

AUSTRALIA ICOMOS NEWSLETTER

VI coming

INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL ON MONUMENTS AND SITES

AUTUMN 1978
VOLUME 1 NO. 2
ISSN 0155 - 3534

Australia ICOMOS Beechworth Conference

A personal view

I came away from Beechworth with four main impressions — all positive.

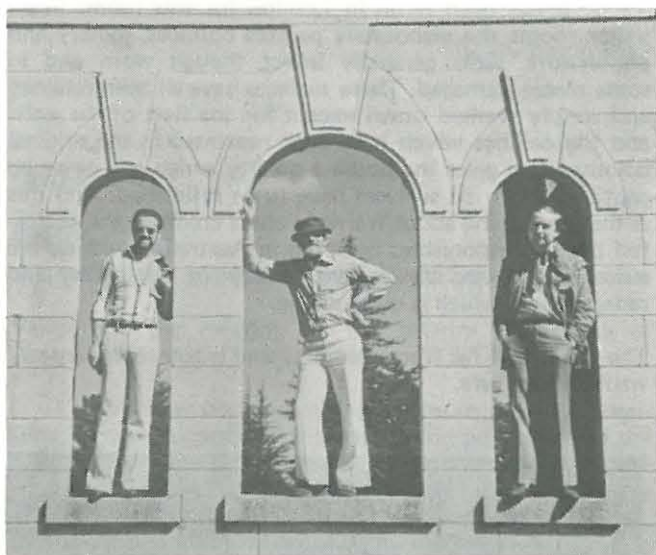
Firstly it was very satisfying that the conference began with Weston Bate's discussion of broad themes in Australian history. Debate amongst those concerned with the conservation of the physical evidence of Australian settlement has largely revolved around general technical detail or the interpretation of specific sites. Even historians involved in the conservation movement have tended to work at the specifics — perhaps because they were asked to.

For example, the "big man's frontier" theme and the understanding of the transportation of convicts as the export of cheap labour to complement the export of capital from England are important dimensions in placing the physical manifestation of European occupation of Australia in context. Too little social and economic analysis has accompanied physical preservation exercises and their presentation to the community. In my opinion the establishment of the national register on the basis of specific sites has reinforced this tendency. Similarly, the selection of nominations for World Heritage registration seems to be proceeding on the specific site basis rather than as a result of general historical analysis. I hope that the general dialogue with Australian historians will now gather pace and that the historians will contribute more comprehensive analytical frameworks for the classification of sites.

Secondly I thought Graeme Pretty's Ngaiwang Folk Province concept to be the most complete and sophisticated approach to conservation and interpretation that has been developed in Australia. A regional park, rather similar to the English national park with continuing mixed use but with specific heritage management, provides the opportunity for the understanding of the broader themes of Australian history, the impact of both black and white races on the landscape and the natural processes of change. I would like to see this regional approach joined with the broader thematic interpretation of the physical environment in the next stage of the A.H.C. register.

Thirdly, it was very pleasing to find that the uncomfortable and brittle relationship between "experts" from similar fields but from different regions is breaking down. Meetings and seminars that I have attended over the past two or three years have been marked by one-up-manship and rather self-conscious posturing. Perhaps that was rather

predictable in fields that are rather new in Australia and where most of us are enthusiastic learners rather than experienced practitioners. But Beechworth was marked by humility, exchange of experience and a sense of camaraderie.



Three arch-supporters of the ICOMOS Charter at work on the Old Beechworth Hospital.

Fourthly, even the animosities and barriers between the various professions and disciplines seems to be breaking down. For example, the differences between the archaeologists and the architects, so hotly argued over the last few years, seemed to be an issue with the "newcomers". Mutual appreciation of the different values and approaches that each field brings to the conservation task has been developing between the "old hands".

I enjoyed the conference. The election for the national committee was keenly contested and whilst it was pleasant to meet Dr. Connally again after fourteen years, in many ways his contribution to the meeting was not as important as the exchange of experience between the participants; further healthy signs.

