

**ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP (RPPG)
GIVEN AT THE AGM ON 26 October 2013**

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 (now built), drilling for the E-W Link Study (now completed), discussions and forums attended re the East West Link and more..

Issues over the past year included:

- RCH and return of parkland.
 - Demolition for the RCH Stage 2 completed and building started.
 - The MCC consultation process for the return of Royal Park unfortunately has not maintained the “bushland in the city concept” and ignored the Royal Park Master Plan – under the note that it did not include this corner of the park!! We are very disappointed with this outcome.
 - Further the current plans show the works going well into the existing park with “equipment”. Again this is disappointing to see that our park is being used up.
 - To add further insult to the overall Master Plan concept, the current plans show that there is to be a small hill raised within the existing park – i.e. outside the returned to RP area.
 - It is noted again 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 we noted that 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. This was recently the subject of a letter to MCC to object to any helipad being placed in the park. If they want it then it should go within the 4.1Ha of the new hospital grounds – perhaps instead of the 4 start hotel?
 - Even though we spoke with the Minister David Davis 30/3/12, and confirmed that the small carpark on the corner of Gatehouse St and Flemington Rd was part of the park and would be returned to the park the current plans show this carpark staying.
 - We met with Minister Davis in June to speak to these issues as well as the impact of the looming E-W Link.
 - The return to RP battle continues...
- The “big silver loo” at the entrance to the Australian Native Garden is now completed although we have noted many times that the door to the loo remains open and is very “heavy” which would make it difficult for disabled people to use. This was brought to the attention of the MCC. As part of the return to Royal Park another of these structures is being proposed near the corner of Gatehouse St. and Flemington Road.
- E-W Link. The saga continues!
 - A site inspection of the “extra” drill sites occurred in June. The drilling is now completed.
 - Many consultations and presentations have been made and attended. The mobilisation of many groups to fight the tunnel continues.
 - In the absence of drawings from the LMA we produced some sketches of the effect that the tunnel would have on the park and distributed these during some of the LMA “information sessions” so that people had a chance to appreciate the impact.
 - Now that the plans are published the effects cannot be hidden!
 - We have produced badges and pamphlets for letterboxing to try and raise people’s awareness of the E-W link impact and that there are real alternatives – but please don’t destroy a park for people of Melbourne for now and to come!!

Improvements in the park have been:

- Community plantings in Royal Park October last.

Other

- We upgraded, and we hope improved, our website!

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 sub Committee - 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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