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Comments on ATP EIS

I write as an internationally and nationally recognised expert on the history and heritage of the Eveleigh Railway Workshops and on the management of industrial heritage sites (Please see Qualifications, experience, expertise and publications listed at the bottom of this submission) to express my serious concerns and objections to *The Heritage Impact Statement: ATP Redevelopment Prepared for Mirvac by Curio Projects December 2015* (Appendix G).

This document allegedly “assesses all known and potential heritage impacts and archaeological impacts associated with the proposed development of the site against the policies and guidelines included in the endorsed CMP for the site, titled Godden Mackay Logan. (December 2013)” and encompasses a Heritage Impact Statement (HIS) and Archaeological Impact Statement (AIS) in the one Report.

The Curio Report claims:

“The following listed documents form the key site-specific conservation management policies and guidelines for the ATP site that provide the baseline for assessing the acceptability or otherwise of the impacts of the proposed works on the individual heritage assets, and broader cultural heritage significance of ATP: • Australian Technology Park Conservation Management Plan Volume 1, prepared by Godden Mackay Logan, December 2013 • Australian Technology Park Conservation Management Plan: Appendices, prepared by Godden Mackay Logan, December 2013 • ATP Conservation Vision Statement, prepared by the Australian Technology Park Sydney • Eveleigh Railway Workshops: Interpretation Plan & Implementation Strategy, prepared for Redfern-Waterloo Authority by 3-D Projects, Artscape & Only Human, February 2012; and • Eveleigh Railway Yards Locomotive Workshops Conservation Management Plan, prepared by Heritage Group State Projects NSW Public Works, June 1995”.

However, references in the body of the Report rely predominantly on Australian Technology Park Conservation Management Plan Volume 1, prepared by Godden Mackay Logan, December 2013. This was a hastily constructed document which is superficial, poorly researched and **an inadequate basis on which to base heritage management and interpretation of the site.**

The EIS neglects the wealth of information contained in the Social and Oral History Volumes that were produced by me and form part of the Conservation Management Plan, prepared for Heritage Group State Projects NSW Public Works, June 1995.

The fact that the Curio report misnames the site as the Eveleigh rail yards instead of the correct name of Eveleigh Railway Workshops, provides testimony to the shallow treatment and superficial understanding of the site's historical and heritage significance, which is not done justice in the Report.

Eveleigh in its entirety is one of the most significant industrial heritage sites remaining in Australia and represents the longest continuous use of a site for railway industrial purposes. I have documented its importance in numerous scholarly publications some of which are listed below this letter.

Many statements contained in *The Heritage Impact Statement: ATP Redevelopment* are flawed – For example:

- “the cultural landscape of the ATP site fundamentally changed after its closure as railway yards and demolition of many buildings for the establishment of the ATP in the 1990s”.

What is the cultural landscape being referred to here? Do the writers mean the physical landscape? No definition is provided. In fact, there is no engagement with the site's cultural heritage. It is of critical importance that attention be given to the site's cultural and political significance insofar as this relates to the history of citizenship and more specifically the site's engagement with the struggle for Indigenous citizenship rights. The site's cultural, social, political, industrial and Indigenous history MUST be adequately addressed and its general historical significance recognised. Access to this history and heritage MUST be provided to the citizens of NSW and Australia.

- “It is unlikely that an archaeological resource exists on site... the former Foundry walls, are adequately archivally recorded and reused within interpretative elements of the new development, where possible. The public domain and landscape design planning allows for the reuse of such fabric within public artworks and interpretative elements planned for the site. The potential for unexpected relics and/or Aboriginal objects to be discovered will be managed through the appointment of an overseeing project archaeologist for the site who will ensure that (4) any unexpected finds are managed appropriately and reported to the statutory authorities in accordance with the provisions of the NSW Heritage Act and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act, as required”

First it is unclear on what grounds the likelihood or otherwise of archaeological resources has been assessed. Second, if such resources are found will they be preserved? This reflects a simplistic approach to both Indigenous and industrial historical archaeology.

- “The report includes an assessment of the potential for the site to impact on Aboriginal archaeological objects and/or places but does not include an assessment of the potential Aboriginal Cultural Heritage significance (intangible values) of the site”.

This gap is extremely problematic.

- “An Interpretation Plan for the entire former Eveleigh Railway Workshops site has been recently approved and some measures have been implemented or are underway, including the ATP Open Day and Eveleigh Railway Film Festival, fit-out of Bays 1 and 2 north for interpretation, new interpretation signage and a walking guide and window graphics to Innovation Plaza”.

