

Submission by Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network 6/5/2024

Lord Mayor and Councillors

Re FMC Meeting 7/5 Agenda item. 6.5 [Draft Experience Melbourne 2028: A Destination Management Plan for Melbourne's Visitor Economy](#)

MMHN notes with dismay that although it is intended as a “*destination management plan for Melbourne's visitor economy. It functions as a guiding compass for the sector, providing a framework that sets a vision for what the visitor economy can look like in five years' time, and outlines overarching ambitions for the sector,*” it is clearly very far from an adequate Plan designed to guide a critical sector of the economy.

Given the visitor economy, is not only critical in driving prosperity in Melbourne, but also important to potentially driving the tourism economy in the suburbs and regions This flow-on effect should rightly matter to the Council of the a state capital city.

MMHN notes “*The overall growth outlook for **tourism in Victoria in the next five years is positive. If the municipality maintains its current market share, forecasts estimate the municipality will welcome 18.4 million visitors by 2028 (vs 14.3 million in 2023).***”

Regrettably the Draft Experience Melbourne 2028 now seeking Council endorsement is deficient.

MMHN urges Council to defer such endorsement and/or direct officer to improve the Plan.

MMHN finds it disturbing that such a deficient Draft is said to be based on stakeholder consultations. We can only conclude that the list was compiled by those without sufficient knowledge of the strengths of this city and/or the imagination to see its unique attributes beyond the ‘usual’ - sport, fashion and food. This diminishes Melbourne as a destination. The current Draft omits reference to several elements of significance to the visitor experience in the city and the state. In order to need to optimise the visitors attraction and experience a better understanding or recognition of Melbourne and it’s unique attributes and assets , beyond fashion food and sport, is required.

MMHN has endeavoured to assist Please find below extracts from Agenda Item 6.5 together with MMHN commentary [Extracts in Blue](#) MMHN commentary in red below,

Key issues.

4.1 Visitor growth is expected to be driven by international markets, with CoM's top international markets being China, New Zealand, the United States, India and the United Kingdom. High growth is also expected from Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Japan and Indonesia."

MMHN notes no reference to Cruise Tourism; no plan to specifically engage with cruise passengers arriving at Melbourne; no reference to Melbourne's international status as the largest Port in Australia no reference to its rich maritime heritage and significantly to Docklands Precinct, the site of the world-renowned hand-excavated Victoria Harbour; nothing about Melbourne's world-renowned heritage architecture

4.2. Moderate growth is forecast in the domestic sector as tourism trends return to normal after a surge in domestic travel post-pandemic. Top domestic markets are Regional Victoria, Sydney, Regional New South Wales, Brisbane and Adelaide.

We note an inexplicable omission in relation to activation of Docklands Precinct at all. Do officers accept this area as part of Melbourne or not? We note no reference to world-renowned Victoria Harbour; No reference to multiple opportunities on accessible waterways enabling maritime activities for **domestic** tourists; Ferries at Harbour Esplanade to Williamstown St Kilda, Port Melbourne, Sorrento Geelong, Queenscliff and Yarra commercial boat opportunities upstream. Again - Such engagement "should rightly matter to the Council of the state capital city". We all share the key tourism asset -ie. **the waterways**.

5. Experience Melbourne 2028 sets out a comprehensive vision and roadmap for the future of the city's visitor economy, providing clear direction for CoM and the broader tourism sector to enhance its **visitor offering and experience**.

See above. We note this '**vision**' and this '**road map**' completely fails to factor in opportunities, or optimise the economic value of, Melbourne as Port City/ and State capital. We note complete disregard in the Draft the tourism asset which is the Port of Melbourne - much of the operations are visible and fascinating and like Rotterdam and Hamburg, can be viewed from the wharf side and the water.

6. Experience Melbourne 2028 is underpinned by eight 'experience pillars' that have been developed through extensive consultation and mapped against global Tourism Australia research. The pillars either create or affirm a distinct identity for aspects of the city's visitor economy, providing industry with a clear direction to align their products and experiences under. Under each pillar is a set of key directions that serve as strategic roadmaps for CoM and industry to develop and enhance these experiences for visitors over the next five years.

