

Melbourne Maritime Heritage Network Submission

FMC Meeting 21 May 2024

Re: Recreation Facilities Provision Framework Agenda item 6.7

MMHN notes with dismay that this Draft framework, which builds on the 2022 framework, is actually deficient in that it inexplicably fails to factor in water-based community recreation pursuits. Melbourne's plentiful and accessible waterways are a recreation resource which has been completely overlooked once again in this revised Draft document.

By way of introduction, Melbourne's waterways are central to the social, cultural and economic life of this city. In the early days of settlement, the waterways enabled commerce to thrive, and later, skills on the waterways evolved into recreational pursuits – rowing being the most obvious example.

Many more water-based recreation activities exist today. Yet this Draft framework reveals a sole focus upon land-based recreation. This bias may be understandable in other municipalities but given Melbourne has more navigable waterways than Sydney (a vast expanse of 'blue' recreation space in Victoria Harbour, two rivers, and several creeks), failure to reference waterways in the community recreation mix is inexplicable in this document purporting to plan for the future.

Water-based community recreation activities, like land-based community recreation activities, obviously require infrastructure to support wider community engagement and access across Melbourne's waterways.

MMHN finds that the Draft in its current form is deficient and should be amended before public consultation. MMHN asks the City of Melbourne to;

- Consider recreational use of the waterways – rowing, canoes, kayaks, dinghies, yachts, dragon boats, etc.
- Consider the size and economic clout of the recreational boating and fishing tackle industries in Victoria.
- Consider facilities required to care of such water-based recreation equipment beyond storage (e.g. storing access, launching, repairing, provisioning).
- Consider recreational fishing from the wharves and piers of Melbourne (a reminder that the State Govt recently indicated strong support for recreational fishing by giving every Grade 5 school child a rod and tuition). Recreational fishing is considered

widely accessible and affordable but nevertheless, it does require some municipal amenities.

- Consider the economic uplift of fostering and enabling the recreational boating and fishing sector in the languishing precinct of Docklands (e.g. water craft, repair, provisioning of fishing supplies and accompanying parent).
- Consider the City of Melbourne investment in its Waterways Branch on New Quay Harbour. It has the potential to expand community waterways recreation. The Waterways Branch should be understood as a fundamentally important resource to foster water-based community recreation.
- Consider the bias within its Draft towards land-based competitive sport activity while ignoring equally beneficial social/recreational opportunities of water-based activity (e.g. engagement in small craft/boats building is internationally acknowledged as delivering social benefit to all levels of society, including troubled youths, and this facility already exists in Docklands on North Wharf but is threatened by development. Sport in and of itself is not the only form of community recreation.

MMHN calls on the CoM recreational planners to think and look beyond 2022. Look beyond a land-based approach to community recreation and recognise that **'Blue'** recreation activities warrant the same municipal attention as the **'Green'** recreation activities. Broaden the narrow land-based focus. Look at the opportunities to expand waterways recreation.

MMHN offers comment below on Agenda item 6.7 21

Note: item presented appears in blue, MMHN response in red.

1. *"A coordinated and planned approach is required to meet current and future needs for community infrastructure as the population in the City of Melbourne (CoM) is forecast to **grow** by 79 per cent by 2040. To plan for this growth, management are undertaking a holistic review of community infrastructure provision in the municipality including across recreation."*

MMHN: An holistic review of community infrastructure provision must include and factor in **'BLUE' open space or waterways recreation.**

2. *"This report focuses on recreation service provision and seeks the Future Melbourne Committee's **approval to commence community engagement on the draft Recreation Facilities Provision Framework** (see Attachment two of report from management)."*

MMHN: It is pointless to undertake community consultation when the Draft ignores a major aspect of community recreation – waterways recreation.

MMHN notes that CoM actually does provide facilities for water-based activities, yet manages to ignore such activities in the Draft (e.g. Maritime Hub on North Wharf, Docklands on Victoria Harbour). There is an obvious need to consider waterways recreation in a more comprehensive manner in the Draft before it is made public.

3. *"Major Initiative 36 of the Council Plan aims to increase and upgrade accessible, inclusive..."*
4. *"The governance and milestones for 2023-24 include briefing Councillors on the analysis of recreation provision and demand, and endorsement of a recreation provision framework by the Future Melbourne Committee."*

MMHN: The community can only comment on what is in the Draft. Any discussion of the Draft in its current form will not give the community the opportunity to discuss water-based recreation as it has been ignored in the first instance.

5. *“Local government is the largest provider of accessible places for active recreation participation. These places include facilities (recreation and aquatic centres, stadiums, clubrooms), sports fields, multi- purpose courts, parks and gardens. Well-designed multi-purpose facilities support a diversity of activities.”*

MMHN: Yet, no mention of waterways which also obviously require some municipal infrastructure.

