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Title: **Two Examples of Urban Renewal: Melbourne and Coolangatta, Australia**

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Subject: Urban Design

Keyword: Urban Design

Publication Date: 2005

Original Publication: CTBUH 2005 7th World Congress, New York

Paper Type:

1. **Book chapter/Part chapter**
2. Journal paper
3. Conference proceeding
4. Unpublished conference paper
5. Magazine article
6. Unpublished

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Omiros Emmanouilides graduated from the University of Melbourne's Architecture school with 1st Class Honors. Two years after graduation, he was the recipient of the Commonwealth Research Award to undertake research in environmental science. Following that, Mr. Emmanouilides completed a Master of Architecture degree at the University of Melbourne.

He founded Omiros One Architecture (O1a) in 1988 in Melbourne. O1a is one of the young, leading design practices in Australia, with extensive experience in medium- and high-density residential developments. The firm's work is known for its commercially successful, unique designs and environmentally sustainable solutions, found in Melbourne, Victoria, and the Gold Coast Queensland. Mr. Emmanouilides is head of O1a's design team.

Two Examples of Urban Renewal: Melbourne and Coolangatta, Australia

Australia is a continent with a diverse topography, climate, and social structure. Omiros One Architecture (O1a) has been involved in the design of high-density residential developments in two of the most dissimilar cities in the country: Melbourne and Coolangatta.

This presentation will examine and compare recent and totally different examples of urban renewal in these two Australian cities. The area to be examined in Melbourne is the recently completed Docklands area, and in Coolangatta the new foreshore development on Marine parade and Griffith streets, a part of the sea change.

Comparisons will be drawn on the topographical, social, economic, environmental, and cultural influences in each city. The recent history of the local demands leading to the requirements of tall building solutions will also be considered.

Examining these two totally opposite environments will draw conclusions as to the influences on the architectural and urban design solutions and review how the response to the constraints and opportunities in each environment has affected the architecture. Major issues which affect the building environment will be isolated and their responses identified.

In addressing the topic, *Renewing the Urban Landscape*, this presentation examines which factors influence the architectural and urban design response and offers two unique Australian examples of urban renewal in two diverse building environments.

Title: "Comparison of two different examples of urban renewal in Melbourne and Coolangatta, Australia"

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Abstract: Australia is a *continent* with a diverse topography, climate and social structure. Omiros One Architecture (O1a) has been involved in the design of high density residential developments in two of the most dissimilar cities in the country Melbourne, Coolangatta, Gold Coast

As one of the country's leading architectural practices, (O1a) has been exposed to a diverse set of design influences, opportunities and constraints.

The proposed paper will examine and compare two recent and totally different examples of urban renewal in these two Australian cities. The area to be examined in Melbourne is the recently completed Docklands area, and in Coolangatta the new foreshore redevelopment on Marine parade and Griffith streets.

A comparison will be drawn on of the topographical, social, economic, environmental and cultural influences in each city. The recent history of the local demands leading to the requirements of tall building solutions will also be considered.

In examining these two totally opposite environments the study will draw conclusions as to the influences on the Architectural and the Urban Design solutions and review how the response to the constraints and opportunities in each environment, has affected the Architecture. Major issues which affect the building environment will be isolated and their responses identified.

In addressing the topic, *Renewing the Urban Landscape*, this paper examines which factors influence the Architectural and Urban design response and offers an insight into two unique Australian examples of Urban renewal of two very diverse building environments.

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INTRODUCTION – LIVING THE DREAM



Fig. 1. The two new towers on Marine Pde. Coolangatta R1 and RT2, Developed by Niecon, designed by Omiros One Architecture (O1a). Images provided by O1a.

As you gaze out your 20 storey balcony into the turquoise blue horizon, you can hear the surf breaking right below you. The temperature is a perfect 24° C and yet just two hours ago, in another part of the country, you were braving the elements at a mere 8° C.

The sun, high above you, defines its path on the sea mist which carries the subtle aroma of the ocean up to you.

How you missed all this!.

You take a deep breath as if you are trying to inhale the exhilarating ocean view framed by the distant City Skyline of the Gold Coast, some 20 km away. This distant Cityscape reminds you of the bar charts you were working on before you left Melbourne.

