

*This is original file.
Superseded by submission to
Hamberman Conf 1998 where it*

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*is broken up into 2 sep
papers.*

PAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A Resource File for the Preparation of Submissions, Media Releases and the Like for the Reinstatement of SEPP-15

Edited by Peter Hamilton

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SECTION 1. Introduction

This material has been assembled as a resource file for use by those seeking to assist in having SEPP-15 reinstated.

Section 2 brings together the results of several brainstorm sessions held at various Pan Com meetings. Section 3 consists of quotations selected from the submissions made by individual MO residents during the period when the proposed replacement of SEPP-15 was on public exhibition early in 1997.

*Section 4 consists of extracts from the Manual **RURAL SETTLEMENT: Guidelines on Rural Settlement on the North Coast of NSW** published by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP) in 1995. This Manual sets out the "best practice" guidelines for rural settlement. MO is listed as one such "best practice" form of rural settlement. I have elaborated in dot point form the ways in which MO addresses the various environmental, planning and design elements set forth in this Manual.*

Reference to this publication in my view is valuable in that it specifically relates to the government's own "best practice" guidelines for rural settlement!

In Section 5 I list some of the potential answers to the question "Why SEPP-15 should be reinstated?" In Section 6 I have framed some questions addressed to the Government, its Ministers and senior bureaucrats as to why the former Policy has not been or should not now be reinstated.

I consider that MO members have well put their case over an extended period of time and that the onus is now on the Government to show cause why the Policy should NOT be reinstated!

In this collection it is often that the same issue or circumstance, is expressed in different ways by different people. Where this has occurred I have chosen to retain multiple expressions to provide a diversity of approach. Some "duplication" also occurs between the Sections. I have retained these as the stated purpose of this compendium is as a resource file rather than an exposition for wider circulation.

Comments and suggestions for additions are invited. Please forward same to Pan Community Council, P.O. Box 102, Nimbin, 2480.

*Peter Hamilton,
October 1997.*

SECTION 2: Features of Intentional Communities

The following features of Rural Landsharing Communities are based on brainstorm sessions with various Pan Community members. These are in random order and loosely grouped under several headings.

M.O. House Design, Construction, Cost and Maintenance

A Multiple Occupancy intentional community:-

- *facilitates low cost housing*
- *enables housing on low capital outlay*
- *assists self help housing construction*
- *enables home construction mortgage free*
- *reduces cost of land by communal sharing*
- *enables early occupation viz. gets "rapid" roof over ones head*
- *provides owner responsibility for house maintenance and replacement*
- *obviates the need for maintenance and replacement cost as is the case in government housing*
- *facilitates composting toilets and the like, in lieu of relying on a town sewerage system*
- *provides communal facilities and sharing of resources eg. community building, hall, shop, school building, retreat facilities, laundry, workshop etc.*
- *enables low cost self help housing, particularly for those on low incomes and with little or no access to capital funds*
- *contributes to the diversity of the national housing stock*
- *contributes to the diversity of family patterns and lifestyles*
- *assists those on low incomes to build or purchase a home*
- *facilitates creative owner-builder house designs*
- *invites a pride in achievement*
- *facilitates a strong and lasting bond between the builder and the building. (It is not infrequent for a single woman to build or extend their home)*
- *enables "rapid" housing particularly in times of crises or emergency*
- *enables early occupation prior to completion of the house*
- *enables sharing of building equipment, tools, assistance and experience*
- *enables physical support for labour intensive construction*
- *enables use of low cost building materials eg. on site mud for brick, round poles for construction and sawdust for cement-sand-sawdust wall panels*
- *enables mortgage free housing*
- *facilitates pride in constructing a house as "home"*
- *facilitates a "life cycling" use of the house eg. occupation by a single person > couple > couple with children > grand parents*

Chinese proverb "When you stop building your house you die."

