



# Ecoso Exchange Newsletter

## Crow Collection Association

Ecological, Social and Political Discourse

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The United Nations Second World Habitat (Human Settlement) Conference will be held in Istanbul (Turkey) in June this year, therefore this Ecoso features articles on housing issues.

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### News from the Crow Collection

#### WHAT KIND OF SOCIETY DO YOU WANT AUSTRALIA TO BE ?

In Ecoso 2/37 it was stated that the Crow Collection planned an "Citizenship essay competition". This idea has now changed to the holding of an **Ideas Exchange Day** and following this up with a tour of some of the exhibits. See enclosed leaflet. Your help is needed. The project will be launched at the Association's AGM on March 28th. Please pass on the enclosed invitation to others. Particular attention needs to be given to involving young people in the **Exchanging of Ideas**, so help with promoting the project amongst students and other groups of young people would be appreciated.

The Association is appealing for funds to finance the **Ideas Exchange**.

Invitation  
to  
The Annual General Meeting of the Crow Collection Association  
and  
**LAUNCH OF THE IDEAS EXCHANGE PROJECT**  
Guest Speaker - Michael Salvaris  
(Consultant to the Senate Inquiry on Citizenship)  
on  
Thursday, March 28th at 7.30 pm.  
VUT Footscray Campus Library, Room P408.

Copies of the Annual Report and balance sheet are now available.

## 1996 U.N. Habitat 2 Conference : Sustainable Human Settlements Shelter for All

*Habitat 2 is more than a conference. It is a recognition by the international community - an awakening, if you will - that time is running out on us, that if we want to save the future, we have no choice other than to find answers today to one of the most neglected and urgent problems of our time, one that goes to the very heart of our everyday lives - how we live, where we live, and above all, if we live.* (Wally N'Dow, Secretary General, Habitat 2).

A United Nations Conference on Human Settlement, Habitat 2, will be held in Istanbul, Turkey in June 1996 - 20 years after the first Habitat Conference was convened in Vancouver, Canada. The main aim is stated as :-

*In the long term, to arrest deterioration of global settlements conditions and ultimately create the conditions for achieving improvements in the living environment of all people on a sustainable basis, with special attention to the needs and contributions of women and vulnerable social groups whose quality of life and participation in development have been hampered by exclusion and inequality, affecting the poor in general.*

In preparing for Habitat 2 the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development has published a newsheet "Habitat News" which describes the Conference in these words :-

*The impetus for Habitat 2 comes from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Through Habitat 2 the United Nations seeks to focus attention on the problems and potential of human settlements as important inputs to social progress and economic growth, and to commit the world's leaders to making cities, towns and villages healthy, safe, just and sustainable,*

The Conference will have two themes :-

1. Sustainable human settlement in an urbanising world
2. Adequate shelter for all.

The Habitat Conference will be the last in a series of United Nation Conferences which have focused attention on key aspects of sustainable economic and social development and the environment. It is planned that the Conference will result in the following :-

1. A State of Human Settlement Report
2. A statement of principles and commitments based on international consensus on policies and goals for shelter.
3. A Global Plan of Action to mobilise international resources and to assist with implementing and monitoring the goals of sustainable settlements and shelter.
4. Provide a range of information on shelter strategies, technologies, resources and sources of support.

In his message in *Habitat News*, the Federal Minister for Housing and Regional Development, Brian Howe, listed some of the recent government reports which have dealt with issues relating to shelter, including :-

- \* the Australian Urban and Regional Development Review;
- \* the Industry Commission Report on Public Housing
- \* the Kelty Report and McKinsey Reports on Regional Development.
- \* the work of the Urban Design Task Force; and
- \* the EPAC Private Unfrastructure Taskforce.

Brian Howe announced that :-

*A comprehensive consultation structure has been set up to co-ordinate Australia's preparations. I see the functions of the National Consultative Committee and Non-Government Organisations (NGO) Forums as key platforms for broadening participation in the preparatory activities.*

*It is with great pleasure that I am able to announce that a contract has been awarded to the Australian Council of Social Service to co-ordinate the provision of several NGO Forums and provide an information services to all interested NGOs and individuals on Habitat issues.*

An international Trade Fair on Housing and Construction Technologies and Human Settlements will be running in conjunction with Habitat 2, The Trade Fair will be organised around the theme of *Good Ideas for Better Cities*.

