

## **Preston Market – a significant place of Intangible Cultural Heritage**

The Darebin Ethnic Communities Council (DECC) is the peak body representing over 140 community groups and clubs in Darebin. The proposed framework for the Preston Market fails to take into account the vital social, economic, and cultural functions the Preston market currently provides not only to Darebin but to the wider Melbourne multicultural and immigrant communities. The proposed framework renders them invisible.

DECC believes the Preston Market is a place of enormous significance to the Victorian multicultural community. Under the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, heritage is not only determined through built environments but just as importantly through cultural, social, creative, and human environments. The cultural heritage of a nation, 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. The Preston Market uniquely demonstrates the influence of post-war migration and their living cultural heritage. The market is a superb example of living history of the post-war working-class migration. It also reflects and reinforces the pivotal role migration played in Victoria's evolution. This importance was identified in a report entitled Victoria's Post-Migration Heritage; commissioned by the Heritage Council of Victoria in August 2011.

There are other markets in Melbourne, but the Preston Market is rare and unique in the role it plays in the social fabric of multicultural Melbourne. There are no other markets or other types of places which uniquely demonstrate post-World War II migration in a lived multicultural experience of culture in Victoria. Preston Market is unique in that regard.

Preston Market, which was built 50 years ago by Polish immigrants, is one of the few undercover markets remaining in Melbourne and the only one in the northern suburbs. The market is a palimpsest of the waves of migration to Victoria and Australia. It is also a vibrant meeting place for Victorian multicultural communities.

In the post-War period of migration to the 1970s Melbourne and the northern suburbs were 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. Followed by the Chinese, Sri Lankans, Indians, and Africans. These waves of migration constitute the multicultural soul of the Preston Market. If not for the Preston Market, High Street would not boast one of the most vibrant Chinatowns outside the CBD and a plethora of traditional Italian and Greek cafes and burgeoning Middle Eastern and South Asian culinary outlets.

It is an excellent example of cohesive multiculturalism. The visitor 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 an enjoyable and meaningful intercultural exchange through diverse food and wares, entertainment, and positive social interaction.

In a period of rising social tensions, the Preston Market uniquely affirms in a material way: *that cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of our community*. Another significant feature of Preston market is the presence of community members with low income, on social security and asylum seekers. It provides them the chance not only to intermingle with their own community but also with people from other cultural, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds. It also affords them a chance to buy good produce at reasonable prices. As a consequence, community members are extremely comfortable and happy in the Preston market environment. An example of this is the young members of the African community who feel safe at the market. They are not vilified or forced to leave the place by the security guards which are unfortunately the harsh reality they face if they make an appearance at shopping malls.

The VPSA framework proposal to relocate will in reality destroy the *raison d'être* of Preston Market. By doing so it will make a mockery of the wonderful phrases such as diversity, community connection, fresh food etc. which pepper their proposal. If the framework is accepted, then many migrants will question the commitment of our government to multiculturalism. As migrants we are not only consumers and workers but also citizens who have a right to cultural sites like Preston market, that have played and are still playing such an important role in our lives.

In closing, the Preston Market is a beacon of cultural interconnectedness. It is for that reason alone that DECC is advocating for the recognition of the Preston Market as one of Victoria's most evident examples of immigration and settlement in the context of Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is for these reasons that DECC rejects the framework proposed for the market.

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [amendments](#)  
**Subject:** Darebin Ethnic Communities Council submission to Preston Market Structure Plan  
**Date:** Monday, 12 July 2021 9:16:07 PM  
**Attachments:** [DECC Preston Market submission Submission July 2021.pdf](#)

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Dear Sir/Madam

I am [REDACTED] of Darebin Ethnic Communities Council ( DECC).

Please Find enclosed DECC submission in response to VPA Structure plan for Preston Market.

Kind Regards

[REDACTED]

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