

Submission to the Fishermans Bend Renewal Area Draft Vision

In the real-life city we say, 'Give us the 21st century – but give it to us with the knowledge that the 21st grew out of the 20th, which grew out of the 19th.' We believe in keeping the best of the past and integrating it with the best of the present and future."

Hal Kalman, Commonwealth Historic Resource Management, Ltd.

The draft vision document approaches Fishermans Bend as if it has no history. It treats Fishermans Bend as a blank page on which to imprint the future. Random dates and inappropriately chosen place names are no substitute for proper history. Fishermans Bend is significant in the history of Australia as well as in Melbourne and in Victoria.

PMHPS contends that understanding the history of Fishermans Bend is fundamental to planning for its future. The draft vision document does not adequately address or appear to understand the history of Fishermans Bend. This matters. It matters because it is relevant to planning for the future. Both the natural history and the post settlement history of the area need to inform the transformation of Fishermans Bend. Gary Presland's *The Place for a Village: How Nature has shaped a city* addresses these themes

My vision of Melbourne is borne of a familiarity with the natural and historical past of this place. It is a vision that sees the present as a function of multiple pasts, all of which have an influence in shaping the city. At the same time it is a vision that also looks forward to a future in which this greater awareness mediates the way in which we both construct and value our surroundings. (p230)

Place Names

A lack of familiarity with the area has led to some lamentable confusion over place names.

We submit that in putting names to future precincts, your staff and/or consultants have made hasty and inopportune selections.

Both the proposed Sandridge Precinct and Fishermans Bend itself are inappropriately named, possibly proposed by persons who haven't a grasp of local history. Both Sandridge and Fishermans Bend are quite definite and historically defined areas which are not the areas to which they are now assigned. Moreover the former is already currently applied to the beach area of the existing Fishermans Bend. Furthermore, Montague was a particularly distinct area in its own right, and never considered part of Fishermans Bend. This causes confusion for our role as an entity that strives to education generations regarding the history of the area. We respectfully suggest that you consider alternative naming to avoid confusion now and in the future. Sandridge was until 1884 the original name of Port Melbourne, and there is increased potential for future confusion should the name be applied to a different area in a different era. Your precinct surely deserves better than an inappropriately recycled name when there are many more appropriate possibilities. We have an abundance of alternative names from the past that have not been utilised here, and would be happy to provide you with an annotated list to consider if this would expedite the matter.

Port Melbourne Football Club

The PMHPS has a particular and urgent concern in relation to the future of the Port Melbourne Football Club, which your document appears to suggest should cease to exist as such.

May we call to your attention the following:

- The plan for 'Key Move #7 as shown on page 47 indicates the area as *new or expanded park* as part of the open space network
- Again on page 57 it is depicted as parkland and as part of a primary community centre with a possible school adjoining
- On page 62 we read The historic North Port Oval will be a key open space in the neighbourhood.

At no point is there a mention or recognition of any sort, of the historic Port Melbourne Football Club that makes its home at North Port Oval. The PMFC has been inseparable from the history of Sandridge/Port Melbourne since 1874, and remains today a vital element of this community. You will therefore understand why your document has created so much angst in Port Melbourne and Port Phillip – where all other AFL/VFL clubs have departed – despite reassurances from the Planning Minister that it is not the Government's intention to remove fencing and force one of this most historic clubs out of existence. PMHPS see the Port Melbourne Football Club as a vital part of the future of Fishermans Bend. It offers history, social connection, continuity, and community building on a ground that is the envy of many other VFL clubs.

Natural or environmental history

The natural history of the Fishermans Bend – its sandy, swampy nature, so well illustrated in the 1864 map below, meant that it was not settled for residential purposes well into the twentieth century. Its proximity to and relationship with the Port has also determined its subsequent use and development. This is profoundly relevant for now and the future.



Cox's 1864 map of Fishermans Bend

Indigenous history

The wetlands of Fishermans Bend provided abundant food for the aboriginal inhabitants of the area.

Industrial history

Fishermans Bend has a very significant industrial history. Some of the industries, such as Kitchens (later Lever and Kitchen, Unichema, Symex) have had a continuous history from the earliest days of white settlement. The post-war history of Fishermans Bend is significant not only for Melbourne and Victoria but in Australia. The manufacture of the first Holden cars at Fishermans Bend has been referred to as 'The symbolic event that heralded Australia's entry into the industrial age'.¹ Whereas the Holden story is relatively well known and its distinguished headquarters remain, many other important industries have disappeared without trace such as Malcolm Moore, Rootes, Dunlops, Tom Piper, and supporting industries such as the steel castings factories and BALM paints.

PMHPS suggest/request that a heritage study of Fishermans Bend and Montague be commissioned. Such studies were commissioned for Docklands and for the Bayside site in Port Melbourne (now Beacon Cove). While some of the more significant buildings may have individual citations or histories, they are not collected or collated in one place to give a meaningful view of the overall contribution of the area to Victoria's history. Such a study would complement the Bayside and Docklands study to give a full picture of the transformation of the southern reaches of the areas surrounding the Yarra River. A heritage strategy would support the protection of significant heritage buildings, but as importantly, an interpretation strategy to ensure ongoing acknowledgement, understanding and interpretation in the new Fishermans Bend precinct.

