



Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Ltd.

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Communications Coordinator
Parks and Recreation
City of Melbourne
Po Box 1603
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Open Space Strategy – Have your Say

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Open Space Strategy. Please accept this submission as a secondary submission to the preliminary submission sent on 5 May 2006.

VALS is disappointed that measures were not put in place to ensure that the Indigenous Australian voice about the Strategy could be heard, such as holding an Indigenous Australian Public Forum. It is doubtful that many Indigenous Australians engaged with the mainstream submission writing process due to barriers (ie: no computer to access the survey due to low socio-economic status).

VALS argues that the Strategy should include a section on Indigenous Australian's use of open space, especially in light of the debate over Camp Sovereignty. Indigenous Australians are placed in the best position to assist the City of Melbourne in developing the Indigenous Australian specific component of the Strategy and their opinions should have been more actively sought.

VALS does not profess to represent the entire Indigenous Australian community, but can provide some advice about what VALS, as an Indigenous Australian community organisation, considers should be included in the Strategy.

The City of Melbourne should consider the following when devising the Strategy:

- Precedent set by past progressive actions of the City of Melbourne in introducing:
 - Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP), launched 25 July 2006.¹
 - Statement of Commitment to Indigenous Australians (SOC).

¹ 'City of Melbourne launches Reconciliation Action Plan' Tuesday, 25 July 2006 as at <http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/info.cfm?top=228&pg=715&st=656>

- Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Melbourne and Reconciliation Victoria Inc (MOU).²
- The City of Melbourne's Aboriginal Consultative Group (ACG).
- Need to consider Indigenous Australian's use of open space is cultural space.
- Need to restore cultural pride and identity, which plays a vital part in efforts to end Indigenous Australian disadvantage.
- Need to acknowledge Indigenous Australians as the first people of this land (see SOC).
- Need to consult with the local Koorie community (see SOC) and Indigenous Australians working in Councils.³
- Need to consider the needs of Indigenous Australians earlier rather than later.
- Need to develop a strategy that goes beyond tokenism.
- Need to involve Indigenous Australians in decision making processes (see MOU, Bendigo Open Space Strategy 2004⁴).
- Need for an Employment and Training Strategy for Indigenous Australians (see RAP, Parks Victoria Indigenous Recruitment Program).⁵
- Need to form a partnership with the Indigenous Australian community (see MOU, RAP, ACG, Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement Phase 1 and 2, Parks Victoria's Indigenous Partnership Strategy).
- Need to appreciate Indigenous Australian knowledge in the urban park context. It appears that Indigenous Australian knowledge is only appreciated in the national park context (ie: common practice of joint Indigenous Land Management of National Parks, such as Indigenous Rangers). Indigenous Australians should have more involvement in Birrarung Marr Common Ground- Commemorative Place or any other urban park.

² Memorandum of Understanding Between The City of Melbourne and Reconciliation Victoria Inc as at http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/rsrc/IM_MOU.pdf

³ Statement of Commitment to Indigenous Australians by the City of Melbourne as at http://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/rsrc/IM_ReconciliationSCIA.pdf

⁴ City of Great Bendigo Open Space Strategy 2004, p.22 as at http://www.bendigo.vic.gov.au/Files/Open_Space_Strategy_Final_April_2005.pdf

⁵ Media release from the Acting Premier and Minister for Environment 'Thwaites Announces Further Parks Victoria Indigenous Initiatives' Wednesday 19 April 2006.

- Need to consider the impact on Indigenous Australians of strengthened police powers that are currently being debated (ie: move on powers, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders) and public drunkenness law.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Open Space Strategy. If you have any queries please contact VALS' Research Officer Ms Greta Jubb.

Yours Sincerely

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service Co-operative Limited

Frank E. Guivarra

Chief Executive Officer