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Submission to Future Melbourne Committee

City of Melbourne, Melbourne Town Hall,
01 July 2025, 5.30pm – Meeting No.11
Agenda Item FMC Agenda item Agenda item 6.7 Boyd Library and Community Hub

The Southbank Residents Association (SRA) is impressed with the alacrity with which this project is being progressed.

However, SRA is disappointed that the document did not acknowledge the role of SRA in advocating for this project against the wishes of the City of Melbourne at the time, to sell the whole block for a housing development where the funds were directed to the redevelopment of the Queen Victoria Market, yet here we are today with funding short-falls for the City Road Masterplan. At this very forum on 18 March 2018 we made a submission to the Boyd park agenda item rezoning the space to make way for this development. In that meeting we specifically requested the entirety of the ground and first floors of the anticipated development for community space. After that meeting I consciously engaged with the then deputy Lord Mayor, Nicholas Reece, to further spruik this concept, which at the time appeared to be well received. When the space was officially negotiated Nicholas Reece had great pleasure to inform me/SRA personally of this outcome and the work he did behind the scenes.

From the onset SRA requested, verbally and by email, to be engaged with how this new community space, in conjunction with the current Boyd space would be allocated. Only to find that the key decision has already been made, that is, the whole new community space will be allocated to the library and that any consultation will be about what to do with the leftovers. This does not instill confidence in the word of the City of Melbourne in regard to consultation. But this is not the first time we have seen such lack of consideration and communication with SRA. Who decided not to engage with SRA during this critical design phase?

May we also remind you, this very space currently known as Boyd community Hub, came about from significant lobbying by SRA as far back as 2006. Our lobbying is recorded in council records from the time.

We have played a significant role in where we are today and it hurts us that this is continually not recognised. We couldn't even garnish a mention in this report that we suggested this in 2018. Does this council not want to acknowledge the achievements of Southbank Residents Association role with this and the Boyd Community Hub? Maybe, is it too much to ask for something to be named after Southbank Residents Association, maybe a room, to acknowledge our role in getting us to where we are?



The proposal says that 'The new Southbank Library will ... offer(ing) approximately 900 m² of public space including amenities. There is no scale on the floor plans on pages 10 and 11, so this value cannot be confirmed from the document. However, as the structure is coming to completion, an estimate of the area for the library can be determined by measuring the external dimensions of the building and mapping those onto the floor plan. Which we have done. This gives a value for the two floors of approximately 700 m², which is significantly less than 900 m².

It is possible that the 900 m² includes some other unspecified space, but the SRA would like to receive an explanation for the value of the area in the proposal, maybe some measurements.

Looking at the plans submitted in this forum for the planning application compared with these plans, it appears there is a size reduction. Can this be confirmed?

The refurbishment of Boyd Community Hub is going to be a challenge in trying to fit all the increased demands for space by the current users as well as converting the old library space into a Community Hall. Family Services want more consulting rooms, the Playgroups want more space as well as there is the need for more bookable community spaces. There is not enough space for all these expectations to be met. Also the space occupied by the Australian Book Review (ABR) is not mentioned. What is the status of ABR?

We look forward to working with council through this upcoming consultation.

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Penna". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Tony Penna
President
Southbank Residents Association