

MMHN Opportunity 1

Melbourne Maritime Experience Centre

Part A. Executive Summary

What is the Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network?

Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network (MMHN) is a non-political, not-for-profit, member-based ‘umbrella’ organisation (i.e. a Network) that brings together individuals and stakeholder groups from marine, maritime heritage, education, tourism, corporate and community sectors, all of which share a commitment to fostering greater recognition of, and knowledge about, Melbourne’s rich maritime heritage and burgeoning maritime industry sector – past, present, and future.

Lost and Found - *Maritime Melbourne*

Swamps, billabongs and creeks and river systems of the Birrarung and Maribyrnong have been critical in sustaining the evolution of ‘Melbourne’ since time began. An ambitious 19th century State government led to draining the swamps, re-configuring the waterways and the construction of major world-renowned maritime infrastructure (wharves) in Victoria Port (now known as Victoria Harbour). Bold investment by state governments since have been less productive.

International port cities comparable to Melbourne celebrate and promote their maritime legacy as a ‘strength’ - an asset of significance, not only to capture and optimise economic value with cultural tourism, but also as a reminder to the wider public that maritime industry and expertise continue to play a crucial role in sustaining national prosperity.

Re-capturing - *Maritime Melbourne*

An opportunity exists to rekindle reputation and respect for Victoria's maritime sector strengths. Melbourne's acclaimed reputation: '*liveability*', innovation, research, culture, the arts, fashion, sport, food, are all closely aligned with the untold success 'story' of maritime industry and trade. Consider:

- Melbourne has a rich first nation history centred around its waterways
- Melbourne remains the largest General Goods Port in Australia
- Victoria Harbour and the extended Yarra /Birrarung waterways represents 150 years of maritime industry and trade, and is a world-renowned feat of civil engineering
- Melbourne is recognised as home-base for specialised shipping in the Southern Ocean
- Victoria has global recognition in the maritime industry sector for innovation, specialised shipping, freight & logistics, aquaculture, blue water exploration extractive industries
- Victoria is also becoming increasingly recognised as a leading force in Ocean Energy- wind, tide, and wave.

Bold New Vision - The Maritime Experience Centre (MEC)

MMHN proposes a bold new vision in cultural tourism for Victoria.

Maritime Melbourne will 're-surface' in Victoria Harbour in a Cultural Centre, The Maritime Experience Centre (MEC) showcasing all facets of maritime industry and trade – past, present and future,

The new cultural centre will facilitate awareness and education, delivered via entertaining creative technologies enabling experiential learning or, to echo in 19th century parlance, *instructive amusement*. Importantly the MEC is NOT a museum.

The MEC presents an opportunity for a new inclusive experiential investment in cultural tourism which will deliver significant public benefit - cultural, reputational and economic.

The MEC represents a creative response enabling us to recognise and celebrate the maritime legacy of Melbourne and the promise of Victoria's maritime future. Victoria's maritime endeavour is a 'strength' that is seldom acknowledged. Melbourne's Docklands waterfront was once the economic 'engine' which drove Victoria's prosperity. This impact of this historic maritime sector strength continues to play a significant role in Melbourne's economy today.

Location: Why Docklands?

The MEC located Docklands will re-ignite the maritime legacy through a unique and appropriate cultural 'activation' experience for Melbourne and Victoria.

Docklands is irrefutably a key site in Victoria's maritime legacy. It physically represents a key 'point of transition' from an indigenous food resource or and gathering place nearby around Batman's Hill sites, which was physically co-opted to serve as a commercial resource – or asset – for expanding the colony.

Core interventions and investment by government, drastically changed the landscape and waterways. Infrastructure designed to facilitate maritime trade and related activity within Melbourne was constructed. Yet though the pattern human engagement with the site changed over time, Docklands continued to be interface between the waters of the Yarra and Port Phillip Bay. Docklands was an area of transition between the early urban fabric of the Hoddle Grid expanding demand for wharves in the Port of Melbourne. More recent urban 'renewal' in Docklands continued this pattern of transition.

The ongoing symbiotic relationships between the regions, the city and the sea exemplify the unique status of Docklands and the opportunity to be captured. The MEC cultural centre, is perfectly located at the heart of Docklands in close proximity to, and surrounded by, its most important medium - the waterfront on Victoria Harbour.

Benefit 1 - Activating Docklands through providing a new focal point

Cultural tourism. The MEC is a modest investment in cultural tourism beyond that which is currently offered in Melbourne which optimises the economic value of seldom acknowledged state assets. The MEC will, imaginatively and appropriately, re-instate cultural legitimacy to the Docklands Precinct and will signal its role as the crucial element in Victoria's rich maritime 'story' – past, present and, importantly, future – and present Victoria's maritime sector strength in such a way as to attract local, regional, international visitation to Docklands.

The MEC is a high-tech, cultural institutional icon on Victoria's first Floating Pier in the centre of the magnificent heritage-listed aquatic amphitheatre - Victoria Harbour. Set amidst a Maritime Garden, encircled by a promenade Deck/wharf with space for the resident Heritage fleet and visiting vessels of note. A compelling prospect.

MEC design will feature spaces capable of shared community use or spaces for hire e.g. theatre, workrooms, meeting rooms, commercially active spaces such as a cafe and fish restaurant to show case Victoria's marine harvest and accessible amenities at all hours.

Benefit 2 – Showcasing Victoria's maritime strength

Few are aware Victoria has global recognition in the maritime industry sector for innovation, specialised shipping, freight & logistics, aquaculture, blue water exploration, extractive industries. More recently Victoria is leading the way nationally with ocean energy.

This is consistent with Melbourne's international recognition as a 'knowledge city' with nine universities spearheading an impressive range of research. A focus on showcasing such maritime research will encourage investment and collaborations.

