

Submitting Councillor - Lynnette
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30 October 2018

A Report to Council on 2018 Sustainable Communities National Summit

Convened by MAV in association with the Village Well, Sustain and Transition Australia
18-19 September 2018 at the William Angliss Institute

It is my view that this report is overflowing with gems of wisdom from passionate individuals who understand the benefit and need for genuine, equitable community engagement for a society to flourish. It would be a useful exercise for Councillors and Officers to review the text in order to identify, and follow through with, opportunities relevant to The City Of Monash.

Theme “Where there is Vision People will Flourish”

- *Community Sustainability :The Future Imperative*
- *The Need to Grow Social Cohesion, Connectivity and Resilience:*
- *Community, Food, Energy*

MC , Gilbert Rochecouste re-imagined an Australia where the Community takes back control and there is social justice. Where there is collaborative consumption and we again can “hang out” in public places, like the grand public piazzas of Europe, and feel a sense of ownership.

1. **The Commons and Social Change** was presented by Belgian **Michel Bauwens**, founder of the global **Foundation for Peer-to-Peer Alternatives**.

Bauwens spoke of resources managed by the community – not by private consortiums, nor by government nor by NGOs. He referred briefly to Europe to provide an example – where historically mountain slopes were the people’s natural resource - but fencing of the commons has been indicative of the rise of Capitalism. Over use of resources is not the exception he said, it is the rule, and inevitably resources will disappear.

He said the Commons should own the platforms for shared economies; to re-localise production and services eg food; machines; cars etc. He was lamenting on the misnomer of “sharing” economies managed by the private sector such as Uber and Air B & B. He gave the example that 26% of housing in Paris is subject to a styled share economy resulting in the young and poor being unable to afford to rent there anymore. He said an average UBER driver works 9 months for less than the minimum wage and collectively they are the fastest growing impoverished freelance employment group - 80% of which are not making enough to live on.

Michel worked on the Commons Transition Plan for the Belgian port city of Ghent. The Commons Transition Platform provides a database of practical experiences and policy proposals aimed toward achieving a more humane and environmentally grounded mode of societal organization for the common good. Basing a civil society on the Commons (including the collaborative stewardship of shared resources) enables a more egalitarian, just, and environmentally stable society. The model encourages civil participation which is facilitated by neighbourhood, social and school councillors. Provisioning systems have been mutualised so that 80 collective food purchasing groups have formed. In addition to recognising the fact that cars are parked 95% of the time, full mobility has been guaranteed for 300,000 members who car share. They have also instigated a Common Land Trust.

In contrast to market value dictatorships which dominate our current system – the transition plan nurtures a society that is productive - encouraging every inhabitant to contribute to the common good. Purpose driven contributions are valued even if not money-based. Although the example above relates to Ghent, this model can be transnational when replicated worldwide with the emergence of global open depositories and leagues of co-operatives– and where appropriate, locally adapted.

2. The bHive, Bendigo – Presentation by Co Founder, Julie Miller Markoff

The bHive Vision is to Own Our Local Digital Sharing Economy - Together

To paraphrase Douglas Rushkoffa thriving economy is when people with skills connect with people with needs. So, to get money circulating locally, the bHive website was set up to promote a digital sharing economy in Bendigo. It facilitates the sharing and trading of goods and services, peer to peer. Given the prediction that 25% of the world’s economy will be digitalised in the next 10 years, this initiative has promised a shared village on line, where participants can elect to share or trade with providers or donors, particularly those within close proximity. A Shared Village can incorporate food, (community) transport, spaces, work, energy, money and logistics. Its aim is to eradicate poverty, restore ecology and to fulfil its promise to earn the title “the Giving Hive”. In ten years if the bHive reaches its goal of 20,000 members, it plans to donate \$2.5M per annum to Charity.

