SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION VICTORIANS WITH A DISABILITY OR MENTAL ILLNESS:

Family and Community Development Committee

Presented by "CHUMS" A Community based group addressing community and environmental issues. November 2008

Section 1. LIFESTYLE UNITS
AIMS OF "CHUMS"
PLANS (HAND DRAWN GRAPH AND DISC)

Section 2. SAMPLE COPIES OF LETTERS AND REPLIES SENT TO CONCERNED CITIZENS.

Section 3. ARTICLES AND NEWS CUTTINGS

Section 4. OPINION PIECE BY ARCHITECT RESPONSE TO ARCHITECTS CONCERNS AND OTHER INFORMATION
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AIMS OF CHUMS IN PROPOSING THESE LIFESTYLE UNITS ARE -

No 1. To Create an environment that is so pleasant for its residents in their day to day living they will do everything in their power to continue living there.

No 2. Make life and living simple with as few rules as possible.

No 3. Engender responsibility without stress e.g. a roster system subject to choice. A roster may consist of gardening; games room duties; helping with kitchen chores; film nights; social activities; etc.

No 4. Need for privacy is balanced need for socialisation through:
   a. Own private garden.
   b. Own private unit.
   c. Options for dining alone or communal dining room.
   d. Reciprocity with outside community "doing for them as they may do for you" (no stigma of charity).

No 5. These advantages in everyday living are most beneficial to people with mental illness; to young people experiencing problems of lifestyle; and especially to the aged community who often suffer greatly from the in-between-periods of being unable to continue living in their own home but who are capable of living a fulfilling life pre-nursing home requirements.

No 6. The opportunity for a live-in carer or married couple to maintain a happy caring environment could be a new career path for mid-age couples.

No 7. The government to provide land and services, e.g. electricity, gas, sewerage, water, etc. Building contractor to complete the utility to live-in stage, including furniture.... Beds, tables, bookcases, TV units. Paths and plants. Fencing, water tanks; natural heating and cooling.

No 8. Government and agencies are at their wit’s end, not knowing what to do with the homelessness and the ever-rising rate of mental illness and suicides. Rental would be paid from private income or welfare payments.

No 9. It is possible that in the present economic climate there could be a great advantage for a building firm to make an attractive offer to State or Federal government. Federal government has already made an offer of tax credits to builders who can come up with ideas for residential.

No 10. The design by June Ryan is presented and supported by Chums, a community based group, addressing community and environmental issues.

June Ryan  Franceska Dezelak  O. Dezelak
LIFESTYLE UNITS

The Units are designed for:

CREATIVE LIVING; SECURITY; PRIVACY; INDEPENDENCE; RESPONSIBILITY; and above all PEACE OF MIND.

They are designed for permanency of tenure subject to the usual rules and requirements of the owner/lessor (State government) as in the Tenancy Act.

There are 6 units, 1 caretakers unit, Communal kitchen, Entrance and Store which surround a central dining/recreation room.

They are ideal for a small area of parkland or sited on two to three housing blocks. Commercial builders could be interested in prefabrication and erection.

All units are furnished and fitted out with linen, kitchen and laundry utensils/amenities. A feature of each unit is the lounge and bedroom opening out on to a private garden patio which in turn opens on to a path surrounding the building and giving access to organic garden beds and recreation room.

Special features are; The latest and most efficient dry toilet placed at rear. Solar roof with piped heat storage and hot water system. Water storage units and Purifying System. Mulching Box. Organic/Permaculture garden. Combining clothesline with Sunshade cloth

These features are not only efficient, they will engender in the residents a sense of ownership and pride in the promotion of the units to interested persons.

The octagon shaped building is erected on a concrete slab, sealed and covered with a cork flooring before walls are put in place. This is far cheaper, more hygienic, better to walk on and easier to lay than cutting carpets or tiles for diagonal and curved surfaces.

Walls would be sectioned with plenty of glass onto outdoors for light. This design can be made most attractive with a feeling of space created through open planning through out. Garden/Patios to be separated by trellis and shrubbery.