We note none of the 8 Pillars recognise that Melbourne is largest a largest port city in the Southern Ocean; nothing about cruise tourism; nothing celebrating heritage architecture nor maritime heritage. Key directions listed below are equally deficient.

6.1. **Sports and events capital** - From the tent poles of the sporting calendar to the tapestry of community events throughout the year, sports and events play a major role in Melbourne's visitor economy.

Yet we note nothing about yachting or recreational boating - a key economic driver in Victoria nor any reference to key international events. eg. international yachting event between Melbourne and its Sister City of Osaka 2025.

6.2. **Ground-breaking creativity** - Melbourne's creative scene is distinctive and celebrated, renowned for its originality, independent spirit and commitment to pushing boundaries

No mention of technical Innovation (which is creative) and in particular Melbourne's contribution has been outstanding in relation to maritime trade, logistics and shipping . Obviously this would also to medical innovation too. All sorts of Innovation an historic strengths in Melbourne - social and technical, See below on Knowledge Hub,

6.3. **Vibrant people and places** - Melbourne's multicultural landscape and vibrant public realm is a fundamental part of the city's identity, attracting visitors who want to experience the authentic and diverse character of the city.

We note reference to '**places**' yet no recognition of Melbourne's uniquely rich architectural heritage assets in these 'places'. There appears to be no indication of any understanding of what actually underpins such '**places**' or multiculturalism. ie. Melbourne's rich heritage heritage – maritime and other. And significantly **immigration by sea** to a famous **Port City!** !

6.4. **Gastronomy 24/7** – In Melbourne, food is not just consumed. It's celebrated, discussed, and savoured. The city's culinary offering extends beyond the plate to be about the experience, offering an adventure that spans from the first sip of morning coffee to the last call of the night.

6.5. **Eclectic shopping mecca** – The experience of shopping in Melbourne is much like the city's own unique style – diverse and eclectic, effortlessly stylish, and showcasing a range of high-end, local and specialty influences.

6.6. **Urban Aboriginal culture** – Melbourne presents a unique opportunity to experience Aboriginal heritage and culture in an urban environment, acting as a gateway to Victoria's rich Aboriginal culture.

We note no reference to the historic indigenous presence in Melbourne understanding that the waterways were the basis of indigenous gathering near in Melbourne –the fresh water of the Birrarung/Yarra running through the city and the swamps and intermittent billabongs teeming with food, Waterways were the basis for there being a city from the get-go.

6.7 **World-class knowledge hub** – Melbourne's reputation as a knowledge and innovation capital attracts national and international business events, as well as international students drawn to the city's global position as a world-class study destination that offers a great lifestyle.

This seems to be simply 'sell' item to attract international students - all well and good – BUT seriously 'undersells' the reality that Knowledge is a strength of Melbourne which is an **intellectual city**. Think Museum, Libraries and special collections; No mention in the Draft of Melbourne's educational heritage which underpinned the later technical Innovation (which is creative) and in particular Melbourne's contribution in relation to maritime trade, logistics and shipping. This became significant because maritime trade was fundamental to Melbourne's prosperity. Innovation is an historic strength in Melbourne - social and technical. One outcome of the distance by sea from Europe.

6.8. **Green urban oasis** – Melbourne is a city where nature is not just a backdrop, but an integral part of the urban landscape. This blend of the built and natural environments not only enhances the quality of life for our residents but also offers a unique, immersive experience for visitors.

We note that that the Plan ignores the other environmentally sound asset of "**Blue**" opportunities in Melbourne. Multiple accessible Water-based sport opportunities abound in Melbourne and, importantly, in the Docklands Precinct. Officers seem to have overlooked the fact that CoM actually has an active Waterways Branch which manages marinas! Melbourne actually has more navigable waterways than Sydney. Think - two rivers, Victoria Harbour, Port Phillip Bay

7. The 'experience pillars' are also supported by three experience essentials, foundational blocks that must be in place to enable a positive visitor experience:

7.1. **Safety and cleanliness** – Melbourne's reputation as a safe city contributes to its attractiveness as a tourism destination.