Barry McNeil
Hobart

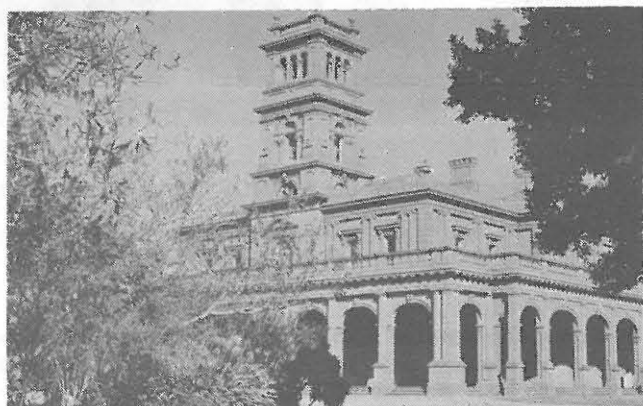
Preservation at Werribee Park, Werribee, Victoria

An excellent restoration by the Government of Victoria

Owner:	Government of Victoria
Interior restoration and research:	Mrs Jessie Serle and Mr Terry Lane
Architect:	Mr Alan Nance, Public Works Department
Garden:	Dr David Churchill

Werribee Park built in the 1870s for the Chirnside family is a much more domestic building than photographs lead one to believe. Despite its use for many years as a Roman Catholic institution it is a remarkably intact house and the job has been essentially one of decoration. The word preservation is perhaps more apt than restoration, for although the house has been added to at the rear, the main fabric with the exception of the billiard room remained unaltered. For example in the drawing room, the original carpet was still there, as underfelt, and the central ottoman and other furniture, including the glass chandelier were original. When the ottoman was carefully stripped down it revealed the original fabric used for the upholstery and curtains. A bright peacock blue silk, Empire design which had been revived in the 1870s and which was also found in a different colour in some curtains still at Como, South Yarra. It has been rerun in London for this room. In all major rooms the elaborately painted cornices, joinery and plasterwork were generally intact though worn and in some places damaged. These surfaces have all been retained and simply washed down except for the flats of the walls and the ceilings which have been repainted in the original colours. This gives the house a quality which can never be captured when all surfaces have to be refinished. And this is the great thing about Werribee and a credit to the dedicated people responsible. So often in Australia buildings are subjected to an unnecessary frenzy of rebuilding and redecoration, which is quite wrong.

The job is still far from complete and many rooms are still wanting furniture.



All in all however, it is a first rate job and one only hopes that the Government of Victoria will appoint a knowledgeable curator to care for the house and keep it in the way its repairers have envisaged. This last point is all too often lost sight of and before very long furniture, bric-a-brac, curtains etc., are rearranged in a way which is quite alien to the period that is being shown to the public. Like a good historical book a restoration must be thoroughly researched and properly presented.

Clive Lucas

FIELD VISIT

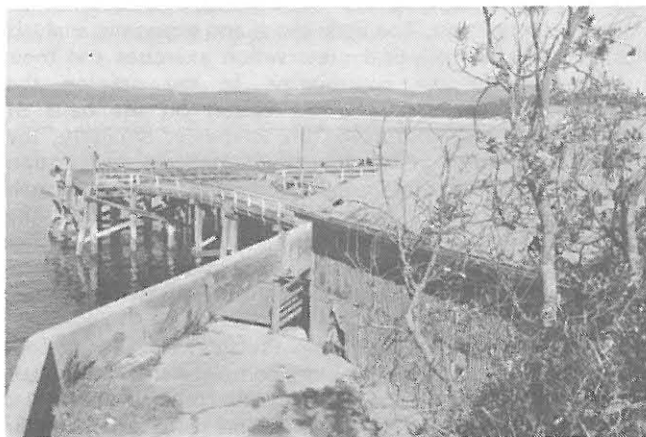
The Far South Coast of New South Wales

This article should be read in conjunction with the previous article in issue No. 1 written by Clive Lucas, Ed.

Sites visited in the courses of the Fifth Committee meeting of Australia ICOMOS, held at Baronda Inlet near Bega, in November 1977 included among others the old wharves at Tathra and Merimbula, Boydtown, Candelo and Tilba Tilba. Both the wharves are in a bad state of repair, and have been the subject of conservation controversy for some years. Tilba Tilba is a small dairying township in a spectacular upland setting which has been declared a conservation area by the National Trust and re-painted according to their directives. Candelo is another attractive township currently under discussion by the Trust for Classification as a whole. Boydtown, with its whaling connections and the striking remains of Benjamin Boyd's enterprise viz. the Boyd church, lighthouse and the Seahorse Inn and wharf, presented its own archaeological and restoration problems.

