



MINUTES
Ordinary General Meeting, Tuesday 19 June 2018, 7.32pm

Present: Martin Andrade (guest), Nicholas Atkins, Kevin Chamberlin, Mary Chapman, Emmy Chung, Sebastian Clark, Bill Cook, Stephen Farrugia, Janet Graham, Lee Harrison (guest), Jan Lacey, Liam Lenihan, Dan McDonnell, Bridget Macwhirter, Jane Poynter, Jacqueline Stevenson, Geraldine Suter, Daniel Tipping (guest) and John Widmer

Apologies: Ray Cowling, Peter Gerrand, Valerie Gerrand, Michael Horscroft, Rosemary John, Jacques Péril, Margaret Péril, Duncan Rouch and Lorraine Siska

The apologies were noted and the Chair, Kevin Chamberlin, introduced the guest speakers from the City of Melbourne's Urban Sustainability Branch: Martin Andrade, Lee Harrison and Daniel Tipping.

1. Presentations by the Melbourne City Council's Urban Forest and Ecology Team on the Royal Park Transport Assessment, Nature in the City and pruning works in Flagstaff Gardens

1(a) Presentation by Martin Andrade (Open Space Planning Team) on the Royal Park Transport Assessment

Martin Andrade went over the scope of the project — assessing all modes of transport within, to and from, and through Royal Park. Movements included trains, trams, private vehicles, bikes and pedestrians. They were looking at case studies and other parks with the aim of improving the status of Royal Park. Case studies included New York and Paris. Martin noted that Melbourne was not the only city facing these issues. They were now consulting with different stakeholders.

Their analysis had identified four main uses of the land in Royal Park and they were trying to understand these different uses:

- Australian landscape (and cultural heritage)
- 'Grassy destinations'
- Destinations in buildings and structures
- Regional transport routes.

The first three contribute to the park and the fourth threatens it. However, the three positive uses can generate negative transport-related impacts. They wanted to assess utilisation of the park and examine the impact of cars on soil erosion and compaction with consequent effects on flora and fauna. Erosion was occurring from the inside of the park and people being in inappropriate places. There was also pressure from the park's boundaries, where land was being lost where cars were parking on soft rather than hard surfaces. The Transport Assessment is envisioned to encourage the new Master Plan to replace the concept of 'entrances' with 'links'.

In summary:

- Protect — prevent further erosion of land by transport facilities
- Recover — return land used for transport inside the park boundaries to recreational and environmental use
- Expand — extend the park beyond the current boundaries into space that is notionally used for transport purposes.

The team are doing surveys and interviews and sharing information with different stakeholders. For example, the NWMA can circulate it further. This Transport Assessment is looking for opportunities and issues on a broader scale as well.

Questions / comments by attendees and answers by Martin

Q: I'm worried about the way Royal Park has been managed. In the 1980s/1990s the Council agreed to an 'open plain' park. However, soccer was being played there, which wasn't in accordance with the plan; the park wasn't meeting a local need. There was an increase in car-parking spaces with the State Netball Hockey Centre development. We need open space, where the park is not incrementally fenced off.

Royal Park is well served by public transport but this has never been capitalised on. The zoo never embraced this. Remember Council's plan for a concrete bus-parking area at the new Royal Children's Hospital. The car park is very poorly utilised because of the meters. Along Park Street there are several ovals, formerly mainly used by Brunswick groups. I hope there is no plan to widen Brens Drive and Macarthur Road.

A: Nothing has been decided yet. We will look at alternatives.

Q: What about the nine-hole golf course? A more appropriate use could be found, such as open space.

A: We will gather information on this sort of thing to inform decisions — for instance, monitoring how many times the ovals are used.

Q: Are these facilities to assist Moreland Council?

Q: How much authority do you have? If the Liberals win the election, they might trash the park. What powers do you have to manage this?

A: We need to come up with a proactive strategy rather than just ameliorating damage.

Q: One issue is crossing major roads — the timing is against pedestrians. A second issue is car-parking. The zoo is quite aggressive about its parking, yet is very well served by public transport. Everywhere in the world now the talk is about mass transit, not private car use. Facility operators should be told no more parking — Council should make this a policy.

A: We haven't been able to track this until now. Roads used to be for emergency access, now they are used all the time. We need information before we can develop relevant policies.

Q: New York doesn't allow cars in Central Park.

Q: Regarding the golf course, judging from the car park it doesn't get much use. People are not noticing the removal of 40 car spaces. Resurfacing it was a waste of money.

A: I will share my presentation with you all.

Comments about the Royal Park Transport Assessment could be made on the Participate Melbourne website until Monday 9 July.

