

# Developing the human

38 The Australian Financial Review, Thurs, November 12, 1970

The first of two articles  
by CHRISTOPHER JAY

NOW THAT words such as environment and phrases such as quality of life have been successfully impressed on the vocabulary of today's political life, interest in town planning is growing markedly in the community.

Most Australians live in the big cities where the problems of urban living are steadily becoming more obtrusive and the results of past thoughtlessness and unco-ordinated development are increasingly being appreciated.

In a variety of ways, some professional people, property developers and local government representatives are taking more interest in the problems of producing cities designed for people, rather than for restricted financial or technical criteria.

Though they are still in the minority, these groups, who could collectively be described as the private planners, could provide a valuable complementary force for official town planning bodies.

It is noticeable that they are putting emphasis on the human

needs of people, the desirability of consulting populations likely to be affected by the decisions of planning authorities and the need to appreciate inter-relationships within a city.

"We've given away the term town planner because we feel that urban problems are so complicated and inter-related that you have to take a systematic view of them," says George Clarke, managing director of Urban Systems Corporation.

"To cope with the full range of urban problems that our clients bring to us, we have to have people who are fundamentally urbanists, who have spent their lives studying cities and the process of urbanisation.

"They include urban geographers, economists, traffic and transportation engineers, architect-planners (better called urban designers or environmental designers), specialists in urban management, that is, in legislation, administration, development control, and urban sociologists.

"Most of our people have Masters degrees in city and regional planning from the top US universities, such as MIT, Cornell or John Hopkins.

"We exist to solve difficult problems, we're basically urban problem solvers.

"Our technical method for solving problems is based on the primary principle that the city is a highly complex system, and only by a comprehensive examination of the political, social and economic factors that operate in a situation together with the topographic, physical and climatic characteristics of an area can you arrive at implementable solutions.

"We believe the reasons why so much activity that passes for urban planning is disastrous in either its social, economic or political effects is that urban planning is regarded either as a relatively simple physical exercise to be done by civil engineers or architects, or as a purely economic exercise by the Housing Commission trying to cram the maximum number of people into an area at minimum cost.

## Unhappy plight

"You have private speculators trying to extract maximum investment returns from a given block of land, and traffic engineers, operating in isolation, planning road systems which are purely and simply designed to carry the maximum volume of traffic by the shortest possible route without bothering about the total fabric of the community.

"These are all examples of partial, non-systematic, technocratic planning.

"A typical example of this sort of unsystematic planning is the unhappy plight of the people who are now crowding into Mt Druitt in Sydney.

"Another unhappy example of this type of planning is the threat to carve an arterial road through Paddington along Jersey Road.

"There is the insensitive approach of the Victorian Housing Commission in their approach to the clearance of large areas of Melbourne and the building of monstrous blocks of flats."

The Urban Systems Corporation, said to be the largest private town planning group in Australia, has emerged from

# touch in urban planning

Clarke, Gazzard and Partners, a name pretty well known in the town planning field.

Its planning groups inhabit premises in the MLC building in North Sydney, with good views of the Manly-Warringah Expressway.

Its planning jobs range from developing iron ore townships in the iron ore provinces of north west Australia to suburban developments in Perth and an ambitious effort to guide the growth of the Gold Coast (one of Australia's few examples of successful decentralised growth).

A portent of what might be an increasing trend at the local government level of politics was the recent (and successful) election campaign run by a 31-year-old Melbourne businessman, Ian W. Rice, to gain election to the Melbourne City Council.

Rice runs the Victorian operation of Kentucky Fried Chicken Pty Ltd and other interests include Granny's Ice-cream Parlours (10 in Melbourne, two in Adelaide) which offer up to 22 flavours for ice-cream lovers.

"I've been actively interested in politics from the age of nine," he says.

## Exposed

"My father was a senior executive of the Liberal Party; my father-in-law was a former Lord Mayor of Melbourne.

"I've been exposed to the operations of the Melbourne City Council for the last eight years. My business wouldn't give me time to serve in the State or Federal sphere, and the Melbourne City Council is the premier local government area in the State of Victoria."

Melbourne's City Council has 11 wards, each with three representatives one of whom is up for election every year in rotation, and the Rice candidature for a ward covering the east Melbourne and South Yarra area was announced on June 4th this year.

The first step was to call in a market research organisation to find out what issues stirred the ward's ratepayers, what they thought of the Melbourne City Council and what sort of representative they wanted.