The bHive was registered as a legal entity in August 2017. It has three pillars 1. (Who) Local People 2. (Where) Local Place 3. (Why) Local Economy

The bHive adheres to a Co-op model platform which shares community wealth; has democratic governance; worker ownership and therefore experiences a low failure rate. The Bendigo Community Farmers Market is an example of a co-op model – with participatory democracy – where each member has one vote.

bHive believes Economic Development should focus on supporting local capacity and facilitating appropriate outside investment for a circular economy - it might include: –

- Repair Cafes
- Library of Things
- Food Share
- Maker Labs
- Co-working spaces
- Energetic exchange

And ...and...and...

3. Opportunities in the Commons – Gilbert Rochecouste

What are the opportunities to create a Commons in our community?

Perhaps a Community Chat Room? A public gathering space? Shared commercial kitchens? Intergenerational sharing? What is your contributory capacity?

4. The Future of Farms presented by Sam Marwood – founder Cultivate Farms – Freeland Park, Central Victoria

The Community Farm Fund is like a Farm Shark Tank where up to 500 members pool their money; back the best; invest in and do what they know. 13 farms were involved in pitching in 2017.

Cultivate Farms is therefore a social enterprise that matches hundreds of young farming families with investors to own a farm together. It aims to rejuvenate regional Australia; realise a financial return; restore ecological health of farming land and connects thousands of people back to the land.

Check out the website – its inspiring! <https://www.cultivatefarms.com/>

Migrant farmers present an important but undervalued resource in such a method of adaptive farming.

5. Developing a Sustainable Food System presented by Dr Nick Rose, Executive Director of Sustain – The Australian Food Network, William Angliss Institute

“We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking we used when we created them.” Albert Einstein

Sustain aims to support local governments to adopt and implement policies to protect, improve and promote the public health of their communities.

Sustain supports short supply chains and alternative retail structures (to counteract concentration of power squeezing markets) and the use of public procurement to support local agroecological produce. Urban Food Streets appear where nature strips are for the Commons. For example, in August 2018, the City of Vincent W.A. ripped up their rule book and after strong community support allowed rocks, seats and garden beds on verges.

Sustainability is influenced by Economics, Politics, Culture, and Ecology – the latter being in distress and under threat from Constructions and Settlements, Emissions and Waste, loss of habitat and food; reduced water and air quality and constraints of place and space.

6. Food Next Door Co-op, Mildura - Presented by Deb Bogenhuber and John Niyera

Problem identified – limited access to local food due to current distribution system and a lack of small scale farmers. The offer of donated vacant land was taken up by migrant farmers who wanted access to culturally appropriate food.

7. Livability and Resilience - The Australian Community Capacity Study presented by Criminologist Professor Rebecca Wickes

The Research Team looked at diversity in Australia and studied the benefits of **Social Conduits** that encouraged repeat encounters eg schools ; health clubs ; local parks ; small shops and cafes (not in shopping centres) ; train stations (routinised interactions with others); walking groups organised by large shopping centres.

Social Holes were identified such as large factory sites, shipping dock and cemeteries.

She spoke of land use as it relates to socio demographic context and social sustainability – open spaces with less roads have a positive impact – in direct contrast, the more carved up an area is – it forces a negative impact on social sustainability. In general a diversity of land types will have a positive influence.

Areas with higher diversity of languages result in a lower sense of attachment. Australian born people withdraw from social life when there is lots of diversity of language in the neighbourhood.

Crime and disadvantage concentrate in particular places. Disadvantage segregates opportunities for particular groups in society, increases violence and erodes social sustainability.

Key challenges for LGA is to simultaneously design out crime and build in opportunities for quality social interactions in disadvantaged areas.

8. The New Large Scale Solar Economy – Implications for a Rural Community – Roger Griffiths - EDM Shire of Gannawarra

The Shire of Gannawarra is a local government area in Victoria, Australia, located in the northern part of the state. It covers an area of 3,732 square kilometres and, at the 2016 Census had a population of approximately 10,500. It includes the towns of Cohuna and Kerang.

The solar farm project attracted millions in funding and employs 30 maintenance staff which is more than would be employed on a grain farm. Tesla has supplied the 25 MW battery for this project which will eventually make it one of the biggest solar storage installations in the world.

