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**BRUCE WEIBYE**  
**8/4 MARRIOTT STREET**  
**ST KILDA VIC 3182**

### **Qualifications and Experience**

Born in to a family of hotel operators, educated at Geelong Grammar, after one year studying law and five years travelling, I began my career in hotel management at Silver's Nightclub for two years. I was then General Manager of the Roxy Hotel (now The Motel) for six years, then most significantly, as Manager of the Esplanade Hotel (EH) for ten years from 1988. In brief I have over 25 years experience in operating hotels and in that time have been involved in all aspects of operations including permit application, refurbishment and building.

### **Area of Expertise**

I have operated the EH for ten years and my knowledge of this hotel and its particular problems and requirements is extensive. My career has always been in entertainment venues with their specific and individual needs.

### **Instructions**

I have been orally briefed to speak with reference to the specific needs and peculiar requirements of the EH, it being a "one-off" entertainment venue in Australia with a view to shedding some light in its unique requirements.

### **Basis of Report**

This report is based on the application before the Victorian Civil Administrative Tribunal (VCAT) and on the plans that apply to that application.

### **Report – Introduction**

For the purposes of this report, I have concentrated on four specific areas that I have referred to as (D) Bottle Shop, (E) Beer Garden, (H) Yard and (G) Yard as annotated on page one of the Fender Katsalidis plan. I have borne in mind clause 21.05-1 of the planning scheme to support the on-going "cultural significance" of the EH when making this report and the proposed plan's effect on that need from an operational point of view.

#### **1. Bottle Shop (D)**

The EH is a busy hotel. The bottle shop is the point of delivery and storage of all incoming stock which is of course significant in volume when catering for 4,000 to 7,000 patrons per week. The cool rooms and refrigerator facilities are the distribution point to the bars in the hotel in frequent small volume trips to minimise customer inconvenience, essential in a "performance environment".

It is important to remember the huge amounts of glass also kept in the bottle shop for collection, ideally once a week to keep noise and nuisance to neighbours to a minimum.

The bottle shop is also significant as a “face” of the EH. Promotionally, advertising wall space and material passed to bottle shop customers is an essential means of alerting people to the goings-on of the EH.

It is also important to remember that during festivals and major events at the EH that logistically the bottle shop is essential for delivery and storage of ice, extra furniture and goods. Ground level delivery in such volumes is extremely important, particularly with a view to OH & S issues.

The bottle shop also provides some essential parking and delivery space at peak times.

## **2. Beer Garden (H)**

Apart from the obvious loss of area to cater for patrons the beer garden is an essential delivery and parking point for bands and their equipment. Considering the number of band performances (30-70 per week) as an integral part of the “cultural significance” of the EH, it is difficult to see how the loss of this area will not eventually impact on that volume of performances as in the part of “queuing” area for performers has been essential, particularly in special event situations.

## **3. Yard (H)**

This area has been as essential parking area for the EH for staff and performers, capable of catering for up to 18 vehicles. Access for maintenance and service vehicles has also been via this area. This yard service the Gershwin Room performance area, traditionally the room for major acts that often need large amounts of equipment unloaded and then moved to the Gershwin Room from this space.

Larger waste bins also share this area and are moved in and out as collection dictates.

This area has also been essential in the production of stage flats, props and back-drops for performance in all stage areas.

The yard was also used on special occasions to set up marquees and stalls for luncheons, markets and film shoots, all supporting the EH’s “cultural significance” status.

## **4. Yard (G)**

This area to the rear of Baymor Court Flats also provides parking area for staff and entertainer vehicles as well as secure parking for interstate vehicles working at the EH. Informally up to ten vehicles can be parked here. The loss of say 28 parking spaces between the two yards mentioned would have a real effect on the EH’s ability to act as a major performance venue.

## **Other Significant Issues**

### **1. Kitchen**

The loss of the kitchen obviously effects operation of the hotel and is bound to have an impact. The kitchen is as “culturally significant” to many Melbourne residents as

is the music component of the EH. The presumption is that the kitchen will be relocated but not on the preferred ground floor.

## **2. General Storage**

A hotel like the EH requires huge storage areas. The loss of storage, cool and dry, with the bottle shop, kitchen, yard areas, is of great import and makes the smooth operation of the hotel that much more difficult. Logically, the space required for storage and cooling would need to take a floor area as big as the present bottle shop.

## **3. Waste**

Provision for dumpsters, recycled glass, recycled cardboard, pallets and miscellaneous waste (say up to 80 square metres) again on ground level, appears to be neglected.

## **4. Plant and Equipment**

I see no area where heating and cooling plant is relocated from its present site above the bottle shop. The loss of toilets in the bottle shop garage is also very significant. There would also be issues of drainage, sewerage and water run-off in the beer garden and yard areas having experienced how often major access is required.

## **5. Liquor Licensing**

The loss of previously licensed areas must have a significant effect on licensing numbers and would impact on expectations of patrons and the financial ability to continue the present commitment to performance acts.

## **6. Special Events**

The loss of significant areas used in the past to cater for special events, festivals etc. further reduces the ability to finance important entertainment events and benefits, which have been an integral element in the EH cultural contribution.

## **Summary**

The EH is a unique resource in a unique tourist precinct. The fact that it holds a place in the heart is quantifiable, the people of Melbourne have been voting with their feet to that fact for over 100 years. Through changing times and trends it has always been a place of recreation and entertainment for millions of people, with access to all, regardless of social status. I believe that the EH must be looked at as a "Luna Park", "Palais Theatre" or "St Kilda Pier", although we do not always use it, as Melburnians, we are very glad and proud that it is there!

The fact that apartments may surround it will have an effect that is not immediately quantifiable. Changes to some degree, must be expected. In my opinion, as is presently proposed, there is one certainty, it must, from a logistic point of view, be extremely difficult for the EH to continue in its present format. The loss of present licensed areas and ground space make the production of entertainment both financially and physically impossible at its present volume. One of the EH's most unique aspects is its ability to produce the volume of acts because it is one of the few venues in Australia that is physically able to do so.

There is also the loss of what one might call “fringe benefits” that come into effect. Film shoot locations (approx 100 in the past 15 years), beer garden function facilities, back yard function facilities that contribute considerably to promote the EH and serve the needs of its community.

No matter how good the intentions of any operator of the EH, the loss of a drive-in bottle shop, and a beer garden of such multi-purpose must lead to a “death-by-a-thousand-cuts” scenario on its own accord, let alone all other incumbrances previously mentioned.

It seems abundantly clear to me, that, as presently proposed, the EH will be transformed from a place of "cultural significance" to a place the once was a place of “cultural significance” purely because the facilities required to provide it with the flexibility and infrastructure to change with the times are being irrevocably withdrawn.