



PORT PHILLIP CONSERVATION COUNCIL INC.

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PPCC Inc. Policy Statement No. 15

Private Structures, such as 'Bathing Boxes', on Public Land and Water

SUMMARY:

The publicly-owned waters of Port Phillip Bay and the foreshore land around it are in places used, or liable to be used, as sites for various privately-owned structures such as 'bathing boxes', boat sheds, jetties, moored floating structures that are not predominantly vessels, kiosks, restaurants, clubhouses, pipelines, telecommunications and electricity supply infrastructure, signs, fences enclosing publicly-owned land, and car parks. That use replaces what had previously been natural coastal and marine environment usable by the general public. Such occupancy should not be permitted without a licence or lease from the public landowner viewable on the landowner's Web site. The structures, if not registered as heritage properties by a State or Commonwealth agency, or used predominantly for water-related activities and owned by a non-profit incorporated association open to any member of the public, or having a function that is essentially related to public safety, national defence, or the provision of authorized services, should be phased out from occupying public land or waters.

DETAIL:

Conflicts with Important Coastal Values: The structures obscure and spoil many coastal landscapes. Their occupancy of land prevents public presence on the beach area occupied, and vegetation growth on other areas occupied. Their presence works against growth of nearby trees owing to dislike by owners of their structures being damaged by the trees.

Numbers of 'Bathing Boxes': Some 2000 private 'bathing boxes' exist around Port Phillip, but they are anachronisms, as there is no longer any possibility of even 0.1% of the metropolitan population of some 3,000,000 people ever owning such a structure without a 50% increase in the number of boxes. Such a pronounced scarcity has encouraged the growth of a market in transfers of licences for large prices, which promotes profiteering at the expense of public land values, and entrenches ownership. Examples of bathing boxes registered as recognized heritage properties should maintain sufficient evidence of former historical use of public sites.

Transfers of Licences: Ownership by private individuals, or by private or public companies, of existing 'bathing boxes' should be, as occurred in their earlier successful phasing out in the former City of Sandringham, linked to the ownership by the same owner of a specific residential lot in the municipality involved. If the ownership of that lot changes, ownership of the 'bathing box' should change with it, or else lapse permanently.

Maintenance of Structures: Public landowners should maintain on their Web sites published criteria of the standard of maintenance and appearance of licensed structures, including a requirement for a permanent clearly visible registration number, and they should require structures that cease to meet those criteria to be removed at the owner's expense. To ensure that such removal is feasible without public cost an indexed bond, refundable on removal of the structure, should be paid to and held by the landowner as a provision for meeting the costs of removal in the event that it is not practicable to recover those costs from the licensee.

ADOPTION:

This PPCC Inc. Policy Statement No. 15 was adopted by a General Meeting of Port Phillip Conservation Council Inc. on 28th April 2003.
