

MORDIALLOC BEAUMARIS

1 MONTGOMERY ST,



CONSERVATION LEAGUE INC

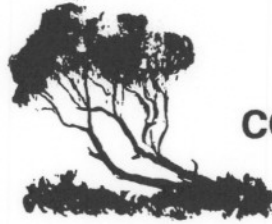
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**SUBMISSION INTO THE SALE
AND DEVELOPMENT OF
PUBLIC LAND AND OPEN SPACE**

September 2007

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Mr Richard Willis,
Secretary Select Committee
Public Lands Development,
Parliament House,
East Melbourne. 3002.

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19-9-07

Dear Sir,

Regarding the sale or alienation of public land for development, or alienation of public open space for the purpose of private development and the relationship to the Victorian Government's M2030 policy and Green Wedges, there have been a number of excellent reports (the earliest 1929) stressing the importance of retention of public land and public open space for the benefit of present and future generations. For example:-

"Open space is an essential part of the urban environment – just as transport, housing, utility services, industry and commerce is. It fulfills a range of functions including recreational use, protection of indigenous flora and fauna and enhancement of the urban landscape. Open space provides many recreational and ecological benefits essential to the healthy functioning of the city." 1

"Open space is highly valued by virtually all urban residents. Parks provide settings for a wide range of outdoor activities, as well as a peaceful refuge from the pressures of city life. They protect natural and historic features, wildlife habitats and flood plains and can be a buffer between conflicting land uses. Parks can enhance almost any urban landscape irrespective of whether residents use parks for recreation. Parks are an invaluable asset." Unfortunately today our parks and open space are under threat from development and commercialization as never before. 2.

In 1929 the Metropolitan Town Planning Commission emphasized the importance of locating urban parks within walking distance of residents, recommended that a minimum of 5 acres of land for recreation and sport be provided per 1000 population, and produced a far sighted plan for development of a system of parks based largely on Melbourne's waterways.

In 1954 the MMBW proposed a set of open spaces standards resulting in 1971, of a "corridor wedge" plan setting the pattern for metropolitan growth by creating green wedges of open countryside corridors of urban development radiating from central Melbourne. It also reserved major tracts of land for metropolitan parks one of which is now Braeside Park in the City of Kingston. Today we are witnessing the rapid erosion of the green wedge concept through council approved residential developments on flood plains.

Social values – Health and well-being

Around the world there is growing acceptance of the strong links between a healthy park system...and a healthy society. Along with the obvious virtues of open space for physical pursuits, parks are refuges from urban stress, places for families to get together for picnics...and for children to safely explore the magic of the natural environment. 3.

Comments from a World Play Summit held in Melbourne supports the importance of an environment where children experience the natural world but all over the world there is a snatching away of places where children can have freedom out of sight of adults to invent their own worlds. Free play is in jeopardy either because of violence, or over population and high rise living. 4.

An example of how M2030 infill development policies can cause loss of parks is the case of Chicquita Park in the City of Kingston. The park is in an Incremental Change area but has been sold to a developer who has destroyed significant vegetation and is building 63 three storey town houses on the site. The small unstructured park has been providing space for imaginative play for children for 30 years but has now been lost forever. This type of development has been described as “parasitic” because neighbours sacrifice their amenity but do not take a share of the profit. In fact the developer does not pay the real cost of the impact on the community in terms of infrastructure and undesirable population distribution.

While new parks are being established in the outer Metropolitan growth corridors, middle ring suburbs like Kingston lose both public and private open space due to M2030 policies. Following council amalgamations part of Kingston’s Green Wedge open space was excised and approved for Waterways residential development of 700 houses, Epsom Training Track is now a residential estate of 540 houses, a large portion of the treed grounds of Kingston Centre in Warrigal Road, Cheltenham is being developed as a residential estate by Mirvac and the extensive grounds of Bonbeach TAFE has become an opportunity site for high density housing in an Incremental Change area.

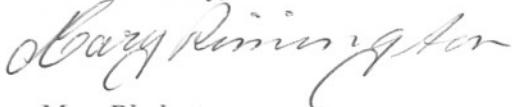
The intensity of infill development in Kingston has meant that private open space is often eliminated. In Increased Diversity areas the only open space provision maybe a roof deck or balcony leaving no permeable surface to absorb storm-water run-off. Clearly with pressure for high density development arising from M2030 policies there is a need to ensure that existing parkland is retained to provide a healthy environment for residents deprived of reasonable private open space. Ideally there should be small parks within 300 metres safe walking distance from residential development – a condition included in ResCode initially.

The reports of alienation of parkland given in the Legislative Council Daily Hansard, Wednesday, 2 May 2007, indicates the need for legislation to prevent further loss of public land for commercial development. The wheeling and dealing over the Kew cottages site is an example of what happens when decisions are made on the use of parks and other amenities and the common good is confused with private commercial advantage. This occurs according to an Age article when we have a generation of politicians and administrators who have never been involved in planning issues, who have no knowledge of the way it has involved in Victoria and who have no personal commitment to it...The erosion of parkland provides the clearest example. There has always been pressure on parklands, but there have always been two commonly held assumptions: that parks are a good thing in their own right and that they belong to everybody. 5

The Age article continues:- "Somebody needs to restate what parks are for. It needs to be understood that commercial activities must buy their own land rather than bludge off the public. It needs to be understood that vacant green space is a good thing to have even when it is not put to any organized or commercial use...What goes for parks goes for the whole planning process. There needs to be established – or re-established-- a common understanding that planning is for the common good, and must conform to basic criteria like sustainability, equity, transparency and consistency. It needs to be understood that the public wishes count; that private concerns must not be handed large windfalls by the planning system; that fair compensation must be paid to those who suffer adverse effects; that planning schemes should be exhibited, adopted and adhered to; that there must be a bona fide appeal process; and that the minister should exercise reserve rather than executive authority." 6.

We commend the Legislative Council in establishing a 7 Member all-party Select Committee to inquire into the sale and development of public land and for providing the opportunity to make submissions.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Rimington
Secretary
MBCL

FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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