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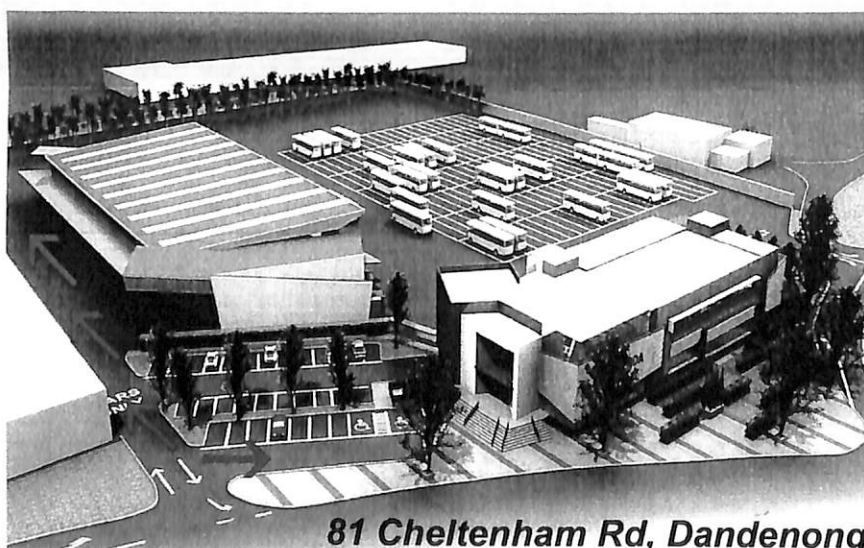
GRENDAS BUS SERVICES
8 FOSTER ST. DANDENONG
VIC 3176
Tel: 0438 014 000
Fax: 03 9797 2888
A/C 100 000 000

6054 AQ



Grenda entry and parking instructions

- Access the depot from Cheltenham Rd via the gate at the left of the main building (see map below).
- Be aware that the access to the second gate on the right of the main building is strictly for Buses and Authorised vehicles accessing/departing the depot.
- There is limited visitor parking outside the main entrance to the building.
- When these visitor spaces are full, all other guests will need to drive along the western boundary to the rear of the complex where Staff Car Parking is provided.
- Proceed carefully to the covered pedestrian walkway along the western fence line giving attention to other car movements in the area.
- At the end of the walkway please proceed through the front gate and up the stairs to the main building where you will be required to sign in.



Enter here. Visitor parking is at the right or proceed to the rear of the building for additional parking.





PLEASE SIGN
OFF YOUR BUS
BEFORE LEAVING



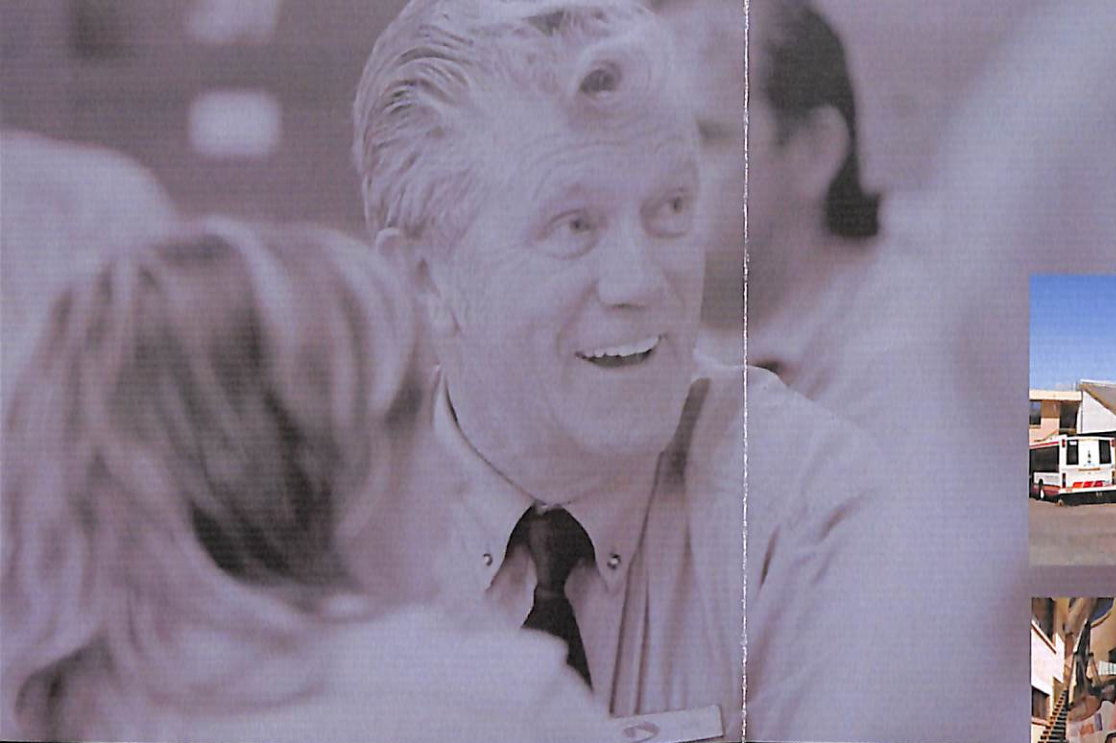

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VicUrban ►►



MOVED
by Grenda's



The City of Greater Dandenong and
Grenda Corporation invites you
to the official launch of
a commemorative booklet

Capturing Grenda's historic Foster Street depot
and memories from selected staff

With photography by Hilton Stone and
interviews with David Crofts

Wednesday 17 June 2009

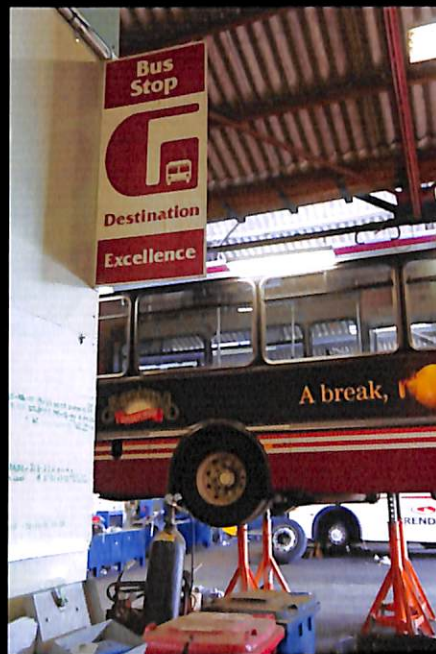
6pm – 7.30pm

81 Cheltenham Road, Dandenong
Melways 90 B8

RSVP by 10 June 2009

Phone 9239 5134 or email culture@cgd.vic.gov.au

The launch will be followed by light refreshments and
an optional tour of the new Grenda Corporation site





Carmen Powell <carmen.powell@gmail.com>

Fw: Grenda's Bus Service

2 messages

Dandenong & Dist Historical So <dandhist@yahoo.com.au>

Tue, Feb 13, 2007 at 10:27 PM

To: Carmen Powell <Carmen.powell@gmail.com>, Ray Carter <ray.carter@optusnet.net.au>

Dandenong & District Historical Society, Inc

PO Box 8029, Dandenong, VIC 3175

186 Foster Street East, Dandenong

Open 11am to 2pm Wednesdays

Tel: 03 9794 8967

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: "Foster, Geoff NM" <Foster.Geoff.NM@edumail.vic.gov.au>

To: dandhist@yahoo.com.au

Sent: Tuesday, 13 February, 2007 11:20:04 AM

Subject: Grenda's Bus Service

Hi there

My name is Geoff Foster. I am the secretary of the Bus and Coach Society of Victoria – a club for bus enthusiasts which includes researching and publishing histories of bus operators through our magazine Australian Bus Panorama. We receive extensive support from individual bus operators and from the Bus Association of Victoria.

At present I am in the early stages of preparing a history of the Grenda Corporation. Whilst our records for the last 30 or so years are quite extensive, I would be interested to know whether your society has any material on the Grenda bus services. I am particularly interested in the early years (mid to late 1940s) when Ken Grenda's father, George sold his milk tanker run and bought into the bus business and the subsequent development of the company through the 50s and 60s. I would also like to know under what conditions I might access and reproduce such material – with full and appropriate acknowledgments of course.

Regards

Geoff Foster

(03) 9637 2784

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Send instant messages to your online friends <http://au.messenger.yahoo.com>

Ray Carter <ray.carter@optusnet.com.au>

Wed, Feb 14, 2007 at 6:11 PM

To: Foster.Geoff.NM@edumail.vic.gov.au

Cc: Carmen Powell <Carmen.powell@gmail.com>, dandhist@yahoo.com.au

Hi Geoff

Thanks for your message.

We have a thin volume which is the story of the Grenda's Bus Lines, and also some photographs. From memory, I think there is pretty basic information in the book.

A very quick look at my info at home indicates a reference in a book by G Johnson, *Diversify for Survival*, published by the Truck and Bus Corporation, March 1981. It refers to the purchase of bus routes in 1945. We don't have that book.

A big boost for Grenda's was in the mid-1950s when Doveton and Lyndale housing estates were established by the Housing Commission, and car ownership was nowhere as common as it is today. They were short and profitable runs.

Take a look at Google. Toggle the "Australian sites" and type *Grenda bus*. I found a few sites that might be good there, including for example a record of a 50th anniversary celebration. I barely skimmed the surface of the Google leads.

You are quite welcome at our resource centre to see what we have. It is open from 11am to 2pm on Wednesdays.

Best regards, and good luck. We would be interested to see how you get on.

Ray Carter

Ray Carter

vice president
Dandenong & District Historical Society, Inc
Mail to: PO Box 8029 Dandenong, VIC 3175
Street address: 186 Foster Street East, Dandenong, VIC
03 9794 8967 (please leave a message if unanswered)
dand.hist@yahoo.com.au

[Quoted text hidden]

With compliments

Please find enclosed a complimentary copy of the commemorative booklet ***Moved by Grenda's***

This booklet captures the final weeks and days of Grenda's Bus Company at their historic depot in Foster Street, Dandenong. It features photos by Hilton Stone; along with memories from staff recorded during interviews with writer David Crofts.

Coloured images from the renowned arts intervention ***Depot*** as featured on ABC Sunday Arts, featuring Cameron Robbins, Robbie Rowlands, Campbell Drake, Susan Jacobs, Ben Morieson, James Carey, and Matt Morrow is also included.

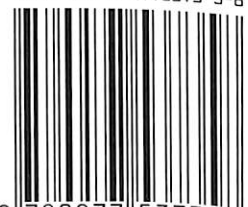
Jenny Pemberton-Webb
Place Manager
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9239 5253



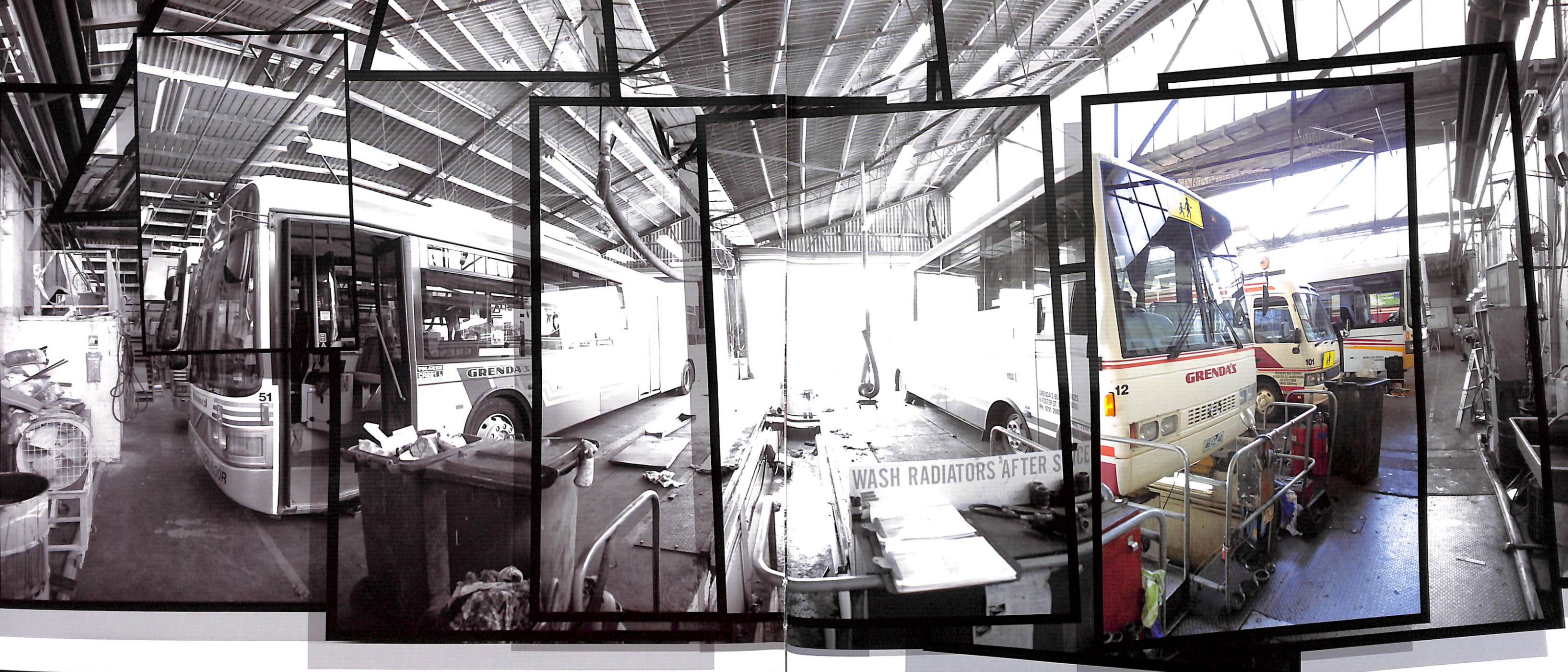
Moved by Grenda's



ISBN 978-0-9775373-5-8



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SUGGESTION BOX

Credits

This project was undertaken and funded by Grenda's Bus Services, VicUrban and the City of Greater Dandenong.

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ISBN 978-0-9775373-5-8

All 'Moved by Grenda's' stories and excerpts are edited transcriptions of oral history interviews conducted during October / November 2007.

Staff Interviews

David Crofts

Photographs

Hilton Stone Photography

Artists

James Carey, Campbell Drake, Susan Jacobs, Ben Morrison, Matt Morrow,
Cameron Robbins, Robbie Rowlands

'Depot' Writer

Geraldine Barlow

Edition

2000 Copies

Project Co-ordination

Jenny Pemberton-Webb, City of Greater Dandenong

Project Team

Sarah Saunders, Grenda Corporation

Grissel Walmaggia, City of Greater Dandenong

Cameron Robbins, Artist

Robbie Rowlands, Artist

www.greaterdandenong.com

depot-installation.blogspot.com

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- The Grenda Story
- Interviews with Staff
- Depot Art Project
- Demolition



Introduction

Moved by Grenda's

When Grenda's announced that it would relocate to a new site to support the Revitalisation of Central Dandenong, a unique project was born. 'Moved by Grenda's' is a project that acknowledges the passing of a specific place and time.

It started with a simple gesture in 2007 when Hilton Stone Photography was commissioned by the City of Greater Dandenong Council to officially document the site prior to demolition and add this record of a local, iconic business to Council's photographic collection.

Hilton Stone took over one hundred images and revealed a workplace of colourful characters against a backdrop of workshops and offices seemingly frozen in time. The photos depicted a space rich in history; layered in meaning; full of memories. It also revealed an immensely inspiring space. At every turn there were materials to work with, meanings to explore, and quirky spaces to interpret.

Artists, Cameron Robbins and Robbie Rowlands, had just completed a pre-demolition project at a beach house in Merricks, Victoria. The two were invited to hand pick a team comprising seven artists, experienced in creating site specific artworks, that would form a weeklong experience called 'Depot'.

The seven artists cut, altered, arranged and interpreted both the fabric of the building and its remnant objects. 'Depot' offered a walk-through experience that invited visitors to discover their work and contemplate the spaces prior to the site being razed.

Whilst the artists began visiting the depot to plan their work conversations with employees, the spaces emerged. Writer, David Crofts, was engaged to undertake oral histories with eleven employees to add to the record of working life in Dandenong.

This project offered an opportunity to combine the arts, business, personal accounts and history into one unforgettable experience.

The resulting book, 'Moved by Grenda's', incorporates Hilton Stone's photographs, David Croft's oral history stories and excerpts from the memorable and challenging 'Depot' project which occurred in April 2008. It brings elements of all three remarkable initiatives into one volume to be enjoyed and shared now and in the years to come.

Jenny Pemberton-Webb
Project Co-ordinator



The Grenda Story

Grenda is a third generation Australian family business which has grown from humble beginnings in Dandenong to become a major player in the Australian Bus Industry.

George Grenda started the business in 1945 when he sold his milk truck and purchased a small business of four bus routes, six buses, land and a galvanised iron shed at 9 Foster Street. The business operated as a partnership between George and his wife, Elsie, until 1951 when it was expanded to include all of their four children.

George Grenda gradually expanded his business, buying out rival companies and adding to the land and buildings in Foster Street. As Dandenong grew, Grenda grew and, in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the company played an important role in transporting workers to and from local industries, GMH, Heinz and International Harvester, who together employed most of Dandenong as well as people from surrounding regions. When the Victorian Housing Commission created housing developments at Lyndale and Doveton, Grenda continued to develop new routes as the population expanded. They also won the right to operate Education Department contracts for the school bus services of Dandenong High School and Pakenham Consolidated School.

In 1960, the Foster Street site was expanded and the administration offices were moved there from the family home in Oakleigh. In 1961, after building a sound enterprise with forty-five buses, George Grenda died. His sons, Lance and Ken, who were already working for the family company, took over. Grenda's location in the fast growing South-Eastern suburbs of Melbourne afforded it an important advantage. Within the metropolitan area, operators were given specific bus routes, whereas Grenda (being outside the Melbourne boundary) had a licence for a bus 'area' which enabled the establishment and expansion of a range of services to schools, industry and charter routes.

In 1967, Ken travelled to Europe on a fact-finding mission and came back impressed with Europe's ability to operate tour buses. Having seen the Mercedes-Benz coaches in Europe, Ken Grenda became the first to import this coach to Australia and, in doing so, created a new link for the company. Grenda's also imported the first Volvo and Scania coach chassis into the country.

At this time in Australia there were few tour operators, especially for short-haul jobs. Grenda's acquired Blue Line Coaches in Sydney, which was offering one and half day tours to international tourists. Building on this success, Ken Grenda organised a national coach operation (AAT) at the request of TAA (Australia's national domestic airline before Qantas) and Mayne Nickless Ltd. The venture was short-term for Ken and, in 1976, he sold the coaches to AAT, which went on to become part of the Australian Pacific Group.

Meanwhile Volgren was developed to enable Grenda to become a franchise dealer for Volvo bus chassis for Victoria and the Riverina. Volvo's confidence in Grenda's soared after record sales made at a Sydney conference, which led to the then Manager of the company being sent to Europe. Upon his return, Volvo granted Volgren the right to build extruded aluminium bodies, revolutionising the Australian bus-building industry which had only ever used heavy steel. Volgren secured important export markets to South-East Asia, particularly Indonesia and expanded its bus-building market nationally. This led to expanded operations at Volgren's Hammond Road site in Dandenong South.

From the late 1970s to 1990, Grenda faced two decades of hardship, characterised by frustrating battles with the State Government over the right of bus operators to set their own fares and lift them in line with wage rises and inflation. Instead, a system of Government subsidies was established and severe limitations were introduced, preventing expenditure on capital costs for bus fleet maintenance and expansion.

This difficult period almost crippled Grenda's and, at times, threatened to bankrupt the business. Industrial action followed as workers felt worried about their future. Finally, in 1990, a sensible tender system was introduced by the new State Government which enabled private operators to contract for the work and incorporate a system for bus replacement.

Grenda's has always moved to increase its fleet and operations through acquisition of smaller private operators, such as Portsea Passenger Service and the Moorabbin Bus franchise - the latter has led to the establishment of Moorabbin Transit.

Geoff Grenda joined the company in 1983, followed in the 1980s by his brother, Scott. Ken's brother, Lance, retired from the business in 1993 and passed away in 2006.

Today, Grenda Transit Management operates in excess of 470 buses and coaches in Melbourne and employs over 800 staff. In 2008, Grenda's moved from its historic site at 9 Foster Street and consolidated its Thomas Street office into a new purpose-built state of the art complex at 81 Cheltenham Road, Dandenong.

Volgren Australia is now Australia's largest Bus and Coach Body manufacturer. It has exported 1000 kits and completed buses to Asia, and its latest development, a three-axle double deck city bus, operates in Hong Kong and Singapore.

Grenda's delivers buses and transit systems that epitomise value for money, service excellence, passenger safety, cutting edge technology, and genuine customer focus. The company's strength is enhanced by its six depots, strategically located throughout Melbourne's rapidly developing South-East. Grenda has the skill, knowledge and experience to build on its long-term business success, and retains its core values of loyalty, honesty and integrity. ■



Interviews with staff | October 2007 | By David Crofts

Getting a job at Grenda's

"When I applied the manager's first question was, 'What does an economics graduate want to do driving a bus?' And I guess I said I didn't know how long I'd be there but I needed a way to keep body and soul together...And he said, 'Well you've got to learn how to drive a bus, get a licence, find somewhere to park the bus – and you've got 10 days.'"

Frank Bowden, Human Relations Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982.

"I was making a lot of changes in my life at the time, and there was an advertisement in the paper that said, 'Female bus operators required – is this the change you're looking for?' And I said to myself, 'Yeah that'd be great so I rang up...It was something totally out of my league, totally...I knew it was a male-dominated field and that was going to be a challenge for me...I wanted that job like I've never wanted to come on board anywhere else before.'"

Jodie Christie, Bus Driver. Joined Grenda's in 2004

"My actual driving test for the company was in what they call an 'old VAM'. I'm not sure if it was a Vauxhall or a Bedford but we just called them VAMs. They were all flat-nosed, the engine was right beside you and there was a big, clunky gear stick – fun and games. It was really old and it had what we lovingly called 'Armstrong' steering. In other words it had no power steering so you needed 'strong arms' to get round the corners."

Eric Stevenson, Disabled School Bus Supervisor and Upholstery Repairer. Joined Grenda's in 1991.

"I remember walking in here on my first day...I walked through the place and thought how run-down it was. It's actually been painted since then but it was run-down. The lino on the floor in the hallway out there had actually been worn through and I remember talking to the manager on the first day and he said, 'One day we're going to rebuild this place and do it all again'...And I thought, 'Thank God for that' – that was 13 years ago."

John Barron, Charter Coordinator. Joined Grenda's in 1994.



Pride in your work

"The analogy I use with all of our people is, 'If it's safe for your wife and kids, or your mum and dad, to get on that bus and, you're happy with that, then I'm happy'. But if you think, 'Gee I wouldn't want my kids to get on this bus' then you don't let that bus out on the road. It's as simple as that."

Ivan Pitcher, Group Maintenance Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982

"We had one driver who was here until he died and that bus went to the funeral with him! You know, that was his bus. And there are still a couple of old drivers who say, 'This is my bus,' because they had to take care of it, they had to see that it was clean." *Lorraine Willis, Accounts Payable and Receivable. Joined Grenda's in 1982.*

"I guess I like the creativity of it all if you're starting from scratch (when planning a new bus route). It's like people have nothing and here's an opportunity to provide them with something in the way of public transport. Sometimes it isn't very much but it's always more than what they had. I like the feeling of seeing a bus going down a road – and it's going that way – and knowing I had some influence on it."

Steve Bigwood, Senior Planning Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1999.

"It used to give me the greatest pleasure when, say you did an engine, and it went out for 12 months and you never heard of it again. Then it came back and you did the tappets and that was it....I prided myself on doing something on the engine that left a signature so I could identify that I did the engine or the gearbox. I always did something just ever so slightly different so, that when it came back, I knew I'd done the work...If I curled over a washer, I curled it over in a specific manner. I'd use one flat side of the hexagon and not a corner..."

Ivan Pitcher, Group Maintenance Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982



Women behind the wheel

"We now employ about 75 women drivers full-time and they have made a big difference....It's made a huge difference in terms of culture... First off, it's put paid to the fact that women can't drive or they would be unreliable....They have absolutely proved they are terrific in terms of customer relations, in particular with the 'oldies' and they probably handle the vehicles more gently, too. The men were a bit hesitant with women coming in at first but it has actually made them behave better and they've actually taken the women under their wing and helped them."

Frank Bowden, Human Relations Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982.

"There were only six [other women] when I came on board and I started with another woman who was in training with me...There was a real mixed response to us. I thank God that six women started before I did because they definitely took a lot of the heat off us when it came to the idea that women shouldn't really be driving or 'you shouldn't be here'. Those first few women eased the way and showed them, 'Yes, we can – we're capable of doing it just as good as you guys'."

Jodie Christie, Bus Driver. Joined Grenda's in 2004.

In the workshop

"People brand me as being a Volvo man. Volvos have a very good chassis –there's no two ways about it... They're very robust. With Leylands and Bedfords, the engine used to haemorrhage and the chassis used to crack and flog itself out. Volvo came along and the first thing we noticed was that we weren't spending a lot of time on chassis repairs but actually working on the components. And even that part of it changed so much that we'd get 300,000 to 400,000 out of the engine. That was unheard of – all of a sudden you weren't doing an engine for five or six years whereas, with the Bedford, you'd do it every 18 months."

Ivan Pitcher, Group Maintenance Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982



"If someone, like one of the mechanics, brings in a bus that's got a torn seat, he will bring the whole seat over here and we'll peel the cover off it. If we haven't got a cover we'll find a pattern and we'll cut one out and re-cover that seat and the same with the backs. School kids like to use knives and so we've got covers pre-made and we just re-cover them and staple them back on. If I haven't got any covers then, as you can see along the wall, there are swags of patterns...And you can see along the far end here, I peel off the roll, mark out the pattern, cut it out and stitch it together and, hopefully, I've stitched the parts in the right order."

Eric Stevenson, Disabled School Bus Supervisor and Upholstery Repairer. Joined Grenda's in 1991.

