

# COMMUNITY REPORT NUMBER 3.



AUGUST '76

# WESTERN COMMUNICATIONS CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

Most of us are active video and film makers.  
We formed Western Communications Co-operative  
Limited on 10th June, 1976.

## Robin Kenny -

" I had a videotape machine before I joined Turtle (video) so I've always been a videofreak. Videotape is the only medium except for still pictures and ordinary audio tape that allows people to spontaneously communicate and I mean the sort of people that are illiterate or inarticulate or the young who need experience.

And this is its single biggest power - I mean look how many diverse people we have here. Just have a look around, metaphorically and literally, and you'll see it's very unlikely in your lifetime you'd ever meet with such people!

But I don't think it's really just videotape itself that is the interest that brought us together. It's just the videotape is a form of cementing ideas and presenting ideas."

## Howard McPhee -

"I'm a port emergency officer.  
I've shot miles of videotape and edited about half of it."

## Alan Dyall -

"I'm a pumping station attendant at the Board of Works.  
Getting people interested in portapaks - that's what I'm interested in, I suppose."



Peter Duffy -

"I'm a schoolteacher at Footscray Tech.

I suppose I'm just interested in demystifying the whole (video) thing.

That's why I think it's good these resources are here.

I don't know how wide a use it gets.

I think the getting wide use should be protected."

Peter Hornby -

"I've worked for short periods at Footscray Community Video and also the Carlton Video Centre.

I like communications ..."

John Robinson -

"For me the only thing that makes the prospect of having a whole pile of equipment in the future interesting is the possibility of setting up a technical facility where I can be building stuff and trying out new ideas and doing different things than our tradition will allow and also helping other people do the same."

Ted Peck -

"I got interested in photography and saw the limitations... I was working at the Williamstown Youth Club and I sort of had this idea of letting children see themselves as children while they were still young enough to see themselves as children. And I guess that's the first thing I did with video after I did my three training sessions was to borrow the gear and take it down there for a couple of nights. It was a lot of fun.

I'm still interested in that idea of just giving people the opportunity to see themselves as they really are."





The Co-operative's basic objectives -

to develop and encourage community media systems and promote programs for community and cultural development.

We operate a network of communications resources ( particularly video ) available for community use -

priority goes to people in Melbourne's western region who do not normally have such access.

We don't actively seek work with business organizations or government institutions -

but our resources are occasionally available at commercial rates.

We use the income to support the community access program.

General meetings of the Co-operative are open to anyone to attend.

Minutes are available at the Yarraville Community Centre, Turtle Video Studios, North Williamstown and The Media Resource Centre, Carlton.

Monthly showings of tapes and films - mostly those we have made ourselves - provide an opportunity for sharing experience and evaluating work being done.



In August '75 Western Communications stated to the Australia Council's Film, Radio and Television Board that rather than separate video centres, Melbourne's western region needed:

"a wider communications exchange ... a regional media awareness ...

- \* establishing regional networks for gathering and distributing information
- \* co-operating to allocate and focus resources
- \* based on a number of media access/resource points."



Lassya Shive and Malcolm Cormack -

"Our reason for working to develop community media systems is we believe that each of us speaks best for himself and each of us best determines his own priorities.

So, e.g., by making Western Communications portapaks available through a network of local groups, the say about their use now lies with known sources of responsibility in the community (e.g. librarians) or local people with a new skill (new videomakers).

It means the system develops as an expression of active community concerns rather than as a field for specialist professionals. And that's how it should be.

The right to determine who and how a public communications resource is used is properly exercised by a given community - rather than for it!"

Nick Liakopolous -

"It was an advantage to be able to edit at Footscray or Williamstown or Carlton.

With equipment all over the place - if someone is using the equipment you want, or you want more room for editing - you don't have a long waiting time."

Most of our video equipment is concentrated in the south western area of Melbourne.

As we intend to continue with our present self-help/volunteer activist based style of operation this will grow slowly, within and from this base, rather than quickly and beyond the rate of the existing resources.

The network operation has however, as we planned, enabled some bodies to see us as a media resources operation of Melbourne's western region - rather than for one or two municipalities.

We find the most practical way is to see our planning in both a local and a metropolitan context.



"Community Media is not second-rate commercial media which fails to meet commercial standards."

The difference is essentially one between the product and the process.

In commercial media the best message is the one which, in its final form, is most attractive to the public.

In community media the best message is the one that, in its preparation and presentation is most an expression of a public."



● KEILOR CITY LIBRARY

● ST. ALBANS COMMUNITY CENTRE

□ SUNSHINE UNION COMMUNITY CENTRE  
Video Workshops

● WEST FOOTSCRAY BRANCH LIBRARY

● ST. PAUL'S COLLEGE

□ WESTERN REGION EDUCATION CENTRE  
Portapak, Video workshops, Publishing

□ KINGSVILLE KOWBOYS  
Portapak

□ YARRAVILLE COMMUNITY CENTRE  
Portapak  
Co-ordinating Centre  
Image Bank

□ LAVERTON COMMUNITY CENTRE  
Portapak  
Video Workshops

□ ALTONA CITY LIBRARY  
Portapak  
Video workshops

□ TURTLE VIDEO STUDIO  
Studio, Editing, Portapak, Video Workshops

● WILLIAMSTOWN CITY LIBRARY

● FOOTSCRAY CITY LIBRARY

◇ FLEMINGTON HOUSING ESTATE

◇ MEDIA RESOURCE CENTRE (CARLTON)  
Video Workshops



During 1975/76 Western Communications' portapak were on access through a network formed in partnership with community groups.

Decisions to place portapaks with groups are made at widely representative general meetings of the Co-operative.

Decisions about who borrows them locally are made locally.

Altona City Library -	Sept '75 - Aug '76
Kingsville Kowboys -	Feb - June '76
Laverton Community Centre -	March - Aug '76
Media Resource Centre, Carlton -	Dec '75 - Feb '76
Sunshine Union Community Centre -	Sept - Dec '75
Turtle Video Studio, North Williamstown -	July - Aug '76
Western Region Education Centre -	Jan - Feb, July - Aug '76
Yarraville Community Centre -	Feb - July '76

Portapaks were booked, checked, by staff or volunteers of the group. Continual training programs or special workshops have been conducted at all these locations.

Access to all other equipment has been at

Footscray Community Video -	Sept - Dec '75
Yarraville Community Centre -	Feb - Aug '76
Turtle Video Studio -	Sept '75- Aug '76



Peter Fraser -

"The things that have been good have been a couple of instances of very enthusiastic individuals.