It should be noted that this design is also suitable for elderly people needing to move from the family home and requiring meals and minimum care only. Supervision is non-invasive by having resident caretakers/caregivers.

The design allows for community activities as desired by residents. Table Tennis, pool, drama and musical groups, growing vegetables, flowers etc., are just a few of the recreations.

Costing: Much of the running costs are minimised by the residents being required to share cleaning and outdoor upkeep through a rostered system. Although residents have their own kitchen, an evening communal meal may be cooked and served by the caretakers/caregivers. cost savings in the purchase of groceries and sundries.)
Gary Spencer,
National Industrial Division Manager,
Wide Span Sheds
2nd July ‘06

Dear Gary Spencer,

I do not know if you are aware of the critical shortage of accommodation for people suffering mental illness. They are being demeaned by being relegated to living in old people’s nursing homes, jails, or alternatively, boarding houses for derelicts and alcoholics.

I would like to present to you my design for people who may need part time or full time supervision. These Units are also suitable for aged people who need to give up the family home but would prefer as much independence as possible.

In fact they cover the accommodation needs of many age groups including teenage.

The plan is enclosed but I would appreciate the opportunity of pointing out the many advantages of this design by building with steel and glass even down to the water tanks.

I am also enclosing correspondence with several people so you will understand the urgency of this matter.

I truly believe that Widespan Sheds has the know-how and ability to offer government’s a much better deal in the construction of a much better type of accommodation. At present millions of dollars are being wasted on monolithic palaces rather than on basic human needs. I have seen most attractive modern dwellings constructed in corrugated iron and glass with rich polished wood surrounds as a quality finish. People in need of care also need to be given the best to assure them that we care also.

You will most likely be able to improve on what I have presented to you but there is a tremendous opportunity for you to have the proposed Lifestyle Units available world-wide. Hoping for your interest,

Yours sincerely,

June Ryan,
5/16 Georgia Grove Corio, 3214

Phone. 03 52752860
Copy to: Professor Alan Fells  
Rob Knowles

Dear Sirs,  

7th June 2006

The attached is my contribution to your coming Forum. I live in Geelong and will be unable to attend although I have booked just in case I may find a place to stay overnight.

My daughter was receiving care at the Barwon Health Units but was transferred to a rundown lodge in Queenscliff.

How can we expect unstable people to respond when they are condemned to live in miserable circumstances?

The Lifestyle Units are designed to be uplifting to the spirit while providing a sense of ownership and permanency for their mental and physical needs.

I can only trust in the sincerity of the people who will be responsible for making the decisions which will affect the people who have suffered mental illness in the past and who suffer still.

Yours very sincerely,

[Signature]

June Ryan,
5/16 Georgia Grove,
CORIO 3214 VIC.
Ms June Ryan  
5/16 Georgia Grove  
CORIO VIC 3214

Dear Ms Ryan

LIFESTYLE UNITS FOR MENTALLY ILL PEOPLE

Thank you for your letter of 30 May 2006 to Rob Hulls MP, Minister for Planning regarding the above matter.

The Minister has noted your concerns in relation to this important issue, and has requested that I pass on his appreciation for your taking the time to express them to him.

Given the issue of appropriate housing for those suffering from a mental illness continues to be a challenge for governments, ideas about addressing the problem are always welcome.

It should be noted that your letter does raise matters that fall outside the Minister’s portfolio responsibilities, so I have taken the liberty of referring it to the Minister for Housing for a direct response

Please contact the Department of Human Services directly if you have any queries regarding this referral.

Once again, thank you for your letter.

Yours sincerely

Ray O’Halloran
Manager Ministerial Services
To Doug:

Timberset Homes
P.O. Box 75
Ballan 3342 17th March '08

Dear Doug,

Further to my phone calls, here is the design and some relevant comments including a sample of letters in reply. One of the important features is not one inch of wasted space yet because the design is outward looking there is no sense of confinement. For instance in the care of the onset of Alzheimer’s disease there is a tendency for the client to wander off; this need for escape is met by the circular path which can be landscaped with trees bushes and seating providing a never-ending walkway.

