

low cost  
Community  
housing?

**FORGET IT.**

We want the right to live on a low cost communities.

Come to the

Pan Com gathering 31 August.

At the Forest Meditation Centre on

Wallace Road, The Channon

9am till 5pm

More information contact Simon Clough on 886217

## Pan Com- Agenda - 31st August

**9am** - brief rundown of last meeting. re-identify why we are here, round the circle.

**11 Morning tea**

**11.30 Break into groups**

a) action- Sepp 15, letterwriting, protest .....

b) networking- connection between communities, social gatherings, info connection, mobilization .....

c) future/ social /broader aspects, the next generation of youth, as we get older, surveys .....

**12.30 to 1.30 lunch**

**1.30 Back to the groups to summarize**

**3 to 5pm back to main plenary for debrief and feedback.**

If you would like further information about Pan Com there is an overview of the last gathering and a background leaflet, please contact :

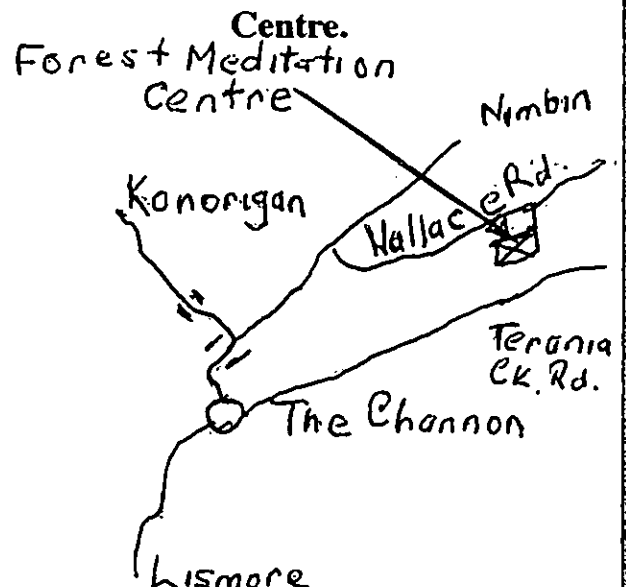
Alan Hill tel 897 464 or  
Simon Clough tel 886 217.

**Please bring food to share for lunch -**

cost for the day is \$10 .

Please note: NO cats or dogs or non-prescribed drugs, no alcohol.

Please park on Wallace Road and we will ferry you to the Forest Meditation Centre.



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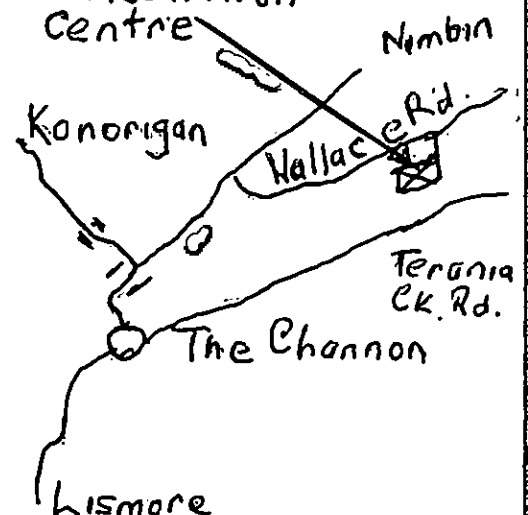
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20/8/36

U

SEPP-15

SEPP-15. Purportedly Cabinet so does this neg-  
it to go back to Cabinet (in a diff Govt)?  
ing can lower level of decision making  
overrule a higher authority?  
of "Natural Justice" - "procedural fairness"?

- Rul Can to bring action against the Minister  
Webster re procedural fairness.
- seek advice from Attorney General re this  
as a "party"?

Ask Knowles WHY's

Why Policy not released

Why ~~his statement~~ nothing has happened  
since his statement in Byron.

Has he given a direction that SEPP-15  
is not to be reestablished?

If not, why has he not acted to  
fulfil the Party platform?

(Send copy of this to Sec 2 etc)

If not, will he give direction now? with  
time frame for it to happen.

(2)  
Seeka of the House of Premier,  
Cabinet <sup>style</sup> Lee + Branches.

SEU + Graham have

Disc of Bill Metzger Bibliography.

Audiovisual Sec Lib.

Dean Windwood? did transfer to/from  
ASCU?

Last entry is 1987

Graham has updated  
Bibliography. See his  
fragment.

If short list reqd. so contents page  
of selected items likely to  
be in ~~several libraries~~ ~~some~~  
Public libraries.

# REVIEW



is kind of  
subliminal

## Not quite Nirvana

**T**HE place was the Commonground Commune, set in the rolling Tallarook Hills near Seymour in central Victoria.

It was some time in 1993 when one of its members — a woman with shimmering long brown hair — heard a call of destiny.

"I want to have a baby," her inner-voice urged. "I want to have a baby."

Four other adults and three children were living with the woman on 55 hectares in what is still Australia's smallest but truest example of a commune.

