

Submission to the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA)

Prepared by [REDACTED]

Re: draft Amendment C182dare/Preston Market Precinct Structure Plan  
Level 25, 35 Collins Street Melbourne Vic 3000

From The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria (ECCV)  
Suite 101 398 Sydney Rd Coburg Vic 3058

**The ECCV strongly rejects the Preston Market precinct framework and structure plan as currently proposed by the VPA. The Preston Market is a significant place of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage.**

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria, (ECCV) is the peak body representing Victoria's multicultural communities since the mid-1970s. Ethnic Communities Council of Victoria is a member and Victorian representative council of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA).

The Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria believes the proposed precinct framework and structure plan does not account for the enormous cultural significance of the market and its important multicultural heritage. It shows little understanding of how the market generates enormous value for the community as a social and cultural hub that showcases both the tangible and intangible multicultural heritage of Melbourne.

The Preston Market precinct framework fails to protect the significant social and cultural functions of the market. Preston Market was built 50 years ago by Polish immigrants and is one of the few under cover markets remaining in Melbourne and the only one in the northern suburbs. It is architecturally unique with a space frame roof. The market is also a palimpsest of the waves of migration to Victoria and Australia. It is a vibrant meeting place for Victorian multicultural communities. The multicultural heritage and fabric of the Preston Market should be proudly protected and not destroyed by the framework and structure plan as proposed by the VPA.

The ECCV believes the Preston Market is a place of enormous significance to the Victorian multicultural community. Demolishing and rebuilding will create a huge risk to the character, social and cultural roles of the market, and the commercial viability for the existing multicultural market traders as well as dismantling a tangible piece of migrant rich architecture and history.

As a place of significant migrant heritage, the lived experience of migrants is embedded into the history of place. This needs to be integral in the planning considerations. We believe this

has not been considered when determining the level of significance of the market by the VPA.

In the post War period of migration to the 1970s Preston was home to Italians, Macedonians and Greeks. In the years that followed, significant Arabic speaking communities from Iraq, Syria and Lebanon positioned themselves in the Market. In the 1970s the Vietnamese, and from the 1980s to the present, Chinese, Sri Lankans, Indians and Africans constitute the multicultural soul of the Preston Market. If not for the Preston Market, High Street would not boast to be one of the most vibrant Chinatowns outside the CBD, including traditional Italian and Greek cafes.

The Preston Market uniquely demonstrates the influence of Post War Migration and living cultural heritage. The Preston market is a superb example of living history and working-class migration and a lived experience – as well as reflecting on migration as a pivotal part of our States history. The importance of the Preston Market has been identified in a report titled Victoria's Post Migration Heritage commissioned by the Heritage Council of Victoria in August 2011.

The cultural heritage of a nation or region or city is not solely composed of buildings, monuments and museum collections, but also of living intangible expressions inherited and passed on to our descendants. As outlined in the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, heritage is not only determined only through built environments rather through cultural, social, creative and human environments.

*“According to the definition provided by UNESCO, intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is made up of oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and traditional craftsmanship knowledge and techniques.*

*Some characteristics of ICH are that it is simultaneously traditional and contemporary; it is integrative and contributes to cultural identity; it is representative and transmitted from generation to generation; and it is based on communities.*

*Its importance lies not in the cultural manifestation itself, but in the heritage of the knowledge and techniques that are passed on, revealing social and economic value for both human groups and entire States<sup>1</sup>.”*

Within the context of globalisation, ICH has huge importance as it allows cultural diversity to be maintained through dialogue between cultures and the promotion of respect towards other ways of life.

For this reason, in 2003 UNESCO passed the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which determines a set of measures aimed at guaranteeing the

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/santiago/culture/intangible-heritage/>

identification, documentation, investigation, preservation, protection, promotion, evaluation, transmission through formal and informal education, and revitalisation.

There are other markets in Melbourne, but the Preston Market is rare and unique. There are no other markets or other types of places which uniquely demonstrate post-World War II migration plus the lived multicultural experience of diversity and culture in Victoria. The Preston Market is a facilitator of living intangible cultural heritage of multicultural Victoria and is invaluable in fostering the well-being of our multicultural community.

A Heritage Study on the Preston Market commissioned by Darebin Council advised that the market satisfies the criteria of local significance. It also advised that there are indicators for State significance due to its importance in representing the layers of migration settlement and development since the post-war period together with its early use of space frame engineering technology. ECCV believes strongly there is the potential to yield precious information through oral histories through the Preston Market that will contribute to an understanding of Victoria's cultural history as identified in the report prepared by *Heritage Victoria and Context*.

Our reading of *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* indicates that the Preston Market is an historical, social and cultural repository of Victoria's social and cultural development. It is an excellent example of cohesive multiculturalism. The visitor or residents can participate in cultural learning from an Italian coffee house to an Ethiopian grocer, or Vietnamese fishmonger all under one roof. People from every continent amass at the Preston Market to share food and daily life. It is a social place that adds to the wellbeing of all, as the Market becomes central to Victoria's cultural life. From a Victorian perspective the Preston Market is a cultural destination that immerses the visitor into enjoyable and meaningful intercultural exchange through diverse and positive social interaction.

ECCV would argue the Preston Market reflects and has uniquely demonstrated living cultural heritage and therefore should be protected. The Preston Market is also an opportunity to align, promote and celebrate the UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression which is about:

***"Affirming*** that cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of our community

***Conscious*** that cultural diversity forms a common heritage of humanity and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all,

***Being aware*** that cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations,

***Recalling*** that cultural diversity, flourishing within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels,

***Celebrating the importance of cultural diversity for the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universally recognized instruments<sup>2</sup>.***

In closing, the Preston Market is a beacon of cultural connectedness. It is for the above reasons that ECCV is advocating for the Framework to be amended to protect the Preston Market's social identity and cultural heritage.

Preston Market has remained in continuous use since its construction. Stall ownership or management and users of the market reflect the waves of migrants who have settled in Victoria. The place operates primarily as a traditional marketplace and is a unique continuous example of lived migration heritage that we must value and protect for all Victorians.

Good planning can ensure that growth is accommodated in a sustainable way and at the same acknowledge the significant cultural heritage of a community and what the community value.

The ECCV strongly believes the existing Preston Market should be protected not demolished as the Market reflects our working-class heritage which is a strong foundation of multicultural Victoria.

The ECCV encourages the VPA projects Standing Committee conduct its proceedings through a public open process for transparency.

The ECCV in addition encourages the Victorian Planning Authority (VPA) to work closely with Darebin City Council and the local multicultural community to plan for the renewal of the Preston Market: to protect the market, to guide future development and to safeguard Victoria's migrant tangible and intangible cultural heritage ensuring good outcomes for the all the community and the strong protection of Victoria's multicultural heritage.

We look forward to your consideration of this submission.

---

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expression (<https://www.arts.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1761/f/149502E.pdf>)