



Melbourne "The most liveable city" Cartoon by Ron Tanberg (The Age)\*

## ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP INC.

### NEWS BULLETIN – DECEMBER 2011

#### Royal Park Again Threatened by State Government Plans for East West Road Tunnel/Tollway

On 17 November 2011 the Victorian Coalition Government released its "2011 Infrastructure Australia Priority List" including, as its centre piece, the **East West project** which Premier Baillieu categorised as "*a once in a generation project that would transform the way people move around Melbourne in a way not seen since CityLink and the City Rail Loop were constructed.*" This came as no surprise as we had heard Sir Rod Eddington spruiking revival of his 2008 plans for the East West Link on ABC Radio and discovered that, on the day before the big announcement, he had been closeted with the Premier. This time around, however, Sir Rod is suggesting that the EW Link would be built under a Public Private Partnership (PPP) agreement and it would be tolled.

This monster construction project, promoted originally by Sir Rod Eddington as a road freight tunnel bypass from the Port to the Eastern Freeway/EastLink, would have - had it proceeded - destroyed Royal Park, Holland and Travancore Parks and wiped out inner suburban heritage streetscapes and residential neighbourhoods in its path, namely: in Collingwood, Fitzroy, Carlton, Parkville, North and West Melbourne, Flemington, Travancore and Kensington.

The year 2008 saw a concerted community campaign with numbers of large rallies led by the RPPG and the Yarra Campaign against the Tunnel (YCAT) together with Public Transport Users Association (PTUA) and dozens of other groups across the inner city and western suburbs, many of whom joined forces under the aegis of the Coalition of Transport Action Groups (CTAG). The call was for "*No More Freeways*" and for funding of public transport, including extension of rail lines such as the Doncaster Rail Link. The Brumby Government appeared to heed public outrage and the EW Link was deleted from the Victorian Transport Plan, officially launched in December 2008.

The 2003 Northern Central City Corridor Study, on which public transport guru Dr Paul Mees represented RPPG, came to the conclusion, unpalatable to the then Bracks Government, that only 17 % of traffic off the Eastern Freeway was headed east-west. Sir Rod apparently now postulates that east-west traffic will increase to 40%. In his Age article of 28 November 2011 "*Why the east-west tunnel is a stinker*" esteemed financial writer Kenneth Davidson points out that "*For the east-west link alone – which has now become a Baillieu government priority – the benefit-cost ratio is 0.5, according to the traditional measure, and 0.7, according to Eddington.*" We understand this means that every \$1 of investment is required for every 50c of benefits. Hence the project lacks economic credibility as well as constituting environmental vandalism on a vast scale and contributing to Victoria's already excessive carbon emissions. See <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/why-the-eastwest-road-tunnel-is-a-stinker-20111127-1o19f.html>

RPPG welcomes the position taken by the Federal Member for Melbourne, Adam Bandt, in opposing the EW Link and in vowing to stop Commonwealth money going towards "*a private road tunnel through the middle of Melbourne*". Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc. (PPL VIC) is planning to send a deputation early in the New Year to meet Federal Infrastructure Minister Albanese with the message from the community that the Commonwealth Government should not fund the EW Link but look instead to funding public transport projects such as the Doncaster Rail Link.

## More News from the Front

### Stage 2 Redevelopment of the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH)

**Funding:** Kenneth Davidson, referred to above, is a trenchant critic of the PPP agreement made by the State Government over the redevelopment of the RCH. Kenneth Davidson spoke at the RPPG AGM on 10 November 2011 at Flemington Community Centre. His topic was: *"How Public Private Partnerships can make you sick as well as poor and can destroy your parks and marine environment - with specific reference to the Royal Children's Hospital, the Southern Cross Station and the Wonthaggi Desalination Plant."* See the following link which is on our website: <http://www.royalparkprotect.org.au/Events/Kenneth%20Davidson%20Speech%20Nov%202011.pdf>

**Failure of State Government to Consult Community:** In July and October this year, following requests made by RPPG and PPL VIC, the RCH held information sessions on Stage 2 RCH development of the RCH. There was a good attendance by our members. On 24 August 2011 community representatives met Health Minister David Davis concerning Stage 2 of the RCH development. We advocated for a Community Reference Group made up of representatives from RPPG, the Parkville Association, the North and West Melbourne Association, PPL VIC, the RCH project officer, Department of Health project officer and City of Melbourne representatives. The issues to be covered would be demolition of old hospital buildings and return to parkland; the remediation and replanting of the "returned parkland" to accord with the rest of Royal Park; traffic management; licensing the hotel which could impact on the local community; and whether a new helipad is to be constructed in Royal Park. At the October information meeting, we were disappointed to learn that the City of Melbourne (CoM) has been given the responsibility for restoration of "returned parkland" and will employ a commercial "community engagement consultant" to determine who is to be consulted. It is alarming that the community will possibly have no part in the promised restoration of "returned parkland" if/when the old buildings are demolished. We will continue to press for involvement.

**Foyer with Meerkat Display** – In August PPL VIC and community representatives made formal objections to the Minister for Agriculture and Food Security to granting a licence for a permanent display of meerkats at the RCH to entertain outpatients and visitors. A special kitchen has been built for the meerkats in addition to the big enclosure and Zoo staff members are in daily attendance. We would have preferred that this large area be returned to parkland.

### Urban Forest Strategy City of Melbourne (CoM)

At the end of November the CoM held an "Eco-City Forum" on the municipality's "Urban Forest Strategy". The Council advised that out of the 60,000 trees in the municipality 44% are assessed as having only "a life expectancy" of between 10 to 20 years. That's 26,400 trees. It is apparently suggested that trees will be removed in advance of their failing. We are particularly concerned that avenues will be removed and no attempt made to retain healthy trees and introduce interstitial plantings in the gaps. Fortunately there are few trees in Royal Park designated as having a limited life expectancy. We propose to ask CoM arborists to advise us of trees proposed for the chop and will request a site inspection, as used to be the procedure in past years. If you see any failing trees or vegetation in Royal Park please advise Paul Leitinger, RPPG Convenor, on Mobile: 0401992000 or Julianne Bell, RPPG Committee member, on Mobile 0408022408.

## Coming Events

### Royal Park Protection Group Inc - Next Meeting:

**Time:** 10:30 am

**Date:** Saturday 4 February 2012. (This year, apart from April, we plan to meet on the first Saturday of each month.)

**Venue:** Walmsley House, Australian Native Garden, Royal Park corner Gatehouse Street and Royal Parade, Parkville.

**Transport:** Tram 19 up Elizabeth Street to Royal Parade. Get off at Gatehouse Street. Train to Flinders Street then tram as above. Parking is in Gatehouse St

**Involvement needed:** We need help from members to assist the new Committee for 2012 given there are some likely battles ahead. Everyone is welcome.

**Contact:** RPPG Secretary: Anne Phefley Mobile: 0412 279 156. Also see website: [www.royalparkprotect.org.au](http://www.royalparkprotect.org.au)

### Protectors of Public Lands Victoria Inc. – 2011 AGM Saturday 28 January 2012

**Time:** 2 pm **Date:** Saturday 28 January 2012 (The 2011 AGM had to be deferred til 2012.)

**Venue:** Flemington Community Centre, Debneys Park, Mt Alexander Road Flemington.

**Speaker:** Kelvin Thomson MHR, Federal Member of Parliament, on the theme of massive migration levels to Victoria and their impact on our environment and public open space.

**Contact:** Julianne Bell Mobile: 0408022408

\*We thank Ron Tanberg for his cartoon of Melbourne, once the ranked as the world's most liveable city!

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