

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations

Melbourne—Monday, 22 March 2021

(via videoconference)

MEMBERS

Ms Sarah Connolly—Chair

Mr David Morris—Deputy Chair

Mr Will Fowles

Ms Danielle Green

Mr Paul Hamer

Mr Tim McCurdy

Mr Tim Smith

WITNESSES

Mr David Callow, Director, Parks and City Greening, and

Ms Fiona Finlayson, Team Leader, Open Space Planning, City of Melbourne.

The CHAIR: I advise that the sessions today are being broadcast live on the Parliament's website. Rebroadcast of the hearing is only permitted in accordance with Legislative Assembly Standing order 234.

Thank you to everyone for joining us today at this public hearing for the Inquiry into Environmental Infrastructure for Growing Populations. On behalf of the committee, I acknowledge the traditional Aboriginal owners of this land and we pay our respects to them, their culture, their elders past, present and future and elders from other communities who may be joining us here today. I also extend a very warm welcome to any members of the public and the media who are watching us here today. This is one of several public hearings that the Environment and Planning Committee will be conducting to inform itself about the issues relevant to the inquiry.

Before we begin I would like to point out that all evidence taken today will be recorded by Hansard and is protected by parliamentary privilege. What this means is that you can speak freely without fear of legal action in relation to the evidence that you give here today. However, it is very important to remember that parliamentary privilege does not apply to comments made outside the hearing, even if you are restating what you said during this hearing. You will receive a draft transcript of your evidence in the next week or so to check and approve. Corrected transcripts are published on the committee's website and may be quoted from in our final report.

David and Fiona, thank you so much for taking the time to meet with the committee today. I just remind members and witnesses to mute their microphones when not speaking to minimise the interference. Before you begin, David and Fiona, I would really like to start by introducing the committee. My name is Sarah Connolly. I am the Chair of this committee and also lucky enough to be the Member for Tarneit.

Mr MORRIS: I am David Morris. I am the Deputy Chair of the committee and, amongst other things, the Member for Mornington.

Mr FOWLES: I am Will Fowles. I have no rank in this committee or anywhere else for that matter, and I am the Member for Burwood, which was recently identified as the most suburban suburb in Australia.

The CHAIR: That is just so interesting, Will. I cannot not smile at that. Fiona and David, I thought a really great way to start is by you guys introducing yourselves. If you have an opening statement prepared or presentation—if you do not have a presentation prepared, that is completely fine—we would love to hear from you first for perhaps 5 and no more than 10 to 15 minutes and then I know the committee has some questions they really want to ask you. So over to you.

Mr CALLOW: Thanks, Sarah. Thank you on behalf of Fiona and me for the opportunity to participate in the hearing. To begin, I would also like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land that we sit on, the Bunurong, Boon Wurrung and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung peoples of the eastern Kulin nation and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging. We are committed at the City of Melbourne to our reconciliation journey because at its heart reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people for the benefit of all Victorians.

I am David Callow and joining me is Fiona Finlayson, who is the Team Leader of Open Space Planning here at the City of Melbourne. I am the Director, Parks and City Greening. We will be sharing a short presentation today in a moment and hopefully we can share a screen from our end.

Our submission on behalf of the City of Melbourne is from management. It is not endorsed by council. We are from Parks and City Greening, Fiona and I, but we represent many areas of council that have contributed to our submission to the hearing. We might jump into our short presentation now. It really is just to outline some of the key points from our submission. As I said before, Fiona and I will share the presentation and I will hand over to Fiona about halfway through.

Visual presentation.

Mr CALLOW: Just in terms of introductions, I have covered off that. What we are going to be presenting today is really three key sections. Firstly, what is the context for the City of Melbourne? What are some of the assets in terms of the environmental infrastructure and some of the key challenges that we see into the future? Secondly, what is the City of Melbourne doing in this space in terms of supporting environmental infrastructure, particularly on public land? What are the strategies, policies and initiatives that we have in place? Thirdly, then moving to the 13 recommendations that we had in our submission, we will be theming those into three key areas, and Fiona will be speaking to those.

To start with the first part of the context for the City of Melbourne, one of our key environmental assets is the open space network within the City of Melbourne. It has been variously described as the ‘emerald necklace’, a network of parks—very large parks—that were laid out in the 19th century. Many of these parks are heritage listed and have state, national and even global significance in terms of the Carlton Gardens and the World Heritage status there. Many of these large parks you would be with familiar with: Fitzroy Gardens, Royal Park and Domain Parklands. You can see the images there on the left: the grasslands circle within Royal Park, which is the really unique native landscape that looks towards the city. The lower left-hand image there is of the Yarra River and the Domain Parklands in the foreground. We have one of our most recent parks, which is Birrarung Marr, there in the centre of the screen. You can see there are some events happening at Birrarung Marr in terms of marquees and a Ferris wheel and so forth.

