

unChain Newsletter
December Quarter 2014

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1. The Annual General Meeting and Renewal of Membership

On Wednesday 10 December the AGM of unChain Inc was held. The following were elected to the Committee:

President	Catherine Sharples
Vice President	Trevor White
Secretary	Richard Roberts
Treasurer	Peter Holland
Members	Dave Fernandes, Mark Lopez and Jenny Webb

Fees for the 2014/2015 year were due on 30 June. The annual fee is \$20. There is also a lifetime membership for \$100. The easiest way to renew your subscription is by direct deposit into the unChain account at the ANZ. Make sure you put your name in the information box so we know which members are renewing is paying.

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If there are any problems please email the unChain Secretary Richard Roberts at Richard@superinvestment.com.au

If you want to join unChain, please email our President Catherine Sharples at unchaininc@gmail.com

2. The State Election in November 2014

The Municipality of Port Phillip covers parts of four state electorates: Albert Park, Brighton, Prahran and Caulfield. unChain participated in the state elections in November by surveying the candidates in these four seats. We posted their responses on our website. Candidates are always deluged by surveys from various groups in elections so to give our interests more 'bite', we also printed a brochure and letter-boxed it.

The survey asked questions about issues like the St Kilda Triangle, the Palais, the Fitzroy and Acland St tram proposals, Schools, Webb Dock, the St Kilda festival, the St Kilda pier, the Grand Prix, public transport, the bay, CCTV, neighbourhood zones, apartment design standards, the new Metropolitan Planning Strategy, Elwood College and flooding in Elwood. If you are interested in what the candidates and the parties are saying on any of these issues, you can go to our web-site. We know what the newly elected Labor government has promised in our area and what issues are yet to be resolved.

Albert Park and Prahran are marginal seats, whereas Brighton and Caulfield are safe Liberal seats.

The state seat of Prahran includes a small part of the municipality of Port Phillip. In a fascinating result the Greens candidate Sam Hibbins narrowly defeated the sitting Liberal member, Clem Newton-Brown. Newton Brown (Liberal) received 44.81% of the vote, Neil Pharaoh (Labor) 25.91% and Sam Hibbins (Greens) 24.75%. However Hibbins edged ahead of Pharaoh on the preferences of the Animal Justice Party. The Labor party preferences then elected Hibbins, who defeated Newton Brown by just 277 votes. Sam Hibbins is the first Greens member in the lower house of the Victorian Parliament. unChain letterboxed the part of Port Phillip that lies in the state seat of Prahran. We wish Sam Hibbins the best. In the Upper House region covering Port Phillip (Southern Metropolitan) the Greens member Sue Pennicuik has been a consistent voice on issues like the St Kilda Triangle and the Palais since she was elected in 2006.

In Albert Park the sitting Labor member, Martin Foley, retained his seat. He received 33.22% of the first preference votes, Shannon Eeles (Liberal) received 41.49% and David Collis (Greens) received 16.77%. Martin Foley was ultimately elected on the Greens preferences with a majority of 2.96% after preferences.

So what did the parties promise in Port Phillip, especially the newly elected Labor government?

In general, unChain and the Port Phillip Council had similar priorities and hopes in the election campaign. The major difference was the Yarra Trams proposal for a super stop in Fitzroy St. Council supported this. However unChain was successful in lobbying the Liberal government early in the campaign to promise to stop the process and to review the super-stop proposal. Labor has committed to relocating the stop closer to the Junction oval (see below).

Highlights of the parties' promises were the bipartisan promise to fund the Elwood College Master Plan (see below) and Labor's promise to provide substantial funding for the Palais (see below).

unChain will be watching, with guarded optimism, Labor's promise of a new start for Fishermans Bend (see below) and for public transport (see below).

Perhaps the most disappointing result was that neither major party promised to fund the St Kilda Rd Bicycle Lane proposal, but again we can have guarded optimism that the newly elected government will eventually decide that this is a worthy project (see below).

3. The Palais and Tex Perkins' Campaign

A feature of the campaign in Albert Park was the candidature of Tex Perkins as a 'single issue' candidate for the Palais.

