

A Manifesto

The Moora Moora Community Co operative

A Friendly Spirit

An Alternative

We are a group of people concerned to develop an alternative to suburban nuclear families living with its particular pressures and limitations. Many of us are discontented with the noise, foul air, water and food of the city, with our polluted environment. We are concerned to get away from the overcrowding of city life. Others are particularly concerned about the isolation and loneliness of suburban living, its increasingly high cost, the narrowness of the isolated nuclear family, the lack of community facilities and co-operative living. We regret the superficiality of our human relationships within the suburban street, living near neighbours we didn't choose, the isolation of the non-working wife and the lack of continuous playmates for the children. Others primarily concerned with education are dissatisfied with the alienation between learning and living as well as with the forms and content of education. They see our intended community as an educational community: a community that finds life and richness in the pursuit of individual and community development.

We plan to create a community education environment, a centre for learning how to live. We seek to create a learning environment that facilitates full realisation of the members potential, a centre that involves people of all ages, where learning is throughout life and integrated within one's living situation. We base our learning on our environment and the people with whom we live.

In a more general sense, many of us are discontented with the mainstream of our society, the direction in which we are going. We dislike the over-centralised nature of our society, our non-participation in the decisions that most personally affect us. We resent being manipulated to 'keep up with the Joneses' and the competitive, violent and materialistic values that permeate the wider society.

Out of this concern we are creating a co-operative community with a diversity of personalities and lifestyles that enable us to shape our environment and live with people of our own choosing. Our primary concerns are social, educational and ecological.

The mode of learning will be as diversified as possible to suit the needs of all of us. Particularly where children are concerned, parents have different ideas on the learning of basic skills. The emphasis, however, will be on the apprentice/learning exchange approach where all who wish to learn would seek out those who have some skill or insight to offer. In short you learn how to do it yourself with the help of some friends.

Visitors may wish to visit us for a specific purpose rather than desire to immerse themselves in our whole way of living and learning. They might take part in apprentice-style learning or seminar/workshops. The influx of people for weekends and holidays may provide employment, full or part time, for members of the community.

However, we do not seek to create a tribal village with its restrictions on personal growth. We cannot expect to be self-sufficient in knowledge and wisdom. We will go beyond our community whenever it is beneficial. The interchange should be fruitful to the members of the co-operative as well as to society at large.

Organisation

This community is registered with the Registrar of Co-operative Societies as a "Community Settlement Society" as required by the Co-operative Act 1959. A set of rules are required by this Act and these are available from our secretary or treasurer.

Membership and Shareholding

(Please note: The figures here are not current. Please contact the Membership Committee for further information.)

The most important qualification for membership of the community will be the concern of the individual for the aims of the community and his/her personal compatibility with other members. This will not be determined by any formal 'entrance interview' but rather by extended social contact between members prior to full participation. It will be as much up to the individual himself/herself to determine his/her own compatibility as it will be up to the existing members. We request that potential members share our concerns, and spend some time getting to know us before asking to join. The first concrete expression of a desire to pursue membership is to become a 'friend' of Moora Moora. The symbol of this is the payment of a non-interest bearing \$100 loan to the co-operative at 3 months call.

There are two types of membership available. Residential membership requires a share holding of a minimum of 6000 \$1 shares. This represents a share in the land of the community and the services available as well as eligibility for a building lease. In order to gain a lease a member must either join together with at least one other residential shareholder or hold a minimum of 9000 shares. Before a lease will be issued the member must be accepted by mutual agreement by the members of the cluster which he wishes to join.

Non-residential membership is available for those who do not wish to build on the land and requires a share holding of 4000 \$1 shares. These members are entitled to full membership rights, except a building lease and farming rights.

All people over the age of 18 years are eligible for full membership of the community. Members' offspring over 18 will have priority over other applicants when we achieve our planned community size.

