

Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
East Melbourne.

Metropolitan Melbourne

Dear Council Members,

Sub:

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No: 97

Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation

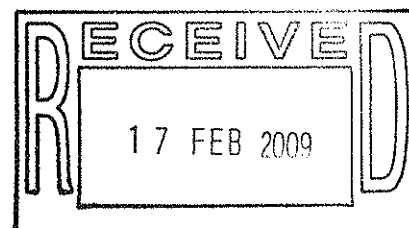
Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the democratic process.

As a 29-year-long resident of Moreland, I believe I am in a good position to comment on the deteriorating status of crown land in our area. I witnessed, most reluctantly, the sale of the Royal Park Psychiatric Hospital and the Northern TAFE Horticultural School, both of which were nearby open spaces, the latter being a particularly lovely sports oval and a de facto park. A local school had also been sold off - another community space lost, and after-hours playing space for our increasingly unfit children. Sports ovals are disappearing steadily from Royal Park even now, the latest being, ironically, for a hospital expansion - not a good sign for the future of team sport in our country.

In every part of Moreland there is continuous housing development to deal with over-population, with houses being replaced by battery-hen-style flats which have no gardens or sometimes not even a treed verge. My plea is for no Crown land to be sold off which could be turned into a simple public park. There are families living in small flats; those children need playing space. I would like to see the crown actually buying blocks to turn into neighbourhood parks - somewhere for people to relax and meet. How can we expect urban dwellers to care about the environment if they never even sit under a tree - and such people do exist in Moreland. I would love to see blocks being bought for community gardens, as well.

There is not only the case for the mental and social health of people but I also believe that parks should be maintained as carbon sinks. Hundreds of trees have been ripped from Royal Park for car parks, private dwellings, a hospital expansion with private hotel attached, or a private sports stadium - trees which our degrading environment sorely needs to absorb the carbon we produce. It has been quite heart-breaking over the years to see the bulldozers at work round the Zoo, which seems to think it should provide a vast commuter car park.

As well as small local parks for convenience, there should be, I think, more expansive areas where you can just wander, and lose yourself in a vista, and observe native flora and fauna on a more extensive scale. It is of particular concern to me that the Merri and Edgars Creeks parkland is seen by VicRoads as a source of profit. It is already owned by the public, and our Council should not have to pay for something that is already 'ours'. The example of Royal Park is cautionary here. Once it is sold off,



we cannot recover it, and no government believes in replacing lost park land, as the Tennis Centre or the Children's Hospital examples testify.

Like many residents, I have never made the distinction between "crown" and "council" land, and had no idea that crown land could lie disguised in the suburbs. In particular, I was quite surprised to see on your map a pocket of crown land on the north-west corner of Dawson St and the Upfield railway line. It is now an unsightly car park. This would be the perfect place for a park, not only for all those residents near Sydney Rd., who have no park, but also for the TAFE students, and as a picnic area for people using the Brunswick Baths, shopping in Sydney Rd. or visiting the library. Or it could be a community garden.

I am aware that we in the northern suburbs fare significantly worse than the 'leafy suburbs' in our allotment of parkland, and I would like the Council to consider this point.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you again for this opportunity to air my thoughts on crown land in our area, and plead with you to maintain or open up all crown land for the health of individuals, the community, and the environment.

With my best wishes for your project,

Yours sincerely,

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