

ROYAL PARK

ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP NEWS BULLETIN

1997 REVIEW - 1998 FORECAST

Facts on the Royal Park Protection Group Inc (RPPG):

- The Royal Park Protection Group Inc, formed just over a year ago, is the only group working exclusively to defend Royal Park and now is known in Local and State Government and other institutions and agencies as a credible environmental and heritage organisation;
- Aims: "To protect, regenerate and conserve the Royal Park as a unique, indigenous, central city park for present and future generations consistent with the 1987 Royal Park Master Plan; to oppose alienation of parkland by government, commercial, sporting and other bodies; and to ensure public access consistent with the terms of the establishment of the Royal Park.";
- Membership - drawn from residents in suburbs encircling the Park and the wider metropolitan area and from other parks/environmental groups;
- Incorporation - Approval was given to RPPG's application for incorporation by the Office of Fair Trading on 25 September 1997;
- Affiliation - with *Hands Off Our Parks* and *Environment Defenders Office* and a signatory to *The Park Lands Code (Victoria)*
- Joint action - with other parks and heritage groups particularly *Parkville Association*, *Defend Our Heritage*, *Save Albert Park* and *North Melbourne Association*

Action Review 1997

February - Participation in Hands Off Our Parks (HOOP) Rally:

- RPPG was one of over a hundred parks and environment groups which rallied in the Carlton Gardens (site of the new Museum) in February.
- RPPG drew attention at the rally to the threats facing Royal Park both active destruction and ongoing degradation.

January to November - Involvement in the Royal Park Master Plan Review:

- Conducted by the City of Melbourne at the behest of the State Government, this PR exercise was held ostensibly to review the 1987 award-winning Master Plan but was designed to allow construction of international standard Commonwealth Games stadiums, also expansion of sports facilities, carparking and roads in Royal Park.
- In April it was agreed that a RPPG representative attend the Review Committee.
- In May RPPG held a broadly-based community consultation on the draft 1997 Plan and, between April and November, made a number of submissions to Council on the Plan.
- On release of the Master Plan Mark II the RPPG representative on the Review Committee put in a dissenting report on the Plan.
- The RPPG Convenor made a submission to the Council's Planning Committee 6 November on behalf of RPPG and the Wurundjeri (traditional owners of Royal Park) requesting deferral of the Plan pending consideration of outstanding unresolved legal, conservation and heritage issues. This was refused.
- Our Ward Councillor refused to see RPPG and the Parkville Association to discuss our request for her to move at the Council meeting deferral of the Plan.
- RPPG made a submission to the National Trust AGM on 24 November and also to the Royal Historical Society of Victoria seeking support for deferral of the Master Plan
- At a meeting on 25 November, 2 days after the release of the Plan and before the public could properly view the document, Council approved the 1997 Master Plan. Permission sought by RPPG to speak at the full Council meeting was refused.
- As a result of 11th hour representations made by RPPG, however, Council made important amendments to the 1997 Plan at the meeting on 25 November. These included the requirement to have a conservation and historical study undertaken of the Park with mapping of Aboriginal sites.

May to December - Campaign over Commonwealth Games Venues for Royal Park

- RPPG undertook an extensive lobbying campaign within Australia over siting Commonwealth Games stadiums for Hockey and Netball in Royal Park. This included representations to the Lord Mayor of Melbourne and Councillors; key Ministers; members of State and Federal Parliament; bureaucrats in all levels of Government; and the Commonwealth Games Bid Committee.
- RPPG also undertook lobbying of international forums - the Commonwealth Games Federation and Commonwealth Games Secretariat in London and the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) in Edinburgh.

July - Formation of Standing Committee on Royal Park with City of Melbourne:

- On the initiative of RPPG, a meeting was convened in July with Councillors and Council staff of the City of Melbourne to discuss problems with liaison on Royal Park. It was agreed a regular, monthly meeting be held with representatives of the Parks and Recreation staff to discuss issues of concern.
- Meetings held between August and December covered planting, maintenance and contract under CCT for the Park.

August - Appeal to Administrative Appeals Tribunal (AAT) over Zoo Expansion into Royal Park:

- RPPG challenged the issue of a permit by the City of Melbourne to the Melbourne Zoo to build a giant canopy out into Royal Park at the AAT in August.
- RPPG's appeal was successful. It was upheld by the AAT in a decision released in November on the grounds that the Park is an urban conservation zone and the canopy was of an intrusive design in an area intended for horticultural treatment..
- This case could set a precedent with consequences for future attempts by government institutions, commercial or sporting bodies to alienate public parkland.

August - Submission made to National Trust over Classification of Significant Tree in Royal Park

- A detailed submission was made to the National Trust nominating the 150 year old River Red Gum in the Australian Native Garden for registration on Victoria's significant trees listing. While this was declined, the National Trust supported RPPG's recommendation to the City of Melbourne that measures be taken to protect the tree.
- Following RPPG's representations, the National Trust has agreed that a case exists for classification of Royal Park and the Australian Native Garden.

September - Agreement with Melbourne University over Student Projects in Royal Park in 1998

- An agreement was negotiated by RPPG with the University of Melbourne that both undergraduate and graduate students from a number of disciplines undertake projects on Royal Park in 1998 academic year.

Action 1998

Summary of Action Forecast for 1998 (in priority order)

- AAT Hearing on 11 February concerning development of the Urban Camp and expansion into Royal Park
- Conducting continued campaign over siting of Commonwealth Games Venues and Village in Royal Park. (Construction anticipated to start in February).
- Monitoring of the implementation of 1997 Royal Park Master Plan and of projects agreed to in amendments concerning the Park "Heritage Overlay" and a parking survey.
- Involvement in water management and the establishment of wetlands in Royal Park
- Involvement in the classification of Royal Park by National Trust
- Participation in the Reconciliation Project involving the Wurundjeri on Royal Park
- Establishment of birdwatching program in Royal Park