

Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc (PPL VIC)

The Chair
Future Melbourne (Eco-City) Committee
Town Hall, Melbourne 3000

7 June 2011

Dear Chairperson

Submission on Item 5.5 Royal Children's Hospital in Royal Park – Underground Carpark and Maintenance Zone

I am speaking for the Royal Park Protection Group Inc. with the support of Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc. and the North and West Melbourne Association Inc. Paul Leitinger, RPPG President, sends his apologies as he is overseas.

We understand that the proposal before the Council is to allow the underground carpark to extend 3000 square metres into the Park to reduce the car park levels required and so save on the cost of the project, also for a "maintenance proposal" adjacent to the Hospital. Supposedly there will be no infrastructure such as vents beyond the boundary. There will be a depth of 1.5 metres of soil above.

I wish to make the following comments:

1. Our organisations have taken the stand since July 2005 since Bronwyn Pike Member for Melbourne announced that the Royal Children's Hospital redevelopment. We predicted that there would be piecemeal incremental expansion into the Park. This was hotly denied and community groups abused for our claims. The mantra that Bronwyn kept repeating was that the building would be within the original footprint of 4.1 hectares; that there would be no net loss of parkland; and that any parkland alienated for the building of the new Hospital would be returned. The area now alienated amounts to 7.3 hectares and it looks as though the helipad will not be relocated to the roof but kept in the Park. Now we have another instance of incremental alienation of the Park with the expansion of the carpark.
2. Expansion of the carpark to avoid having to build one level and save money was never discussed and was not in the original plans for the Hospital. The RPPG and the NWMA were informed at every step of the way as we were then on the Royal Park Master Plan Committee and the CEO of the RCH was a member of the Committee. Unfortunately the Committee was disbanded and now community groups are kept in the dark. Guarantees were given that there would be no expansion of the carpark.
3. Given that the RCH buildings are owned by overseas based infrastructure investors and the RCH and Government are now tenants like McDonalds on the site are you now proposing to recommend the handing over control of land below the Park to these investors?
4. A further question - Is the land in question inside or outside the area identified as the carpark in the original contract?
5. We have another question as to whether the parkland alienated for construction of the Hospital will be returned. It was guaranteed that the old buildings of the RCH – the Nurses' Home and the H Block - will be demolished and the area returned to parkland. There appears no sign of this happening. We had confirmation from the former Government that under the PPP deal the Sheraton Hotel chain would be building a 5 star hotel on the site once the H Block was cleared.
6. We recommend proper community consultations and information be given on this proposal and that it not be rammed through tonight. We wish to ask further detailed questions about the impact on the Park and the loss of vegetation etc. Council will lose credibility if it rolls over and recommends the deal without reference to the community.

Julianne Bell Committee RPPG and Secretary PPL VIC Mobile 0408022408