

The House that Jack Built – Green Bans Hero

a long-overdue book on Jack Munday and the evolution of the heritage conservation movement in Australia post WW2.

Australia ICOMOS members with long memories will surely remember the name Jack Munday and the green ban era of the 1960s and '70s. But it might come as a surprise to those with shorter recollections that nearly half a century ago, Munday himself coined the term during a boom period in the property development industry in Sydney, when hundreds of heritage buildings faced the bulldozer. Throughout Australia, protection of heritage buildings under the law was non-existent. There were sporadic efforts by the youthful National Trust divisions and local community –based bodies; but the important mid-60s messages from the Venice Charter had yet to hit these shores, and most politicians of the day happily turned a blind eye on this frenzy of demolition in Australia's towns and cities.

The facts are clear. In the 1960s, Jack Munday, a dairy-man's son from the back blocks of north Queensland, came out of nowhere to lead a radical left-wing trade union (the Builders' Labourers Federation) to the forefront of the incipient heritage movement in NSW. Within a few short years his name had hit the headlines as a determined fighter for residents' rights and for heritage conservation as well as for more traditional union causes such as wages and working conditions on building sites. With ever-growing grass-roots support within civil society, the BLF imposed green bans on dozens of projects which threatened heritage, bushland, parklands and wilderness sites throughout Sydney and elsewhere. Kelly's Bush in Hunters Hill went into the history books as the site of the world's first *green ban*

The green ban era reached its peak in the mid-70s but by then its message had spread far and wide. One highly significant local outcome was the ground-swell of support for heritage within professional bodies generally - leading to the establishment of Australia ICOMOS in 1977. During the couple of decades following the green bans, Munday became an international identity – welcomed at global environmental forums and sharing the stage with some of the great names of the contemporary conservation movement – people like Barbara Ward, Paul Ehrlich, Petra Kelly. And back home a wave of legislative reforms had commenced to role, with bodies such as Australia ICOMOS in the vanguard. Largely because of NGO and grass roots action, planning laws were up-dated and new statutes arrived, to the point where by the late-1980s almost every state had adopted progressive urban planning and heritage conservation laws, and had started to place heritage assets on official protection registers.

With the BLF green bans behind him, Munday did not hang up his boots. He served a term as an Alderman on the Sydney City Council and sat on the council of the Australian Conservation Foundation for a record term. Later he chaired the NSW Historic Houses Trust and in 1998 was named a National Trust Living Treasure. Amongst his many accolades are two honorary doctorates and an honorary master's degree in environmental studies.

In ***The House that Jack Built***, Sydney architect-planner James Colman covers Munday's key achievements and activities in the planning and conservation fields during a busy half century. He reveals how this erstwhile communist and trade union leader became a dedicated conservationist who achieved fame – and notoriety – for exploits which were praised by the many, denounced by the few. Today, Munday's personal values as a committed environmentalist continue to evoke widespread interest and admiration – even amongst a generation which has no direct recollection of the green ban days. For Australia ICOMOS members, for heritage professionals generally, as well as for the interested layperson, this is an important story – now told for the first time in this very readable, thoroughly researched and lavishly illustrated landmark publication. Appendices include a chronology of key national and international influences in the growth of the conservation movement in Australia, a comprehensive reference list, index and a list of green ban sites. [In bookshops September 2016: published by NewSouth Books].

More detail can be found by visiting www.housejackbuilt.com.au.