

Royal Park Protection Group Inc.

Box 4122 University of Melbourne Post Office
Parkville 3052

Registration No. A0035478L

Copyright © 1998 by Royal Park Protection Group Inc.

<http://www.users.bigpond.com/deedub/index.htm>

Contacts: A. Munro (Convenor) 9347-6560 Fax 9349-1406 J. Bell (Secretary) 9347-6953

Quarterly News Bulletin

July to September 1998

Action Review

BATTLE ROYAL FOR PARK CAMPAIGN TO RELOCATE COMMONWEALTH GAMES VENUES & VILLAGE

Our Position

We are:

- *Standing up for* the relocation of the 2006 Commonwealth Games netball and hockey venues from Royal Park to more appropriate locations — but not in public parkland.
- *Demanding* a proper, open planning process be conducted for selection of a site for the 2006 Commonwealth Games Village; *saying no* to construction of the Village on the Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital and adjacent sites, and *asking* for an enquiry into the future use after closure of the institutions.
- *Saying no* to the construction of an athletes' hotel on the Urban Camp site and *working to save* "Anzac Hall" for a museum and the Park from a hotel development.

Plans Revealed for Park Destruction

Current proposals for construction of mega-hockey and netball stadiums with an underground carpark in Royal Park, in preparation for the 2006 Commonwealth Games, represents an unprecedented assault on public parkland by an elected Council.

The site chosen for the new stadium complex is the hilltop ridge of West Royal Park, the highest point of the Park, in a triangular area of land bounded by the tram line to the east and the train line to the west. An underground car park is proposed on the Council works site (a past illegal use) to the north on steeply terraced land. Much of this land is open, pristine parkland with a line of 100-year old Morton Bay fig trees.

No published measurements or detailed designs for the stadiums or site exist. The only known plan released by Council of the site is a sketch to the scale of 1:2,500 produced by the consultant responsible for the 1997 Master Plan.

A "Feasibility Study of the Redevelopment of the Hockey and Netball Centres in Royal Park (1997)" was commissioned by the State Department of Sport and Melbourne Council, but was kept secret from the public and even Melbourne Councillors. (RPPG obtained it recently under Freedom of Information). This report reveals the specifications required for international standard, corporate stadiums — function rooms, lighting (for night TV), corporate boxes, broadcasting stations, gymnasiums etc. Also revealed are problems related to the choice of site: environmental impact on the Park and on the Zoo (lights, noise, water run-off, traffic, carparking); destruction of the vegetation and bird habitat of West Royal Park; massive earth-works required; lack of access; impact on residential amenity of West Parkville; and lack of infrastructure.

Sports Minister Reynolds has, belatedly, realised that in order to "fit" the netball stadium next to the hockey stadium (on the same level) and to construct an underground car park *the hill in West Royal Park will have to be removed.*

The new stadiums and carpark are to be constructed within metres of the western boundary of the Melbourne Zoo behind which lies the precinct of the rare-animal breeding program. This is shortly to house a herd of Asiatic elephants and an "Asian rainforest" habitat (to be built at the cost of \$7m). Also in the western section of the Zoo is the new Australian bush display.

Battle in Council Over Stadiums

RPPG made submissions to the City of Melbourne Planning, Development and Environment Committee on 13th July and 4th August in which we called for a stay of the construction of international-standard stadiums in Royal Park and an investigation of alternate sites in Melbourne for the hockey and netball venues. At subsequent meetings of the Planning Committee on 6th September and 6th October RPPG presented questions to the Lord Mayor and Councillors on the plans for the takeover by corporate sport of Royal Park.

Since his election to the Council in May this year, Councillor Kevin Chamberlin has been the sole City Councillor working to defend Royal Park from this assault. At the meeting of full Council on 25th August Cr Chamberlin moved a resolution which, in effect, opposed the siting of the 2006 Commonwealth Games hockey and netball stadiums in Royal Park. Crs Wellington Lee and Rosemary Stott supported him, but the motion was lost (3 to 5). (Councillors who failed to defend Royal Park will be answerable to their constituents at the forthcoming Council elections.)

RPPG thanks all members and supporters who attended the Council meetings. Also thanks to the many hundreds of people who wrote to Councillors and politicians with the message — save Royal Park — relocate the Commonwealth Games venues and village!

The State Government has commissioned detailed plans to be made for the stadiums and the Council has commissioned consultants to undertake a feasibility study for an underground car park. We are attempting to obtain information on these developments.

Council Guilty of Breach of Trust

Under the constant threat of dismissal by the State Government, our elected representatives of the City of Melbourne appear to have washed their hands of planning responsibility as regards the siting of the 2006 Commonwealth Games stadiums in the Park. They have facilitated a State Government land grab.

