

# CORRECTED VERSION

## SELECT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC LAND DEVELOPMENT

### Subcommittee

Melbourne — 3 April 2008

### Members

Mr D. Davis

Mr B. Tee

Ms S. Pennicuik

Chair: Mr D. Davis

### Staff

Secretary: Mr R. Willis

Research Officer: Mr A. Walsh

### Witness

Mr P. Matthews, president, Residents 3000.

**The CHAIR** — The committee welcomes Peter Matthews, the president of Residents 3000. Could you make a brief presentation, and then we might ask some questions?

**Mr MATTHEWS** — Thank you. I will be as brief as I can. The previous two presenters have covered the issues regarding damage to the gardens. I would like to stress — and they have also mentioned it, of course — the question of World Heritage listing and our responsibilities under that. Why were the gardens heritage listed? Because of the listing of the Exhibition Building itself, and the gardens were an essential part of that whole site. As you know, the northern gardens had been used to some extent as an extension of the Exhibition Building exhibits when the big building was full. The southern garden was never, ever used in that way. I have to say it is an unfortunate thing that the MIFGS people asserted at the beginning that the gardens had been used for exhibits in the past. That is simply not true. Heritage Victoria — Ray Tonkin, the executive director — has confirmed that the southern garden was never used. Its whole purpose — and every plan and picture you have seen of the way the gardens look in relation to the building — tells you that the gardens lead people to the Royal Exhibition Building. In a sense they are not gardens as gardens, so to speak. They are described as pleasure gardens. They are very simple; they do not have large flowerbeds or anything like that. They have parterre beds, as Rob Adams mentioned. What they are are paths to the Exhibition Building, and that is why the southern gardens were included in the heritage listing. What happens here, of course, is that we get this.

**The CHAIR** — A fence.

**Mr MATTHEWS** — Yes. You get a fence, and I think Margaret mentioned a Norwegian visitor. I have had visitors, including even Americans, saying, ‘Where is this World Heritage place’, standing outside this black fence. I simply do not understand why we have to use — why anybody has to use — those gardens wrongly and in contravention of our undertakings to UNESCO. It is simply nonsense to say that this show cannot be held anywhere else. The ABC holds a series of flower shows around Australia. In Melbourne they use the Caulfield racetrack, and I understand that is highly successful and attracts a very large number of people.

The showgrounds themselves are also suitable. Indeed I think Fleming’s has exhibited within that tent — a marquee or whatever you call it — in the showgrounds, very successfully. I also know that somebody associated with Fleming’s referred to the garden show in the Carlton Gardens as a farmers’ market, and to a large extent it can be. The Ford car was shown. Ford cars, if they are going to be exhibited, should be in the Royal Exhibition Building. That is what it was built for — for the industrial revolution, for people to go and see all those marvellous inventions — but here we have Ford cars out on the grass. And we have Tupperware stands out in the southern part of the garden! We have book stands out in the garden. We have clothing stands out in the garden — boots, shoes, T-shirts and hats. Why? Is it necessary for these to be in the garden? I am not saying they damage the garden, but is this not a degradation of what we are supposed to be proud of, of what the Minister for Tourism and Major Events is wanting the world to see and do?

I think it is extremely disappointing that he, in his speech on the amendment to the act about Carlton Gardens, mentioned world heritage as an aside but he did not really explain what it was about. In the debate in the lower house, as far as I have read it, only one other person mentioned it in the same way — just referred to it. It appears to have no significance for the government. I do not know why they wish to take this over. In his press release Minister Holding did not mention the world heritage factor. He abused the city council, but he did not mention the world heritage standing. All of this seems to me to be simply ignoring something for the sake of what? The Victorian nursery association appears to be powerful. It may be this link with the farmers federation; I understand that they are part of the farmers federation, affiliated in some way with it.

I do not want to push this any further. I think simply seeing the pictures should be enough. People show pictures of the current layout of the gardens with the MIFGS in it. You can see those radiating places which take you there. As Rob Adams said, why does MIFGS not use the Royal

Exhibition Building — splendid; put their Ford motor cars and everything in there — and the hard surface on the other side? And the museum, I think, is willing to cooperate. Then people would have everything. They would come from the city of Melbourne. One of the reasons the garden was designed like that is that people came from the democratic centre of Melbourne — this building — and walked through to the exhibition building, and there they had this wonderful picture frame of the Carlton Gardens.

Can I just lastly say, if you get a chance to have a look at the world heritage website of UNESCO, the garden in the national historical park in Philadelphia is actually quite similar. It is a very striking building and in front of it there is a garden. If you look at the regulations that they have as to the use of that garden, they say you do not use it for commercial purposes, you do not charge people for going in there, you do not allow food and drink, and so on. This is what we are doing and simply, we think, destroying the integrity of our world heritage listing. Thank you.

**The CHAIR** — I thank you for what was obviously a very heartfelt submission. I have no questions, but I do want to put my thanks on record.

**Mr MATTHEWS** — Thank you very much.

**Mr TEE** — I do not have any questions either, but I thank you for reminding me and I think the committee of the gardens' status as a world heritage-listed site. Thank you.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — I also thank you for putting your points very plainly. I just wondered whether you, as Residents 3000, have written to UNESCO or to the federal department or the federal minister?

**Mr MATTHEWS** — UNESCO is very hard to get in touch with. Can I say, Residents 3000 is one of 10 residents associations in this municipality. The Carlton association is another, and they all support us on this because it is a matter of civic pride and of state pride, and should be national pride as well. The federal area, I have to say yes, I have tried to get in touch with them. They are very disappointing indeed. They handed it over to the council, and then the Victorian government under the new legislation, and that was about it, to be honest. Whether they do not want to get into an intergovernmental row, I really do not know.

**Ms PENNICUIK** — If you have a copy of the letter that you sent, that would be good.

**Mr MATTHEWS** — Sure.

**The CHAIR** — Thank you, Peter.

Witness withdrew.