Environmental Impact

Intentional Communal Living Facilitates and Encourages:-

- *environmental repair and enrichment*
- *weed eradication*
- *soil erosion control*
- *soil quality enrichment*
- *forest regeneration*
- *wood lots (as a fuel) and for building purposes*
- *flora and fauna habitat restoration*

Reduction of Demand on Public Facilities and Services

Multiple Occupancy reduces the demand on public facilities and services by:-

- *the use of composting toilets in lieu of town sewerage*
- *the supply of own water in lieu of reticulated town water*
- *the use of solar energy (solar panels, wind and water generators) in lieu of town (fossil fuel) generated electricity*
- *reducing the demand per head on public roads due to shared transport and clustered settlement*
- *providing bushfire fighting facilities in advanced locations*
- *providing wastewater facilities in lieu of town stormwater facilities*
- *providing facilities for the aged in lieu of the need for retirement homes or special villages*
- *not requiring Government constructed or subsidised housing*
- *not requiring farming subsidies as for example is provide to the sugar and other industries*
- *facilitating viable quality rural settlement thereby reducing the “drift to the cities”*
- *contributing input into youth education such as pre schools, primary and secondary schools thereby reducing the demand on the state to provide additional facilities*
- *by engaging in home birthings thereby reducing the demand on hospital facilities*
- *by providing home burials thereby reducing the demand on public cemeteries*
- *facilitating communal health and healing in lieu of reliance on state health services and facilities.*
- *not calling on State funds for house maintenance costs or replacement of buildings.*
- *by providing appropriate, accessible and affordable housing*

Social and Economic Attributes

Some of the Social Attributes of Intentional Communal Living

Multiple Occupancy communal living:-

- *facilitates home grown produce and orchards thereby reducing food costs*
- *facilitates income generating pursuits viz. self employment such as:-*
 - # pottery, woodwork, building and the like # cooking (e.g. tofu, jams, cheese etc.)*
 - # art work, needle work and the like*
 - # various business and commercial "venture" projects*
- *supports employment pursuits off the property e.g. academic and departmental welfare agencies, teaching etc.*
- *encourages and supports continuing adult education*
- *provides a support base for community work in the local, regional, national and global arenas*
- *facilitates and encourages a three generation family lifestyle*
- *supports personal growth and facilitates disputes resolution*
- *supports and enables members to balance their economic budget not so much by acquiring more income but by reducing the cost of living through sharing land and resources.*
- *enables and contributes to individuals relating to each other as an "extended family" (which for some includes adopting the use of kinship terms).*

Sundry Issues

- *The existence of the former SEPP-15 has facilitated the self housing of over 10,000 persons in NSW some of whom were on the Housing Commission waiting list.*
- *communal and supportive intentional communities may be contrasted with "citizen isolates" lifestyle in high rise city units*
- *Many Multiple Occupancy residents have served as Councillors in their local council area. (In the case of the Lismore City Council there have been an a series of councilor from Multiple Occupancies providing continuity of representation since the mid 70's). In one shire the Mayor is an M.O. resident. Currently there are two members of Parliament who are M.O. residents.*

SECTION 3: Selected quotations by M.O. residents

Selected quotations from the PAN COM file of individual M.O. residents submissions in support of the reintroduction of SEPP-15.

"I believe that Multiple occupancy communities have an invaluable role to play in our society".

"I am convinced that as a single parent with two children M.O. offers me the optimal living situation for myself and my children".

"I have in the past experienced first hand the poverty and stress associated with trying to maintain a decent standard of living whilst renting in the private housing market".

"I receive a supporting parent's benefit and am studying for a university degree. Rather than living in poverty and being a burden on the council, health and welfare systems I am able to maintain a relatively high standard of living whilst on a low income".

"I participate in community gardening days which provides me with my fresh vegetable needs. Bulk buying of staples allows me to save on my food bill".

"I appreciate the established infrastructure pool of garden and building tools etc which I could not possibly afford to buy myself at this stage of my life".

"I am able to participate in sharing childcare and be part of a supportive physical, financial and social environment."

"This community offers me support I would simply not otherwise have.

"I have emotional support, companionship and stimulation." (MO single parent)

"My children live in a healthy, rich and safe environment as part of an extended family, the adults of whom provide health role models, the other children provide close and lasting relationships".

It is tremendously fulfilling to participate in the ongoing adventure of living in a community which aspires to ecological sustainability providing a stable and innovative way of life, offering many solutions to health, social , environmental and housing problems.”

“It is imperative in our democratic society that MO communities be allowed to continue for single parents as well as for young people and others”.

“MO offers families the best option for a fulfilling life with a good standard of living”.

“I like others I know who live on MO's, are far less reliant on the full spectrum, of social services because up to three quarters of our income is not going into rent.”

“I applaud the re-introduction of a planning policy intended to promote and encourage rural community settlement based on communal ownership or trusteeship/stewardship principles”.

This form of development is to be encouraged, promoted and facilitated for its environmental benefits and the considerable benefits to the wider community, to the economic and cultural life of rural villages and towns, to the opportunities it offers for low-cost housing and socially and environmental useful activities for the young and unemployed”.

