

# Split city: divorcees by postcode



At the end of lonely street ... Garth Thomas on the balcony of his Blues Point unit. About 10 per cent of the tower's units are home to divorcees, says a local real estate agent.

Photo: *Lisa Wiltse*

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**Mosman is the divorce capital of Sydney, and it is mostly women who are keeping the family home. Erik Jensen reports.**

BLUES POINT TOWER is an ex-husband hotspot. Satellite to the divorce capital of Sydney - Mosman - the concrete shaft draws them in with furnished apartments, three-month leases and proximity to the family home.

Fresh analysis of the 2006 census for the *Herald* shows there are more than 1200 divorcees in Mosman, with lone women outnumbering men two to one. Blacktown is next on Sydney's list of most divorcees, though there the breakdown between men and women levels out. In Mosman, 7.8 per cent of dwellings are home to single divorcees, in the Blacktown the figure is 5.1 per cent.

It is not until we get to No.33 on the list - Cabramatta - that the number of single divorced men significantly outweighs women - 233 versus 125, out of a total of 582 divorcees.

Research to explain the statistics has not been done, but the chief executive of Relationships Australia NSW, Anne Hollands, suggests they

reflect the gender pattern in parenting - the fact women are still more likely than men to keep the children and the home in Mosman, and ex-husbands are more likely to be looking for something cheaper.

In Blacktown, the even split suggests that if the husband moves out, he moves into an apartment in the same suburb. It is all economics and practicality, Ms Hollands said.

"Generally they will move into something smaller than the family home but with enough room for the children," she said.

"Mosman, one. Blacktown, second. You couldn't get a more interesting split on a socio-economic level."

And so to Blues Point Tower - and the neighbouring Neutral Bay where the census shows there are 147 lone men.

"For divorcees we're still the first stop. It's hard, but it's probably about 10 per cent of the units here that are [occupied by] divorcees," said Craig Litchfield, the director of McMahons Point Real Estate, based in the building.

"It's a popular drop-off place. I think it would be a lot less lonely than in a house in the suburbs feeling sorry for yourself."

Paul is a newcomer. He moved in on Saturday - he won't give his real name because his break-up is still fresh - but said his colleagues have already noticed the change. The view of the Harbour Bridge is like an anti-depressant.

"When I left the house I didn't actually have anywhere to go. She still doesn't know I'm here," he said. "Although my partner and I were living together, I was staying on there because she had to replace me in terms of paying the rent. As soon as that happened ... I had to leave pretty quickly and this place came up."

It's a common story, according to agents. "When someone splits up with a partner, there's often a walk-out or something," Mr Litchfield said, "so we often have people [needing furnished rentals] pretty urgently."

Apartments in the tower are between \$400 and \$700 a week. Men often start with a studio or one-bedroom unit, Mr Litchfield said, but might then move to something larger and stay for several years.

"I love to come and look at the view," said Garth Thomas, a divorcee of 21 years. "I sold the house that I lived in in Northwood for 40 years and thought I'd better find a unit. The first place I saw was this place, in a building I had hated for years ... I love it here."

Ms Hollands speculated that divorce was fuelled by the same financial strain in all suburbs, only on different levels.

"Money, work and kids are the top three factors. And lack of time to spend together," she said. "It doesn't matter how much money you've got, that's not the issue. It's the strain of aspiring to ... the lifestyle you wish to achieve."

Places like Blues Point Tower are most likely hot spots of practicality, Ms Hollands said, not necessarily proof the divorced live close to each other for support.

She suggested divorced men might be looking for something other than more divorced men, but Mr Litchfield said the tower was not a meet market.

"I'm not sure it's a pick-up joint," he said. "There are a few ladies in the building in their 80s and 90s, but I'm not sure whether the 50-year-old divorcee will find the 80-year-old attractive."

Overall in the census Sydney had almost 250,000 divorcees, a further 96,000 people separated and 184,000 widowed.

**Source:** <http://www.smh.com.au/news/relationships/split-city-divorcees-by-postcode/2008/07/18/1216163156797.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap1>