In one case a mother and her son who worked with the Lapidary Club have got the whole club involved. Also they're getting the family very involved.

This woman makes tapes of all sorts of things. She made a tape about her collection of rocks she brought back from Queensland.

The schools are by far the heaviest users of the equipment. Some of them they use it very well. Where it has worked well is largely because we've had someone to teach it all the time. People can arrange to come any week. They know they can just drop in very casually."

Alan Dyall -

"I get enough enjoyment out of teaching other people.

It's been going good ... except sometimes there haven't been enough people to teach."

The advantages of the Library are that it is open six days a week, the staff are friendly and able to book the equipment out and in and that regular video classes are conducted voluntarily by Altona videomaker Alan Dyall. The drawback has been that the staff has been unable to introduce video to a wider public and that comparatively few new videomakers have borrowed portapak in the past twelve months.

The present long-term loan runs to the end of 1976 and will be reviewed towards the end of that time.



From February to June 1976, a portapak was on loan to the Kingsville Kowboys, a media group living or interested in Kingsville.

Photographer Jon Conte lists some of what happened:

### "Kingsville Kowboys Video Uses"

- no.1 "Ourselves" therapy-psycho, roomful of people, "experimental"
- no.2. "Stony Creek pollution" its slow change to concrete
- no.3. "City" myers, shop windows, traffic, people, aust 1975, skateboards
- no.4. "Art Exhibitions" our own, two others, inc music  
crazy conversations
- no.5 "AC/DC" live and out of tune, but good,  
st. Albans tribal jive
- no.6 "Drug Documentary" interviews, on the spot reporting,  
we've never seen this done before so we try it out
- no.7 "The Shrine" a brush with the law
- no.8 "East Gippsland Forests" 3 day 500 mile odyssey
- no.9 one hour edited showcase tape



A group of Laverton women decided to become videomakers themselves when they saw a portapak used at a local youth club.

We arranged a series of workshops.

They then applied for a portapak to be based at Laverton on a long-term loan.

The Co-operative has voted one there 'till December '76.

One of the women in the group works at the Laverton Community Centre...

Jean Carlon -

"Among other things we have used the portapak here at the community centre.

We have had video workshops.

Five groups have used it in their activities:

copper picture making,

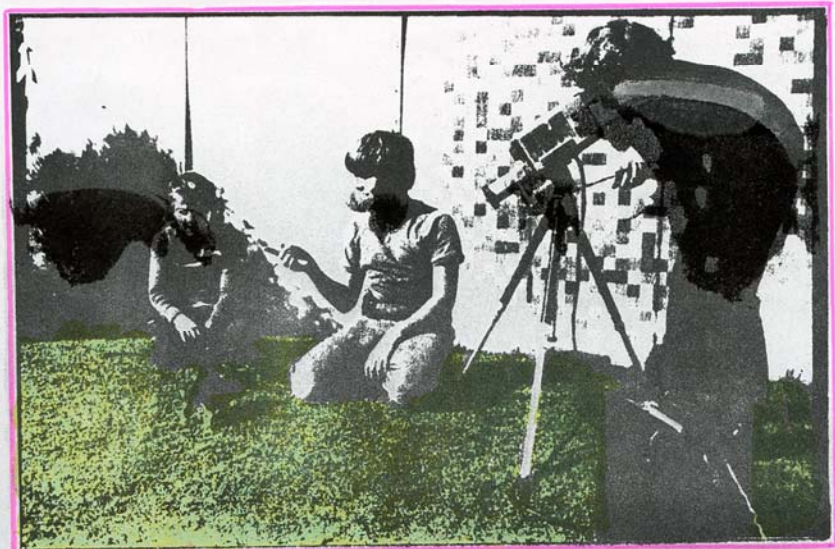
floral art,

the crochet class,

the play group, showing parent/child involvement.

One day we went up the street and interviewed outside the shopping centre to get people's reactions to the community centre and how they'd be interested in using it.

The tapes we are going to edit to show people won't win an academy award but it won't be too bad, I hope."





12 months ago Western Communications planned to make video an integral part of the development of another local community centre - Yarraville.

However, the building, an old school was taken over as a school again until September '76. Instead of sharing the building with a number of Yarraville community groups, we have been the only occupants apart from the children. A '75/'76 plan has had to be postponed until '76/'77.

We have used our space so far

- \* as the Co-operative's video workshop
- \* as the focus for co-ordinating projects
- \* for video editing
- \* and to house the embryo 'Image Bank'.



Heino Saarelaht -

"Me and Dave went to Frankston at Christmas.  
That was the most enjoyable thing I've done in video...

The 'Icthus' Coffee Shop was in danger of being closed down and the coffee shop people and people from the Forest Pine Community Centre were trying to fight it.

And we went up there and we took a portapak and we were there for five, no, seven days, ..... and what we did was just tape what a whole lot of people our age did. In this holiday activities program arranged by the coffee shop they did all sorts of things - skateboard riding, mini-bike riding, surfing at Point Leo, canoeing and a eroplane flying.

They did every sort of thing, lots of things you wouldn't ordinarily do, and with the portapak we covered every sort of thing you would in a whole year!

The tape went to the Council as part of the fight to keep the coffee shop going..."

Nick Liakopolous - Nick is a migrant welfare worker employed by the South Melbourne Council.

"We used video in two of our projects in the South and Port Melbourne areas.

The first was mainly with the Greek community, looking at the education needs of Greek families in the area; both the ethnic schools and the Australian school system as migrants see it.

The tapes were supplies by the Ethnic Video Project and the equipment was from Western Communications.

We showed them around a fair bit - at schools and Education Centres.

# MORE STORIES VIDEOMAKERS TELL



Nick Liakopolous -

"Another thing we used video for was in welfare and community work in South and Port Melbourne.

We took the equipment and made films of school camps which we showed to migrant community groups, so they had a chance to appreciate what the camp was all about, and start letting their kids go to camp, now they knew a bit more about it - if they wanted to."

Ted Peck - a video elective at a youth group weekend.

"It was just a ball... people started to use the equipment. We talked about it.

The thing they really wanted to do was magic tricks. They decided that was really great, so they set up these little stunts where you had a magician standing there with all sorts of things from beautiful girls to a glass of water making them appear and disappear.

From that they realised just some of the stuff that could be done with TV - and maybe all the stuff you see on television isn't really fair dinkum.

