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Love in the time of a pandemic
Photo by John Tadigiri.

As the world continues to come to terms with the outbreak of coronavirus (COVID-19), it's moments like the one captured by *CBD News* photographer John Tadigiri of couple Luke Tipping and Yuchen Liu in an empty Bourke Street Mall, which serve as an important reminder to stay safe and look out for each other during these extraordinary times.

How the virus has hit the CBD

The CBD's community and economy are, like the rest of the world, wading through an unprecedented experience.

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*
ECONOMY

CBD jobs have been lost, meaning CBD workers are unemployed. Foot traffic is down, and sales are plummeting. On Sunday, March 22 Premier Daniel Andrews announced all non-essential services would be shut down in the following 48 hours, for an indefinite period.

Here's how events and impacts unfolded in the CBD up to that point.

Government and business

Amid announcements of federal and state government stimulus packages, the City of Melbourne passed its own stimulus valued at more than \$10 million on March 17.

The package focused on small businesses in the municipality and included:

- A virtual business support summit at Melbourne Town Hall;
- Suspending fees for *Food Act (1984)* registrations and street trading permits for three months;
- Halving rent for eligible tenants in Council-owned buildings for three months;
- Opportunities to deploy casual and part-time staff to enhance city cleanliness and amenity; and
- Developing a Rates Hardship Policy for consideration by the end of March.

Councillors stressed the stimulus was only a beginning and more measures would likely be announced in "the coming weeks".

"We recognise that cash flow management will be a pressing issue for small businesses in the coming weeks and months," Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood said.

"We're developing an investment

package to provide direct support to businesses. This will include up to \$1 million for training and support and up to \$500,000 in grants to support businesses to develop e-commerce and online services."

"We will also implement a business concierge service that will provide one-on-one advice and support to Melbourne businesses negatively impacted by COVID-19."

The business support summit, proposed by Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood, is a partnership with the state and federal governments, Victoria's Chief Health Officer and the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the package would support businesses affected by the state-wide emergency measures announced on Monday, March 23 which include social distancing to prioritise health and safety.

"The economic impacts from this virus will be significant and we're encouraging everybody to support local businesses wherever they can," the Lord Mayor said.

"In partnership with Spotless Services, we will also provide cross training and employment for approximately 200 affected casual staff to be redeployed to work on improving city cleanliness and presentation."

The Council will also work with the Queen Victoria Market (QVM) management to provide appropriate support to traders.

"We're doing everything we can to help businesses stay open and keep Melburnians in jobs," the Lord Mayor said.

The City of Melbourne's business concierge can now be accessed here: melbourne.vic.gov.au/business

On March 19, Luke Harris, President of the Collins Street Precinct

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City on pause amid uncertainty

WORDS BY *David Schout*
LOCAL NEWS

As facilities close, workers clear and events cease, Melbourne is bracing for an acutely uncertain 2020 in the midst of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

In the space of just two weeks in March, almost all CBD-based businesses and events were forced to close or cancel after increasingly stringent government measures forced people indoors.

Many CBD residents now face the prospect of self-isolation inside apartment buildings and, for international students that make up a significant part of the population, a period of particular uncertainty as classes move online and casual work dries up.

There's also significant uncertainty for the city's most vulnerable, including hundreds of rough sleepers and couch surfers.

Increasingly stringent social distancing and isolation

rules has made the job of the Salvation Army, Melbourne City Mission and Launch Housing particularly difficult, but they have bravely vowed to continue serving those most requiring assistance.

The impact on city-based businesses has been swift.

At first, the rapid downturn in foot traffic from both locals and visitors saw parts of the city usually teeming with life rendered to ghost towns in a short space of time.

Areas such as Bourke Street Mall traditionally see more than 3000 pedestrians pass through during the lunchtime period (12pm-1pm).

But by Monday, March 23 the council's pedestrian sensors indicated this was down to just 1165 for the same period, a number expected to further drop throughout April and beyond.

It was at this exact time that all non-essential businesses, including pubs, clubs, gyms and cinemas were forced shut by the state government.

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We're still publishing

WORDS BY *Sean Car*
EDITORIAL

The uncertainty currently confronting our world is well understood and, like everyone, *CBD News* is not immune to it.

“Unprecedented”, “extraordinary” and “bizarre” are words we’ve all become sadly too familiar with in recent times as the devastating effects of the coronavirus (COVID-19) continue to wreak havoc in our community.

But while the fear of the unknown is always a natural cause for anxiety, we should not allow panic to become a more powerful contagion than the virus itself. Calmness, compassion and care are some of the best cures we currently have in grappling with the fresh realities of this pandemic each day.

And as so many of you will feel isolated at home and cut off from your own communities during this period, there has never been a more important time for us to try and do our bit to help you feel that little bit more connected.

But with so many businesses shutting their doors and doing their best to weather this storm, we will be doing our very best to keep bringing you your local news while things return to normal, which they will.

In the meantime, if you’re a resident or business, please don’t hesitate to reach out, share your story with us and let us know how we can support you through this in any way. Most importantly, look after each other, support public health measures and try to stay positive ●



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Telstra payphones get court approval

WORDS BY *David Schout*
COURTS

The City of Melbourne has lost its long-running battle with Telstra over the right to install CBD phone booths on busy city footpaths.

The Federal Court decision means the telco giant can proceed with rolling out new payphones in the city, a service the council argued was obsolete and, as they contain a 75-inch billboard, Trojan horses for advertising.

Telstra will, however, require a planning permit for third-party advertising.

In 2018, Telstra installed 39 new payphones in the Hoddle Grid without fanfare, but a plan to roll out a further 81 cabinets raised the ire of Town Hall, revealed at the time by *CBD News*.

While complaints from the public and retailers rose, the council were hamstrung by a loophole in last century’s *Telecommunications Act (1997)* which allowed Telstra to place payphones where they pleased as they were deemed “low impact”.

“These structures are advertising billboards masquerading as payphones,” planning chair Nicholas Reece said in September 2018.

“Complaints from the community tell us that they are impeding pedestrians, disrupting footpath traffic flow and negatively impacting a number of local retailers and businesses.”

In early 2019 the council rejected Telstra’s application to install the new booths on the basis they were not “low impact”, a move that saw Telstra file Federal Court proceedings.

The City of Melbourne wasn’t alone in the ensuing court battle, joined by The City of Sydney and Brisbane City Council in opposing the rollout of 1800 payphones/billboards nationally.

But Justice David O’Callaghan ruled that the units were authorised by the *Telecommunications Act (1997)*, and upheld their “low impact” status provided they were used only to promote Telstra’s standard telephone service.

Cr Reece said while it accepted the ruling, the telco’s real intentions were clear.

“We believe the number and location of these



▲ Cr Reece next to Telstra phone booths in the CBD.

booths are currently being decided on the basis of advertising exposure rather than customer need.”

He said the decision would impact the city’s ability to free up space for pedestrians, a core tenet of the council’s 10-year transport strategy.

“We defended this case in the Federal Court to protect our footpaths. We will continue to do everything we can to make our city as pedestrian friendly as possible and stop unnecessary clutter and congestion on our pavements.”

In response to the ruling, Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore said the Federal *Telecommunications Act (1997)* was “outdated” and called on the federal communications minister to remove them.

“While Telstra removes payphones from other areas across the country, citing a lack of use, here in the city it wants to roll out more. Why? Because the new payphones house 75-inch advertising screens – billboard space that it wants to on-sell for profit,” she Tweeted.

“We didn’t think that was fair – that precious inner-city footpath space could be hijacked for corporate advertising – so along with Melbourne and Brisbane we took Telstra to court. Today, we lost that case. Thankfully, the court’s decision does not give Telstra freedom to install commercial advertising panels at will.”

Cr Reece said the council was “reviewing the decision and its impact” and would consider future applications for third-party billboard advertising on a “case-by-case” basis ●

Sell or buy first? Which option is right for you?

It’s the ultimate dilemma for any home owner planning to move on to a new property – do I sell or buy first? You don’t want to sell unless you have somewhere else to live, but you don’t want to buy unless you have the money from the original home. Whichever way you go, there will be some stress involved, so it’s important to look at the pros and cons of each option to decide which is the most suitable and practical for your circumstances.

Existing Equity

Your decision should be based on your current equity situation and how fast you can sell your current home. In a “hot” market, a “hot” property is sure to sell fast – but don’t assume that your property will attract an immediate buyer. Do your research so you have a realistic idea of the potential selling time. The other factor to consider is how long it will take you to find your next home. You don’t want to be left homeless and in limbo while you search for the perfect property.

Your financial status

Generally speaking, selling first is a suitable option if you have little to no equity, or if the property will take some time to sell, either because the market is slow. This way, you are not caught in the situation of having two mortgages, and you can purchase your next home with an established budget based on the sale of your last home.

If you have significant equity in the current home combined with a healthy income, you can afford to balance your payments if you buy first.

Simultaneous settlement

If you are very lucky and well-organized, you can achieve the ideal – a simultaneous settlement. This is when the sale of your previous home and the purchase of your new home are processed simultaneously. So the money from your sale is instantly transferred into the purchase of your next home. Your solicitor or conveyancer and your financial lender will assist you best with this.

One way to achieve this is by selling your home with a long settlement period of up to six months. This gives you time to look for a new property, knowing that the payment from your previous home is available for the purchase. You can include a clause in contract allowing an earlier settlement in the event you find a home within that time frame.

You can also purchase a new home with a long settlement period, giving you extra time to sell your current home. However, this is riskier because if you fail to sell your home within the specified period, you could potentially lose your deposit on the new house and incur legal actions against you for non-performance of contract.

Buying first with a bridging loan

If you owe approximately 60% or less of the value of your current home, you may have sufficient equity to apply for a bridging loan. A bridging loan covers the cost of purchasing a new home and maintaining the two properties until you have sold your current home. You need to prove that you have sufficient equity to cover the loan once your property is sold.

This is generally a good option for a home owner who is downsizing, such as a pensioner, as the new home will be of considerably less value than the current home. As a bridging loan incurs a significant amount of interest, it is not a good option for anyone buying a more valuable property than the one they are selling, as the interest could become unmanageable.

In all situations you should seek good counsel from your financial lender, accountant or solicitor.



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Residential Sales, Leasing & Property Management



▲ A busker plays to what would normally be a packed Bourke Street Mall in the middle of the day.

▼ The art of social distancing in practice (left) and a masked woman on Swanston St (right).



▲ A horse carriage driver has a nap (left) and a masked man with flowers in hand waits for a tram on Swanston St (right).

City on pause amid uncertainty

Continued from page 1.

Some were uncertain whether their doors would open again.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the health and economic impacts on the city were profound.

“Of course, the priority has to be health and the way we respond to our challenge around slowing the spread of this virus,” she said in a social media address.

“Here in the city it has been devastating to see the impact on the number people (present) and what that means for our retailers and hospitality businesses in particular.”

Cr Capp said that people were “firmly at the centre” of the City of Melbourne’s approach in the coming weeks and months.

“It’s really important that we’re all taking a caring approach at this time. For us we’re particularly looking at our most vulnerable, being our elderly and rough sleepers. So please, whatever you’re doing, look out for the people

around you whilst taking the necessary precautions for all of us to slow the advancement of this virus.”

All the city’s libraries, aquatic/recreation centres, arts and cultural centres, community hubs and visitor centres have been closed until further notice.

In the CBD, this included: City Library, Melbourne City Baths, Signal and ArtPlay.

At the time of publication, childcare facilities and in-home services such as domestic assistance, home maintenance, meals, personal care, respite, and individual social support would continue, as council staff were ordered to ask COVID-19 screening questions.

The Queen Victoria Market would remain open, as would services such as waste and recycling, building, planning, animal management, parking and traffic.

Of course, the state and federal government’s actions and response will most determine the

health and economic impact of COVID-19 on locals.

But the council has made a number of moves to soften the blow.

Most notably, this included a \$10 million pledge to cushion the impact on city businesses and workers, something small business chair Susan Riley said the a favourable financial position allowed them to do. For more on what the package included read *How the virus has hit the CBD* on page 1.

Deputy Mayor Aaron Wood said the council’s focus was on “rates and rent”, and relief would be swift.

“We’re acting quickly, it’s not all going to be perfect, but sometimes ‘perfect’ can get in the way of ‘good’, and that’s really why we’re moving as quickly as possible,” he said at the March 17 Future Melbourne Committee meeting.

Arts, Culture and Heritage chair Rohan Leppert fielded countless calls from event

organisers cancelling events throughout the municipality, many of which employed hundreds of casual staff who have all lost work.

He said the council’s assistance was important, but should be put in context.

“I wish we were the Commonwealth and we could stimulate the local economy in a targeted way. But we’re not, we’re a municipal authority. We need to look at what we can do well.”

