

Q&A's

Q. What are you announcing today?

After an extensive 15-week assessment of Central Pier by engineering firm KBR, Development Victoria has decided not to reopen the 100-year old structure due to safety and OHS concerns.

The investigation has revealed that despite previous repairs, the rate of deterioration to the piles that support the pier is accelerating.

Safety has always been the number one priority and Development Victoria cannot reopen the pier while there remains an ongoing risk to public safety.

Q. Why are you making this announcement today?

Central Pier was closed by the issuing of a formal notice on 28 August 2019 to allow investigations to be undertaken. This notice expires 6 January 2020.

Development Victoria has committed to making decisions by this date to, as much as possible, be able to provide clarity for impacted businesses and their staff.

We appreciate many people will have their minds and hearts focused elsewhere at this time. But it is important, now that the information is available on which to make decisions that we meet our commitment to the head tenant specifically and the public.

The head tenant has been advised of the engineer's findings and Development Victoria's decision.

Q. What did the assessment from the marine engineers find?

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

The report from the engineers shows that there is severe accelerated deterioration of the underwater piles supporting Central Pier. This is due to rot, marine borer and termites and an aggressive marine environment. Despite ongoing remediation works including an investment by Development Victoria of \$7 million on rectification works over the past three years, deterioration has occurred rapidly.

Due to the complexity and age of the structure, weakening in one area may compromise the structural integrity of other areas.

Q: How bad is it?

There are two active sheds/wharves on Central Pier: Shed 9 and Shed 14.

Shed 9: 30% of the timber deck beams have failed, and 50% of the piles need to be repaired.

It is expected that 7% of the piles may fail, and an additional 29% could deteriorate to a 'poor' condition, requiring immediate repair, in the next two years.

The public walkway to the south of shed 9 and the Central Roadway (between shed 9 and 14) are not safe to bear any weight.

Shed 14: While the piles beneath shed 14 are in a better condition than those on shed 9, there are still significant issues with their structural integrity that would need ongoing and intensive remediation.

In 2017 just under 10% of the piles were identified as 'failed' or 'poor'. At the time of the most recent inspections that had increased to almost 30%, indicating the overall condition of the pier is deteriorating. It is expected approximately 5% of piles may fail and an additional 23% continue to deteriorate every two years.

Q: Why did the Pier remain open – surely this was a safety risk before now?

Development Victoria has undertaken inspections, investigations and monitoring across the pier since 2013. These assessments led to particular areas of the Pier being subject to restricted access.

Following an engineering report in 2017 DV ramped up repairs – spending \$7million dollars over nearly three years on rectification works to address the deterioration of the Pier.

Engineers have also been inspecting the pier every two months since November 2018. It was during these inspections the accelerated deterioration of the pier was revealed and the advice given by our engineers that the pier was no longer safe for occupation. As soon as Development Victoria received this information, the pier was closed.

Q. Do you have confidence in the engineers' report?

Yes. The engineers are specialists in their field and have a detailed understanding of the pier. At all times we have referred to the engineer's advice.

Every decision has been made around safety and we have worked with our engineers closely over the past few months to gain more understanding of the damage and issues around the pier.

Q. What do you mean by 'unsafe'?

During monitoring and repair works an increasing number of piles were found to have failed. This means that those piles are no longer capable of bearing weight.

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

Follow up investigations have further quantified the extent of the issues.

Q: Is the risk that bad?

Yes. The engineers have confirmed an ongoing safety risk.

The latest engineering report confirms Shed 9 on Central Pier is no longer viable for occupation and Shed 14 – without months of remediation - is also deteriorating. Despite previous repairs over many years, the rate of deterioration of critical supports is accelerating.

Extensive remediation and significant investment would be required to support reoccupation. But this will not halt the deterioration so that ongoing repairs will be required.

Given the continued uncertainty around structural integrity, Development Victoria is not confident the pier can be made safe in the longer term. The risk is sufficiently bad that Development Victoria is not prepared to put public safety at risk.

Q: It's an historic structure – surely you will do all you need to do to save it?

Development Victoria is committed to retaining the heritage listed Central Pier for the future of the Docklands precinct and will want to engage with the community and stakeholders to develop a plan for rebuilding the pier.

Q. So many businesses are impacted – how do you feel about this?

We are sorry it has come to this. We have been actively managing repairs to keep the pier open over the past 3 years. This has been a very difficult situation for all involved.

We have been doing everything we can to come up with a solution that would allow the pier to reopen to support the return of businesses. But we also must be sure the pier will be safe for public use.

Q. Those businesses could go out of business - what compensation will you pay them?

There will be a process for that. We have been focused on understanding the condition of the pier and how we can make the pier safe, reopen it, and support the tenant to return. The challenge has been whether this can be practically achieved. The Pier was closed in accordance with the terms of the lease. We have worked as quickly as we can on getting an assessment of the state of the pier so we can provide businesses and employees with certainty about the future of the pier.

We are unable to comment further on issues relating to the closure and business impact while this matter is before the courts.

Q: What about all the jobs lost?

The decision to close the pier was not taken lightly. We understand this is a stressful situation that is impacting peoples' businesses and jobs. But the safety of people who use the pier must be the most important consideration when considering the pier's future.

Q. Will any support be offered to affected workers?

Development Victoria has advised the head tenant of the State Government's Workers in Transition Service that is available for situations like this. This service provides advice to workers on the most appropriate steps to take to get back into employment.

Q. Did you panic when you closed the pier?

Absolutely not. We acted on the advice of our engineers in the interests of public safety. We stand by our decision to close Central Pier. We received advice from specialist marine engineers that in their view the was Pier was no longer safe for occupation. The latest engineering reports confirm this was the right course of action. Safety concerns was why the pier was closed, and safety remains our number one priority.

Q: Surely the issues with Central Pier have dire consequences for the rest of Docklands?

No. Docklands is a thriving precinct which takes in more than Central Pier. It is Australia's largest urban renewal precincts and attracts millions of visitors each year. Docklands is home to 13,000 residents and 73,000 workers and Development Victoria is proud of the commitment we have made to bringing Docklands to life over a 25-year period.

Q: What will Development Victoria do to ensure the overall waterfront precinct of Docklands does not suffer due to Central Pier being closed.

We did not plan for this. We have worked to find ways to reopen the Pier. However, in the interests of ensuring public safety that is not possible.

Now that the decision to close has been made we can turn our minds to engaging with the community and stakeholders on what the future may look like.



Q: What happens now?

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.