

Metropolitan Melbourne



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Subject: Version of submission from Susan Murray to be considered by VEAC in it Melbourne Metropolitan Investigation

Attention Bianca

As discussed this morning, Monday 2 March the attached document replaces the two versions emailed on 28 February 2009.

Than you for your courteous assistance.

Susan (Sue) Murray

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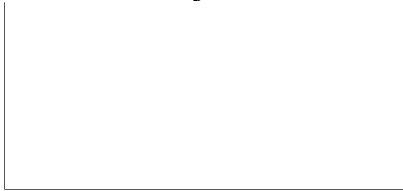


S. Murray's submission re VEAC's Melbourne Metropolitan Investigation.doc

**RE: METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE INVESTIGATION AREA – HOBSONS
BAY CITY COUNCIL**

To: Victorian Environmental Assessment Council
Level 6/8 Nicholson Street
East Melbourne
Vic 3002

From: Susan M Murray



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INTRODUCTION

This is a submission from an individual not from a representative of any group. My views are formed because I am:

- a long time resident of Williamstown (my family first settled here in 1910). I was educated here and have taught in local technical schools
- a member, and inaugural president, of Friends of the Williamstown Rifle Range (now named Friends of Williamstown Wetlands)
- a member of the Truganina Explosives Reserve Protection Society
- a committee member of the Inner West Branch of the National Trust
- a member of the Williamstown, Newport, Spotswood Residents Association (WNSRA)
- on the Truganina Explosives Reserve Advisory Committee as a National Trust representative
- registered to join a proposed Friends of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens
- particularly concerned to preserve the historic character, liveability and natural beauty of the City of Hobsons Bay

The submission contends that the values of the crown land in the City of Hobsons Bay are such that they should be retained in public ownership. Crown land, providing public open space, is an essential component of the unique character of the City of Hobsons Bay – cherished by residents and visitors alike.

Open space makes up 21% of the land area of our municipality. Our wetlands, creeks (five in total), native grasslands and 24km of coastline provide habitat for a diverse range of flora and fauna, and are valued as spaces for recreation and connection with nature. At least one species occurs only in the City of Hobsons Bay: the Altona Skipper Butterfly. Over 200 species of birds, including several species of migratory wading birds and around 200 species of local native plants are found in Hobsons Bay. (www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au)

Public parks, reserves and sports grounds in the city are important areas for social, recreational and community activities. Some crown land protects sensitive environments and some areas are notable for their historic significance.

In an increasingly densely settled, developed urban environment it is essential that public open spaces are retained and maintained for our health and well being. They contribute enormously to the liveability of our city and to the protection of our heritage and of flora and fauna.

This document draws on a variety of sources to detail something of the historic, social and conservation values of the Crown Land in the City of Hobsons Bay including the Parks Victoria web site and Parks Victoria Park Notes.

PARKLANDS AND FORESHORE OF HOBSONS BAY

There are a string of parks along the western shore of Port Phillip Bay. These include conservation sites stretching from the Westgate Bridge through Williamstown and Altona, westward to the Cheetham Wetlands and Point Cook.

In Hobsons Bay large tracts of open space separate residential areas from industry including: "five creek corridors, 23 kilometres of coastline with significant maritime history, conservation areas, the Coastal Trail, and the only two swimming beaches in the western suburbs of Melbourne. This coastline represents an important landscape and recreational asset" (www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au)

"The park network includes manicured, intensively planted spaces with heritage values and modern and botanically significant coastal salt marsh and 'wild' coastal spaces." (www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au)

Major parks include:

- Truganina Explosives Reserve, an important historical site
- Truganina Coastal Parklands
- Cherry Lake in Altona
- Williamstown Botanic Gardens
- Point Gellibrand Heritage Park
- Commonwealth Reserve
- Westgate Memorial Park
- Newport Lakes Park
- Paisley Park Newport

While these parks are formally ratified it is worth commenting on their value and reiterating the importance of retaining them.

Truganina Coastal Parklands

This area includes the Truganina Explosives Reserve, Truganina Swamp, the Altona Treatment Plant and Truganina Park. It is described in the City of Hobsons Bay brochure *Welcome to Truganina Parklands*.

