

'Magic' Melbourne skyscraper would be Australia's tallest building

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PHOTO: An artist's impression of the tower, which would be Australia's tallest building. (Supplied: Royal Society of Victoria)

A "super slender" skyscraper that would be Australia's tallest building has been proposed for a tiny wedge of land in Melbourne's CBD.

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The Royal Society of Victoria, which owns the site at the intersection of La Trobe and Victoria streets, announced its proposal for the 330-metre-high tower on Saturday.

If approved, it would be 7.5 metres taller than Australia's current tallest building, the Gold Coast's Q1, and significantly taller than Melbourne's tallest building, the 297-metre Eureka Tower.

The society says the money raised from the sale of apartments in the 60-storey tower, to be called Magic, will secure the financial future of the organisation and its work to promote science.

The triangular plot of land, about the size of half a tennis court, was used by the Bureau of Meteorology as its city weather observation station until three years ago.

When the bureau removed its weather station from the block, the Royal Society called for ideas for new uses for the land.



PHOTO: The site was used as a weather observation station until three years ago. (ABC News: Iskhandar Razak)

"We had 30 different applications from design companies, from architecture firms and just general members of the public," Royal Society chief executive Mike Flattley said.

"Some of them were absolutely fabulous, but there was only one that really came with a financial plan."

Architect Dylan Brady said the tower had been designed to be as tall as possible to create as much wealth as possible and the apartments within it were aimed at "high net worth individuals".

"We intend to attract the minds of people like Elon Musk, like Richard Branson like Bill Gates, who all have philanthropic-driven understandings of value, who would love a fantastic apartment with a brilliant view knowing that the profit of their apartment is being channelled into the scientists and the science outreach programs of the Royal Society of Victoria for the next 160 years," he said.

The Royal Society of Victoria was founded in 1854 as a private association to encourage scientific research.

It commissioned Burke and Wills' ill-fated expedition to cross the Australian continent, and also kicked off Australia's exploration of Antarctica.

Society president David Zerman said it hoped to generate more than \$10 million in profit from apartment sales, which it would use to upgrade its heritage-listed home on the neighbouring site, develop a new science engagement centre and cafe, and create an endowment fund to support its efforts to promote science to students, adults and the community.

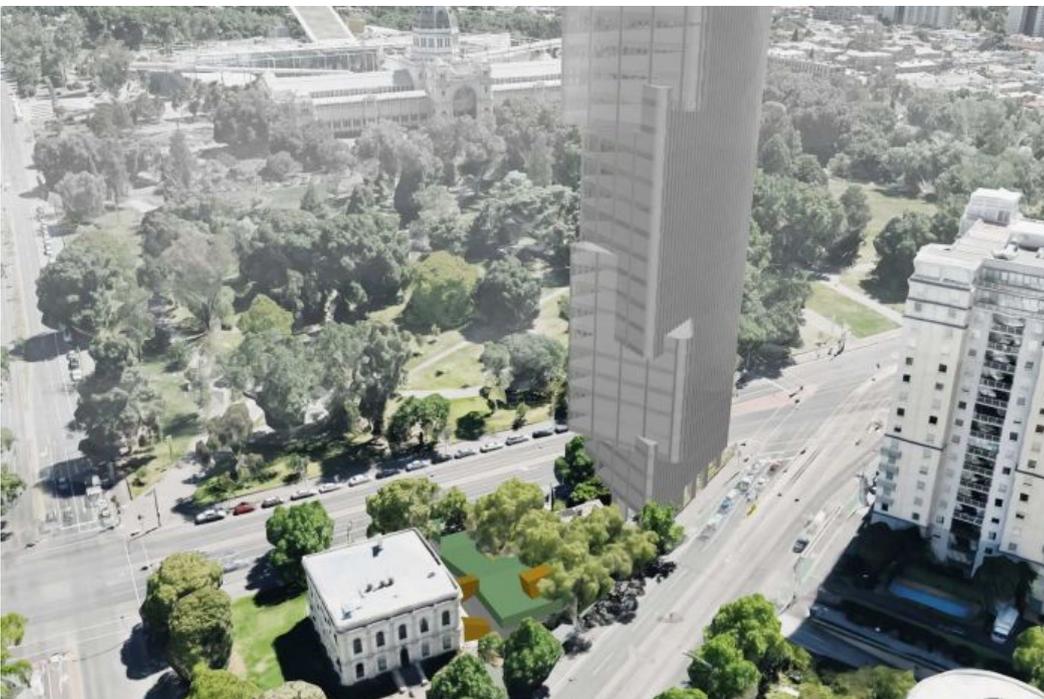


PHOTO: The site of the proposed tower is the size of half a tennis court. (Supplied: Royal Society of Victoria)