The Palais is Australia's top theatre concert venue and ranked by *Pollstar* magazine as the 23-rd best venue in the world. The Council commissioned a Palais Theatre Requirements Study in 2012. The study assessed three possibilities for the Palais ranging in cost from \$26.5 million to \$130 million. These are longer-term possibilities. The current lease for the Palais Theatre expires in September 2015. Council's has extended the current lease to March 2017 to allow for an expression of interest process (EOI) for the long term future of the Theatre. This may be won by the current operator (Neil Croker of Palais Theatre Management) or by a new operator.

In the short-term, there are substantial repairs that are needed urgently. These include repairs to the crumbling façade of the building. Other matters that need to be addressed include upgrading the electrical and mechanical systems and addressing accessibility issues. The officers' report that went to Council on 28 October 2014 estimated that between \$25 million and \$40 million was required to bring the Palais up to compliance standard. The report said that this funding is urgently required to enable works to be undertaken to keep the Palais open. If the Municipal Building Surveyor closed the Palais, it is unlikely that it would ever re-open. This was a threat that no sensible Council could ignore.

Therefore the Port Phillip Council in October 2014 resolved to contribute \$7.5 million for the immediate works necessary to keep the Palais open, provided the State government contributed \$25 million. These amounts were based on taking the mid-point of between the low estimate of \$25 million and the high estimate of \$40 million (\$32.5 million). This is a very substantial amount for our local Council.

Councillor Serge Thomann was then instrumental in setting up a group to lobby for state funding called *ilovemypalais*. This included some unChain

members and many people from the music industry. Rock musician Tex Perkins said that he was prepared to run as an independent candidate on the single issue of the Palais. While unChain members such as Serge, Jim Tuttle, Trevor White, Liz Van Dort and Peter Holland worked on his campaign, this was Tex's campaign, not unChain's.

The campaign was very successful. All the parties promised to save the Palais but Labor gave the most certainty and therefore Tex recommended that his supporters give their second preferences to Martin Foley.

David Collis (Greens) said: *'As the owner of the site, the state government should be funding these works to ensure that the Palais lives on as a treasured part of the cultural heritage of the people of Victoria'*.

However the reality was that the Greens would not constitute the next government and therefore could not guarantee this promise.

Shanon Eeles (Liberals) said: *'Anyone who has been there knows that the Palais is a special place, not only significant to St Kilda but to Victoria ... I love the Palais. I will continue to push for investment for repairs, as well as a responsible and sensitive vision for the triangle site'*. However the Liberals were not able to make a definite commitment of funding.

Martin Foley (Labor) promised 'up to \$13.4 million' for the Palais'. He said: *'Labor expresses its support for the Council led EOI process and indicates our willingness to work with whichever operator is determined to deliver best value in securing the long term future of the Palais'*.

While this promise is less than the \$25 million the Council requested, it did establish the principle that the state government should make a substantial contribution. This was a game changer for the Palais and the Triangle. Therefore Tex recommended that his supporters give their second preference to Labor.

Any independent candidate aims to get 4% of the first preference vote so that he or she gets back the deposit (\$350) and receives a taxpayer-funded contribution to the election expenses. Tex received 4.41% of the votes (1614 votes).

So we secured a promise from the new state government of a substantial contribution to the Palais and achieved our target of 4% of the vote.

Mission accomplished!

4. The super-stop proposal for the 16 tram in Fitzroy St

Yarra Trams and Public Transport Victoria have plans for the 96 and 16 tram route that will have significant impacts on Fitzroy St and Acland St. (All new

tram stops have to have disability and disabled access and every tram stop in Melbourne must eventually be upgraded to a standard that meets the Disability Discrimination Act.)

Public Transport Victoria and Yarra Trams TV's will remove the existing stop on Fitzroy St on the beach side of Grey St. This will speed up the 96 tram which will then stop only at the St Kilda station. The remaining issue is what to do about the Route 16 stop? Where should any new stop be built between the Park St stop and the Junction?

The PTV proposal was for a new Route 16 stop between Grey St and Princes St. This was supported by the Council, but opposed by many residents, traders, and unChain. Our lobbying was successful in securing a review of this proposal.