Truganina Explosives Reserve

Truganina Explosives Reserve is a fenced-in area of 17 hectares of crown land. It was part of a larger area originally set aside in 1896 to provide a safe storage, handling and shipping point for explosives from Deer Park. These were used in the mining, quarrying and other industries throughout Australia.

Operations started in 1901 and continued until 1962 when they were closed down and most of the land was sold. 17 hectares were set aside and operations in testing, trials and

destruction of dangerous goods continued into the 1990s. Finally in 1995 the Reserve was earmarked for sale. After an energetic community campaign it was decided that the land should remain in public ownership.

This 17hectare area at the mouth of the Laverton Creek has now been reserved for conservation and is managed by the City of Hobsons Bay. The *Draft Truganina Explosives Reserve Management Plan 2003* details the values and features of this site which is classified by the National Trust. A series of scientific studies have identified the site as being of high cultural and natural significance for its

- fauna
- flora
- geomorphology (remnants of original sand dunes are considered of state significance)
- archeology (a section of the reserve contains six identified aboriginal sites and is considered of state significance)
- industrial heritage.

This draft master plan was drawn up for the Hobsons Bay City Council with the support of an Advisory Committee which included members of the Truganina Explosives Reserve Preservation Society and the Inner West Branch of the National Trust. The fact that the land had been fenced off for more than 100 years ensured a separate unique environment, with strong indigenous and industrial significance. The new park becomes one of a series of coastal parks on the western side of Hobsons Bay.

Unfortunately there have been long delays in implementing the master plan. Recently, the most important problem has been the need to decontaminate parts of the Reserve. During this time public access has been limited. Decontamination of the site has recently been effected.

The brochure *Truganina Explosives Reserve* is available on the City of Hobsons Bay web site. Oral history tapes are available in the City of Hobsons Bay Library.

Truganina Swamp

This 150hectare wetland provides habitat for a wide range of migratory waders and is an important retarding basin which helps minimise the risk of flooding in Altona.

Altona Treatment Plant

As part of the plant's redevelopment increased public access is to be provided to the internationally renowned Agnes Denes living art sculpture.

Truganina Park

Once Altona's landfill tip, the area is now a recreation and conservation park. A key feature is the 100 Steps to Federation which lead to the highest point of land between Melbourne and the You Yangs. From this vantage point visitors can view the city, Port Phillip Bay and the surrounding Cheetham Wetlands. The Cheetham Wetlands are of international significance, protected under the RAMSAR Convention. They lie partly in the City of Hobsons Bay and partly in the City of Wyndham.

Truganina Park is home to a colony of the threatened Altona Skipper Butterfly which established in the newly created wetland (formerly a concrete storm water drain). This wetland provides habitat for a variety of water birds.

The park provides picnic and barbecue facilities and is open to walkers at all hours.

Altona Foreshore and Beach

The Altona foreshore is an important area for recreation (active and passive) and the Altona Beach is one of only two swimming beaches readily accessible for people of the Western and Northern suburbs. The shallows of the Altona Foreshore provide a habitat for a wide variety of sea birds. This habitat has been adversely impacted recently by the constant dredging and removal of the seaweed which is the foundation of the food chain upon which many species of birds rely. It is not marked as crown land on the map of the investigation area but is an important element in the continuous Hobsons Bay coast.

Seaholme Foreshore

Commencing at Racecourse Road and concluding at Millers Road in Altona, the Seaholme Foreshore area provides stunning views of open sea, the eastern coastline of Port Phillip Bay and of many species of seabird feeding offshore. It offers a range of recreational facilities, including the Altona Boat Ramp, Altona Safe Harbour, Cresser Reserve Jetty, playgrounds, barbecue and picnic facilities, Altona Sports Club Bowling Greens and Fishing Club Buildings. As is the case with the Altona Foreshore and Beach, it is not marked as crown land on the map of the investigation area but is an important element in the continuous Hobsons Bay coast.