In the case of the person with a mental disability there is a sense of privacy and permanancy in housing which would help them in establishing a hold on reality. Providing basic standards of healthy living are adhered to there would also be a sense of ownership attached to each unit.

Caretakers would need to understand that their role is in serving the needs of residents rather than supervisory. All medical and psychological needs would be administered by seconded professionals.

Therefore the aims of these lifestyle units are;

No 1. to create an environment that is so pleasurable to its residents that they will do everything in their power to be able to continue living there.

No 2. to make life and living simple with as few rules as possible.

No 3. to engender responsibility without stress e.g., a roster system subject to choice. A roster may consist of gardening, games room duties; helping with kitchen chores; film nights; social activities; etc.,

No 4. Need for privacy is balanced with need for socialisation through
   a own private garden
   b own private unit
   c options for dining alone or communal dining room.
   d reciprocity with outside community “doing for them as they may do for you.” (No stigma of charity)

No 5. These advantages in everyday living will be most beneficial to people with a mental illness, to young people experiencing problems of lifestyle; and especially to the aged community who often suffer greatly from the in between periods of being unable to continue in their own home but who are capable of living a fulfilling life pre nursing home requirements.
No 6. The opportunity for a live-in carer or married couple to maintain a happy caring environment could be a new career path for mid age couples.

No 7. The government to provide land and services, eg., electricity, gas, sewage. Building contractor to complete the utility to live in stage, including furnishings, built in furniture...beds, tables, bookcase, tv unit. Paths and plants. Fencing; water tanks; natural heating and cooling.

No 8. Governments and agencies are at their wit's end in not knowing what to do with homelessness and the ever-rising rate of mental illness and suicides. Rentals would be paid from private income or welfare payments.

No 9. It is possible that in the present economic climate there could be a great advantage for a building firm to make an attractive offer to State or Federal government. Federal government has already made an offer of tax credits to builders who can come up with ideas for residential.

This design by June Ryan is presented to Timbertop Homes 17th March '08

June Ryan
5/16 Georgia Grove Corio 3214
PO Box 71

cemail june.ryan@bigpond.com

phone 03 52752860
Dear Mr Ryan,

Thank you for your letter and constructive suggestions on design of your lifestyle units. Certainly we need more, better and more friendly accommodated for those in need of more space to thrive in their life. I will have my staff evaluate your concepts.

My sincere thanks,

[Signature]

Level 1, 484 Swan Street, Richmond, MELBOURNE VIC 3121
Telephone (03) 8420 5811 Faksimile (03) 8420 5899 Email jkennett@vicnet.net.au
Dear Jeff Kennett,

11th April 2006

Congratulations on your endeavours with regard to our present epidemic of depression and severe mental illnesses. My experience in this area has helped me in the design of the Lifestyle Units which I believe will answer some of the housing problems especially where sufferers need safety and security of tenure along with non-invasive supervision.

The design of these Units should be suitable for prefabrication and easy erection. They would be ideal on a small corner of parkland or able to be positioned on two side by side housing blocks.

Local Councils have many ideally sized blocks at present vacant.

I have detailed the reason for this design separately along with benefits.

The fact is that people who feel hopeless and helpless need to be given the opportunity to gain control over most aspects of their daily lives. Privacy and independence are the most important but equally they need to have opportunity for company and shared activities/responsibilities along with personal friendships.

I believe these units will be viable regarding building and running costs. They will also provide a new source of employment for young to middle-aged couples. It will be necessary for couples, who have been titled ‘caretakers’ rather than ‘supervisors’ etc., to have special training. As much autonomy as possible must be given to the tenants especially with regard to activities. They must also be assured that they have tenancy for life if they so wish.

I have tried to encompass new trends such as solar heating and cooling through a centrally raised solar roof over communal area. One (newly invented) ‘dry toilet’ to be utilised in preference to unit toilet when possible. Organic garden beds. Water collection and recycling.

Residents/tenants will be part of publicising this ‘new deal’ and new design for living and this should engender involvement and pride in presenting the Lifestyle Units to the people connected to mental health both here and overseas.

