

RETAIL MARKETS

Although retail markets form part of the pattern of metropolitan shopping, they have characteristics that require special consideration. An essential feature of a good retail market is that it is open only on special days, which forces sellers to clear the bulk of perishable goods each market day.

In the metropolitan area of Melbourne there are four large municipal retail markets operated by local councils, and six small privately operated markets. Of these, the four large council markets—Melbourne (Queen Victoria), South Melbourne, Prahran and Dandenong—are the only real markets in the true sense of the word. There are also a number of smaller markets most of which are open for business every week-day like other shops and have not the essential characteristics of a market. They are more akin to food shopping arcades, and are usually located in the heart of suburban shopping centres.

General Characteristics of Existing Markets

The relative size and importance of the various markets can be generally judged by the number of stalls operated as shown in Table 48 and illustrated in map 37.

Trading days for the principal markets are:

Queen Victoria—Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

South Melbourne—Wednesday and Friday.

Prahran—Tuesday, Friday and Saturday.

Dandenong—Tuesdays.

The large council markets cover a fairly comprehensive range of goods, principally food, with fruit and vegetables, meat, dairy produce and fish, generally ranking in that order of importance. The remainder of the stalls cover miscellaneous goods from clothing to crockery. The smaller private markets are generally confined to food.

There seems to be little doubt that most markets are now doing more business than ever before. In fact, some of the larger council markets claim that there are almost double the number of customers patronising the market compared with pre-war years, while the volume of turnover has in-

creased at an even higher rate. The principal attraction of the market is that it provides conditions in which cheaper buying is possible.

The greater turnover of foodstuffs and close supervision in the market ensure a wider and fresher range of perishable food lines to choose from than in most suburban shops. The element of bargaining is also a considerable attraction to many shoppers. One of the principal defects of the large markets around Melbourne is their age, general congestion and, in some instances, unhygienic conditions for the sale of perishable foodstuffs compared with modern shops. It is claimed that all real markets are like this and if a market becomes too elaborate, its overhead costs rise to a point where it is not possible to sell goods more cheaply than in normal shops. It is because of the low operating costs that many retailers are able to make their first start in a market stall. Many operators of stalls move from one market to another, for example, from Dandenong on Tuesday to South Melbourne on Wednesday and Queen Victoria on Thursday.

One of the present-day features of the principal retail markets in Melbourne is the large number of European migrants who are operating stalls and patronising the market as shoppers. Although most market patrons come from the lower income groups in the inner suburbs, the large markets attract shoppers from a wide area and from all sections of the community.

The traffic generation on market days is very high. Queen Victoria Market is believed to attract from 20,000 to 30,000 people on peak days, and about 5,000 people and 600 cars at any one time. Dandenong Market, which trades alongside and on the same day as the adjoining stock market, attracts some 1,250 vehicles on a busy market day.

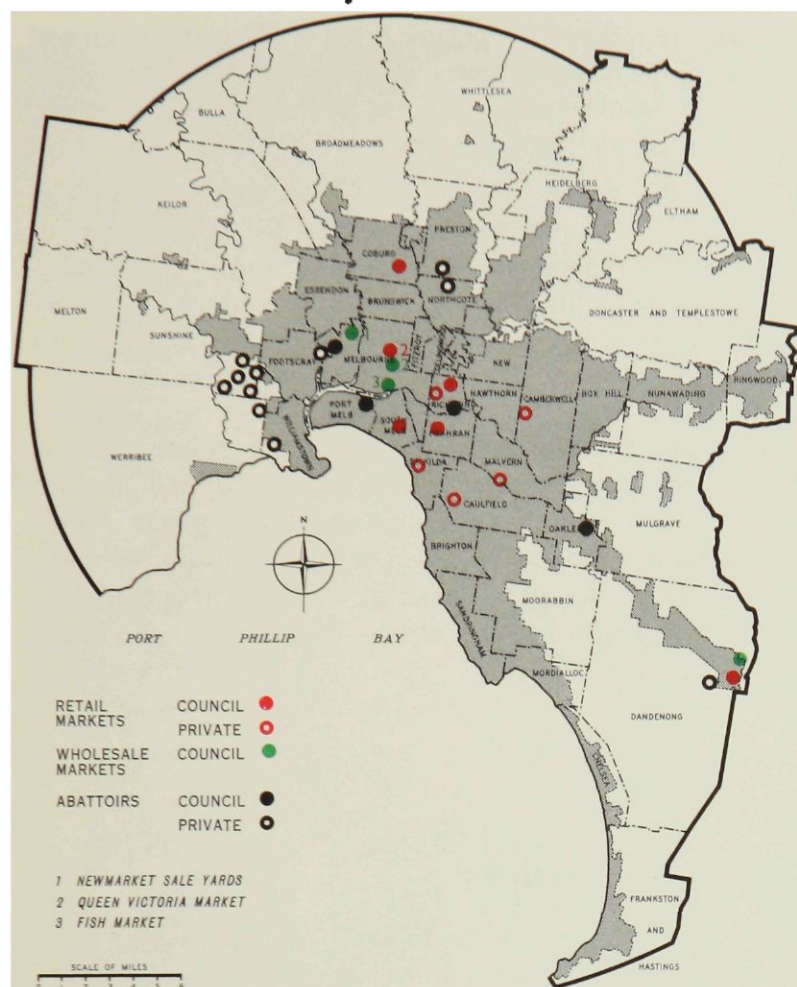
The three principal metropolitan retail markets, Queen Victoria, South Melbourne and Prahran, which handle the bulk of retail market turnover, are all centrally located and draw from a fairly wide area, although most of their patrons come from within the inner suburbs. The other sizeable market, Dandenong, caters primarily for a special country catchment. All the other small markets are dispersed as part of the normal suburban shopping pattern. According to most market authorities, the question of location is very important yet difficult to define. Several markets created in good shopping centres outside the central suburbs have failed because people in the surrounding catchment have either become accustomed to patronising older markets or are just not market conscious. Habit and custom seem to be important with regard to the location and success of most markets. For this reason the authorities controlling the three principal markets, Queen Victoria, South Melbourne and Prahran, all claim that any move from their present location would probably have a serious effect on their trade. All proposals for improving these markets, therefore, are based on improvements on their present sites.