"Think about a shoebox on wheels, that's a bus. Whatever you do, you've got to get underneath that shoebox to work on it because you can't take the top off. A truck mechanic, for example, has that open space because a cab can be tilted and the truck is high off the ground...But a bloke who's a bus mechanic has got to love working on buses. He's got to love buses first and then he's got to love diesel."

Ivan Pitcher, Group Maintenance Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982

Grenda's culture

"Our staff stay because they like the other people around them and they stay because, by and large, they are looked after pretty well. And if they have personal issues they will get some assistance and be employed while they deal with whatever their grief is...Companies are now looking to do extraordinary things just to keep people. I think this company has probably done a lot of that for many years, just in the natural way it deals with people. If there is anything I'd like to try to keep when we move, it's an emphasis on looking after people."

Frank Bowden, Human Relations Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982.

"To me the satisfaction was every time we improved and did something, you could see the success. The Grenda family weren't a show-off family.....When you did the job well enough and kept buses on the road and the business was a success, that success got ploughed back into the business so you could actually see growth and you wanted to be part of that. You could see the fleet expanded, modern vehicles came in, tools were bought.... so there was always this improvement, always, and I wanted to be part of that."

Ivan Pitcher, Group Maintenance Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1982.

"I can remember particularly the day I became an Australian citizen. The next day I came in and I didn't realise what was happening but I saw the champagne glasses going out and Ken came along and gave me a glass of champagne and a pie and he said, 'Now take that pie because you are an Australian'. I will never forget that...Sometimes he used to come in, in the mornings, and look around and say, 'Oh they're all down and they look sad'. So he would go out and buy each one of us a chocolate, just to cheer us up."

Lorraine Willis, Accounts Payable and Receivable. Joined Grenda's in 1982.

"You couldn't ask for a nicer bloke than Ken. After 14 years with all the employees he's had, he still remembers my name. I take the Grenda family out a fair bit in the coach and you're never treated as an employee – you're always invited in to go for lunch with them and all that, and the boys are the same as their father."

John Thomas, Coach Driver. Joined Grenda's in 1993.





Out on the road

"It's a great independence being out there and actually driving the size of the vehicle...I just love it – you know driving around, smiling, singing with the radio because I'm my own little boss out there, if you know what I mean? I really do enjoy that because I know I'm doing what they tell me to do for the day and there are some regulars that I know and we have a little chat."

Jodie Christie, Bus Driver. Joined Grenda's in 2004

"I thoroughly enjoyed it. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting the people and I enjoyed the driving. It was a changing mosaic right through the day...off I went with my till, my money, some tickets and I was expected to come back at night with some cash, some tickets sold, happy passengers, no complaints and the bus in good order. It was a great job."

John Baxter, Group Training Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1975.

"There's about 70 schools in the Dandenong area and we look after most of them. More than 50 per cent don't even bother ringing anyone else – they just ring Grenda's."

John Barron, Charter Coordinator. Joined Grenda's in 1994.

"When I go away on tour, instead of making them pay for morning tea, I pull into somewhere where there's restrooms and set up a table and an urn and we have a cup of tea or coffee and I find by, chatting to them on the first morning, you get to know your group a little bit – and by the end of your trip you've got a lot of friends out of it."

John Thomas, Coach Driver. Joined Grenda's in 1993.

What I'll miss about Foster Street

"The history I think. You're used to coming to the same place every day for 16 years and then you've got to go off somewhere else. It's not going to be the same – everything's going to be modern. Then you're going to have swipe cards, and I don't know. It's just that this place has got character. It's the one word I'd use – 'character'."

Eric Stevenson, Disabled School Bus Supervisor and Upholstery Repairer. Joined Grenda's in 1991.

"I'm 61 now and I've been here 31 years so it's a big part of my life. I was only reflecting on that the other night. I was only a young tacker when I started here so a big chunk of my life has been working at this site...I've seen the place grow to what it is today... Yeah, I'll drive around through here in years to come and say, 'Gee that's where I used to work or that's where the old Grenda's depot was'. It won't just disappear out of my mind, that's for sure... no two ways about it."

John Baxter, Group Training Manager. Joined Grenda's in 1975.





Depot Art Project

7-13 April 2008

Here at the old Grenda bus depot in Dandenong a group of seven artists are making work from something that isn't easy to describe. Ostensibly their subject is a series of buildings, a bus depot vacated just a week ago: bricks, grease, old lockers, asphalt and the veneer-clad boardroom. But space is as much their material as matter and, perhaps, time also.

For fifty years this site has been the home and hub of the family-run transport company—Grenda. They now operate out of a new bus depot across the railway line. Change unfolds in fits and starts. This area by the railway line will soon be a measure of blank metres, space and soil. These buildings will be razed and new lines and patterns of inhabitation will be marked out. The brushstrokes of the master-planner will meet the ground, remaking the city, sweeping lines indicating access, flow, aspect and a forward-looking approach to the future.

'Depot' has come about at the invitation of the Greater Dandenong City Council. Aware of an earlier project the artists had undertaken in a soon to be demolished beach house, they invited the group to work with the Grenda's depot site.

Depot. The word is quite self-contained, suggested a pool of resources, perhaps, or a base to return to. We can imagine multiple paths and sets of footprints leading out from the depot, arcs which then turn and track back 'home'. The routes of so many buses, on their regular journeys out into the community and back again to be lined up side-by-side overnight in their matching livery.

This was one kind of depot and now it is another entirely: a resource, a base and a place for art, for the work of James Carey, Campbell Drake, Susan Jacobs, Ben Morieson, Matt Morrow, Cameron Robbins and Robbie Rowlands. Artists often work in the gaps between purposes and institutions. There are freedoms and opportunities here, dangers as well.

Together and separately, each of the artists involved in the 'Depot' has carefully 'read' the site. We're aware that these buildings are fondly regarded, but this project is not an elegy, it is more about looking and seeing.

Whilst the depot, as a site, is a solid and prosaic entity destined for demolition, the 'Depot' as a project has offered this group of artists a series of discoveries set within the frame of their own artistic process. Likewise, the 'Depot' offers those of us who visit, wander and wonder opportunities to step through our own expectations and anticipations – to walk between the cracks of the everyday.

Geraldine Barlow





James Carey and Campbell Drake

10 Lines East West Trajectory
FORECOURT AND OFFICE

Carey and Drake have marked out a series of 10 stripes in safety yellow. Moving from the main site entry, this work gestures towards the new Grenda's bus depot across the railway line, as well as indicating the position of the bridge that will dissect the site once the depot has been demolished. The stripes run over brick, glass and aluminium. Sometimes they colour the surfaces they touch; at other times they seem to dissolve or dissect them. In the first floor offices, it is as if a wayward bus has cut a swathe through the partitions and desks.

Susan Jacobs

Peripheral Static (Space Re-drawing Itself)
GREASE BAY AND SPRAY BOOTH

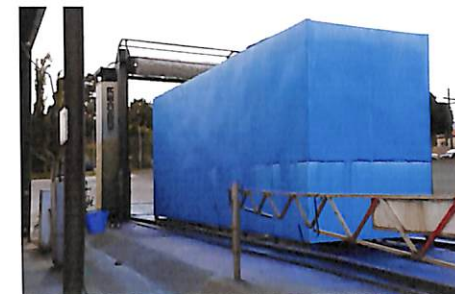
Jacob's work begins beneath the sign, "this area must be cleaned after use", an area of cleanliness spills from the open pipe, across the concrete and into the ground, churning rubble which is joined by other debris from the site metal spans, rags and tins which weave together and funnel through a vent in the blackened wall. This gathered debris turns and spins, as if in the spell of a strange cyclonic poltergeist, arcing across the space and twisting back upon itself.



Ben Morieson

White Wash
BUS WASH AND MECHANICS' PIT

Ben Morieson has constructed a white-cube replica of a bus. Determinedly squatting on the bus wash, his monolith is ready to be painted. For the opening of the Depot, Morieson will turn the bus wash into a massive painting machine, a dance in which the spinning rollers caress and transform the white cube at their centre.



Matt Morrow

Left
FIRST FLOOR OFFICE

Morrow uses discarded timber and veneer to make sculptural versions of the everyday objects of our familiar world. Lying on its back, 60's style fridge, with its rounded corners, icebox and missing door has the solemn aspect of an Egyptian sarcophagus. Looking closely, we can see the loose edges of the copy; they have the fluid quality of a sketch. This work does not conceal the process of its making.



Cameron Robbins

Binary Opposites IV

BOARD ROOM AND PARTS STORE

Robbins has created an artwork which cuts through the building quite literally. Approaching his massive device from the boardroom level, we enter a kind of witness-box apparatus, the old reception desk. On the roof wind vanes transfer the motion of the wind down through the skylights, along aluminium relays, through the large holes penetrating the floor and into the old mechanical parts store below where a white-board and marker translate the motion of the wind into a drawing.

Robbie Rowlands

The Upholsterer Will Fix It

UPHOLSTERY WORKSHOP

To make his sketch in space, Rowlands cuts into the floor and removes a section of floorboards from the joists. Artist-carpenter-sculptor, when he has finished the carpet has been pulled back like a banana-skin, a curl of carpet with its inner lining of floorboards is flicked back. From this near demolition site a fragment seems to spring and twang like a broken piano wire – releasing a long held tension.



Demolition May 2008







*This book is dedicated to
the people who have
allowed us to achieve 50
years as a business.*



*The Grenda families
for their effort and
understanding.*



*The many loyal
employees for their
support over 50 years.*

and



*Our business
associates for their
advice.*



*Thank you for helping
us create history.*

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Somali Isi Ruskij

- 1 Dandenong Station
- 2 Thomas Street
- 3 Dandenong Market
- 4 Dandenong Hospital
- 5 Dandenong Plaza
- 6 Dandenong Plaza (Mc Crae Street)
- 7 Walker Street



GREATER
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Wheely good times

By Jaimee Damon

A RIDE through memory lane can be enjoyed with the release of Grenda's commemorative booklet.

The booklet titled 'Moved by Grenda's' is to be launched Wednesday evening at Grenda's new Cheltenham Road building.

The booklet features stories and photos about the operation and demolition of the company's Foster Street depot.

City of Greater Dandenong's project co-ordinator Jenny Pemberton-Webb said the booklet was an account of the depot's rich history.

"It has been a privilege to

record and celebrate a local company that has helped so many through the service of public transport," Ms Pemberton-Webb said.

Grenda's staff were asked to share their stories about their time at the company and their roles as bus drivers, mechanics and even upholstery repairers.

Ms Pemberton-Webb said the staff's stories and other shared memories made for a fascinating collection of quotes and illustrated what work meant for a lot of people.

Writer David Crofts compiled the booklet which is accompanied by a collection of photographs captured by Hilton Stone.



Jenny Pemberton Webb, outside the new Grenda's site, is excited to launch the commemorative booklet. 32168

Picture: Meagan Rogers

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Journalist MIKE MORRIS worked in Dandenong for many years. A long-time user of public transport, he reminisces about Grenda's Bus Services after the release of a booklet about the firm.

Moving story of historic company

I WISH I'd been there with my former workmate, photographer Hilton Stone when he recorded the demolition of Grenda's Bus Services' depot and offices in Scott Street, Dandenong, in May last year.

I'd like to have been there with Ken Grenda, his sons Scott and Geoff, former general manager Kevin Norris and some of the veteran drivers, mechanics and staff whom I got to know very well over a decade working in Dandenong.

That depot and the marvellous Europa cheese factory next door were part of the history and soul of the area. Ken's dad George started his bus company at 9 Foster Street in 1945 when he sold his milk run and set up a galvanised iron shed for his six buses which were running four routes around Dandenong.

At the time of his death in 1961, George Grenda had built the company to 45 buses.

The company was taken over by sons Ken and Lance. The latter retired in 1993 and died in



Long journey: Moved By Grenda's is available from the City of Greater Dandenong.

2006. Under Ken Grenda's watch, the company grew to be one of the biggest bus operators in Australia.

Grenda's relocation to Cheltenham Road, on the other side of the railway line, is part of VicUrban's revitalisation of Dandenong project.

The idea of the move is to free up land for redevelopment (a tertiary education campus has been a rumour for many years) and to ease traffic congestion in

Foster Street-Railway Parade.

To mark the historic demolition and relocation of Grenda's, the City of Greater Dandenong's arts co-ordinator, Jenny Pemberton-Webb, commissioned Hilton Stone to document the site.

I was particularly pleased to see, captured in colour, my old bus driver friends, the popular Sam (doing a jig) and Joe (as ever, beaming broadly) who used to drive the 888-889 route when I was one of their passengers.

The council also commissioned artists Cameron Robbins and Robbie Rowlands to create artworks to capture the spirit and history of Grenda's depot, workshops and offices. This became a project called Depot.

Writer David Crofts carried out interviews with 11 employees.

This has been lovingly put together in a book, *Moved by Grenda's*, which was recently released and is available at the City of Greater Dandenong.



Melbourne's 2nd City

GREATER DANDENONG

Grenda Corporation Bus Depot 9 Foster Street, Dandenong

Photographic Documentation Brief

Context

Since it was first established in 1945 Grenda's has been the key bus service in Dandenong delivering people to and from the shops and market, ferrying local kids to and from school and connecting local residents with neighbouring suburbs. When it comes to transport in Dandenong Grenda's is an icon. In 1995 Grenda's celebrated 50 years of operation from their site in Foster Street Dandenong. With the rapid development of central Dandenong boosted by State Government funding Grenda's are moving to a new site south of the railway line. For this reason the site at Foster Street must be carefully documented to form an important part of the city's photographic collection, which it keeps for current and future generations.

Historic Overview of Grenda Corporation

In July 1945 George Grenda bought a bus business with 4 bus routes in the Dandenong area, land and a galvanised tin shed at 9 Foster Street Dandenong.

In 1961 after building a sound enterprise with more than 40 buses, George Grenda died. His son's Lance and Ken took the company over.

Later the company diversified and established the Volgren bus body repair business.

Lance retired in 1993. Chairman Ken has stepped down and daily operations have been handed to son Geoff with Scott managing director of bus operations.

Grenda's celebrated 50 years of business in 1995.

Volgren (subsidiary of Grenda Corporation) was inducted into the 2006 Victorian manufacturing Hall of Fame by State Minister of Manufacturing and Export Andre Haermeyer.

Further information available from 'Family Business Volume 2' by John Arbouw

Aims of this Brief

To ensure a complete visual record of the Grenda's Bus Depot prior to their relocation bought about by construction of the George Street Bridge. Photographs must capture both the physical and social history of the company at its present location by focusing on the physical aspects of the site and the activities of the people who work there.

High Priority Areas

Documentation of the buildings and physical layout of the Grenda's site from Foster Street and other vantage points such as George Street and the nearby Railway Station must be completed prior to any changes in daily routines and operations. A suggested timeline is yet to be determined however it is anticipated the documentation will need to be completed in early 2007. Day time (only) images are required.

Physical Documentation

Building and office facades including internal office images and building façade or frontages into Foster Street;

Site layout showing bus parking configurations, wash bays and areas where mechanical repairs or cleaning is carried out;

Photos of signage throughout the site both formal and informal (eg instructions to staff, wash bays, building façade signage, signage linked to operational procedures, samples of bus signage/advertising etc);

Photos from elevated sites such as the Dandenong Railway Station and the Walker Street car park rooftop;

Social Documentation

Staff including where possible management, office staff, drivers and mechanics including Grenda's uniforms;

Diversity of people working at the site;

Interaction of staff with each other;

Behind the scenes interaction such as the lunch room;

Peak times when drivers arrive to collect their busses and start their shifts and at the end of the day when timetables reduce and shifts change, including relevant daily routines that provide an insight into the company as a snap shot in time;

Clean up and maintenance activities or routines;

Final Format

Images are to be provided in an electronic format as high resolution tiffs and jpegs saved on CDROM and in a presentation folder with thumbnail sized proofs.

Ownership and Usage

The images taken will be registered for inclusion in the City of Greater Dandenong's Heritage and Cultural Collection where they will act as a historic record and be accessible to the general public. They will also be accessible to Council staff through its internal 'photo library' managed by the Marketing and Communications department. The images may be used in publications, exhibitions, presentations on the City of Greater Dandenong and on councils website.

Copies of the electronic images and this brief will also be provided to the Dandenong and District Historical Society and Grenda Corporation. It is anticipated that they will form an important historic record of Grenda's Bus Company and act as a visual diary of working life in Dandenong in 2006, for future generations.

Letter of Identification

The photographer will be provided with a letter on Council stationary identifying them as a professional photographer commissioned by Council to undertake photos for the purpose of historic documentation. This letter must be carried at all times by the photographer. In addition prior agreement for the photographer to undertake this work on behalf of Council will be arranged and agreed.

Council Contact Person

Jenny Pemberton-Webb, Team Leader Cultural Development
9239 5253 or email jpembe@cgd.vic.gov.au

Photographer

The photographer commissioned by the city to undertake this project is **Hilton Stone**.

Reference: 13/01/03/018-01
Enquiries: Jenny Pemberton-Webb 9239 5253



29 March, 2007

Mrs Carmen Powell
Dandenong Historical Society
P.O Box 8029
Dandenong Vic 3175

Dear Carmen,

GRENDAS BUS COMPANY

As per your conversation with Nadine last week, please find enclosed a CDROM of important photographs documenting the current workings of Grendas at the Foster Street site.

The photos elude to the operations of the company and provide a snap shot in time of working life at Grendas.

They capture the spirit of the employees and wonderful insights such as the patterns for upholstery repairs to the bus seats.

The photos were taken by Hilton Stone and are being provided to the Historical Society to form part of the collection.

Included is a copy of the brief for future reference.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on 9239 5253.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Pemberton-Webb', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jenny Pemberton-Webb
Place Manager
Revitalising Central Dandenong

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Equal Opportunity in Grenda depots

Grenda Transit Management reached a milestone in late 2008 when it employed its 100th female bus driver.

For a number of years, the organisation was determined to increase the number of female employees in the business. Initially, in spite of its best efforts, it had been largely unsuccessful and was left with a range of theories as to why women were not taking up driving roles in the industry.

During a discovery process with Mt Eliza Business College it was identified that a bus company in Tasmania had sought an exemption through the Equal Opportunity Commission to enable it to advertise directly to women. In the space of three years they achieved a significant shift in the male/female ratio and the results on the road were impressive.

Grenda was encouraged by the story and obtained a similar exemption from the provisions of the Equal Opportunity Act in late 2003. At this time Grenda employed forty-four ladies (ten in administration roles, two coordinators and thirty-two drivers – three of whom were full-time & twenty-nine casual drivers).

The Herald Sun and local Dandenong papers ran articles highlighting what Grenda was trying to achieve and six women applied for positions purely as a response to these articles. Since mid-2003, Grenda has assisted many ladies to commence their careers as bus drivers.

The campaign has been a resounding success. As of November, 2008, Grenda is pleased to announce that there are 111 ladies employed full-time with ninety-nine being full-time drivers. Of course this can't be the only measure we use to gauge the success of such a program.

Since the program's inception, Grenda has seen a range of "firsts" from the ladies that have been selected:

- The first female Manager of the Road Coordinators.
- The first female Depot Manager.
- The first "female" Employee of the Year.
- One of our "female" drivers is featured in the Bus Industry Confederation DVD program - "A Day in the Life of a Bus Driver".

Grenda's program has brought a significant number of enthusiastic, capable and committed employees into the organisation – the really exciting aspect is that very few, if any, would have made the journey without the program being implemented.



A small group of Grenda's female drivers in the canteen after the Employees of the Month (October) presentation to Andrea Fyatt. Left to right: Andrea Fyatt, Liz Daly, Amanda Guillemain, Julie Clark, Vera Chialastri.



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Any feedback?

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Taking You Places

Issue 9, December 2008



Presentation of the cheques at Padua College. Left to right: Mrs Saville, Charlotte Saville, Scott Grenda, Tarryn McGaw, Mr and Mrs McGaw and John Rook.

Grenda in the community

Over sixty-three years in business, Grenda has always had a close relationship with the local communities in which its depots are based. Wherever possible, the Grenda organisation likes to give something back to the individuals, groups and communities that have supported us.

In order to formalise the Corporation's extensive community support program, Grenda Foundation was established by the Board of Directors and the Grenda family.

Throughout 2008, Grenda Foundation has continued its support of a number of organisations and individuals in need of assistance.

Some groups or individuals that Grenda has supported during the past year have included The Choir of Hard Knocks, ERMHA (Eastern Region Mental Health Association), The KOALA Foundation (supporting kids with cancer) and The Million Dollar Lunch. Grenda is also proud to have supported participants in the Homeless World Cup (see story inside newsletter). The assistance provided has generally been either through donation of money or coach transport services – which have been either complimentary or provided at greatly reduced rates.

Grenda was also delighted to be involved in assisting two Year 12 Padua College students to make it to the Beijing Paralympics in September. Charlotte Saville competed in the javelin and the 200m open running and Tarryn McGaw swam the 50m, 100m, 400m freestyle, the 200m individual medley and 100m backstroke.



Tarryn McGaw in Beijing



Charlotte Saville and 'Aussie' mascot

Scott Grenda, Managing Director of Grenda Corporation, together with John Rook, the girls' bus driver, attended the school assembly and presented the girls with \$1,500 each towards their expenses while competing in Beijing.

Padua College Principal, Mr Christopher Houlihan said, "All at the College have been extremely proud of the girls' achievements over the years and the generosity of Grenda's is a wonderful assistance to Tarryn, Charlotte and their families in realising this sporting dream. I'd particularly like to thank Scott Grenda and his family company for their ongoing support."

Planning Minister launches the new Grenda Head Office and Depot facility

On Friday, 17 October, the state-of-the-art Grenda Corporation facility was launched by the Minister for Planning, the Hon. Justin Madden MLC.

Also among those attending launch were - Cr John Kelly - City of Greater Dandenong, Pru Sanderson - CEO of VicUrban, John Bennie - CEO of City of Greater Dandenong and Grenda Management staff.

Minister Madden remarked how impressed he was by the new headquarters. "Grenda buses to Greater Dandenong are what trams are to Melbourne. The family business and its fleet of buses are symbolic to the area's history and identity and the new facility will ensure their continued service and growth."

The event also marked the launch of the \$8M realignment and environmental upgrade of Cheltenham Road including more trees and water sensitive urban design to catch and re-use water. "The new Grenda Corporation and the upgrade of Cheltenham Road not only help pave the way for development in Dandenong to flourish but both are iconic to Dandenong's history and now its future," Minister Madden commented.

Following the launch, all invitees took a tour of the facility which encompassed offices, the bus operations division, driver training facility, driver lunch and recreational rooms, the workshop/maintenance areas, wash bays, re-fueling station and the bus yard.

A Grenda family and staff launch of the new facility will be held in early 2009.



Minister for Planning - the Hon. Justin Madden MLC, Grenda's bus driver - Sami Paulk and Grenda Corporation CEO - Geoff Grenda.



Grenda Corporation Director - Ken Grenda, City of Greater Dandenong - Cr John Kelly, Minister for Planning - the Hon. Justin Madden MLC, Grenda Corporation CEO - Geoff Grenda, Grenda Corporation Managing Director - Scott Grenda and CEO of VicUrban - Pru Sanderson.
Photo credit: Bernie Phelan/VicUrban.

Nightrider bus services

Grenda Transit Management had the opportunity to tender for Nightrider services during June, 2008. We had been successful in the past in securing the service from Melbourne CBD to Mornington with a connecting service to the remainder of the Peninsula and we are pleased to be operating along this route once again.

In addition to this service it was also decided that we would submit pricing for the Melbourne to Dandenong service, as well as a new loop service between Dandenong and Cranbourne.

We have been successful in all three tenders with the service commencing on the 1st November, 2008. This new tender will be in Grenda's hands for the next five years and will allow greater accessibility and transportation options for passengers travelling from the CBD to the South-Eastern suburbs and to the Mornington Peninsula.



Grenda's coach captain, John Thomas, welcoming passengers aboard.



The 1970 Bedford VAM 70 with a COMAIR body that transported the group. It is a typical example of the school and charter buses operated by Grenda's in the early 1970s.



Grenda's buses delivering players and officials to the Homeless World Cup parade in Melbourne.



Grenda supports Homeless World Cup

The Homeless World Cup is a world-class, annual, international football tournament that uses football as a catalyst to help people who are homeless to change their lives and to change the attitudes of governments, media, public and key influencers to create better solutions to homelessness around the world.

From December 1-7, 2008, The Big Issue Australia proudly hosted the sixth Homeless World Cup in Melbourne with events at Federation Square and Birrarung Marr. Fifty-six nations were united for the biggest Homeless World Cup ever, including the first Women's Cup. Around 500 players from all across the world descended on Melbourne and Grenda Transit Management was delighted to provide transport assistance for players which included airport transfers and transport to and from their accommodation at the University of Melbourne residential colleges.

Grenda also transported all participants to the opening parade through the Melbourne CBD on 1 December. Fifteen buses were required to transfer the group and all went very smoothly.

Congratulations to all the participants, the organisers and volunteers of such an exciting and, for many, life-changing event.

Grenda Heritage bus relives history at the Enterprise Migrant Hostel Exhibition

On Sunday, 23 November, 2008, the Enterprise Migrant Hostel Exhibition was launched at the Immigration Museum.

In 1969 the Federal Government decided to provide improved accommodation and settlement services for newly arrived migrants and refugees. The Enterprise Migrant Hostel, which could house up to 1000 people at any one time, was built at Springvale as part of this plan. For over twenty years Enterprise was the first home of thousands of new settlers. Their story is to be told through the exhibition.

Grenda's Bus Services and The Enterprize Ship Trust were pleased to support the exhibition by providing a unique launch activity which was organised by the community group that completed the research for the exhibition.

The Enterprise Migrant Hostel was named after the schooner, Enterprize, which brought the first European settlers to Melbourne. At 10.00am on the launch day, a replica ship sailed up the bay as a representation of those early settlers.

Most Enterprise residents travelled to the Enterprise Hostel by bus, so the ship was met at the Docklands by a 1970s Grenda's bus and the former residents were driven to the Museum as part of the re-enactment of their stories.

The exhibition will be open to the public from Monday, 24 November, and will remain open until 23 March, 2009.