The Liberal member for Caulfield (David Southwick) and Liberal candidate for Albert Park (Shannon Eeles) persuaded the Liberal government to halt the project early in the election campaign.

The Labor member for Albert Park, Martin Foley, said:

'Of particular concern to many is the location proposed by the Council and the State Government for the location of the Super Stop for the Number 16 Tram route in Fitzroy Street immediately opposite the School.

Victorian Labor does not support this proposed location. As part of our announcement on Saturday, 8 November to renovate Junction Oval and its accessibility, Labor supports the relocation of the Super Stop closer to the Junction Oval – at the Lakeside drive intersection with Fitzroy Street area. The specifics of the location and design details would be subject to expert and community consultations'.

An excellent result!

5. The Elwood College Master Plan

The Elwood College Masterplan is the result of an extensive consultation process with students, teachers and community members that began in 2010. The key features of the Masterplan include:

- a new VCE Centre;
- a new gymnasium;
- a new Arts wing;
- the creation of 'learning neighbourhoods' for the Junior, Middle and Senior Schools;
- technology centres incorporated throughout the college; and
- improved indoor/outdoor common areas.

In 2010 the Labor Party promised to fully fund the project, with the first stage of works then costed at \$10 million. However this promise was not matched by the Liberals in 2010. In 2014 all the parties promised funding. Martin Foley promised to:

Deliver the Elwood College rebuild, a commitment Labor made in 2010 that was scrapped by the Liberals. This will deliver the facilities that this fantastic school needs. It will also take the enrolment pressure off Albert Park College

A good result for families in Elwood and St Kilda (and of course we also need new schools in Fishermans Bend, Port Melbourne and South Melbourne to meet the growing demand).

6. Fishermans Bend

The Metropolitan Planning Authority released a Framework Plan for Fishermans Bend in July 2014. Back in September 2013 Places Victoria released a Draft Vision for the Fishermans Bend Urban Renewal Area. This promised that the government had learned from the mistakes made at Southbank and Docklands. But the final plan seems to have retreated from this vision.

We do not want a developer-driven development of Fishermans Bend's as a dormitory suburb. We need good design rules, appropriate limits on high-rise towers, public open space, public transport, schools and other community facilities. What will we get?

The Port Phillip Council said that it was disappointed that several measures it had advocated for on behalf of its community were absent from the Strategic Framework Plan. These included:

- A maximum height in the Montague Precinct of 18 storeys, as opposed to 30 storeys in the Plan
- City of Port Phillip to be the responsible authority for developments of up to 25,000 square metres (buildings of approximately 18 storeys)
- Funding certainty on the purchase of open space and early delivery of community infrastructure.
- Targets for affordable housing and sustainability.

Council announced 10 'non-negotiable' priorities:

- Early roll-out of essential community and transport infrastructure such as parks, community facilities, the Collins Street tram extension (Docklands to Plummer Street) and dedicated cycling corridors
- Sensible height restrictions on developments
- Commercial developments to be delivered within walking distance of transport hubs
- Community infrastructure and open spaces to be funded by developer contributions

- The introduction of sustainable urban development goals
- Incentives for affordable housing
- A design review panel to assess applications against the Fishermans Bend Design Guidelines
- Heritage protection on key buildings and laneway character
- Incentives to retain and grow creative industries
- City of Port Phillip designated the Responsible Authority for developments up to 25,000 square metres.

What will the new state government deliver? Martin Foley said in reply to the unChain questionnaire:

We need to stop the Liberals Fishermans Bend Nightmare. With no real consultation, no height restrictions, no plan to manage congestion and no plan for open space, community services or strategies to manage growth, this community is rightly concerned about the planning disaster heading their way ... Only Labor will work with the community and Local Government to avoid the massive congestion heading our way. Labor has pledged to review the Fishermans Bend Structure Plan because we only get one chance to get Fishermans Bend right.

However the new state government has not committed to the specific items that the Council sought such as the Collins Street tram extension. The appropriate development of Fishermans Bend will be one of the most important issues for the Council and the state government over the next four years.

7. Public transport

The unChain questionnaire asked candidates what steps should be taken to create a world class public transport system in Melbourne generally, and in Port Phillip in particular?

