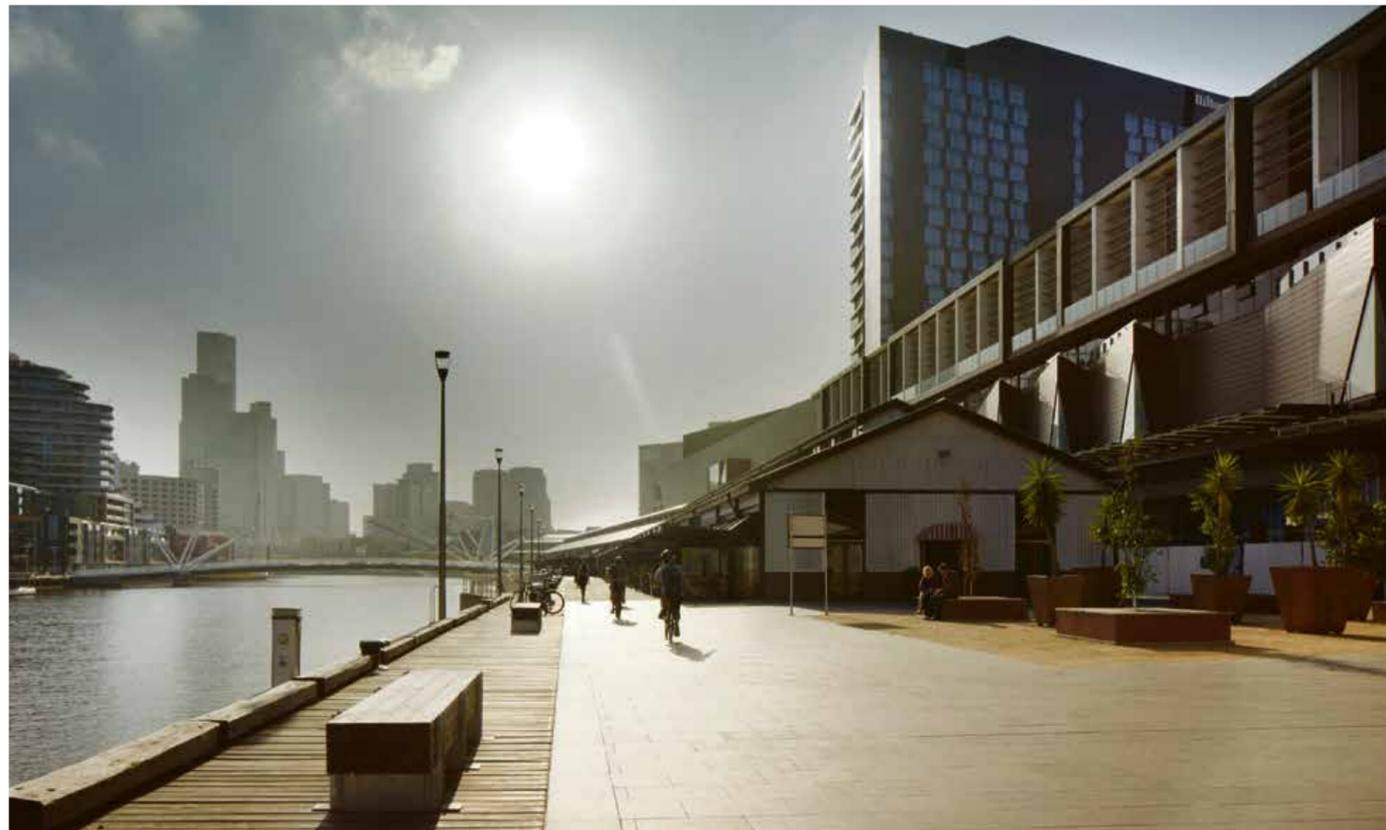


FORM

FORM



SOUTH WHARF PROMENADE

Melbourne's centre of gravity keeps moving slowly as we keep rediscovering the river.