For information about the development of the exhibition content and the ship and bus activity contact:
Merle Mitchell, Convenor, Enterprise History Project: merleric@netspace.net.au

Scott Grenda appointed Chairman of the BIC

In October, 2008, Grenda Corporation Managing Director, Scott Grenda, was elected to the position of Chairman for the Bus Industry Confederation (BIC). The BIC is the National Industry body for the bus industry representing operators and suppliers. In his role, Scott is visiting State and Federal Politicians throughout the country extolling the benefits the bus industry brings to this country, whilst at the same time trying to coordinate a range of parties on issues that directly affect the industry to a fair and reasonable outcome. 'From a personal perspective it was an honour to be entrusted with this position, as the bus industry has pretty much been my life since birth, and to be in a position where I can make a significant impact on its future is one I look forward to,' Scott enthuses.

The role is a busy and exciting one for Scott. In March, 2009, the BIC launched the successful 'A Day in the Life' DVD. The original motivation for the DVD was to encourage people to work in the bus industry. 'In the past few years it has been impossible to find people – like every industry – so we have been bringing people from South Africa and Thailand, mainly mechanics, but even drivers have been hard to find. But, by the time we were ready to launch the DVD, Australia had changed, the world had changed. Now we have reasonable employment. A lot of industries are dying. But the bus industry is one that will grow by five percent per annum for the next five years and that will generate 10,000 new jobs for the industry. This industry employs 40,000 people, so if you grow by 25 percent, that's 10,000 jobs. People may say that is a big stretch, but our company alone in the past two years has employed 23 percent more drivers. In the next 12 months we expect to employ another 120 drivers,' says Scott.



Photo: Charlie Simons/Scania Experience

Invicta trials flashing give ways signs

Dynamic flashing give way signs are used in the USA to help buses enter traffic more efficiently and quickly. This program at Invicta grew from a working committee of the Bus Association Victoria which explored initiatives to help 'Buses entering Traffic'.

The Committee Report made many recommendations including installing dynamic signs. Pam Usher, former Invicta director and strong advocate for the signs, offered a couple of buses for trial purposes. Vic Roads then took on the design and implementation task. At present we are getting feedback as to how effective the signs are and hope to see them used more widely in the future.



Volgren appoints Sales and Marketing Manager

Tony Kerr has been appointed as General Manager of Sales and Marketing at Volgren Australia.



'This is an exciting role with the leader in the industry,' said Kerr, who has extensive experience in the transport industry. 'Volgren has embarked on a phase of rapid expansion and there are many exciting things happening. It is great to be part of an organisation with such commitment to its people and to innovation in the industry.'

Kerr, who is MBA qualified, has worked in a number of national roles for organisations such as Skilled Group, Scania, CitiPower and TNT. 'I am very passionate about sales and marketing,' said Kerr. 'I am also a family-oriented person, so this presented a great opportunity to work for a highly respected family-owned company that values its customers and employees.'

GRENDA



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Invicta

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GRENDA



Grenda acquires Invicta Bus Lines

INVICTA



On the 4th of February, 2009, Grenda Corporation entered into an agreement to buy the shares of Transit development P/L, the company that owns Croydon Bus Service and the trading name, Invicta employs approximately 150 people and has 102 buses which cover almost 6 million kilometres per annum. Their main depot is located in Lilydale and they have a new, as yet unused, depot in Scoresby. Over time Invicta will be integrated into the company under the Grenda Transit Management (GTM) banner. Re-branding of some of the Invicta buses has already commenced. Its addition will see Grenda's Victorian fleet size grow to almost 600 buses and GTM employees to just over 1000. Grenda officially took over the Invicta operation on 27th February under the management of Bryan Tudor. The keys to the Invicta business were presented to Bryan Tudor and Peter Ayres, General Manager of Grenda Transit by outgoing directors, Pam Usher, Frank Mercer and Kumar Vasanthakumar. This is a very exciting development for Grenda and the company has welcomed its new employees and looks forward to a mutually beneficial future working together.



Above image: Peter Ayres, Bryan Tudor and Pam Usher receiving the symbolic key to Invicta from Frank Mercer and Kumar Vasanthakumar, after the signing of the contract. Below image: Kumar Vasanthakumar, after the signing of the contract.

Taking You Places

Issue 10, June 2009

Work begins on new Volgren factories

Newcastle factory

On Monday, 2 March, 2009, construction commenced on a factory in Newcastle that will create more than 250 local jobs. NSW Transport Minister David Campbell conducted a 'ground-breaking ceremony'.

The factory is being built by Australia's biggest bus-builder, Volgren Australia, after the NSW Government awarded Volgren the contract to build 150 articulated buses for the State Transit Authority.

The company had already begun the process of hiring local staff, said Volgren's Managing Director, Peter Dale. 'This is an exciting opportunity for Newcastle and will add more than 250 jobs to the local economy,' he said.

'This world-class facility at the Hunter Industrial Plant in Tomago will be complete and operational by October, 2009, when we will be able to move quickly into full production.'

'In the meantime, we will have an interim facility up and running, and we will produce our first Newcastle-built bus by May.'

Volgren has bus-building plants in Melbourne and Perth and is about to build a large new facility in Brisbane. 'The demand for public transport has jumped sharply in recent years and buses are an excellent part of the solution,' Mr Dale said.

'A new bus route can be introduced instantly, without the significant capital cost and long lead-times that come when you expand rail networks. And the demand for buses is going to increase because they present an excellent solution to public transport shortages.'

'Experience shows that if you create a good bus system and the buses come often enough, people are prepared to get on board.'

The 56-seater articulated buses, which can take 84 passengers including those standing, will be built on a Volvo chassis. The body is built using a unique aluminium system, which makes the buses stronger, lighter and more energy efficient than traditional steel buses.

Volgren Australia is Australia's largest and most respected bus body-building company. It is a family owned company and it produces more than 450 buses each year.



Volgren Planning and Projects Manager, Robert Withall (centre) with Newcastle staff: front row left to right: Colin Woodbridge, Jason Gradwell; middle row: Aaron Parkes, Josh Barrett, Steve Griffiths, Mick Locke.



Volgren Managing Director, Peter Dale, NSW Transport Minister, The Hon. David Campbell MP and Grenda Corporation CEO, Geoff Grenda.

Grenda assists victims of the Victorian Bushfires

With the fires now out, many of the people from areas devastated by the Victorian bushfires are now returning to their towns, faced with the task of slowly rebuilding their lives.

It is over the coming months, as winter sets in, that the funds raised from generous people around the world will be of the greatest assistance in this task.

As a group, we contributed approximately \$85,000.00 directly to the Red Cross bushfire Relief Appeal; \$50,000.00 through the Grenda Foundation; \$25,000.00 through ATE and around \$10,000.00 through staff contributions collected at our various depots.



As well as the direct contributions, we performed Charter work in moving firefighters and other volunteers around the fire fronts.

We also donated vehicles to many local sporting groups to use in their fund-raising efforts.

Brisbane factory

Construction has begun on a state-of-the-art bus-building facility that will deliver hundreds of buses onto Brisbane's streets.

The factory is being built by Volgren Australia, in partnership with the Brisbane City Council.

'This facility will be the most modern bus manufacturing plant in Australia,' said Volgren Australia's Managing Director, Peter Dale. 'It will produce hundreds of state-of-the-art buses for the people of Brisbane.'

Brisbane Lord Mayor, Campbell Newman said the \$19 million bus-building facility at Eagle Farm would help deliver on his pledge of 500 new buses this Council term.

The 2.65ha site at TradeCoast Central, Eagle Farm, would build 150 buses a year for Brisbane City Council and other bus operators. 'At its peak of operation this facility will be able to produce at least three new buses per week,' Cr Newman said.

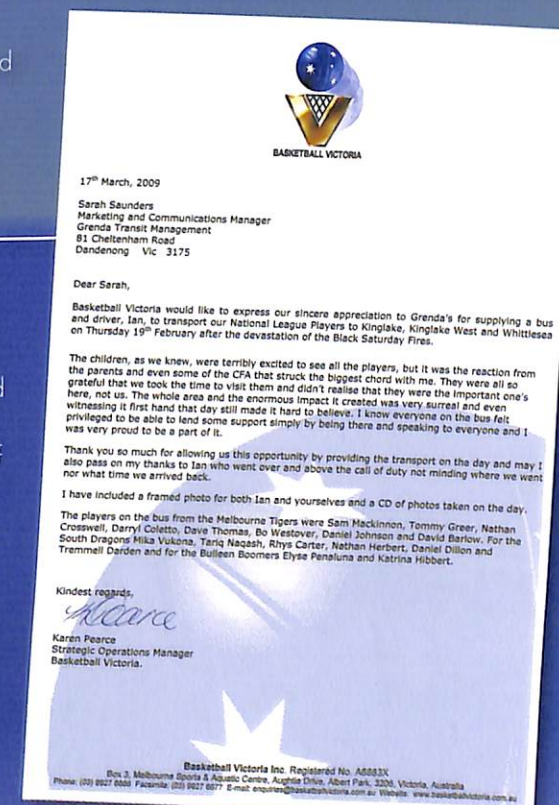
Council bus patronage has grown 40 percent in four years. Brisbane buses carry about 71 million passengers a year, about 10 million more than the southeast Queensland rail network.

Cr Newman said the new facility would enable council to halt bus-building at its factory in inner-west Toowong later this year. Work on the first bus would begin in December as per a 10-year agreement between Council and Volgren that was signed late last year. Council's commitment to the facility is \$6.7 million in land.

'This new facility is close to the port and easily accessible from the Gateway Motorway, which makes it a much better position for bus-building than suburban Toowong,' he said.

Mr Dale said the Brisbane factory was Volgren's fourth, complementing bus-building facilities in Melbourne, Perth and Newcastle (under construction).

'We have been building buses in partnership with the Brisbane Council for eight years and this new facility marks the next stage of a truly successful partnership,' Peter Dale said.



Basketball Victoria approached Grenda Transit for assistance to donate a coach to transport National League players to provide some relief to children in the fire affected areas of Kinglake and Whittlesea. We were delighted to be able to assist with this request and the letter and photo from Karen Pearce, Strategic Operations Manager of Basketball Victoria, reflects the positive impact the visit had on the community.

In addition, many Grenda employees donated their time either as CFA volunteers or assisting with the relief by driving buses. We thank all of those staff for their generous contributions.

It is often the periods of great adversity that truly test the character of a nation and its people. The generosity of the Australian people shown over the last few months should make us all very proud. As our daily news broadcasters reflect on shootings and other violence, we should remember that the true spirit of Australia is still one of mateship and giving.

Many thanks,
The Directors and Grenda Family

Photo Captions:
Basketball Victoria representatives and Melbourne Tigers and South Dragons players in Kinglake, with Grenda's Bus Services driver, Ian Beveridge. Photo courtesy Basketball Victoria and photographer, Melissa Sudiro.

Grenda Transit on-road coordinator and CFA volunteer, Mark Keely, assisting in Kinglake with David Kosh, of Channel 7's, Sunrise.

Depot

James Carey
Campbell Drake
Susan Jacobs
Ben Morieson
Matt Morrow
Cameron Robbins
Robbie Rowlands



APRIL
2008
ARTWORKS
OF
BUS
DEPOT

An exhibition of site-specific artworks
at the Grenda's decommissioned
bus depot.

6 - 13 April 2008

**Grenda's Bus Depot
9 Foster St Dandenong
Victoria, Australia**

**Writer - Geraldine Barlow
Photography - Hilton Stone**

© City of Greater Dandenong
www.greaterdandenong.com
Contact Jenny Pemberton-Webb (03) 9239 5100

depot-installation.blogspot.com

Depot

Installations by 7 artists at the
decommissioned Grenda's bus depot.

James Carey

Campbell Drake

Susan Jacobs

Ben Morieson

Matt Morrow

Cameron Robbins

Robbie Rowlands

FORWARD

When it was announced that Grenda's would relocate from its historic home of 62 years to a new location as part of the Revitalisation of Central Dandenong, a unique project was born.

It started with a simple gesture of council commissioning Hilton Stone Photography to officially document the site prior to demolition to add this record of a local, iconic business to council's cultural collection.

Hilton Stone took over 100 images and in doing so revealed a workplace of colourful characters against a backdrop of workshops and offices seemingly frozen in time. The photos depicted a space rich in history; layered in meaning; full of memories; a place where local people worked long and hard.

It was also a space that was immensely inspiring. At every turn there were materials to work with, themes to explore, and spaces to interpret.

Artists Cameron Robbins and Robbie Rowlands were introduced to the idea of the depot being used for a site specific art installation before being demolished. Having just completed a similar project at a beach house in Merricks, Victoria, Cameron and Robbie were very enthusiastic. They then hand-picked a team comprising seven artists, each experienced in creating site specific artworks.

Depot is about seeing value in everyday working spaces and the items left behind; their ability to be arranged, transformed and built upon, into spaces and objects of reflection, inspiration and final contemplation.

Throughout the exhibition vacant spaces provide a vital curatorial component of the Depot experience offering the necessary 'pauses' between each installation. In this environment the feeling of abandonment and eminent demolition dominate the senses.

Making the space to acknowledge change, highlight successful workplaces, record local history and mark an important step in central Dandenong's progress, is of vital importance in this city's revitalisation.

With a contemporary take on a site of historical importance, Depot offers a walk through experience that encourages the community to be part of history - to explore, reminisce, contemplate and farewell the site prior to it being razed.

Jenny Pemberton-Webb, Place Manager
Revitalising Central Dandenong



INTRODUCTION

On our first visit to the depot it was live. Now, still, the lights are on and warm air circulates through the building - even as James and Campbell dismantle the window frames to the north.

Here at the old Grendas bus depot in Dandenong a group of seven artists are making work from something that isn't easy to describe. Ostensibly their subject is a series of buildings, a bus depot vacated just a week ago: bricks, grease, old lockers, asphalt and the veneer clad boardroom. But space is as much their material as matter, and perhaps time also.

For fifty years this site has been the home and hub of the family-run transport company Grendas, on my first visit with the group, one of the workers told me he had been here for twenty years, they're a good company, they look after you. Are you excited about the move? I asked. Ah yes, it won't be the same, it'll be something else.

Grendas now operate out of a new bus depot across the railway line. I understand many of the drivers still stop out the front here on their layover, before continuing on to the station. Change unfolds in fits and starts. This area by the railway line will soon be a measure of blank metres, space and soil, these buildings will be razed and new lines and patterns of inhabitation will be marked out. The brushstrokes of the master-planner will meet the ground, remaking the city, sweeping lines indicating access, flow, aspect and a forward-looking approach to the future.

Depot has come about at the invitation of Jenny Pemberton-Webb and Grissel Walmaggia both working in the Cultural Development unit at the Greater Dandenong City Council. Aware of an earlier project the artists had undertaken in a soon to be demolished beach house, they invited the group to work with the Grendas depot site. Scheduled to be vacated at the time the project was instigated, the depot is now, as I write, and the site of a number of unfolding artistic processes.

Depot. The word is quite self-contained, suggested a pool of resources, perhaps, or a base to return to. We can imagine multiple paths and sets of footprints leading out from the depot, arcs which then turn and track back "home". The routes of so many buses, on their regular journeys out into the community and back again to be lined up side-by-side overnight in their

matching livery. Regularly the buses were moved through the bus-wash over the road and checked out in the mechanical workshops. Damaged buses were repaired and resprayed. The white spray booth with its banks of fluorescent lights and massive extractor fans is an amazing space, sitting as it does immediately alongside the black-grease-licked corner yard with its array of jet grimed cans and tins.

This was one kind of depot and now it is another entirely: a resource, a base and a place for art, for the work of James Carey, Campbell Drake, Susan Jacobs, Ben Morieson, Matt Morrow, Cameron Robbins and Robbie Rowlands. And so this project unfolds under the banner and "protection" of the word Depot with the close support of Jenny Pemberton-Webb and overarching welcome of the City of Greater Dandenong. Artists often work in the gaps between purposes and institutions. There are freedoms and opportunities here, dangers as well. Council have facilitated the artists' work as well as access to documentation such as the site contamination report and processes in relation to job safety analysis and general workplace safety. Not irrelevant concerns when you have James Carey & Campbell Drake preparing to cut a series of ten lines through the building.

Carey and Drake inhabit the world of design as well as being artists, but they were friends first. For the Depot, "Safety comes first", they tell me and smile as they paint. They have marked out a series of 10 stripes, each 55 cm wide in "safety yellow". Moving from the main site entry this work, *10 Lines, East West Trajectory 2008* gestures towards the new Grendas bus depot across the railway line, as well as indicating the position of the bridge that will dissect the site once the depot has been demolished.

The diffuse edges of these early lines are not nearly as solid as the older yellow lines on the asphalt, which mark out pedestrian access paths from the gates to various entry points. Nor as solid as the bold yellow stripes that Carey and Drake are painting vertically up the building, over brick, glass and aluminium. The building is being dressed and "cut" by the yellow stripes, sometimes they run over surfaces at other times they seem to dissolve or dissect them, in the first floor offices it is as if a wayward bus has cut a swathe through the partitions and desks.

In urban planning and architecture there is much drawing upon notional landscapes here, lines are drawn and painted directly onto, and into, the landscape. There is a fascinating feedback loop between the artist's interests, working-history, plans and approach on the one hand and the site itself on the other. It seems to me that Carey and Drake are not so interested in inscribing their views, or one reading, upon the work, but in allowing for multiplicities. A rich and ambiguous complication of meaning is set in specific tension, and relation, to an apparently simple gesture.

Together and separately each of the artists involved in the Depot have carefully "read" the site. We've visited the site whilst it was in use and spoke with those who worked here, sometimes over the course of their entire careers. We're aware that these buildings are fondly regarded, but this project is not an elegy, it is more about looking and seeing.

Working with the depot allows this group of artists to work with material that already carries multiple layers of meaning. It may be made of bricks and concrete, old benches and broken office chairs, empty tins and grease, but in its concrete actuality and straightforwardness offers artists much to work with.

Susan Jacobs is working in the adjacent areas of the old bus re-spraying booth, a glowing tunnel of white in this otherwise grimly grey landscape, and a kind of grease bay beyond the end of the building. Her work *Peripheral Static (Space Re-drawing Itself) 2008* began to find its form through her appreciation of the irony of a sign in the black zone, - "This area must be cleaned after use". As we are often warned, bad habits can begin with just a tiny crack in the skin of proper process.

Jacobs' transformation and transmutation of these spaces begins beneath this sign, from a small drain in the blackened retaining wall, which she begins by cleaning. Layers of carbonised goo are scrubbed and brushed away, the clean-zone appears to spill and spread from this open pipe, across the concrete and into the ground. The concrete surface first becomes clean and then is broken into, the cleanliness seems to shatter and fragment the surface.

A further transformation then occurs, these fragments of rubble are joined by other debris from the site, metal spans, rags and tins twist together and are funnelled through a vent in the blackened wall, then emerged into the white zone of the spray booth. This gathered debris twists as if in the spell of a strange cyclonic poltergeist, arcing across and through the space and twisting back upon itself.

Jacobs' talks of moving through something as she considers how the work will develop in relation to the space. She moves through one idea to another, through one space to another. Working only with materials from the depot: with cleaning products, a jackhammer and debris, Jacobs draws us from the underground to the celestial.

Likewise, Robbie Rowlands is committed to working through, and with, what he finds on the Depot site. At the far north end of the complex he takes the old "house" where the Grendas upholsters once worked as a found object, which he can cut and mould to a new design.

When we first visited this place there was a room of the long old bus seats, covered in red vinyl from the back of long defunct buses. There were sets of patterns hanging from the walls as well as a special angled rack for reading the newspaper, which intrigued us. I was pleased to see the plaque in the kitchen embossed "El Toro" was still there, even after the grand, and tough, old singer machine was removed.

Rowlands began to cut the pattern of his project *The Upholsterer Will Fix It 2008* even as he cleared the space, to better see what was there. After deciding that he wouldn't use the rough shelves in one of the front rooms he began to rip them out. He tells me he suddenly stood back and realised that the composition he wanted to work with was there, before him, a lower conglomeration of debris crowned by a series of strong diagonal members thrusting out into the room. Like a preliminary sketch for the work, this was enough for a first step, a "sketch in space" from which the decision was then made to cut into the floor and remove the floorboards from the joists. Artist-carpenter-sculptor, when Rowlands has finished it is as if the carpet has been pulled back like a banana-skin, a curl of carpet with it's inner lining of floorboards is flicked back, reshaping our sense of the solidity of the surfaces

around us. From this near demolition site a fragment seems to spring and twang like a broken piano wire - releasing a long held tension, speaking with it's own voice or logic.

What do the voices, or echoes of the spaces and materials around us have to say? Matthew Morrow takes the skin, and bones, and form of his work from that which we discard. Upstairs, in the vacated offices of the Grendas bus depot Morrow's sculptures blend into their environment almost too well. Filing cabinets, an old fridge and a vacuum cleaner, we might almost pass them by. Yet the formality of their arrangement slows us down, suggesting a deliberate, perhaps ritual, connection; these objects are just beyond the "beyond" of their decrepitude, they have become something else.

This pair of four draw filing cabinets are 1:1 scale replicas, crafted from sheets of second hand and salvaged veneer. The texture of one found fragment timber is contrasted with another, within the reproduction of the real a material abstraction is played out.

Lying on it's back; the 60's style fridge with its rounded corners, icebox and missing door has the solemn aspect of an Egyptian sarcophagus. Looking closely we can see the loose edges of the simulacra, they have the quality of a sketch. Given the declarative and material solidity of the work, it is as if we are able to see the traces of the pencil lines of the preparatory sketch at the same time as viewing the finished painting. This work does not conceal the process of its making.

The curves of the thin veneer on parts of the fridge and vacuum cleaner are remarkably expressive, they remind me of the material character of a doll sewn from left over fragments of fabric and seem to animate what might otherwise be a cool and formal study of the everyday. It is as if these were soft-sculptures, about to inhale and exhale, lightly touched by the uncanny.

Looking across the empty bus yards and parking bays from the main offices and workshops of the depot is Ben Morieson's "office", it is only about a metre wide and two metres long, but it has a very large shed attached, as well as the bus wash.

Here, Morieson has been responsible for a major public manifestation of the uncanny. In clear view of the many passing, and possibly bemused train commuters, he has constructed a white-cube replica of a bus. Determinedly squatting on the g-spot of the bus wash his monolith is now ready to be painted.

In advance of this spectacular and ceremonial event, I have been privy only to the first caress of the cube by the rollers, but this, in itself, was an exciting event to behold. Late in the afternoon, and only hours after Kevin Kent and Jack Lowe had finished painting the "bus" Morieson pressed the button, which set the rollers in motion.

With a hum and whirr the once static and forlorn lengths of synthetic "swoosh" came to life, the dance began. On either side of the cube they spin their first steps and then move formally to the north-facing head of the bush-wash. The rollers touch each other gently and playfully at the centre-front of the bus-cube moving across the front windscreen, as it were, and then playing with the corners, moving to and fro upon them as if not wanting to continue further. After this apparent hesitation the rollers proceed along the sides of the bus and mirror their teasing steps at its rear before the mechanism slowly returns to rest.

The works of Cameron Robbins are rarely at rest, he prefers to harness the energy of prevailing elements such as the wind and waves as well as the forces of gravity and magnetism. For the Depot Robbins has taken to the boardroom, creating *Binary Opposites IV 2008*, a multi-storey, multi-dimensional artwork which cuts through the building quite literally.

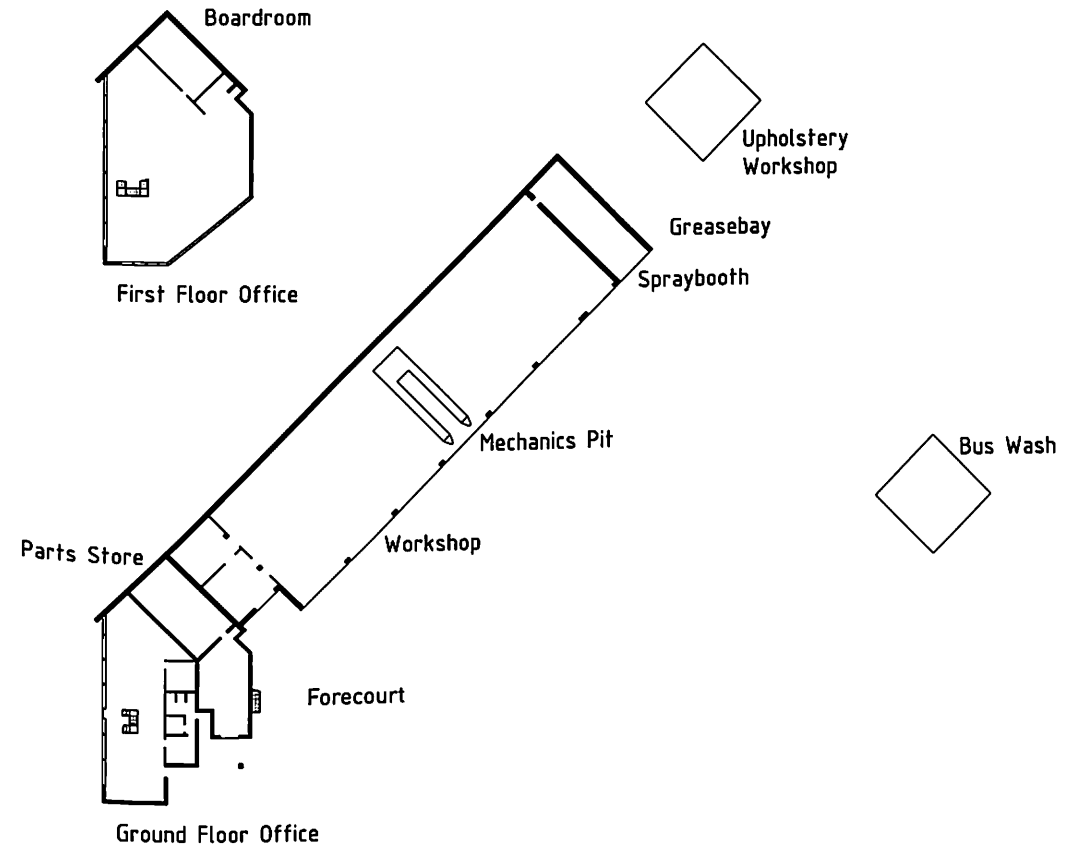
Like a Kafka-esque instrument of metaphor, Robbins "device" requires study and exploration to apprehend. When approaching the work from the boardroom level, we enter a kind of witness-box apparatus - the old reception desk has been reconfigured as a barrier to keep visitors slightly apart. On the roof of the depot wind vanes catch and transfer the motion of the wind down through the boardroom skylights, along aluminium relays and into large holes penetrating the floor into the old mechanical parts store below. The energy of the wind is relayed into an agitated and mobilised whiteboard as well as a lightly dancing white-board marker.

