



**29 Kerr Street
Fitzroy Vic 3065
0438 935 160**

30/12/02

Richard Schuster
Team leader, Statutory Planning
City of Port Phillip
rschuster@portphillip.vic.gov.au
cc. abalshaw@portphillip.vic.gov.au

Re: Application no 1448/2002, 11 The Esplanade St Kilda

Dear Richard,

VicMusic is a member based non-profit incorporated organization. VicMusic was established to represent and promote the growth and development of original contemporary music in Victoria. In this capacity, VicMusic has significant objections to the proposed development of the Esplanade in that in its current form it would severely and irrevocably damage the Victorian original and independent music industry.

Melbourne is world renowned for the strength and vibrancy of its music industry. The importance of the Esplanade Hotel in this it cannot be understated, as noted in the Esplanade Hotel Management Plan.

The Esplanade Hotel on the St Kilda foreshore (the Espy) has been hosting live music performances since it's construction in 1878. In the 1920s and 30'2 it developed a reputation for nurturing and supporting independent Australian musicians. The reputation continues while the music played at the Espy moves through jazz, rock n roll, country, grunge and ever on. In the last few decades, the hotel has become an icon of constantly evolving counter-cultural arts and alternative music. It is a must-have on every Australian non-mainstream musicians CV, and a must see for any backpacker carrying the Lonely Planet Guide to Australia.

VicMusic supports the many objections raised by the Esplanade Alliance, but has particular interest in the elements of the proposal that will compromise the operation of the hotel as a live music venue and therefore damage it's preeminent role in the Victoria's music industry. The particular elements which cause us concern are:

Performance areas. The Gerswhin Room hosts performances by a number of live bands on a nightly basis. Under the new proposal the area at the rear of the Gerswhin Room will be lost. It is critical to retain this area as this is essential for loading and unloading of musical equipment.

The Front Room (aka The Sunset Bar). The beer garden also serves as the loading area for the many bands who play in this room, the elimination of this area would make the loading of equipment virtually impossible as the only available access would be via the Gerswhin Room or the front steps.

Noise attenuation. Verbal commitments have been made by Becton in regards to noise attenuation, specifically double-glazing on the new development windows. The planning application does not stipulate this at any point. The danger is that incoming residents will not be aware of the ambient noise levels and therefore the operators of the hotel will find themselves subjected to reverse amenity objections over noise levels. The application does not make any provision for informing potential residents of the pre-existing use of the venue for live performances.

Fire egress. There is no provision for external fire escapes. Becton has proposed one be located backstage in the Gerswhin Room, this is completely unacceptable as the backstage area is congested with musical equipment and would not meet fire regulation standards whilst also operating as an effective backstage area.

In conclusion, the local planning guidelines (Design and Development Overlay) notes: *"To ensure that the reasonable access, operational and service needs of the Esplanade Hotel are appropriately addressed such that the cultural significance is not compromised."* (p21)

The aforementioned operational issues are practical elements which if allowed to go unchallenged will inevitably result in the curtailment of The Esplanade Hotel's role as an incubator of independent local music.

For all of these reasons, VicMusic recommends that the proposal should not be permitted in its current form.