I trust you will find the attached of interest,

Sincerely,

June Ryan, 5/16 Georgia Grove Corio, Vic. 3214  ph. 03 52752860

[Signature]
10 May 2007

Ms J Ryan  
PO Box 71  
Corio Victoria 3214

Dear Ms Ryan

Thank you for your letter dated 24 April 2007 regarding Lifestyle units.

You are right, there is a desperate need for accommodation for those suffering from depressive illnesses. However, it is not just a case of providing the physical places, but staffing as well.

Be assured that we are doing all we can to address the situation, but we have a long way to go.

Jeff Kennett  
Chairman  
Beyondblue

The Hon Jeffrey G Kennett  
Chairman of the Board  
50 Burwood Road, Hawthorn VIC 3122  
Tel: 61 3 9810 6100 / Fax: 61 3 9810 6111  
ABN 87093 865 840
Mental Illness: Again, nothing changes

Once again we witness in the tragic and untimely demise of a young friend making ‘death for peace’.

Once again we witness media hype as the widespread and tragic epidemic of mental illness-related deaths in young men takes its toll.

Once again we witness the scenario of a growing lack of government funds and/or cuts, maybe crevasses in the mental health system.

Once again nothing will change! Where was the hint when this young man needed help?

Where were the government-trained experts with their anti-psychotic drugs and tranquilizers?

Psychiatric illness is scary, heart-breaking, soul-destroying, too intricate, irrational to understand and much more. It's difficult and construct for the victim, patients, siblings and friends.

How are we able to help, how are we when we are not able to understand and cope ourselves?

As in all serious illness it is so, so hard to be the onlooker and suffer when suffering and distress is so apparent?

I don't know if there exists an answer to this dilemma, but I do feel that placing the blame on others is not the answer.

Surely prevention and cure need to be addressed together as one package.

I refer to these quotes for your consideration. He's not heavy, he's my brother and ‘Walk a mile in my shoes’.

Anne Worland
Jan Ice
Courts are exploring ways of keeping the mentally ill out of jail, reports

Elisabeth Wynhausen

It is a court like no other. "Perhaps we should bring in food on Thursdays," says magistrate Christine Roney of the Special Circumstances Court in Brisbane. "Maybe alcohol and cigarettes," argues a prosecutor in her court.

They are contemplating the continuing absence of a defendant, a man who fails to show up for his legal aid lawyer says. He is absent from his last known address, so his future is in question. "I could bring in fresh muffins," says the magistrate, still unsure about how to handle the matter.

Defendants often fail to show up, quite possibly because they've forgotten about the case.

The Special Circumstances Court is for homeless people who are mentally ill or intellectually disabled.

"There's no doubt the courts are being swamped by mentally ill defendants," says Tamara Walsh, the Lawson lecturer in law at the University of Queensland who has investigated what happens to people charged with public nuisance offences. "In six weeks I have six mentally ill people who come up to the court.

Prisons activist Debbie Kilroy, director of the women's advocacy group Sisters Inside, last week told a conference in Brisbane on the incarceration of the mentally ill that "the lack of services for the mentally ill as governments campaign on law and order have criminalised some behaviour.

"When there is a lack of community services for people with mental illness, they can often come to the attention of the police," says Jeff Cheriton, executive director of the Queensland Alliance, a body for non-government mental health organisations. "They may get picked up for minor offences — doing things like breaking windows or cars in the streets because they believe messages are coming to them from the heavens or for being psychotic and exhibiting strange behaviour, or acting angry and loud. They can very easily be convicted of crimes related to their mental illness and end up in jail.

A year ago Queensland lawyer Dan Toombs moved to Toowoomba, his home town, to set up the Disability Law Project, a legal aid service for people who are mentally ill or intellectually disabled. "I often wonder what happened to these people," Toombs says. "They are sent to jail.

Since the Disability Law Project was founded, 70 per cent of its clients have walked away with no conviction recorded. But in other parts of Australia, Toombs says people who are mentally ill or intellectually disabled and have been charged with public nuisance offences have been released to the public.