And even that was a bit of an eye opener for some of them because I think that a lot of them really thought that what you see on the news was purely fact and wasn't really open for the interpretation of the editor as to what you really saw! "

Western Communications Video Literacy Program:

a chance for people who have been television watchers all their lives to become video makers.

Ted Peck -

"Once the people are really interested and they want to learn there's real value in a training program. But I think there's got to be a preliminary stage where people have got access to a certain amount of gear and there's people there that will share a reasonable amount of knowledge with them just to allow them to use the stuff reasonably effectively so that they can say - 'well yeah, we can do this with it, we can do that with it.'

This is an extension of my ideas. I've got a vision in my head that I can take out and show to somebody else through the medium of video."

Mac Gudgeon -

"I like seeing people come in who know nothing about video going out the door with enough basic knowledge to go out and make something, to give them satisfaction. And the way that some people are spurred on by that initial impulse to go into other forms of media not particularly to advanced knowledge of video but the getting the idea that the story they've got to tell is as important as everyone else's - and there are ways of telling it, finding the appropriate ways, just experimenting and expanding their own concept of their worthiness and being able to use the tool that achieves the ends they want."

Alan Dyall -

"I taught a guy the other day. All he wanted to do was tape his kiddie playing tennis. Well, that's okay. I tried to con him into being a bit more interested, but he wouldn't be in it."



Most members of the Co-operative are available at some time or other to share their experience and skills.

We prefer to let people become videomakers at their own speed. We teach new videomakers one or two at a time whenever we can - and that's most times.

In 1975/76 we also conducted a number of extended workshops at:

- \* Western Region Education Centre
- \* Sunshine Union Community Centre
- \* Victorian Trades Hall
- \* Turtle Video Studio
- \* Footscray Community Arts Centre.

Covered in the workshops:

- \* portpak maintenance
- \* camera work
- \* interviewing
- \* studio operation
- \* lighting
- \* sound
- \* editing
- \* television graphics.

We make one of the points in the resources network the focus for co-ordinating programs and projects. From September to December '75 it was the Footscray Community Video Centre (until the owners put the property up for sale).

During January and early February '76 it was the Western Region Education Centre, West Footscray, and since then it has been our own section of the Yarraville Community Centre.

Our newsheet "Where we're at" published twice in '76 gives interested people in the western region updated information on current projects and when, where and how our equipment is available.

Our part-time project workers operate from Yarraville and the 'phone answering machine allows messages to be left at any hour.

Access to other people's equipment for co-operative members and other people in the community has been made possible through contacts with schools, individuals, and the community education centre.

Information about these resources is available from records and project workers based at the office of Western Communication s.

Two editions of "Open Sesame" were published (in partnership with Western Region Education Centre) which contained information on media resources in the region and conditions of public access.





### Videocassette Network -

We have established an informal videocassette circuit for showing tapes made through Western Communications, tapes made from other sources in the western suburbs and tapes drawn from the library of the Media Resource Centre (Carlton).

Programs of tapes are put together, program notes prepared and the tapes, notes, player and monitor set up in an arranged viewing area.

Sometimes for one or two days: usually for one or two weeks.

The network includes:-

- The Altona City Library
- The Footscray City Library
- The Footscray West Branch Library
- The Keilor City Library
- The St. Albans Community Centre
- The Williamstown City Library



The Co-operative has made a submission to the Western Region Education Centre recommending that the Centre establish a videotape library, copying and distribution service in the western suburbs. Particularly for educational bodies, but also for any interested community groups.

### Video Broadcasting -

Ham radio operators in Melbourne have been allocated a frequency for experimental video transmission and receiving.

A number of transmitters are being built in the western suburbs. We have made test transmissions of Western Communications tapes from St. Paul's College in North Altona.

Further transmissions will provide broadcasting experience, information on technical standards and reception conditions.

During the first part of 1976 a small studio for community videomakers was built at North Williamstown.

Construction of the Turtle Video Studio was co-ordinated into renovations funded by the Australian Assistance Plan to a house belonging to the North Williamstown Primary School.

The control room was designed for editing and for use with studio space which is shared with other community groups.

Main responsibility for managing the studio is in the hands of videomakers who live or work in the area, working voluntarily in their own time.

In 1977 part of the time of the school's new Community Education Officer will be available to co-ordinate activities around the studio.



Channel Four News - a video news magazine program on community events and issues - mostly from Melbourne's south western suburbs shown in libraries and community centres of the area.

Six editions were produced in 1975/76 : items covered included -

the sinking of the Williamstown ferry,  
Concorde and noise,  
Footscray Tech. teachers on strike,  
karate - a violent sort of peacefulness,  
new play space for Yarraville kids.

David Page -

"When we started off there was only three of us. Now there are nine of us.

I think we're a lot more organised now. But with the shows getting better it's taking more and more time. It takes about thirty hours to make a news show. That's each person. It's a lot with this equipment.

The stories are a bit better than last year but still not too good. Most of the ones we put on we'd admit were boring. But we are struggling for time and we haven't got the time to really go into it. Like, we wanted to prepare a good one on the drug problem in Williamstown and we had a lot of really interesting stuff that we had dug up and line up but we just couldn't get time to do it.

"Social Problem Youth" was pretty good fun making. Pretty interesting."

Heino Saarelaht -

"We've been talking, me and Stewie and Dave and Dave. We've been talking about the way our news is running. We say that the end of the year and that's it. We've done it for two years now."



David Page -

"Perhaps the content's not that good but on the technical side we've almost got to where we wanted to get. And it's starting to get not that much fun! "

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The Scarless Pumpernickel - a very funny idea.

Location material shot, but the project has been dropped.

Robert Manderson -

"Physically it's very tiring. It's too much hassle on my part.

If I could get someone else to put in for the transport part of it it would be alright.

The Scarless Pumpernickel is dead. Let's bury him."

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Why Me? - The first original video drama completed in the new studio. Written and directed by Gary Shaw.

Gary -

"We were here till one o'clock in the morning before a single camera came. It came from twelve miles away. It was planned but it didn't come till one o'clock in the morning.

I told my actors we'd be starting at eight o'clock - they were here till one o'clock.

I had to get it finished that weekend so we went right through the whole weekend."

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Road Safety 'Spots' - A series of short video statements to be included with Channel Four News programs. Also written by Gary Shaw.

Gary -

"I like doing things with an idea.

The first one's about a broken exhaust on a car and the fumes get into the car and put the person to sleep and he crashed, and he's also tired in himself as well when he's driving. And little things like that ... he's not wearing a seat belt that might have helped him ..."

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The John Wray McCann Show - A sort of 'Tonight' show recorded in July 1976.

