

## MEMORANDUM

TO	Marcus Lane Group	FROM	Anita Brady
RE	Amendment C214 – peer review of Thematic History	DATE	31 May 2021

**Introduction**

This memorandum was prepared for Marcus Lane Group on behalf of Glen Eira City Council and relates to Planning Scheme Amendment C214.

The memorandum summarises a peer review of the *City of Glen Eira Thematic Environmental History (Refresh) 2020*, prepared by Simon Reeves of Built Heritage Pty Ltd, and generally referred to below as the 'Thematic History' or the 'Glen Eira Thematic History'.

The Thematic History was adopted by Council in August 2020, and Amendment C214 proposes to include the Thematic History as a Background Document in the Glen Eira Planning Scheme, including as a 'policy reference' to Clause 21.10 Heritage and Clause 22.01 Heritage Policy.

In so doing, the Thematic History will replace the current environmental history for Glen Eira known as the *Glen Eira Heritage Management Plan 1996 Volume 1*, by Andrew Ward, and generally referred to below as the '1996 Environmental History'.

Amendment C214 also proposes to implement the recommendations of the City of Glen Eira Post-War and Hidden Gems Heritage Review 2020, Stage 2, including introducing the Heritage Overlay to four new heritage precincts and 34 individual heritage places. This peer review has not included a review of the Stage 2 study or its recommendations relating to the new heritage precincts and places.

Council, through exhibition of the Amendment, received 24 submissions. While the majority related to the proposed new heritage precincts and places, three submissions related to the Thematic History. Accordingly, the three submissions on the Thematic History have also been reviewed here.

**Background to preparation of the Glen Eira Thematic History**

It is understood that in 2019 Built Heritage Pty Ltd, authors of the Thematic History, undertook a 'high level review' of Council's 1996 Environmental History. This review recommended that the existing history, which had been laid out in chronological order, be re-formatted into the thematic framework as outlined in Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes (Heritage Council of Victoria, 2010) which is generally regarded as the current industry standard for a Thematic Environmental History. Built Heritage Pty Ltd also reviewed the suite of historical themes and sub-themes, indicating which ones were adequately covered in the 1996 Environmental History; which ones required expansion and/or updating; and which ones were not covered and accordingly required new research, investigation and documenting in an updated history. The review also identified which of the Framework of Historical Themes were not considered

applicable or particularly noteworthy within the context of Glen Eira. Built Heritage Pty Ltd was subsequently instructed by Council to proceed with reformatting and rewriting the Thematic History in accordance with the recommendations and methodology outlined in their review.

### **Peer review of Glen Eira Thematic History**

#### *Introductory comments*

This peer review initially refers to Heritage Victoria's 'Model Consultants Brief for Heritage Studies', January 2010, generally referred to below as the 'Model Brief'.

While the Model Brief appears to be no longer readily available on the Heritage Victoria or Heritage Council websites, it is referred to here because it includes 'Guidelines for Thematic Environmental Histories' which is a useful and still relevant guide to the preparation of Thematic Histories; and their review and assessment, as undertaken here.

The Model Brief addresses the 'Thematic Environmental History of post-contact settlement and development of the study area' (i.e. the subject municipality) at Section 5.2. Matters which are generally relevant to the update of Glen Eira's Thematic History are set out below.

A Thematic Environmental History should:

- Address the history of the physical development of the study area since post-contact occupation; and isolate and explain those aspects and themes that are crucial to understanding the area and the historic physical fabric as it exists today.
- Identify the key themes in the historical development of the study area. Victoria's Framework of Historical Themes developed by Heritage Victoria should be used as a checklist in producing the Thematic Environmental History.
- Clearly define the key themes that will provide an historical explanation of the existing physical fabric and land use patterns of the study area. These themes will be applied in the identification and evaluation of individual components of the study area's heritage.
- Be concise (up to 20,000 words) and analytical; and must not be a comprehensive chronological history.

The 'Guidelines for Thematic Environmental Histories' (Appendix 4 of the Model Brief) provide further guidance under the heading 'What is a Thematic Environmental History?', including giving emphasis to:

- Identifying the key themes that have influenced the historical development of the municipality or study area since first contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.
- Explaining how and why the municipality looks like it does today, and how the themes may have influenced the settlement and development patterns of the municipality or study area.
- Helping to raise community awareness of the historical development and heritage of the study area.
- Not being a chronological account of everything that happened in the municipality or study area; and not being a record of all the individuals, events, schools, sporting clubs, institutions etc that may have left their mark on the municipality or study area.
- Not being a substitute for a municipal or local history; the latter are quite different and serve different purposes.

And, under the heading ‘Why is the Thematic Environmental History important?’, the Guidelines note that a Thematic Environmental History serves three essential roles:

- It ensures that the places that are identified for conservation reflect and represent the historical development of the area.
- It can provide knowledge of places of historical importance that might not otherwise come to be identified or for which there may be little if any visible evidence (such as potential historic and archaeological sites).
- It is a useful tool when undertaking comparative assessments of the significance of particular places.

