

News



Transformation plan: Brad Matheson, Nigel Edwards and Darren Williams at the substation-to-be-community arts hub.

Eyesore's art fix

By Cathy Stanislawski

LONG-awaited plans to transform one of Newport's well-known eyesores into a community arts centre will soon be realised.

Hobsons Bay council last week donated \$20,000 for materials as part of a Victoria University community initiative program to clean up the derelict Newport substation building.

The university has also committed \$80,000 in labour through the work for the dole program to begin clean up works, supervising 53 people on the site from Saturday.

Announcing council's funding, Hobsons Bay mayor Councillor Brad

Matheson said the substation had long been seen as a blight on the city.

The plans have been the four-year vision of Hobsons Bay residents Mr Darren Williams and Mr Nigel Edwards, co-founders of the Hobsons Bay Community Arts Centre (HBCAC). They argued that unless the heritage value of the building was restored, it would be subject to further vandalism.

The HBCAC has secured a 25-year community lease of the building from landowner Victrack.

"The centre, once established, will provide a venue for all members of our community to learn and partici-

pate in all aspects of the arts, as well as providing employment opportunities," Mr Williams said.

It is estimated more than \$1 million will be needed to carry out initial works to the building, including restoring windows and the interior.

Later stages will include the installation of artists studios and a coffee shop/reception area.

Built in 1915, the landmark building is one of the oldest and largest substations in the metropolitan systems, formerly supplying electrification to the overhead lines during the adoption of electric power of Melbourne's suburban rail network.