Our capital city parks: we are a capital city environment, and our parks have brought visitation from a far wider catchment than just our local community. So our parks essentially belong to the whole state. They support a range of activities, as you can see in the image there—events—and they have many millions of visitors every year. We also have significant other environmental infrastructure that sits alongside our open space network. Trees, other green infrastructure that sits in the city, can also play a significant role in terms of our response to climate change in terms of bringing summer peak temperatures down, managing stormwater and supporting what is a healthy city ecology.

One of the key challenges for the City of Melbourne is our status as a renewal area and the intense development activity that has been happening in a pre-COVID sense. The image here is from our development activity model. It shows the central city area within the City of Melbourne. You can see Docklands Stadium there in the centre of the screen, Fishermans Bend is out to the left and the CBD is on the right of the screen there. This website—it is the City of Melbourne website—shows development activity that is happening in the city. You can see the blue buildings shown there where there are applications in for permits; green is where these permits have been approved; and those yellow buildings are those sites that are under construction. But this was really an unprecedented boom in recent years to a pre-COVID sense. This growth is placing significant pressure on our existing parks to meet our community needs. Many of these developments are high-rise-type residential developments. That means we are squeezing many, many people in, park usage is up, and particularly over the last year we have seen different patterns of activity in terms of the way that our parks were used during the lockdown periods.

Our current public open space contribution scheme, whether it be land or cash that developers are required to contribute, does not meet the needs for the range of open space that we have seen to offset the amount of development that is happening in the City of Melbourne. When I say a ‘range of open space’ needs, we are talking about active recreation needs, passive recreation needs, and water-sensitive urban design within landscapes. Essentially the property prices within Melbourne outstrip the cash we receive in terms of acquiring new land for public open space. We need large open space in addition to small open spaces, and what we are often seeing are very small open spaces that come about as a result of development. The outcome of that inevitably is that we will see that our public open space that is available for residents will decrease over time as our contribution scheme does not actually meet the demand that exists there.

One of the other key challenges—and this is related to development—is the population growth that we are seeing in the City of Melbourne. The chart you are seeing here on the left is our population figures to 2020. There is a forecast that extends well beyond that, but we are recalibrating that at the moment in terms of the pre-COVID projections, so we limited it in terms of 2020, but you can see the trajectory here that is shown in terms of population growth. We had nearly a million people on a typical pre-COVID day; on a workday there were a million people in the City of Melbourne. About 150 000 or nearly 200 000 of those were residents, the remaining being visitors and workers that came into the city. On the right-hand side of the screen here you will see an image from our *Open Space Strategy* that was published in 2012. If I draw your attention to the overall population there, the people essentially that are in red, you will see our projection for 2026 was nearly 165 000

residents. We reached that number in terms of residents within the City of Melbourne back in 2018; eight years ahead of the predictions we were already hitting the numbers that were outlined in our *Open Space Strategy*. So we are really behind the eight ball here in terms of meeting open space needs for a growing population.

One of the other key factors here is about access to quality open space, and that is critical for the wellbeing of residents into the future. When we say 'quality open space', we are talking about open space that is not compromised by a shadow from nearby buildings, that provides a range of recreational opportunities, whether it is active recreation or whether it is passive recreation, and that also supports the ecology and cooling of the city through healthy vegetation. Healthy vegetation requires good soil moisture, requires light and requires generous growing environments, and we know that healthy vegetation is essential for offsetting the urban heat island and some of those heatwave events that Melburnians experience in summer.

What is the City of Melbourne doing in this space? The City of Melbourne has a range of strategies essentially to enhance, manage and protect open space and to support the greening of our city. You can see the *Urban Forest Strategy* there and the *Nature in the City Strategy*, which is all about the ecology of our city. On the far left there we have got our 'Green Our City' strategic action plan, which pushes into the private realms and looks at a planning scheme amendment for sustainable buildings—looks at greening rooftops and so forth. And on the far right we have our *Open Space Strategy*, which was published in 2012, which I have mentioned already. This is about greening our city and planning for the future in terms of open space but also providing climate-adapted and water-sensitive landscapes and streetscapes.