No formal report was made by the Committee as a whole, but individual members were both approving and critical of some things they saw. The following points were generally agreed:—

1. **Tathra Wharf** — The outstanding quality of this historic feature of the coastscape was agreed by all. Equally its restoration was agreed to hold challenging problems if the new timbers and paint were to merge with the faded yellow ochre and silvered wood of the existing structure.
2. **Merimbula Wharf** — Almost equally striking is the evocative quality of the Merimbula wharf and its iron shed, both as a visual feature of the bay, and as a local amenity — for it was demonstrably much loved and used. Given, tragically, that the cost of restoration is now known to be beyond realistic consideration, the committee members felt that the survival of Tathra wharf took on added significance.



Wharf, Merimbula, N.S.W.

3. **Boydtown** — In the Committee's views the Seahorse Inn is past meaningful restoration. In the course of the unfortunate Gothic facelift to its seaward facade too much of the detail of its original fabric was demolished without record, e.g. all doors and windows, to allow authentic reconstruction. However, it was felt that those garden walls which were clearly of early date, and any wharf retaining walls of the same period, should be given greater emphasis as genuine, untouched survivals, and thus made more clearly distinguishing.

uishable from the mock Gothic additions to the hotel itself.



Eden — Boydtown, Sea Horse Inn

All members felt that given the disappointing state of the Seahorse Inn, the Boyd church on the hill above it took on increased significance, especially in view of its visual qualities. However, members were appalled at the ease of vehicle access to this beautiful ruin with its tempting piles of sandstock bricks, and felt there was an urgent need for an appropriate fence and locked gate. Clive Lucas, Chairman of the Restoration Committee, thought capping the walls might be an urgent holding operation pending investigation of the eroded brickwork, and that a traditional limewash over the bricks (of which traces still survive) might give protection.



Eden — Boydtown, Sea Horse Inn

4. **Tilba Tilba** — This visit was a highlight of the tour, and the Committee was made very welcome by local residents. The beauty of the dairying township in its upland setting, together with the strong sense of community involvement were impressive. In particular, the method whereby the town was painted i.e. paint supplied free to individual owners who in turn supplied labour appeared to be beneficial all round. However, most Committee members felt that the colours selected, while good in principle were too bright, and details of the restored lettering of shop signs were not sufficiently close to the originals in either form or size. The cheese factory had a particularly unfortunate choice of lettering. "Very good, but not quite good enough" might be said to summarise the Committee's view.

A short stop at Central Tilba revealed that in the next few days a local contractor proposed to bull-doze an

avenue of trees which marked a former line of the road towards Mt. Dromedary. There appeared to be no pressing need for this, and the Committee suggested the original landscape might be preserved.



Candelo

5. **Candelo** — This township was agreed by virtually all the Committee to be of outstandingly unspoilt character, and the National Trusts failure to give it a Classified listing was questioned. Subsequently it was learned that the Trust's earlier decision may be reserved, and that Candelo is now scheduled for a Classified listing as a conservation area.

Judy Birmingham

FIELD VISIT

ROBE —

A small fishing port in the S.E. of South Australia.

Venue for the meeting of the Interim Committee of Australia ICOMOS 18 - 20th February, 1978.

"If the town has a promising future, its present appearance is more suggestive of its interesting past. Most of the buildings, whether large or small, are characterized by the plainness and solidity of a former style. Square-cut stone walls with little adornment, and casement windows are the rule in the dwelling houses. A handsome Anglican Church crowns one of the eminences and a Methodist Church another. A Roman Catholic Church, a good school, an exceptionally fine institute with a library of 2,400 volumes, roomy hotels and boarding-houses, and several stores for shopping and general business are also included.

The surface is undulating, but the streets are well laid out and graded. Several superior private residences have been established in the town and its immediate neighbourhood. One of the finest of these is "Kooratta House" which stands between Lake Butler and the sea, close to both, and was occupied by Sir James Fergusson as a Marine Residence. A charming esplanade has been constructed and is fenced by a well clipped box thorn hedge.

A short walk from the centre of the town leads to the obelisk on Cape Dombey, whence there is a magnificent view of lofty cliffs torn into a thousand fantastic forms by the ocean billows which have eaten out deep cavities in the rocks, where sea birds congregate. The obelisk, which serves as a beacon for vessels is about 30 feet in height. It stands on a plateau that is not many yards in extent, at the extremity of a rocky peninsula which at its narrowest part is only 13 feet across. Between the obelisk and town stands the building that was erected as a goal, but is now used as a residence".

