

**Royal Park Protection Group Inc**  
**Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc.**

Councillor Cathy Oke  
Chair, Eco-City Committee  
City of Melbourne

2 June 2009

Dear Councillor Oke

I am making a submission on behalf of the Royal Park Protection Group (RPPG) and Protectors of Public Lands Victorian Inc. (PPL VIC) on agenda item 5.4 of the Eco-Plan Committee meeting today, Tuesday 2 June 2009.

I would like to make the following comments on the report on "Community Engagement Parks and Gardens". Council officers are "proposing a community engagement and strategy for parks and gardens". My comments made on the Master Plan item are also relevant.

As far as I can see this is not a proposal for community engagement but the very reverse – for **disengagement** of residents and the community from anything to do with management, conservation and approval of use of parks and gardens. The Committee is a highly bureaucratic organisation. I am particularly concerned over the membership:

1. There are only 2 community members out of 11 on the Committee. These members are expected to cover everything. Plus one "expert in community engagement". Is this a bureaucrat acting as a go-between?
2. It is putting influence into the hands of commercial and horticultural interests. (There are 2 members, the same number as the community)
3. It is handing influence to the State Government. Parks Victoria is a State Government body as far as I know it manages the Yarra banks and wetlands under the Westgate Bridge. It does not manage any Gardens in the City of Melbourne and only manages a number of city parks. It does not manage Royal Park. The Royal Botanic Gardens is a State Government authority (There are 2 members, the same as the community)
4. It appears to be dominated by Council staff.

It is not clear who is this proposed Committee advising? What are the mechanisms? As we pointed out in Item 5.3 the Parks and Recreation Department was abolished and staff sacked. The City of Melbourne must have enough staff to carry out its obligations and enforce by laws. There are few in house parks and gardens staff left to do this. Most of the work is contracted out.

There is also likely to be a significant cost factor in running such a committee as that proposed as the "experts" to be invited are likely to expect an honorarium or fee for attending.

As we pointed out under Item 5.3 it is significant since the parks and gardens were alienated for major projects, taken over as venues for commercial events, degraded, not drought proofed with proper irrigation and allowed to deteriorate with out proper maintenance then Melbourne has sunk from No 1 rating as the world's most liveable city to 17 th (seventeenth.) The City of Melbourne must bear part responsibility.

The RPPG suggests that that the City of Melbourne needs a properly constituted community consultation committee, chaired by the Chair of the Eco-Plan Committee and serviced by a Council staff member and attended by representatives of community organisations. Here is a list of possible members:

CoRBA, Carlton Gardens Group, Carlton Residents Association, Eastenders, East Melbourne Association, Kensington Association, North and West Melbourne Association Inc., Parkville Association, Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc., Residents 3000 and the Royal Park Protection Group Inc.. Also Yarra Park and South Yarra groups. I trust you will seriously consider this recommendation.

Julianne Bell

Convenor Royal Park Protection Group Inc. and Secretary Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc.  
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