

**Submission
No 79**

INQUIRY INTO THE PROTECTIONS WITHIN THE VICTORIAN PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Organisation: Heatherton R.A.I.D. (Residents Against Inappropriate Development) Inc

Date Received: 29 January 2022

January 29, 2022.

We wish to provide comment on the Parliamentary Inquiry into the Protections within the Victorian Planning Framework.

State Statutory support, through Melbourne 2030 and the long-established Green Wedge Policy, along with recent strategic framework Plan Melbourne (2017-2050), collectively sets out to protect Metropolitan Green Wedge Land from uses and development that would diminish its agricultural, environmental, conservation, landscape, natural resource or recreation values.

The Plan Melbourne (2017-2050) Summary Document incorporates a series of Principles and Outcomes that are key to its Vision.

These include: -

- Principle 4 - Environmental resilience and sustainability
- Principle 7 - Strong and healthy communities

“Maintain a permanent urban growth boundary around Melbourne to create a more consolidated, sustainable city.” {Page 9, Outcome 2}

“Strengthen protection and management of green wedge land. Protect and enhance valued attributes of distinctive areas and landscapes.” {Page 11, Outcome 4}

“Develop a network of accessible, high-quality, local open spaces.” {Page 12, Outcome 5}

“Melbourne will be greener, cooler and more liveable.

The community’s access to open space and nature will be enhanced and biodiversity and ecological processes will be safeguarded for future generations.

Make Melbourne cooler and greener. Support a cooler Melbourne by greening urban areas, buildings, transport corridors and open spaces to create an urban forest.

Strengthen the integrated metropolitan open space network.

Protect and restore natural habitats.

Create a network of green spaces that support biodiversity conservation and opportunities to connect with nature.

Protect and enhance the health of urban waterways.

Improve air quality and reduce the impact of excessive noise.

Reduce air pollution emissions and minimise exposure to air pollution and excessive noise.” {Pages 13 & 14, Outcome 6}

The Kingston Green Wedge, and long planned, sensible projects like the Heatherton to Dingley Chain of Parks, will also be critical to delivering a cooler urban landscape as climate change continues to negatively affect our health, our environment, and our enormous number of species extinctions during these increasingly longer, hotter summers.

There is already evidence that green spaces in urban areas are providing refuges for species as the climate changes.

This is a region that historically has had many landfills and mining operations, which has left an appalling legacy of contaminated fill sites and a degraded landscape.

Since the mid 1970's, a series of strategic planning and Policies at both State and Local level have been consistently applied to rehabilitate these sites, including 130 hectares placed under a Public Acquisition Overlay in favour of Parks Victoria for the Sandbelt Open Space Network.

Well established Local Planning Policies, zoning/overlays and Green Wedge Policy are supposed to protect the Kingston Green Wedge/Chain of Parks from inappropriate uses and provided certainty around the decades long planned outcomes.

The State Government, through its current orbital rail plans, will completely undermine all that has been put in place by proposing to locate a heavy industrial type use on nearly 50 hectares of Green Wedge Land, 90% of which is subject to a Public Acquisition Overlay (Parks Victoria) for the Chain of Parks, breaking a key link in this chain.

This Chain of Parks has been embedded in south east Open Space Policy since 1994 and at the 2018 election, the Andrews Labor Government committed \$24 million to delivering this project.

Realising a long-term planning vision is dependent on the cumulative effect of consistent planning decisions that maintain the strategic direction over a long timeframe.

Large green open spaces are already critical to supporting quality of life; good physical and mental health; and for the most popular sports such as football, soccer, cricket, basketball, netball etc.

These sports allow families to participate and underpin community cohesion and inclusion.

We already see the face of Melbourne changing with regards to residential development.

Gone are the days where large lots of land was available for people to build their dream home with a big backyard for their children to play in.

Melbourne housing options are being directed towards higher density living such as multi-storey apartments, townhouses, dual occupancy allotments and units due to the size and cost factors.

Current State Policy is driving this trend even further throughout suburban Melbourne and it is particularly disturbing that Local Government oversight/planning controls in their respective municipalities has been significantly eroded.

A planning system, whereby Local Councils and residents can collaboratively determine the future direction of the municipality whilst preserving its character and residential amenity, is crucial to a proper, transparent and democratic process.

Recent changes to Victorian Planning Provisions has completely undermined this process, leaving the suburbs of Melbourne vulnerable to over development and its people without a voice.

It is absolutely necessary to find a proper balance between meeting the needs of a growing city and preserving its character and quality of life; a centrally controlled, 'one size fits all' approach will irrevocably diminish Melbourne's liveability.

As mentioned above, the concept of the home with the big backyard is changing and as an alternative people residing in these higher density developments are now looking for places to go where they can have access to sizable open space.

This Chain of Parks in Heatherton-Braeside was to cater not only for all the communities and suburbs surrounding Heatherton, but also for people from further afield to come and visit.

People want to go to a place where they can let their children run around safely, kick a football, play cricket as well as meet up with friends and family.

Additionally, there is a significant need for open space and regional sports grounds to service both the Kingston and surrounding municipalities.

These other municipalities, such as Glen Eira, Bayside, Monash etc simply do not have sufficient available space, whereas the Heatherton area of the Kingston Green Wedge, having parcels of land suitable that are already zoned for such uses and being located proximate to these other municipalities, can adequately meet these needs.

For some years, with the cessation of mining/landfill and subsequent site rehabilitation, this area of the Kingston Green Wedge with its local trails and semi-rural spaces has been undergoing a gradual, but noticeable transformation for the better with its burgeoning flora and fauna, which needs to be protected.

Over these years we have seen a noticeable uptake in the patronage of these trails and spaces, particularly during lockdowns where the true benefit these areas provided for people's well-being became clearly evident.

If our bird species are driven away from this valuable habitat corridor, they will have even less areas to breed, feed and roost.

This area is now well known and frequented by bird watchers/photographers, which is proof positive of how abundant in a variety of bird species this area has become.

The current orbital rail plan poses a real risk of what would become to be known as a State sanctioned permanent industrialisation of this part of the Green Wedge, leaving this region and other Metropolitan Green Wedges vulnerable to a proliferation of industrial uses.

Melbourne Green Wedges are designed to be the lungs of this city providing a means to reduce the heat generated by built up areas, not a location for urban/industrial uses that would further exacerbate urban heat generation.

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