The intention was to produce a 'pilot' tape for the ~~compete~~ and experience for the Channel Four crew, and an opportunity for Williamstown people to practice as an audience.

Heino Saarelaht -

"The main thing was we had an audience to please immediately rather than do the taping and put it together and then put it out on the street and hope for the best.

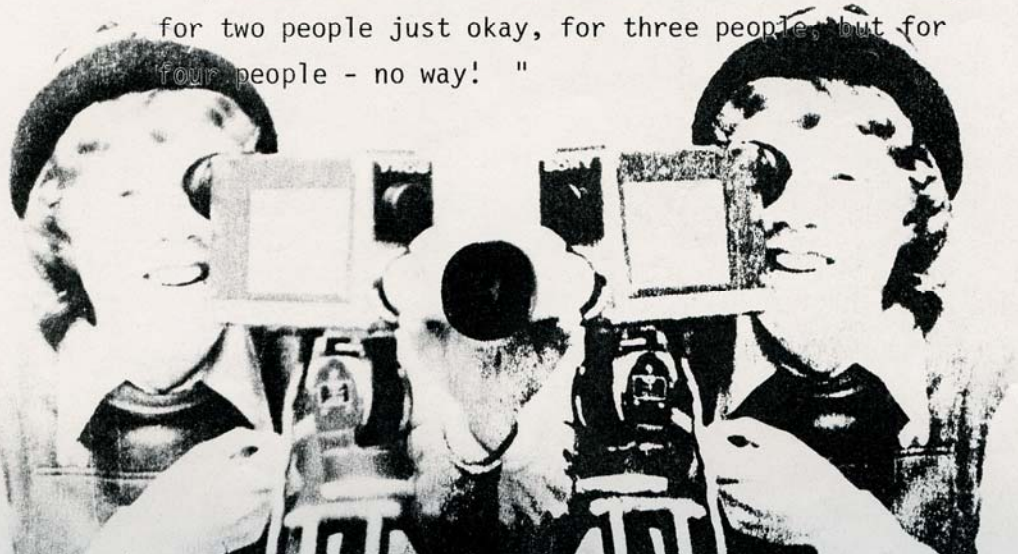
By having a live audience you could see if they were happy.

It was good to do a full-scale production that was live. Because usually you shoot little bits and pieces and you really sort of doctor it as much as you need, whereas when we did this there was no doctoring. We just put it down straight and it was there.

If we did it again we would want to put a lot more consideration and planning into it.

You see originally we were going to get the shot-gun mike which would cover everybody there. But the thing was, when it got here, it didn't work.

So from there we had immediate problems all round. We placed the mikes as best we could and it was okay, for two people just okay, for three people, but for four people - no way! "



Two years of experience has Western Communications videomakers pushing at the frontiers of present equipment granted by the Australia Council's Film, Radio and Television Board.

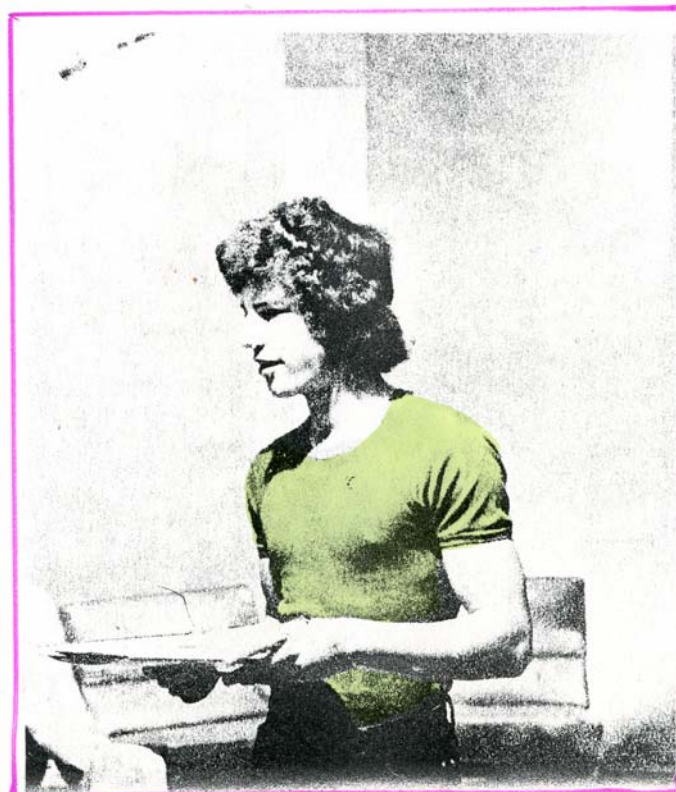
Editing - faster more efficient editing systems are needed for the quantity and standard of work being done.

Cameras - Western Communications does not own special studio cameras. Negotiations for regular use of cameras from the Media Resource Centre, Carlton, finally got somewhere in March - for two to three cameras every second weekend.

A long term loan has been arranged with the new co-operative (Melbourne Access Video and Media Co-operative).

Studio - At present this is the only studio available to community videomakers in Melbourne.

When the Westgate Bridge is completed it will be within easy access of Melbourne's southern suburbs and the Ethnic Video Project centred in Port Melbourne. When the Media Resource Centre (Carlton) studio is re-established both will provide complementary back-up services for Melbourne's videomakers.





John Robinson -

"I see that we're now at a stage where much of the equipment is ready to be written off.

I regard that as a fairly acceptable situation.

Two years hard use of the equipment with people who are basically unskilled is quite okay.

...First stage - attempting to help people develop radically different attitudes towards technology, then, second stage - I suppose is the state of awareness of the fairly small number of people who are at that stage is when you get new equipment.

Learning how to keep that equipment going for quite a long time, being pretty much aware, now, of its limitations."

