

A museum's transport of delight

Fishermans Bend is a golden chance to preserve history, writes **Jon Faine**.

The final nail was hammered into the carcass of our car industry with the announcement that Holden were closing its Fishermans Bend headquarters. Along with it we lose the world-class design studio. Car fanatics and Holden collectors are weeping into their oil cans, but this decision affects every Melbourne.

But it also presents us with a unique opportunity. We can convert the soon-to-be abandoned buildings into a world-class transport museum, a tourism and educational drawcard, a showcase of innovation spanning from 100 years ago to the present and into the future.

The story of modern Melbourne is the story of the local automotive industry. Our prosperity today is built on this history, which we largely ignore. The first car made in Australia was fabricated in High Street Armadale by Herbert Thomson and Edward Holmes in 1896, only 10 years after Karl Benz had ditched the horse and instead married a four-wheeled carriage to the newly invented internal combustion engine.

Melbourne became the epicentre of Australian engineering: post-gold rush prosperity was cemented by industry. The Holden coach-building operation – putting handmade wooden and steel bodies on imported truck and car chassis – was booming for decades even before General Motors kicked off the Holden brand after WWII.

Innovation and invention – creative commerce – became the key to Melbourne's growth. Jobs flowed, and with them the city grew. It is no coincidence that Melbourne is the nation's creative hub – we were



The first Holden is driven off the production line at Fishermans Bend.

industrially creative long before “the arts” became our calling card.

But now, in 2020, we have to look not just at our past but our future in a rapidly transforming world. And we can learn much about what happens next from understanding our own history.

For more than 20 years, taxpayers have splurged at least \$50 million annually on the F1 Grand Prix at Albert Park. The true figure is undoubtedly more, probably \$70 million, but for the sake of the equation let us all pretend the reputed annual fee of \$50 million is correct. Do the maths – take \$50 million and multiply it for each of 20 years.

More than \$1 billion for 20 weekends. Value for money? Hobart got MONA for \$75 million. It provides tourists and locals alike with a venue seven days a week, 52 weeks each year. It has spawned a thriving satellite economy and made Tasmania one of the “hot” travel destinations in the world. The F1 Grand Prix costs about one MONA every year. And it lasts for a weekend.

For a city the size and sophistication of Marvellous Melbourne, we are “under-museumed” and need to improve our offer. Visitors flock to Victoria for the penguins, the Apostles and Great Ocean Road, pour into the

NGV and the MCG for the Sport Museum. Federation Square attracts huge visitor numbers and when ACMI re-opens there will be more to enjoy. Hosier Lane hosts pedestrian traffic jams to enjoy the street art, and Queen Vic Market – especially the Night Market – pull huge crowds.

But museums? Jeff Kennett stopped the Melbourne Museum being built on the river bank so that the casino and convention centre could get prime billing. Sadly, ever since, the Melbourne Museum has struggled in Carlton Gardens. Despite a terrific offer, it is often left off the tourist trail.

ScienceWorks is about to get an exciting upgrade, and if the money can be found to do it properly there is every reason to be optimistic. Hopefully it includes consolidating the museum's various storage sites into one huge space. Like all cultural institutions, 90 per cent of their collection is in storage.

The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is about to start an eye-watering \$500 million overhaul. Even before this extraordinary and questionable expansion, the collection is overwhelming. It will cost more than any other cultural program in recent years. Is this really our No.1 priority?

The PM has also announced that taxpayers are shelling out for a

theme park at Botany Bay. Currently the site of refineries and heavy industry we are paying \$54 million for a Captain Cook “memorial park”. Most people will see it from the window of a jet as they approach Sydney Airport. Few will detour from Sydney Harbour to Botany Bay, through the smoke stacks and the truck traffic.

While all this federal money is being pumped into Sydney and Canberra, Melbourne is at risk of missing the best opportunity we will ever have to understand our own evolution from gold rush boom town through to one of the world's most liveable cities.

The iconic main buildings at Fishermans Bend are earmarked to become part of a new University of Melbourne engineering precinct. The concept is slowly evolving and shows great promise. Easily included would be a new museum dedicated to exploring the technologies and impact on our lives that grew from the manufacturing of cars, trucks, trains, ships, aircraft and bicycles.

Around the world, transport museums are major tourism drawcards. Imagine riding a restored vintage tram from Docklands to Fishermans Bend, and after touring the transport museum then floating to ScienceWorks on a historic steam-powered ferry.

The iconic Holden and Ford factory car collections and many other historic vehicles can be featured alongside the cutting edge design studio – including clay modelling of concept cars. The 3D printers and latest carbon fibre technology can be contrasted with lost crafts including coach-builders making panels to restore historic machinery. An industrial version of Sovereign Hill.

Fishermans Bend presents an unmissable opportunity.

Jon Faine is secretary of Melbourne Transport Museum Inc.

Farewell share-house, we had good times

Michael Koziol

It's not uncommon to fall in love with a house. Plenty of people romanticise their childhood home, or their first apartment, or their marital abode.

