

Report to Community Forum for the Aged  
October to December 1993  
by Ruth Crow

Latrobe Valley Forum. On October 16th I gave a workshop on housing and older people at a seminar organised by the Latrobe Valley Forum. My contribution was based on the part I drafted for the Housing for Aged Action Group's submission to the Industry Commission's Inquiry on Public Housing. Attached are the "starter" questions I distributed to participants. (Attachment 1)

Discussion Group on Planning at Victoria University of Technology (the Crow Collection) 29/ 10/93. The main theme of the October newsletter of the Crow Collection Association (Ecoso 2/28) was on planning for the elderly. This was distributed to a number of organisations.

About 40 people attended the "viewing" and discussion. See report back in attached extract from Ecoso 2/29. (Attachment 2.)

Recent documents from organisations have been put in folders and are available in the Collection Room (Attachment 3.) A list of catalogued documents on housing for aged people has also been prepared.

An articles in the VUT newsletter is about older people (Attachment 4.)

Housing for Aged Action Group, 10/11/'93. The annual meeting was attended by about 20 people. Discussion on living in caravan (mobile home) parks. Concerns were expressed about cost of rental, high energy used for heating, and distance to shops/community services. I have accepted a position on the Committee of Management of HAAG.

Abbeyfield Seminar, 12/11/93. This was attended by about 50 people. Main theme was on how to provide Abbeyfield type of accommodation. The keynote speaker was Delys Sargent. There were contributions by an architect, an interior decorator, an occupational therapist and a financial advisor.

A matter raised in one workshop was about high standards resulting in housing becoming too expensive. Cases were instanced of older people in O-Y-O flats where a concern to improve the flats (mainly to increase re-sale value) resulted in lower income people being forced out. This was happening where there is a high proportion of non-resident owners.

Hearing Aid Services 22/10/93. I visited the Commonwealth Government Hearing Aid Centre. This provides services to people of all ages and thus includes hearing loss in older people. There is a reluctance by some older people to accept that their hearing is deteriorating and special measures have to be taken to convince them of the advantages of an aid to them personally to others they are associated with. The Centre gives assistance with adapting telephones and doorbells for people who have poor hearing.

Through the Looking Glass" and the United Nations Day Calendar

I have written some comments on these documents (Attachment 5.).

Attachments to Ruth Crow's Report to Community Forum for Aged  
October -December 1993

1. Questions used at Latrobe Valley Community Forum Seminar
2. Report on discussion at Victoria University of Technology
3. Index of Recent Documents on Planning for Elderly People
4. Article by Deidre Jones (gerontology consultant) in Victoria University of Technology's Newsletter.
5. Comments on "Through a Looking Glass" and the UN Day Calendar.

# Who Owns Who ? Who Owns What ?

## Latrobe Valley Community Forum

### Alternative Home Ownership

Workshop Contribution from Ruth Crow

16. 10. '93

#### *Introduction*

In the context of the needs of all the people of the world, Australia, with its consumerist life style, squanders resources on housing while people living in the third world countries live in primitive shanties.

and

In the context of needs of future generations our building practices and our town planning squander the world's unrenewable energy resources.

but

We are not discussing these issue today. The aim of this workshop is to deal in more detail with the ideas presented this morning in the discussion groups and forum :-

*What issues do we face as individuals in our daily lives relating to ownership ? How do we respond to these ?*

*How can we link theory and practice ?*

#### *A Few Questions to Start Discussion.*

How are our lives affected by the fact that our homes have both a use value and an exchange value ?

What problems are we facing in keeping a roof over our heads ?

How are our lives affected by the decrease in home affordability ?

How are our lives affected by the inadequate provision of (appropriate) housing for older people, young people, single women, Kooris and migrants and other such people with specific needs ?

Is it possible to have a land title system which would give renters and home owners more security of tenure?

Are we all being given more housing choice through government (Commonwealth and State) current policies for social and community housing ?

What advantages/disadvantages are there in the municipal councils providing some housing ?

What common policies would unite the community movement, the environmental movement and the trade unions ?

Extract from Ecoso Exchange Newsletter, Dec 1993.

## News from the Crow Collection

The main activity for October was the holding of the viewing day and discussion groups on Planning for Elderly People. This was attended by about 40 people. Two pleasing features of the function were the variety of organisations represented and the number of people who were introduced to the Crow Collection (and most probably the VUT) for the first time.

Preparation for this gathering resulted in listing some of the recent documents on ageing in the Crow Collection and thus making them more publicly accessible. (Print outs of these lists and photostats of some of the documents are available from the Collection at a small charge (for copying and posting).