*For More Information About Habitat 2 :-*

*Shirley Browne (Director of Habitat 2 Secretariat) GPO Box 9834 Canberra, 2601  
Phone (06) 289 2537, FAX (06) 289 2060*

*Andrew Hewitt (Australian Council for Overseas Aid), 03.9289 9444 - Victorian member of the National Consultative Committee.*

## **1976 U.N. Habitat 1. Conference The Challenge of the Cities**

The first United Nations Habitat (Human Settlement) Conference was held in Vancouver in 1976. This conference produced "*The Vancouver Plan for Action*".

To mark the 20th anniversary of the first Habitat Conference a Second Habitat Conference will be held in Istanbul later this year. It is timely to reprint some information from Ecoso 1/14 (in the earlier series), published in the summer of 1977. This featured articles on the Vancouver Plan of Action and report-backs by several Australian Habitat Conference delegates. Ecoso 1/14 was entitled "**HABITAT AND ALL THAT ... Planning, Politics, People, Participation, Profit, Property, Paternalism, Privatism, Paradisism, Possessions and Pollution**".

**A FEW FACTS ABOUT THE FIRST HABITAT CONFERENCE, (VANCOUVER 1976)**

1. 134 countries participated at ministerial level.
2. The Conference recommendations were published in a booklet called "**Vancouver Plan for Action**"
3. The 64 recommendations in the Plan for Action were formally endorsed by all 134 countries.
4. Although Australia endorsed the Plan of Action, Kevin Newman (representing the Federal Govt.) said "it certainly did not mean that by endorsing we would implement the 64 recommendations."
5. Australia was one of two countries to abstain from endorsing the Declaration of Principles.
6. Australia mainly objected to two paragraphs both of which referred to the occupation of land and the uprooting of native populations.
7. Mr Peter Newman said that "the Declaration of Principles make us raise our eyebrows...some of the recommendations are unpalatable to me." (Peter Newman was Minister for the Environment Housing and Community Development in the Fraser Govt. in 1976)

In October 1976 the Secretary General of Habitat, Enrique Penalosa visited Australia. At an Australian Institute of Urban Studies conference he called for the endorsement and implementation of the "**Vancouver Plan for Action**" saying :-

*I think the importance of these recommendations for National Action does not lie in how innovative they are because you can find much better presentations in the text books in the universities and the libraries. The importance of the recommendations is the political endorsement that for the first time in history they received from 132 countries (see point 5 above). Nothing in these recommendations is new, the importance is the political endorsement and the repercussions that this political endorsement can have at the national level.*

He warned :-

*The present style of life in western countries is not going to last very long.....amongst other things there is not enough resources in our planet to sustain this life style.*

*\* We are building cities on a scale never before conceived of, ...Already in the third world from a quarter to a third of the urban population lack even water and sewage connections.*

*\* We are building cities which are stocked with cars - and in a certain way we are building cities for cars not for human beings.*

*\* We are building cities so contaminated by air and water pollution that they are a serious menace to health....*

*\* And, most damagingly of all, we are building cities we don't want to live in...*

## **POLITICAL ACTION RATHER THAN TECHNOLOGY OR PLANNING.**

In introducing the report-back article which were published in Ecoso 1/14 (1977). Ecoso made this statement :-

*There is one main theme which is re-iterated throughout these extracts; it is becoming increasingly clear that the solution to most urban problems will come primarily through political action rather than technology or planning.*

Dr Margaret Bowman reported back to the Town and Country Planning Association saying that she was deeply impressed by the fact the main message was not one of doomsday and despair but of hope and challenge :-

*Solutions to problems were being sought through political means rather than merely looking at technical solutions, and there was a growing recognition that to date settlement have been the result of decisions on other issues rather than about human needs and communities.*

She listed 4 matters of concern which were raised at the NGO Habitat, (NGO means Non Government Organisations). These were :-

1. Community control of land
2. The interaction between rural and urban areas
3. Opposition to nuclear energy
4. Self help rather than bureaucratic control

From this report-back and others from the 1976 conference it seems that Jack Munday endeared himself to quite a few of the delegates. For example Jack was called "our own Jack Munday", and his participation was described as "Jack Munday put Australia on the map" and as "Jack Munday was out spoken on uranium mining".

