

**Royal Park Protection Group Inc**

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6 December 2006 004

Mr Ian Harris  
Director, Parks and Recreation  
City of Melbourne  
GPO Box 1602M  
Melbourne 3001

Dear Mr Harris – Ian

**Zoo North Entry Project**

Reference the minute of 22 November 2006 from Trevor Griffiths, Manager Park Planning, requesting comments on the plan for the Zoo entry carpark project (**the carpark project.**)

Apart from brief discussions at the Royal Park Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee, mainly on the planting of the site, we have not had any opportunity to comment on the carpark project. It is unfortunate that the proposal appears to be a fait accompli and is proceeding without serious questions concerning the carpark project being considered.

Our concerns are as follows, not necessarily in order of importance:

- 1. Cost of Another Supermarket Style Carpark for Zoo Visitors in Royal Park:** This carpark project in Royal Park is being built for Zoo visitors, not park users. Commuters and the staff of the Zoo will continue to use the carpark. We have not been advised of the estimated cost of this new carpark the North Entrance of the Zoo. Nor who is paying for it. Are the Zoo and/or the State Government contributing? Or is the cost being borne solely by the City of Melbourne? In 1996 the cost of construction of carparks in Royal Park on the northern and western boundaries of the Zoo, initiated by Kevan Gosper - then Chief Commissioner of the City of Melbourne, was \$9 million. Provision was made for meters to be installed so that costs could be recouped. Meters have, however, never been installed. Nor has timed parking been implemented to deter commuter parking. So parking continues to be free and unlimited. Our view is that the City of Melbourne simply cannot afford to expend millions of dollars on free carparks with no prospect of recouping the costs. The site is particularly difficult with a 45-degree angle slope between Poplar Rd and the Zoo entrance. There would have to be considerable engineering works to render the site accessible for buses and cars. This could mean a blow out of costs.
- 2. Increased Car and Bus Parking in Royal Park Contrary to Council Policy:** As far as we are aware, it is Council policy to reduce vehicle parking in parkland. The carpark project at the North Entrance to the Zoo runs counter to this policy.
- 3. Car and Bus Parking for Zoo Visitors Possibly Illegal on Crown Land:** The carpark project to provide car and bus parking is specifically for Zoo visitors and will be used by City commuters plus Zoo staff, visitors to the State Netball and Hocket Centre, employees of the Royal Children's Hospital, Orygen and the Melbourne Rehabilitation Centre on Poplar Road. (As at 8 am on 4 December 2006 there were 75 cars parked in the carparks round the Zoo. They were therefore either Zoo staff or commuters. People were seen walking away from cars down Poplar Road to Orygen.) The land is Crown land and so any parking provided is for Park users. In 1998 under the Kennett Government the then Minister for Natural Resources and the Environment, Mark Birrell, decreed that Zoo visitors were deemed to be Park users. The standing of this pronouncement is not known and, as far as we are aware, it has never been tested. In addition, the Council proposes to

take over a strip of railway land from Victrack for car parking. The result of the negotiations is not known.

4. **New Proposal Contrary to Royal Park Master Plan North Zoo Entrance Project:** The original Royal Park Master Plan contained a concept plan for a bus turning circle and drop off point outside the North Entrance to the Zoo and the remainder of the site was to have been revegetated with indigenous vegetation and rejuvenated as a part of Royal Park. It was to provide a park entrance to the North Gate of the Zoo used by over 330,000 visitors a year (a third of all visitors.) It is disgraceful that our overseas visitors should be greeted by a carpark and not by a welcoming area with a plaza and open space.
5. **Traffic Arrangements Unsafe for Pedestrians Using New Walkway:** The new plan shows the walkway from the Royal Park Station across to the north entrance of the Zoo. This is patently unsafe as it is crossed at three points by roadways to be used by buses and cars. Also unsafe is the congested exit/entry point for buses and cars off Poplar Road, which is a local narrow road.
6. **Unprofessional, Inadequate New Plan:** As far as we can gather the plan for this carpark project was drawn up by a Council staff member who is a part time student of planning at RMIT. In our view, it falls far short of the professional standard needed for such a project. Most of the Royal Park Master Plan projects have been tendered out to professional consultants specialising in planning, architectural and landscape design. As a member of the Vegetation Management Working Group we see quality plans and regard the current plan for the carpark as inadequate. (Our comments do not apply to the planting regime recommended which is very well researched and presented.)
7. **Conclusion:** We are requesting that, before the carpark project proceeds, that our questions about costs be answered and made public; that metered parking be introduced for all Royal Park carparks; that in the interim timed parking (4 to 5 hours) be introduced and enforced to exclude commuters; and that the original Master Plan concept plan be adopted for the North Entrance to the Zoo as intended; that is, a bus turning circle and an indigenous, revegetated “park” created as a welcoming entrance to the Zoo.

Yours sincerely

Julianne Bell  
RPPG Inc.

Jean Leitinger  
Parkville Association Inc

cc Councillor Brian Shanahan, Chair, Finance and Governance Committee; Councillor Fraser Brindley, Chair, Environment Committee; Councillor Catherine Ng, Chair, Planning Committee  
Mr Trevor Griffiths, Manager, Park Planning, Parks and Recreation and Ms Cathy Kiss, Parks and Recreation. .