Daniella Casamento

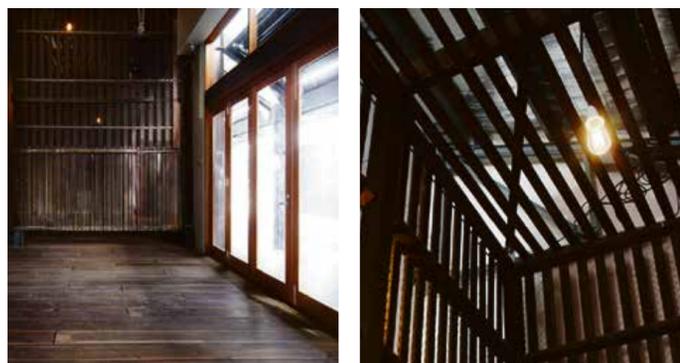
Activation of the southern bank of the Yarra River extending west from Princes Bridge at St Kilda Road was born of the forward thinking outlined in numerous urban design masterplans commissioned by successive State Governments over many decades.

Construction of Hamer Hall, formerly the Melbourne Concert Hall and renamed in 2004, began during the 1970s. The venue, opened in 1982, is undergoing extensive redevelopment including the addition of new connections to the river amongst other improvements and is due to reopen later this year. The completion of Southgate in 1992 and the ongoing development of the southern bank of the Yarra River, including the launch of the Crown Hotel and Entertainment Complex in 1997, have transformed Southbank into a vibrant

arts, entertainment and commercial precinct. Across Clarendon Street, the Melbourne Exhibition Centre also opened in 1997 and is now linked with the Melbourne Convention Centre, Hilton Hotel and South Wharf DFO all completed in 2009.

The development of South Wharf Promenade is the most recent transformation of this former industrial area rich maritime history. The old cargo sheds which line the river at the foot of the Convention Centre and Hilton Hotel have been converted into food and beverage venues. With the launch of the Melbourne Food and Wine Festival this month, more Melburnians and visitors will discover this side of the river, a vantage point for the waterside workers of an earlier time.

Bruce Trethowan has gained a comprehensive insight into the history of the precinct in his role as restoration architect for South Wharf Promenade and the dry dock area.



"The cargo sheds embody the overall character of the wharf culture with the waterside workers, casual employment, trade unionism and the gradual changing of the docks," he explains. "This is an important aspect of the social culture of the area. The South Wharf era eventually came to an end after the Charles Grimes Bridge was built in 1975. Ships were getting bigger and couldn't pass under the bridge to get to the wharf."

The Polly Woodside, owned by the National Trust of Australia (Victoria), was undergoing restoration in the dry dock during this time and has quietly overseen the development of this area of Southbank for over 40 years.

The social heritage entwined with the physical heritage of the wharf and the sheds is recognised with a listing of the sheds by Heritage Victoria. Trethowan also gives credit to the Plenary Group for including the cargo sheds in their winning bid on the Convention Centre project.

"The sheds were starting to degrade. At that stage they weren't included in the land to be bid on by the groups vying for the project. The private-public relationship worked well because all parties were keen to keep the sheds to create a buzz and to jazz up the dry dock area," he says. The public entities included Major Projects Victoria, the National Trust and the Melbourne Maritime Museum.

The wharf was built to cater for the loading and



unloading of cargo and so the level of the wharf was a different height on the river side of the sheds to the original South Wharf Road side of the sheds. The access road was paved in cobbled bluestone and as a reminder of the significance of this site a remnant of the original level can be seen through the glass viewing platform beside

the office at Shed 11. "South Wharf Road was lower to suit the height of tray trucks" explains Trethowan. "The river side was different because cranes handled the goods off the ships."

The development required the entire wharf to be raised by 30cm to make it functional as

a public thoroughfare. This also provided the opportunity to repair and replace timber footings with concrete piers and provide underfloor services for the sheds' new purpose.

The rebirth of South Wharf Promenade involved a design approach that was sensitive to the original

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