As Trustee and Manager of Royal Park the City of Melbourne is bound to maintain unrestricted access to public parkland for its citizens and to preserve the Park for future generations. In this they have failed.

LETTER FROM RPPG TO THE MELBOURNE TIMES (TMT)

The following is a letter from Convenor Angela Munro published in TMT 7/10/98 in response to a letter from Karrin Singh, Manager of the Victorian Hockey Centre. The RPPG letter crystallises some of the legal, political and economic dimensions of the latest land grab, and challenges the propaganda that accompanies it:

Corporate Sport Boom Swallows Up Parkland

Illegal developments in public parkland have a domino effect. As Karrin Singh's letter about Royal Park (TMT, 23/9/98) shows, they give rise to perceptions that further alienation "fits in well". Yet it is obvious that construction of a massive international sporting complex is incompatible with permanently reserved parkland. Indeed, the complex is not a permitted use as the law stands.

That's why the Victorian Government has two choices if mega-stadiums are to be built in Royal Park. Parliament must revoke the reservation or, alternatively, approve a lease (for a non-permitted use) which "will not be substantially detrimental". That will, of course, be a matter of dispute.

Assurances of "no net loss" or even of "more parkland available" are laughable. Face the facts: we are rapidly reducing inner city parkland at the very time when development sites are going begging.

And multi-million dollar stadiums will be required to "pay their way" — through liquor and gambling licences, conventions and corporate sport, with lucrative television rights. (Hence provision for gridiron, according to documents extracted from the Department of Sport and Recreation under Freedom of Information).

As in the USA, we are in the midst of a boom in heavily subsidized corporate stadiums. It is understandable that netball and hockey clubs should be enticed to support such development. But let's not pretend it's in the public interest.

Thought for the day: *"The tree which moves some to tears of joy, is in the eyes of others only a green thing which stands in the way."* — William Blake, 1799

OTHER ACTION:

RPPG Supreme Court Appeal on the Urban Camp Case

Our Supreme Court Appeal against an Administrative Tribunal decision to allow a hotel development on the Urban Camp site is proceeding. The case has been listed for hearing in the Supreme Court on 9th November 1998.

Despite these proceedings, City of Melbourne Council issued the Urban Camp Co-op with a new lease for 21 years for payment of \$1 (yes — *one* dollar) per year rental. RPPG attempted to stay the issue of a lease at the AAT, but did not succeed.

Some good news for members — “Anzac Hall” on the Urban Camp site has been accepted by Heritage Victoria for listing on the State Heritage Register. (RPPG nominated the building.) Unless this is opposed by the City of Melbourne Council, the registration will be finalized in November.

RPPG First Annual General Meeting 31 August 1998

Our first AGM proved an inspiring and momentous occasion, attended by a large number of members and supporters from across Melbourne — not just the suburbs encircling the Park.

The meeting opened with a welcome from the Wurundjeri Elders — representatives of the traditional owners of the land. Bronwyn Pike, the endorsed ALP State candidate for Melbourne, was the guest speaker. Her topic for the evening was “Sustainability: It’s Worth Striving For”. Angela Munro, RPPG Convenor, delivered the first RPPG Annual Report. Discussion during the evening focussed on the impact of Major Events in Melbourne, in particular the impact of the 2006 Commonwealth Games venues and village to be constructed in Royal Park. Peter Haffenden, Director, Living Museum of the West, led a nocturnal walk in Royal Park after the meeting.

FUTURE EVENTS OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 1998

Sunday 18 October 1998 NORTH MELBOURNE “SPRING FLING” FESTIVAL

This local, multicultural festival in Errol Street North Melbourne is to be held between 11 am and 5 pm. We will have a stall for the promotion of the Royal Park Protection Group. We have made a banner for Royal Park which we will display.

We need members to help “man” our stall and to walk in the Banner Parade 12:45 pm. This is a fantastic opportunity to recruit new members and to raise public awareness of threats to Royal Park. We need help! Volunteers please phone Margot on 9510-4845 or Julianne on 9347-6953. (Note: our stall is No. 68 outside North Melbourne Library.)

Monday 26 October 1998 RPPG MEETING

Meet at 7:30 pm at the North Melbourne Library, 66 Errol Street. Meet guests Meeme McDonald and Richard Thomas who are to work with the Wurundjeri and the community on a celebratory project in the Park, culminating in a day next autumn called “In the Footsteps of the Ancestors”. This is part of a Reconciliation Project funded by the Victorian Women’s Trust. Richard will show slides of projects in which he has been involved.

Saturday 7 November 1998 BIRD OBSERVERS WALK IN MELBOURNE ZOO

The Melbourne Zoo has invited RPPG members and supporters for a walk through the Zoo to observe “birds of passage” — the birds from Royal Park which visit the Zoo. Meet at 7:50 am outside the front entrance to the Zoo. Please phone Julianne on 9347-6953 to advise if you will be attending; we need to have some idea of numbers.