For updated local government advice on COVID-19, visit melbourne.vic.gov.au ●



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A different crisis for the worse off

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*

PHOTOGRAPHY BY *John Tadigiri*

HOMELESSNESS

When society grinds to a halt, events are cancelled, businesses shut and most of us head indoors to self-isolate, but what happens to our vulnerable?

The CBD's homeless and those organisations that care for them are bracing for the dire impacts that may soon be felt. Everything from food, medical resources and buildings are being sourced to care for the pre-existing homeless community plus a potential influx of individuals thrown onto the streets during the crisis.

Major Brendan Nottle from the Salvation Army said the charity was working frantically.

"We've had our café we operate for people that are homeless deemed an essential service by the Chief Medical Officer and we're doing everything we can to stay open and remain safe," Major Nottle said.

"Yesterday we had a forensic clean of the building that took about eight hours. The cleaners are back again this afternoon for another eight hours."

He said the café had replaced all cutlery with disposable utensils, and that he was having additional freezers delivered for storage, while also working with the City of Melbourne to source buildings to get the homeless off the streets to isolate and quarantine.

All of this was in the goal to avoid a chilling worst case scenario.

"We are preparing for a day that may come where we have to close the café and deliver those meals onto the street," Major Nottle said.

"In the worst-case scenario, we've purchased face masks and are trying to source hazmat suits to deliver so people don't go hungry and to remain social contact."

As everyone increases what has come to be known as social distancing, Major Nottle said we should be mindful of what that meant for the homeless and vulnerable.

"Social isolation for the people we work with is one of the biggest issues they have to deal with," he said.

"We will need to be checking in on people's mental and physical health on the street."

"We're trying to access really quite large volumes of food in an environment that is inviting and not threatening."

"Presumably there will be lots of people who have never approached us before."

Major Nottle said the Salvation Army was also working on technological communication capabilities to check in on mental health and keep social communication open – even while social distancing.

He also thanked the Victorian Government and Premier Daniel Andrews for homelessness and public housing support announced on March 18.

The state government will provide almost \$6 million to homelessness organisations to help them deal with the crisis.

It will help with the search for temporary housing for the homeless and private rental brokerage for those at risk of falling into homelessness.

Minister for Housing Richard Wynne said the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic would have wide-ranging impacts across our community but would hit the homeless particularly hard.

"This funding will help to get a roof over the head of more Victorians, helping to reduce transmission amongst the community and provide those who are unwell with a safe place to recover," Minister Wynne said.

"We're also making sure our public housing tenants have the information, advice and support they need to look after themselves during this pandemic."

The Council to Homeless Persons (CHP) also welcomed the announcement from the state government.

But CHP CEO Jenny Smith called on the federal government to step up to deal with the issue of loss of income en masse for those that may become homeless. Specifically, CHP recommended payments to cover at least a month's rent for those affected, with extensions provided to ensure against evictions.

"The federal government also needs to provide payments to enable people living in overcrowded housing who need to self-isolate, to get into alternative accommodation," Ms Smith said.

"This pandemic has highlighted the increased vulnerability that decades of inadequate provision of social housing has created for our community during a health crisis."

"Governments need to be planning now to ensure that longer term there is enough social housing to meet the need in our community from people who cannot afford private rental." ●

Fears for traders as virus takes its toll

WORDS BY *Sean Car*

LOCAL NEWS

While the Queen Victoria Market (QVM) remains open to the community, many traders say they fear that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic could spell the end for their businesses.

QVM management and the City of Melbourne announced a three-month relief package on March 20 for the market's 600-plus traders, which council said would be "reviewed and adjusted" where required.

The three-month trader support package includes 50 per cent in rent relief for non-food traders and 25 per cent for produce and food-related traders, while also allowing specialty shopping traders in C to M sheds the option to temporarily close.

"We will continue to monitor the situation and work closely with the City of Melbourne and relevant authorities to evaluate the impacts and consider additional support required for traders," QVM CEO Stan Liacos said.

"This support package will provide immediate relief for traders to help their businesses get through the next few months."

While the relief package comes as welcome news for traders, Friends of Queen Victoria Market (FQVM) president Mary-Lou Howie said the virus was only compounding existing issues for many.

She said 50 per cent in rent relief was not enough for some, who she said were already facing permanent closure before the outbreak.

"You can't make money if there are no people and this is not including the coronavirus. This was happening before," she said. "What's happening now is, because of the empty spaces, management is asking all the traders to spread."

"If you look realistically, clothing and retailing is down. To compound that with the coronavirus, and the major factor of having a CEO with no retailing experience, you've got a perfect storm."

Ms Howie said FQVM and traders were continuing to push for QVM



▲ *Mary-Lou Howie under an empty A Shed.*

Pty Ltd to be abolished to allow for the establishment of a co-operative governance model at the market.

Fruit and vegetable trader Rosa Ansaldo, who has been operating at the market for 33 years, said retail at the market was already "dead".

"We sell in bulk to families and we do a lot of Kenny's restaurants and a lot of the CBD, down in Docklands. Most of it is delivery and some is pick up. IGA Expresses come and pick up," she said.

"Bulk retailing is the only thing keeping us alive. The retail is just dead."

"This is our livelihood. There are 600 traders and it's their livelihood. We have no tenure, no future, no nothing. Yet this place does not belong to Stan Liacos or the City of Melbourne. It belongs to the people of Melbourne."

The news of a relief package follows the forced postponement of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival, which was in the process of setting up its festival HQ at QVM in March when news of the COVID-19 outbreak took hold.

"We understand that news of this postponement will be a great disappointment to our guests. Everyone in our organisation is heartbroken by this turn of events," Anthea Loucas Boshia, CEO of Food and Wine Victoria said.

Despite the uncertainty, QVM will continue operating under the mantra of "business as usual" with trading hours to remain unchanged.

Queen Victoria Market is open from 6am to 3pm Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and from 9am to 4pm every Sunday. Speciality shopping opens at 9am ●

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How the virus has hit the CBD

Continued from page 1.

Group (CPSG), told the CBD business community it was “more important than ever that we band together as businesses to support each other”.

“We are currently working closely with our marketing agency Kreate, the City of Melbourne and our other key partners to do whatever we can to support you during this time.”

Mr Harris suggested some initial ideas to “promote your business during this time and into the future” which included online opportunities, takeaway and delivery services and gift vouchers.

The Victorian Government’s relief package announced on March 21 included:

- Payroll tax relief for businesses with payroll under \$3 million. Refund of payroll tax paid by eligible businesses backdated to July 1, 2019 and deferral of future tax for the current financial year.
- Cash allocations of \$113,000, with an average payment of \$24,000, to 24,000 small to medium businesses who together employ over 400,000 people in Victoria (eligibility criteria to be determined).
- \$500 million Business Support Package for industries hardest hit by the impacts of coronavirus – namely tourism, hospitality, accommodation, events and the arts.
- \$500 million to look after displaced workers and workers that have been stood down.

The state government has also introduced a register to match the skills of displaced workers with other businesses, which can be accessed here: vic.gov.au/workingforvictoria.

\$100 million has also been allocated to remove rent obligations for commercial businesses that operate in government properties, while liquor licensing fees have also been waived.

Treasurer Tim Pallas said that all invoices due to businesses for services provided to government agencies would be paid within five days of the announcement to improve cash flow.

The government will also provide land tax relief for land holdings of less than \$1 million, providing a reprieve on payments for this year and a liability deferral out to 2021.

At the time of publishing, the federal government had also announced two stimulus packages valued at \$17.6 and \$66 billion for impacted individuals and businesses. Further details of what these include can be found here: treasury.gov.au/coronavirus.

Arts

Cr Rohan Leppert, chair of the City of Melbourne’s Arts, Culture and Heritage portfolio, said some of the most immediate impacts were felt in the arts sector.

“One after the other creative directors and CEOs are calling me and saying we’re about to cancel or defer our upcoming festival,” he said.

“The arts ecosystem is very deep and very broad, and like other sectors the City of Melbourne is overexposed, so there’s a lot of independent contractors and casual workers.”

Representatives of the arts and culture sector addressed the Council on March 17 to outline the impact they have already felt locally and nationally.

Matthew Peckham, production services manager at Her Majesty’s Theatre, told council hundreds of jobs in the live theatre sector alone had already been lost in the CBD.

“In the last couple of days *Billy Elliot*, *Come From Away* and *Shrek the Musical* have all been forced to close early,” Mr Peckham said.

“Thirty-two performers are unemployed because *Shrek* has closed. Over a hundred stage crew, ushers, food and beverage staff, cleaners, security guards have all lost their jobs as well and they are nearly all casual employers.”

“What few people realise is that live theatre employs more people than the mining industry, live theatre employs more people than the vehicle building industry ever did.”

Many major arts and cultural institutions in the municipality, including the National Gallery of Victoria and the State Library of Victoria, closed from March 16.



“We’re all in this together, and if we follow the appropriate guidelines, we’ll have the best chance of getting through this as best as possible - Dr Stan Capp.”



Smaller boutique galleries and cultural hubs followed with staggered announcements until the announcement that all non-essential services would be shut down.

Live music venues were also hit early. At the time of writing the Australian music industry had lost \$280 million, with an estimate of 255,000 cancelled gigs and 500,000 individuals impacted.

Music Victoria CEO Patrick Donovan told *Beat*: “Every facet of the industry’s haemorrhaging. I need a music hospital.”

Residents groups

Many residents in the CBD are part of Australia’s elderly community. Local residents’ groups, some of residents’ vital support networks, have had to cease meetings amid the crisis.

On March 16, EastEnders president Dr Stan Capp informed members their meeting planned for the next day would be cancelled.

“Numerous smaller discretionary events like ours are being cancelled through ‘an abundance of caution’ and this seems entirely appropriate,” he said.

“I think that we should also display an abundance of caution and cancel. I would hate to have any consequence from going ahead and so with some sadness I advise that EastEnders will not proceed as planned for tomorrow.”

“We will reconvene when it is indicated to safely do so.”

“In the meantime, stay well, follow advice from our clinical leaders and support each other.”

Residents3000 President Rafael Camillo told members on March 21 the group would do its best to continue communication.

“For the safety of committee members, it is my sad duty to inform you that the next event will be cancelled and possibly further events also,” he said.

“As we all know, the is a rapidly changing event, and we will need to keep abreast of the situation and make the decision to resume events when the relevant organisations consider it is safe to do so.”

“We will try to keep in touch by using our Facebook page and posting some interesting information. Just simply type Residents3000 on Facebook and follow us.”

“We’re all in this together, and if we follow the appropriate guidelines, we’ll have the best chance of getting through this as best as possible. Let’s remain positive and do what we can for one another while doing our best to remain healthy and safe.” ●

For updates and information:
dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus



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A MESSAGE TO OUR COMMUNITY



As we face into the biggest public health challenge we've ever experienced, the City of Melbourne is here to reassure you that the health and wellbeing of our community is at the heart of all our decision making.

This is an unprecedented time and we are committed to supporting all residents and businesses by delivering essential services and helping combat the spread of COVID-19.

We are urging everyone to adhere to the advice from health authorities to help keep our community as safe as possible.

You can count on us to continue to deliver services such as waste and recycling; support for the elderly, isolated and at risk; children's services; homelessness services and animal management. It's what we're here to do, and we won't let you down.

To the businesses within the City of Melbourne, we have established a Business Concierge service to provide information and advise you about available support – call **9658 9568** and press 1 to access this service.

For the latest on how we're supporting you and the community in these fast-changing times, visit **melbourne.vic.gov.au**

Take care, stay healthy, and look out for each other.

Melbourne City Council



(From left) Councillor Susan Riley, Councillor Kevin Louey, Councillor Beverley Pinder, Councillor Nicolas Frances Gilley MBE, Lord Mayor Sally Capp, Councillor Nicholas Reece, Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood, Councillor Rohan Leppert, Councillor Cathy Oke, Councillor Philip Le Liu, Councillor Jackie Watts.

Council well placed to support battling businesses

WORDS BY *Stephen Mayne*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

At a time when small business is getting wiped out by the coronavirus (COVID-19), it was good to see City of Melbourne councillors nimbly come up with a \$10 million support package at the Future Melbourne Committee meeting on March 17.

City of Melbourne has the second strongest balance sheet of any Australian council after City of Sydney. The latest quarterly update showed a cash balance of \$144.5 million as of December 31 and no debt.

Some of the stimulus detail is still to be worked out but a good early move saw 600-plus Queen Victoria Market traders offered rent relief, including a 50 per cent three month discount for non-food stalls and 25 per cent off for food-related traders.

Councils across Australia are well placed to provide support to their communities and City of Melbourne was one of the first to act. As the federal government deluges cash on individuals and businesses, it should also think about giving money direct to councils for locally managed stimulus programs.

Should council add to its property holdings?

One thing that councils can do during a crisis is use its balance sheet to pick up additional property holdings, particularly if there are distressed sellers of strategic assets.