"Because they're charged with public nuisance offences ... the option available to magistrates is to fine them, but the fines just accumulate, and then the court has to look at alternative ways of dealing with them," Toombs says.

One approach, sometimes called therapeutic jurisprudence, has been tried by drug courts and Aboriginal courts such as Queensland's Murri Court, which attempt to do something about the social problems behind crime.

The Magistrates Court in Perth has run a special list one day a week for people with intellectual disabilities since 2002. Defendants are asked if they are willing to undertake drug courses or other counselling, or get assistance with finding a job or independent living arrangements. Their co-operation is taken into account when they are sentenced.

"This is a court designed for people who have impaired capacity at the time of the offence," Roney tells the solicitor of a young brain-damaged man charged with wilful damage after breaking a soft-drink machine that swallowed his coins.

"I have difficulty reading and people don't explain things to me properly," the defendant tells Roney, who has been on the bench for 30 years. "I was a bit confused," he says, as a Salvation Army officer attached to the court can find a suitable support group and explore the possibility of training and employment for the man.

Ruby, the next defendant, is an itinerant indigenous woman of 34 charged with begging and contravening police directions. Police had ordered Ruby to move on after she refused to leave a city street. Her lawyer says she didn't understand and was arrested when police caught up with her a few streets from where they first cautioned her.

Ruby is a homeless person, and it will increase the number of places where homeless people congregate become "designated areas" under Queensland's Police Powers and Responsibilities Act, giving police the power to move on loiterers.

But for now, Roney is more concerned with practical realities, adjourning the case so Ruby can talk to the Salvation Army officer to see if she can get a drink of water without ending up in the watch-house again.

'Saving grace': Dan Toombs, right, and Bill Mitchell, co-ordinators of the Disability Law Project in Queensland.
SECTION 4

OPINION

DESIGN AND BUILDING ISSUES DEPLOITED IN FOR 7 BED EUPHRAI PERSONS HOSTEL.

BUILDING ISSUES

DISADVANTAGES

1. The shape of the circle and wedge shaped rooms within can result in the costly use/waste of materials. Most building materials are manufactured square, or with a rectangular basis. When you cut the materials to fit the room shape, you will find an element of wastage, either large or small depending on the competence of the builder. These materials will be limited to those used in a horizontal plane i.e.

   Floor coverings
      - Carpet
      - Floor tiles
      - Floor vinyl sheet or tiles

   Ceilings
      - Plaster board sheets

   Roof
      - Roof sheeting (corrugated iron?)

You will also incur a cost penalty for the builder to perform this additional cutting and fitting.

2. Obviously, curved glass and curved window frames are not intended, but segmented units. The design may require several window units placed side by side at a slight angle with a cover strap at each intersection. Alternatively, a joiner could produce a shop (factory) made unit with the top and bottom rail segmented and single up rights at the changes in direction. This will also be a cost penalty.
3. The day room walls if curved will also be a cost penalty. Additionally, you may find an uncomfortable acoustic situation where at certain points on the floor, voices will bounce of the walls and come straight back to you (parabolic effect?)

**ADVANTAGES:**

5. Plumbing runs will be reduced with wet areas close to each other (SAVING)

6. The extent of external walls would be less than a "square" plan (SAVING)

**OTHER ISSUES:**

**ADVANTAGES:**

6. Each room has their own unique view, so it may encourage visiting between residents.

7. Central point of care and for delivery of food/linen etc.

**DISADVANTAGES:**

8. I would not like to comprehend what effect the gently askew walls would have on a, say, bedridden person who may spend a lot of time staring at the ceiling. All our lives, most of us, have lived in "square" rooms and now the bedrooms are almost square, but not quite! (In Child care design, I was previously briefed to make rooms for the 0 - 6 month old children as square as possible as they lay on their backs for long periods.

over
9. looking upward. Is there a connection?  
I am not qualified to answer this.

10. A round building on a square site, assuming it is a standard double suburban block(s) you purchase, does not use the site efficiently compared to a building that may be designed to suit the shape of the site (common practice). You may also find a wonderful view in one direction only which 3/7 will be able to appreciate. A view (or the direction the sun / weather comes from) is an integral part of normal architectural design. There have been few, if any, successful utopian designs that can be applied to all blocks of land.