Whilst the City of Melbourne is actively working within the public realm, we only manage somewhere between a quarter and one-third of the total land within the City of Melbourne, and most of that land is actually in streetscapes. Of the 27 per cent of land that we manage, 70 per cent of that in our road reserves and 30 per cent of that is within open space, so we are limited in terms of the influence we have across the entire municipality. What this means is that collective effort is key here. Collaboration, cooperation and cross-jurisdictional approaches are required for us to really secure the environmental infrastructure that is required for our growing population and developing the city into the future.

Just changing gears for you now, I am going to hand over to Fiona, who is going to take us through the key recommendations from the City of Melbourne in terms of environmental infrastructure into the future. Over to you, Fiona.

Ms FINLAYSON: Thanks, Dave. As David mentioned, we have grouped our recommendations into three key themes, the first of which is land. Of all the challenges we are currently facing in the provision of environmental infrastructure, securing adequately sized land parcels is the one we would like to draw your attention to first. The image on the right there is an extract from *Plan Melbourne*, the state planning policy, and from this you can see the designated major urban renewal areas in and around the City of Melbourne, as well as other growth areas that are designated. In particular Arden, Macauley and Fishermans Bend are the priority renewal areas, but other precincts that are hosting and will host additional urban renewal are Southbank, Docklands, E-Gate and Dynon, in addition to the national employment and innovation clusters of Parkville and Fishermans Bend. These precincts will bring large populations of residents and workers, but they are also the only real opportunities in the municipality to secure the large land parcels that we need to provide the mix of sporting, recreation, play, biodiversity, integrated water management and unstructured open space areas that we know are required to support healthy communities and a healthy environment. Much of the land in these areas is owned or controlled by the state government at this stage. We have honed in on the requirements for municipal open space, as it is the most under-serviced in the renewal areas at the moment as we see it. It is going to be the biggest challenge for us to deliver and the one where we do require the support and partnership of the state government.

This extract is from the *Open Space Strategy* from 2012, and the key areas are the square blue boxes which designate areas for potential municipal open space, which in the *Open Space Strategy* is defined as space that will provide sporting fields and community infrastructure associated with sport in addition to play and passive areas. They are larger open spaces. It suggests a minimum of 10 hectares is required. That will be two football ovals, netball courts and play areas and the associated infrastructure. Ten hectares is difficult to secure just as a local government on our own, and as I mentioned, these areas are largely state owned and controlled.

We have since 2012 achieved one of the municipal open spaces that was designated in the *Open Space Strategy*, that being Ron Barassi Senior Park in Docklands—which is here at the centre of the screen. At

2.5 hectares it did not meet the size requirements that we would prefer to support really healthy recreational and sporting opportunities in that location. For those who may not be familiar with Ron Barassi Senior Park or who would like some additional context on what does 10 hectares mean, Ron Barassi Senior Park is located in Docklands under CityLink. You can see an image of it there. It is a couple of soccer pitches or an AFL oval—one or the other. It does have some supporting infrastructure around its edges, but it is quite constrained. There is not a lot of buffer zone. There is not a lot of informal opportunities for non-sport-related activities if there is sport in progress.

A 10-hectare reserve is JJ Holland Park in Kensington. So you can see there in the bottom left, that has got two ovals and a multipurpose synthetic pitch, which is an oval—cricket, soccer or whatever is required at any given time; it also has an adventure playground and a leisure centre within it. So that is what 10 hectares can provide. It is a really significant community place. It also has BMX and skate. It very well provided and it is part of the community there.

If we look at the aggregate of municipal open space we need, we have suggested 40 hectares, and that is essentially the size of Fawkner Park in South Yarra, which is a heritage park with significant sporting provision within it but also excellent passive open space opportunities, three playgrounds and wonderful character of the kind that you can really only get with well-sized open spaces.

Linked to the challenge of securing land is funding. The current systems for funding open space in new developments and renewal areas do not adequately address the substantial cost and complexity of securing land in these areas. Issues such as contamination and other pressures—services, water-sensitive integrated water management requirements, stormwater management—there are significant gaps left from these systems for local government to cover.

And David touched before on the fact that the City of Melbourne only manages between a quarter and a third of the land in the municipality, so partnerships and support of others are critical for us to be able to deliver environmental infrastructure on the land that we do not control. So to that end we have several initiatives underway or in place, including the planning scheme amendment for sustainable building design, which incorporates a proposed urban ecology policy and a planning scheme which we would like to mandate—greening on new developments, so green roofs, green walls, green facades for habitat and biodiversity, for enhanced community value of those places. We are also party to the *Living Melbourne* strategy—a metropolitan urban forest strategy—and several other such programs. So that is our introduction.