Over the years, the City of Melbourne has bought into a variety of property assets including The Regent Theatre (held in a 50-50 joint venture with the state), the Kathleen Syme centre in Carlton, the Boyd Community Hub in Southbank and the Munro site next to Queen Victoria Market.

In hindsight, council should have swooped on the Palace Theatre at the top of Bourke St when it was sold for \$11.2 million in 2012. One of Melbourne's biggest and best live music

venues was then sadly closed in April 2014 and internal demolition started a few weeks ago. What a shame!

If other theatres become available during this crisis after being forced to close, council should be ready to step in.

Similarly, the AFL is reportedly asking the state government for a \$250 million interest free loan to help it through a cash crisis.

Perhaps it should consider selling its biggest asset – Marvel Stadium at Docklands – to City of Melbourne or the state government.

Most stadiums around the world are owned by governments and having long term control of Marvel Stadium would be a great strategic move for City of Melbourne in terms of managing the future development of Docklands.

With net assets of more than \$4.4 billion and no debt, such a move is within the capability of council.

Councillors disagree with officers over new Dexu office tower

The Reserve Bank building at 60 Collins is an iconic location at the Paris End of Collins St, so it is exciting that property giant Dexu is proposing to build a new high quality \$140 million office tower on the site.

Sydney-based Dexu is close to finishing its \$1.4 billion twin towers across the road at 80 Collins St – a project it bought from the Queensland government in 2019.

An unusual element of council's involvement in the Reserve Bank tower proposal was that the council officers recommended Minister for Planning Richard Wynn refuse it, partly because it would overshadow the food court at AMP's Collins Place across the road.

The councillors unanimously overturned this advice at the March 17 committee meeting, instead passing a resolution saying that it didn't object to the proposal provided the over-shadowing was limited to less than 30 per cent of the Collins Place food court between 11am and 2pm on September 30.

This will be an interesting test for the

Most stadiums around the world are owned by governments and having long term control of Marvel Stadium would be a great strategic move for City of Melbourne in terms of managing the future development of Docklands.



Minister. Just how high is too high at this iconic site and should a privately-owned enclosed food court be protected from shadowing?

Maximum transparency on CEO pay

As promised in last month's columns, there are some important disclosures to be made about the remuneration arrangements of former City of Melbourne CEO Ben Rimmer, who departed from Town Hall in January 2019.

Rimmer, who is now the state government's Director of Housing, is believed to have received a six figure ex gratia exit payment over and above his contractual entitlements.

The detail hasn't been disclosed in the 2018-19 City of Melbourne annual report which explicitly disclosed the pay arrangements for the new CEO Justin Hanney, but not his predecessor.

This was the second ex gratia payment to Rimmer by the council, who also received sick leave payments over and above his contractual and statutory entitlements in 2016.

As one of the councillors who agreed to the sick leave top-up payments at the time, I think it was the right and compassionate thing to do in terms of retaining a talented new CEO battling an unexpected illness. However, the details should have been disclosed at the time, rather than kept confidential.

The same principle applies to any exit payment. CEO contracts are typically generous at the City of Melbourne and if additional payments are going to be approved, at the very least this should be disclosed and explained to the public.

Farewell for now

Finally, this will be my final *CBD News* column for a while. While not certain, there is a possibility that I'll be a candidate in the City of Melbourne elections come October and in those circumstances it is appropriate to head to the exits.

Keep supporting your wonderful local monthly newspaper in the period ahead as they provide the best coverage of all things City of Melbourne •



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Council slams state, federal inaction on housing crisis

WORDS BY *David Schout*
HOUSING

City of Melbourne councillors have slammed upper tiers of government for a “disgraceful” response to the housing crisis and said “business as usual” would no longer cut it for the city.

In passing a new draft affordable housing strategy, a piece of policy some conceded would not have the power to enact real change, councillors pleaded for urgent action on the pressing issue.

Cr Nicolas Frances Gilley, a former CEO of the Brotherhood of St Laurence, said the lack of affordable housing was an issue that had significantly worsened in recent years.

“It’s been a big issue in this country and started lots of organisations,” he said at the March 3 Future Melbourne Committee meeting.

“We really had a response to it when the state took on building public housing. But something changed. We stopped, and it’s gone backwards. And not only that, we’ve replaced it with nothing ... I would say to the state government, you have not acted for some time and you have been in the position where you could.”

The council revealed there is a current shortfall of at least 5500 affordable rental homes for people on very low to moderate incomes, a number that would quadruple to around 23,200 by 2036 if no action was taken.

“Affordable” rent is generally defined as below 30 per cent of a household’s income.

When rental repayments exceed this, tenants are forced to sacrifice necessities of daily life such as food, healthcare or education.

The council’s draft strategy pledged to lobby the state government for “inclusionary zoning” in Victoria, a move that would force developers to include some affordable housing in new developments.

On council-owned land (a small amount in the municipality), it aimed to deliver up to 25 per cent of residential development as affordable housing.

Cr Rohan Leppert said that the upcoming public consultation period, followed by the final strategy, was “one of the most important” things councillors would do this term.

But he admitted that their role was still small when compared with the state and federal governments.

“Even if all of the actions that we’re discussing and proposing in this strategy come to life and can be acted on, we’re still tinkering at the edges; we’re not re-writing market economics here,” he said

“We don’t dictate what the state planning provisions are going to be. We can advocate for something, but it doesn’t necessarily mean we will get it.”

Cr Leppert said he was now looking for “the strongest possible leadership” from the state government, despite the lack of national vision.

“We still have no national housing strategy and that is an absolute disgrace,” he said.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp agreed that the strategy was “momentous”, but argued the council’s impact was not insignificant.

“I actually disagree with comments about the fact that we can’t play a major role in this. We can, just by changing our own thinking and policy response to this; we are creating ripples that can have a major impact,” Cr Capp said.

Earlier in the evening Michael Lennon, the managing director of not-for-profit housing provider Housing Choices Australia, said Melbourne’s reputation was dented by the housing crisis.

“Lewis Mumford, the American urban theorist, said the test of any city was the life it made possible for its citizens. On that definition, we are failing a significant number of people,” Mr Lennon said.

The council’s planning chair Nicolas Reece agreed, and said Melbourne’s proud “liveability” claim should be put under the microscope.

“What is very, very inescapably clear is that ‘business as usual’ is not going to cut it for Melbourne if we want to see ourselves as a truly fair, equitable and liveable city ... we like to say we’re the world’s most liveable city, but you can’t be [that] if people can’t afford to live here,” Cr Reece said.

“There is no silver bullet to solving affordable housing. The truth is, it’s something the City of Melbourne can’t do alone. We need to collaborate and work with other tiers of government.”

You can have your say on the council’s Affordable Housing Strategy before April 5 at participate.melbourne.vic.gov.au ●



▲ Charlie Xiao putting up posters to keep us in touch.

Spread art, not viruses

WORDS BY *Rhonda Dredge*
ARTS & CULTURE

In March, Chinese curator Charlie Xiao was in McGraths Lane behind Tolarno Gallery putting up posters to promote his Instagram campaign #spreadartnotviruses.

“We need to stay connected during the outbreak,” he said. “I’m inviting people to upload their artistic response to the pandemic.”

Already young artists from China have contributed pictures and a poster has been hung in the sky over Beijing using augmented reality developed in Melbourne.

The collaborative venture between high-end Tolarno Gallery in Exhibition St and the ambitious young curator began in September last year when Charlie raised \$120,000 to buy a gallery installation called *Colony*.

He’d planned to tour the collection of oversized imaginary viruses to Tank Shanghai in China when the epidemic hit.

“Pop art and surrealism are big in China,” Charlie said. The works

arrived but were put into quarantine. “Then the model viruses became a reality.”

He said *Colony* was not dystopic but an immersive way of showing our interconnectedness. People took pictures of themselves with the viruses and uploaded them on Instagram.

Charlie’s latest initiative is a means of finding something positive to say in the midst of fear and uncertainty.

He says the Instagram campaign is an example of reciprocal art.

“It’s more about humanity not viruses. The action is to speak up and put in the effort.”

“It’s a people movement. You’re getting people in China trapped in their rooms for weeks and weeks. Some are making the most of going to the bathroom.”

“There’s too much negativity. I see it. You feel there is racism happening or young people saying it’s not worrying me. It’s only for old people.”

While many CBD galleries have closed, Tolarno will continue to mount exhibitions during the lockdown. Viewing can be arranged by appointment ●

Gig economy grey area

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*
LOCAL NEWS

In November last year, food delivery drivers working for platforms like UberEats in the CBD were targeted in a Victoria Police traffic operation. Two hundred infringement notices were issued, with at least a quarter of offences relating to delivery bike users.

A state government report into Victoria’s “gig economy” workforce is due by March 31. As a result of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic it will likely be delayed.

But social distancing and self-isolation has already made us even more reliant on gig-workers. As we go out less, and businesses begin to close public areas, there may still be many delivery riders out on our streets bringing us our food.

In 2018, when the state government commissioned an inquiry into the workforce, its background report estimated that about 80,000 people in Australia earned income through “peer-to-peer” platforms like Uber, UberEats and Deliveroo.

But there is a lack of certainty from legal professionals and government regarding the status and rights of workers across the “gig economy”.

Associate professor at the University of Melbourne Alysia Blackham said Australia needed to ensure our laws were protecting those workers.

“The issues relate to how well our laws extend to people who don’t fit our traditional idea of an employee,” she said.

“The way many platforms have been set up is to say the relationship is not between the platform and the Deliveroo rider, but between the consumer and the rider.”

“Platforms are trying to take themselves out of the equation and limit their responsibility.”

This potentially means if a rider causes an



▲ A food delivery person in the CBD in March.

accident, they would be held personally responsible, even if it’s caused by poor training and conditions. Conversely, if a rider has a problem with their employment, it is hard for them to prove they have a relationship with the platform, not the consumer.

When booked for infringements, riders are held responsible as individuals. Riders that were issued infringements in last year’s police operation told *The Age* their fine amounted to their entire day’s wage.

“

The way many platforms have been set up is to say the relationship is not between the platform and the Deliveroo rider, but between the consumer and the rider.

”

The government’s 2018 report said it was difficult for these workers to earn “sufficient and fair remuneration” – many earning under the minimum wage.

“On-demand platforms allow employers to select at will from a pool of workers who often rely on positive ratings for continued work,” the report stated.

The report went on to state those factors contributed to “workers accepting low wages and inferior conditions”.

Furthermore, vulnerable workers from a range of demographics were overrepresented in these precarious forms of work, including many young workers, visa holders and women.

Many of the pressures felt by delivery riders, on top of their precarious and vulnerable starting point, may push them to sacrifice safety and road rules. They are often rated on the speed of their deliveries and need to use their mobiles to accept new jobs quickly.

And it is unclear whether or not there is proper training and information given to riders, who often use electric driven bikes or scooters.

Associate professor Blackham said the issue was about a safe system of work.

“It all comes back to the question of safe systems of work and if there is a way to do the job safely while meeting the platform requirements. We need greater transparency around how these platforms are operating,” she said.

“There are a lot of incentives built into these jobs that don’t encourage safe behaviour, and employers have a duty to not only their employees and contractors, but to other people in the community.”

“And the question comes back to enforcement, too. How do you make sure platforms are meeting their requirements, and how do you make sure workers are able to pursue their rights?” ●

Chart House lost

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*
ECONOMY

City of Melbourne councillors have bemoaned their inability to save a corner of Melbourne heritage through a prolonged struggle over gradings and protection.

Chart House, a cherished interwar era building at 372 – 378 Little Bourke St, will now likely be redeveloped into a 17-storey commercial tower. The nearby Melbourne House will also be redeveloped.



The council had been engaged in a back-and-forth attempt to have the site protected as part of a new heritage review, but councillors said the process had come to an unfortunate conclusion.

Despite recommendations from the council and heritage consultants Lovell Chen, a planning panel appointed by the state government decided against upgrading heritage protection on the site late last year.

Council originally considered the site “non-contributory” until a revision was prompted via new site information provided by the Melbourne Heritage Action Group (MHA) in 2018.

The property owners submitted an application to develop the site into a tower in 2018 and have had their application stalled by the process.

Chair of heritage portfolio Cr Rohan Leppert said he disagreed with the panel’s recommendation, but council had exhausted its options.

“We’ve made it very clear this was our last go to answer this question,” Cr Leppert said.

“I’m very disappointed with where we’ve landed here but this is the

process we’ve set up and I think we need to follow through and close up this very lengthy, extraordinarily expensive process.”

“Throughout this period, this constant chopping and changing and re-asking the question what this grading should be, we’ve been asking an applicant for a planning application on this very site to wait.”

“I don’t agree with the panel member, but I think it would be churlish of us to continue to ask the same question until we get the answer that we think we really want.”