9. City of Greater Bendigo's Bid to be a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy - presented by Trevor Budge – City of Bendigo; and Sonia Anthony – Food Fossickers Network

PILLAR 1. Recognition of Aboriginal Heritage – connection to country and a sustainable food system

PILLAR 2. Creativity Innovation and Diversity

PILLAR 3. Health and Wellbeing – Fair access to physical health and social cohesion

PILLAR 4. Sustainability – Building sustainable local food systems

10. Place Making and Farmers Markets; Melbourne Food Hub – Adam Perkins

Melbourne Food Hub Goals:

- a. Meet
- b. Learn
- c. Grow
- d. Make
- e. Eat
- f. Source
- g. Model
- h. Market

Farmers markets encourage the use of community kitchens eg. in old sheds; cooking workshops; self-watering beds; they facilitate the distribution of produce to hospitality sector and to individual consumers.

Serena Lee – Chief Communications Officer of the agri-tech start up www.farmwall.com.au explained the features of small scale vertical farms – farm to place in 2 minutes. An on-site discreet natural, vertical farm that grows fresh herbs and microgreens inside cafes and restaurants.

11. Quaint and Functional –Tiny Houses in The Wallan Community – Judy Clarke

The Tiny House movement is expanding and should have significant implications for housing affordability; inequality and homelessness. Tiny Houses are sleeping hubs that are designed for short stays of about twelve months after which clients are expected to be in a position to progress to a more regular style of residence via a planned exit strategy.

Transition Village, Wallan

A Tiny House village is the modern day version of the traditional Caravan Park. Tiny Houses are not much more than 12 sq m lockable sleeping pods, where, apart from a wash basin, chattels are limited - with a bed being the main feature. All other daily activities are encouraged in common areas such as the kitchen ; laundry ; shower blocks; community gardens; BBQ; meeting rooms etc.

Tiny Houses offer a localised, compassionate, low carbon lifestyle for those who may otherwise be sleeping rough.

12. RetroSuburbia – The Downshifter’s Guide to a Resilient Future - David Holmgren

www.retrosurbia.com

This methodology offers an alternative to the building bubble – community building through re-localising economies and self-governance in existing suburban communities. Holmgren sees Melbourne’s infill development as a threat driven by the property bubble – and fears building bankruptcies are looming. He believes there is a better way to approach population growth rather than to smash/ pave / develop. If one conserves open spaces, maximises the use of existing residential building stocks and encourages share / group houses, community members have a better chance to optimise living and learning.

Holmgren’s Melbourne Model for *RetroSuburbia* promotes the following ideals:

- Preserve existing private and public open space for garden and urban agriculture
- Maximise use of existing residential building stock (take in a boarder)
- Revitalise non-monetary economies
- Reduce commuting by hone based ad local livelihoods
- Retrofit unused commercial and other buildings when needed for rising population
- Prioritise refugee intake and reduce business and skilled migration

David believes in “home” gardens where there is a balance between soil, water and sunshine – but as density increases, shade does too and there becomes a chronic shortage of sunshine.

13. Creating More Walkable Sustainable Communities – RMIT Centre for Urban Research - Dr Claire Boulange

Health is a basic and universal human right. Built environment affects people’s behaviour and lifestyles so planners should understand the built form – which they can control, has a powerful impact on health. Thus planners should consider a walkability index. They might look at land use – something to walk to ; road connectivity – a way to get there and housing density – allowing maximum walkable areas and last but not least - easy access to public open space.

Quoted by Dr Boulange was Professor Billie Giles-Corti - Honorary, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health regarding built Environment and Health (Impact of built

environment on children through to older adults; evaluation of built environment interventions). Aussie kids are the most chauffeured in the whole world.

<https://findanexpert.unimelb.edu.au/display/person409540#tab-research>

Why not check out her credentials and areas of study? Place , Health and Livability Research Program ...and in 2016-18 a project on Better Apartments funded by DEWLP.

14. The Renewable Newstead Project – Genevieve Barber and Geoff Park

The Renewables Newstead vision involves creating community-owned solar farms, and to share that solar output, in order to eliminate the incentive for individuals to preference rooftop solar. With the presence of fixed charges, and the elimination of usage charges, it is hoped people will be encouraged to “fuel switch” from bottled gas and wood to a grid which the local community hopes will be 100% renewables within a few years.

