



2018

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Executive Summary

Reflecting upon the last year and beyond, to when the AGENCY project started, the obvious question to ask is: what have we achieved? The best way to answer that is to look at what we set out to do at the IAGM last year. Our major initiative was to break up the Project into four (later five) 'pillars' that would focus The AGENCY Project's work and involve more people so that more could be achieved. These 5 pillars were:

- The Building
- The Hub
- Advocacy and education
- Membership
- Finance and Legal

Highlights

In all these areas the AGENCY Project has grown and had some success but the stand out achievements for 2018 would have to be the two workshops: the cohousing workshop in April, and the hub workshop in July. Attended by over 60 people each, both showed what could be achieved by a group of people working collaboratively and a good sign for future, more significant, collaboration. Other highlight activities were the 100 in 1 day; the information sessions; and the number of activities arising from the hub workshop.

However, The AGENCY Project is about bringing people together to grow 'older with gusto in the community we know and love' and that has been the ultimate highlight - engaging with people, and the interest, enthusiasm and energy they bring. We have grown our membership from 30 odd to over 100 and have even more Facebook followers and this sort of interest is both encouraging and humbling. Thank you to all who have helped make this happen. A special thanks is due to Louise Silburn who has been an unstoppable force behind many of the successes.

Challenges

There is no doubt that there is a need and a desire for co-developing housing and services for people as they grow older around existing networks and local neighbourhoods but however well intentioned, there is still a lot of work to do. The AGENCY project is run completely by volunteers and the steering committee has met at least once a month to discuss how we can advance the Project's aims. The subcommittees started well but time and commitment pressures have meant that there has been a drop off in activity during the year and a lot of the work has been done by a dedicated few. The modest, almost token, fee we charge has meant we can run our events and pay for expenses (hall and equipment hire, materials etc.), but our biggest challenge has been trying to find the time and resources to pursue our goals and deliver on the vision we have set. So please continue your support.

Farewell to a champion!

It is with deep regret that due to other commitments, Dr Margot Woods has decided not to continue on the steering committee. She was a founding member and has been an enthusiastic champion and driving force from the very start. The AGENCY Project owes much of its success to her constant effort, wise counsel, warm acceptance and cheery nature. Margot will of course stay on as a member but it will be harder without her on the steering committee. Thanks Margot!

Finally, the above successes show the need (and urgency!) for what The AGENCY Project is doing, but to succeed in the coming years, we will need to access more time and resources. We need your help and hope you will continue to lend your enthusiasm and energy to the project. We look forward to an exciting year ahead.

Guy Luscombe

President

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The Building

Members: Clare Mandeno, Louise Silburn, Marina Shine, Keryn Curtis, Vince Macauley, Peter Ross, Guy Luscombe (chair)

Purpose:

To advance the realisation of a cohousing project

Aims:

The building committee's aims were set up in November 2017.

Running a co-design workshop day with the aim of producing an actual co-housing concept design on a real (if yet unowned) site.

Sourcing potential sites and establishing the development potential and the contribution required to create a cohousing project and seeking interest for participants.

Establishing the formal (and informal) forms of agreement and obligations between the participating individuals (It was agreed that this would form another pillar due to its importance and complexity).

Achievements

The major achievement was the cohousing workshop.



A group of over 60 participants attended and were involved in a stimulating day of brain storming. 7 aspects of cohousing were drawn out by the initial discussion and then were workshopped as themes to bring out the details.

The 7 themes were:

1. ***Vision, objectives and philosophy***
2. ***Governance***
3. ***Legal and financial***
4. ***Health and wellbeing***
5. ***Connection to wider community and cohousing***
6. ***Location***
7. ***Design***

The final report had the following actions:

1. *Further develop the overall model*

- *Organise the information in a more logical way to assist development of the model*
- *Continue to gather feedback from members on their personal needs for cohousing*
- *Develop a visual story board to further illustrate the vision*

What we have done:

- Refined the information and want to set up a 'test' group to understand people's needs more. The work with the Universities (see below) will help to develop the 'storyboard'.

2. *Continue to engage with potential stakeholders including Inner West Council (IWC), State Government, not for profit and for profit organisations*

What we have done:

- We have established relationships with IWC and State Government and are maintaining contact. An exciting opportunity exists with IWC that we are currently exploring further.