The strategy of the campaign and the content of campaign literature was used on the results, which showed that most of the issues agitating local residents were very much issues of town planning.

"Melbourne is the premier city council in Victoria; other shires and municipalities take a lead from it, and I think it's an obligation of the Melbourne City Council to go in for imaginative long-range planning rather than piecemeal, day to day work," says Ian Rice.

"Freeways have to be laid out to take account of potential residential development.

"There seems to have been a lack of correlation between the road system and the public transport system.

"Freeway systems should be a way of getting people across the city with a minimum involvement with cross traffic, with a grid pattern by-passing the city.

You can use the road system as a feeder system for public transport.

"I believe city councils should make every possible use of the top consultants in town planning, because they don't have the resources to employ the top men continuously."

High rise flat development is a big issue in the suburbs just south of the city, since these pleasant garden areas with their respectable neighbourhood environment, the tram system based on St. Kilda Road, and their general nearness to the city centre make them logical targets for home unit builders.

None of this is calculated to soothe the present population.

"I feel the sensible development of highrise building will contribute to the development of the city, and prevent the city dying the way downtown Chicago is dying," Ian Rice comments.

"But it has to be carefully controlled. There is one development which blocks out the sun from 28 houses and creates wind tunnel effects.

"I'm in favour of locating high-rise development along transport routes. Indiscriminate high rise flat development needs to be controlled."

A problem common to inner suburban residents in Australian cities is the way droves of outer suburban motorists park all day in near-city streets, using public transport for the last mile or so of the journey to work.

If Australian public transport systems were less run down and made higher average speeds (London's new Victoria underground line averages 21 mph, faster than any car can possibly go in the peak hour), these motorists could just drive to outer suburban railway stations, and there wouldn't be the same problems.

Alternatively, if the inner city dwellings had plentiful private parking space attached, the streets could be left to the present parking free-for-all.

With the number of cars per dwelling likely to nearly double in the next ten years, the problem of accommodating them is going to be acute.

"The streets are rapidly becoming parking lots rather than thoroughfares," says Rice.

"The Road Traffic Act needs amendment. The people who live in the inner areas are penalised by the fact that the Council has trouble providing parking for people coming in each day from outer areas.

## Problems

"The parking problem in the inner city will be solved in the long-term if the flat developers are made to provide more parking."

In the meantime, his campaign literature suggested a system of residents' parking permits, with parking by non-residents controlled in certain streets.

The idea isn't quite as unprecedented as those outer suburban motorists might think; the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in London has such system in operation, on a short term basis, and is thinking of

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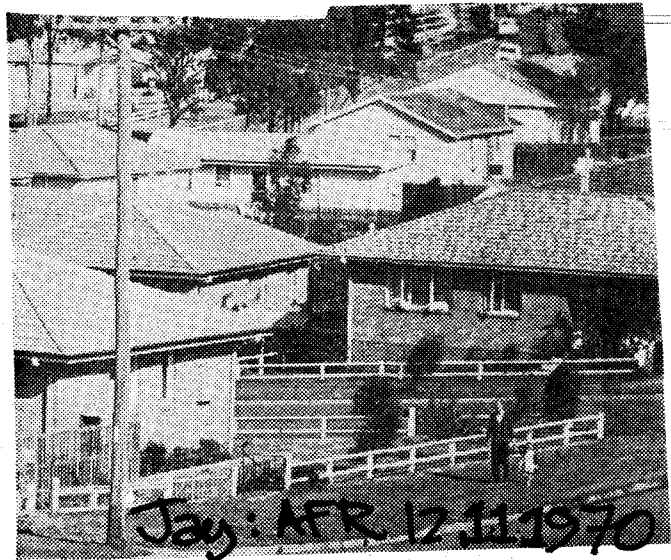
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Green Valley outside Sydney . . . an example of bad planning?

extending it to the provision of season tickets.

The survey done for the Rice campaign had some interesting general pointers for would-be local government candidates.

- Most ratepayers felt remote from the Melbourne City Council; it was seen as a grand club far removed from the ratepayers, concentrating only on major issues.

- For their councillor they wanted a young man, preferably under 40, with sufficient means to be able to give whatever time was needed to the job, and easily approached by the ratepayers.

Three hours of calling every night Monday to Friday, plus all day efforts at weekends for 10 weeks, paid off in a final tally comfortably above the second-placed candidate, the retiring incumbent.

