

LETTERS OF THE WEEK

No place for a hotel

Last week our suspicions were confirmed that, under the terms of the Public Private Partnership deal for the construction of the new Royal Children's Hospital, the private developer is to be gifted 1.2 hectares of public parkland for a five-storey private hotel with car parking and commercial facilities, including a supermarket, cafe and shops. The myth is that the hotel is for the parents and relatives of patients. Not so; 85 per cent of hospital patients will have private rooms with built-in accommodation for parents. And there is a wide choice of hotels and motels right on the doorstep of the hospital.

The tragedy is that this represents further incremental alienation of our Royal Park, Melbourne's largest, inner-city, indigenous park bequeathed to us by our first governor, the visionary Charles La Trobe. Just as we are experiencing a population boom, with 2000 people arriving in Melbourne every week, we are seeing the progressive shrinking of the city's parks and gardens. It is



self-evident that parkland must be provided for people's recreation as well as to counter the city's "heat island effect" and greenhouse gas emissions.

As Patrick White said with extraordinary foresight at a rally in Centennial Park, Sydney in 1972: "Your parks are your breathing spaces. Guard them. Cherish them. Parkland is valuable and greedy eyes see the money in it. So you must always be on the alert ... Protect your parks from the pressure of political concrete."

*Julianne Bell / Royal Park
Protection Group*

Melbourne Times Weekly welcomes letters shorter than 180 words.

Letters are subject to editing and should include a name, address and phone number.

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