

# Happy 10th birthday Docklands Studios

*When the Docklands Studios opened 10 years ago, Docklands was a very different place.*

“The studio was one of the first things built down this end (of NewQuay),” studio CEO Rod Allan said.

“There were no buildings directly opposite and Harbour Town hadn’t been built yet,” Mr Allan said.

This month, the studio celebrates 10 years of operation in Docklands, after opening under the name Melbourne Central City Studios in April of 2004.

Mr Allan said the studio was originally a public-private partnership between the State Government and Central City Studios Holdings before being acquired by the Government at the end of 2008 and becoming a government business enterprise.

Mr Allan himself worked as a contractor at the studio in its early days, when its first feature film, *Ghost Rider*, was being shot. He then returned five years ago as CEO.

When asked why the studio was opened in Docklands originally, Mr Allan said he couldn’t say where the idea came from.

“What I can tell you is that the studio being here is a fabulous asset for the film industry because of its proximity to the city.”

“There’s a widespread belief that a complex like this doesn’t need to be close to the city centre when, in fact, for us that’s one of the big advantages in marketing the studio,” he said.

Throughout its 10 year history the studio has seen major international productions including *The Pacific*, *Where the Wild Things Are* and *Knowing*.

Local feature films shot have included *Patrick*, *Hating Alison Ashley* and *Kath and Kimderella* along with domestic television productions *Winners and Losers*, *Satisfaction* and *The Footy Show*, among others.

According to Mr Allan, the highlight of the past 10 years has been occasions when the studio has been at a diverse capacity.

“I think the highlights are really when we are at a diverse capacity, when we have all of our sound stages occupied by different projects,” he said.



*Docklands Studio CEO Rod Allan says 2014 is shaping up to be a good year.*

“It’s not one particular event, so much as seeing the place fully occupied and humming,” Mr Allan said.

But, of course, the past 10 years haven’t been all rosy, with various challenges along the way.

“I suppose the biggest challenge really has been getting people who would otherwise not think about coming here to actually think about it,” he said.

Nonetheless, Mr Allan maintains the studio has made a valuable contribution to the state’s economy over the past decade.

“If you look at the studio as an economic asset, the direct investment by production companies into the economy is well over half a billion dollars,” he said.

Mr Allan said less than 5 per cent of that was spent at the studio itself, with the rest going towards employment and ancillary services.

Next up for the studio is more facilities, with plans to build another large sound stage and a building to house industry-

related businesses such as casting agents, equipment rental houses and post-production companies.

“We need a bigger soundstage because we want to be able to continue to attract international productions without interfering with our ability to service domestic productions,” Mr Allan said.

Mr Allan said further State Government funding would be required to make this a reality.

So far, 2014 is shaping up to be a good year for the studio, with international feature film *The Moon and the Sun* at the studio until June and an undisclosed Australian feature film to commence shooting in the same month.

Local television shows *Winners and Losers*, *The Footy Show* and *Millionaire Hot Seat* will continue filming at the studios, while other productions have been secured for the second half of the year.

“It’s shaping up to be a good year,” Mr Allan said.

## Harbour Town sale not yet complete

*Continued from page 1.*

He said he had been aware of plans to sell Harbour Town for at least a year, even before ING sold the observation wheel in October last year.

ING has been off-loading its Docklands assets since 2011, when it sold the Victoria Harbour section of Waterfront City site to MAB Corporation.

Last year, ING sold the Melbourne Star Observation Wheel to Sanyoyas Rides Corporation, the Japanese-owned company, which designed and manufactured the attraction.

ING’s Docklands office has also reduced in size markedly. It is believed just four ING staff continue to work at the Docklands Drive office.

ING declined to comment on the sale of Harbour Town and the Icehouse, while Ashe Morgan did not respond to a request for comment.

## “Docklands” site to be developed

*Little Projects will develop an 8000 sqm industrial site just outside of Docklands.*

Located at 85 Lorimer St, the site was purchased from Marina Darlings Capo Nero group for \$18.5 million last month.

Interestingly, Little Projects’ media release on the acquisition states the site is located in Docklands.

However, 85 Lorimer St actually falls within postcode 3006, which is South Wharf.

Managing director of Little Projects Michael Fox said the site had the potential to accommodate up to 1500 apartments.

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