"This is not a development play, this is not a large corporation making a lot of money and running away, this is a community-driven, purpose project." Mr Brady said.

Mr Brady said he was confident the proposed tower was technically feasible.

But because the site is covered by protections associated with the nearby World Heritage listed Royal Exhibition Building, approval will be needed from Heritage Victoria and the Federal Government as well as Melbourne City Council and the Victorian Government.

Mr Brady said he was hopeful of obtaining these approvals.

"We have tested gently. We've never asked for permission so we could never be denied it," he said.

He said the tower could be built within five years.

Mr Flattley compared the proposed tower to New York's iconic 1902 Flatiron Building which was also built on a triangular site.

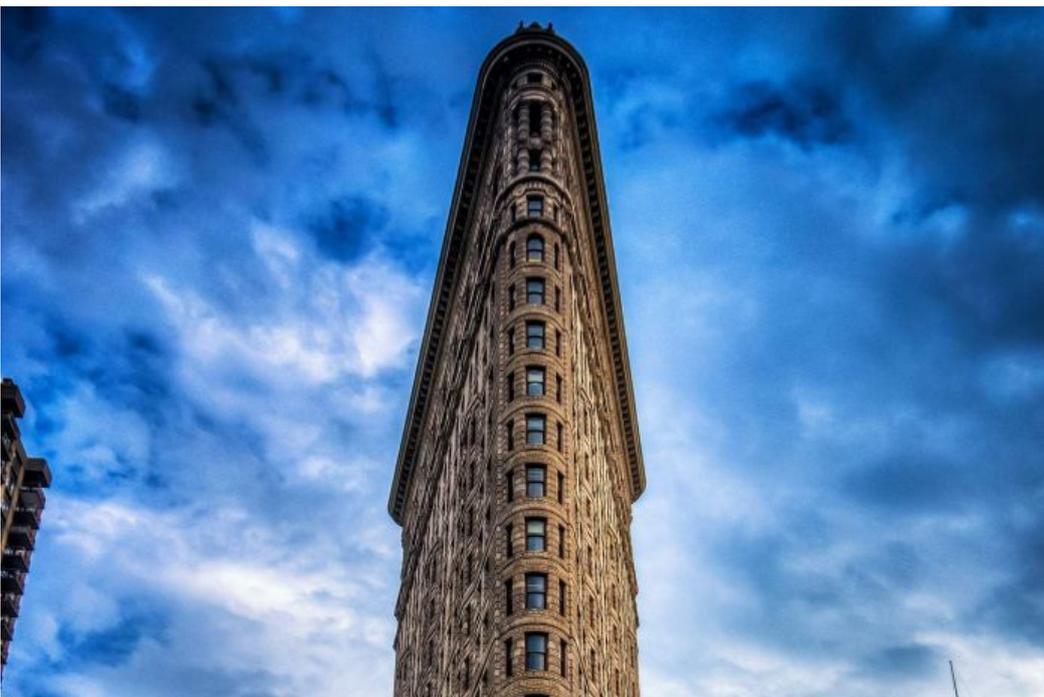


PHOTO: The 'Flatiron' Building, otherwise known as the Fuller Building, in midtown Manhattan. (Flickr.com/

"This is effectively a Melbourne Flatiron," he said.

"It is a difficult project without doubt. I think the market is definitely there, that is the advice that we have had. It remains to see whether we have the political will to see it through."

He said the building would serve as a symbol "as well as a very nice apartment building".

"If you look up the hill from Richmond up Victoria Parade, it emerges magically from the middle of the strip. It's like the Washington monument from a distance, it is like a pinnacle for science."

Topics: community-and-society, urban-development-and-planning, melbourne-3000, vic

