INTRODUCTION

Since late 2008, Renew Newcastle, Renew Australia, and various offshoot projects have launched hundreds of creative enterprises and initiatives in what were once empty spaces across the country, from the decaying west end of Newcastle to the pristine (if somewhat sterile) surrounds of Melbourne’s Docklands.

The program has worked and spread because it addresses two practical needs: (1) the need of places that are lifeless, underutilized, or decaying to generate interest and activity and (2) the need of small scale creative enterprises – many of which are flourishing online – to find real world locations to seed, to expand, or to experiment with their activities.

1.1 KEY INTERVENTIONS

Renew Australia works with communities and property owners to take otherwise vacant spaces and make them available for productive use.

By approach to is meant initiating and even kick-starting, and by “vacant or decaying” the program seeks to buy time, not to secure forever. It is designed not to be temporary, but to take advantage of short term leases or to purchase buildings outright or for very little – that might or might not work unless the risk of doing so is low.

Renew “borrows” buildings without tenants through an online application process, and seeks out, curates, and actively manages compliance, permits, and insurance; and seeks out, curates, and encourages projects with social and community value.

www.renewnewcastle.org

1.2 INDIVIDUAL SUCCESS STORIES

In 2008, when the program was launched, 160 shop and office buildings in the Newcastle CBD were languishing empty or abandoned. The Renew program catalyzed a radical transformation in a struggling industrial city in Australia, it has

Within four years, Renew Newcastle successfully seeded 150 shops and offices with projects that have brought 150 creative businesses to a once empty space. An initiative in Melbourne’s Docklands Spaces, which has been in operation only six months, has launched eight projects and begun to subtly transform the trajectory of a project as site and high profile area.

1.3 GOVERNANCE

www.docklandsspaces.org

While the Renew model was initially developed in response to the very specific needs of Newcastle, a struggling industrial city in Australia, it has quickly become apparent that the strategies and approaches have applications elsewhere. Renew programs now operate in four Australian states and local Renew groups and have started to pop up in places including Toronto, Lisbon, and Rotterdam.
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SOURCES

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RECLAIMING AND RENEWING SPACE

Transforming vacant buildings into productive assets

NEWCASTLE, Australia