Raising the awareness of maritime industries, specifically in relation to skills is also a MEC key focus. Discussions with MMHN members and other stakeholders has identified a gap between skills provision and skills demand in the maritime industry and trade sector. The MEC will showcase Victoria's current skills provision and most importantly, careers education.

Creative technologies and **experiential learning** will ensure that young people are exposed as never before to the breadth of the maritime industry and trade sector and the knowledge, skills and career options open to them.

What would the MEC look like?

MMHN proposes a design competition process to showcase Victoria's creative community of practitioners. Three determinants will dictate the form of the built structure:

- A new permanent focal point for Docklands
- Location atop a floating Victorian-made pier/pontoon.
- Free flowing internals with a focus on user experience, engagement with the water and experiential learning.
- A showcase of Victoria's sustainable 'cutting-edge' design inside and out.
- A prioritisation of innovative approaches to sustainable building in the maritime environment [floating piers, passive climate control etc.].

Models

Several useful indicative 'models to consider:

Site: Brooke Street Floating Pier and Building, Hobart. Cost circa \$14 million, four stories, light-weight construction materials, delivering exemplar environmental sustainability, e.g. translucent polycarbonate cladding, passive heating and cooling using water and tide fluctuation beneath the pier. Unique mooring system by Seaflex See <https://www.brookestreetpier.com>

Context: ACMI – the 'anchor' cultural institution in Federation Square which showcases a specific industry sector (film) and engages the public (in particular the young) via creative technologies. MEC will showcase maritime industry and trade – past present and future. MEC experiential learning, curation and programming will similarly attract young people.

Construction: Cowes Cultural and Community Centre Phillip Island (under cost circa \$35 million, designed by Jason Clement Burrows Architects (JCBA). A mixed-use community centre providing publicly accessible and booking spaces focuses on a design approach which embraces the Cowes surroundings.

Proposed MEC Dimensions: circa 5000 sq. meters (Gross Floor Area), 2-3 levels, accessed from Harbour Esplanade and the waterways, with access prioritised in the design approach. The space will provide:

- 250 seat flexible tiered lecture / theatre space and exhibition spaces, with ancillary retail space, café, and restaurant.
- Flexible spaces capable of accommodating various types of workshops – experiential and immersive displays and exhibitions to show case local best practise in emerging maritime research and development. Cutting-edge technical capabilities including external and internal projection; library.
- Out-of-hours external access to commercial areas will be directed from the landscaped Maritime Garden enabling ‘citizen science’ based activities and will encircle the building with a promenade Deck, where the public will be able to interact with the Melbourne Maritime fleet and other visiting vessels.

MEC Project Delivery Programme

Pragmatic discussions around MEC content and delivery are on-going. MMHN has commenced preliminary discussions with many relevant agencies and industry representatives, e.g. Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) who has helped to determine that a design competition be considered to assist with detailing the specifics of the opportunity and the iconic nature of its design; Australian Ocean Energy Group (AOEG). MMHN is confident of on-going support and endorsement from key stakeholders at Development Victoria, City of Melbourne, Heritage Victoria, Creative Victoria, Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water, Victoria Ports, and the Port of Melbourne.

MMHN considers that a reasonable pathway through the MEC planning process will be negotiated, and that, given the consultations already in train, a comprehensive schedule of further public, stakeholder and industry, a design and planning permit for the MEC could be secured within in a period of 18 months. This programme allows for a design competition (local) and assessment within the established budget funding regimes and anticipated progress on Central Pier demolition. Off-site construction of the floating pier and structure could deliver a new facility delivered late in 2025.

Operations, Management & Governance

Permanent activation imperative: Although decisions on such matters as governance, ownership, corporate and operational responsibility cannot be definitive at this point, MMHN preliminary thinking is that Development Victoria (DV) and City of Melbourne (CoM) have each identified a pressing need to deliver ‘activation’ in the Docklands Precinct. It is the MMHN’s strong opinion that such activation must involve permanent attractions and not simply events. The wider public needs to perceive Docklands as a ‘destination’ which warrants multiple visits.

Shared facilities: CoM has also indicated an imperative to expand its facilities in Docklands for community-use. Applauding and supporting these ideas, MMHN considers that both objectives could be met by working together to realise a shared

arrangement to deliver a community facility with open space, such as a Maritime Garden, and a MEC with permanent attractions and displays.

MMHN's initial thoughts on the short term and longer-term governance and facilities ownership are:

Governance Options: The MMHN Board could identify key representatives from industry, stakeholder groups, state and municipal bureaucracies to join a MEC Advisory Group which would have as its purpose to progress the MEC Project with the TEMC in its preliminary stages as a pilot project.

At the point when the MEC Project gains the requisite in-principal approvals, the MEC Advisory Group structure could then evolve into an Independent MEC Trust structure responsible for operations, programming and curation of the project.

Precise details of the trust would be developed at that point, taking into consideration the trust's purpose and constitution, charitable status, tax, financial profile etc.

Facilities Ownership Options: There are a number of possible ownership models to be explored, and the MMHN is aware of the relatively unique nature of title ownership across the Docklands precinct. We understand that DV do not intend to have a longer role on the precinct and have developed our response accordingly:

- the Independent MEC Trust could assume ownership of the facility;
- if ownership is to be retained by government, then the Independent MEC Trust could take a long term or perpetual lease for a nominal rent; and
- if ownership is to reside in the City of Melbourne (CoM), then the MEC Independent Trust could be a tenant of dedicated MEC space within the facility.

MEC Curation and Programming

A focus on knowledge transfer and entertainment through 'Experiential Learning' using creative technology will differentiate the MEC cultural tourism 'offer' from existing cultural institutions.

