



# **Friends of the Maribyrnong Valley Incorporated**

Registered No. A10136

P.O. Box 266, Ascot Vale, Vic., 3032

Select Committee on Public Land Development

Legislative Council

Parliament of Victoria

## **SUBMISSION FROM JOHN UPSHER** **FRIENDS OF THE MARIBYRNONG VALLEY INC.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This submission concerns the land known as the North Maribyrnong Defence site. Bounded on the south by Cordite Avenue and Maribyrnong Road and to the west and north by the Maribyrnong River, it occupies almost 130 hectares. Its sale is presently being negotiated by Department of Defence with VicUrban for the State of Victoria.

### **BACKGROUND**

The North Maribyrnong Defence site was acquired from private ownership in 1908 by the Victorian State Government then passed at no cost to the Commonwealth Government to establish local manufacture of military explosives.

Since then the land has served many functions largely for the Department of Defence with activities winding down during the past 20 years.

As a consequence of the near hundred years of manufacturing and research activities the land is widely contaminated with hazardous toxic substances. In a recent survey conducted by Defence, the significant under-sampling revealed the presence of chlorinated hydrocarbon solvents, recalcitrant and toxic organo-nitrates and a number of hazardous metals including mercury, lead and cadmium.

The site has many and varied heritage features.

- Aboriginal silcrete excavation and stone working sites
- Equestrian heritage dating back to the mid-1800s when it was close to the first river crossing that served travellers to Adelaide, the goldfields and the pastoral western districts.
- Thoroughbred stables (Cox and Fisher) were prominent at the site and a fine Racecourse was on the western side of the site until 1908. The 1856 Melbourne Cup winner 'Lantern' is buried on site.



part of the Maribyrnong River corridor – providing security and passage for mammals and other animals including bats, reptiles, insects, and birds. Its location demands that in future it continues to provide riverside access for both wildlife and the community.

### **CONTENTIOUS ISSUES**

1. That the State Government should have to buy back land that it ceded at no cost to the Commonwealth for a specific purpose which is now complete.
2. That the local municipality, the City of Maribyrnong has published plans of intent to develop this land with 2000 residences and commercial premises and with less than 10% devoted to genuine open space.

5. Should the site be subject of 'development' there would be need to remove much of the contaminated soil form the site. This would necessitate soil disturbance and excavation to expose and disperse contaminated material then transportation some distance away to a dump site. Operatives and the community should not be exposed to this hazard.

6. The natural heritage of the site is not satisfactorily documented. It is probable that several species rare or endangered exist here. The site must be protected as a bio-refuge and as an integral part of the river corridor. It is demonstrably a bird habitat of rare standing in the western suburbs. It already has the basic characteristics of a mature parkland and this should not be sacrificed for 'development'.

7. The northern part of the site comprises part of a residual flood plain which should be restored.

8. Preservation of the site as parkland with appropriate support facilities such as visitor centres and educational facilities would enable permanent recognition of all of the heritage issues that prevail.

#### **REVIEW**

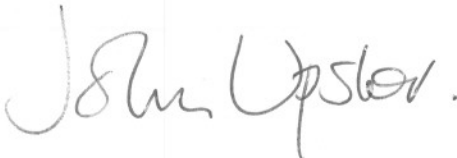
Given increasing population densities and generally smaller building blocks, future generations will demand more, not less, open space for community access and passive recreation.

Given also that the land was ceded at no cost to the Commonwealth Government, it should be returned to the Victorian community as a community asset.

Under no circumstances should the State Government preside over the squandering of this the last remaining significant piece of open space in the western suburbs that would also result in the loss of so many natural, historical and heritage assets and of potential prime urban parkland.

I would be pleased to present further information at a public hearing should that be required.

#### **SIGNATURE**

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