In his report-back in "Chain Reaction" Jack Munday wrote :-

*I believe that up to now workers organisations and political parties of the left.... socialists, communists, social democrats of various hues throughout the world... have been very neglectful of what to do with our cities.*

*I think the real challenge to urban environmentalists is to make cities places in which there is a new spirit, in which there is a new attitude to work, a new attitude to which technology we should be using.....*

*I think we have to try to connect up the workplace and where the worker lives, For too long there has been this slicing off ... You might think I am talking a bit much about ther workers' movement, but I think this is the key, because if you have got these great terrible multi-national industrial complexes, it is not going to change... I can't see capitalism having that much soul to change in time..... this notion that too many socialists have had about conquering nature, that is a terrible arrogant notion and has to be scotched for ever."*

Reporting back to the Australian Institute of Urban Studies Prof. Ronald Gates (Queensland) endorsed Enrique Penalosa's warning to the rich and self-satisfied countries and called for community action to achieve goals.:-

*We owe ourselves and we owe the world something better than unco-ordinated decision making. We owe ourselves and the world a conscious and careful formation of goals at the local and state levels as well as at the national level, and at the international level. And we owe ourselves purposeful community action towards achieving these goals.*

#### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE 1976 U.N. HABITAT CONFERENCE

Ecoso 1/14 has about 12 A4 pages of information on Habitat 1 and Ecoso 1/15 features an article on "Women in Australian Suburbia" which relates some of the Habitat recommendations in the "Vancouver Plan for Action" to our suburban life style.

There are copies of the first series of Ecoso Exchange Newsletters in the Crow Collection (Crow Coll. 333.7 Eco). Other material in the Crow Collection which provide basic information on Habitat 1 :-

The Vancouver Plan for Action published by the United Nations (Crow Coll. 304.2 Van)

The National Report to Habitat published by the Australian Government Task Force (Crow Coll. 307. Aus)

Habitat and the Challenge of the Cities published by the Australian Institute of Urban Studies (Crow Coll. 711.409.94 HAB)

## The EcoCity Project and Habitat 2.

Paul Downton came to Melbourne to attend the first NGO Forum for Habitat 2. He brought with him some booklets about the Halifax EcoCity Project in Adelaide. The Halifax EcoCity Project started in late 1991 when 20 or so aspiring "ecopoliticians" found an inner city site of 2.4 hectares which could house 800 people. The site had been the Adelaide City Council Depot and the project is investigating innovative ways of ridding it of pollution.

To date EcoCity is still on the drawing board but hundreds of people have been involved in planning it... designing the buildings, planning the social spaces, working out new forms of tenure, producing a regular newsletter, organising a LETS (Local Exchange Trading System) and staffing the Centre for Urban Ecology (which has a temporary office on the site).

Halifax is very different from conventional Australian housing projects, not only in its concept but also in the development process and associated organisations. Interestingly, after trying other methods of tenure, EcoCity have found that the housing co-op legal structure will give residents the security they seek.

(More information about the Halifax EcoCity Project from the Centre for Urban Ecology, 83 Halifax St., Adelaide S.A. 5000. The Crow Collection has arranged for an exchange of newsletters with the S.A. Centre for Urban Ecology

## Commonwealth/State Housing Agreement

As a signatory to the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights the Australian Government has the responsibility of ensuring that every citizen has access to housing, education, and health.

Since 1945 this obligation has been met through the Commonwealth State Housing Agreement (CSHA) which has assisted the development of a nationally co-ordinated approach to housing provision for low income people through the construction and maintenance of public housing.

In the past CSHA grants have been "tied" so that the money has had to be spent on the physical provision of housing for low income people.