SITE MAP

This is perhaps one of the most epic and ambitious of Robbins' drawing machines. Like Morieson, he involves himself with imagining, designing and then creating the conditions through which the artwork will then be made. He sets himself at one remove from the immediate making of the work, like a divine driver, he is always somewhere behind, or within, the controls of the machine he has created. Yet, the works of both Morieson and Robbins playfully emphasise the role of chance, the limitations of design and the importance of rolling with the punches as the process unfolds.

Whilst the depot, as a site, is a solid and prosaic entity destined for demolition, the Depot as a project has offered this group of artists a series of discoveries set within the frame of their own artistic process. Likewise the Depot offers those of us who visit, wander and wonder opportunities to step through our own expectations and anticipations - to walk between the cracks of the everyday.

Geraldne Barlow



ARTISTS'

1 James Carey & Campbell Drake

10 Lines East West Trajectory

FORECOURT AND OFFICE

Carey and Drake have marked out a series of 10 stripes in safety yellow. Moving from the main site entry this work gestures towards the new Grendas bus depot across the railway line, as well as indicating the position of the bridge that will dissect the site once the depot has been demolished. The stripes run over brick, glass and aluminium, sometimes they colour the surfaces they touch, at other times they seem to dissolve or dissect them. In the first floor offices, it is as if a wayward bus has cut a swathe through the partitions and desks.

2 Susan Jacobs

Peripheral Static (Space Re-drawing Itself)

GREASE BAY AND SPRAY BOOTH

Jacobs work begins beneath the sign, "this area must be cleaned after use", an area of cleanliness spills from the open pipe, across the concrete and into the ground, churning rubble which is joined by other debris from the site metal spans, rags and tins which weave together and funnel through a vent in the blackened wall. This gathered debris turns and spins, as if in the spell of a strange cyclonic poltergeist, arcing across the space and twisting back upon itself.

3 Ben Morieson

White Wash

BUS WASH AND MECHANIC'S PIT

Ben Morieson has constructed a white-cube replica of a bus, determinedly squatting on the bus wash his monolith is ready to be painted. For the opening of the Depot Morieson will turn the bus wash into a massive painting machine, a dance in which the spinning rollers caress and transform the white cube at their centre.

4 Matt Morrow

Left

FIRST FLOOR OFFICE

Morrow uses discarded timber and veneer to make sculptural versions of the everyday objects of our familiar world. Lying on its' back; the 60's style fridge, with its rounded corners, icebox and missing door has the solemn aspect of an Egyptian sarcophagus. Looking closely we can see the loose edges of the copy - they have the fluid quality of a sketch. This work does not conceal the process of its making.

5 Cameron Robbins

Binary Opposites IV

BOARD ROOM AND PARTS STORE

Robbins has created an artwork which cuts through the building quite literally. Approaching his massive device from the boardroom level, we enter a kind of witness-box apparatus, the old reception desk. On the roof wind vanes transfer the motion of the wind down through the skylights, along aluminium relays, through the large holes penetrating the floor and into the old mechanical parts store below where a whiteboard and marker translate the motion of the wind into a drawing.

6 Robbie Rowlands

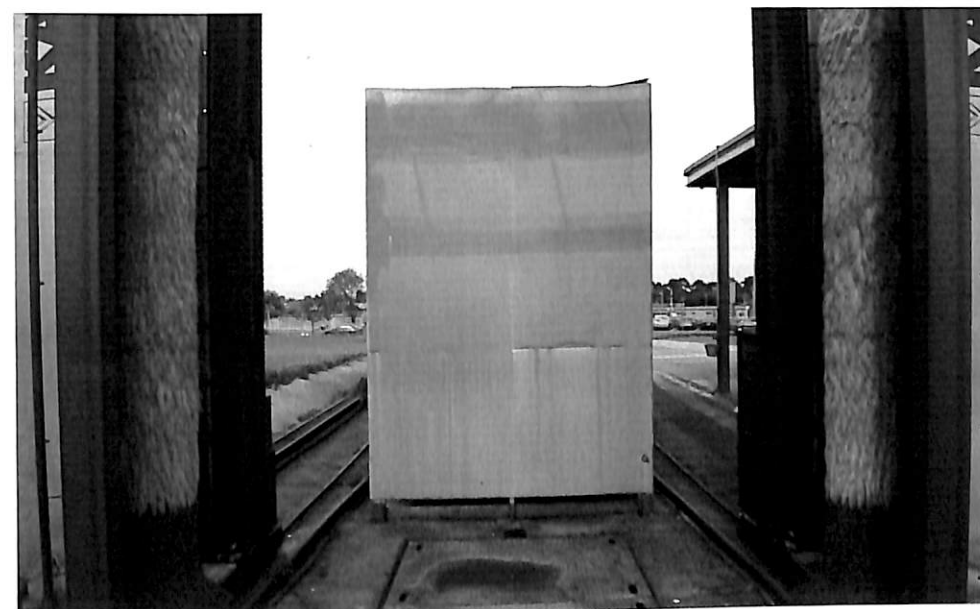
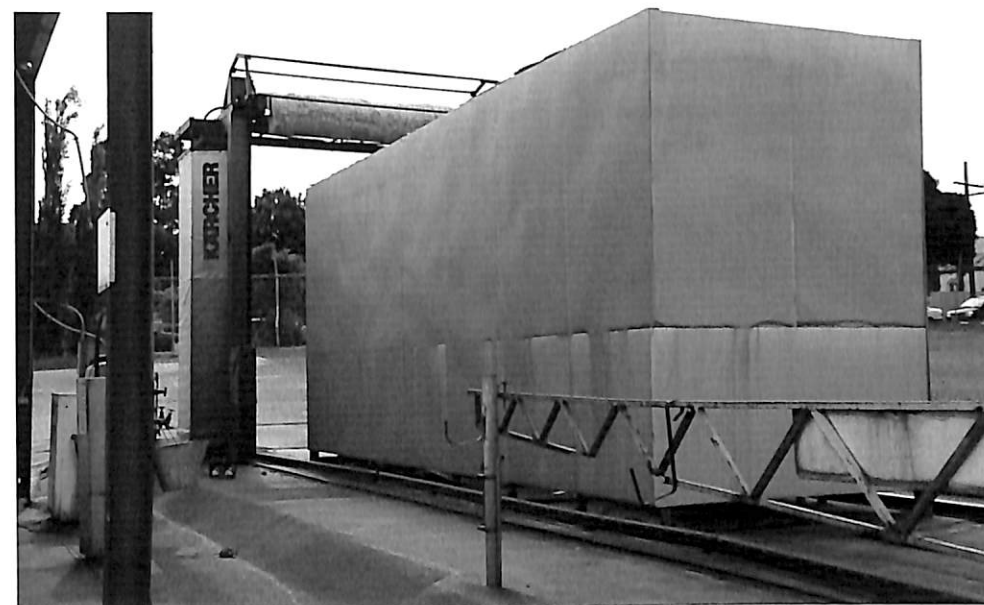
The Upholsterer Will Fix It

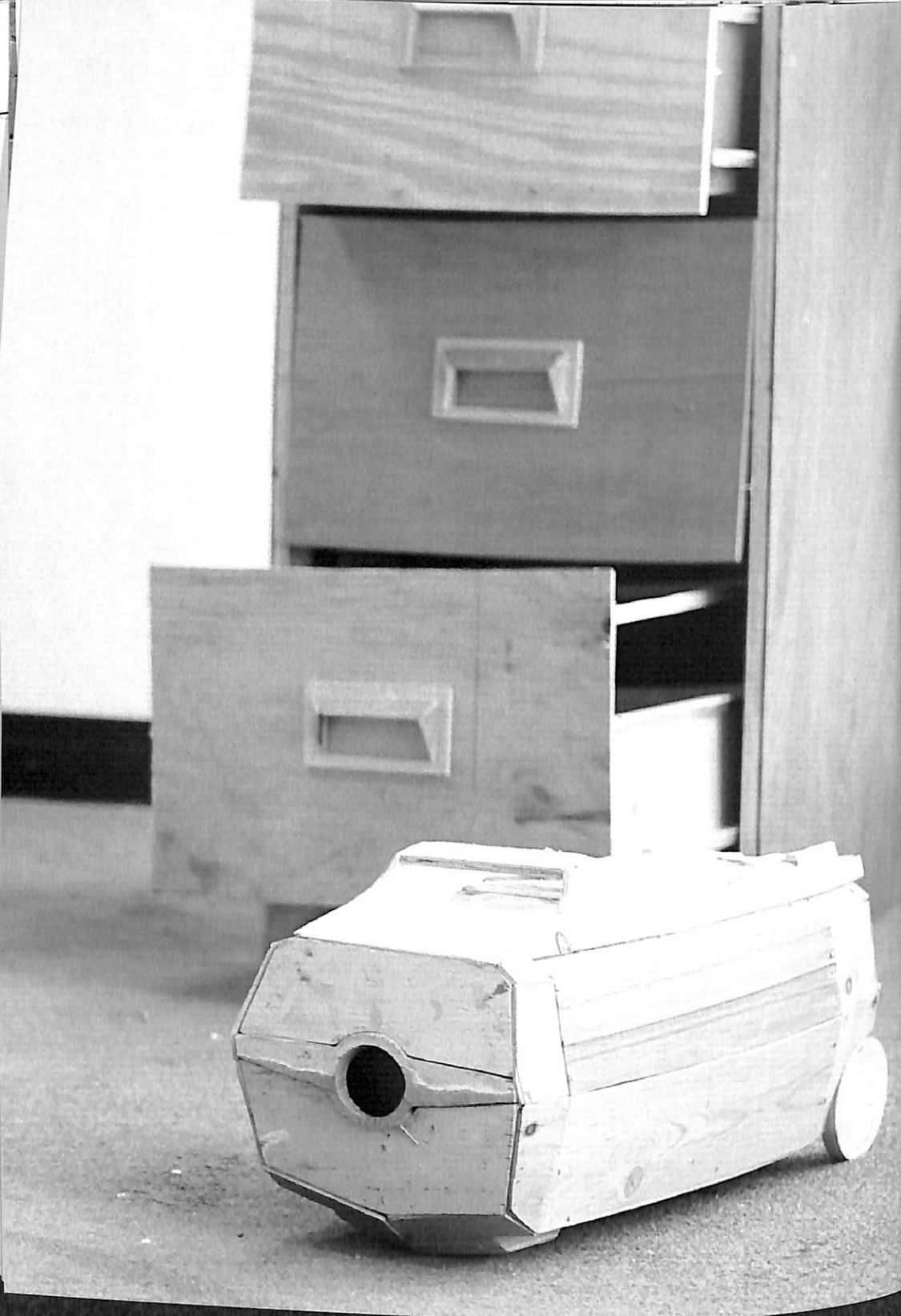
UPHOLSTERY WORKSHOP

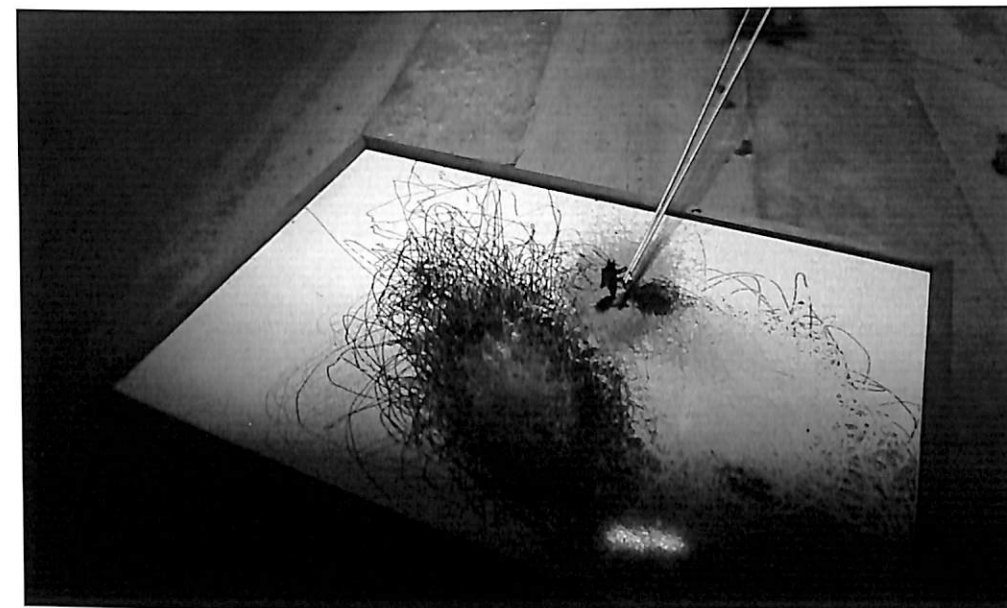
To make his sketch in space, Rowlands cuts into the floor and removes a section of floorboards from the joists. Artist-carpenter-sculptor, when he has finished the carpet has been pulled back like a banana-skin, a curl of carpet with its inner lining of floorboards is flicked back. From this near demolition site a fragment seems to spring and twang like a broken piano wire - releasing a long held tension.

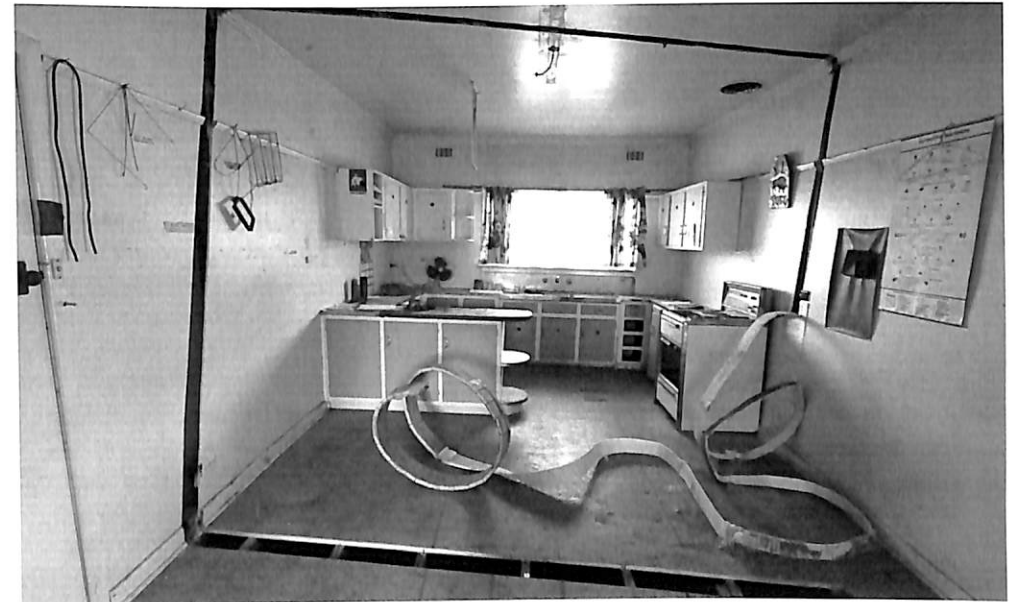












ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

James Carey is interested in the nature of our lived experience. Carey focuses on the blurring of boundaries between architecture, design and art; he constructs multi-layered, textured environments in both his paintings and his design.

James Carey was born in Melbourne in 1977. He first undertook an Arts Degree at Monash University before studying Interior Design at The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Melbourne. Carey's paintings have been shown worldwide and are held in private and public collections. Working together with Campbell Drake, Carey has been responsible for the following projects: *Stanley St Data Landscape 2008*; *The Final Curtain, 26 Surf St, Merricks, 2007* and *The Blundell House 2005* which won an award at the Shanghai Biennale 2007. Carey is also contributing to the project 2020? which will take place at the North Melbourne Meat Market as part of the Next Wave Festival in May 2008.

Campbell Drake works between interior and exterior, art and architecture, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the plans we make and glitches that surprise us. Drake is interested in attending to vernacular forms and spaces, asking us to focus on the familiar and then creating a disquieting slippage between the expected and its underside.

Campbell Drake was born in 1978 in Melbourne. He currently lives and works in Melbourne as an architect, artist and lecturer. He often works in collaboration with James Carey, their recent projects include; *Stanley St Data Landscape 2008*; *The Final Curtain, 26 Surf St, Merricks, 2007* and *The Blundell House 2005*. Drake was awarded the Interior Designer Award for Excellence 2007. He practises under the name of Chameleon Architecture and teaches in Architecture and Design at RMIT University.

Susan Jacobs has a strongly material and spatial practice, and yet her work is also profoundly connected to the exploratory process of drawing. Both her more speculative constructions and her meticulously aggregated works draw from these concerns with space and material. Combining the organic and the manufactured, working in natural as well as built environments, Jacobs work is characterised by an exploration - and subversion - of her chosen materials and sites.

Susan Jacobs was born in Sydney in 1977 and completed her postgraduate studies at the Victorian College of The Arts in 1999. Jacobs work has been exhibited at Ocular Lab, The Narrows, Conical, Monash University Faculty Gallery, Seventh Gallery, West Space and in several pre-demolition sites. Jacobs participated in the exhibitions *Structure, Space and Place*, at the Tower

Hill Memorial, Kangaroo Ground, 2007 and *26 Surf St, Merricks, 2007*. Jacobs is also contributing to the project 2020, which will take place at the North Melbourne Meat Market as part of the Next Wave Festival in May 2008.

Ben Morieson creates art from the unexpected. From a disused bus wash he creates a mechanical action painting that is also a monumental sculpture, from illicit burnouts he creates poetic drawings on asphalt, he draws the edges of the urban into our close consideration as art.

Ben Morieson completed a Bachelor of Fine Art at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in 1988, he then travelled through South America, Africa and Western Europe over the course of two years. He has since held numerous solo exhibitions and group shows. Morieson has been awarded the Australia Council residency in Barcelona and participated in the Echigo Tsumari Triennial in Japan with the support of Asialink. Morieson has been the recipient of grants from Arts Victoria and the Australia Council for the Arts. His work has been exhibited in China, Japan, Germany, Britain and New Zealand.

Matt Morrow recreates the discarded - from the discarded. Drawing from the extensive bank of materials he collects as a part of his "day job" he creates 1:1 replicas of the "junk" we might see in hard rubbish collections or evacuated offices.

Matthew Morrow was born in 1970. He lives and works in Melbourne and completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts - Sculpture at Victoria College, Prahran in 1990. His solo exhibitions have included Sculpture & Prints, at The George Gallery, Melbourne in 1997 and Paintings, at Sui Generis Gallery, Melbourne in 1999. Morrow's work is held in public and private collections around Australia and his group exhibitions include: *26 Surf St, Merricks, 2007*; *Unsigned Artists*, Niagara Galleries, 2002; *Sculpture Survey*, Gomboc Gallery, Perth, 2005; *Exchanging Places*, Ray Hughes Gallery, Sydney, 1999 and *Past its Shelf Life*, Meridian Gallery, Melbourne, 1995.

Cameron Robbins work is based on the interaction of natural forces and the elements. Over the last twenty years he has produced site-specific installations for a wide range of locations around Australia, utilising a variety of media and natural forces including kinetic sculpture, wind and solar powered mechanical systems, sound and ocean waves.

Cameron Robbins was born in Melbourne in 1963. He studied at The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology and completed his post-graduate studies at The Victorian College of the Arts. Recent and forthcoming projects include:

ARTISTS' BIOGRAPHIES

Double Vortex, a permanent installation in the foyer of CH2, the Melbourne City Council's new Green building, 2006; *Sea Shanties Wave Organ*, a sound installation on Lorne Pier, 2007; *Solar System*, a permanent 1:1 billion scale model of the solar system, at locations around Port Philip Bay, October 2008; *Rescueboat Shed*, installations examining the tides and weather, Queenscliff Pier, May 2008 and *Indoor/Outdoor*, a permanent kinetic wind installation at Place Gallery, Richmond, Sept 2008.

Robbie Rowlands looks closely at the everyday objects around us, he questions their nature, their stability. Working both familiar and found materials, Rowlands cuts into and manipulates the recognisable, peeling back one form to reveal another, reflecting upon the passage of time and what lies beneath the surface of our familiar world.

Robbie Rowlands was born in 1968 and lives and works in Melbourne. He graduated from The Victorian College of the Arts in 1999. Rowlands studied at Pratt Institute, New York after, his first solo exhibition FOUND came out of this work. Rowlands participated in the exhibitions *Structure, Space and Place*, at the Tower Hill Memorial, Kangaroo Ground, 2007 and *26 Surf St, Merricks*, 2007. He is currently working toward a solo show at Place Gallery in 22 October 2008.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Artists	James Carey Campbell Drake Susan Jacobs Ben Morrison Matt Morrow Cameron Robbins Robbie Rowlands
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Project Co-ordination	Jenny Pemberton-Webb, City of Greater Dandenong Place Manager Revitalising Central Dandenong
Project Team	Sarah Saunders, Grenda's Grissel Walmaggia, City of Greater Dandenong Cameron Robbins, Artist Robbie Rowlands, Artist
Filming	ABC Sunday Arts Program

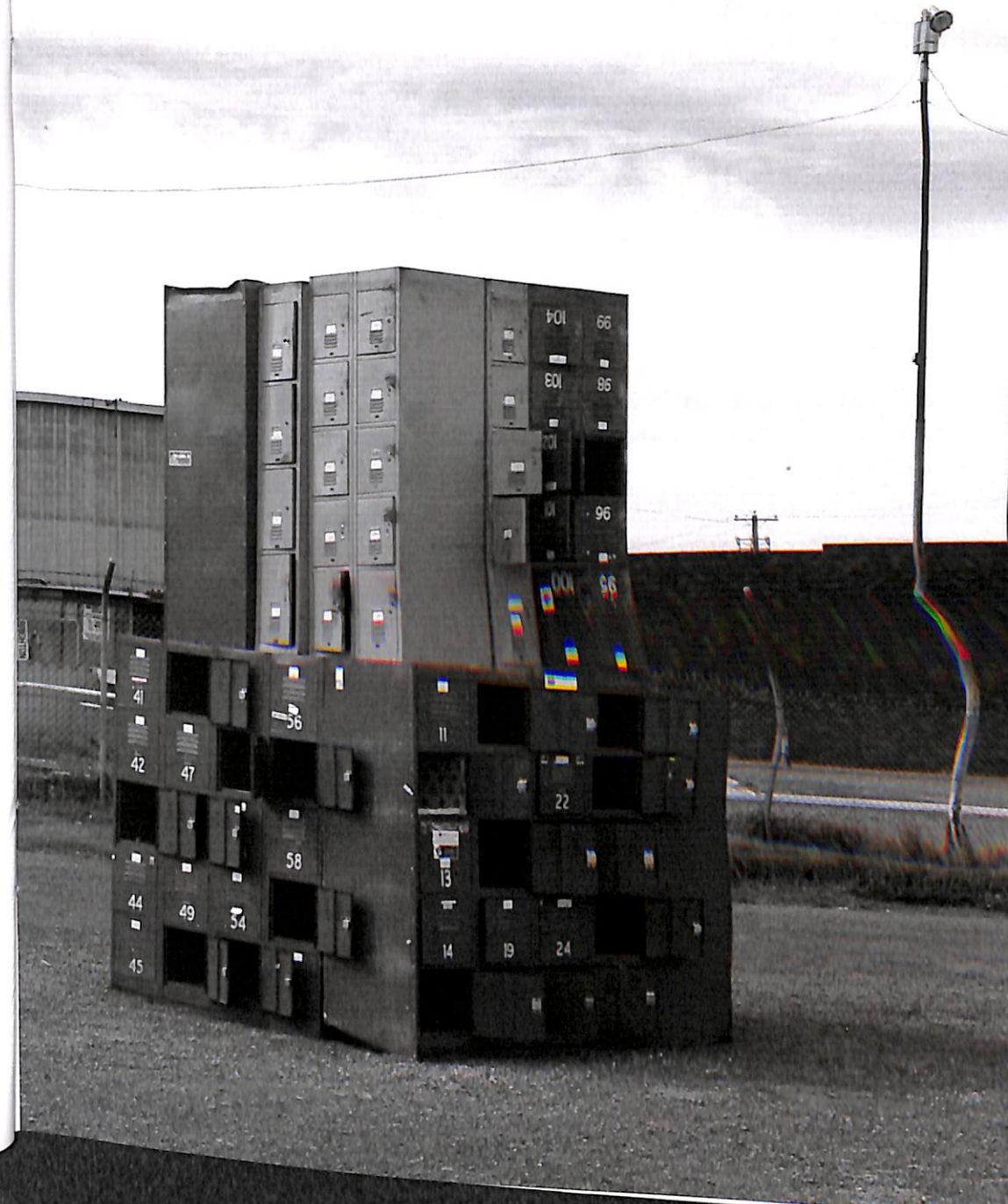
Sincere thanks to the many people who helped undertake this project. With behind the scene support. City of Greater Dandenong - Media and Communications, Accounts Payable, the Building Department, Risk Management and Library, Arts and Heritage Services and at the Grenda Corporation - Geoff and Scott Grenda, Sarah Saunders, Frank Bowden, Michael Thorn, David Willersdorf, Joe Zammit and Hermant Singh

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14 Ken Grenda (far left) and sons, Scott and Geoff

The City Life

Profile



Keeping it in the family

In 1945, the late George Grenda sold his milk truck, and purchased a small business of six buses and four bus routes. Little did he know that this decision was a turning point in his career. Grenda's bus lines has grown steadily ever since, and today, operates more than 350 buses and coaches in Melbourne's southeast. *The City* caught up with George's younger son Ken about this third generation family business and how he's kept it in the family.

For Ken, it was inevitable that he would one day be a part of his father's business. "I did a commerce degree and was working as an accountant when my father offered me a position in the company," Ken said. "Early on, when dad was running the business from home, you couldn't help but be involved. Any time you answered the phone, you'd get timetable queries or be

washing or fixing buses in your spare time.

"About the time I started, Dandenong started to grow rapidly. General Motors and Heinz moved to Dandenong and that meant more buses were needed."

