

Royal Park Protection Group Inc.

Box 4122 University of Melbourne Post Office, Parkville 3052

Registration No. A0035478L

Contact: J. Bell (Secretary) 9818-4114 Mobile 0408-022-408

News Bulletin

March 2000

ROYAL PARK STADIUM LIGHT TOWERS = ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER

The new millennium is not off to a good start, as far as Royal Park is concerned. As members know, the colossal 2006 Commonwealth Games hockey and netball stadiums, approved by the Kennett Government, are now going up in Royal Park next to the Melbourne Zoo. The latest crisis relates to the stadium light towers, designed to televise night games.

Dr Barry Clark, a leading Australian light pollution expert, honorary member of the Astronomical Society of Victoria and now a RPPG spokesperson, is predicting an environmental disaster for Melbourne if construction of the eight 34-metre high light towers on the hockey stadium goes ahead. He has undertaken a study on "the environmental effects of the hockey pitch lighting proposal for the State Hockey and Netball Centre".

Dr Clark maintains that: "*The new hockey stadium light towers will subject the Zoo to intolerably great levels of illumination and have an undesirable effect on the animals. It will force consideration if the Zoo should be moved or if some of the animals should be relocated. The light towers will also increase illumination levels in residences in the surrounding neighbourhoods and affect the nearby Royal Children's Hospital. The stadiums are located on one of the highest points of Royal Park and the light towers will produce a source of light visible from as far afield as Mt Macedon and Mt Martha. They will also cause undesirable levels of light pollution in the whole of the Melbourne Metropolitan area.*"

RPPG is calling on Planning Minister Thwaites for a separate planning application to be made for the light towers and for it to be advertised in accordance with proper planning processes. RPPG is also requesting Minister Thwaites to invoke the Environmental Effects Act 1978, thus requiring an environmental effects assessment to be prepared, given the very significant adverse environmental effects of the light towers.

RPPG welcomes the support given by the City of Melbourne. After Dr Clark made a submission to the Environment Committee on 7th March 2000, Councillors voted to approach Minister Thwaites to request an environmental effects assessment be undertaken of the impact of the light towers. We have also obtained support from the Electrical Trades Union. A meeting is scheduled with the LHMWU – the Union representing the Zoo workers. The Melbourne Zoo is considering the findings of Dr Clark's study, as is the Royal Children's Hospital.

A Quotable Quote from Melbourne City Councillor Rosemary Daniel

"I too share your love of parkland and will be willing to fight for your concerns as they are mine as well ... I assure you I will be vigilant in my stance to protect our precious parkland" (Cr Stott – now Daniel – Universities Ward Councillor which includes Royal Park, in a letter to a constituent 2nd July 1998. Note Cr Daniel co-chaired the Review of the Royal Park Master Plan which legitimised the construction of the stadiums in Royal Park).

Other News

Closure of Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital

RPPG members attended the farewell to RPPH held on 25th February. It appears that one of the major modern buildings on the site will be leased following the move of mental health services from the Hospital. This removes the immediate concern that the Bracks Government will, despite assurances to the contrary, proceed with the Kennett Government's plans to build the 2006 Commonwealth Games Village on this site. Major Events Minister Pandazopoulos has given assurances that the Government is looking for an alternative location for the Games Village (possibly Docklands). RPPG has been supporting moves in the health services field to retain the RPPH and adjoining sites in public ownership. Is this a possible site for Jeff's Institute for Depression?

Committee Representation

RPPG is to be represented on:

- (1) The City of Melbourne Royal Park Master Plan Advisory Committee. Council has long delayed making decisions or any real plans for planting and maintenance regimes for the Park, despite RPPG submissions to the Environment Committee. It is to be hoped that the regeneration and revegetation of Royal Park can be a prime focus.
- (2) The State Hockey and Netball Centre Advisory Committee to the State Sports Centres Trust. This has been set up by the State Department of Sport following the passage through Parliament of the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre Amendment Bill 1999. (See attached article).

Urban Camp Hotel/Hostel Development – Funding Crisis

Construction of the Urban Camp Development has been proceeding – slowly – over the past 18 months. First, the builders were required to reconstruct “Anzac Hall” – the World War II Army Hall which, thanks to RPPG's nomination, was included on the State Heritage Register. Then they were to start on the Hotel/Hostel extension. Reconstruction of “Anzac Hall” is only partially completed and the extension not yet commenced. Trouble is – the funds have run out. The Urban Camp Co-op Pty Ltd has received in total \$1.5 million (yes million) of public monies. The funds are being administered by the City of Melbourne. Questions are being asked as to what has happened to public funds especially given \$1.145 million was provided by the former Premier and the former Sports Minister Reynolds from the Community Support (Gambling) Fund. It is particularly tragic that the homeless and penniless sleep out in the park around the site while public funds go missing. The Urban Camp Co-op has not we are told answered calls by *The Melbourne Times* and *The Melbourne Leader* both of whom published this story. Neither has there been any enquiry by the City of Melbourne.

RPPG MARCH MEETING

Members are urged to support RPPG and attend the March meeting which is to be held at **6 pm** (not 7:30 pm as usual), **Monday 27th March 2000** at the North Melbourne Library, 66 Errol Street, North Melbourne. Councillor David Risstrom, Chair of the Environment Committee, will be a guest speaker on implementing controls on light pollution in the City of Melbourne. Dr Barry Clark will speak on the environmental impact of the hockey stadium light towers.

A Quotable Quote from former Melbourne City Councillor Peter McMullin

“The top of the hill (on which the stadiums are to be sited) will not be removed to accommodate the redeveloped facilities but rather, the siting has been selected so that the structures sit behind the high point in the Park and are set in the slope to minimise visual impact.” (Former Councillor Peter McMullin in a letter to RPPG 8 October 1998). See photo on enclosed article from the North Melbourne News.