

Metropolitan Melbourne Investigation Discussion Paper

FOR PUBLIC COMMENT



October 2010

WHAT IS THE VICTORIAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT COUNCIL?

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) was established in 2001 under the *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001*. It provides the State Government of Victoria with independent advice on protection and management of the environment and natural resources of public land.

The five Council members are:

Mr Duncan Malcolm AM (Chairperson)

Duncan Malcolm is a former dairy farmer and horticulturalist from east Gippsland, with extensive experience in natural resource management, particularly in the water sector and in coastal management. He has chaired many natural resource management bodies including the Gippsland Coastal Board, Lakes and Wilderness Tourism, Watermark Inc, the Irrigation Association of Australia Ltd and the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority. Duncan is a member of the board of Gippsland Water, a Trustee of the Australian Landscape Trust and Deputy Chair of the Monash University Gippsland Advisory Council. He has been a VEAC member since 2002 and Chairperson since 2004.

Mr Barry Clugston

Barry Clugston is a farmer from Stawell in western Victoria, with extensive experience as a land manager with farms and natural ecosystems, particularly relating to biodiversity, salinity and Landcare. Barry is chairman of Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water Corporation and a former board member of the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority and Wimmera Leadership. He is an exhibiting artist and heavily involved in community affairs. Barry is a naturalist who for many years presented a regular wildlife program on ABC radio.

Mr Ian Harris

Ian Harris has had over 30 years experience in the planning and management of land for public use and conservation at both state and local government levels. He has been responsible for on-ground land management in regional Victoria and urban Melbourne as well as statewide policy development and program implementation for national parks and flora and fauna protection.

Mr Ian Munro PSM

Ian Munro is a consultant for the Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD), a board member of the Growth Areas Authority and the former Deputy Secretary and CEO, Invest Assist for DIIRD. He has a comprehensive knowledge of government across areas including regional development, infrastructure, technology, the environment, and has chaired or been a member of numerous government expert committees and policy review committees.

Dr Airlie Worrall

Airlie Worrall is a policy analyst by profession and a historian by training. She specialises in rural industry and community policy development. Airlie trained in Australian history at Melbourne University, researching 19th century land reform movements and the Victorian wool textiles industry. She has been an academic and an industrial heritage consultant, serving on the National Trust and the Victorian Historic Buildings Council classifications committees. As a policy analyst, she has worked in the Victorian food, textile, wool processing and timber harvesting industries and served as Senior Adviser to several Agriculture Ministers.

HOW TO MAKE A SUBMISSION

Written submissions are invited on this Discussion Paper.

The closing date for submissions is
Monday, 20 December 2010.

You may make an online submission via VEAC's website at www.veac.vic.gov.au or send your written submission to VEAC by post, by fax or by email (see contact details). Only submissions sent directly to VEAC will be treated as submissions.

There is no required format for submissions, except that you must provide your name and your contact details, including an email address if you have one. All submissions will be treated as public documents and will be published on VEAC's website. The name of each submitter will be identified as part of each published submission, but personal contact details will be removed before publishing. Confidential submissions are discouraged. If there are exceptional circumstances that require confidentiality, please contact VEAC before making your submission.

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Acknowledgment of Country

The Victorian Environmental Assessment Council acknowledges and pays its respects to Victoria's Native Title Holders and Traditional Owners within the investigation area, their rich culture and their spiritual connection to Country. These include the *Wurundjeri*, *Wathaurung*, *Boon Wurrung* and *Bunurong* peoples. The Council also recognises and acknowledges the contribution and interest of Indigenous people and organisations in the management of land and natural resources.

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Yarra River at Warrandyte State Park

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orange-bellied parrot

CityWide Service Solutions
page 123
national tree day

Council members (left to right):
Ian Harris, Barry Clugston,
Duncan Malcolm (Chairperson),
Airlie Worrall, Ian Munro



FOREWORD

Melbourne has been the subject of several investigations by VEAC's predecessor, the Land Conservation Council. The initial investigation in 1977 was followed by two more, in 1987 and 1994. The current study, however, is the first investigation of public land in the inner and middle suburbs of metropolitan Melbourne and the first investigation covering the area where most Victorians live.