Not content with being one of Australia's largest bus companies, Grenda's began manufacturing bus and coach bodies in 1978 and is now the biggest

manufacturer of bus and coach bodies in Australia and the only company exporting.

Now a third generation Australian family business, Ken is director and his three sons are also heavily involved in the business. Just like his father, Ken wanted to continue the family tradition and get his sons involved. "My eldest son Geoff, a mechanical engineer, is chairman, and

my younger son, Scott, is the managing director," he said. "Max, our middle son runs a beef cattle farm which is also part of the family business." Over the years, international companies have tried to break into the public transport business but Grenda's strong position has always been maintained. "Not that long ago, there were 60 bus operators in Australia but now there are only 15," Ken said. "We understand local cultures and people's needs and we know the costs before we start."

Not that Grenda's hasn't been tested. In the 80s, after some serious bus crashes in NSW, the federal government put in place rigorous strength tests which all bus companies had to comply with within nine months. "It was a very difficult time for all of us. There was a real threat of going out of business." As operator and manufacturer, Ken was in the position to chair a committee to help bus companies meet the compliance standards. "For my work on the committee, I was nominated and received an Order of Australia Medal, Members Award. It was an honour to receive such an award, especially being nominated by your peers."

With almost 2000 staff and continued expansion both interstate and internationally, Grenda's future looks bright. And with one of older son Geoff's children completing a mechanical engineering course, it looks like the Grenda Corporation just might stay in the family.

MANUFACTURING WEEK

SOUTH EAST FEAST

The South East again dominated the Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame presentation at Crown Palladium last week, picking up most of the awards on offer. Dandenong bus entrepreneur Ken Grenda, who made world headlines this year for sharing his company's sale profits with staff, was the latest name to be added to the prestigious Honour Roll. The Star celebrates this success with a special eight-page wrap-around feature.



Main photo: Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Honour Roll inductee Ken Grenda at the Volgren bus manufacturing facility in Dandenong. Inset: The South East dominated the manufacturing awards, with five of the eight Hall of Fame inductees coming from the region. Among those receiving the honours were (from left) Simon Whiteley from Corex Plastics in Dandenong, Brad Ackehurst from Fantech in Dandenong and Norman Mills from Boss Polymer in Mulgrave.



The City of Greater Dandenong's **Business Development Centre** offers business services and activities supporting local businesses



For the latest activities and events visit www.greaterdandenong.com/business

MANUFACTURING WEEK

SOUTH EAST CLEANS UP AWARDS

MANUFACTURERS in the south east cleaned up at the prestigious Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame Awards last week.

Five of the eight inductees into the Manufacturing Hall of Fame hailed from the south east and two of those, Corex Plastics and Fantech, are based in Dandenong.

The others were Mulgrave-based Boss Polymer and Hospira and PACCAR from Bayswater.

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The Enabling Technology Company of the Year award went to Hydrix of Carnegie and two of the three Manufacturer of the Year awards went to local companies.

The Large Business category went to Marand Precision Engineering from Moorabbin and the Small Business category to Coating and Industrial Technologies of Dandenong South.

The companies who shared in the success acknowledged the assistance of the South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance and executive officer Paul Dowling and the South



SEMMA executive officer Paul Dowling (left) congratulates some of the south east's success stories at the Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame dinner. From left: Young Manufacturer of the Year Matt Nettleton from Corex Plastics and Hall of Fame inductees Simon Whiteley from Corex Plastics, Norman Ills from Boss Polymer Technologies and Brad Ackehurst from Fantech.

East Business Networks, headed up by Sandra George.

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MANUFACTURING WEEK

KEN'S DRIVE TO SUCCEED

JOINING the Honour Roll of the Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame has capped a big year for Ken Grenda AM.

In February, he was dubbed Australia's best boss after sharing some of the proceeds of the estimated \$500 million sale of Grenda buslines and Volgren manufacturing with his employees.

While the \$15 million gesture gave Ken his (unwanted) 15-minutes of fame, it was his decades of work for local manufacturing that saw him added to the Honour Roll.

But instead of moaning about the situation, he said working harder and smarter is the only way to compete with cheap imports that are flooding almost every area of Australian manufacturing markets.

He sees Grenda and Volgren as shining examples of how co-operation and commitment can build success.

"I believe this is a fantastic factory... we've always had a good people culture in our business, but the guys here are, I think, extraordinary," he said.

“PERSONALLY, I'M NOT SO MUCH A MANUFACTURER AS AN ENTREPRENEUR...”

It's an award Ken is happy to accept, but one that he is not entirely sure is a perfect fit.

"Personally, I'm not so much a manufacturer as an entrepreneur," he said.

"There was an opportunity that presented itself in the mid 70s that I took. We had a few hard times but we are currently doing very well."

That opportunity was to set up Volgren, filling a vacuum in bus manufacturing in Victoria.

It was a masterful move that has seen the companies, including Cardinia Transit, grow into giants of the sector, employing 3000 people.

Initially focused on bus repair, Volgren is now a bus building company that has enjoyed significant growth in recent years, building approximately 250 buses in 2005 to more than 715 buses in 2011.

"We thought we should diversify and that's when the body building opportunity came up it worked," he said.

With many factories currently shutting their doors in Victoria, Ken believes it is the lack of a level playing field that is causing so much economic pain.

"They love what they are doing and they are very proud of what they are doing and they are very aware that they are not on an even playing field."

"In Australia we are in a well developed, wealthy country where wages are high, complying with government conditions is costly, yet there is no offset when you look at imports from overseas."

The South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance's role in developing industry in the region has been praised by Ken, who said it was instrumental in getting Volgren together with other significant operators in the area.

"I think South East Dandenong is one of the major industrial sites in Australia, if not 'the' major industrial site. SEMA does a wonderful job in co-ordinating that."

"They do a lot of good things. We made contact with Gerry Ryan at Jayco through SEMA and we swapped notes with him."

"We've probably helped him more than he has helped us, but we helped each other and that is pretty important."



Ken Grenda watches another bus being created in the Volgren's Dandenong workshops.

VICTORIAN MANUFACTURING HALL OF FAME AWARDS 2012

HALL OF FAME COMPANY INDUCTIONS

Boss Polymer (Mulgrave)
Corex Plastics (Dandenong)
Fantech (Dandenong South)
Hospira Australia (Mulgrave)
PACCAR (Bayswater)
Haymes Paint
NHP Electrical Engineering Services
United Bonded Fabrics

ENABLING TECHNOLOGY COMPANY OF THE YEAR

Hydrix (Carnegie)

ENABLING TECHNOLOGY ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Dr Erol Harvey, MiniFAB (Scoresby)

HONOUR ROLL

Ken Grenda (Dandenong)

YOUNG MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR

Matt Nettleton, Corex Plastics (Dandenong)

JIM WATKINS AWARD

Amanda Wood, State Director, Enterprise Connect

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR (LARGE BUSINESS)

Marand Precision Engineering (Moorabbin)

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR (MEDIUM BUSINESS)

Koko Black

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR (SMALL BUSINESS)

Coating and Industrial Technologies (Dandenong South)

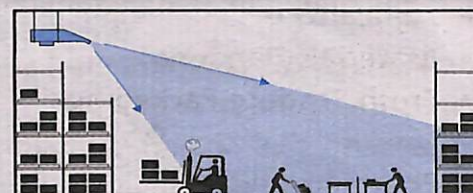
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BUSINESS

south-east

KEN'S DRIVE TO SUCCEED

By DANNY BUTTLER

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ENTER THE FAME HALL

By NICOLE WILLIAMS

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Business stalwart honoured

The City of Greater Dandenong announced the inaugural Corporate Citizen Award earlier this year – with leading business figure Ken Grenda a worthy recipient.

Ken has been a pillar of local industry for more than 50 years.

The Grenda Corporation, which had its beginnings in Ken's parents Oakleigh home, has grown to an impressive international company that is a jewel in the crown of Dandenong's industry.

Today the company operates 670 buses locally, builds around 650 buses each year, and employs 3000 people –

1700 of them in Melbourne alone.

Ken's dedication to the bus industry has earned him many accolades including life membership of the Bus Association of Victoria; the inaugural inductee into the Dandenong Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame; and the Member of the Order of Australia (AM).

He was also the inaugural chairman of the City of Greater Dandenong Regional Youth Committee.

Mayor Youhorn Chea said the City of Greater Dandenong had benefitted greatly from Ken's input over many years.

"We wish Ken and his family well as they complete the sale of the Grenda Corporation and start a new chapter in life," Mayor Chea said.



Mayor Youhorn Chea and Ken Grenda

Local Knowledge

FACES
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COMMUNITY

Dubbed Australia's best boss for divvying up a \$15 million bonus to his loyal staff, Ken Grenda has seen a raft of changes in Dandenong.

How has Dandenong changed over the past 66 years?

Dandenong's gone from a country town to a burgeoning metropolis, but some things that have always been here are still here: Dandenong High School and the Scout Hall were pretty much the end of civilisation (back in the day).

What was your first job?

I got my licence at 17 and was instantly driving buses — school buses were pretty simple with crash, crash gear boxes.

How important have the Grenda's loyal staff and customer base been to your success?

They're fantastic. Like all business, it cycles up and down, we've been very lucky because our people have stuck and passengers always supported us. We have had a heap of people that have been



Ken Grenda (right) receiving an Australia Day award from Greater Dandenong Mayor Youhorn Chea this year.

with us for more than 40 years, the longest ever 52 years."

Where to now for the bus industry?

Buses are very important and they're really the cheapest and most efficient form of public transport. Trains break down they

bring in buses, trams break down they bring in buses. There's no limit to what a bus can do."

What are the keys to business success?

Be prepared to put in and communicate with your people — two major ingredients."

GRENDAS BLOWN AWAY

Grenda's Pakenham depot employee Claire Ginger said it will be sad to say goodbye to Australia's best boss, Ken Grenda.

Picture: LILLY O'GORMAN

BY LILLY O'GORMAN

AUSTRALIA'S best boss just kept on surprising his employees, including everyone at the Pakenham Depot on Wednesday 25 January.

Charter co-ordinator Claire Ginger said she had just returned from holidays and "nearly died" when she discovered quite a significant amount of money had been deposited into her account.

"Everyone was quite surprised," Ms Ginger said.

The Grenda employee of eight years said that although Ken was widely acknowledged among staff members as a great boss, none of them expected the unprecedented generosity.

"Ken Grenda is a phenomenal man and spends a lot of time visiting the depot, which you don't see very often from a boss," she said.

"He has always been very generous with his staff, but nobody expected this. We all wanted to say thank you on behalf of the Pakenham Depot."

Ms Ginger said all of the Pakenham employees were sad to say goodbye to Ken and the Grenda family.

She said the Pakenham depot

started with the Consolidated School contract with only four or five buses and has since grown to 80 buses within the fleet, and counting.

"The story is significant for Pakenham and Grenda has been an iconic company in the area," she said.

"I know as a little girl I used to sneak onto the Grenda school buses to go from St Patrick's Primary School to the Consolidated School to lessen my walk home.

"I now work for them and will miss the Grenda environment and am a little nervous going into the future."

Grenda is now owned by Ventura so the employees will see a branding change over the next couple of years.



"It is always exciting but at the same time it is sad to lose Ken Grenda and his sons Scott and Jeff. Everybody here feels pretty blessed to have such a great job."

Pakenham employees enjoyed a fully catered dinner put on by the Grenda family last week at the Pakenham Depot. [Bse]

THE SMART MONEY'S ON CHANGE

BY NICOLE WILLIAMS

GREATER Dandenong's manufacturing heavyweights are urging manufacturing companies to think smart in the face of a changing market.

Following the closure of the SPC factory in Shepparton last year and the loss of 350 jobs from Toyota last month, Bruce Parker of HM Gem Engines in Dandenong South and Paul Dowling from South East Melbourne Manufacturers Alliance said companies and the government need to adjust to a changing market or the future of the industry could be in jeopardy.

"At the end of the day, if Australia continues losing its manufacturing industry at the rate we are, it doesn't matter if its tomatoes in Shepparton or the downsizing of Toyota, Ford or Holden, it all leads in the one direction," Mr Parker said.

"If manufacturing leaves Australia, we won't get it back again."

Mr Dowling said it was important to consider how employment in manufacturing supports other industries.

"Let's not lose sight that manufacturing directly employs 10 per cent of the workforce and indirectly a lot more," Mr Dowling said.

"It is a vital hub and a great success for Australia's economy and it will continue to be a great success if we all work and plan together."

Mr Parker said the recent job losses at SPC and Toyota had a roll on effect.

"If you look at the number of people in Shepparton who relied on that manufacturing facility of SPC it's now closed and gone offshore," he said.

"Should we lose or substantially reduce our manufacturing base in Australia, we will have widespread unemployment."

To avoid the continued closures and downsizes Mr Dowling said companies need to be willing and able to move with changes.

"It's inevitable with down turns that companies must readjust and government must readjust," he said.

"The Greater Dandenong region as a manufacturing hub has understood that the market is changing."

Mr Dowling said the success relied on the ability to plan for the future of the industry but Australian government lacked a strategic plan for manufacturing's future. [Bse]

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\$350 for a table of 10 (inc GST)
A full breakfast, including
tea and coffee upon arrival is
served at each event
Bookings: To register, please visit
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Registrations close
Monday 27 February 2012

INTERNATIONAL GUEST SPEAKER

THE first Women in Business function for 2012 was an exciting affair with an international guest speaker taking centre stage.

South East Business Network manager Sandra George welcomed close to 100 women, and a smattering of men, to the function and spoke of the role of women's network in business.

"It doesn't matter if you are a giver or a receiver (of support), you need to ensure it is a good fit," she said.

"It is about inspiring each other, connecting and developing relationships."

Ms George linked her opening address to the guest speaker, Tina Thomson, the global director from New York's UnitedSuccess Global - a worldwide network of women business owners.

Ms Thomson spoke about how woman in business can go from surviving to thriving. [Bse]

Tina Thomson, left, the global director from New York's UnitedSuccess Global with South East Business Network manager Sandra George at Women in Business' first lunch for 2012.



MANUFACTURING HEROES REQUIRED

SOUTHEast's business community is being urged to find the heroes of Victoria's manufacturing industry and nominate companies and individuals for the 2012 Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame awards.

Minister for manufacturing, exports and trade, Richard DellaRiva said the awards celebrated manufacturing excellence in Victoria.

"They showcase locally based manufacturers whose creative solutions to manufacturing challenges have proven to be world class," he said.

"They recognise the skill, achievement and contribution made by Victorian manufacturers to the Victorian and national economies in the face of a high Australian dollar, ongoing global uncertainty and increased competition."

The awards are now in their 11th year and

have recognised 116 innovative companies in that time, added 24 recipients to the Honour Roll and awarded eight young Manufacturers of the Year.

Judging will be carried out by a panel of industry experts which will select the hall of fame inductees, new additions to the Honour Roll, the Enabling Technology Company of the Year, the Enabling Technology Entrepreneur of the Year and the Young Manufacturer of the Year.

In 2012, small, medium and large business will also be recognised in three new awards in the Manufacturer of the Year category.

Nominations close 29 February and the awards will be announced at a Gala dinner held on Thursday 3 May.

Visit www.business.vic.gov.au/halloffame for more information. [Bse]

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Grenda Buses have given about \$15 million in bonuses to their employees. Ken Grenda (front row with tie) with some of the staff.

Picture: VALERIU CAMPAN N320S211

Workers ride high on bonuses as Grenda bows out

THERE have been tears of joy after Grenda Transit gave millions to employees. But some said they would give it all back just to keep the family running the business.

Grenda Transit bus company patriarch Ken Grenda, and sons Geoff and Scott, have given staff \$15 million in bonuses for their hard

work and loyalty, with workers receiving bonuses averaging \$8500, and some getting six figures.

Scott Grenda said it had been an emotional roller-coaster since the bonuses went through on Australia Day.

"The most touching ones said, 'I'd give it all back tomorrow to stay',

we've had a myriad of those," he said.

He said it was humbling that people were willing to give up \$30,000.

The bonuses come after the 66-year-old family-owned business was sold to Ventura last November.

Mr Grenda's late father, George, started the company in 1945, with

the manufacturing arm Volgren opening in 1977.

As reported by *Leader* in August, Ken Grenda told staff of the difficult decision to sell.

"The business is only what it is today as a result of the high quality of its people," Mr Grenda said after the sale.

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\$15 million bonus for loyal staff

From Page 1

"We have grown from just four bus routes in Dandenong in 1945 to operating 1300 buses in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. You only get there if you have good people."

The family have been swamped with about 100 emails and countless phone calls of thanks from staff, who will all keep their jobs under the new owners.

Mr Grenda, who was awarded an AM for his services to the bus industry,

“ Good bosses are hard to find and Ken was a very good boss

said the gratitude was humbling.

"The response has been pretty fantastic," he said.

"People said all sorts of things. One said they had a huge amount of bills and you have suddenly got me out of a hole."

The bonuses were paid in various amounts based on years of service and position.

bus driver HEATH

Staff who had worked with Grenda for three months or more pocketed anywhere from about \$1000 to \$30,000 before tax.

The company sold its transit operations to Melbourne operator Ventura for about \$400 million.

Grenda is also Australia's largest bus maker, building about 600 buses a year.

It expects to settle on the sale of the bus building business Volgren to a Brazilian company tomorrow.

Grenda bus driver Heath, with the company for just 10 months, received less than the average bonus, but was dumbfounded by his windfall of around \$850.

"Some employees were calling their banks assuming it was an error," he said. "Good bosses are hard to find and Ken was a very good boss, one of a kind."

dohertye@heraldsun.com.au

Editorial Page 30

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Herald Sun

LET THE BATTLE BEGIN...

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IN SPORT

Meet Victoria's best boss — when he sold the company he gave his loyal staff a ...

\$15m THANKS

G631



Golden goodbye:
Ken Grenda, 72, yesterday, with
sons Geoff and Scott and staff.
Picture: CRAIG BORROW

Elissa Doherty

A MELBOURNE boss has stunned his staff by giving them a staggering \$15 million gift — the ultimate pay-off for their hard work and loyalty.

Workers at bus company Grenda couldn't believe their good fortune when surprise bonuses averaging \$8500 were paid into their accounts — with some staff receiving as much as \$30,000.

Family-owned Grenda Corporation recently sold off its transit operations after 66 years and decided to pour a chunk of the profits into the remarkable thank-you gesture.

Patriarch Ken Grenda, 79, and sons Geoff and Scott, have been dubbed Australia's most generous bosses after rewarding 1800 staff, from drivers to senior executives, for contributing to the company's success.

Some wept while others rang their banks thinking there might be an error.

But Mr Grenda, the major shareholder, modestly played down the "best boss" moniker, instead paying tribute to his staff.

"A business is only as good as its people, and our people are fantastic," he said. "This is to recognise that. We have had people here who are second generation, and one fellow in the same job for 52 years."

Continued Page 10

BLOW FOR UNDERWORLD IDENTITY

GATTO FIRM
GOES BUST

PAGE 3

QUEEN OF HEARTS

YOUR 7-DAY
TV GUIDE

FAST FACT | There are more than 300 bus routes throughout Melbourne

Iconic bus group on the market

Family business under the hammer

Community | **Gilbert Gardiner and Michael Randall**

THE Grenda family's 66-year history in the bus industry is set to end, with the announcement their iconic Dandenong-based company is on the market.

Staff were informed through a memo last week that Grenda's, along with manufacturing affiliate Volgren, would be sold to the highest bidder.

"The decision to part with our family's business has not been taken lightly," patriarch Ken Grenda said in a statement.

"As the family grows, interests continue to diverge, with the next generation not expected to be in a position to run the business for a number of years.

"As such, we have decided that the business would be better positioned under the care of an organisation with strong ambitions in the industry that will continue to capture the significant growth

opportunities and build on the current platform."

Mr Grenda's late father, George, started the company in 1945.

The manufacturing arm Volgren was opened in 1977.

Grenda Corporation employs 2000 people Australia-wide.

General manager David Willersdorf said the family had been agonising over the sale for months.

Mr Grenda's son couldn't take over the business due to personal reasons.

"The staff are shocked ... but generally they accept and understand the circumstances under which the decision was made."

Greater Dandenong Council chief executive John Bennie paid tribute to the Grenda family for playing an "important and pioneering" role in the creation of Dandenong.

"Their contribution to the city and bus industry as operators and builders will be missed," he said.

Firm's drive to excel in civil construction pays dividends

THE construction company responsible for the upgrade to Dandenong's main thoroughfare has won a top industry award for its hard work.

Canteri Bros Constructions was announced the winner for Excellence in Civil Construction for its involvement in the

Revitalising Central Dandenong (RCD) project at the awards night on Friday.

The firm's construction manager Sujan Blanchard said the works on Lonsdale and Langhorne streets were a major component of the RCD project.

"Canteri Bros Constructions feels the

award is a just reward for an outstanding project," he said.

"It is a contemporary and vibrant showcase of the new Dandenong."

The upgrade and realignment of Lonsdale Street provided improved accessibility for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and other

vehicles and the new transport hub on Langhorne Street improved bus movements.

Master Builders executive director Brian Welch said the upgrades added much to the Dandenong Community.

"The Canteri Bros Constructions'

work on revitalising central Dandenong has also contributed much to that local community," he said.

"This civil project has created a valuable public space for Dandenong residents, workers and visitors to use and enjoy."

End of the line

By Nicole Williams

LONGSTANDING Dandenong business, Grenda Transit, is hitting the road and selling up.

The Grenda family announced the decision to put Grenda Transit and Volgren on the market last Tuesday after nearly seven decades in the bus industry.

Director Ken Grenda said the decision was not easy to make.

"The decision to part with our family's business has not been taken lightly," he said.

"However as the family grows, interests continue to diverge, with the next generation not expected to be in a position to run the business for a number of years."

Grenda management decided the business would be better positioned under the care of an organisation with strong ambitions in the industry, Mr Grenda said.

George Grenda started Grenda Transit in 1945 and covered bus routes in Oakleigh, Dandenong, Berwick and Cheltenham.

Volgren was established in 1977 as the manufacturing arm of Grenda and became the market leader in body assembly in Australia, with plants in Dandenong, Perth, Brisbane and Newcastle.

Together they employ over 2000 people.

Mr Grenda thanked the employees of Grenda and said the family were very grateful for their loyalty and hard work.

Grenda Transit appointed UBS as advisors on the sale and a spokesperson said the business had a long and respected reputation in the local market, making it attractive for potential buyers.



Nimal Jaysinghe and Sherajh Rahim outside the Grenda head office in Dandenong after it launched in October 2008. Last week, the Grenda family announced the business would be sold. 23605

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MON, JAN. 19, 2009



by Ted Kloszynski

Grenda's in hybrid bus move

GREENDA'S is working on a hybrid diesel electric bus that could be in action as early as June.

Although Grenda's is tight-lipped as testing is still to be done, *The Journal* can reveal the bus is being built by Volgren on an Iveco chassis with running gear based on proven hybrid technology in the United States.

Grenda Transit Management general manager Peter Ayres told *The Journal* the company had secured a contract with the Department of Sustainability and Environment to develop the vehicle for Victorian roads.

"It's a parallel hybrid bus design, like the Prius [Toyota's hybrid car], which means it can drive off fuel or the electric battery, simultaneously or individually.

"It could have a flat battery and still drive with the engine."

He said the hybrid vehicle would look similar to other buses.

"From the layman's point of view, you won't even know the difference."

Mr Ayres hoped testing would show the bus — the first in Grenda's fleet — would be economically viable.

Hybrid bus trial starts

By Michael Randall

DANDENONG-based bus giant Grenda Corporation has produced Australia's first locally manufactured hybrid bus.

The bus, which was built through Grenda affiliate Volgren, uses two sources of power with the diesel engine working in parallel with an electric motor or generator.

The engine is coupled to the drive unit, which provides variable torque to the wheels, allowing the engine to run more quietly, cleanly and efficiently.

Managing director Scott Grenda said the buses would produce "greener outcomes".

Grenda Corporation has begun



Going green: Gavin Jennings and Scott Grenda with a hybrid bus.

trialling the hybrid bus along its 900 route from Stud Park to Caulfield, while Ventura Buses has started trials along its 250 route from Garden City to La Trobe University.

Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings says the \$500,000 trial, funded by the state and federal governments, will assess the viability of hybrid buses in reducing carbon emissions in the public transport sector.

"We believe the hybrid-

electric bus trial will show how improvements in transport technology can deliver air quality improvements and reduce our carbon emissions," Mr Jennings said. "It's estimated this hybrid-electric technology will provide a saving of around 20 per cent on fuel and greenhouse gas emissions compared to a conventional diesel bus."

Should the trials be successful, Mr Jennings said the State Government would consider increasing its fleet.

Sport

DANDY JOURNAL MON, 13TH APRIL, 2009 P/60

BASKETBALL



On the buses: David Crozier, Michael Thorn, Peter Ayres, Rhys Fitzpatrick and Graeme Allen are promoting the on-the-buses school basketball program.

Picture: Melissa Banks

Buses drive to court future sports stars

By **Phil McLeod**

IT will be a case of 'on the buses' for local students as part of a unique partnership with the Dandenong Basketball Association and Grenda's Bus Services.

Free buses will be made available to schools to take teachers and students to coaching clinics at the Dandenong basketball stadium in Stud Road.

DBA general manager Graeme Allen said the partnership would help promote the sport and provide youngsters with the use of one of the best sporting facilities in the

state. "The DBA is delighted to enter into this partnership with our long-term partner Grenda's Bus Services," he said.

"We have a world-class facility available at our doorstep, and one of the prohibiting factors for schools being able to use it has been the cost of travel for students and teachers.

"Through this generous support, local schools can now access first-class facilities enabling students, who might not have otherwise been able to participate, to get into the stadium, have fun, exercise and learn basketball skills at the same time."

Grenda's marketing and communications manager Sarah Saunders said the scheme would help children living in areas where transport costs were high.

"We are pleased to be involved. Grenda's will provide the service to give something back to the community."

Dandenong Primary School principal David Crozier was on the bus for a promotional trip to the stadium last week.

He was joined by Grenda's representatives Michael Thorn and Peter Ayres, and the City of Greater Dandenong's Rhys Fitzpatrick.

Pedal is down for police

IT MAY not look as intimidating as other police cars, but the newest addition to Greater Dandenong's fleet will play a valuable role in crime fighting.