The above quotation is an abstract from "The Cyclopaedia of South Australia" published in Adelaide in 1909.

The words of its editor, H.T. Burgess LL.D, written nearly seventy years ago, describe more convincingly than any I could write today, those attractions which this little town had then and still enjoys, but which will surely be crushed by the pressure induced by the current resurgence in the popularity of Robe, if this trend is left unchecked.

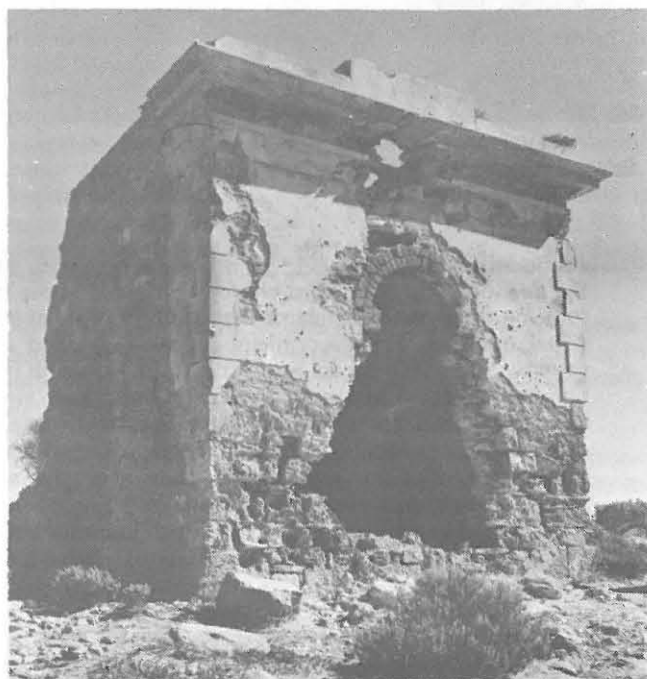


Shop with mansard roof. Main street, Robe.

The town took its name from Major Frederick Holt Robe, Lieutenant Governor of the Province, who praised the natural beauty of the area, and pointed out the excellence of Guichen Bay as a port. Major Robe arranged for the survey of the town and this work was promptly carried out under the direction of Thomas Burr. The township plan is reminiscent of some famous English counterparts as it centres on a Royal Circus with streets radiating out to cover an area of about 52 acres (21 ha). The first allotments were sold towards the end of 1846. The Royal Circus still survives largely unspoiled with a delightful little Custom's House (1863), in a dominant position. This small building has been recently restored by the District Council of Robe with some guidance from the National Trust of South Australia whose plaque it bears. 'Section 1' was reserved for the Telegraph Station and Post Office, and when viewing these premises, members of the ICOMOS Committee were concerned that the comparatively new occupants should be offered all possible assistance when attacking the work which is so necessary in the restoration and adaption of this simple old stone building.

Brought into being by one Governor, Robe was later favoured by another, Sir James Fergusson, who used "Karatta", as it was more properly spelled, as his holiday house when he was Governor of South Australia (1869 - 1872). The two storeyed house to the design of Adelaide Architects EA & GE Hamilton is now in a sorry state of repair, which is unfortunate, as it commands the approach to Cape Dombey - a little further along the road is the picturesque ruin of the Old Gaol which has already been referred to. If some stabilization of the ruin is desired, it should receive attention without further delay . . . it certainly adds a romantic touch to this lovely peninsula which is Robe's crowning attraction and deserves the greatest effort which Council and Ratepayers can make to control the very natural tendency in this area to invade the sandhills with elevated buildings, in search of the best views. Surely restraint should be the watchword of all to save this unique environment and share its beauty in the best possible way.

Something still remains of that exciting period from 1857 until about 1863 when Chinese arriving for the Victorian gold diggings came ashore at Robe to avoid the 20 pound (\$40.00), poll-tax levied by Victoria. At that time Robe was a South Australian Government outpost controlling a huge area of land with no made roads. The first ship brought 200 Chinese, but later they arrived a thousand at a time - in all about 20,000. The route these people carved through the bush to the Victorian Gold Fields is another story, but this trail can still be traced, and its restoration, and the careful maintenance of the Chinese relics such as wells and shelters along its length would be a fine historical provision for posterity.



