



# URBAN ECOLOGY AUSTRALIA INC

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**ECOCITIES**



*The gardens take shape*

**SUSTAINABILITY**

**COMMUNITY**

**RESEARCH  
EDUCATION**



*Time for a break as community members work on paving*

**SUMMARY OF  
ANNUAL ACTIVITIES  
2004 - 2005**

## **AT A GLANCE**

Urban Ecology Australia (UEA) is a community-based non profit educational association that provides information on urban ecological issues.

Urban Ecology Australia was the founding organisation in the International EcoCity Conference series (Berkeley, Adelaide, Senegal, Curitiba, China) and participates in conferences such as Habitat II (the UN City Summit).

UEA is the community group that initiated the Christie Walk Ecocity project.

Through site tours, training programs and seminars it provides education to students and the general public about ecological issues using Christie Walk as the case study.

The Australian Greenhouse Office has extensively used Christie Walk as an example of sustainable housing in the *Your Home* material.

### ***mission***

Urban Ecology Australia Inc (UEA) is committed to the transformation of human settlements into ecocities – ecologically sustaining, vibrant, equitable and economically viable communities.

### ***objectives***

- to initiate and facilitate ecocity projects that meet the Ecopolis Development Principles below
- to foster and support the transformation of human settlements into ecocities
- to educate the community about the philosophy and practice of creating ecocities
- to ensure the effective management and administration of Urban Ecology Australia.

### ***ecopolis development principles***

- Restore degraded land
- Fit the bioregion
- Balance development
- Create compact cities
- Optimise energy performance
- Contribute to the community
- Provide health and security
- Encourage community
- Promote social justice and equity
- Enrich history and culture

An ecocity project is a process of physical change to the landscape, and to the patterns of human settlement; and one that aims to utilise and integrate all these principles.

A project that addresses only one or a few of these principles is not an ecocity; although such projects may be worthy of support, we see the difference as highly significant.

***[www.urbanecology.org.au](http://www.urbanecology.org.au)***

## **CONVENER'S REPORT FOR YEAR 2004-2005**

**T**he past twelve months has been a particularly challenging one for Urban Ecology Australia and one in which we have had to deal with significant changes.

The commencement of the construction of the third and final stage of Christie Walk required us to relocate our office from the UEA Hut at Sturt Street, our home for many years. After considering a range of options we entered into a tenancy agreement with the Global Education Centre in the Torrens Building, Victoria Square to occupy part of their area. This was seen as a good strategic alliance as the GEC shares a number of our aims in educating people for a sustainable and ethical future.

(It also helped that some members of UEA are also members of the GEC.)

This required a major cull of our collected stuff to relocate to a smaller office.

This has worked well, however we now need to move again, but more about that later.

The loss of government grant funding which occurred last year has continued to restrict our activities, something all volunteer environment groups are having to deal with. We have had to prioritise these activities, which this past year have included:

- Regular site tours of Christie Walk for the public, university groups, conference delegates, politicians, government agencies and school groups, the latter being a growing area. Thank you to those who have led the tours and to Joan Carlin for constantly allowing people to explore her house.
- Submissions to various government and other enquiries. Thank you to those who have put valuable time into preparing these, especially Michael Robertson who seems to have endless time and enthusiasm for these.
- Research activities undertaken particularly by volunteers Ron Nicholls (Bioregionalism), Miju Lodge (Ecovillage directory) and Emily Alfred (collation of materials and design details used at Christie Walk). Thank you for your valuable contribution to the work of UEA.
- Representation at conferences and seminars including the Australian Association of Environmental Education.
- Management of our office by Barbara Sheppard who has provided an important point of contact for members and the public. Her

moving to paid employment elsewhere is her gain but our loss. Thank you for your excellent service as Office Coordinator and I wish you well.

- Improving the website as a major point of contact for the public with UEA, for all things urban ecological. Thanks to Michael Robertson for his skill and efforts in keeping this public face for UEA up to date.

We share the current challenge for all environment groups with limited funds and membership at a time when the need to work towards a sustainable future remains great, despite the words by governments and businesses about their commitments to such a future.

This year we heard that for the first time in human history there are now more people living in cities than in the countryside, a trend that will continue. It is timely to remind ourselves that if the city is the problem then it must also be where the solution must lie. Our mission remains focused on turning our current human settlements into ecocities.

In recent months the UEA Board has considered a restructure of the organisation to reflect the financial, personnel and accommodation situation we are in, and the following directions are proposed to make best use of our resources and to work with like minded organisations for a shared future. (These will be presented to the AGM on 23 July 2005).

- To reduce the size of the Board to require less time being spent on management and more time undertaking productive activities.
- To enhance the website as a central resource centre for UEA and urban ecology matters.
- To scale down our office accommodation, moving to Ecopolis Architects, with another cull of material.
- To develop closer working relationships with other organisations which have similar goals to UEA. This will be a discussion for the AGM and beyond.

Thank you to the members of the Board of Urban Ecology Australia who have met regularly and contributed to our work over the past year. Thank you to the members who have shown faith in and a commitment to our work by your on-going membership.

*Andrew Tidswell*

## **ECOCITY BUILDING**

Christie Walk continues to attract attention as a landmark ecological development. Stage 3 has commenced and when completed next year it will bring the number of dwellings to 27. Stage 3 will also house community facilities including laundry, kitchen, hall, disabled toilet and small library.

Urban Ecology Australia was unsuccessful in a bid to have input into the Lochiel Park development being undertaken by the Land Management Corporation.