Altona Coastal Park

Formerly the site of the Williamstown Racecourse, this park is historically and environmentally important. It must be kept in public ownership. Abutting the Kororoit Creek it provides a necessary buffer for the Wader Beach area of the Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve. Partially flood prone, it has salt marsh vegetation, and provides a wonderful area for cyclists and walkers. Many people use it, enjoying the unrestricted views of Port Phillip Bay across the salt marsh. It is a place of beauty and open skies.

A palm tree marks the site of the Williamstown Racecourse Grandstand and the area was used to billet Australian troops during the Second World War.

Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve

Situated only eight kilometres from the heart of Melbourne this reserve is an ecological treasure. "It consists of open grasslands for passive recreation, Wader Beach, two wetland lakes that provide a buffer for Wader Beach, the salt marsh and mangrove conservation area, and the Kororoit Creek". (Parks Victoria *Park Notes – Jawbone Flora and Fauna Reserve* – contains detailed information about the values of this Reserve.)

The western end of the original Rifle Range is a restored wetland habitat. The community had to fight long and hard to retain the latter area as public open space when an invasive marina development was proposed by the then Urban Land Authority. It must not be alienated from public ownership. An area west of the serviced apartments has currently passed from public ownership and a commercial development called Williams Cove is being touted. This will bring dwellings right up to one lake. That land should not have been relinquished from public ownership – it was reserved for community use in the original agreement about land use.

The mudflats of Wader Beach provide the most easterly feeding grounds for the many migratory waders which come to the western shores of Port Phillip Bay from as far afield as Siberia and Japan. These birds are protected by the bilateral treaties, the Japan Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (JAMBA) and the China Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (CAMBA).

The group, Friends of Williamstown Wetlands (formerly Friends of the Williamstown Rifle Range) has actively supported the development and preservation of this reserve since 1987.

Williamstown Botanical Gardens

In 1856 in response to representation from the citizens of Williamstown, 10 acres were reserved to establish these outstanding municipal botanic gardens. Their beauty and value is self-evident. However, refer to the *Williamstown Botanic Gardens Brochure* for information about the values of this site. These historic gardens are protected by a Heritage Victoria heritage overlay.

Formation of Friends of the Williamstown Botanic Gardens is currently proposed.

Williamstown Beach and Foreshore around to Shelly Beach

The Williamstown Beach and its adjoining coastal open space have historically been a recreational destination for local citizens and visitors, particularly from the western and northern suburbs. It is prized for its natural beauty, open views and recreational use.

The foreshore area stretches around to the east - open parkland offering wonderful open vistas of sea and sky, rocky basalt shore, the You Yangs, the Bay coast both east and west. Offshore pelicans, silver gulls, Pacific gulls, terns, cormorants, black swans, gannets may be seen flying and feeding. A variety of recreational activities are enjoyed and by locals and visitors alike. Off leash dog walking areas are found to the east and west of Williamstown Beach.

This is a place for urban dwellers to be renewed by the peace and open space and should be retained as such.

Point Gellibrand Coastal Heritage Park

After decades of community representation and struggle, Point Gellibrand Coastal Heritage Park is a new regional park that has been created to protect the cultural heritage values and coastal character of the area, whilst providing a range of visitor facilities and passive open space opportunities. (Ref: www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au) It is of enormous historical, industrial, social and aesthetic importance to the City of Hobsons Bay and the State of Victoria. The car park adjoining Point Gellibrand Heritage Coastal Park (currently used by workers at the dockyards) should be returned to government control and incorporated into the Heritage Park. It lies over the historic remains of the wheat stack foundations which should be preserved as part of the Heritage Park.

Newport Lakes

Newport Lakes is a bushland oasis created from a former bluestone quarry and rubbish tip site. The lakes area of the park has been extensively revegetated using native plants. There are over 200 species of plants and 85 species of birds have been recorded here. The whole park covers 33 hectares and is extensively used by residents and visitors for picnicking, walking and the opportunity to enjoy a beautiful area of bushland in the middle of a busy suburban area. (Ref: www.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au)

Public Land from the Anne Street Pier to the Stony Creek Backwash

Preamble

According to the Parks Victoria web site "Parks Victoria is working with Hobsons Bay City Council and the Port of Melbourne Corporation on a review of the *Williamstown Foreshore Strategic Plan*. The plan provides coordinated direction for the use and development of land along the foreshore from Stony Creek Backwash to Point Gellibrand.

