

9 December 2022

**Submission to Development Victoria on-line Community
Consultation for Central Pier**

Comment on Vision Statement

MMHN is committed to reinstating Central Pier in a new form in order to appropriately capture and optimise the social, cultural and economic value of the maritime legacy of Docklands in ways which reflect accurately significance - past, present and future.

DV Questions in yellow

Do you think we can improve these draft vision statements? Tell us how!

To assist in developing our place making principles we would like you to tell us how you would like to use the area in the future. Based on your opinions of the previous vision statements please answer the following questions on how you would like to experience a future Central Pier and waterfront.

MMHN recommends the inclusion of additional, but related broad statements, which focus on the *unique* status of the Docklands site and what it means to 'belong' to such a site:

- Seek participant response to the provision of information and knowledge around the heritage and historic role of Docklands should be fundamental to any investment in Docklands Precinct
- Seek a participant response relating to '*permanent activation*' rather than single event activation
- Seek participant response to what would enhance their sense of what it means to 'belong' to, and engage with, this *unique* site.

What experiences and uses would help make Central Pier and adjacent waterfront a unique, vibrant destination?

Consider what you have seen or experienced in other waterfront precincts in Australia or overseas and that you may wish to see in a future Central Pier. Tell us what made them great!

MMHN notes that internationally "***other waterfront precincts***" have generally retained *maritime infrastructure* and *site identity*. These these attributes have regrettably been eroded over recent decades in Docklands. However, all is not lost.

In order to retrieve this apparent loss and re-instate what is the “*unique*” and “*vibrant*” of the past on “*Central Pier and adjacent waterfront*”, MMHN proposes a two-phased Docklands activation project to capture the essence of Docklands.

1. **In the short term** – during the demolition of Central Pier, establishment of a **Temporary Maritime Exhibition Centre (TMEC)** a structure in which to present a curated program of events and exhibitions designed to inform and showcase various aspects of maritime heritage, industry and trade – past present and future.

In effect, during the demolition of Central Pier works, The TMEC will serve as a ‘pilot’ project as a basis for transition into a permanent Docklands institution - the Maritime Experience Centre (MEC).

2. **In the mid-term** – Recognising and celebrating the unique status of Victoria Harbour, MMHN proposes the construction of a new concept in cultural tourism existing nowhere else in Australia – a **Maritime Experience Centre (MEC)**; an architecturally iconic highly-visible innovative structure which will raise awareness, rekindle respect, and re-establish Docklands Precinct by showcasing within it all aspects of maritime industry and trade – past, present and future. The MEC will be the ‘medium’ through which to once more focus on *Maritime Melbourne* showcasing multiple aspects of maritime industry - an industry which continues to drive Victoria’s prosperity. **Note: the MEC is not a museum.** It is a **cultural centre** with a primary focus on showcasing facets of maritime industry and trade, e.g., innovation around aquaculture, ocean, wind and tidal energy, extractive industries, AI assisted freight and logistics etc. Its structural design will facilitate shared community use. To be easily accessible by tram, car and by water, the MEC will engage, entertain, and inspire locals visitors - quietly!
3. As part of the **MEC Project**, noting that the Dockland community has expressed the need for more open space, MMHN proposes that a **Maritime Garden** and/or promenade be incorporated into the MEC project. Such a Maritime Garden could feature ‘citizen’ science installations which relate to navigation, astronomy, observation, monitoring and measurement (wind, weather, tide, pollution, litter, wildlife etc.).
4. An obvious extension of the **Maritime Garden** activities, a ‘**Floating Wetlands System**’ should be anchored off Floating Central Pier designed to enable further active and passive educational experiential learning for the Docklands community, in particular for the young. Such *Floating Wetlands Systems* replicate the riparian environment on rivers and lakes. Many are in operation elsewhere in the world and are being installed for the first time in Australia on CoM waterways. See <https://wetsystems.com.au> and <https://wetsystems.com.au/services/education-capacity-development/>
5. Demographically, the Docklands Precinct is ‘**young**’ as evidenced by the spectacular growth in enrolments at Docklands Primary School. Family centred ‘activation’ should be a serious consideration in any asset investment. The **MEC Proposal (MEC, Maritime Garden and Floating Wetlands System)** should be understood as a suite of family-centric response to Docklands community

needs. eg. 'Citizen Science' opportunities - monitoring, observations, data collection. Comparable maritime centres in the UK and in the USA encourage family engagement by offering project based 'clubs' e.g. in model boat building and small craft building, and variations of the notion of experiential learning or learning by doing. The MEC has the capacity to initiate such activities. See <https://cbmm.org/shipbuilding/>

Location

During the extended demolition of Central Pier, the TMEC would provide a positive experience and benefit to the Dockland community to counter the confronting image of degradation and destruction in this prime location facing the public over many months. The TMEC in the short term will commence telling the 'positive story' of maritime industry and trade as well the 'positive story' of investment in an emerging iconic new cultural institution atop Victoria's first floating pier. As the construction of the MEC progresses – as is the case with any major new 'build' – viewing the progress of the MEC will be an attraction in Docklands in its own right.