Built in the 1940s, the modernist building is six storeys tall and has a history of warehouse, factory and office uses.

The council pushed to have the site added to the Guildford and Hardware Lane Precinct included in the Melbourne Planning Scheme last year.

But the planning panel set up by the state government regarded alterations to the building to have reduced its heritage significance.

Melbourne Heritage Action president Tristan Davies said the decision not to upgrade the building’s heritage status was due to an “architecturally purist sense of what heritage is”.

“It loses sight of the bigger picture that this building’s form and details still clearly contribute to the wider heritage precinct we’re talking about,” he said.

“The panel states that it has been significantly altered but did not provide any evidence on this point and, in fact, only used evidence from

the council’s heritage adviser which was meant to prove that the building was contributory.”

Mr Davies said there were a number of other buildings with more alterations in the heritage precinct that were deemed contributory.

“Chart House actually maintains its original 1941 shop fronts and even painted signage for John Don, who was a pretty big developer in the area,” he said.

“It has a clear historic and visual connection, therefore, at the ground level and human scale to the precinct’s history. Indeed, it’s pretty rare to find an intact shopfront anywhere in the entire CBD like this.”

A similar process led to the approval of an application to demolish and redevelop the nearby Melbourne House.

Cr Nicholas Reece said he shared a sense of “disappointment, sorrow and anger” at the decision.

“I was very concerned when we considered Melbourne House two years or so ago,” Cr Reece said.

“In the end I yielded to the advice of the experts and I’ve got to say it was one of the most painful decisions I’ve had to make as a councillor. Chart House ended up in a place I think is equally unfortunate.”

“When you put Melbourne House together with Chart House and what is likely to happen on those sites, this is going to be a favourite little corner of Melbourne which is never going to be the same and Melbourne is going to lose a bit of its charm.” ●

“

I’m very disappointed with where we’ve landed here but this is the process we’ve set up.

”

Underpayment charges

WORDS BY *Isabelle Harris*
FAIR WORK

A CBD clothing shop is under fire from the Fair Work Ombudsman for allegedly underpaying its staff.

The clothing store 316 Melbourne and its operator Zurel Pty Ltd face charges for not adhering to a Fair Work compliance notice.

Fair Work Victoria also alleges the company and its director, Mr Ban Teik Chee, broke record keeping and pay slip laws.

The compliance notice was served after a Fair Work inspector suspected an employee had been underpaid for their minimum hourly wage, casual holiday and other penalty rates.

The notice, which is used by the Fair Work Ombudsman to enforce workplace laws, was served last year.

Fair Work Ombudsman Sandra Parker said the notices were used to recover unpaid wages and would be enforced when they were not followed.

“The Fair Work Ombudsman will continue to use all its enforcement tools to ensure employers meet their lawful obligations” she said.

Zurel was ordered to recalculate and back-pay underpayments with proof they had complied.

The ombudsman began legal action after the business failed to comply with the notice.

Zurel Pty Ltd faces a maximum penalty of \$31,500 for non-compliance in addition to maximum penalties of \$63,000 per record keeping or pay slip breach.

Company director Mr Chee individually faces up to \$6300 for the breach and \$12,600 per pay slip offence ●

Palace demolition begins

WORDS BY *Isabelle Harris*
HERITAGE

The inside of the historic Palace Theatre on Bourke St has been demolished in preparation for a redevelopment of the site.

The venue, a significant live music and performance space to many Melburnians, began life as a theatre in 1912, before rotating through use as a cinema, theatre, and church in succession.

It was reinvented as The Metro Nightclub after the sale of the building in 1980, which resulted in a major internal refurbishment.

As a music venue, it hosted musicians such as Queens of the Stone Age, The Killers, and Arctic Monkeys.

The nightclub was even used as a location for a *Kath and Kim* episode, entitled *Party*.

It played an integral role in Melbourne’s live music scene, with some attendees travelling from interstate to see shows, and was a fixture of the nightclub scene.

After it closed in 2014, activists campaigned against the development of a hotel on the site arguing that it would come at the expense of the theatre’s architectural and cultural significance.

Save The Palace publicised apparent destruction of internal walls and decorations a week prior to an emergency protection vote that would grant heritage status to internal fittings.

Managing editor of the *Melbourne Arts Review* Rohan Shearn, who worked at the Metro Nightclub in the ‘90s, agreed that the site held cultural significance and was a “prime nightclub” in its heyday.

“That is actually concerning [that] the damage has been done,” Mr Shearn said.

He also said that while it was sad that a great venue had been lost, a restoration was unlikely as a redevelopment of that scale would likely cost into the “tens of millions”. ●

▼ Posters protesting the Palace Theatre’s redevelopment.

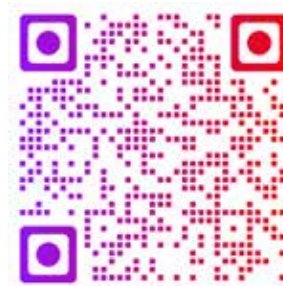


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Residential lockdown begins

WORDS BY Rhonda Dredge
PHOTOGRAPHY BY Rhonda Dredge
LOCAL NEWS

This is the kind of view many of elderly residents will have for the next few months as the CBD bunkers down to avoid the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Lynne Wenig lives on the fourth floor of a converted office block in La Trobe St.

She'll spend time watching city buildings and the greenery grow in her planter boxes.

Lynne hasn't braved a supermarket yet but said she would shop at the new morning sessions when necessary.

"I have reasonable stock from my quarterly visits to COSTCO, but when this runs out I will try the new 7-8 am shop at Woolworths," she told *CBD News*.

When she visited the Queen Victoria Market two Fridays ago she noticed that some of the regulars had closed their stalls.

"I think that will be my last visit for a while as the air seems to be getting dangerous," she said.

Lynne is one of an estimated 700 high-rise residents over the age of 70 preparing for residential lockdown in the CBD.

That is not a large number but the isolation of those often living by themselves could be acute.

City of Melbourne census figures estimate that four per cent of the CBD's population of 20,000 are over 70, with 87 per cent living in high-rise apartments.

At first, Lynne was philosophical about her new, self-enforced distancing.

She said there was still street activity in her neighbourhood. Some Chinese restaurants had closed but workmen and women were busy on construction sites.

"They seem to be doing what they need to do in La Trobe St to keep new apartments going up, and pulling older buildings down to make way for more apartments," she said.

She also had a few observations to make about the police who were training new officers



▲ Lynne Wenig on the balcony of her apartment in La Trobe St.

in traffic control at the corner of La Trobe and Queen streets.

"They seem to love this spot, I suspect because of all the four corner turns," she said.

By last week Lynne was feeling more vulnerable and spending more time indoors.

"I am 82 and in the vulnerable age," she said. "One of the sad things for me is that so many activities that I enjoy have been cancelled. Bridge club, book club, concerts, ballet, u3A *Movies of Merit*. Even the libraries have been closed."

She said she was well-prepared with

technology and her yoga mat.

"Fortunately, I can download books to my iPad but it's not the same as exploring the shelves and finding some new authors to try."

"I subscribe to the *New York Times* online as well as *The Age* and they both have a weekly book section with suggestions."

She will try and keep fit at home by doing exercises.

"I am a yoga person so I can just roll out my mat on the lounge room floor and do my exercises." ●



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Green light for tower despite overshadowing concerns

WORDS BY David Schout
PLANNING

A 26-storey Collins St office tower has been given the thumbs up from the City of Melbourne despite concern from council officers about overshadowing.

Office tower giants Dexus had proposed the development at the "Paris end" of Collins St behind the 139-year-old heritage-listed Melville House.

But officers recommended councillors reject the application because, among other concerns, the proposal would overshadow around 40 per cent of the popular public forecourt at Collins Place on a late September afternoon.

Currently, surrounding buildings only overshadow 10 per cent of the lunchtime hangout at the same time period.

Councillors, however, were happy to support the Bates Smart-designed development provided it decreased overshadowing to 30 per cent.

"We are approaching a million people in the central city on a work day, so those spaces are more important than ever," planning chair Cr Nicholas Reece said.

But overall, he remained supportive of the application.

"At a location like this the truth is we're always going to be looking for a higher standard because this is our premier business street, and with those new buildings we want to see that absolute highest standard for the city achieved. And I do think this proposal in large parts achieves that."

Cr Beverley Pinder said the design was a "superb architectural outcome" and a "great addition to the Paris end of Collins St".

But councillor Cathy Oke, despite supporting the amended motion, was concerned with the

"We are approaching a million people in the central city on a work day, so those spaces are more important than ever," planning chair Cr Nicholas Reece said.



▲ A render of the proposal for 52-60 Collins St.

precedent it might set for overshadowing concerns in future.

She said it was important the council protected "valuable spaces in our city".

"We have so many buildings in our city, often with really bad frontages," she said.

"We don't want our streets to be like the

Queen St tunnel that was the result of bad planning decisions where it is essentially a wind tunnel and it's very dark, cold, windy and not a very nice place to be."

A decision on the project will now be sent to the Minister for Planning Richard Wynne ●

CBD renters missing amid crisis

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*
PROPERTY

Real estate professionals are navigating a market that is unprecedented in their careers. Belle Property's Carlton and Melbourne leasing manager Suzie Inglis described the current environment for *CBD News*.

"It's a situation that none of our team has ever encountered before, so we are utilising technology to innovate and adapt daily in the way we are communicating with tenants and landlords in order to still have people viewing properties, securing tenancies and keeping prices competitive," Ms Inglis said.

In the CBD, the property market had begun to feel an impact from the global migration slowdown long before Australia's dramatic step-up in travel bans and restrictions in the first half of March.

It was the impact of the first ban on travel from China announced in January. The CBD, occupied by many international students, was disproportionately affected.

Ms Inglis said there had been a "huge drop" in the international student market and the corporate market.

"In general, we've seen a big impact in the CBD and very close suburbs. We first started to notice it roughly three or four weeks ago when Chinese students were having their flights and visas cancelled," she said.

Ms Inglis said students had started to trickle back from overseas and the market improved slightly, but there was still a "huge discrepancy with previous years".

"Compared to the last few years, people would fight to secure the property by offering more rent per week or a few months paid upfront," she said.

"This year, I have barely had people coming through for the inspections and because of the current market, there are a lot of vacant properties for the tenants to choose from."

518 Swanston St, a building largely occupied by international student renters, had vacancies at a time of year which would normally see it

“

We've seen a big impact in the CBD and very close suburbs. We first started to notice it roughly three or four weeks ago when Chinese students were having their flights and visas cancelled.

”

completely occupied. Many of the high-rises around the city are also student accommodation bases and Ms Inglis said they were struggling too.

The corporate market, like the international student market, is often very busy at this time of year as executive clients move interstate or overseas to start new jobs.

"January to March is usually the biggest time of year, because a lot of jobs are starting. People move to Melbourne to start a new contract with a certain company," Ms Inglis said.

"But everyone has pushed pause on expanding, conferences aren't being held, and people are being told to stay put."

"A lot of furnished properties that get those types of clients and students are sitting vacant. We're really struggling to fill them. We're dropping rents and there's still nobody."

Ms Inglis said flexibility would be needed in the coming months.

"People still need to move and properties are still leasing, however, I think landlords are going to have to be very flexible over the next few weeks and months to be able to accommodate the logistics of people moving if a lockdown is imposed." ●



New green Wesley Place

WORDS BY *Isabelle Harris*
PLANNING

Minister for Planning Richard Wynne has issued planning approval for new public open space as part of Charter Hall's Wesley Place development.

In helping to address a significant lack of green space in the CBD, the 5000 sqm public space is designed to allow workers to "gather, relax and recharge in nature."

Charter Hall regional development director Simon Stockfeld said, "when it [the new development] opens in mid-2020, the space will create a sanctuary in the heart of the Melbourne CBD."

Food and beverage retail is included in the development, as well as lawn space and native flora alongside elm trees and an existing heritage-listed 140-year-old olive tree.

Outdoor technology, including power outlets, public Wi-Fi, QR code-enabled historical educational plaques and solar-powered smart bins will also be included.

An interactive educational plaque trail will allow visitors to read about the location's history.

This is especially important given the historical location and proximity to sites such as the Wesley Uniting Church on Lonsdale St.

Historically significant buildings in the area are also being restored as part of the project.

Director of landscape architects OCULUS Bob Earl said the team had incorporated the layout and history of the area into the development.

"The buildings and variation in textures will be used to connect the new with the old," Mr Earl said ●

Love in the time of epidemic

WORDS BY *Rhonda Dredge*
PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Rhonda Dredge*
ARTS & CULTURE

One of the plays cancelled last week in the CBD was *Hell Ship*, due to have opened on St Patrick's Day at fortyfivedownstairs.

Instead of rehearsing, actor and writer Michael Veitch was talking to *CBD News* about the healing message of the play.

