**Comment on the Fort discussion paper, with reference numbers**

**Introduction.** The intent of this document is not identified by the “Preliminary vision, principles and opportunities”, as a summary of “stakeholders” suggestions, or as a public consultation power point presentation , and to the intended outcome of this stage of the project process, other than ticking the consultation box . Is a further consultation process proposed?

The only reference to consultation appears to be the “Blue Sky” workshop, 8 Sept 14 9.30-1.45, as reported in council meeting minutes, or a bit over 4 hours discussion with selected members of council, staff and invited community, as a basis for the comments identified in this presentation .

We would have expected a diary of participating representative group comment as a realistic basis for the consideration of this important issue. The consultant attendees input should also be worthy of at least a dot point summary of observations and suggested follow up items.

The specific role of the nominated consultants is not identified and clarification would be appreciated, as to their role as advisors to the consultants, or as independent consultants to council.

1. **The Brief:** The community are aware of the initial tender document for this consultancy as a brief for the scope of the report and the “brief” in the document should refer to their responsibility to respond to that brief rather than a tailored preamble. As discussed at the open house meeting if the brief does not reflect the scope as a study evolves surely it is important for the consultant to clarify or qualify the brief in this public presentation.
   1. “The existing build infrastructure and spaces could present opportunity for ‘ tourism and community use’. Which we understand is the reason for this project
   2. The Fort Precinct implies a wider scope of assessment possibly Harbour to at least Rip View rather than just the internals of the Fort
   3. ...
   4. This statement ,and as, presented at the Open House, implies that if the project identifies a greater development opportunity window with a suggested beneficial commercial outcome , that this could be presented to Govt/Army to allow an earlier rather than later access to the total site, or a larger vision for the Fort. This, as in other Council projects, modifies the brief and any change to scope should be identified as a possibility at the time it becomes apparent, as in this Community Comment survey presentation.
2. **Project goal:**

3.4 Consultation is not reflected well in the current and possibly **only 14 day** window for

comment on a preliminary presentation . The ongoing interest in the success of this project

and the life of the Fort and Queenscliff is predominantly the local community rather than

Govt departments or other perceived stake holders. Community is very wary of council

commercialisation policy and events surrounding the recent light house reserve

development proposals and the consultant needs to be aware of this in bringing the

community along with the consultation process.

4.0 **Project management:** This spells out the working group without identifying the individual representation or contacts made with community. Surely there is a need to identify areas of interest and input from the nominated groups

5.0

6.0

7.0 **Vision statement**.... and a picture of Point Lonsdale! As noted at the open house, this suggests a lack of understanding by council and consultant of where we are all focusing our attention. As council are well aware, we are passionate about the Pt Lonsdale light house and the adjacent reserve. The actual vision statement is a realistic assessment. We suggest reference to the Friends of the Point Lonsdale Lighthouse Reserve Facebook page, as an indication of local positive interest in our surroundings.

8.0 **Guiding principles:**

8.1

8.2

8.3 There is a need to reconsider “adapted for use” as it implies that the heritage areas could be used for the often restated “accommodation and food” that seemingly pervades council’s vision for development in the Borough, and we believe this should read “heritage, education and experience”.

8.4

8.5 Again in context,“ an appropriate mix” is not a definition on which comment can be made. ie.. a water fun park would be an unlikely mix for Port Arthur in Tasmania. This needs better definition and example however we agree with the need to incorporate the ‘present’ and existing town with other developments rather than an “island Fort experience”. This is another comment on the Brief that needs to place the Fort in the context of a Borough Tourism Strategy rather than an independent development project.

8.6 We consider this statement to be somewhat wish full thinking. As under ‘concepts’... where there is no will there is no way. Council recently approved another 1000M2 of retail development space to the Ferry Car park area on a separate site to existing port retail areas.

8.6 May be well managed but not identified in this initial report, but usually seeks to soften the community to the ‘commercial development ‘concept.

