



View to West of Hospital Complex across cricket ground - 1912

Royal Park Protection Group News Bulletin - May 2002

What Future for the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital, Parkville?

On 14 April 2002, the Royal Park Protection Group hosted an Open Day at the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital in Parkville to give Melburnians what might well be their last chance to view the gracious Federation-style buildings in their parkland setting. Many were outraged that the site is certain to be engulfed by the 2006 Commonwealth Games Village or a private residential development. This is the location "preferred" - a euphemism for already chosen? - by the State Government for the Games Village.

Leading conservation architect, Nigel Lewis, addressed the afternoon forum on "*What Future for the Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital?*" He said that he hoped "that the Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital would not become another in the series of philistine demolitions of priceless sites in Melbourne" and emphasised that the whole site should be preserved for reuse as it stands. Costs are low for recycling such buildings for institutional purposes. The audience was reminded that the Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital is of extraordinary historic value as the first hospital established to care for the mentally ill, not as a prison for the insane. The first "shell-shocked" soldiers evacuated from Gallipoli were brought here for treatment.

Others speakers included Professor Patrick Mc Gorry, Director, Mental Health Services for Kids and Youth, who pointed out that, while the era of large, isolated mental health institutions is at an end and services have been de-institutionalised, there is a lack of mental health training and education facilities. The former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital could help fill this need. The site could be opened up for a range of educational services, and the public invited in so helping reverse the stigma that mental illness has had in the past.

Hundreds attended the forum and hundreds more toured the grounds. Attendees at the forum soon let it be known that they had not come to hear what they were about to lose but to organise to fight for retention of the Hospital. The following resolution was carried unanimously for communication to the Bracks Government: '*This meeting supports reintegration of parkland surrounding the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital into Royal Park and the restoration of significant Hospital buildings for future community use and/or mental health services and research.*' This has been communicated to Government Ministers and ALP Members of Parliament.

The Royal Park Protection Group continues the campaign to have an appropriate location found for the 2006 Commonwealth Games Village and to oppose its location in Parkville. We are working with mental health professionals, architects, unions and community members to develop proposals for the future use of the site.

Quotable quote: "As I mentioned in the house, I have continued to meet with members of the Royal Park Protection Group. I will continue to meet with them, as I have, and I look forward to meeting with them. I have not misled the house because, as I mentioned on that occasion, I am happy to meet with those groups and I am happy to have met with them. Further, I am happy to continue meeting with them... I have said I have met with them and I have continued to meet with them. I have spoken to them informally and formally and even on talkback radio. I have no problem with continuing to meet with this group and using consultative processes to ensure that it has input into wherever the Commonwealth Games village might be." Commonwealth Games Minister Madden 24 April 2002

Action on Games Village

Selection "Process" for Games Village

In 1998 Ron Walker Chair of the then Commonwealth Games Bid Committee selected the 'Parkville site' for the Games Village. This remains the Government's "preferred site". Last year the Government called for submissions by developers, allowing that they could nominate a site other than the "Parkville site". There are now four developers or consortiums left in the competition, as far as we understand. Two have put in bids for the Docklands and the Jolimont Railyards respectively and the other two have submitted for the "Parkville site" only.

There is to be a "shortlist" drawn up for two developers to be announced, as far as we know, by the end of April.

The former Minister of Major Projects John Pandazopoulos stated last year that the choice of the Village locations would depend on cost. Obviously the "Parkville site" has to be preferred as the public land and buildings come free. This tortuous, labyrinthine process has been hard to follow. So much for open, consultative Government!

The only significant input made by the community as far as we can tell was a submission made by the RPPG and the Parkville Association to the Director of Major Projects and staff on the basis for assessing the 2006 Games Village proposals. This included a critical analysis of the so-called selection process for the Games Village and the lack of probity. We were not permitted to make a submission direct to the selection committee.

Gazettal of the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital site as a Development and Construction Site

This ominous notice appeared in the Government gazette of 4 April 2002 and gives grounds for concern that the Government is moving to prepare the site either for the Commonwealth Games Village or for a residential development. Tenants have been given notice to move out. Major Projects Victoria has stated that gazettal of the former Royal Park Hospital was necessary to manage the site! RPPG has sought legal advice.

Failure by the Government to Consult the Community over the Games Village

The Government has held no community consultation over the Games Village design, criteria for selection or location despite constant representations and submissions. In October 2001 Minister Madden now Minister for the Commonwealth Games gave assurances to Parliament that the Government would consult the community and the City of Melbourne on the design and location of the 2006 Commonwealth Games Village. On 21 March 2002 he said that he had consulted the RPPG. Not so, not on the Games Village (only on the Commonwealth Games Arrangements Bill 2001 on 18 September 2001 and the Royal Park hockey and netball stadium lights on 27 February 2001) He subsequently protested in Parliament on 25 April 2002 that he had indeed consulted RPPG (see the quotable quote). A meeting has now been arranged for 3 May 2002.

Involvement of Unions in implementing Green Games 2006

As the Government had failed to include ecologically sustainable development (ESD) benchmarks in legislation for the Commonwealth Games 2006, RPPG approached the unions. As a result RPPG and a representative of the CFMEU were "commissioned" by Trades Hall last December to form a working party to draw up a package of resolutions on union involvement in Green Games for 2006. Trades Hall Council Executive with Building Industry Group backing passed a resolution on 1 March 2002 advocating that the Government locate the Village at Docklands or Jolimont Railyards, that 30% of the Village be allocated to "welfare housing" and that the Village be constructed according to world's best practice environmental guidelines. RPPG is continuing to meet with unions to put through the *whole* package, which includes opposition to the Games Village location in Parkville as being incompatible with Green Games.

What's On?

Meet Games Minister Madden

Since the Minister has said he welcomes meeting the Royal Park Protection Group (does that mean *all* of us?) we have decided to meet at 12 noon to 1 pm (approx) Friday 3 May 2002 outside the Minister's Office at 55 Collins Street in the forecourt, ground level. Be there to tell the Minister (or at least to have it conveyed to him) Royal Park is No Place for a Village!

Revegetating Royal Park

Meet us on Sunday 19 May 9:30 pm to see the maintenance trials in the Australian Native Garden, corner of Gatehouse Street and Royal Parade, Parkville. The City of Melbourne has radical trials taking place to see how Royal Park can be maintained as a "wild" indigenous urban park. For instance native grasses are being allowed to grow around trees not closely mown. Guides and written explanations are provided.

RPPG Members' meetings

Regular members' meetings are held on the last Monday of each month at 7:30 pm at the North Melbourne Library, Errol Street, North Melbourne. Contact Julianne on 9818414 or 0408022408 to include agenda. A special meeting on the Games Village is being held Monday 29 April 2002.