"It's ironic that a play about an epidemic was cancelled by an epidemic," he said.

The one-man show tracks the tragic journey of the *Ticonderoga* to Melbourne in 1852, when a quarter of the passengers died of typhus.

Michael plays the part of the ship's young surgeon who has collapsed into a desperate heap down near the Antarctic Circle.

In through the door of his freezing infirmary steps a young Scottish woman who offers to help.

Her name is Annie. She quickly gets to work, wrapping up the dead, and stays by the surgeon's side until the cutter struggles into Port Phillip Bay.

The ship wasn't allowed to enter Melbourne when it finally arrived. Instead, passengers were offloaded at the then-new Quarantine Station near Portsea.

The governor went to visit and the incident caused quite a stir in early Melbourne, Michael said.

But it is his deep engagement with the play rather than the historical facts that brings a tear to the audience.

For the surgeon was Michael's great, great grandfather and the volunteer nurse his great, great grandmother.

He said there were lessons to be learned from the couple's plight for today's situation.

"Epidemics do pass. We have to be kind. We have to be patient. We have to be resilient. We have to make space for people and look after them," he said.

November sunshine and sea bathing helped passengers recover from the typhus bacteria, which was carried by body lice.

Hell Ship is based on a book of the same name, which has sold out following a short season of the play at the Port Fairy Folk Festival.

Michael hopes to reschedule the play later in the year for Melbourne audiences ●

▼ Actor Michael Veitch outside fortyfivedownstairs.



Ban on vaping

WORDS BY *Tamara Clark*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

The City of Melbourne has is proposing to ban e-cigarettes and vaping after an attempt to synchronise the city's local laws with Victorian tobacco laws.

"E-cigarettes are relatively new, but we know that there is a possible link to serious lung disease and growing evidence that e-cigarettes can lead young people to start smoking regular cigarettes," Lord Mayor Sally Capp said last month.

Cr Capp said it was "concerning" to see that 20 per cent of students between the ages of 16 and 17 had experimented with vaping.

"This change to the local law would mean e-cigarettes would be banned anywhere that smoking is banned in the City of Melbourne, making smoke-free areas simpler for everyone to understand," she said.

Cr Beverly Pinder said banning vapes in smoke-free areas may help raise awareness that e-cigarettes were not a healthy option.

"You really don't know what you're inhaling," Cr Pinder said.

"E-cigarettes are often marketed as a way to help smokers to quit, or as a 'safe alternative' to regular cigarettes, but health experts agree that there simply isn't the evidence to support these claims," she said.

If the amendment is passed, anyone found vaping or smoking in smoke-free areas will be fined \$100.

The City of Melbourne will begin issuing fines for smoking in Bourke Street Mall after the public becomes sufficiently educated on the change.



The proposed amendment was scheduled to be heard by councillors at the March 17 Future Melbourne Committee (FMC) meeting but, along with a number of other items, was withdrawn to reduce meeting time in response to COVID-19.

"We want to make sure questions are relevant and indeed urgent in relation to time," The Lord Mayor said.

Former City of Melbourne councillor Stephen Mayne raised the issue with the Lord Mayor at the meeting during public question time.

"I was very surprised to see you supporting a nanny state on vaping when most of the medical advice is that vaping is an excellent pathway out of smoking and probably, almost, should be encouraged," he said.

"So, I'd just like to hear from you as to, what were you thinking?"

The Lord Mayor said the item would be addressed in the next meeting and that councillors were "looking forward" to the debate.

Smoke-free areas in Melbourne include Bourke Street Mall, Goldsbrough Lane, QV, The Causeway, Howey Place, Equitable Place, The Tan, Princes Park running track, Collins Way and Fulham Place.

The ban of smoking cigarettes in outdoor dining areas will continue in correlation with state government laws brought into use in August 2017 ●

CBD LOCAL

How life is changing for CBD locals

In an apartment in the city, a semi-retired couple with careers in health economics behind them have been watching the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis play out.

Jeff and Bronwyn Richardson, aged 69 and 73 respectively, live in an old art nouveau building on the corner of Collins and Elizabeth streets.

Jeff, the founder of the Centre for Health Economics at Monash University, featured in this *CBD News* column last November. We interviewed his wife Bronwyn on March 12.

"We moved to Melbourne from Sydney 28 years ago for jobs. My husband is an economist heading up the health program evaluation unit at Monash and I worked for parliament when I first got here," she said.

"I worked for the economic and budget review committee so we researched the electricity commission, gas, sewerage, those sorts of things."

Bronwyn lectured in economics and worked in the public sector, parliament, the health department, work cover, health and safety and as a private consultant.

On March 12, she said she believed Australia was heading for a recession unless major government intervention took place, but also said she didn't like economics.

"I think it's become a very useless thing," she said.

"I'd be telling people all the time that economics is not very useful for society because it looks at the monetary side, the goods and services, it doesn't look at society and say how do we make this a better place to live."

Bronwyn said she thought economics "had its place", but that it was easily twisted.



▲ CBD local Bronwyn Richardson.

"With governments in particular, this whole business of wanting a surplus is ridiculous. Whether you've got a budget surplus or deficit it really doesn't matter if your society is going well."

Having moved into the CBD from Fitzroy a few years ago, Bronwyn said the couple had enjoyed the "cosmopolitan" lifestyle – theatres, the opera, the ballet, shows and the Melbourne Cricket Ground.

Keeping intellectually occupied has largely been thanks to involvement in the University for the Third Age (U3A).

On March 12, Bronwyn emphasised to *CBD News* the role that U3A played in her life.

"It's really terrific. It's basically people who have something to teach and people like me

come along to learn. They might be teachers, or scientists, or singers or whatever, and I want to learn poetry or French," she said.

"It's very cheap, I've made a lot of friends, and it's a great opportunity."

But since March 12 gatherings of any size have progressively wound down – either at government direction or at their own volition. Many community and social groups that exist for Bronwyn's age group in particular are taking extra caution.

CBD News caught up with Bronwyn on March 18 to ask how she was coping and keeping herself occupied.

"First, I have a stack of classic DVDs as well as iView. I also have a high pile of books which I haven't got to yet," she said.

"I'm still going to my very tiny personal training gym, and have night time Facetimes with friends and relatives in Sydney, Adelaide, New Zealand, Townsville, London, the Blue Mountains and even a kibbutz in Israel." ●



Meg Hill

JOURNALIST

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SKYPAD LIVING

A chair's perspective of vertical living in COVID-19 times

“

The advice is to self-isolate and, if necessary, quarantine at home – but what if home is shared with several hundred others in a vertical village?

”

For this instalment of perspectives on vertical living, I sought insights from the chair of an owners' corporation (OC). And for this I turned to fellow Docklander, Jamie Tarling, who was the inaugural chair of Banksia - an award-winning building which, as the name suggests, was inspired by the Australian native flower.

And as the first chair to take the reins, Jamie had challenges aplenty.

Perhaps among the most difficult was sorting the myriad of contractual agreements put in place prior to the committee's formation which were, in his words, "not ideal". Some contracts were up to 99 years in duration and others had annual increases three times higher than inflation! This is where a committee shows its calibre and during the first two years of operation, the committee, led by Jamie, was able to lower annual fixed costs by \$120k without compromising amenity.

And his opinion as to the best feature of vertical living?

Along with great amenities, Jamie joins the chorus of praise for the sense of community within our vertical villages - "I've never been more social with my neighbours!"

But will such proximity and closeness to neighbours become a double-edged sword in these COVID-19 times?

Jamie shared that the Banksia committee had been considering the situation since the pandemic was first announced. Its objective was to find a balance between assisting individual residents and keeping all residents safe. And its starting point was the pragmatic recognition that low supermarket stocks would likely mean

that some residents would not have enough food to last 14 days of self-isolation. The flow-on from this is that food and/or grocery deliveries were highly likely:

"We've just been debating the merits of whether we continue to allow deliveries to residential floors, which assists residents in self-isolation, or whether we have owners collect all deliveries from the front doors."

The rationale for the front door collection option is that it would prevent delivery workers from spreading the virus (if infected) within the building.

These concerns reflect discussions being held in other OCs where questions such as: what happens if a large number of residents are infected? Does the committee need to know? Do other residents need to know? Do they have the right to know? What happens if lockdown occurs? How is this handled? Where do the standards come from?

These and other legal questions were the subject of a recent webinar hosted by LookUpStrata, an independently and wholly Australian owned website. While it was emphasised that this was a legal discussion and not specific legal advice, it was apparent that current legislation gave OCs little guidance as to their responsibilities and powers under pandemic conditions. So, these remain questions to be answered in the near future.

And with mention of the future, my final question to Jamie was about what innovations he saw – or wished to see. And to this, Jamie quipped, "deliveries via drone to our balconies is on the wish-list!"

In a possibly more immediate timeframe, Jamie then nominated building security as an area in need of attention. In particular, knowing who had access to the building was a constant challenge as FOBs could be easily passed between individuals. This point has obvious relevance in these COVID-19 times and will be especially important to buildings with high numbers of short stays (as many host internationals).

Jamie then shared that he recently attended a presentation that demonstrated how phones could be used as building FOBs. To be activated, a resident's phone must be registered in the system by the building manager. The underlying premise is that people will be far less willing to give their phone to someone else, especially a stranger.

"Just think of how this could help with identifying short stay visitors - giving the building manager the opportunity to ensure they're properly inducted."

Of course, an interesting catch-22 situation arises if you are inclined to let your phone go flat and your charger is in your apartment! ●



Janette Corcoran

JANETTE CORCORAN IS ANAPARTMENT LIVING EXPERT.

LEARN MORE ON FACEBOOK.COM/SKYPADLIVING/

TRADER PROFILE



African deli a part of QVM furniture

WORDS BY *David Schout*

As some Melburnians continued the panic buying spree throughout March, one Queen Victoria Market (QVM) trader turned away customers who sought to buy excess food, despite it being good for his business.

Kunle Adesua, chef and owner of popular African deli Tribal Tastes, wants to instill some calm in a city clearly gripped by the uncertainty of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

"I don't believe in hoarding. I don't believe in panicking. Just come here, buy what you need," chef Kunle said, relaying how he told some customers to return "in a few days" if they wanted more.

"The message we're sending to our customers is that we're with them in this crisis: there is no need to panic, no need to hoard. People should come here, get what they need and we'll always have a supply for them."

There's a sense of calm that emanates from Kunle as he chats to *CBD News*, one that would serve others well during this period of crisis.

And it's his overall outlook that has made him a popular trader in the deli hall at QVM since opening Tribal Tastes in 2002, a stall that claims to be the "world's first African deli".

Having grown up in Nigeria before moving to Europe to study, Kunle eventually arrived in Melbourne in the late 1990s.

Living in Parkville, his first trip to QVM inspired him to set up his own unique stall.

His vision was to create a deli that not only sold African specialties but also ready-made meals: wholesome, preservative-free meals that are boiled inside their packet and ready to serve.

This pitch to market management, Kunle admitted, was a tough one.

"Africans didn't have a good reputation," he explained.

"[The thinking] was all famine, war and turmoil all the time. So, me asking to come and do African food that you take home and heat up; it was like giving someone a licence to sell pork in Saudi Arabia!"

What followed, however, even Chef Kunle could not foresee.

"To my surprise, it was the exact opposite of what was going on in my mind. I opened on

a Thursday and I sold out of everything that I had."

Were the customers the wider African expat community in Melbourne?

"No, it was all Aussies! Middle-class Aussies. Up until then I didn't fully understand Australians, but at that point I did... Australians have this spirit of embracing and encouraging other cultures. That's not saying there's no racism or discrimination, because that's still there. But the generality of society and policy of individuals is embracing and encouraging multiculturalism."

The ready-made meals, which include jollof rice, blackeye beans in sauce, West African chicken stew and other quinoa and lentil dishes, remain ever popular at Tribal Taste to this day.

They are all made at a manufacturing plant in Reservoir, where Chef Kunle takes fresh QVM produce back and prepares and packages the meals, which have a shelf life of three months.

Kunle married wife Rosie Fenech in 2006 and shortly after she started to work in the business.

Now operations manager, Rosie said all the food they produced was free of gluten, sugar and dairy.

And while some business used these terms as a way of luring clients who may have certain dietary requirements - whether forced or by choice - Rosie said it was just how they did things.

"We say that these things are 'traditions, not trends'. So, it's not that we're trying to be trendy that we're gluten-free, it's actually the tradition of Kunle's cuisine that he makes."

Although, she admitted with a smile, it certainly didn't hurt business.

Rosie said that if anyone was ready for the ensuing uncertainty in the coming months, it was Kunle and the team.

"Our philosophy is that during time of abundance, we preserve food so that in times of scarcity, food is available. That's the whole philosophy of our business. It couldn't be more timely at the moment."

