

Archive No. 110

Chris Momot / Queen Victoria Women's Centre

After the Cain government announced that the Queen Victoria Hospital was moving from its Lonsdale Street site out to the Monash Medical Centre in Clayton, Bon Hull started a campaign to save the site for the women of Victoria. The Constance Stone Collective formed to publicise the issues and the first public meeting was held on 7 August 1986 at the YWCA where it was agreed to lobby the government to recognise women's prior ownership. However, the government determined to sell the site to developers and subsequently all the buildings, except for the three towers fronting onto Lonsdale Street and protected by the National Trust, were razed to the ground.

The Queen Victoria Women's Centre Inc was set up in 1990 to continue the campaign and ensure that at least one of the Towers, at first the Eastern Tower and then the more substantial Administration Tower, was designated as a Women's Centre. A consultative process was established, a worker was hired, an office set up, sub-groups were formed and plans were drawn up that included a Koori Women's Centre, Turkish Baths, a library and archives, women's health information and a café, amongst other things.

In 1995 Kennett over road all the work the QVQC Inc had already done by establishing the Queen Victoria Women's Centre Trust to oversee a completely new process and allocated \$5,000,000 to refurbish the Admin building. He'd already given Mariner, who'd bought the site in 1992, permission to pull down two of the Towers in 1994

The expensively renovated QVQC was officially opened on 15 February 1997 with a Café, Women's Health Victoria, the Koori Women's Centre, a Conference Room and a mandate that the Centre had to be financially viable within 12 months or the site would revert back to the government. This meant that unfunded, non-profit-making women's groups were unable to afford the rent and businesses, including the Marriage Registry Office, moved in.

A couple of years later, Grollo started redeveloping the whole site and took over a couple of the floors of the QVWC for their on-site offices for the next few years. After Women's Health Victoria moved to 123 Lonsdale Street the building was virtually abandoned apart from the Trust's office, the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Service, a Cafe and the MRO.

It wasn't till towards the end of 2004 that another attempt was made to encourage women's groups to take up residence again. The MRO relocated to the Treasury Building, WIRE moved in and other groups were planning to take up residence in 2005.

Chris Momot was one of the women who over many years volunteered their time and energy as a member of the QVWC Inc to establish the Queen Vic Women's Centre as a safe and convenient place for the Women of Victoria. Like many other women, after Kennett took over and the QVQC Inc folded, she dropped out of the on-going process and became actively engaged in other women's community campaigns.