



ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA INC.

239 A'Beckett Street, Melbourne 3000

Friday, 1 November 2019

Queen Victoria Market Precinct Renewal,
QVMPR Program Office,
Munro Warehouse,
Rear 128 – 130 Franklin Street,
Melbourne VIC 3000,
GPO Box 1603,
Melbourne VIC 3001

Dear Michele and Team,

RHSV Submission re Market Square

Thank you for the invitation for the RHSV to comment as a stakeholder on the proposed Market Square. Regrettably, the link leads to 404 Not Found. In any case, we believe a considered submission will be of more use.

The proposed Market Square cannot be viewed simply as a park or green space. Rather, as the Renewal Team has made clear from the outset, it is driven by plans to develop 'events' as part of the QVM's business model. The RHSV has long opposed such plans. 'Events' will not bring more shoppers to the market. Indeed, they may displace shoppers. The basis of revitalisation of the QVM must lie in reaffirming and redeveloping its role as a traditional fruit and vegetable market, a role which is crucial to its historic significance as indicated by the statement of significance for the QVM on the Victorian Heritage Registry ('its ongoing role and continued popularity as a fresh meat and vegetable market') as well as by Council's report, 'Queen Victoria Market: Intangible Values' (September 2017).

The Market Square proposal should not go forward until Council have elaborated definitive plans for public parking for shoppers to replace the parking spaces lost from the existing carpark. The Market's future as a traditional market depend on shoppers being able to access the market so as to take home bulk purchases.

If adequate replacement parking is ensured, the RHSV would have no objection to development of a park, **provided** that a reasonable park can be constructed on this space. For that to happen, the problem of the archaeological substratum and human remains will have to be satisfactorily resolved. There is no point replacing the carpark with an empty event space. If it is to be a park, it should be a park with appropriate plantings. So far we have seen no analysis of what planting is possible given the problems of excavation in this area.

The National Heritage List statement of significance emphasises the extent and importance of this site in terms of archaeology and burials:

The Queen Victoria Market is of national significance for its research potential as the site of the Old Melbourne Cemetery. As an early colonial multi-denominational and Aboriginal cemetery which represents the founding population of a major state capital, it offers rare potential for study into matters such as the diet, lifestyle, wealth, pathology and burial customs of the full cross-section of early Melbourne society.

The anticipated number of burials that remain at the site make it the largest single example of an early 19th century colonial cemetery in Australia, and in particular, one that contains a population not founded as a convict settlement. Although the site has been disturbed and a number of burials exhumed over time, numerous investigations have demonstrated that the level of disturbance is less than at comparable sites and that there is a relative prevalence of complementary documentary evidence, making it the pre-eminent example of such a site in Australia.

Given the below ground significance of this site, we have to ask how the park would be constructed whilst having regard to the need to maintain the site. We would need to see a design and an accompanying Heritage Impact Statement to see if a satisfactory park could be created without violating the archaeological value and the human remains which lie very near the surface.

We therefore urge QVM and Council to postpone consideration of the 'Market Square' and to apply for a permit from Heritage Victoria and the Australian Heritage Council. We would of course scrutinise such application carefully. Once a permit were granted, we would reconsider our position, but until then we cannot support the proposal.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Ch Sowerwine".

(Professor) Charles Sowerwine,
Chair, Heritage Committee,
Royal Historical Society of Victoria.