The CHAIR: Thank you. That was actually a really great presentation. A lot of the questions I had you sort of went through and touched upon. It was actually really interesting, because I think every single one of us here on the committee would have a favourite park in Melbourne that we like going to. I just sort of wanted to kick off with some questions around those partnerships that you just briefly touched on there on one of the last slides. Are they the only kinds of partnerships that you think need to be developed and worked through, and relating back to state government, do you think state government should be taking the lead in developing and deepening these types of partnerships or do you think that falls back on council and that state government is another stakeholder in that relationship? What do you want to see from us in that respect?

Mr CALLOW: I might jump in first if that is okay, and then I will hand to Fiona. I think we have provided some examples of successful partnerships or initiatives that we are involved with, so I do not think necessarily a list is limiting in that sense. Back to the emphasis of talking about partnerships, collective effort is really important in this space. We know, whether you are talking about urban forestry, urban ecology, combating the urban heat island, the local government jurisdictions are irrelevant here. We really need to be working together across the city and really across the state. That would be sort of one key point that I would like to make.

The second key point is in terms of: what is the role of state in this? If I could use *Living Melbourne* as an example, we are a signatory to that particular project. We participated right through that. It is to my knowledge—my background is in urban forestry—a unique product I do not know of any other city in the world that has taken 31 municipalities and found a strategy or an initiative that they would all sign up to in this sense. So *Living Melbourne* is a unique document, and it provides targets for regional areas in terms of urban forestry but also talks about urban ecology and initiatives across those jurisdictions.

In terms of *Living Melbourne*, I think state government has a really key role to play in terms of rolling out that program. So the team is working really hard—the team in terms of the *Living Melbourne* team—on what

implementation looks like. But implementation from my perspective will require lots of support from state government. It will require money, but it will also require ongoing strategic support. I think potentially what that looks like is data—so a lot of the decisions that are being made now around environmental infrastructure are evidence based. In *Living Melbourne* there are 31 municipalities that are probably—most of them—collecting annual canopy cover data across their municipalities. Some of those municipalities will do a joint procurement on those things. But I think the opportunity here is state government could step in and say, for argument's sake, 'Year in, year out, we will do a flyover of Melbourne, we'll collect data about environmental infrastructure that exists, we'll distribute that to municipalities and we'll work with municipalities around the targets that are set within *Living Melbourne*'. But I think state really can take a lead on the evidence base but also the continuity of that project, because we require ongoing funding for many years.

I have said a lot there. Fiona, I might hand over to you. Do you want to make some comments about partnerships?

Ms FINLAYSON: Yes, sure. I have got a key example, I guess, of an area where I think it is actually critical that the state government does take the lead, and that is looking at our *Moonee Ponds Creek Strategic Opportunities Plan*—and other waterways-related plans, but with Moonee Ponds Creek in particular we undertook a lot of planning to identify ways to improve the health of that waterway but also the recreational provision along it. We control next to none of the land along that corridor; mostly it is Melbourne Water or VicTrack or even VicRoads or CityLink, a lot of state agencies. As a local government we can do our best to try to bring those together for outcomes that I think everyone signed up for, but it is difficult for us to actually drive the kind of outcomes that are identified as being desirable. I think in terms of land development or opportunities like that, it is really critical that the state is taking a leadership role in bringing together those agencies.

The CHAIR: I think there are some really interesting ideas and feedback from you both in that respect. I just want to ask a question off the back of that. It is not a facetious question, I am just trying to understand: what do you think are the barriers at the moment and why has the state government not gone ahead and implemented some of those recommendations and suggestions and taken the lead on those sorts of partnerships? What do you think are the barriers stopping us?

Mr CALLOW: Wow! I think two things. Firstly, we need real leadership from state government in this space. I think there are parts of state government that are leading in the areas, if you look at the cooling and greening strategies for Melbourne and the metro open space strategy. So there is work that is happening there. I think there are pockets of state government that seem to be doing good work in this space, but we need more leadership in terms of saying, 'Well, how do we secure the environmental infrastructure for the future? How do we ensure that the land managers in terms of local government and other land managers are working collectively in this space?'. Secondly, I think the state needs to take the lead on funding as well. I mean, we have illustrated some of the issues that we have around municipal open space. That could be resolved with the right funding streams. The other example I used was around *Living Melbourne*. If the state is genuinely interested in securing environmental infrastructure for the future, then tree canopy cover across Melbourne should be one of the primary initiatives of its funding.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Tree canopy cover is extremely popular out in Tarneit, out my way. It is a popular topic of discussion. I am going to hand over to David.