Experiential learning experience: These may be 'slow' or extended. e.g. Project-based workshops (individual or group) hands-on building, citizen science monitoring or observing, observing experts in real-time or virtually in research or as they work. Experiential learning can also be rapid. Compared to conventional cultural programming and static displays, creative technologies enable a **rapid turnover** of virtual 'experiences' which will stimulate repeated visitation.

ACMI: The 'anchor' cultural institution in Federation Square showcasing a specific industry sector (film) and engaging the public via creative technologies most closely aligns with the MEC concept, i.e., maritime industry and trade and focus on the adoption of creative technologies.

Projected Visitation

Docklands has no comparable cultural tourism 'experience' and Victoria has no institution targeting or equipped to showcase maritime industry and trade with a focus on 'experiential learning'. The lack of strictly comparable visitation data, our figures are indicative only.

ACMI Federation Square: The 'model' for the MEC concept. Annual Report 2021-22 cites 201,206 visits in its first year (during Covid) with 450 school groups. ACMI, like the proposed MEC, showcases a specific industry sector (film) and engages the public via creative technologies. It is immensely popular.

City of Melbourne: 2021 published annual visitation data from organisations near Docklands Precinct in support of its investment in the *Greenline* project cited: Marvel Stadium 5.3 million, Aquarium 1.4 million, Southbank and Southgate 1.5 million.

Museums Victoria: Annual Report 2021-22 cites Ticketed Attendance: 1,378,323; Student education program attendance 2018-19: 255,552, IMAX projection 17,019.

What would the MEC cost?

Estimated Investment Looking at the comparable activators and, notwithstanding, the initial cost premiums of any building in close proximity to the water, it is the MMHN's considered view that structure costs as detailed could be delivered through an investment in cultural tourism of circa \$45-\$50m.

Estimated Benefits The capacity to deliver public benefit as well as ROI for the state government and industry partners is irrefutable, but at this stage unproven. MMHN, a membership entity, obviously lacks the specific means to assess the financial viability of the operation with the detailed rigour necessary. However, the calibre of the MMHN Board indicates there is a level of expertise available to work with both state and local government to 'prove-up' this MEC proposal.

Income: Income from the commercial leased businesses, hire space plus ticketed entry or events, depending content engagement by industry and government agencies, ongoing activation support and grants are likely to assist ongoing project costs. There is also the potential to host commercial or trade maritime events at the venue for a fee. Hospitality operators will pay commercial rent. MMHN has Charitable Gift Status and philanthropic funding may be available. It can reasonably be considered that the MEC will be a cost neutral endeavour in the future.

Examples Whilst broad similarities can be drawn for example from the Socio-Economic Impact Assessment of **Cowes Community and Cultural Centre** and public benefit is comparable, the following data is merely indicative: a benefit cost ratio of 2.6 for the local Bass Coast economy, which translates into 1.5 when considered in a Victorian context; 30 full-time equivalent jobs; Use value at \$511,000 based on visitation of 62,000.00 (30,000 extra) per annum. Other significant additional benefits are cited in Cowes data which will certainly align with this level of investment in the MEC in Docklands: enhanced social cohesion and community pride; addressing social disadvantage and improved business development and confidence,

The assumption can reasonably be made that due to the larger catchment population attached to the central location of the Docklands Precinct, plus the potential of attracting significant interest from primary and secondary schools as well as special interest groups, the MEC will outperform the Cowes SDG data.

Support for the MEC

Stakeholder: MMHN has ‘tested’ and refined the MEC concept at Docklands over the past 3 years with a great variety of stakeholders – in Docklands and beyond. We are confident that it is supported by key community, industry and heritage stakeholders.

- Strong and sustained support expressed by industry, unions and the Royal Australian Navy.
- Strong and sustained support from relevant state agencies.
- Strong and sustained support from historical institutions and academic networks.
- Consistent with stated federal and state government goals.
- Strong international interest and offers of support from across the maritime museums and academic network.

Three Levels of Government

Federal Government:

The Australian Government’s 2021 Infrastructure Plan follows the 2016 Plan and is intended to support our national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other events that have impacted Australia in recent years such as the bushfires, floods, and drought. The MEC will comply with the UN SDGs potential use in relation to Federal and State grants.

Sustainability SDGs: The MEC Project is consistent with the eight UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the federal and state government (No.4 Quality Education, No.6 Affordable and Clean Energy, No.7 Decent Work and Economic Growth, No.8 Industry Innovation and Infrastructure, No.12 Responsible Consumption and Production, No.14 Life below the water, No.15 Life on Land, No.16 Partnerships for the Goals)

City of Melbourne 2019-20 *Adopt a leadership and advocacy role with key stakeholders with the objective of securing collaborative co-funding partnership agreement to deliver maritime legacy outcomes in the municipality including interpretative heritage signage and a maritime museum, advocate to Development Victoria to ensure that Melbourne’s Maritime heritage is considered as part of the development of Harbour Esplanade and Victoria Harbour 2018-19, partner with Development Victoria and the AFL to develop a Stadium Precinct Master Plan to deliver exemplar connected public spaces in Harbour Esplanade, Bourke and La Trobe Streets, integrated with the future direction of Etihad Stadium, Southern Cross Station and Central Pier.*

MMHN Opportunity 1 Melbourne Maritime Experience Centre

Part B. The Concept

MMHN notes that Melbourne is unique among the large cities of Australia and comparable coastal cities across the developed world in NOT recognising maritime heritage and consequently NOT investing in a Maritime Centre.