South East Suzuki this week donated a Suzuki Swift to the Police Region Five Multicultural Liaison Unit, based at Dandenong.

Police will use the zippy new car to attend community meetings, local festivals and community policing initiatives.

It is the first of its kind in the state and has been fitted out with Victoria Police signage and lighting.

Senior Constable James Waterson thanked the dealership for the donation.

"The dealership group already has a successful long-term partnership with our Divisional Crime Prevention Officer and has supplied a vehicle to the office for the past six years," Senior Constable Waterson said.

"This second donated vehicle from South East Suzuki demonstrates the group's commitment to community policing and we are extremely grateful to be working with them."

Senior Constables James Waterson and Joey Herrech with the new Suzuki Swift police car donated by South East Suzuki in Dandenong. 23588

Picture: Stewart Chambers



\$14 mill. state-of-the-art bus depot



Grenda employees Nimal Jaysinghe and Sherajh Rahim outside the new building. 23605
Picture: Luke Plummer

GRENDA Corporation will launch its new \$14 million bus depot this week with a host of state-of-the-art features.

The building has moved Grenda from its historic Foster Street site to just south of the rail line near Cheltenham Road.

The facility opened in March after the first sod was turned in 2007, and since then the company has been relocating its operations to the new building.

The building has a 4.5 star efficiency rating and features six

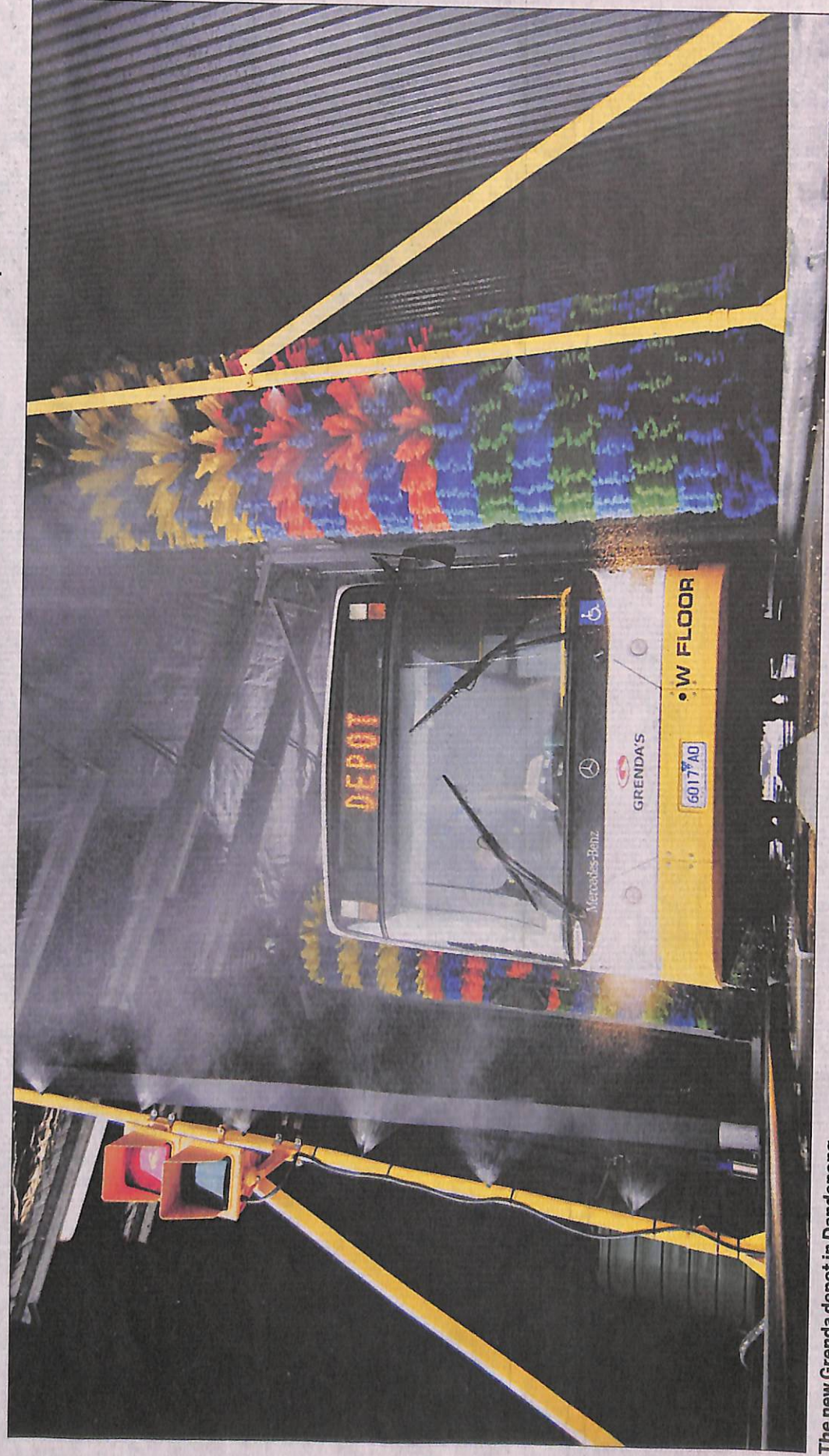
25,000-litre rainwater tanks to capture all water falling on the building's roof.

The workshop roof water is used to wash buses, and the company anticipates that, once the six tanks are full, it will be fully self-sufficient.

Water falling on the office building will be used to flush toilets and for irrigation.

The relocation was made possible with the help of VicUrban which has purchased the Grenda site as part of its \$290 million Revitalising Central Dandenong project.

After decades of living on other side of the tracks, Grenda Bus Services has a luxurious new home in Dandenong – ADRIAN BALLANTYNE reports



The new Grenda depot in Dandenong.

Picture: JASON EDWARDS N010S:401

New bus depot more like 'hotel'

FOUR words crop up again and again when inquiring about the facilities at the old Grenda Bus Services depot in Dandenong. "It didn't have it."

Hydraulic lifts to help mechanics service buses from below at the iconic Foster St site?

It didn't have it.

A plush lunch room with space for drivers to relax?

It didn't have it.

A lock-up tyre shed to stop people jumping the fence and stealing rubber?

It didn't have it.

What it did have was character and history, but it also came with cramped corridors, buses sprawled over five separate yards and a two-inch thick veneer of grease over almost everything in sight.



Now things are very different at the new Grenda depot, situated just off Cheltenham Rd on the south side of Dandenong station.

Buses are now housed in one yard, with easy and direct access to an enormous drive-through service shed.



It's clean, neat and orderly, and with plenty of room to spare.

And the months since he moved to the new depot have certainly proved pure bliss for workshop manager Hermant Singh.

"(At the old depot) everything was built when the *Titanic* was



built," Mr Singh said. "Now it's like a hotel."

"I would say it would have increased efficiency by 50 per cent and as we go further in time we'll get better," he said.

It's the same story inside Grenda headquarters.

When the *Leader* visited the old depot earlier this year it looked as if someone had hoarded every desk, filing cabinet and piece of paper used since the place opened in 1954 and jammed it all into one room.

But at the new office there is enough space to, well, park a bus.

Meeting rooms, all the modern trimmings and a staff lunch room with adjoining games room are just a few of its features.

In fact, there's only one problem with the new site, according to Grenda's Bus Services manager Michael Thorn: "We all miss being able to walk to the shops."

Then again, they could always catch the bus.

More photos: www.dandenongleader.com.au



The bus depot is demolished.

Picture: JASON EDWARDS. N460S777

... and the walls came down

IN THE end it was a somewhat inglorious end to a glorious era.

A 54-year stand finally came to close when Grenda's Bus Services' Foster St headquarters was recently torn down.

Leader photographer Jason Edwards was there to capture the moment the walls were reduced to rubble.

The building had sat empty since the company moved across the rail

line to its new Brighton Rd home in mid-March. But the yard's final days were captured spectacularly when it last month hosted a photography exhibition, attended by hundreds of art lovers and transport enthusiasts.

Life on the buses



Memories... Leader photographer Hilton Stone captures the last days of Grenda's Dandenong depot.

Pictures: HILTON STONE. N130S400

Capturing a moving story

A UNIQUE art project to commemorate the decommissioning of bus company Grenda Corporation's long-time Foster St headquarters is tipped to start next year.

The *Moved by Grenda's* project follows a successful photographic display of life at the 62-year-old site.

Earlier this year Greater Dandenong Council commissioned *Leader* photographer Hilton Stone to record the business, staff and everyday operations at the old headquarters, which will close by the end of the year.

The pictures features insights into the daily rituals at the site and the connections between staff.

They spawned the idea for the commemorative project, which aims to acknowledge the final phase in the life of the site.

Stone said Grenda staff gave him full access to the depot.

"You go in with an open mind and soak in a bit of the feeling around the place," Stone, 36, said.

Stone, who has worked for *Leader* for six years, found many of the machinery and buildings in the yards were relics from a bygone era.

"Once you start going in there, there are drawer sets that have had grease on them for 40 years, he said.

A team of selected artists will be given access to the site after it is decommissioned to create works inspired by the empty grounds and buildings. The project will take place in January, shortly before the buildings are demolished.

Adrian Ballantyne



Clocking off... A Grenda worker packs up and heads home.



The office... The depot's packed noticeboard is a reminder of decades of activity.

Where to now for Grenda?

GRENDA Corporation will next year mark a new phase in its 62-year history in Dandenong when it starts operations from a new \$14 million headquarters and bus depot in Cheltenham Rd.

The old Foster St site will become an edu-

cation precinct under Dandenong's \$290 million redevelopment. Director Ken Grenda said he welcomed the opportunity to build a new depot, because the old one was scattered over fragmented sites and outdated for modern buses and growing staff numbers.



nants

Grenda moving to new site



master plan for Dandenong.

N44OS406

THE Grenda Corporation is vacating its 62-year-old home because it is best for Dandenong, the son of the historic bus company's founder says.

Director Ken Grenda, 75, last week oversaw the turning of the first sod at Grenda's \$14 million new headquarters and bus depot in Cheltenham Rd, Dandenong.

Grenda will leave its Foster St headquarters near the station by the end of the year to make way for an education precinct under Dandenong's \$290 million redevelopment.

Mr Grenda said it was hard to leave a site "ideally located for a bus operation".

"You can literally roll out of the yard into the station yard, where most of the bus timetables start."

"However, our location is not the best thing for Dandenong because us being there inhibits the best presentation for the City of Greater Dandenong."

"When you come out of that site you should really see a landmark building there."

But Mr Grenda welcomed the opportunity to build a new depot, because the old one was scattered over fragmented sites and outdated for modern buses and growing staff numbers.

Negotiation with State Government development agency VicUrban secured plans for a new bridge on George St to provide continued access to the station, Mr Grenda said.

"Our long history in Dandenong has enhanced our passion for the area and we make an effort to contribute to the welfare and development of the city where possible."

"Grenda has recognised that the best answer for Dandenong under this initiative is for Grenda to move from its current Foster St bus depot site."

l still facilitate their businesses or their dis- business requirements," the Min- see them s part would

Mr Theophanous said some tenants would be eligible for compensation.

Wheels set in motion on \$14m bus depot

THE first sod was turned last week on the Grenda Corporation's state-of-the-art \$14 million head office and bus depot in Dandenong.

Grenda Corporation executive

chairman Geoff Grenda said that after 62 years in Foster Street, Dandenong, the company had committed to relocating and expanding its operations south of the

railway line in Brighton Road.

The new site was commemorated by Minister for Major Projects Theo Theophanous.

"This is a demonstration of Grenda's commitment to the

Dandenong region. Their new \$14 million headquarters will also create many new employment opportunities through the construction phase and upon completion."

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Persistence pays off



GRENDA Corporation chairman Ken Grenda and his mother Elsie on his 60th birthday.



THE original Grenda's bus depot in Foster St, Dandenong.

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THE GRENDA STORY

By MIKE MORRIS

DANDENONG South bus manufacturer Volgren has been inducted into the 2006 Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame by State Minister for Manufacturing and Export, Andre Haermeyer.

The company - a subsidiary of the Grenda Corporation - was one of 14 Victorian manufacturers recognised for out-standing and sustained contributions to manufacturing in this state at a gala dinner held at the Melbourne Convention Centre last Thursday night.

New services

It was the crowning of a big week for the Grenda Corporation. On the Wednesday Premier Steve Bracks announced extended and new bus services for the outer suburbs as part of its \$10.5m 10-year transport plan which was described by Grenda's general manager Kevin Norris as the best news ever for bus users in this region (*The Independent* last week).

The next day Mr Bracks and Transport Minister Peter Batchelor arrived at Grenda's bus building operation, Volgren, in Hammond Rd, Dandenong South, to state that Volgren would be building many of the new buses required to deliver the extended and new services, creating 30 new jobs directly. Production will increase from 165 to 200 new buses.

It is ironic that it was a Victorian Liberal government's meddling with bus revenue that prompted Ken Grenda to diversify the company's business to set up Volgren as a bus body repair business in 1977.

It is now the biggest bus building company in Australia, with operations interstate, and exporting to Asia and New Zealand.

IT all started in 1925 when returned World War 1 serviceman George Grenda used his savings of 100 pounds and loans from friends, brought a truck and set up a milk cartage business in Dandenong.

In his first week George Grenda took in 50 pounds. Within a year he had paid off his loans. He gradually extended his run into Gippsland

and became one of the largest milk carrier in the region.

George Grenda was a big man with hands like hams who played football in Tasmania before going to war. During World War 2 it was hard to find able-bodied workers who were sober enough to drive. George sometimes took desperate measures to get his men on the road. Family legend has it that when one driver arrived for work worse for drink George lifted him up by his heels and shook him until he sobered up.

In 1945 he sold the business to Colin McPherson and the milk run eventually became part of Consolidated Milk Transport Group.

George had to quit the heavy work involved with milk carting because he was having heart flutters related to being gassed in the war.

In July that year he bought a bus business consisting of four bus routes in the Dandenong area, land and a galvanised shed at 9 Foster St, Dandenong. He joked that now he wouldn't have to haul heavy steel milk cans aboard. His human "passengers" could get on by themselves.

George Grenda gradually expanded his business, buying out rival companies and adding to the land and buildings in Foster St. He won contracts for school bus services.

When industries such as GMH, Heinz and International Harvester came to Dandenong in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and the Housing Commission moved into Lyndale and Doveton business was good for Grenda's.

In 1961, after building a sound enterprise with more than 40 buses, George Grenda died. His sons Lance and Ken, who were already working for the family company, took over.

As the Dandenong region grew so too did Grenda's. Following a fact-finding visit by Ken Grenda to Europe in 1967 he came back with the idea of setting up tour and charter bus operations, and importing Mercedes-Benz coaches and Volvo and Scania coach chassis for the local routes.

The company bought Blue Line Coaches in Sydney and started offering one day and half-day tours.

It was such a success that TAA (later bought by

Qantas) and Mayne Nickless asked Ken Grenda to set up a national coach operation, AAT.

He became managing director of operations while his own bus operations were run by his manager Alan Clarke.

But the tour bus business was only a short-term venture for Ken Grenda. In 1976 the family company sold its coaches to AAT and Ken returned to Foster St.

The public bus system was undergoing turmoil with the State government's refusal to allow private operators to raise fares to meet wage increases of 23 per cent. Instead it subsidised paying passengers.

Grenda's Bus Services could see this would negatively impact on its bus operations and decided, wisely, to diversify into the travel industry, a fuel injection servicing company and the establishment of Volgren bus body repair business.

Building buses

Volvo in Sweden gave Volgren the rights to build extruded aluminium bus bodies. Previously buses had been built in heavy steel. It revolutionised bus building in Australia.

Volgren initially was building buses for only Grenda's, but other companies were impressed and asked Volgren to build buses for them.

But Grenda's and other bus companies were having major problems with the government's handling of the subsidies. They were not kept in line with inflation. Fares were fixed. A lot of companies went to the wall. Others could not afford to replace their fleet.

In 1983 the Cain government went further to control the bus industry and ruled that it would collect all fares and pay private bus companies their operating costs one month in advance.

At first the changes were good for Grenda's. Volgren received an order to build 50 new buses. It moved to a new factory in Hammond Rd.

But there was a change of Transport Minister. He refused to pay capital-related costs and put a moratorium on bus replacement. Companies could not

• CONTINUED P.13

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THE BIGGEST PRIVATELY-OWNED ...



• **LEFT** — Grenda's fleet of S. B. Bedford buses made an impressive line-up for this picture, taken in the mid-60s. The company started 35 years ago with a fleet of six buses. Now there are more than 100.

By **BOB SPENCER**

There have been many industrial and business success stories emanating from Dandenong, but perhaps one of the biggest is one you would least expect.

It's a business that is virtually taken for granted. Many of us make use of it and all of us see it in operation every day.

Humble start

The business is passenger transportation, and the company is Grenda's Bus Services.

From humble beginnings in 1945, the company has grown into the biggest privately-owned bus service in Australia.

And with the advent of the new aluminium bus — the latest in a long line of innovations — Grenda's is destined for even bigger things.

The Grenda's success story hasn't been without its problems, or lean times.

In the mid-70s, when the Government tightened its belt and reduced subsidies to bus operators, many companies almost went to the wall.

FORESIGHT

However, Grenda's survived, mainly due to the expertise and foresight of its co-managing directors and equal owners, Ken and Lance Grenda.

Today, with such subsidiary companies as Peninsula Bus Lines, BJ Diesel Fuel Injection Services, Powercell, Springvale Auto Electrics, Dumar Trading, Setright Machines and Landanda Tours, Grenda's passengers aren't the only ones who are going places.

The latest — and biggest — edition to the fold is Volgren Industries, set up three years ago specifically to make the aluminium bus body.

From its beginning with just four routes, six buses and a galvanised iron shed, Grenda Bus Services alone has grown to about 180 employees and 110 buses, operating as far away as Inverloch.

The business was started by the late Mr. George Grenda who, from the 1920s, operated a milk carrying business with just one truck.

In the 1940s, Mr. Grenda, together with his wife Elsie, moved to Oakleigh where he continued the milk carrying business.

However, he later decided that he wanted something quieter and less physically exacting.

PARTNERS

So, on 6 October, 1945, a partnership of G. F. Grenda and E. G. Grenda purchased from O. C. Shave the licence rights to the following routes:

Dandenong — Berwick, Dandenong — Oakleigh, Dandenong — Cheltenham, Dandenong — Mordialloc.

Included in the purchase was a block of land at 9 Foster Street a galvanised

iron shed, and six buses — two Bedford, two Ford and two International.

In December, 1946, an additional route was started between Oakleigh and Ferntree Gully and in 1949 the partnership gained its first school contract, from Scoreby to the Dandenong secondary schools.

The year 1951 was one of remarkable growth. In that year, the partnership was enlarged to include the four children of the senior partners.

On the 5 April 1951, a block of land in Atherton Road, Oakleigh, was purchased as a site for a future bus depot. This land comprised an area of about 30,000 square feet.

On 16 May 1951, the existing Dandenong town service was purchased from F. Sherry. This involved the Town Service rights, charter rights in Dandenong, three OB Bedford buses and land and another galvanised iron shed adjoining the existing Dandenong depot.

SCHOOLS

Late in 1951, Pakenham consolidated school was founded and the partnership was successful in securing contracts from the Education Department for the first five buses operating to the school. By June 1951, 21 buses were in operation.

In 1952, three more school contracts were obtained at Pakenham and, as a result, land adjoining the school was bought in McGregors Road, Pakenham, and a brick veneer building erected for the servicing of these vehicles.

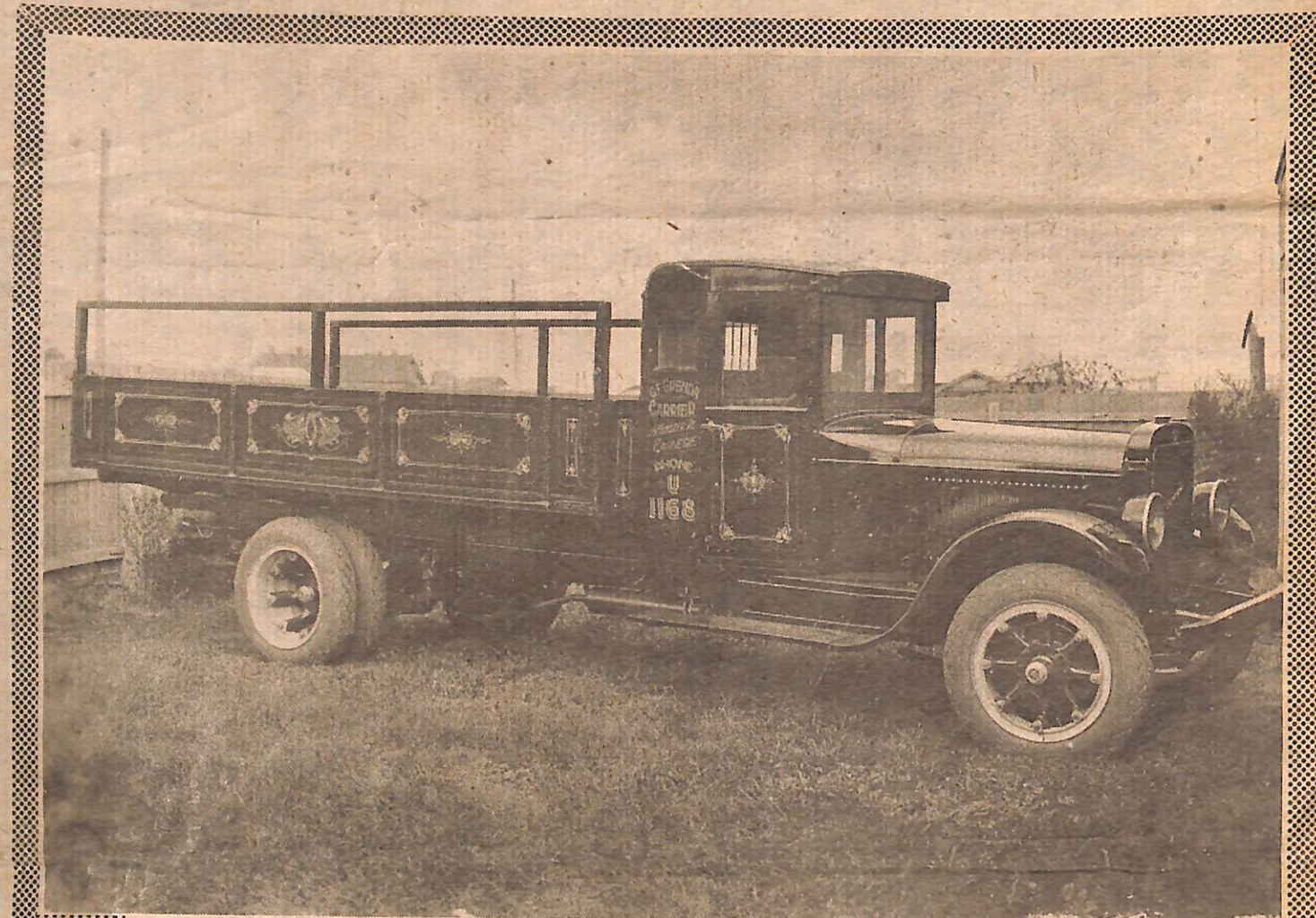
The year 1955 saw the next main move forward. In that year, two Education Department contracts were gained into the Dandenong secondary schools — Harkaway and Koo-wee-rup — and the Housing Commission and big industry came to Dandenong.

International Harvester and Heinz were established and General Motors Holden started. The Lyndale commission area was established and Doveton started.

The bus fleet has risen to 27 by June 1955.

In 1956, two more Education Department contracts were secured — one from Cranbourne into Dandenong and the other into Pakenham.

July 1957 saw a major re-routing of local services in Dandenong to serve the growing commission areas that were proving to be excellent bus users.



• **ABOVE** — The start of it all — the truck the late Mr George Grenda used in the 1920s to cart milk. Two decades later, he began a bus service that today is the biggest privately-owned service in Australia.

THE GREENDA

On 11 August 1958, the rights of the Dandenong-Frankston service were purchased from Peninsula Bus Lines, which had gone into liquidation.

SERVICING

By June 1959, the fleet had grown to 42 vehicles and parking and servicing facilities were inadequate, so during 1959 and 1960 negotiations were made and two homes and a vacant lot adjoining the rear of the existing Dandenong depot were purchased.

In September 1960, the Myer Centre at Chadstone was established and rights were obtained to extend the Dandenong - Oakleigh route there.

In the meantime, the houses bought by the company were demolished and work begun on the erection of a new depot.

An additional house completing the block was bought in October 1960.

The new depot was completed in June 1961 and this meant the transfer of the administration centre from the house of G. F. Grenda at 38 Warrigal Road, Oakleigh, and the use of the land in Atherton Road Oakleigh, as the Oakleigh bus depot.

September 1961 marked the death of G. F. Grenda.

September 1962 saw another major re-routing of local Dandenong services, due to the area now being large enough for routes to be of a radial nature.

During February 1963, the partnership was successful in securing three contracts with Haileybury college, which had established a new school in Springvale Road, Keysborough.

FIRST DIESEL

The year 1953 saw the introduction of the first complete new diesel vehicle. The fleet then stood at 53 vehicles.

From 1970 to 1975 the company devoted much of its time to developing and expanding its coach tour business.

In 1969 the company had bought a luxurious Mercedes-Benz, complete with such comforts as air conditioning, air suspension, taped music, heat-reflecting windows and public address system.

The coach was one of the first of its type to be brought to Australia and led to a virtual revolution in coach tours throughout the country.

Many tour routes all over Australia were developed by Grenda, including the famous Gunbarrel route from Alice Springs to Perth.

Major changes took place to the company in the mid-70s.

In 1975 it changed from a partnership to a private company, when some of the family members left, leaving brothers Ken and Lance.

The company was called Grenda Nominees Pty Ltd, operating as Grenda's Bus Services.

TOURS

The coach tour side of the business was sold to Trans Australia Airlines and Mayne Nickless and now operates as AAT.

Ken Grenda, as well as being managing-director for Grenda's, went with AAT also as managing-director for two years.

The following year Mr. Neville Raffin joined the company as general manager and Grenda's began to branch out into other businesses.

Many bus companies were facing hard times with increases in operating costs.

Grenda's, along with other bus operators, is a

labor-intensified industry with teams of drivers, mechanics, electricians, maintenance men and other personnel.

