

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ROYAL PARK PROTECTION GROUP (RPPG) GIVEN AT THE AGM ON 10 August 2019

Over the last year, RPPG has been involved in a number of issues as outlined below:

Issues over the past year included:

- **Development issues**

- **Star gazing** – the planned observation of Mars by the Astronomical Society on 29 July was cancelled due to rain and cloud cover – this was the closest Mars will be until 2033.
- **RCH Helipad** – Demolition is not planned. We will be writing to CoM to put on record that the original agreement by the parties was for this to be removed.
- **Flemington Rd Billabong** - this was drained and upgraded and officially opened in December. The celebration was hosted in conjunction with FofRP. It was really hot but it was good to see many in attendance. North Park tennis club kindly let us use their clubhouse for refreshments.
- **Wetlands Pollution** – The Wetlands were drained and replanted in February. Unfortunately the windmills to deter the birds failed so netting had to be introduced. Note - Melbourne Water confirmed clean up occurs monthly on the edges and on water on an as needed basis. They were happy for us to advise them if/when litter is excessive and needs further input.
- **Gardens for Wildlife Pilot Program (CoM)** – there was a volunteer meet and greet invitation in March for this program that is trying to increase the native plantings in private gardens of all sizes including balconies. This is aimed at supporting insects, birds and wildlife in general in the city. Pilot program is hoping to lead to the establishment of a local group similar to others across Melbourne. Anne Phefley is taking part in the pilot program.
- **Parkville Gardens** – Amd C281 saga! Representations to Ministers and others undertaken by one of our committee members with other Parkville Gardens residents concerned about this egregious request for more profit for the developer at community expense. To start with the Minister allowed the removal of the stream bed feeding the ponds to allow the developer more land! The other main issue of contention is that it appears to us that the Minister has not properly considered the Heritage Aspects of the development as required by the Legislation.
- **Zoo Carparking** – nothing has progressed on this matter. Discussions have focussed on refuting projected growth figures and the promotion of public transport. Actuals were made available in March and showed a much reduced growth in numbers to the projected figures.
- **SNHC** – attended meeting 23rd October at SNHC for the second presentation on the redevelopment of the site. The objective is to increase the number of netball courts as well as add a half size hockey field all within the current footprint. Issues are – bulk; lighting; parking; road widening?; prioritise PT;...
- **Remnant Protection** – misuse of the remnant area has seen damage occurring to plants and disturbance of the birdlife in the area with dogs, bicycles and joggers regularly entering the area. This is still occurring. Signs are still to be erected to advise people to respect the area and tread lightly if they must use it!
- **CoM Transport Study** - This is looking at access, use of space and severance and we understand was initiated by the Zoo and Sports Clubs as they are pushing for more parking. This covers roads, public transport, bike paths and parking in the park. The aim of the study is to “reduce severance; release space and increase access; increase the coherence of the Park especially the Australian landscape”. We are concerned that passive users seem to have been missed in the assessment which may skew the results. The CoM presentation may be accessed on the website. The study was planned to be completed by July 2018 but has still not been published as of July 2019!! We understand that it is now imminent.
- **Rabbits** in the park. Baiting occurred but was stopped just before Easter. The situation will be monitored with the program likely to be restarted.
- A new Master Plan for the park appears to be on the Council Agenda. We will keep you informed.
- The understorey plantings trial, marked by plots throughout the Park with square in-ground coloured pegs was a failure, due to the very dry period that occurred post plantings, with little or no seed germination. It has been decided to monitor the pegged plots and the nearby areas for 12 months as the recent rains may

result in seed germination. We are asked to note any growth in and ‘down run-off’ areas of the plots and report to Chris.

- **Meetings** – a General Meeting was held on

- October 2018 which had a group of RMIT Landscape design students displaying and talking about their artwork plus a presentation from Sue Scarf about developing an “app” to provide people with a guide to the park. Their project was based on the description by Master Plan architect Ron Jones that Royal Park is “a place where the earth swells, the dome of the sky soars overhead and the horizon beckons”. Unfortunately the planned presentation from Sue Scarf about developing an “app” to provide people with a guide to the park did not take place. However those in attendance held a workshop to define the requirements. There was also discussion of a new emblem for the group.

- March 2019 with Jim Szonyi, Park Ranger who spoke about the Junior Ranger program and other activities in the park. He brought his amazing trailer to illustrate his talk

- **Community Involvement:**

- Short working bees are now occurring every third Wednesday of the month with park officer Chris Nicholson and Friends of Royal Park. We meet at Walmsley House at 10am for a 2 hour session. Everyone is welcome to attend

- RPPG was involved in:

- In September,

- We helped to supervise and advise re-planting with students from Trinity College, University of Melbourne.

- We hosted a Landcare planting near the Burke and Wills memorial in conjunction with FofRP.

- We hosted RMIT students displaying their projects at Flemington Market

- In October

- we took part in the Waterbug Bioblitz

- helped with a group of German students from UHS doing some planting in the Native Garden.

- In May

- we assisted with a Rotary sponsored planting with staff from Melbourne University. We worked in the area near the corner of The Avenue and MacArthur Rd. We gave participants a card and our brochure as a memento.

- In June

- We supported City of Melbourne staff on Saturday June 1st at a planting behind the Children’s hospital around the habitat trees.

- Monthly stalls at the Flemington Farmers Market. Great opportunity to talk about the park and sell some cards. Card sales support the printing of our brochure.

- We have contacted the City of Melbourne suggesting how the description of Royal Park under “Find a Park” might be made more accurate and attractive, Not very hopeful that we will be successful.

- We would also encourage members to report hazards/suspicious behaviour to Council. We had instances of fireworks being let off prior to Christmas – a fire hazard!

- **Jean Leiting** b23/12/27 – d7/9/19 – Jean was one of the founding members and was vigorous in manning the barricades to try and stop many of the inappropriate developments in the park.

- **Enid Hookey** died recently. whilst not a member Enid was a great supporter of the Park and well known to many members.

Website/Facebook: We hope that this has been of use to people as a repository of information on the park as well as highlighting activities. If you have any suggestions for improvements please let us know.

Royal Park Cards

We wish to thank our Committee member Margaret Jungwirth for all the effort put in to prepare cards which have been a great hit with the community at large. Thank you to Lynne Oliver and Mary Kamat for helping with the market stall.

We would like to acknowledge Ying-Lan Dann from RMIT University School of architecture and design for making Royal Park the focus of students project thus increasing awareness of the park.

We would also like to give a special thankyou to Anne Phefley, our Secretary for all the work she does in organising us, the events, the catering and just about everything else!

I would like to end by thanking all our RPPG members, friends and allies for assisting over the years with all the hard work involved in rallies, protests, blockades, publicity stunts, attending meetings and keeping the Government and Council under constant surveillance . As usual I will end with a well known quote from Patrick White at a 1972 Rally, Centennial Park, Sydney.

"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."

Paul Leitinger Convenor Royal Park Protection Group August 2019