

Royal Park Protection Group Inc

MEDIA RELEASE

Friday 10 November 2006

NEW FREEWAY THREAT TO ROYAL PARK AND INNER SUBURBS

Alert environmental and community groups plus public transport advocates were alarmed to hear that extension of the Eastern Freeway through Fitzroy, Carlton, Parkville and Royal Park to City Link is back on the Government's agenda.

The Bracks Cabinet is said to be considering a "scoping paper" on building a freeway "link" which would include construction of a giant on/off ramp and flyover through the Royal Park Wetlands. It would, additionally, impinge directly upon West Parkville, which includes the new residential development The Parkville Gardens (ex Commonwealth Games Village.)

The Northern Central City Corridor Study (2001 to 2003) commissioned by Transport Minister Batchelor found that extension of the Eastern Freeway could not be justified given that less than 13% of traffic off the Freeway heads west. A train down the Freeway was recommended. So why has this proposal to extend the Eastern Freeway raising its ugly head again?

In our view, if it proceeds, Royal Park would be destroyed, surrounding suburbs seriously degraded and residential amenity affected plus public transport options lost. The \$1 billion estimated funding could, in our view, be better spent on hospitals, schools and public transport. PPP arrangements could mean that any future "freeway" built would be tolled.

Julianne Bell, Convenor of the Royal Park Protection Group, explains: *"The revival of the freeway plan has become a hot election issue. The Greens are the only political party to offer an election platform of "No Freeway" through, under or over Royal Park. In our view, the Bracks Government sees Royal Park, as "terra nullius" - there for the taking for hospital expansion, residential development (even if used for a Games Village) and now, it seems, a freeway. It is unbelievable that Bracks could hand over \$5 million for the new Wetlands then apparently risk trashing it with a freeway. Our parklands are sacrosanct and must be protected. "*

This Saturday, 11 November 2006, at 12 noon the Greens, supported by the Royal Park Protection Group, are holding a public meeting at the threatened West Royal Park Wetlands on Oak Street. (Melways Map Reference 29 C 12.) Speakers will include Dr Bob Brown, Greens Leader; Mr Richard Di Natale, Greens candidate for the electorate of Melbourne; and Dr Paul Mees, transport academic and activist.

Contact for Information: Julianne Bell RPPG Convenor 98184114 or 0408022408