The group's members live as a family. There is no private ownership. Everything is pooled — money (some communes require only a regular proportion of one's income), labour, talents. And everything means everything.

The only way the woman

with the long brown hair would be having her baby was if her fellow communards agreed.

Neither her sentiments, nor the wishes of the child's prospective father — with whom she had been entwined in a long-term relationship — were considered any more important than those of the rest of the group.

Over some months, the matter was debated. In the Commonground context of things, where private ownership of children is out, the group would be responsible for raising the new child. Is this what they wanted or needed at this time?

There were other questions.

With the mother pregnant

**Three decades after the Age of Aquarius, Australians are again opting for life in a commune. But though communal living can be rewarding, many people find it much tougher than expected, as MATTHEW FYNES-CLINTON reports**

and later nursing a child, she would not be contributing nearly as much to communal activities. Could the community afford this down-time? Would it be fair to burden the others with the extra work?

Eventually, the commune determined that yes, the woman could have that baby who'd cling to her long brown hair.

But when we give up our well-paid jobs and throw off our suburban chains, is this the sort of "freedom" awaiting our life on the commune? Our better way of life?

Is our journey really one *From Utopian Dreaming to Communal Reality* as conveyed by the title of a book (University of NSW Press)

written last year by Brisbane's world authority on communes Bill Metcalf?

Or is the juxtaposition wrong? Should that in fact be *From Communal Dreaming to Utopian Reality*?

Dr Metcalf, who says up to 20,000 Australians are residing in communes, frankly admits the lifestyle is not all fresh peaches and hand-whipped cream.

Living on a commune is working brilliantly for some. But it's not perfect. And it's not for everyone...

"Something that can occur for people who try this way of life is disillusionment," explains Dr Metcalf, 50, a Griffith University sociologist and social historian who has lived half his adult existence in communes.

"We've been raised very much with the ideas of 'I want, I should have, I come first'. But individualism and communalism are in conflict.

"Individualism is challenged by going into any relationship. In a communal situation, often people don't realise how much is going to be expected of them and how much they're going to have to give up."

Dr Metcalf estimates there are 150 to 300 communes (he feels "intentional communities" is a more workable description) in Australia. "But we really don't know. These groups are forming and collapsing all the time."

What is sure, is that the Age of Aquarius has long ago dawned. These days, many

communards are ex-professionals in their 40s and 50s who have arrived in search of a more meaningful and joyous life.

"We used to hear about drug-crazed hippies hanging round under trees and smoking dope," Dr Metcalf said.

"But today, you're most likely to find workaholics in these communities. They put tremendous energy into looking after the physical environment."

Australia's communes are spread far and wide. While Tuntabla Falls, Nimbin, is the largest (260 members) and most infamous, south-east Queensland is home to three of the more successful: Frogs' Hollow/Manduka, outside Maleny; Mandala, near Warwick; and Chenrezig Institute for Wisdom Culture, a Buddhist commu-

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January 21, 1996 Page 61

The Sunday Mail



# Moving on from the Age of Aquarius

nity and communal nursery, also near Maleny.

Although communes are normally established away from cities, "urban communes" are not unheard of — Dr Metcalf himself lived in one, from 1980-82, in West End.

He even reveals that the seven-bedroom Highgate Hill home he shares with his partner Helen had a previous five-year life as a "commune". The four other members of the couple's group have since moved on.

Having just returned from overseas — from researching his upcoming book looking at 15 international communes, from Brazil to Scotland — he suggests that two types of people are being pulled to communes in the Nineties.

There are the "in order to", and the "because of".

"The 'in order to' people are people who go into this with a positive motivation.

"They're looking forward to something. They aren't failures. They don't have troubles necessarily. They may be teachers, journalists, lawyers ... they could have stayed with their jobs and done very well.

"But they're going into this because it's the right way to live. They're somewhat utopian.

"But the 'because of' people have a negative motivation for going in. They're going in because they can't cope in any other way.

"For example, you get a lot of single parents living in communal groups because it's a lot easier. You can live quite comfortably on the supporting parent's benefit in one of these groups, whereas you'd starve to death trying to rent a flat in Toowong.

"Some people go in because they've had medical problems, psychiatric problems. They can't cope with city living.

"The thing is that if you get too many of the 'because of' people, the commune collapses. The 'in order' people are the people who carry these groups. They're the people who have predominated in the communes that have lasted long-term."

Entree into most communes in Australia will cost — from \$5000 to \$50,000 a share.

Members have not necessarily the same religious beliefs (although there are Christian as well as Buddhist groups) but are usually knitted by a spiritual hunger.

Living in open spaces, tilling the soil, loving the environment — many a commune has settled on cattle-degraded desert then brought it back to green life — puts these people in touch with what some name God, others call Mother Earth.

Some communards work



Author Dr Bill Metcalf: spent half his adult life in communes

away from the commune but contribute some or all of their weekly income. Others set up cottage industries.

While crops and vegie plots are an integral to most communities, a fully-subsistence lifestyle was never the intention of most. They continue to be a part of the local economy, shopping at Woolies and Franklins.