The Problem

Across the globe, cities optimise the value of their maritime heritage, their major economic strength and their future ambitions. Melbourne has NOT strategically nor sufficiently promoted its maritime success 'story'. Melbourne's attributes:

- The largest container and general cargo port in the nation
- recognised as a home-base for specialised shipping, with
- more navigable waterways than Sydney, and the
- site of 150 years of world-renown maritime heritage infrastructure, plus
- renowned for maritime industry sector innovation (e.g., shipping, logistics, aquaculture, blue water extractive industries and exploration), enabling
- almost 200 years of prosperity in Melbourne and regional Victoria, leading to
- global acclaim for liveability, intellectual clout, sport and food awareness, and culture.

Yet there is minimal acknowledgement that Melbourne's status and economic strength should be attributed to maritime endeavor and capability. We continue to ignore this at our peril.

MMHN advocates to the State government and relevant stakeholders (see Appendix B) to 'showcase' Melbourne's maritime credentials – the strength and importance of maritime industry – past present and future. As stakeholders succinctly observe: *Melbourne is the only maritime city in the developed world without a maritime museum* (National Trust, Polly Woodside Volunteers, 21 August 2018).

Despite Melbourne's comparative wealth and culture, the State has not ambitiously invested in any internationally acclaimed construction in recent decades. Melbourne has thus far in effect 'turned its back' on its waterfront and its maritime heritage. It is a major port city; it has an undeveloped waterfront; it has heritage-listed maritime infrastructure assets; it has a rich maritime heritage. Australia obviously has the architectural expertise to create an iconic structure and Melbourne certainly has the need for an inspirational project.

Examples of iconic architectural responses to significant waterfront locations across the world and across the centuries are plentiful (see Appendix C). Not since the construction of Federation Square has Victoria invested in architecture capable of capturing the public imagination. An inspirational project on this under-valued yet iconic maritime site focusing on maritime heritage and maritime industry is an opportunity whose *time has come*.

The Solution: Maritime Experience Centre

Acknowledging and consolidating Melbourne's reputation as the key maritime city in the south of this island nation, and working in collaboration with relevant stakeholder partners, an iconic Maritime Experience Centre is created by the State government.

The Maritime Experience Centre will enable Melbourne and Victoria to showcase its rich maritime heritage, reflect the current strength of Victoria's maritime industry sector, as well as the marine-based science and innovative technologies which are shaping our future.

Rationale

Creating a Maritime Experience Centre will deliver multi-dimensional and multi-layered public benefit:

- **Cultural benefit** – celebrating maritime heritage, maritime industry, marine science, plus opportunities for public and private sector engagement.
- **Educational benefit** – 'instructive amusement' using creative technologies – heritage, innovation, information, experiential learning, careers.
- **Economic benefit** – tourism (local, interstate and international), Docklands Precinct Activation and opportunities for maritime industry engagement.
- **Social benefit** – a post pandemic, iconic inspirational project showcasing Docklands Precinct, architectural and technological expertise, and the multi-faceted maritime industry sector. The 2021 Infrastructure Australia Plan included the first-time cultural infrastructure, quoting ANA this represents *recognition of the significant value Australians place on access to arts and cultural experiences and the need to ensure all Australians can benefit from them, no matter where they live.*
- **Reputational benefit** – the architectural design potential of the proposed Maritime Experience Centre presents an opportunity for Melbourne to not only generate excitement in such an iconic project by showcasing Melbourne strength in architecture and design, but also by tapping into the abundant local expertise in creative technologies. It is an opportunity to deliver extrinsic and intrinsic public benefit – visual excitement as well as intellectual stimulation.

Post COVID Response – Civic Pride

Melbourne needs a symbolic infrastructure project investment, a structure to 'announce' a return to optimism. The State government should grasp the opportunity to re-kindle the civic pride when Melbourne was known as *Marvellous Melbourne* and later, *Modern Melbourne*, by creating a modern cutting-edge 'marvel' beyond roads, tunnels and overpasses – the Maritime Experience Centre – as inspirational, and to counter what has been a tumultuous and challenging period in our history.

Research is clear and is supported by the Australian government's 2021 Infrastructure Plan. Quoting the ANA in relation to public recovery and benefit post-COVID: *We know from our research with both middle Australians and young middle Australians that they believe arts and cultural experiences build communities and can help both individuals and communities recover from trauma like the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Inspiration can be drawn as to the effectiveness of such 'symbols'. Cities comparable to Melbourne have celebrated, invested in and promoted their maritime legacy by commissioning iconic infrastructure. The list is impressive – Tianjin, Belfast, Singapore, San Francisco, Genoa, Auckland, Kobe, Seattle to name a few. Ironically, Melbourne's sister city Tianjin

commissioned Australian talent, Cox Architects, to design its Maritime Centre (see Appendix C: Examples of Maritime Centres)



Titanic, Belfast



Tianjin, China



Busselton, WA

The Location

There are several appropriate waterfront locations for consideration for the Maritime Experience Centre. However, whatever the waterfront location selected, a key consideration should be to extract optimal ‘heritage value’ and to reflect the inherent social and cultural value of Melbourne’s maritime heritage past, present and future.

Key maritime infrastructure assets remaining in the Docklands include Victoria Harbour, Central Pier and Collins Wharf. Victoria Harbour is a remarkably intact example of one of only two large excavated harbours in the world. Victoria Harbour and Central Pier heritage assets were technically advanced civil engineering projects at the time they were constructed; they were complex and complementary structures built to enable the great volume of maritime trade which generated prosperity for Melbourne and the hinterland. The ‘untold story’ underpinning these maritime structures – conception, design and construction – reveals that they deserve recognition, respect, preservation and celebration with the establishment of the Maritime Experience Centre.