#### *1996 Environmental History*

The ‘Background History of Glen Eira’ was included in Volume 1 of the ‘City of Glen Eira Heritage Management Plan 1996’ by Andrew Ward; this is the 1996 Environmental History.

The 1996 history was largely laid out chronologically and covered topics such as pastoralism (1830s-40s); land sales and road boards (1850s-60s); proclamation of shires and land boom (1870s-90s); post Federation years (1900s-10s); suburban expansion and consolidation (1920s-30s); and 1940s onwards.

While the 1996 history served to help explain the physical development and evolution of the municipality and assisted with the identification and assessment of heritage places, it was a history written in the period before a thematic approach – rather than a chronological approach – was preferred for these histories. The modern thematic approach and methodology is both more comprehensive and inclusive and assists in identifying and assessing a broader range of heritage places in Glen Eira.

#### *City of Glen Eira Thematic Environmental History (Refresh) 2020*

The Glen Eira Thematic History is generally consistent with the ‘Guidelines for Thematic Environmental Histories’ referred to above. It uses and appropriately adopts Victoria’s Framework of Historical Themes; it is also a suitable report to replace the 1996 Environmental History in the Planning Scheme, and to be included as a ‘policy reference’ to Clause 21.10 Heritage and Clause 22.01 Heritage Policy.

As per the ‘Methodology’ and the re-use and re-formatting of the 1996 Environmental History, the Glen Eira Thematic History notes that relevant text from the 1996 history was included, where relevant, under the themes of the updated history.<sup>1</sup> The 1996 text was then, for the most part, liberally supplemented by new and additional text. This approach is considered to be clear and helpful.

On the themes and sub-themes, or topics/headings of the Thematic History, they are both comprehensive and appropriate to Glen Eira. The identification throughout the history of those themes which are ‘not considered to be a major theme in the development of the City of Glen Eira’, is also an acceptable inclusion in the Thematic History.

The Thematic History is additionally generally consistent in its format, methodology and content with other recent thematic environmental histories prepared under the auspices of a heritage

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<sup>1</sup> Glen Eira Thematic History, pp. 5-6.

study; or commissioned by a Council as an update of an earlier history; or to otherwise ‘fill a gap’ in the heritage planning documentation.

These, as with the Glen Eira Thematic History, are all distinguished by their use of a thematic framework, highlighted with headings, followed by the identification of ‘related places’ (i.e. places which relate to the themes) and/or a discussion of the heritage places or historic physical elements which the themes have given rise to.

Further comment on the themes is included below in the review of submissions.

### **Review of submissions**

Both Submission 17 (from the National Trust, Victoria) and Submission 18 (from the Glen Eira Historical Society) largely support the Amendment and are not further commented on here.

Submission 6 (from Joe and Pesa Gottlieb, owners of an affected property at 40 Lumeah Road, Caulfield North) is in two parts, with the first part lodged in January 2021 and a ‘late attachment’ lodged in March 2021.

The submission, in two parts, is very detailed and opposes the proposed individual inclusion of the property at 40 Lumeah Road, Caulfield North, in the Heritage Overlay; this is not commented on further here.

The submission also raises issues to do with privacy and procedural matters, with limited comment provided on the latter.

The submission additionally opposes the proposed inclusion of the Glen Eira Thematic History as a background document in the Glen Eira Planning Scheme; and refers throughout the submission to the Thematic History as the ‘Refresh’.

Issues or concerns identified in the submission, in relation to the Thematic History, are not reproduced in detail here but largely relate to (paraphrased and summarised):

- There is inaccurate ‘background material’ in the Thematic History, and this material has been used to inform the assessment and recommendations relating to the Lumeah Road property.
- The Thematic History should not replace the 1996 Environmental History in the Planning Scheme because it is inaccurate.
- The Thematic History relies heavily on the fact of 40 Lumeah Road winning architecture awards and popular acclaim, but this is because the architects of the property [Wood Marsh] used the awards for self-promotion. The history fails to articulate how winning an award justifies the inclusion of 40 Lumeah Road in the study and list of ‘related places’ in the Thematic History [see more on relevant themes below].

The submission raises specific issues relating to the theme of ‘Making homes for Victorians’ at Section 6.7 of the Thematic History; and ‘Achieving distinction in the arts’ at Section 9.3 of the history.

On the theme of ‘Making homes for Victorians’, the submission notes:

This section seeks to update Andrew Ward’s 1996 history in respect of the post-WW2 era, in particular under the heading “Building houses in post-WW2 era” on page 84. Particular reference is made to identify the “enclave” in the vicinity of the block enclosed by Aroona, Howitt and Lumeah Roads.

Particular reference is made to “Related Places” that are limited to houses from the 1950s/60s/70s.

And on the theme of ‘Achieving distinction in the arts’, the submission notes:

Under the heading “Winning architectural awards” commencing on page 131 [of the Thematic History], the author has included a list of “Related Places” that lists 2 houses including the Submitters Property, that are included as being identified only by Built Heritage Pty Ltd.

Regarding the above, and as a general comment, the themes referred to are in my opinion legitimate themes to include and explore in the Thematic History. They are particularly relevant to Glen Eira and are appropriate topics for an updated history. The related places identified under these themes are also relevant and appropriate.

