

“Waterloo”

SYNOPSIS

“Waterloo” - a 50 minute documentary completed in 1981, is an historical account of the 1970’s battle by residents of this inner Sydney suburb to save the area from slum clearance and redevelopment by public housing authorities.

In the early 70’s the state government initiated a massive scheme to pull down inner city terraces (slums) to build the new public housing estates that the government now wants to redevelop. **“Waterloo”** sets out to understand the residents fight-back in terms of the history of the suburb itself: The poverty and overcrowding at the turn of the century, and the impractical, idealistic solutions proposed by the planners. It also looks at Waterloo in the context of urban housing struggles in Sydney: the anti-eviction campaigns of the 30’s, the rise of the Resident Action movement in the late 60’s and the alliance it formed with building unions resulting in the now world famous Green Bans.

In the process the film reveals the history of the Housing Commission and the inner city Labor machine, prompting questions about the planning process, community involvement and bureaucratic accountability. How did the Housing Commission, a public housing authority set up by the State Labor Government in the forties, get to the stage of evicting workers to build more public housing?