1(b) Presentation by Lee Harrison (ecologist) and Daniel Tipping (arborist) on the Nature in the City Strategy

The City of Melbourne's (CoM) latest strategy, Nature in the City, is one of three overlapping plans to create thriving, diverse and healthy ecosystems. Nature in the City is a framework for improving ecological connectivity across the City of Melbourne. The strategy has three main goals:

- (i) To create a more diverse, connected and resilient natural environment
- (ii) To connect people to nature, partly to improve human health
- (iii) To demonstrate leadership in urban ecology and conservation of biodiversity.

Goal (i) – improving diversity

- increase the understorey by 20%
- understand barriers for wildlife — wide roads etc — and help animals to cross roads.

Goal (ii) – connecting people to nature

For HollowBlitz, a citizen science program that aims to locate and document nesting birds:

- they selected five sites — parks across Melbourne
 - created a bird survey app
 - hired survey leaders
 - deployed 200-plus volunteers over four nights
- to ascertain the number of birds using tree hollows.

Many bird species were found in elm trees. Royal Park consists predominantly of sugar gums and supports many species including the purple-crowned lorikeet. Since the first sighting of one in Royal Park more were now breeding there. If there are not enough hollows in a particular location more can be created, but if there are no birds there is no point. They have to work strategically to retain hollows and damaged branches. (Branches can be problematic if likely to break and fall.)

An image was shown onscreen of a chainsaw hollow being created in the north-west corner of Flagstaff Gardens between King Street and the bowling club, almost opposite St James Old Cathedral. The tree had died and the team decided to retain it but prune it back. A hole was carved and a faceplate put back, leaving a hole for access. This achieves a more natural result than with artificial nesting boxes. It needs careful monitoring with regard to the tree's life span and many other factors such as moisture in the soil.

They put a hole 38 mm in diameter in the branch stump for small birds, not rainbow lorikeets, which are well catered for. They were previously unsure what species used the holes, so are going to proceed more scientifically. Metal tags have been attached to trees. These are triggered by heat, alerting observers to use of a hollow. Vegetation is being planted under the tree to protect fledglings when they jump out of the nest.

Questions / comments by attendees and answers by Lee and Daniel

Q: We must work harder regarding dogs. Everyone lets them off the lead there.

Q: Point 1: I recently heard butcherbirds for the first time in Melbourne. Point 2: We need to deal with mynas.

A: Noisy mynas [native species] are just as bad. Mass culling wouldn't do much.

Q: What effect do the possums have?

A: They are probably having a bad impact on the bird population. We install possum bands on trees and people remove them.

Q: What about rabbits?

A: (Mary Chapman) We are putting rabbit guards in Royal Park. Twenty rabbits have destroyed vegetation around the Royal Children's Hospital. The hospital is collaborating on a control program. We have to be careful not to upset animal activists and children.

Q: Re the median trees in Rosslyn Street — the trees have failed.

A: There is money in the budget for the next financial year to enable replanting.

Q: It's part of the West Melbourne Structure Plan to plant in Rosslyn.

A: We're working with MMRA, replacing every tree lost with three trees. It depends on the relationship with the relevant authority. (CoM is supportive of Metro Rail.) We're working on the relationship with MMRA.

Q: There will be a lot of opportunities.

A: Royal Park is packed with bird species. There are hollow-bearing trees, grasslands, wetlands, ponds — all sorts of different resources to sustain wildlife.

Q: What's happening around Arden and Moonee Ponds Creek?

A: (Liam Lenihan, CoM Community Engagement team member) We're awaiting the outcome. We're working with Melbourne Water. CoM doesn't have much jurisdiction along the creek.

A: Moonee Ponds Creek is a very important corridor.

A: (Mary Chapman) We are looking at putting access steps to the creek in the Kensington area.

Q: Are the elms dying out?

A: We're assessing how important they are for the ecology. They are important to rainbow lorikeets.

The Chair thanked the guests for their presentations. They departed and the meeting continued with its regular business.

2(a) Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting

Moved Jane Poynter, seconded Emmy Chung:

That the minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on Tuesday 15 May 2018, having been circulated electronically, be confirmed.

Carried.

2(b) Matters arising from the minutes

Jan Lacey pointed out that Duncan Rouch had been asked to reissue his paper on the new social housing strategy and she said she had not seen it yet. It was noted that Jan had raised the matter of the amended report and that it hadn't yet been circulated.

3. Committee report

Secretary Jane Poynter said there was not much to report.

(1) Membership renewals

Jacque Stevenson was now looking after membership, so would circulate something soon about memberships in arrears. Following the closure of the PayPal option, members were being asked to renew via EFT, cash or cheque.

(2) North West Patch

At 11.00am today, Jane and Kevin had set North West Patch free, handing over the remaining funds. The Patch had had its first AGM, with Bridget Macwhirter elected chair, Jane Poynter deputy chair, Emma Lynas secretary, Jacqueline Stevenson treasurer, committee members Yvonne Charasse and Melissa Nile, and Nick Atkins as horticultural planner. They were probably 90% of the way to getting the community garden established. Bridget thanked everyone for their support and said the group no longer had to rely on the Association but all members were welcome to join or visit the garden. Jane added that North West Patch would be joining NWMA again at our Spring Fling stall.

