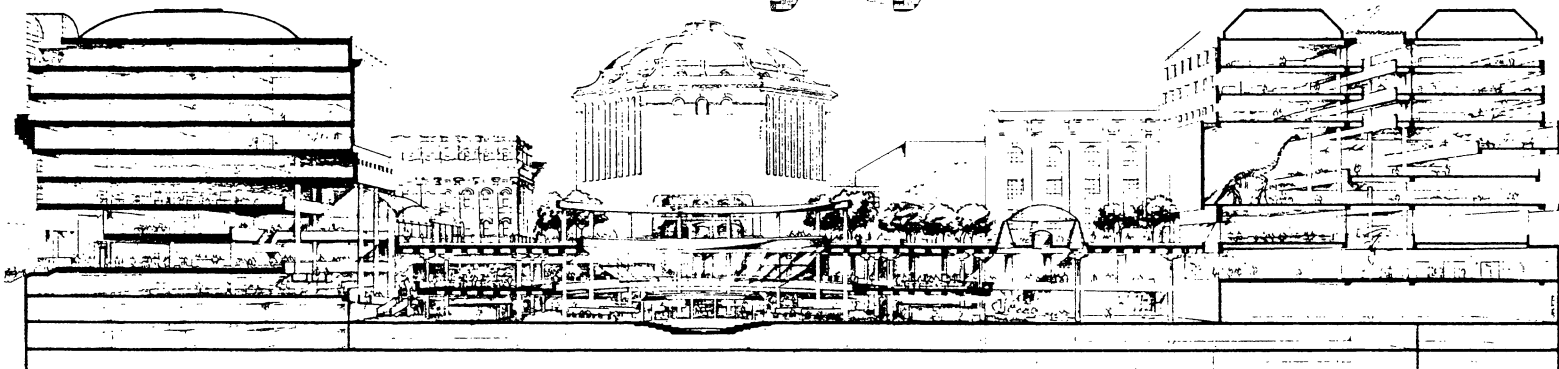


Emerald City Syndrome?



As was reported in the *Times on Sunday* (9 August 1987 p7) there is disquiet down south regarding the future of the State Library of Victoria. Keith Dunstan of the *Times* reported the situation in these terms —

Rumours abound that the Cain Government might be about to axe Victoria's library-useum project as simply too enormous, too tough at a time when the treasury is as arid as St Kilda beach . . .

The site is dream material: two vast blocks bounded by Lonsdale, Swanston, La Trobe and Russell Streets. The block between Little Lonsdale Street is occupied by the Queen Victoria Hospital, once the original Melbourne Hospital. The building's medical days are over. That is the scary part. How tempting it would be for the government to do nothing and sell off the prime Queen Victoria site to some speculator for multi-millions. You must realise that Melbourne's agony over acquiring a library-museum has been going on for 25 years. There has been a splendid range of inquiries telling us again and again how urgent it all is. One remembers the Jungwirth inquiry into library services in 1964, the Veitch committee in 1970. Come 1975, we were told, the new library would go on the site of the Queen Victoria Market. Then in 1983 it was all announced as part of the platform for the new Cain Government.

The competition to design the library-museum complex was won by Sydney architect, Ken Woolley — something which stirred controversy. Both the Victorian State Librarian, Jane La Scala, and the Director of the Museum of Victoria, Bob Edwards, feel the design is an efficient and clever solution to their space problems. The design features a sunken reading room which is surrounded by a grass square. The *Times* article stressed the

importance of the Victorian State Library calling it 'Melbourne's cultural heart' —

The number of great works that began and were nourished there is endless. One thinks of Ray Lawler producing the Summer of the Seventeenth Doll, Frank Hardy with Power Without Glory, Michael Cannon with Land Boomers, Geoffrey Serle, Weston Bate, Manning Clark, all with thier histories and it goes right on with movies and TV series like Waterfront.

It seems a little ironic that just when the so-called intellectual wastelands of big, brassy Sydney, and the smaller but brasher Brisbane, are whipping up the media's and the general

datations and reassessments of the Victorian State Library's role could be a much needed catalyst for change. . . Ray Price, a LAA Victorian Branch Councillor gives further insight into the report.

Hancock says refurbish first

The Hancock Report recommends that the Victorian Government refurbish the Victorian State Library before starting on a new building.

The State Library Development Study, set up by the Victorian Government under the Chairmanship of the Director of the State Bank of Victoria, Arnold Hancock, has recommended that \$6 million be spent on renovating the current building as a temporary measure before new facilities are built at an estimated cost of \$106 million.