How familiar this all is but how different. You may not have the sun in your living room every morning in Melbourne but the view is equally captivating, with the bay in the distance and the wide river at your doorstep. Too bad you hardly have the time to enjoy the view there as you do here.

You reflect for a moment on the long Sunday brunches and the dilemma you face every week in selecting a venue. Suddenly your stomach gently reminds you that its lunch time and you face the same choice again, Teppanyaki at the building next door or Italian at the ground level.

You smile as it downs on you... and you whisper, "*how lucky am I*". You live, work and play in two of the world best places. For a minute you are not just grateful for the creator but all those responsible for your built environment.

Stop dreaming this is not a *Mills and Boon* novel; it is a paper which aims to compare these two environments of urban renewal, the Melbourne Docklands and the new foreshore redevelopment in Coolangatta, Gold Coast.

By studying these two totally opposite environments of urban renewal it is intended to identify the predominant forces that affect the built environment and review the response in each of the case studies. At the same time, you will get an insight into these unique Australian examples of urban renewal.

Of course you also have the option of continuing the dream as it does get much, much better.

III / THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE TWO SITES

With a population of only 3.6 million, Melbourne is a city that assumed a position of dominance in Australian culture since 1885 and not without merit, the first Australian Art School flourished there. The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia was convened there for 27 years until Canberra was sufficiently established in 1928. Melbourne's institutions project a national gravitas; the Melbourne Club, the Melbourne Cup, the Australian Football League Grand Final, the Australian Grand Prix, the Australian Open Tennis. Only a city of supreme confidence would name its state based art collection, the National Gallery of Victoria. Indeed, Melbourne is the New York of the southern hemisphere and the Paris of Antipodes.

Originally the area currently known as the Docklands was occupied by the Native Australians, who inhabited the areas around the Yarra River as they were fertile and plentiful as food sources. This area still functions very much in the same manner, except now food is much easier to obtain and served, *A La Carte*.

During the 1890's, Victoria Dock was established next to the railways. This enabled the Docklands area to become an important industrial transport hub of Victoria. From 1970s, ships gradually increased in size and the use of containers becomes more prevalent. As a result, the quantity of cargo able to be handled in Victoria Dock and surrounding wharves declined. New facilities were developed downstream and the Docklands area became a prime area for redevelopment. In the late 1980s, the state government saw the potential of the site and began exploring opportunities to use this valuable inner-city space.

The Docklands water front development is made up of 200 hectares of land and water, with 7km of waterfront development, mainly by the private sector. There are several developers, each with their own precincts. Within each precinct, there are blends of residential, commercial, retail and leisure uses and activities. By 2015, the area is expected to become a home for 20,000 a workplace for 25,000 people in a wide range of employment and a visitor destination for an average 55,000 people per day^{*1}

Melbourne Docklands is being developed under the responsibilities, objectives and functions set out in VicUrban Act 1991. VicUrban's Business Plan incorporates five key principles that are critical to the success of the development. Melbourne Docklands is to be; *a place for everyone, a thriving water place, excellent in design, environmentally responsible, financially successful*^{*2} The intent behind the Governments re-development of the Docklands was to: Create a world standard urban renewal where from its success, acceptance and attraction it is to be beneficial to the community in general. The birth of the idea however, was out of the State Governments Melbourne 2030 strategy for sustainable urban growth, which aims to reduce urban sprawl and the need for expensive infrastructure to service it.

Coolangatta on the other hand, is a regional resort centre of Queensland's Gold Coast, with a population of only 7,000 people. Unlike Melbourne's rather unstable moderate climate, Coolangatta and the Gold Coast have an exceptionally favourable sub tropical climate.

The Gold Coast as a holiday destination, has been extremely successful to the point that now it has become a place to live as well as a place, for some, to still vicariously seek paradise for short and concentrated periods of time. The urban focus of the main City, Surfers Paradise, together with its global counter parts like Las Vegas, Nevada; Waikiki Beach, Hawaii and Miami Beach, Florida, have developed their own distinctive architectural traditions. The representations of these places are almost always sinister rather than enlightening and treated often in ironic and deprecating tones. To like, to even find value in such locations is to apparently, reveal an appalling lack of tact and taste. Coolangatta was one of the earliest settlements of the Gold Coast, perched on a steep headland at Point Danger, the areas was occupied by Europeans from at least 1828. In 1883 a Township was surveyed and the town included a Customs Office, Boat Shed and Government Wharf.