Housing

Fishermans Bend is the site of three notable approaches to providing affordable housing. The Dunstan Estate, State Bank houses in Garden City and the Fishermans Bend estate add to the story of housing working people close to the industries that required them.

Post War migration

The post war industrial expansion was made possible by the post war migration. Many a tale has been told of people walking off the ships at Station Pier to employment at Fishermans Bend. This is another important story to be told.

Interpretation

Soon after announcing the rezoning of Fishermans Bend, Minister Guy was quick to say that the history would be honoured, but this has not been a strong feature of subsequent announcements nor is it given any prominence in the draft vision document.

A mechanism is required that will both require and enable heritage interpretation. A funding stream for interpretation is essential.

Themes that warrant documentation for the historical record

- Natural history – wetlands or swamps, rich productive places for the indigenous people
- Sand mining – the construction of Melbourne
- Grazing
- Night soil – the story of sanitation

¹ Encyclopaedia of Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, p446

- Industries associated with the river such as abattoirs, boiling down works
- Early industries – Kitchens (later Lever and Kitchen, Symex), Dunlops
- Presence of the US army during World War 2
- Acceleration of industry and manufacturing during World War 2 – including food production Kraft, Tom Piper
- Community's remembered use - picnics, horse races, rifle butts, two-up, exploration and play
- The boom in Australian manufacturing – the automotive and aeronautical industries and supporting industries such as BALM Paints, various foundries and steel castings
- Decline of industry
- The renewal of Fishermans Bend offers an opportunity to re-interpret that wetland past in a climate changed future to re-introduce constructed wetlands and raingardens

Industrial heritage and adaptive re-use

‘The heritage significance of an industrial place can be historic, aesthetic, social and/or technical and both tangible and intangible’ (Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Heritage: Opportunities & Challenges, no page number)

As stated in this publication, ‘industrial history is particularly important in Victoria. Under the Victorian government’s protection policy, Melbourne became Australia’s dominant manufacturing centre. This is an important legacy for our state.’ (p5)

The study goes on to say that ‘It is important to remember that adaptive reuse is not restricted to individual building or small precincts. Large urban areas can also be the subject of adaptive reuse’

The re-use of the Cadbury Factory in Fishermans Bend at 1 Fennell St is frequently cited as a successful example of adaptive re-use. However, increased land values attendant on the rezoning of Fishermans Bend to Capital City Zone mean such protection is much less likely. How then to achieve the retention of buildings that do not have heritage protection?

Demolition by neglect

As previously discussed, many of the industrial buildings in Fishermans Bend have already disappeared. Many were not built to last but that does not mean the stories associated with them should not endure.

Those that remain must be protected. The proud headquarters of Kitchen and son are now looking seriously neglected. Note the windows boarded up, and the graffiti all around the building. PMHPS recorded this building, both outside and in, and so can bear witness to the significant deterioration of the building since 2009. The record of the building can be found at <http://artdecobuildings.blogspot.com.au/search?q=Kitchen> PMHPS calls on the responsible authorities to ensure no further deterioration of this important building occurs and that the building is properly protected until it is restored.



Former Kitchens Administration Building in Ingles St

Heritage protection for remaining heritage properties in Montague

What protections afforded to remaining heritage properties, especially in Montague?

PMHPS member Steve Tserkezidis has undertaken significant research on the remaining houses built by the State Savings Bank in Gladstone St, Montague, which we understand he has made available to you. The remnants of this unique estate provide a strong link to the intact State Bank housing scheme in Garden City. His extensive research should become part of the formal record. PMHPS asks whether this significant remnant of housing will be preserved in the Montague precinct?



Gladstone Street, Montague

The record

Photographs tell the story of Fishermans Bend and the interdependence of industry, river and port in a powerful way. The State Library of Victoria's collection of photographs by Charles Pratt reveals the pride of that post war era. Those photographs in the extensive Pratt collection could be brought

before the public through an exhibition or on line gallery. The workers were the people who were in large part responsible for the prosperity we now enjoy. Their contribution needs to be acknowledged.



Aerial view of General Motors Holden
Charles Pratt
State Library of Victoria

Conclusion

PMHPS looks to see much stronger recognition of, and response to, the significant history of Fishermans Bend in planning for its future. This would include a heritage study to guide the protection of the remaining significant buildings as well as to fund a dedicated approach to heritage interpretation throughout the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area. The PMHPS holds many items on Fishermans Bend in its collection of which the richest are its members' memories. The Society would be pleased to work with Places Victoria to deepen understanding of Fishermans Bend's history.

Sources

Meiers, Allan Fisherfolk of Fishermans Bend

Presland, Gary The Place for a Village: How Nature Shaped a City

[Adaptive Reuse of Industrial Heritage: Opportunities & Challenges](#)

http://www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/199105/HV_IPAWsinglepgs.pdf

<http://artdecobuildings.blogspot.com>