



Heritage Fleet Facility – Background

Executive Summary

The Victorian Heritage Fleet – comprising the tall ship Alma Doepel, Steam Tug Wattle, and Enterprize – faces imminent eviction from its long-standing restoration site at Collins Wharf, Docklands. Development Victoria (DV) issued a Notice to Vacate in January 2025, despite earlier assurances that the site would not be required for at least two years. Following public and media concern, an extension was granted to December 2025. However, despite working with Development Victoria in good faith, no alternative location has been confirmed, and negotiations remain unresolved.

DV's preferred option, Seaworks Williamstown, is outside its jurisdiction, under repair until 2026, and financially unviable. A rent of \$120,000 per year has been proposed for what are currently substandard facilities. The Heritage Fleet seeks funding for an interim solution within Docklands and a government commitment to a permanent maritime heritage precinct within Docklands.

Immediate government intervention is required to preserve this vital cultural and community asset.

Background

The Alma Doepel was invited to Docklands in 2009 by Development Victoria (then VicUrban) to activate the precinct and reconnect Victoria Harbour with its working maritime heritage. Over 16 years, the project has become a major cultural, educational, and volunteer-led initiative delivering significant community benefit.

Timeline of Key Events

2008	Proposal to City of Melbourne and DV (VicUrban) for relocation of Alma Doepel from Port Macquarie to Docklands
	Presentation to CoM, Vic Urban(DV) - proposed sites, activities and activities of Alma Doepel in Docklands. Request for sponsorship
2009	Funding committed by City of Melbourne (\$300,000), commitment to match funding from Development Victoria however never eventuated
	Alma Doepel restoration commences
2010-2013	Discussions with Places Victoria and City of Melbourne regarding future requirements.
2014 – 2016	Resubmission to CoM of facilities requirements for Heritage Fleet berthing and workshop/ operating space.
	Seeking CoM assistance for starting the strategic conversation about the future home of the Alma Doepel / Tall Ships in/around

	Docklands. (with DV, Lend lease, Minister Brooks).
2017	Discussions with Development Victoria and Lend Lease regarding future facility.
2018	Plans drawn for new facility which included a home for the Alma Doepel in Collins Wharf - Plans were later shelved and facility removed.
2022	Letter of Support received from Development Victoria - highlighting the place of the Alma Doepel and heritage vessels in Docklands.
2023	21 December - Notification from DV of transfer by Minister of Planning of management of berthing and building occupation from CoM to PV. Occupation to continue under same terms as previous agreement.
2024	8 Feb - meeting with LL (Allen Lim) "We are obviously aware of the commencement of construction adjacent to our site. We would like to catch up with you to discuss the project, timing and ways in the future we can work collaboratively. We have previously had discussions with Lend Lease, City of Melbourne and Development Victoria about a future home for the ship once operational. It would be good to chat through possible options as part of current or future development.
	Meeting discussions that they were around 18-24 months off development
2025	24 Jan - meeting with DV to inform that we need to vacate the shed in June 25
	13 March - Notification from DV of 6 month extension of lease until December 2025
June 2025	DV proposed Seaworks Williamstown as alternative.
Sep 2025	DV engaged consultants; mediation held, outcome pending.
Oct 2025	No communication or alternative site confirmed.

Assessment of Seaworks (Williamstown)

The Seaworks site is unsuitable for the Fleet's operations. The pier is closed for repairs until 2026, sheds are in disrepair, and the facilities lack appropriate dock access and infrastructure. Seaworks seeks \$120,000 annual rent, which exceeds the Fleet's volunteer-based budget.

Proposed Interim Solution – 533 Docklands Drive

The public land at 533 Docklands Drive, adjacent to the Ron Barassi Snr Oval, offers a feasible interim home. It would accommodate temporary sheds and berthing, maintain visibility, and preserve operations while a permanent Docklands site is secured.

Requested Government Action

1. Approve the interim relocation to 533 Docklands Drive and assist with logistics.
2. Commit to establishing a long-term maritime heritage precinct in Docklands.
3. Re-establish a transparent working group between DV, City of Melbourne, Visit Victoria, and the Heritage Fleet.

Conclusion

The Heritage Fleet was invited to Docklands by government to celebrate Victoria's maritime heritage. Without intervention, the Fleet faces eviction and disbandment, undermining community trust and Docklands' cultural identity. Urgent action is required to secure an interim and permanent home.