



5.05 pm Wednesday July 6th

## **ELECTION CHAOS AND COMMUNITIES THAT REFUSE TO BE BULLIED...**

### **COMMUNITY SIT-IN AT EMERALD BUS SHELTER.**

Yes, you read that correctly - we have election chaos, Brexit, refugees, homelessness and more, and a small community is fighting with all they have, to save a bus shelter.

This isn't just a bus shelter. It's the **Community Art Bus Shelter** outside Emerald Community House Hall, in the Dandenong Ranges. The shelter is a beloved local icon with mosaics by local youth who were deemed to be 'at risk' in a program funded by the state government. The shelter has been managed by Emerald Community House (ECH) with Cardinia Council's cooperation, as part of ECH's community connection and resilience strategy over the last 7 years.

**Since the aftermath of the 2009 bushfires**, in an effort to build disaster resilience, **the shelter has been used to share community information** about everything from local events to services supporting youth, domestic violence help, food networks and more. It is seen far and wide as a symbol of community building, and **recognised in the Resilient Melbourne Strategy (P.155)**. What better place to share information to connect communities, reaching everyone, including the most vulnerable, than a bus shelter?

Yep, only a bus shelter. But sometimes little things are the red flags that can tell us where our society is headed. ECH coordinator Mary Farrow says **"It's about power and control... Council wants to control what we do according to their own agenda. But we are not compliant; we are community, and we must speak truth to power"**.

For reasons that have changed numerous times, Council plans, (probably tomorrow Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July), to rip out this symbol of community spirit, riding roughshod over the community to do it.

For months council has been 'cleaning' the shelter of notices, first coming daily and later two or three times a week, including blasting the shelter with high pressure hoses and damaging the mosaic art work in the process. **It began when a meeting in support of the #Letthemstay campaign placed messages of support for refugees on the shelter. Cardinia Council is supposed to be a Refugee Welcome Zone, but the notices were dismissed as 'graffiti'. So this is what our local government thinks of vulnerable people?** Soon even the kinds of notices that had been left untouched by community and council for years, were targeted.

All this attention to a loved and cared for shelter, while ignoring a shelter in a nearby town with a tree growing out of the seat, another with a badly damaged roof, and another that had almost disappeared under ivy, with a telephone wire hanging within touching distance of any one who wanted to hang off it.

Now, council has declared the shelter unsafe. Yet ECH has offered to repair or replace the shelter with a new community art shelter, raising the funds themselves. There is no shortage of qualified trades people in this area and several have already provided free assessments of the work required to ensure it stands proud and bright for another 30 years or more.

This fight is **not just about a bus shelter. It's about communities being empowered** to take the initiative to help themselves, to build resilience and connection. **It's about all levels of governments working with communities, instead of trying to impose their own agendas.** As the electorate has shown and a small community prepares to fight, **it is time for governments at all levels, to listen...**

**For further information contact:**

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Save Emerald Bus Shelter Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/EmeraldBusShelter/>

Emerald Community Art Bus Shelter shown in the Resilient Melbourne Strategy 2016.

## What comes next?

Thank you for your interest in *Resilient Melbourne*. It is one step in an on-going approach that builds on the tremendous efforts and achievements of many people, over a long time, to make Melbourne a successful, inclusive and modern city.

The actions in *Resilient Melbourne* test out new ways of working. By monitoring their results on several levels, we will not only learn what works well and what could be improved for specific actions, but also how different actions may combine to produce greater, and sometimes unexpected, benefits.

By drawing on our shared experiences, and learning from these and future actions, together we will foster a resilient Melbourne, a city that is viable, sustainable, liveable and prosperous, long into the future.

Please be part of the effort. Identify actions you would like to be involved in or let us know of actions that you think are already contributing to our objectives. We are constantly looking for new partners, new ways of working and new ways to finance and resource actions.

Visit: [www.resilientmelbourne.com.au](http://www.resilientmelbourne.com.au)

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An iconic multi-media bus shelter in Emerald.