

**19 April 2022**

## **Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network (MMHN) Submission**

**Re Melbourne Observatory, Birdwood Avenue, Melbourne (VHR H1087)  
Permit P34916 for installation of safety lighting, including 18 new light bollards.**

I strongly argue against granting this application for Melbourne Observatory lighting work. Representing the Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network (MMHN), I wish to make several pertinent points:

- This application indicates clearly that those making the application lack insight into what the Melbourne Observatory actually means in terms of Australia's heritage - cultural, social and economic. The contribution of the Observatory Precinct to science and the economy is not understood or acknowledged. The Observatory played a key role in the economy and prosperity of early Melbourne which was reliant upon sea trade. Representing the MMHN, I can confirm that accurate astronomical readings taken from this southern hemisphere site underpinned the success of sea trade. I spoke of this at the RHSV on 6 December 2020.
- The irrefutable heritage value of the Observatory Precinct lies not only in the buildings but also function. It continues to enable and perform important scientific observations of the Dark Night Sky. To state the obvious, this proposal to artificially increase the light in the Observatory Precinct will inevitably and adversely impact, actually impede, astronomical work. Work which has been conducted continuously on this site from circa 1860. Melbourne Observatory remains a registered optical observatory.
- This application appears to argue, somewhat disingenuously, that such extensive 'safety' lighting is warranted. Given that the Royal Botanic Garden (RBG) staff are unlikely to traverse this Observatory Precinct in the dark, an obvious conclusion to draw is the application actually relates to another unrelated RBG objective. The proposed installation lighting is directed at, and will cater to, enabling car access for those attending an ever-expanding events program in the Observatory Precinct.
- RBG appears to be intent on further encroaching upon the Observatory Heritage Precinct site for its own purposes. RBG has already 'acquired' use of a sizeable area form a staff carpark in the Precinct for its staff in the day time and now, with this lighting application, it seeks to co-opt more of the Observatory Precinct even if this damages its immense heritage value. There is no relationship between the RBG operations and those of the Observatory Precinct except for RBG use of the area designated at a

carpark and RBG occupation of Observatory buildings for its own purposes. They merely occupy adjacent sites. Regrettably one State agency, the Board of the Royal Botanic Gardens of Victoria, has been granted responsibility for a significant public heritage asset the preservation of which it has no understanding, no expertise and certainly no respect. This application to light the Dark Night Sky is proof of this.

In conclusion: Installation of such lighting fundamentally challenges the heritage integrity and heritage value of the Observatory Precinct site, the significance of which for Victoria and Australia cannot be overstated.

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