

Report to the Future Melbourne (Knowledge City) Committee

Agenda item 6.4

Mission to Seafarers – Redevelopment Proposal

18 August 2020

Presenter: Graham Porteous, Director Strategic Projects

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on a Victorian Government proposal to redevelop the Mission to Seafarers building (M2S) as part of a proposed joint feasibility/business case for a commercial maritime heritage precinct in Docklands.
2. Established in the Port of Melbourne in 1857, the M2S has operated from its current heritage listed building at North Wharf Docklands since 1917.
3. The Victorian Government has approached officers to explore the potential involvement of Council in the management and operations of the M2S. Preliminary discussions indicate possible capital investment by the Victorian Government should Council have an interest in assuming management responsibility of the building.
4. Previous reports provided to councillors have indicated strong interest in the development of a commercial maritime heritage precinct/experience hub located in Docklands and the Yarra River that celebrates Melbourne's significant waterways history and cultivates a focus for Melbourne's maritime heritage.
5. The M2S together with the adjacent Seafarer's Rest Park could present a focal point to activate Melbourne's commercial maritime heritage and provide a linking role to include tall ships such as the Enterprize and Alma Doepel, along with steam tug Wattle, which are currently berthed at Docklands.

Key issues

6. The Victorian Government has indicated a significant base build of \$10 to \$20 million is required to undertake refurbishment and fit out the M2S building. The aim of the investment is to retain the functional operations of the heritage building for core services, as well as defining a repurposed future for the building which could include a focus on Melbourne's maritime heritage activities.
7. To ensure all options for the heritage asset are considered, a feasibility study and business case is proposed. This would include the assessment of potential revenue streams, possible locations and options for operations as a mixed commercial and / or community use space. Community engagement with key stakeholders would also be a requirement of the study.

Recommendation from management

8. That the Future Melbourne Committee recommends:
 - 8.1. Management undertake a feasibility study and business case for a commercial maritime heritage precinct/experience with a hub possibly based at the Mission to Seafarers, jointly funded with the Victorian Government up to \$30,000 each.
 - 8.2. Management actively pursue a capital investment agreement with the Victorian Government for it to fund the refurbishment of the Mission to Seafarers building (conditional on recommendations from the feasibility report and business case).

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (Page 2 of 2)

Supporting Attachment

Legal

1. Legal advice will be provided as necessary in respect to the capital investment agreement and other matters the subject of the report.

Finance

2. The feasibility study and business case will be jointly funded by Council and Victorian Government (up to \$30,000 each). These funds are available within the existing Council budget for 2020/21.

Conflict of interest

3. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Health and Safety

4. In developing this proposal, management would prepare a COVID-Safe community information program to ensure strict adherence to all DHHS Health and Safety requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Stakeholder consultation

5. To ensure all options for a commercial maritime heritage precinct and the heritage asset are considered, the feasibility study and business case would include extensive community engagement with key stakeholders. The successful consultant will be required to prepare a detailed COVID-Safe community engagement program with key stakeholders, adjacent building owners and the community. The program will inform surrounding residents and businesses of the project and consult regarding the need and likely impacts.

Relation to Council policy

6. 2020/21 API 19 – Activate Docklands with a focus on Victoria Harbour

“Explore opportunities for water transport and tourism and a feasibility study on a maritime heritage museum (in partnership with Development Victoria and Heritage Victoria)”.

7. Council Plan Goal – Prosperous City

This initiative aligns with the primary goal of Melbourne as a destination of choice to visit, live and study. It also aligns with the goal to enable a growth in visitor numbers.

8. Docklands Community and Place Plan

This initiative aligns with goals outlines in the Docklands Community and Place Plan to continue to protect heritage listed buildings and facilitate appropriate adaptation to new uses, including community use and access where possible. The plan also identifies opportunities to facilitate the development of berths for heritage vessels, including the Alma Doepel, which offer community and educational programs and encourage potential links to Polly Woodside and Mission to Seafarers.

Environmental sustainability

9. Environmental sustainability issues or opportunities are considered not relevant to this proposal. Any subsequent project development would involve an environmental and sustainability assessment.