



Nepean Historical Society
Sorrento

NHS Submission, PNNP Draft Master Plan 2017

The Nepean Historical Society notes with approval the publication of the revised draft Master Plan for Point Nepean 2017. The Society has a long and close involvement with this magnificent historic site, from the days of its occupation by the Defence Department, through the public campaign for its retention in public ownership when being relinquished by the Commonwealth, to the current period of State ownership and plans for its future.

Our special concern is for the protection of the site's highly significant heritage, and the realisation of the opportunities for public appreciation and enjoyment of that heritage. Our comments at this stage concentrate on matters of particular importance to the Quarantine Station : governance and resourcing, the potential for stories, and precinct design.

Governance

In view of the significant heritage aspects of the site, particularly the Quarantine Station precinct, NHS is especially concerned to see that appropriate governance arrangements are devised and established for the Park in which the QS is now embedded. We note that Section 11.7 of the Draft Master Plan summarises the present existing governance arrangements which apply generally to sites managed by Parks Victoria. These are national parks under the ultimate control of the Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change. Reporting and business planning, and presumably resourcing and staffing, are described in 11.7 as currently managed by the Parks Victoria organisation as a whole, centrally.

We note that the matters floated under the heading Future Governance Considerations (p. 136) are recognised as critical. More detail is required, to ensure that Parks Victoria will have available to it the expertise, the external advice and the dedicated resourcing needed to discharge its responsibilities to maintain, protect and develop the highly significant heritage of this important and exceptional site. We acknowledge that the Draft recognises that the cultural and historic heritage of this valuable national asset will have regard to both pre-European and post-European periods of settlement. We believe that Advisory Committee(s) will be needed to provide independent advice and to make representations on these.

Stories, Precincts and Design

Design is another matter discussed in 11.7 of the Draft. We strongly support the aspiration stated there, to ensure the achievement of high quality design and a world-class visitor experience. We point out that in the case of the Quarantine Station and its story, it is imperative that excellent design be applied to the Quarantine Station as a *precinct*, with the functional interrelationships between the buildings of the Quarantine Station facility made clearly evident to visitors, and presented imaginatively. This would not necessarily be achieved if design work emphasises the built form of individual buildings, one at a time.

Elsewhere in the Draft Plan there is due acknowledgement that the Quarantine Station is one of the most important precincts at PNNP. It evokes great stories surrounding Melbourne's establishment and development (Draft Plan, p. 72). A sub-precinct of the QS - the Disinfecting/Bathing cluster of buildings- is singled out to be restored and reconstructed as fully as possible to the early nineteenth century period. We support this. As the Draft says (p. 73), it is unique and historic, and will provide a series of interpretive experiences, with some parts of the cluster speaking for themselves, and some other stories coming from exhibitions mounted there. We agree with this focus, and most particularly with the associated recommendation for public funding to be applied here as a catalyst project.

However, we point out that this cluster, even with the use of the buildings in it dedicated to heritage activities, is but a sub-precinct of the Quarantine Station. What must also be taken into account is the opportunity of making comprehensible the walking tour which traces the immigrant story from the arrival jetty through disinfection to accommodation and messes to isolation hospital, morgue and cemetery, irrespective of what adaptive re-use is assigned to each of the single Quarantine buildings on the route.

The Jetty

NHS has long supported the re-instatement of the Quarantine Station jetty on heritage grounds. It was the point of overseas passenger arrival, and is a key element in the representation of the Quarantine story as alluded to above. NHS appreciates also that the jetty may serve the aim of linking PNNP to the Marine reserves of southern Port Phillip Bay, but we still assume that the jetty would be relatively low-key, and with restricted traffic.

Further note: lime kilns

NHS points to the importance of the limestone period of settlement at Point Nepean. Attention is directed to the two preserved kilns on the Port Phillip Bay shoreline of the Point Nepean area. Opened to public inspection, these can make a valuable contribution to Point Nepean's story.

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