



Support for Tacoma project 3 December 2003

The Tacoma Port Development proposal gives Port Lincoln the opportunity to house a tourist and artisan attraction of world significance in a modern setting, Member for Flinders Liz Penfold said.

The Tacoma was built from wood which is seldom used nowadays in boat building and was built using hand tools, a method that is definitely no longer used.

The Haldane brothers, Bill, Alan and Hugh, turned to fishing with their father when the Economic Depression of the 1930s halted apprenticeships. The brothers were denied enlistment in World War 2 because their profession was deemed to be vital to the war effort.

Air Force friends flying over the Southern Ocean reported sightings of deep sea fish which encouraged the brothers to build a boat that would enable them to go further offshore to fish.

They went to the Otway forest in Victoria where they picked out a suitable tree for the keel of a boat that became the Tacoma. The tree was felled and dragged to Port Fairy where it was shaped using hand tools.

Money ran out before the boat was completed. No banks or lending institutions would provide the necessary money to complete the boat.

Former South Australian Premier Tom Playford agreed to loan the brothers 5000 pounds (\$10,000) on the condition that they came to South Australia. And so the three families arrived in Port Lincoln, living aboard the unfinished Tacoma until allotted Housing Trust homes. Money was so scarce that the wives took it in turns to play in the weekly social tennis games that cost sixpence (five cents) per person.

The skill that built the Tacoma has stood the test of time. The vessel, originally used for poling tuna, was converted for prawning. It is now about 50 years old.

The Australian bicentenary in 1988 saw a number of projects costing millions of dollars put into building replica vessels by the methods used a century or more ago.

Port Lincoln has this opportunity to have such a vessel as the core of a museum at virtually no cost to the local community.

This is an exciting project that I hope will come to fulfilment, coupled as it is with the retirement, tourism other aspects of the development, and the proximity to the multi story hotel proposed for the former Port Lincoln Hotel site, Mrs Penfold said.

"I congratulate Ross Haldane and John Culshaw on their vision," she said.