6. *“These facilities are essential civic infrastructure which play a critical role in supporting physical and mental health and community connection. A 2021 study by KPMG to quantify the social benefit derived from community sport in the CoM valued it at \$129 million per annum.”*

MMHN: Without question, community recreation is beneficial. Therefore, it is critical to make sure CoM understands the water-based recreation options comprehensively.

Key issues Section

“A municipal wide review was completed in 2022 to understand current provision and future need, informed by a large number of studies, forecast timing of population growth, capacity and condition of existing facilities, and participation trends to assess the gaps in future provision.”

MMHN notes that the 2022 review did not refer to waterways – there is the opportunity to do better in 2024.

“The review highlighted issues of demand exceeding supply and challenges to meet future needs including capacity and condition of existing facilities, the lack of available land for new facilities, and the increasingly constrained financial environment.”

MMHN notes *“demand exceeding supply and challenges to meet future needs”*. This Draft report fails to recognise that there is NO shortage of ‘blue’ recreation space.

“Without strategic service planning and investment, the current suite of recreation facilities will not meet the challenges arising in the next 20 years. Three approaches are proposed to address future provision.”

In considering strategy, it is essential to also consider economic strategy (e.g. economic uptick attached to recreational boating and other craft, manufacturing and servicing, etc).

“Opportunities to increase capacity of existing facilities to be delivered through asset renewal, maintenance, installation of features such a sport lighting to increase hours of use and management practices such as booking systems, policies and procedures.”

Given that the Draft ignores water-based recreation, it is not surprising that the Draft makes no reference to the absence of water-based facilities (e.g. facilities for the repair of watercraft). Note: there is no Marine Service Centre in the Docklands.

“Upgrading existing facilities in current locations to be more multipurpose, fit for purpose and increase capacity. These will include major facility redevelopments.”

MMHN notes that, despite a commitment from Development Victoria, there is no Maritime Service Centre on the Bolte West Precinct or on the slipway in Victoria Harbour (talk to the CoM Waterways Branch).

“The research highlights where new facilities will be required to respond to population growth in urban renewal areas or address gaps. now in urban renewal areas to allow for facility provision in 20 to 30 years.”

MMHN notes, *“A long term view is required as land must be set aside”*. Land has already been set aside on the Bolte West Precinct for a Maritime Service Centre in the CoM.

*“As planning for community sport and recreation facilities will continue over the long term, a Recreation Facilities Provision Framework (RFPF) has been prepared to guide future investment. The draft RFPF provides a vision, key objective and guiding principles ‘to provide a **network of adaptable recreation spaces** that supports the health and wellbeing of the communities that live, work, visit and play in the City of Melbourne’. The draft RFPF presents a prioritisation framework including criteria of strategic alignment, asset condition or identified gap in provision, participation growth potential, social equity, adaptable or multisport, gender equity and deliverability.”*

MMHN notes a *“Recreation Facilities Provision Framework (RFPF) has been prepared to guide future investment”*. Yet, this fails to factor in waterways-based recreation activities at all.

MMHN Specific reference to the Plan document.

Close reading reveals:

- Reference to public open space as a critical element and “limited land supply”. Yet, no reference to ‘ample Blue Space’ available.
- Reference to Green Spaces but no reference to Blue Spaces.
- Reference to economic benefits of recreation, without factoring immensely important recreational boating industry and recreational fishing. And, importantly, no reference to both as a means to ACTIVATING Docklands.
- Reference to ‘7 Rowing Facilities’. Are these on the Birrarung or elsewhere? Are these private facilities?
- Description of Boating Hub on Victoria Harbour at North Wharf – capacity or demand?
- Reference to Innovation and Partnerships that the Planners “will actively seek”? This suggests such thinking is new to Recreation Planners. What has been happening thus far? Why has the CoM ignored the potential of its own Waterways Branch to promote water-based recreation in Docklands? Why is CoM not pursuing Development Victoria on the long-standing commitment to establishing a Marine Service Centre?

“The community values sport, recreation and aquatic facilities as places that support their physical and mental health and wellbeing, and community connection. With the supply and demand challenges and constrained financial environment, the RFPF will ensure priority can be given to projects with high community need.”

MMHN notes that these are assumptions all about land-based recreation.

“The proposed RFPF will provide guidance to allocate priorities for community sport and recreation facilities within the broader capital works and community infrastructure planning processes. Individual projects will be subject to future Council budgets.”

MMHN notes that the Draft has not considered collaborative funding (e.g. the Better Boating Victoria Fund) in relation to promoting facilitation of water-base recreation.

“A five week program of community engagement is proposed to consult on the criteria and weighting included in the RFPF. This will be communicated with current sports clubs and recreation facility users.”

MMHN recommends that the Draft be amended to include water-based recreation before it goes out to the public, to more comprehensively determine the community’s views.