OBITUARY

Bob Dickson. 8 April 1926 – 8 April 2014
Founding Member of the Morialta Residents’ Association

Robert Dickson came into the world surrounded by talent, entrepreneurship and tenacity. In his family background were a stage, TV and film actor; and a Bishop. As life went on he became surrounded by fellow architectural professionals after he graduated to go on to make a salient mark in South Australia.

In 1975 Bob designed Don Dunstan’s home in Norwood. Social reforms led him to assist in creation of The Civic Trust of South Australia in 1969. Bob led it in 1980. Its focus was on the social and environmental issues in urban design.

His working life was a succession of land, urban and building architectural works ranging through apartments, houses and town houses, government offices, Monarto’s town centre, a water works, school and sports complexes, Salisbury Council Chambers, extensions to the Art Gallery, redevelopment of the University of Adelaide’s Union, the Norton Summit Council building, and the shelter for the ‘Old Gum Tree’ at Glenelg.

In 1839 the 80 acre (32 hectares), hills-type, section 857, ‘Morialta’ was created not long after settlement of SA. In 1919 it had its first subdivision. Bob Dickson came to it in 1950 just before his brother Graham. It had few houses then. As allotment prices grew; so did urban issues. The area was under threat of being overrun by insensitive development. Little planning was done by our East Torrens Council. On 23 October 1968 Bob and other sponsors formed the Morialta Residents’ Association with its aims for preservation of the environment with its hills features.

In his student days Bob designed the Dickson family home at the end of Wandilla Drive and other houses in ‘Morialta’. We were most fortunate to have Bob settle here. Without his leadership and example the area would have become an urban disaster. Of course, he did not do it all alone; but he was a driving force. He helped prevent our long standing trees from being destroyed by major pipe-laying along the Spring Gully creek. Between Wandilla Drive and the creek there may well now have been houses or a caravan park. There would certainly have been many more minimum size house plots. A Besser block factory for processing marble might still be by his house. Stobie poles were everywhere with their electrical wires dictating the carving of grotesque shapes into our treescape; they were removed.

Bob’s wife Lillian died 1993 of a brain tumour. In 2010 Bob had a serious car accident: he suffered major injuries from which he never recovered. His achievements and contributions will be proudly remembered by his partner Pamela; his children Nigel, Rohan and Sara; and grand children Simon, Ben, Ethan, Astrid and Harry. He is buried in the North Road Cemetery.

He will be remembered in ‘Morialta’.

Sources
Addicted to Architecture, Robert Dickson, Wakefield Press, 2010.
Eulogy for Bob Dickson, Nigel Dickson, 8 April, 2014