



Iconic River Red Gum, Australian Native Garden Photo David Tamall

ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP INC. NEWS BULLETIN DECEMBER 2008

News of the Month - Community Kills off Brumby's Monster Road Tunnels through Royal Park

The Royal Park Protection Group INC. (RPPG) was invited to attend the Premier's Launch of the Victorian Transport Plan on Monday 8 December 2008. What was remarkable was that the proposed road tunnels through inner Melbourne and Royal and Holland Parks to the Port and CityLink do not figure in the final Plan. They have simply been deleted. (These formed the centrepiece of the \$5 million Sir Rod Eddington Study "Investing in Transport - East West Link Needs Assessment" conducted from April this year.) A senior Victorian public servant who had been involved in the Eddington Review commented at the Launch "regard it as a victory for your groups", referring to the extraordinary campaigns conducted by community groups, backed by Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc., opposing road tunnels and supporting "Sustainable Public Transport".

Community groups who should be congratulated for the hard-fought campaigns include - in addition to RPPG – the Carlton Residents' Association; the Kensington Association; the Mt Alexander Road Campaign Group; the Yarra campaign against the tunnel (YCAT) and the Coalition of Transport Action Groups (CTAG). Far from celebrating, we realise this is just a reprieve and that sooner or later a State Government might decide to declare the disappeared tunnels another "Missing Link". We are concerned, however, over recommendations in the Victorian Transport Plan regarding the tunnels and elevated roadways for Footscray and revived plans for a tunnel for the North East Link connecting the Eastern Freeway and the Western Ring Road from Greensborough to Bulleen. Also of concern is the impact on inner suburbs and Yarra Park of the tunnel now proposed to be constructed under Hoddle Street.

While community groups may have staved off the road tunnel threat to Royal Park, the Royal Children's Hospital has excised a huge area for its new development. In our view, the public have been conned, misled and betrayed by the State Government, including Bronwyn Pike, Member for Melbourne. Initially we were told that the new Hospital would be fitted onto the footprint of 4.1 hectares on the original site. Now we find after several secret changes of plans that existing buildings are to be kept, that the Hospital has expanded north into the Park on 7.3 hectares excised for the construction of 3 new wings plus carpark and that a private hotel is to be built on the site. The concrete carpark on the corner of Gatehouse St. and Flemington Rd is to be "returned to parkland" in exchange for loss of parkland! Incremental alienation of the Park and further destruction of our "bushland in the City" is proceeding at the hands of the City of Melbourne whose staff appears intent on loading yet more infrastructure into the Park. Remember that former Lord Mayor John So sacked the Parks Division to save money so there appears to have been little support by the previous Council for saving and maintaining parks. Developments over the past year opposed by RPPG include a bike path routed through an area of high habitat value on Macarthur Rd next to the Burke and Will memorial; a bus parking bay on narrow Brens Drive outside the Urban Camp; dog off leash areas in important habitat zones and near the wild duck billabong in west Royal Park; and another supermarket style carpark around the Melbourne Zoo. All were with the blessing of "Greens" Councillor, Fraser Brindley!

Recent Events:

29 November 2008

The election of a new Melbourne City Council was an event of some significance for RPPG. Lord Mayor Robert Doyle declared beforehand that he was pro tunnel but fortunately will not have numbers to alter the City of Melbourne's opposition to road tunnels through Royal Park. RPPG wrote to Councillors supporting water sourcing initiatives in parks, in particular the sewer mining project in Princes Park. The proposal for an investigation by Council staff was put by Cr Peter Clark and carried at the first Council meeting on 16 December 2008.

3 December 2008:

The tenth RPPG AGM was held at the North Melbourne Library. Our key speaker was Dr. Leigh Glover, Assistant Director of the Australasian Centre for the Governance and Management of Urban Transport (GAMUT) at the University of Melbourne on "Sustainable Transport for Melbourne." Thanks go to retiring Treasurer Lydia Param and retiring Committee member Jean Leitinger for their work. Notice was received that RPPG had been awarded a community grant by the City of Melbourne for information provision to members and website. (This will enable us to restart our website.)

8 December 2008:

Launch of the Victorian Transport Plan at Federation Square. (See above) See www.transport.vic.gov.au

10 December 2008.

"What Will Brumby's Transport Plan Mean for Melbourne?" Community representatives gave their responses to the Victorian Transport Plan at a forum held by the GAMUT Centre at the University of Melbourne. Speakers at the forum assessed the content of the Plan against a set of principles that GAMUT believes should underpin Melbourne's transport and urban development. Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc. (of which RPPG is a member) was invited and will be a member of the Alliance for Sustainable Transport. See <http://www.abp.unimelb.edu.au/gamut/about/news-events/brumby-plan.html>. Refer recent Age articles one by Clay Lucas (<http://www.theage.com.au/national/on-a-road-to-nowhere-20081214-6y7b.html>) and one by Kenneth Davidson (<http://business.theage.com.au/business/the-real-plan-is-to-push-us-back-into-cars-20081214-6ybt.html>)

Coming Events

15 January 2008: Meeting of the Coalition of Transport Action Groups of which RPPG is a member to discuss further action on tunnels and transport.

31 January 2008: Meeting of the Royal Park Protection Group Inc. at 11:30 am on Saturday 31 January 2008 at the Walmsley House in Royal Park. This is located near the corner of Gatehouse Street and Royal Parade, Parkville. The entrance is off Gatehouse Street. Parking is available in surrounding streets. Or take the tram down Royal Parade. All are welcome. (Contact: Julianne Bell RPPG Convenor 98184114 or 0408022408)

If you attend it will give you the chance to see the State Heritage listed Walmsley House which is a prefabricated iron cottage, one of Victoria's earliest buildings. It dates from the Gold Rush. From 1862 it was the home of Francis Meaker, the first Park Ranger and Bailiff of Royal Park, then his son Charles who took over the position. It was occupied until 1932. It was saved from demolition by RPPG who nominated it for the State Heritage Register. We also ensured that the very fine golden elm next to the House was included on Victoria's significant tree register.

Vale RPPG Members:

We are very sad to have to report the passing of a number of long time RPPG members. Dr Barbara Falk of Parkville was a foundation member who gave wonderful, unflagging support to our group over the past ten years. She had close ties with Royal Park and used to recount how as a child in about 1916 she would be taken on the horse tram through the Park along Marconi Crescent (now demolished) to the Royal Melbourne Zoological Gardens. Other members are Iris Nicholides of Hawthorn, who was a great defender of parkland including Royal and Albert Parks; Phyllis Eager of Parkville and Phillipa Mc Call of South Yarra. We were very fortunate to have had their help over the years.

Season's Greetings and Best Wishes for the New Year: The Committee of the Royal Park Protection Group Inc. sends season's greetings to all our members and friends and best wishes for a peaceful and green New Year.

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