Mr MORRIS: Thanks, Sarah, and thank you both for taking the time to talk to us this morning. You mentioned a couple of times in the presentation the issue of the open space contribution and the current arrangements for that, and in your submission you talked about an evidence-based target for open space per resident. I would be interested in your expanding on the council's perspective on that, and also, if the result of that review is a significantly increased impost on developers in terms of the contribution, is that going to play into affordability? It probably is, but the degree would be interesting. Secondly, is that a consideration for the city?

Mr CALLOW: Okay. Great question, David. The city is very focused on economic recovery right now, so the issue of affordability is key in the minds of many people. I think if we take a step back to the pre-COVID stage and say, 'Well, what are the issues we see in terms of our environmental infrastructure and open space into the future?', one of the things we really wanted to highlight in our submission is this conflict around a walkable distance to an open space. We have a couple of targets in our strategy. We talk about 300 metres and

500 metres, depending on the hierarchy, and from memory I think the state talks about a 400-metre walkable distance. What we wanted to highlight is that walkable distance is one thing. That could be to a very small or a very large open space. But the evidence base that we would like to see applied is that there is a square metres per resident applied in terms of what is provided in a precinct or within a neighbourhood. That would be the ideal outcome: you can walk within an easy distance to open space, but also, particularly where you have got high-density living—the Southbanks of this world—where you have got thousands of new residents coming in to a finite kind of amount of open space that is there, we would like to see those numbers increase based on the population growth as well. That is kind of the bit about how we would like to see things shift in terms of those two measures and that evidence base.

In terms of affordability, there is a real tension there, and I think perhaps one of the ways forward that we talked about in our submission is the role of the state in securing these really large open spaces in renewal precincts. So Fiona talked about Fawkner Park in terms of 40 hectares. Now, 40 hectares is a huge site, but if you took it back to a 10-hectare park like JJ Holland Park and you secured a number of those sites—say, it is in E-gate or, say, it is in Fishermans Bend, then you would be looking at a kind of ratio in addition to the walkable distances into the future. Fiona, did you want to say something as well?

Ms FINLAYSON: Yes. Just building on that last point as well, identifying those opportunities very early in the planning will assist, I suppose, and then there is not the speculating about what the development yield might be because it is factored in that it is required that there will be a 10-hectare park or whatever the case may be. That is particularly for renewal areas.

For the developments we are seeing at the moment in the non-renewal areas, just in the rest of the city under the provisions in the Melbourne planning scheme, we are seeing that open space contributions are not being identified. We would like land that is in our *Open Space Strategy*, but with the way the system is set up at the moment we are not able to secure land or even make a requirement for land to be provided because of the staging of development permits versus subdivision permits.

Mr MORRIS: Okay, yes.

Ms FINLAYSON: So at the time of the development permit being lodged we are not able to foreshadow that if the subdivision was to come in future, there would need to be a park on this site. So by the time a subdivision comes in, the development is already under construction and it is too late and we have lost that opportunity. We will receive cash, but then there is the mismatch of being able to apply that cash to a sufficiently sized open space in the area that it is required. It is really very difficult to achieve, and we have seen that most of our success has been in reclaiming areas of road to extend existing open space to sort of create new open space where there was previously roadway, which is good. It improves amenity. It has a use, but it is not serving that broader recreational function. There are not places for play or relaxation necessarily there. They are more amenity.

Mr MORRIS: What sort of changes would need to be made to allow you to say, ‘All right. On this site we need to set aside X amount’? I know you are talking about large developments, I guess, but while retaining the distinction between the subdivision and the development permit, what sort of changes would need to be made to allow you to foreshadow that at the development approval stage?

Ms FINLAYSON: It is different in each municipality. Some municipalities do have that ability through their schedules. We were not successful in securing that at the time ours was gazetted. So there is a planning scheme amendment potential, which can be a lengthy process. We have mentioned the *Open Space Strategy* which was endorsed in 2012. The planning scheme amendment did not go through until 2016, so we were already a few years behind.

Mr MORRIS: Yes, but a planning scheme amendment would do it.