You're not supposed to fall in love with your university share-house – especially when it's not even yours.

This particular dwelling had all the usual faults and then some: next to a church, basically derelict. One bedroom was dubbed “the mould room” and its window was to be kept open permanently.

I never lived in this house. I spent the night there once or twice, after one of the legendary parties that took place within its walls. Over the years the guest list expanded, if anything, rather than dwindled. There were mainstays, certainly, but newcomers were welcomed into the fold.

The average age might have crept up, but in spirit this house was forever 21. We sat in inflatable pools in the backyard, cheered drag queens as they performed in the living room and kissed strangers in the corridors. We danced to the Hottest 100 on the front porch and yelled about who was robbed (Lorde). We scooped punch from a bowl overlooked by a bust of Zeus our hosts found in the hard rubbish.

They were more than just parties. They were fulcrums on which the year pivoted, and as time went on they became like cast reunions, imbued with the memories stashed within the house's walls. They were about cementing a sense of wonder and belonging in a world that seemed so itinerant. The house wasn't just a party den. It was also a refuge – quite literally, for two refugees who stayed there for a while.

It was a landing place for young and nervous gay men from out of town, and a base for artists and activists trying to work their way into a difficult world.

All this was enabled by the fact the landlord – the church next door – had struck something of an unspoken deal with the tenants: we'll keep the rent down as long as you don't expect any upkeep.

Eventually, the main tenants of the house succumbed to turning 30 and bought an apartment. But they couldn't afford to live in it.

So for another four years the good times rolled on, each party invigorated by the threat that it might be the last.

Last week, the day finally, inevitably came. Mould was to give way to marble, and drag shows were to give way to dinner parties. When they moved out they found six boxes of costumes people had left behind over the years, some still coated in red wine. The bacchanal was over.

I hope there are other houses like it out there, defying the market and amassing a family beyond its immediate owners and tenants.

Can you mourn the loss of something that was never yours? Absolutely.

Michael Koziol is a staff writer.

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Why I'm introducing this climate change bill

Certainty is needed on climate policy. My bill will help give it, writes **Zali Steggall**.

My dream as a 13-year-old was to get to the top of my sport. As an Australian competing in a sport dominated by northern hemisphere countries, the odds were against me and there were many who didn't believe it was possible. But with ambition, a lot of hard work and resilience, it was possible.

My challenge now is to set Australia on a safer climate future, for my kids and future generations. That is why this month I will be introducing the people's Climate Change Bill to Parliament, to end a decade of divisive politics.

Sadly, the lessons of this summer already seem forgotten as Liberal backbenchers Jason Falinski and Tim Wilson couldn't resist playing politics and misrepresenting the bill in an opinion piece in these pages last week.

So I am calling on all MPs to think carefully about the responsibility they owe to their electorates, their children and future generations and

support this plan for the future with a conscience vote. Our country is crying out for certainty on climate policy and this is what the bill provides. More than 60,000 Australians have signed up to the website calling for a Climate Change Bill to be supported by all members of Parliament.

According to the most recent Climate of the Nation report, more than 81 per cent of Australians believe climate change will lead to more droughts and flooding, while 64 per cent believe the country should have a national target for net zero emissions by 2050.

To protect our economy and environment, Australia must have strong national plans to adapt and mitigate the increasing impacts of climate change. The only way we can keep Australia safe is to set our goal to stay below 2 degrees of warming and work our hardest to get there.

The bill's central purpose is to assist with this. It does this by establishing a sensible framework,

endorsed by business including the Australian Industry Group and Business Council of Australia. This type of framework has enjoyed bipartisan support in Britain since 2008 and New Zealand since last year – to name but two.

Part of this framework sets up in law a net zero emissions target by 2050. More than 80 per cent of businesses support this, and all Australian states and territories already have this in law or policy. This bill includes establishing an independent Reserve Bank-style Climate Change Commission, tasked with advising government on the best way to get to net zero, climate risks and the progress towards targets.

Falinski and Wilson argued Australia already has a Climate Change Authority to do this. But they failed to mention that since being completely gutted by the Abbott Coalition government in 2015, the CCA is little used and ineffective.

The new Climate Change Commission will report regularly, independently and publicly without referral, and ensure transparency and accountability for the public. Coalition members have also

raised concerns about potential duplication of efforts with states under this bill. Written very clearly in the text of the legislation is a requirement for efforts by the Climate Change Commission and government to be compatible with the states and territories.

The bill also fills vital gaps in Australia's policy landscape. It will require regular national risk assessments outlining the effect to Australia from climate impacts such as fires, droughts, sea level rises and extreme weather events, and regional development and employment planning impacted by a transition from fossil fuels. Five-yearly adaptation plans are then implemented by the government in response to those risks.

There is no issue of constitutional validity of the bill, as raised in the Falinski and Wilson article. This is only another “fear and smear” attempt by its opponents.

The challenge ahead is not simple, but it must be faced square on, with bipartisan support, with resolution and a plan. The stakes are high. But this is a race we must and can win.

Zali Steggall is the independent member for Warrighah.