

The Case for a Marine Service Depot, on Bolte West Precinct, Victoria Harbour

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Background - A sorry saga

MMHN remains impatient for action. A decade has passed since Places Victoria (now Development Victoria (DV) and the City of Melbourne (CoM) expressed officially expressed the aspiration to establish a **Marine Services Depot** in Docklands. Already identified as an urgent need, this key marine infrastructure on an ideal site government owned site on Melbourne's waterways agreed in July 2012 - **Waterways Operations Concept Plan Bolte Precinct West** "*Facilitate the delivery of a marine precinct that includes space for commercial service providers, a regulatory centre and a facility for servicing and maintenance.*" p.36. The 10-year gap between planning and execution, this inexplicable inertia on the part of DV is hard to fathom.

City of Melbourne

The City of Melbourne recognises that in order for Docklands is to optimise economic up-lift from its prime waterfront location, service infrastructure to sustain and grow local maritime recreation activity is essential. For example- marinas, maintenance facilities for all types of watercraft, provisioning of all kinds. Operational services at such a facility would include re-fuelling, litter collection, shore-to-ship/ship-to-shore access, and staging area for events.

It is important to note that the CoM does not yet have a stand-alone **Urban Waterways Master Plan** and this is a planning deficit – the 2019 draft River Strategy makes scant reference to Victoria Harbour or the Bolte West area of the river ban.

The City of Melbourne, Parks, Property & Waterways Branch '*Docklands Waterways Strategic Plan 2009-2018* refers to the need for the **Marine Service Depot**.

More recently the **Marine Service Depot** was referenced in City of Melbourne Annual Plan initiatives over several years – including CoM Annual *Plans 2019-20: “Progress planning and design for Waterways Operations Precinct in the Bolte Precinct West, to support effective growth of marine activities in Docklands.”*

The CoM Waterways Unit is in frequent and ostensibly constructive enthusiastic discussions with DV – but the persistent disconnect between talking and action is inexplicable.

The CoM Docklands is acutely aware that activation of Docklands is inextricably linked to water activation. Docklands as well as the maritime industry will clearly benefit in many ways. It will enable the development of maritime training skills through offering work-placement and apprenticeship opportunities and it will both serve and expand recreational and commercial boat users and operators. The City of Melbourne is committed to establishing this necessary facility on the Yarra bank south at Bolte West Precinct but it requires the genuine cooperation and collaboration with Development Victoria.

The Heritage Fleet

A Marine Services Depot will support maritime heritage cannot remain in the CoM unless service provision needs are met. Heritage vessels require comparatively frequent scheduled minor and major maintenance and repairs. The proposed Marine Services Depot would enable minor works to be done at Victoria Harbour and major works have Victoria Dock (Dudley Street) slipway access.

Development Victoria

MMHN is amongst the many stakeholders a puzzled at the apathy demonstrated by DV in relation to Docklands waterways activation. Leaving aside neglect of Central Pier and more recently North Wharf, DV seems reluctant to act on this straightforward project. We note DV is already funded to reconstruct the Yarra Wharf in this Bolte West Precinct – the proposed site of the Marine Services Depot.

The joint Development Victoria/CoM/ document ***Waterways Operations Concept Plan Bolte Precinct West July 2012*** appears to have dropped off the radar - but has not been not abandoned. In July 2019 it was reported that designs for the Depot were progressing well although regrettably these plans were deemed by many to be too restrictive in specifying a Class 15 light duty Wharf when it is critical that a Class 40 Wharf with lifting capacity is installed in order to properly serve the various types of repairs of maintenance

State Government Action Warranted

The justification for fast-tracking this Project is obvious. The recommendations in the June 2018 **Lower Yarra River Advisory Committee Report** to the State Govt (p.5) refers to a shortage of “*back of house facilities for maritime provisioning and servicing*”.

In 2019, the State Government established **Better Boating Victoria (BBV)** an independent entity to support and develop the recreational boating industry throughout Victoria. Provision of adequate marine services in the City of Melbourne is critical to any expansion of recreational boating activities as well as maintaining and expanding the Heritage Fleet. BBV is likely; therefore, support the establishment of marine service facilities to support boating in the State capital, Docklands within the CBD.

Marine Service Depot Key considerations

Design

- Slipway on the designated space in the Bolte West Precinct
- Upgrade wharf from Class 15 light duty Wharf to Class 40 Wharf with lifting capacity is installed in order to properly serve the various types of boating
- Glass walls - Capacity for public to view works – as public entertainment
- Capacity to lift vessels at the Depot is critical. A ‘Marine Straddle Carrier’ capable of lifting 250 tonnes as well as Socio-economic uplift
- Adequate power to the site
- High standards of environmental protection for the waterways
- Appropriate boat waste disposal
- Easy vehicle access for provisioning, spare parts and fuel

Socio-Economic

- Access to water will be of value for marine technology students at the Kangan TAFE.
- Create boat related employment scheduled re-fits, repairs, electrical, plumbing, rigging, sail making, joinery, engineering, etc.
- Create provisioning related employment – food, fuel, waste disposal
- Enable ALL types of maritime activities –including staging entertainment.