Martin Foley (Labor, Albert Park) said

Melbourne Metro will double the capacity of the City Loop and deliver a new train line through the heart of the city with new additional train stations at the south end of the CBD, to stations in the north of the CBD, at the site of the Royal Melbourne Hospital and at Melbourne University ...

Directly related to the Metro plan is the doubling the City Loop and directing the Metro through the heart of the City. This will free up congestion on our busy St Kilda Road and Swanston Street trams which is important to many local commuters.

In addition, as part of Labor's Project 10,000, we will reduce congestion and improve safety by removing the 50 worst level train crossings in Melbourne ...

As part of Labor's transport package we will also deliver Homesafe: 24 hour public transport on the weekends to get locals home safely. This will include our local 96 and 109 tram routes.

Sounds great. But we have had grandiose plans for public transport presented by both parties in previous election campaigns. We have to make sure that the newly elected government delivers on its promises.

8. The St Kilda Rd Bicycle Lane

Perhaps the most disappointing result of the state election was the lack of clear support for the Council's St Kilda Rd Bicycle Lane. The City of Port Phillip proposed that Melbourne's grand St Kilda Road boulevard should be the next major commuter route into the city to benefit from separated bike lanes.

Council sought State Government funding of \$12 million to provide greater safety and comfort for bike riders, who make 1.2 million bike trips annually along St Kilda Road. This is one of the widest streets in Australia and has been ear-marked for Copenhagen style-lanes for many years. Under the plan, a 2m-wide bike lane would be built in each of the service roads in the space currently used for parking. The bike lanes would run from Southbank, to Carlisle St, St Kilda. The RACV announced its support for the proposal. VicRoads manages the boulevard and the proposed changes are in accord with agency policy for the corridor. The Council says that traffic capacity would not be affected. Off peak there would be three lanes of traffic each way, but during peak there would be four lanes of traffic each way.

However there was no clear commitment from Labor or the Liberals to the proposal. In contrast the successful Greens' candidate for Prahran, Sam Hibbins, said:

"St Kilda Road is one of the busiest cycling routes into the CBD. The Greens support the proposal for separated Copenhagen-style lanes along the entire length of St Kilda Road".

The Bicycle Network (the old Bicycle Victoria) believes that all is not lost. It said in December 2014:

'With the election of a Labor Government last weekend hopes are high that the Andrews team will hit the ground rolling with a pannier bag full of strategies and budget submissions aimed at fulfilling election commitments made to Victoria's bike riders ...

Much of Victoria's bicycle infrastructure has already been planned, with routes and priorities established. But the build-out has been stop-go, with no deliberate, consistent long-term vision.

Labor has the opportunity to capture the full value of this haphazard

development by ensuring that in the future end-to-end corridors are constructed and linked up with the highest demand routes getting priority.

St Kilda Road separated lanes would be a great project to start with and show the world how it can be done right.

When last in government Labor was initially hesitant, unsure how to react to the boom in cycling. However, by the end of its term, the then Roads Minister Tim Pallas had grasped the significance of the bikes from both transport and health perspective, and there was a vision for cycling as an equal partner in transport decision making.

Now Pallas is Treasurer and should have a full understanding of the bike infrastructure cost-benefit arguments new Roads Minister Luke Donnellan will bring to him.

9. Other promises in the Election Campaign

There were other commitments made in response to the unChain questionnaire. Those interested can see the details on the unChain website. Labor's Martin Foley has promised:

- Support for the process of community leadership in the development of a sustainable plan for the St Kilda Triangle and the continued leadership by the Council for the project.
- A local education package including a new South Melbourne Park Primary School. This includes \$1.5 million to build a Year 9 Campus for Albert Park College and \$11.5 million for the new primary school to be built within the existing foot print of the depot on Albert Road – next door to MSAC.
- Working with the community to deal with the safety, amenity and congestion issues with the expansion of Webb Dock.
- Encouraging the successful St Kilda Festival to apply to the “Victoria Rocks” funding stream for support. Such decisions will be determined on merit under a future Labor Government.
- Consulting with user groups, local environmental partners and the wider community about the St Kilda Pier's future.
- Advocating for the Grand Prix to be relocated from Albert Park to a dedicated motor sports facility.
- Working to combine local action and state wide policy on the issue of pollution and threats from rising sea levels.
- Recognition that Closed Circuit TV can be successful as part of a wider community effort to tackle bad behaviour across the State but It is important to make sure that this is part of a wider strategy to deal with the causes of crime rather than the focus solely on the consequences of crime.
- A review of the ‘botched’ neighbourhood planning zones that meant that ‘leafy, safe Liberal seats are locked up from any development, and

a frenzied, developer free for all is applied to cram thousands of apartments in inner city communities like ours’.