- We are on the Steering Committee for the UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures FACS funded project looking at the next stage of their 'Seniors' Cohousing' project.
- We continue a relationship and understanding with Common Equity, a non for profit community housing provider, to work together on potential projects.

3. Seek potential sites including smaller scale options

What we have done: See comments on Sites below.

4. Develop documentation to support applications to banks and business partners; and potential residents

What we have done: Working on two fronts, we are looking at the financial and legal documentation and more of the 'look and feel' documentation. We intend to produce a brochure or 'prospectus'.

5. Develop our Charter, seeking feedback from all members to create a document for ratification by Special Resolution at the AGM. Our Charter will form the base for any future contracts or rules which we develop.

What we have done: We surveyed members and the charter will be presented to the AGM.

Huge thanks go to Louise Silburn and her colleagues, Jo McAlpine and Rebecca Lazenby, who all gave their expert time freely for the day. The full report from the workshop is available from the website.

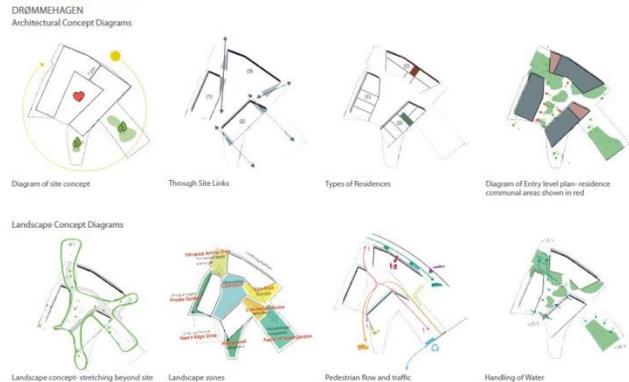
University projects:

- In keeping with the purpose of the Building Committee and allied to the workshop was, we set up a University of NSW project set up to test a cohousing project on a real site in White Bay in the Bay Precinct. 16 Students, half of whom were international students, worked on a cohousing project for a semester as part of their M.Arch studies. They attended the workshop as observers. Some of their work appears below.
- The University of Sydney M.Arch program has also been looking at 'lifelong housing' as part of their Sustainable Architecture design syllabus and asked us to be involved. Guy is leading another 16 students through this program.

DESIGN CONCEPT



PRECEDENT STUDY



Sites:

Part of the Building Committee purpose is to look for potential development sites. Several sites have come up but most are too small and we realise that we are not yet in the position to move quickly enough to secure them. However, two major opportunities have been followed up on.

1. Wesley Mission building in Glebe. With Common Equity as a partner we seriously investigated a decommissioned aged care building in Glebe Point Road. (see picture). We believed we could get approximately 25 x 2 bedroom units by renovating the building. However the building needed a lot of work to bring it up to standard and we would have had to compete with a number of other interested parties so in the end, the committee felt that we weren't ready for this commitment.
2. Possible ex Leichhardt Municipal property that is no longer needed due to amalgamation. In discussion at the moment.

Other activities the Building Committee have completed or been a part of:

- On Steering Committee for next UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures / FACS funded project to look at developing the next stage of their research into Seniors' Cohousing
- Produced brochures
- Organised letterbox drop. Thanks to all those who participated.
- Participated in 100 in 1 day
- Ran 3 information sessions with good attendance about 60 in all
- Participated in book launch for 'Small is beautiful by Anitra Nelson
- Participated in Common Equity workshop in November 2017
- Participated in high level round table hosted by with key housing stake holders
- Met with Jasmine Palmer from Uni SA regarding her research into co housing
- Participated in Inner West cohousing inaugural meeting



The Village 'Hub'

Purpose:

The *Peninsula Village Hub* is about creating a practical, supportive network for residents of the Balmain/Rozelle/Lilyfield area of the inner west (and potentially other areas) who want to live safely and well at home – in as best health as possible, socially connected and assisted as needed – as they grow older.

The Peninsula Village Hub idea is based on the well-known [Beacon Hill Village](#) in Boston, Massachusetts in the US. It began in 1999 with group of locals working together to build community links to help people age well with dignity, living as full a life as possible.

In the words of the Beacon Hill Villagers: *We are a community of people in central Boston who prosper from directing our lives and creating our own future. We are trendsetters for a new generation of people over 50 and invite you to join us in this exciting venture.*

All over the US and in other countries, people did join them in their own Village ventures and in 2010 the thriving grass roots movement formally established itself as the [Village to Village Network](#). In Australia there is only one, the [Waverton Hub](#) which was started in 2012.