Some general issues discussed were :-

*Support for carers of older people (the need for more effective provision of respite care); overcoming negative media images (the need to present positive, optimistic views on life in older years); mental health issues on several fronts (for example, mental health of older people, themselves, and also those some may be caring for); de-institutionalisation, without support systems (resulting in elderly parents being over-burdened with care and in some cases harassed); loss of equity in home ownership and other problems in changing to more appropriate accommodation (in particular how this affects older people in "dying" country towns); specific needs of Kooris (especially in urban areas); lack of knowledge of what is available (especially on housing/ community services /opportunities to develop creative capacities); inadequacies in home help services (the need to update training of domiciliary workers): inadequate public transport (its dehumanising effect) ; location of age-specific housing (needs to be near transport/shops).*

Some recently emerging issues were also discussed :-

The effect of economic rationalist policies which are resulting in *amalgamations of health centres* making them less accessible to older people, and the *contracting out of municipal services*; premature discharge from hospitals resulting from *"case mix" practices in health care*; the costs incurred in obtaining official information ( Australian Government Publishing Services AGPS and the Australian Bureau of Statistic ABS are moving to a commercial footing.

### A Common Interest in Social Problem Solving.

In introducing the discussion session Sheila Byard (Hon Sec of Crow Collection Association) explained that the people who are in the support network for the Crow Collection have, in common, an interest in social problem solving which is not restricted to the professionally qualified. She said that our commitment to sustainable community life means that we want to find ways of working collaboratively on social problems and

believe that this is the only way real solutions will be found.

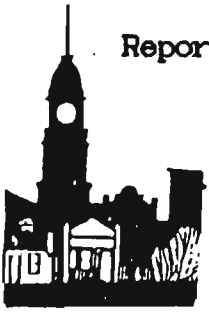
#### **A Common Interest in Social Problem Solving.**

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Here are some quotes from Sheila's introductory remarks.

The reason for the viewing and discussion was to try a little networking of our own at the edge of all this sectoral activity of specialisation and professionalisation. We see great virtue in building bridges into the community so people outside the professional groupings can be aware of what the planners are up to, and we see a great need to assist people "out there" in marshalling their views as a counter-balance to the research grant recipients.

In this University (Victoria University of Technology) the Department of Health Sciences offers an extended care subject and the Department of Physical Education has its graduate certificate of Ageing and Recreation. In the current issue of "Nexus" (the VUT Newsletter Vol. 3, No. 20, 1 November, 1993) describes the Gerontology Review and Planning Project for which Deidre Jones is the consultant for the Faculty of Human Development at VUT.



Report by Ruth Crow to the Community Forum for the Aged....Attachment 3.

## The Crow Collection Association (Incorp.)

### A Living Library to Plan for the 21st Century

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## Planning for Elderly People

### Indexed Folders of Some Current Documents

1. Documents in the Crow Collection
2. Consumer Forum for the Aged....Documents Discussed at Meetings (1993).
3. Consumer forum for the Aged...Documents on Housing.
4. Law Reform Commission .. Four Documents 1992
5. Housing for Elderly - Cross National Perspectives... Three documents from Seminar in Japan (1993).
6. Municipal Association - Housing and Community Care Project (1993)
7. Housing for Aged Action Group - Newsletter and Submission to Industry Commission Inquiry (1993).
8. Royal Freemason's Homes and Princes Hill Village,
9. Two Pink Folders of documents from Princes Hill Village Resident Committee (1993).

### Some Recent Publications

#### Reports from Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Community Development...

National Housing Strategy, especially "Agenda for Action" and booklet Number 8 "Housing for older Australians". (Twelve strategy booklets are in the Crow Collection).

"Changing Places", a report prepared for the Mid Tern Review of Aged Care Reform Strategy.

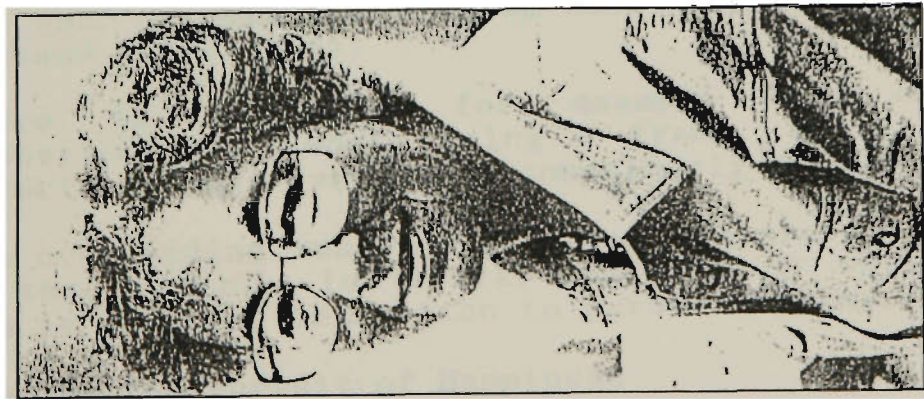
1993 Budget Overview.