Docklands Location – Around Victoria Harbour

Development Victoria Docklands Project 2009-2025 describing the various precincts and nominated Victoria Harbour as *the main civic focus for visitors and locals to Docklands and a major waterfront destination of regional importance. It provides a unique opportunity to create a public-focused place outside of the developer-led initiatives.*

<https://www.development.vic.gov.au/projects/docklands?page=overview>

- **Heritage value**

It is important to note that Victoria Harbour is itself a heritage site, see MMHN Opportunity 3: Victoria Harbour – recognition and activation of an undeveloped public asset, <https://www.mmhn.org.au>

Victoria Harbour, formerly Victoria Port, is world-renowned as a nineteenth-century civil engineering ‘marvel’, largely hand excavated, yet its remarkable genesis and evolution story is largely unknown. The plethora of responsible authorities has persistently, probably inadvertently, impeded optimum commercial activation. Its potential lies dormant. Its wharves and related rail infrastructure which enabled Victoria’s prosperity are in decline: neglected, degraded and in poor condition.

- **Activation value**

The Docklands location would address the widely acknowledged chronic serious absence of a permanent ‘attraction’ institution to draw the public to this Precinct. The Docklands Precinct

teeters on the edge of the CBD. Despite considerable strategic effort and decades of lacklustre development, the public has not embraced Docklands. The impact of the pandemic has exacerbated the sense of ‘emptiness’, with resident numbers in decline and empty office towers. Day workers and residents are unlikely to ever generate adequate precinct vitality. The wider public needs a reason to come to the Docklands Precinct regularly – and a reason to linger. The proposed Maritime Experience Centre will give them reason to do so. A permanent, quality ‘attractor’ of this calibre and scope will certainly draw the young and the not so young. Currently such experiences are missing in the Docklands Precinct. COVID constraints have exacerbated this pre-existing problem.

The entire Docklands Precinct is languishing, in dire need of a destination to trigger visitation. A Maritime Experience Centre is not only an historically appropriate re-purposing of maritime heritage infrastructure in Docklands but, importantly, it is a concept which will generate permanent visitation – an actual ‘destination’ in Docklands where there is currently little to stimulate or sustain public interest (note, for example the economic benefit flowing from MONA in Hobart (see also Appendix C international examples).

2. Central Pier on Harbour Esplanade

In 2021, the State government recognised the ‘activation’ opportunities flowing from re-development of Central Pier by investing \$3 million for the Docklands responsible authority, Development Victoria, to undertake consultations on the re-development of Central Pier at the heart of Victoria Harbour. This re-development opportunity will enable Melbourne to capitalise on the value of its waterways and maritime heritage infrastructure and, at the same time, to revitalise Docklands Precinct post-COVID.

- **Heritage significance**

The current state of dilapidation and abandonment distorts the true value of Central Pier, specifically the key role it has played in the economic evolution of Melbourne. It is a compelling ‘story’ and one that should be told. It is the only existing wooden pier structure of its kind in Australia. With the advent of containerization, the working port of Melbourne at Victoria Harbour and Central Pier moved to the west. Nevertheless, the heritage infrastructure that remains renders this a unique maritime heritage site in a unique geographical aquatic amphitheatre – with Central Pier at the heart.

This re-development opportunity will be a catalyst enabling Melbourne to capitalise on the value of its waterways and maritime heritage infrastructure and, at the same time, to revitalise the Docklands precinct post-Covid-19. As a heritage listed public asset, Central Pier is an ideal site on which to locate the Maritime Experience Centre.

- **Visibility**

Central pier inevitably ‘draws the eye’ from all around Victoria Harbour. Its prominent position calls for an imaginative architectural response to optimise the value of the unique site. Iconic architecture has the capacity to inspire – especially on a highly visually prominent site as Central Pier which also so eloquently and prominently serves to reflect Melbourne’s prosperous past flowing from maritime trade, industry and innovation. What is required is re-purposing, of all, or part of this heritage-listed maritime infrastructure by establishing an iconic maritime focussed structure. This will transform a sad and degraded pier into an exciting iconic building with public spaces. An arresting structure specifically designed to bring economic, social, psychological, educational and entertainment benefits to Melbourne. Maritime endeavour has been and still is, the foundation of Melbourne’s economic prosperity.

3. Collins Wharf – South side of Victoria Harbour

- **Developer contribution**

Large-scale developments in the City of Melbourne are obliged to make public benefit contributions. This opens up a suitable site opportunity at the southern arm of Victoria Harbour along Collins Wharf. Lendlease had ministerial approval to commence work on two residential towers along Collins Wharf in 2019, but have a permitted two-year delay due to COVID. Lendlease view a ‘maritime heritage presence’ as good for the promotion of this residential development. Consequently, Lendlease is open to modification of the original plans which included spaces nominally assigned to house a gym and wooden boat workshop. The community benefit component of any such large-scale development can be applied in a range of ways – even a Maritime Experience Centre. In response to discussions with MMHN in 2019, Lendlease prepared ‘exploratory’ concept designs for a Maritime Museum along Collins Wharf facing Victoria Harbour in place of the gym and boat workshop originally planned.

- **Heritage Commitment**

Lendlease also intends to incorporate the former Harbour Control Tower into their design. Lendlease have already demonstrated a capacity to design and construct excellent community infrastructure nearby in Docklands (c.f. Library at the Dock and the Community Hub). MMHN is aware that plans to restore the heritage-listed Harbour Port Control Tower on the tip Collins Wharf. This significant tower, initially known as Harbour Control Tower, was designed by C.J. Smith, completed in 1966, is ruined internally but externally it remains intact, although non-compliant. Development Victoria is required to both restore and make the tower accessible. Lendlease continues to support the Heritage Fleet on the wharf.

Lendlease has also committed to retain other maritime infrastructure, such as the redundant rail lines extending along Collins Wharf which facilitated the delivery of cargo from the dock to the rail yards. Lendlease has already restored the Australian Wharf closer to the CBD on the Yarra and installed informational signage on its heritage significance.