The AGENCY committee wanted ask the community if they wanted a Hub.

Activities and achievements:

Bright sun and sparkling water greeted the Hub walkers' first adventure walking from Manly to the Spit. This was the first of three walks to trial one of the Hub activity walks. Next is the coastal track from Bondi, past the Sculptures by the Sea to Maroubra. It was a fitting beginning for the Hub activities which started with setting up a steering committee set to work following the Waverton Hubs guide.



Our first job was to look at our community by studying the census which gave some interesting insights. The decision that the area of the first Hub would be the Balmain/Rozelle Peninsula was based on the Waverton guide on ideal sizes for a Hub. To be inclusive we do to have tight geographical boundaries and are happy to include people living off the Peninsula.

What does the community want? We asked, and the Peninsula Hub survey with a response of nearly 150 replies told us there was an interest in establishing a local Hub. The AGENCY's second workshop for the year was run in July to bring together people interested in building community and establishing activities to bond the group.

Louise Silburn kept the discussions going but importantly we not just ideas but commitments to run a varied and interesting group activities. 12 activities have started during our trail period. Each activity and participants committed to having a minimum of 3 activities over the next few months.

Threatening rain and grey skies did not put off an enthusiastic group meeting at East Balmain for the inaugural Hub Picnic. Lots of food, talk and dogs led to the organising of the next picnic. Dog walking, scrabble, tradesman recommendations are among the other activities running which involve 40 people.



Home
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elderly in

community has started on a small scale. Funny conversations and reminiscing has been on the agenda and we hope to build on this part of community building as loneliness is a common and treatable condition.

Time to regroup soon to get feedback on the activities and how to move forward. The next steps involve making the organisation of events easier and growing the group. Shared responsibility for running community building events is the goal and we have made some good progress so far.

A special thank you to the steering committee and all the Hub activity organisers and participants. See you in Bondi with my runners on ready to see the Sculptures by the sea.

Other activities:

- Met with Waverton Hub
- Demographic and statistical data analysis
- Investigating grant availability
- Running the 100in1 day in Loyalty Square in April
- A community survey to gather information about what services people wanted.

Education and Advocacy

Members: Keryn Curtis, David Scandol, Susan Hamilton, Guy Luscombe, Chris Hawkshaw (Newsletter)

Purpose:

To help create the conditions in which The AGENCY Project can successfully proceed.

Audiences:

We need to engage with and influence:

- Government agencies – relevant local, state and Commonwealth departments and bureaucrats
- Politicians – relevant State, Commonwealth and Local Government politicians who can be key influencers
- Financial institutions
- Legal agencies and institutions
- Urban planners and architects
- Healthcare services, stakeholders & advocates
- Housing services, stakeholders & advocates
- Aged care & retirement village operators
- The media (broadly)

Objectives:

- Build awareness of the need for better choices in housing for older people and specifically how co-housing ticks all the boxes.
 - Address the two key challenges:
1. The image problem:
 - Cohousing concept is not well known or understood.
 - Image problem - misconceptions, fears, the 'hippie, student share house'
 - Is the name, 'cohousing', part of the problem? Is there a better way of referring to this housing and living concept?
 2. The 'model' problem:
 - No real financial products offered to meet the needs of this model
 - Challenge of multiple parties mobilising finances at the same time
 - Questions and concerns re nature of the asset especially resale and inheritance issues.
 - The general need for confidence and security with the legal and financial model.
 - Develop strong supporter base and networks of interested, supportive parties across all target audience groups

Activities:

- Develop website as the best starting place for information about cohousing - downloadable information; letter templates to local MPs; media materials for journalists.
- Build media profile – targeted features plus news releases around any major events such as land purchase
- Participate in debates and building relationships through social media networks
- Present papers at relevant conferences
- Consider developing workshops and education activities with interested community groups
- Share knowledge and experiences with Australian & international groups and individuals
- Be alert to synergies & opportunities to promote messages and collaborate with like-minded organisations