Romantic ruins of Old Gaol at Robe.

Remembering Robe in 1969 when Miss Kathleen Bermingham's writings and enthusiasm first awakened many of us to its interesting history and pleasant environment, I found it difficult to counter the disappointment expressed by some members of the ICOMOS Committee that recent development had been allowed to invade the high points of the beautiful sand-dunes, so spoiling the skyline as viewed from the town. It seems a pity too, if the shoreline and sand-hills along Guichen Bay must soon look like some built up suburban beach. However, the late Miss Bermingham could well be pleased to know that eleven buildings in Robe which have been "Classified" by the National Trust, are now on the "List of the National Estate" and so qualify for consideration by the Heritage Commission for assistance, if this is required for their conservation; also that many other buildings now show the care recently lavished upon them by their owners.

Robe still retains great charm and all who have seen it agree that its development can be rewarding if the right means to achieve this is discovered in time. Advice and skill are available if properly tapped.

Some comfort can be taken in the knowledge that members of Australia ICOMOS, whose principal concern is the quality of conservation work throughout this country, have seen this delightful town and are in the right mood to be willing advocates for the people and Council of Robe, should they elect to seek assistance outside their own immediate circle of influence.

Members

Michael Court



Michael Court is an honorary architect to the National Trust and Principal Architect for Design in the Tasmanian Department of Housing and Construction. He is also on the Committee of Australia ICOMOS.

In the former role, he has been able to help formulate the conservation policies of the Trust, particularly in connection with planning schemes and government legislation, and in the latter has had responsibility for the restoration of historic buildings belonging to the Government.

Initially, as a foundation member of the Tasmanian Conservation Trust, he was able to give effect to his concern for the broad issues of resource identification and management, of a more dynamic and fruitful balance between the competing demands for development.

However, his particular skills as an architect led to a greater involvement with the National Trust and the problems of urban conservation and building in particular.

Inevitably this has led Michael to an "awareness of the associated problems of social conservation and the new socio-urban patterns which must be evolved to meet the emerging and critical demands of a society which is already floundering in rapid and profound social and economic change and a desperate need for individual and community identity and historical continuity."

The everyday application of these interests has been to cooperate with Local Government in developing urban conservation policies through planning schemes such as the recently completed review of the Battery Point Plan which Michael hopes will become a yardstick for the current examination of the Hobart City Plan. He has also pressed for an Historic Preservation Act on a State Government level.

In the more limited field of building restoration, Michael recalls that "the concept of the National Estate was one of great excitement and the preparation of Tasmanian submissions to the Task Force provided a great opportunity to formulate a practical and comprehensive programme for urban conservation which would direct funds to the most critical areas and identify the most effective means of implementation. The rather narrow concept which has emerged in practice has been a disappointment but has at least given the Department of Construction an opportunity to establish recognition of the Restoration Architect and to progressively widen that concept with the implementation

of restoration programmes."

These have included:—

The Theatre Royal in Hobart

'Willow Court' — a Palladian gem of military architecture for an infirmary and now the last remaining fragment of a much larger asylum complex in New Norfolk.

'Macquarie House' — a strategically located historic warehouse which will be adapted for use as a restaurant and will become the central feature of the Launceston Civic Centre.

The 'Old Criminal Courts', ex Trinity Church, Hobart.

On a more personal note, he has carried out the restoration of his own house — an 1834 weatherboard pot pourri of classical academicism and colonial details and is currently very interested in historic garden and landscape design.

Current activities are the implementation of a programme for the detailed documentation of Classified buildings and another similar programme for historic urban areas and towns.

News from the Secretary

New Committee

Following the Beechworth Conference the Annual General Meeting of ICOMOS was held and a new Committee elected. This new Committee consists of:—

Ms. Judy Birmingham	(N.S.W.)	
Mr. Max Bourke	(A.C.T.)	Secretary
Mr. Michael Court	(Tas.)	
Mr. Warwick Dix	(A.C.T.)	
Ms. Joan Domicelj	(N.S.W.)	
Mr. Bob Ellis	(S.A.)	
Mr. Peter Forrest	(N.T.)	
Mr. Peter James	(N.S.W.)	
Ms. Lynn Leader	(A.C.T.)	Treasurer
Dr. Miles Lewis	(Vic.)	
Mr. Clive Lucas	(N.S.W.)	Vice-Chairman
Prof. John Mulvaney	(A.C.T.)	
Prof. David Saunders	(S.A.)	Chairman
Ms. Meredith Walker	(Qld.)	
Mr. David Yencken	(Vic.)	