The National Housing Statement announced by the Prime Minister on December 11th, 1995 marks a direct shift in housing assistance.

The new CSHA means a reduction in funds and monies that have traditionally been set aside for the construction and upgrading of public housing. It also means that the federal funds are now untied. This will allow funds to be used at the State's discretion rather than using it for capital expenditure on the construction and maintenance of public housing.

Headleasing properties on the private market will now be encouraged. This means that low income people will have their rent subsidised but the property rented will be obtained from estate agents and other private market avenues. Here are some arguments against headleasing :-

- \* It is an indirect subsidy to the private rental market and reinforces the social inequity that Government intervention has in the past helped to reduce.
- \* By its very nature it cannot provide secure tenure for residents
- \* The private property owner has both intentions and certain rights of ownership which are at odds to the needs of tenants.
- \* The privately owned dwelling has both a use value and an exchange value and the property owner is naturally more concerned with the exchange value, thus security of tenure will be affected by market prices of the property.
- \* Public housing does not have an exchange value and tenancy is not subject to the whim of the property market.

The change in government policy has been welcomed by housing industry leaders including the Master Builders Association and the Real Estate Institute of Victoria.

*If the number on your address slip is 2/38 you are now owing your \$10.00 subscription to Ecoso. Donations are always welcome. For address and other information about Ecoso see cover page.*

## Local Government Housing Policies

Since late 1992 some State legislative changes and their organisational consequences are resulting in municipal council becoming much less involved in housing policies and processes.

Although all local government in Australia has the capacity to influence some aspects of housing provision only a few Victoria municipalities were resourceful enough in the 1980s to take advantage of this. There are two main reasons why local government's participation in housing provision is diminishing :-

- \* the redistributing of municipal boundaries,
- \* compulsory competitive tendering (CCT).

Both council officers and the community are affected by these :-

- \* There is a marked shift in professional priorities as regards innovative housing programs - naturally, council officers tend to put involvement in new schemes to one side pending the restructure of their own work unit and their own application for appointment.
- \* local community networks are being disrupted - resulting in loss of housing enthusiasts in local communities.

### WARNING FROM WESTERN REGION HOUSING COUNCIL

A recent issue of *Western Region Housing Action* describes how the CCT process is affecting properties acquired under the *Local Government and Community Housing Program (LG&CHP)* the fore-runner of the new *Community Housing Program (CHP)*.

At least one Local Government in the Western Region does not now see housing as a "core business" of council. The Shire of Melton has apparently divested itself of a number of LG&CHP properties as well as a \$1.8 million CHP grant to build new rental housing. The titles of the properties and the grant have been transferred under a trust deed to the *Supported Housing and Development Foundation*, a statewide CHP infrastructure organisation with ties to *Singleton Equity*. A number of other properties may face a similar fate. While some of these are already managed by community based services, like the *Special Accommodation Assistance Program* and *Emergency Housing Services*, the question of owner/manager relationship and its affects on tenants and services is not clear.

The old LG&CHP Program is just as flawed as the new CHP. However, the difference is that the owner in LG&CHP programs is a comparatively well resourced Local Government which has had clear accountable structures for tenants to resolve issues. There is no such policy framework and accountability on how properties will be allocated and managed under the new CHP.

The Western Region Housing Council is taking these issues up with Local Government, stressing to Commissioners the importance of a continued Local Government role in housing.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Age 1/2/96

## Byelections part of democracy

from Ben Bodna and Jean McCaughy,  
co-chairs,  
*People Together Project*

The Premier's intention to abbreviate byelections is another display of his animosity to democratic practice where it interferes with his view of managing the world efficiently. Efficiency is undoubtedly important, but freedom and responsibility for all citizens in a democracy are more important, with all their safeguards. Mussolini made the trains run on time.

