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**Request to be heard?:** No

**Precinct:** Montague

**Full Name:** Emma Teasdale

**Organisation:** Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society

**Affected property:**

**Attachment 1:** PMHPS\_Fisherma

**Attachment 2:**

**Attachment 3:**

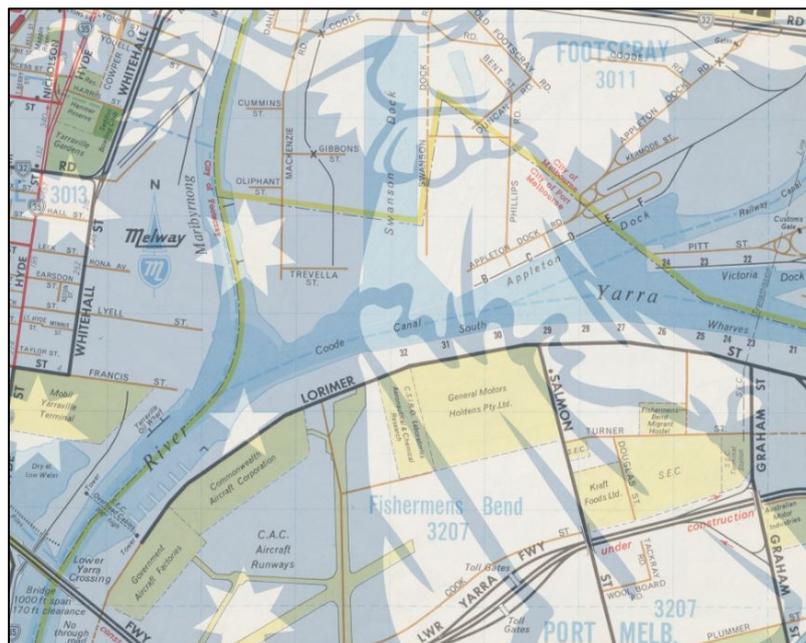
**Comments:** As attached below



The aims and objectives of the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society (The Society) are

- To foster interest in and knowledge of the history of Port Melbourne.
- To collect, preserve and when possible display items of historical interest relevant to Port Melbourne.
- To compile and keep a historical record of the district in a form that will ensure public accessibility.
- To work toward the preservation of buildings and objects of architectural, historical and social interest within Port Melbourne.

These aims and objectives apply spatially to the municipal boundaries of the former City of Port Melbourne at the time of local government amalgamations in 1994. As the 1970 Melways map below shows, the City of Port Melbourne included Fishermans Bend – as well as part of Coode Island.



It did **not** include Montague which was part of the former City of South Melbourne. However, the Society also has a strong interest in Montague because of its very close historical associations with Port Melbourne. Montague children attended Port Melbourne schools and many former Montague residents were the first tenants of the Housing Commission of Victoria's first housing estate at Fisherman's Bend. In the absence of a formal 'voice' to represent its history, the Society plays that role.

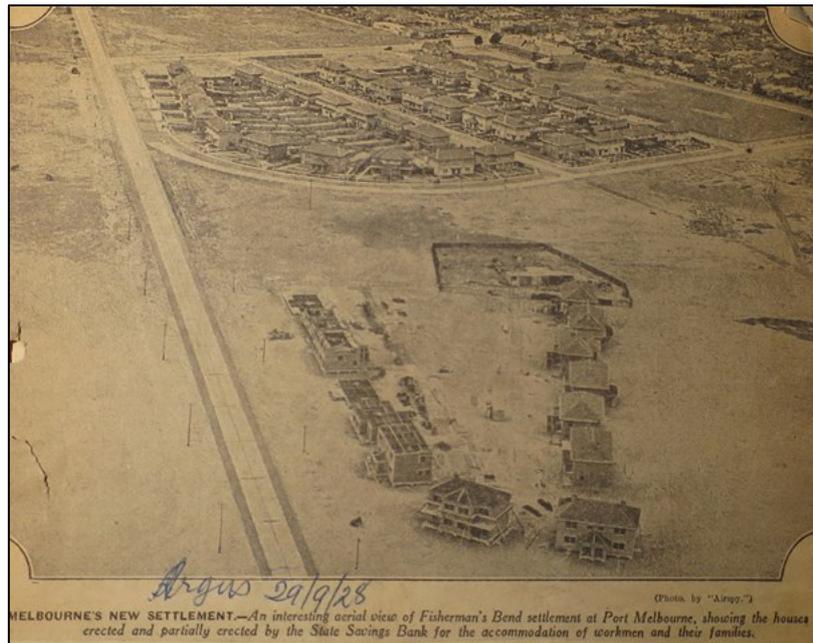
These considerations guide our deep interest in how the history of Fishermans Bend is represented, interpreted and protected in its ongoing evolution.

## FRAMING FISHERMANS BEND

The definition, description and ways of understanding Fishermans Bend have changed many times since settlement. The current definition of Fishermans Bend as used in the draft Framework does not include parts of Port Melbourne that were referred to as Fishermans Bend or 'The Bend' until relatively recent times.

Why does that matter? It means that significant historical themes, such as the creation of affordable housing in the Garden City Estate and the Fishermans Bend Estate, are absent from the narrative of Fishermans Bend.