It is of serious concern that ATP Open Days and Film Festivals, held repeatedly since 1999 are being presented as a new approach to the future interpretation of this site.

Eveleigh’s architectural and technological significance has been recognised since the turn of the 20th century and some of its buildings and machinery collection have been preserved since the 1990s.

The site’s social value has not, however, been adequately recognized or addressed in situ as has been done at railway workshop heritage sites around the world. In short, overarching concern for 'tangible' industrial remains and the reuse of some of the historic buildings has been at the expense of their 'intangible' social and cultural heritage associations.

The Curio report does not engage with the site’s social history or its over century long history of public sector enterprise. Nor does it outline responsibility and accountability over heritage management and interpretation of the site’s historical significance and resources.

Why is this relevant? In 2002, UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention (WHC) formally recognised that industrial sites ‘are important milestones in the history of humanity’ because they ‘testify to the ordeals and exploits of those who worked in them’. A year later, in July 2003, the International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage went one step further by acknowledging that ‘human memories and customs’ are ‘unique and irreplaceable’ resources that form an integral component of industrial heritage because they record of the lives of ordinary men and women.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted by the thirty-second session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2003.

This defines intangible cultural heritage as the practices, representations, expressions, as well as the knowledge and skills, that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognise as part of their cultural heritage. It is sometimes called living cultural heritage, and is manifested in: oral traditions, social practices and traditional craftsmanship. According to UNESCO, symbols, technologies and objects establish a symbiotic relationship between tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In other words, intangible heritage must be seen as the larger framework within which tangible heritage takes on its shape and significance. The neglect of Eveleigh’s intangible

cultural heritage demonstrates a disregard of these conventions and the wisdom underpinning them.

Despite continuous calls for a comprehensive interpretation strategy since 1996 there are no successful examples of heritage interpretation at the site. Plaques have been erected in an ad hoc manner and contain numerous historical errors.

In 1999, at a public forum attended by the then Premier, I raised the idea of building a commemorative workers' wall and in October 2000 I put a number of additional proposals to the Premier's Office, as well as to Stuart Sharpe at SRA, among other stakeholders. No action was taken.

There have been a large number of heritage steering committees established by various government authorities to address heritage issues commencing with the Eveleigh Locomotive Workshop - Heritage Working Group chaired by the NSW Government Architect and General Manager, Buildings Branch, NSW Department of Public Works and Services established in 1997 and followed by the Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority and the Australian Technology Park Heritage Project Control Committee in 2001.

There have been around 20 heritage studies and management plans of the eveleigh precinct produced since 1996. The Redfern Waterloo Authority and ATP arguably wasted government funds by replicating work previously done. A comprehensive and coordinated approach has never been adopted.

The recent engagement of consultants to put together a website – “Eveleigh stories” - was poorly conceived and a short-term quick fix. No evidence has been provided of ongoing management of the website and input into it.

This contrasts poorly with developments at the Midland Workshops in WA and the Ipswich workshops in QLD, as well as others elsewhere in the world including at the Swindon workshops in the UK.

<http://monumentaaustralia.org.au/themes/technology/industry/display/60799-workers%60-wall>

<http://assets.mra.wa.gov.au/production/7f9faebe5c1bof110660b179428755bf/mra-book-final-draft-1.pdf>

<http://www.redwatch.org.au/RWA/heritage/workers/midland/view>

<http://www.mra.wa.gov.au/projects-and-places/midland>

http://www.publicartaroundtheworld.com/Workers_Wall.html

<http://www.steam-museum.org.uk/aboutus/Pages/The-Displays.aspx>

<http://www.steam-museum.org.uk/aboutus/Pages/Wall-of-Names.aspx>

<http://www.fosrm.org.uk/wall.pdf>

Note that my recommendation to the Midland Redevelopment Authority Board in Perth for a commemorate wall and a living heritage interpretation centre, combined with formal structures for community consultation and engagement were accepted by the then WA Minister for Planning; in 2002 a Wall was launched; and an interpretative centre was built. In 2003 the framework for the wall was opened for public display and 7,000 visitors came (descendents began to order bricks); in 2004 stage 2 was opened due to demand.

Subsequently the WA Heritage Council deemed the Wall to be an important part of the site's heritage. This acclamation of the Midland site's intangible cultural heritage was also supported by an ongoing oral history program and a living heritage centre which provides a repository for oral histories, films and other memorabilia donated by retired workers. These developments bring the site to life, connect the past, present and future and give the site meaning.

