



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The Master Plan for the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is the initiative of the Minister of Works. It was commissioned in recognition of the critical situation facing the Precinct. The findings of the Master Plan clearly show that the Precinct faces an uncertain future unless it can receive sufficient financial support to deal with the urgent maintenance backlog and to undertake new initiatives which promote sustainability.

It is imperative that the Government act on the findings of the Master Plan, which have been solidly based on community and expert views. It is no longer an option to do nothing, as the lack of investment in the Precinct over the last decade, has led to a critical situation where the building fabric is rapidly deteriorating and the remarkable potential of the Precinct is unrealised.

VALUE

Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct is a heritage icon with exceptional cultural heritage significance at state, national and international levels. It is the most intact of all Australian convict sites - the most evocative and widespread set of convict transportation sites in the world.

Built in the 1850s, as the heart of the Fremantle Convict Establishment, it was in continuous use as a colonial and then state prison until decommissioned in 1991. Opened to the public as a heritage site in January 1992, its new purpose was formally recognised by the vesting of the site, in the Minister for Works, for the purpose of heritage conservation.

As the custodian of the site, the State Government has accepted significant responsibilities for the maintenance and sustainable development of the site, in particular its responsibilities for the care of the site under the *Heritage of Western Australia Act 1990*. It has also inherited considerable opportunities to promote and demonstrate the value of the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct as a heritage icon and as a model for heritage conservation management.

With current visitor numbers at approximately 112,000 per annum, growth at the Precinct continues, despite difficulties in the international and interstate tourism markets for Western Australia and a significant lack of invested capital. The Precinct has an important role to play in the development and expansion of tourism in Western Australia, and a substantial base on which to build.

FIRST STEPS

Initiatives that have the benefits of generating revenue, as well as providing considerable economic and social flow-ons to the remainder of the Precinct's activities, will be important first steps. This Master Plan calls for investment of \$3.327 million in seed capital to enable the early development of:

- the Gatehouse and Entry Complex (Zone A) as an active and vibrant centre for visitors, tourism and cultural heritage services.
- the Forecourt (Zone B) as the primary open space of the Precinct, providing an impressive setting for special events and a unique spatial experience for visitors.



- the Tunnels (Zone J) as the venue for the exciting and marketable underground adventure/heritage tours.

Visitor attraction will provide the basis and driving force of economic sustainability for the Precinct. The Tunnels experience is forecast to generate an operating surplus of \$429,000 per annum. This represents a significant return on the initial investment. By 2010, tours of the Precinct are projected to net an annual surplus of \$905,000 to \$1,625,000. There is also considerable scope to develop the economic potential of special event, conference and exhibition tourism.

The Master Plan has identified the urgent maintenance needs of the Precinct, and developed a prioritised program of works valued at \$2.289 million that will address the backlog of maintenance works. In recognition of this pressing need, the government has set aside \$1.314 million over two years, commencing in 2004/05. The balance of the program needs to be funded to ensure that the significant fabric is saved from further deterioration and that escalating maintenance costs are avoided.

VISION

The Master Plan provides an integrated framework that will realise the potential of the Precinct to:

- be Western Australia's premier heritage precinct and a heritage icon to the people of Western Australia.
- provide a lasting legacy for the people of Australia and greatly enrich the cultural life of the state and nation by conserving and interpreting the most intact convict era site in Australia.
- be one of Western Australia's premier destinations for tourism, cultural and educational activities.
- be a highly sought after location for a variety of uses, enhancing the vitality of the metropolitan and local area.
- be a model for the care and management of exceptionally significant heritage properties in Australia.

Achieving these aims requires the investment of both economic and intellectual capital by the Government, as the custodians of the site. It is envisaged that increased revenue growth through the core business of visitor attraction and other activities will enable the operational sustainability of the Precinct.

PARTNERSHIPS

Government investment in the Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct, will create an environment for the development of a range of partnerships on a number of levels. Other government agencies which could be involved in these partnership opportunities include:

- Tourism and Small Business
- Community Development
- Education and Training
- Culture and the Arts
- Heritage
- Justice
- Health



At the site level, partnership potentials with government and non government agencies include sponsorship of the tunnel experience by the mining sector, private sector sponsorships for exhibitions, presentations and performances, grants for research initiatives and partnerships in creative production and education.

Locally, opportunities for community and private sector involvement will progress the integration of the Precinct with the local urban framework. The benefits of this are immeasurable and can be demonstrated by the success of the Fremantle Museum and Arts Centre. The recommendations contained within the Master Plan should achieve these outcomes.

Regionally, partnership with the new Maritime Museum and the seven other local museums, should be considered to boost visitor numbers and investment in Fremantle. Investment in the Precinct as a world class tourist facility would clearly be an act of support for the Maritime Museum and for Fremantle as an important cultural heritage tourism destination.

POTENTIAL

The Master Plan, and the process by which it was formulated, has resulted in a considerable opportunity to change current site management and development practices via:

- improved awareness of the significance of the site and the opportunities it presents.
- renaming the Precinct to acknowledge its historical significance as an intact convict-era site.
- promotion of new educational and business ventures.
- identification of short and long-term revenue sources.
- considered cost estimates for the conservation of the building fabric and improvement of infrastructure in a prioritised manner.
- management structures to ensure the site receives the best possible advice and support.
- identification of a clear vision for the future of the site that all parties can work towards.

It is anticipated that, if the recommendations of the Master Plan are adopted and implemented, these changes will consolidate the importance of the Precinct, continue the momentum of interest generated by the Master Plan process, and begin to realise the potential of the remarkable Fremantle Prison Heritage Precinct.