

**A CASE TO THE MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND WATER FOR A BETTER
FUTURE FOR SHED 26: THE FORMER MAIN WORKSHOP OF THE
GOVERNMENT (GLANVILLE) DOCKYARD**

1.0	Preamble
1.1	I have had a long and deep involvement in both Port Adelaide and South Australian history and heritage matters through voluntary associations and as a State public servant.
1.2	The Port's 'modern' urban renewal began in 1975 with the establishment of the state/local government Port Adelaide Centre Joint Committee. The context for the Committee's creation was the Government's approval of the West Lakes development, which included a major shopping centre, and the impact of containerisation, which was to lead to a major decline of the Port's shipping-related workforce. It was obvious that the Port Centre, the busiest shopping precinct outside of Adelaide in the 1950s, was facing major challenges.
1.3	When I reflect on the history of the various urban renewal initiatives since 1975, there is a common thread that spans the years. One obvious strategy to boost the Port's fortunes was to capitalize on its heritage assets, as many other port cities have done. However, despite some good intentions, the potential to make Port Adelaide a major 'must see' tourist destination has never been realized.
1.4	There have been some major achievements – the creation of the SA Maritime Museum (1986) and the National Railway Museum (1988) being two of them – but even they have a sobering back story. Without the \$1.1m Commonwealth funding provided for the State's Jubilee 150 it's highly likely that the SA Maritime Museum would not have eventuated. (I know, as I was heavily involved in its creation when employed by the History Trust.) Equally, the Railway Museum's relocation from Mile End was highly dependent on Australian Bicentenary funding, and its subsequent expansion on more Commonwealth funding via a Centenary of Federation grant.
1.5	<i>A missing ingredient has been the allocation of sufficient State money in the initial stages to reap greater economic benefits in the long term. Few would dispute that the quality of both those museums has well repaid the Commonwealth's investment.</i>
2.0	The 'heritage tourism opportunity' that Shed 26 represents
2.1	Waterfront housing will not be a tourist attraction, but a development that incorporates an eye-catching building with ample room to house a variety of tenants and uses could be. I suggest that many of the Port's existing attractions and businesses would benefit by the State seizing the moment to examine developing a major must-see tourist attraction that would take the Port's visitor appeal to a new level.
2.2	As you know, Shed 26 and the adjacent Fletcher's Dock sit next to a State Heritage Place, 'The Fletcher's Slip Precinct (including the former Fletcher's and Dunnikier Slipways Sites and Associated Structures'. Managed as one, those sites may well represent the last chance to develop such an attraction on a highly visible (and historically very appropriate) site in the Inner Harbour. It would allow the scattered vessels of the SA Maritime Museum (and conceivably the clipper ship <i>City of Adelaide</i>)

	to be brought together to create a lively interactive precinct with broad appeal.
2.3	It would also allow the rich and varied history of the Port Adelaide District – only lightly-touched upon in the Maritime Museum due to its limited exhibition space – to be comprehensively exhibited. That history encompasses themes of State-wide significance, including commerce and industry, transport and communication, and defence. Through the Port’s wool stores, flour mills and ketch fleet it also embraces the wool and grain trade, two staples of the South Australian economy. The right mix of commercial tenants and creative displays to engage visitors could have much to offer.
2.4	Given that the Cedar Woods development is scheduled to take some years, the two initiatives could proceed in tandem and be of mutual benefit. An investment of resources now could indeed deliver a win-win outcome for the developers, the local community and the State. It would certainly be in ‘the public interest’.
3.0	The ‘chance to avoid another strategic mistake’ that Shed 26 represents
3.1	<p><u>Past mistakes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The former Custom House (1879) near the Port Lighthouse occupies a strategic location. It was sold to private enterprise after the Customs vacated it in 1987 – from memory, a decision driven by a directive for the Port Redevelopment Project to be self-funding – and has remained vacant ever since. The southern half of the building was originally built for the Port Adelaide Institute and in addition to a major library housed Australia’s first nautical museum (1933) and first regional art gallery (1880). Its history and location would have made it an ideal location for similar community/cultural services. • The ribbon shopping along St Vincent St and Commercial Rd was allowed to decline to such an extent that it is now proving much harder to revive than it could have been. Ironically, in a State and country where most major shopping centres have almost exactly the same stores, those shops represent a chance for the Port to be different, as demonstrated by Renewal SA’s initiatives in recent years. • The demolition of the boat building and repair yards at Birkenhead, examples of an industry present at the Port almost from its birth, for a development that was subsequently scuttled. They should have been viewed as an asset, not an environmental problem.
3.2	<p><u>A looming mistake</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The previous government’s decision to designate No 2 Dock as a Maritime Heritage Precinct for heritage vessels was misguided. It’s too far away from the commercial centre of the Port and the heritage attractions located there. I know from my time as Director of the State History Centre at Old Parliament House how hard it was to attract visitors to the Library/Museum/Art Gallery precinct to venture a relatively short distance down North Terrace. <p>Shed 26 and adjacent areas would be a much better and more visible location.</p>
3.3	<p><u>Some reality checks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The continued growth of major regional shopping centres (at Kilkenny, Fulham

	<p>and West Lakes) since they opened in the 1960s and early 1970s has had and continues to have a significant economic impact on the Port's commercial life. The more recent growth of Internet shopping is also doubtless taking its toll. More thought needs to be given to the number and type of shops that the Port can both sustain and exploit to provide a point of difference.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long-term redevelopment projects such as the residential ones now underway have a habit of taking considerably longer than planned and/or being delayed by unforeseen events such as credit squeezes and site contamination issues. They can also lead to premature demolition of buildings and sites that then remain vacant for years. Putting too much emphasis on new residential buildings at the expense of heritage tourism initiatives is not wise.
4.0	A way ahead?
4.1	<p>From my lengthy public service experience I can imagine some of the pressure that is building to resolve this issue. May I suggest that things are often not quite as urgent as developers make them out to be. Rather than considering confirming or directing the removal of the provisional entry in the Heritage Register by exercising your powers under s18(7) of the Heritage Places Act, the more flexible option of letting the provisional entry stand until a rapid but thorough look at alternative futures for Shed 26 is undertaken warrants serious consideration.</p>
4.2	<p>Given the long and at times tortuous history of the Port Redevelopment since 1975, I suggest that there might be everything to gain by keeping options open. There has to be a chance that getting a broad spectrum of stake-holders around one table could lead to a more creative response to the site's potential than what is currently proposed.</p>
5.0	A Final Comment - The Heritage SA Assessment
5.1	<p>I am aware from your email correspondence with a Port of Adelaide National Trust member that you were concerned by the disparity between the SA Heritage Council's listing decision and the Heritage SA recommendation. As the Principal Heritage Officer in Heritage SA for some 14 years I can reassure you that from time to time the Council and its predecessor, the State Heritage Authority, would reach a different verdict than the officers serving them.</p>
5.2	<p>By its nature heritage assessment entails subjective opinions and exercise of judgment. It is not, and cannot be, an exact science. Like the study of history, it benefits from long exposure to the field by its practitioners.</p>
5.3	<p>Just in case you are not fully aware of the extent of the reduction of Heritage SA's staff levels and overall resources over some years of budget cuts under the previous government, many years of head knowledge and experience were lost from the Heritage Assessment Team both before and after I retired in 2011. The loss of the Heritage Education Officer and Public Communications Officer and the abolition of the South Australian Heritage Fund (since reinstated by your government), Heritage Advisory Service and State-wide Heritage Survey Program were other measures that have considerably impacted Heritage SA's ability to undertake its core business.</p>

Brian Samuels
29 March 2019