Ms FINLAYSON: It would. One other challenge I did not mention, though, was also the exclusion from open space contributions for things like student housing, which [inaudible] this year and also office/commercial developments. So we cannot secure open space land contributions through the planning scheme for those sorts of developments. So that is broader than a planning scheme amendment at just our local level—that is state policy.

Mr MORRIS: Right, okay. Thanks for that. Thanks, Sarah.

The CHAIR: Thanks, David. Will.

Mr FOWLES: Thank you, Chair. Just I guess further to David's topic, I wanted to understand: you said 40 hectares I think of land was the requirement. At current values, what would that be worth on average, interspersed throughout the CBD? Because my suspicion is it is some gargantuan number that is beyond the means perhaps even of the state government.

Mr CALLOW: Yes, I think you are right in terms of the numbers. I think that is the shortfall that we alluded to in terms of where we often receive cash as a contribution. I think perhaps a solution here is not to say we are looking at land within the CBD but it is within those renewal areas. Say it was E-gate out west of the city and early in that process we were able to secure a site that was 10, 20, 40—I mean, that is probably a little bit ambitious there, but if we were securing a multi-hectare site there early on in the process, that would be, I think, a far more desirable outcome. That is where we will need that open space as well. The CBD is relatively well serviced by large open spaces. Do you want to add anything?

Ms FINLAYSON: No, that is right. If it is large, we generally have identified that it is state-owned land, and most of those—E-gate and Dynon in particular—are rail yards currently.

Mr FOWLES: So do you have a sense, though, of the quantum of the shortfall—\$1 million, \$100 million, \$1 billion?

Mr CALLOW: I think we would have to come back to you on that. Sorry, we do not have a number.

Mr FOWLES: Sure. Following on from that, the public open space contribution, if I recall correctly, is 5 per cent of the project value. Is that right?

Ms FINLAYSON: It is 5 per cent of the land value in some areas, and then in the higher growth areas in the city it is 7.06 per cent of the land value.

Mr FOWLES: So if it is of the land value, why do you not end up with enough money to purchase land for every 20 projects worth of POSC?

Ms FINLAYSON: For each development site, which are smaller in scale, if we took the land value of that, we would end up with a sort of handkerchief-sized piece of open space, so we want to aggregate them. Then we are looking at a couple of house blocks, or if we are talking somewhere like Southbank, a potential apartment development site. So the competition, I suppose, or the conflicting potential uses for those sites really preclude being able to purchase decent-sized open space. If we were to just take the contribution site by site and try to make a park out of each one, they would be too small to really be of any value, so—

Mr FOWLES: Sure. No, what I was asking was if there are, you know, 20 development and they are each on blocks of land that are worth \$10 million, then at the end of the 20 developments you should have \$10 million in POSC, which would allow you to buy a site the size of all of those developments. I guess my question is: why do you still in those circumstances consider that there is a shortfall?

Mr CALLOW: I think one of the issues there is the availability of suitable sites. So, yes, we do collect cash into the open space reserve, and we are looking at developing an acquisition policy at the moment in terms of how we really aggressively go to market in terms of opportunities that come up. But the opportunities are rare in terms of what we have been able to acquire thus far, and so while there is a bucket of money there, it is the right open space in the right area. Thinking back to the image that Fiona showed within the presentation from the *Open Space Strategy* that showed municipal capital open spaces, there is a hierarchy of other open space needs as well. There is a good example in West Melbourne of a site that we were able to purchase adjacent to an existing park and we were able to effectively double the size of the park. But those opportunities are really rare, and they are usually around those very local open spaces, the very small sites. But the squeeze we are feeling is at the big end of town in terms of very large sites that can accommodate active recreational needs, and those sites really do not come to market, or not very often. Often the sites where we need those are held by other state government agencies, whether it be VicTrack or another agency in that regard.

Mr FOWLES: Sure. So how much it is sitting in the open space reserve at the moment?

Mr CALLOW: There is between \$60 million and \$70 million in the reserve.

Mr FOWLES: Okay. In a perfect world how would you see the POSC system, if you like, changed, if at all?

Mr CALLOW: Wow. Okay. Do you want to go first on that one or—

Ms FINLAYSON: Yes, I can speak for—

Mr FOWLES: Nice handball, David. That was good!

Mr CALLOW: I will come back to you in a moment, yes.

Ms FINLAYSON: In terms of the provisions in the planning scheme, I think there are state policy changes that could be made there to increase the ease of securing land for development sites of all kinds that are increasingly used in an area.

Mr FOWLES: Such as?

