

THE FUTURE OF CONFEST

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A discussion and reflection paper emerging from weaving together conversation with alternatives and dropouts over many decades

Full Version of: [The Future of ConFest](http://www.laceweb.org.au/fc.pdf) www.laceweb.org.au/fc.pdf

For those of Down to Earth who have been involved for ten years or less - a question. 'how does ConFest happen?' Another Easter comes around, the gates open, and people stream in, and once again the magic happens. So, how *does* this happen? What does happen during ConFest is unique in the world. Travelers from overseas say they have found nothing like it anywhere else in the world. There are thousands of events, gatherings, festivals, and other kinds of happenings around the world, and every time the gates open and people stream in they *do not* create anything like the ConFest type magic. At ConFest, it is the people who come streaming in that generate the very special experience.

The current 'Down to Earth' energy has *very little* to do with this ConFest magic. Sure, DTE sets the site, some of the roads, and other infrastructure. These are necessary though *in no way sufficient to create the magic*.

Many interconnected and inter-related things have happened in the decades of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s that have contributed to creating a pool of 20,000 to 30,000 or more folk who have been to ConFest multiple times. Collectively this pool of kindred folk have the inclinations, passions, competences, and energy to do it all again. A subset of this pool attends each ConFest. Enough of these people come each ConFest to seed the magic for those who are new or have been to a few ConFests.

During these decades only a very few folk were searching for ConFest sites and knew what to look for. They have searched for, found, and evaluated over 100 potential sites; they were also part of the small group who found DTE's two properties. They are the holders of competence and wisdom of how to do this. For decades ConFest went to a new sit every year. Exploring the new site was a core aspect of the experience. Each year was novel.

And a few older folk who are still around were key people in seeding contexts for enervating this pool of magic-makers in the nineties and before. They are holders of the Way to seed contexts for magic to happen - how to keep everything tentative to maximize the lived experience of freedom upon arrival. The only aspects preplanned were front gate, toilets and the location of the market. ConFest sites were like blank canvas ready for spontaneous artistry. Attendees knew of this freedom and would revel in it. 'Here we come and create our own spaces of our own choosing in places of our own choosing. Here and there are hints of possibilities.' 'Attendees, if you want a more quiet area – look over here. If you are pagans, perhaps look over there. You'll find a grove of trees, a clear view of the full moon and a ceremonial place.' 'Wow! Just what we like. We were seeding possibilities for folk to use if they want. We are constantly exploring self-organizing systems. This seeding of possibilities is coming out of a profound understanding of the differing energies that may arrive and what they may be looking for. No one is telling anyone where they must go.

Many of the establishers of this vast pool of ConFest attendees no longer attend ConFest. *They do not like what ConFest is becoming.*

DTE energy is very different to ConFest energy.

Some folk have been using terms like 'dysfunctional' and 'toxic' to say why they no longer associate with Down to Earth. This has been continuing so some time. Some are asking, will DTE energy kill ConFest?

The phenomena of ConFest can be traced back to radical kinds of folk in the 1960s engaging in radical action, processes, and ways of being together. These radical change-agents were sometimes called 'dropouts' - an apt name. They had dropped out of the dominant system. Some focused on opposing the dominant system. Others had no part in this - preferring to use their energy to create new social forms for better futures. Some of lesser vision and insight with perhaps greater hurt by the system were deflected into useless opposing of the system; protesting the Vietnam war and using illegal drugs both engineered by the dominant system as a very successful strategy to deflect, block and stop innovative social action in evolving better worlds. Today, the remnants of the folk involved in exploring new social forms are a typical example of 'being alternative'. When you find and talk to them they say things like the following which blends many people's comments together:

'With us as 'alternatives' everything and we mean *everything* is continually up for review. We are agents-of-change and we are very aware that we can really scare the powers-that-be. So we never protest against what is; rather we explore what could be. We have a sustained focus on *coming up with alternatives to the dominant (dominating) system*. We are getting close to nature - embracing simply living well with mother earth. We were called 'dropouts' and 'long haired hippies' and included with the 'radical University Students'. We know that together we have *astronomical potential*. Dr Jim Cairns book 'Growth and Human Potential' is about just this. We are using this pooled potential to evolve alternative ways of living together to make better worlds. We are exploring habitat - better ways of housing ourselves, better ways of living, far better alternatives to current economies and current financial systems and means of exchange, altogether better ways of thriving. We are all for enriching the wisdom of life experience within common folk - the psycho-emotional commons that is been whittled away by experts of all kinds. We're exploring working together collaboratively without people being *over* other people and some telling others what they can and can't do. We're exploring better ways of relating; better ways of cooperatively conversing; better ways of evolving communities; better ways of local, regional, and global governance; better ways of celebrating in gatherings and altogether better ways of being. *Now most of us no longer go to ConFest. It is no longer our scene*. Many attendees are into just being entertained and having a good time. The place is slowly been turned into a permanent giant mainstream holiday camp with preplanned camp sites in straight rows Everything is becoming so like the dominant system that it is already feels in parts like Torquay municipal camping ground or a national park camping ground with rangers. Soon bollards will be popping up everywhere. We alternatives are Futurists. We 'alternative folk' continue to form covert networks of networks of futurists on the margins weaving all of the above alternative forms of actions for replacing the dominant system of systems in decline. And in times of increasing threat of natural disasters, we alternatives are at the forefront of world-best-practice in evolving processes for having large collectives of people traveling to remote places and being able to have quality time together with rudimentary infrastructure. You are invited to think about your experience of DTE and how we all may play a part rather than drifting apart. How can DTE support ConFest and not lead to its slow destruction.