- Introduction of apartment design standards to be led by the Government Architects Office.
- Support for the Liberal government’s Metropolitan Planning Strategy except for the East West tunnel.
- Removing discrimination in the law for LGBTI people.
- \$1 million to upgrade the clubrooms at St Kilda’s iconic Peanut Farm Reserve. The plan for a full upgrade, to be completed in partnership with the City of Port Phillip and local clubs, will consider new change rooms and function areas and improved facilities for women players.
- \$2 million to fund half of a redevelopment of the South Melbourne Life Saving Club.
- \$25 million to fund a cricket and community centre at Junction Oval. An issue is whether the St Kilda AFL Football club should also use the facility for training.

We now know what the Labor government has promised for Port Phillip. Let us see how they perform over the next four years.

10. The St Kilda Triangle

Former Councillor Dick Gross has said in the *Port Phillip Leader* that the St Kilda Triangle ‘has been a disaster for the suburb and the ratepayers’. He claims that St Kilda is ‘doomed to decline’. Should we laugh or cry? Perhaps we should simply rebut his criticism.

It was the former Council, led by Dick Gross, which has cost the community so much in money, in time, and in trust. Their Triangle follies meant that we still do not have the entertainment and cultural precinct we were promised.

It is important to understand the history of the Triangle before blaming the current Council for the cost or slowness of the development. It is also important to understand the history to ensure that we achieve a great outcome at this iconic site.

In 2001 the Council commissioned the preparation of the St Kilda Urban Design Framework Plan (UDF). The UDF identified opportunities for the development of the Triangle Site as an entertainment and leisure precinct, with significant public spaces. The UDF was approved in 2004 after extensive public consultation. It was incorporated as part of the Port Phillip Planning Scheme.

In 2004 the Council specifically promised an entertainment and cultural centre at the Triangle with, at most, modest retail. The Council said in 2004:

‘What is the triangle site vision? A reinvigorated public entertainment and cultural space including a reinvigorated Palais Theatre and a new

neighbouring public plaza (“piazza”). Potential uses include a dance and music venue, cinema, galleries, a bar or nightclub, reception and conference facilities and some retail ... Will there be significant retail created on the triangle site? The broad vision is to provide significant new areas of open space with entertainment and cultural uses. It is envisaged that these will be supported by some related retail uses but that these would not be significant ... Do we need another shopping plaza? We have defined the word ‘plaza’ as being more like a “piazza” – i.e. think open space, and people walking and enjoying the sunshine and great views – definitely not wall-to-wall retail’.

But three years later Dick Gross and the Council had completely changed this position. This change was done in secret and without any consultation with the community. IN 2007-8 the former Council approved a proposal from Babcock Brown Citta (BBC) that had ‘wall-to-wall retail’ and a cluster of nightclubs and licensed venues.

There were many good aspects of this BBC plan, including the restoration of the Palais. But it cannot seriously be claimed that the BBC plan was consistent with the promises the Council had made to the community in 2004.

- There was to be a massive retail complex on the St Kilda foreshore. The original BBC proposal included a shopping mall with 24,738 square metres of retail. Ultimately in 2008 Dick Gross’ Council approved an amended plan with 19,000 square metres of retail, comprising about 160 shops including a full-line supermarket. By comparison there are 160 shops presently in the whole of Acland Street. The proposal was the equivalent of putting the Altona Gate or Rosebud Plaza shopping centre on the Triangle site. Surely this is ‘wall-to-wall shops’. A broken promise!
- The original BBC proposal was for six nightclubs (4600 patrons), a ‘Sydney’ style beer tavern (1500 patrons) and other licensed venues. The Council in 2008 approved an amended plan for four nightclubs (3000 patrons), a tavern (900 patrons) and many other alcohol venues. This was another broken promise because the UDF envisaged a *‘family friendly place with a mix of uses which are complementary to the site’s foreshore, beach locale and enjoyment of culture and entertainment without the social problems associated with drunkenness’* (Roz Hansen).