#### From Overseas...

Kazuo Hayakawa "Housing Poverty in Japan" (brought back from Kobe Seminar by Sheila Byard of Victoria University of Technology... see also the three documents from this seminar in the folders).

## Services for aged in short supply

by Deidre Jones,  
University Gerontology  
Consultant,  
Faculty of  
Human Development



**A**ustralia presently has two million people over the age of 65 years. Within 40 years the population will comprise 1.4 million people over 80 years which makes the Gerontology Review and Planning Project being conducted by the Faculty of Human Development, particularly relevant.

The project, which commenced in April this year, is being undertaken to identify the current provision of teaching and research on the aged by the Faculty and by other organisations in the community. A review of existing contributions by staff was carried out and interviews conducted with key people in the

Department of Health and Community Services, managers of aged services in local government, medical practitioners and others with responsibilities for aged services. The findings have revealed a dearth of services and planning for the nation's increasing aged population.

We have identified many areas of unmet needs for educational programs for professionals and members of the community to promote adequate and quality services for older people. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in the next 10 years, it is predicted that the 40-to-69-year age group will almost double and the 70-plus age-group will double.

Melbourne's western region will be one of the most adversely affected areas by these increases. The west has a heterogeneous population of older adults who differ in ethnic background, culture, health status, availability of family or friends support network

and disposable income levels, from those outside the region. According to ABS statistics, only 9.6 per cent of the region's populations have professional qualifications; hence the need for training professionals working in the west to understand the cultural contexts of ageing and the perceived health and support needs of its high ethnic population.

In Victoria, most gerontology courses are at graduate level and offered only to the nursing profession. Government and community-based agencies do offer some forms of training but these do not attract an award, tend not to be portable and are offered on an ad hoc basis. The University's Department of Physical Education currently offers one course on ageing, the Graduate Certificate in Ageing and Recreation and the Department of Health Sciences one subject on extended care. Gerontology is also covered in aspects of a wide

range of subjects offered by other departments in the Faculty of Human Development and the commitment is strengthening. In addition to increasing curriculum content and research at profession-specific and multidisciplinary levels, the Faculty now has an opportunity to offer training to professionals and members of the community. One initiative arising from the project was a one-day conference held last month during National Carers Week for the Carers Association, Victoria. This was developed to help carers to find some of the resources and support they need in their very challenging role.

The key to successful development of future research and gerontology programs lies in the ability of research educators and providers to be in touch with community needs, particularly where the demand for services is outstripping the availability of financial, facility and service-provider resources.

*Published in "Nexus" -  
Newsletter of Victoria University of  
Technology - Oct/Nov 1993*

## **"Through the Looking Glass"**

and

**The United Nations Day Calendar**

Comments by Ruth Crow, November, 1993.

*The world is one big recreational opportunity; that interacting with the world - the inanimate, the living; the symbolic and social layers of existence - is a never ending source of excitement and strength.*  
(quoted in "Through A Looking Glass")

Many years ago my three year old daughter used to cry when she overheard anyone say "Isn't she sweet." but smile when someone remarked on how fast she could run or how high she could jump.

I feel like crying when some one refers to me as being "so wonderfully active for my age" or as being "lucky to have some interesting things to do", and, when an older person refers to "carers" saying "They do so much for us."

Therefore I fully agree with the ideas expressed in "Through the Looking Glass".

**Images of Old People on the U.N Day Calendar.**

The re-reading of "Through the Looking Glass" coincided with me making a decision not to display on my wall the calendar which was given to me on International Day for the Elderly, 1993. I made a similar decision about the 1992 calendar.

**My reasons for not displaying the U.N. Calendar :-**

1. The line drawings tend to make the characters caricatures rather than people (who wants to relate to them ?).
2. There is a stereotyping, for example the letter from "mum" and "dad", the photo display (modelled on "Mother and Son" ?) and the pairing off (a cosy togetherness of husband and wife ?).
3. There is tokenism, for example men eating with chopsticks, the woman using a frame, and a woman in a motorised chair (very self consciously "accepting" ?).
4. The over-riding reason why I don't relate to the calendar is that everyone (or nearly everyone) is smiling (in old age is there an obligation to pursue happiness ?)

### **Oppressed by The Pursuit of Happiness**

It is usual to smile when looking in a mirror. Perhaps the smiles are glued on as people pass through. One way of helping to break the looking glass image is to recognise that old age holds much more than the calendar's happy, busy lives.

(I have some ideas about illustrations for a United Nations Day Calendar)