

AN OPEN LETTER TO PREMIER MIKE RANN

16 June 2008

Dear Premier Mike Rann,

Along with the majority of the Port community, we applaud the development of the Port waterfront as a much-needed regional revitalisation. However, we see a challenge in Port Adelaide and call upon you, as Premier, to meet it.

The challenge is to ensure that the redevelopment honours the importance of the birthplace of South Australia and its history and contributes to regional economic growth to maximum extent, by building on national and international examples of the successful incorporation of maritime industry and heritage. These include Helsinki, Cape Town, Boston, London, Oslo, Seattle, Wellington, Vancouver, Sydney and Copenhagen.

In Port Adelaide, the maritime character of its waterfront is being stripped away, with one of the last remaining opportunities to retain some of this irreplaceable character about to be lost for good.

In other port cities around the world where best practice urban design is applied, this same character is being embraced to enrich the revitalisation of their waterfront zones, but in Port Adelaide it all stands to be lost.

In 2001, the Land Management Corporation (LMC) called for registrations of interest for a "Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment Opportunity". It produced a vision for the Port, with paramount objectives for the redevelopment that included achieving "excellence in planning and urban design, which recognises Port Adelaide's maritime use, character and heritage" and its "rich heritage and unique waterfront character".

Responding to the LMC's vision and aims, the Newport Quays Consortium and their architects talked of their plans for a development that would have a unifying theme consistent with the maritime and

heritage nature of the existing environment. Heritage was an integral component of the consortium's proposal to ensure that the cultural, social and historical significance of the Port was retained and enhanced, and that Burra Charter principles were applied to comprehensively assess this heritage. As recently as 2004, the LMC stated in its prospectus that it would "continue to ensure that the redevelopment appropriately accounts for the maritime history and culture of the area".

What has happened to this vision that is allowing the character and heritage to be eroded and why haven't Burra Charter principles been applied in order that a comprehensive heritage assessment be carried out?

The vision has been lost through incremental erosion. The "maritime use" has been curtailed by opening bridges that will open twice a day, forcing the sailing club, tugs, fishing boats and active tall ships out of the Inner Harbour. The "maritime heritage" will be represented in the 53 hectare waterfront redevelopment by only one item, Fletchers Slip (while Sydney Harbour has 137 items) with all other items deemed, at this stage, to have no formal heritage value and therefore in line for demolition. We are losing the majority of our precious maritime character in direct contradiction to the desired vision for the redevelopment.

We are concerned that the three remaining historic working boatyards at Jenkins Street, Birkenhead, are required by the LMC to close at the end of this month and are scheduled to be demolished soon after. They have long histories, one of them is a five-generation business. If they are removed from the Inner Harbour then we have missed a significant opportunity to enrich and diversify the

revitalisation of Port Adelaide. The boatyards are rich in character and culture. If they close their doors on 30 June, they will be lost for good, with the irreplaceable infrastructure and assets contained within being dissipated through auctions and rubbish skips, to say nothing of the loss of the culture of boatbuilding that has taken place using the same tools and skills in the same place for the last 170 years.

Every LMC initiated community consultation since 2001 has consistently, and in our view rightly, identified the boatyards and related maritime heritage as tangible and integral elements of the character that defines the sense of place of Port Adelaide and the Lefevre Peninsula and contributes to the thriving tourism economy of the region.

We would like to revisit the intent of both the LMC's "Port Adelaide Waterfront Redevelopment Opportunity" and the development Consortium's earlier vision for a multifaceted development that respects Port Adelaide's unique maritime character. We call on you to intervene to ensure that opportunities are fully explored to integrate the Port's maritime heritage and character into the new development in a creative, enlightened and vibrant way, one which is enriched and guided by the vision that was espoused on day one, providing a development that benefits all and is uniquely Port Adelaide.

We ask that the boatyards be given another year of operation so that adequate time is provided for a thorough Burra Charter assessment of their significance to be undertaken, and that from this, design concepts be developed where the boatyards and other maritime items and character might be incorporated into the masterplan for the redevelopment.

Yours sincerely,

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