Paul Downton has been working with the Canberra Cohousing Association to design and build a cohousing development to contain 26 environmentally friendly townhouses. The Association arose from the Canberra branch of Urban Ecology Australia.

## **EDUCATION**

### **SITE TOURS**

Site tours of Christie Walk were held on the third Sunday of each month. Attendances were generally down on the numbers in previous years. Two houses in Christie Walk were open for Solar House Day on September 12, and 253 people took part in the tours of the houses.

**Special site tours** were held for:

- SA Housing Trust
- Land Management Corporation
- Environment Management students from Japan
- UniSA School of Natural & Built Environments
- Adelaide Uni first year students of Environment Studies
- Adelaide Uni Architecture students
- UniSA Planning students

**School tours:**

- Concordia School
- Norwood/Morialta High School
- Paralowie High School
- St Peters Collegiate Girls School
- Gepps Cross Girls School
- Trinity College Gawler
- Wilderness School

The AAEE (Australian Association for Environmental Education) biennial conference was held in Adelaide in September/ October 2004. One of the full day field-based workshops was held at Christie Walk on September 30 and was attended by nine participants. Rolf Jucker, keynote speaker at the AAEE Conference, visited Christie Walk.

## **RESEARCH**

Ron Nicholls continued research into bioregionalism, and published some of his findings about Gaviotas in Columbia in the UEA newsletter.

Emily Albert continued the work started by Miju Lodge and others on the materials used in the construction of Christie Walk. She also looked at a number of other features of the development. Emily's work needs to be completed and edited before it is published.

## **SUBMISSIONS**

Urban Ecology Australia continues to write submissions for government and Council on matters relating to urban issues.

- UEA commented on the City of Adelaide Draft General & Parklands Plan Amendment Report.
- Submission to Australian Bicycle Council National Cycling Strategy
- Submission to Productivity Commission Energy Efficiency Inquiry.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- Michael Robertson submitted articles to Australian Planner and Bureau of Meteorology Climate Activities Australia 2005
- EcoVoice published articles submitted by UEA members

Christie Walk was cited in the following books & publications in 2004/2005:

- *'Australia's best known urban design showcases for sustainability...'* in Solutions for a Sustainable Future; Alan Tate (ed)
- *'South of the Border – City living that is ecologically sound'* in GreenSmart – Housing Industry Association ACT (feature article)
- *'Choosing Straws'* in Sticks, Stones, Mud Homes – N Noyes
- *'Adelaide EcoVillage (Christie Walk)'* in The Sustainable Development Reader – Beatley & Wheeler (eds)
- *'Tale of two sites'* in the Adelaide Review Sept 2004
- *'Sustainable Snapshots'* in Australian Planner (4)
- *'Inner City Living'* in Green Places – Landscape Design Trust, London (feature article)
- *'An eco-community in the heart of the city'* in ReNew – H. Harper (feature article)
- *'A showcase for eco-housing'* in The Australian (Schools Supplement), B. Lane
- *'Towards Sustainable Communities'* in Year of the Built Environment 2004 National Awards Compendium RAI – K. Legge (ed)
- *Sustainment in a Shrinking World'* in Architecture Australia (5)

## **FINANCES**

Summary statement of financial position (subject to audit)

### **Income**

	<b>2004-5</b>	<b>2003-4</b>
Membership	\$1,486	\$3,051
Donations & events	\$4,970	\$3,320
Sales, site tours (net of costs)	\$5,404	\$5,765
Interest	\$205	\$338
Grants		\$8,000
Other		\$297

**INCOME**                    **\$12,065**      **\$20,771**

### **Expenditure**

Wages costs	\$2,023	\$3,044
Audit (2 years)	\$2,359	
Insurance	\$1,899	\$2,522
Equipment	\$299	\$5,267
Admin	\$3,783	\$6,267
Maintenance	\$85	\$420
Rent	\$764	
Projects		\$5,425
Other	\$3,751	
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$14,963</b>	<b>\$22,945</b>

**NET**                            **(\$2,898)**      **(\$2,174)**

### **Assets**

	<b>June 2005</b>	<b>June 2004</b>
Current Assets	\$6,989	\$9,600
Other Assets	\$500	\$7,835
Fixed Assets		\$7,000
SENAC equipment	\$3,305	
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$10,794*</b>	<b>\$24,435*</b>

### **Liabilities**

Liabilities	\$15,690	\$15,786
GST/PAYG	\$1,136	(\$778)
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$16,826</b>	<b>\$15,008</b>

### **Equity**

**Total equity**                    **(\$6,032)**                    **\$9,427**

\*In 2004/5 fixed assets of \$7,000 were written off and furniture & equipment written down to \$500.

## **MANAGEMENT BOARD**

(elected at AGM October 2004)

Andrew Tidswell (convener)  
 Matt Fisher (vice-convener)  
 Michael Robertson (secretary)  
 Thanasis Avramis (treasurer)  
 Paul Downton (Director of Research)  
 Joan Carlin  
 David Buetefuer  
 Michael Pilling  
 Julia Winefield  
 Monica Oliphant  
 Emily Alfred

## **OFFICE VOLUNTEERS & STAFF**

Barbara Sheppard (Office Coordinator until May 2005)  
 Joan Carlin (newsletter editor)  
 Michael Robertson (web designer)  
 Miju Lodge  
 Ron Nicholls  
 Emily Albert

## **SITE TOUR LEADERS AND ASSISTANTS**

Margaret Rohde  
 Michael Robertson  
 Andrew Tidswell  
 Joan Carlin  
 David Buetefuer  
 Matt Fisher  
 Paul Downton  
 Julia Winefield