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Sub: — ① 2

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Subject Submission. Metroploitan Melbourne Investigation

SUBMISSION : METROPLOLITAN MELBOURNE INVESTIGATION

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the review about the use of public land.

I live adjacent to Yarra Park which includes the MCG and tennis Centre precincts and therefore my comments relate specifically to this park. I cannot underestimate the significance of this park to the quality of my daily existence.

I moved to Melbourne from interstate three years ago to accompany my husband who had accepted a position at the RCH. His employment demands he be available for weekend and evening call, often at short notice and so it was important for us to live in the inner city, close to his employment. Most inner city dwellings are short on private outdoor space and so it was equally important for us to be near open space to exercise our dogs and for personal leisure purposes. These factors resulted in us purchasing a home in East Melbourne, adjacent to Yarra Park.

When we moved to Melbourne our adult children remained interstate and I did not join the workforce. I did not know one single person in Melbourne and initially felt quite socially isolated. I now have a new network of friends and community links thanks to Yarra Park. Every single person I now count as friends I met whilst walking my dogs in Yarra Park. I have discovered a wonderful community of locals who gather to exercise their dogs (and themselves) in the mornings and afternoons. These friendships lead to social invitations, Xmas gatherings in the park and awareness and participation in local community events.

Unfortunately, my use of the park on a daily basis has made me aware of the vulnerability of this open space. It is used for more than 180 days each year as a car park. Use of the park by locals on these days must be restricted to very early morning and late at night. After these mass parking events the park is littered with rubbish – take away food wrappers, cans, bottle and broken glass – all hazardous to our pets and our own safety. An even greater concern is the impact the parking has on the environment of the park. The cars compact the earth, kill the grass and damage the trees. In winter the ground is reduced to a muddy mire and in summer the park becomes a denuded dust bowl. The watering system is constantly damaged by cars and consequently in summer we have tracts of dry, dusty, bare earth interspersed with small tracts of muddy, foul smelling water logged earth adjacent to sprinklers. I fear the mature trees may never recover from this long term abuse. I implore you to visit the park to see this damage firsthand. It is not exaggerated.

Over the past three years, perhaps exacerbated by the drought, I have witnessed the park becoming more and more degraded without any opportunity for recovery. It is indeed distressing to see the park so badly damaged at a time of supposedly heighten environmental concern. Parks such as these are the lungs of our city but if they are repeatedly neglected they cannot fulfil this purpose.

I also do not believe that walking in a park should subject pedestrians, young children and pets to motorists, particularly when they exceed the speed limit. We are increasingly aware of the negative impact cars have on our environment yet it is a fact that cars, roads, carparks etc dominate our landscape. Why allow them to intrude on our precious open space? In my opinion, cars belong on roads and parks must be car free! Changing community attitudes to car use and promoting healthier, greener alternatives is a gradual process but we can start by respecting the sanctity of our parks.

My husband and I attended the Commonwealth Games. Everyone attending the sporting events arrived by public transport. Trains and trams are in immediate proximity. It was wonderful to see the magnificent MCG showcased by this lovely park free from cars.

It is my position that Crown Land such as Yarra Park should be available for all the community to use.

It should not be purloined for commercial interests at the expense of other park users and to the detriment of the physical environment. To abuse the park in this way fails to acknowledge the importance of such space as not only a place for exercise and leisure but to forge important social and community networks.

With kind regards,

Tina Cain

