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Date of Council meeting: *

Tuesday 14 December 2021

Agenda item title: *

Agenda item 6.7 Westgate Park Committee of Management

Alternatively you may attach your written submission by uploading your file here:



[submission_to_the_city_of_melbourne_12.12.2021.docx](#)

103.15 KB · DOCX

Do you also wish to attend the Council meeting in person, noting that there is no provision to make verbal submissions at Council meetings? *

Yes



Submission to the City of Melbourne
13 December 2021

Westgate Park Committee of Management

Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare is strongly in favour of the City of Melbourne assuming responsibility for the management of Westgate Park.

We have worked for over 20 years in the Park; planning, collecting seed, mulching, propagating, planting over 300 indigenous species in 9 distinct plant communities and undertaking major infrastructure projects. We now look forward to a future in which we can focus more on maintaining and better understanding the rich biodiversity of the park, and engaging with a growing local population that values nature.

Our volunteers will keep working in the Park – infill planting, weeding and maintaining plant health but we also look forward to spending more time on citizen science, particularly in understanding the sustainability and effectiveness of our work. Our Pollinator Project with RMIT was a world-first study, now in use in other parks and an analysis of almost 20 years of bird surveys is currently underway.

We are excited about bringing Bili Nursery and a compound with decent amenities for volunteers into a corner of the Wharf Road Triangle – a much more central and suitable location for both the park and the ongoing production of indigenous plants – demand for which has grown beyond our current capacity in Williamstown Road. The core purpose of Bili Nursery is to grow more indigenous plants and help councils and residents to restore natural values which we know they are keen to do.

We expect that a thriving indigenous nursery producing 150,000 plants a year (up from 85k 2 years ago) and a committed team of volunteers and staff will be valuable assets to the City of Melbourne's credentials in community engagement and biodiversity.

We look forward to investment in destination points like a children's nature playground, bird hides, boardwalks to protect salt marsh vegetation, better wayfinding and interpretation - features that will attract more people to the Park. There is an urgent need for a water management plan and to have a greater inflow of stormwater and preferably an outflow to maintain wetland health.

The Park is unique. It is surrounded by industry and busy roads, dominated by a majestic bridge, yet supports hundreds of wildlife species with arguably largest population of Superb Fairy-wrens in Melbourne. It has 1 km of largely unknown Yarra River frontage, a salt lake that turns pink, wetlands and rare plant species.

We are confident in the City of Melbourne's ability to see the bigger picture, to be a player in how the Park can serve the broader Fishermans Bend and CBD precincts, to bring its expertise and



experience in urban park management, and to see the opportunities for greenspace linkages for the City.

We have worked on several projects with the City of Melbourne such as the Bioblitz and our experience has been very positive. We hope to have a discussion with the City of Melbourne once the resolution is adopted about our working relationship with the City and an MoU outlining how this will work. It too is likely to be unique.

Your proposed requirement for DELWP to provide funding of \$900k a year for five years to cover operating costs seems entirely reasonable but we would be very disappointed if this was to be denied and the management proposal deferred for 5 years. We feel sure that another approach could be explored to avoid this delay and the subsequent stagnation of improvements in the Park.

Westgate Biodiversity has, by the way, just this week been given Tax Deductible Recipient status which may generate donations for worthwhile projects in the Park.

We have also been awarded grants recently for nest boxes for microbats and other fauna and for a Coastcare grant in partnership with Bayside Intrepid Landcare (a youth group) for innovative saltmarsh propagation and revegetation. There is growing interest from corporate groups in coming back to volunteer in the park and this is also a source of revenue.

We are concerned that recommendation 9.3 referring to the Ministerial funding (originally \$2.5 million and now ~\$1.6 million) may mean that this too would be deferred for 5 years. We have little confidence in Parks Victoria's capacity to proceed with the projects so far agreed as priorities, bearing in mind the fact that this money was set aside in 2015 and the only sums drawn to date from this allocation were for completing the new toilet block in September 2019 and, more recently \$120k for work yet to be done on the entry and other small projects.

Westgate Biodiversity: Bili Nursery & Landcare

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