- **Accessible activation**

Collins Wharf is readily accessible by public transport and adjacent to the Ferry Terminal. MMHN’s proposed *Birrarung to the Blue Lake Trail* (see MMHN Opportunity 2, <https://www.mmhn.org.au>) will incorporate a ‘spur’ pedestrian and cycle trail along Collins Wharf to the proposed park at the tip of the wharf.

Alternative location - Fishermen’s Bend

The State government plans to re-develop several of the brown-field sites at Fishermen’s Bend in collaboration with institutions, including Melbourne University and RMIT, focussing on engineering. Although such spaces and collaborations may to an extent be appropriate for a Maritime Experience Centre, waterways and public transport access may prove to be problematic. The relationship with the maritime industry is tenuous.

The Maritime Experience Centre Concept

By way of clarification: the Maritime Experience Centre will NOT be a Maritime Museum, it will NOT include floating vessels and it will feature minimal conventional exhibits. The Melbourne Maritime Experience Centre will offer a clear point of differentiation from ALL existing maritime museums in Australia.

In broad terms, Maritime Experience Centre will:

- Comprehensively reflect our multi-layered maritime heritage, incorporating Indigenous, and 19th and 20th century industries
- Point to the maritime industries of the future – innovation, environment, extraction, sustainability, etc.
- Deliver an ‘architectural icon’ to the Docklands precinct and, at the same time, enhance ‘brand’ Melbourne as a major port city valuing culture and innovation
- Deliver ‘high tech’ futurist, stimulating and educational experiences to the public realm – above and below (virtually) the water, including visibly accessible and engaging ‘Living Labs’ and workshops designed to showcase and inform on all relevant activities, including relevant specialist or ‘lost’ heritage skills
- Constitute a new public sector ‘asset’ and an architectural ‘icon’ incorporating spaces for exhibitions, lectures, projections, workshops, events involving cutting-edge technological delivery modes
- Catalyse optimal collaboration between relevant State agencies and authorities, (see Appendix B Listing potential collaboration/support).

Experiential Learning Concept - Engagement focus and programming

Engagement focus: The Maritime Experience Centre focus will be on using creative technologies to attract, engage and educate the public, incite curiosity, and at the same time activate the Docklands Precinct. The programming and mode of delivery will reflect and comprehensively inform the wider community on diverse aspects of maritime heritage and marine industry – past present and future.

- Provide education, information instructive amusement and entertainment – on, above and below the pier, or parts thereof.
- Focus on the multi-faceted maritime industry sector (e.g., commerce and trade, specialist shipping, marine research, energy generation (wind and wave), offshore extractive industries, stevedoring, logistics, ports management, innovation, new propulsion, aquaculture, marine archeology, oceanography, marine environmental sustainability etc., shipping company and people stories – all maritime matters above and below the waterline.
- Facilitate public engagement with marine research, wrecks/archaeology, propulsion, wind and wave energy generation, logistics, bio/environmental science, aquaculture – harvesting and extraction, Australian Antarctic Division, Australia’s vase Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the waters of the Southern and Indian Oceans and Antarctica. The emphasis will be on public access to knowledge transfer and engagement.
- Recognising that the wider public rarely sees fascinating work being undertaken by professionals within the public sector, the Maritime Experience Centre will enable a range of government authorities and agencies to showcase the relevant and cutting-edge work they do, including, but not confined to Heritage Victoria, PROV, Fisheries, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, Environment Victoria, AMSA, CSIRO, safety, various universities – a plethora of data collection and monitoring.

Programming Content and Delivery Modes

The range of available ‘experiential’ learning tools or methodologies using creative technologies is immense: e.g., virtual and augmented reality, simulations and experiences above and below the water, internal and external projections. Experiential can be divided into two categories – Virtual and Actual.

Examples of Virtual Experiential Engagement:

- Victoria's coastal marine environment, e.g. research into sustainable aquaculture, climate, tides, coastal geography etc.
- Victoria's fishing industry and recreational boating industries
- Victoria's new offshore maritime energy extractive industries – wave and wind and aquaculture, kelp farming etc.
- Australia's vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the waters and landmass of Antarctica the Southern Ocean
- Presenting Melbourne's comprehensive maritime heritage 'story' from Indigenous times and the 'Blue Swamp' to straightening of the Yarra and Coode Canal, the creation of Victoria Harbour, the advent of containerisation and refrigeration, and urban renewal in Docklands Precinct
- Exploring the history of maritime trade – trade is the continuous thread in the evolution of Melbourne and regional Victoria
- Interpreting human relationships with waterways, coastal, riverine and ocean over 60,000 years – both bountiful and yet perilous – diverse geographic and social relationships, seafarer livelihoods, conservationists, nefarious activities like smuggling and warfare etc.
- Showcasing maritime research and innovation – past, present and future
- Visioning the future of Melbourne's physical or geographic future may be in relation to waterways in the next 50 years. e.g., sea level, climate change
- Presenting 'seafarers' storytelling' – faces, voices, sounds interspersed with images relevant to their stories
- Presenting maritime soundscapes – the sea, the wind in sails, keening of many masts
- Using the external surfaces of the Centre as giant screens to project maritime images.

Examples of Actual Experiential Engagement

- Casual or programmed public exposure to and engagement with marine-focussed 'Living Labs', Citizens Science investigations
- Casual or programmed public exposure to skills 'workshops' made visible behind glass-walled workshops for observing real-time restoration, preservation and maintenance of artefacts (vessel, dockside cranes, buoys etc.); not only engage the public but also provide a potential source of income and (e.g. to assist Seaworks, heritage fleet or); provide training on lost skills through collaboration with heritage fleet; professional work on restoration and preservation.
- Curating Pop-Up spaces for temporary, maritime and marine exhibitions to promote regional Maritime Museums of Victoria exposure and interpretation training.
- Showcasing Victorian seafood – conventional and new foods – in the café and restaurant located at the Centre
- A range of theatres of presentation suites for lectures, zooming, or mini-conferencing.