4. Proposed closure of the Victoria Police Melbourne North Criminal Investigation Unit (CIU)

The closure of the local CIU was still going ahead. A media release had been drafted to get publicity. Jan had not seen any results but Kevin had had one response. NWMA members had been asked to send letters of support (via email 27 May) — there was probably still time. We didn't want to lose the local focus and detectives who were familiar with the North Melbourne area. It was noted that Jan had reported on this issue and would keep the Association updated.

5. Protect Abbotsford Street Estate meeting and update

Jan explained that the Protect Abbotsford Street Estate (PASE) group was organising a public meeting for 6.30pm at North Melbourne Library on Wednesday 18 July and would be advertising it with a flyer. The Greens were assisting and there would probably be a Greens member as either chair or a speaker at the meeting. Kevin said that subject to viewing it the Association would circulate the flyer.

6. Reports from affiliated organisations

(a) Melbourne North Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC)

Jan reported on the latest PCCC meeting.

Facebook: Go to *Eyewatch – Melbourne Police Service Area* to check out crime prevention advice and other useful information about local policing.

Australian Muslim Social Services Agency (AMSSA): Yasac had spoken about this program. Directed particularly at Somali and Sudanese youths and their parents, it aims to reconnect parents with their children, and to redirect the energy of the younger generation to positive activities like sport, camping and learning what their religion is really about. Because some parents have poor English skills and their children only speak English, communication often breaks down. The agency encourages parents to hold onto their old culture but adapt to Australian ways too.

The Huddle has provided them with space for a small fee. A couple of sporting teams have been developed. Girls often remain close to their mothers, so intergenerational breakdown is usually not as acute with girls as it is with boys.

AMSSA is trying to make itself better known in the community via Facebook and other social media and needs our help to spread the word. Suggestions from PCCC members included home tutoring in English for women not comfortable leaving their house, asking Melbourne University music therapy students to volunteer with the agency, and seeking publicity through SBS.

Crime statistics: Crime of all types continues to fall in our local area. There had been a blitz involving the Environment Protection Authority and police in Lygon Street that had caught many excessively noisy cars and motorbikes, with owners to be fined \$800. This was the culmination of a PCCC campaign to protect Carlton residents from disturbance by hoon driving at all hours. The PCCC has asked that blitzes take place regularly until there is consistent improvement.

NWMA members noted that noise was widespread here too and suggested that the same approach be taken in Spencer and Abbotsford streets. Harley Heaven (Harley-Davidson Motorcycles) at 445 Spencer Street was going to expand and take over the karaoke place. It was agreed that Bill Cook should contact Carolyn Fyfe regarding the matter of noise and antisocial behaviour in Spencer Street and other local roads for her to report to the Docklands Security Group – Melbourne West.

There was discussion about whether the statewide reduction in crime statistics meant fewer drugs or just fewer arrests.

(b) Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek (FMPC)

John Widmer reported that the group seemed to be well run but many participants were just individuals. The FMPC meeting last night (18 June) had raised similar issues to a presentation at Moonee Valley Council. Moonee Valley Council is developing a political agenda for the restitution of the concreted section of the creek. There were more earthworks on that section than ever before and litter traps were reappearing from under the silt. John queried whether we should liaise with Melbourne Water.

When the Arden development is complete Moonee Ponds Creek will see a huge number of people in the area and the creek will be very important. John had seen a lot of ibis there tonight. He said there were competing interests, such as VicTrack, which owns the western side of the creek. The railway line runs along the eastern side directly under Transurban's CityLink viaduct. Why does VicTrack still hold the land on the western bank, which is not aligned with any current rail works?

Mary said an opportunities study was being done, and noted that Stubbs Street had flooded twice last year and also last Sunday — the pumps were not working. Kevin added that the Council had done a lot of work on drains to deal with flooding and had also upgraded pumping stations. Stephen Farrugia said the bike path under Macaulay Road was flooded today. Mary thought it would be good if CoM could become the overarching authority for Moonee Ponds Creek.

Moved Jane Poynter, seconded Stephen Farrugia:

That this meeting endorse John Widmer as our observer at Friends of Moonee Ponds Creek meetings and he will report back to NWMA meetings regularly.

Carried.

7. Discussion of correspondence circulated in the last month and received by hand

Kevin confirmed that everything of importance had been circulated by email.

8. General business

There were no items of general business.

9. Time, date and venue of next ordinary general meeting

Tuesday 17 July 2018, 7.30pm, at the Bastow Institute, 603–615 Queensberry Street, North Melbourne.

The meeting closed at 9.15pm.