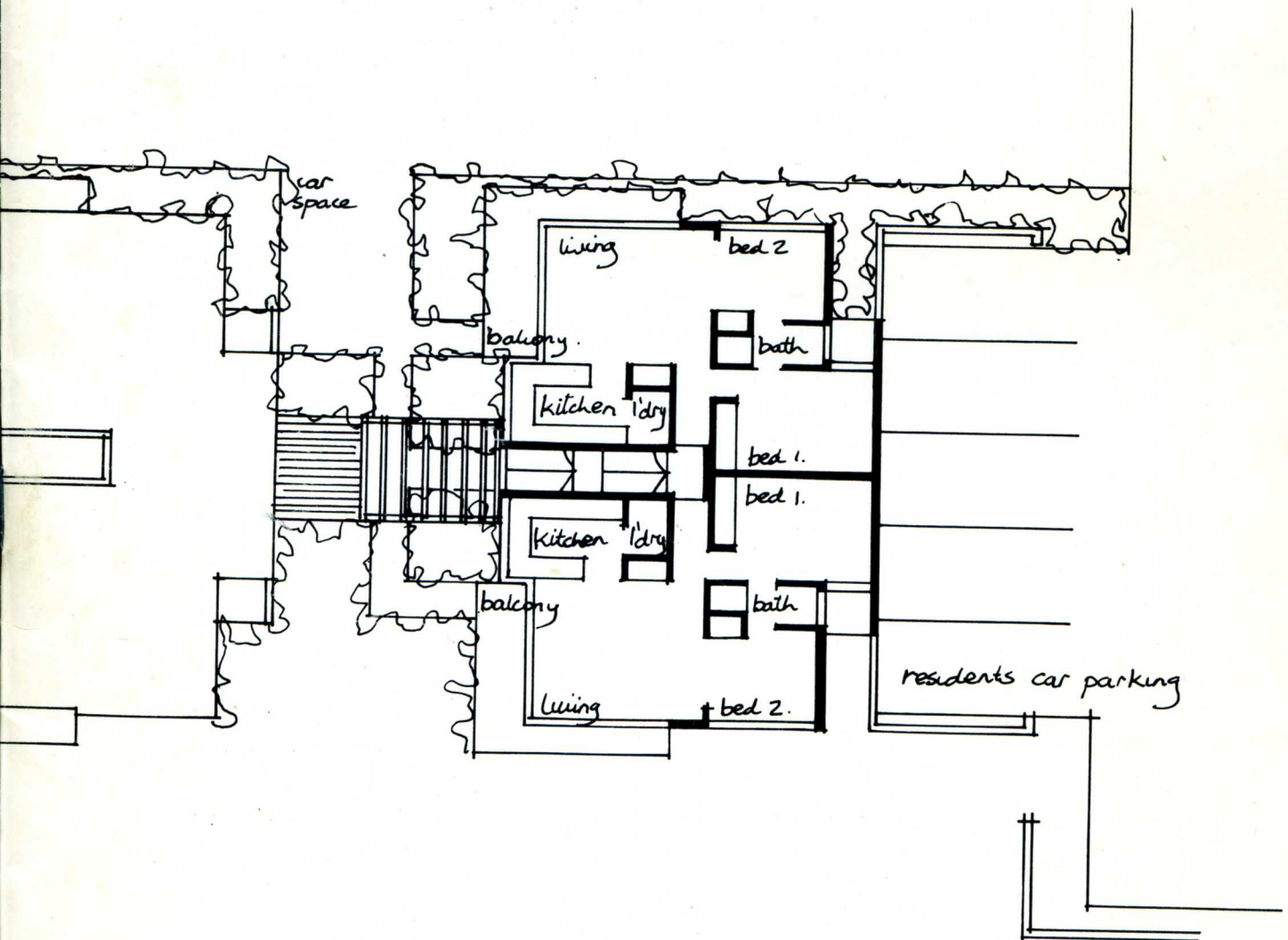


# ABEL TASMAN VILLAGE.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT BY  
THEO TEN BRUMMELAAR APRIL 1989.



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**ABEL TASMAN VILLAGE**

BY

**THEO TEN BRUMMELAAR**

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## THE DUTCH IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Although there have been centuries of contact between the Dutch and the continent of Australia (ref. 1) it is largely the group of migrants who left the Netherlands and the Netherlands East Indies (later Indonesia) after World War II who are now at the age of retirement.

