



History of Melbourne Docklands

The metropolitan Docklands of today rests on a site steeped in history.

Looking at the striking modern architecture, it's hard to imagine the original swamp land that was home for thousands of years to the clans of the Kulin Nation - the Wurundjeri and Bunerong people - who spent summers in the areas around the Yarra River. The Yarra and Maribyrnong rivers and surrounding bush and grassland were fertile and plentiful with waterfowl, fish, and many edible plants and animals.

European settlement began when John Batman sailed into Port Phillip in May 1835. After establishing a treaty with local Aboriginals and buying a large portion of the land that is now Melbourne, he built one of the first houses in the area atop Pleasant Hill. Later known as Batman's Hill, the area was eventually flattened to make way for Southern Cross Station (formerly known as Spencer Street Station). The Batman's Hill area also became home to the Melbourne terminus of the Victorian Railways.

While the marshland area of modern day Docklands was left empty when surveyors Russell and Hoddle drew up the Melbourne grids in 1837, in time the area became home to some of Melbourne's first industries: abattoirs, bone grinders, wool washers and candle makers. By the turn of the century, it was a prominent industrial and transport hub.

The Victoria Docks thrived as Melbourne's key port for many years. It was not until the 1970s that changes to cargo transportation and storage methods reduced the significance of Docklands as a trading port, and the site was virtually abandoned.

But the potential of this valuable inner-city space and harbour was not forgotten, and there was strong interest in redeveloping the area to 'return the waterfront to the people'. In the 1990s the Docklands Taskforce was appointed to identify the best options for the area.

In 1991 the *Docklands Authority Act 1991* passed by the Victorian Parliament. The Docklands Authority was established to facilitate private sector development of the area.

In 1996 the site was released to the market in 7 separate precincts with construction of Docklands Stadium commencing in 1997.

The large scale urban renewal project began with the construction of Telstra Dome. Since 1999, the Authority also had responsibility for the municipal management for Docklands. VicUrban became the development authority when the Docklands Authority merged with Urban and Regional Land Corporation (URLC) in 2003.

In 2000 Docklands Stadium (Telstra Dome) & Docklands key transport links open. Bourke Street, La Trobe Street, Wurundjeri Way all open.

In 2002, the first residents moved to NewQuay, Docklands. Since this time, the residential and working populations have rapidly grown creating a dynamic and vibrant community.

On July 1 2007, the municipal management of Melbourne Docklands is transferred from VicUrban to the City of Melbourne with VicUrban continuing its role as the agency responsible for its development until the project is completed in around 2020.