MMHN research indicates that there are persuasive arguments to support the location of the MEC on a floating pier, i.e., visually 're-instate' Central Pier as the aesthetic heart and focal point of Victoria Harbour. With an imaginative design, the MEC project would commence 'activation' of Docklands during construction. See, for example, **Brooke Street Floating Pier and Building, Hobart**. Cost circa \$14 million, 4 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> Such large pontoons are cost effective and used successfully all over the world.

Governance and Operations

Note: Decisions on such matters as governance, ownership, corporate and operational responsibility cannot be definitive at this point.

Governance Both Development Victoria (DV) and City of Melbourne (CoM) have 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 that attract all ages, and not simply events. CoM has also indicated an interest in expanding its facilities in Docklands for community-use. Applauding these ideas, MMHN considers that both objectives could be met by working together to realise a shared arrangement between a community facility with open space, such as a Maritime Garden and deck, and a MEC as described above.

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

Governance. 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 TMEC 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** 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, etc.

Ownership of facilities

There are a number of possible 'ownership' models to be explored:

- 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, responsible for operations, programming and curation; and
- If ownership is to reside in the City of Melbourne (CoM), then the MEC Independent Trust could be a tenant of dedicated operational MEC space within the facility.

In response to the request 'Tell us what made them great!'

A simple but unhelpful response is that in such exemplary 'great' port cities all over the world have continued to celebrate and take pride in their maritime infrastructure and artefacts as testament to their **historic maritime industry strength and these often enjoy ample government funding!** Sadly, this has not been the case in Docklands.

Reflecting on the Docklands Precinct of today, MMHN perceives the necessity of capturing what we still can of Docklands' legacy and, by using modern technologies, convey our maritime strengths - past present and future - to the wider public which remains regrettably largely unaware the importance of maritime industry and trade in Victoria and our island nation.

What experiences and uses would help make Central Pier and adjacent waterfront a welcoming space?

Consider what you have seen or experienced in other waterfront precincts in Australia or overseas that you may wish to see in a future Central Pier. Tell us what made them feel so welcoming.

Over the past 3-4 years, MMHN has undertaken research, both desk-top and personal, seeking inspiration and appropriate 'models' for the type of cultural institution we determined as absent or lacking in Melbourne. We studied comparable cities. We formed relationships and visited key international maritime organisations, seeking inspiration and advice. We identified exemplar institutions and practises. The MMHN website and the MMHN Monthly Update cite many international examples of maritime institutions which activate port cities around the globe.

Whereas in many, many comparable port cities, maritime pride and 'strength' is conveyed to the public, this is not the case in Melbourne. The entire 'urban renewal' approach adopted in Melbourne was expedient, short-sighted and squandered our maritime heritage. Docklands lost its 'legitimacy' as a port and became a high-rise suburb by the water but oblivious to its unique significance.

MMHN sought ways to address this deficiency; to re-set public perceptions around what Docklands Precinct is actually about – its unique site encircling a heritage listed world renowned harbour. Water is its primary ‘differentiator’. We identified that Victoria lacked an institution which adequately recognised the centrality of maritime industry and trade to our economy - past present and future.

Young people in particular, are simply not presented with maritime heritage, industry and trade information. A dire consequence is the widely acknowledged maritime skills deficit in Australia and consequent current dangerous erosion of our general maritime awareness and capability.

MMHN developed a comprehensive institutional response to address the ‘deficit’ presented in the form of the MEC Proposal for Docklands. See: <https://mmhn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MMHN-Opportunity-1-Maritime-Centre-Sept-2021.pdf>

What experiences and uses would help showcase the themes environment and sustainability at Central Pier and adjacent waterfront?

Consider what great environmental or sustainable waterfront developments you have seen or experienced in Australia or overseas and tell us what you may wish to see in a future Central Pier.

What experiences and uses would help people connect with the rich culture and heritage of Central Pier and adjacent waterfront?

The cultural history of the Docklands area extends back in time for tens of thousands of years. The Wurundjeri people used the expansive wetlands we now know as Docklands as hunting grounds, and a gathering place for the people of the Kulin Nation. Post European settlement the area became a significant trade port for Victoria and Australia. A strong maritime and industrial heritage emerged.

The astounding ‘story’ of the ever-evolving Docklands is best be conveyed using creative technology delivered in an institution in an architectural form which reflects the respect and significance of ALL those engaged in creating our prosperous society over the centuries – based always upon the water and maritime endeavour. The 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 State government, with bold vision and astute investment, led to major world-renowned works to re-design our waterways and construct crucial maritime infrastructure (wharves) in Victoria Port (now known as Victoria Harbour), in the nineteenth century. This investment in maritime industry and trade enabled Victoria’s astounding growth and prosperity. Victoria Harbour and Central Pier were, and remain, at the heart of this development. Today Docklands Precinct is the most recent iteration of this bold vision.

