

Royal Park Protection Group Inc

PO Box 197 Parkville 3052

Contact: Julianne Bell Convenor 98184114 or 0408022408



News Bulletin – November 2007

MESSAGE FOR 2008 - “NO TUNNELS”

The old spectre of the extension of the Eastern Freeway, whether a freeway/tollway, tunnel or expanded roadway, through or under the inner suburbs, the Melbourne General Cemetery and Royal Park to CityLink, has reappeared to frighten many Melburnians.

As reported in our previous newsletter, this may become reality, once Sir Rod Eddington’s “*East West Link Assessment*” is completed. Already Premier John Brumby speaks of this monster PPP project as a fait accompli. Rumour has it that the team of engineers who designed “EastLink” are already busy on the State Government’s grand plan for The Tunnel and were in fact recently despatched to Beijing to study Chinese tunnelling techniques. Before the election, however, the ALP was extremely quiet about the project, obviously not wanting to frighten the voters. The pre election candidates’ forum hosted by Yarra Council at the Collingwood Town Hall on “*Trains Trams and Tunnels*” was well attended. Melbourne MHR Lindsay Tanner was, however, conspicuous by his absence, ostensibly because of an appointment with his “Leader.” So the ALP viewpoint was not heard. RPPG representatives walked in the “*Walk Against Warming*” march with our banners “*No Tunnels*” and “*No More Freeways*”

The citizens of Melbourne are, it seems, finally waking up to the prospect of destruction of the inner suburbs and precious parkland plus the costly failure of the Government to provide public transport to outer and middle suburbs. Full marks go to Boroondara, Manningham and Yarra Councils, also the Metropolitan Transport Forum, for putting a joint petition on line to show support for public transport - the Doncaster rail line - down the Eastern Freeway. The message on Yarra Council’s billboards is “**Say Yes to Doncaster Rail - www.pt4me2.org.au - Faster Sooner Greener**” We urge you to add your voice to the online petition.

The Tunnel sounds most convenient but it will come with all the vast apparatus of vent stacks and on/off ramps at Nicholson, Lygon and Royal Parade intersections. Also mooted is a giant flyer-over across West Parkville and the Royal Park Wetlands. Word is that the Government will “economise” and carve an open cut roadway through Royal Park. As mentioned previously - the Northern Central City Corridor Study (2001 to 2003) - established that only 7% of cars and 8% of trucks off the Eastern Freeway are headed west, most are headed to the city. (Dr Paul Mees was the RPPG representative on this study). As indicated local Councils have taken up one of the main recommendations of the Study, namely the rail link down the Eastern Freeway. We are of the view that the \$10 billion earmarked for this polluting, dinosaur of a project could well be channelled into public transport to ease road congestion; assist Eastern suburbs city commuters; improve inner city amenity; and save Royal Park from further destruction.

The threat of the extension of the Eastern Freeway through the inner city and Royal Park will be the focal point of the **RPPG Annual General Meeting on 8 December 2007** and members are urged to attend to hear Public Transport Guru Dr Paul Mees of the University of Melbourne speak on this topic.

Time: 2pm. **Date:** Saturday 8 December 2007. **Venue:** Upstairs, Nth Melbourne Library 66 Errol St.

Transport: No 57 Tram from Elizabeth Street or nearby streets for parking.

Contact: Julianne Bell, RPPG Convenor, see above. (Due to the election we had to defer the meeting.)

OTHER THREATS TO ROYAL PARK

Expansion of "Dogs off Leash" Areas:

Many City of Melbourne (CoM) residents will have received a questionnaire on the proposed expansion and new location of dogs off the leash areas in Royal Park. We know that already the CoM fails to adequately monitor infringement of the local law that dogs must be leashed in Royal Park, unless in a designated off leash area (currently on Macarthur Road and in the MacPherson Field.) Unlike other municipalities, the CoM does not prosecute infringements. In our experience scant attention is paid by owners to keeping dogs on the leash. As a consequence many residents, especially those with children, do not use Royal Park anymore having been threatened, even bitten by dogs. Some dog owners won't walk their dogs in the Park after other dogs harassed their animals. A number of professional dog-walking companies have been observed to pull up their vans in Gatehouse Street and let their dogs out into the Park to run without restraint. Many members have seen dogs attacking and killing wildlife, including waterbirds in the wetlands and ponds.

We are of the view that:

- Royal Park is recognised as "bushland in the city" and the large open wildlife and significant habitat areas must be protected. We are thinking of the northwest section of the Park bounded by Flemington Road, Elliott Avenue and the tramline. Also the hilltop area (The Circle) to the north of the Childrens' Hospital. These have ground nesting birds such as quail in addition to cockatoos and parrots. The newly revegetated grasslands will be destroyed if dogs are allowed there off leash. These areas must be **ON LEASH**. (The CoM has designated the greater part as off leash.)
- The areas with bodies of water, such as the Wetlands but also including the Australian Native Garden and the Flemington Road Pond (especially designated for wild ducks) must be **DOGS PROHIBITED**. (The CoM has only designated the Wetlands thus)
- The shared use of sports ovals, when appropriate, should be allowed as dogs **OFF LEASH** areas. The CoM already agreed to the Poplar Oval on the Avenue. We also think that Macpherson Field should be kept, as it is an open clear space.
- Existing pathways should define the dogs off leash and on leash areas plus dogs prohibited areas. Some Councils use stencilled signs on pathways.
- See also our comments in the October newsletter.

We urge members to complete the questionnaire or write a submission to the Council by 30 November 2007 using the above points plus any observations of your own. We suggest sending it to Councillor Fraser Brindley, Chair of the Environment Committee, City of Melbourne, Town Hall, PO Box 1603, Melbourne 3001 or by email Fraser.Brindley@melbourne.vic.gov.au with a copy to Cathy Kiss Cathy.Kiss@melbourne.vic.gov.au.

More Threats: Construction of the Royal Children's Hospital appears to be alienating more of Royal Park. RPPG representatives will attend a briefing this week and will report at the AGM. Construction of four super tram stops is now proceeding. RPPG was only advised of plans for one - we were unaware of the other three. Complaints over safety hazards and destruction of mature trees are to be made to CoM.

Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc. (PPL VIC) Annual General Meeting 1 December 2007

RPPG members are invited to attend the PPL VIC AGM (RPPG is a member). Hear the guest speaker, Dr Bob Birrell, on a topic of great importance given threats of climate change and global warming.

Time: 2 pm. **Date:** Saturday 1 December 2007. **Venue:** Upstairs, Nth Melb. Library 66 Errol St.

Transport: No 57 Tram from Elizabeth Street or nearby streets for parking.

Speaker: Dr Bob Birrell, Director of the Centre for Population and Urban Research Monash University, on "*The Scale and Implications of Melbourne's Population Boom*".

Open Mike: There will be an open mike session to hear about PPL VIC members' campaigns.

Contact: Julianne Bell on above numbers.

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