



*Ruined Royal Park Hospital Heritage Precinct - Mortuary/Pathology block being "redeveloped" for Games athletes' accommodation.  
Phot by Julianne Bell, April 2005*

## ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP INC.

### NEWS BULLETIN JUNE 2005

#### ROYAL PARK LAND GRAB WITH EXPANSION OF GAMES VILLAGE

This bulletin contains an account of highlights of the past action-packed six months. The "Games Village" dominates the news. Most people realise the 2006 Commonwealth "Games Village" is located on the 20-hectare site of the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital in Parkville. It is a private property development in disguise. The inappropriately named "*Parkville Gardens*", being built by Australand and the Citta Property Group, is a high-density, concrete, wall-to-wall conurbation, which will be used to accommodate most of the 6,000 athletes and officials during the March 2006 Games. (There is some doubt, however, whether the officials will now stay at the "Village" – many must be having second thoughts about the overcrowded accommodation on offer.) Only 200 or so permanent houses and units out of the total 1,000 dwellings are being built for occupation during the Games. The shortfall in accommodation will be solved, it is claimed by Games Minister Madden, by provision of 115 portable, corrugated iron, self-contained, so-called "cottages" to be located on the expanded site. A perimeter security fence of 3 metres in height with security cameras and lights will be erected to enclose the whole expanded "Village" site. A local wit has pointed out that these detention centre type features are intended to keep overseas athletes in the "Village" (and so prevent defections) rather than intruders out. The "Village" construction is running behind schedule.

In February 2005, in order to "ease the squeeze" in the overcrowded "Village" the State Government decided to occupy the neighbouring Reggio-Calabria Club and the adjacent soccer field for location of portable offices and for staff carparking. In addition the Village is to expand further into the grounds of the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria and occupy the road reserve outside the Juvenile Justice Centre and CSL in Oak Street. (A section of Oak Street between Park and Manningham Streets is to be closed.) It was then discovered that, contrary to previous promises made by Games Minister Madden that he would "never, ever" authorise alienation of Royal Park for the Games, the State Government had decided to take 7 hectares of west Royal Park (the Ross Straw Field and the newly created "Wetlands") for a "break out area" for the athletes. The truth is that open space on the "Village" site had been reduced from 5 hectares to 1.8 hectares and so there are no exercise areas for the 4,500 athletes. The one sports field on the site has been shrunk to become the "Village Green" and, as mentioned above, the adjacent soccer field taken over for portable offices. This decision was inadvertently leaked at a meeting of the Games Village Community Liaison Committee (a token consultative committee) on 2 February 2005 and later confirmed at a briefing held specifically for RPPG on 14 February by the Office of Commonwealth Games Coordination, Melbourne 2006 and VIC Police on "Games Village Plans for Games Mode". No actual plans are yet available.

**Please renew your RPPG membership to help us defend and protect Royal Park (See attached form.)**

**Contact Julianne on 98184114 or jbell5@bigpond.com Website: [www.royalparkprotect.org.au](http://www.royalparkprotect.org.au)**

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## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS JANUARY TO JUNE 2005

**Guarantees Sought for Restoration of Royal Park after the Games:** The associated infrastructure – the perimeter security fence, security lights, security cameras and road barriers – could be installed as early as January 2006 and the area of Royal Park west – the Ross Straw Field and Wetlands “locked down”. Hence all park users including sports groups will be excluded from the Park possibly for six months. On 14 April 2005 RPPG spoke at the City of Melbourne Planning and Environment Committee to urge Councillors to obtain guarantees from the State Government that the “Village” perimeter security fence and allied infrastructure works be dismantled and removed from Royal Park immediately after the Games and that the State Government undertake restoration. The fear is that, as the sunset clause of the Games legislation is 2011, that Royal Park could remain fenced off and left as sports grounds for the “Parkville Gardens”. In fact there is some danger it could be permanent.

**Review by Auditor General of Victoria of the Tenders and Contracts of the Games Village:** In February RPPG made a submission to the Auditor General of Victoria on the contracts for the 2006 Games Village. Our legal advisor had prepared the memorandum analysing the contracts. This showed that they unduly favour the developer over the State Government. (For starters the Government has given the 20 hectares “Village” land – conservatively valued at \$250 million – to the developer.) At the end of March RPPG sent a second submission to the Auditor General commenting on the expansion of the Games Village into Royal Park and surrounding areas (including the Reggio Calabria Club and soccer field, the Mental Health Research Institute of Victoria and Oak Street between Park and Manningham Streets) and asking what additional contracts or variation to existing contracts are to be made. On 2 June RPPG representatives plus our legal adviser met the AG team undertaking the review and raised important issues to us such as the alienation of parkland for the “Village.”

**Submission on Security of Games Village:** In late March 2005 RPPG’s representative made a submission to the Premier with a copy to the Auditor General Victoria on the security of the Games Village. The Victoria Police’s security arrangements were seen to be completely inadequate (As mentioned above, RPPG members went to a police briefing and so realise the implications for inadequate security cover of the “Village”.) It should be noted that, since January 2003, RPPG has pointed out in correspondence with Government that the Royal Park site is a completely unsuitable location for a Games Village – one reason being that it is difficult if not impossible to secure.

**Destruction of the Royal Park Hospital Heritage Precinct:** The above photo shows the Mortuary Pathology block of the former Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital, which has been partially wrecked by demolition of the western annexes. Further damage is likely to be inflicted on the building as construction is being fast tracked for accommodation for athletes. The restoration of these buildings was to have been undertaken after the Games, which would have allowed more care to be taken. RPPG had proposed that these buildings be retained as an historic interpretive centre on the Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital dedicated to John Cade. After the Games it will be used as a child-care centre, which we find inappropriate.

**Resumption of Operation of the Royal Park Master Plan Implementation Advisory Committee:** This City of Melbourne Committee had not met for 9 months and resumed meeting on 9 March but at present is poorly serviced. At the last meeting on 18 May the Royal Children’s Hospital’s presentation on the plans for redevelopment was particularly alarming as staff indicated that the RCH would be taking over a section of Royal Park over the construction phase, which could last until 2008, and also indicated that there were plans to extend the RCH “footprint” into Royal Park. Also of concern was the Dog Walkers’ Group proposal for installation of a dog paddling pool and dog drinking fountains in Royal Park.

**No Funds for Continuing Royal Park Master Plan Projects for Revegetation and Landscaping:** The City of Melbourne appears to be a milch cow for the State Government as Council funds are being diverted into the State’s coffers for the construction of the new Convention Centre and the Commonwealth Games. There are no funds at present for continuing Royal Park revegetation and landscaping projects. RPPG hopes to make a presentation at the special meeting of the Finance and Corporate Performance Committee at 4 pm Thursday 16 June 2005 at the Town Hall requesting funds for the Royal Park projects.

**Commonwealth Games Arrangements (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill:** This Bill, which provides a carte blanche for environmental vandalism of our urban parks and heritage places over the Games plus a suspension of civil rights was rushed through the Lower House on 19 May. It has been referred to the Upper House where it might be debated any day from 14 June onwards in the present sitting of Parliament. RPPG has plans to attend the public gallery to hear the debate. Let Parliament know we are concerned over this infamous piece of legislation. We will keep members posted on our website.

*Quote for the day: “Your parks are your breathing spaces. Guard them, cherish them. Parkland is valuable and greedy eyes see the money in it. So you must always be on the alert. Hang onto your breathing spaces in this developing and already over congested city. Protect your parks from the pressure of political concrete”.*

*Patrick White 1972 Rally at Centennial Park, Sydney.*