In order for the Docklands Precinct to re-capture and optimise cultural tourism and consequent economic value its ‘unique’ port heritage identity, the ‘story’ needs to be told accurately. It is a ‘story’ that is still evolving and should be presented in such a

way as to attract visitation – and engender state pride. Note that MMHN commissioned an historically accurate narrative which identified and cites key heritage sites along Northbank around Victoria Harbour (formerly the Blue Lake/Swamp) and New Quay. See:

<https://mmhn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MMHN-Opportunity-2-Northbank-Trail-Sept-2021.pdf>Dock

The MMHN proposal for the TEMC, and later the MEC and the Maritime Garden will certainly enable this ‘re-imagining’ of the pre-colonial era and tell the many ‘and varied stories’ of Docklands (see above).

MMHN has observed many international examples where **informative illumination or projections** are cleverly used to passively and, of necessity quietly, convey ‘stories of **culture and heritage**’. The design of the MMHN TMEC and later the MEC will be capable of such projections.

How can we make it easy to get to and move around Central Pier and adjacent waterfront?

Prior community research has indicated finding your way to and around the Docklands precinct can be difficult. If you experience this now, think about how a revitalised Central Pier and waterfront may resolve some of these issues.

- Clever and more captivating, **directional signage** as well as **informational signage is** critical, and in order to engage with the young should involve new creative technologies.
- Old technologies (e.g. paving painted trails) should not be overlooked.
- **Historical accuracy lends legitimacy.** The still ‘evolving story’ of Docklands Precinct remains poorly understood and not easily accessible to the public. People must be exposed to its history to understand Docklands. MMHN will make available to DV an historically accurate narrative which identifies and describes key sites along Northbank around Victoria Harbour and New Quay. See <https://mmhn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MMHN-Opportunity-2-Northbank-Trail-Sept-2021.pdf>Dock
- MMHN international research confirms that well-designed, well-maintained accessible signage will effectively will lead people to explore and absorb more of Docklands maritime heritage and status as a port which played a significant role in enabling Victoria’s prosperity.
- It is important to enable (and encourage) those on Northbank to cross over easily to Victoria Harbour. Signage can promote this. See: <https://mmhn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MMHN-Opportunity-2-Northbank-Trail-Sept-2021.pdf>Dock

Do you have any other ideas on what is needed to make a future Central Pier and adjacent waterfront a unique, vibrant destination you would want to visit?

- MMHN has observed many international examples where external **informative Illumination or projections with or without sound** are used to passively and, if necessary, quietly, convey 'stories' of culture and heritage. Regularly programming changes to such projections would attract visitation. Note the external walls or roof of the proposed MMHN TMEC and MEC will be capable of such projections.
- People the world over **ALWAYS enjoy a stroll along a pier**. Water is the ultimate 'attractor'. Provision must be made for this to be available on a re-imagined Central Pier.
- **People also expect to eat seafood in a Docklands Precinct**. A fish restaurant – or even fish and chip shop or small fish market would be an attraction on a re-imagined Central Pier.
- **Water (primarily Victoria Harbour) is the key asset which differentiates Docklands Precinct** from anywhere else in Victoria. This aquatic amphitheatre, a seriously underdeveloped expanse of water at the edge of the CBD, could be a permanent tourist attraction for Docklands. Importantly, only if properly controlled as a 'silent' attraction, e.g., 8pm nightly shows at Singapore, dancing fountains in Bellagio Las Vegas, the spout; in Lake Burley Griffin, are all silent attractions. See:
<https://mmhn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/MMHN-Opportunity-3-Victoria-Harbour-Sept-2021.pdf>
- **Support MMHN advocacy on ferries**. Ferries should be incorporated into Victoria's public transport network – and Victoria Harbour is the key. The potential routes are obvious - new Harbour Esplanade ferry terminal, Australia Wharf, Seafarers Rest Park/Southbank Maritime Precinct, Federation Square, Arts Precinct/Princes Bridge - and when a cruise ship is at Station Pier, ferries around to Docklands.
- **Container Installations are** found in many, many port cities. These entirely appropriate maritime industry assets should rightly feature regularly along Harbour Esplanade or North Wharf. **See MMHN to DV in the past.**
- Facilitate all boating and water-based activity in Victoria Harbour and adjacent waterways. This is not only visually 'attractive' drawing the public to Docklands but it is of significance economic benefit – tourism, servicing, provisioning supplies. Take all possible steps to enable as much 'boating' and other water-based activities are possible establish Marine Service Depot, reform/streamline permit processes and centralise waterways management.