It is at local government level that people interested in town planning could get a lot done, even if they have to accept as given a lot of the general strategies laid down by higher authorities.

In particular, it is here that the human touch in planning is likely to pay both electoral and social dividends.

See 2nd article  
- on 13.11.70.

THERE is a kind of developer for whom the ideal future suburb is one on dead-flat land devoid of trees.

This minimises the cost of putting up geometrical rows of similar-looking houses and providing required services. Bulldozing the natural tree cover doesn't matter from a sales point of view so long as there is a housing shortage.

However, some Australian development groups are trying to provide more than the bare minimum of services required by local authorities, and in the process to show some sense of social responsibility to the people who are actually going to be stuck in the developments.

One example of this is the Lend Lease project at Campbelltown on the fringes of Sydney where natural watercourses have been landscaped and power lines put underground (an investment in suburban amenity justified even in cost accountant terms by the positive effort needed to attract people as far out as Campbelltown).

A recently formed land development group headquartered in Melbourne is promising some interesting concepts in larger scale, more integrated development.

The group is Kaiser Aetna Jennings, announced in August this year as a partnership between A. V. Jennings (Australia) Ltd, a diversified Australian construction group, and the American Kaiser Aetna partnership.

Kaiser Aetna, in turn, is owned jointly by Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical of Oakland, California, and Aetna Life and Casualty of Hartford, Connecticut, US.

A. V. Jennings Industries (Australia) Ltd has a turnover of more than \$100 million a year, turning out about 4,500 residential units.

## Biggest project

Kaiser Aetna, which has a 50 per cent holding in Kaiser Aetna Jennings, has more than 120,000 acres in California, Oregon, Hawaii and Guam. Its biggest project in the US is the development of 90,000 acres between San Diego and Los Angeles with an industrial park, vineyards and orchards, a horse-breeding and training centre, residential and commercial development and extensive outdoor recreational facilities.

The essence of the Kaiser Aetna Jennings intentions appears to be to consolidate areas of land, prepare a development pattern and then sell the land for actual building.

"We would not be involved in building," says Don McLellan, a civil engineer, town planner and lawyer who has been named general manager of the project.

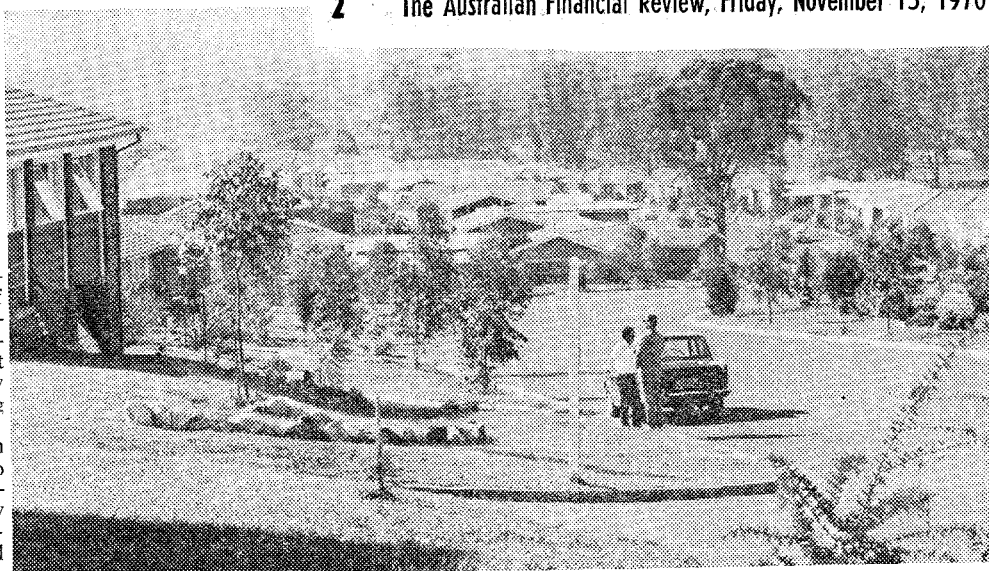
"What we are interested in above all is leaving something behind us; we want to be involved in well-planned developments.

"If we acquire a reputation for this, we hope we can be involved in larger developments in co-operation with State authorities. There is a reaction against piecemeal developments.

"The most important consideration is to get into large areas of land.

"We're hoping to be involved in major community developments; larger, longer term projects. We would be looking for projects involving several hundreds or even a thousand or so acres.