The 1928 newsclipping showing the Bank Houses in the course of construction clearly locates them in 'Fisherman's Bend'.



Argus 29 September 1928

The second example, a plan for the Housing Commission of Victoria estate between Howe Parade and the beach clearly locates the estate in 'Fishermen's Bend'.



## HISTORY AND PLACEMAKING

The importance of retaining existing character and local history was strongly identified by respondents in earlier consultation and it is pleasing to see heritage and history being recognised as fundamental to shaping place and identity.

*The rich history of Fishermans Bend provides inspiration for an invigorated contemporary identity that embraces diversity, innovation and a sense of place. The cultural, social and architectural heritage of the area provides a link to the past and inspiration for its future.*

*Preserving historical elements within Fishermans Bend is critical in both developing a sense of place and respecting the past. This can be achieved by responding to the existing landscape and built form that has been shaped by the natural and historical attributes of the area.*

#### The Society

- acknowledges the considerable work that has been done since the previous framework in recognising the history and heritage of Fishermans Bend.
- welcomes the attention to the Aboriginal history of Fishermans Bend as well as drawing on their continuing culture in the future of Fishermans Bend.
- commends the commissioning of the social history *Life on the Bend: a social history of Fishermans Bend, Melbourne*.
- supports the inclusion of references to the landscape and topography as being a critical underpinning of Fishermans Bend's history (objective 3.8).

#### COMMENTS

PMHPS submits that the history of Fishermans Bend is not a static artefact from the past but an ongoing evolution. A greater understanding of historical themes relevant to Fishermans Bend can contribute positively to approaching planning for the future of the area. Since many buildings in Fishermans Bend were demolished long before the area was re-zoned, and relatively few buildings will stand the test for heritage protection, a greater emphasis on these themes and the protection of individual buildings alone will not be sufficient to interpret the history of Fishermans Bend. The Society suggests that drawing on the following themes in further detailed planning will provide material to learn and draw from. They could be re-interpreted in future planning.

#### Themes

**The landscape and topography** is foundational to all other readings of Fishermans Bend. The low lying swampy wetlands of Fishermans Bend were part of the nature of the place. Those wetlands may be re-interpreted and re-imagined in a 21<sup>st</sup> century form as part of the water sensitive aspirations of the plan. Stories of the past degradation of Fishermans Bend can inspire a more restorative aspiration for the future.

**Natural history** can provide the basis for greater understanding and appreciation of the biodiversity objectives of the plan including plant selection. Dr Gary Presland's *The Place for a Village* is a foundation text here.

**The technology, engineering and innovation:** there is huge scope to build on the remarkable history of Fishermans Bend in car and aeroplane manufacturing, defence, and drainage engineering.

**Affordable housing:** Since the First World War, Fishermans Bend has always been seen as a place to provide low cost housing. This history can be drawn upon.

#### CONCERNS

- While the Society commends the commissioning of the social history *Life on the Bend*, we find it to be a partial account. Drawing largely on newspaper reports, it tends to dwell on those events considered newsworthy at the time. This leads to an over-emphasis on illicit activity of all kind to

the detriment of the stories held by the Society and part of the collective memory of Port Melbourne.

- The Society has deep concerns about the implementation of aspirations of the draft Framework. Although the draft Framework expresses very positive aspirations around the adaptive reuse of heritage buildings, there are no means to support the aspiration.

## **SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Precinct planning should include a response to the heritage relevant to each precinct. This will avoid errors of interpretation based on a lack of understanding of the history of Fishermans Bend. To some extent, these errors are already built into the new Fishermans Bend with the name Sandridge given to an area remote from the name to which it originally applied and Wirraway applied to an area that was not the location of that aircraft's manufacture.

Having said that, the history of the Sandridge Precinct is very different to that of the Wirraway Precinct. This will avoid superficial 'paste on' interpretation and errors of interpretation. Some developments in Montague for example reference aircraft manufacture which occurred in the employment precinct. Another development located in Montague – well known for its swampy character – was named Emerald which is well known to refer to the highest point in South Melbourne.

If naming is one of the principal devices for heritage interpretation and orientation in a different future, naming should be applied accurately.

- Immediate protection of heritage properties identified in the City of Melbourne's heritage study.
- Build on and celebrate the history of innovation in engineering and technology in the precinct through skilful interpretation, urban design and other means. A heritage trail could be created to celebrate science and technology, linking significant sites such as General Motors-Holden, with the aircraft factories, the Melbourne main sewer and then to Scienceworks in a celebration of science.
- Heritage interpretation – how is this to be achieved and how will it be funded?
- The Westgate Freeway severed Fishermans Bend in half. It is now only connected by means of narrow bridges, hostile to pedestrians and cyclists. With the addition of each traffic lane the scar widens. The historical connection of Port Melbourne with the Yarra River is denied.

New transport links should connect, rather than divide, the future communities of Fishermans Bend. The PMHPS supports the intention to improve crossings of the freeway and add new ones.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Society supports a governance framework that conceives of and treats Fishermans Bend once again as a whole, integrated area.

We seek to continue our involvement in further precinct planning and the planning for the Employment Precinct

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