

Royal Park Protection Group Inc.

The Director
East West Transport Options Review
Department of Transport
GPO Box 2797
Melbourne VIC 3001

16 July 2008

Dear Sir

Royal Park Protection Group Inc. Objection to Proposed Road Tunnels on Grounds of Destruction of Royal Park

Introduction

I am making a submission on the Eddington Report (**Report**) on behalf of the Royal Park Protection Group Inc. (**Group.**) Thank you for granting an extension of time in which to make my submission.

I should first state the formal objectives of our Group so that you know where we stand. We are dedicated: To protect, regenerate and conserve the Royal Park as a unique, indigenous, central city park for present and future generations, consistent with principles of the 1987 Royal Park Master Plan; and to oppose alienation of parkland by government, commercial, sporting and other bodies to ensure public access consistent with the terms of the establishment of the Royal Park. Royal Park was established under charter by Queen Victoria for the pleasure and recreation for the people of Melbourne- not as space for roadways.

We are objecting to the proposed Road Tunnels (**Tunnels**) on the grounds of the destructive impact on Royal Park. The project represents a major assault on one of our prime, historic parks of Melbourne. It is hard to envisage the extent of the devastation proposed, given the vague nature of the maps provided in the Report. Royal Park is not "terra nullius" with land there for the taking as Sir Rod Eddington and the State Government appear to suppose. (It should be noted that I have attended three briefings by Department of Transport staff on the Report so therefore am reasonably well informed on the Report.)

Here are the major impacts of the Tunnels on Royal Park:

Destruction of Parkland adjacent to the State Netball and Hockey Centre (SNHC)

1. As you will be aware, the Tunnel starts at Hoddle Street; goes under the Melbourne General Cemetery; and proceeds underground, running next to the Melbourne Zoo, until it comes to the surface to form a T junction in Royal Park. This is adjacent to the SNHC. This huge junction area has been referred to as a staging point for the construction of the Tunnels. The large expanse of open parkland will be a quarry for 5 to 10 years. (Refer attached photo of the area taken from the North Melbourne High Rise Housing Commission Flats.)
2. Although it is said to be constructed by "cut and cover" methods, the area adjacent to the SNHC area may never be "covered" due to security concerns. This was the view of Dr Jan Scheurer of RMIT and Curtin University W.A, a transport expert acquainted with freeways/tollways construction. He provided the RPPG with graphics drawn on an aerial map of Royal Park, which shows exactly where the Tunnels with 4 lanes of traffic will go in Royal Park. (See attached aerial map of Royal Park with graphics indicating the Tunnels.) The Report's little line drawings fail to present the reality and the enormity of this project.

The dotted lines on our photo represent Tunnels with open cut-and-cover construction and the filled-in lines the underground Tunnels. (As mentioned the Tunnel junction may, however, never be covered.) The fine lines represent walls or fences around exit and entry points and the one line to the south of the SNHC is a roadway needed to drive around the perimeter of the Tunnels junction.

3. The construction of the Tunnels junction will impact on the operation of the SNHC – noise, dust and vibration with blasting and excavation. Despite optimistic forecasts by Mr. Rob Hudson MP that construction in Holland Park will only take 2 years, the Department of Transport staff advised us in several briefings that the construction of the Tunnel junction in Royal Park would take 5 to 10 years. This could seriously impact the amenity of the SNHC and could mean that important hockey and netball games may be rescheduled elsewhere.

Destruction of Remnant Native Vegetation in West Royal Park

The southern spur of the Tunnel heads south under Flemington Road, emerges in Holland Park in Kensington and exits at the Port of Melbourne. But a northern spur carves its way through the remnant native vegetation zone of West Royal Park. This area has been rehabilitated and replanted over the years under the Royal Park Master Plan of the City of Melbourne. Enormous community effort has been expended on plantings and on Clean Up Australia days. The Eddington Report - in proposing that this area be bulldozed for a Tunnel - is treating the community with contempt.

Impact on Anzac Hall and the Urban Camp

We have been informed that, as the Tunnel will be constructed close to Anzac Hall, that the Urban Camp, which accommodates school children on visits to the city, will be closed during tunnel construction. This will kill this important service and permanent staff will lose their jobs.

Loss of Ross Straw Playing Fields in the Park

The ope-cut Tunnel will carve its way through a number of playing fields and possibly all 6 on the Ross Straw Field will be out of bounds. These are sports grounds for many residents in surrounding areas as Royal Park is a State Park. The sports played here are soccer, cricket and baseball. Newly settled African communities in the area use these grounds for informal soccer games. The popular children's playground would be bulldozed in the course of construction.

Destruction of Wetlands and Water Storage Tanks

The Royal Park Wetlands were established by the City of Melbourne as a water source for the park, sports grounds and golf course. The Tunnel is designed apparently to cut through the storage pond and exit in the middle of CityLink. This would destroy the operation of the Wetlands. The State Government contributed \$5 million for the Wetlands development prior to the Commonwealth Games. We consider it appalling that such resources be wasted. The Tunnel would also wreck an important habitat for water birds at a time our wetlands are drying up with the drought.

The City of Melbourne is just embarking upon an expensive project costing several million – to install water storage tanks under the Ross Straw Field. This is one of the few water reservoirs in inner Melbourne but will be destroyed by the invasive Tunnel

Installation of Obtrusive and Polluting Vent Stacks

Vent stacks 12 storeys high will be built at the entry/exits (“portals”) of the Tunnels and every 3 kms. on their route. An example of these obtrusive polluting chimneys - the Burnley Tunnel vent stack – can be seen outside the Malthouse Theatre in Sturt Street, South Melbourne. (See attached photo.) Vent stacks are likely to be positioned in Royal Park at the Tunnel junction and then at the

entry/exit to CityLink. Apart from the fact they are visually obtrusive, they will belch pollution over the Park and nearby residential areas. The security risk of interference by terrorists has never been considered.

Social Impacts

The Brumby Government is encouraging a population explosion in Victoria – we will have a million more settlers by 2030 than was anticipated or planned. We are seeing, therefore, increased density of settlement including in the inner city suburbs. Accompanying this is the appalling state of health of Victorians with the majority being overweight. Yet here is Sir Rod Eddington proposing in his Report the alienation of precious parkland used for passive recreation plus sports fields used for official sport. The citizens of Melbourne are being treated like a serf population with the right to residential amenity and a healthy lifestyle being denied.

We would be pleased if you could meet us to allow a fuller exposition of the reasons why we are implacably opposed to construction of Road Tunnels through Royal Park and through Melbourne. We consider it imperative that the \$10 billion funds designated for Roads Tunnels be diverted into improved public transport, in particular the extension of rail lines to outer suburbs, and into environmentally sustainable initiatives to fight climate change.

Yours sincerely

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