



Parliament of Western Australia  
Legislative Council

**Hon Alanna Clohesy MLC**  
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Hon Simon O'Brien MLC  
Chairman  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr O'Brien

*Simon*

### **Petition No 16 – Midland Railway Workshop Site**

Thank you to the Committee for providing the opportunity for me to present a submission regarding the recently tabled petition calling for the creation of a Railway Museum on the grounds of the Midland Railway Workshop site.

The Midland Railway Workshops are a rich part of Western Australia's economic and social history, having operated as the main workshop for WA rail for decades. Since 2001 there have been various studies and plans on the possible future use of the site. In 2001 and 2004 the Midland Redevelopment Authority produced the *Heritage Strategy* for site. The Strategy identified many 'zones of significance' across the site as containing important heritage items. The Midland Redevelopment Authority is now the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority.

In 2004, the Midland Redevelopment Authority conducted extensive community consultations and held public meetings on the interest for a Railway Heritage Centre based in part of the workshops. A number of community groups and individuals maintain an interest in continuing with the plans for a Railway Heritage Centre.

Some redevelopment has already been undertaken at the site. Currently there is a "creative industries hub" which includes the Midland Atelier which houses various creative designers using various mediums. One part of the site houses a GP Super Clinic.

However in recent times this concept for a Railway Heritage Centre has not been at the centre of plans for the site. The planning for such a space appears to have simply faded away, despite the level of interest maintained by community members. There is a need for the precinct planning to incorporate its history with a railway museum and interpretive centre as its central feature.

### **Background to the Workshop site**

The Midland Railway Workshop site has a long and proud history with the railway workshops moved from their original site in Fremantle to Midland in 1904 and remained a functioning workshop for 100 years until it was finally closed in March of 1994.

At its peak, there was a workforce of over 4000 onsite.

It could be argued that the Workshop's role as a leading apprenticeship training centre provided the skills base that allowed Western Australia to take full advantage of the various mining booms we have experienced.

The site was also an important facility during World War 2, when the workshop was converted into a munitions facility with a mainly female workforce.

As part of the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of Western Australia, the Western Australian Government and the National Trust of Australia compiled a list of Western Australian Heritage Icons, the Midland Railway Workshops was included on this list.

Several oral and written histories on the Workshops have been completed. See for example, Bertola, Patrick and Bobbie Oliver. (Eds) (2006) *The workshops: a history of the Midland Government Railway Workshops* Crawley, WA: University of Western Australia Press and Oliver, Bobbie (nd) *It's more than just the buildings; it's what they did inside: a case for the preservation of industrial worksites.* <http://soac.fbe.unsw.edu.au/2009/PDF/Oliver%20Bobbie.pdf>.

I urge the Committee to examine in further detail why plans for a Rail Heritage Centre at the site have stalled and recommend on ways to ensure this important part of Western Australia's social and economic heritage is preserved and open to the public.

Yours sincerely



Alanna Clohesy MLC

**MEMBER FOR EAST METROPOLITAN**

**14 OCT 2013**