

News Bulletin – October and November 2007

MESSAGE FOR THE MONTH - “NO TUNNELS”

Looming large on our inner city horizon is the threat of the extension of the Eastern Freeway, whether a freeway/tollway, tunnel or expanded roadway, through or under Royal Park. This may become reality, once Sir Rod Eddington’s “East West Link Assessment” is completed. Already Premier John Brumby speaks of it as a fait accompli.

Many inner city residents including those in Parkville – the focal point of this monster development - appear to be taking the ostrich approach (i.e. the head in the sand) and ignoring the facts. These poor souls seem to fantasise that the tunnel will mysteriously disappear underground at Hoddle Street and re emerge in the Western suburbs. Not so. Predictions are it will have giant on/off ramps or interchange junctions at all or some of these: Princes Street/Nicholson Street, Princes Street /Lygon Street, Royal Parade/Macarthur Road and Elliott Avenue/Flemington Road. In addition, pundits say that it will spawn massive polluting vent stacks, as did the Burnley tunnel. It is mooted that a giant flyover across West Parkville and Royal Park Wetlands will link the tunnel with City Link. The whole exercise has been costed at \$1 billion or so. The bets are on that the Government will regard Royal Park as disposable and, in a “cost saving” measure, the extension of the Eastern Freeway will be in an open cut motorway through the Park, not underground in a tunnel.

This is shaping up as a major election issue in the Federal seat of Melbourne. We are suggesting to inner city residents, if you want to preserve the “liveability” of your suburb; maintain your property prices, preserve our heritage; protect your health; help fend off global warming; and protect Royal Park then perhaps you should be asking the candidates in Federal seat of Melbourne whether their Party has pledged to oppose the Tunnel and construction of more freeways and support public transport.

As you might recall, the Royal Park Protection Group Inc. was represented on the Northern Central City Corridor Study 2001 to 2003, which came to the conclusion that extension of the Eastern Freeway westwards was not warranted given that only 7% of car traffic and 8% of truck traffic is headed west for City Link, most being city bound. Other major recommendations included a rail link down the Eastern Freeway to Doncaster and improved public transport for the northern suburbs. This is still the position of RPPG. We urge you to support RPPG and come to the October and November 2007 meetings/events listed below, especially those focussing on this issue.

“Trams Trains and Tunnels “ Meet Your Candidates for the 2007 Federal Election - Policies for the Future of Transport Wednesday 24 October 2007

Time: 6:30 pm for 7 pm start. **Date:** Wednesday 24 October 2007

Venue: Collingwood Town Hall, 140 Hoddle Street, Abbotsford. Melways Map Reference: 44 D 5.

Invited Speakers: Lindsay Tanner – Australian Labor Party, Tim Wright – Democrats, Adam Bendt – Greens and Scott Ryan – Liberal Party.

Host: Yarra Council, supporters include RPPG and Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc.

Hear Bob Brown Speak on the Pulp Mill and the Federal Election Thursday 25 October 2007

Time: 6:30 pm for 7 pm **Date:** Thursday 25 October 2007

Venue: Capitol Theatre, 113 Swanston Street, Melbourne. Entry by gold coin donation.

Bob Brown Media Conference on Tunnel in Royal Park and the Federal Election Friday 26 October 2007

Time: 10:30 am to be confirmed **Date:** Friday 26 October 2007

Venue: Carpark of Wetlands Royal Park on Oak Street, Parkville. Melways Map Reference 29 C 11. This is an appropriate location given it could be the site for the new freeway/tollway flyover. We need RPPG members and friends to attend.

Public Hearing - Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Land Development Monday 29 October 2007

Time: 10 am – 12 noon **Date:** Monday 29 October 2007

Venue: Legislative Council Committee Room, Parliament House, Spring Street, East Melbourne.

Hearing: Witnesses from Department of Treasury and Finance.

RPPG Submission: See below under What's Been Happening.

RPPG Members' General Meeting 3 November 2007

Time: 7:30 pm **Date:** Tuesday 3 November 2007

Venue: North Melbourne Library 66 Errol Street, North Melbourne Upstairs Meeting Room 1.

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

Speakers: to be advised. **Reports:** On recent developments including Royal Children's Hospital development, the Select Parliamentary Enquiry into Public Land Development; including the submission by RPPG on the alienation and sale of the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital in Royal Park; and City of Melbourne (CoM) projects for Royal Park including the expansion of dogs off leash areas and the super tram stops. Note that the AGM is now scheduled for 8 December 2007.

What's Been Happening?

RPPG Submission to Select Parliamentary Committee Enquiring into Public Land Development:

We made a submission to the Committee on the alienation and sale of the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital for the 2006 Commonwealth Games Village and the Parkville Gardens private property development. You can refer to the Parliament website. For quick access google "Select Committee on Public Land Development" for our RPPG submission on "Royal Park" It is No 126 on list of submissions. We have yet to be advised as to when we will have a hearing.

The former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital precinct, which is included on the State Heritage Register and the Register of the National Estate, has been subdivided into apartments and is being sold off privately by Australand, the developer. RPPG members may want to pay a visit before public access is denied and private owners take possession, in order to view the buildings for the last time. Any indication of the buildings' former use or recognition of its significance in the history of psychiatry has been removed. It is as if the Hospital is being deleted from our history books.

City of Melbourne "Dogs Off Leash" Project in Royal Park: Following the vociferous demands of a small pressure group, the "Royal Park Dogs", the CoM is proposing to massively expand areas for owners to run dogs off the leash. The reason given by the small clique of dog owners is so they can allow their dogs to "socialise" and so the dogs don't run off onto roads (Legally dogs have to be under voice control and close by owners so they can be leashed easily.) CoM is spending \$10,000 to survey residents in the municipality plus a large area of Moreland. Will it be a push-poll to determine what the results will be? RPPG is extremely concerned over the threat to wildlife. Our position was put to a recent Environment Committee meeting, namely, that no wildlife habitat areas of the Park – that is all the park except for sporting ovals or playing fields - should be allowed for dogs off leash; that the Wetlands and billabong/pond areas should be designated as "No Dogs" areas; and that the Poplar Oval on the Avenue and MacPherson Field near the Zoo be used for dogs off leash. Please include this message about the need to protect wildlife in the Park if you receive a questionnaire from the CoM.

Reminder of Membership Renewals: This is a reminder to lapsed members to renew as we need your support, especially now Royal Park is under siege from the freeways/tollways/Tunnel.

Quote for the day "...Parkland is valuable, and greedy eyes see the money in it. So you must always be on the alert. Hang onto your breathing spaces in this developing and already over-congested city. Protect your park from the pressure of political concrete."

Patrick White addressing the Save Centennial Park rally in Sydney on 18 June 1972.