8.7 Interested ,and often strongly committed groups not referred to in the presentation document include:-

* Community, the need for a community reference group that can represent public opinion are conspicuously absent from this process
* Friends of the Fort
* Fort Museum
* Queenscliffe Historical Museum
* Queenscliffe Maritime Museum
* RSL
* Tourist contact groups including the BoQ information centre volunteers who have significant contact with tourists throughout the town , as well as the Heritage walk activity that represents a real understanding of the history of the township and a hands on tourist contact
* Queenscliff community association
* Etc etc etc

8.9 Economic Progress needs to be identified in a realistic summary of serious issues that affect viability of all business in this area and should form part of a tourism strategy.

They include

* Seasonality .... Queenscliff Motel and Q360 restaurant, as examples need evaluation
* Community : permanent residents / non permanent (holiday house) residents/ transient :campers/Tourist: visitors
* Commercial viability of business that can live through the off season

This leads to a further need to evaluate the impact of new larger potentially successful activity compared with improvement of existing business, possibly funding for the upgrade of existing heritage accommodation etc that allows viable operation in comprehensive Development and Tourism strategy

9.0 The Independent Consultant comment should be documented and available for community review as it should offer an external approach to the subject. Are these parties consultants to the consultant or directly to BoQ? This issue needs to be clarified.

9.1 Queenscliff as a destination....

1)Nobody has tried....

2) Absolutely incorrect...

3)The size of the BoQ is usually assumed to include the area of Point Lonsdale west of Fellows road that is in fact part of the COGG ,areas that do have potential for development. The statistics of Borough economics, population and tourism are often distorted by not providing a breakup of how this split has been accounted for.

At the Open House reference was made to Tourist attractions that might be useful comparisons including:-

* The Point Nepean Quarantine Station
* High Country
* Ballarat ...Sovereign Hill, Eureka Museum, Gold Museum, Art Gallery, Historic Buildings etc
* Gulgong Jail
* And then MONA in Hobart as a success story as the second most popular visit in Aust, but noted by its owner on the ABC as a great idea with the next step of how to continue with a run cost of $10 million per annum and an income of $4 million per annum, build a casino!

4)...Create an iconic visit....ideas?

* Always repurposing historic buildings for some alternate use rather than making it interesting as a historic context and heritage education experience
* Is there an option here to create a “Big Idea” that would allow the army to have an acceptable exit plan from this site . Keeping records here was possibly an act of faith to keep a presence in the town. The land tenure issue also fits with Big Ideas approach.

10...**Core visitor values**

Landscape

Stories

Strategic location

Build heritage

These headings are simplistic more Primary school than objective tourism.

This is one of only a couple of Fortified Historical sites in Australia. Not a location to dream away the past. Australia has only been in military danger of invasion a couple of times in WW2 and in the 1860’s from Russia. In both WWI and WW2 this emplacement played a first response role. In early days the fort was the Town. To suggest the tunnels as playthings rather than fabric of history is rather demeaning. Possible we should remind people that Popes Eye was not a circle of rocks out in the bay as a refuge for sea birds until it was commenced as a fortification some what like Fort Denison in Sydney harbour, referred to elsewhere as an example of Tourism development

We may give some tolerance to a NZ tourism consultant, given a project of “historic site as a possible greenfield tourist park destination!” but we believe the brief should have required specific history background and experience in the field for a project of this nature.

11...**Critical success factors** : At this stage the presentation has not provided a profile of what Queenscliff and its history represents in the form of a tourism before and after expectation proforma.

Examples as quoted

11.1 .Sydney... 6Million people plus a major tourist entry port and all venues accessible by water transport ,itself a tourist attraction ,so we identify Cockatoo Dock, Fort Dennison and the Quarantine station as identified success stories forgetting the bridge ,the opera house, and the zoo all accessible from the same harbour ferry.

11.2. Strahan, Tas...A remote centre for an evening local theatre group to present a historic drama very successfully but there is nowhere to go on that evening. A town with a great Federal Hotels input vintage harbour, fishing port(preserved), timber mills and huon pine, Gordon Franklin access and seaplane access, commercial fish farming, Queenstown railway access, and western ocean wild coast access. Quite a setting, and still seasonal.