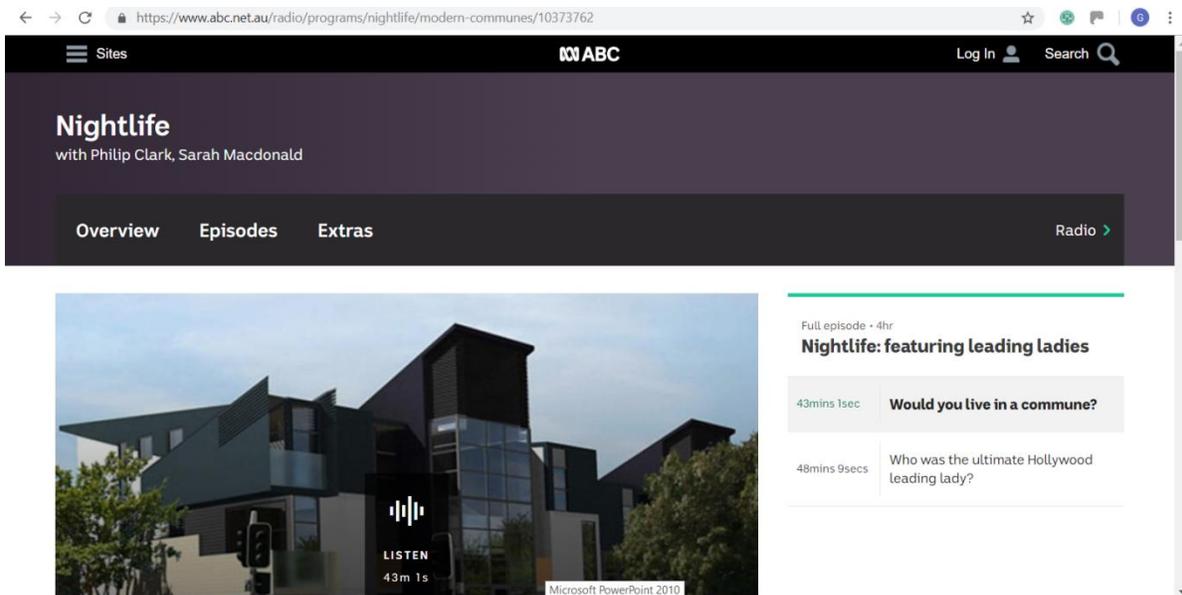
2018 goals:

- Set clear policy targets and stakeholder 'asks'
- Collaborate with researchers and other interested stakeholders to leverage influence eg. UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures; community housing; aged care.
- Learn from US model / take course.

- Develop comprehensive briefing materials including FAQs
- Get systems in place - website, database, membership management system
- Meet with key stakeholders and influencers

2018 Achievements:

- Participated in UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures launch of their FACS study in to seniors cohousing and interviewed for Channel 7 news!
- Interviewed on radio 2GB talkback with Ben Fordham and ABC 'Nightlife' with Sarah Macdonald
- Participated in book launch for 'Small is beautiful' by Anitra Nelson and built awareness with interested cohort.
- Participated in high level round table hosted by Business Council of Cooperatives and Mutuals with key stakeholders in housing for older people.
- Developed and published first on-line newsletter (thanks Chris Hawkshaw!)
- Participated in Inner West Co Housing inaugural meeting
- Developed brochures and other publicity material.



Membership

Coordinator: Susan Hamilton

The aim for Membership was to build membership numbers.

At the 2017 IAGM, there were 30 financial members. As of October 2018 there are 108 members, an increase of over 200%.

Member numbers were boosted by the events we ran in 2018.

Membership Report

	Oct-17	Oct-18	% change
Current Contacts	150	143	-5
Financial Members	37	108	192
Hub Members	0	83	83%



Finance and Legal

Members: David Scandol, Roger Hamilton

Aim

To develop the framework for people to enter into an agreement with others to develop and live together in a cohousing development.

FINANCE

We have developed a good working relationship with Common Equity which structures and finances certain affordable residential developments.

We have Participated in meetings with them, inspected a site (found to be unsuitable), and participated in a workshop sponsored by them.

As appropriate we would expect to consult with Common Equity on financial aspects of a co-housing proposal when a potential site is identified.

LEGAL-

The original model discussed at earlier general meetings was a strata title scheme.

Various other models were discussed at the AGENCY Workshop held on 29 April 2018, and a summary of the discussion can be found on pages 7-8 of the Report on Outputs of the Workshop.

Ownership Options discussed:

1. Retirement village model
2. Strata model
3. Lease
4. Company title model

No decisions have been taken yet as we have not found a suitable site. Discussions have been ongoing.