Many operators faced the prospect of going under because of the increase in costs.

Just as the price of a newspaper comes nowhere near to covering the paper's production costs, so the price of a bus far does not cover the operator's running costs.

SUBSIDIES

The Government stepped in and began paying subsidies to help operators stay viable.

Things went well until the Government started to tighten its belt and reduced some of the subsidies.

While other companies found it hard going, Grenda, through the foresight of Ken and Lance, branched out into other areas.

The first addition was the fuel injection service, which could be used by all heavy transportation vehicles.

That service now includes some of the most modern equipment available, including a chassis dynamometer used for analysing faults in a heavy vehicle.

Other companies have since come under the Grenda wing, making the whole business a multi-million dollar concern.

And just how much is it all worth? Well, if you wanted to buy just the bus service alone, you wouldn't get much change out of about \$6 million.

The buses themselves have an expected life span of about 10 years on "track-work".

After that, they are placed on school runs where they don't have to work so hard.

STRINGENT

Routes and areas for bus operators are set by the Transport Regulation Board and stringent requirements have to be met.

And just as television stations have to re-apply for licences, so too do bus operators — every seven years, in fact.

The "shop window" for any bus company is undoubtedly the driver himself.

As Mr. Raffin explains: "We take pride in meeting the demands set by our passengers."

• **CONT. ON PAGE 15**

VOLGREN'S REALLY ON THE MOVE

Volgren Industries, of Dandenong, born in 1977, is another chapter in the Grenda success story.

Volgren has created a significant export potential and employment opportunities within Australia with its bus project with the new Hess system aluminium body.

Volvo own the world marketing rights for the Hess system, which originated in Switzerland, and in Australia will only be available on the Volvo bus chassis.

Volgren — an amalgamation of Volvo and Grenda — are the sole agents in Australia for Volvo buses with the Volvo chassis and the Volgren body.

TWO PLANTS

The new-style bus has proven to be so popular that the company has had to move to bigger premises three times in as many years.

It is currently located in two factories in Brooklyn Avenue, Dandenong.

Three of the new buses are already operating in Dandenong, with a fourth in Frankston.

Four articulated versions of the bus have also been built and sold — three to the Metropolitan Transport Trust, of Tasmania, and one to New South Wales.

The setting up of Volgren Industries was a move by Grenda's Bus Services' managing-director, Mr Ken Grenda, to diversify into other areas, because profitability had gone out of expanding the bus operation.

MARRIED

Firstly B.J. Diesel Fuel Injection Service was taken under the Grenda wing. Then a bus body repair division was set up, the Volvo bus chassis franchise acquired and the Hess bus construction taken on.

The chassis are imported and assembled in Queensland.

The aluminium bodies are also imported, but in completely "knocked-down" form.

They are assembled at Volgren, where the body is "married" to the chassis.

The bus is then "finished", with interior design, fittings and materials.

Mr Neville Raffin, general manager of Grenda's Bus Services, says the aluminium body is designed for low maintenance, longer life and better fuel consumption, being lighter than the conventional steel bodies.

He says that although the engine in the Volvo chassis is turbo-charged, the company is experimenting with fuel additives to improve fuel consumption even more.

As well as the aluminium body project, Volgren Industries is also a bus body-builder and repairer and bus seat manufacturer.

Other operations of the industry include panel-beating and car body repairs, sales and service of ticket machines and sales and service for Konvekta air-conditioning.

The company can also design or alter any type of bus body, including specialist work such as the installation of wheelchair lifts on buses.

DESIGNERS

The company has designed special bus bodies for organisations for the handicapped, the armed forces and VicRail.

Employment figures have more than doubled in the three years the company has been operating.

Mr Raffin says: "At Christmas last year we had 15 people. Now we are already up to 35 employees."

"It's certainly a winner, and as sales increase, so will the staff."

The staff at Volgren include body-builders, sheet metal workers, boilermakers, welders, motor trimmers, mechanics and auto-electricians.

Also included are a number of apprentices, who are already proving to be an asset to the company.

APPRENTICE

For the last two years Volgren have produced the top body-building apprentice in Victoria.

One of these apprentices is now a leading hand with the company.

Mr Raffin says Volgren are currently pushing to have regulations changed in Victoria to allow articulated buses to operate.

A selling point of the new aluminium bus is passenger appeal.

The interior is attractive and spacious, with ample width of aisle and door areas, comfortable seating and step heights at a level that will not cause elderly people any problems.

The buses are extremely well ventilated and have large windows.

Low-ribbed melded fabric, which comes in a choice of eight colors, has been used as a seat covering because of its serviceable nature and comfort qualities.

The same material is also used to line the interior walls of the bus.

The seat backs are made from Marakesh, which will not allow biro or felt pens to penetrate, so decreasing the risk of vandalism.

SAFETY

Mr Raffin says the new body has been built with safety in mind.

The body is much stronger than conventional bodies and visibility is greater.

The buses cost around \$70,000 each and Volgren's aim is to produce a bus from start to finish within 1,000 hours.

STORY

• ABOVE — The interior of the articulated version of the aluminium bus produced by Volgren Industries. The buses are already in use in Hobart and New South Wales and it is hoped Victorian regulations will soon be amended to allow their operation here.

• CONT. FROM PAGE 14

"Our aim is to run on time with a well presented vehicle and driver."

"We carry an average of six million passengers a year and on average we would receive about two complaints a day."

"The most common one is because of a misunderstanding between the passenger and the driver."

"What a lot of motorists don't realise is that the driver has 30 passengers on board who all want to get where they're going on time."

SAFE

"The increase in traffic makes it more difficult to run the bus on schedule."

Grenda's have an almost exceptional safety record.

Only one bad accident involving a bus has ever occurred and that was about 15 years ago.

The buses are given safety checks every 5,000 kilometre by the company and are inspected by the TRB every year.

Back-up crews include their own mechanics, designers, electricians, cleaners, upholsterers and other maintenance people.

Another problem that in the past has been faced by

Grenda's is vandalism, although Mr Raffin says that, thankfully, most of the incidents have been "fairly minor".

Vandalism occurs, it seems, towards the end of school terms, when the culprits are getting restless and bored.

GRAFFITI

Most incidents involve graffiti and seat-slashing, although there have been reported cases of bus fire-extinguishers being sprayed around the vehicle.

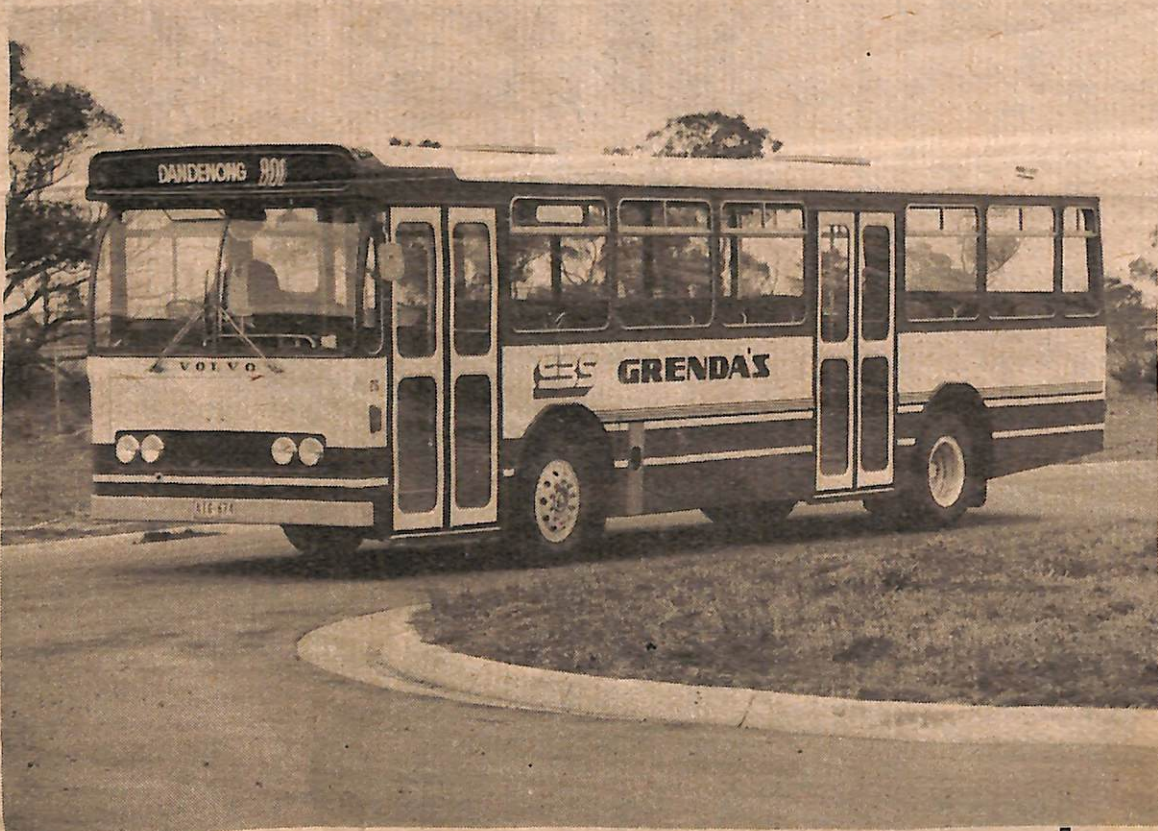
The advent of the aluminium bus will go far to alleviating the problem of vandalism, because of its design and choice of materials.

The aluminium body is built on to a Volvo bus chassis.

The body is built, designed and finished by Grenda which, trading as Volgren Industries, is the sole Australian agent for the revolutionary new buses.

So, as the whole of the vehicle industry moves into a new and exciting phase, the Dandenong company is up with the leaders.

And, as Mr Raffin would quip: "We're really going places!"



• ABOVE — The new aluminium bus, produced by Volgren Industries, of Dandenong. Three of the buses are already in service in Dandenong, with a fourth operating for Peninsula Bus Lines, Frankston. Volgren was formed three years ago, marking another chapter in the Grenda success story.

GREND A. — The Funeral Service for Mr Lance Grenda will be held at St James The Less Church, cnr Nepean Hwy and Koetong Pde, Mt Eliza, on FRIDAY (Nov. 3, 2006) at 12.30 p.m.

A Private Cremation will follow

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Royal Flying Doctor Service. Envelopes will be available at the Church.

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GREND A

George 'Lance'

22-02-1930

27-10-2006

Loved husband of Raie for 52 years.

Proud father to Ngarie, Rodney, Trevor, Beverley and Ian.

Grandfather to eleven and great grandfather to two.

Coach captain, Explorer, Driver, Carpenter, Gardener and Friend.

Gone now for the final drive.

Always In Our Hearts

GREND A

George Lancelot (Lance)

Oct. 27 2006

Loved brother of Ken, brother-in-law of Margaret, Uncle Lance of Geoff, Jan, Alison, Max, Scott and families

FONDLY REMEMBERED

Loved brother of Les (dec.), brother-in-law of Ann and uncle of Elizabeth and Tim

Loved brother of Phyllis, brother-in-law of Peter, uncle of Bronwyn, Heather, Margaret, Keith and families

The last bus has gone

A respected part owner of Grenda's Bus Services for 48 years

Deepest sympathy from all past and present employees to Raie and family

GREND A. — G. L. Lance.
Goodbye Dad, love you lots
— From daughter Ngarie, son-in-law Phillip and grandchildren Lorlent, Riearll and Aerial

GREND A. — Lance.
Great friend
Great times
Great memories
—Graham and Lisel Riley

GREND A. — Lance.
Many wonderful memories of our outback experiences and lasting friendships.
— The Girl Guides Safari Group

ON ROUTE FOR SHARED SUCCESS

To achieve recognition as a best boss, load up with hard work, strap on respect for staff, add a splash of generosity and don't leave your family behind. Report: Jessica Gardner

● A conference speaker talking about family succession spurred Ken Grenda to "get my act together" but it was a piece of advice from a friend that had a more significant influence on the bus baron's outlook on business and life.

In 2005, Grenda visited a friend, Mayer Page, just before he passed away after a struggle with cancer. Page, who ran family travel companies AAT King's Tours and Australian Pacific Touring and was a long time bus industry colleague of Grenda's, told his mate: "Ken you're a good fella, but you work too hard. Life is more about memories than money, so make sure you have your memories."

The influence of Page's words can be seen in the decision by Ken Grenda and his family to sell the bus companies Grenda Transit Management and Australian Transit Enterprises and bus manufacturer Volgren in late 2011, which was 66 years after Ken's father George began the business.

Tasmanian born George Grenda left school at 14. After service in World War I and a short stopover in London, he returned to Melbourne. He brought back a nasty shrapnel wound and some basic qualifications in bookkeeping and petrol mechanics. In 1924, he bought a milk truck and flourished in the dairy industry, building his fleet to 14 trucks in 20 years.

In 1945, when Ken was 13 years old, George changed tack and bought four bus routes in Melbourne's outer suburbs. That was the beginning of Grenda's Bus Services. The business operated from the family home in Oakleigh, "which was pretty much the end of civilisation as far as Melbourne went", Ken remembers. He and his three siblings would count coins around the kitchen table and "every time the telephone rang, you answered for a timetable inquiry", he remembers.

Ken was "pretty smart" by his own estimations and after finishing at Melbourne High he went on to study commerce at the University of Melbourne. "Probably like most young guys, I didn't have a clue what I wanted to be and dad, sort of, being pretty smart, said, 'Well do accounting and commerce. It will stand you in good stead whatever'," he says.

Labour was in short supply following World War II and Ken remembers getting a bus driver's licence as soon as he was able. During university and while working for a small accounting firm, which later went on to become part of Ernst & Young, Ken would work in the family business. It was a natural progression when he joined his father full time in 1955, at the aged of 23.

At that stage, the company just operated bus routes but would move into importing bus chassis and then manufacturing bus bodies in the 1970s. The family was the first to begin importing Volvo, Mercedes-Benz and Scania coach chassis – "We had a fair impact on public transport, because those vehicles are now the staple vehicles of all major bus fleets around," Ken says.

They later formed an agreement with Volvo to build bus bodies, hence the beginning of manufacturer Volgren.

The 1970s also marked the Whitlam era, which brought public transport grants and fare subsidies. It wasn't the first time the Grendas' business has been affected by public policy. While the Whitlam effect "caused a fair degree of change", the Victorian Labor government's attempt to make bus operators state contractors in the 1980s almost brought the family to its knees.

The stoush with the government stung the family manufacturing business in particular, because the uncertainty meant buses were not

being replaced. "We had the crazy situation where we had a bus building factory and we weren't allowed to build buses," Ken says.

The business fought a legal battle for almost four years. Ken's youngest son, Scott, who was in university at the time says: "I watched Dad age for the first time."

In the early 1980s, Scott's eldest brother, Geoff, joined the business after a stint at Hamersley Iron and started using his mechanical engineering skills to push the manufacturing business forward.

Scott followed Geoff into the business in 1989 after working at South Pacific Tyres.

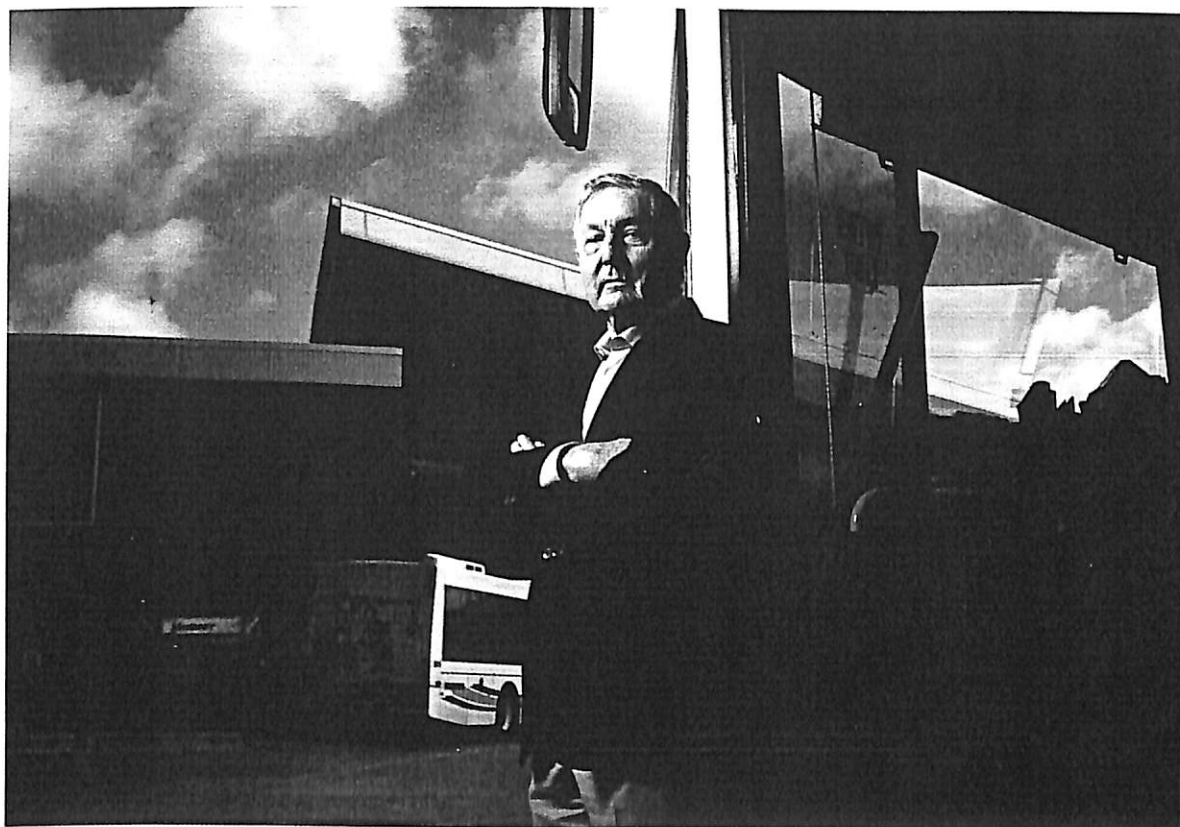
The business recovered swiftly from the government stoush. But in the early '90s, it was struggling with cash flow and high levels of debt. As well as acquiring a number of small bus operators, it had diversified into farming and travel agencies, which were run by Scott's siblings. Scott says although it was difficult for his other brother and two sisters, the family decided to stop focusing on those divisions and return to its core business – running buses and manufacturing. His siblings accepted the strategic switch without hesitation, "because they knew that the business as a whole would benefit from it," he says.

It was around this time that Ken began to think seriously about succession planning. He took the entire family and a facilitator on a trip to Fiji in 1998. "We sat down and discussed what we wanted to do as a family," he says.

The Grendas decided to make a plan and review it each year.

"We involve our immediate family in major decisions," Scott says. "Even those that aren't working in the business have an awareness of what is going on."

Continued on page 50



Multiskilled: Ken Grenda
(net wealth \$245 million)
counts people skills as
one of his best attributes



**EVERY
EMPLOYEE
CALLED ME
KEN AND I
GOT AS
MUCH
RESPECT AS
ANYBODY**

Continued from page 49

The annual family trip has led to a complete change in that document over time, Scott says. "Everybody on the very first Fiji trip said, 'It's all about the business, so all the money should be reinvested back into the business,'" he says. "As time went on and as the families got older and we had our own kids and they were growing older, there was recognition that those families also needed something out of the business."

In the late '90s, the family decided on a management structure in which Ken would sit as executive chairman, Geoff would run Volgren and Scott would run the bus operations, which by this time had been rebranded as Grenda Transit Management. In 2003, Geoff took over as chairman. There was a plan for Scott to take over in about a decade but as with the planning document, priorities changed.

Scott, a father of two boys, was keen to spend time with his family "which meant we needed to look at where the next generation would come from in terms of running the family business".

While Geoff's eldest son, Thomas, was working as a mechanical engineer at Volgren, the rest of the fourth generation of cousins were still in high school or just finishing university. "They've all got the intelligence to work in the business," Scott says. "I suppose when Geoff and I were introduced to the business, it was turning over \$30 million or \$40 million a year, it's now turning over around \$500 million a year. It's a completely different business and for a 25 year

old to come into a senior role in that, it would be much more difficult."

So in November 2011, the family sold operator Grenda Transit Management to the Cornwall family's Ventura Bus Lines for a sum thought to be about \$400 million. It offloaded its 50 per cent stake in Australian Transit Enterprises, which with GTM had 1300 buses in Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth. And in December 2011, it sold 75 per cent of Volgren to Brazilian manufacturer Marcopolo. Volgren built about 600 buses a year.

Ken, Scott and Geoff were thrust into the spotlight as "Australia's best bosses" after giving their 1800 employees nearly \$20 million in bonuses following the transactions.

Although he's a trained bean counter, Ken counts "people skills" as one of his best attributes. He says it has always been his family's way to be generous to employees. His mother, Elsie, was always called on to feed hungry bus drivers and every Christmas each employee would get a piece of her Christmas cake.

"I guess that moved onto our generation and the fact that when I started I was also doing everything," he says. "I was driving buses, washing buses, filling buses and probably learnt to relate to all the employees at their level. One of the guys in the bus industry down here in Melbourne, who was ex-Air Force, he and I used to constantly have discussions. His point of view was you couldn't have respect unless they called you 'Mister' and my view was totally the

opposite. Everybody from the youngest employee called me Ken and I think I got as much respect as anybody."

Ken is keen to point out that his generosity extends to family. The sale proceeds have been split six ways – for he and his wife Margaret, their five children and their families. "We've taken it down through the family because it made sense that you don't do a Gina Rinehart and the kids inherit when they're 80," he says.

As for what next, Ken is taking his friend Mayer Page's advice. The entire family – which now counts nine grandchildren and hits the 20 mark when they're all together – has recently travelled together to a "magnificent" game park in South Africa and an "amazing" trip along the Kimberley Coast in Western Australia. Ken and Margaret also have a holiday house in Sorrento.

But it's not all fun in the sun. "I enjoy going to work," the 79 year old says. "We've still got 25 per cent of Volgren and the guys that bought Grenda Transit Management are trying to keep me involved to some degree, which I'll do. At the same time we had to clear out of our offices fairly quickly, so we've got boxes and boxes of paper. It will be six months by the time we clear our year end accounts and get past the tax man. And some where in all of that we've got a reasonable sum of money we've got to do things with so we've got an income."

And what about time to relax? "I will relax a bit more if Richmond start winning a few footy matches," he laughs. **BRW**

rs, October 28, 1970 — 9

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NEEDS 1970-28 OCT

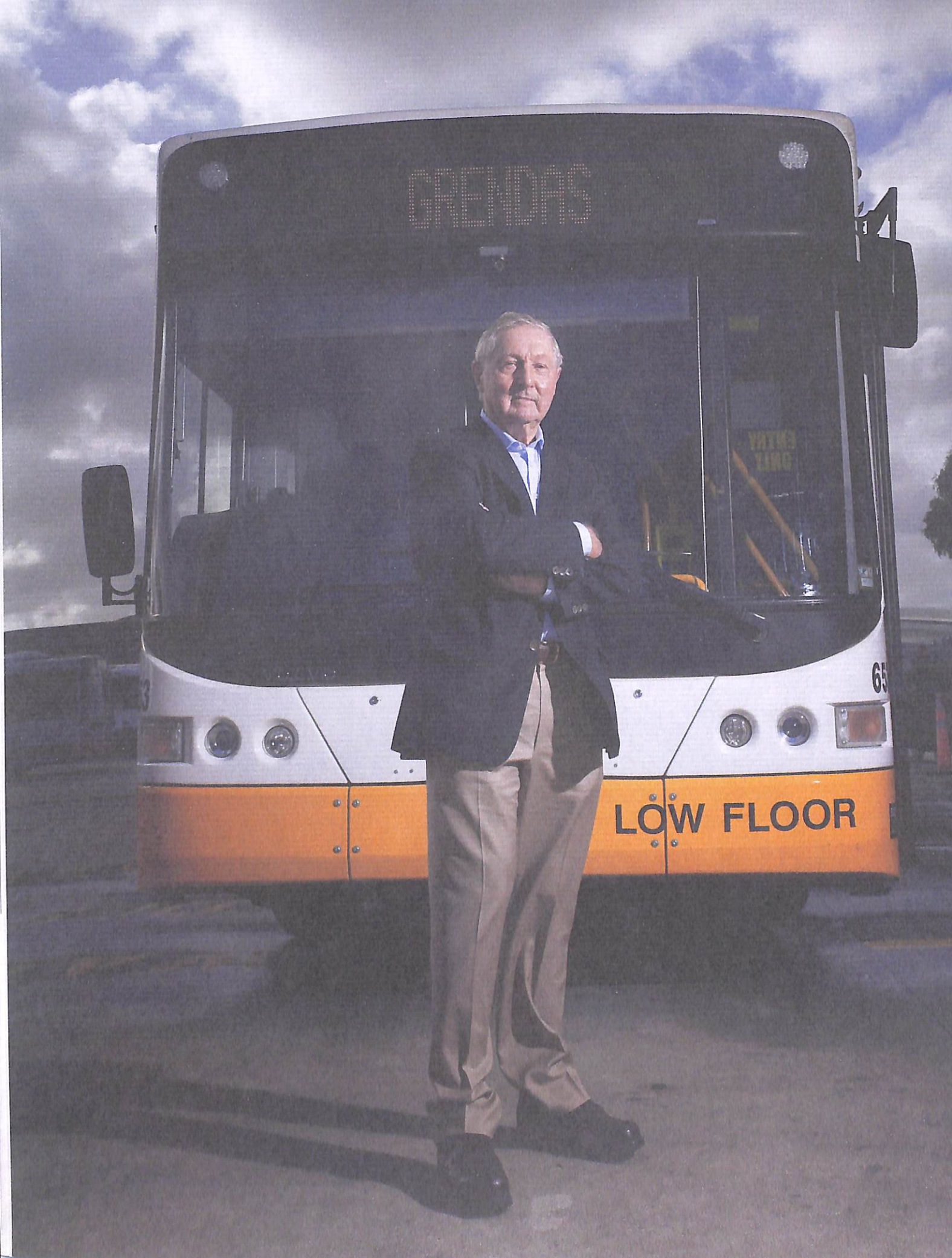
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NEEDS 1970-28 OCT



Stabbing arrest

A HALLAM man, 32, was arrested and released pending inquiries last Tuesday following a vicious attack on an elderly Endeavour Hills woman.