The majority of public land in the metropolitan area provides services and utilities for Melbourne's 3.7 million residents. Some of this public land serves all Victorians. Places such as Parliament House, the Royal Children's Hospital, the St Kilda Road arts precinct and the Melbourne Cricket Ground are just some examples.

Public authorities own or manage considerable areas of public land in the investigation area. Crown land (excluding most roads) makes up about 65 per cent of the public land and the remaining 35 per cent is owned by more than twenty-two public authority landholders, including Melbourne Water, VicRoads, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, VicTrack, the Department of Human Services and the Port of Melbourne Corporation. This is the first time that detailed information about Melbourne's metropolitan public land has been brought together in one inventory.

This investigation is the first to have terms of reference that require VEAC to report on the contribution of public land to Melbourne's liveability and the opportunities for enhancing this contribution.

The Community Reference Group for this investigation has provided valuable guidance to the Council. The Council and its staff have also been supported throughout the development of this discussion paper by significant contributions from, and discussions with, government departments and agencies, public authorities and the 29 local councils covering the investigation area.

Public land has contributed to Melbourne's liveability since the early days of European settlement when Crown land was allocated for public purposes. But Melbourne is changing and population growth and increasing urban density put pressures on the lifestyles of residents.

Public land has a role in alleviating this pressure and in protecting and enhancing Melbourne's liveability. Land is being added to the public land estate in outer and growth areas to provide for new roads, schools and other public purposes for our growing population.

Public open space, whether it is small neighbourhood parks, sports fields or large parks such as Warrandyte State Park, makes a particularly important contribution to Melbourne's liveability. VEAC has mapped these open spaces across the investigation area, including areas owned by local councils. We believe this to be the first time that this information on the location, type, and ownership of public open space across the investigation area has been brought together.

It is important to protect the existing open space network and, where appropriate, take opportunities to enhance it. While additional open space will be needed in growth areas, opportunities to meet the open space needs of increasing populations in established municipalities are more limited than in outer and growth municipalities. Despite this, some opportunities have arisen – Federation Square and Birrarung Marr on the north banks of the Yarra River and the various open space areas in Docklands are the most prominent examples of new inner urban open spaces.

Melbourne's landscape has dramatically changed since European settlement, and protection of the remaining natural environments is critical. Within the investigation area, there are approximately 96,000 hectares of native vegetation. About a third of this vegetation is on public land, including 20 per cent which is managed for conservation within the protected areas system. Protected areas include large areas in the Churchill, Dandenong Ranges, Kinglake and Organ Pipes National Parks and the Bunyip, Lerderderg and Warrandyte State Parks. Outside protected areas, Melbourne's naturally vegetated creeks and waterways, coastal reserves, and metropolitan and regional parks, are also key environmental and recreational assets.

The Council invites interested groups and individuals to respond to this discussion paper. Views are sought, in particular, on the statements made in chapters 6 to 10. We are looking forward to engaging with you during the consultation period.

Duncan Malcolm
Chairperson

THE STRUCTURE OF THIS DISCUSSION PAPER

This discussion paper has five parts:

Part A (chapter 1) provides some background to the investigation, explains the role of VEAC and outlines the terms of reference and other matters to be taken into account in the investigation. It also describes the investigation timeline and process, and outlines the community views presented to VEAC throughout the course of the investigation so far.

Part B (chapters 2 and 3) describes the natural environment of the investigation area in terms of its geology and geomorphology, hydrology, biodiversity and climate. It describes the people of metropolitan Melbourne, focusing on Indigenous and non-Indigenous history and heritage, and the current and future population of Melbourne.

Part C (chapter 4) addresses the terms of reference by describing the public land within the investigation area and its uses, resources, values and management.

