

10/08/07

Mr David Davis MLC
Chairman
Legislative Council
Select Committee on Public Land Development
Parliament of Victoria
Spring Street
Melbourne Vic 3002



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Dear Mr Davis

In response to an invitation for written submissions to the above Select Committee, we wish to register concern regarding any potential imposition being placed upon public land for the purposes of private development.

Beaumaris is well known and popular partly due to its remnant bushland and nature reserves close to the city. Residents and visitors have long been attracted by and remain because of its natural beauty. We are concerned that any reduction or removal of public nature reserves or bushland would detract from the unique neighbourhood character of the area.

Beaumaris consists chiefly of two distinct demographic groupings - young families and senior citizens. Both groups utilize and require access to public open space; more particularly as a result of the push for medium density housing. Residential development has meant 2 or more dwellings where there once was one, with the loss of private open space ('back yards') resulting. Children and young families still require access to open playing areas, senior citizens likewise for healthy recreational activities. The mental and physical health benefits that public open spaces provide should not be discounted. Any removal or reduction would disproportionately disadvantage a large number of citizens.

Beaumaris features some very significant reserves and wildlife sanctuaries including Ricketts Point Marine Sanctuary, and Donald Mac Donald Reserve to name two. Such sites provide habitat for rare flora and fauna and create a corridor for native birds and other small mammals. The future of such species in the greater Melbourne area is quite precarious. Removal or reduction of habitat for private development would have a largely detrimental effect on their survival.

More generally, as global warming increases, the presence of trees and other vegetation takes on greater importance in reducing carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and the removal of pollution. In times of drought it is particularly pertinent to remember that pollution can result in a changed microclimate of an area to the extent that rain is actually suppressed. Any reduction or removal of vegetated open space should only be considered as a last resort - certainly not to advance the gain of private developers.

We believe that the residents of Beaumaris take seriously their desire to maintain what public open space and bushland currently exists. This can be evidenced by the fact that this Society has been in existence since 1953 with a current membership of over 500 and an active membership base. Our members work tirelessly with Municipal 'Friends Groups' to plant out and maintain our local public open spaces - a further indication of the desire to see no advancement of private development at the expense of public land.

We recall that the current Victorian Government was elected on a promise to "put the protection and enhancement of the natural and urban environment at the forefront of planning decision-making". We hope that the outcome of the Select Committee will reinforce support for that view.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute the above which we trust will be taken into account accordingly.

Yours sincerely

Ron Morris
Hon. Secretary