Tribal Tastes is located at Stall 83 in the Dairy Produce Hall at QVM. See more at tribaltastes.com.au ●

METRO TUNNEL

Tunnelling under the CBD now in full swing

Construction is ramping up on the new Town Hall Station with tunnelling underway at all three CBD sites as part of the Metro Tunnel project.

Three road headers have been launched from sites at Federation Square, City Square and Flinders Quarter (next to the Young & Jackson Hotel), with acoustic enclosures built to minimise noise and dust during excavation.

Road headers are excavating machines fitted with a cutter head that are being used to mine out the caverns for both State Library and Town Hall stations in the CBD.

Each road header features a highly advanced computer with a mathematical guidance system that directs the machine to dig out the cavern to exact specifications.

The road headers are tunnelling deep below Swanston and Flinders streets to create the new stations, as well as the underground pedestrian connections that will make it easy for passengers to transfer between City Loop and Metro Tunnel services.

No trams will run along Flinders St between Elizabeth and Russell streets from Monday, March 23 until Sunday, March 29 so work crews can safely build the underground support structures of the underground pedestrian connection.

Flinders St eastbound lanes between Elizabeth and Swanston streets have been closed to traffic since September 2019 to build the underpass and will remain closed to cars for up to three years.

For more information about these works and the associated disruptions, visit metrotunnel.vic.gov.au. Plan ahead by visiting ptv.vic.gov.au or vicroads.vic.gov.au.



First section of the Metro Tunnel complete

The project celebrated a significant milestone recently with the first 1.2km section of the Metro Tunnel completed, after tunnel boring machine (TBM) *Joan* broke through at Kensington in February.

Since her launch in August 2019, TBM *Joan* - named after former Premier Joan Kirner - has travelled 1.2 kilometres between the site of the new Arden Station and the western tunnel entrance in Kensington, installing 4200 curved concrete segments to create 700 rings lining the tunnel walls.

The second TBM, *Meg*, named for Australian women's cricket captain Meg Lanning, has been travelling on a parallel route to carve out the second tunnel between Arden and Kensington.

After breaking through, both TBMs will be retrieved from Kensington and trucked back to Arden where they will be reassembled and relaunched towards Parkville later this year ●

▼ City Square central cavern.



Open for business

Vodafone: 256 Flinders Street

During construction of the new Town Hall Station, Vodafone Flinders Street will remain open for business. Vodafone Store in Flinders Street is offering exclusive deals, which includes a Bonus Drone (RRP \$79) when you sign up to any eligible Red and Red Plus Plan.

For more information visit metrotunnel.vic.gov.au



More trains, more often



Dodgy moves in the corporate sector

In pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) days, corporate culture attracted quite a degree of cynical attention from both outsiders and insiders.

One commentator was novelist Elliot Perlman who began knocking economic rationalism back in 1998.

You could say that Perlman is a pioneer in the genre of the corporate novel.

His first corporate novel *Three Dollars* was acclaimed but Perlman branched out into more esoteric themes for the next 20 years.

Now he has returned to corporate culture and he is not alone in his fascination with the dodgy moves that leaders of large firms employ in their daily business.

In his latest novel *Maybe the Horse Will Talk* the protagonist is about to be down-sized from a large Melbourne legal firm and he devises a plan to save his job and mortgage.

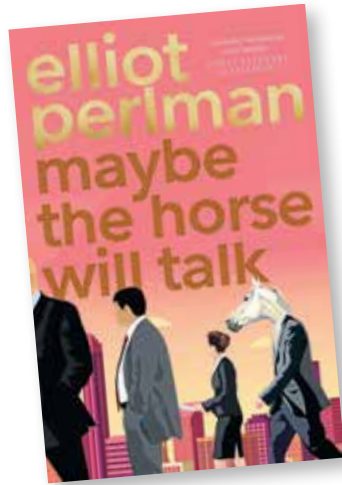
That plan involves making a problem with sexual harassment allegations go away for a major client.

Maybe the Horse Will Talk is a Netflix kind of novel, set in Melbourne, but with connotations of American wheeling and dealing and dynamic duos.

Anyone who loved the legal series *Suits*, *The Good Wife* or *The Good Life* will enjoy this book with its dramatic plot turns, little-guy-versus-big-guy theme and overbearing legal types.

Stephen Maserov is a second-year lawyer who manages to outsmart the feared partner Crispy Hamilton with the aid of a down-and-out, rather ridiculous lawyer called A.A. Betga who has paternity, drinking and financial issues but is as crafty as Louis Canning in *The Good Wife*.

Together they figure out a way of getting compensation for victims of sexual harassment



▲ *Maybe the horse will talk*, Elliot Perlman, Penguin Random House Australia, 2019.

at a large property construction firm Torrent Industries.

The novel is episodic, dialogue-based and linear, with switches between various settings, including the Maserov family home, a St Kilda bar where the love interest hangs out, a suburban pub and the two CBD premises of Freely Savage Carter Blanche, and Torrent Industries.

Freely Savage is at the Paris end of Collins St and Torrent Industries is down near King St somewhere but Perlman is not really into details of street culture.

Instead, he delves quite movingly into the protagonist's problems with love, work and ethics in a fast-paced, amusing and clever narrative that shines through its legal manoeuvres.

Perlman works in real life as a lawyer at Owen Dixon Chambers in the city and uses his knowledge to great effect.

The novel has been criticised for being too "blokey" – males sorting out problems for female victims and it can't be denied that there is an element of the heroic about it as the action escalates.

Male and female roles tend to be polarised with females being good and males strategic. Human resources at Freely Savage is nicknamed the Stasi but a female HR employee of Indian descent at Torrent is beautiful and prefers to use her intelligence to track down incriminating files.

Storytelling requires strong narrative drive and the rest of the world has now caught up with the drama Perlman discovered 20 years ago in the corporate workplace.

Back then the protagonist in *Three Dollars* seemed to internalise the threat. Now, we are more prepared to accept that corporate culture can be dangerous to the soul and protagonists need to be clever about the way they handle it ●



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Lunch break

Cassie stayed outside with her Go Natural muesli bar from Octane Espresso

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SWA113E

MELBOURNE BUSINESS NETWORK

Business networking during COVID-19

It is certainly uncharted territory right now for businesses with the presence of COVID-19. While the impacts to everyone's businesses during this time of uncertainty will be different, clearly, we all need to keep progressing with whatever forward momentum we can. If you or your target market no longer want or are able to conduct face to face business, what are your strategies? Here are just a few of your options:

Enhance your social media presence

One of the biggest obstacles (or perhaps excuses) for business people as to why not to have a stronger social media presence is that they don't have time. Take the time now! What content are you creating that positions you or your business as an ideal solution, thought leader, whatever? It doesn't need to be massive; just 400 words will get you started. Your audience wants to know what pain points you solve and how you have truly helped your customers – not marketing spin.

How are you integrating the content you are posting across all your media channels (e.g. your website, Facebook, Instagram, etc.)?

Connect with LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a target rich environment. Are you connected with your customers, suppliers, etc.? Are you posting relevant content you have created from the above onto LinkedIn? One of the key secrets to growing your presence on LinkedIn is to like, comment and share. LinkedIn loves users who engage with their platform. If you haven't yet, optimise your profile for search engine optimisation (SEO).

Ask for referrals

Are you regularly asking your delighted customers about who else they might know? Remember to keep this request specific so that

they know exactly where among their network they should be looking for referrals for you. People are reluctant to refer someone that isn't an ideal match.

The phone dials out

Today with the use of texts and email, it appears that some of us may have forgotten that people buy from people that they know, like and trust. When is the last time that you called your customers (lapsed or current), your suppliers and business associates just to see how they are doing? You might be surprised by where the conversation takes you as you could uncover a business deal even during these trying times!

Melbourne Business Network B3000+ Awards

The MBN B3000+ Awards are open! Since 2004, the B3000+ Awards have been Melbourne's premier business awards program. Spanning all of the municipalities of Melbourne, there are several categories: New business (start-ups), innovation, sustainability, social enterprise, female entrepreneur, customer experience, business of the year and many more. There is bound to be a category in which you or your business can shine.

For more details about this event, the B3000+ Awards categories or how to enter, visit b3000awards.org.au

For more details about the Melbourne Business Network or to become a member visit: melbournebusinessnetwork.org.au ●



Wendi Dawson
WENDI DAWSON IS PRESIDENT OF THE MELBOURNE BUSINESS NETWORK

Dining in style at Spencer Street Station

Spencer Street Station (now Southern Cross Station) has been the first port of call for country and interstate train travellers since the 1850s.

In the 1920s, when this photograph was taken, it more or less represented the western edge of the CBD. Collins St and Bourke St ended at Spencer St and goods sheds and industrial buildings dominated the landscape. Redeveloped in the 1920s, it was extended to introduce suburban trains, but to generations of Victorians it was known as the point of arrival and departure for those on long-distance journeys. Today, there are bus terminals and Skybuses and much more to add to the busyness of the station, but until the 1950s when car and air travel began to take over, it resonated with the sound of steam trains arriving and departing.

When historian Graeme Davison wrote of Spencer Street's "Hollywood heyday" in the Royal Historical Society's 2016 publication *Remembering Melbourne*, he didn't have the Spencer Street Railway Station's Refreshment Rooms in mind. He was thinking of the grand hotels that cropped up around what was Melbourne's largest transport interchange. And of the celebrities who arrived and departed with great fanfare. Yet you can see suggestions of the glamour of Hollywood in this 1920s photograph of a VR staff member standing beside his refreshment trolley on a station platform.

There is nothing utilitarian about the presentation of the refreshments on offer here. The urns (presumably of tea and coffee) are elaborately decorated. No takeaways in those days, of course, so the crockery, cutlery and glasses were no doubt spirited away to be washed up ready for use again later in the day. The station's Refreshment Rooms held a wine licence, so as well as hot beverages, you can see a number of

bottles of what appears to be champagne and maybe even a decanter of spirits.

The "light refreshments" on offer include healthy options like fresh fruit, featured prominently on the top tray – apples, possibly from the orchards at Harcourt, on the Bendigo line. There are sandwiches, not pre-packaged as we expect today, but pre-cut and piled high on trays behind glass on the bottom level. I can imagine how dried up they'd be if they weren't sold soon after making and I can only wonder at the fillings that were used. My mind goes to fish paste, a favourite of my mother's (she didn't have any competition!). Kraft cheese was introduced to Australia in the 1920s, so perhaps VR catering extended to the latest amazing import from the US. And then there's the iconic Vegemite, launched in 1923 and the favourite of generations of "Happy Little Vegemites". There were the sweet treats, too – scones, I think, and cakes. Advertising of the time tells us that one of the healthy drinks on offer was pasteurised milk, promoted as a "perfect food" and only threepence a glass (about \$1 in today's buying power). And then there was the inevitable confectionery and the ubiquitous tobacco, cigars and cigarettes. Nothing healthy about those, but an accepted part of life in those days.

The Refreshment Rooms themselves were immensely popular and open week days from 6am to 7pm. On Saturdays they opened from 11am to 3pm. (Remember that these were the days when shops closed at Saturday lunchtime and sport was king on Saturday afternoons). They were closed on Sunday, which was church and family day. It was not until the early 1990s

▼ VR staff member with platform refreshment trolley, c1920. RHSV NEG-1798.



that stores in the CBD were allowed to trade on Sundays.

Newspapers of the day tell us that in 1924 the Refreshment Rooms served 1600 meals each day and could take 120 customers per sitting. There were 60 waitresses on the staff (no men, except on the platforms or on the trains) and there was even a nearby hostel where the waitresses could live.

The rooms boasted that they provided the best meal in Melbourne for the money – a three course meal for only 1/3d (about \$5 in today's buying power). The price was the biggest drawback, I think, but I'll leave that for you to decide. Here's a sample menu: soup – gravy soup or beef

tea. Entrée - steak and kidney pudding, stewed rabbit, baked pork and Boston beans. Joint – hot: roast sirloin of beef, roast leg of mutton, and savoury dressing. Or cold: roast beef, roast mutton, corned beef. Sweets - ginger pudding, lemon cream, compote fruit and rice. Served with a cup of tea, coffee or cocoa ●



Dr. Cheryl Griffin
ROYAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

RESIDENTS 3000

What did Rafael say to Sally?

Residents 3000 president Rafael Camillo was recently invited to have morning coffee with the Lord Mayor of Melbourne Sally Capp.



Sally's mission requires that she listens to the people who live, work and play in Melbourne's CBD. Rafael represents the residents of the CBD (postcode 3000) and is constantly listening to residents' thoughts, passions and concerns about living in the city. With our regular Forum 3000 events on the first Thursday of every month, there are plenty of opportunities for members and their guests to discuss their views on a wide range of issues. Rafael prepared a wish list for Sally.

