

# Central Pier

Summary Fact Sheet

January 2020



Damage to the decking under Shed 14

## Central Pier

Central Pier was originally constructed in 1916-17 to form part of Melbourne’s busiest dock. Of local, state and national significance, it is subject to heritage controls.

Central Pier has been the subject of repair and reconstruction over its 100-year life, including a conversion in 2007 to function spaces, offices and restaurants.

## Why was it closed?

On 28 August 2019, Development Victoria’s engineers (KBR) advised Development Victoria that Central Pier was no longer safe for public access. Despite previous repairs there was evidence the pier was deteriorating at an accelerated rate.

This is due to rot, marine borer, termites and an aggressive marine environment.

Engineers were concerned the accelerated deterioration could put the pier at risk of collapse.

Since the closure KBR has conducted a comprehensive 15-week investigation into the engineering integrity of the structure.



## What is wrong with the pier?

Central Pier is an historic structure with some parts more than 100 years old.

Extensive repairs have been undertaken over time, with Development Victoria spending over \$7 million on rectification work over the past three years to stabilise the pier in the face of these challenges.

The 15-week investigation and assessment has revealed a rapid and severe deterioration of the deck and piles supporting the structure, despite previous repairs.



Image left and right: Rot, Marine borer and aggressive marine environment have continued to eat away at the structural supports



## Why Central Pier must close

Central Pier is deteriorating at an accelerating rate.

There is no guarantee even if repairs are undertaken the Pier can be made safe for ongoing occupation.

### The key facts are:

- Significant rectification works would be required to return the pier to service.
- Those works would involve repairing or replacing hundreds of piles beneath the pier and numerous timber beams, rebuilding parts of the public walkway and treatment and preventative measures to deal with termites and marine borers.
- Due to the difficulty in accessing parts of the structure, some areas such as the abutment at Harbour Esplanade would need to be demolished and rebuilt in order for the repairs to be done.
- It is anticipated this work would take more than 14 months and cost tens of millions of dollars.
- Due to the age of the structure and increasing rate of deterioration, even if rectification work was done, there is no guarantee that further closures would not be required in the future.
- It is not viable to continue to repair this fast-deteriorating, century-old structure.

## Next steps

Safety has always been the number one priority and Development Victoria cannot allow access while there remains a risk to public safety.

After reviewing the engineer's advice and looking at all the options Development Victoria has made the only viable decision, and that is to not reopen the pier.

This is a disappointing outcome for all involved and is not a decision that has been taken lightly. Development Victoria recognises the significant impact of this decision on staff and businesses.

Development Victoria remains committed to ensuring a future for Central Pier which is an important heritage asset at the heart of Docklands.

Development Victoria will work closely with Heritage Victoria, the community and a range of stakeholders to identify opportunities to rebuild the pier so that it can be returned to the community to safely enjoy for another 100 years.

## The investigation

The 15-week investigation identified:

### SHED 9:

- An estimated 50% of the piles need repair.
- An additional 7% of the piles could fail in the next two years.
- An additional 29% of piles could deteriorate to a poor condition over the next two years.
- Repairs of existing failed piles and related structural elements would take in excess of 14 months.
- Occupation still cannot be guaranteed.

### SHED 14:

- Around 15-20% of the piles need repair.
- Over 19% of the piles are poor or failing.
- An additional 5% could fail in the next two years.
- An additional 23% of the piles could significantly deteriorate over the next two years.
- The public access area on the east side of the pier is in poor condition and also needs repair.
- The concrete beams and deck need repair.
- Repairs of existing failed piles and related structural elements would take in excess of seven months.
- Even if repairs are undertaken occupation cannot be guaranteed



Beam cracking Wharf 14



Split pile Wharf 9