Professor Roz Hansen, Victoria’s leading town planner, made a detailed analysis of the BBC proposal. Her conclusion was damning. She said: *‘In our opinion there has been a ‘manipulation’ of policy intent by some parties, including the developer for the Triangle site, to justify the substantial retail floorspace component and yet there is very little, if any policy support, especially at the local level, to justify 25,000 sq.m of retail on this strategically significant site. Based on our assessment of the relevant planning policies contained in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme we are of the opinion that there is no substantive support in the existing planning policy framework for an activity centre for retail uses of this scale and nature on the St Kilda Triangle Site’.*

What had gone wrong?

The former Council had established the St Kilda's Edge Committee to oversee delivery of the foreshore projects including the Triangle. There were 15 expressions of interest in the Triangle. The Council has not revealed any details but it is believed that the SKE Committee encouraged tenderers to exceed the UDF. unChain is aware that at least some of the bidders submitted proposals which complied with the UDF. For example the Palace Entertainment Complex submitted a bid through Jackson Architecture that preserved the grassy slopes, had a modest building around the Palais and a modest new building at the Western end of the Triangle. It contained a hotel, a carpark-plaza and a restaurant/café with significant open space.

The two unsuccessful short listed tenders were St Kilda Creative Hub and R-Corporation with John Van Handel. Both originally proposed \$70-\$80 million entertainment centres with modest retail components. Both initial proposals appear to have been in conformity with the UDF. However, the SKE committee instructed both to present significantly larger proposals, which were ultimately rejected.

The former Council took it upon itself to depart from the UDF. Former CEO David Spokes has confessed that it evaluated proposals based on 'which bid best met the UDF *and other objectives*' (our italics). These 'other objectives' were to seek proposals that 'maximised the financial and commercial benefits to the community'.

It is not clear why the Council thought it could jettison the UDF. One possibility is that it was persuaded to adopt a new vision for the Triangle site – not as part of a foreshore cultural-entertainment precinct but as part of a major new retail centre sweeping along Fitzroy Street through the Triangle site and into Acland Street. Another possibility is that the SKE Committee realized that if it 'maximised the financial and commercial benefits' of the Triangle site, the Council would be a major beneficiary, as it would receive substantially greater rate and rent revenues. A third possibility is that Council thought a large commercial development was needed to cross-subsidise the restoration of the Palais.

The St Kilda Foreshore UDF had promised the community that the Triangle would be a cultural and entertainment precinct with significant public open space and only a modest amount of retail. For whatever reason the former Council ditched this promise, in secret and without any consultation. The response from the community to this broken promise was outrage.

The community could not bring the usual challenge to VCAT, arguing 'on the merits', that the Council had failed to comply with the Foreshore UDF. The former Council had removed our normal 'third party appeal' rights. The Council attempted to justify its actions by arguing that '*the UDF is an aspirational document. It was conceived primarily with urban design matters rather than commercial realities in mind*'. In other words, the former Council

thought it could do whatever it thought best and that its promises to the community were disposable.

The community response was political. At the 2008 Council elections there was a clear choice – to support candidates who would try to deliver the cultural and entertainment precinct promised in the Foreshore UDF or to support candidates like Dick Gross who thought it appropriate to use the Triangle for a massive commercial shopping centre and a nightclub precinct. The community's response was overwhelming: only one of the candidates supporting Dick Gross' vision was re-elected.

After the 2008 elections, the newly elected Council had a mandate to deliver the promises in the Foreshore UDF. Council was wise to negotiate a termination of the BBC plan and not to risk litigation by repudiating it. This took a significant amount of time and effort. In 2009 the newly elected Council negotiated a commercially sensible termination of the BBC plan. Dick Gross has criticised the '\$5 million paid by the last Council to make the old proposal go away'. He fails to disclose that the termination meant that the Council regained control of the car park and its \$1 million in annual revenue. In five years the car park revenues had paid for the termination pay-out. So it is completely false for him to claim that 'the city's 46,000 house-holders will have paid' this amount.

