

South Melbourne Town Hall



The South Melbourne Town Hall is located on City of Port Phillip freehold land at 208-220 Bank Street South Melbourne, within the Emerald Hill arts and culture precinct.

It was constructed between 1878 and 1880 on land of the Boon Wurrung people, part of the Greater Kulin Nation. Emerald Hill has a significant Indigenous history as a gathering place for ceremonies, conciliation and exchange, and is also of architectural and social significance to the state of Victoria.

A town hall is traditionally where the business of local government is conducted and public gatherings are held. In the case of South Melbourne Town Hall, the building was originally constructed to house the Emerald Hill Mechanics Institute, Post Office, Police Station and Court House, as well as the Emerald Hill Town Council (later becoming the City of South Melbourne, prior to amalgamation in 1994 with the cities of St Kilda and Port Melbourne to form the City of Port Phillip). Its use prior to amalgamation was largely consistent with the site's Indigenous history as a gathering place. Following amalgamation, most Council services were relocated from South Melbourne Town Hall to St Kilda Town Hall.

Over time, as communities change the way that they interact, communicate and conduct business, the need for town halls and other large public gathering places becomes diminished, which can result in these spaces becoming underutilised, or even obsolete. While the practical need for these spaces is reduced, the building's physical presence itself can contribute to a sense of civic pride and ownership due to its age, grandeur and what it may be seen to symbolise.

The Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) has been the major tenant of the South Melbourne Town Hall since 1996, following an agreement reached by the City of Port Phillip and the Victorian Government. A range of other arts, cultural and community organisations have, until recently, occupied the remainder of the building.

Established in 1994, ANAM is one of eight national performing arts training organisations funded by the Federal Government to support Australia's creative economy and promote artistic and cultural excellence.

As an internationally recognised music training organisation, Council values and acknowledges ANAM's current use of the town hall and the contributions it has made to the Emerald Hill area. However, Council is also cognisant that there may be other uses to which the building may be put and wishes to assess how those other uses may contribute to the activation of the area as a true creative, arts and cultural hub.

Have your say

The City of Port Phillip has received a proposal from the Australian National Academy of Music (ANAM) to restore and renew the South Melbourne Town Hall. ANAM is proposing to raise and invest \$40 million of funds into the building and, in partnership with the City of Port Phillip, re-establish the iconic building as a cultural hub of South Melbourne.

ANAM is undertaking consultation to understand the level of community support for its proposal. For more information about ANAM's proposal, please contact ANAM at community@anam.com.au or call 1800 517 387.

As part of Council's initial assessment of ANAM's proposal, Council is seeking the community's views as to whether it considers the current use of the town hall to be appropriate or if there may be alternative uses given that the original purpose of the building has changed significantly over time.

To share your feedback with Council, visit www.haveyoursay.portphillip.vic.gov.au or for more information contact Council's Property team on 03 9209 6777 or helpdeskproperty@portphillip.vic.gov.au