Office bearers were elected by the new Committee.

Vernacular Architecture Committee

The new Committee has resolved that Dr. Miles Lewis be nominated as the Australian representative of the ICOMOS Committee on Vernacular Architecture. Dr. Lewis' book "Victorian Primitive" has been forwarded to the ICOMOS Documentation Centre.

ICOMOS Moscow Conference — May 20 - 27 1978

The following members are known to be attending this conference: Ann Bermingham, Richard Falkinger, Miles Lewis, John Morris, Gavin Walkley. As Miles Lewis is the only member of the National Committee he is the only member of the Australian representatives able to vote.

ICOMOS DOCUMENTS RECEIVED IN THE PERIOD ENDING FEBRUARY 1978

- Cons 77/1 Highlights of reports of ICOMOS National Committees
- 77/2.1 Report of the International Wood Committee
- 77/2.2 Activity report of the International Committee for Architectural Photography
- 77/2.3 Specialized International Committee for Stone
- 77/2.4 International Committee on Historic Gardens and Landscapes
- 77/2.5 International Committee for the Protection of Monuments and Sites in Seismic Areas
- 77/2.8 UNESCO-ICOM-ICOMOS Documentation Centre Programme
- ICOM-ICOMOS International Symposium on 'Industrial Heritage and Modern Society'
- Cons 77/4 ICOMOS Publications Programme
- Exec 77/1 Report by Secretary General
- 77/2.1 Accountant's Report
- Exec 77/5 Draft rules of the procedure of the General Assembly
- Exec 77/4 Revision of ICOMOS Statutes, draft, including current Statutes
- Exec 77/8 1978 international programme of technical meetings
- Model Statutes for National Committees
- Venice Charter, and report of the Special Committee on the revision of the Venice Charter, and proposals from National Committees.

Employment

POSITION

Director of ICOMOS Secretariat
Paris, France

Seeking individual with administrative and financial background to be charged with operations of the Secretariat of 2,000 member international organization. Responsible to elected officers of ICOMOS.

Experience in dealing with UNESCO and other international organizations desirable. Prospective candidates must be fluent in English and French (written and spoken) with knowledge of other languages (especially Spanish) desirable. Knowledge of architecture, architectural conservation, art or architectural history, engineering, or documentation, useful.

Salary comparable with those offered by other non-government organizations. Vacations generous. Possibility of international travel. Position open early Summer 1978. French work permit necessary for non Common Market citizens.

Applications (by mail) to: President of ICOMOS
Hotel Saint Aignan
75, rue du Temple
75003 PARIS, France

Conferences

Focus on our Southern Heritage

Adelaide, September 16th – 22nd, 1978

This conference is being organized under the direction of The Conservation Council of S.A. (Inc.) and The Department of Continuing Education, University of Adelaide.

The aim of the conference will be to implement the recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry into the National Estate (1974) for community education in the knowledge of and concern for the National Estate.

The organizers see the National Estate in its broadest terms as including those aspects of both the natural and cultural, or man-made, environment that are worth preserving. The prime objective of the conference will be to attempt an overall assessment of South Australia's contribution to the National Estate, highlighting the special, in some cases, unique features and identifying existing and possible future problems.

It will also consider ways in which our southern heritage can be protected for future generations.

The conference will comprise several days of talks, discussions, workshop sessions, short local excursions and two longer pre-and-post conference study tours to the Coorong and Flinders Ranges.

Further information can be obtained from:—

Dr. David Corbett,
University of Adelaide,
Box 498, G.P.O. Adelaide, S.A., 5001

Environment 78 — The Interrelationship Between Environmental Control and Development Progress

Sydney, June 13th – 16th, 1978

This is an all embracing conference covering aspects of Planning; Waste Management; Water and Effluent Treatment; Air; Natural Resource Management; Noise; Energy.

Further information can be obtained from:—

Total Concept Exhibitions Pty. Ltd.,
P.O. Box 127, Brookvale, N.S.W., 2100. Tel. 938 2033



NOTE: All correspondence should be directed to:—
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