10 issues that most concern residents

1. Rubbish collection: What strategies can be implemented to reduce the number of trucks that cause traffic congestion and noise? Is this issue to be part of the Transport Strategy 2030?
2. Liquor licencing: Could the council and the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) work more closely together? The council supports 3.00am permits even knowing that VCGLR has a freeze on issuing licences for later than 1.00am. Residents do not want 3am licencing due to noise and public disruption.
3. Planning: Residents' amenity, public spaces, building design that fits in with remaining heritage architecture and precinct traditional character.
4. Police: More foot patrols to discourage crime and drug trafficking.
5. Trams: Melbourne's greatest asset. Non-polluting and effective people movers. Residents have asked for more accessible stops, distribution of rolling stock to give more frequent service to people needing roll-on, roll-off access. More public education regarding tram etiquette re: boarding and disembarking.
6. Metro Tunnel: Residents support displays of art works on the acoustic sheds.

7. More trees: So important. Council to ensure that trees removed for building works are replaced with mature trees as per planning approval. There are gaps in the city when new trees could be planted, and laneways made more friendly.
8. CCTV cameras: Residents want more installed throughout the Hoddle Grid. CCTV cameras to be monitored by police. It is necessary to be vigilant about keeping the CBD safe for all.
9. Clean city, tidy city, graffiti control: These are self-evident but include pollution-free air and traffic minimisation. Improve the quality of restaurants' cooking canopies and smoke extraction systems to reduce noise and air pollution.
10. Homelessness: This is a big issue for residents as well as for people who work or visit the city. The problem is characteristic of Melbourne's CBD and has been for years. It is still it is not going away.

Every time we come across some poor person, lying about in the street, often half stoned on drugs or simply totally depressed about their situation, it represents a failure of our society to solve these people's issues and return them to a normal fulfilling life. Residents support the moves to set up a homeless centre in Maribyrnong. It has been suggested that a homeless centre in the countryside is needed to help rehabilitate people whose lives are in

turmoil through drug use and/or mental issues.

Rafael reported that city residents recognised the same people who frequent the city, presumably homeless, but who seem to time their appearance during events when there are many people about. They seem to have a dog and the same homeless card and similar hats to collect money.

Residents would like to see more cooperation between police and social organisations to distinguish between the "professional" beggars and the genuine homeless that need help. Begging is illegal. Residents do not want beggars on the street. Full stop.

One wonders why the homeless issue is such a political hot-potato? Is it that, as a community, we feel guilty? We feel guilty that our society thinks it okay to set up home on the street and lie about during the day when "normal" people are working or contributing to society in a positive way?

It is also disturbing for residents to be dealing with the many homeless who appear to have serious mental health issues. "It is like living in a mental institution" some residents say.

We feel guilty. But unfortunately, one or two or a few residents cannot solve the problem. It has to be governments, police, medical people, social workers, developers (affordable dwellings) that solve this problem. That is the message our Residents 3000 group is sending. Thank you, Sally, for listening to us all ●



Sue Saunders
VICE PRESIDENT OF RESIDENTS 3000 MELBOURNE



Pet's Corner

Bruno's a fan of Flagstaff

“

Nine-month-old Cavoodle Bruno's favourite hangout is right here in the CBD, according to his owner Yui.

”



▼ Yui with Bruno.



WORDS BY *Tamara Clark*

While he doesn't frequent a wide range of parks, Flagstaff Gardens is definitely one of his top picks. Yui told *CBD News* that the duo enjoyed strolling through the park twice a day

Bruno is Yui's aunt's pet. However, the two have developed an unbreakable connection during the past five weeks while he has been in her care.

"He is almost always happy," Yui said.

"He is very friendly with other animals and only barks when he wants attention."

With fetch being one of Bruno's favourite hobbies, Yui said she wished the council would build a small fence around the park so pets could play together off leash. "He [Bruno] wants to play games at the park but he is limited," she said.

Bruno is the definition of a quality friend; positive, fun and always up for a hug! ●

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Opportunism over compassion

The City of Melbourne has seized upon these unprecedented times to take advantage of vulnerable Queen Victoria Market (QVM) traders and customers.

By pushing through simultaneous applications to Heritage Victoria (due Wednesday, March 25) and to themselves (due Tuesday, March 24) for planning permits to repurpose QVM into a pedestrianised, commercialised event space with proposed new infrastructure, for the remaining traders that mirrors a supermarket and will increase the price of food.

The very complex, 365-page Heritage Victoria application due on Wednesday and available only online, is monolingual (English only) hardly reflecting the multicultural mix that comprises our market and indeed our society, requiring time and skill to understand and to respond to. No attempt was made to consult with traders regarding draft plans before applying for the permits.

Requests to the Lord Mayor and council to postpone or defer the applications in these urgent times has fallen on deaf ears. Such mean-spiritedness is reprehensible.

*Mary-Lou Howie
President, Friends of Queen Victoria Market*

Don't forget to shop local

I live in the city with my partner. For days, we had been trying to buy our normal groceries with no luck. By Monday, shopping had become an incredibly anxious event.

The palpable stress of the city began seeping into our skin from the moment we stepped onto the street. It clung even heavier inside Aldi, and when we realised we couldn't get what we needed there, we found the same thing inside Woolworths and Coles. The sense of fear was amplified by seeing other people standing frozen in front of empty shelves, being passed by people rushing around frantic with mostly empty baskets. On Tuesday night, my partner went out to Coles Spencer St. He returned with a small bag

of carrot sticks and a bar of Toblerone as consolation, instead of the meal ingredients that comprised our overly hopeful shopping list. On Wednesday, with trepidation for what I wouldn't be able to find and worried about how to avoid contagion, I ventured through the city with a backpack to seek an alternative. On the corner of Elizabeth and Bourke streets, I stopped for a loaf of bread from Woodfrog Bakery's street kiosk. From there I took the 96 tram to South Melbourne Market. Inside were people in lines 20 or 30 people long for some butchers, but they were laughing and chatting while they waited their turn. The rest of the deli aisle felt like another other, pre-COVID-19 day. There was a short wait for seafood, pantry goods, ready-made meals, pasta, quiche, pies, bread and sweets. I passed fully-stocked shops that were selling soap and toiletries. Tension left my shoulders completely when I turned a corner to see the abundance of vegetables stacked up in beautiful rows. There were no crowds. It was a relaxed environment to shop in.

After seeing what was possible, on Saturday afternoon my partner and I went to Queen Victoria Market. We bought takeaway paella, then lined up behind all of four people to buy eggs from Eggporium. That was the longest wait that we experienced that day. The rest was even easier: cheese, ham, bread and pasta from Dairy Hall, shampoo and soap from Food For Your Skin in the organics aisle, no lack of fruit and vegetables in the sheds.

It was easy to maintain physical distance from others to shop safely, and we got everything we needed. No stress, no touching, no bumping into people, no virus spreading. There was so just much food, I shook my head in wonder that we had been so focused on the supermarkets before then.

Cristen Smith



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Hockingstuart becomes Belle Property

In what has become Australia's largest known consolidation of agencies, Melbourne real estate heavyweight Hockingstuart has merged with Sydney-based agency Belle Property.

The two companies began joint operation in late 2019, with 21 Hockingstuart offices now operating under the Belle Property brand, including their Carlton and Melbourne CBD agencies.

While the Hockingstuart brand will continue to operate in several locations across Victoria, director of Belle Property Melbourne Scott McElroy said the decision to operate under the Belle Property brand in the inner Melbourne region would offer great opportunities for local clients.

"Belle Property has a national reach of more than 120 offices across the eastern seaboard of Australia. Plus, international connections through leading Real Estate Companies of the World, which is a global property platform," Mr McElroy said.

"This means we are now uniquely positioned to use this extensive network to sell homes and apartments for more – not to mention, connect buyers to property all over the country and abroad."

The merger marks Belle Property's induction as one of only three truly national agencies alongside Ray White and LJ Hooker.

Despite combining over 40 Victorian offices and 600 employees, no redundancies are expected.

Belle Property and Hockingstuart CEO, Peter Hanscomb, said the inner Melbourne area was a lifestyle market with unique opportunities for buyers and sellers and aligned strongly with the premium brand of Belle Property.

"We know the experienced teams in Melbourne's CBD, Carlton, Richmond, South Melbourne and Albert Park will continue to service the community with dedication and professionalism to achieve superior results," Mr Hanscomb said.



▲ Belle Property Melbourne's Sam Fenna, Suzie Inglis and Scott McElroy.

Belle Property was founded in 2000 in alignment with *Belle* lifestyle magazine, then re-launched in 2007 which saw the agency grow to over 80 offices operating across New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

Speaking with the *Australian Financial Review* last year, Mr Hanscomb said Belle

Property's migration to Victoria was inevitable.

"We have had our sights on Victoria, but as a mature and sophisticated market, we needed to ensure we aligned with the right brand. Hockingstuart is a well-respected agency with a long tradition in the core premium markets in Victoria, and it's a brand of astounding innovation with many 'firsts' under its belt," Mr Hanscomb said.

As part of the merger, and in conjunction with existing partner and lifestyle publisher *Sitchu*, Hockingstuart and Belle Property have also launched a refreshed property magazine, *Sitchu Living*.

"*Sitchu Living* is a lifestyle-focused property magazine that includes editorial content as well as property listings from across Belle Property, Hockingstuart and Luxury Portfolio – our network's international property partner. *Sitchu Living* is a unique way to advertise property and promote local suburbs and businesses," he said.

According to Belle Property Melbourne's Sam Fenna, business generated from their new publication has been invaluable, with sales continuing to perform well.

"The warehouse conversion and heritage apartment market continue to soar both in value and popularity. In March I auctioned a one-bedroom apartment in Hardware Street and had four bidders on the day, eventually selling \$61,000 over the reserve," he said.

"72 buyers inspected that apartment with the majority being first home buyers, many from interstate, in particular Sydney where they came across the listing via our company magazine."

"That reach is extremely valuable for buyers and sellers who work with us." ●

For more information, visit belleproperty.com.au

WE LIVE HERE

We need a clear cladding policy – now!

We are still waiting for a coherent government policy on combustible cladding that can provide clarity for owners' corporations (OCs) facing massive bills for rectification.



More and more buildings are getting caught up in the nightmare, receiving building orders with no appropriate follow up, and no end in sight.

In 2018, the government's ill-fated attempt to introduce a loan scheme ended barely 12 months later. The government itself deemed the scheme unworkable, something which We Live Here had pointed out to them, long before the scheme was introduced into Parliament.

In July 2019, Cladding Safety Victoria (CSV) was established by the Premier of Victoria and the Minister for Planning. CSV was tasked with the responsibility for rectifying higher risk buildings identified by the Victorian Building Authority (VBA) through a state-wide cladding audit.

Audits? Nothing to see here, move along

Would you like to know the outcome of the audits? Sorry, it seems we residents do not have that privilege. Nowhere can we find any information on the outcome of the audits.

A map on the VBA website shows the number of audits carried out within each municipality and we can see that more than 2200 audits have been conducted in Melbourne.

And that's about all you can glean from the VBA cladding web page.

The government needs to communicate much better than this.

For a start we want the Premier and the Minister for Planning to answer these questions:

- What criteria are used to deem a building to be high, moderate or low risk?
- What was the determining factor for the 15 buildings selected for government funding?
- What happens to the owners in the other 1054 cladding-affected buildings identified by the VBA as being a danger to life? Are these buildings suddenly no longer a danger to life?
- Why the secrecy – can we please have some honesty?

We apartment owners inherited the problem created by dodgy construction and reckless government oversight.

The cladding lottery – 15 lucky winners!

Congratulations! Of the 1069 buildings in Victoria identified with cladding that is a "danger to life" – 15 will benefit from the government's meagre munificence.

To the other 1054 buildings who played the game, thanks for investing your life savings in your residence - and good luck with that!

This outcome proves what we have been saying for many months – the state government has not been able to raise enough money to make any meaningful impact on the massive extent of the cladding scandal.

And it proves our oft-repeated allegations that the real budget figure has always been: \$150 million – not the risible \$600 million figure that made a really great sound bite, swallowed whole by the mainstream media last year.

You can find evidence of the government's figure of \$150 million in the State's Treasury papers and the same figure is confirmed by the Baillieu-Thwaites report – albeit in small print. The figure of \$600 million is as fake and as meaningless as the 1069 certificates of occupancy that the government authorised for buildings with flammable cladding.

\$400,000 fines for Building Orders?

Failure to comply with a Building Order to undertake rectification works, is an offence pursuant to section 118(1) of the *Building Act* (1993). For a body corporate, the maximum penalty is just over \$400,000. If your OC is charged with an offence under the Act, the matter would be heard in the Magistrates Court.

It is a no-win situation and frankly a disgrace that the government should yet again ignore the thousands of owner-occupiers who live in high-rise strata communities.

This is a scandal of monumental proportions. And the culpable parties - the government and the building industry - are trying to get away with it.