11. Extending a room or two will be expensive and impractical. (future needs?)

This summary of my opinions in regard to the circular house are only a few of the issues at stake. As a commercial venture, the building must represent value for money in order that a return on investment be achieved. I don’t believe this design will satisfy that criteria.

His information is given in good faith, would normally attract a consultant’s fee, but is free. I shall not be held responsible. By the way these opinions are used.

Steven Lock  
Architect ARATA
Response to the architect Steven Locke’s concerns and other information.

Introduction.

I am 76 years of age and a supporter of the Chums concept. I wish to contribute to the submission by the way of comments based on my own experiences and respond to Mr. Steven Locke’s opinion document.

In my younger years, I was involved with some pise and adobe construction, in my later years owned, and operated a clay bricks manufacturing business, so have an understanding of the processes of making bricks in all forms.

In addition, I would like to provide some additional information as to how some natural environment resources can be used to empower unskilled or limited skilled people among the most vulnerable in our society to contribute towards their own security without the fear of being patronise as in need of charity.

My background is engineering, building construction, farming, manufacturing, business consultant, worked as a consultant with the Victoria government and finally as a public servant working in Industrial Relations and Industry Training. On retirement, I continued to work for the community as a volunteer Community Advocate.

ADOBE AND PISE CONSTRUCTION

For thousands of years, people have mixed dirt with water to make adobe to build their homes.

Today, the traditional methods have been changed a little to make it an even more viable and stronger solution.

ADOBE. Adobe bricks are made by blending together soil and water into a mix, when, traditionally straw was added to the mixture to increase strength and reduce cracking.

The mix was then put into moulds or shaped by hand and then allowed to dry in the sun. The bricks may be of any size or shape desired.

When laying the bricks, mortar comprising of the same material was used.

Drying and curing time varied depending on weather conditions, from a week to a month before they can be safely handled.

Not requiring skilled labour, it offers a viable solution to low-cost housing or the “do-
yourself a homebuilder.

Added materials e.g. asphalt or cement can be added for additional strength, waterproofing and reduce crumbling.

Because Adobe does not span open spaces very well and you need to ensure strong lintels are added to the wall while building.

Some manufacturers of pre-made adobe bricks use hydraulic or mechanical presses to double their strength. A press such as presses used in clay brick manufacture are ideal.

Adobe bricks can last hundreds of years as long as precautions are taken to protect them from moisture.

One method is to add cement stucco to the walls thereby increasing their waterproofing.

**PISE OR RAMMED EARTH** The best results for pise earth techniques is a soil containing approximately 30% clay and 70% sand, crushed fine and sieved, add sufficient water if required, so that when you squeeze it in your hand it will remain compressed.

Long removable boards are bolted together form a mould, separated by a spacer and laid on top of the wall. Sufficient bolts are drilled through the boards to stop the form from being pushed out of alignment when the soil is rammed. Soil is then added to the mould in layers and compressed.

Once the earth wall is stable, the form can be removed and placed on top of the first layer of the wall, continuing the process until the desirable height is achieved. It should compress down to approximately 25%. To increase it strength a small amount of Portland cement can be added to the mix.

In some areas of Australian plains country, wind has blown up a naturally mix of clay and sandy loam. This is also makes a desirable pise mix.

Pise or rammed earth buildings are very durable, lasting centuries. These walls will continue to harden, especially during their first year of construction. To some degree, they are water resistant but their water resistance is improved by the addition of waterproofing materials. Traditionally, one such option was to paint the walls with boiled linseed.

They can be also plastered with a cement render, painted, etc.

Both Adobe and Pise and the later innovation of Straw bale construction offer excellent insulation from both heat and cold. They are also fire resistant.

A desirable attribute of these techniques is that unskilled labour can be used, empowering self-help groups comprising of limited skills to contribute to their building.
STRAW BALE CONSTRUCTION. A recent technique compared with Adobe or Pise for construction uses straw bales for construction. It is called straw bale construction.

