

## Tribute to Julianne Bell

30 MAY 1940 - 27 JANUARY 2017

# Environmental activist will be sorely missed

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS WERE SHOCKED AT THE DEATH OF PUBLIC LANDS DEFENDER JULIANNE BELL ON 27 JANUARY 2017. JULIANNE WILL BE IRREPLACEABLE.



PHOTO COURTESY ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP

Julianne Bell saw an urgent need to retain public lands for present and future generations. In 2003, she established Protectors of Public Lands, Victoria (PPL), based on a similar organisation in New South Wales. As secretary, Julianne was relentless in operating a coalition of urban and regional groups to oversee and fight incursions into precious public open space, both in Melbourne and in regional areas. PPL's slogan is 'Keep public lands in public hands'.

Julianne's environmental activism can be traced back to the battle for the Franklin River in the 1980s, when she made frequent trips to Tasmania to become directly involved.

Closer to home, Julianne, with the Save Albert Park Group, campaigned against the Grand Prix taking over parkland in terms of space and noise for extended periods each year.

In 1996, she was one of the founding members of the Royal

Park Protection Group (RPPG), dedicated to ensuring that activities in this area, bequeathed to the people of Melbourne by Governor La Trobe in 1854, were consistent with the 1987 Royal Park Master Plan.

Under her leadership, the RPPG fought a losing battle against parkland alienation for the State Netball and Hockey Centre, but successfully negotiated some land being returned to parkland. Importantly, her idea of a water harvesting plant at the center for use on site was implemented.

The RPPG and PPL fought hard against the Commonwealth Games Village, where 20 hectares of Royal Park and 2,000 trees were sacrificed for a real-estate development.

Meanwhile, the East-West Link threatened to cut through Royal Park. Julianne advised the PPL and RPPG barrister every day of a six-week public hearing. The planning

panel recommended against the project but the Liberal Government, in its last days, signed off on it. The Andrews Government cancelled it, a great victory for Julianne.

Julianne was fearless, one hundred percent committed and self-propelled right to the end, gaining great respect from her meticulously prepared submissions. She was a politically astute and brilliant strategist, invariably knowing the right person to approach – no matter how high – regarding any issue.

She was like the pilgrim in the hymn at her funeral service: 'No lion can him fright, He'll with a giant fight...'

Motivated by a lifelong love of heritage, parks, nature and wildlife, her democratic perspective was that public spaces belonged to everyone and should not be taken over by private interests. • PW

Jill Quirk