

Submission
No 223

**INQUIRY INTO DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRANSPORT
ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

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Partially
Confidential

I am an 85 year old ex-academic, TV documentary film-maker, and newspaper columnist with The Australian newspaper. I was also Head of the external training division of the Australian Film, Radio and TV school -- running training courses for industry professionals, aboriginal groups, and education/teacher training in all aspects of the media.

I still act as online webmaster and convenor for Australian and international journalists.

I make this submission individually however.

I sent you one of the Plateau Group's proposals for small social housing. This focussed on using existing open-area car parks behind most suburban shopping centres. (but it has much wider application)

The Plateau Group was concerned with providing small houses in existing suburbs — with the secondary value that when the elderly move out of the three-bedroom family home, then new young families move in and make good use of schools, playing fields, etc. This approach offers a substantial boost in inner-suburban housing — equal to high-rise apartments which the elderly don't want for the remaining decades of their life (partly because they often mean putting down the family dog).

The Plateau idea points to the cost-effectiveness of using decking over the car-parks to create a 'pedestrian-only' space for the cluster of small homes in the form of two-story (modified) Victorian Terrace 'clusters'. Without the need for road space, the population density of such developments can be the equivalent of four or five story regular apartments.

We wanted to avoid the ghetto development of retirement villages also.

- a) mainly the elderly (Also the debilitated)
- b) single parent families
- c) some minimal accomodation for the homeless

The elderly in Australian suburbia are the group who have the fungible assets to fund the development of these forms of cheap housing, using a cooperative/mutual building society structure. (leasing air-rights over the parking areas from councils)

It would be necessary to develop a formula for the elderly funders in gaining access to these homes — which they would generally occupy (before full assisted care) for only a decade or so.

There's a lot more to this proposal. But it aims to attack the problem of loneliness and isolation that elderly people often suffer in silence. And the mix of ages, means that mutual help (voluntary and part-paid) can be established. Childcare is equally a problem for the single parent. General laboring (lawnmowing, garbage removal) work in exchange for a basic home-space, can be offered to the homeless.

I have attached a couple of paper produced by the Plateau Group back in the 1990s. Also a biographical outline.

I notice that this committee is 'Transport Oriented'; so I have included a paper on the MiniEV that we promoted for many years in the 1980s and 1990s. It was a simplified approach to developing an electric vehicle manufacturing industry for a niche market. We promoted the idea that big manufacturing lines (Like Holden and Ford) were not needed — and for a while the NRMA were enthusiastic.

The idea was that if a cooperative of smaller engineering and specialist firms were to be put together (with minimal government involvement) they could establish a tightly defined single standard for this low-speed short-range basic EV. We estimated that there would be 1 million in sales potential. This would be a basic car for transport, not a status signaller. And it would provide a feed to the present public transport system.

There were three niches:

1. As a short-range transport for an elderly person or couple after they had lost their full driver's license. This is essential today if they are to remain independent in their own homes.
2. As a basic car for a single-parent (mother) family. It would be large enough and safe enough to take three kids to school and do the shopping on the way home.
3. As a second family car. This would be an enormous cost saver to young families, and also to the nation as a whole in terms of foreign exchange. Thousands of expensive cars sit rusting away at railway stations car parks for 8 hours a day, 5 days a week.

This is basically a golf-car, with the addition of a steel-frame monocoque body-frame and moulded plastic panels. The design could be as simple as the basic Morris Mini 8 — Three doors, backward facing rear seat, no need for five wheels, no CD player, etc. minimum suspension, almost no dash-board, simplified lights and wipers, etc. Basic cars can be simplified amazingly when you think about designing for low-speed (50 kph), local (bitumen road only), short distance (no public charging points needed). They can be equally as safe as larger vehicles.

We believe that this sort of vehicle could be manufactured by Australia's component industry (fridges, washing machines, small electric shops, plastics manufacturers) and assembled at relatively small workshops in each state — rather than taking the big-company/assembly-line approach.

Please don't hesitate to ask if anyone is more interested. I've accumulated much material on these two ideas — and we also developed ideas on radio road-side responders signalling (rather than the warning road signs) and a few other ideas.

Stewart Fist (retired journalist)

WEB-MASTER:

Journalists information exchange]

Group]

Media biography:
and Democracy]

[International

[Australian with Plateau

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