11.3... Ballarat ...see previous comment

11.4 ...UK projects not dissimilar to the above

11.5...NZ has many beautiful locations not dissimilar to the above

More useful would be “ building a picture of how this is related to the position of Queenscliff and the fort and the potential to create a similar hub on the Bellarine rather than a narrow view of developing the existing available portion of the fort site” that is big picture thinking.

12 **Preliminary Thinking:** This is the proposed criteria for assessing options suggested for the Fort development.

12.1. The Table 1, checklist of basic criteria for assessment with a major omission of a reference to the public consultation process

12.2 .Agree to the need to establish Anchor proposals

12.3 .A statement

12.4..The four concepts proposed as an outcome of the Blue Sky workshop do not really represent an exciting vision or a potential anchor style option for this site that would meet the criteria set out in 12.1, and reference to other ideas as yet “to be developed” suggests that this is only a preliminary test of public response.

We suggest that when a worthy option is framed it should be adequately described and then presented to the community for comment. Recent experience suggests this may potentially be an over commercialised option that does not fit the historic critera and is not acceptable to the community at large.

12.5. Consideration of a short list of proposals , having already carried out the target market and potential supply options for this development ,would be a more acceptable methodology for this project.

* Identify respective participants requirements, Govt ,BoQ, community
* Establish market.... Identify options that meet the criteria and the market requirements
* Consult and confirm the possibility of success.
* Then prepare a master plan,costings ,and viability , on the preferred options

13.**Opportunities for use:** The presentation proposes initial thinking on possible use options. In general terms these are the primary issue for this project

14.**Concepts**

14.1.Active Adventure centre. Doesn’t honour the integrity of the site to turn a historic fort into a games playground( plus interpretation ,food and beverage)

14.2.Creative Precinct: It implies this could be a part but not a total solution

14.3.Education : campus of Deakin Uni......combined with a Historic site POSSIBLE

14.4.Army Museum ... (tunnel games, etc, less attractive)......................POSSIBLE

All of the above might be on a list of possible activity and could be considered in the project along with comment from interviews and the consultation process that draws together possible options worthy of further evaluation.

Our problem is the lack of transparency and community involvement in the development of worthy alternatives that reflect the hopes and objectives of the community.

We expect the current project to develop these ideas for further consideration and for public input and agreement on an appropriate course of action

15.**Complementary use options** ...The idea of turning the area into another fragmented non heritage based theme park that competes with the rest of the town for the available tourist dollar does not resonate. What we would like to see is a real plan to generate a sustainable tourist activity that will get more people living permanently in the Borough and that engages the Great Ocean Road, Sovereign Hill or Phillip Island Penguin type tourist. At present Queenscliff does not offer a toilet stop that can adequately cater for a tourist bus stop so infrastructure is a must in any planning.

The suggestion that the Fort Keep building could be modified as high quality accommodation typifies the lack of community knowledge or sentiment reflected in the preliminary document. The keeper’s cottages as accommodation, local produce stall, First Shot Distillery, etc all demonstrate a minimal understanding of the community and the town ,to suggest use of a heritage building as a B&B seems to suggest that a short term, quick fix attitude to tourist development will be appropriate.

See Little Creatures, Flying Brick, and the Bellarine winery trail. In fact the position of Queenscliff in the Bellarine and the disposition of adjacent tourism and tourist mass movement in the area highlights the potential. The challenge how to get our piece of the action, find the niche and make it ours.

Where are we, where do we want to be, what do we have to bring other people to enjoy what we enjoy about this area.

Short Term investment options look practical and need to be part of a master plan that can be implemented in stages, but this project need to be feet on ground stage by stage. This requires ongoing contact with the local community to bring them along on the journey, accepting that they also have a part in the history that is key to the evolution of “A Tourism Queenscliffe “concept.

We are concerned that the BoQ believes there is a magic solution and that a major entrepreneur will provide a tendered project to create a masterpiece development in this location with acceptance to all governments and key players, and a significant financial return to the Borough.

We do not believe that life is so simple .

Recent travel in Canada by one of our member noted their emphasis on retaining historic elements , retaining fishing villages, rebuilding old fortifications, and lots of tourists. Getting the mix right locally and in the national scene is the important issue.