



 Melbourne's skyline and the Evan Walker Bridge. Picture: Mark Stewart

— VIC News —

Grand Designs Australia host Peter Maddison names Melbourne's building clangers and triumphs

FIONA BYRNE and IAN ROYALL, Herald Sun

July 1, 2017 8:30pm

 Subscriber only

ARCHITECT and TV presenter Peter Maddison has delivered a frank assessment of Melbourne's urban landscape, declaring his love for the city's "coathanger" footbridge but slammed two major stadiums — Etihad and Hisense — as "shockers".

The *Grand Designs Australia* host has compiled his list of Melbourne's five hits and five misses, and some recent additions have come under fire.

Maddison described the boom in Southbank apartments as delivering a "windswept, apocalyptic environment".

SCROLL DOWN FOR MADDISON'S ASSESSMENTS OF MELBOURNE



📷 The Evan Walker Bridge, photographed from Southbank. Picture: Mark Stewart

But he said the most interesting architectural offerings in Melbourne were The Commoners residential building in Brunswick, the Melbourne School of Design at Melbourne University, Heide 2 at the Heide Museum in Bulleen and Monaco House on Ridgeway Place in the CBD.

Maddison described the Evan Walker Bridge, named after the former planning minister, as "delicately handled piece of infrastructure".

The footbridge links Flinders St station with Southgate.

His design clangers include the old ANZ headquarters on Queen St and the Esso building on Southbank.

1. The Evan Walker Bridge, Southbank

“It is a delicately handled piece of infrastructure. It is obviously not an engineering solution but an architectural solution.

“It has a life to it, you can feel the bridge wobble a bit as people walk on it.

“It gives the opportunity to pause at various little moments on the bridge where you get snippets of view that you would not get if it was a straight bridge going in one direction.”

2. The Commons, Brunswick

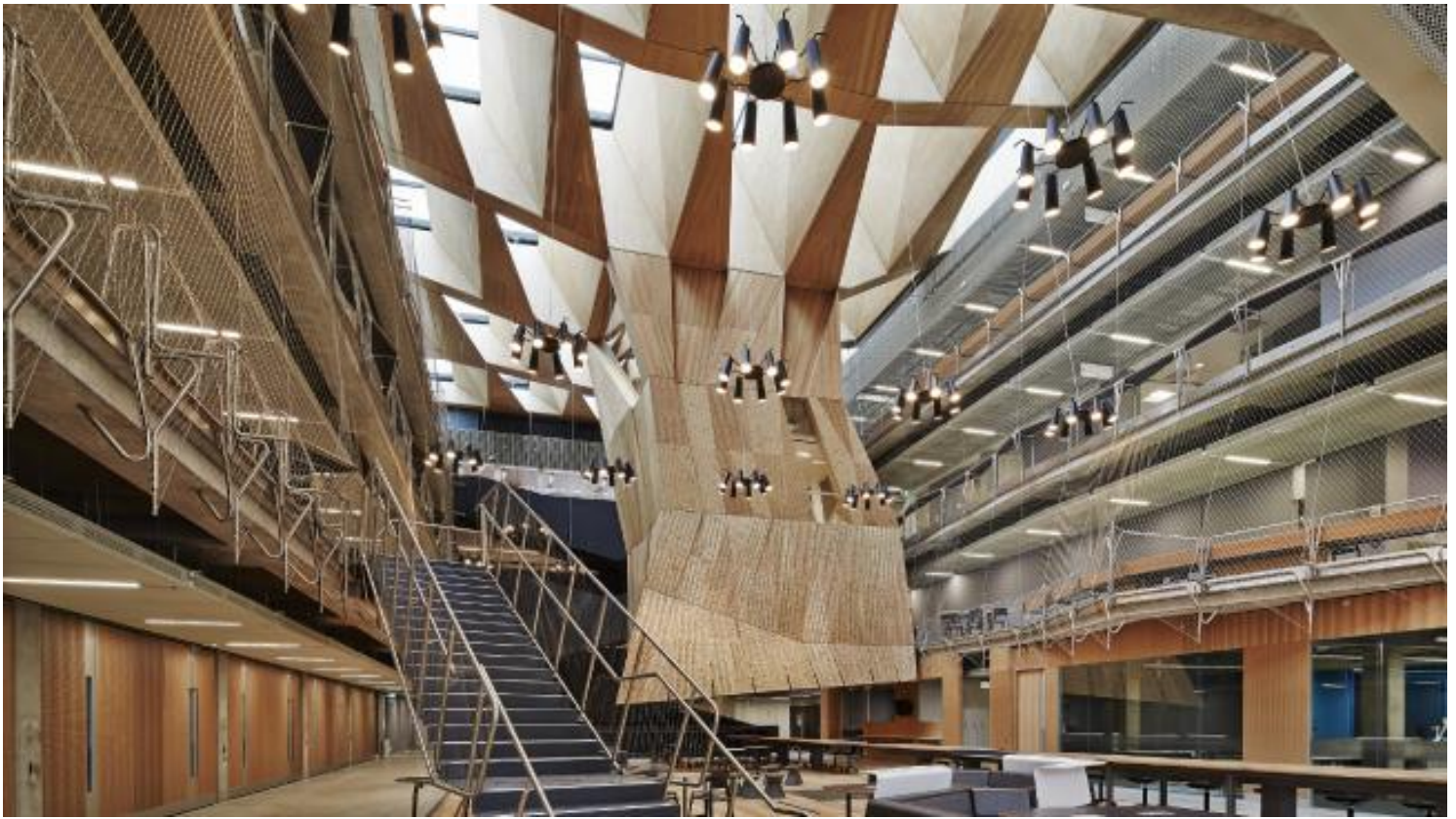
“It is a new dynamic housing model that is really taking off called The Nightingale. The Commons was the first building that was tested.