Initially 360,000 \$1 shares were issued and were held by members. The shares are not paid up to their full value and quarterly calls are made to pay off the property. An incoming member buys his shares at their current paid up value from either a member who wishes to leave the co-operative or a member who holds an excess number of shares. All share transfers must be approved by the co-operative. The planned membership is 60 residential members holding 6000 shares each and 20 non-residential members holding 4000 shares each. Some financial assistance may be available to assist people with limited financial means.

We do not desire a rapid turnover in membership of this community. A member wanting to sell his shares and any assets he holds in the co-operative (such as a home and his share of the cluster development) must continue honouring membership commitments until the sale can be arranged. Every effort will be made in helping the leaving member sell within a reasonable time. A member wanting to leave promptly may forfeit his shares and assets to the co-operative.

Living Together

The actual form of the community cannot be known until we have all begun to live in it together.

Our basic needs, in order to realise our goals and enhance our own power over our own lives, are sufficient space, land, time and people. With a style of living that involves diversity, openness, freedom and participation, we aim to continually work on the balance of our diverse and often conflicting individual and collective needs. We seek a dynamic balance between privacy and community, homogeneity and diversity, co-operative and private ownership, and between our inner community life and our wider social involvement.

We need complexity and diversity to find freedom; commonality and similarity for community, and openness for growth. Each we feel is vital to the meaning and richness of the other, and the dynamics of combining the three will give our lives the richness and meaning we all strive for.

Building and Services

Building

We're planning for a range of buildings in clustered houses, communal buildings, and a learning centre, integrated practically and aesthetically with the natural landscape and allowing us scope for a diversity of lifestyles. We will have 30 housing units grouped in six clusters each of between four and six units.

We are looking for ways of accommodating our own changing needs - for solitude, for shared living, for comfort, for wanting to feel close to nature. The whole community is involved in advising and deciding on what is planned. This is guided by an overall plan based on our careful study of the land. While the community has planned the shape of the cluster, the member plans his own house, individuals may wish to get together and plan an integrated cluster design.

Some of the pitfalls we would like to avoid are the over-planning and inflexibility of most private and public buildings and a lifetime of financial slavery to a lending institution.

We want to explore:

a variety of materials such as mud brick, simple maintenance free finishes, "natural" forms of heating and cooling.

different patterns of grouping buildings - as windbreaks, as structurally part of a stand of trees, designed to fit in with the character of the terrain and bush.

ways of integrating inside and outside using pergolas, verandahs, screens, courtyards.

the use of private areas, their size, and their relation to the boisterous shared spaces.

innovating design features which ensure safety of children but allow them maximum independence.

experimenting with means of introducing flexibility into design of buildings to allow for natural expansion or contraction.

Servicing

A cluster arrangement will make the provision of services simpler and cheaper than in a typical suburban development. We anticipate the cost of running the services to the cluster would be paid by the community. The access road to the property is a four kilometre, gravel government road.

Road construction will be kept to a minimum, with the main criteria being access to the clusters for the largest necessary vehicles and adequate room for fire fighting equipment.

The provision of water will be from several natural springs on the property and from roof tank water. The sewage treatment is fairly simple, designed so that excess water and nutrients do not get into natural water courses. The first stage of treatment is a septic tank for each dwelling unit. The outflow tanks will be connected to oxidation ponds.

We plan to run the telephone and any electricity services underground. Any gas service in the foreseeable future will be liquid propane.

Nature and Agriculture

Protecting the Natural World

Not only do we wish to achieve a highly "social" community but also a community that will exist in harmony with nature. We plan to minimise our impact on the complex ecosystems.

We are constrained in what we do on the site by consideration of natural features. Buildings, gardens and tracks are located in areas of low environmental impact. Particular attention is given to minimise the amount of land we develop. cluster housing which promotes social interaction also fulfils ecological aims. Our long term impact will be

minimised by the lifestyle we adopt. Our waste will not be "discharged" but treated for use if possible.

Native flora and fauna will be encouraged by restraining domestic animals, controlling exotic flora and re-planting as necessary. Dogs and cats are not allowed on the property.