Architectural Design

Exciting design and stimulating programming will draw new visitation interstate and international tourism and will attract repeat domestic visits to the Docklands Precinct. This 'traffic' to the Docklands Precinct will stimulate existing established businesses in Docklands Precinct. Even during the construction phase the project should excite interest – through innovative engagement activities.

Broad-based Support for Maritime Experience Centre

Since its establishment, MMHN has reflected the sentiments of members and other stakeholders. The MMHN the primary advocacy Opportunity has been, and remains, the establishment of a Maritime Experience Centre at Docklands. We have consistently encountered:

- Dismay that such a Maritime Centre does not exist in the Victoria's State Capital – a major maritime port city in the south of a vast Island nation and
- Overwhelming enthusiasm for such an initiative.

Consequently, MMHN can confidently anticipate endorsement and support from many relevant organisations. It is important to note that since its establishment, MMHN already has forged productive relationships with diverse stakeholder groups and is confident that this will evolve into collaborative partnerships as the proposal progresses (see Appendix B - relevant organisations).

It is also important to acknowledge that the self-evident merit in this proposal for a Maritime Experience Centre has been recognised and consistently endorsed for a decade by the community, by industry as well as government (local and state). Appendix A lists relevant policy and planning documents, including:

The Australian Government's 2021 Infrastructure Plan follows the 2016 Plan and is intended to support our national recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and other events that have impacted Australia in recent years such as the bushfires, floods and drought.

Summary – Public Benefit

The Maritime Experience Centre proposed by MMHN in Docklands will:

- Ensure that optimum public benefit will flow from currently 'dormant' maritime assets – including but obviously not limited to those in Victoria Harbour looking to celebrate the past, the present and the future of matters maritime
- Showcase and celebrate Melbourne's rich maritime heritage
- Build reputation and recognition that Melbourne is Australia's largest southern port city
- Showcase and celebrate Victoria's marine environment
- Showcase Victoria's marine science and research endeavours
- Look to the future and interpret transformational change in all matters maritime – environmental, social and industry sectors
- Activate the languishing Docklands Precinct by giving the public a reason to visit
- Re-ignite civic pride and optimism Post COVID.

Appendix A

Relevant policy & planning documents – indicative only

- **2021** Australian Infrastructure Plan.
- **2019-2020** The City of Melbourne Annual Plan proposed and has since funded a *Greenline* Trail along the North bank of the Yarra from Birrarung Marr to Docklands
- **2019-2020** City of Melbourne Annual Plan Initiative includes *Adopt a leadership and advocacy role with key stakeholders with the objective of securing collaborative co-funding partnership agreement to deliver maritime legacy outcomes in the municipality including interpretative heritage signage and a maritime museum.*
- **2019-2020** City of Melbourne Annual Plan – *Advocate to Development Victoria to ensure that Melbourne’s Maritime heritage is considered as part of the development of Harbour Esplanade and Victoria Harbour.*
- **2018-2019** City of Melbourne 2018-2019 Annual Plan item: *Partner with Development Victoria and the AFL to develop a Stadium Precinct Master Plan to deliver exemplar connected public spaces in Harbour Esplanade, Bourke and La Trobe Streets, integrated with the future direction of Etihad Stadium, Southern Cross Station and Central Pier.*
- **2018 October** The Victorian State Government *Fisherman’s Bend Final Framework and Planning Controls.*
- **2017** City of Melbourne *Ministerial Planning Referral: TPM-2017-7 194-206 Lorimer Street, Docklands.*
- **2015** *The Melbourne Heritage Fleet – Keeping alive Melbourne’s Heritage Maritime Past Alive* November
- **2014** September Parliament of Victoria. Parliamentary Paper No.353. *Heritage Tourism and Ecotourism in Victoria.*
- **2013** Yarra’s Edge *Bolte Precinct Development Plan*
- **2013** Precinct Development Plan Addendum for the *Bolte Precinct West.*
- **2012** State government development authority VicUrban (2012)
- **2012** Victoria Harbour Conservation Management Plan See <https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/hdp.au.prod.app.com-participate.files/8614/1221/3715/>
- predecessor of Development Victoria) invited *The Sorrento Steam and Bay Steamers Group* to submit Maritime Heritage Proposal
- **2011** The Maritime Museums of Victoria (17 groups) and Maritime Heritage Association of Victoria made a submission to the State Government for a *Docklands Maritime Centre*. A detailed design was submitted to complement existing dispersed maritime attractions around the coast.
- **2009-2018.** City of Melbourne *Docklands Waterways Strategic Plan*
- **2009** The City of Melbourne *Parks, Property and Waterways Branch Strategic Plan of Docklands*
- **2009-2025** Development Victoria Docklands Project 2009-2025
<https://www.development.vic.gov.au/projects/docklands?page=overview>

Appendix B

Relevant organisations – indicative only

- **Maritime Sector**

BIAVIC, Star of the South, Port of Melbourne. MIAL, Port Phillip Sea Pilots Assn., DP World, Patricks, Port Phillip Ferries, Searoad Ferries, OSSA, International Transport Federation, MUA now part of CFMEU, The Institute of Marine Engineering Science and Technology, Durham Association. Master Mariners, Association of Bayside Municipalities, Better Boating Victoria, Fishing Victoria, Victorian Wooden Boat Centre, Sea Scouts, Yacht and Fishing Clubs