MMHN notes this claim on cleanliness – and seriously question it. CoM appears to condone Parks Victoria practise of locating litter-traps on key tourist locations on the river for extended periods - Fed Square and MCEC. MMHN has repeatedly complained. Why does the CoM tolerate this?

7.2. **Transport and connectivity** – As Melbourne's visitor economy grows, how those visitors get around must be enhanced to support a vibrant, safe and inclusive visitor experience.

We note that inexplicably there is no reference at all to ferries. Several ferry and river boat companies operate in Melbourne – and once again – the unique attributes of Docklands Precinct is ignored .

7.3. **Accessibility** – Ensuring Melbourne is accessible to the one in four travellers with accessibility needs.

8. Experience Melbourne 2028 outlines six strategic priorities for CoM and the sector over the next five years. These priorities are the 'how we get there' - essential steps that bridge our present efforts with the future we envision. Each priority includes a range of actions for delivery.

MMHN argues that your FIRST step is to recognise what is unique about Melbourne. The Draft fails in this.

8.1. Stimulate visitation to the city – aligning under a unified brand narrative, market diversification, and a compelling program of marketing and events to drive repeat visitation.

Cruise tourism not understood adequately. Repeat visitation is occurring, Engagement of cruise passengers will not happen without attention from CoM. Comparable port cities actually work on this. Regrettably Victoria Ports are not proactive in this area. They are concerned with 'operational safety. CoM as the state capital city must take the lead. Station Pier is a substandard Third World Cruise terminal and this reflects poorly on the city as a whole. Forging collaboration Minister Horne, Ports Vic and City of Port Phillip is a matter of urgency,

8.2. Enhance visitor servicing – ensuring visitors discover more through the provision of timely and accurate information, the 'welcome', continued expansion of way finding and best practice visitor information services.

See above. There is nothing that could be described as a Welcome at Station Pier – except for Beacon Cove volunteers. Shabby, No colour, no music. Regrettably Victoria Ports are not proactive in this area. CoM needs to negotiate directly with Cruise companies. As above – maps, Apps ferries, myki tickets- and given the age and infirmity of passengers, assistance - it is long walk to the tram. (The Port of Halifax offers a free double decker bus from the terminal to the City) .

We note reference to 'Way finding' but no indication that a consistent approach is being adopted. Accurate heritage signage is seriously poor in Melbourne.

8.3. Build industry capacity – skills and capacity building, sharing data and insights, improving cultural competency across the sector.

Given that tourism expertise is managed by a disinterested State agency which outsources the Melbourne port 'visitor experience to cruise companies, who make more profit from bussing passengers off to Phillip Island and the Great Ocean Road. The CoM must lead in facilitating collaboration with relevant Councils as a matter of urgency to keep passengers in town. An estimated 10% of passengers do not leave the ship in the port of Melbourne

8.4. Facilitate tourism development – Encouraging the development of new products and experiences in the visitor economy to align with EM28's experience pillars.

There is no evidence in this Draft document which reflects any serious or rigorous comparative analysis – beyond the 'usual' predictable approaches to visitation, What of international comparisons?

Extensive stakeholder consultation has been undertaken and informed the development of plan. There has been engagement across government, peak bodies, industry and business through focus groups, interviews and Participate Melbourne. Additionally, an Advisory Group of senior executives from peak bodies, sector leadership and government guided the planning process and contributed strategic recommendations.

Given the deficits identified in this current Draft, MMHN finds this proposed public consultation process questionable.

10. Recommendation from management

That the Future Melbourne Committee:

10.1. Endorses the draft Experience Melbourne 2028:A Destination Management Plan for Melbourne's Visitor Economy for public consultation

MMHN recommends that this matter be deferred Public consultation should wait until a better quality Draft is prepared for wider public comment,

10.2. AuthorisestheGeneralManagerBusinessEconomyandActivationtomakeanyfurtherminor editorial changes to the Experience Melbourne 2028 prior to public consultation.

Requires a Re-Draft.,

