

Week 21/23: ABC goes home / Venice Pavilion / Bookends: Labor's Labours / Signs of the Weed Heads

Written by [Tone Wheeler](#)

The ABC goes home in 4 parts



ABC TV launched a new series '[The Homes that Built Australia](#)' on Tuesday night. A 4-part series that they must have invested a bit of time on, but no time to advertise it. Neither I, nor the 75 architects I polled at a CPD event on Wednesday night, had seen even a whisper. Which is probably good as it contains some howlers.

Despite having very good experts such as Julie Willis, Phillip Goad (regulars will know I think they're the best architectural historians) no one seems to have checked the final images with the lugubrious narration. Just one error in many: during a lengthy discussion of Fibro the images show tradies installing plasterboard. Surely they could afford to get someone to factually check.

Worse for me was the editorial direction. Whilst I agree that the mistreatment of the indigenous and the shameful use of asbestos were worthy topics, I fail to see how you could have an hour on 50s and 60s homes and not have one mention on the most innovative and successful home builder, [A V Jennings](#), and the architect [Edgar Gurney](#). Populist, yes. Correct, no.

Venice Architecture Biennale



The VAB '*Vernissage*' has come and gone, and now it sits waiting for visitors for the next four months. The Australian pavilion has an exhibition entitled *Unsettling Queenstown*, featuring the Tasmanian mining town as an example of a settler town "built on resource extraction and labour exploitation", seen here.



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However our pavilion has not rated a mention in the overseas press that I've seen, and I've been looking, (Venice Biennale tragic that I am). Brazil won the Golden Lion for best National Participation for its pavilion named [Terra](#), here:

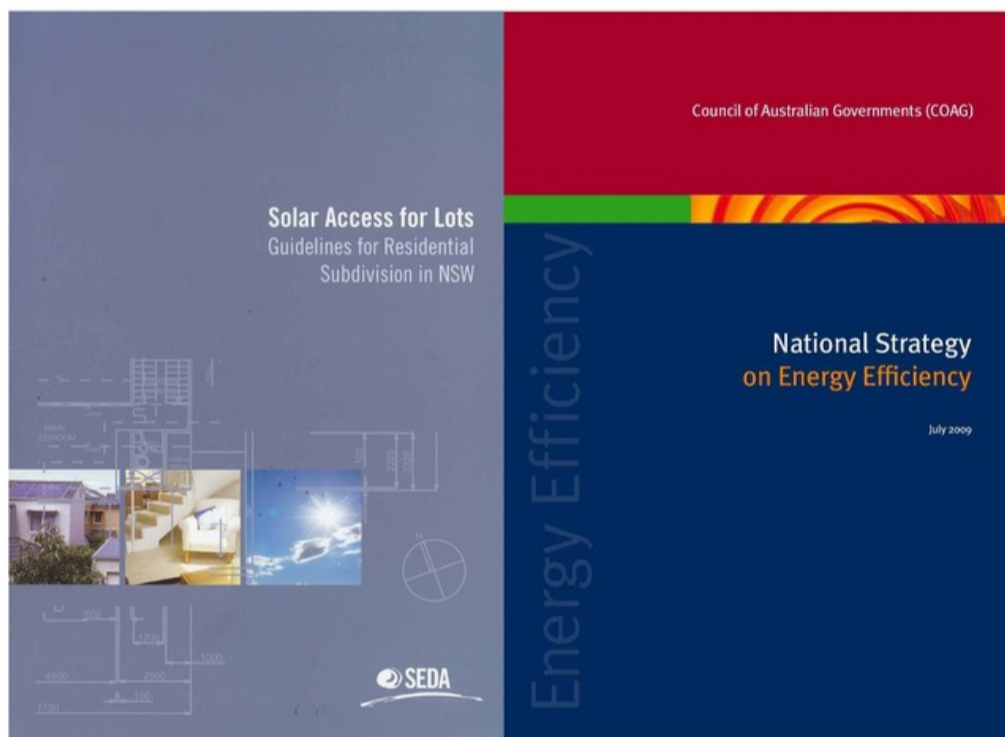


And Architecture studio DAAR was awarded the Golden Lion for the [best project on show](#) seen here:.



Both awards seem to chime with this year's overall theme, set by curator [Lesley Lokko](#), of "Laboratory of the Future", with a welcome and fascinating concentration of architecture in Africa.

Bookends: What Labor used to do, and should do now



Here's a bookshelf reminder of what progressive Labor used to do, and what it should do now. The [Sustainable Energy Development Authority](#) did great work from 1995 to 2004, to encourage better solutions at a bleak time, but was wound up when the fossil fuel boffins wanted it back inside the tent, where it has languished ever since.

And the last Federal Labor government made joint plans with the states, as COAG, to improve energy efficiency, and publicised it well. Time to get COAG back up and running sensibly, this time to attack the critical housing shortage. Shouldn't be too hard with wall-to-wall Labor, except in Tassie, where the right wingers are making the same mistake the LNP made in NSW, preferencing a stadium over housing.

Sign of the times



I'm signing off this week with a tribute the [Aquarius Festival](#) that was held in May 1973 in and around Nimbin. 50 years on and one of the central tenets, that weed was good, is finally coming to public acceptance with the election former *Greens* MLC Jeremy Buckingham for the [Legalise Cannabis Party](#). A longtime advocate for drug reform, his success only shows how slow some social reforms are in this country.

Of course legal weed wasn't the only thing at Aquarius, but you could also say that progress with indigenous and LGBTQIA+ issues, sharing economy, cooperatives and domes for houses have still got a long way to go.

Tone Wheeler is an architect / the views expressed are his.

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