- **Historical Organisations**

Nautical Association of Australia, Nautical Institute, Navy League, Heritage Fleet, Australian National Maritime Museum, History Council of Victoria, National Trust, Royal Historical Society of Victoria, Maritime Museums of Victoria, ANARE, Merchant Navy, Numerous local coastal history groups, International Council of Maritime Museums

And, of course, Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network members

Indigenous: Aboriginal Branch (City of Melbourne), Koori Heritage Trust, Birrarung Council

Local: City of Melbourne, Docklands Chamber of Commerce, Yarra Traders Group Academic institutions: Monash MU, RMIT, Deakin, VU

- **State Government**

Relevant Ministries: Ports, Freight & Fisheries, Planning, Education and Tertiary Education (TAFE), Science, Industry, Economic Development, Tourism, Sport & Major Events, Premier & Cabinet, Treasury, Creative Industries, Jobs Innovation Trade & Small Business, Transport Roads Infrastructure & Public Transport

Relevant Agencies: Heritage Victoria, MCEC, Melbourne Water, Development Victoria, Parks Victoria, Victorian Coastal Council, Fisherman's Bend Development Board,

- **Federal Government**

Royal Australian Navy, CSIRO, Royal Society, AMSA, Antarctic Division

Appendix C Some Maritime Centres

There are numerous examples of maritime centres in the UK, USA, Europe, Asia and Australia. Unsurprisingly many of take advantage of Docklands Precincts and waterside locations.

Worldwide

London maritime museums - like several other major world cities, London has two maritime museums to celebrate its rich maritime heritage:

1. Docklands Museum London

The London Docklands Museum clearly provides a very useful ‘model’ for Melbourne, which has the opportunity to create a similar museum as a permanent ‘activation’. The museum is part of the Museum of London jointly funded by the City of London Corporation and the Greater London Authority. It also enjoys strong corporate sponsorship from Sainsbury’s.

2. Royal Museums Precinct at Greenwich, London

This is essentially a ‘dispersed’ collection model and is an extraordinarily popular tourist destination. Located near the Royal Observatory Greenwich, is the iconic historic vessel ‘Cutty Sark’, the National Maritime Museum and the Queen’s House art gallery. Publicly funded but receives significant philanthropic funds. Planning major new wing gifted by shipping magnate and philanthropist Sammy Ofer. Managed through a Trust.

Aberdeen Maritime Museum

This Museum reflects recent commercial history in that it is constructed on various levels revolving around a full-scale model of a gas or oilrig. Both government and the corporate sector support the Museum. See: <http://www.aagm.co.uk/Visit/AberdeenMaritimeMuseum/amm-overview.aspx>

Amsterdam Maritime Museum

Reflecting Holland’s strong maritime tradition. Digital as well as s conventional collection including heritage fleet virtual reality experiences. See: <https://www.hetscheepvaartmuseum.nl>

Singapore – two

Reflecting the extent of acknowledgement of the importance of maritime heritage, there are two maritime museums in the city.

Maritime Experiential Museum: The Maritime Experiential Museum, formerly the Maritime Xperiential Museum and the Maritime Experiential Museum and, is a museum in Resorts World Sentosa, Singapore, <https://www.rwsentosa.com/en/attractions/the-maritime-experiential-museum>

Singapore Maritime Gallery: an education centre showcasing all aspects of maritime engagement using interactive technologies,
https://www.maritimegallery.sg/web/portal/home?utm_source=google_maps

Norway -has three major maritime museums - regional and in the national capital Oslo - all government funded.

Lisbon Maritime Museum

Established in 1863 and housed in a monastery and with the National Ministry of Archeology. This museum is dedicated to the memory of the great naval achievements of Portugal starting from the age of the great geographical discoveries until now, <http://www.lisbon-tourism.com/en/lisbon-attractions/museums-and-galleries-in-lisbon/maritime-museum.html>

USA – numerous maritime museums, including:

New York, USA Reflecting the extent of acknowledgement of the importance of maritime heritage, there are two maritime museums in the city.

1. South Street Seaport Museum. The Museum houses paintings, ship models, scrimshaw & more with vintage ships docked outside, <http://southstreetseaportmuseum.org/>

2. WaterFront Museum. The Museum aims to educate about maritime history & expand waterfront access in the metro area, <http://www.waterfrontmuseum.org/>

Penobscot Marine Museum, Searsport, Maine, USA

Maine's oldest maritime museum and is designed to preserve and educate people regarding Maine's and Searsport's rich and unique maritime and shipbuilding history; founded in 1936. See <https://penobscotmarinemuseum.org/pbho-1/working-the-bay/nineteenth-century-industries-lumber>.

The Savage Education Centre and the Marine Science 'Lab' provides hands-on children's activities and programs, and the outdoor 'Yard-in-the-Yard' allows children and adults to experience the workings of a square-rigger's sails, yards, and capstan. Penobscot Marine Museum offers an education site for students, teachers, researchers and other users to learn about maritime history and culture. Some of the features of the site are:

- Eleven education modules including educators tools and additional resources
- Searchable collection that includes historic photographs and images of manuscripts, paintings, maps, charts, and objects to support student research projects

See <https://penobscotmarinemuseum.org>

[Mystic Seaport Museum, CT - https://www.mysticseaport.org](https://www.mysticseaport.org)

Canada - Numerous including Maritime Museum of the Atlantic Fisheries, Museum of the Atlantic, Ladysmith Museum, Maritime Command, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Maritime Museum of BC, Maritime Museum of the Great Lakes, Musee Maritime Quebec, Maritime Museum of Manitoba, LA Have Island Museum

Australia -

NSW – Sydney

Queensland – Brisbane

Tasmania - Hobart

WA – four: Fremantle (Maritime and Shipwrecks), Bussellton, Broome

SA – Adelaide

NT - Darwin