^{*1} Figures provided by VicUrban

^{*2} Docklands' Planning Area Strategic Statement, July 2000, By The Docklands Authority.

In the early 1900s, Coolangatta was established as a holiday township with Guesthouses, Hotels and a Commercial Centre, with a conventional Subdivision and land use. The early grid pattern is broken only by the Ocean Front and the Headland. Little remains of the earliest buildings, but Griffith Street remains the Commercial Centre. Resort Hotels and Guest Houses have been constructed on the Ocean Front and clustered in the lee of the headland. The headland itself is an important land mark and tourist destination. Coolangatta symbolizes the terminus of the Gold Coast and the long strip of beach that begins at Main Beach, 40 kilometers to the north.

III/ THE EVOLUTION OF THE NEED FOR HIGHER DENSITIES

Australians prefer space, openness, most of us like low density urban living and we have the space and geographical resources to pursue this lifestyle. Most Australians still prefer the quarter acre block the garage and the barbeque. Apartment style living in Melbourne up to the mid and late '90s was an alien concept. So alien had the apartment market been to Melbourne, that the pioneers marketed their product mainly off shore. Our nation singularly and relentlessly pursued the quintessential suburban lifestyle in every major city during the second half of the 20th Century.

Households are shaped by shifting social values and demographics that combined to exert an influence over the configuration of the suburban house.

Social, cultural and even technology changes over the century have demanded that the family home expand as a shrinking home. Irrespective of this, the past and even present generations have grown to view their home as their castle and sharing a building to live in was an alien concept.

Only until recent the family became less insulate and all members are engaged with work, social and leisure activities off site. The average no longer needs the private external space they once did. After the recession of the late 1980s, interest rates had dropped to an all time low of 4% and 5%. Many households had substantial savings and the kids of the baby bombers were leaving home. Further to these new trends, the construction industry was just emerging from a recession and housing stocks were low. With this high demand placed on the housing stock and rental markets by the population growth, especially the first home buyers, the introduction of a new type of residential product was appropriate. Suddenly it was chic to be downtown amid cafes and restaurants and immersed in a complete culture of "*apartmentia*". For many now, it is a brunch and a pied-a-terre, rather than a BBQ and brick veneer.

This was timely for the release of the Docklands and Melbournians were exposed to a new option of living in an Apartment Tower.

Unlike Melbourne where the City evolved reflecting slowly changing attitudes of the inhabitants, as economic and social conditions evolved, the Gold Coast is more of a product of revolution rather than evolution. The first major spurt of growth was a result of a concerted and focused campaign of the 1960s, selling the opportunities of climate and lifestyle. The new Gold Coast largely absorbed and displaced the culture that characterized it prior to that date.

The Gold Coast and specifically Surfers Paradise is characterized as a culture of excess and exaggeration, where things are of a magnitude and order not experienced elsewhere and where there is a decided accent on the spectacular and manufactured attractions. Coolangatta however, although the primary focus of its architecture is on leisure, it does not ignore its natural attributes of the Foreshore. For whatever reason, Coolangatta escaped the Luna park development epidemic of Surfers Paradise, where the spurious has been turned into an art form and urban design was subjected to the principles of the Theme Park.

Coolangatta is blessed with its fortuitous geography, with its long Coastal strip of, sand and surf, boarded by a hinterland of mountains, rainforest and the most desirous semi-tropical climate. It is a place of escape, a refuge from a more conventional city environment. It is also a place where the conventional demarcations between work and play have been abandoned and the city exists for the sake of play rather than work. It is a city that exists by virtue of the fact that people have chosen to be there and have moved from elsewhere to be there. In effect Coolangatta and more generally the Gold Coast, is an

antipodean version of Las Vegas. A Las Vegas in bathing suites, shorts and t-shirts, forged from the retirement capital of the 1960s, when Gold Coast was sold as the place to live.