We intend to use nature's resources as much as possible, particularly solar energy and wind power.

Agriculture

We want to demonstrate how man can work with nature as well as live from it. Our aim is not to create isolated sanctuaries surrounded by general destruction but to care for nature while gathering food from it and enjoying it.

Our land has a survival potential. Those wanting to can become subsistent. We plan to keep domestic animals separated from the bush. Cattle, poultry, horses, sheep, goats and pigs will at least supplement supplies with fresh dairy produce, eggs and meat. Some members hope to develop dams for fish and yabby farming. Others want to keep bees. Many of us want to become close to self-sufficient in vegetables and fruit, grown organically and bio-dynamically. Surplus could be traded within the co-operative or the local community.

The Natural Environment

Mt. Toole-be-wong is the lyrical name of our 245 hectares, which is 700 metres above sea level and has a rainfall of 1075 millimetres a year. The climate is temperate with occasional snow in winter.

On top of the mountain is 40 hectares of undulating grass pastures. Most land is cleared in this area, except for some clumps of trees, one of which surrounds a natural clear spring which supplies the property with year-round water. The spring flows down a gully into a small dam surrounded by trees. Walking the winding driveway leads to about half a hectare of English garden surrounding the Lodge.

The property is an original Crown land subdivision of 1901. The original guest house was burnt down in 1939. Now all that remains is the mound onto which the ladies used to alight from their Cobb & Co coaches, to save their long skirts. The present house, built after the war, is of clinker bricks, has 13 rooms, and is well-suited on the basis of an education centre. Views are to Melbourne on one side and down the Warburton Valley on the other.

Past the house and down the overgrown track is more bush, amongst which are patches of cleared land which were used for growing potatoes. The bush, about 150 hectares, is rapidly re-establishing itself after the bushfires of the past. Some of the cleared patches we plan to re-forest. Others are our cluster sites.

On the top of the mountain the soil is brown and fertile. The side of the mountain is largely bush, and at the bottom, semi-cleared, is 20 hectares of flatter land with several springs. The property was left to itself in the years before we bought it.

Because of our location, transport is a particular problem. It takes at least one and a half hours to reach the city. We intend to create car pools, reducing the number of cars, the environmental impact and saving resources. It may well be profitable to purchase a small bus. Healesville railway station is about 15 minutes drive away, while Lilydale is about half an hour's drive. The train from Lilydale takes 54 minutes to reach Melbourne.

Children, Work and Recreation

Children

The happiness of our children is one reason we are creating this community. Many of us are committed to zero population growth but we are aware we and our children need closer contact with a wider group of children and adults. We feel children need more than one playmate, more space free of urban dangers and greater scope for creative play. Adults and children cannot be autonomous if each is forced to be dependent on the other. With the mother who is tied to the house and cannot go out at nights, neither mother nor child can enjoy each other fully. In the co-operative, members will babysit knowing and caring for the children. Inevitable in the community environment, children and adults will have more possibilities to learn. We are eager to learn a great deal from our children, in fact they can teach us of spontaneity and abandoned joy.

Work

Members may have to re-evaluate the balance and priorities of their employment and living. Some may want to continue working professionally from the co-operative. They may be able to organise their occupations into less than five days a week. Some may wish to work in the city on an irregular basis. Others may well be able to work nearby. We hope that some members will be engaged in cottage industries such as carpentry, pottery, spinning and weaving. We hope too that some members will be able to work on and for the co-operative - farmers, teachers, mechanics and builders. All work necessary for the co-operative will be performed as far as possible by the members themselves. At an individual level members will cooperate in building their homes.

Recreation

As our working week grows shorter, our lifestyle becomes more focussed around leisure activities. We plan recreational facilities at the co-operative level. A swimming pool, a barbecue area, a volleyball and basketball court, an arts and craft centre with a pottery kiln

and a double tennis court are possible. Some activities may be directly linked with the education centre.