Ms FINLAYSON: Such as—

Mr FOWLES: Assume for the moment you are the minister and you have got a blank sheet of paper and you are just writing the rules, because this committee ultimately gives advice to government—we advise the minister on changes that perhaps ought to be made. Assume for a moment that you are the architect of those changes. What do you want to see?

Ms FINLAYSON: I would want to see open space contributions from all developments that increase the presence of people on a site, because they will need the open space and they will use whatever is available, and increased pressure on—

Mr FOWLES: So what developments are not being picked up by that maybe at the moment?

Ms FINLAYSON: Student housing is one. Commercial buildings are another, and also developments that do not subdivide, which might be hotels or other mixed-use developments. Unless there is a subdivision, there is no trigger for an open space contribution to be made. So in a capital city context—

Mr FOWLES: Okay, so it is about broadening the base?

Ms FINLAYSON: Yes, exactly.

Mr FOWLES: Okay. And David?

Mr CALLOW: If I could wave my magic wand as the minister for a moment, I think looking at the structure planning stage of these renewable areas, so where the land was essentially being laid out—that would be where the minister would say, ‘Well, you need to provide large municipal open spaces’. That would be the first step.

Ms FINLAYSON: That goes to the land use framework plans essentially, so right at the very start.

Mr FOWLES: Gotcha. Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Paul.

Mr HAMER: Thanks, Sarah, and thanks, Fiona and David. Sorry I was a few minutes late, but just for introduction, I am Paul Hamer. I am the Member for Box Hill. A lot of the questions actually I had are questions along similar lines to David and Will, and many of them have been answered. I think, David, your very final answer probably addressed my first question, which is in relation to some of these large strategic sites and how you would envisage capturing those large park areas. So I am assuming from what you are saying, having that, I guess, in a structure plan that is actually identified at that very early stage is key. Is there anything else you want to add to that?

Mr CALLOW: No, I think that is one of the keys. In terms of the overall answer that collectively we had to that last question, large open spaces are definitely an issue for us. Equally, when you are linking back to that walkable distance and open space per resident, the answer is not just in one outcome, which is large open

spaces. We need the right opportunities to be able to acquire or deliver in partnership with others small and other local open spaces as well. That could be delivered through improvements to the contributions scheme, but from our end we probably need better ways to be able to work really nimbly in taking advantage of those acquisition opportunities as well.

Mr HAMER: The other thing I guess I would like your comment on is you mentioned previously some of the timing issues in terms of when the money comes in. Then obviously it is a build-up over time and there is a bit of uncertainty because you do not know what developments will come on at a particular time, particularly in terms of when the subdivision will occur. But what would be the challenges of facilitating the acquisition of some of those parcels at a much earlier time and then identifying them so that basically any developer who is coming in subsequent to that time is basically buying in and paying off particular parcels of open space? Because I suspect that one of the big challenges in securing that land later is that the value of land has increased substantially and it becomes a lot more difficult to secure the size of the land that you require. It would require obviously a bit more of a strategic plan looking at individual suburbs, particularly when they are identified for future development, but I was just wondering if there are commercial issues, planning issues or other issues that would prevent that approach or make that approach a difficult approach to proceed. I hope I am clear enough in terms of I guess the idea or the concept.

Ms FINLAYSON: Yes, I think so. There are two different answers whether we are looking in renewal areas or existing urban areas where there are developments happening. So for the renewal areas I think that early identification through a framework plan, a structure plan, earlier than what is currently done would set those expectations and allow us to secure that land early in the piece. Then every developer, as you say, will know what they are buying into. In the established areas that is more challenging. If we are identifying proactively the sites that we think we should acquire that are currently homes or businesses, there are different ways that that can be done. There could be a compulsory acquisition overlay, for example, or we could just approach and make offers or wait until they come up for sale. None of those are perfect, and they all have pros and cons associated with them. Identifying early that that is a particular parcel we want does not actually guarantee that we will get that. So really the acquisition plan that David mentioned earlier that we will be starting soon will look at those options and see what will actually be most effective in our context. Tough answer.

Mr HAMER: So in the established sites—and obviously in the established areas getting a larger parcel of land is always going to be challenging at whatever time, whether you are doing it sort of at an early stage of regeneration process or at a later stage—does the council have a process for that at the moment, or is that the type of work that you are going to be doing, embarking on soon, in terms of identifying the sites and how that process would run?

Mr CALLOW: Yes.

Mr HAMER: Or has it been purely sort of opportunistic at the moment?