With the turn of the millennium Australians had found a new confidence. Developments in communication and travel technologies have given a new definition and flexibility to the work place. At the same time, Australian values had changed to embrace the beach lifestyle. This generation of Australians has gravitated towards the beach like no previous generation. The Gold Coast has been the premier single destination for Australians on the move for more than 25 years. The Gold Coast did not exist per se in 1945, yet by 2000, it contained 404,000 and is continuously growing. Indeed, most Australians, regardless of where they live, understand what is meant by the concept of the Gold Coast lifestyle; and yet neither this concept nor the city existed at the mid point of the 20th century. Unless there is a fundamental shift in Australian values – for instance, *'we don't like the beach any more'* – then the Gold Coast and other cities like it, will continue to attract Australians at a greater rate than inland cities. Indeed so strong an influence is the beach on current popular culture in Australia, that there must be a burgeoning market for parody of this lifestyle. It's almost as if the Australian nation is establishing a new colony along the edges of the continent.

With most of the coast line already developed the obvious choice is to redevelop were the remaining low density and aging sections of the foreshore. Coolangatta was a perfect choice for redevelopment with its northern shoreline and close proximity to an International Airport. It also had a vast market of locals seeking to relocate closer to the water as well as affluent middle class, from the colder parts of the country, seeking that beach lifestyle.

IV/ CONTROLS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENTS OF THE MELBOURNE DOCKLANDS AND COOLANGATTA.

The Docklands selection process required potential developers to submit bids, including concept plans for a precinct or individual parcels, in competition with other developers.

The land of the Melbourne Docklands remains in government ownership, VicUrban, until such time the developers complete the project. Only then the land title is released to the developer and only for the parcel of land which the building occupies. This ensures that the developer adheres to the initial agreement until the completion of the project.

These agreements provided the basis for many of the Planning, Design, Environmental and Public spaces outcomes of the Docklands. Developers then prepare master plans for their precincts that are consistent with the original bid proposal. The agreements consequently tie in the purchase of the land with the approved concept, time frame, design and quality standard. The Government in assessing the suitable candidates for the re-development, assessed the bids on the following criteria: - Design and Amenity, Integration, Finance and Risk, Viability as well as other aspects relevant to the Docklands. Public benefit is also a very high consideration in the bid assessment and the successful bids all integrate a component of public spaces and art. Indeed most of these spaces are connected to each other proving a designed "art journey".

The brief for the urban design had been formulated by VicUrban after consulting with a number of leading Melbourne Architects. The brief mandates that the art journey uses the City as back-drop and is to have a strong water focus, indigenous history and an industrial and urban interface. The public art of Docklands has a 24 hour impact and is intended to reach a broad audience of residents and visitors.

Statutory Planning requirements for Docklands are contained in the Melbourne Dockland Area Planning Provisions, which is an incorporated document in the Melbourne Planning Scheme. A Development Plan Approval is required for a development to proceed. The Department of Infrastructure administers approvals under the Melbourne Planning Scheme.

Each developer employs a range of designers in order to achieve diversity of built form and landscape character. However, the developers are required to have integrated designs particularly in the public

realm and interface between buildings in order to ensure at the broad scale, that Docklands is perceived as a destination with unique character and sense of place.

In the very recent past, Gold Coast commenced to view itself in a more serious manner and pride, a new marketing campaign reflected this ethos. A new slogan, the “very GC” highlights a sophisticated yet casual beach style of living and heralds a new era of maturity, relevant to the target market of the middle class affluent Australians that seek the beach escape without sacrificing their café lattes and luncheons.

The Authorities have now become aware that it is almost certain that the current growth and continuing vibrancy of a culture sustained almost solely by leisure will presage a new cultural and urban condition for the 21st century and have focused their attention to it. New rules and new visions have been developed and incorporated as strategies in the Planning Scheme.

A comprehensive Planning Document identifies, Local Area Plans and highlights desired outcomes for design is to consider, with intent to provide for integrated planning and development controls of all its areas.

The controls rather than being prescriptive are impact accessible, encouraging high densities in exchange for public benefit and built solution of high architectural and urban design merit.

Although the process may take longer and provides less certainty than the approvals process in the Docklands, it allows for original and pro-active outcomes.

V/ URBAN RENEWALS: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS.

This analysis deals with the completed and working section of the Docklands the New Quay and the currently constructed section of the Coolangatta foreshore between McDonald and Clark Streets.



Fig.2.NewQuay, by MAB, designed by Plus Architecture. Images provided by Plus Architecture

The controls of the Docklands mandate that the developer provides for a quality public space with integrated art work. Indeed the public spaces in this area are of the highest caliber and do attract many visitors. The theme of the artwork and the spaces are contextual and of high quality. These spaces are comfortable, interesting and fuse into each other to provide for linked sequence of enlivening experience.

