

Metropolitan Melbourne



"Averill"

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To <veac@dse.vic.gov.au>

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Sub:

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Subject Submission to VEAC re Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation

Hi,

Please find attached our submission regarding the Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation.

Regards

Peter & Clare Averill



VEAC submission.pdf

2 February 2009

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6
8 Nicholson St
East Melbourne Victoria 3002

To Whom It May Concern

Submission to the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council investigation of Crown land and public authority land in metropolitan Melbourne:

Public open space in Metropolitan Melbourne is vitally important and is one of the things that makes Melbourne such a "liveable city". Population estimates for Melbourne are growing and increased population, together with higher density housing, will continue to place even greater pressure on our living space. It is important that the State Government maintain all public open space on Crown Land, particularly in inner metropolitan areas where open space is at a premium, and include adequate planning for open space in all new future developments. To reduce public open space would be in direct contravention of the Government's own Melbourne 2030 objectives.

Our submission targets an area of public open space of particular concern to us - namely the Edgars Creek parkland in Coburg North (Melways reference Map 17 K9). The Edgars Creek parkland includes landholdings owned by Vic Roads that were originally targeted for the F2 freeway which is no longer required. Vic Roads wishes to sell this 10 ha of parkland for residential and industrial development. The Edgars Creek parkland is very close to our home and is an area that we utilise on a regular basis and have done for well over 26 years. It is the largest piece of passive public open space in Moreland. We believe this land should be kept for public open space and should not be used for housing or any other inappropriate development. We welcome this opportunity to express our views about the Edgars Creek parkland and its importance to us as individuals and to the wider community of Moreland.

1. In an inner city region, open space is very important for recreation, exercise and peace of mind. There has been a recent increase in higher density housing developments in our area, including the new Pentridge Village estate and the imminent re-development of the Kodak site which is directly adjacent to the Edgars Creek parkland. With more people living in the immediate area, there will be greater pressure on this parkland to provide open space to enhance the liveability of the local area. This makes the Edgars Creek parkland reserve not only vitally important now for the physical, mental, social and spiritual health of the community but even more so into the future.

2. Expansion of growth in the nearby Newlands Core Industrial Precinct is also currently underway. A green buffer between residential areas and the Newlands Core Industrial Precinct is vital to protect residential amenity; to help mitigate emissions and manage noise pollution and the impacts of constant lighting. The parkland provides an essential green oasis in an increasingly busy local environment.
3. The Edgars Creek parkland has been managed and maintained by Moreland Council for thirty years – mowed, weeded, beautified with tree planting and landscaping. The Council has built a shared pathway to provide an additional east-west link across Edgars Creek for cyclists and pedestrians, which as cyclists ourselves, we use regularly. A golf practice area has also been developed by the Council to further add value to the amenity. The Moreland City Council have been asked to pay \$9.5million for the Vic Roads land parcels to avoid them being sold off to developers. Why should the residents of Moreland pay again when the land is already publicly owned, particularly when we have already paid the costs of ongoing maintenance and land improvement? For the past three years we have been calling on the State Government to gift this land to the City of Moreland so that it can continue to be enjoyed as public open space by all residents. Some calculations of the land improvements and subsequent increased value would see Vic Roads owing Moreland Council money rather than them having to pay.
4. There has been considerable public support to keep the Edgars Creek parkland as open space, including many well attended public meetings. On Fathers Day 2008, a 'walk in the park' action, organised by the Merri and Edgars Creeks Parkland Group, saw in excess of 250 local residents gather at the park with local state and federal politicians and councillors to see the value of this fantastic amenity first hand and voice their support for its continuation as public open space.
5. The existing Edgars Creek parkland is a recreational hub and is used daily by walkers, runners, golfers, dog walkers (it is an off leash dog area), family activities and is also used regularly by the Coburg Harriers athletics club and their affiliates for cross-country running events. The loss of this parkland would force these activities elsewhere. Off-leash dog walking areas are in very short supply in Moreland; in fact many people travel by car to bring their dogs to this particular location. The parkland promotes social interaction and a sense of connection and community through participation in shared social activities and spontaneous meetings with neighbours and other local residents. The Edgars Creek parkland reserve is also an important continuation of the parkland link to Merri Creek, Coburg Lake and beyond.
6. The Edgars Creek parkland area is of ecological significance. The Department of Sustainability and Environment (2006) Atlas of Victorian Wildlife has recorded 48 fauna species within 1.5km of the Kodak Bridge over Edgars Creek. Around 280 trees already exist on the site and the parkland also includes areas of remnant vegetation. This land has high intrinsic value due to its position at the meeting point of two linear open space and wildlife corridors. To allow it to become anything other than public open space would be an opportunity lost for ever and would contradict Melbourne 2030 Policy 5.7 "to ensure major open space corridors are protected and enhanced". Countless hours of unpaid volunteer work has already gone into tree and vegetation planting and other restoration work along Edgars Creek. Much of this has been facilitated by the Friends of Edgars Creek, a community group established