The so-called "post war" immigration was a result of formal government policy in both the Netherlands and Australia between 1945-1960. More than 120,000 people choose to leave their home, their friends and their family to go to the unknown cities and open country, literally on the other side of the world.

They were often families with parents in their late twenties. Most had basic education (which did not include English) and believed in the need for "assimilation". The conditions during the voyage and the years after arrival have been described elsewhere (ref. 2 & 3).

Now, some 25-60 years later, we may simply state that the immigrants of that period have integrated into the Australian society. They have often replaced their old behaviour pattern with an "Aussie way of life". The government policy at that time encouraged this strongly. Their material wellbeing is reasonably secure, although there are some signs of stress. The Social Welfare Sub-committee of the Federation of Netherlands Societies reported 868 cases requiring assistance in the period June 1986-May 1987. This represented an increase of 26% over the previous period (ref. 4).

The immigrants of "the Great Wave" have seen their children settle in Australia, and feel attached to this country. Growing older (and most are now 60 or more years old) presents them with some needs, in addition to the problems commonly experienced by the general "greying" population.

Their command of the English language - adequate for practical every day life, but often very superficial - reduces drastically after retirement when it is no longer used for communication in the workplace. The reduction in mobility of the people of advancing age also reduces contact with users of the English language. A social isolation results.

The long-term memory of the ageing takes a more prominent place and the increase in available time to recall memories of their youth leads to a sharpened awareness of cultural and behavioural differences between them and their neighbours. This results in further increases in isolation.

The courage and fearless acceptance of risks, displayed when they migrated, is slowly being replaced by an awareness of their vulnerability now that they have become dependent on health, social and public transport services.

There has always been a need for social contact with people in similar circumstances. Earlier "social clubs" were formed all over Australia. After all, these years, these clubs still fulfill an important function.

A short history of Netherlands Societies published in 1985, lists 27 such organisations in New South Wales (ref. 5). The Dutch however, are spread relatively evenly (and therefore relatively thinly) over the populated areas. A decrease in mobility with advancing years does therefore mean a disproportional barrier to social contact with "their own" people. (See Appendix A for distribution figures for the Sydney region).

Comparison between the total population of NSW and the population of people speaking Dutch at home in the area of Sydney, Illawarra and Hunter Valley (source: Census 1986):

#### AGE GROUPS

	5-19 *	20-34	35-64	65 +
NSW	1,270,841	1,298,404	1,829,443	594,871
% of total	25.4%	26.0%	36.6%	11.9%
Dutch Speakers	978	2,330	7,298	2,655
% of total	7.4%	17.6%	55.0%	20.0%

\* Children under 5 years not counted as they do not speak Dutch/English yet.

A study of the above small table clearly indicates that the people speaking Dutch at home have a very different age distribution compared with the general population of the people of NSW.

The age groups less than 35 years of the Dutch speakers is considerably under-represented (7.4% instead of 25.4% and 17.6% instead of 26.0%). This is not surprising, because the children of migrants grew up in Australia, went to school in Australia and probably married English speaking partners.

However, the above-35-years group of people still speaking Dutch at home is proportionally about double that of the general population (55% instead of 36.6% and 20% instead of 11.9%). These are the people who came from the Netherlands, settled in Australia, became integrated in the Australian society, but retained their "Dutchness" (at least in their behaviour patterns if not nationality). Probably a "normal" result considering they migrated as responsible adults of medium educational standard.