The benefits of using plastered straw-bale construction is that building can be a “do-it-yourself” project, creating an insulated, fire-resistant housing. Research shows the insulation factor to be approximately R-30 or more.

Depending on the cost and cartage of the bales, it has the potential to be less costly per square metre than other traditional methods.

The straw bale construction method is extremely flexible and can be easily adapted to architectural design.

Walls well designed and constructed of plastered straw bales are not only load bearing but also are also insulative, saving energy needed to warm the building in the colder months and insulating it from heat during the hot months.

This is a major cost saving to be considered when considering public or private housing.

However, it is important to be aware that it is only part of a building, i.e. wall building and while this can be accomplished by relatively unskilled labour under supervision. You would need to check with your local building authorities as building code and regulations vary from one area to another.

For the rest of the building, the costs involved in your foundation, plumbing, electrical, roof system and finishing, etc are the same as for normal building construction.

The labour here will require someone with the traditional building and construction skills to supervise and where applicable some of the work is legally required to be done by licensed tradespeople, e.g. plumbing and electrical.

Normally this type of construction is one that attracts independent owner builders but in respect to the concept shown in the submission, it could quite easily be adapted for those in need of housing and which would empower them by providing the opportunity to contribute their own labour, thus providing them independence rather being a “charity” case.

Straw like timber grows by photosynthesis, fuelled by solar energy and is therefore non-polluting, therefore will also meet the demands of reducing green house pollution.

Straw left after stripping the grain of crops can be baled and used for this type of construction and would.

For practical purposes, it can be considered an annual renewable source unlike timber, which is harvested from forests that take many years to grow to productive level.
In many areas, farmers rather than ploughing the straw back into the soil burn it. Burning is a contributor to the greenhouse problems.

Baling would add additional income to the farmers and reduce the need for timber from our rapidly diminishing forests.

**The Value of forests.** We urgently need to re-afforest our land and protect our forests, as they are part of our major water catchment resources, assist in drainage, filtering the rainfall before going into the storages; reducing erosion and pollution.

Trees as they grow, take carbon dioxide out of the air and transform it into roots, leaves, Bark, flowers, and wood.

During the lifetime of a tree, several tons of carbon dioxide is taken up.

In addition, Trees provide shade and through transpiration of water lower air temperature and in cities, especially, these will cut the use of energy needed to produce electricity for cooling and means a reduction of carbon dioxide emitted by our coal-fired power plants.

In our cities, we need to plant large green belts as research has proven that trees are excellent filters to reduce the impact of pollution. Indeed, they could be considered as the lungs of the city and if they are not sufficed the health of the environment and the residents suffer as a result.

A major concern is that there appears a reluctance to allow green belts in or near our manufacturing areas where they would prove most beneficial.

Governments in the past for some reason, appear to have been reluctant to allow trees in public housing areas to be grown above house eave height. No wonder our low-income areas are often unsightly and the residents victims to the effect of industrial pollution.

You can see and feel the difference when driving through a well treed and shrubbery covered landscape compared with driving through virtually treeless towns and suburbs.

Notice the difference when driving through the more affluent suburbs.

Local government appears to be more concerned with selling or leasing public lands to developers, etc., rather than consider the long-term benefits of its residents.

Clear felling of our forests; with the resultant soil erosion have also removed the natural shaded areas where the leaf and other plant life can remain moist and allowing quicker and easier, natural regeneration of the forests.

The clear felling of our timber forests are leading to river and stream pollution and creating damage to our environment.
It is beyond the scope of this document to go further into the details of straw bale construction but it is sufficient to state that it is one of many methods that can be used in to construct low cost housing units.

Other methods I will have mentioned are pise and adobe building, which has many similarities to straw bale construction.

All are adaptable to designs using round square or whatever shapes considered desirable. Obviously, in respect to a water catchment area the larger building would be more effective.

Consideration of water catchment from the property, not only from the roofing but also from paths and driveways could be a consideration.

Water from the driveway and paths may need to be stored separately from water to be used for domestic and drinking purposes but would most likely be suitable for gardening purposes.