“The former MO policy has enabled us to be highly self sufficient in food production”

“We see ourselves as an extended family which means there is a great deal of love and support for each other”.

“We reap many social benefits from living communally”.

“We see that because of prejudice, parochialism and misinformation local councils have consistently refused to enable MO in their planning instruments when they have had the sole responsibility to do so. It is for this reason that we believe it to be essential that there be a state wide policy ensuring Multiple Occupancy communities will be approved for those people who want to live in a way that “...protects the environment and does not create a demand for the

demand for the unreasonable ... provisions of public resources ..." as was provided in SEPP-15".

"There is no greater gift one can give to their child than that of personal safety in his/her environment. If my child is not with me, I have total trust that he is being cared for and looked after. He has the privilege of growing up with a very extended family which love and care for him. (MO sole parent)".

"In 1984 when I applied successfully for a sole parents pension my income increased 300%. Yet I had secure housing, access to transport, a high quality diet and lifestyle, access to shared tools and equipment. I was learning new skills and the experience of others was freely available. I was meeting people from all over the world. I had access to childcare and the benefit of cultivating communally owned land. I provided the safest, healthiest most stimulating and high quality social lifestyle I could imagine for my child".

"I note that the young adults and teenagers on my community and other local communities, lead rich and stimulating lives. They have a sense of continuity, and a strong interest in the future and are already thinking about how to provide housing for themselves".

"I have observed that social problems which are magnified by poverty and involvement in crime, are not evident in stable local communities of 20-40 people".

"I have lived in this community for fourteen years. I live with my seven year old son in a simple but comfortable home that I built eleven years ago". (Sole parent Mother)

"It's a joy to not have to lock my home and unlock my car when I go out".

"Intentional communities provide real support for single parents and an alternative to citizen loneliness and social isolation".

"MO has enabled me through sharing the cost of the land to build a council approved house without the burden of a mortgage".

"MO communities have a long record of creating and maintaining educational institutions such as pre-schools and primary schools".

"Social surveys have revealed that MO residents have an above average occurrence of tertiary educational qualifications".

"Many MO residents are involved in mature age educational courses".

"I prefer to build and live in a modest house on shared land than have to wait over six years for Department of Housing rental accommodation".

"Undivided ownership of the land has meant that we have been able to do a great deal of restoration of this degraded land".

"Children, single parents and older people make a special contribution to our community and also receive many benefits, mainly in that they are never isolated or alienated here".

SECTION 4: The Departmental Guidelines for Rural Settlement

The following comments relate to "RURAL SETTLEMENT: Guidelines on Rural Settlement on the North Coast of NSW" published by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP) in 1995.

*In this Manual the desirable **Planning Objectives** are listed under a range of headings (p4). Using these headings, comment is made on the way Multiple Occupancy communities have met these Planning Objectives. (The content and wording in this Section is that used in the Manual).*

Part A

Thresholds to Growth

- *MO communities cluster rural settlement thereby limiting the fragmentation of rural land.*

Natural Environment

- *MO settlement contributes to enhancing the natural features and ecological values of the region.*

Diversity of Lifestyle

- *MO settlement provides a sustainable option for rural living as an alternative to urban living.*

Character of Identity

- *MO settlement retains and enhances the rural character of the local area.*

Efficient Servicing and Self Reliance

- *MO encourages settlement which is located and designed to minimise social and economic costs of providing and maintaining services e.g. internal roads, solid waste disposal, wastewater disposal and maintenance of the natural environment.*

Enhancing Existing Rural Development

- *MO settlement contributes to the form, livability and viability of rural land.*

Quality of Life

- *MO encourages settlement design which promotes quality of living throughout the various stages of life.*

Awareness and Responsible Action

- *MO settlement facilitates and encourages self education and fosters community involvement in sustainable rural settlement*

Part B

*This Manual considers the key **Planning and Design Elements** under the following headings (p10). Comments are made on how MO communities relate to these Elements.*

Protecting the Environment

An MO community typically:-

- *is self reliant in the supply of water*
- *provides stormwater control*
- *deals with waste water*
- *provides watercourse protection*
- *protects air quality*
- *addresses soil erosion*
- *enhances biodiversity, natural habitats and vegetation areas*
- *contributes to wildlife corridors within and between properties*
- *avoids toxic contamination of the property*
- *encourages recycling of wastes*
- *disposes solid wastes*
- *conserves energy in construction of homes and operation of the settlement*
- *provides visual amenity and enhancement of the scenic landscape*
- *protects heritage areas*
- *provides drainage, erosion and sediment control prior to, during and following construction*