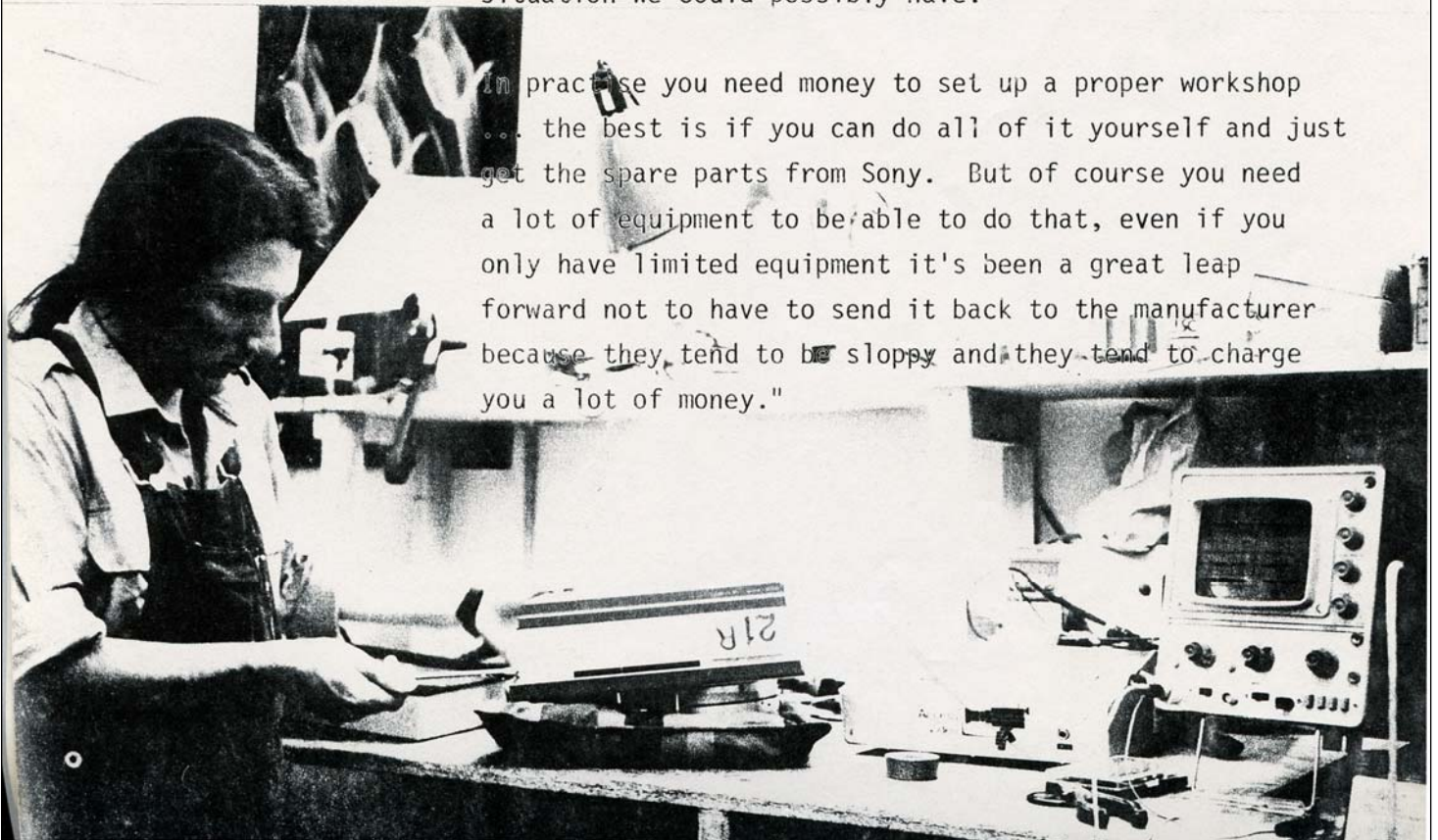
Mac Gudgeon -

"Sony is so far physically.

The service was very poor in the beginning ... but it has improved...

The idea of having someone very accessible is the best situation we could possibly have.

In practise you need money to set up a proper workshop ... the best is if you can do all of it yourself and just get the spare parts from Sony. But of course you need a lot of equipment to be able to do that, even if you only have limited equipment it's been a great leap forward not to have to send it back to the manufacturer because they tend to be sloppy and they tend to charge you a lot of money."



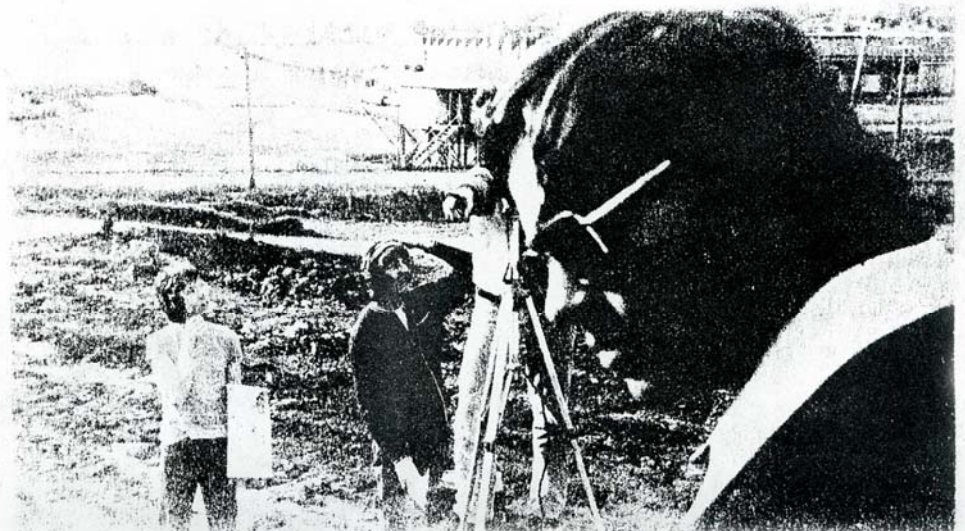
To maintain the video equipment managed by Western Communications we employed our own part-time technician in 1975/76.

Our intention was to set up a small workshop for most repairs and for the technician to visit access points about once a week in a preventative maintenance program.

There has rarely been time for preventative programs to be run as thoroughly as we wished, but to have on-the-spot technical know-how has been a big improvement over depending on the manufacturer's service department.

In 1975 the workshop was at the Footscray Community Centre. We set it up again at Yarraville this year.

Our intention for 1976/77 is to establish a joint service and maintenance program in partnership with the Media Resource Centre (Carlton).



1975/1976

Priorities:

1. Establish video access and distribution networks
2. Establish video studio at North Williamstown
3. Form co-operative.

Staff:

3 Permanent part-time project workers.

Maintenance:

1 permanent part-time technician .

Finance:

Grant - Film, Radio and Television Board (Australia Council).

Equipment:

Purchase - service tools, spares  
Maintain - existing equipment.



1976/1977

Priorities:

1. Develop access and distribution networks.
2. Upgrade studio and editing facilities.
- 3, Develop film activities.
4. Consolidate Co-operative.

Staff:

1-2 permanent part-time project workers.

Maintenance:

Joint service and maintenance program with Media Resource Centre (Carlton).