The Hancock Report has strongly supported the plans for a new building on the Queen Victoria Hospital site, but there is a danger that a state government which is trying to save money may postpone construction for many years. The worst scenario for the library would be that the renovation could be seen to 'solve' the problem and that the old hospital site could be used for a commercial development to help balance the books of a revenue-conscious Government. It would be a tragedy for the people of Victoria to see the million dollar competition-winning design remain on the architect's drawing board. As things stand, Victoria seems likely to remain the only mainland state without a modern building for its state library.

The Hancock Report offers no time frame for Stage 2 of the building program. It seems

If we are not careful, no tourist will ever want to come to Melbourne.

Everything will be done in Sydney. We are on the launching pad now ready to go.

Bob Edwards.

public's interest in new state library buildings and expanded services, that our most cultured city's premier library should be in the doldrums. But who knows — the Hancock Report has just been released, its recommen-

Continued on page 7

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Frontpage story continued

likely that it will be well into the next century before the new building is started. By then it may be necessary to find a completely new site. All librarians in Victoria need to support the State Library in its need for a new building and not just a renovation. Some years ago, both major political parties in Victoria promised that once the State Arts Centre had been paid for the next major public building would be the library.

The Hancock Report also provides a broad overview of the whole of the activities of the State Library of Victoria and makes far-reaching recommendations which could dramatically change the way in which the library operates. In the recommended renovation there is a suggestion that the Technical Services section of the library be moved elsewhere to accommodate other library functions until the new building is finished. Naturally enough there are many allusions to a crisis in accommodation and staff morale, and the report sets out to define the roles and functions of the library.

The report does suggest a large number of changes to services and facilities. In particular, the library is challenged to become service-orientated rather than collection-oriented; to exercise much stronger leadership amongst its peers in the provision of library and information services, particularly in the area of co-operative developments between Victorian libraries; and it strongly recommends that the library find some revenue-producing activities and products to help finance the costs of its operations.

Other important recommendations cover administrative matters, the library's role, its collections, and computing.

Administration — the Library Council should become subject to the general control of the Minister; a General Manager who may not have qualifications in librarianship should be appointed to the second most senior position; the library should lose its responsibility for public libraries in Victoria; the accounting procedures need to be improved; a conservation committee should be established to oversee a much expanded conservation program.

The library's role — the library should take a much more active role in the provision of user services, and it should act as a



CULTURAL TOURISM

NEW MARKETS FOR AN INFORMATION AGE

A conference organised earlier this year by the Victorian Tourism Commission — 'a conference to introduce the Cultural Tourism initiative of the Victorian Government'.

dynamic community service for the public and for tourists. It should exercise leadership in the provision of library and information services in the State of Victoria. A centre for the preservation of library and information materials should be set up to address the conservation backlog. The library should not try to be all things to all people and strong service priorities should be set. The library should find some revenue producing services and products and establish them as soon as possible, perhaps in association with private organisations. The possibility of establishing a city-based free public lending library in association with the Melbourne City Council should be examined (and if this is not possible the feasibility of a self-funding subscription library should be examined).

Collections — an honorary collection advisory panel should be set up to advise on collection activities and policies; clear priorities are to be established for the conservation of materials and some little-used material should be discarded.

Computing — high priority should be given to the provision of computing facilities and the feasibility of introducing technology to improve operations should be reviewed.

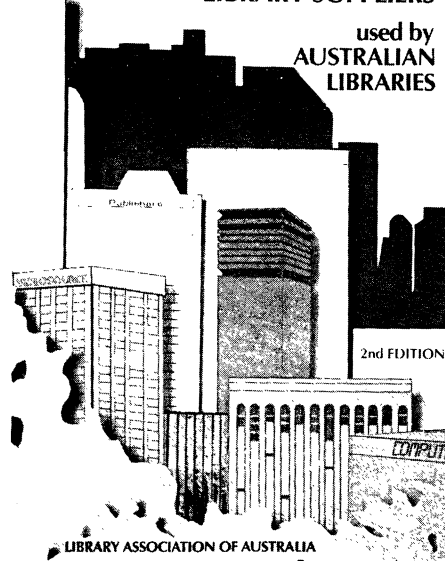
The report is very positive about the future of the state library and it will be interesting to see how many of the ideas put forward are accepted by the Minister and the Victorian Government. The building remains a key issue and many improvements depend on this being commenced as quickly as possible.

Ray Price.

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