These are the people who, when they get older, need to share their memories and experiences with people who had similar experiences. They will need to talk about their youth (in the Netherlands) and they want to feel "at home" in Australia but still speak Dutch when at ease.

Their command of the English language is likely to decrease and they are at risk of becoming more isolated than most elderly people, especially when Dutch speaking partners fall away.

It is imperative that an environment is created where they are on the one hand among people they can converse with and relate to as "my own" and on the other hand not be isolated from the Australian society in which they have lived for some 25-40 years.

It follows that staff in a Village for the aged would have to be bilingual and that such a Village should not be exclusively for Dutch speaking elderly folk.

The "ABEL TASMAN VILLAGE" is proposed to provide such an environment. There, our courageous Dutch first settlers will find a sympathetic atmosphere to spend their retirement years in safe and relaxed happiness.

#### ORGANISATION OF THE DUTCH COMMUNITY

About 25% of the people born in the Netherlands are members of one or more Dutch Social Clubs. The other 75% will visit clubs irregularly or will not need the clubs. It is a remarkable fact that the membership of the so-called "instuif groepen" (see later) contains a large number of people who were previously never associated with a Dutch social club.

The many clubs have formed a Federation (ref. 5) in 1967. This Federation played a major role in matters concerning the total Dutch-Australian population. It organised many social events, but also became, at times, an advisory group making official representations.

Since the middle seventies, the Federation concentrated its efforts also in the area of social welfare. It created several sub-committees with specific objectives:

(a) The Holland Festival Committee

This committee is entrusted with the organisation of the Holland Festival. This Festival is a yearly "carnival" type Dutch fete which raises money for the social welfare work in the Dutch-Australian community. Since 1980 it has raised some \$200,000.

(b) The Social Welfare Committee

The Social Welfare Committee is entrusted with the organisation of the practical aspects of providing social services. Their function could be summarised into the following areas of responsibility:

- (i) assistance in unforeseen circumstances - accidents, fires and floods;

(ii) organisation of many monthly meeting groups all over the Sydney, Illawarra and Hunter Valley areas. These are the so-called "Instuif Groepen" (drop-in groups). The elderly and the lonely get together during the day for a cup of coffee and a chat;

(iii) hospital, nursing home and home visitation.

(c) The Abel Tasman Committee

This committee has done the original spadework, which led to the registration of the "Abel Tasman Village Association Ltd" as a company under the NSW Companies Code.

The Abel Tasman Village Association Ltd has now become a separate identity and is a member of the Federation.

One of the members of the Federation is the "Juliana Village Association", incorporated in November 1972. It has aims similar to the Abel Tasman Association (ref. 6).

JULIANA VILLAGE

In November 1980, a Village for the aged was officially opened. "Juliana Village" in the Southern Sydney suburb of Miranda, was the brainchild of Mr Jan Logeman who, through the Dutch Society in the Sutherland Shire formed a committee in late 1969 for the creation of a Village for the aged of Dutch origin.

The organisation grew rapidly as the members of the Dutch community put their enthusiastic support behind the project - all voluntary.

Two years later, \$2,000 had been collected. By the end of 1974, the finances had grown to \$23,700. Fetes (called "kermis" in Dutch) were held once a year and other special fundraising activities were organised.

The community, the clubs, but also commercial interests were urged to provide interest free loans to the Association.

Land was bought in November 1975, a grant from the Australian government was announced in September 1976 and a gift was received from the Dutch "Queen Juliana Fund" representing \$93,900.

The above represents an enormous effort by the community. People donated by putting change in money boxes, baking cakes for the fete, having 20 "paying guests" for dinner. But it was clear that even this enthusiasm could not collect the more than one million dollars required.

Future residents were asked to show their faith in the plans by paying in advance. These people took the risk of mortgaging their homes to allow progress payments to be made. This made it possible for the government to pay the \$410,000 subsidy.

