

*Royal Park Australian Native Garden
Photo by David Tatnall*



Royal Park Protection Group News Bulletin – May 2010

WILL MELBOURNE'S NEW "OPEN SPACE" POLICY HELP PROTECT ROYAL PARK?

Last March the City of Melbourne ran an online questionnaire on "open space" in Melbourne. Although many Royal Park Protection Group Inc. (RPPG) members participated, we formed the view that this type of survey would seem to be of little use in determining the future of our parklands. Assurances were given by City of Melbourne staff that this survey was only one step in a process of review and that wider consultation will occur prior to any works being undertaken. Our group is specifically focused on the protection and proper maintenance of Royal Park and so we took the opportunity to place a number of comments on record with the Council prior to these future promised consultations occurring.

Our comments included the following:

- Many of the parks and gardens of Melbourne, including Royal Park, are not just "local" but are on the State Heritage Register and, therefore, belong to all Victorians. It is important that the Melbourne City Council treats them as such.
- The parks and gardens of Melbourne used to be the glory of Melbourne. Royal Park was established by Queen Victoria as a place of rest and recreation for the people of Melbourne. The City of Melbourne must be careful in referring to its parks and gardens as "open space" as if they are empty paddocks measured only by area. This tends to lead to their treatment as "terra nullius" with consequences often not in the best long term interests of the community.
- It is regrettable that, under the former Lord Mayor John So, Council disbanded the Parks and Gardens Division and sacked the Director and Deputy Director. The area was moved to Urban Design. Also the Royal Park Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee and its subcommittee, the Vegetation Management Working Group, were disbanded. RPPG and our allies, the Parkville Association and the North and West Melbourne Association, were represented on these committees. Hence Council's cooperative agreements with the community were ended and the on-the-ground practical work with community assisting with planning the planting and maintenance ceased.
- One general Parks Committee was established as a substitute for the Parks and Gardens Master Plan Advisory Committees but we have not heard tell of it. None of its members, except possibly for one, had any connection with Royal Park. I can only say that these Master Plan Committees were an effective tool in increasing cooperation between the Council and community groups and stopping the "us and them" attitudes from developing. Also these allowed Council to harness the extraordinary expertise of members of community groups. We urged Council to reinstate the Royal Park Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee and re-establish the Vegetation Management Committee.

Paul Leitinger RPPG Convenor



Photo Showing 2007 Model of New RCH and "Returned" Parkland

Progressive Changes to Plans of Royal Children's Hospital Development = More Loss of Parkland

In 2007 photos of an architectural model of the new Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) and its location on Royal Park were exhibited on billboards along Flemington Road. (See above photo.) It is evident that the plans shown here bear little relationship to the RCH complex now under construction in Royal Park. Originally the Hospital was to be contained on its 4.1 hectare footprint in the Park. Then plans showed buildings aligned along Flemington Road - as indicated in the photo - with promises made that original buildings would be demolished and the land on the east "returned" to parkland. (The exchange of prime parkland for degraded, contaminated land was never regarded by RPPG as a fair swap.) The construction site was to cover about 7 hectares. The massive new buildings along Flemington Road have, however, now been extended further north and west into the Park obviously alienating more land. The Department of Health has confirmed that, in addition, a private hotel is to be built within the RCH complex under the PPP agreement. At a recent meeting Bronwyn Pike, Member for Melbourne and former Minister for Health, confirmed that the Hospital was to be completed in 2011 and that "H block and the Nurses' Home" would be demolished and the land returned to the Park but failed to mention, however, the construction of a private hotel. RPPG members are monitoring the promised return of land to the Park and its restoration.

What's On In May and June 2010

Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc. Meeting on Freeway/Tunnel Projects Planned for Melbourne Saturday 22 May 2010

Time: 1:45 pm for 2 pm start. **Date:** Saturday 22 May 2010 **Venue:** City of Melbourne Bowling Club, Flagstaff Gardens, Corner of Dudley and William Streets, West Melbourne. (Opposite the Queen Victoria Car park) **Tram:** William, Peel or Victoria Streets and get off at the Queen Victoria Market. Parking in Queen Vic metered car park. (Melways 2 F A2) **Speakers:** A panel on the Tunnel Projects Planned for Melbourne – WestLink, Hoddle Street, the North East Link and Mornington Link. RPPG members should be alert and alarmed as it appears that the East West Link, which includes the open cut freeway through Royal Park, is not dead and may be an extension of WestLink - the tunnel under Footscray. All are welcome at the meeting. Stay to afternoon tea. Enquiries: Julianne Bell PPL VIC Secretary Mobile 0408022408

City of Melbourne Community Planting Day to Celebrate Environment Day Sunday 6 June 2010

Time: 1 pm - 4pm **Date:** Sunday 6 June 2010. **Venue:** Royal Park near corner of Macarthur Road and The Avenue Parkville (Melways 43 1F) **Transport:** Trams in Royal Parade. Stop at Macarthur Road. Cycle: Paths through Royal Park. Parking: The Avenue. Enter off Royal Parade. **Activities:** Afternoon Tea provided. Guided walks in Australian Native Garden wetland. Boomerang throwing exhibition.

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Visit our website www.royalparkprotect.org.au

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