The spaces act as the nexus between the waterfront and the outdoor dining spaces of the various restaurants occupying the ground level of the residential towers. Both the indoor and outdoor commercial spaces are of extremely high design caliber and are well defined and easily accessible.

Responding to Melbourne’s temperate climate, the indoor spaces are substantially larger than the outdoor spaces.

The uses facing the water front are primarily food orientated with specialist retail on the sides and rear of the building.

Currently, the water front spaces and the commercial uses perform best during fine weekend days. One must qualify however that this redevelopment is in its infancy, with only a small portion completed.

The first towers were built at the hype of the residential boom in 2000-2002 when demand was high. During that time construction costs were at least 30% lower than the present time. The apartment sales were directed toward the investor market, with a mix of 70% two bedroom apartments of approximately 90m² in area and only 15% with one bedroom. Almost all the apartments were designed to have water views. Unfortunately the views are to the south in comparison to the Coolangatta apartments which enjoy direct sun penetration from the North. Due to Melbourne's weather the Balconies are approximately 8 – 10 m². In the Coolangatta developments, the balconies are over 20m² and are used for most of the days. The internal configuration of the towers in both instances is very similar.

Currently, the investment market for city apartments in Melbourne has drastically slowed down which had forced this developer, MAB, to reconsider the mix and the target market. The recently completed tower, Conder, is designed for owner occupiers. The mix has also altered to 30% one bedroom, 20% two bedrooms and 50% three bedroom apartment and a higher quality building.*³

With the residential apartment market currently at a standstill and construction costs at an all time high, the progress of the docklands projects have lost their momentum. Since the land owner controls the mix of residential and commercial uses, the developers will start to exert pressure for a review on both the program and the mix. Indeed, one developer is currently experiencing difficulty in completing their residential quota.

Unless the developers research and identify new market trends the balance of Docklands will have to wait

However, even from this brief analysis one can see that the current trend of the down town push cannot continue for more than what it has, otherwise our cities will look like Manhattan Island. Mainstream Australia will never adopt the Manhattan life style. Its fine for a component of the community but it is not as pivotal to grassroots Australian values as is the quest for space, for independence, for privacy and for low-density living. Some downtown development is required by a segment of the community but inner-city living will never quite do it for the average Australian the way nature strips do. Bernard Salt a leading demographic expert, believes that*⁴ *“...the prevailing push into the inner-city and inner suburbs represents, about a 20 year catch-up period, or paradigm, during which developers and the markets are compensating for the earlier absence of this type of residential option in metropolitan Australia...”* From his experience in residential development, the author concurs with this view.

Having said this, Melbournians aspire to high quality living environments and VicUrban have managed to achieve just that, which could fairly well be the saving grace for the Docklands in the near future. Mr Rainer Strunz, an associate of Plus Architecture, indicated that for the balance of the New Quay, a more exclusive residential section is proposed which allows purchaser variations and more customized dwellings. Perhaps this could be the solution but will the market place sustain a product that would retail in the order of A\$15,000/m² to A\$20,000/m². Currently, there appears to be market resistance to certain product, other than penthouses, over A\$1.0 Million, whether it is in Melbourne or the Gold Coast.

The Coolangatta re-development as with the Melbourne Docklands focuses as much in the creation of public urban spaces as it does on the private commercial spaces. This approach is encouraged by the Planning Scheme and allows for a higher yield, a *win win* scenario so as to speak.

In the instance, of this case study; the design of the re-development acknowledged the fact that there are no Plazas or Civic Squares where the population can assemble. The design also acknowledged that the beach represents the Gold Coasts agora, Piazza or City Square, where the residents exercise their bodies rather their minds and where social encounters occur.

*³ figures provided by MABs architects: Plus-Architecture. MAB is the developer for New Quay.

*⁴The Big Shift, by Bernard Salt, internet article, www.thebigshift.com.au/exerts.php, p5

untouched natural phenomenon which has given rise to the peculiar conurbations behind. Few structures intrude upon its purity and there is little distinctive or consistent hard and soft landscaping that defines the edge between the towers and the dunes. It is an edge that needs definition for most parts, in particular a specific landscape philosophy that maintains its charm as a natural terrace. What makes this strip so particularly unique in global terms and so Australian is that unlike Miami Beach and parts of Waikiki, the beach at the Gold Coast has not been privatized.