The Wider Community

As a community, we are involved with the wider society. We are interested in local council affairs. We desire to provide services and share resources within the locality. We anticipate outside participation, opening a learning centre and or environment for outside use.

We hope that a co-operative store will enable the exchange of our surplus and provide economic savings by collective purchase. We hope to continue holding gatherings such as barbecues, sporting fixtures and festivals, where local residents are invited. We also hope to share joint activities with those outside our community with similar ideas and interests.

We are planning to become involved with an urban community in the inner city. Our distance from the city enables us city involvement. We hope to create a community there affiliated with Moora Moora. We aim to develop an interchange of members, shared educational aspirations and action in the wider community. Our non-resident membership caters for these people. In addition we plan to establish close ties with similar groups.

Links will also be established with groups and organisations consistent with our aims.

Community Life

For our co-operative to survive, and certainly for our relationships to be rich and satisfying, it is essential that we aim and practise at being honest, caringly concerned and tolerant in our efforts to reach fellow members. Living in such an environment provides us with an unparalleled opportunity to be aware of ourselves, gain feedback from others, and grow in areas of our choosing. We want each person to feel free to approach others in the community in an atmosphere of friendliness, openness, flexibility and sharing.

Our aim is to bring together a diversity of personalities and lifestyles to form a co-operative community. We are seeking members who are diverse in their ages, occupations, interests and backgrounds; members who seek to relate with others and are interested in promoting their own growth and learning.

We are aiming not only for a diversity of styles of living but for a variety of social groupings. We envisage four types of social grouping within the co-operative: the individual, the family unit, the cluster, and the community. This allows for individuals, single parent families, nuclear families, communal or extended family groupings. We hope that the community will have roughly equal numbers of children and adults.

The basic unit of the community is the cluster, in which dwellings are grouped together on a two acre site. The cluster lends itself to a variety of expressions - any arrangement of single or communal dwellings. The more communal the buildings, the greater the degree of shared facilities and the closer the interpersonal relationships. We have a permit for six clusters with four to six dwellings in each cluster.

The broad social grouping is the co-operative community involving all shareholders and their dependents. The co-operative is not one community but several. Each cluster has its own space and activities, each fulfils different needs for its members but is interrelated with others to help fulfil common needs and desires. This may be through the learning centre, co-op equipment and recreational facilities, farming activities or outside relations.

Within the co-operative's framework, we equally value privacy and community. Life within each cluster and within each unit of the cluster is the prerogative of those involved.

We believe that relationships will develop naturally within our environment given people with compatible ideas and aspirations. We hope that some members will work at home, so that their working and living are integrated. We believe that a wide range of choice in how we live and who we live with is available, enabling us to live more fully. The breakdown of the extended family and the neighbourhood show us the need for community. We believe that community and co-operation on much wider levels are becoming necessary for the survival of mankind.

We believe that Moora Moora will help us to move towards a more human and co-operative world and will give each person a greater degree of power over his life.

Decision-making and Finance

Decision-making

The Co-operatives Act requires a board of directors elected annually. Policy decisions are made at policy meetings open to all members. Directors' meetings handle the continuing business of the co-operative. Our seven directors are assisted by informal committees, making suggestions about issues such as works, the farm and membership.

Control will be spread between the cluster and the community levels. At the cluster level, individuals may make decisions which affect the cluster. But at the community level, the legally-required directors will represent individuals at meetings. Important decisions will be made by all members, who wish to participate.

We accept conflict as a part of life, and hope that those involved will be able to resolve most conflicts, perhaps with the help of their friends. Where this is not possible, the community may be called upon as a conciliator.

Finance

The Co-operatives Act requires an annual audit of the financial affairs of the co-operative which are recorded in the specified books and registers. These and the annual report are available for perusal by members. A treasurer is elected annually from the members and is assisted by a finance committee.

The income of the community is made up of quarterly calls on the shares, rent from residents in the Lodge and Old House, income from the farm, and dues paid by members. These dues are to cover recurrent expenses such as rates, insurance, maintenance and secretarial expenses.