Mr CALLOW: I think that is a fair word to use. It has certainly been opportunistic, and we at our end could be more planned, but there are still limitations in terms of what Fiona outlined in those established areas. The opportunities might not be exactly where our *Open Space Strategy* identifies the need. So yes, it is probably having some more flexibility in terms of, you know, how we can spend those accumulated funds on those types of acquisitions.

Mr HAMER: Thanks.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Paul. I just quickly wanted to raise the public-private partnerships. How big a role do you think they could play in securing bigger parcels of land or even small parcels of land, and how have you been leveraging that?

Ms FINLAYSON: Good question. You made me stop and think for a minute. Most of the partnerships so far have been with developers to develop open space that is either on or adjacent to their development sites. What I am thinking of right now is—

Mr CALLOW: Market Street.

Ms FINLAYSON: Yes. I was thinking of Seafarers Rest. That is the another one: Seafarers Rest park down near the Mission to Seafarers on the north bank of the river. There is a development happening there in an

existing adjacent area of open space that will be extended and upgraded in partnership with the developer. And similarly, Market Street—on the corner of Market Street and Collins Street a new development there, which has a new open space around it, has also reclaimed some of the road space. Certainly for a lot of these larger developments where there is no requirement to provide an open space contribution because either they are commercial or they are not subdividing, we have been able to negotiate open spaces regardless. They are examples of that. But to my knowledge we have not really explored much beyond working with developers. That is linked to their development sites. I am not sure we have really been—

Mr CALLOW: No. The other thing I might add to the Market Street scenario—some of you may be familiar with that site; Fiona talked a little bit in the past—the public open space reserves that we have, I am getting to my point here, can be used for acquisition but they can also be used for new open space and renewal of existing open space. In the Market Street example, we reclaimed half of the roadway there in Market Street, so very low traffic volumes. We were able to take some of that public land and change it from being bitumen and a roadway into being part of that new park, which kind of straddles half on the development side and then half into the public realm, in terms of the street. Public open space reserves are not just for acquisition. The spend might be somewhere between \$5 million and \$10 million dollars a year in terms of upgrading and expanding existing sites. Southbank Boulevard is another really good example of that, where we have got several hectares of open space that have been delivered through closing essentially half of that road and making it a large, linear, open space there. There are other mechanisms we can use, but ultimately those are usually relatively modest spaces and they do not give us those very large sites that, I guess, we keep coming back to.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. Committee members, are there any last questions? I am just mindful of time. We are breaking at 10.

Mr MORRIS: Sarah, this may be more complicated than we really have got time to consider, but in the submission there are a couple of mentions of amendment C376. On page 15 of the submission you talk about it being ‘a primary tool for enabling a response to the Climate and Biodiversity Emergency’. There is an earlier reference on page 8 talking about the ‘mandatory provision of on-lot green infrastructure’. The two points are not contradictory, but they do not necessarily seem to mesh. Can you give us a quick thumbnail sketch of just exactly what is involved in that amendment?

Mr CALLOW: Amendment C376, so sustainable building design, is essentially an ESD amendment but it also incorporates urban ecology. It is proposed to require minimum standards for new buildings within the city around ecological or environmental sustainable design, but it also incorporates the unique aspect, which is around urban ecology and a minimum requirement for greening on a new lot. We have developed a Green Factor tool for Melbourne.

There are other green factor tools internationally, but essentially it is an online tool whereby a developer can put their design into the tool and measure the amount of greening, benchmark the amount of greening depending on the type of greening, and then there will be a minimum threshold that we are proposing in terms of what they would have to deliver through that development. So I think I heard you right, but in terms of the link then to the climate and biodiversity emergency, the contribution of greening on private property—when we go back to that kind of two-thirds outside of our control—in our response to the climate and biodiversity emergency, particularly in that biodiversity space, we know that urban greening, private realm greening, is really important for that, but also in terms of the climate emergency we know that greening is critical for offsetting the impact of the urban heat island and essentially securing the livability of the city into the future.

Mr MORRIS: Thank you for that. I would not mind exploring that, but I am also mindful of the time, so I will say thank you and leave it just there.

Mr CALLOW: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you, David. Fiona and David, that was fantastic. Thank you. We really appreciate it. There were some really great recommendations that you were able to give, particularly when you think about waving a magic wand and what you would wish for, so thank you. Committee members, we are going to break for 15 minutes, so at this stage we will just pause the live broadcast and we will be back in 15 minutes. Fiona and David, much appreciated.

Mr CALLOW: Thank you all.

Ms FINLAYSON: Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.