Consequently, the design extended beyond the site and a Master Plan was undertaken with a coherent landscape philosophy that maintains its charm as the natural terrain.

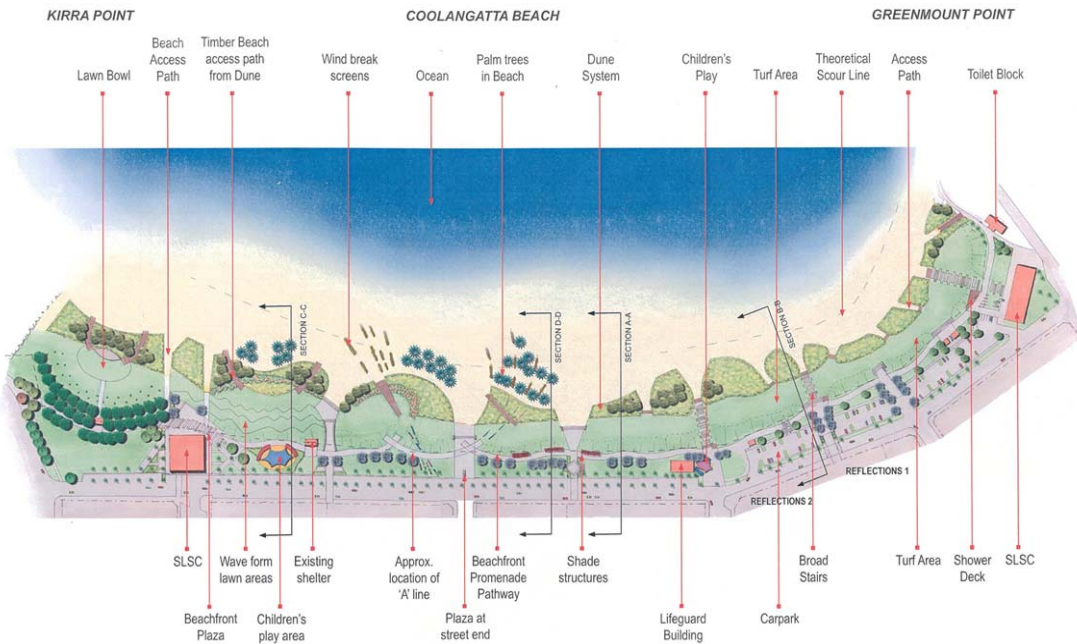


Fig.3. Coolangatta Foreshore landscape master plan proposed by the developer Nicon.

Indeed the developer has undertaken the foreshore landscape work as part of the open space contribution and compensation for extra plot ratio allowance. All developers will be encouraged in the future to undertake the landscape work in front of their sites in accordance with this master plan. This is a similar scenario to the public urban contribution by the developers in the Melbourne Docklands.

This landscape philosophy then spills into the site which incorporates a large Piazza bordering the outdoor dining spaces. Unlike Melbourne; these outdoor spaces are double and even triple, the indoor spaces. This is due to the fact that they can be used for 95% of the time in comparison to Melbourne's 35%-40%. Urban art and a signage strategy is also undertaken. The result at the ground floor is an exceptional commercial shopping strip with a combination of lifestyle and food retail uses.



Fig.4. Outdoor commercial spaces of tower 1 in Coolangatta. Image by Omiros One architecture (O1a)

As with Melbourne, the residential towers in Coolangatta also face the views, fortuitously they are north facing. In both the developments the towers include a substantial amount of environmentally sustainable features. The Passive features are more effective in the Coolangatta case due to the orientation, which in-turn resulted

into a challenge for the design to resolve, the issue of bulk when viewed from the foreshore. Another issue for consideration due to the fact that all the apartments faced the view was the resolution of an active rear façade.

The designers have rose to the challenge and achieved an exceptionally well articulated buildings with four active facades.