Table 48

RETAIL MARKETS IN MELBOURNE

Council Operated Markets			Privately Operated Markets	
Location	No. of Stalls	Approx. Area Occupied (acres)	Location	No. of Stalls
Queen Victoria	1,252	12	Camberwell	33
Sth. Melbourne	450	4	Coburg	24
Dandenong	300	1	Caulfield	42
Prahran	237 ⁽¹⁾	4	Elsternwick	30
Richmond	40	Kerbside	St. Kilda	10
			Richmond	15

(1) Prior to its destruction by fire in 1950.



37 MARKETS AND ABATTOIRS

Queen Victoria Market: Situated at the corner of Elizabeth and Victoria Streets adjoining the wholesale fruit and vegetable market, the Queen Victoria Market is the principal retail market in Melbourne and the largest market of its type in Australia. Although a considerable proportion of its customers come from the adjoining localities in North Melbourne, West Melbourne, Carlton and Flemington, this market attracts people from all over the metropolitan area. Its principal defects at the present time are the age of buildings and the lack of adequate facilities for private vehicles. Portion of the market is more than 70 years old and is well overdue for rebuilding.

For some years the Melbourne City Council has considered transferring the wholesale fruit and vegetable market from this area to a new site and moving the retail market back to the site now occupied by the wholesale market, thus enabling the Elizabeth Street end of the retail market to be rebuilt. Proposals have also been considered for rebuilding other portions of the retail market.

The general opinion expressed by the authorities concerned is that it would be impossible to obtain a better site for a central retail market and that its removal from the present area would adversely affect the volume of trade.

South Melbourne Market: Like the Queen Victoria Market, this market is also very old and in need of re-development. It has no off-street parking facilities, but, as the market is located off the main highways and is surrounded by wide streets, parking does not present quite such a problem as in the other large retail markets. At least half the market's customers are people who come from the surrounding suburbs of South Melbourne, Port Melbourne and St. Kilda, with the remainder coming from the more distant parts of the metropolitan area.

Prahran Market: A considerable portion of the Prahran Market was destroyed by fire in 1950 and, although it has since been rebuilt on a temporary basis, the Prahran Council has plans for rebuilding the market along modern lines as soon as this is practicable. Most customers come from surrounding suburbs, but this market has a large following from more distant suburbs such as Collingwood (with which it is connected by a direct bus-route), Brighton and Gardenvale, and also attracts many shoppers from along the Dandenong and Frankston railway lines. It is conveniently located with regard to transport and adjoins the large Prahran shopping centre. Its principal defect is its lack of adequate parking facilities.

Dandenong Market: This market is somewhat different from the others. It is located alongside an active stock market and was designed primarily for the country farmers' trade. However, it is estimated that about half the customers are now composed of local town people and metropolitan residents from as far away as Frankston and Oakleigh. Most purchases, however, are still made by farmers coming in for the stock market. This market does not offer a range of goods comparable to the other three large metropolitan markets and has a high proportion of clothing stalls compared to food stalls. It is very congested on market days and has inadequate off-street parking facilities nearby. The Dandenong Council contemplates rebuilding and expanding the retail market on its present site in the event of the stock market being moved to a new area.

Future Retail Market Requirements: Three basic facts emerge from a survey of retail markets in Melbourne:

- (a) There is little doubt that a considerable proportion of the population, especially in the lower income groups, desire markets.
- (b) The great bulk of market activity and most market patrons are located in the inner suburbs.
- (c) The condition of buildings is unsatisfactory and parking space is inadequate in the existing markets.

The basic problem thus seems to be that of providing better market facilities and at the same time maintain low prices—the main attraction of the market.

If retail markets of the existing types are to continue as part of the shopping facilities of Melbourne, it is logical that they should be encouraged to follow the broad pattern of metropolitan shopping.