

# Elsternwick Park Northern Section; Response from environmental groups to the 3 options under discussion through 'Have Your Say' Bayside Council

## Introduction

At the meeting 1 March 2017 of environmental groups and some local residents concerned about the future use of Elsternwick Park it was agreed that we would compile key pieces of information in order to decide on actions including letters and deputations to go to those with an interest in or responsibility for Elsternwick Park.

The matter is urgent as Bayside Council is currently scheduled to decide on the future use of Elsternwick Park North at its 26 April 2017 meeting.

## Back Ground -

Elsternwick Park is Crown Land reserved as a public park and recreational purposes in 1872 and covers approximately 40 hectares of land. Its management is under the authority of Bayside Council.

The Park has a variety of roles to play both in recreational facilities and as a public park but increasingly important is its role as a significant environmental asset. Currently, sporting uses take up most of the park both north and south of Bent Street

The environmental groups involved are committed to enhancing its environmental functions in the following key areas:

### **Water Quality Management-**

Elsternwick Park is approx. 40 hectare park located at the end of Elster Creek. It is at the apex of a heavily urbanized 40 sq kilometres catchment and receives both water and pollution from roads runoff which is transported along 18 kms of concrete drains and culverts until it is deposited untreated into the Port Phillip Bay. In this process the water in the creek accumulates (and finally deposits) 26,700 kg of nitrogen, 380 kg of phosphorus and 1.890.000 kgs of total suspended solids into the waters of Elwood and Brighton annually.

This does not need to be the case. Amazingly enough in the relatively small transition where the water meets the soil in Elsternwick Park, the opportunity exists for the water to be cleaned and treated for reuse/ or re-entry to the bay. This process requires a mere 1.4 hectares of wetland surface area which would have the capacity to reduce this load by 80% thus meeting best practice standards.

To date successive Bayside Councils have failed to set aside the required area of 1.4 hectares to meet best practice standards to ensure a positive contribution to bay health.<sup>1</sup> An area of 0.4 hectares was set aside in Elsternwick Park in 2013 and a wetland constructed with grants from the Federal Government and contributions from the City of Port Phillip and Bayside. It had the potential

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<sup>1</sup> Draft Elsternwick Park Sustainable Water Management Strategy EDAW 2008

mutually beneficial function of water treatment and recycling but was sized only to meet its water recycling targets.

The water quality in Elster Creek has continue to decline and its water recycling function has been compromised. This has had a flow-on effect on the environment and is a threat to the .... of wildlife species which have been carefully identified and recorded as inhabiting the remnant land making up the current flora and fauna of Elsternwick Park north.

### **Flooding and Water -Recycling -**

Melbourne Water has an overall function in relation to water management and drainage for the Greater Melbourne area. In 1999 ? major works were done in Elsternwick Park including a major diversion drain to Head Street and re-shaping to provide a water retention function in both the northern and southern sections of Elsternwick Park.

The lake in the southern section of Elsternwick Park has a joint function of flood regulation and plays a part in water treatment and recycling- as well as providing an aesthetic benefit and wildlife habitat. The water recycling scheme was commissioned to assist in reducing the high mains water demand of Elsternwick Park and the Elwood Foreshore area and also links to the 0.4 h wetland area referred above.

The flooding in the Elster Creek Catchment and its impact in Elwood, is the subject of work being spearheaded by the Monash CRC for Water Sensitive Cities (Cooperative Research Centre). Increasing flood events have been identified with much of Elwood now being subject to a Flood Overlay (BO111) in the planning scheme. Additionally the CRC is investigating the impact of sea level rise in this area.

### **Current and Proposed Uses in the Northern section of Elsternwick Park-**

Bayside Council has recently undertaken a series of consultations regarding the use of the land in the northern section of Elsternwick Park in particular with regard to the future use of the land currently leased under a commercial arrangement for the golf course.

A series of actions have been undertaken and some decisions have already been made by Bayside Council in the past year included -

- Rejection by the Council of a Golf Range
- Excision of the area currently leased by the VAFA which borders Glenhuntly Road and St Kilda Street for allow for their future permanent location here. The State Government is making a major contribution to this redevelopment. Other uses in this vicinity slated to be retained are the tennis courts and the bowling club.
- Establishment of a Deliberative Panel process to consider key issues and to inform the Council of its recommendation/s. This process resulted in 86% of the people on the Deliberative Panel supporting an environmental outcome for EP North (Option 1A of the Deliberative Panel)

Council are scheduled to make a decision on the matter at its meeting on 26 April 2017 It has the 3 options supported by the Deliberative Panel on its website with preliminary plans and costings.

**Option 1A** largely supports an environmental outcome for the balance of the northern section of EP including an enlarged wetland, planting of trees and understorey, provision for other sporting facilities for bikes, fitness stations, picnic areas etc. and the upgrading of Oval 2 and its facilities.

**Comment: Option 1A had the strongest support of the Deliberation Panel and provides a largely environmental outcome including the possibility of best practice water management.**

**Option 2A** includes the relocation and upgrading to 165x135m of the cricket field to the New Street alignment and 5 netball courts. A minor increase in pavilion size and pans are costed as well as additional provision for car parking. The balance of the area is allocated for passive recreation and environmental outcomes including enhanced wetlands.

**Comment Option 2A. Relocated and enlarged cricket ground, would permanently lock-in further organized sport recreational uses. The balance of the area has the opportunity for environmental outcomes including the possibility of best practice water management.**

**Option 5** essentially retains the golf course in its current location and upgrades oval 2 in its current location. Meeting minutes are on line regarding improvements for public access.

**Comments Option 5. Retention of the golf course provides visual amenity but essentially locks in the status quo. Council supported improvements to the Café seem to have little broader community benefit. Generally it is neither one thing nor the other and at a costing of \$5m t could encourage the leases to continue to operate. In the short term the wetland can be slightly expand but not to best practice standards.**

Elsternwick Coalition

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