with the aim of helping to improve the environmental and recreational quality of the Edgars Creek reserve. Any development of the Edgars Creek parkland for uses other than public open space would compromise the existing secluded bushland character of the reserve corridor which the Moreland Council has committed to preserving and improving. It would also threaten the ecological integrity of the area.

7. Much of the parkland is designated as land subject to inundation in the planning scheme and the area is intended to take overland storm water flows. This should rule out development of the land, particularly given the age and lack of capacity of existing storm water infrastructure in the surrounding area. We have lived near this park for over 26 years and have seen it flood significantly a number of times. The last major inundation was in December 2005. The pictures below show the flooding that occurred at this time in one of the areas targeted for residential development at the end of Nola Street. Zoning this land for anything other than parkland would be a major mistake.



8. Residential or industrial development of the Edgars Creek parkland area would place additional pressure on existing local road infrastructure that is already considerably strained. Newlands Road would be the only access in and out of any proposed new development. The narrow Newlands Road bridge over Merri Creek and the intersection of Newlands Road and Murray Road to the south are already bottlenecks. There is no better vehicle ingress and egress to the north. The traffic flows along Newlands Road are already heavy during working hours, including large numbers of trucks and heavy vehicles from the Industrial Precinct. The designated speed limit of 50km on the southern residential end of Newlands Road is mostly ignored. Even if Newlands Road was upgraded to a major road it does not connect to an arterial road. In fact all traffic leaving the area has to negotiate at least 3 to 5 kms of slow speed suburban streets to get to a major arterial link. Additional traffic would further reduce the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, and increase noise pollution for local residents.

9. The importance of the Edgars Creek parkland reserve as open space has been supported in previous reports. One example is the 2003 the Merri Creek Management Committee report entitled "Merri Creek Land Tenure Investigation and Mapping". This report was requested by the Moreland City Council to review and evaluate land tenure and land use along the Merri Creek and provide expert advice on the strategic benefits of specific parcels of land. Their evaluation of the Edgars Creek parkland reserve parcel stated the following benefits and recommendations:
- The reserve includes areas of significant remnant vegetation
 - The reserve includes areas of significant tree regeneration
 - The land owned by Vic Roads forms a key part of the open space node at the junction of Edgars and Merri Creeks
 - The land owned by Vic Roads has been managed by Moreland Council for years as open space and should remain as open space.

The value of the Edgars Creek parkland reserve to our local community – its environmental, ecological and recreational importance - cannot be placed in monetary terms and far outweigh any short term profit the State Government may be able to derive from its sale. If we lose this public open space parkland now, it is gone forever. We call again on the State Government to gift the Vic Roads owned sections of the Edgars Creek parkland to Moreland City Council free of charge, to be managed into the future as public open space for the ongoing benefit of our community.

Yours faithfully

Clare & Peter Averill