

## Seeking a better future

Leader - Northcote Leader (Melbourne, Australia) - Wednesday, April 18, 2001

**CAROLYN Lunt** 's eyes are gleaming, despite having an energy-sapping flu.

She has just confronted a woman driving a BMW down High St, Northcote. No offence in itself but the woman in question threw her cigarette butt out the window.

``Do you want to put this in the bin or would you prefer a \$100 fine?" Ms Lunt asked the woman trapped at the traffic lights.

Ms Lunt has a lot to say. She has just turned 50 and has been passionate about environmental issues for many years. Getting her to stick to one topic for more than a minute is like trying to catch confetti in a gale.

But asked why she confronts cigarette butt throwers, revegetates her patch of Merri Creek with indigenous plants and removes the rubbish, installs solar panels in her home and harangues Darebin Council, Ms Lunt says simply: ``I want change for the better".

As an early childhood educator at Northcote's Annie Dennis Children's Centre, Ms Lunt sees the future in those young, open faces.

``People ask `why do you have solar panels', `why do you have solar hot water', `why did you buy a \$3000 fridge'? because it uses less than half the power of an ordinary fridge, 407 kilowatt hours per year," she said.

``People say you're mad but it makes a difference. I've just got my electricity bill and all I had to pay was a service fee."

Ms Lunt's latest venture is learning carpentry.

``Growing up in the '50s, girls couldn't play the trumpet, play football or do carpentry. You had to be a teacher or a nurse," she said.

Undeterred, Ms Lunt is learning woodwork now, part of a grand plan to make her home even more environmentally self-sustaining, to provide an inspiring prototype for others.

``I've got the solar panels, I don't use soap, I recycle my hot water.

``All I need in the house is a composting toilet and I'd be self-sustainable. I want to show (people) how to do it in an ordinary weatherboard free-standing house," Ms Lunt said.

``I'd open up the garden to show the use of indigenous plants, so other neighbours and people in the area could start."

Ms Lunt is waiting for approval from Darebin Council before starting her

renovations.

Last year, the Annie Dennis Children's Centre launched its chook shed, worm farm and compost bins and no prizes for guessing who initiated this project.

ANGRY after receiving a brochure advertising rental of an incubator, complete with eggs, Ms Lunt applied for a grant to build the chicken coop so the children could witness the natural cycle of life.

She is very emotional about the need for inner-city children to experience a life with animals and plants. In 1999 she made herself available to show children ``the wonders of Merri Creek''.

``Children will be able to plant their own indigenous plant, bird watch, look for creatures and basically just potter about and relax," Ms Lunt said, when launching the scheme.

Ms Lunt says that when she was in her thirties, she decided to not have children because she was too busy, too politically active and I didn't need to add to the ``population explosion'.

``I've been arrested at Pine Gap. That was three days in (prison).

``My mother said `why my daughter?' and my sister said `Mum, think of the suffragettes'.

``Sometimes I think `why can't I just live in a little house using electricity, and not worry where my poo goes?' ''.