Part D (chapters 5 to 9) reports on the contribution of public land to Melbourne's liveability (chapter 5) and opportunities for enhancing this contribution. Chapter 6 describes the extent and ownership of public open space across the investigation area and discusses issues associated with, and future options for, providing public open space. Chapter 7 examines the predicted effects of climate change on public land and on liveability and natural values. Chapter 8 discusses the pressures on, and mechanisms for protecting, biodiversity in the investigation area. Chapter 9 discusses the values and scope of surplus land in the investigation area, and reports on future uses of surplus land relevant to Melbourne's liveability and natural values.

Comments are particularly invited on the issues presented in Part D.

Part E (chapter 10) contains draft recommendations confirming the management and use of public land in each category within the investigation area. It also includes draft recommendations for changes in land use category for a small number of sites. These draft recommendations aim to enhance the protection of biodiversity.

Comments are particularly invited on the draft recommendations.

Abbreviations and acronyms and the **Glossary** provide abbreviations and technical definitions of terminology used in the discussion paper.

References are arranged numerically in the order of citation in the discussion paper.

Appendices provide more detail on relevant topics including sites of geological, historical and cultural significance and protected areas in the investigation area, public open space data used for the report and the procedures for disposing of surplus public land.

Maps showing public land and public open space in the investigation area are inserted in the rear pocket of the discussion paper.

Consultants' reports commissioned as part of the development of the discussion paper are published in full on VEAC's website at www.veac.vic.gov.au

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In July 2008, the Minister for Environment and Climate Change requested the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council (VEAC) to undertake an investigation of Crown land and public authority land (i.e. public land) in 29 municipalities* of metropolitan Melbourne.

This discussion paper is the first of two reports published for this investigation. Submissions are welcome on the broad range of issues relevant to the investigation.

PURPOSES AND SCOPE OF THE INVESTIGATION

The purposes of the investigation are to:

- a** systematically identify and assess the uses, resources, condition, values and management of Crown land, and public authority land in metropolitan Melbourne;
- b** assess values of Crown land, and public authority land for areas not committed to a specific use, and report on appropriate future uses relevant to Melbourne's liveability and natural values; and
- c** report on the contribution of Crown land, and public authority land to Melbourne's liveability and opportunities to enhance this contribution.

PUBLIC LAND IN METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE

The *Victorian Environmental Assessment Council Act 2001* defines public land broadly as Crown land and freehold land owned by public authorities.

This is the first investigation by VEAC or its predecessors of the inner and middle municipalities of metropolitan Melbourne. It is consequently the first time that a detailed

picture of the use and ownership of public land – including land owned by the Crown and by more than 22 government departments and public authorities – has been summarised for much of the metropolitan area.

The public land estate across the investigation area consists of almost 58,140 hectares of Crown land (excluding most roads) and 32,000 hectares of public authority freehold land. This is 16 per cent of all land within the investigation area.

VEAC has categorised the majority (60 per cent) of this public land as 'services and utilities areas'. This large proportion is mainly due to the extensive network of roads and road reserves and large areas for water and sewerage services. Other categories containing significant areas of public land include national and state parks (more than 15 per cent of public land), water production areas, regional and metropolitan parks, natural features reserves and state forest.

Public authorities with the largest landholdings in the investigation area are Melbourne Water, VicRoads, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and VicTrack.

CONTRIBUTION OF PUBLIC LAND TO LIVEABILITY AND NATURAL VALUES

Liveability reflects the well-being of communities. Public land makes a significant contribution to liveability of metropolitan Melbourne through parks, roads, hospitals, schools and other community services.

Unlike private land, public land provides governments with opportunities to improve social, economic, environmental, cultural and governance outcomes (i.e. liveability outcomes). These opportunities generally contribute to the 'public good' through the conservation of the natural environment, opportunities for recreation and relaxation, the delivery of public services and utilities, and securing land for use by future generations.

Public land benefits members of the community, often without the requirement to pay for access to private services and/or landholdings, and generally without being excluded based on ownership or club membership. Most importantly, there is a stability or permanence associated with public land, which may be lacking for private land.