Dick Gross has also criticized the Council because it 'is going to put \$7.5 million into the Palais'. There are three things that Dick Gross omits to say. The officers' report that went to Council on 28 October 2014 estimated that between \$25 million and \$40 million was urgently required to bring the Palais up to compliance standard and to repair structural and other building fabric issues. The report said that this funding was required to keep the Palais open. Is Dick Gross seriously saying that the Council should have allowed the Palais to be closed down by the municipal building surveyor, probably permanently? Secondly Dick Gross is misleading in failing to disclose that the Port Phillip Council resolved to contribute \$7.5 million, if the State government contributed \$25 million. This was based on taking the mid-point of between \$25 million and \$40 million (\$32.5 million). The Council's action led the Labor party to promise a significant amount to save the Palais. The third problem with Dick Gross' criticism is that it overlooks the economic contribution that the Palais makes to the local and the state economy. It is estimated that it attracts over 250,000 people every year and directly and indirectly induces economic activity of over \$36 million per annum in terms of spending on staging and presenting performances at the venue as well as pre and post show spending in nearby local businesses, cafes and restaurants. The Council's \$7.5 million contribution to the urgent repairs to keep the Palais open is money well spent.

unChain shares Dick Gross' frustration with the slow pace of the Triangle development. But this has been necessary to restore community trust and to ensure that we get the best possible outcome.

Hopefully we are now at the start of a great development of the Triangle and

the Palais. The key to this is that, for the first time, the state government has promised a substantial contribution to the Palais. It has promised 'up to \$13.4 million' for the urgent repairs. (This is a modest amount compared to the \$136 million for the recent refurbishment of Hamer Hall, which performs a similar role to the Palais). Now we have an Expression Of Interest (EOI) process for the long-term lease of the Palais and the development of a concept design for the Triangle as a whole.

An example of the possibilities for the Triangle is if the current operator of the Palais wins the EOI for a long-term lease. It would then refurbish the Palais and could build a new cabaret room at the Triangle with (say) 300 people seated at tables listening to music and another 200 standing. Labor has also announced \$22 million for a music hub and Rock 'n Roll Hall of Fame. This could be built at the back of the Palais along with improved back stage facilities. Then we would have created a wonderful entertainment and cultural precinct at the Triangle.

A fundamental lesson from the debacle of the BBC plan was the need to restore community trust in the Council and to involve the community in decisions about the Triangle. After the termination of the BBC plan, the Council therefore decided not to simply have another attempt at implementing the vision for the St Kilda Triangle in the Foreshore UDF. It decided to ask the community what it wanted and what it did not want. This consultation began in 2010 and ultimately in 2012 Council adopted the *St Kilda Triangle 2012*.

The elections in 2008 and the consultation in 2010/12 demonstrated that the community does not agree with Dick Gross' position. It does not believe that a massive commercial shopping mall and a hub of nightclubs would be justified to fund restoration of the Palais. Overwhelmingly people want an entertainment and cultural precinct with significant public open space as had been promised in 2004 in the Foreshore UDF.

So the Council in August 2014 'pledged to co-design a project for the St Kilda Triangle with the community'. This has a series of stages

- Preparation of technical reports to inform the development and vision of the site. (This has been done).
- A series of working group sessions with the community, content experts, Councillors and Council officers to refine parameters and inform the development and vision of the site. (This has been completed in 2014).
- An 'Enquiry by Design process', an intensive workshop that will develop a concept design for the site. (This is the current stage).
- Detailing & Funding: this stage will oversee the development of a functional brief, detail design and the securing of funds for the delivery of the design for the site.
- Implementation: This stage involves selecting a preferred tenderer and the commencement of construction .

To gain information on the progress concerning the Triangle, go to:

<http://stkildatriangle.com/index.htm>

Feedback on the newsletter

For feedback on this newsletter please email us at unchaininc@gmail.com