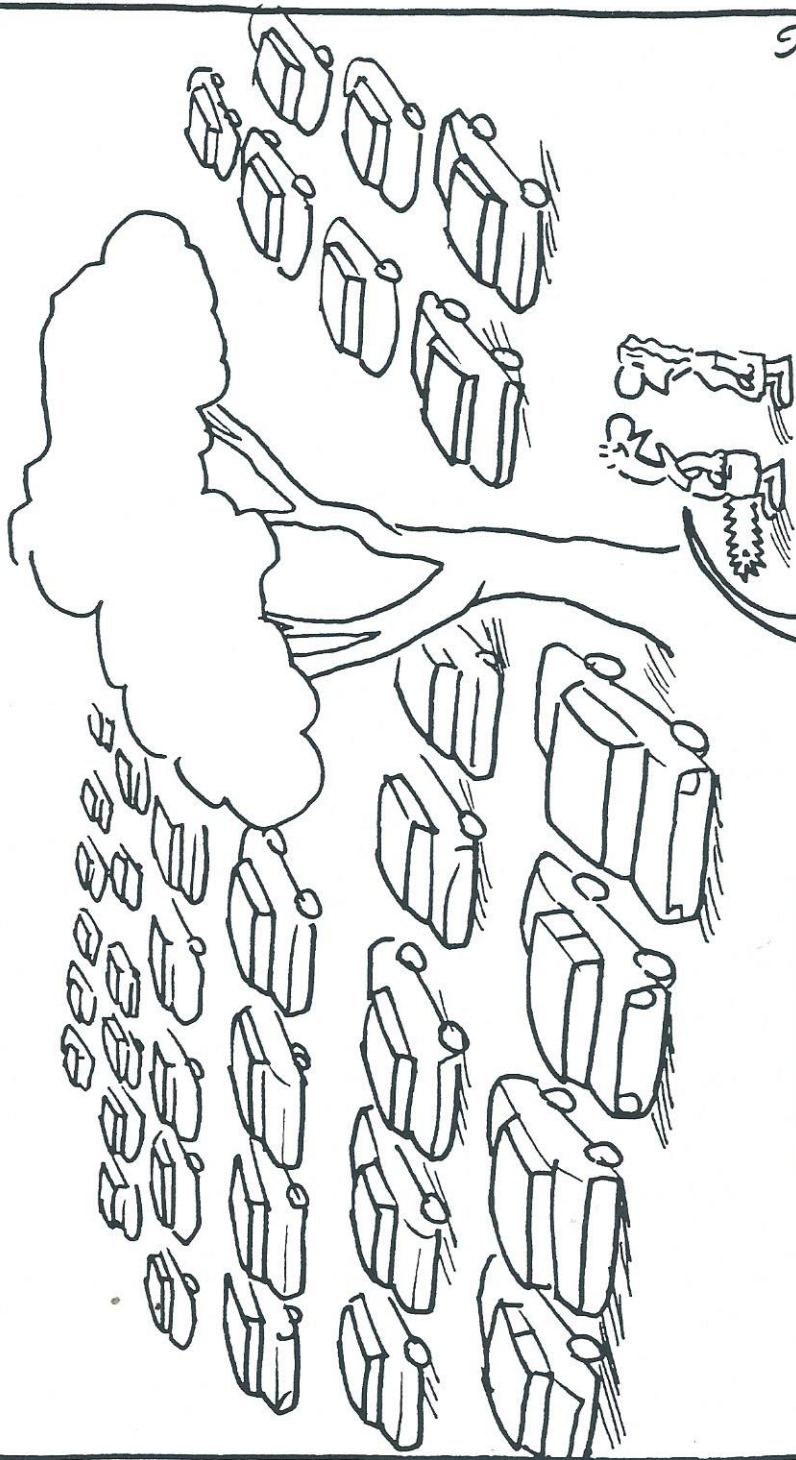
Sunday 13 December 1998 HANDS OFF OUR PARKS RALLY IN ROYAL PARK

The rally is to be organised by the Parklands Defence Council and will be held in Royal Park. About 80 environmental and community groups are signatories to the Parklands Code. This will be an important day for RPPG when we host this huge gathering. We will be able to draw the attention of the Parklands community to the threats which face Royal Park.

“... Parkland is valuable, and greedy eyes see the money in it. So you must always be on the alert. Hang on to your breathing spaces in this developing and already over-congested city. Protect your parks from the pressure of political concrete.”

— Patrick White addressing the Save Centennial Park rally in Sydney on 18/6/72.

WELCOME TO ROYAL PARK



WE WOULDN'T WANT IT TO
DROP BRANCHES ON THE CARS

TANDBERG