The revised plan will update directions for various activities and uses within the study area. This includes boating, tourism and recreation, port operations, community infrastructure and heritage assets. It will recognise and address the unique village environment and character of Williamstown." www.parks.vic.gov.au

A community consultation meeting was held by Parks Victoria at the Williamstown Town Hall on Monday evening 23 February 2009. There we were told that the defined area (which is actually a specific sub set of the entire Williamstown foreshore) is now from Stony Creek Backwash to Ann Street (omitting the Dockyards area and piers). This came as a surprise to the local participants who have been engaging in various stages of the consultation processes leading to a revised *Williamstown Foreshore Strategic Plan* since at least 2007. To prepare a plan for the designated area without consideration of the impact of the likely future development of the Williamstown Dockyards is unrealistic.

Clarification of the relationship of the review of the *Williamstown Foreshore Strategic Plan* to VEAC's Melbourne Metropolitan Investigation was sought. In effect, the outcome of the latter was dismissed by one official representative. Alarming for residents, he stated that any VEAC report would occur too late to inform decisions about the disposal of surplus public land currently being considered by the state government.

Local residents are understandably frustrated and angry – in good faith they have constantly participated in a variety of local government and state public consultations about useage and management of areas of our coastline and public land over decades. The community consensus has been, and is, that our public open space should be retained for the community of Hobsons Bay and indeed for all citizens. It is a strongly held community view that open vistas of the Bay from this area of Williamstown (i.e. along Nelson Place and The Strand where they are most threatened by potential developments) should be preserved.

Commonwealth Reserve

This expansive park is a focal point for community activities and for visitors to Williamstown. It is an important part of Williamstown's heritage and a green oasis in the otherwise built up Nelson Place precinct. There have been proposals to relocate the tennis courts that many locals oppose for social reasons and particularly if the proposed site involves encroachment on the open space of Newport Park.

The Strand Foreshore

At all public consultations with residents over many years the strongest prevailing view has been that the open spaces and vistas of this area must be preserved and if possible, access to the foreshore, be expanded. (Webb Dock's expansion has increasingly blocked the views across the Yarra to the city.)

The Ferguson Street Pier, for many years closed to the public, is particularly valued for the views it allows - of the bay, of the wonderfully varied maritime traffic and of the City of Melbourne skyline. It is a great favourite with walkers and fishermen and provides access for yachtsmen whose boats are moored there. Public access to the pier must be preserved.

Greenwich Reserve

Greenwich Reserve is an important open space for passive and active recreation with sports fields, a shared pathway for pedestrians and cyclists, open parkland, picnic and playground facilities and a boat launching area. It abuts, Greenwich Bay which provides habitat for a variety of birds.

Sandy Point and Greenwich Bay

"Sandy Point and Greenwich Bay are located west of the Yarra River mouth...The area was probably tidal flat at the time of European settlement. Works were undertaken from the 1860's to provide a shipping channel at the mouth of the Yarra - two parallel rock walls were constructed and dredging undertaken to clear the channel."

Sandy Point appears to have been created between 1910 and 1916 from dredged material. This was later covered with fill including bricks, cobbles and pitch. The cinder pits area was formed from fill, and coal ash waste from the adjacent (former) power station, from the 1950's.

The Warmies Inlet was named from its use as a cooling water outlet for the Newport Power Station. The inlet was originally part of the course of the Yarra River.

The Lower Yarra probably consisted of estuarine mudflats with salt marsh, mangroves, teatree and paperbarks at the time of settlement. Today the area carries mixed indigenous and introduced plant species and provides important habitat for a range of birds.

The shoreline is used by seabirds and shorebirds for both roosting and feeding (e.g. cormorants, pelicans and red-capped plovers). The inshore area provides feeding habitat for species such as the welcome swallow, magpie-lark and superb fairy-wren.