3. The Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne

“It is an investment in an architecture which is challenging. It shows hope and a way for the future, a different way of thinking about the way buildings can be put together.



📷 Exterior of The Commons in Brunswick.



📷 The Melbourne School of Design. Pic supplied.

“The building provides a beacon of hope and forward thinking rather than being retrospective and closed down.”

4. Heide 2 at the Heide Museum of Modern Art, Bulleen

“It is a beautiful little limestone building which was designed mid-century, a beautiful little house that was left by the owners to the state for a gallery.

“It is a playful house with little corridors that don’t go anywhere, tight little staircases that explode into double height space with lots of north light coming in and connecting with outdoor courtyards.

“It is a wonderful expose of mid-century architecture that came from Palm Springs and America in the 1950s and ‘60s.

5. Monaco House, Ridgway Pl, CBD

“I have always admired this building. The building has a glass reinforced concrete facade.

“I love how the building crumples and comes down to pavement level and the last little bit of crumpled build just hovers above this tiny patch the size of a handkerchief of lawn.

“It is the attention to detail, bold statement and challenging of tradition that I think makes this building very significant.”

And what Maddison doesn't like:

1. The cluster of high-rise apartments in Southbank

“A number of developments should never have happened and as a group you would have to look at City Road Southbank.

“The developer has done apartment towers that are going to be the slums of the sky going forward.

“It is not just the way the buildings are faceless and have no identity, and the scale of them and how close they are.

“You can't look at that building and tell anyone where you live because it is completely amorphous.



📷 The award-winning Monaco House.



📷 Apartments dominate the Southbank skyline. Picture: Mark Stewart

“It is the way they hit the ground which is really scary because there is no amenity at the ground level for people using the building.

“It is a windswept, apocalyptic environment. We are going to look back at that decade and go ‘what happened there’? Lack of planning, lack of control, we just went off the rails there.

“The new planning guidelines have come in now and public amenity is now included in any development consideration. There are a number of housing buildings along Southbank which are woeful.”



📷 Etihad Stadium at Docklands.

2. Etihad and Hisense stadiums

“Etihad is in the wrong place and it blocks the whole outlook from the city to Docklands. I don’t think it should have been put there.

“Our great sporting institutions like the MCG should be colosseums that we look to and represent our sporting and cultural aspirations.

“To let a building like Etihad Stadium be in a position where it is blocking the view of the city, has no open space around it and all the multistorey office buildings are now being let to crowd around that building and bury it.

“It is being overshadowed, architecturally I don’t think the stadium is strong enough.

“Fancy doing a building as important as that where the grass can’t grow. It is just ridiculous, isn’t it?



📷 Aerial view of Etihad Stadium at Docklands.

“Buildings like Etihad and Hisense Arena, which is another shocker, (should) be done by the best architects of the time.

“They are very large structures that should have really aspirational attributes about them.

“Etihad is a real disappointment as is Hisense arena. The way they have been clad and expressed is very disappointing and if you compare it to the MCG which is tough and robust, the building talks to what is going on inside it — they are chunky and chiselled, expressive and aspirational. “They are uplifting to go into and they are left to stand proud in parkland setting.”