Finance:

Grant - Australian Film Commission  
Fees - Workshops, Productions  
Hire - Equipment  
Sponsorship - Western region industrial and commercial firms.

1976/1977

Equipment:

Purchase - spares  
Update - editing systems  
Replace - 2-3 portapaks  
Maintain - existing equipment.

Partnerships:

Community Outreach, North Williamstown  
- production of community video programs;  
Western Region Education Centre -  
video distribution systems;  
Media Resource Centre - joint  
maintenance program ,  
joint projects.



COMMUNITY REPORT No.3

Text: Members of Western Communications  
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Western Region Education Centre

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It means the system develops as an expression of active community concerns rather than as a field for specialist professionals. And that's how it should be.

The right to determine who and how a public communications resource is used is properly exercised by a given community - rather than for it"

Nick Liakopolous "It was an advantage to be able to edit at Footscray or Williamstown or Carlton. With equipment all over the place - if someone is using the equipment you want, or you want more room for editing - you don't have a long waiting time."

Most of our video equipment is concentrated in the south western area of Melbourne.

As we intend to continue with our present self-help/volunteer activist based style of operation this will grow slowly, within and from this base, rather than quickly and beyond the rate of the existing resources.

The network operation has however, as we planned, enabled some bodies to see us as a media resources operation of Melbourne's western region - rather than for one or two municipalities.

We find the most practical way is to see our planning in both a local and a metropolitan context.

*"Community Media is not second-rate commercial media which fails to meet commercial standards.*

*The difference is essentially one between the product and the process.*

*In commercial media the best message is the one which, in its final form, is most attractive to the public.*

*In community media the best message is the one that, in its preparation and presentation is most an expression of a public".*

### **Video Distribution Network**

Keilor City Library  
St Albans Community Centre  
West Footscray Branch Library  
Footscray City Library  
Altona City Library  
Williamstown City Library  
St Paul's College (Ham Video Broadcasts)  
Flemington Housing Estate (Cable System)

### **Video Access Network**

Sunshine Union Community Centre - Video workshops  
Western Region Education Centre - Portapak, Video Workshops, Publishing  
Kingsville Kowboys - Portapak  
Yarraville Community Centre - Portapak, Co-ordinating Centre, Image Bank  
Laverton Community Center - Portapak, Video workshops  
Altona City Library - Portapak, Video workshops  
Turtle Video Studio - Studio, Editing, Portapak, Video workshop

### **Service/Maintenance**

Media Resource Centre (Carlton)- Video workshops

## ACCESS - PORTAPAKS

During 1975/76 Western Communications' portapak were on access through a network formed in partnership with community groups.

Decisions to place portapak with groups are made at widely representative general meetings of the Co-operative.

Decisions about who borrows them locally are made locally.

Altona City Library -	Sept '75 - Aug '76
Kingsville Kowboys -	Feb - June '76
Laverton Community Centre -	March - Aug '76
Media Resource Centre, Carlton -	Dec '75 - Feb '76
Sunshine Union Community Centre -	Sept - Dec '75
Turtle Video Studio, North Williamstown -	July - Aug '76
Western Region Education Centre -	Jan - Feb, July - Aug '76
Yarraville Community Centre -	Feb - July '76

Portapaks were booked, checked, by staff or volunteers of the group. Continual training programs or special workshops have been conducted at all these locations.

Access to all other equipment has been at

Footscray Community Video -	Sept - Dec '75
Yarraville Community Centre -	Feb - Aug '76
Turtle Video Studio -	Sept '75- Aug '76

## ALTONA LIBRARY

Peter Fraser - "The things that have been good have been a couple of instances of very enthusiastic individuals. In one case a mother and her son who worked with the Lapidary Club have got the whole club involved. Also they're getting the family very involved. This woman makes tapes of all sorts of things. She made a tape about her collection of rocks she brought back from Queensland.

The schools are by far the heaviest users of the equipment. Some of them, they use it very well. Where it has worked well is largely because we've had someone to teach it all the time. People can arrange to come any week. They know they can just drop in very casually."

Alan Dyall - "I get enough enjoyment out of teaching other people. It's been going good ... except sometimes there haven't been enough people to teach,"

The advantages of the Library are that it is open six days a week, the staff are friendly and able to book the equipment out and in and that regular video classes are conducted voluntarily by Altona videomaker Alan Dyall.

The drawback has been that the staff has been unable to introduce video to a wider public and that comparatively few new videomakers have borrowed portapak in the past twelve months. The present long-term loan runs to the end of 1976 and will be reviewed towards the end of that time.

## **KINGSVILLE**

From February to June 1976, a portapak was on loan to the Kingsville Kowboys, a media group living or interested in Kingsville.

Photographer Jon Conte lists some of what happened:

"Kingsville Kowboys Video Uses"

No 1 "Ourselves" therapy-psycho, rooms full of people, "experimental"

No 2 "Stony Creek pollution" its slow change to concrete

No 3 "City" Myers, shop windows, traffic, people, Aust 1975, skateboards

No 4 "Art Exhibitions" our own, two others, inc music crazy conversations

No 5 "AC/DC" live and out of tune, but good, St. Albans tribal jive

No 6 "Drug Documentary" interviews, on the spot reporting. We've never seen this done before so we try it out

No 7 "The Shrine" a brush with the law

No 8 "East Gippsland Forests" 3 day 500 mile odyssey

No 9 One hour edited showcase tape

## **LAVERTON**

A group of Laverton women decided to become videomakers themselves when they saw a portapak used at a local youth club.

We arranged a series of workshops.

They then applied for a portapak to be based at Laverton on a long-term loan. The Co-operative has voted one there 'till December '76.

One of the women in the group works at the Laverton Community Centre...

Jean Carlon - "Among other things we have used the portapak here at the community centre. We have had video workshops. Five groups have used it in their activities: copper picture making, floral art, the crochet class, the play group, showing parent/child involvement.

One day we went up the street and interviewed outside the shopping centre to get people's reactions to the

community centre and how they'd be interested in using it.

The tapes we are going to edit to show people won't win an academy award but it won't be too bad, I hope."

## **YARRAVILLE**

12 months ago Western Communications planned to make video an integral part of the development of another local community centre - Yarraville.

However, the building, an old school was taken over as a school again until September '76. Instead of sharing the building with a number of Yarraville community groups, we have been the only occupants apart from the children.

A '75/76 plan has had to be postponed until '76/77. We have used our space so far

- \* as the Co-operative's video workshop
- \* as the focus for co-ordinating projects
- \* for video editing
- \* and to house the embryo 'Image Bank'.