The woman, 73, was inside her home on Georgette Crescent on 21 May when a man entered the house about 3.30pm and stabbed her in the neck before stealing her credit card.

Detectives believe the man tried to use the card at an ATM on the corner of Lonsdale and Clow streets, Dandenong, at 4.05pm the same day.

The woman is still in hospital.

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Ken Grenda's family name will return to central Dandenong.

Digital image: SAMI LEWIS

Road honour

By CASEY NEILL

THE Grenda name will once again take pride of place in central Dandenong - and Ken Grenda couldn't be happier.

"It's an honour to have something named after you, whatever it happens to be," he said.

City of Greater Dandenong councillors unanimously endorsed the name for a road running north-south between George Street and Halpin Way to be created during the Revitalising Central Dandenong program, immediately east of Rudduck Street.

A Grenda Lane previously existed south of George Street, along the former Grenda bus depot site, but was closed when the CBD rejuvenation process started.

"I guess I sort of quite enjoyed it last time, so the situation's no different," Ken told The Journal.

He said his family also welcomed the honour.

"We've all got a close association with Dandenong. They'd be pretty rapt to see it return," he said.

Ken's father George started the business in 1945 in a galvanized shed at 9 Foster Street.

Ken drove buses around Dandenong during his youth, including the school run from Scoresby to Dandenong.

"Every winter the Dandenong Creek used to flood in three spots," he said.

"I had to learn all the ways to detour around it. The kids loved it."

Ken sold the transport monolith for \$500 million last year and shared \$15 million among his employees.

"We have been lucky to grow with Dandenong and the surrounding area," he said.

"We have expanded, bought other companies and diversified, but we've only been able to do that because we had very good people the entire time."

Ken was named the City of Greater Dandenong Corporate Citizen of the Year on Australia Day last year and joined the Honour Roll of the Victorian Manufacturing Hall of Fame.

Councillor John Kelly said the family had been part of the city for a long time.

"My dad's 90 and he recalls the day they started in this city," he said.

"I think this is really appropriate."

DANDENONG

Housing little hope

Hayley Sultanie

MACPHERSON St residents are at a loss as to how to protect their neighbourhood from high-density development, given they have no appeal rights at the state's peak tribunal.

Homeowners will join Greater Dandenong Council officers at a meeting on Wednesday to oppose a three-storey, 12-unit development at 30 MacPherson St.

RESIDENTS CONCERNED ABOUT DEVELOPMENT

City planning, design and amenity director Jody Bosman said the application was exempt from appeal rights at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal because it fell within a Residential 2 Zone, which promoted higher-density development.

Homeowner Tim Evans said residents did not want

large, bulky buildings towering over their homes and creating parking issues.

"Councillors can refuse the application... but then it's off to VCAT and you wonder how it will go there," he said. "My gut feeling is that it's not going to be a great result."

Resident Sandra Mitchell said the street was sought

after for its suburban character so close to Dandenong's CBD.

"It just seems as if we've totally lost any say and we are a bit lost as to where to go," she said.

Development designer Dino Ramiz said objections focused on zoning issues rather than the building's design.

DID YOU KNOW

The objections are:

- The building is too bulky
- There will be car parking issues
- There will be extra bins on the street on bin night
- The development does not fit the neighbourhood character

DANDENONG

Planting lifts up the creek

DANDENONG Creek will get a facelift this spring.

Melbourne Water is preparing a \$1.6 million project to revegetate a 10km stretch of the creek with 14,000 native plants.

Regional delivery manager Rod Clifford said the water authority had cleared weeds and invasive species that were choking the creek and competing with native plants earlier this year.

Mr Clifford said he hoped the project would attract native species to the creek, including the protected Macquarie perch and platypus.

The authority will also spend about \$350,000 annually to remove 500 cubic metres of rubbish from the creek.

SPRINGVALE SOUTH

Community rallies to help a family in need

FAMILY and friends are rallying to help a family of four that lost everything when their Springvale South home was destroyed by fire.

The O'Donnell family — Danielle and Kevin, and their children Seth, 10, and Milly, 9 — were left with only the clothes on their backs when the blaze tore through their Athol Rd home on August 23.

Mrs O'Donnell was home at the time of the fire and said she was alerted when the family dog Danny kept pestering her as she slept.

"Probably the third time I thought I better get up and when I came out it was just an inferno," she said.

"You don't know what to save and you don't have time to think. I just grabbed my handbag and ran out."

Mrs O'Donnell called for Danny, but sadly he stayed inside the house curled up on a bed and died.

The family are now taking refuge with Mrs O'Donnell's parents.

Close friend Bianca Harmer said she had started a trust fund and was gathering clothing and other essential items for the family.

"Danielle has done so much for the community — she's nursed a friend



Danielle O'Donnell with daughter Milly, 9, in their Springvale South house destroyed by fire.

Picture: DETLEV RUEFF N1005403.

through cancer, she helps her elderly neighbour and organises fundraisers for the Cancer Council — and we need to get the word out that these people need help now," Ms Harmer said.

Mrs O'Donnell said she was overwhelmed by the support.

"I'm saying I've lost everything but we haven't. You realise your family and your friends are paramount and if you've got that, you've got everything," she said.

Can you help the O'Donnells? Tell us at dandenongleader.com.au

HELP THE O'DONNELLS

- Donate to the trust fund through NAB Bank Keysborough, Giving Back to the O'Donnells, BSB: 083297, Account: 142587273-
- A trivia night to help the

family will be held at Athol Rd Primary School, on October 31 at 6.30pm
 ■ Facebook.com/LetsGiveBackToDanni
 ■ Phone Bianca Harmer, 0414 300 582

DANDENONG SOUTH

Volgren staff plan to strike

VOLGREN workers are planning to strike outside the company's Dandenong South factory tomorrow in their bid for better pay and conditions.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union vehicle division organiser Ashley Mayne said the union would meet with Volgren today to discuss the renewal of the workers' enterprise bargaining agreement.

About 90 of the site's 120 workers picketed for eight hours on August 27.

Tomorrow, employees plan to hold two stoppages of four hours each.

Mr Mayne said employees were calling for a 5 per cent wage rise, but had been offered a three per cent wage increase for each year of the three-year agreement.

Volgren general manager of sales and marketing Tony Kerr said the industry was facing tough times, with 40 per cent of the bus manufacturing market in Australia coming from imports.

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ARCHIVES AND RESEARCH DIVISION



COTTLES BRIDGE 2009



The 105 year old building that houses The Offering is innocuous enough; a stranger might pass without a second thought. Yet it hasn't always been this way, the old church and hall were once a destination for congregations and community groups. The Offering evokes this diverse history of use one more time, revealing traces of the building's past as a site for worship and community gathering. Yet Rowlands does not shy away from the building's recent decline, or its final fate, even as he offers up a form of temporary redemption by way of art installation. The project's title registers the ambivalence many of us feel when a historic building is condemned — the old church is to be sacrificed, offered up in the name of progress, but Rowlands allows the building to show what it still has to offer as a site for exploring themes of memory and history, revealing the formal and aesthetic potential contained within the building itself.

The challenge is to evoke the rich history of the building and signal its fate within the context of artistic practice. A church and a community hall; such spaces are easily over-determined in their meaning. There's a temptation to make a series of predictable gestures which might symbolise the decline of community, the absence of the spiritual in contemporary life. Yet what is immediately notable is how Rowlands avoids these easy moves. Intervening in this space is as much a question of what not to do. Inside, the artist's presence is clear, upon entering one can notice a series of cuts made into the structure of the building, into its walls, the ceiling, and upon the stage. What is also obvious is that the building is in a state of abandonment. There are no floors, merely dirt and the remains of a set of wooden stumps, some erect, some fallen over. Amidst the dirt and stumps lie random objects, junk mostly in the form of empty bottles, a car battery, old wires and tape. Grass and weeds have invaded over time and died on entry.

It is confronting to see a church in this state, one is reminded of Freud's observation that 'dirt is matter in the wrong place'. One can find precursors, perhaps Dubuffet's 1940's efforts to rehabilitate the status of dirt for art, but Rowlands refuses any simple choice between the base and the spiritual. Instead he stages a constantly shifting relation between them. Dirt is our constant companion; we try and raise ourselves above it but ultimately come down again. The Offering reminds us of such efforts, playing with basic materials but also with the symbolism of the church — which has always had an ambivalent relation towards matter

Generally if artists stage installations with dirt or other object matter, they occur within the sanitised spaces of the gallery, aesthetic heaps ready for our consumption. Rowlands has chosen to leave much of the building in the state of disarray in which he encountered it. This sets up a tension between the space functioning as a sort of giant found object, and Rowlands' more overt actions within it. Two different sorts of entropy occur, the 'natural' loss of order that results from neglect, the accumulation of rubbish and weeds, and the artificial and more aesthetic form of entropy staged by the artist through his numerous cuts, where aspects of the walls and ceiling are peeled away to form sensuous shapes. We oscillate between the 'base materialism' of the floor, whose refuse and dirt resist the pleasure of the gaze, and the splices and shapes more readily identifiable as the 'art' part.

Many elements of Rowlands' project work with a notion of a minimal difference, between presence and absence, between human creativity and the natural patterns of entropy, between the spiritual and the profane. Take the front room of the building, the oldest part that housed the church proper. At first glance it has all the signs of dereliction and decay; no floor, litter, frayed carpet peeling walls, and graffiti, but when we look again we can see signs

of the artist's presence. There is a large diagonal cut beginning on the southern wall and extending across the stage floor. The material from the wall and floor has been carefully peeled away and laid across the ground in front of the stage forming a curved shape. This shape remains attached to the building but it gains new status as sculptural form. We separate it out from the other objects that recede into the background and begin to notice how it curves one way then another, the way it catches the light. The building is falling apart, yet we know that this object, while it mimics the process of collapse, is not simply another sign of decay. The same applies with the gaps in the floor and the wall where the wood has been peeled from. Nature does not work in this way, and we recognise the signs of human intervention. We might look upon the gap as contiguous with the sculptural form spread across the floor, or we might regard it as a sort of aesthetic void, projecting existential concerns (we are in a church after all) onto it. More practically, we might note the different materials that have gone into the building's construction, noting that the church is a combination of original material and later processes of layering and cladding. From here one might imagine the different groups that occupied the building at these different stages of construction. The point is that Rowlands' intervention marks a point of minimal difference, where we project a different set of concerns – artistic, social, and philosophical – upon *these elements that are immanent to the building.*

The large room at the back of the building has also been subjected to these cutting and peeling processes, but there is almost a formal inversion at work where the roof and walls have had a strip peeled back rather than the floor and wall. Those hunting for symbolism might identify such cuts in a former community hall as representing the fraying of the social fabric, but what is equally significant is how the artist creates an effect in the back room

that functions as an inverted mirror of the front, allowing us to think of the building in different ways at the level of its form.

Other aspects of *The Offering* are more concerned with the historical signs of the building as church. Moving around the space one encounters various iterations of the cross, present, suggested, distorted, even imagined, yet never quite expected. The front room has a single piece of plaster peeled away and left hanging, high up above the stage. The plaster isn't even in the shape of a cross yet it would be hard to think otherwise. Occupying a visually and spiritually significant location, the plaster droops and hangs, evoking the crucifixion. It still has nails attached to it, in case our imaginations needed further prodding. Yet it's not a cross, it's just a part of the wall. Rowlands has simply created the opportunity for us to project onto it. Where we go from there depends on our disposition, we might read this as signifying the spirituality immanent in all things, or we might take the drooping wood as a sign of the decline of the traditional church, the withering of patriarchal authority, and so on.

A similar process occurs in the large room that housed the community hall, where Rowlands has cut the cross bar out from a cupboard and placed the cut and reformed wood in a smaller room at the rear of the building. Looking at the cupboard now the cross shape is striking, it's hard now to see the cupboard without this cross. Was it always there, hidden in the doors, or did it only appear once the artist made his cuts? Such questions can lead one into a sort of analytical overdrive. Looking around the building one soon finds cross-shapes everywhere, in the material of doors and walls, in the bars guarding the windows from intruders, in the patterns of linoleum. At certain times of the day the light enters the building and casts a shadow across one of Rowlands' unfurled shapes on the floor at a crosswise angle. We know that the building is past its prime, parts





of it are downright ugly, and that it's condemned, yet in a curious way Rowlands manages to create a semiotic richness that properly inhabits spiritual places, where everything has significance, a ritual function, and a further level of meaning. Even in this abandoned place old oppositions haunt us. The material that Rowlands has cut out and peeled back have coiled serpentine forms, suggesting that one cannot have the cross without the snake being too far off.

This suggestive mutability occurs elsewhere in *The Offering*. In a small space that divides the front and back rooms, the artist has made a cut in the carpet to reveal the existence of a baptism bath that lies beneath. The contrast is striking, the frayed mission brown carpet against the cool, almost pristine tiles and steps of the bath. We don't see the bath as a whole, nor can we touch it, we only get a hint of it through peering through the narrow slit the artist has made. Given that so much of the surrounding space is neglected, moribund, even dysfunctional, the discovery of the bath seems a minor wonder in its wholeness and perhaps it is right that we aren't granted full access to it. Rowlands has coiled the strip of carpet and flooring at one end of the bath evoking the symbolic transformation it once enabled. The unbaptised would enter from one end, be immersed, and emerge in an altered state. This process is given a secular, if aesthetic twist as we stand at one end and witness the transformation of dull, generic material into something different at the other end of the bath — a spiral form that seems to curl back on itself, hinting perhaps that processes of change are never complete.

By contrast a smaller room to the side feels more melancholic. This space still contains evidence of habitation; there are decorations on the wall and indications that a child might have once been here. Bits of falling plaster lie on the floor and a light bulb hangs morosely. The light no longer works but

the artist has increased the size of a hole around the bulb so as to let in filtered light. There is a single cut into the floor and the linoleum and wood strip has been coiled so that it lies uneasily on the ground. The impression created is one of restlessness, and here one almost welcomes the ultimate fate of this space.

While the act of cutting into walls and floors, peeling and stripping back the building's basic materials, and refusing to alter the obvious signs of decay within this old church and hall could be seen as exacerbating the process of decline, I think that it can be read otherwise, as an attempt to reanimate the site. The sculptural forms created are aesthetically rich, and the use of materials derived from the essence of the building offer a tribute of some kind by making us newly aware of the building's form as well as its various historical and social functions. The display of the building as it is now, decayed and condemned, if initially confrontational, actually allows us to register the traces of the communities that once inhabited it. If Rowlands' various forms of staged 'collapse' dispose us towards thinking aesthetically, we can also look at the space through different eyes, seeing, say, the lone community noticeboard with a single dart stuck in it as something worthy of attention, noticing perhaps how the light falls upon it, or upon other neglected objects lying around the space. Ironically perhaps within the space of a church, *The Offering* is a decidedly anti-transcendental project, it doesn't pretend the building is anything other than it is, but in doing so also offers us hints of what it has been and reveals more than simply a dilapidated structure in the way of development. An offering, a necessary sacrifice perhaps, but the building still has something to offer, this is the complex ambivalence created by the artist within this space.

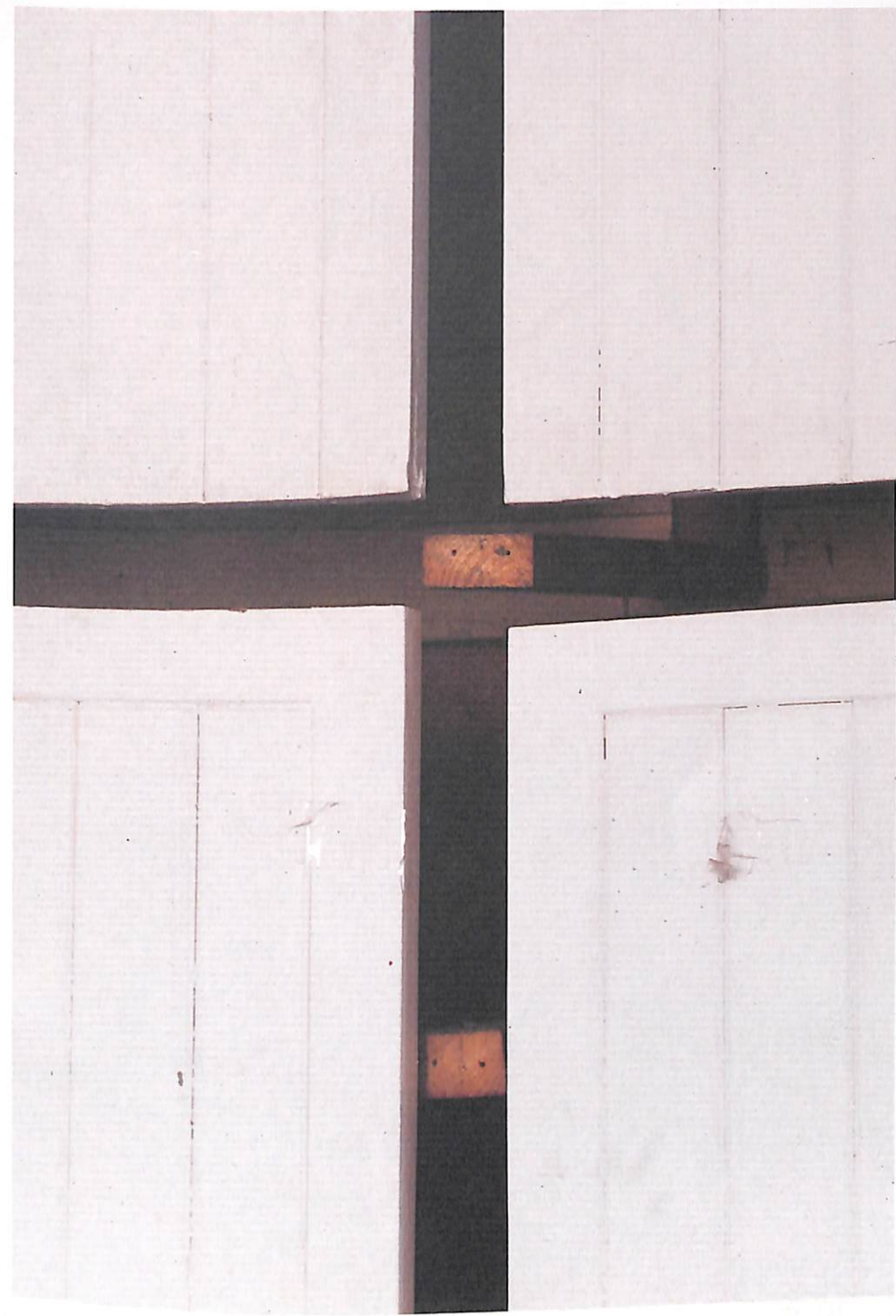
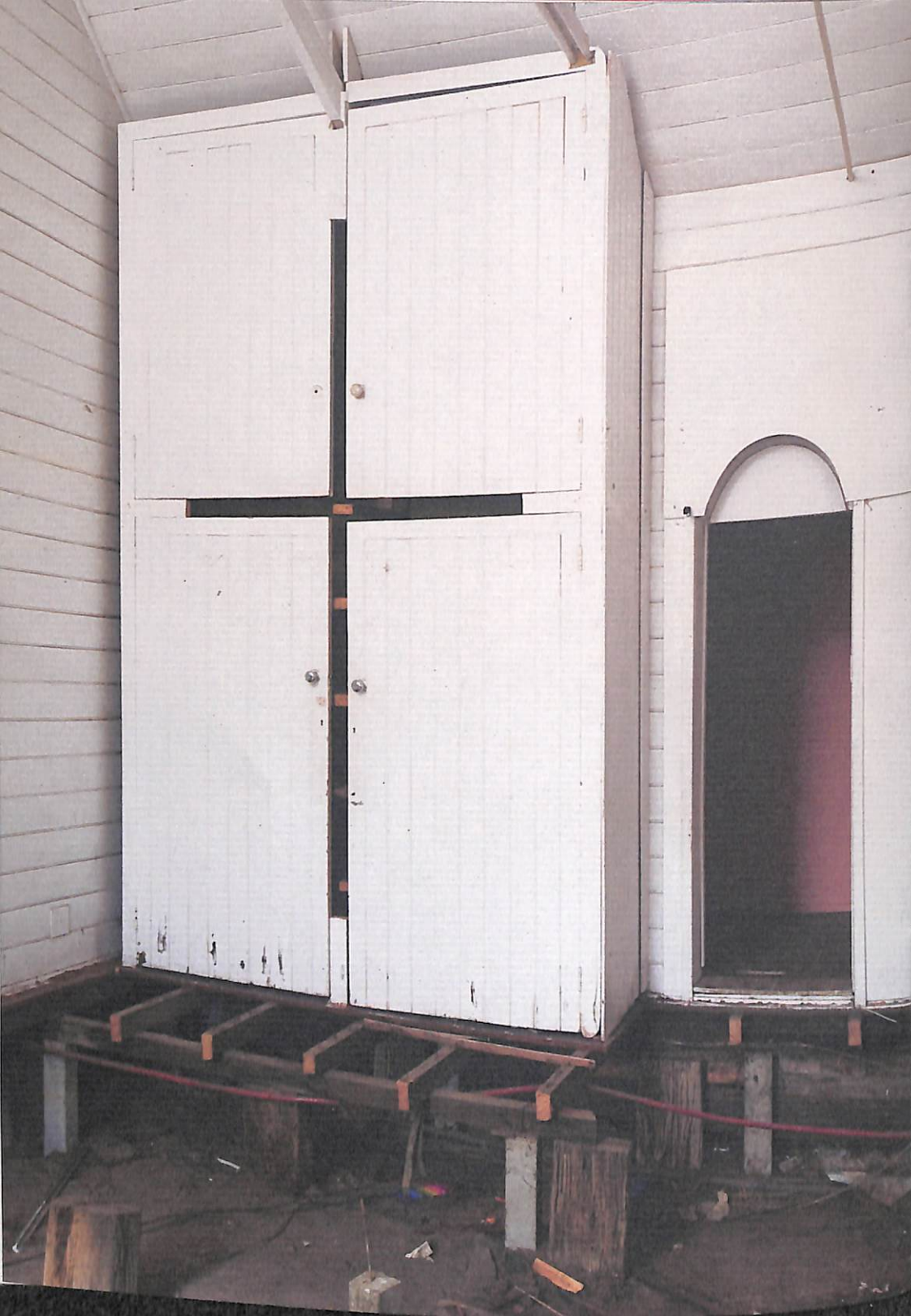
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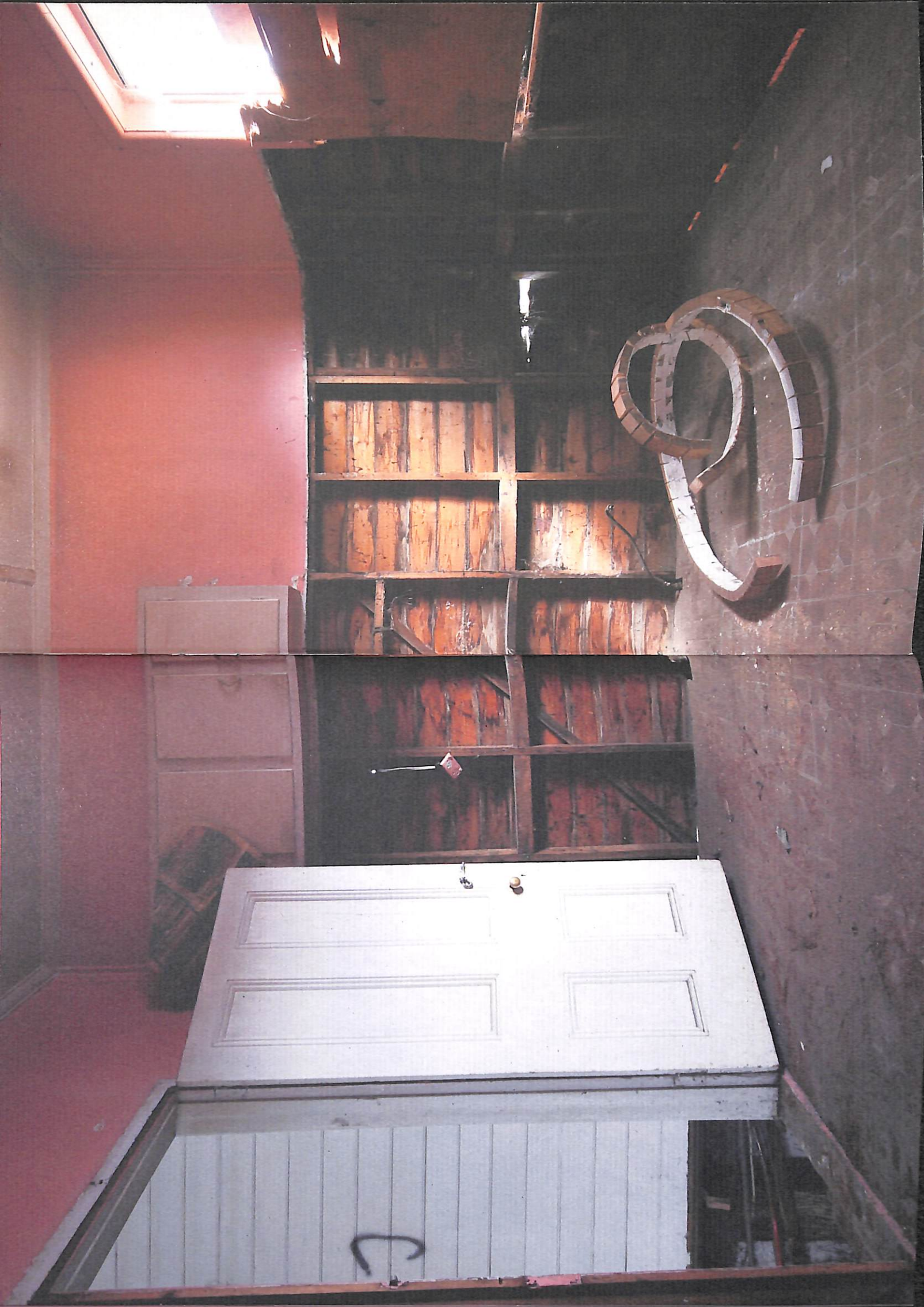












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