Tell us about your cladding issues

We Live Here would like to hear from buildings that have been caught up in the combustible cladding issue and how you have dealt with it, or are currently dealing with it. Please head over to our website at welivehere.net and go to the "Cladding Survey" page. Alternatively, you can email us at campaign@welivehere.net.

We need facts. Facts are ammunition to take to the government to demonstrate the impact their feeble legislation is having on OCs having to manage the consequences of combustible cladding.

Thank you in anticipation - we look forward to hearing from you.

Your resident stories

Thank you to all those who have contributed to date, we will publish more throughout the year, so keep your cards and letters coming in!

Campaign donations

As a not-for-profit organisation, donations from individuals and buildings keep our campaigns going. To register as a supporter of We Live Here or to donate please visit our website at welivehere.net.

We Live Here does not accept donations from commercial tourism interests ●

Barbara Francis & Rus Littleton

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零工经济的灰色区域

撰稿 Meg Hill

去年11月，维多利亚警方在中央商务区的一次交通行动中，对类似UberEats的快递员发出了200张罚款单，其中至少四分之一的违法罚款是与快递骑车者有关。

州政府将在3月31日前公布一份“零工经济”劳动力调查报告。由于冠状病毒(COVID-19)大流行，这个报告可能会延迟出台。

但是目前的社交距离和自我隔离已经让我们更加依赖这些零工快递员。随着我们外出越来越少，企业开始关闭公共区域，可能仍然会有许多送货员在我们的街道上，给我们送来食物。

2018年，州政府委托对劳动力进行调查时，当时的背景报告估计，澳大利亚约有8万人通过Uber, UberEats和Deliveroo等“点对点”快递平台获得收入。

但是，法律专业人士和政府对整个“零工经济”中工人的地位和权益缺乏确定性。

墨尔本大学的阿丽西亚·布莱克汉姆副教授(Alysia Blackham)说，澳大利亚需要有法律来保护这些工人。

布莱克汉姆副教授说：“问题在于我们的法律在多大程度上能适用于这些不符合我们传统雇员观念的人。”

“对于许多平台来说，这种工作关系不是平台和快递(Deliveroo)驾驶员之间的关系，而是消费者和快递驾驶员之间的关系。”

“各种平台正试图摆脱其责任，或者缩小其责任。”

这可能意味着，如果快递骑车者出了事故，即使是由于培训和条件不佳造成的，他们也要承担个人责任。相反，如果这些骑车者遇到就业问题，他们很难证明自己与平台(而不是消费者)有关系。

在收到罚款单时，快递骑车者则要承担个人责任。在去年的那次警察行动中收到罚款的车手们告诉《时代报》，那次的罚款等于他们一整天的工资。

弱势群体的不同危机

当社会陷入停顿，活动被取消，企业关闭，并且我们大多数人都准备居家隔离时，我们的弱势群体又会怎样呢？

撰稿 Meg Hill

中央商务区的无家可归者和那些关心他们的组织正准备应对可能很快就会感受到的可怕影响。食物、医疗资源和建筑物的所有资源都将用于照顾先前存在的无家可归群体，以及在危机期间可能涌入街头的人群。

救世军少校布伦丹·诺特尔(Brendan Nottle)表示，慈善机构正在拼命工作。

诺特尔少校说：“我们已经在自己经营的咖啡馆为无家可归的人提供服务，首席医疗官认为这是一项必要服务，我们正在竭尽所能保持营业并维持安全。”

“昨天，我们用了约八个小时对大楼进行了法医清洁。然而清洁工今天下午又回来了再用了八个小时。”

他说，咖啡厅已经用一次性用具代替了所有餐具，正在运送更多的冰柜进行存储。我们正在与墨尔本市政合作寻找楼房，让无家可归者离开街道，并且能够独处和隔离。

所有这些都是为了避免出现最糟糕的情况。

诺特尔少校说：“我们正在为可能要关闭咖啡馆并送餐到街上的这一天做准备。”

“在最坏的情况下，我们已经购买了口罩，并正在设法购买防护服用于运送人员，使那些人不会挨饿并保持其社会联系。”

随着对每个人的社交距离要求，诺特尔少校说，我们更应该意识到这对无家可归者和弱势群体意味着什么。

他说：“对于我们工作对象的社会隔离是我们必须面对的最大问题。”



“我们将需要在大街上检查人们的身心健康。”

“我们正在尝试在一个安全可靠的环境中获取大量食物。”

“大概会有很多以前从未接触过我们的人。”

诺特少校说，救世军也在研究技术交流

能力，以检查精神健康，保持社会交流的开放性——即使是在保持一定社交距离的情况下。

他还感谢维多利亚州政府和州长丹尼尔·安德鲁斯(Daniel Andrews)在3月18日宣布的对无家可归和公共住房的支持。

病毒笼罩这座城市

正如全国乃至全球大多数地区一样，墨尔本市当地社区和当地经济正面临着一个前所未有的困难时期。

中央商务区(CBD)的工作岗位已经流失，这意味着在CBD的上班者失业了。客流量减少，销售额直线下降。在联邦和州政府宣布刺激计划的同时，墨尔本市政宣布了自己价值超过1000万澳元的刺激计划。

该一揽子计划主要针对市区的小型企

业，其中包括：
在墨尔本市政厅举行虚拟的商业支持峰会；

有关食物提供的注册以及街面商铺交易许可审批暂停三个月；

为在市政拥有的物业中符合条件的租户减半租金三个月；

提供及部署临时工和非全日工作的机会，以加强城市的整洁和舒适；

在3月底之前制定一份困难时期的市政费政策供考虑。

市政议员强调刺激计划只是一个开始，更多措施可能将在“未来几周”内宣布。

副市长阿伦·伍德(Arron Wood)说：“我们认识到，在未来几周和几个月内，现金流管理将成为小型企业的紧迫问题。”

“我们正在开发一项投资计划，为企业提供直接支持。其中将包括高达100万澳元的研究和支持费用，以及高达50万澳元

的拨款，以支持企业发展电子商务和在线服务。”

“我们还将实施礼宾式商务服务，为这次受疫情影响大的墨尔本企业提供一对一的建议和支持。”

由副市长阿伦·伍德提议的商业支持峰会也是一次与州政府和联邦政府，维多利亚州首席卫生官以及维多利亚州工商会的合作。

市长萨利·卡普(Sally Capp)表示，该计划将为受周一宣布的全州紧急措施影响的企业提供支持，这些措施包括实施社交距离，以优先考虑健康和

安全。
市长说：“这种病毒对经济影响将是巨大的，我们鼓励所有人尽其所能支持本地企业。”

她说：“在与Spotless服务公司合作中，我们还将为大约200名受影响的临时员工提供交叉培训和就业机会，这些员工将被重新部署，致力于改善城市的清洁和形象。”

市政还将与维多利亚女王市场管理部门合作，为商家提供适当的支持。

市长说：“我们正在尽一切努力帮助企业保持营业，让墨尔本人继续工作。”

3月17日市政会议上，艺术界和文化界的代表也概述了他们在当地和全国范围内已经感受到的影响。

住房危机 上级政府无所作为

墨尔本市议员抨击上级政府对住房危机做出的“丢脸”回应，并表示“一切照旧”不会再给这座城市带来好处。

撰稿 David Schout

在通过一项新的经济适用房战略草案时，一些被认可的政策将无权实施真正的改变，市议员们呼吁就紧迫的问题采取紧急行动。

圣劳伦斯兄弟会(Brotherhood of St Laurence)的前首席执行官尼古拉斯·弗朗西斯·吉利(Nicolas Frances Gilley)议员表示，经济适用房不足的问题在最近几年已大大恶化。

他在3月3日的未来墨尔本委员会会议上说：“这是这个国家的一个大问题，并已经成立了许多相关组织。”

“当州政府开始建造公共住房时，我们也确实作出了回应。但是事情变了，我们停下来了，整个倒退了。不仅如此，我们没有任何东西取而代之……，我想对州政府说，你们对此已经有一段时间没有作为了，你们已经处于可以有所作为的位置了。”

市政透露，目前至少有5500套中低收入

人群负担得起的出租房短缺，如果不采取措施，到2036年，这个数字将翻两番，达到23200套左右。

所谓“负担得起的”租金通常被定义为家庭收入的30%以下。

当租金的支付额超过这一水平时，租户被迫牺牲其日常生活必需品，如食物、医疗保健或教育。

市政的战略草案承诺，要游说维多利亚州政府进行“包容性分区”，此举将迫使开发商在新开发项目中纳入一些经济适用房。

它的目标是在市政府拥有的土地上(在市中心很少的一部分土地)，以提供高达25%的住宅开发作为经济适用房。

市议员罗汉·勒珀特(Rohan Leppert)说，即将到来的公众咨询，以及随后的最终决策，是本届议员要做的“最重要的事情之一”。

但他也承认，与州和联邦政府相比，市政府的作用仍然很小。

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Fed Square and City Library could converge

WORDS BY *Meg Hill*
COUNCIL AFFAIRS

Before all of our lives, and all of the news, became dominated by coronavirus (COVID-19) there was news regarding a longstanding debate in the CBD – the status of Federation Square.

The deadline for a state government decision about the future of Federation Square is still set to “early 2020”, but early in March, the City of Melbourne made a bold intervention.

It asked the state government to alter the square’s management structure to appoint the Council as manager – in return for a \$22 million investment that could include the relocation of the City Library and a revamped Koorie Heritage Trust.

The square is currently managed through its own board. It is not government-run or -funded.

Lord Mayor Sally Capp said the City of Melbourne wanted to partner with the state government and stakeholders to enhance and invigorate Federation Square.

“The state government’s recent review of Federation Square has galvanised ideas for this civic space and the opportunity for the City of Melbourne to step up as manager,” the Lord Mayor said.

“We have a proven track record of delivering major events – Moomba, New Year celebrations, Melbourne Music Week, Melbourne Fashion Week – to name just a few. We have the talent and experience to bring Melburnians back to Fed Square.”

If appointed manager, the City of Melbourne would “consider” investing \$15 million to relocate the City Library to the square, with another \$7 million dedicated to a revamp of the Koorie Heritage Trust.

The City Library is due to move out of its Flinders Lane address by the end of this year when its lease expires.

“This much needed investment would preserve the cultural and civic value of this iconic Melbourne space and attract hundreds



of thousands of visitors,” the Lord Mayor said.

“Making Fed Square the home of Melbourne’s most popular lending library would provide Melburnians with free access to event spaces, creative technologies and world-class resources.”

The funding is contingent on Council being given management responsibilities for the site – including tenancies, maintenance and activation.

Deputy Lord Mayor Arron Wood said the proposal would cement Federation Square as a community meeting place and cultural hub.

“Melburnians have been loud and clear about what they want for Federation Square – they want this iconic site to be about people, civic and cultural engagement and for it to be a true ‘people’s square,’” the Deputy Lord Mayor said.

“Investing \$15 million to relocate our City Library will attract one million more visitors to the square per year, bringing life and economic activity to the square. That foot traffic will be critical to the existing small businesses in Federation Square.”

“The Koorie Heritage Trust does an amazing job of teaching Australians about our Aboriginal history. This \$7 million funding boost will ensure the stories the

Trust tells and the experiences it offers reach even more people.”

The City of Melbourne said it had made a comprehensive submission to the state government’s Federation Square Review.

Our City, Our Square, a group that campaigned against the unsuccessful bid for an Apple store in the square last year, signaled they would support the proposal, but kept other options open.

“While Our City, Our Square is yet to endorse the idea - and that’s all it is for now - we recognise that it aims to protect the iconic Square as our most important civic space,” the campaign stated on its website.

Federation Square management had not publicly responded to the City of Melbourne’s proposal by the time events and attention – including at the square – became dominated by COVID-19.

On March 13, the square announced it would work in compliance with the federal government’s announcements of public gathering limitations.

On March 19, non-essential staff at Federation Square were directed to stay home after an administration staff member tested positive for COVID-19 ●



International Women’s Day

WORDS BY *Tamara Clark*
LOCAL NEWS

RMIT University celebrated International Women’s Day at the campus’ after-dark space on Friday, March 6 where the student union came together in support of the day’s 2020 theme #EachforEqual.

More than 180 tickets were sold to staff and students who showed solidarity by wearing purple and white outfits on the day.

Special guests to the Cardigan St venue included dance performances from Fusion Music’s Korean Dynasty dance group, Indian inspired Bagda Dance group and women showcasing cultural garments from a range of different traditions.

Event organiser and head of RUSU Women’s Department Mounika Gudapati said equality was important in the workplace, news, parliament, economy, health sector and sports.

“We should all be equal,” she said. “An equal world is a successful world.”

“Indira Gandhi, the one and only and first ever female prime minister of India once said ‘To be liberated, a woman must feel free to be herself, not in rivalry to man but in the context of her own capacity and her personality.’ ●

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