This discussion paper reports on three ways that public land contributes to liveability and natural values:

- ▶ providing public open space,
- ▶ protecting biodiversity, and
- ▶ aiding communities to adapt to and mitigate climate change.

* Municipalities of Banyule, Bayside, Boroondara, Brimbank, Cardinia, Casey, Darebin, Frankston, Glen Eira, Greater Dandenong, Hobsons Bay, Hume, Kingston, Knox, Manningham, Maribyrnong, Maroondah, Melbourne, Melton, Monash, Moonee Valley, Moreland, Nillumbik, Port Phillip, Stonnington, Whitehorse, Whittlesea, Wyndham, Yarra.

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Melburnians consider public open space to be a key contributor to their liveability. It was one of the key issues raised during VEAC's public consultation.

VEAC has developed an inventory and maps of public open space on Crown land, public authority land and municipal land across the investigation area. This is the first time that this information has compiled in one inventory.

Significant areas (more than 68,000 hectares) of public land and local council owned land in the investigation area are open space. Protected areas, such as national and state parks, make up the largest category of public open space in investigation area. Within the urban areas of the investigation area, the largest category is organised recreation areas, such as sports fields.

Public open space per thousand people is generally higher in growth and outer municipalities and lower in established municipalities of the investigation area. This difference is largely due to non-urban areas and the distinction between established and other municipalities is not as clear when only considering urban areas within the investigation area.

Issues associated with the provision of public open space include the absence of a current metropolitan-wide open space strategy and the pressures on open space from projected increases in population. It will be more difficult to respond to population increases in established municipalities where there is limited scope to create additional open space.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND PUBLIC LAND

Climate change impacts on public land and its management. The recent severe rainfall shortages had a significant impact on Melbourne's parks, gardens and recreation reserves. Bushfires are predicted to increase, as are extreme weather events. Sea-level rise in future decades will affect the coastlines of the Port Phillip Bay and Western Port regions.

Urban public land can play a role in the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change through parks and street trees providing cooler areas to reduce the urban heat island effect. Many biodiversity links are on public land and these are important for maintaining biodiversity under the threat of climate change in the long-term.

ENHANCING BIODIVERSITY

Most of suburban Melbourne has been irreversibly changed. This region has the most altered landscape in Victoria, due to the amount of direct habitat loss and because the land and associated land uses between any remaining fragments of habitat are so inhospitable to native biodiversity.

Pressures on the biodiversity in the investigation area include habitat loss, fragmentation, and degradation (particularly from invasive species), altered fire regimes, climate change, and the impact of recreation and tourism. Natural habitats on public land need to be protected, maintained or enhanced wherever possible.

Melbourne's remaining natural environments include some significant protected areas, such as Warrandyte State Park, and other major national and state parks in the outer areas. Native vegetation along creeks and waterways, and large areas of bushland remaining in regional and metropolitan parks and other reserves, are also valuable ecological assets as well as providing a range of other benefits for urban residents.

SURPLUS PUBLIC LAND

VEAC has defined 'Crown land and public authority land not committed to a specific use' as surplus public land. For public authority owners and managers, the value of land that is surplus to current and future requirements tends to be its financial value to be realised on sale and/or the reduction in management costs achieved on disposal.

By contrast, Melbourne communities value surplus public land in terms of its potential alternative community uses, particularly land that is, or could be, public open space.

Some ways of enhancing the contribution of surplus public land to the liveability of metropolitan Melbourne include listing all surplus public land on a central register, retaining Crown land that is suitable for another public use or selling public authority freehold land at a price that reflects its intended public use.

DRAFT LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The draft land use recommendations contained in this report mainly confirm existing land use and management across the investigation area. In addition, VEAC has developed a small number of draft recommendations for areas of public land with biodiversity values. These include draft recommendations for additions to Kinglake National Park and Bunyip State Park and the creation of the Point Cook Coastal Park and Bandicoot Corner Bushland Area.