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23<sup>rd</sup> January 2008

Unchain St. Kilda Group  
PO Box 6547  
**MELBOURNE VIC 8008**

**Attention: Mr. Donald Gazzard**

Dear Sirs,

**Re: Palais Theatre, St. Kilda**

I have been asked for my comments on the proposed development of the so-called Triangle site at St. Kilda and to this end I visited the site on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2008. I have looked at the Conservation Plan and also at various correspondences to do with the Palais building in particular.

It is true to say that all this correspondence generally recognizes the stand alone quality of the Palais Theatre which is its most characteristic quality when one visits the site. It can be seen from as far away as Port Melbourne, from the St. Kilda Pier and although I did not go out on the bay it is obviously prominent from there as well. Indeed it is hard to think of another theatre which is so prominently sited beside water except for the obvious Sydney Opera House.

Another characteristic which is very apparent when on visits the site are the Upper and Lower St. Kilda Esplanades with the landscaped area in between on which is dotted a whole range of monuments, memorials, public conveniences and so on, of considerable interest and heritage value. Indeed it is this esplanade system which is a major feature of St. Kilda and would appear to have been in place for the last century and a half. It is evident on plans as early as 1860. As well the Palais was clearly built to address the Lower Esplanade.

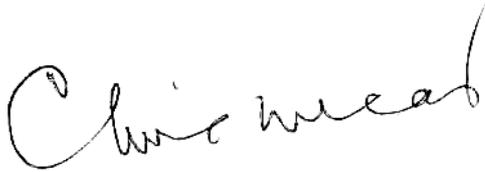
The scheme proposed has the effect of burying the theatre and killing its stand alone quality and destroying the historic road pattern and the sense of the Upper and Lower Esplanades and their associated landscaping. Both these features should be being preserved not destroyed. Development should be restricted to the triangle site and not extended out over the Lower Esplanade. Similarly it should be modelled in such a way that it does not destroy the stand alone quality of the theatre including its side walls which should not be built over, above the height of the ground floor plinth.

The policies for the Conservation Plan, as written, do not address the significances which the rest of the plan has recognized. So far as I can see there has been no conservation planning done on the historic esplanade and this seems to me a tragedy.

The scheme as proposed is clearly not in the interests of St. Kilda or this particular facet of Victoria's heritage.

I enclose a dot point critique of the Planning and Assessment documents.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Clive Lucas". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned in the center of the page.

Clive Lucas  
Clive Lucas Stapleton & Partners  
Architects & Heritage Consultants

Encl.

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**Palais Theatre, Lower Esplanade, St. Kilda**

## **ST KILDA TRIANGLE DEVELOPMENT**

**Critique of Planning & Assessment Documents**

22 January 2008

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### **Palais Theatre Conservation Management Plan**

Prepared by Lovell Chen, dated June 2006

#### **Generally**

- No explanation of statutory requirements for inclusion of the Palais Theatre on the Victorian Heritage Register and City of Port Philip Planning Scheme. [pp.3-4]
- Minimal or no references for dates and sources of information used in Section 2.0 – History [pp. 5-34]
- The policies are not individually numbered creating difficulty in discussion.
- Significant views are not identified.

#### **Identification of East, West and South Facades**

- Detailed description of the east and west elevations with elaborate window mouldings [p.48] and the original 1926 drawing of the Cavell Street Elevation [Figure 25, p.26] show that they were not of “utilitarian” design.
- This is supported by Policy 5.4.2 which identifies the east and west elevations as *Elements of Primary Significance* [pp.106-107]

#### **Identified Significance of the Place**

- The Palais Theatre is described as cultural significant because it is highly intact and rare as a free standing 1920s picture theatre. [p.98]
- The Palais is identified as “an important survivor from...St Kilda’s history, and relates to a range of other buildings and landscaping features of the early twentieth century which survive in the vicinity of the St Kilda foreshore and which collectively are considered important in a state context.” [p.99]

Additional details are alluded to in the history section but not carried through to the Statement of Significance:

- The Palais is important as the only theatre purpose designed (rather than refurbished) by architect Henry White in Victoria. [p.24]
- The design conformed to the St Kilda established form of amusement structures, eg. Luna Park and Palais de Danse. [p.24]
- The Palais Theatre was among the earliest in Australia to screen sound films. [p.34]

## Policies

- *Policy 5.4.2 – Elements and Areas of Primary Significance [pp.106-107]*

All facades of the building are identified as of *Primary Significance*

- *Policy 5.5.2 – Adaptation and New Works [p.113]*

States that although adaptation is allowed, this

- should not detract from the cultural significance of the place
- should have minimal physical alteration to significant fabric
- should not adversely affect the exterior of the building
- should avoid permanent intervention into areas and elements of primary significance

States that elements and areas of primary significance

- should generally be retained and restored and/or reconstructed
- alteration and adaptation works should be undertaken with minimal impact on the fabric

This is later contradicted when the CMP goes on to say there is some scope to alter or make additions to the side and rear facades of the building. [p.113]

There is no justification or rationalisation for the different treatment of elements which are identified as of primary significance

- *Policy 5.5.2 – Specific Policies [p.114]*

*Policy: Generally retain and conserve the exterior to the extent of the original building envelope [p.114]*

This policy is contradicted in the subsequent text which says there is some scope for some adaptation and alteration without unacceptably compromising the significance and presentation of the building.

*Policy: Generally retain and conserve the [east] and [west] facades to the extent of all original fabric. [p.115]*

The policy states the east and west facades should be conserved and retained, the altered and infilled openings should be reconstructed but goes on to say “An exception could be made for single-level linking structure/s which could abut the [west] wall of the Palais Theatre at ground level, but set behind the tower.”

*Policy: Conserve or adapt the [south] façade as required. [p.116]*

Any “new attached or abutting structure should not be of excessive height and not overwhelm the Palais building.”

The south façade has been the only elevation traditionally added to over the years.

*Policy: Retain and conserve all roof forms and fabric [p.116]*

This states no new structure should be added above the Palais building.

### The Policies fail to mention

- Reconstruction of the Juliet Balconies to the Towers
- Reinstate tall strip windows to the east and west elevations of the towers
- Reinstate doors from the Loggia
- Remove square florescent light boxes from within Loggia and replace with sympathetic light fitting
- The tradition was to add to the rear. This should be continued, if modification is required.

## **Appendix B: Heritage Report**

Prepared by Bruce Taworth Pty Ltd, dated 31 October 2007

- No clear map indicating the subject site and surrounding heritage items
- No explanation of heritage controls for each listed item in the area
- No comment on impact on surrounding heritage items
- No clear discussion of the particulars of the proposal against the conservation policies included in the CMP. A brief statement which says the “scheme has been tested.... And is in accordance with it” [p.2] is insufficient.
- No clear discussion of impact on views and setting. It briefly states that the south is the least significant view of the building. No mention of this is found in the CMP
- Statement that some views from the south will be curtailed. This looks to be incorrect, from the plans it appears that all views from the south and foreshore will be blocked. [p.3]
- It states that the few heritage elements on the Upper Esplanade will be integrated into the development but does not explain how or what the impact on heritage significance of such integration might be. [p.3]
- The report only refers to Policies 5.5.2 and 5.5.3 generally. Due to lack of sufficient numbering of policies in the CMP. It is difficult to examine the proposal against the policy details. [p.4] (see above)
- It states the proposal seeks to maintain the building as a landmark. [p.5] This is not possible when it is covered on two sides.