.
2. Estimate based on interview survey, see reference 2, Chapter III.
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