The *People Together* publication *The State We're In* lists the following catalogue of infringements among many others:

- More than 100 acts now make it impossible for citizens to legally challenge the Government.
- Clauses that alter the operation of section 85 of the Victorian Constitution have been introduced to prevent redress before the Supreme Court.
- The increased cost of accessing information under the Freedom of Information Act has made government less accountable.
- Local government elections have been delayed.
- Strong public opposition to the selling of utilities, particularly to foreign interests, has been ignored.
- Public assets contributed by donation and volunteers have been taken from communities without consultation or compensation.
- Community groups have been threat-

ened with funding cuts if they speak out about key concerns.

The Premier is now saying that the bill



to curtail byelections is to be debated. This new respect for debate is delicious. After all, debates on acts relating to the Grand Prix, employer relations, vital industries and members of Parliament (which varied salaries upwards) were all abbreviated by guillotine and the new "4.30 rule" has been used to limited debate on bills relating to the City Link project.

Perhaps some of these can now be revised and there are many other important matters that could be publicly debated in this new spirit.

Perhaps, too, for the duration, the Premier might tell ministers and bureaucrats to stop harassing people who want to express legitimate concerns in such debates, about ways in which efficiencies have induced despair about our democracy.

We might even consider four pages of Government-paid advertisements for expression by such people in *The Age* on a regular basis.

Ben Bodna,  
622 Lygon Street,  
North Carlton.

## Premier's poll proposal a 'power grab'

from Joan E. Kirner

Mr Howard told *The Age* yesterday that, "Jeff governs Victoria ... and what arrangements he proposes here are a matter for him" (31/1).

Not so, Mr Howard. Jeff Kennett's proposal to abolish byelections is a matter for the Victorian people, not simply the Premier. It is an outrageous attack on democracy, advocated by the person who should be its chief defender.

It is a fundamental principle of democratic government in Australia that the lower house, the house of government, should be elected by the people, not nominated by the Government or the Opposition. To propose otherwise is to abuse the intent of the Victorian and

Commonwealth Constitution.

To introduce such a change, by using the Government's majority in both houses, on the pretence of saving \$80,000 a byelection, is unthinkable.

The proposed change would allow a government with a bare five-seat majority, a government that could lose the confidence of the lower house by losing three successive byelections, to maintain itself in office.

The Senate model of filling vacancies, which Mr Kennett quotes in support, is inappropriate. The Senate is not the house of government and its senators are elected by an entirely different proportional voting method that involves the whole of the state — a method of voting that Mr Kennett rejects for the Victorian Legislative Council.

The proposal would also arrogantly carve up byelection results between the two major parties.

This proposal is not simply the "dead cat" of Mr Kennett's recent bid to abandon elections for the Melbourne City Council. This is a power grab of extraordinary proportions.

It exposes for all to consider the dangers of continually acclaiming or humoring a so-called "can-do" Premier to the stage where he believes he can do without the people.

Joan E. Kirner,  
2 Lonsdale Street,  
Melbourne.

# Ecoso Exchange Guidelines

Adopted 1973

1. Ecoso has a value judgement in favour of regeneration and promotion of community participation meaning that it is humanising and enriching for people to relate to each other through one form or another of voluntary participatory activity both on the job and off the job, exercising a measure of control over such activities.

2. A consequent recognition of the necessity for change in life-style and behaviour patterns to one that sees the quality of life as an alternative to consumerism, understood as mass production and consumption of wasteful and unsatisfactory goods and services based on compulsion and manipulation.

3. Accordingly a policy of restricting the use of energy and non-renewable resources per head and hence a planned design of community including size of population, where people can relate to each other and to nature in order to reduce wasteful goods and services and at the same time guaranteeing an adequate minimum subsistence for all, using modern technology to this end.

4. The recognition that such objectives cannot be achieved either on the basis of practical, linear, one-level ecological remedies or with authoritarian and manipulative control of affairs and requires participatory effort to achieve global equilibria.

(Subscription to Ecoso Newsletter \$10 for 6 issues. Ecoso was first published from 1967 to 1980. It was revived in 1988. The Crow Collection Association was formed in 1990. It has adopted Ecoso as its newsletter. More information about the Crow Collection and Ecoso from the address below.)



Crow Collection Association (Incorp.)  
A Living Library to Plan for the 21st Century

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