Providing for People's Needs

A MO community typically:-

- *provides human comfort and safety for all age groups*
- *facilitates easy use of existing services (e.g. schools, shops, recreation, employment and/or provides its own on-site facilities)*
- *provides a community focus*
- *reduces or prevents hazards such as bushfires, flood damage and land contamination*
- *educates residents in bushfire and emergency procedures*
- *educates residents in rural living, self reliance and landcare*
- *reduces maintenance costs through design and the use of appropriate technology (e.g. use of on-site mud for mud bricks, on-site timber for round pole building construction)*
- *creates living communities with a high level of self reliance*

Compatible Land Use and Character

MO communities typically:-

- *reduces or avoids conflict with surrounding or nearby land use through appropriate negotiations, design solutions or a buffer area*
- *enhance the unique character and visual amenity of the area*
- *provides privacy within the settlement for the residents and between each other*
- *establishes a cooperative community lifestyle*
- *encourages self awareness and educational opportunities for residents in communal living*

Efficient Servicing and Self Reliance

MO communities typically:-

- *link into existing utilities and services where appropriate, without adding undue pressure on the infrastructure, or as an alternative, provides these through constructing same*
- *maximise self reliance in water supply and wastewater management*
- *optimise solar access to houses*
- *encourage energy and water conserving technologies*
- *adopt recycling and solid waste disposal management*
- *contribute to reducing motor vehicle dependency and provides vehicle pooling opportunities*
- *provide appropriate internal roads, addressing drainage systems to minimise construction and maintenance costs*
- *provides efficient fire hazard reduction systems and fire fighting equipment. (Note MO communities provide an on-site labor force for fire fighting well in excess of that available in a single family rural farm)*

- *effectively manage the land with attention to resource conservation, weed and feral animal control*

Fostering Community Resource Management

MO communities typically:-

- *adopt legal structures and land tenure systems that facilitate community management of property resources*
- *take responsibility for community resource management*
- *provide a range of opportunities for individual involvement and community action in resource management*
- *encourage and provide community educational opportunities in land management, personal growth, communal living and includes conflict resolution where necessary*
- *participate in Landcare, Bushfire Brigade, Area Assistance Scheme Projects and like community activities*
- *remain accountable to external authorities e.g. Council development and building requirements, waste management, environmental protection and the like*

The DUAP “RURAL SETTLEMENT” Manual provides “best practice” models for rural settlement.

- *The Multiple Occupancy model is listed as one such “best practice” for rural settlement.*
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SECTION 5: Why SEPP-15 should be reinstated

- *Some years ago the Lismore City Council canvassed Minister Knowles that if SEPP-15 was to be reinstated that there be a one year moratorium on its implementation to enable those Councils who wished to introduce M.O. provisions into their LEP, time to do so.*

The Lismore City Council has canvassed all other councils in the North Coast to join in this plea.

Despite this, over a year has passed and the Lismore City Council has not agreed to introduce MO. Provisions into their LEP!!

- *The Mayor of one council has boasted in private that there are no M.O.'s in "his" Shire!*
- *One strongly bonded community of middle income professional people submitted a Development Application for an M.O. in a particular Shire. The D.A. was refused on spurious grounds which on advise would be won on appeal in the Land and Environment Court. Rather than take this course of action, the community as a group, emigrated interstate and have there set up a rural community!*
- *Provides a high "quality of life" that has the potential in the long term to be a model for achieving ecological sustainability.*
- *Is a model for a society aspiring to achieve ecological sustainability.*
- *Is cited in the DUAP "Rural Settlement: Guidelines on Rural Settlement on the North Coast of NSW" as a model form of rural land settlement.*

SECTION 6: Question to the Government

- *Why is the Government against reintroducing a State Policy for Multiple Occupancy to assist especially the unemployed and those on low incomes, to construct self-help council approved housing on shared land?*
- *Why is it that the present Government has not given ANY reason for not reintroducing a State Policy for Rural Landsharing Communities made as an election promise?*
- *Why is the government denying those young people who have the imagination, desire and courage to make a home and a lifestyle for themselves and their families?*
- *The NSW Ombudsman holds that:-*

*"Delay is the most insidious form of denial"
and that
"Justice delayed is justice denied".*

If the government has no intention to reinstate a State Policy for Rural Landsharing Communities as promised at the last State election, will the Government now state its reasons for not so doing?