



NEWSLETTER 29 March 2001

NEW RULES for the ESPY SITE

Port Phillip Council has proposed a new set of planning controls for the Espy site. These would allow small-scale demolition but protect most of the Espy and Baymor Court buildings, allow low-rise development on the Victoria and Pollington Street perimeters and impose a maximum height of 10 storeys for a new building behind the existing Espy. Becton has been asked to respond by the end of February.

In our view these planning concessions to a developer should be tied to delivering a community benefit - in this case sustaining the long-term operational future and cultural use of the hotel.

NOT THEM AGAIN...

Last year, nominees of the Espy's would-be developers, Becton, again sought to exceed the 6 storey height limit on the site. This time, with a proposal for a 'benchmark height' development of 22-24 storeys - or 1.5 times higher than near-by Arrandale. But there is no case on planning grounds to amend the maximum height control. High rise is not justified by the site's geography or a desire to replicate the past mistake of Arrandale. The site is important because of the Espy hotel and its culture.

But the pub is in danger of falling into disrepair. Securing the Espy's long-term physical and cultural viability is the only real rationale for altering height and other controls. And what is required is modest: an eight storey maximum height in one part at the rear of the site and some strictly limited demolition. Independent assessors have estimated that these concessions would yield a benefit capable of refurbishing the entire Espy.

HAD ENOUGH CAMPAIGNS? THERE MUST BE A BETTER WAY...

For too long the hotel's owner, Becton Corporation, has neglected the hotel, except for a brief period of time when it used the Espy as a bargaining chip for its 38-storey development proposal in the hotel's backyard.

Through an innovative trust structure, the Esplanade Alliance is paving the way for a community purchase of the famous Esplanade Hotel.

This process began mid-2000 when Port Phillip Council established a Working Group to review the design and planning guidelines for the Espy site. The Working Group recognised the critical cultural and heritage role of the Espy and agreed that it should be maintained as "an incubator of independent local music and comedy talent and as a venue accessible to a broad, diverse and non-mainstream public."

It canvassed a range of ownership and management options for the hotel and recommended that \$10,000 be set aside to develop an appropriate model.

The three key elements of the model are:

- **a financial vehicle**, most likely to be a cultural trust which will secure tax deductibility for donations;
- **a management structure** that reflects the principal interest groups in the community, such as musicians and other artists, community radio, Fringe Festival, Port Phillip Council; and
- **an operational agreement** with a potential licensee, who has the vision to reinvigorate a Melbourne icon.

Unless investment in the physical fabric of the hotel is undertaken, we will lose the Espy. Someone needs to buy the Espy and separate it from the rest of the site to ensure that operational profits are re-invested in the ongoing success of the hotel.

With the support of Port Phillip Council and State Government, the Esplanade Alliance is working with lawyers and business consultants to establish a cultural trust that will raise the necessary purchase funds and secure the hotel as a vehicle for on-going cultural evolution, independent of any development at the back of the site.

We have already discussed the model with several art organisations, musicians and past and present Esplanade patrons and are confident that the community buy-out will be successful.

Becton always insisted that it would sell the hotel if it did not get a high-rise in the backyard. We are preparing ourselves for this opportunity...

Watch out in the In the weeks ahead for:

- Council's exhibition and call for public submissions on their proposed new controls for the site
- Becton's push for a high-rise tower dominating the St Kilda skyline
- Esplanade Alliance Management Model for the Espy

And remember:

- the Election promises by the Bracks Government opposing high-rise development in foreshore areas

The future of the Espy as a crucible of music, comedy and art in Melbourne is again at stake. Be a part of the most important and exciting chapter in the colorful life of the Espy. We need your ideas, support and enthusiasm to make this work.

UPDATES

St Kilda Foreshore

Concept plans for the future of the St Kilda foreshore - from Luna Park to Catani Gardens - are due to go out for public exhibition very soon. Make sure you head down to the Council 'Think Tents' to put your 2 (or more) bits in. There are many exciting possibilities but there also needs to be intense public scrutiny to avoid the mistakes of the Sea Baths and St Kilda station sites. Have a look at the Foreshore display at: www.portphillip.vic.gov.au or contact the City of Port Phillip ph: 9209 6777.

What is the Esplanade Alliance?

The Esplanade Alliance is a resident action group whose primary interest is the St Kilda Foreshore. EA has been working for some time with the City of Port Phillip and the State Government on major urban design issues that affect the foreshore. If you would like to know more about EA or the issues that affect the St Kilda foreshore, check out the our home page at www.vicnet.net.au/~espall

If you would like to get in touch with us or be on our mailing list please contact us via

e-mail:

espyalliance@yahoo.com

or snail mail:

P.O. Box 1099 St Kilda South, VIC 3182

regular monthly meetings of the **Esplanade Alliance**

date: 2nd Wednesday of each month

t i m e : 7 : 3 0 p m

place: 1st Floor, St Kilda
Army & Navy Club
88 Acland Street, St Kilda

ALL WELCOME

 cut out and mail - we want to hear from you

HOW to SUPPORT US

- Yes, I would like to support a Community Trust for the Espy hotel
- I can provide practical skills to assist establishing a Trust
- I can help the EA with letterboxing, phone calls, meetings
- I would like to donate to the Esplanade Alliance (amount \$.....)
- I would like to join the Esplanade Alliance (\$10 Full or \$5 Concession)

For memberships or donations please make cheques payable to Esplanade Alliance Inc.