

Memo

To	Ron Parker – Parks Victoria		
From	Neil Bourne	Date	10 April 2019
Project	Shipwreck Coast Masterplan Stage 1	Project #	D0163
Subject	12 Apostles Saddle Lookout EPBC Commentary	File Index	

This memo provides clarification on the design proposals for the Saddle Lookout at the 12 Apostles precinct. It focusses upon the process and outcomes that relate to the potential visual and heritage impacts.

The accompanying PDF contains extracts from the Design Development Report (October 2018) and includes key design descriptions and visualisations. The animation and links to virtual reality views greatly assist in appreciating the design proposals, particularly the diverse viewpoints and visitor experience.

The following outlines key considerations and design outcomes.

Design

Conceptual Approach

We recognise that there are three legitimate ways to successfully incorporate built form within sensitive natural environments: to subsume, tread lightly or distinctively contrast. Each three has been adopted at the three very different sites that compose the Shipwreck Coast Masterplan Stage 1 projects.

The proposal for the Saddle Lookout is a considered response to the identity of this place, the physical characteristics and operational constraints. It is consciously a distinctive man-made insertion in to the landscape and a memorable sculptural form.

This recognises the reality of the 12 Apostles site as a major tourist destination, with acceptance of the physical impacts this has upon the site and the need for large-scale, attractive visitor assets.

Abstraction and implied referencing of Traditional Owner cultural heritage is integrated in the built-form. This includes interpretation of the traditional Moietes, the black and white cockatoos. The surface finish of the sticks provides layers of narrative in collaboration with the Traditional Owners' artist collaborator, Vicki Couzens.

Concept Narrative

The Saddle Lookout is conceptually distinctive, perched like so many visitors on top of the cliffs, to elevate and experience the scale and heightened drama of this incredible landscape.

It is deliberately rectilinear and man-made, composed of two contrasting 'blocks' or 'sticks'. One rests upon the ground while the other cantilevers out into the sky.

The visitor journey passes through a series of shallow ramps within, over and around the lookout, creating extended perimeter for the large crowds to be able to access views.

The great views to the Apostles are accentuated and with the panorama of ocean, cliffs and sky, the visitor feels exposed on the edge of the continent; small within the magnificent coastal landscape.

Colour

In response to stakeholder feedback the development of the design has been visually integrated in to the cliff through refined cladding treatment and colour selection. It has adopted muted earth tones when viewed from sensitive locations, supported by limited accent colour from selected viewpoints on the lookouts.

The design incorporates a nuanced use of colour on the south stick (dark stick) to respond to key viewpoints. The dark stick is the most prominent element of the lookout in the broader context but is viewed from a typically distant perspective. In contrast, the north stick (light stick) is predominantly viewed by visitors already within the tourist precinct.

The colour response for the south stick includes adding natural colour tones from the landscape, plus rotating the fins to vary the external reading depending upon the viewpoint. The effect sympathetically relates the skin to the cliff rock tones when viewed from sensitive viewpoints.

The four tones range from dark brown through reddish browns to a muted red-ochre. All of the tones have been selected from sampling the colours within the cliff-face geology. Similarly, the variation and vertical stratification echoes that of the cliff-face.

The tones are also selected, with the Traditional Owner artist, to reflect the feathers of the black and white cockatoos, which are very significant Moiete element of the local Aboriginal cultural heritage. The light toned north stick represents the white cockatoo with the tail-feather pale yellow in a location marking the entry and exit points to the lookout.

The accompanying memos detail the colours specified.

Rotating Fins

The fins forming the dark stick balustrade and cladding, rotate in plan from +45 degrees through perpendicular to the deck to -45 degrees. The most distinctive red-ochre tone is restricted to those fins generally perpendicular to the deck and therefore predominantly edge-on when viewed externally. This red-ochre tone is on only 10% of the fins. The red-ochre provides a subtle highlight to the visitor on the lookout when viewed up close but is practically recessive from a distance.

The darker, more muted tones are applied to the remaining fins (and the base stick cladding). Therefore, the appearance of the lookout from views on Gibson Steps beach and along the Great Ocean Road are recessive and respectful to the landscape and geology of this place.

The diversity in tones and the random orientation of the fins creates a sophisticated and variegated expression. This is best appreciated by viewing the animation that orbits the lookout and demonstrates the changing character from different view directions.

Views

It can be seen that the views to the lookout from outside the precinct are recessive and respectful. The views from the lookout are equally, if not even more, important, given the large visitor numbers and destination views to the Apostles and cliffs. The lookout maintains uninterrupted views to the Apostles for all users including children and those in wheelchairs. The virtual reality views indicate the visitor experience and outlook, including from standing adult and wheelchair eye levels.

It is important to note that the proposal removes visitors from the Castle Rock promontory. Currently, the existing timber lookouts their approach path are populated with large crowds, degrading views to the Castle Rock from all directions. The new lookout proposal delivers an elevated panoramic outlook for visitors but does not physically allow them to intrude upon the promontory. The existing lookout and paths are to be removed and remediated.

Consistent with the desires of the Traditional Owners, the lookout is a dark site at night. It does not include any feature lighting and allows the night sky and darkness to dominate.

Process

The design process has incorporated extensive engagement and review with key stakeholders including Traditional Owners (EMAC), local community, Parks Victoria rangers, tourism operators and the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA). The response was overwhelmingly positive, particularly from EMAC and OVGA.

The process generated feedback which genuinely influenced the design and led to demonstrable development of the proposals. Key considerations have been the visual and cultural heritage characteristics, particularly the form and colour, and the consequent appearance from key viewpoints, both to and from the structure.