

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP (RPPG) GIVEN AT THE AGM ON 8 September 2012

The RPPG has been active again this past year engaging with many parties on issues ranging from the RCH – Stage 2, plans for the return of the park, toilets in the ANG, drilling for the E-W Link Study, planting days, tree replacement strategy (Melbourne general), and more.

Issues over the past year included:

- RCH and return of parkland.
 - Demolition for the RCH Stage 2 has now started (20/7).
 - The Minister David Davis appointed our nominee Kevin Chamberlin, President of the North & West Melbourne Association and past President of PPL VIC, to represent the community on the RCH Reference Group after representations from RPPG. We thank the Minister for this. Several forums have also been held by MCC, one of which was on this morning. It is most unfortunate in our opinion that there is a “push” to potentially develop the small area returned with BBQs, seating, playgrounds, toilets, “quiet areas” and so on. The question of what people “want” appears irrelevant as under the Royal Children’s Hospital (Land) Act 2007 this land, which is to be declared “surplus project land”, will be reserved by an order of the Governor in Council “as a public park to form part of Royal Park.” We believe the most appropriate planting of the returned area is as “bushland” which if done will enhance the inner park areas by providing extra buffer zones to the busy Flemington Rd. This would be an extension of the open woodland of Royal Park and plantings, as specified in the Royal Park Master Plan in keeping with indigenous bushland.
 - The MCC has put out an “Ideas Plan” that talks of the various options and asks for feedback – comments close on 25/9. For a copy of the response form please let me know or you can visit the MCC website.
 - It is noted that pieces of parkland that are unusable for recreation will be counted as parkland and not part of the RCH development, i.e. not within the 4.1Ha of “hospital”. The “returned Park” area is 3 Ha
 - Last year I felt there was some danger that the hospital may expand given the unpredicted growth of Melbourne. I believe that this will not happen and what land is returned will be parkland – phew!
 - A protest outside the hospital was also held to show our position on “No place for an hotel”
 - The roof level helipad became an issue when it became known that the helicopters cannot land on the roof when temperatures are above 29C (or so) due to updrafts. The option of putting another pad in the park has not been averted yet.
 - Just a note that the small carpark on the corner of Gatehouse St and Flemington Rd was confirmed by Minister David Davis 30/3 that it was part of the park – hence should be returned!
- We will soon have a “big silver loo” at the entrance to the Australian Native Garden. We tried without success to have this facility placed in a less obvious spot (which would have been easier (cheaper) to construct as it would be nearer existing services.
- Parkville Gardens/West Parkville – meetings held with the Minister about “overdevelopment” of this area.
- E-W Link. The saga continues!
 - We funded a trip to Canberra for Julianne Bell to meet with the Minister/Chief Advisor to protest funding by Canberra of this work. At the time the available funds had already been committed to other projects.
 - RPPG attended and presented at the MCC Council Meeting to try and prevent the access to the park for the drilling rig. PPL also attended and presented a list of requirements if the rigs were to be allowed access – this “compromise” was accepted in full by the MCC.

- A site inspection of the drill sites was held in August with a number of parties to ensure that there would be no damage to significant areas or trees. The drilling is currently occurring in the park.
- The effects on inner city areas and the parks if it was to be built are dramatic. We need everyone's support to urge the Government to build our public transport system and not continue to hope that "one more road" will fix our problems.

Improvements in the park have been:

- Community plantings in Royal Park June and July.
- The ANG billabong was looking a bit worse for wear with an algal bloom covering the entire surface. This has now been remedied.

Continuing issues:

- There is still a need for coordination meetings with the City of Melbourne for the planting and maintenance of Royal Park. The Council eliminated the Royal Park Master Plan Committee and its subCommittee - the Vegetation Management Working Group. These meetings were discontinued some 3 years ago now.
- Continuing input to the return to parkland with MCC.
- East West Link tied to development of West Link and the proposed Doncaster Rail Line with suspension of Hoddle Street Study.

I would like to end by thanking all our RPPG members, friends and allies for assisting over the years with all the hard work involved in rallies, protests, blockades, publicity stunts attending meetings and keeping the Government and Council under constant surveillance. I would like to end with a well known quote "*Your parks are your breathing spaces. Guard them, cherish them. 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 parks from the pressure of political concrete.*" (Patrick White at a 1972 Rally, Centennial Park, Sydney.)

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