

## **CONVENOR'S REPORT FOR MARCH AND APRIL 2008**

### **East West Link to Proceed:**

The extension of the Eastern Freeway, reportedly in a tolled tunnel through or under Royal Park, was announced in the release of the Sir Rod Eddington's "East West Link Assessment" report on 2 April 2008. This was an inauspicious day given that an intense storm hit Melbourne. See RPPG featuring in the Age on 3 April in the article on The Tunnel "\$18 bn to link east and west".

We now know as far as Royal Park is concerned:

1. That the Tunnel will go underground from Hoddle Street, Clifton Hill and that there will not be any outlets to the city until the Flemington Road/Racecourse Road/Mt Alexander Road/City Link/Elliott Avenue/Church Street/Southgate Street intersection and then there won't be a turn off until Footscray or possibly Sunshine. This is despite the fact that only 7% of car traffic is headed east west and 8% of truck traffic. Most traffic is headed to and from the City. Speculation has it that pressure from big business will force the Government to introduce on-off ramps at intersections on the way namely at Nicholson Street and/or Lygon Streets and/or Rathdowne Street and/or Royal Parade.
2. There will be a massive spaghetti interchange at the Flemington Road/City Link etc. intersection possibly with flyovers and on/off ramps across West Parkville residential area and the Royal Park Wetlands and possibly Travancore Park. on the other side of City Link.
3. There will be a "tunnel staging point" in West Royal Park close to Flemington Road which will result in a massive quarry. Another "tunnel staging point" will be located at the J.J. Holland Park in Kensington and will also effectively turn that park into a quarry.
4. The whole exercise, originally costed at \$1 billion, then \$10 billion is now \$18 billion. The bets are on that the Government will regard Royal Park as disposable and, in a "cost saving" measure; the extension of the Eastern Freeway will be in an open cut motorway through the Park, not underground in a tunnel. (Several years ago under Bracks a leaked Cabinet document advised that the Tunnel would extend under the cemetery then only up to the entrance to Royal Park after Royal Parade after that it would be a roadway.)
5. The Tunnel comes with huge vent stacks belching pollution up to 12 storeys high which will mark the path of the Tunnel. See the Burnley Tunnel vent stack next to the Malthouse Theatre. One or more vent stacks will be located in Royal Park polluting the Park and nearby institutions, for instance Royal Children's Hospital. In addition they will be a major security hazard given that they can be easily scaled and interfered with.

Following up a proposal made by Paul Mees, I contacted Dr Jan Scheurer of RMIT (suggested by Professor Nic Low of Melbourne University ) who agreed to work with us to develop computer images of the Tunnel and the interchanges to let people see what an impact the Tunnel would have on Royal Park and surrounding suburbs. Jill Quirk kindly agreed to photograph the giant vent stack and took a series of photos of the Flemington Road intersection plus the wetlands – site of a flyover. I have ordered aerial maps from Quacso which will be used in this exercise. Funds will have to be raised to pay for this exercise. RMIT staff services will be pro bono.

A number of meetings have already been held on the Eddington Report and The Tunnel. At a meeting in late March of the Fabian Society at the Trades Hall Janet Rice, Maribyrnong Councillor and member of the Metropolitan Transport forum, Professor Nic Low of Melbourne University plus Carlo Carli MP. All spoke in opposition to the tunnels proposed under the Eddington Report. On Sunday 12 April Carlo Carli held a forum on the Eddington Report and the Tunnel through the

northern suburbs in Brunswick Town Hall. Janet Rice also spoke. I spoke in question time on the impact of The Tunnel on Royal Park and asked what was going to be done. The only good outcome was the numbers of contacts made. Lydia Macmichael sold numbers of No Tunnel badges. On Sunday morning 12 April I attended the first of a series of meetings with the Mt Alexander Road Campaign Group (opposing the Travancore 20 story office block development on the former Lombard site) to plan a community protest. We have scheduled this for 25 May 2008. Yarra Council will hold a meeting on Monday 5 May 2008 but appear to be concentrating on a campaign for the Doncaster Rail Link.

Other Issues

### **Dogs Off Leash in Royal Park**

In an amazing turn around Councillor Fraser Brindley, who chairs the Royal Park Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee, plus a new staff member agreed to our demands re proposals for dogs off the leash area:

1. Dogs off leash have now been removed from high habitat areas of the Park and have been restricted to a. Poplar Road Sports Ground b Flemington Road Sports ground plus a section of parkland c Macpherson Field which has always been a D off L area.
2. I suggested that all areas of water with water birds a the Australian Native Gardens b the west Billabong c the Australian Native Garden be made dogs prohibited. And d Wetlands
3. In a positive move I suggested that sports ovals should be made into dogs off lead zones unless sport is in progress. Councillor Brindley suggested one sports field on the Ross Straw Field to cater for dog walkers in West Royal Park; one sports oval on Park Street to cater for dog walkers in Brunswick; and perhaps one on The Avenue to cater for dog walkers in Parkville.

The proposal will be put again to the Environment Committee on the first Tuesday in May. This was thanks to a concerted action by members of the North and West Melbourne Association and RPPG.

### **Commuter Bike Path Through Royal Park**

The final hearing of the planning permit to approve a commuter bike path through Royal Park close to the Burke and Wills memorial and its planted surrounds and through a Conservation 1 area was held on Tuesday 8 April 2008 at the City of Melbourne Planning Committee meeting. (It was due to be decided under delegation by a staff member but RPPG managed to persuade Councillors to call it in and have it heard at a Council Committee. It was then deferred so the Royal Park Master Plan Committee could discuss it before it went before the Council. ) There was a partial victory as following intensive lobbying Councillors voted 5 to 1 (Councillor Brindley lost) at the Planning Committee on 8 April to amend the original design and to construct the path close to the road. —

### **Pine Trees in Park**

We finally got the agreement of Councillor Brindley to have pine trees taken out of Park. These stunt the growth of surrounding vegetation. The Master Plan recommends they be taken out. They should have been taken out 10 years ago.

Signed:

Julianne Bell  
RPPG Convenor