The submission then poses two questions:<sup>2</sup>

Why is information included in the Refresh not relevant as background material?

How is the Refresh not accurate or relevant in respect of identifying the Property for heritage protection?

Without reproducing the content of the submission under each of these questions, it is noted that the matter of the first question is procedural, with the submitter concerned about the content of the Thematic History being used to inform the outcomes of other aspects of Amendment C214, before the Thematic History is formally included in the Planning Scheme. However, as noted above, it is understood that the Thematic History was adopted by Council in August 2020 and is therefore legitimately under consideration as part of C214.

On the second question, the submitter again refers to the theme of ‘Making homes for Victorians’ at Section 6.7, and specifically ‘Building houses in the post-WWII era’.<sup>3</sup> The submission notes that the latter refers to ‘houses in the defined area enclosed by Aroona, Howitt and Lumeah Roads’, and identifies ‘related places’ from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, but does not refer to the property at 40 Lumeah Road, Caulfield North (which was constructed in the early 1990s). In not referring to the latter property under the post-WWII heading, the submitter again questions the validity of the proposed Heritage Overlay control for the property.

In response to this it is noted that the absence of a listing under the category of post-WWII houses does not hold especial relevance, as there is no obligation or requirement in a Thematic History to identify every place of relevance to every identified theme. The ‘Guidelines for Thematic Environmental Histories’ also emphasise brevity, albeit it is acknowledged that many of these histories, undertaken by different consultants for different municipalities, regularly and significantly exceed the preferred 20,000 word limit identified above.

On the property being included in, and referred to, at Section 9.3, under ‘Achieving distinction in the arts’ and specifically under ‘Winning architectural awards’, the submitter notes:

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<sup>2</sup> Submission 6, pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> Thematic History, pp. 84-86.

In section 9.3 (Achieving distinction in the arts, commencing on page 126) under the heading Creating [sic] architectural awards on page 131, the Refresh takes as significant the fact that no architectural award has been granted to a building in the city of Glen Eira for 25 years. This can in no way add to the significance of a building being included in the Victorian Architecture Awards as the siting of a building in a particular municipality is not a criteria that is considered. The Refresh perhaps ignores the possibility that no “floodgates” were opened at all but rather it had been the conservative direction taken by Council planning approvals that severely limited the ability for normal change and renewal to take place in the City of Glen Eira. What we see now in more recent houses built in the area is that this renewal has resulted in a fresh spate of design that is of itself perhaps part of a new era that has not yet fully developed. The view put forward in the refresh is that Property is somehow unique, but only when compared to buildings of the 1950s/60s/70s.

To conclude that this results in the Property being somehow worthy of protection is taking it out of the proper context of late 20th and early 21st century architecture.

The Refresh fails to articulate how the mere winning of an award as a result of the Property being heavily promoted both within and outside the Architectural profession. The inclusion of the Property as one of the “Related places” without such definition of the value of awards seems merely an afterthought that carries with it little significance as background material.

In response to this, it is my opinion that the property at 40 Lumeah Road is reasonably included under this theme, which highlights local buildings which have received prestigious architectural awards in the 1990s. It is a legitimate topic for the Thematic History to explore, and the winning of an architectural award, or receipt of a similar form of public or professional acclaim, is an important and relevant consideration when assessing the architectural merit of a building or dwelling. This also goes directly to the assessment against HERCON criteria – in this case Criterion E (aesthetic significance). The latter is one of the heritage criteria or values attributed to the subject property in the individual place citation included in the Amendment C214 documentation (again, the place citation and property assessment is not addressed here).

To return to the submitter’s concern with ‘inaccurate’ background material or information in the Thematic History, which has been used to inform the assessment and recommendations relating to the Lumeah Road property, and because of which the Thematic History should not replace the 1996 Environmental History in the Planning Scheme. As noted here, the existence of the architectural award for the property is acknowledged to be useful and helpful, and the identification of the award in the Thematic History is appropriate. It is not considered to be ‘inaccurate’ as such, but a relevant consideration under ‘Winning architectural awards’, which gives emphasis to importance of distinguished modern architecture in the municipality.

## **Conclusion**

This peer review of the *City of Glen Eira Thematic Environmental History (Refresh) 2020*, prepared by Simon Reeves of Built Heritage Pty Ltd, concludes that the Thematic History is rigorous and comprehensive; follows an accepted methodology for these histories including being based on, and referring to, Victoria’s Framework of Historical Themes; and is an

appropriate replacement for the existing 1996 Environmental History in the Planning Scheme, including as a 'policy reference' to Clause 21.10 Heritage and Clause 22.01 Heritage Policy.

Regarding Submission 6, which opposes the proposed inclusion of the Glen Eira Thematic History in the Planning Scheme, the reasons identified in the submission are not agreed with here. The Thematic History is relevant to Amendment C214 and its proposed outcomes and inclusions in the Planning Scheme; and the reference to the property at 40 Lumeah Road, Caulfield North, in the Thematic History is also considered reasonable and appropriate.