Juliana Village is a permanent proof of hard work and trust. The people who were largely responsible for this are now themselves enjoying a well earned rest, some of them in Juliana Village.

It is necessary for a younger generation to be involved with the Abel Tasman Village. This seems likely, judging by the enormous participation of the not yet elderly in the organisation of the Holland Festival, which raised monies for the future Village.

Juliana Village contains 28 serviced units and 16 self care units, staff quarters, a kitchen and dining room/social meeting place.

The gardens were especially landscaped with Australian native plants, to provide low maintenance and a beautiful restful "Village-type" environment.

The quality of the Village was such that the architect, Mr L Kristensen, received an "Award of Merit" from the Royal Australian Institute of Architects and an "Award" presented by the Australian Council of Rehabilitation of the Disabled (Oct 1982).

Juliana Village was enlarged by 29 self care units on a separate, but nearby block of land. This became the "Logeman Court" in 1985 and further expansion (including serviced units) took place in 1987-88.

The Village with over 120 residents is an obvious success. The Dutch speaking residents form about 50% of its population, the staff is largely bilingual. Above all, the Village - even though it is one of the lowest entry cost Villages in Sydney - is financially viable to the extent that it made a sum of \$100,000 available as an interest-free loan to the Abel Tasman Village.

It will not come as a surprise to note that the Board of the Abel Tasman Village Association intends to follow the methods and financially responsible attitude of the Juliana Village Board. In fact, three members of the Board of the Abel Tasman Village were involved with the creation of the original Juliana Village during the years 1972-1981.

#### ABEL TASMAN VILLAGE ASSOCIATION LTD

The need for a second Village for elderly of Dutch origin was widely discussed immediately after the completion of Juliana Village in 1980, although it took until 1982 before a Holland Festival was held with the sole aim to raise money for the provision of a nursing home or a home for the aged and other social welfare aims.

Individual clubs profited from their efforts at the Festival, but a proportion of the income went directly to the Federation Benevolent Fund. The first donation (1982) was \$20,000. Similar donations were made in each of the following 4 years. The festival in 1987 produced \$40,000. But in 1988 the Festival income was severely reduced, partly because of the additional expense due to the visit by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands to the Holland Festival in November 1988 and a display of a model of the Dutch Delta-works which did not attract as many visitors as was anticipated. This may also have been due to the enormous variety of attractions during the Australian Bicentenary Year 1988.

A provisional committee was created as a sub-committee of the Federation in 1985. They accepted as their first task, the need to survey the needs of the community. The result of the study was a clear indication that it was NOT a nursing home which was required, but accommodation very similar to that provided in Juliana Village.

The next task undertaken was the location of suitable (and affordable) land. Mr Kristensen and several Board members - all in a voluntary capacity - spent a large number of days searching. But then, in 1987-1988, a block of land was suggested to us by Father J McCann O.M.I. who was the parish priest for a Roman Catholic community in Chester Hill. With his assistance and the understanding attitude of the local and the senior dignitaries of the Church, it has become possible to purchase the land on very favourable terms. In fact, at a price well below the official market value.

The only condition was the requirement of a multi-purpose hall, which would also be available for conducting religious services for the local parishioners.

The Federation decided to create a separate legal identity which would be charged with the planning, design, construction and the ongoing care for the organisation in the Village. It was to be named "Abel Tasman Village". This name was chosen to express the connection between the future residents, citizens of Australia and their country of origin which produced one of the discoverers of the Australian continent - Abel Jansz Tasman (1603-1659) who mapped part of the Australian coast in 1642-44.

A company (limited by guarantee) was registered on the sixteenth day of December 1988. At that time, the Board consisted of the following persons:

Mr A F Kool

Company Director  
Board member, Juliana Village  
Chairman, Dutch Federation

Mr L J G Gijzen

Accountant

Mr T A van Gestel

Welfare Liaison Officer