Construction costs have also affected the design of the apartments. The first tower was constructed predominantly with 95-100m², 2 bedroom apartments, whereas in the second tower, RT2, the size was reduced to 90m² to ensure a retail figure of below A\$1.0M. Most of the apartments are 2 bedrooms except the upper 3 levels which are 200m² sky-homes and penthouses with their own swimming pools on the top level. The balconies are designed to be fully functional weatherproof spaces that allow for the indoor/outdoor living apt to the weather.



Fig.5. The redesigned of Tower 2 by O1a. The façade responds to the constraint of visual bulk. Ground level offers a piazza space, prelude to the foreshore.

The market resistance for over A\$1.0million was profoundly evident in the Coolangatta redevelopment. Tower One, was designed by the author and had incredible sales success in its original release in 2003. The developer then purchased the adjoining site with permits obtained previously by other architects. The apartments in the later were over 120m² in area and they were marketed at A\$1.1 - \$1.3M. Both projects were marketed simultaneously, but the latter failed in its marketing primarily due to the size and ultimately the price of the units.

The author re-designed the tower using a similar template to the first tower only slightly smaller, to cater for the increase in construction costs. In doing so this ensured similar prices to the first released tower. This new building, RT2, was released some 20 months later and was immediately received well by the, somewhat, tougher market.

VI/ IDENTIFYING THE MAJOR FORCES AFFECTING THE DESIGN

The Coolangatta foreshore re-development of R1 and R2 is less than half the size of the New Quay in the Melbourne Docklands. However, one can draw comparative conclusions as they are both of similar scale and use and are sited on a water front, albeit one is an ocean and the other a river.

The cultural and social mindset of Melbourne and the Gold Coast are polar opposites. One is a cultural metropolis and the other a leisure based community. The weather is also very different, as is the orientation of the view.

Orientation for achieving solar access has been given a low priority. The view dominates the orientation variable. Indeed so strong is the emphasis on the view that in one case solar access is totally sacrificed for it. In the other case architectural solutions are sought to eliminate a bulky appearance.

The climatic differences have been responded to primarily in the balcony treatments to enhance the life style opportunities and are of minor architectural consequences, this extends to the ground level spaces. The cultural and social issues have also been responded to; however, there is little effect to the architecture, more so in the finishes and landscape treatments of the projects. The Melbourne solutions

have a small landscape component integrated into the design where as the Coolangatta projects emphasize integrate landscape solutions. The Docklands place a stronger emphasis on street art. The urban spaces as well as the architecture in each case are of high quality, coherent and yet diverse in character and detail, adding to the experience of each.

The major force which dramatically affects the design is the market place, it has the ability to promote or terminate a project. It is the single factor that influences the design and indeed the very existence of the project.

Costs and market demand will determine form, shape and size and there are no compensations.

CONCLUSION -TOWARDS SUCCESSFUL DEVELOPMENT

The success of commercial architecture very much depends on market forces.

The Designer cannot be bound to trends but should be able to read and respond to societies changing values. A successful development should seek to spot an ascendant value. In order to do this one must observe the “*cultural elite*” and monitor the transition of their values from the edge to the centre of main stream society.

Who are the culturally elite? Bernard Salt explains^{*5}: “*They see themselves leaders, they mostly comprise the educated and by definition they include the opinionated. They are the 5% of the nation and mostly live in the inner suburbs of our largest cities. Having introduced an idea, they set about to seize part and promote it until it is accepted by the middle bracket of the society*”. Business should identify a new value which is mainstream bound, fashion a product around it and deliver it to middle class, just before it is mass accepted. This is business bliss. In fact, two of the countries largest apartment developers Meriton and Central Equity achieved this elevated state of commercial enlightenment in the early 1990s.

Property marketed to the heartland for example, should still reflect family values. Property marketed to the cultural elite, on the other hand, should reflect their current aspirations and values.

The property industry needs to closely monitor what is hot and what is not. In a way, Architectural directives like ESD are also based on ascended values but it cannot surpass water views.

Responses to issues like climate and style are easily deliverable and indeed are of minor consequences to the design. Reading the values however that affect the market, is something that needs careful consideration and ultimately affects the design to a grand scale. The Designers need to either be sensitive to community values or need to be guided correctly by their clients.

The analysis of these two totally different cases of Urban Renewal concludes that no one single factor has a major influence on the design as much as the market place, which is directed by our value systems.

Indeed our value systems dictate the controls that govern our built environs.

^{*5} Ibid,p9.