It is hoped that Newstead, a town of only 1500 in Central Victoria, will be 100% powered by solar by 2021.

15. Use Your Power as a Super Fund Member to fight Climate Change ‘Market Forces’ presented by Will Van de Pol

This segment focussed on the Superannuation industry which own/ invest in, 25% of the Australian Stock Market. The presenter exposed superannuation funds that invest in, or underwrite, fossil fuel projects eg QBE and Suncorp, but he said there is little transparency in the Super industry. \$1Trillion investments are not disclosed to the public. He cited shareholder activism; corporate governance and managing climate risk.

More information is available at www.marketforces.org.au and www.superswitch.org.au

16. Connecting Communities is About People – Dean Cracknell – Founder of the Town Team Network 2010

An unfortunate statistic is that only c. 35% of the community trust “the Government”.

In response to this mistrust, Dean was eager to see what he could do if he worked with the community to focus on shared priorities. He started the not for profit Town Teams Movement to help mobilise communities so that businesses, residents, community groups and local governments collaborate to create great places. Dean has been the instigator of 21 Town Teams in Perth.

Commonly we work in silos and are service- instead of people- driven. Many of us wait for something to happen or for someone else to do something. A series of One Night Stands that lack continuity are not the silver bullets that will work. What is needed is Unity and that is why Town Teams are catalysts for positive change.

Unlike hardware (seats, paths etc) that cannot give a place soul, character or feeling – enthusiastic people working together can instil pride, confidence and a can-do attitude. Locals should be the place leaders and have stewardship of place – nurturing it and safeguarding it for future generations.

www.townteams.com.au

17. Great Events – 2018 events that are changing the game

Transition Banyule - Mary Stringer

www.transitionnetwork.org; www.transitionbanyule.org.au

Transition Banyule is working to engage the community in planning for a sustainable future. It now functions as a network of neighbourhood groups across the municipality.

The neighbourhood groups are: Montmorency Community Group, Transition 3081, Sustainable Macleod, Transition Warringal and Sustainable Greensborough.

If indeed we are heading for a Climate Crunch within three years, its imperative that Councils act now for a safer future without oil dependency.

Darebin's Climate Emergency Plan - Samantha Green

Darebin Council's Environment Team has -

1. Executed a Climate Emergency Declaration
2. Devised a Climate Emergency Plan [in consultation with their community]
3. Championed a Climate Emergency Conference

<https://www.yoursaydarebin.com.au/climateaction>

And to quote **The Age** article "It's not too late to act on climate change" by Paul Gilding 11 Sept 2018

"This brings me back to Darebin in Melbourne. This local council looked rationally at what the science told them – that we face a crisis and the only logical response is to declare a climate emergency. And so they did. In consultation with their community, they then developed the Darebin Climate Emergency Plan."

18. 'Food Circles' Pakenham Community Garden and the Cardinia Food Network

Cardinia Council and Sustain have come together to share collective experiences and knowledge to address the escalation of diet-related obesity and resultant Diabetes, in this LGA.

Through this approach, it may be the first community in Australia to successfully address the obesity crisis through mutually reinforcing strategies inc. the Cardinia Health and Wellbeing Plan.

The project has a ten-year vision to achieve the following objectives:

- Reduce the overweight and obesity rates by 30 per cent.
- Balance the ratio of healthy food outlets to fast food outlets to become 1:1.
- Reduce per capita visits to fast food outlets in the Shire by 20 per cent.
- Increase the food and health literacy of the Shire to 80 per cent.
- Increase the regularity of access to fresh fruit and vegetables to at least 50 per cent (weekly), with access distances reduced a 1km walk from people's homes.
- Increase local jobs and business opportunities in food and agriculture.

19. The Big Fix Inc – Grassroots media in The Blue Mountains – Liz Bastian

Shares local and regional stories and solutions that mainstream media ignores. www.thebigfix.org