3. 100 Queen St, former ANZ world headquarters, CBD

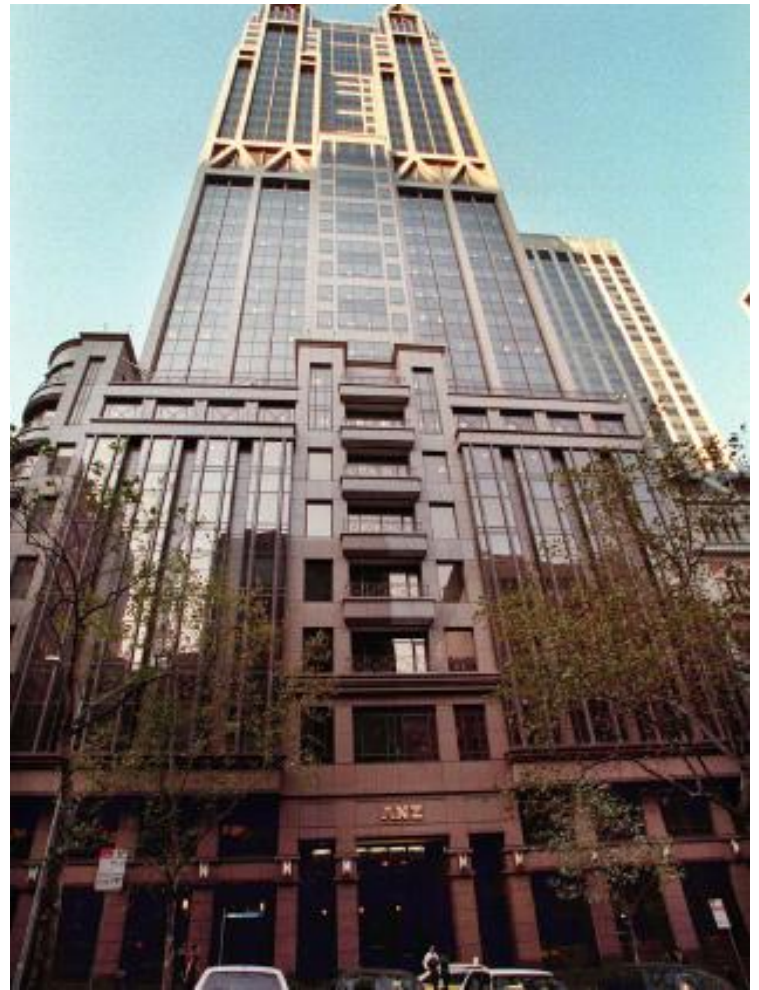
“A shocker. It has mock period-style architecture. I can only think they were trying to appease or anticipate the conservatism of the ANZ bank and to come up with an architectural style which is retrospective and grabbed and applied to a multistorey tower in a very subservient way.

“Really, it should have been a clear modern statement using materials and forms that represent the future rather than visiting the past.”

4. Esso headquarters, Southbank

“The Esso headquarters that face into Southbank should never have been built. If you walk along Southbank it is a promenade and the ESSO headquarters have privatised a key piece of public domain. They have built a great big faceless atrium space.

“It should have been a public park for instance rather than a privatised space.”



📷 The former ANZ headquarters in Queen Street



📷 “Should have been a park.” The Esso building at Southbank.

5. Former DFO site and bus coach terminal at Southern Cross Station

“I looked at it and thought ‘my God’.

“It is quite remarkable given that right next to it is Southern Cross Station which is a marvellous public building. It (Southern Cross) all opens up, it has a lot of poetry in the building, it has got a transparency and a public use and you go 100m up and you have the old DFO.

“The coach terminal underneath that building, which is the central bus terminal of Melbourne, is an absolute disgrace. It is the most unpleasant experience going down there waiting for a bus because it is a dark, dingy, windswept tunnel.”

The Victorian Government Architect Jill Garner said Maddison had chosen a selection of fine buildings which contribute to what makes Melbourne special.



📷 Southern Cross Station and DFO on Spencer St. Picture: Kylie Else

“Several — the revered Heide II or our fondly titled ‘coathanger’ bridge — represent shining exemplars of 20th century architecture that have embedded themselves into the DNA of our city,” Ms Garner said.

“Monaco House and the Melbourne Design School are wonderful, highly considered, additions to their places, with The Commons highlighting an important moment in higher-density housing, reminding us that there might be a meaningful alternative model for a contemporary home.”

Melbourne Lord Mayor Robert Doyle said beauty was always in the eye of the beholder.

“One of the great things about our varied city is that it’s going to give rise to discussions about what is great and what is not.

“We all have a list of our top five and bottom five and they’d probably all be different and that’s the beauty of Melbourne,” Cr Doyle said.

Committee for Melbourne chief executive **Martine Letts** agreed with the favourable review of the Evan Walker Bridge.

“Grace and functionality in one package,” Ms Letts said.

“Design makes for an easy walk before entering or leaving the hustle of Flinders St and you can stop for a drink under the bridge to enjoy the river scape.”

Ms Letts also said the Melbourne Design School was an inspiring space to create innovative designs.

“An ornament to Melbourne as a global city of arts, culture and design. What more would you want from a design school?”



📷 Lord Mayor Robert Doyle. Picture: Nicki Connolly



📷 Committee for Melbourne chief executive **Martine** Letts.

Ms Letts disagreed with the criticism of Hisense Arena, saying it played a key role in our community for sport and entertainment, and was a versatile building at the city's doorstep.

But Ms Letts said the condemnation of DFO and bus terminal at Southern Cross was justified.

“We can do better. Arriving in the bunker from the airport is a terrible first experience for many visitors to our city – we must improve our ‘visitability’.”

Former Victorian Premier Jeff Kennett said the debate proved the importance of design.

“What is most important is if a building gets no comment, in other words is boring. Much better to have debate about architecture, sculptures, paintings and the arts, for architecture is very much part of the suite of the arts.”

Victorians can see the best of the city's buildings at [Open House Melbourne](#) on July 29 and 30. Visitors can wander through 200 of the city's finest buildings, free of charge.

fiona.byrne@news.com.au