The area is part of a site identified as of regional significance due to the number of waterbird species, the number of roosting cormorants and terns, and the regular presence

of the common sandpiper. In 1983 a total of 59 local bird species were identified.” (Ref: www.hobsonsabay.vic.gov.au)

Unfortunately the increased human traffic around this small bay and particularly along Sandy Point appears, from my observation, to be impacting on the number of species of birds feeding in the mudflats.

Newport Park

This landscaped park managed by the City of Hobsons Bay is an important open space for residents who, for generations, lived with the fall out from the coal fired power station on that site. It is the most accessible area for passive recreation for nearby residents in Newport. An athletic track, a fitness centre and a skateboard area provide important recreational facilities and no further development in this parkland should be contemplated.

It is not marked as crown land on the map of the investigation area but is an important element in the City of Hobsons Bay parklands.

Riverside Park

This area of crown land appears to run beside the Yarra from behind the Newport Power Station to near Scienceworks. Confirmation of its location would be helpful. That area is important for its views of the Yarra, and is enjoyed by cyclists and walkers. It deserves to be enhanced by planting of native vegetation and allowing more unhindered views of the river than are currently possible.

Stony Creek Backwash

Sitting beside and under the West Gate Bridge the Stony Creek Backwash marks the junction of the Stony Creek with the Yarra River.

Many changes have occurred as exploration and settlement, then quarry men and industry impacted on the native flora, fauna and avifauna of the lower reaches of Stony Creek. The current area is important for its natural, historical, industrial heritage, social and recreational values. Replanted mangroves flourish, remnant salt marsh vegetation has been degraded and needs protection from human impact, a boardwalk allows viewing access. The Westgate Memorial Park has recently been established under the bridge acknowledging the 35 men who were killed in the West Gate Bridge collapse in 1970.

Detailed information about the important values of this estuarine environment is available in Parks Victoria's publication, *Park Notes Stony Creek Backwash*. The Friends of Stony Creek is active in supporting the maintenance and revegetation of this area.

OTHER AREAS OF CROWN LAND IN THE CITY OF HOBSONS BAY INVESTIGATION AREA

- The historic and social values of the Williamstown Cemetery and the Memorial Park Crematorium and Floral Lawn Cemetery need no spelling out.
- The Laverton North Grasslands is an important conservation site containing remnant western plains indigenous grasses. It is essential this area of crown land be retained and managed for the preservation of our native flora.
- A B Shaw Reserve is an important area for sport and recreation in the Laverton area of the City of Hobsons Bay especially with the massive increase in population in new developments in areas adjoining Laverton.
- Altona Public Golf Course is situated near the larger parkland and recreation area of Paisley Park. The whole area is important for social and recreational activities and provides a buffer from the nearby Altona Refinery. Its retention in public ownership is needed for the amenity, health and well being of our community.
- Retention of open space in public hands in such areas as railway reserves and former railway land should be a priority as population pressures and government planning proposals are reducing the open space available to citizens in their daily living. Planting of appropriate vegetation in such sites would be beneficial for humans, fauna and flora.
- Comment on the other parcels of crown land is difficult to make without them being clearly identified by label on the map provided by VEAC.

CONCLUSION

The City of Hobsons Bay is fortunate to retain considerable tracts of crown land, greatly valued by its residents. I have detailed some of the values of these and other public areas extremely important to the special character of our municipality. We should retain them to protect our heritage, our flora and fauna and for the long-term enjoyment and well being of current and future generations.

MAP CORRECTIONS AND QUERIES RE MAP OF THE CITY OF HOBSONS BAY INVESTIGATION AREA

- Greenwich Bay is the inlet located in the area marked Greenwich Reserve, it is not in the middle of The Strand as shown.
- Stony Creek Backwash is located under the West Gate Bridge in the Crown Land Area in the area designated Yarraville Recreation Reserve, it is not in the middle of The Strand as shown.
- What area does Riverside Park encompass? Is it the area along the Yarra behind the power station and up to the land opposite Science Works? If so, how can it be developed so that views of the Yarra are preserved and indigenous vegetation replanted? Has it any connection to Newport Park?