## **STORIES VIDEOMAKERS TELL**

Heino Saarelaht - "Me and Dave went to Frankston at Christmas.

That was , the most enjoyable thing I've done in video... The 'Icthus' Coffee Shop was in danger, of being closed down and the coffee shop people and people from the Forest Pine Community Centre were" trying to fight it.

And we went up there and we took a portapak and we were there for five, no, seven days ..... and what we did was just tape what a whole lot of people our age did. In this holiday activities program arranged by the coffee shop they did all sorts of things:- skateboard riding, mini-bike riding, surfing at Point Leo, canoeing and aeroplane flying.

They did every sort of thing, lots of things you wouldn't ordinarily do, and with the portapak we covered every sort of thing you would in a whole year!

The tape went to the Council as part of the fight to keep the coffee shop going.

Nick Liakopolous- *Nick is a migrant welfare worker employed by the South Melbourne Council.*

"We used video in two of our projects in the South and Port Melbourne areas. The first was mainly with the Greek community, looking at the education needs of Greek families in the area; both the ethnic schools and the Australian school system as migrants see it.

The tapes were supplies by the Ethnic Video Project and

the equipment was from Western Communications. We showed them around a fair bit - at schools and Education Centres.

#### **MORE STORIES VIDEOMAKERS TELL**

Nick Liakopolous- "Another thing we used video for was in welfare and community work in South and Port Melbourne.

We took the equipment and made films of school camps which we showed to migrant community groups, so they had a chance to appreciate what the camp was all about, and start letting their kids go to camp, now they knew a bit more about it - if they wanted to."

Ted Peck- *a video elective at a youth group weekend.*

"It was just a ball... people started to use the equipment. We talked about it.

The thing they really wanted to do was magic tricks. They decided that was really great, so they set up these little stunts where you had a magician standing there with all sorts of things from beautiful girls to a glass of water making them appear and disappear.

From that they realised just some of the stuff that could be done with TV - and maybe all the stuff you see on television isn't really fair dinkum.

And even that was a bit of an eye opener for some of them because I think that a lot of them really thought that what you see on the news was purely fact and wasn't really open for the interpretation of the editor as to what you really saw"

#### **ACCESS - INFORMATION & INSTRUCTION**

Western Communications Video Literacy Program:

a chance for people who have been television watchers all their lives to become video makers.

Ted Peck- "Once the people are really interested and they want to learn there's real value in a training program.

But I think there's got to be a preliminary stage where people have got access to a certain amount of gear and there's people there that will share a reasonable amount of knowledge with them just to allow them to use the stuff reasonably effectively so that they can say - 'well yeah, we can do this with it, we can do that with it.!

This is an extension of my ideas. I've got a vision in my head that I can take out and show to somebody else through the medium of video."

Mac Gudgeon - "I like seeing people come in who know nothing about video going out the door with enough basic knowledge to go out and make something, to give them satisfaction And the way that some people are spurred on by that initial impulse to go into other forms of media not particularly to advanced knowledge of video but the getting the idea that the story they've got to tell is as important as everyone else's - and there are ways of telling it, finding the appropriate ways, just experimenting and expanding their own concept of their worthiness and being able to use the tool that achieves the ends they want."

Alan Dyall - "I taught a guy the other day. All he wanted to do was tape his kiddie playing tennis. Well, that's okay. I tried to con him into being a bit more interested, but. he wouldn't be in it."

Most members of the Co-operative are available at some time or other to share their experience and skills.

We prefer to let people become videomakers at their own speed. We teach new videomakers one or two at a time whenever we can - and that's most times.

In 1975/76 we also conducted a number of extended workshops at:

- \* Western Region Education Centre
- \* Sunshine Union Community Centre
- \* Victorian Trades Hall
- \* Turtle Video Studio
- \* Footscray Community Arts Centre

Covered in the workshops:

- \* portapak maintenance
- \* camera work
- \* interviewing
- \* studio operation
- \* lighting
- \* sound
- \* editing
- \* television graphics

We make one of the points in the resources network the focus for co-ordinating programs and projects. From September to December '75 it was the Footscray Community Video Centre (until the owners put the property up for sale).

During January and early February '76 it was the Western Region Education Centre, West Footscray, and since then it has been our own section of the Yarraville Community Centre.

Our newssheet "Where we're at" published twice in '76 gives interested people in the western region updated information on current projects and when, where and how our equipment is available.

Our part-time project workers operate from Yarraville and the phone answering machine allows messages to be left at any hour. Access to other people's equipment for co-operative members and other people in the community has been made possible through contacts with schools, individuals, and the community education centre.

Information about these resources is available from records and project workers based at the office of Western Communications.

Two editions of "Open Sesame" were published (in partnership with Western Region Education Centre) which contained information on media resources in the region and conditions of public access.

## **ACCESS - DISTRIBUTION**

### Videocassette Network

We have established an informal videocassette circuit for showing tapes made through Western Communications, tapes made from other sources in the western suburbs and tapes drawn from the library of the Media Resource Centre (Carlton).

Programs of tapes are put together, program notes prepared and the tapes, notes, player and monitor set up in an arranged viewing area. Sometimes for one or two days: usually for one or two weeks,

The network includes:-

The Altona City Library

The Footscray City Library

The Footscray West Branch Library

The Keilor City Library

The St. Albans Community Centre

The Williamstown City Library

The Co-operative has made a submission to the Western Region Education Centre recommending that the Centre establish a videotape library, copying and distribution service in the western suburbs. Particularly for educational bodies, but also for any interested community groups.

### Video Broadcasting -

Ham radio operators in Melbourne have been allocated a frequency for experimental video transmission and receiving.

A number of transmitters are being built in the western suburbs. We have made test transmissions of Western Communications tapes from St. Paul's College in North Altona.

## **ACCESS - STUDIO & EDITING**

During the first part of 1976 a small studio for community videomakers was built at North Williamstown.

Construction of the Turtle Video Studio was co-ordinated into renovations funded by the Australian Assistance Plan to a house belonging to the North Williamstown Primary School.

The control room was designed for editing and for use with studio space which is shared with other community groups.

Main responsibility for managing the studio is in the hands of videomakers who live or work in the area, working voluntarily in their own time.

In 1977 part of the time of the school's new Community Education Officer will be available to co-ordinate activities around the studio.