Unfortunately, no equivalent efforts have been undertaken in NSW. While historians and community representatives have been actively involved at Midland, they have been completely excluded in NSW. RWA, ATP and Urban Growth have preferred to hire heritage consultants with no real professional expertise in regard to history as the Eveleigh Stories website shows in its simplistic timelines and hodge podge of stories. The work and IP of historians and scholars has been used without consultation.

I recommend that MIRVAC refer to these precedents and take action accordingly to make Eveleigh's living heritage accessible and meaningful to the people of this State.

It is important to appreciate that redevelopment not only requires the 'replacement of industry with elements of the service sector' but also a 're-imaging', which involves serious consideration of whose memories of the past are harnessed, which past is selected and recovered and which 'image is commodified for public consumption'.ⁱ

In my view the past is not a foreign country. The relationship between past and present is intimate and dynamic. Hence in dealing with heritage, we are effectively making heritage. In other words, in approaching heritage management we need to be focused on the present and the future

I would therefore suggest the NSW Government and Mirvac must:

- recognise that heritage places are important to people because of emotional attachments;
- that not all stakeholders have the same views about how conservation and redevelopment should be approached and
- that there are many people in the broader and the local communities that have knowledge, skills, motivation and commitment to heritage places which provides potential human resources that can and should be harnessed.

Consultative structures need to be established to draw on such human resources and consultation should not be seen as a one off process.

It needs to be recognised that conservation of buildings and machines is not enough - the buildings and machines in themselves do not provide meaning. On the contrary, it is the human attachments, the social significance that is valued by people.

Proposals from Professor Lucy Taksa:

The NSW Government and Mirvac **need to:**

1. Create a legal and administrative framework which would ensure the adequate custodianship of the site's historical and heritage resources, its moveable heritage collection and its intangible cultural heritage
2. Establish ongoing Advisory co-ordinating body to bring together the concerns of all key stakeholders and those with relevant professional expertise, which has authority and funding to preserve the site's tangible heritage, including moveable and non-moveable artefacts and archives (including both oral and documentary sources) and to manage community involvement with and access to Eveleigh's heritage both at the Precinct and through the medium of the internet and other forms of media.
3. Allocate funds for a comprehensive interpretation strategy for the whole site.
4. Ensure the creation of social and cultural capital through apprenticeship training in the old railway craft trades and conservation work by implementing the NSW Government's Heritage Trades Training Strategy at Eveleigh to ensure that the conservation of Eveleigh's machinery collection has advantageous financial and educational outcomes.
5. Establish links with school curricula and university courses
6. Provide accommodation for relevant community-based rail heritage organizations at the site to enhance community access to transport heritage.
7. Ensure representation of historians in all future deliberations regarding the site's redevelopment and re-use.
8. Construct a Commemorative Workers' Wall at Eveleigh to enable acknowledgement of the labour that sustained the 'heart of the NSW transport system' through a permanent memorial to the working lives of the men and women who worked there between the 1880s and the late 1980s.
9. Establish a living heritage and cultural centre at the site with space and resources for all archival records including all heritage studies and management plans, historical documents, oral histories, videos, photographs and so forth.
10. Employ a professional archivist to manage the holdings and employ a professional historian to provide advice on a day to day basis so the site can enable research by ordinary people as well as students and scholars; and support school student excursions
11. Provide for artists in residence to enable ongoing visual site interpretation that could be displayed at the site provide support for cultural tourism programs.

Such capital and social investments will facilitate both financial and cultural returns by fostering employment opportunities in restoration, operation and maintenance, administrative, financial, management, marketing, publicity, sales, history, archival and art work.

As importantly, they will provide a source of identity and meaning to those who once worked at the site or whose relatives worked here, those who once lived in the vicinity or who now live here, regardless of whether they are advocates of local heritage, environmental protection or business.

These connections will provide added value to the new developments that will occur at the site and any new residents who occupy it.

It is critically important that the very superficial approach taken to heritage interpretation at the Eveleigh railway workshops and particularly the ATP since the late 1990s is not repeated.

A clear plan is needed to ensure appropriate methods are adopted to record the stories of the site and its history, following the national guidelines on ethics in research and serious attention is given to presenting these stories in a professional manner.

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ⁱ Robert Summerby-Murray, 'Interpreting deindustrialised landscapes of Atlantic Canada: memory and industrial heritage in Sackville, New Brunswick', *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*, vol. 46, no. 1, 2002, pp. 49-50. See for example: Lucy Taksa, 'Machines and Ghosts: Politics, Industrial Heritage and the History of Working Life at the New South Wales Eveleigh Railway Workshops', *Labour History*, no. 85, Nov. 2003, pp. 65-88.