

Victory at the QVM People's Panel: The Great Turnaround

The People's Panel was, in the end, a great victory for those of us who support preservation and revitalization of the market on the basis of its heritage. In the end, Lord Mayor Sally Capp kept her word that all options were on the table. The final Panel session, on 19 November, produced an 80 per cent majority around key recommendations:

- Make the Market's heritage value the central factor in future development proposals and avoid excavation below the historic sheds;
- Retain the existing carpark instead of making it into an 'activity square' (a temporary ice-skating rink planned for this Christmas is a foretaste of what Council and QVM Pty Ltd think is the future for the market);
- Reassess the extent of the new facilities required (if the market maintains its traditional mode of operation, most of the proposed new facilities won't be needed).

This represents a huge turnaround. The Council and the facilitators were determined to channel us into supporting the discredited Doyle plan. They encouraged the production of a minority report more in line with their aims, but even so it argues only for excavation under Queen Street, not under the sheds, which was crucial to the Doyle Plan. Thus they've conceded from the start.

The first two sessions of the People's Panel confirmed our worst fears. At the second session, we were put into groups of five to find ways to implement the Doyle plan. That put us in the untenable position of supporting Council's radical makeover. The RHSV protested to the Lord Mayor and this attracted some publicity ('Historian slams market panel', *Herald Sun*, 27 October 2018—see <http://www.historyvictoria.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/rhsv-update-queen-victoria-market-panel-v2.pdf>). At the same time, Friends of the QVM obtained release of Heritage Victoria's internal report refusing Council's application for a permit.

These factors and the Lord Mayor's response may have helped change the facilitators' mode of operation. At the next session, panel members opposing Council's plan made a breakthrough: the facilitators agreed to open debate. Credit for this should go to RHSV panel member Dr Judith Smart, Friends of the Victoria Market panel member Mary-Lou Howie and a number of trader representatives, as well as the many community representatives who learned on the job and came to see that the Doyle plan would mean a radical change in the market's mode of operation, a shift from traders' setting up their own stalls to sell fruit and veg to traders' operating fixed stalls with an emphasis on fast food (or as Council like to say, 'hospitality'). In the new atmosphere of open debate, a solid majority formed in favour of renovation in the spirit of the market's traditions.

If this translates into Council policy, it will mean a thorough and exciting renovation of the market with better support for traders (better access to power, water, internet, and sewerage is essential). In this enhanced environment, traders will continue to operate as they have for a century and a half: bringing fresh produce to a traditional open-air market, setting up their own stalls and selling from their own vehicles. This mode of operation is part of the market's social significance as a heritage site. But it is also a pointer to the future. This low-cost, simple mode of operation has enabled generations of migrant communities to gain a foothold and this is more than ever a great basis for improving the market. New generations of migrants should be encouraged to become traders and offer produce suitable for their communities.

We have won a battle, but not the war. Council, through the facilitators, continued their old tricks. They helped a minority to prepare a report calling for some of the Doyle plan, though only

excavating under Queen Street, not under the sheds. They engineered the [report](#) to appear to have more backing than it had got during the sessions. They have not learned from the Panel that public opinion is against this radical change in the market. So we need to be prepared.

The reports will be presented to the Future Melbourne Committee Meeting (aka the Planning Committee of the City of Melbourne) at the Town Hall on Monday night 10 December. It will be presented by three delegates, including the champion of the Friends of the QVM, Mary-Lou Howie. Her very election as spokesperson is an indication of the victory we've won.

We would urge everyone concerned with the market issues to attend that meeting.