SITE SETUP MODEL

<p style="text-align: center;">Imposing the Dominant System Model</p> <p>Eagerly Comply with Direction of Authorities in using Expert Service Delivery for Preparation of Event-Site Model</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Social Welfare & Community Development Model</p> <p>Social Welfare & Community Development of Event-Site Using Development Application Model</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Co-Creating Community while Evolving an Organic Holistic Self-organizing Gathering Space and Wellbeing Energy Model</p> <p>Informing Authorities that they do not have a category for ConFest</p> <p>ConFest is not a preplanned Event</p> <p>Site Preparing is Co-Creating Community while Evolving an Organic Holistic Self-organizing Gathering Space and Wellbeing Energy Model; so assisting Authorities to find ways that meet their needs whereby we continue to hold and demonstrate world-best Practice in this kind of Model</p> <p>For example, this is a model that may be used wherever large numbers of people require temporary quality self-organised mutual-help communal living following large scale disasters and breakdown of governance; this was the Model used for the first Thirty five or more ConFests during a time when non-appropriate categories were being used to regulated other Festivals</p>
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OUTCOME

<p>To Ensure Continuity Of ConFest as a Dominant System Compliant Preplanned Regulated and Controlled Event that is a Distorted Caricature of what ConFest Once was</p>	<p>To Ensure Continuity of ConFest as a Dominant System Compliant Distorted Caricature of what ConFest Once was in Ways that are hardly noticed by current DTE people</p>	<p>To Ensure Continuity Of ConFest as a World-Best-Practice Model of a Spontaneous Self-Organising Community evolved Gathering Site on our own land for Gatherings Exploring Alternative Global Regional and Local Futures Co-Creating Community Mutual-Help Models</p>
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SITE SETUP PROCESSES

<p>Medical Model In Disguise Use Delegated Authority as Experts to Diagnose and Prescribe What is to be Done and <i>Impose Plan on Site</i></p> <p><i>Use outside Event Management Experts to direct and control DTE volunteers; or preferably use outside contractors</i></p>	<p>Use Experts to <i>Develop</i> Site For Participants and Take Required Steps to Ensure Their Safety</p> <p><i>Use outside Event Management Experts to direct and control DTE volunteers</i></p>	<p>Being Guided by Familiarity with the Site and Embodied Appreciating of <i>Both</i> the Site and the Varied Interests and Passions of Invited Attendees Along with the Subtle Nuances of the Site; Evolving all Aspects of the Site for a Community Gathering on our Own Land while Evolving Our Selves Through Enabling Self-Help & Mutual-Help Community Networking</p>
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APPROACH

<p>Expert Service Delivery (Medical Model)</p> <p>Focus on External Physical</p> <p>Disconnected</p> <p>Hierarchical</p> <p>Bureaucratic</p> <p>Categorized Sectors and Departments (32 +)</p> <p>Disintegrate and Diagnose, Prescribe and Impose within Categories regulated by Bureaucrats in bureaucracy and supervised by 'coordinators' (bosses)</p> <p>Attend to what's 'not working' in dominant system terms</p>	<p>Social work & Community Development</p> <p>Physical & social</p> <p>Disconnected</p> <p>Hierarchical</p> <p>Bureaucratic</p> <p>Categorized Sectors and Departments (32 +)</p> <p>Disintegrate and Diagnose, Prescribe and Impose within Categories regulated by Bureaucrats in bureaucracy and supervised by 'coordinators' (bosses)</p> <p>Help whole</p>	<p>Living System Wellness Model</p> <p>Interconnecting</p> <p>Holistic</p> <p>Networked Psycho-social emotional community physical</p> <p>Networking networks in constant exchange</p> <p>Living well with families and community preparing site for our extended ConFest community enabling whole system to help our selves</p> <p>Sensing the multi-causal whole-of-it and being guided by context on how to use or adapt integrating ways that have worked in other contexts</p>
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META-ACTION

Intervening	Intervening	Enabling
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PERSPECTIVES

<p>'Doctor's' perspective</p>	<p>Social Workers & Community Developer's Perspective</p>	<p>Sensing through Local Perspectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children's ○ Adolescents' ○ People's ○ Older People's ○ Elders' ○ Living System ○ Wellness & Rights
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INTENTION

<p>Inherent risk and hazard Curative – danger of physical or mental injury or disease causing damage needing cure and/or repair</p>	<p>Curative & Preventative</p>	<p>Local people-focused enabling of whole community wellness and wellbeing towards thriving together</p>
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VIEW OF THE CHILD ADOLESCENTS AND OLDER PEOPLE

<p>As vulnerable The problem to be cured or excluded</p>	<p>As vulnerable The problem needing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Relief ○ Protection ○ Rehabilitation ○ exclusion 	<p>As the source of unlimited potential As personally and communally having:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rights ○ Competencies ○ Capacities ○ Resources ○ Resilience <p>who may use our enabling support if <i>they want it</i></p>
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BENEFITS

<p>Disease and physical injuries attended and minimised</p>	<p>Immediately addresses needs for relief and rehabilitation</p>	<p>Ensures a thriving environment recognising harm minimisation and organic eliminating and minimizing of risk factors; Immediately supports and helps strengthen local folk's' resilience, close attending, and recognizing and utilizing of psychosocial resources and the wellness of the children and their families and community</p>
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