Adequate tanks for storage could be built underground allowing more room for gardens, lawns and parking requirements.

Depending on the size of the blocks, the plan can be reduced in size to accommodate the size of the blocks.

The concept not only is suitable for block sizes but would also be suitable for large low cost housing development on large block with the water collected and stored in appropriately tanks for use for domestic purposes or saved separately to water the trees and shrubs used for landscaping.

Encouraging the use of drought resistant trees and shrubs and the use of mulch there is no reason why the sites cannot be attractive and park like in appearance, adding to the pleasure and comfort of the inhabitants.

It would also be an opportunity to encourage other environment savings, e.g. the use of solar energy for heating, lighting etc.

Exterior lighting can use solar panels as well. Solar energy driven pumps can be used to pump the water from the underground tanks.

Toilets can use dry toilets to reduce the need to use water in the toilets.

Etc, etc, etc.

**CORRIGATED IRON CLADDING**

Corrugated Iron has been used by many design architects and can be a useful material. The disadvantage if that it is heat and cold absorbing, therefore provision will be required to
ensure adequate insulation is used. This may increase the costs.

Response to Steven Locke's document.

I will try to make a response to Steven's concerns.

I believe many are valid comments but are not insurmountable are may not even be costly in some instances.

1. Disadvantages. I would agree that a circular shape is more costly to build and make it difficult to fit windows and doorways. My response is that this is a concept plan, with the drawing not to scale. An appropriate plan to scale will allow a correct analysis of shape and size for materials for the internal building and efficient use of materials, reducing wastage.
   a. The plan can be amended in order to make it more cost effective. Instead of a curved wall, it can be modified by making it a series of straight line, which will still give an effect of a circular building.
   b. There is no reason why the building cannot be any other shape that will be the most productive to each block. An advantage of the circular building will be that it provides some degree of privacy for each unit.
   c. The floor and roof plans would provide the most potential for wastage. The original concept envisaged laying flooring down before putting up the walls. I do not see a major problem with the ceilings as most of this would still take standard sized material shapes and not require a great deal of extra cutting and fitting.
   d. The floor, depending on the material used could be a different matter, as this would involve the durability of the material.
   e. If this can be resolved then there is no reason why the walls cannot be built over the floor finishing. It would need to comply with council regulations.

2. Glass and Doors frames. It was not envisaged that curved glass would be used and if well planned and designed they would be straight-line additions.
   a. To be cost effective they would needed to be manufactured and brought on site, then fitted. Depending on the curvature, Windows may still be large and straight, however, if necessary they can be segmented units to fit the shape.
   b. There may be a cost factor involved but if the building involves self-help, then the cost can be off set.
   c.

3. Day room Acoustics. Agree with Steven’s concern here, although I would add that there are ways of reducing this problem with the choice of cladding.
   a. As the day room is the centre it can be, open to the air with moveable roofing that can be closed in the event of bad weather.
   b. It can also provide a heat bank to collect energy.
   c. Careful selection of plants can also be effective in reducing noise.

4. Advantage. Yes agreed

5. Internal walls less than external walls. Yes agreed.
Other Issues

6. **Each room has own unique room.** Comment here is that it would encourage visiting between residents. Is this necessarily a bad thing? After all, they are adults and entitled to have visitors. It encourages a reduction of isolation and loneliness, such as might occur with people living alone. The important issue here that each individual’s privacy should be respected.

7. **Central point for deliveries.** This could be a concern with people using the front entrance for deliveries, laundry, etc as well as receiving visitors, so perhaps a separate entrance may need to be considered where deliveries can be made and or individuals can take their laundry to the clothe lines. Needs further thought.

Other Issues/disadvantages.

8. **The question of the effect of converging or askew walls.**
   a. I would accept Steven’s comment here and believe more information is required to establish whether there is any short or long-term effect.
   b. Have been unable to find any reference to this potential problem on the International Web sites.
   c. However, a suggestion. Perhaps a solution might be to not finish walls with architrave or other Scotia, etc that define the start and finish of a wall. Leave them plainly finished, use one colour, and rely on the furniture to provide contrasting colour.

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