Communes have rules, but the voices of the community decide the rules. In all cases, the groups have a commitment to equality and anarchy (that is, self-responsibility and self-management) and non-violence.

Australia's communards point to almost non-existent rates of rape, murder, child abuse and far less suicide and divorce than the rest of society. They pride themselves on their ability to police themselves.

And while some might be sceptical, even the children revel in this alternative — according to Dr Metcalf. He says they are jovial and, later in life, invariably well-adjusted and successful.

"It might be a little isolating for them — in that you don't have a cinema around or video shops.

"But I've done some work with a few people in their early 20s who have grown up in these communities.

"And you find almost most everyone has very positive memories of their lives.

"They are free to leave when they're adults and are in fact encouraged to experience the other side of life.

"But you get many of them saying that they hope to come back. You rarely get any of these young people saying: 'I'd have nothing to do with that lot again.'

"So overall, socially, environmentally, with their flora and fauna reserves and permaculture systems ...

"The way they are not dependent on the state, the way they are supporting themselves and educating their children (at primary level) and supporting their old people who are staying until they die ...

"I guess any way I can imagine, these communities must be regarded as being successful."

But he warns that right now, of the groups sitting around in houses, fired by the prospect of establishing a commune, only a quarter of them will actually do anything.

And of those, about two-thirds will collapse in the first couple of years.

He says that after a levelling-off period in the late Seventies, communal life in Australia is enjoying a slight popularity surge. But without the hard work, many first-timers are finding happiness and harmony just as unreachable as before.

"People going into this way of life correctly think that one of the things they're trying to do is lead a conflict-free life.

"But they naively think somehow this will automatically happen. And of course, you take all of your shit with you. You don't escape it.

"So there is conflict in communes. And the one thing critical to the survival of these groups is conflict resolution skills. The groups that don't develop them will invariably collapse.

"I do think Australia would be a much better country if we all lived communally. But I'm not saying everybody should do it. And I want to be clear about that.

"I don't think most people are capable of it."



Open-air cooking ... members of the Mandala commune near Warwick.

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FROM  
**UTOPIAN  
DREAMING**  
TO  
**COMMUNAL  
REALITY**

*Bill Metcalf (ed)*

For anyone who has ever dreamed of radically changing their lifestyle and joining a commune, this book is both inspiration and instruction manual.

The first examination of communal living in Australia, it tears down stereotypes of aging hippies dressed in tie-dyes and clutching crystals.

Ten widely diverse people share their experiences of building and living in different communal lifestyles. Some are based on religious or political ideals, many are committed to sustainable permaculture, some involve members working outside while others strive for self-sufficiency. Members include engineers, theologians, teachers, sociologists, journalists, and people from all parts of society.

Dr Metcalf puts these individual stories into perspective with a historical overview of communalism in this country, which stretches back into last century. The communes range from a German community set up in Victoria in 1839, to the New Italy experiment in Northern NSW, set up by Italian socialists in 1882 and William Lane's famous 'New Australia' settlement in Paraguay.

Enjoyable, honest and frequently inspiring, this is a unique book which asks some penetrating questions about the way we live.

213 x 137mm 196pp  
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Acknowledgements

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2. From Barbecues at Bondi to Biodynamic Bananas: *Leigh Davison*
3. From Academic Exercises to Jumping Spiders: *Jan Tilden*
4. From a London Slum to Nimbin's Magic! *Gloria Constine*
5. From Mission Field to Potato Patch: *Estelle and Don Gobbett*
6. From Outrage to Insight: *Bill Smale*
7. From Catholic Farm Girl to Buddhist Nun: *Yeshe Khadro*
8. From Grey-Suited Engineer to Birthday-Suited Hippie: *Barry Goodman*
9. From a Circle of Stones to Commonground Dreaming: *Glen Ochre*
10. From Communal Theory to Eco-Spiritual Practice: *Peter Cock*
11. From Communism to Communalism: *Enid Conochie*
12. Summary and Conclusion: *Bill Metcalf*

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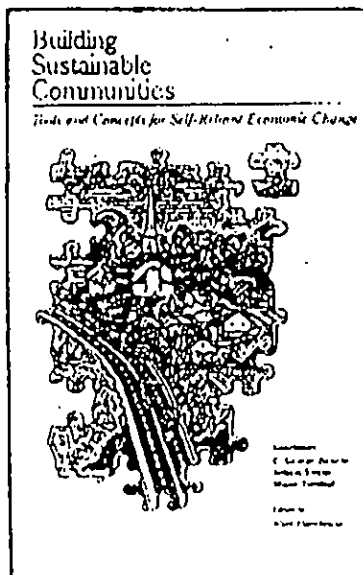
TOOLS AND CONCEPTS FOR SELF-RELIANT ECONOMIC CHANGE

by C. George Benello, Robert Swann & Shann Turnbull  
edited by Ward Morehouse

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-- Kirkpatrick Sale,  
author of *Human Scale*  
and *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision*

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