### **Channel Four News**

A video news magazine program on community events and issues - mostly from Melbourne's south western suburbs shown in library's and community centres of the area. Six editions were produced in 1975/76- items covered included -

the sinking of the Williamstown ferry,  
Concorde and noise,  
Footscray Tech. teachers on strike,  
karate - a violent sort of peacefulness,  
new play space for Yarraville kids.

David Page - "When we started off there was only three of us. Now there are nine of us. I think we're a lot more organised now. But with the shows getting better it's taking more and more time. It takes about thirty hours to make a news show. That's each person. It's a lot with this equipment.

The stories are a bit better than last year but still not too good. Most of the ones we put on we'd admit were boring. But we are struggling for time and we haven't got the time to really go into it.

Like, we wanted to prepare a good one on the drug problem in Williamstown and we had a lot of really interesting stuff that we had dug up and line up but we just couldn't get time to do it.

"Social Problem Youth" was pretty good fun making. Pretty interesting."

Heino Saarelaht - "We've been talking, me and Stewie and Dave and Dave. We've been talking about the way our news is running. We say that the end of the year and that's it. We've done it for two years now."

David Page - "Perhaps the content's not that good but on the technical side we've almost got to where we wanted to get. And it's starting to get not that much fun"

### The Scarless Pumpernickel

A very funny idea. Location material shot, but the project has been dropped.

Robert Manderson- "Physically it's very tiring. It's too much hassle on my part. If I could get someone else to put in for the transport part of it, it would be alright. The Scarless Pumpernickel is dead. Let's bury him."

### Why Me?

The first original video drama completed in the new studio. Written and directed by Gary Shaw.

Gary Shaw - "We were here till one o'clock in the morning before a single camera came. It came from twelve miles away. It was planned but it didn't come till one o'clock in the morning.

I told my actors we'd be starting at eight o'clock - they were here till one o'clock.

I had to get it finished that weekend so we went right through the whole weekend."

### Road Safety 'Spots'

A series of short video statements to be included with Channel Four News programs. Also written by Gary Shaw.

Gary Shaw- "I like doing things with an idea. The first one's about a broken exhaust on a car and the fumes get into the car and put the person to sleep and he crashed, and he's also tired in himself as well when he's driving. And little things like that ... he's not wearing a seat belt that might have helped him ..."

### The John Wray McCann Show

A sort of 'Tonight' show recorded in July 1976. The intention was to produce a 'pilot' tape for the compare and experience for the Channel Four crew, and an opportunity for Williamstown people to practice as an audience.

Heino Saarelaht - "The main thing was we had an audience to please immediately rather than do the taping and put it together and then put it out on the street and hope for the best.

By having a live audience you could see if they were happy. It was good to do a full-scale production that was live. Because usually you shoot little bits and

pieces and you really sort of doctor it as much as you need, whereas when we did this there was no doctoring. We just put it down straight and it was there.

If we did it again we would want to put a lot more consideration and planning into it. You see originally we were going to get the shot-gun mike which would cover everybody there. But the thing was, when it got here, it didn't work.

So from there we had immediate problems all round. We placed the mikes as best we could and it was okay, for two people just okay, for three people, but for four people - no way! "

Two years of experience has Western Communications videomakers pushing at the frontiers of present equipment granted by the Australia Council's Film, Radio and Television Board.

Editing - faster more efficient editing systems are needed for the quantity and standard of work being done.

Cameras - Western Communications does not own special studio cameras. Negotiations for regular use of cameras from the Media Resource Centre, Carlton, finally got somewhere in March - for two to three cameras every second weekend.

A long term loan has been arranged with the new co-operative (Melbourne Access Video and Media Co-operative)

Studio - At present this is the only studio available to community videomakers in Melbourne. When the Westgate Bridge is completed it will be within easy access of Melbourne's southern suburbs and the Ethnic Video Project centred in Port Melbourne. When the Media Resource Centre (Carlton) studio is re-established both will provide complementary back-up services for Melbourne's videomakers

John Robinson - "I see that we're now at a stage where much of the equipment is ready to be written off. I regard that as a fairly acceptable situation.

Two years hard use of the equipment with people who are basically unskilled is quite okay.

...First stage - attempting to help people develop radically different attitudes towards technology, then, second stage - I suppose is the state of awareness of the fairly small number of people who are at that stage is when you get new equipment.

Learning how to keep that equipment going for quite a long time, being pretty much aware, now, of its limitations."

Mac Gudgeon - "Sony is so far physically. The service was very poor in the beginning ... but it has improved...

The idea of having someone very accessible is the best situation we could possibly have.

In practice you need money to set up a proper workshop ... the best is if you can do all of it yourself and just get the Spare parts from Sony. But of course you need a lot of equipment to be able to do that, even if you only have limited equipment it's been a great leap forward not to have to send it back to the manufacturer because they tend to be sloppy and they tend to charge you a lot of money."

To maintain the video equipment managed by Western Communications we employed our own part-time technician in 1975/76.

Our intention was to set up a small workshop for most repairs and for the technician to visit access points about once a week in a preventative maintenance program.

There has rarely been time for preventative programs to be run as thoroughly as we wished, but to have on-the-spot technical know-how has been a big improvement over depending on the manufacturer's service department.

In 1975 the workshop was at the Footscray Community Centre. We set it up again at Yarraville this year.

Our intention for 1976/77 is to establish a joint service and maintenance program in partnership with the Media Resource Centre (Carlton).

**LAST YEAR / THIS YEAR / NEXT YEAR**

1975/1976

Priorities: 1. Establish video access and distribution networks  
2. Establish video studio at North Williamstown  
3. Form co-operative.

Staff : 3 Permanent part-time project workers.

Maintenance: 1 permanent part-time technician.

Finance: Grant - Film, Radio and Television Board (Australia Council).

Equipment: Purchase - service tools, spares  
Maintain - existing equipment.

1976/1977

Priorities: 1. Develop access and distribution networks.  
2. Upgrade studio and editing facilities.  
3. Develop film activities.  
4. Consolidate Co-operative.

Staff: 1-2 permanent part-time project workers.

Maintenance: Joint service and maintenance program with Media Resource Centre (Carlton).

Finance: Grant - Australian Film Commission  
Fees - Workshops, Productions Hire - Equipment  
Sponsorship - Western region industrial and commercial firms.

1976/1977

Equipment: Purchase - spares  
Update - editing systems  
Replace - 2-3 portapaks  
Maintain - existing equipment.

Partnerships: Community Outreach, North Williamstown  
- production of community video programs;  
Western Region Education Centre -  
video distribution systems;  
Media Resource Centre - joint maintenance program, joint projects.

Community Report No. 3

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