



Point Lonsdale Civic Association Inc.

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Representing Point Lonsdale Residents since 1910

09/8/2022

To. BoQ Mayor – Cr. Ross Ebbels;
CC. BoQ Councillors - Cr. Michael Grout, Cr. Isabelle Tolhurst, Cr. Fleur Hewitt, Cr. Donnie Grigau.
CC. CEO BoQ - Mr. Martin Gill, Colleen White DELWP and Lisa Neville MP

VICTORIA PARK DRAFT POLICY CP054

The Association would like to state from the outset, that we , like many community members, are totally dismayed, and outraged, at the actions of Council , in response to the PIN Notices being served on Victoria Park which resulted in the destruction of ancient moonah trees and habitat.

In our view these actions of Council challenge the environmental provisions contained within :

- The CERP that Council has recently adopted;
 - The Wadawurrung Healthy Country Plan;
- and
- devalue Victoria Park as the centrepiece of Queenscliffe’s Botanic Gardens Precinct - HO 9 Heritage Precinct.

It was apparent from what has transpired, that the community was not adequately consulted and consequently we are left with a terrible outcome which is an eye sore for all to see.

Our number one issue with this matter is the lack of transparency that has occurred between ratepayers and Council.

The Association is extremely concerned that something similar may happen to Royal Park vegetation, or even the Avenue of Honour through the actions of just one person initiating Worksafe PIN Notices.

As far as our membership is concerned we have never had so much negative feedback relating to a Council action (save for perhaps the development at the PLMDP some years ago) with numerous calls and conversations about what occurred at Victoria Park.

1. No Camping at Victoria Park.

The Association submits that the Council should return the entire 1.6 hectare park to nature and restore the informal trees/vegetation and make the park an important feature at the entrance to the township rather than a caravan park. Caravanners should be offered alternate locations in other designated caravan parks.

The Association has not arrived at this position lightly. However, it is clear that the community overwhelmingly wants the “Park as a Park” and the trees and parkland canopy restored.

We also believe the Draft Park Plan is unworkable for a number of reasons, and camping and caravanning is no longer suited to Victoria Park in the longer term:

- The latest hybrid plan is essentially a caravan park with increased environmental areas in the central core and along the street frontages. The 5 pockets of restricted camping west of the central road, which will only operate for 5 weeks of the year, are ad-hoc, small in size, have limited revenue potential and will only diminish attempts to restore the parkland vegetation in the central core of the park. There is also no discussion about the aged annualised sites in the General Camping area or replanting in the largely barren camping area east of the central road.
- Post pandemic, larger RV's are now the norm for many users. These demand larger turning areas to park in camp sites, black water dump facilities, and greater electrical infrastructure by their very nature. Victoria Park lacks many of these requirements and if this infrastructure is upgraded, it will only lead to more pressure on existing and new vegetation which is largely unprotected.
- Larger RV's mean larger sites and bigger roadways to navigate to the targeted site. One could argue that this will lead to further reductions of trees/vegetation and ultimately a reduction in the number of sites made available to tourists anyway. This also means diminishing revenue from the Park (refer Hansen 2018 report extract below).

“Site access arrangements from Hesse Street is convoluted and confused, without dedicated parking bays for caravans and inadequate manoeuvring space when entering the site and access to the site office on check-in.”

“The consequential loss of sites associated with upgrading the road structure and park layout in some areas would have an obvious impact on Council’s annual income stream generated from the site”.

- Victoria Park is too small to accommodate all the modern infrastructure to function as a dual use Tourist Park and a Public Park for residents and ratepayers. For example there are no community facilities, limited showers/toilets and community lighting.
- Victoria Park entry and exit points are having impact on existing vegetation. The current layout will need to be updated – with perhaps more tree removal – to accommodate modern regulations.
- Health and safety concerns regarding Fire Fighting Regulations, which in our opinion will only lead to much more carnage in the environmental zones and ultimately the shady areas of the park.
- Limited use of the Park currently, means that permanent caravans are left on site. They constitute an eye sore to the local environment, and the Park’s importance as the gateway to the historic township. Dilapidated RV’s and annexes a mere 200m from some of the Queenscliff’s leading heritage buildings located in our only Botanic Gardens Heritage Precinct is not a tourist attraction nor good marketing.

The Associations poses the following question:

Given the current situation and the recent large-scale destruction of trees and vegetation – even with a planned replanting program - won't the Borough face the same dilemma in say, 20 years time in respect of RV camping in the Park and demands for the removal of trees again?

2. The Coastal and Marine Management Plan (CMMP) Needs to Reference Borough Tourist Parks/Public Use Parkland.

DELWP have consistently indicated the CMMP is a very important guiding document for Queenscliffe Council. It has, and rightly so, referenced Public use land like that in Victoria Park.

Recent events have demonstrated the very nature of protecting fragile public spaces like Victoria Park, mean it cannot successfully co-exist with RV Tourist operations

It is therefore hoped the long-awaited CMMP becomes the blueprint for Council to manage its Crown Land parks and reserves including Victoria Park. This critical document needs to be completed before any lasting decisions are made about our fragile coastal reserves and green open spaces.

Yours sincerely

Fay Agterhuis – on behalf of Committee & members

Vice President PLCA

Ref: 090822BOQCP054