"Closer in to the city, where the population is denser, you might be able to put together



Sherwood Hills development at Campbelltown, NSW . . . Lend Lease have planted more than 7,000 trees there.

# A LONGER TERM APPROACH TO AREA DEVELOPMENT

G.C. gave Dick Dusseldorf the concept of planning on Campbelltown, in 1959.

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50 acres for intensive development.

"For example, one property we've already acquired from Jennings is 26 acres just a few miles from the centre of Melbourne.

"In some of the larger projects we could have an equity of \$5 to \$10 million. We would commit the development of the land before we sell it.

"The actual cost of the raw land will always be a significant part of the cost when we sell.

"Most real estate people are salesmen where we're looking for professional developers.

"The 26 acres we have at Hawthorn in Melbourne we're hoping to develop as a nucleus for redevelopment; it's in the middle of a very densely developed area, alongside an existing shopping area.

"We would never leave the development of the land outside the organisation. The big advantage of operating in this land consolidation and project organisation field is that you're operating in an area where there is less competition, there's a potential for more effective co-ordination with public authorities, and there's more job satisfaction for the people we employ.

"We have several parcels of land already, mostly in Melbourne. Some properties may take 10 to 15 years to turn over, if you get a 1,000-acre development on the outskirts of Sydney or Melbourne.

"There would be some smaller, shorter-term developments to keep our profits up."

The modus operandi for Kaiser Aetna Jennings will be to keep a small, well-qualified group of people, not more than between 12 and 20 in the first four or five years, with use of outside consultants.

"We feel we're in a more flexible position in that we can pick and choose consultants, rather than be tied to an in-house capability which would turn out the same thing every time," comments Richard Holloway, a Stanford University MBA gradu-

ate who is the Kaiser Aetna contribution to the joint venture management.

"One of our strengths has to be the intelligent purchase of land. Because we will be involved in larger parcels, hopefully we'll be able to work more effectively with Government authorities.

"You have problems keeping up cash flow on the larger projects; obviously, being 50 per cent foreign owned, we have some problems.

"You'd have to be paying perhaps 20 per cent down and the balance over five years for land.

"But the fact that larger areas can be comprehensively planned is an advantage; you can have better location of facilities in relation to residential areas, and better planning of the overall road layout."

## Initial assets

The initial assets of the concern are stated at \$6 million in cash and properties.

The type of land development to be engaged in includes:—

- Comprehensively planned community developments involving residential, commercial, recreation development (recreation centres, caravan parks, tourist developments).

- Decentralised commercial developments involving office as well as retail complexes.

- Industrial estates.

- High intensity rural projects.

- Mining and industrial townships.

One project which has been announced is the development of a property in Springvale Road, Melbourne (adjoining A. V. Jennings Headquarters building) as a planned industrial estate.

George Clarke, managing director of multi-disciplinary planners Urban Systems Corporation, is emphatic on the need for a new approach to the making, interpretation and implementation of town planning policies.

"Urbanisation is the major

world problem of the second half of the twentieth century, and the major Australian problem for the next 50 years, just as public health was the major world crisis of the second half of the nineteenth century.

"We're now moving into a post-industrial society in which urbanisation and conservation become the two elements that we have to learn to harness and control.

"Australia has never before had to face such large and complex problems of urbanisation and conservation; there's been a structural shift in the scale of the problem.

"Nobody is to be blamed for the current virtual breakdown in our abilities to shape our environment; in Australia it's the economic boom of the last 20 years that has caught our Governments and citizens by surprise.

"Our traditional methods of thinking about and attempting to shape the urban environment are totally inadequate, because our urban society is getting so large in scale, and so complex in its interrelationships that the only approach which is workable is a multi-disciplinary systems approach within the one team.

"Since we have a widespread lack of understanding of how delicate the relations between the different sub-systems of an urban system are, we get widespread confusion in our State and local government attempts to control development through existing procedures, and therefore we have citizens and policymakers and administrators suffering from considerable confusion."

The general upsurge in interest in town planning and urban problems among various private groups in Australian cities has been a noteworthy feature of 1970.

As Australia's population growth continues to funnel, almost exclusively, into the big cities, the numbers of seminars on the subject and the involvement of various private enterprise groups is likely to increase also.

Town planning, for many years the preserve of university departments and specialist journals, is moving into the public domain — with energetic assistance from the private planners.